

A LONG TRADITION OF COOPERATION AND SUPPORT

Colonel George Topic

One of America's most strongly held values is its enduring commitment to assist other nations and to develop strong ties with U.S. friends and allies through cooperative education, training, and humanitarian assistance programs. Over the past 60 years, a wide variety of activities have built strong friendships and promoted mutual understanding at all levels around the world.



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Since the end of World War II, the Department of Defense has been deeply involved in humanitarian assistance efforts. And over the past six decades these activities have consistently been an important part of the U.S. national security strategy. The Marshall Plan, the Berlin Airlift, and numerous other activities have all contributed to the strong network of alliances, coalitions, and friendships that have helped to promote cooperation, avoid conflict, and, above all to ease the pain and suffering of those in need.

The legal foundation for much of the Defense Department's work is based in the Mutual Security Act of 1954. Throughout the Cold War period, the U.S. military worked closely with the State Department, other government agencies, and various nations and international organizations to provide support for development efforts as well as disaster relief. Thousands of U.S. military personnel have been involved in efforts in virtually every nation. The range of activities includes famine relief, disaster response, and timely preventive action taken to head off impending crises. The major efforts the United States undertook in response to Hurricane Mitch in the Caribbean, and after the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines, are representative examples of hundreds of similar operations undertaken all over the globe.

LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT

Exceptional U.S. military logistics and strategic transport capabilities are tailor-made for ready humanitarian assistance service. In addition to the ability to move significant cargo into some of the most remote places on earth, airdrop capabilities enable the United States to provide critical supplies rapidly in disasters where victims are cut off completely from the rest of the world. In addition, U.S. military medical personnel have critical tactical training that enables them to operate literally under any conditions — a skill often needed

HUMANITARIAN AIRLIFT BRINGS \$15 MILLION IN AID TO KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

Staff Sergeant Chuck Marsh

MANAS AIR BASE, Kyrgyz Republic — The largest amount of humanitarian aid to enter the Kyrgyz Republic since it became an independent country in 1991 came by way of C-17 Globemaster IIIs from McChord Air Force Base, Washington [state], in September.

About \$15 million worth of medicines and medical supplies were unloaded at the Bishkek International Airport — a civilian airport and the base's flightline — by 376th Expeditionary Logistics Squadron workers.

The supplies will be used in hospitals as part of Operation Provide Hope, a medical aid program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

“The United States is trying to help the Kyrgyz people by way of humanitarian efforts, taking advantage of our military capability to spread that aid,” said Colonel Mark Glibbery, the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing vice commander. “While the Manas Air Base mission is to support the global war on terrorism in

Afghanistan, our ability to support Operation Provide Hope helps to give the local communities a positive image of the U.S. military.”

Glibbery said, “It takes the whole system from headquarters and above all the way down to the base to make an operation work.

“At the base level, it requires the operations side to get the aircraft here and be able to integrate with the support group functions to offload and distribute the cargo, as well as the maintenance functions to ensure the aircraft is mission capable,” he said. “The entire base plays a part in making any operation happen.”

Included in the supplies were life-saving antibiotics and cancer medicines.

“I'm just glad to be making a difference,” said Senior Airman Joshua Onge, a 62nd Airlift Wing loadmaster. “I see so much going into Afghanistan and Iraq; it's good to be able to help other parts of the world as well.”

in support of humanitarian operations. As a concrete example of a logistics success, the U.S. Army provided water purification support in the mid-1990s to over a million refugees in central Africa — a truly challenging deployment location.

The U.S. military's flexible, responsive leadership ability and fluid command-and-control systems also make a difference. The best example was the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force's 1991 mid-ocean diversion in support of Operation Sea Angel in Bangladesh. Already in the process of redeploying after Operation Desert Storm, the Marines were called upon to assist in the wake of a typhoon that killed over 130,000 people. Their speed and effectiveness, along with those of many other governmental and international organizations, are credited with saving tens of thousands of lives. The plans for the operation were drafted on the go as the Marines were steaming into the Bay of Bengal to initiate relief operations.

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 provided the guidance

and funding under which many humanitarian assistance programs have thrived over the past 40 years. Military units have deployed to refurbish medical facilities; build schools, wells, and roads, and to provide sanitation, preventive medicine, and medical assistance under the provisions of this legislation. These programs are carried out through the coordination and leadership of the in-country U.S. ambassador and his or her country team.

EXCESS PROPERTY

The Department of Defense delivers additional humanitarian support to allies and friends through the Excess Property Program. Over the years excess medical equipment, transport, administrative, and logistical materiel and general supplies have been offered at little or no cost to other nations. Hospitals, clinics, schools, and community facilities throughout the world have been equipped through this program. This support goes beyond funding provided through Foreign Military Financing, Economic Support Funds, and various other programs.



Manas Air Base, Kyrgyz Republic — Trucks line up as Operation Provide Hope aid is unloaded from a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III from McChord Air Force Base, Washington. More than \$15 million worth of medicines and medical supplies were flown in. (Air Force Photo by Staff Sergeant Chuck Marsh)

Since 1985, the Denton Amendment has facilitated the use of U.S. military aircraft to be used to transport humanitarian relief supplies and related cargo on a space-available basis in support of assistance programs. As a result, thousands of tons of cargo have been delivered, not only for U.S. government agencies but also for the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations, and private charities. Several years ago, for example, a U.S. Army officer working in Ukraine decided on his own to equip several medical clinics in small towns around the country. After soliciting donated equipment while on leave in the United States, he coordinated free transport under the Denton Amendment and practically established three Ukrainian medical facilities single-handedly.

The United States has been a major partner and supporter of regional and international relief and other humanitarian efforts. The Defense Department also provides logistical support and coordination for United Nations humanitarian missions. The United States participated in the highly successful Australian-led U.N. operation in East Timor — considered to be a textbook example of effective multinational response.

There are many other areas where the U.S. military is involved. The U.S. Mine Action Plan has been operating for many years to mitigate the danger from mines and unexploded ordnance, some of which dates back to World War II or before. The result has been the reclamation of land that had been unsafe for decades.

Additionally, the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard perform hundreds of search-and-rescue operations every year. They have also provided assistance to ocean-going refugees who are at risk in overcrowded and unstable vessels.

Emergency assistance is often provided ad-hoc, but over the years an assortment of programs have grown into major cooperative training and education efforts. In addition to the International Military Education and Training program (IMET), which brings foreign military officers and other officials to the United States for instruction, a significant portion of the foreign military funds the U.S. provides to other nations is used for education, training, and enhancing civil support. U.S. military medical training teams have deployed to almost a hundred countries, and foreign medical specialists receive training routinely in the United States. Similarly, deployed U.S. Special Operations Forces often conduct training or information campaigns in developing nations and regions, and their services are highly valued by U.S. ambassadors and country teams.

A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE

Helping others and building strong friendships are core values of the American people, and humanitarian assistance remains an important and highly visible expression of ways the United States can make a positive difference in the world. The Department of Defense has been a leader in these efforts, and its programs and operations have saved many lives and enriched many more.

The U.S. military has also benefited from its involvement in these operations. Many senior officials have developed life-long friendships with their counterparts. Military personnel at all levels profit from these contacts, exchanges, and cooperative efforts. Such exposure promotes cultural sensitivity and new ways of thinking. Last, but not least, logisticians receive invaluable on-the-job training through rapid humanitarian deployments and operations conducted in often austere environments. ■