

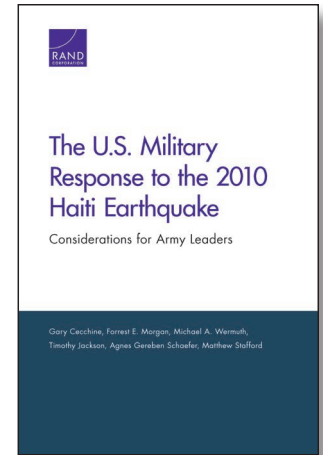


The U.S. Military Response to the 2010 Haiti Earthquake

Considerations for Army Leaders

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www.rand.org/t/RR304



This report examines how Joint Task Force–Haiti (JTF-Haiti) supported the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts in Haiti. It focuses on how JTF-Haiti was organized, how it conducted Operation Unified Response, and how the U.S. Army supported that effort. The analysis includes a review of existing authorities and organizations and explains how JTF-Haiti fit into the U.S. whole-of-government approach and the international response.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How did the U.S. military respond to the 2010 earthquake that devastated Haiti?
- How could the United States improve its military foreign humanitarian assistance and disaster relief?



KEY FINDINGS

Luck, serendipity, and longtime relationships fostered success in Haiti relief efforts, though actual performance is difficult to measure because metrics and plans were not in place before the earthquake hit.

- U.S. Department of Defense policy on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief needs to be updated.
- The Joint Task Force–Haiti commander’s informal approach to determining initial requirements and his liberal use of oral orders had people and resources assigned quickly, and U.S. military leaders had significant latitude to exercise initiative in directing response efforts.
- U.S. Southern Command lacked well-established plans for such a mission. The informal, top-down process that pushed resources to the effort quickly generated inefficiencies that might have impaired the operation’s effectiveness, but a lack of established metrics prevented measuring performance.
- Specific circumstances may have worked to the advantage of Joint Task Force–Haiti (JTF-Haiti): U.S. Southern Command military deputy commander, LTG P. K. Keen, was in Haiti and at the U.S. ambassador’s residence when the earthquake struck; the ambassador’s residence withstood the

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earthquake, and the communication equipment there remained functional; General Keen was a longtime colleague of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti commander; the Global Response Force was available for rapid deployment to JTF-Haiti; the JTF-Haiti commander had a positive professional relationship with the XVIII Airborne Corps commander; and many service members assigned to JTF-Haiti had a high level of experience in civil affairs and other aspects of working with local citizens.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Update the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) directive for foreign humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) to better describe the statutory and organizational changes that have taken place since its last publication and provide important policy guidance to DoD entities and their partners.
- Create a national framework for foreign humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. A national framework for U.S. foreign HA/DR could document and guide a whole-of-government approach for U.S. efforts and facilitate related planning, training, and exercises.
- Ensure that all senior Army commanders are familiar with the guidance provided in the recently published *Department of Defense Support to Foreign Disaster Relief (Handbook for JTF Commanders and Below)*. It should be required reading at U.S. Army intermediate and senior service schools.
- Consider a standing organization to help develop HA/DR doctrine; facilitate HA/DR planning, training, and exercises; establish HA/DR metrics; monitor preparedness and availability of specialized HA/DR units and personnel; provide a base for HA/DR expertise; assist with interagency, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental collaboration; conduct initial assessments of HA/DR requirements; and maintain historical data on HA/DR operations.

