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RELEASE NEWS

THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION/EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Helping The Tsunami Victims

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Americans join those across the globe in mourning the tens of thousands of lives, many of them children, who were lost in the recent violent tsunamis from Thailand to the Horn of Africa. Across America, the American flag flew at half-staff last week in honor of the victims of this catastrophic event.

I commend those individuals, countries, and international organizations that are donating money, supplies, transport and logistics, and personnel to help those in the paths of the tsunamis. Together, people across the globe are providing relief to these countries.

The U.S. government has made an initial commitment of \$350 million for disaster relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction for victims of the tsunami. I have also sent members of America's armed forces to the region to support the relief efforts. United States Air Force planes are distributing aid 24 hours a day. The United States Navy has deployed the Abraham Lincoln carrier group to Indonesia with relief supplies and additional aircraft that will help reach those victims in desperate need in isolated areas. Additional American military personnel will arrive soon to assist with relief activities. In consultation with key allies and with the United Nations, the United States launched one of the largest humanitarian relief operations in recent history.

Secretary of State Colin Powell and Governor Jeb Bush of Florida visited the Indian Ocean region last week, meeting with fellow leaders and international organizations to assess the relief efforts and remaining needs. The international community is gathering in Geneva to develop a reconstruction plan and to raise funds to help southern Asia.

In America, our government will aid these efforts, but America's greatest source of generosity lies in the hearts of the American people. Since the tsunamis, American children and adults have contributed millions of dollars for disaster relief and reconstruction. They join the outpouring of generosity from around the world.

I have asked former Presidents Bush and Clinton to work with all Americans in this important humanitarian relief effort, as we express our country's sympathy for the victims of a great tragedy. The former Presidents are asking Americans to donate to charities that are already providing help to tsunami victims. These organizations have dispatched experts to the disaster area, and they know what is required to meet the needs on the ground.

Americans have suffered great natural tragedies, from earthquakes, to destructive wildfires, to hurricanes. We know that nothing can take away the grief of those affected. Americans will do all we can to help the people of Asia confront the great challenges that face them in the aftermath of this devastation.

We offer our sympathy to those who lost loved ones, our compassion to those suffering, and America's sustained commitment to help the people affected by the tsunamis rebuild.

George W. Bush