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Port-au-Prince Maritime Facilities Destroyed



Coast Guard finds no port facilities for receiving relief supplies

An inspection by the Coast Guard cutter Forward found port facilities at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, were severely damaged in the Jan. 12 earthquake and apparently unusable.

Spokesman Lt. Cdr. Chris O'Neil said Thursday the vessel, aided by an intelligence unit, found cranes were destroyed and piers submerged. Aids to navigation were in their proper places, but on first examination, shore facilities are in no condition to receive ships that might be carrying relief supplies.

O'Neil emphasized that the inspection was preliminary.

A Coast Guard aerial photo shows two of the port's cranes in the water. A wharf 1,500 feet long and some 60 feet wide has subsided below the water surface.

Air charter companies, including Chapman Freeborn, said they were beginning to fly supplies in. FedEx said it will airlift on Friday an aid consignment for Direct Relief.

The airport at Port-au-Prince is largely undamaged, according to a report from Chapman Freeborn Airchartering, but lacks air traffic control. Santo Domingo airport in the neighboring country of the Dominican Republic provides a viable alternative to Port Au Prince airport.

Contact R.G. Edmonson at bedmonson@joc.com.

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Military Tackles Haiti Logistics



Divers seek ways to clear damage at Port-au-Prince Seaport

U.S. military forces are leading efforts to punch through sea, air and road bottlenecks slowing the delivery of food and supplies to earthquake-ravaged Haiti.

The USNS Grasp, a rescue and salvage vessel of the Navy's Military Sealift Command, arrived Monday with Army divers to assess underwater obstacles and damage that have closed the seaport at Port-au-Prince. The vessel had been off the coast of Belize and diverted to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to refuel and collect food and relief supplies before heading to Haiti.

Air Force Gen. Douglas Fraser, commander of the U.S. Southern Command, said reopening the port is crucial. He said the first priorities were quickly reopening the Port-au-Prince airport and clearing an overland route from the neighboring Dominican Republic but scale of the disaster requires resumption of seaborne shipments.

"We're getting supplies in through the air. But the airfield by itself will not sustain the long-

term requirement because there are so many people in need," Fraser told reporters at a Miami briefing. "That's why we're bringing in the capability in ships, why we're looking at how we get supplies across the shore."

Another official, Brigadier Gen. Michael Dana of the J4 Logistics Directorate, told Reuters the military hopes to have Port-au-Prince seaport open in two or three days for shipments of emergency relief supplies.

Having visited Haiti only three months before the earthquake, Fraser said he knew before receiving damage reports that the logistical challenges would be immense. "We knew that there was a single airfield where we could use capacity," he said. "We had a limited capacity, even when the port was running, of what the port could support."

The 7.0-magnitude earthquake wrecked the port's pier and toppled its container crane and two smaller cranes. The extent of the underwater damage won't be known until divers can take a look.

Meanwhile, military helicopters have been ferrying water and other supplies from the aircraft carrier Carl Vinson and other Navy vessels anchored offshore. More than 100,000 bottles of water were delivered Sunday, officials said.

Other vessels have been dispatched to Haiti, including the Navy hospital ship Comfort, due Jan. 21 from Baltimore, and two oceanographic survey ships due to arrive this week. Also due this week are the Navy cargo ships Lummus, which can offload cargo without a port, and Sacagawea.

The Maritime Administration said it was sending five civilian-crewed ships owned or controlled by Marad to deliver relief supplies. Four of the vessels are from Norfolk, the other from Alameda, Calif.

Eighty Navy Seabees, accompanied by road graders, front-end loaders, excavators and dump trucks, have been dispatched from Gulfport, Miss., to remove debris, clear roads and work on construction.

Relief supplies are coming into the heavily damaged Port-au-Prince airport, but delivery continues to be hampered by roads clogged with earthquake debris.

The airport, being operated by the Air Force, is capable of handling 100 flights a day, three times the normal volume the airport handled before the Jan. 12 earthquake. Military officials said the flow of air traffic was improving, with only three of 67 incoming flights rerouted Saturday and only two flights diverted Sunday.

But air traffic continues to be restricted by the lack of fuel, which requires incoming planes to have enough fuel for their return trip, and inadequate ground space.

The airport has a single operating runway, and the airport apron can handle only one wide-bodied plane and five narrow-bodied planes at a time, plus other aircraft that can be parked on the grass. The control tower was knocked out by the earthquake, forcing U.S.

military air controllers to operate from a radio post on the airfield grass.

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