



# International Assistance System

Concept of Operations

*October 1, 2010*



FEMA



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

This document has been prepared by an interagency working group under the direction of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of State (DOS) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

As a result of Hurricane Katrina, the United States Government (USG) established policies and procedures to manage the flow of international resources into the United States under the National Response Framework (NRF) for a Presidentially declared major disaster as described under the Stafford Act.

The FEMA, DOS and USAID seals are featured on the cover of this publication.

Front cover photo credit: Gina Jackson, USAID

The cover photo shows USAID delivering supplies to a local orphanage in Haiti. A young Haitian boy helps unload the donated tents and equipment at the orphanage.

FEMA, DOS and USAID do not endorse any non-Federal entity.

# Executive Summary

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the outpouring of international aid to the United States was unprecedented. Over 150 nations and international organizations offered financial or material assistance to support relief efforts. To manage these offers, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Department of State (DOS) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) quickly developed a mechanism to review and accept or reject the material offers.

After Hurricane Katrina, the United States Government (USG) established policies and procedures for managing international assistance for future domestic disasters declared under the Stafford Act. The concept of operations is called the International Assistance System Concept of Operations (IAS CONOPS). The IAS CONOPS establishes standard operating procedures for:

- Requesting assistance;
- Reviewing offers and determining whether to accept or decline these offers;
- Managing the logistics of transporting, receiving, and distributing international donations; and
- Determining if resources can be procured internationally by a Federal response agency.

***Since the USG is usually in a position to be able to fulfill its disaster response needs domestically, typically the USG will not find it necessary to activate the IAS. Therefore, the IAS will not be automatically activated for every large domestic disaster. It will only be activated in extraordinary cases when the USG determines it is necessary to request or accept international offers of assistance for a catastrophic disaster response and if FEMA needs help managing the offers of assistance.***

The IAS CONOPS delineates the roles and responsibilities of key agencies:

- DOS will act as the focal point for receiving and responding to foreign governments' offers of assistance and will communicate United States Government acceptance/declination of offers;
- FEMA will identify potential requirements and officially accept/reject international donations using its gift acceptance authority;
- The USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) will manage the operations of international assistance, facilitate discussions between DOS and FEMA and ensure coordination with the regulatory agencies;
- Regulatory Agencies will expedite customs clearance for accepted resources and may collocate with USAID at the international commodity staging area to review incoming shipments;
- The Department of Defense (DoD) may provide logistical assistance to support the IAS.

While there are many ways donated goods might enter the United States (e.g., from nongovernmental organizations or private citizens), the IAS CONOPS applies only to formal transactions between foreign governments /international organizations and the USG. All FEMA –approved, donated resources will be accepted through FEMA’s gift acceptance authority under the Stafford Act and, as such, will become FEMA property. FEMA approves the consignment of all donated goods to response agencies and governments. Resources accepted by an agency other than FEMA under its own authority will become the responsibility of the accepting agency, including responsibility for ultimate disposition of that resource and any associated costs.

For further information, domestic entities should contact FEMA’s International Affairs office at [fema-international@dhs.gov](mailto:fema-international@dhs.gov). Abroad, foreign governments should contact the U.S. embassy. Within the United States, foreign governments should contact the State Department country desk officer and/or Crisis Management Support at [ses-o\\_cms@state.gov](mailto:ses-o_cms@state.gov).

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## Introduction

### **Background**

Following Hurricane Katrina, the United States Government (USG) recognized the need to develop policies and procedures for managing the flow of assistance offered by foreign governments and international organizations into the United States (hereafter referred to as international assistance) in response to a major domestic disaster. The Homeland Security Council (HSC) requested the Department of State (DOS) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) jointly lead an interagency effort to develop these mechanisms. Several interagency working groups were established comprising of Federal agencies that either have a role in domestic response operations under the National Response Framework (NRF) or are involved in the movement of commodities and personnel across United States borders (see [Appendix A](#)). The resulting product is the International Assistance System (IAS), a set of policies and procedures designed to systematize the review and receipt of offers of international assistance, as well as requests for international resources, during catastrophic domestic disasters declared pursuant to the Stafford Act.

### **Purpose**

This document outlines the IAS concept of operations, including roles and responsibilities, standard operating procedures for managing offers of international assistance and requests for international resources, and the logistical process for receiving and distributing international assistance and requested resources in response to a domestic disaster declared under the Stafford Act. For the purposes of this document, the term ‘resources’ encompasses any supplies, equipment, services, and personnel that may be offered by a foreign nation or requested by FEMA or a federal agency mission assigned by FEMA in the aftermath of a domestic disaster; ‘resources’ does not encompass cash assistance.

The IAS elaborates on the relevant sections of the NRF’s International Coordination Support Annex. The IAS does not apply to activities carried out by USAID and DOS overseas. Such activities are implemented by USAID and DOS pursuant to their own authorities, policies and guidance, although they may utilize mechanisms included in the NRF such as the NRF’s Financial Management Support Annex. Similarly, the IAS does not apply to incidents where the response is led by Federal agencies other than FEMA, although such agencies can use the procedures set forth here as suitable.

### **Objectives**

1. To quickly and efficiently assist the DHS/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), or another Federal agency acting under a reimbursable Mission Assignment from FEMA to carry out Stafford Act activities (referred to as a FEMA MA agency throughout this document), request and obtain resources from the international community that are necessary for that agency’s incident response operations under the Stafford Act.
2. To provide an expedient response (acceptance or declination) to foreign governments and international organizations that have offered assistance.

### **Assumptions**

1. Due to the wide range of resources available within the United States, the USG is not likely to require routine assistance from the international community during domestic disasters. Exceptions

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may include catastrophic incidents or particularly large or simultaneous disasters, for which very specific commodities or technical assistance might be requested, and for which a foreign partner can provide needed goods in a timely manner.

2. During disaster response operations, any inflow of commodities or services (domestic or international) into the affected area that has not been specifically requested and/or coordinated by a responding agency represents some degree of obstruction to relief operations, and may also present transportation, logistical, and/or homeland security/defense challenges.
3. Financial contributions to professional relief organizations are the most useful form of assistance that can be provided following a disaster. Financial contributions give organizations the power to rapidly procure exactly what is needed for disaster victims. Moreover, unlike in-kind donations, cash donations entail no transportation cost. They also allow relief supplies to be purchased at locations as near to the disaster site as possible. This approach has the triple advantage of stimulating local economies (e.g., providing employment, generating cash flow), ensuring that supplies arrive as quickly as possible, and reducing transport and storage costs.

### ***Applicability of the IAS***

The IAS applies to the three primary IAS entities (FEMA, DOS, and USAID), as well as other Federal departments and agencies that may be requested to provide assistance in expediting the flow of international resources during a domestic disaster declared under the Stafford Act (e.g., Customs and Border Protection, Department of Defense, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Agriculture, and others). The IAS also applies to FEMA MA agencies that may request assistance through the IAS to obtain international resources for disaster response activities. IAS support is only available for international assistance that has been specifically approved by FEMA and accepted under FEMA's gift acceptance authority under the Stafford Act.

Although the IAS was specifically designed to manage assistance to FEMA for responding to a disaster declared under the Stafford Act, Federal agencies with independent authority to be in charge of non-Stafford Act incident response may rely on the assumptions and regulatory requirements in the IAS and choose to implement its procedures as suitable to the situation.

The IAS does not apply to international offers made to state, local, or tribal governments, nor does it apply to offers made by international, private sources. Furthermore, the IAS does not replace existing, separately-developed procedures for USG response to international offers of cash assistance. Also, the IAS does not replace established agreements between the USG and foreign governments or international organizations to provide assistance when requested.

### ***Agency Authorities***

For the purposes of this document, FEMA is the only Federal agency authorized to accept international assistance through the IAS, using its gift acceptance authority under the Stafford Act. FEMA may use this authority to accept donations to be used by FEMA MA agencies that use IAS mechanisms.

IAS support is only available for international assistance that has been specifically approved by FEMA and accepted under FEMA's gift acceptance authority. Before the USG may utilize international donations, it must "accept" the donated assets pursuant to a gift acceptance authority appropriate to the purposes of the gift. This includes gifts from international donors for disaster relief purposes.

## International Assistance System Concept of Operations

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If a major disaster is declared under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (the Stafford Act), 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5206, FEMA is the lead coordinating agency for the disaster relief effort. Section 701(b) of the Stafford Act provides broad authority to the President to accept gifts, both foreign and domestic. This authority has been delegated to the Administrator of FEMA. The only stipulation on this authority is that accepted gifts must be used in furtherance of the purposes of the Stafford Act 42 U.S.C. §5201(b). This includes a variety of assistance to state and local governments for disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation, and to disaster victims through state and local governments or to other entities that FEMA determines to be legally appropriate. See, e.g., 42 U.S.C. § 5170b. Such assistance typically will be provided by FEMA and Federal agencies mission-assigned to carry out Stafford activities or through state and local governments.

Generally, gifts accepted under the Stafford Act may not be used for activities or costs that duplicate benefits available from other sources (such as insurance), that are within the more specific authority of other Federal agencies, or that benefit for-profit/commercial entities. FEMA cannot delegate its authority to accept gifts under the Stafford Act outside the agency.

Several Federal agencies have independent authorities to declare disasters or emergencies and would be in charge of a non-Stafford Act incident response. Although the IAS mechanism is available to any such lead agency, only FEMA has the authority to mission-assign DOS and USAID. Thus, other agencies may use IAS procedures through the development of memoranda of understanding and/or interagency agreements with DOS and USAID that specify those agencies' roles and responsibilities. These agencies would use their own gift acceptance authorities to accept offers of international assistance.

### ***Participating Agencies***

DOS, FEMA, and USAID will jointly manage the IAS to facilitate the review and flow of international assistance. Each may deploy liaison officers to the other two agencies to facilitate interagency communications. United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP), regulatory, and other agencies may provide assistance in facilitating the flow of international assistance into the United States, as needed. The Department of Defense (DOD) may be requested to provide a military installation to be used as a Mobilization Center (MOB Center) for donated resources.

## Agency Roles and Responsibilities

### **Overview**

This section provides a broad overview of the roles and responsibilities of the IAS participant agencies. Specific tasks, conditions, and standards for participant agencies are provided in the relevant sections of this document.

### **DHS/FEMA**

Per the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, the Secretary of Homeland Security is responsible for overall domestic incident management. FEMA is responsible for providing assistance under the Stafford Act for a Presidentially declared disaster, and for activating the IAS when it requires assistance in managing offers or requests for international assistance. To help manage the system, FEMA may mission assign USAID and DOS.

For the purposes of this document, FEMA is the sole agency with statutory authority to accept international donations for domestic disaster response under the IAS. All donations will be accepted through FEMA's gift acceptance authority under the Stafford Act. FEMA must approve all requests before it can be met through a foreign donation, as the donated resources will become FEMA property.

### **DOS**

DOS acts as the formal diplomatic mechanism for all USG communications with other nations regarding the response for a domestic incident. Prior to IAS activation, DOS will track and enter international offers into the *Offers of International Assistance Report*. Upon report of a large domestic disaster, DOS will likely establish the STF (or similar temporary organization) to manage the DOS response for the incident.

The STF is the intermediary for foreign offers of assistance to the USG and works with FEMA and USAID to respond appropriately to such requests. The STF ensures that the donor country understands all conditions of USG acceptance, including, for example: that items need to meet USG regulatory requirements for entry and use in the United States; that they may be used in future domestic disaster events, or disposed of, if not fully utilized for an ongoing event; and that the donation cannot require the USG to pay additional costs for transportation or other requirements incurred prior to receipt at the MOB center.

### **USAID**

USAID provides technical support to FEMA and DOS and synchronizes the various facets of the system, including logistical coordination. Upon mission-assignment from FEMA, USAID activates an Agency Operations Center (AOC), requests personnel from United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP), regulatory, and other agencies to staff the AOC, identifies a site for the MOB center for international donations, and dispatches field personnel as needed.

The AOC is the intermediary for requests from FEMA and FEMA MA agencies, working with regulatory agencies to identify potential sources for the request. If needed, the AOC assists the requesting agency by facilitating the entry of the requested resources into the country.

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The AOC provides logistical coordination for incoming donations to the United States. USAID field staff manage donations arriving at the MOB center and coordinate with CBP and regulatory agencies for the inspection and entry authorization of foreign donations.

### ***DHS/CBP***

CBP provides personnel to staff the AOC within twelve hours of notification, and will maintain a physical presence at the AOC 24/7. CBP dispatches personnel to staff the MOB center, as needed. CBP provides technical advice and support to the AOC for the request and offer processes, and coordinates with applicable regulatory agencies to facilitate the entry of accepted foreign donations into the United States. The CBP liaison at the AOC provides advance notice to CBP field offices of overland shipments of accepted donations and the arrival of foreign disaster personnel requested by FEMA or a FEMA MA agency.

### ***Regulatory Agencies***

Various agencies regulate the entry, handling, and use of resources that may be offered or requested during a disaster, and are responsible for authorizing entry of these resources into the country. Upon IAS activation, regulatory agencies dispatch personnel to staff the AOC, as needed, within twelve hours of notification. Regulatory agency personnel at the AOC provide technical advice and support for the request and offer processes. They subsequently facilitate the entry of accepted items into the United States through expedited inspections, use of agency discretion, and/or issuing waivers of authority when deemed necessary.

### ***Making the Request***

The requesting agency could be FEMA or a FEMA MA agency. To request international assistance, the requesting agency must have provided a request to FEMA that details item specifications, quantity, location, etc. The requesting agency must then provide a *Request for International Assistance Form* (to the AOC FEMA Liaison or USAID field staff).

Prior to seeking USAID/DOS assistance to source an item through this system, the requesting agency must document that a foreign purchase meets the Buy American Act requirements and that the requested resource cannot be acquired through existing mutual aid or bilateral agreements with other countries. To ensure compliance with the Buy American Act, 41 U.S.C. § 10a *et seq.*, the agency seeking to procure from a foreign source must comply with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 25. The requesting agency should provide written documentation to USAID that 25.103 has been met, and that the good or service sought is consistent with FAR Part 25, before foreign sourcing occurs.

### ***DoD***

DOD will use the IAS for any international donation associated with carrying out activities within the scope of a reimbursable FEMA Mission Assignment. If DOD accepts international assistance in support of domestic operations that are outside the scope of a FEMA Mission Assignment, not in direct support of the domestic disaster response in question, and therefore outside the IAS, it will inform the STF and AOC of any such assistance for informational purposes.

DOD will send liaisons to the AOC and STF, as needed. If the decision is made to locate the MOB Center for international assistance at a military installation, FEMA will request that DOD allow use of the facility as a logistical staging area and to provide support and staffing, if needed.

## **System Activation**

### ***Overview***

The IAS will not be automatically activated upon report of a disaster requiring a Federal response under the NRF or Stafford Act.

If FEMA decides to accept or request international assistance and needs support in managing either requests or offers of international assistance, it will activate the IAS and issue Mission Assignments to USAID and DOS.

If FEMA does not activate the IAS, FEMA will coordinate directly with the STF regarding offers of and requests for foreign assistance.

### ***Pre-Activation Procedures***

Before the IAS is activated, the USG may receive proactive offers of assistance from foreign countries or international/multilateral organizations.

If resources are being offered to assist in a disaster that has been declared under the Stafford Act, the STF will take immediate action to minimize the number of unsolicited foreign offers of assistance. To this end, unless requested by FEMA (or, with FEMA concurrence, by another mission-assigned agency) to seek specific types of needed assistance, DOS will follow standing guidance under which DOS and U.S. diplomatic missions notify offering foreign counterparts and international organizations that the USG does not require formal assistance. DOS will further recommend that countries and international organizations wishing to provide assistance do so through a cash donation to a private relief agency operating in the affected region.

### ***Activation Procedures***

Generally, FEMA will activate the IAS if FEMA decides to accept assistance and needs support in managing that assistance, *or* if FEMA or a FEMA MA agency requests assistance because they are unable to acquire a resource from domestic sources in the time or quantity required. If FEMA chooses to activate the IAS, FEMA will notify DOS and USAID in writing that FEMA is activating the IAS. FEMA will also identify the FEMA POC who has authority to accept resources.

## **Managing Offers of International Assistance**

### ***Overview***

When a large scale disaster impacts the United States, foreign governments and international organizations may proactively offer assistance to help in the response and recovery.

Following the onset of a catastrophic disaster, DOS will send a cable to all U.S. diplomatic and consular posts abroad recommending that foreign nations who want to assist make financial contributions to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working in the affected area.

Foreign governments and international organizations may, in some cases, offer assistance directly to a USG entity working on the response rather than to the DOS. For example, DOD may receive offers of assistance for the disaster response from foreign militaries. All such offers must be referred to the STF for dispensation through the IAS.

## **Managing Requests for International Assistance**

### **Overview**

This section outlines the procedures used by the STF, USAID, and FEMA to respond to a request for international assistance by FEMA or a FEMA MA agency.

### **Purchasing Requested Resources**

A guiding principle of the IAS is that the USG will endeavor to purchase required resources whenever possible, rather than seek donations from foreign governments. There are two reasons for this approach:

1. A USG criterion for providing disaster assistance to foreign governments is that the disaster must have overwhelmed the capacity of the local government to respond. Since the USG should apply this same principle to its own requests for international assistance, and because it is anticipated that Pull Requests will emanate from the lack of domestic resources in the time or quantity necessary, not the inability to pay for them, procurement should be the default approach.
2. Procurement, rather than accepting donations, provides for greater control by the requesting agency over the technical specifications and delivery time of the requested resource.

### **The IAS and Bilateral/Mutual Aid Agreements**

The system described herein does not replace established agreements between USG agencies and foreign counterpart agencies to provide disaster response assistance when requested. Federal agencies that use established agreements to receive international assistance for disaster response operations are asked to inform the AOC of the country providing the assistance and the nature of the assistance.

Federal agencies working under a FEMA Mission Assignment and bringing in international resources through an existing bilateral agreement can request USAID and DOS assistance with issues related to entry of the resources into the United States.

### **Requests for Foreign Personnel**

Requests for foreign personnel present numerous additional issues that must be addressed prior to acceptance. Because of these complications, foreign personnel should only be requested as a last resort.

Activities performed by foreign personnel must be limited to those carried out under FEMA's authority to provide direct Federal assistance to states as described in 44 CFR Part 206. Most activities carried out by a FEMA mission-assigned agency will fall under this authority.

Foreign personnel may not be deployed until FEMA confirms that the State has agreed to indemnify the USG for any claims resulting from the provision of direct Federal assistance in accordance with FEMA

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regulations. In addition, the requesting agency must ensure that all of the following conditions have been addressed:

Workers' Compensation

Under current United States law, foreign volunteers would not ordinarily be eligible for workers' compensation in the event the volunteer is injured while providing services. Therefore, issues of workers' compensation in the event the volunteer is injured while providing services will need to be addressed by the requesting agency before service personnel may be accepted.

Liability

Foreign governments/international organizations or foreign volunteers may be susceptible to potential tort claims related to goods or services donated after a domestic disaster. Therefore, the requesting agency will need to examine whether there is an applicable bilateral agreement, specific statutory authority, or State declaration/waiver covering liability protection for foreign governments/international organizations or personnel and notify the AOC of any such protection when making a request for personnel. The requesting agency will inform DOS of the scope of any applicable liability protection, and DOS will relay this information to the relevant foreign government/international organization. If no such liability protection is available, DOS will inform the foreign government/international organization that its personnel may be subject to local United States laws, including laws on liability, for actions committed while in the United States. In all cases, DOS will confirm that each foreign government has acknowledged receipt of this information. In the case of foreign US&R teams, the AOC will also post this information on the Virtual OSOCC when requesting foreign US&R teams.

Credentials, Licensing, and Certifications

Credentials, licenses, and certifications may need to be addressed before certain service personnel may be accepted. These standards are typically promulgated at the State level, with respect to non-federal employees. If the services of foreign volunteers in specialized fields subject to certifications and licensing are going to be requested, the requesting agency will be responsible for ensuring that such requirements are met, or have been waived or altered, before the AOC will consider the request.

The above issues must be resolved before FEMA will approve final acceptance. If a requesting agency obtains applicable coverage or exemptions, the requesting agency must submit this information to the AOC FEMA Liaison. If there is no applicable coverage or exemption, DOS must submit the foreign government's acknowledgement concerning lack of coverage to the AOC FEMA Liaison. If FEMA is satisfied that all conditions have been met, FEMA will approve final acceptance of the foreign personnel. The AOC will not deploy foreign personnel to the affected area until these issues have been addressed and FEMA approves final acceptance.

**Requests for Food**

A number of regulatory agencies have oversight over food products. Because of import requirements and regulations for bringing food into the United States, it's highly unlikely the USG will accept an offer of food but there may be instances when food items, such as MREs, are needed. Below are some of the issues that need to be considered when requesting food items.

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**Prior Notice Requirements for Food**

The Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 (the Bioterrorism Act) implementing regulations in effect since December 12, 2003 require that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) receive prior notice of food imported into the United States. Most of the information required by the Prior Notice interim final rule is data usually provided by importers or brokers to CBP when foods make entry into the United States. However, the Bioterrorism Act requires that this information be provided to HHS/FDA in advance of an imported food's arrival to the United States. The HHS/FDA Prior Notice Center uses this information in advance of the arrival to review, evaluate, and assess whether or not there is a need to hold the imported food for inspection. For more information, go to <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~pn/pnoview.html>.

In order to expedite and facilitate entry of products regulated by HHS/FDA, APHIS and FSIS, consultation is required at the earliest point in the importation process. HHS/FDA, APHIS and FSIS subject matter experts can quickly determine the eligibility of regulated products for importation provided their inclusion in the process is early and information about the products, manufacturers and exporting country are provided early.

## The Mobilization Center

***Procuring the Mobilization Center*** If the IAS has been activated to manage offers of international assistance, one of the first priorities for the AOC is the procurement of a single, central Mobilization Center (MOB Center) for all foreign donated resources. The establishment of a single point for the initial receipt and onward shipping of international donations is essential to facilitate:

- CBP and regulatory agency inspection of entering commodities
- USAID inventory of incoming and outgoing commodities
- Processing of personnel
- Coordinated onward shipping of donations to consignees

All incoming assistance provided by a foreign government should be routed to the MOB Center unless exigent circumstances require otherwise.

### ***Transport of Accepted Resources to the Mobilization Center***

Once FEMA has accepted a foreign offer of assistance, the AOC is responsible for coordinating the movement and receipt of the donated resources with the donor nation/organization, STF, CBP, regulatory agencies, and other entities as needed (e.g., DoD if the MOB is located at a military installation). Once the AOC has received a copy of the acceptance cable from STF and a point of contact from the donor nation, AOC will work directly with the donor nation/organization to coordinate the shipment of donated resources to the MOB. The donor nation/organization is responsible for all transportation and other costs of shipping donated items to the MOB Center.

### ***Information Required from Donor Nation or Organization***

The donor nation must provide the following information to the AOC:

- **Point of Contact:** Name, email, telephone and fax numbers
- **Cargo Information:** Item description, exact quantities, weight and dimensions, palletized/bulk, number of pallets, estimated time to off-load, and any other significant details.
- **Flight Information:** Number of flights, aircraft types, tail number, call sign, departure airport, soonest estimated time of departure (date/time), transit point for fuel/crew rest, window for estimated time of arrival to the MOB (date/time).
- **Truck Information:** Number and type of trucks, truck identification, departure point, soonest estimated time of departure (date/time), point of entry to the United States, window for estimated time of arrival to both the United States point of entry and the MOB Center (date/time).
- **Cargo Documents:** Packing list, airway bill, dangerous goods declaration, etc. All documentation must be in the English language.

The AOC will stipulate that all donated resources will be offloaded at no cost to the donor, and that after being inspected for entry will be loaded on trucks for direct delivery, stored in a commercial warehouse until called forward to the affected region, or stored for use in a future disaster.

### ***Obtaining Flight Clearance***

Upon receipt of flight and cargo details, the AOC will contact CBP and applicable regulatory agencies to coordinate cargo reception. After receiving agency approval, the AOC will provide the donor nation/organization an AOC flight control number. The control number denotes AOC, CBP, and regulatory agency approval of the flight contents and must be used on all requests for flight clearance.

Donations may be shipped via commercial, government, or military aircraft; the process for which is listed below.

- **Military and Government Aircraft:** Donor nation/organization will submit diplomatic clearance requests from their foreign embassy in the U.S. to PM/ISO via the automated Diplomatic Clearance Application System (DCAS). If landing at a U.S. military base, the foreign embassy also requests DOD to provide an Aircraft Landing Authorization Number (ALAN) and a Prior Permission Request (PPR).
- **Commercial Charter Flights:** Donor nation/organization will follow established FAA, TSA and CBP procedures.
- **Commercial Freight Flights:** Cargo arriving via commercial freight carriers will arrive at a commercial airport and require customs inspection and clearance prior to onward trucking from the airport to the MOB Center. The donor nation/organization will provide the AOC with the carrier name, flight number and estimated time of arrival at least 24 hours in advance. The AOC will arrange for customs clearance at the receiving airport and will provide donor nation/organization the MOB Center address and points of contact. The donor nation/ organization will then provide onward truck movement information to the MOB Center. **Note:** All international resources provided by a foreign government will be routed to the MOB Center unless exigent circumstances require otherwise. As such, non-charter, commercial freight carriers are not the preferred method for donor countries to send resources.

The AOC will inform the donor nation/organization of the landing time.

The MOB Center staff will arrange for offloading of incoming commodities and will inventory all cargo as it is offloaded, cross-checking the offloaded cargo with the AOC-approved cargo list.

If it is determined that an incoming aircraft or truck contains cargo that has not been accepted by FEMA and approved by the AOC, MOB Center staff will not allow the cargo to be offloaded; if FEMA decides not to accept the cargo, the AOC will advise the donor that the unapproved cargo will not be offloaded and will also direct the MOB Center to notify the carrier to return the unaccepted resources to the point of origin.

Once offloaded, MOB Center staff will coordinate CBP and regulatory agency inspection, if needed, to obtain authorization for entry into the country.

## **Authorization and Dispatch of Donated Resources**

### ***Overview***

Donated resources (as contrasted with commercially procured resources) entering the United States under the IAS must be approved by FEMA prior to entry:

- Requested Resources: FEMA must approve the solicitation of donated foreign resources (as contrasted with commercial procurement) in advance.
- Accepted Resources: An authorized agency may request an international donation that has been proactively offered. FEMA must approve this request.

### **Requested Resources**

The consignee was identified at the time the request was made. FEMA's approval of the request constitutes authorization of the resources' consignment to FEMA or a FEMA MA agency.

### **Offered Resources**

If a consignee has not been pre-identified for an offered resource, the AOC FEMA Liaison and USAID field staff will share a list of available resources with FEMA and FEMA MA agencies, as well as state, local, and tribal government entities in the field, to determine if there is interest in the resources.

In the event that donated resources enter the United States through the IAS without having been accepted by FEMA (e.g., unapproved commodities that arrive on flights containing approved resources), the AOC, after consultation among the IAS agencies, may refuse entry and require the carrier to return the resources to the point of origin. Alternately, FEMA may de-facto accept the resources.

## **Disposition of Unutilized Donations**

FEMA gift acceptances will be conditioned on donor nation/organization agreement that donations may be used for future domestic disaster response efforts if they cannot be fully utilized for the current disaster response. Although every effort will be made to expedite the delivery and consignment of accepted resources, there may be times when these resources cannot readily be absorbed into the relief and recovery efforts of the disaster for which they were donated. In such cases, FEMA has the following options for disposition of commodities:

1. Stockpile the commodity for future domestic disaster response
2. Use GSA disposal process to excess or surplus the commodity consistent with donor intent and to the extent permitted under GSA regulations.
3. Destroy the commodity, consistent with USG environmental regulations. This option will only be exercised for commodities subject to spoilage or similar expiration (e.g., food products).

If this option is exercised for donated resources, the STF will need to advise the donating country. FEMA and the AOC will need to provide information on why the resource could not be used within the timeframe of its useful life, for the STF explanation to the donating country.

IAS mechanisms for the receipt and disposition of commodities are not available to agencies that accept international assistance using their own gift authorities outside the IAS. The accepting agency will be responsible for the ultimate disposition of such resources and all associated costs.

## **Appendix A: Agency Participation**

The following are acknowledged for their contribution to the development of this document.

### **American Red Cross**

#### **United States Department of Agriculture**

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

#### **United States Department of Commerce**

International Trade Administration

#### **United States Department of Defense**

United States Northern Command (NORTHCOM)

Office of the Secretary for Defense (OSD)

Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

#### **United States Department of Health and Human Services**

Global Health Affairs

Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR)

#### **United States Department of Homeland Security**

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

United States Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

#### **United States Department of State**

Operations Center, Crisis Management Staff

#### **United States Department of Transportation**

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance

#### **United States Environmental Protection Agency**

Office of Civil Enforcement/Enforcement and Compliance Assistance

#### **United States Agency for International Development**

Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance

## Appendix B: Urban Search and Rescue Team SOPs

### *Introduction*

#### **Purpose**

The United States has a robust Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) capacity as well as the ability to maintain sustained operations. It is essential, however, to take a proactive approach to introducing and supporting international US&R teams if United States domestic capacity is overwhelmed and foreign US&R assistance is needed in the event of a major disaster.

Accordingly, there is a need to establish USG policies and procedures for seeking assistance from international US&R teams and facilitating their entry into the United States to ensure rapid deployment to a disaster site anywhere in the country. This appendix establishes the procedures for requesting and receiving such assistance, and details agency roles and responsibilities for receiving and supporting international teams that are deployed as part of the National US&R Response System. FEMA oversees this system in its role as the Coordinating Agency of ESF 9 (Search and Rescue) under the National Response Framework.

#### **International Guidelines and Coordination**

In 1991, the United Nations (UN) established the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), a global network of more than 80 countries and disaster response organizations that addresses US&R issues. INSARAG has established standards for international US&R teams as well as the methodology for international coordination in disaster response. These standards are found in the INSARAG Guidelines, which provide details for countries giving or receiving international assistance, and constitute a standardized operating environment with an emphasis on interoperability between countries. They cover the areas of preparedness, activation, operations and termination and clearly define expectations of both giving and receiving countries. The INSARAG Guidelines were endorsed in the [UN General Assembly Resolution 57/150](#) adopted on December 16, 2002. The United States was one of 58 countries that sponsored the UN resolution, which was unanimously adopted by the assembly. This appendix was developed in accordance with INSARAG Guidelines.

The Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS) in the Emergency Services Branch of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) in Geneva functions as the INSARAG Secretariat. It manages the Virtual On-site Operations and Coordination Center (Virtual OSOCC, <http://ocha.unog.ch/virtualOSOCC>), an on-line information exchange and coordination tool used by responders during major disasters to exchange information and facilitate decision-making for international assistance. USAID, as the USG official representative to INSARAG, will work with the UN OCHA (FCSS) to request and receive international US&R assistance and will post requests for assistance on the Virtual OSOCC.

UN OCHA (FCSS) also manages the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) program, which maintains a roster of disaster management professionals from the UN and member countries. These professionals form stand-by teams that can be deployed rapidly to support national authorities in disaster-stricken countries. At the time USAID requests international US&R assistance, it

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will also likely ask the FCSS to deploy an UNDAC team to help coordinate international US&R assistance, provide support to incoming teams, and help staff a Reception/Departure Center (RDC).

USAID relies on partnerships with domestic US&R teams for their US&R expertise, and these US&R partners support USAID in its role as the USG INSARAG representative. When coordinating requests for international US&R assistance, USAID will call upon its US&R partners for input and advice. USAID will also likely request their assistance in staffing the AOC and the MOB Center for incoming teams.

### **Overview**

This appendix outlines agency roles and responsibilities and details standard operating procedures for identifying and selecting international US&R teams, expediting customs and regulatory agency clearance for incoming teams, and managing and staffing a RDC. It also provides INSARAG criteria for international teams that provide assistance and INSARAG guidelines for USG support services to those teams.

Requests for US&R teams involve legal issues related to licensing, workers' compensation, and tort liability. See the "Managing Requests for International Assistance" section related to requests for personnel for additional information. In particular, all postings to the Virtual OSOCC involving requests for foreign US&R teams must contain the following verbiage, subject to the caveats outlined in the "Managing Requests for International Assistance" section:

"Workers' compensation for injuries sustained while conducting relief and rescue operations in the United States cannot be arranged by the United States Government. US&R teams operating in the United States may be liable to tort claims."

The AOC will not deploy a foreign US&R team to the affected area until it is clear that this information has been received and acknowledged by the team.

### ***Agency Roles and Responsibilities***

#### **DHS/FEMA**

- Assist USAID to obtain interpreters for foreign US&R teams, as needed.

#### **DHS/FEMA US&R**

- Conduct Situation and Needs Assessment
- Maintain contact with USAID on the likelihood of a request for international assistance
- Recommend a formal request for international US&R assistance if disaster exceeds USG capacity to respond
- Decide which foreign teams to accept
- Coordinate operational assignments for foreign US&R

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- Provide appropriate support to incoming teams (e.g., facilities, services, resupply)

### **DOS**

- Assist CBP in expediting visa waivers for foreign US&R team members
- If needed, arrange for DOS embassy/consular personnel to accompany team members to the airport of embarkation to United States to verify visa waiver and clearance for travel to the United States

### **USAID**

- Coordinate team identification and selection process
- Liaise with UN OCHA (FCSS) to request international US&R assistance and an UNDAC team
- Establish a RDC for incoming US&R teams as per INSARAG Guidelines
- Provide briefings and logistical support to US&R and UNDAC teams
- Keep FEMA, STF, and CBP informed of the status of team request(s), selection, and deployment
- Provide situation updates on the Virtual OSOCC

### **DHS/CBP**

- Act as the central point of contact for all regulatory agencies overseeing the entry of international US&R teams, supplies, and equipment
- Coordinate customs clearance information
- Provide liaison to staff the RDC

### **Regulatory Agencies**

- Expedite customs clearance for team equipment and supplies
- Issue waivers, if needed

### **UN OCHA (FCSS)**

- In its role as INSARAG Secretariat, facilitate the request and selection of US&R teams
- In its role as INSARAG Secretariat, provide advice and counsel on selection of US&R teams
- Deploy UNDAC team to assist USAID and support international US&R teams, as requested

### **USAID US&R Partners**

- Provide input to FEMA and USAID on team selection process
- Provide staff for the Reception Center, AOC, and other field locations, as requested.

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### ***Reception/Departure Center Operation and Staffing Procedures***

USAID will establish a Reception/Departure Center (RDC) at the Mob Center. The RDC will serve as the focal point for international US&R teams. It will be staffed by USAID and UNDAC team personnel, as well as liaisons from FEMA and other agencies, as needed. The RDC will have good communication links to the Virtual OSOCC (<http://ocha.unog.ch/virtualOSOCC>) in order to receive information on incoming teams. Teams will report to the RDC immediately after customs clearance, where they will receive an initial briefing from RDC staff.

In most cases, incoming teams will remain at the Reception Center for a short time only, but this will depend on available personnel and equipment for transporting team and their equipment, available ground or air transport, work assignments and weather conditions.

Incoming US&R teams will, per INSARAG guidelines, be familiar with the RDC concept and terminology, and its role in response operations. They will expect to be directed to the RDC upon arrival. According to INSARAG Guidelines, the RDC will provide the following information and facilities:

- Holding area for the team and a smaller meeting area for command and general staff
- Toilet facilities, both male and female, within the arrivals area
- Coffee, tea, hot water, and refreshments available close to both areas
- Briefings, situation reports, and all information relating to the disaster-affected area
- Ability to facilitate needs of teams including transportation, fuel, and other logistical requirements
- Food, water, toilets, and support facilities
- Radio frequencies, maps, and travel information to affected area, information on special hazards, and other team support services
- Place for organizations to establish the following in the arrivals hall area:
  - Radio frequency assignment
  - Interpreters (if required)
- Telephone
- Communications link to FEMA US&R IST

The staff at the RDC will work through the FEMA Logistics Section to provide the resources and assistance needed for international teams to deploy to the affected area and report to the FEMA US&R IST.

### **Media**

Any deployment of international US&R teams into the United States will generate a high level of media interest, both internal and external. FEMA will provide an experienced media liaison person for the RDC to coordinate the media response with all agencies.

### **Interpreters**

Interpreters may be required for briefing and liaison purposes with some international teams. USAID will arrange this resource with assistance from the STF.

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### **Note on On-Site Operations Coordination Center**

Typically, when international US&R teams are deployed into an area there is the need to establish an On-site Operations Coordination Center (OSOCC). The USG does not plan to establish an OSOCC, because international teams will be incorporated into the FEMA US&R Incident Support Team (IST).

## Appendix C: Acronyms

**APHIS:** Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

**CBP:** United States Customs and Border Protection

**DoD:** Department of Defense

**FCSS:** Field Coordination Support Services (UN OCHA)

**FDA:** Food and Drug Administration

**FEMA:** Federal Emergency Management Agency

**FSIS:** Food Safety and Inspection Service

**GSA:** General Services Administration

**HHS:** Health and Human Services

**HSC:** Homeland Security Council

**IAS:** International Assistance System

**MA:** Mission-Assigned

**MOB:** Mobilization Center

**NRF:** National Response Framework

**OCHA:** United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**OFDA:** Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance

**RDC:** Reception/Departure Center

**STF:** Department of State Task Force

**UN:** United Nations

**USAID:** United States Agency for International Development

**USDA:** United States Department of Agriculture

**US&R:** Urban Search and Rescue