

Army Aids Disaster Victims

by Major General Thomas B. Arwood
and Bob Hunt



Late August and early September 1992 will be remembered as a time of natural disasters for the United States. Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki and Typhoon Omar inflicted billions of dollars worth of damage across Florida, Louisiana, the island of Kauai in Hawaii, and the island of Guam. Only the Department of Defense commanded adequate human and material resources to provide rapid humanitarian relief to the disaster victims. Once the call for help went out, response from the military services was immediate.

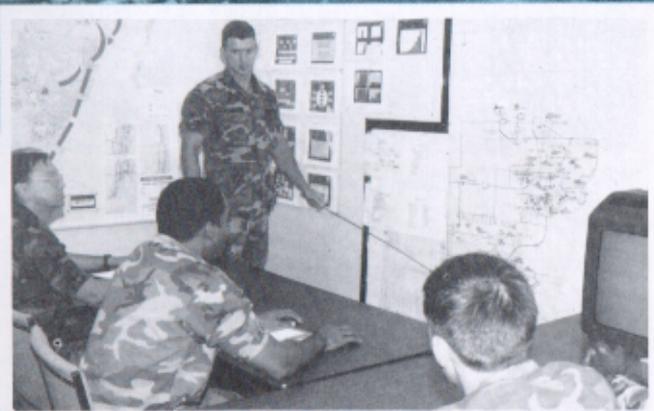
The Army provided thousands of soldiers and civilians from dozens of its units across the country to support the humanitarian relief effort. We could not begin to name all of those soldiers and civilians from units that deserve recognition and thanks from a grateful Nation, for the list is far too extensive. General Arwood's and Bob Hunt's story and Herman Harrelson's photos give a first-hand account of the joint relief effort in south Florida and describe the Army Materiel Command's role in orchestrating that effort.— Editor.

The Army Materiel Command (AMC) again demonstrated its ability to successfully project logistics power during operations of Joint Task Force Andrew in south Florida. The command capitalized on lessons learned from Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, during which it participated in a logistics effort equivalent to relocating the entire city of Atlanta, Georgia—with all of its people and everything moveable—setting it up again in an uninhabitable desert halfway around the world, and then sustaining it for 6 months.

As a result of those lessons, AMC identified the requirement for a rapidly deployable logistics support

group (LSG) that could mobilize with the first forces. We recognized that we needed a larger, more cohesive logistics management capability with an integrated, organized method of getting the right supplies and maintenance to the right place at the right time. Our planning gave birth to the LSG concept that proved invaluable when, just 2 years after Desert Shield, our Nation again called upon AMC's expertise in time of need. This time, however, the need was not to support a typical military operation.

Hurricane Andrew laid waste to vast areas of south Dade County in a few short hours. Whole communities,



□ The devastation troops found in Florida City (above) was described by many as resembling a “war zone.” An LSG G3 officer (left) briefs team members on the day’s HDS operations.

such as Homestead, Florida City, and Cutler Ridge, were devastated. More than 120,000 homes were damaged, with at least half of those totally destroyed, leaving nearly 250,000 people homeless. Businesses, utilities, and infrastructure suffered similarly. Many of those left homeless were also left jobless. America had been hurt like never before. It soon became apparent to state and national officials that usual disaster relief would have to be increased substantially to help the people of Florida recover.

Even before Andrew struck, AMC anticipated that the Army would be called upon for assistance and initially planned for short-term loans of tents, cots, radios, generators, light sets, water purification units, and repair parts from depot stocks and war reserves to support troops committed to disaster relief. By midweek, elements of the XVIII Airborne Corps from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, began deploying to southern Florida. AMC notified its major subordinate commands to be ready to provide materiel and support personnel at a moment’s notice.

The alert to mobilize came Friday evening, 28 August.

The mission: Support Joint Task Force Andrew by establishing and operating a humanitarian depot system (HDS) to receive and store bulk Federal materiel and donated civilian supplies and issue them to military organizations and civilian agencies supporting disaster relief operations.

Within 2 hours of the alert, four AMC personnel from the Army Aviation and Troop Command (ATCOM), St. Louis, Missouri, were in Miami. They formed the initial element of AMC’s LSG. The ATCOM personnel immediately coordinated with Joint Task Force Andrew and began establishing a base of operations in Building 11 at the defunct Eastern Airlines complex at Miami International Airport. At first, this facility was nothing but an empty shell—no power, phones, or water.

By the next morning, LSG headquarters was operational. As commander of the LSG, my staff and I immediately began to lay the framework for the HDS needed to receive, store, and issue huge quantities of donated civilian relief supplies pouring into the area from across the state and the Nation.

The LSG determined initial requirements and wrote operations orders to bring together all the resources needed to accomplish the mission. The first requirement was to find locations for a depot hub and forward sites that could relieve the pressure on the over-burdened

Florida Relief Center at the West Palm Beach fairgrounds.

The Florida Relief Center, located nearly 100 miles north of the disaster area, was opened by the state soon after the storm to serve as an intercept and collection point for all tractor-trailers and trucks bringing civilian relief supplies for hurricane victims. This was done primarily because the first trucks delivering relief supplies drove directly to the disaster area and added to the massive confusion and traffic congestion caused by downed trees and powerlines and the lack of traffic lights and street signs.

The state encountered several logistics problems at the West Palm Beach facility. First, the sheer volume of civilian donations arriving by truck was incredible, attesting to the generosity of the American people. Second, there was no delivery schedule, because no one knew when or how many trucks would arrive from one day to the next. Third, most trucks contained mixed cargoes. Loads were frequently not palletized and required unloading by hand; and the contents of boxes were a comingled jumble of clothes, food, toys, and personal hygiene products that had to be sorted by hand. Fourth, this labor-intensive job was being done by an ever-fluctuating group of volunteers whose productivity changed daily.

The state turned to the Army for help. AMC established the West Palm Beach site as its first link in the HDS chain, and the 724th Main Support Battalion (MSB), Fort Stewart, Georgia, was given the mission of running it. The 724th drove south in 2 convoys of 32 trucks bringing about 350 soldiers. The convoys arrived at the fairgrounds about midnight on 29 August, 14 hours after leaving Fort Stewart. Originally alerted to unload barges of relief supplies, the 724th set up an operations center and, the next morning, immediately integrated with the state's operation. They unloaded trucks, sorted goods, shrinkwrapped pallets of goods, warehoused the pallets, and later loaded them on military and civilian trucks for delivery to relief centers and AMC's forward humanitarian depots in the south. Whenever possible, incoming trucks with palletized loads of supplies were immediately diverted south.

The LSG selected Hangar 22, a large hangar at Miami International Airport, which was closer to the disaster area, for the hub of the HDS. Eventually, the hub was operated by 57 officers and civilians from Army Depot System Command activities and 27 people from the Defense Logistics Agency.

Forward humanitarian depot sites were soon established in Florida City, Cutler Ridge, and Homestead, three of the hardest hit areas, so that relief supplies could be pushed as far forward as possible. The LSG also opened a truck consolidation point at Tamiami Airport to handle any overflow.



Within 150 hours of the arrival of the advance party, AMC's HDS was fully operational and processing hundreds of truckloads and thousands of tons of supplies a day. What started as a group of 4 AMC personnel eventually grew to more than 1,000 military and civilians from AMC activities, the Defense Logistics Agency, and U.S. Forces Command (FORSCOM). This professional logistics corps was assisted by many volunteers and paid workers.

To operate the HDS, AMC prepared force require-



□ (Clockwise from upper left) Military 5-ton trucks and civilian tractor-trailers wait to load relief supplies for delivery to the forward humanitarian depots. Paid civilian workers sort donated clothing—once a 15-foot high mountain—inside a large circus tent at the Homestead depot. General Arwood coordinates LSG relief efforts with state and local officials. Soldiers help civilian volunteers sort donated supplies at the depot hub.

ments, and FORSCOM selected and deployed the units needed. The 227th General Supply Company, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, arrived in Miami at 0400, 30 August. They deployed to Florida City, the most devastated area, at 1700 the same day to set up humanitarian depot operations there. By sunrise the next day, Florida City Humanitarian Depot Forward was operational and receiving trucks bringing supplies from the Florida Relief Center. The 227th sent a contingent to Homestead on 2 September and established another humanitarian depot forward at Keys Gate Industrial Park. Four days later, they set up a site for humanitarian depot operations at Cutler Ridge, near the Miami Zoo.

The 226th Supply and Service Company, Fort Stewart, Georgia, arrived and assumed operation of the humani-

tarian depot in Homestead. The 226th was eventually supplemented by 60 to 70 United Way volunteers and 10 to 20 paid workers, who sorted and repackaged donated goods from trucks that bypassed the Florida Relief Center. Homestead Humanitarian Depot Forward was the largest of the three forward depots and the only one to stock class IV building supplies for all of south Dade County.

The three forward humanitarian depots exclusively received, stored, and issued donated civilian goods and materials, such as nonperishable food, water, beverages, baby food and diapers, personal hygiene products, and building materials. In early September, the forward depots were receiving a peak of more than 100 tractor-trailer loads of supplies a day. Although most of the sup-



□ Some of the 48,500 Army cots (above) and nearly 275,000 meals-ready-to-eat (below) await shipment to relief-area tent cities. Clamshelters (right), first used in Operation Desert Storm for Army aircraft maintenance, proved invaluable in storing relief supplies at Homestead and Cutler Ridge. Three clamshelters were strung end-to-end to form cavernous warehouses about 550 feet long. Victims of the hurricane express their gratitude (far right inset) for the military's relief operation.



ply transports were civilian trucks, military units also assisted in transport operations.

The 533d Transportation Company, Fort Benning, Georgia, and the 365th Transportation Company, Fort McClellan, Alabama, operating from the humanitarian depot hub, moved donated relief supplies from the Florida Relief Center and Federal supplies from the depot hub. The 533d primarily moved Federal supplies from the depot hub to military units in the south and civilian donations from West Palm Beach to the forward humanitarian depots in Florida City, Cutler Ridge, and Homestead. The 365th primarily trucked donated civilian supplies from the forward depots to military and civilian relief distribution centers throughout the disaster area.

Not all relief supplies were delivered by road. Army aviation played a key role in moving desperately needed

humanitarian supplies. Within the first 2 weeks of the relief effort, CH-47D Chinooks transported nearly 1.5 million pounds of supplies, much of which had to be loaded by hand. The aerial missions continued and productivity improved when some CH-47D's were fitted with the helicopter internal cargo-handling system that enabled crews to increase their missions from 6 to 16 a day.

The 80th Ordnance Battalion, Fort Lewis, Washington, deployed its command and staff element to assist me and my military and civilian staff in providing command and control, administration, and logistics support for the four FORSCOM companies. Additionally, AMC deployed logistics assistance officers and representatives, who provided technical maintenance and supply support for all the equipment being used in the relief effort.

Of course, helping the people of southern Florida



recover from such devastation required extensive military and civilian coordination. The LSG coordinated closely with representatives from the Governor's office, various municipalities, and numerous disaster relief agencies. And AMC worked side-by-side with XVIII Airborne Corps' 1st Corps Support Command, which was our counterpart for the retail relief distribution centers.

AMC's humanitarian mission in Florida was highly successful. In just a few weeks, the HDS moved enough Federal supplies and civilian donations to fill Miami's Orange Bowl several times. More importantly, the LSG successfully demonstrated that it could move massive quantities of supplies quickly and orderly, ensuring that the right supplies got to the right place at the right time.

Providing humanitarian relief is a new mission for the Active Army. The demonstrated viability of AMC's

LSG concept will undoubtedly help the Army write new doctrine on how to support victims of natural disasters. Using what AMC accomplished, and building on the lessons learned, we are confident that the LSG concept is the key to supporting the power projection Army, trained and ready for any mission, anywhere. **ALOG**

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