



Spokesperson's Noon Briefing

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY THE OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's noon briefing by Martin Nesirky, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

Good afternoon, everybody. As you know, we have John Holmes here, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. And I'll turn right over to you, John. We have about half an hour.

Briefing by Under-Secretary-General John Holmes

Thank you very much, Martin, and good afternoon, everybody. Let me just make a few points to start with. And I apologize if they're in slightly random order, but it's not easy to find time to make it more structured.

First of all, I think you're aware from various briefings already, we'll be launching a flash this afternoon at 4. I'll be doing that. We were hoping to have [Special Envoy to Haiti] President [Bill] Clinton there as well, but he's not, in fact, available. He's on a plane at the time. The flash appeal will be for around \$560 million, which I think is slightly higher than the figure you had already. The full breakdown of what that appeal represents will be available this afternoon, but let me just say, give you a rough sort of idea: almost half of that, as usual in these situations, will be for food, emergency food aid. And then there'll be amounts of between \$20 and \$50 million for health, water and sanitation, nutrition, emergency shelter, early recovery and agriculture -- the latter two, of course, being linked; they're very much at the recovery end of it. There will be some other elements, too -- for example, emergency education. But those will be the main areas that we'll be asking for money for. The basis of the appeal will be that some 3 million people are believed to have been badly affected by the earthquake, and we'll be looking for relief to keep them going for six months. That's of course in the first place.

As I think I said yesterday, this is very much a first rough effort at this. We know that it doesn't represent very good detailed information from the ground, but we'll be revising it in three or four weeks to reflect that, and probably to include a bit more on the early recovery side when we've got a better idea, for example, of how that should be done.

We still don't have any reliable figures for dead or injured, although, of course, we recognize that those numbers are likely to be extremely high. Our best estimate at the moment, from satellite pictures, is that at least 30 per cent of the buildings in Port-au-Prince have been affected by the earthquake. There are some areas of the city, for example Cité Soleil, which are relatively less affected -- either because of their geographical location or because of the nature of the structures there -- less vulnerable to earthquakes. But, of course, the effects of the earthquake were extremely severe in some areas. There were some areas where 50 per cent or more of the buildings have been damaged.

The scale of the international response so far is extremely encouraging. I think, as I said yesterday, we have counted so far about \$360 million in pledges. Some of that might be going to the flash appeal, others will be going bilaterally in different ways or directly to non-governmental organizations and others, which is fine. That figure is not all for emergency aid; for example, some of it will be for reconstruction and longer-term efforts. For example, there was \$100 million each from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), which are likely to be more related to longer-term reconstruction than emergency aid, but just to give you some idea of the response. And, of course, there are many companies and individuals who are responding extremely generously to this relief effort.

On the search-and-rescue side, that effort is going on with all possible speed. Some people are still being recovered alive, relatively fewer, as you would expect, but that is still happening. There are some 27 search-and-rescue teams, either there already -- I think 17 are there, and another 10 are on their way -- and we're trying to get the message out now that we don't need any more search-and-rescue teams beyond those that are on their way already.

Obviously, every humanitarian agency there is -- both United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement -- are busting a gut, if I can put it that way, to get people there in larger numbers, people to help, and to get supplies in, as well as, of course, all the bilateral efforts which are going on from individual countries led, of course, by the huge United States effort. Planes from the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF, the International Red Cross, the International Federation of the Red Cross -- which is a separate thing -- have already landed, and Médecins Sans Frontières have already landed. Others are on their way. Of course, there are all the bilateral aid planes which have been landing too. I won't go into all the details of those. I don't have a full list here, but many of those I think you're aware of.

As you're also aware, there has been an issue -- there is an issue -- about the capacity of the airport. There was a particular problem about congestion yesterday afternoon, when planes had to circle. But, again, everybody's working desperately to resolve these problems. The airport was working through the night. Planes were landing with increasing frequency. So, the capacity, I think, of the airport to deal with flights is rising. It's certainly handling more flights than it was before the earthquake, despite the damage to the control tower.

The port is still out of action, but we believe the road from the Dominican Republic is now open and useable, and is indeed being used to some extent.

Some other bits of information: you may have seen stories that the World Food Programme warehouses were looted in Port-au-Prince. They were not looted. In fact, that's not a correct story. We believe they are intact. There are some issues about access to them, not least because of some doubt about the structure of them, which is making people a little bit nervous about going inside. But they have not been looted, as we were assured by the World Food Programme this morning.

Food: there are these stocks of food on the ground. Food is arriving in increasing quantities. Water is arriving and water purification equipment is arriving from UNICEF, Oxfam, CARE and others, as well as from the United Nations agencies. I was told this morning that 13 truckloads of bottled water are on their way from the Dominican Republic, for example. That's obviously, again, not going to be enough, but supplies are beginning to arrive.

Distribution of these supplies started yesterday, particularly of ready-to-eat food from stocks on the ground and from stocks beginning to come in. Obviously, you should be well aware that was a very small scale compared with the need. We hope that will be larger today. I'm sure it will larger today, and we are setting up, with the Government, 15 distribution points around the city and also trying to make sure we have safe storage areas to put the food and to operate. Clearly the distribution is an issue -- about how fast we can do that, and whether it represents more than a drop in the ocean of what is needed -- we're well aware of that. We understand and share the impatience and frustration that there is about this, and there is a need to recognize, I think, that there are significant constraints on this; not only the difficulties of the arrival of goods and unloading, but also the distribution. There are a lack of trucks, lack of fuel, blocked roads, and so on. I'm not trying to make excuses; I'm simply saying that there is a reality there that we need to deal with. It's classic for any similar operation that, inevitably, and despite everybody's enormous efforts, it can take time to scale up. It will be scaling up every day by multiples, I'm sure. I acknowledge that you need to note that the anger and frustration is there and that it's inevitably slow. But I just ask you to acknowledge that reality, too. People, as I say, are passing many sleepless nights to try and get this material there, this aid there, to people who desperately need it. We recognize that. We have no doubt about that.

We're also setting up, as well as the airport in Port-au-Prince, separate hubs for the arrival of aid and the stockage of aid, in way stations if you like, in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic and in Panama City, so that we can channel the aid in the most rational way possible.

A couple of other points: bodies are being collected systematically now by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and by the Government, insofar as they have capacity to do that. I think we had a figure of, I think it was 9,000 bodies so far that have been collected yesterday, so that gives you some idea of the scale of that problem. But I hope that much more progress will be made on that today.

On the medical side, which we've also talked about before, some hospitals are still working despite all the difficulties, although, as we've said before, they're overwhelmed. Various field hospitals are already on the way. One or two are already there. And again, we're taking the view that we don't need any more field hospitals beyond those that are already on the way, which are several. But, of course, there's still an urgent need for doctors and medical supplies beyond the field hospitals.

One final point, which I think we touched on yesterday. People are moving, to some extent, from

the centre of Port-au-Prince to areas outside, to relatives, no doubt, perhaps in other communities. And there are some reports of movement of people on a limited scale, I think, towards the Dominican Republic, particularly people seeking medical help in the hospital near the border there. So we're keeping an eye on that to make sure we can track it and deal with people who are crossing into the Dominican Republic. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is very focused on that.

So let me stop there -- I hope that was helpful -- and answer your questions.

**Questions and Answers

Question: Are you starting camps for people who are homeless? Are you planning to do this pretty soon?

Under-Secretary-General: Yes, we will be starting camps. I mean, camps are already arising in a sort of informal manner in the open spaces in Port-au-Prince, and we will be trying to turn some of those into more organized camps as quickly as we can. One of the urgent requirements is for shelter material; tarpaulins and plastic sheets are arriving. There's a massive need for tents, which the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and others, and UNICEF, are trying to provide and get there as quickly as possible. So it will take some time to establish them properly, but there will be a need for camps in, and no doubt around, Port-au-Prince.

Question: Are those related to the 15 distribution points, those camps?

Under-Secretary-General: Clearly, once there's a camp there, then the distributions would tend to take place in the camps. But for the moment, there's no relation, I think, between the distribution points and the camps.

One other point I should have made is, of course, we're conscious that there are problems outside Port-au-Prince, particularly in the city of Jacmel, which was very badly damaged by the earthquake, too. Again, we're trying to get some search-and-rescue teams to get there, to tackle the problems that there are there. And I think the World Food Programme started a small food distribution there yesterday, as well, so we're conscious that we're trying to tackle problems not just in the capital.

Question: If 30 per cent of the buildings are destroyed in Port-au-Prince, why is it--

Under-Secretary-General: Damaged.

Question: Damaged, sorry. Affected. Why is it that you only need 27 search-and-rescue teams and are appealing to countries not to send any more, as well as more field hospitals? And secondly, on the airport, there was a report that two minutes away from the airport, a two-minute walk from the airport, there's practically no aid getting there this morning. How could that be? What does that mean in terms of the inability of getting aid out of the airport?

Under-Secretary-General: Well, in terms of search-and-rescue teams and field hospitals, as I say, we know that 27 teams become quite hard to manage in itself. Normally there are 70 or 80 people with equipment and dogs and so on. That's the expert judgement from the ground. We have our UNDAC -- United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination -- team at the airport. They think the situation, and obviously, as time passes, the relevance of search and rescue declines because the chances of finding people under the rubble declines. Many of the houses are not necessarily collapsed. There's a huge problem, obviously, that many structures are damaged; they have large cracks in them, even if they haven't collapsed. So there are no people buried underneath them, but no one's willing to go back into them, quite rightly, because of the danger of collapse, not least because there are still aftershocks happening. I think they're relatively mild compared to the early, first day or two. But that's still happening. Again, field hospitals, it's simply a question of capacity; what you don't want is too many things arriving after the need has started to decline. So we're trying to manage that in a sensible way.

And you have to recognize as well that when people arrive -- in teams, or field hospitals -- that also puts a strain on the infrastructure. They need to be fed, they need water, they need somewhere to stay, and so one needs to balance that as well.

And your second question, I've forgotten what it was.

Question: There's a report that just a two-minute walk from the airport... Putting up shelter...

Under-Secretary-General: I can't comment on that. I mean it is the easiest thing in the world in these situations to find someone who hasn't had any aid.

Question: What does it say about the inability to get aid out of the airport?

Under-Secretary-General: Well, I just can't comment on that detail. As I say, it's not difficult to find that story. You know, everybody is busting a gut and doing their best to make sure that aid gets there as fast as possible.

Question: First, just a clarification: you're saying 30 per cent of buildings damaged; the Secretary-General said 50 per cent. Yours is just a more up-to-date figure?

Under-Secretary-General: No. All I'm saying is that there are 30 per cent of the whole capital buildings are damaged -- destroyed or damaged -- but in some areas it's 50 per cent of more.

Question: I see. Now, how many people did the United Nations feed prior to this catastrophe on a daily basis? And if it's going to take two weeks to gear up to feed a million people, it doesn't add up. What are those people going to do for the next two weeks?

Under-Secretary-General: Well, I think, from memory, they were feeding something like 1.9 million people. These were largely school feeding programmes. It was extra, supplementary feeding for children at school, not providing whole meals for whole families. These are not people dependent on WFP food. And, of course, that was not just in the capital; that was all the way around the country as well. So I think that explains the discrepancy. Obviously we need to get as much food as we can and distribute it as quickly as we can, but I have to say we'll build up relatively slowly, as it always does in these circumstances; as fast as anybody can do it, but it will be relatively slow.

Question: I want to ask about rescue, and search-and-rescue teams. You said that there are 27. Are they all from other countries? Does the United Nations have its own search-and-rescue teams? And we see on television that many people are trying to -- barely with their feet -- trying to get their relatives. Now you are saying that expertise on the ground say they don't need any more rescue teams, although there are, we have, still time to save people on the ground?

Under-Secretary-General: No, no. We're not saying the search-and-rescue effort is being abandoned, far from it. The point is that there are 17 teams already arrived, and another 10 still on the way. Beyond that, the view is that we're not going to need any more. There's been quite a problem for these teams once they've arrived at the airport, and getting into the airport is not easy. Then they have to deploy. They have to find vehicles to get into town over the roads which are damaged and blocked, and so on. So it is a complicated logistical issue itself. If we have all the 27 teams on the ground in the next day or two, then I think we will have enough capacity to deal with all those problems that are there. But I don't want to give the impression that it's being abandoned. On the contrary, I'm simply saying that for the future, we know from experience you need to be careful not to overwhelm the whole system by more teams arriving when there's very little search and rescue to do by the time they get there, which will still be several days, if more teams start to arrive.

Do we have our own search-and-rescue capacity? No, we don't. These are all national search-and-rescue teams. But what we do have is an organization called International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), which we manage, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs manages, based in Geneva, which is about training, pre-qualifying, certifying teams -- their different capabilities; notifying all these teams of when there is a need, how to get there, how to coordinate. We have a team at the airport coordinating their arrival, and they're directing them in the right places now. So we play a large role in organizing it, but we don't have a team of our own.

Question: Two questions. First, you said they started systematically collecting dead bodies. Do you know what they're doing with the dead bodies that they collect? And second... I forgot what I was going to ask you.

Under-Secretary-General: That's usually my problem. Well, at the moment, as I understand it, where there are bodies which are not identified that they're collecting from the street, they are collecting them together. Where they can be refrigerated, they will be, but there's an enormous lack of refrigeration capacity. But mass graves will be dug in different places around the city and the bodies will be put in there, as I understand it.

Question: Okay, I remember. What is the United Nations doing in terms of preventing disease?

Under-Secretary-General: The World Health Organization (WHO) has got specialist teams who are arriving and are on the ground already, looking at disease monitoring, making sure that all the precautions that are necessary are being taken. I mean, I think we've been through this issue before. I mean, in the context of Myanmar, dead bodies are not themselves a cause of disease. It's extremely

unpleasant and smelly and so on, but you know, there are risks of disease associated with this disaster as there are with any disaster -- from water-borne diseases, from insect-borne diseases. But there's not an automatic link between the fact that there are bodies in the street and the risks of disease. I'm quoting the experts -- and I'm not a medical expert.

Question: It seems to me the idea of a 72-hour deadline for search and recovery... Can you explain what that 72-hour deadline is and how it relates particularly to Christopher Hotel, and whether you have any more information on Hédi Annabi?

Under-Secretary-General: Well, I will refer any questions about Hédi Annabi and the people in the Christopher Hotel to Martin, because he's following that more closely than I am.

I think the 72-hour -- it's not a deadline, and there's no question of abandoning the efforts after 72 hours, as I've just been trying to suggest. I think what the experts say -- and I don't claim to be an expert -- is that, after 72 hours, in most of these situations, the chances of finding people alive start to decline rapidly. It doesn't mean they disappear; we've all seen stories of people being found alive 10 days later in some miraculous circumstances, and that effort will continue, I'm sure, as long as there's any possible chance of finding people alive. So I think that's the significance of the 72-hour point that people talk about.

But Martin, do you want to say anything more about that?

Spokesperson: Yes. Firstly, we have no news on people, names of people, from the United Nations headquarters, the Christopher Hotel, at this point. That recovery operation that you mention, that follows the search-and-rescue operation, a decision that the Secretary-General said that the 72 hours elapses at 5. At that point, you would need to start to consider moving to the next phase. But that's a decision that needs to be made by the people on the ground. But typically the 72 hours is what you can usefully see as an intensive search-and-rescue period. That's what I can say on that at the moment.

Question: A follow-up on this, please. Have you ever managed to establish at any time [Hédi Annabi's] location, like through sensors, like with the Baghdad exploration, Mr. [Sergio Vieira] de Mello? Do you know of anything about him?

Spokesperson: With respect, there are 100 people missing in that building, and everybody's concerned, of course, about everybody in there, trying to locate each and every one, of course. As you heard yesterday, dogs and other detection devices, methods, have been used to try to locate people, and that's how the Estonian bodyguard was found. But, and obviously, it's not a question of trying to find one individual. It's trying to find the people who are there -- 100.

Question: Sure. How many bodies have been recovered until now?

Spokesperson: I don't have that figure.

Question: Out of this hotel?

Spokesperson: I don't have that figure at the moment. As the Secretary-General said, we expect an update from the Mission dealing with the United Nations headquarters, and in general, with the United Nations family on the ground there. I gave you some figures earlier on. We're trying to get updated figures relating to casualties, missing and unaccounted for, and those who are injured. It's quite difficult to pull all of that together.

Question: Where is the Estonian now?

Spokesperson: Pass. Don't know.

Question: Two questions. One, briefly, John, on the airport, one of the things we're hearing just on radio reports from people there is that there aren't trucks, once the stuff lands, to get it out. So is there any kind of effort to get trucks over the border, or is that an issue as far as you're concerned? And the second thing is fuel -- the planes are landing but they can't take off because there's no fuel there. Is there an effort to get airplane fuel to that airport? And how's that done? How do you bring that in? Do you have to do it by land or water? And just on the hotel, have the dogs and the sensors found anything? I mean, I know you brought them in, but... Because we're hearing that the search and rescue, the rescue effort, is getting a little bit more... They're hauling big chunks of concrete, which is usually a sign that the dogs and the electronic sensors haven't found anybody, but I don't really... I haven't heard that from you.

Spokesperson: The search-and-rescue operation went on through the night -- this I can tell you -- and search and rescue involves the kind of technologies you've mentioned, whether it's sniffer dogs or heat-seeking sensors, this kind of thing. Clearly, as I've said, a decision will need to be taken at some point. And, clearly also, as we have consistently said, if you have 100 people missing in the building collapsed to the extent that that building collapsed, it obviously does not look good, and I think everybody understands that. But I would also reiterate that this is a picture that is repeated elsewhere across the city, with Haitians and other people.

Under-Secretary-General: On the trucks, yes, there is an issue about trucks. There are a certain number of trucks there. The World Food Programme has trucks. MINUSTAH have trucks. They're all being mobilized as much as they can. Obviously we're trying to get extra trucks in from around the country and also from the Dominican Republic, and I'm confident that will happen quickly, but for the moment, that's one of the limiting factors, together with the availability of fuel for those trucks, although I think that this is not a huge problem, but there are issues about procuring it, for obvious reasons.

Aviation fuel is definitely a problem. As I understand it, there isn't any aviation fuel available at the airport at the moment. All the planes arriving there are being told in advance that they have to come prepared to fly back to wherever they came from, or to somewhere else, without expecting aviation fuel to be there. Normally, that's not so much of a problem. Of course, it was a problem yesterday -- people have to circle for a while; they're using up their fuel. They thought they would have, and that's why they may divert before they land. I can't give you an accurate answer on the attempts being made to bring aviation fuel in, but I'm sure that's under way in one way or another.

Question: Have there been aftershocks in the last day or two? Major ones?

Under-Secretary-General: As I understand it, there have been aftershocks, but not major ones. They're relatively minor aftershocks. I mean, much less. After the major earthquake, there were some quite significant aftershocks, 5 or 6 on the Richter scale. But I think since then, it's much, much smaller, but it has not entirely disappeared. People are naturally extremely nervous, and it's one of the issues that we face, that the roads, as well as being damaged and so on, are blocked with people who are not willing, for obvious reasons, to go back into the buildings or near any walls, which is why they're in the open spaces, including in the roads. As soon as night falls, it becomes extremely difficult to move around.

Question: Two things: one, to what extent and to what degree is the case out there that supplies are just piling up at the airport and in what capacity are you getting them? They come in, they're unloaded and they have to be sitting there because there just isn't the capacity to get them out and distributed? And two, when you said to some extent people are leaving Port-au-Prince and going to other areas just to escape the situation there, can you be more specific about that if can? Numbers or movement or whatever you've observed?

Under-Secretary-General: I think, in terms of the goods, you know, it's a bit of everything. And of course there are goods arriving at the airport and they're being put in warehouses, as you would expect. And then they're being moved out and are able to be distributed as fast as possible. I don't think we have a problem at the moment of a massive pile of stuff at the airport which is not being distributed. Obviously, we want to avoid that by getting it out as fast as we possibly can. But that's a question of, this is a major logistical challenge from all sorts of points of view, as we've said from the beginning. So that is one of the things we're facing; making sure that we don't get that pile-up. That's why I think we're identifying, as well as the distribution points in Port-au-Prince, areas which are safe where goods can be stored. I think there is a question, for example, of using one of the Jordanian barracks from the MINUSTAH garrison, which is secure and relatively intact as an intermediate base, storage base, and then the goods can be distributed from there. That's the kind of chain you need to establish to make sure that the operation moves as smoothly as possible.

On the movement, I'm afraid I can't really give you any numbers or even an indication of how big it is, but you know, clearly it's visible on the ground and significant. It's helpful in one sense because it means that people will find, hopefully, food and water outside the city. Of course, it may make them more difficult to help in the longer run because we lose track of them and find it more difficult to help them if they're scattered. But for the time being, it may be a sensible coping mechanism.

Spokesperson: I think we have to make this the last question with John, and I'll be able to take some more questions afterwards.

Question: Your communications facilities; are you still using the satellite phones? And two, do you have any rescue operations outside Port-au-Prince, or are you planning to deploy some rescue

teams outside the city?

Under-Secretary-General: I think it's mostly satellite phone. The phone connections, certainly our phone connections, now are getting better, but I think it's because of, there are more satellite phone being distributed rather than anything else. And we're working extremely hard in various guises to get the communications better through our logistics cluster. And I should have mentioned we have different clusters already established to deal with things like food security, nutrition, water and sanitation, health, and so on, as well as protection, emergency education, which will come up later.

And on the question of outside -- yes, as I mentioned, we are trying to get teams, or at least one team, to Jacmel, which is the biggest city, the worst affected as far as we know, and of course, if there are places we can find out about and get to elsewhere, if there is transport available, and transport is an issue, then we'll do that as well.

Question: Is there a water and sanitation cluster?

Spokesperson: Yes, there is a water and sanitation cluster, which is full, in operation and meeting.

Question: And I notice that normally that's coordinated by UNICEF, but in this case it says that UNDP is doing it. Is it the case that UNICEF is usually the water and sanitation lead agency, and why isn't that the case in this...?

Under-Secretary-General: It is usually the case. I think they had a relatively small capacity on the ground before the earthquake. They were quite badly affected by it, I think, in terms of their staff. I know that their Country Director, for example, was trapped outside Port-au-Prince; he wasn't hurt, but his car was effectively destroyed, and that may have limited their capacity for the time being. But I'm sure they'll be in their normal position as soon as possible. They're certainly, as I said before, trucking in large amounts of water purification equipment, water purification tablets and so on, and there will be bladders and all the things that you need to get the water system, or to get water up and running as quickly as possible because we recognize that's a major issue.

Spokesperson: Okay, thanks very much, Under-Secretary-General. Thank you very much.

Under-Secretary-General: Thank you.

Question: Who is in charge at the airport and in charge of the security? Are UN peacekeepers coming under US military command?

Spokesperson: Let's be clear here. In any emergency like this, there will be a division of labour, and there will be strong coordination. The Secretary-General has made it very clear that there is and there will be strong coordination with the US military, with the US Government and with other international partners. The US Government and the US military are obviously bringing a lot of power to bear, and have expertise that can be very usefully deployed, such as at the airport. The other crucial point here is that the airport belongs to Haiti. It's the Haitian Government's sovereign decision if they wish to have someone else help them, and this, as I understand it, you can check with the US military. As I understand it, the US military is assisting the Haitian authorities at the airport, but I'm not going to speak for the US military. They can tell you that. That's as I understand it. But coordination goes on. As you know, there are a lot of UN staff of various kinds who are working in and around the airport to help coordinate the movement of humanitarian aid.

Let me just, as you know, there was an extremely useful briefing with David Wimhurst and Kim Bolduc yesterday, and we would like to repeat that soon. We could not do that today. I think you would understand that they have quite a lot to do on the ground. So we could not do that today. But David has given me some details for the briefing, and if you bear with me, I can just go through some of them because it might be useful even if it's not David on the screen over here, then at least vicariously you'll have some fresh information from him.

**Security

So the military operations, talking about the security side of things, military operations are focused on supporting the delivery of humanitarian assistance and rescue operations. An aerial reconnaissance was conducted over Port-au-Prince on 13 January to detect the most affected areas and identify others where people have sheltered. And this allowed MINUSTAH, the Mission and the military folks there, to start to distribute humanitarian assistance as of yesterday.

And the second aspect on the security side, if you like, is that they have been reinforcing military

and UN police patrols throughout the city to help prevent criminality.

**Humanitarian

On the humanitarian side, David is reporting here that flights carrying humanitarian aid have arrived from Spain, France, the US, Peru, Chile, Canada, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Brazil. And those flights with aid have also been bringing medical personnel and supplies, the search-and-rescue teams, which John Holmes talked about, and the Secretary-General, and these flights have also been bringing food.

The Haitian Prime Minister and President met yesterday with the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who is in charge of humanitarian assistance, Kim Bolduc, who was on our video link yesterday. And the Minister of Interior of Haiti was assigned as the liaison officer to coordinate relief efforts with the international community, and that would be a normal procedure; that would be the typical point person in the Government.

On the mobile military hospitals, they are coming from three countries: Jordan, Brazil and Colombia. And one of them will be set up near the police academy. And this is actually quite important because the Secretary-General was asked earlier about the capacity of the Haitian National Police. They were hit as badly as everybody else and that's why they now need to regroup. And so, one of those military field hospitals, mobile hospitals, will help to treat some of the injured police officers so that they can be, to the extent possible, back in circulation. This, in the view of the Brazilian Force Commander, is an extremely important aspect of ensuring that law and order is maintained.

And I think that the Secretary-General also made clear that the Haitian people have shown incredible fortitude here, and have been extremely restrained.

I just wanted to give you a couple of other details, and I'm very happy to take questions. Food and water supplies were distributed in two main areas and this will continue today in five others. The main zones of distribution are located in Delmas 33, Bourdon, Centre Ville and Place Boyer. The distribution has been carried out by the military, meaning UN peacekeepers in cooperation with international humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations.

And you've already heard that WFP is feeding 8,000 people. There is still, as you've also heard, David says, an urgent and strong need for medical supplies and equipment, as the local hospitals don't have the personnel and they don't have the equipment.

Question: Yes, we've heard about the collapse of the Christopher Hotel, we've heard about the collapse of the Montana Hotel. Are there any other large buildings thought to have large numbers of people trapped inside? Schools, sports facilities, churches, etc.? Are you aware of any other major buildings that have collapsed with a lot of people inside?

Spokesperson: I don't have a clear answer on that. I'd need to find out. My assumption, maybe it's wrong to assume this, my assumption is that by this point we would have heard if there is a very large number of people missing in one place. But we'll need to check on that.

Question: I have two questions, actually. You were talking about flights before. Were they yesterday or today, the flights you were listing?

Spokesperson: David says here they "have arrived".

Question: You spoke to him today?

Spokesperson: Well, this was actually handed to me after the briefing started. So this has just come in. But that doesn't mean, even if it's just been given to me, that these flights took place today. I don't know. We need to clarify that, if you need to know it.

Question: I have another question. It has been written in several media today that there have been gangs with machetes going around the city. Do you have any reports that confirm that?

Spokesperson: Not here, I don't. No. Not here, I don't.

Question: Do you have a way of finding out?

Spokesperson: Of course. Of course we can.

Question: I mean, you know how it is; you see one Ford going round 20 times and seems like its

200? Twenty guys going round [inaudible]...?

Spokesperson: Okay, well we can continue the conversation maybe a little bit later.

Question: I just wanted to clarify, at the Christopher Hotel, no survivors were rescued since yesterday, since the Estonian bodyguard?

Spokesperson: Correct.

Question: Is there enough heavy equipment and machinery there to move on to the phase of recovery, or is that not in place?

Spokesperson: As you've heard, there's a need, a general need, and again, I would try to reiterate that there is a general need for heavy equipment. Not just for that operation, as you've also heard -- I think David mentioned this yesterday -- it's really difficult to get very heavy equipment to that location because it's down a narrow road. So I think that they're doing everything that they possibly can with what they have available. And they had, as you heard yesterday, if I remember correctly, they had, from David, they had tried to get a heavy crane in but it was too narrow.

Question: Is [inaudible] the only airport in operation now, and do you have news about the curfew?

Spokesperson: I'm not aware of any other operational airports in Port-au-Prince or near Port-au-Prince, but I will need to check on that, okay. But right there in Port-au-Prince, as far as I know, there is just the one. And on the curfew, I was at the stakeout with the Secretary-General, we had the same questions. Between then and now, I haven't had the time to find out what else is going on there, on the ground.

Question: Brazil's Foreign Minister has said that the mandate of just the air force, or maybe peacekeepers generally, should be broadened. I was wondering if MINUSTAH knows, is it aware of some restriction or additional powers that it lacks? And if so, what is MINUSTAH, as opposed to Brazilians, doing about it? And then also, in yesterday's briefing with Mr. Wimhurst, it was said that before announcing a death you, the UN, has to check, inform the family, obviously, but that this is done through Headquarters in New York, making it timely. Does that hold true also for national staff, Haitians that work in Haiti? Does the notification process run through New York or is it done by MINUSTAH within Haiti?

Spokesperson: It needs to be coordinated through New York because these are all UN staff. It needs to be coordinated through New York. Of course, the people who need to be informed are in the country. So it doesn't need to be coordinated in the same way as it does for international staff, whose friends and relatives of those people who need to be informed are in a third country, in a different location. If there is a difference, that's the difference. But the coordination remains the same. These are all people who work for the United Nations. And as for the mandate, you know where the mandate comes from and, therefore, any change in the mandate comes from the same place. And I am not aware of any request or otherwise for a change in the mandate.

Question: Yes, what about housing for these thousands of volunteers, emergency personnel and reporters? They're not sleeping on the street; what's the arrangement for them? Are they bringing their own food? And where are they housed?

Spokesperson: Volunteers, those people who arrive with whatever they may be, whether it's medical teams, rescue teams, typically are self-supporting. They have what they need to be able to do the job that they need to do to help the people on the ground. Okay, so any other questions? Is this Haiti-related?

Question: David Wimhurst said that discussions have begun between UN Command and the US. Any update on that? Is there going to be some announcement? Some decision made? I'm getting the idea that they're going to act separately, but coordinated. So it will not be a joint command, but separate commands, but in coordination. Is that pretty much how we can understand it?

Spokesperson: You can clearly find out from the US military what their command structure is. Every individual country's military has its own command structure. When you start to work in an international setting, then you need to coordinate. And the UN on the ground, the Mission there on the ground, is the one that has the mandate, as we've discussed, for security on the ground, in consultation with the host Government, Haiti. Any other national forces that are coming to Haiti are coming at the request and with the approval of the Haitian Government. The action that then takes place on the ground -- humanitarian efforts, rescue efforts, security -- all would be coordinated. And I am not going to

speak for the US military on what they plan to do on the ground.

For the UN, I can say that the UN is looking after security in the city in concert with the Haitian National Police force, working with them. As you've heard, many of the Haitian police officers and their families and other people were injured or otherwise occupied initially. This is now starting to come back together, and MINUSTAH, our UN Mission there, is liaising closely with them.

Question: From previous incidents, we know that UN peacekeepers' mandate includes crowd control, riot control; are they allowed to use force if necessary? They have in the past, the UN peacekeepers.

Spokesperson: They have in the past, I understand that. I think that discussions will take place with the Haitian authorities, with the national police force, on how to operate in the coming days and weeks, as and when that's necessary.

Okay, Matthew, I'm happy if people have finished with questions on Haiti. I am then happy to take other questions. I just wanted to try and keep everything together.

Question: No, that's why I said I'll do it again. One is just a sort of factual one, and there is one other. Have you heard of this reported rocket attack in Kabul? It's said that it's near a number of embassies, but also the UN's main office. So I'm wondering whether the UN either can confirm that this fell, and give some indication of... Is the UN's main office still in use after that attack? Have you heard of this?

Spokesperson: I haven't. No, I have not, and that doesn't mean it didn't happen; it just means that I've been focusing on other things. And I'll find out right after this.

Question: Okay. And the other thing -- and this is only because I asked [Ahmedou] Ould-Abdallah yesterday and he said to ask the Secretariat -- has to do with the UN Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA). So I thought it was his office, but he is something else for Somalia. And there are reports that a ship that was chartered by this UNSOA -- anyway, the ship went from Kenya to Mogadishu with EU military escort, but the reports are that the ship somehow contained both arms and tanks for the TFG [Transitional Federal Government]. So Mr. Ould-Abdallah said that he wasn't sure if it's true or not. So I wanted to know whether, in this UN Support Office for AMISOM, whether it has any role, or would be permitted to actually bring in weapons for the TFG? And if not, who is bringing weapons for the TFG? But mostly it's a factual one about this ship, the name of which is the *Alpha Kawira*, but...

Spokesperson: Why don't you give me that afterwards, after this briefing right now, and then I'll be able to look into it for you, okay?

Correspondent: Okay, that will be great.

Spokesperson: Thank you very much. We're trying to arrange a possible briefing later today, so if we have any further updates for you, then we'll do that, and we'll announce it in the usual way. Okay. Thank you very much, thank you.

* * * * *

For information media • not an official record