



News Release



Office of Public Affairs

U.S. Embassy

Remarks by U.S. Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker to the People of the Allai Valley

Islamabad, October 6, 2006: U.S. Chinook helicopters today began ferrying reconstruction materials to remote areas of the Allai Valley that were heavily damaged by last year's earthquake. U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Ryan Crocker took the opportunity to return to the Allai Valley with the Chinook crews, who had flown earthquake relief missions beginning in October 2005. Ambassador Crocker had the opportunity to speak with residents of the Allai Valley in Rashang at a commemoration ceremony.

Following is a transcript of Ambassador Crocker's remarks.

Ambassador Crocker: Assalam o Alaikum. I am honored to be here with you today as we mark the first anniversary of the terrible earthquake of October 8. The losses and damage were enormous and so too was the response from the Pakistani government, the Pakistani army, the Pakistani people and the whole international community. And I am proud of the role the United States played in that effort.

U.S. helicopters, military and civilians including these Chinooks, flew almost 6,000 missions, evacuating nearly 4,000 casualties and delivering thousands of tons of relief supplies. At the high point of the disaster relief effort, we had 21 Chinooks in the air over Pakistan. Col. Bradley and his crews who are here today flew a lot of those missions. And I want to thank you for what you did at that time and thank you for coming back.

Our Military hospitals, both Marine and Army, treated some 35,000 patients. USAID and the U.S. military worked together and through NGOs to bring emergency shelter to over half a million people. It was in the course of that disaster relief effort that I first came to know that the people of Allai through a number of visits to Mehra Camp. I was tremendously impressed by their courage and toughness and energy and readiness to get on with life in spite of the losses they suffered.

So as the relief effort came to an end, we decided that our role could not end and that we had an obligation to do everything we could to help the great people of this valley return to homes they could live in and return to productive lives. So in coordination with the Government of Pakistan through ERRA, and in partnership with Save the Children we launched a major transition program in this valley and elsewhere.

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In the Batagram district, and especially in Allai, working together, we have provided shelter to some 27,000 families, household kits for about 17,000, distributed rations for more than 45,000. And especially important, Save the Children and USAID have worked to get almost 11,000 boys and girls back in school.

As we mark this anniversary, the Government of Pakistan and its friends, including the United States, move on into reconstruction. We spent well over \$200 million dollars in the relief operation helping to save people's lives. We will spend another \$200 million dollars in reconstruction and in the coming year we expect to build 50 schools, 25 in Azad Kashmir and 25 here in North West Frontier Province; and 15 health clinics. We expect to repeat that each year for the next four years.

As I heard today myself from some of you – the people of Allai – there is still work to do in this transition phase. Therefore, in this coming week, ERRA and Save the Children are combining to make available over 20,000 sheets of CGI. And our Chinook air crews are going to be ferrying those sheets up to this valley and other areas of particular need. So that shelter that is so desperately important will be arriving.

In closing, I would just like to pay my profound respect to the people of this valley, to all of you who suffered through that earthquake, and who have come home determined to build better lives for yourselves and for your children. I respect that enormously. And the United States, both its government and its people, will be there to support you.

Thank you very much.

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