

TEAM KADENA &
OPERATION TOMODACHI (FRIEND)

11 March - 13 April 2011



18th Wing History Office

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After an epic 9.0 earthquake rocked mainland Japan, you sprang into action to deploy into the area with humanitarian capabilities and donations. The 353 Special Operations Group, and the 31st and 33rd Rescue Squadrons were able to help open up Sendai Airport, giving a critical supply hub for relief operations.¹

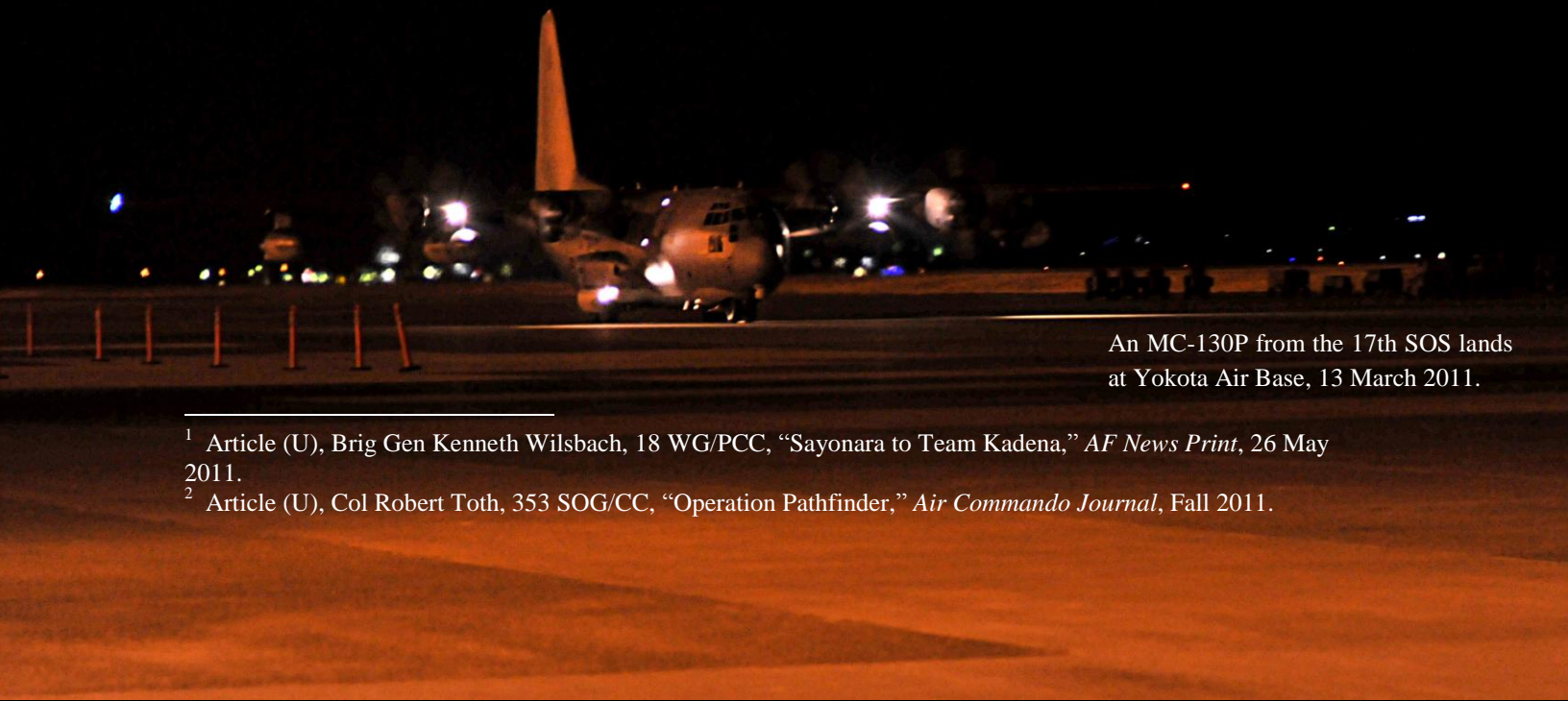
Brigadier General Kenneth Wilsbach

Commander, 18th Wing

Although there was a tremendous amount of destruction on the island of Honshu, I will tell you that each United States service member that was present was encouraged by the strength and resiliency of the Japanese people. And the people of Japan throughout gave all of us hope for Japan's future. I believe they have a very bright future as they recover from this disaster. And from our homes on Okinawa, we continue to lend our support. Although we repositioned back on Okinawa, we remain ready in response to requests for assistance from the Government of Japan if they should come in the future.²

Colonel Robert P. Toth

Commander, 353rd Special Operations Group



An MC-130P from the 17th SOS lands at Yokota Air Base, 13 March 2011.

¹ Article (U), Brig Gen Kenneth Wilsbach, 18 WG/PCC, "Sayonara to Team Kadena," *AF News Print*, 26 May 2011.

² Article (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, "Operation Pathfinder," *Air Commando Journal*, Fall 2011.

INTRODUCTION

On 11 March 2011 a magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck near the east coast of Honshu, Japan at 1446 local time. The earthquake lasted over six minutes in duration and was Japan's largest earthquake in recorded history.

Following the earthquake a massive tsunami with waves reaching 33 feet at its highest point swept across the Tohoku region decimating entire towns. The tsunami created a nuclear emergency when waves struck the Tokyo Electric Power Companies' (TEPCO)



Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, disabling the plant's cooling system. As of September 2011, the earthquake and ensuing tsunami killed at least 15,703, and injuring another 5,314 people. The Japanese government reported 4,647 people are still unaccounted for and another 130,927 displaced. Thousands of buildings were damaged or destroyed in the wake of the tsunami. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS) the Tohoku Earthquake/Tsunami was estimated to cost the Japanese Government over 309 billion dollars worth of damage.³

Immediately following the earthquake, the Government of Japan (GOJ) established an emergency headquarters commanded by Prime Minister Naoto Kan. The rescue and relief effort was lead by the Government of Japan. All coordination between foreign government rescue teams, humanitarian aid, relief supplies, and foreign media was handled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). The GOJ requested assistance from the US Government through the

³ Report (U), Mr. Toshimi Kitazawa, Minister of Defense, "On the Publication Of Defense of Japan 2011," Japanese Ministry of Defense, ca. 2011; Report (U) USGS, "Earthquake Summary, Magnitude 9.0 Near the East Coast of Honshu Japan," ca 2011. Article (U), A1C Katrina R. Menchaca, 374 AW/PA, "Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs gives thanks for Operation Tomodachi," 7 May 2011.

US embassy. United States Air Force assets that assisted the GOJ were lead by Lieutenant General M. Field, commander of United States Forces Japan (USFJ) and Fifth Air Force.⁴

Kadena Air Base's strategic location on Okinawa, Japan aided the GOJ's efforts to stabilize the situation that devastated the Tohoku region. The following report highlights the contributions from multiple US Air Force and Navy units stationed on Kadena Air Base, in what would become known as Operation TOMODACHI (Friend). As the host unit on Kadena Air Base, the 18th Wing worked with our team Kadena partners the 353rd Special Operations Group (AFSOC) and the Navy's Commander Fleet Activities Okinawa. Assigned to US Pacific Air Forces' 5th Air Force, during Operation TOMODACHI 18 WG operated in support of the Japanese Government from restoring power at Misawa Air Base to opening up Sendai International Airport.⁵

RESCUE-RECOVERY-RESUPPLY OPERATIONS

One day after the earthquake/tsunami, members from both rescues squadrons stationed on Kadena deployed to Yokota Air Base, Japan. The 33rd Rescue Squadron deployed 25 personnel and five Sikorsky HH-60G Pave Hawk Helicopters. Flying out with the 33rd were members of

A 33rd Rescue Squadron HH-60G Pave Hawk Helicopter departs for Yokota, March 2011.



the 31st Rescue Squadron. The 31st Rescue squadron deployed eleven pararescuemen, two Combat Rescue Officers and one Search, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape Specialist as well as a communications

specialist. The 33 RQS "Jolly Green" crews began rescue and recovery operations on the 13th of March from Yokota AB. The initial missions took the crews over the city of Tokyo and as far north as Sendai. On board were members of the 31st Rescue Squadron and 320th Special

⁴ Briefing (U), Lt Col Devin Smith, 18 WG/DS, "Team Kadena Operation Tomodachi," 12 Sep 2011.

⁵ Report (U) , Maj Theresa Murphy, 18 OG/DS, "18th Operations Group Monthly Activity Report," Mar 2011.

Tactics Squadron of the 353rd Special Operations Group collocated with the 18 WG on Kadena AB. Within the first ten days of the operation, the 33rd Rescue flew 142 flight hours. Most sorties consisted of daily disaster relief missions, air crews from the 33rd Rescue Squadron assisted by bringing food, water, and medical supplies to displaced Japanese citizens. Although the Rescue Squadrons did record a save during the operation, the missions quickly changed from search and rescue to reconnaissance of the devastated areas.⁶ Kadena rescue squadrons were tasked by Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) to support the US Dept of Energy (DOE). Missions included the insertion of DOE technicians into towns and conducting airborne sampling missions over and around Fukushima. The 33 RQS later flew members of both US and Foreign Aid agencies into the hardest hit areas allowing for a more accurate picture of the situation, allowing the agencies to focus their relief efforts. The combined missions gave the GOJ a more accurate model of the devastated areas, and helped top decision makers with evacuations and follow on aid.⁷

From the 13 through the 15th of March, members of the 31 RQS, 33 RQS, and 320 STS conducted missions specifically designed with the intent to survey airfields and locate possible forward area refueling points (FARP). Airfields within the hardest hit areas became of utmost importance in order to create an airhead for oncoming



Major Traxler (left) and Lt Col Goodman (center-sitting) survey the area from an 18th Wing Pave Hawk helicopter.

humanitarian aid and relief supplies. Lt Col Stephen Goodman, squadron commander of the 31st Rescue Squadron (18 WG), and Major John Traxler, commander of the 320 STS, were both onboard. Both were well versed in disaster relief missions. The surveys were looked over by Colonel Robert P. Toth Commander of the 353 SOG. Col Toth determined that Sendai Airport had the highest potential to allow for follow on humanitarian aid and relief supplies. At the time of the survey much of the airport was still underwater.⁸

⁶ Article (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, "Operation Pathfinder," *Air Commando Journal*, Fall 2011.

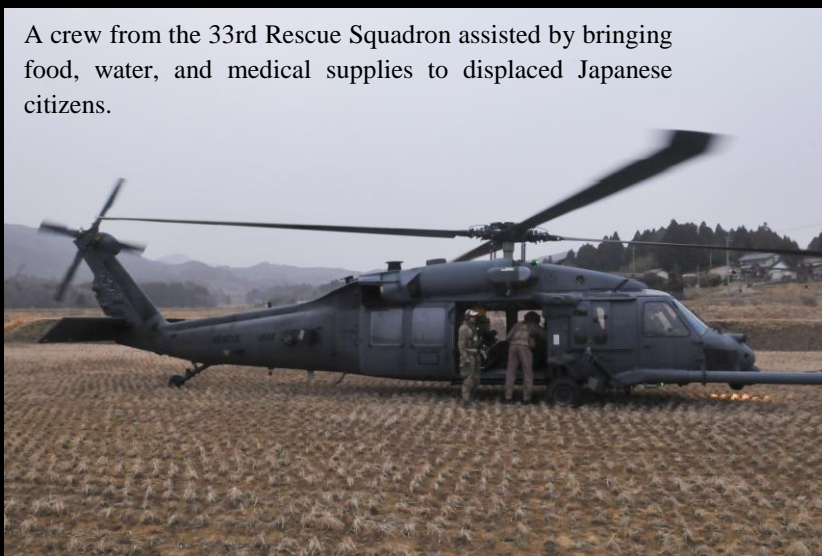
⁷ Email (U), Maj Mathew Mcguinness, 31 RQS/DO, "Tomodachi Report," March 2012.

⁸ Article (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, "Operation Pathfinder," *Air Commando Journal*, Fall 2011.

On 14 March a HH-60G Pave Hawk from the 33rd Rescue Squadron was conducting a nighttime search and rescue mission over Sanriku-Cho, Miyagi Prefecture, when the crew noticed the letters “S-O-S” 200 people spelled out on-top of a roof of a senior care facility. Onboard the Pave Hawk helicopter was 23 year-old Senior Airmen Veronica Cox, an Intel specialist assigned to the 33 RQS. SrA Cox spoke fluent Japanese volunteered to fly with the 33



RQS as an interpreter incase her language skills were needed. That night, crew members hoisted Cox down to the roof top of the senior center to do just that. The SrA spoke to the staff in Japanese “We are U.S. Air Force personnel. We’re here to help.”⁹ The 200 people who sought



refuge in the building were residents of the town, staff members, and seniors. The crew delivered food water and blankets, the people taking shelter in the building were relieved that SrA Cox spoke Japanese so they could communicate their current situation. The supplies within the building were running

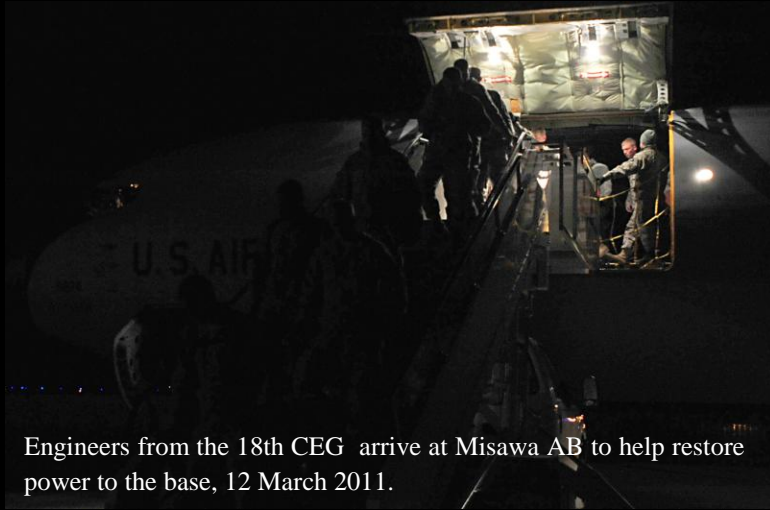
desperately low when the crew arrived.”¹⁰

⁹ Report (U), 18 WG/PA, “Japan-America Air Force Goodwill Association recognizes Naha and Kadena top Airmen,” *AF News Print*, 2 Feb 2012; Email (U), Mr. Ed Gulick, 18 WG/PA to Mr. James D’Angina, 18 WG/HO, 16 Feb 2012.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

POWERING MISAWA AIR BASE

The destructive power of the 9.0 earthquake disrupted commercial power and utilities to Misawa Air Base in Sapporo. Misawa's 35th Civil Engineer Squadron issued a request for



Engineers from the 18th CEG arrive at Misawa AB to help restore power to the base, 12 March 2011.

assistance and Kadena Airmen responded. With their sister base in crucial need of support engineers from the 18th Civil Engineer Group set out for Misawa to get the base back on line. One of the first aircraft airborne from Kadena to assist with disaster relief was a Boeing KC-135R Stratotanker from the 909th Air

Refueling Squadron tasked to transport the engineers. The 909 ARS crew took off at 2210 local with only five hours notice preceding their flight. Just 32 hours after the earthquake struck, 53 engineers (later 58 in total) from the 18th Civil Engineer Group and their equipment were at Misawa getting the base back online.¹¹

The frigid temperatures at Misawa made it imperative that certain operations had continuous power. A number of engineers from the 18th Wing received Air Force Achievement awards from the 35th Mission Support Group for their assistance. The



engineers performed high voltage switching operations protecting Misawa's 100 million dollar power grid, made emergency heating system repairs for six U.S. Navy helicopter hangars, and restored water and utilities to over 1,200 facilities on base utilized by both USFJ and Japanese Self Defense Force during Operation TOMODACHI.¹²

¹¹ Article (U), 18 WG/PA, "Okinawa Airmen deploy to Support Relief Mission," *AF Print News*, 12 Mar 2011.

¹² Award (U), 18 CEG, Tomodachi Support Awards. Report (U) 909 ARS/DO, "Tracker," 25 Mar 2011.

HUMANITARIAN AID (733 AMS / 18LRS)

Airmen from both the 733rd Air Mobility Squadron (733 AMS) and 18th Logistics Readiness Squadron made significant contributions to the relief effort during Operation TOMODACHI. The 733 AMS falls under the Air Mobility Command at Scott



Air Force Base, Illinois. The 18th Logistics Readiness Squadron (18 LRS) was assigned to the 18th Wing; both units are collocated on Kadena Air Base. Airmen from the 733 AMS and 18th LRS prepared 972 short tons of humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR) from Kadena. The equipment ranged in size and priorities, the squadron's services became the supply line for

multiple branches of the US Military and the Japanese Self Defense Forces. Kadena Airmen moved a total of 423 passengers during the operation, including soldiers from the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force 15th Brigade.¹³



Members from the 733rd AMS load a JGSDF truck onto an Australian C-17 Globemaster III.

¹³ Report (U), 733 AMS/DO, "733rd AMS Tomodachi Support," ca. 2011.

909 AIR REFUELING SQUADRON (YOUNG TIGERS)

At 2210 Local a single KC-135R Stratotanker from the 909th Air Refueling Squadron launched from Kadena Air Base. USFJ tasked the crew to deploy a team of engineers to restore power at Misawa Air Base. The mission was the first US aircraft to



Members from the 18 Aero-medical Evacuation Squadron board a KC-135R.

deliver personnel and supplies in support of Operation TOMODACHI. The squadron had multiple aircrews on alert status from 13-16 March. On 16 thru 17 March, crews from the 909 ARS launched in support of an 18 AES aero medical evacuation squadron mission. The mission profile called for the crew to deliver a patient from Atsugi Naval Air Station to higher medical care at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. While stopped at Hickam, the crew loaded iodine tablets (used to prevent radiation poisoning) scheduled to be delivered to Yokota AB. The Young Tigers delivered the iodine tablets to their sister base on their return leg to Kadena AB. On a return flight from Hickam, a Stratotanker crew dropped off 17 US Navy nuclear biological test personnel at Yokota, the teams set up tests to measure radiation levels on arriving and departing aircraft operating from Yokota. The 909 ARS executed their first evacuee flight on 22 March; the evacuees consisted of nine expecting mothers and 16 dependents from Atsugi to Kadena. A second leg was added to the mission in which a crew evacuated 30 additional expecting mothers and dependents to safety.¹⁴ In total, aircrews from the 909 ARS launched from Kadena a dozen times, moving over 132 passengers.

¹⁴ Report (U), Maj Theresa Murphy, 18 OG/DS, "18th Operations Group Monthly Activity Report," Mar 2011; Report (U), Maj Theresa Murphy, 18 OG/DS, "18th Operations Group Monthly Activity Report," Apr 2011; Report (U), 909 ARS/DO, "Operation TOMODACHI," 30 Mar 2011.

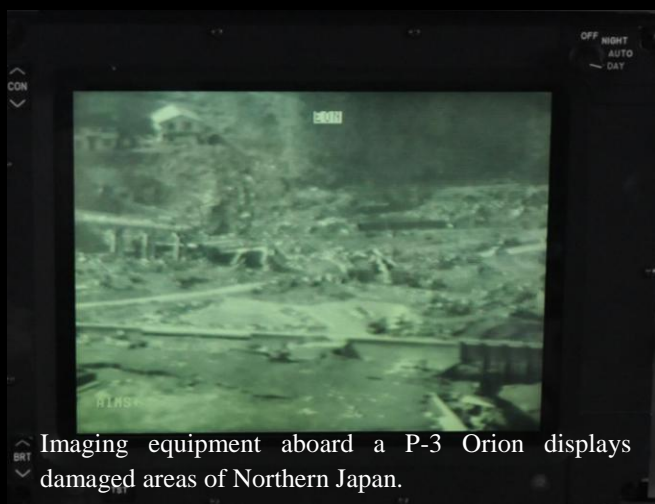
KADENA P-3 ORION OPERATIONS (UNITED STATES NAVY)

On 12 March United States Navy P-3C Orion crews began flying sorties from Kadena Air Base in support of Operation TOMODACHI. A Lockheed P-3C Orion crew from Patrol Squadron Four (VP-4) were the first US aircraft on station to make initial



A Lockheed P-3C Orion crew from VP-4 prepares for another mission from Misawa AB.

damage assessments along the Japanese coastline a day after the earthquake. The squadron conducted aerial reconnaissance and search and rescue sorties along the Honshu coast. The squadron mapped numerous debris fields (at sea and on land) and conducted damage surveys of Japanese lines of communication. The mapping performed by the crews enabled both the



Imaging equipment aboard a P-3 Orion displays damaged areas of Northern Japan.

Japanese and US operations to resupply isolated Japanese personnel. The P-3 crews carried out both port and airfield survey missions in order to locate suitable embarkation sites. The aircrews streamed video feeds from their aircraft to the USS *Essex*, an amphibious assault ship located offshore, for future landing craft operations. The ships used the feeds to aid them in re-supplying islands in northern Honshu that

were not accessible by land. From Kadena Air Base alone, the crews flew a total of 130 hours over 18 missions. The squadron deployed a detachment from Kadena consisting of two P-3C Orion aircraft, four P-3 aircrews, and 81 personnel to Misawa AB. From 17 through 30 March, This detachment flew missions continuously out of Misawa. From Misawa, the two aircraft

executed 18 sorties and 124.6 hours in support of Operation TOMODACHI. The DET redeployed back to Kadena Air Base after conducting 18 sorties and logging 124.6 hours.¹⁵

353RD SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP IN ACTION

On 13 March, the main body of the 353rd Special Operations Group (353 SOG) arrived at Yokota Air base from Daegu AB, Republic of Korea. When the earthquake struck the Tohoku Region, the group was participating in Exercise FOAL EAGLE. In less than 24 hours, Col Toth had repositioned 180 personnel and three MC-130P Combat Shadow aircraft from the 17th Special Operations Squadron to Yokota. Col. Toth the Joint



Force Special Operations Component Commander (JFSOCC) had under his control all special operation forces in theater. These units included the 353 SOG, the US Army's First Battalion, First Special Forces Group (Airborne) [1-1 SFG (A)] and the Naval Special Warfare Unit-1 (NSWU-1) out of Guam.¹⁶ Their mission was as follows:

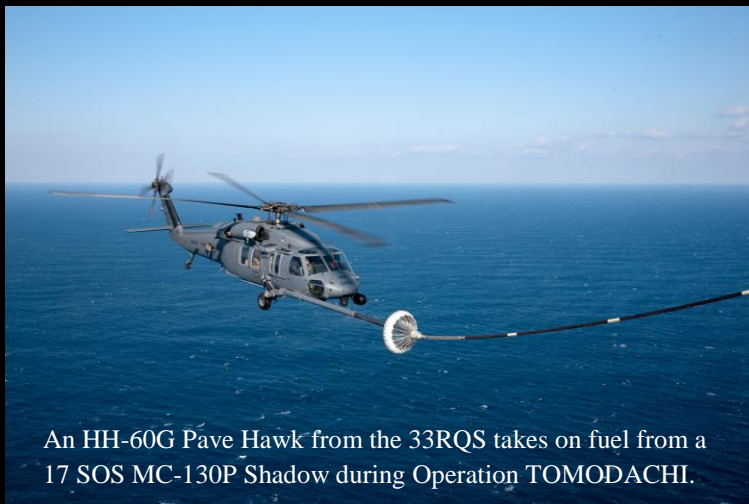
“Mission: 353 Special Operations Group elements advance to Matsushima Air Field (JASDF) and Sendai Airport in order to establish USFJ hub for HA/DR operations, restore operational capability and return control to the Government of Japan. Concurrently, transport humanitarian assistance and disaster relief supplies to affected population in order to alleviate human suffering. On order, 1-1 SFG (A) and (NSWU-1) conduct point assessments

¹⁵ Report (U), Commander Fleet Activities Okinawa, “USN Okinawa Tomodachi Summary,” 6 April 2011.

¹⁶ Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM/CC, “Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC): By, With and Through Approach to HADR,” 23 Apr 2011; Article (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, “Operation Pathfinder,” *Air Commando Journal*, Fall 2011.

in Miyagi and Iwate provinces to identify response capability gaps or identify persons of need.” (Col. Robert P. Toth)¹⁷

One day after the main body of the 353 SOG forces were on the ground at Yokota, Colonel Toth received approval from Lt Gen Field, commander United States Forces Japan, to proceed with a rotary wing option into Sendai International Airport. Due to the lack of 353 SOG rotary wing assets, the Special Operations Group required assistance from the 18th Wing’s 33rd Rescue Squadron in order to complete the mission. The 33 RQS made two attempts to get into



Sendai on the 15th of March 2011. Higher headquarters scrubbed the first attempt due to concerns over radiation levels within the area; the teams did not have dosimeters on them and were ordered to turn around as a safety precaution. The crew aborted the second attempt after weather conditions made it impossible to get into Sendai. Both

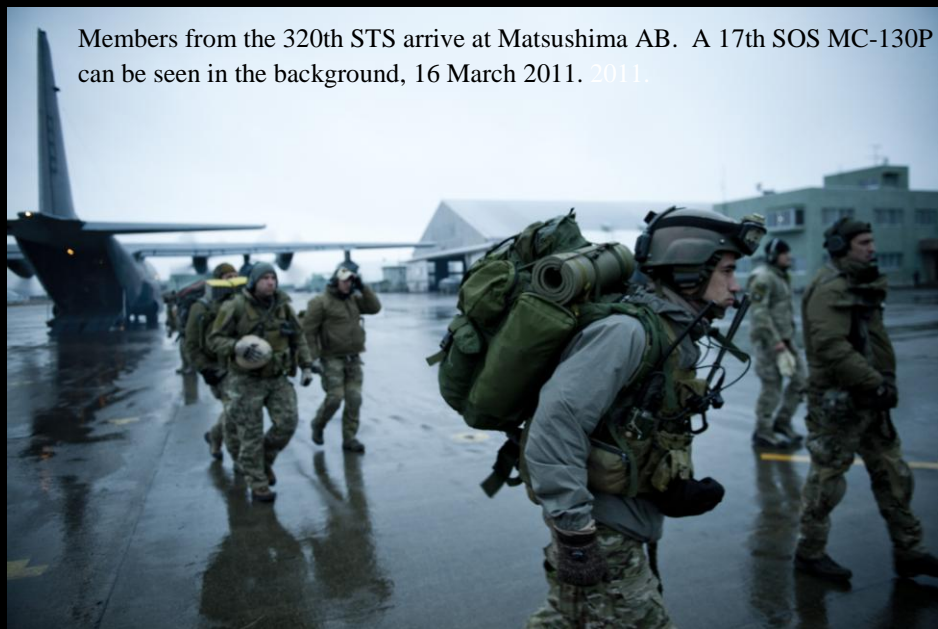
HH-60G Pave Hawk crews with their insertion teams from the 320th Special Tactics Squadron returned to base. Operators expected the bad weather to remain in the area between Yokota AB and Sendai. The poor weather took the rotary wing option off the table. Colonel Toth had one other option his Airmen specialized in; a fixed-wing insertion. Lt Col Eric Zimmerman, commander of the 17th Special Operation Squadron, and Major Traxler, commander of the 320 Special Tactics Squadron devised a plan for a fixed wing option to open up Sendai IAP. Both commanders ruled out landing at Sendai due to the lack of 3,500 feet of runway. The commanders turned their attention to the Japanese Air Self Defense (JASDF) airfield at Matsushima, a 90-minute drive from Sendai. Matsushima became the key to re-opening up Sendai International Airport.¹⁸

¹⁷ Article (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, “Operation Pathfinder,” *Air Commando Journal*, Fall 2011.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

LANDING AT MATSUSHIMA

At 0445L on March 16, JAKAL 17, an MC-130P Combat Shadow from the 17th Special Operations Squadron, departed Yokota Air Base for Matsushima Airfield (JASDF). On board were teams from the 320th Special Tactics Squadron. The unit's infiltration package included 21 personnel and two HMMWV. This package allowed the 320 STS personnel to convoy to Sendai after landing at Matsushima. Weather made getting into the damaged Japanese air base difficult. Aircraft commander Captain Christopher Stewart had the Combat Shadow over Matsushima in 45 minutes. The scheduled time of arrival at sunrise was predetermined in order to give the aircrew a good look at the runway. After making an initial pass, the 17 SOS crew determined the runway had been cleared of debris to their minimum landing distance of 3,500 feet. The crew

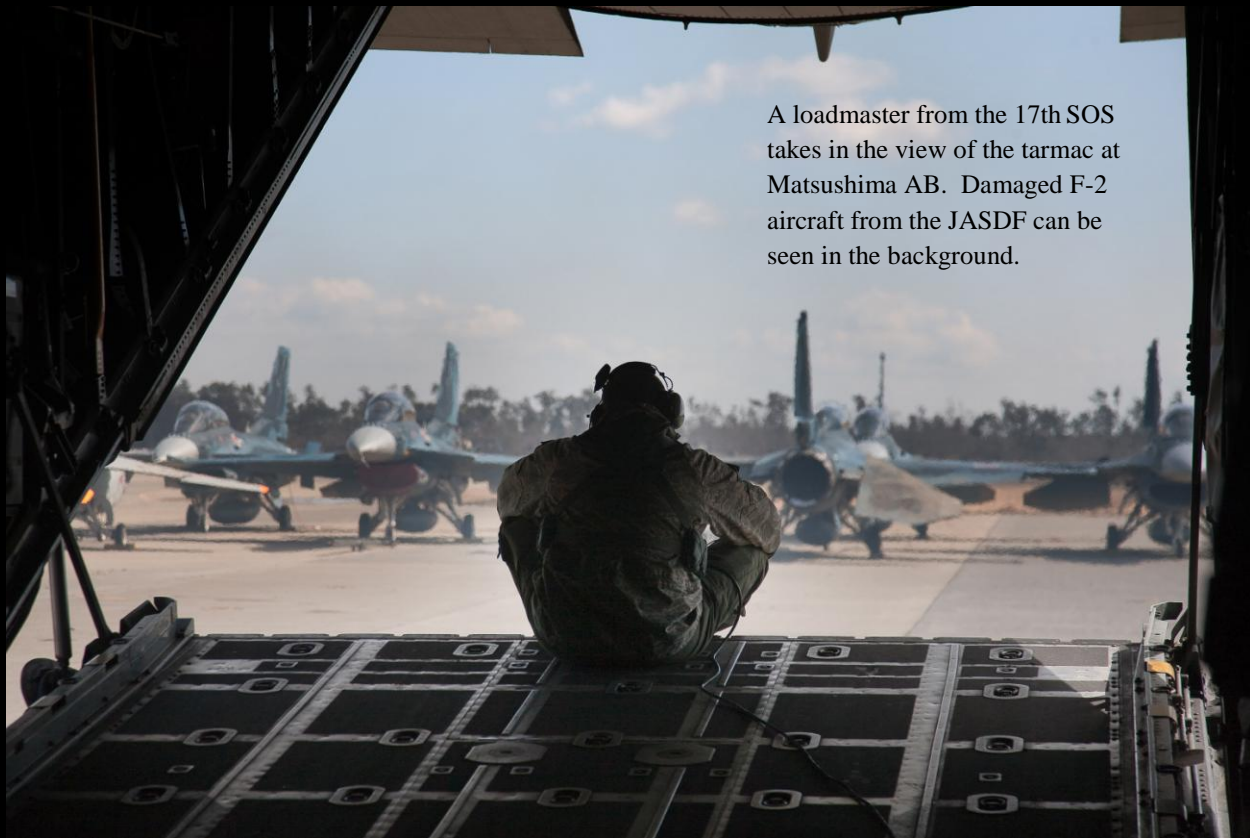


Members from the 320th STS arrive at Matsushima AB. A 17th SOS MC-130P can be seen in the background, 16 March 2011. 2011.

took one more look before executing a self-contained approach in-bound for Runway 33. The Combat Shadow landed at 0550L without mishap. The aircrew wasted no time offloading the infill team and departed Matsushima

AB. The MC-130P, on a return flight to Matsushima, offloaded the first humanitarian aid / disaster relief supplies. Controllers from the 320 STS completed a survey of the airfield and established Air Traffic Control services at the disabled airport. Captain Stewart's crew then returned to Matsushima for the second time. Lead by Captain Garrett Ianacone, the 320 STS team at Matsushima continued to provide air traffic control services. They gave access to multiple relief flights to the field. Within 24 hours, the controllers reestablished normal tower

operations.¹⁹ Members of the 320 STS then transitioned air traffic control services the Japanese authorities, allowing the 320 STS teams to concentrate their efforts on Sendai.²⁰



A loadmaster from the 17th SOS takes in the view of the tarmac at Matsushima AB. Damaged F-2 aircraft from the JASDF can be seen in the background.

SYMBOL OF HOPE (RE-OPENING SENDAI IAP)

Once on the ground at Matsushima, the 320 STS commander, Major John Traxler, and JFSOCC Ground Force Commander, Colonel Dwayne Lott, met with Japanese Air Self Defense Force personnel. Once integrated, the team led their convoy to Sendai International Airport. Col Robert Toth explained: “We arrived there at Sendai roughly at 8:00 a.m. in the morning, and by 10:00 a.m., we had 5,000 feet of runway cleared, primarily being worked by Japanese workers that were there at the field and our Air Force Combat Controllers.” Japanese cleanup crews cleared 5,000 feet of runway and controllers activated commutations and air traffic control hardware. Members of the 320 STS then declared Sendai IAP ready to accept normal Lockheed

¹⁹ Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, “Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC): By, With and Through Approach to HADR,” 23 Apr 2011; Article (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, “Operation Pathfinder,” *Air Commando Journal*, Fall 2011.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

C-130 operations. Colonel Lott coordinated with the Japanese Civil Aviation Bureau and the Sendai Airport Authority to create a priority list to aid the relief operation. After four hours, the team completed the list of necessary aid and equipment, while counterparts sourced them at Yokota AB.²¹



The crew of GOOSE 56 had just landed their aircraft at Yokota AB via Daegu, Republic of Korea. The MC-130H Combat Talon II from the 1st Special Operations Squadron loaded a 10K forklift needed to download aircraft at Sendai. Colonel Toth joined the Combat Talon II crew on their way to Sendai. The Aircraft commander, Major Brian Helton, took off from Yokota at 1345L. At 1430L, the crew landed at Sendai Airport. GOOSE 56 became the first fixed wing aircraft to land at Sendai International Airport since the tsunami just five days prior.²² The 353 SOG commander, Colonel Toth, deplaned while the MC-130H crew offloaded the forklift and initial relief supplies. The aircraft departed for Daegu



GOOSE 56 lands at Sendai International Airport. The aircraft is the first fixed Wing aircraft to land at Sendai since the Tsunami.

²¹ Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, "Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC): By, With and Through Approach to HADR," 23 Apr 2011; Article (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, "Operation Pathfinder," *Air Commando Journal*, Fall 2011.

²² *Ibid.*

AB to return to their FOAL EAGLE commitment. That day, three more 353 SOG flights made it into Sendai offloading items annotated on the Sendai priority list: medical supplies, diesel generators, fuel, water, and blankets.²³

C-130 operations were only the beginning. Members of the 353 SOG and the Japanese Civil Aviation Bureau and Airport Authority needed to clear the entire runway in order to accommodate Boeing C-17 Globemaster IIIs and larger aircraft. By March 20th, cleaning crews



The first C-17 is un-loaded at Sendai IAP, 20 March 2011.

completed clearing Runway 33. Shortly thereafter, the first USAF C-17 landed. As envisioned in Col Toth's calculations, Sendai had become a hub for humanitarian aid and relief supplies.²⁴

On the 21st, US Marines from TASK FORCE (TF) FUJI stationed on Honshu and the Combat Logistics Regiment 35 stationed on Okinawa arrived on at Sendai International Airport (IAP). Members of the United States Army's logistics Task Force 35 based on Torii Station Okinawa arrived on the same day. These additional forces helped members of the 353 SOG and Japanese authorities in cleaning up Sendai. US forces working out of Sendai IAP numbered over 270 personnel, around forty vehicles to include forklifts to remove debris. The joint team removed over 300 tons of debris from Sendai IAP, the debris ranged from scattered trees, automobiles,



Marines from Task Force Fuji arrive at Sendai, 21 March 2011.

²³ Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, "Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC): By, With and Through Approach to HADR," 23 Apr 2011; Article (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, "Operation Pathfinder," *Air Commando Journal*, Fall 2011.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

to houses that washed across the airfield. As Col. Toth noted, “From 11 March thru April 4th members from the 17th and 1 SOS flew a total of 161 missions / 244 hours in support of Operation TOMODACHI. The crews flew over 500 personnel as well as 878,000 pounds of



The first commercial flight lands at Sendai International, 13 April 2011 (Stripes).

relief supplies to some of the hardest hit areas in Honshu. Members from the 353 SOG distributed over 185,000 pounds of fuel in support of Operation TOMODACHI primarily at the Sendai Airport, Yamagata Airport, and also Matsushima Field.”²⁵ Combat controllers from the 320th Special Tactics Squadron allowed

for over 250 aircraft to come into Sendai safely from 16 March thru 6 April. They communicated with flight crews not only from the US military, but the Royal Australian Air Force and Japanese Self Defense Force as well. In less than a month at Sendai, members of the 353 SOG had turned Sendai IAP into a major hub for Operation TOMODACHI. The group processed 517 relief workers, and allowed for nearly 2.5 million pounds of relief supplies to be distributed from Sendai.²⁶

I will tell you that our efforts there on Honshu really pale in comparison to the effort put forward by the people of Japan. And when we departed, it was clear that the struggle there continued for the Japanese people in the vicinity of Sendai Airport. The Japanese people have put forth a tremendous effort in the midst of struggling for survival and searching for those lost.

But we are very proud and honored of all U.S. military forces that participated in Operation TOMODACHI there at Sendai Airport, all the missions that we conducted. ²⁷

Col Robert P. Toth

²⁵ Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, “Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC): By, With and Through Approach to HADR,” 23 Apr 2011; Article (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, “Operation Pathfinder,” *Air Commando Journal*, Fall 2011; Interview (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, with US Department of State, Foreign Press Center, “Reopening of the Sendai Airport,” 15 Apr 2011.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Interview (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, with US Department of State, Foreign Press Center, “Reopening of the Sendai Airport,” 15 Apr 2011.

RETURNING HOME



Members from the 33rd Rescue Squadron and the 353rd Special Operations Group's, 17th Special Operations Squadron returned to Kadena Air Base on 4 April 2011. An HH-60G Helicopter pilot Captain Joseph B. Andresky described working with his Japanese Counterparts during Operation TOMODACHI and how grateful the local citizens were for their assistance:

"Working with the Japanese counterparts was nearly seamless in every way, We were constantly amazed at the resourcefulness of the Japanese culture, and the speed in which the JGSDF was able to respond to emergencies.

"From every stop where the helicopters landed to get gas, to any chance meeting of locals, the Japanese were incredibly thankful for the aid that the US and the 33rd RQS provided. It made us feel very honored and proud, especially as we attempt to live up to the Jolly Green motto of 'these things we do...so that others may live.'"²⁸



Brigadier General Wilsbach greets members of the 18th Wing and 353 SOG as they arrive back at Kadena AB.

²⁸ Article (U), SrA Sara Csurilla, 18 WG/PA, "Kadena's 33rd RQS return home," 6 Apr 2011.

On the same day, three MC-130P Combat Shadows landed at Kadena with 100 personnel from the 353rd SOG and 18th Wing's 718 AMS. *“Repositioning to Kadena, our home base, better postures our force for long term support to the people of Japan. We stand ready from here to support future Operations Tomodachi missions as required. The Japanese people continue to be a great host for our forces here on Okinawa while they are recovering from this tragic disaster on Honshu. It will be our pleasure to return the favor and provide future support should they ask.”*²⁹

Col Robert Toth



Locals from the town of Sendai formed a sign that spelled out the word ARIGATO (Thank You) on the approach to Sendai International Airport. (Photo taken by Col. Robert P. Toth)

²⁹ Article (U), TSgt Aaron Cram 353SOG/PA, “Special Operations Airmen supporting Operation Tomodachi reposition,” 6 Apr 2011.

TEAM KADENA TIMELINE

Time/Date	Events
11 March 2011	A 9.0 earthquake strikes the eastern coast of Japan creating a 33 foot tsunami devastating Honshu. The tsunami impacted over 350 miles of coastline within the Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures. At its furthest the tsunami reached ten miles inland. ³⁰
	An explosion occurs at Unit 1 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. ³¹
	Misawa Air Base loses commercial power to the base. ³²
12 March 2011	A P-3 Orion crew from Patrol Squadron Four (VP-4) flying out of Kadena Air Base became the first US aircraft on station over the Honshu Coast during Operation TOMODACHI. ³³
	A KC-135R crew from the 909th Air Refueling Squadron departed Kadena AB for Misawa AB with over fifty engineers from the 18th Civil Engineer Squadron (first Humanitarian Relief Mission for USFJ). ³⁴
	The 18th Wing deployed five HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters from the 33rd Rescue Squadron. Personnel deployed from the 31st Rescue Squadron included 11 PJs, two CROs, one SERE, and one communications specialist. ³⁵
	First C-130 departs Kadena AB for Yokota Air Base Japan with relief supplies. ³⁶
	MC-130Ps from the 17th Special Operations Squadron deploy to Yokota Air Base. ³⁷

³⁰ Interview (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, with US Department of State, Foreign Press Center, "Reopening of the Sendai Airport," 15 Apr 2011.

³¹ Briefing (U), Dr. Robert Sligh, 5 AF/HO, "USFJ Operation Tomodachi Timeline 11-25 March," 1 Jun 2011.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Report (U), Commander Fleet Activities Okinawa, "USN Okinawa Tomodachi Summary," 6 Apr 2011.

³⁴ Report (U), Maj Theresa Murphy, 18 OG/DS, "18th Operations Group Monthly Activity Report," Mar 2011;

Report (U), Maj Theresa Murphy, 18 OG/DS, "18th Operations Group Monthly Activity Report," Apr 2011.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Briefing (U), PACAF/HO, "PACAF Operation Tomodachi Timeline 11-17 March," 9 Aug 2011.

³⁷ Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, "Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC)," 23 Apr 2011.

13 March 2011	The main body from the 353rd SOG deploys to Yokota AB from Daegu AB South Korea. (The 353 SOG was deployed to Daegu for exercise FOAL EAGLE. ³⁸
	First of three Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)C-17 Globe Master III aircraft arrive at Kadena. ³⁹
	Sendai airfield is assessed by members of the 353rd Special Operations Group. ⁴⁰
14 March 2011	33rd Rescue Squadron conducts first search & rescue mission. ⁴¹
	Members of the 623rd Air Control Flight deploy to Honshu to assist in command and control of relief efforts. ⁴²
15 March 2011	Pave Hawk aircrews from the 33rd Rescue Squadron attempt to infill 320th Special Tactics Squadron members into Sendai Airport, JFSOCC aborts two attempts due to radiation and weather concerns. ⁴³
16 March 2011 / 0550L	An MC-130P Combat Shadow from the 17th Special Operations Squadron lands at Matsushima Air Base (JASDF) on a self-contained approach. Onboard are three STS teams and two HMMWVs. The 320th STS teams surveyed the airstrip and established air traffic control at Matsushima by 0700L. ⁴⁴
0630L	320th STS teams driving HMMWVs are escorted to Sendai airport by JASDF personnel. ⁴⁵
0830L-1000L	STS teams arrive at Sendai airport and assist Japanese personnel in clearing the first 5000 feet of runway. At 1000L Combat

³⁸ Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, "Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC)," 23 Apr 2011.

³⁹ Briefing (U), Dr. Robert Sligh, 5 AF/HO, "USFJ Operation Tomodachi Timeline 11-25 March," 1 Jun 2011.

⁴⁰ Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, "Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC)," 23 Apr 2011.

⁴¹ Report (U), Maj Theresa Murphy, 18 OG/DS, "18th Operations Group Monthly Activity Report," Mar 2011; Report (U), Maj Theresa Murphy, 18 OG/DS, "18th Operations Group Monthly Activity Report," Apr 2011.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, "Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC)," 23 Apr 2011.

⁴⁴ Interview (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, with US Department of State, Foreign Press Center, "Reopening of the Sendai Airport," 15 Apr 2011; Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, "Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC)," 23 Apr 2011.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

	controllers established air traffic control and declared the runway open for C-130s. ⁴⁶
16 March 2011 / 1158L	A 17th Special Operations Squadron MC-130P Combat Shadow delivers the first HADR supplies into Matsushima AB. ⁴⁷
1430L	The first fixed wing aircraft lands at Sendai Airport from Yokota AB. The MC-130H (Call sign GOOSE 56) from the 1st Special Operations Squadron delivered a 10K forklift to aid in downloading follow on aircraft. ⁴⁸
17 March 2011	353rd Special Operations Group personnel verified that level one trauma patients could be handled at Tohoku University Hospital. ⁴⁹
18 March 2011	The 909th Air Refueling Squadron delivered Potassium iodine pills from Hickam AFB to Yokota AB Japan. ⁵⁰
19 March 2011	Members of the 909th ARS flew US Navy nuclear biological test personnel to Atsugi NAS Japan. ⁵¹
20 March 2011	Japanese civilians and US Forces cleared the full length and width of the Sendai runway. At 1429L the first C-17 Globemaster III touched down at Sendai. A second C-17 landed at 1802L. With the runway at 100% Sendai could handle C-17, C-5, and Boeing 747s. ⁵²
21 March 2011	A 909th ARS crew flew nine pregnant mothers from Atsugi NAS to Kadena AB. ⁵³
22 March 2011	Engineers from Kadena Air Base restore Misawa Air Base back to

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, "Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC)," 23 Apr 2011.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Report (U), 909 ARS/DO, "Operation TOMODACHI," 30 Mar 2011.

⁵¹ Report (U), Maj Theresa Murphy, 18OG/DS, "18th Operations Group Monthly Activity Report," Mar 2011; Report (U), Maj Theresa Murphy, 18OG/DS, "18th Operations Group Monthly Activity Report," Apr 2011.

⁵² Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, "Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC)," 23 Apr 2011.

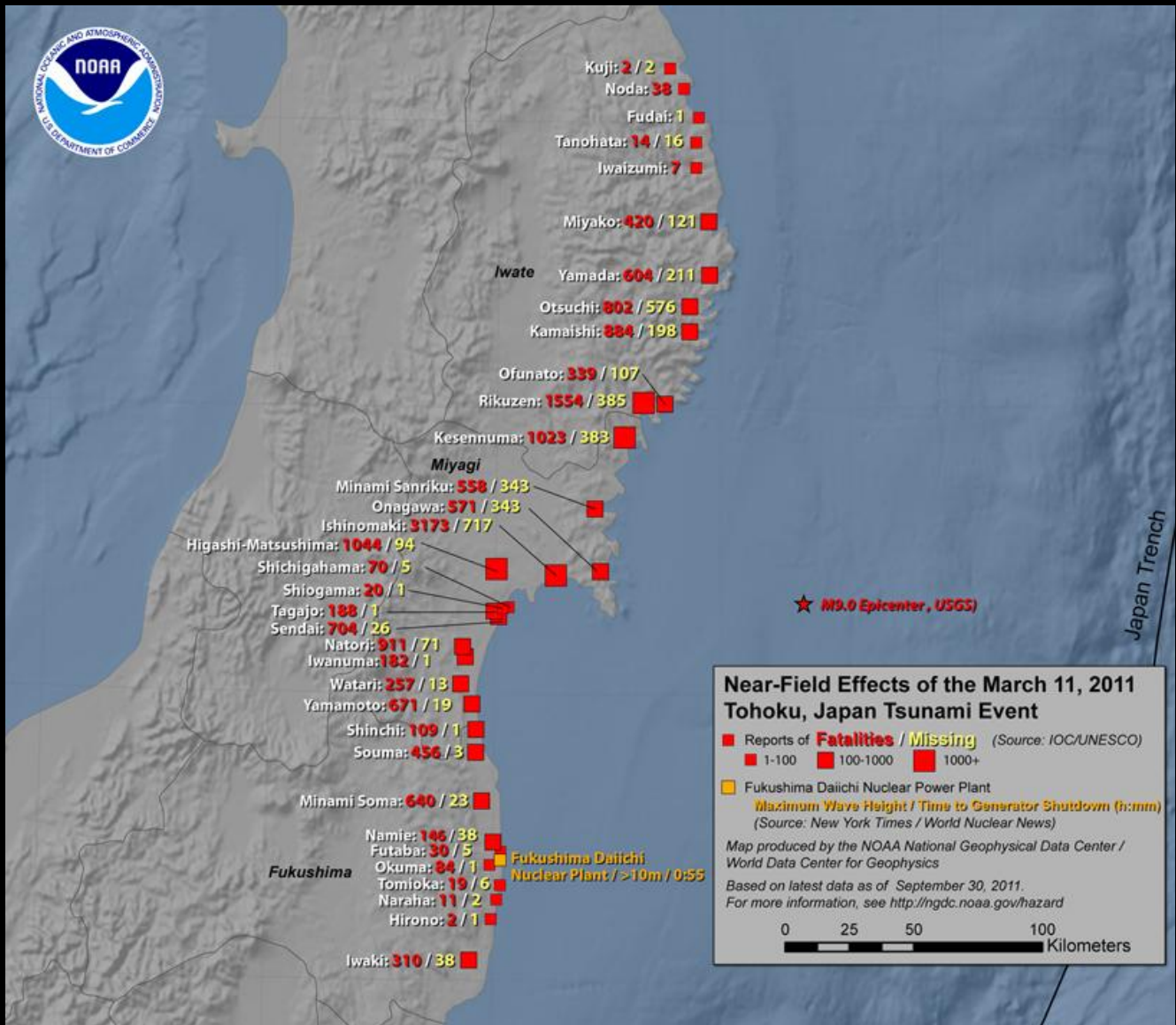
⁵³ Report (U), Maj Theresa Murphy, 18OG/DS, "18th Operations Group Monthly Activity Report," Mar 2011; Report (U), Maj Theresa Murphy, 18OG/DS, "18th Operations Group Monthly Activity Report," Apr 2011.

	100% commercial power. ⁵⁴
4 April 2011	Jolly Green HH-60G Pave Hawks and MC-130P Combat Shadows from Kadena Air Base are released to return to home station. ⁵⁵
13 April 2011	First commercial flight arrives at Sendai Airport. Japanese officials estimated at least five years to reopen Sendai. The team of Japanese and US armed forces service members had Sendai ready for commercial operations in just over a month. ⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Briefing (U), Dr. Robert Sligh, 5 AF/HO, "USFJ Operation Tomodachi Timeline 11-25 March," 1 Jun 2011.

⁵⁵ Article (U), SrA Sara Csurilla, 18 WG/PA, "Kadena's 33rd RQS return home," 6 Apr 2011.

⁵⁶ Briefing (U), Col Robert Toth, 353 SOG/CC, to ADM Eric Olson, PACOM, "Joint Force Special Operations Component (JFSOC)," 23 Apr 2011.



Source: NOAA casualty map depicting the effects of the Tohoku Tsunami event as of 30 September 2011.

733 AMS/18 LRS**AIRLIFT SUPPORT SUMMARY**

CARGO/HADR	QUANTITY
WATER	20 PALLETS
BLANKETS	12 PALLETS (8,300 BLANKETS)
EMPTY PALLETS	34 PALLETS
COMPUTERS	2 PALLETS
GENERATORS	21 PALLETS
INDUSTRIAL GENERATORS	10 PALLETS
ELECTRICAL CABLE	3 PALLETS
MEDICAL SUPPLIES	2 PALLETS
PLASTIC	2 PALLETS
GRADERS	2 ROLLING STOCK (VEHICLE)
QUAD CONEX	20 PALLETS
ECU CONTAINER	2 PALLETS
FLOOD LIGHTS	4 PALLETS
EXTENDABLE BOOM FORKLIFT	1 ROLLING STOCK (VEHICLE)
COMMUNICATIONS SATELITE	1 ROLLING STOCK
GETT POWER GENERATORS	2 ROLLING STOCK
WATER DISTROBUTION TRUCK	1 ROLLING STOCK (VEHICLE)
FARP CART	1 ROLLING STOCK
ISU CONTAINER	3 PALLETS
RESCUE EQUIPMENT	7 PALLETS
COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT	2 PALLETS
FIRE EXTINGUISHERS	1 PALLET

18th WING

(31ST AND 33RD RESCUE SQUADRONS)

33/31 RQS	QUANTITY
NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT DEPLOYED	5
PERSONNEL DEPLOYED	26
SAVES	1
MISSION FLOWN	55
AIR SAMPLING MISSIONS	18
HOURS FLOWN ISO/HADR	85
SURVIVORS AIDED	10,000
HADR DELIVERED	3,000lbs

(909TH AIR REFUELING SQUADRON)

909 ARS	QUANTITY
LAUNCHES	12
AEROMEDICAL EVACUATIONS	26
PASSENGERS FLOWN	132

**353RD SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP
(17TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON)**

SORTIES FLOWN	92
HOURS FLOWN	135.2
HADR DELIVERED	621,300lbs
HELICOPTERS REFUELED	2
TRANSPORTED RELIEF WORKERS	350

(1ST SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON)

SORTIES FLOWN	40
HOURS FLOWN	74.7
HADR DELIVERED	277,400lbs
TRANSPORTED RELIEF WORKERS	98

(320TH SPECIAL TACTICS SQUADRON)

CONTROLLED AIRCRAFT	170
CONTROLLED HADR	2,500,000lbs
CONTROLLED FUEL DISTROBUTION	185,000lbs
ARRIVAL OF RELIEF WORKERS	618

**UNITED STATES NAVY
PATROL SQUADRON FOUR (VP-4)
FOR OPERATION TOMODACHI**

VP-4	QUANTITY
VP-4 MISSIONS FLOWN ISO TOMODACHI	36
HOURS FLOWN FROM KADENA AB	130.1
MISSIONS FLOWN FROM KADENA AB	18
HOURS FLOWN FROM MISAWA AB	124.6
SORTIES FLOWN FROM MISAWA AB	18
TOTAL HOURS FLOWN ISO TOMODACHI	254.7

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