

## OPERATION PAKISTAN ASSIST



1. At 0852 h 08 October 2005, an earthquake with an epicentre 18 km NW of Dhanni and measuring 7.6 on the Richter Scale devastated northern Pakistan (PAK). It was estimated 85 percent of buildings were either destroyed or were assessed as structurally uninhabitable in the affected zone following the earthquake. In some areas entire villages were levelled as the buildings collapsed on site. The majority of the road infrastructure was also damaged by landslides generated by the earthquake, isolating many villages. The most severely affected provinces were Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) and North West Frontier (NWF). The casualties from the earthquake was 73,000 dead, 70,000 injured and up to 3.5 million left homeless.

2. The Government of Australia (GOAS) subsequently approached the Government of Pakistan (GOPAK) with an offer to provide humanitarian assistance to the disaster relief effort. The GOAS announced the deployment of an ADF medical capability, including an aviation force element of four S-70A9 Blackhawk helicopters and supporting personnel, to PAK to provide health care to those affected by the earthquake as part of a Whole of Government (WhOG) response. Operation PAKISTAN ASSIST (OPPA) was the code name for the ADF contribution of 150 personnel.

3. Dhanni was identified as the location for JTF 632 to provide humanitarian aid in the form of primary health care. Dhanni is located in the Neelum Valley, approximately 100 km NNE of Islamabad in the Muzaffarabad District. This area was also affected by over 1800 aftershocks since the earthquake, many measuring over 5.0 on the Richter Scale. Casualty estimates for the Dhanni region were 800 dead, 700 serious casualties requiring evacuation and hospitalisation, and up to 15,000 people left homeless. The Neelum Valley has a population of 453,857 – 383,180 of which were affected by the earthquake and a local health infrastructure assessed as being destroyed in the earthquake.

4. The aviation task group operated from Qasim Army Aviation Airbase, Rawalpindi, 11 km south of Islamabad, and was collocated with the logistic task group. However, the JTF 632 Headquarters, medical and communications task groups were located at Camp Bradman, Dhanni.

5. The primary JTF 632 force multipliers were the health and aviation task groups and their respective rates of effort were:

- a. **Aviation.** 890 hours flown, a rate four times greater than normal, 2,600 VIPs transported, over 500,000 lbs of cargo moved and 42 priority one or two aeromedical evacuations executed.
- b. **Health.** 5,678 presentations, 2,026 immunisations delivered in accordance with the Government of Pakistan Expanded Immunisation Program, and four babies delivered.

6. In February 2006, JTF 632 was also tasked with the responsibility for coordinating all US military and ADF relief efforts in Pakistan, until the operation ceased. This included the redeployment of all respective force elements.

