

RELEASE IN PART
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Sent: Thursday, January 14, 2010 6:40 PM
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Subject: Advice based on experience

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Cheryl and Raj--

I received the following advice from a retired general w experience in disaster assistance. I asked both Gates and Mullen about the 3 star HQ and they both told me that's what they were doing. If it would be helpful to talk w him, pls let me know:

Based on experience in Hurricane Andrew in early 90s and Katrina recommend you advocate a 3 star military hqs to deploy on the ground to "take charge" of the relief effort by plugging into Haiti's relief hqs. Haitians as you know do not have the infrastructure nor the communications system to be effective on their own. Also, as we discovered in Andrew and Katrina the host leaders are psychologically and emotionally overwhelmed because they and their families and friends are directly impacted by the disaster. We can also help organize the international relief effort which if not done becomes chaotic and simply not effective.

These first 72/96 hrs are most critical for preserving life. In Katrina almost all the deaths in New Orleans occurred after the water rose and trapped people in their homes. We failed to respond quickly enough with the right equipment and sufficient personnel to save the thousands we lost. Similarly, in Haiti we have Haitians trapped in buildings and a focused effort with right HQs, sufficient equipment and the correct sensors can make a difference. Its the SCALE of the disaster that is so overwhelming, yet underappreciated, and usually our efforts while helpful(some airplanes, troops, ships etc) can only work at the margin. A major HQs with advance assessment teams making specific requests for capabilities and resources, then organizing and directing the effort is key to truly making a difference. Haitians should remain in charge obviously but in fact because of experience and resources we would drive much of the relief effort. Am not trying to stick my nose where not wanted but we have learned a great deal about disaster relief and we have a tendency to relearn some of the major lessons.