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UNJLC Pakistan Earthquake BULLETIN No. 17 (Day 39)

As of 1800 hours local, Wednesday, November 16th, 2005

UNJLC Bulletins aim to provide a clear and concise regular overview of the situation as it exists in the earthquake-affected area of Pakistan and contiguous areas with regards to logistics matters affecting relief work by the humanitarian community. They focus on practical issues that affect the welfare of the afflicted populace and related humanitarian work such as the status of transport routes for humanitarian supplies and personnel into the area, relevant administrative or commercial developments, air (including strategic airlift and helicopter operations), Customs and immigration matters, and availability of accommodation and fuels. They further seek to identify major issues for the humanitarian community and other interested parties, to provide relevant background and constructive recommendations on current issues, and to alert responsible parties to emerging issues. This bulletin was produced daily from October 17th – 22nd but as the emergency has matured is now produced on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, until further notice.

Summary and Highlights

- Air safety concerns and truck traffic congestion are limiting operations at Muzaffarabad. Several actors have suspended aviation operations to the airfield until the matter is resolved.
- Pakistani Army mules may be available on application to humanitarian agencies for access into difficult area
- Fuels have emerged as a critical logistical element with the intensive use of helicopters in the area. Forward basing of fuels is vital for efficient, economical and effective operations. Domestic fuel for heating and the supply of Diesel may also become issues.

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1. Security Brief

Following the explosion in Karachi that cost the lives of several Pakistani citizens, the UN Department for Safety and Security encourages all relief organisations to be particularly careful and avoid potentially high profile targets, particularly those linked to western interests.

Sectarian tensions are an ongoing issue following violence on November 12th in the Lahore area which saw the burning of several churches and related buildings. Faith-based NGOs should be especially vigilant.

Security also continues to be a concern in Muzaffarabad following clashes between two national relief organisations and also between the local authorities and people displaced by the earthquake.

2. Field Co-ordination: Muzaffarabad

Air Safety: Concerns over **Muzaffarabad** airfield safety have arisen as it has become more active without corresponding increases in airfield management and air traffic control. This has been exacerbated by the operational challenges of the two heavy-lift Abbottabad-based UNHAS Mi-26 helicopters with their powerful downdraught, requiring large areas of clearance for take-off and landing. As a result, at least one foreign military involved in the relief effort have temporarily suspended air operations out of the Muzaffarabad airfield.

DFID Chinook Operation: The start of the operation from November 15th through 20th by the DFID-provided Royal Air Force Chinooks (see Bulletin 15) to lift about 1000 tonnes of relief supplies from Muzaffarabad to forward areas was postponed owing to maintenance requirements. However, the operation has been extended to compensate for this unexpected delay.

Fixed Wing Operations: At the request of rotary wing aircraft operators, the Pakistani Government has suspended any fixed wing operations into Muzaffarabad airfield in order to safely improve the rate of helicopter airfield operations. It is now a helicopter-only facility.

Hub Capacity: Concerns continue over the logistical capacity of the Muzaffarabad hub. It is now becoming particularly congested, creating bottlenecks and reducing turnaround time. With most humanitarian operations, including warehousing, run out of the airport, WFP report that trucks are arriving unannounced at the airfield and causing congestion. WFP have requested that all agencies should provide at least 48 hours advance notice of the expected arrival of trucks at the airfield or other warehouse facilities. Given the limited warehousing space and labour available, such notice is necessary to allow planning of storage space, loading and unloading.

3. Winter Sustainment Planning

The UNJLC DFID Plans Team has provided an update on the information requirements for the last mile/Forward Area Support Site concept and underlying plan as outlined in Bulletin 15 of November 11th, item 1.

The finalisation of the plan will require further input and commitment from relief agencies. To this end the team will continue a programme of visiting the key humanitarian hubs to collect additional information from current field operations and feedback from agencies. All agencies are encouraged to participate in this process.

ABOUT UNJLC: UNJLC is an inter-agency facility reporting to the Islamabad-based Humanitarian Coordinator for the South Asia (Pakistan and India) Earthquake and strategically to the Inter Agency Standing Committee. Its mandate is to coordinate and optimise logistics capabilities of humanitarian organisations in large scale emergencies. UNJLC operates under the custodianship of WFP, which is responsible for the administrative and financial management of the unit. UNJLC is funded from voluntary contributions that are channelled through WFP. The UNJLC project document for the Pakistan Earthquake can be viewed at the UNJLC website (www.unjlc.org).

4. Last Mile Logistics: Army Mules

The Pakistani Army Animal Transport Units (ATU's) have available approximately five animal transport regiments and a further five animal transport squadrons, totalling about 600 mules. Subject to their availability, humanitarian agencies can request the use of these animals through the local Pakistani military liaison officer.



Pakistani Army Animal Transport Units are vital to logistics in the mountains. Picture courtesy BBC

The ATU's have historically been vital to both military and civilian logistics in the area. More than 2000 were reportedly deployed before the earthquake. They can navigate routes that even four-wheel-drive vehicles cannot, traversing up to 26km in a day with loads of up to 72kg each. Capable of operating above 8500 feet – where reduced oxygen levels severely limit the amount that humans can carry – up to the snowline, they can be the vital last link in the humanitarian logistics chain for the most remote settlements.

5. Fuels: Transport and Heating

Fuel, particularly the supply of aviation fuel, has been an issue restricting the forward-basing of helicopters north of Islamabad, nearer to the affected areas. This should improve today with the arrival at Abbottabad of a fuel bowser generously provided by DFID.

Forward-basing of fuels is vital to maximising the utility of both air and land transport assets. If helicopters can refuel at forward locations, they spend less time shuttling to bases to refuel and have less need to carry a full fuel load. Similarly, if trucks can refuel *en route* or at destination, they can carry more cargo.

Fuels will also be important for heating in the winter. With many shelter, food and medical needs now being met, heating – whether wood, LPG or kerosene - is recognised as the next greatest humanitarian need. The Pakistani military reportedly sees a need to provide at least 200,000 oil heaters to survivors.

UNJLC plans to conduct a fuel survey of the affected area to identify potential bottlenecks in meeting the needs of the affected populace and the relief effort, and to identify recommendations to make the strategic management of fuels more efficient and effective.

6. Eastern Access: Line of Control

Over the past three days, Pakistan and India opened the final two of five agreed crossing points along the Kashmir Line of Control. The first of these is the southernmost of the five, at **Tattapani-Mendhar**. The most recent – opened today – is at **Hajipur-Uri**, on the Jhelum River and about 80km south-east of Muzaffarabad via Haitan. This is near to the **Chakoti-Uri** crossing that was opened around November 9th.

The other two crossing points now open are **Nauseri-Teethwal** and **Rowalakhot-Poonch**. The five points are along an 80km front. Relief supplies are understood to be crossing over, but in token quantities. Some of the crossings are little more than pedestrian suspension bridges across rivers; others have good road access or are on bus routes between the two sides of Kashmir.

UNJLC will attempt to monitor the customs and protocol situation of these access points. Given the political context and distance from major supply hubs in India, it is not yet recommended that agencies develop logistical plans that may be overly dependent on these crossings.

7. Mapping: UNHAS Route Map

UNJLC has developed a downloadable A4-sized map containing the routes flown by the regular UNHAS Mi-8 helicopter passenger service in the earthquake-affected area. See www.unjlc.org/pakistan/maps/. This will be updated as the schedule changes.



BULLETIN ENDS

Contact information and addresses: UNJLC Pakistan Earthquake is located in the WFP Afghanistan Liaison office, **House 3, Street 2, F-8/3, Islamabad** alongside **UN Humanitarian Air Services**. Fax: +92 (0)51 285-0003. A presence is maintained in the UN Emergency Response Centre, UNICEF Building, **90 Marghalla Road, F-8/2, Islamabad**.

Generic e-mail address for UNJLC Pakistan: pakistan@unjlc.org. For matters related to air: pakistan.air@unjlc.org

Detailed information on the clusters being used to manage the humanitarian response, including the Logistics Cluster in which UNJLC plays a key role, is available on www.un.org.pk. Daily situation reports from the UN Emergency Response Centre – Islamabad are available on www.reliefweb.int.