

OPERATION TOMODACHI:

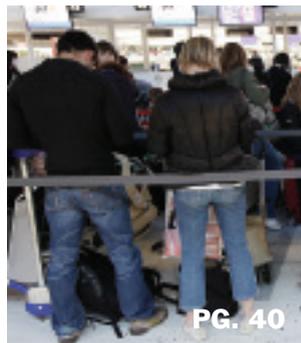
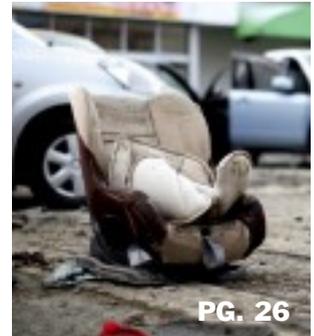
The Great East Japan Earthquake





OPERATION TOMODACHI: The Great East Japan Earthquake

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LEFT PAGE:
Spc. Christina Lee, 25, (right) and Lance Cpl. Dylan Messner, 20, along with other Marines and soldiers from Okinawa, Camp Fuji and Camp Zama, help clean up Minato Elementary School in Ishinomaki on April 2. NATHAN A. BAILEY | STARS AND STRIPES

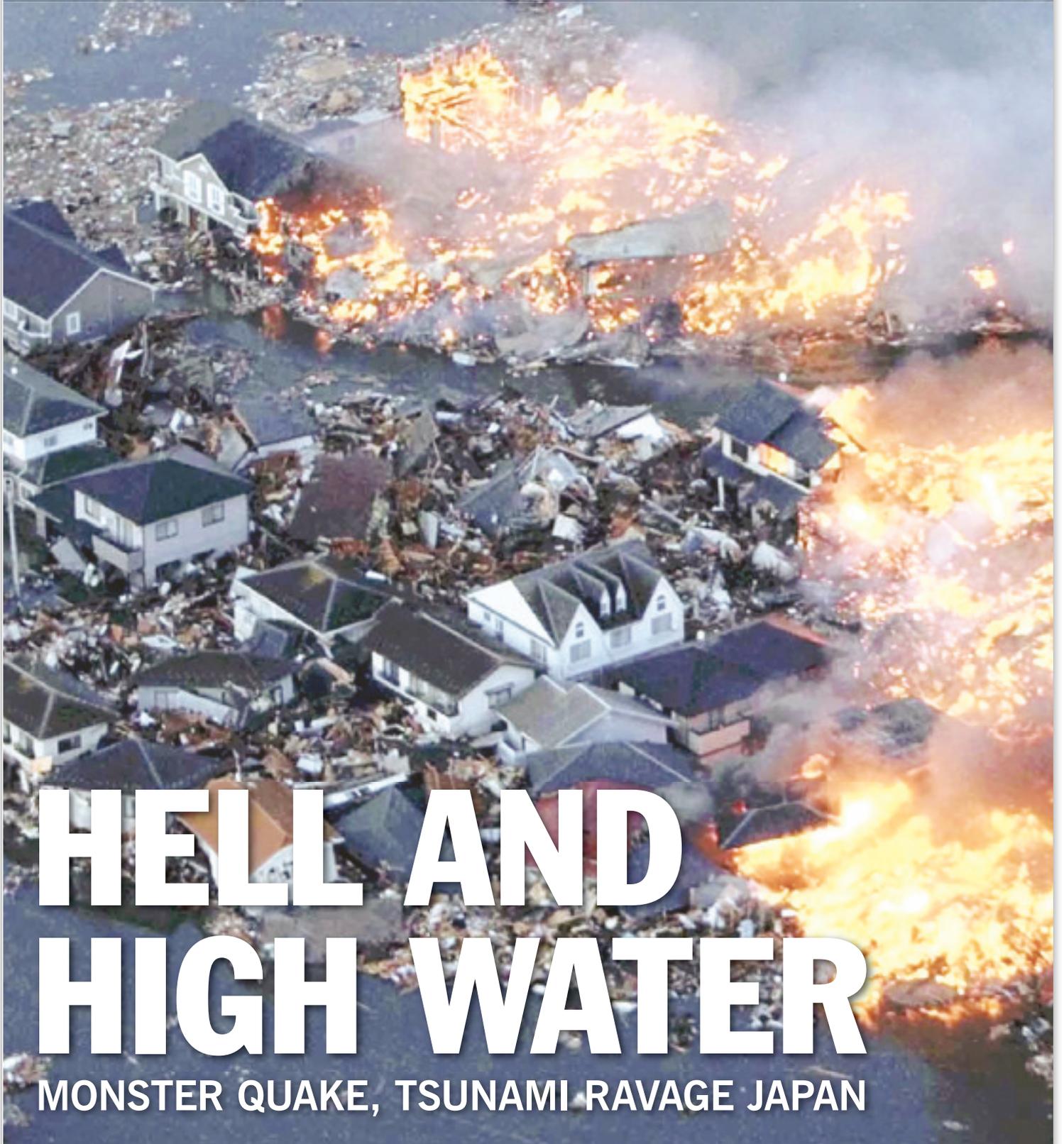
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HELL AND HIGH WATER

MONSTER QUAKE, TSUNAMI RAVAGE JAPAN

■ Hundreds feared dead in northeastern areas

■ U.S. military personnel jump-start relief operations

■ Nuclear power plant in emergency shutdown

Full coverage, Pages 2-6

FRONT PAGE, MARCH 12, 2011: Houses burn Friday after the Natori River was flooded by a tsunami in Natori City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan.

Front Page Photo: YASUSHI KANNO | THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN/AP

Hell and High Water

Even before Washington and Tokyo began detailing coordinated relief efforts, U.S. military personnel, Defense Department civilians and their family members in Japan sprang into action, setting the tone for Operation Tomodachi.

Immediately after the quake, nearly a dozen commercial flights were diverted from Narita International Airport to Yokota Air Base, just west of central Tokyo. Military personnel and civilian volunteers fed and sheltered more than 500 stranded Delta Airlines passengers until their flights to Narita resumed the next day.

By day two of the catastrophe, U.S. military preparations to provide whatever assistance Japan required were well underway throughout the Pacific. Navy assets in the region, including the USS Ronald

Reagan, USS Tortuga, USS Essex and U.S. 7th Fleet flagship, the USS Blue Ridge, were redirected from their then current locations to Japan. Okinawa-based units such as the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force and 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit were en route to key locations with manpower and medical supplies.

Sailors and civilian volunteers at Naval Air Facility Atsugi collected and packaged supplies for delivery to quake-ravaged areas. Units from Kadena Air Base and Yokota — where Operation Tomodachi was headquartered — ensured humanitarian aid was quickly and steadily delivered.

MARCH 11-12 | Flights Diverted to Yokota



Stranded Delta passengers eat boxed meals at the Taiyo Community Center after their flight was diverted to Yokota Air Base when the March 11 earthquake shut down Narita International Airport.
GRANT OKUBO | STARS AND STRIPES



Passengers board their plane at Yokota Air Base on March 12 to resume a flight to Narita International Airport after an overnight stay when two airliners were diverted to the military base because of the earthquake.
GRANT OKUBO | STARS AND STRIPES



Stranded Delta Air Lines passengers fold their borrowed blankets and prepare to depart Yokota Air Base's Taiyo Community Center, where they spent the night after two Narita International Airport-bound airliners were diverted to the air base due to the March 11 quake.
GRANT OKUBO | STARS AND STRIPES

Cpl. Michael Phillips (left) and Lance Cpl. Jesse Frields tighten down the straps on a pallet of medical supplies to be loaded on a KC-130J cargo plane at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni on March 12 for relief efforts in tsunami-ravaged northeastern Japan. Four KC-130J cargo planes and four CH-46E helicopters loaded with 50,000 pounds of food, water, vehicles and medical supplies left the air station that day.
MATT ORR | STARS AND STRIPES





Col. Craig Timberlake (front), commanding officer for the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade, and other senior Marine Corps and Navy leadership board a KC-130J cargo plane laden with medical supplies, food, water and vehicles at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma on March 12. The group flew to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni a day after the devastating the Great East Japan earthquake and ensuing tsunami to see what support Marines and Navy personnel from Okinawa could provide for relief efforts.
MATT ORR | STARS AND STRIPES



Marines from the 7th Communications Battalion prepare to board a C130-J cargo plane at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni bound for Naval Air Facility Atsugi on March 14. Their mission was to set up communications at a new command post for 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force Forward Command Element relief operations.
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March 14 | Sailors Prep Donations



Naval Air Facility Atsugi volunteers prepare clothes and other essentials on April 14 for transport. NAF Atsugi sailors and dependents donated and packed thousands of pounds of goods for delivery to the hardest hit victims of the 9.0-magnitude Great East Japan Earthquake and ensuing tsunami. ERIK SLAVIN | STARS AND STRIPES



Petty Officer 1st Class Matthew Marusin, of Yuba City, Calif., passes clothes to another sailor for packing at Naval Air Facility Atsugi on March 14.
ERIK SLAVIN | STARS AND STRIPES



Petty Officer 3rd Class Clarence Young hauls supplies for packing aboard helicopters at Naval Air Facility Atsugi on March 14.
ERIK SLAVIN | STARS AND STRIPES



MARCH 16 | Airmen Prep for Support

Senior Airman Ramon Mortensen, of the 17th Special Operation Squadron from Kadena Air Base, does a pre-flight oxygen console check on board an MC-130P before taking off to deliver humanitarian aid in Sendai on March 16. Mortensen, the loadmaster on board, said he was anxious to get out and support the recovery of Japan: “This is great – I’m just glad I could be doing something to help.”
GRANT OKUBO | STARS AND STRIPES



Senior Airmen Stephen Prentiss (center) and Jesse Chism (right), of the 353rd Special Operations Maintenance Squadron, set up an MC-130P to receive relief supplies at Yokota Air Base on March 16.
T.D. FLACK | STARS AND STRIPES





Christopher Cebelak, of the 353rd Special Operations Maintenance Squadron, prepares on March 16 an MC-130P to receive supplies headed to the earthquake disaster zone in Sendai. Cebelak and his fellow crew members were loading supplies at Yokota Air Base near central Tokyo.
T.D. FLACK | STARS AND STRIPES



The coastal city of Ofunato looks like a war zone on March 15, four days after the Great East Japan Earthquake and follow-on tsunami. **T.D. FLACK** | STARS AND STRIPES

A massive barrel rests atop two cars on a street in Tagajo on March 13 as the glow from a burning oil refinery lights the background. **NATHAN A. BAILEY** | STARS AND STRIPES





TOP LEFT: Workers hurry to load cargo trucks with supplies bound for evacuation sites throughout the area at the Sendai Prefectural Headquarters Building in Sendai. **NATHAN A. BAILEY | STARS AND STRIPES**

TOP RIGHT: Japan Self-Defense Forces members coordinate relief efforts at the Sendai command and control center on March 15. **NATHAN A. BAILEY | STARS AND STRIPES**

BOTTOM LEFT: Shoji Saito, who was staying in an evacuation shelter on March 15, tells how he and his wife narrowly escaped death in the tsunami: They were driving in their car when the quake struck and floodwaters started to rise. They tried unsuccessfully to break a window to get out and had all but given up hope when another car smashed into them. It broke a window and allowed them to escape. Saito added that he was happy to be alive. **NATHAN A. BAILEY | STARS AND STRIPES**

BOTTOM RIGHT: Workers at the command and control center for relief efforts in Sendai worked furiously but were orderly on March 15. **NATHAN A. BAILEY | STARS AND STRIPES**

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