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International Disaster Assistance: Cost to the United States of Six Recent Crises

**Lois McHugh
Analyst in International Relations
Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division**

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INTERNATIONAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE: COST TO THE UNITED STATES OF SIX RECENT CRISES

SUMMARY

The years since the end of the Cold War have been marked by a tremendous increase in the size, speed, and complexity of manmade international disasters (civil wars and insurgencies) in addition to the continued need to respond to natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes. Correspondingly, donor countries have scrambled to provide adequate money, personnel, and materials to provide assistance to the victims. The size and scope of U.S. activities in response to disasters, particularly by U.S. military forces, has grown dramatically and disaster assistance has come from many sources within the Federal budget. While the public continues to support a substantial U.S. response to disasters in other countries, the foreign aid budget, from which disaster relief funds are allocated, has become increasingly controversial in Congress.

Because disaster money comes from several agencies, and from several accounts within each agency, it is often difficult to obtain a total cost of providing assistance in a disaster. This paper pulls together the total costs of providing disaster assistance in six recent or ongoing disasters. One, the 1991 Bangladesh cyclone was a natural disaster. The others are so called "complex emergencies", disasters which include elements of natural disasters, warfare, and massive human rights violations and which require a multifaceted response.

- Bangladesh Cyclone (April 30-June 15,1991)...\$15.7 million
- Iraq-Post Gulf War Emergency (March 27-July 15, 1991)...\$443 million
- Somalia-Civil Strife/Famine (1991-1994)...\$1.77 billion
- Former Yugoslavia (1992-present)...\$964.2 million
- Rwanda-Civil Strife (May 1994-present)...\$657.7 million
- Haiti Emergency (1994)...\$442.7 million

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INTRODUCTION

The years since the end of the Cold War have been marked by a tremendous increase in the size, speed, and complexity of manmade international disasters (civil wars and insurgencies) in addition to the continued need to respond to natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes. Donor countries have scrambled to provide adequate money, personnel, and materials to assist the victims quickly and effectively. The size and scope of U.S. activities in response to disasters, particularly by U.S. military forces, have grown significantly. Disaster assistance is also provided by Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State. While the public continues to support a substantial U.S. response to disasters in other countries, the foreign aid budget, from which disaster relief funds are allocated, has become increasingly controversial in Congress.

Some of the controversy involves the growth of the role of U.S. military forces, and the expansion of DOD efforts to train and use personnel in disaster response activities. A particular concern is the use of U.S. military personnel for relief in areas with ongoing conflict. Others express concern that the ever-increasing amount of money devoted to immediate response to disasters leaves less to address those development programs which in the long run could prevent disasters. Some are also concerned about the broadening scope of activities included in disaster assistance, such as providing police, fire, municipal agency training, voting and election monitoring, and other activities, which often prolong the disaster response.

Because disaster assistance comes from several agencies, and from several accounts within each agency, it is often difficult to provide a total cost to the United States of responding to disasters. This paper pulls together the total disaster assistance costs of six recent crises in Bangladesh, Iraq, Somalia, Former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Haiti.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. response to disasters takes many forms and funding comes from many sources. U.S. assistance to stem the spread of the Ebola Virus in Zaire, for example, consisted of medical supplies and experts funded by USAID, while assistance to the Rwandan refugee flight included both military and civilian personnel, transportation, equipment, and food supplies. U.S. agencies also respond to disasters in widely different ways. Contributions to disasters from the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the Department

of State Migration and Refugee accounts are generally provided as cash and channelled through private non governmental agencies and international organizations such as UNICEF and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. OFDA also provides expertise such as Disaster Assistance Response team (DART) to coordinate assistance and provide communication and other technical support. Food for Peace contributions are primarily in the form of food, with some additional funds to pay for transporting commodities in U.S. vessels. (For example, in FY1994, \$41.3 million was provided for the transportation of \$1.4 billion in emergency foodstuffs.) Department of Defense aid is in the form of personnel, military equipment, and military transport, and is measured only in incremental costs....that is, the additional costs incurred by the military above normal levels, such as increased maintenance for vehicles, above-normal fuel use and replenishment of supplies provided from military stockpiles. In recent years, the DOD expenditures have become a larger part of U.S. emergency relief responses, even though DOD cost calculations are limited to incremental costs.

Determining when a disaster begins and ends is an arbitrary decision. U.S. involvement in disasters often lasts long beyond the end of the initial emergency phase. For purposes of determining disaster costs in this paper, the disaster assistance phase begins with the declaration of emergency by the United States. The figures included cover the cost to the United States of responding to the initial humanitarian emergency phase of the disaster. The end of disaster relief efforts, however, varies for each of the six cases examined in this report. For three of the disasters (Bangladesh floods, post conflict Iraqi emergency, and Somalia civil strife/famine) the aid effort terminated at the end of the emergency phase which required a substantial buildup of assistance, including a major military component. For Haiti, amounts are limited to FY1994 because very little funding prior to that year or in the year since has come from disaster assistance accounts. For former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, funding continues to the most recent period. Calculations made in this paper do not include bilateral economic aid programs in place before the disaster occurred, nor bilateral aid or peacekeeping programs that continued after the end of the emergency. It also should be noted that the total amount of assistance funds is subject to change even years after the emergency due to auditing, late billing, or other normal accounting adjustments.

Data Sources: The U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), the coordinator of the U.S. response to both natural and man-made disasters, has provided the non-defense information included in this paper. OFDA produces situation reports on most disasters in which the United States is active. They contain more detailed information on these humanitarian emergencies than is included here. Information on Department of Defense expenditures was provided by the Department of Defense Comptroller and only cover years through FY1994.

The following abbreviations are used in this paper:

- OFDA** The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in USAID. Established in 1961 to provide a coordinated, quick U.S. response to natural and man-made disasters.
- FFP** The Food for Peace Program, established in 1954 as part of the Department of Agriculture, commonly known as the PL 480 program, now part of USAID. Title II authorizes the donation of agricultural commodities to meet emergency food needs.
- PRM** The recently renamed Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration in the Department of State was established in 1979 as the Bureau of Refugee Programs. This Bureau provides assistance to refugees through the Migration and Assistance account and the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund, established in 1962.
- DOD** The Department of Defense has provided humanitarian assistance in disasters throughout U.S. history. Much of this has been provided on an ad hoc basis at the request of the President. In 1985, the DOD created a special office for emergencies -- the Office of Humanitarian Assistance. It is now called the Office of Humanitarian and Refugee Affairs, within the Directorate of Global Affairs. (HRA)

The other abbreviations used stand for the various offices of USAID, which use funds from bilateral development assistance accounts for disasters. The USAID Office of Transition Initiative, OTI, was established in FY1994 to help countries recovering from disaster to return to a development path.

BANGLADESH-CYCLONE, APRIL 30-JUNE 15, 1991

	FY1991
OFDA	\$ 4,670,702.
FFP	\$ 1,871,500.
Other U.S. Govt.	\$ 2,014,000.
Total non-DOD	\$ 8,556,202.
DOD	\$ 7,100,000.
Total with DOD	\$15,656,202.

On April 30, 1991, a cyclone swept across the southeastern coast of Bangladesh causing floods and other storm damage. By May 21, the official Bangladesh government death toll was 138,866 and the injured numbered 138,849. Over 13.4 million people were affected. OFDA funds were used to provide water purification supplies and oral rehydration packets (ORS) to voluntary

agencies and Bangladesh government agencies, and funds for stepped up production of ORS in Bangladesh. The Department of Defense provided relief supplies, medical personnel and construction, air traffic and disaster relief forces. DOD also provided transportation of relief goods. By the end of May, only the very destitute remained in temporary shelters. A U.N. task force investigating the cyclone's impact estimated that the cost of reconstruction and

rehabilitation would be \$1.78 billion. USAID bilateral aid programs are involved in the reconstruction.

IRAQ-POST GULF WAR EMERGENCY, MARCH 27-JULY 15, 1991

	FY1991
OFDA	\$ 13,331,334.
FFP	\$ 36,973,000.
PRM	\$ 67,550,334.
Total non-DOD	\$117,854,000.
DOD	\$325,000,000.
Total with DOD	\$442,954,334.

Following the cessation of hostilities at the end of the Gulf War on March 3, 1991, Iraq Kurds in northern Iraq, and Shiites in southern Iraq rebelled against Iraqi government military forces in these regions. The uprising was short lived, and during the final week of March and the first week of April, over 400,000 Kurds fled to the inhospitable, largely inaccessible mountainous border areas separating Iraq and Turkey.

About one million other Iraqis moved into mountainous areas bordering northern Iran. At the time, this was the fastest large movement of people in the post World War II time period. The Center for Disease Control estimates that 6,700 people, mostly children under 5, died between March 29 and May 25, 1991. In the south, 70,000 Shiites fled into southern Iran, about 30,000 sought shelter in the security zone along the border with Kuwait, and many thousands more were displaced in the marshy areas of southern Iraq. Although the relief effort was multilateral, U.S. Government relief activities focused on those Kurds who had fled to the Turkish border area or remained inside northern Iraq. U.S. forces in southern Iraq also provided aid to Shiites in the south. Very little U.S. aid was provided to Kurds or Shiites in Iran. The U.S. provided food, shelter and medical assistance largely by military airlift and later by truck, and U.S. military personnel built camps, moved refugees, and assisted humanitarian agency personnel in providing assistance. Finally, U.S. military personnel built camps in northern Iraq and moved the refugees back to their own areas. The emergency humanitarian effort ended on July 15, when the operation was turned over to the United Nations. The plight of the Kurds in northern Iraq is still unsettled and U.S. military and humanitarian activity continues.

SOMALIA-CIVIL STRIFE/FAMINE, 1991-1994

A civil war in Somalia culminated in the overthrow of the government of Mohammed Siad Barre in January 1991. With no functioning government, the country quickly declined amidst warfare among competing factions. Banditry increased and food production and distribution ceased. By the end of 1992, up to 500,000 people had died, including an estimated 50 percent of the children under 5. An estimated 4.5 million persons needed food assistance and of these, 1.5 million were close to starvation. Most international relief agencies evacuated

the country periodically because of security concerns. In August 1992, the U.S. Government began a military airlift of humanitarian supplies into Mogadishu. In December 1992, the U.N. Security Council approved a U.S. led military task force (UNITAF) to provide security for the delivery of humanitarian supplies. Approximately 26,000 U.S. troops were dispatched to Somalia in an operation called "Restore Hope" to escort relief convoys and maintain security of relief assistance programs. On May 4, 1993, this program was subsumed into UNOSOM, a more broadly mandated U.N. program to rebuild the country and prevent future famine. The UNOSOM mission incurred casualties in Somalia, including 41 Americans. On March 25, 1994, the last U.S. troops departed Somalia. Very little progress was made in resolving the political differences and restoring stability to Somalia. UNOSOM force reductions began in October 1994 and the final withdrawal was completed on March 2, 1995. Multilateral and bilateral humanitarian assistance continues to date.

TABLE 3. U.S. Disaster Assistance to Somalia
(\$000)

	FY1991	FY1992	FY1993	FY1994	Total 91-94
OFDA	4,359.1	26,126.7	49,037.3	12,195.0	91,718.1
FFP	5,743.7	42,373.7	76,402.7	16,807.6	141,327.7
PRM	10,000.0	26,619.5	20,000.0	1,942.0	58,761.5
USAID/Afr.			14,000.0	8,100.0	22,100.0
Total non-DOD	20,102.8	95,119.9	160,430.2	39,044.7	314,697.5
DOD	--	1,600.0	943,100.0	528,000.0	1,471,100.0
Total with DOD	20,102.8	96,719.9	1,103,530.2	551,624.8	1,771,977.7

FORMER YUGOSLAVIA CIVIL WAR, 1991-

Civil war among the ethnic groups of the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, began in 1991. It has been distinguished by its concentration on expelling civilians of different ethnic groups in order to create separate states. Human rights violations have been used by all sides to accomplish this. Since 1992, the primary focus of the war has been in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the greatest number of victims in need of assistance have been Bosnian Muslims. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that about 3.3 million people throughout the former Yugoslavia are in need of relief assistance. Nearly 2.7 million of these are in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Destruction of homes, interruption of gas, water, and electrical supplies, and blockades of relief supplies have increased the suffering in the Muslim towns. Relief supplies are provided by truck convoy when possible. Much aid also arrives by air and in isolated areas, by military air drop. It is hoped that a peace agreement signed in November 1995 will end the emergency. U.S. aid continues to be directed to this emergency.

**TABLE 4. U.S. Disaster Assistance to Former Yugoslavia
(\$000)**

	FY1992	FY1993	FY1994	FY1995	Total 92-95
OFDA	3,760.2	34,566.9	30,620.9	40,200.7	109,148.7
FFP	9,350.0	93,500.0	95,661.6	57,964.2	256,475.8
PRM	33,632.1	65,300.0	76,125.5	52,653.1	227,710.7
USAID/ENI	619.9	6,200.0	25,955.0	30,770.1	63,545.0
Total non-DOD	47,362.2	199,566.9	228,363.0	181,588.1	656,880.2
DOD	44,849.6	99,424.8	159,635.0	3,395.0	307,304.4
Total with DOD	92,211.8	298,991.7	387,998.0	184,983.1	964,184.6

RWANDA/BURUNDI-CIVIL STRIFE, May 1994-

Following the death of the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi in a plane crash on April 6, 1994, the Hutu-based government forces and the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) fought for control of the country. At the same time, government forces and armed Hutu militia killed an estimated 500,000 Rwandan civilians, primarily Tutsis, and several hundred thousand refugees fled into neighboring countries. The RPF victory in the civil war led 1 million people, primarily Hutus, to flee to eastern Zaire within five days. These refugees entered an area with limited infrastructure, few vehicles, difficult terrain (lava rock), no potable water, endemic cholera and dysentery, and active volcanos. Between mid-July and mid-September, approximately 43,000 died in the camps or in the journey to them. The U.S. response included a military humanitarian relief effort (Support Hope) as well as an ongoing OFDA, Food for Peace, and refugee assistance effort. Operation Support Hope began on July 24 and lasted until September 30, 1994. Since the end of the emergency phase, security in the camps has been poor and ethnic tension and violence has increased in Burundi. The humanitarian assistance program, without U.S. military involvement, continues. As of August 28, 1995, there were an estimated 1.1 million Rwandans in Zaire, over 526,000 Rwandans in Tanzania, and nearly 152,000 in Burundi. In addition, many of the 5.5 million in Rwanda also need assistance. By November 29, 120,000 displaced persons needed international assistance and 168,000 had fled to neighboring countries. This U.S. effort includes aid to the entire region.

TABLE 5. U.S. Disaster Assistance-Rwanda/Burundi		
	FY1994	FY1995
OFDA	61,069.4	31,611.0
FFP	78,532.0	156,559.6
PRM	91,625.4	93,890.7
USAID Afr./EA	1,798.7	1,447.6
USAID OTI		2,450.7
Total non-DOD	233,025.5	285,959.6
DOD	138,759.6	--
Total with DOD	371,785.1	285,959.6

HAITI-EMERGENCY, 1994

President Aristide, the first democratically elected President in Haiti, was overthrown in a military coup in 1991. Brutal suppression of his supporters and flagrant violations of human rights by the Haitian military led to U.N. and bilateral U.S. economic sanctions. After an agreement to return Aristide was not honored, economic sanctions were tightened to allow only food, medicine, and humanitarian relief supplies into the country. On November 27, 1993, the U.S. Ambassador to Haiti issued a disaster declaration. In response to the declining economic situation and increasing political repression, thousands of Haitians attempted to flee to the United States, most of them in unseaworthy boats. U.S. policy directed the Coast Guard to intercept the boats and return the occupants, first to Haiti, and after mounting criticism, to a temporary camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. A U.N. Security Council vote authorized the United States to lead a multinational force to oust the military government. Instead, a last minute diplomatic agreement allowed U.S. troops to enter Haiti on September 19 as a peacekeeping force under Operation Uphold Democracy. The military junta left Haiti and President Aristide returned by October 15, 1994. Sanctions against Haiti were lifted. Some U.S. personnel are part of a U.N. force in Haiti. (For further information on this subject, see CRS Issue Brief 95090, *Haiti after President Aristide's Return: Concerns of the 104th Congress.*)

TABLE 6
U.S. Disaster Assistance-Haiti

	FY1994*
OFDA	\$ 5,196,312
FFP	\$25,204,000
PRM	\$9,825,128
USAID/Haiti	\$23,473,834
USAID/OTI	\$6,861,379
Total non-DOD	\$70,560,653
DOD Humanitarian and Peace Keeping Operations	
Migrant Processing	\$108,100,000
Maritime Interdiction/ Sanctions Enforcement	\$ 65,800,000
Uphold Democracy	\$198,200,000
Total DOD	\$372,100,000
Total with DOD	\$442,772,581

*Although the disaster in Haiti was declared in FY1993, less than \$5 million in disaster funds was spent during that year. Likewise, in FY1995, very little disaster assistance money has been provided to Haiti. Data exclude USAID bilateral development assistance provided under a separate multilateral agreement to help with reconstruction of the country, sanctions enforcement, and interdiction of civilian boats, or other costs occurring prior to FY1994.