

## COSTA RICA - Earthquake

Date: April 2, 1983 and July 3, 1983 (FY 83)

Location: April 2 earthquake - 14 km northeast of the banana port of Golfito and 175 km southeast of the capital city of San Jose

July 3 earthquake - epicenter located in the Division River Valley, 10 km north of San Isidro del General in San Jose Province and 60 km southwest of San Jose

No. Dead: Two

No. Affected: April 2 earthquake - 200 persons injured, 30 hospitalized, and 95 families homeless

July 3 earthquake - 5,000 persons evacuated from mountain villages in the earthquake zone

Damage: April 2 earthquake - Numerous reports of property damage; brief power and telephone outages in many areas; several small houses severely damaged or destroyed; slight displacement of numerous bridges on the Pan American Highway; extensive damage to concrete public buildings, movie theaters, and schools

July 3 earthquake - 30 to 50 houses destroyed in the San Isidro area; the San Isidro General Hospital damaged; towns of Quepos, Golfito, and Pacayas damaged; numerous landslides along the Pan American Highway

### The Disaster

On the evening of April 2, 1983, an earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale struck Costa Rica in an area 14 km northeast of the banana port of Golfito and 175 km southeast of San Jose. The earthquake resulted in one death, 200 injuries, and 30 people hospitalized; 95 families were made homeless. Reports of property damage were numerous, and there were brief power and telephone outages in many areas. The Costa Rican press reported that several small houses were severely damaged or destroyed. There were no reports of serious structural damage in San Jose. A local car dealership suffered extensive damage when the water tank on the building's roof collapsed and fell into the building. Several churches were reported damaged and closed temporarily.

There was slight displacement of many minor bridges on the Pan American Highway and serious damage to one major bridge. Extensive damage occurred to concrete public buildings, movie theaters, and schools in the affected area.

On July 3, a second major earthquake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, struck the Division River Valley, 10 km to the north of San Isidro del General, San Jose Province, and 60 km southwest of San Jose. One person was killed and hundreds of injuries were reported. Between 30 and 50 houses were demolished in the San Isidro area. San Isidro General Hospital was evacuated and several patients were flown to hospitals in San Jose. The towns of Quepos, Golfito, and Pacayas also suffered structural damage. Major landslides trapped 300 to 400 people along a 100 km stretch of the Pan American Highway connecting San Isidro and San Jose. One landslide covered 100 m of highway with debris piled 25 m high. In other areas the highway collapsed, leaving impassable crevices. Road traffic to San Isidro and south to Panama was halted as a result.

#### Action Taken by the Government of Costa Rica (GOCR) and Local Voluntary Groups

The GOCR responded to the disasters through the Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social (Joint Social Aid Institute) with tents, mattresses and cots, blankets, kitchen utensils, clothing, and construction materials (roofing and nails). The GOCR also made several aerial surveys to assess the damage. The Ministry of Public Works and Transport worked to clear dirt and debris from the Pan American Highway, as well as to make repairs. The Government also provided 5,000 gallons of fuel by tanker truck at San Isidro for the refueling of the helicopters provided by the United States.

The Costa Rica Red Cross worked alongside the GOCR to provide food, shelter, and other aid. The Red Cross set up a 12-tent camp and arranged other temporary living quarters near La Georgina and San Isidro to care for 216 persons. An additional 358 people were housed in a Red Cross-operated camp at Villamil. The National Food Program, with help from Caritas, distributed food valued at \$2,685 to affected families. Several Costa Rican communities collected food locally for distribution.

#### Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On April 6, 1983, the U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, Francis J. McNeil, determined that the earthquake disaster warranted USG assistance. Accordingly, he exercised his disaster assistance authority, requesting the release of 40 tents and tent flies from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) stockpile in Panama. The value of this contribution, including transportation and replacement costs, totaled \$18,358. These tents, granted to the Costa Rica Red Cross, were used to

provide shelter for homeless families in the affected areas of Golfito, Puerto Cortez, and the canton of Osa. When the emergency phase passed and the tents were no longer needed, the Red Cross placed them in warehouses for use in future disasters.

In response to the occurrence of the second earthquake on July 3, Ambassador McNeil again exercised his disaster assistance authority. On request of the GOCR, the USG, through OFDA, authorized the dispatch of two U.S. military helicopters to assist in the evacuation of persons trapped on the Pan American Highway. The crews of the two helicopters flew a total of 37 missions during the two-day operation and brought 326 people to safety. The helicopters landed in six small mountain villages located within an 80 sq. km area around the epicenter of the earthquake, evacuating only those people who could not walk or be carried out. The helicopters also carried basic food supplies to victims who had not eaten in more than two days and flew several reconnaissance missions to assess damages to the Pan American Highway and to power lines in the area. Total costs of the evacuation operation were \$25,000.

The second quake also resulted in severe structural damage to the hospital in San Isidro, rendering it nonfunctional. OFDA authorized the loan of 14 medium size military tents from DOD stocks to the GOCR for the purpose of erecting a 100-bed temporary hospital. In addition, temporary personnel were provided to help erect the tents, and three medical corpsmen were detailed to the hospital for four months. The total cost of the tents and personnel assistance was \$36,500, including transportation and retrograde costs.

Summary of USG Assistance

U.S. Ambassador's authority used to purchase and transport 40 tents and tent flies to the Costa Rica Red Cross for the victims of the April 2 earthquake.....	\$18,358
U.S. Ambassador's authority used to provide two helicopters and crew for evacuation mission.....	\$25,000
Provision of 14 military tents and personnel for 100-bed temporary hospital.....	\$36,500
TOTAL	\$79,858

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

CARE - donated the following P.L. 480 food commodities from existing stocks in Costa Rica: 1,966 kg of vitaleche, 1,035 kg of masarina, 828 kg of fresco-orchata, and 365 gallons of vegetable oil. The food, which constituted a two-week supply for 3,450 people, was donated to the GOCR family assistance agency.

Assistance Provided by the International Community

Caritas - with the GOCR National Food Program, distributed food to affected families. Caritas also donated medicines and clothing received from Switzerland.