

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - Forest Fire

Date: February 12-17, 1983 (FY 83)

Location: Cordillera Central, near Valle Nuevo and Constanza; 145 km northwest of the capital

No Dead: None reported

No. Affected: None reported

Damage: Approximately 2,500-3,000 hectares were affected; 40-50 percent were heavily damaged.

The Disaster

On the twelfth of February, a fire was accidentally started in the Cordillera Central near Valle Nuevo which burned valuable timber and threatened the country's major electronic and communications site. Strong gusty south winds blew the flames across 2,500-3,000 hectares of very dry pine and brush in a sparsely populated region. Fortunately, not all of this area burned, although 40-50% of the affected area's soil and timber sustained heavy damage. The fire was rapidly contained and, by the 16th of February, the combined efforts of the Dominican civilian and military authorities brought the blaze under control.

Action Taken by the Government of the Dominican Republic (GODR)

Both civilian and military personnel responded to the fire. Under the direction of the Armed Forces, special military rangers familiar with the terrain fought the fire alongside civilian personnel of Foresta, the Dominican Republic Forest Service. On February 12, at the peak of the fire suppression effort, 700-800 men were fighting the fire. By mid-afternoon of the same day the flames in approximately 75% of the affected area had been contained. Due to favorable weather conditions, the crews had the fire entirely contained by February 16. Only three major injuries were reported despite the fact that many of the fire-fighters used primitive hand tools and wore inappropriate clothing.

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

None reported.

Assistance Provided by the International Community

None reported.