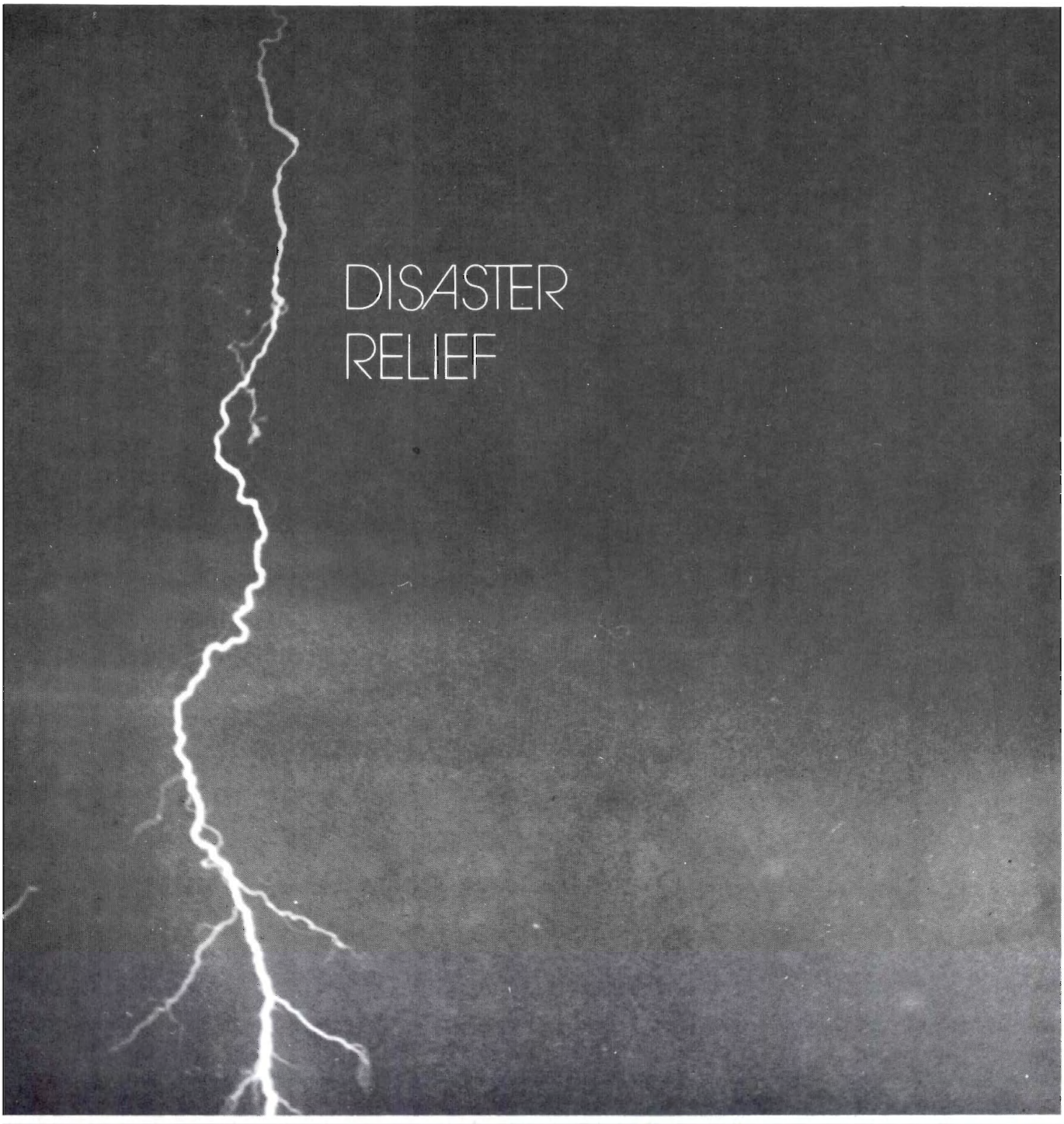

DISASTER RELIEF

CASE REPORT
Middle East War
October 1973

Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523

Foreign Disaster Case Reports are publications of the Office of the Foreign Disaster Relief Coordinator, Agency for International Development. This office has responsibility for coordinating U.S. Government foreign disaster relief responses and for the further coordination of such activities with those of the U.S. private and international disaster relief communities.

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MIDDLE EAST WAR October 1973

War broke out between the Arabs and the Israelis on October 6, 1973, while the Israelis were celebrating Yom Kippur. The 17-day war ended with a shaky cease-fire on October 22. Evacuation of the wounded and return of prisoners to Egypt and Israel took place in November. A similar prisoner exchange agreement between Syria and Israel was not made until June 1974. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) launched an extensive relief operation and issued an appeal to governments and national societies, in response to which generous contributions were received. The number of people who died in or as a result of the conflict is not known, and the following are the only statistics available to FDRC.

- **1,000,000 (Est.) people displaced in Egypt**
- **10,000 people displaced in Syria**
- **8,541 prisoners of war exchanged between Egypt and Israel**
- **476 prisoners of war exchanged between Syria and Israel**
- **No official dollar damage figure but believed to be in excess of $100 million.**

Value of Worldwide Assistance:

U.S. Government	**$5,255,500**
U.S. Voluntary Agencies	**168,772**
International Community	**3,724,770**
	$9,149,042

Capping a week of escalating tension promoted by reports of military buildups and troop movements on both sides, war broke out for the fourth time between the Arab States and Israel on October 6, 1973. The first reported fighting occurred along the Syrian-Israeli front, and soon thereafter Egyptian troops crossed the Suez Canal to establish a beachhead in Occupied Sinai. This was the first such crossing since the Middle East War in 1967.

Air, sea, and ground battles raged over the entire length and beyond the Canal and along the Golan Heights. Other Arab countries joined the conflict in support of Egypt and Syria. During the first week of the war, battle success was mainly on the side of the Arabs, but following a heavy tank battle on October 18, there was increasing penetration by Israeli forces of Egyptian and Syrian territory. By October 21, the tide of battle appeared to have turned in favor of Israel.

On October 21, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger met with Soviet Leader Leonid Brezhnev to discuss the Middle East conflict. The super powers stepped up pressure on both sides for an early cease-fire. They proposed a standstill truce to which the United Nations gave its full support, and the UN called for the cease-fire to begin at 6:53 P.M. October 22. Israel and Egypt agreed to the cease-fire; Syria rejected it. The Arabs and Israelis battled to gain new ground in advance of the deadline. The cease-fire went into effect at the stipulated time, but fighting soon resumed when the Egyptian 3rd Army tried to break out of an Israeli encirclement. Although Syria had not yet formally accepted the cease-fire, fighting on this front essentially stopped. On October 24, a second attempt at a cease-fire was made, and Syria on this date indicated formally it would abide by the truce. Land seizures claimed by Israel and Egypt were: Israel—300 square miles of Syrian territory (22 miles from Damascus) and 500 square miles of Egyptian land (37 miles from Cairo); Egypt—250 square miles of the Sinai formerly occupied by Israel.

Sporadic fighting continued after the second cease-fire, but in general the second truce held up. On October 26, the first UN troops flew to Egypt and UN observers moved into position on the northern front.

On October 28, the UN voted to provide a buffer force from both western and communist countries totaling 7,000 troops.

The United States arranged for the first face-to-face meeting between Israeli and Egyptian officials in 17 years. It took place on October 27 with the UN Truce Supervisory Organization chairing the meeting and Red Cross and UN personnel in attendance. At this meeting agreement was reached to permit a relief convoy to bring supplies to the encircled Egyptian 3rd Army. Israeli troops held the rest of the Sinai and a large pocket deep in Egyptian territory on the West Bank. On October 29 the convoy passed through Israeli forces on the West Bank bringing medical assistance, food, and other supplies to the encircled Egyptians. On October 30 Israeli and Egyptian officials met for the second time to discuss prisoner exchange.

Through the efforts of Secretary of State Kissinger, Egypt on November 9 and Israel on November 11 signed their first agreement in 25 years. The pact was that:

- both sides would strictly observe the cease-fire;
- both sides would agree to discuss a return of territory held as of October 22;
- arrangements would be made for providing daily relief supplies to the town of Suez and for evacuating the wounded;
- Israeli checkpoints on the Cairo-Suez road would be replaced by UN checkpoints; and
- exchange of prisoners would be negotiated following the establishment of UN checkpoints.

On November 14 agreement was reached by Egyptian and Israeli authorities for repatriation of prisoners of war. Several repatriation operations were undertaken between November 15 and November 22 enabling 8,541 war prisoners to return to their own country. Repatriation was made by means of four aircraft (one DC-6, two DC-8, and one DC-9) provided by the Swiss Government to the ICRC. Two doctors and four nurses, dispatched by the ICRC, accompanied wounded prisoners of war on the flights. Under the ICRC auspices, about 1,300 wounded civilians and soldiers were evacuated from the town of Suez.

The immediate cease-fire positions, which found Israeli troops deployed on the West Bank and Egyptian forces on the East Bank, seemed too unstable to be held for long. Both sides agreed to negotiate an interim peace settlement at discussions that began in Geneva in December. In June 1974, an agreement to exchange 476 prisoners of war was made between Syria and Israel. The ICRC began relief operations on October 11, 1973, and on October 20 appealed for worldwide help in providing medical assistance, food, shelter and other supplies.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE COUNTRIES IN CONFLICT

FDRC has no information on the self-help relief programs by Israel and Syria, and only limited information by Egypt. In Egypt the Ministry of Social Affairs was in charge of resettlement of the displaced population, and the Ministry of Reconstruction had the responsibility for rebuilding the war-torn areas. The Government of Egypt (GOE) attached a high priority to reconstruction of Suez Canal cities, and planned to provide new homes (empty frames) for returning refugees. The GOE also had plans to establish a resettlement loan fund and set up social centers to provide vocational and handicraft training for the returnees. Assistance of local and outside voluntary agencies was sought by the GOE, and the programs of these agencies were coordinated with those of the GOE through the Ministries of Social Affairs and Reconstruction.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

On October 28, 1973, in recognition of the war's serious impact on the civilian populations of Egypt, Syria, and Israel, Kenneth Rush, Deputy Secretary of State, declared

the situation was of such disastrous proportions that U.S. Government humanitarian aid was warranted. ICRC had appealed to governments of the world for donations of money and relief supplies, and with this declaration the U.S. Government was in a position to respond. On November 1, 1973, the U.S. Department of State instructed the U.S. Mission in Geneva to transmit $200,000 to ICRC to assist in financing the relief operation and to carry out its responsibilities in caring for prisoners of war and other victims. ICRC formally accepted the donation, on November 6.

The U.S. Government also made contributions in support of U.S. voluntary agencies' relief activities or provided air transport for their donations. These are summarized below. In addition, the following U.S. Government PL 480 food commodities were supplied in fiscal years 1974 and 1975 for the displaced Egyptian victims of the conflict.

Through Catholic Relief Services	*Value Including Transport*
1,000 metric tons of wheat/soy blend	$ 432,000
1,405 metric tons of flour	536,000
9,620 tons of whole wheat	1,983,000
1,500 tons of vegetable oil	1,775,000
	$4,726,000

Summary of U.S. Government Assistance

Cash grant to ICRC	$ 200,000
Cash grant to CRS to purchase, transport and distribute 50,000 blankets, 600,000 bars of soap, artificial limbs and orthopedic prostheses	225,500
10,000 blankets* to the American Red Cross to be turned over to ICRC. Value including air transport	80,000
Payment of air transport for medical supplies and equipment donated by Church World Service	9,000
Hadassah—5,000 blankets*	$ 15,000

U.S. Government Assistance

	Value Including Transport
Value of PL 480 food (distributed through Catholic Relief Services)	4,734,000
Total U.S. Government Assistance	$5,255,000

* These blankets came from FDRC stocks stored in an A.I.D. excess property warehouse at Shelby, Ohio.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY U.S. VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

CRS expanded its activities in Egypt to include an emergency assistance program. This program consisted of the local purchase of soap, kitchen utensils, clothing, bedding, medicines and medical care, rehabilitation projects, assistance to the Government of Egypt in a resettlement loan fund, and vocational and handicraft training programs. In addition, CRS engaged in an emergency feeding program for 500,000 people. In support of these relief activities, CRS requested and received from the U.S. Government a $225,500 cash grant and PL 480 Food for Peace commodities. From its own resources, CRS donated blankets, medicines, and funds totaling $42,340

American National Red Cross (ANRC)

ANRC requested and received from the U.S. Government 10,000 blankets which were consigned to the ICRC. From its own resources, the ANRC made a cash contribution of $25,000. In addition, the Eli Lilly Company at the request of the ANRC donated antibiotics worth $25,000.
Total $50,000

Church World Service (CWS)

CWS sent blankets, blood transfusion sets, and medical supplies to Egypt, Syria and Israel valued at $51,432

Hadassah

Hadassah maintains a hospital service in Israel. The need for these services increased during and following the war. Medical assistance was given by Hadassah on a non-discriminatory basis to civilian war victims and, when necessary, to military casualties as well. Hadassah requested and obtained from A.I.D. a donation of 5,000 blankets and purchased from A.I.D. Excess Property 2,500 cots with an estimated value of $ 25,000

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Since the ICRC already had delegations in the Arab countries and Israel and Israeli-occupied territories dating back to the 1967 war, it was in a position to assume immediately its responsibilities under the 1947 Geneva Conventions, insofar as the parties to the conflict permitted. There are four Geneva Conventions. The first two relate to the condition of the wounded, sick, and shipwrecked members of the armed forces; the third to treatment of prisoners of war; and the fourth to the protection of civilians, including those in occupied territory. ICRC called for immediate and full application of the Conventions. Following initial delivery of supplies to war-affected areas, the ICRC sent a fact-finding team of relief experts to assess the precise needs. Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies of Syria, Egypt, and Israel requested large quantities of blood plasma and substitutes, material for blood transfusions, resuscitation kits, medicines, surgical supplies, stretchers, blankets, mobile clinics, ambulances, and clothing. On October 25, 1973, the ICRC convened a meeting in Geneva to discuss the relief program. It was attended by 22 National Societies and by a delegation from the League of Red Cross Societies led by Mr. Henrik Beer, Secretary-General. At the meeting, the need for cooperation and coordination to ensure quick and effective Red Cross assistance and protection was stressed. ICRC had on October 20 launched an appeal for worldwide assistance to which governments and National Societies were already responding with gifts of cash and in kind.

ICRC obtained four aircraft from the Swiss Government to carry out the repatriation of prisoners of war between Egypt and Israel. It provided two doctors and four nurses to accompany wounded prisoners on the flights. From November 15 to November 22, 1973, 71 flights took place between Cairo and Tel Aviv carrying 8,541 prisoners of war. An agreement for the exchange of prisoners between Syria and Israel was not reached until June 1974. Between June 1 and June 6, in planes provided by the Swiss Government, ICRC governed the exchange of 476 prisoners of war between Damascus and Tel Aviv.

Because of the ICRC's increased activities as a result of the war, it was necessary to add 23 people to its staff. In answer to its appeals, the ICRC received, in addition to U.S. contributions, supplies (mainly medicaments, surgical equipment, tents, blankets, and ambulances) valued at over $1.7 million. These supplies were handed over to the ICRC at Geneva or sent directly to its delegations in the capitals of Syria, Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon. Gifts received in Geneva were transported by air to the Middle East. From October 18 to November 8, a DC-6 plane made available to the ICRC by the Swiss Government made nine flights between Geneva and the following cities: Cairo, Beirut, Tel Aviv and Nicosia. Over 50 tons of medicaments alone were flown in. ICRC distributed relief supplies in Syria, Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon, and maintained a stock at Beirut. Money contributions sent to the ICRC by National Societies and governments, not including the U.S. grant, totaled nearly $1.5 million. Part of this was employed to cover operational costs during the emergency phase. The balance was budgeted to finance the purchase, transport, and distribution of supplies. The emergency stage of ICRC's operations terminated at the end of January 1974, but continuing, less urgent assistance was required for a long period after that.

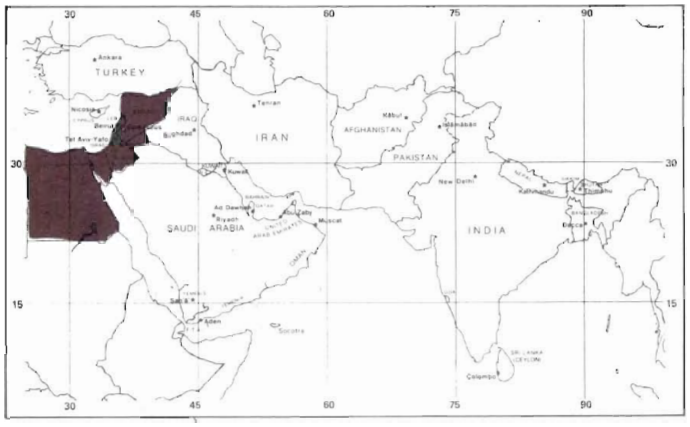
Following is a breakdown by country of worldwide assistance through ICRC, other than the United States. U.S. Government assistance is recorded in a previous section of this report.

Country	National Red Cross/ Red Crescent Societies Supplies	Cash	Governments Cash	Other	Total
Abu Dhabi (UAE)	$	$	$ 105,000	$.	$ 105,000
Australia	16,000	3,400	38,600		58,000
Austria	42,433				42,433
Bahrain		3,333			3,333
Belgium	25,800				25,800
Botswana			300		300
Canada		16,666	52,400		69,066
Denmark	64,300	36,666	44,600		145,566
Finland	15,666				15,666
France	14,033				14,033
Germany (FRG)	293,433	41,733			335,166
Greece		12,166			12,166
Haiti		533			533
Honduras		133			133
Ireland		3,666	12,600		16,266
Italy			33,333		33,333
Japan			1,000,000		1,000,000
Liberia		2,066			2,066
Liechtenstein		2,333			2,333
Luxembourg	3,000	1,000			4,000
Mauritania		4,433			4,433
Monaco	233	2,366			2,599
Netherlands	76,100	24,133	58,033		158,266
New Zealand	2,666	7,333			9,999
Norway	2,000	3,333	93,333		98,666
Philippines		1,566			1,566
Spain	16,000				16,000
South Africa		3,733			3,733
Sweden	186,900	73,333			260,233
Switzerland	74,300			873,330*	947,630
Thailand		266			266
United Kingdom	34,133	17,266	27,200		78,599
	$866,997	$261,457	$1,465,399	$873,330	$3,467,183

International Organizations and Others			
Caritas Internationalis			$ 123,200**
World Council of Churches			45,187**
ICRC	86,400		86,400
Private Donors		2,800	2,800

Total Assistance from International Community $3,724,770

* Cost of aircraft supplied for repatriation of prisoners and some relief flights.
** Breakdown indicating cash or supplies was not available.



MIDDLE EAST

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