

OPERATION PAPUA NEW GUINEA ASSIST

Substantial flooding has taken place in Oro (Northern) Province, caused by several days of torrential rain from Cyclone Guba which struck Oro around 15 November 2007.

The region has suffered substantial damage to infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and telecommunications, making accurate reporting difficult. Most bridges in the province have been destroyed. Bridges providing the main road access to Popondetta, the capital of Oro Province, have been cut.

Australia's humanitarian effort, led by AusAID and supported by the Australian Defence Force, is helping the PNG Government bring desperately-needed relief to Oro province. AusAID has distributed \$500,000 to key NGOs who are well placed in Papua New Guinea to contribute to the relief effort.

Australia received a request on 21 November to provide urgent assistance to support PNG's emergency operations. Defence has been working with AusAID and other agencies to establish the most effective response.

Joint Task Force 636, led by Group Captain Tim Innes, is providing assistance to help an estimated 40,000-60,000 villagers displaced by floods which have already claimed the lives of more than 150 people.

The ADF has provided:

- One Kingair aircraft to assist with aerial inspections of the disaster zone;
- Two Royal Australian Air Force C-130 Hercules transport aircraft carrying AusAID humanitarian stores and people to the disaster area;
- Three Caribou transport aircraft and three Army Black Hawk helicopters to provide access to remote and isolated regions of Oro province;
- One C-17 Globemaster for strategic airlift;
- A Navy heavy landing craft (LCH) to transport about 150 tonnes of rice, oil and food stores from Lae to Gona Beach and Oro Bay;
- Specialist Navy clearance divers to conduct an assessment of the harbour and wharf;
- A health assessment team to report on what is needed to help the victims of the disaster.

- An engineering team to assess the damage to local infrastructure including port facilities, roads and availability of water and sanitation; and
- A small ADF support and command element to coordinate the deployment in close consultation with the PNG Government.

Links:

For information about AusAID's assistance to PNG go to: www.aisaid.gov.au