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# The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance



# What is OFDA?

- USAID, through OFDA, leads the U.S. Government response to natural and man-made disasters internationally.
- Created in 1964 after the U.S. response to an earthquake in the former Yugoslavia and a volcanic eruption in Costa Rica were less than effective.
- USAID Administrator is designated by the President as the Special Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance (IDA).





# The OFDA Mandate



SAVE LIVES

The image shows a close-up of a person's face being held in a supportive embrace. The person has their eyes closed and appears to be in distress or receiving comfort. The background is blurred, focusing attention on the human connection.

ALLEVIATE SUFFERING

The image depicts healthcare workers in a clinical setting. They are wearing blue scrubs, hairnets, and face masks. One worker in the foreground is looking intently at a patient, while another is visible in the background. The scene suggests a medical or humanitarian response.

REDUCE THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF DISASTERS

The image shows a group of children looking upwards with expressions of hope and anticipation. They are in a room with warm lighting, and their faces are the central focus of the image.



# Criteria for Response



- The magnitude of the disaster exceeds the affected country's capacity to respond
- The affected country has requested or will accept U.S. Government assistance
- It is in the interest of the USG to provide assistance





# OFDA's Response Role



Coordinate and lead the USG humanitarian response



Identify needs and set priorities for USG assistance



Provide funding through NGOs, the U.N., and other partners for humanitarian assistance





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## What is a DART?

Field-based response team  
Assists US Ambassador or Chief of Mission  
Identifies and prioritizes humanitarian needs  
Reports on the situation  
Recommends response activities  
Coordinates with affected country, military, and other organizations  
FY 2011, USAID/OFDA deployed six DARTs

## What is an RMT?

Washington-based emergency operations center  
Supports field teams  
Acquires and transports supplies  
Develops and distributes information  
Serves as a liaison to the USG  
Coordinates USAID or USG response  
In FY 2011, USAID/OFDA activated six RMTs





## Organizing principle: Incident Command System

- Developed in 1970s
- Interagency
- All-Hazards Approach
- National Response Framework
- ICS Principles
  - Functional organization
  - Modular organization
  - Manageable span of control
  - Chain of command
  - Unity of command





# OFDA's Special Capabilities



International Disaster Assistance (IDA) Account

“No Year” Funding

Notwithstanding Authority

Borrowing Authority

Surge Capabilities

Commodity Stockpiles in Regional Warehouses

Response Network



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# Disaster Response Partners

- National government
- Local government
- Affected communities
- And...





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EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection



Federal Republic of Germany  
Humanitarian Aid



Canadian International  
Development Agency



Australian Government  
**AusAID**



**Irish Aid**  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha



REGERINGSKANSLIET  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs  
Sweden



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**World Health  
Organization**



**OCHA**



**INSARAG**



**WFP**



**unicef**





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**Save the Children®**



**American Red Cross**



**ACTED**  
Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development





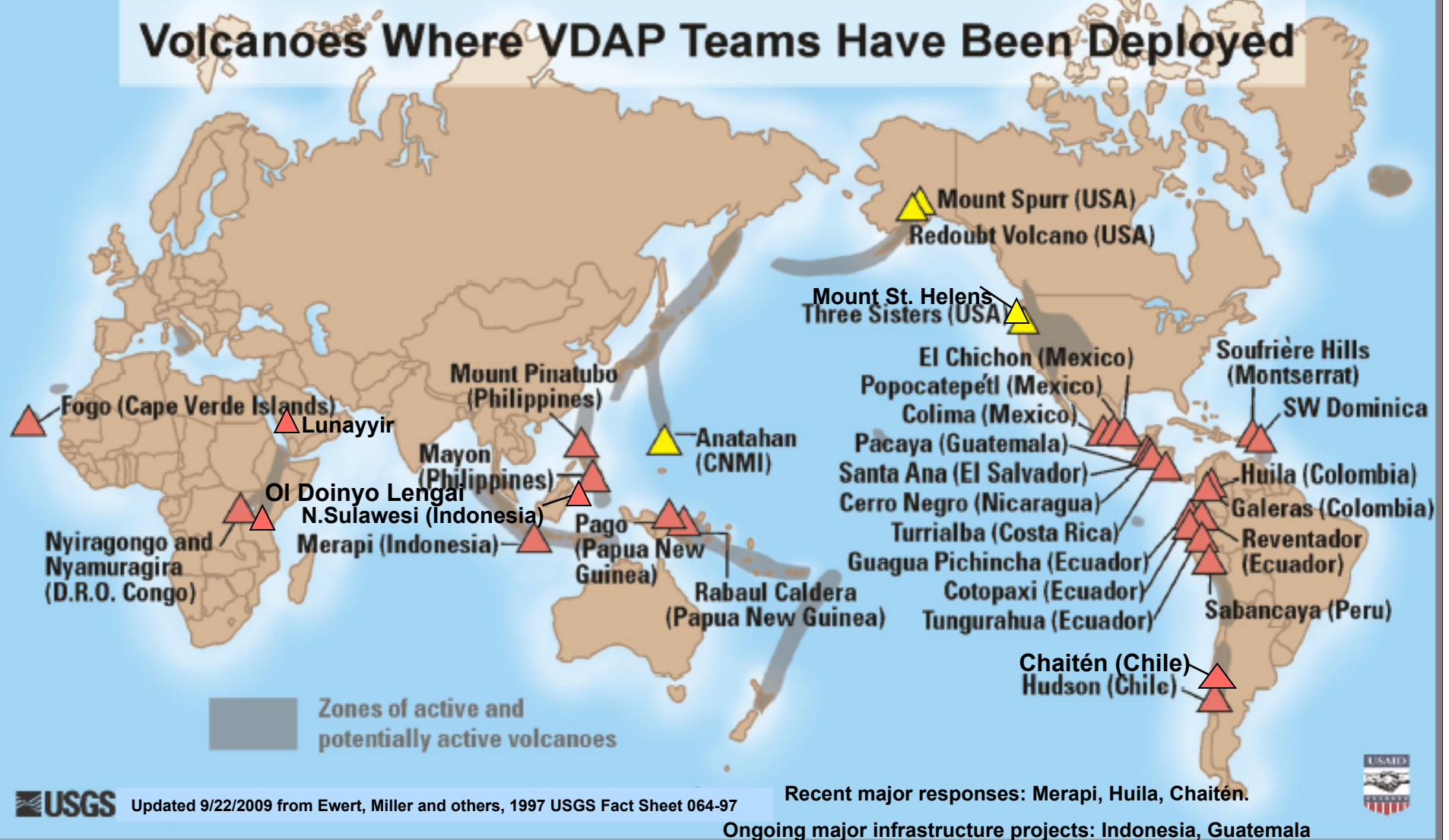
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## Nevado Del Ruiz, Colombia

- **Nov. 13, 1985 Nevado Del Ruiz erupted**
- **Over 23,000 people in Armero killed**
- **No international team of volcanologists**
- **In 1986 VDAP was formed – a partnership between USAID-OFDA and USGS**



# Volcanoes Where VDAP Teams Have Been Deployed



- Infrastructure built in 12 countries
- 10's of thousands of lives saved
- 25 major crises in 25 years
- 100's of \$ millions in property



## NOAA-USAID/OFDA collaboration

- NOAA is the lead federal agency for prediction and early warning of weather, hydrology and climate extremes.
- USAID/OFDA and NOAA/NWS have been cooperating through Interagency Agreements since 1999. NOAA provides technical and scientific resources and staff to meet USAID/OFDA's objectives in response to, preparedness for, and mitigation of hydrometeorological disasters such as floods, droughts, cyclones, tsunamis, climate variability and other climate, weather, water induced extremes.





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## NOAA-USAID/OFDA collaboration

- Partnering to train host nation forecasters on how to improve early warnings in partner countries: USAID/OFDA and NOAA held joint **capacity building workshops on climate prediction and application** which led to the training of some 300 forecasters, globally.
- Dissemination of information and warnings to population at risk, via the ***Radio and Internet for the Communication of Hydro-Meteorological and Climate Related Information (RANET)*** program utilizes radio, internet, and mobile technology. RANET is the only global medium to make tsunami warning to emergency managers
- Support for strengthening tsunami warning systems, esp. following 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.

# USAID/DOD Coordination During Disaster Response





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# Int'l Military Assets are a Last Resort

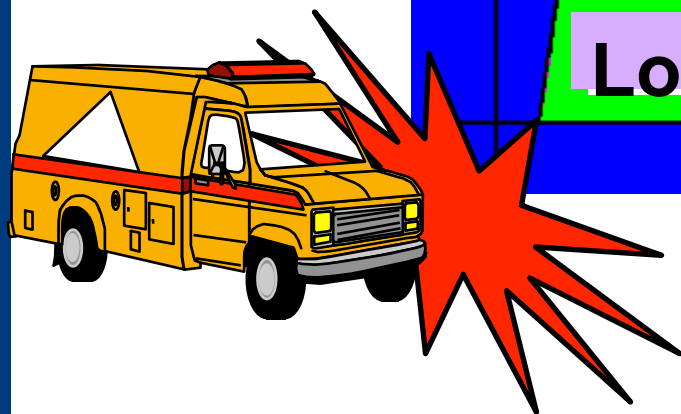
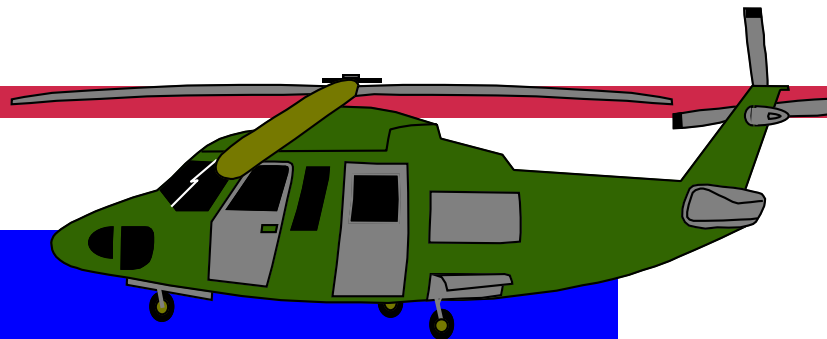
**Need for  
Assistance**

**International Military  
and Civil Defense Assets**

**International Civilian  
Relief**

**Local/National Response  
incl. military**

**Time**







## DOD Policy: DOD and OFDA Roles

DOD's role in disaster response is part of a comprehensive U.S. Government (USG) approach in which the U.S. Agency for International Development/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is the lead agency.

In this capacity, USAID/OFDA is responsible for determining appropriate USG contributions and coordinating overall USG disaster response activities.

Prior to the Combatant Commands' commitment of resources to disaster response, USAID/OFDA validates the humanitarian requirement and the Office of the Secretary of Defense approves specific requests for DOD support.

***Office of the Secretary of Defense Guidance Cable, 2004***

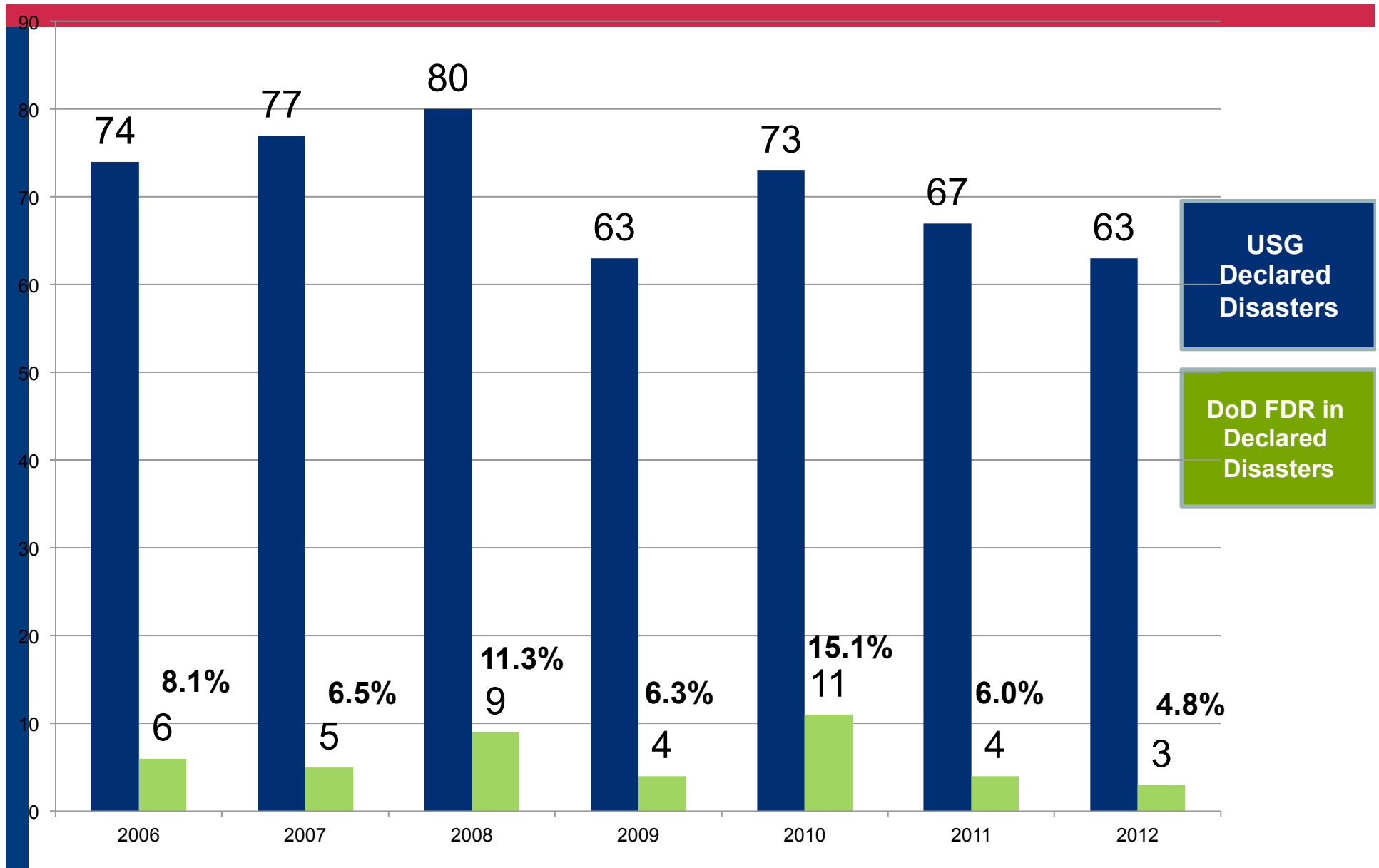
# DOD Policy: DOD Mission in FDR

- U.S. military is not an instrument of first resort in responding to humanitarian crises; rather it *supports* civilian relief agencies
- The U.S. military may be involved when:
  - The military provides a unique service
  - Civilian response capacity is overwhelmed
  - Civilian authorities request assistance
- When the U.S. military does become involved:
  - The military mission should be clearly defined
  - The risks should be minimal
  - Core DOD missions should not be affected





# OFDA – Military Cooperation: FY 2006 to 2012







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**THANK YOU!**

**Julie Leonard  
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## DOD Policy: Expediting Responses

### **“72-hour authority” / “Life & Limb”**

- *At or near the immediate vicinity*
- Not a free pass; for *immediate life-saving assistance only*
- *Host nation and Chief of Mission concurrence required*
- NLT 72 hours— must obtain SecDef approval to continue providing assistance
- SecDef approval required to obtain OHDACA reimbursement

**“72-hour” / “Life & Limb” authority  
does *NOT* include non-urgent life-saving efforts**



# Requesting DOD Support

