



April 2007

# US IOTWS Program Update

US Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS) Program  
*from advanced technologies to resilient communities*

## Warning System Alerts Asia-Pacific Region as Tsunami Strikes Solomon Islands after Earthquake *April 2, 2007, Bangkok, Thailand*

On Monday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, an 8.0 magnitude undersea earthquake caused a destructive tsunami that struck the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific, killing at least 25 and displacing thousands. Because the islands were so close to the earthquake epicenter, their only advance warning was feeling the strong earthquake itself. Some immediately questioned the value of building and maintaining the sophisticated regional tsunami warning systems (TWSS) in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and elsewhere, and called for renewed attention to strengthening local preparedness. While community preparedness remains a critical part of the overall disaster warning and mitigation system, tsunami warning systems are intended to play a vital role in alerting those thousands of communities across an ocean basin which *do* have enough time to evacuate—whether in minutes or hours.

While it was not possible to alert the Solomon Islands through the Pacific warning system, the U.S. Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, Japan, and others did issue warnings on Monday to dozens of countries across the Asia-Pacific region, first to alert them to the possibility of destructive tsunamis in the Pacific region, and later to cancel the warning based on additional data and analysis. Warning systems in two of those countries—Indonesia and Thailand—have benefited from extensive international support since the 2004 tsunami, including from the USAID-funded U.S. Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS) Program. As a sign of effective system operation, on Monday each country followed its standard tsunami warning procedures and made proper determinations not to issue national warnings—both avoiding panic and demonstrating that the national governments can quickly receive and analyze tsunami data in case of real tsunami risks.

## Sri Lankan Government Officials Receive Training in the US on Organizational Management for Disaster Response

*April 6-22, 2007, Nevada and California, USA*

A group of 15 senior Sri Lankan government officials visited the United States to learn about the organizations and structures required for establishing Incident Command System (ICS) teams for disaster management by participating in the California Interagency Incident Management Teams (CIIMT) Workshop and the Advanced ICS Workshop. Participants attended the CIIMT Workshop from April 10-12, 2007, in Reno, Nevada, which provided the tools necessary for interagency ICS personnel at all levels to perform their jobs in the most efficient and professional manner possible, regarding issues



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Sri Lankan government officials with Mike Dietrich (third from left) and Ed Hollenshead (fifth from left) of the Southwest Pacific region, Fire and Aviation, USDA/FS, in the 2007 CIIMT Workshop



such as interagency communication, communication with news media, air operations safety, planning, logistics, and finance. The workshop provided a single forum for local and national ICS teams to share the latest information; discuss real-life incident management issues, challenges, and solutions; learn new procedures and policy changes; and network with their interagency counterparts and team members. The Advanced ICS course followed during April 16-20 in California as one of a series of activities through which the Government of Sri Lanka is working together with the US IOTWS Program to institutionalize ICS within its government agencies.

### **Indonesians Build Capacity to Develop Local Standard Operating Procedures for Tsunami Early Warning and Response**

*April 10-12, 2007, Jakarta, Indonesia*

USAID, together with the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, United Nations Development Programme, and German Technical Cooperation co-sponsored a series of four workshops in Indonesia on building capacity for the development of local standardized operating procedures (SOPs) for tsunami early warning and response. The series provided the opportunity for officials and key stakeholders from local government agencies in Aceh, Padang, and Bali, along with their national counterparts, to begin planning for tsunami early warning and response, initially with how to receive the information from the national warning system at the local level. Indonesian and international experts, including members of the US IOTWS Program team, facilitated discussions and trained participants on issues such as defining the local context, identifying roles and responsibilities, evacuation planning, and best practices. The workshops began in October 2006, and the fourth and final event took place during April 10-12, 2007, in Jakarta.

With Indonesia's decentralized governance, the delivery of final warnings and orders to evacuate are under the mandate of local governments, which have close coordination with the Meteorological and Geophysical Agency, National Disaster Management Coordinating Board, the Indonesian Red Cross Society, and others. Strengthened links between stakeholders at all administrative levels are needed for effective end-to-end responses, and workshop results over the past six months have shown progress in the development of SOPs for Aceh, Padang, and Bali that are compatible with national warnings and response, yet adapted to the needs of local areas. Following the series, the US IOTWS Program, UNDP, and GTZ will continue working with these local governments to finalize their SOPs and strengthen tsunami preparedness. The agencies will then disseminate lessons learned and share these experiences with ministries' disaster risk reduction programs and with Banten Province, which will become the site for the national tsunami evacuation response drill in December 2007.

### **UPCOMING US IOTWS PROGRAM AND RELATED ACTIVITIES**

#### ***Indonesia Basic/Intermediate ICS Training Course, April 30-May 4, 2007***

*Jakarta, Indonesia*

For more information contact S.H.M. Fakhruddin, US IOTWS Program, at [fakhruddin@adpc.net](mailto:fakhruddin@adpc.net)

#### ***Regional Sharing of Best Management Practices on Incident Command Systems for Disaster Management, May 8-11, 2007***

*Jakarta, Indonesia*

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#### ***Thailand National CCR Training, June 4-8, 2007***

*Thailand*

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#### ***Second Workshop on Inundation Modeling, June 29-July 6, 2007***

*Bangkok, Thailand*

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#### **About the US Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS) Program**

The US IOTWS Program is part of the international effort to develop tsunami warning system capabilities in the Indian Ocean following the December 2004 tsunami disaster. The US program adopts an "end-to-end" approach—addressing regional, national, and local aspects of a truly functional warning system—along with multiple other hazards that threaten communities in the region. In partnership with the international community, national governments, and other partners, the US program offers technology transfer, training, and information resources to strengthen the tsunami warning and preparedness capabilities of national and local stakeholders in the region.

For more information please visit [www.us-iotws.gov](http://www.us-iotws.gov).