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For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
January 8, 2005

President Discusses ongoing Tsunami Relief in Radio Address

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Americans continue to mourn the victims of the devastating tsunamis in the Indian Ocean. More than 150,000 lives are now feared lost, including tens of thousands of children.

Communities have been decimated from Indonesia, to Thailand, to India, to East Africa. Thousands are missing, or injured; and millions are thought to be homeless, or without food and clean water.



Radio Address

- [2006](#)
- [2005](#)
- [2004](#)
- [2003](#)
- [2002](#)
- [2001](#)

Radio Interviews

- [2005](#)
- [2004](#)

The world has united behind this urgent cause, and the United States is taking a leading role. We're working with other governments, relief organizations, and the United Nations to coordinate a swift and effective international response. We are rushing food, medicine, and other vital supplies to the region. And we are focusing efforts on helping the women and children who need special attention, including protection from the evil of human trafficking.

This past week, I sent a delegation led by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Governor Jeb Bush, of Florida, to the Indian Ocean region. They surveyed the damage in several countries, met with local and regional leaders, assessed the relief efforts in place and began to evaluate what more can be done to help. Secretary Powell reported that American relief efforts are making major visible progress.

We have made an initial commitment of \$350 million in aid. And those funds are being distributed promptly to organizations on the ground. Navy vessels, including the USS Abraham Lincoln, have moved into the region to help provide, food, medical supplies and clean water. Helicopters and other military aircraft are meeting critical needs by airlifting supplies directly to victims in remote areas. As in so many other places, our servicemen and women are showing the courage and compassion of our nation to the world.

We're also seeing the good heart of America in an outpouring of generosity here at home. Private citizens are showing their compassion in creative and inspiring ways. On a rainy day in Washington state, children sold hot chocolate by the side of the road and gave their profits to charity. Seven professional basketball players pledged to donate a thousand dollars to UNICEF for every point they scored in a game. American businesses have contributed cash and products, and many are matching donations by their employees. Churches, temples, synagogues, mosques and other religious congregations are taking up special collections for disaster victims.

To draw even greater amounts of private donations, I asked former Presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush to lead a nationwide charitable fundraising drive. Their mission is to encourage contributions both large and small, directly to the organizations with recovery efforts underway in the disaster area.

I am grateful to the courageous relief groups that have responded so quickly to this catastrophe, including the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Salvation Army, Catholic Relief Services, Save The Children, CARE, AmeriCares and many others. Many of these organizations have long experience with natural disasters and in-depth knowledge of the recovery needs. They're in the best position to use donations wisely and effectively.

To encourage support for these groups, I have signed legislation allowing Americans to deduct from their 2004 federal income tax cash contributions made to tsunami relief efforts this month. I urge all Americans to contribute as they are able. More information about making a donation is available on the Internet at www.usafreedomcorps.gov.

In this time of grief for so many around the world, Americans have come together to pray for the victims and families of the tsunami disaster. We

think especially of the children who have been lost, and the survivors searching for their families. And we offer our sustained compassion and generosity as the people of the devastated region begin to rebuild.

Thank you for listening.

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