

More Than 1 Million Pounds of Aid Moved Into Gaza Via DOD's Temporary Pier



MEDITERRANEAN SEA (May 17, 2024) A truck with humanitarian aid drives down the ramp from the the Bob Hope-class large, medium speed roll-on, roll-off ship MV Roy P. Benavidez (T-AKR 306) onto the roll-on/roll-off discharge facility (RRDF) platform, May 17, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1Kelby Sanders)

May 23, 2024 | By Joseph Clark, DOD News

U.S. forces have facilitated the transfer of more than 1 million pounds of humanitarian assistance into Gaza via the Defense Department's Joint Logistics, Over-the-Shore pier, a senior military official said today.

Navy Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, deputy commander of U.S. Central Command, said 820 metric tons, or 1.2 million pounds, of aid have been transferred to a beach transfer point on Gaza's shore since the temporary pier became operational on May 17.

Of that, 506 metric tons, or two-thirds of total aid transferred via the maritime corridor to the beach transfer point, has been distributed by the United Nations further into Gaza, Cooper said, citing figures current as of last night.

The effort, led by the U.S. Agency for International Development, is being carried out as part of the United States' broader efforts alongside international partners to surge assistance to Palestinians in need.

"U.S. Central Command forces continue to support USAID's provision of humanitarian assistance into Gaza from the sea as part of our government policy to flood the zone with humanitarian assistance," Cooper said.

Construction of the pier began late last month after President Joe Biden called on the military to conduct the emergency operation during his State of the Union address.

Soldiers from the Army's 7th Transportation Brigade at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, and sailors from Naval Beach Group 1 at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, California, were tapped to deploy the JLOTS capability.

Delivering the capability involved a complex choreography of logistics support and landing crafts that carry the equipment used to construct the approximately 1,800-foot causeway comprising modular, floating sections linked together.

The units also constructed a roll-on, roll-off discharge facility that is 72 feet wide by 270 feet long. The discharge facility will remain about far off Gaza's shore and enable cargo ships to offload aid shipments at sea prior to being transported to shore.

About 1,000 soldiers and sailors are involved in the operation.

The U.S. is also working closely with the Cyprus, the government of Israel, the U.N. and international donors including the United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and European Union as part of the multi-step process to move aid into Gaza from the sea.

International donors first ship aid into Cyprus where it is screened and packaged before being loaded onto ships to be transported to the temporary pier.

From the pier, the aid is offloaded into a marshaling area before being distributed further into Gaza by humanitarian organizations.

Officials emphasized that no U.S. boots are on the ground in Gaza as part of the operation, and that safety of U.S. forces

is the top priority.

The distribution of aid into Gaza once offloaded from the pier is being done solely by humanitarian aid workers.

“This is a complex humanitarian aid mission that requires continuous coordination between many partners,” said Dan Dieckhaus, the director of USAID’s response operations. “The support and contributions of the U.N., the government of Cyprus and other international partners, including the U.K., European Union, United Arab Emirates, France, Romania and others is vital, as is the cooperation of Israel.”

In addition to operating the pier, the U.S. has stood up a coordination cell to ensure operations are carried out as safely and efficiently as possible.

“Our commitment to the safety of humanitarian workers requires a meticulous approach to distribution, route planning and convoy monitoring with various stakeholders, especially the U.N., to reduce risk,” Cooper said. “We’re doing this collaboratively with the Israeli Defense Forces and the United Nations who are embedded in our combined coordination cell.”

Cooper emphasized that despite measures to mitigate risk, the environment remains “very complex and dynamic.”

Still, he said the U.S. aims to continue increasing the flow of aid.

“We have thousands of tons of aid in the pipeline,” he said, adding “we do encourage international donors to continue their contributions so that we can sustain and increase the volume of lifesaving aid getting to the people of Gaza every day.”