

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 10, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

## STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

I wish to announce this morning that the United States' response to the Italian earthquake has been speedy and helpful. On Friday the President sent to President Leone of Italy the deepest sympathies of the United States and special condolences to the immediate victims of the earthquakes in northeastern Italy.

Even before that message, U.S. military installations nearest the disaster zone had reacted to the appeals of local authorities. Five helicopters were dispatched for medical evacuations, another one was provided to ferry an Italian disaster area survey team through the affected zone, and an ambulance, a doctor and generator and lighting equipment also were provided that first night.

The Italian Government estimates that 45,000 people have been left homeless by the earthquake that struck May 6. The Italian Government has appealed for international assistance in providing shelter for at least 50,000 people. As of this morning the U.S. Government has donated 1,333 tents from U.S. military and A.I.D. disaster relief stocks in Europe. These tents can shelter about 9,000 people.

The United States also has provided earth-moving equipment from U.S. military installations in northeastern Italy, and we are providing field rations, blankets, sheets, stretchers, medical supplies and fuel.

In addition to responding to direct requests from local and national Italian authorities, we are coordinating our responses with the other NATO allies through NATO's Civil Emergency Planning consultative mechanism.

We also have notified the Italian Government that we have available specialized teams, such as an Italian-speaking group of epidemiologists from the U.S. Center for Disease Control, who are on stand-by status in case the Italian Government would like to use them on short notice.

The Italians themselves, of course, are carrying the main burden of the disaster relief effort, and our contributions -- which totaled \$575,000 this morning -- are closely coordinated with the Italian authorities to ensure the quickest, most effective response to this human tragedy in a country with which the United States is closely allied and has close historical, cultural and family bonds.

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