



iMMAP Enters Lebanon Crisis

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iMMAP deployed two specialists to improve conditions and help aid distribution with advanced logistical data

PR9.NET August 10, 2006 - Washington, D.C. – While many humanitarian organizations struggle to distribute aid in Lebanon, one organization is using cutting-edge technology to create safe passage routes for humanitarian relief and journalists throughout the hostile country. The Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation's (VVAf) Information Management and Mine Action Programs (iMMAP) deployed specialists into the war-ravaged Lebanon last week to assist relief operations struggling to distribute food and medical supplies throughout the country by creating highly advanced maps of surveyed road conditions.

"Food and medical supplies are worthless unless they are delivered to those in need," said VVAf Vice-President of Programs Joe Donahue. "The air strikes have damaged main roads and forced thousands from their homes. Our specialists improve the capacity of relief agencies to plot safe transportation routes to put food and supplies into people's hands."

With the help of a grant from the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, U.S. Department of State, iMMAP's information management specialists are supporting the United Nations Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC) as they monitor road and infrastructure conditions, and the impact of landmine and unexploded ordnance contamination, to ensure safe transport of food and health supplies to the more than 800,000 Lebanese currently displaced. Many citizens have been without water or fresh food since the Israeli air strikes began two weeks ago.

"The spatial data (map data) provided by VVAf at the onset of the humanitarian crisis in Lebanon has provided a huge boost to the provision of [mapping] support to the operation," said Olivier Cottray, UNJLC GIS Coordinator. "No operation I have previously been involved in benefited from such quality data at such an early stage. From day one we were able to produce reliable routing maps used to notify the IDF of planned humanitarian aid convoys. These daily notifications are crucial for their safe passage. Weeks can go by before reaching this level of reliability under usual data preparedness conditions."

Several news outlets, including Reuters Alertnet, recently reported the most urgent problem in Lebanon is the lack of safe passage to deliver humanitarian aid. The U.S. Department of State, which approved a \$30,000 grant to iMMAP for this emergency project, also reported on July 25 that agencies like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has supplies for more than 20,000 people waiting at the Syrian border they are unable to distribute. Transportation through Lebanon is difficult as a result of the bombing of main roads, as well as the sizeable mountain ranges that cover much of the country

Stationed in Lebanon for a period of two months, iMMAP's specialists will improve aid distribution by coordinating safe passage routes and identifying and assessing the overall impact of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and aerial strike damage. A leader in establishing standardized data collection procedures, iMMAP will monitor road conditions as well as design road, port and airport condition logistical maps.

Already a high contamination of cluster bombs has been located in the southern region of Lebanon, which will have a serious impact on the deteriorating conditions. Lebanon also remains heavily contaminated with landmines and ERW left over from the 1975-1990 civil war.

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About Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation

VVAf is an international humanitarian organization that addresses the causes, conduct and consequences of war through programs of advocacy and service for victims of conflict.

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