

Posted on Sunday, 05.30.10

Haiti relief efforts relied on strong partners

I salute the partners who supported AmericasRelief Team's Haiti programs during the initial phase of Haiti's earthquake crisis. I appreciate their dedication, commitment and generosity.

The scale of this disaster is unprecedented in the Western Hemisphere. The United Nations recently reported that more than 220,000 people died in the Jan. 12 earthquake, while 800,000 people have been relocated to refugee camps. USAID considers it "the largest long-term reconstruction project ever envisioned for a single country."

During the crisis, AmericasRelief Team emerged as the premier organization dedicated to providing transportation, warehousing and other logistical needs for international relief organizations. We offered all of our services at no cost to the organizations. Without our assistance, many would be unable to send the needed resources, be they medical supplies, food and water or construction materials, to those who needed them most.

Despite our deep involvement in Haiti, we still were able to host this year's Regional Crisis Relief Luncheon aboard Carnival's M/V Imagination on May 7.

As keynote speaker, former Gov. Jeb Bush discussed the importance of involving nonprofit organizations in the coordination of relief work following natural disasters and human crises in the Caribbean. He expressed his strong support for economic and social development there, encouraging the members and partners of AmericasRelief Team to provide humanitarian assistance to alleviate suffering created by hurricanes and other catastrophes.

Bush said that such contributions foster goodwill and strengthen Florida's relationship with our Caribbean neighbors.

The magnitude and complexity of the devastation in Haiti means that we collectively will struggle for much longer to provide basic assistance and dedicate much more effort to the reconstruction and long-term development. After 30 days of participating in Haiti's earthquake recovery we had already facilitated the shipment of almost seven million pounds of humanitarian aid to Haiti -- and we have our partners and associates to thank.

TEO A. BABUN JR., executive director, AmericasRelief Team, Miami