



National Science and Technology Council
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 22, 2005

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NATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE
NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TSUNAMI RISKS REDUCED

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The White House today released the national plan for tsunami risk reduction and highlighted national and international efforts to reduce risks from tsunami. Together, these efforts have led to improved tsunami detection and warning systems in the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and became the foundation for national and international coordination to ensure the safety of individuals in coastal communities.

“Though tsunamis are low probability, high impact events, the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 26, 2004 demonstrated international vulnerability,” said Dr. John H. Marburger, III, Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy. “Over the past year investments in tsunami detection and warning have made individuals safer in their homes and places of work. Working with our national and international partners, we also produced the national plan for tsunami risk reduction to provide a framework for ongoing federal investment in activities that will continue to reduce risks to life and property.”

In the last year, the United States has deployed and updated detection technologies in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans and, in partnership with nations around the world, will deploy an early warning and preparedness system in the Indian Ocean region. “From seismic monitoring to coastal mapping and modeling to satellite imagery, U.S. Geological Survey scientists have worked with colleagues at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, other federal and state agencies, and international partners to improve monitoring capabilities, hazard assessment, and information products for emergency responders here at home and around the globe,” said Dr. Patrick Leahy, Acting Director of the U.S. Geological Survey.

“Since the Indian Ocean event, the DART network has been expanded from six buoys to ten buoys and 23 U.S. at-risk coastal communities were recognized as TsunamiReady,” said Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “In partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development we also invested \$4.6 million for an end-to-end tsunami and multi-hazard early warning system for India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand and Maldives.”

Also over the last year, the U.S. Agency for International Development has invested \$656 million in immediate international humanitarian response, food assistance, medical assistance, transportation rebuilding, educational programs, microfinance programs and refugee operations. “We know that natural hazards will continue to occur, and we will continue to partner with nations to reduce suffering and speed recovery. I firmly believe that America's foreign assistance accomplishes our foreign policy objectives while expressing the deep humanitarian instincts of the American people,” said Andrew S. Natsios, Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development.

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All of these actions are consistent with the U.S. national plan for tsunami risk reduction, released today and available at www.sdr.gov. Requested by the Congress and the President, the plan was authored by a working group of the President's National Science and Technology Council in partnership with scientists and policymakers at the local, state and federal levels. It recognizes critical worldwide interdependencies, especially for Earth observations, and notes the opportunities for nations to work together to reduce vulnerabilities. The National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program, a partnership involving relevant Federal agencies and coastal states, will execute the plan by facilitating the following actions:

- Develop standardized and coordinated tsunami hazard and risk assessments for all coastal regions of the United States and its territories.
- Enhance tsunami forecast and warning capability along our coastlines (Pacific, Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico) by increasing the number of Deep-ocean Assessment and Reporting of Tsunamis (DART) buoys, tide gauges, and seismic sensors feeding real-time data into on-line forecast models.
- Provide technical expertise and assistance, as appropriate, to facilitate development of international tsunami and all-hazard warning systems, including for the Indian Ocean.
- Promote development of model mitigation measures and encourage communities to adopt construction, critical facilities protection and land-use planning practices to reduce the impact of future tsunamis.
- Increase outreach to all communities at risk to raise awareness, improve preparedness and encourage the development of tsunami response plans.

About the National Science and Technology Council

The NSTC was established by Executive Order on November 23, 1993. This Cabinet- level council is the principle means for the President to coordinate science and technology across the federal government. The President chairs the NSTC, and membership consists of the Vice President, the Director of OSTP, Cabinet secretaries, agency heads with significant science and technology responsibilities, and other White House officials.

About the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

The purpose of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Research (CENR) is to advise and assist the NSTC to increase the overall effectiveness and productivity of Federal research and development efforts in the area of the environment and natural resources. This includes maintaining and improving the science and technology base for environmental and natural resource issues, developing a balanced and comprehensive research and development program, establishing a structure to improve the way the Federal Government plans and coordinates environmental and natural resource research and development in both a national and international context, and to develop environment and natural resources research and development budget crosscuts and priorities.

About the United States Group on Earth Observations

An Interagency Working Group on Earth Observations was chartered by the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources for the purpose of developing the Strategic Plan for the U.S. Integrated Earth Observation System, and to provide U.S. contributions to the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). The Interagency Working Group's charter expired in December, 2004, and the working group has been replaced with a standing subcommittee under the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, the United States Group on Earth Observations (US GEO).

About The Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction

The SDR is a subcommittee of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources (CENR) under the National Science and Technology Council. Chartered in 1988, the SDR is charged with facilitating and promoting disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. The SDR addresses all types of natural and technological hazards, whether domestic or foreign in origin. To accomplish this mission, the SDR provides a forum for government leaders to leverage expertise, inform policy makers, promote technology applications, coordinate various activities, and promote excellence in research.

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