

SUPPORTS TSUNAMI RELIEF EFFORTS

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In the aftermath of the devastating tsunami in Asia on Dec. 26, 2004, people from all over the world were filled with overwhelming compassion for those affected. From across the globe came assistance in the form of money, food, shelter and much more. But some members of U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command were able to provide a different type of aid — satellite imagery.

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The Spectral Operations Resource Center in Colorado Springs, Colo., produced three main types of scenes in their imagery to support the relief effort — highways and road systems, before and after scenes and land saturation.

“We were pulling imagery of the affected areas the day after the tsunami,” said Chris Russelavage of the SORC, who was the key technician in providing satellite imagery requested by U.S. Pacific Command and the 8th Army; the units directly involved in the support efforts for tsunami survivors.

“The Sumatrans had one main highway running along the coast that was their principal shipping artery. We sent them satellite imagery of what remained after the tsunami,” added Russelavage. This was key to getting relief supplies delivered throughout the countryside quickly and effectively.

“The before and after scenes showed locations of population areas, among other things so that searchers would know where to look for survivors, and the soil saturation views showed levels of saturation of agricultural areas.”

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Yet relief support is nothing new for the SORC. “We have a long history with disaster support,” said Bo Dunaway, chief of the SORC.

In 1998 the SORC provided imagery for relief efforts with flood in Honduras. They also brought fresh imagery to firefighters in the Western United States during the disastrous fire seasons of 2001 and 2002, allowing firefighters to track the movement of the fires and find the locations of hotspots.

In 1999 and 2000 SORC imagery supported relief efforts in the Venezuelan floods, and in 2003, their images was used to help provide relief to the earthquake-devastated region around Bam, Iran.

“These efforts are paper products but they touch an untold number of lives,” Dunaway said of their efforts.

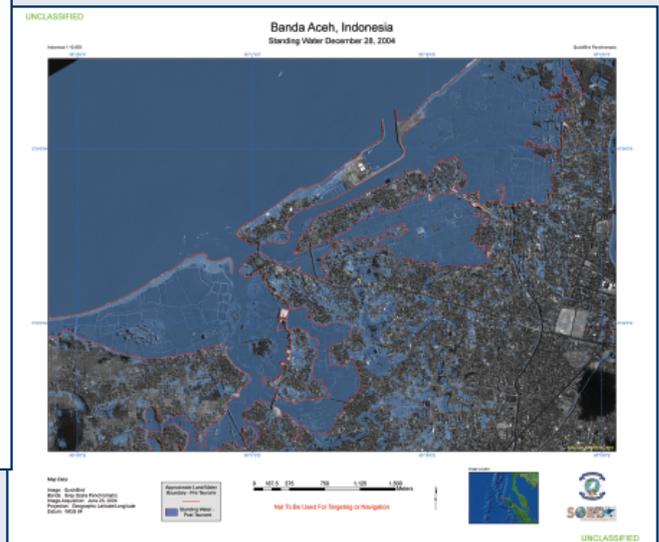
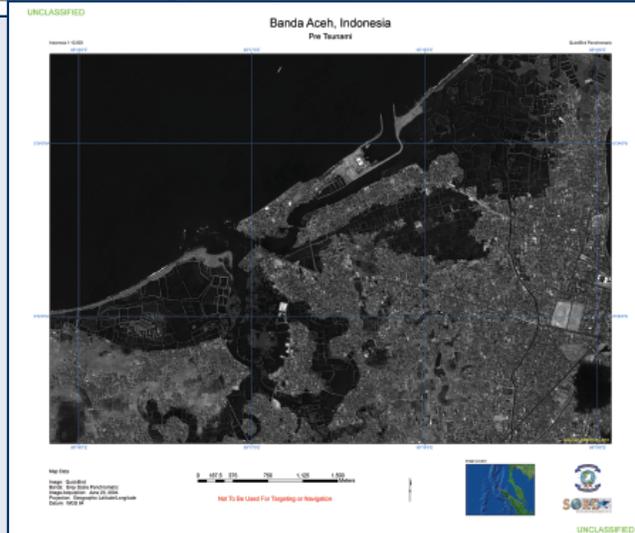
“There is no telling how many people receive direct relief sooner, faster and more frequently because we can provide these products to the forces and agencies doing the relief efforts.”

Dunaway credits FA40s for helping make SORC products available to field commanders in a rapid, timely manner. “Those guys on staff are able to be our voice. They can tell that commander that there is this capability called the SORC back in Colorado Springs, and let them know exactly what we can do and how they can best utilize us.”

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For the Tsunami relief efforts, the SORC provided products from Jan. 4 through Feb. 9. “We sent scenes on Sumatra, Sri Lanka and Thailand. About 95 percent of the scenes were for Sumatra though,” added Russelavage.

The overall knowledge and experience in dealing with prior disaster relief efforts gave the SORC a powerful edge in assisting with the tsunami relief work and most certainly will give them an edge in whatever the future may bring.



ARTICLE BY ED WHITE
 IMAGES PROVIDED BY THE SPECTRAL
 OPERATIONS RESOURCE CENTER

Top: A before and after, side-by-side shot of the highway and road system of the Banda Aceh region. The yellow lines show major roads and highways. The green circles show passable roads, red are not passable and yellow triangles are areas that cannot be determined. The white arrows show where roads were completely washed away and are impassable. Above left: A satellite image produced by the Spectral Operations Resource Center shows the area of Banda Aceh on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia before the devastating tsunami. Above right: This SORC satellite image, produced four days after the tsunami, shows standing water across Banda Aceh after the disaster.