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## Japan Reassures, Others Flee

By NATHAN HODGE, JONATHAN WEISMAN And ANDREW MORSE



Yumiko Ono reports from Tokyo on the confusion there over the differing assessments of the radiation danger from the damaged Fukushima Daiichi power plant. Plus, Japanese officials scramble to dump water on the damaged reactors to cool them down.

The U.S. government, signaling distrust of reports from Japan about the nuclear crisis there, moved Thursday to evacuate U.S. citizens and set up its own channels of information—a step echoed by some American companies that laid plans to trim their operations in the stricken country.

In the latest sign of international skepticism about progress at Japan's crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear facility, the U.S. embassy in Tokyo said Thursday that the government would arrange to fly U.S. citizens out of Japan to safe havens elsewhere in Asia, using military aircraft if necessary. The U.S. also moved aggressively to assert control over information about the scope of the nuclear disaster by flying a military drone aircraft and a U2 spy plane over the plant to get a first-hand assessment of the damage.

As dawn broke Friday, a week after a massive earthquake and tsunami devastated Japan, live television showed white steam billowing from several of the severely damaged nuclear reactors at the crippled nuclear plant, suggesting water continues to evaporate from a dangerously overheating pool used to store spent nuclear fuel.

Cooling operations resumed at the nuclear plant midmorning Friday, with water cannons and fire truck hoses trained on Reactor No. 3, which is thought to present the greatest immediate risk.

The Defense Ministry said no water would be dropped from helicopters Friday.

Earlier in the day, reconnecting power to the reactors was the main focus of work to stabilize the situation. Restoring electricity to the reactor's cooling systems could represent the major breakthrough needed for bringing the crisis at the plant under control. But a nuclear safety agency official said Reactors No. 1 and No. 2 would be reconnected first, within the day, while Reactor No. 3 would not get power until as late as Sunday.

Japan's top government official reiterated that cooling Reactor No. 3 remained the main priority, since it is believed that spent fuel in a tank at the reactor is exposed, presenting a high radiation risk.

One possible problem with work to restore power to the reactors is the danger of contact with water while handling power equipment.

### Helicopters Drop Water on Reactors



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Yomiuri Shimbun/AFP/Getty Images

On Thursday, Walt Disney Co. said it had "temporarily suspended all its administrative and store operations in Tokyo" to allow its employees to deal with the effects of the earthquake and tsunami. "Our top priority is the wellbeing of our employees and their families," Disney said in a written statement.

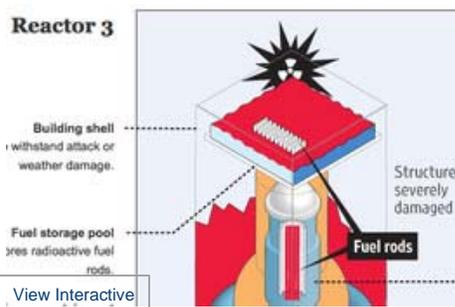
Medical-device maker Medtronic Inc. of Minneapolis said it is paying for air transportation for foreign nationals hired locally in Japan, as well as their families, to return to their home countries.

And in a sign of the spreading global economic impact, General Motors on Thursday became the first U.S. auto maker to close a U.S. factory because of the crisis in Japan. GM said it plans next week to idle a Shreveport, La., plant that builds small pickup

trucks, citing short supplies for an unspecified component that comes from Japan.

New U.S. government statements on Thursday reflected the delicate diplomatic dance required in dealing with an important ally like Japan. "This is something that will likely take some time to work through, possibly weeks," said Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Gregory Jaczko.

### Reactor Monitor



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Mr. Jaczko on Thursday stood by his statement the previous day that the risks of radiation exposure call for evacuating U.S. citizens from within 50 miles of the stricken plant.

Japanese and French officials had challenged certain details of Mr. Jaczko's Wednesday assertions—in particular his statement that one of the pools used to store spent nuclear fuel had run dry of the water necessary to cool and protect the fuel rods from catching fire.

"The bottom line is that there clearly appears to be a challenge keeping that spent fuel filled with sufficient water," Mr. Jaczko said.

### Survivors' Stories



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An executive at Tokyo Electric Power Co., or Tepco, said that operations Thursday to douse the Fukushima Daiichi plant with some 100 tons of seawater "were a good first step" in the effort to bring reactors under control. Another company executive said the operations "produced some results."

Much of the water missed its target, however, and the effort was hampered by high radiation levels and technical difficulties. Site personnel also failed to reconnect the plant to the electric grid as they had hoped, an effort that would have allowed workers to restart the cooling pumps within the crippled nuclear reactors—a

### Japan Quake's Effects



See a map of post-earthquake and tsunami events in Japan, Hawaii and the U.S. West Coast.

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Associated Press

A view of the badly damaged No. 4 unit of the Fukushima Daiichi plant.



President Obama Thursday afternoon warned Americans in Northern Japan to exercise caution, even beyond the declared 50-mile danger radius, but said harmful levels of radiation are not expected to reach the United States. Jerry Seib has details.

critical factor in preventing full-scale disaster. The difficulties suggested that bringing down the temperatures of the damaged reactors and the spent-fuel pools could be a long and difficult task.

On Thursday in the U.S., General Electric Co., which designed the stricken plant decades ago, said it had dispatched teams of nuclear experts to a Japanese emergency-response center where they are working with Tepco. Never before has a single operator faced the possibility of multiple reactor meltdowns amid a natural disaster that has made it difficult to get emergency equipment—even such basics as lights so workers can see what they're doing at night—to the site.

Last Friday's tsunami devastated the emergency backup generators at the plant, making it impossible to keep the all-important cooling pumps operating, thus putting nuclear material at risk of meltdown. The crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi complex now threatens three of six nuclear reactors there, and four of seven pools in which nuclear waste is stored.

On March 15, Tepco, requested 10 GE truck-mounted gas turbines, which can offer temporary power. GE says three of 10 ten trucks are ready in Florida and awaiting air transport.

The events in Washington and Japan underscored the confusion around the Fukushima plant and efforts to keep it from spinning into a nuclear catastrophe. As officials at Tepco have sought to calm fears, governments in Germany and China have ordered halts to nuclear-power production and development.

President Barack Obama Thursday put himself out front of the U.S. response, using a short Rose Garden appearance to reassure Americans that "we do not expect harmful levels of radiation to reach the United States, whether it's the West Coast, Hawaii, Alaska, or U.S. territories in the Pacific."

Mr. Obama said he has ordered a "comprehensive review" of safety at U.S. nuclear power plants, a step urged by members of Congress.

Concern among U.S. officials about the quality of information coming from the Japanese government has risen dramatically, according to administration officials. In addition to the difficulty getting reliable information from an unfolding calamity, there's U.S. officials are concerned they may not be getting the full

picture of what is happening on the ground.

In recent days, U.S. military installations in Japan have detected radiation and have recommended that personnel at Yokosuka and on other bases remain indoors.

Regarding the U.S. evacuation plans announced Thursday, Pentagon spokesman Col. David Lapan said that the U.S. government will charter aircraft to airlift U.S. civilians from Japan. U.S. military bases in Korea are now being prepared to receive evacuees from Japan.

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The primary means for the current evacuation, Col. Lapan said, would be charter aircraft. "If necessary, U.S. military assets may be used," he added.

The State Department has authorized the voluntary departure of family members and dependents of U.S. government employees stationed in northeast Japan.

The U.S military presence in Japan is substantial, and U.S.

Forces Japan, which is headquartered at Yokota Air Base, has a sizable contingent of military families and civilians. The command has approximately 38,000 military personnel, along with 43,000 dependents and 5,000 Pentagon civilian employees.

The State Department also has authorized a voluntary evacuation of around 600 diplomatic family members and dependents stationed in Tokyo, Yokohama and Nagoya.

The U.S. late Thursday began flying U.S. citizens out of Japan from Tokyo's Narita Airport aboard civilian charter aircraft. The move follows a government travel advisory issued Wednesday cautioning all Americans against traveling to Japan.

The U.S. Navy has positioned a sizeable fleet off both the west and east coasts of Japan to aid in the relief efforts. Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus said the service had 14 ships and more than 10,000 personnel in Japan or off the Japanese coast.

"We're flying our helicopters, and we will soon have almost 70 helicopters in the region or in the area that was affected," he said. "We're moving Japanese first responders, Japanese troops by ship to the affected areas."

Marines of the III Marine Expeditionary Force based on Okinawa have sent a headquarters company up with 500 Marines to close to the earthquake-hit regions of Japan. Mr. Mabus said they would assist in radiological testing, humanitarian assistance and other disaster relief planning.

Ships of the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet, including carrier USS Ronald Reagan, are off the east coast of Japan. On the west coast, the Essex amphibious group is stationed with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit aboard.

Capt. Caleb Eames, a spokesman for 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, said the amphibious force was not currently performing civilian rescue missions.

"Of course, we remain available to assist as directed by our higher headquarters, but at this point we are on the west coast of Japan preparing for humanitarian aid and disaster relief operations," he said.

—Ethan Smith, Rebecca Smith, Ellen Byron and Yuka Hayashi contributed to this article.

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