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US military scales back relief efforts in Japan

The US military has withdrawn 10 ships from a disaster relief mission off the battered coast of northeastern Japan. They were used to airlift supplies to isolated areas immediately after the March 11th quake.

The US military says the aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan and 9 other vessels have left because many roads have been cleared and a helicopter platform is no longer needed to transport supplies. It says the initial phase of the relief mission has been completed.

Four US military ships are now stationed off the disaster zone, including an amphibian assault vessel, the Essex.

At one point, the US military sent 22 ships. It also mobilized nearly 20,000 troops for search and rescue operations and humanitarian assistance.

A specialist unit of about 150 troops has also been sent to the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

The US military says it will continue to work closely with Japan to provide any necessary support.

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