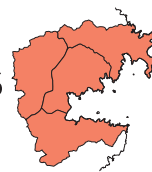


The Urgent Transportation of Relief Supplies to the Places Where People Are Waiting



▲ Transporting solar panels to the many evacuation centers in the town

Photo courtesy of Ground Self-Defense Force Northeastern Army

The disruption of coastal roads turned many of Minamisanriku's villages into isolated islands. The area experienced shortages of water, food, clothing, fuel, and daily necessities. It took more than half a month for relief supplies to reach the 10,000 or so evacuees.

In addition to their main task of searching for bodies and repairing roads, the Self-Defense Forces also transported necessities for people to stay alive—things such as water and solar panels. At first, the number of roads along which emergency vehicles could pass was very limited, and major roads connecting inland areas with the coast suffered heavy congestion. On some days it took five hours to make the one-way journey to Minamisanriku from the garrison in Sendai.



▲ Evacuees at Utatsu Junior High School, where a US military helicopter transporting supplies landed, unload and form a line to ferry the items.

Photo courtesy of Minamisanriku Social Welfare Council

On the third day after the earthquake, when the roads were still impassable, the US military delivered a large amount of relief supplies by helicopter. Evacuees made gestures to show that they were feeling cold, and the next day, the US military delivered water, blankets, and warm food. Known as Operation Tomodachi, this relief let the people of Minamisanriku know that they were receiving support from all over the world, and their hearts filled with gratitude. The large amount of relief supplies delivered to evacuation facilities provided invaluable physical and emotional support.