

**Briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations,  
Alain Le Roy, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping  
Operations, Edmond Mulet, and Susana Malcorra, Under-Secretary-  
General for Field Support**

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[unofficial transcript of English segment]

Q: Can you tell us about the casualties? I'm sorry but we need to start with that. Do you have any figures?

Le Roy: We don't have any figures for the time being. But we know clearly it is a tragedy for Haiti, and a tragedy for the UN, and especially for the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti – the MINUSTAH. The only figures we have are the figures of MINUSTAH. All together, we are more than 9,000 uniformed personnel, 490 international civilian personnel, and 1,200 local civilian staff, and 200 United Nations Volunteers. And I didn't mention, among the troops are 7,000 troops and 2,000 policemen. That is the total figure of MINUSTAH.

As far as we know, the main building that was the Headquarters building called the Hotel Christopher has collapsed. As far as we speak, some of our troops – mostly Brazilian troops – are surrounding the building and trying to rescue the people from the main headquarters. As we speak, no-one has been rescued from this main headquarters, but we don't know how many people were in the building when the collapse happened. It happened a little after five o'clock, and we don't know how many people were in the building at the time, so we don't have any number of casualties for the time being.

I am here, of course, with Susanna Malcorra, Head of Field Support, and Edmond Mulet, who is, as you all know, the former SRSG for Haiti.

Q: Any word on Mr. [Hédi] Annabi [current Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti]?

Le Roy: No, we haven't heard from Mr. Annabi. We just know that he was in the building, as were many others. But we don't know how many others at the time of the collapse.

Q: You know he was in the building at the time?

Le Roy: Yes.

Q: Do you have any casualties on the UN side confirmed for now?

Le Roy: No. We don't have figures of casualties. We know there will be casualties. But we cannot give figures for the time being.

Q: Could you describe the building? How tall?

Mulet: This is a building that was built in the early 60s. It is five storeys tall; concrete; reinforced concrete building; very solid. The headquarters of MINUSTAH has been there for the last four years. The Force Commander's office is there. The Police Commissioner's office is there. All the political section officers are there. MINUSTAH has two headquarters. This one in this building, and down near the airport in [inaudible], which is the logistical base. That one was also damaged, but not seriously. Next to that logistical base is the Argentinian hospital Level II – that was also damaged but not severely and is operating now and functioning with no problem, and receiving victims of the earthquake right now.

Q: How many people work in that main building, would you say?

Mulet: Normally around 200 to 250 during working hours. But we have to be reminded that this earthquake happened after 5pm, so we don't know how many people had already left the building at five o'clock. We don't know that.

Q: The location of building that's not next to the base, close to the airport, it's in the middle of the city?

Mulet: It's in a completely different neighbourhood, up on the hills of the city, on the road from Port au Prince proper on the road to Petion-ville.

Q: And it is called the Hotel Christophe, is that what you said?

Mulet: The Christopher Hotel. That's the original name of the building.

Malcorra: I think one of the points to stress is that communications are very, very, very sketchy at this point. All the communications in Port au Prince are down, and we are only being able to reach the people who have been in contact with us through satellite communications. So this is not only sketchy, but also the few satellite phones are being used for operational purposes on the ground, so we need to be mindful of that. Sometimes we just cannot get through because they are using the telephones for other purposes on the ground, so that is part of the reason why it is hard to have a full picture of the situation, plus the fact that it is of course night there. It is in the same time zone we are in, so that makes things a little bit more difficult.

Q: Can you talk about the response that you are planning? Are you planning to send someone, maybe the SG, or yourself? What's the plan?

Le Roy: I don't know if the decision has been made yet. We will have a meeting very early tomorrow morning with the SG. So far, the people on the ground, it is very important that the chain of command of the troops is effective. The Deputy Force Commander is on the spot. The Force Commander was out of the country, but the Deputy Force Commander is in command. We are in contact of course with him. We are in contact with the Chief Mission Support – with various people in the mission. And they are trying their best. Of course, the urgent thing is to rescue the people in the main building.

Q: Do they have any security concerns about looting or things like that?

Le Roy: We have asked that question. So far, there are of course many people in the street, but as far as our building is concerned, again our troops are there. There is no security problem in our headquarters. But we don't know about the rest of the city so far.

Q: What do you know of the general situation in Port au Prince? What kind of situation has been reported by the soldiers there?

Mulet: Well, the soldiers have been concentrating their efforts around our headquarters and trying to rescue our colleagues there. So, as Suzanna said, the communications are not very constant so we haven't had a really clear picture of the situation there. The Brazilian battalion commander, who was on the phone with us a few minutes ago, confirmed that the situation in the streets is that there are many people in the streets, a lot of traffic, and people moving around, but he expected that, coming midnight, this is going to calm down and of course we will wait until tomorrow morning when there is sunlight.

Malcorra: One other thing that is not yet confirmed is whether the airport is fully operational, which is also another important consideration. That is going to be assessed tomorrow morning, because the implications on the airfield are not yet established.

Q: Is anyone preparing for a major relief operation?

Le Roy: Yes, of course. OCHA [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs] is completely on top of this issue. You can ask John Holmes. Again, all that will be decided in the coming hours.