

## Massive worldwide aid effort for Haiti quake victims

Sniffer dogs, high-energy biscuits and tonnes of emergency medical aid were heading to Haiti yesterday as governments and aid groups launched a massive relief effort for the estimated three million people reeling from a devastating earthquake.

Aid officials in the impoverished Caribbean nation worked to clear rubble from roads, build makeshift hospitals and remove bodies from the rubble despite transportation problems and broken phone lines. Wintry weather in Europe added to the challenge, with snow temporarily delaying a British aid flight with 64 firefighters and rescue dogs at Gatwick airport. As it struggled to gauge the full scale of the catastrophe, the United Nations said it was rushing food, personnel and medical supplies to alleviate the "major humanitarian emergency". It also confirmed at least 140 members of its own staff were missing under flattened roofs in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince. "We'll be using whatever roads are passable to get aid to Port-au-Prince, and if possible we'll bring helicopters in," said Emilia Casella, a spokeswoman for the UN food agency. Its 200 staff in Haiti were trying to deliver high-energy biscuits and other supplies, despite looting and the threat of violence in a nation long plagued by lawlessness. Humanitarian officials said the proximity of the quake's epicentre, only 10 miles (15 kilometres) from Port-au-Prince's sprawling slums and hilltop villas, as well as Haiti's crumbling infrastructure, meant it was difficult to estimate how many people might be dead or injured. But the sheer number of dead bodies was expected to pose a problem. The World Health Organisation said it has sent specialists to help clear the city of corpses and prevent the spread of disease, and the Red Cross is sending a plane today loaded mainly with body bags. The Red Cross estimated that three million people will require aid, ranging from shelter to food and clean water, and said many Haitians could need relief for a full year. "There are many, many people trapped in the rubble," said Paul Conneally, spokesman for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. "We're not optimistic at the moment." US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the United States was offering full assistance -- civilian and military -- while dozens of countries including Britain, France, Canada, Germany, China, Mexico, and Venezuela pledged rescue teams, doctors, cash, and supplies.