

Tsunami Support Network – First Meeting British Red Cross, 44 Spitalfields - Friday 11th March, 2005

This meeting was attended by the main agencies involved including Metropolitan Police (on behalf of all police forces), representative from head of social work departments, representative from emergency planning, representative from local authorities, British Red Cross, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department of Health, UK Trauma Group and Disaster Action.

Summary of situation so far.

Some 80 British Nationals are confirmed dead and have been identified. 30 of these live permanently overseas.

There are 147 level one victims, or victim families where there is either a confirmed death, or a death is almost certain. All these families have a police family liaison officer assigned.

Foreign and Commonwealth Support Package.

Details of this are given on the FCO website. It includes free travel for 2 family members to the disaster area, either now or later. It also includes up to £600 for counselling, providing this has been recommended by a GP and is not readily available on the NHS. (I was intrigued to find out the FCO had already funded one course of hypnotherapy).

Memorial Service

There will a memorial service at St Paul's on May 11th, 2005 for the families of those who have been bereaved (the memorial service for the Hercules that crashed in Iraq will be the following week in Salisbury Cathedral).

Website

This was launched on 3rd March. Address = www.tsunamisupportnetwork@redcross.org.uk

The plan is to set up regional support meetings to which survivors will be invited to attend. These will be co-ordinated by British Red Cross who have been allocated funds for this purpose.

What is the size of the affected population?

Nobody knows. Holidaymakers boarding planes in Thailand were given questionnaires, but it's not clear how many were returned. Most people flew back into Gatwick and names were recorded there. Unfortunately this was a pencil and paper exercise.

Special flights into Gatwick were running at 8 per day x approx 250 per plane over 5 weeks. It seems unlikely that survivors can be contacted directly (even if the Data Protection Act would allow this).