

<Press Release>

Message from the Commander of the Joint Task Force for International Disaster Relief Operations in Tonga on the occasion of the departure of JS OSUMI

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt sympathy to all those affected by the earthquake and tsunami that followed the eruption of the volcano Funga Tonga Funga Ha'apai in the Kingdom of Tonga on January 15.

The Self-Defense Fleet Command, in response to the government's and the Ministry of Defense's order to dispatch the Japan Disaster Relief Team, promptly issued an order to prepare for the dispatch of JS OHSUMI, commanded by the Landing Ship Division 1 (Captain MATSUMI Toshinori).

After departing from Kure Base, the transport JS OHSUMI will sail to Tonga as quickly as possible while carrying out various preparations. After arriving in the Tonga area, the SDF will operate CH-47 helicopters and LCACs to deliver relief supplies as soon as possible.

The Self-Defense Fleet has been making efforts to deepen friendly relations and strengthen cooperation with the Pacific island nations by conducting goodwill visits and training exercises at ordinary times, with the aim of realizing a "free and open Indo-Pacific". In this mission, we will do our best to support the reconstruction of our friend, the Kingdom of Tonga, hoping for its early recovery and sustainable development.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the families of the members of the expedition for their generosity in sending them on this urgent mission.

24, JAN, 2022

Commander of the Joint Task Force for International Disaster Relief Operations in Tonga •
Commander in Chief, Self Defense Fleet, JMSDF

VADM YUASA Hideki