

USFJ helps provide fuel to Ebina hospital

By Tetsuo Nakahara
Tori Staff

The director of Ebina General Hospital expressed appreciation to U.S. Forces Japan for the organization's support in helping to provide the hospital with fuel that allowed the facility to continue operating in the weeks after Japan's March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

Dr. Kiichiro Uchiyama and his staff visited Camp Zama and met with various installation leaders whom he thanked for their coordination that led to the delivery of 800 liters of fuel to Ebina General. The fuel was used for generators that supplied electricity to the facility during rolling outages that have been occurring throughout Japan to conserve energy.

In the aftermath of the dual natural disasters, Ebina General continued to provide medical care to its patients by utilizing its generators during the power outages. However, the hospital's supply staff was unable to procure a sufficient amount of additional fuel and would soon not be able to continue running them.

The normal allotment of gasoline and other resources in Japan immediately began to face shortages and redistribution due to the crisis in the country's northeastern region. Ebina General tried asking for help from their city office, but officials there were unable to take immediate action. It was essential for the hospital to secure fuel for its generator in order to maintain medical care for inpatients in need of intensive care there, said Uchiyama.

"I called the [Camp Zama's] BG Sams Army Health Clinic to see if it would be possible to get some fuel from them after we couldn't find any other way," said Uchiyama. "We had 400 inpatients in the hospital that needed medical support at the time, and it was an urgent matter."

After the clinic received the request from Uchiyama, it was processed by USFJ through Maj. Gen. Michael T. Harrison Sr., commander of U.S. Army Japan and I Corps (Forward). The fuel was successfully transported to Ebina General by Naval Air Facility Atsugi personnel on March 22 as a part of a USFJ support mission.

"I was surprised at how quickly they took action on our request and provided the fuel for us," said Uchiyama. "I want to give my deepest appreciation to Medical Department Activity – Japan and Major General Harrison for their support."

"The motivation for helping Ebina Hospital is very



Photo by Tetsuo Nakahara

Dr. Kiichiro Uchiyama, right, director of Ebina General Hospital, shakes hands with Maj. Gen. Michael T. Harrison Sr., left, commander of U.S. Army Japan and I Corps (Forward), at the general's office Friday. Uchiyama was there to express his appreciation to U.S. Forces Japan personnel for their support in helping to provide 800 liters of fuel to his hospital during power outages following Japan's March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

simple," said Harrison. "U.S. Army Japan is an integral part of the community, and for the hospital to ask for our support – particularly in time of need when you have a disaster such as we experienced – it was something well within the capability of U.S. Forces Japan.

"We worked with our joint service teammates to come up with a solution that would help the hospital with what they needed," added Harrison. "It's important also to say that we're not only helping the hospital and the patients there, but also the military community because that hospital services our family members. It was a simple request that we could honor, and we stand ready to continue assistance in any matter."

On Friday, Uchiyama visited Harrison's office to express his appreciation and to discuss the situation his hospital faced during the crisis. Also there were the commander of U.S. Army Garrison – Japan and Col. Kathleen Ryan, commander of the BG Crawford F. Sams U.S. Army Health Clinic.

"They've never failed us, and they were always there for us when we sent patients," said Ryan, referring to Ebina General and its staff. "They have helped us in every way possible, and I thought we should be able to do something [to help them]. It made our bond stronger, and we will continue building the relationship in that community."

Currently, the fuel and power situation has become stable in the Kanagawa area. The crisis has made the Ebina General staff more aware of the importance of keeping medical care available following any kind of disaster, said Uchiyama.

"Our mission is to help the patients in the community," said Uchiyama. "We really feel like the U.S. Forces care about us as part of their community, and we can see there is a bond between us."

Ebina General is the only general hospital in Ebina City and has provided care for both the city's residents and patients from Camp Zama for many years whenever they require medical support.