

A call to the Red Cross  
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Their primary mission is to organize and coordinate relief actions in response to a natural disaster, but the role the Red Cross plays in domestic and international affairs has made the organization an invaluable resource in the global humanitarian effort.

While focused on the community, the American Red Cross and U.S. Armed Forces have shared a bond for many years. The organization was founded by Clara Barton in 1881, after she had spent an extensive amount of time aiding victims of the Civil War in and the Franco-Prussian War. Today, a 50-member volunteer board governs the ARC, with the President of the United States serving as the Honorary Chairman.

Overseas in Korea, the ARC conducts operations with the same resolve found in the states, said Steven Wegley, the Camp Henry Station Manager for the ARC. "Our station covers many of the installations in Southeastern Korea," Wegley said. "We provide emergency communications and community support for the soldiers stationed at Camp Henry, Camp Walker, Chinhae Naval Base, Camp Pohang and Camp Mujuk."

One of the more notable support functions the organization provides is family emergency communication. If a tragedy strikes a soldier's family in the states, the ARC acts as the messenger.

"After we become advised of an incident involving a soldier's family," said Wegley, "we contact his commander or first sergeant. It is sometimes easier to hear the information from someone he knows."

The Camp Henry ARC is also involved with the UFL exercise, simulating the role they will play if a war broke out in this region.

Along with standard casualty assistance, said Wegley, the ARC also tries to enhance the mental health of the soldiers. "We deploy with mobile canteens, bringing coffee, candy, soda and magazines to the people in the field. The same is done for patients in the various hospital wards.

Wegley's staff, consisting of 2 full-time workers and over 35 volunteers, has their hands full even without performing blood collection, which is standard for many stateside ARC stations.

"We don't collect the blood while deployed, but we do assist military bases in the process," said Wegley. "A lot of our current programs are geared toward helping the community such as first aid and CPR classes."

Prone to cyclones, earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis, the Pacific ring on which Korea resides seems to be a magnet for nature's fury. With the support of the ARC, the country has a safety blanket to fall back on in the wake of a disaster.