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The Great Hanshin Earthquake
by Glen S. Fukushima

The 7.2-magnitude Great *Hanshin* Earthquake of 1995 hit the Kobe area at 5:46 a.m. on Tuesday, January 17, leaving in its wake more than 5200 deaths, 30,000 injured, 300,000 homeless, and 110,000 buildings damaged. The worst quake to hit Japan since the Great *Kanto* Earthquake of 1923, which killed 143,000 people, the recent tremor has provoked considerable discussion in Japan and abroad about lessons to be learned. Among the central issues are the following:

1. Overconfidence in the ability to withstand earthquakes. Immediately after the earthquakes in San Francisco (1989) and Los Angeles (1994), Japanese authorities boasted that Japanese construction--unlike that of the U.S. and other countries--was uniquely capable of withstanding quakes of great magnitude. The collapse of numerous buildings, highway structures, and port facilities in the Kobe area, however, quickly and dramatically proved how misplaced this confidence was.
2. Lack of local preparedness for natural disasters. Authorities in the Kobe area admitted, after the fact, that they had been caught essentially unprepared by the earthquake because they had assumed that their area was unlikely to be hit by a major tremor. Thus, they had paid little attention to earthquake drills and other measures to prepare for such a disaster. And the initial ability to fight fires (e.g., by using helicopters) and bring some order to the chaos was severely limited, as was the capability to rescue, treat, feed, and shelter the victims.
3. Ineffectual crisis management in Tokyo. The central government authorities in Tokyo at first appeared paralyzed because they were unable to secure information from the scene more accurate and timely than that provided by television news programs. Once the information was obtained, acting on it proved difficult because no clear lines of authority for disaster relief had been established that would permit effective coordination between central, regional, and local government authorities. What one saw was *tatewari gyosei* ("vertical administration," where agencies jealously guard their turf and refuse to cooperate with each other) at its worst. The need for Japan to establish a national emergency management agency similar to the U.S. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) is clear, but whereas FEMA reports to the U.S. president, a comparable Japanese agency would most likely report to the prime minister, who may or may not have the necessary authority to make important decisions in a timely manner.

4. “Privatized” relief efforts. In the absence of prompt and effective response by governmental authorities, non-governmental organizations such as the infamous *yakuza*--relying on their nationwide network and clear lines of authority--were able to transport relief supplies (water, food, toiletries, diapers, etc.) to the Kobe area and distribute them to local residents with considerable aplomb and efficiency. Similarly, companies such as Daiei and Seven-Eleven Japan appeared more able than the government to respond quickly and effectively to the victims’ needs.

5. Reluctance to accept aid from abroad. One of the most puzzling and frustrating discoveries was the reluctance of Japanese authorities to accept assistance from foreign countries. This reluctance stemmed from three sources. First, a strong sense of national pride and self-sufficiency predisposed some Japanese officials to reject such aid, especially from countries that in their eyes are less developed than Japan. Second, the multi-layered Japanese bureaucratic decision-making process made it difficult to respond quickly to the immediate offers of aid from many countries around the world. Third, risk-averse Japanese bureaucrats resisted allowing medicines, relief personnel, dogs to locate survivors, and so forth into the country without first subjecting them to time-consuming procedures, such as the testing of drugs to account for Japanese “uniqueness,” animal quarantine measures, and government licenses. Some of these requirements were later eased, but too late to make a significant difference to the victims.

6. Differential treatment of foreigners. There were few reported cases of overt discriminatory treatment of non-Japanese residents in the area hit by the tremor--certainly nothing to compare with the massacre of thousands of Koreans after the 1923 quake. Yet Korean, Chinese, German, and other non-Japanese residents were heard to complain, at least initially, of not receiving the information, attention, and assistance that were being offered to Japanese residents.

7. Selective reporting by the mass media. Despite the round-the-clock reporting of the quake by the Japanese mass media, it was difficult to know how representative the reporting was. For instance, there was evident bias by the Japanese media in their focus on positive stories of cooperation, discipline, and perseverance by the victims, as well as on the orderly and effective manner of their rescue, relocation, and care. Meanwhile, eyewitness accounts unfiltered by the Japanese mass media (through phone calls, letters, and visits) painted a less rosy picture of arguments, fistfights, looting, price-gouging, hoarding of merchandise, and other conflicts one would expect in most societies struck by such massive destruction and temporary loss of legal order. Whether or not encouraged by the authorities, Japanese journalists engaged in considerable wishful thinking by reporting the Japanese response to this disaster as uniformly characterized by docility, obedience, and resignation.

The above seven points are among the major issues now being discussed in the aftermath of the Great *Hanshin* Earthquake. One can only hope that the Japanese government and public will draw constructive lessons from this tragedy so that at least the most egregious errors will not be repeated in future encounters with natural disasters.

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The Relief Effort Seen by a Participant
by Robert M. Orr, Jr.

What is now being called the *Hanshin Daishinsai*, or Great *Hanshin* Earthquake (*Hanshin* meaning Osaka-Kobe) is the first quake to receive the designation “great” since the 1923 earthquake that ripped the Tokyo-Yokohama area apart. This is indicative of the shock and damages that occurred in the Kobe area and its environs.

Going in as a volunteer, first as part of a Motorola team I organized and then as a volunteer for the relief work, I and my colleagues were stunned at the extent of the damage, which far exceeded anything we had expected based on television reports. The area truly looked like a war zone, complete with refugees and chaos.

Our mission was divided into two parts. The first, which took place on January 20-22 (the quake itself having occurred in the early morning hours of January 17), involved assessing the damage and where Motorola could play a proper role. Motorola had already supplied some two-way radio equipment to local and national government offices. Several volunteer groups advised me that regulatory restrictions made it difficult for them to use two-way radio equipment and thus none were provided to these groups initially. Under current government regulations, users of this equipment must be certified through training. While government agencies have people who have gone through this superfluous process, relief organizations usually have not.

Cellular phones no longer face the regulatory barriers that other communications equipment must contend with, so the demand was high from all groups, both private and governmental. But it was difficult to identify the *madoguchi*, or windows, in the government--both local and national--who could tell us where the phones were most needed. In addition, our Japanese partner in the region was reluctant to provide telephone numbers for the cellulars on short notice. Therefore, we initially had to bring in phones from the Tokyo area that already had numbers, which meant they were largely private cellular phones used by Motorola employees. Ironically, this involved using phones operated by IDO, the partner involved in last year’s market access dispute for the Nagoya-Tokyo region.

Surprisingly, given all this, one of the most efficient bureaucracies in getting things started in the region following the quake was the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPT). They accelerated many communications access issues and did not hinder outside efforts. The

main problems were simple confusion and *nawabari*, or bureaucratic territoriality problems, which exacerbated the situation.

I returned to the Tokyo area on the 22nd and discovered from the newspaper that there was a relief outfit called Japan Helpline, headed by Ken Joseph (Ken Joseph is the son of American missionaries and was born and raised in Japan. He is a native speaker of both Japanese and English, and he also runs Agape House in California. Japan Helpline predates this crisis. Joseph has been a leader in humanitarian volunteerism in Japan), that was in need of mobile phones. I called and asked how many they needed.

The answer was, “do you have four or five?” I replied, “How about 30?” They were overjoyed. So I left again the next morning to meet a Japanese Motorola representative in Osaka with all the phones. Three of us, including a colleague who had been with me on our initial fact-finding mission, went into the quake area again.

Our mode of transportation both times was bicycles. The closest open train station at the time was Nishinomiya Kitaguchi, an area also struck by the quake. From there we bicycled 20 kilometers with backpacks and phones through a rainstorm back into Kobe to the City Hall, where we delivered the phones to Japan Helpline volunteers. After that we moved over to the Chuo ward government offices, which were damaged by the quake but still stood, and which effectively became the Motorola headquarters in Kobe for the following week. We had sleeping bags and so camped out on the floor. Much of the day consisted of looking for people who needed cellular phones. When we were not doing that we helped other volunteers with loading food trucks or by going into the many *hinanjo*, or evacuee centers, to deliver food and water or clean up.

One has to admire the Kobe people. They displayed in full the positive side of *gaman*, or uncomplaining endurance. This inculcated Japanese trait is often maligned because it leads to political (and personal) passivity. But in the case of a disaster like the earthquake it meant that there was no panic and, best of all, no wholesale looting, as there almost assuredly would have been in the United States.

But even *gaman* began to dissipate when the subject of the Japanese government’s reaction to the earthquake and to offers of foreign assistance came up. Hyogo prefecture residents were irate at what they perceived as the tardiness of relief and the unwillingness of the central government to allow more foreign help to get to them. I saw one elderly Japanese lady scream at a TV interviewer that President Clinton had offered to provide abundant assistance, but what had the Japanese government done? Virtually nothing.

In fairness, it should be said that the Japanese government did mobilize and try to remedy the situation. But the aid was late and usually confused. I can vividly recall their failure in a simple but vital task in a crisis: traffic control.

In the late afternoon of January 21, travelling down Route 2 from Kobe to Nishinomiya was like a combination of scenes of Japanese refugees at the end of World War II and modern-day Bangkok. Pedestrians, bicycles, motorbikes, private cars, trucks, and ambulances were all going in the same direction, away from Kobe. (In the mornings, this stream of traffic was reversed, with people trying to come into the city.) Combine this with non-stop 24-hour sirens and honking auto horns, and you have a complete definition of the term chaos. Why a

separate lane for emergency vehicles was not created was beyond me... and most of the Japanese people there as well.

There were plenty of ironies: among the most visibly present and effective food relief efforts were the soup lines sponsored by the *uyoku*, or right-wingers with their normally intrusive sound-trucks, and the *yakuza*. In one ward the only building we found standing was the Kobe city tax office!

It was interesting to see the locals' reaction to foreigners. Several Kobe residents came up to me and with half-snarling faces asked simply "news?" meaning, was I from the media. When I responded that no, I was a volunteer, they bowed low and thanked me profusely. But it shows the low esteem with which people had come to regard the press.

I went into one evacuee center and was treated somewhat like a soldier from the American occupation period. As I came in with a back-pack, an elderly lady looked up and with tears in her eyes declared to her relatives that there was nothing to worry about now, the Americans had arrived! Just like after the war, we would save them. It was difficult for me to retain my composure after such an encounter. And it was indicative of the way at least some regarded the Japanese government's response to the quake. On the other hand, *Shukan Diamond* on February 4 ran a headline story recounting that three white foreigners (*hakujin* rather than *gaijin*) on bicycles working for Nippon Motorola were going around in Kobe and offering people cellular phones when what was really wanted was food and sustenance. According to the story, when no one would accept our telephones we asked where the *hinanjo* were, and our efforts were essentially part of a vanguard Motorola business strategy. Needless to say, we are deeply disappointed (but perhaps not surprised) by this kind of interpretation. We sought no publicity at all and never met anyone from *Shukan*. Perhaps the story merely illustrates how some Japanese expect their own businesses to operate in a tragedy--that is, look for the next business opportunity--and so they cannot imagine how a foreign company might view things otherwise.

The two worst-hit areas I saw were Nagata-ku and Ashiya City. The former looked like the epicenter of Hiroshima after the atomic bombing. Several people were sifting through the debris looking only for the bones of relatives. Ashiya was like one gigantic lumberyard of crumbled wooden homes. Very few were left standing and it was a devastating sight. Again, particularly when we came upon small shoes and dolls in the wreckage, it was difficult to control our emotions.

The Kobe area has a long road ahead of it. Among the feelings this experience produced in me is that Kobe has become a sort of adopted city. I want to help, in some fashion, see it through its recovery. But I also realize that in many ways what I witnessed was merely the dress rehearsal for a second Great Kanto Earthquake sometime in the near future.

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Views from Two Observers **by Andrew Morse and Todd Zaun**

By now almost everyone has seen dramatic footage from Kobe. Getting those pictures was easy. From the suburbs of Nishinomiya to the smoldering ruins of Nagata Ward 30 kilometers to the east, you could point a camera in any direction and film houses collapsed into streets, buildings listing on their cornerstones, and toppled bridges and overpasses. All around, residents, many still in their pajamas, stood in varying degrees of shock. What those heart-wrenching pictures did not capture is scale. On January 17, Kobe was literally destroyed.

Hours after the temblor left the city in ruins, private relief workers began ferrying in water, food, blankets, and clothing. Providing these simple necessities, once trucked to Kobe in bulk, now became an arduous physical task. The only practical way to get into the city at first was by foot, and it was a long hike, made treacherous by wreckage and debris littering the streets. Still, thousands made the trek, toting with them crates of bottled water, fresh foods, and portable butane stoves. Some people were on personal missions, searching for friends and family whom they had not been able to contact. But many were part of organized private relief efforts.

On the Saturday after the quake, the first day that many people outside of Kobe could get away from work, volunteers organized themselves with military precision and stormed the city. The private relief effort was in overdrive. One of the things that amazed us was how fashionable these good samaritans were. Many came in stylish leather jackets and used bright ski duffle bags to haul in their donations. More than a few women wore high heels, and it was not uncommon to see men in suits and ties. They were a strange sight amidst the rubble.

The size of these volunteer efforts varied with the resources of the groups sponsoring them. Eighty volunteers from the Asian Friendship Society (a fraternal group comprising Japanese, other Asians, as well as Americans) fanned out from Nishinomiya to deliver bottles of mineral water and fresh fruit. In a small park along Route 2--the only passable road into Kobe-- a Buddhist group pitched fair-tents and hawked donations from around the country with the same ardor evinced by sales-clerks at the gourmet food stalls in upscale department stores. "How about a tasty rice ball?" shouted a smiling woman to the crush of tired, cold, and still disoriented victims. It was almost as if she were in competition with the woman to her right, who was giving away bowls of hot *miso* soup.

Koji Matsumoto, a spokesman for *Kofuku no Kagaku*, a Buddhist organization, said over 1,000 of his volunteers from around the country had descended on Kobe by Saturday; and that they had established seven relief centers. The Nishinomiya YMCA was also providing hot meals, blankets, medicines, and water; and some of their volunteers went from door to door to deliver food and water to the elderly and disabled.

The scene at the Nishinomiya YMCA was in stark contrast to the Higashi Nada Ward Office a couple of kilometers west. Under an old sign reading “Let’s keep Higashi Nada fire free,” pallets of Nissin instant noodles, Ritz crackers and Suntory canned soft drinks stood in their shipping crates collecting rain. Most had been donated by the manufacturers, and relief workers at the ward office said that donations were pouring in. But they didn’t know what they were getting, how much of it they’d received; and they had no plan to organize its distribution. Instead victims of the quake were trekking to the ward office for help. The degree of destruction varied by neighborhood, but a clear pattern was evident. Older homes and shops were invariably leveled, while newer prefab homes (which use lighter materials hooked together to a steel frame onsite) did much better. In Kobe and the surrounding cities of Nishinomiya, Ashiya, and Takarazuka, the earthquake did in a matter of seconds what a decade of deregulation has failed to accomplish. Mom-and-pop shops, symbolic of Japan’s archaic retailing structure, simply collapsed. Entire *shotengai* (neighborhood shopping arcades), and the little groceries, liquor stores, and crockery shops that operated there, ceased to exist.

Along the busier thoroughfares, the Kobe outlets of nationwide retailers and superstores escaped with only moderate damage. On the day following the quake, many displayed their agility. Convenience store chains quickly chartered helicopters and put their staff on motorbikes and bicycles in an effort to get goods to their Kobe area stores. Other retailers immediately put their inventory on sale, some even offering credit to customers who had no cash. Sales were booming at the *Torii Shinshifuku* outlet in Nishinomiya two days after the quake. But the company lost money on every sale. Managers had moved all of the merchandise out to the sidewalk, where the town’s motley-dressed victims picked through it. Prices had been slashed on everything. Jackets, in a rainbow of colors, were going for 1,000 yen, an unbelievable bargain in Japan. T-shirts were just 100 yen.

“At these prices, we’re operating in the red,” said Takumi Hashimoto, the store’s manager. “But we’ll extend the sale until things get better around here.” Hashimoto was so committed to helping the stricken residents that he was looking for more employees. A flyer stapled to a leafless tree next to the store announced openings for part-timers to help with the disaster-relief sale.

Retailers were not alone in displays of corporate philanthropy. Nippon Telegraph and Telephone set up banks of phones throughout the area. Victims could call anywhere in the world for free. And Motorola executives, in from Tokyo to check on the company’s employees and examine facilities, handed out cellular phones to relief workers, asking only that they be mailed back when the crisis was over.

Just as Kobe retailers refused to prey on those in need, Kobe’s citizens didn’t take advantage of shops too damaged to open. Almost no looting was reported. At one retailer on heavily traveled Route 2, Sony Walkmen, portable stereos, television sets and an array of electronics products sat untouched on display shelves, despite shattered windows and holes big enough to walk through. No one had pilfered the coin hoppers of the dozens of Coke machines that we saw that had cracked open after toppling in the quake.

While many Kobe residents are confident the city can recover in due course of time, that optimism will be tested in some of the poorer sections of town. Nagata Ward, a few kilometers from the epicenter of the quake, looked as if it had been carpet-bombed. Two hours after the quake leveled most structures in this dense crush of factories, cheap restaurants, and low-rent houses, fires razed the few that were left standing. Fire crews struggled to get through the cluttered streets, but after they arrived many discovered they had no water pressure.

Many of Nagata Ward's residents have lived their entire lives within the borders of this once-bustling borough, home of one of Japan's largest communities of Koreans [see next story]. Thousands now find themselves both homeless and jobless. Few carried earthquake insurance, and many may find the cost of rebuilding too great. Like the buildings that used to house them, many small businesses here may simply fold.

The government is trying to shift some of the burden of rebuilding Kobe away from the local government by allowing reconstruction projects to qualify for Japan's 10-year 630-trillion-yen plan to beautify and modernize the nation's cities. For example, plans call for greenbelts and parkways to line Route 43, which runs below the elevated *Hanshin* Expressway. That will not only make the drive into Kobe a little more pleasant than before, but it will also serve as a firebreak in the event of another disaster.

Also, the hardest hit areas of the city--like Nagata and Higashi Nada wards--are being included as *toshi keikaku taisho kukaku* (urban development zoning). Residents are being given the option of selling their properties to the national government and will then be given preference when applying for space in a *kodan jutaku* (public housing).

One suspects, however, that the *yakuza*--who were also prominent in relief efforts--will be moving in to buy up small plots of land that can then be amalgamated into larger, more profitable building sites. Kobe will surely never again look the same as it did before the quake.

This first-hand account was written by **ANDREW MORSE** and **TODD ZAUN** both reporters for Bloomberg Business News. Zaun, who arrived in Osaka the day of the quake, walked into Kobe the following day (Wednesday); Morse arrived on Friday (January 20) and stayed until the following Tuesday. Both are Japanese linguists and alumni of the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies at the University of California, San Diego.

A Korean Perspective
by **Yong Mok Kim**

Little or no attention has been paid in the American or Japanese mass media to the casualties of the Korean population in the Kobe area, their plight in the aftermath of the quake, and their despair.

The *Hanshin* area, with the major cities of Osaka and Kobe, contains one of the largest concentrations of overseas Korean residents--a population totaling about 200,000 and constituting about a third of all Korean residents in Japan. Both the pro-South Korea Residents' Association (*Mindan*) and the pro-North Korea Residents' Association (*Soren*) put the size of the Korean population in Kobe itself at about 20,000. In the most severely devastated area of Kobe, Nagata-ku, 9,352 Koreans reportedly resided. It is therefore difficult to believe that as of February 8 only 154 Koreans are known to have been killed by the quake, including 4 Japanese women married to Koreans. The actual number of Koreans dead in the quake may ultimately be much higher than these officially confirmed numbers.

Many Koreans are known to have adopted Japanese-style names. Unless they specified their nationality, such Koreans are not classified as Koreans. (Official Japanese casualty lists also do not specify nationality.) Therefore, some Korean names written in Chinese characters, such as (Yu in Korean) and (Lim or Im), may be read as the Japanese surnames Yanagi and Hayashi and even as the Chinese surnames Liu and Lin.

Nagata-ku, the area with the heaviest concentration of Korean residents, was known for its shoe-manufacturing industry, including some 500 factories making chemical (i.e., plastic) and rubber shoes. The Japan Chemical Shoe Industry Association, the Japan Fashion Shoe Industry Association, and the Kobe Rubber Industry Association estimate that the plastic and rubber shoe industry in Nagata-ku provided approximately 80% of the total Japanese output of these items. In addition, there were more than 1,000 family shoemakers in Nagata-ku. Some 80-90 per cent of the shoe industry in Nagata-ku was owned and operated by Koreans. There were also approximately 200 Korean restaurants in the downtown Sannomiya area reportedly destroyed by the quake. Numerous Korean-owned pachinko parlors in Kobe were also destroyed or shut down.

Estimates of losses from damaged shoe-manufacturing plants are <500 billion; from raw materials for shoe manufacturing, 300 billion yen; and from distribution facilities, 200 billion yen--a total of about 1,000 billion yen. Since the industry was already under heavy pressure from the severe competition coming from Southeast Asia and China, many are doubtful that it can or will be rebuilt.

In addition to those killed, thousands of Koreans were left homeless and found shelter in schools, parking lots, even on streets. However, there were no known anti-Korean demonstrations or public outcries. Observers attributed this to the fact that Korean residents have been integrated into Japanese community life for several generations, which is quite different from the isolated and alienated Koreans at the time of the Kanto quake in 1923.

Japanese government agencies have adopted official policies of not differentiating between Japanese nationals and Korean residents with regard to public assistance in the wake of the

quake. For instance, the government has announced that it will provide each household with a dead person in it 5 million yen compensation, regardless of national origin.

Because the Japanese mass media seemed prompt and accurate in their quake coverage, no anti-Korean sentiment was allowed to erupt among the Japanese population. Nonetheless, on February 8, House of Councilors member Eiichi Nakamura, in his testimony before the Budget Committee, referred to a rumor that “Korean residents in Japan committed arson at the time of the Kobe quake.” This comment was telecast live by NHK, causing Prime Minister Murayama immediately to express his displeasure, and Home Affairs Minister Hiromu Nonaka to demand Nakamura’s retraction. Many Korean residents in Japan denounced this reference as racist and demanded that Nakamura apologize.

Both *Mindan* and *Soren* established relief centers in the Kobe area, with hundreds of Korean volunteers throughout Japan sending cash, food, clothing, medical supplies, and rescue tools. In their relief efforts, Korean volunteers made no distinction between Korean and Japanese victims.

In South Korea the government was also prompt in responding to the needs of Korean residents in the quake, sending supplies and funds to *Mindan*. The Korean *chaebol*, such as Samsung, also sent rescue and relief missions to Kobe. KAL and Hyundai responded with potable water, blankets, and cash donations. The Korean government announced that it would set up a loan fund of \$50 million with low interest charges of 4 per cent.

On January 21, the South Korean government air-lifted some 90 tons of relief supplies to Kobe, and even North Korea sent a message of condolence to the Japanese prime minister. The new North Korean leader, Kim Jong-il, made a 20-million-yen donation to the Japanese Red Cross. In the Los Angeles area, Korean newspapers and community organizations collected approximately \$50,000 for the Korean victims of the Kobe quake. This is about a quarter of the \$200,000 collected in 1992 for the victims of the south-central Los Angeles riots.

Although Japanese publications reported some unfavorable behavior, including mismanagement of the crisis by Prime Minister Murayama and some price-gouging by merchants, looting, and arson, the South Korean government said it was impressed by Japanese public behavior. It decided to dispatch a study mission to the Kobe area to learn from Japanese administrative measures in coping with a crisis, including coordination between local governments and the central government, and why the Japanese populace behaved in such an orderly fashion. To the relief of all, there was no repetition of the massacres of Koreans that followed the Great Kanto earthquake of 1923.

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