“Death brings pain and tears. In this case, it motivates us to prepare ourselves to honor the memory of our heroes,” said Don Osvino José Borth, the Brazilian Army’s archbishop, on January 21, 2010, during a ceremony honoring the 18 Brazilian military personnel killed in the earthquake that had devastated Haiti nine days earlier.

The president of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, along with relatives and friends of the victims of the earthquake, were overtaken by emotion when the 18 coffins, draped in Brazilian flags, were displayed at Brasilia Air Base during a ceremony honoring the fallen Soldiers while the military band performed the national anthem.

Speaking about Brazil and MINUSTAH’s role in Haiti in a Miami Herald newspaper column published on February 24, 2010, Lula said: “Brazil and MINUSTAH must persevere because we know the Haitians
themselves will not give up hope. We are certain of that after witnessing the countless demonstrations of heroism and solidarity in the wake of the earthquake. The sacrifice of our heroic Soldiers who lost their lives reinforces our commitment to Haiti. We are inspired by the unyielding determination to survive by those who endured days, or even weeks, under the rubble. They never ceased to believe in being rescued, nor did the rescuers lose hope, as they relentlessly dug, even with their own hands, in search of signs of life.

At the end of 2003, Haiti was submerged in a deep political crisis that culminated with President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's resignation and departure from the country on February 29, 2004. On that day, the Multinational Interim Force, or MIF, was created by the United Nations Security Council. On April 30 of that same year, the U.N. transitioned to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, or MINUSTAH. Brazil, which was already playing a major role with MIF, was selected to lead the initiative.

Before the January 12, 2010, earthquake, Haiti was receiving food aid and financial resources from Brazil, the country providing the largest contingent in Haiti, with 1,226 troops.

In the weeks following the earthquake, Brazil multiplied its actions, offering aircraft that transported tons of food to the ravaged country, several disasterresponse specialists, rescue dogs, tons of medicine, water, tents and other items, including emergency field hospitals and telecommunications equipment.

The Brazilian Air Force treated thousands of patients and performed hundreds of surgeries in its field hospital set up in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince.

In addition to aid from the government, hundreds of social entities were mobilized in Brazil to help the Haitian people, sending health and social services professionals, food, money, clothing and supplies.

The Oswaldo Cruz Foundation donated more than 40 tons of medicine to the Haitian people, while companies, celebrities, athletes and thousands of Brazilian citizens contributed millions of dollars.

Brazil also proposed a reconstruction package for the country, including building homes for earthquake victims and starting several agricultural projects, according to the chief minister of the Brazilian Cabinet of Institutional Security, Gen. Jorge Felix.