Newsweek magazine published an article with Barack Obama’s byline headlined “Why Haiti Matters.”

In it, President Obama explained his reasons for mobilizing a massive American response to the Jan. 12 earthquake there, including deploying some 2,000 Marines to the Caribbean nation. He wrote: “… above all, we act for a very simple reason: in times of tragedy, the United States of America steps forward and helps. That is who we are. That is what we do.” Do you agree with the president, or does his declaration expose the U.S. to having to commit troops to other parts of the globe not named Iraq or Afghanistan where large-scale tragedies and emergencies are taking place, such as the Darfur region of Sudan? And do you see the American post-quake effort in Haiti as a purely humanitarian mission, or is there a strategic and national security dimension?

There is a difference between committing troops and support for humanitarian rescue operations and committing troops for combat and military engagement. Haiti is geographically close to the United States and therefore commands more attention from us than would a more remote location. I think the president is doing the right thing here. I do not think it compels us to similar response measures in every disaster or other situation around the globe.

U.S. Rep. John Campbell (R-Newport Beach)