



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on November 11, 2013

## The Philippines Struggles in the Aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan

As the remnants of Typhoon Haiyan made landfall in Vietnam on November 11, the effects of the deadly storm are still being evaluated and dealt with in the Philippines — where the death toll is feared to be as high as 10,000. The Philippines gives its own names to storms within its territory, and the typhoon was called Yolanda there.



The city of Tacloban, a city of 220,000 and the capital of the Philippine province of Leyte on the island of the same name, was hardest hit by the massive storm and accounts for the overwhelming majority of fatalities. Haiyan combined tsunami-like 13-foot tidal waves with 150-mile-per-hour hurricane-force winds.

“I don’t believe there is a single structure that is not destroyed or severely damaged in some way — every single building, every single house,” U.S. Marine Brig. Gen. Paul Kennedy said after viewing Tacloban from a helicopter.

[USA Today](#) reported that Philippine soldiers handed out food and water in Tacloban, and a contingent of Marines distributed food, water, and generators to the city.

“This area has been totally ravaged,” *USA Today* quoted Sebastien Sujobert, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Tacloban, as saying. “Many lives were lost, a huge number of people are missing, and basic services such as drinking water and electricity have been cut off,” he added.

The report cited a statement from Regional Police Chief Elmer Soria, who related information provided to him by Leyte provincial Governor Dominic Petilla late on Saturday indicating that about 10,000 people died on the island, most either drowning or being killed in the collapse of buildings. The governor’s figure was based on reports from village officials in areas hit by the typhoon.

Philippine President Benigno Aquino III toured some stricken areas on Sunday and declared a “state of calamity,” which would set in motion the release of emergency funds from the federal government.

Aquino was accompanied by his defense secretary, Voltaire Gazmin, who described the dire situation in Tacloban: “There is no power, no water, nothing. People are desperate.”

An [AP report](#) cited a statement from authorities who said they had evacuated about 800,000 people before the typhoon struck, but some of the evacuation centers provided little or no protection from the wind and flooding. The Philippine National Red Cross said people were not prepared for a storm surge. “Imagine America, which was prepared and very rich, still had a lot of challenges at the time of Hurricane Katrina, but what we had was three times more than what they received,” said Gwendolyn Pang, the Red Cross executive director.



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A report from [Euronews](#) noted the massive task of distributing badly needed emergency supplies to the victims of the typhoon and cited a statement from government authorities that local administrators lack the personnel and materials needed for the rescue effort. Most of the emergency supplies must be shipped to Tacloban from Manila, which is about 360 miles to the north.

While the devastation in Tacloban is horrific enough, authorities can only guess at the condition of more remote areas in the surrounding province.

“We are seeing a lot of dead throughout the province,” Brigadier General General Domingo Tutaan, Jr. was quoted as saying by [New York Times](#). Tutaan added, “I have been in the service for 32 years, and I have been involved with a lot of calamities. I don’t have words to describe what our ground commanders are seeing in the field.”

Richard Gordon, the chairman of the Philippine Red Cross, said that a Red Cross convoy bringing aid supplies to Tacloban had to turn back on Sunday after it halted at a destroyed bridge and was set on by a crowd of hungry people. “There is very little food going in, and what food there was, was captured” by the crowd, Gordon said in a telephone interview with a *Times* reporter on Monday morning.

A statement posted on the [U.S. Defense Department](#) website on November 10 stated:

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel directed U.S. Pacific Command yesterday to support U.S. government humanitarian relief operations in the Philippines in the wake of a deadly typhoon that has left more than 1,000 dead, defense officials announced yesterday.

The support, provided at the request of the Philippines government, will initially focus on surface maritime search and rescue, medium-heavy helicopter lift support, airborne maritime SAR, fixed-wing lift support and logistics enablers, officials said.

DOD is working in coordination with the U.S. Agency for International Development and U.S. ambassador in Manila, they said, and will continue to monitor the effects of Typhoon Haiyan while standing ready to help the Philippines recover from the monster storm.

The DOD statement noted that during his visit there in August, Hagel praised the “deep and unbreakable alliance” between the United States and the Philippines, calling it “an anchor for peace and stability and prosperity in this region.”

“Our close ties to the Philippines have been forged through a history of shared sacrifice and common purpose,” Hagel added, “and continuing to strengthen the close partnership between our nations is an important part of America’s long-term strategy of rebalancing in the Asia-Pacific.”

Americans have had a long relationship with the Philippines. The United States took control of the island nation after the Spanish-American War in 1898 and granted the country commonwealth status in 1935. Plans to grant the nation independence were delayed by the Japanese occupation during World War II, finally occurring on July 4, 1946.

In 1944, during the Philippines Campaign of World War II, General Douglas MacArthur established his headquarters at Tacloban. It was on the beach of Leyte that the general waded ashore with Philippine President Sergio Osmena and delivered his [famous speech](#):

People of the Philippines: I have returned. By the grace of Almighty God our forces stand again on Philippine soil — soil consecrated in the blood of our two peoples. We have come dedicated and committed to the task of destroying every vestige of enemy control over your daily lives, and of restoring upon a foundation of indestructible strength, the liberties of your people.



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World leaders expressed words of sympathy and support for the people of the Philippines. President Obama issued a [statement reading](#), in part:

Michelle and I are deeply saddened by the loss of life and extensive damage done by Super Typhoon Yolanda. But I know the incredible resiliency of the Philippine people, and I am confident that the spirit of Bayanihan [communal unity and cooperation] will see you through this tragedy.

At the Vatican on Sunday, [Pope Francis told pilgrims](#) who had gathered: “I wish to express my closeness to the people of the Philippines and of that region. Unfortunately there are many victims and the damage is enormous. We pray now in silence ... for our brothers and sisters, and we will seek to also send concrete help.”

Photo of Typhoon Haiyan aftermath: AP Images



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