



# Super typhoon flattens the Philippines

BY MANUEL MOGATO, ANDREW R.C. MARSHALL, ROLING AND AUBREY BELFORD

November 9 – 19, 2013 Manila and Tacloban, Philippines

# “Massive destruction” as typhoon kills at least 1,200 in Philippines, says Red Cross

BY MANUEL MOGATO

November 9 Tacloban, Philippines

**O**ne of the strongest typhoons ever to make landfall devastated the central Philippines, killing more than 1,000 people in one city alone and 200 in another province, the Red Cross estimated on Saturday, as reports of high casualties began to emerge.

A day after Typhoon Haiyan churned through the Philippine archipelago in a straight line from east to west, rescue teams struggled to reach far-flung regions, hampered by washed

out roads, many choked with debris and fallen trees.

The death toll is expected to rise sharply from the fast-moving storm, whose circumference eclipsed the whole country and which late on Saturday was heading for Vietnam.

Among the hardest hit was coastal Tacloban in central Leyte province, where preliminary estimates suggest more than 1,000 people were killed, said Gwendolyn Pang, secretary general of the Philippine Red Cross, as water surges rushed through the city.

“An estimated more than 1,000 bodies were seen floating in Tacloban as reported by our Red Cross teams,” she told Reuters. “In Samar, about 200 deaths. Validation is ongoing.”

She expected a more exact number to emerge after a more precise counting of bodies on the ground in those regions.

Witnesses said bodies covered in plastic were lying on the streets. Television footage shows cars piled atop each other.

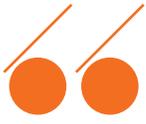
“The last time I saw something of this scale was in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami,” said Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, head of the U.N. Disaster Assessment Coordination Team sent to Tacloban, referring to the 2004 earthquake and tsunami.

“This is destruction on a massive scale. There are cars thrown like tumbleweed and the streets are strewn with debris.”

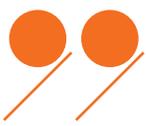
The category 5 “super typhoon” weakened to a category 4 on Saturday, though forecasters said it could strengthen again over the South China Sea en route to Vietnam.

Authorities in 15 provinces in Vietnam have started to call back boats and prepare for possible landslides. Nearly 300,000 people were moved to safer areas in two provinces alone — Da Nang and Quang Nam — according to the government’s website.

The Philippines has yet to restore communications with officials in Tacloban, a city of about 220,000. A government official estimated at least 100 were killed and more than 100 wounded, but conceded the toll would likely rise sharply.



We escaped through the windows and I held on to a pole for about an hour as rain, seawater and wind swept through the airport.



The national disaster agency has yet to confirm the toll but broken power poles, trees, bent tin roofs and splintered houses littered the streets of the city about 580 km (360 miles) southeast of Manila.

### “IT WAS LIKE A TSUNAMI”

**The airport was nearly destroyed as raging seawaters swept through the city, shattering the glass of the airport tower, levelling the terminal and overturning nearby vehicles.**

“Almost all houses were destroyed, many are totally damaged. Only a few are left standing,” said Major Rey Balido, a spokesman for the national disaster agency.

Local television network ABS-CBN showed images of looting in one of the city’s biggest malls, with residents carting away everything from appliances to suitcases and grocery items.

Airport manager Efren Nagrama, 47, said water levels rose up to four metres (13 ft) in the airport.

“It was like a tsunami. We escaped through the windows and I held on to a pole for about an hour as rain, seawater and wind swept through the airport. Some of my staff survived by clinging to trees. I prayed hard all throughout until the water subsided.”

Across the country, about a million people took shelter in 37 provinces after President Benigno Aquino appealed to those in the typhoon’s path to leave vulnerable areas.

“For casualties, we think it will be substantially more,” Aquino told reporters.

Officials started evacuating residents from low-lying areas, coastlines and hilly villages as early as three days before the typhoon struck on Friday, officials said. But not all headed the call to evacuate.

“I saw those big waves and immediately told my neighbours to flee,” said Floremil Mazo, a villager in southeastern Davao Oriental province.

Meteorologists said the impact may not be as strong as feared because the storm was moving so quickly, reducing the risk of flooding

and landslides from torrential rain, the biggest causes of typhoon casualties in the Philippines.

Ferry services and airports in the central Philippines remained closed, hampering aid deliveries to Tacloban, although the military said three C-130 transport planes managed to land at its airport on Saturday.

At least two people were killed on the tourist destination island of Cebu, three in Iloilo province and another three in Coron town in southwestern Palawan province, radio reports said.

“I never thought the winds would be that strong that they could destroy my house,” LynLyn Golfan of Cebu said in a television interview while sifting through the debris.

By Saturday afternoon, the typhoon was hovering 765 km west of San Jose in southwestern Occidental Mindoro province, packing winds of a maximum 185 kph, with gusts of up to 220 kph.

The storm lashed the islands of Leyte and Samar with 275-kph wind gusts and 5-6 metre (15-19 ft) waves on Friday before scouring the northern tip of Cebu province. It weakened slightly as it moved west-northwest near the tourist island of Boracay, later hitting Mindoro island.

Haiyan was the second category 5 typhoon to hit the Philippines this year after Typhoon Usagi in September. An average of 20 typhoons strike every year, and Haiyan was the 24th so far this year.

Last year, Typhoon Bopha flattened three towns in southern Mindanao, killing 1,100 people and causing damage of more than \$1 billion. 

Cover photograph by **Erik De Castro**  
 Additional reporting by **Rosemarie Francisco,**  
**Manuel Mogato and Karen Lema in Manila**  
 and **Nguyen Phuong Linh in Hanoi**  
 Editing by **Jason Szep and Nick Macfie**

# Survivors “walk like zombies” after Philippine typhoon kills estimated 10,000

BY MANUEL MOGATO AND ROLING

November 10 Tacloban, Philippines

**O**ne of the most powerful storms ever recorded killed at least 10,000 people in the central Philippines, a senior police official said on Sunday, with huge waves sweeping away coastal villages and devastating one of the main cities in the region.

Super typhoon Haiyan destroyed about 70 to 80 percent of structures in its path as it tore through Leyte province on Friday, said police chief superintendent Elmer Soria, before weakening and heading west for Vietnam.

As rescue workers struggled to reach ravaged villages along the coast, where the death toll is as yet unknown, survivors foraged for food or searched for lost loved ones.

“People are walking like zombies looking for food,” said Jenny Chu, a medical student in Leyte. “It’s like a movie.”

Most of the deaths appear to have been caused by surging sea water strewn with debris that many said resembled a tsunami, levelling houses and drowning hundreds of people in one of the worst disasters to hit the typhoon-prone Southeast Asian nation.

The national government and disaster agency have not confirmed the latest estimate of deaths, a sharp increase from initial estimates on Saturday of at least 1,200 killed by a storm whose sustained winds reached 195 miles per hour (313 km per hour) with gusts of up to 235 mph (378 kph).

“We had a meeting last night with the governor and the other officials. The governor said, based on their estimate, 10,000 died,” Soria told Reuters. “The devastation is so big.”

About 300 people died in neighbouring Samar province, where Haiyan first hit land on Friday as a category 5 typhoon, with 2,000 missing, said a provincial disaster agency official.

Nearly 480,000 people were displaced and 4.5 million “affected” by the typhoon in 36 provinces, the national disaster agency said, as relief agencies called for food, water, medicines and tarpaulins for the homeless.

International aid agencies said relief efforts in the Philippines were stretched thin after a 7.2 magnitude quake in central Bohol province last month and displacement caused by a conflict with Muslim rebels in southern Zamboanga province.

Witnesses and officials described chaotic scenes in Leyte’s capital, Tacloban, a coastal city of 220,000 about 580 km (360 miles) southeast of Manila which bore the brunt, with hundreds of bodies piled along roads and pinned under wrecked houses.

The city lies in a cove where the seawater narrows, making it susceptible to storm surges.

The city and nearby villages as far as one kilometre (just over half a mile) from shore were flooded, leaving floating bodies and roads choked with debris from fallen trees, tangled power lines and flattened homes.

Many Internet users urged prayers and called for aid for survivors in the largely Roman



It's like  
the end  
of the  
world.

Catholic nation on social media sites such as Twitter.

### AQUINO CONSIDERS MARTIAL LAW

**“From a helicopter, you can see the extent of devastation. From the shore and moving a kilometre inland, there are no structures standing. It was like a tsunami,”** said Interior Secretary Manuel Roxas, who had been in Tacloban since before the typhoon struck the city.

“I don’t know how to describe what I saw. It’s horrific.”

Looters rampaged through several stores in Tacloban, witnesses said, taking whatever they could find as rescuers’ efforts to deliver food and water were hampered by severed roads and communications. A TV station said ATM machines were broken open.

Mobs attacked trucks loaded with food, tents and water on Tanauan bridge in Leyte, said Philippine Red Cross chairman Richard Gordon. “These are mobsters operating out of there.”

President Benigno Aquino said the government had deployed 300 soldiers and police to restore order and that he was considering introducing martial law or a state of emergency in Tacloban to ensure security.

“Tonight, a column of armoured vehicles will be arriving in Tacloban to show the government’s resolve and to stop this looting,” he said.

Aquino has shown exasperation at conflicting reports on damage and deaths and one TV network quoted him as telling the head of the disaster agency that he was running out of patience.

“How can you beat that typhoon?” said defence chief Voltaire Gazmin, when asked whether the government had been ill-prepared.

“It’s the strongest on Earth. We’ve done everything we can, we had lots of preparation. It’s a lesson for us.”

The U.N.’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said aerial surveys showed “significant damage to coastal areas”

with heavy ships thrown ashore, houses destroyed and vast tracts of agricultural land “decimated”.

The destruction extends well beyond Tacloban. Officials had yet to make contact with Guiuan, a town of 40,000 that was first hit by the typhoon. Baco, a city of 35,000 people in Oriental Mindoro province, was 80 percent under water, the U.N. said.

There were reports of damage across much of the Visayas, a region of eight major islands, including Leyte, Cebu and Samar.

Many tourists were stranded. “Seawater reached the second floor of the hotel,” said Nancy Chang, who was on a business trip from China in Tacloban City and walked three hours through mud and debris for a military-led evacuation at the airport.

“It’s like the end of the world.”

Six people were killed and dozens wounded during heavy winds and storms in central Vietnam as Haiyan approached the coast, state media reported, even though it had weakened substantially since hitting the Philippines.

Vietnam authorities have moved 883,000 people in 11 central provinces to safe zones, according to the government’s website.

Tacloban city airport was all but destroyed as seawaters swept through the city, shattering the glass of the airport tower, levelling the terminal and overturning nearby vehicles.

The European Commission said it would provide 3 million euros to help in relief efforts in the worst affected areas. The U.S. embassy said it would provide \$100,000 for health, water and sanitation support. Australia said it would provide an initial 15.5 million pesos (\$358,900) in relief supplies.

The World Food Programme said it was airlifting 40 tonnes of high-energy biscuits, enough to feed 120,000 people for a day, as well as emergency supplies and communications equipment. 

Additional reporting by **Rosemarie Francisco**  
and **Karen Lema**

Editing by **Jason Szep** and **Nick Macfie**

# In devastated Philippine city, anger grows, aid elusive

BY MANUEL MOGATO AND ANDREW R.C. MARSHALL

November 11 Tacloban, Philippines

**H**ung outside a shattered church in the Philippine coastal city of Tacloban, on a road flanked with uncollected corpses and canyons of debris, is a handwritten sign.

It read, "We need help!"

Relief supplies are pouring into Tacloban three days after Typhoon Haiyan, one of the most powerful storms ever recorded, turned this once-vibrant port city of 220,000 into a corpse-choked wasteland.

Tacloban city administrator Tecson Juan Lim says the death toll in this city alone "could go up to 10,000."

At least a dozen U.S. and Philippines military cargo planes arrived on Monday, with the Philippine air force saying it had flown in

about 60,000 kg (66 tons) of relief supplies since Saturday. But the demand is huge and the supplies aren't reaching those who need it most.

"People are roaming around the city, looking for food and water," said Christopher Pedrosa, a government aid worker.

Aid trucks from the airport struggle to enter the city because of the stream of people and vehicles leaving it. On motorbikes, trucks or by foot, people clog the road to the airport, clutching scarves to their faces to blot out the dust and stench of bodies.

Hundreds have already left on cargo planes to the capital, Manila, or the second-biggest city of Cebu, with many more sleeping rough overnight at the wrecked airport in the hope of boarding flights in the coming days.

Reuters journalists travelled on a government aid truck which took five hours to pick up 600 bags of rice, tinned goods and milk from the airport and take it to a distribution point at City Hall. Thousands more bags were left at the airport because the truck wasn't big enough, said officials.

Pedrosa, the government aid worker, said security concerns prevented supplies from being handed out after dark.

"There might be a stampede," he said.

The aid truck was guarded by soldiers toting assault rifles. "It's risky," said Jewel Ray Marcia, a Philippine army lieutenant who led the unit.

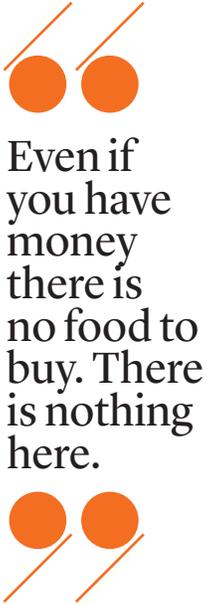
"People are angry. They are going out of their minds."

## "NOTHING LEFT TO LOOT"

The official slogan of Tacloban is "A City of Progress, Beauty and Love". But Typhoon Haiyan, known locally as Yolanda, has turned that on its head, as desperation and anger grow. Residents wait with increasing impatience for a trickle of aid to become a torrent.

Earlier on Monday, said Pedrosa, soldiers fired warning shots into the air to stop people stealing fuel from a petrol station.

A heavier presence of soldiers and police on



Even if you have money there is no food to buy. There is nothing here.

the debris-choked streets has stopped most looting, at least for now.

People were still emptying one warehouse of rice and loading it onto carts and motorcycles. No police or soldiers stopped them.

A handwritten sign pinned to a makeshift police checkpoint near a looted department store warned of an 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew. Reuters was unable to confirm whether the curfew was observed or enforced.

Also cleared out is a bottling factory for beer and soft drinks. In some areas, Coca-Cola was handed out free while drinking water was impossible to find. Officials were warning residents not to drink water from wells, which were likely polluted.

But there is another reason the looting had abated.

“There is nothing left to loot,” said Pedrosa.

### “THERE IS NOTHING HERE”

**Officials attribute the high death toll to the many people who stayed behind to protect their property and were swept away in a storm surge of water and lacerating debris.**

One of them was Marivel Saraza, 39, who moved her six children further inland before Haiyan struck, but stayed behind to look after her home only a stone’s throw from the sea.

She ended up battling through chest-high water to reach higher ground, while the storm surge destroyed her two-story concrete home.

“My house just dissolved in the water,” she said.

Saraza now struggles to feed her children. The government gave her 2 kg (4.4 lb) of rice and a single can of sardines — barely enough for one family meal — so her husband was foraging for fruit further inland. But trees have been combed flat by the force of the wind and rice fields inundated with salt water.

Haiyan struck with a force strong enough to drown hundreds of people in a storm surge and send cars and shipping containers tumbling through neighbourhoods. All that’s left of the

main airport building is a carcass of twisted metal.

The sea has yet to retreat from some neighbourhoods and the streets are flooded. The bay is littered with half-submerged cars.

Some people are making shelters from what the water has left of their broken homes. Others, unable to find any flat ground amid the ruins, sleep on sodden mattresses on their roofs. Some 5,000 people sheltered in a stadium.

The streets empty at night, the ruins lit here and there by cooking fires, or scoped by the powerful lights of passing army trucks.

Rusty Lacambra, 42, is joining the exodus along with his wife, two sons and niece. On Monday night he hitched a lift in an army truck bound for the airport to wait with hundreds of others hoping for a free flight on a cargo plane to Manila.

“My house is destroyed,” he said. “Even if you have money there is no food to buy. There is nothing here.” 

Editing by Jason Szep and Robert Birsell

# Monster typhoon exposes an ill-prepared Philippines

BY ANDREW R.C. MARSHALL

November 13 Tacloban, Philippines

**D**ead bodies clog the basement of the Tacloban City Convention Centre. The dazed evacuees in its sports hall are mostly women and children. The men are missing.

That so few men made it to this refuge shows how dimly aware they were of the threat posed by Typhoon Haiyan, which crashed into the central Philippines on Friday with some of the strongest winds ever recorded.

Many men stayed at their homes to guard against looters. Poorly enforced evacuations compounded the problem. And the bodies illustrate another, more troubling truth: the evacuation centre itself became a death trap, as many of those huddling in the basement perished in a tsunami-like swirl of water.

Those with the foresight to evacuate flimsy homes along the coast gathered in concrete structures not strong enough to withstand the six-metre (20-ft) storm surges that swept through Tacloban, capital of the worst-hit Leyte province.

The aid, when it came, was slow. Foreign aid agencies said relief resources were stretched thin after a big earthquake in central Bohol province last month and displacement caused by fighting with rebels in the country's south, complicating efforts to get supplies in place before the storm struck.

The Philippines, no stranger to natural disasters, was unprepared for Haiyan's fury.

"We're all waiting for our husbands," said Melody Mendoza, 27, camped out with her two young sons at the convention centre, which towers over the devastated coastal landscape.

Local officials say 10,000 people were killed in Tacloban alone. President Benigno Aquino told CNN the death toll from the typhoon was 2,000 to 2,500, saying "emotional drama" was behind the higher estimate.

Aquino defended the government's preparations, saying the toll might have been higher had it not been for the evacuation of people and the readying of relief supplies.

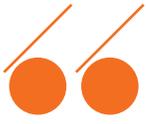
"But, of course, nobody imagined the magnitude that this super typhoon brought on us," he said.

## WARNINGS UNHEEDED

**Two days before the storm hit, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies predicted a "dangerous" typhoon with winds of 240 kph (150 mph) heading straight for Leyte and Samar — the two most devastated provinces.**

Warnings were broadcast regularly on television and over social media. More than 750,000 people across the central Philippines were evacuated.

"As bad as the loss of life was, it could have in fact been much, much worse," said Clare



Some people didn't believe us because it was so sunny. Some people were even laughing.



Nullis, spokeswoman for the U.N.'s World Meteorological Organization, praising the government's work in issuing warnings.

"Certainly on Thursday and Friday, PAGASA, which is the Philippines' meteorological service, they were sending out regular warnings of a seven-metre (22 ft) storm surge. That was going out on an hourly basis."

But as the storm approached Tacloban and authorities crisscrossed the city, their warnings often fell on deaf ears.

"Some people didn't believe us because it was so sunny," said Jerry Yaokasin, vice mayor of Tacloban. "Some people were even laughing."

Getting relief supplies to survivors has also been chaotic.

Foreign aid workers said they had struggled to get equipment and personnel on to Philippine military cargo planes, with the government prioritising the deployment of soldiers due to widespread looting at the weekend.

Mark Fernando, 33, a volunteer for the Philippine National Red Cross, arrived in Tacloban on Tuesday afternoon after a two-day wait at nearby Cebu city for a military plane.

"They said, 'Our priority is to bring in soldiers and policemen,'" said Fernando, whose 10-strong team plans to clear debris and set up a water filtration system.

One survivor at the Tacloban convention centre said he would have evacuated if he had been told a tsunami-like wall of water might hit.

"On Thursday night we could see the stars in the sky," said Moises Rosillo, 41, a pedicab driver sheltering beneath the centre's distinctive domed roof with his family. "We thought it would just be wind and rain."

Rosillo evacuated his wife and son, but stayed behind with his father and thousands of other men in a neighbourhood near the airport. The authorities warned of a storm surge - a term Rosillo said he didn't understand - but didn't try to forcibly evacuate them.

Winds of 314 kph (195 mph) were followed by a surge of water, which rose to the height of a coconut tree within five minutes, he said.

Rosillo was swept into a bay, which he likened to a giant whirlpool, and clung for hours to a piece of wood before struggling ashore. His father died in the water.

Medical workers are treating evacuees at the convention centre for lacerations and other wounds.

But many, like Mendoza, complained of a lack of food and poor hygiene. "People won't come here because they are scared their children will get sick."

### **"THE PREPARATIONS WERE NOT ENOUGH"**

**With so little help arriving, people are still streaming towards Tacloban's airport, where hundreds of people are waiting for a chance to board a flight to Cebu or Manila.**

"It appears local government units failed to mobilise officials for forced evacuations to higher and safer ground, out of the way of strong winds, storm surges and widespread flooding," said Doracie Zoleta-Nantes, an expert on disasters at the Australian National University in Canberra.

Typhoons are a frequent phenomenon in the Philippines and the flimsy nature of rural housing means fatalities are hard to avoid. Haiyan was the second category 5 typhoon to hit this year after Typhoon Usagi in September. An average of 20 typhoons strike every year, and Haiyan was the 24th this year.

Last year, Typhoon Bopha flattened three towns in southern Mindanao, killing 1,100 people and causing damage of more than \$1 billion.

Zoleta Nantes, a Philippines native, said despite those disasters and efforts to strengthen disaster management since 2010, "the Philippine government continues a reactive approach to disasters".

Survivors complained of shortages of food and water, piling pressure on Aquino whose once soaring popularity has been eroded in recent weeks by a corruption scandal roiling his political allies.

Some officials said they could have done more.

“Now, looking back, the preparations were not enough, especially in Tacloban. What we did not prepare for was the breakdown in local functions,” said Lucille Sering, secretary of the government’s Climate Change Commission.

More than 30 countries have pledged aid, but distribution of relief goods has been hampered by impassable roads and rudderless towns that have lost leaders and emergency workers.

Hardest-hit Leyte province has only one working airstrip, which is overrun with relief supplies and crowds jostling to evacuate. It can handle only lighter aircraft.

Philippine Army Major Ruben Guinolbay said help from the United States, other countries and aid agencies was slowed by the lack of clear information. Tacloban’s government was wiped out by the storm. Many officials are dead, missing or too overcome with grief to work.

“The usual contact people could not be reached because communications were cut and there was no way of getting information,” he told Reuters. A U.S. Marine commander came to Tacloban to personally assess the situation, he added. After his trip, help started to flow.

Budget Secretary Florencio Abad said the government’s response this time was faster than previous disasters.

“We saw something that is really unprecedented,” Abad said. “I don’t think we could have prepared for this.” 

Additional reporting by **Rosemarie Francisco and Erik dela Cruz in Manila, Maggie Lu Yueyang in Sydney and Stephanie Ulmer-Nebehay in Geneva**  
Editing by **Jason Szep and Dean Yates**

# Dramatic U.S. humanitarian effort in Philippines aids Asia “pivot”

BY MANUEL MOGATO AND AUBREY BELFORD

November 19 Manila/Tacloban, Philippines

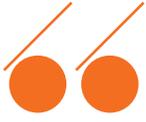
**T**he U.S. military’s response to the devastation wrought by one of the world’s most powerful typhoons has been breathtaking.

About 50 U.S. ships and aircraft have been mobilized in the disaster zone, including 10 C-130 transport planes, 12 V-22 Ospreys and 14 Seahawk helicopters air-dropping supplies from an aircraft carrier.

The accelerating relief efforts underscore a fast-expanding U.S.-Philippine military alliance that could grow even stronger in the wake of the catastrophe as the United States pursues its “pivot” towards Asia.

As U.S. ships deliver food, water and medicine, they are also delivering goodwill that could ease the way for the United States to strengthen its often-controversial military presence in one of Southeast Asia’s most strategic countries.

“It is not that the United States used assistance



China has been found wanting in (humanitarian aid) capacity in 2004 and again in 2013.



to promote rebalancing, but that rebalancing enabled to the U.S. to respond so decisively,” said Asia security expert Carl Thayer.

The Philippines is one of Washington’s closest allies in Asia and a crucial partner in President Barack Obama’s strategy to rebalance U.S. military forces towards the region to counter the rising influence of China.

The United States sent the nuclear-powered USS George Washington aircraft carrier to lead relief efforts after Typhoon Haiyan killed at least 3,900 people on Nov. 8, leaving many survivors dazed and without food and water for days.

By coincidence, and heavy in symbolism, the carrier is moored off the coast near where U.S. General Douglas MacArthur’s forces landed on Oct. 20, 1944, in one of the biggest Allied victories, fulfilling his vow “I shall return”.

### HIGH-FIVES ALL ROUND

The U.S. forces are also using an airfield in Guiuan, one of the worst-hit towns in Eastern Samar province, that was a major base during World War Two and then abandoned.

Now U.S. helicopter crews dump tarpaulins and stacks of food aid, dishing out a round of high-fives to grateful villagers before jumping back into their helicopter and taking off for the next drop.

On Monday, the United States announced an additional \$10 million in aid, bringing the total U.S. humanitarian aid to more than \$37 million.

The United States and the Philippines are in the middle of negotiations to increase a rotational presence of U.S. forces in the country, deploying aircraft, ships, supplies and troops for humanitarian and maritime security operations.

The widening military cooperation, that includes the use of bases for temporary deployment, signals rapidly warming security relations after Manila closed big U.S. military bases that had operated for decades in 1992. Manila later allowed the return of American troops for training and joint exercises. The

new agreement is expected to expand these activities.

A senior Philippine officer said some of the equipment the United States provided had been in place before the typhoon struck.

“But, in the future, we’ll be better prepared to deal with disasters if our two governments signed the framework agreement on enhanced defence cooperation and increased presence,” he said.

“The humanitarian cooperation we’re seeing between the Philippines and the United States makes the new agreement more relevant.”

China’s response to the disaster was slow off the mark and, some would say, less than generous. The world’s second-largest economy initially announced it was giving \$200,000 and then raised that by \$1.64 million. Only on Sunday, more than a week after the storm struck, did it say it was ready to send rescue and medical teams.

Japan has sent three ships with trucks and engineering equipment, while Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore have sent C-130s.

### “CHINA FOUND WANTING”

China and the Philippines are locked in a bitter dispute over islands in the South China Sea and many Chinese took to Sina Weibo, China’s version of Twitter, to say the Philippines should not be given anything in aid.

“China has been found wanting in (humanitarian aid) capacity in 2004 and again in 2013,” Thayer said, referring to the 2004 Asian tsunami. “If one were looking at a connection between political motivations and humanitarian assistance, Beijing would be a good place to start.”

Brigadier General Paul Kennedy, commander of Third Marine Expeditionary Brigade, commanding the U.S. operation, said there was no plan for a permanent presence in the Philippines.

“I’ve been coming here for 28 years training, much of it done over disasters, obviously,” he

said. “It’s already a tacit agreement that when a disaster happens, we’ll do this.

“The United States isn’t going to take advantage of the crisis to increase its footprint. It would be taking advantage of someone’s appreciation.”

Asked how long the U.S. military presence would last in Guiuan, he said: “We’ll base it on the demand from the Philippine side.”

Patrick Cronin, an Asia-Pacific security expert at the Center for a New American Security in Washington, said the United States remained focused on helping survivors of the storm.

“America’s response includes our military, civilian disaster and foreign experts, and non-governmental organization, all pulling together to minimize misery and catalyze reconstruction,” he said.

“The emergency response opens an opportunity to move forward with long-discussed plans for a modest U.S. rotational military presence in the Philippines.” 

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Writing by **Nick Macfie**  
Editing by **Robert Birsel**