

SPECIAL DEFENSE DEPARTMENT BRIEFING BY ADMIRAL TIMOTHY KEATING, COMMANDER, U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND SUBJECT: UPDATE ON RELIEF OPERATIONS TO BURMA AND CHINA LOCATION: THE PENTAGON BRIEFING ROOM, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA TIME: 11:30 A.M. EDT DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2008

ADM. KEATING: Aloha!

Q (Off mike.)

ADM. KEATING: I love saying it. Good morning, one and all. It's still morning.

For those who aren't familiar, Tim Keating, commander of the United States Pacific Command, here in Washington for a little while and will leave this evening to join the secretary and the chairman in Singapore for Shangri-La Dialogue and then proceed to -- hello, Jonathan -- to Korea for the change of command there.

A couple of topics that -- in which you might be interested. Burma, to start, and then I'll talk China for just a second and then a couple other relief operations we have under way, and I'll be happy to take your questions.

As you all know, the typhoon Nargis came ashore in Burma on the 2nd of May. We had forces in Thailand for Exercise Cobra Gold already. We were able to stand up a task force consequently, very quickly, headed by Lieutenant General John Goodman, commander of the Marine Corps forces in the Pacific. He remains in Thailand overseeing our operations.

I flew with Henrietta Fore, the director of USAID, and Ambassador Scot Marciel in an Air Force C-130 from Utao, Thailand, into Rangoon on the 11th of May. It was coincidentally the first relief flight supplied by the United States. We took 30,000 pounds of water, mosquito netting and plastic sheeting, used for shelter, in that C-130.

We disembarked the C-130 after a couple-hour flight from Thailand and were met by a delegation of Burmese military and civilian officials, with a three-star leading the Burmese delegation. His English was quite good, so we -- the standard reception, getting out of the airplane, long line, lots of pictures. We went around to the back end of the C-130. They took a large number of pictures, significant -- I'm assuming Burmese -- and some international media there, capturing the load masters beginning the unload of the gear.

We went upstairs at the terminal there and spent about an hour to an hour and 15 minutes with our Burmese colleagues. Henrietta Fore led the discussion as the lead delegate from State.

I spoke for, I'll say, five or 10 minutes and reassured the Burmese delegation of a couple of points. One, we were ready to provide relief assistance immediately. Two, we were capable of moving 250,000 pounds or so a day of relief material into Burma. We were capable of moving it from the central distribution point there at Rangoon out to the areas needing the equipment, the relief supplies, using our medium and heavy-lift helicopters, of which we have about a dozen in Thailand and another dozen on the USS Essex group, which is off the southwest coast in the Bay of Bengal.

I assured our Burmese colleagues that we would do this without fingerprint. That is, we wouldn't need any gas, we wouldn't need any fuel -- gas fuel, we wouldn't need any food, we wouldn't need any lodging. We would come in, be entirely self-sufficient. We would come in, if they chose, at first light and leave every evening. We offered them the opportunity to put their own military members or civilians, they're choice, on our airplanes, on our helicopters. And I delivered a written letter of invitation to have a Burmese delegation visit the USS Essex off the coast, should they so choose, so as to observe our operations.

And I said when we were concluded, when our operations concluded, that would be a mutual decision, but once you tell us we're done, we will leave, you will not know we were here. So we went to great lengths to try and assure them and reassure them that we had no, you know, military intentions here; we wanted to provide relief, and we were capable of doing that already.

The delegation accepted my comments and said, "We understand, we acknowledge, but we cannot approve. This decision has to be made at the very highest levels of our government, and we will take your recommendation to the highest levels of our government."

Since then, Goodman, in his own capacity, and our charge there, Shari Villarosa, and our defense attache, Colonel Don Tarter (sp), have all worked this challenge vigorously.

We have been moving about five C-130 loads a day. We're up to 70 so far -- 70 airlifts with about 1,400,000 pounds of relief supplies: food, water, again, mosquito netting and sheeting principal amongst the various things we move. A number of the flights now are including -- are what are called consigned flights. That is to say we are carrying goods provided by non-government organizations -- the U.N. World Food Program, agencies like that, and not as we had been doing earlier, material bought for and obtained -- purchased and obtained by the United States.

The secretary has given us some funding to support our own operations. Again, more of it now is consigned flights carrying non- governmental organization material.

It remains a challenge, still. The goods end up in Yangon. Subsequent distribution is handled by non-governmental organizations to a limited degree, and to a larger degree by the government of Burma. Do we know where they're going? I do not necessarily

know where those relief supplies are going. That is why we continue to emphasize our desire to put helicopters into Yangon and the surrounding countryside so as to assist in the further distribution into the Irrawaddy Delta, where we are convinced that the help is needed most desperately.

USS Essex is off the coast -- off the southwest coast of Burma with another three ships, with thousands of Marines and sailors on board who are prepared to provide relief assistance as well. In addition to the helicopters, they have amphibious landing craft which can go up into the delta as you would, no doubt, understand. As yet, we don't have permission from Burma to conduct those operations.

I would emphasize again the work being done by Lieutenant General John Goodman and his staff leading this joint task force. While in -- after we came out of Yangon, I went to Bangkok and met with representatives from the United Nations and from the World Food Program. John has met with those agencies as well.

And he has had a meeting with the ASEAN secretary-general, Surin Pitsuwan, in an attempt to get ASEAN collaboration to move these goods.

It doesn't matter to us whose stuff it is we're moving. We just want to move stuff, which isn't a very elegant way of putting it but it's a fact. And Goodman is working very hard, has been for weeks now, to try and break the logjam with the Burmese leaders.

Essex is off the coast, will remain there for a while. I don't know how much longer we'll leave her there. I'll have conversations with the secretary of Defense in Singapore, if not sooner, to discuss options attendant to keeping Essex on station or allowing that group to resume their normal operations schedule.

On to People's Republic of China, in the wake of the disastrous earthquake there, we have sent several flights out of the Transportation Command and Air Force assets, principal among them two C-17s that flew last weekend to close to the epicenter of the earthquake.

They were loaded with earthquake relief supplies that we got from FEMA -- two airplanes with tens of thousands of pounds of equipment including chainsaws, generators, again, plastic sheeting for shelters and some water purification equipment.

That evening, that Saturday night, I was given permission to use the secretary of Defense hotline and called a senior official, a Lieutenant General Ma in the People's Republic of China, and discussed with him the aid we had provided.

He was aware of it. The C-17s had just landed and unloaded their cargo. He was aware of their arrival and the materiel contained in the cargo. So we used the Defense hotline, if you will. It worked just fine. His translator was quite good.

I had met Ma a couple of times. So we had this -- he's an air force fighter pilot in China. So we had a little professional experience with each other, not in airplanes but in meetings in Beijing. Good conversation with him, on the phone for about an hour, and relayed our sympathy for the casualties that they had suffered, as we passed to our Burmese colleagues as well.

We've flown a couple more airplanes since then, one of them carrying members of a Los Angeles Fire Department urban rescue team, and we just sent another load of tents. As you're no doubt aware, because we're getting the information from you guys, principally there are millions of folks who are without shelter. And so one of the things that the Chinese tell us they need is tents. So we've just sent a load of a couple hundred tents yesterday or the day before.

Two last points, and then I'm, again, happy to take your questions. The United States Naval Ship Mercy, hospital ship, is currently in the Philippines providing the same sort of medical and dental assistance that USS Peleliu and her team provided last year, which was about a mirror image of what Mercy did the summer before that.

So we are going to proceed. We're prepared to send Mercy, if directed, to Burma, to the southwest coast of Burma. I don't think that will happen, because we have ships there already that we can't use. So I doubt we'll send Mercy there, but we're prepared to, if the situation recommends and we get clearance. But Mercy's going to go from the Philippines to Vietnam, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea for about a six- -- a total of six months throughout the South Pacific, providing medical and dental assistance to those folks who couldn't otherwise avail themselves of this sort of treatment.

And the last point: We have two C-17s, one of them in Thailand and one in Cambodia out of Pacific Air Forces, that carry with them a smaller complement of doctors and nurses and dentists and engineers that land in kind of out-of-the-way places to provide assistance -- and oh, by the way, veterinary medicine. It's a much bigger deal than some folks might assume, but these -- the vets on these flights have already seen 250-some animals -- pets, presumably pets -- providing that sort of care and have seen hundreds of patients already. So whether it's Marine Corps in Burma, Army and Navy -- Marine and Navy folks on the ships off the coast of Burma or Air Force on C-17s, we're providing significant disaster assistance relief all throughout the Pacific, in addition to our primary job of defending the homeland.

I'd be happy to take your questions. Sir?

Q Admiral, there was a report -- I think it was a British report -- yesterday that the Burmese authorities had said it would be okay for relief supplies aboard U.S., British and other ships off their coasts to come ashore as long as it was brought by a local craft and as long as the U.S. and other ships did not come ashore. Is that something you're aware of and are considering?

ADM. KEATING: That's news to me. It would be -- certainly we'd consider that if there were vessels that would come out to Essex and her complement of ships, and we would offload the supplies from Essex onto these vessels for further distribution. I would think we'd look favorably on that.

But --

Q But -- (off mike) --

ADM. KEATING: But it's a new one on me, and no, we -- that's brand-new on me. But we'd certainly entertain that.

Q Sir, what are your calculations as you'd consider how long the Essex should stay there? I mean, what do you consider --

ADM. KEATING: She's been there over two weeks, hasn't done anything yet. She has a schedule that has her and all of her complement of Marines and sailors doing other things -- should be now -- one of them a port call in Hong Kong, in the near term. So it is a series of calculations that will lead to a recommendation that I have not yet given the secretary of Defense, but I will very soon. Yeah, I don't think her time there -- remaining time -- absent a green light from Burmese officials, I don't think she will be there for weeks -- days, and then we'll see.

Tom?

Q Thank you, sir. The past record of the government of Burma might allow us to guess why they don't want U.S. assistance. But did the men -- the officers you met with, did they say exactly why it is they won't accept this generous offer from the U.S. military?

ADM. KEATING: No comment. They didn't say a word about it, Tom. They listened to -- graciously, if you can listen gracious -- in a graceful manner, but they listened. Again, they were -- they spoke -- their English was quite good. I don't think there was anything, quote, "lost in translation," and they were very straightforward and said, "We understand, we acknowledge, we appreciate your offer, but we can't give you recognition now."

Now, they did go into a little bit of detail as to their assessment of the need for those affected by the storm, and it was a much more optimistic assessment than our embassy officials and our intelligence led us to understand as the situation on the ground. They said we're -- people are returning to their villages, they're planting their summer rotation of crops, and there was even an advantage as the summer monsoons come. The fresh water will wash the salt water out of our -- which is really, you know, looking for a pony in that pile -- the monsoons will be an advantage, because they'll wash the salt -- they'll leach the salt water out of the soil and out of the ponds. So their estimate was not nearly

as grave as ours, and they did not comment at all on military missions beyond relief provision.

Sir?

Q Sir, U.N. Secretary-General Ban (Ki-)Moon was in Burma, and do you think -- was he help to the U.S. or to the international community, as far as opening up for the elections of Burma? And also if you can explain, what is difference, as far as delivering the necessities for the dying people, between Burma and China?

ADM. KEATING: Let me take the first one. I'm not sure I understand the second one.

I know that the secretary-general was there. General Goodman did not -- to my knowledge, did not meet with the secretary-general, though the secretary-general's efforts with Burmese officials certainly aren't harmful. We don't yet have a watershed change in the Burmese position about allowing more than what we've done already, though our charge there -- and I don't want to put words in Shari's mouth -- she thinks that the situation could be improving very gradually, due, no doubt, to the secretary-general's efforts and ASEAN's efforts and all of the other nongovernmental organizations, in addition to Shari Villarosa's efforts and John Goodman's efforts.

So a lot of folks are putting intense pressure on Burmese leaders. And it's kind of like the first question. We'll take whatever we can get. We want to provide aid; we want to do it now; we've been ready for weeks.

Say your second question again?

Q (Off mike) -- why China is different than the Burmese as far as allowing the international community -- (off mike).

ADM. KEATING: Night and day difference. Night and day difference.

Q But China is friendly to the U.S. Why they are not also allowing this?

ADM. KEATING: Again, I may not understand your question. China has accepted the offers that we -- the material we have offered, they have accepted. And as you're probably aware, there's a coalition -- international coalition effort in China. As it happens, the Chinese tell us they have sufficient -- what they think is sufficient material. It's bodies that they need to help, and they are throwing a lot of their military at this challenge. So there's a dramatic difference in the assistance China has requested and we've provided versus what Burma isn't looking for but we're still ready to provide.

I would point out that China has been helpful in getting the Burmese to understand our position. Through Ambassador Randt in our embassy in China, we are passing messages through Chinese military officials and Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials that

are working their way to Burma, and we believe that those messages from our Chinese colleagues have been helpful.

Sir.

Q You've spent a lot of time engaging in and with China. I wanted to take a second -- as you look and see their response to the earthquake, their acceptance of this aid and what -- do your perceptions change at all with regard to China and the transparency issues? You're welcome to --

ADM. KEATING: It's a great question and it's very interesting. We are recognizing the obvious. China's reaction here in the aftermath of this earthquake is different than China's reaction has been to other natural disasters in China. You know, as an example, the aforementioned conversation on the defense hotline wouldn't have been -- the hotline didn't exist a while ago. And it was very easy to set up the connection. They were quite willing to accept the phone call.

While it is catastrophic and tragic, it nonetheless is an opportunity for us to increase and improve the communications we have with officials in China. And that is beneficial from our position.

Yes, ma'am.

Q I wanted to ask -- you mentioned that the Essex will be the going on a port of call in Hong Kong. There have been problems --

ADM. KEATING: Perhaps. Perhaps.

Q There have been problems in the past with making a port of call at Hong Kong. Given the hotline and the new communication that you're having with China, what changes do you think have been made on their end to make those things more possible?

ADM. KEATING: There were a couple of port visit request denials, as you accurately state, around Thanksgiving of 2007. Foremost amongst them, the Chinese saying the USS Kitty Hawk was denied. Very close -- I mean, Kitty Hawk was, quote, "coming around the corner" and the Chinese said no. So Kitty Hawk went back to Japan.

Since that denial, we have been to China and we -- yours truly and a Pacific Command team -- and we expressed to our colleagues we were sad, literally. We just didn't think this was a way to do business. There are written and unwritten rules to be admitted to the League of Nations. They, China, advocate harmonious integration. They advocate a peaceful rise. We're all for that. Ways of manifesting this strategic goal of yours, China, is to allow port visits.

Since that time and since our conversations with the Chinese -- not to suggest that these were the -- that the conversations were the only reason, but they're part of it -- the

Chinese have let -- the USS Nimitz has been in port to Hong Kong. The USS Ronald Reagan is either there or going soon. So port visits have resumed on a large scale, with Navy carrier battle groups going in. So I think that that is an issue that is past and opening.

Yes, sir?

Q You stressed the large number of photos that were taken. Any -- in Burma, on your arrival. Any thought as to why? And also, just to clarify, you said you told the Burmese that you would -- that it would be a mutual decision how long you stayed, but you also said that when they asked you to leave, you'd leave.

ADM. KEATING: Yes. I have seen some of the photos in international media. As to what the Burmese do with them inside Burma, I don't have any information on that.

The -- our point of emphasis with the Burmese was -- we're not -- if you want us to leave, we are not going to overstay our welcome, if you will. When the relief efforts are completed, the United States military will leave. We're not in the business of reconstruction. We're in the business of supplying relief supplies. So it would be a mutual decision, and when they tell us, "Your work here is done," we will leave and leave nothing behind.

Yes, ma'am?

Q I think the Chinese said that what they needed most now is -- are the tents. Could you tell us how many tents the U.S. has provided them and also any planes you provide? And in your hour-long hotline conversation with General (Ma ?), other than the relief, what else have you talked about and exchanges? And also, do you have the cell phone number for General Ma yet?

ADM. KEATING: (Inaudible) -- not yet.

Q (Off mike.)

ADM. KEATING: Not yet. However, he is going to go to the Shangri-La Dialogue -- at least he was, pending the disaster relief -- so I'll see him again in Shangri-La. And I'll ask him again for his cell phone number. I may or may not get it. There will come a time. As to the number of tents, we'll get that for you. There were a large number of tents in the two C-17s. I'd be guessing so I shouldn't do that. And then there were about 200 big tents in this latest charter flight that we sent.

So the number is between 500 and 1,000 [SIC: number of tents delivered 808]. And I'll ask our Pentagon friends, Bryan and his guys and girls, to net that down for you. It's a large number of tents. We'll get you the precise number.

I talked with General Ma about a wide range of things: exchanging information on our families, you know, the pleasantries initially. He thanked us, by the way, for the relief efforts, the relief supplies we provided to help respond to the cold snap in Guangzhou, where the 400,000-some people were at that railway station.

We sent two C-17s into Shanghai and offloaded a bunch of blankets and some more tents, as I recall. This was in January or so. He remembered that and thanked me for that.

So the Chinese are certainly aware of our interest in helping them when we can. And I told him that I was aware that China had offered relief goods when we were recovering from Hurricane Katrina. So this is a mutual support system that we're developing here.

And he went on to describe, in significant detail, their assessment of the damage done by the earthquake. So that was the major point of the conversation. I was listening to him tell me about the consequences and how they were providing relief, for those who were suffering, and then a little bit on their gratitude for the work we had done for the cold weather stuff.

Q When do you plan to visit China next?

ADM. KEATING: Nothing on the books right now. We're looking for a trip in the fall. But we don't have --

Q (Off mike.)

ADM. KEATING: Maybe earlier.

Barbara.

Q Given the catastrophic consequences of the earthquake in China, what's your assessment, or are you working on one, how it may change China's own security, military and intelligence posture? Will they have to devote, for many years perhaps, troops, resources to recovering from this? Will it affect their military program? Does it change how you assess their role in the region?

And what can you tell us about the satellite imagery you've provided and maybe any agreement to provide continuing imagery over time?

ADM. KEATING: We have -- this satellite imagery has been provided to China and to Burma. We've given both countries pictures, some of them commercial, some of the military, but good-quality overheads.

As to the larger strategic implications of the commitment of Chinese forces to this relief operation, I don't think it has a dramatic or even significant impact on their ability

to conduct military operations, should they so choose, throughout their area of responsibility.

It is in that vein that we continue our extensive program to try and -- I'll say draw them out, to engage with them, to share personnel exchanges, to send our guys to their schools, invite their guys and girls to our schools. We're sending our senior enlisted leader from Pacific Command to China, Chief Master Sergeant Jim Roy. So there's a wide range of personnel exchanges. We are beginning to increase the number of exercises in which they participate and the complexity of those exercises, all of which intended to draw them out and to show them there is plenty of room in the Pacific. There is no reason to be confrontational with us. Why don't we cooperate?

Q Well, what I was actually getting to is you don't see the earthquake recovery diverting them from their military spending, their weapons development programs?

ADM. KEATING: I do not.

Q You do not. Is the imagery you're providing, the military imagery you're providing, degraded imagery or is it the same quality that the U.S. military gets?

ADM. KEATING: The imagery is sufficient to need.

Sir.

Q Admiral, after the Chinese shot down their weather satellite, they were clearly surprised by the international response and seemed to have difficulty managing it. Do you see a qualitative difference in how their national security bodies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the military, have worked together?

ADM. KEATING: It's gradual. It's measured in small steps and not giant leaps, but I think the trend is positive. I think there are demonstrable examples. When we shot down our errant spy satellite, we told people in advance. We -- the system told Hoss Cartwright and it was on TV -- "Here's what we're going to do. Here's the risk. Here's why we're going it. And we'll let you know how it goes." And we did all of those things.

After the Chinese shot their satellite down -- which is -- it's not an insignificant technical capability, to be sure -- I had discussions with senior Chinese military officials who didn't want to talk about it and when pressed, said, "Oh, it was a scientific experiment."

When further pressed, they somewhat reluctantly, begrudgingly, acknowledged that there may be military application.

That was in May of '07. Our shot was, what, months after, and in the period since their -- our shot, we have had some relatively minor communication opportunities and some relatively minor exchange opportunities, all of which indicate to us an increased

willingness to at least consider, if not engage, in opportunities that would be beneficial for a more thorough understanding of intent and not just transparency.

Sir.

Q Hu Jintao met today, I think, with the head of the Kuomintang, which is the highest-level contact since 1949. And you mentioned other, you know, sort of positive signs here. Do you sense that there is some change in the wind in terms of how China is -
- ?

ADM. KEATING: Short answer is yes. Now, I have to temper that. We're cautiously optimistic about all this, but, you know, you-all expect us to be a little bit conservative and reserved, and you want us to be prepared in case what we're seeing is a little bit rose-colored -- tinted through rose-colored glasses. But we are encouraged by the dialogue between the new government in Taiwan and the current government in the People's Republic of China. We're encouraged by Taiwan leaders' presence in China to offer assistance and relief aid to the earthquake victims. All of these are positive signs, in our view.

(Jonathan/John ?).

Q Two questions, if I may.

ADM. KEATING: Sure.

Q First, a factual question. This use of the defense hotline with China, was this the first time you'd used that?

ADM. KEATING: For me.

Q And secondly, regarding the Essex, how frustrating is that for you to have -- you've had these ships, you know, right off the coast of Burma this entire time. And now to give this order to have them depart, I mean, how many lives could have been saved with the supplies on those ships? How frustrating is all that?

ADM. KEATING: How frustrating it is to me is of much less consequence than the men and women on Essex. I've not spoken to them directly. But we have, you know, e-mail and various, and there have been reporters on Essex.

And the kids out there, the young sailors and Marines, are desperate to provide help. They're willing to do whatever it takes. Some of them have experience with Aceh. Some of them have experience with the tsunami at Aceh. Some of them have experience with Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh last Thanksgiving.

So these guys, they know what they're doing and they know how much help they can provide just that quick. That's all it would take, is yes. And there would be

significant materiel going ashore within an hour, I'd say. And they badly, desperately want to help.

If they can't help, they know they have other things that they joined the Navy and the Marine Corps to do. So they want to get on with that sort of thing. So it is certainly frustrating to us at Pacific Command. Imagine how much more frustrating it is to the men and women on the ship who are right there.

Sir.

Q I wonder, when does the window close for giving assistance to Burma? When is it too late, in that the kind of emergency relief, that you can do, is beyond?

ADM. KEATING: It's a great question.

We're relying on these non-government organizations, who are able to move around the countryside a little bit, not as much as they'd like, and also the assessment from our charge d'affaires, the aforementioned Shari Villarosa, and her sources and contacts throughout Burma.

It is our assessment that we could still provide relief assistance; that there are still folks principally in Ayeyarwady, many of them young, very young, whose moms and dads may not be alive anymore -- not clear -- who just need the most bare-bones essentials: food and water and shelter. And we can provide all of those in significant quantity for a long period -- for a reasonable period of time.

So it's -- we believe there's still a mission for us. As to how much longer that situation will recommend our staying, that's what we're assessing right now.

Q That plays into the Essex --

ADM. KEATING: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Yes, sir?

Q Admiral, the George Washington is in San Diego now being checked out for the damage from the fire. Do you have any feeling for whether there is going to be a delay in her movement to Japan to replace the Kitty?

ADM. KEATING: I have seen nothing official. There are some conversations to which I've been -- of which I've been apprised that indicate there will be some repair work necessary for George Washington. Those teams are on board now. We, along with Pacific Fleet, are preparing a number of options to recommend to the secretary of Defense. As to the turnover between Kitty Hawk and George Washington, I don't have sufficient detail to tell you whether those recommendations are -- have -- there have been recommendations been eliminated and a decision's been made. If there's been --

Q Is the Kitty going to leave Japan on schedule?

ADM. KEATING: That's my understanding. She is under way, I think today, is what I understand. I'm not -- I just got that report a little bit ago.

Yes, ma'am?

Q Have the NGOs and the charge d'affaires down on the ground in Myanmar -- can they give you any kind of assurance or certainty that the relief supplies that the U.S. is sending in are being distributed at all? I mean, do you have any estimation of whether that's going to --

ADM. KEATING: Well, we have a reasonable but not -- we have reasonable confidence, but not a hundred percent confidence in -- that the folks who need it -- that they're receiving it. You know, the -- well, not to be -- we're not trying to be too cute by half, but thus far, when it was just U.S. material that we were sending, stuff we're buying, we just sent water, principally water. When I was with the senior Burmese delegates, we asked them, "What do you need?" He said, "We need water more than anything." So that -- his words, not ours -- so we were providing water. You can only hoard so much water, it seemed to us. So again, not to be too cute, we thought the one thing we can send that they say they need and is most likely to be distributed further down range is water. So that's why we sent mostly water.

As far as mosquito netting and sheeting, it is possible that the junta leaders are hoarding that stuff or distributing it to those more in their favor than those in Irrawaddy. I don't have direct intelligence or information to indicate that it has been hoarded, nor do I have information that it's not going down range.

So we're making a couple of assumptions: that -- the stuff we're sending is of little high value. It's -- everyone will recognize how desperately this stuff is -- the materials we're providing is needed down range. So there's a certain amount of faith that it is getting down range, and the NGOs who are moving around report some evidence of its distribution. But it's complicated.

Q And you mention that the delegates that you met with said that the decision to let the U.S. in would have to be made at a higher -- very high government level. Have they come back to you since then, those delegates, and updated you or said any specifics about why they're denying the access?

ADM. KEATING: No, not directly. But we do get on a daily basis -- we have to file a flight -- you know, for diplomatic clearance for these C-130 flights out of Thailand, and we have gotten five a day every day for the past 14 days, two weeks. So while they're not saying, "Yes, send everything," they're not saying, "No, you can't bring anything." So there's a -- it's not much -- million, 400,000 pounds -- compared to what we could be moving, but there is this, you know, measurable acceptance of relief aid.

STAFF: There's time for maybe one or two more. (Pause.) Or not. (Laughter.)

ADM. KEATING: Okay. Thanks, everybody. Appreciate your time.

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