



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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Statement by the Press Secretary on Cyclone Relief for Burma

The United States is committed to bringing relief assistance to the victims of Cyclone Nargis, and to work with ASEAN countries, the United Nations, and non-governmental organizations to do so. To date, the United States has provided more than \$26 million in humanitarian assistance to the people of Burma, and the United States Agency for International Development and the Department of Defense, as part of the ongoing airlift, have completed a total of 106 airlifts of emergency relief commodities that will benefit at least 417,000 people.

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As the Pacific Command announced last night, the USS Essex group and U.S. Marine Corps 31 Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) will move from the waters off Burma and continue their previously-scheduled operational commitments on June 5, 2008. These assets were immediately deployed to Burma in the spirit of goodwill to offer extensive and life-saving assistance to the victims of Cyclone Nargis. Tragically, the Burmese authorities refused to accept this assistance.

Furthermore, the generosity and compassion of the United States and the wider international community are impeded by the unwillingness of the Burmese authorities to provide full access to the cyclone-affected areas, despite their commitments to do so. Over a month after the cyclone hit the shores of the Burmese Delta, tens of thousands have died and over a million victims have yet to receive any assistance. The Burmese regime must permit all international aid workers the access necessary to provide the urgently-needed assistance. There is no more time to waste.

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