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ASSESSING THE RESPONSE TO TYPHOON

YOLANDA/HAIYAN

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON EAST ASIAN AND
PACIFIC AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

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Hon. Scot Marciel [\[view PDF\]](#)

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific
Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Mr. Jeremy Konyndyk [\[testimony unavailable\]](#)

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**STATEMENT OF HON. SCOT MARCIEL
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR EAST-ASIA PACIFIC AFFAIRS**

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Senator Rubio, and other Members of the Subcommittee for giving me this opportunity to testify on the U.S. Government's response to Super Typhoon Haiyan, which struck the Philippines on November 8th.

The typhoon, one of the largest and strongest in history, struck the central Philippines from the east, and carved a swath of destruction across the middle of the country. Hardest hit were Leyte, site of General MacArthur's return to the Philippines in 1944, Samar, and a series of other islands. The typhoon's incredible winds, plus a major storm surge, killed an estimated 4000 people, left hundreds of thousands of others homeless, and devastated cities, towns, villages, and the region's infrastructure.

Even before the storm hit, U.S. Government agencies began preparing to respond. USAID prepositioned a team in Manila, our Embassy in Manila issued a message warning American citizens of the storm, and many of us in Washington began to communicate and coordinate in preparation for a potential disaster.

Once the storm hit, the State Department, USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, the Pentagon, and the Pacific Command – working closely with the U.S. Embassy in Manila – began a period of intensive communication and coordination to ensure a swift and effective response. USAID and PACOM disaster assistance teams headed to Tacloban, the capital of head-hit Leyte Province, and moved rapidly to

conduct joint disaster assessments. USAID is leading and coordinating the US government response, including with other donors.

There was immediate agreement within the Administration on the need for a rapid, effective response, both because of the scale of the devastation and because of the close historic and people-to-people ties between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines.

My colleagues from USAID will describe in detail their agencies' efforts here and on the ground. I would simply highlight that the U.S. Government's response has been rapid, well-coordinated, and substantial. Our Embassy in Manila announced an initial \$100,000 in assistance almost immediately, and USAID announced \$20 million in humanitarian assistance a few days later, and an additional \$10 million in humanitarian assistance on November 18. Including another \$7 million in humanitarian assistance through the Defense Department, the combined U.S. government assistance being provided in response to the disaster is \$37 million

President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry have both been monitoring the situation closely. Both have called their Philippine counterparts to offer condolences and assistance, and to stress our commitment to helping the Philippines respond to and recover from this disaster. The State Department also set up a Crisis Response Task Force to help monitor and report on developments, help identify any obstacles to

effective relief supply, help facilitate coordination with other agencies, and deal with large numbers of phone calls from concerned Americans.

Our Embassy in Manila has also played an important role. It has served, for lack of a better term, as a physical platform for all of the agencies involved in the relief effort, as well as a center for coordination and communication with other agencies, Philippine authorities, and private organizations and citizens.

The Embassy and the State Department as a whole have as a top priority helping American citizens caught up in this disaster. In the days before Haiyan made landfall we activated our messaging system and warden network so that American citizens who had registered with Embassy Manila would get the word that a colossal storm was coming, and that they needed to find refuge, immediately. We put warnings up on our Embassy website. We also tweeted warnings, not only to the American community but to our Filipino and third-country friends. In both Manila and here in Washington, we mobilized human resources for deployment in the event of a catastrophic storm – a mobilization that helped us move quickly when damage assessments started coming in. In both cities, we consulted with senior Philippine government officials on prospective relief operations.

There are, Mr. Chairman, now five confirmed American deaths caused by the Typhoon which reportedly killed about 4,000 people and injured more than 18,000 people. The State Department has been working around the clock to assist those who

have lost loved ones. The Embassy has received nearly 950 requests for information on US citizens in the disaster area, and we have located more than 475 US citizens at this time. Our first consular team arrived in Tacloban on Nov 13, to assist the evacuation of American citizens from the region, and consular officers are traveling to Tacloban regularly to provide any assistance required by American citizens. A second team has met evacuated Americans upon their arrival at Villamor Air Base, providing emergency cash assistance and help with emergency loan applications. We will do everything we possibly can to locate and assist these U.S. citizens. In both Manila and Washington, we are responding to phone calls and emails from the many concerned relatives of those who are missing.

The American people have responded to this natural disaster with an outpouring of support, not least of all in the Philippines itself, where the American business community has made donations to help those in storm-hit areas. The U.S. Embassy has worked with the American business community to ensure that donations are channeled most directly and effectively. As President Obama said, the best way for private parties to help is to make a *monetary* donation to a relief organization already working to provide aid on the ground. Begun months ago in anticipation of a future disaster, our public-private coordination has already made a meaningful difference in the relief effort, through monetary donations, as well as the donation of mobile power generators, transport equipment and other goods.

The United States is also coordinating with other international donors, and together, donors have already pledged funding nearly \$200 million, an amount equal to about two-thirds the UN flash appeal of \$301 million.

The Department of State is working closely with Philippine government officials, not only at the working level but also at higher levels. We have activated our response in close partnership with the Philippine Government, which has been helpful in facilitating the entry of assistance into the country, responding quickly to security concerns, and identifying urgent needs. At every such meeting, we underline what President Obama told President Aquino during their November 12 phone call: that the United States is fully committed to a swift and coordinated response to help the people of the Philippines recover. That we stand shoulder to shoulder with the Philippines, our treaty ally with whom we have kept the peace in the Asia-Pacific for more than 60 years. Given the strength of the Philippine people and the U.S. commitment to the bilateral relationship, I believe that Filipinos will emerge from the current difficulties even stronger than before. Similarly, I am convinced that our joint work to help the victims of Super Typhoon Haiyan will deepen the already robust U.S.-Philippine partnership and demonstrate U.S. commitment to this alliance and to our rebalance to the region.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Rubio and other Subcommittee members, thank you for allowing me to appear before you today. I would be delighted to take any questions.

Thank you.

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