

U.S. Marines Complete Typhoon Krathon Humanitarian Assistance Efforts



From Marine Rotational Force – Southeast Asia

MANILA, Philippines – U.S. Marines across multiple forward-deployed commands concluded six days of foreign disaster relief efforts in the Philippines Oct. 10, 2024, supporting the U.S. Agency for International Development’s humanitarian response to Typhoon Krathon (locally known as Julian) at the request of the Philippine government.

Marines and Sailors from Marine Rotational Force – Southeast Asia (MRF-SEA); 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (I MAW); III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF); and the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (15th MEU) embarked aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4) delivered nearly 96,000 pounds of foreign disaster relief supplies to Batan Island, a remote island in the Batanes Province and one of the locations most impacted by Krathon.

Typhoon Krathon originated 155 miles southwest of Okinawa before moving northwest, reaching peak intensity Oct. 1, with sustained winds of 195 kph (120 mph). Krathon heavily battered the northern islands of the Philippines, leading to evacuations, infrastructure damage, and food supply insecurity in affected communities.

At the request of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin directed U.S. Indo-Pacific Command to support USAID’s relief efforts due to the unique capabilities and high state of readiness of forward-deployed U.S. Marine Corps forces.

MRF-SEA first arrived in the Philippines in late September to participate in upcoming training exercises with the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Operating out of Fort Bonifacio, Philippines, MRF-SEA immediately began coordination with the U.S. Department of State, USAID, the AFP, and other U.S. Marine Corps units to plan support for the relief effort. Two teams of Marines and Sailors from MRF-SEA integrated with USAID and AFP personnel in Manila and Laoag to plan and prepare for the arrival of KC-130J Hercules aircraft from 1st MAW in Okinawa, Japan, and personnel from 3rd Marine Logistics Group.

“Before Marine Corps aircraft ever touched down in the Philippines, Marines and Sailors with MRF-SEA were integrated with our partners in the U.S. and Philippine governments, on site at Villamor Air Base and Laoag International Airport, with the manpower and heavy equipment needed to package and move aid material,” said Col. Stuart Glenn, commanding officer, MRF-SEA. “Forward-deployed Marine Corps forces allow us to quickly respond to humanitarian missions because we’re already in the region. I am extremely proud that our team was able to set the necessary conditions to quickly provide relief to the Philippine people.”

After arriving on Oct. 5, the cargo planes were loaded with supplies at Villamor Air Base and flown to Laoag International Airport in northern Luzon for staging and preparation to move the supplies to their final destination on Batan Island. The KC-130 crews conducted 26.2 hours of flight operations, successfully transported all aid materials to Laoag.

As U.S. and Philippine personnel worked to move supplies north, the 15th MEU arrived aboard USS Boxer and began flight operations to support relief efforts on Oct. 8. MV-22B Ospreys, assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 165 (Reinforced), landed in Laoag, and combined teams from the 15th MEU, MRF-SEA, and Philippine Marines spent the next three days loading Ospreys, the Marine Corps’ medium-lift tiltrotor

V/STOL platform, with disaster relief supplies for the final leg of the movement to the Basco Airport on Batan Island. Pilots and aircrews from VMM-165 (Rein.) conducted more than 55 flights and successfully delivered the final disaster relief material on Thursday, Oct. 10.

“The primary focus of our mission is helping the people of the Philippines recover as quickly and safely as possible,” said Col. Sean Dynan, commanding officer, 15th MEU. “Humanitarian assistance in an expeditionary environment is what we train to do, and it is one of the reasons we are forward-deployed as an amphibious force.”

The forward presence and ready posture of U.S. Marine forces in the Indo-Pacific region was pivotal to the rapid and effective response to Typhoon Krathon, demonstrating the U.S.’s commitment to its allies and partners during times of need.