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#### Emergency Preparedness

## Typhoon Haiyan: a Superstorm Brings an Alliance into Focus

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Out of the many natural disasters that strike Southeast Asia each year, every so often there is one that rears its ugly head and tests the mettle of U.S. commitments in the region. Over the last few days, what we have been seeing in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan is an impressive international response that reflects the good will of nations in assisting a country that is reeling from the impact of a superstorm, but also a robust American response which demonstrates the importance that the United States places on its strategic alliance with the Philippines. If there is a silver lining that can be found amid the ruin left behind by Typhoon Haiyan, it is that this moment of tragedy may lend itself as an opportunity for the U.S. and the Philippines to further strengthen their alliance through greater cooperation on disaster response.

In the last [timely issue](#) of *Banyan Analytics Brief* (a special edition on emergency preparedness in the Asia-Pacific), Julio Amador and Gabriel Lopez [commented](#) on this opportunity, saying, "Disaster planning ... provides an opening for greater cooperation between the Philippines and the United States under their longstanding alliance." To date, joint planning for disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) already serves as a non-traditional function of the U.S.-Philippines alliance that draws on the strengths and capabilities of both nations, but in light of this storm—and the many others that are likely to follow in the region—DRRM activities of the alliance may become an increasingly important component of the relationship.

But for now, the United States has the important task of reinforcing its commitment to the Philippines and supporting its strategic ally by shoring up much needed resources for disaster relief. Yesterday, President Obama directed his Administration to mount a swift and coordinated response, and he pledged to work with the Philippines to quickly deliver whatever assistance is needed. In fact, the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance DART team was one of the first assessment teams to provide support to the Philippines by arriving in advance of the storm and ahead of other international assessment teams.

USAID is also providing [\\$20 million in humanitarian assistance](#), including 55 metric tons of emergency food aid and other relief supplies. The U.S. Department of Defense is contributing to relief efforts by working to transport aid workers and deliver supplies to areas that are cut off by the destruction of the storm. In addition to the [90 U.S. Marines](#) and sailors who already are on the ground and providing humanitarian assistance and disaster support, the USS *George Washington* (an aircraft carrier) and several other U.S. Navy ships and 80 aircraft are en route and scheduled to arrive in the Philippines by November 14.

With every disaster it is worth acknowledging that the U.S. government assesses and balances humanitarian and political interests that are involved. In this case, both the large scope of the United States' response to Typhoon Haiyan and the agility with which it is responding go to demonstrate that the Philippines is important to U.S. foreign policy in Asia and its commitment to humanitarian assistance. By comparison, [China's aid to the Philippines](#) to date was a modest \$100,000. U.S. response to this disaster, as with many before, is critical to the international response and sets a standard few nations will approach.

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