

CYCLONE, BURMA
DISASTER RELIEF
MAY 1968

AGENCY
FOR
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
RANGOON BURMA

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SCALE - ONE INCH TO 4 MILES.

Drawn by THE OFFICE, US&ID, WASHINGTON

Akyab town has been hit by cyclone three times within a year: May and October 1967 and May 10, 1968. The last has been the severest. 95% of the town was damaged or destroyed.



Aerial view of storm devastated Akyab.

On the first two occasions, the center of the storm passed Akyab. The damages caused were not so severe. But the last cyclone made a frontal attack.



The damage was great as this aerial view of the port area shows.

The port area bore the brunt of the frontal attack. Among the first casualties was the Greek ship "Gero Michalos" which was sunk on May 12, two hours after this picture was taken.



Several vessels in the harbor were blown and washed ashore by the cyclone and the tidal waves which followed in its wake.



A river craft comes to rest against a fallen building in Akyab.

10,000 houses collapsed in the fury of the cyclone.



Residential buildings fallen askew along the Strand, Akyab.

The Strand suffered severe damages. The buildings looked as if they had been bombed.



Rice mills and factories in Akyab were destroyed. Some had their chimneys blown off completely. 30 mills were put out of commission in Akyab.



One of the many rice mills destroyed in Akyab.

Among the worst hit were the schools and hospitals.



The T.B. ward of the Civil Hospital after the storm.

The cyclone wrought havoc in the hinterland areas -- Myebon, Pauktaw and Myinbya townships. The tidal waves literally swallowed up whole villages.



A section of Myebon after the storm.

The refugees from the townships were sheltered temporarily in tents which had been donated by America for relief during the last disaster in 1967.



Refugees at the camp in Kantha village, Myebon Township.

Among the immediate actions taken by the local authorities was the inoculation of the flood victims against cholera and small pox and other epidemics.



Health teams inoculating villagers in one of the camps.

The Central Relief Committee undertook immediate relief measures. Helicopters were used to bring relief supplies. The refugees eagerly awaited and when they heard the first drone of the copter they ran to welcome it.



Cyclone refugees of a village in Myebon running to meet the helicopter bringing relief goods.

With commendable promptitude the Burma Government swung into action: Central, Coordinating, and departmental. Relief goods were flown in. The United States' donation of 25,000 blankets were among the first relief goods to reach the



stricken people, just seven days after the first news of the disaster reached Rangoon. The blankets were flown in by a Trans-World Airways cargojet from Boston to Burma.

On hand to receive the relief goods were Ambassador Byroade, Mr. Small, Disaster Relief Officer, and staff members and personnel of the Relief Ministry.



Lt. Col. Hla Moe (in Burmese dress) was also there to receive the United States' gifts.

The gifts were formally handed over at the airport. Lt. Col. Hla Moe, on behalf of the Burma Government, expressed gratitude at the prompt response of the United States to relieve sufferings of the flood victims.



With smiles on their faces the personnel of the Relief Ministry and other workers of the airport unload the United States' gifts. They realised the urgency and importance of prompt action on their part.



There was perfect coordination of efforts: Union of Burma Airways provided a Fokker Friendship plane to take immediate delivery of the relief goods and fly off with them to the disaster area within 1½ hours of the arrival of the Cargojet.



In next to no time, the bales of blankets occupied every available space on the U.B.A. plane.



The loading was done carefully and cheerfully.

As part of the coordinating plan, the m.v. "Pyidawnyunt" awaited at the wharf to take delivery of the balance of the 25,000 blankets:



Trucks were loaded at the airport to take the blankets to the wharf.

At the wharf the loading was done with the minimum of delay. The cranes of the m.v. "Pyidawnyunt" worked overnight at full speed but with the greatest caution.



The Wharf Superintendent personally supervised the loading.

Some of the bales of blankets burst as they were thrown down from the plane's belly - from a height of about ten feet.



However, the personnel of the Relief Ministry took immediate charge and in a systematic way restitched the bales in burlap.

Cotton materials purchased with American owned rupee funds, made possible with the assistance of the Government of India, was airlifted gratis by Pan American World Airways from Calcutta to Rangoon.



Disaster Relief Officer taking personal delivery of longyis and long cloth on arrival at Rangoon.

CYCLONE/FLOOD DISASTER, BURMA, MAY 1968

No. killed: 1,037	No. cared for by mass feeding: 12,409
No. of livestock killed: 17,537	No. of acres cultivated paddy fields destroyed: 145,144
No. of homes destroyed: 57,663	No. evacuated: 12,409 to 12 camps
No. homeless: 297,768	Estimated dollar property damage: \$3,169,572 (K15,000,000)

Geographically situated on the Bay of Bengal, the Arakan is vulnerable to cyclones and tidal waves. In 1967 Arakan was hit twice on May 20 and on October 23. But the cyclone on May 10, 1968 was the severest both in property damaged and the number of deaths.

The cyclone buffeted the coast like an angered giant, flattening Akyab town, and churning up blankets of sand followed by massive tidal waves which swallowed up whole villages in the hinterland, in Pauktaw, Minbya, Myebon and six other townships in which men, women and children perished. The area devastated was about 1,500 square miles. The total damage was 614 villages in nine townships, 57,663 houses were destroyed and the loss \$3,169,572 (K15,000,000). The death toll was the heaviest ever suffered by Akyab and Kyaukpyu Districts which had been battered 17 times since 1895 by storms and cyclones.

Akyab Town

It is the headquarters town of the surrounding district. It has a population of about 123,711 people. One eye-witness

account of a resident stated that "On the evening of May 9, 1968 at 0700 hours an easterly cyclonic storm struck the town. The velocity of the wind increased from 60/100 m.p.h. from 0230 hours onwards. On May 10 at 0800 hours the cyclone coinciding with high tides caused ten foot tall tidal waves which inundated the Strand Road and low lying areas of the town. Again at 1000 hours of the same day till 1330 hours, the second cyclone storm hit the town at a speed of 100/150 m.p.h.

"Government administrative buildings, Trade Corporation warehouses, army and police barracks, agricultural godowns, hospitals, government rice mills, the electric power station, telephone and electric cables and posts, schools, the telegraph office together with a very large number of private houses were badly damaged or destroyed. The town looked as though it had been flattened by bombing. Communication by land, sea or air with outlying townships and Rangoon was completely cut off.

"A Greek ocean-going vessel in the harbor with 4,000 tons of rice on board, broke its moorings and was sunk.

"The Inland Waterways Transport launch "Oway" which was berthed alongside the jetty at Ponagyun on the Kaladan river north of Akyab was also sunk. Five persons who refused to abandon ship were drowned. I.W.T. Launch "Waylin" was also blown ashore. Numerous private launches and schooners were also sunk. I estimate that about 95% of the town has been reduced to shambles. "

Within Country Operations

Burma Government's Action: Government of the Union of Burma's reaction to the cyclone disaster was swift and effective. A high level Central Relief Committee was appointed with Col. Tin U, Commander, Central Command, as Chairman, Major Lwin Maung, Relief Ministry; as Secretary; Capt. Nyunt Shwe, Central Command as joint-secretary.

Immediate steps were taken to airlift drinking water (wells and other water supplies were salinated), medicines, food, clothing and other household goods in urgent need.

The Burmese Government immediately sanctioned K2,250,000 towards the disaster. The Committee together with the Chief Justice, Dr. Maung Maung, and Lt. Col. Hla Moe, President and Secretary of the Burma Red Cross respectively, flew also to Akyab on May 14 to make an on-the-spot assessment of the extent of the disaster and to put into effect urgent relief measures both immediate and long-term. They took with them on the plane 1,000 pieces of cotton blankets, 2,500 yards of longcloth, 100 cases of condensed milk, 200 dozen tins of baby food and five cases of medicines presented by the Burma Red Cross, relief stores and canvas tents (donated by U.S. in May 1967) from the Relief Department.

For three months following the disaster a constant flow of relief and construction supplies were sent by air and sea to be distributed to the affected areas.

The tidal waves of Arakan brought in its wake a wave of sympathetic generosity from the whole country; men, women and children from all walks of life gave generously. Even the blind did their part in this national effort; the Blind Monk, Principal of the Pakokku Blind School, donated K500 (\$105.65) from his own funds which his disciples had given him, and the blind students donated K100 (\$21.13), their earnings as Red Cross volunteers. Workers in factories, offices, at jetties, railway stations and other places did overtime work and contributed the money thus earned to the Fund. Teachers and school children were not outdone in giving their mite. Public contributions amounted to K4,244,271.30. Immediate relief and rehabilitation measures were put into operation at once by the local command of the Burma Army stationed at Akyab in cooperation with the Civil Administrative authorities. Emergency rations were immediately issued to the storm victims.

In Rangoon, a Central Relief Committee was formed, headed by Col. Tin U, Commander, Central Command, in whose jurisdiction the disaster area falls. A Coordinating Committee with the Home Minister Col. Kyaw Soe was also formed.

The work completed has included the distribution of seed grains, restoration of electricity supply, repairs and refloating of vessels, distribution of building materials, such as timber, roofing materials, bamboo, dhani (thatch), motor vehicles, repairs to government buildings and schools, reconstruction of rice mills and industries, rebuilding of embank-

ments, bridges and roads. The colossal work has been accomplished speedily with the drive of Col. Tin U and the army personnel and the various departmental committees working at high pressure.

U.S. Government Disaster Relief Operations

The news that the Arakan was hit by the cyclone reached Rangoon on the evening of May 10 through the Burma Army wireless. The AID Disaster Relief Officer being notified of the fact immediately issued instructions to his staff to contact the Relief Ministry.

On May 13 the Disaster Relief Officer received a request for a supply of blankets, this being the most needed item of relief supply. This request was relayed to AID/Washington the same day. A prompt reply was received the following day enumerating the items of supplies to be chosen from and an indent sent forthwith. As per original request made by the Burmese Government blankets were promptly dispatched on a chartered freighter. A total of \$137,488.94 was allotted for disaster relief. Out of this \$9,000 was used to purchase Indian cotton materials. No other funds were used. Nor was any aid given from Food for Peace.

The gift of 25,020 blankets by the United States Government, was dispatched in a Trans-World Airlines cargojet plane from Boston to Burma, arriving seven days after the disaster. It was given full coverage by the press - Burmese, English and Foreign.

The United States contribution made to the Burmese Government in the shortest possible time after the cyclone disaster, impressed the Burmese.

To expedite the dispatch of supplies to the disaster area, a Fokker Friendship aircraft was at standby at the airport to take direct delivery from the TWA plane as it landed. It took off immediately the same evening for Akyab, after being loaded. At the same time, the remaining portion of the 25,020 blankets were trucked to the port and loaded on the m.v. "Pyidawnyunt" which was alongside the jetty awaiting the much needed cargo. The relief shipment from the United States was followed by cotton materials, 6,400 longyis and 18,000 meters of long cloth from India arriving June 1 and June 3. This shipment came from Calcutta and was made possible with the assistance of the Government of India. The Government of India gave the U.S. Government special permission to purchase the Indian cloth with American owned rupee funds.

These gifts followed two other major United States Government donations made for the cyclone victims last year, 1967.

There was excellent coordination of efforts between the Burmese Government and the U.S. Government Disaster Relief Staff in Rangoon. The Disaster Relief Officer and his staff took personal delivery of every shipment and turned over the relief goods immediately to the Relief Ministry.

Cotton blankets and airfreight 25,020	\$102,529.46
6,400 longyis and 18,000 meters longcloth	9,000.00
Airfreight for Sulphur Drugs	<u>7,200.00</u>
	<u>\$118,729.46</u>

Disaster Relief Operations by U.S. Voluntary Agencies and the American National Red Cross (ANRC).

The Burma Red Cross made an appeal to the International Red Cross for aid. The IRC requested the Red Cross Societies in other countries to respond to Burma's appeal. The American National Red Cross immediately responded with the help of well known pharmaceutical firms in the U.S., viz. Squibb, Wyeth, Lilly, Abott and Lederle, which contributed sulfa drugs. The total value was \$22,000.00.

These contributions were airlifted to Burma through the Disaster Relief Branch of AID/Washington.

In addition, a check for \$5,000 was donated from the Children's Fund of the United States Red Cross Society for Children's Welfare work in the disaster area.

The Council of World Churches also donated \$2,000.00.

The clothing material consisting of longyis and long cloth purchased in India were airfreighted gratis by Pan American World Airways from Calcutta to Rangoon.

American National Red Cross:

Sulphur Drugs	\$22,000
A.N.R.C. Children's fund	5,000
Council of World Churches	<u>2,000</u>
	\$29,000

Appraisal of U.S. Government and Voluntary Agency Assistance

The blankets were most appreciated. A Burmese airport official commenting on the blankets said "How quick the U.S. is in giving help!" Feeling one of the blankets from a damaged bale he added; "They have given us the blankets as they would their own people if they were in similar conditions."

Fourteen of the bales got damaged as they were discharged from the T.W.A. plane. It would appear that the packing was not strong enough to stand the impact, dropped from a height of about 10 feet from the plane.

The longyis and long cloth from India were also greatly appreciated. They were of a quality which the Burmese generally wear. The family unit tents, large and medium sizes, and tarpaulins donated for the 1967 disaster came in very handy for immediate use after the cyclone for the homeless. The gifts of sulphur drugs donated by ANRC were used to combat diseases.

The newspapers, both Burmese and English publicized every consignment of U.S. relief goods as they came in. Photographs of the Ambassador handing over the relief goods were given front page prominence in all papers. Other photos of relief goods being received or discharged from planes were also used by the press.

Assistance Received from Other Countries

In the wake of the United States gesture of goodwill, many countries have followed with messages of sympathy and condolences and with concrete contributions of foodstuffs; clothing, etc.

A table showing assistance received from other countries in chronological order up to August 30, 1968 is on Appendix C.

Appendix A

Table Showing Loss of Life, Villages Destroyed and People Homeless

<u>Locality</u>	<u>Villages</u>	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>Persons Homeless</u>
1. Akyab Township	126	16	112,982
2. Pauktaw "	186	553	71,307
3. Minbya "	51	39	20,768
4. Myebon "	43	415	24,024
5. Myohaung "	67	1	13,548
6. Rathedaung "	55	5	26,610
7. Ponnargyun "	60	8	24,729
8. Maungdaw "	9	-	2,258
9. Kyauktaw "	43	-	1,542

Appendix B

Within Country Contributions

1. Government contribution, cash	K 2,250,000.00
	(\$475,435.81)
Materials for construction, transportation (sea and air freight) and services	10,199,690.00
	(\$2,155,243.50)
2. People's Donations, cash	4,244,271.30
	(\$896,834.92)
Burma Red Cross	
Various Communities, working people, schools, etc.	

United States Government Contribution

1. Blankets, cotton materials and freight for sulphur drugs	\$118,729.00
2. American National Red Cross	
Sulphur Drugs	22,000.00
A.N.R.C. Children's fund	5,000.00
Council of World Churches	2,000.00
	<u>\$29,000.00</u>

APPENDIX COther Countries Contributions

<u>Country</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Date Received</u>
Swedish Red Cross	Check	\$ 1,930.48	May 21
Canadian Red Cross	"	4,624.83	May 21
German Democratic Republic	Medicines	2,535.66	May 21
m.v. "Eckhardt" Capt. and crew	Cash	496.57	May 22
Indonesian Residents, Cairo	Check	1,155.84	May 23
Yugoslav Trade Promo- tion Off., Rangoon	Cash	2,113.05	May 24
Indonesian Ambassador and Staff	Cash	2,113.05	May 26
Canadian Red Cross	Clothing	4,437.40	May 26
Danish Red Cross	Clothing & Plastic Cups	1,901.74	May 26
USSR Red Cross	150 cartons sugar	6,761.75	May 30
India	620 longyis	No commercial value	May 30
Indian Ambassador and Staff	Cash	211.52	May 30
Bulgarian Red Cross	Relief goods	4,226.10	June 2
UNICEF	Skimmed Milk & Clothing from India	No comm.value 2,000.00	June 5
Australia	1040 cases con- densed milk	22,482.83	June 6
Australian Red Cross	Check	1,124.14	June 6
People's Republic of China Red Cross	Check	4,044.58	June 9

APPENDIX C

<u>Country</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Value</u> \$	<u>Date</u> <u>Received</u>
United Kingdom	Cash	5,493.92	June 13
Chip Seng Co.Ltd., Singapore) Wee & Co. Ltd.,) Singapore)	Check	653.35	June 14
Federal Republic of Germany	Medicines	6,339.14	June 15
Canada	Food, Medicines, Drugs, Tents and Clothing	4,624.83 4,624.83	June 16
Singapore Red Cross	64,880 tins con- densed milk, 223 tons longyis	No comm.value	June 27
G.D.R. Red Cross	Medicines	22,877.44	June 27
Japanese Embassy	Check	4,999.89	June 28
Swedish Red Cross	47,000 yds cloth	No comm.value	July 11
Canadian Red Cross	1410 cases con- densed milk and 30 bales cloth	"	July 11
Hungarian Red Cross	Medicines, clothing	5,282.62	July 12
London Rotary Club	Blankets, bed- sheets, towels, shoes, pillows	No comm.value	July 25
Ceylon Embassy	1000 lbs. tea	"	July 30
Pakistan Embassy	Textiles	1,056.52	July 30
Thai Embassy	8 tons corrugated iron sheets, 4 boxes nails, 91 cases con- densed milk, 1308 pcs corrugated iron sheets, 20 cases cond. milk	4,944.53	Aug. 28 Aug. 30
	TOTAL	\$124,056.61	