



TODAY'S FRONT PAGE



TAGA SPORTS

US military's relief mission ends

By Frauleine S. Villanueva | Posted on Aug 24 2015

Tag: FEMA, Marine Expeditionary Unit, MEU, US

The USS Ashland is on its way back to its home port in Okinawa, Japan, after Marines and sailors with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit completed their typhoon relief mission on Saipan last Saturday.

At a press conference at the Garapan Fishing Base where the 31st MEU were producing and distributing water, Lt. Gov. Ralph DLG Torres expressed his appreciation for their help as the island recovers from the devastation of Typhoon Soudelor.

"We're going to miss you guys and the services you've provided. We thank you very much," Torres said.

The Marines were earlier set to leave on Aug. 18 and Torres expressed his thanks for extending their mission.

"The Marines provided manpower, equipment, and technical expertise for emergency drinking water production and distribution for typhoon survivors as directed by the CNMI government. Their assistance expedited immediate humanitarian relief. We appreciate the unique capabilities of the Marines," Federal Emergency Management Agency federal coordinating officer Stephen M. DeBlasio Sr. said.

The Marines and sailors of the 31st MEU, along with the USS Ashland (LSD 48), delivered more than 19,000 gallons of water and 47,000 individual meals provided by FEMA to five distribution sites. More than 10,000 lbs of emergency supplies provided by the American Red Cross were also distributed.

The Marines distributed an additional 366,200 gallons of potable water to the people of Saipan, 279,375 gallons of which were purified using a Light Water Purification System and a Tactical Water Purification System.



A member of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit fills up a 5-gallon water bottle during their last day on Saipan. Their mission to provide potable water and help with the typhoon relief efforts on island ended last Saturday. (Frauleine S. Villanueva)



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WEATHER FORECASTS

Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands

CURRENT CONDITIONS FOR SAIPAN AS OF WED, 26 AUG 2015 8:54 AM CHST



High: 28° Low: 25°
Mostly Cloudy

Feels like: 28 °C
Barometer: 1012.9 mb and steady
Humidity: 85%
Visibility: 16.09 km
Dewpoint: 25 °C

Marines and sailors also cleared debris from seven schools, including Marianas High School, Hopwood Junior High School, and Koblerville Elementary School.

In a statement, Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) also thanked the 31st MEU.

"The people of the Northern Marianas are deeply grateful to the members of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit for the extraordinary service they have delivered in the devastating aftermath of Typhoon Soudelor," he said.

Joint Region Marianas Commander Rear Adm. Bette Bolivar described the relief operation as a "joint effort."

"And I can tell you that we are absolutely proud and honored to have assisted our island of Saipan in need, in terms of their immediate relief to prevent human suffering and to help stabilize any sort of infrastructure damage," Bolivar added.

She said their "hearts go out to the resilient people of Saipan" and that, as DOD slowly backs out, it is a good sign for recovery.

FEMA, in conjunction with local authorities, have assessed that they have the capabilities to complete any remaining relief operations without military assistance.

"We're going to continue to press that road for recovery and that we're certainly proud to be a part of it. And we thank you for opening your arms to us as a team," Bolivar said.

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Frauleine S. Villanueva | Reporter

Frauleine Michelle S. Villanueva was a broadcast news producer in the Philippines before moving to the CNMI to pursue becoming a print journalist. She is interested in weather and environmental reporting but is an all-around writer. She graduated cum laude from the University of Santo Tomas with a degree in Journalism and was a sportswriter in the student publication.

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FEMA and DOD press conference



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