



Israel's Assistance to the Philippines

13/13/2013

Typhoon 'Haiyan' Disaster on Thursday Night

One of the most powerful storms ever hit the Philippines on Thursday 7 November 2011.

A few days after the storm, first estimates of destruction and devastation caused by the storm:

- The winds reached 350 km/h and ravaged entire regions.
- 70% of the buildings in the area were destroyed.
- 660,000 persons displaced.
- 800,000 homeless people.
- **Thousands of people died.**



Path of the Typhoon Haiyan (on the left) and Destruction in Tacloban, a city of about 220,000 (on the right)

First Team Sent to Assess the Situation on Sunday Evening

Following talks between the Israel and the Philippines Foreign Affairs Ministries, the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Benyamin (Benni) Gantz and the Government of Israel decided to send an assessment team to the area ravaged by Typhoon 'Haiyan' in the Philippines.

A lead expedition of five officers, experts in the fields of search, rescue and medicine under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Sami Yehezkel, arrived on Monday 11 November 2013 to the Philippines. The team included:

- The Head of the Planning and Development Department in the Home Front Command (Head of the mission).
- The Head of the Eastern Asia Desk of the Foreign Affairs Ministry.
- A Commander of the Medical Office in the Home Front Command.
- A representative of the Medical Corps from the Technological and Logistics Directorate.
- A representative of the Logistics branch in the Home Front Command.

Their mission was to form a situational assessment and infrastructure evaluation that would determine the best rapid response the IDF could offer to the Government of the Philippines.

IDF Humanitarian Delegation Left to the Philippines on Wednesday Noon

Following the assessment team conclusions, the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Benjamin (Benny) Gantz ordered to deploy a large-scale delegation to the disaster zone. As a result, a 148-member delegation left for the Philippines today.

The delegation comprises of officials from the National Search and Rescue Unit headed by the unit commander, Colonel Ramtin Sabti (Mission Chief), as well as senior doctors in the IDF Medical Corps, headed by the Deputy Surgeon General, Colonel Doctor Dudu Dagan (Deputy Mission Chief). Experts from the Home Front Command, the Air Force, C4I, the Technological and Logistics

Directorate, the Spokesperson Unit, the Ministries of Defense and of Foreign Affairs and from the Magen David Adom have also joined the team.

People and equipments will be airlifted using two Boeing 747 planes. An advanced multi-department medical facility, equipped with approximately 100 tons of humanitarian and medical supplies from Israel, will be rapidly established in the city of Tacloban to provide medical care for disaster casualties. The facility will be operated by IDF doctors, nurses, paramedics, pharmacists, mental health professionals, x-ray technician, and lab workers and will include:

- A children's department,
- A women's department,
- An ambulatory care department,
- A general admission department.

Previous IDF International Rescue Operations

Over the last decades, Israel has sent 15 humanitarian delegations to 14 countries. Israeli medical personnel have saved more than 417 people from certain death, provided medical care to more than 3,700 injured patients and delivered more than 47 babies. All Israeli delegations partnered with local and foreign medical teams in their effort to save lives.

Recently, in January 2010, Israel joined the global effort in assisting Haiti's earthquake victims, treating more than 1,110 patients and completing 319 successful surgeries.

Along with other IDF units, the National Search and Rescue Unit of the Home Front Command, is usually one of the key member of these rescue operations. The unit is trained to execute special search and rescue missions, especially in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. It was created in 1983 after the Second Tyre truck bombings at the IDF's buildings in Tyre, Lebanon, where 28 Israelis were killed, nearly one year after the first bombing which killed 75 Israelis.

The unit consists primarily of reservists who are always on call, with prepared kits to enable immediate departure, and a small core of soldiers in mandatory service. In addition to the rescue teams, the unit employs doctors, engineers, mechanical engineering equipment operators and rescue dog handlers. The unit can be deployed on a domestic event within 3 hours.

The National Search and Rescue Unit participated over the last decades in many rescuing operations abroad including:

- Mexico in 1984;
- Armenia in 1988;
- Argentine in 1994;
- Kenya (Nairobi) in 1998;
- Turkey 1 in 1999;
- Greece in 1999;
- Turkey 2 in 1999;
- India in 2001;
- Kenya (Mombasa) in 2002;
- Egypt (Taba) in 2004;
- Kenya in 2006;
- India (Mumbai) in 2008;
- Haiti in 2010;
- Japan in 2011.



IDF soldiers rescue a Haitian man from a government building in 2010 (on the left) and The National Search and Rescue Unit during an exercise in 2008 (on the right).