

By JOSEPH G. LARIOSA

(Journal Group Link International)

CHICAGO, Illinois (JGLi) – President Barack Obama expressed Tuesday (Oct. 6) his “deep condolences for the loss of life and devastation caused by recent storms in the Philippines, particularly Tropical Storm Ketsana (Ondoy).”

According to a White House statement, Mr. Obama, speaking on behalf of the American people, said, “Michelle and I feel great sorrow over the hundreds of people who have died from the storms and resulting flooding and the hundreds of thousands more who have been displaced.”

He said, “In the spirit of our long history of friendship and cooperation with the Philippines, the United States has been assisting the people of the Philippines

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President Obama Expresses Condolences to RP Typhoon Victims - MabuhayRadio

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“Our military forces and civilian agencies have supported local Philippine efforts by distributing relief supplies and helped in rescuing victims from inundated areas of Manila.

“As part of this effort, the U.S. Agency for International Development has so far allocated \$1.8 million to respond to the disaster. As a longstanding friend and partner of the Philippines, we stand ready to continue our cooperation and assistance in the coming days.”

Mr. Obama becomes the highest U.S. government official to issue a statement on the typhoon victims after U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (HI-D) delivered a speech last week on the U.S. Senate floor, encouraging “everyone in our community to do what they can to help those suffering from this terrible disaster.”

Senator Akaka added, “Survivors are now struggling to find clean drinking water, food, medicine, and shelter.”

NO TAXES FOR TYPHOON DONATIONS

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Meanwhile, used clothing items are banned importation shipments while misdeclared and/or undeclared shipments of food and clothing shall automatically be seized by the Bureau of Customs and turned over to the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development.

This was the clarification issued by Consul Roberto Bernardo of the Philippine Consulate in the Midwest after being told that Customs "is holding hostage the relief goods sent from abroad unless a "tax" is paid."

Consul Bernardo said, "I cannot say this categorically. There are reasons why the BOC could tax the goods, such as they may have been misdeclared unintentionally, or lack the authenticated deed of donations, or clearances. Also, by virtue of R.A. 4653, used clothing items are banned."

He said, "questions regarding the donations of relief goods and rehabilitation equipment may be directly addressed to the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC). Medicines to the Dept. of Health (DOH) and relief goods to DSWD."

An email being circulated said, "I know you are collecting relief goods to send here. Just wanted to give you the heads up that the Customs is holding hostage the relief goods sent from abroad unless a "tax" is paid. They will only exempt relief goods sent to DSWD."

“I know this firsthand because the Filipino Community of Hong Kong just sent 50 boxes of relief goods to the Church I am volunteering for and customs is demanding a duty of P5000 per box.

ANGRY GROUPS AT CUSTOMS

“There currently are many other angry private and religious groups right now at Customs demanding the release of the relief goods and denouncing the fees.

“It's such a downer that in times of crisis, even the best of intentions by Filipinos are still subjected to corruption by the Government.”

Another email was asking for “current or corrected information with regard to this tax imposition in the Philippines” for “international, national and local network.”

GUIDELINES FOR RP TYPHOON DONATIONS

Mr. Bernardo furnished this reporter again the following guidelines for donors for the Ondoy typhoon victims:

TYPHOON ONDOY (International Code Name: KETSANA) RELIEF EFFORTS INFORMATION:

Bank accounts to which voluntary cash donations for Typhoon Ondoy victims may be remitted:

A. National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC)

NDCC Donated Funds

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Current account (Philippine Peso) #0-00149-435-3

Swift Code: DBPHPHMM Account #36002016

Development Bank of the Philippines

Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo Branch

Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City

Philippines

NDCC updates and other information can be accessed via www.ndcc.gov.ph

B. Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)

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Contact persons: Imee Rose Castillo/ Rey Martija

(632) 931-8101 local 506-507/ 951-7119

www.dswd.gov.ph

US Dollar

Philippine Peso

DSWD Foreign Donations

Account No. 3124-0055-81

ZIP Address: TLBPPHMMXXX

LBP Batasan Branch

Constitution Hills, Quezon City

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DSWD Donation

Account No. 3122-1011-84

LBP Batasan Branch

Constitution Hills, Quezon City

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C. Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC)

For donations to be acknowledged, please fax bank transaction slips to (632) 5255654 or 4040979 with donor's name, address and contact numbers.

Guidelines for on-line donations may be accessed via www.redcross.org.ph.

US Dollar

Philippine Peso

The Philippine National Red Cross

Account No. 151-2-151-00218-2

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Swift Code: MBTC PH MM

Metrobank	Port	Area Branch
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Anda Circle	, Port Area,	Manila
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The Philippine National Red Cross

Account No. 81140030-94

Swift Code: BOPIPHMM

BPI United Nations Branch

Ermita,	Manila
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The Philippine National Red Cross

Account No. 151-3-041-63122-8-MBTC

Metrobank	Port	Area Branch
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Anda Circle , Port Area, Manila

The Philippine National Red Cross

Account No. 4991-0010-99

BPI United Nations Branch

Ermita, Manila

Other queries and donations may be referred to the following agencies:

A. NDCC (Relief goods/ rehabilitation equipment)

Maj. General Glenn J. Rabonza

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NDCC Administrator

Attn: Engr. Florentino Sison

Deputy Chief, Operations Division

Tel. (632) 912-5979, 912-2665/ Fax: (632) 9111873, 9111406, 9125668, 9120984

B. Department of Health (Medicines and / or medical and humanitarian missions)

Dr. Virginia Ala

Chief, Bureau of International Health Cooperation

Department of Health

Attn: Ms. Noni Balbino

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Chief, Technical Division

Tel. (632) 781-2843/ Fax: (632) 781-8843

C. DSWD (Relief goods)

By virtue of RA No. 4653, used clothing are banned importations/ shipments. Mis-declared and/or undeclared shipments of food and clothing shall automatically be seized and be the subject of seizure proceedings by the Bureau of Customs and then thereafter forfeited in favor of the government and turned over to the DSWD.

Material donations may be sent to the following DSWD Donation Drop-off Points:

Area

Contact Person

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National Resource Operation Center

Chapel Road, Pasay City

Mrs. Francon Fabian

Tel. No. (632) 852-8081

Mobile no. +63918-9302356

Quezon City Area

Disaster Resource Operations

Monitoring and Info Center (DROMIC)

DSWD Central Office

Batasan, Quezon City

Mr. Rey Martiga

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Ms. Imee Rose Castillo

Tel. No. (632) 951-7119, 951-2435

Assistant Secretary Vilma Cabrera

Mobile no. +63918-9345625

Manila Area

DSWD-

NCR

San Rafael Cor. Legarda St

Quiapo,

Manila

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Director Thelsa P. Biolena

Tel. No. (632) 734-8622, 734-8642

DSWD officials confirmed that expenses relative to sending of material donations will be borne by the sending party and only costs to be incurred in the Philippines shall be borne by DSWD. (
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