

## **U.S. SENDS SHIPS, SUPPLIES TO CYCLONE-DEVASTATED BANGLADESH**

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WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 20 -- The United States is sending naval ships and \$2.1 million in emergency relief supplies to Bangladesh to help the victims of Cyclone Sidr, which ravaged the country's southern coast.

President Bush and first lady Laura Bush, as well as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, have expressed their condolences and sympathies to the victims while the USS Essex and USS Kearsarge, each carrying 20 helicopters for relief-and-rescue operations, steam toward the coast of Bangladesh. The ships are scheduled to arrive off the coast of Bangladesh by November 24.

Cyclone Sidr, packing winds of 240 kilometers per hour and whipping up 6-meter waves, killed thousands and wrecked the lives of many more. It is reported to have been the most severe storm to hit Bangladesh since 1991.

Rice said in a statement that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is funding water and sanitation programs and providing materials for temporary shelter. The United States also is disbursing funds to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent societies for relief operations. (See full text ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttrans-english&y=2007&m=November&x=20071119113350xjsnommis0.8903467> ).)

As tragic as it was, the havoc wreaked by Cyclone Sidr could have been much worse, had it not been for disaster preparedness and mitigation programs undertaken by the government of Bangladesh with assistance from the U.S. government, according to USAID. The U.S. development agency funds construction and maintenance of flood and cyclone shelters, wave-protection walls and earthen embankments to reduce flood damage.

Before Cyclone Sidr made landfall, USAID prepared boats, water treatment systems and water ambulances for emergency operations. In cooperation with CARE and Save the Children, USAID helped pre-position 30,000 emergency survival packages and food stockpiles for distribution after the storm.

A team of five USAID experts is assessing the extent of the cyclone's damage and drawing up a relief-and-recovery plan.

The full text ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=texttrans-english&y=2007&m=November&x=20071119112508xjsnommis0.7737085> ) of a White House statement on Cyclone Sidr is available on USINFO.

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