

**Office of the Press Secretary
Presidential News Desk**

**PRESS BRIEFING BY
PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.**

[Held at the Presidential Broadcast Studio, Malacanañ Palace in Manila | 27 July 2022]

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.: Good afternoon. As I am sure everybody knows we were — we felt the effects of an earthquake earlier today at approximately 8:40. And so I've asked to speak to you to give you the latest situationer on what is going on and what we have been able to find out about the situation in different places.

Mukhang malakas 'yung lindol kasi malaking — ang 7.3 napakalakas na niyan. Hanggang Ilocos Sur nag-approximately 6.0, which in the Richter scale which is a very — which is still a very strong earthquake.

I have with me Usec. Solidum [Where? Ah there.], and SND Faustino and DILG Abalos so that they can give us the reports from the — on the technical aspects of what happened today from PHIVOLCS and the reports that are our policemen and other local executives have been providing us, and of course, the NDRRMC on the measures that we have taken to immediately provide support to the LGUs and of course the citizens that have been affected.

The Secretary of DSWD, Secretary Erwin Tulfo, is not here with us because he is already there. He left early earlier — he left soon after the earthquake. Again, we are awaiting his report.

I am staying away from going to the affected areas for a very simple reason: It has been my experience as governor, it has been my experience in Yolanda that when the national officers come to the affected areas immediately, ginugulo lang namin 'yung trabaho ng mga local. Halimbawa, pupunta ako doon maghahanap pa ako ng pulis para pag-secure; kailangan akong i-meeting ng mga local officials, eh marami silang ginagawa. So I said, let them do their work. Let us wait for them to tell us what is going to be — what the true situation is. And maybe I can schedule a trip perhaps tomorrow as soon as possible.

So, now I'll turn the floor over to Usec. Solidum so he can explain to us exactly what happened in Abra this morning.

DOST UNDERSECRETARY AND PHIVOLCS OFFICER-IN-CHARGE RENATO SOLIDUM JR.: Thank you, Mr. President.

At exactly 8:43 this morning, a magnitude 7.0, initially rated at 7.3, occurred in Abra. And the depth of the earthquake was 17 kilometers, so not so deep, shallow. And because of the magnitude of the earthquake, we consider it as a major earthquake. Anything greater than 7 is a major earthquake and we would expect significant effects of this event.

First, on the reported strength of the shaking, so far the maximum intensity reported to us would be intensity 7 in Bucloc and Manabo, Abra. And this would be manifested by damages to houses and buildings and landslides, especially in the mountainous region. We also noticed intensity 6 in Vigan and other towns of Ilocos Sur like in Sinait, Bantay, San Esteban and in Laoac, Pangasinan and even Baguio City and that would be nearby La Trinidad.

The reason why there was significant damage in Vigan is that the foundation of the city is essentially sandy because of the big river that would flood the area from time to time. So there was amplification of the shaking and many of the churches and the historical buildings were damaged.

Now, landslides are a problem especially not only for earthquakes but during rains. So we have to make sure that areas that are affected by landslides and starting or incipient landslides should be avoided.

Towns should actually investigate houses and buildings that were damaged to see if they can still be usable and even those that don't have very obvious damage. So this will be the work po ng mga local engineer.

There was a reported unusual wave in the coastal areas of La Union and Ilocos. This was not a tsunami po 'no because a tsunami would be very high waves because of the uplift of the ocean floor due to an earthquake in the ocean. What happened was there was shaking of the island and the coastal water was shaken, so there was minor seawater oscillation, some of the waters actually entered some of the river.

Mr. President, iyon lang po ang report natin.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: All right. So that is the initial report from PHIVOLCS on what has happened. Siguro next I will ask Secretary — unahin natin ang DILG 'coz I want to hear also — hindi ko pa narinig ang mga report na galing sa mga local government at saka sa mga pulis natin. So maybe Sec. Benhur you can brief us on what they have reported to you.

DILG SECRETARY BENJAMIN "BENHUR" ABALOS JR.: Magandang hapon po, Mr. President, at sa lahat po ng mga nanonood, nakikinig po ngayon.

Itong pong mga data na ito, ito po'y kinompile (compile) po natin. Ito'y galing sa mga local chief executives ng mga LGUs and of course galing sa PNP at galing sa mga fire. Kinross-reference (Cross-reference) po namin ito ng sa ganun ay talagang ito'y eksakto po at tama.

Ang affected regions po ay I, II, and CAR; 15 provinces are affected; 15 cities; 280 municipalities; 6,756 barangays. Ang initial reports po are there are road closures in some parts of Abra; power interruptions in Abra and Benguet; intermittent communication lines in Region I; landslides in some parts of CAR; minor damages in other regions.

Ito po ang initial report sa CAR: 29 municipal roads were damaged; three bridges in Abra are also reported to have been damaged; 173 buildings both private and government were also damaged; 58 reported landslides, most of which occurred in Abra, with 31 reported landslides; 60 injured; and so far po apat po ang nabalitaang nasawian ng buhay, four deaths. Of these four, two are in Benguet, one each in Abra, and Mountain — two in Benguet, one in Abra 'no. Iyong sa Mountain Province po...

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Ang cause niyan pagguho ng lupa?

SEC. ABALOS: Pagguho po opo. Sir, if I might also add, Mr. President, 'no para lang — [Sandali lang po] — para lang po maano po natin. Ito na po. Karamihan kasi pagguho eh.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Iyong unang casualty sa La Trinidad natabunan ng lupa eh. Mukhang ganoon din kasi doon sa mga highland areas maano 'yung lupa.

SEC. ABALOS: Yes, sir. Sir, ibe-breakdown ko lang po 'no. So lumalabas sa Abra ay tatlong tulay, tatlong bridges. Sa buildings ito lang ho iaano ko lang: sa Baguio 33 were affected; tapos 59 dito po sa Abra; sa Apayao, dalawa; tapos sa Benguet, 62; pagkatapos po sa Kalinga, 7; and then sa Mountain Province, 10 po. That's a total of 173.

And of course, ang pinakamaraming landslide reported ay dito po sa Abra with 31. Mga injured po pinakamarami din po sa Abra, sir, at 44. At iyon po ang report po namin.

Naka-deploy po ang mga kapulisan at mga bumbero po at ang mga disaster risk na mga LGUs po sa mga lugar na ito.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thank you, Sec. Benhur. Itutuloy ko na lang dahil naumpisahan na ni Sec. Benhur 'yung ano report sa mga daan. I've also received an initial report from the Department of Public Works and Highways on the condition of the roads in and out of the area, national roads especially.

Kennon Road is presently not passable; Palispis — 'yung Palispis area ng Marcos Highway is not passable; the Benguet-Nueva Vizcaya Road as of now is not passable; K0302+700 Poblacion Bokod, Benguet is also not passable; Baguio-Itogon not passable; Andres Cosalan Road in Sitio, Bugao, Brgy. Adaoay, Kabayan, Benguet is not passable.

Sa national road: K0297+200, Beling not passable; Poblacion, Kibungan collapse sa Benguet pa rin ito, K0313 not passable; Upper-Kalinga sa bandang Pail is not passable; on the road going up from Kalinga to Abra: Pantikian to Balblasang, Balbalan is not passable; Lubuagan-Batong Buhay Road is not passable; the Banaue-Hungduan-Benguet Boundary Road is not also passable.

Mayroong — however there are other roads like the Palispis Marcos Highway, one lane is passable now; Baguio-Bontoc Road, puwede ng one lane; Benguet-Nueva Vizcaya, one lane.

So dahan-dahan nabubuksan naman what was not passable. We have been — we have been already been able to clear some of them.

Unless kasi — basta't hindi naman mabagsakan ng malaking-malaking bato at lupa lang ang bumaba ay hindi naman mahirap na i-clear 'yan. Kaya't I anticipate by the end of the day, the majority of these roads that I have mentioned as being not passable should already be available for use to us.

Now, I'll give the floor to SND Faustino on the report from the NDRRMC.

DND OFFICER-IN-CHARGE JOSE FAUSTINO JR.: Yes sir. Thank you, Mr. President. Magandang hapon po sa lahat. Ang reports po na ito ay halos kaparehas din po nung kay Secretary Abalos.

Gayunman ang — dito ay... I will give emphasis doon sa ano na ba ang mga preparasyon o ano na 'yung mga ginawa natin as a result of the earthquake.

Ang actions po taken by the NDRRMC, agad po ay nag-convene ang ating NDRRMC. Nagkaroon po tayo ng emergency meeting through VTC with concerned regional directors ng mga naapektuhan na mga rehiyon at mga probinsiya and we already issued a directive, issued to Luzon regions regarding the reiteration of response actions.

The OCD also issued two emergency alert and warning message. We also — in coordination with PHIVOLCS, the quick response teams to be deployed for field assessment as mentioned by the President, DSWD Secretary is already in the affected — is already in Abra for the relief assistance.

Of course, 'yung Armed Forces of the Philippines prepared assets for mobilization already. We are talking about air assets and we could add more kung kinakailangan pa. But we have a number of assets — air assets already positioned in the area in coordination with the Northern Luzon Command.

And the Philippine Navy assets are on standby already sir in Subic kung kakailanganin pa sir ito. Then of course the available relief items from the Office of Civil Defense is already ready and prepared sakaling mangailangan ang ating mga LGUs, dahil mayroon naman naka-preposition na mga relief goods doon sa lugar na 'to.

Right now, the rapid assessment is ongoing on the following: status of roads and bridges as reported kanina; status of critical lifelines and infrastructures; status of houses; the total affected population; the immediate needs; and as we speak, ongoing ang road clearing operations and ongoing data gathering and submission of situational reports.

Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thank you, Secretary.

So that is the general situation as we know it for now. Pagka ganito, ang lagi kong inaalala kaagad 'yung kuryente at saka 'yung tubig because that's always the immediate ano. Dahil 'yung kuryente kailangan sa communication — and the communications. But the communications is dependent on the availability of the power supply.

Ang report na nakukuha natin, nagtanong ako, kasi generally rural area naman ito, so hindi siguro dapat maging problema ang water supply ng tao pati pagkain. Dahil naman hindi naman iba't — iba naman ito sa bagyo, palagay ko may available na pagkain.

Wala pa tayong report kung kailan maibabalik ang kuryente. Dahil ang nangyayari diyan kailangan nilang tingnan lahat nung mga linya at — para kasi walang — basically walang short, 'yung lagi nating pinagdadaanan pagka may disaster.

Sa communication naman, ang Globe ay may pinadala na na mayroon silang emergency na mga cell site. 'Yung Smart, wala pa kaming narinig. Ngunit nag-request na kami sa kanila na magtayo na kaagad o ibalik na kaagad ang serbisyo dahil lalong-lalo na 'pag disaster, pagka ganito, napaka-importante na nakakapag-usap kami, nakakausap ko 'yung mga local leaders, nakakausap natin ang mga first responders na on the ground.

So that is where we stand now and we will continue to provide information as it comes in. As you can imagine, this situation continues to develop and it will do so for the next few days.

But I think that everything that can be done has been done. We have even anticipated the needs of those who have been — have become victims of this very strong earthquake. So I'll end it there but I'll open the floor to a few questions about the earthquake.

Q&A:

PRESS SECRETARY ROSE BEATRIX “TRIXIE” CRUZ-ANGELES: First question from Mr. Nel Maribojoc from UNTV.

NEL MARIBOJOC (UNTV): Magandang hapon po, sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good afternoon.

MR. MARIBOJOC: Base po doon sa natatanggap na po ninyong initial information sa mga damages, may posibilidad po ba o ikinokonsidera ninyo ang pagdedeklara po ng state of calamity sa mga lugar po na ito?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Generally ang SOP diyan, ang state of national calamity 'pag apektado ang tatlong region, automatic, actually automatic 'yun eh. Hindi naman naapektuhan ang tatlo. So far, we can say that it's Region I and CAR.

And so I don't think it's necessary right now to declare a national emergency. However, depending on the information that comes back — I'm sure marami pa tayong mababalitaan, marami pang impormasyon na hindi pa nakarating sa atin — baka mangyari 'yun. I hope not kasi sana limited na nga dito sa Abra hanggang sa Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, La Union. 'Yung mabigat yata 'yung sa... Sa amin sa Ilocos Norte, I spoke to the governor, sabi niya mukha namang so far may structural damage, wala naman kaming casualty.

Iyong sa Ilocos Sur, I'm sure nakita ninyo 'yung Bantay Church na malaki ang damage. Mayroon din structural damage sa mga bahay. Sa La Union naman, mukhang hindi gaanong tinamaan. Perhaps because of the terrain structure as explained to us by Usec. Solidum, iba siguro ang pinapatungan ng mga bayan doon sa La Union.

So anyway that's the — and now of course we know what has been happening. Kalinga in Benguet, and in Baguio, Baguio City mukhang ano na naman, mukhang natamaan ng malakas. So we have to wait for those reports.

But right now, hindi pa nangangailangan magdeklara ng national calamity.

MR. MARIBOJOC: Thank you, sir.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Thank you, Mr. Nel. Ms. Pia Gutierrez, ABS-CBN.

PIA GUTIERREZ (ABS-CBN): Hi, sir. Good afternoon.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good afternoon.

MS. GUTIERREZ: Sir, base po sa report ng PAGASA, mayroon po silang mga binabantayan na weather disturbances that will affect mostly 'yung mga areas na lubhang tinamaan po nitong

lindol. Sir, what are your directives, sir, to the government agencies to prevent further damages and loss of lives?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good question. Kinakatakutan namin baka umulan. And kasi — siguro naluwag na nga, there'll be a great danger again of landslides. So binabantayan natin 'yan.

And usually naman na-identify natin kung saan 'yung areas of risk so puwede nating bantayan. Huwag sanang umulan at least for the next two days para makapag-stabilize tayo ng mga — lalo na 'yung mga daan pati 'yung mga... Para mainspeksyon na rin 'yung mga bahay if they are safe to go back to. Pero siguro hindi pa ngayon. Dahil even if they are structurally safe to return, magkakaroon pa tayo ng aftershock. Baka doon naman magkaproblema.

If you remember a while back, during the earthquake in Baguio, maraming namatay kasi akala nila tapos na, bumalik, pumasok sila, inabutan sila ngayon nung aftershocks.

So that's what we are watching out for, both in the structures and in the — watching the danger of landslides.

MS. GUTIERREZ: Maraming salamat, sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thank you.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Thank you. Ms. Cathy Valente, Manila Times.

CATHERINE VALENTE (MANILA TIMES): Yes, sir. Mr. President, good afternoon po.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good afternoon.

MS. VALENTE: Para po sa kaalaman lang po ng ating mga kababayan. Where were you po and what were you doing when the earthquake happened?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I'm sorry.

MS. VALENTE: Nasaan daw po kayo President during the earthquake?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I was in my office. Naririnig ko 'yung nag — may chandelier na... 'Yun ang guide namin dito sa Palasyo. 'Pag narinig mo 'yung chandelier na kumakalansing, then ibig sabihin may lindol.

But it was very strong. It's stronger than the usual.

MS. VALENTE: Yes, sir. Follow up lang sir, what can the government do to ensure daw po 'yung National Building Code is enforced? Will you push for a review of the code? And lastly sir, will you ask the Congress to pass the bill on Department of Disaster Resilience?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yes, precisely because as I said in the SONA, we have to recognize that we are disaster prone and that's why — which leads me to the answer to your previous question which is we have to be certain that our planning — hindi na natin mapalitan 'yung mga

nakatayo na — but our planning for the future should include all the mitigation — all the science and the knowledge and the learnings on the mitigation of these kinds of disasters.

Iba naman 'yung lindol. The problem — the real problem with the earthquake is hindi talaga tayo makapag-predict ng lindol. At least 'yung bagyo, mayroon, may warning. 'Yung lindol, talagang bigla.

So we just have to deal with it that way. And if we can make our — get that balance between cost and the mitigation requirements ng ating building code so that we are safe when the earthquake comes or malakas na bagyo, then that is what we will have to do.

MS. VALENTE: Sorry sir, will you push po for the passage of the ano...?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Of the?

MS. VALENTE: 'Yung ano sir, bill on National Disaster Resilience? Department, sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yes. Mukhang... I don't like to say it pero mukhang mapapadalas ito eh. Not the earthquake pero 'yung weather, lalo na 'yung extreme weather. Kahit hindi bagyo, 'yung masyadong... Nakikita niyo 'yung sa Europe, nakikita niyo 'yung sa Amerika. Baka naman abutan tayo ng ganyan, 'yung napakainit masyado.

So these are the things that we have to be careful. We need more capability than we have now. Magaling na tayo sa bagyo. Marunong na tayo sa lindol. Pero ang mga dangers na — the dangers that the effects of climate change present are different, that's why we need a specialist agency.

MS. VALENTE: Thank you, sir.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Thank you. Ms. Tuesday Niu, DZBB.

TUESDAY NIU (DZBB): Good afternoon, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good afternoon.

MS. NIU: Opo. So far po, nabigyan niyo na kami ng initial scenario ng ongoing relief and disaster response operations. Saan po ang extent ng assistance na puwedeng ibigay ng national government sa mga affected residents, lalo na po 'yung mga nagiba ang bahay, bumagsak ang bahay? Ipapagawa din po ba 'yung kanilang mga bahay, sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Ipapagawa 'yung?

MS. NIU: Mga bahay na nagiba.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Tutulong kami siyempre. The immediate — lalo na sa lindol, ang immediate concern is shelter kasi nga kahit na titingnan mo 'yung bahay mukhang matibay, hindi mo malalaman hanggang nainspeksyon nang mabuti 'yun.

So we cannot allow people to return to their homes yet because it's dangerous. That is one of the problems. Because ang tendency ng tao, pagka umalis ng kanilang tahanan eh babalik kaagad 'yun kasi para hindi... Alam niyo na 'yun. Walang masira, walang makuha, whatever.

So we have to explain to them that ang kailangan munang mainspeksyon 'yung kanilang mga bahay at bukod pa doon kailangan muna natin hintayin na medyo matapos na 'yung mga aftershocks.

Usec. Solidum tells me that may two or three days significant aftershocks. After which, magtataper off. So antayin na natin 'yung ilang araw.

In the meantime, it is up to us, the government, to provide shelter for them to be able to feed them while they are in the shelters. And to inspect their residences, their places of business para makita natin kung puwede na silang bumalik, puwedeng magtrabaho ulit, puwede na bumalik sa kanilang mga bahay.

MS. NIU: Follow up lang, sir. May panawagan po ang PHIVOLCS kaninang umaga sa local government units na seryosohin po 'yung pag-iinspeksyon sa mga residential houses not just buildings and other establishments. Would you issue a directive po sa DILG na gawin po itong at least regular inspection sa mga residential houses sa kanilang areas?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: There's no need. There is already an existing — there is already an existing procedure for that. Ang problema hindi masyadong — kung minsan hindi masyadong nagagawa because we — actually at the local government level, mayroon tayong mga engineer pero not necessarily qualified sila para tumingin sa building at sasabihin safe ito 'pag nagkalindol. Hangang Richter Scale 6 puwede ito, hanggang ganito. Wala tayong — sa local level walang tayong ganoon kaya hindi nagagawa.

So we will just have to... I think the better way is to educate people na huwag niyong... Huwag kayong magtatayo ng bahay sa delikadong lugar. Make sure that maayos 'yung mga materyales na ginagamit at maging matibay para 'pag sakali mang magka-lindol o magka-bagyo ay hindi naman kayo mabiktima.

So yes, it's something that we would like to be able to do. We have yet to have the capability to do it extensively. Sa urban areas nagagawa, pero sa rural areas hindi gaano.

MS. NIU: Thank you, sir.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Maraming salamat. That's all for today, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yeah? That's it? Alright. There's one more. Oh yeah sige, go ahead.

KATRINA DOMINGO (ABS-CBN): Thank you, Mr. President. Katrina Domingo from ABS-CBN News. Mr. President, do we have an initial assessment regarding the cost of infrastructure and agricultural damage incurred after the quake?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Wala pa. We haven't yet gotten the estimates. That will take some days. Kasi kailangan nilang — kailangan 'yung mga — sa agriculture, 'yung mga OPAG, 'yung mga MAO, kailangan iikot 'yan sa lahat ng lugar. Again, ang worry ko dito ay hindi 'yung tanim,

kung hindi 'yung irrigation systems, kung ano 'yung nasira. Kasi 'pag lindol, 'yun ang tinatamaan eh. And then yeah, that for me in terms of the agricultural sector, that for me is going to be the greatest concern kasi malapit na ang taniman.

MS. DOMINGO: Sir, two prompt follow up question. First, aside from the provision of shelter and food, will the government also be providing cash incentives or cash allowances to rebuild their homes? And how much of an additional budget are we looking at to address the situation?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: We haven't made those calculations yet. But siyempre, we have all of the mechanisms that have been put in place for the pandemic. So they are also in place.

And if you know, AICS is for all citizens in a precarious situation. So it does not necessarily mean that they got sick with COVID. It means basta't nalagay sila sa alanganing posisyon. So that will apply.

Siguro that will be most relevant to those who have — for whatever reason 'yung mga kanilang mga opisina or 'yung kanilang mga tindahan ay nasira, hindi sila makapagbukas, eh mangangailangan talaga dahil wala silang hinahanapbuhay.

I'm sure the social programs will then come into play.

MS. DOMINGO: Definitely sir, we have an available budget? And do we have a ballpark figure of how much we can still spend?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I think in terms — especially in terms of what we're anticipating after this earthquake, I think we should be able to cover it.

MS. DOMINGO: Thank you, sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Salamat. Thank you all very much. Good afternoon.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Thank you. Thank you very much.

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