

September 23, 1974

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

The President today sent the following message to General Lopez, Chief of State of Honduras:

Dear General Lopez:

On behalf of the Government and people of the United States, I extend our profound sympathy to you and the Honduran people on the tragic loss of life and suffering caused by the hurricane which struck your country. The close bonds of friendship between our countries evoke particularly strong feelings of solidarity with the Honduran people at times like these. You may be assured of our continuing interest in and support for the courageous efforts which you and your people are making to alleviate human distress and initiate recovery from this tragedy.

Sincerely,
Gerald R. Ford

The President has been receiving reports on the situation regularly and is following the activities directed at assisting Honduran efforts to alleviate the suffering and begin the rebuilding in stricken areas. He has directed that appropriate government agencies apply their full efforts to providing relief and rehabilitation in an effective way. To this end AID's Disaster Relief Center has been functioning to coordinate our efforts. The Center has been in regular contact with the Embassy at Tegucigalpa, the Defense Department and the State Department.

Since September 18 when the U.S. Ambassador declared that a disaster existed requiring U.S. assistance, approximately 1/4 of a million dollars has been committed in search, rescue and relief actions. Four UH-1 helicopters were dispatched from the U.S. Southern Command in Panama. Two C-130 Hercules have been shuttling back and forth between the AID Disaster Relief stockpile in Panama and La Mesa Airport in Honduras. Three smaller U-21 observation planes have been assisting in surveying the damage. The relationship with the Honduran director of civil defense has been close and effective. To date the U. S. has supplied communications equipment, three large water purification units, emergency and medical supplies, jeeps and transportation, including three large boats.

The Disaster Relief Center is coordinating efforts to bring international, federal, state and private sector resources to bear. The Mississippi and California National Guard are sending cargo aircraft to Honduras with medical personnel, food and supplies. CARE is also releasing PL-480 food supplies which it has stored in Honduras.

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