

State media: Myanmar shuns aid from U.S. warships

Associated Press

YANGON, Myanmar — Myanmar shunned a U.S. proposal for naval ships to deliver aid to cyclone victims today, according to state-run media, dimming hopes that the vessels could provide a major boost to relief efforts.

The New Light of Myanmar, a mouthpiece for Myanmar's ruling junta, said that such assistance "comes with strings attached" that are "not acceptable to the people of Myanmar." It cited fears that Washington wants to overthrow the country's government and seize its oil.

The United States, as well as France and Great Britain, have naval vessels loaded with humanitarian supplies off the Myanmar coast, and had been waiting for a green light to deliver them. The article did not say whether the French and British supplies would be allowed.

The state media report said that other U.S. aid airlifted into the country was welcome, an apparent reference to ongoing relief flights, which land in the country about five times a day. American officials are required to hand the aid to Myanmar authorities upon landing in Yangon, from which it is a difficult journey to the Irrawaddy delta.

The four U.S. warships were seen as a major potential boost for the relief effort with the capacity to deliver supplies to inaccessible areas of the delta, with 14 helicopters, two landing craft vessels, two high-tech amphibious hovercraft and about 1,000 U.S. Marines.

The report gave no explanation why the regime was willing to accept aid flown on U.S. planes, with U.S. military personnel on board, but would not allow the warships and helicopters to deliver relief supplies.



Associated Press

A group of homeless Myanmar cyclone survivors looks on at a monastery, being used as a temporary shelter, on the outskirts of Yangon, Myanmar today. Myanmar will not allow U.S. naval ships and helicopters poised off its shore to deliver aid to cyclone victims, according to state-controlled media today, which cited fears of an American invasion aimed at grabbing the country's oil reserves.

leaders have long feared an invasion by the United States, a concern that some analysts believe prompted the junta's abrupt decision in 2005 to move the country's capital from Yangon to the remote city of Naypyitaw, which is equipped with bunkers.

Despite today's announcement, the junta appeared to be slowly relenting to foreign pressure to accept more outside help for an estimated 2.5 million survivors faced with hunger, loss of their homes and potential outbreaks of deadly diseases.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who was headed to Myanmar, said the world body had received permission from

the junta to use nine helicopters to carry aid to stranded victims.

"We have received government permission to operate nine WFP (World Food Program) helicopters, which will allow us to reach areas that have so far been largely inaccessible," Ban told reporters in New York on Tuesday before departing for Southeast Asia. His announcement was not immediately confirmed by officials in Myanmar.

"I believe further similar moves will follow, including expediting the visas of (foreign) relief workers seeking to enter the country," Ban said, warning that relief efforts to save survivors of the May 2-3

Cyclone Nargis had reached a "critical moment."

"We have a functioning relief program in place but so far have been able to reach only 25 percent of Myanmar's people in need," he said.

So far, the few foreign aid workers allowed inside the country have been banned from the areas of the worst devastation in the low-lying Irrawaddy delta.

At least 78,000 people were killed in the storm and 56,000 remain missing. European Union nations have warned that Myanmar's junta could be committing a crime against humanity by blocking aid intended for hundreds of thousands of survivors.

Ban arrived in Bangkok,

the capital of neighboring Thailand, today and was scheduled to fly to Yangon on Thursday. In Myanmar, he was expected to visit areas devastated by the cyclone and to talk with officials and aid workers.

He was also scheduled to attend a meeting of aid donors in Yangon on Sunday. Myanmar, one of the world's poorest nations, claims losses from the disaster exceeded \$10 billion.

At U.N. headquarters, Ban welcomed the junta's "recent flexibility" in saying it will allow relief workers from the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations — of which Myanmar is a member — to begin distributing aid.

LEVY

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"We looked at the replacement (levy) and the amount that would bring in. It won't allow us to continue to do what we're doing now and won't allow us to expand into the future," he said.

The bulk of the funds would go toward in-home care services — from home delivered meals to personal care — designed to help seniors remain living in their homes as long as possible. COA expects demand for its in-home services to rise by 54 percent over the five-year life of the levy, Horrocks said.

While the nonprofit has relocated to and is now operating out of a new senior services center on Cheshire Road, the new building has nothing to do with the 0.9-mill levy request, Horrocks said.

Construction of the new senior center was funded through the 2006 passage of a 0.2-mill, 20-year bond issue. Its operational costs are largely being offset by fees and the elimination of lease payments that had been required when the COA operated from its former Bowtown Road office.

"What's driving the cost of this levy is home care," Horrocks said. "Whether the facility existed or not, we would be asking you to be on the ballot and asking for nine-tenths of a mill."

The county commissioners gave their consent to place the levy on the August ballot after a motion to keep the levy at its current rate failed to gain traction. Commissioner Kris Jordan initially requested the levy be a renewal of its current 0.7-mill rate, citing rising living expenses and the pressure that is putting on taxpayers.

Horrocks said those expenses also are impacting the COA. "If 0.7 would have done it or us that's what we would have asked for," he said.

Jordan's motion was not seconded, and the commissioners voted unanimously to move forward with the 0.9 mill levy.

The levy will be COA's first request for an increase since 1998, when voters agreed to raise the COA levy from 0.5-mill to its current 0.7-mill rate.

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PRIMARY

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voters as he moves on to the general election.

Kentucky Democratic Party Chairwoman Jennifer Moore, one of roughly 200 superdelegates yet to be claimed by either candidate, said the Clintons will always have a loyal following in her state because voters there remember the economic good times of the 1990s.

"Clinton supporters need to get to know Barack Obama, get to understand that he stands for many of the same principles as Senator Clinton," Moore said.

Obama offered his own olive branch Tuesday night, praising Clinton for her pioneering candidacy and acknowledging the millions who have voted for her.

"No matter how this primary ends, Senator Clinton has shattered myths and broken barriers and changed the America in which my daughters and your daughters will come of age, and for that we are grateful to her," the Illinois senator said. "Some may see the millions upon millions of votes cast for each of us as evidence that our party is divided, but I see it as proof that we have never been more energized and united in our desire to take this country in a new direction."

Steve Grossman, a former DNC chairman and Clinton fund-raiser, said Obama is "wisely being patient," not pushy, about pursuing Clinton backers.

"The art of the appropriate is not always present in politics," he added. "It means you show respect, keep your distance, and understand what people are going through."

Still, neither candidate has moved flawlessly toward reconciliation.

Even after it was clear Obama was on a path to the nomination, Clinton hasn't been able to resist the occasional jab such as criticizing his health care plan. And in a newspaper interview following her West Virginia win last week, Clinton noted she was beating Obama among "working, hardworking Americans, white Americans" — a characterization that drew widespread criticism. Clinton later said she regretted the comment.

For his part, Obama has taken the risk of appearing to trivialize some of the final primaries, choosing to shadowbox with Republican John McCain in general election swing states rather than focus solely on the remaining

Democratic contests. He's already making plans to take over the Democratic National Committee.

"They want to claim victory and push Hillary aside — this is what Bush did to Gore in 2000, and we aren't going to put up with it," said Susie Buell, a top Clinton fund-raiser based in San Francisco. "It's wrong and corrupt."

Buell helped launch a new organization, www.womencountpac.com, dedicated to giving Clinton's female supporters an avenue to speak out. The group placed full page ads in *The New York Times* and *USA Today* proclaiming, "Not so fast: Hillary's voice is our voice, and she is speaking for all of us."

Clinton's advisers are keenly aware that the calls for her to drop from the race are likely to intensify during the 10-day hiatus between Tuesday's primaries and the next contest in Puerto Rico on June 1. But they say there is virtually no chance the former

first lady will do so.

They say that she is firmly committed to staying in the race through the South Dakota and Montana primaries June 3 and the meeting of the DNC Rules and Bylaws Committee May 31, where the situation involving disputed primaries in Michigan and Florida may be resolved.

Clinton expects to do well in Puerto Rico on June 1 and her advisers say she will compete actively in South Dakota and Montana even though the three contests will yield just 86 delegates total.

But the numbers aren't as important as the signal each primary will send to her supporters: She's a fighter, not a quitter, and she's got a future. Even after this race is over.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Nedra Pickler and Beth Fouhy cover presidential politics for The Associated Press. Fouhy reported from New York.

PARADE

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"We need some of these Vietnam veterans and younger people to step forward," Burr said. "But I know they work and have jobs during the day; we just need to get some of these veterans off their barstools."

Burr said with three Amvets organizations, one American Legion, one VFW and one Disabled American Veterans organization in Delaware County, there shouldn't be a problem finding veterans to be in the honor guard or be a part of the Delaware County Veterans Association, but that is not the case.

Burr said he hopes residents of Delaware will go out and attend one of the many other Memorial Day ceremonies in Ostrander, Powell or Radnor.

"I hope that the people will go out to one of those and show their support," he said.

Even though Delaware will not be hosting a parade this year, Burr said the veterans will be putting flags on more than 3,500 veteran graves at Oak Grove and

St. Marys cemeteries beginning at 3 p.m. Friday.

"If you can come out and help it would be appreciated," he said.

Burr said any Cub or Boy Scout leader or 4-H group adviser interested in bringing their troop or group out to either location can let him know by calling him at 740-369-0652.

"It doesn't matter how old you are as long as you can pick up a flag," Burr said.

Burr said no matter what, members of the honor guard will continue as best they can by appearing at as many funerals of deceased veterans as they can, whether the weather is hot or freezing.

"Time may catch up with all of us eventually, but until then we will keep doing what we do best, giving our veterans the proper sendoff they deserve and the proper burial they deserve," Burr said.

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