

Aid trickles into Myanmar

by UPI

YANGON, Myanmar -- The first U.S. military plane carrying relief supplies to cyclone-devastated Myanmar arrived in the Asian country Monday, officials said. The plane was loaded with 28,000 pounds of supplies including water, mosquito netting and blankets. "One flight is much better than no flights," White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said. "And we're going to keep on working to provide as much assistance as possible." U.S. disaster teams, however, still haven't been issued visas, Johndroe said. International relief agencies report very few visas have been issued, The New York Times said. Officials from the United Nations estimate the cyclone death toll to be between 63,000 and 100,000 people, with millions left homeless, CNN reported. Myanmar's reclusive military junta has been reluctant to allow relief workers and aid into the country formerly known as Burma since the cyclone struck more than a week ago. The junta has said it would accept international aid but insisted it would distribute the supplies itself, prompting criticism from relief agencies. Debbie Stothard, who heads the Southeast Asian human rights group ALTSEAN-Burma, said her group has gotten reports of aid packages being selectively distributed. "There's people who are very concerned now that the reason the aid workers are being blocked is so that the military can deliver aid selectively, and so that they can appropriate the aid and pretend it was from them in the first place," she said.

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