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Trump's "America First" Foreign Aid Faces First Real-World Test in Philippine Flood Crisis

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The Trump administration's restructured foreign aid strategy, designed to prioritise American interests, has undergone its first major test during recent flood disasters in the Philippines. Despite previous funding cuts, the U.S. State Department led the coordinated relief response through strategic support and logistics aimed at helping displaced Filipinos.

Since mid-July, the Philippines has been battered by heavy flooding and landslides triggered by tropical cyclones and the southwest monsoon. The storms have caused at least 34 confirmed deaths and displaced over 192,000 people, with more than 107,000 still sheltering in 1,017 evacuation centres as of July 30.

The U.S. government, while reducing funding to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in line with President Donald Trump's push for efficiency and measurable outcomes, maintained support for essential humanitarian relief through targeted efforts. This crisis marks the first deployment of aid under the revised "America First" assistance model.

"Our team is on the ground in central Luzon assessing needs and supporting food distribution for displaced families," a senior State Department official told *The Daily Signal*. The department allocated \$250,000 through the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), strengthening the Philippine government's emergency logistics and supporting delivery to hard-hit areas.

As of July 29, the WFP had delivered 34,000 family food packs, each capable of feeding a family of five for roughly three days, to Ilocos Norte, Pangasinan, and La Union in northern Luzon.

In a request made July 27, the Philippine government sought logistical assistance from the U.S. Department of Defence (DOD). By July 30, U.S. military aircraft had begun airlifting 300 boxes of food packs from Clark Air Base to Basco, Batanes—a remote island province cut off by severe weather. The ongoing airlift aims to bridge difficult terrain and weather-related access issues in the region.

The State Department continues coordinating closely with the WFP, DOD, and Philippine authorities to support relief operations. Despite earlier criticism of foreign aid inefficiencies, this early test of the Trump-era strategy shows a focused approach, backing essential, life-saving missions while ensuring alignment with broader U.S. strategic objectives.