



PIA Press Release

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WESCOM fights cholera with newest water purification machine

ISABELA CITY, Basilan, July 16 (PIA) — The Western Command (WESCOM), has deployed its newest water purification machine to barangay Culandanum in the municipality of Bataraza in Palawan to help its residents recover from the tragic cholera outbreak that struck the village, last March that left at least 27 persons dead.

The 6th Civil Relations Group of the AFP said in a statement the project was implemented in partnership with the National Development Support Command (NADESCOM) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Marine Forces in the Pacific (MARFORPAC) of the United States of America to prevent another occurrence of the calamitous incident.

The water purification system brought by the WESCOM and NADESCOM personnel headed by 1Lt Dennis S. Martinez is being used to decontaminate water from the sources found in Bgy Culandanum so that its residents may have safe drinking water.

With the assistance of elements of the 12th Marine Battalion Landing Team (MBLT-12), WESCOM and NADESCOM have been distributing purified drinking water to the residents of the cholera-afflicted village for two weeks already.

They are using the machine to decontaminate water from the water cistern located at the Barangay Hall of Culandanum. Commercial jerry cans are used to distribute the purified water to approximately 1,200 households living in the barangay.

Barangay chairman Joel Pundales said the water purification system was a big help to the crisis they are facing. According to him, tests conducted revealed that almost all of the water from the sources found in their village is contaminated.

On April 1 this year, barangay Culandanum has declared a state of calamity after 27 persons were reported to have died from cholera in under a month. Seven of the victims, according to the barangay chairman, have succumbed to the disease a few minutes after each other.

This month, the barangay health office of Culandanum has received four cholera-related cases. On July 6, another patient from Sitio Linao of Bgy Culandanum was reported to have died from the illness.

Pundales lamented the absence of a safe source, potable water in their barangay. To counter the problem, the barangay has distributed water purification tablet to the households, but this, according to the barangay chairman, is temporary and limited.

In response to the situation, WESCOM, in coordination with the NADESCOM, the Provincial Health Office (PHO) and the local government of Bataraza and its Rural Health Unit (RHU), sent trained operators of the water purification machine, known as ASPEN 2000DM, to Bgy Culandanum to provide safe drinking water to its populace.

The machine, which utilizes reverse osmosis technology, boasts of being the most compact, versatile, full-featured, computer-controlled, energy efficient, mobile reverse osmosis system available today.

It is capable of freshwater and seawater purification and can produce 2000 gallons per day of clean, potable water when using freshwater sources and 1800 gallons of the same when using salt water.

It was donated to the AFP by the United States Marine Corps Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC) at the conclusion of the most recent Balikatan Exercises between the US and the Philippine armed forces.

The machine was initially deployed to Culandanum for 30 days and or until it is needed.

Selected personnel of the MBLT-12 are also undergoing training on operating the machine so that they may be able to operate the equipment by themselves when NADESCOM personnel go back to Manila.

TRAINING AND TESTING PRIOR TO DEPLOYMENT TO REMOTE ISLAND LOCATION



U.S. Marine Corp Personnel from (MARFORPAC) training



Water taken from a highly polluted canal and turbid river



Philippine Soldier training local soldiers and villagers on use



Aspen 2000DM in place ready to produce healthful water



Philippine Government 5 Gallon containers being filled



First taste by Village official prior to distribution to his people

THE FACE OF NEED

Villagers with the elderly and children in Culandanum, at a remote location on the Island of Palaw-an in the Philippines suffering from a Cholera outbreak. Healthful water supplied by an Aspen Water 2000DM provided by the U.S. Marine Corp Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC)

