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Filipino Quake: 3,103 Dead, 2,282 Missing

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From Times Wire Services

MANILA—The confirmed death toll in the southern Philippines from Tuesday's massive earthquake, 10 powerful aftershocks and 24-foot tidal waves climbed past 3,100 Tuesday, with thousands more missing and homeless.

The government's national disaster coordinating center set the toll at 3,103 dead, 2,282 missing and 688 injured. At least 28,700 were reported homeless.

The center of the earthquake, which struck just after midnight Monday was under the Celebes Sea. But it was the resulting tidal waves, sweeping over the scattered islands in the area and washing away homes as people slept, that apparently caused most of the deaths.

President Ferdinand E. Marcos declared a state of emergency over densely populated Mindanao Island, the worst-hit area, and the nearby islands of Sulu, Basilan and Tawi Tawi, all swamped by the waves. Dozens of buildings, including schools, collapsed all over Mindanao, officials here said.

The major quake, which registered 8.0 on the Richter scale, was felt in Manila, more than 500 miles away, but it caused no damage in the capital.

Dr. Vicente Galvez, Red Cross secretary general, said the mounting casualty toll indicated the disaster could be the worst to hit the Philippines since World War II. The three cities of Cotabato, Zamboanga and Pagadian and more than a dozen

coastal towns were devastated.

There were no reports on the fate of American missionaries who worked at schools and churches in Mindanao. Thousands of people whose homes were washed away were housed temporarily in school buildings, churches and government offices.

Marcos mobilized all government agencies, including military units, for relief and rescue operations, and ordered medicines, food and additional relief personnel airlifted to the southern region.

The earthquake knocked down at least 10 tall buildings and damaged many others.

Waves reported as high as 24 feet swept 150 miles across the Celebes Sea and poured millions of tons of water on Mindanao's southwest coast.

One wall of water passed through the wide mouth of Illana Bay and struck the coastal cities of Cotabato and Malabang. Officials said more than 500 buildings, including fishermen's homes at the edge of the sea, were swept away by the waves.

Later Tuesday, 10 strong aftershocks of the main quake jolted the islands. The strongest, which measured 6.3 on the Richter scale, hit mountainous Jolo Island in the Sulu chain.

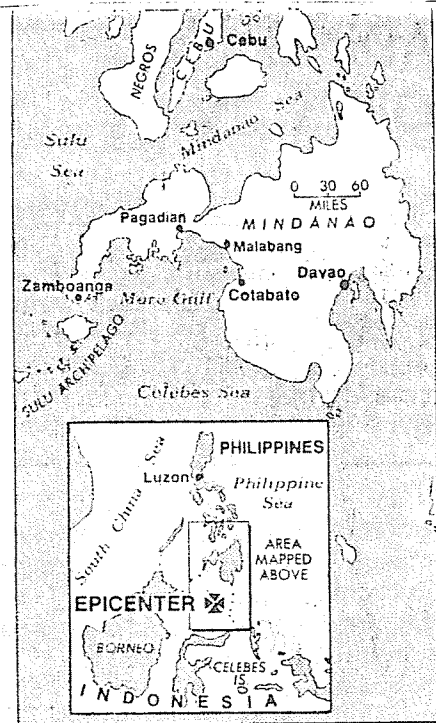
Some of the heaviest damage was reported in Cotabato city, where two hotels, a department store and a large restaurant collapsed. Many smaller buildings were damaged in the city of 100,000.

"People are walking around as if in a daze," said UPI reporter Sol Jose in Cotabato. "There is a shortage of just about everything. Cars have to line up for four hours before they can get gasoline."

"We were caught unaware and asleep by the waves," said Abdul Rahmis Jamil, a fisherman. "All of a sudden my house and children were gone." He lost three of his four children.

By Tuesday night in Zamboanga city and throughout Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur provinces, most residents, fearful of new tremors, were camping in the streets. All schools, businesses and government offices were closed, and residents prepared to spend the night outdoors.

A social welfare department report from Zamboanga city said at least 68 people, many of them children, died in the area, most of them caught in the tidal waves,



DISASTER—Epicenter of the quake.
Times map

which also took 13 lives on nearby Basilan Island.

The Philippines meteorological and geophysical service warned that more aftershocks could be expected as the earth settled down but a spokesman said people should not be too alarmed.

"It could be considered a safety valve. Much of the strain accumulated in our region would have been released by this quake," he said.

At the Republican convention in Kansas City, White House Press Secretary Ron Nessen said President Ford sent a personal message to Marcos offering aid and expressing sorrow.

This is the second disaster to hit the Philippines this year. More than 200 people died last May in typhoon-spawned floods in the north.

* Los Angeles Times

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