= Tropical Storm Mekkhala (2015) =

Severe Tropical Storm Mekkhala , known in the Philippines as Tropical Storm Amang , was an early @-@ season tropical cyclone that made landfall over the Philippines in January 2015 . Mekkhala killed three people in the Bicol Region and caused light crop damage . Notably , the storm disturbed Pope Francis ? visit to the country after the victims of Typhoon Haiyan on November 8 , 2013 . Although the storm also caused an airplane crash in Tacloban , nobody was hurt in the incident .

The system developed on January 13 between the Philippines and Guam . Moving west @-@ northwest for its duration , Mekkhala passed north of Yap State on January 14 while slowly intensifying due to moderate wind shear . Conditions became more favorable on January 16 , when the storm quickly strengthened to peak winds of at least 110 km / h (70 mph) ; a ragged eye prompted the American @-@ based Joint Typhoon Warning Center (JTWC) to upgrade it to a typhoon . The storm weakened slightly and made landfall on the Philippine island of Samar on January 17 . Mekkhala weakened further over land , dissipating on January 21 east of Luzon .

= = Meteorological history = =

A tropical disturbance formed approximately 390 km (240 miles) south @-@ southwest of Pohnpei early on January 9 . The system remained disorganized until the Joint Typhoon Warning Center (JTWC) issued a Tropical Cyclone Formation Alert to it late on January 12 , when deepened convection with formative started to wrap into a slowly @-@ consolidating low @-@ level circulation center (LLCC) . Afterwards , the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) upgraded the low @-@ pressure area to a tropical depression early on January 13 , as did the JTWC with the designation 01W Although deep convection was displaced to the northwest of an exposed LLCC early on January 14 , the JMA still upgraded the system to a tropical storm and named it Mekkhala , under moderate vertical wind shear offset by excellent poleward outflow . In post @-@ season analysis , the agency upgraded the storm at 12 : 00 UTC on the previous day . Late on January 14 , the PAGASA named the storm Amang right after it entered the Philippine Area of Responsibility .

Tracking west @-@ northwestward and then westward along the southern periphery of a subtropical ridge , Mekkhala was upgraded to a tropical storm by the JTWC early on January 15 , due to its slightly improved structure . Mekkhala quickly intensified on the next day due to improved conditions ; the wind shear became in @-@ phase with the storm 's motion while the robust divergent outflow persisted . Therefore , the JMA upgraded the system to a severe tropical storm at 06 : 00 UTC on January 16 , and later that day the JTWC upgraded it to a typhoon , when a central dense overcast has significantly deepened and totally obscured the LLCC . Later , a microwave imagery revealed that Mekkhala formed a ragged eyewall structure . The system reached peak intensity at 00 : 00 UTC on January 17 with ten @-@ minute maximum sustained winds of 110 km / h (70 mph) , although operationally the JMA estimated typhoon @-@ force winds of 130 km / h (80 mph) .

After slightly weakening , Mekkhala tracked northwestward and made landfall over Dolores , Eastern Samar of the Philippines at around 15 : 00 Philippine Standard Time (07 : 00 UTC) , where Typhoon Hagupit also made landfall the month before . Both the JMA and the JTWC downgraded Mekkhala to a tropical storm on January 17 , due to land interaction weakening the storm significantly . Mekkhala eroded further while crossing the Bicol Region on January 18 , leading the JTWC to downgrade it to a tropical depression when it turned northward and emerged into the Philippine Sea . Late on the same day , the JMA downgraded Mekkhala to a tropical depression , and shortly after the JTWC issued the final warning as strong wind shear exposed the LLCC . The tropical depression drifted northeastward and maintained its exposed low @-@ level circulation east of Luzon , until the system was completely absorbed by a stationary front early on January 21 .

= = Impact = =

During January 14 , Mekkhala passed about 95 km (60 mi) to the north of Yap State and less than

45 km (30 mi) to the south of the atoll Ulithi . A peak wind gust of 58 km / h (36 mph) was recorded in Yap State , along with a rainfall total of around 13 mm (0 @.@ 5 in) . On Ulithi a rainfall total of 100 mm (4 in) was recorded , while there were no reports of any deaths or significant damage on either Ulithi or in Yap State .

Severe Tropical Storm Mekkhala , also known as Tropical Storm Amang , killed three people in the Bicol Region of the Philippines . Damage in the region amounted to ? 318 @.@ 7 million (US $ 7 @.@ 1 million) , stemming mostly from agriculture . In addition , the storm caused agricultural damage of ? 30 @.@ 3 million (US $ 680 @,@ 000) in Samar . The crop damage and a subsequent drought caused rice shortages in the country , prompting the government to import the grain in May 2015 . Throughout the country , 48 homes were destroyed while a further 490 sustained damage . Infrastructural losses reached ? 49 @.@ 7 million (US $ 1 @.@ 1 million) ; repairs to roadways was quick and completed by January 21 . A volunteer from the Bicol Region , who worked for a Catholic Relief Services station in Salcedo , Eastern Samar , was hit by a soundbox due to a collapsed scaffolding caused by heavy winds during a papal Mass held in Daniel Z. Romualdez Airport in Tacloban , Leyte .

To comfort Tacloban people who suffered from the devastating disaster caused by Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 , and Typhoon Hagupit a month prior , Pope Francis visited the storm @-@ ravaged city on January 17 . However , the schedule is significantly impacted by Severe Tropical Storm Mekkhala , making thousands of pilgrims and even Pope himself have to wear a raincoat during the rain @-@ soaked Mass in the airport . Only several minutes after Pope Francis ? own aircraft left the airport , a private jet was veered off the runway by strong winds of Mekkhala and eventually crashed . The 15 passengers on the plane were all safe , including many officials from the Cabinet of the Philippines .