

# US pays Philippines compensation for warship reef damage

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The USS Guardian, a US Navy minesweeper, is pictured trapped on the Tubbataha Reef in January 2013

The United States has paid nearly \$2 million compensation to the Philippines for the damage a US warship caused to a protected reef, Manila said Wednesday.

The minesweeper USS Guardian became stranded on the Tubbataha

Reef in January 2013 after visiting a Philippine port, and had to be cut to pieces to avoid further damage to the World Heritage site in a salvage operation that took 10 weeks.

The ship damaged 2,345 square metres (25,240 square feet) of the coral reef that investigators said would take a generation to re-grow.

The incident stirred nationalist anger against the United States, a former colonial ruler of the Philippines that remains the Southeast Asian nation's most important military ally.

Washington promptly apologised for the mishap and issued a report five months later that blamed the captain and three other officers.

The vessel, which was en route to Indonesia after visiting a northern Philippine port, was found to have sailed into a protected area where marine vessels are not allowed due to "poor voyage planning", according to a copy of the report.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Philippine foreign department said it received last month "the full requested amount" of 87 million pesos (\$1.97 million) in compensation.

"The compensation will be utilised for the protection and rehabilitation of Tubbataha Reef Natural Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site," it said in a statement.

Part of the money will also be used to enhance monitoring activities in the area to prevent similar incidents in the future, it added.

The United States will also help the Philippine Coast Guard upgrade a patrol station guarding the [reef](#), it said.

US embassy spokesman Kurt Hoyer confirmed to AFP that Washington had paid full [compensation](#) for the damage.

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