

Vanuatu volcano island evacuation complete

October 5 2017



A handout photo from the Australian Defence Force shows Prime Minister of Vanuatu Charlot Salwai (R) passing his thanks to the Deputy High Commissioner for Operation Vanuatu Assist 2017

The evacuation of more than 11,000 people from a Vanuatu island threatened by a volcano was completed Thursday, authorities said, as aid began arriving to help the displaced.

Everyone on Ambae, in the north of the Pacific archipelago, was ordered to leave after the Manaro Vouï volcano rumbled to life and rained rock

and ash on villages last week.

Fearing a [major eruption](#), officials mobilised a rag-tag armada of civilian vessels to ferry residents to safety on other islands, with at least 18 evacuation centres set up in schools, churches and on sports grounds.

"The evacuation of the residents of Ambae Island—approximately 11,600 people—is now complete," said Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop.

An Australian navy vessel with emergency specialists and food supplies arrived in Vanuatu on Thursday, joining two Hercules aircraft, one from Australia and the other from New Zealand, in the relief effort. France also sent a planeload of aid and relief personnel from its nearby territory of New Caledonia.

"Tents for temporary shelter, kitchen supplies and lighting will provide relief to families and improve community safety," said Bishop, adding that access to clean water was also being provided.



A handout photo shows Royal Australian Air Force personnel preparing to unload Australian Aid supplies from a C-17 Globemaster on the runway at Luganville's Santo-Pekoa International Airport in Vanuatu as part of Operation Vanuatu Assist 2017

Vanuatu's official Geohazards Observatory said on Tuesday the threat had eased, although it continued to maintain the volcano's status as level four on Thursday, the second-highest rating.

Aid workers have said locals can only return to Ambae when the government downgrades the threat to level three, which could take months.

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