

Philippines' Mayon Volcano spews lava in gentle eruption, thousands warned to be ready to flee

June 12 2023, by Jim Gomez and Aaron Favila



Mayon volcano belches red-hot emissions down it's slope as seen from Legaspi, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Albay was placed under a state of calamity last week to allow more rapid disbursement of emergency funds in case a major eruption unfolds. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila

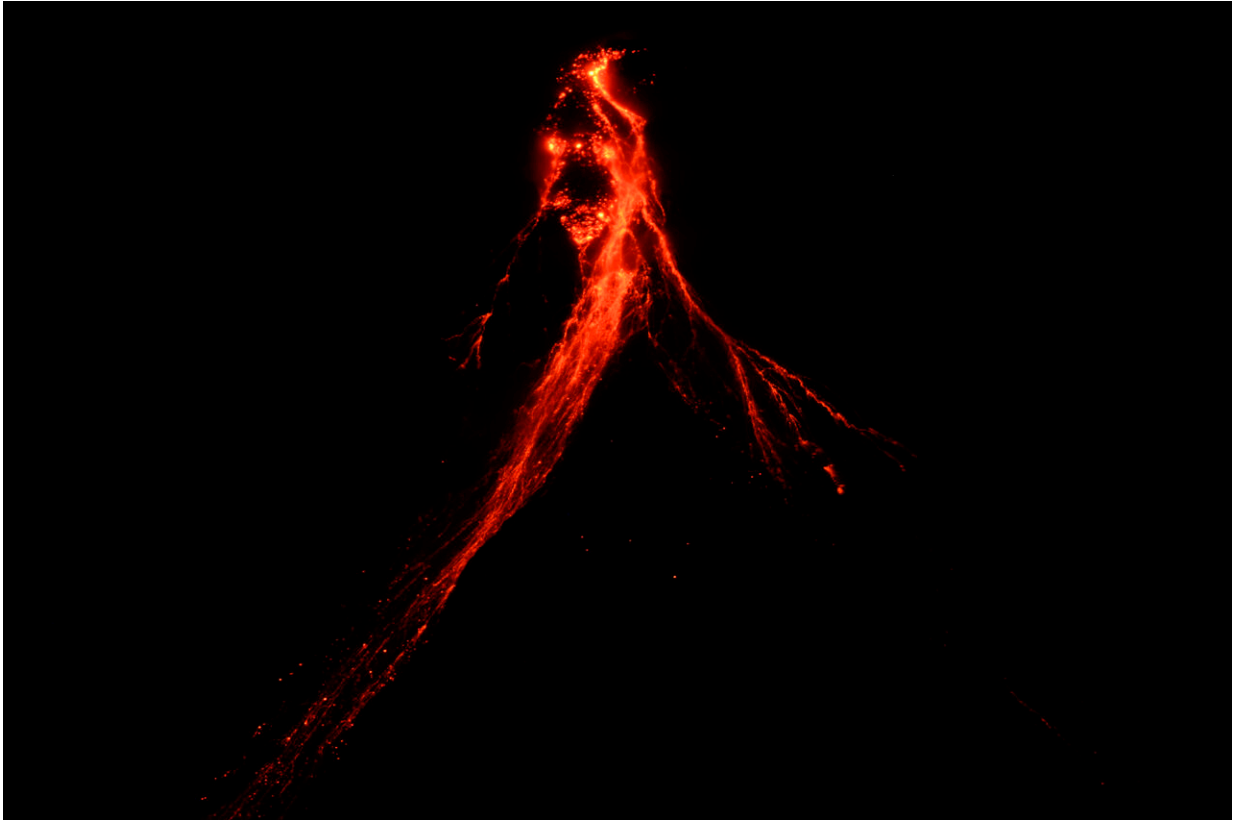
The Philippines' most active volcano was spewing lava down its slopes on Monday, prompting officials to warn tens of thousands of villagers to be prepared to flee from their homes if the gentle eruption turns into a violent and life-threatening explosion.

More than 13,000 people have left the mostly poor farming communities within a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) radius of Mayon Volcano's crater in mandatory evacuations since volcanic activity increased last week. But an unspecified number of residents remain within the permanent danger zone below Mayon, an area long declared off-limits to people but where generations have lived and farmed because they have nowhere else to go.

With the volcano beginning to expel lava Sunday night, the high-risk zone around Mayon may be expanded should the eruption turn violent, said Teresito Bacolcol, director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. Bacolcol said if that happens, people in any expanded danger zone should be prepared to evacuate to emergency shelters.

"What we are seeing now is an effusive eruption," Bacolcol told The Associated Press. "We are looking at this on a day-to-day basis."

From a distance, Associated Press journalists watched lava flow down the volcano's southeastern gullies for hours Sunday night. People hurriedly stepped out of restaurants and bars in a seaside promenade of Legazpi, the capital of northeastern Albay province about 14 kilometers (8.5 miles) from Mayon, many of them snapping pictures of the volcano that's a popular tourist draw known for its picturesque conical shape.



Mayon volcano belches red-hot emissions down its slope as seen from Legaspi, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Albay was placed under a state of calamity last week to allow more rapid disbursement of emergency funds in case a major eruption unfolds. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila

Mayon's renewed restiveness has also struck fear and brought new suffering.

Marilyn Miranda said she, her daughter and 75-year-old mother, who recently suffered a stroke, fled their home in a village within the danger zone in Guinobatan town on Thursday and sought shelter at a sweltering high school turned into an evacuation center. Her nephew returns to their home each day, as do other men in their impoverished rural

neighborhood to guard their houses and farm animals, she said.

From the overcrowded evacuation center, they were terrified to see the bright red-orange lava streaks gushing down Mayon's slope on Sunday night. "We had this feeling that our end is near," Miranda told the AP, breaking into tears.

Mayon's new eruption was one of back-to-back tragedies that struck Amelia Morales and her family in recent days. Her husband died of an aneurism and other illnesses on Friday and she had to hold his funeral wake in a crowded emergency shelter in Guinobatan because she and her neighbors had been ordered to stay away from their community near Mayon.



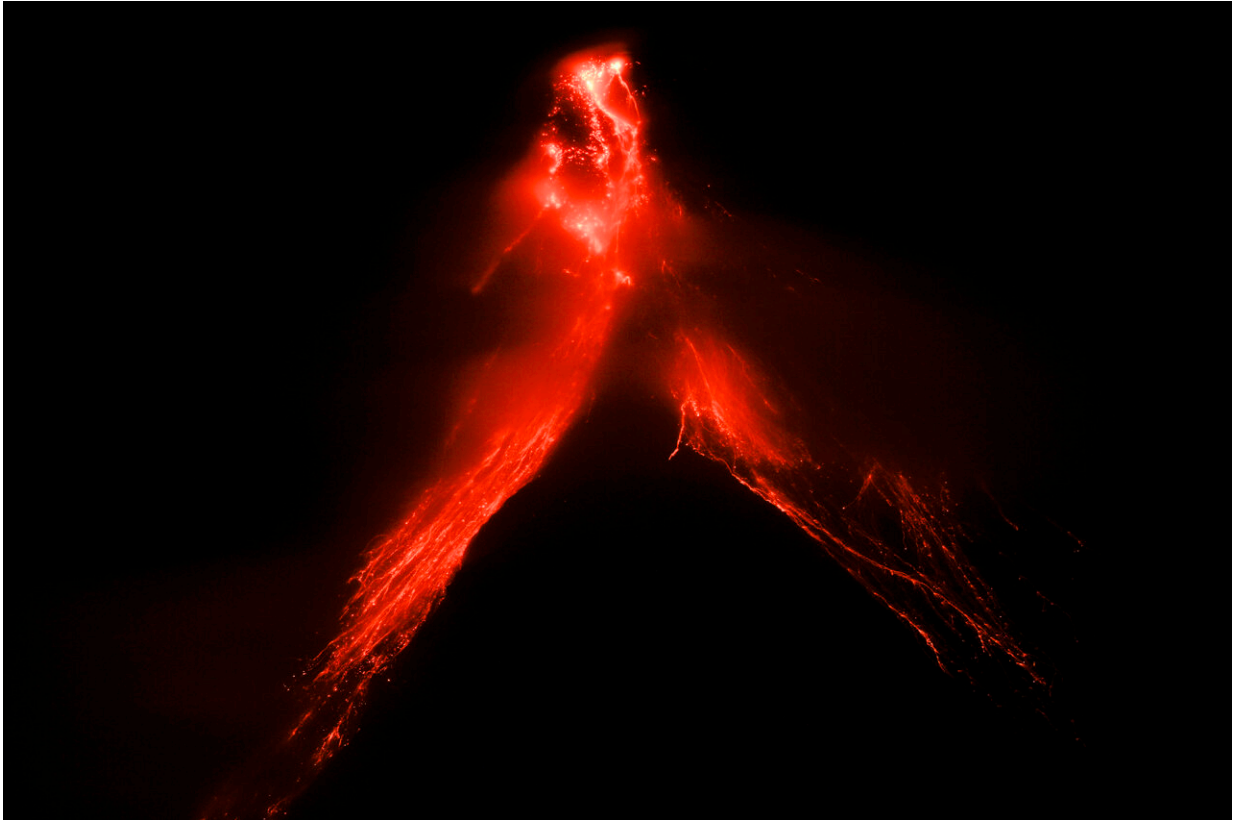
A farmer brings his water buffalo to a pooling center outside the 6-kilometer "permanent danger zone" near Mayon Volcano in Daraga, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Thousands of villagers have been forced to leave rural communities within a 6-kilometer radius of Mayon volcano's crater in Albay province. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila

"I need help to bury my husband because we don't have any money left," Morales, 63, said as she sat near her husband's white wooden coffin under a flimsy open tent in a corner of the evacuation center. "I cannot do anything but cry."

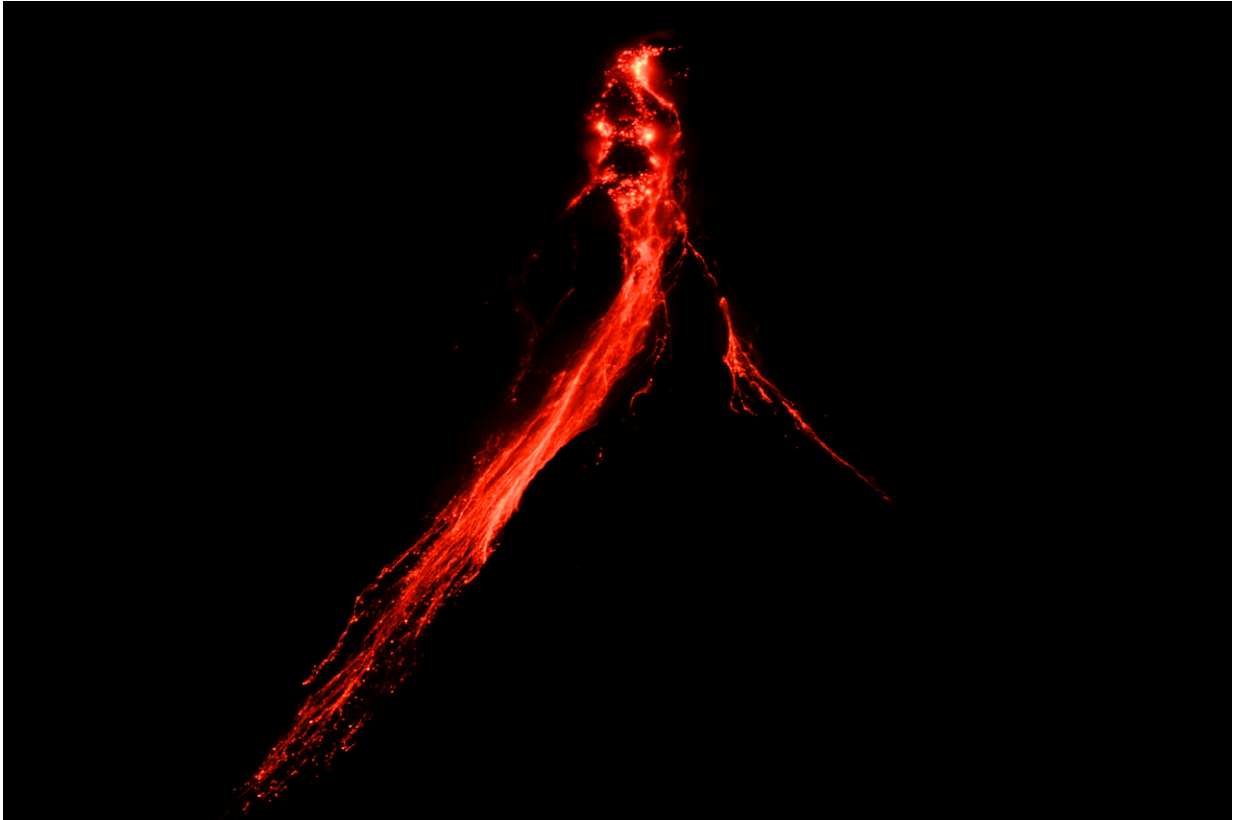
With its peak often shrouded by the wisps of passing clouds, the 2,462-meter (8,077-foot) volcano appeared calm on Monday. Bacolcol said red-hot lava was continuing to flow down its slopes but could not easily be seen by people under the bright sun.

The volcano had been raised to alert level three on a five-step warning system Thursday, meaning the volcano was in a state of high unrest and a hazardous eruption is possible in weeks or days.

With lava flowing down from the volcano gently, Bacolcol said the alert level would stay at three but it could be moved up higher if the eruption suddenly turns perilous.



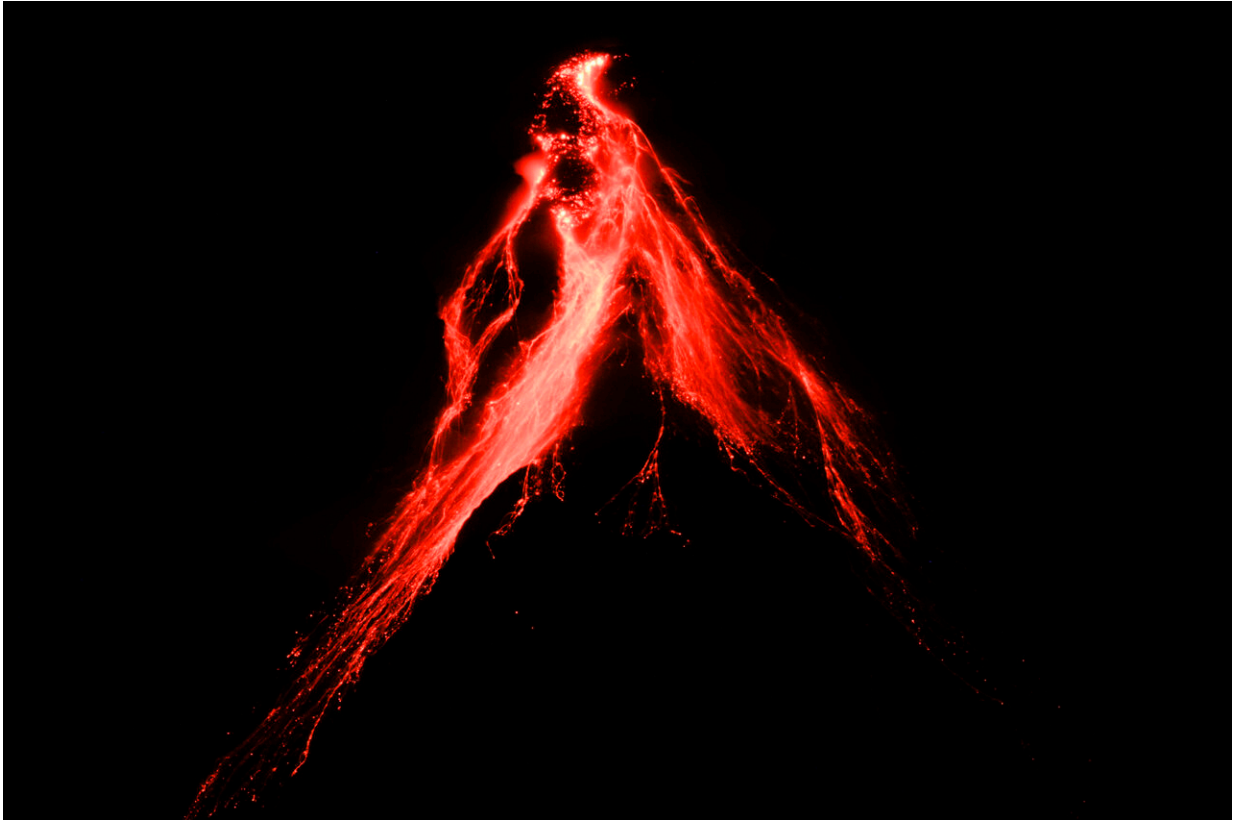
Mayon volcano belches red-hot emissions down it's slope as seen from Legaspi, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Albay was placed under a state of calamity last week to allow more rapid disbursement of emergency funds in case a major eruption unfolds. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



Mayon volcano belches red-hot emissions down it's slope as seen from Legaspi, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Albay was placed under a state of calamity last week to allow more rapid disbursement of emergency funds in case a major eruption unfolds. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



Farmers place a makeshift shelter at a pooling center for water buffalos and cows outside the 6-kilometer "permanent danger zone" near Mayon Volcano in Daraga, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Thousands of villagers have been forced to leave rural communities within a 6-kilometer radius of Mayon volcano's crater in Albay province. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



Mayon volcano belches red-hot emissions down it's slope as seen from Legaspi, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Albay was placed under a state of calamity last week to allow more rapid disbursement of emergency funds in case a major eruption unfolds. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



A farmer ties his cow as they bring them to a pooling center outside the 6-kilometer "permanent danger zone" near Mayon Volcano in Daraga, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Thousands of villagers have been forced to leave rural communities within a 6-kilometer radius of Mayon volcano's crater in Albay province. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



A fisherman works at sea in Legaspi, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Thousands of villagers have been forced to leave rural communities within a 6-kilometer radius of Mayon volcano's crater in Albay province. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



Tourists ride ATV's near Mayon Volcano, hidden in clouds, in Daraga, Albay province, northeastern Philippines on Sunday, June 11, 2023. Thousands of villagers have been forced to leave rural communities within a 6-kilometer radius of Mayon volcano's crater in Albay province. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



A water buffalo receives oral deworming fluids from a veterinarian as they are brought to a pooling center outside the 6-kilometer "permanent danger zone" near Mayon Volcano in Daraga, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Thousands of villagers have been forced to leave rural communities within a 6-kilometer radius of Mayon volcano's crater in Albay province. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



Farmers bring their cows to a pooling center outside the 6-kilometer "permanent danger zone" near Mayon Volcano in Daraga, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Thousands of villagers have been forced to leave rural communities within a 6-kilometer radius of Mayon volcano's crater in Albay province. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



Violeta Peralta paints a picture of an erupting Mayon Volcano outside his home in Legaspi, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Sunday, June 11, 2023. Thousands of villagers have been forced to leave rural communities within a 6-kilometer radius of Mayon volcano's crater in Albay province which was placed under a state of calamity on Friday to allow more rapid disbursement of emergency funds in case a major eruption unfolds. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



A man walks along a stream near Mayon volcano in Bonga, Legaspi city, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Saturday, June 10, 2023. Monsoon rains that could be unleashed by an offshore typhoon were complicating worries of villagers threatened by a restive Philippine volcano that has forced thousands of people to flee from their homes. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



Evacuees carry their belongings as they arrive at a temporary relocation site at a school in Daraga town, Legaspi, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Saturday, June 10, 2023. Monsoon rains that could be unleashed by an offshore typhoon were complicating worries of villagers threatened by restive Mayon volcano that has forced thousands of people to flee from their homes. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila



The summit of the Mayon Volcano is seen from Bonga, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Saturday, June 10, 2023. Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology reports a new summit lava dome in the Mayon volcano crater emerged as its pre-existing one has been pushed out in increments that formed rockfall in the first week of June 2023. Monsoon rains that could be unleashed by an offshore typhoon were complicating worries of villagers threatened by a restive Philippine volcano that has forced thousands of people to flee from their homes. Credit: AP Photo/Aaron Favila

The highest alert, level five, would mean a violent and life-threatening eruption is underway with ash plumes shooting into the sky and superheated pyroclastic streams endangering more communities at Mayon's lush foothills.

Mayon is one of 24 active volcanoes in the Philippines. It last erupted violently in 2018, displacing tens of thousands of villagers. In 1814, Mayon's eruption buried entire villages and reportedly left more than 1,000 people dead.

The archipelago is lashed by about 20 typhoons and tropical storms a year and is located on the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire," the rim of seismic faults where most of the world's earthquakes and volcanic eruptions occur.

In 1991, Mount Pinatubo north of Manila blew its top in one of the biggest volcanic eruptions of the 20th century, killing hundreds.

© 2023 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Philippines' Mayon Volcano spews lava in gentle eruption, thousands warned to be ready to flee (2023, June 12) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-06-philippine-volcano-spews-lava-locals.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.