



PHOTO AVAILABLE: Nashville Area Man Instrumental in Myanmar Relief Efforts, Reports ShelterboxUSA

Gains Initial U.S. Access to Cyclone-stricken Country

For Immediate Release

BRADENTON, Fla./EWORLDWIRE/June 1, 2008 --- ShelterBox USA confirmed the safe return and mission accomplishment of ShelterBox Response Team (SRT) member, David Eby of Brentwood, Tenn., as the first U.S. relief worker to gain approved access to Myanmar and the affected disaster areas. Eby arrived in Yangon shortly after a pre-approved charter DC-10 flight from the U.K. to Yangon, Myanmar loaded with 1050 ShelterBoxes. The flight originated in Birmingham, U.K. on Wednesday, May 14, and arrived in Yangon Airport early Friday, May 16.

Eby, a Brentwood real estate appraiser and father of three, met fellow SRT volunteers from the U.K. who had previously arrived with the initial 400 ShelterBoxes received from strategically located stockpiles in Dubai and Australia. This original U.K. team was reportedly the first international aid group to gain officially approved access to the disaster-torn nation after the cyclone Nargis. Up until access was gained into the delta region, their primary focus was the training of local Myanmar fire and rescue personnel who would be moving with the Boxes and ensuring proper distribution channels were open. This training gained significant local media coverage in Myanmar.

Eby and a fellow U.S. SRT member, Patrick Olson, from Plymouth, MI, received unprecedented special visa permission from Myanmar officials to accompany the flight of the emergency shelter aid. An influential Burmese-American citizen, Leilei Thein, who first approached ShelterBox USA for aid soon after the cyclone struck, provided considerable clout to accomplish many of these bureaucratic miracles and was instrumental in the early stages of disaster relief. Eby was among a very few foreign aid workers, the only U.S. citizen, whom accompanied the Boxes into the affected areas to ensure and confirm their proper use and distribution when other aid organizations were still striving for entry permission .

ShelterBox, a U.K.-based, internationally sponsored disaster relief organization, has gained favor in Myanmar media, where distribution efforts in Yangon area have been shown. Team members report that big construction companies and private corporations are now responsible for major relief and resettlement efforts. Unlike ShelterBox, many NGOs were initially hampered in gaining entry and access to any direct distribution operations and have been forced to donate through Myanmar business groups.

Each ShelterBox contains a 10-person tent, sleeping mats and mosquito netting, a stove and cooking implements, water purification supplies, and hand tools. A complete ShelterBox costs \$1,000 to sponsor, but financial contributions of any size are welcome. Sponsors include Rotary clubs, individuals, community, church or school groups in the six countries that ShelterBox currently has national affiliates established, including in the U.K., the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Germany. The organization originated as an international Rotary club service project,

ShelterBox is represented in the United States by ShelterBox USA, a 501 (c)(3) organization, affiliated with the Rotary Club of Lakewood Ranch, Fla., in the Sarasota area. The organization solicits U.S. Box sponsorships

on behalf of the U.K. operation and provides donors of \$200 or more with follow-up information including specific assigned Box number and disaster distribution information.

ShelterBox is currently conducting similar relief efforts in China where some initial 800 Boxes are being distributed by SRT personnel. Information and on-line donation access to ShelterBox USA may be found at 'http://www.shelterboxusa.org'.

Pictures: Still images and video footage from previous deployments can be downloaded from ftp://www.shelterbox.org - user name shelterboxmedia, password sh5938.

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SOURCE: ShelterBox USA

AVAILABLE MEDIA: Photo: US SRT's Olson & Eby with ShelterBox relief for My (size: 61.0 k)
jpg 52 Kb
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