



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice China

China – CHN36072 – Fujian Province –
Pingtan – Typhoons – Underground
churches
27 January 2010

1. Please advise any details known about typhoons affecting Pingtan Town, Fujian Province in 2000 and in 2004, and any information about damage to oyster farms and relief given to persons affected by the typhoons.

Typhoons in Pingtan in June 2000

There is no information available indicating that a typhoon occurred or tracked near Pingtan Town in June of 2000. The closest possibility to a typhoon in that timeframe was the occurrence of a tropical depression that formed in the South China Sea, labelled Tropical Depression Number 4, which tracked along the coast of Vietnam, dissipating over Hanoi between 30 May and 1 June 2000. This storm had maximum winds of only 30mph and did not reach typhoon status.¹ This storm system may have brought rains to Fujian Province, although it dissipated in the Gulf of Tonkin, almost 1,500 km distant from Pingtan.²

However, very heavy rains storms, and accompanying damage, did occur in the vicinity of Pingtan Town in June 2000, although they are not attributed to a typhoon. On 21 June 2000, Agence France Presse reports that heavy rains and storms, beginning 17 June 2000, caused flooding and landslides in China's Fujian Province, killing 35 people. The article reports that the rains were most damaging to Quanzhou (138 km from Pingtan), causing USD \$141 million in damage, flooding approximately 52,000 acres of crop, and collapsing 95,000 houses. Daily rainfall in some areas was in excess of 30 cm and "torrential rain" fell on coastal areas of Fujian Province, according to other press reports. There is no available information regarding damage to oyster farms during this time frame. References to government assistance to storm victims is limited to general remarks about local governments engaging in "relief work".³ A search of media sources did not produce any information on specific aspects of the relief work.

The only typhoon to strike the Pingtan area in 2000 was on 23 August when *Super Typhoon Bilis*, a very powerful category 5 typhoon, tracked directly into the Pingtan area, causing great damage and flooding to the entire Fujian Province.⁴ An image of Typhoon Bilis' track, as portrayed by UNISYS 2000 Hurricane/Tropical Data website is inserted below:

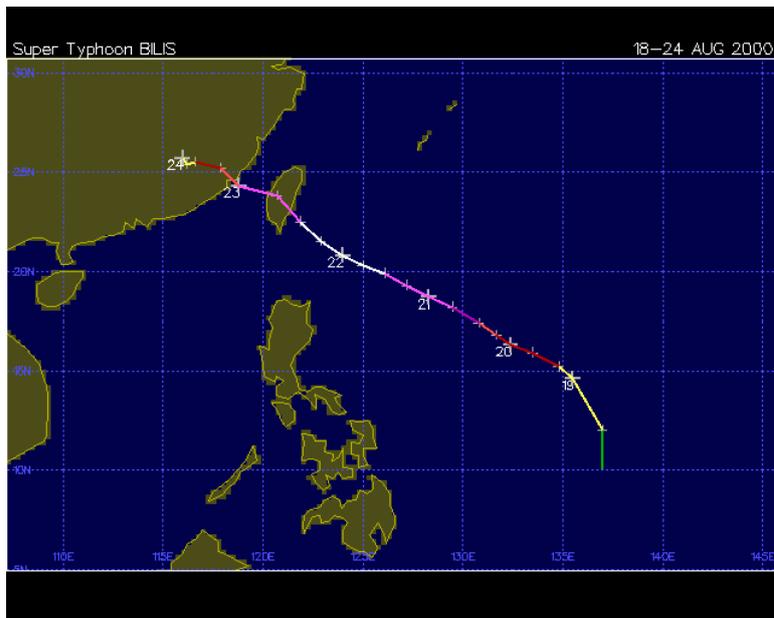
¹ '2000 Hurricane/Tropical Data for Western Pacific', 2005, UNISYS website,

http://weather.unisys.com/hurricane/w_pacific/2000H/index.html - Accessed 21 January 2010

² Distance calculated using Microsoft Encarta, Interactive World Atlas 2000, Measure Tool - Accessed 28 January 2010

³ Xin X. 2000 'Storms wreak havoc in Fujian' *China Daily* 22 June- Accessed 22 January 2010 – Attachment 1

⁴ US Department of Agriculture Foreign Agriculture Service Online 2003, 'Typhoon Bilis Hits Taiwan and Southeastern China', 5 September <http://www.fas.usda.gov/pecad2/highlights/2000/08/chtphoon824.htm> - Accessed 20 January 2010 – Attachment 2



Typhoons in Pingtan in the months following March 2004

Only one typhoon directly struck Pingtan in 2004. On or about 22 August, *Typhoon Aere* garnered significant media attention, when it struck Fujian Province very close to Pingtan. *Typhoon Aere* caused 2.1 billion Yuan in damage, collapsing 8,000 buildings and submerging farm fields. Fujian Province evacuated almost one million people in advance of the storm, resulting in no reported deaths, according to press reports. The government was reported to contribute 50 million Yuan to relief funds for disaster hit areas.⁶ *Typhoon Aere* was unusual in that it struck Fujian Province three separate times as it tracked along the coast over the course of three and a half days, affecting 2.49 million people. Economic costs were estimated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs to amount to almost USD\$257 million.⁷ While there was specific mention in media reports of flooding and damage to farms, electrical grids, and transportation systems, there is no available information on damage to oyster farms or aquaculture. The *China Daily* reported that damages to Fujian Province totalled USD\$242 million and the provincial government set aside USD\$604,595 in “reserve funds to settle affected people”.⁸ There is no information regarding specific relief efforts or payments to individuals.

Typhoon Aere’s track is depicted below in an image available from the UNISYS 2004 Hurricane/Tropical Data website:

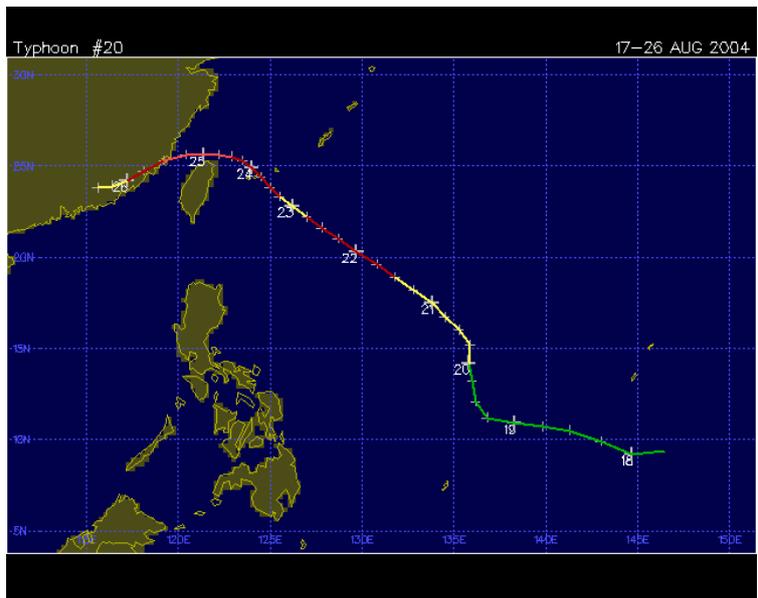
⁵‘2000 Hurricane/Tropical Data for Western Pacific’, 2005 UNISYS website,

http://weather.unisys.com/hurricane/w_pacific/2000H/index.html - Accessed 21 January 2010

⁶ Savadove, B. 2004, ‘Typhoon’s; 2.1b yuan damage bill; in Fujian; Nearly 1.3 million people evacuated in two provinces, but no official fatalities’ *South China Morning Post*, 27 August - Accessed 22 January 2010. – Attachment 3

⁷ ‘Chinese government allocates relief fund to typhoon-hit province’ 2004, *Xinhua News Agency* 26 August - Accessed 22 January 2010 – Attachment 4

⁸ Daozu, B. 2004, ‘Efforts pay off against typhoon Aere’ *China Daily*, 27 August - Accessed 24 January 2010 - Attachment 5



2. Please advise any information known about unregistered churches in Pingtan Town, Fujian Province in 2004 and 2005 and the attitude of the local government towards persons attending these churches.

In the 2004-2005 time period, unregistered churches in Fujian Province were operating in a relatively permissive environment according to some available sources. The attitude of authorities toward persons attending unregistered churches was characterised as liberal by Chinese standards. Liberal, in the China context means that underground (unregistered) churches hold gatherings and meet openly with the full knowledge of the local authorities who have great discretion in deciding which house churches violate regulations.¹⁰ Information sources indicate that many Chinese were not prevented from attending underground churches in Pingtan and Fujian, in general, however political pressure to crack down on these churches fluctuates.

A 2005 Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board refers to correspondence from the Executive Secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council, in which he stated that he was aware of unregistered churches, Bible schools, fellowships, and even missionaries that had been allowed by authorities to operate in Fujian for several years. He commented that authorities were more likely to take steps against unregistered religious organisations if there were any identifiable ties to organisations outside of China. The Executive further stated that Fujian and Guangdong have “...the most liberal policy on religion in China, especially Christianity” and local authorities he has met with when travelling in the Fujian Province “usually tolerate activities of unregistered Christian groups.”¹¹

In the 2006 edition of *China Christians Millions* Lambert describes religious policy in Fujian as “relatively liberal” and notes that Fujian has a “thriving and rapidly growing Christian

⁹ ‘2000 Hurricane/Tropical Data for Western Pacific’, 2005 UNISYS website, http://weather.unisys.com/hurricane/w_pacific/2004/index.html - Accessed 21 January 2010

¹⁰ US Department of State 2004 *International Religious Freedom Report for 2004 – China*, Restriction on Religious Freedom Section, 15 September <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35396.htm> - Accessed 1 February 2010 – Attachment 6

¹¹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2005 CHN100387.E - *China: Situation of Protestants and treatment by authorities, particularly in Fujian and Guangdong (2001-2005)* 7 September http://www2.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=449522 - Accessed 27 January 2010 – Attachment 7

community”. Lambert states that Pingtan has been the site of enormous growth in religious adherents over the years, with the Christian population rising from 5,000 in 1959 to 60,000 in 2004. In 2004 he reports there were 60,000 Christians “...divided equally between registered and unregistered congregations. At least 15 per cent of the island’s population are Christians”.¹² Lambert cautions that while unregistered churches are generally tolerated and religious policy is applied liberally in Fujian, there are occasional crackdowns by authorities.

There is very little information on government crackdowns on unregistered churches in Pingtan during the 2004-5 timeframe. However, Christian Solidarity Network reported that on 25 July 2005 authorities violently arrested Catholic priest Father Lin Daixian of the Pingtan Parish of Fuzhou Diocese, Fujian Province for the fourth time. Authorities reportedly raided a private home where Father Lin Daixian was holding Mass for 50 people and assaulted parishioners and ransacked the home before detaining him and nine parishioners.¹³

List of Attachments

1. Xin X. 2000 ‘Storms wreak havoc in Fujian’ *China Daily* 22 June - Accessed 22 January 2010. (FACTIVA)
2. US Department of Agriculture Foreign Agriculture Service Online 2003, ‘Typhoon Bilis Hits Taiwan and Southeastern China’, 5 September <http://www.fas.usda.gov/pecad2/highlights/2000/08/chtphoon824.htm> - Accessed 20 January 2010.
3. Savadove, B. 2004, ‘Typhoon's; 2.1b yuan damage bill; in Fujian; Nearly 1.3 million people evacuated in two provinces, but no official fatalities’ *South China Morning Post*, 27 August - Accessed 22 January 2010. (FACTIVA)
4. ‘Chinese government allocates relief fund to typhoon-hit province’ 2004, *Xinhua News Agency* 26 August - Accessed 22 January 2010. (FACTIVA)
5. Daozu, B. 2004, ‘Efforts pay off against typhoon Aere’ *China Daily*, 27 August - Accessed 24 January 2010. (FACTIVA)
6. US Department of State 2004 *International Religious Freedom Report for 2004 – China*, Restriction on Religious Freedom Section, 15 September <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35396.htm> - Accessed 1 February 2010.
7. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2005 CHN100387.E - China: *Situation of Protestants and treatment by authorities, particularly in Fujian and Guangdong (2001-2005)* 7 September http://www2.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=449522 - Accessed 27 January 2010.
8. Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2005, ‘China: Current Developments and Cases of Concern’, November, p.13 <http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/country.asp?s=id&urn=China> - Accessed 27 January 2010.

¹² Lambert, T. 2006, *China’s Christian Millions*, Monarch Books, Oxford, pp.240-1

¹³ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2005, ‘China: Current Developments and Cases of Concern’, November, p.13 <http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/country.asp?s=id&urn=China> - Accessed 27 January 2010 – Attachment 8