



**ERUPTION EFFECTS.** A villager takes his cows to a field while Mount Agung erupts in the background in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia. Indonesian authorities raised the alert for the rumbling volcano to the highest level and closed the international airport on the tourist island of Bali, which stranded thousands of travellers. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

## Bali flights resume after eruption, but travel still disrupted

By Stephen Wright  
The Associated Press

**K**ARANGASEM, Indonesia — Flights trickled out of Bali a day after its airport reopened but the erupting volcano shut down air travel to a neighboring Indonesian island, showing the continued risk to aircraft from the towering ash clouds.

Mount Agung has been gushing black-gray columns of volcanic dust and steam since late November and glowing a dramatic red at night as lava wells in its crater.

Bali's airport was closed from early November 27 through the afternoon on November 29, stranding tens of thousands of travellers on the idyllic resort island famous for its Hindu culture, surf beaches, and lush interior.

It reopened after the hazardous ash clouds changed direction, but the threat closed the small international airport on Lombok island.

The Disaster Mitigation Agency said the ash plume was rising about 2,000 meters above the crater, about half its previous height. As ash has drifted away from the mountain, it has reached heights of 25,000 feet, posing a threat to aircraft.

Despite the all-clear for Bali's airport, flights are unlikely to rapidly return to normal levels and a change in the direction of the ash or a new more powerful eruption might force the airport's closure again.

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo ordered ministries and agencies, the military, and police to help Bali's government deal with the disaster, and he has urged anyone inside the mountain's exclusion zone to get out "for the sake of their safety."

Authorities have told 100,000 people to leave an area extending up to six miles from the volcano. About 40,000 people are staying in 225 shelters, the disaster agency said, but tens of thousands more have stayed, saying they feel safe or don't want to abandon homes and livestock.

In the village of Tulamben inside the exclusion zone, farmers plowed their fields with cattle, seemingly unbothered by the smoking mountain behind them swelling with orange lava.

In Sukadana village, about eight kilometers from the crater, a few remaining residents said mudflows of volcanic debris and water had passed through the area for a couple of days before solidifying.

Some stranded tourists managed to get off the island before the airport reopened, but they faced an arduous journey involving crowded roads, busses, ferries, and sometimes overnight waits in yet another airport in Surabaya on the island

of Java.

"This is a very unforgettable experience for us. So much hassle and definitely one for the books," said Sheryl David, a tourist from Manila, the Philippines, who had arrived in Bali with three friends. She said the experience didn't dampen her feelings about the island.

"Yes, still a paradise," she texted.

The volcano's last major eruption, in 1963, killed about 1,100 people, but it is unclear how bad the current situation might get or how long it could last. A worst-case scenario would involve an explosive eruption that causes the mountain's cone to collapse.

"An analogy would be the twin towers collapsing in New York on 9/11," said Richard Arculus, a volcano expert at Australian National University. "You saw people running away from the debris raining down and columns of dust pursuing people down the street. You will not be able to outrun this thing."

Indonesian officials first raised the highest alert two months ago when seismic activity increased at the mountain. The activity decreased by late October, and the alert was lowered before being raised to the highest level again.

Indonesia sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire" and has more than 120 active volcanoes.

*Associated Press journalists Ali Kotarumalos and Margie Mason in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Kiko Rosario in Bangkok, contributed to this report.*

### What North Korean photos say about new ballistic missile

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Hwasong-15 before a launch more difficult.

#### The payload

North Korea claims the Hwasong-15 can carry a "super-heavy" nuclear payload to any target in the mainland United States. The re-entry vehicle, the nose cone in the photo, does indeed look quite large. But the heavier the load the shorter the range. Michael Elleman, a leading missile expert, has suggested in the respected 38 North blog that Hwasong-15's estimated 8,100-mile range assumes a payload of around 330 pounds, which is probably much lighter than any real nuclear payload the North can produce. To get to the west coast, the North needs to keep that weight down to 1,100 pounds. Whether it can do that remains questionable. "Kim Jong Un's nuclear bomb must weigh less than 800 pounds if he expects to strike the western edges of the U.S. mainland," Elleman estimated. "A 1,300-pound payload barely reaches Seattle."

Talmadge is The AP's Pyongyang bureau chief.

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