

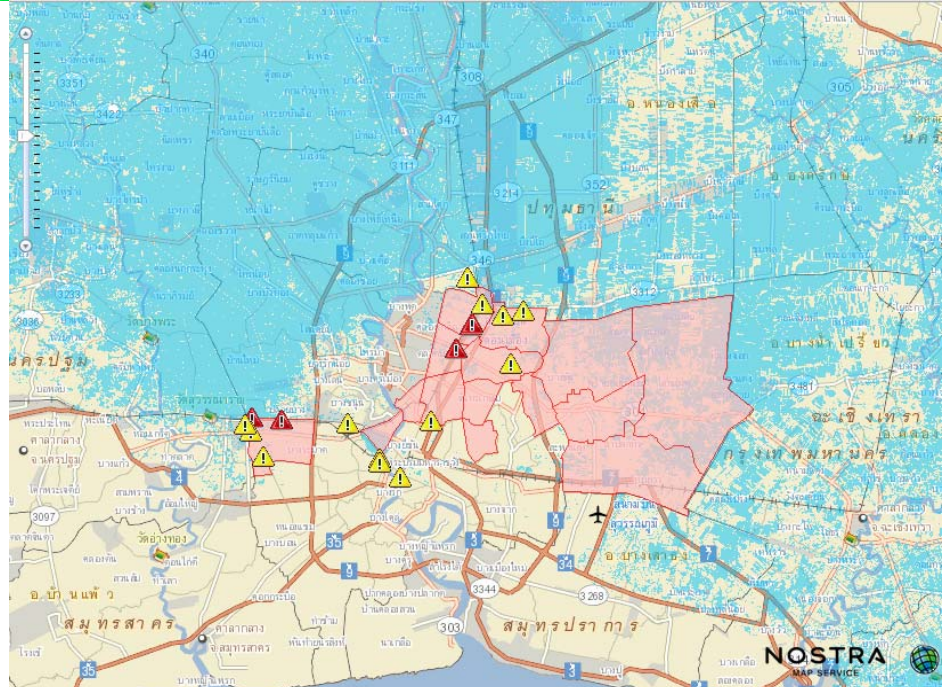
Fall 2011 Thai Flood Photos: Part 6

Overview from Space

The images below are false-color IR (near Infrared) taken before the flooding (left image acquired 11 Oct 2010) and during the flood (23 Oct 2011). The right image clearly shows the wide extent of the flooding of the Ayutthaya area north of Bangkok.



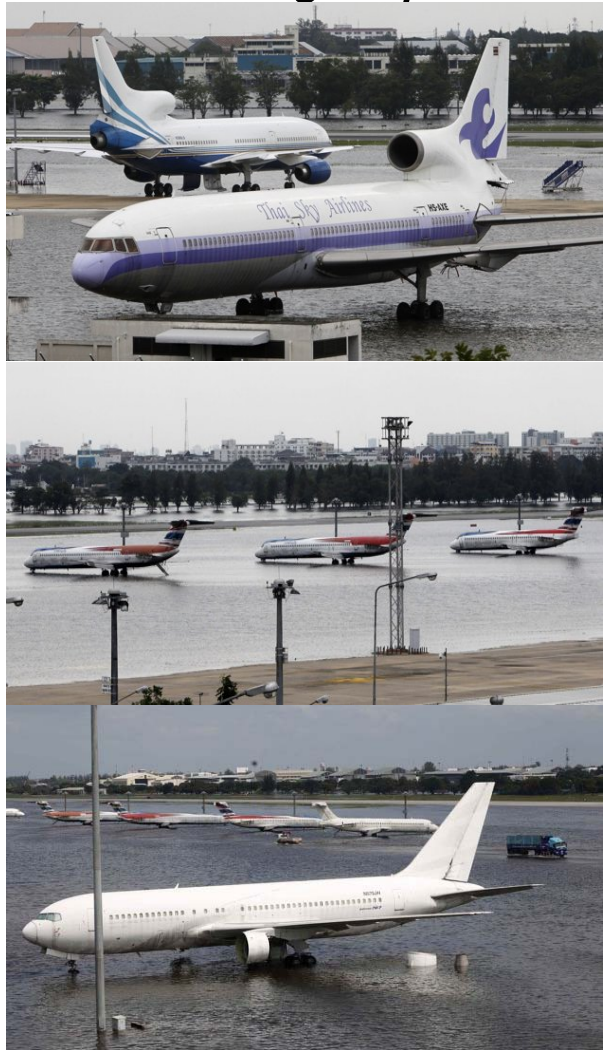
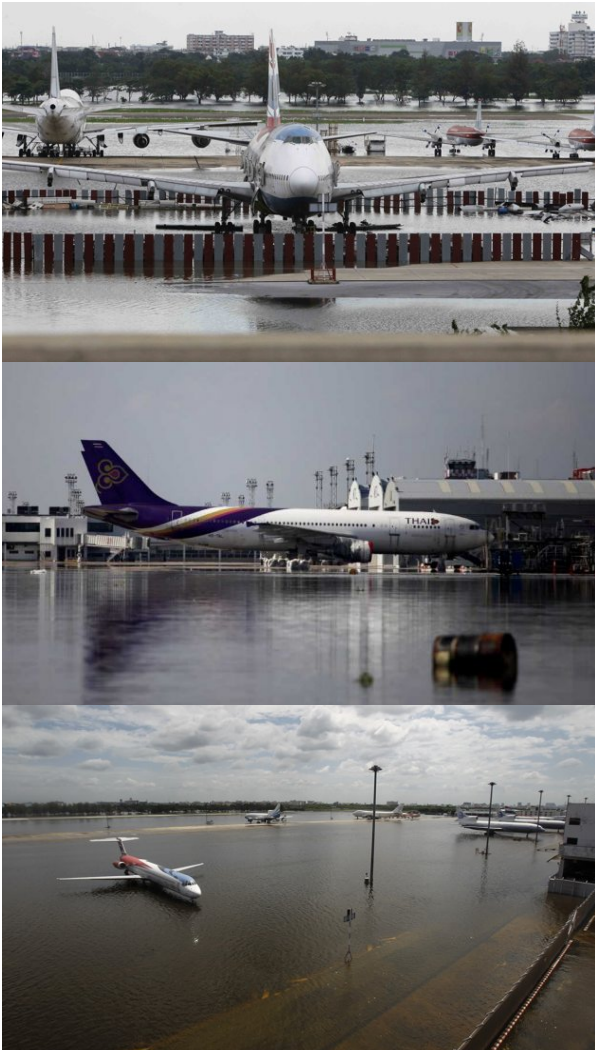
The flood status map below shows the areas of Bangkok subject to imminent flooding. This weekend spring tides occur in the Gulf of Thailand which may back up the Chao Phraya River to a height of 2.6 m. The flood barriers along the Chao Phraya were reported



to be 2.5 m high about 2 weeks ago.

Authorities are now saying it may be until Dec for flood waters in Bangkok recede.

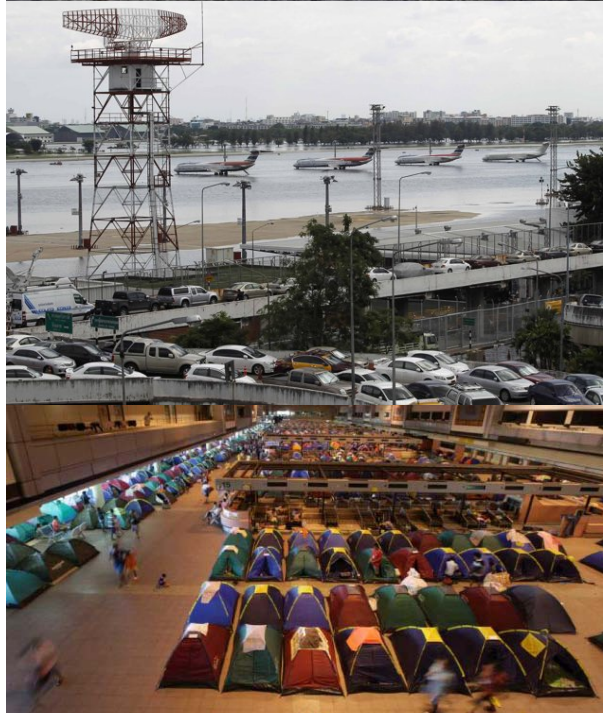
More Scenes of Flooded Don Muang Airport



Domestic flights used to operate out of Don Muang, but those carriers were forced to move out temporarily when flood waters encroached on the runways.

Most of the aircraft in these photos are decommissioned planes or were undergoing servicing so could not be flown out. Some people are calling this flood a “slow tsunami” in contrast to the tragic Indian Ocean tsunami that struck Thailand several years ago.

One of the more tragic effects of the airport flooding is the need to relocate about 4,000 evacuees who were sheltered here. Relocation is a major undertaking as this may mean transporting these folks to other provinces beyond the flood zone. All of this brings back memories of the long distance move of Katrina survivors.



Trying to Get the Water Out

Dealing with the flood involves two seemingly contradictory actions: barricade or block the flood water vs. pumping it out and letting it flow out. When trying to protect a building, any barrier to keep the water out can also hold water in through leaks in the barriers. Pumps are running day and night to get water moving out.





Flood waters pouring into storm drains and canals in an effort to move the water out of the city to the sea.

Still More Evacuations Ordered



The government declared a 5-day holiday to give people time to evacuate areas of the city. Workers were free of their jobs to attend to the task of moving families and critical personal property to higher ground or evacuation centers in other provinces.

Thoughts about Emergency Preparedness



Power loss means no more ATM service.



No electricity also means no gas.



No electricity means no refrigeration.



Stores are cleaned out by panic buying

It seems emergency preparedness is not a high priority for most people. It doesn't seem high on the list for education and training either. Thai people seem to just roll with the punches. They hunker down and struggle to get by.

In some areas, electricity was cut off to prevent accidental electrocutions. And when the power goes it will mean no ATMs (so how much cash do you carry with you?); gas stations can't pump fuel unless they have a back-up generator. Many smaller water pumps need fuel. Many folks are using cell phones to communicate. But without electricity, once the cell phone battery is depleted, that means no cell phone service.

Communications will be a serious problem

As news of Bangkok being flooded got out, people rushed to markets to buy food and water. This led to panic buying. Soon the store shelves were bare. Floods closed roads making re-supply difficult. Gradually, some people who decided to stay in their high rise condos began to run out of clean drinking water.

The population of Bangkok has been reported a 9-14 million people depending on where you draw the boundaries and if you count migrant workers and visitors. That amounts to a huge sanitation problem during the floods. The longer the flood the greater the threat of water borne diseases.



Clean drinking water is in short supply

Drowning #1 Child Killer in SE Asian Floods

It seems ironic that in a region dominated by annual monsoon rains and floods many children don't learn to swim. Water is a big part of their lives; ponds, canals, lakes, rivers are all part of the landscape of the central plains of Thailand. But the sad fact is that many of the 370+ deaths are children.

Distraught parents struggle to evacuate and can easily lose hold of a small child. They are in water 0.5-1.5 m deep trying to carry bundles and children.

Flowing water exerts considerable force. While knee deep water may not sound like much, it is easy to lose your footing or balance. It takes only a few minutes for a child to drown.

As you look at the numerous photos of people being evacuated, look at the relief workers. Notice how few have life vests.

One TV reporter showed a life vest made by stringing empty plastic water bottles together. Others put pieces of Styrofoam inside a heavy plastic bag with cords to secure tie it in place.



TV reporter showing an improvised life vest



Woman being fitted with an improvised life vest.



Sand Bagging Buildings



As large flood barriers and sand bag walls fell to the onslaught of flood waters, many in Bangkok started in earnest to sand bag and build flood defenses for their individual homes, shops, and other buildings.

Thousands try to flee the flood waters. Some in multi-story buildings move to higher floors and decided to protect their property, render assistance to others who cannot or will not leave. With little or no high ground nearby, many evacuees may be transported to evacuation centers to be set up in provinces outside the flood zone.



Trying to Find the High Ground

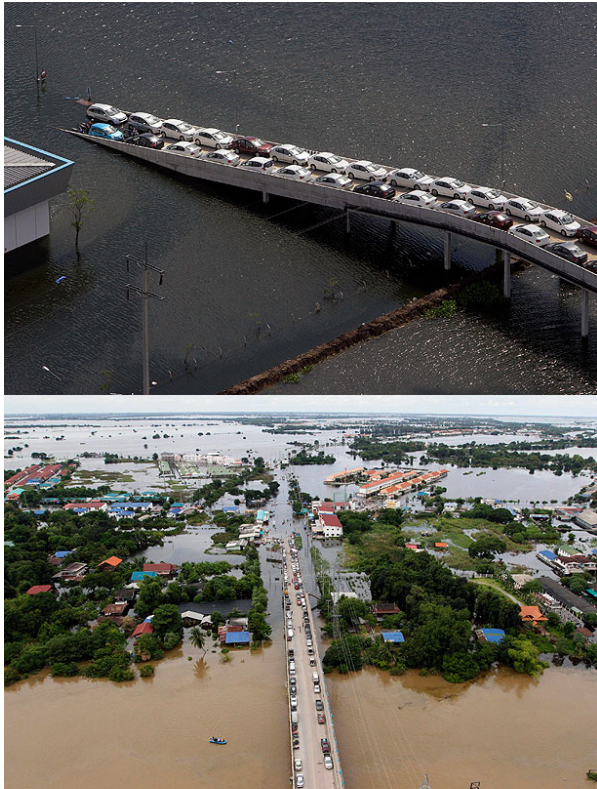
Flood plains and river deltas are natural flood zones due to their low elevation and flat profile. So when floods occur, there is little high ground available. People in single floor dwellings have to leave when water rises 1-2.5 meters. They don't have many choices when it comes to finding high ground in the Bangkok area.



More Fall 2011 Thai Flood Photos: Part 6



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No Place to Go; Waiting It Out



For some, there are no options but to sit tight and wait it out. They may be lucky and have a higher floor to get to if the water rises. But how long can they hold out before they deplete their supplies of clean drinking water and food? And what about basic sanitation? Sinks and toilets cease to function when flood waters back up sewers.

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Others pause catch their breath before struggling to find a way out of the flooded areas. But the flood literally makes things fluid with rapidly changing circumstances as to which areas are dry and which are flooded.



The Hazards of Flooded Roads



Muddy or deep water makes it hard to know where the road is or where it is washed out.

Amateur Radio Lends a Hand

RAST (Radio Amateur Society of Thailand) reported the use of ham radio in the FROC (Flood Relief Operations Center) using HF, VHF, and EchoLink®.



ACM Tareh Poonsri, Chairman of the NBTC, (fifth from left) announces the establishment of the HSOAB amateur radio centre at Don Muang airport to co-ordinate communications using HF and VHF radio as well as Echolink to help in flood relief operations in the disaster zone to help in relief work in Ayutthaya, Pathum Thani, Bangkok, Saraburi, Lopburi, Nakhon Sawan, Pathum Thani and Chachoengsao provinces.

Deputy Public Health Minister Torpong Chaayasarn has assigned RAST to help in managing communications between volunteer doctors who are helping flood victims in the field and at refugee centers. The HSOAC health service centre is standing by on 7.063 MHz HF and 144.9375 MHz VHF.

