



Vol. I, Issue 6

THE RESPONDER

Telling the Joint Task Force-Haiti story

a call to duty
March 3, 2010

American, Haitian engineers assess building damage

By Sgt. Richard Andrade
XVIII Airborne Corps

TOURGEAU, Haiti -- The Naval Facilities Engineering Command partnered with U.S. Navy Seabees, Air Force and Army engineers Feb. 26 here to train Haitian engineers on building assessment ensuring Haitian citizens are living in structurally sound buildings.

"The work we are doing today is to systematically walk through neighborhoods assessing damage," said Vince Sobach, a structural engineer with the Joint Task Force Engineers, NAVFAC.

"The primary goal is to get people back in their homes. The second part of the mission is training the local Haitian engineers. Basically we are doing a technology transfer. We are trying to both things at the same time since time is of the essence."

"A lot of the residents of Tourgeau are in one of the local internally displaced persons' camp that is very much overcrowded," said Sobach.

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Communications support

Pfc. Paul Garland and Pfc. Sean McCall, signal Soldiers both currently assigned to the Joint Forces Special Operation Component Command, check the set up of a AV/2011 SATCOM antenna for voice and data tactical communications. The United States and other international military and civilian aid agencies are conducting humanitarian and disaster relief operations as part of Operation Unified Response. (U.S. Navy photo by Chief Petty Officer Robert J. Fluegel) **Full story page 3**

SECNAV visits Bataan, thanks crew for efforts in Haiti



BAIE DE GRAND GOAVE, Haiti -- The Honorable Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy returns a salute to the rainbow side-boys aboard the multipurpose ship USS Bataan, Mabus visited Bataan to show his appreciation for the crews effort during Operation Unified Response. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Class Julio Rivera)

By Public Affairs Staff
USS Bataan

Sailors aboard the multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS Bataan and embarked Marines from the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit hosted the 75th Secretary of the Navy March 1, as the ship continues to support disaster relief efforts off the coast of Haiti.

The Honorable Ray Mabus met with Sailors and Marines on Bataan's mess decks before thanking the entire crew over the ship's general announcing system for their efforts.

"One thing I don't think you hear enough of is thank you, and how much America appreciates you. On behalf of a grateful nation, thank you for your service. Thank you for your skill, and thank you for your patriotism," said Mabus. "When the earthquake

hit Haiti, people just expected America to be able to respond. Well, it just doesn't happen without a lot of training. It doesn't happen without building ships like Bataan. It doesn't happen without the people on Bataan doing what you do."

While Mabus' time aboard was brief, he was able to witness and appreciate the efforts the "blue-green team" aboard Bataan has brought to the devastated island nation.

"Not enough people realize what the capacity of a big-deck (amphibious assault ship) is and all the different things you can do," said Mabus. "There is absolutely no other country on earth that could do what you've done here."

Mabus previously visited Bataan in August

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Bobby Grissett (left) and Bryan Haelsig (right), two engineers from the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, evaluate the structural damage of a building from the outside before getting permission to go inside. NAVFAC partnered with U.S. Navy Seabees, Air Force and Army engineers here to train Haitian engineers on building assessment ensuring Haitian citizens are living in structurally sound buildings Feb. 26. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade)



Bryan Haelsig (left) and Bobby Grissett (right), two engineers from the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, speak with a Haitian home owner about the structural damage of his house. NAVFAC partnered with U.S. Navy Seabees, Air Force and Army engineers to train Haitian engineers on building assessment ensuring Haitian citizens are living in structurally sound buildings Feb. 26. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade)

Engineers

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"So we are going to sweep this neighborhood and try to decompress that camp."

"The goal today is to evaluate all the houses and structures in the neighborhood of Tourgeau for earthquake damage and get people back to safe houses or tell them they are living in a dangerous one," said Bryan Haelsig, NAVFAC engineer.

The group of engineers walked from house to house knocking on doors, looking in and around buildings and talking to residents. All of the Haitian citizens opened their doors with no protests and confidently showed the cracks on the walls of their homes.

"We are here to do the assessments for two reasons," said U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Scott A. Shaulis, a staff engineer with NAVFAC. "According to a United Nations poll, it is estimated that the people living in the large displaced persons' camp near the palace, about 85 percent of them are from Tourgeau."

"If we find that their homes have little to no damage from the earthquake," Shaulis said, "it is hoped that they will come home and alleviate the strain on that camp."

The long term goal, said Shaulis, "is to compile all the information that we are gathering, give it to the Haitian government and they will decide what to do from there."

Shaulis said, "This is a good and noble effort to come in and tell them 'you can feel safe going back in to that building.'"



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The Responder is an electronic newsletter distributed by the JTF-H PAO. All photos are Department of Defense unless otherwise credited.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

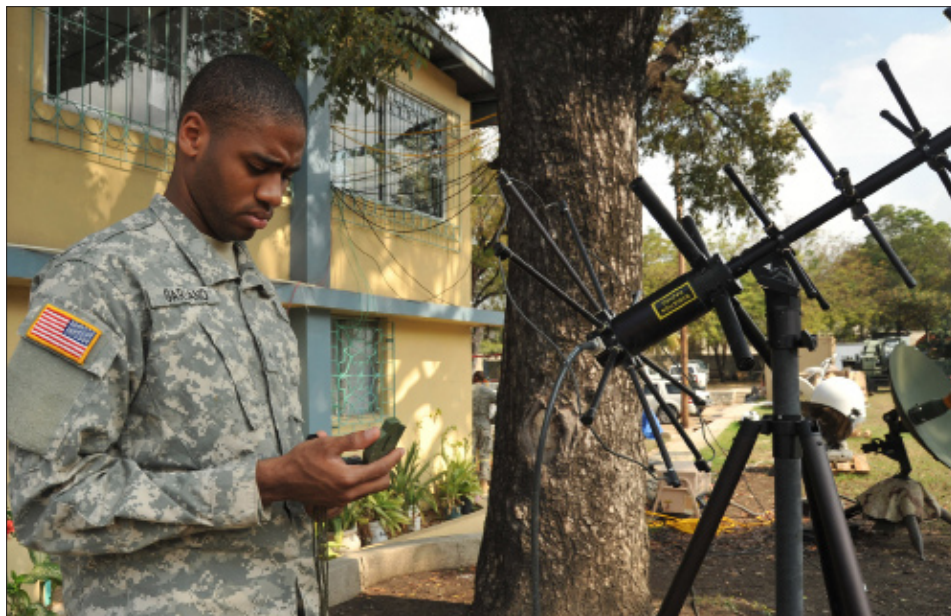
By Ch. (Lt.Col.) Matt Pawlikowski
JTF-H Catholic Chaplain

The Army organizes its chaplain operations into Unit Ministry Teams (UMTs). The UMT consists of one chaplain (of any religion) and one enlisted chaplain assistant (of any or no religion).

The chaplain assistant supports the chaplain in a wide variety of ways. The assistant is the chaplain's driver and administrative specialist. The assistant sets up for religious services (in accord with whatever faith or denomination his or her chaplain is) both in garrison chapel settings and in the field. The assistant screens and schedules appointments for the chaplain for counseling; to this end, chaplain assistants enjoy privileged communication with soldiers, the same kind of confidentiality chaplains have with penitents and defense lawyers have with clients. And most importantly (at least in this chaplain's mind!), the assistant is the chaplain's bodyguard, as it has always been the policy of America's service's chiefs of chaplains that chaplains will not carry weapons of any sort in their role as con-combatants.

Here in JTF-Haiti, chaplain assistants have supported operations in line with their duties. Assistants driving or navigating the horrors of Haitian traffic allow their chaplains to use that time on the road to record notes from their last visit or mentally prepare for their next. Assistants ensure that altars and pulpits are set up worthily, that seating is available for congregants, and that everything in the chapel tent or worship area is cleaned of the ubiquitous, omnipresent, powdery dust that seemingly covers everything here in Haiti. And while the danger physical threats are relatively low here, assistants still ensure that their chaplains are not mobbed by people eager to receive radios, food, water, or just to touch an American in appreciation for the work we're doing. So similar to another adage: behind every good chaplain is a great chaplain assistant.

Soldiers provide communications support in Haiti



Pfc. Paul Garland, a signal Soldier with the Joint Forces Special Operation Component Command, checks the set up of a AV/2011 SATCOM antenna for voice and data tactical communications. The United States and other international military and civilian aid agencies are conducting humanitarian and disaster relief operations as part of Operation Unified Response in the aftermath of the earthquake that hit the area, Jan. 12. (U.S. Navy photo by Chief Petty Officer Robert J. Fluegel)

By Navy Lt. Arlo Abrahamson
Joint Forces Special Operations Component Command

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Soldiers assigned to the communications directorate for the Joint Forces Special Operations Component Command have played a critical role in supporting civil affairs and other humanitarian operations conducted by U.S. special operations forces here during Operation Unified Response.

Special operations forces served as the commander's eyes on the ground during the early days of the rescue and recovery phases of relief operations in the wake of a magnitude 7.0 earthquake that struck Jan. 12. These tasks rely heavily on vital links between forward elements and operational commanders, a support capability that Signal Corps Soldiers bring to an operation.

"There's a lot of coordination and streamlining that goes into our job, because we have to work across a variety of networks and satellite feeds," said Army Staff Sgt. Kelly Williams, a communications team leader. "We have to ensure the end user, our people in the field, have the signal capabilities they need to accomplish their assigned tasks."

To remain mission capable, Williams

said, computer networks must continue to run efficiently, and tactical, radio and satellite communications equipment must be managed and maintained.

"There's a lot of security protocols and other procedures we must follow to run efficient networks," Williams said, "but we try to make that as transparent as possible for our users."

But as Army Staff Sgt. Wayne Potts explained, there's also a hands-on portion of their mission.

"The civil affairs teams bring communications equipment with them to the field, but we show them how to get the most out of this equipment," Potts said. "We want to make sure they have the right capabilities when they get to where they are going so they can concentrate on the overall mission we have here in Haiti."

That mission, humanitarian operations, is one these Soldiers know they have enhanced with the skills they bring to the operation.

"We feel good knowing we played a part in the overall success of our mission," said Army Sgt. Derek Auguste. "Communications are vital to any operation - everyone has to talk and coordinate with each other. We feel like we created an environment where that could be successful."

Paratroopers reflect on experiences in Haiti



Soldiers from Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., guard the American embassy helicopter landing zone here. Pfc. Aanjali Anderson and Spc. Sharina Lumpkin, both information technology specialists, watch as people arrive at the LZ they protect. Both have been on many humanitarian missions during their time here. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade)

By Sgt. Richard Andrade
XVIII Airborne Corps

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – Soldiers from Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., guard the American embassy helicopter landing zone here.

Spc. Thomas Gabala, a multichannel transmission systems operator – maintainer with Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, provides helicopter landing zone security, which consists of making sure people or wandering animals do not disrupt helicopters from landing or leaving.

“What we are doing is making sure the landing zone is free of any animals, like cows, which on occasion wander into the area but we gently shoo them away,” he said.

“A lot of the kids like to hang out at the gate and socialize with us, sometimes even helping us out with our jobs,” said Gabala.

When speaking of the mission in Haiti, Gabala said, “I actually wanted to volunteer for the mission before I found out 2nd



Thomas Gabala, a multichannel transmission systems operator from Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., guards the American embassy helicopter landing zone here. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade)

BCT was going, so I am actually glad I am doing this,” said Gabala.

Spc. Anthony Knight, a Company C cable systems installer – maintainer provides communications for the BCT and helps with humanitarian aid missions.

The helicopter landing zone mission is also part of his duties, protecting the helicopters which are flying in and out,

two or three times in the five hours that his shift lasts.

When asked about what has affected him the most during his time in Haiti, Knight said, “All of the rubble, and all of the fallen buildings.”

“I was at a food distribution point here in Haiti for 14 days, handing out water and bags of rice,” he said. “I got a chance to talk to the locals and they said that they are glad that we are here and that they appreciate all that we do.”

Knight said his family back home in New Jersey supports him being in Haiti, he said, “they are happy that I am here. They are happy that I get to help out the Haitian people in need.”

Knight said, “This mission has made me appreciate things more. I see kids who don’t have any parents, and that makes me appreciate my parents.”

“I am just happy that I could help the Haitians, and I am glad that I had the opportunity to come here,” said Knight.

Spc. Sharina Lumpkin, a Company C information technology specialist, has been in Haiti since Feb. 4 and has been on

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Paratroopers

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many humanitarian missions during her time here.

Lumpkin said everything about this mission has affected her.

"Everything that I have seen here so far, really makes you take a second glance at all the things that we have back home that we don't really appreciate."

Participating in Operation Unified Response has changed Lumpkin.

"I definitely realized that there are a lot of things that I have that I don't really need, and to come and see those that have hardly nothing at all, really changes that way that you view some things back home."

Pfc. Aanjali Anderson, a Company C information technology specialist, has also been personally moved by this mission.

She said, "It makes me want to cry, every time we go out."

"The first night we got here we went out and there were people laying on the street, inches away from our tires because they didn't have anywhere else to sleep," Anderson said, "That made me not want to go out there, but I know we have to, it's sad."

Anderson will always carry her impressions of Haiti with her.

"I've never seen anything like this. It makes me think that we have way too much that we take for granted back in the states," she said.

"It definitely is going to make me rethink everything I am doing back in the states, all the things I don't need and how I can help other people," Anderson said.

As the four soldiers from Company C were gathering their thoughts, a helicopter flew towards the LZ and they quickly put their equipment on and grabbed their rifles. The Haitian security officer opened the gate for the Soldiers and they posted themselves on the four corners of the landing zone.

Making sure that no Haitian child, stray goat or meandering cow wanders into the area, they maintain vigilance. Four helicopters land a few minutes apart. Haitian kids walk towards the Soldiers and stand next to them to watch the helicopters land. They know not to get too close to the helicopters. As the helicopters depart from the LZ and the servicemembers that arrived get into vehicles, the four paratroopers walk back towards the base gate -- another successful landing.

Next wave of Colombian medics arrive in Haiti



PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Medics from the Colombian defense forces are working with their U.S. counterparts at an intermediate aftercare facility here. They are assisting with Colombia's on-going humanitarian aid mission to the people of Haiti. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade)

By Sgt. Richard Andrade
XVIII Airborne Corps

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Medics from the Colombian army and the air force are working side by side with U.S. Army, Air Force, and Navy doctors at an intermediate aftercare facility in Port-au-Prince.

The fact that the IAF is so close to the port makes it easy for the medics to transport patients to and from the USNS Comfort.

Colombian army Col. Pedro Segura arrived to assist with the ongoing humanitarian aid their country is providing to the people of Haiti Feb. 27. He is in charge of the Colombian contingency that is in Port-au-Prince working with U.S. forces.

"We will be in Haiti as long as it takes," said Segura.

"We will do our best to collaborate with the U.S. forces to help the people of Haiti," he said.

The Colombian Red Cross is also in Haiti, handing out water, first aid kits and hand crank radios at many food distribution points. The newly arrived medics are eager to be part of the Haitian mission.

Colombian army Lt. Col. Antonio Beltran who has been in Haiti since Jan. 31, said that "the Government of Colombia initially sent 27 anesthesiologists, orthopedists,

nurses and physicians to provide medical care."

"After a month or so in Haiti their replacements have come from various parts of Colombia to help assist the medics here and the doctors working at the USNS Comfort," said Beltran.

When asked about his experience working with the U.S. forces here, Beltran said, "It has been a tremendous experience, in a sense that there has been a lot of camaraderie, they have learned a lot both professionally and personally."

Colombian army 2nd Lt. Jenny Milena Acevedo is a nurse assigned to the Colombian contingency that has arrived to medical assistance here.

She is "glad to be here to support the doctors here and be of assistance to the Haitian patients that require medical help."

"We are from many parts of the Colombia, most of us are doctors, others are nurses, and we will be here for approximately a month," Acevedo said.

Colombian air force 2nd Lt. Lil Geraldine Avendano Chavez is the chief medical officer at the military aviation school in Cali, Columbia. Her aviation skills will be put to use when there is an air medical evacuation in Haiti.

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POSTCARDS FROM HAITI



Comforting sight

CARIBBEAN SEA -- A utility boat returns to United States Navy Ship Comfort after delivering humanitarian supplies to Terminal Varreux, Port-au-Prince for earthquake victims. Comfort is in Haiti supporting Operation Unified Response, a USAID-led effort to assist the people of Haiti rebuild the country's infrastructure. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Edwardo Proano)

SECNAV

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of 2009 when the ship was deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility, performing Maritime Security Operations. The ship returned to her homeport of Norfolk Dec. 8, 2009, before surging to support operations in Haiti Jan. 14.

"It is an astounding thing that you were able to pivot from the mission you had in the Gulf to the mission you have here—that everybody turned around and changed missions and did this good of a job," said Mabus.

Mabus continued to praise the team aboard Bataan as he introduced himself and shook the hand of every Sailor and Marine he encountered.

"It was great opportunity for the crew to meet the Navy's senior leader," said Petty Officer 1st Class David Mitchell, a native of Cleveland and the navigation department leading petty officer. "When he's on aboard and talking about the great work Bataan did down here, that's motivating."

Bataan is currently supporting Operation Unified Response as

part of the Bataan Amphibious Relief Mission, which also includes the dock landing ship USS Fort McHenry.

Colombian medics

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"I am trained to be an air combat medic, we work both in airplanes and helicopters," said Chavez, "Colombia is very mountainous, so our principal mode of transportation is via helicopter," said Chavez, "we mainly use the UH-60 Black Hawk to evacuate casualties."

When asked what Chavez thought of the Haiti mission, she said, "There are very few aviation evacuation medics in my part of the country, so once they found my replacement, I was glad that I was chosen to be able to come to Haiti."

Before patients receive care on the ship, they are seen by the doctors at the intermediate aftercare facility the Colombian medics are working at. If they require further medical treatment they are flown by helicopter to the USNS Comfort.

POSTCARDS FROM HAITI



USNS COMFORT, At Anchor -- Capt. James Ware, commanding officer of the military treatment facility, gives a farewell gift to a Haitian child aboard the hospital ship USNS Comfort. The child transferred to a land-based medical facility in Port-au-Prince for after-care treatment after receiving injuries during the earthquake Jan. 12. Comfort has treated nearly 1000 patients since arriving in Haiti Jan. 19, as part of Operation Unified Response, helping the Haitian people recover from the worst disaster in their history. (U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Timothy)



BAIE DE GRAND GOAVE, Haiti -- Steve Simeone, a comedian with the USO's Comics on Duty world tour, performs for the crew of the multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS Bataan during a comedy show on the mess decks Feb. 22. Simeone and Tom Foss have performed many shows for troops since 2008 and began their current tour in the area of Haiti aboard Bataan. The duo is scheduled to perform on ships supporting Operation Unified Response. Bataan and the amphibious dock landing ships USS Fort McHenry and USS Carter Hall are participating in Operation Unified Response as the Bataan Amphibious Relief Mission by providing military support capabilities to civil authorities to help stabilize and improve the situation in Haiti. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Daniel Bristol)