



Vol. I, Issue 9

THE RESPONDER

Telling the Joint Task Force-Haiti story

a call to duty

March 14, 2010

USNS Comfort completes Haiti mission

Public Affairs Staff

Office of the Secretary of Defense

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - The hospital ship USNS Comfort will leave Haiti tomorrow, as U.S. Southern Command officials have determined its crew has completed its humanitarian relief mission in the aftermath of the Jan. 12 earthquake that devastated the Caribbean nation.

Medical facilities and field hospitals in Haiti have assumed a greater role in addressing the health-care needs of Haitians, and the need for urgent, life-saving medical care steadily declined, officials explained.

"Over the last 10 days, we've seen over a 65 percent reduction in patients on board the [Comfort], as they have been appropriately transferred to local hospitals for follow-on care," Army Col. Jennifer Menetrez, Joint Task Force Haiti's command surgeon, said during a "DoDLive" bloggers roundtable, March 4. The last patient treated for earthquake-related injuries aboard the Comfort was discharged from the ship, Feb. 27, Menetrez added.

The hospital ship began supporting humanitarian relief efforts in Haiti after receiving its first patients a day before anchoring off Port-au-Prince on Jan. 20. Over the course of seven weeks, the ship's U.S. military and civilian medical personnel treated 871 patients, receiving one



CARIBBEAN SEA -- The USNS Comfort sits off the shore of Haiti. The Comfort, provided urgent medical care to people injured in the Jan. 13 earthquake that rocked the nation of Haiti. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. A.M. LaVey / XVIII Airborne Corps)

patient every six to nine minutes at the height of the recovery effort, officials said.

Comfort's medical staff also performed 843 surgeries aboard the ship during the mission, treating more than 540 critically injured earthquake survivors within the first 10 days.

The hospital ship ran 10 operating rooms at full capacity to care for injured Haitian and U.S. earthquake survivors requiring surgical care. Comfort's medics also treated

U.S. and international military personnel transferred to the ship by physicians on the ground for surgical and nonsurgical care.

Volunteer experts from the Orthopedic Trauma Association, Project Hope, Operation Smile, National Nurses United, Johns Hopkins Emergency Medicine and other nongovernmental organizations provided the ship's medical team with orthopedic

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Servicemembers take measures to combat malaria

by Spc. William R. Begley
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—As of March 12th, there have been 12 cases of malaria reported here, with 10 Soldiers and two Marines falling victim to the disease.

Deployed personnel are being prescribed medication for the prevention of malaria, with Doxycycline being the most prescribed. Additionally, U.S. forces are utilizing mosquito nets, insect repellent and wearing their sleeves down to avoid exposure to mosquitoes.

"Malaria is a common in-



The anti-malaria medications, Doxycycline Hyclate, is seen in the hand of a Soldier. Taking the medication under the advisement of a medical professional is shown to decrease your chances of catching malaria. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Cody Barber / 11th PAD)

fection found typically in the tropics, and is a huge issue in Haiti," said Capt. Donald Adams, a physician's assistant with Special Troops Battalion, U.S. Army South.

"Fever is the first sign of malaria, along with body aches, joint aches, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea," said Adams. "Individuals with such symptoms need to be checked immediately."

"Most people coming to Haiti usually start on Doxycycline days to weeks prior to deployment. This provides them with the initial protection to come into a country that has

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JTF-H staff transitions, Sky Dragons redeploy

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- On Monday, March 15, the XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, N.C., will complete its transition of duties as the core Joint Task Force-Haiti planning staff after more than two months in Haiti, in support of Operation Unified Response to Soldiers from U.S. Army South, Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

In historic fashion, the XVIII Airborne Corps - universally known as "America's Contingency Corps" - responded to the Nation's call to duty. Within 48 hours of the Jan. 12 catastrophic earthquake, which brought massive destruction and killed more than 220,000

people, nearly 150 Corps staff members responded to an international call to help from the Haitian people.

The XVIII Airborne Corps is the epitome of the word contingency, which is defined as a provision made against future unforeseen events. The 7.0

magnitude earthquake was certainly an unforeseen event and the Corps was distinctively postured to respond.

Once on the ground, these Paratroopers formed the foundation of the staff and quickly synchronized planning efforts at a critical time in the relief



Col. Steve Smith, the outgoing chief of staff, Joint Task Force-Haiti, receives the Defense Meritorious Achievement Medal for his service here from Lt. Gen. P.K. "Ken" Keen, commanding general, JTF-H during a primary staff awards ceremony at the Joint Operations Center, Logistical Support Area Dragon March 10. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. A.M. LaVey / XVIII Airborne Corps)

mission. "The ability of the Corps to coordinate and synchronize complex operations with interagency organizations partners such as U.S. Agency for International Development, United Nations forces and the Government of Haiti was invaluable," said Lt. Gen. P. K. "Ken" Keen, commander, Joint Task Force-Haiti. "The Corps' staff operational experiences in both Iraq and Afghanistan were uniquely suited to meet mission requirements here in Haiti," said Keen.

The staff managed resources and assets which led to the immediate reorganization and management of the Port-au-Prince airport on Jan. 13, the reopening of the port on Jan. 22 and successful dis-

tribution of food in support of the World Food Program.

The staff also tackled the tough issues of debris and shelter management and resettlement.

"The crisis resulted in validating the critical role of the Corps command post as an enabler within the global response force," said Maj. Gen. Dan Allyn, deputy commanding general, XVIII Airborne Corps and JTF-H. "The entire team provided immediate capacity to JTF-H commander to rapidly gain situational awareness and the ability to prioritize actions to best support the mission and Haitian people."

The XVIII Airborne staff is returning to Fort Bragg where it will begin preparations for its deployment to Iraq next year.



Col. Duane Gamble, the J4 and outgoing sustainment chief, Joint Task Force-Haiti, briefs his replacement, Col. Steve Woods of U.S. Army South at the Joint Logistical Operations Center, Logistical Support Area Dragon, March 12. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. A.M. LaVey / XVIII Airborne Corps)



THE RESPONDER

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A CALL TO DUTY

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The Responder is an electronic newsletter published every Wednesday and Saturday for the Soldiers, Sailors, Coast Guardsmen, Airmen and Marines of JTF-Haiti.

Mission proves skills, flexibility

by Lisa Daniel

Office of the Secretary of
Defense Public Affairs

WASHINGTON - The military's quick humanitarian response in Haiti, then in Chile, proved the skills and compassion of service members and showed how fast U.S. Southern Command's mission can change from its ongoing challenges in Latin America, Southcom's commander said here March 10.

Air Force Gen. Douglas M. Fraser outlined Southcom's missions to the Senate Armed Services Committee, highlighting service members' work in the aftermath of the earthquake that leveled much of Haiti in January, prompting a massive international humanitarian relief effort.

"I've personally seen what these brave young men and women are capable of," said Fraser, who took over the command last year. "The men and women who deployed to Haiti performed magnificently. They were outstanding representatives of our military, displaying compassion and a sense of focus."

The magnitude 7 earthquake hit the island nation on Jan. 12, and multiple U.S. military assets were there within 24 hours,



Coming through

GUANTANAMO BAY, Cuba--U.S. Navy harbor tug boat, Santaquin, pulls into the pier while amphibious dock landing ship, USS Carter Hall, gets under way here, March 4, 2010. Carter Hall was in port conducting an environmental washdown on the equipment used in support of disaster relief efforts in Haiti. Environmental washdowns are required before bringing equipment back into the United States. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Bill Mesta)

Fraser said. In total, some 22,000 U.S. servicemembers provided humanitarian support to Haiti, providing 2 million meals, 2.6 million liters of water and 17 million pounds of bulk food. And thou-

sands of surgeries were performed on the hospital ship USNS Comfort, he said.

Less than two months later, a magnitude 8.8 earthquake devastated Chile.

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Combat controllers bring order during chaotic times

by SrA David Salanitri

Air Force Special Operations
Command Public Affairs

HURLBURT FIELD, Fla. - It was 1:30 in the morning Jan. 13 when Tech. Sgt. Chris Grove answered the phone call that shaped the next two weeks of his life.

Just hours after taking that call, Grove and his nine-person team of combat controllers from the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron here were deploying to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in response to the earthquake.

Living up to their motto, "first there," the Air Force Special Operations Command combat controllers arrived at the Toussaint L'Ouverture International Airport around 6 p.m. Jan. 13 with much work ahead of them.

One of the first tasks at hand for the team was to conduct a runway assessment. "We had to determine the extent of damage to the runway as well



Combat controllers talk to aircraft circling the Toussaint L'Ouverture International Airport Jan. 23, 2010, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The Airmen are from the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Desiree N. Palacios)

as the control tower," said Tech. Sgt. Joseph Hepler, on the 23rd STS combat controller team.

The runway was safe. The tower was damaged and unsafe for use. The runway lights were operational, so the ramp

was capable of 24-hour operations, but there was little movement at the airport. The parking ramp, designed to safely accommodate eight to 12 aircraft, was now gridlocked with 42 aircraft of vary-

ing sizes, parked nose-to-nose and under each other's wings. Within 28 minutes of landing in Haiti, the team of combat controllers took full control of air operations in the theater.

"We set up the air traffic control point in a field with our equipment propped up on our ATV," said Grove, the airfield team leader. "For the first two days we had no tables, no chairs, just our ATV and the ground to conduct air traffic control from."

With an over-packed airport, the combat controllers had to figure out a way to adapt and overcome this challenge.

"We developed a rotation called the Haitian maneuver," Grove said. "When an aircraft landed we would have it continue on to pass the taxiway, then bring it in just as another aircraft was departing, creating a one-for-one swap."

From total congestion and

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A U.S. Army landing craft pulls up to a beach to unload equipment from USS Carter Hall during its washdown in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, March 1. The washdown, a standard process that prevents foreign soil, agriculture and organisms from contaminating the U.S., marks the beginning of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group and 22nd Marine Expeditionary Units, withdrawal from Operation Unified Response in Haiti. (USMC photo by Cpl. Bobbie Curtis)

Marines begin phased departure from Haiti

Story by Cpl. Bobbie Curtis

22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit

GUANTANAMO BAY, Cuba — After nearly two months of dedicated work to providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Haiti, crippled by a severe earthquake, Marines and Sailors from elements of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit have taken their first homeward bound steps from Operation Unified Response toward Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The Caribbean country, which shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic, was struck by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake on Jan. 12. Less than a week later the Sailors and Marines of the 22nd MEU quickly mobilized and arrived off the coast of Haiti, aboard several ships from the U.S. Navy's Bataan Amphibious Ready Group.

Having just returned from a seven-month deployment in Europe and the Middle East, the experienced group of Marines and Sailors were well trained and prepared to take on the challenging humanitarian assistance and disaster relief effort that awaited them.

Using the four elements of a Marine Air-Ground Task Force, the Marines and Sailors



Cpl. Geoffrey M. Smith, a driver with the Transportation Support Platoon, Combat Logistics Battalion 22, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Force, cleans a seven-ton truck that was used in Haiti March 1. (USMC photo by Cpl. Bobbie Curtis)

were expeditiously inserted by air and sea into several locations west of the nation's capital, Port-au-Prince. Once on the ground, troops established secure bases to begin relief operations in the cities of Grand Goave,

Petite Goave and Leogane. From these locations, hundreds-of-thousands-of-pounds of food and water were distributed to earthquake victims in the surrounding areas.

1st Lt. Peter M. Balawender, logistics officer, Combat Logistics Battalion 22, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, said their initial HA responses allowed non-governmental organizations to build strength and prepare to take over the relief efforts for the long-term rebuilding of the Haitian infrastructure.

"We were the first tangible presence providing assistance, and the Marines did a wonderful job providing care, food, water and medical supplies," the Laport, Indiana, native said. "I think the Marine Corps as a whole did a good job supporting the NGOs until they could sustain the people."

"There was a four-week period where the NGOs could not provide essential services," Balawender continued, "we bridged that gap until they were strong."

Besides food and water distribution, the Marines and sailors also provided other services to the people of Haiti, which included debris removal and several water assessments.

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Combat Controllers

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nose-to-nose parking upon arrival, the team of combat controllers turned chaos into order.

"This isn't the first time we've shown up somewhere with nothing but our radios and had to bring order and control to a chaotic situation," said Grove. "We've had to do this several times in Afghanistan and throughout the area of responsibility."

In total, the 23rd STS team brought in 1,675 aircraft and 830 helicopters in the 12 days they were there.

"I have been fortunate to have been the 'first in' on several occasions," said Chief Master Sgt. Antonio Travis, the special tactics team lead. "I have had the honor to work with the finest men and organizations in the world. Nothing has been as rewarding as the two weeks controlling the Port-au-Prince airfield in support of Operation Unified Response."

"I have never been more proud of what I do and the decisions I have made over my career than watching the bar raised in Haiti by the special tactics Airmen and 1st Special Operations Wing," Travis said. "I have thought how to put into words how I feel as a leader. Every angle I look at leads to a single one word answer: humbled."



PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Haitian fishing boats are seen from the air March 12. Fishing is an important part of the economy in Haiti. (US Army photo by Spc. A.M. LaVey / XVIII Airborne Corps)

Comfort

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trauma, surgical, nursing and anesthesia support.

"We are immensely proud of the contributions made by everyone who helped treat critically injured earthquake survivors aboard [the] Comfort," said Air Force Gen. Douglas Fraser, commander of U.S. Southern Command. "Their efforts saved the lives of many patients and helped everyone treated begin the important process of recovery."

"Their rapid response and contribution to the international relief efforts in Haiti helped the country overcome an urgent medical crisis at a time when access to surgical care on the ground was very limited," the general added.

Comfort's crew worked closely with Haiti's health ministry and health care professionals from the U.S. Agency for International Development, international relief organizations and nongovernmental organizations to secure follow-on care for patients in recovery.

By early February, as relief efforts in the areas near the earthquake's epicenter gained momentum and medical treatment facilities began or resumed operations in those areas, the numbers of patients with earthquake-related injuries arriving aboard Comfort gradually declined. By Feb. 28, Comfort was no longer treating patients with earthquake-related injuries, officials said.

Comfort is scheduled to return to its home port in Baltimore, March 14.

Mission

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While the humanitarian crisis and request for assistance was not as great as in Haiti, the U.S. military again responded within 24 hours, providing critical imagery and satellite phones to the Chilean government, Fraser said.

"The tragedy in Haiti is a stark reminder of the nature of the challenges we face in the region," the general said. Southcom's emphasis on relationship-building and partnerships proved important, he said.

Beyond humanitarian responses, Southcom is focused on challenges to the stability and security of the

region, including narcotics and weapons trafficking, the proliferation of gangs, competing ideologies, and the reach of Iran, Russia and China into the region, Fraser said.

"As globalization trends continue, our security will depend upon expanding cooperative engagement with multinational, multiagency and public-private partners in our hemisphere," he said.

"We will be better able to meet complex challenges of the 21st century security environment by building robust, enduring partnerships now. Together, we are stronger and more effective than working as a single organization or nation operating individually," Fraser said.

Southcom has strong military-to-military relations with every counterpart in the region except Venezuela, Bolivia and Cuba, Fraser said.

"I see real competition in the region for various ideologies, but I see the view of the U.S. growing, too," he told the Senate panel.

Last year, for the first time, Southcom detected a decreased amount of sea-based drug trafficking, Fraser said, noting 46 maritime movements, compared to 68 in 2008.

"From a destabilizing standpoint, my biggest concern is illicit trafficking," Fraser said. Southcom is working with U.S. Northern Command and law enforcement officials to combat the spread of illegal

drugs in the region, he said.

Asked how possible ratification of the Latin America Free Trade Agreement would affect the region, the general said he thinks it would be "a very positive step forward."

Fraser noted the economic importance of the region, the United States' largest market with nearly 38 percent of U.S. trade worth about \$1.5 trillion per year.

The region supplies 52 percent of U.S. crude oil imports, compared to 13 percent from the Persian Gulf, Fraser said. The Panama Canal, he added, is paramount in strategic and economic importance, as nearly two-thirds of ships transiting the canal are going to or coming from a U.S. port.

Marines

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Medical personnel from the 22nd MEU and the USS Bataan treated nearly 100 earthquake victims aboard USS Bataan's medical facilities.

The first two-weeks of February, the Marines and Sailors moved their presence into Carrefour, Haiti, a one-million person city on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. While in the city, Marines and Sailors conducted civil affairs missions throughout the area, successfully bringing the people of the city together with local leaders, and the local and national government.

The Marines began scaling back their food and water distribution role as NGOs developed the capability to take over operations. Marines continue to remain in the area to provide supplemental security for further distributions.

For more than the first two weeks in February, Marines and sailors of the 22nd MEU participated in the World Food Program's massive distribution of food. During this time, the Marines from the MEU's ground combat element, Battalion Landing Team, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, assisted U.N. security forces, the WFP and correlating NGOs as they distributed food throughout the city of Carrefour.

The first ship from the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group con-

taining Marines from the 22nd MEU, USS Carter Hall, arrived in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, March 1, to participate in an agricultural wash-down of all equipment that assisted relief efforts ashore in Haiti. This process stops the possible spread of environmental hazards that could enter the U.S.

The Marines and Sailors worked through the night of March 1, using pressure washers, scrub brushes and good old-fashioned elbow grease to remove all foreign items and soil from all of their military vehicles and equipment.

The USS Carter Hall is scheduled to return to the U.S. the second week of March, with the other two ships of the amphibious ready group slated to do the same process before mid-April.

The 22nd MEU is embarked aboard the ships of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group near the island of Haiti to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the wake of a devastating earthquake that struck the country Jan. 12.

The 22nd MEU is a multi-mission capable force comprised of Aviation Combat Element, Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461 (Reinforced); Logistics Combat Element, Combat Logistics Battalion 22; Ground Combat Element, Battalion Landing Team, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment; and its command element.



PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- A Naval Aircrewman looks over the city from his perch aboard a Navy Seahawk helicopter. (US Army photo by Spc. A.M. LaVey / XVIII Airborne Corps)

Malaria

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a malaria problem," said Adams.

"Even with appropriate protection such as bed netting, pyrethrin treated uniforms, and Deet applied to the skin, there is still a significant chance that one can acquire malaria," Adams said.

11 of the service members showed symptoms in theatre, while the other one didn't develop symptoms until he returned home to Fort Bragg, N.C.

Five of the cases were treated here in Haiti, two were treated aboard a Navy ship and the remaining had to be airlifted to the United States.

"We are going to treat malaria aggressively since complications from malaria can include long term illness and possibly death," said Adams. "We want to advocate for people to take their medications on time. This along with the other precautions should drastically reduce the chance of becoming ill." It is important that Servicemembers follow the guidelines on taking their medications and following preventative measures to reduce their risk of contracting malaria.

"Take it everyday," said Sgt. Zachary Hover, a medic with Headquarters Supply Company, Special Troops Battalion, U.S. Army South, Fort Sam Houston, Texas. "Most of these confirmed cases are Soldiers not taking their Doxy. Take it every day...every day."

POSTCARDS FROM HAITI



PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Pfc. Troy Sims, a human resources specialist with the XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, N.C., speaks with a local child outside the gates of Logistical Support Area Dragon on March 10. Sims provides administrative support for the Joint Task Force -Haiti. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. A.M. LaVey / XVIII Airborne Corps)



PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - U.S. Navy Cmdr. Richard Froderman gives children toys at the Association Solidarité et Fraternité, an orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, March 7, 2010. The DOD and USAID are in Haiti supporting Operation Unified Response, providing humanitarian assistance to Haitians affected by the 7.0-magnitude earthquake that struck the region Jan. 12, 2010. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 David A Frech)



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Arier Santiago teaches a Haitian child how to jump rope at the Solidante Fraternite orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, March 7, 2010. Santiago is in Haiti as part of Operation Unified Response. (DoD photo by MC1 David A. Frech)