



Vol. I, Issue 12

THE RESPONDER

Telling the Joint Task Force-Haiti story

a call to duty

March 24, 2010

JTF-Bravo hits ground running

by Staff Sgt. Bryan Franks

Joint Task Force-Bravo Public Affairs

PORT AU PRINCE, Haiti - Members of Joint Task Force-Bravo, Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras, worked all afternoon and into the evening to ready two of their UH-60 Blackhawks for rotary airlift operations March 21 in support of Joint Task Force-Haiti.

Maintainers and aircrew from 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment worked side by side to accomplish the unloading and reassembling of UH-60s so they could begin the transition process with the Navy rotary assets that have been serving JTF-Haiti for the past couple months.

"I'm very pleased with our team...at this point we're ahead of schedule," said Lt. Col. Salome Herrera, commander, 1-228th. "The advance team did a really great job of laying the ground work which allowed us to come right off the plane and begin working on our aircraft."

The more than 40-member team planned to have at least one aircraft operationally ready by the end of their first day in Haiti. However, they were able to get a second aircraft operational as well.



Deployed members from 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment race against the sun to get their UH-60s unfolded and operationally ready March 21. The 1-228th along with other members of Joint Task Force-Bravo from Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras deployed in support of Joint Task Force-Haiti March 21 and 22. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Bryan Franks/*Joint Task Force-Bravo Public Affairs*)

"It's because of the teamwork and attitude of our personnel that enable us to get this far," said Herrera. "We have been well received by JTF-Haiti, specifically the 24th Air Expeditionary Group. They have really gone above and beyond to support us."

Aircrew members began a change over with the Navy March 22 and will take full

control within the week.

"We are excited about our opportunity to contribute to this global effort here in Haiti," said Herrera.

JTF-Haiti is the U.S. military's task force providing disaster relief assistance, to Haiti following the Jan. 12 earthquake.

Clinton, Bush visit Haiti

by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- Former Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton visited Haiti March 22 on behalf of the Clinton-Bush Haiti Fund which was established to raise money for long-term recovery efforts. They wanted to remind donors of the long road ahead and the immense need for help during the recovery process.

Bush and Clinton visited internally displaced persons camps and even made a stop at the U.S. Embassy to thank the

troops on the ground, embassy workers, and Haitian nationals.

"Thank you for your service, members of the embassy, fellow agencies and military people here and the Haitian nationals for what you do here, day in and day out," Clinton said.

Troops from LSA Dragon were able to take some time off work to hear both former presidents speak.

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Former President George W. Bush addresses members of Joint Task Force Haiti, U.S. Embassy staff, and USAID staff members in the center of the U.S. Embassy in Haiti. Both Presidents Clinton and Bush are in Haiti to show their support. (U.S. Navy photo by Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist Spike Call)



Not far from the UN Headquarters, a UN soldier directs and monitors traffic near the Toussaint Louverture International Airport in Port-au-Prince. UN Soldiers perform security operations daily, ensuring the safety of the people of Haiti. (Photo by PFC Jasmine Slaton /11th PAD)

407th returns to Ft. Bragg



Maj. Gen. Simeon Trombitas, deputy commanding general, JTF-Haiti, stops to talk with several Soldiers from Alpha Company, 407th Brigade Support Battalion, 82nd Airborne Corps, while they play a game of hearts at the airfield March 21. After arriving two months ago to support Operation Unified Response, Soldiers are returning home to Fort Bragg, N.C. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)

Haitians work together to rebuild nation

by Pvt. Cody Barber
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI – The earthquake on Jan. 12 left countless people victim to a disaster that would leave a mark in the history books as well as in their lives. Where their homes once stood, is nothing more but a pile of memories. The foundation of Haiti was ripped from the roots but is now being rebuilt brick by brick and day by day. That would not have been possible if it was not for the help of one Haitian to another.

If you walk down the streets of Haiti, you will see a group of Haitians wearing bright yellow shirts picking up trash and clearing rubble. This is a program called Cash for Work, which gives Haitians the chance to help their country while also being paid.

These shirts symbolize the cooperative effort of the people and the start of getting this nation back on its feet.

“We see great examples of that every day and it’s absolutely essential to their recovery process,” said Lt. Gen. Ken Keen, commander, Joint Task Force Haiti.

There is also a new program called Sponsor a Family. This program focuses on the idea that Haitians whose homes were not damaged by the earthquake could invite displaced families into their homes to live with them.

With the Haitians working hand in hand with international organizations and each other, the spirit of Haiti will rise from the rubble, building new memories and a hope for a brighter future.



Lt. Gen. Ken Keen, commander, Joint Task Force-Haiti, talks with military and a local resident in downtown Haiti on Mar. 23, about relocating those displaced by the earthquake. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Cody Barber/11th PAD)



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Commander JTF-Haiti
Command Senior Enlisted Advisor JTF-Haiti
JTF-Haiti Public Affairs Officer
JTF-Haiti Public Affairs Senior Enlisted Advisor

Lt. Gen. P. K. (Ken) Keen
Sgt. Maj. Louis M. Espinal
Col. David Johnson
Sgt. Maj. Rick Black

Responder Staff:
Editor
Layout/Design

Sgt. 1st. Class Debra Thompson
Pvt. Samantha Hall

The editor can be reached at The Responder office located in the LSA Dragon sustainment tent, by DSN phone: 413-254-8007 or by email: JTFHFAOCI@CORE1.DJC2.MIL

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CT Guardsmen reflect on mission at Hotel Montana

by Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy
National Guard Bureau

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — The earthquake that rocked this city left many of its structures damaged or destroyed, including one landmark that many say represented a sense of stability within the city.

The Hotel Montana, a four-star hotel where diplomats, dignitaries and other world leaders often stayed, collapsed during the Jan. 12 earthquake trapping many of its guests in the rubble.

A few made it out alive, and the task of finding and identifying those who didn't fell to a variety of organizations, including search and recovery teams from France, Mexico, Canada and members of the U.S. military.

As a member of the services flight for the Connecticut Air National Guard's 103rd Airlift Wing, Tech Sgt. Bambi Putinas said her job encompasses not only personnel issues, food services and lodging, but also mortuary affairs.

"We all volunteered to come here, but we had no idea what we would be doing," she said. "In the back of our minds, we all thought possibly mortuary affairs."

When a call for volunteers to assist at the Hotel Montana site was put out, Putinas was one of many from her unit to volunteer for the mission.

"We would help with the preliminary identification of remains and make sure they got back home safely and also any articles, luggage, personal effects," she said. "We helped to document what we found, and those also would be shipped home."

Putinas said it was



As members of the services flight for the Connecticut Air National Guard's 103rd Airlift Wing, Tech. Sgt. Chris Jones (left) and Tech. Sgt. Bambi Putinas volunteered to do search and recovery at the destroyed Hotel Montana in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The four-star hotel collapsed during the Jan. 12 earthquake trapping many of its guests in the rubble. The two worked with search and recovery teams from France, Mexico, Canada and other branches of the U.S. military. (U.S. photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy/National Guard Bureau)

an important job to do, but also a difficult one.

"It was hard," she said. "Sometimes you could actually put a face with a name or an article or something that was inscribed."

For many who worked at the site, it was an opportunity to provide a sense of closure to the grieving family members of those who died in the hotel.

"...we were recovering those that had fallen at the (Hotel) Montana, so that they could be returned to their loved ones and bring closure," said Tech Sgt. Chris Jones, also with the 103rd AW. "We were sending them home."

That was part of what made many who worked at the site go back day after day.

"Some people wanted to go out every day, no matter what," said Putinas. "You think that you're going to find somebody one day and you just keep on searching, hoping to find someone."

Though it is part of the services mission set, mortuary affairs is not a skill that unit members use on a regular basis.

"It was a lot of nerves the first time we went out there," said Jones. "We do a lot of training, but this was our first real-world experience handling this aspect of our career field. It was a lot of nerves, a lot of anxiety, but everyone got out there and did their job and handled it very well.

Unit members also relied on each other for support during the recovery operations.

"We kept an open door policy and set rank aside if anybody needed to talk or had any questions," said Jones, who added that there were briefings and other opportunities for those at the site to discuss or work through any issues.

"We're a pretty strong group to begin with," said Putinas. "I think it was a great team that we put together, and we were there for each other."

Jones recalled the day the remains of Air Force Lt. Col. Ken Bourland were recovered.

"They said he was still in his uniform," said Jones. "His body was covered, and he was moved out of the rubble and all of us stopped working and we went to attention and saluted as he was moved past us. It was our way of paying final respects to him."

For those at the site, doing the job was something they took great pride in.

"We received a great sense of fulfillment in the job we were doing," said Jones. "We had an extreme amount of pride in the job that we had done."

And that is something that will stay with them long after they return home.

"I think I'll be telling my family members about the team I worked with," said Putinas. "And how great it was to work with the Army, the Navy, the French, the Canadians, and how people from all aspects of life could come together for one mission, in a country that none of us ever thought we would come to, and pull together and do a mission that needed to be done."

Naval officer to assist with rainy season preparation

by Spec. William Begley
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- Lt. Cmdr. John Jeffrey, a Civil Engineering Corps officer for the U.S. Navy, is a leader, a husband, a father, as well as a Sailor.

On top of all of this, Jeffrey is the director of the Facilities Engineering and Acquisition Division (FEAD) at Public Works Department in Pensacola, Fla., and is deployed to Haiti from Naval Air Station Pensacola in support of Operation Unified Response.

Jeffrey deployed to be part of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) team. The NAVFAC team has taken on a very important mission here in Haiti. The team does structural assessments and has been training engineers to help with these assessments. Another member of the NAVFAC team is Dennis Smith, an engineer from Carson City, Nev. Smith is glad to have Jeffrey as a part of the team.

"It's good to have an engineer that has experience," said Smith.

While in Haiti, Jeffrey has been tasked to assist in the coordination of cleaning out several drainage canals in Port-Au-Prince to prevent flooding in the lower-lying internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. These canals have become a dumping ground for the locals to put garbage and other waste in.

"I just came back from doing a site assessment at a canal near an IDP camp,"

said Jeffrey. "We are working on getting these canals cleaned up before the rainy season."

Jeffrey and NAVFAC are working closely with the government of Haiti and USAID to tackle this huge task. Once a priority project is identified and assessed, then appropriate action is determined, and the project is sub-contracted out to American firms with the requirement that they hire local Haitians as employees to do the work. This is just one of the ways the joint task force is working together with organizations helping Haitians to help themselves.

Jeffrey has been married to his wife for 12 years and they have two children, an 11-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old son. As a father, Jeffrey was moved by the hardships of the displaced families that he encountered.

"Seeing these young children in this environment, no shelter, inadequate supplies of food and water, poor sanitation, your heart goes out to them," said Jeffrey. "I think what we are doing here is much needed and I'm glad I get to contribute to that," Jeffrey said.

Jeffrey has been in the military for a total of 13 years, with 10 of those years spent in the Navy, and the other three as an infantryman in the Army. As a service member who has served in two different branches of the military, Jeffrey reflected



Lt. Cmdr. John Jeffrey just recently performed a site assessment at a canal near some internally displaced persons camps. The canals are full of garbage and need to be cleared before the rainy season hits to prevent flooding in the camps. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. William R. Begley/11th PAD)

on his experience.

"It's a great experience to work with all of the different services," said Jeffrey. "Seeing us come together to provide humanitarian assistance to the Haitian people is very rewarding."

When Jeffrey arrived in Haiti it had been raining hard for two days. This increased the sense of urgency and importance of the mission that Jeffrey and the team at NAVFAC share.

While it's a race against time for Jeffrey and the team, rain or shine they will do everything in their power to complete this mission in time.

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"We really appreciated them taking time to come out and support what we're doing," Spc. Sarah Lystra, administration specialist, U.S. Army South, deployed from San Antonio, Texas.

Clinton also said he wanted to thank people for their services rendered in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.

"It showed that they believed in what they stand for," said Spc. David Reed, mechanic, U.S. Army South, deployed from San Antonio, Texas. "They're not just on TV talking about the earthquake and devastation; they're

actually coming to the spot where it happened. It reassured me that we're doing all that we can to help the people of Haiti and that we are making a difference."

Senior Airmen Joseph D. Meade, communications technician, 49th Communications Squadron, 49th Fighter Wing, Holloman Air Force Base, deployed from New Mexico, also attended the visit.

"Hearing them speak showed they were behind what they were talking about," Meade said. "They were showing continuing support for the Haiti relief effort."



Sgt. Maj. Luis Gonzalez smiles as he gets his picture taken with former President George W. Bush inside the Embassy of The United States, Port-au-Prince, Haiti Mar. 22. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Cody Barber/11th PAD)

Civilian workers help military

by Pvt. Cody Barber
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI – Not all of JTF-Haiti is made up of those in uniform. Some of the work here is done by civilians assigned to the task force. Katharyne Gallagher is a Department of Defense civilian employee, assigned to Navy Facility Engineer and Command, NAVFAC.

Gallagher volunteered to go to Haiti and has been here since Feb. 9. She travels around Haiti and performs damage assessments of buildings that were either destroyed or damaged by the massive earthquake that battered Haiti on Jan. 12. Gallagher works with a crew of 50 personnel, and together they have checked numerous structures.

“For 15 days we would send out a group of 4,” said Gallagher. “In those 15 days we checked approximately 1,400 buildings.”

Each building they check has to be marked accordingly to how much damage it received during the earthquake.

“There are three different colors, red, yellow and green,” said Gallagher. “Red basically means that the building has either collapsed or is so severely damaged that it can’t be repaired. Yellow means the building is damaged to the point that you shouldn’t be in there but you can repair it and green is superficial and very minor damage.”

In efforts of coordination and collaboration, the team trained a group of Haitian engineers on how to assess building damages.

“We need them to start doing things on their own so when we leave, they will have the resources they need to complete the job,” Gallagher said.

The Haitians in training went through an in-class situation where they were shown how to do an ACT 20, which is a detailed evaluation safety assessment form. After that, a few of the Haitian engineers went out and completed field training exercises.

“We went through buildings with them and we asked for their opinion on the status of the building and decided if we agreed with them,” Gallagher said. “We wanted to make sure they looked at things the way we thought they should.”

Gallagher said by the end of February the Haitian engineers finished training and took control of the job and are doing approximately 1,500 buildings assessments each day.

Maj. Gen. Trombitas visits camps



Maj. Gen. Simeon Trombitas, deputy commanding general, JTF-Haiti, takes a minute to talk with a group of children March 21. Trombitas took the morning to walk through several internally displaced persons camps and see how the conditions were for people living there. He also spoke with local nationals and got feedback on how they were living. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)



Maj. Gen. Simeon Trombitas, deputy commanding general, JTF-Haiti, sat down at an internally displaced persons camp and spoke with the locals in charge. Trombitas wanted to see what help the locals were getting and how they were preparing for the rainy season. The general also stopped by several other camps to see how the living conditions were. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)

POSTCARDS FROM HAITI



A Haitian woman sells produce at a market right outside a riverbed camp. She was one of many Haitians selling things like squash, carrots and potatoes. Other vendors sold canned goods and grain. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)



At an internally displaced persons camp, a young girl gets camera shy. She is one of many children who run around camps, posing for photos when units pass through. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Cody Barber/11th PAD)



Two local Haitian children play hide-and-seek between tents at a riverbed camp. The children are only two of many locals who were displaced by Jan. 12th's earthquake. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)



Billy goats run around a destroyed building at a riverbed camp. Many animals now run around Port-au-Prince because the fencing that penned them was destroyed in the earthquake. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)