



Premier Issue

THE RESPONDER

Telling the Joint Task Force-Haiti story

a call to duty
February 12, 2010

Seabees bring their 'can do,' assist local MD's

By 2nd Lt. Victoria Brayton
Special Operations Command South

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Navy Seabees, deployed from Little Creek Amphibious Base, Va., built three tents Jan. 27 at the Quisqueya Christian School to help store medical supplies and provide more space for staffers sleep.

Various non-governmental organizations have been living at the school compound since the Jan. 12 earthquake. Doctors and nurses from relief organizations also use the site as their starting point before going out to the various clinics in Haiti.

"These tents are so very, very appreciated," said Mary Dekoter, wife of Quisqueya's elementary and middle school principal and a retired registered practical nurse. "It's a very good setup for all of our supplies."

Prior to the tent construction, medical supplies were stored in the school's chapel. Moving the supplies out to the tents enabled the chapel to be used to hold classes again, she said.

Dekoter has been volunteering as a nurse at the school for the past four years, but now she runs the medical tents for all of the NGOs and doctors.

The tents have electricity and air conditioning to help maintain the integrity of the medicines they store. Inside are thousands of different medicines and equipment

Continued on page 6



CARREFOUR, Haiti -- Marine Sgt. Maj. Louis M. Espinal, SOUTHCOM and JTF-Haiti command senior enlisted advisor, visited the 22nd and 24th MEU's, both of whom are providing humanitarian relief to the Haitian people affected by the Jan. 12 earthquake. The Marines are helping to provide security at different food distribution points here Feb. 5. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade / XVIII Airborne Corps)

Red Falcons return to Jammeau, build trust

By Pfc. Kissta Feldner
2nd BCT, 82nd Airborne Division

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Citizens of the town of Jammeau, Haiti, filed past a U.S. Army Light Medium Tactical Vehicle, carrying boxes full of water and food. The smallest of the locals, unable to hold all of their rations in their arms, carried them in their shirts.

These rations, high-energy biscuits and bottled water, were being distributed by paratroopers assigned to Team D, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, a culmination of Soldiers from different companies in the battalion.

Earlier this week, paratroopers met with leaders of Jammeau to establish good relations



Spc. Tommy Clark of Team D, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, hands bottled water to a local Haitian woman Jan 29. This was the second food drop in Jammeau, Haiti, for the 1/325th AIR "Red Falcons." (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Kissta Feldner 82nd Airborne Division)

Continued on page 6



TOP RESPONSE

JTF-H Commander thanks team for quick response to Haiti mission

Welcome to the first edition of the RESPONDER. I asked our Public Affairs staff to publish this on-line newsletter periodically to keep you informed midst the fluid environment that is JTF-Haiti. I hope you'll find it useful, and I encourage you to go-online whenever possible to stay abreast of information relating to our critical mission here in Haiti. Information is power, and I want each of you to stay well informed on our mission, our milestones, and incredible progress on this historic mission.



Keen

First, I want to thank each and every member of our team -- active, guard and reserve Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and Civilians, and our counterparts in the State Dept, USAID, and Health and Human Services -- for the amazing progress in easing the suffering and improving the lives of the Haitian people. This tragedy is one of epic proportions, and this relief operation has been a true team effort in every sense of the word.

It has now been one month since the earthquake, and the eyes of the world have been focused squarely on Haiti and the work you are doing. The Haitian people have demonstrated their amazing resilience; as Ambassador Merten noted to the press recently, no one should HAVE to be so resilient.

Of course, the Haitian people have suffered greatly, but Americans are not without our own losses in this tragedy. More than 100 American citizens perished in the earthquake, and the tragedy struck particularly close to home with the loss of USAF Lt Col (select) Ken Bourland, who died with several other Americans in the collapse of the Hotel Montana.

Let us draw together in prayer and strength for the victims and their families. We remain mindful of their loss, as we strive to pay tribute to their lives by carrying on in the face of adversity, and helping to ease the suffering of thousands in the wake of this devastating event.

You have no doubt noticed our evolving mission here in Haiti. In the beginning, we were focused on opening the airfield and port so that critical search and rescue teams and medical professionals could arrive and render life saving aid. After that phase, we shifted our priority to getting medical care, water, and food out to the people most in need, to provide life saving aid. As we continue work in these critical areas, new priorities will arise. Our mission remains focused on enabling our government, through USAID, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, and the Government of Haiti to deliver commodities and medical aid to the populace; to concurrently transition our efforts to capable partners when they are ready; and to plan a phased transition for redeployment as directed.

As for our "end of mission" - we don't yet know when that will occur. We assess daily our force requirements to meet mission demands, and adjust our force posture accordingly...several capabilities have been off-ramped, others have redeployed, and still others are pending decisions as we continue to make progress on our objectives here in Haiti. Suffice to say, we will retain only the essential capability to meet our mission objectives, and "right size" in stride.

There's an old Haitian proverb that says many hands make light work, and that is the focus of our efforts here - to support, assist and help the Government of Haiti, USAID, the UN and the various non-governmental professionals who will remain in Haiti doing this important work for many years. Of course, we can't do this alone. We are all citizens of the same planet, and our partners in the UN and MINUSTAH, and international partners like Canada, Brazil, Spain, Mexico, Sri Lanka, and so many others are joined together in this monumental task. We are a global team in every sense of the word. And we're making a real difference. The USNS COMFORT has become a global icon for expeditionary medicine, and we have helped provide food and water to literally millions of

Continued on page 6



JOINT TASK FORCE HAITI OFFERS CONDOLENCES FOR LOST TEAMMATE

PORT-AU-PRINCE - U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. (Select) Kenneth Bourland's remains were recovered from the ruins of the Hotel Montana in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Feb. 7 after more than three weeks of intensive search and rescue operations, under the direction of U.S. Southern Command and concurrent with ongoing Joint Task Force-Haiti's humanitarian disaster relief operations.

Bourland, 37, of Birmingham, Ala., accompanied U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Ken Keen, Deputy Commander of SOUTHCOM and Commanding General of Joint Task Force-Haiti, during a visit to Haiti Jan. 12 for official meetings with Haitian defense and security counterparts.

"We extend our deepest condolences to the Bourland family; we will continue to keep them in our hearts and prayers" said Keen. "Ken was a great military officer and an invaluable member of our team; his loss has stricken us all deeply, and we collectively mourn with all who've been blessed to serve with such a consummate American Patriot.



THE RESPONDER

Telling the Joint Task Force-Haiti story

A CALL TO DUTY

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. Billy J. Buckner

Sgt. Maj. Sharon Opeka

Responder Staff:

Editor

Public Affairs Specialist

Sgt. Richard Andrade

Spc. A.M. LaVey

The editor can be reached at The Responder

office located in the LSA Dragon Sustainment

tent, by phone: 797-7009 and or by email:

richard.andrade@us.army.mil

This newspaper is an authorized publication for the members of Joint Task Force-Haiti. Content of The Responder are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. Government, or the Department of Defense. The Responder is an unofficial publication authorized by Army Regulation 360-1. Editorial content is prepared, edited and provided by the Public Affairs office of Joint Task Force-Haiti.

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

SAFETY

Make traffic safety first point of performance

By Mr. Jesse Martin
JTF-H Safety Director

You may have noticed that the road conditions in Haiti are significantly different from those in the United States. Driving in Haiti must be undertaken with extreme caution. There is neither a written nor a driving test required to qualify for a driver's license. Road laws are not generally known or applied.

The situation on the roads can be described as chaotic at best. Roads are generally unmarked and signs indicating the direction of traffic flow seldom exist. Few roads have lane indicators and drivers use whatever part of the road is open to them, even if it is not the correct side of the road. Traffic is extremely congested in urban areas, and hours-long traffic jams develop quickly throughout the country. Speed limits are seldom posted and are generally ignored. In many cases vehicles are overloaded and lack adequate braking



A UN security forces soldier directs traffic in a busy street in Port-Au-Prince. Traffic is extremely congested in urban areas, and traffic jams develop quickly throughout the country. Feb. 9. (U.S. Army photo by Lt. Col. John 'Jay' Boyd/20th MHD)

systems or in need of repair. Drivers should be particularly cautious at night, as unlighted vehicles can appear without warning.

Signaling imminent actions is not widely practiced, and not all drivers use turn indicators or international hand signals properly.

For instance, many drivers use their left blinker for all actions, including turning

right and stopping in the road, and others flap their left arm out the window to indicate that they will be taking an unspecified action. Drivers do not always verify that the road is clear before switching lanes, turning, or merging into traffic. Huge potholes may occur without warning. This will also cause drivers to execute unpredictable and dangerous maneuvers in heavy traffic.

Many Haitian drivers can be quite aggressive and will seldom yield. Walls built to the edge of roads frequently make it impossible to see around corners, forcing drivers to edge their cars into the road at inter-

sections to check for oncoming traffic. Be advised drinking and driving is illegal in Haiti, but some local national frequently drive after drinking, especially at night.

Remember, when driving in Haiti, do so defensively. Avoid confrontations, such as jockeying for position and remain aware of all vehicles around you. Stay safe out there!

Military postal service to begin in Haiti

By Spc. A.M. LaVey
XVIII Airborne Corps

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- U.S. postal inspectors have arrived here to conduct security assessments and help prepare to set up an Army post office, as well as to assist with the restoration of mail service to the earthquake-ravaged country.

"We have 30 days from the time we arrive in country to set up military mail service," said

Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Nelson, Joint Task Force-Haiti J-1 non-commissioned officer-in-charge.

"The civilian postal inspectors will determine what needs to be done before we have an Army postal unit arrive," said Nelson.

According to a U.S. Postal Service press release, this experienced team of postal inspectors has sharpened their skills in the aftermath of such large-scale disasters as Hurricane Katrina.

One of the inspectors, Kenneth Miller,

has also been battle-tested as the former chief of postal operations for the Iraq theater, before he retired from the Army.

"This mission is a lot different because the Haitian postal infrastructure is nonexistent," said Nelson.

"Postal service was stopped because the main facility was destroyed - so there is currently no mail coming in or going out at this time," he said. "We are going to have to build this Army post office from the ground up," said Miller.

Re-establishing postal services in Haiti requires close coordination with the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and various components of the Department of Defense.

The process of setting up an Army post office is a joint effort between the Department of Defense, the U.S. Postal Service, and the liaison between the two - the Military Postal Service Agency.

"When they postal inspectors turn in their report, the JTF-H will work with MPSA

and the USPS to do what needs to be done to get postal operations up and running," said Lt. Col. Edward Allen, the chief of postal operations for JTF-H.

There must be facilities and personnel to accomplish the mission. Transportation needs to be secured and coordinated, postal Soldiers need to be in country, routes need to be cleared, security measures must be in place, unit mail clerks must be trained and the necessary equipment must be in place.

"To get to the point where a Soldier can receive mail here, we have to build the air-mail terminal at the airport so that we can receive the incoming mail," said Allen. "From there we take the mail, receive it, and sort it, so that the mail can be transported to the units."

"The lack of postal infrastructure in Haiti will make it difficult to meet the 30 days guidance," said Allen. "In the beginning the post will be limited in scale to what can be sent and received."

Continued on page 6

22nd MEU Corpsmen bring smiles to Haiti

By Cpl. Alan Addison
22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit

DANO, HAITI -- While the humanitarian aid and disaster relief efforts for the people of Haiti brought much needed supplies to Haitian residents, some earthquake victims are still in need of more than just food and water supplies.

Corpsmen from Battalion Landing Team, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, treated injured and sick residents of Dano, Haiti, Jan. 28.

After a reconnaissance team established a treatment location and all the medical equipment was prepared, corpsmen donned latex gloves and started their mission.

Although the seriously injured are already evacuated, residents began to form long lines in order to receive attention from the staff.

As the mission began, patients were placed in lines based on the severity of their injuries, after which each got the opportunity to sit down with a corpsman and discuss their ailment. Once each person was assessed, they received medicine along with instructions on when to take it. Corpsmen examined more than 60 patients, whose injuries ranged from serious infections to basic headaches.

"Our mission is to come in and render medical support, not only in terms of patient care, but also medical supplies," said Navy Lt. Matt Swartz, surgeon for the BLT.

"This is one of those things I'm thankful I got the chance to do, we get to help people out with their basic needs. Some people just need a laugh and that's what we're here for, to help out," said Petty Officer 1st Class Simba Wallace, a hospitalman and leading petty officer for the BLT.

This mission for the corpsmen differed slightly from others because of the surrounding environment. Instead of operating in a small town, the corpsmen found themselves at the top of a small mountain in the midst of three small homes.

"These are the places that seem to get forgotten," said Wallace. "As you can see, there are three homes and we've treated more than 60 people, this is what I like and I'm glad they found a remote location to give these people some aid."

Some of the more junior corpsmen also got the opportunity to come out and lend a hand in the mission.

"It feels really good to be out here. This is my first time being out and deployed, so it feels good to actually get out and help," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Neil Goldstein, a hospitalman and a BLT corpsman. "Seeing the smiles of the people gives you a feeling that's hard to express."

One by one, people trickled in and out of the treatment area in front of the middle home, after receiving whatever care they needed. As patients began to exit the triage location, so did the supplies.



Petty Officer 1st Class Simba Wallace, a hospitalman and leading petty officer for Battalion Leading Team, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, administers an IV to a Haitian woman during a medical mission in Dano, Haiti, Jan. 28. Throughout the mission, corpsmen treated more than 60 patients with wounds ranging from serious infections to headaches. (U.S. Marine photo by Cpl. Alan Addison)

"We brought what we thought we would need and now we're running low, but our guys are doing the best service to the people as they can," said Wallace. "I'm sad that we can't stay and I didn't have an enormous amount of meds, but I think the people we helped appreciated what we've done."

As the day drew to an end, local Haitians trickled away from the site with bags of medicine and bandages putting a close on a successful mission. Although the corpsmen couldn't stay as long as they wanted or supply everyone with limitless medication, they worked hard to provide the locals with what they needed that day.

Petty Officer 1st Class Simba Wallace, a hospitalman and leading petty officer for Battalion Leading Team, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, administers an IV to a Haitian woman during a medical mission in Dano, Haiti, Jan. 28. Throughout the mission, corpsmen treated more than 60 patients with wounds ranging from serious infections to headaches.

"Gold Falcons" distribute supplies throughout Haiti

By Staff Sgt. John Seth Laughter
82nd Airborne Division

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – Millions of bottles of water, pallets of rations stretching over an airport tarmac disappearing into the dusty haze, hundreds of trucks filled with bags of rice, a battle hardened U.S. Army Soldier on bended knee gently handing a day's supply of food to a young girl, or massive earth moving machines carefully clearing the rubble of fallen buildings to reveal an earthquake survivor; these are the images seen each and every day in Haiti. But, none of this could be possible without a certain group of paratroopers working in the background, orchestrating the supply of this massive humanitarian aid and assistance mission, ensuring that the 2nd Brigade Combat Team has the equipment and aid supplies they need to reach out to the citizens of Haiti.

They are called the Gold Falcons, these paratroopers of the 407th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, and their mission is often successfully completed without the fanfare and glory received by their brethren on the front lines. It is easy to forget that these front line victories could not be possible without the support of the Gold Falcons.

Each evening the leaders of the Gold Falcons assemble in a small tent next to the runway of the Haiti International Airport to coordinate the daily distribution to the 2BCT assets. "You deploy with what you've got," said Lt. Col. Matt Shatzkin, commander, 407th BSB. "You have to be like Lewis and Clark and find the right equipment or contract to get the job done."

The small Haiti International Airport was the busiest airport in the world following the devastating earthquake, Jan. 12. Hundreds of civilian and military aircraft landed, disgorging their cargos of Soldiers, equipment and supplies. Of course there was limited room on the tarmac for all this cargo. Using heavy vehicles, special lifting equipment, and 24-hour non-stop labor, the Gold Falcons started organizing the supplies and delivering them to the battalions of the 2BCT and

**"We are the first line.
We are the base on
which the humanitarian
aid mission is built"**
-Capt. Albert Park



Spc. Vincent Valone a motor transport driver, A Company, 407th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, guides the loading of storage containers filled with equipment and supplies on to a Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck, Load Handling System containers shipped to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, from the United States, Feb. 6. The 407th provides precision supply and support for the paratroopers of the 2nd BCT as they provide humanitarian aid and assistance to the people of Haiti. (US Army Photo by Staff Sgt. John Seth Laughter)

various organizations working to bring humanitarian aid to Haiti.

Up to 15 convoys depart each day to different locations around Port-au-Prince and the surrounding countryside. "We ship humanitarian and sustainment aid for the brigade, nongovernment organizations or

any organization that needs help," stated Sgt. 1st Class Montrell Kea, platoon sergeant, A Company, 407th BSB. "We have the assets they need."

Through the dark of night, navigating the twisted roads and byways of Port-au-Prince, made less navigable by fallen buildings, the Gold Falcon convoys move like they have been working here for years and not a few short weeks. We run the majority of the supply missions at night, Sgt. Walter Isengard, a motor transport operator, A Company, 407th BSB, said. The curfew keeps the traffic down at night and we can operate faster and with less chance of an accident in these crowded streets, he continued.

In less than 30 minutes, a convoy has

traveled across Port-au-Prince to the Petionville Club where the 1st Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment has set up a forward operating base. In less than an hour, that same convoy has delivered its load of food and water, and headed back to the airport.

Talking about this particular convoy, Spc. Marco Marquez, motor transport operator, A Company, 407th BSB, said "We run two or three convoys to different locations every night and sometime they run into the day."

Its not only the challenges of transportation the Gold Falcons have to face, it is also a myriad of logistical issues they must overcome. "We are structured for a combat environment and geared for self-sustainment," Isengard said. "Now we have a whole country that needs food and water and we are trying to sustain the whole thing. It's a whole different set of logistical challenges."

Food, water, humanitarian aid, medical supplies, vehicles, generators and a myriad of other pieces of equipment or supplies are delivered daily throughout Haiti and the surrounding countryside. In the non-stop passing of convoys, the Gold Falcons

CONTINUATION

Keen

continued from page 2

people here. Every day is better than the day before. But much work remains to be done. There is no “quick fix” here - this mission requires dedication, hard work, and above all, patience. Thanks for delivering that daily as you set the standard for all to emulate.

Lastly, take care of yourselves and each other. Stay in touch with your families. Use social media like Facebook and Twitter to let your friends back home know what your part is in this effort. And keep safety at the forefront of everything you do.

This mission is vitally important. You are each making history here in Haiti. On behalf of Americans everywhere, I thank you for your service, and I’m proud and honored to serve with you.

LTG P.K. Keen, US Army
Commander, JTF-Haiti

Seabees

continued from page 1

cines and equipment from dressings to orthotic supplies, Dekoter said.

When the school asked the Seabees if they could build storage tents, saying yes was easy.

“Being presented with the opportunity to help these doctors was awesome,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Andrew Kauffold, a construction electrician. “They’re the real heroes, you know.”

Petty Officer 1st Class Phillip Brown, also a construction electrician, agreed that helping out the doctors and school managers was exactly what Seabees do.

“Whatever we can do to add to the relief effort and make life easier for these people, that’s what we’ll strive to do,” he said.

“We’re in the business of customer service. Whatever is needed, we give it. As long as we’ve got the materials and the tools, we can build it.”

In addition to setting up the two medical storage tents and one berthing tent, the Seabees have regularly checked in to see if they can offer any other services.

“They’re so helpful and polite, we’re well cared for,” Dekoter said.

Red Falcons

continued from page 1

said 1st Sgt. Brian Knight, first sergeant of D Company, 1/325th AIR, “Red Falcons.”

Prior to this particular humanitarian aid distribution, they spent several days conducting reconnaissance around the area trying to find places affected by the earthquake, said Spc. Austin Ibarra of Team D. This was the second humanitarian aid distribution the Red Falcons conducted for the town. This drop was more successful than the last, said Knight, due to the number of people present. Word spread quickly through the small town, made clear by the amount of people using their cell phones while waiting in line for food, he said.

The organization of this distribution was obvious as the townspeople stood in single file line with their children. Ten at a time, the locals approached the LMTV. Each was given an armful of high-energy biscuits and a 1.5 liter bottle of water for every two people. However, once everyone in the town had cycled through, they were able to come back for seconds or even thirds.

Ten thousand biscuits were given out as well as 500 bottles of water, which will feed 500 people for four-and-a-half days, said Lt. Ben Wackerlin, a platoon leader with Team D.

Although the biscuits are a source of food for the locals, they still need the staples of their regular diet, said Knight. Within a few days the Red Falcons will provide 80 pound bags containing rice, beans and cooking oil, and will feed a family of five for two weeks. This allows the people to concentrate on other essential tasks, such as searching for work, rather than waiting in line for food every day.

When the rations ran out for the day, the Soldiers promised the locals they would be back soon with more.

Postal Service

continued from page 3

The Soldiers tasked with setting up the JTF-H Army Post Office are from the 502nd Postal Platoon, 502nd Human Resources Company, Brigade Troops Battalion, 4th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), Fort Hood, Texas, and should be on the ground within a week.

tainment Command (Expeditionary), Fort Hood, Texas, and should be on the ground within a week.

The postal platoon, whose mission is to run a military post office and assist in mail terminal and distribution facilities, will have 48 hours to set up the APO, said Miller.

“The middle of February is the target date for postal operations to begin. The ground has already been broken on a military mail terminal and the troops are on their way,” Miller said.

Gold Falcons

continued from page 5

supply the tools necessary to keep the massive Haitian relief effort running. Even as these paratroopers unload hundreds of containers and vehicles from ships arriving at the port of Port-au-Prince the pace never slows. “We are the first line. We are the base on which the humanitarian aid mission is built,” said Capt. Albert Park, commander, B Company, 407th BSB.

Shatzkin compares the challenges they are facing in Haiti with missions they have been training for back at Fort Bragg, N.C. We trained on purifying water for mass consumption at MacArthur Lake on Fort Bragg, he said. But here in Haiti we have to adapt our skills in water treatment to newly dug and pre-existing wells within the city.

“You have to find a way to make things work,” Shatzkin stated.

No one notices when the Gold Falcons are operating at full capacity, supplying the humanitarian aid work in Haiti. Without fail the 2nd BCT paratroopers and the aid workers have the supplies they need to continue on with their mission. “If we are doing everything right, no one notices,” Shatzkin said. “We are behind the scenes making the soldier successful.”

It is the precision download, delivery and distribution capabilities of the Gold Falcons that make the efforts of the 2nd BCT and its partners successful. “We work so everyone doesn’t have to look over their shoulders wondering where their supplies are,” Shatzkin said. “They can focus on the mission at hand, whether that’s the fight or the humanitarian mission here in Haiti.”

POSTCARD FROM HAITI



Servicemembers and staff of Joint Task Force-Haiti enjoy watching the Super Bowl on a projection screen at Logistics Support Area Dragon. Soldiers from the XVIII Airborne Corps, 82nd Airborne Division among others, along with Airmen from Pope Air Force Base joined with Families of servicemembers helped to pack boxes of fruit, sodas and chips for the Haiti-deployed servicemembers to enjoy. Feb. 7. (US Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade / XVIII Airborne Corps)

Servicemembers at LSA Dragon enjoy Super Bowl

By Sgt. Richard Andrade
XVIII Airborne Corps

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- The Super Bowl is an American institution, right next to Uncle Sam and Mom's apple pie. Many people watch the annual game in the comfort of their homes or at sports bars. For servicemembers deployed to more austere parts of the world - it is a much anticipated treat.

According to Peter Schwartz, of Forbes magazine, Super Bowl Sunday and New Year's Eve are the two biggest party days in the United States. The New Orleans Saints' victory over Indianapolis in the Super Bowl was watched by more than 106 million people, surpassing the 1983 finale of "M-A-S-H" to become the most-watched program in U.S. television history, according to the Nielsen ratings.

At Logistics Support Area Dragon, where many servicemembers work and live, a projection screen was set up, and snacks, donated by the USO North Carolina, Walmart and other vendors, were passed out and enjoyed by all.

"I think it was a good experience, honestly I didn't think we would be able to do that here," said Marine Cpl. Jerry Vandyk, an artilleryman with Company B, 1st Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

"It boosted our morale a lot, he said. "This is my third deployment, and I have never done anything like this"

"This has been the highlight of the Haiti mission, our morale went up, it was a good night," said Army Pvt. Ricardo Frias of Company C, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, XVIII Airborne Corps. Army Pvt. James Chvala a combat engineer, also with Co. C, said that the Super Bowl event was one the greatest things done at LSA Dragon and was a real morale booster.

When asked about his mission in Haiti, Chvala said, "Everything that we are doing here is for a great cause, and I am glad to still be here, doing my part." The Super Bowl was "a big morale pusher, especially with us being away from

our family and friends," said Spc. Dannie Jones, a motor transport operator, also of Co. C. "This boosted our morale up, I am happy they put this together for us."

"There was a lot of effort over the last week to bring it all together," said Lt. Col. Peyton Potts, chief of current operations for JTF-H and XVIII Airborne Corps. Potts was instrumental in coordinating 11 other sites in Haiti where servicemembers got a chance to enjoy the Super Bowl with chips and soda.

"It was a fantastic set up," said Potts. Soldiers from the XVIII Airborne Corps, 82nd Airborne Division among others, along with Airmen from Pope Air Force Base joined with Families of servicemembers helped to pack boxes of fruit, sodas and chips for the Haiti-deployed servicemembers to enjoy.

"I think this was a great break for everybody after all of their hard work," said Potts. "They have worked really hard the last couple of weeks trying to help get this country back on its feet."