



Vol. I, Issue 8

THE RESPONDER

Telling the Joint Task Force-Haiti story

a call to duty
March 10, 2010

Spec Ops Wing lends hand in Operation Unified Response

By A1C Claire Behney
193rd Special Operations Wing

It's been more than a month since the 7.0 magnitude earthquake devastated southern Haiti and more than a month since three aircraft and more than 50 Airmen of the 193rd deployed on a humanitarian mission in support of Operation Unified Response.

Two C-130s and one Com-mando Solo aircraft have deployed in support of this mission. Staged outside the devastation area, these aircraft have flown for a combined total of more than 430 flying hours since deploying Jan. 14.

"Our first flight in [Haiti] was just a few days after it happened, so we were pretty much there at the fore-front when everything first

continued on page 5

Return to normalcy: Haitians go back to work weeks after disaster

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

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI – Locals sit by their stands, filled with everything from rice, to cigarettes, to Revlon lipstick. Men carry enormous bags of fruits and vegetables on their heads, zigzagging through the maze that makes up the "orange market." It was dubbed this by the U.S. soldiers in the area because of the massive amount of oranges that lay in piles by the side of the road, waiting to be peeled by Haitian women, stuffed into plastic bags, and sold to locals as they walk the streets.

The market is a bustling place, as are the areas of Port-au-Prince where vendors fill

continued on page 5



A local woman sits in the "orange market", selling fruit to passersby. She and many citizens of Port-au-Prince have begun going back to work, seeking a sense of normalcy in their day-to-day lives, more than a month after the Jan. 12 earthquake. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Kissta M. Feldner)



Abandon ship

CARIBBEAN SEA, USNS Comfort -- Sailors are lowered in life boats during a live abandon ship drill. More than 900 embarked Sailors participated in the drill designed to educate members on the safest means to disembark the ship in case of emergency Mar. 8. (U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Matthew Jackson)



Lt. Gen. Ken Keen, deputy commanding general, U.S. Southern Command, and commander, Joint Task Force-Haiti, speaks with Sailors aboard the Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort Mar. 8. (U.S. Navy photo by MCCS Spike Call)

JTF-Haiti commander commends Comfort's crew

By MC2 Class Shannon Warner
USNS Comfort

USNS COMFORT, At Anchor – Lt. Gen. P. K. “Ken” Keen, commander, Joint Task Force - Haiti, visited USNS Comfort Mar. 8 to express his appreciation for the hard work and dedication exhibited by the crew aboard the hospital ship during the past several weeks in support of Operation Unified Response.

During his visit, Keen lauded the efforts of the crew of Sailors and civil mariners whose devotion to the multinational humanitarian mission led to the successful treatment of 794 Haitians affected by the destructive 7.0 magnitude earthquake that devastated the Caribbean nation’s capitol of Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas Jan. 12.

“Hospital ships represent the very best of America,” Keen said. “The job each and every one of you has done, from the crew to the medical staff has been extraordinary.”

Keen spoke to the gathered crew on the mess deck and praised their efforts alongside Anthony Banbury, Acting Principal

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

“Thank you so much each and every one of you for the lives you saved,” said Banbury. “The lives you have touched, the memory of what you have done, will endure for a long time in the hearts and minds of the Haitian people.”

After the address, Keen toured the casualty receiving area where the first earthquake victims were triaged Jan. 19 before the ship arrived off Haiti’s coast. Keen also visited the hospital ship’s surgical suite which contains 12 operating rooms and met with the operating room staff responsible for 843 surgeries.

Keen said, “Comfort has enabled us to meet the needs of the people and to address the most traumatic injuries.”

Walking through the corridors of the hospital ship, Keen took time to greet members of the crew and personally thank them. One of the Sailors greeted by Keen was Petty Officer 2nd Class

Reneline Llamas, a hospital corpsman.

“It’s an honor to be recognized. It makes you feel really special,” said Llamas, a surgical technician who performed her duties in the pre- and post-operative care ward aboard Comfort. “I’m so blessed to be on this mission. I will never forget what I’ve had the opportunity to do here.”

More than 20,000 service members, including 1,400 Sailors, civilian mariners and nongovernmental volunteers aboard Comfort, have provided aid during Operation Unified Response, a USAID-led relief effort in conjunction with the government of Haiti to begin the steps toward the Caribbean nation’s recovery from January’s catastrophe.

To date military forces attached to the Joint Task Force in Haiti have provided a little more than 2.6 million bottles of water, 2.2 million meals, and 149,000 pounds of medical supplies.

“Thank you for everything you have done,” said Keen. “As you go back home, remind folks that Haiti is still a country in desperate need of the world’s assistance.”



THE RESPONDER

Telling the Joint Task Force-Haiti story

A CALL TO DUTY

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

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209th MP cooks pleased to support JTF-Haiti

By Sgt. Richard Andrade
XVIII Airborne Corps

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – Food service specialists from the 209th Military Police Company base out of Fort Polk, La. are serving hot chow at Logistics Support Area Dragon for servicemembers here.

When Staff Sgt. Marshall Gillard, a food service specialist from the 209th Military Police Company from Fort Polk, La., heard that he was going to Haiti he said he was excited, “I had brand new Soldiers who had just gotten to the company from initial entry training,” he said. “It is a good experience for them to come to Haiti and train in this environment.”

“Our mission here is to provide food support for the 209th MP Co., Joint Task Force-Haiti and U.S. Army South Soldiers,” said Gillard. “We are providing meals for Soldiers here that haven’t had a hot meal in over thirty days.”

Gillard said prior to receiving notification for deployment, everyone was volunteering. “I work in a consolidated dining facility where there are over 80 cooks,” said Gillard. “After the other cooks found out I was going to Haiti, they were calling me on my cell phone asking if they could volunteer and come with me.”

Gillard is proud to serve in Haiti. “I feel



Cooks from the 209th Military Police Co. based out of Fort Polk, La. serve hot chow at Logistics Support Area Dragon. Some servicemembers had not eaten hot chow in over a month Mar. 3. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade)

blessed to be here, seeing all the nations come together helping each other for a good cause,” I am just glad to be a part of it. I am going to be proud to go home and tell my kids, I have two girls and a boy, look what your dad was a part of.”

“The devastation in Haiti is “far worse

than what you see in the streets,” said Sgt. Willie Taylor, a food service specialist, also from the 209th MP Co. “I do feel sad; a lot of people are in the streets with their hands out, needing help.”

Taylor has a wife and six kids back home. “My wife is very glad that I am on this mission, I hope these people here get the help that they need, and they feel safe when we leave here,” he said. “I hope they feel confident knowing that the United States did their part in helping them.”

Staff Sgt. Amy Hurst is also a food service specialist from the 209th MP Co., and she compared the Haiti mission to Iraq.

In Iraq “you help contractors and you work in the dining facility. Here the cooks are doing they are trained to do, which is working in the mobile kitchen trailer,” she said.

Hurst, who has been in Haiti for a little over a month, said “I think it is sad, you see the kids ask you for food and water, you see the buildings collapsed and rubble everywhere.”

The Haiti situation is improved Hurst said. “They have made great improvements since I got here. They are cleaning the rubble off of the roads; the streets are a lot better,” she said.

When speaking of the international collaboration uniting to help Haiti, Hurst said, “I think it is awesome that all the different countries and all of the branches of the military are here working together to help the people of Haiti.”



Food service specialists from the 209th Military Police Co. based out of Fort Polk, La. are serving hot chow at Logistics Support Area Dragon. Servicemembers line up to be served at a Mobile Kitchen Trailer Mar. 3. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade)

Labrador retriever brings special skills to Haiti

By Sgt. Richard Andrade

XVIII Airborne Corps

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – A 6-year-old yellow Labrador retriever named Spirit, a cadaver finding dog, is here to find the bodies of American citizens that might still be under the rubble after the Jan. 12 earthquake.

Hilda Wood, a firefighter from Miami Dade County Fire and Rescue, Fla., is Spirit's handler. Wood and Spirit are tasked to recover American citizens' remains here in Haiti.

During her time here, "Spirit has been very successful, I believe we have 7 recoveries in a week's time," said Wood.

While working at the Hotel Montana, Wood said, "we had a confirmed find; we kept searching and found another recovery."

"One of the things that I am most proud of on this trip is that, at the Hotel Montana site at an area that had been cleared by other responders, by people, I decided that I was going to go in there anyway, down a tunnel into a cavern, deep down in the rubble," said Wood, "I thought, if it is not cleared by a dog, it is not really cleared, so I went in and I started to detail the back wall and about midpoint she alerted and there was a confirmed find within ten minutes."

Spirit, who has been working for five and half years, has an advantage over her human counterparts, "Humans don't have the nose that the dog has, there is no way that they can do the job the dog does," said Wood.

"Rainy weather will dampen down the scent a little bit, but not throw Spirit off," she said. "In the hot weather I just have to monitor Spirit's panting, if she is panting heavily, she is not really scenting as well." "In real extreme heat, we will work 20 minutes, then let her rest, I make sure I am always hydrating her."

U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 Stormy Ripley, a personnel and recovery officer with JTF-H operations, helped to bring Spirit to Haiti.

"Bringing this cadaver dog to Haiti is a very big deal," said Ripley, "Had we not got Spirit to come to Haiti, we may not have found all of the people under the rubble."

"Wood comes highly recommended by a top evaluator that evaluates all dogs that went to Iraq and Afghanistan," she said.



A 6-year-old yellow Labrador retriever named Spirit, a cadaver finding dog, and her trainer, Hilda Wood, firefighter from Miami Dade County Fire and Rescue, Fla. are here to recover American citizens' remains that might still be under the rubble after the Jan. 12 earthquake. (Courtesy photo)

"This dog may not pick if you are an AMCIT or not," Ripley said, "but she will show you where to dig."

Ripley is confident that all the remains of the American citizens will be returned home by next week.

"We have gone from 120 AMCITs that are known by investigation, down to six," she said.

Ripley said some people are unaware of cadaver dogs.

"This is an asset that people don't think about or are not really educated on, or they might have a lot of myths and misunderstandings about them," she said.

When Spirit is not working with the military or the police department, "she goes out as a subcontract, or with NAVFAC who own the rubble removing equipment," Ripley said.

"This is a big inter-agency collaboration between NAVFAC, mortuary affairs, the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team, there are civilian organizations and military," said Ripley.

"What's unusual about this collaboration is that you have Department of Defense and Department of State all working for one goal. "No one group could have done this alone," Ripley said.



Hilda Wood, firefighter from Miami Dade County Fire and Rescue, Fla. and her 6-year-old yellow Labrador retriever named Spirit, a cadaver finding dog, are here to recover American citizens' remains that might still be under the rubble after the Jan. 12 earthquake. (Courtesy photo)

Normalcy

continued from page 1

the streets, selling second-hand clothing, beautiful paintings and hand-carved wooden sculptures. Seven weeks after the earthquake that devastated Haiti's capital, and life is ever so slowly returning to normal.

Many citizens have spent these few weeks cleaning and restoring their places of business, just wanting to get back to work and restore some normalcy to their daily routine after the traumatic events following the disaster.

Charlotte Germain, a local seamstress, went back to work at the brightly painted dry-cleaning shop only 15 days after the earthquake. She sits behind an ancient, pedal-powered sewing machine every day, making clothes to sell to passersby. She has worked in the shop for two years and has always had customers. "I've never had a problem," Germain said. "Lot's of business." Following the earthquake, business is slow, she said, but she's not surprised. Because few people have money, she didn't expect to have the same amount of clientele as before. However, she still comes in each day, makes her clothes, and waits for business to pick up.

A local supply store has also seen a decrease in customers, but for a different reason. A back-to-school paradise, the store's isles are lined with binders of every size, tablets, pens and paperclips. "Before the earthquake, most business was school supplies," said the store manager.

But, people are afraid to send their children back to school, she said, so she's seen a drastic difference in her amount of customers.

Some store owners have had more luck. One of four Delimarts, a local grocery store chain, also opened two weeks ago after spending weeks cleaning, reconstructing, and stocking the shelves. The store was full of customers perusing the aisles, inspecting merchandise and waiting in line at the cash registers.

As the first major grocery store to open in the area – two Delimarts are still under construction, while the fourth was demolished in the quake – they have had a lot of business, said Samia Hage, a manager and co-owner of the grocery. "It's going slowly, but it's going well," Hage said. "We're trying to do our best."

Behind tables of mahogany sculptures, brightly colored knick-knacks and coolers full of cold drinks, stands Samson Charles, a merchant who has been in the business for 45 years. Selling these items



A Delimart in Port-au-Prince is packed with customers, after reopening two weeks ago, more than a month after the earthquake that affected the Haitian capital. Shops throughout the city are reopening, getting back to business as they try to recover from the disaster. (Courtesy photo)



Charlotte Germain, a seamstress in Port-au-Prince, poses for a picture while working in her shop on Feb. 27. Germain got back to work two weeks ago, less than a month after the earthquake that devastated the Haitian capital. Shops throughout the city are reopening, getting back to business as they try to recover from the disaster. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Kissta M. Feldner, 2BCT PAO)

has helped him raise 10 children and kept a roof over his families head for decades. That roof, however, collapsed, and Charles has been left without a home like so many others. He is making money at his store in Petionville, but he has also been selling his merchandise to soldiers looking to take home a Haitian souvenir. This, Charles said, has greatly improved his business

and again given him a way of supporting his family. "It's not so bad", he said. "I find a way to provide for my children."

He has also noticed a rise in the amount of businesses reopening, he said, slowly but surely. "I'd just like things to get back to normal", he said. And with his recent rise in business, his ability to continue to sustain his family even in these hard times, he is hopeful.



Got milk?

In a pasture inside Forward Operating Base Falcon of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, an AAFES trailer sits in the city of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, March 4. The AAFES trailer is open allowing service members from the Joint Task Force to restock on much needed supplies. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. John Laughter / 2BCT, 82nd Airborne Div.)

Spec Ops

continued from page 1

started," said Matthew, a C-130 pilot.

The C-130s are working missions to deliver relief supplies to the people of Haiti. The aircraft are loading supplies at their staged location and flying into the local air port of Haiti. Once the aircraft land, the supplies are unloaded and the aircraft and crew depart again to continue with the cycle. This cycle has led to the delivery of more than 100 tons of cargo.

"We took supplies ranging from water, to humvees, to extension cords, as well as some personnel," said Matthew, who was deployed for three weeks in support of Operation Unified Response. "Over the whole trip we probably hauled about 250 Americans back to the states."

Matthew said through interactions with the Americans the aircraft transported back to the United States he learned of their great appreciation for what the Wing was doing.

"They said that it was pretty backed up getting out of Haiti and that they waited in line for hours," said Matthew. "Some people were even turned away and told to come back at a later date, so they were

thankful for the ride."

While the mission of the C-130s is to transport supplies and personnel, the mission of the Commando Solo is all about transmission.

The Commando Solo's mission is to fly over the devastation area broadcasting information regarding relief efforts to the people of Haiti through FM and AM frequencies.

"We're doing what's called a real-time relay," said Aaron, an airborne communications system operator. "Voice of America broadcasts out of the United States from multiple locations, primarily being the east coast and southeast coast of the U.S. and we receive it on the airplane and then re-broadcast it on the different frequencies."

Commando Solo is broadcasting the VOA messages on five different frequencies in French-Creole, the native language of Haiti, Aaron said.

The Haitian government advises what messages are broadcasted to their people. The messages are primarily in regards to health concerns and where to find water, as well as, non-interference messages, advising Haitians to not interfere with the help

coming to them, said Aaron.

This mission marks the first time the Commando Solo has provided direct support of humanitarian aid.

"It's a great opportunity to get in and do what we can to help since it is a very versatile platform as far as what we are capable of doing," said Aaron. "It's also a great testament to the Unit that we are able to go down there and help the people out when they need it."

The Solo's milestone of involvement is having a significant impact in the Operation Unified Response mission.

"Radio is having a huge impact; it's the only way that they're getting information," Aaron said. "I think it's very important that we're up there doing what we're doing just to get some information to the people so they know what to do, what to expect and where to go to get what they need to survive."

The length of the deployment for the 193rd is still undetermined as the Airmen and aircraft diligently work to provide to the people of Haiti. Whether supplies are being provided or information is being broadcasted, the Wing is continuing its role in Operation Unified Response.

POSTCARDS FROM HAITI



PORTSMOUTH, Va. -- Coast Guard line handlers on the pier assist crewmembers of Coast Guard Cutter Forward with mooring up to the north pier at Base Support Unit Portsmouth when they arrive after a 52-day patrol. During the patrol, the crew served as the first Coast Guard responders to the earthquake in Haiti Jan. 12. (U.S. Coast Guard Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Mark Jones / USCG District 5)



PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – Staff Sgt. Stephen B. Roach, a broadcast noncommissioned officer with the 16th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, currently attached to the Joint Task Force – Haiti and XVIII Airborne Corps, co-hosts an English-language radio program on a local radio station here. The XVIII Airborne Corps is in Haiti to provide command and control elements for American disaster relief and humanitarian assistance mission, Operation Unified Response Mar. 5. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. A.M. LaVey / XVIII Airborne Corps)



CARREFOUR, Haiti -- First Lt. Mauricio White, an air traffic controller with the Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461 (Reinforced), 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, watches a UH-1N Huey he cleared for take off at Landing Zone Argonaut. Marines from Battalion Landing Team, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, MEU, and United Nations Security Forces are assisting Adventist Development Relief Agency and the World Food Program over the first half of February. (USMC photo by Cpl. Bobbie A. Curtis / 22nd MEU)