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THE RESPONDER

Telling the Joint Task Force-Haiti story

a call to duty
April 10, 2010

Commanding general of SDDC visits Haiti

by Spc. William R. Begley
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—Maj. Gen. James L. Hodge, commanding general, Military Surface and Distribution Command (SDDC), visited Haiti April 7 to view firsthand the destruction from the earthquake on Jan. 12 and to thank Joint Task Force-Haiti military personnel for their efforts in support of Operation Unified Response.

The SDDC provides global surface deployment and distribution services in support of the Department of Defense to include port management.

Accompanied by Lt. Col. Robert J. Lehman, commander, 833rd Transportation Battalion, Hodge visited Logistical Support Area (LSA) Dragon, headquarters of Joint Task Force-Haiti, where he met with

Lt. Col. Peter Moons, chief of operations, Joint Task Force-Haiti, and was briefed on how operations are coordinated and controlled at the headquarters level. Hodge also met with Maj. Gen. Simeon Trombitas, deputy commanding general, Joint Task Force-Haiti.

From there, Hodge was given a chance to view the devastation by helicopter. The general flew over Port-au-Prince and saw the damage caused to thousands of buildings by the earthquake.

“I wanted to come down and get eyes-on firsthand experience as to just what havoc the earthquake caused,” said Hodge.

The helicopter came to rest on the landing zone of Camp White Falcon, home of 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, where Hodge was greeted by the battalion commander, Lt. Col.



Maj. Gen. James Hodge, Commanding General, Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, is given a tour of Joint Task Force-Haiti by Lt. Col. Peter Moons, Chief of Operations, J-3, Joint Task Force-Haiti operation center. Hodge was in Haiti to view the progress of his troops deployed in support of Operation Unified Response. (U.S. Army Photo by Spc. William R. Begley/11th PAD)

David Doyle. Doyle's team briefed Hodge on the operations at White Falcon and showed the general the destruction in their area of operations.

After viewing the damage to places like the Presidential Palace and the National Cathedral, they escorted him to the Seaport of Embarkation.

There, Hodge met with his Soldiers and civilians of the 833rd Transportation Battalion. Hodge also met with Soldiers of the 10th Transportation Battalion, the 408th Port Management Team and the 358th Automated Cargo Documentation Detachment whose units all deployed from Fort Eustis, Va.

“One of the main reasons I came down was to make sure that I thanked the incredible Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen who are down here doing this incredible job, and helping the people of Haiti,” said Hodge. “Of course, I have a great bias for the Soldiers and civilians who are here with the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command.

Overall, Hodge was pleased with the accomplishments of the entire operation. Soldiers from the SDDC have played a huge role in restoring Haiti from the damages done Jan. 12.

“I want you all to take great pride in what you have done,” Hodge said.



Maj. Gen. James Hodge, Commanding General, Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, and Maj. Gen. Simeon Trombitas discuss thoughts and plans at the Joint Operations Command, Joint Task Force-Haiti April 7. Hodge was in Haiti to view the progress of his troops deployed to Haiti in support of Operation Unified Response. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. William R. Begley/11th PAD)

Rising above the ordinary

by Lt. Col. Edward M. Grice
377th Chaplain

When we only do the ordinary things in life and never challenge ourselves or others, then everything remains ordinary. But when someone takes the time 'to rise above the ordinary' then something special does happen and life is interesting as well as challenging. I think we are in the midst of 'rising above the ordinary' here and now.

For people in the military, and for the various entities that volunteered to support relief efforts here in Haiti, most will 'rise above the ordinary' in doing those things required of them or doing the extraordinary thing that one would never imagine doing back at home.

When a situation presents itself, an individual chooses to act or not to act. I can illustrate what I mean by two examples—military service members and organizational volunteers. Many military personnel arrived within days of the earthquake and

provided direct humanitarian efforts with and for the people of Haiti.

Additionally, many Americans have volunteered to provide direct humanitarian support through the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations. On the other hand, many of us in the military find ourselves providing indirect support to our other military elements and the organizations who do give direct support.

For military personnel providing direct support and those who support them, our commitment is to 'rise above the ordinary' in doing our jobs well in extraordinary and somewhat uncomfortable circumstances. For volunteers among the organizations, much like the military, they are leaving home and family for a period of time to also 'rise above the ordinary.'

Together we are all collectively providing relief to a nation drastically affected by a historic and devastating earthquake. The challenge is for each of us as individuals to continue to 'rise above the ordinary' each and every day.

65th Military Police Company's effect on Port-au-Prince

by Pfc. Jasmine Slaton
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—The 7.0 magnitude earthquake that hit Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas devastated an already poor country. Since U.S. troops first arrived, the Joint Task Force-Haiti mission has been to save lives and mitigate human suffering among the people of Haiti.

The 65th Military Police Company (Airborne) from Fort Bragg, N.C. is one of many units that deployed to Haiti in support of Operation Unified Response. The 65th MP Company received notice that they were deploying to Haiti on the same night of the earthquake.

"I received the call and was told to pack up and be ready,"



Sgt. Maj. Louis M. Espinal, command sergeant major, JTF-Haiti, USMC, talks to Soldiers of the 65th Military Police Company (Airborne) from Fort Bragg, N.C. Espinal visited the airfield to check on the conditions and concerns of the troops in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine Slaton/11th PAD)

said Staff Sgt. Myrtle Greer, 2nd squad leader, 65th MP Company. "We left four days later."

They arrived in Port-au-Prince on Jan. 17 and were tasked with part of their mission; security and distribution.

"When we first arrived we [assisted in] security for distribution points," Greer said. "Some of us also got to hand out rice and water to the Haitian people."

The 65th MP Company also helped with providing shelter at Golf Delmas, an internally displaced persons camp located on an elite nine-hole golf course in Petionville.

"2nd platoon put up 70 tents for an IDP camp," Greer said. "It was hard work, but my guys are awesome and the locals took initiative and helped out as well. It only took two days to complete [this] mission."

"At Delmas we got to interact with the Haitian people a little more," Greer said.

In order for Operation Unified

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Spc. Darwin Quinteros, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with Headquarters Support Company, Special Troops Battalion, U.S. Army South, visits with his wife after the couple both re-enlisted via video teleconference April 7. Spc. Darwin Quinteros is deployed with Joint Task Force-Haiti in support of Operation Unified Response. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. William R. Begley/11th PAD)

U.S. Army South couple re-enlists by video teleconference

by Spc. William R. Begley
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- Re-enlistment can be a nerve-wracking, thought-provoking, second-guessing experience for one person. Now times that by two and imagine re-enlisting with a spouse.

Spc. Darwin Quinteros, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with Headquarters Support Company, Special Troops Battalion, U.S. Army South, deployed with Joint Task Force-Haiti in support of Operation Unified Response. His wife, Spc. Erica Quinteros, an intelligence analyst with Alpha Company, Special Troops Battalion, G-2, U.S. Army South, is at home at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Despite the distance that divided the couple, both re-enlisted together by video teleconference April 7.

This was a unique opportunity in that they re-enlisted and also got some face-to-face time while being in two different countries.

Darwin was deployed to Haiti almost immediately following the birth of his daughter, Luci, who is now 11 weeks old. It was difficult to leave so soon but he

knew that it was part of being a Soldier in the Army. Darwin and Erica have been married for nearly a year.

Not long ago, Erica received Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders to go to Korea. With a new child, and a husband on deployment, Erica decided to see what options she had available to her. She had never re-enlisted before and found out that if she and her husband both re-enlisted they could remain stateside at the duty station of their choice. She also had another reason to re-enlist.

"I wanted to see my husband," said Erica. "Re-enlisting by video teleconference is also unique and different."

Darwin also wanted to see his wife. After the re-enlistment ceremony, mom, dad and daughter were allowed to talk alone.

"It felt good to talk to her," he said. "I haven't seen her and the baby since I came here."

Re-enlisting for three more years, Darwin was a jumble of emotion. This wasn't the first time he had re-enlisted so he wasn't sure about making the commitment once again. However, his

wife Erica was determined to keep her new family together.

"At first, I was nervous," said Darwin. "But then she convinced me and we did it."

Maj. Gen. Simeon Trombitas, deputy commanding general, Joint Task Force-Haiti, was present at the re-enlistment ceremony. After the ceremony, Trombitas presented Darwin with two coins.

"Here's one for you and one for your wife," Trombitas said.

Even when you re-enlist, the needs of the Army must be taken into consideration. The Army also takes into consideration the needs of its Soldiers.

The Quinteros' will be heading to Fort Lewis, Wash. in December where they will be closer to Erica's family who lives in Washington, and can care for their daughter if Erica and Darwin are deployed at the same time.

With the family's needs met, and the Army able to retain two good Soldiers, a unique re-enlistment ceremony ended.

"It was amazing," said Erica. "I'm just so excited that he got to see his baby."

Sean Penn visits LSA Dragon



Actor and producer Sean Penn and his two children, Hopper Jack and Dylan Frances, enjoy a meal from the DFAC during their visit to LSA Dragon on March 8. Penn spent some time seeing how troops are operating and to review the upcoming plans for internally displaced personnel camps that are in danger of floods during the rainy season. He also took some time to take photos with his fans at LSA Dragon. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)



Lt. Gen. Ken Keen, commanding general, JTF-Haiti, shows Sean Penn, actor and director, along with his children, Hopper Jack and Dylan Frances, around LSA Dragon on March 8. The trio was shown the inner workings of LSA Dragon and the plans that will be executed in preparation for the rainy season. Penn is actively involved with the internally displaced camp at Petionville. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)

ESPN correspondent visits LSA Dragon

by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—Bonnie-Jill Laflin, ESPN correspondent, the NBA's first female scout for the Los Angeles Lakers and former NFL cheerleader, paid a visit to troops at LSA Dragon on April 7. Laflin was travelling with Pierre Garcon, an Indianapolis Colts player, but broke away from his group for the day.

"I just wanted to say thank you to my troops," Laflin said. "You guys are always in my thoughts and my prayers. I love you all and that's why I'm here."

Laflin toured LSA Dragon and took some time to get photos taken with service members.

Senior Airmen Joseph D. Meade, communications technician, 49th Communications Squadron, 49th Fighter Wing, deployed from Holloman Air Force Base, N.M., said, "It was good to see her out showing her support for the work we are doing."

Laflin was not just visiting troops during her time in Haiti, though. She also

travelled throughout the area, volunteering and visiting children at a mission and assisted in handing out more than 40,000 meals. Laflin intends to take as much information and stories back with her to spread the word.

"When we go back, we want to educate people that [Haitians] still need help and that Haiti is a long way from rebuilding," Laflin said. "We still need people down here volunteering and donating."

This is not Laflin's first time visiting troops. She has gone on 13 USO tours, six each to Afghanistan and Iraq, and now Haiti.

"I like being around the Soldiers and making sure I tell you guys thank you," Laflin said. "You guys are doing so much down here for the people of Haiti."

Laflin said being here is a good reminder of how well off many people in the U.S. truly are.

"These people here are under so much destruction and poverty," Laflin said. "You realize how much you have



JTF-Haiti Public Affairs had the chance to sit down and talk with ESPN correspondent, and the NBA's 1st female scout for the Los Angeles Lakers, Bonnie-Jill Laflin, during her visit to Port-au-Prince on April 7. Laflin wanted to show her continuing support for the troops deployed in Operation Unified Response. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)

back home and how much we take for granted."

Laflin said she intends to remind people that help is still needed in Haiti.

"People tend to forget that these people still need help," Laflin said. "I think when disasters first happen, it's in the

media and people remember, but then people forget."

Laflin said as time goes on, people tend to forget there are Soldiers down here helping and that people can't forget. Haiti still needs support and volunteers.

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Response to be effective, the military has also trained Haitian engineers in areas of expertise such as assessing structural damage. Doing this has created jobs and has Haitians helping Haitians.

"We are working hand-in-hand and it shows," Greer said.

The 65th MP Company is currently assisting in securing the Gestro Clinic in Port-au-Prince, which is a Haitian hospital that treats people from around the surrounding areas.

The road to recovery for the Haitian people is not going to be a short ride but the progress that has come over the past few months will continue to increase.

All troops involved in Operation Unified Response are a part of this progress. The U.S. will continue to adjust its force strength to mission requirements and keep only those forces necessary to assist in humanitarian aid activities.

"My experiences here in Haiti have been humbling," Greer said. "To come to a country in a time of need and most that you come in contact with want better for themselves."

"They want to work hard," continued Geer. "It's humbling and gives me a sense of pride that I had something to do with change."



Soldiers of the 65th Military Police Company (Airborne), from Fort Bragg, N.C. made a sign branding their camp at the Airfield. The Airborne unit began arriving in Haiti on Jan. 17 and by Jan.21, everyone was present. The 65th MP Company (Airborne) is currently attached to 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine Slaton/11th PAD)

"The Final Countdown"

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—The final countdown has begun as Airmen deployed from the 823rd Expeditionary Security Force Squadron begin heading home.

"As the mission progressed, it was obvious that the need for all the 'Jesters' was no longer necessary," Tech. Sgt. Matthew Downy, 823rd Expeditionary Security Force Squadron, said. "Leadership prioritized the unit's manning and started creating redeployment chinks based on the box of volunteers. In total, the unit was broken into four chinks, with the final chink labeled as 'until the end.'"

Most members of the unit returned home in the first two weeks of March. It was decided that roughly 30 Airmen would be needed to complete the mission.

"Of the original 184 Moody warriors tasked to secure the only operating international airport in Haiti, only 34 were needed to complete the mission," Downy said.

The decision was made to place a box that read "volunteers to stay until the end" in front of the 823rd Expeditionary Security Force Squadron Tactical Operations Center. The squadron's commander, Maj. Tyrell Mayfield, 823rd Expeditionary Security Force Squadron, intended to match the Airmen's desires with the mission requirements at Toussaint L'Ouverture International Airport.

Downy said Airmen filled out letters stating they wanted to stay to the end and dropped them into the box.

"Within the first day, the box was filled with more than enough names to satisfy the mission," Downy said.

There was an overwhelming volunteered support of Noncommissioned Officers to remain behind and lead the Airmen until the end of the deployment.

"Their enthusiasm and dedication was the driving factor in the successful collection of young Airmen volunteers," Downy said.

As the third chink left, the remaining Airmen stood vigilant in their focus for the mission. The following day, Airmen went on without regret, attending guard, loading weapons and taking their posts.

"I am sure those Airmen are missing their families and wished they were home, but know their support is needed here in Haiti," Downy said.

The mission remaining for the roughly 30 Airmen now becomes assisting in the relocation of those who have no protection from the upcoming rainy season.

"The mission is still not complete," Downy said. "The immediate crisis of the earthquake has passed, but new challenges remain. With the rainy season quickly approaching, our resources and personnel are dedicated to relocating the internally displaced persons of Haiti to interim camps where they can safely pass the upcoming months."

The Airmen will continue to work towards the mission and assist in Operation Unified Response until the mission is complete.

"As the three 'Jesters' of the last chink stepped onto the waiting aircraft, we looked over our shoulders and saw the embodiment of 'service before self,'" Downy said. "We saw willing hands and volunteers who would stay until the end."

courtesy of Tech. Sgt. Matthew Downy
823rd Expeditionary Security Force Squadron

POSTCARDS FROM HAITI



Soldiers at LSA Dragon received a special visit from ESPN correspondent and the NBA's 1st female scout for the Los Angeles Lakers, Bonnie-Jill Laflin on April 8. Laflin took time from her visit in Haiti with Pierre Garcon to show her support for the troops deployed in Operation Unified Response. Laflin has also visited Iraq and Afghanistan to show her ongoing support for the U.S. military. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)



New Orleans 2031, a landing craft utility, or LCU, belonging to 8-24th Transportation Detachment, deployed from Tampa, Florida, is responsible for moving supplies along the coast of Haiti. The New Orleans 2031 has transported rice, water and other supplies to more than seven cities along the coast. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine Slaton/11th PAD)



Haitian residents of Petionville Golf Club IDP Camp wait in line to register for relocation to a new settlement site in Corail Cesselesse April 9. Relocation to the site is scheduled to begin April 10. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Jasmine Slaton/11th PAD)