



Vol. I, Issue 7

THE RESPONDER

Telling the Joint Task Force-Haiti story

a call to duty
March 6, 2010

U.S. military's medical role in Haiti declines

By Navy Lt. Jennifer Cragg
*Office of the Secretary of Defense
Public Affairs*

WASHINGTON - It's been a week since the last Haitian patient was treated aboard the U.S. Navy hospital ship USNS Comfort, as the need for immediate medical attention is declining two months after a magnitude 7 earthquake struck the island nation, the Joint Task Force-Haiti surgeon said.

"The Comfort currently has no Haitian patients aboard," Army Col. (Dr.) Jennifer Menetrez told bloggers March 4 during a DoDLive bloggers roundtable. "The last patient was discharged from the Comfort on Feb. 27."

The hospital beds and hallways of the Comfort are now empty of Haitian patients, Menetrez said. Meanwhile, she said, the Comfort remains on station to provide any follow-on care as needed by the Haitian government.

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Thank you

USNS COMFORT, At Anchor -- Alex Larsen, Minister of Health for Haiti, greets MC2 Gessie Exantus, Ship's Serviceman, a French Creole translator embarked aboard USNS Comfort. Larsen visited Comfort to thank the crew for the care they provided to the people of Haiti in the initial weeks of Operation Unified Response. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Shannon Warner)

Country musician Big Kenny performs for troops in Haiti



Big Kenny, of the country music duo Big and Rich, performs for Paratroopers with 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, at their forward operating base in Port-au-Prince on March 4. Big Kenny traveled to Haiti to thank the soldiers for their work in the city. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Kissta M. Feldner)

By Spc. A.M. LaVey
XVIII Airborne Corps

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – Country musician Big Kenny performed 13 shows for Servicemembers based here.

This is actually the second trip to Haiti for William Kenneth Alphin, professionally known as Big Kenny, half of the Country music duo, Big and Rich. He had come down earlier searching for a friend of his who had been staying in the Hotel Montana when the Jan. 12 earthquake rocked the island.

"Having been here and seeing the disaster that had happened and seeing all of our U.S. forces who had come in to help out and all the aid workers, I was moved to want to come back," said Big Kenny.

After being home "for a few weeks, I knew that there were so many people who had been down here the whole time and I just wanted to come provide a little musical relief and hopefully bring some smiles and thanks to everyone for being here and helping the Haitian people out," said Big Kenny.

During Big Kenny's first trip to the island, he brought much-needed relief supplies and a team of search and rescue and medical personnel.

"We came down here with the intention to help," said Big Kenny.

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JTF-H readies to readjust as other nations employ reconstruction efforts

By Spc. A. M. LaVey
XVIII Airborne Corps

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – Seven weeks after the earthquake that rocked the nation of Haiti, the Joint Task Force – Haiti prepares to readjust its forces as the Government of Haiti and non-governmental organizations exercise more and more control over relief and reconstructions efforts here today.

“If you would have been here Jan. 15, like I was, you would have seen a shocked population, roads that were clogged, an airfield that was chaotic, and a port that was not operational,” said Col. Gregory Kane, director of operations for the JTF-H. “There was a massive amount of aid trying to get in to the country, and we had very little synchronization.”

“Now, we have a great deal of synchronization and coordination amongst the Haitian government and the many agencies assisting,” said Kane. “The Department of Defense is still providing some support but much less than what we have been.”

At the high point of Operation Unified Response, American forces numbered 20,000 and they were responding to about 2,000 incidents a day; today there are about half the number of troops here, and they are responding to under a hundred incidents per day.

These numbers show two things: that the demand is down and that the Government of Haiti and the relief agencies are taking on the bulk of the response, said Kane.

U.S. elements remain in Haiti, supporting both the needs of the United Nations and the host government. The JTF-H is continuing to work large projects in conjunction with its international partners and



Humanitarian supplies were off-loaded from the Venezuelan ship LST AB Capana where more than 250 tons of supplies were delivered during a three day period to assist with relief efforts in Haiti Mar. 2-4. (U.S. Navy photo)

the U.S. Agency for International Development. These projects include rubble removal from urban areas and the resettlement of camps that have been identified as high risk, prior to the rainy season. U.S. forces are also continuing to provide indirect support to the World Food Program by helping to bring supplies in to the Port-au-Prince area.

“We will continue to resize our force based on the mission parameters that we are given,” said Kane.

“We have received approval to start redeployment, and that will continue for the next two weeks.”

“We will still have a considerable force in Haiti, about 4,500 personnel, but they will be more logistically-oriented,” he said.

“We will also have a small-sized maneuver element to deal with any contingencies – be they natural disaster or otherwise.”

The reduction in forces, like what is happening here around the two-month mark, is normal in a humanitarian operation such as this, with the military assets providing immediate response, bringing with them many different capabilities, and then transferring more and more responsibilities to the local government and NGOs.

“At this point, the work that our partners are doing continues to grow and the Haitian government is becoming more and more self-sufficient,” said Kane. “However, we will continue to support them as long as we are needed.”

Medical role

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“Over the last 10 days, we’ve seen over a 65 percent reduction in patients onboard the [Comfort] as they have been appropriately transferred to local hospitals for follow-on care,” she added.

This follow-on care is being supported by the numerous mobile and on-site clinics that have been set up to give continued treatment to victims of the Jan. 12 earthquake.

“To date, there are 130 mobile clinics and 156 on-site clinics,”

Menetrez said. “The collaboration between military, government of Haiti and [U.S. Agency for International Development] continues to be wonderful. Collaboration between all parties has been a milestone of a unified response through a challenging event.”

Since the Comfort arrived on station, she said, U.S. military medical personnel have provided care to more than 8,600 Haitian residents.

“Of the 8,600 patients seen, the U.S. military surgeons performed close to 1,000 surgeries, primary care physicians conducted over 7,200 outpatient visits and oversaw the care of 1,300 for post surgical care within the hospital wards,” Menetrez said.



THE RESPONDER

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A CALL TO ACTION

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Air Force firefighters dig through rubble, protect resources

By Karen Petitt

375th Air Mobility Wing Public Affairs

SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, Ill. -- Twenty-six Air Force firefighters have arrived in Haiti more and are protecting airfield resources alongside thousands of other international aid workers providing relief to the country.

Since arriving, they've made significant contributions to providing safe airfield operations and have helped families find closure as the search for remains continues.

"Soon after landing in Haiti and setting up initial operations, Canadian firefighters asked us if we could assist with searching for bodies at the Hotel Montana," said Master Sgt. Bradley Beaty, from Scott Air Force Base, Ill. "It was important to us that we assist in that effort."

To date, the team has recovered the remains of 15 Americans and the remains of others who were part of the estimated 50 known guests who are still missing at the Hotel Montana.

"I can't describe how awful it is to go through this type of wreckage," he said. "It's an emotional job, but I am glad that at least we are able to give families closure by locating their loved ones."

Air Force firefighters have also helped fix several issues at the Toussaint L'Ouverture International Airport in Port-au-Prince here. The main priority was fixing a broken water line and setting up a fire station to support 20,000 coalition forces and provide resources for the 140 aircraft takeoff and



Haitian and Air Force firefighters practice entry over the wing of a Boeing 727 aircraft during an exercise at the Toussaint L'Ouverture International Airport in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. (Courtesy Photo)

landings each day.

The fire team has worked with contracting vendors to bring in equipment and provide training for 70 Haitian firefighters to increase their operational capability.

"I believe we are here making a difference," Beaty said. "So often we train to defend our country or work with coalition partners to liberate or defend other countries, but it is good to put the same training toward the good of the Haitian community."

Recently the team conducted a three-day aircraft egress exercise. They used an old Boeing 727 on the ramp as their training mock up. Through an interpreter, they were able to coordinate a single plan for emergency response between the Haitian and

international forces assisting them.

"I feel that we're making a positive difference down here," said Airman Mike Palatucci, from Dover AFB, Del., "The Haitians seem to like us and the Haitian fire department really appreciates the training we've done."

"We have only been here for a short time, and I honestly feel that we have made an impact on the local community; from helping clean up the city to training the local firefighters on the flightline here at the airport," said Staff Sgt. Thomas Sidoti, assigned to Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst, N.J. "We may not be able to stay that long to help the infrastructure of the city, but I feel we are doing the best we can in the short amount of time that we have."

Big Kenny

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"I have a fire and rescue background and I'm a farm boy, so there is really nothing I can't fix or do and I can take care of myself."

His team provided relief at the Hotel Montana, assisted at a nursing home and helped to install water filtration systems in orphanages and schools.

Big Kenny is no stranger to helping others in need. In 2005 he became aware of the incidents that were happening in Darfur, Sudan. So when he had found musical success and acquired financial resources, he flew to Sudan with 23 cases of aid, medical supplies and musical instruments.

Love everybody. That is the motto that he lives by, preaches and is also what motivates Big Kenny to help.

This "is what my heart tells me to do. I don't have no choice, I can't fight it and I can't change the feelings I have," said Big Kenny. If "I've got something - I want to do something with it." Big Kenny is here in Haiti, serving those who dedicate their lives to serving others.

"I just want [the Servicemembers] to know, as a performer and as a citizen, I appreciate what you are doing and I want to encourage you all to keep up the good work," said Big Kenny.



PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – Country musician Big Kenny performs a duet with Staff Sgt. Ryan A. Shilling, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with the 98th Civil Affairs Battalion, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, during a concert for Servicemembers based in Haiti at the American Embassy here Mar. 2. Big Kenny is scheduled to perform ten shows for the troops who are supporting Operation Unified Response. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. A.M. LaVey / XVIII Airborne Corps)

Engineers assess rising water level of Haitian lakes

By Sgt. Richard Andrade
XVIII Airborne Corps

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- The Naval Facilities Engineering Command partnered with U.S. Navy Seabees, Air Force and Army engineers to assess the rising water levels affecting a main supply route between the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

Yasil Elmayta, a civil engineer, and Mike Helbing, an environmental engineer, both of the contingency engineering group from NAVFAC, are working side by side with U.S. forces' engineering elements in Haiti to help repair the damage caused by the Jan. 12 earthquake.

"This road runs along several lakes that don't have a natural outlet to them," said Helbing. "As a result of that, during the rainy season, the water tends to come up and cut the supply link to the Dominican Republic."

"We go to assess the structural damage of buildings; we have looked at where landslides have come and crossed roads, and we came up with solutions to fix it," said Navy Lt. Jason Killian, a civil engineer working with the NAVFAC group to make assessments of the roads and plan reconstruction operations.

"We are looking at the water level of the Trou Caiman Lake, as it affects the road that we call Route 102," said Killian. "If the water level comes up too high on the lake and nothing is done to fix it, then we will lose the ability to use that road."

"The significance of Route 102 is that it is the main artery to get supplies in from the Dominican Republic," he said.

Part of the engineer mission in Haiti is to assess structural damage, and give that information to the Government of Haiti so that there can be coordinated plans to fix any issues the country may have. In the U.S., there are safety laws and codes for anyone who wants to build a house or building. Unfortunately Haiti does not have regulations that might stop someone from building a house with inferior components.

"We [in the U.S.] are used to using a crushed aggregate, because it locks together and works better in concrete mixes, here [in Haiti] they use a lot of river rock, that is readily available, and unfortunately doesn't lock together," said Killian.

"You don't necessarily want to make temporary fixes unless you absolutely need to, you have the opportunity to make something that will last and you can say 'it's done,' that is the way



U.S. Navy Lt. Jason Killian, Yasil Elmayta, a civil engineer, and Mike Helbing, an environmental engineer, both of the contingency engineering group from The Naval Facilities Engineering Command partnered with U.S. Navy Seabees, Air Force and Army engineers to assess the rising water levels affecting a main supply route between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade)

you want to proceed," said Helbing.

"We are looking for a route that we can run cargo tractor trailers on, so you need to have a decent road that can handle the capacity and doesn't have a lot of big holes in it, with all of that weight you are going to destroy the vehicles, if the water begins to cross the road, then you will lose that artery," said Killian.

As the engineers reached Etang Saumatre lake, they saw how close the water reached the road. "Without some type of real elaborate ditch or pipe system there is no way to pull that water out of that lake," said Killian.

"The other alternative is raising the road," said Helbing.

Gabriel Sagesse, 75, lives in the city of Trou Caiman. He took the engineers to a side of a mountain where he claims water has been coming out since after the Jan. 12 earthquake. The water turned from a blessing to a curse because it has been flooding the nearby homes and roads non-stop.

"It is coming from both sides of the city, inundating people's homes," said Sagesse.

"For them to solve the problem, they need to send it somewhere that needs it more," he said, "It is not good at all, it



U.S. Navy Lt. Jason Killian, Yasil Elmayta, and Mike Helbing, of the contingency engineering group from The Naval Facilities Engineering Command partnered with U.S. engineers to assess the rising water levels affecting a main supply route between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade)

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Agency supplies millions of meals for Haitians



Sailors aboard USNS Comfort work together to safely store supplies received from the Military Sealift Command supply ship USNS Sacagawea. The supplies will allow Comfort to sustain efforts in support of Operation Unified Response. (U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Matthew Jackson)

By Sgt. Sara Moore

Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs

WASHINGTON - As part of the Defense Logistics Agency's ongoing support to humanitarian operations in earthquake-stricken Haiti, the Defense Supply Center Philadelphia recently supplied 2.7 million packaged meals to the Haitian people.

The center worked with its industry partners to supply the meals to the U.S. Agency for International Development, which joined with the World Food Program to distribute the meals in the hardest-hit areas of the country.

In addition to being DLA's troop support center, the Philadelphia center also serves as a first responder during emergencies and natural disasters. The supply center maintains a stock of meals that can be used in emergencies, and also has agreements in place with its industry partners to produce meals, explained Ray Miller, deputy director of subsistence operations.

These industry partners - about 20 vendors - are ready to go at a moment's notice, and often can provide millions of meals in just days, he said.

In the case of the earthquake in Haiti, officials at the Philadelphia center received

a request to supply meals to USAID, then notified its industry partners of the requirement. Even though it was a Sunday night, Miller said, the vendors responded that same night and through the next morning.

Through this partnership, more than 2 million meals were available immediately to the center, and 22 million meals could have been sent over the next 15 days if needed, he said.

When USAID decided to use only what was readily available, the center shipped out 2.7 million meals, Miller said.

DLA is positioned to respond during emergencies, and over the years has partnered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide relief after hurricanes and other disasters, Miller said. DLA buys and ships packaged meals to FEMA, which stores or sends them to individual states, he explained. DLA also maintains its supply of meals for emergencies at the Philadelphia center.

"Between [DLA and FEMA], that is the only stock of food that is maintained in the United States for an emergency basis," he said. "We have the program set up that should a disaster hit, we are able then to tap into the industrial base to expand the availability of meals as we go on over time."

Engineers

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is dangerous because the rainy season is coming and so far we have seen no help."

The engineers began to brainstorm to find a solution for the villagers as they left the town.

"There is no way to plug the hole so you have to make a controlled ditch somewhere, said Killian. "You have to have the water flow and continue on its path to the lake and out to the sea."

"If the hydroelectric plant is low, then that would be a big deal, issues like a reduction of power as well as flooding," said Killian.

"There is so much other information that we have to gather," said Helbing. "From historical records of the lake levels both here and at the dam and rainfall information - it is a complicated problem to figure out what to do with them."

All of the research being conducted by the engineers, the state department together with the Government of Haiti will be used in the future to develop solutions for the many issues Haiti is dealing with.



U.S. Navy Lt. Jason Killian, of the contingency engineering group from The Naval Facilities Engineering Command looks over a map of the area he is assessing. He has partnered with U.S. Navy Seabees, Air Force and Army engineers to assess the rising water levels affecting a main supply route between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richard Andrade)

POSTCARDS FROM HAITI



Lance Cpl. Alfred, Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, shares a laugh with some children in the town of Mirebalais, Haiti, during a disaster relief assessment of the area today. Alfred is of Haitian descent and acted as a translator for a 10-man assessment team. The team flew in on MV-22 Ospreys, marking the first time these aircraft have flown in support of a Humanitarian mission. (U.S. Marines photo by Gunnery Sgt. Robert Piper)



Musician Jimmy Buffet performs for servicemembers based at Logistical Support Area Dragon who are supporting Operation Unified Response Mar. 3. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. A.M. LaVey / XVIII Airborne Corps)



U.S. Army Spc. Anthony Gonzales 114 Signal Battalion, Fort Detrick, Md. makes friends with some Haitian children outside of Logistical Support Area Dragon. He is here to provide communications in support of Operation Unified Response Mar. 5. (Courtesy photo)