



Vol. I, Issue 10

THE RESPONDER

Telling the Joint Task Force-Haiti story

a call to duty
March 17, 2010

Brazilian, U.S. paratroopers celebrate strong partnerships

by Staff Sgt. John Laughter
2nd Brigade Combat Team,
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PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—Maroon berets of the U.S. Army Airborne and the sky blue berets of Brazilian army paratroopers working for the United Nations filled the courtyard at the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti compound in Port-au-Prince.

The crisp report of bugle calls and the voices of Paratroopers lifted in celebration of the accomplishments of the Airborne Soldier, marked the opening of a ceremony held to highlight the unprecedented event of Paratroopers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, “Falcons,” 82nd Airborne Division and the Brazilian Airborne Infantry Brigade working together to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and disaster relief in Haiti.

Lt. Gen. P.K. (Ken) Keen, commander, Joint Task Force Haiti, put it best when he remarked during his speech to the assembled Paratroopers, “As I look across the field and I see the sun shining, I see in front of me the flag of the great nation of Brazil, the flag of the United States of America,



The senior leaders of Joint Task Force Haiti and MINUSTAH join together to celebrate the partnership and accomplishments of Paratroopers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, “Falcons,” 82nd Airborne Division and the Brazilian Airborne Infantry Brigade working together to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and disaster relief in Haiti. (From left to right) Col. Ajax Porto, BraBat 1 commander; Maj. Gen. Simeon Trombitas, Joint Task Force Haiti deputy commander; Maj. Gen. Floriano Peixoto Vieraneto, MINUSTAH commander; Lt. Gen. Ken Keen, Joint Task Force-Haiti; Brig. Gen. Nicolas Matern, Joint Task Force Haiti deputy commander of operations and Col. Luciano Puchalski, BraBat 2 commander. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffery Taylor/HHC 2-325th AIR)

side by side, and I see in front of me the best warriors of our nations.”

The Brazilian Airborne Infantry Brigade invited the 2BCT Paratroopers to join

them in a ceremony and dinner honoring Airborne heritage at the MINUSTAH compound on Mar. 13.

The evening began with the arrival of the VIPs to

include Keen, Maj. Gen. Floriano Peixoto Viera Neto, MINUSTAH force commander, Maj. Gen. Simeon Trombitas, deputy commanding general, JTF Haiti, and Brig. Gen. Nicolas Matern, deputy commanding general of operations, JTF Haiti. To start the ceremony, the commanders of troops, Col. Ajax Porto Pinheiro, commander, Brazilian Battalion, Haiti, and Col. Tim McAteer, commander, 2BCT, presented their commands.

Following the presentation, each Airborne unit sang a thunderous rendition of their respective Airborne Songs. The Brazilian Paratroopers sang “Eternal Hero” and the Falcons sang the 82nd Airborne Division’s “All American Soldier.”

As the echoes faded across the compound the commanders of the formation formally exchanged their unit insignias. Pinheiro was given an 82nd Airborne Division Flag and McAteer was given a Brazilian Airborne Crest.

With the exchange of Airborne heraldry complete, both Keen and Peixoto delivered speeches in which they praised the long

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Haitian native returns home to help

by Spec. William R. Begley
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- It’s not often that a foreign-born American Soldier is deployed to return to his country of origin to help his people in their time of need. One Soldier here was able to do just that.

1st Lt. Bob Rousseau, a Haitian-American, serving with the 32nd Medical Brigade at Ft. Sam, Houston, Texas, deployed last week to assist the Joint Task Force with his skills as a translator. With difficulties

communicating with the native Haitian people, translators who spoke the native languages were in high demand.

“I was born here. I grew up here,” said Rousseau. “In Haiti we speak two languages.

Creole is our native language and we learned French in school.”

Rousseau began translating for the Joint Task Force at

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for the Joint Task Force at internal displacement camps. According to the United States Agency of International Development (USAID) at least 700,000 people in the Port-Au-Prince metropolitan area, whose homes were destroyed as a result of the earthquake, were relocated to camps in various locations around Haiti.

“The hardest thing for me is to see people that I knew that used to be well off. They had everything,” said Rousseau. “Now, they are asking for my help.”

Rousseau witnessed the resilience of the Haitian people firsthand at these camps.

“When you go to the camps, you see people who have lost everything, but still don’t want to leave,” Rousseau said. “They have shelters made from tarps that people donated and some even have tents. Some have neither but have made drapes from their clothes.”

Rousseau commented proudly on the resiliency of his people.

“We will not give up. We will do whatever it takes to survive,” said Rousseau. “And we are doing that right now.”

From the tragedy, that according to USAID has claimed the lives of an

estimated 230,000 people, good things can still come. Things like hope and reassurance.

“The best thing that we are doing here is just being present,” said Rousseau. “People see us at the camps and it gives them hope and reassurance that something is being done for them.”

As a Haitian-American, Rousseau sees the positive effects that the presence of the U.S. Army has on his native countrymen.

“They see what we are doing, and they believe in that,” said Rousseau. “They believe in the U.S. Military.”



1st. Lt. Bob Rousseau, a Haitian-American with the Headquarters company, 32nd Medical Brigade out of Fort Sam Houston, is helping to translate here in Haiti. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. William Begley/ 11th PAD)

XVIII Airborne Corps, 24th Air Expeditionary Group head home



Lt. Gen. Ken Keen, deputy commanding general, U.S. Southern Command, and commander, Joint Task Force-Haiti, bids farewell to Soldiers from XVIII Airborne Corps and Airmen from 24th Air Expeditionary Group before they board planes heading back home on March 15. Both units were deployed to support Operation Unified Response. (U.S. Army photos by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/ 11th PAD)



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A CALL TO ACTION

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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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U.S. Army South assumes Core responsibilities

by Arwen Consaul
U.S. Army South

SAN ANTONIO, Texas - U.S. Army South continued to push Soldiers to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, during the past several days as its headquarters element deployed to provide support to the Joint Task Force-Haiti headquarters as part of Operation Unified Response.

"This is the first time that U.S. Army South has deployed as an army service component command, ever," said Army Maj. Gen. Simeon G. Trombitas, commanding general of U.S. Army South. "Our mission is to provide a trained and ready army command and control headquarters for a full spectrum of operations, to include humanitarian assistance."

Army South will assume the responsibility as the Headquarters Core and will provide the primary planning staff for Joint Task Force-Haiti. As part of the headquarters element of Joint Task Force-Haiti, Army

South will assist in providing leadership and coordination for military personnel in Haiti and liaison with the lead federal agency, USAID and other nongovernmental organizations, as needed.

"One of our missions will be focusing on current operations, compiling and organizing operational information for both the Joint Task Force and U.S. Southern Command commander," said Army Maj. Brian Pedersen, the Operational Command Post officer in charge at U.S. Army South.

"This information provides the commanders with an accurate picture of what is happening in Haiti in regards to humanitarian assistance and our military operations, which ultimately supports the government of Haiti, as well as governmental, nongovernmental and international governmental organizations."

Over the past few days, more than 150 Soldiers from Army

South joined the Army South Soldiers currently on the ground in Haiti supporting Operation Unified Response. Support includes Soldiers with specialties in engineering, medical support, operations, logistics, security and intelligence.

"Part of our mission as the Headquarters Core is to provide life support to the Joint Task Force," said Army Lt. Col. Scot Storey, the U.S. Army South Special Troops Battalion commander. "We will ensure that the JTF has their required daily necessities so that they can focus on their job."

As a humanitarian mission, Operation Unified Response will provide the Soldiers of Army South the opportunity to use their training and expertise outside a combat zone.

"For our Soldiers, 90 percent have done missions in a combat zone," said Trombitas.

"Going on this mission

to help the people and assist the government of Haiti is significant not only to the Haitian people but to our Soldiers as well."

According to many of the deploying Soldiers, they are excited to help the government of Haiti and put their training to use.

"I feel real good about going to Haiti," said Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Oliver, a watercraft operator with Army South's logistics directorate. "I get to take everything I have been taught and trained to do and use it in the real world."

Providing assistance to Haiti is part of Army South's mission of building strong regional partnerships to enhance hemispheric stability and security for the Western Hemisphere.

"Bottom line, the country of Haiti is part of our family in the Western Hemisphere," said Storey. "Their well-being is just as important as our own."

Orphanage visit



(left) Spec. Celines Woods, 15th Financial Management Company, says good morning to several orphans during a recent visit. Woods was part of a small group that went into the mountains to check on internally displaced persons and a local orphanage. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/ 11th PAD)



(right) During a recent visit, Sgt. Penny Cook, 15th Financial Management Company, holds Dara, a child whose mother was displaced after the earthquake. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/ 11th PAD)



An American Airborne trooper takes time out to strengthen partnerships and friendships with his Brazilian brethren. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffery Taylor/ HHC 2-325th AIR)

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history of the Paratrooper, the men and women in front of them, and the combined efforts of the forces in Haiti.

“It is important that everyone here understands that we are building the history of friendship between the Brazilian and American Army,” Peixoto said.

He continued by saying that he was extremely satisfied to see the Brazilian army working with the American Paratroopers in the same operations with the same commitment to helping the Haitian people.

Keen seconded Peixoto’s remarks, adding, “From World War II to today, our militaries have trained, have fought, and have died together on the field of battle. This generation will carry this legacy forward.”

Only subtle differences stood out as the Paratroopers passed in review in front of the reviewing stand. While there were differences in uniform color and style of march, it was clear that both units possessed the rigid discipline

and esprit de corps that is the hallmark of Airborne forces.

The Paratroopers marched straight from the parade field to a dining area decorated with airborne paraphernalia that included suspended parachutes. The Brazilians hosted a dinner for the Falcons that featured ice cold drinks and a traditional Brazilian meal that included hot french fries in a welcome nod to the American guests.

Intermingling at numerous tables, the conversation at first was stunted by the language barrier, but it only took a few minutes for the laughter and smiles to begin. Using English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish, the Paratroopers started the conversation asking what patches on uniforms meant and progressing to Airborne stories. Soon, American soldiers were sporting Brazilian Commando patches and Airborne wings, while the Brazilian paratroopers received the famed All American patch of the 82nd.

The gift exchange continued

as the Brazilians presented each paratrooper with a shirt with both units’ insignia and a shoulder bag made from true parachute silk.

“It was an experience I’ll never forget,” said Master Sgt. Rosetta Pratt, S1 non-commissioned officer in charge, HHC, 2BCT. “It was an honor sitting side by side

with them and knowing they had just as much pride in their Airborne heritage as we do.”

The evening was capped off with three, loud and boisterous songs complete with the Paratroopers banging their fists on the table and shouting. Though the American Paratroopers didn’t know the words to the songs, they were able to follow along with a pamphlet provided by the Brazilians. “I didn’t need to understand the words,” said Staff Sgt. Derek Chambers, assistant operations NCO, 2BCT. “We are Paratroopers and it didn’t matter what we were saying, I knew we were brothers.”

As the Falcons boarded their transportation to take them back to their camps scattered across Port-au-Prince, their faces, worn by two months in Haiti, were lit with huge grins. Maj. Eric Saulsbury, fire support officer, HHC, 2BCT, summed it all up saying, “This was a night of incredible camaraderie and Airborne brotherhood. It was the best night in Haiti.”



Brazilian Airborne troops stand in formation during a ceremony in honor of the accomplishments of the Airborne Soldiers at a UN compound in Haiti. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffery Taylor/ HHC 2-325th AIR)

Building partnerships from tragedy

by Pvt. Cody Barber
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI- The Hotel Montana was known as a four-star hotel with all its beauty and sights to see, but all that remains of the once famous hotel is rubble. Military and civilian contractors have been working non-stop to clear the rubble and debris from where the five-story hotel once stood.

Lt. Bryan Beyer, Navy Facility Engineering Command, NAVFAC, has led the search and recovery operations at Hotel Montana since Jan. 29. He and his crew have made tremendous progress clearing the devastation.

“Since we’ve been here, we’ve removed approximately 1,400 dump truck loads of debris which equates to 14,000 cubic yards,” said Beyer. “We average approximately 130 people working on site per day and an average 90 visitors per day.”

The lieutenant and his crew have not been working as a single American unit.

“The team we have working here is a joint mission; we have the Army, Navy and Air Force,” said Beyer. “We have civilian government contractors and we also work with international forces: the Canadian, French, Israeli and the Mexican search and rescues team as well as the UN.”

The various groups that have helped each played different roles at the site and

brought with them their own unique set of skills and equipment.

“The French brought a search and rescue team from the military. They had about 20 people here for about a month,” said Beyer. “They focused on victim extraction, searching void spaces, holes created in the rubble where they could fit inside a confined space.”

Beyer said the Canadians brought a fire fighting team that averaged 20 people per day and brought specialized tools that allowed them to search voids without actually entering them. They also had rappelling gear that allowed them to rapel down some of the vertical shear faces.

The United States’ southern neighbor, Mexico, also joined in the relief efforts.

“The Mexican search and rescue team was a group of six personnel called the Topos, which translates to moles,” said Beyer. “They would search voids and assist in victim extraction.”

With the partnerships that have been created and the members who have worked together toward a common goal, a chapter of new events is put into the history books.

“As part of NAVFAC, this is really something new, and it’s the first time we have deployed to a recovery mission like this,” said Beyer. “It’s been rewarding for my-



Service members and civilian contractors survey the damage caused by the quake to the Hotel Montana in Haiti. The earthquake on Jan. 12 almost completely destroyed the four-star hotel. (U.S. Army Photo by Pvt. Cody Barber/ 11th PAD)

self and everyone involved and we enjoyed working with the Army Corps of Engineers and everyone else in this joint mission.”



Pfc. Arvit Kopluku, 47th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Corps, works on his second painting at the Haiti International Airport. He has been working on this painting of Ironman for almost three weeks. His first, the mascot for his unit, took about two weeks. Kopluku was requested to do the paintings by his commander, who wanted to make the site feel a little more like home for the soldiers. Kopluku has also drawn a poster and stickers for his unit. (U.S. Army photos by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/ 11th PAD)

POSTCARDS FROM HAITI



The National Cathedral of Haiti was destroyed during the earthquake that struck Haiti on Jan. 12. Even though the cathedral was destroyed, Port-au-Prince locals still gather in front on Sundays to worship. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Cody Barber/ 11th PAD)



Locals in the mountains near Port-au-Prince have tamed wild horses and use them to get around the mountainside. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/ 11th PAD)



An Airman with the 118th Civil Engineering Squadron gives candy to a child at the New Life Children's Home in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on March 12. Members of the squadron have been working at the home, a local orphanage that has taken in many children injured by the January earthquake, building cabinets, storage areas and a medical clinic. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy/ National Guard Bureau)