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THE RESPONDER

Telling the Joint Task Force-Haiti story

a call to duty

May 10, 2010

Medical exercise concludes in Port Salut

by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—Over a week and a half, thousands of Haitians waited to be seen by the medical staff participating in the Medical Readiness Training Exercise (MEDRETE). From April 26 to May 5, approximately 30 U.S. service members with the 94th Combat Support Hospital and 965th Dental Corps worked alongside local Haitian medical officers and Uruguayan medical personnel assigned to MINUSTAH to provide locals living in the Port Salut area with level one, basic primary care.

“In the 10 days we were here, we saw between 400 and 600 people each day,” said 1st Lt. Jana Grinslei, nurse, 94th CSH, deployed from Seagoville, Texas.

The exercises were held in several communities throughout Port Salut. The three locations were Roche au Boteaux, Coteaux and Damassin. Damassin was the third site and the location for the closing ceremony held May 5.

“The MEDRETE was fabulous,” said Lt. Col. Clara Moses, MEDRETE officer in charge, 94th CSH. “We did a good job and everybody was just great.”

Despite having to stand in line for hours at a time, the Haitians were also very grateful.

“It’s great for the community who cannot afford to travel to Port Salut to see doctors,” Lisane Alexis, a local at



Lt. Col. Clara Moses, MEDRETE officer in charge, 94th Combat Support Hospital, deployed from Seagoville, Texas, is visibly touched during a speech at the closing ceremony for the Medical Readiness Training Exercise (MEDRETE) on May 5. The speaker was thanking Moses for her giving spirit and all of the hard work during the MEDRETE. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)

Coteaux, said. “This [clinic] came at the right time for us.”

Locals like Alexis and Justeau Beaubrun came to the clinic for problems like fatigue, toothaches or allergies.

“I came because I am sick in my stomach. I am happy [the MEDRETE staff] is here because we don’t have money to afford [care] elsewhere, which shows [the MEDRETE staff] cares about our health,” Beaubrun said. “I thank them for offering free care to the community.”

Not all the patients that came through the clinic had illnesses like Alexis and Beaubrun. Maj. Claude Perkins, OBGYN physician, 94th CSH, deployed from Little Rock, Ark. said a lot of people he saw were healthy.

“There were a few patients that were very sick and we were

able to do some good things for them, but most of the patients we saw were very healthy,” Perkins said. “They didn’t need any kind of medical intervention.”

Many Haitians walked out of the doors carrying vitamins and antibiotics.

“[Haitian children] are getting vitamins to grow up big and strong,” Sgt. Greg Carter, licensed practitioner nurse, 94th CSH, deployed from Little Rock, Ark., said. “It’s awesome and very rewarding. It makes putting up with the heat and humidity [worthwhile].”

Carter said his favorite part of the exercises was the children.

“The kids are what matter because they are the future for this country and if we can leave a good impression as

Americans, they will pass that on,” Carter said. “They’ll know we’re good people and we can help.”

The service members and Uruguayan medical staff were not the only ones assisting in the MEDRETE. Soldiers from the 209th Military Police Company, deployed from Fort Polk, La., and the Haitian National Police handled the security and crowd control.

With the conclusion of the first MEDRETE in a series of projects continuing through September, approximately 5,000 Haitians received medical care, with more than 400 receiving dental treatment and more than 3,000 animals were seen by the veterinary team that also assisted in the exercise.

“Something is Something”

by Col. Richard Gary Moore
JTF-Haiti Command Chaplain

Lawrence Peter “Yogi” Berra played catcher and outfield for the New York Yankees and New York Mets from 1946 -1965. He was an 18-time All Star, 13-time World Series champion, three-time American League most-valuable-player and baseball Hall of Famer.

He occupies a niche in American folklore more for his humorous life quotes than for his baseball acumen. Here are just a few of his quotes:

- “You can observe a lot just by watching.”
- “I knew exactly where it was, I just couldn’t find it.”
- “The future ain’t what it used to be.”
- “I really didn’t say everything I said.”

When driving the roads of Port-au-Prince we may say, “There are still years of work to be done.” Even with the great efforts of 22,000 U.S. military, almost 1,000 Non-governmental Organizations, the heavy lifting of the USAID rescue mission, thousands of security patrols conducted by the United Nations MINUSTAH contingents, and the government of Haiti bouncing back from devastation and chaos, there is a lot more to be done, however, “Something is something!”

This something may be found by the fact that along with rebuilt piers, internally displaced persons camps staged to meet heavy rains, millions of people supplied with food, water, shelter and sanitation, tens of thousands treated medically and countless collaborations among helping organizations and agencies, the conditions have been set for the future success of the Haitian people. The take away for us is... missions well done! As the JTF’s mission transitions to Theater Security Cooperation exercises, we will continue to continue because “something is something!”

Bringing hope to orphans of Haiti

by Cpl. Jake Marlin
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- Service members from the headquarters element of Joint Task Force-Haiti made a visit on May 8 to the Foyer L’escale Orphanage in Port-au-Prince to deliver clothing and toys to Haitian children who would have otherwise gone without. Most of the children at the orphanage were left parentless after the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti.

Senior Chief Petty Officer Ralph Johnson, non-commissioned officer in charge of the Deployable Joint Command and Control system, organized the visit to the orphanage. He started looking for ways to help after he was impacted by an encounter with a child shortly after arriving to Haiti in January.

“There was a little boy outside the gate holding his little sister,” said Johnson. “She had already passed away and he kept saying he didn’t want to wake her up because he didn’t have any food for her, and that really hit home with me.”

The service members spent the afternoon playing with the children and fitting them with clothing provided by several service members and civilians in JTF-Haiti. The children that live at the orphanage have had next to nothing since the Jan. 12 earthquake took everything away.

“When this started, me and several others in the Joint Task Force started emailing and Facebooking our friends and family, and they started sending boxes from all over,” said Johnson.

While some kids took time to kick a soccer ball around, others flew kites, danced, blew bubbles, and watched the show put on by their guests. Capt. Jose Linares, network engineer, JTF- Haiti, has been to the orphanage before, but for him, this kind of mission never seems to get old.

“This was my second visit and I was astonished to see the changes they have made to the grounds,” said Linares.

The little girls of the orphanage ran around showing off their new shoes and clothes and the boys chased around the service members. For these kids, there hasn’t been much to smile about the last couple of months. But, because of the initiative of a few service members, they got time to let loose.

“I think we did something good for the kids,” said Linares. “I think the kids are going to appreciate the toys, candy, and the clothes we brought.”

After a couple of hours and a lot of laughs, the group shared hugs and a few tears as everyone said their goodbyes. For service members like Linares it is a bittersweet experience coming to these orphanages.



Sgt. Theresa Linn, information systems specialist, Forward Detachment, 56th Signal Battalion, plays with an orphan during a visit to Foyer L’escale Orphanage in Port-au-Prince. Several service members made the trip to deliver toys and clothes to the children. (U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Jake Marlin/11th PAD)

“It breaks your heart,” said Linares. “You get to play with them, you get to run with them and then you have to leave; it’s tough.”

Thanks to the service members of Joint Task Force-Haiti, the children of Foyer L’escale Orphanage shared a little happiness. The little toys and the few pieces of clothing are a start to these kids moving on from the tragedy of the earthquake that took so many of their loved ones.



THE RESPONDER
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A CALL TO ACTION

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

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Guatemalan Soldiers assigned to MINUSTAH push a humvee during the final leg of the race during the 65th Military Police Company Military Stakes competition at Toussaint Louverture International Airport on May 8. The team of three competed against other service members deployed in support of Operation Unified Response. The foreign national team took sixth place out of ten teams. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)

65th MP Company puts troops to the test

by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—As Soldiers began knocking out push-ups, nicknames were yelled and words of encouragement were shouted as loud as possible. Despite the harsh tones, excitement and anticipation surrounded competitors taking part in the 65th Military Police Company (Airborne) Military Stakes competition at Toussaint Louverture International Airport on May 8.

Service members deployed in support of Operation Unified Response took on the challenge of push-ups, sit-ups, a 0.8 mile run, a relay race and a Humvee push all while racing against the clock.

“I think [the competition] gives the guys a good chance

to see their overall endurance level and do things they don’t usually do,” said Sgt. 1st Class Toby Hansen, military policeman, 65th Military Police Company, deployed from Fort Bragg, N.C.

Although the majority of the competitors were 65th MPs, two teams stood apart. LSA Dragon had a team compete and Guatemalan Soldiers assigned to MINUSTAH forces took part in the challenge. The Guatemalan’s took sixth overall.

“It’s really good we had the Guatemalan team come out,” Hansen said.

Master Sgt. Elva Marquez, chief medical NCO, surgeon cell, JTF-Haiti, competed for LSA Dragon. She was one of only two females competing, but that didn’t stop her from giving it her all.

“I had no energy left at the end,” Marquez said. “It was OK, though, because everybody cheered everyone on even though they were on different teams. Camaraderie was big today.”

Hansen, who is part of third platoon, got very involved in keeping his Soldiers morale up. He assisted in time keeping, but still found time to cheer on his Soldiers.

“We are very big on competition in the unit,” Hansen said. “It brings morale up when we do competitive sports.”

He said people came out to have fun and earn bragging rights, especially within the 65th MP Company. Ten teams took part in the event and by the end, everyone had smiles on their face.

“I think the guys like doing stuff like this,” Hansen said. “It

seems to make them happy to get out and do stuff in their down time and not just sleep in their tents.”

Third platoon Soldiers competing on Team Hump won the challenge, with a time of 16 minutes, 15 seconds. Soldiers on Team Hump, Pfc. Dean Hunter, Pfc. Justin Eberhart and Sgt. Malcolm Smith, were third to compete and held the lead for the entire morning.

“The challenge was pretty good,” Hunter said. “It’s the first [competition] we’ve done well and it was something to do other than watching movies or sleeping.”

The team had competed in other challenges together and spent many missions working together.

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Families talk face-to-face miles apart

by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- When Soldiers from U.S. Army South deployed, many were told to prepare for at least a six month deployment, but hope for three. With that in mind, Soldiers said goodbye to families and headed to Haiti in support of Operation Unified Response. Although many families keep in touch via phone, email and Facebook, very few have been able to video chat with their loved ones.

Thanks to technology and some coordination between Joint Task Force-Haiti and U.S. Army South, Soldiers at LSA Dragon were able to spend 10 minutes a piece talking to families and loved ones on May 7 following a family readiness group meeting via video teleconference (VTC).

“My wife and I talk a lot through Facebook chat, but seeing them [live] is a big deal,” said Lt. Col. Scot N. Storey, headquarters commandant, JTF-Haiti, deployed from U.S. Army South. “The thought of seeing them and to be able to see how they’ve changed in the past couple of months is kind of cool.”

Storey has two children still at home, one 14 years old, and the other 16. While deployed, Storey had to miss his son’s birthday.



Before the families saw each other, Maj. Gen Simeon Trombitas, commanding general, JTF-Haiti, held the Family Readiness Group meeting. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)



Sgt. Theresa Linn, information systems specialist, Forward Detachment, 56th Signal Battalion, deployed from Fort Sam Houston, Texas, waves hello to her 15-month old son, Caleb, and her husband Henry during a live video chat. Linn deployed in support of Operation Unified Response several months ago. This is the first time she has been able to see her family. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)

“I was very excited that I got to talk to my wife and children, especially my children,” Storey said. “It was a very nice touch to see them for a little while.”

Several other Soldiers were able to talk with their families.

“It was great to be able to talk to [my son] and see him after a couple months,” said Sgt. 1st Class Leslie Hawkins, noncommissioned officer in charge, secretary of the joint staff, JTF-Haiti, deployed from U.S. Army South. “We talked about what he has been doing and he told me about my other sons who weren’t there.”

Hawkins deployed about two months ago to assist in the relief efforts in Haiti. In previous deployments she was able to do video chats, but this was the first time she was able to, in Haiti.

Sgt. Theresa Linn, information systems specialist, Forward Detachment, 56th Signal Battalion, deployed from Fort Sam Houston, Texas, also spent a few minutes talking to her husband, Henry Linn, and her 15-month-old son, Caleb.

“I’m very excited I got to see them over video,” Theresa said. “It’s sad that I can’t be there to see Caleb through all his stages

of walking, but now that I’ve gotten this VTC, I feel a lot better. I look forward to being home with them.”

This is Theresa’s first time away from her son. Henry, who brought Caleb with him to see his mom, was just as happy to see his wife.

“It was really cool,” Henry said. “I really enjoyed seeing her and so did my son. We’re both happy to see her.”

During the couple’s VTC, Caleb showed off his walking skills and acted shy towards his mom on the video screen.

“He doesn’t really recognize her, but he walked around for [Theresa],” Henry said.

The couple got to talk face-to-face about their son, how tall he is and the things going on during the day.

“He’s been getting bigger, walking and running around,” Henry said. “I know [Theresa] misses that.”

With today’s technology, Soldiers are able to keep in touch with families and friends a lot easier through Facebook, Myspace and Skype, while still using emails, phone calls and letters. The VTC gave families the ability to see their Soldier and made that 10 minute conversation all the sweeter.

Army South civilian receives award

by Sgt. Catherine G. Talento
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- If you're ever walking around LSA Dragon and happen to see Andrew Durbin, or Andy as he is known, give him a little wave. You'll be able to recognize Durbin with his short cropped brown hair, salt and pepper goatee and rotating wardrobe of University of Texas and Texas A&M t-shirts. An interesting clothing choice for a native of Ohio and Ohio State Buckeyes fan.

But, even if you've never met Durbin there is a good chance you've probably used a piece of equipment he is responsible for.

Durbin is the Joint Task Force-Haiti Deputy Chief for networking and communication management (J6), part of the team responsible for the computers, phones, and other communication devices that help keep JTF-Haiti communicating. Recently, Durbin was named the Civilian Employee of the Quarter for U.S. Army South, an honor he said that took him by surprise.

"I didn't even know I was nominated for it. I really just try to come to work everyday and do my best," said Durbin.

Col. Paul English, U.S. Army South and JTF-Haiti J6, said he knew about the award when the nomination was forwarded by Durbin's supervisor at U.S. Army South for his endorsement.

"It's a pleasure working with him. He is a former 53 series officer and he understands the Deployable Joint Command and Control



Maj. Gen. Simeon Trombitas, commanding general, JTF-Haiti, presents Andrew Durbin, with an award for being named the Civilian Employee of the Quarter for U.S. Army South. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)

System. He's good with people and is a good fit for the joint task force."

Communications, said English, are how the commanders are able to see and coordinate with one another. In Haiti, the J6 is responsible for not only coordinating communications amongst like units such as U.S. Army South but also separate units and the sister services in a communications network stretching across Haiti and all the way back to San Antonio, Texas and up to Washington D.C. Still, Durbin says being deployed is where he feels most comfortable.

"This is my niche; as a former 53 series this is where I feel most at home, setting up deployed communications."

Durbin retired from the Army as a Major in 2008 after serving nearly 22 years. He initially enlisted as a Military Policeman, later becoming a commissioned MP Officer. He changed functional areas and retired as an Information Systems Management Officer, returning to U.S. Army South to work as a civilian. This is not his first time deploying to Haiti. He previously served in Haiti in 1992 as an MP.

Durbin recognizes how fortunate he is to be deployed. He was in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba getting ready for a deployment exercise when the earthquake struck. He volunteered to go to Haiti and was one of four persons chosen to deploy as the J6 advance party.

"I think I was lucky to get to go. I think almost everyone at Army South volunteered," he said.

For being named Civilian of the Quarter, Durbin received a copy of his award certificate; the original is waiting for him back in San Antonio as is commander's coin from Maj. Gen. Simeon Trombitas, commanding general, JTF-Haiti. Like most of the joint task force personnel, he will soon redeploy back to the states, back to his wife and four children and his Ohio State Buckeyes jersey, which begs the question, why would a lifelong Ohio State fan wear Texas gear?

"It's to pay tribute to where I am now in Texas, it's where I live and work and many of my co-workers are Texas and Texas A&M grads. Plus," he said with a slight smile, "everyone knows I won't do anything to damage my Ohio State jersey."

TEST continued from p. 3

"They are an organic team," Hansen said. "They work together all the time."

Smith, who was the unofficial leader for the team, said it was rough on the tire flip, but knew they had the win.

"When you have good teamwork, you can accomplish things better," Smith said. "We had great teamwork."

The trio went into the competition with a clear plan in their heads.

"For the push-ups, we all did two sets of 20, then 10 each," Hunter said. "The sit-ups were a set of 40 then 20 each. For the rest, we just focused on staying together and getting the job done."

After their run, the team sat around joking about having to carry each other

during the relay race and how it went.

"My legs were like jello," Eberhart said. "You had to pull all you had for the [humvee push]."

Team Hump participated in the volleyball tournament last weekend and the firefighter challenge a few weeks ago.

"We do events every Saturday," Hansen said. "We rotate with the Air Force (24th Air Expeditionary Group) and now that the 209th Military Police Company [deployed from Fort Polk, La.] just moved in, they'll probably have next week's event to coordinate."

With Team Hump's win, and the 65th MP Company's second and third spots in the firefighter challenge, bragging rights are higher than before at the Toussaint Louverture International Airport.



Pfc. Justin Eberhart, military policeman, 65th Military Police Company (Airborne), deployed from Fort Bragg, N.C., fireman carries his teammate, Pfc. Dean Hunter, MP, 65th MP Company, during the 65th MP Company Military Stakes competition. The fireman carry was the first part of the relay race. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)

Hope & Pride:

Sergeant Major reflects on Haiti service

by Sgt Catherine G. Talento
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- After talking to Sgt. Maj. Jean Chouloute for awhile, two words come up time and again; hope and pride. Hope for the recovery of Haiti and pride that in the twilight of his 25-year Army career he can be a part of helping to make that recovery possible. For Chouloute, there is also the pride of being able to return to Haiti, the land of his birth.

In 1977, then 11-year-old Chouloute and his family immigrated to the United States and settled in New Jersey. Eight years later, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and headed to Fort Knox, Ky. to train as a tank crewman. Currently, he serves as the Operations Sergeant Major for V Corps in Heidelberg, Germany.

Chouloute was serving in Afghanistan when news came that the earthquake had struck. He volunteered to go to Haiti and six days later, touched down in Port-au-Prince with the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division. He says it is an honor to serve in his homeland but he did not return to Haiti just to be a translator.

"I consider myself a Soldier first. So if it is handing out MREs, or going on patrol, or visiting the camps, then that is what I want to do," Chouloute said.

Being on the ground in the early days after the earthquake gave Chouloute an appreciation for the enormous task facing the U.S. military and the role they helped play in the early days of the disaster.

"In any catastrophe, people will loot, they will shoot at each other, they're going to be desperate. But, I have seen here many people standing in lines, for hours, and it is orderly and organized because of the role of the United States Armed Forces," he said.

Chouloute's last assignment was with JTF-Haiti in the Staff Judge Advocate's Office. Where his Soldier skills were used more in the early days, it is his linguistic and cultural skills that were called on later. "[Being Haitian]I understand the people, the culture and I think it gives people confidence to see a Haitian who is also a U.S. Soldier," Chouloute said.



Sgt. Maj. Jean Chouloute gets ready to pay claimant Marie Eveline Joseph at LSA Dragon April 30. Chouloute, a native of Port-au-Prince, has been in Haiti since Jan. 18. He was recently serving as a translator for the JTF-Haiti Staff Judge Advocates Office. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Catherine G. Talento/11th PAD)

Working as a translator with the JAG, Chouloute had the opportunity to learn about the laws of the country and doing business in Haiti. More importantly, it allowed him to meet with many different Haitians.

"Most are proud to see a Haitian who wears the uniform. They are proud of my accomplishments and a lot will say I am the first or second Sergeant Major they have seen who is Haitian," he said. "I don't know if that is true or not. I will have to do some research but they always ask how long the U.S. will stay."

It is not a question Chouloute is able to readily answer but he hopes that U.S. organizations stay and help rebuild, bringing the skill sets necessary to help Haiti. With help, he sees Haiti rebuilding in five years but acknowledges it will probably take ten years before the country really recovers.

Redeployed on May 1, Chouloute wrapped up his three and a half months in Haiti and returned to his wife and three children in Germany.

"It gives me a sense of accomplishment to be able to serve my country of birth while also continuing to serve the United States," he said.

Better than many, Chouloute understands the challenges that Haiti faces but he has hope that one day things will improve.

"I want there to be jobs and I want children to be able to go to school," he said. "I would like to see more tourists and foreigners come to Haiti and it be safe like it once was."

Next year, Chouloute will retire from the U.S. Army. He plans to return to Haiti to help bring about the newer, better Haiti he hopes and longs for.

It's a dirty job, but someone has to do it

by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- As troops prepared for their deployment to Haiti, many were told to bring laundry soap and expect to be doing laundry in the sink. Thanks to the 16th Quartermaster Company, deployed from Fort Lee, Va., the laundry detergent is unused and the troops are able to enjoy clean laundry on a regular basis.

"When you come out here and you don't have clean clothes, you're going to feel like crap," said Spc. William Ozee, laundry and shower specialist, 16th QM Company.

Ozee is one of several Soldiers who provide laundry services for the troops deployed to assist with Operation Unified Response. His company deployed to Haiti in February and they haven't had a slow day yet.

"We stay pretty busy; time flies," said Pfc. James Johnson, laundry and shower specialist, 16th QM Company.

Johnson said when his company first arrived they were in charge of all the pick-up and drop off points for laundry. After that, the company was



Pfc. James Johnson, laundry specialist, 16th QM Company, begins sorting laundry and making sure the ticket and the items in the bag match. The process from start to finish is roughly an hour and a half long. The 16th QM Company can do about 20 bags of laundry a day and is in charge of all the laundry for JTF-Haiti. The company deployed in February to assist with Operation Unified Response. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall/11th PAD)

put in charge of cleaning and sorting the laundry.

"I think we do a pretty good job," Johnson said. "Everybody likes to have their laundry done."

In one week, the Soldiers wash roughly 60 loads of laundry, but it all depends on how many troops turn in laundry. From inprocessing to outprocessing, a load of laundry takes them roughly 90 minutes.

"You start out by inprocessing all the clothes," Johnson said.

"You have one team that goes through the bags and you recheck all of the [clothing] that [troops] put in their bag."

Inprocessing and checking pockets allow the Soldiers to make sure all items are accounted for before going through the wash. The washing and drying process takes about 65 minutes.

Each load is put into a mesh bag and typically contains either one uniform or a mix of tops and underwear. If a

laundry bag contains more than one uniform, multiple mesh bags are used. The company is also very specific on how to wash the clothes.

"We have our own detergent, we don't let people use their own," Johnson said.

Johnson said letting people use their own detergent could ruin the machines.

After the inprocessing and cleaning, the clothing is sorted out once again to ensure all the items are accounted for.

"I think we're doing a good job," Ozee said. "We haven't had any major complaints yet."

Ozee admitted his job isn't the greatest and he doesn't always enjoy it, but someone has to do it.

"It's a good service," Ozee said. "If there wasn't someone to do laundry, I think it would be a lot rougher out here."

Although they have the dirty job of sorting laundry that has been out in the Haitian heat, the Soldiers of the 16th QM Company understand their job has a big impact on the service members of Joint Task Force-Haiti.

"It's a pretty big morale booster to have clean clothes to wear," Johnson said.

Better safe than sorry

by Pvt. Samantha D. Hall
11th PAD

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- Humvees were parked, helicopters grounded and all unnecessary movement was stopped May 6 for troops assigned to Joint Task Force-Haiti. Safety Stand Down Day gave troops the opportunity to refresh on safety measures that need to be remembered in their everyday missions.

"The purpose was to get everybody to refocus before the major movement [to redeploy]," Duncan Brady, civilian safety director, JTF-Haiti, said. "The troops have been busting their butts for the last three months and they're close to the end. They're focused on getting home, so they need the reminder to stay safe and not rush things."

The safety day was a direct order from Maj. Gen. Simeon Trombitas, commanding general, JTF-Haiti.

"We had safety stand down day because it's the duty of every commander to ensure that their Soldiers perform their duties safely and correctly," Trombitas said. "Everyone has done a great job [in Haiti] and it's up to commanders to make sure we get home safe."

Trombitas said the troops need to understand the mission and how to conduct it safely so that everyone gets home together.

Service members throughout Port-au-Prince spent the day in classes on various topics such as vehicle safety, heat injury prevention, weapon safety and general order number one.

"The topics were viewed as major areas for redeployment safety," Brady said. "In addition, topics on once you got home were covered."

Sgt. Bruce Bargar, infantryman, U.S. Army South, deployed from Fort Sam Houston, Texas, briefed Soldiers on the proper functions and cleaning of an M16 rifle.

"It's important to make sure Soldiers know how to keep their weapons clean, especially with the dirt and dusty conditions in Haiti," Bargar said.

The biggest focus of the day was continuing to drink water.

"Just because the troops have been in Haiti for the past several months does not mean they have fully acclimated," Brady said. "They may think they can push themselves more than what they can handle. They need to remember, they don't want to be the next heat casualty. It's safe to be safe."

POSTCARDS FROM HAITI



Senior Chief Petty Officer Ralph Johnson, non-commissioned officer in charge of the Deployable Joint Command and Control system, teaches children at Foyer L'escale Orphanage how to blow bubbles. Johnson started getting involved with the orphanage after a personal encounter with an orphan in Port-au-Prince. (U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Jake Marlin/11th PAD)



In preparation for the rainy season, two Hatian men attach sheets of metal to their shelter at the internally displaced persons camp, Ancien Aeroport Militaire. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Debbie Thompson/11th PAD)



Capt. Jose Linares, network engineer, JTF-Haiti, helps children from the Foyer L'escale Orphanage fly kites during a visit May 8. Linares and other members of the headquarters element of JTF-Haiti sent emails to friends and family back in the U.S. to send clothing and toys for the orphans of Haiti. (U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Jake Marlin/11th PAD)