

From: Allen, Thad Admiral
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2010 4:47 PM
Subject: ALL HANDS - Coast Guard Activity in Haiti

To the Men and Women of the United States Coast Guard:

Exactly one week ago today, a little before 1700 EST, a violent earthquake devastated Port Au Prince, Haiti. Without waiting for tasking, Coast Guard men and women from all over the country made immediate preparations to assist the beleaguered Haitian people. The next morning, Haitians witnessed President Obama's pledge - "You will not be forsaken and you will not be forgotten" - become reality when the cutter FORWARD arrived with the rising sun as the first American asset on-scene. Amidst the devastation, FORWARD delivered damage assessments, critical command and control capabilities, and most importantly - hope.

I am incredibly proud of the performance of all our personnel during this challenging period and like you, my heart goes out to the Haitian people who have suffered so greatly. Coast Guard units were the first on-scene in Port Au Prince and have been working around the clock with our interagency partners to provide humanitarian assistance, evacuate U.S. citizens, and help the most seriously wounded.

On-scene, the cutters TAHOMA and MOHAWK quickly established a makeshift trauma unit with the Haitian Coast Guard and triaged hundreds of injured people (read the story here: <http://coastguard.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/01/guardians-report-in-hs1-larry-berman/>). TAHOMA's crew even delivered a baby boy from an injured Haitian woman on their flight deck and a second baby at their shoreside clinic. C-130 aircraft performed damage assessment flights and the cutter VALIANT conducted a port assessment of Cap Haitian to create another entryway for supplies that were backing up at the airport. The cutter OAK continues to survey Port Au Prince harbor and repair the primary pier to allow much needed supplies to flow directly into the city. Aircrews from Mobile, AL; Elizabeth City, NC; Sacramento, CA; Barbers Point, HI; Detroit, MI; and Jacksonville and Miami, FL are also assisting with overflights and evacuations. Follow these links to view our Guardians in action (<http://coastguard.dodlive.mil/> and www.d7publicaffairs.com/go/site/586/).

Supporting our forward operations have been thousands of Guardians working inside and outside of the Coast Guard. The Seventh District Commander has been leading the Homeland Security Task Force South East which is a key coordination point for the federal government's collective response and evacuation efforts. A joint FEMA-Coast Guard team has been deployed to Port Au Prince to support United States response operations being directed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). We are also supporting U.S. Southern Command Joint Task Force Haiti with individual augmentees. Our Area Commanders have worked seamlessly to flow forces rapidly including moving the cutter HAMILTON through the Panama Canal from the West Coast. The Chief of Staff, exercising his mission support responsibilities, has skillfully integrated and deployed logistics elements demonstrating the maturation of our new support model. Here in Washington, our staffs have integrated with key partners including DOD, FEMA and USAID. I have worked with FEMA Director, Craig Fugate, in support of Secretary Napolitano and Deputy Secretary Lute at a number of White House meetings.

We continue to surge people and assets because we will have to sustain our response efforts in Haiti. HAMILTON and LEGARE will soon be on-scene pushing our total number of Guardians in theater to over 700. We are also recalling Coast Guard reservists to augment our humanitarian efforts and ensure maritime safety and security for relief supplies arriving in theater. Our immediate and sustained response illustrates the value of the Coast Guard's flexible command structure, ability to operate across the interagency and international spectrums, and the initiative of our people to take action. This is why the Coast Guard is so valuable to the American public and the global maritime community.

Our efforts have not gone unnoticed. Secretary of State Clinton commented "our Coast Guard has been unbelievable." At a press conference last week, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ADM Mike Mullen stated "the Coast Guard was magnificent from day one. First, they were medevacing people literally within the first 24 hours. And I want to give them a great deal of credit for their response capability as well." Those comments are directed at all of you who executing or supporting our operations.

Many have questioned how the Coast Guard can do so much so quickly, and I simply reply: "This is what we do". Our Guardians are committed to protecting, defending, and saving without having to be told to do so. Along with all Americans, I am truly inspired by the Coast Guard men and women operating in theater, backfilling for deployed units, or providing the necessary support to make it all possible. As always, our Guardians are here to protect and ready to rescue at a moment's notice. That is who we are and why we serve.

I cannot describe it any better than a young petty officer assigned to TAHOMA in this email to his family:

"There is an eerie feeling in the air amongst our crew tonight. Those who remained shielded on the cutter today see in the eyes of those who went ashore what a major disaster can do to a nation. I have never seen so many grown men and women with tears in their eyes. Those who did go ashore experienced first-hand the severity of the situation.

I've been shielded today only talking over the radio to those who have seen it. Never once was there a question of professionalism in their voice. I remember in boot camp being told that the U.S. Coast Guard on the right side of our chest takes priority over our name. Today the men and women who went ashore wore coveralls without their names on them. All that was visible were the letters USCG.

Today was the first day I think I've truly been more thankful to be an American. Not because of our infrastructure or the freedoms given to us, but because as a country we will be there when a country of less fortune is in need. Haiti rarely exports anything to our country. They have no oil or major cash crop we use. But as a county we will stand together and put aside our different opinions of healthcare, war, or economy and help out those in need.

Right now we are taking it hour by hour, aftershock by aftershock, every little bit helps. I'm going to try and get some sleep, as I've already put in a solid 16 hours. Tomorrow will be longer."

Well said.

Thank you and Semper Paratus!

Admiral Thad Allen
Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard

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