

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH U.S. MARINE CORPS CAPTAIN CLARK CARPENTER, 22ND MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER VIA TELECONFERENCE SUBJECT: UPCOMING DEPLOYMENT TO HAITI TO PARTICIPATE IN RELIEF OPERATIONS TIME: 10:02 A.M. EST DATE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 2010

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LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG, (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable for Tuesday -- excuse me, not Tuesday -- Friday, January 15th, 2009 (sic/means 2010). My name is Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg with the Office of Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. I'll be moderating the call.

A note to all the bloggers on the line. Please clearly state your name and the organization you're with prior to asking your questions.

And today our special guest is U.S. Marine Corps Captain Clark Carpenter. He's with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, and he's a public affairs officer. He's going to be discussing their upcoming deployment to Haiti to participate in relief operations.

I know that someone just joined us. Before I welcome you, I want to turn the floor over to Captain Carpenter.

If you'd like to start with an opening statement, and we'll go straight to questions.

CAPT. CARPENTER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Captain Carpenter here. And I'll just give you a quick brief on where we've come in the last couple of days.

Two days ago, we got the call early in the morning to begin planning prudent planning to support relief operations in Haiti. Now, the 22nd MEU just returned from a deployment on December 5th, so we were deployed to U.S. European Command U.S. Central Command for seven months, so we'd just gotten back. In fact, I was on leave myself, post-deployment leave, as were some others, who have since been recalled to the unit.

We got that call and we began our Crisis Action Team planning that morning. And since then, we have maintained a focus on embarking the ships USS Bataan, USS Fort McHenry and USS Carter Hall. And we'll be beginning that process today. A lot of effort has gone into getting organized and getting the gear prepared and getting it ready to get back onto the ships.

The great thing about being a Marine expeditionary unit is that we load and unload ships very, very often, and we've done it dozens of times during the workups and deployments. So we're expeditionary. That's our middle name, of course, so it's a challenge, but it's not a unique challenge to what we typically do.

We're preparing to bring some CH-53 Echo Super Stallion helicopters and some UH-1 November Hueys as utility air-support aircraft. And we're also looking at bringing trucks, some limited earth-moving equipment. We have tactical water-purification systems that can produce water right from sea water.

And, of course, you know the contingent of Marines that we have -- the Ground Combat Element, Battalion Landing Team, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines, our Logistics Combat Element, Combat Logistics Element 22. And actually, our ACE is not the ACE that we deployed with. And by ACE, I mean Aviation Combat Element. We are deploying with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461 reinforced. And it's reinforced because it has Hueys with it.

You know, I don't have a lot else to add at this point. We're very focused on that embark, and we're also trying to get a clear picture of what's happening on the ground there. So if I can open it up to questions. Or Jennifer, I guess you're the moderator. I'm not sure how you do this, so I'll let you -- I'll kick it back to you. LT. CRAGG: Thank you so very much.

Let's go ahead and go with questions. Andrew, you were the first online. Please go ahead.

Q Captain, thanks for joining us this morning. I know you're real busy down there.

CAPT. CARPENTER: Yeah, no problem, no problem.

Q Okay. Captain, I guess the biggest question, we've seen this morning on the news pictures of groups of Haitians running through the city looting with brandished machetes. Do you foresee this as a stabilization mission or more humanitarian?

CAPT. CARPENTER: We foresee it as however our assets can best be applied to the situation. You know that Marine expeditionary units are broadly capable of conducting a variety of missions, from humanitarian relief, disaster relief, all the way to combat operations. We've been trained to do all of these things. So we come as a multi-mission force, so we'll be able to support any number of things that are asked of us.

As for telling the future, as to what specifically we will be doing, we don't necessarily know. But with those heavy-lift helicopters that we're bringing and some of the trucks and some of the equipment, we're looking at more of a relief effort at this time. But we're very capable of providing more than just the relief effort, if that's necessary.

Q Okay, thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, thanks, Andrew.

Richard.

Q Hi. This is Richard Lowry from Op-For.com.

Can you give me a little bit of additional information on how the 22nd MEU is going to be configured differently than it was when it made its last cruise for this special mission?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Well, sure. You know, the focus is the humanitarian relief and providing relief to the human suffering that's going on down there. So with that said, we're looking at the supplies and equipment that can help support that. The ships have also put on a lot of supplies. And as we begin to load our equipment on the ships, you know, we'll get a better idea of what the ships brought and then how we can best accompany what the ship already has on it with the gear that we have. So specific numbers of gear and that type of thing, I don't have in front of me right now. I have to get with the logistics experts on that. But we're working through that and we're moving stuff, you know, up there to the Morehead City port right now to get unloaded.

But, again, we come with a heavy-equipment capability on the ground with our seven-ton trucks. We do have a lot of forklifts, some earth-moving equipment. We've got the water-purification systems. And, of course, we've got a lot of bodies that can support whatever mission might be asked.

Q So are you going to take ACEs instead of tanks?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Yeah, we're not going to take tanks. That's a good point. You're right. We're not going to take our tanks and our artillery. Typically, our Battalion Landing Team is reinforced with some tanks, some artillery. They're also reinforced with engineers. But, again, the focus will be humanitarian efforts. So you're right; we're not going to take the tanks with us. But we will take the bodies that can help support the relief effort. So the tanks might not go, but the tankers might.

Q Thank you, Richard.

Let's go to Jim.

Q Hi. Jim Davo (sp) with the U.S. Naval Institute blog.

Will you be partnering with NGOs on the ground? And how will you bridge the language gap?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Well, I'll answer the second question first. We have pulled in a lot of interpreters, Marines who speak the language down there, whether they're native or whether they happen to speak that language. We're pulling those in that went out across the Corps to pull in as many bodies as possible. I'm not sure how many we have, but we asked for about 40. So we're in the process of getting those guys. In fact, you'll see them checking in on a regular basis here at the unit as we begin to prepare to leave tomorrow.

So we will be able to bridge that language gap. I'm confident about that. And I think the aid, providing aid and providing relief, that is an international language. People will be able to understand what we want them to do or what we can provide for them.

The first part of the question was about working with NGOs. During our pre-deployment workup period, which began September 18th, 2008, we conducted a number of training exercises, a six-month-long workup period. During these training exercises, we actually rehearsed and trained two humanitarian relief operations and working with non-governmental agencies or organizations and USAID, those types of organizations. So we train to work with those guys. We actually have role players in those exercises acting as those that need the aid. We'll have role players acting as the NGOs. So we do a lot of coordination and training to support these.

The NGOs and those relief organizations are very well-equipped to support relief operations. That's what they do. So definitely we will want to support them in their efforts. But until we get on the ground and until we can make contact with them, exactly how we'll do that is yet to be determined.

Q Thank you so much.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Jim.

Bruce, you're next.

Q Hi, there. Bruce Henderson, New Ledger.

Of course, I have a ton of questions. We'll stick to just one at first. When do you expect to put to sea?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Pardon me?

Q When do you expect the Bataan to put to sea?

CAPT. CARPENTER: The Bataan is at sea. The Bataan's --

Q I'm sorry. I thought you'd said you were at the dock loading.

CAPT. CARPENTER: Right. Oh, okay. Well, we plan to pull out tomorrow morning. They'll be pulling in today to Morehead City Port. They were underway yesterday. The amphibious ships were underway yesterday from Norfolk.

Q If I could follow up, are you bringing any of the LCAC units?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Right. There will be three LCACs aboard USS Bataan, and we're going to have two LCUs and another variant of landing craft, a smaller version of the LCU. And I don't remember the nomenclature. I believe we'll be bringing two of those.

Q Thank you much.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Bruce.

Leo, you're next.

Q Yeah, hi, Captain. Leo Shane calling from Stars & Stripes. I don't know if anyone has talked about the length of this mission. I mean, you guys are just back from a deployment. Have you -- have there been discussions about what to prepare for, how long folks might be down there, and how long you're prepared to be down there?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Right now -- well, you know, we're prepared to be down there as long as we're directed to be down there.

Q Right.

CAPT. CARPENTER: But we're preparing for at least a minimum of 30 days. I think the key is to get down there and figure out how our assets are going to best support the mission. That's very important. Once we can determine that and see how we're going to be able to support it, maybe we can bring in more of something, or maybe we can use those assets differently to help support that relief operation. But right now, you know, we're looking at a minimum of 30 days, but we're prepared to support the mission as long as we're asked to be down there and support it.

I just wanted to touch base with something. You know, we did just get back about a month ago, but the morale is off the charts here. We are absolutely ready to go to help down there. The images that we've been seeing on the news, it's just -- it's catastrophic and it's very sad. Marines are definitely warriors first and that is what the world knows the Marines for, as warriors. But we are equally as compassionate when we need to be and this is a role that we like to show, is that compassionate warrior that can reach out that helping hand to those who need it.

So we are very excited about this. We have a sharp focus on loading on the ships right now, but that focus will ultimately shift to applying our assets to this relief operation in the best way possible.

Q All right, great. Thanks.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Leo. Michael, please go ahead. Michael, are you still on the line?

Q I forgot to push mute.

LT. CRAGG: Oh, that's okay. Go ahead.

Q This is Michael Cardin from American Forces Press. You talked a minute ago about your guys asking for more linguists throughout the Marine Corps, but you're not taking your total force -- you know, mentioning your tanks and artillery. Is there anything else you guys asked for, like more engineers or more medical personnel?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Well, I can't get into the specifics right now because I don't know exactly the number of plus-ups we've got. I know, for instance, just within my shop I asked for some extra bodies to help out -- you know, some more photographers, some more videographers in that role. But yeah, absolutely we've asked for some specific equipment.

In fact, some of the equipment that we brought with us on deployment we had already turned over to other units and we're getting it back. I think the great thing about this whole process -- and it's been a very rapid process -- is that, you know, 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force, all the Marines here have bent over backwards to ensure that we get everything that we need. And that starts at, you know, the Marine Corps level on down.

This base, this community, the American people are outpouring compassion and support and they want to help in any way possible. So yes, it's been fast-paced to plan this and organize this to get on the ships, but it's been made a lot simpler by the singular focus of the Marines and sailors on this base to support this mission. And I'm talking everybody on this base.

Q Okay, sir, just to follow up, you guys are normally manpowered at about 2,000 Marines. Are you guys going with more or less?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Right now I don't have a specific figure. It will be less, though.

Q Okay.

CAPT. CARPENTER: And our traditional MEU number is at about 2,200. That reinforced infantry battalion is really large. It's 1,200. Our ACE is about, you know, 4 (hundred) or 500. CLBs, 2 (hundred), 300, and the command element is in between 2 (hundred) and 300. So about 2,200, 2,100 is the traditional strength. But it will be less than that. The ACE is a little bit smaller.

Q Okay. All right, thanks, sir.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Michael. Sergeant Boss (ph), are you still on the line? Please go ahead. Sergeant Boss, it's your turn. I'm going to skip you but I'm going to come back if you chime in. Chuck, please go ahead.

Q Yes, Captain, what you said about Marine compassion reminded me of the phrase "no better friend, no worse enemy."

CAPT. CARPENTER: Sure.

Q I wanted to ask you about when you get to Haiti. Do you have an advance party down there? And do you anticipate having to make maybe an amphibious landing when you arrive? Or how are you going to get your boots ashore? CAPT. CARPENTER: You've just -- this is a very good question, and I'm going to answer the advance party first. We are planning to send our forward command element in, and this is during our training and actual employment. This is a team that is led by the MEU executive officer, Lt. Col. Danny Verda.

Q Can you spell that?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Yeah. D-a-n-n-y, and Verda is V-e-r-d-a. He is the MEU executive officer. It's a select team comprised of subject matter experts from the command element in our elements, our other elements. And they'll go in, and they're trained to liaise with the Department of State and during the training process, like I said, they're the ones that work with -- talk a lot with NGOs and some of the major aid organizations as we do this training. But particularly they're well-versed in working with Department of State representatives. So they'll be there first to conduct some liaison. At least that's the plan at this point.

As far as entry points, this is an exceptional -- this is an operation that's well suited for an amphibious unit. Our amphibious ships that we're bringing, each of them has a flight deck so we can launch aircraft, rotary wing, tilt-rotor, and any aircraft that can land vertically, from those aircraft, so we can launch and recover those aircraft.

Each ship has a well deck, so the landing craft air cushion that will be on the USS Bataan, they can seek additional entry points other than, you know, the airport in Haiti, so we can find a beach and we can set up a place where we can bring supplies ashore at that beach. So we bring additional entry capability from the sea.

And of course on the USS Bataan we have a medical capability that's only actually surpassed by the USNS hospital ships, the Hope and Comfort, so it's a very robust and flexible capability that Marines and the Navy bring with amphibious ships. And we can put tons of supplies ashore by sea, or we can move tons of supplies with our helicopters. So again, very well suited for this mission with our amphibious ship and our Navy and Marine Corps team.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Chuck. Let's go to Dale.

Q Good morning, Captain. This is Dale Kissinger calling, talking from Military Avenue. I have a quick question about the preparation for the young Marines. I know they've been all over the world, they've seen combat in many cases. How are we preparing them for the devastation they're going to come, with tons of bodies stacked in the middle of the streets? Are the chaplains preparing them? Are you going to have chaplains along? Are you going to have some kind of mental health meeting with them? CAPT. CARPENTER: Well, sir, we don't go anywhere without chaplains. We always have Navy chaplains with us, and each element has a chaplain with us. But I think that the most important thing we do to prepare our Marines is train, to provide realistic training. And we've rehearsed for mass casualties, where we've hired Hollywood companies that, you know, provide some incredibly realistic injuries that our corpsmen will have to deal with, or our first responders, our combat lifesavers might have to deal with.

So the Marines are prepared for this. We've trained for this, we're ready for this. You know, we've got to just get onto these ships and get down there as quickly as possible so we can begin to ease that human suffering.

Q (Off mike) -- are going along?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Pardon?

Q How many ships are going with the 22nd?

CAPT. CARPENTER: There are going to be three -- USS Bataan, that's an LHD, so it is a very large ship. It's got a -- it looks like a small aircraft carrier, or is similar to what you might see as a World War II aircraft carrier, and it can only receive aircraft that can land vertically. We typically deploy with six AV-8B Harrier jets, and they can land vertically, but we use the runway to launch those. We're not bringing those -- we're not bringing our attack helicopters, but we're looking at bringing those heavy-lift and the UH-1 November Hueys for the utility and support role.

The other two ships, I'm sorry. USS Ft. McHenry. It's an LSD. And then USS Carter Hall is an LSD as well.

Q Is the Bataan like the Saipan? Is it similar?

CAPT. CARPENTER: The Saipan, I'm not sure. Is that an LHA or an LHD?

Q I don't know. I just happen to have landed on it a long time ago.

CAPT. CARPENTER: It's probably very similar. If it's an amphibious ship with a big deck, it will look very similar, whether it's an LHA or an LHD.

Q Okay, thanks.

LT. CRAGG: Thanks, Dale. Chris, go ahead.

Q Chris from -- Christopher Albon from Conflict Health. When you arrive at Haiti, how are you coordinating where your resources are deployed to best match the needs on the ground? CAPT. CARPENTER: Well, there's a relief operation already in place, and while we are rapidly embarking and rapidly deploying, still it's going to take us some time to get down there. So when we get there, the relief effort that's already in place, we expect to support that. Our advance party, our forward command element will help identify where we can best support. But again, you know, SOUTHCOM is overseeing this operation and they'll know what assets we have and they will probably be able to tell us specifically how they want us to employ those assets.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thanks, Chris. Taylor, please go ahead.

Q I don't have a question.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Taylor. David, please go ahead.

Q Hi. It's David Axe from warisboring.com. So as the situation evolves in Haiti so quickly, how are you keeping current on intelligence as you prepare to deploy?

CAPT. CARPENTER: That's a great question.

And the Marine Expeditionary Unit always deploys with a robust information gathering or intelligence gathering capability. So we have a very large intel shop that can pull in that raw information and produce it into usable intelligence.

But there's a tremendous amount of information pouring in from Haiti, and we're able to get a lot of solid-source information to support the planning that we are doing.

But you're right. You know, we pull that information in. We develop that information, and we use it to get a clear picture of what we are coming into but also how we can apply our assets to the best of our capability.

Q Okay. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thanks, David.

Paul, before I call on you, I'm going to go back to Sergeant Vought. He has two questions, and I skipped him. He was number seven.

Q Sure.

LT. CRAGG: Sergeant Vought, please go ahead.

Q Yes, sir. This is Staff Sergeant Vought, DMA Marine Corps, Marine Corps News.

When you have boots on the ground, what do you see as your very first thing, basically, once you get those boots on the ground? What do you see happening?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Well, the first boots on the ground are going to be the forward-command element. And that is the most -- you know, these guys are going to help pave the way for what the major forces will do ashore.

What we see ourselves doing is, very generally, we're going to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and we're going to use the assets that we're bringing to apply to that situation to the best that those assets can be used.

What specifically we might be doing, I can't tell you. I can only tell you in general terms because, again, we're loading today, and we'll be pulling out tomorrow and we'll get a much more clear picture as we get closer to Haiti.

Q Thank you, sir. When we talk about -- you were talking about the vertical lift. Will the MV-22 Osprey be at all used in this operation?

CAPT. CARPENTER: That's a good question. We deployed. We were the first MEU to deploy with the MV-22 Osprey. And at the end of the deployment, we flew our squadron, our Ospreys, into Afghanistan. We were the first unit to get those Ospreys into Afghanistan where they were turned over to another squadron.

We are not taking the MV-22 Squadron with us. We are taking a Marine heavy helicopter squadron reinforced with Hueys. So we will not have Ospreys with us.

Q Thank you, sir.

LT. CRAGG: And going back to a previous question -- I forgot to say the USS Saipan is an LHA in case anybody was wondering.

Paul, please go ahead.

Q Hi. Paul McCleary from DTI.

Do you know where the Marines are going to go staged once you get to Haiti? Is it going to be at the airport? Or is there another place where they're going to kind of set up base camp?

CAPT. CARPENTER: That's a great question, and somebody asked a question earlier about an amphibious landing. Well, with our amphibious

ships, we also have a great capability to sea base. We don't know if we're going to sea base or not at this point.

But the great thing about sea basing is that we can push forces in during the day, and we can recover them at night. That reduces the strain on an already strained infrastructure, and we have a great flexibility from those ships to provide command and control of the forces on the ground from the ships.

So, you know, this Navy-Marine Corps team, when you put them together on these amphibious ships, an incredible capability to do a number of things. We can sea base. We can push people ashore for short periods of time. We can set up a command operations center and run operations from the ground. So there's a lot of options that we have, but -- and that's because, basically, we've got this great Navy- Marine Corps team with this amphibious capability.

Q All right. A quick follow-up. As far as power generation needs, I'm assuming you're bringing generators. Do you have any kind of like solar generation capabilities that you can bring? CAPT. CARPENTER: Solar generation, no. We'll bring all fuel-run generators. And that's something that we have a limited supply of. Those generators, if we did transition ashore, would probably be used to power a command operations center so we could conduct -- we could have command and control ashore.

So no solar. It's all fuel run, and those would probably be used to support our own forces on the shore -- on the ground.

Q Thanks a lot.

LT. CRAGG: Thanks, Paul.

Okay. Beth, you're the last on the line. Please go ahead.

Q Good morning, sir. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us this morning.

You mentioned that many of the commands were on stand-down following your deployment. Can you give me just a kind of a percentage of how many were on stand-down, how many were called back? And how are the families and spouses responding to this quick turnaround?

CAPT. CARPENTER: As to how many, we were -- we were composited as a unit -- as a full Marine Air-Ground Task Force on September 12, 2008, and we were still composited as a full Marine Air-Ground Task Force when we got the call.

So basically all of our units were still attached to us. We were in our post-deployment leave block, the second half of that post-deployment leave block. But many Marines had gotten a chance already to spend some time over the holiday periods were their loved ones.

How are the families taking it? Well, I can speak for myself. My wife is excited about us being able to go to support, and I know that the spouses are understanding that this is an important mission that we need to support. I think that's coming across at all levels across America.

People want us to get down there and support -- and that includes our family members.

We do have a robust family readiness program in place. Each of our units has family readiness officers that we put their phone numbers, their cell phone numbers, their e-mails out there that they can contact if they have any questions. And we also have a way to make notification to all of our family members via our mass notification tool as information becomes updated further. We've got Web sites like our divids (ph) Web site and the Marines -- our Marine.mil Web site where we'll be pushing making as we go throughout this deployment. So we've got a good program to keep them informed, good resources to plug into. But they are all -- having very supportive of us going to support these folks, and they need us there.

Q One final question. When do you expect to go arriving in Haiti?

CAPT. CARPENTER: As to -- I think it's about a three- to four-day transit is my understanding. So if we leave tomorrow morning -- sorry, I've forgotten what day it is at this point.

Q That's okay. Roughly Monday, Tuesday?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Yeah. Next week. The beginning of next week sometime.

Q Super. Thank you.

CAPT. CARPENTER: Okay.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. And the last person that called in was Greg Grant. Greg, please go ahead.

Q Yeah. Hi, Captain. Greg Grant from DOD Buzz.

Could you explain -- on the sea-basing, you mentioned that you can push in during the day and recover at night. Can you explain that real quickly why that is?

And, also, you -- I understand you're going down there, obviously, for a relief effort, but from news reports, a lot of that will entail collecting bodies. And I'm just wondering if you've added any morgue assets or units or people --

CAPT. CARPENTER: A personnel recovery platoon. It used to be called mortuary affairs. It's called personnel recovery now.

I don't know if we've added that. I know that that's been something that we discussed. So I don't know at this point. I can't answer that for you.

I'll get back to the sea-basing though. When I was deployed with the 22nd MEU in 2007, we supported Operation Sea Angel II in Bangladesh, and we sea-based during that exercise. So we would take our heavy-lift helicopters ashore and distribute -- and our medium-lift. We had CH-26s at that time as well -- and distribute supplies to places that could not be reached otherwise.

And at night, everybody would be recovered. We'd also push supplies ashore with our landing craft during the day and bring those back at night. We put medical personnel ashore to conduct some medical operations. You know, they would -- they would go to a central location and provide medical care during the day. But, again, we'd bring them all back at night. So we recover our forces at night with the exception of some small footprint Marines -- you know, no more than 30 that were ashore at some of the supply hubs. So sea-basing definitely allows us to come from the ships -- these amphibious ships -- whether it's by sea or whether it's by air -- conduct those operations during the day and then move those personnel back to the ship where they have life support for them on the ship already. You know, we've got everything that those Marines and sailors need on that ship.

They use the life support on the ship versus going ashore and using or tapping into any life support that might be better applied to those that need it the most.

Q Great. And one quick follow-up. You mentioned you'd participated in a relief effort. Could you -- do you have a rough idea of how many of your former Marines may have participated in a similar relief-type effort?

CAPT. CARPENTER: Well, a lot of -- (laughs). A lot of Marines have participated in humanitarian relief efforts around the world. So wherever there is a disaster, there's always Marines.

I know, just within the command element, there's several people that were there with us in 2007 when we conducted the relief operations there. So that expertise will definitely be important as we continue to plan and as we continue to load these ships and get down there to support these folks.

Q Great. Thank you very much.

LT. CRAGG: With that, we're run to a close of the roundtable. So what I wanted to do is turn it back over to Captain Carpenter so he can end with a closing statement. And a note to the fifteen bloggers on the line, if you have any follow-on questions after the roundtable, please let me know and I'll forward it to Captain Carpenter.

Sir, the floor is yours.

CAPT. CARPENTER: Well, you know, I appreciate this, ladies and gentlemen. This was a really -- really efficient way to get out and talk to a lot of folks. And appreciate your interest in what we're getting ready to do.

I think the most important things that I can say right now is that the Marines and sailors of this unit are ready to do this. We're well trained. We're well equipped. And the morale is off the charts.

Like I said earlier, you know, the Marines are best known in that warrior role, but when we step ashore, we're going to show the face of compassion -- of not only the Marines and sailors but of the United States. And we want to get down there and help those folks as quickly as possible. And I think that's about all I have.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

And with that, that draws a close to today's Bloggers Roundtable.

CAPT. CARPENTER: Thanks, everybody.

END.