

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL MICHAEL BORREL,
TASK FORCE COMMANDER OF NEW HORIZONS-HAITI 2010 EXERCISE; MAJOR CHARLES
HUDSON, TASK FORCE OFFICER FOR ENGINEERING MISSION; COLONEL THOMAS
STEINBRUNNER, MEDICAL READINESS TRAINING EXERCISE OFFICER VIA
TELECONFERENCE FROM HAITI SUBJECT: NEW HORIZONS-HAITI 2010 EXERCISE TIME:
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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's Bloggers Roundtable for Monday, July 12th, 2010. My name is
Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for
Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating this call today.

(Gives queuing instructions.)

Today our guests are Colonel Michael Borrel. He's the task
force commander of the New Horizons-Haiti 2010 Exercise. Colonel Borrel
will be discussing the incredible humanitarian efforts of his 500
soldiers, sailors and airmen during the past month in Haiti. And joining
the colonel are Major Chuck Hudson and also Colonel Thomas Steinbrunner.
Colonel Borrel will introduce both of them.

So without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to the
colonel. So the floor is yours, if you'd like to start with an opening
statement and go into questions.

COL. BORREL: I would. Good morning. And I want to thank
you all for allowing Task Force Haiti to participate in this morning's
Blogger Roundtable. Since our last Blogger Roundtable, the task force
has made significant progress on each of the four engineer projects.

And joining us today is Major Chuck Hudson, who is the task
force officer in charge of the engineering mission. Also joining us is
Colonel Thomas Steinbrunner, who is the officer in charge of the medical
readiness training exercise, which is being conducted in the town of
Ennery.

Since our last Roundtable Blogger, the task force has been
extremely busy. Just to mention a few of the things that have gone on

here in Haiti and primarily in the city of Gonaives, which is north of Port-au-Prince about 90 miles.

You may or may not know that the mayor of Gonaives, Mr. Stephen Moise, passed away about two weeks ago. He was a big supporter of the U.S. and the military effort here in Haiti.

Myself and the task force staff to include the U.S. ambassador, Ambassador Merten, attended his funeral. And I think it showed a great support for the mayor's family and the city of Gonaives.

We also had an opportunity to meet with the commander of the MINUSTAH here in Haiti, Major General Paul Cruz. We met with him and discussed hurricane preparation for Haiti and also to thank him for the great support that the MINUSTAH has provided the task force.

And MINUSTAH is the peacekeeping force here in Haiti.

We also met with the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs -- the acronym is OCHA -- a good session with them. Part of an organization under the USAID, very complex, but we're doing everything we can to collaborate with them. A lot of support from those organizations can help our operation or at least maximize the effort that we're doing here in Haiti.

We also had a visitor (sic) a couple of days ago from the senator of the Artibonite district, Mr. Youri Latortue. He came out and visited the site here at the base camp and some of the engineer missions that we're doing here in Gonaives.

Again, a great effort on the engineer missions, and I'll let Major Hudson discuss that a little bit more in detail and I'll let Colonel Steinbrunner discuss the med-ready (sp) -- but just so everybody knows, we've completed four med-ready (sp) sites here in Haiti, one in St. Marc, (l'Estere ?), Pouteau (sp), and Gonaives. And to date, we have seen over 20,000 Haitian patients in the med-ready (sp) sites.

So that's all I have right now. I'm going to turn it over to Major Hudson, and he can discuss our progress on the engineer sites.

(Pause.) Are you there?

LT. CRAGG: Yes, we're all there. (Do ?) the questions.

COL. BORREL: Okay. Go ahead.

MAJ. HUDSON: Good morning, everyone. This is Major Hudson, task force engineer. An update on our engineer projects. We have four project sites that are currently under way. At Mandrin, Haiti, we are building a three-room school and a three-stall latrine.

We are approximately 45 percent of scope on that project right now. The three-room school is a NuForm or an RBS system that is a concrete slab, concrete wall, and a metal-frame -- metal-roof building

that will have -- be wired for electrical and have ceiling fans. The three-stall latrine is adjacent to the three-room school, and it will provide an avenue for the children to use the restroom during the day in a -- in a good facility.

We've also done some water-well enhancement at this location, where we've put in some hand pumps to make it easier for the local Mandrin folks to gather their water, as opposed to dropping buckets down in the well. We've done that coordination with the Navy construction battalion that's here, NMBC (sic/NMCB) 25, and they are doing all the water wells for us.

We also have a project site at K. Georges, which is a -- basically an elementary school with -- that the Navy is working solely by themselves. It's a two-room school effort there, with the same building technology, and a three-stall latrine at that school as well.

The other project site is at Lycee Louis Diaquoi, which is a girls' school, elementary/middle-type school, where we are putting in a three-room school there as well. And we are in the preparations of pouring the concrete walls for it on Wednesday.

We have one other site, a school where an existing structure -- two existing structures were victimized by burn, destroying the roof and the interior of the buildings.

We have cleaned out the buildings, cleaned up the facility, and we are in the process of rebuilding the roofs at both of those locations, which, again, will be a steel-frame metal roof structure at that site as well. There are water wells at each of those locations that have been retrofitted by the Navy to improve their ability to gather water.

Pending any questions that you have, that's the status of our projects right now. We anticipate completion of the K. George school site and the Desronvilles roof project by the end of July, and we're looking at the Mandarin facility and the Diaquoi facility indexing approximately 15 August.

Pending your questions.

COL. BORREL: Okay. We'll turn it over to Colonel Steinbrunner, who will discuss a little bit about the med-ready (sp) site.

COL. STEINBRUNNER: (Off mike.) We have a 30-person team. We started our 10-day mission out here at the school. Our medical team began operations about an hour ago. And we have, again, a 30-person team led primarily out of the 56th Medical Group out at Luke Air Force Base. Our team consists of medical providers, both family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics and women's health, as well as dentists and optometrists. Each of our patients will also receive public-health education with our public-health staff, as well as we will provide pharmaceutical medications to our patients that need them.

We are our primary care site, and if we need to refer the -- our patients for something that is more intense, then we will utilize the local Haitian system for them. There is a local hospital here in Ennery, and there is a more advanced hospital, the Cuban hospital, down in Gonaives.

Again, today we started our first day of the medical mission, and we will run for 10 straight days.

Pending any questions, that's my report.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, everyone. Thank you, Colonel Steinbrunner, Colonel Borrel and Major Hudson.

I know that two other folks have called in. Before I turn it over to Chuck to ask his first question, can I get your name, please?

Q John Doyle, with 4GWAR.

LT. CRAGG: John, great. Who called in after John, please? (No audible response.) Okay, John, thank you.

Chuck, you were first on the line. Please go ahead with your question, Chuck.

Q Okay. Jen, can you hear me?

LT. CRAGG: I hear you loud and clear, Chuck. Please go ahead.

Q Okay. My name is Chuck Simmins, and I'm with America's North Shore Journal.

I've been covering Haiti extensively since the earthquake, and I don't know who to address this question to. Gonaives is in the northern part of Haiti, part of the two-thirds of Haiti that was not directly affected by the earthquake. With over a million Haitians still without even a temporary shelter, why are we conducting the mission in the Gonaives area, when there are so many people in the earthquake-stricken zone that could use the support?

COL. BORREL: This is Colonel Borrel. I'll try to answer your question to the best of my ability, or my knowledge.

One of the things that -- when we first came down here to begin the mission, back in February, the government of Haiti and the JTF that was operating in Haiti asked us to look at cities outside of Port-au-Prince, because there was so many displaced persons from the Port-au-Prince area that migrated to Gonaives.

We've gotten some indications that up to 100,000 additional personnel moved to the Gonaives area. So what we were asked to do was to come into this site, to try to help alleviate some of the additional burden that was put on the school systems here in Gonaives.

So that was pretty much our goal or our mission, to try to help the people in the Gonaives area. There are many, as you are well aware, nongovernmental organizations working in the Port-au-Prince area, providing as much sanitary support to the IDP camps in that area -- food, water, those kinds of things.

So I think that was the intent, was to come here and try to lessen the burden that was placed on Gonaives. And it gave us an opportunity to construct some schools and help the children here in the Gonaives area.

I hope that answers your question.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Chuck.

Sergeant Salzer, you're next. Sergeant, did you have any questions? Or do you want me to skip you? I'll come back around.

Jeff, please go ahead.

Q Thank you. It's -- I understand the Haitian government asked you to go to this area, but it seems like the more pressing tasks right now are rubble removal and moving people from their tarps into more permanent structures. Is this something you plan to do after you're finished in Gonaives?

COL. BORREL: No, it's not. Right now, our mission is for -- to construct the four schools, as we talked about, and conduct 10 med-readies here in and around the Artibonite district. Once that is completed, we will redeploy back to the home station. Our mission is only till the 18th of September.

I do know, as I mentioned earlier, we did attend meetings with OCHA and USAID. There are goals that those organizations are working to do exactly what you're saying. Again, not to get into the specifics, but rubble removal on the private properties in Port-au-Prince is extremely complex because it does involve some private property. But I do know that efforts are being made, and I'm sure you can read about them, to try to alleviate some of the IDP camps, and a long-range plan to construct shelters for anybody that's displaced.

Q Thank you. Are you aware of any other American units in Haiti who are helping with rubble removal or relocating people into permanent structures?

COL. BORREL: I am not. I think we're -- currently we're the only U.S. military force that is in Haiti right now. And like I said, we're about 550 here in the Gonaives area. We do have personnel back in Port-au-Prince and at the port.

We are conducting our operations with our helicopters at the airport in Port-au-Prince, and we do have personnel at the port, which is strictly to receive supplies coming into the port.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Jeff.

Dana, please go ahead.

Q Okay. Thank you. Can you give a sense of how many people would benefit from or be affected by these projects you're doing? And in terms of the scope of the trouble out there that you're seeing, how does that compare?

COL. BORREL: Right now, again, you know, statistics are hard to -- are hard to get accurate information, as far as the population here in Gonaives. Again, we've heard anywhere between 50(,000) and 100,000 displaced persons came up to the Gonaives area. Based on that, we're looking at somewhere in the neighborhood of about 20,000 school children that has put a burden on the school system here in Gonaives. So those are kind of the numbers we're working with. Again, based on our footprint here in Gonaives, with the number of troops and the engineers that we had, our ability to start and complete these four schools was our mission.

Q So these are four schools of -- what? -- a few hundred children?

COL. BORREL: Actually, it's more than that. Some of the schools actually conduct classes in the morning and in the afternoon. So that number doubles as far as the number of kids able to attend school.

Q Okay.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Dana.

Tanya (sp), you were next. Go ahead.

Q No question at this time. Thanks.

LT. CRAGG: Thanks, Tanya.

No questions, she has stated, if anyone had not heard that.

Ed (sp), please go ahead. (Pause.) Ed, any questions?
(Pause.)

Okay, Lisa (sp), go ahead. (Pause.) Lisa, can you hear me? Go ahead. (Pause.) Lisa with Voice of America, can you hear me? (Pause.)

I'm going to come back to Lisa, in case her phone's on mute.

John, please go ahead.

Q Yes. I think this is either for the Colonel or Major Hudson. Along the lines of the last question, can you give us any sense of the size of these school buildings? You talk about a three- room school or a two-room school. That sounds kind of small. But are they -- are we talking about very large classrooms? And approximately how many - - (audio break) -- accommodate at a time? Thank you.

COL. BORREL: The dimensions are -- of the three-room school are approximately 100 feet by 30 feet in width, and they -- each room would be approximately one-third of that. It has -- we have a small -- two small offices for -- or to be utilized by the instructors as an office, for each of the schools.

The two-room school is approximately the 30-foot-wide by about 75-foot length.

It's basically the same type of school just with one classroom shorter.

So the approximate number of kids that go into that, they have a bench-style desk system that, you know, comfortably they could probably get 30 children in each of those rooms for a class. And then the number of classes is, of course, up to the educational system in to how they conduct their daily business.

Q And is there any special construction techniques employed -- anything to make these a little more stable or earthquake-resistant or hurricane-resistant?

COL. BORREL: Yes, the system that was selected through the Army South engineers that we're utilizing is the Royal Building Systems that's -- that has since been renamed the NuForm System. And it's essentially a concrete-reinforced slab that's 3,500-PSI concrete with reinforced rebar that is very -- with a six-inch slope that's very strong concrete slab. The walls use a smaller aggregate but at the same 3,500 PSI and the same six-inch slump (sic; slope). So it's a reinforced concrete building.

And the roof structure facilitates a steel frame J-bolt system that's bolted steel with the corrugated metal roof. You know, it's much more better -- much better technology, a much stronger system than any of the systems in -- being utilized in Haiti.

When we came on the ground, essentially, in Mandrin they were using United Nations tents, and they had a pole (sp) barn that they were using as a classroom.

So this will be a significant improvement and will enhance the learning capabilities of the children and the instructors as well.

At the facilities at the K. Georges and at the Diaquoi (sp), they were existing structures that were projects from the past that were constructed under the guise of USAID, and they are a similar concrete reinforced structure that have withstood the hurricanes and winds of the

past. The grade at which we are placing these buildings is consistent with where the grade is of the existing structures and is intended to be above any type of flood area.

Q Thank you, Major.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Sean.

We have time to go around the horn really quickly. So, Chuck, any follow-on questions? Please, Chuck, go ahead.

Q Yes. I wanted to ask about the medical aspect of the mission. Are they doing any immunizations? And are they also -- what sorts of infections and illnesses are they seeing so far? (Pause.)

LT. CRAGG: Sir, did you hear that question?

COL. STEINBRUNNER: I'm sorry?

LT. CRAGG: Did you hear that question, Colonel Borrel?

COL. BORREL: I did. I was waiting on Colonel Steinbrunner to answer.

LT. CRAGG: Okay.

COL. BORREL: Colonel Steinbrunner, are you still on?

COL. STEINBRUNNER: Right. I sure am. This is Colonel -- (audio break).

LT. CRAGG: Colonel -- we're having a difficult time hearing Colonel Steinbrunner.

COL. STEINBRUNNER: Can you hear me, Colonel Borrel?

COL. BORREL: Yes, I can. Go ahead.

COL. STEINBRUNNER: Okay. Thank you.

We have -- for the immunizations, we have been asked not to provide immunizations by the ministry of health, so we will not be providing those services. However, we are providing primary care to the Haitian people here in Ennery. We have family-practice providers, pediatricians, internists, and women's-health providers as well as dentists and optometrists providing primary care to our patients here.

Q And what have you --

COL. STEINBRUNNER: I'm sorry if I missed the second half of the other question.

Q Yeah, what have you -- have you -- what kind of illnesses have you seen so far?

COL. STEINBRUNNER: Okay. For our particular mission, we have just started it this morning, about an hour and a half ago, so I don't have anything specific to let you know about here. But in previous med-readies, we have seen a lot of skin diseases, we have seen a significant amount of parasitic-borne illnesses, as well as a significant amount of sexually transmitted diseases.

Q Okay. Thank you.

COL. STEINBRUNNER: Mm-hmm. Certainly. LT. CRAGG: Thank you both -- Colonel Borrel, and thank you, Colonel Steinbrunner. I appreciate it.

Thank you, Chuck.

Sergeant Salzer, I just want to make sure, if I come around -- any follow-on questions?

Q Yes, ma'am. This is Sergeant Salzer, National Guard bureau. This question is either for Colonel Borrel or Major Hudson. Colonel Borrel, at the beginning of the call, you mentioned that there were hurricane preparations being made.

And Major Hudson also mentioned that the new buildings were being retrofitted to, you know, withstand hurricanes better than the old buildings. I'm wondering what other hurricane preparations is the National Guard making in Haiti?

COL. BORREL: Well, as you know, hurricane season is upon us. And while we're here, we do have a limited engineering capability. But we do have engineers, we do have military police and we have medical assets available. In the event of any type of severe weather that would hit Haiti, we could be directed by Southern Command and have a change of mission which would require us to provide search and rescue to the people of Haiti. Also, we have the capabilities of doing assessments of roads and providing some very limited medical assistance.

We do have aircraft available to us. Naturally, before any type of severe weather, we would relocate our aircraft to Guantanamo Bay and secure them until the storm passes, and then bring them back and put them into action if we have a change of mission.

So those are the things we're doing. We're working with the MINUSTAH here in Haiti, also working with SOUTHCOM. But again, we're a very small piece. But again, we do have some assets that can be very valuable to the help here in Haiti.

Q Thank you, sir.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Sergeant.

Jeff, any follow-on questions?

Q Sure. Are any National Guard -- or, excuse me, any of the U.S. troops in Haiti, have they come down with malaria or other diseases?

COL. BORREL: At this time, no, we have not encountered any of those kind of problems. We are taking the proper medication with all our troops. We actually start the troops prior to deploying to Haiti. But again at this time, no issues with malaria.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Jeff.

Dana, any follow-on questions? Dana, going once, going last?
Dana?

Q Sorry, I had turn it off. (Inaudible.)

COL. BORREL: I'm sorry, we didn't hear the question.

Q I'm just wondering if there's some sort of a ballpark figure on the cost of your whole operation.

COL. BORREL: No, sir. I -- we get funding through Army South and SOUTHCOM and the National Guard Bureau. I cannot provide you with an exact or a total number or total amount, because we're only funded for the things that we request.

Q Right, okay.

COL. BORREL: You'd have to get that from Southern Command.

Q And just to be clear, this is the only significant operation by the U.S. military in the country right now.

COL. BORREL: That is correct.

Q Okay, thank you.

COL. BORREL: By U.S. military.

Q Right.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Dana. Tanya, just wanted to make sure. Any follow-on questions?

Q No, thanks.

LT. CRAGG: Thanks, Tanya.

Edge, just wanted to make sure.

Okay, Lisa, Voice of America, can you hear me?

(Pause.)

Okay. Lisa, if at any time you have other questions, please feel free to e-mail them to me.

And then, last but not least, John, please go ahead.

Q Yes, for Colonel Steinbrunner, Colonel, did the Haitian Ministry of Health explain why they didn't want you to do any immunizations?

COL. STEINBRUNNER: This is Colonel Steinbrunner. No, I did not get a specific explanation on that. We were just asked not to provide immunizations to the patients here during our mission.

Q (Off mike.)

COL. STEINBRUNNER: And as part of our planning factor, using that information, we did not bring immunizations with us.

Q Is that an unusual situation, or is that pretty typical when you're in for just a short duration?

COL. STEINBRUNNER: For a short duration, on the other medical missions that I've done -- this was my third -- we have followed the same pattern in all three. And that's in other countries, as well.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, John.

At this time, I'm going to turn it back over to Colonel Borrel, Colonel Steinbrunner and Major Hudson, if all three gentlemen would like to end with any closing thoughts.

Colonel Borrel, the floor is yours, if you'd like to start.

COL. BORREL: Okay. Well, first of all, again, we appreciate the opportunity to participate in this bloggers roundtable.

The U.S. forces here in Haiti are doing a tremendous job. Although we're very small -- only 550 people -- we are doing some very tangible things here in Haiti, and truly helping the people of Haiti.

Again, we continue to ask for your support and prayers for our soldiers, sailors and airmen here in Haiti.

And I'm going to turn it over to Major Hudson if he has any final comments from the engineer side.

MAJ. HUDSON: And just -- (going what ?) the colonel just said, we've got a lot of engineers on the ground here that are doing some great work, and they're making a significant contribution to the folks in the Artibonite region and the people in the Gonaives area. And we are -- we are -- have a sense of pride in what we're doing, and we're motivated about the fact that we're having an impact on these folks' lives.

COL. BORREL: Colonel Steinbrunner?

COL. STEINBRUNNER: Echoing the same, we have a team of 30 energized medics that -- we're excited with the opportunity to take care of our Haitian patients. This is a -- not only a good opportunity for our medical staff to see tropical diseases that aren't often prevalent in the United States, but it's also an opportunity for our staff to give back in an area which is part of their natural calling: taking care of patients regardless of where they're at. We look forward to the opportunity to serve the people here in Ennery and are excited to do so.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, gentlemen.

And, Colonel Borrel, I have one question -- follow-up question for this transcript. Can you perhaps provide the proper spelling for "Gonaives" just to make sure that everybody on the call has it right? Or it's --

COL. BORREL: It's G-O -- yes, go ahead -- G-O-N-A-I-V-E-S.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you so much, sir.

Thank you. I really appreciate it.

And thank you for everyone providing an ending/closing statement. With that, I want to remind everybody that I will send the transcript from Fed News, once completed, to everybody who signed up. We will also post it to www.dodlive.mil, Blogger Roundtable, and you'll find a post about today's call.

You've been listening to Colonel Michael Borrel, Major Chuck Hudson and Colonel Thomas Steinbrunner. Thank you, gentlemen, for calling in today's roundtable, and thank you for everyone who also called in.

That concludes today's event. Please feel free to end the call at any time. Thank you again.

COL. BORREL (?): Thanks.

COL. STEINBRUNNER (?): Thank you.

END.