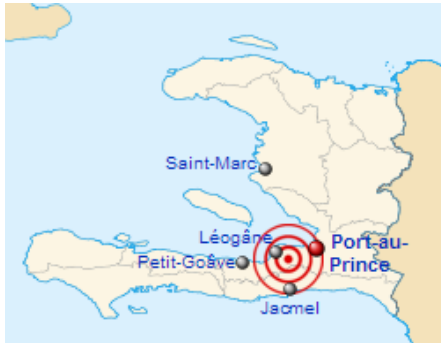


## Operation Unified Response – Haiti Earthquake 2010

Asst. Professor David R. DiOrio – Joint Forces Staff College



On January 12, 2010, a massive 7.0 magnitude earthquake centered 25 km southwest of Port-au-Prince, Haiti killed over 230,000 people, injured another 300,000, and created over one million homeless (IWG, 2010). An estimated 45,000 Americans were stranded. The country's infrastructure was decimated. A majority of air and sea transport facilities became inoperable. Hospitals were destroyed and key access roads were blocked with debris which greatly hampered rescue and aid efforts. Six field hospitals at schools and stadiums were established within a few days, but the medical situation was bleak. The Haitian government (GoH), with a majority of civil leadership dead, was paralyzed. On the day of the quake, the President of Haiti declared a national emergency confirmed by the U.S. Ambassador to Haiti and both requested immediate assistance from the United States and the international community (USSOUTHCOM OPORD 01-10, 2010).

The overall security situation in Haiti remained amazing calm, but delays in relief supply distribution led to angry appeals from aid workers and survivors. Looting and violence was sporadic and local police presence was virtually non-existent. Four thousand inmates from the Prison Civile de Port-au-Prince were unleashed on the public. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and now the already fragile economy was in shambles. The power grid, marginal even before the quake, was devastated and there were no available petroleum reserves for generators. Public landline and cellular telephone capability was gone and all 50 radio stations went off the air. The clothing industry, which accounts for two-thirds of Haiti's exports, came to a standstill.



Day 1 - Collapse of the Presidential Palace



Day 2 - Field Morgue

In the following days and nights, most Haitians slept in the streets, in cars, or in makeshift shanty towns because they feared standing structures would not withstand aftershocks. Construction standards are low in Haiti - there are no building codes. The country suffered from fuel and water shortages even before the disaster. In the heat and humidity, corpses buried in rubble began to decompose and smell. Port-au-Prince's morgues were quickly overwhelmed with tens of thousands of bodies. The dead were hastily stacked in the street before burial in mass graves hastily dug in fields north of the capital. Towns in the eastern Dominican Republic began preparing for tens of thousands of refugees, and by the third day, hospitals close to the border were filled to capacity. The

border was reinforced by Dominican soldiers, and the Dominican Republic asserted that all Haitians who crossed the border for medical assistance would be allowed to stay only temporarily. A local governor stated, "We have a great desire and we will do everything humanly possible to help Haitian families. But we have our limitations with respect to food and medicine. We need the helping hand of other countries."

### **Forward leaning military... a plan will come later**

The United States Coast Guard, at the time of the quake, had two cutters near Port-au-Prince and four more joined within a few days to provide initial damage assessments. The most immediate concern was opening the air and seaports. The Haitians handed over control of the airport to the US to hasten flight operations - hampered by damage to the control tower. By Day 2, a team of Air Force special tactics teams reopened the Port-au-Prince airport, but - understandably - air traffic control was initially confused. Some planes carrying medical supplies were not allowed to land in favor of evacuation or security related aircraft. Incoming planes from around the world arrived without notice - most circled for at least an hour - and they all seemed to be out of gas upon arrival. A formal agreement to prioritize HA flights had to be brokered by the UN. Airfield management capability and subsequent flow improved significantly when the Air Force Contingency Response Group arrived at Port-au-Prince and Canadian air traffic controllers opened Jacmel airport.



Day 2 - US Air Traffic Controllers

***“Just tell them to keep sending me stuff, I’ll tell them when to stop.”*** - LTG Keen, CDR JTF-Haiti



Day 3 - Water Delivery from US Flotilla

US military resources began arriving within days. On Day 1, two MC-130Hs began the distribution of essential food and water. The USAF sent in 6,000 airmen including a Kansas Air Guard Engineering Squadron to break the log-jam at the airport. The U.S. Navy mustered 33 ships - including the carrier *USS Carl Vinson* that arrived on Day 4 fresh from sea trials, loaded with food and water (with distilling capability) and 19 helicopters - supported by the cruiser *USS Bunker Hill*. The hospital ship *USNS Comfort* soon arrived with two

USNS salvage ships and USCG buoy tenders that tried to re-open the ports. Approximately 4,000 United States Marines of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> MEUs (diverted from the Middle East deployment cycle) arrived with *V-22 Osprey* and helicopter squadrons on *USS Bataan* (LHD-5) and *USS Nassau* (LHA-4) supported by their amphibious ready group support ships. Three thousand United States Army soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division (Global Response Force) from Fort Bragg were sent in to establish a base to distribute food and water. By Day 3, US helicopters were distributing tons of food and within the first week after the disaster, the U.S. military had a

total of 17,000 military personnel in and around Haiti. They were joined by over 43 militaries from around the world – some integrated or coordinated with the US – and some did not.

### Global Response ... abundance of enthusiasm surrounding political turmoil



Day 7 – US and Canadian sailors treat Haitians aboard USS Carl Vinson

*“Since...the first hours and days are absolutely critical to saving lives and avoiding even greater tragedy, I have directed my teams to be as forward-leaning as possible in getting the help on the ground and coordinating with our international partners as well”* – President Obama Press Conference 13 Jan (Obama, 2010)

The French, Italian, Dutch, Spanish and Canadian Navies sent ships that arrived within the first week (including the Italian Carrier *Cavour*). An Argentine military field hospital, that was part of the UN Mission in Haiti - MINUSTAH, was the only hospital left operating. Within a week, rescue and medical teams arrived from the United States, Canada, Russia, France, Chile, Peru, Jamaica, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Iceland, Sri Lanka, China, and Korea. From the Middle East, the government of Qatar sent a strategic transport aircraft (C-17) and the Qatari armed forces set up a hospital. The Israeli Defense Forces also established a field hospital which included specialized facilities to treat children and the elderly. Initially the relief teams were autonomous with independent logistics support. Since the functioning logistics train ended at the edge of the Port-au-Prince airport – the field hospitals and emergency response vehicles ended up clustered there as well.

The combined military response to Haiti was impressive, but political turmoil erupted that overshadowed events on the ground. Although Haitian President Preval and his remaining cabinet met with the international representatives daily, there was confusion as to who was in charge and no single group had organized the relief effort four days into the crisis. The UN expressed approval of a United States humanitarian mission and stated that the American troops would not stay long – although the plan was not yet developed. The neighboring Dominican Republic and the US were the fastest and largest contingents to respond. The French immediately expressed dissatisfaction with the larger size of the American relief operation compared to those of European nations and they resented the commanding role of US forces. Several Latin American leaders accused the US of militarily occupying Haiti - including Venezuelan President Chavez, former Cuban President Castro, Bolivian President Morales and Nicaraguan President Ortega. It did not help that Congressman Ron Paul (R-Texas) opposed operations citing concerns of an "open-ended US military occupation of Haiti." The Department of State rejected these allegations stating that US forces were there by the invitation of the Haitian government. The dispute culminated with a UN brokered agreement that gave the United States responsibility for the ports, airports and roads for distribution of HA - and the UN (supported by select militaries and Haitian authorities) were made responsible for law and order.

Over 60 nations and hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private organizations responded by sending special teams and supplies despite the unknown disposition of the relief resources upon arrival. The NGOs proved invaluable. International aid workers, without food or shelter themselves, acted as translators for outside rescuers to communicate with Haitians whose only language was Creole. Red Cross organizations from around the world, most notably the International Committee of the Red Cross, dispatched doctors, nurses, and tons of medical supplies, but they were stranded at the airfield. Medical supplies in the field lasted only 24 hours and Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) reported that many amputations were done without anesthesia or morphine - constructing splints out of cardboard and reusing latex gloves. Ophelia Dahl, director of Partners in Health, reported *"there are hundreds of thousands of injured people... as many as 20,000 will die each day that would have been saved by surgery."* The wounded were taken to field hospitals in ambulances, police pickup trucks, wheelbarrows, and improvised stretchers. Many NGOs were already there – such as the Catholic Relief Services and UN World Food Program - that had warehouses of food and temporary shelter available for thousands. The Royal Caribbean Cruise lines shuttled supplies in and many wounded out.



Day 4 – International Aid Station

### United States Interagency Coordination

*“Given the many different resources that are needed, we are taking steps to ensure that our government acts in a unified way. My national security team has led an interagency effort overnight.”* – President Obama Press Conference 13 Jan (Obama, 2010)

The National Security Council acted quickly to coordinate a USG response to be headed by Rajiv Shah, administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID was designated the lead federal agency and they led an Interagency Haiti Task Force. There was general agreement that USAID should be in charge of coordinating international humanitarian relief efforts – by leveraging their subordinate Office of Disaster Assistance (OFDA). They were responsible for the protection and disposition of AMCITs, and limiting the adverse impact on trade and commerce (Guha-Sapir & Kirsch, 2010). USAID-OFDA became the final authority, manned with technical disaster response expertise and a pre-existing management structure that allowed it to leverage the assets of NGOs and other organizations to create a more integrated response. OFDA established an NGO coordination cell on Day 4, but USAID responsiveness and effectiveness was hampered by limited personnel, insufficient resources, bureaucratic (administrative) hurdles and diverse political agendas amongst the agencies. (IWG, 2010)



On the ground, the role of USAID as the lead agent was not clear. The response planning model – the International Response Framework (IRF) - was insufficient to manage multiple USG chains of command points and did not incorporate UN or Host Nation capabilities. This framework was not as mature as the US National Response Framework (NRF) that was frequently exercised and validated within the United States. Protocols of interaction between agencies did not exist, mandates of action were undefined, and budgetary responsibilities were unclear (IWG, 2010). The USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team – Response Management Team (DART/RMT), US military, and the US Embassy in Haiti were operating in parallel with varying degrees of collaboration. High-level policymakers – often armed with faulty information - and with little or no expertise in disaster response created difficulties for field staff resulting in increased tensions between agencies. Refined protocols were clearly needed (IWG, 2010). The establishment of liaison officers proved to be a sufficient – albeit not optimized - interim measure to facilitate mutual understanding and enhance the overall USG effort.

Mobilization of USG personnel was a major weakness. Leaders were unable to quickly tap into potential sources of personnel with disaster expertise and the lack of pre-response training and exercises significantly degraded the response. Expertise resident in the US State Department’s Office for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), for instance, were not employed due to an internal rift between USAID and S/CRS stemming from competing mission sets, budgetary considerations, and personalities. USAID-OFDA was not able to muster or hire additional staff to handle the magnitude of the crisis and pre-existing relationships were insufficient to augment staff from other agencies (IWG, 2010). But, the many USG agencies that did respond did so with passion and professionalism, making a significant impact despite limited resources.



Day 1 - Port-au-Prince Sea Terminal

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS) were charged with providing shelter and emergency medical care to augment local resources and to assist in evacuating AMCITS – and they responded relatively quickly. Shelter and healthcare are vital to maintain social cohesion and reduce lethal congestion at the points of aid distribution – but there was no coherent strategy (IWG, 2010). The establishment of shelter was delayed due to devastation and bottlenecks at the ports and airfields – and this provided an opportunity for the civil authorities to work with the military to open lines of communication. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) coordinated with military airport engineers, controllers and logistics experts to do just that with great success. Seaport capabilities proved more problematic due to the extensive infrastructure damage.

The Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) was directed to coordinate overall non-medical support (mostly food security and nutrition) across all Federal agencies. They did this by supporting the

World Food program and its partners through a number of channels and the result was the stabilization of food prices although the nutritional standard for surviving children remained below emergency thresholds months into the crisis. From the outset, the international community's delivery of emergency aid depended entirely on logistical support from the US military. According to USAID (2010), the US military should be commended for its extraordinary efforts in actively liaising with its civil USG partners, but the perception was that the military is less proficient in delivering humanitarian aid than it is in conducting search and rescue. The US military involvement in Haiti was met with apprehension by some NGOs, especially early on during the emergency relief phase when search and rescue needs were prioritized over delivering life sustaining medical supplies. From the USAID perspective, the mandate and role of the military should be clearly delineated and exit strategy defined before mobilization. Secretary Clinton – recognizing the void of clear guidance and resulting confusion – collaborated with the Haitian President who emphasized that the priorities were to reconstitute the government, clear roads, and dispose of the dead. It would take some time to get the US “whole of government” effort in gear, but the Pentagon - understanding that time was of the essence – pushed forces and resources while USAID commenced detailed planning in collaboration with USSOUTHCOM. (USAID, 2010)

### **USSOUTHCOM and the challenges in forming the Joint Task Force**

Excerpts from : JCOA, J. C. (2010, June 23). Some Challenges and Considerations in Forming a Joint Task Force. Suffolk, Virginia: DoD - US Joint Forces Command.

***“The COCOM Staff has a BIG role in being the strategic shaper for the JTF so that the JTF can function at the operational and a tactical level...the challenge was that we had - by necessity - to be the operational and strategic headquarters for this crisis while the JTF stood up. Once the JTF HQ was a functional...they took control of the operational/tactical level actions and we then transitioned to the strategic level shaping actions. So, the COCOM HQ has to ‘look up and inform down’ along strategic level actions by J-Code function and other policy considerations.”*** - BGEN Garza USSOUTHCOM CoS, 3 Feb 10 (JCOA, 2010)

SOUTHCOM commenced crisis action planning on the evening of 12 January - over 12 hours before they would get official tasking from the Joint Staff. The most immediate tasks at hand were establishing security and making damage estimates. Two significant challenges emerged - the lack of situational awareness and clear on-the-ground assessments to enable decisions and subsequent force flow - and the nagging planning shortfalls that resulted from their unique and unorthodox functionally organized staff that was optimized for theater security cooperation rather than crisis response. The command was aligned with the interagency and without traditional J-codes. This made the task of forming a JTF very challenging (JCOA, 2010).

***“The functional organizational model we were under did not survive the crucible of the crisis.”*** - BGEN Garza USSOUTHCOM CoS, 3 Feb 10 (JCOA, 2010)

On Day 5, CDRUSSOUTCOM directed the staff to reorganize into the traditional J-code structure, creating initial confusion that ultimately culminated with a better organization to deal with the crisis. The new – albeit traditional – J code structure allowed faster integration of augmenters and facilitated communication between staffs organized in the same manner. The staff augmentation was overwhelming. The command not only had to work through the problems associated with the crisis itself, but they also had to re-align in stride and assimilate what would eventually be 274 new members from the Joint Staff, other CoCOMs, and the Services.



Day 1 - Montana Hotel where LtCol Bourland, USA was killed

*“When the Haiti earthquake hit, we immediately went into crisis action mode and quickly realized that we did not have the personnel depth to maintain 24/7 daily operations. Accordingly, the Boss (General Fraser) went to the JS (Joint Staff) and COCOMs and requested personnel augments. Within 24 hours we received several staff augments - initially NORTHCOM provided 3 FO/GOs (flag/general officers) and 34 Action Officers”* - BGEN Garza USSOUTHCOM CoS, 3 Feb 10 (JCOA, 2010)

The CJCS issued an execute order on Day 2, authorizing US military humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations. USSOUTHCOM stood up Joint Task Force Haiti (JTF-H) - commanded by their Deputy Commander, LTG Ken Keen, who was visiting the US Ambassador to Haiti, Kenneth Merten on a routine theater security cooperation visit – having dinner at the time of the quake. LTG Keen’s Haiti desk officer, Lt Col Bourland was killed in his hotel which left him with a small staff and armed with a Blackberry and one tenuous land line. SOUTHCOM decided to build the JTF around Keen, very familiar with the AOR and who had built personal relationships in Haiti. Most notable was his long-time friendship with MG Peixoto, a Brazilian officer in command of MINUSTAH who was spared although many, including the Mission Chief, were killed in the collapse of their HQ. Their relationship, which extended back many years to an exchange program in which CPT Keen was assigned to the Brazilian Airborne Brigade where Capt Peixoto was a Pathfinder, was critical to working through a host of highly politicized issues, not the least of which was delineating security responsibilities between the US and MINUSTAH. (JCOA, 2010)

### **Establishing security ... a prerequisite for effective humanitarian relief**



Day 3 - UN patrolling Port-au-Prince

MINUSTAH was given the mission to establish security. By Day 3, when food and water were not keeping pace with demand, violence erupted – mostly related to gang activity. Uruguayan UN peacekeepers had to fire rubber bullets to try to control crowds while distributing food. Brazilian troops distributing food at the tent city next to the Palais National had to use tear gas and pepper spray. Several men scaled walls at the Haitian Dept of Commerce, raided aid trucks,

and started throwing stuff into the crowd. Across the countryside, stones were often thrown at aid workers. Nepalese UN Peacekeepers had to wield batons to try to control unruly crowds. Many World Food Program convoys delivering food were attacked by bandits and required UN escort. The UN requested and received assistance from the European Union (EU) which sent 300-350 police officers mostly from France, Spain, and the Netherlands. US forces - in charge of airport and seaport operations - established security at those logistics nodes. On Day 5, LTG Keen announced that despite the stories of looting and violence, there was less violent crime in Port-au-Prince after the earthquake than before. As security improved, JTF-H could focus on organizing and executing the HADR mission – but the task would not be easy.

### **Identifying and organizing the JTF-H component parts**

JTF-H was officially established by vocal order (VOCO) on 14 January, but the process of identifying and assembling the components of the JTF would take the next six weeks. With no assigned forces and an outdated HADR functional plan (FUNCPLAN 6130-06); the SOUTHCOM and JTF staffs had to build the force from scratch. Almost immediately, the major building blocks of the JTF such as TF-41, including the USS Carl Vinson, the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Strike Groups, as well as the 2/82 Airborne Brigade Combat Team were alerted and committed to the response. However, many of the supporting forces and the C2 necessary to build the JTF were not part of the Global Response Force (GRF) and had to be identified on the fly. The lack of a designated JTF HQ or joint logistics element within the GRF required ad-hoc deployment planning by a SOUTHCOM staff with little force deployment planning capacity. Many required enabling capabilities (to include engineering, civil affairs, psyops, public affairs, and medical) were also not in a contingency ready status.

The potential component elements of the JTF were in various states of readiness and were scattered across the United States. Some were in the Active Component, others in the Reserve, each with different mobilization timelines. Some were at or near “force projection platforms” such as Ft. Bragg and Pope AFB, others were scattered across the US and had to move long distances to reach an aerial port of embarkation (APOE) or a sea port of embarkation (SPOE). These considerations added to the challenges at this early stage of planning and complicated the decision making at the COCOM-level with regard to JTF composition and force sequencing. (JCOA, 2010)

### **Selecting the Core of the JTF HQ**

Early on, one of the next major decisions was identifying the “core” command and control element to build the JTF around. The three main options considered were: a subordinate Service component command (US Army South (ARSOUTH), 2<sup>nd</sup> Fleet, II MEF, or 12th Air Force), the SOUTHCOM Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ), or an external organization that was “JTF capable.”

From the start, LTG Keen felt that given the nature of the crisis, it would be important for at least some if not all of his headquarters to be stationed on land. He wanted to be connected to the embassy, the government, the UN, other relief organizations, and, most importantly, the people. He believed that a highly visible land-based presence was important to reassure the Haitians. This effectively





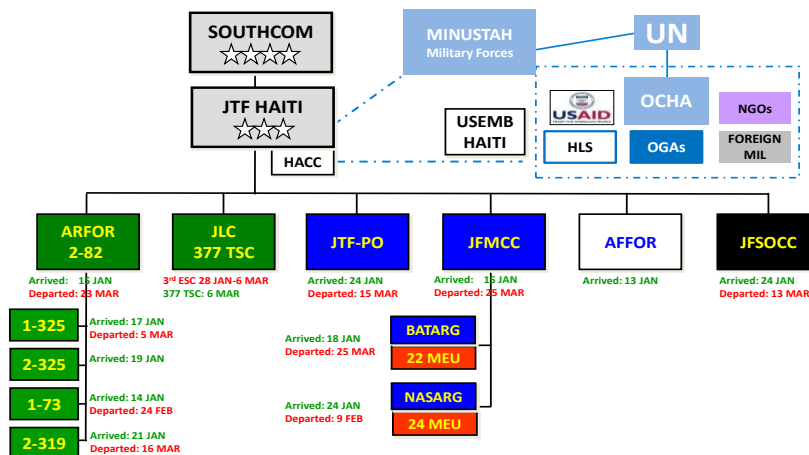
Day 4 - Exodus of Victims by Ferry

narrowed the candidates down to the two ground Services. II MEF was unavailable due to commitments for CENTCOM, so ARSOUTH appeared to be the logical choice as they had been “certified” as a JTF capable HQ, but one of the major concerns in the early days was a potential for significant security issues that might cause a mass exodus of Haitians toward Cuba and the US. Accordingly, the Joint Staff tasked SOUTHCOM to be prepared to conduct mass migrant operations. Only one organization was trained and rehearsed at this task and that was ARSOUTH.

Therefore, SOUTHCOM designated ARSOUTH as JTF-Migrant Operations (JTF-MIGOPS) with the specified task to deploy its JTF HQ to US Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and prepare to conduct migrant operations support. With ARSOUTH committed, SOUTHCOM had to find an alternate JTF headquarters. (JCOA, 2010)

The next option was to use the Standing Joint Force Headquarters and build around it. Lead elements of the SOUTHCOM SJFHQ arrived in Port au Prince within 24 hours. While providing important initial JTF staff capability, the SJFHQ could not form the core of the JTF staff without significant personnel augmentation. All but 22 of its original 56 personnel had been integrated into the SOUTHCOM staff to make up for manning shortfalls. Although the 22 that arrived on the ground in Haiti brought with them an understanding of the country and the broader SOUTHCOM AOR, they were too few to provide a viable staff for 24/7 operations. Help would come from an unexpected source. LTG Keen received a phone call from LTG Frank Helmick, Commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps at Ft. Bragg, NC - and a personal friend. Helmick offered the XVIII Corps Assault Command Post (ACP) to Keen with which to form the headquarters. The ACP was already packed and ready to deploy for a training exercise on the 14<sup>th</sup> and a brigade combat team from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division was part of the GRF and already tagged for deployment. The decision was made.

### JTF-Haiti Command & Control



## JTF-Haiti kicks into gear

**The JTF-H mission was to conduct Foreign Disaster Relief operations in support of USAID to support the GoH and MINUSTAH by providing localized security, facilitating the distribution and restoration of basic human services, providing medical support, and conducting critical engineering operations in order to alleviate human suffering and provide the foundation for the long term recovery of Haiti.** (USSOUTHCOM OPORD 01-10, 2010).



Day 3 - JTF - Haiti Staff Arriving

Within 72 hours, the XVIII ABC Assault Command Post (ACP), led by MG Allyn, was on the ground, providing a trained staff around which the JTF would mature. Though very experienced as a result of a recent Iraqi Freedom tour, the XVIII Corps staff was not joint and required the addition of a host of “plugs” to round it out. In addition to the SOUTHCOM SJFHQ that arrived on Day 2, the JFCOM Joint Enabling Capabilities Command (JECC) arrived within 72 hours, providing key enabling capabilities that rounded out the XVIII ABN joint planning capability, including current operations, future operations, and logistics. Soon, staff plugs from the Joint Force Maritime Component Command- Task Force 41, the 12<sup>th</sup> USAF’s Air Component Coordination Element (ACCE), as well as numerous other joint and interagency staff members began to turn the Army “green” staff into a joint “purple” staff. The Joint Communications Support Element (JCSE) provided an early entry communications package (Deployable Joint C2) to support the ad-hoc staff – and all communications domains became available by Day 4. (JCOA, 2010)

### Coordination, Collaboration, and Communication

*“The military’s planning capability is not the most expensive part, but it is probably the most valuable. The international coordination structure would not have stood up if they weren’t there – we tapped into the JTF planning capacity.”* – United Nations Strategic Plans Officer

The nascent JTF initially fell in on the embassy that provided space, communications, the proximity to support the initial response and the opportunity to develop staff relationships. While this arrangement was greatly beneficial to initial coordination and collaboration, the influx of so many personnel greatly strained the embassy infrastructure and existing communications quickly proved inadequate. To overcome this, additional personnel were housed in tents on the embassy grounds and the JTF headquarters was established in a vacant lot next to the embassy and the UN headquarters, thereby maintaining what would be critical proximity to major collaborating partners as the operation matured. The JCSE also established additional communications through deployable systems and workarounds to alleviate communications shortfalls. (JCOA, 2010)

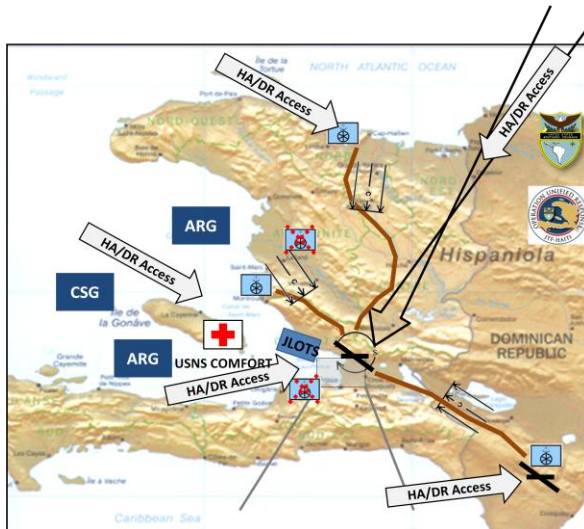
The JTF-H commander realized early-on that it would be critical to organize the boards, centers, cells and working groups within his JTF in a way that would best facilitate a collaborative environment and align efforts with the UN, MINUSTAH, and NGO/PVOs. As an example, JTF-H

stood up a 30-person Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Cell (HACC) as a mechanism to integrate with the UN Cluster system. The JTF Commander designated BG Matern, a Canadian exchange officer assigned to the XVIII ABC HQ, the responsibility to lead the HACC efforts. Primarily staffed by members of the 98<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs (CA) Battalion, the HACC began the task of integrating US military support to USAID and the Government of Haiti by coordinating, planning, and assisting the establishment of medical clinics and food and water distribution points. The JTF also provided key support to the staffs and working groups of USAID and the UN. (JCOA, 2010)

### Determining Requirements

Most of the major force deployment decisions were made within the first 72-96 hours when the situation was still very unclear. As a result, the fledgling SOUTHCOM and JTF staffs had to make some bold assumptions. ***“Many of the early assessments were simply guesses. SOUTHCOM guessed at what ... capabilities and capacities would be needed and sent them forward without ever being requested by the lead agency (USAID)”*** - BGEN Garza USSOUTHCOM CoS, 3 Feb 10 (JCOA, 2010)

Though SOUTHCOM had developed a functional plan (FUNCPLAN 6150-06) for HADR operations in theater, the plan was written for a traditional J-code organization in mind – but the staff was not configured that way. Moreover, there was no standing Concept of Operations (CONOP) or Operations Plan (OPLAN) with an associated Time Phased Force Deployment Data (TPFDD), built for a HADR event that the staff could use to begin force flow planning. Adding to these complications, SOUTHCOM’s logistics and deployment expertise had been disaggregated under the original functional staff organization.



### Force Flow and Logistics

***“The opening of the airport by the US was critical since initial over-the-shore supplies were more hampered. They went from around 35 flights per day to just over 200 flights per day, which was incredible. From the humanitarian assistance perspective, logistics is the best thing that the military does for such a disaster and we did it well.”***  
- W.L. “Ike” Clark, SOUTHCOM’s HA Division Chief

SOUTHCOM initially adopted a “push” approach to force deployment. Because speed was of the essence and the obvious requirement to respond to a disaster of such magnitude so great, the command opted to overcome ambiguity with mass in numbers. Force flow was initially based on verbal orders with no previously established TPFDD. This resulted in an uncoordinated sequencing of units and equipment that continued for the first 2 weeks. Supporting commands did not adequately communicate between each other as to what forces were being moved to the Joint Operational Area (JOA) on verbal orders. The rapid infusion of manpower and supplies, while creating inefficiencies,

was nonetheless effective in giving the JTF the means to stabilize the situation and save lives. (JCOA, 2010)

***“We had 16 pages of VOCOs regarding force flow. Official RFFs were not required and the bureaucracy was eliminated by this approach. This was the enabler for speed-of-response.”***

- RADM Parker, SOUTHCOM J-3

Yet the speed of response had its downside. The lack of the requisite audit trail, due to reliance on verbal orders, deprived supporting and supported commands of synchronized force flow planning and tracking. Because effective Joint Reception, Staging, Onward-movement, and Integration (JRSOI) was not implemented as force flow began, and a Joint Logistics Operations Center (JLOC) not established until 12 days into the disaster, JTF-H planners and operators felt they did not have adequate visibility of “what they had, where it was, and what was coming.” Rather than approaching the HADR mission from an operational level perspective, JTF-H was responding to immediate tactical level needs with “whatever showed up at the airfield from well meaning contributors”. To adjust to this lack of visibility of incoming assets, JTF-H created the Force Flow Working Group (FFWG) consisting of personnel from the J3 and J4 who met daily to de-conflict issues and apprise the commander. This would be one of several ad hoc organizations and processes set up on the fly as C2 for the crisis transitioned from SOUTHCOM to JTF-H. Later, as the numbers and capabilities of boots-on-the-ground increased and the JTF-H matured, requirements became clearer and a “pull” approach was implemented, improving efficiency.

### **Information Gathering and Situational Awareness**

***“I can honestly say that ... we have not had any problems sharing information. One of the key reasons for this is that from the outset of this crisis, we at the SOUTHCOM Headquarters decided to classify our Operations Order as UNCLASSIFIED. This classification gave us ease of transmission across the military, civilian sectors and with our partner nations.”***

- BGEN Garza  
USSOUTHCOM CoS, 3 Feb 10 (JCOA, 2010)

Communication and information sharing was crucial. Limited data was available for management decisions and there were overwhelming requests for data within the USG and the media (Guha-Sapir & Kirsch, 2010). News reports became a driver for a deluge of inquiry during the first weeks. Responding to the demand for detailed tactical information from senior decision makers placed heavy demands on USSOUTHCOM that often disrupted the planning process. The staffs spent as much as 6-8 hours each day to “chase down” facts and prepare VTCs with leaders in Washington, often being asked questions about Haiti they had no means to find answers. SOUTHCOM also had to gain situational awareness on what all the other US and international contributors were planning and executing in support of the relief efforts. Foreign embassies in D.C. bombarded the State Department with inquiries. In turn, SOUTHCOM had to constantly adjust their support to USAID. Fortunately, the integration of interagency representation, coupled with augmentation from NORTHCOM and many LNOs from interagency partners, provided an enhanced ability to gain sufficient situational

awareness of the whole of government effort. (JCOA, 2010) A Joint Information Center (JIC) was established and successful in facilitating information flow – but maintaining a unified message between all the agencies was difficult (Guha-Sapir & Kirsch, 2010).

USSOUTHCOM decided early-on to use “open” communications and an unclassified information-sharing network to alleviate the problem of information flow. Though degraded, the commercial communications infrastructure became part of the de-facto crisis response coordination architecture and a viable alternate means to military communications. For the first several weeks, much of the operation in Haiti was run off of cell phones and mobile email devices. Commercial technology helped greatly. The International Charter on Space and Major Disasters was activated, allowing satellite imagery of affected regions to be shared with rescue organizations. Members of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook spread messages and information. Facebook was overwhelmed by - and blocked - some users who were sending messages about updates. The OpenStreetMap community responded to the disaster by greatly improving the level of mapping available for the area using post-earthquake satellite photography provided by Google Maps<sup>®</sup> (through GeoEye Inc.) for use by relief organizations. Open source websites, such as Ushahidi, coordinated messages from multiple sites to assist Haitians still trapped and to keep families of survivors informed. Google Earth updated its coverage of Port-au-Prince on Day 5, showing the earthquake-ravaged city. On the Internet, JTF-H leveraged the All Partners Access Network (APAN) and a User Defined Operational Picture (UDOP), allowing them to link into USAID and other governmental sites. These eventually created a near real-time information sharing environment that enabled collaboration and information sharing within the command. (JCOA, 2010)



Global Hawk in Haiti

To address critical information gaps SOUTHCOM employed a combination of traditional intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) systems, and non-traditional tools such as those found on commercial internet sites. Technical ISR platforms provided imagery to support hydrographic and geographic surveys, a rough assessment of damaged infrastructure and lines of communications (LOCs), and disposition of internally displaced persons (IDP). Within the first 24 hours SOUTHCOM re-tasked its sole P-3 aircraft to conduct full motion video (FMV) of Port au Prince to assess the damage and incorporated additional external resources over time. National Technical Means, commercial satellites, and the RQ-4 GLOBAL HAWK also provided geospatial intelligence within the first 48 hours to improve situational awareness. Additionally, SOUTHCOM experimented with a new sensor, ALIRT (airborne laser imaging research test bed) LIDAR (light detection and ranging), which provided assessment capability for evaluating infrastructure damage. JFCOM’s Joint Warfare Analysis Center (JWAC) provided detailed analyses of a variety of critical infrastructure systems such as roads, water, and electricity. In the second week, with the information sharing capability gaining strength and the ISR architecture beginning to develop, the addition of RQ-1 PREDATORS and RC-26 Air National Guard aircraft and their respective ground stations provided much needed FMV capability



to forces on the ground to monitor food distribution efforts, IDP movement and response to any dynamic tasking directed by the JTF-Haiti commander. The posting of over 4000 hand held images from the numerous Navy and Marine helicopter flights aided what would become the longer term recovery stage. (JCOA, 2010)

***“The SOUTHCOM J2 provided estimates on the viability of Haitian hospitals by using satellite imagery showing movement around the buildings; but this gave no real intelligence on functionality, capability, or staffing that can only be obtained from in-person assessment.”***

Ultimately, much of the information gathering had to be accomplished the old fashioned way—with boots on the ground. SOUTHCOM deployed human intelligence teams to provide information on the human terrain environment. By using social networking sites, blogs, clergy, non-governmental organizations and the Haitian diaspora, SOUTHCOM supplemented its traditional ISR capabilities with sources that could provide first-hand accounts of where to focus humanitarian efforts within the country. The arriving troops from the 22 Marine Expeditionary Unit and the 2/82d Airborne Brigade Combat Team (BCT) conducted detailed ground reconnaissance to provide assessments and to document the locations of critical infrastructure and local leaders. The US Special Operations Command – South (USSOCSOUTH) deployed special operations forces (SOF) teams and provided on-the-ground assessments in six principle areas outside of Port au Prince. Later, the innovative use of Google Earth by 2/82 BCT that combined the details of the air and ground reconnaissance with the commercial map background became the basis for a viable HADR Common Operating Picture (COP). (JCOA, 2010)

### **Strategic Communications**

LTG Keen and his staff recognized the need to implement an effective strategic communications plan to get out in front of the expanding public media presence. To accomplish this they organized the Joint Interagency Information Cell (JIIC). The JIIC was a centralized coordination body comprised of USG agencies, headed up by a JIIC director and assisted by the US Embassy Public Diplomacy Officer. The communications goal was to ensure key audiences understood the United States’ role in the global effort and to portray the US as a capable, efficient and effective responder. Focusing on the Haitian people, Haitian leadership, international community, and American people, the core themes emphasized “Haitians helping Haitians” and ever expanding partnerships. Of equal importance was dispelling the undesirable themes that the US was keeping an inept Haitian Government afloat, that it was an occupying force, or that the US would rebuild Haiti. The White House sent a “trusted agent” to Haiti in an effort to synchronize situational awareness and messages, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, ADM Mullen, sent his personal public affairs officer to serve with the JTF Commander. (JCOA, 2010)

***“For the first few days of the crisis, the guy that was most valuable to me was the Chairman’s PAO—he was with me all the time.”*** – Interview with LTG Keen - 23 Feb 10

The JECC package included the JFCOM Joint Public Affairs Support Element (JPASE). JPASE provided media specialists and production capability to address the vacuum that was initially filled by the public media. In the days there were more media members on the ground than military. Using real time video and satellite feeds, the public media were able to get out in front of the military in describing the situation. This provided a useful window to those in and outside the country, but with drawbacks - it tempted those in Washington and Miami to use the “10,000 mile screwdriver.”

### **Mission Performance and Transition**



Operation Unified Response relief phase effectively concluded with the redeployment of the 24<sup>th</sup> MEU on March 24<sup>th</sup> – ten weeks into the crisis. International partners took over responsibility for food and water distribution. The JTF continued to provide relief support in the form of shelter and engineering projects. From mid-March through mid-May, the JTF mission focused extensively on mitigating the dangers of pending heavy rains, floods and mudslides

at the nine designated priority displacement camps in Port au Prince and also in supporting GoH, UN, USAID, and NGO partners in relocating displaced persons to transitional resettlement sites. JTF-Haiti engineering operations resulted in the protection of over 37,000 at risk persons. Additionally, JTF personnel worked to improve the infrastructure at the Toussaint Louverture International Airport. Through these efforts, JTF-Haiti postured for a seamless transition to the newly created SOUTHCOM Coordination Cell and follow-on Haiti relief operations and Theater Security Cooperation activities represented by the New Horizons Exercise. (Helping Haiti, 2010)

By April, in spite of severely damaged docks, the port doubled its capacity through JTF assistance and projects, allowing the offload of over 8,500 containers totaling over 10.2 million short tons. Navy and Army divers repaired the damaged south pier in record time and by mid-March the port was turned back over to Haitian authorities. Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore operations coordinated by the JTF and led by the JLC brought much needed supplies from ships anchored offshore to the beaches via landing craft, amphibious vehicles and hovercraft. JTF helicopters from the Army, Navy and Marine Corps flew every day, bringing in supplies from ships and transferring patients.

By the end of May, over 4.9 million meals, 17 million pounds of bulk food and 2.6 million bottles of water were delivered to the people most in need. Over one million people received emergency shelter, while more than 80 blocks of debris-covered streets were cleared and over 40,000 buildings were assessed by JTF engineers. Under the auspices of a comprehensive SOUTHCOM theater security cooperation (TSC) plan, JTF-Haiti developed a detailed plan to transition to an enduring US military presence in Haitian reconstruction and relief efforts in the form of New Horizons exercises, medical readiness training exercises, which will provide

construction projects and medical relief missions in rural areas. The operation officially concluded on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010. (Helping Haiti, 2010)

### **Reflections on Haiti**

During an after action plenary session in August 2010, the key leaders with agency representation reflected on the Haiti response. USAID Administrator Dr. Shah, General Fraser, LTG Keen, DoS Undersecretary Kennedy, US Ambassador to Haiti – AMB Merten, and the initial USAID response coordinator – Ambassador Lucke, provided their perspectives.

Dr. Shah noted that a critical enabler for an effective response was clear and strong presidential support backed by Congress and public support, which led to trying new methods and taking risks to save lives. Clear policy – shared by the USG, Host Nation, and International Partners – serves to establish priorities and provide effective solutions. He identified a strategic planning and shared decision-making capability shortfall that requires an investment. This investment will enhance the impact of each direct aid dollar that is spent in the future. Then, greater authorities on the ground – aligned to the resources- must be provided to implement the response. (Guha-Sapir & Kirsch, 2010)

General Fraser emphasized the need for unity of response by utilizing a common operating picture supported by robust logistics. DoD's ability to move people, equipment and supplies and to repair and operate the airport and ports was essential, but it is expensive and DoD does not always understand the requirements and humanitarian imperative that USAID, NGOs and other stakeholders use. But there is a need to use DoD's logistics strengths efficiently to maximize other agencies' response capacities. (Guha-Sapir & Kirsch, 2010)

DoS Undersecretary Kennedy reminded the audience that all humanitarian contingencies are not the same and planning must be flexible. By international law it is the host government that has the authority to direct activities; however when, like Haiti, the host government is severely impacted and has limited capacity - our first effort must be to persuade that government to allow the U.S. to take charge of key functions and diplomatic actions are necessary to rally international support. The most important role for the USG – through the Embassy - is to protect U.S. citizens and better tools and complimentary resources to perform this task are needed. There is a need to coordinate support in Washington in order to enable the effort from the U.S. (especially in terms of logistics) and to alleviate the burden on the field staff. An example was working with the U.S. Embassy in Dominican Republic to assist with U.S. citizen evacuation. (Guha-Sapir & Kirsch, 2010)

LTG Keen reinforced the necessity to respond quickly, build partnerships, collaborate between all agencies, fully support the lead Federal Agency, and work closely with the U.N. Humanitarian community. He recommended that the USG develop a better Response

Assessment Team and form a reserve International Civilian and Military capacity to respond to disasters – and this capacity must be exercised. Better doctrine and processes are need for the Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Centers (HACC) – and they need “unclassified” information sharing tools to better integrate and support the NGOs and public/private sectors. (Guha-Sapir & Kirsch, 2010)

Ambassador Merten discussed how the U.S. Embassy staff had to play a dual role of victim and responder. Many lost their homes and over 16,000 Americans had to be evacuated - the largest evacuation of U.S. citizens since World War II. He underlined the significance of collaborating with all partners *before* deploying – and the resulting assistance must be self-sustaining, as to not overwhelm the staff and resources at the Embassy. (Guha-Sapir & Kirsch, 2010)

Ambassador Lucke expressed the importance of designating a civilian agency supported by an existing – as opposed to ad hoc – international planning, communication, and personnel management system. He expressed concern that much of the decision-making power was concentrated in Washington D.C. and highlighted the importance of empowering field missions to handle the disaster response. The Ambassador indicated that a balance must be established between the need for information in Washington D.C. and the ability of USAID to deliver information, so that relief efforts on the ground are not sacrificed. (Guha-Sapir & Kirsch, 2010)

All presenters applauded the overall response efforts in Haiti, but there is clearly much more that can be done to prepare for the next crisis.

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