Virginia Task Force 1, Haiti Deployment — Special Supplement

Volume I, 2010 Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department

*Captions on back cover

Greetings all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the men and women of this department and other agencies who have supported our mission to Haiti during these past few weeks. Whether you were filling the vacancies in operations or supporting us in other ways, we greatly appreciate it. It allowed us to concentrate on the mission of helping those devastated by the earthquake knowing that our friends and families were well taken care of by you. This deployment not only took us away from our families and friends, but I realize you as well worked longer hours and stayed away from your families to help support our mission. And for that we are forever grateful.

It was an honor and a privilege to represent the United States of America, the County of Fairfax AND the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department; we could not be the team we are without your continued support.

Keith Morrison, VATF-1, Program Manager

Haitian Earthquake Deployment; Mobilization, Activation, Demobilization

By Battalion Chief Keith D. Morrison, Program Manager VATF-1

Battalion Chief Robert J. Zoldos, Task Force Leader VATF-1

At 5 p.m., January 12, 2010, a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Epicenter about 10 miles (15 kilometers) southwest of Port-au-Prince. Early estimates had the death toll as high as 200,000. This quake was the most powerful to hit Haiti in a century. USA-1 received authorization to mobilize a heavy team (72 personnel) within 38 minutes of the earthquake. This was the quickest deployment decision to date from United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This expedited decision making and allowed the team to get into action to the disaster area rapidly, and was a key factor to the overall success of the mission. The team worked through the night in conjunction with USAID to deploy the team. This involved coordination of splitting the team among three aircraft to expedite the mobilization process. One aircraft was used for team members and two were loaded with equipment cache. This was the first time that the team deployed a heavy team in the international arena using civilian aircraft.

Members of VATF-1 separate out equipment and supplies to be left behind for Haitian first responders and area hospitals near the American Embassy.

The team arrived on January 13, 2010, and reported to the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince to establish a Base of Operations (BoO). While team members engaged in base set-up that evening and into the early morning, rescue operations began. Task Force Leader (TFL) Joe Kaleda reported that one of the recon teams had a positive hit for a live victim at the United Nations (UN) compound. A rescue squad was sent immediately to assist. This was the first live victim pulled from the rubble by any US&R team since the earthquake had struck. This rescue was just the first of four live victim contacts the team encountered in the first 36 hours. This number also tied the most live victims found in any other single response prior to this event. As the team continued the rescue phase, they took part in another nine live victim rescues the next day, many working side-by-side with other international teams.

While the heavy team was actively involved in the rescue operations, the call came from USAID to roster a second team to join forces with our first team. Once again, another first for our team to have the opportunity to roster and deploy two teams simultaneously. The second team was a medium team (42 personnel), one canine and a smaller equipment cache. Upon their arrival, both teams were reconfigured into a jumbo team which proved extremely efficient and significantly increased overall operational productivity.

USA-1 cleared several grids by searches that were assigned by the UN On-Site Operations Coordination Center (OSOCC). This established an operational rhythm that allowed for routine handling of requests for assistance and search operations, continuing until January 26, 2010. The team also experienced the longest extrication in its history, lasting 26 hours and 11 minutes. Members rescued a 27 year-old female from the rubble of the University Port-au-Prince. She was trapped in several floors of concrete slabs and stairwell railing. This rescue proved the

importance of cooperative operations in technical rescue and advanced life-support measures. Over two-thirds of the team was involved in this rescue.

Team members worked several days at Hotel Montana, an extremely large resort style hotel. The building was five stories high in most places and was completely destroyed with much of the building falling into a "pancake" type collapse. Team members made four unassisted rescues from the site during the first few days and assisted with several more. At the request of the U.S. government, USA-1 established a continuous presence at the site on January 19, 2010, continued until relieved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers January 25, 2010. The team's work at this location included establishing command of the site, developing a continuing rescue operational plan, systematic delayering of the structure, and forensic identification and respectful treatment of remains.

Beyond the collapse rescues, the team was able to make tangible differences for the people of Haiti by providing humanitarian assistance. As with past deployments, through the DART, the team was able to donate tents, medical supplies, and rescue equipment to the local government. Additionally, they set up tents at several local clinics and retrieved equipment and medications from within the damaged structures. The goal was to ensure that clinics were as functional as possible before departing. Structural assessments and stabilization operations at several hospitals were other tasks completed. While these humanitarian assistance missions greatly aided the affected population, they also provided our team members an opportunity to transition smoothly from rescue to the recovery phase. This proved to be as rewarding of an experience as the previous 16 rescues.

Additional resources were also deployed to this event in conjunction with the two USAR teams. A team of three was also deployed as part of our Americas Support Team (AST) providing base camp support to the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC). The initial three AST members were relieved by a second team of three to continue providing support to the UN. One member was deployed as part of the initial UNDAC team immediately after the earthquake struck. The UNDAC team is responsible for providing first-hand information on the disaster situation and priority needs of the victims to the international USAR teams arriving in country to assist. Two team members were deployed as part of a joint Rapid Response Force (RRF), while the heavy and medium teams were preparing to leave Haiti. The RRF consisted of members from Los Angeles County and Fairfax County, capable of providing immediate or emergency response as needed. Two team members worked in the operations center in Washington, D.C. as part of the Response Management Team (RMT) for USAID/OFDA. Their role was to assist in coordination efforts between USAID/OFDA in Washington, the Program Office Support Center, and the deployed teams.

On January 27, 2010, the team traveled to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic to prepare for their flight home the next day. Upon arrival at Dulles International Airport, the team received a warm welcome. They were met by members of both of our Federal Partners; FEMA and USAID; Congressman Gerry Connolly; Chairman Sharon Bulova and members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, co-workers from the team and the Fire and Rescue Department; as well as family and friends. The day ended with a final team debrief and homecoming event at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Academy. ❖

Battalion Chief Patrick Rohaley, CATF-2, Battalion Chief Terry DeJournette, CATF-2, Haitian Fire Captain Ardovin Zephirin, ("Chief Z"), and Battalion Chief Keith Morrison shake hands after receiving supplies and equipment from both teams.

Operations – Haiti 7.1 Earthquake 2010

By Lieutenant Rex E. Strickland III
Operations Manager, VATF-1

From the moment the earthquake first shook just outside of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Fairfax County Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) anticipated a response. Based on the strength of the 7.1-magnitude earthquake, local response capacity, and prior knowledge of the area's building construction, it was clear that a US&R activation was necessary.

From an operations perspective, there were several challenging aspects to this deployment, and planning for these started well before we left Fairfax County. Everything from aircraft type, vehicle transportation, equipment cache, security, and the first-ever addition of our medium team to our onsite heavy team posed hurdles that were eventually overcome.

This was the first time our task force deployed as a heavy team via commercial aircraft, which required flying personnel in a 737 and splitting the equipment cache using two trips on a single privately owned C-130.

Much like the Haiti school collapse response in late 2008, our vehicles were not transported – and transportation was a major issue throughout the duration of this deployment. The U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince had a working motor pool to which we had access; however, due to perceived security concerns, only certain vehicles were available to US&R assets. All five US&R teams co-located on embassy grounds shared the limited pool of SUVs, armored vehicles, and cargo trucks. This made pushing rescue and RECON teams out the door to search for victims very difficult.

The delivery of the second part of our equipment cache was significantly delayed. The same C-130 that delivered the first part of the cache (configured similarly to a medium cache) flew back for the remaining part. Airport damage and limitations along with a significant humanitarian response, hampered the arrival of much-needed rescue tools. The other task forces that were able to get their equipment into the airport were not able to deliver it to the embassy, so all of the task forces shared equipment and resources until the balance of the cache could be delivered.

Lieutenant Rex Strickland, a CATF-2 member, answers questions from USAID Administrator, Dr. Rajiv Shah, in the Base of Operations, near the American Embassy.

Security was a major concern during the deployment. The U.S. Embassy controls security for U.S. citizens in Haiti. By order of the Regional Security Officer, we were not to move about the city after dark unless there was an active rescue. Of course, the first 72 hours after an earthquake are the most important, so security restrictions were frustrating.

Over the next 14 days, we did not encounter any security concerns. While security was an issue prior to the earthquake, we found that the people of Haiti responded similarly to the populations of other quake-stricken areas in which we have worked. With the help of local interpreters, we adapted our search methods, re-

lying heavily on human intelligence. Many lessons were learned regarding local interaction as result of this mission, including that fire line tape can hold back thousands of people; building markings help locals understand when we are complete with operations; and taking a minute to explain what we're doing goes a long way.

The Haiti deployment was also the first time we had been requested to deploy both a heavy team and a medium team simultaneously; a requirement of our USAID contract. We did so, flawlessly. We went from four rescue squads to six, and up-staffed numerous other positions, from physicians to communication specialists. With four Operations Chiefs, we chose to keep both day and night operations from the heavy team and designate the medium team's operations staff as Rescue Team Managers. They acted as an area command, similar to an ICS scenario, and managed large off-site operations such as the Hotel Montana, the University, and large grid searches.

Lieutenant Thomas R. Carver and Technician Thomas P. Feehan use a Delsar seismic listening device while searching for victims on a rubble pile.

Two modular RECON teams were kept working throughout the deployment, with a third smaller RECON element that kept close ties with local assets such as the Cap Haitian Fire Department. The RECON teams consisted of search managers, technical search specialists, structural engineers, doctors, and canine specialists.

One of the team's first missions occurred moments after we touched down at the airport January 13. We sent Lieutenant Tom Griffin, Technical Search Specialist, on the back of a motorcycle driven by DSS personnel, to determine the fate of an embassy staff member. Unfortunately, the staff member was confirmed to be deceased. Later in the mission, a rescue squad was sent to recover the remains to be transported back to the United States.

A few hours after unloading the planes by hand and then packing the equipment on the back of large POD trucks, we drove a short distance to the U.S. Embassy. The embassy is a large state-of-the-art compound, and sustained little to no damage to any of its buildings. The embassy provided filtered water, power, and security.

The initial priority was to assemble the Base of Operations (BoO.) Since we arrived at dusk and night operations were restricted, we assembled a limited number of tents and laid out the equipment boxes. Members slept outside, under the stars, most without cots – many became dinner for insects.

Around 2200 hours on January 13, a request came in to send a crew to rescue a 37-year-old male trapped at a UN compound. Crews operated for approximately eight hours and successfully freed the victim, who walked away soon after the rescue.

The next morning, January 14, several rescues were initiated and approximately 20 sites were checked. The initial target sites were provided by USAID personnel. The list included markets, hospitals, banks, hotels, and schools. As we investigated, the locals provided additional leads. Eight victims were pulled from Hotel Montana. Five victims were pulled from the University of Port-au-Prince, where six rescue squads worked on rotation.

The next few days consisted of completing the ongoing rescues, conducting grid searches of four assigned sectors, and responding to countless "911 calls" generated by locals, embassy staff, USAID, and the UN.

On January 17, we assisted a Martinique team with an amputation and subsequent rescue of a

(Continued on Page 6)

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victim. During that same event, we found four other trapped victims within a few streets. That site was transferred to Los Angles County, due to their close proximity.

On January 19, we assisted Martinique and local PAP fire brigades with a rescue in a market. We also had the benefit of an embedded U.S. Airforce Para-Rescue Jumper team who provided collapse rescue capability, critical EMS care, security, and advanced intelligence. We will forever be grateful for their assistance.

Beyond the collapse rescues, we were able to make tangible differences to the people of Haiti in the form of humanitarian assistance. On many past deployments, we have donated our tents, medical supplies, and equipment to the local government. Knowing that, we returned to a pediatric hospital that collapsed. All of the surviving patients were outside, under sheets and tarps, many recovering from open-air surgeries. We were able to donate three large and one small tent to improve their living conditions. We also scoured the collapsed portion of the hospital for beds, cribs, medical equipment, and a large supply of much-needed medications.

Lieutenant Thomas R. Carver, Dr. Anthony McIntyre, and Sean P. Kennedy work with members of the Cap-Hatian Fire Brigade and the U.S. Air Force Para-Rescue Jumpers near a collapsed structure.

Team members were also able to assemble a surgical tent, which was used moments after they left. Our crews also participated in a shoring operation at another hospital and living quarters for U.S. troops.

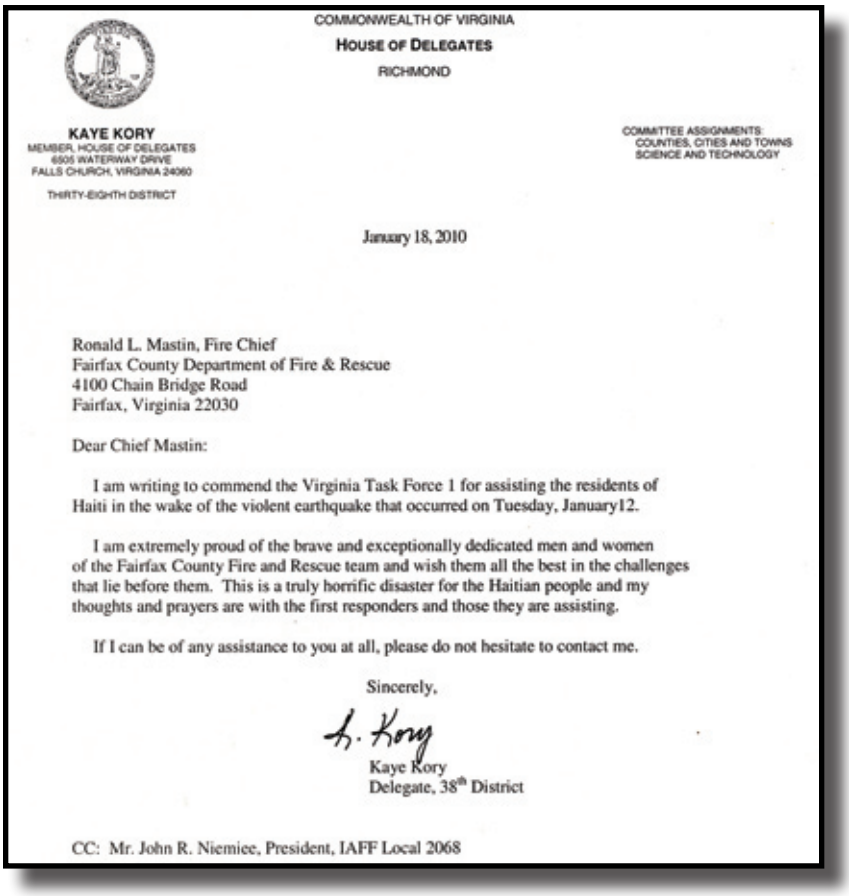
Additionally, members organized monetary donations. Together, the Fairfax, LA County, Miami, and South Florida teams were able to give the Cap-Haitian Fire Department in excess of $5,000; $2,500 just from Fairfax members. The money was used to feed the fire brigade which had been working tirelessly, sometimes side-by-side with our crews. The fire chief, nicknamed "Chief Z," also worked with our team during the school collapse.

Since our return, it has been interesting to read and watch the news and hear the varying responses to this remarkable deployment. Some say that the sheer numbers of rescues made it successful. Perhaps it was the extensive humanitarian response. Maybe it was that no one on our team was seriously hurt.

For me, the most remarkable part of the Haiti deployment were our members. While many aspects were unusual, what made this deployment unforgettable was how our men and women persevered under the harshest of conditions. The heat was brutal, especially since we were not acclimated. The rescues were especially difficult, some lasting over 30 hours from first contact. The risk was significant, with a lack of shoring and the constant threat of aftershocks.

Most of those things we've seen at other deployments, but have never been forced to work on, around, and under so many dead bodies. There were a record number of amputations on this deployment, including several performed on the deceased in order to access the living. Since many of the rescues routinely exceeded six hours, our rescue team spent significant time literally face-to-face with decomposing bodies.

Despite the cramping, the odor, the body fluids, and the twisted entanglement of corpses that the



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
HOUSE OF DELEGATES
RICHMOND

KAYE KORY
MEMBER, HOUSE OF DELEGATES
6505 WATERWAY DRIVE
FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA 24060
THIRTY-EIGHTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
COUNTIES, CITIES AND TOWNS
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

January 18, 2010

Ronald L. Mastin, Fire Chief
Fairfax County Department of Fire & Rescue
4100 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Dear Chief Mastin:

I am writing to commend the Virginia Task Force 1 for assisting the residents of Haiti in the wake of the violent earthquake that occurred on Tuesday, January12.

I am extremely proud of the brave and exceptionally dedicated men and women of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue team and wish them all the best in the challenges that lie before them. This is a truly horrific disaster for the Haitian people and my thoughts and prayers are with the first responders and those they are assisting.

If I can be of any assistance to you at all, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

K. Kory

Kaye Kory
Delegate, 38th District

CC: Mr. John R. Niemiee, President, IAFF Local 2068

rescuers were forced to lie on, around, and under, the men and women of Fairfax County Urban Search and Rescue continued with their mission, unconcerned with the discomfort and the danger. They ignored the distractions and focused completely on rescuing their victims. Our team challenged every bit of training ever received and gave the six-sided approach a completely new meaning.

No one ever gave up. Everyone stayed focused on the mission for the entire 14-day duration. Few complained despite suffering countless bug bites, long rides in the back of a box truck, and the endless investigations for people trapped.

Remarkable is an understatement; incredible is more appropriate. ❖

VATF-1 affectionately renamed the "Jumbo Team," poses for a group photograph in front of the American Embassy on their last day in Haiti. (Photo by Deputy Chief Andrew L. Duke)

VATF-1 Medical Operations, Considerations

By Captain II Jeffrey S. Lewis
Medical Specialist, VATF-1

If you ask people in our department why they work or volunteer here . . . somewhere in their answer will be that they want to help people in their time of need. Traveling down the road in a shiny emergency vehicle is a plus, but at the core of why we help . . . is just that . . we want to help. The same is true for those that decide to join the Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) Program; it is an opportunity to help people in their time of catastrophic need.

When Virginia Task Force 1 (VATF-1) responds to a US&R event, the same basic principles apply that we use in the county working as a team to mitigate all-hazard events. US&R requires planning, incident management, EMS, rescue, and the same support mechanisms we have at home. Though the same things are required, the scope is much broader requiring we be as self-sufficient as possible.

Part of our self sufficiency is that we have an internal medical capacity that can handle issues ranging from what we encounter in the field up to basic surgery and critical care. The personnel that accomplish this are medical managers (physicians) and medical specialists (paramedics) who have substantial field experience both with the department and other agencies. These personnel advance their skills further by attending a specialist course in which they learn advanced care techniques applicable to the US&R environment.

Several VATF-1 members work at Minustah Headquarters, the site of VATF-1's first rescue.

Coordinating overall medical care is a cadre of highly experienced medical managers who are board certified emergency room physicians. The team physicians are also well versed in disaster management and have provided medical care in austere environments on many occasions. Our team physicians are not only experienced but are internationally recognized and respected; in some cases they have literally "written the book" about US&R medicine.

Though the primary focus of the medical team is medical care, it is important that all team personnel lend a hand with all tasks. When not directly engaged in medical care, the medical team is integrated with search and rescue crews performing work to both locate and disentangle entrapped victims.

Once a victim is located, the goal of the medical team is to start planning how best to manage care. This requires close coordination between all team functions so that the patient can be assessed and a treatment plan developed. Working together each discipline manages the event much like a complex rescue at home. Once extricated, the responsibility of the medical team for the patient continues until they are either evacuated or transferred to a higher level of care. The ultimate decision as to how this plays out depends upon the pre- and post disaster capabilities of the communities we operate in. It is important not to overburden local resources and to ensure that patients receive

Technician Matthew T. Groff (center in the opening) communicates with other rescue squad team members during an ongoing rescue retrieval.

the definitive attention they require.

Though a tremendous amount of time and effort is dedicated to locating, treating, and removing the entrapped; the primary function of the medical team is to provide excellent care to everyone within VATF-1. Everyone in the medical section takes this seriously because they are often our friends and co-workers. The provision of effective care requires a broad range of training; including advanced medical care, primary medicine, dental care, foot care, and veterinary medicine. To support this, the medical section meets all standard departmental EMS training requirements and meets monthly with team physicians to further hone US&R skills. Several of the medical specialists are also participants in the department's Technical Rescue and Hazardous Materials programs and most have been through the training.

When a disaster occurs, and the call comes in for assistance, all sections of VATF-1 go to work on a project that will occupy all of their time and effort with the assumption that they will be gone for 10 - 14 days. From a medical perspective, we gather at our designated assembly point, typically the Academy, and our work begins. We perform physical evaluations on all potentially deployable personnel to expand upon our annual physicals and speak with each deploying member to discuss recent medical issues and concerns. This allows us to compile a personnel baseline for effective monitoring throughout the deployment. While processing over 70 members, we also obtain specialty medications, assign travel medical gear, gather medical information, and develop the Medical Action Plan. Enroute to and from a US&R event, the medical section carries both their personal gear and enough equipment to care for the rest of the team.

Once VATF-1 arrives at the scene of a disaster there are numerous tasks that must be completed while they gear up to go to work. One of the first priorities for medical is to set up the medical tent where we are equipped to provide continuous care to patients in a relatively short period of time.

On the deployment to Haiti, we had the opportunity to engage in operations that were beyond the scope of many of our prior missions. Within the medical section we provided care to multiple personnel and assisted local medical organizations and other international rescue teams. While doing this we used resources from every aspect of our medical cache performing extrication, medical treatment, resuscitation, and even surgical procedures. These operations allowed us to both validate and refine a host of operational procedures and equipment configurations. We also had the opportunity to gather information and experience that will allow us to progress and provide even more effective care to others in their time of need. ❖

The Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority Fire Department welcomes back VATF-1 with a spectacular "Water Salute" on the tarmac at Dulles International Airport, January 28, 2010, upon the return of VATF-1 to Fairfax County.

Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2010 6:46 PM

Subject: County Pride

All Fairfax County employees should be so proud...to work for an entity which has produced VATF-1.....
especially now that they are front and foremost in the World News.....
what a great example they are setting as envoys of good will for the United States !

Laura J. Nabili
Property Manager. Housing Services Specialist [for Woodley Hills Estates Manufactured Home Park)

(Pictured Left) A Virginia Task Force-1 member does a reconnaissance of a collapsed structure in Port-au-Prince.

(Pictured Right) Lieutenant Thomas Griffin marks a building using the international marking system, allowing other international teams to know the disposition of search and rescue operations of the structure.

Sent: Thursday, January 14, 2010 7:59 AM
To: Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs
Subject: Assistance for the victims in Haiti

To Whom It May Concern:

My husband and I just watched the early news on an NBC affiliate and heard Brian Williams say Fairfax County's Fire and Rescue Team arrived in Haiti ahead of many national and world agencies to "lend a hand." What a tribute to your leadership, organization, and workforce!
God bless you all; may you be richly rewarded for your efforts! (Please forward to those within your county offices who have been most instrumental in this project.) Submitted By: Roxana Morrill, Colcord, Oklahoma

Canine Specialist Christopher Holmes and his Canine "Cazo" search rubble piles.

Several VATF-1 members do "breach and break" operations on a collapsed building.

HOPE FOR HAITI

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 13, 2010

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer my deepest sympathy to the people of Haiti as they cope with the aftermath of yesterday's massive earthquake. The tremendous loss of life and the untold devastation has left the capital of Port-au-Prince in ruins and countless families facing the untold horrors of loved ones injured or killed. This earthquake has shown us nature's worst.

The world's response to this awful tragedy will demonstrate the best of human nature. Many people will offer relief and assistance, through time and money. As we have always done in times of international disaster, the United States is sending aid to Haiti, including Fairfax County's Urban Search and Rescue Team 1 (USAR Team 1), which deployed this morning.

USAR Team 1 is one of two urban search and rescue teams nationwide that report to the U.S. Agency for International Development—Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance for humanitarian deployments. This highly trained rescue team has deployed to numerous locations across the globe, saving lives in areas such as Armenia, Indonesia, Romania, Kenya, Bolivia, Oklahoma City, and the Pentagon, providing critical lifesaving rescues, especially in building collapse situations.

In this terrible time of tragedy, Fairfax County's USAR Team 1 represents the best that America has to offer, hope and a commitment to helping those in need. I commend the men and women of USAR Team 1 on their heroic efforts, mourn for those who lost their lives and pray for those awaiting aid.

Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2010 5:53 PM
To: WEBTeam
Subject: thank you

thank you for being the first rescue team to be in haiti for that disaster in the bottom of my heart and the haitian communauty in maryland we said thank you to you your family and the state of virginia only one way we can pay back that's pray for you ...thanks again

GOD BLESS YOU AND YOU FAMILY AND THE STATE OF VIRGINIA....

GLOD BLESS AMERICA.....THANKS

PHILIPPE CLÉRIÉ

A thank-you from Port-au-Prince

As I write this, it has been 10 days since the earthquake of Port-au-Prince. The international response has been nothing short of phenomenal. The search-and-rescue operation is beginning to wind down now, and the teams carrying that out will soon be sent home. I cannot claim to write in the name of the Haitian people; that's President René Préval's job and privilege, even if he sometimes does not seem to understand that. But I do want to thank the people of the Washington region, and all the world, for their help and care during this catastrophe.

I have spent the past few days serving as a guide and interpreter for a rescue task force from Fairfax County. I have seen their dedication and their eagerness to go looking for survivors. I have seen their persistence when searching, their insistence on following every possible lead in an effort to save lives, despite all the frustrations, particularly with transportation problems and the horrendous traffic jams. I want to thank all the team members for their dedication and their courage. I thank Fairfax County and the governor of Virginia for allowing them to come, the president of the United States for asking them to come, and the people of the United States for being so generous.

JAE C. HONG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rescuers from Fairfax at a collapsed hospital in Port-au-Prince.

The Fairfax rescuers were considerate, patient, caring. When we were idle, waiting for an assignment, there always were several people who would ask me if I needed anything. Water? A meal? And there were those moments when they would come up to thank me. All I did, really, was say: "Turn right," "Turn left" and "Go straight" at the proper time. And yet they would thank me for helping. It was horribly embarrassing, considering all that they were doing. What I did was the least I could do. Literally. That was the only thing I was qualified for. And that hurt, because I so wished I could do more.

I hope more Haitians will come forward and in turn be generous with their thanks. Every single individual who left his or her normal life to come to Haiti deserves every bit of thanks we can give. It feels like it's about the only thing we have left to give.

Thank you, Fairfax.

The Fairfax County Police Motorcycle Squad line up to escort VATF-1, Thursday, January 28, 2010, from Dulles International Airport to an awaiting crowd of family and friends at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Academy following their 15-day deployment to Haiti. (Photo by Donna Spiewak, Fairfax County Police Department)

Front cover photos, clockwise: Lieutenant William Moreland poses with Haitian children while providing humanitarian assistance near the end of the mission; several structural engineers on VATF-1 at the Hotel Montana site discuss the integrity of the collapsed building; Lieutenant Evan Lewis provides direction during a rescue tunneling operation; members of VATF-1 establish a forward equipment cache; at Hotel Montana, Battalion Chief Robert Zoldos, Lieutenant David Barlow, and Captain II Paul Ruwe formulate a plan of action for delayering operations; and Lieutenant Burroughs and Technician Craven continue to make a larger opening to remove a patient.

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