

RUBICON RESCUE - MISSION HAITI - PART 4

Posted By **Blackfive** The following was just written by Team Rubicon's Mark Hayward, a former Army SF Medic:

We left the Dominican Republic this morning and arrived safely at our staging area in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, this evening. As follows:

After packing and cross-loading our medical gear, and doing quick training on combat med kits with Jake, Will, Jeff, Craig, and Jim, we got a few hours sleep and got ready to go into Haiti. We were met this morning by Eduardo and David (respectively, a family practitioner and an ER physician), who joined the team the same way I did: by wandering into the right place at the right time. Initially the plan was to take the Terra-Bus from SD through the Jimani crossing to PAP, have the Jesuits meet us at the bus stop, and have them drive us to the novitiate. However, we spent a considerable amount of time this morning developing our en-route security plan, as the news reports indicated that the route was plagued by bandits. While planning, we also made contact with several locals who were willing to take us by minivan from SD to the border, and then transfer into pickup trucks for the ride from Jimani to PAP.

We left via two minivans around 11:00, and had an uneventful six-hour ride to the border. I slept contentedly on a pile of luggage, with my nose three inches from the interior roof of the minivan, for most of the way. I also enjoyed the comforts of a DR rest station, at which we enjoyed fresh coconut milk and picked up some local bananas and eggplants ("aubergines") for the monks. Along the road, we passed many UN and other aid vehicles, some formal, most not, returning empty from Haiti. The border crossing was very simple; we didn't even have to get our passports stamped, but did so anyway to observe all the formalities. We offloaded from our minivans and transferred into TWO mini-pickups. We packed and equipped ourselves in light of the fact that news reports implied we would be overrun by mobs of famished civilians once we got to the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. Our arsenal included machetes, hatchets, and (in my case) a folding shovel. We put our dust masks, stowed the doctors and the Jesuit safely inside the vehicles, and climbed on top of the luggage for the last 40 miles to Port-au-Prince. We were ready for anything...

Which in this case consisted of an utterly uneventful hour-and-a-half drive. Several things NOT mentioned in the news happened en route and deserve notice. Various patterned helicopters flew what appeared to be patrols over the roadway, presumably watching out for bandits. Haitian police (PNH) were very much in evidence at the border crossing (Commissariat Malpasse) and at all chokepoints/traffic blockages. Most of the

traffic snarls were centered around gas stations, which were OPEN and operational. Fuel was being sold; food and drink were being sold along the road; the usual black market fuel was also being sold along the road from old 5-gallon water-cooler bottles -- in other words, all of the normal economic activity of pre-quake Haiti appeared to be back in action. We began to see signs of earthquake damage beginning about 8 miles N of the airport. Some structures had collapsed. Most were unaffected. Taptaps were running; clouds of motorbike/taxis buzzed around the bus stops. Basically, other than a few buildings that had fallen in on themselves, things looked normal (for Haiti), at least on the north side of the city.

We worked our way down a winding road to the novitiate, set behind an 8-ft-high razorwire-topped wall with a heavy metal gate. A security team of PNH met us in the front yard. The compound is very large (I'll post the lat/long coords tomorrow). There is some quake damage to the buildings, which our firefighters have assessed as fairly significant, so we are sleeping in the yard in tents. There are a few refugees here as well, but not many. The monks made us dinner: pumpkin soup with mixed pasta, saltine crackers, and tasty goat morsels. But the monks warn us that the damage to the southern portion of the city is extensive. At first light tomorrow we will move in convoy to a refugee camp of 900 persons, and do what we can to assist. So now, to bed.

(Addendum: while preparing this note, we were informed that an injured girl had been brought to the compound. Her name is Jessica, and she had a wall fall on her during the earthquake, now almost five days ago. We are the first medical providers she has seen. As far as we could determine clinically, she had a closed, displaced, unstable fracture of the midshaft of her left tibia. So, doing the best we could, we gave her some pain medications and manually reduced the fracture, then splinted it with a SAM splint, a cut-up-dress for padding, a piece of wood for support, and duct tape to hold everything together. I think we may be seeing a lot more of this sort of thing and I wish I had gotten a dozen rolls of duct tape. Or, for that matter, a mobile orthopedic suite with casting materials. We expect more medical providers to arrive by plane to PAP Tuesday, hopefully with orthopedic supplies and other items. We will do the best we can in any event. Jessica is resting comfortably and her leg is straight again. I hope things continue well.)



Under cover of darkness, Team Rubicon Doctors Griswell and Dolhun, along with former Army SF medic Mark Hayward, treat a 14 year-old girl with a mid-shaft fracture fibula and tibia. Five days ago a concrete wall collapsed on her leg during a massive 7.0 earthquake. In the United States, she would fully recover after surgery requiring an orthopedic surgeon and anesthesiologist. However, with the lack of resources in Haiti and low triage priority (not open fracture and not infected), Griswell speculated she will walk again but with a slight deformity and a limp. The medical trio applied traction in order to reduce the fracture, set the leg, and finally applied a splint of wood scraps wrapped in bed sheets and duct tape. "You use what you can", said Dolhun.

More at Badger Jake's place.

[You can read all of Team Rubicon's updates on Blackfive here]

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COMMENTS



defendUSA said...

Once again, B5 is on it. Like reading what the team is doing...and I am a little jealous. Wish I could DO more than donate stuff.

January 18, 2010 at 08:27 AM



Deltabravo said...

They're calling it "Civil War Medicine" on tv. What a challenge for the medical professionals! You all make us proud.

January 18, 2010 at 09:20 AM



AFSister said...

Same here, Defend and Delta. Same here.

January 18, 2010 at 09:22 AM

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