

**STATEMENT OF**  
**REAR ADMIRAL JOSEPH KERNAN,**  
**UNITED STATES NAVY**  
**US NAVAL FORCES SOUTHERN COMMAND**  
**COMMANDER, U.S. FOURTH FLEET**  
**BEFORE THE 110TH CONGRESS**  
**HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE,**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

**September 23, 2008**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the ongoing relief efforts of the U.S. Military in Haiti. I would also like to thank the Committee for taking the time to examine this important situation in our hemisphere

As a result of a Government of Haiti request for assistance through the U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and the Fourth Fleet deployed the USS KEARSARGE to Haiti on September 7th to support the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) in their relief efforts. Prior to the response in Haiti, the USS KEARSARGE was conducting a humanitarian mission in Colombia as part of a humanitarian assistance deployment in Central and South America and the Caribbean region called "Continuing Promise 2008." The timing of and preparation for this mission was purposeful. The USS KEARSARGE was not only prepared for its planned humanitarian assistance visits, but also to respond to disasters of this nature during the hurricane season. Our primary mission in Haiti is to support overall USG efforts to conduct disaster relief in order to mitigate human suffering and loss of life. Our forces have delivered over 1000 metric tons of relief supplies, principally food, and almost 10,000 2.5 gallon water bags to devastated areas in Haiti, and that number continues to grow every day. KEARSARGE support to Haiti includes the air and waterborne movement of cargo and equipment between Port-au-Prince and Gonaives, Jeremie, Saint Marc, Port de Paix, Jacmel, and Les Cayes. The KEARSARGE has also been able to employ its medical capabilities to conduct assessments, provide care, and recommend protocols to mitigate current and future disaster-induced medical issues. The USS

KEARSARGE engineering team, augmented by SOUTHCOM engineers, is working with USAID, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), and the Government of Haiti to conduct assessments of basic infrastructure damage and needs, with a focus on bridges and roads.

All of the efforts described above would not have been possible without coordinated and combined efforts with our interagency partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), MINUSTAH, other UN organizations, and the Haitian government. I have personally been in Haiti to oversee U.S. Military contributions to these operations and I can testify to the success of these collective efforts and the great work being done by our young Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, DOD Civilians, and Coastguardsmen. I thank you for your interest and support and am prepared to answer your questions.

USS KEARSARGE crew and assets in action as it distributes supplies and delivers medical assistance. Cooperation with host nation, NGOs, and other partners has been the key to reaching those who need medical attention and basic supplies of food and water.

The Department of Defense brought its unique sea-based mobility assets to provide logistical support such as delivering food, water, and medical supplies in required quantities to remote and difficult to access locations. To date, we have met or exceeded requested quantities.

These photos depict the conditions in Haiti, particularly in Gonaives, one of the most affected areas. The U.S. Military has worked hand-in-hand with the MINUSTAH forces on the ground, interagency partners, NGOs, partner nations, and the Government of Haiti. Because of this collective commitment by participating organizations to coordinate their efforts and the volume of supplies rapidly made available, aid has been widely distributed in a methodical and orderly manner.

The widespread flooding is not only affecting the cities, it has also devastated crops, which creates long-term health concerns and potential food shortages. A significant number of crops will be lost and standing water is creating a breeding ground for mosquitoes, increasing risk of dengue fever, malaria, and other diseases. Additionally, significant damage has occurred to water sources and systems throughout Haiti.

A joint effort to identify critical infrastructure throughout the country resulted in the prioritization of six key bridges that need immediate repair in order to facilitate further relief efforts and re-establish lines of communication. These maps show the top six priorities. This joint effort also identified a number of other infrastructure problems in Public Works related areas.