U.S.A-1/VA-TF1
Urban Search and Rescue
Response To The
2010 HAITI EARTHQUAKE
2010 HAITI EARTHQUAKE

- Established in the late ’80’s following the Mexico City and Soviet Armenia Earthquakes
- Federal government recognized that local assets may be overwhelmed
- Partnership with USAID (International deployments) and FEMA (Domestic deployments)
- All costs covered by Federal government.
- 28 teams established domestically
- 2 International teams (Fairfax and L.A. County)
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- Over 200 “Specialists” make up VATF-1/USA-1
- Team consists of Command, Search, Rescue, Medical, Logistics, Engineering, Technical and Support components.
- Self Sufficient providing our own Food, Water and Shelter.
- Typically deployed as either a “Heavy” (72-person) or “Medium” (38-person) team.
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• 5:00 PM, January 12:
  – Magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck
  – This quake was the most powerful to hit Haiti in a century.
  – Epi-center about 10 miles (15 kilometers) southwest of Port-au-Prince
  – Death toll could be as high as 200,000
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• 6:25 PM, January 12:
  – USA-1 received orders to deploy a Heavy team to an earthquake in Haiti from USAID.
  – This activation was only ~1.5hrs after the earthquake.
  – This was the fastest deployment decision to date from USAID.
  – This quick action allowed USA-1 to get into action in the disaster area rapidly and is responsible in part for the success of the team.
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- Team works through the night with USAID to deploy the team.
- This included dividing our team among three aircraft:
  - 1 for team members
  - 2 for equipment cache
- 12:39 PM, January 13:
  - USA-1 airborne enroute to Port-au-Prince airport.
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• 4:10 PM, January 13:
  – USA-1 arrives at Port-au-Prince airport.

• Team enroute to the U.S. Embassy to establish their BoO.

• 8:41 PM, January 13:
  – USA-1 on-site at the U.S. Embassy.
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• 1:35 AM, January 13:
  – Start of rescue operations:
    • Blue Task Force Leader reports Recon had a positive hit for a live victim at a UN Complex and is sending a squad to assist at that location.
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- January 13 - USAID requests a roster be developed for the deployment of a second team.
- January 14 – Second “Medium” Team deployed via chartered aircraft
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• 1:30 AM, January 15:
  – Second Team arrives at PAP airport.
  – Transport from airport to U.S. embassy secured after daylight.
  – Teams merged (later) to form “Super-Jumbo” Task force of 114 members and 7 Canine.
    • With 6 Rescue Squads and 3 Recon Teams.
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• Continued Operations:
  – Search operations continued until January 26.
  – Team cleared several grids by searches that were assigned by the U.N. OSOCC.
  – Established operational rhythm that allowed for routine handling of requests for assistance.
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- Longest Extrication in Team’s History
  - 26:11 of total extrication time.
  - Members rescued a 27YOF from the rubble of the University Port-au-Prince.
  - Female was trapped by 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 2/3 of the team (114) were involved at this rescue site at some time.
The Hotel Montana:

- The Montana is an extremely large resort style hotel.
- The building was five stories tall in most places.
- Building collapsed in almost all areas with most collapses being of the “pancake” type.
- Team members made multiple rescues from site during the first few days.
- USA-1 established a continuous presence at the site on January 19 that would continue until relieved by the US Army Corps of Engineers on the January 25.
- Team started the systematic delayering of the structure and established command of the area to include body identification and forensic efforts.
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- **Other Assistance:**
  - Structural Assessment of several hospitals.
  - Structural shoring of these hospital allow buildings to reopen.
  - Re-roofing of a critical Internet server site.
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• Other Assistance:
  – The team left the following equipment and material behind to assist the people of Haiti:
    • All tents
    • Majority of the Medium Cache
    • One complete radio system.
    • Majority of our medical cache.
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• Team traveled to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic to be flown home.
• 5:40 PM, January 28:
  – Full team arrives at IAD.
• 3 members of the AST still in country.
• 2 members of a newly-formed rapid response force enroute to Haiti.
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- 16 Lives Saved
- No major injuries
- First time two teams (Heavy and Medium) deployed at same time.
- New team configuration designed and implemented.
- Demonstrated use of combined rescue arms successfully (search, rescue, medical, etc.)
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Could CERT training have helped?

- Local responders overwhelmed
- Family Preparedness
  - Clean water a concern prior to the earthquake
  - Several days worth of food until humanitarian assistance arrives
  - Temporary Shelter – People forced to sleep on the sidewalk
2010 HAITI EARTHQUAKE
Could CERT training have helped?

• Many rescues performed by Haitians.
• Not all buildings heavily damaged
  - Many rescues were performed using basic levers and cribbing
• Basic First Aid supplies used up quickly