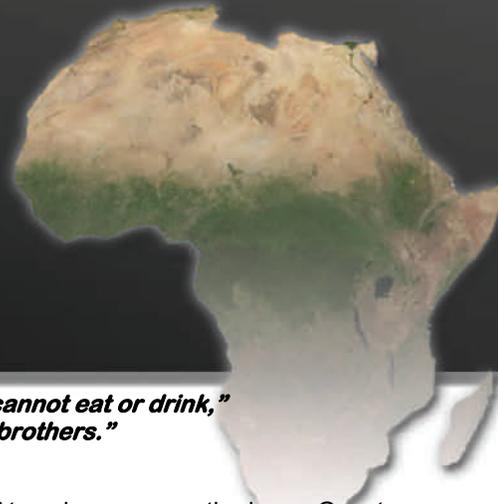




Africa Partnership Station Supports Operation Unified Response, Haiti

U.S. Africa Command Vignette



"It is hard to see all those people on the ground. You see people without means... They cannot eat or drink," said Seye. "It's a pleasure to help them because I'm African and they are my brothers."

—Senegalese Navy Lieutenant Assane Seye

Overview

The USS Gunston Hall (LSD 44) was diverted from its scheduled deployment to Africa to take part in Operation Unified Response and provide aid to victims following the 7.0 earthquake that struck the Caribbean nation on Jan. 12. Gunston Hall crew and other embarked Africa Partnership Station (APS) international partners delivered lifesaving food and medical care to Haiti from Jan. 18 through Feb. 11, 2010.

African partners embarked on an APS mission aboard Gunston Hall proved instrumental in providing core on-site translation capabilities and developing patient and family I.D. tracking program, Haitian volunteer teams, and a Command & Control coordination cell for support at Killick. African APS staff, facilitators in all aspects of operations, readily built trust and confidence of Haitian patients, families and volunteers

The Team

Gunston Hall, with the already-embarked APS international staff, consisting of nearly 50 individuals, to include 10 Africans from Nigeria, Gabon, Togo, Cameroon, Ghana, and Senegal, 11 Europeans, and one Brazilian, was preparing to deploy on Jan. 15 to West and Central Africa to conduct APS West activities. Planned major port calls were to be in Cameroon, Ghana, and Senegal between Feb. 10 and May 14. The international staff was scheduled to pick up more APS partners in various port visits throughout the mission.

APS Team in Action

Upon arrival off the Haitian coast, the APS international staff and ship's crew immediately began major relief and lifesaving efforts, focusing on medical care, movement of patients, and distribution of food and water. The APS staff also took the lead on immediate on-site coordination issues, worked with UN forces, and provided unique insights on how to get things done - with personal connections that USGOV/USN did not immediately possess.

Gunston Hall crew members and embarked APS staff passed out high-calorie meals and medical supplies transported from the Killick Haitian Coast Guard Base to the devastated communities.



The Bottom Line

Crew members and Africa Partnership Station international staff aboard the USS Gunston Hall assist in disaster relief efforts in Haiti following a 7.0 earthquake. The ship was diverted from its mission in West and Central Africa to assist in Operation Unified Response.

At anchorage near the base, Gunston Hall sent boats ashore with people and supplies for use at the base clinic. Crew members provided rice, dry spaghetti, bottled water and other dry goods, as well as approximately \$20,000 worth of much-needed medical supplies to organizations already providing care. Some of the material included surgical lights, syringes, medications and bandages. The embarked African, European and U.S. partners proved invaluable in the disaster relief efforts.

Ghanaian navy Lt. Cmdr. Samuel Ayelazono's job was keeping track of patient movements as they were medically evacuated to distant hospitals or to offshore medical facilities such as USNS Comfort (T-AH 20). "This was very important because there were so many patients to be evacuated...the information collected was to help reunite

relatives with patients when they are finally discharged," he said. "I am happy to have played a role in this relief assistance. It has indeed broadened my horizons as a naval officer."

Outcome

Nearly 200 Haitians are treated daily by the personnel of the USS Gunston Hall, many of whom are seen on the spot, while others, with more serious conditions, were transferred to the Gunston Hall via helicopter. Lieutenant Seye said he does not know when the mission will end, but that the influx of patients continues to grow. The Haitian Coast Guard commander presented the APS crew and international staff with a Haitian flag signed by the Base's leadership as a token of their gratitude for the team's help.

The Way Forward

Once Gunston Hall's humanitarian mission was complete, it continued with its original mission, a deployment to Africa in support of APS West. The Gunston Hall will spend the month of March in Ghana, working with the Ghanaian Navy and neighboring countries' navies on various maritime training and familiarization activities. A Ghanaian officer is embedded on the staff, and when Gunston Hall arrives in Sekondi, Ghana, it will take on trainees and ship riders from navies of neighboring nations.