

23 March 2010

From: Commander Task Group 41.5/BATAAN Amphibious Relief Mission
To: Office of the U.S. Surgeon General

Subj: USPHS APPRECIATION

As our operations here in Haiti wind down, and post-deployment briefing thoughts and lessons learned come to the fore, it has become even clearer now than before our deployment just how important the work of the US Public Health Services was here in Haiti in response to the horrific earthquake. Before the team redeployed at the end of February, they had canvassed the countryside establishing a mass immunization campaign, assessed and advised numerous IDP camps for water and sanitation issues, and coordinated with the Army and NGO's to develop a veterinary vaccination program. Even more importantly, they established sustainable preventative medicine programs in each of these areas—enhancing long term capacity, not merely providing temporary services. In so doing their work will multiply to many more thousands than the (large) numbers they were able to directly affect during their time in Haiti.

That these few folks could have such an impact is hard to comprehend, but there will be thousands that will be alive in the future because of their commitment and energy. They are truly front line heroes whose legacy will be captured in the absence of sorrow to thousands of Haitians who have already lived through one nightmare.

I used to tell the USPHS team that they were the best defense against the “next wave” of horror, but that the ‘Thank you’s’ they would get were all silent—from people who would never even realize their indebtedness, because they never got sick from contaminated water, or didn’t get tetanus when they got scratched because they had received an immunization. That remains my story today, and I am committed to ensure that the USPHS story gets told as I run through the sequence of post-deployment briefings. They have certainly earned my greatest and enduring respect and gratitude.

I have attached/appended a few emails I sent up the operational chain of command explaining to the Joint Task Force–Haiti Commander what the superb professionals of the USPHS were doing, as well as a transition slide explaining how each of their primary lines of operation were continued by NGO's and other local leaders that they trained.

Sir, thank you again for your generosity and response in sending the USPHS team to Haiti—they truly made a huge difference!

Very Respectfully,
Tom Negus
CAPT USN
Commander,
Task Group 41.5/
BATAAN Amphibious Relief Mission