

Navy Medicine Takes a Look Back at Mission in Haiti

By Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

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BETHESDA, Md. (NNS) -- Navy Medicine, along with personnel from key military commands, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and inter-agency partners, came together for an after action review conference of Navy Medicine's support for Operation Unified Response, May 5-6, at the National Naval Medical Center/ Uniformed Services University.

"This is the first time Navy Medicine has ever conducted an after action review of this magnitude," said Cmdr. Brad Hartgerink, Emergency Preparedness and Contingency Support for the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

During the two day event, both military and civilian personnel gathered, prioritized, and identified key lessons from Operation Unified Response, the United States military's response to the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Actionable items on the tactical, operational, and strategic levels were developed that will become tools for future humanitarian assistance/ disaster relief missions.

"While we did well overall, future success in correcting some of our deficiencies will be determined by our collaboration efforts with the Fleet and our inter-agency and NGO partners," said Hartgerink.

Participants included representatives from the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, as well as, participants from a variety of NGOs including the Red Cross, Operation Smile, Johns Hopkins, Project Hope, Orthopaedic Trauma Association and the University of Michigan. Also in attendance were many of the USNS Comfort and USN Bataan's medical personnel and crew.

"Medical operation success is very dependent on to what was happening on land by a host of other facilities and the ability to get situational awareness so we can get the right patients, out at the right time, and then back," said Dr. Harold Timboe, Project HOPE's Chief Medical Officer. "So the freedom to maneuver and the freedom to communicate is important on that aspect of mission success."

Lessons learned and the actionable items found by working groups during the conference were presented to a flag panel on the last day of the event.

"If you take this mission as an exam, we scored about a 95 percent," said Rear Adm. Thomas Cullison, deputy Navy surgeon general during the panel. "We did well and that had a lot to do with leadership - both military and civilian - that made this mission happen."

Medical operations during Operation Unified Response and the disaster in Haiti were one part of the Navy's Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Response mission. The Department of the Navy has become increasingly involved with other U.S. government agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) since it adopted the "*Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*" in 2007 that elevated stability missions to the same priority as combat operations and committed itself to working more closely with its civilian partners.