

USNS Comfort Deploys in Support of Continuing Promise 2011

Story Number: NNS110317-06

3/17/2011

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BALTIMORE, Md. (NNS) -- U.S. Navy hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) departed its homeport of Baltimore, Md., Mar. 17, in support of the humanitarian civic assistance mission Continuing Promise 2011 (CP11).

CP11 is a five-month mission to nine countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean, where the U.S. Navy and its partnering nations will work hand-in-hand with host nations and a variety of governmental and non-governmental agencies (NGOs), to train in civil-military operations.

"Humanitarian assistance is a key component in the Navy's maritime strategy," said Vice Adm. Adam M. Robinson, Jr., U.S. Navy Surgeon General. "Our humanitarian assistance missions bring to others a sense of enrichment and hope that touches individuals, their families, their communities, their nations and in doing so, benefits the global community."

More than 480 Navy medical personnel will work side-by-side with medical professionals from the nine host nations, five partner nation militaries, and more than 30 NGOs to provide medical care to patients both ashore and aboard the Comfort.

Also deploying with Comfort are 71 civil service mariners from Military Sealift Command who operate and navigate the ship, provide electricity and fresh water to the shipboard hospital, and when necessary, transport patients between ship and shore in small boats.

"My professional Merchant Marine officers and crew are excited to be part of Continuing Promise 2011," said Capt. Randall Rockwood, USNS Comfort civilian master. "While Comfort's hospital is key to extending medical care and civil assistance to other nations, our role operating the ship is critical to getting the Navy professionals to their destinations."

During CP11, Comfort will visit selected ports in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Nicaragua and Peru.

CP11 will provide host nation populations with medical and dental care including surgical services, public health training, engineering support, veterinary services, as well as provide partnering nations with an

opportunity to exchange knowledge and information. The exchange of information is integral to building disaster relief preparedness and supporting maritime security in the region.

"The relationships built and sustained with our multinational partners during this mission will enhance our ability to work collectively in support of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts in the future, as well as other collaborative security activities in the area," said Capt. David Weiss, USNS Comfort medical treatment facility commanding officer. "We are looking forward to fostering these relationships in the next five months."

This is the Comfort's second Continuing Promise mission and the fifth year that U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command (NAVSO) have conducted this mission.

During Comfort's previous Continuing Promise missions in 2007 and 2009, medical personnel aboard the ship treated nearly 200,000 people in 14 countries.

CP11 is a joint effort with NGOs such as DesMoines University, Johns Hopkins, Loving Hugs, Inc., Project Hope, Samaritan's Feet, World Vets, and others.

"Humanitarian assistance missions such as CP11 demonstrate the Navy's ability to truly be a global force for good while continuing to bolster our relationships with host nations and our NGO partners," said Robinson.

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