



Army Sustainment Command

News Release

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ASC Public Affairs

Haiti Heroes: Col. Steven J. Feldmann.

Army Sustainment Command personnel ... in their own words

Q: What was it like for you when you first got to Haiti, stepped off the plane and started to look around?

Feldmann: Well, we came in around 3 a.m., so we didn't see a whole lot, but the next day we went downtown and it was total devastation. I live in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. In 2008 we had the floods and lost about 2,900 homes and I thought that was major devastation, but this is like a war zone. In Port-au-Prince (the capital of Haiti) alone there are over 19 square miles of total destruction. Here the homes are built of concrete. Typically in other places where you have disasters like tornadoes, you can recover some of your belongings, but when you have 2 or 3 floors of concrete fall on top of each other, it is quite hard to recover anything - including bodies that are still under homes and businesses.

Just how bad are things there?

Well this is a disaster that is going to affect the Haitian people for a long time. There are probably 700,000 who are still homeless.

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What are some of the missions you have been tasked with?

What we (Army Sustainment Command personnel) do here, is support units that run to the airport and seaports and distribute food to the Haitian people. More specifically, our personnel fix the generators and air conditioners for some of the local businesses, hospitals and those sort of things.

How difficult is it for you and your crew there to get around and accomplish some of these tasks?

A lot of the streets are closed, but we are bringing heavy equipment in and starting to get rid of debris from some of the buildings. When we first got here, people were still in massive shock, so there wasn't a whole lot of traffic on the roadways and a lot of businesses were closed. But, everything is progressing ... this week we had our first car dealership open, banks are opening up, the first mall reopened. So, the community is coming alive

How do you think Army Sustainment Command's contributions will help the Haitian people as they start to pick up the pieces?

We have personnel working on the equipment that the 82nd Airborne Division and supporting units bring in [to provide relief]. We are rebuilding forklifts. We are fixing generators at hospitals and orphanages. So we are hoping that has a long-term effect.

What do you think you will take from this experience in Haiti?

These are the most gracious people I have ever seen. They are hard-working. You stop and give them a bottle of water and think that you are their best friend. They smile, they thank you, they want to high-five you - just for a bottle of water. When you pass out water or a meal to small children, they just smile and just absolutely like you. That is the biggest take-away. The personality, demeanor, and just the positive outlook that folks here have: Even though they have lost their homes, their businesses, their cars, they are just thrilled we are here and helping them. It is my pleasure to be here.

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Is there any comparison with the floods in Cedar Rapids to what you're dealing with in Haiti?

I think that in both of these situations, you have communities that pull together to help each other out. Both in Cedar Rapids and here, the neighborhoods and families work together to help each other out.

What's the state of communications in Haiti?

Each day communications improves down here. When we arrived, there was very little cell phone coverage. TV stations and radio stations are starting to come on. Now, we are at full scale for telecommunications. We have television and radio working, so everything is coming along. Plus the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and Marine Corps distributed about 65,000 hand-crank radios so the public can listen to the radio.

Editor's note: Feldmann, who has been selected for promotion to brigadier general, is the ASC deputy commanding general for mobilization and operations.

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