

SEABEE CENTER NEWS

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Press Release

Seabees departing to support Haiti relief operations

GULFPORT, Miss. – More than 80 Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 7 homeported at the Naval Construction Battalion Center here began departing Jan. 26 on board United States Air Force C-17 aircraft to support relief operations in Haiti after a 7.0 earthquake devastated the city of Port Au Prince.

"The Seabees from NMCB 7 are eager to get boots on the ground in Haiti to start performing their assigned mission, said Cmdr. Jayson Mitchell, commanding officer of NMCB 7. "They've refined their plans over the past week and are poised to make an immediate and positive impact on a dire situation."

This flight is the first of four aircraft which will be loaded with personnel headed to Haiti to clear a path for aid coming into the country. The Seabees will join up with some 25 pieces of heavy equipment from U.S. Navy Maritime Prepositioning Ship USNS 1st Lt. Jack Lummus (T-AK 3011).

"NMCB 7 has been tasked with rapid deployment of a tailored Air Detachment in support of disaster relief/recovery operations in Haiti" said Mitchell. "At this time, primary mission areas include route clearance and opening up lines of communication in order to facilitate flow of incoming aid."

NMCB 7 was tasked Jan. 13 to provide support. Since then, personnel from NCBC and the 20th Seabee Readiness Group has pulled more than 50 pieces of civil engineer support equipment (CESE) and other non-CESE items from warehouses and prepped it to fly out with the air detachment from the battalion. Due to the lack of heavy lift aircraft and congestion at the Haitian airports, the flight plans have changed.

The non-CESE and Seabees will still fly; however, now the CESE will be placed on a ship. All told more than 690 short tons or roughly 1.38 million pounds of cargo and personnel are ready to roll. Initial indications are the air detachment will be in Haiti three to six months.

"The air detachment has been training extensively throughout the past 10 months in executing contingency construction and disaster relief operations and I'm confident in their collective ability to accomplish such an important mission," said Mitchell.

This tasking comes less than a month prior to the battalion's main body deployment to Rota, Spain, the Horn of Africa and several other locations in Africa and Europe. Due to the surge in Afghanistan, NMCB 7, which was originally scheduled to deploy for six months, will now deploy for approximately 10 months.

Seabees are well known for their humanitarian assistance and disaster recovery efforts around the world, having recently provided support for victims of hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters. Recent disaster recovery efforts include:

About 125 Seabees deployed to Pakistan from Okinawa to help clear roads and remove debris to help relief workers get to isolated areas following the 7.6 magnitude earthquake that occurred Oct. 8, 2005.

When Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast in August 2005, nearly 3,000 Seabees provided invaluable support to local communities. They made temporary repairs to more than 100 schools, removed 20,000 tons of debris, cleared 750 miles of roads, and delivered more than 100,000 gallons of fuel and water.

More than 135 Seabees deployed to Indonesia, Thailand and Sri-Lanka to provide humanitarian support in the wake of the massive tsunami that devastated the area in December 2004.

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To cover the loading and take-off of the first or subsequent aircraft, please call Rob Mims at 701-330-1169.

NOTE: These flights are tentative. Most likely meeting at ANG at 12:30 p.m.