

Marines of HMM-265 Deliver Supplies

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SUPPLIES

NAVAL AIR FACILITY ATSUGI, Japan - Marines with the Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 265 (HMM-265), Marine Aircraft Group 36, 1st Marine Air Wing, III Marine Expeditionary, delivered humanitarian relief supplies on Mar.17-18 to residents in Northern Japan in support of Operation Tomodachi.

Two cargo helicopters, CH-46E Sea Knights, carried two crews consisting of four Marines and 4,000 pounds of Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MREs) packages to Camp Sendai in an effort to supply the base with a temporary food supply.

After completing the initial mission, the two crews landed in a local airfield to refuel their aircraft before returning to Naval Air Facility Atsugi but there would be no return for either crew that night.

During the refueling process, the weather turned and it began to

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snow.

“The CH-46 is a near all-weather aircraft,” said Lt. Col. Damien Marsh, commanding officer of the HMM-265. “We don’t have the ability to fly directly into icing. If we get into icing conditions, then we’re to land as soon as possible. Yesterday, what happened is, although we had the ability to launch, the airfield went below the airfield personnel minimums and they would not let us launch.”

As a result the eight Marines were forced to stay in the gym of the air base.

“For our crews and for our aircraft, yes it is very common,” Marsh continued. “There are times you may not come home at night and you go forward, you spend the night forward, in order to better help the people you’re serving and it’s just a safer way of doing business.”

By the next morning the skies had cleared, the snow had settled, and the two crews were assigned a new task to find and deliver supplies to a remote group of Japanese nationals who had been isolated since the day of the earthquake.

The Marines didn’t falter at the task.

“We pushed and pushed and actually got tasking like we wanted

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to so we could help out with the Japanese people like we really wanted to.” Said Cpl. Ray Killinger, a crew chief for the HMM-265. “We picked up some supplies from the [aircraft carrier] Ronald Reagan. We launched from there and actually found a zone of people who hadn’t eaten and we were able to assist those people and make sure they had food and supplies to survive.”

The first crew landed and began to unload. The Japanese locals poured out of the school, in which they had been living, helped the Marines unload their cargo.

However when the second aircraft landed, the Japanese had a different reaction to them.

Instead of accepting the second cargo worth of food, the locals insisted that the food be taken somewhere else where others truly needed it.

“The way the Japanese culture is not give give give,” said Sgt. James Ryan, crew chief for the HMM-265 as he gestured to himself. He explained that the Japanese culture was broader than their immediate selves. “Everybody needs help and they want to make sure that everyone’s getting the same amount,” he said. “Because there’s no reason why you should have a stockpile in one place and absolutely none in the other. That’s their culture, that it’s just better for the

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greater good than one people. Seeing the amount of order and discipline that they had is remarkable.”

The second cargo was dropped off, however, and the two crews of Marines began their long flight home, ending a two day mission which started out being a one day mission.

Marsh also stated how proud he was of the Marines and Sailors in the squadron and their attitude and their absolute motivation to go out and help those that are in need of their help right now. He went on to say “I stand in awe of the attitude and the resilience of the Japanese people.”