

146 MEDICAL GROUP



MISSION

LINEAGE

146 Tactical Hospital
146 Medical Group

STATIONS

Van Nuys, CA
Channel Islands ANG, Port Hueneme, CA

ASSIGNMENTS

146 Airlift Wing

COMMANDERS

Col Daniel L. Straub, #1974
Col Nancy J. Sumner

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

USS KEARSARGE – For America’s Air National Guard, the humanitarian/civic assistance mission Continuing Promise 2008 more than anything else proved one thing: A part-time job doesn’t come with a part-time heart. Beginning Aug. 6, nine Air National Guard medical technicians from across the United States traded in their civilian creature comforts for the rigors of a four-month deployment aboard the USS Kearsarge, doing their part to make the world a better place. “Helping people like we did on this mission was why I became a medic in the first place,” said Staff Sgt. Ladrew Price, of the California Air National Guard’s 146th Medical Group based at Channel Islands Air National Guard Station. As a prior Navy hospital corpsman, Price is unique among his Air Guard brothers and sisters. He not only knows the Navy language, but is familiar with ship life having served aboard the USS Bohomme Richard, a ship of the same class, feel and capabilities as the Kearsarge. “I knew what we were in for,” said Price, who joined the other Air Guardsmen aboard the Kearsarge, which departed Georgetown, Guyana, Nov. 22 to begin transit back to the ship’s homeport in Norfolk, Va. Kearsarge itself forged the first, and for some, the most lasting memories for the Guardsmen: “You never forget sea duty once you’ve done it,” said Price. The Guardsmen contributed to the Continuing Promise mission in Nicaragua and five other Caribbean islands through a variety of medical care, including de-worming, pharmacy, patient flow, triage, bandage and wound care. “Nicaragua really set the benchmark for how things would be for us on this mission,” said Staff Sgt. Danae Eskridge, a medical technician assigned to 173rd Fighter Wing Medical Group at Kingsley Field, Ore. “The poverty where we were in Nicaragua was rampant, but people still showed up as well dressed as they could be. It was some of the saddest living conditions I have ever seen, but at the same time they were some of the most gracious people we met on the trip.” On the other end of the medical spectrum, the Guardsmen found Trinidad and Tobago’s people to be the easiest to relate to mostly because everyone there spoke English, but also because their health care needs seemed less dire. “Trinidad and Tobago had a lot more resources than any other country that we visited,” said Price, “so the level of care we were able to give to them was vastly different than, say, the people of Nicaragua or Guyana. But I was glad we were able to help everyone in different ways.” In addition to Nicaragua and Trinidad and Tobago, the Guardsmen made visits to Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Guyana, as well as two liberty ports in Puerto Rico and Curacao, before answering the call to provide disaster relief to Haiti after it was devastated by Hurricane Ike and several other tropical storms. Eskridge, like many in the Air Guard, lives a full-time life away from her voluntary military service. The 24-year-old Oregonian is a full-time college student in the middle of a four-year nursing program at Sacramento State

University Eskridge is also a combat veteran who deployed to Camp Victory, Iraq, in 2004 and then again to Qatar early in 2008. Citing the Air Force value of service before self, Eskridge makes a point to always show her college friends back at Sacramento State a slide show of her travels. “What I do and what I go through is such a life-changing experience that I want to share it with people and try to get them to join because what I learn is something that can only come from service,” said Eskridge. “If not in the military, then maybe in the Peace Corps or something where you’re giving humanitarian aid.” While medical care was one aspect of the Airmen’s mission, it wasn’t the only one. In August and September, Mother Nature lashed out at the population of Haiti with two hurricanes. Continuing Promise, with its nine Air National Guardsmen in tow, was at the tail end of its mission in Colombia when the call for help was heard. “What we were able to do for the Haitian people was my fondest memory from this mission,” said Price. “Those people really needed our help. They had no food. They had no water.” And like most things in life, seeing the aftermath of the storms destruction in Haiti could only be explained in person. “When I came ashore on the first day of relief efforts, I saw tons of rice, and the impact it had on me was enormous,” said Price. “When you see things like that on television it just doesn’t do it justice. All I could think about was ‘how much rice could they really need?’ And they needed all of it and more.” That was just Price’s first day in Haiti. His second was even more profound. “The next day was even harder on me because we went in by landing craft versus helicopter, and we got to see the Haitian people up close and personal,” he said. “I saw boats flipped over, people starving, it was just total destruction. It made me so thankful to be an American.”

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.
Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.