

Vitamins Build Healthy Relationship Between Armed Services

Story by Air Force 478th Expeditionary Operations Squadron, with contributions from Coast Guard PA1 Tasha Tully, PADET St. Petersburg, Fla. Photos by Air Force Capt. Ashley Norris

FORWARD OPERATING LOCATION MANTA, Ecuador -- A U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater, Fla., HC-130 Hercules landed here Feb. 7, with a generator and 1,053,800 vitamins for local schools and an orphanage, donated by Vitamins for the World and Extreme Response International.

Bob Eredics, director of Vitamins for the World, based in Bradenton, Fla., was part of an eight-member team that spent one week in Ecuador providing humanitarian support.

“We are very happy to be here in Ecuador to provide care for those in need,” said Eredics. “We can only hope that we put a smile on their faces and provide them with something they need.”

He said that this shipment was only half of the two million vitamins that will come to Ecuador. These vitamins will impact the lives of more than 5,050 children and pregnant women in the local Manabí province.

Vitamins for the World and Extreme Response International are both non-profit organizations that have partnered to help provide vitamins and minerals to less fortunate children and adults in Ecuador.



A Coast Guard HC-130 landed at Forward Operating Location Manta, Ecuador; Feb. 7, carrying more than one million vitamins and a generator for donation by a non-profit organization to local schools and orphanages in Ecuador.



Chaplain Survanche watches as a generator is loaded onto a truck at Manta, Ecuador. The generator was donated by a non-profit organization and will provide running water for 15 children at the Foundation Por Amor Orphanage in Montanita Verde, Ecuador.

One of the team’s projects was to build a well at the Montanita Verde Orphanage where 15 children reside.

Vitamins for the World had obtained the vitamins and a 7.5 kilo-watt auto-start generator, needed to construct a fresh-water well, but had no way to transport them to Ecuador. This is where the Air Force and Coast Guard stepped in.

Air Force Chaplain (Capt.) Jason Knudeson, started the process when he was deployed here from Barksdale Air Force Base, La. Air Force Chaplain (Capt.) Steven Survanche, deployed here from Shaw AFB, S.C., followed through with his predecessor’s work and reached out to help Vitamins for the World and Extreme Response International. He worked with Air Force leadership to secure space aboard a Coast Guard HC-130,

which had just enough space for three pallets headed to FOL Manta, located on the Ecuadorian Air Force Base, Aerea Eloy Alfaro, Ecuador.

“It’s amazing what our team of Airmen were able to accomplish,” said Chaplain Survance. “We are very happy that we were able to support these organizations in their mission to serve those in need.”

On the evening of Feb. 8, the three pallets were off-loaded and Bob Eredics’ team had the generator working by noon the next day. In the weeks that followed, Extreme Response International distributed the vitamins to schools through Montanita Verde Orphanage.

The 478th Expeditionary Operations Squadron commander, Lt. Col. Robert Leonard said, “This is a wonderful opportunity for the FOL to help get vitamins to those who need them the most in the local community and we’re glad that we could help make it happen. A donation of this magnitude will greatly benefit the less fortunate here within Manabí Province and is a testament to FOL Manta and Manabi working together as “Amigos y Socios.”



Lt. James K. Morrow, a member of the Coast Guard HC-130 crew, finalizes paperwork for Bolívar Nuñez, a contractor for ITT Federal Services International Corporation.



The 478th Expeditionary Operations Squadron commander, Lt. Col. Robert Leonard, accepts a bottle of children’s vitamins to donate to Shekinah Orphanage from Bob Eredics, Vitamins for the World director.

The Coast Guard HC-130 is deployed from Air Station Clearwater to FOL Manta in support of Joint Interagency Task Force South’s efforts in the Eastern Pacific Ocean to stop transnational narcotics movement. As a result of missions launched from the Manta FOL in 2008, 30 metric tons of drugs, valued at \$619 million, have been seized.

Coast Guard Cmdr. Robert D. Phillips, Executive Officer Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater, said, “It’s an honor and privilege to work along side the U.S. Air Force providing aide to the people of Manabi Province. Humanitarian outreach and support are at the core of all Coast Guard missions, and we are very pleased we could be of assistance.”

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