

Press



Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legislator Michel Leads Delegation of Public Safety Experts to Haiti

New City, NY (June 29, 2010) – Rockland County Legislator Jacques O. D'I Michel recently formed the Public Safety Response Team - a Rockland delegation of law enforcement, medical, construction and design industry personnel – and led the team of volunteers to Haiti on a fact-finding mission and to join in the ongoing relief efforts and the rebuilding process of Haiti's Public Safety, Homeland Security, Correctional facility and Judicial Police networks. As the former Director of the Rockland County Sheriff's Department Crime Awareness Program, Michel had organized seminars on public safety and professional security tactics for Homeland Security personnel from Haiti. The delegation was escorted by and worked together with The Corps D'intervention et de Maintien D'ordre (Cimo) and Haitian National Police details during the eight day journey. Legislator Michel was accompanied by Correction Officers Ruben E. Felix, Rocky Jean-Louis, Jodi Michel, and Seth Felix, Parole Officer Mario Alexandre, Police Officer and EMT Jean-Herve Mondestin, and Pierre-Mary Martin, an architect.

The group spent time in Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas severely affected by the catastrophic January 12, 2010 earthquake. The delegation met with U. S. Embassy officials and representatives of the Narcotic and Law Enforcement Affairs Bureau who spoke about their concerns surrounding national security and public safety. Legislator Michel was pleased to learn that \$185 million of aid has been pledged to fund justice, correction and law enforcement programs with money specifically earmarked to combat the sale of narcotics and fund drug rehabilitation programs. They met with the Haitian Minister of Justice and with the administration of the School of Magistrates, a training facility for the development of judges, government commissioners and clerks. That discussion focused on the slow building reconstruction process and the challenges of managing a growing caseload.

At the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) at Belvil PAP, Haiti, the Country Director Jeff Kerzner provided an overview of the PADF programs that work to address prison/victim assistance, border police patrols, and human rights projects focusing on the protection of women and children. Director Kerzner also identified what is labeled as the "red zone", seven targeted crime prone areas: among them Port-au-Prince, St Marc, Cap Haitian, Petit-Goaves, Jacmel, Leogane and Gonaives.

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“We toured the Correctional Facility in Arcahaie, which is presently under reconstruction,” said Legislator Michel. “The facility supervisor Mr. Lancelot Cherefils welcomed our suggestions and ideas that can protect both the government and inmates against any and all human rights violations. Pretrial detentions and alleged prison and human rights abuses must be addressed during the rebuilding process...an outlook on the future needs of Haiti and its citizens.”

The team attended a youth conference with the Honorable Evans Lescoufler, Ministre de la Jeunesse des Sports et de l’Action Civile, a 49-acre facility dedicated to housing athletes, both amateurs and professionals. Minister Lescoufler addressed the youth conference which focused on the formation of self-sufficient skills and professional and agricultural career opportunities. The youth in attendance were also able to participate in athletic competitions held by the Ecole Nationale des Talents, a school on the grounds of the facility. The youth must demonstrate both academic and athletic abilities in order to remain at the school.

The Public Safety Team also met with Dr. Neil Christopher, a resident physician from Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn, New York. The doctor, accompanied by his wife Nancy, provided medical, recreational and educational services to the village of Tilinet, Fonds-Parisien, an outlying tribal village of small, crowded mud huts, without plumbing, electricity or running water. During the team’s two-day service in the village, they assisted Dr. & Mrs. Christopher to serve some 100 community members, offering assistance with security details and crowd control measures, medical care, recreational activities, and distribution of toys and donated goods.

“In all instances,” said Legislator Michel, “the trained and skilled members of the response team shared their wealth of knowledge and advice and the assurance that their commitment to the rebirth of Haiti and its people is a lasting one. All officials responded with gratitude. I am very proud to be associated with this team of very compassionate volunteers.”

“The devastation is shocking and the suffering of the Haitian people is unimaginable,” said Michel. “Caring American volunteers are everywhere in Haiti, assisting to care for its people and to rebuild its infrastructure. The people of Haiti are very appreciative for the outpouring of assistance. Our team will continue to support the needs of Haiti. We have already started planning our future missions.”

(photo available upon request)

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