

Kingdom Special Operations

Haiti



A.K.A. Tony

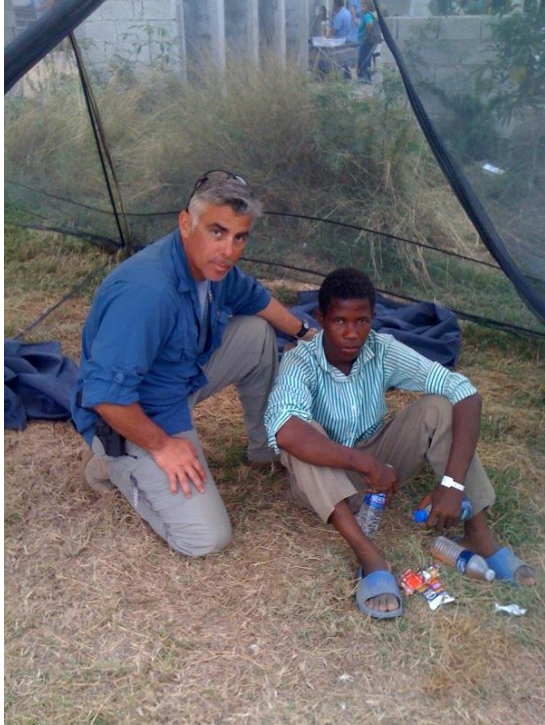
It was just another hot day under the Haitian Sun at the camp. The retired ex-special forces soldiers volunteering to help secure the field hospital had already dealt with a hundred stories of misery and suffering of family members looking for loved ones, arranging transportation of those discharged from the hospital, the throngs of men looking for work or food and those just wishing take advantage of the chaotic situation that gripped the Haitian Capital in the aftermath of an earthquake.

A boy was caught stealing an IPOD plug that was surely of no use to one so impoverished and was escorted from the camp with a stern warning that follows such behavior and the day dragged on, the heat, the misery, the sorrow.

A gator pulled up hours later with soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division with the same young boy that was escorted from the camp earlier. They say he tried to stow away on an aircraft bound for the states and they didn't know what to do with him as they eyed the Haitian police that were following them. The police said they would kill the boy should he be released. Given the current natural disaster and lawlessness on the streets they had no time for such behavior from a boy and he would surely create a problem sooner or later. There were hundreds perhaps thousands of lost boys and the police refused to deal with them, especially one who wouldn't talk or communicate. "His soul has been captured and placed in a bottle he is of no use to anyone" they would say.

The retired Green Berets grumbled at the thought of another task and gave the boy some water and took the boy not knowing what was to be done with him. The boy did not speak a word but his gaze followed the ex-soldiers as they went about their tasks of solving the seemingly endless situations that were presented to them. An MRE was eagerly devoured and the boy continued to watch the soldiers. Dinner time came and the boy had two helpings of rice and beans and still without a word began to

follow the medic soldiers around not just with his eyes but now with his feet.



Retired Green Beret with Tony, prior to the answered prayers that he would have a Home

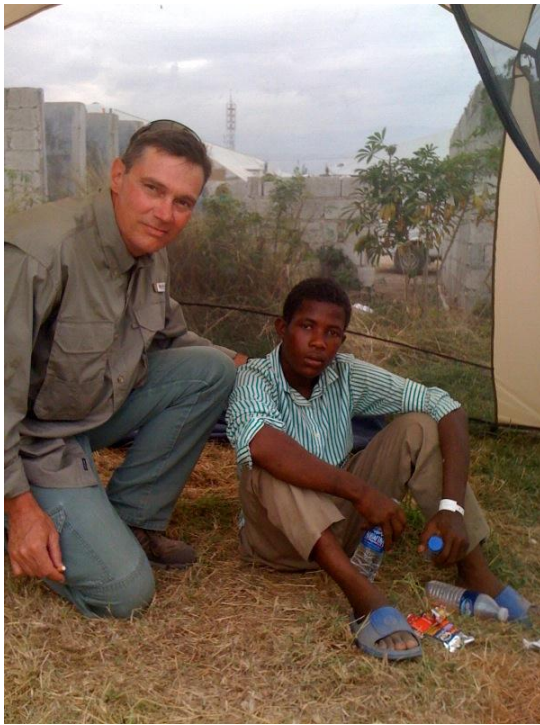
“What should we call him? I guess we just adopted him” one of the ex-soldiers asked. “Bravo, Mike, Stevo,?? Tony?”. When asked if that was a good name for him the boy just stared but this time a glimpse of a smile. “Tony it is!”

A bed from a canvass tent cover and a blanket made up his bed in the tent erected at the checkpoint to block the searing sun from the guards. And still not a word from “Tony”.

The morning came when the team of ex-Special Forces men was due to pull out from the camp. Despite exhausted attempts to locate an orphanage or people to care for “Tony” his future was uncertain. If left behind his fate would be unpleasant due to the fact that the locals believed he had no soul, the hospital had no resources to deal with the psychiatric fallout from the natural disaster and the US military was already tasked with relief efforts, the Green Berets were now faced with very hard choices.

Until Capt Rios showed up.

Like an Angel dressed in uniform she had heard of our request for help with “Tony” and Capt Rios’s timing could not have been any better, perhaps it was divine intervention. Introductions were made and Capt Rios answered the prayer. I asked “Tony” if he wanted to drive the gator and take the Captains with him and for the first time he smiled. We all smiled.



Team P.A. with Tony prior to him being liberated from the cruel and deadly streets of Port a Prince, Haiti

Operation Unified Response

Chaplain's perspective: a prayer offered is a prayer answered

By Chaplain (Capt.) Eusebia D. Rios
Joint Special Operations Air Component Chaplain
Operation Unified Response

As a chaplain, you never really know what the day holds. There are so many moments in the stillness of the day that you can actually see the hand of God moving in the lives around you. It is amazing how things seem to fall together and even someone who has not thought of God for a long time cannot escape the unexplainable truth that something greater than ourselves is at work.

Such a moment occurred when I met "Tony."

I remember walking toward an expressionless boy. He sat on a folding chair next to a broken down shed. The sun beat down upon his dark face. He sat where he was told and did not move. When spoken to, he merely looked up for a brief moment before returning to his stoic posture. He had no family and no friends. He'd been written off as a mute and perhaps mentally ill. To me he was a scared boy.

I knelt next to him and asked him his name. He would not speak. I took his hand and said come with me. We walked to the Gator and started on a journey. I had no idea where it would end.

My commander asked me what the plan was. I rattled off a few ideas. He seemed to buy off on the idea that I had it under control. In all humility, I was not quite sure what God had in mind. I just knew bring "Tony" with us back to camp was the right thing to do.

Once we got back, there were many concerns about safety and about his mental state. Yet, I could not believe God would set us up for failure. I strongly believed God was going to do something. It was the "what" I had to pray about.

As life would have it, I had to leave Tony with an interpreter for a few hours. Several emergencies arose, and, for some reason, I was pulled away. However, I did not give up on Hope.

My last stop before going back to see how we could help Tony was at a hospital. I got a ride there but had to walk back. As I started walking back, I said a little prayer, "Lord, if you could just help me help Tony, I would appreciate it. I really need for the nuns I had worked with to show up today. Lord, I know you can help me -- just let me know what you want me to do."

As soon as I finished that prayer, I heard from behind me, "Hey Chaps! Need a lift!"

I said, "Sure!" to the stranger. He was an older man in an Army uniform – I hadn't seen him around before. He didn't say much. But he was so happy to help me get back to my camp.

As I looked to the heavens and wondered if God had heard my prayer, the driver slowed down. I looked at the driver to figure out what was the matter and to my surprise I saw two nuns I had worked with earlier in the week standing right there on our left. I told the driver to stop and he did. He smiled and drove away.

I immediately spoke to the nuns about what was happening with Tony.

Sister Olita said, "Take me to the boy. I want to see for myself."

I said, "Let's go!"

As soon as we arrived where Tony was, I began to see the hand of God at work. Soon, the mute boy began to speak. He answered one question, then two questions, and then finally he said, "My mother works. I don't know where she is."

The nun told me what he was saying. I was amazed. Sister Olita grabbed her phone and made a few calls. She said, "Chaplain, I will be right back. I think I know someone that can help."

As I watched the nun walk away, I was trying to figure out another plan. I looked at Tony and watched him eat a few bites of an MRE. I knew God was at work. But I grew impatient and started walking down the flight line in search of the nun.

I looked to the heavens one more time and prayed, "Lord, if you could just help me find a place for Tony it would really help me out here."

I looked up and the crowd of people before me parted, and who did I see walking towards me? Sister Olita. She was smiling and gave me the thumbs up.

She said, "Let me make a call."

She called an organization that I had helped during the first few days we were here in Haiti. The nun recognized my name. She said, "Yes, we can help Chaplain Rios ... no problem, we will take the boy."

Sister Olita told me that a family would watch Tony, and they would help track down his mother. They'd make an announcement on the radio regarding where Tony will be located.

It amazed me how the events unfolded, but, as I watched Tony walk away with the nuns, I knew it was the right thing to do. I walked into my counseling area and noticed a piece of paper on my desk. It was a picture that Tony had drawn.

It was a heart and a cross.

I taped the picture to the metal wall and sat back to admire his art work. I thought to myself, "Tony knew exactly what he needed -- Love and God."

Amen