

PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP 2008

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Press Release # 08-25

Mercy Launches Pacific Partnership in Timor Leste

By Lt. Arwen Chisholm, Pacific Partnership PAO

DILI, Timor Leste -- USNS Mercy arrived in Dili July 12 to provide humanitarian civic assistance in a planned, coordinated effort with the government of Timor Leste, partner nations and non-governmental relief organizations in the region.

Mercy will visit select locations in Timor Leste. This mission reflects longstanding ties between the United States and Timor Leste, as well as a continued commitment to work together to assist the people of Timor Leste with this humanitarian outreach.

"The Pacific Partnership team is a unique team formed from organizations with very different skills and capabilities, but unified in purpose to conduct a very important mission," said Adm. Robert Willard, Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet. "They carry with them a spirit of caring, commitment and compassion on this deployment for our Pacific neighbors."

The deployment is expected to last four months, approximately 13 days of which will be spent in the Timor Leste. The effort is being carried out in conjunction with non-governmental organizations and in close coordination and partnership with local medical care professionals. A contingent of medical and engineering specialists from Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Republic Of South Korea, Portugal and India, as well as personnel from U.S. Public Health Service and volunteers from non-governmental organizations, are with Mercy in Dili.

Medical personnel of the Timor Leste Defense Force will work with the ship for the Timor Leste portions of the deployment, providing focused medical care in partnership with their U.S. counterparts. A number of U.S. and Timor Leste government, military and civilian agencies have been involved in planning the myriad details that go into this mission of medical, dental and civic-action programs to provide focused humanitarian assistance to the people of Timor Leste.

Pacific Partnership will conduct five medical civic action projects in Timor Leste, including remote locations in districts outside the capital. Services include surgical screenings to determine patients subsequently transported to MERCY for necessary operations, as well as basic medical and dental care performed ashore.

Medical civic actions projects will be conducted in, Dili, Viequeque, Baucau, Gleno, and Liquica.

For Pacific Partnership, Mercy has a robust specialized medical team of uniformed and civilian health care providers to provide a range of services ashore as well as on board the ship.

The San Diego-based ship can support a variety of medical, dental, veterinarian, educational and preventive medicine services. A team of naval engineers from the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133 and Amphibious Construction Battalion One (Seabees) will perform repair and construction projects ashore. Some of these construction projects will improve medical and sanitary conditions.

The U.S. Pacific Fleet Band is also deployed aboard the ship and will be performing various areas throughout Timor Leste.

For further information, please contact Public Affairs office of the US embassy in Timor Leste at (670)332-4684 ext. 2083. For photos of USNS Mercy, visit www.news.navy.mil/index.asp, keyword Mercy, or the U.S. Pacific Fleet Web site at www.CPF.navy.mil.