

Japan quake affects at least one Leonard grad in military

Written by By Betsy Blevins, Managing Editor
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March 17, 2011 - The fifth largest earthquake in world history hit northern Japan last Friday, March 11, and at least one Leonard High School graduate stationed there by the U.S. Air Force was directly affected by it. The 8.9 magnitude shake occurred nearest Sendai, Japan off the eastern coast, and Megan McDonough - a 2004 graduate of Leonard High School - is stationed with the U.S. Air Force in Misawa in the Aomori prefecture, some 180 miles north of that location.

After several posts on her Facebook wall from concerned friends, McDonough was able to let everybody know that she was okay for the first time via Facebook on March 11 at 4 p.m. central standard time, which would have been about 6 a.m. Japan time on Saturday, March 12. She reported that electricity was out and it was snowing, later saying in response to a friend's post "I am ok...just cold, hungry and dirty...but alive so no worries."

At first, it was believed electricity would be out for a week or two - while the country is experiencing freezing temperatures - but McDonough updated on Monday to let everybody know electricity had been restored already. Before that time, she advised that the military was ordering humanitarian missions to the area and they would be okay.

"The Air Force is incredible...it will take care of us," she said.

Her latest post on Monday, however, showed her concern for the country she's stationed in.

"There are several surrounding cities that are completely destroyed so please continue to keep us in your prayers!" she said.

Two other Leonard grads stationed in Japan are Allison Booher with the U.S. Marine Corps and Damieyon Titus with the U.S. Navy. Booher is stationed in Okinawa and was quite a distance from the epicenter.

"She is fine," her mother, Allecia Booher said Tuesday. "She is kind of on

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standby to do humanitarian aid, but she hasn't been called out yet. They did have a tsunami warning, but fortunately it passed. She was at work when her commander told her to get to her barracks."

McDonough said that Titus was stationed in central Japan and that he should've been safe, but also believed he was underway on a submarine at the time the quake happened.

As of press time Tuesday, CNN reported the official death toll from the event was over 3,000, though it will likely climb by thousands more in the days, weeks and even months ahead. The big quake followed two other quakes - which they are now calling foreshocks - that registered at 7.2 and 6.3 on Wednesday and Thursday. Anything above a 6.0 is considered a strong level. Since the 8.9 earthquake, the country has experienced 154 aftershocks, with dozens of those registering 6.0 or stronger.

A major concern at press time was the condition of a nuclear power plant in the Fukushima prefecture where three explosions and a fire had occurred. Workers were trying to prevent a major outbreak of radiation poisoning, and had ordered those within 18 miles of the plant to stay indoors, but were battling against many odds.

The U.S. Geological Survey released a report on Monday stating that the earthquake had caused the entire main island of Japan to shift by eight feet.