



Rescue Dogs Arrive in Japan

News-Press Staff Reporter

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Two Santa Barbara canine disaster rescue teams landed in Japan and were awaiting deployment to the earthquake and tsunami-ravaged region.

Trained by the nonprofit National Disaster Search Dog Foundation, Santa Barbara County firefighter Eric Gray and his 31/2-year-old yellow Labrador Riley, and civilian handler Linda Tacconelli and Joe, a 4-year-old yellow Lab, will be helping out in the search for people trapped in the rubble.

They are part of Los Angeles County international Task Force 2, which traveled from LAX with Virginia Task Force 2, America's other international task force, called into action by the United States Agency for International Development.

According to information provided by Ojai-based National Disaster Search Dog Foundation, after a re-fueling stop -- and snow break -- in Alaska, the chartered flight continued to Japan, arriving at Misawa Air Base in northern Japan.

"The group of 12 dogs did well on the flight over and is bedded down with handlers to rest after their long journey," according to National Disaster Search Dog Foundation officials. "They will soon be receiving official search assignments, traveling to the areas with the highest probability of survivors."

When a dog comes across someone in need of rescuing, it lets out a bark alert.

Most of the canines in the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation's 75 teams across the U.S. are rescued animals. South Bay Purebred Rescue in San Jose rescued Riley, while the Longmont Humane Society in Longmont, Colorado, rescued Joe.



Firefighter Eric Gray and his yellow Labrador Riley 2009
Photo courtesy NDSDF

National Disaster Search Dog Foundation's dogs have worked 75 missions around the world, including 9/11, Hurricane Katrina and the Haiti earthquake of 2010, where they helped bring a dozen people to safety.



Eric Gray and his NDSDF-trained dog Riley lead the team of six dog handlers from California Task Force 1 as they exit the plane in Ofunato City, Japan.
Photo courtesy NDSDF

National Disaster Search Dog Foundation operates without taxpayer funding. Another 21 new teams are being formed this year -- at a cost of \$15,000 per team.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

For more on the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation or to make a donation, go to www.searchdogfoundation.org.