

Friday, July 17th.

After an 16 hour flight from LAX to Manila via a short stop in Guam, I landed in the Philippines. The darkness of night seemed like it would never end, chasing the moon and stars with the sun on the other side of the earth. My knees ached. The price of being tall in a modern era of downsizing, sitting with mostly Filipinos, who generally do not have that problem.

Staff Sargent Bling met me on behalf of Knightsbridge since Ed Artis, Ramone Moreno (who has more titles than most military and humanitarian people on earth) and driver were stuck in traffic at 5:00 am. Bling was a handsome, friendly and warm personality who seemed to make a point a few jet friends I made along the way that I was VIP. He praised the work of Ed and Ramone and since I was now along with such good company, he was all smiles. Customs gave us no problems. All smiles there, too.

After checking-in in a nice hotel in downtown Manila, Ed and Ramone picked me up to take me to the Change Of Command Ceremony for the incoming CPMC J. Sabban, who I was reading about on the front page on the Philippines Times in the plane earlier. It was like having a crash course on Marine and military personal of a whole country in, inside politics and the state of affairs in less than 4 hours from touch-down. My preparation and understanding more of where I am about to go in the south to Jolo was becoming more clear, or muddy, depending on your observations. One thing became very clear...I am working with one of the legends of humanitarian aid in the Philippines and in the world today. Ed Artis is one of a kind, unstoppable and has a heart the size of all these islands put together. No wonder I like him.

It's all about the children, the people. Ed never lets anything else get in his way to help others in need. He and many others here are very excited about having me here with the flutes to give out to children.

Tomorrow, we'll prep for the trip and pick up the Doctors flying in from John Hopkins. I will post a few picks tomorrow here for you to see.

Over and out!

JZ