

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 6, 2012

CONTACT: Alex Del Llano

(323) 960 3500

MediaRelations@ChurchofScientology.net

Scientology Volunteer Ministers of Mexico Complete Search and Rescue Training

A team of Scientology Volunteer Ministers returned to Mexico City this week after completing a rigorous course of training in disaster search and rescue in various locales around Mexico. The training was supervised by Los Topos, the renowned Mexican search and rescue team featured in a National Geographic documentary on the Japan tsunami of 2011, and other top professionals. The purpose: to leverage experience and expertise gained to direct the activities of the Scientology Volunteer Ministers Disaster Response in the worst possible disasters.

The Volunteer Ministers were inspired to participate in this month-long training program through their association with Los Topos. The alliance between the two groups began in Haiti, where they worked together to deal with the devastation after the January 2010 earthquake. Since then, Los Topos volunteers and executives have completed Volunteer Minister training at the National Church of Scientology of Mexico. And Los Topos carried out much of the training program the Volunteer Ministers have now completed.

But it was a personal experience in Colombia last year that brought home the urgency of carrying out a program like this.

“When we were in Colombia to help with the floods last year, I realized the importance of disaster *prevention*,” says Alejandro Del Llano, who directs the Scientology Volunteer Minister activities for Latin America. “We were evacuating buildings under the direction of CINAT—National Circle of Aide Technicians—the top disaster response team of Colombia and one of the best in Latin America. We found and evacuated an entire community of 6,000 residents, completing the operation just before a nearby mountain collapsed in a mudslide that buried the entire neighborhood. We saved thousands of lives. This experience brought home to us the urgency of gaining full competence in every possible disaster response skill.”

The Volunteer Ministers’ training began with a week-long hospital course in March 2012 in the classifying and handling of urgent medical situations. It included learning to recognize the levels of trauma and assessing priorities and the appropriate medical procedure to use for each. They trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), procedures for minor and major injuries, and the care of children, pregnant women and the elderly.

Next came training in civil protection for emergencies occurring inside buildings or other structures. This included organizing and executing evacuations, establishing safety zones and assessing the risks of a damaged building to those inside and the surrounding area.

The Scientology Volunteer Ministers then completed a course in underwater search and rescue where they learned to dive in rivers and at sea under extreme conditions including frigid temperatures, strong currents, and low or no visibility.

“We had to dive into waters where you literally could not see anything,” says del Llano. “We overcame our natural fears and are proud of the competence we gained, which makes it possible to help others in ways we were never able to do before.”

With these skills learned, they trained in initial assessments of disaster sites, including immediate care of victims and damage control—how to prevent loss of lives by spotting and evacuating dangerous zones or buildings likely to collapse.

Training in search and rescue under collapsed structures came next. This included analyzing the condition of structures, learning to penetrate and advance inside and underneath buildings, and tracking and extracting victims.

In a private hospital under the supervision of the emergency medical technician in charge of civil protection, they learned CPR, rapid diagnosis of external injuries, and how to transport and remove injured persons from confined spaces such as cars and rooms.

Part way through their training, the volunteers were invited to deploy as part of the civil defense unit to serve when more than 3 million converged for the visit of Pope Benedict XVI in the city of Silao in Guanajuato, Mexico.

Del Llano knows there is more to learn, but the training completed gives the team the immediate expertise needed to contend with the situations most likely to be dangerous in disaster zones.

“We have immersed ourselves in a previously unknown world of professional disaster response,” he says. “Coupled with our knowledge of the technology contained in the *Scientology Handbook*, we are now able to perform an important service in times of disaster.”

For more information, visit the [Scientology Volunteer Ministers website](#).

###

The Scientology Volunteer Minister program was initiated by Scientology Founder [L. Ron Hubbard](#) in 1976. There are now hundreds of thousands of people across 185 nations trained in the skills of a Volunteer Minister.



Alejandro Del Llano (in the yellow uniform) who directs Volunteer Ministers activities in Latin America



Volunteer Ministers underwent extensive search and rescue training in Mexico.



Scientology Volunteer Ministers learned to penetrate and advance inside and underneath buildings to track and extract victims.



Scientology Volunteer Ministers learned to dive in rivers and at sea under extreme conditions.



Scientology Volunteer Ministers learned underwater search and rescue.