

The IGUANA

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Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner

Guatemalan paratroopers leap from a Chinook helicopter during the Iguana Voladora jump over Tamara April 9.

Central Americans, U.S. jump for friendship's sake

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

Paratroopers from across Central America joined United States Airborne soldiers in a friendly jump over Honduras last week that strengthened a commitment to work together on humanitarian missions.

About 70 soldiers from Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico, Guatemala and the United States took to the skies over the Honduran army's Tamara airfield April 9. The U.S. contingent included jumpers from Joint Task Force-Bravo and the 7th Special Forces Group out of Fort Bragg, N.C.

The jump was the highlight of an event series over several days called "Iguana Voladora," or flying Iguana.

"It brings countries together. It brings armies together. It brings people together. It helps make our relationships better," said Guatemalan Lt. Col. Enrique Juchuna Cumez through a translator.

"There's great pride among paratroopers. The thrill and the danger of exiting an aircraft in flight is one experienced by all paratroopers regardless of nationality, and it creates a bond between them," said Joint Security Forces



A soccer game April 10 pitted participants in a friendly match.

Staff Sgt. Joseph Von Itter.

"We were able to share stories, camaraderie and friendship. It is an experience that won't be forgotten by anyone who took part."

Cumez said the multinational jump is symbolic, but also has practical training value.

"Throughout Central America, if we are to respond together for disaster relief, such as during Hurricane Mitch, we would have to count on reaching many inaccessible areas. Highways would be down, bridges would be out — the only way in would be from above," he said.

The Iguana Voladora included a social gathering shortly after the national delegations arrived at Soto Cano, a banquet at the Dining Facility Annex, a soccer match on the base playing field, and open house events at the Medical Element, fire station and south end of the runway.

"[It] was a great success," said ARFOR commander Lt. Col. William Sternhagen. "Every delegation expressed their sincere appreciation and desire to continue the event in the future. We hope to continue this event in the future and possibly expand or combine it with a symposium or conference to address a topic relevant to Central American and U.S. relations."

See more photos on Back Page

Coalition changing shape

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — As the war in Iraq winds down, the shape and number of coalition forces in the area will change, DoD officials said during a briefing in the Pentagon.

Two carrier battle groups centered around the USS Constellation and Kitty Hawk will leave the area, Navy officials said Monday. This still leaves three carrier battle groups in the region: the USS Nimitz, Harry S. Truman and Theodore Roosevelt.

In addition, coalition commander Army Gen. Tommy Franks is looking at ground-based air assets, now that the need for strike aircraft has diminished, said Army Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, vice chief of operations on the Joint Staff.

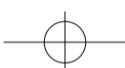
McChrystal said that while land combat power is needed in Iraq, over time the mix of land forces will change. He said that as more and more of the country becomes stable, more military civil affairs specialists, engineers and military police will be needed.

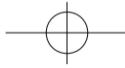
But for now, coalition forces are still rooting out the remnants of the regime, most notably in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit. "The regime is at its end and its leaders are either dead, surrendered or on the run," said Pentagon spokeswoman Torie Clarke.

She said the war has been costly. Since the conflict began 118 American service members have died in the liberation of Iraq. "War is also hazardous for journalists, as we know," Clarke noted.

"At great personal risk many of them have reported the conflict firsthand. We salute these professionals and offer our condolences to their families."

A total of 10 reporters have died covering the conflict: Tareq Ayyoub, Al-Jazeera; David Bloom, NBC; José Couso, Telecinco; Kaveh Golestan, a free-lancer; Michael Kelly, Atlantic Monthly and Washington Post; Christian Liebig, Focus; Terry Lloyd, ITV News; Paul Moran, free-lancer; Julio Anguita Parrado, El Mundo; and Taras Protsyuk, Reuters.





Reflect on selfless service, sacrifice

By Lt. Col. William Sternhagen
ARFOR Commander

As members of the United States Armed Forces, we pledge our service to our nation. We've dedicated ourselves to defending our nation and the ideals for which it stands. This dedication requires our selfless service and leads to many sacrifices. We make these sacrifices every day and they come in many forms – from long deployments away from family to making the ultimate sacrifice.

Presently, our fellow soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are engaged in combat operations. They represent the selfless service that marks our armed forces as the best in the world. They are making the sacrifices necessary to make the world a safe place. Some of these men and women have already made the ultimate sacrifice and before the current operations come to an end and the last shot is fired, it is likely that other fellow servicemen will lose their lives.

At this time it is fitting that we remember the many sol-

COMMANDERS' CORNER

diers, sailors, airmen, and marines who have gone before us and have made the same sacrifices. We must not forget or forsake their service and sacrifice nor what they have done to ensure our freedom and liberty. To do so would dishonor their service and nullify their sacrifice.

Just as we cannot forget our past, we cannot lose sight of the future and what our service and sacrifices mean to those who will follow us; our sons and daughters who will continue the selfless service and make the sacrifices that ensure the world is a safe place to live.

The lessons and examples we set now will be our legacy – we must not and will not falter.

Ultimately we honor the selfless service and sacrifices



of past, present, and future warriors by doing our best to do our duty for our fellow man and our country – and we must not fail in this duty.

As a small gesture of our respect and appreciation, we should take a moment each day to reflect on the selfless service made by all in the pursuit of liberty and freedom and especially for those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Wood Shop carves into spare time

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

The Wood Shop is a great way to carve away at extra hours.

The Morale, Welfare and Recreation office offers the unique pastime to soldiers and airmen stationed on Soto Cano Air Base.

"Personally, I enjoy it because I am learning something different, plus it keeps my mind occupied," says Sgt. Andres Ramirez, who's been working for the past three weeks on a headboard. "As far as the value, it is a good deal – free. We get the best wood there is out there [mahogany]."

The first step is to set up an account at MWR's Recreation Center, says Robin Gonzalez, MWR manager. This is strictly a paperwork process that entitles you to \$300 worth of free wood, or wicker and hammock materials, if you are here for one year. If here six months, you receive \$150 worth of free materials.

As you purchase wood (or wicker and hammock materials) from MWR, the amount is subtracted from the authorized total.

This amount is non-transferable, cannot be converted to hard cash, or used for any other MWR program, Gonzalez says.

The next step is to attend the wood safety class and the last step is to sign for your materials from the Recreation Center.

If you're not sure what you want to make, the Wood Shop staff can provide suggestions or you can browse through the craft books and plans available in the shop.



Photo by Spc. Chuck Wagner

ARFOR Sgt. Andres Ramirez watches Wood Shop employee Juan Carlos demonstrate the best way to carve into a wood post. For several weeks Ramirez has been working on a mahogany headboard in the Wood Shop.

Once you decide on a project, the staff will provide instruction on how to construct it. Additionally, many of the regular customers take time to provide invaluable tips they've learned while making their own projects.

If you're not ready to take on a large project, you can use scrap pieces (which are not part of your total authorization) to make a jewelry box, coffee table or other small item.

Using scraps will also let you gain experience on various shop equipment.

Shop staff can demonstrate how to carve birds, flowers, abstract designs or other designs on

"As far as the value, it is a good deal – free."

- Sgt. Andres Ramirez
ARFOR

projects. Wood workers can also enhance a finished project with a stain or allow the natural wood to show under a coating of polyurethane.

SUBMISSIONS

The Iguana is always looking for submissions. Any articles, photos or letters to be submitted to *The Iguana* should be sent to the PAO at charles.wagner@jtfb.southcom.mil or delivered to the Public Affairs Office, Bldg. D-06. If you have questions about possible submissions call ext. 4150 or 4676 to talk to the editor.

The IGUANA

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NEWS

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Post office NCO earns top ranking

Figueroa to compete for Air Force best

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

There's not much snow or sleet in central Honduras, but the mail still has to get through.

A Soto Cano post office sergeant saw need for improvement in mail service on base and tackled the task. It wasn't just Soto Cano personnel who noticed the results of his efforts.

Tech Sgt. Rogelio Figueroa of Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, is 2002 Air Combat Command Communications and Information Postal Non-commissioned Officer of the Year. This huge title simply means command views him as one of the best in the business.

Figueroa's candidacy packet now moves up to compete with about nine other major command winners for an Air Force-wide recognition.

"It means a lot to me. I was surprised and at the same time it felt good to be recognized for the effort that we made," said Figueroa, who is quick to share credit with the entire staff.

He won at two lower organizational



Photo by Spc. Chuck Wagner
AFFOR Tech Sgt. Rogelio Figueroa marks packages at the Soto Cano Air Base Post Office. Air Combat Command has selected him as a top postal NCO.

levels before hearing in mid-March about his selection as top postal NCO for Air Combat Command.

The award cites Figueroa's "pride, professionalism, innovation and commitment to excellence," for selecting him over his peers. Candidates are measured against each other in several cate-

gories: Overall achievement, leadership abilities, management experiences, and a catch-all category for special achievements.

He'll attend an Air Combat Command ceremony banquet in June, while awaiting word from Air Force-wide competition.

He arrived at Soto Cano Sept. 9, 2001. Walking into the post office, he faced the usual challenges of a new position plus monumental new demands following the terrorist attacks in America two days later.

"The post office was in pretty bad shape when I arrived. There was a lot that had to be done," he said. What the post office needed most was good personnel management and training. With some adjustments to how things operate, the employees could take it from there, he said.

"He inherited a sub-standard operation and converted it into a flawless operation," said Capt. Gretchen DePauw, Figueroa's executive officer at the post office during his tenure as postmaster. DePauw is now at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. "While doing this he also expertly handled the increase in security due to Sept. 11, as well as an Anthrax scare that took over four months to clear up. Bottom line - he was the epitome of what is expected of today's Air Force NCO and postmaster - always the professional."

Figueroa was to leave Soto Cano this past September, and relinquished his role as postmaster to Master Sgt. Henry Alvarado, who he says will "continue the successes, and find new areas to improve."

Figueroa extended his tour at Soto Cano, and continues as postal service center supervisor.

Fighting forces now focus on human needs

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - Coalition forces are addressing concerns about Iraqi humanitarian needs, Pentagon spokeswoman Torie Clarke said today.

She said the Iraqi people have real needs, but that these needs pre-date the war. Clarke observed that the regime of Saddam Hussein spent billions on palaces and weapons of mass destruction and very little on the needs of the everyday Iraqi.

"The war didn't launch a humanitarian crisis, it is ending one, however," she said.

Coalition allies are moving substantial amounts of food, water, expertise and medical aid to Iraq. A British ship has already docked at Umm Qasr and delivered thousands of tons of food. The United States has sent two ships loaded with wheat, and Australia has also donated a shipload of wheat.

President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair have called on the United Nations to reinstate the Oil-for-Food program.

U.S. Central Command civil affairs experts have assessed the food stocks, water supplies and medical facilities in liberated cities. Clarke gave a run-down on their conclusions.

In Umm Qasr, she said, the water supply is above pre-war levels. Electricity in the city and port has been restored, and sufficient food is available. The experts concluded that the medical facilities are sufficient and operating. The United Nations Children's Fund is providing

"The war didn't launch a humanitarian crisis, it is ending one, however."

- Torie Clarke
Pentagon spokeswoman

medical supplies, and the Czech Republic is setting up a hospital to treat enemy prisoners of war.

Civil affairs experts say Basra has sufficient food supplies. Electricity has been restored, water is available in 60 percent to 80 percent of the city, and relief personnel are trucking water to the suburbs. Basra's medical facilities are functioning at pre-war levels, civil affairs experts said.

In the town of Nasiriyah, the scene of heavy fighting, the food is sufficient, but water is in limited supply. Electricity is not operating well, and health care is rudimentary. Clarke said the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force is providing medical care. The U.S. Agency for International Development is providing health kits - health supplies for 5,000 people for three months.

In Baghdad, civil affairs experts say the food supply is adequate. Hospitals are operating at reduced rates, with a large patient load at some facilities. Electric power is down in some parts of the city, but generators are supply-



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Quinton T. Burris
U.S. Army soldiers board an Air Force C-130 Hercules at a forward-deployed location in the Arabian Gulf region April 4. Coalition air forces have transported more than 51,000 passengers and moved about 38,000 short tons of cargo March 19 to April 4.

ing emergency power at critical places. "The water supply is in no immediate crisis in Baghdad," Clarke said.

The supplies should last for the near future, but coalition leaders are concerned, Clarke said. The coalition will see to it that the Iraqi people get what they need, she said.





Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner
A rescuer descends on a "jungle penetrator" seat from a U.S. Army Air Ambulance Detachment Black Hawk helicopter.



Perched on the "jungle penetrator" seat, Sgt. Brian Brockett, U.S. Army Air Ambulance, is swiveled out from the helicopter on a hoist. Right, Sgt. Shontal Thompson, flight medic, is lowered 60 feet to the soccer field and a waiting patient. Below, a medic watches and learns as Brockett moves a tightly wrapped victim closer to the zone during a demonstration.



A casualty, played by MEDEL physician assistant Maj. Elizabeth Fudge-Morse, receives comfort from MEDEL's Sgt. John Evans.





Tied-down training

By **Spc. Chuck Wagner**
Editor

The only thing left to the imagination was jungle as Soto Cano personnel practiced evacuating casualties by helicopter on a base soccer field April 3.

Members of the Medical Element, Soto Cano Fire Department, the Search and Rescue team and U.S. Army Air Ambulance Detachment trained together on how to get in with equipment and get out with a patient through a thick canopy of vegetation common to many parts of Central America.

An air ambulance helicopter made repeated flights to the field, lowering a flight medic from a rescue hoist on a "jungle penetrator" — an anchor-like seat designed to punch a hole through leaves and branches. The medic then unrolled a flexible stretcher called a "SKED," and the ground crew tightly strapped the patient into a mummy-like roll which can slip through tree branches without snagging.

The helicopter hoisted the bundled patient, while a medic held the end of a guide rope, then returned to lift out the medic on the jungle penetrator.

"This training was essential because it provided the confidence and technical knowledge necessary for soldiers from supporting units to work safely around the UH-60 helicopter while proficiently providing life-saving patient extrac-

tions," said Capt. Edward Mandril, air ambulance company commander. "All three units [MEDEL, SAR team and fire department] have missions that require them to work with medical evacuation helicopters during emergency situations."

"In addition to training soldiers from external units, this exercise provided [air ambulance] an opportunity to train several of the newest flight medics coming straight from the Flight Medic Course at Fort Rucker [Ala.]," Mandril said.

Participants learned about the jungle penetrator and SKED during classes April 2. Crew members from the air ambulance detachment then walked through the exercise for the students.

Sgt. Brian Brockett started the second training day by demonstrating the entire process at combat speed.

More than two dozen participants got a chance to strap patients into the SKED or play victim during more than 30 successive exercises.

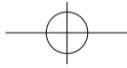
"It's awesome training for anybody, whether you're a medic, a fireman or whatever your job," said Sgt. Amada Abrego, a MEDEL supply sergeant who practiced as patient and rescuer.

"It's the first time I've done something like this. I wouldn't normally get training like this, except I'm here with MEDEL. We might need these skills in some situations."



Staff Sgt. Sherry Ebaugh and Spc. Jerry Hanson, both with MEDEL, strap a patient into the "SKED" litter.





Major running achievement

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

After slogging 5,000 miles in sneakers, Maj. Michael Phillips considers himself just another runner.

"I'm not a professional runner. I think I'm an example of reaching a goal because I refuse to give up," ARFOR's executive officer says.

It has taken Phillips more than a decade to reach the milestone, a mark he put behind him on Soto Cano Air Base's perimeter road April 7.

For fleet-footed fanatics, the record may not strike awe, but it earns considerable respect from those like Phillips who started with something close to hostility for running.

"Prior to joining the military, I was never into running. The first time I ran two miles was in 1987 during an Army Physical Fitness Test for an ROTC scholarship application. It was dark, pouring rain and cold. There were pools of water across the track. I thought I was going to die. I never forgot that run," he says.

He heard about the U.S. Army's Run for Your Life program in 1989, and although he still didn't find enjoyment in the grueling activity, he latched onto the program as a way to keep track of the miles he put behind him.

By the time Phillips finished college, he was feeling less pain and more gain. He entered 5-mile and 10-kilometer races in the Pittsburgh area. His running career snowballed from there.

"I'm always out to go to the next level. When I had 50 miles, I wanted 100, then 200, then 1,000," he says.

Setting goals helped motivate him through the difficult times. Now he usually feels there's little motivation needed to lace up.

"I find it a big stress release and a time to think. I don't mind running with other people, but I won't talk a lot. It's a chance to clear your head. It's just you, the pavement or dirt and a whole lot of nothing," he says, leaning back in this office chair after his milestone-reaching run.

There've been times when he couldn't, or chose not to run — while deployed during the Gulf War or after serious injuries for example. A neck injury might have put him out of the running for his personal goal, but a never-



Photo by Spc. Chuck Wagner
Maj. Michael Phillips, ARFOR executive officer, center, completes his 5,000th mile in the U.S. Army's Run for Your Life program while on Soto Cano Air Base's perimeter road April 7. Joining him on the run were ARFOR 1st Lt. Thomas Swint, left, and commander Lt. Col. William Sternhagen.

quit attitude put him in sneakers again even before his doctor gave a thumbs up. Now that he's fit and in full stride, there's not much that can keep him off the asphalt, he says.

"I started running and working out two times a day. I've been able to get my APFT run back under 13 minutes for the first time in five years," he says.

While pounding the pavement over the years, he's trained himself to count paces.

This subliminal ticker is extremely accurate, and continues even when his mind wanders during a long run.

"If I plan to start sprinting three-tenths of a mile from the end, I know exactly when to start," he says. "I've made running a game. I don't do it for recognition. It's a

competitive thing for me. I always want to see how far I can take it. I'm never quite where I want to be."

Five thousand miles is only a green flag to continue, and Phillips has his sights on doubling the figure before he retires. With nearly 11 months at Soto Cano, Phillips has logged 1,143 miles on base. He intends to complete 1,200 at 11 months and before changing duty stations to Fort Lewis, Wash.

He's also taken interest in other personal fitness goals. He's completed 12 of about 70 Presidential Sports Award Programs.

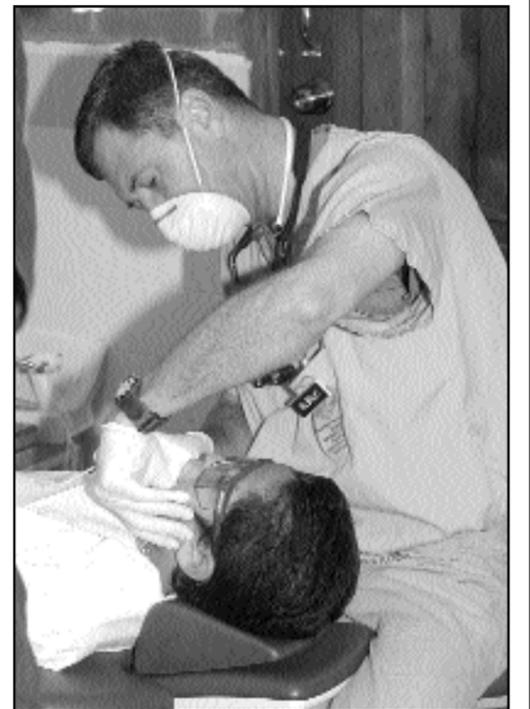
"I encourage anyone to set these kinds of goals for themselves. If I can get out there and keep reaching higher levels, so can other people, even those people who hate running. I'm a great example," he says.



Photos by 1st Lt. Carla Pampe

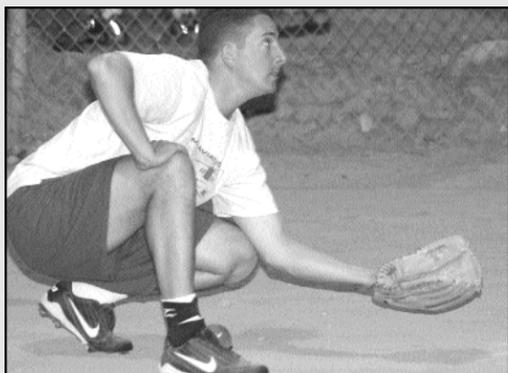
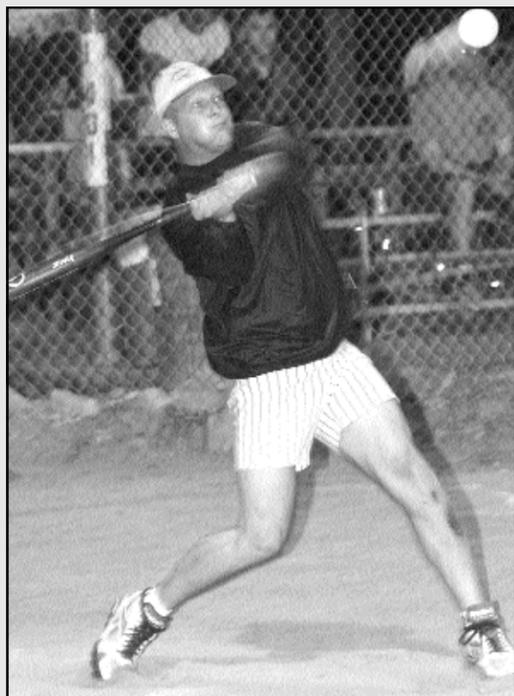
First Lady visits MEDRETE

Honduran First Lady Aguas Santa Ocana de Maduro visited a dental Medical Readiness and Training Exercise April 8 at the Catholic University Dental School in Tegucigalpa. Left and above, the First Lady greets a young patient and visits with Dr. Rosario Fernandez, Dean of the dental school. The MEDRETE was conducted by U.S. Army Dentists March 29 through April 9 at both the dental school and Escuela Limpera. Right, Dr. (Lt. Col.) John Balas, Joint Task Force - Bravo, works on a patient. The dentists, along with students attending the dental academy, saw more than 220 patients during the exercise, doing procedures such as fillings, crowns, root canals and extractions.





AF takes title in All-Star softball



Above, Army catcher Anthony Asborno waits for the pitch. Below, Mike Brobeck connects with the ball.

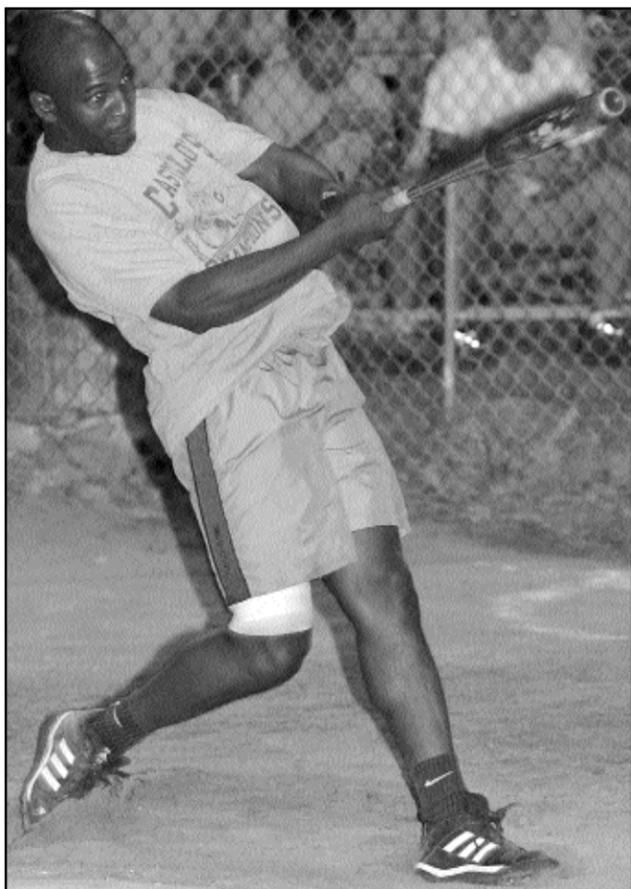


James Page gears up for one of several home runs Thursday night.

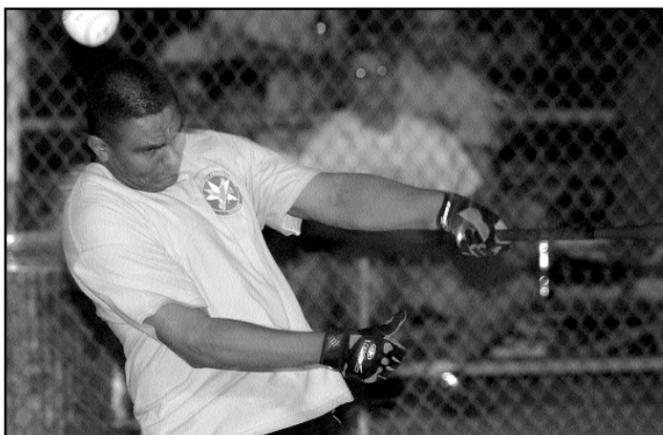


Photos by 1st Lt. Carla Pampe
The Air Force team outscored the Army 52-10, and the game was finally called in the sixth inning. Air Force players are, back row-left to right James Page, Nick Campbell, Nathan Sprague, Reginal Cook, Ralph Spencer, Tom Mullican, Vincent Swanson, Roberto Cacaes, front row-left to right, Guillermo Birmingham, John O'Barsky, Casey Doane and Jesse Cadavid.

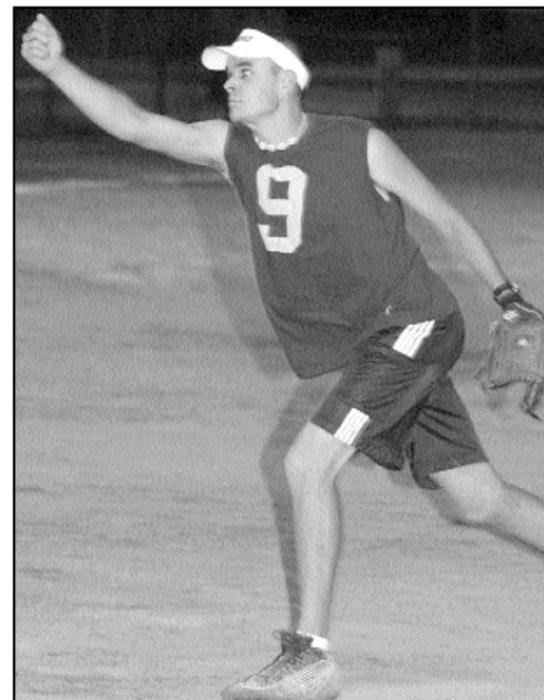
Intramural playoff action



Photos by 1st Lt. Carla Pampe
Reginal Cook, Joint Security Forces, gets a hit during the JSF vs AFFOR game.



Above, Aaron Enriquez tries to keep the JSF team alive. Below, Roberto Cacaes knocks one out of the park for the AFFOR team.

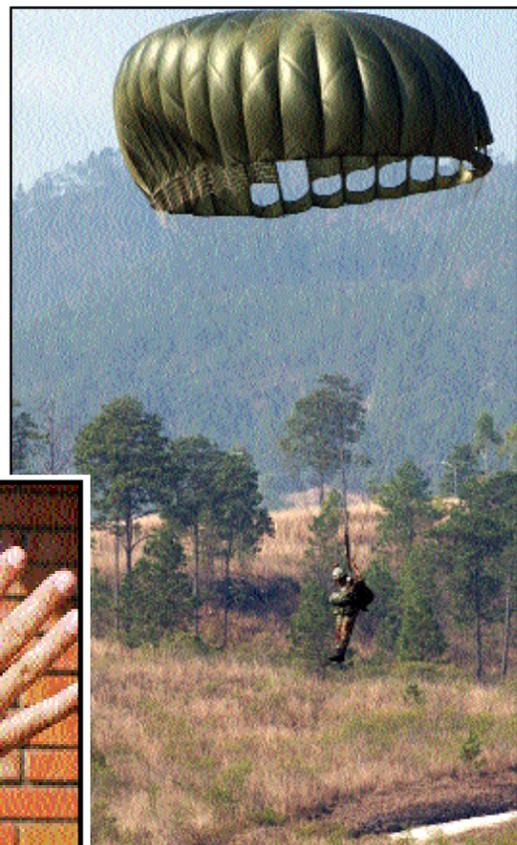
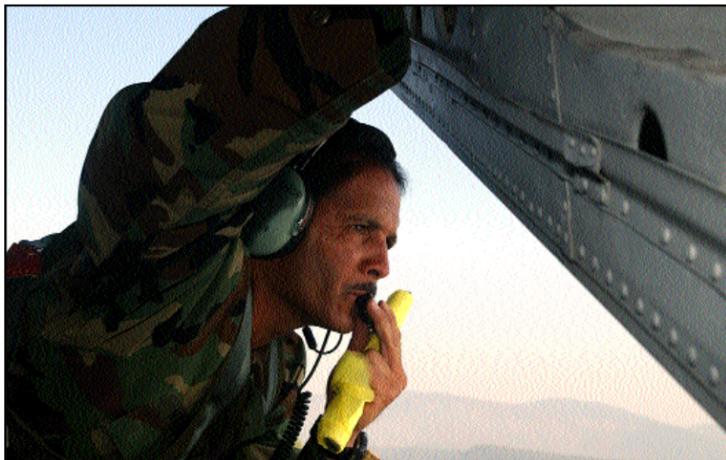


Above, Dennis Kraffert lobs a pitch to a member of the Comayagua team. Below, A Comayagua player steps up to bat. AFFOR had to defeat the Honduran team twice to claim the title in the double-elimination tournament.





The Chinook helicopters on Tamará airfield. Right, ARFOR Staff Sgt. Sergio Negron overlooks the drop zone out the back of the Chinook helicopter.



Left, Joint Security Forces Staff Sgt. Joseph Von Itter discusses the jump with a Mexican soldier while paratroopers descend on the drop zone, above. Winds were light and there were no major injuries during the jump. Below, ARFOR parachute rigger Sgt. Elvis Saucier collects drag lines while parachutists fall away from the helicopter over Tamara airfield.

Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner



Before leaving Soto Cano Air Base for the jump, Honduran Brig. Gen. Maldonado Galeas helps Joint Task Force-Bravo commander Col. Raymond Thomas adjust his parachute.

