



The IGUANA



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Photo by Spc. Chuck Wagner

No walk in the park

ARFOR soldiers push through an early-morning mist during a road march on Soto Cano Air Base July 23. Lugging 35-pound rucks and their rifles, the company covered 6.3 miles in under two hours.

Army family has rare twins

By 1st Lt. Mike Chillstrom
59th Medical Wing Public Affairs

LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE, Texas – Conjoined twins Brynleigh and Victoria Smith beat the odds when they were born July 25 at Wilford Hall Medical Center.

While roughly 60 percent of conjoined twins are stillborn, Brynleigh and Victoria survived birth. However, their premature lungs required immediate ventilation in the neonatal intensive care unit.

The only time the twins have not been hooked up to life-saving equipment was the short walk from the delivery room to intensive care, according to officials.

“Brynleigh and Victoria have overcome many obstacles to bring them this far,” said their mother Dawn, wife of Army Spc. Matthew Smith, a topographical analyst stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. “We feel that God has brought us to the place where our babies will receive the best care. The doctors and nurses here at Wilford Hall Medical Center are incredible.”

The girls, who share a liver, a six-chamber heart and possibly some intestines, are joined from chest to stomach. Physicians concluded the twins are inseparable because of the heart's complexity. However, Maj. (Dr.) Kirk Milhoan, a pediatric cardiologist, believes the twins can survive into their early adult years with their unique heart.

In the more immediate future, a surgery aims to repair the babies' exposed intestines. From there, the medical staff and the Smith family are taking things one day at a time.

“(The twins’) future is still unknown, but we will accept every moment with them as a gift and be grateful that we could be part of this miracle,” Dawn said.

A positive, mature attitude has helped the Smiths throughout this tough situation, said Lt. Col. (Dr.) Brian Hall, the chief of neonatal services.

“It's inspiring to work with families like this,” Hall said in a press conference. “The way they are able to deal with it is impressive.”

Coalition begins ‘Sweep’ of Afghan mountains

By Spc. Greg Heath
4th Public Affairs Detachment

AYUBKHEL VALLEY, Afghanistan – Paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division began searching the mountains and villages of southern Afghanistan recently in Operation Warrior Sweep.

They joined 3,000 soldiers from Task Force Nibio from the Italian army and six companies of the newly formed Afghan National Army.

More than 600 soldiers from three companies of the 82nd's 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and one company from the 3rd Battalion, 504th PIR, flew by helicopters into landing zones at altitudes of over 10,000 feet in the Ayubkhel Valley in the southeast part of the country.

The paratrooper's mission was to set up blocking positions to intercept any anti-coalition or anti-government

forces that may have been traveling in the valley. The valley was the primary travel route used by the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces during Operation Anaconda last year.

They also searched Afghan homes and caves during their movement, but nothing was found.

For two days the paratroopers held their blocking positions but didn't encounter any enemy forces. On the third day of operation they were given a follow-on mission.

They received intelligence reports that there were al-Qaeda personnel within the valley at a nearby village and so they were sent to move in and intercept them or any military weapons and intelligence, said 2nd Lt. Che Atkinson, platoon leader, 2nd Bn., 505th PIR.

“The Taliban and al-Qaeda, they're cowards, and they're going to hit and run, and as long as they're running we're going to follow them,” Atkinson said.



Photo by Spc. Greg Heath

Afghan Persons Under Control are moved in to position to be loaded onto a CH-47 Helicopter.

The soldiers moved six miles from their original landing zone through rugged terrain with heavy combat loads of equipment to search a nearby village July 26.

“The terrain was treacherous,” said 1st Sgt. LaMarquis Knowles, the first sergeant for Co. B, 2nd, 505th PIR.



Commander puts out safety philosophy

By Col. William Phelps
JTF-B commander

Safety surrounds everything we do both on and off duty. There are also risks associated with all activities.

Through application of Risk Management principles we can establish control measures to reduce our exposure to those risks. I expect all leaders, service members and civilians to constantly look for ways to minimize risk and accept only that residual risk that cannot be eliminated.

Excellence in safety starts with individual commitment and discipline. Injuries and damage to equipment occur for many reasons. Complacency, excessive motivation, overconfidence, and disregard for established procedures are the greatest causes according to accident and collateral investigations. Concern for the well being of our soldiers, airmen, marines and civilians will be exercised on every mission. If you see an unsafe act or condition, TAKE ACTION!

Accident prevention is essentially a matter of assessing hazards, developing

controls, implementing them, and supervising. Said differently, it is training to standard every time. If it doesn't have a task, condition, and standard, or is not a recognized procedure or maneuver - DON'T DO IT!

Good judgment is the cornerstone of any safety program. It's developed by having a positive attitude toward safety and is seen in your commitment to your job and your fellow soldiers, airmen, marines and civilians. You have to be able to plan your operations carefully, objectively analyze your actions, follow standard procedures, avoid unnecessary risks, and stay proficient in your specialty. Everyone has to ingrain SAFETY in everything we do; before, during, and after operations. Never compromise the safety of yourself or your team.

We must achieve safety through prevention, not through investigation. Remain vigilant and take care of yourself and your co-workers. I want you to know my concern for your safety and sincere determination to spare no effort in making your job a safe one. Be assertive - THINK SAFETY!



Safety Code of Ethics

Safety is our highest priority. The command will lead the safety process.

Safety is a shared responsibility of everyone in the organization.

No known unsafe act or condition will go without immediate mitigation of the risk.

Safety performance is a key indicator of organizational excellence and will be integrated into all of our activities and functions.

We will communicate safety

openly with all service members, civilian employees, and visitors.

All service members and civilian employees will be given the knowledge and tools to perform their jobs and activities in a safe manner.

We will extend our safety efforts beyond the workplace to include our homes and communities.

We will continually strive to improve safety and health within the Task Force.

Fire prevention

Per Directive 1, it is extremely important that all JTF-Bravo personnel follow Soto Cano's fire prevention requirements:

1. Hootches are off-limits to smoking, open flames, candles, etc.
2. Check and replace batteries in inoperable smoke alarms.
3. Replacement smoke alarms can be signed for at the Self-Help shop.
4. Ignite/operate all grills at least 10 feet from the hootches.



A military approach to handling finances

By Capt. Thomas Clark
Soto Cano J-3 CD officer

How are you doing financially? This is a question service members don't seem to analyze very often. The answer to that question really boils down to what we want out of life. After all, money is just a tool to purchase goods or services to make our lives more enjoyable. Earning money isn't the end-all to being happy. But then again who wouldn't want to be financially secure for the rest of their lives?

When it comes to assessing our financial status, we should ask ourselves two key questions:

- 1) What are my assets, liabilities and routine expenses?
- 2) What are my financial goals?

What are my assets, liabilities and expenses? An asset is something of value that can be cashed in (liquidated) for funds. A positive asset is something that produces income for you (pension plans, stocks, or even royalties on a book you wrote). A negative asset is something that has inherent value but doesn't produce income until it is sold (for example, jewelry, the house you live in, or a car). A liability is best defined as a

debt. Credit card debt and mortgage payments are good examples of a liability. Routine expenses consume the bulk of our income. This category includes food, fuel, rent, entertainment, personal hygiene items, clothing and insurance. When it comes to long-term financial security, having more positive assets than liabilities and expenses is obviously better.

What are my financial goals? A life without goals is like a boat without moorings. Not having financial goals puts you adrift, leaving your financial security to chance. A recent Gallup Poll survey found the average American male by age 65 had no more than \$400 in the bank and was living from paycheck to paycheck (that's right, still working) or was dependent on others (to include his social security check). Is this how you want to live your golden years? Taking time to gather facts when it comes to finances and investing takes discipline. You are responsible for setting your goals for your life after the military.

As far as a military career, planning factors are easy to calculate. The military has specific promotion timelines and pay-charts. For example, an E11 entering service today, with no pay-raise adjustments to our

current pay scale can expect to make \$520,683.60 (before taxes) over the course of a 20-year career (for this example I used the slowest allowable promotion rate with retirement at E-6, with no reduction in rank or special pay over the course of the service member's career). How much the service-member allocates to accumulating assets (or liabilities) is entirely up to the individual. With military retirement one thing is guaranteed for this service member: he/she will earn a positive asset (a military pension) that produces \$1,414.25 a month.

If this service member spent the entire \$520,683.60 on negative assets, liabilities and expenses over the course of their career, their sole income would be from their pension and maybe social security check. Obviously the retiree will have the ability to sell negative assets for cash if needed, but most people don't like doing so because they like their possessions.

So, how are you doing financially? I hope you agree that you owe it to yourself to set financial goals for yourself, seek to educate yourself on the accumulation of assets, and cultivate the discipline to stick to a plan to achieve your financial goals.

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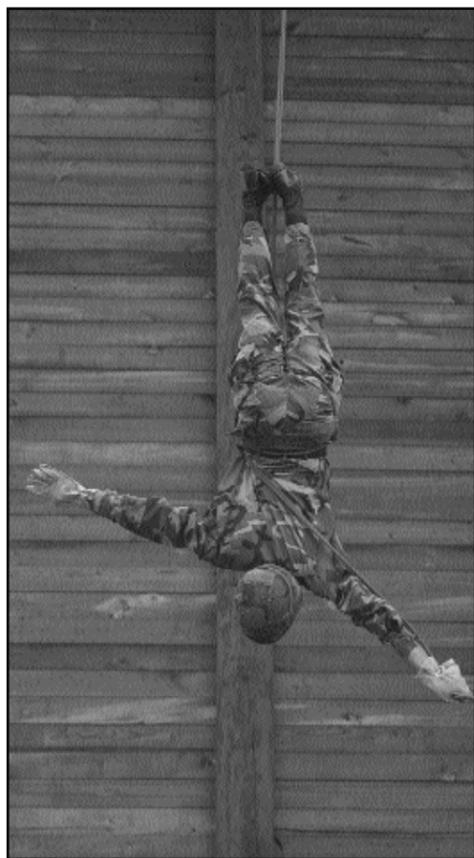
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ARFOR Staff Sgt. James Russo hangs from the rappel rope. Below, AFFOR Airman 1st Class Ronald Lee is secured by a buddy before climbing the tower.



Ready to rappel, ARFOR Spc. Erin Thomas takes guidance during training July 25 on Soto Cano Air Base's rappel tower. Below, Capt. Thomas Swint holds on while descending from the tower.

Photos by Martin Chahin

On a string and a prayer





Pfc. William Yeary low-crawls under a "house" of Marines during conditioning drills.

Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner

Marine training tests endurance, teamwork

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

As long as the Marine keeps slugging, he spares himself from a flurry of punches. But after just a few minutes in the ring, the padded gloves feel like iron weights and the fighter pauses for air. The bulkier, well-rested instructor lowers his head and moves in...

Joint Security Force Marines turned part of Soto Cano Air Base's recreation room into a "cohesion room" July 30 during the last phase of training under the Marine Corps Martial Arts program.

As one exhausted Marine faced off against an instructor, his buddies strained through a series of exercises before they could rotate a new contestant in the ring.

An instructor bellowed into a loudspeaker "is that all you've got? No pity for this tired Marine getting pummeled over here?"

Participants quickly realized the importance of teaming up, and despite shortness of breath, they yelled encouragement to those about to give in.

"It's physically very hard. The idea is to not let anyone drop out," said Lance Cpl. George Hook, wiping sweat from his forehead. "You can't do it yourself. If you put us all together, as a team we can't break."

Black belt instructor Sgt. Christopher Beard said the purpose of the program is to improve hand-to-hand combat skills and to increase unit cohesion.

The best way to accomplish both goals simultaneously is to train the Marines in fighting at a time when they have only guts, and each other, to count on.

"We want them to push through even when they are exhausted. Before we even start training, we exercise them into the ground," said Beard.

During conditioning drills on Soto Cano's sports field, Beard yelled at the Marines gasping and sweating under Kevlars. "This is when you prove who you are – not sitting behind a desk in an air-conditioned room. Right here is where it counts!"

The program is measured in training hours. These Marines spent over 34 hours between July 21 and 31 working towards a gray belt, a level up from the common tan belt.

They learned tactics such as fending off attackers, ground-fighting techniques, and lower body strikes. The group also slogged through team-building exercises like

litter carries, and, of course, the cohesion room.

"The Marines are the only service that has its own martial arts program. We take a lot of pride in that," said Beard. "These Marines have done something special."

Beard intends to organize similar training within a few weeks that will be opened to all services on Soto Cano.

The Marines arrived on Soto Cano in May from Camp Lejeune, N.C. to help provide security on the base through November.



Pfc. David Mills during a break

Blood, sweat and plenty

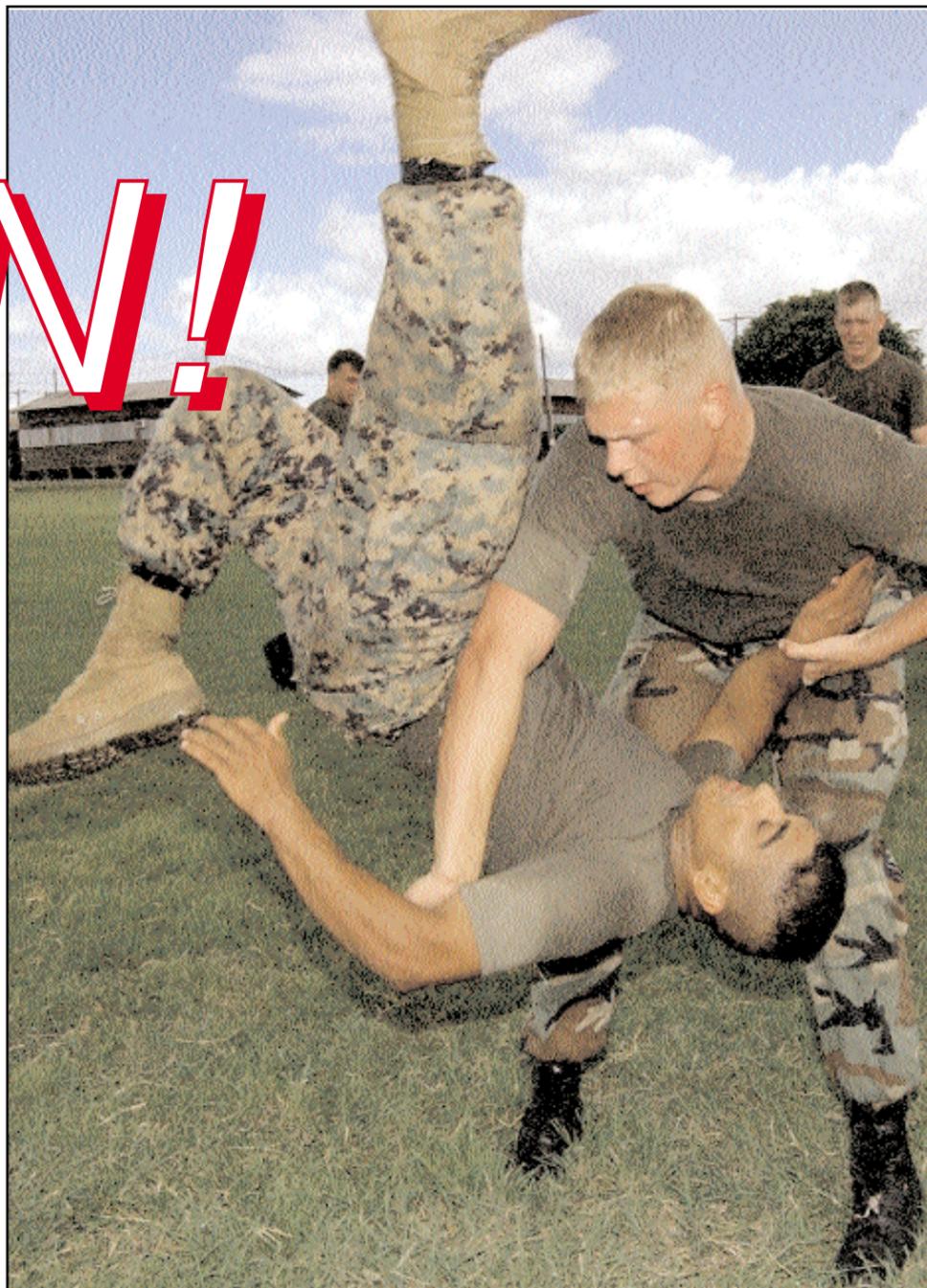


Pfc. John Mantzouranis slugs it out with Pfc. Wesam Mahmoud.

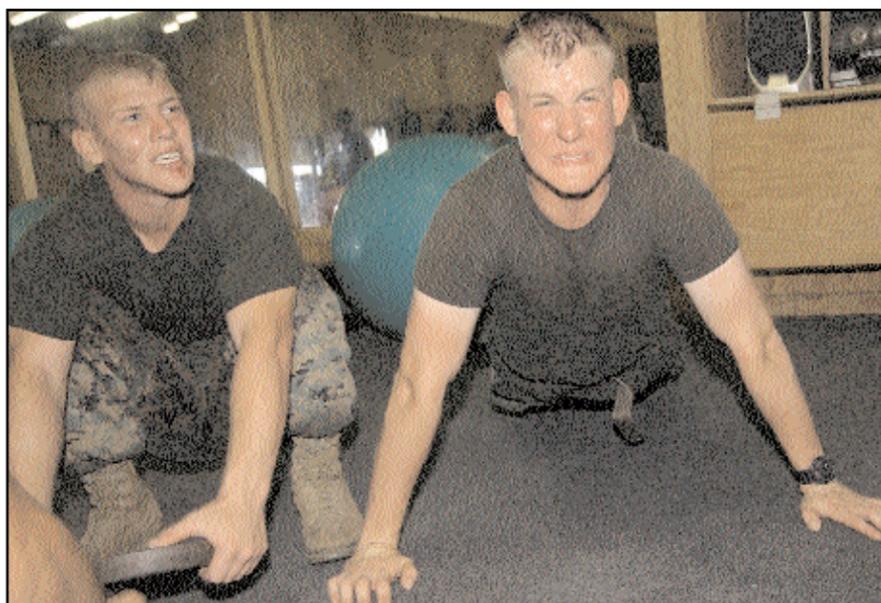




eat... of **PAIN!**



Above, the hip toss can hurt. Lance Cpl. George Hook up-ends Pfc. Wesam Mahmoud on Soto Cano Air Base's sports field. Inset, Pfc. William Yeary springs over Marines during a drill. Below, arduous exercises in the "cohesion room" challenge the Marines to shorten a buddy's time in the sparing ring. Pfc. James Roschi, left, and Pfc. David Mills push their endurance to the limit.





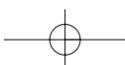
A Honduran paracadista leaps from the ramp of a 1-228th Aviation Regiment Chinook helicopter over Tamara airfield July 30. Right, parachutes descend onto the drop zone. *Photo by Spc. Chuck Wagner*

Touch down in Tamara

ARFOR, Hondurans combine for jump



Photos by Spc. James Wyllie





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Photo by Spc. James Wyllie

U.S. and Honduran paratroopers climb aboard the Chinook helicopter after a successful jump over Tamara. Below left, Capt. Stacey Moore has his gear checked by Capt. Michael Rutherford before the airborne jump. Below right, Staff Sgt. Maurice Ratliff packs his parachute after a successful landing on the drop zone.

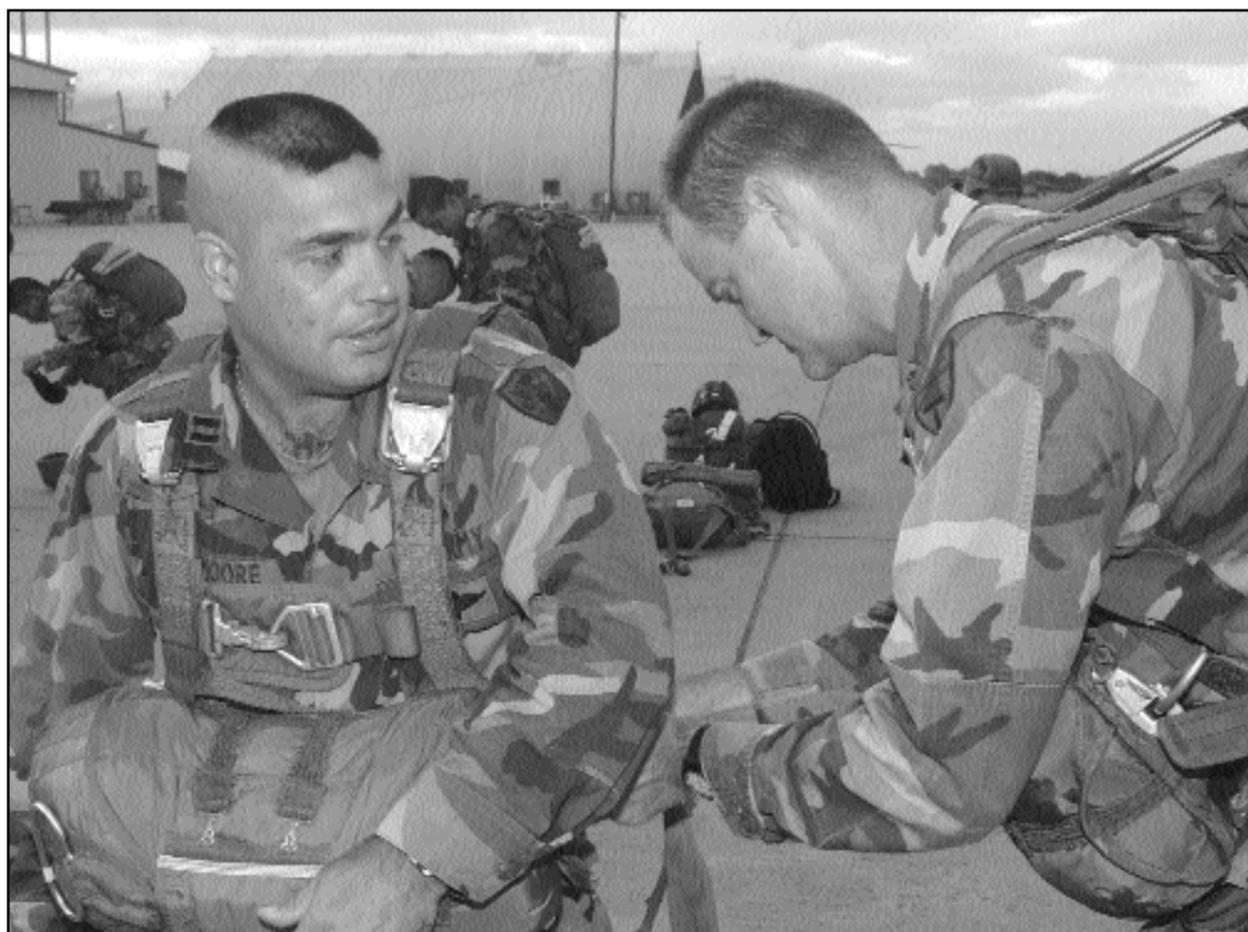


Photo by Spc. Chuck Wagner

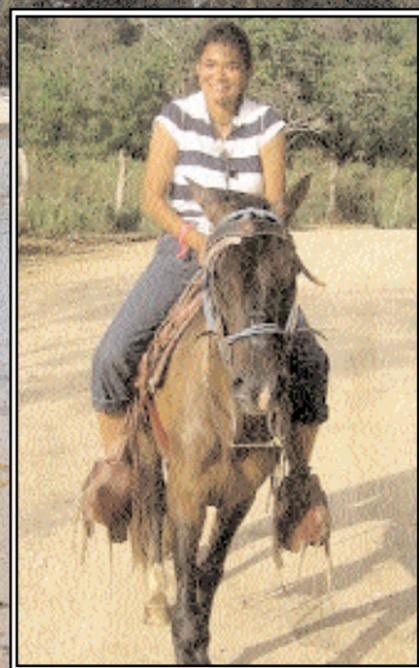
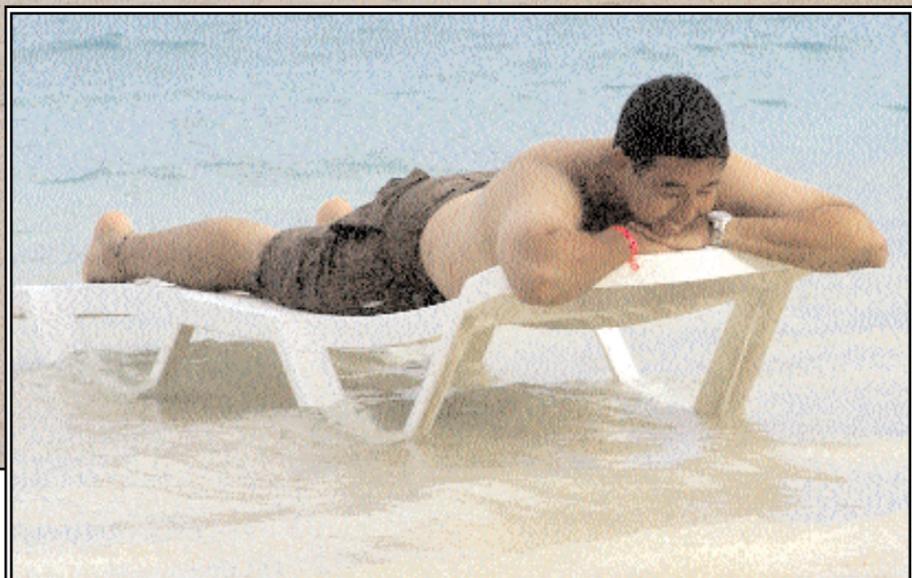
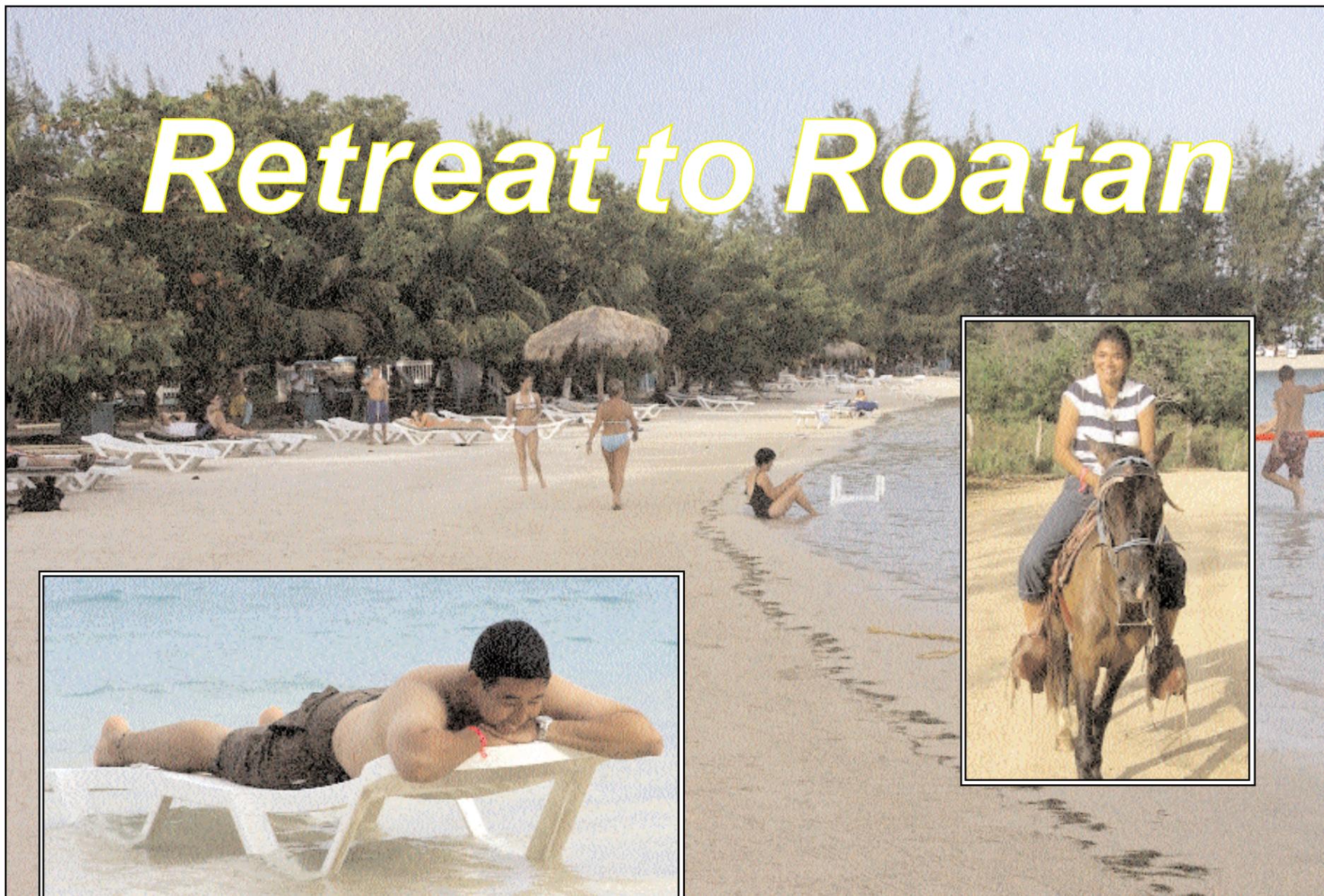


Photo by Spc. James Wyllie





Retreat to Roatan



Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner

Lounge and learn

Over two dozen Soto Cano personnel enjoyed a trip to Fantasy Island resort, Roatan, for a Chaplain's retreat July 25-28. Above, 1st Lt. Nathan Kaiser lounges on the surf. Right, Chaplain (Capt.) Tommy Vaughn instructs the island visitors during daily leadership training. Inset top, Capt. Angela Rodriguez tours Roatan on horseback.

