



# The Iguana



# 2001 Task force's year of tragedies, triumphs

*The Iguana looks back at the events which highlighted the first year of the new millennium*



## Commanders Corner

# Thanks for a memorable year

As another calendar year draws to a close, it is customary to retrospectively examine the events that have shaped the history pages and made an imprint in our lives. News documentaries will read "2001 in review," sports channels will highlight "The year in sports," and radio stations will capture "The top 100" all in an effort to punctuate the end of another adventurous year.

For many reasons, 2001 will be remembered as an unforgettable year—a year of tragedy, a year of struggle, a year of evil. But, 2001 should also be remembered as a year of triumph and a year of achievement. It should be regarded as a year of progress and a year of success.

I predict that you, guardians of your nation, will look back on this year as one of growth, where the sweat and grime of a tough day's work was its own reward and the feeling of accomplishment set the stage for the next task to be mastered. You'll likely recall the fresh faces of disadvantaged children that have been helped by your kindness, and the thankful eyes of families combating a tropical storm as they received much needed supplies delivered by you. You will likely anguish because you didn't do more in the counter-drug effort, not giving yourselves full credit for the huge contribution you made in training, deterrence and intervention.

Of course, you will stand tall because you have made a difference in countless ways. The medical and fire emergency services you provide to this region are un-

matched in professional quality. The civic assistance and outreach programs you humbly employ, empower people to move forward with their own lives and their own dreams. As you look back on your year, you will take pride in knowing that your presence made a difference for the peoples of Honduras and the people throughout Central America. That is something worth remembering.

While 2001 is a memorable year, I know that 2002 will be equally as memorable and likely more prosperous for Joint Task Force - Bravo. I am grateful that all of you are here to make it so. We are in the groundbreaking stages of creating a Joint Task Force-Bravo Future that will set the condition for years of continued military presence at Soto Cano. While somewhat transparent to most of you today, it is your vision, your ingenuity, your creativity, and your energy that will pave the way for JTF-Bravo in the years ahead. Yes, it will take work and lots of it, but with the collection of talent that we have at JTF-Bravo it is a task well within our grasp. I am excited about what lies ahead and look forward with great anticipation to sharing 2002 with all of you.

As I close, I do so with this toast for New Year's Eve: "May you live all the days of your life," Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), writer. Happy New Year JTF-Bravo!

*Colonel Mike Okita*



**EDITORIAL STAFF**  
**JTF-Bravo Commander**  
 Col. Michael Okita

**Public Affairs Director**  
 1st Lt. Richard Komurek

**Superintendent**  
 Master Sgt. Jeff Bohm

**Editor**  
 Spc. Jon Christoffersen

**Photo technician**  
 Martin Chahin

**E-mail:** pao@jtfb-emh1.army.mil  
**Website:** <http://www.southcom.mil/home/jtfbravo>

This funded, joint U.S. Air Force/Army newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military overseas. Contents of The Iguana do not necessarily reflect the official view of, and are not endorsed by, the U.S. government, Department of Defense or the departments of the Air Force or Army.

Content is edited, prepared and provided by the Joint Task Force-Bravo Public Affairs Office, in Building D-06. Telephone numbers are 011-504-234-4634, ext. 4150 or 4676. Fax is ext. 4550. or DSN 449-4150/4676. Readers with story ideas should call the Public Affairs office. All photographs are property of JTF-Bravo unless otherwise noted.

PRINTED BY PUBLYNESA

## Holiday wishes, greetings from Air Force SECAF, CINC

**By James G. Roche, secretary of the Air Force, Gen. John P. Jumper, Air Force chief of staff**

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — This holiday season marks the end of an emotional year for all Americans; a time reserved for reflecting on past events, counting blessings, and looking to the future and the promise of the new year.

While the tragic events of Sept. 11 weigh heavily on

the hearts of all Americans, our spirit continues to rise from the ashes of New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. America's abundant blessings are more evident than ever; we now appreciate things once taken for granted. Our nation turned to its military for strength and character during this critical time and America's military again answered her call.

As in holidays past, America's airmen can be found across the globe, in more than 115 countries, making a

stand for freedom and eliminating the scourge of terrorism. Like all Americans, these airmen cherish holidays spent with family and friends, but faithfully choose to serve their nation. America is blessed by your service.

On behalf of a grateful nation, we give thanks for the selfless sacrifice of those who wear the uniform. Know that you and your families are foremost in our thoughts and prayers during this special season.

## Task force comes together to celebrate holiday season

**By Spc. Jon Christoffersen**  
*Iguana Editor*

Members of Joint Task Force-Bravo gathered to celebrate the season at a tree lighting ceremony Dec. 14.

Starting with Christmas carols, the servicemembers gathered to celebrate the season and to spend time with one another. After a carol was sung, the lights were plugged in and the lights on the tree came to life. Applause rose from the gathered crowd as they stared at the tree.

"It is a nice way to remind us of the reason for the season," said Chaplain (Capt.) Earl Vanderhoff, JTF-Bravo chaplain. "In one sense it marks the beginning of the holiday season, in another it demonstrates to the (task force) that their commander is truly grateful for the service and commitment of each member of the JTF-Bravo family."

Vanderhoff, who directed the service, spoke about the importance of the season both from a religious stand point and a personal one for many people.

"We all miss our families and loved ones dearly at

this season, but through this type of ceremony we are reminded that JTFB is our family," Vanderhoff said. "Each of us needs to make extra effort to reach out and wish everyone a merry Christmas."

Vanderhoff suggested that every member of the task force should wish every other member happy holidays when they pass them.

Vanderhoff added that he knows how difficult the stresses of military life can be, especially during this time of the year.

"It is always hard to be away from home," Vanderhoff said. "I want to communicate my appreciation for all my fellow service men and women who have volunteered to serve our country. Military life is hard! We miss graduations, birthdays, anniversaries and many other important family times year after year."

"Thank you for your dedication and service to the United States! This year in particular let us think of our part in the war against terrorism. Soto Cano may seem insignificant but, we have to be here so that more innocent American families will not suffer as those of the 9-11 attack."

Along with the lighting of the tree, each MSC also created a Christmas card which are on display by the

Christmas tree. The cards were judged and a winner chosen as the best Christmas card.

Col. Michael Okita, JTF-Bravo commander, said the cards were all incredible. "The intricate detailed artistic work was masterfully done by all," he said. "Each entry sends a special message and amplifies what a special time of year this is for us."

Okita added that there is much to remember during this time of year.

"During this festive season of giving, we cannot and should not be blind to those who are less fortunate than we," he said. "Today, it is nearly impossible to do so ... to overlook death, illness, poverty, and spiritlessness. We see it every day on television, we know of our own misfortunes at home in the United States, and we live with it daily here in Honduras. But, we also live among beauty, energy, the riches of sharing, of growing, and of lending a hand or a compassionate ear. This season, as never before, give thanks for the goodness that surrounds each one of us. Take the time to recognize and enjoy the spirit of giving. Above all, have a peaceful holiday season knowing that you make a difference in this world ... Thank you JTF for making the start to our holiday so memorable."

# 2001: The year that was full of news

## Notable news stories from the task force and world events

### New commander: Okita takes over JTF-Bravo command

By 1st Lt. Richard Komurek  
July 27

Joint Task Force-Bravo welcomed a new commander and bid farewell to their former leader during a change-of-command ceremony July 17.

Col. Michael Okita assumed command of JTF-Bravo from Col. Michael Wood, who has been assigned to the Joint Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C.

The ceremony was attended by several military leaders and distinguished guests, including Frank Almaguer, U.S. ambassador to Honduras; Maj. Gen. Gary Speer, deputy commander in chief of United States Southern Command; retired Gen. Marco Rosales Abella, Honduran deputy minister of defense; Lt. Col. Gustavo Lanza Lagos, director of the Honduran Military Aviation Academy and Anibal Murillo, governor of La Paz.

Speer, who flew in from Southern Command, Miami, for the day, spoke about the significance of the change of command here.

"Thank you all for attending this very important ceremony today in which the command of the only forward deployed force stationed in Latin America passes from one great leader to another," he said.

Speer also took the opportunity to praise Wood's leadership and thank JTF-Bravo members for their hard work over the past year.

"JTF-Bravo continues to be the doorway through which our regional engagement and efforts in strengthening democracy have passed into Latin America," he said.

"For the men and women who comprise JTF-Bravo, from ARFOR to AFFOR, thank you for what you do not only today but every day, day in and day out. Your many accomplishments have a profound impact on the people and nations of Central America."

In addition to praising JTF-Bravo's past, Speer also hailed the new commander and the promising future for the task force.

Speer said he has known Okita for more than 15

years and was confident that Okita's tactical background and concern for soldiers made him fully qualified for this command.

Upon his turn at the podium, Okita said he was energized and anticipated the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

"In the days ahead, I look forward to working along side you uniformed military, defense department civilians and contractors and most especially my new civilian and military Honduran colleagues," Okita said.

"As we step forward together, I ask you to join me in revalidating the commitment you made to your nation's flags, to your services, to those you are chartered to serve and to the team we are all a part of."

Okita's military career includes experience as an airborne infantry platoon leader and company executive officer, infantry battalion S3, Ranger battalion executive officer and infantry brigade executive officer.

He twice served as Aide-de-camp, was commandant of the Airborne School at Fort Bragg and commanded rifle companies in the 82nd Airborne Division during Urgent Fury, Grenada and in the

2nd Ranger Battalion during Operation Just Cause in Panama.

Most recently Okita commanded the 2d Ranger Battalion, Fort Lewis, Wash.

Okita comes to JTF-Bravo from the National War College in Washington, D.C., where he completed advanced military education and training.

A native of Honolulu, Hawaii, Okita earned his commission in 1980 as a Distinguished Military Graduate of ROTC at the University of Dayton, Ohio.



Photo by Martin Chahin

The newly appointed JTF-Bravo commander, Col. Michael Okita greets Col. Agenor Navas Rodriquez, the Honduran commandant commander of the Special Forces Operation at Tamara. Okita will be working closely with him.

### Okita shares philosophy on task force

By Col. Michael Okita  
Aug. 10

As I make my introductory rounds throughout Joint Task Force-Bravo, I am repeatedly reminded of the depth and breadth of talent that is assigned here. Component commands and civilian organizations are replete with soldiers, airmen and civilians who bring both experience and youthful exuberance to this remote outpost.

I also see a command that is filled with a healthy number of junior and senior leaders, far more than I had anticipated. While initially surprised by our rank-heavy force, my study of the organizational construct and our mission requirements indicates the level of leadership that we find here is not only necessary, it is critical to the mission at hand.

The remoteness of this assignment and the readiness posture we share demands a level of personal discipline that blends initiative, self-learning and goal setting with the timeless need for sacrifice and teamwork. These particular traits, traditionally expected of leaders, are absolutes for everyone assigned to this posting.

Why? Because by design, our task force organization and environment places

each one of us in a leadership role and puts us in the spotlight of our units, our services and the international community.

In spite of the position we hold or the rank we wear, each of us is in a leadership position. We are team leaders, shift leaders and directors. We are commanders, foremen and first sergeants. We lead combined security patrols, hold leadership positions in relief organizations, and lead church groups. We are leaders to the weak, the poor, and the less fortunate. We are, by virtue of the uniform we wear and the nation we represent, a leader to so many throughout Central America.

Consequently, we can and should expect that our actions, of which few go unnoticed, will have an effect on someone every day. People are routinely watching what we do and the expectation for us to perform is particularly high.

So what of this leadership business? What of this demand for selfless service ... this requirement for teamwork?

Well, the task force needs your personal involvement for it to be successful. We need your energy, your enthusiasm, your professional competence, and your commitment. The task force needs your leadership. So, evaluate where you are today as a leader and get on with making good things happen for those you lead.

Whatever arena you compete in, whether in the civilian sector or in military service, whether you have been called to lead a team, build a team, or play on a team — get started now.

Dec. 28, 2001

JTF-Bravo

## A message about terrorism

By Thomas E. White  
secretary of the Army  
Sept. 21

As you all know by now, our nation, this department and the United States Army was attacked 11 September.

I want you to know that we have survived that attack. That attack has made us stronger and we are now engaged in what our president has called the first war of the 21st century. We will win that war.

Now the war is not going to be won in a single day, or a single raid or a single event.

We are engaged in a campaign against a cowardly enemy. And it will take us a while to root him out. But let there be no question about our resolve, our discipline, our professionalism, our tenacity; and in the end, the result of that war.

It won't be easy. But few things that are truly worth doing ever are.

This is our challenge: to preserve the freedoms that make America what Abraham Lincoln called the "last best hope on earth." And I can assure that the civilized people in countries of the world have united in support of our cause.

You and I, the American soldier

and the veteran, now carry the hopes of the American people on our shoulders.

I know that you will do your duty. I have every confidence in that as does the Secretary (of Defense), the Chief, and the President of the United States.

America expects no less of you and I and we can do no more.

And always know that wherever you are, your nation stands behind you with absolutely solid support.

The Chief, General Shinseki and I, extend our condolences, and ask God's tender mercies on our foreign comrades and their loved ones.

We have 74 people unaccounted for in our headquarters. We will mourn them and we will shed our tears.

They are part of our family. But once that's finished, we will go forward, with anger and with purpose in our hearts, to see this campaign through to the end.

Tuesday, Sept. 11 has already been described as the darkest day in American history.

I say to our adversaries, be very, very careful, for you are going to experience the finest hours of the United States Army as we prosecute this campaign against you.

God bless you, God bless the Army. God bless our great nation.

## Army top enlisted leader visits Soto Cano troops



Photo by Spc. Sarah Maxwell

Members of the Soto Cano Search and Rescue team wait for their turn to perform the Jacob's Ladder insertion/extraction exercise during the Sgt. Maj. of the Army's, Jack Tilley, visit to Soto Cano, Aug. 13.

By Spc. Sarah Maxwell  
Aug. 24

Joint Task Force-Bravo troops were treated with a visit to Soto Cano from the Army's senior ranking enlisted leader Aug. 13 and 14. Sgt. Maj. of the Army Jack Tilley showed troops here that just because they were in a remote location, their voices are still being heard.

After eating his first meal with soldiers, airmen and the JTF-Bravo senior enlisted leadership, Tilley visited the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment soldiers.

He then went out for some Search and Rescue Team training by practicing the Jacob's Ladder, climbing up and down a ladder in and out of a hovering CH-47 Chinook, with the team members. It was something he had never done in his more than three decades as a soldier.

After the training, Tilley didn't miss a beat and went to the theater where he hosted an open discussion bringing controversial Army issues to the forefront for about 100 soldiers and airmen in the audience.

Troops and the sergeant major of the Army exchanged points of views about issues such as pay and the transformation of the Army, including the

new "Army of One" ad campaign and the donning of the black beret.

Addressing concerns and getting on the soldiers' level about the issues that are important to them is what brought Tilley's visit.

"I came down here because I always like to see what goes on around the Army and what the issues are," he said to his captivated audience.

He went on to explain the different ideas that are being kicked around in Washington about the pay table, such as adding a new rank of E-10. But, he focused on one key issue about pay: "Fix my base pay."

He said that he was advocating for an increase in the base pay table for soldiers, focusing on noncommissioned officers.

Explaining that the "Army of One" campaign is designed as an enlistment tool and that "it's working," he went on to give the history of the black beret and how it has been used by different organizations in the Army over the last century. It's now being used as a symbol of the Army's transfor-

mation to a lighter more mobile force, he said. "I'm proud of everything the soldiers are doing down here. You have great soldiers here and a great noncommissioned officer's corps," he said about his visit to the base.

"... It's all about being a soldier. It's all about believing in what you do."

*"It's all about being a soldier. It's all about believing in what you do"*

**Jack Tilley**  
Sgt. Maj. of the Army



Photo by Capt. Jim Fabio

Tech. Sgt. Nick Marchisello, an Air Force Reservist and New Jersey firefighter, awaits the order to enter the rubble of the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Marchisello is a member of the 514th Civil Engineering Squadron at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J.

## Called up to protect; National Guard troops' unique assignment

**Army News Service**  
Oct. 19

ALEXANDRIA, Va. - Soldiers of the Virginia National Guard patrolled the quiet corridors of Reagan National Airport Oct. 4, the first day it opened for business in more than three weeks.

Reagan National near Washington, D.C., was the last major airport in the nation to reopen after Sept. 11 when hijacked jetliners crashed into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon just up the road. Business at the airport that first day was rather slow because of a limited number of flights.

"I understand it's generally a little bit busier," said 2nd Lt. David Sutton, who led a dozen or so other members of the 229th Military Police Company from Virginia Beach to help civilian authorities keep the airport safe and secure for the passengers and employees.

"So far there's been more reporters here than there have been people getting on and off the airplanes," added Sutton of the place that on a normal Thursday would be a beehive of passengers and of airplanes taking off and landing.

"We've been the extra eyes and ears for the other police and security people," explained Sgt. Shelle Switzer of the 229th MP Company. "Some passengers didn't know they had to check most of their bags, so they had to go back upstairs and do it right. Overall, it's been pretty quiet."

Sutton, a full-time Newport News, Va., police officer, and Switzer, a corrections officer at Virginia's Sussex State Prison, and other members of the 229th had been providing security at the Army National Guard's Readiness Center in Arlington, Va., since Sept. 11.

Other Virginia Army Guard troops trained in Federal Aviation Administration security procedures will report to Reagan National during October's first weekend because reinforcing airport security has become a new mission for the National Guard in the cause of homeland defense.

President George Bush announced on Sept. 27 that National Guard troops would reinforce security crews at 422 of this country's largest civilian airports for the next four to six months to boost the country's confidence in the aviation industry.

The FAA has asked for about 5,000 troops. Many other Guard troops are reporting for airport duty this

weekend after completing FAA training and after being sure they can all safely and properly handle their weapons.

The intent is to give airports time to improve their security procedures and systems over the next half year.

Each governor can decide which Guard troops to deploy and what they will actually do.

But the job is universally the same - providing a military presence that includes monitoring and reinforcing security checkpoints, monitoring the alertness and performance of the civilian screeners, and assisting screeners and supervisors and airport police as required.

There is a universal understanding about what President Bush intends to accomplish.

"Some airports already meet high standards," he said at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport on Sept. 27. "But for those airports that need help, we will work with the governors to provide security measures - visible security measures - so the traveling public will know that we are serious about airline safety in America."

*(Editors note: Story by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell and Sgt. 1st Class Eric Wedeking, National Guard Bureau Public Affairs)*

## Food drops to Afghans underscore president's pledge

**Air Force News Service**  
Oct. 19

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — Two C-17 Globemaster III aircraft flew a daring 22-hour mission to airdrop some 35,000 humanitarian daily rations into Afghanistan early Oct. 8.

The aircrews flew the 6,500-mile round trip sortie, which originated from Ramstein.

They dropped their cargo into the eastern and northern parts of the country.

It was the first U.S. military airdrop of humanitarian aid into the embattled nation, and the first time the Air Force used this kind of airdrop operationally.

That made for a "very dangerous mission," Col. Bob Allardice, the overall mission commander, said at a press conference at the base after the aircraft returned safely.

"This unprecedented mission to deliver aid to the Afghan people was both very difficult and challenging," Allardice told some 50 international media representatives.

"This airdrop mission was the first installment of President Bush's \$320 million aid package for the people of Afghanistan."

Though not identified for security reasons, the airborne mission commander did speak to the assembled media about the rigors involved with the mission.

"This mission required intensive

planning, preparation and coordination," he said.

Aircrews depressurized the C-17s and opened their cargo doors on the approach to the drop zone, Allardice said.

At the precise time, the pilots pulled the aircraft nose up about seven degrees and the loadmasters released the specially constructed container delivery systems with the rations.

"We determined our drop zones, taking into account where the people who needed the aid are located, potential threats in the area, and existing wind conditions to maximize accuracy to the best of our ability," Allardice said. "Our goal was to get the aid to the right people, without putting them at undue risk."

Each of the 2,200-calorie ready-to-eat food rations contains two main vegetarian meals based heavily on lentils, beans and/or rice. It also has complementary items such as bread, a fruit bar, a fortified biscuit, peanut butter and spices.

"One meal provides enough nutrition for an entire day for one person, but needs to be supplemented with liquids," said Capt. Dana Whelan, a registered dietician with Ramstein's 86th Medical Group. "The meals are a good source of protein, fortified with vitamins and minerals and are appropriate for someone in a poor state of nutrition."

*(Editors note: Story by Master Sgt. Kenneth Fidler, United States Air Forces in Europe Public Affairs)*

## Captains visit copan for seminar

**By 1st Lt. Richard Komurek**  
Nov. 30

JTF-Bravo leadership issues were mixed with Mayan history and culture as a group of 33 Army and Air Force captains visited the ancient ruins of Copan Nov. 16-17 for a two-day officer professional development seminar hosted by Col. Michael Okita, the JTF-Bravo commander.

The seminar gave the officers a unique opportunity to discuss issues with the task force commander, meet their fellow captains from across Soto Cano, learn about the Mayan's civilization; and to hear from a guest speaker from the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa about the various U.S. government agencies that work within Honduras. The off-site OPD, the first of its kind in recent years, was supported by the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment who flew the group to Copan in one UH-60 Black Hawk and one CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

Through tour guide tales and the remains of stone temples and other artifacts, the officers learned about the ancient city of Copan which flourished from the years A.D. 250 to 900 and was regarded as a cultural center of Mayan civilization.

It is estimated that only a small fraction of the ruins have been uncovered since its initial discovery, and the site continues to provide archeologists with important information about the ancient Mayan people. Some of the main sites at Copan include the ruins of temples, a ceremonial court, a ball court, a hieroglyphic

stairway, sculptures of Mayan rulers and sacrificial altars.

"I had three objectives for the OPD," said Okita. "I wanted to provide historical exposure to the history and culture of Honduras, expose the captains to aspects of the (U.S.) federal government that operate with us in Honduras and to provide a team building event where captains from across the JTF could come together in a professional environment and get to know each other better."

For many captains who are new to JTF-Bravo, the OPD provided a wealth of information and a chance to see another side of Honduras.

"I thought the OPD was awesome," said Capt. Lee Brinker, Army Forces operations officer. "I enjoyed going to the ruins ... it was something I've never seen before and I thought they were really beautiful. I also went horseback riding and bought some souvenirs."

For the Air Force captains on the trip, the OPD provided an opportunity to meet and interact with their Army counterparts who they may see infrequently during day-to-day AF-FOR operations at Soto Cano.

"The OPD gave us an opportunity to talk with the commander and gave us insight into Army operations here," said Capt. Gretchen DePauw, Air Force Forces mission support flight commander. "It was a great way to meet the other captains at Soto Cano and made us feel like one post and one big family."

In all, the trip proved to be more than just another leadership seminar, it was also a life enhancing experience.

# Missions

by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn  
Public Affairs Superintendent

January rocked and quaked into the new year as a 7.6 earthquake shook El Salvador into the first disaster relief mission of the year. Forty-five task force members deployed Jan. 13 to 24, and arrived with full-house of three Black Hawk and two Chinook helicopters for disaster relief efforts. The cities of Usulután and Santa Tecla were destroyed by landslides with amage to many other communities. After flying more than 143 hours, ferrying more than 379,000 pounds of supplies, and 610 passengers in the country during the

initial relief effort, they gave assessment teams from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance flight tours for damage assessment. The 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment

ment was inspected by the Army Department of Evaluation and Standards and the FORSCOM Aviation Resource Management Survey Team. These inspections reviewed all aspects of the battalion's aviation program, to include operations, standardization, maintenance, and safety. The battalion did exceedingly well, receiving 27 commendable ratings and all other satisfactory.

The month marked the first medical readiness exercises of the budding year with a 12-member team from Brooks Army Medical Center performing ear-related surgical procedures on 38 people in the San Pedro Sula area. Another MEDRETE was started in the latter part of the month in Santa Barbara, Honduras when a team from Wilford Hall Medical Center performed a specialized eye surgery MEDRETE. More than 700 people were screened and examined, many were given eye glasses, while 70 people had surgical procedures.



Photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn

Soto Cano Fire Dawgs controlled nearly 40 brush fires last year. This P-19 fire truck used its 500 GPM roof turret to contain a section of fast-moving flames.

Fire season got into full swing as the dry season had firefighters battling blazes on and off the base. Assisted by helicopter water drops, firefighters kept losses on base to a few abandoned shacks in the middle of brush fields. Of the year's 39 brush fires, nine were responses off base at the request of the Honduran fire department.

New Horizons operations fired up with Task Force - Lempira in Gracias, Honduras and Task Force - Aurora in Flores, Guatemala. The goal for Lempira was to build four schools and three clinics. The goal for Aurora was to construct five schools, dig five wells, perform three MEDRETES, and make minor road repairs.

Soto Cano saw the completion of four warehouses in the Romeo area, the rappel tower, and the wastewater treatment plant.

February marked the first month for Central Skies where Honduras and Guatemala received their Central Skies II validation. Thirty-seven JTF-Bravo members deployed to Guatemala's Operation Mayan Jaguar for the validation process with U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and host nation enforcement agents were trained and validated.

A 6.6 magnitude earthquake struck El Salvador again on Feb. 15. JTF-B personnel deployed within four hours after notification. 1-228th sent two UH-60s and one CH-47 to Illopango Air Base where they remained until Feb. 25. Airlift accounted for 210 passengers moved, delivered 127,000 pounds of supplies, and executed ten hoist rescues and one emergency medical evacuation.

Earthquake relief in El Salvador continued with the help of JTF-Bravo medical and Joint Security Forces personnel who rendered aid to more than 9,000 people. The aid ranged across the spectrum from vaccinations, counseling, dental and preventative medicine procedures.

Civil affairs took possession of two fire trucks and several pallets of donated material, courtesy of a Massachusetts rotary group through the Denton Amendment, and dispersed them to a Tegucigalpa firefighters and local rotary group.

Soto Cano was host to five Congressional delegates who received an immersion course in Latin American-based U.S. counter drug programs and how U.S. tax dollars are being spent overseas.

March opened the door for Costa Rica's Central Skies II validation near the Caribbean coastal town of Puerto Limón.

Training took off full force with a helocast exercise up at Lake Yojoa despite austere and unseasonably cold weather at the lake.

A pediatric orthopedic surgical MEDRETE took place in Tegucigal-

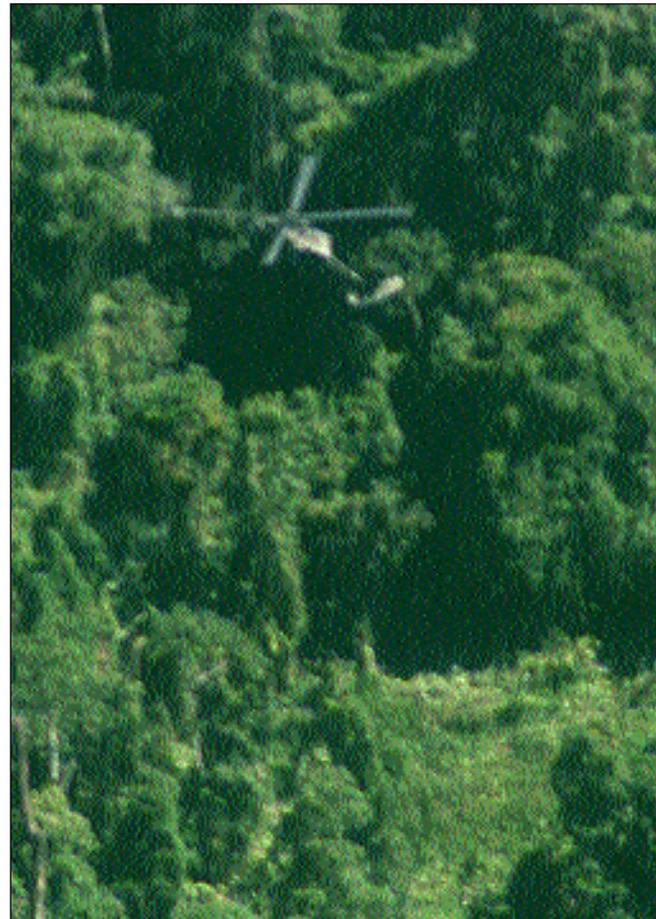


Photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn

A 1-228th Black Hawk helicopter hovers over a Costa Rican marijuana field during a Central Skies mission.

pa. Some traveled great distance to be one of the 109 patients screened with 57 of those having a surgical procedure done by Air Force surgical members from Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio.

The 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment hosted a formal dining-in on the base with Army and Air Force members dressing in their finest uniform for the camaraderie building event.

April was the first time task force members were in Belize since Hurricane Keith laid waste to the countryside in October 2000. This time the task force was involved with Operation Strike Out, another Central Skies mission.



The 1-228th deployed 22 personnel and 3 aircraft to Trinidad and Tobago for Operation Tradewinds 01, April 12. Two UH-60As and one USAAAD UH-60 (MEDEVAC) flew a total of 122.7 hours. Tradewinds 01 was a USSOUTHCOM, Caribbean Partners, and certain NATO allies joint/combined training exercise in disaster relief, stability, and maritime operations to sustain regional cooperation

See Missions, Page 7



Photo by JTF-Bravo Public Affairs

Seventeen MEDRETEs were completed involving the talents of surgical, general and preventative medicine, dental, nutrition and optometry personnel.

## Missions

*(Continued from Page 6)*

and engagement. In addition, the exercise enhanced collective capabilities and focused training exercises of host nation contingency plans.

Live fire operations involved more than aerial gunners and M-60 ammunition this month at the Honduran aerial live-fire range. After two evolutions through the course, the tracer rounds started the dry vegetation and rush on fire and ceremoniously cleared several hundred acres of countryside in the process. The most raining of the day was with Ch-47s and UH-60s dropping buckets of water in an attempt to control the blaze.

May saw the first of several change of command ceremonies. Lt. Col. Brainerd passed the Air Force Forces reins to Lt. Col. Lane who took command of the 612th Air Base Squadron.

AFFOR also trained 70 personnel and completed an internal three-week environmental compliance inspection in preparation for a higher headquarters inspection slated for February 2002.

A pediatric nutritional MEDRETE took place in rural La Paz, Honduras that serviced more than 250 people in hard-to-reach areas.

The New Horizon's projects in Guatemala and Honduras came to a close in formal ceremonies in early May, however no rest for the weary as the J7 engineering staff shifted their focus on the next round of New Horizon projects. El Salvador and Nicaragua were slated to be the project sites for 2002.

Public affairs debuts the newly created JTF-Bravo Intranet News which is an Intranet based method of information dissemination for the task force. The new process replaced the e-mail method that caused multiple distribution problems and filled people's mailboxes up too fast.

June provided for a MEDRETE in Catacamas, Honduras by active-duty Air Force servicemembers from Colorado. More than 4,000 patients were seen in general medicine, optometry and dental work. There was also a collaborative effort of a first-time nature evaluating civilian residents along the northern Mosquito Coast for depression.

The task force supported the visit of two special visitors in June. The Queen of Spain and the president of Taiwan both came for a visit and used the base as a jump-off point for their travels in Central America.

Hooch maids got new uniforms and the process for hooch maid management was rewritten.

Closed circuit television comes to Soto Cano in the form of an elaborate security system. With the new cameras base surveillance has made multiple eyes from the sky a strong deterrent against theft and an early warning system against

bad-guy break-ins.

Army Forces received their new commander, Lt. Col. Crews. Crews replaced Lt. Col. DeNeff in the second major change of command ceremony of the year.

July's first event was the Joint Security Forces' change of command ceremony where Maj. Grassley took command of a recently employed Army MP company and contingent of annual tour Air Force members.

A double change of command ceremony had MEDEL's Lt. Col. Nash and 1-228th's Lt. Col. Gaddis gain command of their respective units.

The following week, Col. Okita made the final change of command ceremony as Col. Wood made his farewell back to Fort Bragg, N.C. Coming to the task force from the National War College in Washington, D.C., Okita asked, "As we step forward together, I ask you to join me in

revalidating the commitment you made to your nation's flags, to your services, to those you are chartered to serve and to the team we are all a part of."

JSF conducted a joint security training exercise with the Honduran Security Forces unit — La Guardia. This was the first combined training exercise in recent memory and served to build upon their working relationship and test out the effectiveness of the new camera surveillance system on the base.

Firefighters visited Tegucigalpa and competed in a two-day, multi-fire department muster competition. Soto Cano placed first in the obstacle course, drafting operations and fire ground operations out of ten teams before point deductions.

General Pace from U.S. Southern Command and seven U.S. Ambassadors from the CENTAM nations paid Soto Cano a visit July 24 in a Chief of Mission Conference where regional issues were briefed and Joint Task Force - Bravo's mission was explained.

August opened up with a special visit from Sgt. Maj. of the Army Jack Tilley who spent two days talking with the troops and getting a realistic view of JTF-Bravo training operations by watching the search and rescue team practice insertion techniques.

1-228th aircraft deployed three times in August to support the 7th SFG for its specific mission, assisting the 15th INF BN for the training of a class of commando soldiers. JCET 401 was a joint/combined training exercise of 7th Special Forces Group (SFG) and the Honduran 15th Infantry Battalion in the vicinity of Trujillo. The 1-228th supported numerous rappel, STABO, and air assault operations to include a helocast operation with 7th SFG and Honduran Naval Special Naval Forces and night-flying exercises.



# DEA

A local MEDRETE in Comayagua and Central Skies operation in Guatemala kept the task force busy. Local

planners were devising strategy in creating a fallout-funding priority list for the upcoming fiscal year close-out.

A base-wide fire safety inspection of all living quarters improved the safety of the task force and replaced 180 defective smoke detectors.

September is suppose to be a month for hurricanes, but another type of disaster fell upon the task force. The memories of Sept. 11 still ring

*See Missions, Page 8*



Photo by Capt. David Phillips

SPIES on Soto Cano was nearly a monthly occurrence. Special patrol infiltration/exfiltration system training is key to jungle operations.

## Missions

(Continued from Page 8)

true today, but the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attack brought the task force together for a common mission — force protection. Numerous plans were implemented and forces stretched to keep the missions going strong.

JTF-Bravo forces deployed to Guatemala for two days for a combined airborne jump — an event that hasn't happened for several years. Guatemalans were treated to some American airborne training and airlift, while the American forces were shown some genuine hospitality and got a visual of a well-disciplined combat airborne force.

The most significant fire involving a base structure took place Sept. 26 when the AFFOR dayroom suffered a kitchen fire. Soto Cano firefighters made quick work at extinguishing the blaze and saving the structure. Damage was minimal and the facility was operational again in just a couple of weeks.



Photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn

**Chinook crews from the 1-228th get some extra fire training during the spring aerial gunnery exercise.**

Fiscal Year '01 ended with a bang and more than a buck for the task force. Nearly \$4.4 million in unfunded requests were bought with end-of-year funds thanks to the tireless taskforce members who labored over purchase requests and countless budget meetings.

October was time for the Combined Federal Campaign and the task force showed its support by breaking last year's donation statistic with a total of \$27,735 and averaged \$53.85 for the 515 people counted in the task force.

Aerial gunnery hit the range for the second time this year. Prepared to fight fire, gunners had a successful range experience without nearly the flaming episode as experienced earlier in the year. For the year, the battalion trained 45 crew chiefs on the M60D and 20 soldiers on the M2 weapon system. 1-228th improved the training area at Zambrano Range by emplacing 5 vehicle hulks on the range to serve as targets for aerial gunnery, as well as for the Honduran Artillery Battalion.

A Cominada, or commanders day, was hosted by the task force in late October. The event was different than the past years' hike around the base in that it was a multi-event competition that involved swimming, team hiking, running and biking exercises. The competitive event had seven teams pitted against each other, composed of Honduran and U.S. senior officers.

October 26, 1998 is when Hurricane Mitch hit landfall; and October 26, 2001 saw Hurricane Michelle strike Honduras in much the same fashion — only she didn't linger nearly as much as Mitch did. For several touch-and-go days task force members leaned forward for a relief mission, they weren't disappointed. In early November, JTF-Bravo personnel went on three missions — one for assessment, and two to deliver relief supplies to villages hit hardest with no road support.

November also had the task force participating in a major search and rescue team exercise. An exercise aircraft, injured personnel, and responding personnel were the ingredients for the response exercise that took place about 15 air-minutes away from the base in the mountains behind La Paz.

Soto Cano firefighters participated in two separate evolutions at the Tegucigalpa International Airport with local firefighters in an effort to build closer relations with mutual aid responses for major accidents.

MEDEL graduated another Combat Lifesaver Course. This achievement was the 8th combat lifesaver course this year, and resulted in 120 personnel receiving the certification.

The only MEDRETE in the new fiscal year took place in Santa Ana. More than 125 children were treated and screened in this general MEDRETE that also gathered nutritional research for the Honduran Ministry of Health to determine the level of malnutrition in the area.

JTF-Bravo's captain corps was treated to an educational officer professional development course of unique proportion. Rather than spending a day in the theater, the OPDC was held in Copan, a first time event for the task force.

Issues centered around the U.S. Embassy and the different U.S. governmental



Photo by Martin Chahin

**Helocast operations were conducted twice at Lake Yojoa where Search and Rescue team personnel maintained proficiency of water insertion and rescue.**

agencies that are supportive in the country. Of course no training mission to Copan would have been complete without a history course of the surrounding area.

In November, 1-228th conducted its first Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation with the Military Group in Belize. This training exercise focused on a peacetime evacuation scenario. The 1-228th deployed 4 UH-60s, 2 CH-47s, and a UH-60 medevac to conduct this mission, as well as train on FATCOW forward refueling operations and night-vision goggle operations over the water. This marked the beginning of what hopes to be a quarterly training event with all the countries in the JOA.

December is traditionally a time to wrap up projects and get new ones started for the new year.



Photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn

**The final disaster response of the year was in November as Hurricane Michelle left many villages San Pedro Sula valley cut off from the road system. JTF-Bravo members delivered needed food and supplies to areas isolated by the storm.**

# Out with the old in with the new

## With '01 behind, the task force looks forward to '02

### MEDEL

MEDEL has projected 24 MEDRETEs on the calendar for the next year. This year they were involved in 17 MEDRETEs throughout Honduras involving 20,849 patients treated/screened; 3,445 dental treatments; 3,798 immunizations; 866 surgical procedures and 653 operations. This was in addition to the in-house treatment of 4,267 task force soldiers and airmen at the MEDEL clinic.

### Central Skies

Central Skies training missions will start again in a couple of months. There were a total of seven Central Skies missions conducted this year. There were three Central Skies I missions in Belize, Guatemala and Honduras with Central Skies II missions in Honduras, Costa Rica and two in Belize. The missions netted four drug boats confiscated, 980,000 marijuana plants eradicated and more than 1,100 kilos of cocaine seized. Additionally, the information seized in house raids will

be used to gain indictments and used to support further search warrants.

### New Horizons

New Horizons will begin in El Salvador and Nicaragua in January, with planning for New Horizons 2003 for Panama and Belize starting in May. The New Horizon's 2001 culminated with Task Force Lempira in Honduras completing four schools, three clinics, roads and bridge repair, and three MEDRETEs. Task Force Aurora in Guatemala completed five schools, three wells and three MEDRETEs.

With the true purpose of the humanitarian exercises is to maintain good relationships with the host nation counterparts, help construct facilities for schools and clinics, repair roads, provide clean drinking water to remote areas and give medical assistance; more than 5,000 servicemembers, mostly Guard and Reservists, received valuable construction training under austere deployment conditions for each task force employed.



Photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn

Final product of search and rescue team -- one more life will live.



Photo by Spc. Jon Christoffersen

Nobody said war was always hell -- AFFOR Combat Dining-In.



Photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn

American and Honduran combined security exercise tested abilities of all forces.



Medical readiness exercises will number 24 in 2002. The focus of the exercises will be preventative medicine, general medicine, nutritional surveys, multiple types of surgeries, optometry, dental, pediatric consultations -- and probably the most important element -- a caring relationship between health practitioners and the patients they see.

Photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn

# Progress Through Unity ... and some fun

*The following pages are some of the fun events from this year*

## Soto Cano holds joint combined open house

By 1st Lt. Kim Garbett  
May 4

Dogs, planes, fire trucks and thousands of kids littered the flight line all day long at Soto Cano Sunday.

Live music and ethnic food scents filled the air on this hot but breezy spring day. Amateur photographers and videographers took rolls of film and footage.

People filed in and out of aircraft and kids hopped in and out of pilots' seats, some dressed in their Sunday finest. It was an aeronautical carnival of sorts, with more than 5,000 people in attendance.

The Honduran Air Force hosted a combined Honduran/United States miniature open house with some of both countries' assets and aircraft on display.

play. Fly-bys performed by a Honduran F-5 highlighted the afternoon's events; the U.S. Joint Security Forces wowed the crowd with their narcotic and bomb dogs' attack capabilities.

Anything from a Honduran Condor C-101 to a U.S. CH-47 Chinook to a C-23 Sherpa among many other aircraft were on display for people to funnel through and ask questions about.

The Honduran Air Force, Joint Task Force-Bravo, 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment and the 1-207th Aviation Regiment out of Alaska joined forces to make it an exciting international military exhibition.

Along with riding a "60K" cargo loader, going up and down a high staircase loader and playing with the sirens and speakers on the Fire Dawgs fire trucks, the crowd was treated to a Moed-and-Carat display of aggression.

Kennel Master Staff Sgt. Chris Hurst with Joint Security Forces explained the crowd saw four different exhibits of the military working dog's capabilities.

"We demonstrated obedience, controlled aggression, detection and the muzzle attack," he said.

Moed, Carat and Pat, the three dogs assigned duty at Soto Cano, displayed exceptional control with the large Honduran crowd surrounding them.

"We did have personnel along the edges for crowd control and strategically placed others along the fringes of the zoned off area who were capable of deterring the dog if for some reason he got out of control," Hurst said.

The crowd stared awestruck as the dogs attacked the handlers in a mock scenario.

Fernando Rojas of Comayagua, a visitor to the open house, said he felt it was great that two countries could work together to do this kind of event.

"It's also beneficial for both countries to train together." The really impressive part of the open house to Rojas, he said, was the opportunity to take pictures of U.S. helicopters.

"It's the first opportunity I've had in my life to do something like this," he emphasized.



Photo by 1st Lt. Kim Garbett

With tired arms, CPT Brian Warfel, Co. B commander, 1-228th, helps one of hundreds of children out of a CH-47 Chinook Helicopter who visited the open house Sunday.

## Org day provides day of fun through competition

By 1st Lt. Kim Garbett  
Feb. 23

Joint Task Force-Bravo Organizational Day, held all day long Feb. 15, kicked off on a bright Honduran morning at the soccer fields with birds singing in the background and the sun shining down as music blared from loud speakers on the fields. Everyone knew it was going to be a hot one. The sweat would be pouring down and PT shirts would be drenched within minutes.

Teams could be seen gathering up at their respective areas for whatever sport they were competing in that day. Teams from AFFOR, ARFOR, MEDEL, and the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment slugged it out for Task Force bragging rights. Who would come out on top? Soldiers and airmen lined up for battle as the first event began a little after 8 a.m. All around, balls flew, legs pumped in action as sweat began pouring down the faces of competitors and fans alike.

Organizational Day is designed to improve cohesiveness, morale and esprit de corps among the men and women, both airmen and soldiers at JTF-Bravo. Typically held yearly at this time spearheaded by AFFOR, teams challenged each other in a number of events.

From the bike race to darts, from basketball to soccer and from the sack race to dizzy bat, spirits were high and adrenaline pumped. In addition to those events, racquetball, volleyball, horseshoes, softball, the barrel roll, the 4x1 mile relay, 9-ball, swimming and the 4x400 were among the many other events going on simultaneously throughout the morning. If you didn't watch carefully, you could miss that dizzy bat competition going on at one field while the soccer game played on or while the volleyball was spiked.

Not to be forgotten was the illustrious field goal kick. One of the most memorable kicks sailed up and over a fire truck sitting out on the fields, spiking the head of our beloved AFFOR commander, practically knocking him out. As he came to his feet, a little taken aback, he asked where his long-time friendly rival, the 1-228th Aviation Regiment commander, was at, knowing full well that he was in El Salvador assisting with the disaster relief efforts there. It was a bit of comic relief for the day filled with several intense competitions. The ARFOR had the toughest team out there, giving it all they had left and took the points gained for the competition.

In the end, after the points were all tallied up and as the sweat was drying, it was AFFOR who came out on top and stole the bragging rights for this joint-style Org Day.



Photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn

### Cheers ...

Twelve of the Washington Redskins' cheerleaders showed their dancing and singing talents during a show performed for more than 200 Soto Cano servicemembers here May 21. The cheerleaders visited the base for two days as part of an Armed Forces Entertainment and MWR tour.



Photo by Martin Chahin

A swimming relay was on of the events for org day.

# MWR activities

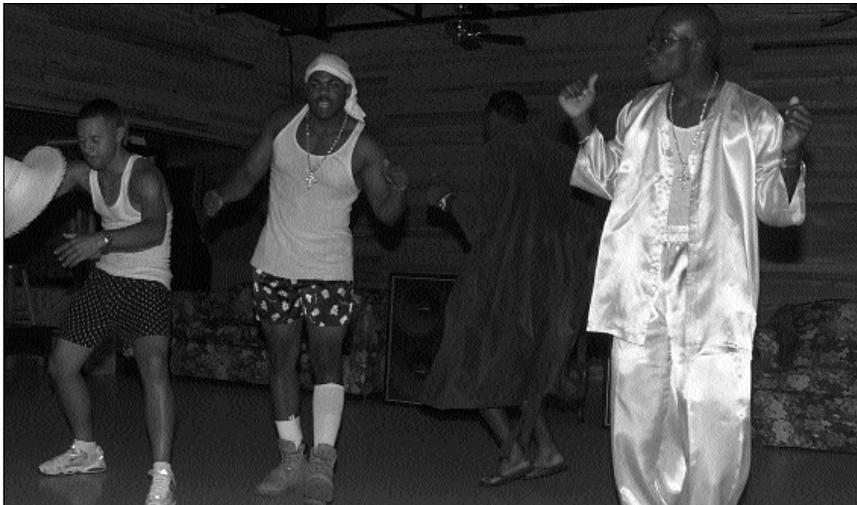


Photo by Spc. Sarah Maxwell

## Pajama Party ...

Several servicemembers get down in their jammies during the Jamie Jam party at the Oasis Club Aug. 17.



Photo by 1st Lt. Kim Garbett

COL James Martin, MEDEL commander, and 1LT Gary Hawkins rappel down from an ancient Lenca cave during the MWR horseback riding tour May 18.



Photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn

Early spring fishing has local anglers in homemade boats crowd the shorelines in search of spawning bass during an MWR fishing trip to Lake Yojoa March 12. Handlines are the predominant method of fishing.

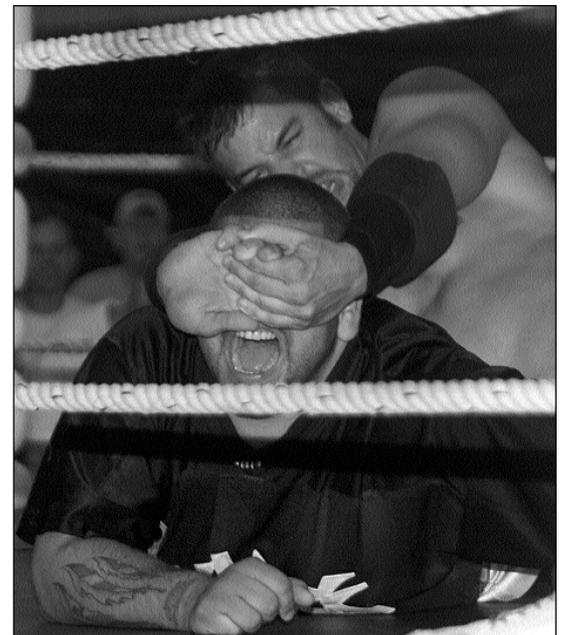


Photo by Spc. Jon Christoffersen

John Badillo gets his face smashed by Danny Gimondo during the WWA wrestling show Nov. 7, sponsored by MWR.

## '01 softball champions

By Staff Sgt. Ken Kline  
June 15

Before a raucous crowd, the Fire Dawgs proved once again that being down doesn't mean being out.

A "never-give-up" attitude guided them to the base championship in softball action June 1.

One more thrilling come-from-behind victory was all that was needed to wear the title of champions.

With the No. 1 seeded AFFOR and No. 2 seeded JSF making an early exit from the tournament, it boiled down

to No. 3 seeded 1-228th and No.4 seeded Fire Dawgs.

Three closely matched games during regular season paved the way for a true "Dawg" fight for the crown.

This championship game was an awesome display of intestinal fortitude by the Fire Dawgs.

At the end of the hard-fought game, the score was, Fire Dawgs 12 and 1-228th 9, the Dawgs finished the season on top.

With fan support seconded to none and that "never give up" attitude, they have proven that they are indeed worthy champions!

## Weight lifting competition held

By Spc. Jeremy Heckler  
Feb. 23

A group of competitors from across Soto Cano took on the challenge in a competition of weightlifting excellence. At the end of the day, Norne Walker of Joint Security Forces had his arms raised in triumph as the event's heavy lifter. Walker pressed a total 880 pounds in the bench press and the squat in the 216 pounds-and-over weight class, outdistancing his competition by 80 pounds.

"I was just trying to do my personal best," Walker said. "I've been competing for a while, and I've never distinguished myself until today."

"This is the first time that a weightlifting competition has been held at Soto Cano since October 1999," said Josh Hanson of the Fire Dawgs, who coordinated the event.

Hanson used his experience from the last event and from a competition he organized while deployed in Saudi Arabia to get it underway.

In the competition, Hanson set personal bests for the squat at 415 pounds and 285 pounds in the bench press, capturing his weight class, defeating Ronnie Williams and Jared Cleary of ARFOR for the title.

Those who didn't win the competition were still winners for pushing themselves further than they had gone before.

# Services, nations come together for day of fun

By Spc. Jon Christoffersen  
Nov. 2

Jogging with a litter, swimming 50 yards, blindly kicking a soccer ball, and teams demonstrating strength during a tug-of-war.

These were just some of activities senior officers from the Honduran and American militaries participated in during Dia de Coroneles en Hermandad, or Colonels' Day Saturday here.

The colonels first came together with airborne troops from both armies to participate in and observe a multinational airborne jump. Unfortunately, the wind picked up and the jump had to be cancelled. The set back was only temporary as the participants quickly moved onto the next event.

The team scooped up their military litter, and started jogging towards the swimming pool. About one-half mile later, they got dropped the litter and dove into the chlorinated water to swim 50 yards. Upon all team members finishing the swim, the teams went to the running track to run one lap which was made more

difficult because they had to kick a soccer ball around it with them.

After managing around the track with the ball, the teams had to get to the starting point of the bike relay. Around the designated course, the teams powered their bikes trying to rack up the best time. From the strength test of the bicycling they went into a skill competition.

With blindfolds securely blocking their visions, the teams had to kick a soccer ball into a goal. With those events being accomplished, the seven teams headed to a sections of the field where the fire department just happened to spray water just moments before.

On the wet grass, teams came together to pull with everything they had to bring their opponents across the line in a tug-of-war.

Once all of the events were completed, the participants came together to eat a barbeque lunch and visit with one another. Col. Michael Okita, JTF-Bravo commander, who hosted the event said, "the primary effort was to bring the colonels of the Honduran and American armies together in comradery."

The events were coordinated with a lot of help of



Photo by 1st Lt. Richard Komurek

Honduran Army Colonels Marco Carranza, Jose Ramos Guzman and Jeronimo Barahona pull their end of the rope during the tug-of-war event Saturday at the Colonels' Day. The event was held to promote comradery.

DynCorp and MEDEL.

"MEDEL provided the major support for the events the colonels participated in," Okita said.

After the lunch was completed, the colonels all gathered to recognize the winners of the competition with a trophy and other prizes.

After all was said and done, the competition wasn't the point of the events, but more the friendships that were formed during the events.

"This was a spectacular morning and a great time to spend time with our Honduran friends," Okita said.



## Members of JTF-Bravo find time to support orphanages

Swinging a dirt-busting pick nearly his own size, a young boy looks across a muddy pond he is digging in and down the dusty road toward approaching vans and trucks.

From memory, the boy conjures up a smile, for he knows the visitors are a welcomed respite to the day's events and signify a break from his manual labor. Dozens of other boys come to the same conclusion simultaneously and materialize from concrete-block structures, muddy water holes and other places around the compound.

Almost 400 children living in six different orphanages in the Comayagua and La Paz area have a much healthier life because JTF-Bravo's major commands give their support to them.

In Honduras when a family is too poor to give a child the basic necessities of life, the child most likely will end up in an orphanage where he will at least have food to eat and a roof over his head. While the orphanage may be better than what their family can provide, but it is still far from the living standards the average American child grows up with.

ARFOR supplies a special need by taking water buffalos filled with good drinking water three times a week to the rural orphanage.

They also visit the orphans once a month and invite them on base once a quarter where they enjoy a filling lunch and play games all day.

The Medical Element here on Soto Cano also does its

fair share with the orphans they support — more than 150 children in two orphanages. They raise the money for the orphans by paying two or three dollars to wear their civilian clothes on Fridays.

First Lt. Maria Ortiz, MEDEL, has been in charge of her units orphanage visits since May. She said the benefits from helping them out can be easily seen. When the children see the van from Soto Cano pull up, they're so happy that they try to jump into the van before anyone can get out.

"You can just see it on the faces of those kids," she said. "It's not the items we give them; it's just the fact that we can be there with them is what makes them happy. Maybe for an hour or hour and a half we can be a part of their family."

The 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment has one of the highest aviation operational tempos in the Army, and members still find the time to visit their units orphanage about once every other month.

AFFOR also contributes tremendously to two orphanages, helping more than 150 children with their twice-a-month visits and thousands of dollars of donated goods going to the orphanage a month. They serve lunch and spend time with the younger kids and play sports and cook tortillas with the older kids.

(Story compiled from many stories throughout the year by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn, Spc. Sarah Maxwell and Spc. Jeremy Heckler.)



Photo by Spc. Sarah Maxwell

Private 1st Class Debra Hunt of ARFOR, takes a moment to give a young orphan a much appreciated hug during the children's May visit to base.