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Diver's dream, drug trafficking hot spot



Photo by 1st Lt. Kim Garbett

Belizan Defense Force members hop on a Soto Cano UH-60 Blackhawk after completing a roadblock in search of illegal drugs during Operation Strike Out.

By 1st Lt. Kim Garbett
Public Affairs

The small fixed-wing, non-commercial aircraft traced a path under radar scope coming out of Colombia. He flew mostly over the waters and coastal areas, hoping to remain unnoticed in air traffic patterns.

The pilot made no radio contact or transmissions as he journeyed north toward Mexico and the United States with a potentially deadly and expensive cargo. He had not stopped, but as the sun began to set in Central America, and as fuel gauges fell, he headed for the Guatemalan/Belizan border inland.

The aircraft was almost within an

arm's reach of Belizan and U.S. counter-drug forces on stand-by in Belize for a potential aircraft interception when somehow the pilot must have been tipped off. He crossed back to Guatemalan borders.

Who knows if he was caught or not? Who knows what his cargo really amounted to and why he was trying to remain out of the line of sight?

Approximately 30 members from Joint Task Force-Bravo and the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment got a taste of Caribbean and Rastafarian culture as they took part in Operation Strike Out, a multinational, interagency counter-drug operation that took place in Belize April 4 to 12.

Amid blue skies, Caribbean waters streaked in various shades of blues and

greens and hundreds of atolls and delicate reefs world-renowned for excellent scuba diving exists an intricate web of illegal narcotic operations.

The Belize Barrier Reef offers anything from manta rays to manatees and other exotic flora and fauna. But it also provides a natural haven for go-fast vessel operations, making the maritime threat for narco-trafficking higher than average. Belize, once upon a time a British colony, is the only country in Central America where English is the official language. It is also an important transit country for drugs flowing from Colombia into Mexico. Belize has contiguous borders with Guatemala and Mexico, and has a long, unprotected coastline with thousands of cays and a very rudimentary infrastructure for combating illegal narco-trafficking. As a result, Belize has become a significant transshipment point for cocaine and more recently heroin.

Members from Soto Cano provided immediate insertion aviation support to the Belize Defense Force and their Police Department for roadblocks, house searches and transportation to other suspected target locations. One of the additional benefits of this exercise for crew from the 1-228th Aviation Regiment was the over-water training. "A lot of missions in Honduras are not over-water missions," said CW3 Jose Nieves, a maintenance test pilot from the C2 Aviation detachment at U.S. Army South in Puerto Rico, who is part of the 1-228th Aviation Regiment here.

"Nieves said each aircraft's crew, including pilots, are required to have Dunker and HEEDS training. "Dunker training is a one-day course, which we take a swim test, go through underwater egress procedures and go through barrel training," he said. "Barrel training simulates the underwater egression from an aircraft after it is rolled over and after water has rushed into it."

The best way to explain HEEDS training, or helicopter emergency egress device system, said Nieves, is from a scene in the movie "The Perfect Storm."

"When the helicopter pilot was egressing the aircraft after it had been engulfed in the water, he took out a small bottle that had been attached to his vest and started breathing from it.

This little bottle provides you with additional oxygen for underwater in the

See Central Skies, Page 2

Commanders' Corner

Service upholds country's ideals

By CPT Brad Glaze
Command Judge Advocate

An old soldier (I do not recall his name) once said, "I do not know much about the Constitution, but I've done an awful lot of fighting for it."

Today, as members of the United States Armed Forces, we do not find ourselves on the battlefield as much as our predecessors. However, we should never forget that our very reason for being stems from this document created more than 200 years ago, and the jobs we do today are still important in carrying out the Constitution's ideals. At the time of its ratification, the Constitution established a form of government that was unique among nations.

Today, our form of government sets the standard for all freedom-loving people around the world. How do we as servicemembers today carry out the Constitution's ideals even though we may not literally fight to defend this document?

The discipline and obedience by which members of the armed forces are required to abide is derived from the Constitution's mandate of a civilian led government.

This mandate is one of the primary themes of the Constitution and the main reason for the stability of our nation. Article I, Section 8 gives Congress the power to raise and support the armed forces and to declare war. Article II, Section 2 further refines this balance by making the president -- the civilian leader of our govern-

ment -- the commander in chief of the armed forces.

The Constitution also gives Congress the authority to implement rules and regulations for governing the armed forces.

These governing rules are known as the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Upon entering the armed forces, we each take an oath to "support and defend the Constitution." Furthermore, we pledge to obey the orders of those officers appointed over us.

This oath is binding on each servicemember from the lowest ranking enlisted member to the highest ranking flag officer and further reflects the importance of a civilian-led armed forces to the stability of our government. In following these rules, regulations and orders, we are focusing on mission accomplishment.

The U. S. Armed Forces' mission accomplishment continues around the world including peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance operations.

Occasionally, we are even required to respond with war-like force.

Regardless of the mission, as we execute our duties, we are implementing the ideals of the Constitution. We are following the orders of the commander in chief and Congress who have been elected by the citizens of the United States.

Our mission continues, although it may change direction, regardless of who holds these offices. So, while you may or may not know a lot about the Constitution, as members of the armed forces we continue to "fight" to uphold this document every day.

Central Skies

(Continued from Page 1)

event of a maritime crash."

Charge d'Affairs Mary Witt at the U.S. Embassy in Belize said she felt Operation Strike Out has been a very successful operation. "The important thing in this process is how much we can help the government of Belize to be a full partner in the region's counter-narcotic efforts. These exercises are important stepping stones in the process."

Witt also mentioned the Belize Defense Force was very impressed with the professionalism and the U.S. military's ability to sit themselves down in a unique situation and to perform the mission well. "I think that they're in awe of what JTF-Bravo and the other U.S. agencies here have been able to do here," she said.

Major General Gary Speer, deputy commander in chief for U.S. Southern Command in Miami, visited the operation in Belize. Speer said two of the most important elements of this nine-day, counter-drug exercise revolves around the training of various agencies and countries, and the deterrence factor it creates.

"Having these aircraft here lets them know that their nemeses are on the patrol and out to get them if they let their guard down."

The last time personnel from Soto Cano were in Belize was to assist with disaster relief after Hurricane Keith in October 2000.

Chaplain's Corner

Easter brings in new beginnings

By Chaplain (CPT) David Phillips
JTF-Bravo Chaplain

Christians everywhere celebrated Easter last Sunday, April 15. What is most important about Easter is not the Easter Bunny, but on Easter morning, preferably at sunrise, Christians celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. You may ask yourself, why is this so important? Well, who else do you know who has come back from the dead to live again and be seen by as many as 500 people who also saw Him die on the cross?

Death is that word that we never like to talk about, much less experience. And when death draws near, I have not met a person yet who did not search for a higher meaning of life.

Back in the late 1970s, I was a chaplain at a local hospital doing a Clinical Pastoral Education Unit on a cancer ward. That summer, I worked with 40 different cancer patients, of which eight died; some while I was in their presence. I really thought I would find some diehard that summer who did not believe in a higher being, much less life after death, but I did not.

Those patients who knew they were dying all had a strong faith and did not fear death other than leaving their families. Thus, that is the good news of Easter. No longer do any of us have to face death as the final end. As believers, death is a step of faith simply from this life into the next with God Almighty.

Paul the apostle said, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." Also, Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "I tell you the truth; today you will be with me in paradise."

So, what Easter holds for us is a new beginning. Death is not the end for believers but rather another beginning. Life now has an eternal future and meaning as well. We can face tomorrow with confidence that our time on this earth has a purpose.

For those who are believers that Jesus was the Son of God, and that he died on the cross for our sins and rose the third day, each day is a new beginning and the future is bright. Telling others the good news is just the beginning. We can face death with the confidence that we never have to face it alone because someone, Jesus, has been there and overcame it and lives on in our hearts and our lives. Each day is the dawn of the future that never ends; it is only a step toward immortality.

The Iguana



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100 percent tuition paid with new Top-Up program

By Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn
Public Affairs

A new program provides active-duty servicemembers with essentially 100-percent tuition assistance by allowing them to combine the current 75-percent TA benefit with their Montgomery GI Bill.

"As an education services officer, this is the first time I have seen a 100-percent, tuition-free program that allows military personnel from all branches to use the Department of Veterans Affairs GI Bill together with the education center tuition assistance funds," said Mo Eckols, Soto Cano's education service officer.

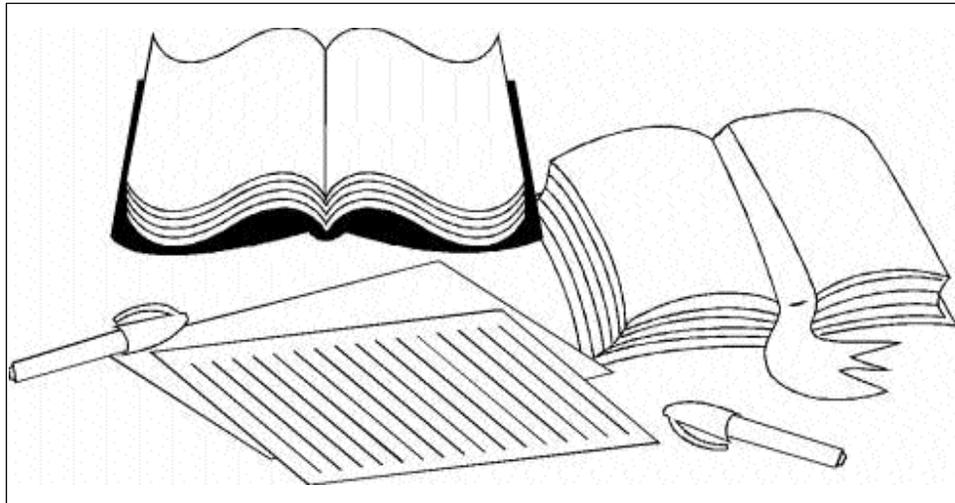
The program, called Top-Up, is available to all active-duty servicemembers eligible for both Montgomery GI Bill benefits and service-funded tuition assistance.

"Top-Up benefits, retroactive for courses starting on or after Oct. 30, 2000, provide students with up to 36 months of payments which do not impact the 36 months of (MGIB) benefits," said Jim Sweizer, Air Force voluntary education branch chief.

"If a student claims 24 months of Top-Up while on active duty, and after separating from the service then enters school, they are still eligible for the full 36 months of MGIB benefits," Sweizer said.

However, students should remember Top-Up payments are borrowed against future GI Bill payments, education officials said.

The process for getting reimbursed is very simple.



The first step is to go to the education center.

- Complete a VA Form 22-1990 to initiate the GI Bill's 25-percent tuition reimbursement,

- Complete the standard tuition assistance form to cover the 75-percent tuition,

- Pay the college the 25 percent up front,

- Receive the GI Bill's reimbursement in about two months.

Students must send the Department of Veterans Affairs both the VA and the TA forms.

Future monthly GI Bill benefits are reduced by the amount of Top-Up dollars claimed, divided by 36 -- the total number of months of MGIB benefits. Therefore, a student who received a total of \$360 in Top-Up payments would receive \$640 per month instead of the current maximum MGIB benefit of \$650. If in a career the student used \$3,600 in Top-Up reimbursement, the 36 months of MGIB

benefits would be reduced to 36 monthly maximum payments of \$540.

The essence of the program gives servicemembers more flexibility on how to use their MGIB. Rather than using 75-percent tuition assistance or the MGIB benefit, now servicemembers have the choice to supplement their tuition assistance for complete compensation of all tuition fees.

"Top-Up benefits are dependent on course length and generally not the cost, although total Top-Up benefits in any given term cannot exceed the MGIB full-time rate of \$650 per month," Sweizer said.

Case in point: Tech. Sgt. Christina Miko, an AFFOR quality assurance evaluator, completed five, two-month terms with the University of Maryland.

After 36 semester hours, at \$217 an hour, she paid more than \$7,800 for a year of full-time tuition. She had two choices to fund the schooling. She could either use Air Force TA, in which her 25-

percent obligation of \$1,950 would come out of pocket, or she could use her GI Bill, which would have reimbursed her year of study at \$7,800, but reduced her GI Bill by nearly one-third of the \$23,400 total benefit.

Using Top-Up, Christina would have the GI Bill pick up the \$1,950 TA didn't cover, and her total GI Bill benefit would be reduced to only \$21,450.

That is a GI Bill savings of \$5,850 — money that is still available for future educational needs. The only caveat is if she were to take classes after retirement. At her current GI Bill balance, her 36-month, VA educational benefit would be reduced from \$650 a month to \$595.

With 15 years of service, Miko said, "This is the best thing they have brought out since the GI Bill in 1985. I think people who couldn't afford classes, now can."

"The Top-Up Tuition Program is having an excellent response from Air Force personnel who are requesting reimbursement for present and past college courses. It has had a motivating impact on Air Force personnel to continue toward their degree completion," Eckols said.

Congress approved the Top-Up program as part of the Veterans Benefit and Healthcare Improvement Act of 2000.

Government-funded Top-Up benefits cannot be used to supplement spouse tuition assistance that receives its funding from private sources.

Students wishing to receive Top-Up benefits should contact the base education office located at H-56.

(Editors note: Information contributed by Air Force Print News)

Air Force education program increases affiliated schools



By Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn
Public Affairs

After awarding 209,000 associate's degrees since it began in 1982, the Community College of the Air Force turns 29 this year.

As the world's largest community college, CCAF is fulfilling its mission to develop the academic potential of Air Force enlisted personnel.

Recently, CCAF brought base education services online with a system that allows career advisers access to Air Force members' educational records.

"Soto Cano Air Base Education Center has offered multimedia-automated, on-line services and programs since February 2000. For more than a year, Air Force personnel have been inputting and retrieving direct on-line, problem-solving information from CCAF, colleges and Air Force site classes," said Mo Eckols, education services officer here.

Future plans include expanding the system, so students can use the Internet to check their progress toward earning a degree.

"The significant advantage," said Eckols, "is an Air Force member can input or retrieve data from their hooch, their office, or the moon at no cost, seven days a week, 24 hours a day."

Air Force personnel are sending inquiries to CCAF via 24-hour e-mail at edservices.ccaf@maxwell.af.mil. Although this is an excellent way to check CCAF records, transcripts and database, students will still need to request test scores from the actual testing source and officially send them through education centers to CCAF on an AF Form 968, said Eckols.

The college's accomplishments in job-related education give airmen an opportunity they might not otherwise have had because of the demands of military life. The degrees are directly related to Air Force Specialty Codes and are designed to sharpen the technical, leadership and management capabilities of the enlisted corps.

Policy council members recently voted to recommend an increase in the number of affiliated member schools from 122 to 135. Increasing the number of affiliated schools means students can receive credit for more courses applicable to CCAF degrees.

Areas being explored through CCAF include offering enlisted Air Force members an opportunity to earn additional academic degrees or professional credentials, such as certificates or licenses in specific fields.

Most recently, CCAF has been granted authority by the Federal Aviation Administration to verify that Air Force individuals meet all requirements and to issue the certificate of eligibility to take the exam for an airframe and power plant certificate.

The college is also exploring options to expand opportunities for obtaining a wider variety of associate's and bachelor's degrees including coalitions of educational partners and a variety of distance learning opportunities.

(Contributing information was provided by by Lynis Cox, Air University Public Affairs)

RIGHT: This grape border, like most designs in the carpets, has a Biblical meaning. The grape symbolizes the unification of the Old and New Testaments. BELOW: Working until minutes before the procession, this worker puts the finishing touches on the carpet drawing.



Easte

Spending holidays away from loved members know all too well. Fortunately vantage of taking part in one of the most s the world.

Comayagua may have its rough parts, l put aside as the city geared up for the liv Cross.”

Soto Cano’s chapel staff loaded up ne and brought them into the city early that carpet drawings. Many others from Sot ed, hot streets.

The carpets were made with sawdust c ioned into meticulous designs and artwo

Most people started their drawings evening before and worked through the n for the morning’s procession to walk thr

According to Comayaguan tour guide pet drawings is originally a Guatemalan t 1963 when a member of the Zapata family front of The Cathedral, located in the c Guatemalan dignitary as a type of gestur

From then on, the tradition spread thr Tegucigalpa.

The family who originally started it, n

Artwork like this rendition of Michelangelo’s “The Creation of Adam,” which adorns the Cistine Chapel in the Vatican City, displays the talents of Honduran families and organizations who make them. By the end of the day, this piece of art will be destroyed by the procession and followers. Instead of using sawdust, most people use granular salt to make the bright whites in the drawings.



ABOVE: Members of the family who originated the carpet drawing tradition in the 1960s make the finishing touches on their drawing using stencils. It’s one of the many techniques used in making the elaborate designs of sawdust. RIGHT: Sawdust is collected year-round by wood workers and is given out free so there will be enough for drawings such as this one stretching a full block.



Stepping over the brightly colored car en is the symbol of tourism in Hondur.

Celebrations

always hard, as service-

od Friday all of that was

servicemembers in vans

h bright colors and fash-

e silent procession the

ll Perdomo, making car-

. It began in Honduras in

comayagua and then into

as their carpet drawing in

front of their house along with a couple dozen other families and organi-

With solemn reverence, the procession made its way through the streets

Beginning at one of the city's historical churches, it made its way

Taking hours to go just a couple miles, the procession finally made its

Behind it, a trail of colored sawdust laid waiting to be swept up or sal-

Another event servicemembers may not have had a chance to experi-

As the inspirational sermon was delivered, the people were dazzled

Juanita Phillips, Chaplain David Phillips' visiting wife, gave the serv-

After the service, everyone was invited to add a flower to the "Living

More chapel services were held throughout the day.

(Compiled by SPC Sarah Maxwell)



The spirit of Easter was alive as the "Living Cross" was radiated by sunlight. People were asked to put a flower on the cross to symbolize how Christians worship a living god.

Photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn



Photos by SPC Sarah Maxwell



A local Comayaguan girl reenacts a Biblical event as Mary Magdalena holding the cloth of Jesus. Many of the experiences the Bible tells of Jesus on his way to the crucifixion were reenacted on Good Friday in Comayagua.

wing of a chicken, the beginning of the procession makes its way through the crowded streets. The chick-

was done by the Institute of Honduran Tourism. Many families and organizations made carpet drawings.

Ancient Mayan ruins of Copán explored with MWR trip

By SPC Sarah Maxwell
Iguana Editor

One of the largest benefits of being a military member is the opportunity to see parts of the world the average American may not even know exists. Honduras, with its rich historical past, breathtaking mountain views and beautiful coastlines offers much for the military explorer.

Nowhere in the country does the magnificence of the Central American historical culture show itself than in the ancient Mayan ruins of Copán located just south of the Guatemalan border.

The Mayan city of Copán is part of a large network of ancient Mayan ruins located in Southern Mexico and throughout Northern Central America dating from almost two thousand years ago.

Discovered in 1576, the ruins have played an important role in understanding the ancient Mayan people. Copán, with its many hieroglyphs (symbolic writings), is different from the rest of the Mayan ruins because of the predominance of art carved into its stone mounds and sculptures.

It is also home to the longest inscribed text in the New World, the Hieroglyphic Stairway, which is now covered from the elements to protect its still mysterious writings.

Soto Cano's Morale, Welfare and Recreation program makes it easy to visit this monumental piece of history by offering a two-night, three-day trip almost every weekend.

Leaving on a typical sunny, warm Saturday morning, nine people loaded their bags into the MWR van to experience a piece of Honduras away from the base.

During the six-hour drive through the winding mountain roads, passengers were treated with the sites of the rural countryside and a glimpse or two of the monkeys hanging out on the branches of the trees that border the road.

After arriving at the hotel and checking in, the present town of Copán was ready to be conquered.

The modern city of Copán may not be as old as the Mayan city, but it does have its own charm and history to discover.

While in the central courtyard, visitors can see the ancient mesh with the modern. Women wearing traditional Honduran garb carrying baskets precariously

balanced on their heads travel down the narrow cobblestone streets, but just around the corner a modern Internet café may be nestled between souvenir shops.

Waking early the next morning, the MWR group was ready for what they came for. About two minutes from the hotel, the ancient city was ready to be explored. With a guided tour led by a colorful character who called himself "Smoking Tony" after Mayan rulers, a glimpse was given into the mysterious culture.

Hieroglyphs were explained with as much knowledge as modern archeologists have today, but much is still not known about their writings.

The visitors were even given a quick lesson on how to read the Mayan number system, which was the first to use zero as a number.

For some of the group it was an incredibly exciting experience to be standing on the ancient city's soil.

Not being able to contain her excitement about being at the ruins, Alexia S. Grimes exclaimed, "I saw this on the Discovery Channel, and I'm here!" while enthusiastically raising her arms at the magnificent sculpture about a foot in front of her.

She came down to Soto Cano from Rock Island, Ill. to visit her husband CPT John H. Grimes, who is the contracting director here.

Having become interested in Latin American history when working at the University of Texas library's Spanish Collection, and because of her life-long love of archeology, she was thrilled about being in Copán.

"Besides Copán being a dream realized, Copán is a fantastic recipe for fun because there's an interesting mix of antiquity, modern sites and everyday life," she said.

The ancient Mayan culture may have faded away about a thousand years ago, but the Honduran people are a living testament to their ancestors.

More than 6 million people who live in the region are direct descendants of the ancient Maya and speak one of the 28 languages recognized by linguists.

"As a tourist, you have an opportunity to experience life not only how it was at one time, but to also see what Copán has become," said Alexia.

After experiencing the ancient city, the group went their separate ways. Some opted to take a horseback ride up

the mountain to a secluded hotel, and some went to relax by the pool for the afternoon.

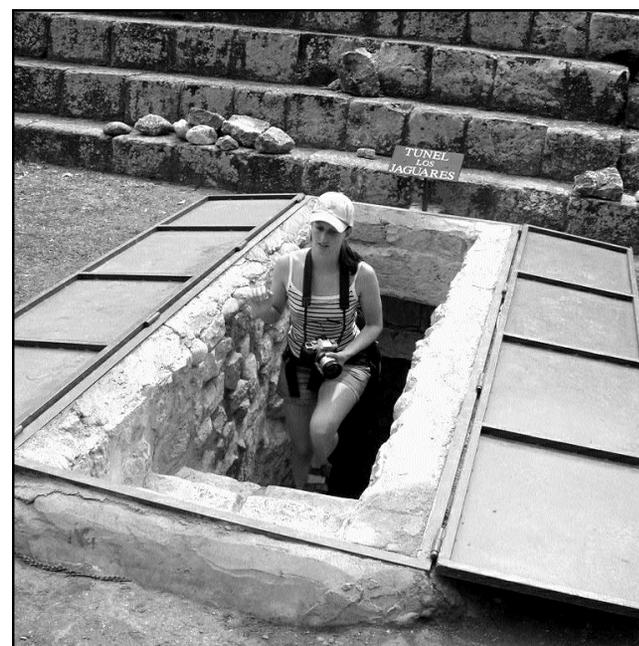
With the flexibility of the MWR trip's schedule, almost any traveler can find something they love to do in Copán.

And for the non-Spanish-speaking tourist, a knowledgeable MWR employee is always there to assist any needs a he or she may have.

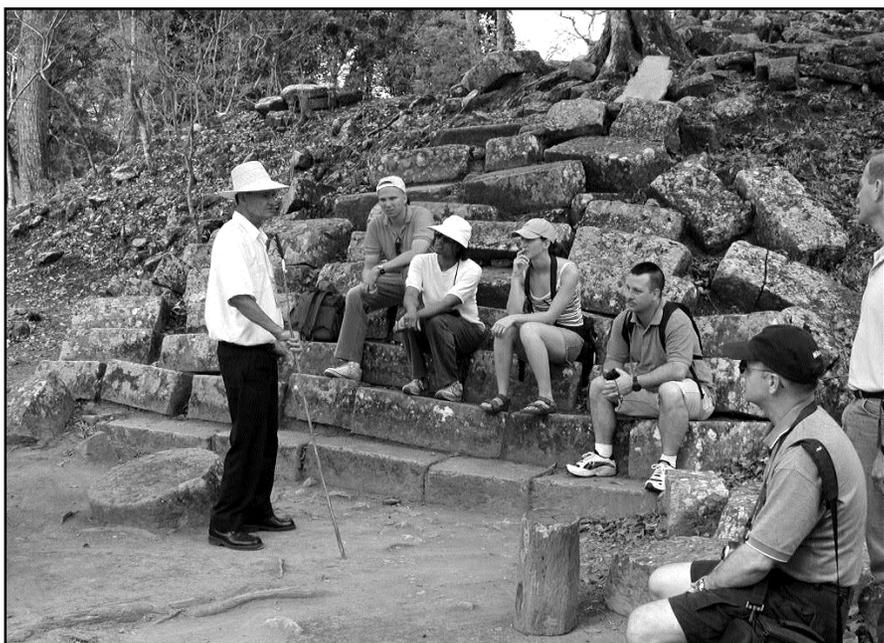
The trip ended Monday morning after a last-minute souvenir shopping spree, and the troop loaded up in the van for the drive back to base.

Having easy accessibility and fair prices, MWR trips are easily available to most servicemembers.

"Anyone down here who has not taken advantage of seeing the Copán Ruins, Roatan and historical Comayagua is cheating (himself or herself) of the cultural experience," said John Grimes.



2LT Erin McLaughlin, MEDEL, exits the "Tunnel of Jaguars" at the base of a temple in the city's center.



Tour guide "Smoking Tony" explains some of the history of Copán while members of the MWR tour lounge on a thousand-year-old mound.



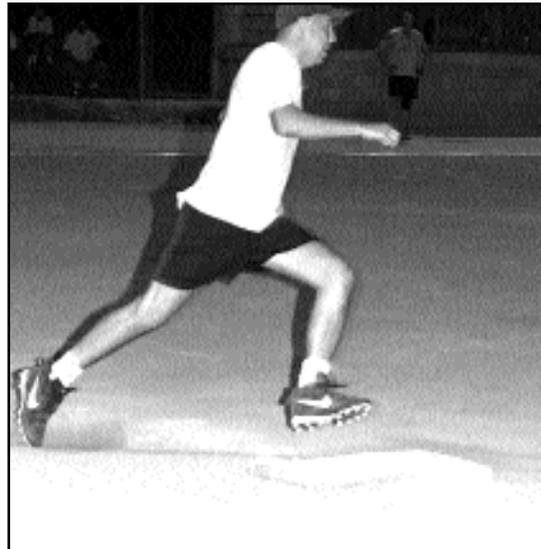
This mound, located in the urban center of Copán, would've had a facade or another sculpture placed on top. They can be seen at the Copán museum in the park.

Photos by SPC Sarah Maxwell



Photos by SPC Sarah Maxwell

ABOVE: AFFOR player Todd Abbott is zeroed in and ready to blast the softball on opening night. Right: Also playing for the AFFOR, T.J. Hogan sprints past first base. AFFOR went on to win 22-7 over MEDEL.



Softball season kicks off

2001 Softball Schedule

- Teams: 1. ARFOR
2. Fire Dawgs
3. 1-228th
4. JSF
5. AFFOR
6. MEDEL
7. Comayagua

	April 23	April 24	April 25
6 p.m.	6-3	2-1	1-4
7 p.m.	1-5	4-3	2-5
8 p.m.	4-7	6-5	3-7

	April 30	May 1	May 2
6 p.m.	4-6	1-3	4-5
7 p.m.	3-2	6-2	6-1
8 p.m.	7-1	5-7	7-2

	May 7	May 8	May 9
6 p.m.	3-5	3-6	1-2
7 p.m.	4-2	5-1	3-4
8 p.m.	6-7	7-4	5-6

	May 14	May 15	May 16
6 p.m.	4-1	6-4	2-6
7 p.m.	5-2	2-3	3-1
8 p.m.	7-3	1-7	7-5

	May 21	May 22	May 23
6 p.m.	5-4	5-3	6-3
7 p.m.	1-6	2-4	1-5
8 p.m.	2-7	7-6	4-7

Thursdays will be makeup days.

Season standings as of April 15

	Wins	Losses
AFFOR	2	0
JSF	1	0
Fire Dawgs	2	1
1-228th	1	1
ARFOR	0	1
Comayagua	0	1
MEDEL	0	2

Games played

April 10

Fire Dawgs	19	ARFOR	7
AFFOR	22	MEDEL	7

April 11

AFFOR	15	Fire Dawgs	13
1-228th	10	Comayagua	7

April 12

JSF	29	Medel	3
Fire Dawgs	11	1-228th	10

Preventive Medicine

Kick Butts: Leave that nasty nicotine habit at curb

By MAJ Marie Price
Preventive Medicine

Make a difference in your life and quit the use of tobacco! Why is it so hard to quit? Mark Twain said, "Quitting smoking is easy. I've done it a thousand times." Maybe you've tried to quit, too; over 40 million people have made the decision sometime in their life to quit. So why is quitting for good so hard for so many people? The answer is nicotine.

Nicotine is the addictive drug in tobacco. It is found in substantial amounts in all forms of tobacco. Nicotine is absorbed readily from tobacco smoke in the lungs and from smokeless tobacco in the mouth and nose and rapidly spreads throughout the body. The body becomes physically and psychologically dependent on nicotine.

Why? Because nicotine is as addictive as heroin and cocaine.

Nicotine produces pleasurable feelings that make the smoker want to smoke more. As the smoker increases the number of cigarettes, the body adapts to the nicotine. After a while, the smoker develops a tolerance to the drug nicotine, which leads to a greater increase in smoking. Eventually, the smoker reaches a certain level and then smokes to maintain this level of nicotine. A sudden cessation of smoking leads to nicotine withdrawal.

Nicotine withdrawal is both physical and psychological. Symptoms usually occur within a few hours of the last cigarette and peak about 48 to 72 hours later. These symptoms can last for a few days to several weeks. Physically, it is the body's reaction to the absence of the drug nicotine.

Symptoms may include: depression, irritability, trouble sleeping, headache,

dizziness, difficulty concentrating, etc. Psychologically, the smoker is faced with giving up a habit.

If you've smoked for any length of time, smoking has become linked with nearly everything you do -- waking up in the morning, eating, reading, watching TV, drinking coffee, etc.

It takes time to "un-link" smoking from these activities. However, in order to be a successful ex-smoker, both must be dealt with.

How does any individual successfully quit?

There really is no right way to quit. Successful cessation may include one or a combination of methods including step-by-step manuals, attending self-help classes or counseling or using a nicotine replacement therapy (zyban or nicotine patch).

Anything that is legal, ethical and effective is worth trying; this could include chewing sugarless gum, eating carrot sticks, hiding ashtrays, asking others not to smoke around you and spending time in places where smoking is prohibited.

If you are serious about quitting the use of tobacco, call or come by the preventive medicine office Monday through Friday, Building O-13, ext. 4200/4500.



Kick Butts: A Smoking Cessation Class

A class to teach you how to cease the use of tobacco is set for April 24 at 6 p.m. at the spiritual and fitness center on base.

BRIEFS

Mini-triathlon coming

Start training now for the mini-triathlon scheduled for May 12. The event will begin at 6 a.m. and end at approximately 11 a.m. The race will consist of a 500-yard swim, 13-mile bike ride and 3.1-mile run. The start of the race will be at the swimming pool and end between Cabanas and the track. A pre-race pasta dinner will be held at The Zone at 6 p.m. May 11. The award ceremony will take place at 6 p.m. May 12 at The Zone. Individuals and teams are welcome to participate. For more information, contact MAJ Marc Thoreson at ext. 4140/4141.

Extinguisher check-up

The fire prevention office would like to remind everyone to inspect the fire extinguishers in your living area as well as your work centers. If you encounter any problems with the extinguishers or have any questions, contact Senior Airman Jessie Cadavid, extinguisher maintenance technician at the fire department at ext. 4553/4343/4818, Building Z-09.

MWR facilities' hours

Supply center:

Monday to Thursday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Saturday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Swimming pool:

Monday to Sunday 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Library:

Monday to Thursday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Friday, Saturday 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Construction areas

Use care and caution around construction areas.

Construction sites around base are for contract personnel only. Even if the construction site is a short cut to someone's destination, they need to go around. Contractors are liable for all injuries occurring on their sites. Questions concerning construction should be referred to the base civil engineer's office at ext. 4473.

No open alcohol

Alcohol and evening strolls don't mix. Per Directive 1, personnel may not carry alcoholic beverages in open containers on base. Alcohol may be consumed in personal hooches, sanctioned clubs, sporting events and other places approved by the Commander. Open alcohol containers including bottles, cans and cups may not be carried to or outside of these designated areas. This directive applies to all U.S. personnel.

Servicemembers aid in medical care, gives 'eyes,' hope to Lempiran locals

By 1st Lt. Kim Garbett
Public Affairs

The dust choked up around the helicopter as it landed in the small soccer field at a little Honduran school in late March in Coalaca, a small village in the Gracias, Lempira, region March 23. The humidity swallowed the air up making any breeze as good as a Christmas in July.

Old women, young children, mothers, grandfathers and many others stood in long lines, awaiting medical treatment. For many Honduran children, it was the first time they've had medical care of any kind. For many older men and women, it was their first pair of glasses.

One woman, age 61, with her arm wrapped gently in an olive-colored cloth sling, was laughing and crying as her glasses were fit onto her face by the optometrist and she could see clearly for the first time in many years. "I am very happy to be able to see so much better," she said. "It's truly a blessing to see God's wonderful world all around you."

They all live simply with what they have in a world where very little is taken for granted and where each little gesture of friendship is a little piece of gold.

It was an amazing world to the non-village trotters visiting Honduras from the United States. Many of them have never seen a world shaped quite like this, except maybe on the Discovery Channel or in National Geographic. Yet here it was, staring them starkly in their face. Their mission was clear: To provide band-aid medical treatment wherever possible.

A group of 35 Army National Guard personnel, some active and some reserve, out of the C-109th Area Support Medical Battalion in Montrose, Colo., brought a little more sunshine to the tropical climate of Honduras and bearing gifts aplenty.

They came from all over the state of Colorado to visit six villages in seven days, spending a total of two weeks in the Gracias, Lempira, region of Honduras.

They provided medical care to more than 3,400 patients — almost 100 times the number of military personnel — all in just two short weeks. A small contingent of personnel out of Joint Task Force-Bravo's Medical Element also provided assistance for this general medical readiness training exercise (MEDRETE).

Anything from the usual preventive medicine classes to acute medical care services to dental care to veterinarian services can be provided during a general MEDRETE. One of the unique as-



Photo by 1st Lt. Kim Garbett

Of 3,400 people treated, these children wait patiently for medical care and treatment during a MEDRETE in the Gracias, Lempira region of Honduras.

pects of this exercise was the addition of optometry services. LTC Jeff Peters, on-site optometrist for the group, said that the optometry station does the best it can within the field condition's constraints to find them the best vision prescription possible.

"We can't do refractions or any other type of test we would normally do back in the states, (but) we try to ascertain their vision. We ask the patient questions, give them something to read and try to judge what they need as well by their age."

Peters said that most people they've tested in Honduras are farsighted. Unlike most people in the United States, he said, there hasn't been a need to see near. They don't do as much reading or work with computers, or the like, as we do in the states.

"Now, as they try to supplement their incomes and expand their economy (for some, that includes making clothes), they find they can't see to thread the needle or can't see something up close. It's amazing."

Peters also said that because of malnutrition, vision fades at an even more rapid rate. Some of the problems they run into are growths in the eye because of too much sun exposure, he continued, but those are normal for this area of the world.

"One of the most amazing things to me about seeing all this here is that although the people have very little material possessions, no running water and not much clothes, they are still so happy," said SPC Sheldon Smith, another medic who was working in the hot Honduran sun.

Smith is a deputy sheriff in Teluride, Colo., where there is a large

Hispanic population, so he assisted as best he could with translating.

SGT Sandy Hanson, another member of the C-109th Medical Battalion, is a nurse in her civilian career as well as with the MEDRETE team.

"The primitive methods of our care here amazes me, but it's great we're able to help this way," she began. "We're seeing things we don't normally see in the states, like head and body lice, cleft palates (advanced) ... a lot of it is a result of poor hygiene. We also see women's health care problems, such as urinary tract infections and yeast infections ... yet they still wear their best clothes out to see us," she said in an awed voice.

To Hanson, the care being provided is not enough, and it is frustrating to a degree. "The sad thing is that this is all only a temporary fix. We can give them shampoo for lice, but next week they'll have lice again. We can give them deworming pills, but next week they'll have worms again."

Hanson said in addition to the temporary fix, there is the issue of poverty.

"Many are so poor that the things we give to them (pills, medicine, shampoo, toothbrushes, eye glasses, etc.) may walk outside the schoolyard (where the team was set up) and will be sold just for them to have something to eat. It's very heart-tugging."

Hanson said this is her first time in Central America. "I really have a picture of what a third-world country is like now," she said. "It's the same everywhere, the poverty, the trash ... and yet the people are so happy and the families seem very close to each other. They have very tight-knit communities."