

U.S. Army South

Defense & Fraternity

October 2013



Inside this issue:

- 1-228th Aviation Regiment saves nine stranded off Honduran coast
- Army South wraps up staff talks with El Salvador

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U.S. Army South

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Front cover: A flight medic with the crew of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter assigned to the 1-228th Aviation Regiment brings up a Soldier after connecting a hoist during practice hoist operations with those assigned to the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) off the coast of Utila, Honduras, July 25. Two flight crews assigned to the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment practiced these operations by conducting rescue simulations with day and night iterations to stay proficient. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Steven K. Young)

Back cover: Spc. Pedro F. Romero, a U.S. Army South combat medic, reviews how to evacuate a casualty with a group of Guatemalan army, navy and civilian national police July 30 in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Army South conducted the tactical combat life saver subject matter expert exchange with Guatemala to share combat medical tactics and techniques to enhance and sustain both countries' military medical programs. (U.S. Army Photo by Miguel Negron, U.S. Army South Visual Information)



After making several visits to our partner nations over the past weeks, I have noticed a lot of similarities between ARSOUTH and our partner nation Armies. We are all entering an era of dynamic resourcing while increasing the potential to make a positive impact on regional security.

Dynamic resourcing may sound like a euphemism for decreased funding, and admittedly, everyone's funding (for operations and personnel) is decreasing. Figuring out how to do less with less is hard, and as ARSOUTH plows its way to that answer, we are also seeing how to be more efficient.

A chief ingredient to efficiency is good communications. If everyone at all levels has the same sight picture, we will be better at optimizing events (from training, conferences, personnel exchanges, etc.) because we will all be on the same azimuth.

We have to identify specific objectives for what we want to accomplish and then determine how to measure if we were successful. We cannot afford to go blindly executing events without knowing why we're doing them and what we want to accomplish (beyond simply executing events).

Our partner nations are in the same environment; they are trying to figure out what to do with fewer resources. I am pleased to observe they are working hard to execute priority missions, with clear objectives that are measureable. They are not trying to do the same with less.

We can work jointly with our partner nations on prioritizing missions and getting consensus on desired outcomes. We can be successful in missions we focus on while doing less with less.

I am also encouraged by our partner nations' ability to focus more on regional approaches and burden sharing.

Countering illicit networks must be done from a



Maj. Gen. Joseph P. DiSalvo (right), the U.S. Army South commanding general, and Salvadoran Brig. Gen. William Armando Mejia (left), the Salvadoran army chief of staff, listen to a presentation during the army-to-army staff talks in San Salvador, El Salvador, Aug. 13. (U.S. Army photo by Eric R. Lucero, U.S. Army South Public Affairs)

regional approach, no single nation can defeat the illicit network.

Central American partners appear ready to step up and establish multi-nation strategies focused on effectively countering illicit networks. I'm also seeing innovative strategies to harness minimum resources necessary for successful mission execution.

All across the area of operations there are partner nations ready to be centers of excellence - this is a testimony to this regional approach strategy.

Bottom line, ARSOUTH and our partner nations have good momentum towards achieving positive impacts while doing less with less.

Good communications (vertically and horizontally) are absolutely essential so we all see the same challenges, and determine if our efforts are successful or not.

I am very confident the ARSOUTH Team will continue to make a positive impact in our area of operations despite the resource environment.

Just ask CW3 Hanshaw and his crew about their rescue mission (Page 4).

"Juntos Podemos! - Together We Can!"

Maj. Gen. Joseph P. DiSalvo
Commanding General
U.S. Army South



Members of Joint Task Force-Bravo's 1-228th Aviation Regiment's flight crew Warrant Officer Zachary Lugo (top left), pilot, Sgt. Travis Mayo (left front), flight medic, Spc. Robert Clement (right front), crew chief, and Chief Warrant Officer Jay Hanshaw, (top right), pilot, pose for a photo in front of a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter at Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras, July 9. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jarrod R. Chavana)

1-228th Aviation Regiment crew rescues nine stranded off Honduran coast

2 Americans, 1 Canadian and 6 Hondurans hoisted from waters

Story by
Staff Sgt. Jarrod R. Chavana
Joint Task Force-Bravo Public Affairs

On July 2, a U.S. Army Utility Helicopter-60 from the 1-228 Aviation Regiment at Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras, was dispatched to the Caribbean Sea to help locate two Americans, one Canadian and six Hondurans, which had last been seen June 30.

“We flew in a snake pattern for nearly seven hours and covered more than 450 miles searching for them the first day, but to no avail,” said Chief Warrant Officer Jay Hanshaw, 1-228 pilot. “The second day we could see the water currents shifting west as we flew in the grid and after hours of searching we received a call from the U.S. Coast Guard to examine a small vessel more closely.”

With less than 90 minutes left to search for the vessel before the U.S. forces would conclude the search, the boat was spotted by the U.S. Coast Guard’s HC-130 Hercules.

At around 8:30 a.m. the aircrew reached the coordinates and could see the passengers were frantically twirling their shirts over their heads, waving their arms and hoping they were about to be rescued.

“The people on the boat were found more than 30

miles outside of the search grid and were being pulled into a current created by a storm off the coast of Belize,” said Hanshaw.

The aircrew of 1-228 would then hover over the drifting boat and prepare to hoist a medic out of the aircraft.

“We were hovering about 50 feet above the boat when I was hoisted from the helicopter on a rescue seat,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Travis Mayo, a 1-228 flight medic. “The rotor of the aircraft was pelting us with water and

swaying me and the boat from side to side. It even pushed the boat forward as if it were turned on.”

The rescue seat used was about 35 inches high and had two 12 inch by three inch collapsible seats, with two retention straps inside of a bright orange bag connected at the top.

In order to not capsize the boat and cause further injury Hanshaw decided to gain another 30 feet in altitude and help stop the boat from drifting even further away.

“We have protocols for just about every scenario, but we had to figure out the best strategy to save the passengers because we knew they would be weak and dehydrated,” said Hanshaw.

Mayo accessed the injuries of the nine crew members and sent the injured and weakest up first. The passengers hadn’t eaten in days and were only able

to drink rain water, which they caught inside of their ice chest.

“One of the females had hurt her wrist a week prior,



A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from 1-228th Aviation Regiment lowers a flight medic into the ocean to conduct hoist operations with Soldiers from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) off the coast of Utila, Honduras, July 25. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Steven K. Young)



A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from 1-228th Aviation Regiment lowers a flight medic into the ocean to conduct hoist operations with Soldiers from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) off the coast of Utila, Honduras, July 25. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Steven K. Young)

so I examined her splint before securing her on the rescue seat and then I sat on the other seat,” said Mayo. “She was scared and I wanted to ensure she was going to make it to the aircraft.”

Mayo, physically exhausted, would be hoisted back and forth from the helicopter to the vessel another three times, before they decided to try a different plan.

Trying to use pin-point accuracy to place Mayo into the boat, it began to tax him physically, so the aircrew came up with a strategy to lower him into the Caribbean Sea and have him swim a few meters to the boat.

This helped loosen the strain of the water pounding the vessel and its crew.

“I was then able to load the last six people onto the rescue seat two at a time,” said Mayo.

During the nearly two hour rescue, the aircraft flew to

the island of Roatan and landed with less than 30 minutes of fuel remaining.

This wasn’t Hanshaw’s first rescue.

While deployed to Afghanistan, he flew a solo Blackhawk into a hot landing zone to save the lives of two U.S. Marines.

After a narrow escape, where a round from an AK-47 ripped through the side cockpit door, striking the ballistic cover of his helmet and imbedding shrapnel into his cheek, Hanshaw would vacate the area and receive the Army’s Distinguished Flying Cross for his bravery.

“Daily training ensures our aircrew members maintain the highest levels of proficiency and readiness for real world events. Although you may never know when you will use this training, it’s times like this you’re glad you have it,” said Hanshaw. 🇺🇸

Joint Task Force-Bravo's 1-228th Aviation Regiment pilots Chief Warrant Officer Jay Hanshaw and Warrant Officer Zachary Lugo conduct a pre-flight check inside a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter at Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras, July 9. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jarrod R. Chavana)





Lt. Col. Jerrod W. Killian, the U.S. Army South command veterinarian, performs a physical examination on a Colombian military working dog with army veterinarians during a visit to Bogota, Colombia, in July. (Courtesy photo)

Army South Soldiers, veterinarians help partner nations build working dog programs

Story by
Eric R. Lucero
U.S. Army South Public Affairs

During the month of July, a handful of U.S. Army South Soldiers traveled to Colombia and Honduras to conduct combined training exchanges with partner nation soldiers and civilians.

While SMEEs are not an uncommon form of engagement within Army South's area of responsibility, the topic of these two proved to be an exception. The focus for each one of these engagements centered on military working dogs.

During the two engagements, the focus of each SMEE shifted slightly. While Colombia possesses a more robust MWD program, the Honduran army is in its

early stages of development.

"Because the two countries are in different stages of their programs, we chose to center our exchanges based on what was important to each of them," said Master Sgt. Kirby West, the Army South military working dog program manager.

The veterinary working group focused on exchanging classes to create better understanding of each country's Veterinary Corps and MWD programs. The classes led to discussions on challenges each program faces and points of collaboration.

During the trip to Colombia, the Army South contingent chose to highlight the proper care of the working dogs to include the detection and treatment of common diseases among the dogs, specifically

Leishmaniasis, a disease caused by protozoan parasites that is transmitted by the bite of certain fly species. Leishmaniasis is a disease that affects MWDs and Soldiers, often leaving permanent scars and potentially impacting force readiness.

During the SMEE, West and Lt. Col. Jerrod W. Killian, the Army South chief of clinical operations and command veterinarian, worked with 15 veterinarians and two dog handlers from the Colombian army. This exchange was the first time all 15 Colombian veterinarians were gathered in one area for a class.

“The discussions centered on the prevention and treatment of MWDs diagnosed with diseases specifically Leishmaniasis,” said West. “We also discussed other important topics such as the proper care and treatment of the working dogs while they are deployed.”

Both groups presented veterinary classes, and discussions geared toward mitigating the impact of Leishmaniasis. In addition, the Colombians learned how to collect tissue samples of a working dog with active Leishmaniasis. This was the first time most of the Colombian veterinarians were shown how to collect samples.

Currently, the working life of a Colombian MWD is about five years. In the U.S., a working dog can be expected to work up to 10 years. With proper disease detection and care of their MWDs, the Colombian army is hoping to extend the working life of their approximately 3,500 working dogs.

“The Colombian

“There is no piece of equipment that can replace these dogs. So, keeping them healthy is critical and requires a deliberate and robust veterinary team.”

*- Lt. Col. Jerrod W. Killian,
U.S. Army South chief of clinical operations
and command veterinarian*

military fully understands the value of their working dogs in detecting improvised explosive devices and narcotics,” said Killian, who led the veterinarian SMEE. “There is no piece of equipment that can replace these dogs. So, keeping them healthy is critical and requires a deliberate and robust veterinary team. The Colombian Army has increased the number of veterinarians in uniform from three to 15 over the last year. This investment in veterinarians will certainly extend the working lifespan of Colombian MWDs.”

Prior to leaving Colombia, the Army South contingent toured one of Colombia’s largest military kennels and received information on Colombia’s MWD breeding program.

With the cost and time commitment invested in selecting and training a working dog, the importance of an effective breeding program becomes vital. In the U.S.,

a dog selected to become a MWD does not start training until approximately 15 months of age, while in Colombia, dogs as young as four months begin their training to become MWDs.

“The Colombian army’s breeding program appears to have found the right way to breed dogs to become MWDs,” said West. “They have successfully bred



Master Sgt. Kirby West, the U.S. Army South military working dog program manager, works with a Colombian military working dog during a mission in Bogota, Colombia, in July. (Courtesy photo)



A Colombian soldier works with a military working dog during a demonstration in Bogota, Colombia, in July. (Courtesy photo)

more than 140 dogs with a 100 percent success rate.”

After leaving Colombia, the Army South team shifted their focus to assist the Honduran army in their implementation of a brand new military working dog program. Honduras began the construction of their first kennel and purchased their first MWDs in May of this year.

While they currently only have seven dogs, the Honduran army hopes to have that number swell to 30 dogs by mid next year.

“It’s a new program and they are reaching throughout the region for assistance,” said West.

Dominican soldiers are working with Honduran MWD handlers to train them on the proper use of the MWDs.

In September, there is a plan to send 20 Honduran handlers to Colombia for training.

The Honduran army commanders see the importance of a strong MWD program in countering transnational organized crime, said West.

“These dogs are a force multiplier,” said West. “They can detect and locate substances that we can’t see.”

Like in Colombia, an emphasis on the care of the dogs was stressed to the Honduran soldiers in attendance.

The Army South contingent gave classes on where and how to use the MWDs, the cost of maintenance for the dogs, equipment requirements, certification and training standards and a veterinarian brief on the initial and continuing care for the MWDs.

“Our SMEE with the Hondurans focused on the operational planning and utilization, the organizational structure and certification and training of an MWD program,” said West. “This is important in the implementation of a successful MWD program.”

Even though the MWD programs in Colombia and Honduras are in vastly different stages of their development, the importance of the programs to the security of the region remains the same.

And while security and stability in the Central American region remains crucial, West and Killian believe lessons learned from both SMEEs can have a lasting impact on MWD programs in the United States as well.

“The ability to exchange information and dialogue with both armies will have a lasting effect on both countries’ dog programs,” said West. “We can certainly learn just as much from our partners as they can learn from us.”



Veterinarians collect a tissue sample from a Colombian military working dog to test for Leishmaniasis, a disease that affects MWDs and soldiers, potentially impacting force readiness. (Courtesy photo)

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To see Army South's new command video magazine, please visit www.youtube.com/usarmysouth or go to our homepage at www.arsouth.army.mil.

The command video magazine is published monthly and is produced and edited by Army South Public Affairs broadcasters: Sgt. Robert Quintero, Sgt. Deylon Douglass, and Frederick Hoyt.



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U.S. Army South, Salvadoran army wrap up 6th annual staff talks

*Story and photos by
Eric R. Lucero
U.S. Army South Public Affairs*

Maj. Gen. Joseph P. DiSalvo, the U.S. Army South commanding general, and Salvadoran Brig. Gen. William Armando Mejia, the Salvadoran army chief of staff, signaled the end of the sixth annual army-to-army staff talks between the U.S. and Salvadoran armies by signing a memorandum of understanding in San Salvador, El Salvador, Aug. 14.

Army South, as the Army's executive agent, conducted the staff talks with the Salvadoran army in an effort to create a bilateral forum for strategic-level discussions between the respective armies.

The staff talks program seeks to promote professional partnerships and increase interaction between partner nation armies.

The engagements enhance army-to-army contacts and mutual understanding, providing the partner nation armies with insights concerning specific U.S. Army programs, areas of mutual interest, and assisting partner nation armies in areas of modernization or reform.

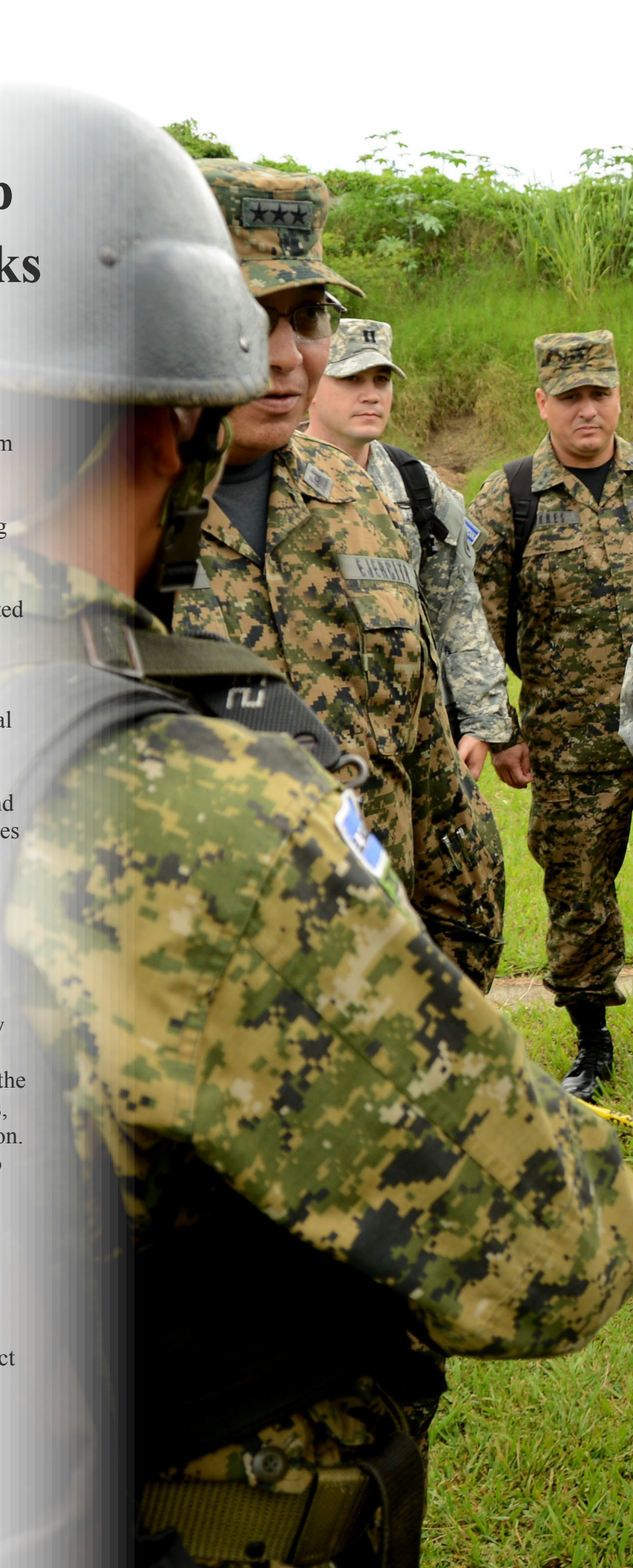
"We've had a very close relationship with the Salvadoran army through the years," said DiSalvo. "The purpose of these staff talks is to strengthen that relationship so that we can work together to successfully face the challenges in this region."

The staff talks have been instrumental in enhancing the interoperability and cooperation between the two armies, which have contributed to increased stability in the region.

Throughout the many steering sessions leading up to this week-long event, the two armies worked to develop a bilateral engagement plan that includes knowledge, capabilities and support for current and future peace-keeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and other combined operations.

The result of those meetings produced 24 agreed to actions that include professional development and subject matter expert exchanges that will take place throughout fiscal year 2014.

"The staff talks provide a strategic line of effort



Maj. Gen. Joseph P. DiSalvo, the commanding general of U.S. Army South, speaks with two Salvadoran army special forces soldiers after a demonstration in San Salvador, El Salvador, Aug. 13.





Col. Jerome Jackson, the U.S. Army South G-2, shakes hands with a Salvadoran soldier during a meeting prior to the army-to-army staff talks at the Circulo Militar in San Salvador, El Salvador, Aug. 12.

between the two armies in order to coordinate the events for the upcoming fiscal years to include subject matter expert exchanges,”

said Salvadoran Lt. Col. Raul Torres, the Salvadoran army liaison officer to the U.S. Military Group in the U.S. Embassy in El Salvador.

“The importance for our group is that we receive all of this knowledge on how to train our soldiers and officers,” he added. “This forum helps the way we are able to communicate directly army-to-army and enforce the link to provide a stronger partnership.”

“Strengthening the relationship with the Salvadoran army

through these talks will have lasting effects on the peace and stability of the region,” said DiSalvo. “With its

highly capable military and law enforcement agencies serving as models of professionalism in the region, El Salvador is a key player in enhancing security in the region.”

In addition to being a key partner in the region, El Salvador has continued to support coalition efforts in the Middle East.

“El Salvador has proven to be a reliable partner in the War on Terror,” said Maj. Sergio Trejo, the Army South Central America desk officer for El Salvador. “They have deployed more than 3,400 soldiers during 12 consecutive troop rotations to Iraq, and currently have forces deployed to Afghanistan in



Salvadoran Brig. Gen. William Armando Mejia (left), the Salvadoran army chief of staff, and Maj. Gen. Joseph P. DiSalvo (right), the U.S. Army South commanding general, sign a future bilateral training agreement during the closing ceremony of the army-to-army staff talks in San Salvador, El Salvador, Aug. 14.

support of the International Security Assistance Force mission."

In addition to the deployments to the Middle East, the Salvadoran army participates annually with Army South and other partner nation armies and security forces in humanitarian, natural disaster preparation and security exercises, such as Peacekeeping Operations-Americas, Fuerzas Aliadas Humanitarias and PANAMAX.

Salvadoran Col. Guillermo Enrique Galicia, the Salvadoran G-5 civil affairs director, also believes the week-long staff talks are a crucial mechanism that provides an opportunity to maintain a commitment to support each nation face respective challenges.

"Both armies have always supported each other," said Galicia. "When the U.S. has requested, the Salvadoran army has always been ready and willing to provide troops. In addition, the U.S. Army also provides logistic and training support.

"There has been a long-standing brotherhood between both countries," he continued. "Together we can solve our problems and united we work better."


This past summer, Army South planned and

"With its highly capable military and law enforcement agencies serving as models of professionalism in the region, El Salvador is a key player in enhancing security in the region."

*- Maj. Gen. Joseph P. DiSalvo,
U.S. Army South commanding general*

conducted Beyond the Horizon-El Salvador, a humanitarian and civic assistance operation that provided training for both American and Salvadoran military and government personnel, while providing medical, dental, veterinary and engineering support to rural communities in Central and South America.

The overall objective of the U.S. Army Staff Talks Program in Latin America is to promote peace and stability in Central and South America, and the Caribbean through mutual understanding, partnership, and cooperation.

In addition to El Salvador, Army South also conducts annual army-to-army staff talks with Brazil, Chile and Colombia on behalf of the U.S. Army and as part of the U.S. Southern Command's theater security cooperation mission in Central and South America and the Caribbean. 

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* U.S. Army South Command App coming soon!



Staff Sgt. Ruth Salinas, G-1, Intelligence & Sustainment Company, U.S. Army South, signs her name into the Army South noncommissioned officer induction book during a ceremony on Fort Sam Houston, Texas, July 31.



U.S. Army South conducts first NCO induction ceremony

*Story and photo by
Sgt. Deylon Douglass
U.S. Army South Public Affairs*

“No one is more professional than I.”

It is statement that all noncommissioned officers live by every day. Becoming an NCO is a distinguished title that every enlisted Soldier strives to achieve.

Twenty Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, U.S. Army South commemorated their rite of passage as they transitioned into the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers during a ceremony conducted at the Academic Support Building July 31 at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

The ceremony which is rich in history and tradition, was the first ever coordinated and hosted by HHB.

The inductees walked through the threshold signifying their ‘Rite of Passage’, signed their names into the Army South Noncommissioned Officer’s Induction Book, and received a plaque engraved with their name and the day they were inducted into the NCO Corps.

“This is a pivotal moment in my career that I’m always going to remember,” said Sgt. Michael Floore II, enlisted aid to the Battalion Command Team, Headquarters Support Company, U.S. Army South, one of the 20 NCOs inducted during the ceremony. “Walking across that stage and officially being inducted into the Corps of the Noncommissioned Officers is something that I will never forget.”

For Floore and the other inductees, as NCOs they are now expected to lead, train and take care of Soldiers. The Army’s newest sergeants are now mentors and role models for the junior enlisted Soldiers to look up to. 🇺🇸



Brazilian soldiers speak with U.S. Soldiers during a tour of the 3-28th Cavalry Stryker squadron at Fort Hood, Texas, Aug. 20.

Brazilian delegation visits Fort Hood

Facilities tour to assist in developing partner nation armor capabilities

Story and photos by
Frederick Hoyt
U.S. Army South Public Affairs

U.S. Army South hosted a delegation from the Brazilian army during a visit to III Corps headquarters, and various units of the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas, Aug. 20.

Also in attendance were army foreign liaison officers representing Colombia and Chile currently stationed at Army South headquarters, Joint Base San Antonio, Fort

Sam Houston, Texas.

The three-day visit was part of agreed-to-actions made last year between the Brazilian and U.S. armies during bilateral staff talks.

One of the agreements included a visit to a major combat arms installation.

After receiving a briefing on the history and operations of Fort Hood, the group spent the first day touring the Close Combat Tactical Trainer and Warrior Skills Trainer facilities.

These state of the art simulation training centers use some of the most advanced virtual technology to train Soldiers individually and collectively in weapons

systems, tanks and tactical combat maneuvers.

“One of the purposes of this trip is to learn a little bit more about tank simulators which will help us to improve our simulators back in Brazil,” said Brazilian Lt. Col. Marcello Yoshida, the Brazilian foreign liaison officer to Army South. “For us, tank simulation training is very important and also a very cost effective way to train soldiers.”

The Brazilian army is currently entering a period of modernization that includes both heavy armored vehicles and doctrine.

Representatives from the Brazilian Center of Armored Instruction and Headquarters for Doctrinal Modernization had the opportunity to see firsthand the simulation technologies and methods the U.S. Army incorporates into training and equipping the modern day Soldier.

“Events like these are very important because they not only help strengthen interoperability between armies, but the more doctrine that is shared the better both armies are able to work together in the future,” said Army South’s Brazilian foreign area officer, Maj. Robert Hammack.

On day two participants visited a heavy armored training facility, observed a Bradley fighting vehicle live fire exercise, and participated in an after action review that assessed Soldier and equipment performance.

They also toured the 3rd Cavalry Regiment Squadron motor pool and received an in depth presentation on the Stryker heavy armored wheeled vehicle.


“These kinds of visits are very important for both armies because we develop

“These kinds of visits are important for both armies because we develop a stronger relationship. And with this kind of relationship, we can improve not only our systems, but the defense of the region.”

*- Lt. Col. Marcello Yoshida,
Brazilian army foreign liaison officer to U.S. Army South*

a stronger relationship,” said Yoshida. “And with this kind of relationship we can improve not only our systems but the defense of the region.”

“We also build mutual trust and greater cooperation, and can use many of the shared ideas to improve our doctrine,” he added. “One result is that we can work better and more effectively together which is useful for both of our armies.”

As the Army Service Component Command to U.S. Southern Command, Army South works closely with partner nation armies throughout the Western Hemisphere to enhance security cooperation and mitigate transnational threats. 



Maj. Robert Hammack (left), the U.S. Army South Brazilian foreign area officer, speaks with Brazilian Capt. Cristiano de Souza Dorneles, during a tour of the Fort Hood close combat tactical trainer facility Aug. 20.

Army South teams with partner nations for PANAMAX 2013

*Story by
Robert R. Ramon
U.S. Army South Public Affairs*

The annual Fuerzas Aliadas PANAMAX exercise, which took place in Central America and the United States, wrapped up Aug. 16 after forces from 19 nations took part in simulated training scenarios focused on ensuring the defense of the Panama Canal.

The U.S. Southern Command-sponsored, 12-day exercise serves as a valuable tool to improve interoperability among participating nations according to those in attendance.

“One of the most important benefits of multinational exercises like PANAMAX is that all the participants can exchange their experiences and expertise and gain new knowledge about each other’s culture and people,” said Col. Larry Dotson, Army South exercise division chief.

The distinct portion of the exercise that takes place within the borders of Panama, known as PANAMAX Alpha, marked the first time non-Panamanian forces were invited to participate as a bilateral entity.

Known simply as PANAMAX, the exercise brings together sea, air and land forces in a joint and combined operation focused on defending the Panama Canal from attacks by a violent extremist organization as well as responding to natural disasters and pandemic outbreaks in various locations.

PANAMAX develops and sustains relationships that improve the capacity of our emerging and enduring partners’ security forces to achieve common desired goals, while fostering cooperation and understanding among participating forces.

“These interactions strengthen our bonds across the region and foster long-lasting partnerships and understanding among the nations participating, ultimately benefiting the overall security of the region,” said Dotson.

Army South deployed a contingent to Panama City to support the government of Panama by enhancing security cooperation with Panamanian public safety and security forces.



Salvadoran army Lt. Col. Daniel Bermudez works with Dominican Republic army Lt. Col. Miguel Suero to map out counterattack scenarios during a war gaming synchronization in the Coalition Forces Land Component Command cell at PANAMAX 2013. More than 160 participants from 18 countries gathered together at U.S. Southern Command for the annual exercise that focuses on supporting the Panamanian government in defense of the strategic Panama Canal. (U.S. Navy photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Elizabeth Thompson)

Medical Forces Positions



U.S. Air Force Capt. Andres Munera and Peruvian Navy Cmdr. Rodolfo Ruiz brief the Multi National Forces South cell on medical's plan of action after a war gaming synchronization at PANAMAX 2013. (U.S. Navy photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Elizabeth Thompson)



Col. Larry Dotson, U.S. Army South exercise division chief, speaks with Panamanian Col. Marcos F. Rueda during the PANAMAX 2013 exercise in Panama City, Panama, Aug. 14. Forces from 19 nations took part in simulated training scenarios in the waters around the canal and other locations throughout the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility during the exercise. (U.S. Army photo by Kaye Richey, U.S. Army South Visual Information)

“The big significance for PANAMAX Alpha this year is that we were invited to participate as a bilateral entity involved in providing the Panamanian security forces some notional capabilities,” said Lt. Col. Carlos Blanchard, Army South civil affairs partnering chief. “It allowed us to be integrated into their effort and get an understanding of the Panamanian forces as well as their roles and responsibilities.”

PANAMAX has grown dramatically since 2003, when Panama, Chile and the United States conducted the first exercise.

PANAMAX 2013 incorporated participants from Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and the United States.

“PANAMAX has evolved over many years and will continue to meet the constantly changing nature of threats in today’s security environment,” said Dotson.


In addition to Army South, service members

participated in PANAMAX through simulated training that was executed in several locations including the U.S. Southern Command headquarters in Miami, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and Naval Station Mayport, Fla.

The Panama Canal is critical to the free flow of trade in the region and the entire world.

The region’s economy and political stability largely depend on the safe transport of several hundred million tons of cargo through the canal each year and PANAMAX 2013 is designed to ensure plans are in place to respond to requests from the Government of Panama to protect the canal.

Brazil and Colombia led the land and sea components this year, marking only the second time that two partner nations outside of the United States led the land and sea functional components.

This is the first year that the Brazilian army has participated in the exercise and the first time the Colombian navy has commanded the maritime component. 

U.S. Army South

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