

155th MEDICAL GROUP

LINEAGE

155th USAF Dispensary activated, 1 Jul 1960

155th Tactical Dispensary

Redesignated 155th Tactical Clinic, Apr 1973

STATIONS

Lincoln, NE

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Cpt C W Magnuson

Cpt D F Mabeus

Maj M R Simpson

Cpt F C Koranda

Maj L J McIntyre

Maj Donald G Smith, #1981

Col Patricia Mehmken

LTC Tami Thompson

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

During the past ten years, clinic personnel have deployed to several locations for annual field training. These include: Homestead AFB, FLA; Tyndall AFB, FLA (on two occasions); Tucson, AZ; Alpena, MI; Savannah, GA; and Eskisehir, Turkey. There have been several other deployments with medical personnel involved, including Dyess AFB, TX, Spokane, WA, Anchorage, Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska, and Niagara Falls, NY.

In January 1973, clinic personnel deployed to Tyndall AFB, Florida, for annual training. They were integrated into the USAF hospital at Tyndall. What better time to be in Florida and miss two weeks of a Nebraska winter?

The TAC clinic began 1974 with their annual field training from 20 January to 3 February. Once again they deployed to sunny Florida and trained at the USAF hospital, Tyndall AFB.

In late February 1977, the clinic deployed to Homestead AFB, Florida. Once again timing was perfect and clinic personnel successfully avoided two weeks of Nebraska winter.

2003 the weekend of Nov. 22-23, was unique in a “purple” sort of way. As nearly 200 Nebraska Army National Guard soldiers met in Lincoln to begin their preparations to mobilize as members of the 267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance), they became part of an unusual experiment. Assisting the soldiers in their mobilization processing were Air National Guard medical personnel from the 155th Medical Squadron, who conducted dental, vision and hearing screenings. That might seem like a minor incident, but it wasn't. In fact, it's one of the first times in memory that part-time Air Guardsmen have assisted an Army Guard unit mobilize for a federal call-up. According to Brig. Gen. Mark Musick, Nebraska Air Guard chief of staff, it probably won't be the last as a new transformation initiative is creating closer ties between the Army and Air National Guard than ever before. Accomplishing a Growing Mission Key to Decision That transformation took place on Sept. 1 when the Joint Forces Headquarters replaced three separate Army and Air National Guard headquarters in Lincoln. Musick said the concept behind the transformation is simple: “The Army and Air can help each other and accomplish the missions that both organizations have. To combine where you have joint resources from the Army and the Air to support the people who are really doing the job on the frontlines is really the right thing to do and it's the right time to do it.” The change combined the taffs of the National Guard Headquarters, the Army Guard's State Area Command and the Air Guard's State Headquarters. It is part of a nation-wide transformation of National Guard headquarters to streamline and remodel them to mirror active duty organizations, said Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska. “More than anything else, it will make state operations more recognizable by federal military agencies, especially Northern Command,” said Lempke. “The STARC (State Area Command) organization didn't fit into military organizational doctrine. The Joint Forces Headquarters will streamline mission functions such as mobilization support and military support for civilian affairs by bringing together Army and Air National Guard capabilities.” The decision was made by Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, National Guard Bureau chief, shortly after he took office this past summer. Blum wrote about the decision and the reasons behind it in the September edition of *On Guard*: “Transformation is a state of mind. It is about how we think, organize and approach the future. We are transforming our headquarters and our capabilities to shape our future. We are

organizing to operate in peacetime and fight in wartime in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and potentially multinational environment.”

2008 Master Sgt. Todd Schneider had heard the stories before, but he really didn't believe them until he saw it with his own two eyes. There, standing outside a makeshift medical clinic in a tiny village near the Honduran capitol of Comayagua, hundreds of local people had lined up for several blocks – in some cases hours earlier – waiting for the American medical personnel to arrive and begin dispensing aid. Mothers holding babies. Fathers with their families in tow. Elementary students in school uniforms. Elderly people with ailments almost too painful to describe. They were all there, waiting. Some had come from dozens of miles away, standing or sitting together in open-air vehicles, or riding on the back of horses and mules. Others had simply walked the distance over mountainous trails, through the nearby jungles or along desert like roads. Schneider said it was an amazing sight that immediately reinforced in his mind how important the arrival of the American medics was to the people of the surrounding area. “It was a big shock,” said Schneider, one of six Nebraska Air Guard medics who deployed to Honduras to participate in a joint medical humanitarian mission from March 29 to April 12. “I had heard that we were going to see a lot of people. They tried to prepare us for that, but it was a little mind-boggling once we arrived there to actually see how many people were lined up to see us.” According to Schneider, who works as the fulltime health systems technician for the 155th Medical Group in Lincoln, the group helped evaluate and treat approximately 4,000 local Hondurans from six different villages during their two-week “Beyond Horizons '08” mission. Schneider said the Nebraskans were part of a much larger joint team that provided medical services to remote village Honduras. Based out of Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras, Schneider said a typical day began early in the morning, sometimes as early as 4 a.m. The medical technicians would then travel by either convoy or Chinook helicopter to the day's destination, usually arriving around 9 a.m. Some of the villages were high up in the mountains, separated from Comayagua by miles of perilous mountain roads. Others were in the desert plains, miles from the nearest hospital. Schneider said that one thing remained constant. Each day the American medical teams would be greeted by hundreds of Hondurans waiting to receive medical attention. “They would already be lined up for a block, just waiting at a certain checkpoint,” said Schneider. “People would come from miles around.” Schneider said the medics set up their makeshift clinics wherever they could. Sometimes this meant setting up in a school. Other times in a church. Still others in a nearby home. And sometimes it meant simply setting up a folding chair outdoors and dispensing care as best as the medics could. The six Nebraskans, said Schneider, worked primarily in the optometry and dental stations. Others worked in preventative health or with the doctors who accompanied the team to the village. According to Staff Sgt. Amanda Meyers, a full-time aerospace medical technician who worked in both the preventative medicine section and as a floater between the different sections, the opportunity to work in Honduras was a dream come true. “This is the kind of thing that medics dream about,” said Meyers, adding that most Air Guard medics typically spend their drill weekends helping perform unit physical health assessments and other routine medical processing. “We don't get (to do) a lot of hands-on medical treatment.” That wasn't the case in Honduras, where the medics were able to use their training to help people who were visibly in need of medical attention, said Meyers. “Most of us medics became medics to help people and to see and treat the injuries, to help the sick people,” she said. “That's why we're medics.” “So it was really, really incredible to actually get to use a lot of the skills we've been taught,”

Meyers said. “That was a blast.” Meyers said the types of assistance ranged widely from Honduran to Honduran. For example, in the preventative medicine section, the medics would speak to the people about the need to wash hands, boil water and thoroughly cook their food. They also provided each of the people with bars of soap and vitamins (chewable vitamins for children, pre-natal vitamins for child-bearing aged women and multi-vitamins for the men.) They also gave each person drugs to treat intestinal parasites. Others had their eyes checked or teeth examined – and often pulled. Still others received aid for injuries and illnesses. Meyers said the philosophy was pretty simple. “They don’t have any alternatives,” she said. “It was just a way to provide very basic medical care and hopefully teach them something. They always say if you feed a man a fish you feed him for a day but if you teach him to fish, he’ll feed himself for years. It’s kind of that thing...to teach them to wash their hands, to cook their food so they don’t get sick. How to brush their teeth so their teeth quit falling out.” Meyers added she was incredibly moved by the people she met. “We would pull up to the villages in the morning and there were lines...you could tell that people had been there for hours waiting for us. And the kids were just so excited just to see us. I’m not even sure they knew why we were there for the most part, but it was very cool because they would come running up to us... they were climbing on the HumVees.” “If you had water or any kind of candy or toys you would just get swarmed.” While in Honduras, Meyers and Tech. Sgt. Carolyn Oborny also worked at a hospital in Comayagua. Meyers said the experience of watching people wait outside the hospital, sometimes for 36 hour or more, to be treated for a variety of injuries and illness ranging from badly broken bones to insect bites on foreheads that had developed into larvae, changed her perspective forever. “I will never complain (for having to wait) for 30 minutes to see my dentist,” Meyers said. “Or if I have to go to the ER and have to wait 20 minutes. I will never complain about that again.” That’s primarily because of the gratitude the Hondurans displayed for receiving the most rudimentary medical assistance, Meyers said. “No one complained. You never heard anyone yelling or throwing a fit because they’d been waiting for an hour,” she said. “The same thing when we went to the villages... some of them had to wait for quite a while to see the doctor. No one complained. Everyone was smiling.” Meyers wasn’t the only one changed by the experience. Senior Airman Rosaldo Garcia is a 155th Medical Group medic. While in Honduras, she not only helped with the humanitarian effort, she also had a chance to interact directly with the Hondurans while serving as an interpreter. She said the Hondurans she spoke to – including the Honduran military members who worked as guards at the various medical sites – were pleased to receive the help they did. A lot of people were happy to see us... were happy that we were there helping them,” said Garcia. “They were also smiling and thankful for what we were doing.” Smile: Senior Airman Rosalba Garcia, Nebraska Air National Guard aerospace medical technician, shares her Meal Ready to Eat with a group of children in Plan de Leones, Honduras.

New Friends: Tech. Sgt. Carolyn Oborny, Nebraska Air National Guard aerospace medical technician with the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, poses for a photo with a group of Honduran children during a break in the village of Laguna del Rincón, Honduras. While in Honduras, Oborny worked in preventative health and optometry services. She was one of six Nebraska Airmen who traveled to Honduras recently. Eye Check: Master Sgt. Todd Schneider performs an autorefractometer examination on a Honduran woman’s eyes to see if she needs prescription glasses while working in a church in Horno, Honduras. Nebraskans: Members of the 155th Medical Group pose for a photo at the medical clinic at Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras. Garcia

said her conversation with the guards were particularly enlightening. “They said if we weren’t there, nobody else was going to help them. All these poor people could use all the help that we could give them.” Garcia said the entire experience was heartwarming. “Seeing all those kids and helping them, and all those smiles and hugs from the kids... it actually made me teary,” she said. “Seeing how they live versus how we live... we have so much and we’re still not happy and always wanting more and more. And they don’t have hardly anything and they’re so happy and they’re not asking for anything more... they’re just happy.” Schneider said he too enjoyed his first opportunity to perform a humanitarian assistance mission overseas. “It was something that I always wanted to do... so it was a good experience to share some of the training that I have received with people who normally don’t have access to this type of care,” said Schneider. “It was very rewarding.”

Air Force Order of Battle

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