

**Mexico Bioterrorism Mission**  
**28 Mar 04 – 7 Apr 04**  
**SSgt Esmeralda Flores**

In order to get this mission on the road, many things had to happen before hand. The entire team had to verify their passports. Supplies had to be ordered. The Course Briefings had to be prepared. Course manuals were published. Communication between the US Mexican Embassy and our office was a nonstop occurrence. Finally there was the departure packing for the mission.

After much preparation, it was now time for my adventure to begin. I was a team member for a training mission to three locations in Mexico. Bright and early, a taxi came to whisk me off to the airport to meet the rest of the team. I had met the Director of our mission, Maj Conger, so was looking for his familiar face at the ticket counter. Although I was not late, I was the last to arrive. I was pleased to meet Col Arroyo, Lt Col Christopher, and Capt Rasnake. After checking the excess baggage, we rushed off to security hoping and praying we would avoid one of the random body cavity searches.

All went smoothly as we arrived at our first destination; Manzanillo, Mexico. As the plane was landing, I could see the waves of the ocean crashing on shore. It was one of the most beautiful sights I had ever seen. We processed through customs, hoping our bags were there to meet us. Two porters graciously helped with the bags as we met our escorts, Mr. Figueroa and Mr. Sanchez. They drove us to the hotel and checked us in. Then they took us to the Naval School House to set up the classroom for the following morning. In the 2.5 days we were there, I was impressed with the students' desire to learn. The funniest moment was discovering the hotel nightclub was the Boom-Boom Room. Later that night, exhausted and as I tried to sleep, I fully understood the name.

Our next stop was in Veracruz, Mexico. Again, we were grateful to see our bags arrived safely. I was impressed with the city's patriotism and the wonderful food. On the beach, there was a Mexican flag so big I could not begin to describe its size. The way it would glide in the wind left me breathless. The food was served as a four-course meal. We began with a house specialty appetizer, then a house salad that was prepared at our table, continuing on to the main course. The owner brought out the different raw meats we could choose from and cooked them at our table. We ended our feast with a velvet chocolate dessert that was to die for.

Our final stop was Mexico City, Mexico. The city has an impressive 32 million people living at the bottom of two active volcanoes. We had the opportunity to visit the National Museum and the Historical Basilica, which is an ancient Catholic church. Now, the Basilica is sinking and plans are to close to visitors in the near future. Since it was holy week, we attended mass there for a brief moment. I think the whole team would agree that the best part of this stop was the beds in the hotel. I do not know if I was just that tired, but those beds were amazing. I melted into mine...and there was no Boom-Boom Room! To kick-start our early morning, we all made a visit to the Starbucks in the hotel.

Our 10-day trip was fast-paced, but with a team that meshed so well every moment was full of joy and laughter. It was extremely rewarding to participate in the Defense Institute for Medical Operations' mission and provide training to such an appreciative audience.



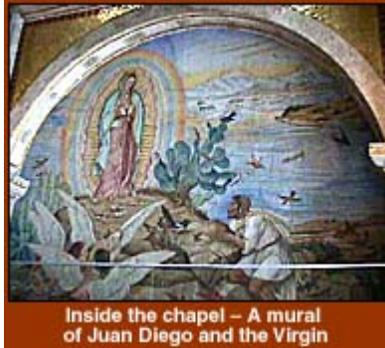
Mexico City National Museum (Name) poses at the Sun Stone. This is the Aztec Calendar, perhaps the most famous symbol of Mexico, besides its flag. The original object is a 12', massive stone slab, carved in the middle of the 15th century. Many renditions of it exist and have existed through the years and throughout Mexico. Historically, the Aztec name for the huge basaltic monolith is *Cuauhxicalli Eagle Bowl*, but it is universally known as the Aztec Calendar or Sun Stone. It was during the reign of the 6th Aztec monarch in 1479 that this stone was carved and dedicated to the principal Aztec deity: the sun. The stone has both mythological and astronomical significance. It weighs almost 25 tons, has a diameter of just under 12 feet, and a thickness of 3 feet.

On December 17th, 1760 the stone was discovered, buried in the "Zocalo" (the main square) of Mexico City. The viceroy of New Spain at the time was don Joaquin de Monserrat, Marquis of Cruillas. Afterwards it was embedded in the wall of the Western tower of the metropolitan Cathedral, where it remained until 1885. At that time it was transferred to the national Museum of Archaeology and History by order of the then President of the Republic, General Porfirio Diaz.

## Basilica in Mexico City

On December 12, the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and non-Mexicans alike come to the new church, the "Basilica de Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe" to pray and visit. About 12 million people visit the Basilica each year! Except for the Vatican, home of the Pope, this is the most visited Catholic sanctuary in the world!

The original church, built in Basilica," wasn't safe enough Mexico City (remember the was causing the entire



the 1700s, the "Antigua for visitors - the soft soil of city was built on a lake?) church to lean.





**Veracruz Feast**



**Manzanillo Bio-Terrorism Class**