

Prime BEEF Goes to Santo Domingo

by Capt R. J. Oelke, EIT



Fig. 1. San Isidro AB is the headquarters and main operating base of the Dominican Republic's Air Force.

When and where was the first Prime BEEF Team employed? This question was answered for us when Maj J. H. Kent and eight civil engineering NCOs and airmen from Myrtle-Beach AFB, N.C., stepped down from a C-130 on 1 May 1965 at San Isidro AB in the Dominican Republic. These engineers were part of a very austere Combat Support Group (CSG) assigned to provide support for the Airlift Fleet which was moving U.S. Army Forces into the area. Operational considerations had dictated that Myrtle-Beach AFB would supply the required CSG personnel. This fact proved immensely desirable from a civil engineering standpoint since Maj Kent and many of the enlisted engineering personnel had participated in nearly every field exercise for the past 18 months. Considering the climate, geography, mission, and the fact that only a limited number of personnel would be initially deployed, the following skills were chosen to give the CSG an across-the-board capability:

TABLE I

TITLE	AFSC	NO.
Maint Engr	5544	1
Electrician	54250	2
Elec Pwr Line Spec	54251	1
Const Equip Oper	55151	1
Carpentry Spec	55250	2
Plumbing Spec	55255	1
Water Waste Proc Spec	56370	$\frac{1}{9}$

The crisis soon escalated, more forces were ordered into the area, and the original CSG was expanded to support the increased Tactical Air Command (AIR FORCES, U.S. ATLANTIC COMMAND) airlift operations. The CSG augmentation included fire protection personnel and was comprised of the skills identified in Table II at right.

These 34 personnel made up the first Prime BEEF team to be deployed.

From the very first, an almost never-ending list of knotty practical engineering problems had to be solved.

As in all operations of this type, the available materials, manpower, and equipment never quite met the demand. Conditions were similar to any other field type exercise that Tactical Air Command's engineers participate in with the following exceptions. The Air Base was in an area of hostilities. A language barrier existed between the TAC forces and the local population. Virtually nothing in the way of engineering supplies could be procured in the theater.

TABLE II

TITLE	AFSC	NO.
Elec Pwr Prod Spec	54350	2
Pavements Maint Spec	55150	4
Refrig/Air Cond Spec	54550	1
Const Equip Oper	55151	1
Water/Waste Proc Spec	56350	4
Electrician	54250	3
Fire Prot Supv	57170	2
Fire Prot Spec	57150	$\frac{8}{25}$

Simultaneously with the 25-man Prime BEEF Team augmentation, critical Gray Eagle mobility support equipment was airlifted to San Isidro AFB. A runway lighting set was airlifted from Seymour-Johnson AFB and installed to give San Isidro a reliable night lighting capability. An O-11A crash truck and a class-500 powered pumper were sent to afford fire protection for aircraft and the tent city.

A portable water purification unit was brought in and used to obtain potable water for drinking and cooking. Shower water was used untreated. San Isidro obtained pipeline water from a well seven miles distant. This water source was unreliable because electrical power for pumping and boosting line pressure was interrupted by the fighting at the main power station in downtown Santo Domingo. The pipeline also served Dominican communities before it reached the base. These problems necessitated hauling the water to the base for treatment. Four F-7 refueling semi-trailers had been converted by TAC into foam fire trucks. Two of these were used to haul the water from the Army water point. Sniper fire put several holes in one of these trucks in the early days of the operation.

Spare Parts in Short Supply

Generators in various sizes from five-KW to 100-KW were brought in to supply reliable power for the AF operation. These units also posed problems for the Prime BEEF engineers. Common spares; oil filters, fuel filters, commutator and slip ring brushes, and fan belts were difficult to obtain. The team found that moving skid-mounted units was difficult. Forklifts with sufficient capacity to lift the units were not readily available. The rain and mud in the area made the use of forklifts nearly impossible even when they could be found and borrowed for use.

The solution to the generator problems lies in obtaining new lighter weight equipment. A portion, possibly 50 per cent, should be trailer mounted. The commonality factor should be high. This would reduce the requirement for a large variety of spares, thus reducing the down time on the generators.

Plywood and framing lumber had to be airlifted in from the ZI to meet
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Fig. 2. The field mess facility was constructed on site by the Prime BEEF engineers.

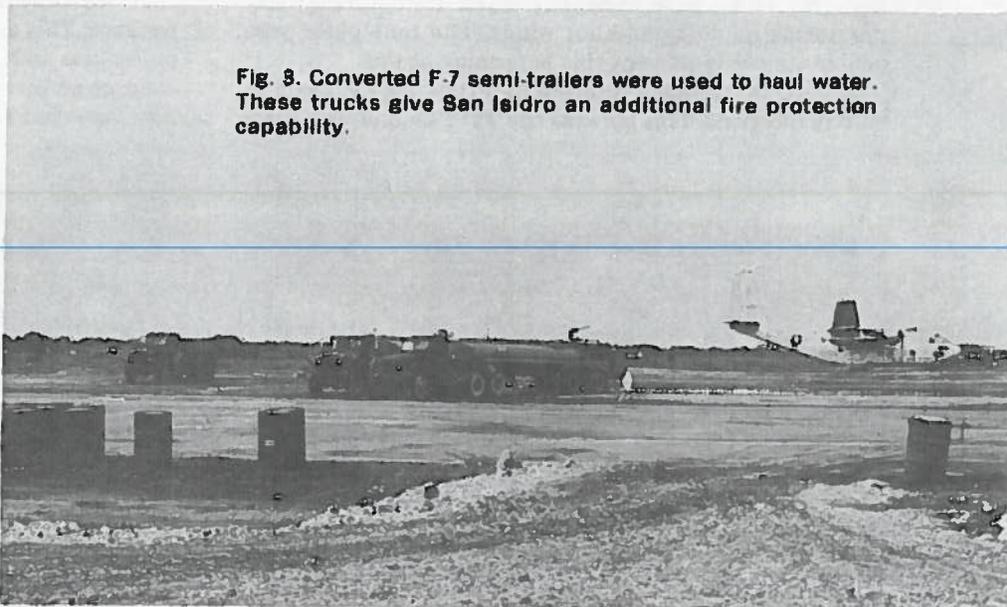


Fig. 3. Converted F-7 semi-trailers were used to haul water. These trucks give San Isidro an additional fire protection capability.

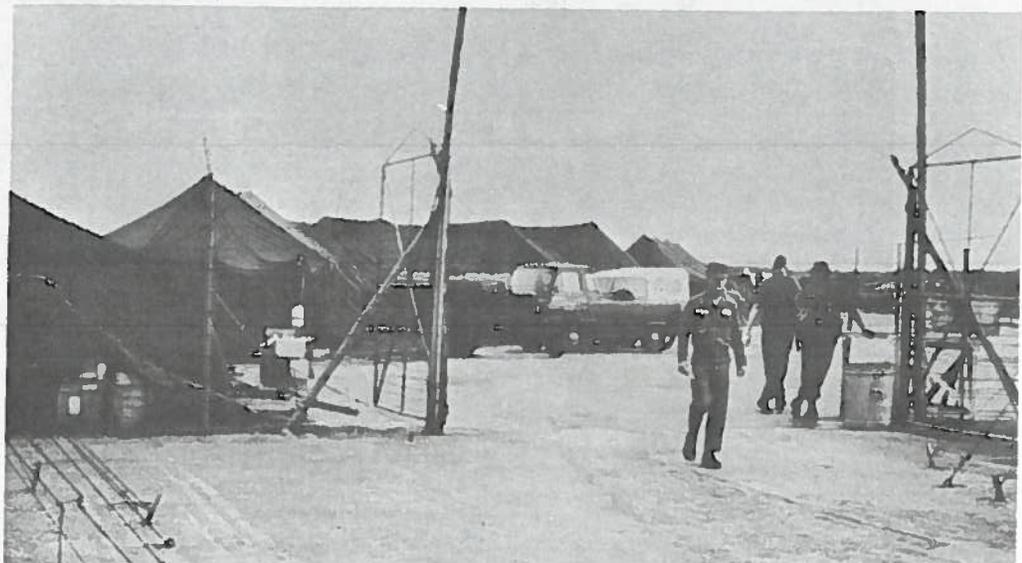


Fig. 4. The field hospital was located just outside the fenced wire compound which surrounded the living area.

Santo Domingo *cont'd . . .*

the need for tent floors, field furniture and latrines, field showers, and mess hall facilities. The need for this material wasn't adequately satisfied for several weeks.

The rapid execution of operation POWER PACK prevented the development of a carefully designed camp layout plan. The only inside space available to the AF was the ramp side portion of a Dominican Air Force hangar and the lower floor of an office building. The hangar space was used to house the Combat Airlift Support Unit. The space in the office building housed the weather station, message center, and the commander's office. All other activities were located in expeditionary facilities.

The tried and tested experience at San Isidro has again lent a sense of urgency to the requirement for better shelters. Tents were occasionally blown down during thunderstorms by 40 to 45-knot winds. The tent poles were double staked to prevent this happening again.

TAC is currently rotating its Prime BEEF Team at 60-day intervals. This spreads the TDY load on the bases

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and provides valuable experience to more of the TAC Prime BEEF Teams. Thus far three TAC bases have provided teams in addition to the original Myrtle-Beach AFB team. Augmentation has been drawn from other TAC bases when shortages at these bases made this necessary.

The lessons learned from the first Prime BEEF Team employment in operation POWER PACK have provided the TAC staff and TAC base personnel with valuable experience. This experience will be used to refine and perfect procedures and equipment to make the Prime BEEF Team concept an invaluable asset in accomplishing the Tactical Air Command mission.



Fig. 5. The USAF tent city contains hospital, combat support group and living areas.