

NAVAL STATION GUANTANAMO BAY, CUBA



Miami Medical Team's
Commemoration
of
Operation Sea Signal

August 22, 2014

Miami Medical Team Foundation

The Miami Medical Team Foundation (M.M.T.F.) is a non-profit, humanitarian, self-supported organization whose goals are the improvement of the sanitary and medical conditions in those Third World countries with desperate needs.

The M.M.T.F. was founded in the early 1980s, when refugees began piling in the borders between Nicaragua and Honduras. Since then, the group has been involved in many different scenarios of tragedy and despair in five continents of our planet, providing assistance to a total of nineteen countries.

The modus operandi of the M.M.T.F. consists, among other things, in providing medical and surgical teams to the affected areas, and in other occasions, by shipping medical equipment which has been donated to our organization, to the different hospitals and clinics in the affected countries. The shipment of medications to these areas is another service that our organization provides.

The M.M.T.F. members have always covered the expenses and cost of each and every humanitarian operation they embark on. We have not been granted by any institution or government agency, but are registered in the United States Agency for International Development (A.I.D.).

Miami Medical Team was contacted to provide Humanitarian medical services to the refugees housed at Guantanamo Bay during Operation Sea. Their first trip was in September, 1994 and it was then decided they would do weekly trips with teams of specialists which was required by the Medical Military Corps.

The MMT mobilized 110 professionals of all specialties such as, general medicine, internists, general surgeons, gynecologists, urologists, orthopedics, ophthalmologists, nose and throat specialists, psychiatrists, dentists, pediatricians and others. On each weekly visit, 600 to 700 refugees were consulted. Medications and medical equipment was delivered to the refugees and also a variety of food supplies.



Sequence of Events

*National Anthems
(USA and Cuban)*

*Invocation by Dr. Héctor Lans
(English and Spanish)*

Recognition of Personalities and Special Thanks to All Distinguished Guests

*MC Hon. Tomás Regalado, Mayor of the City of Miami
Honorable James Cason, Mayor of Coral Gables, FL
(Ambassador to Havana Cuba and Paraguay)
Colonel Celso Bolet, MD (US Army Ret.),
Chief of Psychiatry Operation Sea Signal
Mr. Guarione Diaz,
(Civilian/Military Liaison Officer during Operation Sea Signal)*

Welcome Remarks by Commander Colin Caswell

*Remarks by Mr. Guarione Diaz
(Civilian/Military Liaison Officer during Operation Sea Signal)*

*Remarks by Dr. Manuel Alzugaray
(President of the Miami Medical Team Foundation)*

Delivery of Commemorative Plaque and Flag

*Closing Words by Honorable James Cason
(Mayor of Coral Gables, FL and Ambassador to Havana, Cuba and Paraguay)*

MMTF Hymn



History of Operation Sea Signal

Operation Sea Signal began in May 1994 when a U.S. policy decision to screen Haitian migrants for refugee status on board ships—rather than immediately returning them to Haiti—caused a sudden, heavy outflow of Haitian migrants. To prevent the loss of life at sea and uncontrolled, illegal immigration into the United States through Florida Navy and Coast Guard vessels interdicted and rescued migrants. An initial attempt to screen and provide a safe haven for the migrants on board leased ships anchored off Kingston, Jamaica was quickly overwhelmed by the large numbers of migrants, resulting in a decision to temporarily shelter them ashore at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo, Cuba. In August 1994, Castro changed his internal policy and allowed Cubans to leave the island. The immediate exodus of thousands of Cubans further complicated matters. It quickly became apparent that the routine capabilities of the United States to control immigration had been exceeded. The U.S. military provided the emergency capability to protect the country's borders from uncontrolled immigration and to provide humanitarian assistance to the migrants until they could be brought to the United States, resettled, or returned to their home countries. Both migrations were triggered by policy changes that created a perception of increased opportunity to reach the United States.

Sea Signal was implemented on short notice in a dynamic international and domestic political environment. The interagency policy formulation process had to balance the protection of U.S. interests against the protection of foreign migrants' lives, weigh national responsibilities against international obligations, and use the resources and authorities of each agency in an appropriate, effective manner.

Working under demanding conditions, Sea Signal participants helped save more than 60,000 Haitians and Cubans, shelter them temporarily and eventually return them to their homes or bring them to the United States in a legal, controlled manner.