

# State and Local

## 'Grenada still seems like yesterday'

A&M senior recalls surprises, fears met during island war

By Sondra Pickard  
Senior Staff Writer

It's been two years since about 7,000 U.S. soldiers were ordered to invade the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada, but for at least one of those soldiers, it seems like the invasion happened only yesterday.

Just three weeks after 25-year-old Richard Diaz-Gonzalez, now an A&M senior, joined the 82nd Airborne Division of the Army, he was thrown an unexpected surprise — American citizens were stuck on an island in trouble, and the government wanted a lightning-fast strike to rescue them and vanquish the enemy.

Hesitant and unprepared, Diaz-Gonzalez boarded a southern-bound C-141 cargo plane early in the morning of Oct. 25, 1984, with his fellow paratroopers — just a day after the fighting had begun.

"It really didn't dawn on me until we were actually in the bird that something was real," Diaz-Gonzalez said. "I still had this Hollywood picture of war, but had never done anything like this before — it was only on TV."

"I, like most guys, was really unfamiliar with everything about the service. They don't prepare you for anything of what the Army's really like. It's totally different and almost impossible for you to imagine."

"His division wasn't told much, and Diaz-Gonzalez said up until the time the plane landed in a barrage of bullets, he was clueless as to what was going on.

"We were told we were going to an island called Grenada," he said, "and that there was some sort of coup there. We knew it was a real mission but they really didn't explain it. The closer we got to the island, the quieter that airplane got. Everyone was doing some really deep thinking."

As paratroopers, Diaz-Gonzalez's division had to be prepared to either jump from the plane or land with it.

The decision was made to land the plane on an airstrip prepared earlier that day. But going from the safety of the plane into what would become a three-week, real-life experience with battle wasn't easy, and he said it never turned out like the movies.

Compared to North Carolina, where he was stationed, the tropical island of Grenada was warm and extremely humid. The weather, mixed with the deafening sound of gunfire, caught Diaz-Gonzalez a little off-guard.

"There it was," he said. "My first impression of the battlefield. It was right there and it hits you quite hard. Artillery was pounding away just ahead. The sight I was seeing left me in awe."

"They told us to dig in where we were, but the ground was solid coral. You can't dig into coral, but guys were frantically trying to anyway. It's unreal. That was the only time I've felt real fear."

Constantly wet, and dehydrated because of a lack of tap water, Diaz-Gonzalez had to face a tough and often elusive enemy. In the final count, the United States outnumbered the opposition in combat forces 10-1, but the number of guns shooting at him didn't matter — one was quite enough.

"You don't know where the enemy is or what's going on," he said. "You hear voices and movement, but sometimes you find out it's your own people."

Diaz-Gonzalez said the first dead bodies he saw were shocking. A Soviet armored vehicle was parked on the side of a road which had been hit the night before, and soldiers' bodies still were lying next to it.

"The bodies were pretty well chewed up by a rifle shot," he said. "The shot of a rifle can do some nasty things to the body, and this just added to my awe."

"We all pretty much reverted back to our training mode of thinking. No fun and no play, just mindlessness. Not crazy mindlessness, but we were droned out and it became real hard

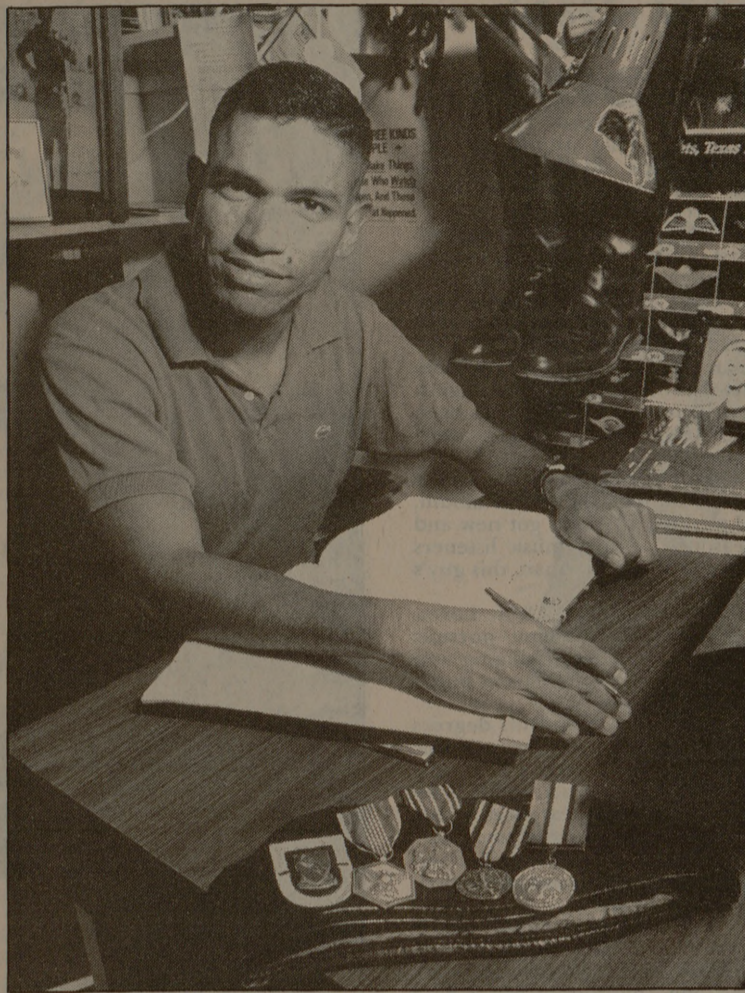


Photo by John Makely

Richard Diaz-Gonzalez

to focus on anything. We started doing things automatically."

Diaz-Gonzalez said he wasn't scared, but that he just didn't think. He didn't think about home, his parents, or even ideals like freedom or liberty. The fact that the enemy was Communist and he was American didn't make a difference, he said.

"War is dirty and nasty and it's definitely not glamorous," he said.

He says he can go back into the Army now with a more sane, realistic picture of what war can be like, and

with a better idea of the potential damage it can cause.

"I'm now a little more able and mature," he said. "Maybe now I can at least be the guy who says, 'Let's sit back and think about this a little more before we act.'"

"There's a real world and reality outside the Corps and Texas A&M in which people are dying for silly reasons. Any sort of conflict like Grenada is mean and brutish, and it shows you how very real death can be."

## What's up

### Monday

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH:** Joanna Gibson will conduct a writing outreach session, "Coherence: Making Meaning Relationships Clear," at 6:30 p.m. in 153 Blocker.

**CENTURY SINGERS:** auditions for male singers will be held through Wednesday in 003 MSC. For more information call 845-5974.

**MSC CAMAC:** will present a program, "Bilingual Education: The Real Story," at 7 p.m. in 701 Rudder.

**AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION:** will meet at 8:30 p.m. in 407 A-B Rudder.

**ADVERTISING ASSOCIATION:** will have photos taken for Aggeland '87 at 8 p.m. in the MSC Flagroom.

**AGGIE TOASTERS:** will meet at 7 p.m. in 342 Zachry.

**INTRAMURAL RECREATIONAL SPORTS:** entries open for cross country, putt-putt golf and handball singles at 8 a.m. in 159 Read.

**MSC HOSPITALITY:** Miss TAMU Scholarship Pageant applications are available in 216 MSC through Friday.

### Tuesday

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH:** Marjean Purinton will conduct a writing outreach session, "What is a Paragraph?" at 6:30 p.m. in 153 Blocker.

**AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS:** The Texas State Board of Professional Engineers will discuss "How to Become a Registered Engineer and Why?" at 7 p.m. in 102 Zachry.

**PREMED/PREUDENT SOCIETY:** will meet at 7:30 p.m. in lecture hall 1 of the Medical Science Building.

**BIOCHEMISTRY SOCIETY:** will have photos taken for the Aggeland '87 at 6:15 p.m. in the main lounge of the Memorial Student Center.

**TAMU ONE-WHEELERS UNICYCLING CLUB:** will meet at 6 p.m. in front of G. Rollie White Coliseum.

**NUTRITION CLUB:** will meet at 7:30 p.m. in 145 MSC.

**ALL-NIGHT FAIR:** will meet at 7 p.m. in 407 A-B Rudder.

**CIRCLE K:** will meet at 8:30 p.m. in 704 A-B Rudder.

**AGGIE REPUBLICANS FOR GEREN:** will meet at 8:30 p.m. in 504 Rudder.

**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE:** will meet at 7 p.m. in 304 Rudder. Open to anyone interested.

**ANTHROPOLOGY SOCIETY:** will meet at 7 p.m. in 301 Bolton.

**COLLEGIATE FFA:** will meet at 7:30 p.m. in 208 Scoates.

**INTRAMURAL RECREATIONAL SPORTS:** entries close for badminton doubles at 6 p.m. in 159 Read.

**Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, no less than three working days prior to desired publication date.**

STUDENT GOVERNMENT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

# We're Working For You !

## Executive Branch Update

### COSGA

- \* Chairman-Lorrie Brown
- \* 1st speaker Dan Clark Scheduled to invite students from other universities to attend A&M's 5th Annual Conference.
- \* Expanding internationally-to include students from Canada and possible England.

### United Way

- \* Chairman-Zane Russell
- \* Pool party and Dance at AeroFit on Villa Maria-Nov. 15-Beach theme with a live band and KISS 105
- \* Advance tickets \$4.<sup>00</sup>/person, \$8.<sup>00</sup>/couple
- \* Tickets at door \$5.<sup>00</sup>/person, \$8.<sup>00</sup>/couple
- \* Mock election in MSC Oct. 29-Nov. 4 to vote for governor. Candidates are White, Clements, Sherrill, Reveille, and Mickey Mouse
- \* All proceeds for both benefits United Way

### Public Relations

- \* Chairman-Jody Kay Manley
- \* Held Get Involved Week the second week of school to get student body involved in Student Government.
- \* Held a Public Relations workshop on Oct. 5 for all Student Government committees.
- \* Post notices on Student Government information boards in MSC, Commons, Library, Sibisa, and Academic building
- \* Sponsoring Project Visibility in which members of Student Government will speak to any organization about what Student Government has to offer.
- \* In the process of making a new Student Government brochure.
- \* Will conduct a Student Government awareness survey in November.

### Traditions

- \* Chairman-Louis Meneghetti
  - \* Held switch-off for kick-off
  - \* Girls asked the guys, Rice Game
  - \* Boutonnieres were on sale on MSC all week
- The girls showed them how it was done!

### Big Event

- \* Chairman-Renee Dix
- \* Mr. & Mrs. Heye were presented the '86-'87 Parents of the Year Award before the Texas Tech game.
- \* Public Realties pushed Oct. 17-26 so students could make hotel reservations well in advance.
- \* Parents' Weekend held April 10-12 this year.

### Parents' Weekend

- \* Chairman-Renee Dix
- \* Mr. & Mrs. Heye were presented the '86-'87 Parents of the Year Award before the Texas Tech game.
- \* Public Realties push Oct. 17-26 so students can make hotel reservations well in advance.
- \* Parents' Weekend held April 10-12 this year.

### Muster

- \* Chairman-Wendy Wayne
- \* Awareness Question- Who was the only president of the U.S. to speak at an on campus Muster?
- \* Answer President Dwight D. Eisenhower
- \* In 1946 Eisenhower came to express his gratitude to student and former students who served as military officers in World War II and recognize the accomplishments of the ROTC program.

### Blood Drive

- \* Chairman-Margie Boswell
- \* There will be contests between: guys dorms, girls dorms; sororities, fraternities; and apartment complexes for the Nov. 3-6 Blood Drive
- \* The winners of each category will have a party thrown for them.

### Leadership Development

- \* Chairman-Misty Ventura
- \* Sponsoring a speaking contest to promote communications skills
- \* The speech must be a 5-7 minute persuasive speech
- \* There will be a \$100 cash prize for the winner

\* This ad is sponsored by the Public Relations Committee\*