



*A Hawaii Army National Guard soldier from the 230th Engineer Company examines the progress of the fence modifications, during an Operation JUMP START mission along the California/Mexican border in April. Operation JUMP START is a federal initiative which uses the National Guard to give support to the U.S. Customs & Border Patrol in securing the southwestern border. Hawaii engineers were attached to Task Force STEEL CASTLE, the California National Guard's engineering slice of the OJS mission.*

# BORDER SUPPORT

## from Hawaii Engineers

Story & Photos By SPC Matthew H. Oda

**M**ore than 80 soldiers from the Hawaii Army National Guard's 230th Engineer Company help support California's Operation JUMP START southwest border mission in April. As part of President's Homeland Security initiative, OJS uses National Guard troops to support U.S. Customs & Border Patrol protection mission of prevent illegal crossing and drug trafficking through the Mexico borders.

The Maui-headquartered engineer unit worked out of San Diego and was attached to Task Force STEEL CASTLE, the California National Guard's engineering slice of OJS. The Hawaii engineers, who also have detachment on Oahu and a platoon on Molokai, made the round-trip San Diego onboard an Air Force C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft flight, which took more than eight hours. Additionally, the 230 has two soldiers from the Big Island of Hawaii and one from Lanai.

Engineering missions included retrofitting an existing fence, repositioning electrical boxes and making a drainage ditch.

"[We] modified the angle of the poles," said Staff Sgt. Jason Jacinto, a noncommissioned officer in charge of the fence and

electrical box project," and put clips on webbed sheeting to reinforce the fence."

"Each day, we tried to do about 30 fence lines," said Spc. Richard Galo, a seven-year Guard member from Maui, "which equal to about 300 feet a day."

"It took us about four days to complete our project," said Galo, the retrofitting and supporting fence supervisor. "The Task Force STEEL CASTLE personnel overseeing the project were impressed with our productivity."

"Our team also rebuilt the electrical boxes along the fence line," said Jacinto, a 15-year Guard veteran from Maui. "We raised the boxes a foot above ground to make them visible when the graders that passed them. We also built concrete platforms around the boxes to protect them from increased damage. TF STEEL CASTLE expectations were about 20 platforms a day. Instead, we did 28 of them while they were there and expect to do three more today."

"My team made a Brow ditch on one of the hills by digging a long ditch and coating it with concrete to redirect the water to a



*Hawaii Army National Guard soldiers from the 230th Engineer Company, cut wood to build forms that will surround the electrical boxes and protect them from increased damage, during an Operation JUMP START mission along the California/Mexican border in April. Operation JUMP START is a federal initiative which uses the National Guard to give support to the U.S. Customs & Border Patrol in securing the southwestern border. Hawaii engineers were attached to Task Force STEEL CASTLE, the engineering slice of the California National Guard's OJS mission.*

culvert," said Staff Sgt. Lester Delos Reyes, brow ditch project NCOIC, "instead of [having it run] down the hills and causing potential damage to the surrounding areas.

"We completed the task on Russian Hill in three days (ahead of schedule) even with some soldiers doing on-the-job-training," said Reyes, from Molokai. "Many of our new soldiers are infantrymen retraining as engineers."

"We had one concrete truck leave, because the crew working with us didn't have enough ditches set out for us."

"The only obstacle the 230th faced was time," said 1st Sgt. Michael J. Lacno, a 22-year Guard member from Maui. "Given more time, the more we could have accomplished. Other than that, things ran very smoothly . . . leaders took charge," said Lacno.

"Our TF STEEL CASTLE host provided the materials and equipment we needed to get the job done," Lacno said. "Many of our troops are transitioning from the infantry mission, but the young or inexperienced soldiers were willing and motivated to learn engineering for the mission."

**R&NG**