

Richard Bussell

I participated in the removal and return to the United States the bodies of 913 American citizens who perished in the mass suicide at Jonestown, Guyana. I was a Specialist 5th Class assigned as the Avionics technician to the 498th Medical Company at Fort Benning Georgia. We were alerted on the Monday morning following the mass suicide the previous Saturday evening that we were going to be deployed but the location or mission information was not given at that time.

We departed Fort Benning, GA late Tuesday night or very early on Wednesday morning and arrived at Timerhi Airport later in the day on Wednesday at Georgetown during a hard rainstorm. We were flown to Guyana on 6 C-141s that contained helicopters, support vehicles and equipment and 72 personnel from the 498th Medical Company and the Fort Benning Community. That was the beginning of an experience that I wouldn't take a million dollars for but would not give a penny to do again. It changed my life forever after.

The personnel from the Fort Bragg community were awarded impact Army commendation Medals (ARCOM)s but our Company Commander, Major Clarence Cooper, took his time, did his research, applied for and was awarded Joint Service Commendation Awards for our personnel. In addition, we were also awarded the Humanitarian Service Awards.