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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OPERATION PACIFIC HAVEN WRAPS UP HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS

Tomorrow marks the beginning of the end of Joint Task Force Operation Pacific Haven when the last of 6,600 Kurdish evacuees brought to Guam for political asylum depart the island -- heading for new lives on the U.S. mainland.

This 218-day humanitarian effort was established Sept. 16, 1996, to serve as the instrument of care for the evacuees. While on the island, the Kurds were provided shelter, food, clothing, medical care and assimilation classes to help them adjust to a new way of life in the United States. This was a joint effort by about 1,600 individuals, including military members from all services and U.S. interagency professionals from around the globe.

According to David Johnston, Immigration and Naturalization Service officer-in-charge, the normal asylum process requires six months to two years to process a single individual. The asylum process includes a series of background checks, medical examinations and the designation of sponsors. Due to a streamlined procedure and the high priority given this program by INS and Health and Human Services officials in the screening, adjudication

and resettlement activities, the process on Guam averaged between 90 and 120 days for the Kurdish families.

"Pacific Haven was so successful due, in part, to the strong support by the local community," said Lt. Col. Ray Charlesworth, JTF Plans officer-in-charge. "The U.S. military people stationed on Guam and the local community's outpouring of goodwill resulted in donations of well over 40,000 volunteer hours and \$650,000 in needed materials -- primarily clothing, household items, toiletries and toys." JTF officials also noted that the U.S. government spent over \$10 million in the local communities to support the operation.

"The cooperation between U.S. military, federal and local government, and non-government organizations and the community ensured the mission's success," said Maj. Gen. John Dallager, Joint Task Force commander. "Our success will undoubtedly be a role model for future humanitarian efforts." All Joint Task Force assets are expected to be off the island by April 30 -- depending on how quickly support members can tie up loose ends and be redeployed to their home units.