

The Shots Heard ‘Round the Hill

Story and photo by PA2 Bobby Nash, PADET Jacksonville, Fla.

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – It seems that Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron Jacksonville has made quite an impression with the people near Capitol Hill. They recently received an award from the Whitehouse for outstanding performance during 2005.

John P. Walters, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, also known as the “drug czar”, presented the award. In his address to the crew of HITRON Jacksonville, he commended them for their accomplishments and highlighted his speech with a sum of their 2005 year.



The drug czar, John P. Walters addresses the crew of HITRON Jacksonville during an awards ceremony. HITRON Jacksonville received an award from Walters for their outstanding accomplishments during 2005. Walters is the director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Coast Guard photograph by PA2 Bobby Nash.

HITRON conducted 42 go-fast interdictions while deployed to cutters in the Eastern Pacific and Caribbean Sea. These interdictions resulted in the arrest and prosecution of 131 drug smugglers and the seizure of more than 54 metric tons of cocaine, said Walters.

Additionally, HITRON Jacksonville was cited for being flexible and able to work off of several different types of vessels including Coast Guard, Naval and British Royal Navy vessels, which greatly extended the range and effectiveness of the rotary-wing interdiction capability.

HITRON is also credited with assisting and advising other services and countries with starting their own airborne use of force programs, which extends the presence of law enforcement and military officials even farther.

After Walter’s remarks there was a short ceremony in which the commanding officer of HITRON accepted an award on behalf of the unit and for its success, and made a brief remark to the crew.

“I am very proud of the work you do everyday, and I hope that we can continue to build on the successes we have had in the past,” said Capt. Edward Greiner, commanding officer of HITRON Jacksonville.

After the short ceremony and remarks, Walters handed out challenge coins to the entire crew and received a brief tour of the aircraft and weaponry.

Walters toured the MH-68A stingray and examined the weapons used for the rotary-wing

interdiction, and he marveled at the precision and practice necessary to safely use these tools to stop illegal drugs on the high seas.

Walters closed his tour by thanking the crew of HITRON Jacksonville for their efforts. “It is because of your work that America can feel safe at night. You help keep our streets safe. Thank you,” said Walters.

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