

U.S. Dept. of Defense Honors U.S.-Tico

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Rogelio Pardo-Maurer IV, son of former Costa Rican Health Minister Rogelio Pardo and U.S. citizen Su Maurer de Pardo, last week received a Medal for Distinguished Public Service from the U.S. Department of Defense for nearly five years of leadership within the department.

According to his father, Pardo-Maurer had to leave his post because his Special Forces Unit has been called up for a one-year tour of duty in Iraq. Pardo, Sr., told The Tico Times this week his son is now taking a road trip through the United States before reporting for duty.

Pardo-Maurer, 43, served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Western Hemisphere Affairs in the Office of the Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy from August 2001-April 2006. According to the citation for the award, signed by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Pardo-Maurer's leadership was instrumental in enabling the United States to support the Colombian government against insurgents; ensuring the ratification of the Central American Free- Trade Agreement with the United States (CAFTA) in the U.S. Congress; and strengthening naval cooperation throughout the hemisphere.

U.S. President George W. Bush appointed Pardo-Maurer to the post as part of a reorganization that raised the status of the Western Hemisphere Affairs office, formerly a sub-office for the "War on Drugs."

Pardo-Maurer grew up in San José, and attended the Lincoln School in the northern suburb of Moravia, before studying at Yale University and graduating in 1983. He became a sergeant in the U.S. Army's Green Beret Reserves (Airborne) and has worked in the private sector in business and consulting posts.

Upon arriving at the Pentagon, Pardo-Maurer, who described himself as a "quirky Republican," told The Tico Times one of Bush's foreign-policy goals was "building a new relationship of intimacy and respect with the hemisphere," and that the U.S.-Costa Rican citizen's youth and energy were factors that led to his appointment (TT, Aug. 17, 2001).

Less than one month later, on Sept. 11, 2001, Pardo-Maurer spoke to The Tico Times by phone as fire, the result of the terrorist attack on the Pentagon, approached his office. He said a careful investigation to discover who planned the attacks on Washington, D.C. and New York's Twin Towers would be an important first response (TT, Sept. 14, 2001).

In the aftermath of the attacks, according to the award citation, Pardo-Maurer "helped lay the foundation of a new defense relationship with Mexico and Canada during the establishment of the United States Northern Command, steering United States-Mexican security relations to an historical high point."

Regarding his son's upcoming service in Iraq, "It makes me very nervous," Pardo, Sr. said, adding that his son "believes in what he's doing... They are special trained. Physically and psychologically, much is demanded of them."