Tournament earlier this year. Instead, the US Association for Young Physicists Tournaments Inc, formed in 2003 in part to compete in the IYPT, hosted its own international competition over a weekend last February. The USAYPT will begin fundraising "in earnest" this fall to expand on its tournament and its efforts to promote research in high schools, says USAYPT secretary and treasurer Bruce Oldaker.

Even though IYPT statutes allow the host country to choose dates between May and July, the decision to hold the 21st IYPT—billed "The Physics World Cup" by its organizers—so early is a rare one, says IYPT president Gunnar Tibell. "All dates are awkward for some countries," adds Tibell. "Of course, we are concerned that the Croatian choice was not suitable for the US team, [but] we are also concerned that later dates are impossible for other teams."

Both the IYPT and the US invitational featured "physics fights," where students debate a subset of questions from a list that is released about a year prior to the face-offs. Old IYPT questions were used for the US invitational, including investigating pendulum oscillation between charged capacitors. In the final debates, the only non-US participant, an Australian team from the Brisbane Girls Grammar School, edged out Virginia's all-boys Woodberry Forest School—host of next year's invitational—to capture first place.

This year's IYPT was its first since achieving legal status as an international organization. Germany took the top prize in Croatia, while the host country tied with New Zealand for second place. The 2009 IYPT will be held 10–16 July in Tianjin, China, and will be organized by the Nankai University school of physics.

Jermey N. A. Matthews

news notes

Portable bridge. This month in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the US Army Corps of Engineers will test a floating bridge it says can be transported by ship, truck, or helicopter. US military and industrial partners worked with the army's Engineer Research and Development Center in Vicksburg, Mississippi, to design a lightweight causeway system that can be transported in packages of up to four 3-meter long by 6-meter wide modules, which weigh about 2600 kilograms each. The modules are connected by compliant and compressive urethane joints and float on large tubes inflated with air from pressurized, carbon-spun

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bottles. In Hawaii eight modules will be used to test a 17 000-kilogram load; the causeway is being designed to support vehicles up to a 65 000-kilogram M1A1 Army tank. In the image, an 8000-kilogram forklift drives along the causeway deployed on a beach near Fort Eustis, Virginia. The bridge system is currently about 10% over its design weight goal, but technical manager Donald Resio thinks the goal will be met in a second R&D cycle. This project was funded by the advanced concept technology demonstration (ACTD) program within the Office of the Secretary of Defense to enable military and humanitarian operations to be carried out in ports and other waterways whose bridges were damaged by unforeseen events (see related article on page 33). **JNAM**

Revitalizing NOAO. On 7 July David Silva took the job of guiding the National Optical Astronomy Observatory in a period of redefinition. "NOAO had begun to stagnate," he says. But a 2006 review by NSF "clarified our mission [see PHYSICS TODAY, December 2006, page 32]. NOAO is the natural focal point for providing open access for the entire US astronomical community to a broad range of world-class optical–IR capabilities. It's important that we revitalize our core."

As part of the revitalization, NOAO is "trying to build a national system of the existing 2- and 4-meter telescopes to share capabilities, and we've been given a mission by NSF to find ways to feed money into instrumentation for 6–10-meter-class telescopes," Silva says. Perhaps most significantly, in 2006 NOAO withdrew as the public partner in the Thirty Meter Telescope to instead represent the broader US astronomy community's participation in both the TMT, where Silva once worked, and the other US-led extremely large telescope in the works, the Giant Magellan Telescope (see the story on page 28).

TMT OBSERVATORY CORP

Silva

Earlier he oversaw data management and user support at the European Southern Observatory, and at NOAO in the 1990s he served as project manager during the commissioning of the 3.5-meter WIYN telescope and as a staff astronomer at the US office of the Gemini Observatory. He succeeds Todd Boroson, who served as interim director after Jeremy Mould stepped down in April 2007. **TF** ■

web watch

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http://www.onegeology.org

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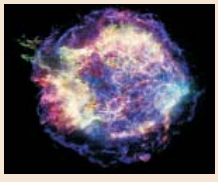
http://physics.aps.org

Physics is a new online publication that highlights papers in *Physical Review Letters* and other American Physical Society journals. *Physics* contains a mix of summaries, commentaries, and reviews—all written in a style accessible to nonspecialists. Access will be free of charge in the publication's first year.



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