

15 Minutes of Fame...

with Spc. Robert Lovely, 43rd MP Brigade

Letting it all hang out is a Lovely thing

Interview by Spc. Chris S. Pisano
and Spc. Joseph A. Morris
The Wire

Q: Look, do you really think you're worthy of having 15 Minutes of Fame?

A: No, I don't. I deserve 30 minutes after all of the junk I've seen down here.

Q: So what do you do here?

A: I'm serving as the historian of the 43rd Military Police Brigade. Previously, I was the operations NCO for the Joint Information Bureau.

Q: The 43rd is almost out of here. You looking forward to leaving?

A: I want to go home, wherever that will be. I don't really have a home. I live in my '94 Lincoln Town Car.

Q: What will you do in your car?

A: I will live. I'm going to travel the country in it. I'm planning to drive from Chile to Alaska in less than 22 days.

Q: With the money you've saved here, how long do you think you could last paying for gas?

A: Probably about two years, if I dilute the fuel with water.

Q: So your car means a lot to you?

A: Yeah it does. Back in June though, I found out that it was stolen. It had all of my personal belongings in it, even my prized Yankees jersey. I filled out a police report and everything, and eventually found out that my friend had just driven it to the railroad station and forgot he left it there.

Q: Why would you leave all that you had behind to join the military?

A: I just wanted to serve my country. I originally joined as an 11B infantryman.

Q: Do you still like to get dirty and hone your infantry skills?

A: You grow out of it... I did half way through basic training.

Q: Did basic treat you well?

A: Well, one time me and my friends stole some cake from the DFAC. We hid it in a garbage bag inside of the trash. When we got a chance to recover it from the dumpster, we started to chow down. Halfway through, we discovered the bag was torn, and trash had leaked into it.



Photo by Spc. Chris S. Pisano
Hardcore Spc. Robert Lovely uses his infantry skills to catch a fierce barracuda.

Q: So not only do you live in your car, but you eat dirty junk out of the trash....

A: Cut me some slack, I was an 11B. I'm trained to adapt, improvise and overcome.

Q: You think you can shoot your weapon better than a journalist?

A: I know those print journalists are good shots, but I'm naturally better.

Q: How many confirmed kills do you have under your belt?

A: Well, I am originally from Boston...

Q: You have to be Irish, think you'll ever find that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow?

A: No. At least not in the military.

Q: The military has to be better than being poked in the eye with a sharp stick, right?

A: Well, someone did break a beer bottle in my eye once.

Q: What happened?

A: It was a standard street fight: One friend took off, one friend got knocked out, and I caught the beating of my life.

Q: Would you rather take that beating again or do six more months at GTMO?

A: I would take the beating in a heartbeat.

Q: What was your lowest point while here?

A: Well, one time my picture was in the paper, and I looked like a fool.

Q: Make that two times now. But GTMO wasn't all bad, was it?

A: I did like the water here, it's so blue and clean. Once I went spear-fishing, and I got the spear stuck in some coral. I couldn't get it

unlodged, so I had to take off my trunks so I could get a hold of the coral. So I guess skinny dipping was my greatest moment while here.

Q: Give us your best "command message" about the military.

A: You can return home from this deployment and hold your head up high. You've sacrificed much, but the sense of pride and accomplishment are something that no one can ever take from you.

Q: Now tell us something about life.

A: I offer you a Winston Churchill quote: "If you're going through Hell, keep on going." Happiness comes with your state of mind. Keep driving on, and you will find it.

Q: You'll find it down the road someday?

A: It's a long road, and each step is a new beginning. Sometimes you get no breaks and only heart aches, but for me...life is lovely.

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Volume 2, Issue 25

New sheriffs in GTMO

300th MP Bde. hits the ground, prepares to be support staff of the JTF

Story and photos by
Spc. Chris S. Pisano
The Wire

A group of volunteers greeted them at the Windward ferry landing with much fanfare, celebrating their arrival by waving American flags, giving out hearty handshakes and holding welcoming banners high in the air. But this was no welcome-home parade for soldiers returning to the States from the front lines. No, this was an arrival: that of the 300th Military Police Brigade from Michigan, hitting the ground at GTMO Saturday and marking their territory as the new supporting staff for JTF-GTMO operations.

And while many servicemembers throughout the JTF are looking forward to returning home for the holidays, finally finished with their deployment and content or not with what GTMO had to offer, the soldiers of the 300th will be seeing this Caribbean base with fresh eyes backed with the determination to fulfill their role in the current War on Terrorism and Operation Enduring Freedom.

"We're here to provide full support of the War on Terror, to be an integral part of the mission completion of the JTF while taking care of all of the servicemembers serving in it," said Command Sgt. Maj. John R. VanNatta,



The soldiers of the 300th Military Police Brigade depart the ferry, ready to take on their critical mission.

command sergeant major of the 300th and now camp superintendent for JTF-GTMO.

Ceasing to exist as a brigade in the traditional sense upon their arrival, the 300th is now part of the combined force here. In command of an area spanning five states back home, some of the units that fall under the

jurisdiction of the 300th have already been deployed here, such as the 342nd MP Co., which just left the island last week after finishing their deployment.

While mobilizing out of Fort Dix, N.J., the

300th MP Bde., page 5

A look inside...



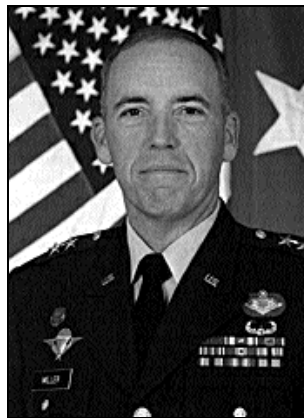
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JTF-GTMO commander
Army Maj. Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller

Message from the Commander

Good leadership is vital to keeping the chain of command strong and effective, and it demands our constant effort and attention.

Whether you are a commanding general or a squad leader, leadership means setting priorities, providing guidance, delegating authority, and holding those below you accountable for their work.

Hold everyone below you responsible for their actions, while remembering you are responsible for them as well. Leadership traits will trickle downward, and the benefits from them will flow back upward through the entire organization.

Know your people and trust their talents. Good

leaders give their subordinates the freedom of initiative to find the best ways to accomplish their mission. Support your subordinates and allow them to make honest mistakes, and then provide guidance on how to improve in areas where needed. Part of being a leader is mentoring those below you and developing their leadership skills.

Set your subordinates and junior leaders up for success, and celebrate the small victories every day.

Great leaders teach what "right" looks like. Invest yourself in making a difference for the future.

OPSEC Corner

For every soldier, sailor, airman, Marine and Coast Guardsman assigned to GTMO, OPSEC should be nothing new. We are doing a fairly good job by not discussing critical, unclassified information that our adversaries can use to cause our mission here to fail. However, there are still some people who just don't get it.

Let's talk about OPSEC "indicators." When at home during vacation time, we either stop the mail or have a neighbor collect it for us. We also arrange for the lawn to be mowed. Why? We don't want burglars to know we are not at home. A stuffed mailbox and overgrown lawn are "indicators" — it broadcasts to potential thieves that no one has been home for a period of

time. You see, even before we joined the military we have practiced OPSEC.

Our mission is very important, and we cannot allow complacency to set in and return to the "September 10th mindset." We are at war, as of 9-11-01. You are at GTMO because of 9-11. Therefore, we MUST protect all information critical to the success of our mission.

Every single unclassified email (Yahoo, AOL, us.army.mil, etc.) and non-secure phone call is beamed to a satellite. When this occurs, those signals are subject to interception by anyone with the proper equipment. Don't think for one minute that Al-Qaeda doesn't want to know what we are discussing. Simple comments made over the phone, or in

emails, can be an indicator to our enemy letting them piece together information to learn about our operations here. Keep in mind, their doctrine refers to operations such as rescuing their brothers who have been captured, making their brothers in prison martyrs, and killing as many Americans as possible. Imagine the media exposure and embarrassment to the United States if we allow something like that to happen here at GTMO.

Remember, any information about detainees, troop movements, troop strength, etc. should not be discussed over non-secure electronics.

Have a great OPSEC day!

— Mr. OPSEC

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Farewell message from the 361st PCH

For six heated months, the members of the 361st Press Camp Headquarters have sought out the stories of this Joint Task Force, from the heady early days of Brig. Gen. Rick Baccus to the merger of JTF-160 and JTF-170 under Maj. Gen. Michael Dunlavey, to the arrival of Maj. Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller and the long-awaited realization of JTF-GTMO.

A well-deserved thanks to all of our readers of this publication, as well to all the servicemembers of the task force who week after week became the leads of our stories and columns. We strove always to walk that fine line between operational security and well-deserved publicity for the hard-working servicemembers who, day in and day out, perform the missions that help make their far-away homes and families safer until they return to them.

And now it is our time to go home. Next week, the 362nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, an Army Reserve unit from New Hampshire, will take the reins of The Wire, and will continue to scour the landscape of GTMO in search of the stories that will keep you informed, tell your story and hopefully entertain you a little. As for us, we will be heading back to New York...

To all the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen assigned to this remote corner of the current global War on Terrorism and Operation Enduring Freedom, never think that we, whose job it was to chronicle yours, failed to appreciate your importance to this detention operation and this war.

Our efforts were for you.

Sports

Last Chance wins in "Xtreme" race

Story and photos by
Spc. Jose A. Martinez
The Wire

Guantanamo Bay went to extreme measures again Saturday, when members from the 346th Military Police Company conquered the grueling "GTMO Xtreme Adventure Race" in 4 hours, 20 minutes to take first place out eight co-ed teams battling through four events: kayaking, biking and running.

The challenging course was a test of endurance and will for all of the bold athletes that dared to compete.

Gathering at the MWR Sailing Center at 5:30 a.m., most of the competitors arrived quiet and focused on the challenges ahead, preparing themselves both physically and mentally.

But the arrival of a warm and tranquil sunrise over the bay, it meant that the "GTMO Xtreme Adventure Race" was on.

The first event started at sea with an exhausting 7.1-mile kayak. Team Last Chance was the first to emerge triumphantly from the waters of GTMO.

"What a way to start your day," said a charged-up Spc. Eric L. Blewett, captain of team Last Chance afterward.

For the competitors who had never competed in an event of this caliber, it was a rude awakening. But this was only the start. There was more pain to endure.

The warriors came back to land to start a strenuous 6.8-mile



Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Lisa Czubernat, Navy Lt. Wayne Clark (center) and Marine Corps Lance Cpl. David J. Braswell negotiate the bike course.

bike course. The competitors had to trek up and down extremely difficult hills on the trail. The ironic part was that they were only able to actually ride though half the bike course.

"From the 6.8 miles, we were able to ride maybe four of it," said Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Lisa Czubernat. "We had to carry our bikes up and down those dangerous hills."

Due to the heavy rainfall from the previous day, the course was ripe with dangerous maneuvering on the muddy and washed out trails. And at the middle of the bike course came a twist to the extreme race, where contestants had to climb up and rappel off a three-story wall.

And if that was not extreme enough for these guys, the final event of the day was a back-



Determined Spc. Amos C. Essary was the first to complete the kayaking event.

tougher," he said.

Not only were the conditions of the course a factor, but strategy also played a key part.

"We kept a consistent pace," said Eric Blewett. "We're leaving the island, so this was our last chance to compete. Our undying motivation was the unstoppable drive to win."

Not only were they well-conditioned for this race, but they also had Lady Luck on their side.

"In the last GTMO Xtreme race, we had a flat tire that slowed us up. But in this race, everything went well," said Spc. Clint D. Bowman. "Everything was perfect. We came here to have fun and everything went right."

Coming in second place after the superiority of Last Chance was team JTF-GTMO, which clocked in about an hour later at 5:16. Behind them was team Naval Hospital, which proudly took third place at 5:26.

After the epic race, the athletes celebrated their trials and tribulations together, bonding over sweat, aches and fatigue, and perhaps creating extreme lifetime friendships as well.

breaking 8.3-mile run.

Clearly this event was not made for the average "weekend warrior." These athletes were well-trained and determined to take on the challenge.

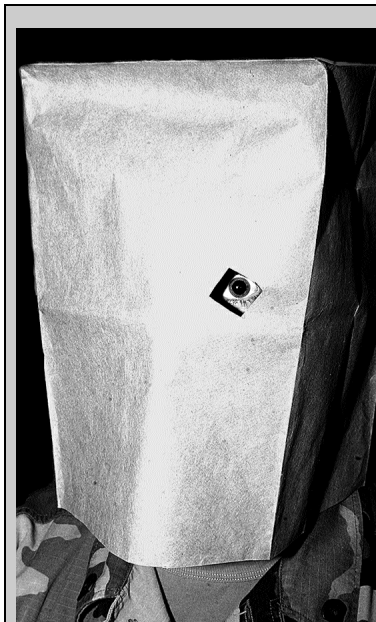
"The race was very hard, but the run was the toughest. It takes a lot of heart and determination to compete in an event like this," said Spc. Autumn N. Blewett, who alongside her teammates from team Last Chance had an advantage few of the other competitors had: they had participated in the previous Xtreme race.

"It was easier because we knew what to expect on the course," she said afterward.

"When we had the lead after the kayaking, I felt we had an advantage," said Eric Blewett. "We were the first team to reach the wall, which slowed down the other competitors. The rain didn't help the course either. It only made it



With spider-like skill, Spc. Clint D. Bowman conquers the wall and makes the three-story climb look easy.



The Next Chapter

by Spc. Joseph A. Morris

Could this be where it will all end?
 Came here in pieces,
 but I've started to mend.
 I turned to myself,
 and within I've found a friend.
 A new beginning means a new start.
 Writing's an art,
 it must be sharp like a dart.
DO THE RIGHT THING;
 No matter what life will bring.
 I ain't no puppet on a string,
 and this ain't no GTMO fling.
I HATE GREED.
 Forget what you want,
 and learn what you need.
 Life goes by at God's speed.
 If you want it real bad,
 then desire you'll bleed.
 The choice is yours
 to follow or lead.
I'M A HERETIC
 on an everlasting odyssey,
 and my mind's gone astray;
 I'm finished with this place,
 I got no more to say.

Movie Schedule

DOWNTOWN LYCEUM	CAMP BULKELEY
Friday, November 29	Friday, November 29
7 p.m. Stealing Harvard, G - 98 min	8 p.m. U571, PG13 - 116 min
9 p.m. Barbershop, PG13 - 96 min	10 p.m. Bounty Hunters, R - 96 min
Saturday, November 30	Saturday, November 30
7 p.m. The Santa Clause 2, PG13 - 85 min	8 p.m. The Collectors, R - 90 min
9 p.m. Red Dragon, R - 106 min	10 p.m. Shaft, R - 97min
Sunday, December 1	Sunday, December 1
7, 9 p.m. Harry Potter & the Chamber of Secrets, PG - 130 min	8, 10 p.m. Traffic, R - 147 min
Monday, December 2	Monday, December 2
7 p.m. The Tuxedo, PG13 - 130 min	8 p.m. The Ultimate Weapon, R - 110 min
Tuesday, December 3	Tuesday, December 3
7 p.m. Barbershop, PG13 - 96 min	8 p.m. Twister, PG13 - 96 min
Wednesday, December 4	Wednesday, December 4
7 p.m. Harry Potter & the Chamber of Secrets, PG - 160 min	8 p.m. Urban Legends: Final Cut, R - 98 min
Thursday, December 5	Thursday, December 5
7, 9 p.m. The Four Feathers, R - 160 min	8, 10 p.m. Valentine, R - 97 min

MWR more than just good times

Story by Spc. Michelle M. Scsepko The Wire

Being on a deployment, troops sometimes find themselves working long and stressful days. But just as hard as they work they can play here thanks to the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation program.

"The MWR is here to make sure the physical and mental well being of military personnel and their dependants are in place," said Craig Basel, Director of the MWR program at GTMO.

"We provide a variety of quality of life activities for our hard working servicemembers," he said. "From the gyms and top of the line equipment to the pools to sporting leagues and water activities, there's something here for everyone," he said.

The MWR allows servicemembers and their families to unwind in a healthy way, by offering boating, sailing, aerobics and even spin classes. Additionally, they organize events such as fishing rodeos and commander and captain's cups, not to mention running the liberty centers, which provide servicemembers with access to computers, pool tables and movies to watch.

When the Joint Task Force landed on GTMO and tripled the size of the base's small community, MWR funds also increased.

"When the JTF came, the MWR budget increased considerably so that we would be able to support all the troops that arrived," Basel said. "The money we receive is distributed out through the year for events that benefit everyone on base. It goes to many different things, but primarily it is used to maintain and replace equipment," he said.

Aside from the programs and events the MWR fund provides for servicemembers, there are also additional monies to be used for soldiers by their unit, known as unit allocation. Each soldier acquires \$2.50 per every three months for MWR activities. If a unit is interested in organizing an MWR event, such as a picnic or party, a memorandum from the unit commander is to be submitted to MWR along with a unit roster, date of scheduled event and the unit's arrival date and estimated date of departure. Once approved, a check is given to the unit for their event.

"The JTF makes up a large number of the populace of GTMO. That's why it is impor-

tant for me to coordinate and be involved with Craig Basel," said Army Maj. James R. Buchanan, Officer in Charge of quality of life for JTF-GTMO. "I want to ensure information about MWR events and programs is disseminated down to our people and to have a say in where the money would best be spent to support our troops.

"I welcome the JTF's contributions of ideas to MWR activities. My main goal here is to ensure the entire base benefits from the things we offer here," he said.

Since the arrival of the JTF, the MWR budget has increased dramatically, said Basel, which can only ensure even more events and programs for servicemembers at low or no cost at all.

"As we in the quality of life office are getting ready to depart, I would only like to say that it is vital for those who replace us to keep the lines of communication between MWR and the JTF open," said Army Capt. James H. Gormly, deputy quality of life officer. "The benefits of what the MWR provides are not only good times, but stress relievers for those who work so hard in support of this mission."

MWR Information

Friday, November 29th

11 a.m. - 1 p.m., Free bowling, Marblehead Bowling Lanes.
 7 p.m. - Midnight, Friday Extreme Bowling, Marblehead Lanes.

Saturday, November 30th

Noon - 5 p.m., Second JTF-GTMO Special Social Event, Windmill Beach.
 6 p.m., The 2002 Electric Light Holiday Parade, LCN Parking Lot.
 7 p.m., Bowling Party, Marble Head Lanes.
 8 p.m., Karaoke, Rick's Lounge.

Sunday, December 1st

1 p.m. - 6 p.m., Extreme Bowling, Marblehead Lanes.
 6:30 p.m., Bingo, Windjammer Club.

Monday, December 2nd

8 a.m. - Noon, Adult Ceramic Classes, Ceramic Shop.
 6 p.m. - 8 p.m., Nativity Painting Social, Ceramic Shop.

Tuesday, December 3rd

6:30 p.m., Bingo, Windjammer Club.

Wednesday, December 4th

9-11 a.m., Adult Adv. Pottery Classes, Ceramics Shop.
 8 p.m., Karaoke, Windjammer Club.

Thursday, December 5th

11 a.m. - Midnight, Bowling, Marblehead Lanes.
 6 p.m., Bowling League, Marblehead Lanes.

Profession of the Week

MWR Marina workers

Compiled by Spc. Chris S. Pisano and Spc. Joseph A. Morris The Wire

The MWR Marina workers are here to help you get out on the waters of Guantanamo Bay by providing multiple services and an impressive fleet of boating craft of all varieties.

Don't know how to drive a boat? No problem, for these guys provide schooling in all that needs to be known in the ways of navigating this great bay.

Want to go fishing, water-skiing,

tubing or just want to cruise the bay? The Marina makes it all possible, thanks to its steadfast workers.

These guys do it all — Performing maintenance on the craft, fueling them up, cleaning them down and making sure that the boats are worthy enough to tread the bay.

They also provide an on-call water taxi service that cruises people from one side of the bay to the other in case the ferry has been missed.

Everyone can enjoy the waters of GTMO bay, thanks to these workers.

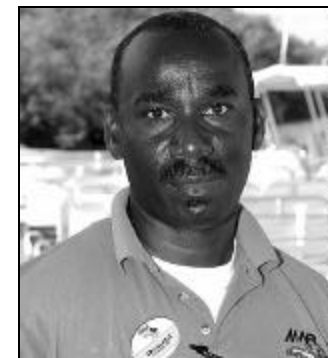


Photo by Spc. Chris S. Pisano



Photo by Spc. Joseph A. Morris

Above: MWR Marina worker Donald Thoms swabs the deck of a pontoon rental boat as he ensures that the craft is seaworthy in time for the arrival of its next customer. Left: While replacing a battery in a Sea Chaser boat, MWR Marina worker Colin Williams looks up for a brief moment to observe a student boater's finesse as he attempts to smoothly bring the training boat into the dock.



Donald Thoms
 "I like doing my job. I like the water, being outside and the nice people that I meet. I also enjoy going out and doing the water taxi pick-ups."



Shawn Lewis
 "I love my job. I meet different people and make lots of friends, especially during the boat tests. Those are just plain fun!"



Colin Williams
 "I'm a water man, so I enjoy being around this type of environment. But it can be stressful at times, ensuring the equipment is alright."



Franklin Pinnock
 "I'm Mr. Fix-it here, and I know my stuff. I enjoy repairing the boats and performing the maintenance on them. That's why I'm here."

Seeing the white-caps of their eyes

JTF-GTMO commander Army Maj. Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller, manning a light machine gun, serves up a lead salad to some GTMO surf off the deck of a Port Security Unit's boat Monday. The general was onboard observing the crew from PSU 307 during an "underway gun shoot" battery exercise, and got to do more than watch as he joined the Coast Guardsmen in a little seaborne target practice. By morning's end, the Boston Whaler's varied arsenal got a full workout in the name of keeping the intrepid crew of Coast Guardsmen's fighting skills razor-sharp.



Photo by Sgt. Frank N. Pellegrini

Man on the Street

Compiled by Spc. Jean-Carl Bertin and Spc. Delaney Jackson

This week's question:

What do you want to give thanks for?



Army Staff Sgt. Howard Duncan, Motor Pool

"I want to give thanks for my cherished wife and my two lovely daughters. This time of year makes me think more of them."



Coast Guard PO1 Tim Shughrou, PSU 307

"I give thanks for being back on land, where I can make calls. Usually I'm on a ship, where it's not easy to call my family and talk to them."



Spc. Abby Keely, Chaplain Assistant

"I'm thankful for being awarded the opportunity to be deployed to GTMO, having just come from advanced individual training."



Navy PO1 Carolyn Stevenson, NECTAMS LANT

"I'd like to give thanks because I was allowed to keep my two sons here with me at GTMO. I'm truly blessed."



Army Sgt. John Cook, Chaplain Assistant

"I have a lot to give thanks for. Above all, I say thank you to God for a safe deployment at GTMO. And for my replacement being here."

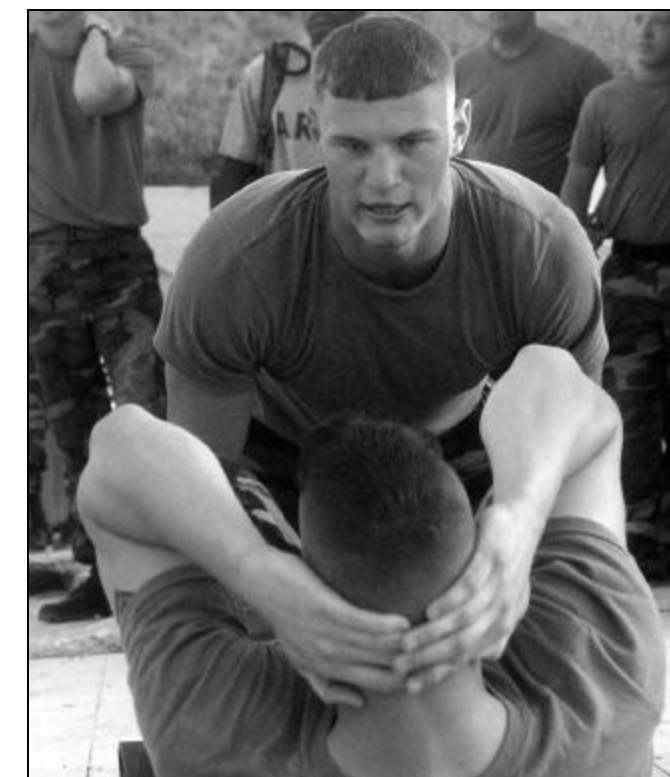
Georgia MPs vie for 178th 'Top Dawg'

Story and photos by Sgt. Frank N. Pellegrini
The Wire

With its time at GTMO coming to an end and a return to Georgia imminent, the 178th MP Co. figured to go out with a bark Nov. 22 and 23, holding its first-ever "Top Dawg" competition at its home and headquarters at Camp Bulkeley. Thirteen teams of three soldiers competed in a mixed breed of events including PT-test

events, an orienteering course, a road march and obstacle course, and the ultimate feat of strength: pulling a Humvee (including driver) 91 feet up a slight incline. (Winning time: 22 seconds.)

All participants got a medal just for coming out at 6:30 p.m. on a work day, and the overall winning team of 1st Lt. Jonathan Roscoe, Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Williams and Staff Sgt. Chester McClendon received a trophy with — what else? — a bulldog on top.



Above: 178th MP Co. company commander Capt. Jeff Carlyle, followed by team members Staff Sgt. Scott Hurley and Master Sgt. Wade Harris, strains at the rope during the HUMVEE pull. Right: Carlyle falls down in exhaustion after the 91-foot pull.



From top: l to r, Staff Sgt. William Brooks, Spc. George Thiel and Spc. Sarah Day lean on each other after an exhausting run; Spc. Bradley Stallings exhorts (and secures) Spc. John Russell during the situp event; bottom, the view from second place as 1st Lt. Jonathan Roscoe, Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Williams and Staff Sgt. Chester McClendon, who were also the overall winners, run into the rising sun.

239th MPs say goodbye to GTMO

Story and photos by
Spc. Jean-Carl Bertin
The Wire

After being deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for more than five months in support of the Joint Detention Operations Group, the 239th Military Police Company bid farewell to the Caribbean to go back home to Louisiana on Saturday. The consensus: A job well done.

"I think our deployment here has been slamming," said Army Capt. Sam Barbera, the commander of the 239th. "They said GTMO is the 'least worst place.' That's a very accurate statement."

The 239th, known as the "black sheep of Louisiana," has been on active duty for about a year. Before coming to GTMO, the company was stationed at Fort Polk, La., doing local patrol and force protection as part of the U.S. war on global terror. As the unit was getting ready to go home, Barbera had nothing but praises for the multi-purpose military guards who have seen the task force transforming into what it is now.

"We had to be flexible throughout the whole deployment," said Barbera. "We have seen many changes during our transition from Joint Task Force 160 to now JTF - GTMO. My soldiers have handled the transition well. I couldn't be prouder of them."

Like Barbera, the company's first sergeant recognized the outstanding and tireless effort of the 239th's soldiers adapting to the environment and accomplishing their mission during their tour here. "My soldiers were well-disciplined and very efficient. That's important for me, and I am really proud of them," said 1st Sgt. Darian Williams.

"The deployment has been a great experience. I had the opportunity to learn about the capability of my soldiers," he said.

To keep them focused on their mission, Williams spent a lot of time counseling each soldier about September 11. "My biggest challenge was to help the soldiers cope with the events of 9/11. But now I am glad to say that



Army 1st Sgt. Darian Williams, the top Noncommissioned Officer of the 239th Military Police Company, aligns a company formation held on Camp America's basketball court after the unit's outprocessing brief last week.

so far they've acted as real professionals during the deployment," said Williams.

"Watching the detainees at Camp Delta was not an easy task," he said. "It was a mental challenge for most soldiers. Sometimes things go smoothly, but other times it's very chaotic," added Williams. "I'll tell my counterparts not to take anything for granted at the camp. Keep their minds focused on the right things and to stay focused for tomorrow."

As the 239th's soldiers worked the various shifts at Camp Delta, they barely had time to do activities as a unit. Before they left, they organized an all-day picnic at Windmill Beach. Some of them went for a quick swim, others teamed up to play volleyball, but those who missed Louisiana's cooking spent their time by the table replete with Cajun food



Some of the soldiers of the 239th MP Co. teamed up for a volleyball game on the sand of Windmill Beach before they took the plane home last week. The game was part of an all-day farewell picnic for the soldiers.

including peas, rice and barbecued chicken.

"Overall, this day is fun. We are having a good time," said Spc. Timothy Bordelon as he was watching at his fellow soldiers playing beach volleyball. "I've been with this unit for four years," he said. "This is my first deployment with the company. I've enjoyed being here, but now it's time for me to go back to my farm. I am a country boy," he said.

Spc. Cory Brown, who's also been with the unit for almost four years, said that the deployment drew him closer to his fellow soldiers and contributed to his self-development.

"I learned a lot about myself and how to become a stronger person. Patience, patience...I got a lot of that," he said. Brown also said he is looking forward to going back home and continuing to drive trucks and do some cross-country trips.

Sgt. Katty Casas, who has been with the unit for two years, also said that patience was the virtue that came to her rescue as she manned the different shifts at Camp Delta.

"I said virtue because taking care of the detainees in their cells is like taking care of small children. You have to do everything for them," she said. Casas said she likes her job, but the most difficult thing for her was to get used to the way the detainees look at women. But Casas said she is ready to forget it all, as she longs to go back home to finish school, studying to be a commercial pilot. "I miss flying," she said. "I can't wait to go home."

Casas said that the key to surviving a deployment at GTMO is to stay busy all the time. "After working your shift, go out and do different things. Get a boating license, try new sports. Let me tell you, six months fly by."

300th MP Bde.,
from page 1

brigade headquarters linked up with several of the units currently getting ready to come down to GTMO. Additional Michigan units that fall under the umbrella of the 300th will soon be here to offer their services and to support the brigade as a leading force in Enduring Freedom.

"The 300th has had a big chunk of the War on Terrorism. Since Sept. 12, 2001 we have been heavily engaged with numerous, ongoing deployments throughout the world," said VanNatta. "While at Dix we had an intense train-up with all of the other units deploying down here, which has prepared us even more for this mission."

In addition to the already healthy portion of canned mobilization activities, including the myriad of Soldier Readiness Process stations and the venerable weapons qualifications, the 300th went through non-lethal weapons and techniques training and Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical training. Perhaps most helpful, though, was the Mission Readiness Exercise, which involved training in the actual handling of a detainment facility.

"Prior to leaving home station we went through a pre-scrub SRP, and as reservists we were constantly training," said VanNatta. "We even had trainers come down here ahead of time, see first hand what we would encounter, and then build a program that could better prepare us while at Dix. The training was real good and went down smooth."

But getting ready to handle a detention facility of alleged terrorists can only be prepared for so much.

"The mission here is a little bit different than we're used to. We were originally trained for interment/resettlement, basically Prisoner of War operations," said VanNatta. "Here, we follow the Geneva Convention principles, but the detainees are not military combatants."

The battalions of the 300th back home are capable of holding 4,000 to 6,000 POWs in a mass camp, he said, but Camp Delta is a different animal — a high-security facility. And dealing with detainees is a lot different than dealing with the average enemy soldier. The soldiers of the 300th, however, should have no real



Fresh into the oven that is GTMO, soldiers of the 300th MP Bde. take a quick moment to unwind from loading a truck.

problem getting into the swing of things.

"The basic principles of a confinement operation are the same, which will help to crystallize our mission — dealing with a prison environment. It won't be that great of a leap to get accustomed to this operation," VanNatta said.

A warden/superintendent of a 3,188-bed prison back in the civilian world, VanNatta is no doubt in tune with this sort of operation, and said he will draw from his own personal experiences and education in this field to better serve the mission.

But VanNatta isn't the only man who knows what's going on. "Our brigade does have



Command Sgt. Maj. John R. VanNatta, command sergeant major of the 300th MP Bde., plans to use his experience as a prison warden to help support the Joint Task Force.

Enemy Prisoner of War units, which will help the mission," said VanNatta. "As units with more expertise come in, there will be a constant building on the enhancements in the JTF."

Change is good, and VanNatta has already seen it during his short tenure in GTMO.

"From when I first visited here a couple of months ago until now, I've noticed the quality-of-life has been greatly improved, which is evident in the attitudes of all the servicemembers," said VanNatta. "GTMO is a good assignment. It's a solid, clean base, and I'm impressed by the friendliness of the servicemembers working here. Morale also seems good, and it's always improving."

The 300th will be adding to that pool of morale, said VanNatta, representing the reserves as the backbone of the Army.

"We're fortunate to have some strongly motivated troops from the Guard and Reserves at GTMO," he said. "Also, the EPW units are strictly Reserve and National Guard, which is a good show of how they help augment the active component."

The "purple" joint-service environment, peppered with representations of all the different services, is another plus for the 300th, according to VanNatta.

"It's an honor to be able to work with the other branches. There's truly a wealth of leadership here. We'll be able to learn from their strengths, incorporate them into ours, and the 300th will return as a better unit," he said.

Also, the transition with the members of the 43rd Military

Police Brigade — who will be returning home to give Rhode Island its population back — has been progressing smooth as silk, according to VanNatta.

"It's hard to let go of ownership, but the 43rd has been very good with passing their knowledge off," he said. "So fortunately we won't have to start from square one."

Having a Joint Task Force out of short pants is a huge benefit for the soldiers of the 300th MP Bde., with the structural groundwork well-laid for them already. And when their subordinate MP companies arrive here, the average Camp Delta guard here will have been long spared from having to live in the tents of Freedom Heights. And now that Camp America North, with its hard roofs and indoor latrines, is open, even the fine SEAhuts of Camp America will look rough enough to these newbies.

"We're very appreciative of the sacrifices that our predecessors have made here," said VanNatta. "They had a rough go, but we hope to pick up the ball and carry it even further. We'll build on the remarkable accomplishments that they have made, just as we can expect the people to follow us here to carry on the same."

In other words, to VanNatta, GTMO's future looks bright.

"Joint Task Force -GTMO will only improve," said VanNatta. "We have excellent soldiers and leaders coming, and with the excellent ones already here in place, we'll have a winning combination for running a fantastic military operation."

Leeward Point: find peace at

Story and photos by
Army Sgt. Paul S. Morando
Special to The Wire

Leeward Point sits quietly in the Bay of Guantanamo, while the surf pounds its rocky shores, patiently awaiting the arrival of the ferry. Across the bay, the faint glare from the Windward Lighthouse answers the blinking lights of the Leeward Air Terminal that beckon incoming flights. On the tarmac, eager passengers board an off-island plane.

There is only one way to this world — a 20-minute ferry ride, which affords servicemembers an impregnable pause from their daily routine, time to look back as well as forward. It's an often introspective trip, and one which foreshadows the desolate atmosphere of its destination.

But sometimes, desolate is just what people come for. In spite of its relative isolation and sparse attractions — or because of them — Leeward has developed a cult-like existence among servicemembers. "Leeward has a Key West feel, where the beaches are your own and everything is within walking distance," says Navy JO1 Christopher Sherwood, Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of the Media Support Center. "It's an ideal place to go to get your mind off things, giving you a chance to break free from it all."



"Nothing beats the isolated ambience of Leeward," said CBQ employee Arcui Maitim, seen here standing in front of his workplace, the "Pearl of the Antilles" where weary guests flock to for their fine rooms, friendly service and tranquil atmosphere.



Like an old neglected back-country road where speed has no limits — the vehicle-less paths of Leeward Point stand silently under the searing Cuban sun waiting patiently for someone to walk slowly by and take it all in.

"It gives me an opportunity to escape the monotony of the Windward side and of the military itself," adds Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Cline, who ventures out to Leeward to visit its tranquil beaches every chance he gets. "The environment is always calm and peaceful, which allows the time and space to reflect on life."

Since World War I, after the Army moved out amidst countless downsizing by the Navy and ever-changing landlords — Leeward has slowly developed into a bucolic outpost where servicemembers and contract workers come to contemplate their lives among its foothills, lost roads and hidden beaches.

However, due to the influx of Joint Task Force personnel under Operation Enduring Freedom, Leeward's role has since increased as a transportation hub — shuttling servicemembers daily in and out of Guantanamo Bay.

But the shells of the Leeward Side remain as neo-apocalyptic settings that dot the arid landscape. Neglected bowling alleys, abandoned movie theaters, burnt-out

cars now used as training objects for the fire department. A drive along the roads of Leeward is a tour of the artifacts of its past.

"Certain spots around Leeward remind me of a scene out of the movie 'The Terminator,'" Sherwood said, who finds himself returning back to Leeward even after moving to the Windward side. "But its other-worldliness is what makes it so appealing."

At the crossroads of 2nd street and Avenue D stands a large cross, planted among the wispy tall grass where the turkey vultures circle above — a quizzical dash of civilization in the pastoral landscape. Was there an old church where servicemembers and their families attended or some mystical presence that evolved over



MASR Ellis Voivedich Jr., a member of the Naval Security Police awaits the arrival of the ferry to shuttle him back to the "real" world of the Windward side of GTMO, leaving behind the serenity and desolate vastness that is Leeward Point.

the loneliest place in GTMO

the years? Perhaps an ancient general from the Spanish-American War occupies these sacred grounds — there are two stars pinned on the bottom, their age betrayed by the peeling paint.

Escapism aside, Leeward has a direct military function: home of the Marine Corps Security Forces, who patrol the fenceline separating us from communist Cuba.



Marine reservist Sgt Jose Alvarado, Marine Security Forces, keeps Leeward Point secure when heading out on his shift—which is patrolling the fence line between communist Cuba and American rented soil.

These camo-clad Hemdalls also man Marine Observation Points (MOPs) along the Leeward shore, keeping an eye on Castro's 'Barrier Road' — a nickname given to a stretch of pavement that cuts across the sun-baked Cuban landscape.

For Marine Staff Sgt. John Mcinerney, a member of B Company, 1st Battalion of the 23rd Marine Corps Security Forces, the isolation of Leeward does not take away from the importance of their mission. "At times, the solitary environment out here does take a toll on us because we are on strict shifts that require steadfast concentration under very limited activity," he admitted, as his HUMVEE tore along the 8.5-mile fence line where the elusive cranes fly freely in and out of Communist Cuba. "However, we are trained to fight against such behavior — that's our job and we do whatever we can to not let it affect our work performance as a battalion."

This small-town existence fits just fine for fellow Marine Lance Cpl. David Hueben, who sees it as "a place where you can be yourself without worrying about being politically correct all the time." When at Leeward, Hueben spends his off-time pumping iron with old-school weights at "Rusty's" Darkside Gym.

Another aspect that Hueben likes about Leeward is the friendliness of the contract workers. "Everybody knows each other — you see them all the time," he said, after ordering some chicken fingers at the "Clipper Club" — Leeward's only-game-in-

town and answer to Windward's Tiki Bar and Windjammer.

Servicemembers dot the relatively plain landscape — mixing in with the Jamaican and Filipino contract workers who seem to be right at home on Leeward side despite the apparent lack of construction.

Leeward Point, as well as the rest of GTMO, opened up many job opportunities for contract workers from all across the world. For Phillipines' native Arcui Maitim, a front desk employee at the Combined Bachelor Quarters, (CBQ) — affectionately known as the "Pearl of the Antilles," Leeward Point has become not only his workplace but a permanent home for the last three years, solidifying an intimate connection with the serene atmosphere.

"Nothing beats the isolated ambience of Leeward," he said, after finding his present job in a Filipino newspaper and makes sure he sends money back home to his family. "I am proud to be working here supporting the American military as a civilian by offering the very best service that I can."

Across the street from the CBQ lies the beachfront area where iguanas act as ancient trolls standing guard at the man-made, sand-covered Chapman and Hidden beaches. And those beaches are what draw the tourists.

GTMO's "country" side, even quieter than the relatively bustling Windward side, has always struck a dichotomous chord among the GTMO community, especially with the Marines that work both sides of the bay. "It's like living in a small town away from the big city," said Lance Cpl. Keith Harris. "But there are times when I miss civilization and find myself heading to the Windward side to check out a movie or maybe just visit the NEX."

For fellow Marine reservist Sgt. Jose Alvarado, Leeward is an ideal place to work, but he prefers the "real world" of Windward and its interactive social environment. "Except for the beaches, there is nothing to do out here except watch the vultures and banana rats while contract workers drive around the base," he said.

Leeward is often looked at only as a place to catch a flight or brought up in conversation as a point of geographical reference. For many there



A lone cross stands stoically within the tall grass along Avenue D — adding to the mystic setting that Leeward so often provides for willing travelers.

is no real connection, but for those pensive souls looking for a place to escape, the name spells sanctuary.

But like any military escape, it always comes with a return trip. On the lonely road back to the ferry, vultures align the telephone wires, waiting out the moments and the days, perhaps watching the comings and goings of the the only GTMO beast that will never die.

As the gray hulking vessel finally streams into the calm bay, the vultures look up quickly and take flight. The mighty boat docks, stays 10 minutes and then slowly-pulls out, leaving Leeward on its own once again.



A faint breeze shakes a pair of old swings back to life for a brief moment, leaving one to ponder how long it's been standing.