



PSU 312 defends GTMO waters

By Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class
Trevor Andersen

JTF-GTMO Public Affairs Office

It's safe to say that Guantanamo Bay is not the most dangerous place to be deployed. However, it's not completely shielded from enemies. That's where the United States Coast Guard comes in.

Port Security Unit (PSU) 312 from Alameda, Ca. deployed in the summer of 2006 to GTMO to provide port security and harbor defense in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"The number one reason we're in GTMO is Anti-Terrorism Force Protection (ATFP)," said commanding officer of PSU 312, Coast Guard Cmdr. Don Huenefeld. "We're an integral part of ATFP here," said Huenefeld.

"We are the first line of defense for waterborne activity," said Coast Guard Master Chief David McCallum, PSU 312 Command Master Chief. The Coast Guard has jurisdiction from the shore to several miles out to sea, said McCallum. "After that, the Navy has jurisdiction."

Though ATFP is the mission, training is one of the side benefits of deployment. Because of the location, Coast Guardsmen can train in ways they could not at home.

"This is one of the best training locations for a PSU," said Huenefeld. "We've had two underway shoots [live fire exercises at sea]. Because of environmental concerns we couldn't do that where we were," he said.

"Most of the crew is on their first deployment and they're doing a superb job," said McCallum. "They've earned qualifications,

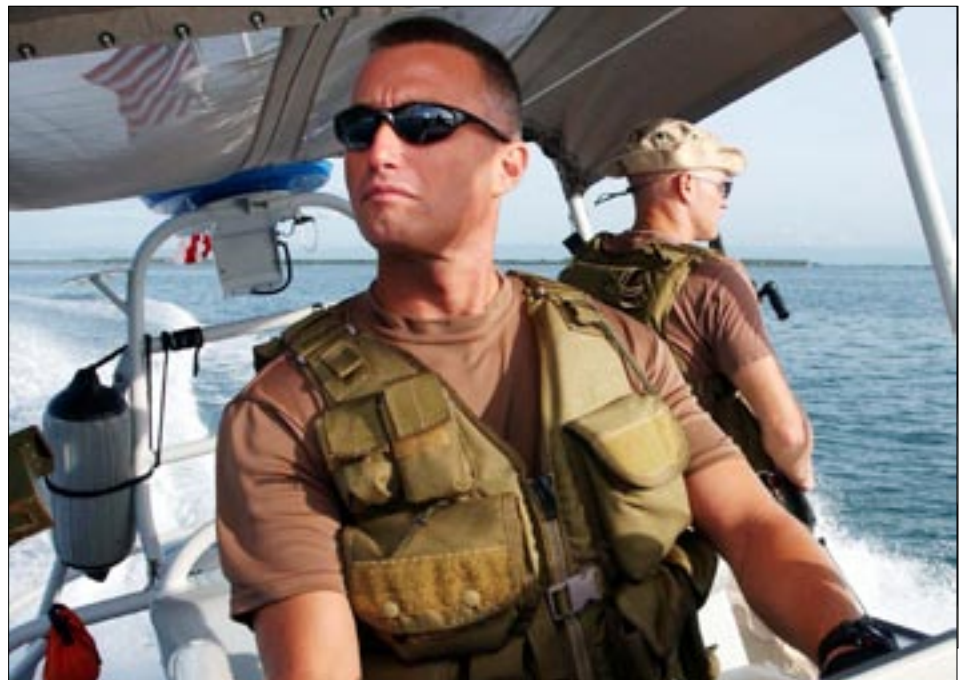


Photo by Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Trevor Andersen

Coast Guard Petty Officers 3rd Class Mike Robison and Michael Hard from Port Security Unit 312 escort the Navy ship USS McInerney to port in GTMO.

pins, advancements; they've done what usually takes four to six years in four months," he said.

"The crew has performed superbly, I can't say how proud I am of the boat crews," McCallum said. "They're the bulk of the unit."

One of the Coast Guardsmen on his first deployment is Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Mike Palmer, Port Security Specialist for PSU 312.

"It's really nice to be working with other branches. This is not what people usually see the Coast Guard doing," said Palmer. "It's our job to make sure no bad-guys get in."

The "Coasties" are also responsible for escorting ships to and from their ports.

The Coast Guard does this to make sure something like the bombing on the USS Cole doesn't happen here, said McCallum.

The USS Cole was attacked in October, 2000 by suicide bombers in Yemen. After the bombing, a Coast Guard PSU was deployed to the Middle East to provide force protection for Navy assets in the area.

Yes, GTMO is a relatively safe location, but as many of us are in our beds at night, we can rest assured that the United States Coast Guard is standing watch on the waters of Guantanamo Bay. ■

Mission first, Troopers Always, self last!

By Army Sgt. Maj. Richard Magnum

JTF-GTMO J-3 Sergeant Major

It is important as a leader that you be able to motivate subordinates to accomplish the mission. The mission can be a physically challenging task or performing a hazardous task that is dangerous and life threatening. Most of the Troopers I have spoken with are doing jobs here that are not exactly in line with their MOS / rating. However, whatever our duty is at GTMO, we must give 100% effort! When we let our guard down, we give our enemy an opportunity to exploit that weakness. We must remain vigilant always. Every single trooper has an important job in GTMO or they wouldn't be here.

Motivation is defined in Webster's dictionary as: "The reason or reasons one has for acting in a particular way; the general desire or willingness of someone to do something." As leaders we should serve as and develop positive role models. If not already in place, we should develop methods of motivation such as setting the example, establishing clear goals and objectives and use the established awards system to the maximum. Reward the desired behavior of an individual or group promptly. Present awards at an appropriate unit ceremony. Give verbal praise liberally. A pat on the back doesn't cost anything. Promote those who work hard, study hard, achieve standards, and influence others to achieve unit standards. Both commissioned and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) need to share the same goal, accomplishing the unit's mission. Our responsibilities overlap and must be shared. Officers must give



NCOs the guidance, resources, assistance, and supervision necessary to perform their duties. The Army Creed of the noncommissioned officer states, "Officers of my unit will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and confidence as well as that of my soldiers." NCOs are responsible for assisting and advising officers. NCOs should conduct the daily business of the JTF within established policies, focusing on individual tasks that lead to mission success. NCOs are primarily involved with individual troopers and team leading. Allow your troopers to take ownership of their portion of the mission. With ownership comes pride. Senior NCOs need to ensure subordinate NCOs and troopers are prepared to operate as effective unit members. All NCOs should concentrate on the standards of performance, training and the professional development of subordinate NCOs and troopers. Teach your Troopers to be proactive and not reactive. If we as leaders take care of our troopers, our troopers will take care of the mission.

NCOs Lead The Way! ■

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The Wire

Circulation: 1,350

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Commercial: 011-53-99-3651

DSN: 660-3651

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www.jtfgtmo.southcom.mil

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The 305th Press Camp Headquarters, Joint Task Force-Guantanamo, produces *The Wire*, which is printed under the provisions of Department of Defense Instruction 5120.4.

Legal: Service Members Civil Relief Act

By Navy Lt. Stacie J. Leonard

JTF-GTMO JAG Corps

Welcome to the first edition of the Legal Assistance Corner. Each month the Legal Assistance Office will be publishing a column, both in *The Gazette* and *The Wire*, designed to provide guidance to personnel stationed in Guantanamo Bay on a variety of legal issues they may encounter.

Our first edition addresses the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) – formerly known as the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act. This Act provides safeguards for the servicemember in civil matters (as opposed to criminal matters) when military duties interfere with normal civilian legal proceedings. While on active duty, servicemembers are protected from negative action in areas where the member's service may interfere with his ability to meet civilian obligations. Even though you may have heard of this Act before, most people are not fully aware of all the tremendous benefits it gives to military members and their dependents.

The most commonly known benefit is the 6% interest rate limitation on pre-service debts. If you have credit card debt,

an auto loan, school loan, or basically any kind of loan; to include mortgages; with an interest rate higher than 6%, under the SCRA, you are entitled to have your interest rate reduced to 6%. You must have acquired the debt obligation prior to coming on active duty and if asked, you must be able to demonstrate that your military service has "materially affected" your ability to pay the debt.

In order to benefit from this protection, you simply need to notify the creditor that you are on active duty and provide them with a copy of your orders. Upon receiving this information, the creditor will lower your interest rate to the statutory 6% and your overall principal balance owed will be based upon this new rate. All amounts previously based on a higher interest rate must be forgiven.

The SCRA also allows for a stay or postponement of court proceedings against servicemembers. If you are being sued or are involved as a party in any kind of court proceeding and cannot attend the court proceeding due to your military obligations, the SCRA gives you an automatic stay for a period of not less than 90 days. A stay can be used to stop the ac-

tion or put it on hold during any phase in the case. The court may stay the action on its own motion and shall stay the action upon application by the servicemember. To stop the case, the court needs a letter from the servicemember and their commanding officer stating that current military duty prevents their appearance and they are not authorized military leave at this time.

Some of the other great benefits include: protection against default judgments, protection from eviction, termination of pre-service residential leases, termination of leases during military service, temporary relief from paying mortgages, and termination of auto leases during military service.

As you can see, the SCRA can be a big help to military members while they are deployed. The United States Supreme Court has declared that the Act must read with, "an eye friendly to those who dropped their affairs to answer their country's call." If you think you may qualify for protection under the SCRA, stop by the legal assistance office or give us a call at 3561 to make an appointment to discuss your case with an attorney. ■

Security bulletin: Web surfing safely

By Frank Perkins

JTF-GTMO Special Security Office

The Internet is an informal collection of government, military, commercial, and educational computer networks used to transmit information publicly. As a member of the government, you may be placing yourself at risk every time you access the Internet.

If you even hint at having access to classified information or information that is not readily available to the public, other users will assume that you may have access to classified information about these subjects. You may start receiving private Electronic Mail (E-mail) asking you fairly innocent questions. In return, the sender promises to provide you with some desirable information. What starts out as a casual information exchange can quickly lead to much more. Don't get sucked in.

The Internet gives foreign intelligence services a new and effective means of collecting both economic and defense information. Spying in cyberspace is quick, easy, and deniable. If someone on the

Internet discovers that you are a good "source" because of the type of information you offer, the person will have no problem finding out more about you. From easily accessible on-line sources the interested party can get your social security number, address, spouse's name, children's names, employer's name, location, and phone, all from accessible, inexpensive or even free and on-line sources.

You can safely use the Internet by following three principles: keep a low profile, minimize the potential for disclosing classified information, and understand the hazards involved. Following these three principles will allow you to better protect your personal information, organization information, and classified information. The less attention that you draw to yourself, the less chance you will have of becoming a target. Constantly remind yourself that anything you post to a news group, chat room, E-mail, or post on a home page is distributed worldwide. Once information has been made available on the Internet, anyone, anywhere, can obtain that information.

The point of contact for this information is Frank Perkins at ext. 9824. Remember, mission first, security always. ■

JTF Troopers compete in Army Ten-Miler

Army Spc. Philip Regina

JTF-GTMO Public Affairs Office

Six members of the Joint Task Force Guantanamo took part in the 22nd annual Army Ten-Miler Race October 8th in Washington D.C.

Army 1st Sgt. William Fitzgerald, Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Crocco, Army Sgt. Gustavo Lombera, Army Staff Sgt. Eric Shue, Army Staff Sgt. Tyler Thomas and Navy Seaman John Miklas represented the JTF, with a team name of "Honor Bound."

The overall team placing was determined by the top four runners from each group's time.

In a field of 24,011 individuals and 425 teams, "Honor Bound" placed 47th. Lombera, Shue, Thomas and Miklas contributed an impressive 4:26:06 overall time. The overall time was a

result of adding up each individual's time. Each team member averaged an individual time of 1:06:00.

"Honor Bound" placed 15th out of 29 in the active duty open mens category, the most difficult of all the categories.

"The active duty open mens category is the hardest category among the others. Basically, you're running against the healthiest and fastest teams of the entire race," explained Fitzgerald.

The ten-miles run by each participant was a grueling, yet awe-inspiring trek through American history. Starting from the western side of the Pentagon, the participants crossed the Potomac River over the Arlington Memorial Bridge. They then did a loop, passing the Lincoln memorial and the Kennedy center. Next, they ran along Independence Ave. passing the Washington Memorial and

on through the Smithsonian Mall, until finally reaching the state capitol, which served as a turn around point for the race. Finally, they ran onto I-35 back to finish the race at the Pentagon.

According to Fitzgerald, Washington D.C.'s terrain was relatively flat and the training "Honor Bound" did here was more than adequate preparation.

"The hills here in GTMO helped a lot in the training process. The flatness of D.C. was a lot easier than the hilly roads they have here," said Fitzgerald.

Other than the congested racing lanes, Fitzgerald felt that the race was quite memorable, as well as a great experience.

"It was a great experience. I really enjoyed taking part in it. It was also great to be running with others individuals who enjoyed running," added Fitzgerald. ■

Network News

Web filtering software

By Air Force 1st Lt. Jim Northamer

JTF-GTMO Information Assurance Officer

Two weeks ago, I wrote an article about phishing—"The practice of luring unsuspecting Internet users to a fake website by using authentic-looking email with the real organization's logo, in an attempt to steal passwords, financial or personal information, or to introduce a virus attack; the creation of a website replica for fooling unsuspecting Internet users into submitting personal or financial information or passwords." This week, I'd like to show you an example of a very legitimate-looking phishing attempt that a few GTMO Troopers have recently received. This is a great example of what a phishing attempt may look like and a reminder that criminals are always trying to find new ways to scam innocent people.


This e-mail looks official. It has the Bank of America logo, which even has a hyperlink to the official Bank of America website. It has to be legit, right? Unfortunately it's not. As a rule, financial institutions will never request that their members provide account or personal information via e-mails, web links, or other insecure means. Where this particular message says, "Click here and Renew Now," the scammers provided a hyperlink to a website that also looked legitimate. It had "bankofamerica.com" as part of the web address. Per the e-mail, this is where the recipient is supposed to, "...enter your checking account number as Account Number and Social Security Number as Password."

The consequences of falling for this scam could be devastating.

Imagine the damage a person could do with your checking account information and your Social Security Number.

If you ever receive an e-mail that requests personal information, asks you to click on a hyperlink, requests that you download a file, or otherwise asks for sensitive information, be skeptical. All of these are indicators of phishing activity or a potential scam. If you receive such an e-mail, simply delete it. Do not forward the message, reply to it, click on imbedded links, etc. Just delete it.

If you ever have any questions or concerns about a computer security issue, please feel free to contact the JTF-GTMO IA Office at j6-ia@jftgtmo.southcom.mil or x3333. ■



Bank of America Higher Standards

Dear BOA Military Bank Customer,

This is your official notification from Bank of America Military Bank that the service(s) listed below will be deactivated and deleted if not renewed immediately... **Click here** (hyperlink removed) and **Renew Now** your BoA Military Bank Payments & Transfer Services. If you are not enrolled for Online Banking, please enter your checking account number as Account Number and Social Security Number as Password.

.....

Thank you. Sincerely,
Eric Wilkinson, Customer Service
Document Reference: (#658051).
2006 Bank of America

NEX shows appreciation for GTMO shoppers

By Army Sgt. Jonson Tulewa-Gibbs

JTF-GTMO Public Affairs Office

The Guantanamo Bay Navy Exchange held their annual customer appreciation day at the main NEX Saturday.

It was a fun-filled all day event, kicked off by an early morning 5K run, with prizes offered to the winner of each respective racing age group.

Amateurs learned from the professionals at Windmill Beach for the Roxy/Quicksilver Surf Class. Boards were first laid out on the sand teaching technique, and later ended on the water with high spirits.

A free breakfast was served to customers waiting in line at the doors of the NEX, which opened at 9 a.m. to a line of military personnel doubling back through the front hall. As the eager customers filled the store, discounted prices awaited them.

Amidst the shopping sprees and overflowing shopping carts, prize giveaways were announced over the loudspeakers. \$100 and \$250 cash prizes as well as camcorders and televisions were among the many giveaways. An outburst from the crowd would signal an end to a shopper's hope of winning an appealing prize.

Magician Shawn Oaks provided the crowd with amazement during his magic show; one of the most memorable being the burning of a \$100 dollar bill in an envelope, then amazingly cutting it out of the middle of an orange held by an audience member off stage, causing an approving roar from the crowd.

2004 Olympic fencers retired Air Force Master Sgt. Weston Kelsey and Army Private 1st Class Cody Nagengast took to the stage donning their protective gear. After the introduction they displayed some of their moves, lunging and striking at each other like two pirates out of the movies in a battle to the death. After their display, the Olympians offered a short fencing class to anyone daring enough to pick up a sword.

A free lunch of barb-e-que chicken, hamburgers, and hot dogs awaited the crowd under a big-top tent in the front parking lot. Children played in two

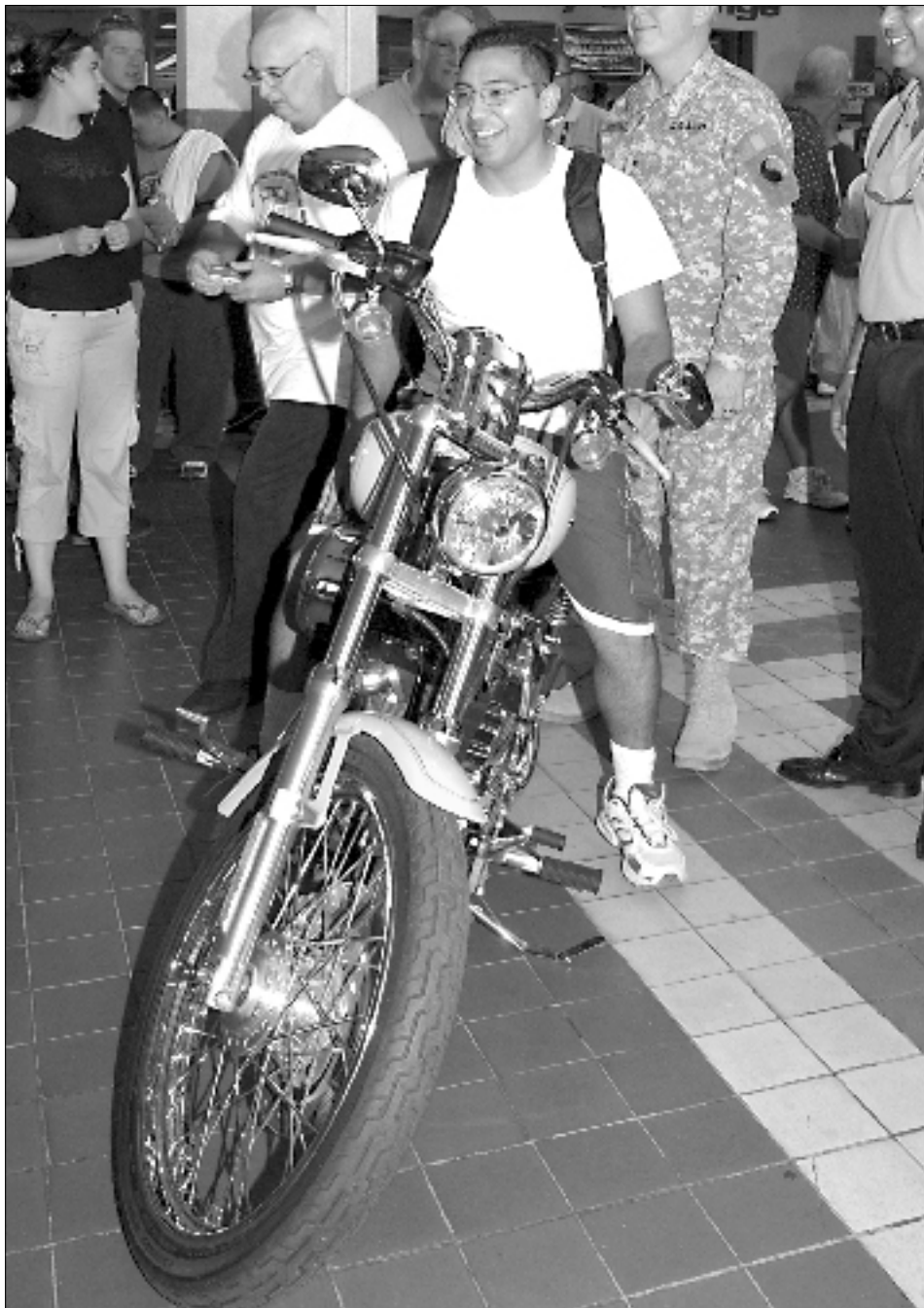


Photo by Army Sgt. Jonson Tulewa-Gibbs

Simon Roman sits atop the NEX CAD grand prize, a Harley Davidson motorcycle, after his name was drawn during the customer appreciation celebration.

inflatable play areas as their parents sat back and enjoyed their meals with friends and family.

Following the lunch, major giveaways were announced. These giveaways included a trip for two to Orlando, a trip for two to London and the much anticipated grand prize being a Harley Davidson motorcycle.

As a part of Customer Appreciation Day, the NEX presented a magic and comedy

show at the Windjammer Club that evening. Magician Shawn Oaks made a second appearance and comedians Jeffrey Ross, Jim Norton and Tony Woods provided comic relief to those in attendance.

From the early dawn to the late night, the 5th annual Customer Appreciation Day proved to hold something for everyone; leaving residents with much more than great deals. ■

exchange

CUSTOMER APP



Photo by Army Spc. Philip Regina



Photo by Army Spc. Philip Regina



Photo by Army Sgt. Jonson Tulewa-C



Photo by Army Spc. Philip Regina



RECIATION DAY



Photo by Army Spc. Philip Regina



Photo by Army Spc. Philip Regina



Sibbs



Photo by Army Spc. Philip Regina



Photo by Army Spc. Philip Regina

Transition assistance: life after the military

By Army Spc. Dustin Robbins

JTF-GTMO Public Affairs Office

For many Troopers leaving military service, finding a new job is the first priority. Congress recognized the importance of employment assistance and required the military departments to create permanent employment assistance centers at major military installations.

Consequently, the Transition Assistance Programming was designed by the Department of Defense to smooth the transition from the military to the civilian world. Whether you're retiring, separating and looking for a new career, or heading to school, success requires planning and resources

The key to a successful transition is to know what resources are available and learning how to utilize them, this article will outline the steps to take in order to do just that.

"There has been much confusion on what steps personnel need to take to be ready for transition," says Guantanamo Bay Transition Assistance Program Manager (TAMP), Brenda L. Walker.

First of all, Troopers need to know just what the TAP provides. TAP is a four day seminar offering personalized services including

resume development, job search techniques, interview strategies, veteran's benefits, goal setting, skill assessments for those who are as early as two years from retiring or separating from the military, said Walker.

Servicemembers desiring a smooth transition should remember that they are eligible to participate in TAP or ACAP Seminars at around the 16 month mark and again around the six month mark prior to separation or retirement from the military, said Walker. Waiting until the last 30 days can create undo stress and limits preparation time – preparation needed to confidently begin transition.

Before taking advantage of these 1:1 transition assistance or TAP/ACAP Seminars, Troopers should go through pre-separation counseling from their career counselor to learn about their benefits as well as services that can be provided to help the transition. During counseling, Troopers will complete DD Form 2648, the "pre-separation counseling checklist." The checklist helps Troopers to identify their needs and develop a personal plan for securing the assistance to meet those needs.

In order to create smooth

transition you will need to take the following steps to attend a TAP/ACAP Seminar:

- Select a TAP/ACAP Seminar date from the 2007 TAP/ACAP seminar schedule
- Submit a TAD/No Cost Order Chit for your four day seminar to your chain of command
- Upon approval, contact your designated Command Career Counselor to schedule your pre-separation counseling session
- With your CCC complete the DD-2648 (Pre-Separation Counseling Form) being sure to address any items you are unfamiliar with.
- Upon completion of the DD-2648, request that your CCC sign you up for your TAP/ACAP Seminar.
- Create a rough draft of a resume prior to TAP/ACAP Seminar & attain your SMART transcripts if available.

Military spouses are also welcome to attend TAP/ACAP and are welcome to use the services of the Family Employment Readiness Program that provide assistance in the job search needs unique to the military spouse.

If you have any questions or concerns about transition assistance, contact Brenda L Walker at ext. 4141. ■

Pigskin Picks	Army Col. Dennis Army Command Sgt Maj. Plemmons Joint Detention Group	Army Maj. Pearson Army Command Sgt. Maj. Vanwyngarden Joint Detention Group	Navy Cmdr. Winter Navy Command Master Chief Conley Joint Detention Group	Army Lt. Col. Tucker Army Sgt. Maj. Diaz Joint Task Force Public Affairs	Army Capt. Hughes Army 1st Sgt. Fitzgerald Headquarters, Headquarters Company
Week 4	7-6	7-6	7-6	7-6	7-6
Season	51-27	51-27	47-31	54-24	49-29
TCU at Army	TCU	TCU	TCU	Army	TCU
N.C. State at Maryland	NC State	NC State	Maryland	Maryland	Maryland
Texas A&M at Oklahoma State	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma State
Hawaii at New Mexico State	New Mexico State	Hawaii	Hawaii	Hawaii	Hawaii
Carolina at Cincinnati	Carolina	Carolina	Cincinnati	Cincinnati	Cincinnati
Detroit at N.Y. Jets	Detroit	N.Y. Jets	N.Y. Jets	N.Y. Jets	N.Y. Jets
Green Bay at Miami	Miami	Miami	Miami	Miami	Miami
New England at Buffalo	New England	New England	New England	Buffalo	New England
Philadelphia at Tampa Bay	Philadelphia	Philadelphia	Philadelphia	Tampa Bay	Philadelphia
Pittsburgh at Atlanta	Atlanta	Atlanta	Pittsburgh	Atlanta	Pittsburgh
San Diego at Kansas City	San Diego	San Diego	San Diego	Kansas City	San Diego
Denver at Cleveland	Denver	Denver	Denver	Cleveland	Denver
Minnesota at Seattle	Seattle	Seattle	Seattle	Seattle	Seattle

Movie Summary



By Army Spc. Jonathan Mullis

“Beerfest”

When American brothers Todd and Jan Wolfhouse travel to faraway Germany to spread their grandfather’s ashes at Oktoberfest, they stumble upon a highly-secret, centuries old, underground beer games competition; “Beerfest,” the secret Olympics of beer drinking.

Staring Paul Soter, Erik Stolhanske, and Steve Lemme 112 min Rated R. ■



Army Spc. Philip Regina asks, “What do you plan on doing for Halloween?”



“I’m going to a Halloween party dressed as the Incredible Hulk.”
-Navy Petty Officer
2nd Class Petty Officer
Tanniesha Watts



“I’m going to go snorkeling in a Pink Panther costume.”
-Army Sgt.
Garrus Richardson



“I’m going to the Rocky Horror Picture Show.”
-Navy Seaman
Michelle Wigle



“I’m hanging out with her.”
-Army Spc.
Shaun Patrick Rieley

THE LAST FRIDAY

By Army Lt. Col. Ron Martin-Minnich

JTF-GTMO Command Chaplain

In some Muslim countries the Last Friday of Ramadan is known as Jumu'atul Wada' or Farewell Friday. Its significance is an expression of their grief at the approach of Ramadan's departure. A month of great blessings is about to end. Allah is thanked subhanahu wa ta'ala for this auspicious time. Muslims feel sorry that it is coming to an end, but they look forward to the next Ramadan and pray to Allah to give them long life, good health and strong faith to enjoy His blessings during this month next year.

This is not only a time to say good-bye to Ramadan, but also to reflect on what Muslims have learned from this month and how they are going to use these lessons in the coming days. The following are some of the lessons that Ramadan teaches:

1. Patience: Fasting in Ramadan taught patience (sabr). It taught self-discipline. Now they have to use this training. They avoided some permissible things during fasting; now they know how to control themselves and protect themselves from unlawful (Haram) things.

2. Control over passions and desires: Fasting taught them to control their passions and desires. Now they have to use this training and always keep themselves pure. They must not be the slaves of their lusts and desires. They should not obey their desires, but they must obey Allah all the time.

3. Control over bad temper: Fasting taught the control of bad temper. It taught them how to avoid bad words. Now they have to use this training. They must not quarrel with others or use bad language. They should be a gentle and honorable people all the time.

4. Charity: Fasting taught us charity (muwasat). They paid their Zakat and their Sadaqat during this month. Now they know how to be good, kind and generous to those who are in need. Now they know how to help good causes always.

5. Nawafil: During Ramadan they prayed Tarawih during the night. Now they should be regular in their daily prayers. They should pray them on time and in a proper manner. They woke up for Sahur every night. Now they can get up for Tahajjud

prayer. They should try to pray Tahajjud as much as possible.

6. Regular Visit to Masjid: During Ramadan they came to the Masjid every day. Now they should make a habit to pray at the Masjid as much as they can. They have their Friday which is known as the Sayyid al-Ayyam (the best day of the week). They should not neglect the Friday prayer. They should also take care of the Masjid. Those who come to the Masjid should also be those who maintain the Masjid.

7. Reading of the Qur'an: During Ramadan they read the Qur'an and they listened to the teachings of the Qur'an. Now they should make a resolution to read the Qur'an every day. They should read one juz' or half Juz' every day. They should read with translation and try to reflect on the words of Allah.

8. Family gathering: During Ramadan they spent more time with their families. They ate together and they prayed together. Now they should keep this habit. The families that eat together and pray together, stay together. They should have good relations with their spouses. They should pay more attention to their children and our youth. They should give them more time and continue to help them to learn the principles and values of Islam. They must pay attention to their Islamic education and training.

9. Concern for the Ummah: During Ramadan they prayed to Allah to help the Muslims of Palestine, Chechnya, Muslims of Kashmir, Muslims of Iraq, Muslims of Afghanistan and Muslims who are suffering in many other lands. They should continue to know more about them and do whatever they can to relieve their suffering and to help bring justice and peace in the world.

10. More good deeds: During Ramadan they did a lot of good things. Now they should be in the habit of doing good all the time.

Brothers and sisters, Allah says in the Qur'an:

O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may (learn) self-restraint. (Al-Baqarah 2:183)

Ramadan is not just a ritual. It teaches self-discipline and human concern. ■

The source of this article is www.isna.com

Stavridis Takes Reins of SOUTHCOM

By Kathleen T. Rhem

American Forces Press Service

Navy Adm. James G. Stavridis became the first naval officer at the helm of U.S. Southern Command this morning. Before assuming command, he said he's looking forward to the challenges and opportunities in this varied region and to strengthening relationships throughout Latin America.

Navy Adm. James G. Stavridis addresses the media after assuming command of U.S. Southern Command in a Miami ceremony Oct. 19. Photo by Kathleen T. Rhem (Click photo for screen-resolution image); high-resolution image available.

Stavridis received his fourth star yesterday evening and assumed command from Army Gen. Bantz J. Craddock in a ceremony here today. Craddock is moving to Europe to assume the lead of U.S. European Command and of NATO military forces.

In a broad-ranging interview earlier this week with local media members and American Forces Press Service, Stavridis discussed his thoughts on issues facing the region and described some of his previous experiences there.

"Latin America is part of our DNA, and we are part of theirs," he said. "It's all one Americas."

Stavridis' new command encompasses a vast and varied region of 450 million people in 32 countries and 13 territories and protectorates. "It's a sixth of the surface area of the world," he said.

Despite pressing demands on the U.S. military in other parts of the world, U.S. Southern Command is a vital piece of American security policy for several reasons, Stavridis explained. "There's a plethora of reasons that SOUTHCOM is an important functional part of what we're doing in the Department of Defense," he said.

He noted that 40 million Americans speak Spanish, and that immigrants come to the United States from the region every day. "So there's an enormous cultural and demographic linkage," he said.

Security concerns in the United States'



Photo by Photo by Kathleen T. Rhem

Navy Adm. James G. Stavridis addresses the media after assuming command of U.S. Southern Command in a Miami ceremony Oct. 19.

backyard could spill over into the country. "We have to always be mindful of security concerns that are close at hand to us. So if there are problems like poverty, and gangs, and narco-trafficking, money laundering, human smuggling, these are things that will impact the United States," Stavridis said. "And so therefore, when it's proximate to us and in our region that's close at hand, it's important that we work with our partners to try to reduce those threats, not only in their countries but in ours, because inevitably the effects can be felt in the United States."

Finally, the admiral said, operations in SOUTHCOM are vital to the war on terrorism. "It is always a possibility that, as terrorists seek to harm the United States, they could possibly try and come through the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility," he said. "We see indications of activity from a variety of different organizations that have interests antithetical to the United States in this region.

"So we have to be very mindful of that

and, therefore, participate ... with our regional partners to try and defend the United States from a security perspective in this war on terror," he added.

Stavridis had a golden opportunity earlier this month to begin getting to know ministers and chiefs of defense in the region when he attended a Defense Ministerial of the Americas meeting in Managua, Nicaragua. "I had a nice oportunidad de practicar mi Español en Nicaragua," he said. "And it was all very, very positive and helpful."

The admiral said he is fluent in French, has been working hard on Spanish and plans to tackle Portuguese once he's fluent in Spanish. Brazilians speak Portuguese. "One hundred eighty million people in this area speak Portuguese," he said. "We often don't sort of recognize that. ... So it's important to reach out to that particular partner ... as well as to make an effort with their language. I think language is very important."

Stavridis said he plans to visit the U.S. enemy combatant detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, which he called "an important part of my responsibilities."

"I want to look the commander there in the eye, Rear Adm. Harry Harris, who is a friend of mine. I've known Admiral Harris for a long time. He enjoys my confidence," Stavridis said. "I want to meet with him personally, get his impressions of how things are going, and I want to emphasize to him that we will continue to run Guantanamo Bay in a legal and transparent fashion."

The new commander will find Guantanamo much changed since he first visited the naval base there as a young naval officer in 1973. At the time, Stavridis served as a boat captain who shuttled sailors back and forth to the base from the USS Nimitz, anchored off shore because of Guantanamo Bay's shallow depth.

Stavridis said he believes the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay is a "well-run, legal, transparent facility ... run under the auspices of United States law." But, he added, he will visit the base to draw his own conclusions. ■

AROUND THE JTF



Photo by Army Spc. Philip Regina

Workers from Burns, Rowe and Dick Corporation renovate the Camp America Post Office.



Photo by Army Spc. Philip Regina

Contractors from Burns, Rowe and Dick Corporation refurbish a clamshell at Camp America.



Photo by Lt. Cmdr. Carrie H. Kennedy

Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Shawn Dickens, a corpsman with the Joint Medical Group, participates in a send off for the last of the JMG Delta Detachment at the ferry landing.



Photo by Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Trevor Andersen

A boat crew from Coast Guard Port Security Unit 312 returns from patrolling GTMO's waters. PSU 312 patrols the waters around GTMO 24 hours a day.