Grammy Award Winning Artist Visits Guantanamo Bay

Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Grant
Joint Task Force Guantanamo Bay Public Affairs

Grammy Award winning singer/songwriter Michael W. Smith visited Naval Station (NS) Guantanamo Bay, Cuba Aug. 6.

The visit served as Smith’s first United Service Organizations (USO)/Armed Forces Entertainment tour, as he provided musical entertainment at the installation’s Windjammer ballroom for the community.

“I've been on a lot of military bases in the U.S. and overseas,” explained Smith. “But this is my first USO tour.”

Smith, who is between shows during a world tour that began in Brazil, is a supporter of America’s armed forces.

“Our nation’s troops and military families are among the bravest and most selfless people I know,” Smith said. “We, as a nation, owe them not only our respect and gratitude, but also our time. I am honored for the opportunity to travel to Guantanamo Bay with the USO and extend our nation’s thanks for their service.”

Prior to the concert, Smith along with USO personnel and Moral Welfare and Recreation (MWR) staff, visited various work areas on the installation. The tour also included an early morning on-air interview at Defense Media Activity (Radio GTMO).

“It was fun having him in the studio,” said Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Oliver Cole. “He was very open and honest. He actually made the hour go by faster and I had a lot fun.”

Between interview segments, Smith spoke with Radio GTMO personnel as they chose songs to play during the interview.
The Naval Station (NS) Guantanamo Bay Chief Petty Officer’s Mess began its six-week indoctrination period for nine Chief Petty Officer (CPO) selectees assigned to the installation, Aug. 1.

Sailors selected for advancement to the rank of CPO undergo the induction period marking the transition from Petty Officer First Class to a brotherhood of senior-enlisted Sailors: the Chief’s Mess.

Each year, CPO induction culminates at a time-honored pinning ceremony in early September.

Congratulations to NS Guantanamo Bay CPO selectees Religious Programs Specialist CPO select Gilbert Credo, Yeoman CPO select Bonita Kendrick, Gunner’s Mate CPO select Brandon Lalley, Electronics Technician CPO select Rolando Roblesnavarro, Boatswain’s Mate CPO select Rogelio Salinas, Gunner’s Mate CPO select Lamont Shearin, Legalman CPO select Kristen Spakoski, Logistics Specialist CPO select Joseph Tolbert, and Master-at-Arms CPO select Russell Wood.
The Oliver Hazard Perry-class guided-missile frigate USS Underwood (FFG 36), recovered 49 bales of narcotics from the Caribbean Sea during Operation Martillo, Aug. 3.

Underwood pursued a "go-fast" speed boat late Tuesday evening, Aug. 2, but it dumped its load before Underwood was able to effect a boarding. A Customs and Border Protection maritime patrol aircraft flying overhead, reported the "go-fast" dumping packages over the side and informed Underwood, who marked the position of the debris field in order to locate the packages in daylight.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Miguel Aponte, a member of the bridge watch team, spotted the first bale in the water around 8:15 a.m. Underwood Sailors manned the boat deck and loaded a team, including two members of an onboard U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET), into a rigid-hull inflatable boat (RHIB). Over the next few hours, Sailors aboard Underwood used binoculars to search the surrounding area for more bales while the RHIB team recovered anything spotted in the water.

“Right off the bat, we just start picking up bales that were floating in our area,” said a member of the LEDET. “After that, the ship vectored us in to different sections that they could see from a further distance and then also the helo [helicopter] vectored us in.”

An SH-60B Sea Hawk helicopter assigned to the Vipers of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Light Four Eight Detachment Three (HSL-48.3) launched to assist the search from the air.

“Initially we took off, were given two initial points to go between, searching back and forth using a linear pattern,” said Lt. j.g. Lance Herdon, one of the SH-60B pilots that flew the mission. “We got vectored in by the ship after calculating set and drift. We went to that area and began spotting the packages. We called back the position back to the ship and they began directing the RHIB over in that area. We orbited the area and continued to find more packages.”

In the end, Underwood recovered approximately 1,225 kilograms of narcotics.

“Going wholesale price is $22,500 per kilo. So estimated with 49 bales and 25 kilos per bale, we estimate about $27.5 million” worth of narcotics recovered today, according to a Naval Criminal Investigative Services (NCIS) Special Agent familiar with the case.

Operation Martillo (Spanish for ‘hammer’) is a U.S., European, and Western Hemisphere partner nation effort targeting illicit trafficking routes in coastal waters along the Central American isthmus.

Led by Joint Interagency Task Force (JITF) South, a component of U.S Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), Operation Martillo is a component of the U.S. government’s coordinated interagency regional security strategy in support of the White House strategy to combat transnational organized crime and the U.S. Central America Regional Security Initiative. Fourteen countries are participating: Canada, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States.

JIATF South is a multiservice, multiagency national task force which conducts counter-illicit trafficking operations and intelligence fusion to detect, monitor, and handoff suspected illicit trafficking targets to law enforcement activities; promotes security cooperation and coordinates country team and partner nation initiatives in order to defeat the flow of illicit traffic.

Underwood is deployed to Central and South America and the Caribbean in support of Southern Seas 2012.

Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet supports U.S. Southern Command joint and combined full-spectrum military operations by providing principally sea-based, forward presence to ensure freedom of maneuver in the maritime domain, to foster and sustain cooperative relationships with international partners and to fully exploit the sea as maneuver space in order to enhance regional security and promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the Caribbean, Central and South American regions.

**Respect and Tolerance**

Chaplain Tung Tran
NS Guantanamo Bay Chaplain Services

It is sad to read in the news that last month James Holmes allegedly opened fire and killed twelve people and wounded fifty eight others at a movie theater in Colorado. It is also troubling to read that this month Wade Michael Page also took the lives of six people in a Sikh temple in Wisconsin.

The American public enjoys freedom and safety. I would like to think, more than any other place in the world, but we cannot ignore the fact that there are still acts of senseless violence in our society. We may never be able to understand all the causes and motives that led an Army veteran and a graduate student to take the lives of others who were gathered at the most peaceful of places- a temple and a theater. We may never be able to rid society of similar incidents in the future. Definitely, one thing all of us can do is remind ourselves of the great importance of respect and tolerance, to live it and pass it on to the younger generation.

I urge everyone to remember in thoughts and prayers those victims who are in need of healing, the families and friends of the deceased who are in need of consolation, and justice and penitence for those perpetrators who have committed these horribly senseless and sinful acts. God Bless.
The Jamaican Independence Day Committee (JIDC) at Naval Station (NS) Guantanamo Bay, Cuba hosted the annual Jamaican Independence Day celebration, Aug. 4. Community members gathered at the installation's Windjammer ballroom to celebrate the Caribbean country's 50th anniversary of independence from Britain, while experiencing Jamaica's history, food, and culture.

“This year is a special one for Jamaica and all Jamaicans,” said NS Guantanamo Bay JIDC member Joycelyn Connage-Johnson. “Jamaica celebrates its 50th anniversary of independence as an independent country and Jamaicans have a lot to be proud of. A country of around 3 million people, Jamaica has influenced the world and made its mark in the fields of athletics, academics, food, religion, art, music, and more.”

Attendees were treated to cultural performances featuring dances, poems, fashion, and singing. NS Guantanamo Bay Commanding Officer Capt. J.R. Nettleton and former United Nations Officer Ms. Charmaine Limonius served as keynote speakers during the celebration.

“Remember my brothers and sisters, someday you may return to Jamaica, and on that day the sun will shine brightly on your shoulders and you will know, you are forever home,” said Limonius.

NS Guantanamo Bay’s Jamaican residents incorporated the Jamaican national colors of gold, black, and green into their wardrobe, displaying pride in their country, according to Connage-Johnson. “There is resilience and pride among the Jamaican people,” said Connage-Johnson. “We showcase an ambition and a creative spirit that allows us to excel in our chosen fields. Jamaican culture fuels its people with a pride in their homeland that translates into a highly competitive spirit and in the GTMO community.”
Former United Nations Officer Ms. Charmaine Limonius serves as keynote speaker as part of NS Guantanamo Bay’s annual Jamaican Independence Day celebration, Aug. 4. During the JIDC sponsored event, Limonius highlighted the cultural influence Jamaica has had on the world during the island country’s 50 years of independence. - U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Justin Ailes
“He asked me a lot of questions ‘off-air’ and talked about his family ‘on-air’ which made me feel like he really cared about others,” explained Cole. “Coming down here wasn’t just for him, he really did come for the troops. When a gesture like that is sincere, it really does make a difference to people.”

After the interview, the group met with NS Guantanamo Bay Commanding Officer Capt. J.R. Nettleton, toured Marine Hill, and met with NS Guantanamo Bay and JTF Chaplains.

The visit with the Chaplains centered on a tour of the main Chapel facility and outer buildings where Smith was briefed on the various types of religious services offered at the installation.

“Michael was very interested in how the ministry operates here,” said NS Guantanamo Bay Command Chaplain Cdr. John Van Dickens. “He wanted to understand what it is like in all its variety.”

During the Chapel tour, Smith sat at the piano and played a song titled “Agnus Dei,” which means “Lamb of God.”

Deputy Chaplain Lt. Larry Jones recognized an opportunity during the impromptu mini-concert and sang along.

“That will be a memory to last me for a lifetime,” said Jones. “It’s a once in a lifetime opportunity to be able to sing with someone so legendary in the Christian music world.”

“What a spiritual boost,” exclaimed Dickens. “His coming here was truly a gift. A concert in this remote location by the likes of him sends a clear message that we are very special to this man and that he highly values who we are and what we do.”
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MOVIES
DOWNTOWN LYCEUM

FRIDAY Aug. 10

8 p.m.: Total Recall (new) PG13 124 min.

10 p.m.: That’s My Boy (new) PG 116 min.

SATURDAY Aug. 11

8 p.m.: Rock of Ages (new) PG13 124 min.

10 p.m.: Dark Knight Rises PG13 165 min.

SUNDAY Aug. 12

8 p.m.: Men in Black 3 PG13 103 min.

MONDAY Aug. 13

8 p.m.: The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel PG13 124 min.

TUESDAY Aug. 14

8 p.m.: Ice Age Continental Drift PG 94 min.

WEDNESDAY Aug. 15

8 p.m.: That’s My Boy (new) PG 116 min.

THURSDAY Aug. 16

8 p.m.: Rock of Ages (new) PG13 124 min.

CALL THE MOVIE HOTLINE @ 4880
The Guantanamo Bay Cuban Community held a town hall meeting to welcome the new Commanding Officer and say farewell to a dear friend and advocate, Aug. 5.

Cuban Community Program Manager, Melanie Resto kicked off the event by welcoming Naval Station (NS) Guantanamo Bay, Cuba Commanding Officer Captain J.R. Nettleton.

“I am here to support your needs and I look forward to getting to know each and every one of you,” Nettleton said. “The most important thing I want you all to know is that I always have your best interest at heart.”

Following Nettleton, Resto introduced some other key personnel that will be working with the Cuban community members to include two hospital personnel, Lt. Patrick Daly and Cmdr. Janice White. Both put out vital information about receiving care at the hospital and also who their resources were.

Following the various speakers, Resto said a heartfelt goodbye to the residents and co-workers of the Naval Station.

“This job is extremely rewarding and I mostly enjoyed the humanitarian aspect of it,” Resto said. “It has truly been an honor to get to know the Cuban Culture through their eyes.”

Melanie said her most memorable experience was reuniting one of the residences with his daughter who he had not seen in over 40 years.

“It was such an honor to part of that. They still talk once a month and to think I played a part in that was truly special,” Resto said.

NS Guantanamo Bay, Cuba Installation Business Manager, Lee Adelman and Capt. Nettleton presented Resto with the Meritorious Civilian Service Award for her outstanding accomplishments while serving as the Cuban Community Program Manager. Resto was also presented the Secretary of Defense Medal for Global War on Terrorism and various mementos from members of the Cuban community.

“During my time here I had to be their voice, and it was truly a pleasure and honor to be their voice,” Resto said.

Resto is moving to Fort Bragg, North Carolina and will be teaching Spanish and Latin American Culture.