

THE WIRES

A JTF Journal



Safety First

Rules & regulations to keep you safe

Chaplains unite!

Coming together to serve

Persevere toward advancement

Coast Guard Master Chief Wayne Miesen

PSU 305 Command Master Chief

Advancement is crucial in today's military. Do not let advancement requirements turn into career ending obstacles. I received advice from my father who was a Seabee, a Senior Chief, a Warrant and Commissioned Officer. He advised, "Your time in the service will be like running through an obstacle course. Overcome all obstacles, the easy way or the hard way."

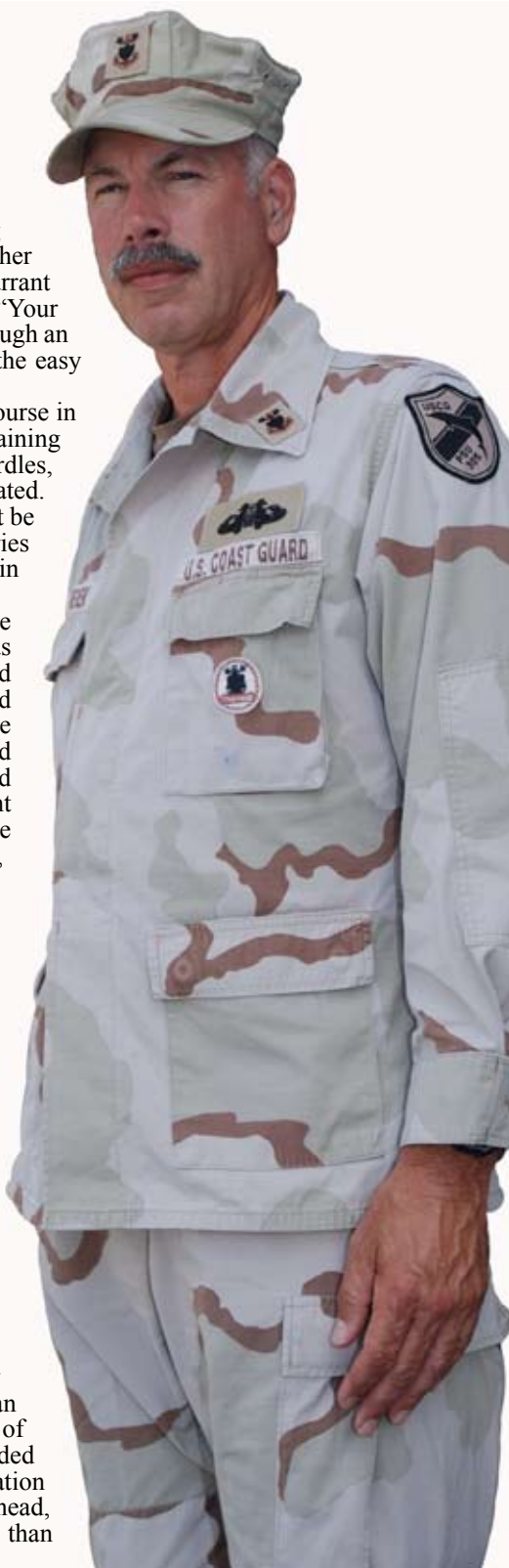
I looked up the definition of obstacle course in the dictionary. It is defined as a military training course filled with obstacles such as hurdles, fences, walls and ditches that must be negotiated. Broadly, it is a series of obstacles that must be overcome. The definition illustrated the series of challenges that we face in advancing in today's military.

I advise all junior personnel to complete advancement requirements as soon as possible. This means studying required courses and completing rate enlisted performance qualifications. One of the biggest obstacles is passing the required correspondence courses. Junior enlisted fail the end of course test and are reluctant to study and retake the test. This can be overcome by monitoring their test scores, encouraging, motivating and requiring them to study and retake the test.

There is no shame in failing a test, only in not completing the course. Don't let initial failure of a test become an obstacle to advancement. Myself and most senior enlisted have initially failed several end of course tests. We continued to take the tests until we passed the course.

Another obstacle to advancement is completing enlisted performance qualifications. Junior enlisted members need to take the initiative to complete these tasks and have a senior person verify completion of the tasks. Monitor subordinates' progress in completing these requirements, do not let them become obstacles to advancement.

History has shown advancement is crucial in today's military. During my father's time, the day of the career Seaman ended in the Navy. During my time, the day of the career Third Class Petty Officer has ended in the Coast Guard. With a new administration in Washington and unknown challenges ahead, advancement is even more important now than in the past. ★



JTF GUANTANAMO

Commander:

Navy Rear Adm. David M. Thomas, Jr.

Joint Task Force Senior Enlisted

Advisor:

Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Brian T. Schexnaydre

Office of Public Affairs:

Director:

Navy Cmdr. Pauline Storum: 9928

Deputy Director:

Army Capt. Kim Kleiman: 9927

Supervisor:

Army 1st Sgt. James Venske: 3649

The Wire

Executive Editor:

Army 1st Lt. Adam Bradley: 3596

Editor:

Army Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn R. Larson: 3651

Assistant Editors:

Army Staff Sgt. Emily Russell: 3592

Army Staff Sgt. Gretel Sharpee: 3594

Staff Writers:

Army Spc. Megan Burnham: 2171

Army Spc. Eric Liesse: 3499

Contact us

Editor's Desk: 3651 or 3596

From the continental United States:

Commercial: 011-53-99-3651

DSN: 660-3651

Email: thewire@jtfgtmo.southcom.mil

Online: www.jtfgtmo.southcom.mil

COVER:

A Cuban boa senses its surroundings with a forked tongue while making its way across the grass at the veterinary clinic, Feb. 23. – JTF Guantanamo Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Emily J. Russell



The WIRE is the official news magazine of Joint Task Force Guantanamo. It is produced by the JTF Public Affairs Office to inform and educate the Troopers of JTF Guantanamo through news, features, command guidance, sports and entertainment. The WIRE seeks to provide maximum disclosure with minimum delay with regards to security, accuracy, propriety and policy. This DoD news magazine is an authorized publication for the members of the Department of Defense. Contents of The WIRE are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or Joint Task Force Guantanamo. It is printed by the Document Automation & Production Service with a circulation of 1000.

JTF SAFETY

JTF GTMO



Army 1st Lt. Roberto Flores Martinez, officer in charge of the J1 Safety Office, displays his reflective safety gear near his Camp America office. Martinez gives guidance to senior leadership on all JTF safety issues.

Safety first

**Army Spc.
Eric Liesse**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

"I always compare safety with a credit card," Army 1st Lt. Roberto Flores Martinez said. "It's better to have one and not need it, than to need it and not have it."

That philosophy is the basis for Martinez's office, the Joint Task Force Guantanamo J-1 Safety Office.

"We ensure and oversee the safety of all the JTF," Martinez continued. He provides recommendations to JTF senior leadership on areas in which special safety considerations should or must be applied.

Martinez also takes guidance from JTF commander, Navy Rear Adm. David M. Thomas, Jr. On occasion, Thomas finds a safety issue he believes needs special attention or consideration, at which point Martinez checks military regulations on that subject to make a safety policy recommendation.

"The leaders we have within the JTF are some of the better in the armed forces," Martinez said.

Martinez, now in his third year with the JTF, said that personal safety is often overlooked but is always important – regardless of one's job.

"Accidents can happen to anyone," Martinez said. "Accidents don't recognize

rank. Accidents don't recognize service. Accidents can happen to anyone. We're here to be proactive, not reactive."

Stressing mission readiness and situational awareness, Martinez stressed that everyone's attention to detail is the key.

"I believe all the policies are to be complied with here," Martinez said, "but the main point from the admiral is to make sure everyone knows [Naval Station and JTF safety policies]."

This guidance becomes increasingly important when a new group of JTF Troops arrives.

"[Informing the new Troop rotations] is the most important thing for the safety office right now," Martinez said. "All tasks are important, but that's the most critical right now."

Martinez served with the Joint Detention Group's external security element for his first two years with the JTF, taking over the safety office about four months ago. Enlisted for 10 years before going through officer training, Martinez has extensive safety training. He holds two safety officer courses under his belt, extensive hazardous material training and civilian training with



**Accidents can happen to anyone.
Accidents don't recognize rank.
Accidents don't recognize service.
Accidents can happen to anyone.
We're here to be proactive, not
reactive. – Army 1st Lt. Roberto
Flores Martinez**

Puerto Rico's Electrical Power Authority.

"I wanted to taste all the different sources we have in the U.S. Army," Martinez said. "I've volunteered here for three years because I love the armed forces," adding how much he thanks his grandmother, daughters, wife and God for all their support in his service.

Martinez said he believes that safety policies and regulations shouldn't be followed "just to comply. Do it to be a better Trooper." He added he's glad he's able to bring that betterment to JTF Troopers.

"The safety office, at the end of the day, we're here for everyone," Martinez said.

All JTF commands have a designated safety representative with additional information on considerations for individual jobs. To contact the JTF safety office directly, call x9948, or stop by the newly renovated office at Camp America building 2525. ★



Chaplains, chaplain assistants and religious program specialists from varying branches of service spent four days at Guantanamo Bay participating in a conference intended to strengthen the chaplaincy in support of a joint environment.

Chaplains join hands

■ *Conference supports joint partnership for the Americas*

**Army Staff Sgt.
Emily J. Russell**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Chaplains, religious program specialists and chaplain assistants from all branches of services, active and reserve, descended on Guantanamo Bay this week to attend the U.S. Southern Command chaplain's conference.

"The theme is 'Partnership for the Americas,' said Air Force Lt. Col. Randy A. Marshall, SOUTHCOM deputy command chaplain. "We've borrowed the SOUTHCOM theme and applied it here. How do we do a better job at being engaged in our area of focus? How do we reach into the chaplaincy and be more effective and pull our assets together?"

The chaplains at U.S. Southern Command provide the spiritual, moral and ethical leadership and counsel across the full spectrum of military operations.

"We focus on Central and South America and the Caribbean and provide religious support to our service members and engage with our military, partner nations and non-government organizations in that area," Marshall said.

Chaplains from U.S. Army South, Air Force Southern Command, Special Operations Command, Navy 4th Fleet, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as National Guard and Reserve chaplains – just to name a few – attended in support of the partnership.

"There are approximately 25 chaplains, religious program specialists and chaplain assistants attending the program," Marshall said.

Each participant briefed the group on their area of expertise and explained what's going on, what needs they have, and what challenges they face.

"It is a collaborative atmosphere where we can suggest resources and partner together from this level to address that," Marshall added. "One area we will talk about is religious support to our contractors who work with the military [to identify] how we effectively reach all our folks who may be going through difficult times."

The conference addressed communication processes in a joint environment including the different doctrine and philosophies that can sometimes make inter-service operations confusing.

"The take-away will be a sense of understanding and cooperation," Marshall said. "The communication process is an important thing. We want to walk away with a greater understanding of each other, so that as we converse with one another, we will not just know the person but know the heart of that individual as well. It's a combination of mission and personal understanding."

This is the second conference that SOUTHCOM has held, with the first taking place in Miami one year ago.

"The purpose of the chaplain's conference [here] is to give our senior chaplain leadership a chance to have an opportunity to see what goes on at Guantanamo," Marshall said.

During the four-day seminar, participants met with Joint Task Force leadership and also toured the detention facility.

"The entire staff here has done an incredible job of helping us," Marshall said. "Everything was coordinated by phone. There's no way we could have done all this without them." ❖

474th: New Airmen to continue the mission

**Army Staff Sgt.
Gretel Sharpee**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

New faces can be found around Camp Justice with the arrival of a new Air Force Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron.

The new squadron is mostly comprised of airmen from the West Virginia Air National Guard but a few are also from the Michigan and Hawaii Air National Guard.

“Our main goal is to maintain and supply Camp Justice and the Expeditionary Legal Complex,” said Air Force Master Sgt. Charles Brown, squadron first sergeant.

Camp Justice was established to support the military commissions taking place at the ELC. Everyone from world media to legal support staff can be found there during commissioning sessions.

Since falling in on Camp Justice operations, the mission these airmen face is not new, but for some of their younger members it will be the first time they take what they learned in school and apply it to a real-world mission.

“We have some real good seasoned veterans in each shop,” Brown said. “We rely on [these airmen] to mentor and show leadership to the younger ones and lead them down the right path.”

One new mission this squadron is falling in on, but would also like to complete, is providing the ELC and Camp Justice with “ground power.”

“Right now [Camp Justice and the ELC are] powered by generators. We are looking forward to getting the power supply of generators on to a ground supply,” said Air Force Lt. Col. John Dulin, squadron commander.

While adjusting to their mission and new surroundings, the airmen have taken the time to scour Guantanamo Bay and take advantage of all the recreation opportunities it has to offer.

“I don’t think there is any activity you could name that they haven’t already tried out,” Dulin said. “I’ve also been impressed to hear that they have gotten involved in the community as well through volunteering.”

During the six-month tour these airmen have here, it is clear the mission is first.

“What we bring to the table is our experience,” said Dulin. “We are an expeditionary civil engineering force and we are here to carry out the mission of the Commission Support Group.” ✪



Air Force Staff Sgt. Alan Fleming, a member of the 474th Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron, siphons water out of a tub as part of a periodic maintenance inspection, Feb. 10. The 474th ECES supports the Joint Task Force Guantanamo by maintaining the Expeditionary Legal Complex and Camp Justice facilities and infrastructure. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Carlynn M. Knaak

Women's soccer takes the field



GTMO United meets up with W.T. Sampson Lady Pirates, Feb. 24 for a league game. After the first half, GTMO United had a two-goal lead and went on to win the game.

**Army Staff Sgt.
Gretel Sharpee**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Soccer nets placed at the ends of Cooper Field's football field transformed it into the hosting ground for another night of competition for the 2009 Captain's Cup Women's Soccer League.

A modest four teams make up the league that plays one game a week until Mar. 17, if playing isn't interrupted by the last phase of construction on Cooper Field. Since nine players can be on

the field at any time, teams try to have at least 10 players on the roster to allow for at least the hope of a substitute during a game.

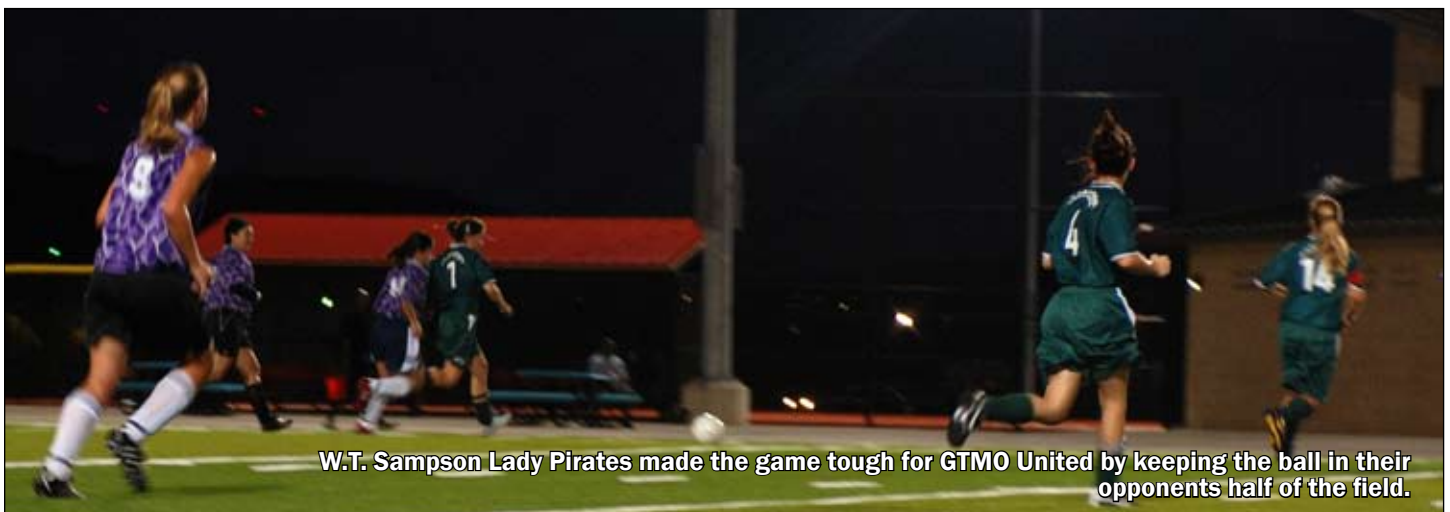
Each game consists of two 25-minute halves with a five-minute break in-between. Games generally start at 6 p.m., although late starts are made to accommodate the playing of evening revelry.

The next league will likely start in early summer.

For more information or view the schedule of the next game, stop by the G.J. Denich Gym or call: 77262. ☆

**2009 Captain's Cup Women's
Soccer League
As of Feb. 23**

TEAM	Wins	Losses
1. Soccer Bombers	2	0
2. GTMO United	1	1
3. W.T. Sampson Lady Pirates	1	1
4. Lady DOCs	0	2



W.T. Sampson Lady Pirates made the game tough for GTMO United by keeping the ball in their opponents half of the field.

We're just *not* that into this movie

**Army Spc.
Christina Beerman**
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

“He’s Just Not That Into You” is a quote first popularized by “Sex and the City” during the season six episode “Pick-a-Little, Talk-a-Little.” The line later became the title for a New York Times bestselling relationship advice book by Greg Behrendt and Liz Tuccillo.

As one of the mass of “Sex and the City” fans who flocked to the bookstore and purchased the literary gem, I had high expectations for the film adaptation. “He’s Just Not That Into You” follows a group of interconnected twenty- and thirty-something folks who attempt to navigate their romantic lives.

The star-studded ensemble successfully breathed life into the too-tricky reality of trying to read the signs of the opposite sex with its endearing moments and comical twists (thank you, Drew Barrymore). The lack of chic-flick clichés in the first two acts would seem to make the movie more palpable for male audiences. There isn’t any make-over medley; no chase scenes where a character keeps another from going somewhere or getting married; and no popular “falling in love” montage.

However, true to chic-flick form, clichés wrap the movie up in a very predictable and syrupy-sweet ending. There is the last-minute “I’m a jerk” realization, the softening of a pessimistic heart, and even an “I’m a better person because of you” line.

The bottom line is it had a good start but a poor finish. It’s safe to say that I’m just not that into this movie.

Rating: ★★☆☆☆☆

PG-13
2 hours, 9 minutes

**Army Spc.
Eric Liesse**
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Romantic comedies rarely surprise people with a clever or unique concept; such genre films play to their audience. Yet, “He’s Just Not That Into You” seems it could actually have a unique twist to it. But by the film’s end, there is nothing special about it.

Featuring a megastar ensemble cast, “He’s Just Not That Into You” has its moments. The film has about five separate relationships, each intertwining through co-workers, friends and cheating husbands. Individually, most of the characters are bland, but they play off each other well enough and seem somewhat interesting.

Ginnifer Goodwin’s character, Gigi, is the film’s center: a twenty-something who obsesses so much over each trivial detail of a date that it borders on pure crazy. Goodwin’s character is a smart choice for the ensemble’s center since neurotic women always make for funny cinema.

The only other notable character is Alex (Justin Long), a bar owner and friend of Gigi’s latest obsession, Conor (Kevin Connolly). Alex goes through women like a box of tissue, not really caring how many he throws aside. His hilarious and extremely blunt relationship advice to Gigi is easily the best part of the film.

With the exception of a few interview-like interludes sprinkled in, the rest of the movie is passing at best. Jennifer Aniston out-acts everyone (as usual) in her marriage-less relationship with Ben Affleck; Bradley Cooper cheats on his wife, Jennifer Connelly, with a yoga-instructing Scarlett Johansson; and Drew Barrymore bemoans the technology age of dating without actually meeting anyone.

All the intertwining relationships have their moments of sharp writing and comedic delivery, but the set-up of such honest characters like Gigi and Alex is killed by film’s end. Without giving much away, the climax feels like a genre cop-out that could have been a pleasant surprise. Too bad interesting is not what sells tickets.

Rating: ★★☆☆☆☆



GUANTANAMO'S CREATURES

A snake with legs? A lizard without? These were just a few of the creatures featured at the reptile and amphibian show, hosted by Dr. Peter Tolson, Feb. 22 at Windmill Beach. With well over a dozen different reptiles and amphibians to display and discuss, the show captivated approximately 200 residents of both Joint Task Force and Naval Station Guantanamo Bay. Tolson, director of conservation and research at the Toledo Zoo, Toledo, Ohio, visits Guantanamo regularly to conduct research on the Cuban boa and hutia population.



Tarantula



Decorated Gecko



Cuban Whiptail Lizard

JTF Guantanamo photos by
Army Staff Sgt. Emily J. Russell

FEAR

what can you handle?

Jonathan Goble passes a handful of washers and murky water to his teammate Erika Bilchik during “The Swamp Swim” event of the Fear Factor competition, Feb. 24.

Army Spc. Megan Burnham

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Fear and uncertainty was felt by 16 Guantanamo Bay residents who scrounged up enough courage to partake in the first Morale Welfare and Recreation Fear Factor competition, Feb. 24.

“When you walked up to the [Windjammer] pool and the first thing you smelled were rotting fish, you started to really think about the kind of fools that would sign up for such a challenge,” said Meghan Phillips, a participant in the competition.

Only eight two-person teams accepted the challenge to compete in the three events that tested their mettle to do whatever was deemed necessary to win the competition. Despite the limited competitors that could sign up, many spectators showed up to watch the grossly humorous events as well as to provide support.

The Fear Factor competition began with “The Swamp Swim,” where one member of each team would submerge themselves in a container filled with murky water, dead fish and squid. The task was to retrieve 20 washers that were thrown in the bucket in less than three minutes. While most tried to keep their face above



Teammates Liam Walsh and Meghan Phillips swim to victory, winning the competition. Walsh and Phillips each won a new iPod.

water, as time wore on they succumbed to dunking themselves entirely to obtain all the washers. After the first event, two teams were eliminated; one didn’t finish in the time allowed and the other had the longest time.

The second event was “The Gory Gorge,” where the other team member consumed a pound of unidentifiable meats in the fastest time possible. The four fastest teams advanced to the final round. Participants had five minutes to put away an assortment of pig feet, pork stomach, pig tail, pig ears, beef heart, beef tongue and beef liver. Two team members managed to finish their plates while the other four teams had their plates weighed to determine who ate the most.

“All the food was pretty greasy and that was what grossed me out,” said Erika Bilchik. “I really wasn’t trying to taste any of it.”

The third and final event was “The Gauntlet,” where the last four teams competed to finish the obstacle course in the quickest time possible. The event started with one team member climbing an inflatable iceberg to obtain four bandanas, just to knot them on an underwater rope. The member was only allowed four breaths to tie all the

See **FEAR/12**

Rare plants, relics from another era

**Army Staff Sgt.
Emily J. Russell**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

A bombing range seems like an unlikely location to find rare species of plants, but amid the destruction is a home to many unlikely plants and animals.

Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, like all military reservations, practices conservation and takes an active interest in the flora and fauna that grace the hills and valleys of the base. Whether developing environmental policy and evaluating the impact of military operations on the environment, implementing measures for preservation and continual improvement or preventing pollution on land and in water, it takes a team effort to get the job done.

Alberto Areces, a Cuban-born world-class botanist, recently visited the base to study the local flora and identify various species of plants.

“Since the first time I came here with the nature conservancy I’ve gotten acquainted with the local flora,” Areces said. “I know what’s here and can identify important species.”

After completing master’s degrees in both Belgium and Austria, Areces returned to Cuba and began working as a researcher and associate professor at the University of Havana, eventually accepting a job proposal from the New York Botanical Gardens where he worked for 10 years. Currently he is the director of the Luis Muñoz Martin Botanical Gardens in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

“The first time I came [to Guantanamo], I found species that have been extinct from the main island [Cuba],” Areces said. “They are still alive here because the mine fields have protected a great deal of plants everywhere, maybe on both sides of the fence. You see more than you expect to see, [especially] at the bombing range.”

During his first trip here in the mid-1990s, Areces found *Pereskia zinniflora*, commonly known as Abrojo or Erizo, a plant that belongs to the cactus family and is the most primitive genus of the cactus family.

“The naval base is important because it is one of two main centers of plant biodiversity and evolution in the West Indies for dry regions,” Areces continued. “The other is on the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.”

Recently Areces returned to look for the *Pereskia* and identify other plants around Guantanamo. It is the first time he’s been



Alberto Areces, director of the Luis Muñoz Martin Botanical Garden located in San Juan, Puerto Rico, identifies an ebony tree located on the Leeward side during a recent visit to Guantanamo Bay.

back since his initial visit.

“My finding is important because all the cactus plants belong to the western hemisphere,” Areces explained. “There are no cactus whatsoever in the deserts of Africa and Asia; cacti belong to America and originated after the South Atlantic Ocean was formed, over 65 million years ago. This [particular] plant originated about 60 million years ago.”

The relics of nearly 2,000 species of cacti found in the Americas are found here in the Caribbean and Central America.

“Here, you’ll find the most primitive genera,” Areces continued. “*Pereskia* is the most primitive one. The genus has around 16 or 17 species. In Cuba there are two species; in the Dominican Republic, maybe three or four.”

Because these plants are so primitive, they are easily susceptible to destruction.

“These are highly threatened and

endangered plants,” Areces said. “They are quite adapted to their locations but cannot sustain significant changes in their environment. We must protect them.”

Areces explained the reproductive nature of the plant and the importance of finding these particular trees.

“The species is dioecious, which means there are male and female trees,” Areces said. “The plant is capable of producing seeds and perpetuating itself over time; however, if you don’t have male and female trees close together, you’ll never have seeds.”

Finding the trees close together gives Areces hope that there are both male and female trees so the species can continue.

“[Guantanamo] is really an amazing place and has been an interesting personal experience,” Areces said. “I’ve seen many species [here] I’ve never seen on the main island.” 🌱

Intestinal fortitude key factor in contest

FEAR from 10 bandanas.

Once that was completed, they swam to the side of the pool to hand tag their team member to proceed in the second portion of the event. Both members ran to the shallow end where the second member would buddy tow the other to the deep end of the pool. The event was completed as soon as they touched the wall at the deep end.

The winning team of Phillips and Walsh finished the final event in 4 minutes, 59 seconds and were awarded two iPods. Second place was Travis Thomas and Forrest Rodman, who finished in 5 minutes, 57 seconds and received two \$50 Navy Exchange certificates. The third place team of Bilchik and Jonathan Goble finished in 6 minutes, 12 seconds and received two MWR gift certificates.

This Fear Factor competition was made possible by Liberty Center staff Rebecca Reed, Trecia Anderson, Norris Brown, Jason Hamilton and Cinco Brian. Jeffrey Shaw of MWR and the Windjammer Pool lifeguards also assisted in the coordination and success of the event.

“This is the first time that Liberty has offered [Fear Factor] for the adults and it turned out great,” Anderson said. “There is a good possibility that it will become an annual event.”

Forrest Rodman consumes portions of beef and pork during “The Gory Gorge.” - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Megan Burnham

Trouble Sleeping?

- Quiet hours will be maintained from 2200 until 0600 daily for all JTF-GTMO Bachelor Housing.
- Since many JTF-GTMO personnel are on shift work or stand watch, noise during other hours should be kept to a reasonable level.
- No one should be able to hear any noise outside the room or structure where the activity is occurring. For outdoor events, music will be maintained at a moderate level appropriate for the listening pleasure of personnel in the immediate area attending the event.
- The use of stereos, radios and televisions is a privilege which should not be abused.
- Multiple noise complaints will result in a permanent relocation to Camp Bulkeley for the offender.

For more information, please refer to JTF-GTMO Bachelor Housing SOP <https://intranet/resources>



Staying in the fold

Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Diamond, a member of the Navy Expeditionary Guard Battalion, displays his fresh reenlistment certificate after Joint Detention Group Deputy Commander Navy Cmdr. Jeffrey Hayhurst administered the reenlistment oath, Feb. 20. The NEGB, which falls under the JDG, provides security and support for the detention facilities of Joint Task Force Guantanamo. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Staff Sgt. Brian Jopek

Boots on the Ground

by Army Spc. Megan Burnham

If you could have any exotic animal as a pet, what would it be and why?

Army Staff Sgt. Marquita Williams



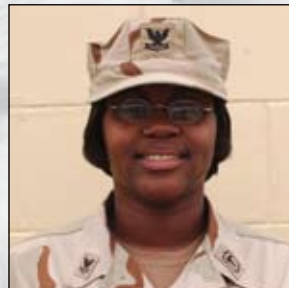
“A panther because they are so mysterious, smooth and vigilant.”

Army Sgt. 1st Class Miguel Bonilla



“I like birds so I would like a parrot because they are so colorful.”

Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Angela Ray



“An iguana because they would keep away crawling insects. I can’t stand them at all.”

Army Sgt. Olando Plaisime



“A lion because of how they are leaders and how they protect their own territory.”



Finding your roots

**Army Capt.
Scott C. Brill**

JTF Guantanamo Deputy Command Chaplain

Alex Haley, the author of the book *Roots*, said: “In all of us there is a hunger, marrow-deep, to know our heritage – to know who we are and where we have come from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is still a vacuum, an emptiness, and the most disquieting loneliness.”

During Black History Month I have thought a lot about my family history. My dad is a huge genealogy buff, and has gathered quite a tapestry of family names, occupations, and the like. It is fascinating and telling to say the least. If you ever wondered why you walk or talk a certain way, genealogy may have the answer.

Alex Haley described the writing of *Roots* as “a spiritual experience.” After learning about his great-grandfather he said, “That was when I received the bite of the genealogical bug – a bite for which there is no cure.”

The question is how to get started? Someone who really knows family research, James E. Faust, wrote, “Each of us has a fascinating family history. Finding your ancestors can be one of the most interesting puzzles you can work on.” He gives these simple suggestions to genealogical research. “Ask living members of your family what they know about your extended family. Then you can reach out to other sources such as vital records, church records, census records, and military records. You can easily access a vast collection of family history records using the Internet on your home computer.”

Of course, knowing our roots is not without its challenges. How far we can go back depends on many variables. For every person and culture, there are tremendous challenges and blessings to family history research. Thanks to the science of DNA, Internet technology and heavenly help, many doors once closed are now opening. So why not start today? Think of genealogy in GTMO as a free lyceum “family” movie. The characters will amaze and inspire you.

I urge everyone to begin now to unlock the knowledge of who you really are by learning more about your roots. I can hardly think of a better source of inspiration and guidance than family history. Learning about the adventures, trials and triumphs of those that have gone before, can give us encouragement in a way nothing else can. We soon learn that they were very real, living people with difficulties, hopes and dreams like we have today.

As you know, this is a historic time to be in Guantanamo Bay. Someday our personal history will be the very thing that strengthens and inspires our children’s children. Begin a personal journal; what you might see as ordinary, can be the spark that enlightens a generation of your posterity.

It is my personal testimony that we are all part of God’s family tree. God created the races, not racism. We are His sons and daughters. We are not alone. We are all family. Families are forever. The most important record in our pedigree chart is, “I am a child of God.”

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”
Malachi 4:5-6. ☆

JTF CHAPEL SCHEDULED PROGRAMS

Catholic Mass

Sunday: 7 a.m. Confession
7:30 a.m. Mass

Wednesday: 11 a.m.
Spanish Mass

Protestant Worship

Sunday: 9 a.m.

Spanish Protestant Worship

Sunday: 11 a.m.

Bible Study

Sunday: 6 p.m.

Wednesday: 7 p.m.



Brothers continue military tradition

Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Matthew Webster (left) and Petty Officer 2nd Class David Webster are deployed together as part of Port Security Unit 305 from Fort Eustis, Va.

**Navy Petty Officer 1st Class
Linda J. Andreoli**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Military service sometimes separates family members, but in the case of two Coast Guard brothers, it's giving them a chance to serve together.

Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class David Webster and Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Matthew Webster are members of Port Security Unit 305. The military call runs strong in their family. One set of grandparents served as Marines and were married during World War II. Many of their uncles served in the Marines, and their father retired from the Navy. Now the story continues with the Webster brothers.

David Webster serves as a food service specialist. A second class petty officer, the 22-year-old entered the Coast Guard in 2005 and studies food service management at Tidewater Community College back home. On the civilian side, he is a training chef

at an Italian restaurant and likes to watch "Hell's Kitchen." He also plans to continue his education and may apply for officer candidate school. Like his older brother, he joined right after high school. He didn't join to follow in his brother's footsteps, but he did consider his perspective.

"It was between the Coast Guard and the Marines," he said. He chose the Coast Guard because there were more education opportunities and relatives gave him a favorable impression of the service. "I asked family members and everyone said the Coasties were a great bunch to serve with. I knew I wanted to serve somewhere — I just wasn't sure where. I love the Guard. I've been having a blast since I've been in," he said.

Matthew Webster is a 28-year-old electrician's mate with a Bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He is working on his master's degree in the same field and when at home works as a nuclear engineer at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard. The third

class petty officer joined the Coast Guard after high school in 1999.

"I joined primarily for education and as a back-up job," he said. "That and the majority of family have been in the military in one branch or another."

This is Mathew Webster's third deployment. His first was here in 2002 and his second was to Rota, Spain, in 2003. Both were with PSU 305. He takes care of electrical issues on the boats and at Coast Guard facilities, including their assets at the Joint Operations Center (JOC). Tasks can range from changing light bulbs to servicing boat consoles.

David Webster served for two months in 2006 aboard the Coast Guard cutter "Barque-Eagle," a sailing ship used to train cadets. This is his first unit deployment. He works as a communications watchstander at the JOC and as a boat crewman for the boat division. Unlike his brother, David Webster's duties have nothing to do with his rating, and although he enjoys food service, doing something different is okay with him.

"It's interesting to get the feel for what everyone else does," he said. He was trained in communications before the deployment and is now working on his qualifications for boat crewman. He has to demonstrate knowledge about general boat handling and how to respond to emergencies such as fire, running aground and engine failure.

Unlike his deployment on the Eagle, which was doing one job only and perfecting it, this deployment has challenged his flexibility.

"My job has changed a multitude of times," David Webster said. "What I originally was told I'd be doing is completely different than what I'm doing now." He said there have been new tasks, jobs, information and resources and the best way to handle it is to keep a "Semper Gumby" or "always flexible" attitude.

Although his civilian and military jobs are not identical, his training in the Coast Guard has helped Mathew Webster in his civilian career. "I've been in the Coast Guard much longer than I've had a degree, but I learned to read electrical schematics in the Guard. That translates to my civilian job and gives me a leg up over someone who just got out of school," he said.

The brothers seem to have more of a professional relationship than a mushy family one. At times they are on opposite schedules and only see each other occasionally. When they do meet up, they usually go to the movies, O'Kelly's or play video games.

"Sometimes we meet up at the galley and catch up — find out what's going on," Mathew Webster said.

"It's humorous most of the time because some people are just realizing we're brothers," said David Webster.

Both brothers are said having a family member here is a good thing.

"It's a little piece of home that's with you," he continued. 🌟



Joint Detention Group Deputy Commander Navy Cmdr. Jeffrey Hayhurst explains detainee operations inside Joint Task Force Guantanamo's Camp Delta to Reps. Sheila Jackson Lee (left), Peter King (center-right) and Henry Cuellar Monday, Feb. 23. The group also included Reps. Candice Miller, Peter Olson and Michael McCaul, here touring many JTF facilities. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Richard Wolff



Senior Airman Nathan Ansell, an electrician with the 474th Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron, strips wires to fit a new power source onto a generator, Feb. 26. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Carlynn M. Knaak

Around the JTF

Cara-Beth Burnside, a professional skateboarder, shows her moves during a visiting pro-skateboarding demonstration at Denich Gym Sunday, Feb. 22. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Eric Liesse

