MSST Transfer of Authority
Miami replaces Galveston

Paintball Turkey Shoot
Take aim for Thanksgiving
Holiday Greetings

Rear Adm.
Jeffrey Harbeson
Commander, Joint Task Force Guantanamo

It’s always somewhat surprising how quickly the holiday season sneaks up on us. Every year, right around this same time strangely enough, we’re suddenly staring at Thanksgiving and six weeks of festivity. Here in the Caribbean, we don’t get clues like trees changing colors or dropping temperatures to remind us ‘tis the season to be jolly. Instead, we see catchy AFN commercials promoting winter safety tips and big sales on electronics at the Exchange. Either way, ready or not, it all means we’re days away from too much food, countless command celebrations, and a parade of personal memories from yuletide past.

Honestly, I can’t imagine a more privileged place to spend this time than with you, the troops of Joint Task Force Guantanamo. Since arriving five months ago, I have been continuously impressed by your spirit, sincerity and commitment to each other. This is a demanding mission around the clock and across the calendar – one that doesn’t stop because cars are playing on the radio or the ball is falling in Times Square. But I know that same contagious spirit and shared sense of duty you’ve shown every day will undoubtedly make the coming weeks both memorable and joyous for our team.

Many of you have spent previous holidays away from home. While there is no substitute for family and lifelong friends, we invariably find enduring gems of camaraderie and compassion that make the occasion equally distinctive . . . even in the midst of combat, sailing on a ship at sea, or standing tower watch over some remote outpost. It comes with the uniform; the indomitable idea that home is a state of mind and those around us are, really and truly, family.

There will be a lot to do in Guantanamo. Starting with a traditional feast at the Seaside Galley on Nov. 25, through a holiday parade down Sherman Avenue, and concluding with live bands on New Year’s Eve, the community opens it arms to make the season special. The JTF is even starting choir practice soon – rumor has it, singing is not required to go caroling; just a desire to make others smile.

You all deserve wonderful holidays and the chance to celebrate not only the season but your successes. Please do so responsibly and safely. Most of us will sit through briefs on the potential pitfalls we face at this time of year and that’s for good reason – inevitably our armed forces will lose heroes during the holidays, not just in war zones but on highways after driving exhausted in poor weather or on main streets following a few too many drinks. Every member of this Joint Task Force is a precious commodity to our nation . . . so stay focused when your NCO is talking about how alcohol effects the brain or why stringing 25 sets of twinkling lights on a single frayed extension cord is bad business. We have a lot of resources to prevent accidents and to get people home without risking their lives or careers. Look out for each other just as you always do. Leaders always lead and friends keep friends from making bad decisions. Pay close attention to our junior troops and those that seem to be missing home to the point of prolonged sadness. You can make a huge difference in how they remember this time.

I could not be prouder of each of you for the work you do here every day. You are inspiring and professional and resilient – truly a blessing to your country, your service and your family. You are the reason this is recognized as the finest detention facility in the world. I am sincerely thankful for the opportunity to serve as your commander. Maria and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at events in the weeks ahead. Happy holidays Joint Task Force Guantanamo. 🌟
Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team Miami 91114 replaced Maritime Safety and Security Team Galveston, Texas, 91104 at Joint Task Force Guantanamo during a transfer of authority ceremony, Nov. 12.

As part of Joint Task Force Guantanamo, the MSST is not only responsible for securing the waterways, but also has a land-side security mission while military commissions are underway.

The Galveston operations officer noted the unit’s accomplishments.

“My crews were able to consistently perform at a high level,” said Coast Guard Lt. George Adams of MSST Galveston 91104. “They responded to emergent situations, just as they had been trained to do, and they displayed exceptional maturity and understanding by finding the motivation to stay focused and best represent both the Coast Guard and its part of this war effort.”

The overall mission for the newly assigned Miami unit is to provide enhanced port safety and security, and law enforcement capabilities to the economic or militarily-significant port where they are based. The incoming unit is excited about being a part of the JTF mission.

Coast Guard Lt. j.g. Caitlin Quinn, operations officer of MSST Miami, explained the incoming unit’s mission.

“Our mission is two-fold, support the waterside, which is the Maritime Security Detachment and augment the land-side security team for JTF commissions and the [Expeditionary Legal Complex] mission,” Quinn said.

“We are looking forward to working alongside our partners from the Department of Defense and learning what the policies and procedures are, as well as sharing with them the Coast Guard side in regards to the Department of Homeland Security.”

Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Bryan E. Clampitt, commander of MSST Miami 91114, acknowledged the transition from the Galveston unit to the Miami unit.

“Thank you very much for all your help,” said Clampitt. “To my staff and crew, continue to be good shipmates to one another, look out for each other on and off duty. We have to stay sharp especially through those long watches.”

As operations officer, Quinn stated that the unit hopes to gain a new perspective on their partner agencies and the role they play in the JTF mission.

In addition, they hope to educate others on the MSST’s other missions.

“We would also like to enlighten our partners to the Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team mission and skill sets we possess,” Quinn said.

The Maritime Safety and Security Teams were created under the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002, and are a part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s layered strategy directed at protecting seaports and waterways.
The Naval Legal Service Office at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay is very much like the Legal Assistance Office of Joint Task Force Guantanamo with one exception, it handles defense assistance.

Every Thursday from 9 to 11 a.m. the staff of two is at the Trooper One Stop, available to help JTF GTMO personnel.

“We provide legal assistance to service members, this includes active duty, reservists and retirees,” said Navy Lt. Courtney Gordon-Tennant, the Naval Legal Service Office officer-in-charge. “Because we are overseas we’re also allowed to provide service to Department of Defense civilians, and we can provide limited service to contractors as well.”

Navy Legal Man 2nd Class Sarah Kelly-Alston, a paralegal with the legal office, explained some of the services the office offers.

“We are here [at JTF GTMO] mainly for defense. We’re the only office on island that provides defense assistance to the Naval Station, JTF GTMO and the Naval Hospital,” Alston said.

Many times Troopers who are facing a punishment are worried, they do not have help here. JTF GTMO Troopers, who are not in the Navy, may not be aware that the office is there to help, because it is located on the NAVSTA side. Regardless of the branch of service, the Legal Service Office staff can help.

“Navy personnel know they can come to us for help in legal matters, because we are a naval office,” Alston said. “We have received training to deal with issues from all branches, we’re well aware of how we can help the Troopers as well. We can do anything from notaries, bills of sale, last wills and testaments, powers of attorney, and things of that nature.”

Any legal issue that deals with the Uniform Code of Military Justice or adverse action such as Article 15’s, for the Army, court-martial or Non-Judicial Punishment [NJP], for the Navy, is referred to the Legal Service Office.

“We mainly give legal advice to Troopers who have a reading coming up. We advise them on what their rights are, what the process is going to be like and what they’re facing,” Gordon-Tennant said.

“Sometimes the service member will come to us after they have had their Army Article 15 reading or their NJP. If their punishment is too unjust or disproportionate to the offense, we help draft appeal letters.”

According to the Legal Office staff, there is a first and second reading during the legal process of an Article 15.

During the first “reading” the Soldier gets a chance to review his charge sheet. The Military Justice paralegal goes over the charge sheet with the member and also reads the member his or her Article 32 rights.

“At that point, the Soldier has the option of electing his right to speak with counsel. After the member has met with counsel, he or she will get his second reading,” Alston said.

“At that reading the Military Justice paralegal again will go over the charge sheet and ask the member whether or not he or she wants to elect trial by court-martial or Non-Judicial Punishment or Article 15.”

The Navy Legal Service Office recommends appointments, but Troopers can walk-in if there is a limit to time.

“We would prefer if the service member had a defense issue to make an appointment, but if they find out about it the day before they can just walk-in. Appointment or not, we will take them,” Alston said. “We don’t want the Army Soldiers to think that we’re not here for them as well as any other branch of the military.”

“Most military members who come into our office are very frustrated and scared. It is very rewarding to be able to put a smile back on their face by answering their questions and letting them know about all of their options,” she said.

The office wants the Troopers to know that they are welcome to make appointments on the Naval Station side.

They also offer help with any type of Servicemembers Civil Relief Act issue or court proceeding.

“One team one fight we’ll do our best to assist anyone that qualifies for our services,” Alston said.

For more information call 4692 or Thursday, at Trooper One-Stop, 8116. For an emergency contact 84486.
“The Town” takes place in Charlestown, the bank robbery capital of the world, which is a neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts. There is an air about this place throughout the entire movie that makes it seem as though you cannot escape this city.

In Charlestown, crime is a way of life. Most families pass down heirlooms or hand over businesses to run, but in Charlestown the path of wrongdoing is paved by the father and, followed faithfully, by their offspring.

I am not a big fan of Ben Affleck since his role in “Gigli,” or his “awesome” performance in “DareDevil.” However, he plays his part pretty well in “The Town.”

Doug MacRay (Affleck) is the ringleader of a gang of criminal-minded misfits, James “Jem” Coughlin (Jeremy Renner), Albert “Gloansy” Magloan (Slaine) and Desmond “Dez” Elden (Owen Burke).

Doug, like his father, has embraced and excelled in the life of criminal activity. He and his gang have made a name for themselves by robbing numerous locations and venues around the Boston area and each job was a “decent payday.”

During a robbery, the gang takes a female hostage, Claire Keesey (Rebecca Hall). They bind, blindfold and then release her on the beach to walk until ‘she feels the water between her toes.’ Cut to next scene.

After a few more jobs, the gang comes to the attention of law enforcement and the Federal Bureau of Investigation gets involved.

The FBI investigation is lead by Special Agent Adam Frawley (Jon Hamm), who you may recognize as Donald Draper from the television series “Mad Men.”

Frawley refuses to rest until he has apprehended those responsible for committing such crimes against the city of Boston.

Meanwhile, MacRay is falling for Claire, who he meets at a Laundromat, after a little light stalking.

Claire is completely oblivious to who MacRay is, what he has done to her or how he really earns a living. She believes his cover as a “Fred Flintstonesque rock breaker.”

MacRay gets caught up in his feelings for her and decides he wants out. He is then forced into doing one more big job.

The headline of this review should clue you in as to what the final big payday is. I was surprised that they were even allowed to do it or even hint at it.

The rest of the movie plays out like you would expect. However there are a few twists and turns you wouldn’t expect. Affleck surprised me with the quality of his work as a director, this is officially the third film he has directed. His first work, “Gimme Shelter” is a short film and “Gone Baby Gone” is critically acclaimed.

Ben is a decent actor, but if he continues to direct movies like this, he could follow in the steps of Clint Eastwood.

“The Town” is definitely one of the better movies during this horrible season of big screen flicks. It is in my Top 10. Go see “The Town” it will be sure to entertain.
Navy Master at Arms 1st Class Arthur Stoddard is presented the Senior Trooper of the Quarter Award from Navy Rear Admiral Jeffrey Harbeson, Nov. 16. Troopers are nominated by their JTF organization each quarter to determine who the best JTF service member of that quarter is.

– JTF Guantanamo photo by Air Force Senior Airman Gino Reyes

Around the JTF

Soldiers from the 525th Military Police Battalion Headquarters, Headquarters Company conduct cross fit training, a type of battle focused physical training, Nov 9. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Capt. Jean Georges

Master Chief Petty Officer Evan Cutler gets pied in the face during a Joint Intelligence Group (JIG) Christmas fundraiser, Nov. 12. Troopers paid money to throw pies in the faces of JIG leadership.

– JTF Guantanamo photo by Air Force Senior Airman Gino Reyes

A Cuban Boa leisurely slithers across the road at the Camp America tombstones, Nov. 10. The boa, which mainly come out at night, but sometimes come out during the day, spanned a little over one lane of traffic.

– JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Capt. Jean Georges

Members of the 525th Military Police Battalion Headquarters, Headquarters Company and other Troopers participated in a kickboxing session at the G.J. Dennich Gym, Nov. 10. The unit requested the fitness instructor for that mornings’s physical training. MWR instructors are available upon request.

– JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Capt. Jean Georges
Troopers deployed to Joint Task Force Guantanamo and stationed at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay are gearing up for the holiday season. Usually the season is celebrated by getting together with family and friends to share in the spirit of the holiday. But what if you cannot be together for the holidays? At JTF Guantanamo, Troopers may not have the opportunity to be with immediate family and close friends, but they have their military “family” to lean on, and a very supportive base, which strives to provide the many comforts of home during this time of the year.

With Thanksgiving quickly approaching, the majority of Troopers will celebrate the holiday here, while a few others will be able to make it home. Navy Intelligence Specialist 1st Class Daniel E. Rodriguez, with the Joint Intelligence Group, will be home for the holiday. This fellow Trooper is spending his Turkey Day back home reenlisting in a unique setting.

Rodriguez debated whether or not to get out of the Navy, but decided to stay in after talking it over with his wife. Once he decided to stay in he wanted to do something out of the ordinary for his reenlistment ceremony.

“I figured since I am going home on leave in November, why not try to reenlist near Thanksgiving in the one place that offers me a glimpse of home, no matter where I’m at overseas,” Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez did some research and found out that Chip Kelly, University of Oregon head coach, participated in a United Service Organization tour previously. Rodriguez knew that Kelly was very supportive of the military and set out to find a military contact in Oregon to try to set up his reenlistment on the field at Autzen Stadium, where the Oregon Ducks play football.

“I went online and found out that the University of Oregon has an Army Reserve Officers’ Training Corps program,” Rodriguez said. “They were the only military branch at the university, so I decided to contact them.”

Army Capt. Darren McMahon was Rodriguez’s main point of contact throughout the planning stages. Through him, Rodriguez was able to set up his reenlistment at the stadium.

According to McMahon, having the reenlistment on game day would be challenging, but he was able to find the right time and a more than willing Army officer to assist.

“I spoke with Lt. Col. Thomas Lingle, professor of military science at the University of Oregon, and he would be more than happy to read the oath,” McMahon said.

McMahon was very helpful from the beginning to make Rodriguez’s reenlistment special. He even went one step further to keep in touch with Rodriguez’s family in Oregon, and made special arrangements for his younger sister who is mentally disabled to attend.

“For Thanksgiving I am giving thanks to everyone who is making my reenlistment possible – family, friends and the Army.”

– Navy Intelligence Specialist 1st Class Daniel E. Rodriguez
The Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) staff is hosting their first ever Paintball Turkey Shoot scheduled to take place at the paintball range Nov. 20 at 8 a.m.

The shoot offers Troopers an opportunity to build sharpshooter skills and enjoy the challenge of the game. There is no age limit and military and civilian players are welcome. The event is free, and everything is supplied, from the paintball guns to the safety equipment.

Anyone who has not fired a paintball gun will learn paintball safety, operation and techniques. The shootout is scheduled for one hour, but could take longer depending on the amount of participants. Main prizes include three Thanksgiving Day turkeys, paintball masks, pod packs, pods and paint balls. Prizes will be awarded to the person with the top score of each round. Then, the winning shooter of each round can “pick” their prize from the available selection.

A participant will be selected at random to begin each shoot and will have a total of 10 targets with 20 shots (paintballs) available in their paintball gun hopper. Targets are placed at different stages, heights and locations throughout the range.

Points are added with each successful paintball gun hit. The event is scheduled to be a single elimination tournament, but may change to a double elimination depending on the number of participants. The highest score wins the event.

“The main purpose of this event is to boost morale of the GTMO community,” said Cory Geiger, the MWR Outdoor Recreation Director at GTMO. “This event gets the service member or civilian to try something new.”

The paintball field will also have an “open play” round after the turkey shoot at 9 a.m. Equipment rental fees will also be waived during the “open play.”

Participants must register by Nov. 19. For more information on the MWR Paintball Turkey Shoot or any other MWR activity, call extension 2345.
United Through Reading

Army Staff Sgt. Tim Brooks videotapes his reading of “Animal Touch” for his nephews who live at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Brooks is attached to the 336th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, deployed from Phoenix, Ariz.

The Joint Task Force Chaplain Office conducts a program called United Through Reading which facilitates deployed service members with keeping in contact with their family and friends via video recording.

The program provides the opportunity for a Trooper to record a children’s book of their choice, then send the book and the video recording home to family or friends. When it is received the child can read along with the recording or have the book read to him or her while the recording is played.

For further information on this program or to participate contact JTF Navy Religious Program Specialist 2nd Class Ellyse Corbeil at ext. 3202 – JTF Guantanamo photo by Mass Communication 2nd Class Elisha Dawkins

Boots on the Ground

What are your plans for Thanksgiving?


Army 1st Lt. Mark Wise

“I will help serve a Thanksgiving meal to the single Troops.”

Army Sgt. David King

“I plan to spend Thanksgiving in East Caravella with some close friends.”

Marine Corps Cpl. Ammon Bogle

“I will be on watch at the JTF Headquarters building.”

Army 1st Sgt. Kevin P. Stapleton

“Talk to the wife and kids, help serve a meal to the single Troops and spend it with some friends.”

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For further information on this program or to participate contact JTF Navy Religious Program Specialist 2nd Class Ellyse Corbeil at ext. 3202 – JTF Guantanamo photo by Mass Communication 2nd Class Elisha Dawkins
As I bid farewell to GTMO, I offer the following words from the New Testament book of Galatians: Do not grow weary in well doing. For in due time you shall reap, if you faint not. (Galatians 6:9)

I hope that each person here understands they have an important task; whether it is to keep watch over the detainees and insure their custody and safe treatment, while surveilling the harbor on patrol, or perhaps to insure the maintenance and upkeep of facilities. Each of us serves a role in keeping this place functioning.

Sometimes in the day-to-day grind, it is easy to allow our immediate surroundings to block the view of the big picture. When our tasks seem to lose their appeal and the monotony of our job overwhelms us, never forget the big picture—our job helps keep the world safe from terrorists.

Never underestimate the impact you have in serving your country honorably. Remember there will come a day when you will leave Naval Station Guantanamo Bay and return to the life you have back home. Stay focused, strong and do not engage in any activity that will damage your integrity and reputation.

In our relationship with God we encounter the same struggle. A time will come when the enthusiasm of our faith and the fatigue brought about by spiritual warfare may overwhelm us.

We begin to wonder if it is worth the spiritual discipline to remain spiritually fit and honor God in our daily living. When such a mood envelopes us, it is important to recall the words that the Apostle Paul penned nearly 2,000 years ago.

Never underestimate the role of spiritual fitness in your personal development. Faith is a necessary ingredient in living life to the fullest. Being obedient to God does not only improve our character and integrity, but that of those around us as well. I encourage those of you growing weary in your spiritual journey to stay strong and spend time daily reflecting on the importance of your relationship with God.

My closing prayer for those of you who remain: May the LORD bless you and keep you, May the LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)

May God bless you all and may God bless America.