

# THE WIRE

A JTF Journal



**Hispanic Heritage Month**  
HAHA celebrates

**Getting off the ground**

Trooper finds a way to fly at GTMO



# Fighting the good fight

**Navy Command Master Chief  
Scott Fleming**  
JTF Guantanamo CMC

The definition of success at Joint Task Force Guantanamo is most likely dissimilar to almost any other command in the armed forces. Our primary mission – effecting the safe, humane, legal and transparent care and custody of more than 200 detainees – seems quantifiable enough. To that end, the JTF team unarguably delivers spectacular results every day – a dramatic testament to all of you who serve so professionally.

But there are other more abstract measures at play here as well. It's no secret that our activities are scrutinized meticulously and relentlessly in political, military and media circles around the globe. A Google search of "prison, Guantanamo" reveals nearly 3.4 million hits in 0.22 seconds. In that equation, the implication that this is a prison is almost as profound as the large number of hits. By comparison, a similar search of the more accurate "detention facility, Guantanamo" produces less than half a million results. Semantics maybe . . . but an outward indication that there are a lot of people paying attention with drastically different takes on reality.

Vague perceptions and groundless myths about JTF GTMO have unfortunately taken root over eight years. So much so, in fact, it's tempting to believe our efforts are in vain . . . that no amount of integrity or compassion or restraint can truly impact opinion or policy. That's decidedly incorrect. Distinguished visitors depart Radio Range in lock-step, overwhelmed by your honor and ideals. News outlets desperately cling to ancient anecdotal references for taglines because nothing has happened in years to impugn the current conditions of detention. One day at a time, through deliberate actions and solid virtue, you drag the legacy further from fallacy and closer to truth.

This is noble and strategically vital, if unglamorous, work achieved shift by shift, process by process, in the unflattering, unending glare of a public spotlight. Get it right, and nobody pays much attention; but get it wrong, and we find ourselves back on the front page. Those are difficult working conditions for anybody. Understanding the volatility of our battlefield is a huge element of readiness here. The smallest details, insignificant at one moment, can quickly become the start of something much more substantial . . . a fact validated each day in the Battle Update Brief and countless other strategy sessions aimed at identifying issues before they develop into opportunities for our adversaries.

Precision, forethought and communication are crucial elements of everything we do – from complying with standard operating procedures and collecting intelligence to hosting media and escorting detainees – because they emphasize discipline and eliminate distraction. No one pretends the minutia of day-to-day routine is scintillating, but hopefully everyone understands it's absolutely essential in this business. We hear "focus" and "complacency" and "vigilance" from so many directions, the words themselves sometimes induce daydreaming. Get past the monotony, though, and absorb the message – both for your welfare and team success.

The holy month of Ramadan is finished. January 22, 2010, looms on the horizon as an unknown variable. Between now and then, anxieties may manifest themselves through behavioral changes on both sides of the wire. It is imperative that everyone understands their roles and the specific guidance governing procedures, and prudently executes according to instruction. This is not necessarily a news flash, but certainly a point worth repeating if we hope to achieve success across the entire spectrum – both concrete and abstract.

As always, your efforts do not go unnoticed or unappreciated. Keep fightin' the good fight. 🇺🇸



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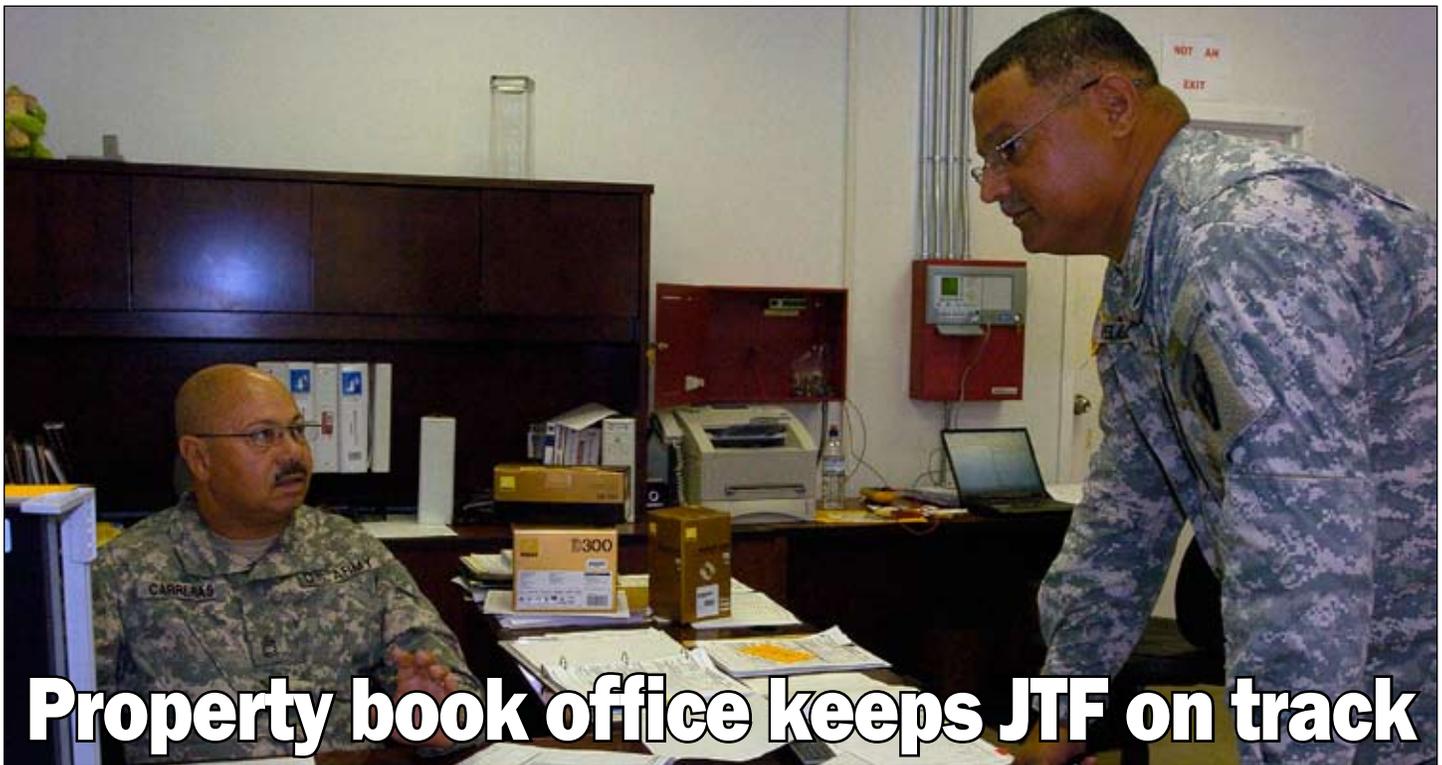
**Participants dance during the HAH celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, Sept. 19.** – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Emily Greene

### BACK COVER:

**Troopers line up during a flag football game at Cooper Field.** – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Staff Sgt. Blair Heusdens



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 1,000.



# Property book office keeps JTF on track

**Army Sgt. 1st Class Tomas Carreras, JTF property book office non-commissioned officer-in-charge, explains some details of an order to Master Sgt. Luis Velazquez, the JTF property book officer.** – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. April D. de Armas

**Army Spc.  
April D. de Armas**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Everyone deployed to Joint Task Force Guantanamo needs equipment, supplies and transportation to complete their mission. So, where does all that stuff come from? Who keeps track of all the necessary tools these units or commands need to perform their daily tasks?

The answer to these questions is the JTF property book office. They have the overall responsibility to ensure everything used by the JTF, from computers to government vehicles, is properly accounted for.

Army Master Sgt. Luis Velazquez, the JTF property book officer, said he leads his three-man team in accomplishing this task.

“We all work very hard to make sure everyone has what they need and that it is appropriately accounted for, so when new equipment is needed we can get each unit the proper items in a timely manner,” Velazquez said. “Our motto is ‘customer first.’”

With 28 accounts and more than \$35 million in assets under management, the property book office stays very busy.

“Sometimes we work long hours, but it is worth it,” said Army Sgt. Raul Fuster, a property book clerk. “We take care of a lot of important things for everyone and I learn a lot about the needs of the different sections.”

They also have the responsibility for approval of all new equipment and supplies requested by each command attached to the JTF, while looking for ways to cut costs.

“We have a warehouse full of equipment, furniture and supplies, so when purchase requests come in from the different commands, we can determine if we can

supply the requests from the warehouse or if the items really need to be ordered,” Velazquez said. “This helps the overall JTF mission by cutting down on waste and ensuring fraud and abuse are not a factor. It also helps save money that can be used in other areas.”



**Army Sgt. Raul Fuster, a property book clerk, records information to update a file. He is the first person to welcome JTF Troopers when entering the property book office.** – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. April D. de Armas

Each command helps the property book office by providing mandatory physical inventory reports quarterly, along with a sensitive item report every month.

“We are very strict with each command when it comes to these reports, but it is very important,” Velazquez said. “The physical inventory reports have helped lower the overall financial liability for those who are responsible for each item.”

Because of the unique responsibilities of the JTF property book office, challenges are somewhat different than what offices on

other military installations that do not work in a joint-service environment might face.

“My biggest challenge is working with many different branches of the military and learning what each branch needs to complete their mission,” Velazquez said. “With more than 23 years of service in the Army National Guard, this is the first time I have worked in a joint environment like this. However, it has been a great learning experience for all of us in the office.”

Another way the staff takes care of the JTF is through its supply of meals ready-to-eat, extra water and backup equipment needed in the event of an emergency created by inclement weather.

“We make sure each command has access to emergency water, food and equipment for their Troopers in the event of a hurricane or other bad weather that may hit Naval Station Guantanamo Bay,” Velazquez said.

The maintenance of warehouse inventory, along with the emergency supplies needed by JTF commands, is one aspect of the job done by Army Sgt. 1st Class Tomas Carreras, JTF property book office non-commissioned officer-in-charge.

“When we have bad weather, commands come to me to get supplies that will take care of their Troopers,” Carreras said. “We are committed to working together to ensure JTF commands are fully supplied and are able to continue their missions while deployed to Naval Station Guantanamo Bay.”

The Troopers at the property book office said they enjoy their jobs and will continue to work together to ensure their mission flows as smoothly as possible, which in turn will help the entire Joint Task Force mission. ★



**Army Sgt. Timmy Dawson, a non-commissioned officer with the Joint Task Force Guantanamo legal office, is a paralegal. Paralegals provide services involving power of attorney, bill of sale, notary public, estate planning, attorney assistance and information on the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Michael Baltz**

# Legal action for JTF Troopers

**Navy Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class  
Sharay L. Bennett**  
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

While on deployment, Troopers have a lot to attend to. The hours are long, the work load is heavy and the responsibilities are great. The last thing they expect is for legal problems to arise.

Issues outside of work can wreak havoc on the nerves. They can lead to a decrease in work performance and lack of concentration. Instead of thinking about the job at hand, Troopers may worry about their troubles. This is a disaster waiting to happen and that's not what the personnel at Joint Task Force Guantanamo's legal assistance office want.

With the services the legal assistance office provides, Troopers are able to keep their minds on the mission at hand.

Paralegals at the JTF legal office provide a variety of services such as legal research, general and special power of attorney, bill of sale, notarization, assistance in preparing immigration documents and information on the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act. The office also advises on consumer financial issues and bankruptcy law, as well as provides federal income tax filing assistance for those deployed to Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

The JTF legal office serves not only Troopers, but also civilians, contractors and their families. The office works closely with the naval station legal office to provide a full range of legal services to the many people at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay.

"It's a convenient service for those who work at the Joint Task Force," said Army Sgt. Timmy Dawson, a paralegal. "They don't have to drive to the naval station side of the island to get assistance."

Paralegals can provide most legal services, except for legal

counseling. That's where the legal office's officer-in-charge, Army Maj. Maria Hidalgo, an attorney, comes in.

Hidalgo, who also holds a civilian job as an attorney, has experience in a wide range of legal issues. When first arriving at her job, she looked for ways to improve the assistance that is given to Troopers.

"We want the Troopers to receive the best service that we can provide them," said Hidalgo. Hidalgo and her staff assist in providing not only legal counseling but help with the legal paperwork Troopers might need to provide to the court, as well as assisting Troopers with filing the paperwork.

While the office assists with all types of issues, one of the most common issues they deal with involves family law.

"Many of the guards come here on their days off after working long shifts," said Hidalgo. "We want to be able to help them right away to take some of their stress away."

While most things can be handled by walk-in, establishing wills, trial defense, immigration, child support, custody and some other in-depth legal counseling may require an appointment.

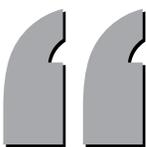
"It is our goal that no one leaves this office without receiving the best services that we can provide," said Hidalgo.

The office also provides spanish-language services for Troopers who need documentation in spanish.

For help with basic legal services or other legal issues that may arise, Troopers should visit the JTF legal assistance office.

"We like to give peace of mind," said Dawson.

The legal assistance office is located in the Trooper One Stop, building 1451. For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact them at ext. 8110 or 8117. The naval station legal office can be reached at ext. 4692. ☆



**It is our goal that no one leaves this office without receiving the best services that we can provide.**

**– Army Maj. Maria Hidalgo**



# Warfighters return to GTMO

**Army Staff Sgt. Rene Salazar directs the Warfighter competitors during their training prior to the Military Police Warfighter Competition.** – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Staff Sgt. Blair Heusdens

## **Army Sgt. Michael Baltz**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Troopers from Joint Task Force Guantanamo's 525<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion recently returned from the 13th annual Army Warfighter Competition where the three-person team placed 25th out of 42 teams from around the globe. The competition, which was held at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., from Sept. 15 through Sept. 19, pitted the best of the best Military Policemen in the U.S. Army against each other in a battle of physical endurance and tactical proficiency.

Army Sgt. Steve Jones, Pvt. Terrance Robinson and Pvt. Levi Arrowood represented the 525<sup>th</sup> in the four-day event. Sgt. Samuel Nobles and Pvt. Jessie Pendleton were alternates for the event, in case someone was to get injured.

Prior to the event, the team of five trained for two months after competing in a battalion tryout.

"We had a two-day tryout," Jones said. "We competed in an obstacle course, and then an extended [physical fitness] test."

After being selected to the team, they started training on military police-related tasks and rigorous physical training.

"I was sleeping one night, and then I got woken up at midnight, I was told to ruck-up and get ready to go on a road march," Jones

said sorrowfully. "I am not a big fan of being woken up in the middle of the night to do a 15-mile ruck march."

Jones, who extended his stay for a few months at the JTF to participate in the event, was honored to be part of this event.

Throughout the competition, Soldiers participated in a physical fitness assessment, and completed various obstacle courses and challenges, as well as weapons qualifications, military skills competitions and even water survival tasks.

"Events like these continue to push military policeman to higher standards," Jones said. "It is a great way to challenge yourself and fellow [Troopers]."

A Humvee push, ammo can loading, and 200-plus-pound dummies to carry around were among the physically demanding events, which tested the abilities of the military policemen over four days. A written exam tested the MP's practical knowledge following the physical events. The competition is based on a point system.

It wasn't all glorious for Jones and his team.

"We had some challenges along the way," Jones confessed. "There was one event when I almost wanted to quit. It was the 16-mile road march with a 65-pound rucksack."

The physically-demanding event was on the last day of the competition, meaning it was after several other physically exhausting events. The team went on to finish third in

the road march. It was the team's best finish in an event.

Robinson found the 50-foot warrior tower in the physical endurance course to be the most challenging, due to a fear of heights. With cheers of support from his team, he was able to face his fear and complete the event.

"I didn't want to let my team down, and I wanted to make the 525<sup>th</sup> proud," Robinson said humbly.

Army Command Sgt. Maj. Steven Raines, the senior enlisted leader of the JTF's Joint Detention Group, accompanied the Soldiers to the competition.

"All of the teams there were winners," said Raines. "[The team] represented the 525<sup>th</sup> extremely well as an organization."

The 525<sup>th</sup> Troopers placed 25th overall in the competition, but took away more than just the satisfaction of representing their unit.

"It is something very challenging and very rewarding," Robinson added. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime event."

"In the end, it was worth it," Jones continued. "It was a lot of fun. I would do it again."

It is the 68<sup>th</sup> Military Police Corps Anniversary this year. The Warfighter Competition kicks off the anniversary week. The 525<sup>th</sup>, in honor of the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary, will have run 68 miles in the last couple of months, and will celebrate the anniversary Sept. 25. ★

# Bump, set, spike!



Army Spc. Adrianna Deleon of the 525<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion women's volleyball team bumps the ball during the team's match against the Sparkle Monkeys, Sept. 22. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Staff Sgt. Blair Heusdens

## Army Sgt. Andrew Hillegass

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Fall sports kicked off last week with the start of Morale, Welfare and Recreation's flag football season at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay.

However, if slant routes, zone defense and spread formations are not your things, have no fear.

Troopers looking for another sport to participate in have to wait no longer, as the Captain's Cup volleyball league got underway Sept. 21, at G.J. Denich Gym.

"It is exciting to finally get out and play volleyball," said Army 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Nicole Lopez, a player for the women's team, Sparkle Monkeys, a team comprised of civilians and Troopers.

This season of Captain's Cup volleyball is also ushering in a women's division that has been lacking in past volleyball seasons.

"Since I got here in January, there has not been an all-women's league available. So, getting the chance to go out and play volleyball with just women is really fantastic," said Lopez.

Lopez is no stranger to the volleyball court, having played beach volleyball since she arrived at Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

"I know a lot of my teammates from playing beach volleyball on Saturdays," said Lopez, who also played volleyball at

Michigan Technical University.

Of course, you don't need an extensive background playing organized volleyball to enjoy the competitiveness of the sport.

Air Force Staff Sgt. William Roberts, captain of the Hawgs, has been involved in volleyball for many years and put together a team comprised of members from the 474<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron.

"There are a lot of guys on our team that are playing volleyball for the first time here at GTMO," said Roberts, who has played on teams sanctioned by the U.S. Volleyball Association.

Roberts was very optimistic about his team and their effort after they finished their first game.

"The guys have really played hard; and for not getting a chance to practice before our first game, I think we did pretty good out on the court," said Roberts.

The six-on-six league has 10 teams signed up for the fall league, seven in the men's division and three in the women's. The league is scheduled to run through the first part of November, which includes a post season tournament.

Games are played Monday, Tuesday and Thursday nights beginning at 6 p.m. All members of the Guantanamo community are encouraged to attend and enjoy a little volleyball action.

If you have any questions regarding volleyball or other MWR sports, call the sports office at ext. 2113. ♡



Navy Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Giannina Gutierrez, a member of the 525<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion women's volleyball team, sends the ball back over the net to the Sparkle Monkeys. Gutierrez's team played hard, but came up short losing both games to the Sparkle Monkeys, Sept. 22 at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay's G.J. Denich Gym. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Staff Sgt. Blair Heusdens



# 'The Ugly Truth' is predictably satisfying

**Army Sgt.  
Carmen Gibson**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

As of late, romantic comedies have caught a lot of heat, upon which critics blame everything from lack of chemistry to an endless parade of predictable plot developments. The honest truth is that regardless of the negative press, the "rom-com" perseveres and continues to rake in admirable amounts of cash at the box office, and thankfully, never fails to disappoint its viewers: an audience looking for on-screen sentimentality, sensuality and the whole knight-in-shining-armor extravaganza with the added bonus of prop falls and tongue-in-cheek perverse humor gets just that. Following this familiar yet fulfilling format, "The Ugly Truth" excels and exceeds the standard in all the right places.

Created by Australian film director, Robert Luketic from such blah comedies as "Monster in Law" and "Legally Blonde," this latest laughs and loves mixture boasts a slightly recognizable cast of rom-com regulars such as "Grey's Anatomy" alum and "27 Dresses" star Katherine Heigl and "P.S. I Love You" hunk Gerard Butler.

The awkward intro sets the tone for the flick, as morning news show producer and obsessive compulsive control freak Abby Richter (Heigl), demonstrates how not to behave on a first date. Dating pointer number one: producing a background



**R**

**96 minutes**

**Rating:** ★★☆☆☆

check and crossing off truthful answers teeters on the line between paranoid flake and all around stalker.

After the disappointing date, she calls into a brutally honest and crude talk show titled "The Ugly Truth" and is bombarded with accusations about her deteriorated love life by a swaggering tool of a man, Mike Chadway (Butler).

Anonymously humiliated, she had no intentions of ever having to actually meet the verbally-abusive host. Unfortunately, in true Murphy's Law style, she is forced to hire the very same arrogant, misogynistic and all-around sleaze ball in order to boost her show's ratings.

Arguments over tact vs. entertainment heighten tensions between the two which eventually transform into feelings of desire when Chadway attempts to loosen up the prude with his overtly-sexual, show-as-much-skin-as-possible pointers to help her nab the man of her dreams.

While the premise of the movie is the inevitable pairing of the unlikely couple, the journey toward the predictable chick flick ending is full of laughs, especially an updated version of "When Harry Met Sally" unforgettable restaurant scene. If you're looking for something innovative and fresh, you should probably stick with new age dramas and high-ticket action flicks, but for a pleasant revision of an old idea that tickles until the very end, "The Ugly Truth" is mighty satisfying. ☆

# Hispanic American Heritage Association



JTF Guantanamo photos by  
Army Sgt. Emily Greene



Guantanamo Bay's Hispanic American Heritage Association kicked off Hispanic Heritage Month with a celebration at the Windjammer Ballroom, Sept. 19. The formal event included dinner, dancing and live entertainment.



# Dancing into Hispanic Heritage Month

**Army Sgt.  
Emily Greene**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Naval Station Guantanamo Bay's Hispanic American Heritage Association kicked off Hispanic Heritage Month with a celebration at the Windjammer Ballroom, Sept. 19.

The 2009 HAHA Dinner Dance was a formal event featuring Hispanic food, dance and cultures.

Navy Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Jeffery Ronchaquira has been the president of the HAHA for approximately one year. He said the goal of the event was to celebrate different Hispanic cultures and the contributions Hispanic Americans have made to the country.

"We wanted to start off Hispanic Heritage Month with a celebration of our many cultures that can be appreciated by everyone in Guantanamo," said Ronchaquira. "This event is a chance for the GTMO community to get together and have fun, and for people to see what the Hispanic community is all about."

The event was attended by Navy Capt. Steven Blaisdell, Naval Station Guantanamo Bay commanding officer, and Army Brig. Gen. Rafael O'Ferrall, deputy commander of Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

In his remarks, Blaisdell praised the contributions of Hispanic Americans, both past and present.

"Our nation would not be this strong without the contributions of Hispanic Americans," Blaisdell said. "Tonight, and throughout the month, we increase our awareness and appreciation of Hispanic Americans."

Ronald J. Gardner, Guantanamo Bay Cuban community assistance program manager, was the guest speaker. Born in Guantanamo City, Cuba, Gardner migrated to the United States with his family in 1990. He served in the U.S. Navy and, in 2007, arrived at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, a place his grandparents called home for many years.

In his speech, Gardner recalled the wonder he and his family experienced upon first arriving in the U.S. and spoke of the opportunities he was afforded because of his family's move. He encouraged pride in Hispanic American culture.

"As we celebrate together tonight, Hispanic Americans take pride in our culture and our heritage," Gardner said.

Doraima Alvarez, secretary of the HAHA, said the event was just the start of celebrations for Hispanic Heritage Month in GTMO.

"We wanted to start out with a big event to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month and



**Participants dance during the HAHA celebration at the Windjammer Ballroom, Sept. 19. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Emily Greene**

to get everyone involved," Alvarez said. "Everyone is invited to join us all month long. We are planning a bunch of events for everyone to get together and have fun."

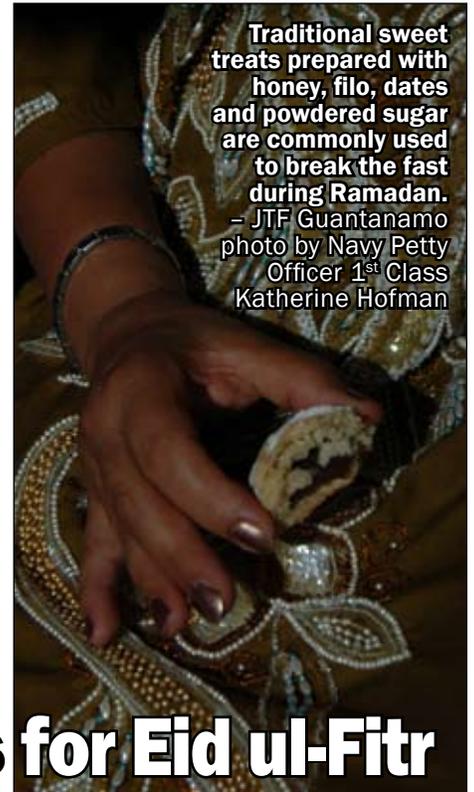
Alvarez said the goal of the HAHA is to encourage everyone to join the Hispanic

community at Guantanamo and to learn about what they have to offer.

"Everyone in Guantanamo Bay works very hard. We want everyone to come to our events and enjoy themselves. We are all family here," Alvarez said. ☆



In celebration of Eid ul-Fitr, Guantanamo's Muslim community shared a meal of hotdogs and hamburgers in the naval station chapel courtyard with members of other faiths. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Navy Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Katherine Hofman



Traditional sweet treats prepared with honey, filo, dates and powdered sugar are commonly used to break the fast during Ramadan. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Navy Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Katherine Hofman

## Army chaplain joins Troopers for Eid ul-Fitr

**Navy Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class  
Katherine Hofman**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Joint Task Force Guantanamo and Naval Station Guantanamo Bay Muslim personnel celebrated the end of Ramadan, Sept. 19, with the observance of the three-day festival, Eid ul-Fitr. Ramadan, one of the most important observances in Islam when Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, is not complete without the Eid festivities.

Army Maj. Abdullah Hulwe, a Muslim chaplain, visited GTMO on a mission to support Muslim Troopers and civilians during their spiritual journey from Ramadan through Eid ul-Fitr. "It's like Thanksgiving, Easter and Christmas all in one. It is about spirituality and community, gifts, dressing nice, praying together, the whole package. Coming together is a joyful time, and brings joy to the heart and soul," said Hulwe.

Observers of Islam joined as a congregation for special Eid ul-Fitr morning prayers and a festive meal at the naval station chapel's mosque room. Traditionally, after the prayers, people visit their relatives, friends and acquaintances and some pay visits to cemeteries as a way of connecting and remembering where they have come from.

"Because Muslims are all over the world, each ethnicity brings its own foods from all over the world. It's like a worldwide festival," Hulwe said.

It would be easy to get caught up in the festivities, enjoying the food and celebrating the end of the month-long fast, but Chaplain Hulwe used this time to refocus the congregation. He put the celebration into perspective for the attendees, after the Eid prayer by asking those present what they had learned during Ramadan. His talk focused the followers on the long-term purpose of both Ramadan and Eid ul-Fitr and encouraged them to keep the principals and focal points of Islam in their minds past the celebration and into the new year.

Noor Mohamed, a Joint Task Force Guantanamo civilian contractor, understands the concept Hulwe is talking about as he shares his experience of Eid ul-Fitr. "It's not a celebration about Ramadan being over, but that you had the strength and support from God to be able to do it," he said. Mohamed explained what fasting during Ramadan meant to him and the memories of not

having what most people take for granted like food and water. "You have a memory of your whole entire life, when you had food, and when you did not. It is emotional and hard to forget," said Mohamed. This point of view helps him to continue to reach out to other people as part of his spiritual path. "When you sit down to a meal, it reminds you of the people who don't have what you have." This, Mohamed says, encourages him to give to others.

Selfless giving, or charity, is a large part of Ramadan and a quality that is focused on especially during Eid ul-Fitr. Mohamed sees his Ramadan observances as a part of selfless giving, humility and honoring his own spiritual journey. It's what he sees as "charity and remembrance."

"We are all equal, the rich, poor, kings, and workers, we all fast. It's about discipline and putting yourself on the same level as others and putting yourself in the shoes of the have nots," Mohamed said.

Of course, charity can be sponsoring a family or giving money to the poor, but as Mohamed notes, charity is not about money, but rather acknowledging others. "The best charity is not always money; the best charity is a smile, asking how your day is going. It comes from inside," Mohamed said.

Getting information about Islam out to other Troopers is another way to share and give to others. This has been the focus of Hulwe's visit during this time of celebration. Hulwe says he is happy to share information about practices of Islam. "It helps both the Muslims and those of other faiths, to understand," he said. Hulwe sees his sharing as, "giving insight, as well as sight." This unique perspective helps keep him going. The wonderful part Hulwe said, "is when both sides can see that their values and concerns are exactly the same, everyone wants good things for their family and for themselves and [everybody] wants to help."

More than one billion people around the world, including nearly 5,000 active duty and reserve-component U.S. military members, are estimated to be followers of Islam, coming from all over the world including China, Indonesia, the Philippines, United States and the Middle East.

It is rewarding to work as "a bridge between one [religion] and the other, and to clarify the cloud hanging over the Islamic faith, and to see that the cloud is not black anymore, but actually shining," Chaplain Hulwe said. ☆



**Army Sgt. Charles Verax flies remote control helicopters to maintain his skills as a pilot. Verax hopes to attain his helicopter pilot license and eventually go to Army flight school. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Joshua Frye**

## 'Grounded' in GTMO

**Army 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Joshua Frye**  
525<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion

Look up in the sky. It's a bird... it's a plane... it's a UAV? No, actually, it's a remote control helicopter flown by Army Sgt. Charles Verax of the 525<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion. Frequently some of Naval Station Guantanamo Bay's large open fields provide the perfect venue for practicing and honing RC helicopter flying skills. But what's an Army Engineer like Verax doing flying model helicopters?

Ever since 1997, when Verax was first rated as a private airplane pilot, his fascination with flying has led him down the road to fulfilling his dream of becoming a helicopter pilot. Having logged more than 255 hours of flight time in various types of aircraft, when he deployed to Iraq it meant he had to find another way to stay sharp in the cockpit. Unable to fly while downrange, he turned to remote control helicopters which have a control style that compares favorably to full-sized airframes.

Just like playing a musical instrument, developing muscle memory takes much practice. If a helicopter pilot wishes to maintain the vital skills and hand-eye coordination necessary for rotary wing flight without deterioration, a suitable substitute must be found.

Verax cautions those who say that RC helicopters are just toys, "Make no mistake; a remote control helicopter is not a toy. They

are very expensive and complex small scale aircraft that are extremely difficult to fly. In the wrong hands, an RC helicopter could cause some very serious injuries. This is why their manufacturers always warn that they are not toys."

The higher quality models all come as kits in hundreds of pieces that have to be built. Once built, the electronics have to be installed and set up correctly. Conversely, remote control airplanes even if not put together exactly right, might still fly. RC helicopters must be close to perfect or they will be uncontrollable.

After returning from Iraq last year, Verax set out to attain his helicopter license. With the money he saved while on deployment, he accrued 50 hours of flight training, 10 of which were solo. A 135-mile commute from Kansas to Boonville, Missouri, however, meant that Verax was unable to complete his FAA helicopter practical exam and check ride prior to deploying to GTMO.

Since his arrival in GTMO six months ago, he says he misses being able to fly. "This is a really nice base with some awesome Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities and activities. The snorkeling in GTMO's beautiful clear waters and mountain biking have been great. It is way better than the bases in Iraq. Since MWR no longer has a flying club here like they did in the [1990s], I've essentially been grounded during my time here," said Verax.

Remote control helicopters are expensive, but nowhere near as expensive

as renting a helicopter. The Schweizer 300C helicopter, on which Verax did a majority of his training, rents for \$310 an hour. For him, flying RC helicopters is not just a useful tool, but also an investment to keep up skills flying full size helicopters.

"The collective and tail rotor pedals are simplified on the RC helicopter's controls. But the cyclic stick controls exactly the same as the full-sized helicopter," said Verax. "This is why an RC helicopter is a very useful means for a helicopter pilot who cannot fly for a while."

Verax also points out that there are actually people who make money with RC helicopters by using them to do aerial photography and survey work. Other remote control pilots earn money through sponsorships from manufacturers and compete professionally by doing extreme aerobatic maneuvers and demonstrations at air shows. The military also uses RC aircraft and spends billions of dollars on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to gather intelligence and actively engage enemies on the battlefield.

Flying isn't just a hobby for Verax. You can tell by walking into his room where the tops of his two dressers look like the deck of an aircraft carrier. There, he proudly displays six flight capable RC helicopters with their blades folded back.

His laptop-based flight simulator is also a vital tool. "The simulators do an excellent

See **VERAX/15**



## Flu shots

Navy Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Jose Gino, a hospital corpsman with Joint Task Force Guantanamo's Joint Medical Group, administers a flu vaccination to a JTF Trooper inside Camp America, Sept. 16. JMG personnel staff the Joint Troop Clinic as well as the detention hospital inside Camp Delta. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Carmen Gibson

## Boots on the Ground

by Navy Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Marcos Hernandez

*If you could have any job in the military, what would it be and why?*

Army Sgt.  
Russell Saunders



"An X-ray technician. It's a specific task and also because you're in a relaxed hospital environment."

Air Force Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class  
Daniel Henderson



"I would be a B-52 bomber pilot because it's a mysterious aircraft."

Navy Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class  
Rachel Mendoza



"A civil engineer. I'm currently studying and looking forward to a degree in civil engineering."

Army Capt.  
Manuel Rosado



"A helicopter pilot. It's a technical job that involves many different types of mission."

# Putting God in His place

**Army Capt.  
Eric Bey**  
525<sup>th</sup> MP chaplain

I heard of a counselor once that would have people show up for their appointments, and for the first 20 minutes or so, he would direct them to the altar for prayer. He required them to first talk to God about their problems. He found that many people would not need to talk to him after a good healthy prayer session.

Hearing this caused me to wonder if the same was true for the people I talk to. I have found that it is true, so one of my newly acquired skills is to listen for God. As people come into my office to talk, vent, rant or rave, I have begun to listen for where God is in their situation. Many more times than not, I cannot find Him.

What I have found myself doing is reminding people that there is a God, and He does love them and is intimately interested in their dilemma. In essence, I put God back into their situation. I have found many a burden lifted when people realize that they have indeed left God out of their equation. I help them put God in His place.

Everyone has a throne in their life. Who is sitting on yours?

For many people it is themselves and it doesn't take long for them to realize that they just don't have what it takes to deal with everything life throws at them. God's perspective is perfect, so it is infinitely better than ours. We see a mountain, He sees on top, behind, beside, underneath and in the mountain. He is better equipped to lead and guide us in the best way. Add to that His precious promises, like all things working out for the good to those who love the Lord, He will never leave or forsake you and He will never suffer you to be tempted beyond your ability to pass the test and with the test always comes a way out.

You are precious to Him: So like the precious metals or stones that are brought from the ground, yield to the Master Craftsman as He begins to bring out the best in you. He ought to be on the throne of one's life for He is a good, kind, loving and very capable God. ☆

## JTF CHAPEL SCHEDULED PROGRAMS

**Catholic Mass**  
**Sunday - Friday:**  
6:30 a.m. Mass

**Spanish Catholic Mass**  
**Sunday:** 5 p.m.  
at NAVSTA Chapel

**Protestant Worship**  
**Sunday:** 9 a.m.

**Spanish Protestant  
Worship**  
**Sunday:** 11 a.m.

**Bible Study**  
**Sunday:** 6 p.m.  
**Wednesday:** 7 p.m.

# JTF Trooper pursues his dream of flight

**VERAX** from 12

job of replicating remote control helicopter flight and are the absolute best way for anyone interested in learning how to safely fly an RC helicopter to start out,” said Verax. “The nice thing with the simulator is that you don’t have to do any maintenance and crashes don’t cost you any money. You just hit the red reset button and start flying again. Without a flight simulator, most people get frustrated and give up altogether because it’s such a challenging and expensive hobby to learn.”

He encourages other troopers who fly or those interested in the hobby, to seek him out for some “hangar flying” and he offers to help any enthusiasts out in any way that he can.

Verax plans to complete his FAA helicopter license and then take his career to the next level by submitting a warrant officer packet for Army flight school. The next time you see Verax flying one of his helicopters around GTMO, you’ll know he’s practicing for a dream that is much bigger than that little bird buzzing around up in the sky. ☆



**Army Sgt. Charles Verax, a member of the 525<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion, flies remote control helicopters at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay during his free time. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Joshua Frye**

## Know Before You Go...

**We deserve a break every now and then, but remember to take a minute and assess the swimming area to make your aquatic experience fun, memorable and safe.**

- **Drinking could cause you to over-estimate your ability.**
- **Inadequate rest might not allow you to operate at your full potential.**
- **Always take a buddy with you when participating in any unsupervised aquatic activity. Swim alone only when a lifeguard is on duty.**
- **Be careful when diving head-first.**
- **Weather is unpredictable. It can change in a moment's notice. Remember, if you hear thunder, it's probably a good idea to get out of the water.**

**For more information, please email: [safety@jtfgtmo.southcom.mil](mailto:safety@jtfgtmo.southcom.mil)**



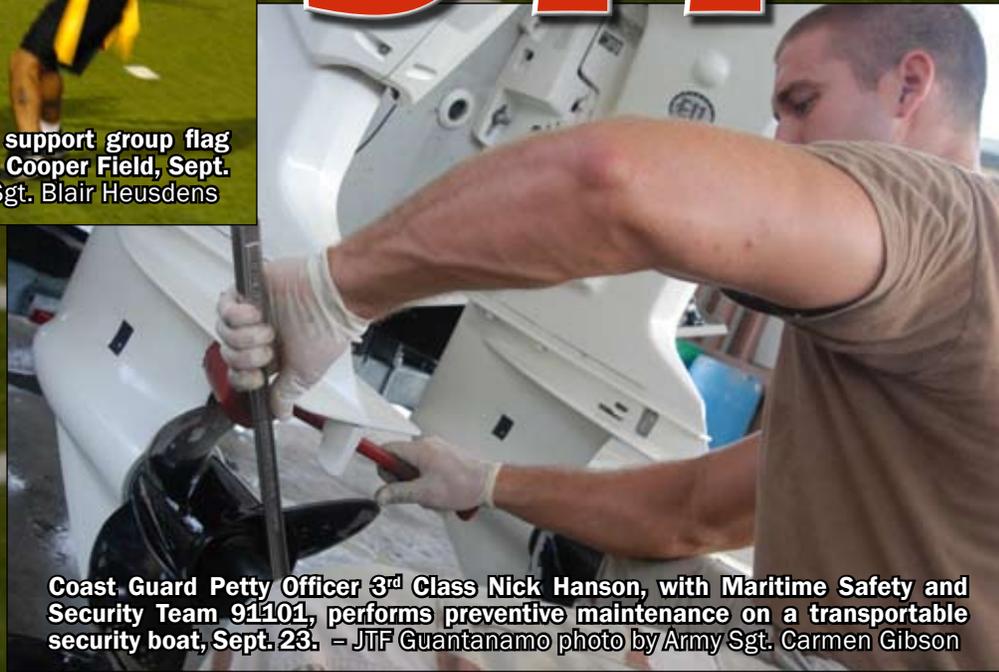
Navy Chief Petty Officer Kirk DeLeonardo sends a shout out to the crew of USS New York, which is made from 7.5 tons of steel from the World Trade Center. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Carmen Gibson

Around the

JTF



Navy Lt. Brian Bush with the commissions support group flag football team runs the ball during a game at Cooper Field, Sept. 22. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Staff Sgt. Blair Heusdens



Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Nick Hanson, with Maritime Safety and Security Team 91101, performs preventive maintenance on a transportable security boat, Sept. 23. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Carmen Gibson