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THE WIRE

2008 YEAR IN REVIEW

We're not done yet

**Army Sgt. Major
Matt Aragon**
JTF HHC NCOIC

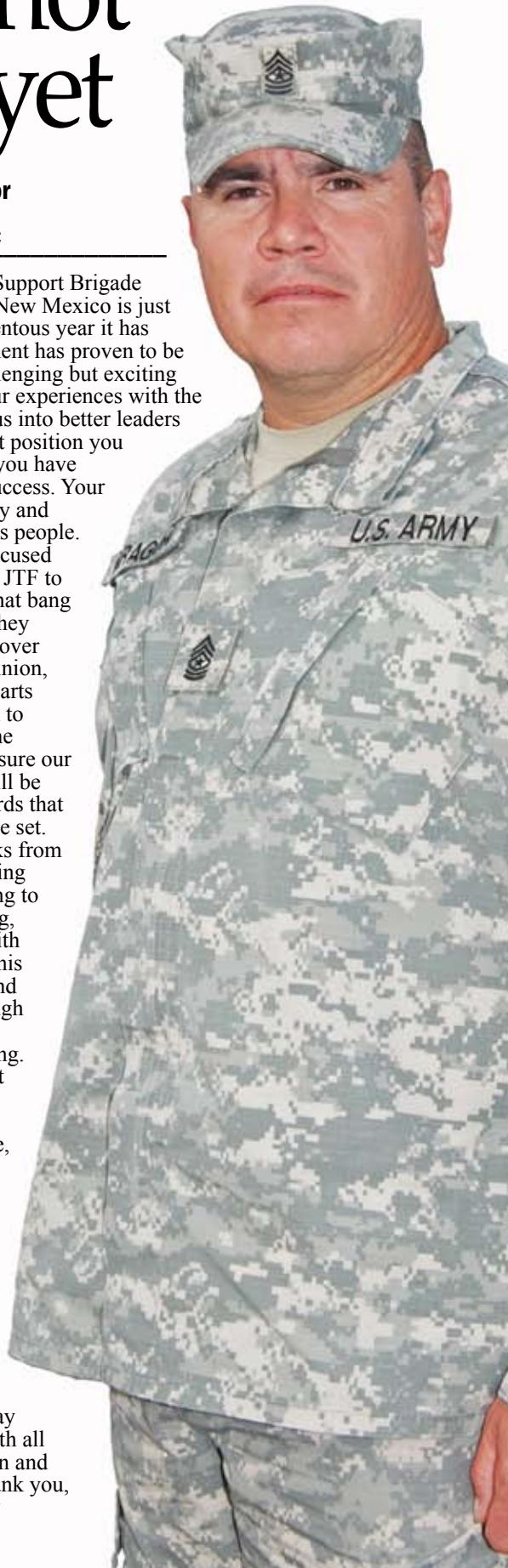
The tour for the 111th Combat Support Brigade M/E (Forward) Guardsmen from New Mexico is just about complete, and what a momentous year it has been. Working in a joint environment has proven to be a very rewarding, sometimes challenging but exciting chapter in our military careers. Our experiences with the JTF have unquestionably shaped us into better leaders and future leaders. No matter what position you might have held for this mission, you have made an immense impact on its success. Your contributions have promoted safety and security for our great nation and its people.

We must remember to remain focused on our important mission with the JTF to the end and go out with a bang. That bang is preparing our replacements so they can properly and confidently take over without skipping a beat. In my opinion, this is one of the most important parts of our mission. It is our obligation to ensure that we train and pass on the knowledge and tools needed to ensure our replacements from Puerto Rico will be able to perform to the high standards that our predecessors and the 111th have set.

Now that we are just a few weeks from going home and joining our awaiting families, I suspect you all are trying to get in a few more dives, snorkeling, fishing trips or just hanging out with your soon-to-be missed friends. This is all well and good, but be sure and take a few moments to think through your actions and calculate all the risks involved and do the right thing. Always think safety and watch out for each other. It's only natural to try to do all the things that you might not be able to do back home, but please be careful and *think*.

One last thought I have for you. In my experience, it is best to make sure to give yourself and your family time to get re-familiarized with each other when you get home. Take it slow, and don't forget to thank them for all their sacrifices to our nation.

In closing, I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to say how proud I am to have served with all the active duty, reserve, guardsmen and civilians here at Guantanamo. Thank you, happy holidays and God bless. ☮



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COVER:

The mosaic cover created to commemorate this special Year In Review issue is composed of hundreds of images from the past year. The Year in Review begins on page 4.



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Admiral praises Sailors during visit

**Army Sgt. 1st Class
Vaughn R. Larson**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Navy Rear Adm. Carol M. Pottenger, at the helm of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command for only three months, visited some of the Sailors under her command Saturday, Dec. 20.

"I really did not know what you guys do down here," she confessed at an all-hands call at the Windjammer Ballroom Saturday afternoon. "I don't know if I can begin to express my awe, my gratitude, my appreciation after walking around and seeing the conditions under which you operate."

The Navy Expeditionary Combat Command was established in January of 2006 to train and outfit approximately 40,000 Sailors for joint service missions in every theater of operation. Expeditionary tasks include explosive ordnance disposal, maritime security, riverine duty, diving and salvage, naval construction, logistics, maritime civil affairs, training, intelligence, combat readiness, Combat Camera, medical and the Navy Expeditionary Guard Battalion.

Pottenger acknowledged that Sailors also perform guard duties at Camp Bucca, a large detainee operation in southern Iraq. However, she emphasized that the mission at Joint Task Force Guantanamo is "really unique, really different, and really special." She praised the Sailors for their professionalism.

"Not only do you show forbearance, but time after time you smile and say you have a job to do, and you do it the best you can," she said. "You understand, and I didn't until today, that every time you walk into the camp, your every tactical act can impact America. You get that."

Navy Command Master Chief Ferris Foresman added to the praise.

"What you have to do day in and day out, the focus you maintain, is phenomenal," he said. "Keep doing what you're doing."

Be proud of what you are and where you come from."

Foresman reminded the packed ballroom that the purpose of the meeting was to get feedback to improve training and support for the Navy's individual augmentees. Some questions focused on the length of an IA tour, and ironing out pay differences among Sailors of the same pay rate assigned to augmentee missions. A concern was raised about Sailors assigned to advancement schools who get orders for an augmentee mission and end up losing incentive pay.

Another question was about a prior promise to provide free Internet and cable at Tierra Kay housing. Pottenger replied that the cost and scope of that project is currently under review.

"That's not a yes or a no – it's an issue that deserves my attention," she said. "That's something you guys should have."

Others asked about replacing boots that wear out quickly from walking the pods, and lighter or more breathable security vests. Both Pottenger and Foresman said that new versions are being field tested.

Foresman cautioned that taking too many augmentee assignments is "close to committing career suicide" in that it can keep Sailors from progressing in their military job, and can affect promotion. He suggested that 12 months as a guard, whether at Guantanamo or Bucca, should be the maximum assignment.

"The whole IA mission has been very painful for Navy commanders," Pottenger explained. "From what I understand, the Navy is going to be in the IA business for some time to come." She said that it could be up to five years, as the Army continues to grow its brigade combat teams.

The admiral shared that the Navy as a whole is earning praise for its role in joint environments, particularly the ability of chief petty officers to accomplish tasks without direct management.

"I am so proud to be your commander," she said. ♦

Navy Rear Adm. (Upper Half) Carol Pottenger addresses questions raised by Sailors during an all-hands call Saturday, Dec. 20 at the Windjammer Ballroom. Pottenger heads the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, which includes the Navy Expeditionary Guard Battalion.

2008 has been a historic year. In this issue, *The Wire* takes a look back at the events and changes that were a part of the past 12 months at Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

Helping Haiti

Joint Task Force and Naval Station Guantanamo Bay residents pulled together to support Haiti after Hurricane Ike ravaged the country, leaving many people desperate for help.

Troopers and civilians donated used clothes and new items like diapers, baby wipes, and formula purchased from the Navy Exchange, and dropped them at designated collection sites where they were picked up by chaplains and volunteers.

"The [plan] to support the people of Haiti with humanitarian aid was put into motion almost immediately," said Harriet Johnston, a Guantanamo Bay resident and member of the Catholic Chapel Council. "The idea was conceived on a Tuesday night, and the community responded quickly."

The very first donation, consisting of pillows and children's clothing, was from a JTF Trooper eager to help.

"It was amazing how quickly Troopers reacted," said Father Sal Aguilera, JTF and Naval Station Chaplain. "Troopers were over at the Navy Exchange buying pillows, clothes ... they don't have much here but it didn't mean they weren't willing to go to the NEX and buy stuff. It was incredible."

The outpouring of support resulted in 14 pallets of donated goods. Once all the items were packed up, the pallets were loaded onto the Navy amphibious ship USS Kearsarge, which stopped in Guantanamo for fuel and supplies before returning to Haiti.

The timing of Kearsarge's arrival played an integral part in the effort by providing



'GTMO' out the vote

American service members, upon signing their enlistment, swear an unyielding devotion to defend the U.S. Constitution and the democracy it created. However, when service members are stationed or deployed overseas, taking part in that democracy is not handled the same as back home; it's done through the mail.

Over the 22 months leading up to the 2008 presidential election Nov. 4, Joint Task Force Guantanamo's Voting Assistance Office helped register more than 650 JTF personnel for state absentee voting ballots. This let JTF's service members and civilians exercise their right to help choose their government's leaders.

"One of the biggest issues I have encountered this year is that Troopers at JTF did not request their absentee ballot by their state deadline or update their absentee mailing address," said Petty Officer 1st Class James Richardson with the voting office. "Upon each [permanent change of station], active duty personnel should submit an absentee ballot request to their local election official."

However, when a state's absentee ballot application deadline passes before a Trooper registers, they are not left without a voice. The federal back-up write-in absentee ballot can then be used to vote in all federal elections, and some state and local elections.

The federal ballots were used in a voting drive at the Troopers' Chapel Oct. 21, giving JTF Troopers their final opportunity to have their voices heard. There, about 250 JTF personnel cast their write-in ballots.

After the ballots were counted Nov. 4, Democratic U.S. Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois was elected president over Republican U.S. Sen. John McCain of Arizona. Obama earned 52.92 percent of the total popular vote, while McCain earned 45.66 percent. The popular vote earned the two senators 365 electoral votes and 173 electoral votes, respectively. — Army Sgt. Gretel Sharpee ♦

Event keeps memories in step at home, abroad

This year, U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay held its first 9.11 Mile Guantanamo Bay Freedom Run and 9.11 kilometer (5.6 mile) Run/Walk, Sept. 6. More than 200 residents attended the event, getting up and traveling to Windmill beach before the sun was close to rising.

The freedom run was modeled after the Freedom Run founded by Dirk Beveridge, a member of the We Do Care organization, this is a non-profit organization in Chicago whose mission is to provide opportunities to the public to support and thank active-duty military personnel, their families and veterans.

The run was scheduled to proceed simultaneously with the Barrington, Ill., Freedom Run which gave participants the chance to run with family and loved ones, despite being 1,650 miles apart.

"I wish I could be there with them but this is the next best thing," said Army 1st Lt. Sarah Cleveland. "I'm actually running



with [my mom and sister] even though I'm not home, which is a rare opportunity."

The race started and finished at Windmill beach, and as each participant crossed the finish line, Army Brig. Gen. Gregory Zanetti presented them with a coin that commemorated the event.

"It was a great run and an outstanding challenge," said Derek Johnson, first male finisher. "It was great to see such support. I hope they do this again next year." — Army Spc. Megan Burnham ♦

Housing expands, improves for JTF Troopers



With more than 2,000 Troopers serving in Joint Task Force Guantanamo, housing is a continuous concern.

Navy Master Chief Petty Officer Brad LeVault, JTF's command master chief, said in April that he understood when Troopers' housing conditions suffer, their motivation does as well, which ultimately impedes mission success.

"My written goal – that I wrote probably a year and a half ago – is to have one Trooper per room," LeVault said. His vision was put in full force in 2008.

Throughout most of the year, all of Tierra Kay Housing saw renovations – 150 total homes in all.

With a \$3.1 million budget, Naval Station Guantanamo Bay's combined bachelor quarters office partnered with JTF housing officials to renovate and improve TK. The renovations included laying wood laminate flooring, new carpet, refurbished bathrooms, new furniture and a fresh coat of paint. Later, energy-efficient air conditioning units were installed.

"They went all out," said Edward Karabinus, CBQ's manager. "The Navy went with a whole room concept. They purchased really nice, name-brand stuff, mostly Thomasville furniture."

"With Sgt. Maj. [Matt] Aragon in charge, this has been getting under control," Karabinus said. Aragon, JTF's Headquarters and Headquarters Company commandant, is the top enlisted personnel in charge of all housing.

Two major new housing projects concluded during 2008.

Cuzco Barracks phase III was finished, adding 192 new residents, as well as 36 more washers and dryers. The units were first occupied in mid-June by Troopers from Camp Justice and Camp Bulkeley.

Senior enlisted received new homes with the opening of the Bay Hill Senior Enlisted Housing complex at the end of July. 40 units at 462 square feet each were



built, accommodating one Trooper. Each contains a bathroom, a bedroom, a kitchen and living room area, as well as a washer and dryer.

"The biggest achievements for the past year, without a doubt, have been the completion of Cuzco III and Bay Hill, followed closely by completing the renovations at TK," said Navy Lt. Joseph Singer, JTF's housing officer.

Singer added that at TK, a new Liberty Center and post office, as well as mini-NEX and Subway restaurant, are "in the works," and are expected to be complete within the coming months. Cuzco Barracks is also set to have three permanent pavilions added, with a few remaining road paving projects also scheduled.

Information for this report was provided by Army Sgt. Scott Griffin, Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Cheryl Dilgard and Army Spc. Megan Burnham. ♦



Changing of the guard at JTF Guantanamo

The faces may have changed as new blood was injected into the Joint Task Force Guantanamo in 2008, but the mission did not.

Navy Rear Adm. David M. Thomas Jr. relieved Navy Rear Adm. Mark Buzby as Joint Task Force Guantanamo commander at a May 27 change of command ceremony.

"You are inheriting the finest military unit that I have ever been associated with," Buzby told Thomas during the ceremony. "There's no denying that you are being handed a tough mission and are in for the professional challenge of your life, but I am confident that you will find the rewards are many and long-lasting."

"You have forged a legacy of outstanding service under the most intense scrutiny and arduous conditions imaginable," Thomas said, addressing JTF Troopers. "[I] am proud to assume the duties as your commander."

Buzby, who served one year as JTF commander, was confirmed for appointment to rear admiral (upper half) and assigned as deputy chief of staff for Global Forces Management and Joint Force Operations, N3/N5, U.S. Fleet Forces Command.

The 111th Combat Support Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the New Mexico Army National Guard replaced the 92nd Separate Infantry Brigade HHC of the Puerto Rico National Guard Feb. 4 in the role of supporting JTF operations. The New Mexico National Guard last deployed to Cuba as members of Teddy Roosevelt's "Rough Riders" in 1898. The Puerto Rico National Guard's

See **CHANGE/6**





Changing of the guard at JTF Guantanamo

CHANGE from 5

191st Regional Support Group will replace the New Mexico National Guard in January 2009.

Army Lt. Col. Alex Conyers assumed command of the 525th Military Police Battalion from Army Lt. Col. William Wozniak during an Aug. 5 ceremony. The 525th, originally constituted in World War II, was reactivated in 2004 to conduct detention operations as part of the Joint Detention Group for JTF Guantanamo. The 525th and the Navy Expeditionary Guard Battalion each ensure the safe and humane care and custody of detained enemy combatants.

One month later, Navy Cmdr. Michael Fulgham took command of the Navy Expeditionary Guard Battalion from Navy Cmdr. Jeffrey Hayhurst. Fulgham previously served as executive and commanding officer of U.S. Naval Consolidated Brig Miramar in San Diego from July 2005 until March 2008. Hayhurst became deputy commander of the Joint Detention Group.

The 2008 presidential campaign brought promises from both leading candidates to



close detainee operations at Guantanamo Bay. In a series of assemblies, Thomas spoke to each member of the Joint Task Force about the mission here.

"Of course we're going to close detainee operations," he said. "The challenge is how."

The JTF commander noted that he expects to complete his two-year tour, and that incoming units should expect

to complete their deployments as well. He praised the guard force for what he described as flawless execution of their duties.

Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Nat Moger, Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Cheryl Dilgard, Army Spc. Eric Liesse and Army Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn R. Larson contributed to this report. ♦

Hard work yields state-of-the-art legal complex

The unique nature of the military commissions process required a unique legal complex.

Air National Guard engineering units such as the 474th Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron from Texas helped develop and construct the Expeditionary Legal Complex. The ELC includes a sensitive compartmented information facility, or SCIF, capable of handling top secret and other classified documents. The complex also features housing trailers and tents for prosecution and defense attorneys, their staffs, media and other observers.

"We took the baton from our predecessors," said Air Force Lt. Col. Frederick Olison, 474th commander. "Our primary mission going in was the sustainment, operations support and maintenance of the facilities. Once we got here, we realized due to the increased security requirements, we had a bit of construction left to do."

The complex was operational in May, prior to the June arraignment of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four other alleged Sept. 11 conspirators. — Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Nat Moger ♦



Joint Medical Group maintains, surpasses mission at Joint Task Force

At the beginning of November, the Joint Medical Group conducted a staff turnover as they completed their six-month tour and welcomed the new group that came to replace them.

"The outgoing group performed in an exceptional manner, improving both the efficiency and quality of care provided here," said Navy Capt. Bruce Meneley. "They overcame every obstacle that they were presented and fully succeeded in every aspect of their mission."

The mission of the JMG is to provide safe, humane and ethical medical care to detained enemy combatants while also providing a comprehensive standard of care to all JTF personnel. This consisted of the JMG staff providing 24/7 medical care, including general surgical, dental care, preventative medicine, routine care, mental health services, specialty care and mass casualty support. The staff also provided general and mental healthcare services to all JTF and active duty members.

The JMG is staffed primarily by U.S. Navy individual augmentees with members of the Army and Air Force also offering support. Meneley said the current rotation has settled in and has been doing a great job.

"They have reviewed all processes and are accurately following all standard operations procedures to ensure open



communication lines," he said. "They are facing a challenging mission and I applaud their dedication." — Army Spc. Megan Burnham ♦

Kittery Café sates appetite with more convenient dining for guards

Since its opening, the Kittery Café Galley has been a tasteful and convenient stop for all Joint Task Force Guantanamo personnel who work at Camp Echo and Camps 5 and 6.

"It's easier for [the Joint Detention Group Troopers]," said Navy Capt. Greg Rismiller, JTF engineer. "They don't have to go to Camp Delta anymore; there is a central galley right [at Camp Echo]."

The production process of the dining facility began back in January 2007 when it was first requested, but the contract wasn't awarded to begin construction until August 2007. The cafe was finally completed in June, with the first meal being served July 7, 2008.

"Even though Kittery Café is slightly smaller than Café Caribe, it is big enough to meet the needs of our Troopers," said Army Maj. David Giesler, JTF engineer.

Even though Troopers still eat with plastic foam plates and cups at Kittery Café, the addition of a scullery machine is planned for next year.

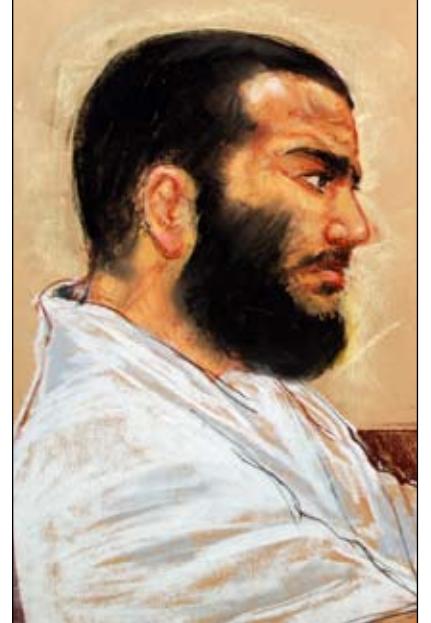
The opening of Kittery Café has been successful, as Troopers constantly comment on the convenience and cleanliness of the chow hall.



"It is a perfect complement between Sailors and Soldiers who put in long hours behind the wire," said Navy Chief Petty Officer Greg Alexander. "The service is excellent, the location is essential and the

hours are beneficial."

In addition to Kittery Café, many new buildings are in the works to accommodate the Joint Detention Group transition to Camp Echo. — Army Pfc. Eric Liesse ♦



Omar Khadr

Al Bahlul



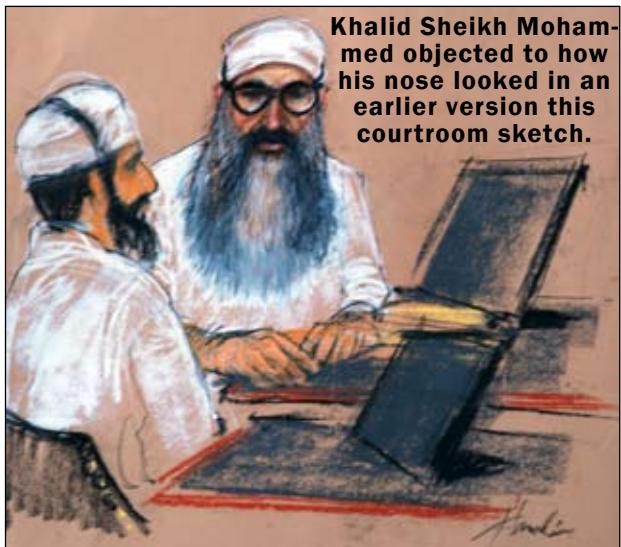
Below: Defense Attorney Charlie Swift, with Joe McMillan in the background, speaks about Salim Ahmed Hamdan's military tribunal during an Aug. 6 press conference following the military commission's guilty verdict.



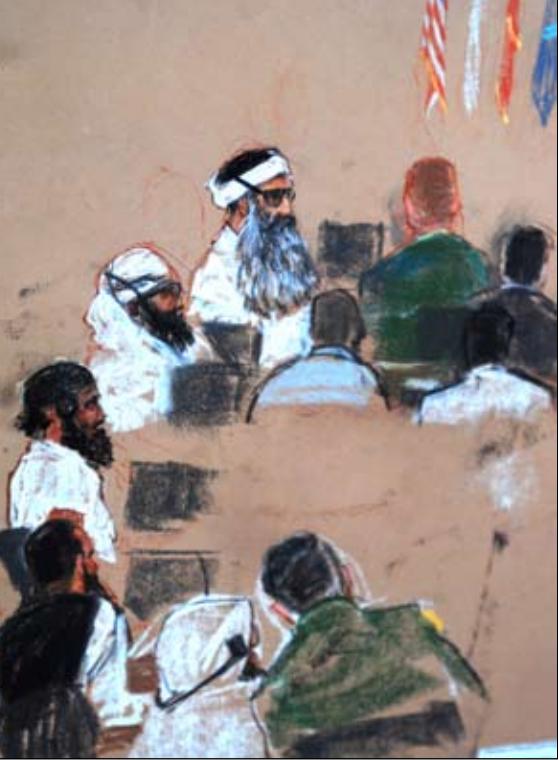
Army Col. Lawrence Morris, right, chief prosecutor for the Office of Military Commissions, following the arraignment of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four other alleged Sept. 11 co-conspirators in McCalla Hangar here June 5.



Al Qosi



Khalid Sheikh Mohammed objected to how his nose looked in an earlier version this courtroom sketch.



At right: Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Walid Muhammed Salih Mubarek bin 'Attash, Ramzi bin al Shihb, Ali Abdul Aziz Ali and Mustafa Ahmed Adam al Hawsawi.

January February March April May June July August September October November December

The military commissions here experienced some firsts and also more of the same during 2008.

For Omar Khadr – a Canadian, captured in Afghanistan in 2002 at age 15, accused of murder, attempted murder, conspiracy, spying and providing material support for terrorism – the year began and ended with challenges by his defense team that the crimes he was charged with were baseless and that his designation as an enemy combatant was incorrect.

Khadr's defense questioned whether his alleged actions were technically war crimes, and argued that he in fact could not have committed the crimes. They also challenged whether Khadr was properly charged or could be held liable under the Military Commissions Act.

Government prosecutors countered that Congress intended the Military Commissions Act to be applied retroactively, and argued that conspiracy and providing material support for terrorism violate the law of war and were codified into the MCA. The prosecution also cited past international cases in which teenagers were tried for war crimes, and dismissed attempts to use the international protocol prohibiting persons under age 17 from serving in the armed forces to define Khadr as exempt from prosecution as an adult.

What did change for Khadr in 2008 is the military judge overseeing his case. Army Col. Peter Brownback was replaced May 29 by Army Col. Patrick Parrish.

All charges against Khadr had been dropped in 2007, but his case was reopened Sept. 9, 2007 when that dismissal was overturned by the Court of Military Commission Review. Oct. 24, 2008 the case was delayed until Jan. 26, 2009 to allow a defense psychologist time to obtain a security clearance and evaluate Khadr.

• • •

The case against Salim Ahmed Hamdan – the personal driver and bodyguard for Osama bin Laden – proceeded to a jury trial. It was the first case brought to trial in the special tribunals created by the Military Commissions Act and became the first war crimes conviction, albeit in a split verdict handed down Aug. 6.

Hamdan, a Yemeni citizen, was found guilty of supporting terrorism, but not guilty of the greater charge of conspiracy. He was apprehended in Afghanistan in November of 2001 and detained at Guantanamo Bay since 2002. Two surface-to-air missiles were found in his vehicle at the time of his capture. He was accused of delivering weapons to al-Qaeda as well as aiding bin Laden's escape from U.S. forces.

The commission of six military officers sentenced Hamdan to 66 months, and credited him for the 61 months already spent in the detainee camps. The U.S. government had sought a sentence of 30 years to life. Hamdan was transferred to Yemen in late November to serve the remainder of his sentence.

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The second conviction by military commission was much less complicated.

Ali Hamza al Bahlul was sentenced to life confinement Nov. 3 after nine military officers found al Bahlul guilty on 35 counts of conspiracy, solicitation to commit murder and providing material support for terrorism.

Al Bahlul was the propaganda chief for al Qaeda and allegedly was tasked with establishing a video feed to allow Osama bin Laden to watch the Sept. 11 attacks. He was officially charged Feb. 25, 2008.

Al Bahlul did not speak or defend himself during the week-long trial, and he also forbade his military attorney from speaking on his behalf. In an unsworn statement following the trial, al Bahlul said that he did not care about the sentencing, and that regardless of who is elected president of the United States, his trial would only support al Qaeda's goals and objectives in continuing their fight against the U.S.

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A number of detainees were charged with war crimes in 2008.

Ahmed al-Darbi was charged in January with conspiracy and providing material support. He appeared for legal motions Dec. 15. Ahmed Mahmoud al Qosi was charged March 5 with providing material support to terrorism and conspiracy. He last appeared in court Nov. 19. Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani was charged in March with planning the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Mohammed Kamin was

charged in April with providing material support, placing explosives and launching rockets. Mohammed Hashim was charged in May with providing material support and spying. Abdul Ghani was charged in July with conspiracy, material support and attempted murder. Obaidullah was charged in September with conspiracy and providing material support. Fouad Al Rabia and Faiz Mohammed Ahmed al Kandari were charged in October with conspiracy and providing material support.

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Five detainees alleged to have planned and executed the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks – Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Walid Muhammad Salih Mubarek bin 'Attash, Ramzi bin al Shihb, Ali Abdul Aziz Ali and Mustafa Ahmed Adam al Hawsawi – were formally charged in May.

The defendants were charged with conspiracy, murder in violation of the law of war, attacking civilians, attacking civilian objects, intentionally causing serious bodily harm, destroying property in violation of the law of war, terrorism and providing material support for terrorism. The charge sheet detailed 169 overt acts.

The five were arraigned simultaneously June 5 at the Expeditionary Legal Complex. The new facility was designed to accommodate multiple defendants and their legal counsel at one time. During the arraignment it appeared that Mohammed communicated with the other defendants in the courtroom, creating a pact to reject

military and civilian lawyers provided for their defense. All but bin al Shihb requested to represent themselves, despite facing a possible death sentence if found guilty. The detailed military judge, Marine Col. Ralph Kohlmann, carefully advised each defendant of the advantages of retaining detailed counsel. Due to concerns over bin al Shihb's mental competency, his detailed military lawyers remained on as his counsel. The military and civilian lawyers for the other four defendants were retained as advisers.

The proceedings were notable as well for a complaint raised by Mohammed that his nose looked too big in an official court sketch. Artist Janet Hamlin revised the sketch, which received the defendant's approval for release.

Mohammed, bin 'Attash, Ali and Hawsawi next appeared in court July 9-10 to address accusations of intimidation regarding their choice of counsel. Hawsawi's military lawyer, Army Maj. Jon Jackson, contended that Hawsawi elected to defend himself under pressure from Mohammed. Hawsawi told Kohlmann that "thus far I haven't made a decision" regarding election of counsel. However, the other defendants present reconfirmed their decision to defend themselves. Kohlmann warned them against abusing the dignity of the courtroom and also that they could not later claim they lacked a competent defense.

All five reappeared in late September

to take advantage of *voir dire*, a procedure that in commissions allows the defense to challenge the judge on claims of bias against the defendants. Bin al Shihb, however, would not leave his cell the first day of proceedings, resulting in a delay and a judge's order that bin al Shihb appear in court the next day.

Kohlmann dismissed all bias claims against him – including his status as a Marine and an officer, his professional relationship with the chief prosecutor for the military commissions, his lack of experience in capital cases, the allegation that he viewed the defendants as Islamic extremists and disrespected their religion, and the potential negative impact of his impending retirement – as baseless.

In late November, Kohlmann was replaced by Army Col. Stephen Henley.

During a motion hearing in December attended by family members of Sept. 11 victims, the five defendants requested to withdraw all prior motions and to enter guilty pleas. Bin al Shihb and al Hawsawi were not allowed to withdraw motions due to a pending competency hearing. Questions about whether Henley could accept pleas without the military jury present, and what sentence he could render, led to the other three defendants to decide against entering pleas that day.

Army Spc. Shanita Simmons, Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Nat Moger and Army Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn R. Larson contributed to this report. ♦

Dives help raise spirits for wounded warriors

The Wounded Warriors program made two visits to the U.S. Naval Station in 2008.

In early February, six amputees – two Marines and four Soldiers – completed their dive certification through the combined efforts of Soldiers Undertaking Disabled Scuba (SUDS), Reef Raiders Dive Club and Joint Task Force Guantanamo. Disabled Sports USA, along with SUDS and Wounded Warriors, helped generate donations to offset airfare and lodging costs. The six became involved in SUDS at Walter Reed Medical Center.

John Thompson, SUDS founder, said the organization is “designed to help improve the lives of injured Soldiers. By training the Soldiers in a challenging and rewarding activity, it can help facilitate the rehabilitation process and promote mobility.”

The first portion of dive certification was completed at Walter Reed. The open-water dives required for certification were conducted at Guantanamo Bay.

“It’s been awesome seeing all of the sea life and beautiful beaches,” said Josh Bell, a Marine who lost both legs following an attack in Fallujah, Iraq. “[That first open-water dive] hit every nerve in my body when I entered the water. It was a feeling



I’ve never had before.”

Thompson called SUDS “the most rewarding project I have ever been involved in.”

The return visit in early December included six Soldiers and one Marine.

One Soldier was part of the February visit. Another used to live on the Navy base and his parents still work here.

Army Capt. Kevin Cowan and Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Jayme Pastoric contributed to this report. ♦

Charges, changes, challenges, convictions at military commissions

Jan. 11, 2009 will mark seven years since the first enemy combatants detained by coalition forces during Operation Enduring Freedom arrived in Guantanamo Bay.

Upon arrival, detainees were held at Camp X-Ray for four months while the construction of Camp Delta took place. In April 2002, detainees were moved into the new facilities improving their quality of life.

Throughout the last seven years, the U.S. government has continually worked to improve the process of determining a detainee's threat level and intelligence value. This in-depth process has resulted in the release of approximately 530 detainees. When a determination is made to transfer custody of a detainee, the U.S. State Department notifies U.S. Southern Command and a designated official here. The designated official notifies the Staff Judge Advocate, who then notifies the detainee who is subject to release. At this point, appropriate coordination for the transfer is made. The U.S. is generally responsible for transporting detainees to and from Guantanamo Bay. All detainees released from custody of the detention



facilities here have their personal effects returned to them. In addition, two new sets of clothes, shoes and a new Koran in the detainee's native language are given to the detainee upon departure.

Since 2002, detainees have been released to countries including Albania, Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, France, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom and Yemen.

In January of this year, former Joint Task Force Deputy Commander Brig. Gen. Cameron Crawford said, “Some countries are happy to have their constituents back; however, sometimes we have credible evidence that they may be tortured or killed when they return there. We will not knowingly release a detainee if we have information that he will be tortured or killed. That causes us to look to third party nations to attempt to take some detainees.”

Army Sgt. Sarah Stannard and Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Billings contributed to this report. ♦

Pentagon officials weigh in on JTF

Two high-ranking Pentagon officials visited the Joint Task Force Guantanamo in January.

Gordon England, deputy secretary of defense, toured the nearly completed Expeditionary Legal Complex Jan. 12. England had previously visited 10 months earlier, when the ELC was still in the conceptual stage.

"What has been accomplished here in the past year has been extraordinarily important as we go forward with these commission trials, and the world sees that we do have a legal process," England said.

He stressed that the legal process would not be rushed.

Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, held a town hall meeting at Guantanamo Bay Jan. 13, one day after touring the ELC as well as the detention facilities. He praised the JTF during the meeting.

"The world is focused on Guantanamo Bay," Mullen said. "We've got to get it right every single hour. The consequences of getting it wrong could be global."

Mullen admitted that he supported closing detainee operations here. Even so, he acknowledged the important role JTF Guantanamo played in the War on Terror.

"The joint detention operation is a part of mitigating risk," he said. "We need to keep the detention facilities operating as best as they can be to protect Americans against individuals who have pretty bad backgrounds in terms of the War on Terror."

England echoed those sentiments.

"People have criticized Guantanamo," he said, "but the fact of the matter is, we have been holding detainees under the Law of War, and we will prosecute them according to the Law of War."

Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class William Weinert and Army Spc. Shanita Simmons contributed to this report. ♦



Visitors see Joint Task Force up close, personal

Sometimes, in order to get out the message about what is really happening at Joint Task Force Guantanamo, you have to bring people to the message.

That happened in a big way April 19 when approximately 70 people – business leaders, academics and a handful of military personnel – visited Guantanamo Bay as part of the Joint Civilian Orientation Conference.

The JCOC is a Pentagon outreach program, sponsored by the Secretary of Defense, designed to expand knowledge about the military and national defense. Participants pay their own expenses in a program that has been conducted more than 74 times since 1948. This particular conference focused on the U.S. Southern Command area of focus.

Visitors toured the new Expeditionary Legal Complex as well as detainee camps 4 and 6, where they saw the different accommodations for compliant and non-compliant detainees. Army Col. Bruce Vargo, Joint Detention Group commander, noted that detainees seek to convince an international audience that they are being abused.

"The problem is, it's not happening here," he said, explaining the ratio of

guards to detainees, work shift schedules and the number of official visits from media, lawyers, International Committee of the Red Cross and others. "You can't do this [accommodate visits] and also do all that the detainees claim we are doing."

Visitors also learned about the health care provided to detainees, and came away with strong impressions of their visit.

"This is more than a detention center – this is a first-class intelligence operation," said Madelyn Hammond, who works for Variety Magazine in Los Angeles.

"It definitely opens your eyes that what the media portrays is not reality," added Meredith Iler, of Strategic Alliance in Texas. "What shocked me is the original camp that was only used for a few months [Camp X-Ray] hasn't been operational for years."

One guard said he hoped the public would learn that detainees are treated humanely at JTF.

"We're doing what we set out to do – provide humane care," the guard said. "We walk the block every day. I've never seen a guard lose composure, and I don't think I'll ever see it." – Army Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn R. Larson ♦

Joint Task Force deputy commander candid, confident on mission here

In April, Joint Task Force Deputy Commander Army Brig. Gen. Gregory Zanetti addressed more than 1,000 members of the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary gathered in the nation's capital for the 48th Annual Washington Conference and Legislative Rally.

Zanetti said, "I understand why people are reluctant to say [we] are really telling the truth here. We are going to make sure we conduct our operations in a safe and transparent way and it is going to be transparent to the world."

The general spoke in detail and candor the many ways "Gitmo" detainees are given fair and humane treatment, from culturally appropriate meals to numerous spiritual and recreational opportunities.

The detainees, however, "believe the camps are an extension of the battlefield," Zanetti explained, adding that they have attempted to form new terror cells inside the fence and frequently fling feces and other bodily fluids at guards.

Guards must keep their eyes on detainees for a number of reasons. It's not just for their own security, or even for intelligence

gathering. It's also because the detainees pose a risk to themselves, Zanetti said.

"The detainees often want to commit self harm," Zanetti said. "And we don't want them to commit self harm."

Zanetti recollects for Legionnaires an incident in which a detainee told a female guard that he was going to harm her and, after he gets out, find her and kill her and her family. The Soldier shook it off and went back to work for another 12-hour day. The general was impressed by her response. "That's when I fully realized we are going to win this war," Zanetti said. ♦

Flashing back to 2008

**Army Pfc.
Eric Liesse**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

2008, as with every year, showcased some amazing cinema. We saw everything – a super villain earned some Oscar buzz; a trash compactor made an entire country smile; while a pair of pot-heads took down their own suppliers. Of course, we were also given some real lame ducks, such as the lifeless “Hitman” and the simply horrible “Space Chimps.” (I still don’t know who thought that was a good idea.)

So, in alphabetical order, I’ve devised my list of the best movies reviewed by this paper in 2008.

“American Gangster” – This film was on over 50 critics’ top-10 lists for 2007, and for good reason. It boasts stars Denzel Washington as a Harlem drug lord and Russell Crowe playing the detective leading the case against him. Add that duo of pure talent to the razor-sharp direction of Ridley Scott, and you’ve got undeniable drama.

“Cloverfield” – Big-budget monster movies are rarely original enough to matter. Thankfully, J.J. Abrams can make anything amazing. Starring no one you know (still true 11 months later) and focused on a barely seen monster, the film’s production takes center stage. Viewers that didn’t get a migraine saw the superb use of the camera as a first-person handheld documentation of a day’s events, making the short movie engaging.

“The Dark Knight” – There isn’t much more to say about the newest Batman flick. Heath Ledger as the Joker will probably forever be the greatest super villain portrayal on film, while Christian Bale again masters Batman’s ever-tireless seething against evil. Plus, director Christopher Nolan returns to helm the entire A-list cast.

“Iron Man” – John Favreau directs Marvel Comics first solely produced film, starring the always-amazing Robert Downey Jr. as billionaire-inventor Tony Stark, the man in the humanoid tank of Iron Man. Downey is both eccentric and commands every scene he’s in – especially out of the suit. With the underrated Gwyneth Paltrow and a bald Jeff Bridges, Favreau does the tin-man justice.

“The Kite Runner” – Although cultural controversy surrounds it, this film about two teenage friends in pre-Russian/Taliban/American-filled Afghanistan leaves a poignant mark. The look later in the film of the pair grown and living in America reuniting to deal with their personal and national past

makes it a lesser-known treasure.

“No Country for Old Men” – The early buzz considered this film legendary before it was even released. Thankfully, it lived up to it. The Coen brothers waste no film and take this story to brutally intense places. Javier Bardem is the definition of psychotic, while Josh Brolin, Tommy Lee Jones and others solidify this film’s perfection

“Pineapple Express”/“Tropic Thunder” – Yes, I know these have nothing to do with each other. However, both were equally outlandish yet perfectly executed comedies with amazing talent across the entire productions. They may have been raunchy and ridiculous, but they were darn funny.

“Quantum of Solace” – Bond. James Bond. That name alone should earn a viewing. Daniel Craig returns for the direct sequel to the Bond movie reboot, “Casino Royale,” and gives Bond more violence and adrenalin than ever. The story of Bond pursuing the Quantum organization that killed his love goes full-bore and is worth every second.

“There Will Be Blood” – Written, directed and produced by Paul Thomas Anderson, this film about the California oil boom took top honors in most critic’s minds. Star Daniel Day-Lewis as a new oilman willing to hold nothing back is the unapologetic antithesis of subtle acting. Plus, when a film stars Day-Lewis, it’s going to be excellent.

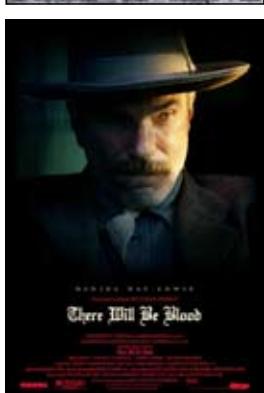
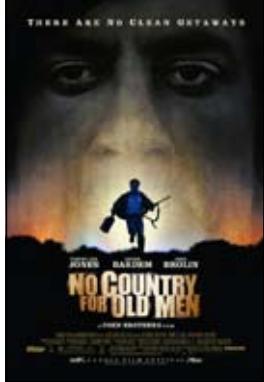
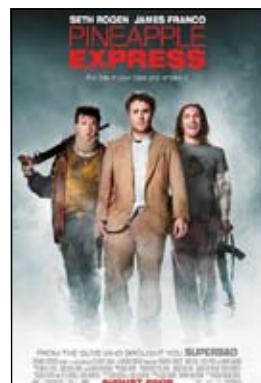
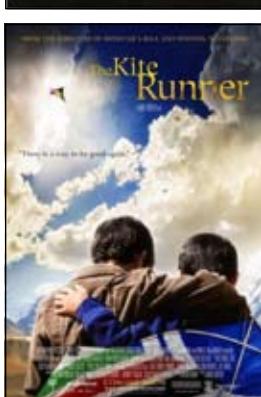
“WALL-E” – The main character – an anthropomorphic trash compacting robot – speaks no audible language. Yet, he showed more emotion than most any other on this list, using his inquisitive eyes, delicate graspers and unrelenting love of EVE, an alien robot that finds him on Earth. As the hands-down best computer-animated family film yet made, “WALL-E” is the new gold standard for quality cuteness.

In honoring such excellence in the art of film, it’s only fair to shine light on the flick that brought the year down.

Worst Film of the Year: “Star Wars: The Clone Wars”

George Lucas has hit a new low. The animation is far below any standard – especially for a special effects guru such as Lucas. The voice acting is almost as rigid and cold. Then add the atrocious teenage alien of

Ahsoka Tano, who whines, jokes and fails repeatedly – and she wields a lightsaber. “The Clone Wars” continues the thought that legendary stories should remain untouched: the more they’re tampered with, the more they’ll let you down. ★





FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE EMAIL:
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Boots on the Ground

What was your biggest personal accomplishment of 2008?

by Army Pfc. Eric Liesse

Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Yvette Jackson



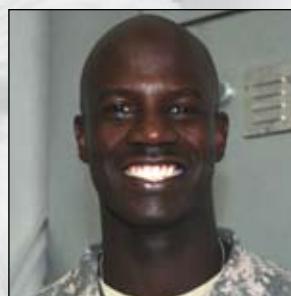
"I survived another year in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba!"

Air Force Capt. Daniel Koeppel



"I coordinated a poker run fund raiser for the Dayton Autism Society."

Army Maj. Carlos Hopkins



"Learning to invest in the stock market."

Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Jared Johnson



"I've made it down here almost 17 months."

Happy New Year

**Navy LCDR
Clint Pickett**

JTF Command Chaplain

Very soon we will be making the leap into the New Year, with Christmas just a few days behind us. Although we still have the 12 days of Christmas, most of the Christmas parties are over, with the New Year parties to come.

New Year's has been celebrated for thousands of years, all over the world. More than 4,000 years ago, Babylon was celebrating the New Year in an interesting way, complete with resolutions for the upcoming year! Babylon lay in what is now the country of Iraq, and their New Year was in the spring. During the festival, the king was stripped of his clothes and sent away, and for a few days the people whooped it up. Then the king returned in a grand procession, dressed again in fine

robes. Then everyone had to return to work and behave properly. And so, each New Year, the people made a new start to their lives.

New Year's can be time for us to make a new start as well. Especially for Christians, a new start, a new beginning, has long been a part of our tradition. "In the beginning . . ." These are first words in the Bible, in the book of Genesis. In the beginning, God created the world, and all that is in it. And God saw that it was good. God made a new thing. And God continues to make things new.

The first words of the book of the Gospel of John echo the first chapter of Genesis; "In the beginning was the Word . . ." In Jesus, God continues to renew his creation, making things new, changing and shaping us into a new creation as he intended us to be.

Our longing for things new resides deep inside us. Change can be a little

intimidating, but I think there is an excitement about starting a new job, moving to a new place, beginning with a clean slate. Too often, though, we bring enough of our old selves to soon do and be what we were before.

God, however, is able to change us and renew us. God is able to make us truly a new creation. He is the one who can wash away sins, forgive wrongs, and remove the load of guilt all of us carry through life. He is the one who makes a new beginning, each and every day.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And God is not done with that creating. At the end of the Bible, towards the end of the book of Revelation, John writes about this re-creation. Verse 21:5 states: "And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.'"

The beginning of the New Year is a good opportunity to reflect on our lives, and how God is able to renew us. To make of us a new creation. And not just once a year, but every day of the year. And Christians are reassured of this, for as John writes, "these words are trustworthy and true!" Have a blessed and happy New Year!

**"Have a blessed
and happy New
Year!"**

JTF CHAPEL SCHEDULED PROGRAMS

Catholic Mass

Sunday: 7 a.m. Confession

7:30 Mass

Wednesday: 11 a.m. Mass

Protestant Worship

Sunday: 9 a.m.

Spanish Protestant Worship

Sunday: Noon

Life, liberty and the pursuit of citizenship

Army Pfc.
Carlynn M. Knaak
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Fighting for a country that is not yet yours, and in some cases dying for it, may be the most difficult way to become an American citizen. Eligibility for naturalization states that one must be a "person of good moral character" to become a United States citizen and many would agree that joining the U.S. military is just that.

Spc. Antonio Rodriguez, a member of the 525th Military Police Battalion, took this path. Rodriguez was born in Spain, and also served in the Spanish Army. In 2000 he moved to Puerto Rico.

"When I decided to move I could only say a few words in English, so I moved to Puerto Rico where we could speak the same language but I could still be close to America," said Rodriguez. "I've always had a big interest in America."

Rodriguez came from a military background, with his father serving as a captain in the Spanish Army. At the age of 17, Rodriguez joined the Spanish Army.

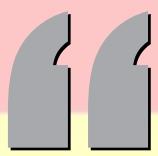
"I believed in everything the military represented, such as freedom," he said.

Upon completing his two-year contract with the Spanish Army, Rodriguez furthered his education and, after visiting America a few times, decided to move.

"After moving to Puerto Rico I got married and in 2006 I joined the Puerto Rico Army National Guard," he said. "I joined because I believe that America and Spain believe in the same things, like democracy and the pursuit of happiness."



Army Spc. Antonio Rodriguez, a member of the 525th Military Police Battalion, after receiving his American citizenship certificate making him a dual citizen of America and Spain.



I am willing to fight for this country and die for this country, so I was allowed to become a citizen of this country.

- Spc. Antonio Rodriguez

This is Rodriguez's first deployment with the PRANG and he has loved every minute of it so far.

"All my experiences have been great with the [PRANG]," he said. "It has so many wonderful things to offer and it made my American citizenship easier to get."

Rodriguez has always been a citizen of Spain. However, in April his paperwork was finally complete

and Rodriguez became a citizen of the United States of America, granting him dual citizenship.

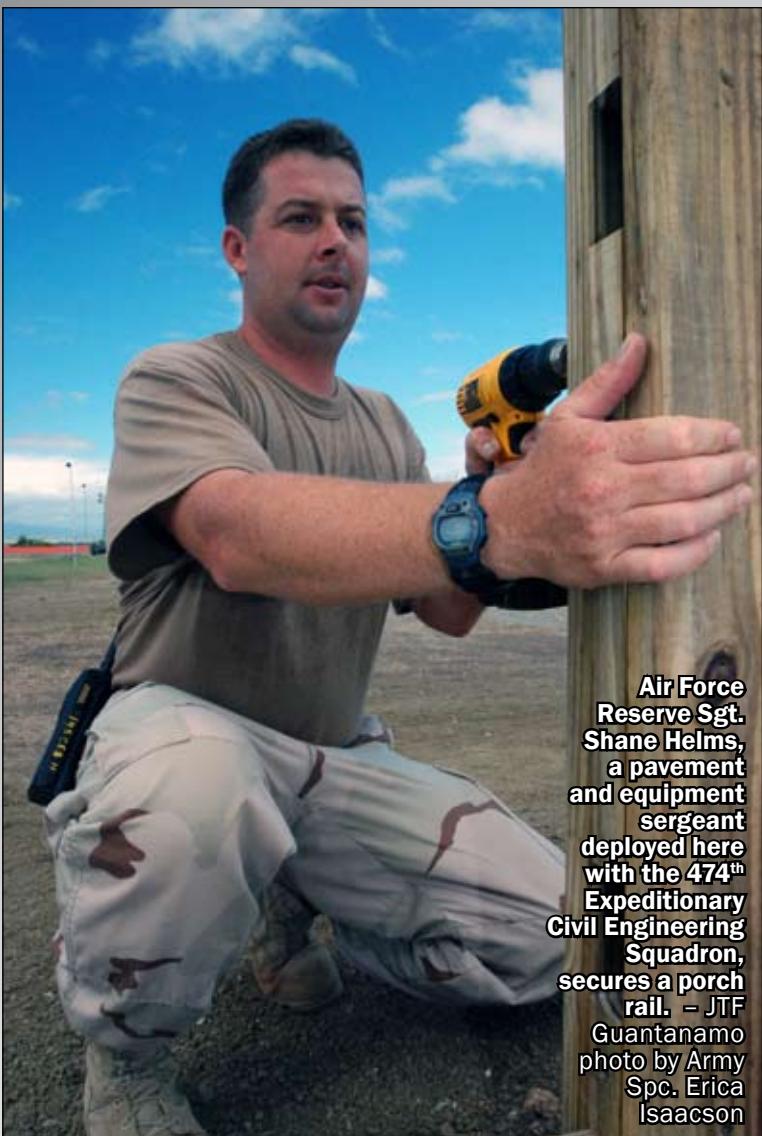
"My family is so proud of me, and I think that my life is good being an American," he said.

"I am willing to fight for this country and die for this country, so I was allowed to become a citizen of this country. I'm really grateful for that." ★

Around the JTF



U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Petty Officer 1st Class Sheldon Harley, a machinery technician deployed here with Port Security Unit 305, removes a bolt from a motor on a Viper patrol boat.
– JTF Guantanamo photo by ArmySpc. Erica Isaacson



Air Force Reserve Sgt. Shane Helms, a pavement and equipment sergeant deployed here with the 474th Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron, secures a porch rail. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Erica Isaacson



Army Brig. Gen. Gregory Zanetti (left) and Army Sgt. Brandin Schumann, both with the New Mexico Army National Guard, hold steady their state's flag while diving near Phillip's Dive Park Saturday, Dec. 20. These Guardsmen – and four others not pictured – showed the state flag as they neared the end of their deployment here with Joint Task Force Guantanamo. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Pfc. Eric Liesse