

# THE WIRE

A JTF Journal

**A message to the children**

Inspirational speaker addresses students

**Supporting the mission**

NAVSTA provides for the JTF



# Ultimate sacrifice

**Air Force Senior Master Sgt.  
Tim McConnell**  
474<sup>th</sup> ECES Operations NCOIC

What does sacrifice mean to you?

For years, sacrifice meant to me getting up early for work, or spending a hard earned weekend at unit training assembly. Recently, I was reminded by an old friend what sacrifice really meant.

In 1991 while stationed in Diego Garcia, when shopping at the Navy Exchange, I ran across some Missing In Action (MIA) bracelets. Men and women who had sacrificed everything were now reduced to a name on a bracelet. However, while looking through them, I ran across a man who was from my home state. I felt a connection with that bracelet and instantly bought it. After I had been home for a few years and Internet became more accessible, I attempted to find as much information regarding this name on a bracelet, but to no avail. Eventually, my life went on, the bracelet became lost during moves, house cleanings and reorganizations.

A few months ago when I was cleaning out my home office, I discovered the bracelet and recalled my desire to find out what happened. Thanks to technological advancements, I was able to do just that. Let me introduce you to Master Sgt. Paul Jenkins.

Jenkins was born May 11, 1930 in McGehee, Ark. He joined the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War conflict. He became a pararescueman assigned to the 40<sup>th</sup> Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron. On June 30, 1970, the crew he was assigned to was dispatched to rescue a downed flight crew. Jenkins' crew consisted of five members aboard a Sikorsky HH53C "Super Jolly" helicopter. The orders were to fly into Laos for a downed and injured pilot. Two attempts were made by the HH53C to penetrate the area. Eventually it was hit by hostile fire, caught fire, went out of control and crashed. It was assumed that the entire crew was dead and no remains could be recovered.

In December 1992, a team from the Joint Task Force for Full Accounting traveled to the crash site of the HH53C. After surveying and excavating, human remains were recovered. On March 24, 1993, found were more than 120 bone fragments, a dental prosthesis and part of an ID tag. All items were turned over for examination. The dental prosthesis belonged to Jenkins and he was formally identified on March 24, 1995.

No longer is he just a name on a bracelet. He is now a name on the Vietnam Wall, Panel 09W – Line 105; a name along with 58,195 other names. Nor is he just a name on a wall. He is a definition of true sacrifice, along with the 58,195 names that are to the right, left, up and down from his name. He joined the Air Force to be there when others needed him and gave his life in the process. Thank you Jenkins for reminding people like me what sacrifice really means. Maybe someday I can return this bracelet to your family and thank them for the lessons it taught me. ☆



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### COVER:

Army Spc. Cory Garabedian, deployed with Joint Task Force Guantanamo's 115<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company, conducts random vehicle inspections at an entry control point, Dec. 2. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Cody Black

### BACK COVER:

Service members with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 25 assemble a large storage structure at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Dec. 2. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Emily Greene



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.



# Making waves

**MSST 91109 members patrol Guantanamo Bay performing daily maritime anti-terrorism and force protection duties in support of JTF Guantanamo, Dec. 9.** – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Pfc. Christopher Vann

## **Army Pfc. Christopher Vann**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

When the waters at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay start getting rough, and the waves make the boat rock back and forth, fear not; the Coast Guard Maritime Safety & Security Team 91103 Los Angeles/Long Beach is on the way.

Assigned to Joint Task Force Guantanamo, MSST 91103 is part of the Deployable Operations Group and has the responsibility of securing waterways in and around Guantanamo Bay.

The DOG establishes a single command authority to rapidly provide the Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, Department of Justice and other interagency operational commanders adaptive force packages drawn from the Coast Guard's deployable specialized force units.

The DOG's purpose is to develop systems and processes for standardized training, equipment, organization, planning, and scheduling of rapidly deployable specialized forces to execute mission objectives in support of tactical and operational commanders.

Coast Guard Cmdr. Charlene Downey, MSST91103 commander, sees this as an opportunity for the unit to implement training they have received and to grow closer as a team.

"We are accustomed to

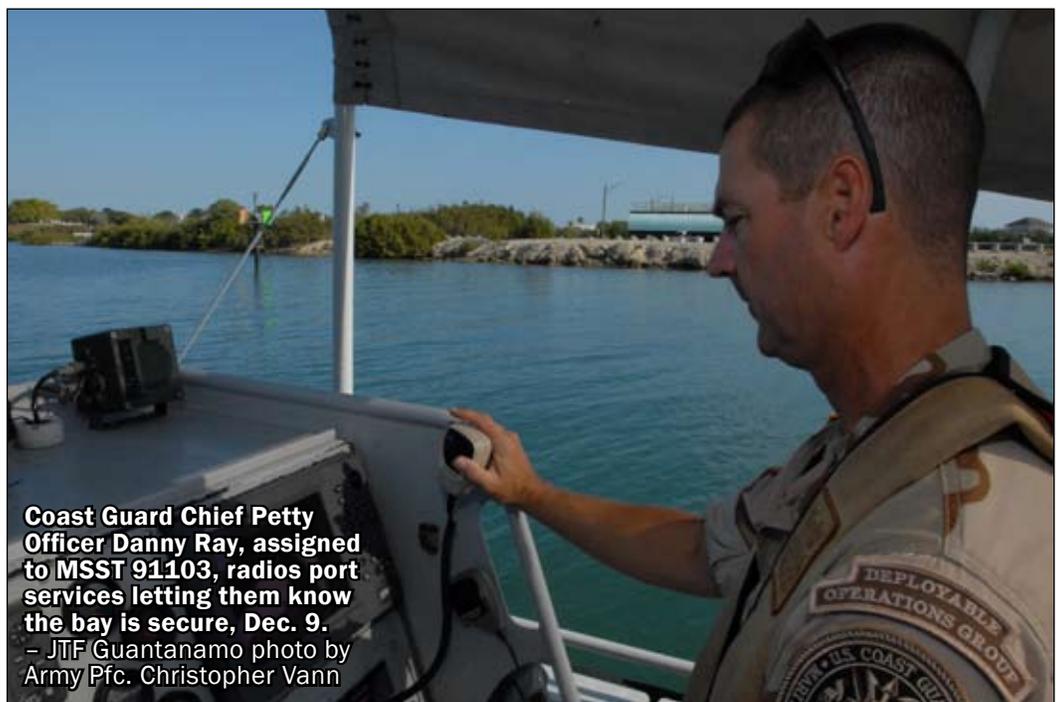
adjusting to various conditions and working with others," Downey said. "We don't feel that there will be too much pressure. We believe the transition into our watches will be seamless. I am sure that we will fall right in with the JTF.

"The unit has great expectations for the upcoming deployment," Downey continued. "We stress to the crew the importance of not only mission first, but completing the mission safely."

Downey is confident in the abilities of her unit, but remains vigilant to the needs of her Troopers.

"We know that our biggest challenge is to keep our team focused on the mission and to stay healthy throughout our deployment," Downey said. "We are also aware of our Guardians' needs to manage their work-life and the needs of their families back home, and we are always here to support them in any way we can."

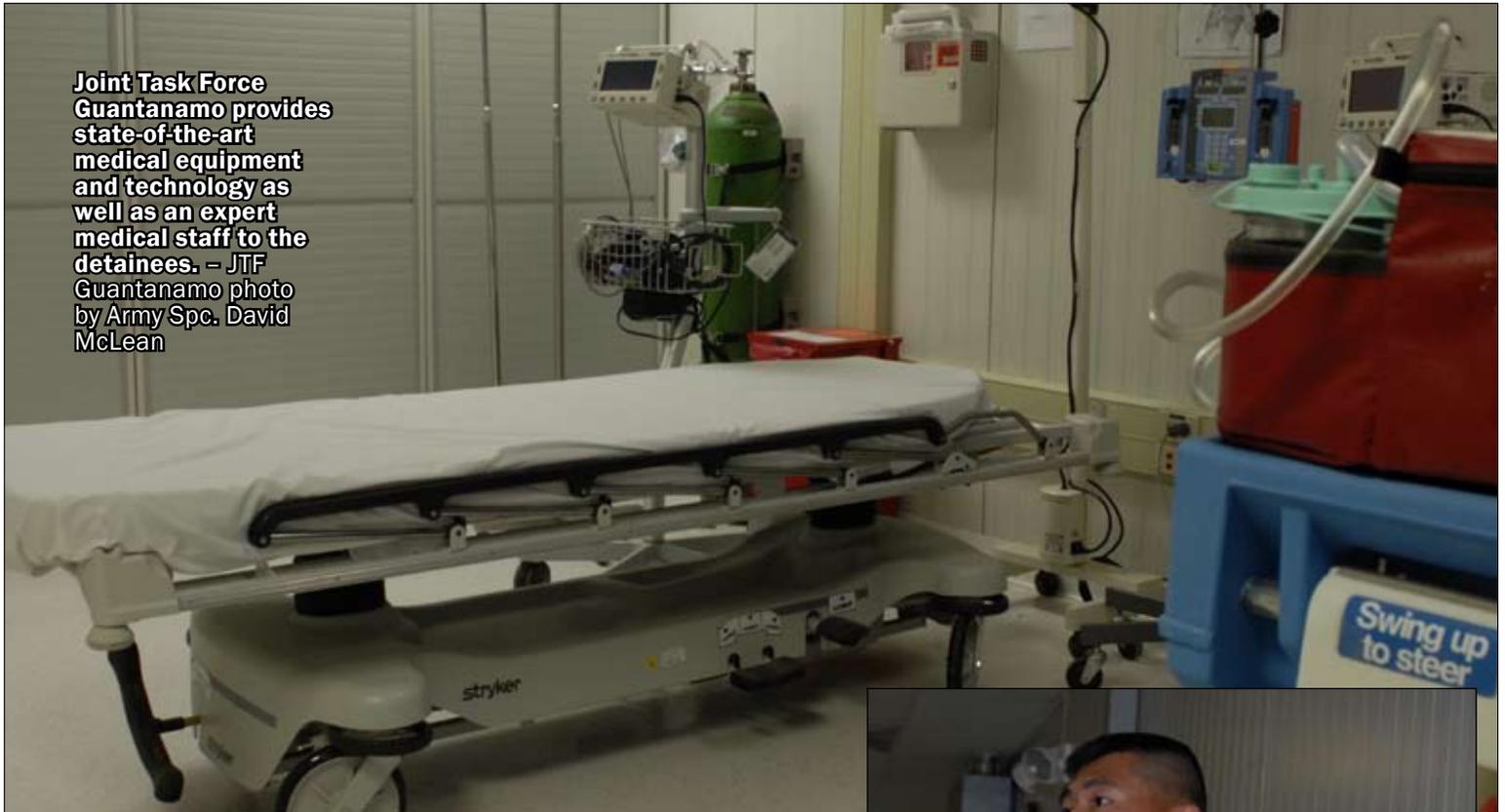
Even while being separated from their loved ones stateside, MSST 91103 is still amongst family. "The best thing about this deployment," Downey said, "is that it has brought us closer as a team, while here." ☆



**Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer Danny Ray, assigned to MSST 91103, radios port services letting them know the bay is secure, Dec. 9.**

– JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Pfc. Christopher Vann

**Joint Task Force Guantanamo provides state-of-the-art medical equipment and technology as well as an expert medical staff to the detainees.** – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. David McLean



# Quality medical care for detainees

**Navy Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Edward Flynn**  
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

For Troopers at Joint Task Force Guantanamo, providing exceptional medical care to detainees is the consistent with the JTF mission of ensuring a safe, humane, legal and transparent care and custody of all detainees.

“As professionals, our medical care does not discriminate,” said one Joint Task Force medical doctor. “Under the Geneva Conventions, we are required to provide access to quality medical care. As medical professionals, we take that responsibility seriously.”

Detainees are treated at a dedicated medical facility with state-of-the-art equipment and technology with an expert medical staff of more than 100 personnel. The staff provides all aspects of quality medical care to the detainees, regardless of their disciplinary status.

“We want the world to know that the detainees are provided quality care. It is also our responsibility to ensure this information is provided to the public and international community,” another Joint Task Force medical professional added.

Detainees have immediate access to a wide-range of medical care including skilled nurses, doctors and physical

therapists. Each detainee receive’s a comprehensive physical and dental examination upon arrival at JTF. Regular medical follow-up treatment is also available for each detainee. On-going medical appointments ensure each detainee is current on all immunizations. Trained nurses and doctors conduct nutritional supervision for the detainees; ensuring daily feedings are properly administered for some of those who refuse to eat.

Detainees have also received quality medical care for wounds sustained prior to detention.

More serious medical conditions can be treated at the naval base hospital operating room and intensive-care unit. Specialists are available to provide care at GTMO for any medical needs that exceed the capabilities of the base hospital.

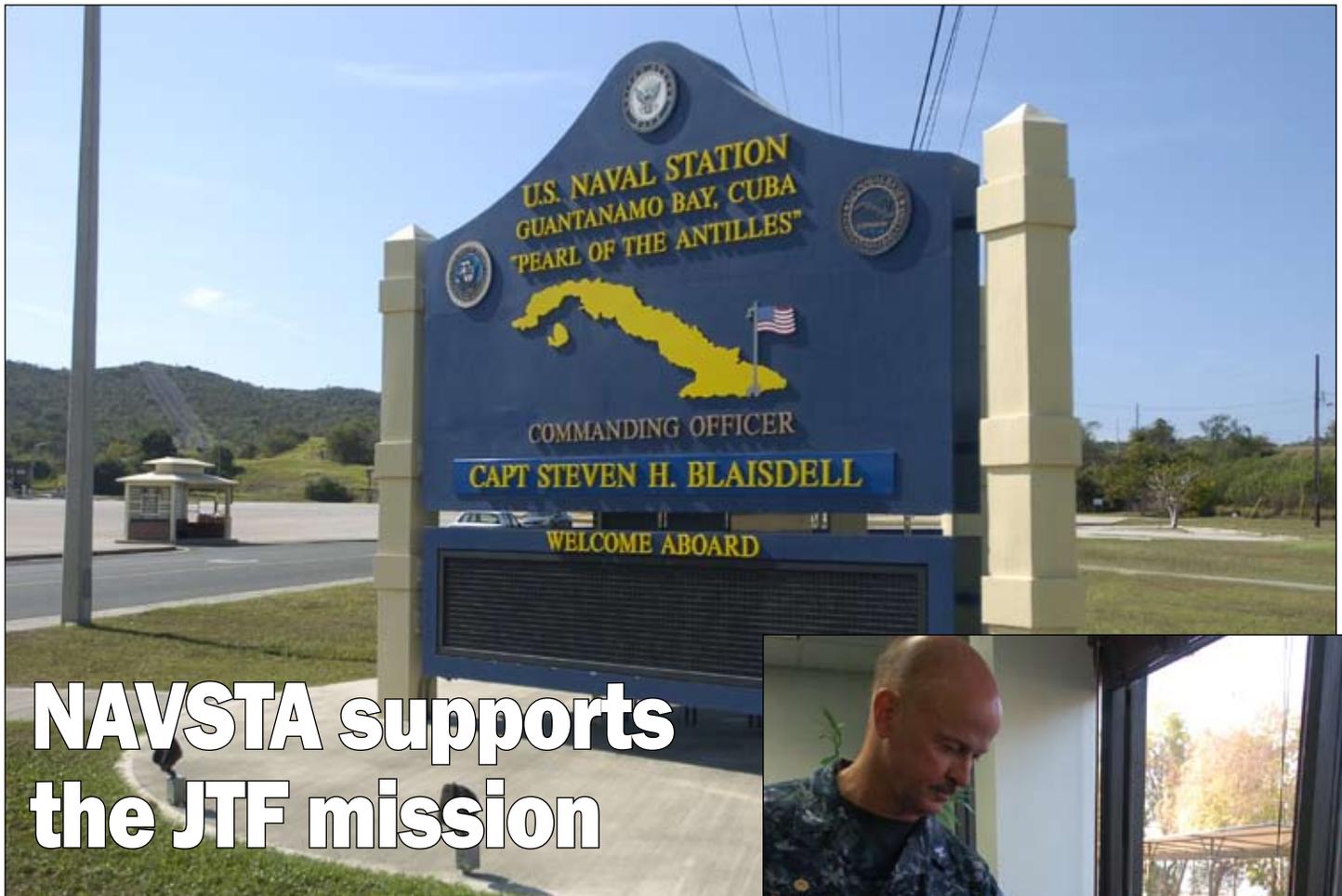
Mental health professionals from the Behavioral Health Services ensure mental health care is available for detainees. From depression to anxiety, detainees have immediate access to mental health professionals. In addition, a professional



**A Joint Task Force Guantanamo medical staff member briefs distinguished visitors about the quality medical care of the detainee hospital.** – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Tiffany Addair

pharmacy staff is able to fill needed prescriptions. “The medical team works hard to ensure all detainees receive the best care possible, regardless of their legal status,” said a JTF doctor. ☆

*\* Editors note: Troopers names have been omitted to ensure operational security and the safety of the medical personal.*



# NAVSTA supports the JTF mission

**Army Spc.  
April de Armas**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Troopers receive orders all the time to deploy to Naval Station Guantanamo Bay to support Joint Task Force Guantanamo. When this happens, Troopers may wonder about the history of the naval station or what purpose it serves outside of being home for the detention camps located at the base.

Constructed in December 1903, the base was established to serve as a strategic logistics platform for the Navy's Atlantic Fleet. Some may not realize Naval Station Guantanamo Bay is the oldest U.S. military base located outside the United States and is the only one of its kind located in a Communist country.

"We are the only naval base in the Southern Command and we serve as a place for ships to refuel and replenish supplies," said Navy Capt. Steven Blaisdell, the base commanding officer. "We also provide ranges for various training, both on the leeward and windward sides of the base."

In 1991, the naval station received more than 34,000 Haitian refugees during an upheaval in Haiti. So, the naval station expanded its mission to provide humanitarian relief for migrants.

"Although we don't have many migrants left on island, we do have offices set up on the leeward side to accommodate any further migration relief efforts if needed in

the future," Blaisdell said.

The permanent residents living at the naval station are a diverse group to include Navy and Marine Corps personnel, civilian contractors, Cuban migrants, and third country nationals contracted from Jamaica and the Philippines who provide support for everyday operations that keep the base running.

"We are essentially a self-contained city here with various restaurants, a sports complex, bowling alley, schools and shopping at the Navy Exchange," Blaisdell said. "We make our own water and a barge brings in any and all supplies we may need a few days a week, from the States."

The JTF became a resident of Naval Station Guantanamo Bay in 2002 when detainees started arriving from the War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

"Our relationship with the JTF is that of a tenant, it has been a positive experience since joining our residency here," Blaisdell



**Navy Capt. Steven Blaisdell, the NAVSTA commander, points out the fence line that divides Naval Station Guantanamo Bay from mainland Cuba. The naval station has been at the Southeastern corner of Cuba since 1903. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. April D. de Armas**

said. "We provide them with all the things needed for everyday living such as electricity, water and housing."

Army Col. Bruce Vargo, the Joint Detention Group commander over the

See **NAVSTA/12**

# Spear bends to Pulse

**Army Spc.  
David McLean**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Not since elementary school has kickball been so exciting to watch as the top-seeded Naval Hospital GTMO Pulse defeated the sixth-seeded Joint Task Force Guantanamo Public Affairs Office Tip of the Spear 8-5 during the Morale, Welfare and Recreation season-ending kickball tournament at Cooper Field on Dec. 8, 2009.

The teams were trading scoring early and worked to a 4-4 tie in the 5<sup>th</sup> inning. Left fielder Adam Spacher delivered a base-clearing blast that was the eventual game winner.

"It's great to be the clutch guy every once in a while," Spacher said. "It has been 16 years since 4<sup>th</sup> grade, but I can still deliver."

The Pulse breezed through the regular season accumulating only one loss. Coach Nathan Cobler noted that teamwork and cohesiveness gave them the edge in the league.

"The commitment and the same people showing up every time helped us," Cobler said. "We built cohesion and we all worked well together. Some of us never knew each other before, but now we have a tight little community."

The community and team concept also played into the Tip of the Spear, as interim head coach Chris Vann rallied his team from



**Tip of the Spear third baseman Shane Arrington races to the bag to force a Pulse player out during the MWR kickball tournament championship game Dec. 8, 2009. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Tiffany Addair**



only having two wins in the regular season to playing in the championship game of the tournament.

"We were working together, and we were not going to quit," Vann said. "We stuck together, had a game plan and took it as far as we could."

The game plan for many of the teams involved bunting, sacrifice fly-balls and tenacious defense. Each of the six league teams developed strategies throughout the season to make a run for the Captain's Cup.

"I don't think I'd ever put tough game and kickball in the same sentence, but you have to have situational awareness," Cobler said. "It is about knowing where your runners are and where you want to put the ball."

The ping of the large rubber ball will now fall silent for another season, but this final game leaves great competition in the memory of the players.

"The whole game was a highlight to me, even the one play that we lost on," Vann said.

For more information on MWR activities, call the sports office at ext. 2113. ☆

# For some reason, they sparkle like diamonds

**Navy Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class  
Joshua Nistas**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Continuing with the love story that started in the movie “Twilight,” “New Moon” tells of the romance between vampire Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson, “Twilight,” “Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire”) and human Isabella “Bella” Swan (Kristen Stewart, “Twilight,” “Adventureland”), which feels like a reenactment of Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet.”

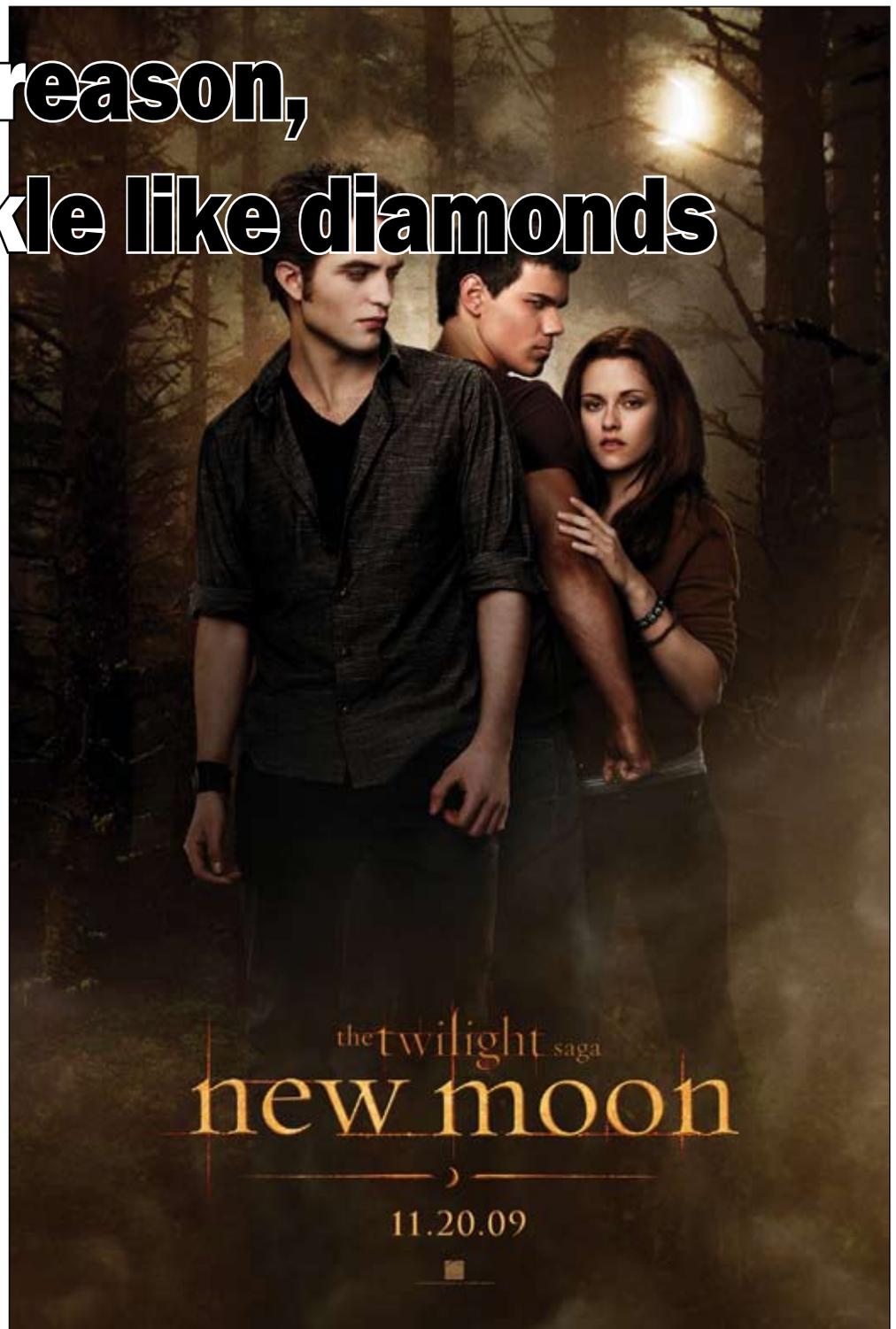
This movie broke the box office record for biggest one-day gross income with a whopping \$72.7 million in the United States, which was formerly held by the movie “The Dark Knight.”

Starting things off, I want to say that I’m an avid reader, and I read the Twilight series before any of the movies were released; in case anyone is wondering why I sat through this movie whose target audience is primarily teenage girls.

The movie was good in that it followed the book pretty well. Most books-to-movie don’t really pan out well. There are problems whenever someone decides to make a movie from a book, because the directors, producers and screenwriters have to figure out how to portray thoughts and feelings on the big screen without written words. The masterminds behind this movie did a good job, except for the fact that they showed Edward talking to Bella, and in the book it was just the voice of Edward that was haunting Bella.

There are some things I don’t agree with in the movie. First of all, in most vampire myths, they do not sparkle like diamonds in the sun. In the movies “Interview with a Vampire” and “Underworld,” both of which are two of the more popular vampire movies, vampires burn into ash when exposed to sunlight. In the Twilight saga, Edward is shown sparkling, faintly, as if his skin was made up of millions of diamonds. The girl sitting next to me at the downtown Lyceum theater would say “Sparkle, sparkle,” every time this would happen, which was the only good thing coming from this, as it made me laugh every time.

Also, the movie tried to make the actors look undead, pale and lifeless. This affect doesn’t really work when Pattinson is shirtless, as the producers forgot to continue



to the chest with the makeup. It’s kind of obvious that they weren’t thorough.

It seemed like both main male characters had to have at least one scene where they removed their shirts to show off that they worked out. It was ridiculous to see teenagers running around in the woods with only shorts on.

The Lyceum was actually filled more than when the movie “2012” played, so if any guy is thinking about seeing this movie, you probably won’t lose too many “man points” as long as it’s at Guantanamo

Bay. Even though I did argue most parts of the movie, it was still entertaining, if for nothing else than to laugh at all the parts where they were trying to appeal to the teenage girls.

**PG-13**  
**130 minutes**

**Rating:** ★★★★★☆



# 2009 Holiday Parade Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

JTF Guantanamo photos by  
Army Spc. David McLean

Naval Station Guantanamo Bay puts on its own tradition with lights, decorated vehicles and onlookers lining the streets enjoying the festivities.

Twenty-one floats were on display with a number of Joint Task Force Guantanamo and NAVSTA Troopers participating as the holidays are in full swing this time of year.





# Protecting America for 373 years

**Army Spc.  
Tiffany Addair**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Happy birthday, National Guard!

The National Guard celebrates its 373<sup>rd</sup> birthday Dec. 13, as it has since 1636. The oldest element of the United States Armed Forces and one of the nation's longest enduring institutions, the National Guard can trace its history back to the English colonies in North America.

Thousands of guard members are serving in harm's way in Iraq, Afghanistan and here at Joint Task Force Guantanamo as the National Guard continues its historic dual mission. Its mission is to provide the states trained and equipped units to protect life and property, while also, providing the nation ready and able units to defend the United States and all of its interests.

After helping win the Revolutionary War, writers of the Constitution gave power to Congress to "provide for organizing, arming and disciplining the militia." Despite the authorization to disband the National Guard, our Founding Fathers decided to keep the militia and as a result, the National Guard is still a dual state-federal force.

In the early 1900s, national defense legislation ramped up the role of the National Guard as a reserve component for the U.S. Army. During World War I, the guard composed 40 percent of the fighting force in France. Following that, the guard was the first to deploy and fight in World War II. After the National Defense Act of 1947 was enabled, aviation units split from the National Guard and

the Air National Guard came to fruition. The National Guard has proudly fought in every America War from the 1600s to present operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Currently, Army National Guard forces make up as much as 50 percent of the support in Operation Iraqi Freedom while also maintaining readiness to respond to natural disasters in the states.

The National Guard is more frequently called upon to respond to crises. After the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, more than 50,000 guardsmen were called up by both their state and the federal government to supply security at home and fight terrorism abroad.

Following hurricane Katrina, the National Guard responded with one of the largest and quickest responses to a domestic disaster in history, calling up more than 50,000 guard members to support the Gulf States.

Individuals join the National Guard for different reasons. Some out of a sense of duty to former and fellow guardsmen.

"I joined the Army National Guard out of service to my fellow countrymen," said Army Spc. Marvin G. Robinson, a Soldier deployed with the 115<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company of the Rhode Island Army National Guard. "My grandfather and uncle were guardsmen, so it is my way of backing them up."

With the duality of the National Guard mission, members have both a civilian and military duty to balance, which is expressed in the below national guard motto.

"Civilian in peace, soldier in war...the stricken have known the comfort of my skill. I have faced forward to the tornado, the typhoon and the horror of the hurricane and the flood. I saw the tall towers fall — I am the Guard!" ☆





# Drawn to hope

**Author, illustrator and speaker Trevor Romain visited W.T. Sampson High school and talked to students about deployment – interested in how they cope with their parent's absence. Romain filmed the event to use for a portion of an upcoming educational DVD that focuses on deployments called, "With You All the Way." – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Staff Sgt. Emily J. Russell**

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

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Children worry. When a parent is deployed, it's not only the adults who have new problems to deal with.

While adults deal with the day-to-day realities of having to carry on a normal life during a deployment, sometimes the small – yet significant – voice of a child needs to be heard.

Adults try to teach children to deal with their problems but often teach them to push their problems away by telling them not to worry or be sad, explained Trevor Romain, author, illustrator and children's motivational speaker who travels world-wide to deliver his message of hope, inspiration and self-help to children, relating to them in a way they can understand.

"As we get older, we tell kids what we think they need to hear instead of listening to them," Romain said.

Romain recently visited Guantanamo Bay to talk to children at W.T. Sampson Middle School and High School and to film portions of his upcoming educational DVD.

Romain warmed up his audience, relating to listeners by sharing his own past.

"I was dyslexic and I was in special [education]," Romain revealed. "I think I'm the only dude in the world who failed an aptitude test."

Through storytelling of his experiences of being bullied as a child, to working with terminally ill children and working in child

refugee camps in Africa, Romain draws in the audience to deliver his message. His goal is to empower children to understand their feelings and feel comfortable expressing them.

"When kids realize I'm not trying to preach or lecture [to] them, they relax and read my sincerity," Romain said.

Romain's curriculum and messages have impacted public and private schools nationwide and, within the last few years, have been recognized by the Department of Defense as a tool to reach out to military children.

The DoD identified a correlation between children's behavior and the deployment cycles of military service members and took measures to support military families by asking Romain to develop a curriculum to help military children identify and understand their feelings, words and actions.

"We saw how troop movements would affect [negative behavior] within DoD schools and needed Trevor to develop something specific for the military family," said Lee Adelman, educational services facilitator for the Fleet and Family Support Center at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay.

"There are [service members] who have been deployed to Iraq five times and some children have lived through all five rotations," Adelman added. "These kids are unique because they're kids of parents who are away fighting a war on terrorism."

Romain's curriculum addresses subjects like homework, bullying, divorce and even death by helping children identify

and express the things that stress them and cause them to act out. For the military child, he helps them deal with deployment grief.

Romain explained that the lessons come with a journal to encourage children to write about their feelings or draw a picture or doodle that represents something significant in their life, giving them an outlet instead of keeping it inside.

"Trevor was amazing, his connection with the students and ability to share his experiences with the kids helped them channel their emotional strife in a positive way," Adelman said.

As a result of Romain's curriculum, DoD schools noticed a drastic decrease in negative behavior, according to Adelman.

"I had a child come up to me and tell me, 'Mr. Romain, you changed my life. I used to be a bully but I listened to your talk and watched your video and now I'm not a bully anymore and I feel better!'" Romain said.

"If a child can walk away with knowledge about how to deal with grief or bullying, I've made a difference," said Romain. "I want to help kids reach inside and find the courage to tackle what comes their way."

"Don't skirt around the sadness," Romain continued, "confront it, be in it and grow from it."

Romain's books, DVDs and other educational materials can be found at [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com), as well as at his company's Web site, [www.trevoromain.com](http://www.trevoromain.com). ★

# Supporting the JTF mission

NAVSTA from 5

JTF detention facilities for the last two and a half years says he has the upmost respect for the Navy and their way of life.

"I have never lived on a Navy base," Vargo said. "The base here is beautiful and the JDG is very indebted to Capt. Blaisdell and his guard force for their support of our mission."

Meetings between the JTF commander, Navy Rear Adm. Thomas Copeman, and the naval station commander regularly take place.

"Rear Adm. Copeman and I meet at least twice a month to discuss what is needed for the Troopers and the mission as well as any concerns that might arise as the JTF carries out their mission," Blaisdell said. "The impact on the naval station as a whole has been a positive one and we want to continue the great relationship and friendship we have developed over the years."

Regardless of pending questions about the longevity of the JTF mission and its



**Bulkeley Hall serves as headquarters for Naval Station Guantanamo Bay. Residents of the naval station come here for various services offered by the command.** – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. April D. de Armas

stay at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Troopers can rest assured the naval station will still be here supporting its fleet and all other military services long after the JTF has packed its bags and left.

"Before JTF arrived and after the JTF is gone, we will continue to provide

the training opportunities, migrant operations and services to our military ships as we have before," Blaisdell said. "We are proud to continue service to our country and our Navy for as long as we are needed here." ☆



## FIRE SAFETY



**Have a plan and practice it. A fire drill can help you practice leaving your building quickly and safely.**

**Use a fire extinguisher to put out small fires. You can also use water if the fire is not electrical or chemical. Do NOT try to put out a fire that you can't control.**

**If there's a fire that is too big to put out, leave the building immediately. You might not have much time before the fire spreads, so don't even stop to call 911. Once outside and safe, You can use a neighbor's phone or a cell phone.**

**If your clothes catch fire, do NOT run. Drop to the ground, cover your face with your hands and roll back and forth until the fire is put out.**

**If there is smoke in your house, cover your nose and mouth with a small moist cloth and stay low to the ground as you're leaving.**





## Sparks fly

**Air Force Master Sgt. Roy Wann, a member of Arkansas Air National Guard's 188<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing, deployed to Joint Task Force Guantanamo's 474<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron, welds two fence poles used in the construction of a soccer goal for detainees inside the Camp 6 recreation yard. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Cody Black**

## Boots on the Ground

*by Navy Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Justin Smelley*

**What is your favorite Christmas present?**

**Navy Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class  
Tori White**



**"Ipod Nano, because it was my first MP3 player."**

**Navy Lt. Jonathan Ryan**



**"My favorite present was my blue 'big boy' bike, because it made me feel grown up."**

**Navy Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class  
Megan Rascoe**

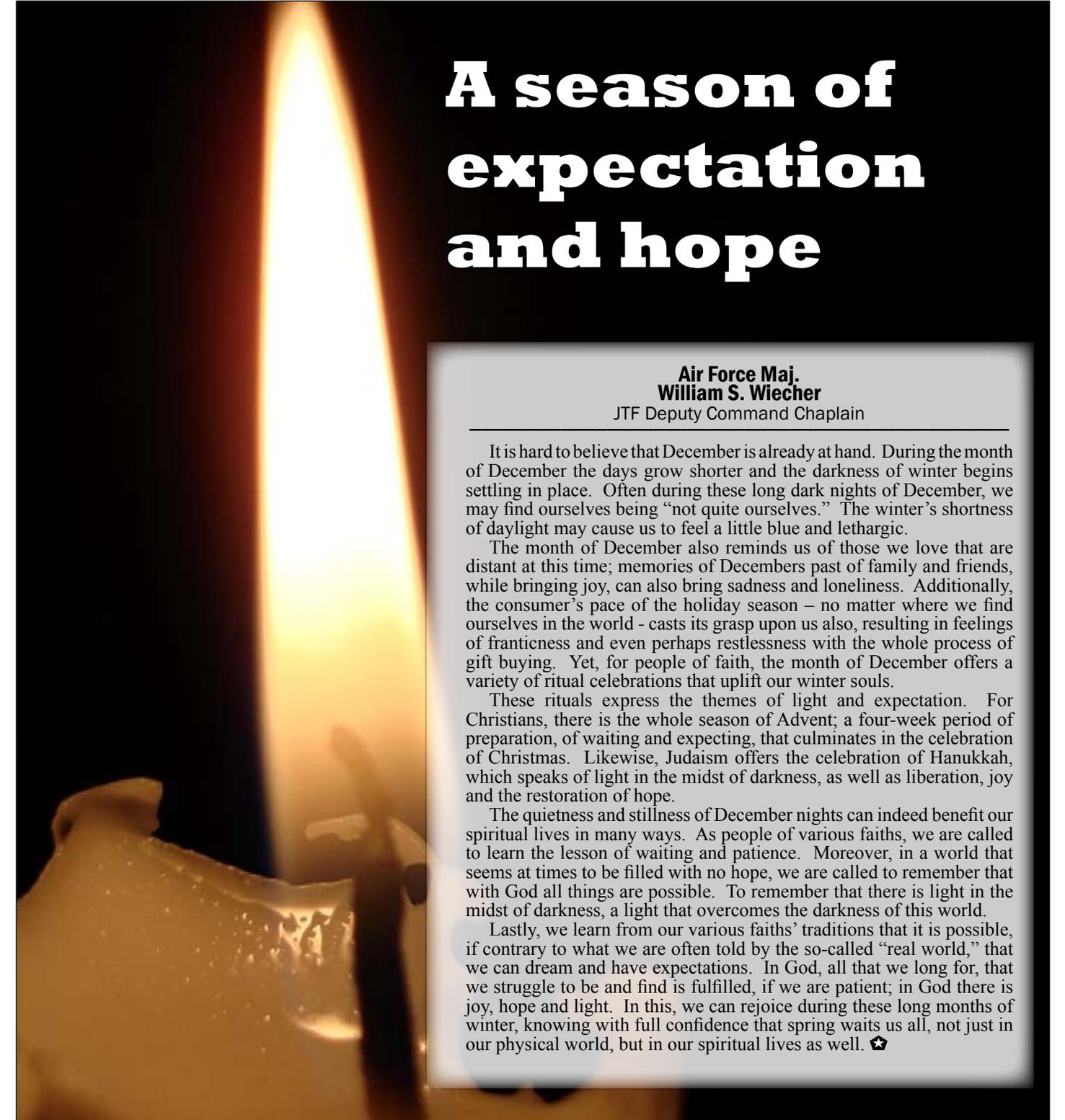


**"Money, because you can buy whatever you want, and it's hard to return gifts down here."**

**Army Spc. Joseph Pine**



**"Ipod Touch, because it can do everything and prevents boredom."**



# A season of expectation and hope

**Air Force Maj.  
William S. Wiecher**  
JTF Deputy Command Chaplain

It is hard to believe that December is already at hand. During the month of December the days grow shorter and the darkness of winter begins settling in place. Often during these long dark nights of December, we may find ourselves being “not quite ourselves.” The winter’s shortness of daylight may cause us to feel a little blue and lethargic.

The month of December also reminds us of those we love that are distant at this time; memories of Decembers past of family and friends, while bringing joy, can also bring sadness and loneliness. Additionally, the consumer’s pace of the holiday season – no matter where we find ourselves in the world - casts its grasp upon us also, resulting in feelings of franticness and even perhaps restlessness with the whole process of gift buying. Yet, for people of faith, the month of December offers a variety of ritual celebrations that uplift our winter souls.

These rituals express the themes of light and expectation. For Christians, there is the whole season of Advent; a four-week period of preparation, of waiting and expecting, that culminates in the celebration of Christmas. Likewise, Judaism offers the celebration of Hanukkah, which speaks of light in the midst of darkness, as well as liberation, joy and the restoration of hope.

The quietness and stillness of December nights can indeed benefit our spiritual lives in many ways. As people of various faiths, we are called to learn the lesson of waiting and patience. Moreover, in a world that seems at times to be filled with no hope, we are called to remember that with God all things are possible. To remember that there is light in the midst of darkness, a light that overcomes the darkness of this world.

Lastly, we learn from our various faiths’ traditions that it is possible, if contrary to what we are often told by the so-called “real world,” that we can dream and have expectations. In God, all that we long for, that we struggle to be and find is fulfilled, if we are patient; in God there is joy, hope and light. In this, we can rejoice during these long months of winter, knowing with full confidence that spring waits us all, not just in our physical world, but in our spiritual lives as well. ✨

## 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.



# Message in a bottle

**Army Sgt.  
Emily Greene**

JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Many people know a story about a letter in a bottle, appearing on a beach or bobbing in the water, tossed into the sea in the hope that the right person may read it. Some people may even write their own letter and throw it into the vast ocean in the chance that someone will eventually come across it. However, very few have experienced success with this method of communication.

Navy Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Christopher Delacruz, a culinary specialist and personal chef for the Joint Task Force Guantanamo commander, is one of these few. His story begins with his early days as a Navy seaman aboard his first ship.

“I was assigned to USS Jarrett (FFG 33) when I first met Navy Cmdr. Thad Moyseowicz, my commanding officer at the time,” Delacruz said. “He was always carrying cases of empty bottles on board and I wondered what they were for.”

As it turns out, Moyseowicz was involved in a school project for the children at his sons’ elementary school.

“Each of their classmates gave me a letter, and, thrice daily, during our transit, I ‘mailed’ two bottles bearing a child’s message and Jarrett’s position at the time of ‘mailing,’ as well as their address,” Moyseowicz said.

Delacruz said he clearly remembers helping Moyseowicz carry the boxes of bottles onto the ship and watching him throw them overboard with the children’s letters inside. He said he never would have guessed what an impact his skipper would have on his future.

“Seaman Delacruz was the messenger of the watch at the quarterdeck. I think he

obtained permission from the officer of the deck and offered to help me,” Moyseowicz said. “I gladly accepted and he helped me lug the rest to my cabin.”

A few years later, Delacruz found himself aboard USS Benfold (DDG 65) off the coast of Melbourne, Australia. He said it was a difficult time for him as a young man and he often found himself looking for an outlet for his thoughts and feelings. It was during that time Delacruz said he remembered his first skipper and the boxes of bottles he had helped carry.

“I remembered my commanding officer’s messages in the bottles and thought it would be a good way for me to let out my thoughts,” Delacruz said. “So, I started to write letters and seal them in bottles. Whenever I had the chance I would toss them overboard and let the sea take them away. I never expected them to reach anyone else.”

However, one of the letters did reach someone else. Months later (now stationed in Japan), Delacruz received a letter in the mail with a return address he did not recognize. He said he opened it not knowing what to expect. As he read, he said he was dumbfounded.

“Dear friend much greetings, I wish to inform you that I am the one who found your letter in the bottle...”

“I could hardly believe it,” Delacruz said. “I had never expected any of my bottles to reach another person; it was just an outlet for me at the time. When I read that letter I was surprised and very excited.”

As Delacruz read he learned that Muthike Thiaka was a poor farmer in Kenya with a wife and eight children. Thiaka said he found the bottle in the Indian Ocean.

“I was just looking at the sea [to see] whether I could see anything which could help me, like timber, rope, or something else,” wrote Thiaka.

Delacruz said he read Thiaka’s letter over and over, thinking how amazing it was that his thoughts had reached someone so far away.

“That letter really made me think about myself, and also Muthike,” Delacruz said. “It changed the way I see things. All of my problems seemed so small in relation to his; in relation to the world. I realized how small I was.”

Delacruz said because of his experience, he now looks at life in a different light; he keeps the letter in a frame to remind him of life’s possibilities.

“Now I know that work is work, but at the end of the day you have to be happy. Every day I wake up and I am happy to be alive and living the life I lead,” Delacruz said.

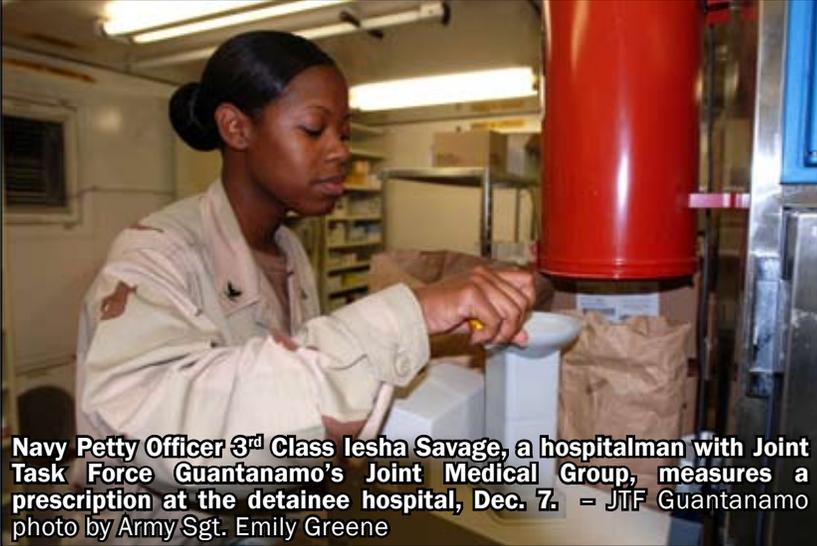
Delacruz said he credits much of his growth as a Sailor and a man to his former skipper.

“Moyseowicz and his bottles made a big impression on me as a young man. I learned so much from him and he always treated me and the rest of his crew with kindness. He taught me to think outside the box and to solve problems in a creative manner,” Delacruz said.

Moyseowicz said he remembers Delacruz with fondness and was pleased to hear his boxes of bottles helped a former Sailor of his when he needed an outlet for his frustrations.

“My time on USS Jarrett was the best, most rewarding, and most fun professional experience to ever happen to me. It was the highlight of my career and I owe that to Delacruz and his 219 mates on that vessel,” Moyseowicz said.

Now, Delacruz said he is no longer skeptical when he hears a story about a message in a bottle. Instead, he said he often keeps an eye out for any he may see bobbing in the waves. ★



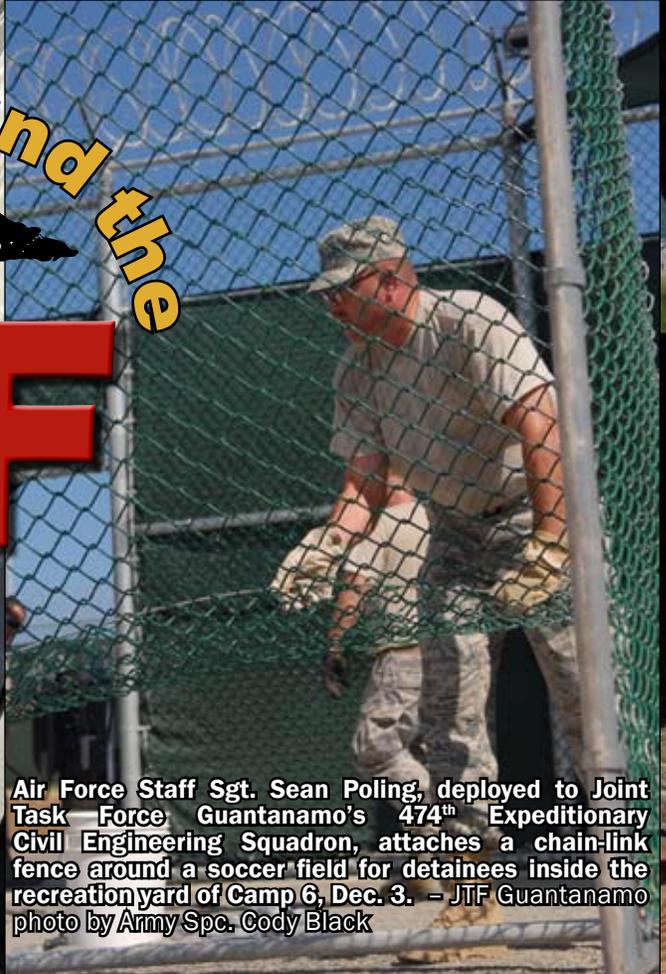
Navy Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Ilesha Savage, a hospitalman with Joint Task Force Guantanamo's Joint Medical Group, measures a prescription at the detainee hospital, Dec. 7. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Emily Greene



Around the



JTF



Air Force Staff Sgt. Sean Poling, deployed to Joint Task Force Guantanamo's 474<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron, attaches a chain-link fence around a soccer field for detainees inside the recreation yard of Camp 6, Dec. 3. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Cody Black