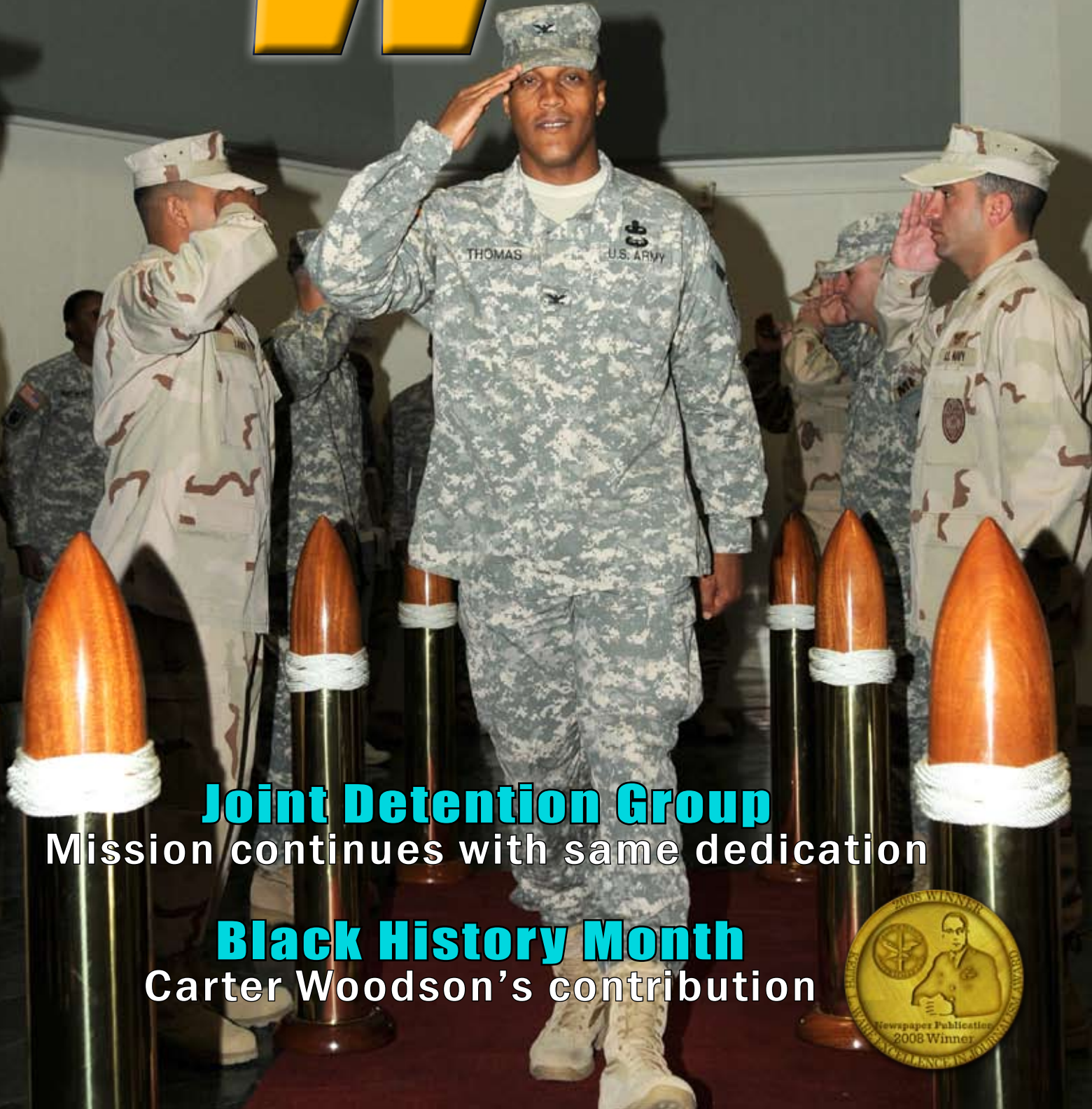


THE WIRE

A JTF Journal



Joint Detention Group

Mission continues with same dedication

Black History Month

Carter Woodson's contribution



On Courage

**Machinist's Mate Senior Chief
Jesus Magana**

Navy Expeditionary Guard Battalion

Many services use courage as a Core Value and accordingly, courage is the value that gives us the moral and mental strength to do what is right, even in the face of personal or professional adversity.

Some may think of courage as an act displayed only during an emergency, a casualty or on a battlefield. Courage is also a value that you can practice daily.

I use the analogy that courage is like a muscle that must be exercised. One must start with courage-building workouts, like doing the right things when no one is looking.

A few examples would include suggesting better ways of conducting business to your supervisor or calling out those who are not doing the right things, such as not following procedures or not maintaining grooming standards.

Try leading those who are causing your unit or company extra work. Once you exercise courage with your peers and immediate supervisors, it will be easy to apply when you come across a situation that requires it.

When I was a seasoned second class petty officer on board my second fast-attack submarine, we were introduced to our new chief. In the middle of his introduction, he glanced down and noticed a fireman's boot laces untied. Chief lost his composure and began yelling and cussing at the whole division about how screwed up we were.

This was the first of many yelling sessions. Sometimes he would muster us in the middle of the workday to give us a good yelling. This went on for months. Most of the division would tune him out completely and he eventually earned the nickname "old yeller."

One day I was on watch in the auxiliary machinery room and there was some miscommunication between chief and me. I had been following an operating procedure and chief wanted me to deviate. Before chief had the opportunity to yell, I told him I would not deviate from the procedure. Then I explained how no one in the division understood what he wanted.

I also said that he had been yelling at us for months and we didn't know what he yelled about because we all tuned him out. As I braced myself for what I thought was going to be one of his worst yelling sessions, he just looked at me, turned around and walked away.

About two hours later he walked back in and thanked me. He said no one had ever told him those things. From that moment on, chief stopped yelling at us and started communicating with the division, which resulted in the morale increasing immediately.

As I look back and think about that time, I realize that I was only able to confront my chief because I had been strengthening my courage "muscle" over the years.

You have to keep working the courage muscle to strengthen and condition it. When you need it, it will always be there because you have been strengthening it all along. Courage, exercise it daily! ★



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COVER:

Army Col. Donnie L. Thomas, Joint Detention Group commander, departs his change of command ceremony as Navy Boatswain's Mate Chief Petty Officer Stephen R. Pace pipes him ashore at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Feb. 9. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Tiffany Addair

BACK COVER:

Air Force Lt. Col. William Ferrel, Joint Task Force Command Chaplain, provides guidance and support to a Trooper attached to JTF Guantanamo, Feb 10. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Angela Ruiz

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.

Army Col. Bruce Vargo, Navy Rear Adm. Tom Copeman and Army Col. Donnie Thomas stand at attention during the JDG change of command ceremony, Feb. 9.
– JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Cody Black



JDG changes hands, welcomes new commander

Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Edward Flynn
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Army Col. Donnie Thomas relieved Army Col. Bruce Vargo as commander of the Joint Detention Group at a change of command ceremony held at the Windjammer ballroom on Feb. 9.

Navy Rear Adm. Tom Copeman, commander, Joint Task Force Guantanamo, presided over this time-honored military tradition which formally states to the officers and crew the continuity and the authority of command.

In his address, Copeman praised Vargo for his exceptional performance and leadership as JDG commander and

presented him with the Defense Superior Service Medal from the chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Copeman credited Vargo in establishing communal living for detainees, thus enhancing their quality of life while significantly improving working conditions and morale of JTF Troopers. Today, more than 80 percent of detainees live in communal housing, according to Copeman.

“Col. Vargo was an invaluable and remarkable leader who had a huge impact in carrying out the JTF mission,” said Copeman. “A humble man, Vargo continuously credited JTF Troopers for their remarkable professionalism in carrying out this mission. We will never see the likes of him again.”

During his last address as the JDG commander, Vargo thanked his staff and highlighted the professionalism of the JTF Troopers who served under his command for the past three years.

“I stand before you filled with unparalleled pride and admiration for the men and women of the Joint Task Force,” Vargo said. “The level of commitment, perseverance and passion that I have witnessed in the past three years of command will be forever burned into my memory. The magnificent performance of these young Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and civilians will be cast in stone.”

Vargo added he felt honored and privileged to be able to work in this joint environment in carrying out the JTF mission of conducting safe, humane, legal and transparent care and custody of detainees.

Under Col. Vargo’s leadership, the JDG

established a language program and art classes and also added satellite television for detainees. Additionally, the detainee library was enhanced.

While stressing transparency and accountability, Vargo worked closely with JTF staff in hosting U.S. congressional members, foreign government leaders, and members of the national and international media in providing tours throughout JTF detention facilities.

Troopers throughout the detention facilities praised Vargo for exceptional leadership and for understanding their concerns.

“Col. Vargo will leave a legacy of ensuring we always kept the mission in focus,” said Navy Command Master Chief Alfonso Rivera, command master chief of Navy Expeditionary Guard Battalion. “And he believed in taking care of Troopers and enhancing their quality of life.”

Other Troopers echoed similar comments about Col. Vargo’s leadership style.

“Col. Vargo was a true leader,” said Army Lt. Col. Alex Conyers, commander of the 525th Military Police Battalion. “A soldier’s soldier. With Col. Vargo, it was mission first, Troopers always.”

Incoming JDG commander Col. Donnie Thomas also praised Vargo for his successful tour as JDG commander. Thomas also welcomed the new assignment and huge responsibility in leading the JDG.

“I’ve been entrusted with the most precious responsibility that can be bestowed within our profession, the opportunity to lead these Troopers,” said Thomas. “I will give all to lead, coach and assist the Troopers of this great brigade, and to meet the challenges ahead.” ★



Army Col. Bruce Vargo shakes hands with Navy Rear Adm. Tom Copeman after receiving the Defense Superior Service Medal during the JDG change of command ceremony, Feb. 9. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Spc. Cody Black



Christopher Cappel, a weather observer for Naval Aviation Forecast Component, Guantanamo Bay, focuses on the Doppler radar as part of his daily duties, Jan. 27. The component is vital to GTMO's airfield as it continues to ensure safe missions by keeping pilots informed of the weather. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Michael Baltz

GTMO weather

**Army Sgt.
Michael Baltz**
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Those planning to leave Naval Station Guantanamo Bay have to get permission from their mother – Mother Nature, that is.

Every pilot who commands every aircraft is at the beck-and-call of the weather. Storms, lightning, wind – it all has to be compiled on a weather report that is reviewed by every flight crew. Stanford Johnson, the weather observer supervisor at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, said every airport has to have a weather observer.

“Our job is to give updates to pilots every hour,” Johnson said. “We warn them of adverse weather conditions.”

Johnson, Christopher Cappel and Richard Walker maintain non-stop weather operations. The trio, all prior service military weather observers, has been extremely busy since Operation Unified Response with the increase of air traffic for humanitarian assistance to Haiti. According to Johnson, with a 24/7 operations schedule, they stay busy through the night assisting pilots by distributing those weather reports.

The weather observers record data from the airport, from a Doppler radar and from visual observations. Their weather reports include several observations that pilots have to take into consideration.

And, those who use the weather reports appreciate the information.

“It is a requirement to obtain a weather

system report prior to take-off,” said Navy Lt. Joey Giordano, a pilot with Carrier Early Warning Detachment (VAW) 125. “Before we brief each flight, we come into the weather office and get the weather report. We know the cloud layers, surface winds and things like that.”

While pilots benefit from the data there are several other not-so-obvious implications of the weather observers’ work.

“We have fuel, weapons and people in boats out on the bay during all hours,” Johnson said. “We have to stay alert. It is important to keep people updated, so they can prepare for the worst and stay as safe as possible.”

Cappel said the weather component is also responsible for recording climate changes and is essentially the eyes and ears for the weather center in Virginia.

“April through November is our busy period with hurricane season and the wet season,” Cappel said. “During this time, we inform the base of warnings set by our forecasters at the Naval Aviation Forecast Center in Norfolk. While we do this year round, it is during these months that we see the most warnings due to thunderstorms.”

According to Johnson, weather constantly changes and people should stay alert.

“Weather is always different,” Johnson said. “Right now we are in an El Nino pattern. You never know what will happen. There is no such thing as steady weather, so



Stanford Johnson, the weather observer supervisor at GTMO, conducts a visual observation of the weather around the airport, Jan. 27. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Michael Baltz

we always have to stay alert.”

Regardless of the mayhem nasty weather could cause, Johnson has found his calling.

“I love weather,” Johnson said. “If you see me out and about, you can call me Mr. Weather.” ☆

Hospital ship Comfort works to expand care capability

Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class
Timothy Wilson

USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) Public Affairs

GUANTANAMO BAY, Cuba (February 12, 2010) – Personnel from USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) scouted possible helicopter landing zones near Cange, Haiti Feb. 8 that would expand the hospital ship's capability to transfer and receive patients injured in the earthquake that left hundreds of thousands of Haitians injured or dead.

Comfort is operating with 16 medical facilities near functional landing zones throughout the Caribbean nation in an effort to maximize efficient movement of patients. This also allows the ship's staff to admit new and urgent cases. Many of these sites have been open since Jan. 24, screening new patients and providing after care for those who have been discharged but still need care.

Before any site is approved for operation, though, a team of experts must ensure that there is a safe landing zone nearby, that

there is an adequate route from an already established medical facility to the landing zone, and that the medical facility has the capability to meet the long term after care needs of patients already treated aboard Comfort.

"Today, we are evaluating the medical and surgical capabilities of Cange Hospital," said Navy Cmdr. Zsolt Stockinger, a trauma care surgeon and on-site commander for assessing the hospital. "We are not going to operate on patients and just put them on the street."

While Stockinger met with medical representatives to assess their post-operative care capabilities, Navy Lt. Tracy Parsons, the air operations officer for Task Group 48, embarked aboard Comfort. She was surveying routes for the safe transfer of patients to and from the landing zone.

"My goal is to evaluate landing zones to make certain we can safely transfer patients," Parsons said.

Since Jan. 21, Comfort's staff has treated 741 patients and performed 644 surgeries.

Of these patients, 524 have already been discharged back to their homes or to sites like the one at Cange.

Cange is a small remote village located on the Central Plateau of Haiti, east of Port-au-Prince. Its general hospital is an American-funded organization administered by the non-governmental group Partners in Health. ★



Air crewmen and flight deck personnel unload medical relief supplies from an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter assigned to the Chargers of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 26, during a delivery to the Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20). Comfort is conducting humanitarian and disaster relief operations as part of Operation Unified Response after a 7.0 magnitude earthquake caused severe damage in and around Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Jan. 12.

- Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kristopher Wilson



Morale, Welfare and Recreation recently installed state-of-the-art athletic equipment at the G.J. Denich Gymnasium. The new athletic equipment includes at least 38 new pieces of "Life Fitness," Feb. 11. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Navy Mass Communication Specialist 1st Edward Flynn



GTMO gym upgrades to new equipment

**Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class
Edward Flynn**
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

It will be easier to keep those 2010 fitness-related New Year's resolutions alive as Morale, Welfare and Recreation installed state-of-the-art athletic equipment at the G.J. Denich Gymnasium, Feb. 11.

The new athletic equipment includes at least 38 new pieces of "Life Fitness." This top-shelf athletic equipment will also reduce the physical layout and maximize space in the designated area.

"This will be a great update to the gymnasium," said Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Woodrow Scott, a Joint Task Force Guantanamo Trooper and frequent user of the gymnasium. "This is certainly an incentive to utilize the athletic facility and it's a morale booster."

The MWR team continues to find ways

to improve the quality of life for people living on base. In addition to the Life Fitness equipment, this extreme MWR makeover will include new cardiovascular equipment and free weights. The staff at MWR is more than happy to extend a hand to those who use the facilities and equipment.

"One of the best parts of my job is seeing base personnel and civilians utilize our athletic services, equipment and programs," said Alec Culpepper, MWR fitness specialist. "With this new equipment, it is another opportunity for the Naval Station Guantanamo Bay community to participate in the many physical fitness programs we offer."

Culpepper also praised the MWR maintenance and athletic staff for their hard work, determination and professionalism in installing the new equipment. The newly installed athletic equipment affords

base personnel and other patrons the benefits of similar equipment found at state-of-the-art civilian athletic facilities.

"This is an outstanding upgrade to the old athletic equipment," said Kelly Powell, acting director of MWR. "It is long over due and I know it will improve the quality of life throughout the Guantanamo Bay community."

Powell also said MWR is planning to install new athletic equipment at the Marine Hill Gym. For more information on MWR activities, contact the sports office at ext. 2113.

MWR administers a variety of recreation, social and community support activities throughout Naval Station Guantanamo Bay. This mission also includes contributing to the retention, readiness, physical and emotional well-being of military personnel and civilians on base. ★



Brotherly love?

**Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class
Zachary Harris**
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

“Brothers” focuses on Sam and Tommy Cahill, played by Tobey Maguire and Jake Gyllenhaal, and their complex relationship with each other and their family.

Sam is a Marine Corps captain called to deploy to Afghanistan. His life is Norman Rockwell-esque. He has the ideal wife, Grace, played by Natalie Portman, two lovely children and a house with the white picket fence.

Tommy is an ex-convict who epitomizes the polar opposite of his brother. He stays out late, drinks heavily and relies on others to get him out of trouble.

This provides the source of conflict with not only his brother but his father, a former Marine who drank heavily when Tommy was growing up, as well.

The movie opens by showing the dichotomy between the brothers’ lives. Tommy is just being released from prison and Sam plays with his daughters to the delight of his wife. It sets the stage for the drastic paradigm shift that occurs later in

the movie.

While deployed, Sam’s helicopter transport is shot down by insurgents and he is captured, unbeknownst to the Marine Corps. He is subsequently held hostage and subjected to various forms of torture.

When given the news of his brother’s

fate, Tommy steps in to the lives of his nieces and sister-in-law as the “man of the house.” His mindset shifts to that of the responsible male figure in the house, essentially the exact opposite from the opening of the movie. He helps care for his brother’s children and lifts the spirits of Grace.

The movie also shows the horrors that Sam must endure as a captive living in a cave and being assaulted by his captors on a regular basis.

Sam also begins his role reversal from the level-headed, squared-away Marine to that of a mentally unstable victim of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Sam is eventually rescued and returns to his family. He becomes paranoid and uncomfortable around his children, unable to readjust to life away from battle.

This comes to a head in an explosive climax that puts the brothers at odds with each other.

Director Jim Sheridan, who also directed “Get Rich Or Die Tryin’” and “The Boxer” depicts the darkest elements of PTSD and its consequences to the families of the service members affected. ♡



JDG Change of Command



Army Col. Bruce Vargo relinquished command of the Joint Detention Group during a change of command ceremony held at the Windjammer Ballroom, Feb. 9. Army Col. Donnie Thomas assumed command and was piped aboard.

The ceremony included formations with personnel from the JDG, 525th Military Police Battalion, Navy Expeditionary Guard Battalion and Maritime Safety and Security Team 91103.

Following the ceremony, a reception was held at O'Kelly's Irish Pub where guests enjoyed refreshments and cake.



JTF Guantanamo photos by
Army Spc. Cody Black and
Army Spc. Tiffany Addair



Trooper of the Quarter

Army Sgt. Brandon Miller shares a smile as he receives a plaque from JTF Commander Navy Rear Adm. Tom Copeman, honoring his achievement as JTF Guantanamo's Sr. Trooper of the Quarter, Feb. 2- JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Athneil Thomas

**Army Sgt.
Athneil Thomas**
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

The Joint Task Force environment brings many new challenges for all service members involved, and some take those challenges head-on and find honor in service along the way.

Army Sgt. Brandon Miller took on all challenges and challengers, and earned himself the honor of Senior Trooper of the Quarter. The award was presented recently by JTF Commander Rear Adm. Tom Copeman.

Miller, the 525th Military Police Battalion, 189th MP Company's training NCO, won challenges at the company and battalion levels before being considered for the JTF nomination.

"It's pretty cool," said Miller of his achievement. "I had the opportunity to go and compete and represent my company and battalion, but I think its way awesome that I was selected from the entire JTF."

As a food service training NCO, Miller creates training events for his Soldiers, including getting the tools he needs and scheduling times and locations.

Miller has 6 1/2 years in his military career and is working toward making enough points to put a rocker under his

chevrons and attain the rank of staff sergeant – hopefully before he completes his tour at JTF Guantanamo.

Though he has proven himself to be an above-average NCO, Miller said one of his long-term goals is to leave the NCO corps and become a warrant officer with a specialty in food service.

Inspiration for success comes from many angles and sources, and Miller credits his former platoon sergeant from his days in the 82nd Airborne as his military role model. Miller said Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Hageman is a fierce leader and an exemplary mentor.

Even the recruiter from his hometown of Tampa had to shine to catch Miller's attention. Most military service recruiters battle for good recruits. Miller said the Army recruiters won him over when they went out of their way to fulfill his requests for enlistment.

But Miller said his most important role model is his late father.

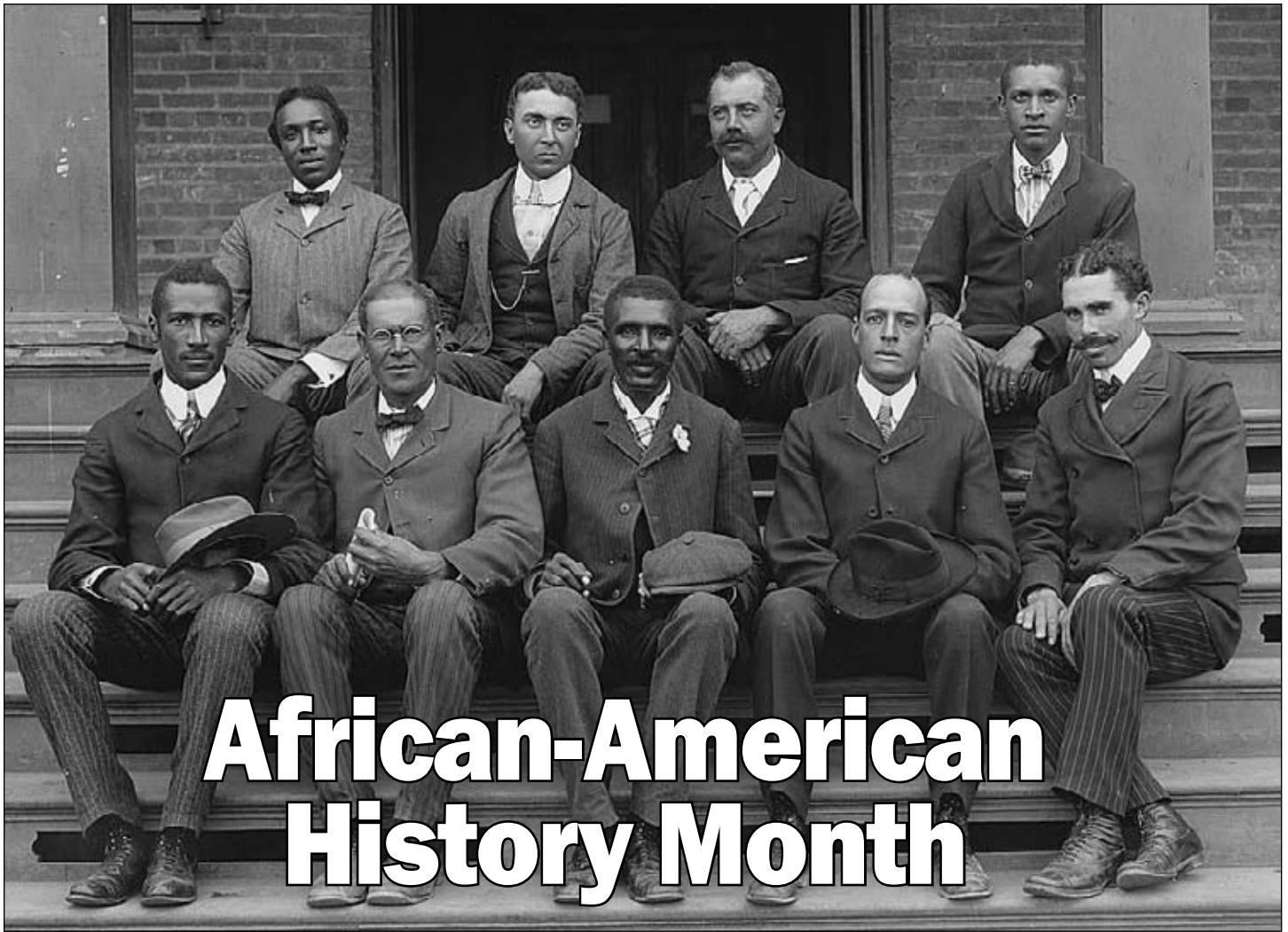
"I know if he were still here, he would be proud of my accomplishments," Miller said. Adding that each of his honors would have been that much more special if his father were around to share them with him.

The Junior Trooper of the Quarter for the last quarter of 2009 was also recognized

for outstanding performance from October through December. However, due to work assignment sensitivities, he opted to not be named for this story. Both Troopers of the Quarter received an Army Achievement Medal along with a JTF-GTMO plaque. ★



Army Sgt. Brandon Miller receives a Joint Service Achievement Medal as the newest JTF Guantanamo Sr. Trooper of the Quarter, Feb.2. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Army Sgt. Athneil Thomas



George Washington Carver (front row, center) poses with fellow staff members from Tuskegee Institute, Ala., in 1902. Carver was the lead of the agriculture department for 47 years at Tuskegee. – Photo taken by Frances Benjamin

Marine Lance Cpl.
Justin R. Wheeler
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

More than eight decades ago, black historian Carter G. Woodson founded a week-long celebration to recognize the accomplishments of African-Americans in the United States.

Today, Americans dedicate a month for African-American history. Troopers from the Joint Task Force Guantanamo are a part of this observance.

“It’s the celebration of what has happened,” said Army Pfc. Jazmine Primer, 115th Military Police Company. “And, it shows everyone that we are still moving forward.”

Woodson thought along the same lines when he conceived the notion of Black Awareness Week back in 1926.

While Woodson was schooling at Harvard, he noticed that the contributions of African-Americans were overlooked.

He was determined to make black history widely recognized.

After Woodson’s efforts, stories of

famous inventors like George Washington Carver, who discovered about 300 uses for peanuts, including peanut butter, or Benjamin Banneker, a famous astronomer and mathematician, became common in history textbooks nationwide.

“African-American history month

did his duty under the flag, whether that flag protected him or not,” said Edward A. Johnson, a Spanish-American War historian.

In the Civil War, African-Americans fought for the Union as free men but served primarily in segregated units.

It wasn’t until 1948 that military units were integrated.

“African-American History Month is significant to service members because the service is very diverse,” said Donato. “It has embodied diversity to effectively accomplish our mission.”

He said the diversity is apparent in the military among races, sexes and even branches of service that the JTF has employed to complete the mission.

Celebration for the month merely requires acknowledgement of African-American history, Donato said.

Donato said some of those ways a person can be educated on African-American history is by watching historical commercials, viewing posters or reading news articles. ☆

Let it be said that the Negro soldier did his duty under the flag, whether that flag protected him or not”

emphasizes the history and social significance of African-Americans,” said Navy Religious Programs Specialist 3rd Class Adam Donato. “Pay attention to the events and activities of Black History Month and take advantage of the opportunities to learn about the black history.”

In the military, African-Americans have served since the Revolutionary War. During this war, African-Americans served as slaves.

“Let it be said that the Negro soldier



Army Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Cardent, 118th Military Police Battalion, and Army Spc. Rafael Sanchez, 189th Company, 525th MP Battalion, move and organize supplies a K-span warehouse, Feb. 11. – JTF Guantanamo photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Angela Ruiz

Use a proper grip on the steering wheel. Your hands should be placed on opposite sides of the steering wheel.

Use turn signals. Turn signals give other drivers time to react to your maneuvers.

Obey posted signs and speed limits.

When driving on gravel, you must slow down.

Check behind your vehicle before you get in.

Place your right arm on the back of the seat and turn around so you can look directly through the rear window.

Do not depend on your rearview or side mirrors since you cannot see directly behind your vehicle.

Turn your steering wheel the direction you want the rear of the vehicle to go.

Back up slowly, your vehicle is more difficult to steer while you are backing up.

Whenever possible, use a person to stand as a spotter outside the vehicle as you are backing up.

VEHICLE SAFETY

BACKING UP?





From left to right, Navy Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Maria Blanchard, Army Staff Sgt. Shereen Grouby and Army Sgt. Michael Baltz swap the Florida state flag with the Virgin Islands flag and Navy Jack as part of a change of command within Joint Task Force Guantanamo's Public Affairs Directorate, Feb. 2. The Florida Army National Guard's 107th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment departed after a one-year tour at Guantanamo. Troopers from the Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, along with the 51st Public Affairs Detachment from the Virgin Islands Army National Guard relieved the 107th of its duties. – JTF Guantanamo Photo taken by Army Spc. Juanita Philip

Boots on the Ground

by Marine Lance Cpl. Justin R. Wheeler

What was your most memorable Valentine's Day activity?

Army Spc. Aaron Rogers



"My wife baked a cake for me in the shape of a heart."

Army Spc. Johanna Bravo



"My boyfriend in college sent me a dozen roses to me when I was in my history class."

Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Woodrow Scott

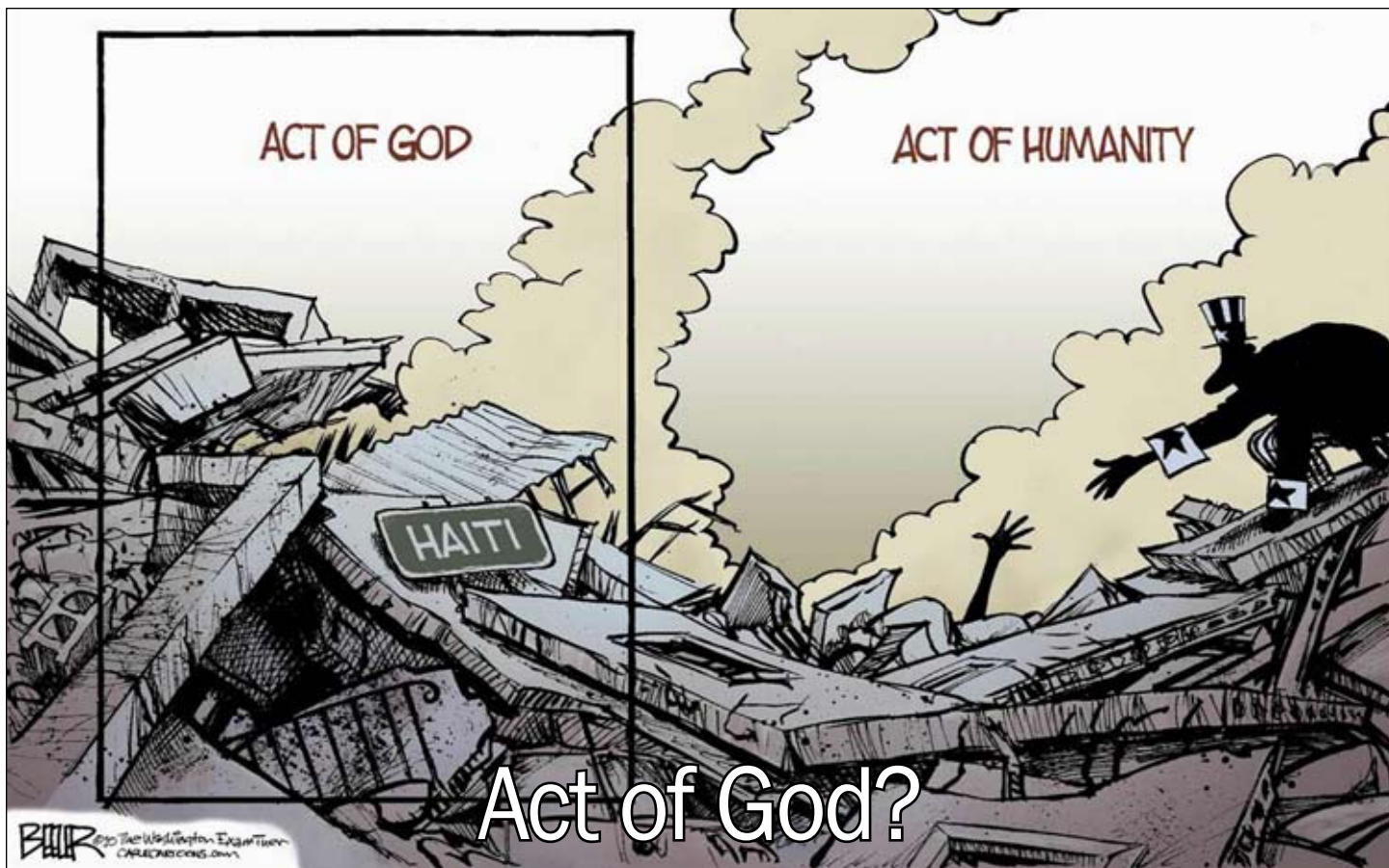


"Having dinner with a special friend. It was a romantic night."

Master-at-Arms 1st Class Laryl K. Helberg



"I received a teddy bear from my mother on my first Valentines Day after I joined the U.S. Navy."



Act of God?

**Air Force Lt. Col.
William Ferrel**
JTF-GTMO Command Chaplain

After the Haiti earthquake, an editorial cartoon in the Washington Examiner labeled the devastation there as an Act of God and contrasted that with the U.S. relief effort which was labeled Act of Humanity. Personally, I thought the cartoon was very disturbing, but it got me thinking about what people believe about God.

I don't think that anyone would disagree that beliefs about God vary widely. The various major religions of the world all have their distinctive view about who God is and what God is like. With all the different views and beliefs about God, isn't it obvious that not all of them can be right?

It has become common in our society to think that each person gets to decide for themselves what is true or right for them.

This may work for some areas in life but does not work when you are talking about any kind of objective reality. For example, whether you believe in gravity or not is irrelevant when you step off the roof of a tall building.

The main point I want to make is this: if God exists at all as an objective reality, then God is what God is regardless of what we believe. Our belief doesn't make God exist or cease to exist. Our belief doesn't make God cruel or compassionate. Our belief doesn't make God a "him" or a "her" or even an "it." If there really is a realm of spiritual reality and a being that we call God actually exists, then our belief, or lack of belief, doesn't affect the essential character or nature of that being.

We may have to agree to disagree on whether God exists at all or what God is like, but I cannot see how we can be intellectually honest and accept that belief systems with diametrically opposite views

of who God is can all be equally true and valid. If we accept the proposition that all belief systems are equally true or valid then all we have really done is to say none of them actually have any substance or reality. They are all just fairytales that some people need to make themselves feel better or sleep at night.

I know what I believe about God, but I am not so arrogant as to think I have it all figured out, or to think that I couldn't possibly be wrong about some things. If you examine the evidence and grapple with the questions and come up with a different conclusion than mine, then I have to respect that. If I was capable of fully understanding God he would truly be a very small god. Coming to a belief in God will always involve a certain amount of faith. But I want my faith to discover who God is, not just who I would like God to be. I hope your goal in life will be to seek what is true and real. ✪

GTMO Religious Services

Daily Catholic Mass
Mon. - Fri. 5:30 p.m.
Main Chapel
Mon. - Fri. 12:30 p.m.
Troopers' Chapel
Vigil Mass
Saturday 5:00 p.m.
Main Chapel
Mass
Sunday 9:00 a.m.
Main Chapel

Protestant Worship
Sunday 9:00 a.m.
Troopers' Chapel
Islamic Service
Friday 1:15 p.m.
Room C
Jewish Service
FMI call 2628
LORIMI Gospel
Sunday 8:00 a.m.
Room D

Seventh Day Adventist
Saturday 11:00 a.m.
Room B
Iglesia Ni Christo
Sunday 5:30 a.m.
Room A
Pentecostal Gospel
Sunday 8:00 a.m.
Room D
LDS Service
Sunday 9:00 a.m.
Room A

Liturgical Service
Sunday 10:00 a.m.
Room B
General Protestant
Sunday 11:00 a.m.
Main Chapel
United Jamaican Fellowship
Sunday 11:00 a.m.
Building 1036
Gospel Service
Sunday 1:00 p.m.
Main Chapel

GTMO Bay Christian Fellowship
Sunday 6:00 p.m.
Main Chapel
Ash Wednesday Mass
Wednesday 11:30 a.m.
Troopers' Chapel
Bible Study
Wednesday 7:00 p.m.
Troopers' Chapel
The Truth Project
Bible study
Sunday 6:00 p.m.
Troopers' Chapel

Army Col. Bruce Vargo, former commander of the Joint Detention Group, discusses details of the change of command ceremony with his executive aide, Electronics Technician 2nd Class Lane Houser.

- JTF Guantanamo photo by Navy Mass Communications Specialist 1st Class Edward Flynn



An aide for everything at JDG

**Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class
Edward Flynn**
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

Electronics Technician 2nd Class Lane Houser is no stranger to change and challenge after going from being a go-to person in training detainee guards to being the right-hand woman to the commander of the Joint Detention Group.

For her work as the executive aide to the JDG commander, Houser gets her 15 Minutes of Fame.

"I have learned a great deal about fairness, leadership and accountability," said the 25-year-old Houser, a Texas native. "Serving at JTF has given me the opportunity to work with exceptional and dedicated people."

Her journey to the prestigious position in the command hub took some interesting twists after she enlisted in the Navy in 2004. Trained as an electronics technician at Naval Station Great Lakes, Ill., Houser's first job was as a crew member of USS Philippine Sea (CG-58) and her overseas visits included stops in Spain, Italy, Greece and Bahrain. Following this deployment, Houser was stationed at Naval Station Mayport and worked as a technician fixing and installing communication equipment.

When she arrived at Joint Task Force

Guantanamo, Houser served for nine months as an assistant watch commander in Camp Delta, a position that put her in stressful conditions frequently.

"Houser responded without hesitation to several emergencies in difficult and dangerous situations which exposed her to physical danger and constant harassment," said Chief Master-at-Arms Robert Butcher, the leading chief petty officer of operations in Camp 6. "She is an expert in all facets of camp operations and has made use of her knowledge and experience whenever presented with any challenge."

At Camp Delta, Houser was responsible for leading and training more than 60 of the guard force in every area of detainee operations. In addition, she revised and updated all policies and job qualification requirements for Camp 6's medium security block operations, ensuring maximum safety for both guards and detainees.

Houser's attention to detail, a professional attitude and communications skills were a perfect transition into her role as the executive aide to Army Col. Bruce Vargo, outgoing JDG commander, who handed over command of the organization earlier this week. In a position that requires long hours, Houser is the person who makes sure the commander gets what he

needs, is where he's supposed to be and gets no surprises at the office.

"Through her hard work, positive attitude and determination, she has an outstanding impact supporting the JTF mission," Colonel Vargo said. "She has performed her duties in a brilliant and professional manner."

In addition to the administrative functions for which she is responsible, Houser also worked closely with JTF leadership on special projects and logistic support.

While her tenure as executive aide comes to an end, Houser had kind words for Col. Vargo and the other JTF leaders.

"I learned a great deal from my experience as executive aide and working inside the detention facilities," Houser said. "Although both are difficult assignments, I feel privileged to be part of this great command. This is an experience of a lifetime."

Houser will soon begin another chapter next month at her tour at Maritime Civil Affairs and Security Training Command, Little Creek, Va. As she begins to train the next executive aide to the JDG commander, Houser is proud of her association with JTF and her upcoming tour. "I'm excited to report to my next assignment. It is another dynamic command, much like JTF." 🇺🇸

Coast Guard Machinery Technician 2nd Class Robert Gasparas, Maritime Safety and Security Team 91103, turns pages in a book he is planning on reading to his nephew at the Joint Task Force chapel for the United Through Reading (UTR) program, Feb 6. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Air Force Staff Sergeant Angela Ruiz



Army Staff Sgt. Richard Dumont (left), S-6, 118th Military Police Battalion, Joint Detention Group, Sgt. Claudio Barbour (right) and Sgt. Rebeca Beltre (bottom), S-4, 118th MP Bn., JDG, lift a safe in their warehouse spaces at Camp America, February 8. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Marine Lance Cpl. Justin R. Wheeler

Around the

JTF



Monuments lie beneath the hot sun in the boneyard at Joint Task Force Guantanamo's Camp America, Feb. 9. - JTF Guantanamo photo by Navy Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Marcos T. Hernandez