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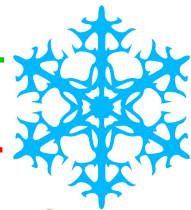
The WIRE

An award-winning
JTF journal

Beachy folks: Scott
Kirby plays GTMO

USS Oak Hill
departs

Season's Greetings!
from JTF Guantanamo



Have a safe and happy holiday!

Sincerely,
the Joint Task Force Guantanamo
Command Leadership

NEWS FROM THE BAY

Traffic advisory

There will be a temporary road closure at 4th Street off Sherman Avenue from Dec. 27 to Jan. 2. Drivers must take a detour through 3rd Street to get back to 4th Street.

Lionfish Derby Challenge

Hit the beaches on Guantanamo Bay at 6:30 a.m. on Jan. 21 for the Lionfish Derby Challenge. Join the competition with a donation of \$20.

Prizes will be given for biggest lionfish, smallest lionfish, most lionfish caught and other categories. The scoring station will be open from 2 p.m. to 4:40 p.m. at the Marina. Money donated will go toward the Seabee Ball.

For more information, call Lt. Jg. Andrew Maughn at 4805.

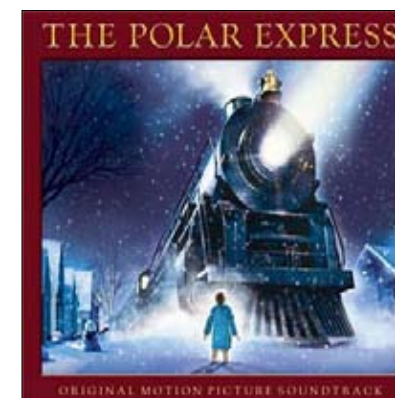
Post office closure

The Camp America post office will be closed Dec. 26, 31 and Jan. 2. Make sure to plan your post office errands accordingly.

Holiday movie marathon

Head to the Windjammer Ballroom tonight for the Holiday Movie Marathon. "Polar Express" starts at 6 p.m., "Elf" begins at 7:50 p.m. and "Four Christmases" kicks off at 9:40 p.m. Enjoy free cookies and hot chocolate. Indulge in the pizza buffet from 6-8 p.m. Prices are \$7.95 for adults and \$3.95 for kids under 12.

For more information, call 4882.



Holiday dive hours

Planning a scuba dive around the holidays? Make sure you check out the special holiday hours for Reef Raiders Clubhouse:

Dec. 24: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Dec. 25: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Dec. 26: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Dec. 31: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Jan. 1: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Jan. 2: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tax assistants wanted

Interested in helping the Guantanamo Bay community during tax season? The Naval Legal Service Office is looking for volunteers.

Beginning Jan. 17, the NLSO will train service members to assist others in preparing their taxes. The two-week training course will be held at Building 760 on the naval station side, next to Personnel Support Detachment. Contact your chain of command before signing up for the course. There is also self-directed training available at IRS.gov.

Tax preparation will begin Feb. 6 and continue through April. Deployed personnel can apply for a two-month extension; however, this is not the same as the six-month extension for troops deployed to Afghanistan.

For more information, call 4692.

Rock and Roll Half Marathon

MWR will host a half marathon at 7 a.m. Jan. 28 with musical acts and cheering sections every mile. Registration is \$25 per runner and runners must register by Jan. 20. There will be no same-day registration. This event is open to anyone 16 years and older.

For more information, call 2157.



Flock your friends

Surprise your buddy with a flock of flamingos. From now until March 1, the Seabee Ball Committee will adorn a yard with 25 plastic flamingos for three days for the price of \$20. If you want to get unflocked earlier than three days, they will remove the birds for \$10. All proceeds will help fund the Seabee Ball on Mar. 10. For more information, or to schedule a flocking, call Patty Hinton at 4518.

Tuesday night pasta and trivia dinner

Enjoy a pasta dinner and trivia every Tuesday night at the Windjammer Cafe. Dinner is from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Team trivia is held during dinner from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. The winning team will eat for free.

For more information, call 75503.

Christmas Eve Paintball

MWR Liberty will host the Christmas Eve Blowout Tournament at the paintball field Dec. 24 at 9 a.m.

For more information call 2010.

Sunset sailing Dec. 23

MWR Liberty will host a Holiday Sunset Sail tonight, open to all hands. Meet at the Marina at 5 p.m. Goodie bags, appetizers and refreshments will be provided for all unaccompanied active duty personnel.

For more information, call 2010.

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Trooper to Trooper

take care of your buddy: ACT!

SENIOR CHIEF PETTY OFFICER SCOTT DILLON
JOINT TASK FORCE GUANTANAMO J2 NCOIC

First of all, let me wish all Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guard personnel: happy holidays! Being deployed over the holidays is always hard and can lead to depression, if we let it. Depression can lead to thoughts and sometimes actions in regards to taking one's own life.

This is an all-hands effort to have a successful holiday season. If you see someone displaying any of the following symptoms: hopelessness, rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge; acting reckless or impulsive; feeling trapped as if there is no way out; increasing alcohol or drug use; withdrawing from family, friends, society, anxiety, agitation; inability to sleep or sleeping all the time; dramatic mood changes, expressing no reason for living, no sense of purpose in life: intervene. Get them talking and if it's serious, get them help. You could save a buddy's life just by just taking time out and sitting down with them. Suicide can be prevented.

- Remember: ACT (ASK – CARE – TREAT)
- ASK if someone is depressed and is thinking about suicide. Let them know you CARE.
 - Get them assistance (TREATment) as soon as possible.
- Seeking help is a show of strength, and is consistent with mission readiness and building resilience. If you find yourself depressed, try some of these techniques:
- Engage in mild exercise.
 - Get involved in activities.
 - Set goals and assume a reasonable amount of responsibility.
 - Break large tasks into small ones; set some priorities.
 - Try to be with other people and choose someone to confide in.
 - Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately.
 - Often during treatment of depression, sleep and appetite will begin to improve before a depressed mood lifts.
 - Postpone important decisions.
 - Do not expect to “snap out” of a depression. Do expect to feel a little better day by day.
 - Remember, positive thinking will replace the negative thinking as your depression responds to treatment.
 - Let your family and friends help you!
 - If you can't get yourself feeling better, call or seek out help. Call or



seek out the Chaplain, your Senior Enlisted Leader, or your buddy. Just call or seek out someone and get help. I would hate to be that person who has to go to your family's front door and be the bearer of the worst news a family can get: that someone they love has died by their own hands.

Remember: suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary crisis! More than 60 percent of people who complete a suicide are depressed at the time of death. Simply talking to a shipmate or professional can greatly improve a suicidal person's chance of survival. Intervening on some level is better than doing nothing at all and ignoring the problem.

Let's have a happy and successful holiday season.

525th: MPs, Vigilant Warriors, pen-pals



Members of the 525th Military Police Battalion received Veterans Day cards from San Diego second-graders, which they then “adopted” as pen pals. —photo by Mass Communication Spc. 1st Class Ty Bjornson

By Army Sgt. Saul Rosa

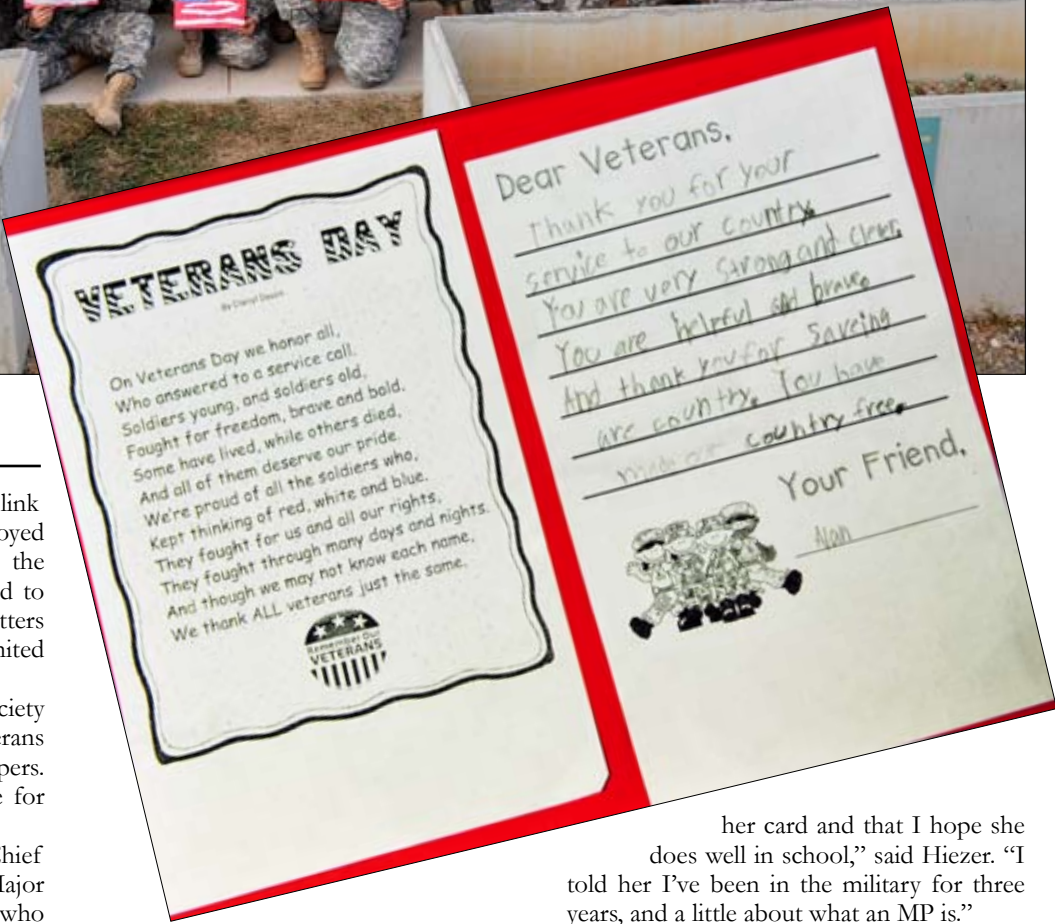
During the holiday season, every link to home counts for Troopers deployed overseas. For the Vigilant Warriors of the 525th Military Police Battalion deployed to Joint Task Force Guantanamo Bay, letters from a class of second graders in the United States provided that link.

The Florence Griffith Joyner Microsociety Magnet School in San Diego sent Veterans Day flag cards to Joint Task Force Troopers. The letters arrived in just enough time for Troopers to respond before Christmas.

Joint Task Force Command Master Chief Reynaldo Tiong gave the letters to Sgt. Major Mike Barnes of the 525th MP Battalion, who then suggested that each of his Soldiers “adopt” a student as a pen-pal. Imelda Tiong, the second grade's class teacher, agreed to the idea.

“Each soldier wrote back to that student expressing our gratitude to their loyalty to the service members,” said Barnes.

One Trooper who received a letter was



Army Sgt. Brittany Hiezer.

“I’m very happy to know these young children appreciate and acknowledge what we do,” said Hiezer.

Hiezer sent a letter back to the student right away.

I told her that we were very thankful for

her card and that I hope she does well in school,” said Hiezer. “I told her I’ve been in the military for three years, and a little about what an MP is.”

The outreach between the students and MPs goes to show that even the most vigilant of warriors longs for a bit of home at the holiday season.

“I think it’s great,” said Barnes. “I think it’s a representation of the support from our nation for Troops everywhere.”



Would you tell a stranger when you're not home?

Have you ever left a light on at your house when you're not home? When you're on vacation do you have a friend pick up your mail, or take the paper off the lawn so it won't look like there's nobody home? If you did, then you used OPSEC. We do these things to keep ourselves and our things safe from people who mean us harm. So why would you post your travel plans online? Putting travel plans online is the same as putting a sign in front of your house that says “I'm not home.” Stay safe. Protect your travel plans. USE OPSEC!

TROOPER FOCUS

By Mass Communication Spc. 2nd Class Louis Batchelor

Petty Officer 2nd Class Rebekka Vanzant was born into a military household. The daughter of a Marine master gunnery sergeant, Vanzant enjoys the military lifestyle and loves to help fellow Troopers reach their goals.

Vanzant, a yeoman working in Joint Task Force Guantanamo’s J2 department, said she likes her job because she is given more responsibility and feels she is making a difference. After working hard on the USS Frank Cable (AS 40) as a Machinist Mate, she was capped to petty officer third class and was then able to pick another rating.

Her supervisor, Army Master Sgt. Gregg Ramsdell, remarked on her positive attitude and determination to improve personally and professionally.

“I was able to convert to YN, which was one of the goals I set for myself,” Vanzant said. “After being here, I want to work at a headquarters so it can better prepare me for civilian life.”

Vanzant credits her success to advice taken from her friends. She said she has been in tough situations during her military

tenure, but with the help of those around her, she was encouraged to do something about her career direction.

“If there is any advice I can give to Troopers, it is that sometimes things get rough in the military,” Vanzant explained. “Complaining about the way things are will not help your current situation. Your career is what you make it. You can either complain about the way things are going for you or do something about where you are.”

Vanzant implores Troopers of all ranks to think about where they are in accordance with where they would like to be in their career. She said Troopers should want to reflect on their time in service, thinking of all the memories and successes they have made in their military lifetime.

“Don’t waste the time you have in the military,” she said. “No matter whether you are enlisted or officer, even if you are a career Trooper, there is life after the military. You do not want to feel like you have not accomplished your goals when your time is done.”



BULLET BIO

Time in service: 6 years

Hobbies: Playing football and hanging out with friends, taking pictures, and diving

The boss says: “She has been put into a situation of high importance with limited experience while taking the ball and running with it. She has earned the respect of her supervisors and subordinates alike.”

Advice to junior Troopers: “No matter how bad a situation might seem, it always gets better.”

How do you plan to celebrate the holidays?



“We are renting a boat to relax and unwind.”

Petty Officer 2nd Class
Melissa Hoover



“I will spend time with my church family.”

Petty Officer 3rd Class
Leotis Dixon



“I will celebrate with my Guantanamo Bay family.”

Army Sgt.
Ashlei Johnson



“I plan to call my family.”

Army Sgt.
Robert Keller

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

STUDENT OF THE GAME

Drew set to Brees past Marino for all time passing record

By Army Sgt. Landis Andrews

Drew Brees, I’m going to let you finish, but Dan Marino is the best quarterback of all time. ALL TIME. Okay, that’s my personal opinion, and I borrowed that line from Kanye West, but this beautiful dark twisted fantasy called defense in the National Football League has Brees 305 yards from surpassing a once-untouchable record set by Miami Dolphins great and Ace Ventura co-star Dan Marino for most passing yards in a single season.

Marino never won a Super Bowl, but throwing for 5,084 yards in 1984 means more than Brees and the New Orleans Saints playing against weak football teams with watered down defenses that inflate offensive numbers. Taking nothing away from the amazing year the Saints quarterback is having, Dan Marino’s record is more impressive than Brees’ 2011 production.

Cool Brees is on pace for 652 pass attempts in this effort to replace Marino atop the record book. Marino reached his milestone with only 564 throws. Both QBs played 16 game seasons, but the difference of 88 attempts gives Brees the equivalent of more than two extra games worth of throws.

Of those 564 passing attempts, the Hall of Famer completed 362 of them. To this point, Saints receivers hauled in 349 of Brees’ offerings. When Touchdown Breesus hits 362 completions, he will, more than likely, still trail Marino.

The Dolphins’ frequent flyer year came in 1984. Those were the days before thinking about hitting a quarterback was a personal foul and touching the passer’s helmet was considered roughing.

Marino played alongside the likes of Joe Montana, Troy

Aikman, Steve Young and Warren Moon. Each of those players called it quits when their bodies could no longer handle the beatings delivered on the gridiron.

To the contrary, Brees plays in a league that protects quarterbacks like they belong in Fort Knox.

Colt McCoy, Cleveland Browns’ quarterback, suffered a concussion from a hit by Pittsburgh Steeler James Harrison. The NFL suspended Harrison and implemented new concussion policies within weeks. New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady was injured from a low tackle. The next year, the NFL outlawed low tackles on quarterbacks.

Today’s defenders can’t even attack the quarterback to stop him from passing the ball. It’s no wonder Drew is Breeding his way past Marino.

High flying, explosive offenses overshadow gaping holes in secondaries throughout the entire NFL. Defense is so meaningless that only one of the top five defenses have clinched the lead in their division (San Francisco 49ers). The rest of the playoff-bound teams simply score more points than their defense allows.

If Brees breaks Marino’s mark, the new record for yards in a single season will have the same indifference as Mark McGwire breaking the single season homerun record amid the steroid era in Major League Baseball.

Numbers never lie, but they can be misleading. Barring injury, at the end of this year, Drew Brees will hold one of the most prestigious records in the NFL, but don’t be fooled by numbers. When this Saint goes marching in the record books, Marino will still be king. Watch the throne.



Above: Petty Officer 2nd Class Rodolfo Gallardo, a master at arms, seizes victory for the Red Team as he brings a captured Santa back to the team’s base in Capture the Santa Paintball.

Below: The Red Team managed to defeat the Yellow Team in an epic battle of the season during Capture the Santa Paintball. The rules of play were simple: one team must capture the other team’s Santa figurine and return it to their base or have more team members standing when time ran out.

—photos by Army Sgt. Saul Rosa





Above: David Edmisten on the electric guitar during a performance at Guantanamo Bay. Right: Scott Kirby played acoustic guitar during his performance. Below: Lew London played the fiddle during a performance with Scott Kirby. — photos by Army Sgt. Saul Rosa



Scott Kirby: Bringing the Folk to the Bay

By Army Sgt. Saul Rosa

Scott Kirby performed at the Naval Station Guantanamo Bay Tiki Bar Dec. 16 and 17 and brought a new tune to the community just in time for the holidays.

“He brought a little bit of celebration to the holiday, which could be hard to find here since you’re away from friends and family,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Jacob Isbell. “It makes the season a little special.”

Kirby puts his own personalized twist on the folk rock genre.

“Some of the critics who have reviewed my songs in the United States refer to it as beach folk,” said Kirby “A lot of my songs have nautical themes and are about being in the islands or on the coast, but the musical style is definitely folk rock or contemporary acoustic rock.”

For Isbell, Kirby’s performance came at the right time at the right place.

“The music is great for the atmosphere here in the Caribbean,” said Isbell, a logistics specialist. “It’s relaxing, with an island feel to it.”

Kirby performed with David Edmisten on electric guitar and backup vocals and Lew London on fiddle.

Edmisten, who is from North Carolina, has been working with Kirby for the past five years. Kirby and Edmisten perform around 150 shows a year, and this show in particular struck a chord with Edmisten.

“This is something that I felt like I could do to give back to the troops,” said Edmisten.

London, a New Jersey native, specializes in string instruments and has worked with Kirby on and off for 15 years. Kirby invited London to perform with him at Guantanamo Bay.

“I thought ‘when am I ever going to get a chance to check out Guantanamo first hand,’ said London. “I didn’t know what to expect, but this place is beautiful.”

With the night drawing to a close, Kirby dedicated his performance to the Troopers and community of Guantanamo Bay.

“We have tremendous respect for everyone in the military stationed around the world, especially during the holidays when many can’t get home to see their families,” said Kirby. “We feel honored to be able to come down here and feel it’s the least we can do.”

JTF first classes lend a helping hand E-6s focus on careers, community service

By Mass Communication Spc. 2nd Class Louis Batchelor

Community service is instrumental in building relationships with the community and between Joint Task Force Guantanamo Troopers. Sailors from the JTF First Class Petty Officer Association are doing just that: strengthening JTF’s bond with the local community with morale-producing support wherever they go.

The FCPOA is designed to broaden the professional development of all First Class Petty Officers; provide an outlet for personnel to become active in their local communities; and to foster improved morale to embody a positive image of the United States Navy and JTF Guantanamo.

“The FCPOA meets together as a sort of think tank. We meet, seeking

to gather insight on how to handle issues or plan ideas that we may have on the horizon,” said Petty Officer 1st Class Frankie Knobloch, FCPOA President. “We also use our time to identify any morale issues and talk about what we can do to make things better. It also makes it easier for us to work things out for personnel that may have a dilemma between chains of command.”

The FCPOA is an organization which thrives with the assistance of all Troopers. For instance, one of the organization’s activities in the past involved members cooking and distributing breakfast burritos to other petty officers taking their advancement exams. The advancement exams are a requisite for promotion.

Knobloch encourages the input of E-6s from other branches and believes staying open to other personnel’s ideas are what will improve the association and JTF as a whole.

“Other first class petty officers offer insights from other points of view,” Knobloch explained. “Personnel with different rates and other backgrounds have different points of view on how to deal with various situations.”

Knoblach wants JTF to understand the FCPOA is about helping every Trooper, no matter their pay grade, reach the next level of leadership and understanding of military service. He envisions everyone working together to make JTF a better place.

“Utilize your peers and utilize your people,” Knoblach said. “Everybody has ideas, no matter how junior or senior they are. Those ideas could make a difference.”

For more information on the FCPOA’s activities, or how to become a member, call 8228.

Below: Joint Task Force Guantanamo First Class Petty Officers Association washed cars Saturday to raise money for their activities. —photo by Mass Communication Spc. 1st Class Ty Bjornson



Climbing the Mighty Oak: JTF Tours the USS Oak Hill



The USS Oak Hill ported at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay Dec. 13 to conduct agricultural washdowns and refuel before returning to the U.S. Joint Task Force Guantanamo Troopers boarded for a tour of the ship Dec. 15. —photos by Mass Communication Spc. 1st Class Ty Bjornson

By Mass Communication Spc. 1st Class Ty Bjornson

The Harpers Ferry-class amphibious dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51) recently visited U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, after finishing its Caribbean deployment supporting Amphibious Southern Partnership Station. The ship returned Wednesday to its Little Creek, Va. homeport.

The port visit afforded the USS Oak Hill's crew opportunities to take advantage of the various recreational facilities available at Guantanamo during their liberty time.

"This is the first chance that most of my crew of 300 and the other 400 embarked Marines, Air Force, Army and Coast Guard personnel have ever had to visit Guantanamo Bay," said Oak Hill commanding officer Cmdr. David Bauer. "I am honored to have had the opportunity to sail the 'Mighty Oak' into this port and we all look forward to meeting those of you stationed here."

The USS Oak Hill conducted agricultural washdowns of all embarked equipment. This procedure removes and neutralizes any harmful or invasive species that may have been picked up so they will not be transported to the U.S. The ship also took on fuel and supplies.

The USS Oak Hill's stop gave Guantanamo service members an opportunity to visit the ship as well, which was a new experience for some of them.

"I'm glad they welcomed us aboard," said Joint Task Force Guantanamo Trooper Sgt. 1st Class Katherine White. "It was good insight into how other branches (of the military) operate. I was amazed how they could function in limited space. Everybody had a job and a place on the ship."

Amphibious transport dock landing ships like the USS Oak Hill are vessels which embark, transport and land elements of a landing force for expeditionary warfare missions. These ships are generally designed to transport troops by sea, usually with landing craft or in some cases with transport helicopters.

Troopers on the tour remarked on how organized and clean the ship was, and commended the visiting crew for the unique opportunity to see the USS Oak Hill.

"It was a great tour," White said.



Happy Holidays, Joint Task Force Guantanamo!

Winter Solstice Dec. 21

Nearly every culture in recorded history has recognized the changing of the seasons, and the first day of winter in particular has strong pagan roots. As the shortest day of the year, modern observants light candles and hold the last feast day of the calendar year.

Kwanzaa Dec. 26– Jan. 1

Celebrated by members of the African-American community since 1966, Kwanzaa focuses on the seven principles of unity, self-determination, responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. Those who celebrate often do so alongside Christian traditions. The seven-candle kinara represents the seven principles.

Festivus “for the rest of us!” Dec. 23

A secular celebration, the concept of Festivus has gained popularity as a way to reject modern commercialization of the holiday season. The holiday is observed in three practices: the Airing of Grievances, the Feats of Strength and the display of the plain aluminum Festivus pole. Though rooted in parody and popularized in an episode of “Seinfeld,” Festivus is inclusive and affordable.

the story of chanukah

by Ed Hood, J6
special to The Wire

In the Hebrew language, Chanukah means “to dedicate.” The festival of Chanukah is the Festival of Dedication. Chanukah, unlike Passover, is not an “appointed time” as given in the Torah. Chanukah is a tradition. Chanukah is a festival that commemorates the miracle of the oil and G-d saving His people.

The story of Chanukah begins in Judea around 2,200 years ago, when King Antiochus III the Great of Syria defeated King Ptolemy V Epiphanes of Egypt at the Battle of Panium. In an attempt to appease his new Jewish subjects, Antiochus III guaranteed them the right to “live according to their ancestral customs” and to continue to practice their faith in the Temple of Jerusalem.

In 175 BCE, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the son of Antiochus III invaded Judea. Soon after, the Temple was captured by Syrian-Greek soldiers and dedicated to the worship of the god Zeus.

During the next few years the Greeks forced Israel to finance their war through collection of taxes. They also forced them to quarter their soldiers in Jewish homes. Collectively, the Greeks were determined to destroy the Jewish faith.

Historical record and a Jewish holy book, the Talmud, detail the ways in which the Greeks did so. First, they took the statue of Zeus and mounted it in the courtyard of the Temple. Second, the Greeks banned the observance of the Sabbath on pain of death. Third, there was a period of time when the Greek officer in town had the right to “live” with a woman on her wedding night before her husband-to-be. The Greeks also banned circumcision. Then they demanded that altars to the Greek idols be established and that sacrifices be offered on a regular basis in every Jewish town.

The Jewish educational system was entirely disrupted during this time. King Antiochus IV Epiphanes erected a temple for himself and demanded worship from among the people. He made Greek language mandatory. Torah

studies were forbidden. Kosher diets were banned and the people were forced to eat unclean animals. Torah scrolls were burned. Judaism was outlawed.

The final straw came around 167-166 BCE when King Antiochus IV Epiphanes gathered the Jewish people together and ordered an altar constructed in the Temple and a pig sacrificed to Zeus. A Greek officer ordered Mattathias, a High Priest, to acquiesce to their demands, but Mattathias refused. When another villager stepped forward and offered to cooperate on Mattathias’ behalf, the High Priest became outraged. He drew his sword and killed the villager, then turned on the Greek officer and killed him too. War eventually broke out, concluding with the battle for the fortress guarding the Temple. The Jews destroyed the statue of Zeus and restored the Temple as best they could, but found themselves running out of supplies.

This is when the miracle of Chanukah occurred. The Jews could only find one small flask of uncontaminated oil with the seal of the High Priest. By Torah law, the flame of the Menorah (candelabrum) in the Temple could only be lit with specially prepared pure olive oil. The amount of oil remaining in the one uncontaminated flask was only enough to burn for one day, and it would take eight days to produce a new batch of pure oil. So what did they do? They lit the Menorah and it miraculously burned for eight days.

Chanukah is celebrated in reverence and remembrance of this struggle in Jewish history. While there is currently no organized Jewish service available at this time at the Joint Task Force or Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, the chaplains’ offices are always available to serve all people of all faiths. Stateside contacts for rabbis and other clergy are also available through them. During this holiday season, no matter which faith or belief system you ascribe to, remember that everyone has reason to celebrate.



Make the most of the holiday season

We have just entered a very full period of holy days and holidays. It is common for each one of us to consider what loved ones might be doing at home or what other activities are being missed. Some are missing the gathering at Grandma's house with all the relatives. Some may be missing that first Christmas with a spouse or a newborn. These are special days that will be certainly remembered. Among those gathered at Guantanamo Bay are veterans who have been away for multiple holidays and there are those here for their first time away from home. No matter which one it is work to make it a significant one.

My first Christmas while deployed was during a port call in Hong Kong. I was amazed at how lit up the skyline was with holiday decorations. It was a thrill to walk the streets of the Asian city and seemingly everyone on the street was donning a Santa hat. It seemed all were wishing one another "Merry Christmas." At midnight I attended worship at Christ Church, high up on a hill. Just a few feet from my pew sat the governor of Hong Kong and his family. I struggled to stay awake but elated to sing the carols of my own tradition in a faraway land. It would have been wonderful to be with family, but my Christmas in Hong Kong is etched deep into my memory and retelling it is fun.

How are you going to make this holiday on the island a memorable one? What are you doing to make this time one to be remembered? Think of one significant practice that happens back home and replicate it here. (But if you're of Norwegian ancestry, don't try and find any lutefisk and cook it with roomies in the

Cuzco. You may wear out your welcome with that nasty smelling stuff.) Get together with friends and co-workers and compare notes and what your favorite traditions are. Attend one of the many worship services offered. Or, try doing something you haven't tried before in the area of water sports or other adventures. I know I've never snorkeled on Christmas, how about you?

Also, think about why some of those traditions are significant to you. Share your reflections with loved ones in an e-mail or even a letter to reinforce the importance of those events in your life. Now that you taken the opportunity to do the reflecting and remembering, get out and do some Guantanamo holiday adventuring and make this a time of your life.

Happy holidays from the Joint Task Force chaplains!

ONLY AT GTMO by Mass Communication Spc. 1st Class Ty Bjornson



Analysts: switch U.S. troops to Afghanistan advisory mission in 2012

By Chris Carroll
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON – Afghanistan is no longer the United States' war to win, analysts from an influential Washington think tank said Monday, advocating a U.S. policy shift that would quickly transition U.S. troops to advisory and support roles while pushing Afghans to the lead in combat.

With the clock ticking on U.S. combat involvement in Afghanistan, the United States should end the current counterinsurgency mission by October, when U.S. surge forces are scheduled to be out of the country, according to a policy brief by the Center for a New American Security, a group with strong ties to the Obama administration and the Pentagon. The United States should then switch to a "security force assistance" mission that sets Afghan forces up for success against the Taliban and Haqqani Network after 2014, the report said.

"Because U.S. units can execute counterinsurgency operations better and faster than their Afghan counterparts, they are continuing to do so despite the looming transition," the CNAS paper said. "Afghan forces must move more rapidly to take the lead in Afghanistan while the United States and its allies still have significant numbers of troops and enablers in the country."

American commanders, focused on short-term results, sensibly rely on their own superior troops, said co-author Andrew Exum, a CNAS senior fellow and a former Army Ranger who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"There's a sense the Afghan commanders aren't ready, and there a sense we're going to assume a lot of risk [by relying heavily on Afghans]," he told reporters Monday. While there is truth in those beliefs, he said, the result may be that crucial developmental steps for Afghan combat forces are left until 2015, when there will be far less backup from American and coalition troops.

Although partnering between American and Afghan troops is official doctrine, on a recent trip to Afghanistan, "there was no question anywhere we visited who was in the lead in these operations," said retired Army Lt. Gen. David Barno, a CNAS senior advisor and coauthor of the report.

The Pentagon should establish a command within U.S. Special Operations Command devoted to developing and fielding military advisors, the authors wrote.

And while it will be risky, troops on the ground should begin embedding with Afghan units rather than the more common paradigm, where, Exum said, "Often it's a few Afghans in a truck behind you as you go off to fight the enemy."

AAFES pulls weight loss, bodybuilding supplement from shelves

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa – Weight-loss and bodybuilding supplements containing a popular new stimulant were pulled off the shelves at Army and Air Force Exchange Service stores over the weekend due to concerns they could be related to soldier deaths, according to the Defense Logistics Agency.

The drug DMAA, which is an extract of the geranium plant with the chemical names 13 dimethylamylamine and methylhexanamine, triggered the recall of 18 athletic supplements

sold worldwide in General Nutrition Centers shops by AAFES, the agency said Saturday in a recall alert.

"Even though GNC believes DMAA is safe, it has complied fully with the Army's precautionary request to remove products containing DMAA, as it is contractually obligated to do, from GNC stores on Army and Air Force bases," GNC spokesman Greg Miller said.

Miller said that the Food and Drug Administration has never questioned the safety of DMAA and that GNC officials have requested the opportunity to meet with the Defense Department to discuss the recall.

Former Obama envoy: engage with N. Korea

Voice of America News Service

WASHINGTON – The Obama administration's former special envoy to North Korea, Stephen Bosworth, says the United States should try to engage with Pyongyang to encourage a return to negotiations, even as the reclusive state goes through a secretive leadership transition.

Bosworth said it is important for North Korea to be connected to the outside world as it prepares to make Kim Jong Un the official successor to his father, Kim Jong Il, who died Saturday at age 69. Bosworth says one of the foreign connections that matters most to Pyongyang is with the U.S. The two nations do not have diplomatic relations.

Bosworth stepped down as President Barack Obama's special envoy on North Korea policy in October, after two years in the post.

White House Press Secretary Jay Carney Wednesday said the Obama administration is monitoring events in North Korea closely.

U.S. officials have held several rounds of informal talks with North Korea since June, but it is not clear when the two sides will meet again. The U.S. has been trying to persuade North Korea to rejoin six-party negotiations in which regional powers have called for Pyongyang to give up its pursuit of nuclear weapons in return for diplomatic and other incentives.

Bosworth said the U.S. should adopt a "patient" and "positive" approach toward North Korea as long as Pyongyang provides evidence that it is willing to treat U.S. requests in a "serious manner."

ON THE GROUND

375 years of National Guard history and commitment

By Lt. Gen. William E. Ingram, Jr.

Director, Army National Guard

Fellow Citizen Soldiers,

As your new Director, I am honored to send this greeting as we celebrate the 375th birthday of the Army National Guard.

First, let me express how humbled I am by the tremendous honor and privilege to serve as the 20th Director of the Army National Guard. My wife Lil and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to extend our greetings to you, our fellow members of the National Guard family, on this momentous occasion: the Guard's 375th birthday.

Celebrating 375 years is unprecedented in the history of the United States military. The National Guard is older than our country itself. The colonial militia defined our first communities: the earliest rural settlements, villages, towns and cities in what became the United States of America.

On Dec. 13, 1636, the Massachusetts General Court in Salem established that all able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 60 join the militia. At that time, local leaders realized that better trained and highly prepared militia units were needed to safeguard communities and colonies. Ultimately, these units formed the basis of our national defense.

This part-time force grew into a cornerstone of early American communities, playing an instrumental role in establishing a new country founded on

individual freedom and liberty. We are proud to remember that our Guard started as a militia formed by Citizen Soldiers men and women just like each of you who currently represent the 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia.

Of course, our institution is still comprised of truly dedicated citizens, always ready to respond to emergencies at the state or federal level. Along the way, the National Guard has been called upon to protect national interests in all major military conflicts. Guard members have also responded to countless state and local emergencies within their own communities.

Like so many who served before us, you have made personal sacrifices. You consistently show your professionalism and selflessness, whether serving at the Southwest Border, or patrolling outside a Forward Operating Base, or performing your traditional Guard responsibilities at home. You are always there when needed.

As we reflect on 375 years of service, we can identify an unbroken chain of commitments that linked communities, unified colonies and forged a nation all based on responsive forces.

Since 1636, our Citizen Soldiers have repeatedly demonstrated vigilance and valor at home and abroad, always defending freedom. Over the past 10 years, our National Guard has demonstrated broad-based capabilities and unquestionable commitment. You have

been there. You have contributed to the proud history of the Army National Guard.

Sustaining such high levels of proficiency and commitment will be challenging. Success will be defined by a trained and ready Army National Guard serving our States and Nation for the next 375 years.

May God continue to bless our nation and its people, as well as our Soldiers and their families.

Thank you and happy birthday Army National Guard!

ON THE DECK Navy: Updated special duty assignment pay

Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

MILLINGTON, Tenn. – The Navy announced revisions in special duty assignment pay (SDAP).

NAVADMIN 356/11 lists updated SDAP levels for qualified active duty, full-time reserve component, and select reserve Sailors. Increases to existing SDAP levels are effective immediately and reductions are effective 60 days from release of NAVADMIN 356/11.

Sailors whose SDAP will be eliminated will receive half of their previous SDAP entitlement for 12 months, or until the Sailor completes the tour, whichever comes first.

The SDAP program is an incentive pay ranging from \$75 to \$450 a month used to entice qualified Sailors to serve in designated billets that are considered extremely difficult or entail arduous duty. Program levels change to reflect the current environment associated with each billet and to sustain adequate manning levels.

In order to qualify for SDAP, Sailors must be assigned to and working in a valid billet on the Command Manpower Authorization Listing. This billet must be authorized by the Bureau of Naval Personnel as a special duty assignment billet. Commands holding SDAP billets are required to complete an annual recertification.

NAVADMIN 356/11 supersedes previously released SDAP rates.

More than 25,000 Sailors currently receive SDAP. Sailors can read OPNAVINST 1160.6 and talk with their command career counselor to learn more about SDAP.

COAST TO COAST

Coast Guard, federal partner agencies participate in San Juan Harbor operation

7th Coast Guard District Public Affairs

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – Coast Guard Sector San Juan concluded a multi agency strike force operation (MASFO) at the Seastar Marine Terminal Friday in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The multi-agency strike force successfully screened a total of 200 containers with a Customs and Border Protection VACIS X-Ray machine, and they physically inspected 80 other containers and portable tanks, including multiple hazardous material containers.

During the MASFO no illegal drugs, contraband shipments or placarding irregularities were detected.

The primary objective of the MASFO was to ensure compliance with federal, state and local regulations pertaining to the safe shipment of cargo. The MASFO was comprised of two teams strategically located throughout the port.

Leveraging the jurisdictional authorities of each agency, the inter-agency teams thoroughly inspected freight containers and portable tanks ensuring compliance with the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code as well as U.S. Regulations.

“The MASFO was a great example of the interagency cooperation,” said Cmdr. David Berliner, Coast Guard Sector San Juan chief of prevention. “The timely and comprehensive inspections were aligned with the shared mutual objective of facilitating the safe and timely flow of commerce through the maritime and highway modes of transportation.”

The initiative combined the capabilities of numerous agencies including Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, Federal Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) personnel.



A team of Coast Guard and Customs and Border Patrol Protection personnel check a container for hazardous goods and contraband during an operation at San Juan Harbor, Puerto Rico. –photo courtesy USCG

ON THE WING

EO officials aim to set standard for federal agencies

By Erin Tindell

AF Personnel, Services and Manpower Public Affairs

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas – Air Force equal opportunity officials have expanded a pilot program that reduces processing times for civilian equal employment opportunity complaints to five months versus the standard six months. The move is part of an Air Force effort to set the EO standard for federal agencies.

In 2010, the Air Force EO office, in collaboration with the Air Force Personnel Center EO office, implemented pilot programs at Lackland and Randolph Air Force Bases to process formal civilian EEO complaint investigations within 150 days. The test resulted in an average process time of 77 days, which is 57 percent faster than the required 180 days. On Dec. 6, the pilot program expanded to include Tyndall AFB, Eglin AFB, MacDill AFB and Hurlburt Field, Fla.

“The pilot program demonstrated significant improvement can be attained by re-evaluating current processes with our key mission partners who also participate in the civilian EEO process,” said Lt. Col. Stephen Miliano, the EO director at AFPC. “Reduced processing times benefit all involved, from employees to organization leaders and managers. Additionally, these improvements

greatly help to further the AF EO program in reaching its goal of being a model program for the federal government.”

Members of the AFPC Equal Opportunity Office also revamped their analytics for capturing data on how the Air Force processes formal civilian EEO complaints. Previous metrics only measured the number of complaints that were overdue or exceeded standard timelines.

“The new metrics measure the average time it takes to process each step in the informal EEO complaint process,” said Cinni Youngblood, the AFPC EO operations manager. “This way, we can get a better idea of what’s going on out in the field and recognize and address trends throughout the process.”

During fiscal year 2011, 90 percent of all complaints counseling were processed on time resulting in a 2.38 increase of timeliness from the previous year. Only 0.3 percent of the total Air Force civilian workforce filed EEO complaints.

While both military and civilian EO programs focus on unlawful discrimination and sexual harassment, civilian complaints are subject to Equal Employment Opportunity Commission standards and sanctions and are coordinated with agencies outside the Air Force.

Civilian complaints must go through a 30 to 90-day informal process to handle the issue through the traditional process or mediation called alternative dispute resolution before filing a formal complaint. The Air Force encourages commanders and managers to participate in ADR because it saves time, money and can quickly resolve problems or issues before they escalate, Youngblood said.

“The goal is to try to resolve a complaint at the lowest level,” she said. “Leaders should never discount an employee’s issue. We all want to feel like we have something to offer and are a valuable member of the team.”

Youngblood said leadership should keep the lines of communication open throughout the entire complaint process. Additionally, EO offices should let AFPC/EO know and document any local or procedural issues that create process delays.

“The Air Force EO program is about taking care of people to ensure mission readiness,” she said. “If people aren’t getting along, what impact do you think that will have on the mission?”

For information about EO and other personnel issues, visit the Air Force Personnel Services at <https://gum-crm.csd.disa.mil>.

IN THE FIGHT

New reg: Corps allows bags, bracelets in uniform

By Lance Cpl. Lauren A. Kurkmilis

Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – Marines are no longer restricted to wearing only issued bags in uniform.

Civilian backpacks officially can now be worn in uniform, according to the results of Uniform Board 212 which were released in MARADMIN 695/11 Dec. 6, 2011.

Backpacks may be black, brown, olive drab, tan or a combination of these colors, according to the MARADMIN. MARPAT-printed commercial and organizational bags are still authorized as well. Bags must be con-

servative and will be worn over both shoulders. Logos must be no larger than five-by-two inches big.

Other changes included the official approval to wear honor bracelets, meant to remember those killed, missing or captured in action, must be either black or silver and no more than half an inch wide. Engraved on the bracelet will be name, rank, operation and date.

There is no limit on how many names can be on the bracelet, but only one bracelet can be worn at a time.

For more information or to see other changes, refer to MARADMIN 695/11.

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

PG-13
110 min.



Hey there, Hollywood. Have I done something to offend you? Whatever it was, please come clean with me. We can talk about it. Heck, I'll even apologize. We used to be good pals once upon a time. What happened between us?

That's pretty much what I was thinking as I watched the latest interpretation of "The Three Musketeers." I honestly felt like I was being punished for something, though I'm not quite sure of what. By the film's close, I was both relieved and appalled. Even now, I am still wondering: what happened with this movie?

Hollywood took the concept of "The Three Musketeers" (which is a apparently more than just a candy bar): a trio of swashbuckling members of the 17th century French royal guard and oversaturated it with unnecessarily loud crescendoing music; an exotic countess who doubles as a back-stabbing catburglar in a "Mission: Impossible"-style heist, an onslaught of characters with goofy, inconsistent accents; and then they added some large-scale airship sky-battles that look like "Master & Commander" (2003) crossed with "Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan" (1982). I

kid you not. Even as I write this, I'm as baffled now as I was when the end credits rolled. I'm still waiting for Ashton Kutcher to pop up with a video camera to tell me that I've just been punked.

Perhaps it's not the filmmakers' fault on the quality of the movie we got from them. I'm thinking they made this kind of movie to cater to the fast-food movie masses that want their movies loaded with "the works." Like most special-effects-heavy actioneers released now, "The Three Musketeers" was made in 3-D. While the filmmakers were focusing on the quantity of characters, gimmicks and random events to put into this movie, they compromised on the quality.

Ever since the first "Pirates of the Caribbean" movie, there has been a steady increase in films with music scores that go "rum-dum-dum-dum." Special emphasis on "dumb!" Going the way of the dodo are scores rich in majesty that were melodic narratives to their films. I'm not saying this is how all movies should be scored. Though it would be nice if a movie's premise warrants a traditional score approach in lieu of "rum-dum-dum-dum." Instead, we get "rum-dum-dum-dum" all too frequently. You know what? It's wearing kind of thin.

Hey, here's idea: How about making a movie that's not top heavy on superficiality and is actually fun to watch. Wouldn't that be something? Like one where I can get immersed in young D'Artagnan's (Logan Lerman) dream of becoming a Musketeer when he leaves his rural home for Paris. Imagine the kind of movie where I'm pleased to see the introduction of the Three Musketeers: Athos (Matthew Macfadyen), Porthos (Ray Stevenson) and Aramis (Luke Evans) and learn of their history and current plight. After all, they're the heroes of the story, right? When movies are well-produced, this kind of story has the potential to be fun. I think the filmmakers dropped the ball on the touchdown pass.

If I had to applaud "The Three Musketeers" for anything, apart from the ending so I could leave, I'd go with the look of the sets and the costuming. There's a lot of investor bucks squandered on the screen with so much meaninglessness, but at least the visuals are good. Now if only something interesting had happened in front of these grandiose backdrops, we'd be okay. If you have the kind of money to produce a film like this, wouldn't you want a return on your dollar? The best way to do that is to have a good script, a good director, a good cast and a good goal of what your movie is about. Random chaos thrown together a good film does not make.

It's obvious director Paul W.S. Anderson played fast and loose with the original premise of "The Three Musketeers," a classic Alexandre Dumas novel written in 1844. Granted, fast and loose interpretations of printed works often sell movie tickets. It's perfectly legitimate to take your film in another direction. Take the novel and the film version of "Jaws" (1975): they're very different versions of the basic story. Both are effectively presented and are revered as classics in their respective mediums.

With "The Three Musketeers," you get a film which irritates and frustrates while you're hoping the movie will turn into more than what you get. Then nothing of consequence happens. You get a film that's all about the polish without the shine. If you have the attention span of a flea, you should probably do just fine with this feature. But come on, you can do better than settle for this. If we accept this movie and turn it into a money maker for the studio which put it out, they'll give us more of the same. This kind of tolerance has already been gone on for too long as is.

Okay Hollywood, now it is YOUR turn to apologize.

Background: At least Orlando Bloom (as the dastardly Duke of Buckingham) seems to enjoy being typecast as a swashbuckling adventurer with impressive standards of grooming.

GTMO Quick Reference

Bayview Club - 75605
Wed.-Fri. 11 a.m.-8 p.m.
Sun. & Holidays 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Bowling Center - 2118
Mon.-Fri. 6-11 p.m.
Fri. 6 p.m.-12 a.m.
Sat. 1 p.m.-12 a.m.
Sun. & Holidays 1-11 p.m.

Caribbean Coffee - 77859
Mon.-Sat. 6 a.m.-10 p.m.
Sun. 1-10 p.m.

Jerk House - 2532
Sun.-Thu. 5-9 p.m.
Fri. & Sat. 5-10 p.m.

KFC and A&W Express - 75653
Daily 11 a.m.-10 p.m.

MWR Liberty Centers - 2010
Mon.-Thu. 11 a.m.-12 a.m.
Fri. 11 a.m.-1 a.m.
Sun. 9 a.m.-12 a.m.
Sat. & Holidays 9 a.m.-1 a.m.

Library - 4700
Mon.-Sat. 8 a.m.-9 p.m.
Sun. & Holidays 12-9 p.m.

Pizza Hut - 77995
Mon.-Thu. 11 a.m.-9 p.m.
Fri. 11 a.m.-11 p.m.
Sat. & Sun. 12-9 p.m.

Windjammer Cafe
Mon.-Thu. 11 a.m.-9 p.m.
Fri. 11 a.m.-10 p.m.
Sat. 5-10 p.m.
Sun. 5-9 p.m.

Windjammer Club - 77252
Fri. & Sat. 5 p.m. - 2 a.m.

Windjammer Sports Bar
Mon.-Thu. 5-9 p.m.
Fri. & Sat. 5 p.m.-2 a.m.
Sun. 5-9 p.m.

Safe Ride - 84781

GTMO Holiday Services

**Operation Christmas
Stocking: Dec. 22-25**
Volunteers needed!

12 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Setup, stocking
stuffing, and pickup
for distribution in the
Community Center

**Call 2323 for more
information on all
holiday events.**

December 24
Main Chapel services
5 to 6:30 p.m.
Roman Catholic
Christmas service

7 to 8 p.m.
Protestant
Christmas service

11 p.m. to 12 a.m.
Roman Catholic
Christmas Mass

December 25
Regular Sunday
services

December 31
7 p.m.
New Year's
First Night service

January 7
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Decoration clean-up

	23 FRI	24 SAT	25 SUN	26 MON	27 TUE	28 WED	29 THU
Downtown Lyceum	Johnny English Reborn (PG) 7 p.m. Real Steel (last showing) (PG-13) 9 p.m.	Arthur Christmas (PG) 7 p.m. Three Musketeers (PG-13) 9 p.m.	Alvin & the Chipmunks (NEW) (G) 7 p.m.	In Time (NEW) (PG-13) 7 p.m.	Ides of March (last showing) (R) 7 p.m.	Hugo (PG) 7 p.m.	Paranormal Activity 3 (R) 7 p.m.
Camp Bulkeley	Ides of March (last showing) (R) 8 p.m. Sherlock Holmes (NEW) (PG-13) 10 p.m.	In Time (NEW) (PG-13) 8 p.m. Paranormal Activity 3 (NEW) (R) 10 p.m.	Three Musketeers (R) 8 p.m.	Real Steel (last showing) (PG-13) 8 p.m.	New Year's Eve (PG-13) 8 p.m.	The Big Year (PG) 8 p.m.	Hugo (PG) 8 p.m.

Call the movie hotline at 4880 or see the MWR GTMO Facebook page for more information.

Troopers enjoyed freshly grilled burgers during the Chaplains' Burger Burn Dec. 16 by Kittery Cafe. -photo by Mass Communication Spc. 1st Class Ty Bjornson



The Integritas award, displayed by Air Force Capt. Jason Ballard, passed from the BEEF to J6 Dec 21. -photo by Mass Communication Spc. 1st Class Ty Bjornson



The JTF at Shutter Speed

Background: Troopers at the Seaside Galley received a special treat this holiday season: a surprise "flash mob" dance routine by J6 personnel and Joint Task Force staff volunteers. -photo by Mass Communication Spc. 2nd Class Kilho Park