



# NAVY MED NAVIGATOR

## Headlining in world news...

President Bush, accusing Iraq of playing with U.N. weapons inspectors by engaging in a "willful charade," declared Thursday that Iraq would be disarmed and said that, if necessary, the U.S. would remove Saddam Hussein from power with or without U.N. approval. However, the U.S. and Britain did announce they are considering changes to the draft U.N. resolution on Iraq that might help certain key members of the U.N. Security Council overcome their resistance to support military action against Hussein.

Former President Bill Clinton and his 1996 election opponent Bob Dole are joining the CBS newsmagazine "60 Minutes" for weekly debates on national issues in the show's old "Point-Counterpoint" style. The two agreed to 10 segments, starting tonight, but CBS executives say the network will consider extending the debates into next season.

## In Navy news...

Four North Korean fighter jets intercepted a U.S. Air Force plane in international airspace over the Sea of Japan early March 2. Two North Korean MiG-29 fighters and two other North Korean aircraft believed to be MiG-23s engaged an American RC-135S reconnaissance aircraft on a "routine mission" 150 miles off the coast of North Korea. The North Korean fighters "shadowed" the American plane for 22 minutes and then closed to within 50 feet of the American airplane at an equal altitude. The fighters were armed and at least one may have engaged its fire-support radar and "locked on" to the American jet. The RC-135S then returned unharmed to its home base in Kadana Air Base, Japan. Defense officials said the incident is the first such direct hostile act by North Korea since MiG-17 fighters from that country shot down a U.S. Navy EC-121 reconnaissance plane over the Sea of Japan in April 1969, killing all 31 persons aboard.

## In sports news...

Baseball industry rumors aren't clear if the Cincinnati Reds will put Ken Griffey Jr. back on the trading block before Opening Day. If they do, the Baltimore Orioles won't let \$79 million dissuade them from making a deal, sources say. Orioles owner Peter Angelos has given his front office permission to take on the \$79 million due Griffey in the final six years of his contract, several major-league sources told The Baltimore Sun in Wednesday's editions. About an actual trade, the Orioles believe the Reds would still like to unload Griffey's salary, although Cincinnati general manager Jim Bowden has resisted their recent overtures.

# Promoted to Parent

## Deployed dads talk about fathering from afar

By JO2 Ellen Maurer  
Comfort Public Affairs

**M**ess Specialist 3<sup>rd</sup> Class David Cargo shifts in his seat with his eyes determinedly focused on the flat-screen television in front of him. His facial expressions shift through a kaleidoscope of emotions, from anticipation to impatience. Then a picture appears and, instantly, his eyes light up as they capture the first images he'll ever see of his twin baby boys – Xavier Giovanni and Elijah Corree.

Cargo finally takes a breath and exhales the simple question, "Which one is which?"

Born at the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in Bethesda, Md., just a couple of days earlier, their births come almost a full two months into Cargo's deployment aboard Navy hospital ship *USNS Comfort*. Through the hospital ship's video teleconferencing (VTC) system, usually used for training and medical consultation, Cargo gets to see his sons and talk to his fiancé for the first time since delivery.

"I saw pictures already but this is much better," says Cargo of the live video teleconference. "When you look at them this way, you can see them move and see their features...I want to see which one looks more like me."

Although Cargo admits he was surprised when he originally found out he and his fiancé were having twins, he



Photo by JO2 Ellen Maurer

**MS3 (SW) David Cargo holds up a picture of his twin sons, born two months into his deployment aboard hospital ship *USNS Comfort*. The birth announcement, which was made by medical photographers from the National Naval Medical Center, was sent to the ship via e-mail and is one of the ways that Cargo gets to "see" his sons, even through he can't currently be there.**

wasn't surprised about his deployment aboard *Comfort*. Setting sail Jan. 6 to the Arabian Gulf region in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Cargo had been on stand-by for this mission for several months.

He, like many other *Comfort* crewmembers who are regularly assigned at NNMC and other stations along the east coast, knew he might have to leave his family if *Comfort* was activated. So, as he readied to become a new dad, he also geared up for a likely deployment.

When *Comfort's* call to duty finally came, the time between the issue of orders and the ship's exodus from Baltimore, Md., was not long – only a matter of days.

For Cargo, preparations for parenthood shifted into preparations for possible war.

Felicia Plunkett, Cargo's fiancé who is also in the Navy and serves as a Ship's Serviceman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class at Anacostia, Md., continued preparing for the twins' arrival, as "dad" made his departure.

"They're beautiful...I'm sorry I couldn't be there," Cargo now says of his newborn sons to his fiancé via the VTC.

Cargo's story is not an uncommon one. As Navy men and women carry on the mission throughout the fleet, families back home carry on their "missions," too. Life -- in its many facets of begin-

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**PARENTHOOD, from page 1**

nings, endings and all possible events in between -- continues, despite the distance or duration of deployment.

Although Cargo is proud to be serving his country, Cargo's absence during his sons' first months is not something for which he planned. He wanted to be there, he emphasizes.

In today's society, where the ever-growing prevalence of fragmented and fractured American families has come under fire, members of the male gender are often criticized for their lack of locality in relationship to the partnership of parenting.

However, especially concerning those in the Navy, this is not always by choice. Furthermore, where proximity is not always possible, new Navy fathers are proving that they are still committed to being involved with their kids. From aboard *Comfort*, thousands of miles from home, Cargo and others are finding ways to bridge the gap between "The Gulf" and the family.

"I think it's a real asset to have the kind of technology available where we can do things from the sea, such as video teleconferencing," says Chief Information Officer for the Medical Treatment Facility aboard *Comfort*, Lt. David Felton, NC. "Back when I first joined the Navy, guys that became dads during a float had to

wait until the end of the deployment to see their babies. I remember when it used to be that when we pulled into homeport, they let the new moms on the ship first. Now, in many aspects, they don't have to wait to see their kids and I think that's great."

Felton adds that giving deployed dads a way to connect with their newborns is also beneficial to the Navy. "I think that giving them a chance to actually see their new babies and know that mom is alright, helps them stay focused on the mission out here."

Staying focused on the mission -- of being a father and a Sailor -- is something MM2 (SW) Eric Baker, a *Comfort* crewmember who works in the ship's oxygen plant, has learned during his six-year career in the Navy. Having be-

come a new father while he was at a Navy training school two years ago, Baker joined his wife in the delivery room via a cell phone as she had his son, Brye. Recently, as his wife, Missi, gave birth to their second child Jan. 31, Baker stayed connected through Yahoo Instant Messenger, typing for nearly five hours as his wife labored and delivered 8-lb, 7-oz Angeleah Mae Sue.

"My wife's little joke is to say that we're going to keep having kids until I can be there for one," says Baker, with a slightly nervous laugh. "But that sounds like it would get too expensive."

All joking aside, Baker insists his Navy career is not at the cost of his children. He says he finds way to connect with his kids and keep his father role, regardless of whether he's home or not.

"Missi and I e-mail everyday and talk on the phone a lot, too. We still make parenting decisions together - everything from bedtime schedules to how to get my son to pick up his toys...I send them pictures via e-mail and they make home videos for me...I leave messages on their cell phone sometimes, so my little man can listen to them whenever he starts hollering for me," says Baker. "In some ways, though, it hasn't really hit me yet that I have a daughter. I think the whole thing with me being away is actually harder on my 2-year-old."

Baker says that while he can stay connected with his family while he's aboard *Comfort*, he still won't get a chance to bond with his new baby until he's back home. *Comfort* Sailors have not been told, as of yet, when that may be.

However, for Ship's Serviceman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Steven Robey, the chance to see his brand-new daughter, Skylar Jolynn, who was born March 2, comes much sooner. After receiving word that his grandfather is dying, *Comfort's* chain of command authorized Robey to fly home on leave to see his family. Robey, who departed the ship March 6, says he has mixed emotions about the trip.

"Yes, I am excited about seeing the baby, but I also want to spend as much time as I can with my grandfather," says

**Angeleah Mae Sue Baker**



**Jan. 31, 2003  
8lbs 14 ozs**

Robey. "But I am going to bring Skylar with me, so my grandfather will get to spend time with his first and probably only great grandchild...I am just glad he was still here for her birth."

Robey, echoing Cargo's feelings, says he's still "numb" over the whole experience of becoming a dad, but says he's devoted to parenthood despite deployments and mission needs.

"I just have to try extra hard when I get home to make up for lost time," jokes Robey, referring to his daughter as well as his wife,

Melissa. "I know (Melissa) doesn't enjoy (me being gone) but its part of being in the Navy -- it's part of the package deal."

However, Robey is quick to add that having a child has already changed him in some ways, making him more responsible and more determined to succeed in the Navy, so he can support his family and set a good example for his daughter. "The other guys out here have told me that having a child changes you," says Robey. "And I think they're right."

Ultimately, whether fathers in the Navy are there to witness the birth and beginning months of their children's lives is not what determines if they will be good parents, says Cargo, Baker and Robey. Even serving full careers in the Navy, when the mission is sure to take them away from home -- time and time again -- does not impede their parental roles; it just alters them a little. In the end, they say that which makes them so dedicated to the Navy is the same thing that helps them be good fathers. It's called commitment.

"Some days, I wonder whether I'm doing the right thing, or if I'm doing enough. But, there will come a day when I can sit down with my kids and really talk to them. And I think they'll have respect for my decisions and understand why I wasn't always "there" all the time," confesses Baker.

"Ultimately, we all do the best we can."

**Xavier Giovanni & Elijah Corree Cargo**



**March 1, 2003  
7 lbs 8 ozs & 7 lbs 15 ozs**

**Skylar Jolynn Robey**



**March 2, 2003  
6 lbs 15 ozs**

# Helping children cope with deployment

By Lt. Cmdr. Stella Hayes  
Branch Medical Clinic, Naples

**NAPLES (NNS)** -- One of the biggest worries deploying Sailors have is for their children. How will their children cope with their parent's absence and uncertain safety?

In their article, "Children and Fear of War and Terrorism," the National Association of School Psychologists said, "For many, the guidance of caring adults will make the difference between being overwhelmed and developing life-long emotional and psychological coping skills." Talk and images of terrorist attacks and war may set children's imaginations running wild. They may imagine the worse, however unrealistic it may be.

Dr. Lillian Miller is a clinical psychologist at the Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC), Naples. She said, "Children have vivid imaginations, and if they are young enough and imaginative enough, they tend to think that they are at the center of all things, that they are the cause of all actions, good or bad. It is better to tell them of impending changes in their family life, because if they aren't prepared ahead of time, they may blame themselves for a parent's absence, thinking that parent is gone because of something 'bad' they did, said or wished."

She goes on to say that if your child is upset, try to recognize these feelings,

and put them into words, such as 'I can see you are feeling really scared about this.' Sometimes a hug and saying 'This is really hard for us all' is the best thing you can do to validate your child's feelings and communicate that you share these feelings. Don't deny the seriousness of the situation by telling your child not to cry or not to worry. At the same time, you should express your hope that things will be okay."

Children often take emotional cues from the adults around them -- especially parents. Thus, it is important for a parent to remain calm and respond to children's concerns in a controlled and reasonable manner.

Help provide a sense of stability and security by maintaining normal routines. Remind children of day-to-day events that will not change: school will continue, the house will not change, and they will still sleep in their own beds.

Children may need guidance on what to believe about war and world events. "Take your child's lead and talk on a level appropriate to his or her developmental level," Miller said. "If they are old enough to be reading about and discussing the events leading up to a war, then refer to people or countries or events by specific name. If they are too young to know the specifics, and they are asking 'why' questions, try to get them to explain what they think or know, and then correct any misunderstandings at

their level."

With small children, Miller recommends avoiding using global terms, like "bad," as children are too used to hearing this applied to themselves or other children and may assume that if they are "bad," the same drastic measures may be taken against them or anyone else called "bad."

For difficult questions such as "Are you going to die?" answer a young child simply and truthfully: "I don't know. I hope not, because I want to return to be a part of this family and watch you grow up. My friends and I are going to do everything we can to make sure we come back safely as soon as possible."

For an older child, Miller suggests you can discuss the specific dangers of your assignment and the uncertainty of war, while stressing the precautions you and your unit will take.

In conclusion Miller said, "Knowledge can be helpful, I believe, in terms of preparation for possible war, but the assurance of a deploying parent's care, enduring love, and intention to return and rejoin the family as soon as possible can go a long way toward calming a child's reasonable fears."

If your child exhibits extreme or unusual reactions such as sleeping problems, withdrawal, aggression or obsession with violent thoughts, he or she may benefit from professional help. If you are concerned, contact your chaplain, the FFSC, your medical provider or your school guidance counselor.

## Changing families, growing together

By LCDR Mark Koczak  
Comfort Chaplain

**W**e all have some connection with people that we love and care for back home. I pray for them every night we are at sea.

Long periods of time away from them can bring about a lot of change. It is important for us to realize that we change, too, when we are at sea for a long time.

We get accustomed to the people around us, our shipmates, to the ship where we live and work and try to relax. We often see and hang out with the same folks. We make and break friendships. This is why being a good shipmate is so important.

But -- and this is very important -- we change. This is part of being human. Recognize change within yourself on this cruise. If we

change, then those whom we love and care for at home also change. They have lived without us for a long period of time. For some of us this is the first time apart. They have matured and grown, as have we.

If the greatest problem in relationships is communication then the second problem is not recognizing change. People change. Our children grow and mature. We develop and maintain ways of communicating our feelings and thoughts over long distances.

We use the technology of e-mail and telephones to do this. Writing letters is also a wonderful idea.

Too many of us do not admit to change in our lives. Do not make this mistake with yourself and with your loved ones on this cruise. Rejoice in it and allow it to make things better.

## Paddock promoted to Commander



**Lt. Cmdr. Charles Paddock, DC, was promoted March 1 to full Commander aboard USNS Comfort by MTF Commanding Officer, Capt. Charles Blankenship, MC.**

## Navy, Marine Corps Leaders to Congress:

# We Are Ready

**WASHINGTON (NNS)** -- When the top leaders from the Navy and Marine Corps recently testified on Capitol Hill, their message to Congress was loud and clear: their team is combat ready.

Acting Secretary of the Navy Hansford T. Johnson, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Vern Clark and Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Michael Hagee testified before the House Armed Services Committee during the Department of the Navy posture hearing recently.

"Today, approximately 60 percent of our ships are underway, including six deployed carrier battle groups, and 63 percent of our Marine operating forces are forward deployed," Johnson said. "Our Navy Marine Corps team is well trained, highly motivated, and ready to meet the call from our nation."

The CNO said retention and manning successes have enabled the Navy to "surge" forces to where they're needed, and he thanked the Congress for the investments they've made in readiness.

"Since 1968 when I joined the Navy, I have never seen the Navy as ready as it is today. It's a capable, persistent, combat force. It represents the return on investment that you in the Congress, speaking for the American people, have made in our readiness. And we are grateful," Clark said.

"I also want to thank you for the exceptional support that you have provided to our Sailors, our most cherished resource, the brave men and women that we call upon in this country to represent us and the values that we believe in," Clark added.

Hagee told the representatives about some of the Navy Marine Corp team's many deployments around the world in support of the global war on terrorism.

"Along with our sister services, the Navy-Marine Corps team continues to play a key role in the global war on terrorism and in the establishment of stability and security in many of the world's trouble spots," Hagee said. "Marines, both active and Reserve, are operating side-by-side with Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, NGOs (non-government organizations), diplomats and many others, in diverse locations from Afghanistan, to the Arabian Gulf, the Horn of

## Comfort vertreps to gear up



Photo by JO2 Ellen Maurer

**Aboard Navy hospital ship USNS COMFORT (T-AH 20) — Working into the evening hours, a crew of about 30 Sailors from the ship's flight deck and supply departments off-loaded nearly 75,000 lbs. of medical supplies during a vertical replenishment March 4. *Comfort*, now positioned in the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, deployed from its layberth in Baltimore, Md. As the most sophisticated medical facility in theater, *Comfort* offers a full spectrum of medical support to forward deployed troops and is capable of caring for up to 1,000 in-patients at a time.**

Africa, Turkey, the Georgian Republic, Colombia, Guantanamo Bay and the Philippines."

Johnson thanked the Congress for its continued support of the Navy Marine Corps team and the families who support it.

"The Navy Marine Corps team's successes reflect the strong and sustained support by the Congress, as well as those on the homefront, our dedicated civilian (and) contract employees and the great American mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, and children who support the

forward deployed defenders of freedom," he said. "We're eternally grateful for all the hard work and sacrifices they and all of our supporters are making."

The CNO said that the Navy Marine Corps team is ready to respond, if called.

"Your Navy, the nation's Navy, is ready. It is combat ready. It is forward deployed. It is on scene," Clark said. "The young men and women in your nation's Navy are serving with great distinction."