



NAVY MEDICAL NAVIGATOR

In World News:

Iraqi Kurds handed over the Ba'ath Party regional command chairman for East Baghdad to coalition special operations forces yesterday. Samir Abd al-Aziz al-Najim was the "4" of clubs in the deck of cards issued to coalition troops to identify the 55 "most wanted" members of Saddam Hussein's regime.

To date, on April 16, coalition special operations forces captured Barzan Ibrahim Hasan al-Tikriti, Saddam Hussein's half-brother. On April 14, coalition forces captured Abu Abbas, a terrorist responsible for the hijacking of the cruise ship Achille Lauro in 1985. Another Hussein half-brother, Watban Ibrahim Hasan, was captured April 13 in northern Iraq reportedly trying to flee to neighboring Syria.

In Navy News:

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- The Navy Museum celebrates its 40th anniversary and the legacy of past naval museums with a new exhibit called, "Spanning Three Centuries: Museums on the Washington Navy Yard."

This anniversary exhibit highlights images and artifacts from the Navy's original collection and its early museums.

Featured are rare photographs of the yard's past museums, and architectural drawings designed in 1932 for a proposed naval history museum to be located on the National Mall.

In Sports:

Seattle Mariners pitcher Jaime Moyer pitched his 100th career win with the Mariners Thursday night against Anaheim.

Moyer pitched seven scoreless innings and benefited from a circus catch by teammate Ichiro Suzuki to lead the Seattle to an 8-2 victory over the Anaheim Angels on Friday night.

Moyer allowed seven hits, struck out four, walked two and escaped a bases-loaded jam in the third by striking out Tim Salmon with an 80-mph breaking ball on 3-2 that broke away from the Angels' career home run leader.

Moyer (2-1) joined five-time Cy Young winner Randy Johnson as the only pitchers to record at least 100 victories with Seattle. Moyer did it in his 204th start for the Mariners, seven fewer than the Big Unit needed.

Comfort faces different war



Lt. Cmdr. Mary Ann Brantley, NC, takes care of an ICU patient Tuesday. Brantley was a nurse on Comfort during the last Gulf War.

*Story and photos by JOSN Erica Mater
Comfort Public Affairs*

Did you know Comfort has performed over 500 surgical procedures during Operation Enduring/Iraqi Freedom? That is nearly 180 more than the number of surgical procedures Comfort performed in Operation Desert Shield/Storm. While those numbers might not be staggering, let's put it in perspective. In Operation Desert Shield/Storm, Comfort was out here for a total of nine months and performed a total of 337 surgical procedures. This time, over 500 surgeries have been performed in about four weeks.

Though the numbers mentioned above provide a comparison between both Iraqi conflicts, they are anything

but the same for Comfort.

"You can't compare the two wars. It's like apples to oranges, you just can't," said Cmdr. Anne Diggs, NC, who works in the intensive care units as the head nurse.

Diggs, who was on Comfort during the last Gulf War as a staff nurse and Lt., did not imagine being back here a second time.

"I didn't expect to be back here 11 years later," said Diggs.

In 1990-91, Comfort treated only Americans and non-combat related injuries. This time, Comfort has seen mostly combat related injuries, such as gunshot wounds, shrapnel wounds, burns, and head injuries. Comfort is also dealing with mostly Enemy Prisoners of War and Iraqi civilians.

For Diggs and the ICU staff, they are taking care of more critically wounded patients than in Operation Desert Shield/Storm, including seven severely burned patients, which is the most Comfort's ICU has seen. In fact, most major burn units in the states have rarely taken in seven burn patients at one time.

With over a decade between the two conflicts, it is no wonder that technology on board has changed just as much as the wars are different.

In 1990-91 Comfort did not have the capabilities to perform angiograms. This time, there have been 30 angiograms performed on Comfort. An angiogram is a type of interventional radiology, which allows radiologists to view and repair blood vessels without having to make an incision.

"This procedure has undoubtedly saved some of our patients lives," said Capt. Jeffrey Georgia, an interventional

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Comfort Laboratories Honored in NMLW

Story by LCDR Wilson Knight
and HM1 America Ceralde

The *USNS COMFORT (T-AH 20)* laboratory will celebrate National Medical Laboratory Week (NMLW) from 20 to 26 April 2003. NMLW offers an opportunity to recognize the contributions laboratory professionals make to the field of medicine. This year's theme, "Exceptional People, Exceptional Work," highlights the medical laboratory's role as an essential element of patient care. Medical laboratory professionals are dedicated to the prevention of serious illness.

Using state of the art technology and instrumentation, these clinical laboratory scientists perform and supervise tests that often identify the presence of disease in its earliest stages, when the possibilities of a cure are greatest and when treatment is least costly. Military medical laboratory professionals represent a variety of



Photo by JOSN Erica Mater

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Xuan Nguyen inspects a test tube in the main lab on *Comfort* Tuesday. National Medical Laboratory week will be celebrated from 20 to 26 April 2003.

specialties, including pathologists, clinical laboratory scientists, medical laboratory technicians, blood bank specialists, histology technicians, cytotechnologists, phlebotomy technicians, microbiologists, laboratory managers, clinical chemists and medical educators.

"We are proud of the work we do," said HMC Anthony Blackwell, the Laboratory's Leading Chief Petty Officer. "We have to be painstakingly meticulous in performing our jobs in order to provide dependable answers to clinicians."

Laboratories also play a critical, front-line role in the detection of infectious agents, such as those that might be employed in a bioterrorist attack. In fact, *USNS Comfort* has a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) analyzer that is capable of detecting several of the biological weapons agents that are of most concern to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

USNS COMFORT Laboratory Department has 34 personnel, including a pathologist, lab managers, clinical laboratory scientists, medical laboratory technicians, histology technician and a cytotechnologist. The laboratory is divided into Clinical Pathology (chemistry, serology, hematology, microbiology, immunology, coagulation, and urinalysis), Anatomic Pathology (cytology and histology), and Blood Bank. The laboratory has performed over 4,729 tests through 10 April 2003 including, the issuance of over 180 blood units and 20 fresh frozen plasma units since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

To celebrate NMLW, the Laboratory Division will conduct various games and contests and provide prizes for the winners. Each activity will feature an aspect of clinical laboratory medicine. The galley will also provide a cake in honor of NMLW.

"We have an outstanding group of laboratory professionals onboard *Comfort*, and these events give us an opportunity to maintain our high morale and gain more visibility within the medical community," said LCDR Greg Knight, Laboratory Division Officer.

First TSP Open Season of 2003 Begins

From Chief of Naval Personnel
Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- As the tax filing season ends for most Sailors, the first open season for Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) for 2003 begins -- offering Sailors a chance to begin building future savings or adjust their TSP contributions.

During the open season, which runs April 15 through June 30, active duty and Reservists can choose to invest from 1 to 8 percent of their basic pay and up to 100 percent of bonus, special or incentive pay in TSP within

IRS limits.

"If you haven't already done so, now is the time to begin investing in yourself and your future," said Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Gerry Hoewing. "TSP offers Sailors an avenue to provide for that future by setting aside some tax-deferred dollars for long term savings."

TSP was not designed to replace the military's retirement plans but is a convenient way for Sailors to invest in a variety of investment vehicles to provide additional money for the future. Account balances can be transferred to an eligible retirement plan when a

Sailor leaves the service. Thus, the balance can continue to grow tax-deferred.

TSP enrollment can be done online through the MYPAY Web site (formerly called Employee Member Self Service (E/MSS)) at <https://emss.dfas.mil/mypay.asp>, or by completing a TSP enrollment form (TSP-U-1) and turning it in to the servicing pay or personnel office. TSP enrollment forms are available at local Fleet and Family Support Centers, Personnel Support Detachments or online at the TSP Web site, <http://www.tsp.gov>.

Pharmacy plays role in patient care on *Comfort*

Story and photo by JOSH Erica Mater
Comfort Public Affairs

When we go to sick call, in many cases, the doctor gives us a prescription for some type of medication. Then we take it to the pharmacy window and we pick up our prescription. For the most part, we don't even think twice about where the medicine came from, how it was made, or all of its uses.

During these past few weeks, the pharmacy clinic has been hard at work making medicines for use all around *Comfort*. Whether it's making emergency medicines down in casualty receiving, or the normal, everyday prescription from sick call, *Comfort* pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are receiving a lot of business.

"Since the war started, we have seen a tremendous increase in our workload," says Pharmacy's Division Officer Lt. Gary West, MSC. "Now, we are making about 300-500 IV's, filling about 50-90 prescriptions in one day, and have at least 40,000 syringes of morphine on hand."

The pharmacy is involved with the making of antibiotics, IV, cardiac medicines, as well as life-saving and pain control medicines. Every morning around 8 a.m., you can walk into the pharmacy and see two-three people working meticulously to make the

days supply of IV or any other medicines needed.

When there are patients in Casualty Receiving, at least one person from pharmacy can be found waiting to make emergency medicines if the need arises, but that's not all they do.

"I am not just down there for pharmacy," said HM2 Brian Southard, the leading petty officer for pharmacy. "If there is no need for medicines, then I will help out wherever I am needed."

However, when CASREC does need medicines, Southard and other pharmacy staff have a unique way of communicating with each other to get the meds out. Pharmacy uses Microsoft Net meeting to communicate back and forth from pharmacy and down in CASREC. Net meeting is like a chat room, and allows for real-time messaging.

"Net meeting is very useful. We don't tie up the phone lines, and we are the only ones using it, so it allows us to communicate faster and without interruption," said West.

The pharmacy is staffed with three pharmacists (officers), one chief, and about 15 pharmacy techs (hospital corpsman). They work two 12-hour shifts. Sometimes the workload is more than they expected, but they often adapt and overcome.

"It can be very stressful, but at the same time, we handle it just like we

would on a normal day," said HM3 Alicia Davis, a pharmacist's tech.

Pharmacy is also used as a place of knowledge.

"Medical staff will often call us about certain medicines. We are used often as a clinical reference and for drug knowledge," said West.

West said the pharmacy can be found just about anywhere on *Comfort*.

"Either directly or indirectly, we have more patient contact than any other medical service on *Comfort*. We are there in CASREC. We are in every ward, every surgery, with any medication," said West.



Hospital Corpsman Jifen Huang works on filling prescriptions and making medications in the pharmacy lab.

MCPON makes 'rounds' aboard *Comfort*



Hospital Corpsman Tana Palmerton greets MCPON Terry Scott (SS/AW) in one of *Comfort*'s ICUs Tuesday.

Story and photo by JOSH Erica Mater
Comfort Public Affairs

On Tuesday, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Terry Scott (SS/AW) came aboard *Comfort* to visit staff members.

The MCPON met briefly with the CO, XO, and CMC, before making his way around the ship. Scott visited numerous areas during his two hour stay including supply, the ICUs, mess decks, and casualty receiving. He talked with personnel about the importance of their job and took questions, mainly questions about when *Comfort* was going home.

Scott also presented a number of awards to personnel throughout the ship including Enlisted Surface Warfare (ESWS) pins, Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medals, as well as letters of commendation.

Chaplain's Corner:

History of Easter

By LCDR Mark Koczak
Command Chaplain

Easter is the yearly celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the center of Christian worship in all of the Christian denominations. It is the oldest of Christian feasts and in the early Church, the celebration started on Thursday with the Last Supper, Friday with the Crucifixion and Burial, Saturday with Jesus in the tomb and Sunday the Resurrection.

There is also another celebration going on. We all are celebrating spring and the renewing of life on our world. The Church purposely put these two events together. The word, Easter, comes from the pagan Anglo-Saxon feast that celebrates this rite of spring. Pascha, from the Hebrew and Greek, is the proper word for the religious feast that is celebrated by Christians throughout the world. Easter is a changeable feast on the Church calendar, because it falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox every year. So look outside tonight, the moon is full. Another old rule from 325 AD added; not before or during the Jewish Passover. This rule remains with the Eastern Orthodox Church. So for the Orthodox Christians, in the Eastern Europe, the Middle East and many in the United States, such as myself and a few others on COMFORT, our Easter is later than the western Christians.

In our American culture, Easter, like Christmas, has become a secular holiday. The Easter bunny, candy, Easter eggs and all that goes with it is a part of many of our lives whether we believe or not. A number of folks wanted to bring Easter baskets to our civilian patients. This could cause much confusion for them. Their religious faith is fused into their whole lives. They do not think in boxes as we do in the West.

Shipmates, believe me, enjoy the Easter baskets and such, but remember that a number of us on the ship are celebrating the main religious event of our faith. Come to the services if you can and especially the sunrise service on Easter Sunday. Sunrise on *Comfort* is always beautiful.

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radiologist who has performed a number of angiograms aboard *Comfort*.

Radiology is another department that has surpassed the numbers from the last war. In 1990-91, Radiology performed a total of 1,240 radiographic studies, including 141 CT scans in nine months. This time, *Comfort's* radiology department has performed almost triple the number of radiographic studies and CT scans with 3,026 and 311 respectively. All in four weeks time.

However, the medical field is not the only area where technology has changed. Communications has made vast improvements over the past decade. During Operation Desert Shield/Storm, the only way Sailors could communicate with family and friends back home was through regular mail. Now, Sailors can talk on telephones and e-mail in real-time.

There is also satellite television, which allows Sailors to see the news as it is happening.

"Last time, we had two televisions without news capabilities. We had no e-mail," said Diggs. "It is totally amazing that we can keep up to date with e-mail and the news."

For ICU nurse Lt. Cmdr. Mary Ann Brantley, NC, this is nothing like the last time she was here.

"No deployment is ever the same, and this war is definitely not like the last one," said Brantley.

Brantley also worked in the ICU in the last war. She said in the last war, Sailors had to find ways to amuse themselves because they had no patients. Now, she is part of a team taking care of approximately 30 ICU patients.

"Last time, when we heard flight quarters it meant we were getting

mail. This time when you hear flight quarters, it means we are in business," said Brantley.

Sometimes the ratio of patients to nurse is four to one. Back in the states, that number would read more like two patients to one nurse.

"We are asking the corpsman and nurses to answer the call, and they have done just that," said Brantley. "Every staff member you ask to do something, it gets done. They just keep giving and giving."

Comfort Anesthesiologist Cmdr. Craig Bonnema, MC, has been keeping track of the statistics for this deployment. Bonnema is

amazed at the numbers he has been seeing.

"In the past four weeks, we have easily exceeded the number of surgical cases that were done in the last Gulf war. At the rate that we have been

working, we will double that number in two more weeks," said Bonnema.

Bonnema said the numbers also tell about the care we have been giving.

"It says a lot about the high level of care here on *Comfort*, to be able to keep up this kind of pace," said Bonnema. "And we will continue to do so, even after the media has stopped reporting."

If there is one thing that is the same about the two wars, it is the care that has been provided to patients on *Comfort*.

"The best thing about *Comfort* is that we always provide the best quality care to our patients... no matter who they are or where they come from," said Diggs.



Cmdr. Anne Diggs, NC, covers an ICU patient with an air blanket which helps regulate body temperature.