

JOINT TASK FORCE GUANTANAMO

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HISTORY OF NAVAL STATION GUANTANAMO BAY, CUBA

U.S. Naval Base Guantanamo Bay is the oldest U.S. base overseas and the only one in a Communist country. Located on the southeast corner of Cuba, in the Oriente Province, the base is about 400 air miles from Miami, Florida. In December 1903, the United States leased the 45 square miles of land and water for use as a coaling station. A treaty reaffirmed the lease in 1934 granting Cuba and her trading partner's free access through the bay, payment of \$2,000 in gold per year, equating to \$4,085 today, and a requirement that both the U.S. and Cuba must mutually consent to terminate the lease.

U.S. diplomatic relations with Cuba were cut on January 3, 1961 by President Dwight Eisenhower; shortly prior to John F. Kennedy's inauguration on January 20, 1961. At that time, many Cubans sought refuge on the base. U.S. Marines and Cuban militiamen began patrolling opposite sides of the base's 17.4-mile fence line. Today, U.S. Marines and Cuba's "Frontier Brigade" still man fence-line posts 24 hours a day.

In October 1962, family members of service people stationed here and many base employees were evacuated to the United States as President John F. Kennedy announced the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba. This was the start of the Cuban Missile Crisis which resulted in a naval quarantine of the island until the Soviet Union removed the missiles. The evacuees were allowed to return to the base by Christmas 1962. Another crisis arose just 14 months later on February 6, 1964, when Castro cut off water and supplies to the base in retaliation for several incidents in which Cuban fishermen were fined by the U.S. government for fishing in Florida waters. Since then, Guantanamo Bay has been self-sufficient and the Naval Base desalination plant produces 3.4 million gallons of water and more than 800,000-kilowatt hours of electricity daily.

The base is divided into two distinct areas by the 2 1/2 mile-wide Guantanamo Bay. The airfield is located on the Leeward side and the main base is on the Windward side. Ferry service provides transportation across the bay. The primary mission of Guantanamo Bay is to serve as a strategic logistics base for the Navy's Atlantic Fleet and to support counter drug operations in the Caribbean.

In 1991, the naval base's mission expanded as some 56,000 Haitian refugees and 8,000 Cuban migrants passed through Guantanamo Bay. The refugees fled Haiti after a violent coup brought on by political and social upheaval in their country. The naval base received the Navy Unit Commendation and Joint Meritorious Unit Award for its effort. In May 1994, Operation Sea Signal began and the naval base was tasked to support Joint Task Force 160 providing humanitarian assistance to thousands of Haitian and Cuban migrants. In late August and early September 1994, 2,200 family members and civilian employees were evacuated from the base as the migrant population climbed to more than 45,000 and the Pentagon began preparing to house up to 60,000 migrants on the base. The last Haitian migrants departed November 1, 1995. The last of the Cuban migrants left the base January 31, 1996. In October 1995, family members were authorized to return, marking an end to family separations. An immediate effort began to restore base facilities for family use, including a child development center, a youth center, two schools and Sunday school. Additionally, the revitalization of Boy and Girl Scout Camps and the Guantanamo Bay Youth Activities (a free sports program for children) was enacted.

During the Haitian migrant operation "Operation Sea Signal" at Guantanamo Bay, a number of migrant camps were set-up at "Radio Range" the site of the Naval Base's radio antennas on the south side of the base, and the future site of the more permanent detainee facility. To identify the camps, a name was designated to each to correspond with the phonetic alphabet used for official military "radio" communication (Camp Alpha, Camp Bravo up to Camp Golf). When additional sites were established on the north side of the base, camp names were designated using the opposite end of the alphabet, to include Camp X-Ray. Camp X-Ray is the only campsite on the northern side of the base and is no longer used as a detention facility.

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Since Sea Signal, Guantanamo Bay has retained a migrant operations mission with an ongoing steady state migrant population of approximately 40. The base has also conducted two contingency migrant operations: Operation Marathon in October 1996 and Present Haven in February 1997. Both of these short-fused events involved the interception of Chinese migrants being smuggled into the United States.

After 52 years of service, Guantanamo's Fleet Training Group relocated to Mayport, Florida, in July 1995. One month later, the naval base lost another major tenant command when the base's Shore Intermediate Maintenance Activity disestablished after 92 years of service.

The Naval Base includes, as separate commands, a Naval Hospital and Branch Dental Clinic, detachments of the Personnel Support Activity, Naval Atlantic Meteorological and Oceanographic Command, Naval Media Center, Naval Communications Station and Department of Defense Dependent Schools. Directly supporting the base as departments of Naval Station are Naval Criminal Investigative Service, Resident Officer in Charge of Construction, Human Resources Office, Family Support and Service Center, Red Cross, Security and Navy Exchange/Commissary.

Guantanamo Bay is the largest bay on the extreme south coast of Cuba, and affords anchorage for deep-draft ships. The bay is a pouch-shaped indentation about 12 miles long in a northeast-southwest direction and about 6 miles across at its greatest width. Guantanamo Valley, a low, hilly district, extends westward from the bay along the Sierra Maestra. The deep bay is sheltered by the nearby Cuzco Hills (elevations to 495 ft) to the south and east and by mountains to the north.

At Guantanamo Bay, the Outer Harbor is used by the U.S. Navy and the Inner Harbor serves as a commercial (Cuban) port. This evaluation deals with the facilities of the Outer Harbor only, although the climatology section is appropriate for both harbors. The Outer Harbor includes that portion of Guantanamo Bay from the entrance north to Palma Point (approximately 19° 58' 24"N). The major naval facilities are contained within Corinaso Cove from Corinaso Point to Radio Point. There are five piers available, varying in length from 180-900 ft with depths alongside from 20 to 35 ft. Three wharves provide accommodations up to 1065 ft with depths to 38 ft. Piers and wharves range from 6 to 10 ft in height above MSL. It should be noted that dredge depths decrease along some piers (see Pier B) and also that dredge width may be minimal and maneuvering is consequently difficult. Berths and anchorages in Guantanamo Bay are assigned by the Port Services Officer. The naval anchorage areas for deep-draft vessels are in the Outer Harbor. Pilots are available and required for ships engaged in commercial trade, but are not compulsory for ships of the US Navy. Tugs (normally two available) and other harbor services may be arranged through Port Control. Emergency harbor services are available 24 hours a day.

Two airfields are located within the naval complex: McCalla Airfield, on the east side of the harbor entrance, is inactive; Leeward Point Field on the west side is an active naval air station.

In early 2005, four white wind turbines began operating on John Paul Jones Hill, the base's highest point, named after the Revolutionary War naval hero. The turbines, standing at 80 meters (262 feet) high, feature three-blade turbines. The four turbines were estimated to provide as much as a quarter of the base's power generation during the high-wind months of late summer and fall; an appreciable fact given that Guantanamo Bay is completely self-sustaining, generating its own power and water without having to rely on Cuban municipal sources. In addition to generating power, the turbines have significantly cut down on emissions of greenhouse gases created through burning diesel fuel. Black clouds containing carbon dioxide can routinely be seen pouring from the diesel generators supplying power to the base's energy grid. Each turbine is anchored in a giant block of concrete, through which 22 soil anchors are drilled into the mountain to a depth of 30 to 40 feet deep. These are then sealed with grout. The automated turbines are rated to withstand winds of up to 140 miles per hour.

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NAVAL STATION GUANTANAMO BAY BY THE NUMBERS

PERSONNEL (does not include JTF):

Military – 624
Civilians – 2980
Total: 3604

INSTALLATION:

The base has a 46 ft. deep natural harbor, enabling ships to moor closer to shore.
Land area: approximately 45 square miles (28,817 acres)
Fence Line: 17.4 miles of security fence is guarded by U.S. Marines

UTILITIES:

No utilities are received from the government of Cuba. The base is self-sufficient.

- Desalination plant produces 3.4 million gallons of water per day
- Power plant produces more than 800,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity per day
- Wind Turbines
- On average 2-3 percent of the base's electric energy per day comes from the Naval Station's four 262 ft. tall, three-blade turbines.
- Each of the turbines produces 950 kilowatts of electricity.
- The wind turbines save approximately 250,000 gallons of diesel fuel per year.

MAJOR UNITS AND TENANT COMMANDS:

United States Naval Hospital Guantanamo Bay
Marine Corps Security Force Company Guantanamo Bay
Personnel Support Activity
Naval Atlantic Meteorology and Oceanography Command Detachment
Naval Media Center Detachment
Department of Defense Education Activity – W.T. Sampson Schools
International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Southeast, Public Works Detachment
Fleet & Industrial Supply Center (FISC), Jacksonville Detachment, GTMO
Joint Task Force Guantanamo (Detention Center)
U.S. Coast Guard Aviation Detachment – Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

Fleet Camp at Deer Point, circa 1910