



Volume 14, Issue 16

U.S. Naval Forces Central Command - U.S. FIFTH Fleet

October 9, 2003

## Keating turns over command of 5th Fleet



U.S. Navy photo by PH1(AW) Ernest Hunt

Outgoing Commander U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/ Commander, Fifth Fleet Vice Adm. Timothy J. Keating speaks with guest gathered for a change of command ceremony aboard 5th Fleet Headquarters in Bahrain. Vice Adm. David C. Nichols, Jr. relieved Keating, who led Fifth Fleet Sailors and Marines for the past 20 months during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

*COMUSNAVCENT/ COMFIFTHFLT*

*Public Affairs*

Vice Adm. Timothy J. Keating, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/

### **Statement from Gordon R. England on second term as SECNAV**

*Secretary of the Navy*

*Public Affairs*

Secretary of the Navy Gordon R. England released the following message:

When I left our department in January, I said that I would "marvel at your achievements" and "gain strength from your example." Over the last seven months, in Iraq and around the world, you have fought the enemies of freedom and prevailed. Your courage and hardened resolve is the shield Americans rely on for their security and way of life.

Commander, U.S. Fifth Fleet, was relieved by Vice Adm. David C. Nichols, Jr., yesterday in an official ceremony in Bahrain.

In his farewell speech, Keating praised U.S. Fifth Fleet Sailors and Marines for their

The success of the Navy Marine Corps team results from that daily dedication to America. It also results from the strong leadership of servants like President Bush, Secretary Rumsfeld and Hansford T. Johnson. H.T. guided our department through a significant battle in our global war on terrorism and through our continuing transformation. He and Linda deserve our deepest gratitude. With leaders like Adm. Clark, Gen. Hagee, MCPON Scott and Sgt. Maj. Estrada, our team is indeed blessed.

Dotty and I are pleased, proud and delighted to return to the Navy Marine Corps team. The

accomplishments during the last 20 months under his leadership. Most notably, Keating said, were their essential contributions to the success of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Last February, I visited many Sailors and Marines in the region, and I had a message. 'Be ready,'" Keating said. "And they were ... you were. You were ready when you were needed most, and you performed superbly."

At the height of OIF, five carrier strike groups, three amphibious ready groups, and two amphibious task forces, totaling more than 200 U.S. and coalition ships with more than 80,000 Sailors and 15,000 embarked Marines, reported to Keating as Commander, Naval Forces Central Command. Keating's other responsibilities included Commander, U.S. Fifth Fleet and Coalition Joint Forces Maritime Component Commander.

Technological superiority, advanced communications, and historic naval warfare tactics, combined with extensive use of special forces and more than 800 Tomahawk land-attack missile strikes, softened Iraqi defenses,

*See Keating - page 2*

success of our naval family is due to the quality of your work and depth of your devotion. We pledge our equal dedication to you and to your families.

In my confirmation hearing, I committed to strengthening our combat capability, improving your quality of service, recapitalizing our forces and improving business practices. Naval power 21 will continue to guide our transformation as we project persistent power, around the world and around the clock.

Working together, we will prevail in this global war on terror.

Semper fi and sail proud. 



U.S. Navy photo by JO3 Shawnee McKain

Capt. Jay M. Smith, Commanding Officer, Naval Support Activity Bahrain signs a proclamation declaring October as Domestic Violence Awareness month. October is the launching point for a year-round campaign to open closed doors and shed light on the problem of spouse/intimate partner abuse, helping prevent domestic violence and ensure that victims are protected.

also in the continuing global war on terrorism. Nichols, with his extensive experience in the region, was a natural choice to succeed Keating.

"I cannot think of a more superb naval officer than David Nichols to serve as my successor," Keating said. "He comes to this area with great regional experience. He is a dynamic leader. The Sailors and Marines in Fifth Fleet are truly blessed to have him taking the reins."

Vice Adm. Nichols returns to the theater with significant experience in CENTCOM. He commanded Attack Squadron 196 on *USS Independence* (CV 62) in 1990-91 during *Operation Desert Shield*. He also commanded Carrier Air Wing Two onboard *USS Constellation* in 1994-95 in the Arabian Gulf in support of *Operation Southern Watch*.

Nichols served as Deputy Director of Operations for U.S. Central Command between 1998 and 2000. During *Operation Enduring Freedom* from 2001 through 2002, he served as Deputy Commander, Joint Task Force Southwest Asia and Combined Air Operations Center Director at Prince Sultan Air Base. Most recently, Nichols commanded the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center in Fallon, Nev., but was temporarily assigned as Deputy Coalition Forces Air Component Commander during OIF.

"It is an honor for me to be chosen to lead the Navy and Marine Corps' finest in this theater," Nichols said. "With our brethren in the coalition of the willing, I am privileged to lead a cooperative engagement for global peace. Even though most of the kinetic operations in Iraq are complete, I trust that everyone in this area of responsibility will continue to give 100 percent to ensure peace and stability are maintained regionally."

"This staff has earned my undying appreciation for the sacrifices you've made during the last year-and-a-half," Keating said to the members of his team. "You were called upon for sacrifice, for strenuous labor, for gut-wrenching, split-second decisions. Because you were schooled in the traditions of our great Navy, you had the strength and wisdom to make the right calls.

"Because of you, millions of people in Iraq are now able to speak and worship freely, engage in commerce, and can pursue a life of liberty and happiness. You can – and should – be proud of a job done better than anyone else could have accomplished it."

Keating's next assignment will be as Director of the Joint Staff in Washington, D.C.

**United States Naval Forces  
Central Command  
and 5th Fleet**

<http://www.cusnc.navy.mil>



Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and Commander, U.S. 5th Fleet, is **Vice Adm. David C. Nichols, Jr.**

The Scimitar is an authorized publication for the men, women and families serving overseas in the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command area. The editorial content of The Scimitar is prepared, edited and provided by Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Commander, U.S. Fifth Fleet Public Affairs Office. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the U.S. Navy and do not imply endorsement thereof.

Questions and comments can be directed to the Public Affairs Office. The Editor of the Scimitar can be reached at 724-510 or 724-027. Stories and input may be submitted via e-mail to: [scimitar@cusnc.navy.mil](mailto:scimitar@cusnc.navy.mil).

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### Keating - from front page

allowed the coalition to take control of Baghdad within three weeks.

More than 780 Navy and Marine Corps aircraft were among the 1,800 total coalition aircraft used in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Naval aircraft from aircraft carriers and large deck amphibious ships flew nearly 14,000 sorties in support of OIF, averaging 1,500 sorties per day. *USS Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72), *USS Constellation* (CV 64) and *USS Kitty Hawk* (CV 63) carrier strike groups (CSG) conducted operations from the Arabian Gulf while *USS Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) and *USS Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71) operated from the U.S. Sixth Fleet's waters in the Mediterranean. All five CSGs, as well as coalition ships from 17 countries, were under Keating's operational direction during OIF.

"U.S. and coalition Sailors and Marines involved in OIF and the continuing global war on terrorism fought aggressively and intelligently, with audacity and courage," Keating said. "Be fully confident in the knowledge that Sailors and Marines deployed in NAVCENT have earned the support of our countrymen and millions of freedom-loving people around the world."

Naval forces in the theater still play an integral role not only in the rebuilding of Iraq, but



<http://www.cusnc.navy.mil/afn/tvsked.pdf>

## Port Royal Sailors benefit from onboard resource center

Expeditionary Strike Group ONE  
Public Affairs

Sailors aboard *USS Port Royal (CG 73)* can look forward to a deployment that keeps them a little closer to home, thanks to a little ingenuity and a commitment to quality of life and professional development. Just prior to deploying with Expeditionary Strike Group One (ESG 1), the ship completed a renovation of its learning resource center (LRC) and a larger, more user friendly classroom.

The renovations, completed within just a few days of setting sail, were largely performed by ship's force, and increased the size of the learning resource center from a mere two-computer workspace, to a nine-station resource center, with email-capable computers with flat screen monitors. The classroom, formerly capable of holding only 18 sailors, can now hold up to 29 sailors, enough for a full ship's division. It has theater-style seating, equipped with cup holders. The space is used for everything from training, to Catholic mass and Protestant Bible study, to the ship's "movie night" location.

"We've been able to maximize training as a result of the changes to the classroom," said Ens. Horst Sollfrank, *Port Royal's* training officer. "The classroom is so popular, we have had to institute a sign-up system, and the sign-up sheet stays full," said Sollfrank.

*Port Royal* crewmembers are taking advantage of the resource center, using the computers for a variety of purposes.

"I do a lot of research," said Engineman Third Class Jeffery Shaffer, 24, of Orange County, Ca. "Right now I'm researching sustainable agriculture. When I retire, I'd like to buy some land on the big island [of Hawaii] and farm it. I'd like my monthly expenses to be roughly zero, and sustainable agriculture is a good way to do it," Shaffer said.

"I've got 10 months left in the Navy, so



U.S. Navy Photo by PH2 Joshua L. Pritekel

Seaman John Sine takes advantage of the newly built learning resource center aboard *USS Port Royal (CG 73)* to email one of his friends from home. The space provides sailors with a quiet, out of the way place to keep in contact with friends and family as well as participate in many of the online education programs available. The LRC is one of many newly refurbished spaces aboard *Port Royal* that were finished just days before getting underway for their Western Pacific deployment as part of Expeditionary Strike Group One (ESG 1).

this is a lifesaver," said Damage Controlman Second Class Levon Steele, 25, of Ft. Worth, Tx. "I can look at colleges online, without being kicked out of the space because there's something else going on."

Steele referred to the standing rule that the space is strictly for the use of the crew as a resource center during working hours. This has enabled crewmembers to take advantage of the space without interrupting scheduled training or work by other departments. Before the room was created, there were two computers located in the ship's combat systems workspace. Personal time for research or emails had to be balanced with the need for scheduled training.

"Lots of times, they'd have meetings

during working hours, so we didn't have access to computers at all," Steele said. "This new space has done wonders for the command."

Capt. Pat Allen, *Port Royal's* commanding officer, is pleased with the work his Sailors have done to make their ship more conducive to their personal and professional growth during deployment.

"It's a long deployment," Allen said. "The crew deserves a place where it can do professional development and communicate with family back home. I'm proud of the work they've done."

*USS Port Royal* is scheduled to return to its homeport of Pearl Harbor, Hi. in April 2004.

## DFAS myPay customers cautioned against 'look-alike' sites

By Bryan Hubbard

Finance and Accounting Service  
Public Affairs

The 2 million military and civilian users of myPay are being cautioned to use only the official myPay site (<https://mypay.dfas.mil>) when seeking to access pay account information.

"Personal information is valuable and

should be safeguarded," said Claudia L. Bogard, director of Corporate Communications for the Defense Finance and Accounting Service. "Don't provide your personal information to any Web site unless you know it can be trusted."

Look-alike sites have recently frustrated myPay customers who have been confused by accidentally finding their way to a commercial site that is in no way

affiliated with DFAS or the Department of Defense.

DFAS' myPay is a secure, DFAS-operated Web site that lets active duty, National Guard and Reserve military members, civilian employees, and military retirees and annuitants take charge of their pay accounts online. The DFAS myPay Web site is found at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/>.

# Navy's first Expeditionary Medical Unit deploys

By Lt. Richard Schulz,  
CJTF - Horn of Africa  
Public Affairs

CAMP LEMONIER, Djibouti — The Navy's first Expeditionary Medical Unit (EMU) deployed here Sept. 14 to provide expanded medical care to personnel supporting Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa.

The new services provided by the EMU, Level II and III care, include expanded sick call hours, casualty receiving, an intensive care/medical-surgical unit, operating room, laboratory and radiology.

Army medics have been providing Level I basic medical care to coalition forces aboard Camp Lemonier since beginning operations in the region. Working in tandem with the Army, a Navy Emergency Medical Surgical Team (NEMST), comprised of surgeons, nurses and corpsmen have been in place for the past year, supplementing care at the local French Military Hospital for urgent surgery and contingency purposes in the event of a mass casualty.

However, with the ever-persistent growth of the camp, the need for a higher level of medical care was identified, and Fleet Hospital Jacksonville answered this need with the EMU.

The commanding officer of Fleet Hospital Jacksonville, Capt. Bill Kinney, led an advance party to Djibouti Sept. 2 to lay the foundation for the EMU.

"The purpose of the advance party was to do the groundwork at the proposed EMU site, make preparations to receive the main body and supplies, and to establish positive working relations aboard the base," Kinney explained.

Five days after the arrival of the EMU's main body, the facility was ready to see patients. The entire staff of the EMU worked hard, and 88 pallets of material were staged for present use or inventoried for future capability.

"So far, our mission has been an unqualified success. We are providing all base care and assumed the mission of the NEMST at the French Military Hospital by the end of our first week in country," Kinney said.

The original timeline in assuming base care, and that provided at Bouffard Hospital, was several weeks. However, with the rapid response of the base to a variety of support issues, the new medical team was able to cut the transition time from weeks to days, even as work progresses in bringing up the Laboratory, X-ray and Surgical Departments. The facility now has a wide array of bedside patient monitoring equipment and a six-bed in-

tensive care unit.

"The support of everyone on the base has been very positive, and the transition of care from the Army to the Navy could not have been smoother," Kinney said.

The EMU is also providing specialty consultation services in Orthopedics, General Surgery, Sports Medicine, Hand Surgery and Internal Medicine. This significantly expands medical care to those who might not otherwise have access to these specialists, prevent needless MEDEVACs [medical evacuations] out of theatre, and directly translates to quicker recovery for injured or ill personnel.

The medical care provided by the Navy team will undergo several transitions in the next three to six months. The current site will transition from tents to a permanent facility to be named the Michaud Medical Clinic in honor of a fallen Marine. This facility, which is currently under construction, will be built in two phases to provide uninterrupted continuity of care.

In the event that current medical abilities are exceeded or more definitive care is required, the Air Force has a forward medical team to provide air medical evacuations.

"The capability of this AELT [aeromed-

See EMU - page 6



## Command Religious Program Naval Support Activity Bahrain



### Weekly Schedule of Events

Monday	1200 - Catholic Mass, Chaplain's Office Chapel Annex 1700 - Gospel Choir Practice, Chapel/Training Facility
Tuesday	1130 - Praise Ministry - Chapel Training Facility 1200 - Catholic Mass, Chaplain's Office Chapel Annex 1830 - Gospel Bible Study, Chaplain Parker's flat
Wednesday	1200 - Catholic Mass, Chapel/Training Facility 1630 - Catholic Choir Practice, Chapel/Training Facility 1730 - Protestant Choir Practice, Chapel/Training Facility 1830 - Gospel Choir Practice, Chapel/Training Facility 1830-2000 - Alien Youth Group Bible Study (grades 9-12), Bahrain School Room NTC 2000 - Gospel Praise Dancer's rehearsal, POC Elder Sorrells
Thursday	1130 - Praise Ministry- Chapel Training Facility 1200 - Catholic Mass, Chaplain's Office Chapel Annex 1630-1700 - Confessions, Chapel/Training Facility 1730 - Catholic Vigil Mass, Chapel/Training Facility 1830 - Gospel Intercessory Prayer Ministry, POC Miller 1830 - Children's Choir Practice - Chapel/Training Facility. POC Sister Diane
Friday	0815 - Catholic CCD classes. POC Monika Thompson 0930 - Catholic Mass, Chapel/Training Facility 0930 - Protestant Adult Friday School II in the CPO Lounge at the Dome 1100 - Protestant Worship Service, Chapel/Training Facility 1130 - Gospel Friday School Class, Navy College Classroom #2 1300 - Gospel Service, Chapel/Training Facility 1330 - Gospel Children's Church ages 5-10 in the CDC, POC Mrs. Fulson 1830 - Catholic Bible Study- Fr. Borger's flat
Saturday	0730 - Protestant Single and Geo-Bachelor Men's Study in the Dome Conference room 1545 - Protestant Campaigner's Youth Bible Study, Bahrain School Rm 53 POC Ketan
Sunday	1200 - Catholic Mass, Chaplain's Office Chapel Annex 1800 - Protestant Evening Worship Service, Chapel/Training Facility 1900 - Gospel Praise Dancer's rehearsal, POC Elder Sorrells

#### Laypeople:

Muslim- CTCM Young  
Latter Day Saints- Cmdr. Hansen  
Jewish- Lt. j.g. Frey  
United Pentacostal- CW3 Moody

#### NSA Chaplain Staff:

Cmdr. Marshall, Command Chaplain  
Lt. Borger, Catholic Chaplain  
RP1(SW) Jefferson-Brooks  
RP2 Harris  
RPSN McCaLister  
**NAVCENT Chaplain Staff:**  
Capt. Tidd, Command Chaplain  
Cdr. Parisi, Catholic Chaplain  
RP2 Mosqueda

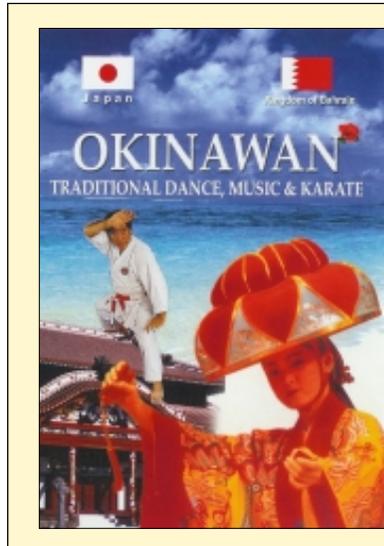
Questions regarding Command Religious Programs, please contact NSA Bahrain Chaplain's office at 439-4235/4303 or 724-235/303, Sunday - Thursday.

Event participation contingent upon Force Protection Conditions

EMU - from page 4

cal evacuation liaison team] is a tremendous complement to the medical facility and a huge asset to the base," Kinney said. "In the event of injury or illness that cannot be treated locally, this team would arrange for a MEDEVAC to a higher level of care, generally Level IV, and be able to send medical personnel with the patient. We are fortunate to have them co-located with us and have already experienced firsthand their invaluable service to the patient."

According to Kinney, the medical presence aboard the base is growing in very beneficial ways. "We want everyone to know whether for prevention or treatment of illness or injury, we'll be there. Force protection is our mission, and we're pleased to bring enhanced care to coalition forces in the Horn of Africa."



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**The OKINAWAN**  
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in the 12th Bahrain International Music Festival

On October 9, 2003 at the  
 Bahrain National Museum

Doors open: 7:30 p.m.

Show start: 8:00 p.m.



# NSA Paradise Theater

<b>THURSDAY</b>	
<b>9</b>	1530 Finding Nemo (G)
	1730 Grease (PG)
	1930 China Town (R)
<b>FRIDAY</b>	
<b>10</b>	1530 Babe (G)
	1730 The Italian Job (PG-3)
	1930 K2 (R)
<b>SATURDAY</b>	
<b>11</b>	1530 Angels in the Outfield (PG)
	1730 League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (PG-13)
	1930 Hollywood Homicide (PG-13)
<b>SUNDAY</b>	
<b>12</b>	1730 Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle (PG-13)
	1930 Wrong Turn (R)
<b>MONDAY</b>	
<b>13</b>	1730 Grease (PG)
	1930 The Fly (R)
<b>TUESDAY</b>	
<b>14</b>	1730 Raiders of the Lost Ark (PG)
	1930 Hollywood Homicide (PG-13)
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	
<b>15</b>	1530 Dumbo (G)
	1730 League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen (PG-13)
	1930 Matrix Reloaded (R)

**CHINA TOWN (R)** Jack Nicholson & Faye Dunaway: Jake is a private investigator who makes his living by following unfaithful spouses. When a woman asks him to get the goods on her husband, it's easy money. But when the husband is found dead, Jake decides to look a little closer, and what he finds will lead him through a world of shady characters, and plots within plots. (103 min)

**THE FLY (R)** Jeff Goldblum & Gena Davis: A nerdy, self-involved guy, working on a project to teleport matter, decides to take the next step and transport a living creature. His plans go awry when he attempts to transport himself and is unaware that a tiny fly has also entered the transport chamber with him. (96 min)

**BABE (G)** James Cromwell & Magda Szubanski: A piglet, won by Farmer Hoggett as a raffle prize, is raised by Fly, the matriarch sheepdog, as one of her own. Though the farmer senses something special in Babe, he is amazed to learn of the pigs sheep herding skills and soon enters him in the national herding competition where he learns that cooperation is the key to victory. (92 min)

**RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (PG)** Harrison Ford & Karen Allen: In the late 1930's an adventurous archaeologist, who prefers field work to the boredom of the classroom, is shown a damaged tablet describing the location of an ancient artifact that he can't resist the urge to find. Others are also looking for the tablet because the "Ark of the Covenant" is said to contain the very power of God. (115 min)

**MATRIX RELOADED (R)** Keanu Reeves & Carrie-Anne Moss: Neo and Trinity are summoned by Morpheus to join him on a journey to Zion, earth's last outpost of free humans. (138 min)

**CHARLIE'S ANGELS: FULL THROTTLE (PG-13)** Cameron Diaz & Drew Barrymore: When the Angels are summoned to Charlie's office, they are introduced to Bosley, his right hand man and given a new assignment. Recover a pair of stolen rings that contain an FBI code that allows users to access a list of everyone in the witness protection program. (106 min)

**THE ITALIAN JOB (PG-13)** Mark Wahlberg & Edward Norton: In this remake, a mastermind thief pulls off an amazing gold bullion heist from a heavily guarded palazzo in Venice, Italy, only to be double crossed by one of his crew. He travels to California with his former gang to re-steal the gold by manipulating traffic signals from a thief. (103 min)

**LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN (PG-13)** Sean Connery & Shane West: In an alternate universe where the characters of literary classics actually exist, the queen has called an unusual summit. A league of super heroes brought together to combat a villain who wants to plunge the world into war. (110 min)

**HOLLYWOOD HOMICIDE (PG-13)** Harrison Ford & Josh Hartnett: When a hip-hop group is murdered, two L.A.P.D. homicide detectives are assigned to the case. As the investigation progresses, they begin to suspect the rappers were offed for attempting to get out of their recording contract. Also starring Dr. Fre, Bell Biv DeVoe, Master P, Gladys Knight and Dwight Yoakam. (116 min)

**WRONG TURN (R)** Eliza Dushku & Jeremy Sisto: A cartload of six teens find themselves trapped in the woods of West Virginia, hunted down by cannibalistic mountain men grossly disfigured through generations of inbreeding. (84 min)

# Deadlines set for holiday mailings

By Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample  
American Forces Press Service

If you want make sure your holiday packages arrive to service members overseas on time, mail them by Nov. 13.

Otherwise, your package could very well be on the proverbial "slow boat to China," said Mark DeDomenic, chief of postal operations for the Military Postal Service Agency.

Military postal operations employees ship about 250,000 pounds of mail each day to Iraq. That number is expected to go up to about 325,000 pounds each day during the year-end holiday season, which is why DeDomenic suggests that people mail holiday packages early.

"Mailing early is the best way to ensure that mail gets through the pipeline and to its destination on time," he said.

The Military Postal Service Agency has set the following deadlines for holiday mail:

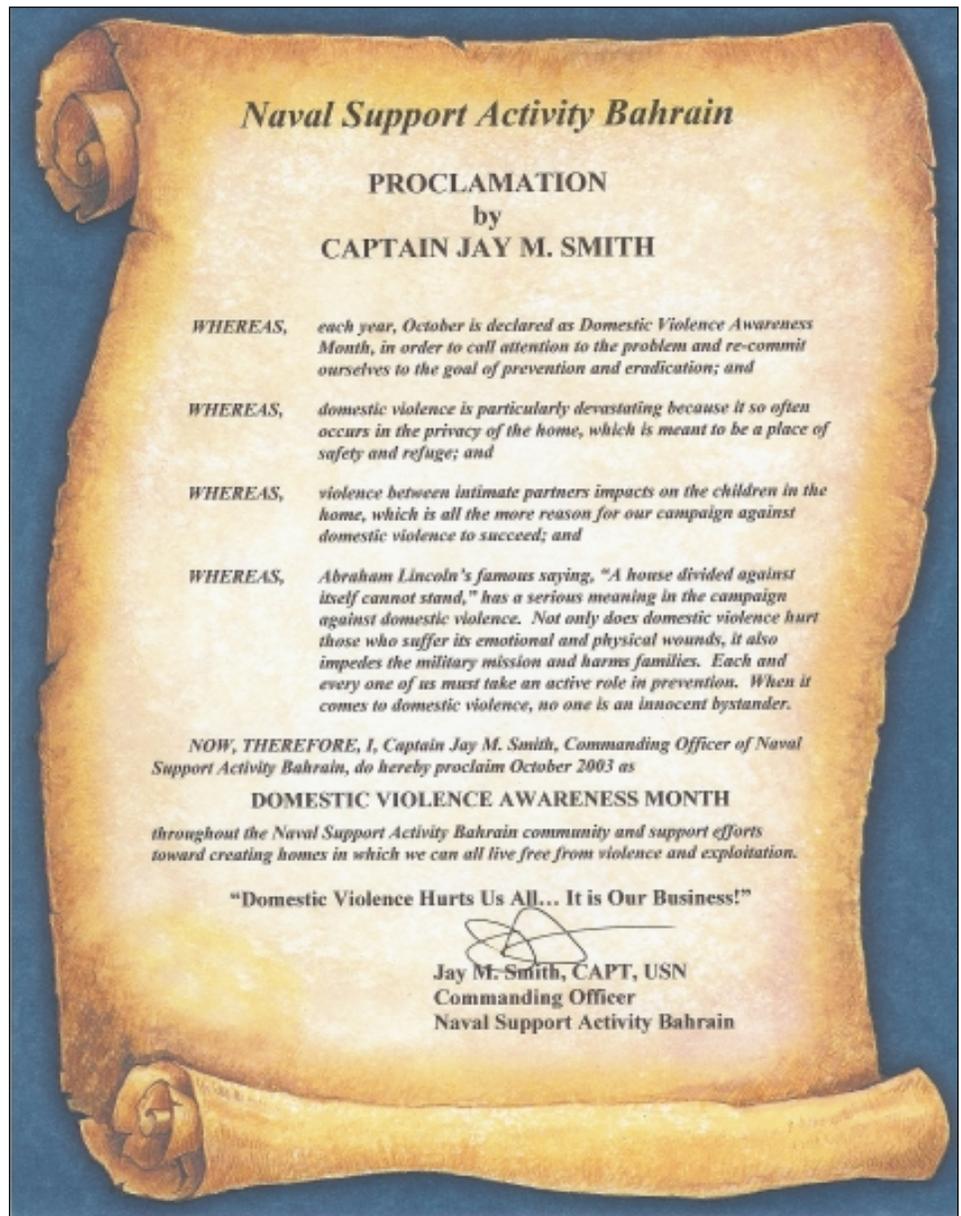
Parcel Post, Nov. 13; Space Available, Nov. 28; Parcel-Airlift Mail, Dec. 4; Priority and First-Class Letters or Cards, Dec. 11.

Those dates also should be observed when sending mail from most overseas locations to the United States as well, DeDomenic said. The Army's 1st Armored Division has a pop-up window that appears on its Web site, linking to an electronic information sheet with specific guidance for people sending mail to and from Germany.

Other tips for faster delivery include mailing smaller packages. "The smaller the package, the easier it is to handle, the quicker we can move it," DeDomenic said. "Shoe box-sized packages are perfect."

Because packages going to an APO or FPO address will require a U.S. Customs label, DeDomenic said, senders should be specific about what is inside the package. "People tend to like to put on the customs label 'Gifts,'" he said. "This is very vague and that is the type of thing that will slow mail down. We must know exactly what is in those boxes to ensure that they are mailable items."

Although some service members move from place to place, DeDomenic said customers should mail packages to the recipient's most recent known address. Although in most places mail will reach its destination in a



timely manner, troops on the move often mean that mail will have to be forwarded. "The packages will catch up, but sometimes it may take a little longer," he said.

It's a good idea to place a copy of the address inside the package, just in case the address label or package gets damaged. "That way, the package can be rewrapped and sent to the correct address," he said.

To ensure packages arrive safely, DeDomenic suggested using strong, sturdy boxes with lots of wrapping. He said boxes should be packed tightly, using packing materials such as popcorn or newspapers, to keep contents from moving. He also recommended that senders use good tape, because the humidity in the desert tends to destroy tape's adhesive qualities.

"Masking tape is a definite 'no' when it comes to mailing, and (light-duty transparent tape) is terrible," he said. "Reinforced

nylon tape works very well."

It's also important to remember what can't be mailed, DeDomenic said.

Hazardous materials, firearms and flammable liquids are prohibited inside packages. This includes alcoholic beverages and even some perfumes that may have a high alcohol content, he said.

Also, he advises not to install batteries inside the electronic items that require them. "Things tend to get turned on (from jostling during shipping), and that causes security concerns," he said.

Because of security restrictions, mass-mailing operations such as "Operation Dear Abby" or "Any Service Member" cannot be supported by the agency this year using traditional mail, DeDomenic said.

"We ask that the American public use electronic Web sites or send greeting cards via e-mail" as alternatives, he said.