
Camp 5: Breaking the Stereotype

By Second Lieutenant Joshua K. Frye

Images of the detention facilities at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, dominate the news media. Old photographs and videos of Camp X-Ray, including images of guards wearing outdated battle dress uniforms and escorting orange-clad detainees between wooden huts, frequently resurface. Reality, though, is very different. By mid-April 2002, operations at Camp X-ray had ceased and detainees were immediately dispersed to other facilities located behind the wire.

By September 2003, Kellogg, Brown, and Root, Inc., and Hensel-Phelps International had begun construction on new, state-of-the-art detention facilities. Camp 5, which was the first of these facilities, was completed in April 2004. The \$17.5-million complex was an excellent example of the military tradition in which Soldiers continually work to “improve the foxhole;” in May 2004—just two years after all detainees had been moved from Camp X-Ray—Camp 5 was occupied.

Camp 5 was designed based on a high-security U.S. penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana, with some adaptations for the unique mission of housing detainees at Guantanamo Bay. The facility was designed for reduced manpower requirements and detainee movement. It meets all standards and U.S. building codes and boasts the latest in amenities and security, including digital access and utility management, full climate control, handicap accommodations, medical facilities, and recreation areas. Each of the four 2-story wings includes numerous 12- by 8-foot cells. Each cell is camera-capable; includes a bunk, toilet, sink, mirror, and breakaway hooks; and receives natural light through a window with an outside view. Camp 5 is primarily manned by U.S. Army military police internment/resettlement specialists.

As detainee operations have progressed, Camp 5 has been continuously enhanced and upgraded inside and out. Suggestions from the guard force have been implemented over time. The realization that one recreation yard would be inadequate when compliant detainees began to receive four hours of recreation per day prompted the construction of two additional recreation yards. Bulletin boards were erected so that camp rules and newsletters could be posted. Exercise equipment such as treadmills, elliptical machines, and soccer balls were provided. Movie rooms were also added, and compliant detainees are allowed uninterrupted

time to watch a movie or read newspapers for two hours per week. And detainees are now afforded the opportunity for communal meals in the recreation yards every Monday and Friday, allowing for social time and group prayer. Most recently, a classroom was constructed to accommodate detainee instruction on a variety of topics.

Other modifications have been made to ensure force protection. Many of the detainees housed at Camp 5 are noncompliant. Assaults with various bodily fluids are very common. Guards are required to wear personal protective equipment to counteract these assaults. In the past, the staff wore ballistic eyewear. However, as threats of these assaults increased, splash face shields and gloves became mandatory for guards who interact with detainees. Another modification that has been made to ensure force protection is that meal tray slots remain secure except during prayers in which the *moo adhan* (prayer caller) and *imam* (prayer leader) must address the tier. And special meal tray boxes may be used to pass food and other items into the cells of detainees who have a history of assaults.

Notwithstanding these changes, continuing images of Camp X-Ray in the media perpetuate negative perceptions of detainee treatment. These outdated images do not promote a broader public understanding of the current mission of Joint Task Force Guantanamo (comprised of representatives of all Department of Defense [DOD] services, the U.S. Coast Guard, and other organizations)—namely to conduct “safe, humane, legal, and transparent care and custody of detainees.” And they do not promote a broader public understanding of the Joint Detention Group, which is a part of Joint Task Force Guantanamo that consists primarily of U.S. Army and Navy personnel who are directly responsible for operating the facilities at Guantanamo Bay. It is within this operational environment that Soldiers must perform their challenging mission. Two of the keys to successful mission performance are discipline and impartiality.

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