THE BEACON

U.S. Naval Support Activity Souda Bay, Greece

March 2021

THE BEACON

Warfighting First, Operate Forward, Be Ready

COMMANDING OFFICER Capt. Rafael C. Facundo
EXECUTIVE OFFICER Cmdr. Michael Mosi
COMMAND MASTER CHIEF CMDCM Brian McDonough

THE BEACON NEWSLETTER

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER Carolyn Jackson
ASSISTANT PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER Joel Diller
COMMUNITY RELATIONS SPECIALIST Kostas Fantaousakis
PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST MC2 Kelly Agee

HOW TO CONTACT US

EMAIL SoudaBayPAO@eu.navy.mil
ONLINE www.cnic.navy.mil/SoudaBay
PHONE +30 28210-21348
WRITE PSC814 BOX 1, FPO, AE, 09266
FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK facebook.com/NSASoudaBay
FOLLOW US ON TWITTER @NSA_SoudaBay
FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM instagram.com/NSASoudaBay

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CNIC ★ FLEET ★ FIGHTER ★ FAMILY

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Front Cover: Personnel Specialist 1st Class John Braun is all smiles as he bonds with a puppy during a volunteer event at the Souda Animal Shelter Feb. 13. Photo by MC2 Kelly Agee, Public Affairs.

The Parting Shot: Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jacob Vernier gets some puppy love. during a volunteer event at the Souda Animal Shelter Feb. 13. Photo by MC2 Kelly Agee, Public Affairs.

Triad Corner

Team Souda,

I am incredibly excited to be here and to serve as your Executive Officer. Believe me, NSA Souda Bay has a tremendous reputation among the Sailors of our Navy, and for good reason. I've been here a little more than 4 months and I have already seen excellence in action – there is magic happening all over this base.

I see the pride each of you take in your work, and how you (Sailors, civilians and host nation employees) work together and take care of each other. You are truly inspiring. Miss Mary who handles tailoring at the Navy Exchange comes to mind as just one example here – I had a predicament a few days ago. I needed my measurements taken so I could send them away to get a suit made, and I was lost. I went to the NEX to ask if anyone could help me. Not only did she say yes, but she read my body language and I could tell by the look in her eyes that she had genuine concern for me, the human being who was standing in front of her. During our conversation she shared her personal story with me and that interaction made a world of difference to me. We all have the ability and the opportunity to impact each other like that every single day. And that impact can be positive or negative. Remember that, and continue to keep the positive vibes flowing.

I am so proud of Team Souda and how you get it done – daytime, nighttime, sun or rain – you take the mission and you work it until complete. Recently, the Port Operations Officer departed, and BMC Richmond and the rest of her team have stepped in – and Port Ops is still running. They've demonstrated that he wasn't doing the work alone, and therefore there wasn't that much of an information gap to fill when he left, because the work hasn't changed. Granted, the responsibility she has now is at a much higher level than what she had before, and the operational tempo is much higher, but she has a seasoned team to rely on, and together they are getting the mission done. BZ to Chief and the Port Ops Team!!

We have Sailors that have work to do that have been dedicating time out of their schedule to take ROM meals over to Sailors who are staying in NGIS while they are completing their COVID-19 ROM requirements. And all of that has been coming out of hide. That has been coming out of our generosity and our notion that we are taking care of a Team – and you don't have to live at Souda to be part of it. We're doing what NSA Souda Bay is here for – to support the Fleet.

So, where and how do I fit in to Team Souda? My goal over the next two years is to make sure you have what you need to continue to provide outstanding support to the Fleet and our warfighters. I work for you.

First, on behalf of CAPT Facundo, I'm here to break down barriers. If you are struggling to get something accomplished, and you find yourself getting frustrated when you are explaining the situation to someone, it is time for you to come see me. Your job is not to stress over things that should be easy. Please afford me the opportunity to facilitate the things that should be easy but are not. That's my job.

What I'm also striving to do now is to facilitate communication between departments and individuals. No one department runs this base – its all of us together that make this base function. Therefore, we should all have a basic understanding of what each other does, and we also need to know how what we do contributes to our fellow departments – and how any changes that we make impacts them.

And for now, my last big push is to move us from thinking that we can't do something because of COVID. COVID is here, so we have to figure out ways to stay safe while working within the restrictions. Yes, NSA Souda Bay has still been operating and completing missions, but there is more that we can do for our team. One very important example is that CAPT Facundo, CMC and I are bringing back public recognition of awards so that we can highlight the outstanding work you accomplish. That will start happening this month.

Team Souda, you've welcomed my family and me with open arms and we are excited to get to know and be a part of Team Souda and this community. My wife, Harriet, and I could not ask for a better place to live or a better place to raise a family. So know that while we are here, that this is not just an assignment — this is our home, and you are our extended family.

If you need something, if you have ideas on how to make Team Souda better, or if you just want to say hello, come see me. Consider this an open invitation!

~XO

AROUND NSA SOUDA BAY

Awards Reenlistments Events Operations

Charles Tanner named NAVSUP Civilian of the Quarter

Photo by MC2 Kelly Agee, Public Affairs

Charles Tanner, logistics support officer, Naval Supply Systems Command Fleet Logistics Center Sigonella Site Souda Bay, was named the NAVSUP FLCSI Civilian of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2020.

Tanner, a native of Orlando, Fla., served in the Navy for 13 years as a supply officer and has been at NSA Souda Bay for 2 years. As the logistics support officer, Tanner is responsible for managing logistics support to U.S. vessels conducting port visits at the Marathi NATO Pier Facility. His work includes coordinating cargo, food, repair parts, and material transfers.

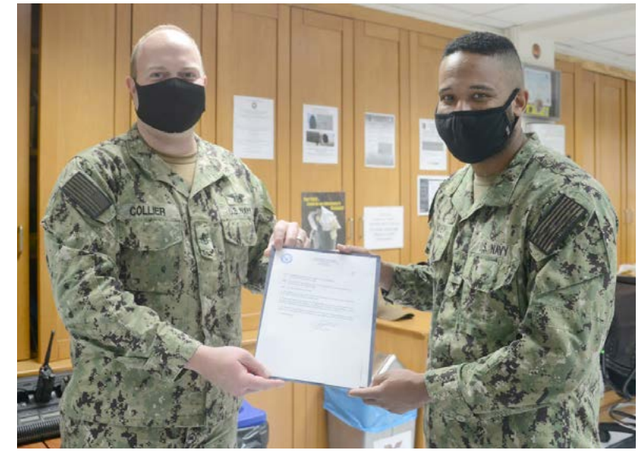
“During FY20, Mr. Tanner and his team supported 152 port visits from USS and USNS vessels and delivered over 260,000 pounds of fleet cargo,” said Frank Vargas III, deputy site director, NAVSUP FLCSI Site Souda Bay. “They also handled the shipment of more than 730 complex pieces of equipment valued at nearly $64 million, and achieved some of the highest fleet customer service scores in the region.”

Navy Capt. Alsandro H. Turner, commanding officer, FLCSI, offered his congratulations to Tanner in an email to the organization and said his efforts and contributions reflect his high commitment and dedication to the mission.

"Mr. Tanner … you should be rightfully proud of your deserved selection. All of us within the command are proud of you. WELL DONE!! KEEP FIGHTING!!” said Turner.

Air Traffic Controlman 3rd Class Madison Harvey Frocking Ceremony

Photo by MC2 Kelly Agee, Public Affairs



Newly-appointed Air Traffic Controller 3rd Class Madison Harvey received his frocking letter from Chief Air Traffic Controller Cameron Collier during a ceremony in the Air Tactical Operations Center on Feb. 8. Harvey, a native of New Kensington, Pa., has been in the Navy for 1 year and 2 months and at NSA Souda Bay for 5 months.

Harvey is a member of the Air Operations Department where he makes sure incoming aircraft have a parking spot before they arrive and that they receive fuel. During the Covid-19 pandemic, he delivers meals from the Fleet’s Inn Galley to the aircrew while they are in Restriction of Movement status.

Harvey said that after receiving his crow he wants to continue to push forward and grow in his career while helping other junior Sailors in the process.

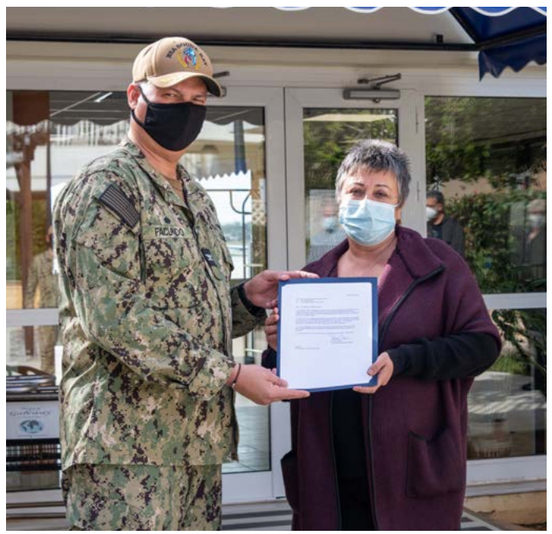
“I’d like to continue leading and teaching the younger Sailors the right way,” said Harvey. “That is what the crow means to me … honor, courage and commitment. I’m going to continue honoring that and find more ways to exemplify that to the younger Sailors.”

Harvey said being a great leader doesn’t just mean teaching Sailors about their job but also helping them with their personal lives.

“For a lot of Sailors this is their first time being away from home,” said Harvey. “Making sure that Sailors are making good use of their time outside of work and making smart decisions. That is something I am big on. (They) could be using (their) time to do something positive like building (their) career or building (themselves) personally, spiritually and emotionally.”

Antonija Hibic, NGIS Manager, Receives Letter of Appreciation from Navy Lodging Program

Story and photo by Joel Diller, Public Affairs



Antonija Hibic, Navy Gateway Inns & Suites Souda Bay general manager, received a Letter of Appreciation from the Navy Lodging Program on her nomination for their Manager of the Year award. Hibic was presented with the letter by Navy Capt. Rafael Facundo, NSA Souda Bay's commanding officer, in the presence of base leaders and lodging facility staff on Feb. 2.

"We wouldn't be able to operate this base, especially under this COVID (pandemic), if it wasn't for your team under your leadership," said Facundo.

Hibic started working in military lodging in 2009 and became a general manager in 2015. She said Navy Gateway Inns & Suites has always maintained high cleaning standards, but during the pandemic additional measures have been put in place for the safety of staff and visiting guests.

"We have installed sneeze guards at our front desk, and have provided our team with the necessary PPE (personal protective equipment) as recommended," said Hibic. "The chemicals that we utilize for cleaning and sanitation of our guest rooms and common areas are CDC recommended. Additional cleaning measures have also been implemented to mitigate the spread of germs and bacteria, such as more frequent cleaning of our high traffic areas, door handles and such."

Hibic said she is happy about receiving the award and glad that her team's efforts were noticed by the NSA Souda Bay command and Navy's lodging program management, especially during this difficult time.

"My team and I work 24/7 to provide the best possible accommodation for our guests," said Hibic. "Recognition always helps to build morale and I am confident my team and I will continue to do what we do best, which is following the NGIS mission."

NGIS provides quality affordable lodging and hospitality services, which contribute to mission accomplishment and quality of life for a mobile Defense community.

Hibic has been at NSA Souda Bay since July 2019 and managed military lodging properties in Chicago, California, Maryland and Virginia before moving to Crete.

Motorcycle Basic Riding Training

Story and photos by Joel Diller, Public Affairs

A motorcycle Safety Foundation Basic RiderCourse was held at the motorcycle training course on Feb. 3. Michael Tyburski, Emergency Operations Center manager and certified MSF RiderCoach, administered the course.

The Basic RiderCourse includes classroom-style instruction and hands-on riding experience. Tyburski said he teaches motorcycle fundamentals and safety during the course to give the potential riders the necessary basic riding skills.

"Everything is about safety, safety, safety," said Tyburski. "I give the riders some acronyms so they know what to look at when walking around the bike prior to riding it. We talk about PPE, personal protective equipment, which is what they should be wearing at all times."

Tyburski said he was excited to teach the course because he knows it supports the Navy's safety program and it keeps Team Souda safe.

"It's a great volunteer purpose for me to make sure the guys are safe out on the road," said Tyburski. "And if they aren't safe out on the road then I'm not doing my job here."

If you are interested in attending a future course, contact Michael Tyburski at 266-1719.

Celebrating Black Heritage Month

Photo by Kostas Fanaousakis, Public Affairs

Beginning in 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as National Black History Month, honoring the history and achievements of Black Americans. The Fleet's Inn Galley celebrated the month by serving Team Souda a special meal on Feb. 10. The lunch included a cake that was baked and decorated by Antonia Chnara, a food service attendant.

Chaplain Hosts SafeTALK Seminar

Photo by MC2 Kelly Agee, Public Affairs

Lt. Michael Spoke, command chaplain, hosted a safeTALK training seminar for Team Souda members in the Chapel Feb. 26. The safeTALK program is a three-hour suicide alertness training program that equips helpers with the skills to identify people with thoughts of suicide and connect them to suicide first-aid resources.

Spoke said that the Navy Chaplain Corps has partnered with LivingWorks, the creators of the safeTALK training, to offer suicide awareness training in the classroom as well as an interactive virtual training.

The virtual class is very similar to the classroom course; it is a 90-minute interactive class. People taking the training are given simulated scenarios involving a person that might be having suicidal thoughts or tendencies. This gives them the opportunity to get a more in-depth and real-world learning experience. There will be another opportunity to take a safeTALK class in March. To sign up for the classroom or virtual class contact Chaplain Spoke at 266-1206.

Community Relations: Volunteers Pick Oranges and Donate Proceeds

Photos by MC2 Kelly Agee, Public Affairs

Volunteers pose for a photo with Nick Fragos, President of the Sternes Cultural Association, second from right, on Feb. 7.

Team Souda volunteers participated in a community outreach project picking oranges at a local farm Feb. 7. During the event the volunteers learned about the orange grove from Nikos Anastasakis, a local national employee and caretaker of the trees and the property. According to Anastasakis, the oranges are 100 percent organic, meaning no fertilizers and pesticides were used during their production.

Anastasakis said picking oranges at the right time is the key to ensuring a sweet taste. In Crete, the best time to pick oranges is by March at the latest, because heavy rainfall and cold may do considerable damage to the crop and cause them to drop from the trees.

The specific variety of the oranges collected during the project are called "omfalofora" which translates to navel orange. Navel oranges are characterized by the growth of a second fruit at the apex, which protrudes slightly and resembles a human navel. For varous reasons, they are primarily grown for human consumption: their thicker skin makes them easy to peel, they are less juicy and they are less suitable for juice than other varieties.

The volunteers delivered 90 bags of the fruit to the St. Nektarios Girls Care Center of Chania and to the Sternes Cultural Association.

90 Bags of Oranges!

Lt. Michael Spoke, command chaplain, carries two of the 90 bags of oranges collected from the orange grove. Here they are being donated to the St. Nektarios Girls Care Center of Chania, Feb. 7.

Straight from the Tree

Dr. Virginia LeBlanc picks a navel orange during the volunteer event Feb. 7.

Tailor-made!

Courtesy photo.

Cmdr. Michael Mosi, executive officer, poses with Mary Smits, the Navy Exchange's tailor, in a fitting room. Smits has been tailoring clothing for Team Souda for 21 years. Be sure to read more about her in this month's Triad Corner.

Souda Spotlight

Story and photo by MC2 Kelly Agee, Public Affairs

Utilitiesman Contructionman Ryan Sanders

Public Works Department

Utilitiesman Constructionman Ryan Sanders, from Albany, Texas, joined the Navy in July 2019, following his family's tradition of military service. Sanders' dad was a Hospital Corpsman and served with the Marines before converting to Aviation Ordananceman. Sanders' arrived at NSA Souda Bay in August 2020. This is his first command and this is his first time working overseas, where he is a member of the Public Works Department's Bravo shop.

What does a typical day look like in the Bravo shop?

When we first get to the office we check in with our shop's supervisor (Construction Electrician 2nd Class Sean Sutherland), he tasks us all with work orders and projects we have for the day. After that, I go to the boiler rooms and make sure that no alarms are going off, and I maintain the boilers. For maintaining the boilers, I conduct preventative maintenance checks. After that, I will go to any work orders on the base that need to be fixed. If there is a work order and I don't know how to do it, I can ask a local national (employee), and they teach me. If it is a work order that deals with fire suppressions, we will task it to IAP (contractors). Most of the time we are busy, but when we do have down time we go to the back of our shop and learn from the local nationals, so we are always learning something. We have one person a week that is on duty, and they are on call the whole time. We deal with after-hours calls a lot. If someone on duty can't figure out the problem they will come to us and we will get together and help each other out.

What is your favorite thing about your job?

I like to work with my hands because growing up I did a lot of physical labor. I can't stand being behind a desk. My dad was in the oil business, and we owned some cows and horses. I was feeding animals and working with my dad in the oil business, where he taught me how to layout pipes.

Is there anything that makes Public Works at NSA Souda Bay unique?

Here you actually get to work with local nationals and you learn your job more. (Local nationals) are amazing. They know more than most people because they have been doing (their job) for basically their whole lives, you learn a lot from them. We don't get to do the combat side of things here, but you learn how to actually do your job.

When you're not at work, what do you enjoy doing?

I work out, mainly running. I run with Construction Mechanic Constructionman William Ryan. We try to run down to Marathi and back, so it is around 5 miles. I try to go every day, if not, every other day. It is a great workout.

What is something you want Team Souda to know about Bravo shop?

Bravo shop is the best shop. We do everything: Electrical, plumbing, building, we even do maintenance on vehicles. We do everybody's rate. So, if you want to be a Seabee, be a Bravo type.

Souda Spotlight

Story and photo byJoel Diller, Public Affairs

Haralambos "Bobby" Anetakis

Administrative Specialist, Administrative Department

Bobby Anetakis, a member of the Administrative Department since 2006, specializes in formatting the installation's official correspondence, instructions, policies and evaluations, ensuring that Team Souda's paperwork meets the Navy's standards.

Your accent doesn't sound like it is from Greece. Where did you grow up?

I was brought up in South Africa. My mom is English and my father is Greek, from Chania. I moved to Crete in 2000. It was the beauty of Greece that drew me back.

How did you get started working here at NSA Souda Bay?

I came to NSA Souda Bay on the 1st of May of 2002. I started working for MWR at the Bowling Center and (at the) Argonaut as a cashier and then I went to Emergency Management on a two-month contract. After that, I went for a four-month contract as the secretary for the Public Works Officer. While I was working there, there was an opening at the Admin department and they offered me the job, so I came here permanently in January of '06.

What is a typical day like for you in the Admin Department?

We're pretty busy. We've got a lot of incoming and outgoing correspondence, evaluations, instructions and policies to format and make sure all the supporting documents are included.

How do you make sure documents are formatted correctly?

A lot of manuals. You need to read a lot of instructions, as well. There's a lot of reading to do with everything: the Naval Correspondence Manual, evaluation manuals, the directives, everything. This is to ensure that we're within all the Naval regulations.

When you are not at work, what you do you enjoy doing?

I like taking a boat out to go fishing, but we haven't been out in almost 2 years with everything that is going on. But my family, that's the most important thing. I have three kids. My oldest son is 6, my daughter is 4 and my baby boy is 2. So they're all small, I've got my hands full. My wife, even more so, because she's got them all 24/7. Yeah, we've got our hands full.

Anything you want Team Souda to know?

I believe our Admin office is a strong team, and we have a good Triad, as well. And we all work well together as a team, trying to make things easier and better.

Souda Spotlight

Story and photo by Joel Diller, Public Affairs

Miguel Saul

Firefighter, Fire & Emergency Services

Miguel Saul, originally from Orange County, Calif., joined the Navy when he was 23 years old and served as a hospital corpsman for five years. After leaving the Navy, he earned his paramedic license and became a firefighter at Naval Station Norfolk, Va. He joined our Fire & Emergency Service's team in August 2020 and is in the Souda Spotlight for his role in keeping Team Souda safe and qualified to perform CPR.

Have you been a firefighter at any other bases?

This is actually my second time on the island. The first time I was here was for about two and a half years and then I went to Rhode Island to take a firefighter position there. Now, I'm fortunate enough to be able to come back and work at Souda Bay again. This really is an incredible department to work for.

Are you in charge of any programs?

Yes, I'm in charge of the community CPR program here. I'd like to put out there that this is for everybody. It's free of charge. If you have access to the base, please get in contact with us here, or me personally, and we can schedule a class for your entire department. Again, it's free of charge and we can even come to you, if that's easier.

Have you taught any CPR classes?

Yes, so we've had the opportunity to teach about 90 people on base who are now qualified to perform CPR. Our overall goal is to continue to push for 100 percent of base employees to be CPR certified.

What should someone expect if they sign up for a course?

The course is approximately two and a half hours long. It's mainly hands-on. There is a PowerPoint portion of it, but it's mainly hands-on with practical skills. The goal is to encourage people to start CPR and actually feel good about doing it. We want them to feel confident in themselves to perform CPR when it's needed. The hardest part about CPR, and I say this in every class, is actually making the decision to start CPR. After that, the rest is easy

What do you like to do outside the office?

I love to walk. I love to take long hikes. My favorite has been walking from the Agia Triada Monastery to Stavros Beach through the canyon. I recommend this hike to everyone because it's easy and relatively short. It's always great to be outdoors, surrounded by the incredible scenery of Crete.

Are you here with your family?

I'm here with my wonderful wife of ten years, Carolyn, and my amazing dogs, Kepler and Brinkley. My dogs are both over two years of age but still act like puppies. When they're not sleeping on the couch, they're chewing holes in my socks. It's definitely time to buy them new toys.

Souda Spotlight - Meet the New Leaders

Story and photo by Joel Diller, Public Affairs

Ens. Christopher Gibbs

Security Officer

Ens. Christopher Gibbs, a native of Mooresville, Ind., enlisted in the Navy as an airman recruit in 1994 and was commissioned as an officer in November 2020. He comes to Team Souda from Strategic Communications Wing One, Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., and brings experience with Navy Security Forces and as a civilian police officer.

Gibbs leads Team Souda's Naval Security Forces, a composite of active-duty Sailors, civilians, local nationals, and contractors, who work across many divisions to protect the installation's critical infrastructure, ensure continuity of operations and enforce the policies and procedures designed to protect personnel, facilities and equipment.

Why did you decided to join the Navy?

I joined as an airman recruit in 1994. I got stationed on the USS Constellation – that was harbored at San Diego. I was going to college at the time and money was tight and I wanted to find a way to do it on my own, so I joined the Navy.

How did you get into security?

So, in 1998 I got off active duty. I was an ABH2 (Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 2nd Class) at the time. I had been an aircraft firefighter on a carrier and I was kind of bored with that and I didn't really ever get to use it, so I decided to go into the reserves and start working in the security world. So, at the time they had what they called a 9545 NEC (Navy Enlisted Classification), it was a law enforcement specialist, basically trained to be security augment. I was an ABH2 working security all over San Diego at the bases there. I came back active duty in 2018 under the (Reserve Component to Active Component program). I applied, got picked up, and here I am.

What does the security officer, or SECO, do here at NSA Souda Bay?

To be the SECO here, it is basically program management. So, day-to-day questions arise, things come up like 'Hey, why do we do what we do?' And so, I have a team of people that I reach back out to and research on the actual instructions and policies to back up why we do what we do. Or, if something doesn't look right – I'm new eyes – so, if I come here and I see something that doesn't look right, I go find a regulation that governs that. It takes a lot of research, but in the meantime I'm learning how we do business at Souda Bay. Whether it's right or wrong, it's for me to make a determination on, 'are we complying with the instructions and the directives?' So, the big deal is, obviously, to keep the Skipper out of trouble, but also keep the watch standers out of trouble to make sure, 'Hey, we're doing this in accordance with (Navy regulations)'. Because when we're not, it's when we're out there on our own.

What experience in your career best prepared you for your role here?

I was the protective services detachment non-commissioned officer in charge of General Mattis' protection team at CENTCOM (U.S. Central Command). I did that for about a year and a half under his tutelage. I had a team of about 24 joint service members. So, I got a chance to supervise and work with Army, Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy people, figuring out how to take care of their careers, as well as mine. And then, listening to General Mattis talk and having some personal discussions with him helped prepare me for this role. I have a guide and a mentor in my head for where I should be in thinking and how I carry myself, so that's what has best prepared me.

What are you looking forward to most about your time in Greece?

Travel, and being out with the local society without all the restrictions. Being out at a restaurant talking and meeting the Greek people. Being able to work alongside our Hellenic Air Force and Hellenic Navy counterparts more freely, and for us trying to make each other better, so I'm really looking forward to working hand-in-hand with our counterparts.

What do you want Team Souda to know about you?

I'm a former senior chief and I have a combined total service of 24 years in the Navy. So, I've been to a lot of places and I've done a lot of things. I'm not perfect, but I come with a lot of experience. And, I'm older, so hopefully people get seasoned advice from me instead of any knee-jerk, 'I think this is how it is supposed to be.'

Souda Spotlight - Meet the New Leaders

Story and photo by Joel Diller, Public Affairs

British Royal Navy Cmdr. Ivor McQuaid

Commanding Officer, U.K. Forces Souda Bay

British Royal Navy Cmdr. Ivor T. McQuaid joined the Royal Navy in February 1984 at the age of 16, enlisting as a junior weapon engineer mechanic. He has served on several U.K. warships and was promoted to petty officer (E-6) before transferring to the submarine service, where he was subsequently promoted to chief petty officer (E-8). He became a commissioned officer in 2005.

During his 37-year career, he has served on several classes of submarines, and in many different operational theatres, including Bosnia and Iraq. He served an operation tour in Afghanistan with the Joint Force Support Headquarters. McQuaid said he is coming from the U.K. Defence Nuclear Organisation in London, where he served in a capability acquisition role as the (Command, Control, Communication, and Computers) desk officer and brings a wealth of engineering, operational and personnel management experience to this role. He earned a Master of Science degree in Information Capability Management from Cranfield University, England, and is a chartered engineer.

Why did you decide to join the Navy?

I grew up in a small town in Northern Ireland. There was unfortunately at that time, very low employment. An ex-Naval officer came to my college to discuss engineering and I really enjoyed his lecture. I walked through the gates of new entry a few months later, aged just 16.

What is your role here in Souda Bay?

My role here is I am effectively the commanding officer of the U.K. forces, and that stretches anywhere from between just my good self and all the way through to several hundred people depending on who is in the area and who is not. So my job is effectively to liaison with the U.K. Embassy to ensure that we understand what is going to happen. With the U.S. colleagues here and the Hellenic service here to ensure we've reached and interact with you in both supply and orientation roles, but also in the operational side of that as well. So it's more of a central focal point for U.S. and Hellenic navies to direct questions directly to me and then I can actually interface with the correct people.

What experience in your career best prepared you for your role here?

I have served in the Royal Navy for a long time, enlisting as a rating and worked my way up through the ranks and then being commissioned as an officer. I have served on large and small surface ships and three different classes of SM (submarine). I have also worked in operational delivery, quality assurance, capability and acquisition, and personnel management roles in several key headquarters, both in the U.K. and deployed. This has set me firmly on the path to provide the support that is key to the success of this role.

What are you looking forward to most about your time in Greece?

I am looking forward to travel, COVID depending. There are some stunning places to visit in Crete and on mainland Greece itself. A particular place of interest for me would be the town of Marathon in Greece, where the event that is so close to my heart was born.

What do you like to do in your free time?

This assignment is unaccompanied, so my family has remained in the U.K. My wife, Alison, is an archaeologist, and I have two adult children and three dogs. I am a submariner by trade, so generally that means I have little or zero contact with my family when I am deployed. I have the added advantage of this time (to) have the ability to contact my family on a regular basis, on average we Facetime once a day just to catch up and talk about the small things.

My hobby is running. I am coming back from a couple of serious injuries (age is a cruel mistress), so I plan to return to pre-COVID running fitness levels and get some big miles in. I also enjoy road and mountain bike cycling.

What do you want Team Souda to know about you?

I consider myself to be a Naval officer, a professional engineer and a submariner. During my time here, I wish to continue the great working relationships that the U.K. has with our U.S. and Hellenic forces colleagues. I feel that the close interaction and support that currently exists is of benefit to all those involved. Despite my years of service, it's a submariner thing, you've always got something to learn, so I'm here to understand how the U.S. Navy, Air Force, and other U.S. colleagues who I interact with here, how you do your business and interface as best as I can with that to ensure that we get the best benefit from both sides. And also the Hellenic Navy as well, operating with the Greeks. Getting past the language barriers and the culture's barriers and doing things like that. So that's exactly what I'm here to do.

Community Relations

Sailors Share Smiles at Souda Animal Shelter

Story and photos by MC2 Kelly Agee, Public Affairs

Sailors from Naval Support Activity Souda Bay's Administration Department and American Forces Network Souda Bay participated in a community outreach event at the Souda Animal Shelter Feb. 13. Team Souda volunteers were able to help the community while following COVID-19 measures, spending the afternoon performing yard work and playing with the dogs to socialize them, making it easier to find them a home.

Sailors assigned to Naval Support Activity Souda Bay pose for a photo during a volunteer event at the Souda Animal Shelter Feb. 13.

Senior Chief Culinary Specialist Daniel Hemingway is a returning volunteer. Hemingway, a native of Newark, N.J., has been in the Navy for 17 years and at NSA Souda Bay for 15 months. Hemingway said he had to go back to the shelter because the last time he volunteered was such a great experience.

"I am a big softy when it comes to (stray animals)," said Hemingway. "They need love too and to have a place that gives them shelter and gives them food, it is necessary. It is just great to have a place that they can be taken care of and safe."

Elizabeth Iliakis, director of the Souda Animal Shelter Project and a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., founded the shelter in 2016 out of her love of animals.

"I grew up in a house where we were all animal lovers. We had everything from pigeons, to chameleons, to birds, to cats, to dogs," said Iliakis. "When I was living in Athens I just took on the 20 strays in my neighborhood."

Souda Bay Sailors have been volunteering their own time since the establishment of the shelter.

Organized groups representing NSA Souda Bay began visiting the shelter in November 2018 and have completed eight projects.

"You are getting people coming from two sides of the Earth coming together who share the same ideals and it is really nice," said Iliakis. "It is really a special feeling. I can't even try to describe it in words, you can't. It is beautiful, especially when you see military working alongside regular Greek civilians."

It was Personnel Specialist 1st Class John Braun's first time volunteering at the Souda Animal Shelter.

Braun, a native of St. Louis, Mo., has been in the Navy for 9 years and at NSA Souda Bay for 3 months. Braun said he volunteered to help the local community and encourages fellow service members to also get involved in volunteering.

"I think that it is very easy to just say 'my weekend time is my time'," said Braun "But, there is a bigger picture. It can only benefit you to volunteer and give your time to a bigger cause."

According to Iliakis, once someone has volunteered at the shelter they often want to come back.

"We see it all the time where people come in not knowing what to expect and then leave asking us when they can come back again," said Iliakis. "It is pretty obvious that they have been touched. It happens all the time."

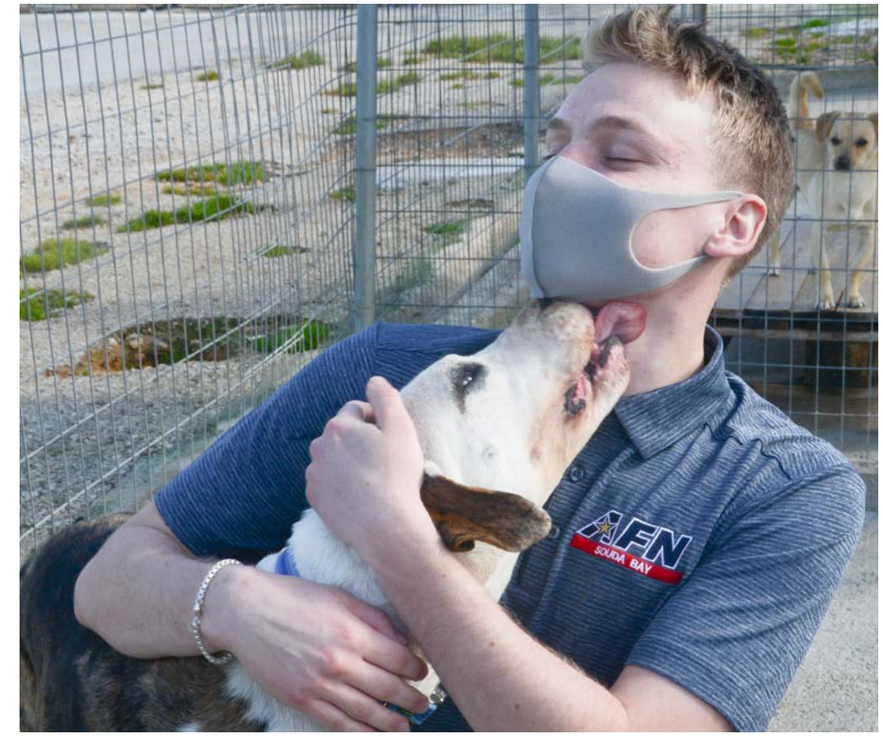
If you are interested in volunteer opportunities, contact Lt. Michael Spoke, command chaplain, at 266-1206. ■

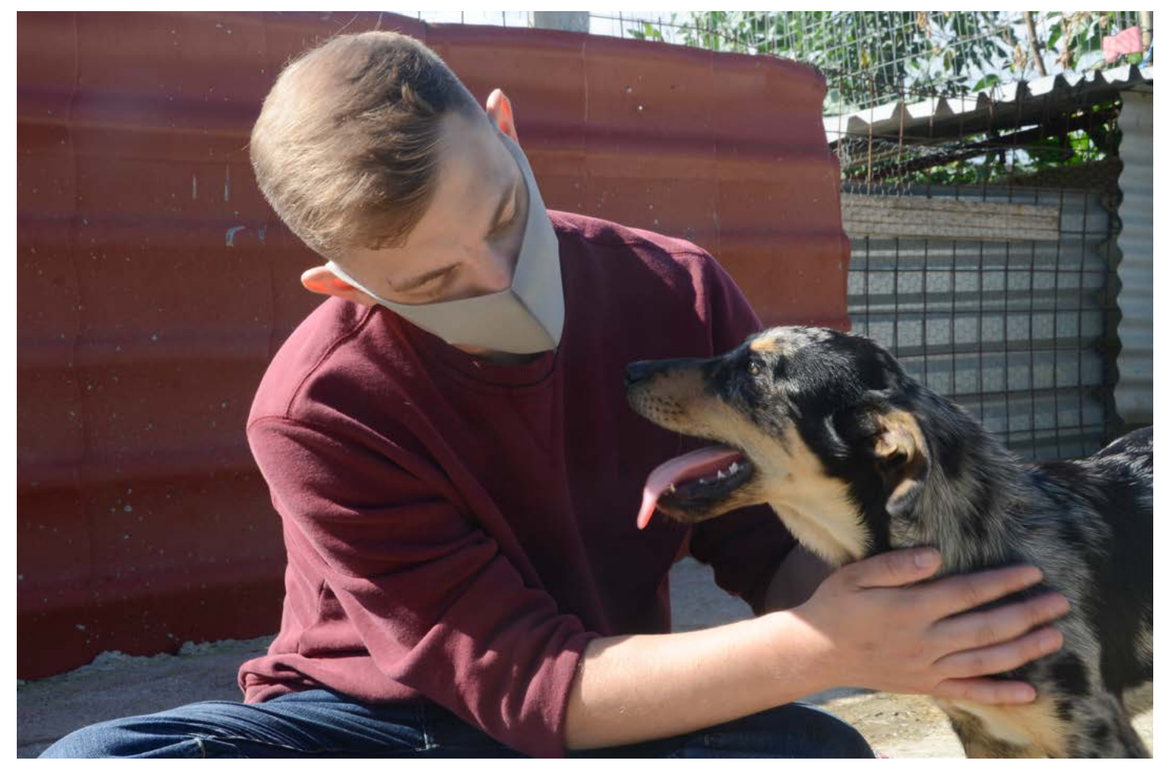
LEFT: Senior Chief Culinary Specialist Daniel Hemingway makes a new friend.

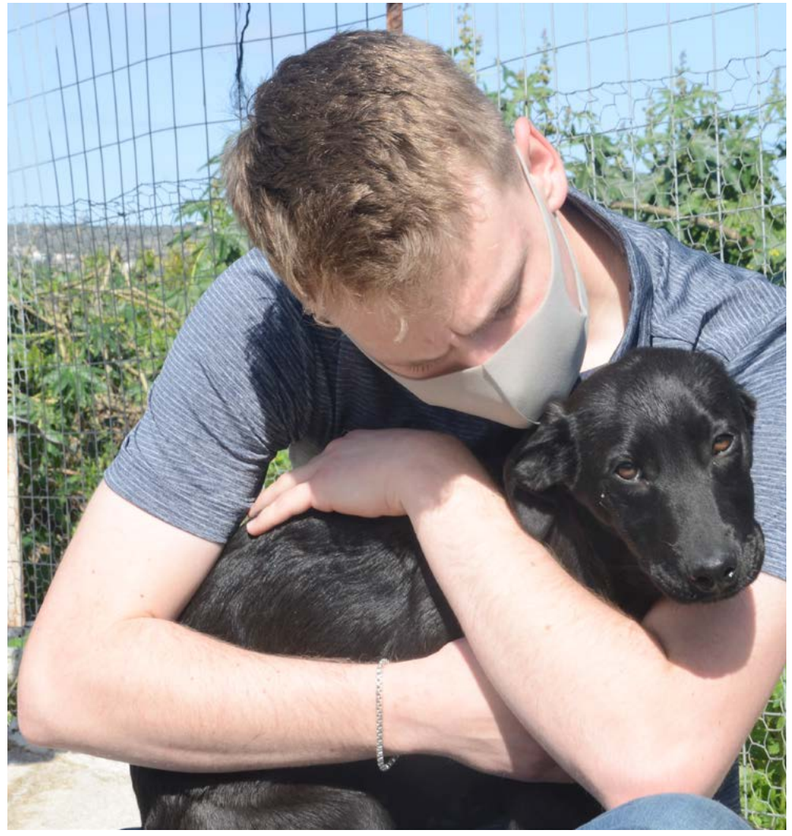
BOTTOM: Damage Controlman 1st Class Roneshia Lashe' performs the first phase of yard work to clear weeds from a kennel.

TOP: Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jacob Vernier gets some puppy love.

BOTTOM: This sweet pup only has eyes for Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Timothy Ruple.





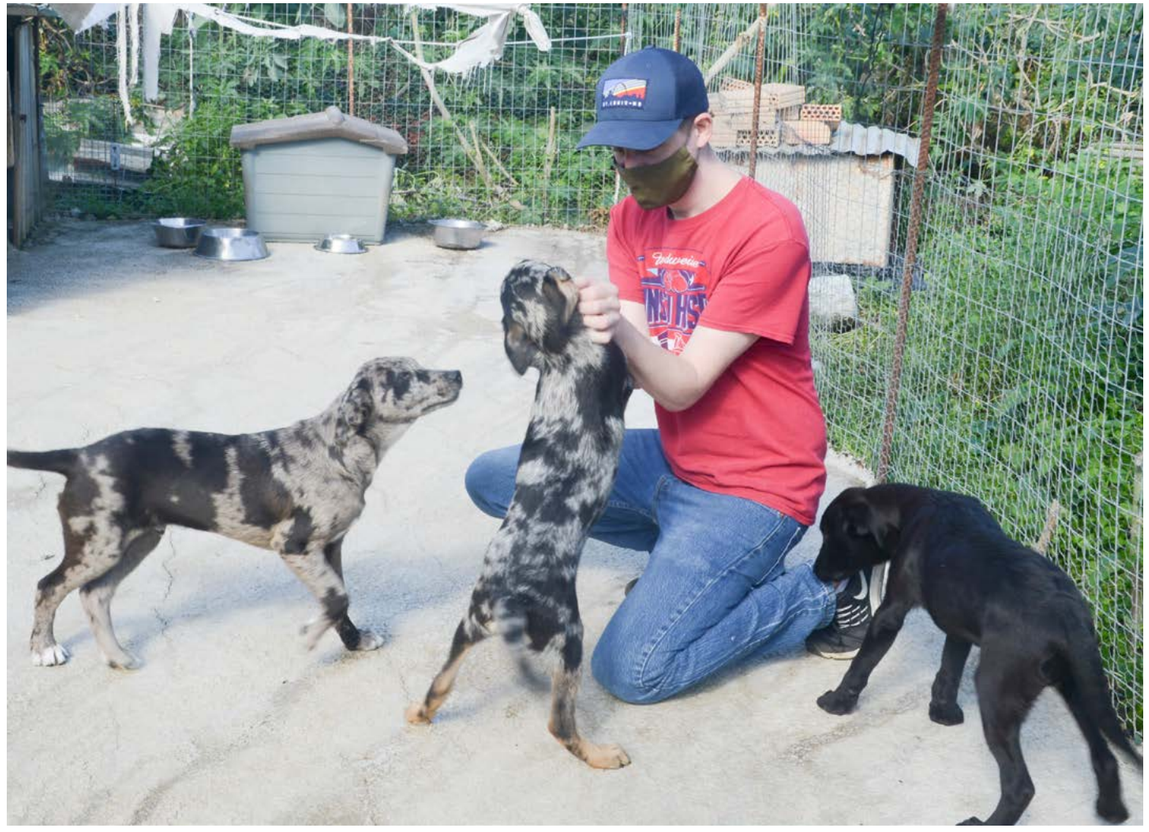


ABOVE: Senior Chief Culinary Specialist Daniel Hemingway bonds with his new friend.

LEFT: Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jacob Vernier shares a quiet moment with one of the pups.

RIGHT: Volunteers clear vegetation.

BOTTOM: Pups line up for their turn to play with Personnel Specialist 1st Class John Braun.



A Day In The Life:
Environmental Program

Story and photos by Joel Diller, Public Affairs

Caption

In Crete, it is apparent everywhere you look that the environment provides the necessities, and luxuries, of life. Drinking water is provided by the snow-covered Omalos mountains. Sea salt is left behind by the Mediterranean Sea. Lemons, oranges, avocados and figs fall from fruit trees. Products such as olive oil are from olives; likewise wine from grapes; and milk and cheese from sheep and goats. Archeological sites of the ancient Minoans, Greeks, Romans and Venetians provide us with education and entertainment.

The environment its natural and cultural resources are worth conserving, protecting and restoring for future generations. This is the mission of Naval Facilities Engineering Command's Environmental Program. NSA Souda Bay's Environmental Division, a part of the Public Works Department, accomplishes this by providing technical support in project planning; ensuring compliance with federal and host nation regulations; and providing products and services to the installation.

The Environmental Division poses for a group photo outside Building 60 on Feb. 18. They are wearing "Batman" masks to coordinate with a bat survey commencing in April which will record bat activity on the installation.

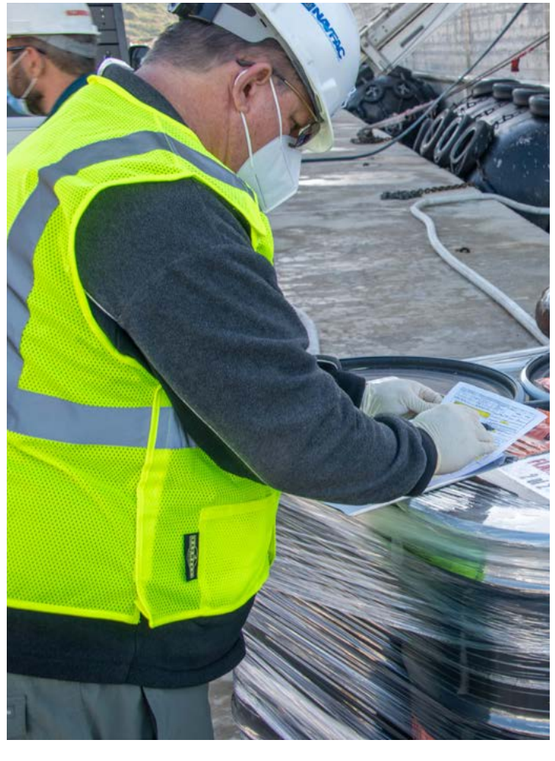
Christopher Fairfield, NSA Souda Bay's public works officer, said Souda Bay's PWD is a field office of Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Europe, Africa, Central, and exists to deliver facility, construction and acquisition services to the installation and its tenants. He said the Environmental Division is critical to that work by executing environmental management and compliance activities.

"Environmental makes sure we follow host nation regulations and standards for things like hazardous waste disposal, spill response and drinking water quality, ensuring we act as good guests in Greece and maintaining this operational platform for the Navy and the nation in the Eastern Mediterranean," said Fairfield.

The following is a "Day in the Life" of NSA Souda Bay's Environmental Division as it provides environmental support to assist Team Souda in accomplishing its mission.

Environmental Planning

"Planning looks at what projects will have an impact on the environment," said Bill Smith, installation environmental program director. "It is our job to look at those projects going on over at FEAD (Facilities, Engineering and Acquisition Division) within Public Works and determine whether there is going to be a significant impact on that activity."



LEFT: Bill Smith, installation environmental program director, reviews paperwork at the Marathi NATO Pier Facility on Feb. 2.

RIGHT: Peter Matheos, environmental engineer, takes a water sample at the Visitor Control Center on March 1.

NSA Souda Bay's airfield apron is currently being expanded by NAVFAC EURAFCENT project that will increase aircraft parking capacity and provide combatant commands with more opportunities to use the installation for operational support.

Peter Matheos, an environmental engineer who has worked with Team Souda since 2007, said the Environmental Division reviewed the engineering plans of the airfield apron expansion project for any environmental impacts, such as its effect on storm water drainage.

Matheos said suddenly covering an earthen area where water normally percolates into the ground with concrete would cause storm water to drain off and increase the volume of water going off base.

"We had to make sure the designer incorporated storm draining control measures in their project," said Matheos. "There was one big trench where all the storm water from the base ended up and that was going to be covered up by the new apron, so we wanted to make sure that there is enough temporary storage under and around the apron to help that capacity."

The Environmental Division also assess projects for their impact on cultural or natural resources.

During the construction of the Intermodal Access Road, which was a NAVFAC EURAFCENT project completed in August 2018 that connected the 115th Hellenic Air Force Base in Mouzouras Village with the Hellenic Navy Base in Marathi, the Environmental Division became involved when the excavation "came really close an archeologically significant cave and aqueduct," according to Matheos.

Matheos said the Environmental Division met with the local archeology department to mitigate the possible effects of the project on the archeological site.

Environmental Compliance

When it comes to ensuring the installation complies with environmental regulations, there are three documents that the Environmental Division follows: DoD's Overseas Baseline Environmental Guidance Document; the Navy's OPNAV Instruction 5090.1E Environmental Readiness Guide; and the Greek Environmental Final Governing Standards, according to Smith.

Smith said all the installation's environmental management plans incorporate the compliance requirements of these three documents.

"Within those are individual (standard operating procedures) and instructions that help us control risk of compliance violations and big (fuel) spills," said Smith. "We have a notification process that everybody should be aware of and they know who to contact in the event of a spill and how to respond to it."

Drinking the Water

Matheos, who manages the Drinking Water Program for Environmental, said the installation's drinking water is received from the Chania Water Authority and is tested regularly to ensure the results comply with the Navy's instruction, which requires compliance with certain sections of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Safe Drinking Water Act.

"It comes from the White Mountains – it's a very pure source. And we've never had any problems with our drinking water here and we test it regularly on several fronts," said Matheos.

The drinking water undergoes weekly bacteriological monitoring by a local contractor. In addition, every three months samples are taken in the drinking water system and sent to a lab in Europe for analysis.

Matheos said once a year a larger test is done where they look at "a lot of parameters together to ensure that everything is under the minimum contaminate level."

The results of the test are published every year in a Water Quality Consumer Confidence Report, which summarizes information about the water sources used, any detected contaminates, compliance and educational information. It can be found online at: https://www.cnic.navy.mil/regions/cnreurafcent/installations/nsa_souda_bay/om/environmental_support/water_quality.html.

Taking Out the Trash

The Environmental Division plays a role in the installation's Solid Waste and Recycling Program by tracking and providing oversight of the program. Smith said that recyclable material currently accounts for about 33 percent of the total volume of waste, which is collected by a contractor and sent it out for recycling.

Team Souda members should be familiar with seeing the blue, green and yellow plastic dumpsters located around the installation.

Matheos said the blue and green dumpsters are for mixed recyclables or will be labeled for a particular type of recyclable such as "white paper only" or "cardboard only." If they aren't labeled, they are for mixed recyclables – with one exception.

"We don't put glass in those mixed recyclable containers because that is the one thing we have to recycle separately," said Matheos. "And the reason for that is that a lot of the recycling gets hand sorted, so we want to make sure glass stays in its particular glass containers. Those are usual yellow dumpsters spread out throughout the base."

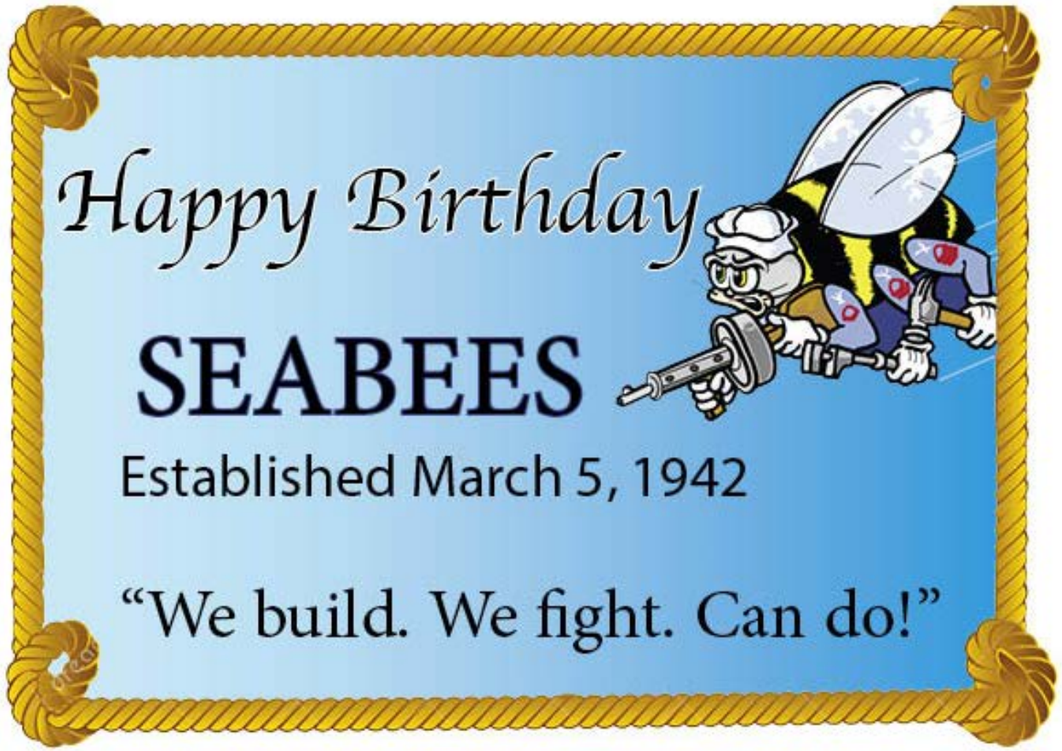
Another type of waste that is generated by the installation's activities is hazardous waste. The Navy's definition of hazardous material is "any material that, because of its quantity, concentration, or physical, chemical, or infectious characteristics, may pose a hazard to human health or the environment." According to Smith, this includes oils, chemicals, anti-freeze, batteries, used rags, spill spoils – anything that normally does not get put into the trash or recycling.

Matheos said the Environmental Division's Services Branch inspects and collects hazardous waste from accumulation points around the base, making sure they are functioning properly and not overfilled.

Sotiris Katsounas and George Papasifakis, hazardous waste technicians, collect drums of waste and replace them with empty drums. Matheos said this allows the people generating the hazardous waste "to have a safe place to temporarily store that waste. So we pick it up and bring it to our storage area."

To ensure hazardous waste is managed properly, Smith said, "the Defense Logistics Agency comes in every nine months, or once or twice a year, and collects and removes everything that we have collected and makes sure it goes to an authorized hazardous waste recycling facility or disposal facility."

In addition to environmental planning and managing the drinking water and solid waste programs, the Environmental Division also plays a role in spill prevention and response, emergency management system, air emissions, storm water and wastewater management, medical waste, and storage tanks management to ensure Team Souda is doing its part in protecting the environment. ■



Team Souda, Here's What Your Environmental Program Managers Want You To Know!

Lt. Cmdr. Christopher Fairfield, Public Works Officer

"I think it is important that our Sailors and civilians understand that good environmental management can enhance the ability to accomplish assigned missions as well as improve community and public relations. The PWD EV Division works hard every day to achieve the Navy's environmental goals."

Bill Smith, Installation Environmental Program Director

"They need to know how their activities apply to compliance. So, the real focus is three areas that everybody on this base should have an awareness of:

1) The Installation Commanding Officer's Environmental Policy.

2) Everyone that has a role to play in fueling and handling of hazardous material, they need to know what to do in the event of a spill. And it is especially important to have that awareness of what their role is when responding to spills down at Marathi, because we have the water there.

3) Recycling. We're trying to elevate the awareness of the importance of recycling."

Peter Matheos, Environmental Engineer

"There is a combination here locally of good hiking and lots of archeology. And what that means is if you are following a trail hiking somewhere, and you have an eye for it, you will come across shards of pottery and stuff that is thousands of years old. And one very good way of getting in trouble here is taking that and being caught with it while you're leaving the country. You can pick up whatever you find, look at it, photograph it, but you're supposed to put it right back where you found it. And if it is something you think is of archeological value that nobody else has come across yet, (let us know) then we'll note the location and we'll notify the proper authorities of that."

Installation Commanding Officer's Environmental Policy Statement

In his 2020 Environmental Policy Statement, Navy Capt. Rafael C. Facundo committed our installation to adopting practices that promote good environmental stewardship and prevent pollution, so that we can foster a postive effect on the environment.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
U.S. NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY SOUDA BAY
PSC 814 BOX 1
FPO AE 09865-0102

27 Nov 20

NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY SOUDA BAY ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY STATEMENT

As Commanding Officer, I am making a commitment that Naval Support Activity (NSA) Souda Bay will comply with all applicable environmental rules and regulations, prevent pollution, and continually improve our Environmental Management System (EMS). With this Policy Statement, I make everyone at NSA Souda Bay responsible for following environmental rules, instructions and policies that apply to their mission support roles. All personnel shall ensure that they are aware of this policy and how their activities impact the environment. In adopting the aforementioned commitments all personnel assigned or working at NSA Souda Bay will take ownership and responsibility for how their activities impact the environment.

NSA Souda Bay shall maintain an EMS that will be given top-down chain of command support in both policy and implementation of Environmental Programs. All personnel are expected to comply with environmental regulations as outlined in the Department of Defense Environmental Final Governing Standards for Greece and support conformance of the Environmental Programs established and maintained by the NSA Souda Bay Environmental Division.

A variety of our operations directly impact the environment. By adopting practices and establishing goals that promote good environmental stewardship, wherever practically possible, we can foster a positive effect on the environment.

We will use our Environmental Quality Board to periodically review our EMS and set realistic and measurable objectives and targets. Together, we shall create the conditions necessary to meet our installation missions while ensuring that we continually improve how we interact with the environment.

R. C. FACUNDO
Captain, U.S. Navy
Commanding Officer

Read the full statement here: https://www.cnic.navy.mil/SoudaBay

Word on the Street

If You Could Talk to Anyone Who Would it Be and Why?

"My grandfather – he passed away four years ago. It would be nice to check in on him and tell him that I joined the military."

Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Ashlee Evans
Security

"My father's father – I want to know how it was like to live in Crete back in the day. "

Eirini Maragkaki
Navy Exchange NEXMART

"John F. Kennedy – he was very handsome. I like what he did for the Civil Rights Movement. He was young and before his time."

Boatswain's Mate Seaman Sa'Niyah Taylor
Port Operations

"Dean Smith – he was the basketball coach for the University of North Carolina. He taught Michael Jordan. I'd like to learn about his methodology."

Mike Tyburski
Emergency Operations Center

"Benjamin Franklin – he tried thousands of times on (electricity.) I'd like to ask him what kept him trying to succeed."

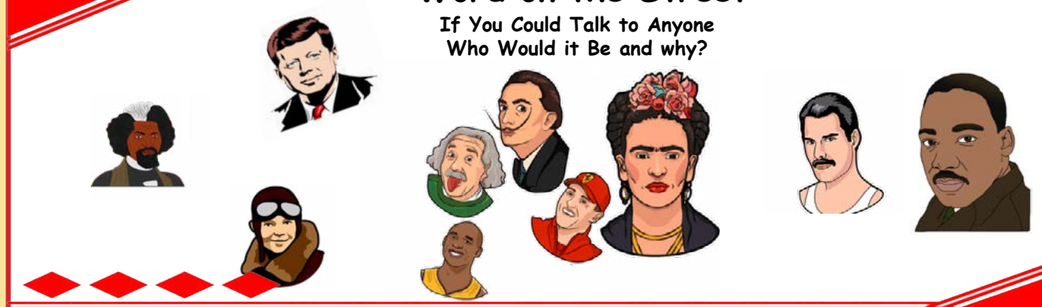
Joseph Dermer
Morale, Welfare and Recreation

"Frida Kahlo – she was a strong Hispanic woman. She has really inspired a lot of women who have read about her."

Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Annette Anaya
Security

Word on the Street

If You Could Talk to Anyone
Who Would it Be and why?



"Michael Jackson – because it was interesting to see how his life changed. I would like to know how he dealt with fame."

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Brandon Jones
Air Operations

"Kristina Kuzmic – she is an influencer on Instagram and Youtube. She went through a lot of hard times but still keeps a positive attitude."

Olga Chereti
Spa Tours

"Yanni – he is the reason I picked Greece. He opened up my mind to a different culture and taste in music."

Builder 2nd Class Tariqah Miller
Public Works Department

"Theodore Roosevelt – because of what he did for the Navy and national parks."

Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Dan Shirley
NAVSUP

"Tom Hanks – because I'd like to ask him how he chooses the movies he is in."

George Xinos
Navy Gateway Inns and Suites

"Elon Musk – and I'd ask him about the secrets of his success."

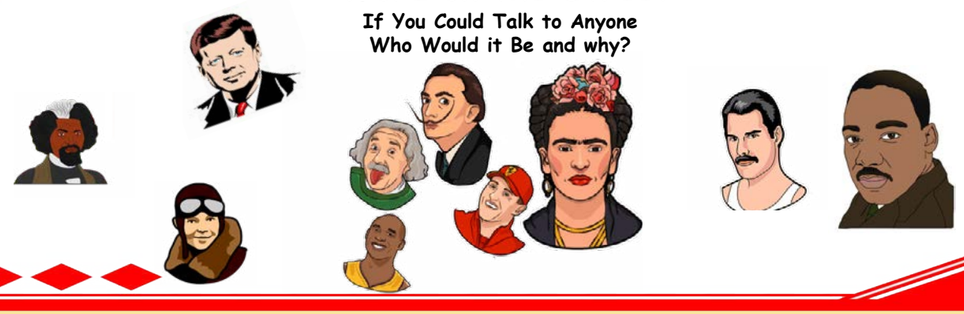
Air Traffic Controller Airman Cyril Formentera
Air Operations

"God – I want to know the meaning of life. Why are we here?"

Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Adrian Strauss
NAVSUP

Word on the Street

If You Could Talk to Anyone
Who Would it Be and why?



"Kobe Bryant – I'd like to ask how he has balanced being a celebrity but also being able to be humble and relatable."

Logistics Specialist 1st Class Gbolahan Afolabi
Air Operations

"Anthony Bourdain – I like his outlook on how travel changes you and how hard work improves your character."

Beth Astor
NAVFAC

"Theodore Roosevelt – because he cared completely about the country and held life by the horns and never let go.

Chief Steel Worker Andrew Meyer
Safety

"General James Mattis – he is one of the most knowledgeable military leaders that is still alive today."

Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Louis Reynosoluna
Security

"Danny McBride – because he would be hilarious to talk to."

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Zak McBride
Medical

"My dad – because I'd just like to hear his voice one more time. He always gave me great advice and made me laugh."

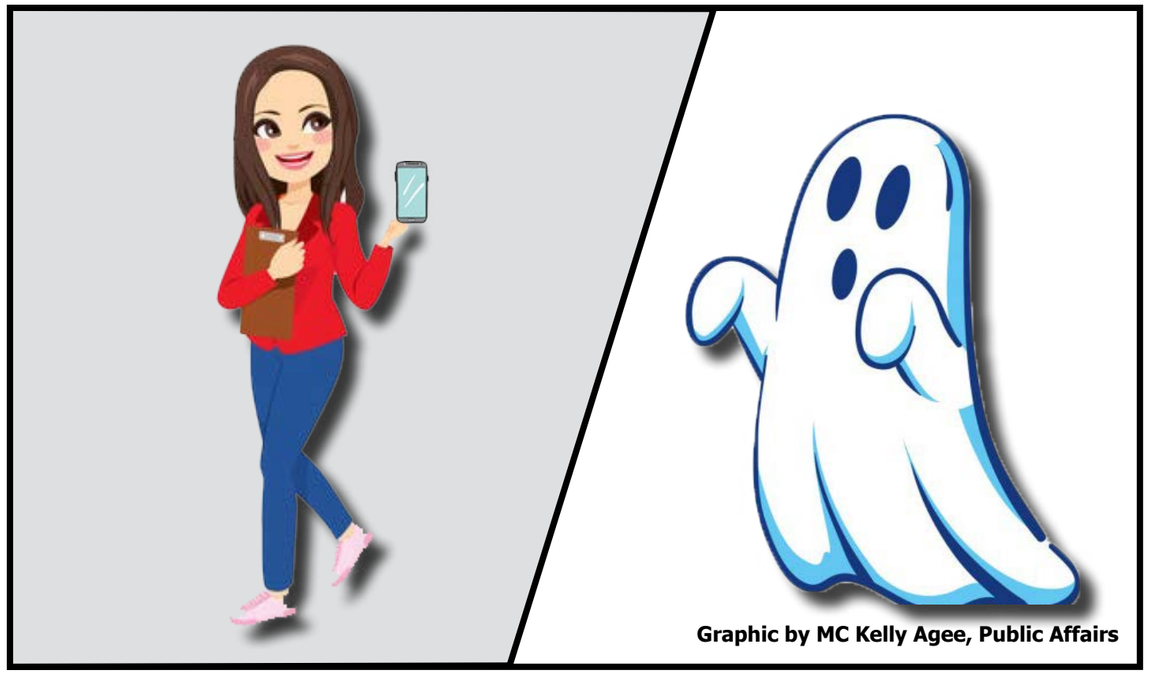
Jackie Manos
Navy Federal Credit Union

"Dwayne "the Rock" Johnson" - I like his movies and career."

Tech. Sgt. Georgios Apostolakis
Hellenic Air Force

Chaplain's Corner:

Left on Read = Left Unsaid



Graphic by MC Kelly Agee, Public Affairs

Lt. Michael Spoke, Command Chaplain

We have all been there. You craft a text and come up with something witty. You envision how the recipient is going to see it and hope some banter ensues. You muster the courage and send the text – only to view your own epitaph: "Read." You check back a couple minutes later, nothing. A few hours go by and still no response. Hours turn into days and eventually you stop checking … but your mind doesn't stop wondering: Why didn't they respond? What did I do wrong?

The sad reality is that being "Left On Read" has become a primary way people end conversations. What is worse, it has also become a common way to end even longstanding relationships. This is crazy! At no other time in the history of the world have we had so many ways to communicate – from text, email, social media, FaceTime, messenger, drones, carrier falcons – you name it! We have access to any number of ways to engage in a needed conversation. Still, one of the primary ways we deal with difficult situations is by ghosting – disappearing from the conversation altogether.

The impact and havoc this avoidance is creating is largely self-evident, and the effects are spilling over into every corner of society. As people have gotten less comfortable talking face-to-face about difficult things, we have resorted to not having the conversations at all. Instead of giving the basic courtesy of communication, we abandon and ignore one another. This kick-starts a vicious cycle. In a culture where the threat of abandonment is real, you must have the courage required to have difficult conversations. Otherwise, necessary conversations fall to the wayside. Too often, we use indirect methods to "show" rather than "tell" our unresolved feelings. We try to bury and ignore our discontent. We give no notice and simply "no show" to events or commitments. We don't give explanations and we don't apologize, which means we leave others holding an emotional bag of confusion, rejection, hurt, disillusion and lack of closure. And the truth is that while ghosting another person may feel easier than engaging with them in the moment, we are ultimately short-changing everyone involved. In conjunction with the disrespect we show to others, ghosting other people stunts us as well by leaving what needed to be said, unsaid. Societally, we are out of practice and losing the ability to have tough conversations.

This is a huge problem, because difficult conversations are unavoidable. No matter how many we may run from, the need for tough conversations is a lifelong reality. The question is, will you have the skills and practice to know how to have them in a way that is meaningful? Because it is not an exaggeration to say that the way you handle those moments impacts not only the quality of your life, but the lives of those around you. A proverb says, "The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." We need to relearn, or maybe learn for the first time, how to have difficult conversations.

There is a fantastic book, Crucial Conversations, which I highly encourage everyone to read. It is full of the tools, research and examples to help us learn and be ready to engage confidently and skillfully in conversations that matter – even when they are tough. Whether you read it on your own, or sign up to join us as we read it together at the Chapel, taking the time to change the way you are engaging in conversations is taking the time to change your life for the better.

If you want to discuss this, or any other topic with me, please give me a call at 266-1206.

Greek Culture:
March Holidays

Story by Kostas Fantaousakis, Public Affairs

March 4 - Tsiknopempti (Smoked Thursday)

Tsiknopempti (Smoked Thursday) is the Thursday during Carnival (the Greek version of Mardi Gras) which marks the beginning of the last weekend that Greek Orthodox Church members are allowed to eat meat. Because of this, everyone rushes to prepare and enjoy their favorite meat dishes, thus creating a “cloud of smoke” where it is being cooked. This smoke gives Tsiknopempti its most common names, Smoke Thursday or Smoked Thursday. It is also called Barbecue Thursday or Grilled Thursday by some. It's a popular day for going out to eat and enjoying as many different types of meat as possible. It can also be called, as a joke, Feast of the Carnivores.

In Greek, the word “tsikna” (Τσικνο) refers to the smell of cooked meat and the word for Thursday is Pempti (Πέμπτη), which literally means the fifth day of the week, so "Smoked Thursday" is a reasonable translation.

Tsiknopempti takes place on the Thursday before Cheesefare Week which precedes the 40 days of the Great Lent in the Greek Orthodox calendar. Tsiknopempti is the first food-related tradition in the run up to Greek Orthodox Easter Sunday.

Meat is king during this day, with the emphasis on grilled meats, though the occasional stew pot will still be visible. Before COVID-19 restrictions were put in place, some hotels and virtually every taverna would put on special menus for Tsiknopempti.

By far, the most common treat on the menu will be some variation of “souvlaki” (pork meat on a wooden skewer.) These dishes would be available everywhere along the streets and the taverna areas. It would also be common for local authorities and businesses to set up grills in central squares as musicians stroll around playing traditional instruments, and large quantities of roasted meat are consumed in the midst of the Carnival atmosphere. Even if public feasts will not be possible this year due to the pandemic, backyard grills and fireplaces will be usually fired up for family gatherings and the countryside air will be filled with wonderful aromas and lots of barbecue smoke.

Sources: Gogreece.about.com, Wikipedia.com

March 15 - Clean Monday

Clean Monday (Greek: Καθαρά Δευτέρα), also known as Pure Monday, Ash Monday, Monday of Lent or Green Monday, is the first day of the Eastern Orthodox Christian and Eastern Catholic Great Lent. It is a movable feast that occurs at the beginning of the seventh week before Orthodox Easter Sunday.

The common term for this day, Clean Monday, refers to the leaving behind of sinful attitudes and non-fasting foods. It is sometimes called Ash Monday, by analogy with Ash Wednesday (the day when the Western Churches begin Lent).

Liturgically, Clean Monday – and thus Lent itself – begins on the preceding Sunday night at a special service called Forgiveness Vespers, which culminates with the Ceremony of Mutual Forgiveness, at which all present will bow down before one another and ask for forgiveness. In this way, the faithful begin Lent with a clean conscience, with forgiveness, and with renewed Christian love. The entire first week of Lent is often referred to as Clean Week, and it is customary to go to confession during this week and to clean the house thoroughly.

Although Clean Monday rings in the start of what is basically a mourning period in the religious calendar, peaking on Good Friday with the crucifixion and culminating with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the actual day is always celebrated in a much more positive light, as the celebrants are usually to be found amidst family members.

In Greece it is a food-centric event with special menu items that follow the fasting rules. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the day would finish with a round of kite flying, weather permitting, which denoted a sense of joyful youth.

In Greece, although officially classified as a religious holiday, Clean Monday is regarded as a special day of celebration by all Greeks regardless of their religious affiliations. Nowadays, most people do not follow the fasting rules to the letter as set down by the Greek Orthodox Church, but a number of Greeks will adhere to them on this day. This has more to do with the cathartic need to rid the body of toxins gathered from the over-indulgence of the Apokries (Carnival) period preceding Clean Monday, when meat was the central focus of the meals. Fasting is a way to cleanse the body of impurities, and the meals eaten on Clean Monday reflect this to some extent. In any case, the day is now more than just a purely religious event and is celebrated by everyone.

Meal Choices

Because Clean Monday is a holiday which always falls on a three-day weekend, people will meet in family gatherings. Special meals are cooked, referred to as lenten (νηστίσιμα), since meat or dairy products are not traditionally permitted according to the fasting rules. Although fish is also excluded from today's diet, shellfish are allowed because they are considered to be bloodless. The most devout will also abstain from olive oil on this day, although this is rare in modern times.

A meal to be served on Clean Monday requires good planning and can also be expensive. The menu is designed to provide a choice of dishes that form a balanced meal when combined. Most of the dishes require quite a bit of work in their preparation and cleaning up afterwards. Typical foods include:

• Octopus, squid or cuttlefish cooked in wine sauce or dressed with vinegar

• Boiled leafy greens, with olive oil and lemon. These are collectively labeled in Greek cuisine as horta (χορτα)

• Fried potatoes and olives as accompaniments

• Taramosalata is a dip traditionally made from taramas, the salted and cured roe of the cod or the carp, though blends based on other forms of fish roe have become more common. The roe is mixed with either bread crumbs or mashed potato and lemon juice, vinegar and olive oil. It is usually eaten as a dip, with bread and/or raw vegetables. The color can vary from creamy beige to pink, depending on the type of roe used. Ready-made taramosalata is often colored bright pink due to the addition of food coloring. It is definitely worth a try for those who love dips.

• For a dessert, an oil-based semolina called halva is appropriate as it contains no milk or eggs. Another popular option is xerotigana, a type of fried dough drenched in syrup and sprinkled with nuts.

March 25 - Independence Day

March 25 is celebrated in Greece as both an historic and a religious holiday – a double holiday recognizing the War of Independence and the Annunciation.

Historic Event

On March 25, 1821, Bishop Germanos of Patras raised the banner of revolution in an act of defiance against the Ottoman Empire, which ruled Greece for nearly 400 years. During that time, the Greek language, religion and sense of identity remained strong.

The people of Greece shouted, "Freedom or Death" and revolutionaries fought for nine years, until in 1830 a small part of what is now modern Greece was finally liberated and declared an independent nation.

The struggle for Greek liberation didn't end in 1830. In 1864, the Ionian Islands were added to Greece, followed by parts of Epirus and Thessaly in 1881. The islands of the Eastern Aegean and Macedonia were added in 1913 and Western Thrace was added in 1919. After World War II, the Dodecanese Islands also were returned to Greece.

Crete was liberated in 1897 and remained an autonomous principality. On December 1, 1913, the union of Crete with Greece was finally achieved.

The war for Greek independence was supported abroad by intellectuals and prominent world figures of the day, including Lord Byron in England and Daniel Webster in the United States.

Greeks celebrated Independence Day prior to the COVID-19 pandemic with parades in towns and villages. Schoolchildren would participate in the parades – the student with the best grades would carry the flag followed by classmates wearing the official school uniform marching behind. In most major cities, the Greek military would also take part in the parade and other commemorating events.

A Greek military band performs during a military parade commemorating Greek Independence Day.
Photo by MC2 Kelly Agee, Public Affairs.

Religious Holiday

March 25 is exactly nine months before Christmas, and on this day, the Greek Orthodox Church celebrates the Annunciation by Archangel Gabriel telling the Virgin Mary that she would become the mother of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

The Annunciation (Greek: Evangelismos) to the Mother of God (Greek: Theotokos) is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church. It is one of only two days during Lent when fish is permitted, the other being Palm Sunday.

Many Greek men and women are named for this event. Evangelia (a female name) and Evangelos and Vangelis (male names) celebrate their name day on March 25. ■

Byzantine-era icon of the Archangel Gabriel announcing the good news of the coming of Jesus Christ to Mary.
Source: Wikipedia.com.

The Parting Shot...