



Abraham Lincoln hosts Chairman, CENTCOM

By MC2 ARIANNE A. ANDERSON
Penny Press Staff

NORTH ARABIAN SEA -- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen, Commander, Multi-National Force, Iraq Army Gen. David Petraeus, Commander, International Security Assistance Force Gen. David McKiernan, Commander, Special Operations Command Adm. Eric Olson, Acting Commander, Central Command Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey and several other high-ranking military officials visited USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) Aug. 26-27.

The distinguished visitors toured the ship, attended briefings, visited with Lincoln and Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 2 crew members and awarded a Helicopter Squadron (HS) 2 Sailor the Navy/Marine Corps Medal.

Aviation Warfare Systems Operator 1st Class (AW) Jesse P. Hubble was awarded for his efforts in rescuing seven crew members in a crash of a Navy HH-60H helicopter off the coast of Southern California in November of last year.

"It was completely unexpected, but extremely appreciated," Hubble, a San Diego native, said. "It's a really big day for me."



Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen, addresses the crew of USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) on their deployment thus far and on the importance of their work.

Photo by MC3 Geoffrey Lewis

Mullen congratulated Hubble and addressed the crews of HS2 and Lincoln.

"Thank you," he said. "You [Lincoln and CVW2 crew members] represent the thousands of shipmates who couldn't be here. I want to express my/our gratitude for everything you do out here."

Mullen said he believes today's Navy is the best it's been.

"I've been around for a very long time," he said. "Hands down, you're the best I've ever seen. We couldn't do this without you and your families' support. It's truly been spectacular in the last seven years."

Mullen said the visit was a wonderful experience.

"Thank you for the hospitality," he said over the ship's announcing system. "It's a terrific ship, a terrific crew, and I can't say enough. From the Captain down to the folks that prepare the meals and make the screws turn, you're doing an excellent job."

With less than two months left at sea, Mullen reminded Lincoln Sailors not to become complacent within their jobs.

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Mullen presents award to HS2 Sailor

By MC2 ARIANNE A. ANDERSON
Penny Press Staff

NORTH ARABIAN SEA -- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen presented the Navy/Marine Corps Medal to Aviation Warfare Systems Operator 1st Class (AW) Jesse P. Hubble

aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) Aug. 27.

Hubble, a member of Helicopter Anti-submarine Squadron (HS) 2, was awarded the medal for rescuing seven crewmembers from a crash of a Navy HH-60H helicopter off the coast of Southern California Nov. 9, 2007,

while Hubble was embarked during Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX).

"I'm sure he'd say he was just doing his job," said Mullen. "But, he was more than instrumental in saving seven

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Local Stories

AWARD

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lives. He was the calm in the eye of the storm. It's one thing to have the skills, but it's quite another to execute them."

According to the award citation, Hubble launched in Hunter 610 to conduct a six-and-a-half hour range night Combat Search and Rescue exercise. While returning to Lincoln, wingman Hunter 616 experienced a controllability failure and ditched at sea. Before being directed to do so, Hubble immediately donned his rescue gear and prepared for water entry. He unhesitatingly and with complete disregard for his own personal safety entered the low-light, no-moon, open ocean to rescue the seven exhausted survivors.

"Relying on his special training, stamina and courage, he remained in 63-degree water for 45 minutes until all seven survivors were safely hoisted aboard the rescue helicopter. By his courageous and prompt actions

in the face of great personal risk, Hubble prevented the loss of seven lives," the citation read.

The San Diego native has been an AW for 10 years and said he really enjoys what he does.

"When I am up in the sky, I own the back of the helicopter," he said. "We train everyday, physically and mentally, for any situation that might happen. We prepare for the worst case scenario, and that night was one of the worst. It all happened so fast. You just do what you have to do. I am glad everyone made it out alive."

Hubble said the award was completely unexpected.

"I never expected any recognition like this," he said. "It's a big shock. I have never seen anyone get

this award and I never thought I'd have something this high on my chest. I really appreciate it. It's a big day for me."



Photo by MC2 James R. Evans

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen presents "Golden Falcons" Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (HS) 2 Sailor Aviation Warfare Systems Operator 1st Class (AW) Jesse P. Hubble, of San Diego, with the Navy and Marine Corps Medal in the hangar bay of USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

VISIT

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"You've [Lincoln and CVW2 crew members] done a great job so far," he said. "Keep your heads in the game and get Lincoln home safely."

Petraeus and Mullen walked throughout the crowds meeting Sailors, and Mullen posed for pictures and passed out coins.

Aviation Electronics Technician 3rd Class (AW) James E. Harrison, of Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department, said meeting Mullen was

a really unique experience.

"He [Mullen] gave me my first coin," Harrison said. "I doubt I'll be able to top it. I think it's really neat that he took time out of his busy schedule to hang out with us and see how we live out here on the ship."

"Thanks for what you are doing, for serving your country especially during this critical time," Mullen said. "Lincoln and the strike group [Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 9] have an exceptional reputation."

Commander, CSG9 Rear Adm. Scott

Van Buskirk congratulated the crew of Lincoln and CVW2 for a job well done in facilitating the visit.

"Thank you for all of the hard work and helping out to make this visit a success," he said over the ship's IMC. "The visit went very well and I think they had a good time visiting with you guys. Good job."

Lincoln is deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility supporting Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom as well as performing Maritime Security Operations.



1781 - French Fleet traps British Fleet at Yorktown, Va.



Local Stories

V-4 Division gets pilots to final destination

By MC2 R.J. MORAJDA

Penny Press Staff

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) Air Department's V-4 Division plays a key role supporting Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom as well as Maritime Security Operations by supplying fuel to air assets aboard Abe.

As of August 23, V-4 has refueled an estimated 10,000 aircraft and issued 14 million gallons of fuel, said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) 1st Class Christopher Morrow, a native of Prescott, Ark., and V-4's Leading Petty Officer. Morrow said the ship has also received 15 million gallons of fuel via underway replenishments.

But the end goal of V-4 Sailors isn't tallying gallons issued and received however, it's getting aircraft fueled and on their way.

"V-4's overall mission is to deliver clean, clear and bright JP-5 to all fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft aboard Abraham Lincoln, and also all transient aircraft that come aboard. We have to do that in a safe and efficient manner. Along with

that, we have to purify the fuel, clean it, and deliver it to the flight deck as quickly as possible without missing any sorties," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) 2nd Class Patricia Fry, Quality Assurance Lab Supervisor and native of Pittsburgh, Pa.

Fuel operations span the entire ship, from the pump rooms below decks all the way up to the flight deck. A nerve center for fuel operations is in Flight Deck Control, where a control talker coordinates all refueling and defueling evolutions on the flight deck and in the hangar bay.

"They maintain communications between all of the below deck spaces and the refueling and repair crews," said Fry. "They also act as a liaison between V-4 and the Aircraft Handling Officer (ACHO) for fueling operations to inform him on the progress of all refueling operations, which results in zero missed sorties."

Ensuring that fuel is clean, clear and bright is the task of the Fuels Quality Assurance Lab where technicians are constantly testing fuel from the pump rooms and from aircraft up on the flight



Photo by MC2 James R. Evans

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) Andy Callahan, of Littleton, Colo., displays a fuel sample aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

deck.

"I think in the bigger picture we play an important role because we are constantly checking that the fuel going to our sorties is clean and won't disrupt the mechanical workings of the aircraft," said Fry. "Our planes can take off as quickly as possible, fly where they need to go and take care of the missions they need to do."

The Sailors in V-4 know exactly what that mission is.

"Right now our mission is to help our ground troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Basically without the fuel, regardless of whether it's the sample runner all the way up to our crewmen that are up on the flight deck, stuff like this wouldn't be possible," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) 2nd Class Damian Rodriguez, Pump Room Supervisor and native of San Antonio, Texas.

Lincoln is deployed to the 5th Fleet area of operations to support Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, as well as Maritime Security Operations.

LINCOLN'S SUNDAY CHURCH SERVICES

0800 Lutheran/Episcopal - Chapel

0800 Church of Christ - Library

0900 Protestant Worship - Foc'sle

0900 Latter Day Saints - Chapel

1030 Iglesia Ni Cristo - Chapel

1030 Roman Catholic Mass - Foc'sle

1900 Full Gospel Worship - Chapel

2115 Daily Rosary - Chapel

Local Stories

Lincoln holds CS, FSA appreciation dinner

By MC1(SW/AW) RODERICK JESSIE

Penny Press Staff

In today's Navy, Sailors are being tasked with work to accomplish with less manpower. Working hours have increased, responsibilities and demands are at an all-time high. And amongst a crew of more than 5,000 Sailors aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) there can never be enough praise for the commitment and turn-to attitude that renders success in the Navy.

Many departments on board Lincoln award their Sailors with certificates of appreciation for a job well done. But Food Service Divisions (S-2 and S-5) of Supply Department utilize their expertise in culinary arts to rejuvenate spirits and bring smiles to the faces of their Sailors deployed now for six months to the Arabian Gulf.

Supply Department's Food Service Officer (FSO) Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael A. Hill, from Johnson City, Tenn., said the dinner is an important event.

"We want to host this dinner for the Food Service Attendants (FSA) and the Culinary Specialists (CS) to show our appreciation for the hard work they put out for the crew," said Hill. "This is the least we can do to show our appreciation. A lot of times Sailors are underappreciated by the crew. This is just our way to show our appreciation for the hard work they put out."

S-2 Division Leading Petty Officer Culinary Specialist First Class (SW) Joseph I. Tenorio, from Oakand, Calif., shines more light on the Appreciation Meal.

"This actually started in May," said Tenorio. "June and July was combined. The Culinary Specialist and Food Service Attendant Appreciation Meal is our way as a division and department to say thank you to those individuals out there taking care of the troops. Giving the internal

customers the thank-you while providing a good service to the external customers, the crew," said Tenorio.

On a daily basis, Lincoln's food service divisions serve 20,000 meals a day, to include the daily consumption of 6,000 gallons of milk, 600-800 loaves of baked bread, 900 pounds of fruit, 620 pounds of hamburger and 800 pounds

of vegetables. This is enough food to feed up to 6,000 Sailors to include ship's company and air-wing. FSAs and CSs are directly responsible for ensuring this process takes place, under the guidance of their superiors. Cleaning the mess decks, wiping down tables, assuring condiments are available, washing dishes and serving food to Sailors are the duties of Supply's food service divisions.



Photo by MC1(SW/AW) Roderick Jessie

Food Service Officer Chief Warrant Officer Three Michael A. Hill serves Culinary Specialist Seaman Apprentice Jared K. Rodrigues-Morales during a CS, FSA appreciation dinner.

Only the most outstanding Sailors showing superior performance are awarded a seat at the appreciation meal. CS of the Month, Culinary Specialist Seaman Apprentice Jared Rodrigues-Morales, from Honolulu, Hawaii, thought the meal was great.

"I was surprised," said Rodrigues-Morales. "We have a good chain of command but I wasn't expecting a full-blown meal like this. The past couple of times [they recognized people], they handed out certificates. That's all I was expecting, that's all I really wanted. But the meal just went over the top, it was good! The food was excellent, we don't get this kind of treatment in aft galley." Rodrigues-Morales has been in the Navy for just over a year. He remembered boot camp and the respect that comes with rank.

"It wasn't too shocking to see CS1 Tenorio serving us drinks, but when the FSO actually came and handed me my plate, I was amazed. I was all stiff, I didn't know what to do. I was like, thank you Sir! I didn't know

Arts & Entertainment

'As the Eternal Cowboy' pumps up the workday

By MCSN KAT CORONA

Penny Press Staff

After two fun days on liberty I woke up bright and early for work. Instantly I knew I was going to need something a little more than just my standard diet soda to get me through the sluggish morning. I plugged into my trusty iPod, shuffled around and landed on "As the Eternal Cowboy" by the ever-hyper band Against Me! knowing it would do the trick.

The exclamation point in the band's name should be a clue enough that these guys have more than enough energy to spare. They're so amped up they need punctuation, so that when it's read or spoken aloud it's not said "against me" but "against ME!"

"As the Eternal Cowboy" is one of those albums you listen to in your car,

on the freeway, with your windows up (as to not get the pouring rain of Washington inside the car) and the volume up way high. Singing along ridiculously loud and very off key gets you through the throngs of traffic that is inevitably backed up.

The songs are intense and loud, emotional and hyper. Even the few "slowish" songs keep your energy up, which is an unimaginable feat, but some how Against Me! pulls it off.

The album starts off with "T.S.R.," a single voice with some synthesized tones strumming along. The drums pick up as the singing continues before a crescendo into the loud, throbbing, dance along. Before you know it, you're bobbing your head, shaking your shoulders and contemplating a revolution.

The energy continues until you're given a brief intermission from the up tempo shout-fest with the album's fourth song: "Sink. Florida. Sink." It's the slow-

est song on the album, with an acoustic guitar strumming along in the background, a few bars of piano at the end and some vocalizing that would make any 1960's Motown group giggle. It's slow, but you're not put to sleep; the energy and flow of the album isn't completely interrupted by the change of pace.

The tempo increases with song five and continues until the end of the album.

Formed in 1997, the punk rock band from Naples, Fla., have put out three albums, "As the Eternal Cowboy" was their second album, which was released in 2003.

Pick up "As the Eternal Cowboy" by Against Me! where ever you can. If you're heading out for a night out on the town or meeting up with some friends or had a long weekend and need some energy to make it through the workday, just pop the album in and get ready to be pumped up.

DINNER

Continued from Page 4

how to take it. But it's real good, it's good for them to do that for us. It boosts our morale and shows that we're appreciated. It keep us wanting to keep working hard," said Rodrigues-Morales.

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) Airman Dusti Fogleman, from Garland, Texas, who is assigned Temporary Additional Duty (TAD) from Air Department V-4 division to Wardroom 3 said the meal was great.

"It was very nice, it was different. This is a very good thing, I feel very special!" said Fogleman.

In order to obtain a seat at the FSA/CS appreciation meal, a Sailor has to be FSA/CS of the Month/Quarter. All divisions in Supply Department qualify to include, S-2, S-3, S-5 and S-11.

FSA of the Month Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Lachresha Jackson, TAD to the S-2 forward galley from

Weapons Department G-3 Division said the meal helped boost her morale.

"I felt so appreciated by my chain of command," said Jackson.

Chief Electrician's Mate (SW) Mike Arnold, the Chief Mess Decks Master-At-Arms, from Bakersfield, Calif., believes that the appreciation meal is important.

"When a lot of FSAs come here [TAD to food service division], they feel very unappreciated because of all the work they do," said Arnold. The hours are long. A lot of the FSA's come down to do a 90-day tour. These days they work are very long, very monotonous. They're very driven because we've got to set a standard because our end customer is the crew. [The crew] makes the ship go through the water. If the crew's not happy, we're not able to do our job effectively," said Arnold.

The Food Service Divisions will be hosting another FSA/CS Appreciation meal in the month of September.

Salsa Dancing
 Sunday Evenings
 Forward Mess Decks

MM2 Hernandez invites Sailors to learn dance moves and participate in Lincoln's Hispanic Heritage Celebration to be held in September.



For more information, contact MM2 Hernandez at 3244, 6602, 7904

Muay Thai Kickboxing

Mondays
 Wednesdays
 & Fridays @
 2030-2130
 HBThree



For more
 info contact
 PS2Phominh





Star-studded visit



Clockwise: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen addresses Sailors in the hangar bay aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) during a visit to the ship.

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen is greeted by Commander, Carrier Strike Group 9, Rear Adm. Scott Van Buskirk, after arriving aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

Commander, Multi-National Forces Iraq Gen. David Petraeus meets with Sailors in the hangar bay of USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen greets Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class Nathaniel Kramer and other sideboys after arriving aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen and Commander, Multi-National Forces Iraq Gen. David Petraeus observe flight operations from the flag bridge during a visit to USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).



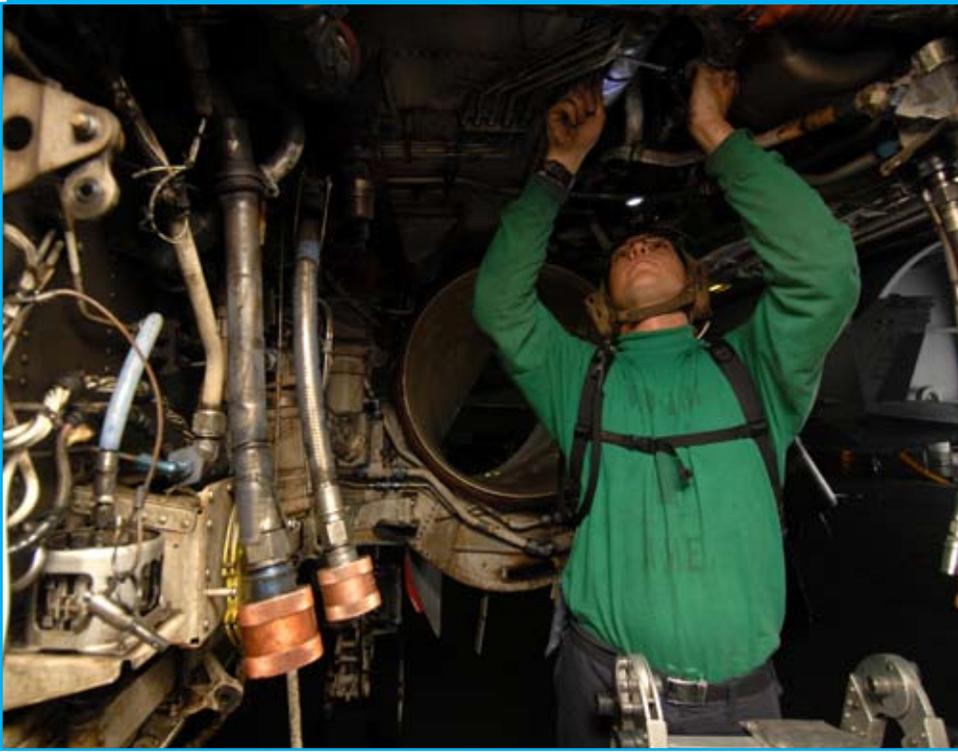
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen speaks to sailors assigned to "Golden Falcons" of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (HS) 2 after presenting Aviation Warfare Systems Operator 1st Class (AW) Jesse P. Hubble, of San Diego, Calif., with the Navy and Marine Corps Medal in the hangar bay of USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

Center Photos:

Left: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen and Commander, Carrier Strike Group NINE Rear Adm. Scott Van Buskirk talk with Pakistani Chief of Army Staff, Gen. Ashfaq Kayani and Director General, Military Operations, Major Gen. Ahmad Shuja Pasha on the flight deck aboard Lincoln.

Right: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen greets Quartermaster 3rd Class Timothy Hayes and other sideboys after arriving aboard Lincoln.

Photos by
Lincoln's Media Department





Sailors aboard Lincoln

Photos by Lincoln's Media Department

Clockwise: Chief Gunner's Mate (SW) Norman Banks, of Carson, Calif., instructs personnel from USS Abraham Lincoln's (CVN 72) Weapons Department on the proper deployment techniques on the G911 hand grenade as they go through ordnance training off the fantail.

Chief Gunner's Mate (SW) Norman Banks, of Carson, Calif., instructs personnel from Lincoln's Weapons Department on the proper deployment techniques on the G911 hand grenade as they go through ordnance training off the fantail.

A Sailor from Air Department's G-1 division goes checks to ensure bomb integrity on board Lincoln.

Information Systems Technician 3rd Class Justin K. Sin, of Honolulu, Hawaii, terminates connectors on a SIPRNET switch in the tactical automated information systems center aboard Lincoln.

A Sailor of Air Department's V-2 Division looks on as an F/A-18E Super Hornet Assigned to "Kestrels" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA)137 lands on Lincoln's flight deck.

Aviation Structural Mechanic Equipment Airman Apprentice Joshua D. Holcomb, of Eliot, Maine, changes the forward water separator on an EA-6B Prowler assigned to "Lancers" of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 131 aboard Lincoln.



Sports Analysis/Opinion

Bournes' Breakdown

'Big Dawgs' lead the pack

BY MC2 JAMES BOURNES
Penny Press Staff

Marching bands, the Heisman Trophy race, tailgating, let the pageantry of college football begin. This is undoubtedly my favorite time of year. When everyone gathers together to watch their Alma Maters and favorite local teams take the field against their hated rivals.

With so much riding on every game, there's nothing like the college football atmosphere. Last season was one of the wildest in recent memory, and this season's championship looks to be wide open as well. There are plenty of familiar faces on top of the polls, but there doesn't appear to be clear-cut favorite to win the Bowl Championship Series, or BCS. Every team in the top 10 has its flaws, and there are some teams lurking just outside waiting to upset them. So, without further ado, let's break down my top 10 teams for this year's college football season.

Georgia Bulldogs – They return 17 starters, and have stars on both sides of the ball. Surviving the Southeastern Conference, or SEC, schedule will be their toughest task. MVP – RB Knowshon Moreno

Ohio State Buckeyes – A few players turned down big bucks in the NFL to return for their senior year in hopes to win a national title. A weak Big Ten conference helps this team go far. MVP – RB Chris "Beanie" Wells

University of Southern California Trojans – Head Coach Pete Carroll says quarterback Mark Sanchez's injury is minor and he'll be ready for the season opener at Virginia. Circle Sept. 13 on your calendar when the Buckeyes come in to town for a BCS preview game. MVP – MLB Rey Mauluga

Florida Gators – Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow returns, but the pass defense needs to improve after getting embarrassed by Michigan in last year's Capital One Bowl. MVP – WR Percy Harvin

Oklahoma Sooners – Sophomore quarterback Sam Bradford tries to improve on his stellar freshman season. The Sooners will win games this year with their great offensive and defensive lines.

A favorable schedule helps too. MVP – QB Sam Bradford
Missouri Tigers – The Tigers will rely on the arm of undersized quarterback Chase Daniel. An improving defense will make this team a contender once again for the Big 12 Conference. MVP

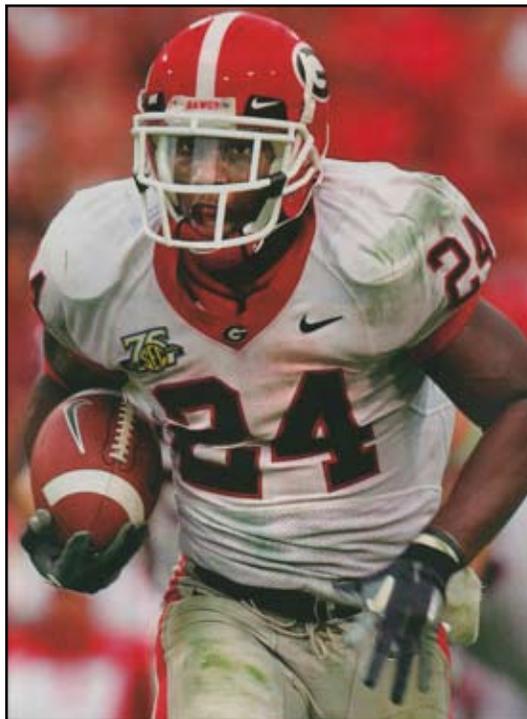
– QB Chase Daniel

Auburn Tigers – The Tigers will try to run the ball to an SEC championship. No Florida and both LSU and Georgia at home make this a favorable schedule. MVP – RB Ben Tate

Louisiana State Tigers – The defending National Champions have plenty of talent at running back and wide receiver, the big question lies with the guy taking the snaps. Might be Coach Les Miles toughest year. MVP – Offensive Line

West Virginia Mountaineers – This offense can and will put up a lot of points. However, their defense will give up a lot too. Playing in the weak Big East Conference keeps WVU in the top ten. MVP – QB Pat White

Clemson Tigers – The best running back tandem in college football. Experienced quarterback Cullen Harper and top receiver Aaron Kelly both return. MVP – RB James Davis



Courtesy Photo

Georgia Bulldogs Runningback Knowshon Moreno.

This, by no means, is my predicted end-of-the-season finish, but rather a look at the preseason talent of the top teams in Division One football. Here are my BCS conference champion predictions:

BCS Conference Championship: ACC Champion - Clemson Tigers, Big 12 Champion: Oklahoma Sooners, Big East - West Virginia Mountaineers, Big 10 - Ohio State Buckeyes, Pac-10 - Southern California Trojans, SEC - Florida Gators.

Some other teams to watch for in the 2008 season include Wisconsin, BYU, Texas Tech, and Arizona State.

This season will prove to be another great year of excitement and sorrow for college football fans. I'm sorry if your team isn't mentioned here, but if that's the case then prepare yourself for a second tier bowl game or a long losing season. For those of you who are fans of the smaller schools, I haven't forgotten you, by request I'll preview the mid-major conferences and schools next week. Find out which mid-major has a chance to sneak in to the BCS.

Arts & Entertainment

Fear, loathing in Arabia: One man's quest to see Batman

By MC2 JAMES R. EVANS

Penny Press Staff

This weekend USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) pulled into everyone's favorite "Arabian GulfPort" for the third and, hopefully, final time. While the purpose of this visit ostensibly was to perform critical maintenance and "enjoy some much-deserved liberty," for my buddy and I, this stop was about one thing: Seeing the new Batman flick.

The much-anticipated sequel to 2005's "Batman Begins," "Dark Knight" has been a steady fixture in the press ever since Heath Ledger's untimely death in January. Unless you've been living under a rock for the past year or so, you've heard all the hype about Ledger's performance as Batman's nemesis, The Joker. Or at least hype was what we called it until the movie hit theaters last month, smashed box-office records, received fantastic reviews from nearly every critic and then got even more press attention. Yes, this movie was going to be good.

With so much anticipation built up over a deployment of media bombardment, my friend and I were on a mission to witness once and for all what had been billed as "The Ultimate Batman." The ship moored and Department Head's "discretion" received, we set out into the desert heat to board a liberty bus and head for the mall. A long, sweaty ride and two fruit smoothies later, and we were in line for tickets. But then something went terribly wrong. The movie times flashed green behind the ticket salesman, and then they flashed something else: "Full."

Nooooooooooooooooooooo! Our shipmates had beaten us to the punch. All show times had sold out. Damn those delicious fruit smoothies for distracting us from our true mission. It was now time for an agonizing reappraisal of the entire situation. We had to see another movie. How about "Tropic Thunder," the hilarious action parody starring Ben Stiller, Jack Black and Robert Downey Jr.? Also full. Confronted with a list of movies neither of us had heard of, it was with heavy hearts that we chose the one with the coolest sounding title, "Death-defying Acts."

I could bore you with the agonizing details of this melodramatic attempt to squeeze a romance out of Harry Houdini's last days, starring Catherine Zeta-Jones and Guy Pearce, but

this is a Batman review. We slept through most of it anyway.

Day two and we left a bit earlier, skipped the smoothies this time, and managed to snag tickets to the only showing that wasn't already sold out, which would be playing in five hours. Meanwhile we wandered the mall, got some grub, and witnessed all the spectacles associated with a modern Middle-East city, including the sight of women dressed head to toe in black veils shopping for designer underwear.

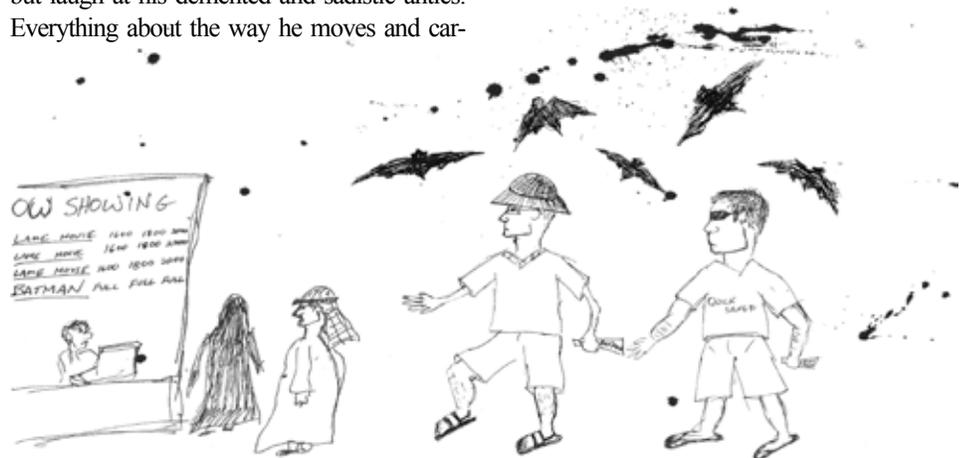
Finally show time was upon us. Opening credits rolled, and the movie got off to a great start involving a bank heist gone terribly awry for all but one of the robbers. But when The Joker made his first real appearance a couple of scenes later, things took a turn for the worse. As Ledger's maniacal devil clown strutted and licked his lips while he laid into some mobsters, the unmistakable sound of a crying baby entered the theater. Topping my all-time list of "What were they thinking?" acts, someone had brought their baby to see the "Dark Knight."

For the next two-and-a-half hours (yes, it's a long movie), every time The Joker graced the screen, the baby would start crying. And while it did slightly detract from my enjoyment of the movie, I couldn't help but note that baby's crying was a testament to the power of the character. Ledger's Joker is, hands-down, the scariest villain ever to square off against Batman. From that first big scene with the mobsters in which he performs the most brutal "magic trick" you're ever likely to see, Joker scares the bejeezus out of you, even though sometimes you can't help but laugh at his demented and sadistic antics. Everything about the way he moves and car-

ries himself paints a portrait of a madman with no regard for his victims, money, or order. His twisted sense of fun means death and destruction for the city of Gotham and there's simply no stopping or reasoning with him. It makes for one crazy ride.

Although Ledger's character could carry the film, and could have even without the hype caused by his death, the movie does not need to be carried. I didn't really enjoy the last installment of Batman because the plot just didn't speak to me, the vehicles were hokey, and the characters weren't at all memorable. Well, the vehicles are still hokey (bring back the old bat mobile!) but director Christopher Nolan has definitely upped the ante on everything else. The intricate plot line follows Christian Bale's Batman, his girlfriend on-hold played by Maggie Gyllenhaal, The Joker, and Aaron Eckhart as the star district attorney who will become Two-Face Harvey. An ongoing theme in this movie is that the hero who sticks around long enough will inevitably become a villain and the audience watches this prophecy unfold with disastrous and heartbreaking results.

I have always held all Batman movies to the standard set by director Tim Burton in 1989's "Batman." And while I'll always look back on this movie nostalgically for its style, music, and Jack Nicholson's memorable portrayal of The Joker, I have to say "Dark Knight" is the Batman movie that finally surpasses the Burton film and sets a new standard. Well worth another miserable trip to the desert.



Final Thoughts



Shipmates

The strength of a warship lies in the hearts and hands of its crew.



Photo by MC3 Ronald Dallatorre

Commander, Carrier Strike Group Nine Rear Adm. Scott Van Buskirk presents the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal to Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (SW/AW) Amiel Guerrero, of USS Abraham Lincoln's (CVN 72) Medical Department.

Editor's Top 10

Things to look forward to leaving the Arabian Gulf

- 10. Clear skies with visible stars.
- 9. Cooler weather.
- 8. No more Arabian Gulf ports.
- 7. Our ears get a break with the lack of aircraft launches and recoveries.
- 6. Night crew will lose hours of work.
- 5. Thailand - enough said.
- 4. Hawaii - even better.
- 3. Sharing the underway experience with our family members during Tiger Cruise.
- 2. Easier communication with loved ones.
- 1. In case you didn't already know, we are heading home!

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