

### **Guantánamo Thoughts—Beer and Lack of Security**

I'm sure I'm different from a lot of people, but I was struck by some of the more mundane details about my trip to GTMO. I wondered about small things, like how one traveled to GTMO, where would the habeas lawyers eat, and would it really be much different from a small town in Florida. Of course I wondered about what it would be like to meet my client in the prison, but I wondered about details. Would the guards be rude to me? Would I want to buy a GTMO cap or t-shirt? Could I get illegal Cuban cigars?

I first found that civilians traveled to GTMO on one of two commuter airlines, Lynx or Sunshine. Both depart from Fort Lauderdale, much farther north than the more logical Miami. The schedule is such that a person cannot get to GTMO in one day from the West Coast. It was necessary to fly to Fort Lauderdale, spend the night in an airport hotel, and then fly to GTMO the next day. My daughter Molly (acting as my legal assistant) flew with me on Lynx, which flies the larger planes. I believe they use Swearingen Metroliners, cigar shaped planes that were flown by a local commuter airline, Horizon, years ago. I suppose these were sold used to Lynx. I was told ahead of time that the flight was miserable, bumpy, and that everyone lost their lunch. We did not find that to be the case, and it was no different from any commuter flight. We did stop in Exuma, Bahamas, to refuel, and we were allowed off the plane into a tiny airport "lounge," really a cinder block building where we could buy a t-shirt or a soda, and wait for the aircraft to refuel. Across the street, where we weren't allowed being alien to the Bahamas, was an inviting bar with the promise of cold beer. It wasn't fancy, but looked infinitely better than the airport "lounge."

Upon reaching GTMO, it was already dark at six p.m., given the tropical latitude. The mess was closed, so our dinner was limited to The Clipper, the only bar on the leeward side of the

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bay, where habeas lawyers live. Most of the town, and most of the bars, are on the windward side, but letting us wander amuck there might compromise security, so we were exiled to the side with no people. Well, there were some, but they were mainly Haitian or Filipino contract workers, or the occasional Marine, guarding “the wire” separating us from the frightening Cuban army. The Clipper is a quiet place, smelling of a poorly cleaned grill and spilled beer and run by a surly Haitian. We had been warned away from the hot wings, and told only to eat the pizza, but we tried the wings, nevertheless. They were fine by my book, especially when dipped in ranch dressing, and they went well with Coronas, a logical choice when in palm tree and beach zones.

The accommodations are the CBQ, which I believe stands for Combined Bachelor Quarters. It’s like an old, but clean and sturdy, Motel Six, with four twin beds per unit, separated into two bedrooms and served by one bathroom. There’s also a kitchenette, with a full sized refrigerator in which to store more Coronas. Each bed had a basket of typical motel condiments, including shampoo and lotion. While U.S. cell phones won’t work, it is possible to buy a phone card and use the phones in the rooms or the pay phones scattered around, to call home.

I got up early, and I was the first one into the large mess hall, or galley, which is next door to The Clipper. The Haitian cooks will make you an omelet to order, and whatever breakfast you want, for about \$1.83, which is about what they make per hour, the U.S. minimum wage not being applicable in the Kingdom of GTMO. The food was great, and almost no one came into the mess hall, which easily could have seated 150 people.

I caught the bus to the ferry landing, with my daughter and my compatriots, and we rode a battle grey U.S. Navy ferry across the bay to the windward side. That naval vessel was piloted and crewed by third party national (TPN) contractors, probably Filipinos. TPNs do virtually all the

non-prison work on the base, and I was quite surprised that the Navy would turn one of its vessels over to guys in Rasta t-shirts. Even the uniformed fire fighters, a proud and natty bunch, were TPNs.

When we reached the windward side and checked in to get our photo ID badges, my daughter found that she had left her purse and all her IDs, including her passport, back at the CBQ, an hour and a half away. The helpful clerks, however, created her an ID badge on my say-so, and her assurances she was who she said she was. She didn't look too threatening in her long blonde hair and her Columbia safari clothes. On the way to the prison, we made several food stops at the local Starbucks (a shack that said, "We proudly serve Starbucks coffee") and at the McDonald's for breakfast sandwiches. Knowing our client was probably Muslim, we opted for the Egg McMuffin with no sausage. We brought various candy items, also, having been told that the prisoners like treats from town. The prison diet is very bland, very boring, and not particularly nutritious, so any food treats were a big bonus.

At noon we brought in more food, and I brought my client several pairs of new underwear and several super-hero comics. On subsequent visits, the comics and underwear were deemed contraband, even though the dangerous staples were removed from the comics.

Upon completion of the day's visit to the prison, we high-tailed it back to the mess hall on the windward side for steak and shrimp night—all you can eat. The steaks were mass produced and cooked through, but the shrimp were fine. The chief petty officer who escorted us said he looked forward to Fridays, and the surf and turf, so we needed to stop. We also needed to make the last ferry back to leeward, so we had to gobble down our dinner.

The next night we opted to bring back steaks and fine wine from the supermarket and barbecue at the CBQ. One of the Arab interpreters fancies himself a fine outdoor chef, and he supervised the cookout. I followed up with a Dominican cigar (no Cubanos for sale here, thank you), and the evening was complete. I thought about my client, back in his solitary cell.