

## NORTHCOM was on guard against plot to bomb planes

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American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – U.S. Northern Command was aware of the terrorist plot to bomb commercial airplanes that came to light this week, and was prepared to act if necessary, the command's operations director said.

"We were working with other agencies and the Department of Homeland Security well in advance," Army Maj. Gen. William Webster told a CNN reporter. "Our job is to deter, prevent and defeat threats to North America. It probably wouldn't be helpful to talk about how long but we've been working on this, but we've been working on this a long time."

The Colorado Springs, Colo.-based command had also been coordinating with international intelligence agencies prior to yesterday's arrest by British authorities of more than 20 terrorists suspected of plotting to bomb U.S.-bound commercial airplanes using liquid explosives.

NORTHCOM was established in October 2002 to provide command and control for the Defense Department's homeland defense efforts and to coordinate military assistance to civil authorities.

If an aircraft becomes a threat to North American infrastructure or civilians, NORTHCOM will direct fighter planes to either try to get the aircraft down on the ground safely, or, if ordered by the president, shoot it down.

"Part of our command is NORAD. Our fighters are on guard all the time," the general said. "Our job 24/7 is to watch the skies and make sure those kinds threats are not to be carried through. We had fighters ready to take off (during the plot investigation), but we're fortunate we didn't have to do that."

NORAD and NORTHCOM remain vigilant to potential terrorist threats and are prepared to respond to threats in all domains, whether on land, in the air or at sea, NORAD officials said.

In related news, following the lead of several other states, including New York and Massachusetts, New Mexico put its National Guard on alert and beefed up security at the Albuquerque International Sunport airport in the wake of the terrorist plot.

Because of the recent threat, the U.S. raised the nation's threat level for commercial flights originating in the United Kingdom and bound for the United States to its highest alert level of Severe, or Red. The threat level for all other flights was raised to High, or Orange.

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson said his office was in contact with Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration.

"We will continue to closely monitor the situation, and we stand ready to provide whatever assistance necessary to support DHS and the TSA and to ensure the safety of all New Mexicans, especially those traveling by air," Richardson said in a news release.

## Restation

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This seminar, taught by Capt. Gale Cotton, chaplain for 31st Combat Support Hospital, focused on the fundamental principles of marriage to include communication skills, conflict management, and romance and intimacy skills.

"Mastery in the art of loving will empower Soldiers to be balanced and integrated persons, which makes readiness to the demands of life second to nature. An integrated personality makes a good Soldier," said Opara.

The final module of training, Financial Peace, taught by 31st Bde. Chaplain, Maj. David Epperson and Cotton, was attended by single Soldiers and couples. This seminar offered practical ways to manage money, not just in preparation for the unit re-stationing, but throughout life. Epperson and Cotton addressed cash flow planning, debt reduction and emergency funds.

"The trainings were designed to help the Soldiers and families to emotionally and spiritually accept the realities of deployment and be ready for the unit re-stationing and operational deployment," Opara said.

The Soldiers and families await a long flight across the Pacific to get to their new duty station.

*Editor's note: This article was compiled by Erin Brown and Capt. Isaac Opara.*

## Justice Department presents Web site to explain military rights

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American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – The Department of Justice has launched a Web site to protect servicemembers' rights, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales Monday.

Gonzales, speaking to the Disabled American Veterans annual convention in Chicago, said the Justice Department has made it a priority to enforce civil rights laws for American servicemembers.

"The law recognizes that although we can never thank you enough for your service, we can take away some of the worries that Soldiers might face when they are deployed," he said in prepared remarks.

The government promises that servicemembers' jobs will still be theirs when they come home and that they cannot be discriminated against by their employers because of their military service. The U.S. vows that servicemembers will be able to vote and that their vote will be counted. And it promises that servicemembers "will have procedural protections in civil actions, like lawsuits or property re-possession, when serving overseas."

The Justice Department Web site, [www.servicemembers.gov](http://www.servicemembers.gov), outlines the rights servicemembers have under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act and the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.

"These basic civil rights are enforced by the Department of Justice, and I can assure you that the department's staff and prosecutors are deeply committed to these enforcement efforts," Gonzales said. "We feel that it is an honor to serve those in uniform in this way. It is our way of saying thank you for your service."

The attorney general said these are not just "pie in the sky" rights, but issues that directly affect people.

In one case, Justice Department officials filed its first complaint alleging that American Airlines violated rights of employees who also serve as military pilots. The case was brought on behalf of three military pilots employed by American Airlines. It states that the airline reduced the employment benefits of pilots who had taken military leave, while not reducing the same benefits for pilots who had taken similar, non-military leave, Gonzales said.

"In another vivid example of the people for whom we enforce these laws, the department recently won a

consent decree from an employer who terminated employment of a serviceman named Richard White the very same day that Richard told his boss he was being called to active duty," the attorney general said. "The consent decree requires the employer to pay back wages to Mr. White."

"What leads an employer to treat a Soldier like an inconvenience is something for a higher power to judge. But here on earth, we have USERRA, and we'll use it for Richard White and for Soldiers like him, as often as is necessary."

Voting is another servicemember right the Justice Department guards. "Earlier this year, ... (the department) addressed long-standing structural issues affecting uniformed military personnel posted both in this country and overseas who wished to vote in North Carolina, South Carolina and Alabama," Gonzales said.

These states had run-off elections too close to the primary elections to allow these voters to receive and return ballots. With cooperation from state election officials, the department was able to redress each of these violations.

"As the 2006 general election approaches, we will continue vigilant protection of the voting rights of servicemembers, their families and other overseas citizens," he said.

Gonzales also addressed the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.

"Thanks to this law, men and women currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan have procedural protections in place that will allow them to be less distracted by litigation back home -- by someone trying to repossess a leased car, evict their spouse and children, sell their house at an auction or run up penalties on credit cards with 21 percent interest rates," he said. "It's hard to respond to a civil lawsuit while you're focused on improvised explosive devices, and the law protects servicemembers for that reason."

Enforcement of this law is a readiness and morale issue, he said.

"Men and women in uniform, like all Americans, have to honor their obligations," he said. "However, Congress long ago decided, wisely I think, to provide protections to them against lawsuits while deployed overseas on active duty."

Gonzales urged any servicemember with questions to go to the Justice Department Web site. Military lawyers can help servicemembers and their families navigate through the laws.

## Recycle Center now offers Family Housing cardboard pick up

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

The Fort Bliss Recycle Center makes moving and the new transition a bit easier by picking up discarded cardboard boxes.

After everything is unpacked and ready to be put away, here is what can be done with the cardboard boxes.

Call 568-1537 or 487-6366 to schedule a pick up and provide a name, address and phone number in case of rescheduling. The truck used by the recycle center is not very large, so flatten and remove all items from the boxes.

The recycle center will not pick up boxes if they have items inside. For example, a prescription medicine was discovered with a load of

cardboard. Be careful not to leave items which pose a health threat. Remove all clothing and personal items. After a pick up date has been set, put cardboard boxes on the curb in front of the house. The recycle center has the following schedule to pick up cardboard from family housing:

Monday - Upper and Lower Logan Heights

Tuesday - Beaumont and Hays Housing

Wednesday - Biggs and main post

Thursday - 801 Housing

Before piling up the boxes for pick up, call and make an appointment. The recycle center is located at Bldg. 1336 and recycle containers are located in front. The recy-

cle point is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, but closes during inclement weather. The recyclables collected are newspaper, cardboard, plastics #1 and #2 (water bottles, juice bottles, milk jugs, detergent bottles, microwave food containers, soda bottles, and Gatorade bottles), white paper, junk mail, toner cartridges, cell phones, magazines, aluminum cans, shredded paper and tin cans.

Do not bring furniture, plastic play equipment, plastic pools, Styrofoam, bubble wrap, computers, televisions, radios or any other item not listed on the recyclable items.

For more information, call Rosie Zarate, outreach coordinator, at 568-6384.

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