



If it's Friday (again), it must be Guam.

Traversing more than 13,000 miles in the Pacific in one week, Publisher Ken Roberts sees that the U.S. armed forces, like the private sector, isn't able to escape the effects of outsourcing, workers displaced by technology and the challenges of sprawling 'world cities.'

MADE IN CHINA

MIAMI, 10:00 hours, Aug. 31

On the third anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist strikes, I will be gathering in Honolulu with about 50 business and community leaders from around the country to begin a tour of U.S. military operations in the Pacific.

Today, I am at the U.S. Southern Command Headquarters just west of Miami International Airport, receiving a briefing on U.S. military operations in Latin America from Gen. Thomas Hill, a "four star."

"Southcom," as it is called, might not have the sex appeal of the Central Command, which includes Europe and the Middle East, or the Pacific Command, which oversees Asia, with a third of the world's population, a third of its trade and half of its square miles. But it is critical to U.S. military interests nonetheless.

The primary threats or concerns, we are told, are guerillas in Colombia bankrolled by the illegal drug trade; Middle Eastern terrorist cells in and around Paraguay and, increasingly, the influence of China in the hemisphere. A Hong Kong company, Hutchison Whampoa, owns port facilities on both sides of the Panama Canal. Chavez and Castro are only minor blips on the radar.

The briefing is for the five Miamians chosen to attend a Joint Civilian Operations Conference, the largest contingent from any city.

I'm reminded of how small a town Miami can be: I already know Annette Taddeo of LanguageSpeak, Gene Prescott of the Biltmore Hotel and Luis Lauro of Hunton & Williams. The only member of the Miami squad I do not know is Leonard Abess, President and CEO of City National Bank.

The JCOC missions were started in 1948, three years after Truman dropped two atomic bombs on Japan to end the war in the Pacific. Ours, the 68th mission, will be the first to Asia and only the third outside the United States.

The idea then remains the idea today: for the military to show a select group of civilians what it does.

As a journalist who has had the creed "If your mother tells you she loves you, get a second source" seared into my defenses, I brace myself for the public relations barrage to come as I see our country's defenses. As will occur often during the trip, our Southcom hosts offer some memorabilia. A pen and pencil set. A golf shirt. A baseball cap. I check. Made in China, say two of the labels.

The global economy is just as real for the military. As I would come to see on my 25,000-mile, eight-day trip, the military is being challenged by and benefiting from the same forces affecting the private sector: productivity gains wrought by technology, the risk and reward of rising urban populations in "world cities," and a network of global suppliers forcing prices down.

MADE IN HAITI

MADE IN BANGLADESH

HONOLULU, 18:00 hours, Sept. 11

Hawaii looks just like Miami, with volcanoes, instead of hurricanes. Foliage is virtually identical — poincianas and palms abound. I have gained six hours. Not to worry. I will lose them many times over in the next few days as I become acquainted with the International Date Line and the military's C-17 aircraft.

We are introduced to Gen. Hill's counterpart at the U.S. Pacific Command, Admiral Thomas Fargo, and his second-in-command and our leader on the trip, Gen. Bob Dierker, a three-star.

We break into four groups and meet with our team leader, an Army major and expert on Korea and Japan, Steve Lee. Here, for the first time, I meet Leonard Abess, the City National Bank chairman, as well as an Arizona mayor, a successful Seattle developer and a Tampa-area judge.

Over the course of the trip I will get to know many of the others. Since the idea is to bring together "opinion leaders," there is some formidable firepower aboard. CEO, chairman and president are common titles.

I will meet the creator of "The Club" car protection device, the owner of a Texas oil and gas company, the man whose company supplied jelly beans to former President Rea-



The Joint Civilian Operations Conference members, including Publisher Ken Roberts, did an "arrested landing" on the U.S.S. John Stennis in the South China Sea as well as visit Korea, Japan, Singapore, Guam and Hawaii

gan, Massachusetts' lieutenant governor, a cardiologist who short-circuited his trip by a day to see a prominent world leader, the president of Pakistan, visiting New York — you get the idea.

Later in the trip, after we had just landed to end an overnight trip in our C-17, a Marine drill sergeant who got right up in our faces, ordering us to "Get off my plane you maggots!" confided that he did not dare read the resumes of the participants for fear he wouldn't be able to play his role that morning.

But, at this point, the trip is still ahead of us. Our group breaks and Lee, the Army major who is our group leader, reminds us of the tight schedule ahead for the week, and the long flight ahead to South Korea the following day. Get a good night's sleep.

In our travel bag, more mementos, including a JCOC baseball cap and a golf shirt. The hat is made in Bangladesh, the shirt not far from home, in Haiti.

MADE IN VIETNAM

OSAN, Korea, 13:00 hours, Sept. 13 — Korea will be one of the more fascinating parts of the journey, largely because we will visit the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. Our side estimates that their side has about 70 percent of their military, the world's fifth-largest, amassed just across the border.

But first, we must figure out what happened to Sunday. Hawaii is six hours behind Miami. But Korea is 19 hours ahead of Hawaii, thanks to the International Date Line. We will have two Fridays on the return home.

We have just finished our longest single flight of the trip, in the C-

17, a cavernous and loud aircraft, whose interior lights are always lit. The C-17 will become a home of sorts over the next week.

In fact, I will spend a fair amount of time in the cockpit with the four pilots, all of them stationed in Charleston, S.C. Like pesky children, journalists always have lots of questions. Plus these guys have the only view, a magnificent one at that; the C-17 has only a few port-hole-like windows in the fuselage.

The pilots have flown the C-17 far and wide, including quite a few trips to Afghanistan and Iraq. Sometimes they fly soldiers off to battle, sometimes they fly them off the battlefield. Most are alive, some are not. The live ones have the option not to fly with the coffins, I am told. Most do anyway. The pilots transport all sorts of supplies, including the fabled compact meals called MREs, hummers, helicopters and tanks. They see the world.

For this voyage, a skid of seats is put in place. Our luggage is wrapped under pink plastic at the rear. There is electricity on the sides for laptops and the like, something commercial airliners don't offer.

For the first time, but not the last, I sense what it must feel like to be heading off to war, though I know it is just a sense.

At the Air Force Base here, we visit the underground Hardened Tactic Air Control Center. After walking down hallways and stairs, we entered vault-like doors and find ourselves in a large, dark room filled with U.S. and South Korean military, computers and wall-mounted monitors.

On them, we can watch the movements of all aircraft on the peninsula, represented by tiny icons that replicate the type of aircraft. The skies over the south are swarming with U.S. fighter jets; the skies

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over the north wide open.

The Korean War never ended, of course, and the armistice remains.

The day we were there, Charles Robert

Jenkins, the U.S. soldier charged with deserting almost 40 years earlier and becoming a vocal pawn of North Korea, turned himself in at the U.S. Camp Zuma in Japan.

I find myself thinking of the young enlistment men and women I was seeing on the trip, thinking of my own father's experiences in World War II, where he was the sole survivor after his jeep went over a landmine in France, and contemplating the curves life can throw us. What happened 40 years ago to a young Sgt. Jenkins the evening he went alone on night patrol at the DMZ?

Later that day, after seeing a U-2, the B-2 stealth bomber and other aircraft at the Air Force Base, we fly aboard two CH-47 Chinook Helicopters into the heart of Seoul.

Here, and later in Toyko, one of the big issues is that U.S. military bases are now in urban areas where millions of people live and work. Seoul and Tokyo are among the largest cities in the world today, Seoul with more than 12 million people – three times the population of South Florida – and Tokyo with about 8 million.

Shortly before our trip began, the Bush Administration announced that U.S. forces in Korea would drop from about 37,500 to about 25,000 in the next few years. Military leaders on the trip are quick to point out that our commitment is not similarly diminished.

Technology, they say, is the difference – such as the intelligence-gathering technology we had seen in the underground bunker – the same technology credited with productivity gains throughout the global economy in the private sector.

It is here that I start to appreciate what is described as a renewed phenomenon in the armed forces: military coins. These coins, inscribed with the branch of the military, or the commander giving them or some important event, are distinguished – this should

come as no surprise – by rank. Ours from this stop bears the stamp of a four-star general, Leon LaPorte, the commander of the U.S. forces in South Korea. The rank is important because in a bar or nightclub setting, if your coin outranks the coin of your compatriot, he buys.

That evening, Lee, the Army major in charge of our team who is of Korean descent, takes a few of us out for a little shopping and a meal in Seoul. Baskin & Robbins, Nike Town, Outback Steakhouse, N.Y. Yankee jerseys – to the Caucasian eye not trained to easily distinguish Asian facial features, it could be Chinatown in any major U.S. city, except for the presence of American franchises.

I don't buy much but, thanks to the gifts we are nonetheless accumulating, my suitcase is in need of relief and I am increasingly grateful for the LL Bean carry-on briefcase the JCOC provided. It carries my laptop, Walkman, books, magazines, toiletries, camera, batteries, inflatable wraparound pillow, tape recorder and more. It is made in Vietnam.

PANMUNJOM, South Korea, 0845 hours, Sept. 14

– There might be a more bizarre corner of the Earth but I am not sure where it would be. This is in the DMZ, a piece of the 155-mile stretch separating North and South. Truth, myth, legend, posturing and propaganda all swirl here.

The South Korean soldiers serving here must be taller than most South Koreans, 5-foot-8 or taller, so as to suggest superiority to their long-ago brethren from the North.

Just across the border, which is literally intersected by several small conference rooms where negotiations sometimes occur, the North Koreans added a floor to their headquarters building once they realized the South Korean equivalent would be taller.

Rules had to be set on the height of the table flag that each side could use during negotiations in the conference room after



Not everything we did on our trip was safe, nor pleasant. In order to be safe for an attempted landing on an aircraft carrier – achieved when the hook hanging from the aircraft snags the cable on the deck of the ship as it flies by – a helmet, goggles and life preserver are donned for the claustrophobic and sweltering ride.

each kept bringing taller and taller flags to successive meetings until they almost reached the ceiling.

We are told that the North Koreans once surreptitiously sawed an inch or so off the chairs of the South Korean side of the negotiating table to make them a little shorter.

Ironically, the area between the two – the actual demilitarized zone – is, after five decades with virtually no human interaction, an environmentalist's dream, lush with animal and plant life.

And yet the threat of violence pervades the area. Nearby Camp Bonifas is named for Captain Arthur G. Bonifas, who was hacked to death with machetes by North Koreans in 1976 while he was part of a detail trimming tree branches.

Not far from here, North Korea has most of its military might aimed at Seoul. This is one of the three "Axis of Evil" countries first mentioned by President Bush in his 2002 State of the Union speech.

ATSUGI, Japan, 1600 hours, Sept. 14 – We tour two Navy destroyers, the U.S.S. Cushing and the U.S.S. Curtis Wilbur, and attend a terrific reception aboard the U.S.S. Coronado.

Although we generally stayed in first-class hotels on the trip – a Hyatt, a Hilton and a Mandarin – in Tokyo we stayed in the Central Hotel, where, with a good stretch, you could almost touch both sides of the room. No CNN here. Air conditioning worked by inverting your room key and inserting the

square peg into a slot.

Three of us walked to a Japanese restaurant in a narrow back alley, where no one else spoke English. Turns out, there is a universal hand sign for beer.

MADE IN U.S.A

FLYING TOWARD THE USS JOHN STENNIS, South China Sea, 10:45 hours, Sept. 16

– First, you are hot, sweating hot. You are wearing a life jacket of sorts, a clunky helmet and oversized goggles. Second, you are cramped, really cramped in a small seat on a small plane called a C-2 Greyhound. You are facing backwards, or so you are told because you realize you can't really tell which way you are flying in a plane other than what you assume.

Third, there is no air in the cabin, not any you really want to breathe, though we are told the smoke rising from the floor is the air conditioning. Fourth, you are wearing not a seat belt but a full harness so you can't move anything other than your head.

Have I put you in the seat with me? With about two dozen of my fellow conferees, I am approaching the U.S.S. John Stennis, an aircraft carrier sailing south of Singapore.

We are over the Straits of Malacca, a narrow band of water that joins the Pacific with the Indian Ocean. It is the busiest shipping lane in the world – for pirates, too. We are waiting for the signal that we will soon land. This is like no landing you have ever experienced. We are going to hang a hook from the bottom of our Greyhound and it is going to catch a cable on the deck of the Stennis and bring us to a sudden stop.

You have seen these landings on TV and in movies. I have lived one. It is an indelible piece of the tapestry of the incredible journey across Asia.

Aboard the Stennis we again see how technology, how computer power, is replacing older systems, just as in the private sector. On the bridge, an old board is mounted on a wall, once used to track schedules with – get this — markers. This day, it sits virtually unused.

On the deck, wearing helmets and headphones to cut down the noise, we stand and watch the young pilots in their fighters take off – being catapulted from the carrier – and land, grabbing the very cables we grabbed in making our landing.

Our parting gift – other than those the Navy was selling, the only branch that offered memorabilia for sale – was a U.S.S. John Stennis baseball cap. And it was made in the U.S.A. I can't help but wonder how much more it cost.

GUAM, 03:45 hours, Sept. 17

– I can't sleep, even though we flew overnight in our beloved C-17 and even though it is the middle of the night. Perhaps it is the assault-type, nose-down landing the pilots executed to give the civilians an idea of what it is like to bring her down in the Green Zone surrounding Baghdad.

Regardless, while most of my compatriots sleep, I turn on ESPN and – lo and behold – there are my San Francisco Giants. I call home for the first time in days, in my jet-lagged fog not even bothering to think what time or day it is there. It is Thursday afternoon and my son is home. "It's yesterday?" I ask, and indeed it is. And tomorrow will be Friday again, when we cross through the International Date Line to Hawaii.

I enjoy some spectacular snorkeling in the lagoon our hotel overlooks, with hundreds of multi-colored tropical fish. I swim in the pool, slide down the water slide. Guam is paradise. For the military, Guam seems like a paradise as well. It's U.S. territory; there is lots of land; and there is plenty of air space for training.

As with the global economy, when you get squeezed in one place – Seoul and Tokyo – you find opportunity in another. Here, we have Anderson Air Force Base and the Naval Station Guam. Downside, as any good Floridian can understand: Typhoons. Lots of 'em. I have never seen a concrete hangar before.

HONOLULU, 08:15 hours, Sept. 17

– It is Friday again. The trip is nearly done. We have traversed more than 13,000 miles in the Pacific and have slept in the C-17 two nights in a row. We look like – well, we don't look military crisp, let's just say that.

Ahead we have marksmanship training with a handgun and a rifle – I'll keep my day job – with the Marines, including the afore-

mentioned drill sergeant who was eager to see us depart the aircraft; sea rescues, seizures and inspections with the Coast Guard; whose cutters require fewer muscular men, thanks to improved equipment; a tour of the Joint Prisoners of War / Missing in Action Accounting Command; and, finally, Pearl Harbor.

It is a fitting end to a journey that began on Sept. 11. The U.S.S. Arizona Memorial is all in white marble, sits atop where the ship rests in the harbor, rusty pieces of it visible just below. The wall of names, like the wall of names of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, is moving. Reverence comes naturally, as does reflection.

We have come a long way in a week but so too has the world come a long way in the last half century. There have been no wars of that magnitude, no more atomic bombs dropped though many nations possess them. The Iron Curtain, a result of that war, has fall-



In the conference room at the Demilitarized Zone, Gen. Robert Dierker stands on the North Korean side of the room with Jim Winner, who invented "The Club" automotive theft prevention device, while Army Major Steve Lee, my team leader, and Air Force Sgt. Moreen Ishikawa, who previously worked at the White House during the Clinton and Bush administrations, record it for posterity. The North Korean door into the room was locked while we were in the room.

en. Communism is nearly vanquished and even in China and Vietnam, the free-market is finding its way in. North Korea and Cuba are the odd men out from.

As the trip comes to a close, we are promised something that other Joint Civilian Orientation Conferences have traditionally had, and it is because we started in Hawaii that it hadn't happened: a meeting at the Pentagon with the Secretary of Defense, a reunion.

I'll bring a lot of memories, perhaps some photos and the coin with the highest rank I can find.