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## News

### Student gets inside look at Gitmo

Argen Duncan/Sun-News reporter  
Aug 30, 2005, 10:24 pm

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Guantanamo Bay may be a household name, but how many civilians have seen it from the inside?

Jolie Tixier, New Mexico State University senior in hotel, restaurant, and tourism management, worked as a civilian intern from mid-May to mid-August at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station on the island of Cuba.

This year, 40 students from across the nation participated in the internship program at various sites around the world, Tixier said.

She served with the Navy's Morale, Welfare and Recreation program, spending 40 hours or more a week on such projects as overseeing catered events and working in eating establishments on base to entertain members of various branches of the U.S. military. She and another intern, a woman from Oregon, did "just everything," she said.

"We were kind of gofers," Tixier added.

Jessica Carroll, her internship supervisor and also a civilian, praised Tixier's contributions.

"Jolie was a phenomenal addition to our team," Carroll said by e-mail. "She worked alongside seasoned professionals and fit right in."

She said Tixier started work the day she arrived on the base when a large ship came in and the staff needed help.

Tixier said she loved the experience.

"It was the most interesting place I've ever been in," she said.

She was proud to be American, even more than when she returned from studying in Costa Rica, and was impressed with the integrity of the people, she said.

Tixier said she saw prisoner camps but never abuse, despite media reports.

"That's nonsense, really," she said of such stories.

She specifically mentioned Guantanamo Bay's large July 4 celebration.

"You don't appreciate being an American until you're somewhere else and among soldiers that are serving us," Tixier said.

During her internship, she was able to vacation in Jamaica, but never went into the nation of Cuba. U.S. personnel are not allowed to leave the base while on the island.

While Tixier was there, senators, four-star generals and other dignitaries visited, which she said was exciting.

Tixier said Guantanamo Bay is "exactly like being in New Mexico, except with water.

"It's hot!" she said.

Tixier, who had already studied abroad in Costa Rica, said she applied for the internship because she wanted to travel. Priscilla Bloomquist, NMSU associate

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professor of hotel, restaurant and tourism management, initially told her about the opportunity, which included paid training, travel, lodging and salary.

Bloomquist said Tixier's work provides a unique and important service, and added that NMSU students are actively recruited for such internships.

"So we're really excited for Jolie, and we know she did a really great job making us look good," Bloomquist said.

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