

February marks the beginning of African American History Month - Joint Warfare Centre

Written by Inci Kucukaksoy, JWC PAO
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On 18 February 2011, the African American History Committee held an observance luncheon to honour and celebrate African American History Month with this year's theme "African Americans in the Civil War" at the 426th Air Base Squadron's Community Activity Centre in Jättå, Stavanger, Norway.

The aim of the observance was to celebrate the past and present achievements of the African Americans who have played a significant role in shaping the history of the United States. More than 50 soldiers and civilians attended the event, which included distinguished guests such as German Army Lieutenant General Wolfgang Korte, Commander Joint Warfare Centre, U.S. Air Force Brigadier General Steven J. DePalmer, Chief of Staff Joint Warfare Centre, Ms Bjorg Tysdal Moe, Deputy Mayor of Stavanger City, Mr Hans Vik, Acting Chief of Police, Rogaland Police District, as well as the Guest of Honour for the event, Major General Byron S. Bagby, Director of Operations, NATO's Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum.

The programme of the event, narrated by TSGT Bethany Crisafulli and MSG Eddie Caver, Jr., consisted of the national anthems of Norway and of the United States, an introductory speech by Brigadier General DePalmer who said that the observance offered everyone an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the rich African American heritage, a tribute in "Lift Every Voice and Sing" anthem, an invocation by Chaplain (Capt) Michael Howard as well as an inspiring reflection by guest keynote speaker Major General Bagby. In his speech Major General Bagby focused on the strength of diversity and the extraordinary courage and contributions of African

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Americans serving in the U.S. military since the start of the Civil War 150 years ago and he honoured those who have served throughout the Nation's history; from the Civil War to World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War, to the current military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, among others. The General described the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of African American pilots who fought in World War II, as his real life heroes. Major General Bagby said he applauded NATO's diversity efforts, reflecting the Alliance's commitment to valuing everyone as an individual. He encouraged everyone in attendance, to explore and further their knowledge of the amazing heritage and the history milestones of African Americans by following the activities of the African American History Month.