

## **Guantanamo Bay, Not Just a Military Base**

When you think of Guantanamo Bay, you don't think of scientific ecological research. Guantanamo Bay is a Naval Base. There is a lot of scientific research taking place on the military base. It began when the base was started in 1903. The reason for the research is the biodiversity available. Some species of cactus found on base, are rare and extinct outside of the base perimeter. There are advantages of studying organisms on the military base. The acreage has been preserved on the base. The base provides an important refuge. The land is a protected area for habitats of many species of organisms. One species studied is the red land crab (*Gecarcinus ruricola*). This particular crab is host to a fly, *Drosophila endobranhia*, which was discovered in 1966. The fly was never seen again. According to many scientists, the Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay provides an easy place for United States researchers to study the diversity of plants and animals of Cuba.

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