

Barack Obama feels 'small' compared with members of US Marines

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Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii: President Barack Obama is one of the most powerful men in the world. He's commander in chief of one of its mightiest militaries, too.

Yet in spite of all that, Obama feels inadequate from time to time. Especially when he's vacationing in Hawaii and working out alongside strapping Marines at their gym.

"The only problem I've got when I'm here is having to work out with Marines in the gym," Obama said during his annual Christmas Day visit with U.S. troops at Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay.

"Because I generally feel like your commander in chief is in pretty good shape, and then I get next to some guy, you know, curling 100 pounds and it makes me feel small."

Obama works out at the base gym just about every day when he vacations here. With New Year's Day approaching, though, he told the troops he's inspired "to work harder so I can keep up with you next year."

Perhaps using the "workout stuff" his wife, Michelle, had said she was getting him for Christmas.

The 6-foot-1 Obama is known to enjoy a daily workout whether he's at home in the White House, traveling or on vacation. He also plays golf practically every weekend in Washington when the weather cooperates, and he swings his clubs just about daily during extended vacations on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, or here in his native Hawaii.

The Christmas visit with the troops has become a yearly tradition for the Obamas during their annual vacation on Oahu.

Obama said it's one of their favorite things to do because they get a chance to "say thank you on behalf of the American people."

This year's visit came four days after six U.S. service members were killed in a suicide attack in Afghanistan. In his first public comments on the attack, Obama praised the six individuals as "outstanding, brave men and women."

The six service members, including a New York City police detective who served in the U.S. National Guard, were killed Monday at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan, the largest U.S. facility in the country, when a suicide attacker rammed an explosives-laden motorcycle into a joint NATO-Afghan patrol. The Taliban claimed responsibility.

Obama is on a 16-day vacation from Washington. He is scheduled to return to the White House just after the start of the new year.

- AP