

Victory Times



Telling the United States Forces - Iraq story

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Soldiers earn their spurs



Spc. Brian Yong-Hyun Kim from Houston, Texas, with the personal security detail for Gen. Odierno, commanding general for United States Forces-Iraq runs through an obstacle course during the STB Spur Ride. For story and more photos see Page 4. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall)

Sexual assault impact is detrimental to Army family

Story and photos by Spc. Britney Bodner
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

As the scene unfolded, an audience of about 400 United States Forces-Iraq service members went silent.

"I didn't rape that girl," he said.

"She did whisper 'no,' but she didn't do anything to reinforce it; I thought she didn't mean it."

"So you didn't listen to or respect her enough to stop and at least ask," the woman questioned.

Two actors, Kyle Terry and Sharyon Culberson, using only two chairs as props, presented "Sex Signals," an improvised skit created by Catharsis Productions to discuss sexual assault with service members, April 19.

Terry and Culberson used a mix of humor and drama to discuss the miscommunications between men and women. They presented situations that are common to everyday life and illustrated how choices made by both parties and those around them can lead to sexual assault.

The program was a different approach to talking about sexual assault.

"It's something every service member should see when they first deploy, so they know how to avoid situations that could result in sexual assault," said Sgt. Sean Forsythe, an

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Special Troops Battalion takes on brigade-size mission

Story by Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

When the III Corps Special Troops Battalion arrived in Iraq, they became the largest battalion in the Army, providing support to more than 5,500 service members and contractors.

At Fort Hood, Texas, the Phantom STB supported about 950 Soldiers.

When they took over the United States Forces-Iraq STB mission, they became the Task Force Phantom STB and their

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Chaplain's Corner

Pursue wisdom, listen in love, duty is deep

By Chaplain (Col.) Mike Lembke
Deputy United States Forces-Iraq Operations Chaplain

In this season of transition; as we encourage and empower the Iraqis in their work and mission and deploy and redeploy as individuals and units, I would offer that actively pursuing wisdom is a good idea.

I suggest that wisdom is knowledge combined with understanding.

We can know a lot about many things, but if it is not coupled with cultural, emotional and spiritual sensitivity, as well as broad understanding, we will never achieve real wisdom.

We all know that communication is what propels and enlivens relationships. When you listen in love you allow the necessary 'space' for the other to be really heard.

General George Marshall, who served as the Chief of Staff during WWII, remarked that his formula for handling people, was to :

- ◆listen to the other person's story;
- ◆listen to the other person's whole story;
- ◆listen to the other person's whole story first.

Marshall's advice is well taken; it postures us to really hear the full content of what the other is saying.

When we listen in love, it is with a broad acceptance of the other, and we are better able to gain a more positive attitude about them. Sure it's risky to listen ... you might think
How will I get my point across?

How will I be heard?

Will I get my way?

These are all valid questions and I would submit that "we convince best by listening."

Try listening in love today.

Your faith, what you believe in, the foundation of your life, is portable.

It is good to take some time to remember , contemplate and evaluate that which is the foundation of your life. This portability allows for questions, exploration, pondering and revelation.

It would seem counterintuitive to lock your faith away in a box so that you could take it out when you return home from the mission.

Your faith is portable. It goes where you go. Exercise your faith. Live your faith and be empowered by your faith.

Wisdom, love and faith inform the strong sense of the duty that is necessary to ensure mission accomplishment. Duty is to the Soldier, Sailor, Airmen or Marine what 'roots' are to a tree.

Your sense of duty is what anchors you in reality and purpose ... these roots are fed by pursuing wisdom, listening in love and faith.

Just as it is important to exercise your body, it is equally important to exercise your spiritual self.

Enjoy this deployment journey by pursuing wisdom, listening in love.

Exercise your portable faith and be strong in duty.

SARC Smarts



What is a DSARC? The Deployed Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (DSARC) is considered the center of gravity when it comes to ensuring that victims of sexual assault receive appropriate and responsive care. They serve as the single point of contact to coordinate sexual assault victim care. The DSARC is here to ensure you are treated with dignity and respect and you receive the care you need to complete your mission!

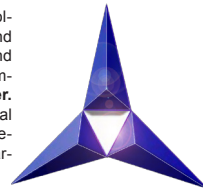
Call the USF-I Deployed Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (DSARC) at 485-5085 or 435-2235 for help. Army members should seek assistance with their Unit Victim Advocate (UVA) or DSARC.



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Victory News

Assault, from Page 1

intelligence analyst with the 35th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade.

The message reinforced the theme for April, which is designated as Sexual Assault Awareness Month: 'What hurts one, affects all. Preventing sexual assault is everyone's duty.'

"Service members are here for an entire year," said Sgt. 1st Class Peter Farmer, the United States Forces-Iraq deployed sexual assault response coordinator. "If Soldiers don't watch out for one another they risk losing their battle buddies."

The best way to stop sexual assault, he said, is to prevent it.

"We want to be proactive ... we want to try and eliminate some of these things before they start," Farmer said.

"Sexual assault in the military, particularly inside your unit and your team, is as devastating in its own way as incest," said a USF-I Soldier who was a victim of sexual assault. "Someone you have been taught to trust, someone who worked beside you, laughed and joked with you, someone you even liked - violated every value the military has impressed on you. He betrayed your trust and your confidence in the team."

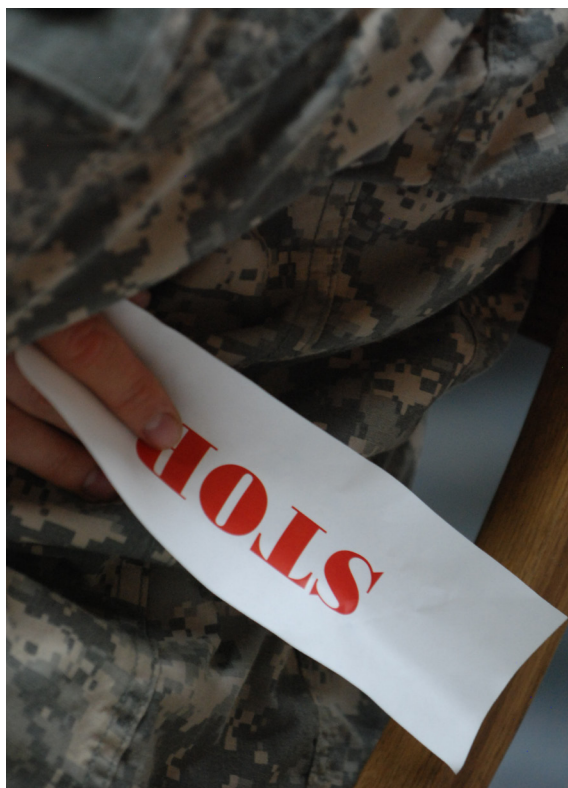
Sexual assault also affects more than the offender and the victim, Farmer said. It's a common misconception that sexual assault only affects the two parties involved. In reality, it affects units, friends, family, and the integrity of the military.

"When sexual assault happens in a unit, there are many people who are taken out of the fight," he said.

Farmer said that if an unrestricted report is filed, it requires the involvement of the first sergeant

and commander. Individuals will go through a process involving the criminal investigative division to interview, the staff judge advocate, and possibly through court-martial proceedings.

In addition, it can affect the readiness of a unit by creating animosity, he said. People start choosing sides and then



A Soldier holds a sign used to identify inappropriate behavior during Catharsis Production's "Sex Signals." The impromptu play is presented by two actors who present scenerios to the audience to teach them what sexual assault is.

the unit becomes polarized. Service members are either on the side of the victim or believe the alleged offender is innocent.

"Unit readiness in large part depends on cohesion, which is based largely on mutual trust and loyalty," said Capt. Peter Higbie, commander of Company A, TF Phantom. "If the perpetrator is from the same unit as the victim, the negative effect on unit cohesion is obvious. But even if the perpetrator is not from the unit, unit cohesion may still suffer if Soldiers perceive that the

chain of command cannot protect its Soldiers."

Farmer says the goal of Sexual Assault Awareness Month is to educate every service member and civilian about sexual assault.

While education is important, the main goal for USF-I leadership is not to just reduce sexual assault, it's to eliminate it, said Command Sgt. Maj. Kevin Stuart, command sergeant major of TF 1st Medical Brigade.

"Soldiers have a duty to other soldiers to report these crimes so that the chain of command can take appropriate action to ensure the health and welfare of those involved in the incident," Higbie said. "From a command perspective, punishing offenders to the fullest extent of the UCMJ is an important way to show soldiers that sexual assault is behavior that will not be tolerated."

"The chain of command cannot do that if no report exists," he continued. "I understand, though, why some victims want to file restricted reports. Restricted reporting is important to ensure those victims who don't want to go public still have access to medical treatment and other resources to help them cope."

It's good to bring awareness about this to service members, said Forsythe. With programs like Sex Signals it makes people think about how to prevent sexual assault.

"American Soldiers are members of a band of brothers and sisters, bonded by Army values, duty to country and loyalty to each other," said Master Sgt. Rita Cossio, a USF-I DSARC. "As Soldiers and leaders, it is our responsibility to set the climate and conditions where safety is promoted and where a fellow Soldier is not hampered by fear of sexual assault or reprisal against reporting a sexual assault."



III Corps Spur Ride encourages

Story and photos by Sgt. Dan Yarnall
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

Sixty-three Soldiers were mentally and physically pushed to their limits during a 16-hour event as they attempted earn their golden spurs.

On Sunday, United States Forces-Iraq Special Troops Battalion held a “Spur Ride” on Victory Base Complex to provide Soldiers an opportunity to participate in the cavalry tradition.

The Soldiers were challenged through different stations such as pushing an up armored humvee, clearing rooms in the Victory Over America palace and completing an obstacle course that finished with a low crawl under barbed wire in the mud.

Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Livengood, USF-I STB, command sergeant major, said he wanted to challenge the Soldiers in a way that would show them what they are really capable of when they work together.

“They had no idea that they were going to accomplish what they did today, yet they persevered; they pushed through the pain and they helped each other out. In the end, this is all about team work,” he said.



A squad of Soldiers complete the room clearing event in the Victory Over America Palace.

First Sergeant Barry Ellis from Company C, USF-I STB, was part of the cadre for the ride. He said, the highlight was witnessing the camaraderie.

“The best part was seeing individuals come and grow together in a matter of hours to be a team,” he said. “Going through this, you might not make it, but having someone there to push you through to the end really makes the difference.”



Spc. Peter Beskales wears the rank of staff sergeant as a squad leader for his team as they perform room clearing techniques.



A Soldier walks through the Victory Over America Palace with his team as they demonstrate how to clear rooms. More than 60 Soldiers took part in the United States Forces-Iraq, Special Troops Battalion Spur Ride April 18.



teamwork, challenges Soldiers



A Soldier receives support from his battle-buddies as they walk off of the obstacle course during the Spur Ride.

Specialist Eric Johnson from San Francisco, Calif. with 382nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, took the challenge put out by his commander and participated in the event.

“It was something that he had done in the past, and it is something that we should do,” Johnson said. “So I accepted the challenge and I wasn’t going to let him down.”

Johnson was surprised by how difficult the challenge actually was, he didn’t think it was going to be that tough.

“There were times in there I felt like giving up,” he said. “When half of my team went down it was

really tough for me to get through.”

He went on to explain that earning his spurs with his team means a lot to him.

“I have so much respect for the guys that made it though with me on my team,” he said. “We are all brothers.”

In the end, 42 Soldiers came together, passed the test and were accepted into the brotherhood of cavalrymen, earning their spurs.



▲ *Spc. Kevin Marshall and Spc. Peter Beskales discuss their plan as they clear rooms*

◀ *Soldiers execute squad rushing techniques up a hill on Camp Slayer.*



A Soldier with USF-I STB comes out from the mud pit after crawling under barbed wire during the obstacle course on Camp Slayer

BOB on the FOB comes back to Iraq

Story by Sgt. Chris McCann
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

Almost everyone in the military has heard of the Good Idea Fairy. And when you think of it, the image that might come to mind is a Soldier, head cocked to one side in thought, as an ACU-clad, moth-winged fairy whispers in his ear.

If that's what pops into your head, thank Staff Sgt. A.J. Merrifield and his BOB on the FOB comics.

Merrifield is a member of the personal security detachment for Lt. Gen. Robert Cone, deputy commanding general of operations for United States Forces-Iraq, but in his off time, creates cartoons that have become something of a touchstone for deployed troops and civilians alike.

"It started when I was at Multinational-Division North," Merrifield said. He was assigned to create a poster for the unit, known as Task Force Band of Brothers. He commented that the unit would be dubbed "Task Force BOB," and was quickly proven right – although his picture of Soldiers silhouetted on a horizon was widely used. The nickname stuck, and since he was on a Forward Operating Base, "BOB on the FOB" seemed a logical name for the comics.

"The first one was "Fobbit," Merrifield said. "And like in all the cartoons, 90 percent of the text is straight from conversations I hear. It's one of the reasons it resonates; we all know people who say those things, we recognize the inherent humor."

The Good Idea Fairy was the third or fourth comic, drawn after he received a suggestion.

"The officer that posed is now in United States Division – North again," said Merrifield. "I got a photo of him for reference, and right outside his office, a signal Soldier was

sitting on a desk in the perfect pose. I told him 'Don't move!' and got a photo."

Merrifield uses photographs for reference, and takes texture and pattern samples from them, but draws the cartoons by hand.

"They're all drawn on a Wacom tablet, by hand. I sample ACUs, skin tone, things like that, and paint it in with Photoshop."

Each comic contains between 30 and 50 layers, and takes two to three hours to draw. Merrifield took a break from creating the comics for awhile, only to discover how wildly popular they were even when he wasn't updating them regularly.

"I put together a Facebook page for them, and in no time I had five thousand fans. I realized then how many people wanted to see them."

Still, not many people know he's the source of the humor they enjoy.

"The longest I've gone without someone e-mailing me my own comics, thinking I haven't seen them, is about a month," said Merrifield. "And I was nearly dismissed from a promotion board because when I mentioned the cartoons, they thought I was taking credit for someone else's work."

Merrifield said he isn't running out of ideas any time soon; he frequently receives suggestions, and credits the person in the comic.

"There's always something being done, or being said, that you have to laugh at," he said. "That's what I love most about the military – the shared sense of humor. You have to laugh, or you'll go nuts sometimes."

"The cartoons are really funny because they poke fun at things most Soldiers, Marines, Airmen and Sailors and civilians immediately recognize as silly or absurd," said Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Mellinger, the Army Materiel Command senior enlisted Soldier, who met Merrifield while he was working in MND-N. "They exaggerate some of the excesses in behavior or accessorizing some troops go to. And anyone who looks at one of the cartoons will immediately have someone come to mind that they would swear was the subject."

Merrifield also appreciates the occasional negative comment he receives.

"I love hearing from people who are offended because they see themselves in it. I say, if you see yourself in a BOB on the FOB comic, you need to look at how you're doing things. If I get a nasty letter sometimes, I'm doing something right and hitting



Photo by Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall

Staff Sgt. A.J. Merrifield, a member of the personal security detail for Lt. Gen. Robert Cone, deputy commanding general of operations for United States Forces-Iraq, works on a new BOB on the FOB comic.

See BOB, Page 8

Community

The Coalition Dining Facility is Closing

The Coalition Dining Facility on Camp Victory will be closing its door April 30, following the midnight meal.

Beginning May 1, the Sports Oasis will have new meal hours

Breakfast : 0500-0830
Lunch : 1130-1430
Dinner : 1700-2030
Midnight : 2300-0100

The Oasis will also provide a 24-hour Grab and Go Sandwich Bar for service members and civilians on the go.

Additionally, the NFL, NBA and MLB overflow rooms will no longer be available for special functions.

All special meal requests will now go through the Oasis DFAC.

For more information, contact Sgt. 1st Class Brian Gorby, the Task Force Phantom senior food operations sergeant at brian.gorby@iraq.centcom.mil or 318-485-2159/6238

VBC Facility Operating Hours

Coalition Cafe DFAC
Breakfast 5:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Dinner 5 - 8 p.m.
Midnight Dining 11 p.m. - 1 a.m.

Sports Oasis DFAC
Breakfast 5:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Dinner 5 - 9 p.m.

Education Center
8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Camp Liberty Post Exchange
8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Camp Victory Post Exchange
8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Paul Smith Gym
Open 24 Hours

Victory Main Post Office
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

USF-I Unit Mail Room
Customer Services/Mail Call:
Daily 3 - 6 p.m.

Al Faw Palace Post Office
Wednesday and Sunday
12:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Gorby TMC Sick Call
Monday - Friday 7:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Saturday & Sunday 9 - 11:30 a.m.

Mental Health Clinic
Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m. - noon

Pharmacy
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - noon;
1 - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. - noon

Notice

To all USF-I personnel:
Remember to apply OPSEC to your e-mails, blogs, Facebook, and other social networking sites.

Use the USF-I and Reduction of Forces critical information lists if you are unsure whether or not it should be posted.

This applies to any time on a NIPR computer or personal computer.

Make sure your families know about OPSEC as well.

Keep up with United States Forces - Iraq online

www.usf-iraq.com

www.youtube.com/USFIraq

www.facebook.com

United States Forces - Iraq

U.S. Army III Corps Phantom Battalion

III Corps and Fort Hood

www.flickr.com/photos/mnfiraq

twitter.com/USF_IRAQ

SAFETY ZONE



Check CHUsday

Each Tuesday Check The Following In Your CHU

- Power strips are free of debris and clothing
- Electrical devices not in use are unplugged
- Power strips and outlets are not overloaded
- Smoke detector is operational
- Fire extinguisher is serviceable (in the green)
- Room is neat and orderly

If you experience a fire or shock contact TF SAFE at 318-485-7143 or Your Major Cell.

STB, from Page 1

numbers and workload swelled.

The STB's role during a deployment remains pretty much the same as it does at home station, to take care of Soldiers.

"For Special troop battalions it is our duty to handle personnel, property, and accountability support of their higher headquarters operations. We have been working extremely hard up to this point in the deployment to do those very things," said Lt. Col. Menti the USF-I STB commander.

Major Kevin Kugel, executive officer for the USF-I STB, said supporting this many personnel and units is a very challenging mission, and just adjusting to the scope of work involved was the biggest challenge.

"We have a brigade sized population but only a battalion sized staff," he said.

The STB is comprised of four organic companies, but in Iraq, they are now responsible for the care of more than 50 subordinate units spread throughout Iraq.

While the units vary in size and mission, Kugel said they are all provided the same support, and they all have representation at all the battalion meetings.

"As long as they fall under us they are treated as our own," Kugel said.

To accommodate the increased numbers of personnel and the myriad of daily tasks required to enable a unit to function, many of the staff sections have had to be creative in the tasks Soldiers perform.

Master Sgt. Christopher Reeves, the noncommissioned officer in charge for the Task Force Phantom STB's plans and operations section has augmented his staff with Soldiers from a variety of Army jobs that would normally never work in that shop.

He said his shop now includes infantrymen, truck drivers and even some military police. They have all adjusted well to their new missions and are ensuring the battalion succeeds in its mission.

"These young troops have really had to step up and learn how to do the job," Reeves said. "There are some specialists performing jobs that would normally be filled by a senior noncommissioned officer or a commissioned officer, and they get the job done."

And Menti says that during the nearly three months the STB has been in Iraq, they have adjusted to the mission workload and he is confident that everyone under the care of the Task Force Phantom STB will continue to receive the support they need throughout the deployment.

BOB, from Page 6

a nerve." (Merrifield easily admits to being a 'geardo' – one who spends at least 50 percent of a paycheck on the latest and greatest gear.)

"It's great to see that he's doing the comics again," said Sgt. Gregory Smith, an intelligence senior analyst at the United States Forces – Iraq Joint Operations Center. "They're entertaining and humorous because they're so true. If you spend even a couple of days in Iraq, you'll run into people that exactly fit those definitions."

Merrifield's company commander, Capt. Robert Bonham, is also enthusiastic about the potential.

"I can't wait to see what Staff Sgt. Merrifield has prepared for this deployment. I am positive he has some really unique ones started already... I was introduced to BOB on the FOB via the 'Good Idea Fairy' in 2007 and kept a stack on my desk until we deployed."

The comics aren't just popular with

American troops.

"I was looking at the makeup of the Facebook group," he

said, "And the comic is massive in the Canadian military; it blew my mind. And I like hearing from civilians; they say it reminds them of people they know.

"For the first time we have an all-volunteer force in combat, and there can be a real disconnect between the military and civilian populations," said Merrifield.

"Not everyone knows someone serving, there's no shared experience. So I'm making that connection through humor – that military life isn't that different. The same kinds of people, the same kinds of experiences are shared.

"And if you can't laugh at those, what's the point?"

