

Victory Times



Telling the United States Forces - Iraq story

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EOD technicians gather to remember their fallen

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

Sixteen sets of dog tags were hanging from a small wooden cross near the center of the Al Faw Palace conference room, May 1. As the names on each set were read, the tags were taken off the cross and added to more than 200 sets already hanging from the M16 in a combat memorial set up a few paces away. As the dog tags were draped on the rifle, the explosives ordnance disposal technicians, who had gathered from throughout Iraq, made a simple promise that echoed off the marble covered walls of the room.

“We remember!”

The event was timed to coincide with the annual ceremony at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, during which the names of the EOD technicians who have died in the line of duty around the world in the last year are added to the wall of the national EOD Memorial.

Rear Admiral Frank A. Morneau, deputy director for operations, DJ-3 United States Forces-Iraq, drove home the significance of the event to the young technicians who were attending the event for the first time.

“Your life as an EOD technician will change tonight,” said Morneau, who has been an explosives ordnance disposal expert since 1987.

“These people died too young. They should have been my age. They sacrificed way too young,” Morneau said. “Our job is to keep their spirit alive. Our job is to make sure we do remember, every day, in our own way.”



Gunnery Sgt. Jimmy V. Callins, the noncommissioned officer in charge of Task Force Troy's combined explosives exploitation cell, looks at the dog tags of one of the eight Marine EOD technicians who died in the line of duty since April 2009. Senior NCOs from each branch of service represented in Task Force Troy added the ID tags of technicians from their branch to the those who have died since the start of World War II.

The message was not lost on Army 1st Lt. Jarod Pugh, the newest member of the EOD community in Iraq.

“It makes it real,” said Pugh, who graduated from EOD technician school in December. “It lets you know what can happen out there, what really can happen. It’s proof of the dangers and the hazards that EOD techs face day after day over here.”

Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Joseph W. May with Task Force Troy has been in EOD for 20 years. He’s no stranger to

See Memorial, Page 3

INSIDE:

*Coalition DFAC closes
after 6 years*
Page 6

*Operation Catch Fish
returns*
Page 4

*National Guard unit
assumes EOD*
Page 8

Spiritual resiliency leads to strength

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

At 5 a.m., while groups of service members and civilians are just getting out of bed to go run along the roads of Victory Base Complex before the start of the day, another small group stands atop Signal Hill on Camp Liberty praying.

The group meets Tuesday and Thursday every week to fellowship and pray together, building their spiritual resiliency.

Spiritual resiliency is strengthening a set of beliefs, principles or values that sustain a person beyond family, institutional, and societal sources of strength.

“We’ve demanded so much of Soldiers,” said Sgt. Michael Lee, a chaplain’s assistant with United States Division-Central, “Between the separation from their families and the long hours, you need that spiritual resiliency.”

“There are other people who are really hurting. We build resilience through teaching, training, and counseling,” he said. “It doesn’t have to be a person with post traumatic stress disorder; it could be combat stress or just homesickness.”

Like physical resiliency, spiritual resiliency is a daily activity that needs to be built by developing positive relationships, being a part of a community, and having some sort of devotional center, said Chaplain (Col.) Mike Lembke, the United States Forces-Iraq chaplain.

“Spiritual resiliency is the individual ability to exercise your faith on a daily basis so you are able to understand, or you are able integrate the joys and sorrows of each day into your life,” Lembke said.

It’s not waiting for something to happen, but preparing to be well-grounded when it does.

When a person has a solid, spiritual foundation, they

understand that someone has everything under control and they can lean on that during the tough times instead of relying on themselves to make through, Lee said.

The USD-C chaplains started the Mountaintop Experience to further help service members strengthen their resiliency.

The group began meeting twice a week for morning prayer in January at the Liberty Chapel beside Signal Hill. Beginning in April, the group decided to walk to the top of the hill to pray to see over the area they were praying for, Lee said.

Those who come to the morning prayer meetings are excited to be there, Lee said. They are spending time laughing and learning from the bible with friends, building camaraderie, and building their spiritual resiliency.

While spiritual resiliency may seem like it is based around people of a certain religion, Lembke said that it is actually not faith based at all. Even those who do not claim a specific faith need some type of spiritual resiliency.

“This isn’t a Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or Buddhist perspective on resiliency,” said Lembke.

“A person could say, ‘I don’t believe in anything,’ but if they explored it a little deeper, I think they would find they believe in something,” Lembke said

Spiritual resiliency gives a person something to hold onto when things back home get tough, Lee said.

It can play a large part in helping a person stand back up after getting knocked down, Lembke said.

“I would contend that everybody has a spiritual dimension and that’s the way the Army is looking at it,” Lembke said.

“I want to talk to a person and find out where they’re at. What do they believe and how does it affect their life,” he said.

Lembke said, “It’s a process of discovery as an individual, but it bears on the whole force.”

Editors Note: This is the second installment of a three part series on Soldier resiliency.



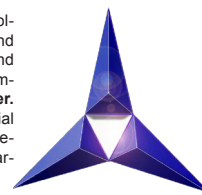
A Soldier, an Airman, and a civilian stand on top of Signal Hill on Camp Liberty during the Mountain Top Experience the morning of April 26. The group meets every Tuesday and Thursday morning for prayer and fellowship.



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238 sets of ID tags with the names of all the EOD techs who have fallen in the line of duty since the declaration of World War II hang from an M16. Sixteen more sets with the names of those who died in 2009 were added during the EOD memorial ceremony May 1.



An etched-glass memorial plaque presented to Rear Adm. Frank Morneau at the memorial ceremony is examined while being auctioned off to benefit the EOD Memorial Scholarship fund. The Plaque brought in a winning bid of \$800.

memorial ceremonies like this, nor is he a stranger to seeing the names of people he knew added to the memorial.

“In my EOD class we had about 20 guys graduate. We lost two of those guys over the years, one in the first Gulf War, one out on a range clearance on Twenty-Nine Palms.”

This year May’s involvement in the ceremony was both symbolic and personal.

“Adam Ginnet was probably one of my better friends,” May said, referring to Tech. Sgt. Adam Ginnet, who lost his life in an IED explosion in Afghanistan in January. “I’ve tried to steer Adam the right way on some things in his life and even tried to steer him in his career. When his career and life was cut short it was devastating.”

As the senior Air Force noncommissioned officer with Task Force Troy, it fell to May to add the four sets of Air Force dog tags to the combat memorial, placing them on the weapon at the same time the names were added to the wall of the EOD memorial in Florida.

“The exact time that they were putting the names on the wall down in Florida, was the same time we were putting the tags on the weapon,” May said. “It allowed us to be there even though we weren’t.”

“I was placing the Air Force ones on there and I knew three of those (Airmen) well,” he said. “I could see my hand just shaking. I was upset. But it felt good that I was honoring them.”

“That’s the point of the whole ceremony, to show that we will remember these warriors ... to let everybody know that we’ll remember them and remember their families.”

The EOD memorial at Eglin Air Force base bears the names of all the EOD school graduates, in all four branches of the military, who lost their lives on active duty since the declaration of World War II. As of May 1, that number now stands at 254.



Portraits of the 16 EOD technicians who lost their lives in the line of duty last year stand in the rotunda of Al Faw Palace during the EOD Memorial Ceremony

Soldiers focus on marksmanship training

Story by Spc. Steven Schneider
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

Soldiers conducting basic rifle marksmanship training on Camp Liberty, Iraq from Company B, 702nd Brigade Support Battalion recently got a surprise visit from Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur L. Coleman Jr., senior enlisted advisor to the United States Forces deputy commander and III Corps command sergeant major, April 28.

Coleman paid them a visit to observe their BRM training, which he described as crucial for Soldiers' belief in their capabilities.

He likened the training to physical fitness, and how being proficient in these areas gives Soldiers the edge they need to do their job successfully.

"One thing we're doing is installing the warrior ethos and the warrior spirit in these Soldiers," said Sgt. 1st Class Travis Moultry, ground support equipment noncommissioned officer in charge for Co. B, 702nd BSB.

Moultry said the basics are important for his Soldiers because they don't get many opportunities to go to the range, so when they go, they have to make the best of the training. He said building the Soldiers' self assurance in their ability to fire their weapons is important to keeping them mission ready.

The 33 Soldiers first zeroed their weapons and then moved farther down the range to qualify on paper targets.

"It gives the Soldiers confidence," Coleman said. "Soldiers must be sure his or her weapon shoots and functions properly. Soldiers must be confident when they shoot to kill because that's what we're trained to do."

The command sergeant major shared his 32 years of experience with the Soldiers as he mentored and discussed with the troops how they could improve their marksmanship by understanding and using the basics.

"It's our fundamentals that have always kept us alive. With this training, Soldiers don't have to question whether his or her buddy can engage the enemy," Coleman said. "If their buddy's on their left or right, the Soldier knows that buddy can aim, shoot and engage the enemy."

The Co. B, 702nd BSB, commander, Capt. Aisha Hughes, agreed with Coleman's assessment of the importance of BRM training.

"My Soldiers don't go outside the wire very often, so doing this common task training really keeps them keep

up on their skills and ready," she said.

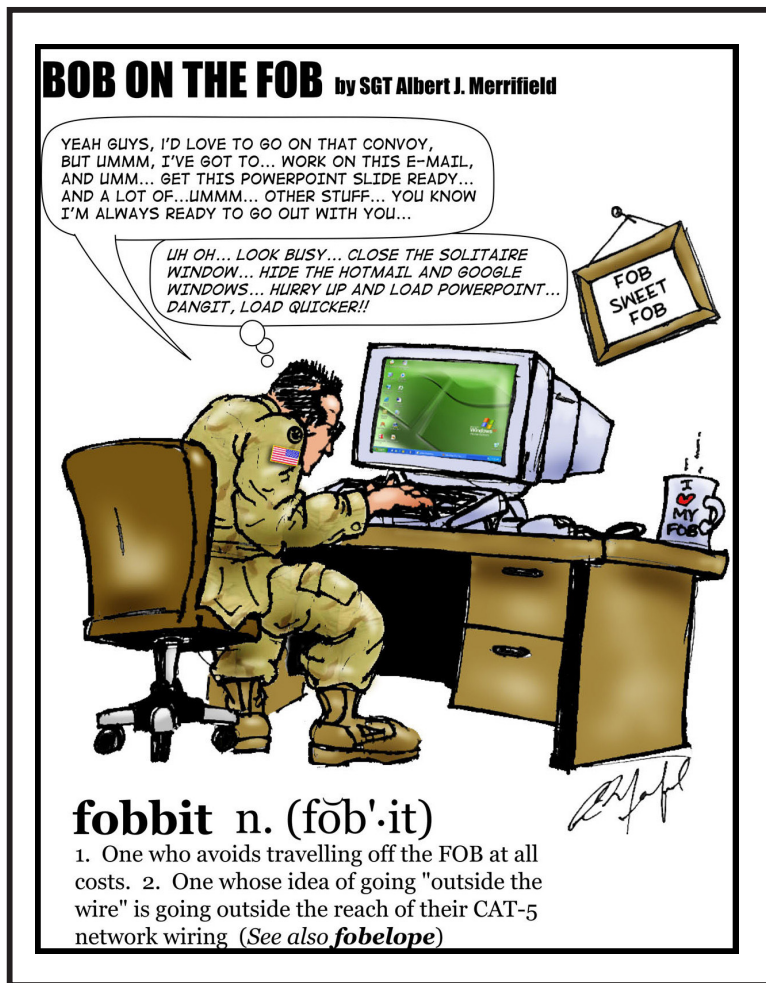
"It's good because it let's us see where everybody is at so we can make assessments and work on improvements," said Sgt. Joshua K. Morgan, power generation equipment repair team leader, Co. B, 702nd BSB.

Coleman said learning how to perform BRM tasks correctly is especially important to young Soldiers because they will be the future leaders of the Army.

"Training like this lets you know your weapon is ready in case you actually need it," said Spc. Ronald E. Walrath, fire control assistance repair specialist, Co. B, 702nd BSB. Walrath said the familiarization was helpful in building his confidence and knowledge.

"We're training Soldiers to standard," Morgan said. "We're making sure we didn't forget anything and doing things right, just like we're supposed to be doing. If it's right, it's going to show."

"It's our fundamentals that have always kept us alive."



Victory Base Complex hosts fishing tournament

Story and photos by Sgt. Phillip Valentine
366th MPAD, United States Division-Central

Fishing show host and creator of Operation Catch Fish, Joe Mercurio made another visit to Iraq for the 3rd annual Baghdad Fishing Derby held April 28 around the shores of Z Lake at Victory Base Complex.

Operation Catch Fish was created to bring a feeling of home to those deployed to Iraq.

Mercurio was joined by fellow television personalities: Sheli Sanders, a fishing show host and model; Mary Delgado, of ABC's *The Bachelor*; and trick-casting guru, Gary Hain. The group also included two members from the New Orleans Saints football team cheerleading squad, the "Saintsations."

The founder of the Baghdad Anglers Club, Lt. Cmdr. Joel Stewart, a native of Great Falls, Mont., assigned to the USS *Makin Island*, returned to Iraq with the fishing crew to act as a liaison.

Stewart said he truly appreciates what the service members do everyday and had this bit of advice for those who are looking to take up fishing:

"Fishing should be about enjoyment, getting in touch with oneself and nature. You have to know the water, understand the fish and know what they eat."

Armed with this advice, a fishing pole and the help of visiting professional fishermen, the service members and civilians at VBC were ready to take on the Operation Catch Fish challenge.

The winning fish, an 8-pound, 11-ounce, common carp was caught by Air Force Capt. Matthew

Vanceleave, officer in charge of logistics assigned to the 447th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron. The Omaha, Neb., native had only fished a couple of times in the past and only came to the tournament because his fellow office workers signed him up for it.

"I never win anything," said Vanceleave. "Just catching a fish was good enough for me today."

(Far left) Pfc. Bryce Maygren, a native of Copperopolis, Calif., assigned to 67th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, casts a line during Operation Catch Fish.

(Left) Sgt. Casey Clevenger, a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., native, assigned to 1st Maintenance Company, 373rd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, weighs a fish brought in during the tournament.



Capt. Matthew Vanceleave (left), officer in charge of logistics assigned to the 447th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, and fishing show host and creator of Operation Catch Fish, Joe Mercurio, hold up an 8-pound, 11-ounce, common carp, caught by Vanceleave.



Coalition DFAC closes its doors

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

After providing meals to service members and civilians since July 2004, the Coalition Café on Camp Victory closed its doors after the midnight meal April 30.

The Coalition Café is the first large-capacity dining facility on Victory Base Complex to close its doors. All dining services on Camp Victory are now provided by the Oasis DFAC.

Sgt. Qumvithea Lee, an intelligence analyst, said this is a positive move for Camp Victory, but that it is bittersweet. Lee was previously deployed here with the military police in 2004.

“When I was first here, I used to go to this DFAC a lot, so I have some good memories,” he said. “I’m going to miss it.”

The Coalition Café served approximately 16,240,000 meals during the time its doors were open to service members and contractors.

Those meals once served at the Coalition Café will now be served at the Oasis DFAC.

“We are going from feeding about 15,000 people daily to 20,000 people daily in the Oasis,” said Sgt. First Class Brian Gorby, III Corps and United States Forces-Iraq senior food operations sergeant. “We are also setting a standard for other DFACs to follow as we consolidate our resources to better serve our patrons.”

“I expect the first couple of months to be really busy,” said Chief Warrant Officer Sharon McCray, a food service advisor.

Gorby said the Oasis is prepared to support the increase in customers.

“We’ve added serving lines to the building and have added several hundred more seats, and we’ve expanded to a 24-hour sandwich bar in order to provide a meal at all hours of the day to take a little pressure off the regular meal hours,” Gorby said.

“I think the longest anyone will wait in line is maybe three minutes, as we have about three times the serving capability of the Coalition Café,” he said.

“We just ask that everybody be courteous to one another,” said McCray. “When you’re finished eating, get up and leave so the other people can get in. We’ve increased the seating, but we are still going to need people to eat and not linger.”

The Oasis DFAC is open for breakfast from 5 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.; lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; and dinner opens at 5 p.m. and goes to 8:30 p.m. A midnight meal is also served from 11 p.m. until 1 a.m. A sandwich bar is open 24 hours a day.



Soldiers eat the final meal at the Coalition Dining Facility. The DFAC on Camp Victory closed after serving the midnight meal April 30.

DON'T BE VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Be Alert

- Trust your instincts; if a place or person feels unsafe, it probably is.
- Watch for signs of trouble such as strangers in private areas or persons loitering in places where they shouldn't be.
- If you sense trouble, get to a safe place as soon as possible.

Reduce your risk in a deployed environment

Be especially prepared and alert in deployed environments. Deployed environments can present special risks for Army personnel:

Sleeping areas (tents, bunkers, trailers and other buildings) may be less secure in a deployed environment.

Report any unauthorized males or females in sleeping areas.

Many non-Army personnel are present in deployed unit and working areas.

Be aware of your surroundings. Deployed environments may have different lighting conditions and facilities than those in garrison.

Carry a flashlight at night.

Different cultures may treat females differently than they are treated in the U.S.

Be assertive and clearly state if you feel uncomfortable with how someone is treating you.

To reduce your risk in a deployed environment, travel with a buddy.

Community

Runners slish through TF Phantom run



Service members and civilians at Camp Victory, Iraq, braved wet and muddy conditions to take part in the TF Phantom Welcome Run, May 2, the 5K and 10K races held to welcome the III Corps Phantom Warriors to Iraq. Roughly 350 people turned out to take part in the event in spite the conditions that resulted from heavy rains earlier in the morning.

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

The morning of May 2 began with a downpour that inundated Camp Victory, Iraq. But the rainstorm, which left large standing puddles of water along the roads of the base, did nothing to deter roughly 350 service members and civilians from taking part in the Task Force Phantom Welcome Run.

According to 1st Lt. Rebecca Ore with Task Force Phantom Special Troops Battalion, the five kilometer and 10 kilometer runs, organized by the STB's Company C, were held to welcome the Phantom Warriors of III Corps to Camp Victory.



A Soldier's shoes and legs are covered with mud after completing the TF Phantom Welcome Run around Walleye and Victory Lakes on Camp Victory.

SARC Smarts



What is the SAPR Program? SAPR (Sexual Assault Prevention and Response) was designed by the Department of Defense to put in place a means of eliminating incidents of sexual assault through awareness. Its main focus centers on training and prevention of sexual assault in the military. The program provides training and awareness to Soldiers about how to prevent the possibility of becoming a victim.

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.

VBC Facility Operating Hours

Sports Oasis DFAC
Breakfast 5:00 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Dinner 5 - 8:30 p.m.
Midnight chow 11:00 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.
Sandwich Bar open 24 hours

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.

Golby 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

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U.S. Army III Corps
Phantom Battalion
III Corps Fort Hood

Guard leadership a first for Task Force Troy

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

When the 111th Ordnance Group took over command of Task Force Troy in March they made history.

The National Guard unit out of Opelika, Ala., is the first non-active duty unit to be responsible for all explosives ordnance disposal operations in Iraq.

Task Force Troy's mission is to eliminate the improvised explosive device threat to U.S. forces in Iraq, said Col. Jose R. Atencio III, commander of the 111th. To accomplish this task, they run counter-IED operations and reduce the enemy's effectiveness by reducing their ability to move freely or conduct operations.

The goal is to lower overall IED activity, said Master Sgt. Mark LaJoye, chief intelligence analyst for the 111th Ord. Grp.

One of the key features of the 111th is that they bring

service members with diverse knowledge and experience to the table, according to Atencio.

"We bring some unique skill-sets from the civilian world here. We have people that are teachers, business owners, and we even have a rocket scientist," Atencio said. "Their managerial skills and their outside-the-box thinking is often highly beneficial."

The unit also has many members who are in civilian law enforcement.

LaJoye, a former police officer and bomb squad senior technician in Columbus, Ga., now a reserve deputy for the Russell County Sheriff's Office in Alabama, has more than 18 years in civilian law enforcement.

He said the unit's civilian professions provide them additional experience to take on the new mission with Task Force Troy.

"We really know how to protect a crime scene involving EOD," he said. "We also have a unique insight in processing evidence," LaJoye said.

It's also helpful to have members who are not law enforcement, but are experts in fields outside of their military occupational specialty.

"We save the Army money by combining the skill-sets that we have. We don't have to send personnel to specialized training in order to fill some additional duties when they already know how to perform the task," LaJoye said.

Atencio aims to ensure that the unit meets their strategic objectives, to provide quality and timely counter-IED support to American forces and save lives.

While the unit may be working in Iraq, the information they gather has much broader applications.

The information and intelligence the 111th Ord. Grp. collects here goes into policy and training, Atencio said. It is even being pushed to the war effort in Afghanistan to help with the counter-IED fight there.

Whether it's about manpower or making sure units have the capabilities in the right places, the members of the 111th know that this deployment will be a challenge.

Even though this is the first time a National Guard unit has taken on this mission, Atencio believes that they are perfect for the job.

For LaJoye, it's a very unique opportunity to work with such a good staff. He said that Task Force Troy has an excellent reputation in the EOD world and when he gets back to Alabama he will be able to brag about being part of their team.

"I'm looking forward to being a part of history and being a part of this counter-IED fight that we have now," said Atencio.



Courtesy Photo

Members of TF Troy prepare unexploded ordnance for disposal near Baghdad.