



III Corps staff work translates to battlefield success

Story by Master Sgt. Tim Volkert
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

III Corps, now on its third deployment to Iraq, makes up the nucleus of the United States Forces-Iraq headquarters. The staff work and planning they are doing is critical to the course both the U.S. military and Iraqi

Security Forces will follow during the next year.

And the work they do touches all facets of the operation, all the way down to the lowest-ranking Soldier.

“Compared to leading Soldiers in harm’s way, outside the wire, it pales in comparison,” said Col. David Batchelor, chief of the J35 Future Operations staff.

“But we work hard. We take our work very seriously, because those who have to execute the plans depend on us to be right,” he said.

Planning in a war zone with all the different organizations involved and the ever-changing environment is

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Wounded warriors return for Operation Proper Exit VI



Photo by Sgt. Rebekah Lampman

Nine wounded warriors participating in Operation Proper Exit VI walk through the Hero’s Highway tent at Joint Base Balad, May 13. Operation Proper Exit is a program run by the Troops First Foundation that gives service members injured in combat a chance to return to Iraq to see the changes that have taken place because of their sacrifices and help provide closure.

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Chaplain's Corner

Don't let the little things wear you down

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Keith Goode
Deputy United States Forces-Iraq Chaplain

Think about what bothers you most: a solitary fly that won't leave you alone; that small rock that trips you; the iPod battery that goes dead 10 minutes into your workout; remembering your forgotten ID card while standing at the dining facility entrance; a roommate that snores.

Why is it those little things bother us so much in our daily living? There is a whole mountain worth of gravel around Victory Base Complex, why get upset over the one small stone that we fall over?

There are TVs within earshot of every exercise machine in the gym, so why be frustrated over a dead battery? Will any of us actually starve to death as we take our "walk of shame" to retrieve an ID from a computer?

Flies and roommates ... well, that's another story!

They all fall into the same category: small stuff. Richard Carlson writes in his book, "Don't Sweat the Small Stuff," that the way we react to life reflects who we are on the inside.

We will tend to overreact to all the little things around us when we lose sight of the big picture, leaving us living in a perpetual "emergency" state of mind. Should a true emergency occur, we are left with nothing to handle the crisis.

Stretched thin emotionally by life's little things, we break down at that critical moment.

So, how do we adjust our reactions to the little things in life?

A good place to start is with this prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr, known as the Serenity Prayer:

*God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Train your expectations to react appropriately to the events you face each day. Rocks and flies will always be a bother, but what are those compared to life and death? A difficult roommate may make for a long deployment, but what is that compared to being in the hands of the enemy, restrained in solitary confinement?

By keeping your perspective through the day, you will build up your resiliency. Adjust your attitudes and it will help you deal with genuine difficulties.

Soon, you will be laughing at the gravel and the forgotten ID. Well, it will still be easier to laugh at the other guy who forgot his ID, but you get the idea.

You will move through your deployment with a much healthier outlook and go home with wisdom to know the difference.

SARC Smarts

Remember Sexual Assault is a crime:

Sexual assault is a criminal offense that has no place in the Army!

We must use training, education, and awareness to prevent incidents of sexual assault.

Victims will be offered assistance and counseling; offenders will be held accountable.

All victims of sexual assault will be treated with dignity, fairness and respect.



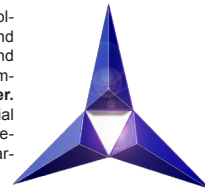
Call the USF-I Deployed Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (DSARC) at 485-5085 or 435-2235 for help. Army members should seek assistance with their Unit Victim Advocate (UVA) or DSARC.



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USF-I Commanding General: Gen. Ray Odierno
USF-I Public Affairs Officer: Col. Benton A. Danner
USF-I PA Sergeant Major: Sgt. Maj. James Posten
Editor: Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey
Print Staff: Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall, Sgt. Chris McCann,
Spc. Britney Bodner
Layout: Spc. Britney Bodner

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Resiliency helps service members stay positive

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

Sometimes that mountain you've been climbing is just a grain of sand...

In 2007, Carrie Underwood released her single "So Small," a song that communicated how people tend to focus their energy on the small things in life. Until it's put into perspective, people don't often realize how small a problem truly is.

"Human nature has a tendency to lean toward the negative," said Lt. Col. Ernest Proud, the chief of behavioral health for TF 807th Medical Brigade. "They tend to overreact to less than important emotions and spend a lot of energy fretting over the little stuff."

This has a significant effect on a service member's mental resiliency, or the ability to bounce back from emotional stress.

"The idea of mental resiliency is to help Soldiers overcome those negative thoughts and replace them with the positive," Proud, who has a doctorate in psychology, said.

"Knowing who you are is the first step," said Sgt. Shantel Hair, a mental health specialist attached to the 1908th Medical Detachment out of Kansas. "If you know who you are and what you stand for, you will be able to bounce back."

The best way to define mental resiliency is being able to fail, learn from the experience and maybe find humor in the situation, Hair said.

"It's the concept of a steel beam compared to a rubber brick," Proud said. "With a steel beam, if you put enough weight on it, it will eventually bend and remain that way. A rubber brick can take a lot of weight and squish down, but once you remove the weight it rebounds to what it was before."

According to Proud, this is the ability the Army is trying to develop in Soldiers.

Its important for service members to have the attitude they can rise to the challenge and be successful no matter what life throws at them.

During deployment, not everything goes according to plan and service members have to adapt to many changes, said Sgt. 1st Class Jose Evans, a former drill sergeant currently deployed with the 14th Military Intelligence Battalion.

Soldiers, especially units that constantly face combat, have to accomplish the mission no matter what, Evans said. Going that

extra mile to accomplish your mission depends on your mental strength.

This also has an effect on service members returning home. "We're finding that a lot of Soldiers go home and issues that occurred here spill over into their personal and civilian life," Proud said.

"If you don't build mental strength before or during your deployment it is very difficult to accomplish your mission during stressful situations or have a successful transition back home to your family," said Evans.

When a service member is not resilient enough, simple things can make them angry and make it hard to discern what is and what is not important or what they should get upset about and what they don't need to, Proud said.

They become angry and take it out on those that are closest to them, he said. In turn it makes the family member pull away and makes it difficult to have a positive relationship.

"If they are resilient, there is less spillage of deployment stress into those other areas.

"It helps them regulate all their emotions and use their problem solving skills to handle emotional breakdowns," Proud said. "Like the rubber brick, they are able to go back to where they were before they left rather than being bent or damaged."

Learn to be positive. Identify the negative thoughts in life and replace them with good, Proud said. Realize that life can be successful and failure can be learned from. It's a day to day process that helps service members endure and prevents stress from becoming a problem while deployed and back at home.

It's also important to remember that mental resiliency directly impacts a service member's physical and spiritual resiliency and they, in turn, affect mental resiliency, he said.

"You can't have one that is significantly weak and have it not impact the others," Proud said.

The Army recognizes the connection between the different areas that affect resiliency and has taken a holistic approach through the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program, said Chaplain (Col.) Mike Lembke, United States Forces-Iraq chaplain.

Lembke said "The program recognizes that mental, physical, and spiritual resiliency work together to produce a resilient Soldier capable of doing their duty."

If you know who you are and what you stand for, you will be able to bounce back.

Mother pays surprise visit to son

Story and photos by Spc. Roland Hale
CAB PAO, 1st Int. Div.

In an early Mother's Day surprise, two Soldiers—a mother and her son—were reunited during a visit to Camp Taji.

Command Sergeant Major Rue Mayweather, who works in United States Forces- Iraq's Critical Thinking cell at Victory Base Complex, traveled to Camp Taji to visit her son, 1st Lt. Kenieth Mayweather May 5.

The two had been working with their respective chains of command to arrange a Mother's Day visit, but Kenieth had no idea his mother was coming to visit him early.

"She's always up to something," the lieutenant said to

friends after the surprise. Kenieth had been sternly told by his battalion's operations officer to report to the conference room. Hesitantly, and trying to recall what exactly he could have done wrong, he reported.

"I opened the door and there she was," Mayweather said. "It was a priceless moment."

Kenieth is an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter pilot and a battle captain for the 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

Kenieth took his mom on a tour of Taji during her visit and introduced her to his peers, commanders and his favorite aircraft – the Apache attack helicopter.

The mother and son acted as if they were simply spending a regular afternoon together as they walked around Camp Taji's facilities.

This Mother's Day visit may seem extreme to some, but both have grown accustomed to military life. Command Sgt. Maj. Mayweather had already been in the Army for 16 years before her son told her he wanted to join the service.

"I told my mom and she was there the whole time with the recruiter," said Kenieth. After serving for several years as an enlisted Soldier, and reaching the rank of sergeant, he left the military to pursue a college education. After earning a degree, he was commissioned as an officer and attended flight school.

Kenieth stood at parade rest for his mother when he first joined; a sign of respect Soldiers give to those who outrank them.

Now, it is Mayweather who pays respect by saluting her son, a commissioned officer.

The two have a total of 43 years of service in the Army: Mayweather with 29 and her son with 13. The Mayweathers are both on their first deployment to Iraq.

"I never thought that Kenieth and I would deploy together," said Mayweather. "This is an honor for me to actually serve with him at the end of my tour." Mayweather plans to retire after her deployment.

They plan to see each other at least once a month throughout their time in Iraq although this visit will be one Mayweather never forgets.

"It's wonderful. It's one of the best Mother's Day presents I've had. It isn't materialistic.

There's no money, there's no flowers—it's just my favorite son, in the flesh—and it's wonderful," said Mayweather.



1st Lt. Kenieth Mayweather gives his mother, Command Sgt. Maj. Rue Mayweather, a tour of Camp Taji May 5, which included a stop at an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, the aircraft Kenieth pilots.

Preventing suicide is everyone's job

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

It starts with creeping paranoia.

They know.

It doesn't matter what; they know, and I will never be able to explain it away.

Then, the fact that my life is fiction, lies. *They think I'm fine, and I'm falling apart.*

Then, despair: *Nothing is important; there is nothing keeping me here; no job opportunities, no reason to continue.*

Welcome to the world of depression, where suicide seems like a rational choice.

Welcome to where your buddy might be right now.

In the first eight days of 2010, eight Soldiers killed themselves across the Army; in 2009, a record 160 active-duty Soldiers did so. More service members die at their own hands than due to being engaged by the enemy in Iraq. There is no Powerpoint class that can train it away, no threat of push-ups to dissuade a desperate service member. It's not the medic's duty to fix.

"Preventing suicide isn't my job," said Spc. Larry Williams, a behavioral health specialist at Golby Clinic. "Preventing suicide is *everyone's* job."

Leaders have to know their people. Officer, enlisted, civilian, high-ranking or low – no one is immune to depression or the slings and arrows of life that can lead up to it. If you don't know the people you work with, you will never know that the sergeant next to you, who's always ready with a joke, got an e-mail last week and found out her mother has breast cancer but doesn't want her to come home – just days after her parents announced they were divorcing.

If you don't have a sense of what is 'right' for a person, you'll never mention that your platoon leader seems suddenly withdrawn. The first time anyone thinks to ask, in the harried world of deployment, might be when they find a letter from his wife admitting an affair, under his leg when it's far too late.

You have a responsibility.

"Nobody has to have all the experience, or have all the answers,"

said Chaplain (Lt. Cmdr.) Marcus Lawrence, a chaplain with United States Forces – Iraq. "It just takes someone who cares."

I've been there, in an extremity of pain that no one sees. The last bad bout, someone – not even in my chain of command, but someone who cared – pulled me aside by the coffee pot. Asked how I was doing in the tone that meant it was a real question. All I could say was "Does it show?"

To someone who cared enough to look twice, it did, and just

**NEVER LET
YOUR BUDDY
FIGHT
alone**

Be willing to listen

Not all Wounds are Visible

Prevent Suicide.

It is your responsibility to get help for a fellow soldier

Talk to your Chaplain or a Behavioral Health Professional or Call 1-800-342-9647
<http://www.militaryonesource.com>

USACHPPM
TA-064-0107

Courtesy graphic

knowing that someone did care was a tremendous weight off my shoulders. I went to the Combat Stress Center that day and got help.

It might take more than an offhanded "you can always talk to me." It might take going out for a cigarette and talking about the time your wife told you your kid had a car accident and how powerless you felt, across the world and unable to help. An assurance that talking to someone

at the CSC isn't going to ruin that specialist's chance for promotion or make everyone in the company think he's 'crazy,' because eight other Soldiers are going to the clinic on a regular basis.

Handing out cards and attending the quarterly training isn't enough; when a person is in trouble, much like in combat, it is

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anything but simple. Taking large problems or tasks that need to be accomplished can be challenging and be a life-or-death decision for those asked to implement the plan.

“Our staff officers are doing the top quality work they always do, but they are doing it now in an environment that is much more complex and where the stakes are much higher,” said Brig. Gen. Joseph DiSalvo, USF-I deputy chief of staff and the III Corps chief of staff.

“What I share with my family is that every ball is a hardball and every pitch is a fastball, on a four-star staff in a combat environment where lives are on the line,” Batchelor said.

Collecting the right information and putting it into a plan that is easily understood and put into practice is the challenge for the Phantom Soldiers and their fellow USF-I staff members. And that work can be difficult.

“You’re accessing a lot of information from a lot of different resources,” said Maj. Christopher Smith, a lead planner with the J5 staff.

The challenge is getting the correct information and filtering through it to provide the commander with the best solution or plan so he can make his decision, said Maj. Andy Sanchez, a maneuvers planner with the J35 Future Operations staff.

To do this, the staff works in ever-changing formations of working groups and planning teams. The meetings vary in size

and have at times included more than 30 personnel sitting in a meeting trying to determine the scope of a problem or issue, he said.

Some issues even draw in other agencies organizations, making the process even more complex.

Col. Eduardo Gutierrez, director for J33 Air, United States Forces-Iraq, whose staff primarily deals with flight issues, said that in addition to the USF-I staff and leadership, his personnel have almost daily contact with the Department of State, the U.S. Embassy, Army Central Command, U.S. Forces Command and the Department of the Army.

While the size and make-up of the planning teams may change, they all realize their decisions impact everyone, and with Soldiers’ lives and millions of dollars of equipment resting on those plans, the stakes are high.

“If we don’t do our jobs the right way, the guys who pay for it are out in the field,” Gutierrez, said. “We know that if we don’t do what the job entails, they pay. We can’t allow that to happen.”

To be good at this job, a planner and staff member has to be flexible, pay attention to the details and be able to adapt their plans as the situation changes, Gutierrez said.

“A good staff officer is one who can take the changes and figure out how to modify it,” he said. “A good plan will adapt to the environment and morph.”

At the end of the day, for the staff members, the best plan is the one that provides the Soldiers and units what the equipment and the information they need to succeed.

“The best thing a staff can do for its subordinate elements is provide them with priorities and resources,” Sanchez said. “I am fully confident in our USDs ability to do the hard work . . . our job is to set them up for success.”

For Batchelor, who last deployed to Iraq as a battalion commander, success is judged by the Dominguez Rule. He uses this simple rule, named after his driver during his last deployment, to determine if a plan was done properly.

“If it is not executable by your favorite Soldier . . . we should not be planning it,” he said.

DiSalvo said the Soldiers on the ground deserve the best information and plans the staff can provide. And he is confident that this staff is providing that guidance.

“Quality staff work is the precursor to successful operations,” he said. “We owe our Soldiers and units on the ground the best in that regard, and that’s precisely what the III Corps Soldiers and officers on the USF-I staff work hard to accomplish.”



Photo by Spc. Steven J. Schneider

Lt. Gen. Bob Cone, United States Forces-Iraq deputy commanding general for operations and III Corps commanding general (far left), Lt. Col. Adam Rocke, commander, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment (center), other U.S. and Iraqi Security Forces Soldiers, walk through a market in Muqadiyah, Iraq. III Corps Soldiers, who make up the nucleus of the USF-I staff, are working on the plans and operations that will enable the U.S. forces to transition to advise, assist, and training missions and ensure the success of the Iraqi Security Forces.

807th Medcom takes over for 1st Med. Bde.



Courtesy photo
Col. William W. Burgin, commander of 807th Medical Command from Seagoville, Texas, and Command Sgt. Maj. Harold P., unfurl the brigade colors during a transfer of authority ceremony in the rotunda of Al Faw Palace May 8. The 807th, an Army Reserve medical brigade, replaced the 1st Medical Brigade from Fort Hood, Texas.

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seldom like the briefings. If you don't know your Soldiers, you won't know whether that private first class is joking about death just because he's got a morbid sense of humor or if he's steeling himself for what he's decided to do later this evening while his roommate is at the gym.

There are signs – usually mentioned in retrospect. The flawless military record for twelve years and a sudden Article 15. Becoming withdrawn. Giving away possessions, trouble at home. We've all seen the lists and probably have them in our wallets. But it takes noticing those signs, and being willing to step up and say something, to put a hand on someone's shoulder and ask if they're okay.

I am very fortunate to have a commander and a first sergeant who bend over backward to help me, but never treat me like I'm broken. I am strong, I am capable, and I am on medication, and these things are not mutually exclusive.

Maybe if those of us who are fighting it – about 40 percent of the people who visit Golby's combat stress center self-refer for symptoms of depression, Williams said – speak out more, it will help dissipate the stigma.

The good news? There's help. There are hundreds of medications that, contrary to popular belief, don't make you 'happy,' they keep you on

an even keel and functional. In many cases, being on medication through a particularly rough patch is enough; when the stressors are removed, the medicine isn't necessary. Chaplains can offer faith-based counseling; the combat stress centers can offer a more clinical approach, and both have excellent ideas for coping strategies and are a way to network with people who are also struggling.

At this point, there are so many resources in theater that someone fighting with depression or post-traumatic stress disorder has an almost dizzying array of options. With all these options, one might wonder how we lose so many.

The better news? It goes away. "Time heals all wounds" is a platitude, but it's true – what is devastating today will be surmountable next week, and in six months will be a memory, if only you can endure it one day at a time. "Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem" is also a platitude, but it's also true, and depression is an insidious thing that can make suicide seem logical and even honorable. It isn't. It's devastating to families, friends, and units.

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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US provides public affairs training to Iraqi SF

Story and photos by Spc. Daniel Schneider
366th MPAD, United States Division-Central

American Soldiers assisted with a two-week training event on Victory Base Complex that taught Iraqi Special Operations Forces the benefits of providing truthful information to the people of Iraq.

A small team of U.S. public affairs personnel from Special Operations Task Force-Central, based in Baghdad, provided guidance to ISOF soldiers at their request in basic photography, videography, media relations, news writing and ethics during the course.

“We’re trying to encourage Iraqi Security Forces to work with the media and inform the public,” said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Tim Nosal, public affairs officer for SOTF-C.

Classes were taught by both Iraqi and U.S. instructors. All of the lessons covering photography and videography were taught by an ISOF master sergeant who is a veteran combat cameraman.

U.S. forces taught the sections on media operations, public affairs ethics and basic release writing to the Iraqi public affairs personnel.

“The ultimate goal of our training is to get ISOF able to contribute toward a prosperous Iraq,” said Nosal. “We want them to engage local media while being smart about it; what information they should put out to the public while protecting their own operational security.”

The students were a mix between officer and enlisted Iraqi soldiers.



An Iraqi Special Operations soldier takes a photo May 10 during a practical exercise as part of public affairs training at Victory Base Complex. The Iraqis requested U.S. assistance to train their public affairs personnel. During the two-week course, Iraqi Special Ops soldiers learned basic photography, video and public affairs skills.

A first sergeant with 2nd ISOF Brigade spoke about the benefits of the information he plans to take back to his soldiers.

“We’ve learned from our American friends and [the instructor] the importance of getting the complete and honest story to the public,” he said about his first class in the public affairs field. “If we can feed the media



An Iraqi Special Operations soldier practices new video skills during a practical exercise May 10 at Victory Base Complex. The purpose of this training was to develop confidence in providing the truth to local media outlets while not exposing operational security information.

truth and honesty, they will begin to trust our information more than the insurgents.”

Spc. Victor Ayala, a public affairs specialist with SOTF-C, commented on his observations during the third class provided to the ISOF by his unit since arriving earlier this year.

“The Iraqis in the class have a great eagerness to learn,” Ayala explained. “There are lots of discussions between the class and the instructor. They seem to have the aptitude and enthusiasm to perform the public affairs mission on the same standard as U.S. forces.”

Ayala said he has also gotten something from guiding the lessons.

“I enjoy the experience and chance to share what I know with these ISF members,” said Ayala. “I get the chance to learn a new culture and see these Iraqis show the aptitude to become great public affairs officials.

“I’m proud to be a part of enabling soldiers of Iraq to defend and inform their country,” he said.