

13th SUSTAINMENT COMMAND (EXPEDITIONARY)

# SUNBURST FORWARD

THE PULSE OF GLOBAL LOGISTICS

## 1-133 OUT WEST: RUNNING WITH THE BULLS

p. 8



ST. NICK, YEAH I KNOW THAT DUDE, HE BETTER HAVE MY G.I. JOE AIRCRAFT CARRIER

## One Tree At A Time

Soldiers Extend Olive  
Branch to Iraqi People p. 14

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**Cover:** Spc. Kerick S. Francis, a gunner with C Company, 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry, scans the road for signs of insurgent activity. - Photo by Sgt. Gary Witte



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






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**Back Page:** A Heavy Equipment Transport (HET) Prepares to leave Camp Ar-  
ifjan in Kuwait to deliver supplies throughout Iraq.  
- Photo Illustration by Spc. Adryen Wallace

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**657th Area Support Group**

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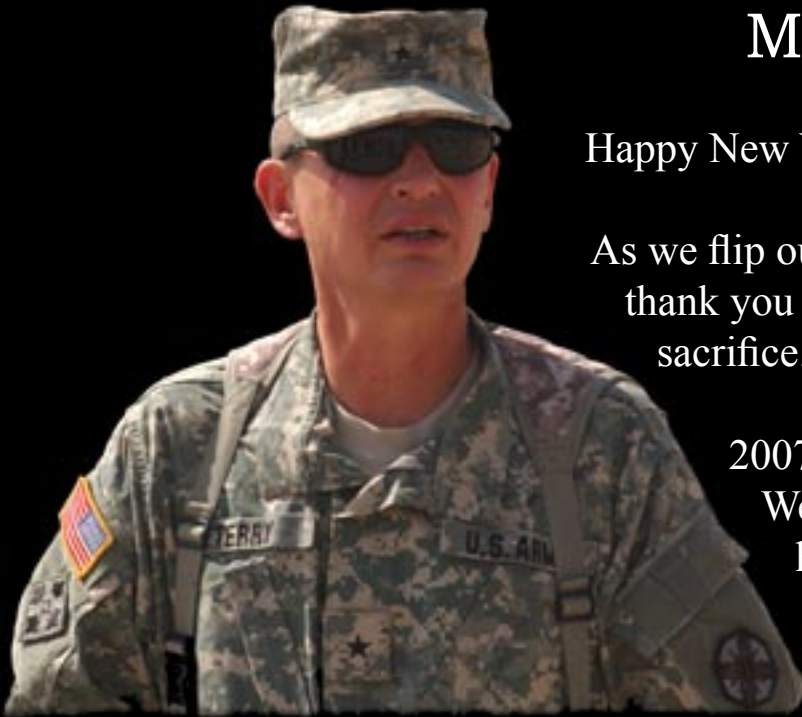
**Sgt. 1st Class Mark Bell**  
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## BRIGADIER GENERAL Michael J. Terry



Happy New Year!

As we flip our calendars to 2007, I want to again thank you for your tremendous service and sacrifice.

2007 will be a monumental year in Iraq. We can expect a number of changes in how we try to help the Iraqi people build a secure and stable country but one thing that will not change is the commitment of Soldiers and leaders of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

The ability to sustain our forces is what separates the United States Army from friend and foe. The Soldiers who execute this sustainment mission—the PLL clerks, the truck drivers, the gunners on our convoy protection platforms, our Soldiers in guard towers—all are a critical part of what makes our Army the best in the world.

As I travel the battlefield, my first question to our combat units is “are you getting the support you need.” Without question, the answer is always a resounding yes. Each of you plays a part in ensuring that logistics sustainment is always a strength—and never the weak link in our operations here in Iraq.

My thoughts and prayers are always with you and your families. As we begin 2007, good luck and Godspeed.



# 13TH SUSTAINMENT (EXPEDITIONARY) COMMAND



# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Contributed by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) James Kirkendall



## Saint Nicholas

BISHOP OF MYRA

*Christians believed in one god and one god alone, so their conscience would not allow them to obey the Emperor's order. Angered by their stubbornness, Diocletian warned the Christians that they would be imprisoned. The Emperor carried out the threat and Saint Nicholas who resisted too was also imprisoned. For more than five years, Saint Nicholas was confined to a small cell. He suffered from cold, hunger, and thirst, but he never wavered in his beliefs. In 313, when Diocletian resigned, and Constantine came to power Nicholas was released, and he returned to his post as Bishop of Myra. He continued his good works and became even wiser and more understanding by the time of his death on December 6, 343.*

*In the eyes of the Catholics, a saint is someone who has lived such a holy life that, after dying and going to heaven, he or she is still able to help people on earth. They often become patron to different groups of people - one such was children and many legends sprang up to explain his presence.*

*By 450, churches in Asia Minor and Greece were being named in honor of him. By 800, he was officially recognized as the a saint by the Eastern Catholic Church.*

*In the 1200s, December sixth began to be celebrated as Bishop Nicholas Day in France.*

*By end of the 1400s, Saint Nicholas was the third most beloved religious figure, after Jesus and Mary. There were more than 2000 chapels and monasteries named after him.*

*In the 1500s people in England stopped worshipping Saint Nicholas and favoured more another gift giving figure Father Christmas. Over the centuries, Saint Nicholas' popularity grew, and many people in Europe made up new stories that showed his concern for children. The name Santa Claus was derived from the Dutch Sinter Klass pronunciation of Saint Nicholas. Early Dutch settlers in New York (once called New Amsterdam) brought their traditions of Saint Nicholas. As children from other countries tried to pronounce Sinter Klass, this soon became Santa Klass, which was settled as Santa Claus. The old bishop's cloak with mitre, jewelled gloves and crozier were soon replaced with his red suit and clothing seen in other modern images*

*Saint Nicholas was born in 280 AD, in Patara, a city of Lycia, in Asia Minor. He became the gift giver of Myra. His gifts were given late at night, so that the gift giver's identity would remain a secret. St Nicholas was eventually named the patron saint of children, sailors, Russia and Greece.*

*Saint Nicholas was a Christian priest, who later became a bishop. He was a rich person, and traveled the country helping people, giving gifts of money and other presents. Saint Nicholas did not like to be seen when he gave away presents, so the children of the day were told to go to sleep quickly or he would not come! Nothing has changed and Santa Claus will not arrive this Christmas unless the children go to sleep early.*

*A famous story about St Nicholas, is about a poor man who had no money to give to his three daughters on their wedding day. Saint Nick dropped bags of gold into the stockings which the girls had left to dry by the fire. The sisters found the gold and ever since, children have hung up stockings on Christmas Eve hoping that they will be filled with presents by Christmas morning.*

*Despite being quite young Nicholas had earned a reputation for kindness and wisdom. In the year 303, the Roman emperor Diocletian commanded all the citizens of the Roman Empire, which included Asia Minor, to worship him as a god.*

# JUST A LITTLE TRIVIA

1. What Chinese leader wrote “Thoughts on Guerrilla Warfare”?
2. Between what two neighboring countries did the short and ludicrous “Pig War” take place?
3. What British made VSTOL fighter plane has been adopted by the US Marines?
4. The US Army’s 1st Ranger Bn. is located at what Georgia air base?
5. By what name was the World War II US built B-24 bomber known?
6. What hero of the Mexican War was the Union General of the Army at the outset of the US Civil War?
7. The red stripe on the blue trousers of US Marine NCOs and officers commemorates what action in the US/Mexican War?
8. What small medieval multi-point weapon, when scattered in numbers, will lame horses or puncture truck tires?

Answers on page 20

## GUESS WHERE?

The Sunburst staff and contributors are constantly out there where ever you can find a 13th SC(E) unit. While on the road we take pictures of places that we visit. Can you guess where we took this picture. Look on page 26 for the answer.



# PUT IT ON PAPER



I pulled this picture from the boys over at the Desert Bull (redbullweb.com if you didn't know), and I just couldn't help but wonder what are they gonna do for the Easter parade down there.

But on to a new subject, we got a some feedback on our request for office photos. Here's the winner. Way to go chaplains office.



Thats the chaplains for you, they got a snow man, a Menorah, and I bet you some Kwanza candles somewhere too. That's why they never have any sacramental wine, they celebrate everything.

Well that's enough jabling at the jaw for me. Drop me a line at [putmeon@balad.iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:putmeon@balad.iraq.centcom.mil) and let me know what's going on with you. Until next time

**HOLLA BACK!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

**PRIVATE MURPHY**

By Mark Baker

**BLACKBERRY**



[PUTMEON@BALAD.IRAQ.CENTCOM.MIL](mailto:PUTMEON@BALAD.IRAQ.CENTCOM.MIL)

# PUT IT ON PAPER

Nearly 150 tractor-trailer headlights illuminate the dark, dust-filled lot as the Soldiers guide the vehicles out to the highway.

The men of C Company, 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry Regiment have been on the road for two days, traveling nearly 400 miles across the vast Western desert to guide a convoy of supply trucks. They have already been hit by an improvised explosive device which temporarily crippled one of their Humvees.

But the hardest part of their journey comes on this third day, when everyone expects multiple explosive devices to be waiting on the roads back to Al Asad Air Base. The convoy has more than 200 miles left to go and the Soldiers have reason to expect trouble.

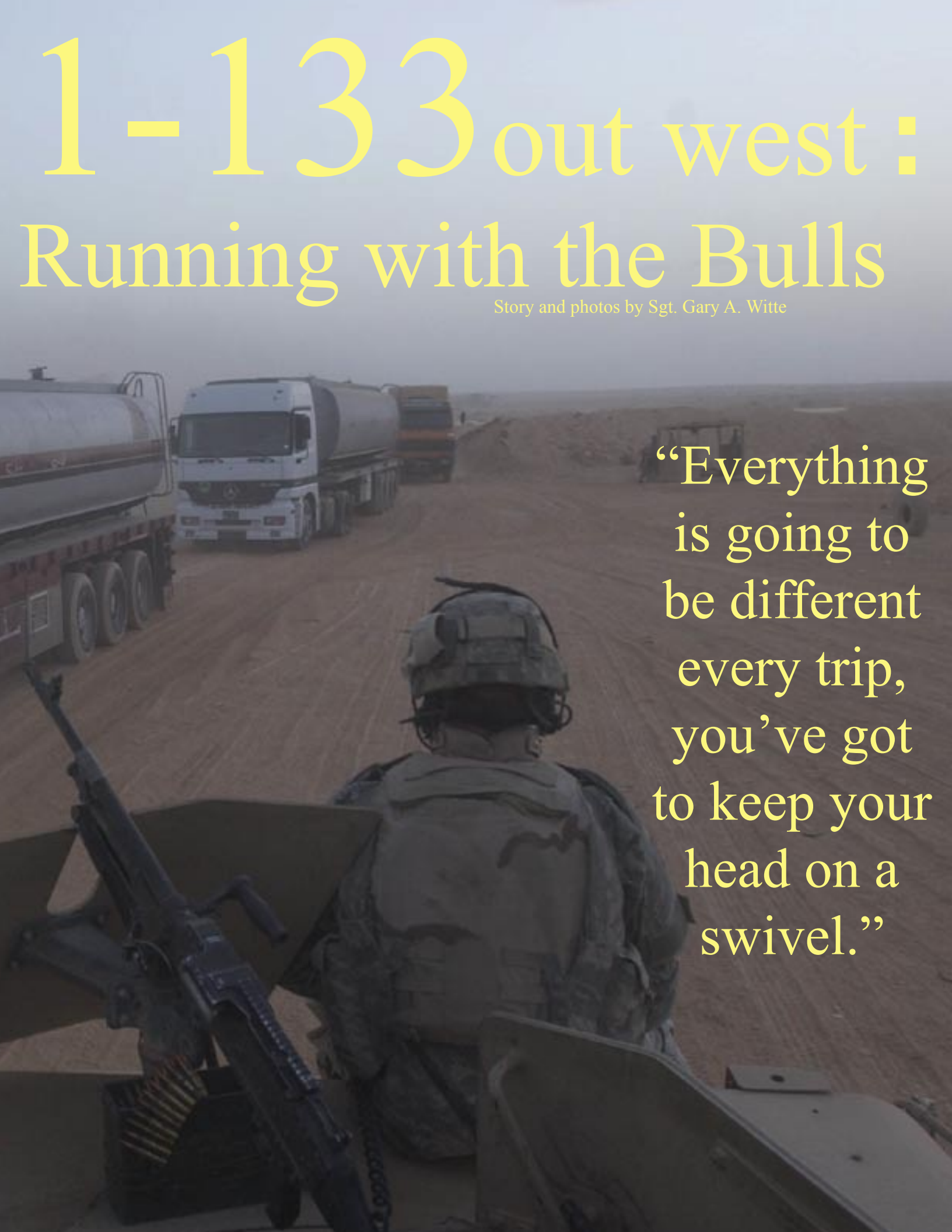
After all, their battalion makes this trip routinely.



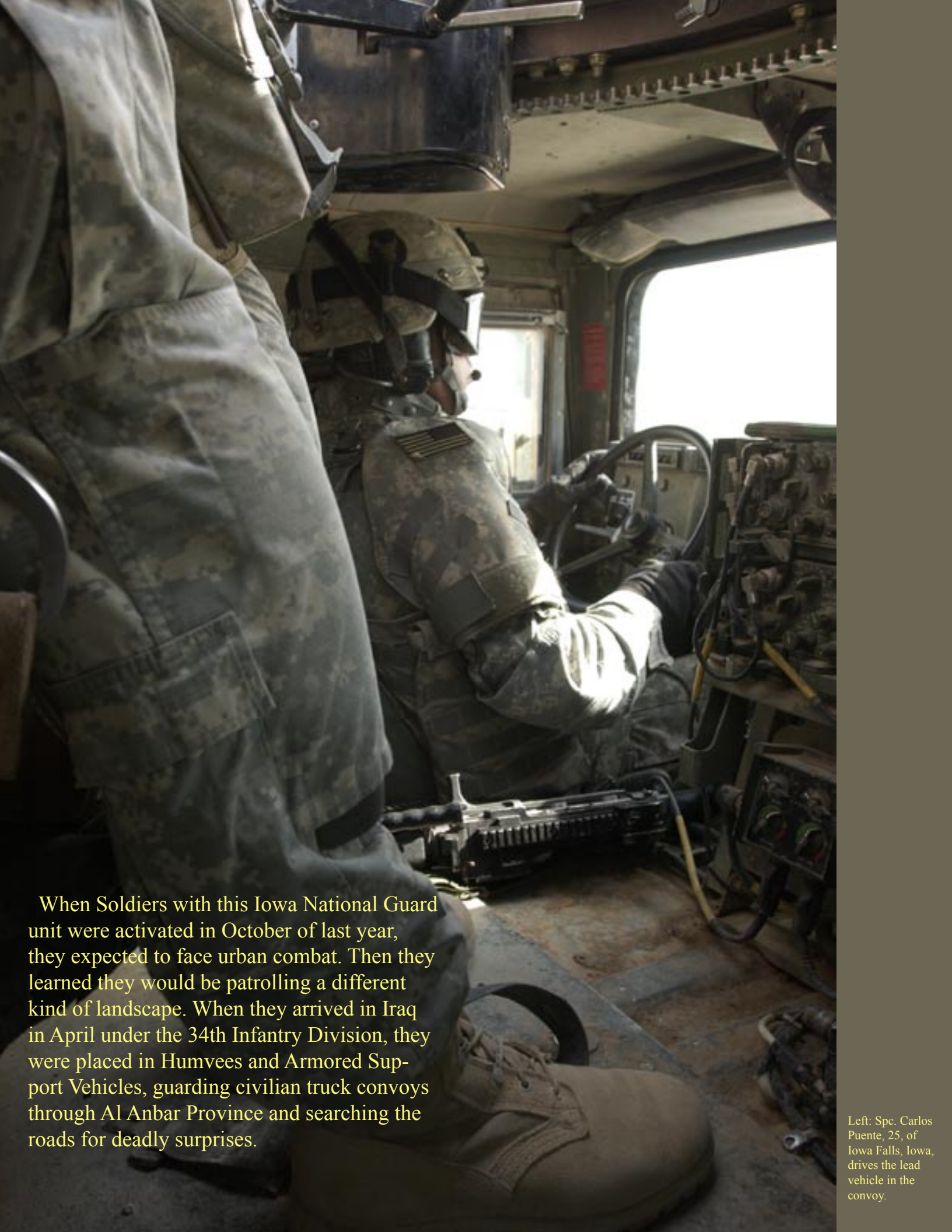
Spec. Eric W. Reeves, 22, of Riverton, Iowa, watches the convoy pull into the Forward Operating Base for the night. Reeves is a driver and gunner for 2nd Squad, 1st Platoon, C Company, 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry Regiment.

# 1-133 out west : Running with the Bulls

Story and photos by Sgt. Gary A. Witte



“Everything  
is going to  
be different  
every trip,  
you’ve got  
to keep your  
head on a  
swivel.”

A photograph showing a soldier in camouflage uniform and helmet driving a vehicle. The soldier is seen from the side, looking out the window. The interior of the vehicle is visible, including the steering wheel and dashboard. The soldier's hands are on the steering wheel. The vehicle appears to be a military transport or support vehicle.

When Soldiers with this Iowa National Guard unit were activated in October of last year, they expected to face urban combat. Then they learned they would be patrolling a different kind of landscape. When they arrived in Iraq in April under the 34th Infantry Division, they were placed in Humvees and Armored Support Vehicles, guarding civilian truck convoys through Al Anbar Province and searching the roads for deadly surprises.

Left: Spc. Carlos Puente, 25, of Iowa Falls, Iowa, drives the lead vehicle in the convoy.



Right: Sgt. Joedy J. Dennis from Alden Iowa, analyzes data and communicates with the convoy commander.

“You’ve  
got to be  
suspicious  
about  
everything  
out there.”

Damage roadway from a previous IED detonation.

Sgt. Joedy J. Dennis from Alden, Iowa, who wears a tourniquet attached to the front of his body armor, leads 2nd squad, 1st platoon. He said the unit never knows what will happen out on the roadways. “Our plan of action is always the same when we leave here, but it never ends up the same,” Dennis said. “Our mission is always accomplished. We always get the trucks from point A to point B.”



Staff Sgt. Brett A. Schmidt, 36, of Nashua, Iowa, watches as a civilian attempts to help repair another man's truck. Schmidt is Weapons squad leader for 1st Platoon, C Company, 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry Regiment.



“You get to go out a lot, we’ve spent 90 percent (of our time) out here ...

Almost a week goes by if you go on a four day run.”



Left: The lead gun truck for the main convoy pulls a security halt in the Western desert while waiting for a problem with one of the civilian trucks to be fixed.

Right: The supply convoys can stretch from 30 to 50 miles long.(Photo by Sgt. Joedy J. Dennis)



Sgt. Joedy J. Dennis from Alden Iowa, points out a past IED strike point. The explosive devices are a common hazard for the convoy.



# Veterans Day Patch Ceremony

Story and Photos  
By Sgt. KaRonda Fleming

Soldiers of the 657th Area Support Group gathered at the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Center East to receive proper authorization to wear their combat patch during a Veteran's Day observance.

On Nov. 11, Americans all around the world observe Veteran's Day to show pride in the heroism of those who have served in the country's Armed Forces.

It began eighty-eight years ago, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, which was then called Armistice Day, the temporary end of hostile fire, between Germany and the allied nations, said Col. Stephen Nakano, commander of the 657th ASG.

World War I ended at that time, and Armistice Day was later named "Veteran's Day to honor American veterans of all wars," he said.

The 657th ASG Soldiers are now authorized to wear the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) combat patch on their right shoulder sleeve, said Command Sergeant Major Jorge

Young, command sergeant major of the 657th ASG.

Young said "You have served with distinction and honor in the United States Army, and were deployed directly in support of the global war on terrorism."

Soldiers of the 657th ASG have taken many challenges head on, Nakano said, and have shown what they are capable of accomplishing.

"Your achievements have not gone unnoticed and I anticipate many more throughout the deployment," Nakano said.

"I serve proudly and so does my father who served in Vietnam," said Sgt. 1st Class John Kaneshiro, a force protection noncommissioned officer with the 657th ASG.

Kaneshiro said his father paid the ultimate sacrifice in his theater of operation. In 1995, his family received the Distinguished Service Cross in his father's honor at Fort Huachuca, Ariz.



Col. Stephen Nakano, commander of the 657th ASG and Command Sgt. Maj. Jorge Young, command sergeant major of the 657th ASG were the first to affix the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)'s patch onto their right shoulder sleeves after receiving authorization to wear the combat patch.

# High school builds connection with Soldiers

## Classroom students talk to Anaconda via live satellite video conference

Editor's note: The following story includes contributions by a West Aurora High School student Andrea Houlihan.



Students from West Aurora High School, in West Aurora, Ill. ask questions of Soldiers of the 210th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment. Pictured on the screen from left to right are Sgt. 1st Class Mark Bell, Spc. Amanda Solitario, and Spc. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown.

Three Army journalists, speaking at an Oct. 30 live satellite video conference, offered student journalists from West Aurora High School insight into their experiences in Iraq.

The students asked a variety of questions, including some about the weather, food, and lessons learned as Soldiers. Sgt. 1st Class Mark E. Bell, Spc. Amanda J. Solitario, and Spc. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown of the 210th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment spoke from their office at Logistical Support Area Anaconda.

The Soldiers joked with students during the hour-long conference, but also discussed their jobs and life in the military. Solitario noted the sense of responsibility she has gained since joining the Army.

The conference was made possible using

the military Digital Video Imaging Distribution System, which enables troops to transmit live broadcasts from the field.

Many students at West Aurora High have family members currently serving overseas. Sophomore Pat Spoden has a few family members serving in Iraq. Senior Kirsten Grahn's older sister and West High graduate, Jessie, is currently stationed in Iraq. West High graduates like Mike Montemeyer have joined the armed services.

Teachers and students also sought to contribute to Soldiers through a school-wide project that assembled multiple care packages to be sent to LSA Anaconda. Solitario and Hemmerly-Brown opened two of the packages sent by students during the live conference. Hemmerly-Brown said it's not just about the contents of the care package that makes it so great.

"Getting a care package is awesome," she said "It's really the support that comes with the packages that is really touching."

Sophomore Laurencia Mendoza said that she felt it necessary to donate, "just to give something back to troops and to give them a piece of home [in order] to bring them happiness." In agreement with Mendoza's opinion, Luis Salines agreed that, "since they are over there fighting, [I should] do my part."

Teacher Jenny McCormick thinks that receiving packages from friends and family "uplifts the Soldiers. It lets them know that we haven't forgotten them ... We are telling them that there are still people back home who care."

McCormick said she hopes that she is sending a message to everyone else: "To make people more aware that a war is going on, and real people are out there fighting." She hopes to shed a positive light on the Soldiers and what they do.

**STAY ALIVE  
DO YOUR CHECKS**



# EXPEDITIONARY



## 13th SUSTAINMENT

# GOVERNMENT

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CLICK

# WARRIOR ETHOS



I WILL  
ALWAYS  
PLACE THE  
MISSION  
FIRST.

I WILL  
NEVER  
ACCEPT  
DEFEAT.

I WILL  
NEVER QUIT.

I WILL  
NEVER LEAVE A  
FALLEN COMRADE.

# AND

AND A BANG IS LOGISTICS



DATA DOESN'T KNOW  
REMEMBER  
OFPSEED

OR YOUR DATA MIGHT FALL



WHO IT BELONGS TO.

IT  
INTO THE WRONG HANDS :(

# Trivia answers

1. Mao-Tse Tsung
2. Canada and US
3. AV-8 "Harrier"
4. Hunter Army Airfield
5. "Liberator"
6. General Winfield S. Scott
7. The assault on Chapultepec Castle
8. The caltrop



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**PUT IT ON PAPER**



Guess Where Answer: LSA Adder Warrior Memorial wall.





# Tae Bo-athon, alive and well in Taji

by Capt. Sandra Ming-Wilks 15th BTB

Just mention the name Billy Blanks and almost anyone will break out with the "air punching bag" movement.



Soldiers traditionally volunteer to lead physical fitness sessions in some form of aerobics or dance to provide a change of pace to the traditional push ups, sit ups, and run.

Tae Bo, an aerobic exercise routine developed by Blanks, a Tae Kwon Do practitioner, is increasingly becoming the physical fitness

session of choice. It is one of the first "cardio boxing" programs that's expanded onto most military installations.

Popularity has held for this intense workout regimen, which helps increase cardiovascular fitness, strength, muscular endurance, and flexibility. The popularity continues on forward operating base Taji.

Chief Warrant Officer Sabrina Nero, a food service technician, from the 4th Infantry Division Support Brigade, picked up the challenge and has led the Tae Bo sessions in Taji since April 2006.

Once the word got out amongst the 15th Brigade Troop Battalion about the physical benefits of an hour of jumping, kicking, and punching, the crowd attendance grew steadily. On Nov. 3, Nero, with help from the Taji Morale, Welfare, and Recreation office, sponsored a Tae Bo-athon. Platters of fruit and other refreshments followed the two hours of Tae Bo. Participation was high even in the second hour.

With Nero's tour of duty drawing to a close, three leaders from the 15th BTB have stepped up to keep the classes going.



Soldiers at Camp Taji enjoy extensive work-out training using the fundamentals taught by Billy Blanks, a Tae Kwon Do practitioner.



A student in the ASV maintainer's course checks inside the engine compartment before an engine is lowered and reinstalled.

Factory representatives taught a course on maintaining Armored Security Vehicles to mechanics working on what is one of the Army's newest modes of conveyance at Q-West throughout the last few weeks.

The M1117 Guardian ASV, a new configuration of a four-wheeled armored vehicle that has quickly proven itself, continues to be distributed to units throughout Iraq under a contract that has grown to \$840 million. More than 450 of the vehicles have already rolled into theater, prompting a need for the maintenance course. A series of three, weeklong courses provided 40 hours of training for more than 100 soldiers.

"This vehicle has only been out for about two years now and it was originally made for military police," said Chief Warrant Officer Paul Hogie, a maintenance officer with 423rd Transportation Company. "But now, since transportation companies are using them more often, the Soldiers need to now how they work and how to repair them."

The introductory maintenance course consisted of basic presentation of various systems inside the vehicle including hydraulics, pneumatics and the power train. It also allowed Soldiers to familiarize themselves with a lot of new features added to the M1117 not seen on other vehicles.

"Just like any new vehicle, the M1117 is going to have its own problems that

Story and Photos  
By Spc Kyndal Hernandez

# MECHANICS GET COURSE IN ASV REPAIR



In the final day of the 40-hour course, Soldiers reinstall an engine in an M1117 Guardian Armored Security Vehicle.

we as mechanics need to know how to fix,” said Sgt. Curtis Nienhuis, diagnostics noncommissioned officer in charge with 423rd, “We need this class so we can diagnose and troubleshoot and keep this vehicle safe and mission effective.”

With its armor, the ASV weighs about 15 tons but can travel at nearly 70 miles an hour. Its armor and its agility allow the ASV to perform many missions. The Guardian is a further development of the older LAV-150 4 x 4 light armored vehicle. The M1117 redesign was intended to be a security vehicle for the military police for patrols in Iraq.

Now, they are used more often as gun trucks for transportation companies when they go out on convoys to provide better security.

“This was just a basic maintenance class on the M1117 and it gives us a good foundation to

start with,” said Nienhuis, “Knowing how to repair things correctly on this vehicle helps us to ensure that our Soldiers are safe and protected out there on the road.”



Peering in from the top, Soldiers put the final pieces in before the screws are fastened.



Story and Photos  
By Spc. Alexandra  
Hemmerly-Brown

Soldiers  
extend olive  
branch to  
Iraqi people

# Tree at a Time

Three Iraqi men plant an olive tree during a ceremony at LSA Anaconda.

The olive tree. It has long held deep-seeded symbolism in several cultures; the crown of Olympic champions in ancient Greece, a sign of peace in Christian and Jewish faiths, and an icon of the Prophet Mohammed in Islam.

Shajarat zaytun in Arabic, the olive tree is very hearty and long-lived, and can survive in conditions of almost total neglect. The tree is not especially remarkable in appearance or stature, but its meaning and practical use is where this little tree leaves its mark.

A few centuries of symbolism combined with three Iraqi citizens, two U.S. Army colonels, and one Army Reserve unit, and you are left with a lasting legacy of the partnership between U.S. forces and the people of Iraq.

On Dec. 23, a ceremony was held by the 164th Corps Support Group which falls under the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), to begin the planting of 164 olive trees on Anaconda.

"The olive tree is a symbol of peace and this is the message we want to leave the citizens of Iraq," said Master Sgt. Patricia A. Marsano, the field ordering officer for the 164th.

The Crestline, Ohio native said the olive tree project was a challenge from her command to leave her unit's area on Anaconda better than how they found it.

Master Sgt. Patricia Marsano, a field ordering officer with the 164th plants a single tree during a ceremony at LSA Anaconda.



“There are so many trees dying around here, so we researched what kind would survive best in this environment. Also, it’s the symbol of peace which we all hope for,” Marsano said. She said the unit thought trees would be a fitting gesture for both their practical use in this country and their symbolism.

Marsano, along with the help of 1st Sgt. Roberto Galicia of Ontario, Calif., also of the 164th, approached the California Rare Fruit Growers, Inc., in September, and submitted the request for a donation of olive trees to plant in Iraq.

The CRFG responded with great interest in assisting the Soldiers and set out to find a grower who would help with the project. In the end, 164 olive trees of five different varieties were sent to Iraq via Federal Express, who footed the shipping bill.

The trees were shipped Dec. 7 and arrived on Anaconda in time to be planted as an unconventional kind of Christmas tree.

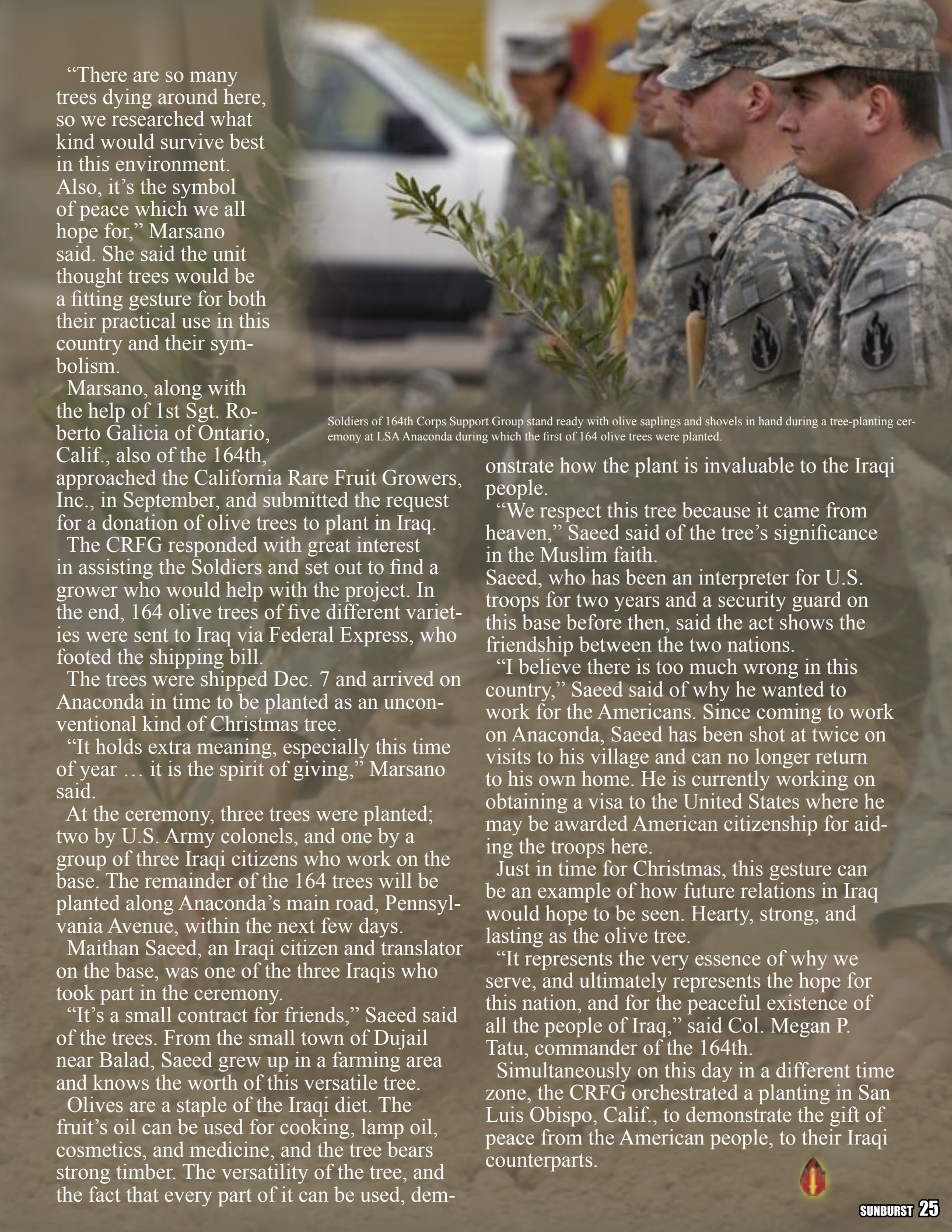
“It holds extra meaning, especially this time of year ... it is the spirit of giving,” Marsano said.

At the ceremony, three trees were planted; two by U.S. Army colonels, and one by a group of three Iraqi citizens who work on the base. The remainder of the 164 trees will be planted along Anaconda’s main road, Pennsylvania Avenue, within the next few days.

Maithan Saeed, an Iraqi citizen and translator on the base, was one of the three Iraqis who took part in the ceremony.

“It’s a small contract for friends,” Saeed said of the trees. From the small town of Dujail near Balad, Saeed grew up in a farming area and knows the worth of this versatile tree.

Olives are a staple of the Iraqi diet. The fruit’s oil can be used for cooking, lamp oil, cosmetics, and medicine, and the tree bears strong timber. The versatility of the tree, and the fact that every part of it can be used, dem-



Soldiers of 164th Corps Support Group stand ready with olive saplings and shovels in hand during a tree-planting ceremony at LSA Anaconda during which the first of 164 olive trees were planted.

onstrate how the plant is invaluable to the Iraqi people.

“We respect this tree because it came from heaven,” Saeed said of the tree’s significance in the Muslim faith.

Saeed, who has been an interpreter for U.S. troops for two years and a security guard on this base before then, said the act shows the friendship between the two nations.

“I believe there is too much wrong in this country,” Saeed said of why he wanted to work for the Americans. Since coming to work on Anaconda, Saeed has been shot at twice on visits to his village and can no longer return to his own home. He is currently working on obtaining a visa to the United States where he may be awarded American citizenship for aiding the troops here.

Just in time for Christmas, this gesture can be an example of how future relations in Iraq would hope to be seen. Hearty, strong, and lasting as the olive tree.

“It represents the very essence of why we serve, and ultimately represents the hope for this nation, and for the peaceful existence of all the people of Iraq,” said Col. Megan P. Tatu, commander of the 164th.

Simultaneously on this day in a different time zone, the CRFG orchestrated a planting in San Luis Obispo, Calif., to demonstrate the gift of peace from the American people, to their Iraqi counterparts.



# Soldier's PPE Saves the Day

Personal protection equipment and training saved a Soldier from serious harm recently during an attack on a convoy in Mosul, Iraq.

"I would be in bad shape if I wasn't wearing my eye

from his damaged turret.

"After the explosion, I dropped down into the vehicle for safety and began checking the passenger in the back seat," he said. "And at the same time he was checking me for injuries."

During the attack, Davis said his vehicle began to smoke due to a suspected fire under the hood and his battle buddies in the convoy responded quickly.

"We were trained to set a secure perimeter for Soldiers in a disabled vehicle to move to, and my battle buddies sprung into action instantly," he said. "I was treated by a medical specialist, who rides in all of our convoys and transported back to the forward operating base."

Pfc. Kristy Cannoy, the medic who administered aid to Davis, said her training was essential.

"We are trained to react to injured Soldiers and treat them without hesitation," she said. "And with the extensive training we receive during battle simulation training, I was confident I was able to take care of the Soldier and get him transported to safety quickly."

Cannoy, who graduated advanced individual training in May, said this was her first time treating a Soldier who was injured during a mission outside of the FOB.

"This is my job, and this is what I was trained to do," she said. "I was ready for this situation before I deployed to Iraq and I continue to train to ensure I am ready for more situations later in the deployment."

Davis said the quick reaction of the driver Spc. Lacyde Arnold, who was also injured during the attack, helped him and the passenger in the back seat exit the vehicle quickly, despite all of the confusion. He pointed out the importance of being prepared and taking training seriously.

"Almost everyone in my unit is trained to operate in any position in the vehicle," Davis said. "We are not only capable of operating in any position, we also know what responsibilities each position has in the case of an emergency and that helped us through this situation without having more Soldiers injured."

Davis sustained cuts to his face and lips, a bruised hip and a minor concussion from the incident and he said he feels lucky to not have been hurt worse.

"I love my IBA and protective equipment," he said. "I should be an example to all Soldiers that this equipment works and it can only help you if you have it on properly."

**Story and Photos**  
**By Sgt. Kevin McSwain**



Spc. Austin Davis looks over the damage done to his vehicle caused by an explosive device during a convoy in Mosul, Iraq. Davis sustained minor injuries and attributes his good fortune to wearing his protective equipment.

protection," said Spc. Austin S. Davis, just hours after being injured by an explosive device during a mission.

Davis, a driver and gunner for 1st platoon, 1345th Transportation Company, 352nd Corps Support Battalion, 45th Support Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), said his protective equipment and the training of the Soldiers around him are the reasons he was able to walk around less than 12 hours after the attack.

During a routine convoy to carry cargo and passengers to another forward operating base, Davis's vehicle was struck by an explosive device, causing moderate damage to the front passenger side of the vehicle.

"Everyone did exactly what they were trained to do in this situation," he said. "They stayed focused and helped me and other Soldiers get to safety."

The Muskogee, Okla. native was struck in the hip by a piece of shrapnel which was stopped by the thick rigger belt he had on at the time.

"The medic said that if the belt had not stopped the metal from entering my body, it would have caused serious complications," he said. "The explosion was so violent that it ripped my gun mount from the turret."

The husband and father of one, Davis received cuts and bruises on his face from the explosion and metal pieces





Staff Sgt. Joshua L. Quinton practices his Golf swing on the driving range built in Al Asad, Iraq.

# Soldiers create a slice of home in the desert

## Story and Photos By Sgt. Gary A. Witte

Next to the unit's headquarters, former streetlight poles have been bolted to concrete protective barriers in order to hang a shade canopy in the air. Two small Astroturf-covered platforms, which can be moved from 20 to 70 feet away, sit on the ground next to a covered bucket filled with golf balls.

Many staff members have golf clubs in their office, including group paralegal NCO Staff Sgt. Joshua L. Quinton of Seattle, Wash.

"It's a good release ... It's nice to get out of the office for even 10 minutes to hit a few balls," Quinton said. "It kind of takes you out of this place for a minute."

The driving range was the brainchild of Support Operations Sgt. Maj. Clinton A. Beers of Boise, Idaho, who took inspiration from the driving range nets at golf stores. He saw streetlight poles that had been knocked down by tanks or other vehicles and came up with the idea.

"I love golf," Beers said. "I thought if I could get my hands on a couple of those, I could make it happen."

The initial driving range was completed at the end of September, and with the contributions of a stateside golf business and a former commander, the unit has numerous clubs and plenty of golf balls.

"We could lose 500 balls in the desert and still have a thousand left," Beers said.

Despite the size of the canopy, which is 40 feet tall by 60 feet wide, they occasionally have a golfer who manages to miss it, but the problem is a rare one, Beers said.

The military doctrine of constantly improving the fighting position has been applied to the driving range. There are plans to have a working streetlight pole installed, which would essentially allow it to be open to golf enthusiasts 24 hours a day.

"Pretty soon we'll mount that and we'll be able to hit balls at night, too," Beers said. The canopy is raised with a pulley system, which allows it to be lowered during severe weather. If it isn't lowered during high winds, the canopy acts as a sail and billows out of control, Beers said.

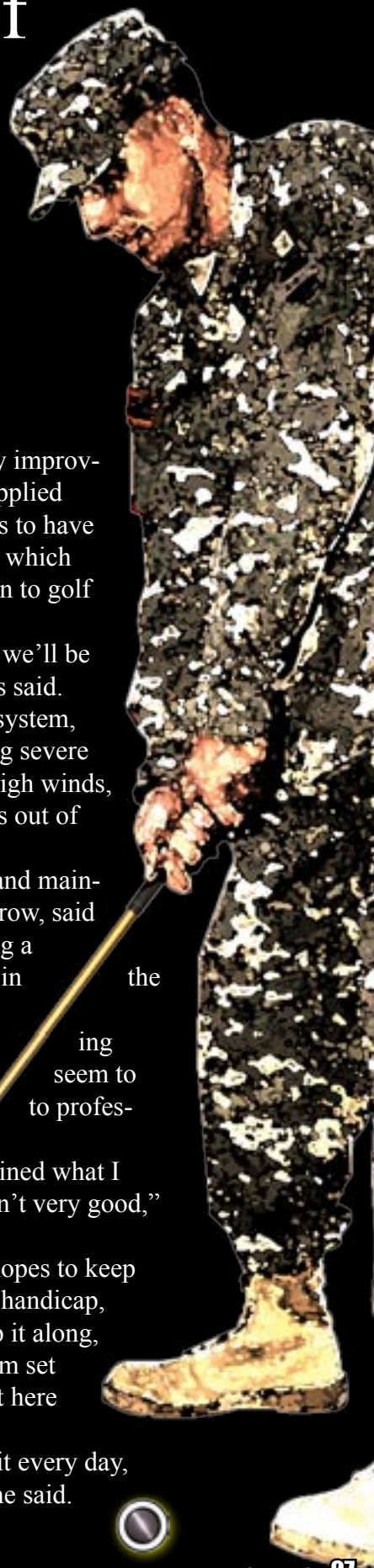
Quinton, who built the platforms and maintains a set of clubs for others to borrow, said they are also thinking about building a small putting green out of concrete in the break area.

Despite the opportunities the driving range offers, Quinton doesn't expect it to take his golf skills to professional levels.

"Hopefully it's maintained what I had before I left, which wasn't very good," he said, smiling.

Likewise, Beers said he hopes to keep his game up as well as his handicap, which stands at eight. To help it along, he recently ordered a custom set of clubs and had them sent here from home.

"I don't have time to do it every day, but I do it when I can," he said.



Story & photos by  
Spc. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

# The Ziggurat

# urat of

**O**n a hillside overlooking Tallil, an ancient structure stands. Looming like a guardian over the city, the Ziggurat of Ur has witnessed centuries of people come and go, cultures change, and countless seasons pass.

More than 4,000 years old, the site is the location of an ancient temple originally built in 2113 B.C. in honor of the moon god Nanna.

Since then, the structure has been partially rebuilt on its foundation to resemble what historians believe the temple once looked like.

Across a short stretch of sand, the compound also contains the tombs of ancient leaders, and a house that is said to be the birthplace of the biblical prophet Abraham. Located just outside Tallil, servicemembers, civilians, and coalition forces on almost

any base in Iraq can take advantage of this historic landmark by simply coordinating with their chaplain's office.

"I think it's fascinating every time I come out here," said Staff Sgt. Thomas G. Murray, a Minnesota National Guard Soldier and the brigade senior chaplain's assistant for the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team of the 34th Infantry Division.

Murray helps organize weekly trips to the Ziggurat. He said about 40-50 people sign up for each excursion, and the group will spend about two hours exploring the site.

"I think for the Soldiers, it's mere curiosity," Murray said. "To see where civilization started is important."

The chaplain's team works closely with the site's curator, a native Iraqi who was born in the city of Ur and has lived there his whole life. He not only knows a lot about the Ziggurat telling its story is in his blood.

The unnamed man's family has been giving visitors tours of the ruins and keeping the land's story alive since the first scientific excavation unearthed a city lost in the sand in 1922.

As a third generation tour guide and expert of the site, the knowledge and history of the Ziggurat was passed down to him by his father, and his father's father before that. The Ziggurat is his profession and his livelihood.

Excavations of the city started in 1850, but weren't widely known until the 1920s when British and U.S. archeologists joined in on the discovery.

Scientists found they were uncovering the ancient city of Ur, when Iraq used to be called Mesopotamia, "the land of two rivers." This city is thought to be linked to the invention of the wheel, the first written laws, and most famously, the birthplace of the prophet Abraham.



The curator said his grandfather lent a hand in the 1922 excavation, but no further attempts to uncover more of this city have been made.

"Most of the city has not been excavated. I think more than 80 percent is still underground," the curator said.

After seeing the Ziggurat, visitors will come to the site's next attraction, a small, stone archway. The curator said this arch, which is part of a crumbling building, is argued to be the first in the world.

"Some books say that the Romans have the oldest arch in the world, but later they found this one," he said.

Next, guests have the chance to explore the tombs of ancient rulers where famous artifacts have been found. More than 2,000 tombs were found in the 1922 excavations, the curator said.

The unlighted underground tombs, which are accessed by winding wooden stair cases, were once the resting places of kings and queens.

According to the curator, food, beverages, and the bodies of servants, as well as riches were often found inside the tombs of these

rulers who believed they could take possessions with them into the afterlife. Poorer people, he said, were simply buried in the sand.

Another marvel servicemembers can view is cuneiform. As one of the earliest forms of writing, cuneiform was invented before Egyptian hieroglyphics.

The picture-writing is inscribed on several bricks outside the tombs, and can be seen when the tour guide dabs a damp cloth over the bricks, making the words appear from under their sand layer. A short walk from the sprawling tombs stands a re-built structure of what is said to be the "house of Abraham."

Abraham, the "father of prophets," was born in the city of Ur according to the Bible in Genesis 11:27-31.

The evidence that led historians to conclude the house was Abraham's fathers, include the fact that Abraham's father was said to be a rich merchant, and this house is one of the largest found in the city. Also, somewhere near the structure a brick was found with Abraham's father's name on it. "Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, they all



have roots here," said Murray, noting the site's appeal.

He said seeing the Ziggurat is a great opportunity for Soldiers who might not otherwise get to see much of Iraqi culture. "Soldiers can say that they have been here, they went to Iraq, but they also saw an ancient wonder," he said.

There are many chances to see the Ziggurat of Ur if a servicemember is in the Tallil area. Aside from the trips organized by Murray and the chaplain here, the curator gives at least 14 tours per week, he said. The land is owned by the government and was once closed to outsiders by Saddam. It has now been open since U.S. troops arrived in Iraq and awaits servicemembers to visit and walk away with a little bit of history.



# Sustaining

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