



Vol. I, Issue 18

# Phantom News

Telling the TF Phantom story



April 22, 2007



**Capt. Joe Vargas, commander, Task Force Vigilant, 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, addresses villagers from Iraqi Family Village during their first town hall meeting regarding security and employment issues.**

## Spreading the wings of democracy

### *Iraqi Family Village holds open forum at first town hall meeting*

**Story, photo by Spc. Abel Trevino**

*28th Public Affairs Detachment*

The Iraqi Family Village city council held an open forum for citizens to discuss important issues at its first town hall meeting April 14.

Attendees at the meeting brought up problems they have been having with electricity, sewage, employment, medical care and security.

"Some of the issues that came up, we're not able to solve right off the bat," said Capt. Joe Anthony Vargas, company commander, Task Force Vigilant, 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division. "We have to resolve them through the different (governmental) ministries."

The town hall meeting was held and managed by elected citizens of the village who make up the city council, with American Soldiers playing a minor part in maintaining security for the event and answering questions the council was unable to.

One of the issues that was a concern to both villagers and Coalition Forces is a hole in a wall that bypasses Iraqi Army

- enforced security checkpoints. The townsfolk wanted the convenience of it, but also the security offered by the checkpoints without the hassle of going through the checkpoints, Vargas said.

"Iraqi Army soldiers are providing security at the gates and as long as there is another way to get in, security at the gates is useless," Vargas said.

After his speech, the villagers voted to close the hole in the wall.

Vargas also explained how the contracting system works and what he could and could not promise the villagers in terms of reasonable expectations of assistance.

"We can only offer so many jobs every time we sign a contract," he told them. "It is impossible to employ the entire village in one contract. I apologize if you are not hearing what you want to hear."

Reassurance from the soldiers was not why the Iraqis attended the meeting.

"Probably the biggest thing to come out of the meeting, for the people and the council, is the understanding of what

See **MEETING**, page 6

## Heard on the streets of Victory... *How has the surge affected your daily routine?*



**Pfc. Diane Currier,  
2/10th Mtn. Div.,  
Gate guard**

"I just returned from leave, but at lunch time it was really crowded. I noticed we also get more questions about where things are."



**Spc. Anthony Taveras  
MNC-I,  
C-2**

"There is an increase in inprocessing and overcrowding in billeting and many Soldiers live in tents."



**Maj. Ron Wheeler  
MNC-I,  
C-2**

"My daily routine is actually not affected by the surge."

"It is harder to get in and get the laundry done. The chow hall is infinitely crowded and it gets busier at the gates at work."



**Sgt. D. Riley,  
2/10th Mtn. Div.  
Gate guard**

"There are more people in the chow hall and the number of people we see coming in for new badges has increased significantly."



**Petty Officer 1st Class  
Paula Buehrer,  
MNC-I, C-2**

"It is a little bit tighter, but everything seems to be working a lot better than what I expected for support services."



**Master Chief  
Michael Chavez,  
MNF-I, CIS**

## Chaplain's Corner

### Words of Wisdom

**Chaplain Roger Rodriquez**  
*Task Force Tiger Chaplain*

Ask yourself a couple of questions. First, "Am I wise?" Second, "If I do not consider myself to be wise, then how can I be wise?" These are serious questions to ponder. Do you care to be wise? Is it important enough for you to learn how to obtain it if you consider yourself lacking in this needful area?

Is wisdom needed? Of course it is. Wisdom is needed in everyday living. Do you have children? Are you in financial debt? When you and I "kick the bucket," is a will necessary? What will I be doing five years from now? Ten years? Twenty years? Am I planning now for it? Wisdom is so important that Solomon says, "Wisdom is the principle thing."

The Book of Proverbs is filled with wisdom. It is there to read for anyone who so desires to obtain it. Wisdom can be obtained by all who seek it. It is not just for the elite. It is not just for the elderly. It is not just for the man of

the cloth. It is for the young and old, the rich and poor. That is what I love about the Lord. He is no respecter of persons.

The Bible says in Proverbs 3:13, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom." We see here that wisdom can be found. It is for those who are seeking her. Thus a lazy man will not search for her "as treasures and fine gold." This is an amazing thing. If we had a treasure map telling us where hidden riches would be found, we would waste no time looking for them. The lord says that wisdom is better than

See **WISDOM**, page 3

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# Reserve unit tasked with new mission

Story, photo by Spc. Beatrice Florescu-Vila Verde

MNC-I PAO

Soldiers with an Army Reserve unit from Orlando, Fla., received an additional duty as the personal security detachment for high-ranking officials at Camp Victory.

The security and safety of Brig. Gen. James McDonald and Maj. Gen. Peter Devlin are now responsibilities of the 329th Chemical Detachment. They can be called upon at any moment to set up their weapons systems, vehicles and personnel for security operations.

The PSD is responsible for ensuring security regardless of what they may encounter en route.

"Initially, I think we were doing essentially a chemical mission here," said 2nd Lt. Greg Hoel, commander, 329th Chem. Det. "With our hands full with chemical mission and running convoys and dual task missions, we essentially have to find an easier way to try to man everything."

While on the PSD assignment, Soldiers still train for chemical missions. They will continue to rotate convoy



**Spc. O'Brian Resto, gunner, 329th Chemical Detachment, Special Troops Battalion, checks his weapons system before heading out on a mission.**

duty with their other two missions.

"We are very busy," Hoel said. "We have had a good experience and it would be a fun thing to do permanently, but I think the (mission) is so exhausting and highly driven that we have to give the other guys a break and allow them to also do PSD."

Soldiers are excited about the new mission and enjoy doing their job every day.

"It is definitely the experience of a lifetime," said Spc. Blaise Newmans, 329th Chem. Det. "I am 19 and I am doing stuff that people haven't done their whole life. I like the PSD better because we get more time to do things at the International Zone. It is a more important package that you are escorting, but when you get to where you're going, you have a little bit more freedom," he said.

This new task helps them break the

monotony and places a different level of importance on their performance and type of job. They have to meet specific requirements and adapt rapidly to fulfill the mission based on who they are escorting.

"I feel like I am doing an important job since we are escorting a one-star general," said Staff Sgt. Hector Morales, 329th Chem. Det.

It is essential to stay focused on the mission and to pay attention to every element they notice. Soldiers confirm that the training they received both at home and here helps them feel confident in their team.

"Going to downtown Baghdad is unfamiliar territory and you feel you are unprepared, but you have to really entrust your instincts and know that your training has prepared you for those high-impact missions," said Sgt. Brad Cornell, 329th Chem. Det.



**Staff Sgt. Jose Millan, 329th Chemical Detachment, mounts his weapons system on the tourette before a mission.**

## WISDOM, from page 2

gold! King Solomon, "the wisest man of all the earth," did not obtain wisdom by becoming rich; he became rich by obtaining wisdom. Therein must lie our priorities, for many have their priorities wrong.

If anybody can find wisdom, where can it be found? Too easy. You must go to the Source: the Lord. To obtain this wisdom you must first do something. You must fear Him. Proverbs 9:10 states, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It is here that wisdom begins. There are many

who claim to be wise but when put to the test, they fall apart at the seams. Notice the wisdom of Solomon in the following story:

The promise found in God's word is to those who are lacking wisdom. It is seen in James 1:5. It says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given to Him." Again, notice the source of wisdom and to who it is available – from God, to everyone.

Wisdom is up for grabs. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning (Proverbs 1:5).

## Moving with a purpose



Photo by Sgt. Curt Cashour

Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, arrives at Camp Taji Airfield April 16. Odierno visited Taji to tour the nearby town of Saba al Bor with leaders of the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. Looking on is Warrant Officer Eric Barreras, Odierno's Personal Security Officer.

## Hear today, gone tomorrow

# Change of habits could change your life

**Capt. John Merkley**

*Task Force 3*

Many Soldiers turn tail and run when they need a hearing test. There are Soldiers in theater who would rather go on combat missions than go see the audiologist.

Hearing loss is one of the most prevalent injuries sustained on the battlefield. A study by a Marine Light Armor Reconnaissance group during OIF II found that 23 percent of injuries were ear related. Even with improved hearing protective communication systems, use of combat arms earplugs and command emphasis, Soldiers continue to disregard good hearing health.

You cannot see noise and most do not understand its effect on the ear. Acting in time requires faith in those who truly understand the hazard without necessarily understanding it yourself.

Some hearing loss, such as congenital or genetic related loss, cannot be prevented. However, noise-induced hearing loss, the most prevalent cause of permanent hearing loss among Soldiers, can be.

Hearing loss from noise is progressive. When you are in a noisy environment, the noise becomes less. It is not because your ears have become accustomed to the noise – it is because your ears are being damaged.

Repeated exposure to loud noise does not exercise your ears or make your hearing stronger. It damages sensitive nerve endings and leads to permanent hearing damage.

Although you may have some recovery of hearing after noise exposure, repeated exposure will eventually cause permanent hearing loss.

Hearing loss from excessive noise exposure is usually preventable. Proper use of hearing protection reduces your chances of developing permanent hearing loss. It is easy to become complacent and accept that noise is ever-present.

Noise in a Blackhawk ranges anywhere from 103–106dBA depending on where you're sitting. Unprotected exposure to this amount of noise can cause permanent damage to the ear after 4–8 minutes.

It is never too late to begin practicing good hearing health.

Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Kevin M. Skelly summed it up well in the 1995 NCO Journal. He said, "If I could change one thing from the past 20 years, it would be the constant ringing in my ears I live with now all because I didn't wear hearing protection when I should have," he said. "The only thing I can change now are the batteries in my hearing aids."

Spend time and effort now to protect a very valuable sense. You only get two ears and they need to last you a lifetime.



# Third deployment to Iraq, Soldier finds home away from home

Story, photo by  
Spc. Beatrice Florescu-  
Vila Verde  
MNC-I PAO

"My grandfather was in the Air Force and told me many stories about his missions in World War II and I wanted to enlist," said Spc. Cassandra Bishop, Special Troops Battalion, Task Force Phantom, Multi-National Corps-Iraq.

Bishop is 24 years old now and said she matured a lot in the Army. She discovered herself while growing stronger and more patient. She is married with two daughters, 3-year-old Dakota and 14-month-old Mackenzie.

"It was very difficult to leave my youngest daughter," Bishop said. "The first thing I will do as soon as I return is to give her a big old hug and kiss."

Bishop is in Iraq for the third time and said it almost feels like a

home away from home. After five years of service, she likes the sense of family she has in the Army. She also likes to travel and see different places.

Bishop drives the lead vehicle in the convoy platoon that travels to the International Zone. "It's

fun and scary at the same time," she said. "The fun part is clearing the path for the convoy. The scary part is that you are the first one in sight. You can get hit by anything."

As a woman in today's Army, Bishop said she enjoys the experience because "It gives me the sense that I can do what guys are doing." Her husband was in the Army for eight years and is having a hard time not being able to protect her while she is in Iraq.

"My husband doesn't know what to do right now because I am protecting myself and that is his job," Bishop said.

"Being here as a woman broadens your horizons," Bishop said. "You are so lucky with what you have back in the States as a female compared to what

females have out here."

On this third deployment, Bishop said she hopes it will be her last

**"Being here as a woman broadens your horizons. It gives me the sense that I can do what the guys are doing."**

-Spc. Cassandra Bishop  
Driver, Special Troops Battalion,  
Multi-National Corps-Iraq

visit to Iraq.

"The first time I came here I was excited," Bishop said. "I wanted to know all about this fascinating country."

The second time I thought, 'well we're here again, let's do the job.' The last time I was here, I lived



Spc. Cassandra Bishop, Task Force Phantom, Special Troops Battalion, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, is a driver in the convoy platoon transporting personnel from Victory Base to the International Zone daily.

in a truck for five months and had to make my own shower with water bottles."

Bishop said she will support and encourage her daughters if they will wish to enlist in the Army.

"I will let them know the differences between the civilian and military lives so they know what the reality is and also the way life is outside the States," she said.

Bishop has advice for

new Soldiers who may be hesitant and confused like she said she was in the beginning.

"Stick with it. It will get better eventually," she said. "Relax if you are new to the Army or in theater. Don't be so uptight because you cannot stop an RPG or an IED, or (whatever) else is out there, but you can control your emotions and focus on doing your job right."

## Seven steps to making cents

# Troops learn to wage war on debt

Story, photo by Spc. Stephanie Homan  
MNC-I PAO

Camp Victory service members and civilians had a chance to learn how to manage their money at Waging War on Debt, a seminar held April 11 at Victory Chapel.

"According to the Federal Reserve Board, consumer debt has hit \$2 trillion after more than doubling over the past 10 years. Credit card and car loan debt alone averages \$18,700 per household, excluding any mortgages," said Lt. Col. Ronald Huffman, Multi-National Corps-Iraq chaplain OIC and sponsor of the seminar.

Maj. Steve Sheridan, chief of medical logistics, MNC-I and David Ramsey, certified financial counselor, were the instructors for the class, which highlighted multiple financial areas, including family and future planning, vehicles, mortgage, credit cards, investment and retirement.

Financial education is crucial for everyone to learn about, Sheridan said. He wanted attendees to encourage to increase their financial knowledge beyond his seminar.

"If you are not taught at home about finances then you learn from banks and other institutions who want to profit from your ignorance," Sheridan said.

First Lt. Javier Pla, general supply officer, MNC-I, said that Soldiers who attend seminars such as this are looking for three things.

"Soldiers want to know how to get out of debt, how to make more money,



**Maj. Stephen Sheridan, chief of medical logistics, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, hosts a debt seminar, Waging War on Debt, in Victory Chapel April 11.**

and what to do with the excess money they have," he said.

Sheridan said the most important part of the seminar is the Seven-Step Financial Battle Plan, which gives Soldiers a plan to get out of debt and start saving.

The plan starts with battling debt and then overcoming it. The last few steps are about saving and investing once someone is debt-free.

"My overall goal is to advise Soldiers in debt about options they have and provide a plan to get out," Sheridan said. "As for people who are already doing well, I offer them advice on maintaining it."

Much of that advice comes from books by David Ramsey, talk radio host and author of financial counseling books, Sheridan said.

"I borrowed the seven-step plan from David Ramsey and gave it a military spin," he said. "I became certified in 2001 – when I was a company commander – so I could help my Soldiers and their families."

Sheridan has been helping Soldiers get out of debt since then, and plans to continue doing so through the seminar.

For more information, contact Sheridan by phone at 822-2415 or by e-mail at [steve.sheridan@us.army.mil](mailto:steve.sheridan@us.army.mil).

## MEETING, from page 1

the council is doing for the people," said Michael Virnig, civil affairs NCOIC, Task Force Vigilant. "With very little commentary from us, (council members) explained what they have been doing and plan to do to help the village."

The locally elected officials further explained that the process for project approval is long. They asked the villagers to work with them by bringing their concerns to the council so they may be addressed with the Iraqi government, Virnig said.

Despite a few rough moments of townsfolk attempting

to approach the council individually, the meeting went well and few seemed extremely frustrated at those they elected to represent their interests.

"The people seemed satisfied with the explanations given by the council and seemed to have a better understanding of what is trying to be done in the village," Virnig said.

Before leaving the meeting, villagers wrote down questions and concerns and presented them to council members so they could be addressed at future meetings and through the chain of democracy.

Virnig said they are planning to have a second meeting in the next few weeks.

## Announcements

### Bodybuilding show

The first-ever officially sanctioned bodybuilding show in Baghdad will be held at Camp Liberty May 5. All are welcome. Contact Master Sgt. Woody Carter at **woody.carter@us.army.mil** for more information.

### Rock concert

The BandShe Rock Group will be performing on the Oasis DFAC stage May 6 at 7 p.m. There will be a meet and greet after the concert.

### Women's soccer

There will be a women's 6-on-6 soccer tournament on May 18. All are welcome. Contact Sgt. Christopher Christian at 822-2754 or **chris.christian@iraq.centcom.mil** for more information.

### Barber shop hours

Due to an increased customer demand, the barber shop's hours of operation have increased by one hour. The new hours are from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

### Newcomers' brief

Newcomers' briefs for all incoming personnel to Camp Victory are held Saturdays at 2:30 p.m. in the Coalition Cafe.

### Women's Bible study

There is a women's Bible study that meets Mondays at 7 p.m. in Bldg. 24F (new chaplains building). Contact Chief Warrant Officer Dawnetta Loomis at 822-2309

### Qatar restrictions.

When traveling to Qatar for R&R or pass, service members cannot have any knife or blade exceeding two inches. Travelers who have them will be expected to sign them into the Arms Room. The device will be returned to service member upon return to theater.

### Free mail kits

The U.S. Postal Service offers a free mailing kit to anyone sending care packages or shipping items to military personnel through USPS. The kit includes priority boxes, mail labels, tape and customs forms. The kit may be ordered by calling the USPS Expedited Package Supply Center at 1-800-610-8734. There is no charge for the kit.

### Mandatory R&R briefing

All VBC tenants going on R&R must attend an R&R Reunion and Suicide briefing prior to leaving. Briefings are held at Victory Chapel, Mondays at 3 p.m., Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m. and Saturdays at 3 p.m.

## Vehicle violations on the rise

An inordinate number of military personnel have been stopped by the military police, the garrison command sergeant major and several other senior NCOs for violations including excessive speed, lack of dispatch, failure to wear seatbelt, no license present and other infractions. Be prepared to lose your tactical or non-tactical vehicle for at least a month if your troops are not found in compliance with all DA and MNF-I policies.

### Area 51 events

Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Dominoes Competition 9 p.m.	Mayor's Cup Closing Ceremony	MNC-I Model Club 7 p.m.	Pool Competition 9 p.m.	Salsa Night 8 p.m.	Salsa Night 8 p.m., Ping Pong 9 p.m.	3-on-3 Basketball Tournament Sign-up at 12 p.m.

**Do you have an announcement about an event of interest to the Camp Victory community? Contact Spc. Laura M. Bigenho at [laura.bigenho@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:laura.bigenho@iraq.centcom.mil) with the information. Information for community announcements needs to be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event to allow for timely publication.**

## Operating Hours

**Coalition Cafe**  
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**  
Breakfast 5:30 - 8:30 a.m.  
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Dinner 5 - 9 p.m.

**Education Center**  
Open 24 Hours

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

**Fitness Center**  
Open 24 Hours

**MNC-I STB Mailroom**  
9 a.m. - noon  
5 - 7 p.m.

**Golby Troop Medical Clinic**  
**Sick Call**  
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - noon  
Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. - noon

**Dental Sick Call**  
Monday - Friday 7:30 - 10:30 a.m.  
Saturday 9 - 10:30 a.m.

**Mental Health Clinic**  
Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Saturday 9 a.m. - noon

**Post-Deployment Health Briefings**  
Monday, Wednesday and Friday 1 p.m.

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

**Personnel Service Support Centers**  
Monday - Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Sunday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**ID Cards**  
Monday - Friday 6 a.m. - 5 p.m.

## Worship Hours

**Victory Chapel (Bldg. 31)**  
**Sunday**  
7 a.m. .... Collective Protestant  
8:45 a.m. .... Collective Protestant  
10 a.m. .... Catholic Confession  
10:30 a.m. .... Catholic Mass  
noon .... Gospel Protestant  
2 p.m. .... Latter Day Saints  
4 p.m. .... Episcopal/Lutheran  
6:30 p.m. .... Contemporary Protestant

**Saturday**  
11 a.m. .... Seventh Day Adventist  
8 p.m. .... Catholic Mass

**Mini Chapel (Bldg. 24F)**  
**Sunday**  
9:30 a.m. .... Breaking of Bread  
3 p.m. .... Church of Christ  
7:30 p.m. .... Latter Day Saints  
8 p.m. .... Knights of Columbus  
(1st & 3rd Sundays)

**Monday-Friday**  
11:30 p.m. .... Daily Mass

**Friday**  
6:30 p.m. .... Jewish Service

**Warrior Chapel (Camp Liberty)**  
**Friday**  
6:30 p.m. .... Wiccan/Pagan

## AFN Freedom Radio

Al Asad ..... 107.3	Kirkush ..... 107.3
Ali Base ..... 107.3	Mosul ..... 105.1
Ar Ramadi.. 107.3	Q-West ..... 93.3
Baghdad ... 107.3	Taji ..... 107.3
Balad ..... 107.3	Tal Afar..... 107.3
Fallujah..... 105.1	Taqquadum.. 107.3
Kirkuk..... 107.3	Tikrit..... 100.1

*All stations are FM*



# Gym offers new twist on exercise

Story, photos by Pfc. Jason Adolphson  
16th Military Police Brigade

A standard physical performance rate is expected of all Soldiers to keep the Army ready in any situation that calls for persistence, strength and endurance to complete a mission or save lives.

The primary place to sharpen this stamina is the Camp Victory gym. Upon entering, one sees weightlifters performing exercises including squatting and pressing, running on treadmills and other exercises working their abs on gym mats.

This is the typical gym until one glances to the right and sees a door, which blends into the walls.

Peeking inside, a new twist on exercise becomes apparent. It is the entry point to a large room with mirrored walls and several service members gathered for one of many different classes.

One artistic form of combat Victory's service members and civilians

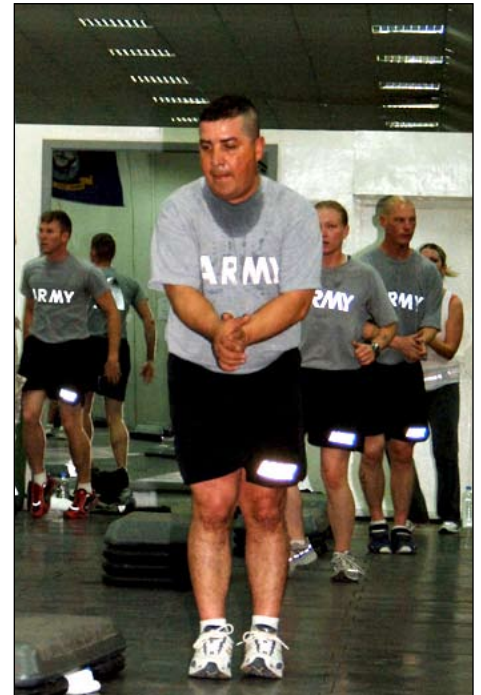
can learn is fencing. Although this sport adds weaponry to the equation, proper stance, quick reactions and key movements continue to be driving factors in it. Fencing dates back to 1160 B.C. and has been a part of every modern Olympics since 1896.

During sessions, participants take turns gathering in pairs of sparring partners, geared up in fencing attire, to monitor for valid strikes between opponents. Classes are divided between newcomers and more advanced fencers.

To step things up a notch, step aerobics offers participants 60 to 90 minutes of nonstop cardiovascular work. Upbeat music and an instructor calling a steady cadence to the movements motivate the exercisers.

These continuous movements help improve cardiovascular health, reduce body fat, increase flexibility and strengthen muscles. Other benefits include lowered blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Aerobics was introduced to Amer-



**Soldiers are in the full swing of exercise during a step-aerobics workout at Camp Victory Gym.**

ica in the mid-1970s when the spread of fast food began. Aerobic exercise routines prove to hold their effectiveness as they are still a popular workout method today.

If soreness occurs from new or existing exercise methods, it can be eased with yoga. For beginners, holding still positions and extensive stretching can be strenuous. As the class concludes, the final point of meditation lets participants relax.

Proper forms of stretching can enhance physical fitness, mental and physical relaxation, development of body awareness and the ability to learn and perform skilled movements. It reduces muscle soreness and tension, and also can reduce the risk of injury to joints, muscles and tendons.

Yoga is a system of exercises that helps control the body and mind. Although yoga was introduced to westerners in 1947, its practice dates back several thousand years.

Victory gym has classes to suit every exercise style. Stop by the front desk for time and date information.



**Participants practice their moves during a sambo-jujitsu session, one of several unique classes offered to service members and civilians at Victory Gym.**