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Serving Task Force Marne

203rd BSB takes on Eagle Challenge

SGT. 1ST CLASS SCOTT MAYNARD
3RD HBCT, 3RD INF. DIV.

FOB HAMMER – At 5:30 a.m., 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team Soldiers throughout the brigade's area of operations were working hard to do their part in the war on terror.

At FOB Hammer, Soldiers from 203rd Brigade Support Battalion were busy building the team through a series of physical and mental tests known as the "Eagle Challenge."

The challenge tested physical endurance with a one-mile run with their rifles; a four- and a half-mile footmarch, which included stops to test their general Soldiering knowledge and unit history; a 30-minute physical fitness and agility session; and four testing stations which evaluated Soldiers' ability to treat a casualty; disassemble and assemble a rifle, perform a functions check then load; and fill a radio to make a radio check.

"It's not all Soldiers' common task training in the challenge," said 1st Lt. Natassia Fay, from Youngstown, Ohio, the battalion logistician. "There are rules that must be followed as well."

The rules stipulated that contestants could compete as individuals or teams, there was no use of rank during the challenge, no disputes with the cadre and a positive attitude must be maintained.

The entire 203rd BSB could not par-



Sgt. 1st Class Scott Maynard

First Sgt. Kenya Berry, from Milledgeville, Ga., Company C, 203rd Brigade Support Battalion, puts on her war face while high crawling in the mud, during the Eagle Challenge on FOB Hammer, Iraq.

ticipate due to mission tempo, but 48 out of 250 available Soldiers prequalified and took on the team building event.

Lt. Col. Kelly J. Lawler, from Monticello, N.Y., commander of the 203rd BSB, addressed the 48 203rd Soldiers, known as "Crows", prior to the start.

"Thank you for participating in the Eagle Challenge," Lawler said. "Right now you are a 'Crow' but by the end of the day some of you will be 'Eagles'. You are the reason for this battalion's suc-

cess and for that I thank you ... I have my buckle. I want you to have yours."

The sign of an "Eagle" is a brass belt buckle with the head of an eagle wrapped in the words, "203rd Brigade Support Battalion, Eagle Challenge, Support and Defend, 3rd Infantry Division."

"You will be proud to wear your belt buckle after today's challenge," Lawler said. "Other Soldiers will ask where you

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Sol lead Coalition forces to weapons cache

SPC. BEN HUTTO
3RD HBCT, 3RD INF. DIV.

FOB HAMMER – Sons of Iraq led Soldiers from Troop C, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, and Policemen with 3rd Brigade, 1st National Police Division to a large weapons cache in

Tameem, a town east of Baghdad, April 14.

The cache was buried approximately 500 meters from the NP headquarters in Tameem.

"The cache had been in the ground a long time," said 1st Lt. Andrew Ellison, from Coleman, Ala., a squad leader in

Troop C. "EOD (explosive ordnance disposal) Soldiers estimated that the munitions had been buried for over a year based on their condition."

The cache contained 389 82 mm mortar rounds, 96 125 mm tank rounds,

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Iraqi Army takes lead in Marne Piledriver

PVT. CHRISTOPHER MCKENNA
3RD BCT, 101ST ABN. DIV. (AASLT)

FOB MAHMUDIYAH – Operation Marne Piledriver launched in the Mahmudiyah area April 15 as Iraqi Army and Coalition forces conducted joint clearance missions.

Soldiers with 1st and 2nd Battalions, 25th Brigade, 6th IA Division and 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) combined to conduct dismounted patrols and an air assault.

“The Iraqi Soldiers took initiative from the start,” said Pfc. Nathan Krueger, from St. Clair, Mich., Battery A, 3-320th FA. “Every time I went into a building, there would already be an IA Soldier clearing or searching the area. Once we got on-site, they took the lead.”

Marne Piledriver is the first Task Force Marne major operation focused on capacity-building projects throughout the Rakkasans’ area of operation. This Iraqi Army-led operation will continue efforts to root out insurgency

and stimulate economic growth and development throughout the Mahmudiyah Qada.

“Our role was to support the Iraqi Army,” said Capt. Ryan Mayfield, from Culver, Ind., commander of Battery A. “Because of what has been going on in the whole country, specifically Mahmudiyah, we are continuing to maintain momentum and ... provide the basic needs, as well as freedom of movement to the people so that the government and tribes can continue to help build the area.”

The Soldiers from 2/25/6 IA Div. teamed with 3rd Platoon, Btry. A, 3-320th FA on dismount patrols, while 1/25/6 IA Div. partnered with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3-320th FA.

“Now that we feel the AQI (al-Qaeda in Iraq) presence is at a minimum,



Pvt. Christopher McKenna

An Iraqi Army Soldier leads Coalition and other IA Soldiers during a clearance mission in the Mahmudiyah area that started Operation Marne Piledriver April 15.

we are about to start establishing Sons of Iraq checkpoints through the area, which adds to the freedom of movement,” Mayfield said. “The main effort of our portion of Piledriver is to develop multiple projects as well as solid governance in the area. We are providing support to the Iraqi Army wherever they deem it’s needed.”

CACHE

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172 57 mm anti-aircraft rounds, 38 60 mm mortar rounds, 30 130 mm artillery rounds, 17 122 mm mortar rounds, 15 100 mm rockets, seven 155 artillery rounds, five 100 kg aircraft bombs and four 120 mm mortar rounds.

“When we first found it, we weren’t expecting it to be that large,” Ellison said. “We started digging and we started finding mortars at three feet deep. We actually hit the water table before we

found the bottom of the cache. When we finished digging we had a hole about seven feet deep.”

Ellison said the SoI and NP were key parts of the operation.

“The sheikh in charge of the Sons of Iraq actually brought a front-end loader to help us dig up the cache,” Ellison said. “It was a big help. Of course, if it wasn’t for his informant, we would have never known about the cache. The Policemen provided security while they brought a truck so we could transport the cache back to (Combat Outpost

Cashe). After we had finished transporting the cache, they stood guard over it the whole night. They were extremely helpful.”

Soldiers of Troop C, Ellison said, are happy to remove the threat of munitions to harm citizens or Coalition forces.

“Even though many of the munitions were badly degraded, they could have still been used to make IEDs (improvised explosive devices),” he said. “We are extremely happy to help interdict these accelerants here.”

THE

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3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division

214th Fires Brigade

7th Sustainment Brigade

720th Military Police Battalion

302nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

EAGLE

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earned it, and you can tell them FOB Hammer, Iraq."

The Crows were herded off to have their rucksacks inventoried and the challenge began.

"Hurry up crows, get those rucks emptied out," barked Capt. Fenicia L. Jackson, from Hartsville, S.C., the battalion operations officer. "Crows! You are not moving fast enough, front-lean-ing rest position, move!"

After the Soldiers warmed up for the one-mile run with Jackson, she inventoried the gear, had them load it up in the truck and moved them to the start-ing line.

Lawler was there waiting for the group.

"Are you warmed up, Crows?" Lawler asked. "Maybe another warm-up exercise will get you ready! The side straddle hop, ready, exercise one, two, three!"

After the exhausted Soldiers finished the exercises, Lawler sent them run-n-ing into the sun. Some left with smiles, some with frowns and many with a set jaw and determined look.

Once the run was complete the con-testants put on their rucksacks and moved on to the foot march. Sgt. Michael Decker, from Columbus, Ga., was in the lead with Spc. Clinton Biddle, from Paris, Ky., close behind. They were followed by team "Wolfpack," which consisted of Sgt. Paul Zadzura, from Sturges, Pa.; Spc. Mark Shaheer, from Chicago; and Spc. Louis Pinault, from Fitchburg, Maine.

After the march, the leader board remained the same. Decker stayed out in front, Biddle a close second and Staff

Sgt. Willie Farris, of Pinebluff, Ark., in third place for the singles competition. Team Wolfpack led in the team category; the leader board remained the same for the rest of the events.

The march was followed by a man-datory rest period at the home station.

However no one got any rest.

Behind the break area lurked a gi-ant water truck. They were soon both drenched and covered in mud.

"I didn't see that coming," said Sgt. 1st Class Perry Flournoy, of Columbus, Ga. "It felt good at first. I was hot and sweaty after moving out with that ruck on. Next thing I know, we were covered in mud."

The 30-minute 'mandatory break' turned into an exercise in discipline, dedication and motivation where Sol-diers had to demonstrate low- and high-crawl techniques.

"At that point we were half way through. I have never been a quitter - I wasn't going to start then," Flournoy said who was elected the event's Most Valuable Player by the cadre. "By the time the break was over, I needed a break. My eye-pro was covered in mud, which meant I was covered in mud."

After the break, contestants were re-leased to the testing stations according to the time they came in to home sta-tion.

Wet and dripping with mud, the Crows took their score sheets and were directed from station to station by the cadre.

At each station, they dried out a little more, until they finished the challenge.

"I knew this team had what it takes to win," said Zadzura, whose team, Wolfpack finished in 1st place. "We pushed each other hard ... We won to-gether."

The day capped off with a banquet to award the Soldiers their belt buckles and recognize the winners with Army Achievement Medals.

The event started with 48 Crows and finished with 48 Eagles earning their right of passage - an Eagle Challenge belt buckle.

The day was best described by Capt. Emanuel Velez, from Quebradillas, Puerto Rico, and the commander of Company A.

"For a few moments today; I forgot I was in Iraq, he said.

The 203rd BSB is assigned to the 3rd HBCT, 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Benning, Ga., and has been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since March 2007.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT MOM!



Mother's Day is coming up so don't forget to tell mom how much you love her and appreciate her support.

You can send some flowers or do something as simple as pick-ing up the phone and giving her a call.

**MOTHER'S DAY IS
MAY 11!**

Safety Thought of the Day FOB Traffic Safety Reminders

Safe vehicle operations is an important part of our daily missions. Leaders must ensure drivers are properly qualified and licensed for the vehicles they operate, and that risk assessments are updated to identify known hazards, road conditions and environmental factors.

- ACH/Kevlar is required to be worn if riding in a tactical vehicle or ATV.
- Seatbelts are mandatory for all vehicles while in motion.
- Headlights are required to be use during hours of darkness and during periods of limited visibility.

- Drivers will maintain appropriate speeds for the vehicle type and conditions.
- Bicycles flow with traffic with appropriate PPE and reflective devices.
- Joggers face traffic with appropriate reflective devices.

Drivers must obey posted speed limits and reduce speeds to 10 mph when passing pedestrians or runners, and 5 mph in parking lots or other congested areas. Emergency vehicles, convoys, VIP parties and pedestrians in a "crosswalk" have the right-away.

Headline Highlights

7 year-old towed; fake cops steal documents; Ferris wheel for sale

Tow truck driver takes car with sleeping 7-year-old inside

DALLAS (AP) – A tow truck driver unknowingly hauled away a car with a 7-year-old asleep inside before returning the vehicle minutes later and speeding away, police said.

The panicked parents of the missing boy watched the driver hurriedly unhook their car and take off as they met with authorities late Monday, according to a Dallas police report. A possible kidnapping investigation at the apartment complex had already begun.

Fidel Retana Jr., 23, was pulled over a short time later and arrested on child endangerment charges. But police said Tuesday they expect to drop the charges.

"It appeared that he did not intend to take the child," Dallas police Sgt. Brenda Nichols said.

David Traylor, Retana's attorney, said his client noticed the boy only when he stopped to ensure that the car was hooked up properly. The car had been parked in a fire lane while the boy's mother ran upstairs to her apartment.

Traylor said Retana left the second time in a hurry because he knew the parents were there and were probably angry.

"He tried to do everything he could to get the kid back quickly," Traylor said.

Authorities said the boy's mother was crying and vomiting outside when

they arrived. The boy was still asleep when the car was returned.

"I hate the way towing people run the business," said Sergio Zuniga, the boy's father.

Gang dressed as cops steals court papers

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) – Thieves dressed as policemen talked their way past guards at Johannesburg's High Court, then locked them in a bathroom and stole highly sensitive documents, a police spokeswoman said on Tuesday.

About six armed men in police uniforms convinced security guards they were at the court on Sunday night to look into a rape case, spokeswoman Julia Claassen said.

Once inside the building, the robbers disconnected surveillance and alarm systems, tied up the guards in the toilets, broke into a safe and left with the court documents.

"Police in the area outside the court noticed the men leaving and there was an exchange of gunfire," said Claassen, adding the gang had still managed to escape.

Claassen did not give details about the stolen papers, but local media reports said one of the documents was linked to the case of a senior state prosecutor who is under police protection.

South Africa suffers from one of the highest levels of crime in the world, sparking public anger at the inability

of authorities to ensure safety.

Ferris wheel from SoCal pier on sale; sorry, no ocean view

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP) – It won't come with the ocean views, but you can still catch some thrills from riding your very own Ferris wheel, taken straight from the Santa Monica Pier.

The nine-story wheel that's been at Pacific Park since 1996 was put up for sale Tuesday on eBay.

The wheel overlooking the Pacific has 20 gondolas and is outlined in 5,392 light bulbs. It has provided some 3 million rides and has been seen in movies, on television and in numerous photos.

Next month, however, the Pacific Wheel will be replaced by a \$1.5 million modern model.

The old wheel is operational and still in "great" shape, said Cameron Andrews, a spokesman for the amusement park.

The wheel cost \$800,000 when it was built. It was modified in 1998 to become the world's first solar-powered Ferris wheel.

The auction will last 10 days and the minimum price is \$50,000. Half the winning bid — minus fees — will be donated to the Special Olympics.

A support base for the wheel costs another \$135,000, Andrews said.

And, the buyer must handle shipping costs for the 122,000-pound wheel.

Sudoku

	4		6			5	1	
					1	2		
				7			9	4
6		1	4			7		
8			2	9				
3		2			8	9		
2	1				9			
	3		5		7			
		5		2		8	7	3

from Sudoku Easy Presented by Will Shortz

Solution to yesterday's puzzle:

4	2	8	9	6	1	5	7	3
5	6	9	7	2	3	8	4	1
7	1	3	4	8	5	6	9	4
3	9	4	1	7	8	7	8	2
8	5	6	3	9	2	3	5	1
2	7	1	5	4	6	9	4	6
1	4	5	2	3	7	4	6	5
6	3	2	8	1	9	1	2	9
9	8	7	6	5	4	8	7	3

ARABIC QUESTION OF THE DAY

how?

shlone?