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newest Americans  
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# THE Desert Talon

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## TF49 plays key role in Basra



Photo by Sgt. Dale Sweetnam

UH-60 Blackhawk crews from 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment prepare for a mission in Basra in early April. When violence flared in the region in late March, Task Force 49 elements had only 24 hours to mobilize and move forward to assist in a conflict President George W. Bush called a "defining moment in the history of a free Iraq."

### FROM PAO AND STAFF REPORTS

**W**hen violence flared in Basra in late March, there was little time to act.

Within hours of receiving the mission, Task Force 49 aircrews were operating over the skies of Basra supporting coalition and Iraqi Special Forces.

Follow-on forces continued to flow in to build the support base for Task Force 49 elements. Within 24 hours mission support was in place and supporting steady combat operations.

Aircraft and Soldiers from Task Force 49 - including 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment; 412th Aviation Support Battalion; 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment; B Company, 5th Battalion; 158th Aviation Regiment; Headquarters and Headquarters Company; MEDEVAC

Support; Personnel Recovery Teams - initially responded and remain in the region supporting what is now called Operation Cunning Dragon.

The rapid deployment provided aviation combat and logistical support to the government of Iraq's plan to regain control of Basra. Task Force 49's involvement was essential to the success of the Iraqi Army in the operation, according to Iraqi and coalition officials. President George W. Bush called the conflict a "defining moment in the history of a free Iraq."

"It was a team effort," said Task Force 49 Executive Officer Maj. James Jones. "All units in the task force played a critical role, from the initial push of aviation forces in the air to all the support personnel who pushed equipment, Soldiers, parts and supplies forward to support the fight. This mission would not have succeeded

without everyone's cooperation and support."

Task Force 49 Soldiers found themselves in a different world upon landing in Basra. The housing consisted of dome tents full of individual concrete mini-bunkers, covered with steel plates and layers of sandbags. The Soldiers moved in with the British Royal Air Force, sharing workspaces, desks and offices with their coalition counterparts.

Lt. Col. Richard Crogan, commander of Task Force Talon, said the first few days were chaotic, but after the dust settled, troops of different services, battalions and countries worked well together to accomplish the mission at hand.

Despite the harsh conditions of the region, Crogan said the Task Force 49

**See Basra, Page 11**

# Talon 6 sends . . . TF 49 Soldiers shaping the fight

## Soldiers and Families of Task Force 49:

Summer has officially arrived here in Iraq with temperatures this week rising above 100 degrees. We're expected to break 110 next week. Of course that probably sounds like bragging to those of you on the home front still trying to get rid of the last of the winter's snow. Your Soldiers here continue to perform well despite the heat. Their dedication to the mission has not waned - just more sweat expelled and more water consumed. I am proud of each and every one of them and the professionalism they display daily. This command is truly blessed to have such a hard working, cohesive team.

The brigade continues to support operations across the width and breadth of Iraq and continues to set the standard for passengers moved, equipment hauled, and attack aircraft operating in four Multi-National Division areas of operation. Your superb mission execution has an impact on every area of the Corps. It is phenomenal to step back and see the influence you are having on operations in Iraq and setting the conditions for the units after us.

As you have probably seen in the news over the last month, several uprisings across Iraq have taken place and have since been quieted. Your Soldiers have played a significant part in restoring peace to these areas and as the history of this conflict is written, so will be the accomplishments of this Task Force. Know that your Soldiers' contributions have made a major impact on the security and growth of the nation of Iraq. When the President said that events in Basra were "a defining moment for the Iraqi government," it was, and continues to be, your Soldiers shaping that fight and its success.



This month we said goodbye to Lt. Col. Dave Resler and members of his command team as they rotate out of theater. Dave's fixed-wing assets have been a critical component of this command and the accomplishments of his unit are without equal. Dave is replaced by Lt. Col. Craig Jack. We're glad to have him on board. His reputation precedes him and he has already hit the ground running. I know Task Force Hawk will continue the same outstanding support to the Corps and the Theater.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention a special guest who graced LSA Anaconda last week, Toby Keith, courtesy of the USO. Every year that U.S. Soldiers have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, he has taken the time to visit and, through his music, remind us of home and how privileged each of us is to be an American Soldier. A title spoken with pride, for it is American Soldiers assigned to this command and across Iraq who are making a difference for all.

Over the next few months we will all be preparing for those who follow behind us and we want them to continue with the successes we have known; focus on the daily mission and looking out for one another, and make sure we have laid the foundation for continued excellence. The most lasting impact we can have is to leave this mission and country better than we found it. Finish hard.

To the entire Task Force 49 team, thank you. I am proud to serve with you and appreciate your service to our great country.

**One Team! Arctic Talons!**  
Col. Chandler C. Sherrell  
Commander, Task Force 49

## Task Force Hawk change of command

Task Force 49 Commander Col. Chandler C. Sherrell passes the guidon to incoming Task Force Hawk commander Lt. Col. Craig Jack in a May 2 change of command ceremony at the unit's hangar. Task Force Hawk is a forward element of the 244th Aviation Brigade based at Fort Sheridan, Ill. As part of Task Force 49 in Iraq, the unit provides fixed-wing support to Multi-National Corps - Iraq.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

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# Talon 7 sends . . . Feeling the heat

Five months and counting! As the snow in Alaska has melted away the heat in Iraq has started its climb, but it takes more than heat to slow a Soldier from Task Force 49. The temperatures have seen the high around 110 degrees. In spite of the heat we still have seen a very busy month.

I'd like to thank the Task Force 49 Soldiers who went to Basra. Given little notice you have once again proven the ability of our Task Force to support MNC-I and shown our value as a combat aviation brigade headquarters. You have done an outstanding job and the commander in Basra even said that we were instrumental in "snatching victory from the hands of the enemy." You have once again proven that Task Force 49 is capable of accomplishing complicated missions with excellence. Our Soldiers there have done an amazing job of building and manning a strike package in combat.

The Task Force 49 Soldiers who ran the [forward area rearmament and refueling point] FARP in Ar Ramadi were also recognized for their outstanding work in austere conditions. The Soldiers from A Company, 412th Aviation Support Battalion, were recently authorized to wear the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force combat patch after their work with the Marine Corps. They supported Marine aircraft, Iraqi and Special Forces aircraft there from July 2007 to March 2008.



As the deployment continues we have found new and exciting things to do in our off time. For example, Task Force 49 Soldiers have organized softball and flag football teams and even took part in a homemade raft race at the swimming pool.

Besides all of the organized sports we also had the pleasure of having Toby Keith here for a concert. He put on a great show and had a lot of words of support for our Soldiers. Some here even had the chance to meet him.

The Mother's Day TV "shoutouts," had an amazing turnout, with Soldiers from Task Force 49 thanking their mothers and wives at home for their

outstanding support. With help from the Defense Imagery and Video Distribution System (DVIDS), the greetings will be aired on our Soldiers' hometown TV stations. They will be available to download from the DVIDS website at <http://www.dvidshub.net>.

Task Force 49 has not had any heat casualties yet and we need to keep it up. We all need to stay vigilant to avoid the needless loss of Soldiers due to something so preventable. Be aware that kidney stones are another danger in hot conditions, but are also preventable. Make sure you're drinking enough water, eating right and getting enough rest. Leaders, keep looking out for your Soldiers.

The outstanding and unconditional love and support from our families and friends back home is impressive. It keeps our Soldiers motivated and helps us accomplish our mission here in Iraq. Many thanks to our families and friends back home for this outstanding effort.

## Talon 7 Out!

CSM Richard A. Mitchell  
Command Sergeant Major  
Task Force 49

## 'Word to your mother'

Sgt. Lee Fowler of the LSA Anaconda Public Affairs Office counts down a Mother's Day shoutout for Staff Sgt. James Grady of Headquarters and Headquarters Company Task Force 49. More than 90 of the brigade's Soldiers taped messages for their loved ones April 25-26. The greetings will be distributed to hometown TV stations all across the United States and posted to the Defense Imagery and Video Distribution System website where Soldiers can download them (go to [www.dvidshub.net](http://www.dvidshub.net) and click on the "Mother's Day Greetings" tab).



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt



# Soldiers earn Marine Corps combat patch

By SGT. DALE SWEETNAM  
Task Force 49 PAO

Combat patches serve as an important source of pride for Soldiers, especially when they come from other military branches.

Soldiers of A Company, 412<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion were recently authorized to wear the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force combat patch after their work with the Marine Corps in Ar Ramadi. The Soldiers of A Co. ran a forward area rearmament and refueling point (FARP) that catered to Marine aircraft, Iraqi aircraft and special forces from July 2007 to March 2008.

Staff Sgt. Herman Robinson, noncommissioned officer in charge of the FARP, said earning the patch was an honor, but the true pride comes from the positive feedback the Marines have given them.

"The sense of pride came from the [comments of] pilots and crewcheifs," Robinson said. "As they were coming in, they would tell the tower that the nightshift (which was us) was the most professional and easiest FARP they've ever been to."

That praise went a long way to motivate the Soldiers during their long busy hours at the FARP. Robinson said there was



Courtesy photo

Soldiers of A Company, 412<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion stand with Sgt. Major of the Marine Corps, Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent (far left) and Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James T. Conway (center) during their time at Ar Ramadi. The Soldiers of A Co. earned a Marine Corps combat patch after working alongside Marines for eight months in Ar Ramadi.

never a shortage of aircraft to refuel at Ar Ramadi.

"There were nights that I would look across the airfield and we'd have birds lined up waiting to come in," he said.

Robinson and his 15-Soldier crew burned the midnight oil for eight months before the company's involvement in the mission ended. While there, A Co. was attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. Once 3<sup>rd</sup> ID left the country, the Marine Corps took over

the refueling mission and A Co. was relieved.

Sgt. Patrick Robbins, who worked the FARP in Ar Ramadi, said the Soldiers really enjoyed the work. In some instances, he said, it was hard to get them to leave when the mission was over.

"The quality of life wasn't half as good as it is here, but they still wanted to stay,"

he said. "One of our Soldiers said he'd give up his leave if he could stay out there with the Marines."

A Co. Commander Capt. Stephen Ostrander said the company always sends its best to these missions, and he's pleased with the way they get the job done.

"We know they can handle it, be professional and do a good job no matter where they're at," he said.

Robinson said working with the Marine Corps was not only a good experience, but one he'll remember for a long time.

"It was probably the best experience of my military career," he said. "The Marines were really good to us. Whenever we needed something they were right on it."

Once the crew returned to LSA Anaconda in March, many were diverted to support operations in Basra. The company is also responsible for running FARPs all over Balad and the surrounding forward operating bases.

First Sgt. Jose Alegado said the Marines understood that the whole company was responsible for the success

**"It was probably the best experience of my military career. The Marines were really good to us. Whenever we needed something, they were right on it."**

Staff Sgt. Herman Robinson

in Ar Ramadi, not just the Soldiers on the ground, but the Soldiers providing support back in Balad. Alegado said he was pleased that the Marines understood the overall effort needed to run the operation in Ar Ramadi, and he is happy to have his whole company wear the patch.

"The Marines looked at it as a whole team concept," Alegado said.

Lt. Col. Sam Hamontree, 412<sup>th</sup> ASB Commander, said he has made it a point to illustrate the brigade's appreciation for all the Marine Corps did for A Co. Soldiers while in Ar Ramadi by putting eight Marines in for Army Achievement Medals. The medals have all been approved and delivered to the Marines.



Photo by Sgt. Dale Sweetnam

Several Army units including A Company, 412<sup>th</sup> ASB earned the Marine Expeditionary Force combat patch for their work with the Marine Corps in Ar Ramadi.



# Americans All

## Task Force 49 Soldiers become U.S. citizens

*17 from MNC-I  
Combat Aviation Brigade  
take part in largest overseas  
naturalization ceremony  
in history*

By SGT. 1ST CLASS ERIC REINHARDT  
Task Force 49 PAO

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq – Seventeen Task Force 49 Soldiers became American citizens April 12 as part of the largest-ever overseas U.S. naturalization ceremony.

In the atrium of Baghdad's lavish Al Faw palace, 259 U.S. service members hailing from 71 countries raised their right hands and pledged allegiance to the country they already serve.

The event drew troops from all corners of Iraq.

Lt. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, commander, Multi-National Corps – Iraq, presided over the ceremony. He



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

Two-hundred fifty-nine servicemembers gather April 12 at Al Faw palace on Camp Victory for the largest U.S. naturalization ceremony to ever take place outside the United States.

highlighted the importance of diversity in American society and the military in his opening remarks.

"Our nation's unique quality is that it weaves the world's cultures into a great American tapestry, and our military benefits from their strengths," Austin said. "Thank you all for sacrificing so much for the United States and for the Iraqi people."

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service official John Lafferty administered the oath and presented certificates to the brand new Americans.

### From refugee to U.S. citizen

U.S. citizenship was a long journey for Spc. Yousoi Yang, a mechanic with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment.

Yang was born in a United Nations refugee camp in Thailand.

His family were among the Hmong people, from the mountainous regions of Laos, who had helped the Americans in the Vietnam War.

The family fled Laos when North Vietnamese soldiers were killing Laotian Hmong in retribution.

The Yang family hid deep in the jungle, surviving on vegetation and whatever they could hunt and kill to eat.

Finally, they made their way to Thailand and eventually to Minnesota.

Yang said he enlisted out of gratitude to his adoptive country for allowing him to live safely.

"I wanted to do my duty as part of being an American," he said. "I also joined because I like the skills of being a Soldier."

He said serving in the Army National Guard inspired him to further fulfill his duty to the United State by becoming a citizen.

As a former child of war, he said he identifies with the plight of ordinary Iraqis.

"No one deserves to live in fear," Yang said. "I am proud to help make Iraqi people safe."

### Naturalizations during wartime

The U.S. government has historically conducted overseas military naturalization ceremonies during times of war.

The USCIS has naturalized more than 37,250 members of the U.S. Armed Forces since the beginning of the War on Terror and has granted posthumous citizenship to 111 servicemembers who have died in conflicts related to it.



Spc. Yousoi Yang of E Co., 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment receives a flag and congratulations from Multi-National Corps - Iraq Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen.



# TF Ready NCO sets re-up standard

■ *Staff Sgt. Rodrigues Lemon and 5-158 become first Europe-based unit to meet retention goals*

By SGT. DALE SWEETNAM  
Task Force 49 PAO

It started as a friendly competition between Army career counselors, but eventually turned into one of the most stunning retention performances in all of Europe.

Staff Sgt. Rodrigues Lemon, 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 158<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment career counselor, was jokingly dragged into a head-to-head battle with 412<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion career counselor, Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Eboni Britton to see who could reach Army retention goals first. Lemon not only beat Britton; he beat every career counselor in Europe.

"Honestly when they told me, I didn't believe them," Lemon said.

Britton said she was impressed with Lemon's performance and joked about how he was dragged into the competition.

"He was really an innocent bystander, [the competition] was mainly [between] me and Sgt. Major [John] Moore."

The Army sets retention goals for all of its units based on size. The goal for 5-158 was to retain 67 Soldiers by September of 2008. By March of 2008, Lemon had already reenlisted 87 Soldiers, or 132 percent of the Army's original goal.

Because Lemon surpassed his goal so quickly, 5-158 commander, Lt. Col. Jack Bone upped the ante. Bone said he's expecting Lemon to push even harder now and achieve 175 percent by the end of the fiscal year. "Some will say that is an unrealistic goal," Bone said. "But to that I say, if you shoot for the stars but only hit the moon then you have still accomplished a lot."

Lemon said he was a little intimidated by the new goal at first, but after some thought he realized it could be done.

"When the colonel challenged me with 175 percent, at first I just kind of laughed," Lemon said. "But then I thought about it, I've got another six months in this fiscal year. So I went ahead and made that a personal goal of mine."

When Lemon met his retention goals in March he thought he'd just beaten Britton and after that, he didn't think much of it. But soon word started to spread, and his speedy completion of the mission turned out to be a much larger accomplishment.

"Once I completed the mission, as far as I was concerned, I just finished first in 12<sup>th</sup> [Combat Aviation Brigade]," he said. "Then I started hearing rumors like 'You're the first in 5<sup>th</sup> Corps.' Then one day someone walked by and said, 'Hey, I hear you



were the first to finish in [US Army Europe]' and I was like, 'That's got to be a mistake.'"

Turns out it wasn't a mistake. A few Soldiers in Lemon's chain of command made some calls and they eventually verified that Lemon was the first career counselor in Europe to meet the Army's retention goals.

While Lemon said he was happy he had accomplished the mission first, he was quick to share the credit with the Soldiers and the chain of command.

"I think we have a great caliber of Soldiers, some good American Soldiers," Lemon said. "I think the main thing [in retention] is command climate."

Bone echoed this sentiment by bringing attention to how the Soldiers and their families make accomplishing goals like this possible.

"I believe with Lemon's dedication he will be able to do his part in the goal, but it is the dedication and true professionalism of our Soldiers along with the outstanding support of our families at home that will make this goal a reality," Bone said.

Now that the goal has been met and Lemon is well on his way to attacking the new 175 percent mission, Lemon knows the bar has been set awfully high. He met this year's goals quickly, but he has no illusions about how tricky it can sometimes be keep Soldiers in an Army that is always evolving.

"When it comes to recruiting and retention, I'm great now—everything's great—but come next fiscal year, it starts all over again," he said. "Now I've set a precedent that I've got to follow up on no matter what battalion I'm in."

# Set goals while running life's marathon

CHAPLAIN (LT. COL.) DAVID VANDERJAGT  
Task Force 49 Chaplain

About three weeks ago I decided that I wanted to try to run the half marathon that will be sponsored here in Balad in May. Yes, you read that right. Here I am in the middle of Iraq, trying to get in shape and volunteering to run 13.3 miles straight. Now I am not saying that this was a good plan, just that it was a plan. Ever since coming to Iraq I have challenged myself to get in shape, and I found out that running will definitely get you in shape.

Now running any race takes desire, endurance and patience. Paul the Apostle in 2 Timothy wrote these words: "7: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8: Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." Let me meditate on those words, "I have finished the race."

Each of us in life is, in some sense, running a race. Now hopefully, we are not running a "Rat's Race" where all our energy, time and effort are wasted. But we all should have some sense of purpose, some dream, some hope, something that gives our lives

meaning. How can we, like Paul, someday say, "I have finished the race?"

First, we must have a goal. Many people never accomplish anything great with their lives because they never dream big. You don't run a marathon when you think 10 feet is nine feet too far to run. Dream big; look beyond the ordinary and expect the spectacular. Desire starts the journey. Desire is the motivation that sets one's expectations. There is a race to be run. For Paul it was serving God and sharing God's love with others. This became his dream and his reality.

Second, running a long race takes endurance. I told myself the other day I was going to run at least five miles outside during my lunch time. So, at 12:15, I changed into my PTs, running shoes, reflector belt, put on a good attitude and stepped outside into 104-degree heat. I immediately wanted to walk back to my cool, comfortable room. Now if you have not been running, or aren't used to the heat, I suggest you don't run five miles outside in the blazing sun. Good way for a chaplain to have to visit you in the hospital. However, because I have been training for this race, off I went into the dust and sun. You can't run in a race without enduring the trials.

And life is also like that. If you dream big you will also face obstacles and trials that will try to make you quit. To finish the race you must overcome them. You must endure. Paul was shipwrecked, beaten, stoned, imprisoned, scorned and rejected, but Paul never quit running.

Third, we must remember that life's race is a marathon and not a sprint. We must have patience. When you are 12 you want to be 16. When you are 16 you want to be 21. When you are 21 you want to make the money of someone who is 41. When you are 51 you want to be 21 (but be able keep your stocks, cars, IRAs etc.). Seems we are always sprinting ahead only to find out that when we arrive it's not quite what we'd hoped for.

Most of us need to slow down – not quite running – but enjoying the passing miles and passing time. We sprint, run out of wind, then wonder why we aren't happy. Life is a marathon, not a sprint. Set your sights on what is of real importance and run with patience the race that is set before you.

"I have finished the race." In about three weeks I hope to be able to say that about the half marathon here in Balad. I also hope that we all can say, with Paul, those same words someday about our lives – that we dreamed great dreams, that we endured the trials and that we ran with patience this marathon of life. Good running and may God bless you.



Chaplain David Vanderjagt

## VTC links Balad, Minnesota for NCO's promotion

By CAPT. RYAN CURL  
2-147 AHB

Technology helped friends and family back home support Task Force 49 Soldier Sgt. 1st Class Darrel Jones as he was promoted to master sergeant April 6 at LSA Anaconda.

When Jones, of The Minnesota Army National Guard's E Company, 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment, found out that he was getting promoted, he saw the VTC as a great opportunity to ensure his wife could be there.

Jones' wife, retired Lt. Col. Bonnie Beta-Jones, has been a strong supporter of his service for many years.

"She knows how much this promotion means to me," he said, "and I knew she'd be disappointed if she couldn't attend."

So Jones sought the help of 2-147 Chaplain (Capt.) Buddy Winn, who has coordinated video teleconferences with the unit's families for the past seven months.

Late on a warm Saturday night at LSA Anaconda, Jones' friends and family gathered on a blustery afternoon at a National Guard armory in St. Paul, Minn. The battalion conference room was quiet

as Winn adjusted the camera to get the best angle for the event.

Sgt. 1st Class Jones became Master Sgt. Jones as friends and family watched thousands of miles away. With a small one-second delay after the promotion ended, applause filled the TV speakers in the room.

Those in immediate attendance shook the new master sergeant's hand and Giddings took time to tell Jones' wife, "I have worked with this man for the past year and no one is more deserving of this promotion than he is."

As the room cleared, a voice from across the divide came over the speaker: "You'd better suck in that gut, Sarge!" Soon, both sites erupted into laughter.

Jones spent the next 20 minutes talking with friends and family across the miles.

"We had nothing like this when I first joined," Jones said. "It was Vietnam, and you were lucky to get a chance to call home once a year. We really have it good now."

With that, the newly minted master sergeant headed back to his room for the night, ready to begin another day as manager of LSA Anaconda's Dining Facility 2. This time he gets to do it with an extra "rocker" on his chest.



E Co., 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment 1st Sgt. Craig Giddings congratulates newly promoted Master Sgt. Darrel Jones during an April 6 promotion ceremony. Family and friends back at his home station in Minnesota were able to take part in the event via a video teleconference connection.





Photos by Sgt. Dale Sweetnam

(Top) Toby Keith walks through a sea of Soldiers and Airmen while singing a rendition of Ted Nugent's "Stranglehold" during his April 28th concert at LSA Anaconda.



## 'How do you like me now?'

After Toby Keith's April 27<sup>th</sup> flight out of Falluja was grounded due to inclement weather, Soldiers and Airmen of LSA Anaconda were worried they may not get an opportunity to see the country music legend. But a day later, Keith arrived in Balad and took service members away from the worries of Iraq during a powerful one and a half hour set of crowd-pleasing favorites.

Keith shook the stage with his biggest hits and kept the crowd of thousands singing right along with him. Keith performed standards like "How Do You Like Me Now," "Should've Been a Cowboy," "Who's Your Daddy," "Beer for My Horses" and "I Love this Bar" to name a few. At one point Keith walked through the crowd during a surprising cover of Ted Nugent's "Stranglehold."

Keith was conversational throughout the concert and played into the intensity of the fans. To close out the concert Keith sang an emotional rendition of "American Soldier" and then pumped up the thousands with "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue."

(Top) Toby Keith played some of his country classics during his April 28th concert at LSA Anaconda. Keith played his biggest hits during the show. (Right) Two Task Force 49 Black Hawk helicopters trail Toby Keith's Helicopter after escorting him from Falluja. Keith came in on a Marine aircraft escorted by two AH-64D Apache helicopters from Task Force 49's 2-159th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (not pictured) and two UH-60 Black Hawks from the 2-147th Air Assault Battalion.





## 2-147 on the big screen

Task Force 49 Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment give a "shoutout" on the big screen to family members, friends, the Minnesota Swarm Lacrosse team and fans April 12 during a National Lacrosse League game at the XCEL Energy Center in St. Paul, Minn. The Swarm held a military appreciation night during the game, giving away nearly 900 tickets to military members and their families.

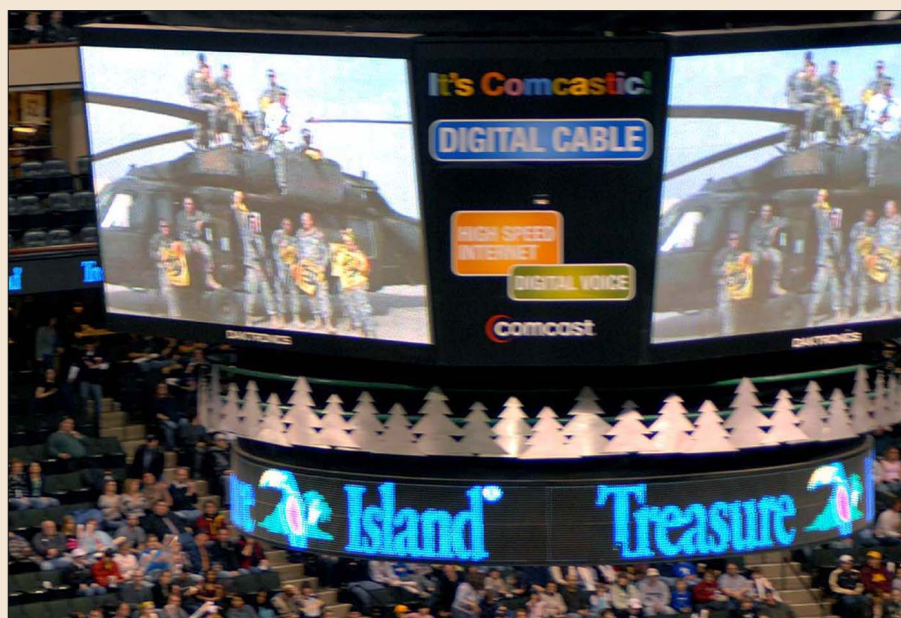


Photo by Sgt. Daryl G. Sanford/Minnesota National Guard

# Lost Army equipment could cost you

By CAPT. MARY ANN BOWERY  
Task Force 49 Brigade Judge Advocate

All Soldiers know that Army regulations are important; however, when it comes to the Army's ability to take your hard-earned money, some are definitely more important than others. One such regulation is AR 735-5, "Policies and Procedures for Property Accountability."

### Why is this regulation important to me?

It's important because all Soldiers are responsible for the care of Army property. If you are negligent in that care, you may be required to pay for it with as much as one month's base pay in most circumstances.

It's also important if you are an officer, because you may be chosen by your commander to be a financial liability investigating officer (FLO). As a FLO you will be responsible for conducting an investigation into the loss, damage or destruction of Army property and determining who, if anyone, is responsible for the loss.

### What exactly is a Financial Liability of Property Loss investigation (or FLIPL)?

A FLIPL is how the Army investigates the circumstances surrounding the loss, damage or destruction of Army property and if appropriate, holds those responsible for the loss financially liable. This process is used to account for anything from a missing digital camera to a wrecked Humvee and is initiated almost anytime Army property is lost, damaged or destroyed.

### How can a Soldier be held financially liable?

To be held financially liable, three important things must be established: a

duty of care towards the property, culpability and proximate cause.

First, it must be shown that a person owed a duty of care towards the property or had some sort of responsibility for it.

There are several types of responsibility, but the two most common are personal and supervisory.

The most common duty of care is personal responsibility – the obligation of a person to exercise reasonable and prudent actions to properly use, care for, safeguard and dispose of all government property in his or her possession. It applies to all government property issued for, acquired for, or converted to a person's exclusive use, with or without a hand receipt. Supervisory responsibility, as the name suggests, is the duty of commanders and supervisors to properly manage and oversee accountability of property under their command.

Second, before a person can be held financially liable, the facts must show that he or she, through negligence or willful misconduct, violated his or her duty of care towards the property. Simple negligence is the absence of due care, by an act or omission of a person towards the property that a reasonably prudent person would have taken under similar circumstances to avoid the loss or damage to government property.

For instance, if you leave your government laptop in the front seat of your car and someone steals it, you were negligent because a reasonably prudent person would have properly secured it.

Third and most importantly, the facts must clearly show that the person's conduct was the "proximate" cause of the loss or damage of the property.

That is, the person's acts or omissions were the cause that, in a natural and continuous sequence, unbroken by a new cause, produced the loss or damage, and without which the loss would not have occurred. Put simply, a person's negligent act must be the cause of the loss.

In the case of our stolen laptop, you might argue that the cause of the loss was the guy who stole the laptop, not your failure to lock it in the trunk or take it with you. This would be an incorrect conclusion, because without your negligent act of leaving the laptop on the front seat, the thief would not have seen the laptop and taken it.

### What can I do to prevent all of this?

We all make mistakes and sometimes those mistakes result in the loss or damage to Army property, but there are some things we can do to help protect ourselves from becoming financially liable:

- **Guard your stuff.** Don't leave your gear unsecured where anyone can take it.
- **Commanders:** sub-hand receipt property on your property book down to the user level. If a person has signed for something, he or she is a lot more likely to keep up with it.
- **Establish an SOP** for inventories of your property book and accounting for items and stick to it. The most common error commanders make is failing to do their cyclical inventories. You can be held liable if something goes missing and you weren't aware of it because you haven't inventoried your property for a year.

In closing, the Army expects you to take care of the property it entrusts to you. If you fail to do so, AR 735-5 ensures that it may cost you.

# 'Hey XO, What's with the chair?'

BY MAJ. JAMES JONES  
Task Force 49 Executive Officer

Another month down and the questions continue to roll in. Again there is so much I want to impart in so little time. For those of you who want one-on-one advice, please stop by my office. I should be able to schedule you into my work load somewhere between "whiny time" and "incessant nagging time." For those of you who were asking the status of Little Billy (carrot article), he is doing fine. He did not take my advice, ate the carrots and tried to dodge a moving car. Results were not good; he should be out of traction in a couple of weeks. Good thing is he does not have to eat his vegetables anymore because they won't fit through the straw.

**Dear XO,**

I really like the picture of you in that fancy chair, is that yours?

**-Spc. Donny Ashworth**

**Dear D.A.:** Of course the chair is mine. It also comes with six geisha girls who feed me grapes and rub my feet while I type this column. The staff comes in every day and throws palms on the floor and waves those big palm fans to cool me off; not because my air-conditioning doesn't work, but because I am the XO. COME ON! I can't even get a real couch in my office to hold meetings, or even print out this article in my office, because someone stole my printer. Haven't you been reading my articles?! Do I seem like a well-adjusted person? **[Editor: What the XO meant to say is that the chair was originally a gift from Yasser Arafat to Saddam Hussein and it now rests in the MNC-I headquarters and people enjoy getting their picture taken in it.]**

**Dear XO,**

I am going on R&R leave here this month. Looking for some advice on making my travel in and out of country easier.

**-Leaving on a Jet Plane**

**Dear Jet Plane:** Like that's your real name - please!

**When departing:**

**Do:** Turn your weapon in prior to leaving Balad.

**Do Not:** Pull it out in the middle of Kuwait International Airport and say "Who wants this?!"

**Do:** Pack a change of underwear.

**Do Not:** Use the four-day method of wearing your underwear: forward, backward, inside out, forward, and inside-out backward.



**Ask the XO**

**Do:** Take necessary precautions when having relations with the opposite sex.

**Do Not:** Think that a 6-inch Q-tip swab will not bring you to your knees crying like a baby.

**Do:** Take ear plugs and drink plenty of water on the flight so you are well rested and not jet lagged when you reach your final destination.

**Do Not:** Sit next to a soldier named Lencowski who talks you into doing tequila shooters every time the call button dings and convinces you to hit on the stewardesses by saying you are "special operations."

**When returning:**

**Do:** Listen to announcements from the stewardesses.

**Do Not:** Dismiss the fact that she said the plane will be making a stop in Iran. Tehran is not a city in Iraq!

**Do:** Get on your scheduled flight from Ali Al Saleem back to Balad.

**Do Not:** Get off the plane in Balad, get disoriented, get back on the plane and fly back to Ali Al Saleem.

**Do:** Come back with lots of pictures of your trip to show your buds back in Iraq.

**Do Not:** Forget to screen the pictures for the ones that Lencowski took of you when you passed out on the plane and he put his junk on your forehead.

Have a good leave.

**Dear XO,**

Why is there so much dust here in Iraq? My eyes get all puffy and hurt when we have a dust storm. Is there anything I can do to make it better?

**-Pvt. Blood Shot**

**Listen here Private:** Try this technique: go outside and, using your thumb and your index finger, pull your eyelids open to the fullest extent. Spin your body around in a 360 degree circle. By this time you should have realized you are in the middle of a desert! DEAL WITH IT!

Please send your questions to:

Maj. James Jones

"Ask the XO"

HHC TF 49

APO AE 09391

Or email them to: [hawktwosix@yahoo.com](mailto:hawktwosix@yahoo.com)

## Waterworld

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Galen Durbin, Task Force 49 human resources technician, thrashes his way to the finish line at the Balad outdoor pool's homemade raft race. Participants were challenged to devise pool-worthy craft, using nothing but empty water bottles, duct tape and nylon "550" cord. While some of the rafts resembled Viking ships, river boats and kayaks, Durbin's "Team Waffle" opted for a back-to-basics design they propelled to a respectable third-place finish in the first heat of competition.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt



## Basra

### Continued from Page 1

Soldiers were glad to be involved with the mission.

"Morale remained high despite indirect fire and attacks on [Contingency Operating Base] Basra," Crogan said. "Soldiers are incredibly satisfied working alongside UK forces and supporting [Iraqi Special Forces] led operations."

Since arriving in the region, Task Force Talon's AH-64 Apaches have provided reconnaissance and security operations to include providing counter-indirect fire and MEDEVAC cover support of Iraqi Army, British troops and U.S. Marines; UH-60 Black Hawks have provided lift support for troops in support of operations as well as movement of VIPs; within the first week of the operation CH-47 Chinook helicopters provided more than 100,000 pounds of food, water and ammunition to isolated Iraqi Army and U.S. Marines; and fixed-wing airplanes have helped with nightly resupply missions to the area.

Despite the fact that the task force came together within 24 hours of notification, the overall performance has been highly successful, according to Crogan.

"[Although] the Soldiers operated out of their comfort zone, they pulled together, making the impossible possible," he said.



Photo by Sgt. Dale Sweetnam

A Task Force 49 Apache provides security for a British Merlin helicopter carrying Iraqi government officials April 2 in Basra. Task Force 49 elements deployed forward to Basra in late March to assist the Iraqi Army.



Photo by Sgt. Dale Sweetnam

Iraqi officials and their security team dismount a British Merlin helicopter April 2 in Basra. Task Force 49 Apache helicopters escorted the helicopter to the airfield.