

Telling the Story of Task Force 34

The Flightline



Soldier Penpals • Baptism • Halloween in Iraq



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A special thanks to over 50 part time Unit Public Affairs Representatives telling the story of their companies to their Soldiers, families and hometowns.

Task Force 34 Commander
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HSC 834th ASB Unit Public Affairs Rep.



USO now offering United Through Reading to Task Force 34 Soldiers pg. 11

Dear Families and Friends of TF 34,

Your Soldiers continue to execute their missions in an absolutely incredible fashion. I, like many of your loved ones, already have a few stories to share about our great Task Force 34.

Late one evening, I toured the Joint Base Balad Service Support Activity (SSA) supervised by the 834th Aviation Support Battalion of Minnesota, Oklahoma, Iowa, and West Virginia. Our SSA is the largest of this type facility in Iraq. An SSA is akin to a Wal-Mart Distribution Center complete with offices, huge warehouse space and aviation and vehicle parts, pieces, nuts and bolts of every kind and description. Every item is stored in some type of protective bag, box or container and stacked from the floor to the ceiling. As I toured and spoke to both Soldiers and contracted civilians from Kellogg, Brown, and Root Services, I was amazed at the level of commitment that everyone had to their jobs and to supporting the TF 34 aviation mission here in Iraq. As you can imagine, aviation maintenance is incredibly important to underwriting our aviation flying mission. Our SSA receives and ships critical aviation parts to not only our units, but also all of the other MNC-I SSAs located here in the Multi-National Corps - Iraq theater. This helps to reduce duplicity in managing critical aviation parts and streamlines the ordering process to get these parts to the unit mechanics for the critical surgery they do on a daily basis to provide mission-ready aircraft.



On the far side of JBB, is located one of our most critical aviation units, C Co., 2-149 General Support Aviation Battalion (Air Ambulance) otherwise known as Alamo Dust-Off. This unit heralds from the great states of Texas and Oklahoma. I am exceedingly proud of their efforts to collectively come together to save our wounded Soldiers from a variety of MNC-I units. As many of you know, Iraq has been plagued with drought for well over a year. Since we have been here, I have seen rain fall once in Kuwait and smelled it once here! Most of the rain that falls today in Iraq actually evaporates before it ever hits the ground. Of course, I have been reminded that we are approaching the rainy season that two years ago nearly flooded out several of the housing units.

With any approaching cold front, and I use that term very loosely as the temp may dip into the high 60s at night and low 90s during the day, comes a lot of red or brown dirt normally from Syria. The visibility here in central Iraq can rapidly go from a normal of 5 miles to ½ mile visibility. During the afternoon of Oct. 16, we had a very bad dust day. The insurgents took advantage of this opportunity and rocketed a nearby Forward Operating Base. Several Soldiers were severely hurt and Alamo Dust Off responded in a superb manner. After securing the final mission approval, the single-ship medevac, with an extra medic on board, rapidly took-off and incredibly linked-up with the ground ambulance convoy trying to make their way to the JBB Air Force Theater Hospital. Thanks to some superb piloting skills and GPS work, the crew quickly navigated to the arranged pick-up site.



COL Clay Brock
Task Force 34 Commander

The Soldiers on the ground heard the aircraft and popped smoke! The medevac helicopter landed at a road intersection and the crew-chiefs and flight medics quickly loaded the patients. So you might ask what was the total time from mission start till the patients arrived at the hospital? A lightning quick 14 minutes! And though sadly one life was lost during this attack, two others were rushed into surgery and saved due to Alamo Dust-Off. May God always protect these mighty warriors as they fly in the worst of weather and adversity to save lives! More stories about your great TF 34 Soldiers in the next issue.

One Team-One Fight, Attack!

Written by COL Clay Brock





CSM Gery Thesing
TF 34 Command Sergeant Major

Hello again families and Soldiers of Task Force 34 (TF 34),

We are focused on our daily missions here, but conversations do reference the returning dates or "refrad" dates more often. There is some planning occurring for the return of the Task Force; that planning is more enjoyable than the planning it took to get here to Iraq. Soon after the holidays, planning for the return of the 1-244 Assault Battalion will get very real; they will be coming home before the rest of the Task Force because

they arrived here earlier.

The units celebrated Halloween last week in various forms here on the base. The Air Force had a haunted house set up for all base occupants to go thru. The 2-149 GSAB from our Task Force built a great haunted house that stretched thru several buildings and work trailers. It had a fog machine, strobe lights, and hidden creatures that grabbed you as you went thru the maze of the haunted house. There were Halloween movies playing in the unit areas with computer projectors and some have a home theater audio system. I saw bobbing for apples, pie eating contests, trick or treat bags, everything we would have at home except our families were not here; you all were in our thoughts very much! Other units had small parties while others had Battalion size parties. I saw a group that looked like the "Flintstones", others were pirates, patients all wrapped in gauze, a reflective person totally wrapped in our almighty reflective belts, and many others. It is amazing how resourceful Soldiers can be when they need a costume in a combat zone, on a base, and use what is available here to make something unique and great. When I say parties; that means we have food from the DFAC, near beer, sodas, juices, snacks, and we have cigars. The real party will be when we are all home and

we are rejoined with our families and loved ones.

The next hurdle to get thru will be Thanksgiving in November and then Christmas in December; those will be tough days for all of us. Keep e-mailing, keep the cards coming/going in the mail, and use the phone systems that are available to keep in touch during the holidays. I encourage all the Soldiers of Task Force 34 and the families to e-mail and call each other more often during the holidays. Do not forget grandma, grandpa, in-laws, and relatives either during the holidays, I would bet they would love to hear from the ones that they are so very proud of.

In closing for this month; I want to remind everyone in our extended Task Force Family, both Soldiers and the families need to keep in touch and communicate!

If you do not have the means to do so; Soldiers, talk to your leaders and families talk to the FRG group leaders or the rear detachment commanders. There is no excuse to not stay in contact between home and here in Iraq. Take care families, we will take care of your Soldier here in Iraq.

Written by CSM Gery Thesing

Public Affairs Guidance

UPARs – they link their unit with the outside world. Does your unit have a UPAR? UPAR stands for Unit Public Affairs Representative and sometimes the UPAR is the only person who stands between your unit and the vast desert of untold stories.

In these days of 24-hour news operations and more media choices than you can shake a remote control at, it takes effort for your unit's message to be heard. UPARs make that happen.

The Army has an energetic and vibrant public affairs branch, but only has enough Soldiers and officers to assign trained public affairs personnel to brigade-level units and above. So what's a smaller unit to do? Assign a UPAR, that's what.

The Army Public Affairs Handbook says,

"Unit Public Affairs Representatives, or 'stringers,' are assigned through additional duty appointments to represent their units for PA functions." Sure, it's an additional duty, but few additional duties can have a greater impact on how your unit is seen by the outside world – OR be this much fun!

UPARs find the stories that a public affairs officer or Soldier in a higher headquarters might never become aware of. The UPAR can write a story and/or take a picture that could get theater-wide or even world-wide exposure.

*Written by SFC David McClain
Expeditionary Times*



For full UPAR story visit:
www.TaskForce34.org

ARMY FRG

The mission of the Task Force 34 Family Readiness Groups is to establish and maintain a fully-functioning chain of concern to work alongside the military chain of command to provide an avenue for mutual support, assistance and communication among family members, the chain of command, and community resources.

www.ArmyFRG.org

Wing and a Prayer

In the 1940 comedic classic film "Saps at Sea," Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy set out on an ocean cruise to calm Ollie's nerves. The boys work in a horn factory and Ollie develops "hornophobia," the fear of loud noises. His good friend Stan recommends they take a nice quiet sea voyage to rest Ollie's fragile nerves. As one might imagine, chaos ensues, and poor Ollie receives no "peace and quiet!" There is a scene where Ollie begins to scream "noise, noise, noise, I can't stand the noise any longer," when the horn to signify lunch time began to blow. Well, I must confess that there are days here at Joint Base Balad (JBB), Iraq that I can relate to Ollie's plight. In fact, I can relate to hornophobia most days!

As Andy Rooney use to say, "Did you ever wonder....!" Well, my brothers and sisters, since being in Iraq, did you ever wonder what the heck that noise is that wakes you up multiple times every night, or disrupts your conversations repeatedly during the day? Well I have, and as you might have guessed, it doesn't take an Einstein to figure it out! God bless the Air Force, but...!

They say the sound of an F-16 is music to ones' ears when you really need

them. Let's assume the timely arrival of a friendly F-16 in a fire fight is truly a "sight for sore eyes," but "music to ones ears"? PLEASE! After nearly 3 months in theater, the novelty of watching the glow of the jets after burners at dusk has long lost its "oooo, awww" effect! One of the complaints that I have heard time and time again, usually from myself, is that "we just can't escape the constant noise!" Well, I am here to tell you that Jesus, on many occasions, felt the same way.

There are several passages in the gospels that reflect Jesus' desire to get away from the noise of the crowds and find a place of solitude in order to spend time with God The Father! In the Gospel of Matthew 14:22, Jesus dismisses the crowd and his disciples, and climbs to a mountain top to find "peace and quiet." I know there are no mountain tops here at JBB, but one can still find a quiet place to take refuge from the stressors of your day, if you only look for them. If they are hard to find, come talk to a chaplain, for we are experts in finding "all who are weary and heavy laden" a place to find rest!

Written by CH (LTC) Joel Severson



CH (LTC) Joel Severson
TF 34 Chaplain

(Above) CH Severson hugs SPC Joel Bartell, Headquarter Support Company 834th Aviation Support Battalion Maintenance Specialist, following his water baptism in Joint Base Balad, Iraq's Turner Indoor Pool on Oct. 26.



Soldiers water
baptized in
Biblical land

"Water baptism represents death, the grave and resurrection," said CH (LTC) Joel Severson, Task Force 34 Chaplain. "When you go in, it's like dy-



ing. When you come up, you take a deep breath and live."

Six Task Force 34 Soldiers took a step of faith and were water baptized by Chaplain Severson at Joint Base Balad, Iraq's Turner Indoor Pool on Sunday, Oct. 26.

"Jesus walked the ground in this area," said baptism participant SGT Stephanie



Plahn, Headquarter Support Company 834th Aviation Support Battalion Utilities Specialist of Hanska, MN. "I couldn't think of any better place than here to be baptized."

Written by SPC Jodi Krause, HSC 834th ASB



For the full Baptism story
and more photos visit:
www.TaskForce34.org

Many Soldiers have asked, "What exactly is an Inspector General (IG) anyway?" MAJ Cox is a member of COL Brock's personal staff (like the JAG or the Chaplain) and serves as one of his confidential advisors. All IGs extend the eyes, ears, voice, and conscience of the commander, and have four functions: teaching and training, inspections, assistance, and investigations. IGs focus on Combat Readiness; problem solving is one of the IG's primary missions. According to AR 20-1, the IG sphere of activity includes everything for which the commander is responsible and over which the commander has Federal authority.

To complain without fear of reprisal is the right of any Soldier, civilian, or family member seeking help from the Inspector General.

THREE QUESTIONS THE IG WILL ALWAYS ASK:

1. Have you talked to your chain of command?
2. What do you want the IG to do for you?
3. Do you have any documentation?

IG FAQs:

What is an Inspector General Action Request (IGAR), DA Form 1559-R?

An IGAR is an Inspector General Action Request, DA Form 1559-R. A complainant completes the IGAR, presents it to an IG, who in turn initiates the appropriate action. You can download a DA Form 1559-R on the web at <http://www.army.mil/usapa>, or find MAJ Cox and fill one out in person. When completing an IGAR, please include as much DETAIL as possible. (who, what, when, where, how, etc). This allows the IG to conduct a thorough inquiry.

Who can submit an IGAR?

You do not have to be in or associated with the military to submit an IGAR. Anyone can submit an IGAR as long as it concerns an activity of the U.S. Government, specifically the U.S. Army and/or its members.

What problems/issues can I present to the Inspector General?

Any problems/issues concerning the U.S. Army and/or its members may be presented to an IG. Law and statute restrict what Inspectors General can do in the areas of civilian personnel, Legal, and Equal Opportunity/Equal Employment Opportunity (EO/EEO).

Can I talk to an Inspector General "off the record"?

Information provided to an Inspector General is NEVER OFF THE RECORD. However, we attempt to maintain confidentiality.

Can I be disciplined for contacting an Inspector General?

NO. Contact with an IG is a "protected communication". A supervisor who reprises against a Soldier for contacting an IG faces possible punishment for violation of the statutory prohibition against reprisal for whistleblowing.

Can an Inspector General order my supervisor to fix a problem?

NO! An Inspector General belongs to the Commander's Personal Staff. The IG has NO command authority. Therefore, the IG reports, and makes recommendations to the Commander for his action.

Can I obtain the results of an Inspector General's investigation/inquiry that I initiated?

The initiator of an IG investigation/inquiry will be informed upon the completion of an investigation/inquiry of the results as they pertain to the initiator. An individual may request IG

records through the Freedom of Information Act by writing to the IG Office of Record, however, due to concerns regarding confidentiality, they are not allowed to obtain the results of an investigation/inquiry concerning third parties. (Privacy Act of 1974 and Army Regulation 20-1).

MAJ Taylor Cox is the Inspector General for Task Force 34 and can most easily be contacted by e-mail: taylor.cox@iraq.centcom.mil.

BEFORE CALLING THE IG:

1. Be sure you have a problem, not just a peeve.
2. If IG assistance is needed, please contact MAJ Cox first. IG's at higher commands will normally refer the case to the local IG for action.
3. Be honest and don't provide misleading information. IGs will discover the truth quickly in most cases and there are penalties for knowingly providing false information.
4. Keep in mind that IGs are not policy makers. If a policy is flawed you can submit proposed changes on a DA form 2028.
5. Keep in mind that IGs can only recommend, not order a resolution. Only Commanders can order; the role of the IG is to advise the Commander.
6. Remember IGs can only resolve a case on the basis of fact. Your claim that a supervisor has violated the rules doesn't make it fact. A claim must be supported with evidence.
7. Don't expect instant action on your request... Be patient. Investigations take time, and IGs tend to have heavy workloads.
8. Be prepared to take "No" for the answer. In any case, "Yes" or "No", the IG will explain why.

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

THE MOST COMMON INJURY IN THE ARMY IS PREVENTABLE

Why is preventable hearing loss from loud noise the most common injury in the Army?

- Lack of Education
- Lack of Technology
- Lack of Personal/Leader Emphasis

EDUCATE: Hearing loss from noise is PAINLESS, PROGRESSIVE, PERMANENT and PREVENTABLE. Your hearing can be damaged at 85 decibels (dB) for continuous (steady) noise which is your alarm clock, and at 140 dB for impulse (banging) noise which is weapons fire. Therefore, a general rule would be if you have to raise your voice to be heard at 3 feet you have been exposed to hazardous noise.

TECHNOLOGY: Historically, hearing protection interfered with communication when it was needed the most, a tactical environment. With the introduction of the original Combat Arms Earplugs (CAE) the military gained a double sided ear-plug which allowed for prevention of impulse noise and allowed for communication OR protected against

steady noise. The drawback was you had to remove the hearing protection and re-insert to change protection levels and it only came in one size.

NEW TECHNOLOGY: The New Improved CAE addressed both of these drawbacks while maintaining the protection against both types of hazardous noises.

First, the New Improved CAE comes in 3 sizes (small, medium and large) and you will need to be fitted at the Aviation Medical Clinic to ensure proper fit in both ears. Secondly, the small filter is activated with a turn of the pistol selector dial.

EMPHASIS: With ongoing OIF operations, hearing loss has quickly become the #1 injury among military personnel, resulting in more than \$1 billion/year in disability payments.

Written by SFC Gwen Zimmerman, HHC 34th CAB

TF34 Fun Facts

Happy Birthday National Guard!

The National Guard, the oldest component of the Armed Forces of the United States and one of the nation's longest-enduring institutions, will celebrate its 372nd birthday on December 13, 2008. The National Guard traces its history back to the earliest English colonies in North America. Responsible for their own defense, the colonists drew on English military tradition and organized their able-bodied male citizens into militias.

The colonial militias protected their fellow citizens from Indian attack, foreign invaders, and later helped to win the Revolutionary War. Following independence, the authors of the Constitution empowered Congress to "provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia." However, recognizing the militia's state role, the Founding Fathers reserved the

appointment of officers and training of the militia to the states. Today's National Guard still remains a dual state-Federal force.

Throughout the 19th century the size of the Regular Army was small, and the militia provided the bulk of the troops during the Mexican War, the early months of the Civil War, and the Spanish-American War. In 1903, important national defense legislation increased the role of the National Guard (as the militia was now called) as a Reserve force for the U.S. Army. In World War I, which the U.S. entered in 1917, the National Guard made up 40% of the U.S. combat divisions in France; in World War II, National Guard units were among the first to deploy overseas and the first to fight.

Today, tens of thousands of Guard-

members are serving in harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan, as the National Guard continues its historic dual mission, providing to the states units trained and equipped to protect life and property, while providing to the nation units trained, equipped and ready to defend the United States and its interests, all over the globe.

Courtesy of mdang.net/guard_history



"The First Muster" By Don Troiani

Veterans Day:

Iraq veteran returns for second tour

For CW4 Robert Burke, 2nd Battalion 641st Aviation Regiment Pilot from Columbia, SC, spending time in Iraq is nothing new. Currently serving his second tour of duty in Iraq as a fixed-wing aviator, Having spent more than 7000 hours in the cockpit during his two tours in Iraq, CW4 Burke has seen many notable changes during his time spent in country compared with his last tour.

CW4 Burke's first tour in Iraq was a challenging one. As an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter pilot supporting the 25th Infantry Division in the Mosul and Tall Afar provinces, CW4 Burke saw action first hand on multiple occasions.

CW4 Burke said that one of the most difficult job aspects for him was providing close air support within the immediate proximity of friendly troops, a daunting task which requires complete concentration and great experience to master.

Now on his second tour, things are completely different with a new set of challenges on the horizon.



"I'm currently flying C-12s, a utility/cargo fixed-wing aircraft. The missions are 180 degrees apart," CW4 Burke said. "I'm transporting personnel and equipment to and from different locations."

As a Regional Airline Captain for a major commercial airline out of Atlanta, Georgia, CW4 Burke is aware of the risks of flying; and as a war veteran, he knows the threats of combat.



"There are always dangers with aviation assignments," CW4 Burke said. "Here in Iraq, we have additional dangers [besides] small arms fire, [but also] surface to air threats."

Well into his tour since arriving in Sept. 2008, CW4 Burke faces missions that will ultimately bring him face to face with dangers time and time again in the months to come.

This time in Iraq, CW4 Burke says there is more than just enemy activity as an immediate threat to his mission.

"Weather brings its own set of challenges," CW4 Burke said.

The hostile weather and climate of Iraq, with its turbulent sandstorms and tough to predict weather patterns, brings about challenges tough enough to test even the most experienced of pilots. Vigilance and adherence to training are key to completing the mission and bringing peace to the war-torn nation.

As pilots gain the degree of experience and battle tested stamina that CW4 Robert Burke has, the U.S. Army is one step closer to completing its mission of peace and stability in the region.

Written by SSG Mark Pekkola, 2-641 AVN



For more Task Force 34 Veterans Day stories visit:
www.TaskForce34.org

834th ASB Soldiers receive Combat Action Badge

Nine Soldiers, deployed with the 834th Aviation Support Battalion (ASB), were awarded long awaited Combat Action Badges (CAB) in a ceremony Oct. 20, at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

By order of BG John Nunn, Assistant Adjutant General for New Jersey National Guard, these Soldiers were to be awarded the CAB for their service during their previous deployment in Iraq with B Company 434th Main Support Battalion in 2005. At that time, they were responsible for running convoy missions, hauling supplies and vehicles, as well as providing convoy security.

LTC Eric Waage, 834th ASB Com-

mander, presented the Soldiers with the award.

"The Combat Action Badge is a non-skill badge, there is no school at which you can earn these," LTC Waage said. "But like the skills badge, you still have to take a test. These soldiers have passed that test."

After presenting the awards to the soldiers, LTC Waage addressed those in attendance.

"I want to compliment these Soldiers on coming over for a second tour," LTC Waage said. "It is a wonderful morning for the battalion to be able to award them, we are all extremely proud."

According to Army Regulation 600-8-22, the CAB provides special recognition to Soldiers who personally engaged the enemy, or are engaged by the enemy during combat operations.

Because they were attached to a New Jersey unit, the Minnesota Soldiers waited almost three years to receive the award.

"We each knew that we deserved the award and we were waiting patiently for it all to happen," said CAB recipient SSG Anna Kern, A Company 834th ASB Operations Noncommissioned Officer. "We had people working on these awards the whole three years trying to help each of us receive the recognition that we deserved."

SSG Rick Culver, A Co 834th ASB Transportation Platoon Sergeant and CAB recipient, gave a glimpse of his previous deployment.

"On a convoy I saw all these clumps of grass on the road. Sure enough there was an [Improvised Explosive Device]," SSG Culver said. "As we called it in, mortar rounds started to drop in around us. I wasn't scared, the adrenaline was just pumping through me, and I was doing what I was trained to do."

Written by SPC Justin Adelman, A Co. 834th ASB



For more photos and video of the CAB ceremony visit:
www.TaskForce34.org

Schultz couple runs half the world apart

Being able to bond with family back home can boost the morale of any Soldier. For SGT James Schultz and his wife, Lori, running half the world apart brought them together.

“The idea that we could both run a ten miler on the same day was very inspirational to us,” said SGT Schultz of Hastings, MN from A Co. 834th Aviation Support Battalion.

SGT Schultz participated in the Army 10 Miler at Joint Base Balad (JBB), Iraq on Oct. 5. He ran with 880 other participants and finished the race just under one hour 30 minutes.

Lori ran the Medtronic TC 10 Mile in Minneapolis, Minn., on the same day, however, eight hours later due to the time change. She ran with 5,542 other participants, and finished her race just under two hours.

In order to motivate one another for each other’s race, the couple talked on the phone before and after each race.

“Even though we are on the other side of the world,” SGT Schultz said, “it kind of brought us together.”

To show her support at her race for SGT Schultz in Iraq, Lori wrote ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) 08-09’ on a strip of hot pink duct tape put on the back of her shirt.

“I had several people ask me about it, some former OIF participants and some people just asked what OIF meant,” Lori said. “Almost everyone said ‘tell your Soldiers thank you for their service.’ That was the best part!”

The couple’s daughter, SPC Heidi Schultz, is also stationed at JBB with her father. She accompanied SGT Schultz to his race to take pictures for Lori and cheer on the runners. Although she had participated in the Twin Cities Marathon held in Minneapolis, Minn., with SGT Schultz in 2000, she did not participate in this event. It was Mom’s turn to run a race with Dad. This was Lori’s first race.

“[It] was important to me that I did this,” Lori said.

Written by SPC Jodi Krause, HSC 834th ASB



(Above) Lori Schultz (right) competes the Medtronic 10 Mile with friends on Oct. 5.

(Whole pg) SGT James Schultz (right) runs Army 10 Miler at JBB on Oct. 5.



For more Schultz couple photos visit:
www.TaskForce34.org



United THROUGH READING

Bedtime stories may have been put on hold for Soldiers stationed at Joint Base Balad (JBB), but no longer.

Task Force 34 began a cooperative effort with the JBB United Service Organizations (USO) to help families and Soldiers connect during this deployment through reading.

Sept. 29, was the first West-side USO United Through Reading® Military Program at Catfish Air. The United Through Reading Military Program was created in 1990 during the Persian Gulf War, according to www.uso.org.

The program, previously offered for base Soldiers and civilians at the East-side Joint Base Balad USO, is now available weekly to Soldiers and civilians on the West. Participants choose from a wide-variety of children's books and are taped reading these books to their loved ones. The USO sends the book and the tape home to the Soldier's family at no cost to the Soldier.

During its first four weeks, more than 100 Soldiers have taken advantage of the program.

"It is an incredible way to share the joy of reading and connect with my children and family at home," said CW2 Emily Larson, HSC 834th Aviation Support Battalion (ASB) Supply Systems Technician, who reads to her two children weekly.

Not only is this program positive for families, but a morale booster for Soldiers.

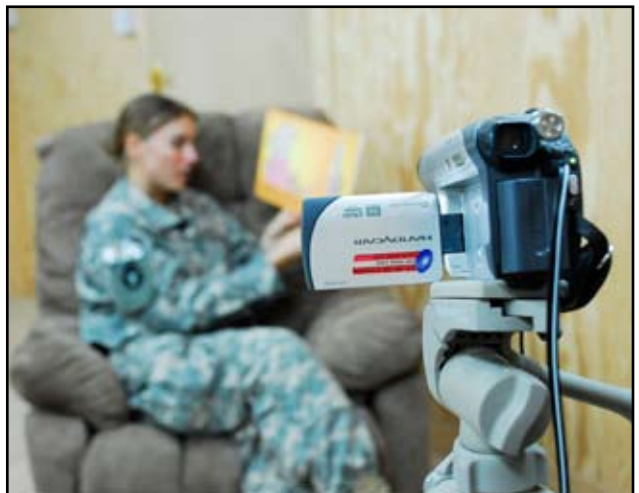
"Watching my children talk to me as they view me reading their book brought tears of joy to my eyes; absolutely priceless!" said CPT Cheryl Wachenheim, HSC 834th ASB MEDLOG Officer from Moorhead, Minn.

The package may arrive through the U.S. Postal Service, but it originates from the heart of a Soldier.

Written by CPT Cheryl Wachenheim, HSC 834th ASB



For more United Through Reading photos and video visit:
www.TaskForce34.org



(Top) COL Bradbury, Task Force 34 Flight Surgeon, fills out label on envelope that his book and DVD will be sent in

(Middle) The USO provides a variety of children's books that are available to read and send to loved ones

(Bottom) SGT Stephanie Plahn, Headquarters Support Company 834th Aviation Support Battalion Utilities Noncommissioned Officer, reads a book to her son with the video camera capturing the story

D Co. 3-159th exceeds standard for Reenlistments

As the deployment ticks by in Iraq, meteorologically speaking, the days were perfect for the Soldiers of D Co. 3rd Battalion, 159th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (ARB). The air was remarkably cool, with a brisk breeze blowing across the flat ground of the Joint Base Balad flight line. The sun burned brightly above the formation and there wasn't a cloud to be seen for miles.

It was in these conditions, along with F-16s thundering overhead, that the D Co. "Outlaws" were to set the standard for reenlistment.

On Oct. 11, D Co. Commander CPT Nathanal J. Patton swore in eight United States Army Soldiers, collectively taking in close to 80 thousand dollars in bonuses for continuing their service to their country.

That reenlistment formation was actually one of many in the month of October for the members of 3-159 ARB. Two days prior, CPT Patton swore in Soldiers working as part of D Co. split operation mission in Basra, Iraq. Shortly thereafter, two more Soldiers, swept up in the momentum from the Oct. 11 enlistment ceremony, swore to honor and defend their country.

Within less than a week, the D Co. "Outlaws" had sworn in ten percent of its strength for continued service, collecting nearly 100 thousand dollars in bonuses.

The Soldiers varied from every rank in the spectrum as well as

their reenlistment commitments. Some added two years to their service, others signed up for indefinite terms of service.

"At this time, Delta Company is exceeding the glide path set forth by Headquarters, United States Army Europe," said Staff Sgt. Walter Simmons, 12th Combat Aviation Brigade Career Counselor..

Their dedication to service, and their loyalty to their unit, combined to distinguish them as the example for active duty Soldiers everywhere.

Written by SPC Neil Dalson, D Co. 3-159th ARB



For more photos of Task Force 34 Soldiers Reenlisting in Iraq, visit: www.TaskForce34.org



(Left) D Co. 3-159 ARB officer swears in Soldiers who have decided to serve their country for another term

(Above) D Co. 3-159 ARB officer congratulates Soldiers on reenlisting

Texas middle school students write Soldiers to offer support

"We wish that helicopter didn't crash, then seven people wouldn't have died," said Lori K., sixth grader from Calhoun Middle School in Denton, Tex.

The hearts and minds of the future have reached out and touched Soldiers of the maintenance platoon from D Co. 2-149th General Support Aviation Battalion. Students from Calhoun Middle School in Denton, Texas showed their remorse for the loss of Task Force 34's Fallen 7 by sending over 100 letters.

"I felt moved by what those kids did for us," said SPC Victor Lara, CH-47 maintenance mechanic. "I even thought about having my wife go and visit the students in person to tell them thank you for me."

SPC Lara is one of many Soldiers from the maintenance platoon who gladly, upon notification of receiving letters, volunteered to write back. Each Soldier was asked by their platoon leader to take five letters each.

"It's not mandatory, and I know we have a busy schedule, but the guys came and read through all the letters immediately. Most of the letters were very touching and patriotic," said 1LT Anthony Sims Jr., maintenance platoon leader. "It's good to know that children at such a young age are paying attention to current events."

Many of the Soldiers immediately took advantage of the opportunity to write home, saying that it breaks up the monotony of daily operations and will continue to correspond.

Written by 1LT Anthony Sims, D Co. 2-149 GSAB

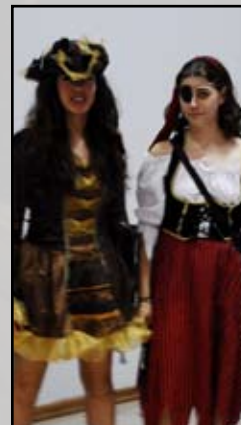


For more Task Force 34 Pen Pal photos visit:
www.TaskForce34.org



Halloween in Iraq

The Soldiers of Task Force 34 attacked **Halloween 2008** with good spirits, lots of candy and some very innovative costumes.





“This is kind of like another family for us. Even though we are away from our kids and spouses, we can still make it the holidays here.”

-SGT Jaime Mitre, TF 34 HQ Information Operations Noncommissioned Officer



For more photos and stories of the Halloween activities of Task Force 34 Soldiers on JBB visit: www.TaskForce34.org