

Telling the Story of Task Force 34

The Flightline



Humanitarian Mission • Thanksgiving 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 COL Clay Brock

Task Force 34 Command Sgt. Major CSM Gery Thesing

Task Force 34 Public Affairs Office MAJ Roy Fuhrmann

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SPC Richard Brown
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Merry Christmas to all of our Families and Friends!

There have been a few changes since I last wrote you back in November. First, not more than a week passed after I penned the words describing an intense and long enduring Iraqi drought that it rained and rained and then rained some more. Matter of fact, not only did this rain NOT evaporate prior to hitting the ground, it rained so much that we ran out of places to store the water! I am absolutely amazed at the desert that surrounds Joint Base Balad. As you know we are not far from the Tigris River, and there is still a lot of sand. But what most of us didn't read in the fine print is that there is also a band of clay soil 10 + FT down that prevents the water from soaking through in a timely fashion. On top of that, the water table is just under this clay band of soil. The good news is the west side of JBB did not see the harsh flooding that the east side did, and we were graced with one of only two very large pumps to rid ourselves of much of the unwanted water before the water breached our CHUs.

And similar to the head-on collision with the Iraqi rainy season, we have now officially entered winter. Several of us took a trip down south to Baghdad today, and it was downright cold flying with the windows open. Our lowest recorded temperature to date this season has been 30F, and matched with the near 140F we had in the summer, many of us are looking for the long johns we have stuffed at the bottom of our duffel bags. I have

been told that the lowest recorded temp here at JBB was 21F and that it even snowed last year. Since it recently snowed 8 in. in New Orleans, LA yesterday, nothing surprises me anymore!

Our great 1-244th AHB from Louisiana and Florida, similar to our other fine TF 34 units, have really excelled at their assigned mission sets. Since last May, Task Force Voodoo, 1-244th AHB, along with 2-149th GSAB flight companies have supported our battlefield circulation mission transporting tens of thousands of people across the expansive battle space here in Iraq. Other units, such as HHC, D Co., and E Co. from TF Voodoo, underwrite the flight companies with aviation maintenance, supply, and fueling requirements.

TF Voodoo also has the privilege of supporting our special operations brothers. Now working for "spookyville" is quite the demanding task, and though I cannot go into too much detail as to what our specific missions are, I can tell you that our TF 34 Soldiers are truly doing a magnificent job of providing aviation support to this incredibly important job of getting our customers to their destinations. These warfighters are very much on the tip of the spear, and you should be very, very proud of their superb leaders, aircrews, and Soldiers that are leading the charge for TF 34! May God truly bless their efforts to rid this country of violent extremists and bring peace and stability to a harsh land.



COL Clay Brock
Task Force 34 Commander

Finally, and most importantly, Merry Christmas to our Families throughout Task Force 34! Though many of us will not be with you physically this season, remember that we think of you often, and we appreciate the many care packages you have sent us. Lastly, I ask you to continue lifting our mighty TF 34 warriors up in prayer as they do their vital mission in support of Multi National Corps-Iraq!

ONE TEAM-ONE FIGHT, ATTACK!

Written by COL Clay Brock





CSM Gery Thesing
TF 34 Command Sergeant Major

Hello to the families and Soldiers of Task Force 34, hard to believe it is December already. For some, it may not seem that time moves along quite fast enough due to numerous reasons, but time is moving and our return is on our minds, our calendars, in our hearts, and it is going to happen. We will continue to do our mission here and we will return to our homes and families with a sense of accomplishment in what we did here in Iraq. Every Soldier in the Task Force has a part in the re-building of Iraq and the stabilization of Iraq; it takes all the different skills to make our mission here a success.

Thanksgiving has just passed and Christmas is around the corner; we were told this is the most difficult time of the year for the Soldiers and our families. It was hard to go to Thanksgiving dinner here at Joint Base Balad (JBB) and not feel some sadness as I ate, alone. I was not alone in terms of sitting alone, but alone in terms of no family with me. There were no loved ones near me, the familiar faces at the previous thanksgiving meals were not there, and the tastes and flavors I remember from previous Thanksgiving family meals were absent. The family I sat with during the Thanksgiving meal was my Task Force family, my fellow Soldiers, and my fellow military friends. The dining facility (DFAC) Soldiers and KBR workers did a great job cooking us a meal that was as good as it gets here and had decorations to put even the most grumpy person in a good mood. As Christmas approaches, the feelings of missing the familiar smells of "OUR" Christmas dinner will again surface and we will again miss our life style we had before

coming here. Keep calling, writing, e-mailing, sending cards; keep in touch with each other back at home. Our DFAC will cook another great meal for Christmas and we will try to overload all the phone lines on Christmas day. The familiar decorations, activities, and simple home routines will be on our minds and the family's minds. Remember that we are here to do a job and support the Iraqi people who have far less than we have; we will be home soon, they will continue to improve their country.



We all may question why we have to do this or why me; the only answer I have is we are here to help because we are Americans. A veteran here in Iraq wrote a song and the ending reminded me that we have to be grateful for what we have and to remember our traditions fondly, remember our holiday favorite smells and tastes; remember!

*The verse goes like this:
Well when you've seen what I have seen
Things don't seem so bad
Quit worrying 'bout what you aint got, thank God for what you have
'Cause you could be raising your family in this place
But you were born in America by God's amazing grace!!!
Happy holidays to all the Soldiers of Task Force 34, our families, and our loved ones.
"WILD 7", out.*

Written by CSM Gery Thesing



Welcome LTC James Yates,
TF 34 Equal Opportunity Advisor

For all Task Force 34 Soldiers, LTC Yates can be found in the TF 34 ALOC, next to Catfish Air.





Now that Thanksgiving is over and done with, and the leftovers are barely a memory, we can now shift our attention to, as Andy Williams would say, "the most wonderful time of the year!" I know many who are reading this are asking the question, "Andy who?!" There are many reasons why I love the Christmas season, or to be more PC, the "holiday" season. First and foremost, speaking for myself of course, "Jesus is the reason for the season," everything else is secondary. With that said, there are many "secondary" reasons why I love this time of year, even here in Iraq!

It is true there is no snow, and I do not miss the "hustle and bustle" of crowded shopping malls, but this time of year is much more than these things, and being here in a combat zone has helped to bring this into focus. I have noticed many Soldiers putting up "holiday" decorations in order to help "make the season bright," and the sounds of jingle bells can actually be heard above the roar of F-16s!

Troops are already sending packages home in hopes of being under the tree on Christmas morning, and exchanging with each other their favorite Christmas movies on DVD. These are all "tell tale signs" that even in Babylon, there is now a "nip" in the air, and the holidays are upon us! With that being said, Christmas is much more than just a date on the calendar!

Separated from our families by more than 6,000 miles, and 9 hours ahead (time wise), still cannot dampen the sense that the TRUE meaning of Christmas is more about the bigger family of "mankind," than about candy canes and eggnog. Though, I would love nothing more than to be home for the holidays amongst kids and kin, but to share this advent season with my fellow Soldier "family" here in Iraq is truly an honor, and will be held fondly in my memory for many Christmas to come!

The verse in the "Christmas Story" in the Gospel of Luke Chapter 2 that reads, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men," has taken on a much greater meaning for me now that we are here in war-torn Iraq! There is no place



CH (LTC) Joel Severson
TF 34 Chaplain

else on earth, and no time like the present, for this verse to be complete, that is to say, "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men!"

May the memories of Christmas past sustain each of us through this Christmas and into the New Year! From all of us, to all of you, may your Christmas be truly bright!!!

Written by CH (LTC) Joel Severson

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



ASK JAG about Naturalization



Naturalization is a very important issue for all foreign born U.S. Army Soldiers, the absence of which may negatively affect a Soldier's career. For example, a non-U.S. citizen Soldier cannot reenlist beyond eight years of service and are not eligible for a security clearance, which in turn prevents Soldiers from being qualified for certain MOS and/or promotions. In addition, dependents of the non-citizenship Soldier also lose out on the potential benefits that may accrue because of citizenship. The totality of negative impacts upon the Soldier and his or her dependents can be avoided by taking the necessary steps toward citizenship. The road to citizenship is considered to be an arduous, time consuming process, but there is a shortcut: the Soldier's military status, and with it, the Soldier can substantially shorten the time it takes to gain citizenship. With that, here are some questions:

What is a Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR)?

It is a person who has a green card, has legally immigrated and received authorization to reside in the US permanently; and has adjusted status to LPR while in the U.S.

How many years does it take to gain citizenship in an LPR status?

The general rule is that it takes 5 years as an LPR to gain citizenship.

Does the military have any exceptions to the five year LPR rule?

Yes. Section 328 of the Immigration & Naturalization Act (INA) allows applicants to apply if they had 3 years of honorable military service. In 2004, the Defense Authorization Act reduced this period to 1 year of honorable service. Section 329 of the INA allows applicants to apply if they have 1 day of honorable military service during periods of qualifying military hostilities. Service since 11

September 2001 has been designated as qualifying service for Section 329. What that means for Soldiers in the Iraqi Theater of Operations is that one day of honorable service permits the Soldier to begin his or her path to citizenship. In that respect, it truly is a fast-track to citizenship because Soldiers do not have to wait 5 years, 3 years or even one year, they only need to serve one day of honorable military service in a period of qualifying military hostilities.

Okay, so the military has this fast-track program, where do I go to even begin?

Soldiers must go to the Office of the Brigade Judge Advocate. This office is located in the ALOC, building 4417.

So if I visit the JAG, how painful is this process going to be?

The Office of the Brigade Judge Advocate will coordinate and assist with much of the paperwork required to begin the process. In particular,

paralegals will assist the Soldier in putting together his or her immigration packet. Soldiers will have to fill out a few forms, have a picture taken, and have fingerprints taken. Some of the forms that you will need are:

1. Form N-400 Application, completed and signed.
2. Form N-426, certified by your S-1 office.
3. Form G-325, completed.

The JAG office can ensure that the Soldier has all of the necessary forms. In addition, the paralegals can perform a quality control check on the immigration packets to ensure they meet the Citizenship and Immigration Service's requirements.

The Brigade Legal Office is here for you! Take advantage of one of the military benefits and become a U.S. citizen without any fees. If you have any more questions, the POC is SSG Artem Bunin who can be reached at 483-4156 or artem.bunin@iraq.centcom.mil.

Written by SSG Artem Bunin, TF 34 Legal NCO

Public Affairs Guidance



Christmas Photos

Please send us your best Christmas photos for the next Flightline.

Stories

Have a story idea? Tell your company Unit Public Affairs Rep (UPAR). Help them represent your company to the world!

Company website

Did you know your company has a website? See www.TaskForce34.org/units. Please send us feedback!

Personal websites

Have a personal blog, myspace, or other web page? Let us know, so we can better tell our story! See the blog links on our website.

Written by SFC Daniel Ewer, TF 34 Public Affairs Chief



Army Aviation History Timeline

1965- The 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) validated the use of airmobile in combat.

April 1, 1979- The first UH-60 (Blackhawk) arrived at Fort Rucker.

1984- The Army received its first AH-64 Apaches.

Feb. 1, 1984- LTC Robert L. Stewart, the first Army astronaut, walked in space.

Jan. 17, 1991- An Army aviator fired the first shot of Operation Desert Storm from an Army helicopter. Within a few minutes, two teams of Apaches destroyed two Iraqi radar stations.

Today- Army aircraft include Apaches, Blackhawks, Kiowas, Chinooks, Serpas, C12s, C35s, and many unmanned systems.

Courtesy of <http://www.army.mil/aviation/timeline/index.html>

Aug. 2, 1909- After a series of tests, the Army accepted U.S. Army Aeroplane No. 1, which was built by the Wright brothers.

Oct. 26, 1909- 1LT Frederic E. Humphreys and 1LT Frank P. Lahm each completed a solo flight, becoming the first Army pilots.

May 1918- The Army creates the Army Air Service.

July 1, 1926- Congress changed the Army Air Service to the Army Air Corps and created the Secretary of War for Air to manage it.

June 1, 1941- Regulation consolidated all Army air elements under the Army Air Forces (AAF).

Sept. 18, 1947- The Department of the Air Force (USAF) began operating separate from the Army.

1956- Army began testing armament systems for helicopters.



For more Task Force 34 history visit:
www.TaskForce34.org

Health Spot

Medical care while on leave

Soldiers going on leave should obtain all routine care and fill prescriptions before traveling. However, if you do need care while traveling, here are some guidelines for getting care when you are on leave.

Emergency Care - Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. Any Soldier on leave is authorized to seek emergency care without prior authorization. Simply seek care at nearest Emergency Room or Urgent Care facility - No authorization is required.

Urgent or Routine care - Urgent care is defined as care for an illness or injury that has the potential to become an emergency if not treated within 24 hours (e.g., sore throat, rising temperature, etc.). Routine Care is defined as any other elective or non-urgent/

emergent care (e.g. getting an annual check-up, having a mole removed, etc.). Routine and urgent care may not be covered while on leave and Soldiers must first get authorization to receive the care. This prior authorization must come from either the regional TRICARE contractor (i.e. TriWest, HealthNet, or Humana), a Primary Care Manager at the Mob Station where you deployed through, or directly through the Military Medical Support Office. Contact information provided below. Failure to obtain authorization for routine care obtained at civilian facilities could result in the member being responsible for bill payment.

TRICARE Nurse Advice Line - While on leave, Soldiers can access the Nurse Advice Line which provides around-the-clock access to medical informa-

tion and advice. Registered nurses are available to answer questions, provide self care advice and help decide if you need immediate care. There is also an audio health library with hundreds of topics. To access the advice line, call 888-475-9233.

Care on Leave Outside the United States - The TAO will work with the provider to arrange a guarantee of payment, but you should be prepared to pay for your care at the time of service and file a claim with TRICARE for reimbursement. For more detailed eligibility and coverage information, contact your TRICARE Area Office (TAO) or a TRICARE Service Center (TSC), or visit www.tricare.osd.mil/overseas.

*Written by MAJ Randall Hedegaard,
TF 34 HQ Medical Operations Officer*



T'WAS CHRISTMAS

By CH (LTC) JOEL SEVERSON



T'was the night of the first Christmas,
And all throughout the land,
Only one was found worthy,
To give birth to the Son of Man!

For Caesar was greedy,
He desired much gold,
So he taxed all the people,
Both the young and the old.

The city was crowded,
With travelers near and far,
Too busy to notice,
The rising of a new star.

A carpenter from Nazareth,
Along with his wife,
Had come home to Bethlehem,
In time to give life!

He knocked on each door,
Of both brother and kin,
But the answer they gave,
"There's no room in our Inn!"

The night was so cold,
And dark was the sky,
If not for the light,
That was placed upon high.

The moon, how it paled,
In the shadow of the star,
That guided three wise men,
That came from afar.

Bearing gifts for The King,
That was born on this night,
Who grew up to feed thousands,
To the blind would give sight.

The woman gave birth,
Upon the warmth of the straw,
Both heaven and earth,
Stood silently in awe!

The birth of This Child,
Foretold long ago,
In visions of prophets,
"So let it be so!"

"God is now with you,"
The angels did say,
"The way to salvation,
Would begin on this day!"

The shepherds in the field,
Stood watch by their flock,
The foundation of God's Kingdom,
Is built upon The Rock!

Emmanuel, our Savior,
Our Counselor, our King,
Jesus is all this,
But yet still one thing.

For He came to this world,
To forgive and to save,
To think my dear friend,
It began in a cave.

From His throne room in heaven,
To a manger below,
He gave up Himself,
For He loves each of us so!

Now hear ye the words,
That rang out in the night.
Sang angels in heaven,
In the midst of their flight.

"Give glory to God,
May all hatred be ceased,
For sin is now broken,
All earth be at peace!"

Merry Christmas to all of you,

From all of us in Iraq, God Bless!





SSG Anna Kern,
A Co. 834th ASB
Operations NCOIC
Cold Spring, MN

"My family and friends, my students, my nieces and nephews, and all of the people who love and support me and my fellow Soldiers here."



SGT Jackie Mann,
A Co. 834th ASB
Stock Control NCO
Mankato, MN
"I'm thankful for the good food coming back to the DFAC."



SGT Terry Davis,
812th Medevac Maintenance Team Leader
Pireville, LA
"We only have four months left, and good people to work with."



SFC Rodger Pruitt,
HSC 834th ASB
Dining Facility Manager
Staples, MN
"I get to be over here, see new places and meet new people. I get to learn Ugandan."

What are you thankful for?



SPC Blia Lor,
A Co. 834th ASB
Force Protection
Brooklyn Center, MN
"To be alive, and that the deployment is half over."



SGT Aron Embaye,
HSC 834th Retention and Mail Room NCO
St. Paul, MN
"Thanksgiving in this vacation place, I have my own grass!"



CW2 Michael Kelley,
D Co. 1-244th AHB Production Control Officer
Alexandria, LA
"I'm thankful for family."



SPC Sarah Shorter,
A Co. 834th ASB Stock Control Specialist
Edina, MN
"The holidays mean it's almost time to go home."

Compiled by SPC Jodi Krause, HSC 834th ASB
Unit Public Affairs Representative



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

TF 34 Chaplains host Thanksgiving Talent Show

Busy bustling lines, long lay-overs and troubling traffic commutes are just a few things people face during the holidays. Finding extra time to gather with your family and friends during the holidays may be difficult to arrange.

It is no exception for Soldiers of Task Force 34 (TF 34) stationed at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

However, with the help of the Task Force 34 Chaplains, and many of their friends a 'Thanksgiving Talent Show' was held for the Soldiers of TF 34. The show included prepared 'skits' from different battalions, live music, free pizza and beverages for the Soldiers and participants of the event.

"It was fantastic; I heard some music from some very talented people," said 1SG Don Burrows, First Sergeant, B Co. 834th Aviation Support Battalion and native of Nobles, OK. "I wouldn't have believed that some of the people I saw out here could do what they did. It just makes you want to stand up and sing and dance with them."

Especially with the holidays around the corner, the event helps the Soldiers deal with the many struggles of being away from family, friends and loved ones.

"A lot of times morale can go down and we help each other out, this is an opportunity to lift each other up, kind of help each other's morale," said SGT Robert Bandy, TF 34 Headquarters Movements Noncommissioned Officer in Charge and native of Baltimore, Md. "Just like crying is kind of contagious, laughter is contagious. If everyone is having a good time together, it will help bring up other Soldiers' spirits."

The two-hour event included a gospel choir, video clips and prepared skits, which sent the audience into an uproar of laughter.

"Events like this help take some of the anxiety off of people when they aren't around their family and helps them be a little happier around the holidays," said SPC Kristen Canfield, Class Nine, 834th Aviation Support Brigade and a native of White Bear Lake, Minn.

This holiday season, the National Guard and Active Duty Soldiers of TF 34 will celebrate Christmas and ring in the New Year in Iraq, instead of stateside with family and friends. However, with the support of their military family and battle buddies, there can be an abundance of joy and seasonal cheer.

Written by SGT Lynette Hoke, TF 34 Public Affairs Journalist



For more Talent Show pictures and Thanksgiving articles and photos visit:
www.TaskForce34.org



SPC Tiara Winn and CH (LTC) Joel Severson singing a song for the Thanksgiving Talent Show.



The Freedom Chapel Contemporary Worship Team perform for the Thanksgiving Talent Show.



CH (CPT) Harris riding a unicycle while playing the harmonica at the Thanksgiving Talent Show.



The Freedom Chapel Gospel Choir performs for the Thanksgiving Talent Show.

Thanksgiving Day Another Way



A typical, traditional American Thanksgiving Meal can include turkey and additional fixings of all kinds. Mashed potatoes and gravy, yams, stuffing, and macaroni and cheese are just a few of the dishes usually present. One thing that never gets left out is a big helping of family, friends and loved ones to help gobble up all the baked goods prepared for hours on end.

However, for the military members stationed at Joint Base Balad (JBB), Iraq, to include Soldiers of Task Force 34, Thanksgiving was just another workday. Despite the distance and separation, the command staff prepared something special to help the Soldiers remember the holiday.

"Today was a celebration for our Soldiers overseas who are away from families," said MSG Rudolph Brown, Food Advisor. "This is one way we show our appreciation to the military, that we appreciate what they are doing."

Dining Facility 4 (DFAC 4) at JBB decorated their establishment to the hilt with the supplies they had available. A turkey statue made of potato chips, a pilgrims' boat made of hard noodles and pop tarts and a number of other elaborate food decorations that put a smile on many of the patrons faces as they 'ooo'd' and 'awed' at the festive and very innovative decorations.

"They are putting out a plethora of food for Soldiers and civilians; it is amazing how it can change the attitude of so many people," said CW4 Dibble, 3-159 Assault Helicopter Regiment.

Those who normally serve the food were also given a nice surprise during the holiday.

"This is a day of tradition that we do in the military, on New

(Left) LTC Darryl Ducharme, TF 34 Deputy Commander serving the Thanksgiving meal at DFAC 4.

(Middle) DFAC 4 was decorated for Thanksgiving with this turkey made from produce.

(Right) DFAC 4 worker carving turkey for the Thanksgiving meal.

Years Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas," MSG Brown said. "The leadership comes in and serves the troops so the cooks can enjoy the festivities along with the rest of the troops."

The leadership of Task Force 34 rotated shifts throughout the day to serve not only their own Soldiers, but all the military members and civilians who came to DFAC 4 to eat Thanksgiving lunch.

"It is an opportunity to let the other troops see you," said 1SG Craig Heggerston, First Sergeant, Headquarters Support Company 834th Aviation Support Battalion. "Many times we get focused in our own lanes, and we don't want to lose track of where things really happen, and that is at the Soldier level."

"If we have an opportunity like this to mentally stand down a little bit, come together, with a command goal and realize we are here for the same common goal which is to do our jobs, do it well and return home to our families," said 1SG Heggerston a native of Center City, Minn.

As the lunch rush came and went, a few Soldiers reflected about the holiday they were spending away from their families and friends who were back in the United States.

"We are all going through different struggles, but in the military we are like a family," said SPC Nancy Charlton, Movement Specialist, 34th Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force 34.

"At the end of the day, we are family when we are away from our own families," said CW4 Dibble. "That is how we come together in the military."

Written by SGT Lynette Hoke, HHC 34th CAB



For more Thanksgiving articles, photos and video visit:
www.TaskForce34.org

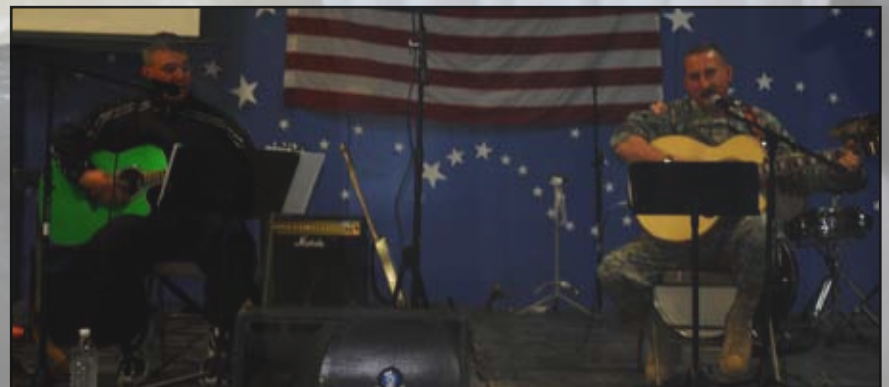
Happy Thanksgiving from JBB





“They are putting out a plethora of food for Soldiers and civilians; it is amazing how it can change the attitude of so many people.”

-CW4 Dibble, 3-159 Assault Helicopter Regiment



For more Thanksgiving articles, photos and video, visit:
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It took a war to bless a child



(Top) Iraqi children sit in their classroom at an Iraqi school.

(Middle) CH (1LT) Paul Woodward with Iraqi guards.

(Bottom) Nine year old Iraqi girl with her first pair of shoes.

"I guess the old Persian adage; 'I wept because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet' is an appropriate summary of this humanitarian effort," said Chaplain (1st Lt.) Paul Woodward, 1-244th Assault Helicopter Battalion Chaplain of Enid, OK.

CH Woodward, together with Chaplain (Capt.) Emmanuel Woods, 5th Engineering Battalion Chaplain, delivered much needed school supplies, toys, and two pair of shoes to two grade schools in northern Iraq on Nov. 3.

"The term 'wealthy' has new meaning for me," CH Woodward said. "It is so easy to forget how wealthy we really are until you meet someone who needs what you would throw away."

The Chaplains took school supplies provided by Natalbany Baptist Church of Natalbany, La. With all the donated things for the kids, there was one pair of boys' sandals and one pair of girls' tennis shoes.

The one child who touched the group the most was a girl about nine years old; the recipient of the one pair of donated girls' shoes.



"It was obvious that the shoes she was wearing, some old, blue, closed-toed sandals, were about four sizes too big for her," CH Woodward said.

She tried on the shoes, and they were a perfect fit.

"We were informed by the principle, afterwards, that this girl would have to borrow her mother's shoes to go to school, and then have to give them back when she returned home," CH Woodward said. "She has never had a pair of shoes of her own before."

For this little girl, these shoes were truly a blessing.

"I don't know her name; the school she attends doesn't even have an address," CH Woodward said. "It seems like it took this war to basically illustrate to one nine year old little girl that freedom can bring real blessings."

Written by SPC Jodi Krause, HSC 834th ASB Unit Public Affairs Representative



For more Humanitarian mission photos
visit: www.TaskForce34.org

Testing Above the Rest

Soldiers trying to enlist into the United States Army have a lot of hurdles to jump before they can be considered as a recruit for the Active, Reserve or National Guard components. One of many tests any military recruit will be required to take is the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test administered by the United States military to determine a potential enlistee's career field opportunities.



Recently at Joint Base Balad's Blackjack Education Center, Soldiers were offered a chance to improve their ASVAB score by taking a four week course designed to help them improve in the sections most Soldiers are weakest in.

"There were three main areas covered in the class: arithmetic reasoning, word knowledge and reading comprehension," said MAJ David W. Freberg, Logistic Project Officer for Task Force 34. "Most of the class was focused on the math part, which consisted of fractions, decimals, averages, proportions, distances and interest."

The class was not required, but was offered to the Soldiers, Airmen, Marines and Navy men on Joint Base Balad to help them advance in their military careers.



"Most of the students were trying to improve their General Technical (GT) scores, so they could put in their packets for a commissioning program or for warrant officer school," said MAJ Freberg, a native of Kannapolis, NC. "Also, several wanted to change to a military occupational specialty (MOS) that required a higher GT score."

"I think it's beneficial to go through the class, because it is a self improvement class in many aspects; you can get your scores up to where you want it to be, and you get five promotion points for taking the course, which shows your leadership that you're willing to do self improvement on your own time," said SPC Allen Rolfes, Heavy Vehicle Operator, A Co. 834th Aviation Support Battalion. "Showing them that you're willing to learn and better yourself as a Soldier for your own reasons and to help make the Army better as a whole."

Regardless of the reason for the military member to be a part of the course, the end result was the same: to set the students up for success regardless of rank, service and job.

"The biggest challenge was how long some of these students were away from the classroom," Freberg said. "Some of these students had not done much formal math for up to 15 years. My job was to knock off the rust for most of them and just polish up the others."

"A lot of the students, like me, left high school a while ago and we have not dealt with Mathematics for a while," said SGT Olutayo Ogundare, Human Resource Sergeant for Task Force 34 Headquarters Company. "It was a great refresher program which helped in sharpening my thinking skills especially for Soldiers like me who are very rusty in their Arithmetic Reasoning skills."



(Top) Soldier being awarded certificate of completion following the 4 week GT improvement course.

(Middle) SPC Allen Rolfes, class valedictorian, shakes hands with course instructor MAJ David Freberg.

(Bottom) SPC Allen Rolfes and SGT Denver Williams, both from A Co. 834th ASB, with certificates of completion from GT improvement course.

NOTE: ASVAB improvement classes are ongoing. For those stationed at Joint Base Balad, contact the JBB Blackjack Education Center for more information about the classes.

Written by SGT Lynette Hoke, TF 34 Public Affairs Journalist



For the full ASVAB article,
visit: www.TaskForce34.org

Task Force 34 Soldiers gain U.S. citizenship

Ecuador. Russia. Mexico. Three Task Force 34 Soldiers have left their roots to call the United States home.

These Soldiers were initiated as United States citizens on Nov. 4, at a naturalization ceremony held in the Water Palace at Camp Victory, Iraq.

One of these Soldiers was SGT Edison Cevallos, D Co. 3rd Battalion, 159th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion technical inspector. A native of Ecuador, being a citizen of the U.S. has been a life's journey.

"Becoming a U.S. citizen was one of my goals in life," SGT Cevallos said. "My family is very happy that it finally [has] become a reality."

SGT Cevallos has lived in the U.S. for nearly 20 years, and served in the military for half of that time.

"I came to the U.S. in 1989. I was 23 years old," SGT Cevallos said. "I traveled alone. It took me a couple of weeks to reach my destination."

After becoming a legal resident of the U.S., SGT Cevallos joined the Army in 1999. Since being stationed in Germany, he has been deployed three times, twice to Iraq and once to Afghanistan.

After serving the United States over the years, SGT Cevallos, along with SPC Jose Aguirre, E Co. 1st Battalion, 244th Assault Helicopter Battalion (AHB) Maintenance Specialist from Mexico, and SPC Yuriy Skrubert, E Co. 1-244th AHB Maintenance Specialist from Russia, took the proper steps to gain his citizenship.

"To become a citizen, a Soldier has to initiate the process by filling out various forms, getting his or her fingerprints and photographs," said SSG Artem Bunin, TF 34 Headquarters Paralegal.

Once the paperwork is approved, the applicants are ready for an interview.

"Interviews are held within days of the actual naturalization

ceremony," SSG Bunin said. "For the current ceremony, the interviews began on Oct. 30."

The interview is conducted by a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officer.

"He checked my paper work and asked me questions about it. [There were] also a couple of civic and American history questions," SGT Cevallos said. "The interview lasted about 15 minutes."

At the Nov. 4 ceremony, each of the 186 Soldiers being granted their citizenship were given a certificate, American flag and coin by Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, Commanding General of the Multi-National Force in Iraq.

*Written by SPC Jodi Krause, HSC 834th ASB
Unit Public Affairs Representative*



For more Naturalization photos, visit: www.TaskForce34.org



(Above) SPC Jose Aguirre, E Co. 1st Battalion, 244th Assault Helicopter Battalion (AHB) Maintenance Specialist from Mexico, and SPC Yuriy Skrubert, E Co. 1-244th AHB Maintenance Specialist from Russia, with their Commander and 1SG.

(Bottom Left) All 186 Soldiers participating in the naturalization ceremony.

(Bottom Middle) Soldier receiving coin and certificate from Gen. Raymond T. Odierno.

(Bottom Right) SGT Edison Cevallos, D Co. 3rd Battalion, 159th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion technical inspector with his certificate and flag from the naturalization ceremony.



Roseville teacher joins local run from Iraq

As the Task Force 34 deployment continues, it is important for Soldiers to participate in activities and events that remind them of home. For CPT Jeff Bibeau, Headquarters Support Company 834th Aviation Support Battalion Human Resources Officer, that event is a hometown run.

"Every year the Roseville Area School District in Minnesota hosts a 6.23K run in honor of their District, 623," said CPT Bibeau, Roseville Area School 8th grade History Teacher. "The event is intended to bring together the community for fun and fitness."

This year, CPT Bibeau contacted the school district, and asked if his section could participate in the Nov. 8 race at a remote location; Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

"The Roseville Run Event Coordinator Jan Vanderwall, liked the idea," CPT Bibeau said. "[She] gave her approval, and even had the event fee waived for the eight-person section."

These eight participants joined the 427 participants from Roseville, MN to make this event a success.

"The Roseville event is quite scenic and takes participants through a meandering tour of lakes and parks," CPT Bibeau said. "The corresponding Balad run will be the same distance, but will lack some of the same scenic beauty. Luckily though, with the recent rains, Balad now has lakes and, technically speaking, also has plenty of places to park."

CPT Bibeau finished 36th in the race with a time of 28 min. and 5 sec., finishing first among the Balad runners. But for the Balad participants, it was not the race that really mattered.

"Just knowing that we were supporting CPT Bibeau's school was important," said Balad run participant SGT Kimberly Doan, HSC 834th ASB Administrative Noncommissioned Officer. "This deployment is one that pulls us apart from home, and knowing that we were supporting his connection to home was cool."

Not only did the Soldiers support the school, but they also felt the support from the school.

"It always feels a little bit more special when you are running a satellite run," said Balad run participant SSG Melissa Evans, 834th ASB Human Resources NCO. "It is nice to know that there are others supporting us back home."

Written by SPC Jodi Krause, HSC 834th ASB Unit Public Affairs Representative



For more 6.23K photos visit:
www.TaskForce34.org



(Left) 834th ASB Soldiers get ready to run the 6.23K race in JBB, Iraq.

(Middle) SGT Aron Embaye, HSC 834th ASB Retention and Mail room NCO, runs the 6.23K race in JBB, Iraq.

(Right) CPT Jeff Bibeau's daughter wears a picture of her dad on her backpack in Roseville, Minn. for the 6.23K race.

(Whole pg) CPT Bibeau runs the 6.23K race in JBB, Iraq.



2-149th Medevac cozy up with Original Java

In a somewhat secluded corner of Joint Base Balad, Iraq, in what is known as Kelly Compound, the Soldiers of Alamo Dustoff Medevac operate a cozy little coffee shop known as Original Java. This coffee shop has operated under successive Medevac units since at least 2004. Each rotation passes it on to the next as a place to relax.

Due to the remote nature of the C Company compound and the need for Soldiers to stay at the ready for any Medevac calls, going to MWR facilities can be difficult. The coffee house provides a handy alternative for on-call crews and visitors from around Balad.

Unit members volunteer their time in the evenings to provide a relaxing atmosphere for friendly gatherings. The coffee tenders are the closest thing you can find to bartenders on the base, and they are always willing to hear the tales of patrons or share some of their own.

For special occasions, the coffee house really rocks. On Halloween, many of the Soldiers dressed for the event, and prizes were awarded for the best and most creative costumes. Christmas and New Year's will be celebrated

there as well.

The décor includes numerous old weapons (not functional) and displays coins and patches from several units. Sadly, the collection was larger, but the previous unit took most of it with them. Still, the various patrons contribute when they have something to offer.

Soldiers and airmen can come in and enjoy a hot cup of coffee or a specialty drink prepared especially by the Medevac folks. There is plenty of room to visit with friends or play a friendly game of cards. Use the big screen to play video games, watch a movie or watch the big game. Wireless internet may even be available. Cigars are available for purchase and you can join others on the outside walkway for good discussion and smokes.

*Written by CW5 Wesley Jones, C Co. 2-149 GSAB
Unit Public Affairs Representative*



For more stories and photos of
Task Force 34 Soldiers visit:
www.TaskForce34.org

(Top Left) 2-149th Medevac Soldiers watching TV on Halloween in Original Java.

(Bottom Left) 2-149th Medevac Soldiers watching TV on Halloween in Original Java.

(Right) 2-149th Medevac Soldiers playing poker in Original Java.



JOINT BASE BALAD

Presents

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day ESSAY WRITING CONTEST

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday



- **Open to all on JBB**
- **12 point font size, Double space, 2 pages or less**
- **Must pertain to the National 2009 Theme: "Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On, Not A Day Off!"**
- **Please submit all essays by COB January 8, 2009**

Send essays to:

joseph.newton@blab.afcent.af.mil
everett.worman@iraq.centcom.mil
damon.walker@iraq.centcom.mil

Prizes for the top three essays will be presented at the **Martin Luther King Jr. Day Observance Celebration Luncheon** January 15, 2009 at 1130 hours at MWR East Facility

POC: MSG Jackson, Tuynuykua EO Advisor 3d ESC at 433-2527,
MSGt Joseph Newton, EO Directory 332 AEW at 443-8459,
SFC Everett Worman, EO Advisor 555th EN BDE at 483-4645
SSG DaMon Walker, BN EOL 51 SB(E) at 483-2217

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday



DOD National Theme:
"Remember! Celebrate! Act!
A Day On Not A Day Off!"



JOINT BASE BALAD

Presents

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Observance



MWR East Lounge

15 January 2009 at 1130 to 1300 hours

Guest Speaker: CSM Willie C. Tennant, Sr.

Command Sergeant Major

3^d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)

Lunch will be provided
Essay Awards Presentations
Joyful Noise Choir
H-6 Choir

Contact: MSG Tuynuykua Jackson, 3^d ESC HR/EO Advisor @ 433-2527,
MSGt Joseph Newton 332nd AEW EO Directory @ 443-8459,
SFC Everett Worman 555th EN BDE EO Advisor @ 483-4645,
LTC James-Michael Yates Task Force 34 PM/EO Advisor @ 483-4589
SSG Damon Walker 51st ESB BN EOL @483-2217