

Telling the Story of Task Force 34

# The Flightline

Jan. 2009 • Issue V



FARP • Holidays in Iraq • 1-244 AHB Stories



# Contents

The Flightline • Jan. 2009 Issue V

## Departments

- 3 Commander's Corner  
*By COL Clay Brock*
- 4 CSM's Corner  
*By CSM Gery Thesing*
- 4 Public Affairs Guidance  
*By SFC Daniel Ewer*
- 5 Wing and a Prayer  
*By CH (LT) Woodward*
- 6 Legal Lines  
*By SGT Sherry Johnson*
- 7 Equal Opportunity  
*By LTC James Yates*



Soldiers from Task Force 34 participate with "Combat Caroling" around Joint Base Balad, Iraq on Dec. 22. More photos of Holidays Celebrations on pg. 20

## Features

- 8 New Year Resolutions
- 9 1-244 Helping Hands
- 10 Eagle Scouts Show Support  
*By SGT Edward Thorne*
- 11 Humanitarian Support  
*By SPC Justin Adelman*
- 12 Balad FARPs  
*By SGT Jose Isales and SPC Richard Brown*
- 14 Bean Cook Off  
*By 1LT Anthony Simms*
- 15 Mail Equals Love  
*By SPC Jamie Eccles*
- 16 Friendship Mission  
*By SPC Justin Adelman*
- 17 Tale of a True Hero  
*By SPC Nancy Charlton*
- 18 NG Bday and Reenlistment  
*By SFC Daniel Ewer*
- 19 Swim-a-Thon  
*By SGT Lynette Hoke*
- 20 Holidays in Iraq  
*By Task Force 34*
- 21 A Toast to TF 34 Family

The Flightline is the official command information publication of Task Force 34. Contents of The Flightline are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government or the Department of the Army. The content of this publication is the responsibility of Task Force 34 Public Affairs Office. All contributions are edited. For more information on Task Force 34, visit [www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org).

**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**

Task Force 34 Public Affairs Officer

**SFC Daniel Ewer**

Task Force 34 Public Affairs Chief

**SGT Lynette Hoke**

Task Force 34 Public Affairs Journalist

**SPC Jodi Krause**

HSC 834th ASB Unit Public Affairs Rep.

**SPC Richard Brown**

A Co. 834th ASB Unit Public Affairs Rep.



Hello and Happy New Year to our Families and Friends!

The year of 2009 is here,...finally! I believe I see the light at the end of a very long tunnel. TF34 Soldiers have been working very hard throughout the Christmas and New Year holidays, yet most if not all of us had time to stand still for a moment or two, reflect and give thanks for the blessings that God has bestowed on our great Task Force. We were blessed here at Joint Base Balad with a quiet day and night allowing our Soldiers the time to rip into the many Christmas gifts and care packages sent our way! Thank you to all for sharing literally hundreds of care packages with us. The United States Postal Service must have been very busy with the number of white, flat-rate boxes that we received. These priority mail boxes were jam-packed with great things to eat, read, or use to help keep clean.

On Christmas Eve, your Soldier had the opportunity to go to a Christmas Candle-Light Service at the Westside Chapel. Our chaplains did a great job of keeping us focused on the correct reason for the season. Major Trish Baker led our TF 34 choir as they sang a variety of classic Christmas carols. This awesome event made more than one Red Bull shed a tear or two.

In this month's FLIGHTLINE, I want to draw your attention to some really outstanding missions that have taken place. For example, read on page 9 about the 1-244 AHB that flew a mission directed by the U.S. Ambassador to transport several Iraqi families with their children to safety and a new life in a different country. Read about a 17 year old Boy Scout who dedicated a huge amount of time as part of his Eagle Scout project to organize a Christmas package drive with many, many USPS packages showing up on 2-149 GSAB's front step. The 834<sup>th</sup> ASB had the opportunity to get out in the local Iraqi community. A Co., 834th's Distro Company transports fuel as part of an agreement between Joint Base Balad and a local village of Bikar. Our Soldiers have delivered a variety of items to the children in the area creating quite the positive impact. Our mighty Attack Recon BN, 3-159 ARB, otherwise known as TF Quickstrike, has quietly and ever so efficiently supported a host of customers in Basra and here near JBB. It is always good to look up and see a pair of AH-64Ds growling as they pass overhead. The local insurgents clearly understand it is still in their best interest to lay low when these crews are sharking and on the hunt.

The CSM and I just got back from visiting this great unit in Basra. Despite a somewhat primitive living environment, the morale down to every last Soldier is very high.

And in closing, similar to last month, I would ask each of you in your own way to continue to pray for all of our mighty TF 34 warriors as they do their vital mission in support of Multi National Corps-Iraq!

**ONE TEAM-ONE FIGHT, ATTACK!**



COL Clay Brock  
Task Force 34 Commander  
Reading the Christmas story on  
Christmas Eve.



SGT Christina Oanes and SPC Jenaye Hoke are excited as they are given care packages to open on New Years Eve 2008.



CSM Gerry Thesing  
TF 34 Command Sergeant Major

Hello Families and Soldiers of Task Force 34;

*Happy New Year!*

This new year; 2009, has special meaning because it's the year we ALL will be planning our return home from this deployment and start our lives again as we left it LAST YEAR! It is time to start planning family events now, such as deciding when to take a vacation and where or what that vacation will be. Instead of making plans for our separation and deployment, we can all make plans for our return and reunion.

When I return home, I am looking forward to grilling meals on our deck for my family and enjoying some cold beer (real beer), walking on grass with bare feet, taking the boat out on the lake, my wife and I taking walks together, landscaping in our yard, visiting family and friends, and spending time with my family.

I encourage everyone to have plans for your return, keep active, and do not let the lure of partying too much drag you down. Be cognizant of the

facts about accidents; the cause of accidents that Soldiers encounter after returning from deployment, and avoid the causes; have fun in moderation, and drive safe.

Remember to ask yourself when you return, what does my wife/husband want to do? What do my children want to do? What do my relatives expect of me?

I wish everyone a happy New Year and best wishes to all. The best part of the year is yet to come; think of the day the busses roll into the company area, AASF, or Armory and we are getting off to re-unite with each other; that will be the best day of this New Year!

*Written by CSM Gerry Thesing*



## Public Affairs Guidance

### Balad, MN Wild Hockey Day

834th ASB "Skater" vs. 148 Fighter Wing, 17 Jan., 2008  
See [www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org) for details

### Jersey Contest!

Write a story, get an NFL Jersey! See me for details.

### Company website

Have you seen your company website lately? Go to [www.TaskForce34.org/units](http://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!***

### Stories

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

*SFC Daniel Ewer, TF 34 Public Affairs Chief*



# Wing and a Prayer

The 1-244<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion, what can I say ... well, everything you saw depicted in the movie "Deliverance" is true. Just kidding, some toothless Cajun humor. Actually, as the (Christian) Chaplain of task force VooDoo, yes that is an oxymoron, I have been amazed at the kindness and warm hearted giving these, seemingly, stone cold killers have displayed. For three weeks in a row these Sons and daughters "of the Bayou" would sacrifice their only day off and give of their own Christmas boxes from home to some of the local moms and kids. I am pretty sure that this is true Christianity.

The Bible has something to say about selfless acts like these:

*But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep*

*at his right hand and the goats at his left. Then the King will say to those on the right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

*For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'*

*"Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?' And the King will tell them, 'I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'"*  
Matthew 25: 31-40



CH (LT) Woodward  
1-244 AHB Chaplain

Though I'm still not sure I would want to meet certain W4's in a dark alley in the French quarter, I know that they, from the top down, would, and have, given the shirt off of their backs to someone in need.

*Written by CH (LT) Woodward*

## 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](http://www.ArmyFRG.org)



## ASK JAG *About Your Taxes*

### **Secrets to Successful Income Tax Filing During Deployment**

Tax season is around the corner! Filing state and federal income taxes may be the last thing you want to deal with, especially right now during a military deployment. It can be an overwhelming event, but it doesn't have to be difficult. The IRS has recognized that service members and their families face special circumstances, and we are here to help you lessen that burden.

#### **Getting started:**

Below are a few things you should know before filing your income taxes:

- \* File State tax returns in your permanent home state (home of record or where you have residency).
- \* Access your tax statement online. Beginning 23 January 2009, you can view and print out your W-2 form at:

<https://mypay.dfas.mil>

- \* Find answers to your questions on the IRS Web site at: <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/military/index.html>

#### **Getting help with your taxes:**

##### **In Country:**

Service members and eligible DoD contractors can get help beginning next month through the Voluntary Income Tax Assistance program (VITA). There will be a location on the West and East sides of JBB. Our legal center is here to help you along with additional volunteers. Together we will help you file your taxes FREE of charge. Go as early before the filing deadline as possible to avoid long lines. Fliers and information will be posted in your unit area soon.

TF34 Office of the Brigade Judge Advocate

Tax POCs

SSG Matthew Nelson [matthew.j.nelson@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:matthew.j.nelson@iraq.centcom.mil)

SGT George Ngugi [George.ngugi@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:George.ngugi@iraq.centcom.mil)

DSN 318-482-4156

##### **At Home:**

Check with your military post Family Assistance Center or Family Programs Office for local tax help for military families. Many states have free tax resources for deployed service members. If you decide to see a

private tax preparer, make sure he/she is familiar with the IRS Armed Forces' Tax Guide and has experience filing returns for service members and their dependents. There are many military specific exemptions and benefits for both state and federal filing- don't miss out!

#### **You will need the following:**

- \* All W-2 and 1099 forms
- \* Social Security numbers for all family members
- \* Deductions and credit information (mileage logs, receipts, education credit forms, etc.)
- \* Bank Account and routing numbers (pertaining to direct deposit)
- \* Receipts for child care expenses
- \* Last year's tax return (if available)
- \* Power of Attorney for tax filing (for family members)

#### **Basics To Know for Deployment Tax Filing:**

\*Service member's Boots on Ground (BOG) pay is tax free (this does not include time at MOB station BUT check with your state to see if military duty outside the state is tax free).

\* The IRS allows an extension of the deadline for filing taxes (period of BOG plus 180 days) for deployed service members (applies to joint filing). Use this extension only if you need to- there is no reason to delay getting your refund!

\* Spouse income is taxable.

\* Any income from a Reservist's civilian employer is taxable.

\* Be sure to check whether you qualify for Earned Income Credit and/or your state's equivalent, due to BOG tax free status.

\*Most states have a military tax page describing benefits for military members; check your state's site.

**Resources:** For more information, visit the websites provided below.

<http://www.militaryonesource.com>,

<http://www.guardfamily.org>,

<http://www.irs.gov> (for military tax benefits, e-filing and free filing)

*By SGT Sherry Johnson, Paralegal*

## Fact for the Day

**Title:** *Bloody Sunday*

**Date:** 7 March 1965

**Fact:** For five days in March of 1965, civil rights activists responded to weeks of violence and unrest by walking 54 miles from Selma to Alabama's state capitol of Montgomery. The first of three marches was known as "*Bloody Sunday*." On that day, Alabama state troopers attacked marchers with clubs and tear gas, injuring almost one hundred.

## Joint Base Balad Celebrates African American History February 2009

Every year since 1976, the President has proclaimed African-American History Month a national observance to celebrate the achievements and contributions of African-American/Black Soldiers, Airmen, and civilian employees of our nation. African-American/Black History Month is a time to reflect on the history of African-American/Blacks as an essential part of creating this country. This month provides a welcome opportunity to recognize and celebrate the contributions that African-American/Blacks have made and continue to make towards our country's progress. This year's theme is "*The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas*."

## 2009 MNC-I Equal Opportunity Conference

MNC-I will be hosting an EO conference in February 2009 at Camp Victory, Baghdad. The conference will provide training and workshops for EO personnel and DSARCs. TF34's EO Program Manager, LTC Yates will facilitate a training class on Diversity.

## 2008 Army Equal Opportunity Advisor Worldwide Conference

Monica J. Bailey, MNF-I/MNC-I EO Office attended the conference held in Orlando, Florida. The conference facilitated and hosted various topics dealing with equal opportunity throughout the Army. The conference was sponsored by the Department of the Army Equal Opportunity office. Key issues were 1) the "Strategic Perspective" and importance of the Equal Opportunity Advisor (EOA) in the Army and 2) the possibility of the Department of Army combining EO and Sexual Assault into one role for the EOA.

## Historical Note from the NGB EEO/EO Director, Mr. Felton Page

You have seen and heard the phrase "**The Watermark**". There was a time in which one of the ways used to determine the levels of quality of the paper used for manuscripts and legal documents was the Watermark that was affixed to each sheet. Not over bearing and bold, but ever present only visible if you focused directly upon it. That watermark stood to ensure the reader of the quality and caring that went into the preparation of the writings. In that same vein, **EEO and EO are the watermarks and foundation** in which we must continue to build our Army and Air National Guard programs. Equality, fairness, inclusion, and accommodations together equal a force that is diverse, always ready, and always there!

## Upcoming Special Observances for 2009

Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday  
15 Jan 2009

African American History Month  
February 2009 (Entire month)

Women's History Month  
March 2009 (Entire month)

Holocaust Remembrance Day  
21 April 2009

Days of Remembrance  
19-26 April 2009 (Sunday to Sunday)

Asian Pacific Heritage Month  
May 2009 (Entire month)

## Annual Special Observances Programs

Annual Ethnic and Special Observances are designed to enhance cross-cultural awareness and promote harmony among all uniformed members, their families, and the civilian workforce. These activities are the extensions of the EO education and training objectives.

Commanders should develop, plan, and conduct annual observances with assistance of the TF34 staff. EOAs and EOLs should be utilized as subject matter expertise along with company personnel for coordination of the event. Guest speakers, musical, and other artistic entertainment, food exhibits and samples are excellent ways to promote cross-cultural harmony and awareness.

A consolidated annual observance recognizing members of all racial/ethnic groups may be conducted in addition to (but not in lieu of) annual observances. If you have any questions, please contact TF34 EO Office at (318) 483-4589.

By LTC James Michael Yates, TF 34 EO Advisor



# IT IS 2009! ...



SFC Michael King, E Co. 1-244<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion, Motor Platoon Sgt., "Not to make promises I can't keep"



SGT Trent Shoemaker, Future Operations Noncommissioned Officer, 1-244 Assault Helicopter Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company, "In 1994 I made a resolution to never make another resolution again".



1LT George Wiley, E Co. 1-244<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion, Maintenance Platoon Leader, "To quit smoking and come home alive"



SSG Jimmy Veal, E Co. 1-244<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion, Unit Movement Noncommissioned Officer, "Continue not drinking when I go home"

## WHAT IS YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION?



CSM Myron Creecy, 1-244<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion CSM, "Not to make New Year's Resolutions I can't keep".

"G to G"

(Grateful to God)



CW4 Michael Stanco, Battle Captain, Headquarters and Headquarters Company 1-244 Assault Helicopter Battalion, "Spend more time with my daughter"



Staff Sgt. John Pate, Unit Supply Sgt, E Co 1-244 Assault Helicopter Battalion, "Keep doing what I have been doing"



1LT Brian Cooper, Platoon Leader, C Co 1-244<sup>th</sup> Attack Helicopter Battalion, "Get Home Safely"



# 1-244 AHB Helping Hand

On October 11, 2008 B Company, 1-244<sup>th</sup> AHB was tasked with a mission that was not the normal VIP or dignitary ring route around Iraq to which they had become accustomed. Their passengers that day would be considered typical, ordinary people by American standards but in Iraq, Christians are a very small minority group. In fact over the last few months Christians have been receiving death threats and 13 Christian Iraqis have been killed in the northern city of Mosul. Christian families have been fleeing from their homes because they fear for their safety and the safety of their family members.

CW4 Rick Rowzee was the Air Mission Commander for this particular operation and he gave a synopsis of what the mission entailed. In a Forward Operating Base (FOB) just south of Baghdad, a small group of Protestant Christian Iraqis were working with

the Polish military. When the Polish Ambassador learned of the religious persecution of these Iraqis he offered Polish citizenship for all the men and their families. B Co. transported the group (25 total) with the help of Black Water from the FOB to the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP, 1 hour flight,). All the Iraqi passengers secured everything they brought with them in the helicopters and then boarded an airplane for Poland.

I asked Mr. Rowzee about the people he transported that day. "I don't know if the people were scared from the threats on their lives or scared to ride in the helicopter. We had 3-4 children in each aircraft, ages ranging from 7 years to a baby, 2 older men in their late 60's and a handicapped man." Mr. Rowzee said that one of the young Iraqi girls had blond hair and cried when she had to get off the aircraft. "Some of the children cried

because they didn't want to get off the helicopter," they really enjoyed the ride. He described it as a "feel good mission."

The crews were: CW4 Rick Rowzee, CW2 Cody Davis, CW2 Christina Maple, CPT James Wells, SFC Jason Debusk, SGT Corey Hoyt, SGT Rick Halbert and SPC Jerry Lint. Mr. Rowzee was very aware of the danger in transporting this group. The crew learned that some of their passengers had relatives executed in Mosul the week prior. Mr. Rowzee told his crew that the Muslim extremist that hated and want to kill the Iraqi Christians may attack their helicopters. The crews carefully planned the route, used evasive maneuvers to deter threat and completed a fully successful mission with dexterity and pride.

*Written By CPT Paige Hood  
HHC 1-244 Unit Public Affairs Representative*

*To CPT Tim Cleighton, B Co. Commander,*

*Tim,*

*On 11 OCT, your crews flew a very important high priority mission that was directed by the U.S. Ambassador. In short, this mission saved lives (no doubt) where your soldiers/crews were directly responsible for the safe extraction /transfer of several Iraq Nationalist and their very young children/families.*

*I personally observed your crew physically handle these young children with pride, professionalism, and a manner that would make you think these children were their own. I was extremely impressed with the crew's performance with the hospitality and delicate caring attitude they demonstrated to these families.*

*This mission was directed from the AMD (U.S. Ambassador) after he received a special request from the Polish Ambassador. The stellar performance and irrefutable integrity of your crew has had immense impact on the relations with the US, Iraq Nationalist, and the Polish Delegation contingent.*

*I cannot emphasize enough how grateful the Polish AMD (Ambassador) was for your crews. Several crew members debarked the aircraft and hand carried young children on the Helo, secured them, and then loaded a lot of luggage. They went even further and emptied their coolers providing cold drinks to all the women and children.*

*I have ensured the AMD office knows the output of your crew men/women on a day to day basis, their constant professionalism and hard work day in and out, only qualifies the integrity of all members of the 244<sup>th</sup>, and they have made us all look good with the AMD mission.*

*CPT Dwayne Hodges*

## Words of Praise



# Eagle Scout Shows His Support for Troops in Iraq

Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 149th General Support Aviation Battalion received some unconventional support as 122 care packages came pouring in on Nov. 15.

CPT Carisa Kimbro, Headquarters 2-149th GSAB Commander from Burleson, TX, received the packages all addressed to her. Surprised at the number of boxes filling her office, she made some calls to find who had sent them. CPT Kimbro contacted Lynn Geddie from Klein, TX, and was told that Lynn's 17-year-old son, Geoffrey Geddie, was the one responsible.

During her conversation with Lynn, CPT Kimbro learned Geoffrey is in the Boy Scouts of America, and had to complete an Eagle Scout Project to attain Eagle Scout status. Instead of doing the traditional project of cleaning an old cemetery or building a playground, Geoffrey chose to support the American Soldiers serving in Iraq.

"Even if you don't agree with the war," Geoffrey said, "the Soldiers still matter!"

This was not the first time Geoffrey has been around the military; he grew up in a family full of former military. His family is very supportive of those in uniform as his grandfather was once a Prisoner of War.

Geoffrey distributed 2,000 flyers, and then a week later collected the items that were donated. With the cash collected, he shopped for the things he thought Soldiers would want: candy, lip balm, puzzle books, etc. He brought a crew together to build the packages, and arranged postage.

"I couldn't believe a 17 year old could do all of this! He dedicated a lot of his time to it, and it really shows his support for the troops," said PFC Rajah Ello, HHC 2-159th GSAB CBRN Specialist from Little Elm, TX. "I was very thankful for what he and his family have done."

However, this is not the end of the story. During the phone conversation with CPT Kimbro, Lynn brought up the hundreds of Beanie Babies that were also

packaged. These were the family collection. Unfortunately, Lynn herself is terminally ill and the family made the decision that the Soldiers could better use the Beanie Babies here in Iraq.

"As your Soldiers take them, realize how special these were to this family," Lynn said.

"In addition to our own Soldiers taking them," CPT Kimbro informed Lynn, "we would also take them to the East side Hospital on Joint Base Balad, as well as making sure that our MEDEVAC unit C Co. 2-149th GSAB could also get some for their aircraft when they fly kids."

The 2-149th GASB has flown an American flag here in Iraq to be presented to Geoffrey at his Eagle Scout Ceremony in early December.

*Written by SGT Edward Thorne  
HHC 2-149 GSAB Unit Public Affairs Representative*



For more stories and photos of 2-149 GSAB, visit:  
[www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org)





# 834 ASB fuelers provide humanitarian support

The Transportation Platoon of A Co., 834th Aviation Support Battalion is doing its part to reach out to the local communities with its own humanitarian mission.

“We really wanted a transportation mission,” said 2LT Bryan Pederson, A Co., 834th ASB Transportation Platoon Leader. “This one came available and we got it.”

The mission is a vitally important one for a local village near Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

“We periodically go out to Bikar village to deliver fuel,” 2LT Pederson said. “It helps power their water and sewage plant.”

The Air Force provides the security for the convoy traveling to the Bikar village, which is located less than a mile outside the base. It is a quick trip and a safe one. The Air Force also provides ground protection when A Co. Soldiers are off loading the fuel.

“They bring MRAP’s and HMMWV’s to escort our fuel trucks,” said PV2 Melissa Trull of A Co., 834th ASB. “But it feels safe to travel without them.”

Besides the fuel, the Soldiers reach out to the villagers in other ways.

“2LT Pederson and SSG [Rick] Culver [A Co. 834th ASB Transportation Platoon Sergeant] take the time to talk with the village mayor,” PV2 Trull said. “We deliver candy and stuffed animals to the children. They run right up to you to talk to you.”

The A Co., 834th ASB Transportation Platoon mission is part of Joint Base Balad’s Force Protection, which keeps them primarily inside the wire. Each month, different Soldiers are chosen to participate in the humanitarian mission.

The Soldiers appreciate the mission outside the wire, and look forward to their turn to reach out to the local community.

*Written by SPC Justin Adelmann  
A. Co. 834th ASB Unit Public Affairs Representative*



For more 834 ASB stories visit:  
[www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org)



A Co. 834th ASB convoy to their fuel drop off point



SSG Rick Culver, A 834 ASB, talks to children of a local village during a humanitarian mission.



PV2 Melissa Trull, Heavy Vehicle Operator, A 834 ASB, talks to Iraqi children.



# Balad Attack FARP

FARP, depending on who you ask, could stand for one of two things, either Forward Arming and Refueling Point, or Fueling And Rearming Point. But no matter what it is called it has but one purpose, to recover, replenish and launch aircraft.

The Attack FARP in Balad, Iraq, has the duty of receiving aircraft that need both fuel and armaments, and sending them back out to complete their mission. The Balad FARP has received the OH-58 Kiowa, AH-1 Cobra, and the AH-64D Apache, and stands ready to receive many more types of aircraft.

The high operational tempo of the FARP can have aircraft arriving every twenty minutes, and the aircraft needs to head back out as quickly



as possible to provide support to the troops on ground. The FARP personnel stand ready to receive them, and get the crews what they need as quickly and safely as possible. A full turn around can be achieved in as little as 15 minutes, at full combat speed.

FARP personnel achieve their quick turnaround when an aircraft starts its approach into the FARP, the person in the watch tower quickly yells out “BIRD!” This sets the rest of the personnel into motion. Everyone dons their head protection, be it a FARP helmet, flight helmet, or a Kevlar, and puts on their eye protection.

Fully protected, everyone runs to the pads where the aircraft are waiting. At this point the pad chief approaches the aircraft, electrically grounds it and asks the pilots what they need.

The pad chief signals over the fuelers, who begin to fuel the aircraft. Simultaneously, the pad chief, who is an armament specialist, rearms the aircraft with rockets, rounds or missiles. After the aircraft has been refueled and rearmed, it will take off and continue its mission providing support.



*Written by SGT Jose Isaacs  
3-159 AHB Unit Public Affairs Representative*



For more pictures and articles of  
3-159 AHB visit:  
[www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org)

# Balad Ready FARP

The Ready Forward Arming and Refueling Point (FARP) at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, is operated by Soldiers of A Co., 834<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion and has the responsibility of receiving and refueling aircraft as well as providing fuel to the Balad Attack FARP. The Balad Ready FARP has received UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters, V-22 Osprey, as well as numerous other aircraft types. They have fueled upwards of 2,370 aircraft and handled upwards of 825,000 gallons of fuel since arriving in country in late August. This averages out to about 7000 gallons a day.

“The Ready FARP is a ‘hot’ FARP. Which means that the aircraft does not shut down during refueling, operations” according to 1Lt. Jared Annexstad, Fuel and Water Platoon Leader, A Co. 834<sup>th</sup> ASB. Due to the multiple moving parts safety always comes first. Most refueling in theater is known as cold refueling when the aircraft is shut down making the A Co. mission more unique than others.

The operational tempo of the Ready FARP can change by the hour. Soldiers may be very busy for several hours and then sit and wait for the rest of their twelve

hour shift. The FARP never shuts down due to the fact that aircraft are always flying which means a need for fuel. Soldiers wait in a tower built by Soldiers of A Co. When an aircraft is making an approach the Soldier in the tower will alert other personnel. The Soldiers then grab all of their Personal Protective Equipment and head out to the aircraft. Once they arrive at the aircraft they wait for passengers to unload to the waiting area and for the Crew Chief to motion them in. Soldiers then hook up to the aircraft and signal to the truck to begin pumping. The Crew Chief will signal them when the aircraft is full.

Soldiers at the Ready FARP take part in many different activities to keep busy while readily waiting to fuel aircraft. The FARP's Recreational activities include a weight bench, Xbox<sup>®</sup>, card and board games. The Soldiers also find time to do online classes and Army Correspondence Courses. The Soldiers at the Ready FARP even had a Rock Band<sup>®</sup> ‘Battle of the Bands’ as part of their New Years celebration.

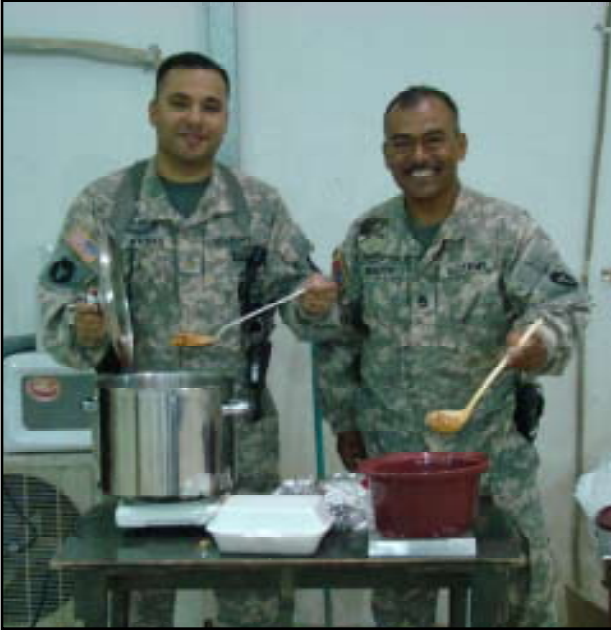
*Written by SPC Richard Brown, 834th ASB Unit Public Affairs Specialist*



For more FARP and New Years pictures and articles visit:  
[www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org)



# TEXAS BEAN COOK-OFF SHOWDOWN



**MAJ Matthew Masias, D Co. 2-149th GSAB Commander (left), and SFC Juan Rendon, C Co. 2-149th GSAB Crewchief (right), face-off at the 2-149th GSAB Texas Bean Showdown.**



**MAJ Masias and SFC Rendon following SFC Rendon's victory.**

"The only differences between cook-offs here and at home are 12 hours, the beans taste just as good now as they do back home," said SGT John Norman, D Co., 2-149th General Support Aviation Battalion Maintenance Team Leader. "I enjoyed the Major's beans better."

Soldiers of 2-149th GSAB "Jokers" brought a little taste of Texas to Iraq on Dec. 7, during a bean cook-off sponsored by D Co., 2-149th GSAB.

"It was great," said MAJ Matthew Masias, D Co., 2-149th GSAB Commander. "We had a lot of participation, and the food tasted really good."

Texas Soldiers came together carrying on a long tradition of Texas cook-offs dating back as early as the 1900s when people got together, they not only sample the best of the best in food, but they also had a good time with games and other activities.

"The cook-off was between me and SFC Rendon from Charlie Company," MAJ Masias said.

MAJ Masias and SFC Juan Rendon, C Co., 2-149th GSAB Crewchief, faced off head to head, beans against beans, filling stomachs and soliciting votes. Ultimately, SFC Ren-

don's beans were voted the winner.

"We chose the winner based on texture," said LTC Joanne MacGregor, 2-149th GSAB Commander. "But we also liked the fact that MAJ Masias added little extras with his beans, the sausage and rice were good additions. However, in the end SFC Rendon was the winner, and MAJ Masias was a gracious loser!"

SSG Ben Hale, D Co., 2-149th GSAB CH-47 Maintenance Supervisor, plans on making the cook-offs a regular part on the monthly regiment at Delta Company.

"When we accomplish our mission and keep the aircraft running, we have a little extra time to boost morale. These little events help to pass the time," SSG Hale said. "The guys finish their work, and we get together and toss the football around or play a little basketball until the food is done. Competition is good; we'd like to do brisket next."

*Written by 1LT Anthony Sims  
D Co. 2-149th GSAB Unit Public Affairs Representative*



For more 2-149 articles,  
photos and video, visit:  
[www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org)



# Mail equals love for Task Force 34 Soldiers

It's 1458 on a sunny Monday afternoon, and a line begins to form outside the Brigade's mail room with Soldiers checking to see if they received any mail that day. Promptly at 1500, the doors open and mail is given to those patiently waiting.

"Getting mail is one of my favorite parts of the day, it really feels good to get something from home," said SPC Todd Robins, Headquarters 34th Combat Aviation Brigade Human Resources Specialist. "It shows that someone took the time to send something to me, they were thinking about me."

The Brigade mail room is run at the company level by Soldiers SPC Jamie Eccles and SPC Troy Vance.

"There have been good reactions and bad reactions, depending on what exactly they get," said SPC Troy Vance, Task Force 34 Headquarters Mail Room Clerk. "A bill gets less of a dramatic reaction than a package, of course. Cards are a welcome Birthday or holiday greeting."

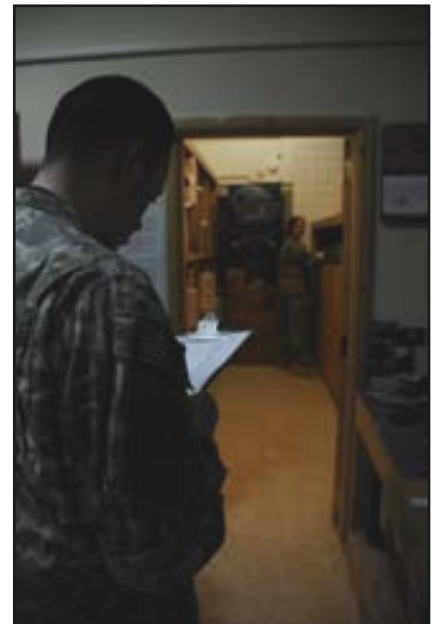
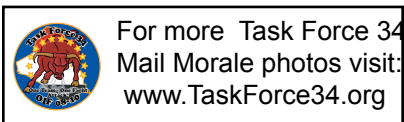
At 1500 Monday through Saturday, a white board is posted at the mail room desk with the names of Soldiers who have mail. Many Soldiers take this board as the "They Love Me" board.

"My theory is, if I receive a package sometime this week, about a week ago, someone loved me enough to send me a package," said CPL Zachary Gardner, HHC 34th Combat Aviation Brigade Signal Support Specialist.

If you receive mail that day, you're loved. If you don't receive mail that day, you aren't loved. Many Soldiers come into the mail room in hopes of seeing their name on the mail board for the day.

"Mail is definitely a morale booster. Soldiers here need a little bit of home brought to them when they are so far away and in these conditions. It helps to maintain a sense of stability and balance at home and here in Balad," SPC Vance said. "Whether it be in the form of something they ordered from Amazon or something a family member has sent, it is a little bit of home in every piece of mail."

*Written by SPC Jaime Eccles, HHC 34th CAB*



(Top) Boxes pile up in the TF Headquarters mail room.

(Middle) SFC Stacke looks at the list for mail as SPC Jaime Eccles retrieves his boxes.

(Bottom) SPC Jaime Eccles sorts letters in the TF HQ mail room.

# Friendship Mission

On December 19<sup>th</sup> 2008, Soldiers from A Company 834<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion, met and ate dinner with local tribal leadership in what was dubbed a Friendship Mission.

It all began when three Soldiers from the Transportation Platoon of A Co. were given the mission of escorting local nationals who came to work for the Iraqi Business Industrial Zone (IBIZ) on Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

SPC Seth McMurtrey, SPC Alan Rolfes, and PV2 Joseph Loscheider, quickly built a camaraderie with the local nationals.

SPC Seth McMurtrey was chosen for the job as the Noncommissioned Officer In Charge for the escort mission because of his experience in dealing with Iraqi citizens, as this is his second deployment to Iraq.

“On my last deployment I was a part of a [Quick Reactionary Force] unit.” McMurtrey said “The atmosphere is totally different, but the things I learned help me relate with them today.”

Among the Iraqi nationals who came to work with IBIZ were the sons of a local tribal leader who owns a part of IBIZ.

Through his sons, Sheik Shihab Ahmad Salih Al Timmi, invited the Soldiers and their leadership to enjoy a dinner at his house.

Accompanying the party was LTC Eric Waage, 834<sup>th</sup> ASB Commander.

“This dinner is to celebrate the relationship between A Co. Transportation Soldiers and the Iraqi citizens that they work with and have built a close bond with” LTC Waage

said during the convoy briefing.

During the dinner the leadership talked about the relationship between Iraq and America, and how they could continue to build the bonds stronger.

Sheik Ahmad Salih has been supportive of America since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He has always believed America was there to help and has not wavered in



*LTC Eric Waage has a conversation with the elder of the household during the Friendship Mission on Dec. 19.*

his beliefs.

“I tell people the American’s came and they help to build schools and water treatment plants, and other things that we need.” Sheik Ahmad Salih told LTC Waage “The insurgents try to discredit America, but I tell them it is the insurgents who are the ones that destroy things.”

His beliefs have not made life easy, as he has experienced multiple attempts on his life.

With the new Status Of Forces Agreement a few weeks away LTC Waage asked “How can we continue to make these bonds stronger?”

“By continuing to show the same support” was the Sheiks response.

While 834<sup>th</sup> ASB leadership; Battalion Commander LTC Waage, Battalion Command Sergeant Major Jeffrey Lindberg, A Company Commander 1LT Christopher Staples, A Company First Sergeant William Buystedt, A Company Transportation Platoon Leader 2LT Bryan Pederson, and A Company Transportation Platoon Sergeant SSG Rick Culver conversed with their hosts, SPC McMurtrey and PV2 Loscheider kept up a friendly banter with the Sheik’s sons and cousin Rick, who is also the translator/manager of the local nationals who work on JBB.

“They are good people,” Rick said of the Soldiers “very professional and friendly.”

The hosts treated the American Soldiers to a feast of lamb, chicken and other delicacies.

The hosts also extended their hospitality to the soldiers who were among the convoy and security detail that waited outside the home. They loaded up plates of food and personally brought it to the Soldiers waiting outside.

The Soldiers also received a tour of the property, and had a chance to extend their friendliness to the local children by passing out treats.

The Friendship Mission was a success, each group extended their thanks and well wishes for each other. They each pledged to continue working on keeping the relationship between American Soldiers and Iraqi citizens strong.

*Written by SPC Justin Adelman  
A. Co. 834th ASB Unit Public Affairs Representative*



For full ‘Friendship Mission’ Story  
visit: [www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org)

# Tale of a True Hero

When someone is introduced to a deployed Soldier who is also a Vietnam veteran, there seems to be an immediate look of surprise. Many people don't think there are any Vietnam veterans left that are still serving in the military. That is not the case with CW5 Gary Arne of Task Force 34 Headquarters, currently deployed to Joint Base Balad in Iraq. CW5 Arne has been an inspiration to many of the Soldiers, not only for his kind nature and leadership skills, but his willingness to pass knowledge onto our younger generation of Soldiers.

CW5 Arne was honored as a true war hero from his battles in Vietnam and is still recognized as a hero today. In April of 2009, he will have served forty years in the military. During his service in Vietnam, he received 1,300 hours of combat flight time and survived six helicopter crashes in the jungle. He was ultimately awarded two Silver Stars, the Bronze Star, forty-two Air Medals, a Presidential Campaign Medal, and many others for his bravery and valor during the war.

Back in 1970, CW5 Arne knew he was going to be drafted. When the draft notice came in the mail, the father of one of his best friends was the Army recruiter. In those days, you had thirty days after you received the notice to sign up for whatever service you chose. The recruiter told him he was going to Vietnam and asked if he wanted to walk through the jungle or fly over it. So, CW5 Arne signed up for the High School to Flight School program and his journey began.

As with most cases, CW5 Arne's family didn't initially react well to him participating in the war. He had two older brothers and his family had assumed that he would follow the same path. CW5 Arne was more interested in the war and the adventure. Before he left for Vietnam, he received the first hug that he could remember from his mother and a solid handshake from his father. Since it wasn't a regular occurrence in his household to show emotions, it was a very special time for him. Today, his family is very proud of him for his service in Vietnam as well as the war in Iraq.

Many Americans were against the Vietnam War from the start; however, CW5 believed in what our troops were sent there to do. He and his comrades trained for over a year to go and fight. At the end of flight school, some of his fellow pilot graduates received orders state side, so they were not being sent to Vietnam. Most of them cried from disappointment.

One of the things that made CW5 Arne different from most Soldiers was that he went out of his way to get to know and understand the Vietnamese people. He could see the happiness on their faces because they felt safe and secure that the American troops were there. This made CW5 Arne proud and willing to go out every day to fight for the freedom of those living in the war torn country. It was a much safer place with our troops there than any other forces that preceded us.

The environment of Vietnam was all triple canopy jungle and mountains in comparison to his current place of duty in Iraq, which is flat desert. The temps were comparable to Iraq, but the humidity was much higher. During the rainy season in Iraq it may rain a few days. In Vietnam, our troops had the monsoon season where it would rain for days and days. Many villages would flood and living conditions were primitive at best, compared to Iraq.

CW5 Arne was, and still is, a helicopter pilot. He flew everything from resupply to combat assaults, gunships, special operations, VIP, propaganda, long range reconnaissance, and many others. He loved the Vietnamese people and loved the flying, but seeing the number of people killed was unbelievable. He lost many friends. The lack of commutation with family back home was also very hard to deal with. Today with communication devices, such as phone, e-mail, and VTC, Soldiers can keep in better contact with loved ones back home.

CW5 Arne knows full well that he was forever changed by his experiences in both Vietnam and Laos. It was hard for him to see it, but others have discussed it with him. He was nineteen years old flying a high priced helicopter, getting shot at daily trying to make a difference. If he didn't believe in what he was doing, there was no way he could have done what he did.

All he really wanted out of this experience was to take the knowledge he gained and make a difference in someone's life. "I have always tried to help junior Soldiers progress through their careers, and improve their standing in life" he states.

Being in the military for almost forty years, CW5 Arne knew to expect anything. The same as with Vietnam, CW5 Arne knew he was going to deploy to the Middle East at some point. Now, he is the Tactical Operations Officer for Task Force 34. He flies missions that are similar to what he flew in Vietnam, but his main job is to help evaluate the enemy's weapon system capability and advise the command in regards to how to protect the force against these capabilities.

His views on the war are similar to Vietnam. He believes in the mission and the decision to come was sound. Judging from his experiences in Iraq so far, he believes the majority of the Iraqi citizens feel the same as the Vietnamese people did. They know no life without war, but understand we are the best army they have ever had here, making them feel much safer.

When young Soldiers ask him questions about the wars that he's fought in, he says, "Anyone can sit around feeling sorry for themselves. Try to look around at how bad others have to live. We are so blessed and so many other Soldiers sacrificed so that we can live the way we do. It is time to do your part. Keep busy, continue your education and work toward advancing your career. If you don't like the way the Army does something, don't work around it, change it through the system."

*Written by SPC Nancy Charleton  
HHC Task Force 34 Unit Public Affairs Representative*



For more information, articles and photos about Soldiers from Task Force 34 visit:  
[www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org)



# Task Force 34 Soldiers Re-enlist and Celebrate Guard's 372nd Birthday

Task Force 34 was well represented at the National Guard's 372th Birthday celebration in the Al Faw Palace rotunda Dec. 13 when 60 TF34 Soldiers reenlisted accompanied by more than 150 other Multi-National Corps-Iraq Soldiers.

The TF34 reenlistments "totaled 300 years of additional commitment of service to their states and country. The Soldiers will earn nearly \$1 million in bonuses," according to SGT Tim Stocking, TF34 Retention NCO.

"We've been answering our nation's call, just like our forefathers did 372 years ago," said Maj. Gen. Nelson Cannon, director general, Civilian Police Assistance Training Team, Directorate of Interior Affairs, Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq, and part of the Michigan National Guard. "The National Guard has constantly been serving as one of our most enduring institutions. We are all part of the legacy of what is now called, the National Guard."

National Guard troops from all over theater descended upon the palace to devote further years towards serving their nation and to share in the birthday celebration of their component.

"On the thirteenth day of December

we celebrate the National Guard Birthday," said Col. David Sheridain, Chief of National Guard Affairs, MNC-I. "I am extremely honored to be with you here today. On behalf of General Odierno (commander, Multi-National Force – Iraq), Lieutenant General Austin (commander, Multi-National Corps – Iraq) and the many other senior leaders, I welcome you to Al Faw Palace and salute you for your continued service to our nation at a time when you are needed most."

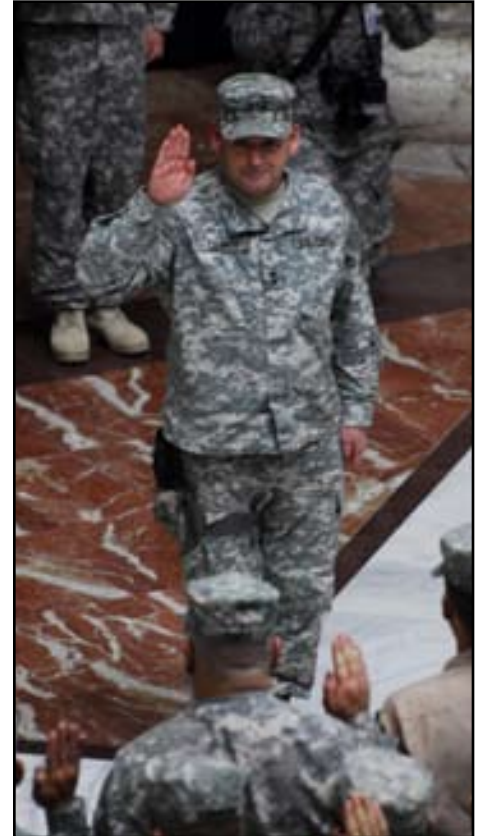
The ceremony highlighted the history of the United States military's oldest component and featured a mass re-enlistment of more than 200 Army National Guard Soldiers from more than a dozen states. The National Guard service members, who re-enlisted during the birthday celebration, represent the wide array of troops who perform crucial missions in support of operations in Iraq.

"We've set aside our communities, our careers and, most importantly, our families," Cannon said. "We do this with much personal sacrifice."



For more Task Force 34 reenlistment articles and photos visit:  
[www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org)

*Written by SFC Daniel Ewer  
Task Force 34 Public Affairs Chief*



# Christmas Eve Swim-a-thon

Most Americans might be found “baking cookies for Santa”, finish wrapping presents and tidying up the house for holiday parties and family ‘get togethers’ on Christmas Eve. Though military members deployed overseas usually aren’t afforded leisure with family and friends during the holidays, some found other ways to fend off ‘holiday blues.’

Soldiers and other service members deployed to Joint Base Balad, Iraq participated in a multitude of events on Christmas Eve, including a “Rudolph’s 5k Swim-a-Thon.”

“The 100 lap swim is a challenge and it went on all day,” said Command Sgt. Major Jeffrey Lindberg of HHC, 834th Aviation Support Battalion. “Some people are doing it for competition and some people are doing it just to finish.”

The event had four different heats at various times throughout the day to allow participants who may work nights or swings shift to have the opportunity to participate. It gave them the chance to do something a little different on Christmas Eve.

“When are in Iraq, everyday seems like the same day,” said Sgt. Stephanie Plahn, 834th Aviation Support Battalion. “It doesn’t really matter to me that it is near Christmas, the fact that we are doing it on Christmas Eve is just a bonus.”

Soldiers and military members are offered a wide variety of Morale, Welfare and Recreation events to keep them busy, active and engaged during off-duty hours.

“This shows that people are out there doing different events; they are willing to go out there and show some different athletics and not becoming dining hall potatoes,” said Command Sgt. Major Lindberg, a native a Ramsey, Minn.

The Rudolph 5k involved participants of all different branches of the military, different genders and different skill levels.

“I have never really swam before,” said Sgt. Plahn, a native of Jasper, Minnesota. “I wanted a challenge and this looked really hard, I have been training for about a month.”



**(Top)** Sgt. Stephanie Plahn, 834th Aviation Support Battalion stays strong and steady during the 5k swim.

**(Bottom)** Command Sgt. Major Jeffrey Lindberg of HHC, 834th Aviation Support Battalion participates in the Rudolph 5k swim-a-thon on Dec 24.

“It feels good once it is done,” said Command Sgt. Major Lindberg.

The military members deployed with Task Force 34 did not have cookies and milk left on the fireplace for Santa, but found other fun and different ways to beat the blues this holiday season.

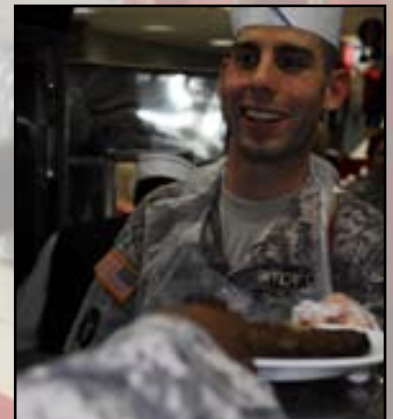
*Written by SGT Lynette Hoke  
Task Force 34 Public Affairs Journalist*



For more pictures and articles visit:  
[www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org)



# Task Force 34 Spends...



## Holidays in Iraq





*My toast is to our  
Task Force 34 family.*

**“We have grown tight, like a family.**

**Sometimes fighting like brothers and sisters,  
but growing close together and capable of  
overcoming any challenges or  
obstacle.**

**I toast to our Task Force 34  
family ... if I can't be with my  
personal family for the holidays,  
there is no other family I would  
rather be with than to be here  
with you,”**

said LTC Todd Kubista, S3, Task Force 34  
as he raised his glass of pop shortly after the  
passing of midnight on New Years Eve 2008  
to his peers, subordinates and co-workers at  
the Task Force  
34 Tactical Operations Center on  
Joint Base Balad,  
Iraq.



For more Task Force 34 holiday  
pictures, articles and video,  
visit: [www.TaskForce34.org](http://www.TaskForce34.org)