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Soldier Edition

March 19, 2009

An issue dedicated to soldiers' stories

The Baghdad Bad Boys strike their last chord



Photo by Spc. Darryl Montgomery
Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Mike Charles, MND-C division chaplain and Knoxville, Tenn., native, plays the mandolin during a song with the Baghdad Bad Boys. The Baghdad Bad Boys played for the final time together in Iraq on March 15 at the Green Beans coffee shop here. The group has plans for a reunion show scheduled for June 6 in Fayetteville, NC.



Photo by Spc. Darryl Montgomery
Lt. Col. Gregory Rawlings, MNC - I, C3 FMD chief, plays the lead mandolin part as Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Mike Charles, MND-C division chaplain, accompanies him on acoustic guitar. Rawlings, a Columbus, Ga., native, and Charles, a Knoxville, Tenn., native, are original members of the Baghdad Bad Boys, established in 2008.

SPC. DARRYL LEE MONTGOMERY
MND - C



CAMP VICTORY – For the past nine months, a group of musicians have gathered on Sunday mornings to fill the air with bluegrass music at the Green Beans coffee shop here for anyone to come and enjoy.

The Baghdad Bad Boys performed together for the last time in Iraq on March 15.

The group's members will begin heading home this week.

While looking back on how the group first came together, Lt. Col. Gregory Rawlings, 18th Airborne Corps, chief of Multi-National Corps-Iraq C3 Force Management Division, said it all started as an opportunity to sit down and play music with others.

"It was a lot more than just playing at Green Beans," Rawlings said. "I left a lot of good bluegrass picking back in North Carolina, so I asked Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Jeff Houston if he would like to

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A pioneer of the skies

Soldier goes where no other female N.C. ARNG has, in the cockpit

PFC. JASMINE N. WALTHALL
TF 449



CAMP STRIKER— If a pilot ever finds himself in the cockpit of a North Carolina Army National Guard UH60 Blackhawk helicopter with a female aviator, he will have no doubt as to her identity. That is because there is only one.

Sixteen years ago, Maj. Michele P. Harper became a pioneer of the sky when she graduated flight school in Fort Rucker, Ala., becoming the only female Black Hawk pilot in the N.C. Army National Guard, a distinction she would hold for the next sixteen years.

"It makes me feel good to have done something that many females have not done," said Harper, a Hendersonville, N.C., native. "But at the same time, I wish more females would go for a non-traditional military role. I mean, it is flattering to say, but I definitely would not mind flying with some females."

According to Harper, who is constantly teased about females allegedly being bad drivers and therefore, worse pilots, females are known to have a better landings because they touch down softer.

"Females always want things to be nice and pretty, and we take that into our flying as well," Harper stated. "Pilots are always complementing me on what a nice landing I have."

Harper may fly Black Hawks now, but she got interested in flying with her eyes on a much bigger 'bird.'

"I have always and still want to be an astronaut," said the mother of 17-month-old son, Soren. "Before you apply to the space program you have to be a pilot first, and I was always at the airport getting on any aircraft that they would let me."

Harper is deployed to Iraq as Task Force 449 Aviation Brigade's Administrative Officer.

Her job consists of overseeing all personnel actions for the Task Force, including pay issues, awards and orders.

"It's the best job," said Harper. "I have an awesome staff. I



Courtesy photo

Maj. Michele P. Harper, a Hendersonville, N.C. native, is the only female Black Hawk Helicopter pilot in the N.C. Army National Guard. She is currently deployed to Baghdad, Iraq with Task Force 449 from Morrisville, N.C.

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THE Mountain View

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4th BCT, 1st Cavalry Division
41st Fires Brigade
343rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
793rd Military Police Battalion
Division Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mtn. Div.
Task Force 449

BAD BOYS

From page 1

try and get a group started. The intent was to get a group together that sat and picked as a means of stress relief. We wanted to do something besides work and sleep."

The group began meeting Friday evenings for two hours in the Mini Chapel at the MNC-I Chaplain's Office, the Columbus, Ga. native added. Meeting to play music became an opportunity for the group to forget about the stress of being in a combat zone and feel like they were back home for the time they were together making music.

During the Friday meetings, people would just show up to listen, said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Mike Charles, MND-C division chaplain. Some would bring their own instruments and join us. Friday nights became a sustenance support group for the community by getting together to have a good time.

"At some point, we were asked to play at little events going on around Victory Base Complex," Rawlings said. "Then we started taking our instruments to Green Beans for coffee after church on Sundays."

"We really just wanted to sit in the corner and play some tunes to relax a bit," he continued. "The workers there didn't throw us out, so we kept going back."

The group has played all over Victory Base, said Charles, a Knoxville, Tenn. native.

"We have had more invitations for us to play than we can practically fill," he continued. "Sometimes, to fill those



Photo by Spc. Darryl Lee Montgomery

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Mike Charles, MND-C division chaplain, and Staff Sgt. Johnny Alvarez, MNF-I, CJ3 targeting NCO, engage in a harmonica duel. Charles, a Knoxville, Tenn., native, and Alvarez, a Yauco, Puerto Rico, native, are the only two in the group that know how to play the harmonica.

invitations, we either had to say no or just sent the group members that could go. We had to say no because we were working; duty first."

The most significant thing the group has done while they were here together, Rawlings affirmed, is a fundraiser to benefit the Fisher House, a program that recognizes the special sacrifices of Servicemembers and the hardships of military service by meeting a humanitarian need beyond what is normally provided by the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

"We played for six hours at the

Green Beans and people contributed over \$2,100 to go to Fisher House," he added.

The end of the deployment isn't necessarily the end of the Bad Boys, according to Charles.

"We are going to have a reunion called the "Baghdad Bad Boys D-Day Reunion" on June 6 in Fayetteville, N.C. at a central location," Charles said. "Our families have never seen us play, so our reunion show will be the first time for them."

For more information on the Fisher House, visit www.fisherhouse.com.

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PIONEER: *Soldier goes where no other female N.C. ARNG has, in the cockpit*

From Page 2

love to help people because I am a people person."

However, for Harper there is no better experience than the time she spends in the sky.

"I get to see the world," Harper explained about her love of flying. "I get to see so many different things that others may never see. Last night, when everyone else was sitting in their rooms or walking around their office, I was flying over Babylon. How many people can say that?"

"I get the same feeling at home flying over the Blue Ridge Mountains or on the coast. All those places that are inaccessible in a vehicle, I see."

There are currently two females in training to be pilots, and if Harper gets her way, it will not be long before she is part of an all-female mission.

"The males would not even know what to say," laughed Harper. "They are so afraid to even have two females up front because they have never seen more than one, but it is time to shake them up a bit."



Courtesy photo

Maj. Michele P. Harper, pilot with the 449th Theater Aviation Brigade out of Morrisville, N.C., prepares for takeoff. Harper, a Hendersonville, N.C., native is the only female Black Hawk Helicopter pilot in the N.C. Army National Guard.

G-1 Corner: Post Deployment/Mobilization Respite Leave (Non-chargeable Leave)

Post Deployment/Mobilization Respite Leave (PDMRA) is a program designed to recognize Soldiers who are involuntarily deployed or mobilized beyond the rotating frequency threshold established by the Secretary of Defense, (1:2 for the Active Component; 1:5 for the Reserve Component).

For active component Soldiers, creditable deployment time for computation of PDMRA commences on January 19, 2004, or the date that is 36 months prior to the Soldier's initial deployment, whichever date is most recent, and includes the day of the Soldier's arrival in theater through the date of departure from theater. This leave may be used during a period of authorized rest and recuperation (R&R) leave period, within 12 months from deployment or during permanent change of station (PCS) travel between a Soldier's old and new permanent duty station (PDS).

For reserve component Soldiers, creditable mobilization time for computation of PDMRA commences on October 7, 2001, or the date that is 72 months prior to the Soldier's mobilization, whichever date is most recent, and includes the day the Soldier is initially mobilized through the date the mobilization is terminated. Soldiers may use accrued PDM-

RA during any authorized R&R leave period, in combination with or in lieu of using chargeable annual leave. However, PDMRA cannot be used in conjunction with R&R leave to extend the overall authorized R&R leave period of 15 or 18 days. Soldiers may also use PDMRA during the current mobilization order or an authorized extension of their current mobilization order.

Soldiers unable to utilize accrued PDMRA days during their current mobilization order may be voluntarily retained on active duty under the provisions of Title 10 USC 12301(d), contingency operations active duty for operational support orders (CO-ADOS), to utilize accrued PDMRA days. However, extensions of mobilization orders may not exceed designated limits in law applicable to the authority under which the Soldier was mobilized.

Leave requests are submitted on a Department of the Army Form 31. PDMRA not used within 12 months of returning from deployment or during PCS travel are lost. PDMRA days cannot be retained and carried to the new permanent duty station for later use.

See your unit S1 for eligibility and calculation of days.

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TAPE MEASURE

TEARS
THIMBLE
THREAD
TRACING PAPER
TRACING
WHEEL
ZIPPER

AROUND THE
COMMUNITY**Lions Den**

Ping Pong @ 8 p.m.

Texas Hold 'em @ 8 p.m.

Fishbowl Gym

March 27

Relay for Life HOPE Ceremony
@ 8 p.m.

March 28

Cancer awareness 5K/10K walk
run. Free t-shirt and
continental breakfast. Race
begins @ 7 a.m.

April 11

Pirate's Cove Run 5K/10K.

Registration begins @ 7 a.m.,
race begins @ 8 a.m.T-shirts awarded to top
finishers.**Babylon Theater**

March 20

Town Hall Meeting @ 1 p.m.

Freedom Chapel

Sundays

Protestant (Traditional) @ 10
a.m.

Roman Catholic Mass @ 12 p.m.

LDS service @ 2 p.m.

Eastern Orthodox @ 4 p.m.

Protestant (Contemporary) @ 12
p.m.

Mondays

A History of Christianity @
7 p.m.

Tuesdays

God & the Military @ 6:30 p.m.

Wednesdays

Guitar Lessons @ 7 p.m.

Thursdays

Catholic Choir practice @ 5:30
p.m.

Fridays

Catholic hour @ 6:30 p.m.

*The Norris Roundhouse**"There is no 'ctrl' button on Chuck Norris's computer. Chuck Norris is always in control."*