

Lightning Weekly

General Petraeus Delivers Recognition, Promotions and Re-enlistments in MND-N



FROM THE DESK OF 'LIGHTNING 7'



The Joint Best Warrior Competition 2009 is being held at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq, July 27-31. Units who support the Multi-National Division-North sent their best troops to compete for the title of Best Warrior.

22 Evaluation Stations
16 Units Competing
11 Noncommissioned officers
10 Soldiers
3 Day Competition
1 Best Warrior Soldier Winner
1 Best Warrior NCO Winner

Tune in at the MND-N Website
www.army.mil/25thid



COMMANDER OF U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND VISITS COB SPEICHER, IRAQ

General David H. Petraeus, commanding general, U.S. Central Command, visited with deployed Soldiers and military personnel currently serving with Task Force Lightning in Operation Iraqi Freedom at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, near Tikrit, July 25.

Gen. Petraeus and Task Force Lightning leaders discussed the achievements within Multi-National Division - North and shared an assessment of the progress with the ongoing U.S. mission in Iraq following the June 30th repositioning of U.S. combat forces from Iraqi cities and continued partnership with Iraqi Security Forces.

In addition, Petraeus provided moral support and thanks to the Soldiers and service-members serving in the region, taking time to perform re-enlistment and promotion ceremonies for several of the Task Force Lightning Soldiers.



130th Engineers nearing completion of COP India Construction



STORY AND PHOTOS BY
Staff Sgt. Melanie Trollinger
 130th Engineer Brigade

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE
MAREZ, MOSUL, Iraq—With the sound of hammers and saws resonating in the otherwise still night air at Combat Outpost India, Soldiers of the 643rd Engineer Company are making steady progress to complete construction of the outpost.

COP India's completion will help facilitate the reduction of U.S. forces from the city of Mosul.

The outpost will be used as a training site for local Iraqi Security Forces, and its construction will also make the areas north of Mosul more accessible to the reconstruction teams

working in the area, said Cpt. Joshua A. Long, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 130th Engineer Brigade technical headquarters officer-in-charge.

"This is a major construction project that will significantly increase USF's ability to train with Iraqis, and will facilitate transition to the GOI," said Long.

Advisory teams from the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, deployed from Ft. Hood, Texas, will occupy COP India and their primary role will be training the ISF's.

Capt. Kevin P. Arnett, commander, 643rd Eng. Co., said the completion of COP India will help expand the capabilities of the advisory teams and will improve the area.

Initiated in mid-June, COP India has been a big construction project for

Arnett's unit and the engineers are now nearing the final phase of the project.

"The construction of COP India has been the brigade's number one priority. Despite significant constraints, the 643rd adapted, and performed extraordinarily," Long said.

Once finished, COP India will consist of multiple housing structures, including living quarters and offices, a dining facility, a laundry facility, and a Morale, Welfare and Recreation facility.

"This will be a nice living area for the Soldiers. We've put a lot of pride and hard work in this project and hope it will help them accomplish their mission," said 1st Lt. Emily Hannenberg, 1st platoon leader, 643rd Eng. Co.



Command Sgt. Maj. Dale A. Moran, 130th Engineer Brigade, visits 643rd Engineer Company Soldiers during a Combat Outpost India site visit July 18. COP India will house U.S. forces advisory teams to train Iraqi Security Forces.



Spc. Corey J. Abbot, of Altus, Okla., a vertical construction specialist with the 643rd Engineer Company makes a door for a housing structure at Combat Outpost India, Mosul, Iraq, July 18. The construction project will house advisory teams to train Iraqi Security Forces.

Civil Service Corps Graduation in Nimrud Brings Skills in the Area



STORY BY
Capt. Linda North
3rd HBCT, 1st Cavalry Division

MOSUL, Iraq — Local sheiks and U.S. and Iraqi military leaders attended a Civil Service Corps graduation ceremony for 185 students in the Nimrud sub-district of Ninewa province July 20.

The CSC training program was a significant event in the Nimrud area, located approximately 40 kilometers southeast of Mosul, because of the lack of opportunity for stable, non-security employment.

The CSC started the road and canal construction project in Nimrud Jan. 4 and hired students from the local area to become skilled journeymen.

The students built 20 kilometers of paved roads and 18 canals throughout the Nimrud sub-district. The asphalt roads provide better access to paved roads from small villages in the Nimrud area. The canals will bring irrigation water to farmers’ fields in the area.

The CSC program, funded by the United States Agency for International Development, provides on-the-job training to young men who can now take this training to find work in the civilian sector.

“This project is essential because it allows people to see what the U.S. forces can provide, jobs and reconstruction versus what the terrorists provide, destruction and death,” said Capt. Matthew L. Keith, commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

“This type of project shows that American forces are dedicated to improving the lives of the Iraqi people.”

A U.S. civil affairs team and Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, conducted quality control inspections throughout the entire phase of construction.

The graduation ceremony was mainly an Iraqi-led event. Iraqi Security Forces leaders from 2nd Iraqi Army Division, 7th Iraqi Army Division, and Nimrud Iraqi Police attended the graduation ceremony and provided security for the event.

Capt. Keith and Sheik Khalid Sabbah al Jabori were guest speakers for the graduation ceremony and commended the men on the great work they had accomplished.

Afterwards, Sheik Khalid and Sheik Ali presented diplomas to each of the new graduates.



Sheik Khalid Sabbah al Jabori speaks at a Civil Service Corps graduation ceremony for 185 students in the Nimrud sub-district of Ninewa province July 20. The CSC training program was a significant event in the Nimrud area, located approximately 40 kilometers southeast of Mosul, because of the lack of opportunity for stable, non-security employment. (Courtesy Photo)

Numerous leaders from Iraqi Security Forces attend a Civil Service Corps graduation ceremony for 185 students in the Nimrud sub-district of Ninewa province July 20. The CSC training program was a significant event in the Nimrud area, located approximately 40 kilometers southeast of Mosul, because of the lack of opportunity for stable, non-security employment. (Courtesy Photo)



Plant Opening Shows Progress for Diyala



STORIES and PHOTOS BY
By Spc. Jeremy Pitcher
1st SBCT, 25th Infantry Division

DIYALA, Iraq – An asphalt plant in Diyala recently reopened its doors for business after a refurbishment of the plant and two administrative buildings.

Located in Khalis, the plant will employ approximately 60 people and will allow for paving services to start in much of the province.

Prior to the refurbishment, local government officials found that the expense necessary to ship in asphalt from Baghdad was too costly; projects had to be put on hold.

The new facility is anticipated to produce well over 75 tons of asphalt per hour, allowing many formerly dormant reconstruction projects to now move forward.

“The reopening of this plant is enormously significant for the people of Diyala,” said 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division spokesman, Maj. Chris Hyde. “More than just an updated facility, the plant offers the residents an improved ability for them to rebuild their future.”



The Khalis asphalt plant in Diyala will supply the province with the ability to create new jobs and raise the standards of living to residents there.



Humanitarian Aid Helps Residents of Diyala



Residents of Awad received food, water and other humanitarian aid July 20. The aid helped feed the residents of the area and also provided them with needed cooking supplies.

DIYALA, Iraq – Iraqi Army soldiers conducted two humanitarian aid distributions in central Diyala over the past two weeks to help improve the quality of life for residents there.

The distribution was made to the residents of Awad and Tahwilla in the form of 55 bags of flour, 45 bags of sugar, 25 bags of rice and 38 boxes of cooking oil.

The humanitarian missions serve not only to improve the lives of the residents, but also to build local relations between residents and Iraqi Security Forces in the areas. These relations are often instrumental in furthering security in the area and are anticipated to continue in the future.

During the distributions, Iraqi soldiers helped residents portion the goods and aided in carrying the supplies to local houses.

“The Iraqi Army continues to lead the way in helping local residents,” said 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division spokesman, Maj. Chris Hyde.

Residents of Tahwilla unload a truck of flour, rice and other cooking supplies during a humanitarian aid drop to the town on July 15.



U.S. Forces and Iraqis “Giving Back Kindness”



STORY AND PHOTOS BY
Sgt. Angie Johnston
3rd IBCT, 25th Infantry Division

MATAR AL-SADDIQ, TUZ, Iraq – At the invitation of Lt. Col. Khalid Hajji Mohammad, Maj. Gen. Robert Caslen, commander of the Multi-National Division- North, visited both Iraqi Army and his own troops at Matar al-Saddiq July 17 to laud the progress of several joint operations currently underway in the Tuz Qada.

Khalid is the deputy commander of the Iraqi Army’s 16th Brigade, 4th Div., and his troops frequently work with the Soldiers of the Special Troops Bn., 3rd Inf. Bde. Combat Team, 25th Inf. Div.

The U.S. Soldiers live and work closely with Khalid’s Soldiers at Matar al-Saddiq, a base just outside the city of Tuz.

During the visit, Caslen spoke with Soldiers who are concentrating on governance and stability operations. One of the battalion’s main missions is to ensure the Iraqi Army and Police are trained and ready to take over the full spectrum of military responsibility when American troops permanently withdraw from Iraq in 2011.

“You are here establishing our long-term relationship with Iraq,” Caslen told Soldiers while visiting a joint U.S. and Iraqi Army temporary base in Pir Ahmed, a small town on the outskirts of Tuz. “When you’re standing out here in the middle of the Iraqi desert, it says a lot about who you are.”

STB Soldiers conduct short-duration ‘warm base’ operations with the IA to build trusting relationships with both the security forces and the citizens of Iraq. The operations often include joint missions, including school book donations and hospital visits; U.S. Soldiers usually stay the night on Iraqi bases or at IA checkpoints along major routes to be immediately available to the ISF should the need arise.

Salman Mahmoud, a truck driver from Tuz, knows exactly how helpful it can be to have U.S. assets available when they’re needed. Salman was pulling two trailers overflowing with grain to be sold at a

local market when his rear tire blew July 17, nearly forcing his semi truck to careen off the highway and down a steep embankment.

Command Sgt. Maj. Jon Stanley of the STB happened to drive by moments after the blowout, and he quickly radioed his nearest troops to help Salman. Within minutes, Soldiers of Stanley’s battalion were rushing to the scene to lift the truck so the driver’s tire could be replaced and he could get on with his day.

“In a sense, it’s our duty to help the Iraqi people like this during this time of growth,” said Pfc. Nicholas Houston of Kinston, N.C., a heavy equipment mechanic stationed at Matar al-Saddiq who helped Salman out of trouble.

“I knew the coalition was helpful, but I had no idea they even had trucks like this,” said Salman, gesturing toward the wrecker which suspended the back of his trailer.

“I will tell everyone I know of this story, and someday I will return the kindness by doing a kindness of my own for the Americans. Giving back kindness is what makes this work.”

Help from the STB doesn’t only come in small doses, though. Soldiers of the battalion’s Headquarters element have been diligently building training houses in which they will train ISF on SWAT-type operations.

Company A is digging trenches and constructing training lanes where ISF will learn how to react to contact with a roadside bomb; all of these resources are being built to last long after U.S. Soldiers have left the country.

While the ISF take the lead for security, U.S. Soldiers is able to get the edge on projects which will improve the quality of life for all Iraqis – including water distribution and waste management.

Stenman and his Soldiers frequently attend city council meetings and partner with local key leaders in order to ensure that all of Tuz’s outlying villages are getting the attention they deserve.

“3rd Brigade has worked so hard to establish these relationships,” said Caslen. “We could see that before July 1st; the way they’ve been partnering with the Iraqis really sets them (Iraqis) up for success.”

Salman Mahmoud watches as Army Mechanic Pfc. Nicholas Houston of Kinston, N.C. rigs his wrecker to Salman’s trailer July 17. Salman had a near-catastrophic blowout, and U.S. Soldiers from Special Troops Bn., 3rd Inf. Bde. Combat Team, 25th Inf. Div. who were passing by came to his rescue within minutes. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Angie Johnston, Special Troops Bn., 3rd Inf. Bde. Combat Team, 25th Inf. Div. Public Affairs)



Salman Mahmoud helps Staff Sgt. Christopher Hoffman attach a wrecker to his trailer July 17. Salman had a near-catastrophic blowout, and U.S. Soldiers from Special Troops Bn., 3rd Inf. Bde. Combat Team, 25th Inf. Div. who were passing by came to his rescue within minutes. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Angie Johnston, Special Troops Bn., 3rd Inf. Bde. Combat Team, 25th Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Kirkuk Seeks to Revitalize Domestic Tourism Industry



STORY AND PHOTOS BY
Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas
2nd HBCT, 1st Cavalry Division

FORWARD OPERATING BASE

WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq— In Iraq's northern province of Kirkuk, government officials are looking at ways to revitalize the domestic tourism industry.

A working group consisting of members of Kirkuk's Directorate General of Tourism, Urban Planning Directorate, the mayor from the town of Dibbis, several Kirkuk provincial council members, and Iraqi civil engineers have come together to develop a project to build a tourist resort near a popular vacation spot along the lower Zaab River in Dibbis, Iraq.

The members from Kirkuk's Provincial Reconstruction Team met in Dibbis, July 19, to discuss the business plan and review several optional locations for construction of the tourist resort.

According to Bakr Raheem, a civil engineer and the "Dibbis tourist village" project manager, more than 1,000 Iraqi families already visit the river every week.



Richard Moore (yellow shirt) and other members of a working group established to build a tourist village along the lower Zaab River in Dibbis, Iraq, meet July 19 to review business plans and potential construction sites near the river.

"This area has been set aside for a tourist village since 1985," Bakr said. "Already many Iraqis come in the spring to swim and fish in the river."

Assisting the working group were Richard Moore and Stuart Clark, both economic and development officers with the U.S. State Department, and Maj. Samuel Du Plessis, a Clackamas, Ore. native, all of whom are members of Kirkuk's Provincial Reconstruction Team.

"The governor of Kirkuk formed this working group to establish tourism in the area," Moore said. "We are here to help them, advise, and facilitate the process."

Du Plessis explained this project was being developed at the provincial level; a new experience for many of the working group's members.

"This project is the first of its kind being done by provincial members without assistance from Baghdad," Du Plessis said.

According to Bakr, water is channeled from the Dokan dam in northern Iraq into the lower Zaab River.

The landscape provides an area suitable to build cottages where visitors can stay while on vacation.

"This area is one of the most beautiful in the region," Bakr said.

The development of this project is in its infancy, but the idea is gaining interest with higher attendance at the working group meetings by Kirkuk provincial council members.

"This project is for the economy and tourists," said Kirkuk council woman Turkhan.

"This will also provide jobs for Iraqis."



Bakr Raheem (center), a civil engineer, shows a map to Richard Moore (yellow shirt) and other members of a working group established to build a tourist village along the lower Zaab River in Dibbis, Iraq. The group met July 19 to review business plans and potential construction sites near the river.

LIGHTNING HERO OF THE WEEK

Name: SSG Velmer, Lucas

Unit: CST, C/ 84th, 65th EN BN

Hometown: Dollar Bay, Michigan

SSG Velmer is the Noncommissioned Officer In Charge of the C/84 EN Company Commander's Security Team. His work on over 10,000 miles of battlefield circulation up to this point in the deployment has been superb. His preparation of his team everyday for whatever mission the company commander throws at him is without equal.

SSG Velmer has truly shined over the last month as he and his team have tackled numerous repair and upgrade tasks around the 65th Engineer Battalion area while not on mission, and usually outside of their normal military occupational specialties. SSG Velmer's hard work and dedication is an inspiration to his Soldiers and the company.



IRAQ FACTS

What year was University of Baghdad opened?

(1957)

What year was Al-Mustansiriya University opened?

(1963)

What year was a permanent British diplomatic residency established in Baghdad in order to assist European trade on Iraq?

(1798)

What year did the steamship travel on the Tigris allow for more trade in Baghdad, bringing back much of the city's old wealth?

(1860)

What year was Baghdad captured from the Ottomans by the British troops?

(1917)

Some Information compiled from Worldfactbook and Trivia Architect.

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CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



MND-N Ravens Flies the Iraqi Sky



STORY AND PHOTOS BY
Pfc. Justin Naylor
2nd HBCT, 1st Cavalry Division

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq –

Launching an unmanned aircraft by throwing it in the air might not sound too technologically advanced, but with Surveillance equipment and auto-navigational systems it could be the difference between life and death.

This aircraft, known as a “Raven,” is operated by two Soldiers assigned to Forward Operating Base McHenry, with the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, who use it as an “eye in the sky” around the base.

Spc. Andrew Larsen and Pfc. Eloy Martinez, both infantrymen with Company B, 1st Bn., 8th Cav. Regt., have been maintaining, repairing and operating the Raven

during their deployment in addition to their infantry missions.

Before launching the aircraft, Martinez and Larsen program coordinates into it. Once the Raven is airborne, the Soldiers need only to control take offs and landings, while the aircraft does everything in between on its own.

“It is a lot easier for someone to use,” said Martinez.

The Raven also has the added benefit of not needing a large launching area, and it can also get into the air faster than traditional UAVs.

“This [Raven] is for people on the move...it is a lot more mobile,” explained Martinez.

While in the air, the Raven monitors situations on the ground and sends a live feed back to the Soldiers.

Rather than sending Soldiers into potentially dangerous situations, the Raven can be sent instead, said Larsen.

Leaders can use the information to make decisions about how they want to approach situations and where they want to send Soldiers, said Larsen.

“It saves lives,” Larsen said. “It keeps Soldiers out of harm’s way.”

Larsen used one scenario to illustrate the effectiveness of the Raven.

The Raven gets sent out alongside one of the main roads, and while it is flying, the camera takes a video that shows someone emplacing an improvised explosive device, said Larsen.

This information is then analyzed and dispersed to Soldiers in the area who can be sent to investigate the scene and prevent Iraqi civilians from going near the explosive.

“As an infantryman, it is not something I would have ever expected to do,” said Martinez.

“Every unit should have an aerial asset like this,” said Larsen.



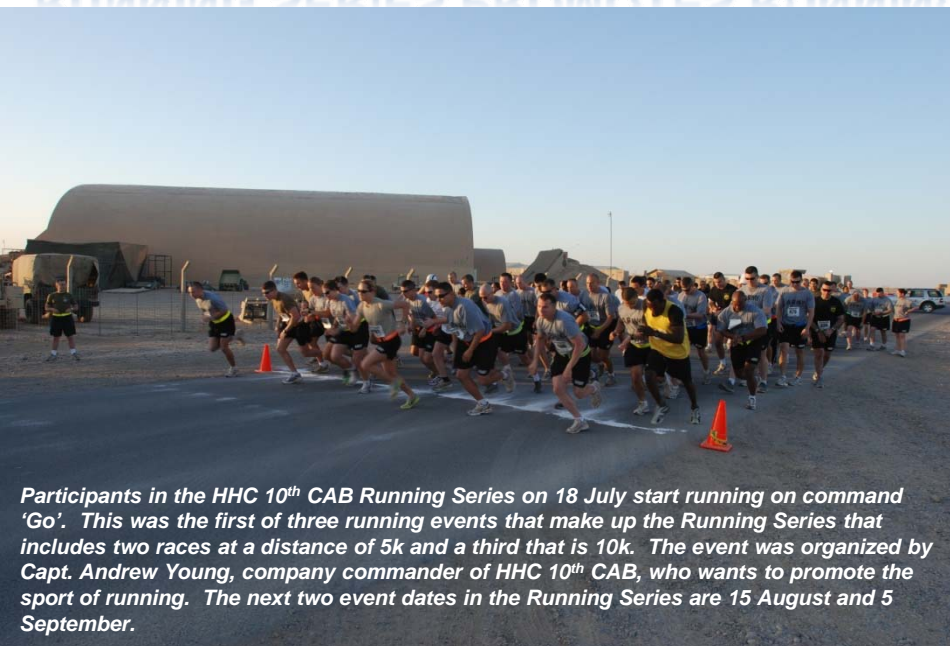
Pfc. Eloy Martinez an Infantryman with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, demonstrates how to properly launch a Raven. Martinez and his partner, Spc. Andrew Larsen also an infantryman with Co. B, use the Raven to gain aerial intelligence that helps Soldiers in their battalion stay out of harm’s way.

Spc. Andrew Larsen, an Infantryman with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, assembles a small unmanned aerial vehicle known as a Raven on Forward Operating Base McHenry July 15. Although Larsen’s primary job is an infantryman, he launches the Raven to collect aerial intelligence about things that are happening around his base.



“BLACKJACK”

RUNNING SERIES PROMOTES RUNNING AND AWARENESS



Participants in the HHC 10th CAB Running Series on 18 July start running on command 'Go'. This was the first of three running events that make up the Running Series that includes two races at a distance of 5k and a third that is 10k. The event was organized by Capt. Andrew Young, company commander of HHC 10th CAB, who wants to promote the sport of running. The next two event dates in the Running Series are 15 August and 5 September.



1LT Kelly Calway finishes the 5k race with a time of 18 minutes and 46 seconds to claim first place overall in the HHC 10th CAB Running Series July 18, COB Speicher, Iraq. This was the first of three running events that make up the Running Series that includes two races at a distance of 5k and a third that is 10k. The event was organized by Capt. Andrew Young, company commander of HHC 10th CAB, who wants to promote the sport of running.



STORY BY

Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Carr
10th Combat Aviation Brigade

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq

On a rather cool July 28 morning on the aviation side of COB Speicher, Iraq, a group of runners competed in the first of three running events planned by Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade.

The Running Series was the brain child of the company commander who is an avid runner himself.

"I'm a big runner," said Capt. Andrew Young, commander, HHC 10th CAB, "so I thought I'd try to see if I could get a lot of sponsors and organizations that I participate in and know, pull them together with the Soldiers to enjoy the sport of running. We did the Running Series to basically get people together to support each other as well as for fitness and wellness."

Once Young contacted the sponsors, the support was tremendous. One sponsor was not

only willing to help with this running series, but the organization actually helps those around the world who are less fortunate.

"Soles 4 Souls" is a non-profit organization and what they do is they take donated shoes, running shoes and pretty much send them to a lot of countries even Afghanistan and Iraq that need them," explained Young.

"We are going to be collecting for Soles 4 Souls at the next two running events in this series this August and September. So we need runners to bring in their old shoes so we can box them up and get them sent out."

Young says that you don't have to be a participant in the running event to donate your old shoes.

"Even if you don't run you can donate your old shoes," said Young. "Just drop your old shoes off at the South MWR on the day of the race."

Road Runners Club of America was another big sponsor for the event as well as AAFES and a several others who donated items like gift certificates, medals and trophies.

Young thanks those who helped with organizing the event and those who donated to the cause.

"The sponsors like Road Runners Club of America really want to support the Soldiers that are deployed," explained Young.

"They understand the constraints we have to put on events like this, so they want to help in order to make it a special event and support the sport of running.

This was the first event in the series over 90 Soldiers and civilians stationed here participated.

Young says that he expects to see an even bigger turn out for the next two events coming up in August and September.

"I know there are more that wanted to participate but due to the 24 hour operations here they couldn't get off work to enjoy this," said Young.

"Hopefully they will get the chance to come out to the next two events."

"I've had several people walk up to me since the last race and tell me that they are looking forward to getting out to the next two."

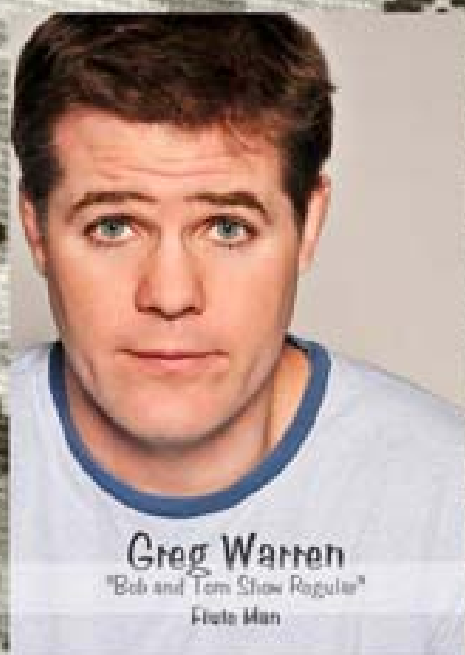


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Greg Warren
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 Flute Man



Ron Morey
 The Late Late Show

TASK FORCE LIGHTNING - THROUGH THE LENS



(U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Steven King)

TIKRIT, Iraq - U.S. Soldiers from the 25th Special Troops Battalion, 25th ID, conducted training with local Iraqi Police on the M240 B machine gun at Memorial Range, Contingency Operating Base Speicher, July 15. Along with the training, U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers joined together to sing "Happy Birthday" to a Soldier.

Do you have a great photo from your time serving OIF? Send your images to us at mndnpao@25id.army.mil

THROUGH THE LENS

HEROES OF THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION



- Private 1st Class Ernest E. West
- Co.L, 14th Infantry Regiment, 25ID
- Entered Service: Wurtland Ky
- Place of Action: near Sataeri, Korea
- Date of Action: 12 October 1952



Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy . He voluntarily accompanied a contingent to locate and destroy a reported enemy outpost. Nearing the objective, the patrol was ambushed and suffered numerous casualties. Observing his wounded leader lying in an exposed position, Private West ordered the troops to withdraw, then braved intense fire to reach and assist him.

While attempting evacuation, he was attacked by 3 hostile soldiers employing grenades and small-arms fire. Quickly shifting his body to shelter the officer, he killed the assailants with his rifle, then carried the helpless man to safety. He was critically wounded and lost an eye in this action. but courageously returned through withering fire and bursting shells to assist the wounded. While evacuating 2 comrades, he closed with and killed 3 more of the foe. Private West's indomitable spirit, consummate valor, and intrepid actions inspired all who observed him, reflect the highest credit on himself, and uphold the honored traditions of the military service.

<http://www.cmoht.org/>

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