

*in the*  
**ZONE**

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Chap. (Lt. Col.) Doulgas H. Fleis-  
chfresser (left) and Sgt. Carl Seim, a  
chaplain's assistant (right), vacuum a  
speaker that is used during religious  
services at FOB Prosperity's chapel.  
Religious Support Teams and  
volunteers cleaned and organized the  
chapel Aug. 29. Photo by Sgt. Michelle  
Gonzalez

## On the Cover:

Soldiers assigned to the Kentucky National Guard's, 301st Chemical Company guide a principal to safety during personal security detail training scenarios held Aug. 5 in Baghdad. The 301st Chemical Co., replaced Troop B, 1st Squadron, 303rd Cavalry of the Washington National Guard July 29. Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez

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# From the Top

## JASG-C Commander

August proved to be an interesting and event-filled month. As I wrote in the July edition of "In the Zone," we continue to operate in an environment that causes us to consider all aspects of force protection. August 19th reinforced the fact that threat conditions remain and that force protection is a critical component of life in the IZ.

Recent meetings with officials during the Joint Security Subcommittee meeting placed a change of intent for impending road openings in the IZ. 14 July Street will not open as originally proposed in September. The new proposal leaves 14 July Street and all entrances into the IZ unchanged for now. We anticipate future discussions on the subject following the national elections in January.

In the interim, you will continue to

see T-walls being erected and changes being made to FOB ECPs, traffic control, road access, and other areas. Please allow additional travel time for movement inside the IZ to accommodate for delays caused by additional equipment working on these projects.

Our focus at the JASG-C is security and support for the IZ. This focus relies heavily on coordination and cooperation with our Iraqi partners. Our partners continue to work to maintain our security. That process often involves change. And, although change is sometimes less than comfortable, it is necessary to support the strategic objective of giving this country fully back to the Iraqi people.

Last month in this publication, I asked you to not relax personal or operational security posture. It is equally imperative today that you remain vigilant on security. Always



Col. Steven Bensend  
Commander  
Joint Area Support Group—Central

travel in teams, always travel armed, never walk outside of the FOBs without solid risk assessment and mitigation, and look out for each other. If you see something that does not seem right, report it up the chain.

In closing, thank you for the job each of you are doing to make the mission here a success. Each Soldier, Airman, Sailor and Marine holds critical a piece for our mission success.

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## JASG-C Command Sergeant Major

In January of this year Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth Preston, Army chief of staff General George Casey and Secretary of the Army Pete Geren announced that 2009 would be the year of the NCO. At the time, my first thought was "what took so long!" Promoted to sergeant in 1969 while serving in Vietnam, I have spent 31 years as a noncommissioned officer. My next reaction—probably because I am an "old" NCO and at times can get a bit grumpy — was, "wait, why do NCOs need a year dedicated to them anyway?" We just need to focus on the mission, train our soldiers, get our hands dirty and get it done! We do not need any spotlights or distractions!

However, after thinking about it for a while, having a year dedicated to NCOs started to make sense. Our NCO corps makes our Army different and has since the Revolutionary War. Our NCO corps reflects the uniqueness of our nation and our values, and these same values give our NCOs a unique place in our Army. This combination has given us success on the battlefield through all our wars. Maybe it is time we put a spotlight on the NCO corps!

In 2003 in Afghanistan, I was part of an embedded trainer team (ETT) with an Afghan Army mechanized infantry battalion. My job was to mentor the battalion's command sergeant major and his NCOs. He was a veteran of the Russian war



Command Sgt. Maj. Edgar J. Hansen  
Command Sergeant Major  
Joint Area Support Group—Central

and had fought the Taliban, as had many of his soldiers. The first thing I noticed was most of the battalion's soldiers wore U.S. NCO rank. There were three or four who wore CSM and SGM rank. I figured out who was who after working with them for a few weeks. It was easy to see few

More —→



of them were really NCOs. This did not mean they could not or did not fight well—they did—but often their success was limited because they were not empowered to be leaders or NCOs. They always waited for orders and seldom used personal initiative!

In 2005 in Iraq, I was part of a military transition team working with an Iraqi infantry brigade mentoring their CSM and his battalion CSMs and NCOs. This was a much more professional and disciplined Army, but again, the sergeants were NCOs in name only. They had no real authority, they did not make decisions nor did they make mistakes. They waited for orders and never used initiative.

We Americans are a free nation with a sturdy middle class, a nation of small businesses and business ventures that take hard work, initiative, vision and more hard work to be successful. A land of opportunity where if you are poor, you go to school and study, and you work hard so you, too, can succeed. Wherever you are on the ladder, you can aspire to move up. We value hard work, education, “think for yourself,” “never quit,” “pick yourself up,” “lend a neighbor a hand,” get the job done!

Our Army’s NCO corps reflects those same values: accomplish the mission, never accept defeat, never quit, and never leave a fallen comrade! For a nation to be successful, its citizens must be successful and the success of our Army of citizens reflects that same success in its NCO corps!

One last thing, during this year of the NCO I have to tell you about the finest NCO I have served with, a man who set the standard for me and has been my role model for more than 40 years.

In 1969, I joined my first regular unit in Vietnam, Co. E 3/187th

Infantry (Rakkasans), 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) and met my first First Sergeant, 1SG James. He was a 30-year veteran who had fought in WWII, Korea and Vietnam. He was slightly taller than me, barrel-chested and as strong as a bull. He probably would not meet today’s height and weight standard. He was a black soldier who had served in the segregated Army of WWII and now served in the desegregated Army of Vietnam.

1SG James spoke softly, but everyone heard him, everyone obeyed. In the seven months he was my 1SG, he seldom raised his voice, and he was always calm even during dire circumstances. We were a young company, many of us only 19 or 20 years old experiencing our first war, our first combat. Most of our NCOs were as young. He was the experienced veteran who set the battle rhythm. We knew if Top was not excited it must be OK.

He knew his soldiers; he knew how to train us and to motivate us. Moreover, no matter how smart we thought we were, he was always smarter, always ahead of us. He never got angry, even when we tried his patience! He used each situation to teach us not only to be better soldiers, but also to be better men!

When we moved into the A Shau for our last big mission he was there with us although many other first sergeants stayed in the rear at Camp Evans. It was on the morning of our last day in the valley that events gave me a chance to see Top at his best and for me to know what kind of NCO I wanted to be.

Echo divided into chinks with me being with the CPT Sullivan, 1SG James, and the other CP guys. Alpha, Bravo and Charlie Companies of the 158th Aviation were moving the battalion north. Our Huey bounced in and barely touched down as the

pilot anticipated a quick take off. We scrambled on with me last. I knew immediately that my gear and I were not going to fit. There were no more birds. It was this one or I was walking. I stepped on the skid trying to push my ruck on to the chopper. Top grabbed me and pulled, my ruck and half my butt slid on and then stopped. That was it; my feet were still on the skid.

The pilot did not wait on me. He picked the Huey up, nosed her over and headed in full pursuit of the rest of the formation. I looked at Top and yelled over the chopper noise, “Don’t let go, just don’t let go!” I knew he would not. And, then things got worse! Our UH-1H was badly overloaded and on the north end of the airstrip was a tall stand of trees. I had a bird’s eye view and did not see how we were going to clear. I looked at Top and he just smiled. There was not a thing we could do about it. It was out of our hands. You prepare the best you can and the rest is what it is. The trees got closer and closer and we slowly gained altitude. I had to look. We just cleared the trees by mere feet! I heard the crew chief say, “Damn sir, that was close!”

When I looked at Top again he gave me that, “We’ll be OK” look and I knew we would. For 40 years I have tried to live up to his standard, to be a soldier and NCO of whom he would be proud.

Until next month, never forget, these are momentous times and we serve in a place with 7,000 years of history. This is a mission like no other and it is your chance to make a difference. Do not tell me what you did yesterday; tell me what you did today!

To all of our partners across the IZ, stay safe! Victory is in the details!

One team, one fight!



# Ramadan Kareem

## “Generous Ramadan”

The Islamic holy month of Ramadan began this year around Aug. 22, and residents of the IZ may have noticed that things are different than they were a few weeks ago.

Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. Because Ramadan begins the night after a new moon, when the first waxing crescent is spotted, the date varies from year to year. The exact date when Ramadan begins differs between Sunni and Shi'a calendars, normally by a day or two. Ramadan is believed to be the month when the Quran was revealed to Muhammad. To celebrate this important event in Islam, Muslims

spend the daylight hours fasting.

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the pillars of

Islam and is meant to purify every part of the body through restraint: the tongue is restrained from cursing and gossip; the eyes do not look at unlawful or impure things; the ears abstain from listening to idle talk or obscene words; the feet refrain from going to sinful places; the mouth abstains from food, water or smoking during daylight hours; and the mind does not think impure thoughts.

Fasting is required

of all adult Muslims unless they are sick or otherwise unable to fast.

During Ramadan, Muslims try to re-evaluate their lives in light of Islamic guidance. They try to make peace with those who have wronged them, strengthen ties with family and friends, and try to quit bad habits.

Throughout Ramadan, Muslims are encouraged to pray more often and to read the whole of the Quran. Many Muslims attend services at mosques more often and strictly adhere to a daily prayer schedule.

Iftar is the breaking of the fast. This occurs every night after the evening prayer. Service members in the IZ wishing to partake in an Iftar meal can do so at the New Embassy Complex. Iftar is a communal event for Muslims, with family and friends gathering for a meal consisting of dates and other traditional foods.

During the last ten days of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate the Laylatul Qadr—the Night of Power, in English. This is when Muslims commemorate the actual night Muhammad was given the Quran by the angel Jabril. Some also believe that this is the night



Leaders of the Iraqi security forces are served dinner at the Sgt. Maj. Cooke dining facility in Camp Taji, Sept. 21, 2008. Leaders from the 25th Infantry Division held an Iftar dinner for the Iraqi soldiers to end the day's fast. Photo by Spc. Daniel Herrera, Joint Combat Camera Center Iraq



More than 400 Muslims line up in a massive formation for the fourth of five daily prayers in Islam during Ramadan in Doha, Qatar, Aug. 25. After prayer, they resumed embracing each other while bestowing hopes for peace and happiness. Photo by Dustin Senger, Area Support Group Qatar Public Affairs Office





In observance of the holy month of Ramadan, leaders from 25th Infantry Division held an Iftar dinner for leaders of the Iraqi security forces to end the day's fast. Photo by Spc. Daniel Herrera

when their fate for the following year is decided, so they spend all night praying to Allah for forgiveness and blessings.



Iraqi soldiers, 1st Battalion, 15th Brigade, 4th Division, show up for breakfast at 3 a.m. to eat before sunrise in observance of Ramadan at Bagarha, 1st Battalion Headquarters, Hawijah, Iraq, Sept. 19, 2008. Photo by Staff Sgt. Ave Pele-Sizelove, Joint Combat Camera Center Iraq

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan with a feast to celebrate the end of fasting. The Eid is a huge celebration with families coming together to share meals and reconnect.

It is important for non-Muslims to remember that these activities are going on so they can avoid offending Islamic beliefs.

To show respect for Muslims celebrating Ramadan:

- Don't eat, drink, smoke or chew gum in front of Muslims who are observing the fast.

- Don't have food or snacks laid out in plain sight.
- Be aware that families will be gathering, you will see large groups gathering at homes or mosques.
- Schedule meetings in the morning since Iraqis may be much more active at night.
- Be prepared for the possibility of celebratory gunfire during Eid al-Fitr.

For more information on Ramadan or the Islamic culture contact Sam Freeman, the JASG-C cultural advisor, or your chaplain. ■



Iraqi soldiers assigned to 1st Battalion, 15th Brigade, 4th Division gather inside a tent designated as their mosque after being called to morning prayer at 4 a.m. at Bagarha, Sept. 19, 2008. Photo by Staff Sgt. Ave Pele-Sizelove





# Train as we fight... or protect

Guardsmen train as personal security detail soldiers

*By Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*

Going through scenarios similar to what they might encounter in real-world situations, Guardsmen from Kentucky's 'Dragon Warriors'—the 301st Chemical Company—completed training in Baghdad in July and August that prepared them for missions as personal security detail soldiers.

The training, offered by the Department of State, was completed by more than 100 soldiers in the company.

For nearly a week in full battle rattle, soldiers in a platoon-size element learned and applied the security tactics that will ensure personnel's safety throughout Baghdad.



Pfc. Michael Mullins, a gunner and personal security detail soldier for 3rd Platoon, 301st Chemical Co., plugs a communication device into a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle while training at the Crossed Sabers in Baghdad. *Photos by Spc. Michelle Gonzalez*



More than 100 soldiers assigned to the Kentucky National Guard's 301st Chemical Co. applied their training to scenarios similar to what they might encounter while in Baghdad.





Guardsmen from the 301st Chemical Co. secure their principal and lead him to safety during a training exercise Aug. 5.

“Kicking in doors and training in four-man teams has been the best training I’ve ever received,” said Spc. Kelly Goode, a driver assigned to the ‘Dragon Warriors’ unit. “It’s definitely been a thumbs-up on this deployment for me and absolutely believe 175 percent that I will use this training in real-life missions.”

Soldiers were challenged physically and learned techniques that focused on keeping their principal alive by planning for contingencies, conducting a thorough recon of venues, applying security measures and thinking under pressure, said Capt. Travis Huber, the 301st company commander.

“The training definitely honed the PSD basics we acquired during pre-mobilization training.” ■



Soldiers assigned to 2nd Platoon, 301st Chemical Co., practice close quarters battle prior to completing training exercises provided by instructors on the final day of training Aug. 5.



Spc. Mickey Kirk, 3rd Platoon, 301st Chemical Co., provides security while his team recovers their principal.



Pfc. Justin Tucker, 3rd Platoon, 301st Chemical Co., securely fastens gear onto his Improved Outer Tactical Vest before heading out to train as a member of a personal security detail at the Crossed Sabers in Baghdad.



# Caring and sharing

## Wisconsin program sends packages to troops

*By Spc. Tyler Lasure*

Hands frantically tearing at tape and cardboard; an ear-to-ear smile; the excitement of not knowing what's inside; the joy of knowing somebody cares enough to send something. It sounds like Christmas, but it's not. It's an eager soldier opening a care package.

Troops all over Iraq get care packages from groups or anonymous individuals, but 2nd Lt. Johnathan Meyers has known the woman who sent this package since he was a toddler.

"She was my preschool teacher," said Meyers, a screening officer with IZ Badging. "It's kind of a unique situation; it's kind of funny that she is still taking care of me 28 years later, through all I have been through."

The package is from Linda Hughes, a teacher at Rascals and Rockers, a Christian day school for children up to 12 years old in Cambria, Wis. She has taught there for 42 years, including when Meyers was a young student. Today she is the coordinator of the service learning project "A Case of Caring and Sharing," which sends care packages to troops around the world.

Hughes and her students prepare the packages as part of a lesson focused on community



In Wisconsin, Linda Hughes (far right, in red), a teacher at Rascals and Rockers day school, and her students prepare packages for deployed troops as part of lesson focused on community outreach. Photo by Staff Sgt. Mary Flynn



Linda Hughes, the coordinator of "A Case of Caring and Sharing" service learning project prepares to deliver packages to the post office. Photo by Staff Sgt. Mary Flynn





**Students from Rascals and Rockers day school eagerly drop off packages at the post office for deployed troops.**

*Photo by Staff Sgt. Mary Flynn*

outreach and developing a sense of volunteerism in the students.

"We do a lot of projects in the community so they grow up caring and willing to help someone in need," said Hughes.

Hughes started the "Case of Caring and Sharing" program in 2001 and has sent packages ever since. She asks people to send her names and addresses of troops to receive packages and hopes the soldiers share their packages with others.

"That's one thing Linda has encouraged me to do; if anybody needed anything, if there was a troop that didn't get much from back home, to be sure to let her know and she would do what she could. She sent many care packages to many different people," Meyers said.

Each package includes a letter and several drawings colored by the students.

"I like seeing the drawings.

Their imagination takes you back to when you were little. Children are so proud and happy to be doing this for troops, it shows through. I like that the most," Meyers said.

Hughes said she plans to continue sending care packages until she doesn't have any more soldiers to send to. In the meantime Meyers and other soldiers will continue to appreciate the hard work Hughes and her students put into this program.

"It humbles me to know that there is such a big effort back home to show support for us," Meyers said. "To me that shows patriotism in its many forms." ■



**In Baghdad, 2nd Lt. Johnathan Meyers cuts through the tape of a care package sent by a long-time friend.** *Photo by Spc. Tyler Lasure*





# Showtime on the FOB

## Time Bandits perform on Prosperity

*By Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*

Typically the only evening sounds heard at Forward Operating Base Prosperity are the droning of fuel-powered light generators.

However, on rare occasions, music does blare in front of Al Salam Palace.

Chris Barron—the former lead singer for the Spin Doctors—and the Time Bandits performed on Prosperity's stage Aug. 6 to show their support for service members and to improve troop morale.

Service members gather in front of Al Salam Palace and enjoy the Time Bandits' performance.



**Above:** Members of the Time Bandits from left to right: Jon Lloyd, Chris Barron, John Pahmer, performed Aug. 6 on Prosperity's stage in front of Al Salam Palace. *Photos by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*

**Left:** Chris Barron, former lead singer for the Spin Doctors, performs with the Time Bandits as part of a 10-day tour throughout Iraq and Kuwait.



**Phil Cimino** drums the night away at FOB Prosperity during a concert sponsored by MWR.





Spectators cheer as they listen to Chris Barron and the Time Bandits perform on FOB Prosperity's stage Aug. 6. The band toured Iraq and Kuwait for 10 days to show their support for service members and improve troop morale.



Chris Barron, the lead singer for the Time Bandits, autographs an album for a service member who attended the alternative rock band's concert.

The stop at Prosperity—the group's final performance in the International Zone—was one of several locations across Iraq and Kuwait in the alternative rock band's 10-day tour sponsored by Morale Welfare and Recreation.

"I thought the show was absolutely fabulous," said Capt. Rebecca O'Keefe, a transportation officer for Joint Area Support Group-Central.



The Time Bandits perform for service members for nearly two hours Aug. 6 at Prosperity.

After the nearly two-hour show, the four musicians talked to and took photographs with service members.

"It was great to have the opportunity to see them perform; that they gave up their time to come here," O'Keefe said. ■



Chris Barron (left) and John Pahmer (right) perform for service members in front of Al Salam Palace.



After the concert, service members meet the band and receive autographed copies of the Time Bandits' album.



# Into the fire

## Iraqi firefighters learn new skills at a fire academy

*By Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*

Running into a burning building and suppressing a fire is second nature to a firefighter. But this skill is not something that a firefighter is born with—it is learned through rigorous training.

At a fire academy in the International Zone, Army and Air Force instructors train nearly 40 Iraqi firefighters from across the nation every two months in an effort to establish a training framework for future firefighters.

For 60 days, students go through the basic training of fire service at the Iraqi Civil Defense Directorate Fire Academy where Firefighter I and II classes are divided into three phases.

Soldiers and airmen instruct the first phase with the help of an interpreter. During the second phase, a student from the previous



**Iraqi firefighters at the Iraqi Civil Defense Directorate Fire Academy train rigorously for 60 days, learning to fight different types of fires.** Photos by Sgt. Fernando Ochoa, 222nd Broadcast Operations Detachment



**Students apply the fundamentals of firefighting to scenarios at the fire academy in Baghdad.**

class and a service member share instructional duties. In the final phase, service members become observers while an Iraqi instructor teaches the entire class.

“We have trained these firefighters and now they are going to take over,” said Army Sgt. Michael Kuca, an academy instructor.

The goal is to have Iraq’s Ministry of Interior provide every firefighter in Iraq with the Firefighter I and II training and make it mandatory for future incoming firefighters.

Firefighter I and II classes include topics that involve learning about equipment used to fight fires, the

fundamentals of extinguishing fires in different settings such as vehicle, structure or chemical fires, and how to respond to medical emergencies such as shock, soft tissue injuries and bleeding.

“Teaching these skills in fire and rescue fundamentals will help better serve the community,” Kuca said. ■

*A story by Sgt. Fernando Ochoa, 222nd Broadcast Operations Detachment, contributed to this story.*



**Army and Air force instructors supervise training in a simulator Iraqi firefighters use during a 60-day firefighting class.**





# Spirit of Aloha!

Commemorating Hawaii's 50th anniversary of statehood

*By Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*

From group discussions covering topics like tourism and the strength of the Hawaiian people to Hawaiian dancers teaching people how to hula dance, Hawaii's statehood—which became official August 21, 1959—is celebrated differently.

For more than 300 service members and civilians on Forward Operating Base Prosperity, Hawaii's 50th anniversary of statehood was commemorated Aug. 21 with a luau held nearly 10,500 miles from Hawaii.

Prosperity's volleyball pits were transformed into Hawaii with tiki torches and an inflatable pool which became the setting for commemorative photos of the luau.

"We did what we could to make this as realistic as possible which is a challenge given that we are in the middle of Baghdad without a lot of resources," said Adrian Williams, a technician for Morale Welfare Recreation.

Donning leis around their necks, attendees ate Hawaiian food prepared by the dining facility, listened to Hawaiian music and had the opportunity to participate in a hula and limbo contest.

The event ended with a phone conversation with senior military leaders and Linda Lingle, Hawaii's governor.

"We will ensure the next 50 years will be as rich and divers as the first 50," Lingle said. ■



Sgt. Mike Feller and Capt. Rebecca O'Keefe soak their feet in the inflatable pool which was turned into a studio for commemorative photos of Hawaii's 50th anniversary celebration on FOB Prosperity. Photos by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez



Service members and civilians who attended Prosperity's luau ate Hawaiian cuisine prepared by the FOB's dining facility.



Luau attendees test their flexibility during a limbo contest at Prosperity's volleyball pits.



# Higher education 101

## Soldiers get briefing on new Post-9/11 GI Bill

*By Sgt. Emily Anderson  
314th Public Affairs Operations Center*

Service members in Iraq trying to figure out a way to pay for higher education recently found some relief.

Nearly 100 soldiers traveled to Forward Operating Base Prosperity to attend a briefing held Aug. 13 on the new Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The briefing led by Patricia Davis-Mullins covered program eligibility and guidelines that became effective Aug. 1, 2009. Davis-Mullins, a staff member of the Victory Base Education Center, highlighted recent changes, including options to transfer benefits to a spouse or children.

Although Davis-Mullins does not work for the Department of Veterans Affairs—the agency that has oversight of the GI Bill program—she said she is the closest thing to a subject matter expert in the area. Her briefing gave service members an opportunity to learn more and ask questions about the new Post-9/11 GI Bill.

“I wanted to know more about what the new GI Bill offers and how to make sure I am entitled to

everything it offers,” said Sgt. Michael Kimberly, a personal security detail soldier and driver for Multi-National Force—Iraq. “I expected to get a rough idea of the new GI Bill, and

much to my surprise I got a detailed explanation of it.”

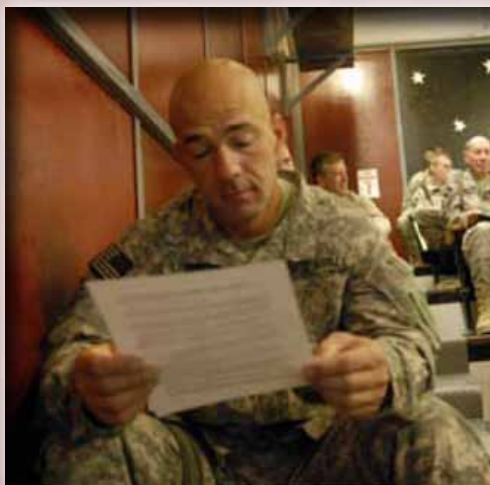
Davis-Mullins made it clear at the beginning of her presentation that the details of the program are still being worked out. “Don’t use my slides as the last word in making your decisions. Instead, use this information as the starting point,” she said. She added that the new GI Bill program might not be the best choice for everyone.

“Some people will be better off with their current GI Bill benefits,” she noted.

The basics of the program involve eligibility. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs Web site, an individual on active duty will be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill on the 90th day of service after

completion of entry level and/or skill training. Reservists, Guardsmen, and veterans will be eligible for the new GI Bill after serving a collective period of 90 days to 36 months of active duty, excluding basic training and skill training.

Sgt. Maj. Troy Falardeau and the staff of Combined Press Information Center on Prosperity facilitated Davis-



**1st Lt. Brian Forshee reads over the quick reference guide that was handed out before the briefing.** Photos by Sgt. Emily Anderson, 314th Public Affairs Operations Center



**Patricia Davis-Mullins informs service members about eligibility and benefits of the new Post-9/11 GI Bill.**





Service members sit and listen to a staff member from the Victory Base Education Center explain certain requirements with the new GI Bill Aug.13 at Forward Operating Base Prosperity.

Mullins' visit. According to Falardeau, his soldiers saw it as the best way to get their questions about the new GI Bill answered. Once the visit was confirmed, they spread the word among units around the International Zone, and got an overwhelming response.

"You can only do so much on a Web site or over a phone call," Falardeau said. "A lot of people need face-to-face help."

While some service members attended the briefing to learn more about the Post-9/11 GI Bill, others attended to learn the difference between the new Post-9/11 GI Bill and the previous Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty, the Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve and the Reserve Educational Assistance Program.

"I was attending the briefing to find out the benefits of changing from the Montgomery GI Bill to the Post-9/11 GI Bill. I was hoping to learn the difference between the two,"

said 1st Lt. Brian Forshee, a platoon leader for 1st Battalion 7th Field Artillery.

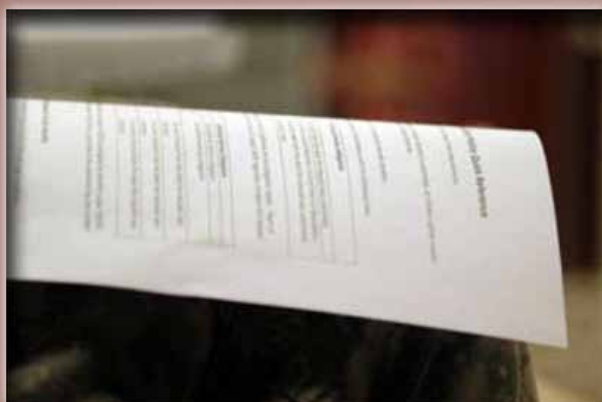
The new GI Bill will pay for tuition and fees which can include, but is not limited to, health premiums, freshman fees, graduation fees, and lab fees. For some service members, a monthly housing allowance and a stipend for books and supplies will also be provided.

"The benefits are better. More money for tuition and a housing stipend, it doesn't get much better than that," said Sgt. Ferdinand Thomas, a photojournalist

for the 222nd Broadcast Operations Detachment who recently decided to switch from his previous MGIB to the new Post-9/11 GI Bill.

"The more money you have for college, the less stressful it's going to be. Get as much money as you can so you don't have to worry about paying extra fees," Thomas added.

For more information about the new Post-9/11 GI Bill policies, eligibility, or benefits, visit [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov) or call 1-888-GIBILL-1. ■



A quick reference guide explaining how to request the new GI Bill and eligibility requirements was handed out to all members who attended the briefing.



# Honoring a fallen soldier

## Dedicating the TMC on FOB Prosperity

By Spc. Tyler Lasure

The first Army nurse killed in combat since Vietnam was honored during a dedication ceremony for a troop medical clinic on FOB Prosperity Aug. 13.

The clinic was named in honor of Capt. Maria Ortiz, who died during a mortar attack in Baghdad's International Zone on July 10, 2007, while returning from physical fitness training. Ortiz was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on Aug. 9, 2007.

Ortiz deployed to Iraq in 2006 and was assigned to Ibn Sina Hospital in Baghdad. She worked at the hospital when it was featured on the HBO television series "Baghdad ER."

Ortiz was remembered as an outstanding medical professional by the Chief of the Army Nurse Corps.

"Each person who will work within these walls will know her spirit and her passion for standing by our service members and providing the best health care possible to those who choose to wear the cloth of our nation," said Maj. Gen. Patricia Horoho in a letter read at the ceremony. "May you continue to find comfort in the memories of Maria and all the service members' lives that she saved and touched."

Ortiz's family could not be in attendance for the ceremony, but a speaker at the ceremony extended a message to them.

"The loss of your daughter, sister and fiancée was and still is a difficult situation for all of us," said Lt. Col. Noel Cardenas, commander of the 421st Multifunctional Medical Battalion. "Capt. Maria Ortiz left her mark on our nation, the country of Iraq, the Army medical department,



A placard at the entrance to FOB Prosperity's troop medical clinic honors the memory of Capt. Maria Ortiz. Photos by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez

the Army nurse corps, and all the soldiers that have served with her and with everyone that is here today. The dedication of this clinic in her name is just a small token of what we owe you, her memory and her service to our nation."

Ortiz was born in Camden, N.J., in 1967, but was raised in Puerto Rico. She enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve in 1991 and entered active duty in the Army in 1993. She earned her nursing degree from the University of Puerto Rico and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1999.

"I didn't want her memory to be forgotten," said Ortiz's twin sister Maria Luisa Medina in a phone interview from New Jersey. "The dedication of this clinic in her name is an honor." ■



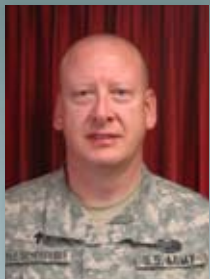
From left to right: Col. Steven Bensend, Lt. Col. Noel Cardenas and Col. Michael Calder unveil a new sign Aug. 13 dedicating the troop medical clinic on FOB Prosperity to Capt. Maria Ortiz who was the first Army nurse killed in combat since Vietnam.



## Chaplain's word

# Living water

Chap. (Lt. Col.) Douglas H. Fleischfresser  
JASG-C Chaplain



Every morning as I walk to work I am amazed by the green, abundant leaves on the trees I walk by. Leaves that are so green and lush that it is

hard to believe because of the deep drought Baghdad and the country of Iraq is experiencing. How is it that these trees not only survive, but somehow seem to be flourishing in this extreme heat and dehydration?

Have you ever heard people say they are experiencing a dry spell in their Spiritual Life? What are they saying? Usually they mean that because of some difficulty or struggle, they feel as though their Spiritual resources have dried up! They are expressing to the best of their ability,

that instead of receiving a refreshing in their faith, a renewal if you will, when they go to the well of their Spiritual assets they find it is parched and instead receive nothing.

This leaves the individual feeling withered, dried up and cut off from the source of replenishment. I can't speak for everybody, but I bet if we looked back on our lives we could all see that at some point we felt "dried up!" I know I certainly can.

But perhaps that is just the problem! Often, we are trying to rely on a system that needs replenishing and becomes empty very quickly. Spiritual resupply from God never dries up! When we try to go it alone, we fail because we are imperfect people. When God's people tried making it on their own during Jeremiah's time, God spoke to Jeremiah saying, "They have

forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water" (Jeremiah 2:13). Artesian wells never dry up. Broken cisterns do! When we feel like we are in a "dry spell" remember the words of the Lord, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:37-38).

And about those trees with the very green leaves and palm branches here in the Baghdad area, I'm told their root system is extremely wide and is constantly seeking out replenishing, storing it for up to years if need be. Want your life to be rich and abundant? Seek out the Source of all life and tap into an unending supply of blessings and nourishment.

## JAG brief

# Checking your credit

Capt. David James  
JASG-C Deputy Command Judge Advocate



A boost to your finances and savings can be a significant benefit of deployment. Now is also a perfect time to

make sure your credit report is in good shape. If you don't, you could get home and find that you cannot get the loan you wanted for that new car or home. How well you handle credit can also impact how much you pay for insurance and your ability to obtain or keep a security clearance.

Your credit report is a record of your credit accounts for everything from credit cards, to school loans, to mortgages. When someone wants to lend you more money (say for that new home when you re-deploy), they will check your credit report at one of the three credit reporting agencies—

Equifax, Experian and TransUnion—to see how you have handled borrowed money in the past.

You can get a free copy of your credit report from each of the three agencies once every 12 months by going to [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com). This is the only official Web site for obtaining your free annual credit report.

If you find errors on your credit report, you will need to follow the dispute process outlined on each of the credit reporting agencies' Web sites. Unfortunately, this happens more often than you would expect. Another way to proactively protect yourself is to "freeze" your credit. A freeze prevents anyone from using your credit report to extend credit without your express permission.

Your credit report is also the basis for your credit score—the numerical

valuation that creditors use to rank potential borrowers. While several different scores exist, the most commonly used score is your FICO score (available for about \$10 when you get your free report).

If you want to talk with a credit counselor about any questions or problems, check out [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com) for free resources. You can also contact your legal assistance office for help. If you think you have been the victim of identity theft, check out the helpful letter, WI TAG Identify Theft Memo, located at the JASG-C Command Judge Advocate Web site.

### Tips for Improving Your Credit Score

- Pay your bills on time
- Keep your oldest account open
- Only seek new credit when you need it
- Keep debt-to-credit ratio low on credit card accounts



# FOB Future

## Editor's note

*This month, Outside the Zone takes you to Forward Operating Base Future on Victory Base Complex near Baghdad, where Wisconsin Guardsmen oversee the training of Iraqi correctional officers.*

*By Spc. Tyler Lasure*

An instructor shouts commands in Arabic. Recruits snap into fighting stances. The instructor tests the recruits, shaking them and kicking their legs. One recruit makes a mistake, and the instructor drops him for push-ups.

This training may seem like Army boot camp, but these men aren't preparing to be soldiers, they are training to become Iraqi correctional officers.

At the Iraqi National Training Academy, located on Victory Base Complex near Baghdad, Iraqi instructors are training four platoons of recruits to become the foundation of the Iraqi correctional system.

This facility is the first of its kind, and this is the first class to be trained entirely by Iraqi



Sgt. 1st Class David Wilson, the non-commissioned officer in charge of training (left) and 2nd Lt. Christopher Cahak, Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry's officer in charge of training (center) go over a training schedule with one of the recruits. Company A is responsible for overseeing the training conducted at the academy. Photos by Spc. Tyler Lasure

instructors.

"This facility, from the ground up, has been designed to be the leading edge of the American withdrawal of forces from Iraq," said 2nd Lt. Christopher Cahak, Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry's officer in charge of training. "It's an incredibly important mission, we take it very seriously and this mission has been handed to the Wisconsin National Guard."

Company A is responsible for the logistics of the academy and supervises

training. The company is based in Menomonie, Wis., and is part of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team serving in Iraq.

"Our responsibility is to ensure there is a conduit of information between the Iraqi Correctional Services and the actual instructors and staff here on site," Cahak said. "We also have a supervisory role with their instructors to ensure they're teaching the material that is supposed to be trained in the order it is supposed to be taught."

Sgt. 1st Class David Wilson, the non-commissioned officer in charge of training at the facility compares their mission to that of



Sgt. Nicholas Essick reviews the training schedule for the week. Even though all of the instruction at the academy is done by Iraqi instructors, the Wisconsin Guardsmen oversee the curriculum.





Iraqi recruits stand in formation. Recruits are marched from classes to meals in order to instill the discipline needed to work in a theater internment facility.

a principal and vice principal at a school.

"It's hard to pinpoint a specific description of what we do because we cover so many little different aspects, whether it's making sure they have uniforms, making sure they have water, making sure the maintenance and things are facilitated," Wilson said.

The six-week Iraqi-led course consists of both classroom training and practical exercises. The course covers restraint procedures,



A recruit takes notes during a block of classroom instruction. Classroom topics include basic human rights and the treatment of prisoners in internment facilities.

defensive techniques, handcuffing, the use of weapons, basic human rights, and the treatment of prisoners in theater internment facilities. After recruits finish the basic course they go on to an eight-day session taught by Wisconsin Guard soldiers. The advanced training focuses on the specifics of running the U.S.-controlled TIFs.

"This is probably the toughest thing the majority of these gentlemen have undergone in their lives," Wilson said.

Soldiers of Company A take pride in their work at the academy, "It's rewarding in that we can bring our Iraqi counterparts up to the correct standard to conduct prison and correctional officer operations on their own and hopefully facilitate the withdrawal of the American troops because they will be operating independently," Wilson said.

Although language and cultural barriers sometimes cause problems, the Wisconsin Guard soldiers see improvements in



An instructor demonstrates unarmed self-defense tactics to a platoon of recruits. Hands-on lessons are half of the curriculum at the National Training Academy.

recruits on a daily basis. "They have only been here a couple of weeks and are taking pride in what they do," Wilson said.

The soldiers of Alpha Company will continue overseeing operations at the academy until they return to Wisconsin in early 2010.

"We hope that we can get this facility completely run by Iraq so that they can continue to train professional Iraqi correctional officers in our absence," Cahak said. ■



# Know where to go

## Life on the FOBs

### Common Access Cards

The IZ Common Access Card (CAC) office is in Room 110 on the first floor of the Palace (Bldg. 100) at forward operating base Prosperity, Monday through Saturday from 0800 to 1700. For questions, call DSN 312-239-1765 or e-mail [jasg-chrm@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:jasg-chrm@iraq.centcom.mil)

### Post office

Free mail, limited to 13 ounces, still exists for the letter home. If you are mailing pictures, a small souvenir in an envelope or packages, then you must go to the post office. Packages will be inspected and limited to three items per visit. A military ID card is required for the transaction. Civilians need two forms of identification to conduct postal transactions.

Items forbidden to be shipped include weapons items, drugs, alcohol, and perishable material. For a complete list of items, consult CENTCOM AR 25-200 or HRSC Policy 07-26.

FOB Prosperity: Located at the west entrance of the Palace. The hours are 0900 to 1700 daily.

FOB Union III: A mailbox is located in front of Bldg. 6. The post office is located in Bldg. 5. The hours are 0800 to 1730 daily.

### Laundry

Since dirty laundry is serious business, the FOBs have a seven-day-a-week laundry service that at a maximum takes three days to complete. Individuals using the service can only have 20 pieces of laundry in each bag. Blankets and comforters must be separated from clothing or uniform items.

FOB Prosperity: 0700 to 2000 daily

FOB Union III: 0700 to 1900 daily

FOB Blackhawk: 0700 to 1800 daily

### Dining facility

The Prosperity dining facility across from the Palace (Bldg. 100) offers four meals a day with Grab-n-go options between meal hours. Meal hours are:

Breakfast: 0600 to 0830

Grab-n-go: 0830 to 1100

Lunch: 1130 to 1330

Grab-n-go: 1330 to 1700

Dinner: 1730 to 2000

Grab-n-go: 2000 to 2230

Midnight Meal: 2230 to 0100

Grab-n-go: 0100 to 0530

The Union III DFAC across from the Bldg. 1 parking lot offers four meals a day. Meal hours are:

Breakfast: 0530 to 0800

Lunch: 1130 to 1330

Dinner: 1730 to 2000

Midnight meal: 2330 to 0100

### Medical Treatment

Those eligible for care at Troop Medical Clinics include active-duty U.S. and Coalition Forces, retired U.S. military and Department of Defense federal government employees.

Routine immunizations and Post Deployment Health Assessments are available for individuals during sick call hours. For groups of 10 or more and immunizations call the TMC to schedule an appointment.

Ortiz Consolidated Medical Clinic is located in Bldg. 87, behind the fuel point. Sick-call hours for walk-ins are Monday through Friday from 0800 to 1000 and 1300 to 1500. Medical staff is present 24/7 in case of emergency. The clinic is closed on Saturdays and Sundays. Services now available include primary care, dental, combat stress control, laboratory, radiology and pharmacy.

The Union III TMC relocated to the west side of Bldg. 5. Sick-call hours for walk-ins are Monday through Friday from 0800 to 1045 and 1300 to 1500,

0800 to 1045 Saturdays.

Audiology services are now located at Phipps TMC in Balad; optometry and dermatology are located at Camp Liberty's Witmer TMC.

### Finance

Finance operations include check cashing, Eagle Cash Card transactions, military pay issues, collection and review of travel vouchers and other military pay-related documents, and more.

Eagle Cash Card (ECC) applications are available. The service member must provide a current bank statement or LES to verify bank routing and account numbers. As a reminder, you can load up to \$350 per day to your card. You can get cash back up to \$200 per month. Checks can also be cashed for up to \$200 per month.

Prosperity finance operations are in Room 108 on the first floor of the Palace. Hours are from 0900 to 1600 Saturday through Thursday.

Union III finance operations are in Bldg. 6, A-Wing, room 2A from 0900 to 1600 Saturday through Thursday.

### Gym/ MWR

The Prosperity gym is located on the first floor of the Palace and is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The MWR center, in rooms 122, 125 and 127, are also open 24/7 and offer a large-screen television, DVDs, books, boardgames, and other fun activities.

The Union III gym is located in Bldg. 5 and is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The MWR center, next to the gym, is also open 24/7 and offers a large-screen television, DVDs, books, boardgames, Xbox and other fun activities.

The Blackhawk gym is located in Bldg. 12 and is open 24 hours. Gym equipment will be moved out at the end of July.



# around the zone



Lt. Col. Robert Bailes, 1-7 Field Artillery commander, presents battalion coins during a ceremony held Aug. 22 to soldiers from his battalion who will be the advance party for their demobilization process. *Photos by Spc. Tyler Lasure*



Capt. Travis Huber, commander, 301st Chemical Co., points out landmarks in the International Zone to Maj. Gen. Edward Tonini, Adjutant General, Kentucky National Guard, Aug. 19. Later that evening, Tonini ate dinner with his troops and presented soldiers with coins.



Col. Steven Bensend, JASG-C commander, recognizes Pvt. Seth West and three other 1-7 Field Artillery soldiers Aug. 22 for identifying and detaining a criminal suspect.



Capt. Travis Huber, commander, 301st Chemical Co., briefs Maj. Gen. Edward Tonini, Adjutant General, Kentucky National Guard, on his company's mission. Tonini visited the International Zone to meet with his soldiers Aug. 19.

## Transitions...

*We welcome the 93rd Military Police Battalion to the International Zone, and bid farewell to the soldiers of 1/7 Field Artillery and thank them for a job well done.*





Spc. Michael Mowry, a gunner assigned to a personal security detail with 3rd Platoon, 301st Chemical Co., surveys possible exits and secures a perimeter while training in Baghdad. *Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*