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in the
ZONE

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Air Force Master Sgt. Tommy Robinson, JASG noncommissioned officer in charge of department of public works Team 2, coordinates with Iraqi contractors for construction projects located in the International Zone Oct. 18. Photo by Air ForceTech. Sgt. Johnny Saldivar

On the Cover:

Wisconsin soldiers—gathered at Prosperity's volleyball courts—cheer as the Green Bay Packers run another touchdown during the Tailgating with the Troops event held Oct. 18. Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez

in the
ZONE



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From the Top

JASG-C Commander

Residents and workers in the International Zone, greetings.

25 October gave us one more reminder that, although overall attacks in all of Iraq are at an all-time low, a significant threat continues to exist. Vigilance in security is a key component to our survival and success. Entry control points continue to be manned by our Iraqi Army counterparts and they are doing a superb job. However, remember that security depends upon each one of us. Stay alert, report abnormalities or unusual behavior, and take action when necessary.

The comfort level of our environment is improving as we are met with cooler temperatures and occasional precipitation. Along with that comfort, come safety and security concerns as vehicles become covered with mud and surfaces become slippery. Vehicle searches are increasingly more difficult and additional time is necessary for thorough inspections.

Over the past month, additional T-walls were emplaced to complete the span between Al Khindi Street and Quadisiya along 14 July Street, and also in other areas of the IZ. Checkpoints along Al Khindi Street and ECPs at Union III and Prosperity are taking new shapes. Expect changes to continue over the next two months as we prepare for future movement inside the IZ. Expect continued delays in movement times and plan ahead.

If there is one resounding theme in the IZ, it is constant change. Essayons and Freedom Compound were returned to the GOI on 25th of October, and several more property transfers are pending. Freedom Rest is currently being prepared to turn over in early November. Transition of MNSTC-I, TF 134, MNC-I and MNF-I into one USF-I headquarters is well under way. Some of the transitions are already behind us but much is yet to come. During this period of change, I anticipate the need for increased vigilance and attention to detail.



Col. Steven Benseid
Commander
Joint Area Support Group—Central

The environment we are operating in is truly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). Proactive leadership—at all levels—that incorporates a common sense and logical method of action is critical for mission accomplishment. I believe we have things moving in the right direction. Examples of this type of action by soldiers and leaders at all ranks are evident.

Thank you for the superb work you are doing. It makes a difference and it is commendable.

JASG-C Command Sergeant Major

For all of us in the JASG time continues to fly and I am sure that is true for many of you out in the IZ. Fall is here, and we are already six weeks into the NFL season. Now most of us Wisconsin soldiers are fanatical Green Bay Packer fans. However, we do harbor a very few Minnesota Vikings fans and one very lonely Lion's fan. I thought it was very big of Green Bay to let Bret Favre retire, again, and again, so he could sign with the Vikings just to give them a chance to go to another Super Bowl. It is our Mid-Western sense of fair play. Why should Wisconsin have all the fun of Favre-mania?

Although, the Vikings may have

won the first meeting, it is still a long season. The next game is on the "frozen tundra" of historic Lambeau Field. We Packer fans do not give up easily! We will be watching the game.

I have been writing these pieces for the last five months and I always try to share an experience to which most of us can relate. Just like being a fan, how you grew up and how you view the world often depends on experiences with family, friends, your schools, community, or simply, that you just like something.

Being in the military and in a war zone, we learn to develop and maintain SA, situational awareness. We always check our 5 and 25. We



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

should always know what is going on around us, but this is nothing new. We have used a type of SA our whole life, when we drive, when we go shopping, when we go hunting. We use SA in most everything we do. However, when we do it here, it takes on a

More —————>

different aspect, a more important focus. It could save our life or the lives of others. Our training honed a skill we grew up with, but our own experiences often color what we see and how we see it, even here.

Growing up in Wisconsin as a boy, I lived just outside the City Of Manitowoc. Manitowoc is a port city on Lake Michigan well known for shipbuilding and in particular for building submarines during WWII. I lived in the country next to my cousin's farm, surrounded by many wooded areas.

In the 1950s, television was still new and when my Dad bought our first set there still was only a few stations to watch, two Green Bay stations and one from Milwaukee if you turned the antenna just right. Yet, I did not get to watch much during nice weather, well any kind of weather, my Mother's favorite line was "Get out of this house and go outside and play!" I did.

So as a young boy growing up and spending a lot of it outdoors, I began to hone my SA. I noticed the change of seasons, I noticed animals, especially birds and the tracks they made, the songs they sang. We had a dog and cats so I knew their tracks and found the track of other animals that traveled through our property. As I got older and explored the wooded area near my house, I found many interesting animals and trees,



Crow. Photo by Marek Szczepanek

especially apple trees, crab apple trees. If you kept a close eye on them, you could get a few ripe apples just before the worms, bugs and other critters finished them off or made them uneatable. Even then, they were great for having apple fights with my cousins. When hit with one, it really stung!

Here is my point, my early experiences influence how I look at things, how I look at the IZ especially FOB Prosperity. That is what I would like to share this month.

I like to run, not only does it keep me fit, that old APFT thing, but I write most of my stories while running. I am not a marathoner by any means, just a plodder. I like to run. The thing I liked about Prosperity when we moved in last May was the park like atmosphere, the variety of trees, the lakes, the wild life and a good route to run. Wildlife was the first thing I noticed and on my second early morning run I saw what at first I thought were two cats, one smaller in front and one bigger behind. As I ran closer, I realized the second animal was not a cat but a small dusty brown fox. It stopped, took one look at me and beat a hasty retreat.

Now I hesitated telling anyone of my sighting because the last thing I thought I would see on Prosperity or in Iraq was a fox. I did share with one of my NCOs, but he gave me one of those "ya, sure you saw a fox" looks. Two days later on a stretch of road on the south side of Prosperity there was my fox again just casually running next to the wall, again when he saw me he reversed course and beat a speedy exit through a break in the wall. On my second lap, I saw him again and he ran across the road in front of me and through the gate into the EOD compound.

Prosperity also has a large number of birds; everyone has seen our



Kingfisher. Photo by Rakesh Dhareshwar

resident Rock Pigeon population. There are hundreds if not thousands and they have done a good job of turning some of the upper floors of the palace into guano repositories.

However, Pigeons are not the only birds on Prosperity, about a month ago, I finally had a good look at what I thought was a Magpie, white body and black head and wings. I did some research on line and it is really a Pied Crow or Mesopotamian Crow and belongs to the Hooded Crow family. Crows are extremely intelligent birds who can solve problems and fashion tools especially when it comes to getting food. I have only seen a pair, but there are probably more.

Speaking of food, with the lakes here, there are quite a few fish, not eatable for us, but a good source of food for birds. While running a few weeks back I did my second lap around Deer Lake, when I saw a long-beaked bird, black and white in color, intently scanning the lake. It turned out be a Pied Kingfisher. Since then I have seen another but this one was more colorful, large bright red bill and blue, white and brown plumage, probably a Smyrna Kingfisher.

I could go on, Sunday morning I saw my first Raven on Prosperity, but it is time to close for this month. Maintain good SA, you never know what you might see here in the IZ. It may be more than you expected.

To all of our partners across the IZ, stay safe, one team, one fight!

With the stroke of a pen

Transferring Ibn Sina Hospital to Iraq

For the past six years, Ibn Sina Hospital was a place in Baghdad where lives were saved. Now, following the hospital's transfer to the government of Iraq, it represents yet another positive sign of the nation's progress in becoming stable and self-reliant as U.S. forces steadily reduce their presence here.

Built in 1964 by four Iraqi physicians—and named for a great physician, scholar and philosopher of the 10th century—Ibn Sina Hospital now belongs to the government and the people of Iraq.

Presiding over a ceremony transferring the 58,000 square foot facility to Iraq was Army Brig. Gen. Stephen Lanza, director of CJ9 for Multi-National Force–Iraq.

"The potential for this hospital to provide first-class health care to Iraqi citizens is a microcosm of the potential of this nation to provide peace, prosperity, and opportunity to its people," Lanza told the transfer ceremony audience of about 50 U.S. and Iraqi medical personnel.

During the time U.S. military medical professionals operated Ibn Sina, they treated thousands of U.S. service members, but they worked just as hard to care for Iraqi soldiers and citizens, coalition partners—and even to save the lives of insurgents.

"Such is the work of hospitals and the very special people called to the practice of medicine," Lanza noted.

Ibn Sina Hospital was made famous in the award-winning HBO documentary "Baghdad E.R." Transferred along with the three-level hospital property was \$7.9 million in supplies and equipment including:

- The hospital contains 44 beds and four operating room tables



Col. Martin Seifer, JASG's director of installations, and Mr. Sameer Secretariat of the Committee for Receiving Real Properties and Camps Office of the Prime Minister, sign the official documents transferring Ibn Sina Hospital back to the government of Iraq. Photos by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez



Army Brig. Gen. Stephen Lanza addresses an audience of about 50 U.S. and Iraqi medical personnel during a ceremony held Oct. 1 transferring Ibn Sina Hospital to the government of Iraq.

- Full radiological capabilities
- Outpatient clinic capability with ultrasound machine
- Fully capable intermediate care ward with bed and vital sign monitors
- Crash cart and defibrillator
- Fully supplied dental clinic
- Two medical waste disposal incinerators
- Industrial washers and dryers for cleaning hospital linen

Ibn Sina was the 33rd International Zone property the U.S. military has returned to the government of Iraq since the U.S.-Iraq security agreement took effect Jan. 1. Nine more properties are scheduled to be turned over before the year ends.

"The milestone we mark today is one more important step in building a secure, stable, sovereign, self-reliant Iraq fully able to meet the needs of its citizens," Lanza said. ■



Break away Prosperity's MWR activities

Service members play table tennis in FOB Prosperity's lounge area. Photos by Capt. Joy LeMay

By Capt. Joy LeMay

Most service members don't get a lot of free time while they're deployed. They spend long hours in their offices, out on missions and catching up on sleep, but occasionally they find time to break away from the drudgery of deployment life.

"Soldiers and civilians all need something to do, that's why we're here," said Adrian Williams, a Morale, Welfare and Recreation technician. "We do our best to help people enjoy themselves while they're here."

The MWR program on Prosperity is operated by KBR and offers a variety of activities including physical fitness competitions, movies, games, classes and organized sports.

"There are a lot of people living here with a lot of different interests," Williams said. "We try hard to sponsor a variety of events

so we can appeal to everyone."

Exercise is the most popular MWR activity for service members during downtime. It helps them maintain mental and physical health during their deployments which is why KBR's contract requires them to provide soldiers a fitness center. Prosperity has the largest fitness center in the IZ.

It is equipped with more than 100 pieces of exercise and cardio equipment and also offers daily pilates and yoga fitness classes.

"I like the fact that the gym's open 24 hours," said 2nd Lt. Christine Kramer. "It's nice that I don't have to schedule my day around the gym. Instead, I can schedule the gym around my day."

MWR's Garden State Theater, named by the New



Pilates and yoga classes—the newest classes offered by MWR provide service members with an alternative core workout.



Volleyball tournaments—along with soccer, football and basketball—are sponsored by Prosperity's MWR and foster friendly competition against units.



Sgt. Brian Wepking, a personal security detail soldier, uses Prosperity's fitness center—the largest in the IZ.

Jersey-based JASG soldiers here earlier this year, is located on the second floor of the palace on Prosperity. A different movie is shown Thursday through Sunday and the theater is also available for special events, including meetings, presentations and watching broadcast sporting events.

Service members can also watch movies in the MWR lounge on the first floor of the palace. The lounge offers televisions, video games, board games, pingpong and billiards.

Throughout the year, MWR sponsors six to 10 different sports tournaments including soccer, football, volleyball and basketball.

A football tournament is planned for the week of Thanksgiving and an enlisted

versus non-commissioned officers dodgeball tournament is scheduled for December. Winners of the enlisted-officer tourney will play the officers. Teams can register at the Prosperity MWR fitness center.

"Team events foster friendly competition against units," said Craig Miller, the MWR supervisor. "It's a fun way for soldiers to release deployment stress."

Because of the strong interest in team activities, MWR also plans to host a unit fitness challenge. The competition will include push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups and a run. Each unit can have one person compete in each event.

Upcoming MWR event schedules are posted at the entrance of the fitness center on the first floor of the palace. FOB residents can contact MWR if they have suggestions for future events. ■

Rebuilding Iraq's economy

Local contractors build facilities

*By Senior Airman Alyssa Miles
U.S. Air Forces Central, Baghdad Media
Outreach Team*

Military contracting officials deployed to Baghdad work to rebuild the economy in Iraq by hiring local contractors to build and remodel facilities throughout the International Zone.

Airmen, soldiers and sailors have been hands-on with several structure projects, including the construction of an Iraqi school for boys, an Army finance office and a security compound.

Air Force Master Sgt. Tommy Robinson, Joint Area Support Group's department of public works non-commissioned officer in charge of Team 2, is responsible for ensuring structures are built according to code and are safe for habitation. So far, the airman has overseen more than four projects.

The construction process begins when leadership directs the construction or renovation of a facility. Next, contracting companies are invited to view the area during a site survey.

The companies submit bids outlining the estimated cost and completion dates. After all bids are in, the most desirable candidate receives a notice to proceed with construction. At the moment, JASG's Team 2 oversees the renovation of a building that will serve as the U.S. Forces—Iraq headquarters. The project is set to cost \$5 million and more than 200 Iraqis have been hired to complete the task.

In addition to constructing the building, contractors are responsible for running power and electric throughout the structure—an area which is the Navy's specialty, according to Robinson.

"On a daily basis I come out and check what's going on with the electric side of the construction," said Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Jack Frierson, deployed with the Army's 32nd Brigade out of Wisconsin. "We have a different way of viewing things, but I still feel like we're accomplishing a lot every day. Things that were hazardous and unsafe are getting repaired. It's a little different from being on a ship, but you can get acclimated pretty fast."

Robinson says he hopes the work the Iraqis do on behalf of the U.S. Forces will benefit the host nation long after the Americans redeploy.



Air Force Master Sgt. Tommy Robinson (left) and Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Jack Frierson (center), noncommissioned officers with JASG Department of Public Works, discuss an electrical panel with the Iraqi contractor who installed it. Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. Johnny Saldivar

"We're reconstructing things they can use for a long period to come and I'm hoping what I'm doing here will help the economy for a long time," he said.

Working in a joint service environment has increased the tempo on projects as more office space became necessary to house service members. While this may result in more work for him, Robinson is glad to work with and gain insight into his sister services.

"It brings us closer together, so we understand what each other does," he said. "We always work one team, one fight. When we get together and come together as a team, we focus on one thing—getting the mission accomplished—and we do that well together."

His Navy counterpart agrees.

"We both do this on a daily basis in our normal career," said Frierson. "What one person doesn't know, the other one knows and is there to fill in the blanks. It makes the whole operation run a whole lot smoother."

Robinson feels the contractor's can do attitude will ensure that the structures and Iraqi economy will once again be built on a strong foundation.

"They like doing a good job and they want to do a good job," Robinson said. "Being able to work with them and communicate with them and see where they've been and where they're going is great. I think I had a big part of that—helping them build their economy and putting them to work." ■

Tailgating with the troops

Wisconsin soldiers watch football with family via satellite



Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle addresses families of deployed Wisconsin Guardsmen at Madison's Alliant Energy Center and the troops via satellite Oct. 18 during the Tailgating with the Troops event. *Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*

As their families in Wisconsin gathered together for a pre-game tailgate party 6,200 miles from Baghdad Oct. 18, about 140 32nd Infantry Brigade troops at FOB Prosperity in the IZ joined them. Sort of.



Staff Sgt. David Sisco, a JASG paralegal, seasons hamburgers before serving them to hungry troops. *Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*

In Madison, Wis, a group of volunteers organized an event called "Tailgating with the Troops" for the families of more than 3,200 Wisconsin National Guard soldiers serving throughout Iraq with the 32nd Brigade, whose headquarters is operating in Baghdad as Joint Area Support Group-Central. Part of the appeal was that troops in Iraq would be watching the same NFL football game, the Detroit Lions visiting the Green Bay Packers, that several thousand family members were watching from Wisconsin.

The first challenge was persuading American Forces Network to carry this game in Iraq. After a few requests from both Wisconsin and Iraq, AFN was on



Staff Sgt. Alan Bires, JASG intel analyst, talks with family through an Internet connection set up at the tailgate site near the volleyball courts. *Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*

board.

Now the soldiers in Iraq had to put a tailgate party together without two of the most traditional items (some would say "essential") of Wisconsin tailgate fare: beer and bratwurst. That pesky General Order Number One kept beer off the Baghdad menu, of course, and it turns out you just can't get a good bratwurst east of Sheboygan, Wis. But charcoal grilled burgers and chicken were an acceptable



In Madison, family members of deployed Wisconsin Guardsmen gather at the Alliant Energy Center for Tailgating with the Troops. The event provided free food and activities to say thank you for the sacrifices families make while having a soldier deployed. Photo courtesy Staff Sgt. Gretel Weiskopf, Wisconsin Army National Guard

substitute for the brats, while non-alcoholic beer did its best to make up for the real thing.

Then there were technology hurdles to leap. The hope was that Baghdad troops could interact with the crowd in Wisconsin, and also talk directly with their families over Internet connections.

AFN came through again. With support from the 222nd Broadcast Operations Detachment, a satellite

uplink was established from Baghdad to Madison. The satellite hookup got a live television signal to Wisconsin, where participants included the adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar; Gov. Jim Doyle; and Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton.

Several dozen soldiers were able to talk directly to their families through an Internet connection set up out at the tailgate site near the volleyball courts.

Similar arrangements were made at seven other locations for soldiers of geographically dispersed elements of the brigade.

The whole event couldn't have been more technically challenging. And technically challenging stuff sometimes has a glitch or two.



Staff Sgt. Elisha Higgins, a JASG regional security officer, throws a koosh ball to a soldier in the bleachers during a tailgating event held Oct. 18. Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez



Soldiers celebrate as the Packers score a touchdown against the Lions. Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez

But there were more glitches in Madison than in Baghdad, so everybody here considers it was a successful event.

Capping off the night's success: the Packers creamed the Lions 26 to 0. ■

Breaking barriers

Interpreters help soldiers accomplish missions

By Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez

Five months ago, Wisconsin National Guard's 32nd Brigade took command of the Joint Area Support Group—Central and was tasked to secure and administer Baghdad's International Zone.

The global community found in the heart of Baghdad makes the JASG's mission a challenge, especially considering the language barriers existing between service members and local citizens.

Interpreters help U.S. forces communicate effectively by breaking the language barrier with local citizens, furthering the mission to establish Iraq as a sovereign nation.

"I couldn't do my job effectively without the use of an interpreter," said Sgt. Mike Feller, a mayor cell noncommissioned officer at Forward Operating Base Prosperity.

The mayor cell is responsible for FOB cleanliness which is accomplished with the help of a 20 to 30 local national labor force—making interpreters an integral part of the mayor cell team.

"I don't know how to speak Arabic and the laborers know little to no English," Feller said. "Interpreters help me talk to the laborers who clean Prosperity and explain to them what needs to get done for the day and how to complete the tasks."

Maintaining a FOB is not the only way interpreters



Master Sgt. Jennifer Zscher-nitz, the mayor's cell noncommis-sioned officer in charge, (left) relays the day's tasks to a forklift driver who works at the mayor cell (center) with the help of an interpreter (right). Photos by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez

help soldiers. They also work in sections that are responsible for establishing security in Iraq.

"Interpreters help us break the communication barrier when it comes to explaining what the applicants need and if there is anything that has been written wrong on applications or badges," said Spc. Melissa Dolatowski, a badging cell clerk with JASG.

"If there are ever any questions from either us or the applicants and it isn't fully understood what the question/answer is, the interpreter can usually explain it better for both sides."

Interpreters receive help from U.S. forces as well. Aside from food and shelter, they are able to obtain visas to move their families and themselves to the U.S.

"I'd like to thank U.S. forces for giving me the opportunity to get out of Iraq and visit the U.S. and also for giving my family the opportunity to do so," said 'Johnny' who has worked as an interpreter since 2007.

U.S. forces provided work, shelter, and the ability to take care of my family from a distance. "I definitely believe if I wasn't working with U.S. forces in 2007 I would've ceased to exist." ■



With the help of an interpreter (right), Lt. Col. Dennis Konkel (left), explains badging procedures to an Iraqi general (center).



By Spc. Tyler Lasure

The melodies of Beethoven, Mozart, and Dvorak replaced the honking of vehicles and the humming of generators Oct. 16 at the New Embassy Complex in Baghdad's International Zone.

Service members and others in attendance were treated to performances by students from the Peace Through Art Center and a quartet from the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra. The Peace Through Art Center is a school created and supported by the INSO, and provides children a safe place to learn music, etiquette and civics.

"Straight away I tell students 'You have a choice in life. You can choose a weapon, a Kalashnikov, or you can try a musical instrument,'" said Karem Wasfi, director of the INSO.

The performance included two solos by budding young artists, each with less than a year experience, a brass quartet made up of adolescent boys, and the INSO's own string quartet.

"I thought it was a spectacular performance," said Lt. Col. Juan Flores, the FOB Governor with the Joint Area Support Group-Central. "Especially on the emotional level; who can go through what they have and still perform so well?"

Wasfi hopes to put on another concert in the IZ in the near future and will continue to teach young Iraqis how to bridge cultural gaps with instruments instead of Kalashnikovs—that would be music to the ears. ■



Tariq Yassin, a celloist with the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra, reads from a sheet of music during a concert held Oct. 16 at the New Embassy Complex. Photos by Spc. Tyler Lasure



Students from the Peace Through Art Center learn music, etiquette and civics.



Continued progress

Two additional properties transferred to Iraq

Freedom Compound—consisting of 34 buildings —was remodeled with Development Fund for Iraq funds. *Photos by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*

Among the many ways to judge the continued progress in Iraq is by counting the increasingly fewer number of U.S.-controlled properties in the International Zone.

On Oct. 25, the U.S. presence

in the IZ was reduced again as two additional properties were transferred to the government of Iraq. The two properties total 25 acres of land, more than 35,000 square meters of building space, and equipment

and furnishings valued at nearly 12 million U.S. dollars.

“In terms of square footage of habitable structures, Essayons and Freedom Compound are the largest we’ve turned over so far,” said the 32nd Brigade’s



A total of 13 buildings make up the lodging facilities known as Hotel 6 located in the Freedom Compound. Each building has 50 single rooms.



Maj. Gregory Schlub, officer in charge of real properties.



Essayons is the 34th International Zone property the U.S. military has returned to the government of Iraq since the U.S.-Iraq security agreement took effect Jan 1.

Maj. Gregory Schlub, officer in charge of real properties for Joint Area Support Group-Central.

The 7.6 acre (30,796 square meters) property known as Essayons consists of 10 buildings with 5,904 square meters, and furnishings and equipment worth \$279,275.

The nearby 17.4 acre (70,455 square meters) Freedom Compound consists of 34 buildings with

29,765 square meters and \$11,691,000 in furnishings and equipment. Freedom Compound was remodeled and lodging facilities were constructed with Development Fund for Iraq funds.



A statue stands next to the entrance of one of 10 buildings at the Essayons compound.

"I think it's another very important day in the International Zone as we continue to turn properties back over to the government of Iraq," said Col.

Steven Bensed, commander of the 32nd Brigade.

Essayons and Freedom Compound are the 34th and 35th International Zone properties the U.S. military has returned to the government of Iraq since the U.S.-Iraq security agreement took effect Jan. 1. Seven more properties are scheduled to be turned over before the year ends.

"The handover of properties back from the coalition forces means a lot to Iraq," said Sameer Al-Haddad, secretariat of the Committee for Receiving Real Properties and Camps Office of the Prime Minister. "I just want to say thank you, thanks for all the people who support us, thanks for the American Army," he said. ■



Mailing Christmas home

Mail early and avoid the rush

By Capt. Joy LeMay

It may not seem like Christmas yet, especially in the middle of a desert, but it's not too early to start planning holiday mailings to family and friends back home.

"The Christmas rush causes mail across the whole theater to slow down, so it's important to mail your stuff early," said Spc.



Spc. Nathan Wheeldon, 847th Human Resource Company, weighs a package that will be sent to the U.S. and then collects payment. Photos by Capt. Joy LeMay

Nathan Wheeldon of the 847th Human Resource Company at the Forward Operating Base Prosperity post office. "We recommend mailing holiday greeting cards and presents by the second week in November to ensure they get home by Christmas."

The Prosperity post office, operated by Army personnel from several human resource companies, handles an average of 1,000 pounds of outgoing mail daily and anticipates that number will significantly increase as the holidays approach. To help prepare for the increase in outgoing mail they encourage customers to stop in ahead of time to pick up free packing supplies such as foam padding, boxes, tape and labels.

"People can come in at any time to get boxes and forms to fill out," said Spc. Richard Leeper of the 678th Human Resource Company. "Taking care of it in advance helps the process go faster and smoother."

Deployed personnel can mail personal correspondence including letters and CDs weighing 13 ounces or less for free. Normal U.S. postal

rates apply to mail exceeding that weight. Packages cannot weigh more than 70 pounds or exceed a combined height, width and girth of 130 inches.

People mailing packages are encouraged not to pack the contents too tightly or neatly, because postal workers must inspect all packages for prohibited items before shipping. Prohibited items include knives with blades more than six inches, perfume, aerosol cans, weapon parts, ammunition and anything flammable. A full list of prohibited items is available at the post office.

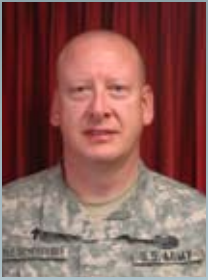
The military post offices in the IZ accept cash and Eagle Cash cards. They do not accept credit cards or Army and Air Force Exchange Service gift certificates.

The Prosperity post office is located in a trailer on the west side of the Palace and is open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., Monday thru Friday.

The Union III post office is operated by KBR and handles incoming and outgoing mail, as well registered mail. It is located in Building 5 and is open from 8 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. daily. ■

Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving

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



Back home it's usually right around this time of year that I get in one more morning at the range, fine tuning the sites

on my scope to confirm my rifle is sighted in right where I want it. I drag out the trunk with the long underwear, heavy gloves, radios, GPS, grunt, and all the other gear that I'll need for the upcoming season. It all has to be prepared, tested and repacked for one of the most important activities of the year. Yes, it's hunting season time in Wisconsin.

There are usually anywhere from 6 to 10 guys in our hunting party, every one of us military or retired military. Now we have the second generation coming as well, and if they are old enough they too are military. If a little too young to join up, they are quick to identify themselves as "future military". It is a wondrous time to get together, catch up on each other's lives and share some incredible camaraderie.

How is it that a bunch of fellas from different military branches and different states find themselves together, even inspiring and motivating the next generation to want to be a part of this brotherhood?

All of us have served our nation, many of us together... in one way or another...at one time or another.

Of all Shakespeare's great plays, Henry V may rank as the most heroic. In one stirring scene, the English army stands fearfully before superior French troops. King Henry challenges his men to take heart. Because the battle will be fought on "the feast of Crispian," their victory will be remembered in its yearly celebration. The king tells his men, "This day is called the feast of Crispian...We in it shall be remembered; we few, we happy few, we band of brothers."

In many ways those who serve their nations flag together consider themselves, "a band of brothers." Whether from the same unit or not; or from the same military branch or not, there is a kinship that is shared.

For all of us who gather together on my family farm in north Wisconsin, with each day begun and each day ended in prayer, we acknowledge the goodness of God in bringing us together and keeping us safe in His protective arms.

Since 9-11, every year there has been at least one of us gone and we include that individual in our prayers and lift up his family. This year for the third time, I will be gone from one of my favorite passions—hunting.

But even more than the good food, the fresh air, the challenge of the hunt, and the heart pounding excitement of the first sighting of your deer, is the incredible fellowship and "brotherhood" that is shared among us all.

To those of us who gather together on that family farm, it is also about two special days that are incredibly connected in November—Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving. You see to us, one compliments (or serves) the other. We serve or have served, because we are grateful for all that God has blessed us with in America through our Savior Jesus Christ. And, inversely we are grateful to God through Jesus Christ, for all those who have served without regard to cost or sacrifice, for the freedoms (including hunting) that we enjoy still today.

I am proud to serve with all my brothers & sisters-in-arms with the 32nd IBCT, all those in the IZ, all those who serve to keep our nation strong, protected, and free. To you all I say; Happy Veteran's Day and a Blessed Thanksgiving.

2 Corinthians 9:12 - This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

Mail and Customs

Maj. Chris L. Hartley

JASG-C Deputy Command Judge Advocate



You found that perfect gift for someone and now you want to get it home. Or maybe you purchased one of those cool “Romex” watches and you can’t wait

to impress someone back home. Or maybe you really love your hookah pipe and can’t stand the thought of leaving it behind. Now the question becomes, “How do I get this thing back home?” Can you mail it? Can you hand carry it back to the states? Can you put it in your luggage? Here are SOME of the answers:

U.S. CENTCOM regulation 25-103 applies to all United States military and civilian personnel using the military postal service facilities within the USCENCOM area of responsibility (which includes the International Zone). Persons who violate the policy are subject to administrative, nonjudicial and criminal action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. While the list of items that cannot be mailed through the military postal service is somewhat extensive, the most common include:

- unexploded and exploded ordnance or other explosives of any type, including replica explosive devices such as grenade lighters;
- pistols, revolvers, rifles, and other concealable firearms;
- switchblade or butterfly type knives;
- ammunition (live or spent), empty brass, and shell casings;
- weapon/firearm parts such as magazines, bolt assemblies,

receiver assemblies, stock, barrel, etc. (some exceptions apply for antique weapons);

- drugs such as anabolic steroids, narcotics, hallucinogenics, stimulants, and depressants; drug paraphernalia;
- alcohol or food products laced with alcohol;
- poisonous drugs and medicines;
- pork, pork products, and fruits and vegetables, unless presented in a dry condition;
- fireworks, cigarette lighters, and matches;
- lewd or pornographic matter;
- matter inviting violence; and
- captured enemy weapons.

Some limited exceptions do apply to the above list for items such as fixed blade knives, swords, bayonets, and war souvenirs. These exceptions, however, should be carefully examined before presenting your item for mailing and it is recommended that you speak with postal service personnel prior to presenting your item for mailing so as to avoid any problems. While you might not be able to send some items via regular military postal methods, you might be able to send the item via registered mail or through a non-government carrier.

In addition to the postal restrictions, a related topic is what U.S. Customs will allow you to physically bring into the United States. While customs officials will brief everyone before boarding that wonderful plane back to the United States, you run the risk of forfeiting your item if you are not familiar with the rules and regulations beforehand. As such, the following

is a partial list of items and their corresponding restrictions:

Some of the more popular allowed items:

- hookah pipes that are free of residue;
- wooden handicrafts that are free of insects/insect infestation;
- authorized war souvenirs (per general order number one) such as helmets and head coverings, bayonets, uniforms, and flags.

Items that can only be carried on:

- no more than one purse, movie, watch, or other article bearing an unauthorized protected trademark;
- prescription drugs in your own name;

Items that can be brought back, but only in checked baggage:

- Leatherman/Gerber tools;
- weapon replicas;
- bayonets;

Items that are strictly prohibited/forbidden:

- switch blade or gravity type knives;
- compressed air guns;
- non-military weapons;
- gun lighters;
- firearm parts;
- realistic explosive replicas;
- brass knuckles;
- martial arts weapons;
- Cuban cigars; and
- controlled substances.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns with regard to your particular item, please feel free to contact the JASG Command Judge Advocate’s Office for guidance.

Editor's note

This month, Outside the Zone takes you to Forward Operating Base Grizzly on Camp Ashraf, where the commander of Wisconsin's 32nd Brigade visits his troops.

Camp Ashraf

By Spc. Tyler Lasure

With 27 units spread throughout a country the size of California, the commander of the Wisconsin National Guard's 32nd Infantry Brigade, Col. Steven Bensend, can't just hop in a Humvee to visit his troops. Instead, he orders up a couple of UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and takes key staff members along by air.

On one recent visit, Bensend's Black Hawk helicopters dropped into Camp Ashraf, where soldiers from the Arcadia and Onalaska-based Company C, 1-128th Infantry are serving at Forward Operating Base Grizzly. Company C is charged with operating observation points, escorting distinguished visitors in their area, providing personal security details for meetings and movements outside the FOB, and performing resupply patrols.



Col. Steven Bensend (left-center) and Command Sgt. Maj. Edgar Hansen (right-center) talk with soldiers from Company C at an observation post on Camp Ashraf. Company C runs several outposts in the area. Photos by Spc. Tyler Lasure

"The troops here at FOB Grizzly are busy in a very unique mission that is unlike any other in Iraq," said 1st Lt. Rhett Zietlow, a platoon leader with the company. "There is no cut and dry day-to-day type of mission, it is continually evolving due to the overall political sensitivity and humanitarian nature of it. There is no pattern to these missions as they could all happen on the same day if the situation would require it."

The company's accomplishments didn't go unnoticed by the

brigade's top enlisted soldier, who was along on the visit.

"These soldiers are doing well and doing a great job on a difficult mission," said Command Sgt. Maj. Edgar Hansen, the brigade command sergeant major, after his visit to FOB Grizzly.

The visit allowed the top leaders in the brigade to see how their troops were doing at the small and remote FOB. It was also an opportunity for soldiers to ask the commander questions about the deployment.

"It was a great chance for our soldiers to share their views and input on what we are doing," Zietlow said.

Company C is deployed to Iraq with the 32nd Brigade and is expected to return to Wisconsin in January. ■



Col. Steven Bensend answers questions from Arcadia and Onalaska's Company C during a visit to Forward Operating Base Grizzly Sept. 18. Bensend and other leaders from the 32nd Brigade met with troops to check on morale and answer questions about the deployment.

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 FOB Prosperity, Monday through Saturday from 0800 to 1700. For questions, call DSN 312-239-1765 or e-mail: jasg-chrm@iraq.centcom.mil

TMC

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.

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

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.

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 com-

plete 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



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.

around the zone

Staff Sgt. Alan Bires, an intel analyst for JASG, shoots an arrow at Prosperity's range. Bires is a member of the Red Arrow Archers, a group of Wisconsin soldiers who recently received donations of archery supplies from Wisconsin archery businesses. *Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*



One of four operating room tables at Ibn Sina Hospital. *Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*



Soldiers write their finish time to Race for the Cure 5k run held Oct. 10. More than 150 service members participated in the event. *Photo by Capt. Joy LeMay*



Tally marks in the prison at Freedom Compound are traces of prisoners' time. *Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*



Happy Halloween!!



Flight over Baghdad. *Photo by Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez*