

# The North Star

Serving Task Force Marne  
U. S. Division- North, Iraq



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## Strenuous events bond new NCOs

*Strykers end 'Year of the NCO' with induction ceremony*



Photo by Pvt. Zachary Zuber, 3SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. PAO

**Team Sapper heads out of the FOB Warhorse medical center on their way to the first challenge during a team-building exercise, Dec. 31. The exercise was the first part of an induction process for new noncommissioned officers in the 296th BSB.**

**By Zachary Zuber  
3SBCT, 2nd Inf Div PAO**

The "Year of the NCO" came to a close as Soldiers from Task Force 296, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division and the 5th Iraqi Army Division faced their final set of challenges together before being inducted in the noncommissioned officer corps, Dec. 31.

"The NCOs went through a team-building event, and finally the official induction ceremony," said 1st Sgt. Shawn E. Romero, first sergeant for TF 296 Medical Company.

The team-building event divided the Soldiers into separate elements, charged with completing tasks located at different points around the forward operating base.

They were given a map and a simulated casualty litter to carry as they maneuvered through the exercises to test both their physical and mental skills and their ability to work as a team.

"Our first task was to carry a casualty over a shipping container, which had several layers to consider in order to keep everybody safe while we went from one side to the other," said Sgt. Matthew Ferguson, a Soldier from TF 296.

Another event required the Soldiers to move sandbags set in a flag design, through a winding path and place them correctly on the other side in the same pattern.

The third station showcased the joint efforts of these new NCOs as they hauled an inoperable gator vehicle over a bridge and up a short, yet steep, hill using only ropes, pulleys and shovels.

"My favorite event was pulling the gator up the hill," said Sgt. Howard K. Browning, a supply sergeant from TF 296. "It required us to use thought and strength to complete."

The final task required the teams to move sandbags into a humvee and then push the humvee around a traffic circle and then unload them again.

"The teams had four hours to complete their tasks," said 1st Sgt. Romero.

Afterward, the new NCOs formally accepted the duties and responsibilities of a noncommissioned officer during a formal ceremony welcoming them into the NCO Corps.

"The events leading up to the ceremony are a great way to get Soldiers' motivation to another level before their official induction to the unit as new NCOs," said 1st Sgt. Romero.

This event provided a special memory for the Soldiers, especially since they had a unique opportunity to go through the training with some of the new NCOs in the Iraqi Army.

"It was great to work with (our Iraqi counterparts) during this because we got to see their style of leadership and they were very motivated to do this training," Sgt. Ferguson said. "I learned that everybody has different ideas, but being a leader means taking other ideas and using them to make the mission happen."

# Gen. Petraeus promotes troops

By Pvt. Jennifer Lowes  
130th Eng. Bde. PAO

General David Petraeus, the commander for U.S. Central Command, visited Contingency Operating Site Marez on New Year's Eve and promoted Soldiers including three from the 130th Engineer Brigade; 1st Lt. Jason Jack, Staff Sgt. Ronald Nelson and Sgt. Everardo Samaniego.

"It was an honor to be promoted by General Petraeus," said 1st Lt. Jack. "He's the man who turned this war in Iraq around, and a major player in history."

For Sgt. 1st Class Vessichelli it was somewhat of a reunion.

"I was excited to see that the general remembered me," said Sgt. 1st Class Vessichelli who served near Gen. Petraeus with the 327th Infantry Division

at Fort Campbell.

Along with the promotion ceremony Gen. Petraeus had lunch with a small group of Soldiers and handed out coins to many others.

"It's not often that Soldiers are given the opportunity to talk to him on a personal level," said Maj. Seana Jardin, the brigade S-1.

Major Jardin coordinated with the division to schedule and lock in the timeline for the general's visit. Along with the planning of right place and right time she ensured that the Soldiers were ready for the visit.

"It means a lot that he is taking time out of his schedule to do some battlefield circulation and really talk to

Soldiers, and the Soldiers understand and appreciate just what it means to be given these opportunities," said Maj. Jardin.



Photo by Pvt. Jennifer Lowes, 130th Eng. Bde. PAO  
**General David Petraeus, CENTCOM commander, stops for a photo with Sgt. Everardo Samaniego after a promotion ceremony.**

## Allotments for Green to Gold program released

By Spc. Michael Adams  
TF Marne PAO

When Ruthann Morgan, of Shiloh, N.J., enlisted in the Army in 1999, she did it because she wanted to do it to get a college degree. She was working two jobs and felt it was easier to join the Army and try to earn a degree while serving.

As an air traffic controller, she became so proficient in her job she obtained supervisory positions at the rank of specialist. But while she was involved in the mission execution portion of the Army, she wanted to have more control over the planning aspect of the Army and she realized the way she could do that was by becoming an officer.

She found out about a program called Green to Gold. This program allows a Soldier to go to college while attending Reserve Officer Training Corps.

She chose to apply for the program and was accepted into the University of Washington in 2006. She attended the university's ROTC program, graduated with a degree in political sci-

"This is a good opportunity for them to make that dream reality. You'd go from enlisted to officer so you'd have both sides of the spectrum during your military career."

-Sergeant Tracey Masdeu, awards and actions NCO for TF Marne

ence and obtained a commission as a second lieutenant in the military police branch.

She has since been promoted to captain and is currently the provost marshal office operations officer in charge for Task Force Marne.

"I love the Army," she said. "It's a constant challenge and constant change. You move around from place to place, meet new people, see new places, have new experiences, I really like it because of the challenges and the opportunity the Army provides."

The Green to Gold program is available for anyone who wants to follow in Capt. Morgan's footsteps and go from enlisted to officer.

All divisions are allocated a specific number of slots for the program. The 3rd Infantry Division will receive eight slots and cannot process any applications from their subordinate brigades in Iraq, only for units that fall under

3rd Inf. Div. Other brigades under the task force will have to go through their parent division-level command for application processing. Ultimate approval of all who will be selected will be U.S. Army Cadet Command.

"This is good for a Soldier that wants to go do their degree full time and come back in as an officer," said Sgt. Tracey Masdeu, awards and actions noncommissioned officer for TF Marne and the point of contact for 3rd Inf. Div. applicants to go green to gold.

"This is a good opportunity for them to make that dream reality. You'd go from enlisted to officer so you'd have both sides of the spectrum during your military career."

In order to be eligible for this program Soldiers must have a minimum General Technical (GT) score of 110

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# Soldiers able to file taxes while in Iraq

By Capt. Todd Chard  
Office of the Staff Judge Advocate

Tax season is here! It is true that as a deployed servicemember you are entitled to an automatic filing extension that allows you to delay filing past April 15. This is, however, not necessarily a benefit to the majority of us expecting a refund.

If you are due a refund, consider filing earlier rather than later. Put the stress and anxiety of filing behind you now so you don't have to worry about it after redeployment, and remember, money now is always better than money later. Here are a couple of ways to accomplish filing, even from your deployed location:

1) The IRS offers a "free file" program for taxpayers with an adjusted gross income of \$54,000 or less. Many military members will meet this

required income threshold because of the combat tax exclusion. Beginning Jan. 15, simply go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and click "freefile" to take advantage of this mechanism. Other on-line preparers such as "Turbo Tax" also offer discounts to deployed servicemembers when using their site, but be careful – free preparation does not always mean free filing.

2) Many military installations provide tax centers on post where trained personnel assist with preparing returns and electronic filing, free of charge to military ID cardholders. If you know a military ID cardholder you trust and who can travel to an installation offering this service, designate that person to file your taxes on post by giving them a special power of attorney. Installations vary the scope of tax services they provide annually, so

please contact our office or your installation of choice to determine what tax services are available per location.

3) Military One Source ([www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com) or 800-730-3802) is also available for free consultation (24/7, available in Spanish) on preparing returns, and servicemembers can file directly through the company's contracted commercial tax preparer.

The TF Marne Client Services Office stands ready to provide general guidance on tax matters. We are temporarily located at Conner Hall, Building 3001 (Corner of Stars & Stripes Blvd. and Screaming Eagle Way, a block from the Main PX). Contact Capt. Todd Chard via email ([todd.chard@us.army.mil](mailto:todd.chard@us.army.mil)), telephone (DSN: 849-0069), or stop in any time Monday through Saturday 8:30 a.m.- 8 p.m.

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or higher. A Soldier cannot have a domestic violence charge against him or her.

Applicants cannot be flagged or ineligible to re-enlist and must have passed a physical training test in the last six months. They cannot have a permanent or temporary profile.

There are programs for a two, three or four-year college program. Applicants with some college can apply for the two- or three-year program. If a Soldier already has some college, they must have a minimum grade point average of 3.0. These requirements above are nonwaiverable.

Other requirements for potential applicants are waiverable and there is no limit to the number of waivers Soldiers can receive to apply.

For more information on the Green to Gold program, contact Sgt. Masdeu at 318-849-0258 or e-mail at [tracey.yon@3id.army.mil](mailto:tracey.yon@3id.army.mil).

## Who's # 1?

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone Marshall,  
25 CAB, 25th Inf. Div. PAO

**Specialist Govinda Shabazz, a QRF Soldier from Co. A, 209th ASB, 25th CAB, 25th Inf. Div., greets a group of young boys during a visit to local schools and villages near Tikrit, Dec. 30. This was part of a visit to local schools and villages surrounding COB Speicher.**



## Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Corporal Vladimyr Mathurin, of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, is with Headquarters and Headquarters Command, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. He is the company supply sergeant, a senior staff sergeant's position. He was the noncommissioned officer in charge of turning over 946 pieces of temporary property equipment and was recognized by the unit's property book officer for his meticulous, error-free preparation of turn-in packets. Capitalizing on his success, he serves as the principal trainer on equipment turn-in operations for the remainder of the brigade's supply sergeants. Corporal Mathurin also managed the removal of more than 157 containers full of excess equipment and was selected as HHC's Dec. 2009 Noncommissioned Officer of the Month. Corporal Mathurin sets the standard in everything he does and is a key contributor in the battalion's responsible drawdown efforts. It is in recognition of these accomplishments that he is selected as today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Private First Class Mathew Zumbrun, of Baltimore, Md., is a cavalry scout with 6th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division. While conducting a dismounted patrol, Pfc. Zumbrun noticed subtle differences in the terrain from the last time his platoon conducted a mission in the area. He couldn't pinpoint what the specific differences were, but he knew something had changed. During his previous patrol, Pfc. Zumbrun had taken pictures of the terrain and compared the pictures with what he was seeing. He identified an area that was altered in an attempt to conceal it from observation. After a search, Pfc. Zumbrun's platoon discovered a cache of almost 2,000 feet of Improvised Explosive Device command wire and that gasoline had been poured on the road in order to soften it in preparation for a future IED emplacement. Private First Class Zumbrun's actions, attention to detail and trust in his instincts effectively denied enemy attempts to inflict casualties on U.S. or Iraqi forces and make him a most deserving Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

## Gift giving considered popular etiquette in Iraqi culture

### Cultural Tidbit Special to the North Star

Gift giving is a popular custom in Iraqi culture. If someone is invited to an Iraqi home, they should bring a box of cookies, pastries or chocolates. A fruit basket also is appreciated.

This gesture is considered an act of goodwill and respect to those that

invite you to their homes.

Flowers are becoming very popular to give as a gift in modern day Iraq, but those are mostly given to female hosts.

If a man gives a gift to a woman, they should say it is from his wife, mother, sister or another female relative. This can be misconstrued as rude and disrespectful to the woman.

Also, while not required in Iraqi culture, it is a nice touch to give gifts for children as well.

When someone receives the gift, they do not open it immediately. Gifts are always given with two hands.

Some of the more popular gifts are necklaces and coffee sets. Giving earrings to women is also a prominent custom.

## Safety Thought of the Week: Ground Guide Safety

- A ground guide is required when a vehicle is moved in a confined or congested area, including cantonments and parking areas; during limited visibility; or if the driver is in doubt about adequate clearance.
- All Soldiers must be trained in standard hand and arm signals and flashlight signals before ground guiding a vehicle or operating a vehicle using a ground guide.
- Ground guides should keep 10 yards between themselves and the vehicles front and rear corners and stay out of the vehicle's path of travel.
- Instruct drivers to STOP immediately if they lose sight of the ground guide, see a ground guide in a dangerous position, or don't understand a signal.
- Ground guides must never run in front of a vehicle or walk backwards while ground guiding.
- For all vehicles larger than a humvee, use two ground guides when backing up. They must maintain visual contact with each other, and the front guide must stop the vehicle if they lose sight of the rear ground guide.
- Only one ground guide gives the signal to the driver.



# REGIONAL HEADLINES

## Baby born in hot tub after New Year

[Thenewstribune.com](http://thenewstribune.com)

PIERCE COUNTY, Wash.- He was supposed to come on Christmas Day. But apparently, Ronin Gerald James Quinn is more of a party kind of guy: He showed up amid New Year's revelry – in a hot tub, no less.

"I guess he wanted to make a grand entrance," his proud new mama, Amanda Quinn, said Friday.

By arriving in the midnight hour of New Year's Day at St. Joseph Medical Center, Ronin – all seven pounds, six ounces of him – looks to be Pierce County's first baby of 2010.

And by coming via water birth – a relatively rare, all-natural delivery process that takes place in a large Jacuzzi-like birthing tub – he arrived with a watery twist.

"Tub births are great," said Carole Meland, charge nurse at St. Joseph's birthing center, which offers a few birthing tubs for laboring moms.

"The warm water helps you relax and you have less pain," Meland said. "Babies have a dive reflex. When it's delivery time, baby dives through the water and right up on mom's tummy."

Amanda, 25, a massage therapy student, and her husband, James Quinn, 35, a marine foreman, wanted a natural birth for their firstborn.

The Tacoma couple decided on a tub birth, and Amanda's pregnancy met the hospital's qualifications for the process: a normal, healthy gestation

with no complications.

"I'm glad we did it," Amanda said. "I think it sped up the delivery."

Six days after his due date, Ronin started getting active late New Year's Eve.

"We went to our birthing tub right at midnight," James Quinn said.

With the tub near a large window overlooking the city, the ruckus of 2010's dawning erupted outside while Amanda lay inside – in water and in labor.

"We could hear all the fireworks going off," James said.

"I really didn't notice a thing," Amanda said. "I was focusing on something else."

Her labor took about 45 minutes, with Ronin making his official appearance at 12:46 a.m. A check with other area public hospitals indicates he likely is Pierce County's firstborn of the new year.

On average, 10 babies are born at St. Joseph every day, with more than 3,700 births tallied at the hospital during the last fiscal year, hospital spokesman Gale Robinette said. But only about five to 10 births at St. Joseph each month occur by water delivery.

"It doesn't happen a lot," said Meland, the charge nurse.

By sheer coincidence, the Quinns chose for their new aquatic arrival the first name of Ronin.

"In Japanese, it translates to 'wave man,' and he was born in the water,"

James said. "But it really wasn't planned that way."

Both of Ziebeck's children were delivered naturally – though not in water, she said.

## Home of Red Raider James gets added security

[Morris News Service](http://morrisnews.com)

CELINA, Texas- Celina Police have beefed up patrol around the home of Craig James this week amid Internet postings from angry fans revealing his address.

"We have patrol officers that are watching over the house along with the Collin County Sheriff's County," Celina Police Chief Joe Williams said. He wouldn't disclose details of security efforts.

The department added extra patrols when the news broke Dec. 28, that Mike Leach was suspended as Texas Tech's head football coach over an incident involving James' son, a player on the team. Craig James is an ESPN analyst. The university fired Leach Dec. 30, angering many fans even more.

"Of course there's concern," Williams said. "We don't anticipate anything happening, it's certainly precautionary – that's all."

The James home is located in Collins County, which is near Dallas. Collins County Lt. John Norton said "deputies are spending as much time in the area (of the James home) as they can."

## THE North Star

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