

The North Star

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



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Palm groves provide cooperative clearing

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

While working to increase security in the town of As'Sadiyah, members of 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, assisted the Iraqi Army in clearing a series of palm groves and orchards.

"Today we are checking the palm groves for any kind of caches of weapons or explosives that could be hidden in here," said Lt. Haidar Abid Ali Jassan, 2nd Brigade Iraqi Army.

The patrols cover the palm groves, where the land is also used as orchards for local orange crops, and the streets immediately around them.

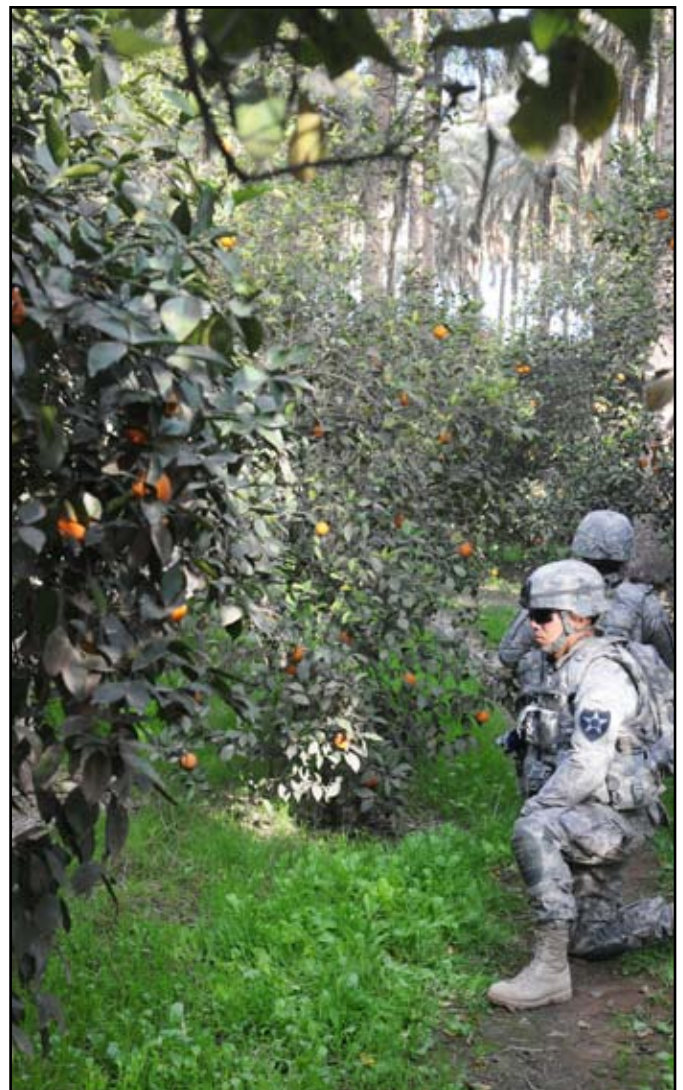
"We have done searches like this about six times since August, trying to show that we are here and show the community we are looking for anything," Lt. Haidar said.

Cooperative efforts like this patrol is standard practice as 1/14th Cav. often works with their Iraqi Army counterparts to ensure that they become more capable and confident in their abilities.

"We go out about three times a week on average," said Sgt. Dan Boley, a squad leader for the mortar platoon, Charlie Troop, 1/14th Cav. "There is a difference you can see since we got here. They [Iraqi Soldiers] have learned tactics and formations to use during missions."

Providing support for operations in the area allow the Iraqi Soldiers a chance to increase their support to the community.

"By coming out on missions we can show everyone that we are working together and can go anywhere at any time to provide security and protection," Lt. Haidar said.



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

Above: Members of the 1/14th Cav., 3SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., pause during a security search of a palm grove and orchard in As'Sadiyah, Jan. 11. The search was performed in cooperation with the Iraqi Army to show increasing strength in the area.

Left: Soldiers from the Iraqi Army and the 1/14 Cav., prepare to begin searching a group of palm groves and orchards in the As'Sadiyah area, Jan. 11. The cooperative effort was a search for caches of weapons or explosives.



Tenn. Guard maintains aviation mission

By Staff Sgt. Mike Alberts
25CAB, 25th Inf. Div PAO

They don't attract much public attention, and they're far less visible than the pilots and aircraft they support. But their mission is no less important. In fact, without them, those pilots wouldn't be able to fly their helicopters. They are the maintenance Soldiers of the Tennessee Army National Guard's Troop F, "Titans," 1st Squadron, 230th Air Cavalry Squadron, Task Force Wings.

They handle all aviation intermediate maintenance for the 1/230th ACS, operating in northern Iraq from Forward Operating Bases Sykes, Warrior and Diamondback.

According to their squadron executive officer, the importance of their AVIM cannot be overstated.

"Without [Titan], we would be at the mercy of the next higher level of repair, which would require us to go beyond the squadron and beyond the [FOBs where we operate]," explained Maj. Layne Beason, executive officer, 1/230th ACS.

"To do that would add -- at a minimum -- days if not weeks, in some instances, to repairing an aircraft, depending on the nature of the repair. That's time we can't fly our mission; that jeopardizes the work of the ground forces we support."

The 1/230th ACS deployed with more 600 Soldiers from units in Smyrna, Alcoa and Jackson, Tenn., back in July.

The squadron is task organized with a Headquarters and Headquarters Troop. Troops A, B and C are equipped with the unit's OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters, whose primary missions are reconnaissance and security operations.

Troop D is equipped with Blackhawk helicopters used to transport troops and supplies. Troop E handles the

battalion's first level, aviation maintenance work. Finally, Troop G provides ground transportation, downed aircraft recovery capability and fuel and ammunition supply in addition to other forward support functions.

"Frankly, having our own intermediate maintenance is one of the unique nuances of our air cavalry squadron," said Maj. Beason. "Without it, we would not be flying the operational tempo that we do. We can do it because of [Titan]."

Captain Amanda Wolfe is a UH-60 Blackhawk pilot, production control officer and Troop F's acting executive officer. In addition to her administrative responsibilities, Capt. Wolfe manages the squadron's AVIM. She explained that Troop F's true value is handling levels of maintenance above the day-to-day, line-level maintenance.

"AVIM principally focuses on helicopter part and component repair and not just servicing," said Capt. Wolfe.

"To accomplish that mission, the troop contains all necessary specialty maintenance sections, to include an avionics shop which handles radio repair, an armament shop that focuses on weapon systems and survivability equipment, a sheet metal shop that works aircraft structural repair, a prop and rotor shop, a hydraulics shop, and an engine shop."

Of course, all these tasks must be done correctly and replacement parts must be properly ordered, received and promptly delivered.

It's the production control, quality control, technical supply and logistical supply Soldiers who handle those details. They are some of the best at their jobs.

"All our young Soldiers have done an exceptional job and developed by leaps and bounds since we arrived," explained Capt. Wolfe. "And that really shows how exceptional our senior noncommissioned officers and other senior leaders are. We have not had to drop a mission yet because of maintenance problems."

Staff Sergeant Michael Brown is one of their many NCOs. He's a 20-year TANG veteran, native of Maryville, Tenn., a maintenance squad leader and OH-58D Kiowa Warrior maintenance supervisor.

For Staff Sgt. Brown, anything less than perfection when it comes to maintenance is not an option.

"As a team, we worry about anything that can get inside an aircraft and cause it to go down," explained Staff Sgt. Brown. "I am very aware, and I ensure that everyone that maintains these helicopters is aware, that [the aircraft] we work on transports lives when they fly. We take that personally. It is our responsibility to ensure that they are mechanically sound and don't have any problems."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mike Alberts, 25CAB, 25th Inf. Div. PAO

Specialist Sarah Ehlers, from Gordon, Neb., helicopter maintainer, Trp. F, 1/230th ACS., in the Tenn. Army National Guard, conducts maintenance on an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter at FOB Sykes, Tall Afar, Iraq.

Spinning gives Soldiers diversion during deployment

By Spc. Michael Adams
TF Marne PAO

To survive this deployment, I realized I needed something to help me forget about work for awhile. My diversion came in the unlikelyst of places -- a spin class.

I decided to do it one night just to try it. I have done different aerobic classes at gyms when I was in America, but never a spin class. I didn't think I would have fun sitting on a bike for an hour and I didn't think it would be that good of a workout.

I was wrong, dead wrong. This class kicks my butt and it has become a lot of fun. There are a few of us that go there as often as we can given our very busy schedules.

In this class, about 20 to 30 of us get on stationary bikes and we ride on them for about an hour. The instructors vary, but they all push us to our limits by leading us in different exercises on the bike and an iPod full of songs that they play throughout the class. Twenty minutes into the class I was dying, I was also very out of shape.

I kept going back as often as I could and I started getting pretty good at the class. Along with cutting back what I was eating, this class helped me lose a lot of weight. Normally, when I come out of the class, I sweat so much I look like I've been swimming.

It is not just riding the bike. The class overall is a full-body workout. Then there are the Sprints those wear me out, the longest sprint we do is a minute. Those kill my legs.

There are some things I don't like about the class. Sometimes the others want to leave the door to the class open to bring some circulation into the room. I like that it gets very hot in there and we sweat a little more.

Then there are the times a song will come on the speakers like "Bootylicious" by Beyonce. But it's all good, I learned long ago you're not going to get everything you want out of life.

But this class actually has done a lot for me. It gives me something that I really like to do while I'm in Iraq and furthermore, something to look forward to, which everyone needs while they're here. Since I started going to the class, I have lost 20 pounds, and I intend to lose a lot more.

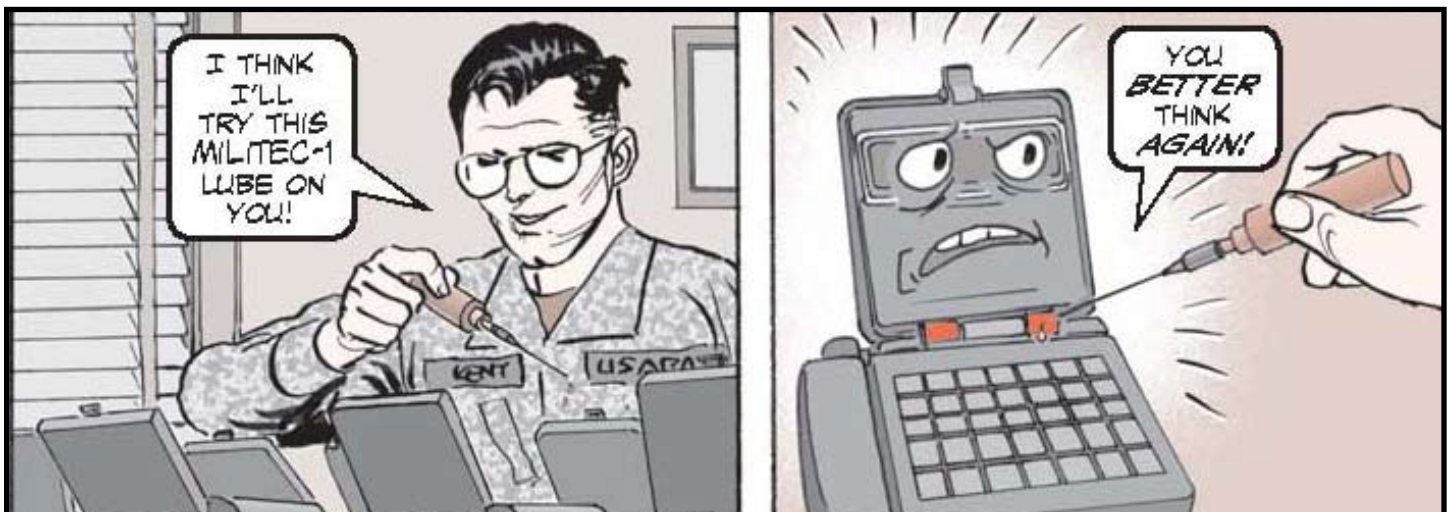
The times for the spin classes vary, but most of the time they are Monday-Saturday at 6 a.m., Monday-Thursday at 7:30 p.m., every day at 6 p.m. and an hour and a half class Saturdays at 7:30. Now 'those' classes will wear you out. The schedule of the classes are posted every day inside the Contingency Operating Base Speicher Main Gym.

If I could give any piece of advice to anyone stationed here, regardless if they are in the military or not, find one

thing to look forward to, something you can do that will relieve the stress. It will make the deployment go by a lot quicker.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Carlos Rodriguez, TF Marne PMO
Specialist Michael Adams at a spinning class.



From Master Sgt. Stanley Harrell, 172 SBCT: Militec-1 is not an authorized lubricant for data transfer devices or weapons. The jury is out over this controversy and the debate goes on. In regard to this particular problem, here's the word: Tests are being run to see if there is a problem using Militec-1 on DTDs. Until a conclusion is reached, use cleaner, lubricant, preservative (CLP) and not Militec-1. This is just a precaution because DTDs are in short supply.

Task Force Marne Heroes of the North

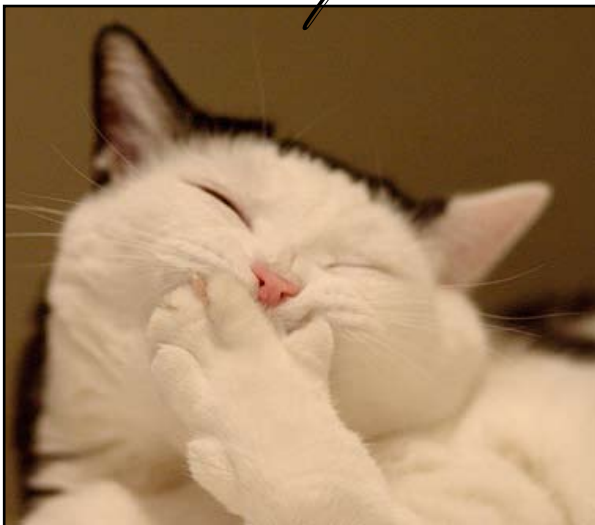


Specialist Michael Davenport, of Poultney Fla., is with 1st Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. His platoon was redirected to search for a weapons cache based on emerging intelligence. Specialist Davenport's attention to detail, dedication to the mission and desire to affect the enemy's decision-making process made him a vital asset to the search. His motivation during the day was vital in keeping his search team working over a 20-hour period. During this time, Spc. Davenport uncovered more ordnance and searched more diligently than any other member of this platoon. His efforts resulted in the prevention of 60 pounds of home-made explosives, one initiation device, one improvised rocket launcher, two rockets and a 155mm round from being employed in his unit's area of operation. Specialist Davenport worked hand-in-hand with the Iraqi Army and made great contributions by our relationship by integrating the IA into his team and directing their search. For his outstanding efforts, he is today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Specialist Monica Mitchell, of San Antonio, is with Headquarters and Headquarters Operations Command, Division Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division. She plays a crucial role as a geospatial intelligence analyst for the Task Force Marne intelligence section. She conducted daily imagery analysis of a prioritized standing target deck and compiled weekly reports addressing critical intelligence topics, like the recent Government of Iraq operation to Camp New Iraq. Additionally, Spc. Mitchell competed in and won the company Soldier of the Month Board for Dec. 2009. Specialist Mitchell consistently demonstrates analytic tradecraft capability at a level normally seen exclusively in more senior analysts. Specialist Mitchell's drive to excel makes her a critical member of the TF Marne Geospatial Intelligence Cell and a most deserving choice for Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

Name the Caption



Courtesy photo

"The dogs just don't get it."- Submitted by Lt. Col. Marvin Chavous

"Canary?"- Submitted by Ed Cunningham

"Yes, that plan will do nicely."- Submitted by Warrant Officer Timothy Wuchter

Sudoku

Answers will be printed in Monday's edition of the North Star

				2		4	7	
	2	9	5		4	8		
	4		8	7				9
	5		9	8			6	
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6				5	1		2	
		2	4		8	6	3	
	9	8		6				

REGIONAL HEADLINES

Couple weds in Walmart's lawn and garden section

Beaumontenterprise.com

BEAUMONT, Texas- There was not a dry eye in the lawn and garden section of the Silsbee Walmart on Jan. 18.

For Connie, a sales associate at the Silsbee Walmart for 13 years, she could think of no better place to wed the love of her life than amid the bargains of her favorite big box retailer.

"I just love Walmart," Connie said. "And hey, they already had all the flowers."

On that night, as a dozen of Day's friends, family and fellow Walmart associates looked on, Connie and David Day wed in a brief ceremony in the aisle between the Miracle Grow potting soil and shelves of plastic bird baths.

"I think it's really sweet," said Debbie LeBlanc, one of Connie's coworkers. She attended the wedding wearing her WalMart photo department smock and wiped tears from her eyes as she watched the couple wed. "They deserve this. She deserves some happiness, she really does."

Connie and David married 30 years ago and had two daughters but the pair divorced after about four years.

Connie and David bent over a row of shopping carts to sign their second marriage certificate.

The couple married the first time at

a large ceremony at First Presbyterian Church in Silsbee. They knew they wanted a smaller ceremony this time, but when Connie came to David with her venue idea, he didn't know what to think.

"I thought it was a little weird," he said, "but I just let her do what she wanted to do."

The ceremony was brief and informal with everyone in attendance dressed down but wearing some shade of blue.

Behind a table with two small wedding cakes, Connie and David exchanged vows surrounded by potted plants arranged artfully around them.

Connie had bought two plastic toy rings from the WalMart cake decorating department

And so as Minister Anthony Solomon read passages from the book of genesis, Connie slipped the plastic toy ring onto David's finger and yelled out, "Woo!" after completing her vows.

Couple get wedding video 4 1/2 years late

Hillsboro Star-Journal

SEATTLE- When Karen and Shane Sehlin want to remember their wedding in 2005, they bring out the photo album and look at the pictures. Despite their smiling faces, something's missing in their marriage. "We've been married four-and-a-half years and never received our wedding video," said Karen.

That's right. Karen and Shane paid

a company called Living Moments \$1,400 to shoot the event.

"Two came out shot the wedding shot the reception and everything is dandy, or so we thought," said Karen. For years, Karen tried to get the tapes, but got nowhere with the owner. Since then, she's had a son. It's a shame. The couple didn't have a wedding video to show their son.

"It was a big night for us," said Shane. "It's one of those priceless memories that Chase would like to see one day to see how this all started."

Karen dropped me an e-mail and, through public records, I found the owner of Living Moments.

We've learned he went out of business a couple of years ago, but when we asked, he still had the wedding tapes and sent them to Karen right away.

She couldn't believe it when it arrived on her doorstep.

"I was shocked. I got the tracking information and the video arrived yesterday," said Karen.

You're Invited

The Great Aloha Run

When: Feb. 1, 8:10 a.m.

Where: Registration is at 6:30 a.m. to 8 a.m. at the South Dining Facility, and will begin at 8:10 at the South Morale, Welfare and Recreation.

Mass re-enlistment Ceremony

When: Jan. 27, at 2 p.m.

Where: COB Speicher Soccer Stadium

THE North Star

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1st Infantry Division
2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team,
3rd Infantry Division

3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team,
2nd Infantry Division
1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team,
1st Armored Division

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