



Marines transfer authority in Anbar province to Army

II MEF entrusts mission to 1st Armored Division

Story by Spc. Kayleigh Cannon
1st Bde., 82nd Abn. Div., USD-C

RAMADI, Iraq – The first major indicator of the responsible drawdown of U.S. Forces in Iraq occurred in Ramadi Jan. 23, when II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) transferred authority of Iraq's largest province to 1st Armored Division.

Before the ceremony, 1st Armored Division's area of operations, as U.S. Division-Center, encompassed Baghdad and its surrounding communities. The historic transfer of authority ceremony, held at Camp Ramadi, extends the division's reach throughout Anbar province; a vast western landscape spanning more than 53,000 square miles.

The ceremony also marks the closure of a nearly six-year U.S. Marines Corps command presence in Iraq and comes at a crucial time when U.S. Forces are transferring from combat operations to stability operations.

Since its activation as II MEF (Forward) on July 2, 2008, the Marine division worked with the people of Anbar and tribal sheiks to help secure peace and stability for the province and all of Iraq. The efforts of II MEF (Forward) built upon the developments made during two previous Marine Expeditionary Force rotations.

"This is a pivotal moment in the history of Iraq," said Maj. Gen. R.T. Tryon, II MEF (Forward), commanding general of U.S. Forces-West.

Marines have been at the heart of almost every major Iraq campaign period since February 2004, from the early battles in an-Najaf and Fallujah, along the western Euphrates River

Valley which extends from Qa'im to Rawah; and continuing with the pivotal Awakening Movement which many historians and diplomatic experts credit as the turning of the tide against al Qaeda in Iraq.

"Since early 2004, the U.S. Marines serving in Al Anbar have consistently exemplified their motto, Semper Fi – Always Faithful," said Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby, deputy commanding general for operations and I Corps commanding general, U.S. Forces-Iraq. "They have been especially faithful to the people of Al Anbar; the focal point of their mission in Iraq. Anbaris are resilient people who have sacrificed dearly but now emerge as stronger people."

As the Marines say their goodbyes to the citizens and tribal leaders of Anbar, Iraqi soldiers and police officers in the region will begin working closely with 1st Armored Div., under the continued leadership of 1st Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division who have been operating there for about six months. Army leaders with 1st Armored Div., said they are eager to build on II MEF's reputation. Tryon expressed confidence in their ability to do so.

"Today's ceremony is certainly an example of continued positive change as we transition and consolidate U.S. Forces under the flag of USD-C," said Tryon. "Over the last several years, we have seen a logical and a desired progression in Anbar, moving from combat operations to counter insurgency operations, and now to stability operations."

Tryon praised the efforts of the Iraqis and tribal sheiks in Anbar for their courage in standing against tyranny and violence in their streets.



Photo by Spc. Kayleigh Cannon, 1st Bde., 82nd Abn. Div., USD-C

The color guard of 1st Armored Division, U.S. Division-Center stands at attention after USD-C officially assumes responsibility of Anbar Province from II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), U.S. Force-West Jan. 23. The transfer of authority ceremony marks the end of nearly six years of Marine command of coalition forces in the province.

"These things have not been accomplished over the course of the past several years because of what U.S. Forces have done alone," said Tryon. "Rather, these achievements are a result of what we have done together in

partnership with one another and with the leadership of the Iraqi civil sector.

"We see over and over again that we are at our best when we partner together to achieve our mutual objectives and

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Iraqi Soldiers compete for division soccer title

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Coping with unknowns after earthquake devastates Haiti

Story and photo by Spc. Daniel Schneider
366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – As Haitians and rescue workers from around the world work tirelessly to dig survivors from the rubble of a magnitude 7.0 earthquake that rocked Haiti Jan. 12, three Iron Soldier personnel must helplessly watch the news from Iraq, trying to

cope with the uncertainty of not knowing the whereabouts of their family.

When the earthquake hit at 4:53 p.m., it leveled schools, hospitals, government buildings and residential neighborhoods throughout the area, trapping people underneath the rubble.

Sgt. Stanly Rene, non-commissioned officer in charge of the 1st Armored Division chemical section, has an aunt, an uncle and two cousins who

were in Haiti when the earthquake struck the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Walner Nelson, a human resources technician assigned to Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Armd. Div., also has family in Haiti in the area affected by the crisis.

Marie Jean-Baptiste, a civilian budget analyst with the U.S. Army here, has many family members in Haiti, including her mother, sister, aunts, uncles and many cousins.

“The worst part about this is being so far away, and not being able to do anything about it,” Jean-Baptiste said.

One of Rene’s cousins, from Connecticut, was visiting the family in Port-au-Prince when the earthquake struck, said Rene, a Brooklyn, N.Y., resident, who was born in Port-au-Prince.

By Jan. 15, all three had tried to contact Haiti by phone without success.

“I am sure that every other Haitian is doing the same thing, with similar results,” Nelson said. “My mother and many of my cousins were living near the Haitian president’s house, which was leveled during the quake. The worst part is not knowing if they’re alive or dead, but I need to continue on with my mission.”

Rene said he is impressed that several countries, including the United States, have been rushing to Haiti’s aid, which, to him, shows that the world cares enough Haitians to help them in the aftermath of this latest disaster.

The three of them are coping with the disaster and uncertainty surrounding the crisis in different, but effective ways.

“Being from a country that is tormented by natural turmoil, being in ‘Hurricane Alley’ in the middle of the Gulf, I’m not immune to the emotions that come from something like this, but I’ve learned to cope with them,” Rene explained. “I’ve learned to differentiate

between personal [issues] and work. In a war zone, I can’t be distracted while on duty.”

Nelson is also remaining positive about the situation.

“I am doing just fine and I remain hopeful that my family somehow made it through,” Nelson said.

Other Iron Soldiers are also helping to keep their minds off of the earthquake.

“It has been great being with the Army during this crisis,” Jean-Baptiste said. “The division surgeon and two chaplains have stopped by the office to make sure I was doing all right. It’s amazing how supportive everyone has been here.”

“While I’m here, we try to crack jokes with each other,” Rene said. “Sgt. Maj. Merika Barnes, [who is] in Kuwait, sent me e-mails making sure I was okay.”

Rene said he will soldier on in the wake of the disaster but admits he continues to struggle with so much uncertainty.

“I try to focus on other things but at the end of the day, I can’t help but think about it,” said Rene.

Though struggling with the destructive force of the earthquake and the overwhelming destructive potential yet to be revealed, Rene said he knows he has another family to lean on for support.

“I know I can talk to the chaplain if I need to,” Rene said. “I don’t want my fellow Soldiers to go out of their way and be distracted by my family’s situation. I am trying to find out if there is anything I can do to help in this crisis.”

Editor’s Note: Rene was able to contact his sister Jan. 15, and found out his family in Port-au-Prince is unharmed. One of Jean-Baptiste’s aunts, who was living in the town destroyed by the earthquake, was found and will be all right, although her niece is still missing. Nelson still has not heard word about his family. ▲



Sgt. Stanly Rene, non-commissioned officer in charge of the 1st Armored Division chemical section, has family in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, near the epicenter of the massive earthquake that struck Jan. 12.



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goals working side-by-side, hand-in-hand,” he said, “learning from one another in accomplishing our mutual mission.”

The casing of the II MEF colors signified completion of the Marine Corps mission in Iraq. As the Marine color guard marched their colors off the stage, the Army color guard replaced them.

Maj. Gen. Terry Wolff, 1st Armd. Div., USD-C commanding general, said the accomplishments of the Marines in the region will not be in vain.

“For many of us who have served with you on multiple tours across Iraq, we’ll never forget your sacrifices and all that you have given on our behalf,” Wolff said.

He emphasized that his division will match Anbar’s changing environment by assisting the region’s tribal sheiks and Iraqi Security Forces to ensure all Iraqis in the region enjoy the security and peace they deserve.

“Today is one of those transition points in the evolution of military operations as the 1st AD and USD-C takes over responsibility for partnering with Iraqi security forces and the provincial government of Al-Anbar,” said Wolff. “As we move forward, we understand the importance of this year in Iraq, and the USD-C team has dedicated ourselves to that mission and the tasks ahead.”



Photo by Spc. Daniel Schneider, 366th MPAD, USD-C

Maj. Gen. R. T. Tryon, commanding general of II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), U.S. Force-West, and his senior non-commissioned officer in charge, Sgt. Maj. Kip Carpenter, case the II MEF’s colors, symbolizing the end of their command responsibility in Al Anbar province during a transfer of authority ceremony held Jan. 23.

Engineers respond to UXO on jobsite

Story by Sgt. Brian Moore
317th Eng. Co., USD-C

BAGHDAD – Good fortune and a keen eye saved lives Jan. 12, as engineers from 317th Engineer Company worked to level a 32-acre field at Victory Base complex.

Spc. Eric Bolyn, of Elwood, Ill., unearthed a

Type 69, 75 mm, anti-personnel high explosive round.

The keen eye belonged to Sgt. Justin Sikma, Bourbonnais, Ill., non-commissioned officer-in-charge at the project site, who spotted the unexploded round before Bolyn ran over, and immediately shut down the site.

“I was just walking over to check on his [Spc. Bolyn] progress, when I looked down and saw

something that didn’t look right,” said Sikma.

After stopping the scraper, Sikma confirmed the unexploded ordnance from a safe distance by using the magnification from the optic sight on his rifle.

“It was hard to spot. It was covered in dirt and painted olive drab green. It blended right into the ground,” said Sikma.

Spotting the round was especially difficult because the area the engineer Soldiers are leveling had once been used as a dumping site, so forgotten scraps of concertina wire and broken concrete lay everywhere.

According to Sikma, before the mission began, visibility was limited to about five meters away in any direction due to small hills, covered in brush.

Swampy and overgrown with foliage, the area is crisscrossed by two creeks. Ten-foot high reeds hide mounds of dirt and damaged Hesco barriers that once formed part of the base’s perimeter.

The Soldiers are now working hard to make the area visible from six hundred meters away.

“We probably pushed thousands of tons of dirt and debris all over this field,” said Sikma.

That particular type of UXO that was found has been in production since the 1980s, so it is difficult to say how long it had been there.

The crew had no way of knowing how long it had been buried, but with it safely removed and destroyed by explosives experts later in the day, Sikma said he knew the importance of finding it.



Photo by 1st Lt. Stacy Burress, 317th Eng. Co., USD-C

An unexploded ordnance round was unearthed at a construction project site at Camp Victory Jan. 14, by a scraper operated by Spc. Eric Bolyn of Elwood, Ill., a heavy construction equipment operator from the 317th Engineer Company. The round was later disposed of and no Soldiers were injured on the jobsite.

Engineers offer maintenance training to the 11th IA

*Photos by Staff Sgt. April Mota,
101st Eng. Bn. UPAR, 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C*



Pvt. Ali Kitab Sarhan, 11th Iraqi Army, looks for the appropriate tool in a tool box during a maintenance class, taught by three Soldiers of the 101st Engineer Battalion, at Victory Base Complex Jan. 7.



Using a ratchet and a wrench, Pvt. Ali Kitab Sarhan, 11th Iraqi Army, tightens the bracket that holds the rearview mirror in place on their vehicle while attending a maintenance class, at Victory Base Complex Jan. 7.



Using an adjustable wrench for the first time, Pvt. Hayder Maky, 11th Iraqi Army, tightens the steering column to their Badger, an Iraqi light armored vehicle, at Victory Base Complex Jan. 7. Six Soldiers from the 11th IA attended a three-day Badger maintenance course covering basic repairs and tool familiarization.

Humanitarian mission spreads joy, warmth to 100 Iraqi families

Story by Spc. Ruth McClary
30th HBCT PAO, USD-C

BAGHDAD – One hundred families in the Yusifiyah area, southwest of Baghdad, benefited as U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers targeted their villages during a humanitarian aid mission, Jan. 3.

Soldiers of A Troop, 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, and the 1472nd Civil Affairs Team attached to the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team and Iraqi Army 17th Division Soldiers, distributed blankets, quilts, kerosene heaters, children's clothing, school supplies and pre-packaged bags of food donated by U.S. charitable organizations.

The commander's emergency relief fund was used to purchase items distributed in the Hasameet, Setoah and Zobai regions; the most deprived segment of the Troops' area of operations. The villages suffer mainly because they are not located on main routes or near water sources.

"Heaters and blankets were purchased through the brigade [commander's emergency relief fund]," said civil affairs officer 1st Lt. Adam Stickley, of Leeton, Mo. "Beyond Orders and the Hugs Foundation sent in items for this drop, along with private donations from citizens of West Virginia."

Beyond Orders is an organization developed by a group of U.S. veterans from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They set-up a website for U.S. military to request specific items needed in the Iraqi communities in their area of operations.



Photo courtesy of 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron

A Troop Commander Capt. Mark Houck, of 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, carries a blanket to recipients in a village southwest of Baghdad during a humanitarian mission Jan. 3.

The web site posts requests from Soldiers stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan matching them with private donors to include individuals and organizations who pledge to send items for needy people in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Hugs Foundation campaigns for donations to fund deliveries of care packages containing cooling scarves, homemade goods, toiletries and snacks to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"The Hugs Foundation sent us some games, toys and about 50 quilts made by retired la-

dies," said Stickley. "Beyond Orders sent most of the children's clothes disbursed."

"They were excited and actually pretty well organized as we gave out the supplies," said civil affairs noncommissioned officer, Staff Sgt. Michael Hawf, of St. Louis.

"Giving the children clothing and seeing the expressions of joy as they receive something that they need and can use is rewarding," explained Hawf. "It's absolutely amazing that we are able to make an impact on people's lives." ▲

Engineers bring joy to Iraqi children

Story by Spc. Heather Todd
1192nd Eng. Co., USD-C

BAGHDAD – To improve ties with the people of Iraq, Soldiers from 1192nd Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, delivered clothes and food Jan. 10 to families living in Area Four, an Iraqi Special Forces training base at Victory Base Complex.

Besides canned goods, books, hygiene items and magazines for the adults, the Soldiers also handed out stuffed animals, cards, balls, coloring books, pens, pencils, crayons, glue and other school supplies to the children.

The importance of the gesture wasn't lost on the young ones.

"The kids were smiling and excited when they saw the truck," said Sgt. 1st Class David Zika, from Norwalk, Ohio. "They knew that there was something there for them. They were appreciative."

Among the goods were about 45 packets of candy. The candy and school supplies were donated from Lakota High School in Cincinnati, Ohio, and members of 1192nd proved to be a favorite draw by some of the Soldiers.

"I liked giving the candy to the kids. It shows them that we're here to help," said Sgt. 1st Class John Botts, of Cincinnati, Ohio, 1192nd Eng. Co. "This was one of the better days that I've had in theater."

This was the 1192nd's second time visiting Iraqi children and their families. The

Soldiers said they like doing this because it gives them an opportunity to interact with the families, and provide them with useful supplies. Instead of having excess items from care packages sent during the holidays just lying around, the engineers figured that the families at Area Four could put the items to good use.

"There are a couple of little shops, but no grocery store for the families to go and get the things that they need," said Staff Sgt. John Scott from Warren, Ohio, 1192nd Eng. Co.

The Soldiers said they plan to go back to Area Four as soon as they can accumulate more items to hand out; especially candy.

"It's fun to see the smiles on their faces when they see us," said Scott. ▲

Air Cav employs new unmanned aircraft system

Story and photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski
1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

TAJI – Placing a new aircraft in a combat situation is a true test of its capabilities and future role within the Army.

Unmanned aircraft systems have become a mainstay in military operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom; injecting new concepts and technologies will only further push the uses of these aircraft.

Quick Reaction Capability 1, attached to 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – Center, is a small unit of 16 Soldiers deployed from Unmanned Aircraft Systems Training Battalion out of Fort Huachuca, Ariz., that has spent the past months putting the new MQ-1C Sky Warrior UAS through numerous tests to help Department of Army officials determine the path of the UASs.

The Sky Warrior, a system larger than the Predator, is operated by Soldiers in Iraq as opposed to being flown remotely from the United States. It has a wing span of 56 feet and is capable of carrying Hellfire missiles.

The DA wanted QRC1 to be assigned to the Baghdad area of operations; and since the 1st Cav.Div. was in charge of operations for Baghdad at the time, the unit fell under 1st Air Cav. Bde., said Capt. Travis Blaschke, from Spokane, Wash., commander of QRC1.

“This aircraft is in its infancy. The aircraft that we have right now on the flight line are the first aircraft produced by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems and deployed by the Army,” said Blaschke. “All of the aircraft were built during the Development and Testing phase of the acquisition process, which means all the aircraft are prototypes.”

Even though the Sky Warrior is still in a testing phase, it is being used in missions to support units on the ground. Through these missions, the QRC1 unit is gathering data to determine the direction the program will go.

“Our mission is to support [USD-C] on all of their [reconnaissance surveillance and target acquisition] missions by providing aero scout capabilities to

the maneuver commander,” said Blaschke. “Our secondary mission is to validate the MQ-1C for the program of record.”

Program of record, or POR, is the final milestone for any new Army asset. This will move the MQ-1C from development and testing into production and adoption into the Army’s common inventory.

The Army saw a need for having division-level UAS assets similar to the Air Force Predator. The Sky Warrior MQ-1C will answer this need, said Blaschke.

“We (QRC1) are actually testing the concept of operations, system limitations, hardware and software,” he said. “We are working through a lot of challenges by forging a new path, but it has been

ple Sky Warriors starting in 2011,” said Blaschke. The aircraft would be a division-level asset and would be further dispersed down to the combat units to support the maneuver commanders.

“To date, the majority of the missions we are conducting involve the dissemination of full-motion

video, which provides situational awareness for the commanders at battalion,

brigade and even division,” said Blaschke. “We have been overwatching air assaults, cordon and searches; conducting reconnaissance and surveillance.”

Along with the ability to conduct surveillance and fly well beyond a dozen hours, once testing is complete, the Sky Warrior will be armed with Hellfire missiles,

The future of MQ-1C operations is only limited by the breadth of our imagination.

– Capt. Travis Blaschke



An MQ-1C Sky Warrior unmanned aircraft system from Quick Reaction Capability 1, attached to 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division–Center, sits in a hangar. The Sky Warrior aircraft has the ability to remain airborne for up to 24 hours straight to conduct continuous missions in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

worth it to see the incredible progress.

“To think that the company was created 14 months ago, finished qualification training eight months ago and we are now conducting full spectrum RSTA missions in theater is pretty amazing,” he said.

QRC1 is a program that has been developed to assume and mitigate a lot of the risk for the POR, which should be developed in about three years, said Blaschke.

If the QRC1 program is successful, the Army has a plan in place to give every aviation brigade multi-

which will add another dimension to its combat role.

“This is an aircraft that can have different pay loads,” said Blaschke. “It has the capability of actually looking out long distances in order to find the enemy in different ways. Whether it is using the image intelligence, using signal intelligence, this platform can not only find the enemy but will ultimately be able to engage and neutralize the enemy.”

The Sky Warrior also has the capability to point out targets for oth-

er aircraft – enabling them to hit their target while the Sky Warrior aims, said Blaschke. It can guide in a Hellfire from an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter or even Joint Direct Attack Munitions from an F/A-18 Super Hornet, F-16 Fighting Falcon or F-22 Raptor – making a hunter-killer team.

“This aircraft will be standing side-by-side Army maneuver assets, rotary wing teams on air assault missions, or teaming with the ground maneuver commanders on cordons or raids,” said Blaschke.

However, the Sky Warrior with all of its technology is nothing more than a display model without the men and women who operate the aircraft and know its full capabilities.

“The operators of the system need to be at the highest level of proficiency and also maintain the proper situational awareness to ensure they are supporting the ground commander to the best of their ability,” said Blaschke.

Unlike the Air Force, who only allows officers to operate UAS, the Sky Warrior operators of QRC1 consist of officers, warrant officers and enlisted personnel.

Twenty-year-old Spc. Josh Palowitch, from Grayson, Ky., QRC1, is one of three Soldiers at his rank qualified to operate the Sky Warrior in garrison and combat operations. Given the uniqueness of his position, Palowitch remains humble.

Everything taught in the schoolhouse and everything done here is done for one reason, said Palowitch; to support the ground troops.

“I definitely think this is a unique aircraft and once the systems come up to par, I believe they will be a valuable asset for the Army to have in many different situations,” he said.

The QRC1 unit is on the edge of the envelope and Army leaders have high expectations for the future of the Sky Warrior program, according to Blaschke.

“We are in the process of honing the operators’ proficiency to the highest levels and also developing this aircraft to the pinnacle of reliability and lethality,” said Blaschke. “The future of MQ-1C operations is only limited by the breadth of our imagination.” ▲

Engineers ensure safety, security at only enduring forensics facility



Pausing to check his measurements, Spc. Ryan Hedburg of Lockport, Ill., 317th Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, does some quick math on some finishing touches at the Joint Expeditionary Forensics Facility, at Victory Base Complex Jan. 7. The facility needed some extra security measures implemented before it is ready to open.

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. April Mota
101st Eng. Bn. UPAR, 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

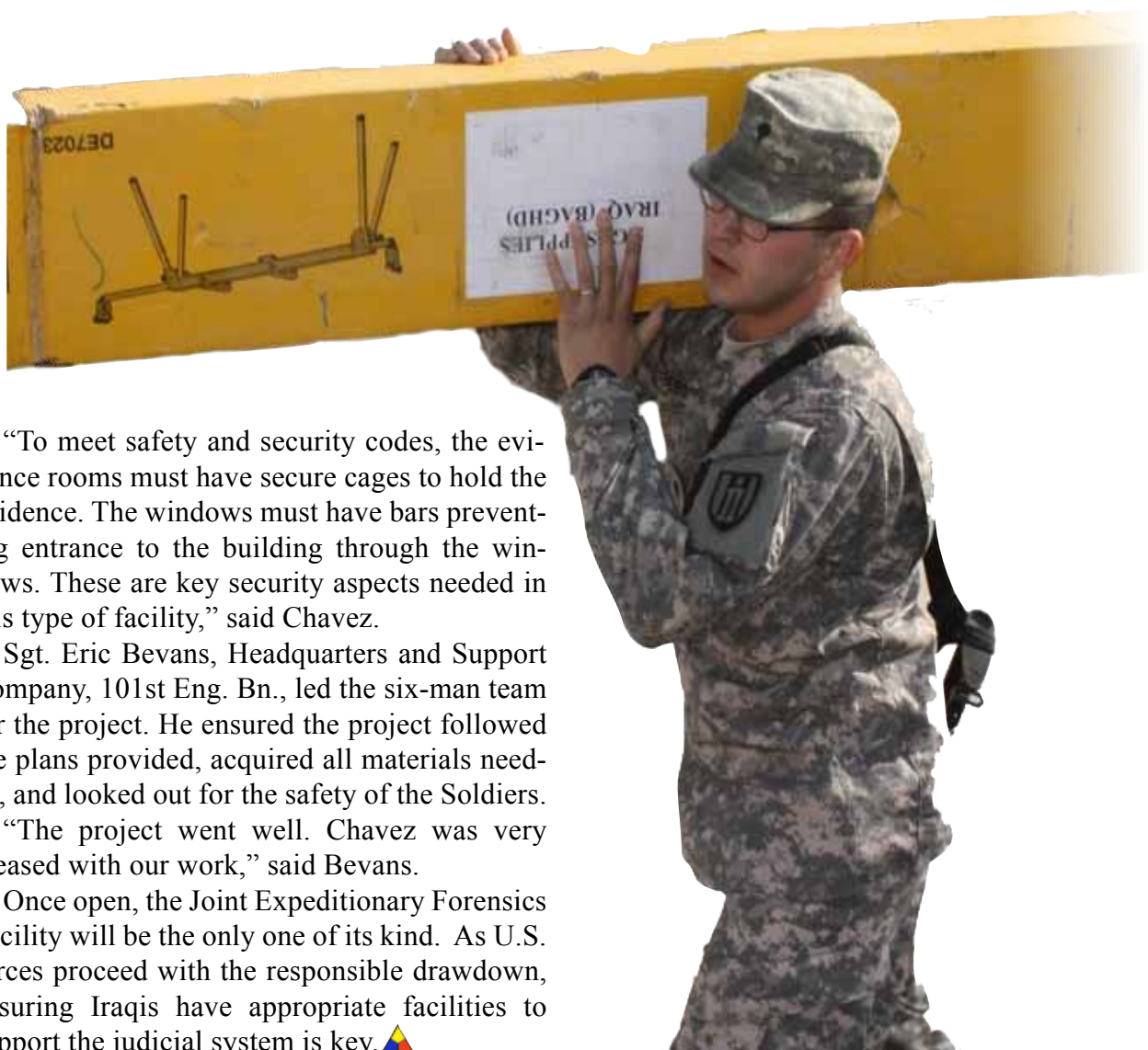
BAGHDAD – Six Soldiers from the 101st Engineer Battalion added finishing touches to the new Joint Expeditionary Forensics Facility, at Victory Base Complex, Jan. 7. The forensics facility will be run by military police, Iraqi lab examiners, and civilian contractors.

The Soldiers, from the 317th Engineer Company and 101st Eng. Bn., added security screens to cover the windows, built evidence room security cages and added a counter for the lobby.

The forensics facility will be used to process DNA, ballistic evidence, and latent prints. This facility, by storing and processing evidence, will be an integral part of the Iraqi judicial system and be the only remaining forensics center of its kind following the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq.

“The evidence from this facility will be used to assist the Iraqi judicial system to successfully prosecute insurgents,” said Capt. Victor Chavez of Riverside Calif., 393rd Military Police Battalion who is the officer in charge of the building.

Chavez is aiming to open the facility by mid-February. Before the facility can open, it must meet certain standards to ensure the evidence is maintained safely and properly.



“To meet safety and security codes, the evidence rooms must have secure cages to hold the evidence. The windows must have bars preventing entrance to the building through the windows. These are key security aspects needed in this type of facility,” said Chavez.

Sgt. Eric Bevens, Headquarters and Support Company, 101st Eng. Bn., led the six-man team for the project. He ensured the project followed the plans provided, acquired all materials needed, and looked out for the safety of the Soldiers.

“The project went well. Chavez was very pleased with our work,” said Bevens.

Once open, the Joint Expeditionary Forensics Facility will be the only one of its kind. As U.S. forces proceed with the responsible drawdown, ensuring Iraqis have appropriate facilities to support the judicial system is key. ▲

Soldiers from 501st Military Police Company, 1st Armored Division, participate in a convoy live fire exercise at the Besmaya Range complex, Jan. 2. The exercise allows MPs to familiarize themselves with weapon systems, and it gives everyone the opportunity to practice truck positions while in an actual convoy.

501st Soldiers all fired up

1AD MPs conduct live fire training in Iraq

Story and photos by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh
366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – The Soldiers of 501st Military Police Company, 1st Armored Division participated in a live fire training exercise Jan. 2 at the Besmaya Range complex near Contingency Operating Station Hammer.

The MPs began arriving in Iraq Dec. 30, and the convoy live fire is part of their initial mandatory training for their unique mission requirements. The purpose of the range is to familiarize Soldiers with the positions they will occupy in their trucks while on actual convoy missions.

The exercise consisted of six convoy teams comprising four trucks each.

Although the day was long – starting around 2:30 a.m., with a return to post around 7:30 p.m. – Soldiers found the training valuable.

“It was probably the best [range] we’ve ever been to,” said Sgt. Josh Locke, a truck commander assigned to 501st and a native of Indianapolis.

Previous ranges Locke participated in required each truck to stop during the convoy to load weapon systems. Then, one at a time, the vehicles would drive through, shoot off their rounds, and drive around to clear their weapons, Locke said.

This range ran much smoother and more ef-

ficiently, Locke added. MPs loaded their weapons at the same time, went through five different lanes, and fired simultaneously at a continuous rate.

“It just gives you a really good idea of what your gunners can do when they’re out there knocking down targets,” said Locke.

The convoy live fire was a culmination of much of the training conducted prior to this deployment, said Spc. Robert Brubaker, a native of Thermont, Md., also a gunner assigned to 501st. He said the range proved practical, giving team leaders a chance to work together with the gunners and the drivers to ensure mission success.

In addition to the live-fire training, 501st has also started the relief in place of D Troop, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. The transition will include observing and working with D Troop until 501st can operate alone.

Once training is complete, the unit will conduct its transfer of authority. Most of the leaders assigned to 501st have previously deployed with the unit, so many enlisted Soldiers said they feel confident the personal security detail will run smoothly.

Sgt. Troy Clement, a truck commander assigned to the 501st and native of Concord, N.C., said the unit is well prepared and well trained for a variety of missions.

“With the leadership we have and the adaptability we have,” said Clement, “we’re ready for the handoff.” ▲



Pvt. 1st Class Pamela Clohisy, a native of Hudson, Wis., assigned to 501st Military Police Company, 1st Armored Division, prepares her M240B machine gun for the live fire convoy exercise at Besmaya Range complex, Jan. 2. The exercise allowed the gunners to test their efficiency with their weapon systems while riding in a convoy.



Soldiers conduct joint live fires exercise

*Photos by Sgt. Shejal Pulivarti,
1st BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C*



Columbiana, Ala., native Spc. Brandon Bishop, a howitzer crew member assigned to 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, performs a functions check on the breach of an M777 howitzer, during a joint fires exercise Jan. 10.



TAJI, Iraq – Brooksfield, Fla., native Sgt. Joseph Beichner, chief of a howitzer crew assigned to 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, places a 155mm round back in place after he marks it with his signature. The crew supported 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, during a joint fires exercise Jan. 10.



Little Rock, Ark., native Capt. Alex Aquino, commander for Battery B, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, carries a 155mm round to an M777 howitzer in preparation for a live fires scenario Jan. 10.



Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, fire their first live round in country in support of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division during a joint fires exercise Jan. 10.



Engineers add much-needed space to gym

Story, photo by Staff Sgt. April Mota
101st Eng. Bn. UPAR, 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – As U.S. Forces begin their responsible drawdown and relocate to bases like the Victory Base Complex, Soldier support facilities are expected to accommodate the population growth.

Soldiers from 1434th and 1192nd Engineer companies, 101st Engineer Battalion, are constructing an addition to a gym at Camp Liberty that will serve the population safely and comfortably.

The right facility can assist Soldiers in keeping themselves mission ready. A gym in a combat zone may seem like a luxury to some but it is an important tool for Soldiers to maintain physical fitness and provides a healthy way to spend time when the day's mission is done.

"There is not much room at the gym after we get out of work; it is pretty busy. If there were more room, more people would use it," said Spc. James Lavallee of Northbridge, Mass., 101st Eng. Bn.

Soldiers with 621st Survey and Design team designed the plans for the addition to the gym. Staff Sgt. William Burriola, of Charlotte, N.C., explained that the new plans will add a total of 2,050 square feet to the original structure, which is currently only 1,350 square feet.

The gym currently has a small weight area and a cardio room. The cardio room is used to do squad level physical training and other group fitness training, which ties up the space. The engineers' new addition to the facility will allow for



Spc. Eric Zihlman, a native of Grossepointe Park, Mich., assigned to 1434th Engineer Company, hammers nails into wood blocks that will be used to attach trusses to the roof of a new addition to a gymnasium at Camp Liberty. The addition, planned and built by Soldiers of 101st Engineer Battalion, will more than double the current size of the facility.

group sessions and individuals to do PT at the same time.

"We will be adding a second cardio room, space for more weight equipment and a small deck," said Burriola.

Although conveniently located near the troops' living areas, the current space routinely gets over crowded during peak hours, deterring Soldiers

from using it.

"The location of the Pad 9 gym is much better," said Lavallee. "If it were bigger, I would go more often with my gym partner who gives me the motivation to push further than I normally would."

The new addition to the gym is expected to ensure all Soldiers who want to use it, can. ▲

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August - Financial Peace University

September - Baby Makes Three

October - Five Power Tools for Marriage

November - Grab Bag

For more information please contact the 1st Armored Division Chaplain's Office at DSN 847-2738.



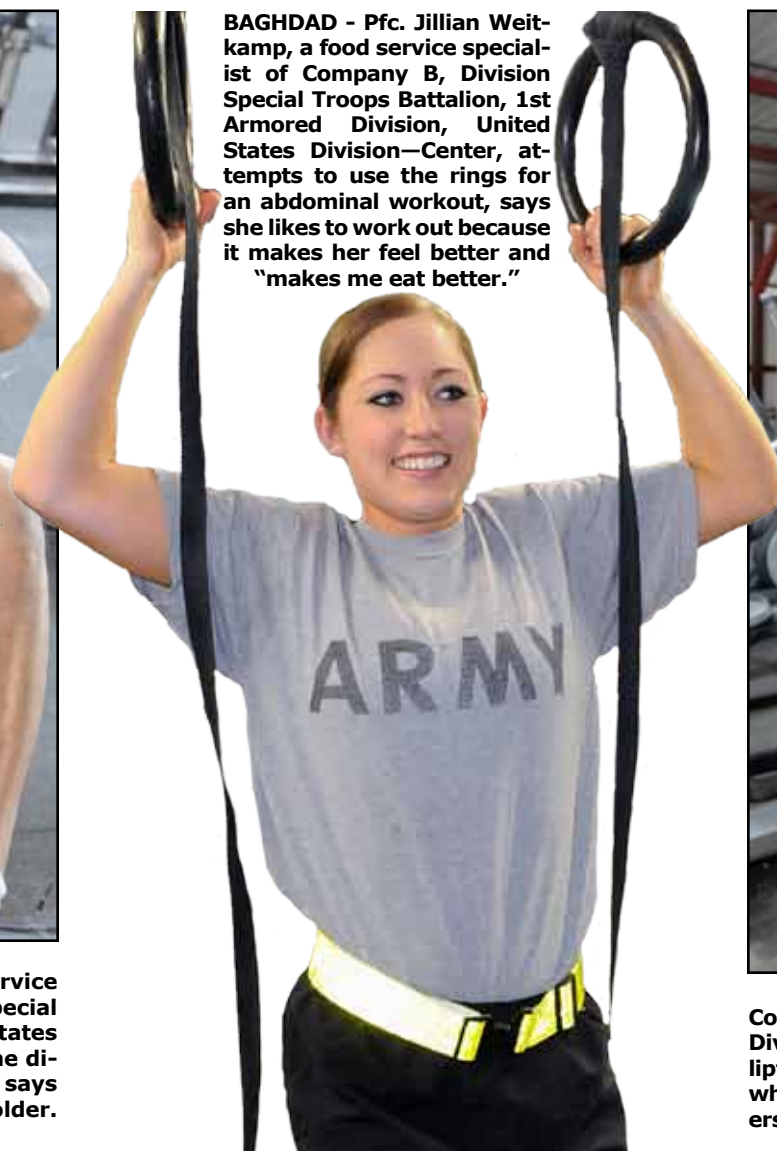
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PRACTICE GOOD OPSEC!

Working out key to 'survivability'



Staff Sgt. Roongpetch Kaewnork, a food service sergeant assigned to Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Armored Division, United States Division—Center, performs inverted sit-ups at the division's gym Jan. 10. The Hampton, Va., native says he works out to maintain his body as he grows older.



BAGHDAD - Pfc. Jillian Weitkamp, a food service specialist of Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Armored Division, United States Division—Center, attempts to use the rings for an abdominal workout, says she likes to work out because it makes her feel better and "makes me eat better."



Command Sgt. Maj. William Johnson, the 1st Armored Division's senior non-commissioned officer, uses the elliptical machine at the division's gym Jan. 10. Johnson, who works out every day, says it is important for leaders to stay physically fit, so they can lead by example.



Sgt. Alicia Clark, a pianist assigned to the 1st Armored Division Band, United States Division—Center, practices a plank exercise Jan. 10, at the division's gym. Clark says she wants to stay healthy and working out makes her feel stronger.

*Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott,
366th MPAD, USD-C*

Engineers ensure safe living areas at COS Carver

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. April Mota
101st Eng. Bn., 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from 317th Engineer Company and 808th Engineer Company are providing electricity to the future living spaces of U.S. Forces as they prepare to hand off their current housing to Soldiers of the Iraqi Army.

The move will happen as soon as Soldiers from 1434th Engineer Company complete the new Joint Operations Center at Contingency Operating Station Carver. The IA will then occupy a portion of Carver that is currently home to Soldiers from 10th Mountain Division.

The engineers are busy digging ditches, upgrading electrical boxes, burying cables, and connecting boxes to generators, which provide housing units with electricity. The new units, Containerized Housing Units, will allow the Soldiers of 10th Mtn. Div., to vacate the space that the IA Soldiers plan to utilize as they expand independent operations.

Sgt. 1st Class Theodore Blandford, 1434th Eng. Co., is responsible for some of the work done by the Soldiers of 317th Eng. Co. He was impressed with the hard work done by the Soldiers—they dug most of the concealment

ditches by hand.

Spc. Josue Delgado, of San Antonio, Texas, with 808th Eng. Co., explained how important it is to make sure all of the boxes are wired correctly to ensure safe living areas for Soldiers.

“We had to make sure the boxes didn’t piggyback off each other. They all have their own electric supply; they are all routed and grounded properly, which is important,” said Delgado. “This makes sure there are no fire hazards.”

The most time-consuming part of the project was digging the ditches to bury the electrical wires underground running from the generator to the electrical boxes. They dug, by hand, more than 60 feet of trenches to conceal the cable.

Another challenging aspect of the project was salvaging the existing electrical boxes.

“The electrical boxes we used came from the [scrap yard.] We had to pick through, find proper boxes, then drill holes in the bottoms of the boxes to feed the wire through,” said Delgado.

Creating housing to relocate the 10th Mtn. Soldiers is a vital part of the U.S. Forces handing over responsibility to the IA at COS Carver, he said. It is key to the responsible drawdown of U.S. Forces. ▲



Prior to turning on the electricity, Spc. Brandon Burgess, of Hammond, Ind., with 317th Engineer Company, makes sure all connections are secure while Pfc. Sean Carroll of Dyer, Ind., 317th Eng. Co., observes the process. Soldiers from 317th Eng. Co., are providing power to new housing units for Soldiers of 10th Mountain Division at COS Carver.

Engineers build new joint operations center at Carver

Story by Spc. Brian Johnson
16th Eng. Bde., UPAR, USD-C

BAGHDAD – Soldiers of 1434th Engineer Company are constructing a new joint operations center and a planning annex at Contingency Operating Station Carver to provide better communication and smoother coordination capabilities between U.S. Forces and the Iraqi Army.

As the role of U.S. Forces in Iraq diminishes and the IA takes the lead, the construction of a joint operations center is considered vital by Army leaders to the success of joint security missions.

First Lt. Brian Civile, of Owosso, Mi., the construction officer-in-charge of the site, says that these new facilities will meet a number of needs.

“The two buildings, being built next to each other, will allow for smoother planning, fa-

cilitation and coordination of joint operations between the U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers,” said Civile.

Staff Sgt. Todd Thomas, from Traverse City, Mi., has been amazed

with the project’s success.

“The command group here has been giving Soldiers a chance to shine and they have been highly motivated because of it,” said Thomas. “We don’t have to tell them anything; they just do it.”

None of the current structures at COS Carver meet the future needs of the U.S. and Iraqi forces. The construction is expected to fix that problem and will also include a large, shared space to

conduct joint operations.

According to Civile, the U.S. Forces are not the only ones who will benefit from the expansion project.

“As the transition of forces in Iraq continues, the Iraqis will begin to work more out of Carver,” said Civile. “The base will become more of a focus point for joint U.S.-Iraqi missions. When the U.S. Forces eventually leave the base, the Iraqis will be able to run all of their missions from the facilities that were constructed there.”

The JOC and planning annex are scheduled to open and begin operations in early February. ▲

The command group here has been giving Soldiers a chance to shine and they have been highly motivated because of it.

– Staff Sgt. Todd Thomas

1434th Engineers increase quality of life at NWS

Story and photo by Spc. Brian Johnson
16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – Engineers from 1434th Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, are working hard to expand a gym and make additional living facilities safe and habitable at Joint Security Station Nasir Wa Salam, on the western edge of Baghdad.

Space to sleep and keep physically fit is limited for U.S. Forces stationed there.

As with any construction project, challenges present themselves along the way. The highly capable and skilled engineer Soldiers of 1434th Eng. Co. address construction issues with ease and grace, according to Staff Sgt. David Robarge, of Holland, Mich.

“Our biggest challenge that we have had is being able to construct so much, so quickly,” said Robarge.

This presents a unique issue: not always having the materials you need when you need them.

“If we find a need for additional material for the site, we sometimes have to wait for it to be sent to us,” said Robarge.

When that happens, the focus turns more to the other job site until required materials are again on hand.

Robarge said this project has been a series of cross-training missions for all of the Soldiers on the job site. Plumbers and electricians have become carpenters, and carpenters have become electricians. This cross-training allows the work in both buildings to proceed very quickly.

Spc. David Peek, of Homer Mich., is an electrician with 1434th. During the project, there has been



Pvt. 1st Class Jeff Rochefort from Munising, Mi., a member of 1434th Engineer Company, works to install a support beam Jan. 7 at Joint Security Station Nasir Wa Salam. The 1434th Eng. Co. is working to construct an expansion to the main gym at NWS. When complete, the expansion will be able to accommodate the additional Soldiers that are stationed there.

an abundance of carpentry work, so Peek has had a chance to learn some basic carpentry skills.

“I have enjoyed the challenge of learning something new,” said Peek. “I have been learning carpentry techniques, like putting together roof trusses that I have no formal training on.”

When electricians begin to work on a job site, safety becomes extremely important. If wiring is done incorrectly, it could cost someone his life. When working in the barracks building, because wiring is already in place, the task becomes ensuring it is safe.

Spc. Gerald Alexander from Gladstone, Mich., said this can be time consuming.

“When walking into a new job, and wiring is already there, we have to try to figure out if the wiring is still ok, and if it is hooked up properly,” said Alexander. “If they are hooked up incorrectly to a circuit, it could blow a beaker, or cause a fire.”

The projects are set to be completed by early February. When the work of Peek, Alexander, and the rest of the electricians from the 1434th is complete, 100 Soldiers at Nasir Wa Salam will have more comfortable and safer spaces to live. ▲

317th Engineers improve safety at test fire range

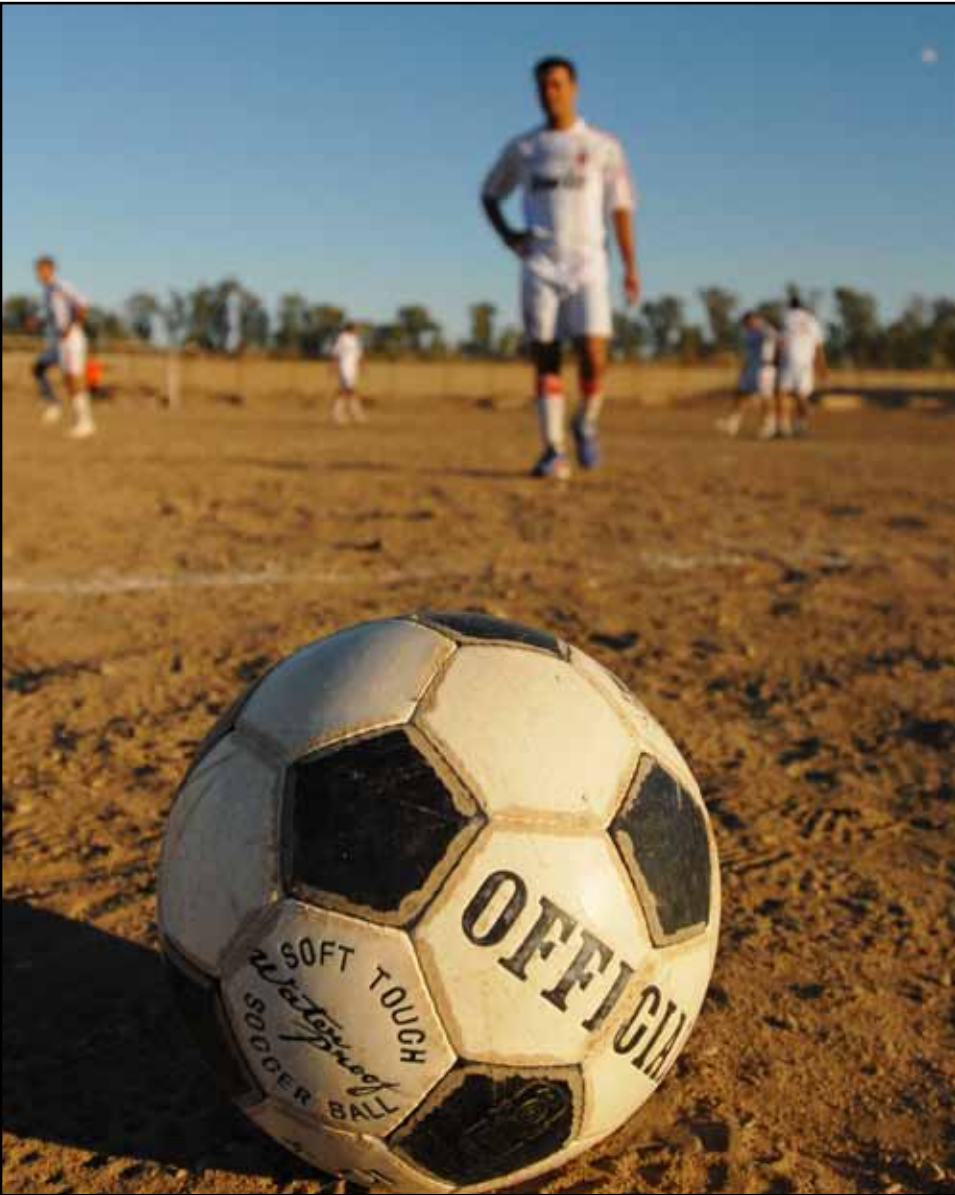


BAGHDAD - Dusk falls on the engineers as they work hard to finish filling Hesco barriers that will reinforce the test fire range at Camp Victory Jan. 6. Spc. Jeff Miller of Rockford, Ill., Spc. Peter Trost of Downers Grove, Ill., Ronald Carlson of Tinley Park, Ill., Sgt. 1st Class William Kenes of Mechanicsburg, Penn., and Spc. Andrew Strickler of Wakefield, Minn., work on leveling the dirt in the barriers while Spc. Chris Forrest, Downs, Ill., operates the HYEX. These Soldiers serve as heavy construction equipment operators with 317th Engineer Company.

Photo by Spc. Richard Olson, 101st Eng. Bn. UPAR, 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C



CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION CONSTITUTION, Iraq – Medals to be awarded to the top team in the division sit on a table during the 6th Iraqi Army Division soccer championships Jan. 7.



A soccer ball rests on the sideline of the field during 6th Iraqi Army Division soccer championships at Contingency Operating Location Constitution Jan. 7.

Iraqi Soldiers division soccer



An Iraqi Army Soldier kicks a soccer ball during the 6th Iraqi Army Division soccer championships Jan. 7.



An Iraqi Army Soldier passes the ball to one of his teammates during the 6th Iraqi Army Division soccer championships Jan. 7.

s compete for title

*Photos by Spc. Luisito Brooks
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., USD-C*



ampionships at Contingency Operating Location Constitution Jan. 7.



y Division soccer championships at Contingency Operating Location Constitution Jan. 7.



An Iraqi Army Soldier leaps over his opponent to head a soccer ball to one of his teammates during the 6th Iraqi Army Division soccer championships at Contingency Operating Location Constitution Jan. 7.



A line judge raises his flag, signaling that the ball has gone out of bounds during the 6th Iraqi Army Division soccer championships at Contingency Operating Location Constitution Jan. 7.

Council meeting brings Soldiers closer to locals

Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., USD-C

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION TARMIAH, Iraq – As Iraqi townspeople debated with raised voices in a building in Tarmiyah, Jan. 11, the commander of Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, sat in the back of the room and listened intently as his interpreter translated the concerns of the local populace.

This was the first time Capt. David Culver had attended a Tarmiyah council meeting since his unit began supporting Iraqi Security Forces in the qada.

Troop A recently replaced outgoing elements of 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, who are redeploying stateside.

“We’re there to answer any security questions they might have as well as keep tabs on what other problems are affecting the population,” said Culver, a Palatine, Ill., native.

The meeting helped him get a better idea of local issues in the area and prepared him to assist his Iraqi counterparts in making Tarmiyah a safer place.

One thing Culver said was very encouraging to see was the input from the attendees at the meeting.

“There was an issue, there was some conflict over the issue, and they came to a consensus and eventually moved forward,” he said.

Communication wasn’t always good in the meetings, said Capt. Ray Canzonier, commander of Company B, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt. Canzonier’s company secured Tarmiyah before Troop A arrived.

“I’ve seen an increased participation (from council members),” said Canzonier, a Point Pleasant, N.J., native.

The council members discussed items such as a neighborhood watch program, area construction projects and street cleanliness.

Culver took all of these issues into consideration. However, the biggest benefit the commander took away from the meeting was an introduction to the local people.

“As a new commander here, knowing the influential people who walk into town is important,” he said.

Being able to talk face-to-face with several of the council members, both before and after the meeting, Culver said he left the meeting feeling welcome in the neighborhood.

“Everyone seemed very encouraged to work with me,” said Culver, “just as I’m encouraged and excited to work with them.” 🚩

Manchu Soldiers hit the links

Story and photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., USD-C

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION AQUR QUF, Iraq – Some would call having a shipping container full of golf balls and only two clubs ironic, but that’s exactly the situation Soldiers from the Company A, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment “Manchus,” found themselves in.

It was only through the help of two embedded reporters, and the generosity of organizations and families from the Fort Lewis, Wash., area that they were able to address the matter and properly adjust their swing.

“We read the article in the Tacoma News Tribune, by Scott Fontaine, about our brave Soldiers of Able Company, 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt.,” John Thompson, a military supporter from Fox Island, Wash., wrote in a letter sent to the unit. “We understand that they could use some golf clubs for the 50,000 golf balls they found.”

Thompson and other readers who saw the article reached out to 4th Bde., 2nd Inf. Div., for help, donating several sets of clubs to the unit.

Many Soldiers had no idea that a news article had been written about their particular situation, so when the golf clubs arrived, they were surprised.

“Wow, these clubs are really nice,” said Spc. Miguel Franchini, a Co. B, 702nd Brigade Support Bn., 4th Bde., 2nd Inf. Div., mechanic assigned to the Manchus from San Diego. “We really are thankful for all the support.”

For the Soldiers who play golf on this small secluded joint security station, the clubs gave

them something to look forward to at the end of a busy day here.

“[On] the days when we just get so busy and we are working 14 to 18 hours or more a day, it’s good to get away just for a few moments and take our minds off work and hit a few golf balls,” said Spc. Hardin Andrew, a native of Ontario, Ore., from Co. B, 702nd Bde. Support Bn. “Hitting a couple of golf balls really helps me relax, especially when things get a little stressful.”

The Soldiers have built a small area on a rooftop to hit the golf balls-something some of the Soldiers would love to build stateside.

“I wish I could hit golf balls off the roof of my house back at home,” said Capt. Keith Roberts, the company commander of Co. A, 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt., 4th Bde., 2nd Inf. Div., from Dupont, Wash. “That would be really fun to do.”

Not only were Soldiers hitting golf balls with the new clubs, but their Iraqi Army counterparts got in on the action as well.

“I have never played golf before,” said Capt. Nomas, the commander of Co. 3, 1st Bn., 24th Bde., 6th Div. “It was real fun learning to play from the Soldiers, and I even hit the ball good one time.”

The Soldiers said they were happy to have received the golf clubs, but they also understood that the organizations and families who sent them were sending something more than that.

“It wasn’t just getting golf clubs that was great, but it was the fact that we were on the minds and on the hearts of people who care about the guys out here,” said Roberts. “That’s what’s truly important to us.” 🚩



Soldiers from Company A, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division took the opportunity to share with their Iraqi Army partners a few tips, along with the new golf clubs that were sent to them from the Fort Lewis, Wash. area Jan. 9.



Air Cav keeps busy during three deployments

An AH-64D Apache attack helicopter performs security as part of 1st Air Cavalry Brigade's ongoing mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. First ACB has flown 225,000 hours during its three deployments, with thousands more hours of maintenance logged, which help keep helicopters in the air.

Story and photo by Sgt. Alun Thomas
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs, USD-C

TAJI Iraq – After three deployments in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and over 225,000 hours flown, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade can claim to have played an essential role during its seven years of combat in Iraq.

Producing those hours requires teamwork, something everyone in 1st ACB contributed to in some fashion say the leaders, making this a significant number for them all.

The 225,000 hours comes from the endless work and contributions from pilots down to maintainers, said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Donald Washabaugh, from Collingswood, N.J., brigade aviation maintenance officer, 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – Center.

“The significance about where we’re going and the amount of hours that we’ve had is the cumulative effect all the Soldiers have been producing constantly out here,” Washabaugh said. “Nobody thinks about what they’ve done, but nearly a quarter of a million hours shows the ... tons of things we’ve moved.”

“It’s [also] the protection in the sky and the convoys we’ve covered,” he added.

During its three deployments, the unit has averaged more than 70,000 hours of flight,

Washabaugh said, with almost as much time expended performing maintenance to make those hours possible.

“We measure the flight time in hours and the hours also represent maintenance too,” Washabaugh said. “With the hours of phase maintenance added on to the 225,000 hours flown, it would add up to 350,000, which is about 700 phases.”

Washabaugh said their helicopters are the lifeblood of 1st ACB, which is the reason that teamwork has been so vital to the success of the brigade over its various deployments.

“The whole brigade is wrapped around those helicopters,” he said. “It’s not wrapped around the pilots; it’s not wrapped around the individuals in there, but it’s wrapped around producing that combat power.”

The mission has changed for 1st ACB as Iraq’s security has become more stable, but Washabaugh said the hours flown indicate the difference the brigade has made.

“We’re still on combat hours because there are still hostile forces out there, but it’s not in direct hunting or attacking, it’s delivered more in defense or deterrence,” Washabaugh said. “It shows the success that we’ve had in producing safety for the population.”

Washabaugh said safety accounts for much of the flight time.

“That’s part of what our hours represent; that protective umbrella that has been out there for the Iraqis and our Soldiers, too,” he said. “So we’ve done a phenomenal job putting it all together ... We know what we’re doing.”

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Cliff Mead, from Copperas Cove, Texas, brigade aviation maintenance officer, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, said he shares Washabaugh’s opinion about their efforts.

“Everyone has contributed to the missions, from the refuelers ... to the kids at the motor-pool who keep the refueler trucks going,” Mead said. “When I’ve got Soldiers on the flight line that are doing maintenance anywhere from 12 to 14 hours a day, somebody else has to take care of their issues, too.”

“Everybody gets a piece of this,” Mead added.

Mead specifically praised to the maintenance crews, who he attributed to making the difference in attaining the mark.

“When you look at the overall safety – what the Soldiers have produced in maintenance – there are a lot of hours that go into that,” he said. “When you have that many flying hours requiring that much maintenance, you’re talking about a major maintenance action happening on average every 300 hours. That is something to be proud of and I’m proud of our Soldiers who have done that.”

UAV operator brings smiles to Soldiers through magic skills

Story by Sgt. Alun Thomas

1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs, USD-C

TAJI, Iraq – By day, he works magic controlling unmanned aerial vehicles, helping keep ground patrols safe with protection from the skies.

At night, he works magic of a different sort – making coins disappear and cards appear out of nowhere, bringing smiles wherever he performs his arsenal of magic tricks.

The art of magic has been a lifetime passion for Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Allan, from Marysville, Utah, and a UAV technician for Quick Reaction Capability 1, attached to 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – Center.

He became fascinated with magic as a youngster.

“When I was about 6 or 7, my uncle performed a card trick and it sparked something in me – I just wanted to get the laughs and participation that he had,” Allan, 33, said. “From that time on, I started buying all the different tricks and trying to learn them.”

As Allan got older, he harbored ambitions of being a professional magician but soon realized it was unrealistic.

“There was a time if you asked me what I want to be I would have said, ‘I want to go to (Las) Vegas and be a magician,’” Allan said; “but I quickly learned that wasn’t going to pay the bills, so I changed my mind.”

Allan said he pursued magic as a side hobby but when he joined the Army eight years ago, he started taking magic much more seriously and improved significantly as a result.

“I figured if I could develop this skill a little better, I’d be able to pass it on to others,” he said.

The practice has paid off for Allan, who said he has become recognized around Camp Taji for his magic tricks, which he is always happy to display.

“When I go to pick up my laundry, the (employees) there always ask me for a card trick or a coin trick

and before I know, it I’m there 20 to 30 minutes and the place is filled up with Soldiers,” Allan said. “I’ll apologize to them, but they’ll say, ‘No, show us another trick.’”

“It’s kind of a break in the monotony that everyone needs ... it’s pretty positive,” he continued. “The hairdressers ask me for tricks and I’ll ask them, ‘How did you guys know I do card tricks?’ The word has gotten around.”

The novelty of Allan’s magic is keenly felt by Spc. Joshua Palowitch, from Grayson, Ky., a UAV operator, with QRC-1, who said Allan has taught him several tricks.

“He’s teaching me his ways,” Palowitch said. “He’ll learn a new trick and come to me with it. He shows me how he’s doing with it and sees if he can get it by me.”

Palowitch said he enjoys Allan’s array of tricks involving cards and coins, as do the rest of the QRC-1 team.

“It’s really awesome seeing him come up with new tricks all the time. It boosts our morale,” he said. “When we go to different places like the (laundry facility,) he’ll do tricks for them, and it’s cool to see their reactions and the smiles on their faces.”

Allan said he likes teaching his tricks to those who are curious about his skills because it may benefit others.

“Every dad should know a couple of tricks just to be able to wow their kids,” Allan said. “So when I see someone who’s really interested and I think they would be able to make someone smile when they go home on leave, I’ll send a trick home with them.”

Once his Army career is over, Allan said he would like to showcase his magic in settings that involve good causes.

“I have some long-term goals. ... Once my Army career is over, I’d like to do more fundraisers for schools,” he said. “I’m big into foster care and they do a lot of fundraisers, so I think that’s a good way to help the community and progress in this talent. I just want to share it with others.”



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Allan (left), a Marysville, Utah, unmanned aerial vehicle technician for Quick Reaction Capability 1, attached to 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, pulls a card trick on a surprised Spc. Timothy Edmonds, from Elmwood, Tenn., a paralegal specialist with 1st Air Cavalry Brigade Jan 13.



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

Displaying his sleight of hand with a coin, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Allan (left), from Marysville, Utah, an unmanned aerial vehicle technician for Quick Reaction Capability 1, attached to 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, demonstrates the outcome of his trick Jan. 13 to Sgt. 1st Class Gina Onesto-Person (right), from Ingleside, Texas, the senior paralegal non-commissioned officer for 1st ACB.



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

As part of a magic trick, Sgt. Alun Thomas, from Copperas Cove, Texas, a public affairs specialist with 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – Center, writes his name on a card Jan. 13 for Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Allan, an unmanned aerial vehicle technician from Marysville, Utah, assigned to Quick Reaction Capability 1, attached to the 1st ACB. Allan, 33, is an experienced magician of more than 25 years who performs an array of tricks that involve coins, playing cards and other miscellaneous items.

Creating profit through poultry



An Iraqi worker attaches a chicken's feet to the prongs that will carry it through the newly reopened Al Kanz Poultry Processing Plant Jan. 10.

Story and photos by Spc. Daniel Schneider
366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from 120th Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division joined Department of Agriculture representatives to witness the reopening of a poultry processing plant Jan. 10 that promises to increase profits in Yusifiyah.

The Kanz Poultry Processing Plant, southwest of Baghdad near Contingency Operating Station Falcon, reopened after being closed in 2004 due to the poor condition of its facilities and the lack of poultry producers.

Thanks to joint efforts between the U.S. Army and the Department of Agriculture, the plant, which could employ up to 150 Iraqis, reopened in hopes of sparking the industry in the Yusifiyah area, said Capt. Bobby Lumsden, an operations officer with 30th HBCT.

"The plant is the only functioning processing plant that can take live chickens direct from the farmers, completely prepare them, freeze them, and deliver them to the market," said Lumsden.

"In the early 1970s, this region, which used to be nicknamed 'the triangle of death,' exported poultry and agriculture," said Juan Alsace, team leader of the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, a subsection of the Department of Agriculture. "The infrastructure was here; we just had to refurbish what was already in place."

The 101st Airborne Division began refurbishing the plant in March 2008, and 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, along with 30th HBCT, continued the project, said Michael Clayton, senior advisor for the ePRT.

The plant provides Iraqi people fresh halal chicken, which is slaughtered in accordance with Islamic standards, said Clayton.

Soldiers from 120th CAB provided security for the project as well as acting as liaisons for the U.S. Army effort in funding the project.

Teaching Iraqis methods to flourish on their own gives them the ability to provide their own stability without needing to rely on Americans, said Clayton.

"The key to this project is sustained capacity building for when the Army is gone," Alsace explained.

"We've taught the farmers husbandry methods that allow them to produce a market weight chicken in 35 days; a process that used to take them 55-60 days to accomplish," said Clayton.

This project provides for hundreds of jobs due to

all the supporting chicken farms, hatcheries, breeders, and feed mill workers it takes to support the processing plant, giving those hundreds of Iraqis a means to peacefully make a living.

The Mahmudiyah Poultry Association is an Iraq-run organization that spearheaded this project, asking the United States for assistance to reestablish the poultry value chain. The chain involves breeder houses, hatcheries, producers, and the processing plants in order to cut out middlemen who raise the cost to produce the end product.

Shaykh Najim Fadel Hussein al-Ameri, president of the association, said that assistance uncludes security and economic development. "Security and economic development are two different sides of the same coin." ▲



Col. Gary Thompson, deputy commander of 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, meets with Juan Alsace, team leader of the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, which is a subsection of the United States Department of Agriculture, during a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Kanz Poultry Processing Plant in the Yusifiyah region of Iraq Jan. 10.



Soldiers show skills at 17th Division Iraqi Armed Forces Parade

Soldiers from Headquarters Company, 17th Division, swing their arms high as they march down the streets of Camp Deason during a parade to celebrate the 89th Anniversary of the Iraqi Army Jan. 8.

Story and photos by Spc. Ruth McClary
30th HBCT PAO, USD-C

MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq – Soldiers of 17th Iraqi Army Division proudly marched down the streets of Camp Deason during an Armed Forces parade in celebration of the Iraqi Army's 89th Anniversary Jan. 8.

Staff Maj. Gen. Ali Jassam Mohammad, the 17th Division commander, spoke at length to several Iraqi and U.S. leaders about the strength, honor and dignity of the new army since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

"New Iraqi Army soldiers have come through the ranks, sacrificing time and effort for a free Iraq," said Mohammad. "You put a smile on people's faces and sad faces to your enemies. Your service is an honor for that reason."

National Iraqi Armed Forces Day was celebrated Jan. 6 in the country's capital of Baghdad; this smaller rendition of that event was planned to be a tribute to 17th Division and its supporters, and a recognition of its growth since the new army was established in 2004.

"It was really nice," said Swan. "Planes flew over as representatives from every unit of their armed forces marched the streets."

The Iraqi Army band played in the background as all elements of the divisions marched down the street, swinging their right arms forward with a hard thrust at every other beat. Members of Commander's Battalion yelled a cadence as they ran down the street in formation without missing a step.

A line of military, police and engineering vehicles followed the procession of soldier formations. The many vehicles hauled mannequin-like soldiers at rigid attention, saluting the crowd as the vehicles slowly passed by.

When the procession ended, a speeding car broke through barriers to be cut off by a Humvee as a role-playing kidnapping victim was rescued. This kicked off the start of demonstrations, to include riot control and clearing a building. Onlookers were captivated as soldiers and policemen displayed techniques they have mastered over the years, proving their readiness to handle various situations that

may arise in their area.

"This Army stands like a strong sword that cuts, working hard to prove itself," said Mohammad. "I would like to thank [President Barack Obama] and all the Americans in support of our army."

"People [of Iraq] can have full confidence in General Ali [Mohammad] and his Soldiers. However, he can't do it alone," said Lusk, of Fuquay-Varina, N.C., when asked by an Iraqi reporter about the stability of today's Iraqi Army. "He needs the help of the people. A whole lot of preparation went into putting the parade together and he does things right." 🇮🇶



Policemen of 17th Division Military Police swing their batons high as they march down the streets of Camp Deason during a parade to celebrate the 89th Anniversary of the Iraqi Army Jan. 8. They also gave a crowd control demonstration later on during the event.

National Guard Soldiers adapt to new unit in new environment

Story and photo by Spc. Ruth McClary
30th HBCT PAO, USD-C

BAGHDAD – “Contact... contact...”

The warning blares from the computer speaker as 1st Lt. Carlos Gonzalez, of Greenville, N.C., and Sgt. 1st Class Mike Street, of Charlotte, N.C., prepare for a shift change brief in the 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron tactical operations center.

The computer alert, which informs Gonzalez and Street of incoming intelligence in the area of operations, constantly interrupts as they discuss the challenges and privileges of being transferred from the North Carolina battalions of 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team to the West Virginia squadron at the start of the 2009-2010 deployment.

When National Guard members deploy, Soldiers fill mission essential roles throughout the brigade and may be transferred into different sections or battalions as

missions require.

“I was told five days before coming into country that I would be transferred to the 150th,” said Street, a fires support noncommissioned officer. “Although it was hard to gauge in the beginning, it ended up being a good thing.”

“It was a smooth transition,” said Gonzalez. “I was pretty nervous at first because this was my first post, but they welcomed me with open arms.”

Gonzalez received orders to deploy with the 30th Brigade Special Troops Battalion five days after he graduated from the military intelligence officer’s course in December 2008. He linked up with the battalion in January to assume the position of executive officer at Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

Three days later Gonzalez was transferred to the squadron as a battle intelligence coordinator. He is the assistant to the intelligence officer, the squadron intelligence surveillance reconnaissance manager and provides assets such as radio-controlled airplanes for squadron missions.

“My main job is to assist [Major Bruce Campbell, the intelligence officer] and request assets to support squadron missions,” said Gonzalez.

Gonzalez may assist the major but he works side-by-side with

Street. Together, they collect and analyze information to reduce potential threats. The two, along with the help of Soldiers in their sections and the tactical operations center, have devised a system to deter crime.

They have developed packets to deter improvised explosive placement and indirect fire on the base; something they didn’t have coming into the area and a valuable asset for the unit replacing them.

“There has been a decrease in [improvised explosive device attacks], indirect fire, rocket and mortar attacks deployed against us compared to the unit before us,” said Street. “IEDs have gone down 60 percent in our area of operations.”

“I attribute this to the guys I work with because we didn’t have a foundation coming in,” he added. The previous unit had worked out of one of the other battalion areas.

The intelligence section, fire support and operations used a multi-faceted approach to reduce threats in their area of operations, said Gonzalez.

Gonzalez and Street have become a part of the 150th team, meshing cohesively and setting a standard for others to follow. They were the only two Soldiers transferred into the squadron from the more than 4,000-man

brigade and they have been asked to remain with the squadron when they return home.

“The two have transitioned in well,” said Capt. Scott Bossie, of Charleston, W. Va. “You would never know they joined up with us here. They fit right in; like family.”

“We have had the most illumination missions in the brigade and more aerial weapons team assets per troop,” said Bossie. “Street coordinates all of this and the work that he and Gonzales have done saved Soldiers lives.”

“It’s been a good experience,” said Street. “I actually got to work in my [trained military occupation,] doing fire support missions, and I may not have been able to do that if I stayed with 252nd Combined Arms Battalion.”

“The 150th is a great unit and I feel like we made a significant impact and contributions to Operation Iraqi Freedom,” said Gonzalez. “I met a lot of good people.”

“I met friends for life.”



1st Lt. Carlos Gonzalez



The 150th is a great unit and I feel like we made a significant impact and contributions to Operation Iraqi Freedom... I met a lot of good people... I met friends for life.

– 1st Lt. Carlos Gonzalez



Sgt. 1st Class Mike Street

U.S. Soldiers teach ISF advanced marksmanship skills at Cashe South

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jeff Hansen
366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – Members of the Iraqi Army and Federal Police got hands-on rifle training from the best in the business at Contingency Operating Station Cashe South during a six-day advanced marksmanship training course.

Soldiers assigned to Troop C, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, assisted the Iraqi Security Forces with marksmanship skills above and beyond what they were taught in basic training.

All of the U.S. instructors are graduates of advanced marksmanship courses, so they were a logical choice to teach advanced marksmanship skills to the ISF, said Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Grant, a section sergeant with Troop C.

Command elements from both U.S. and Iraqi forces said they thought this training would be a great way to train the ISF during the transition.

“We started off with the very basic fundamentals of marksmanship, then moved into the advanced stages,” said Grant, a native of Springfield, Mo.

The Iraqi Soldiers and policemen taking part in the course were assigned long-range rifles, which have a total effective firing distance of 700 meters.

“These guys haven’t had a lot of marksmanship training, they’re just beginning,” said Grant. “But we’ve seen a huge improvement [in their shooting] with each day.”

According to Policeman Jamal Abdul Gunnei, an intelligence specialist assigned to 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Iraqi Federal Police, the federal police officers were excited to work with the U.S. Soldiers.

“This training is excellent,” said Gunnei. “The Americans have been great at training us.”

Gunnei is considered by his U.S. advisors to be the best shooter in the course, and his eagerness to learn and help his comrades caught the attention of his chain of command.

The students received a visit Jan. 12 from members of 3rd Federal Police Brigade and 9th Iraqi Army Division, who commended them on their efforts and thanked the instructors for their hard work and dedication.

“I think it’s great their leaders care enough about what [the Soldiers] are doing to take time out of their day to come all the way out here to check on them,” said Grant.

Handshakes and photos were only part of the visit, however. When the visitors noticed that their Soldiers needed more ammunition, members of the 9th Iraqi Army Division operations office brought out more rounds for them to work with.

The Soldiers of Troop C feel they are making a real difference in the skills the Iraqis are learning. As only the first iteration of U.S. Soldiers teaching ISF advanced marksmanship skills, Grant and his team anticipate continued participation and future successes. ▲



Spc. Jordan Ferrell, an infantryman from Leamington, Utah, calls out sight adjustments for an Iraqi Federal policeman as other members of C Troop, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division help the policeman Jan. 11. Ferrell and his comrades were at Contingency Operating Station Cashe South, teaching Iraqi Security Forces advanced marksmanship skills during a six-day class.



During an advanced marksmanship training course at Contingency Operating Station Cashe South, Sgt. Aleksander Prikhodko observes as an Iraqi Army Soldier zeroes his rifle Jan. 11. Prikhodko, a Sacramento, Calif., native, is assigned to Troop C, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, and is part of a team of U.S. Soldiers tasked with enhancing the firing skills of Iraqi Forces.



Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Grant, a section sergeant assigned to Troop C, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, observes the breathing techniques of an Iraqi Army Soldier as he zeroes a rifle during advanced marksmanship training at Contingency Operating Station Cashe South Jan. 11. The training is designed to enhance the firing capabilities of Iraqi forces who have had limited training opportunities.

U.S. passes training torch at Cashe South

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Jeff Hansen
366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – Soldiers at Contingency Operating Station Cashe South have moved a step ahead of most with their training and transition programs.

Task Force Nassir, a four-phase training course designed to enhance the combat and leadership skills of Iraqi Federal Police, has now converted to being taught completely by Iraqi instructors.

According to 1st Lt. Ilyas Renwick, a platoon leader with 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, transitioning to “Iraqis teaching Iraqis” was always meant to be the end state of TF Nassir, which was originally taught by U.S. Soldiers. He said he is impressed at how smooth the process has been for them.

“The instructors have been great,” Renwick said. “We’re always here to provide the extra resources and helping hands, but they’re doing a great job teaching their [policemen].”

The concept of training for TF Nassir starts with basic assessments and training in a classroom environment, with the later stages moving into real-world scenarios. Basic rifle marksmanship, machine gun familiarization, individual patrol movements and evidence handling techniques are all parts of the second phase of training and are taught by



During a class on machine gun maintenance, instructors demonstrate buddy-assisted disassembly techniques. The machine gun class was added to the training program after leaders noticed the Iraqi Security Forces had limited training and experience on large weapon systems.

members of 3rd Brigade, 1st Iraqi Federal Police. U.S. Soldiers are present for all classes to provide assistance.

Renwick, a native of Fayetteville, N.C., said he has been impressed with the enthusiasm and cooperation of the shurta, Iraqi Federal Policemen, during the program, which has went through several changes over the past year due to changes in the FP operational environment. Some tasks have been added or modified at the request of the instructors, who brought real-world experience to the course.

For example, traffic control points are a permanent structure in Baghdad, whereas U.S. Soldiers are used to controlling a temporary TCP. The

class needed to be altered to fit the local situation.

“We’re doing our best to train the shurta. They’re being trained on things they really need,” said 1st Lt. Haydar Abd Almajeed, the officer in charge of TF Nassir. Haydar is assigned to 3rd Brigade, 1st Iraqi Federal Police.

Haydar said he is excited to see the shurta implementing the skills they were taught in basic training and looks forward to seeing them using the new skills learned during TF Nassir.

Leadership on both sides realized the FP had very limited training and experience on large weapon systems and decided a preventive maintenance instruction class should be

added to the program. With U.S. assistance, a PMI class was implemented and is taught by Iraqi subject-matter experts.

A similar situation was responsible for the intermediate casualty care training. Due to logistical constraints, training aids had been in very short supply for a 60-man class. Most policemen had received no first aid training prior to TF Nassir.

Spc. Ryan Jorgensen, a medic assigned to TF Nassir, has been assisting Iraqi medics with this part of the course. Jorgensen said he understands medical training can be a lot to absorb, so he has been limiting his class to one or two tasks each day.

The medical instructor for TF Nassir, Sgt. Adel Sadweg, said the FP were amazed at first at how much training would be available for this course. He stated that too many ISF casualties occur simply from the lack of tactical field care knowledge.

“We have absorbed a lot of experience from the Americans, and I like them helping us with more advanced [medical] techniques,” said Sadweg, who has been a medic with the Ministry of the Interior for more than six years.

Renwick said he and his fellow TF Nassir members are excited to be working with the FP students and instructors in the future. They hope to stay on the path they have laid so far and continue to build camaraderie and friendship with their Iraqi counterparts and together strive to build a safer Iraq. 🇮🇶

Zafaraniya Essential Services Conference

Story by Sgt. Jennie Burrett
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div., USD-C

BAGHDAD – The National Chemical Plastic Industry water treatment facility held an essential services conference with the civic leaders of the surrounding areas, a member of the Baghdad Provincial Council, a Karada District Council member and a representative of the Baghdad Water Authority in Zafaraniya Jan. 18 to acknowledge their successful cooperation.

The purpose of the conference was to show the progress of the renovation and inform the local leaders

of the benefits that the facility, which was initially funded by U.S. Forces, will bring to the surrounding area through increased drinking water and support to local businesses.

“This project; by hiring workers, maintaining and rehabilitating this water facility; takes water from Tigris River, south of Zafaranyia and supplies it to the Rabee area, in Mahala 961,” said Mohammed Al-Rubeiy, the Chairman of Planning Commission strategy in the Baghdad Provincial Council. “There are future plans and future projects for combined work between our council and the coalition forces. Today, we are here to oversee the progress in

this project”

When the facility is working at full capacity, it will carry 500 cubic meters of water per hour. It will provide 300 cubic meters of water service to 16 businesses within the Zafaranyia industrial area and 200 cubic meters to the locals in the surrounding communities. The plan is to increase the availability to more businesses and local people in the future

“We [the water treatment facility contractor and U.S. forces] have been working together for the last few months to repair and refurbish the entire water treatment plant in order to produce water capacity for southwest Zafaranyia,” said Capt.

Joseph Ortiz, of Sacketts Harbor, N. Y., the fire support officer for 2nd Battalion, 15 Field Artillery. “[This project is] allowing Iraqi leadership to deal with public works for new developments and future plans and to continue operations with one another.”

The water treatment plant, when complete, is expected to have two major impacts; on the citizens of southwest Zafaranyia, and on the industry complex in the surrounding area, which includes 16 major companies.

The project is 78 percent complete and is scheduled to be finished in the next 30 days. 🇮🇶

Iraqi forces conduct physical fitness test with 10th Mountain

*Photos by Staff Sgt. Jeff Hansen,
366th MPAD, USD-C*



BAGHDAD - Staff Sgt. David Gable, a platoon sergeant assigned to 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, observes an Iraqi Federal policeman during the sit-up portion of the Iraqi Physical Fitness Test Jan. 12. Gable said he was impressed by the enthusiasm and performance of the Iraqi forces as they performed the first of two tests during a two-week training course meant to enhance their individual skills and unit readiness.



In preparation for their first Iraqi Physical Fitness Test, Pfc. Justin James demonstrates to Iraqi Army soldiers and federal policemen the proper form for the pushup Jan. 12. James and other members of 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, make up Task Force Nassir, a program aimed at assisting Iraqi forces in training their own members during the U.S. and Iraqi transition.



Staff Sgt. Johnny Ferree, a platoon sergeant assigned to 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, gives an Iraqi Army Soldier his time on the one-mile run Jan. 12. The run, along with push-ups and sit-ups, was part of the newly implemented Iraqi Physical Fitness Test meant to test the physical strength and endurance of the Iraqi forces.



First Lt. Hyder Abd Al-Almajeed, a platoon leader assigned to 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Federal Police Division (brown track suit) watches his students start the one-mile run during their Iraqi Physical Fitness Test Jan. 12. Hyder is the Iraqi officer in charge of Task Force Nassir, where he supervises Iraqi instructors and aids them in troop leading procedures as they enhance their Federal Police and Soldiers' skills for battle.

Best friends reunite in Iraq

Story by Pvt. 1st Class Nicklaus Bendure
HHC 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – After 12 years apart, two old friends thousands of miles away from where they last spoke had the opportunity to reconnect at Camp Liberty for a short time Jan. 11.

The two Soldiers, Staff Sergeant Joshua Singer, of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 16th Engineer Brigade, and Chief Warrant Officer Adam Wagner, of Company A, 1/52nd General Support Aviation Battalion, attended the same high school in Bucyrus, Ohio, where they met on the cross country team.

Even though they were a year apart in school, they became fast friends and eventually best friends.

After graduation in 1992, however, their ability to keep in touch grew increasingly difficult. Each time that both Soldiers tried to reconnect with each other, challenges always pre-



Photo by Spc. Brian Johnson, 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

Reuniting after 12 years apart, Chief Warrant Officer Adam Wagner (Left), a member of A Company 1/52nd General Support Aviation Battalion, and Staff Sgt. Joshua Singer, a member of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 16th Engineer Brigade, take a moment for a photo together at Camp Liberty Jan. 11. Both Soldiers, from Bucyrus, Ohio, were high school friends who were able to reunite for a short time after not seeing each other for years.

sented themselves and they eventually fell out of touch.

Earlier this year, Singer, who is a member of the social networking site, noticed a friend request

from Wagner.

“I was excited,” said Wagner. “I had been looking for him for years and he just found me through a mutual friend.”

Within minutes of accepting the friend request, the two were chatting online and catching up.

To his surprise, Singer discovered that his old friend had become a Blackhawk pilot in the Army.

“I always pictured him in a cubicle,” said Singer.

Wagner, equally surprised, doubted his friend would still be in the Army after all this time.

As both Soldiers were catching up, they quickly realized that they were both in Iraq; not that far from each other.

Wagner was able to work out with his chain of command the chance to travel from his duty station in northern Iraq to Baghdad, where Singer is stationed, to be able to see his old friend again.

Things fell quickly back into place as they filled each other in on how their lives have changed. And both said they plan to stay in touch in the future, despite the distance that may come between them. ▲

Dusky departure



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, USD-C

TAJI, Iraq - A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division-Center, swiftly departs the flight line during dusk Jan. 11. The 1st ACB conducts aviation operations 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in support of U.S. and Iraqi Forces.

Remember! Celebrate! Act!

USD-C remembers Dr. Martin Luther King



Photo by Sgt. Alun Thomas, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs, USD-C

TAJI, Iraq - Sgt. Maj. Gary Durant, from Pittsburgh, command sergeant major for 115th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division - Center, recites a portion of Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech as part of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigades' Martin Luther King Jr. Observance at the Taji Ministry Center Jan.18.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott, 366 MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD - Soldiers of the 16th Engineer Brigade, U.S. Division—Center, exuberantly race across the finish line carrying the brigade colors during the Martin Luther King Jr., 10k Holiday Run conducted on the anniversary of King's birthday at Camp Liberty Jan. 15.



Photo by Spc. Brian Johnson, 1434th Eng. Co., USD-C

BAGHDAD - Members of the Combined Liberty Gospel Choir and Victory Gospel Experience Choir perform a musical selection during the Dr. Martin Luther King Birthday Observance at Camp Liberty's Division Chapel Jan. 18.

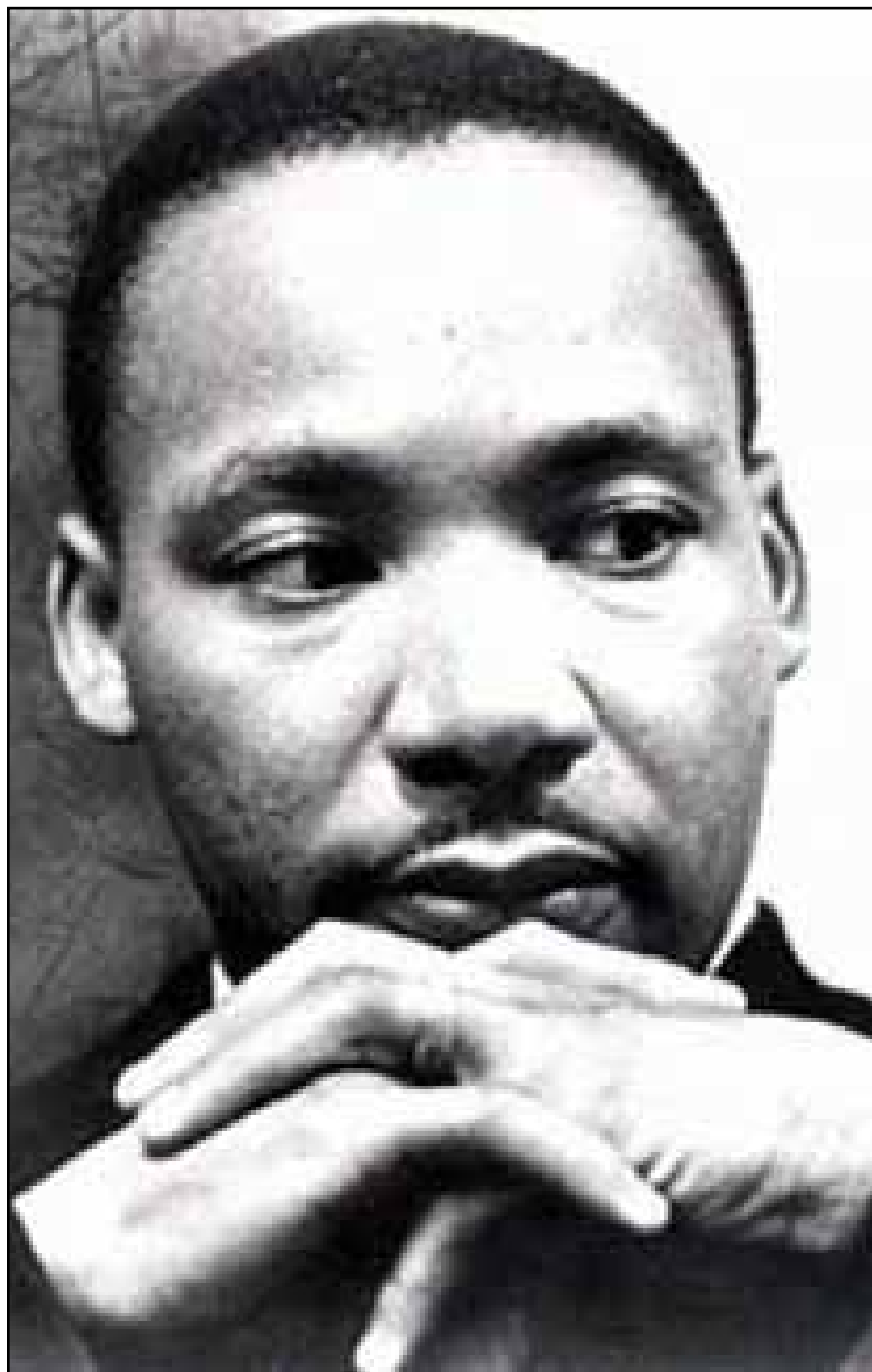


Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott, 366 MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD - Service members from all branches of the military and civilians run side-by-side during the Martin Luther King Jr., 10k Holiday Run conducted on the anniversary of King's birthday at Camp Liberty Jan. 15.

CROSSWORD

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- 49. Aromatic herb
- 50. Fitting
- 51. Champion
- 52. Droop
- 55. Tablet
- 58. Aspersions
- 60. Languish
- 62. Residence
- 64. In the middle
- 66. Halo
- 67. Defamation
- 68. Shade of blue
- 69. Pack tightly
- 70. Medieval land worker
- 71. Hinge joint
- 72. Conifer

Down

- 1. Type of duck
- 2. Mineral used as an abrasive
- 3. Not as great
- 4. Simian
- 5. Pandemonium
- 6. Avid
- 7. Woody plant
- 8. Consumed
- 9. Tossed
- 10. Unwritten exam
- 11. Flowerless plant
- 12. Glove
- 15. Insect
- 20. Yield
- 22. Tibia
- 26. Crested bird
- 28. Flightless bird
- 29. Charge
- 30. Animal doctor, in short
- 31. Fit
- 32. Saucer
- 33. Woodwind instrument
- 34. Male hog
- 35. Merely
- 36. Variety
- 37. Coalesce
- 40. Saloon
- 41. Be unwell
- 43. Jump
- 44. Annual grass seeds
- 45. Melody
- 46. Gambit
- 49. Infer
- 50. Tree with conelike fruit
- 51. Person
- 52. Fry quickly in fat
- 53. Pointer
- 54. Chew
- 55. Buddy
- 56. Wading bird
- 57. Part of the ear
- 59. Long and thin
- 61. Facile
- 63. Mischievous fairy
- 65. Staining substance

Across

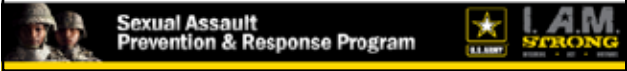
- 1. Snakelike fish
- 4. Assist in crime
- 8. Particle
- 12. Imitate
- 13. Fruit
- 14. Pulsate
- 16. Bad time for Julius
- 17. Border
- 18. Wipe out
- 19. Laconic
- 21. Sediment
- 23. Additional to or different from
- 24. Attempt
- 25. Slightly open
- 27. Cut down
- 29. Form of transport
- 30. Vitality
- 31. Fuss
- 34. Study of plants
- 37. Bill of fare
- 38. Napkin
- 39. Quartz used in cameos
- 40. Used to control a horse
- 41. As well
- 42. High mountain
- 43. Fraud
- 45. Each
- 47. Cereal grass seeds
- 48. Paddle

Intervene! Act! Motivate!



The USF-I and USD-C Sexual Assault Teams are sponsoring the 2010 Sexual Assault Prevention Response Walk, 12 Feb.

The SAPR Walk will start at 5 p.m. at the Victory Stage. All walkers carry flashlights and wear reflective belts. This walk allows everyone to join in the I. AM. Strong Campaign to help support the fight against Sexual Assault. Please feel free to bring a Battle Buddy. Remember, sexual assault has no place in the military – it’s up to everyone to prevent assaults by watching out for fellow Service Members and Civilians. Join in standing up and saying “No more!”



**World War II****FEB 14****This week in American military history****Kasserine Pass**

Elements of the 1st Armored Division had their first taste of combat during World War II when they were sent to North Africa to participate in Operation Torch, the Allied powers initial push into the country. The 1st Armd. Div. bore the brunt of much of the fighting that occurred, including battles that took place at Kasserine Pass, near the village of Sidi Bou Zid, these battles later became known as the Kasserine Campaign.

Feb. 14 marked the first time in the war that an American division engaged Germans in combat, as well as the first fight to occur in the desert. Ironically the 1st Armd. Div. was the only one of the 16 armored divisions at the time to not have gone through desert warfare training.

The division courageously defended the pass, sustaining heavy casualties and equipment loss. Their efforts delayed the enemy, but by the end of the day the Germans had taken Sidi Bou Zid.

With supply routes in enemy hands the 1st Armd. Div. was lacking vital equipment and was outnumbered by the Germans. The division and its counterparts rallied and later regained the pass and surrounding areas. By Feb. 25 the area was back in allied hands.

The 1st Armd. Div. remained at the front until the final surrender of the Axis powers.

