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Ready In Need Gazette

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# TF Twister takes command of VBC

By Staff Sgt. Karl Johnson

The American poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, "Where we love is home – home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts."

That sentiment was alive and well when the 326th Area Support Group and Task Force Jayhawk gathered here Saturday for a transfer of authority ceremony to turn over the Victory Base Complex Garrison Command.

They had successfully served as the stewards of VBC for nearly a year and they knew it was time to go home.

Hundreds of Soldiers attended the ceremony to see off the 326th ASG and to welcome TF Twister and the 561st Regional Support Group.

"Task Force Jayhawk has set a high standard on VBC," said Col. Arlan DeBlieck, commander of TF Twister. "We will strive to pick up where they left off and endeavor to move the bar even



Photo by Staff Sgt. Karl Johnson

Col. Arlan DeBlieck and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Ploeger uncasing the Task Force Twister colors Saturday during a transfer of authority ceremony.

higher."

Nearly a year ago, TF Jayhawk set out to leave VBC better than they found it. They oversaw the opening of several Iraqi businesses on VBC, oversaw the opening of a new water treatment facility, and ensured that more than 65,000 personnel living here received the support they needed to complete their missions.

Brig. Gen. Peter Bayer,

Chief of Staff for Multi-National Corps - Iraq, made note of the grand opening of the new waste water treatment facility.

"As a sign of my confidence in the job that Task Force Jayhawk has done, I will be the first to drink from the new water treatment facility," said Bayer.

He then lifted the first bottle of purified water from

the new facility and drank to the applause of the audience.

The task of running the largest coalition complex in Iraq now falls to TF Twister and the 561st RSG. And it does so during a time of great transition. A time when Iraqi Security Forces are taking on a larger role in the security of their nation and eventually on some of the same battle space run by TF Twister.

"During the next year the measure of our success will be in how well we adapt and remain flexible to an ever-changing Victory Base Complex," said DeBlieck. "We will be challenged in ways unseen by our predecessors and must bring to bear the sum of our experience and abilities to overcome those challenges."

Col. DeBlieck knows the challenges will come. What is unknown is how TF Twister will meet those challenges and whether they, like TF Jayhawk, will leave VBC better than they found it.

## Spotlight On: Spc. Andrea Conn

The challenges of deployment and the affect it has on a Soldier's family is something all of us are very familiar with. Spc. Andrea Conn, a single mother of five children, says she sees the effect five times over.

Conn's children range from 12 years old to one, and she says each one is unique and understands her deployment in a different way. Her oldest is Christina, a straight-A

honor student and an aspiring model. Christina was recently awarded the President's Award for academics for having the highest test scores in her school.

"She is very understanding of this deployment," explained Conn. "She is proud of me like I'm proud of her."

Next in line is Rachel. Conn says she is the considerate one,



telling mommy, "I know you are very busy being a Soldier."

"I miss home," she says in between descriptions of her children. "I just keep telling myself that there is a big payoff at the end of all this."

That payoff for her is reuniting with her family and knowing that she served her country.

The oldest boy in the family is Jacob. Conn says he's the clown, always busy making everyone laugh and getting into mischief. She has to explain to him that mommy is not a Soldier like in the movies. He worries that she is out doing her best Rambo impression. She explains that she helps take care of other Soldiers like she takes care

- See Conn Pg. 2

## The Ministry Message

### Make time for 'You'

By Sgt. Michael Heuertz

Looking back on the past four months it's hard to believe that we're finally here in Baghdad with our mission underway. All of our work in Nebraska, Wisconsin and Kuwait has brought us to this place that we can now call "home."

I know some Soldiers were wondering if we would ever leave Kuwait, but we did and we are better for that experience. We learned two, very important things. We learned that patience can go a long way, and we all have more of it than we probably thought. And two, we learned that the game drill sergeants play when they make you pick up your bags and put them down isn't really a game after all. It's training for the few times in your career that the Air Force will have control over your life.

With that said, there is still one pivotal mission left to be tasked now



Sgt. Michael Heuertz, Task Force Twister Chaplain's Assistant, prepares for a prayer prior to the departure of Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

that we are making VBC our home. That mission is all about taking care of YOU.

Now that training schedules and the question of whether or not we need to have our pro-mask in full battle rattle is behind us, it is critical to devote time to ourselves both physically and spiritually.

Physical training can help regulate sleep patterns while promoting psychological well being. Make PT a priority and stick to it. There are many classes available in the gyms that are challenging and fun. I've found a step aerobics class that is a rewarding

challenge three times a week.

Spiritually, there are many worship services, studies and classes offered around VBC. The Corps web site has schedules posted for many of those activities through either your local MWR or Chapel.

Even taking time to watch a movie, take a nap, go fishing or talking to family and friends back home can help you spiritually. Make it a priority to keep in touch with loved ones. We can't do this mission to the best of our abilities without their support.

Deployment is also a great time to combat bad habits and create a better lifestyle.

Make it your mission to take care of yourself. Work can be long and stressful but it is important to remember that you can't give what you don't have. We have a mission to take care of others, but make it a priority to take care of you. May God be with us in our mission here and with our loved ones back home.

#### Conn:

of him. And doing his best, he tries to take care of her as well.

"You need a lot of water in the desert mommy," explains Jacob. "And if you see any volcanoes, stay away."

Conn's youngest daughter Josephine, better known as JJ, is four years old. Conn hopes that she doesn't remember mommy being away on deployment, but she does her best to explain it to her anyway.

"I won't be home this Christmas, but I will be home next Christmas," Conn tells her little girl.

And last but certainly not least is

Coty, her one year old little boy, born Feb. 29, 2008. That's right, he's a leap year baby. Conn smiles when she thinks about him and explains, "I don't have to miss his birthday. I can celebrate it whenever I want."

She e-mails her children often and calls them whenever she can.

"I just let them hear the sound of my voice," said Conn.

She explained that she just wants her kids to continue to have a relationship with her while she's gone and looks forward to the time when they are reunited. It's safe to say that the entire task force looks forward to that as well.



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The Ready In Need Gazette welcomes commentary from our readers and is always looking for ways to better serve Task Force Twister. If you have questions, comments or story ideas, send them to the editorial staff at karl.johnsonii@us.army.mil. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit for security, accuracy, propriety, policy, clarity and space.

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# DEBLIECK'S PICKS

GAMES 10/10	PICKS
Nebraska vs. Missouri	Missouri
Florida vs. LSU	Florida
Wisconsin vs. Ohio St	Ohio St
Alabama vs. Mississippi	Alabama

DeBlieck's Picks YTD: 11-9. The commander guarantees victory with this week's picks.





## How We Got Here;

A look back on our journey to Iraq

Top Left: We were so innocent then, some were even eager to finally be loading our bags. We had no idea what was in store for us. Top Right: No Spc. Marshall, you're not going to Disney Land. Middle Right: Sgt. Major Bell seemed completely comfortable playing dress-up and explaining the use of inflatables to the flight. Bottom Right: One of the few things that was worth looking at during our time in Kuwait. Bottom Left: Third trip to the flight line was a charm. And say what you want about how much of a pain it was, but getting kicked off an airplane after 70-plus people used the bathroom was funny.

