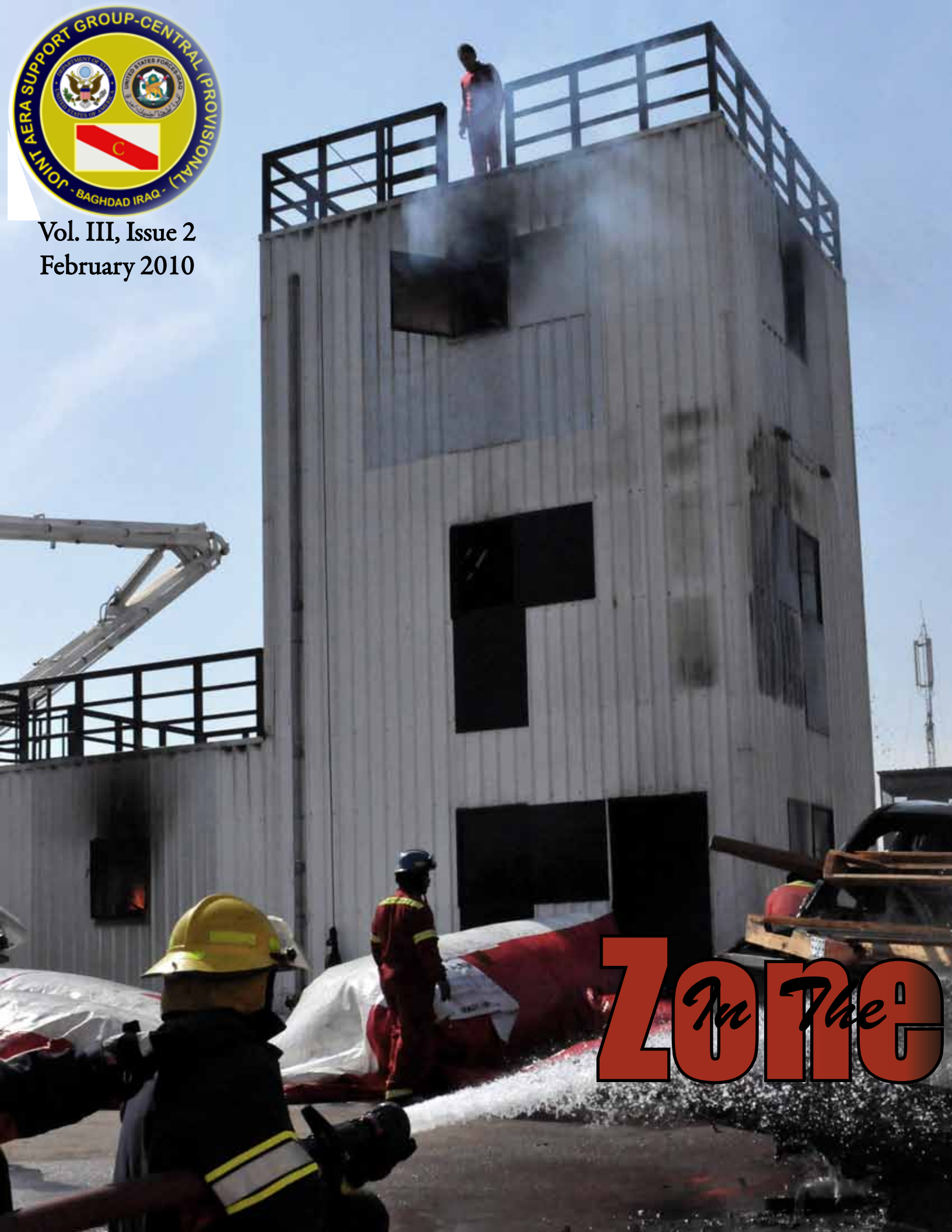




Vol. III, Issue 2
February 2010



Zone
In The

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**Overhead view of
the Al Salam
Secondary School
for Boys in the
International Zone.**

*Photo by Texas Army
National Guard Sgt.
Melissa Shaw*

On the Cover:

Fire Response Demonstration event February 17th by the Iraqi Civil Defense Department. *Photo by Sgt. Melissa Shaw*

in the ZONE



***Produced by the Joint Area
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From the Top

JASG-C Commander

Another month begins. Another ends. During February, we spent a lot of our time on matters that supported the responsible drawdown of U.S. forces in the IZ. Doing this meant turning over properties and responsibilities to Iraq and preparing for more of the same.

On each of the six entry controls points that lead into the IZ, U.S. forces are stepping away more and more every day. Currently, Iraqis are leading the security efforts with support from the U.S. on request.

Stay alert in the coming weeks. The IZ, being the heart of the Iraqi government, will play a big role in upcoming national elections on March 7th as the Iraqi government services and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) headquarters buildings are located here.

And, in Baghdad, there still resides small extremist groups willing

to do anything to undermine Iraq's progress and the people's confidence. So, be vigilant.

Successful execution of credible, legitimate and safe Election Day activities and the validation of ballots are things we take for granted in the United States. But, they're both critical to the continued progress of Iraq.

February saw lots of IZ changes. On FOB Prosperity, efforts to improve force protection and quality of life status continued. The addition of taller T-walls, "duck and cover" bunkers and lighting systems significantly enhanced our static protection capabilities locally.

Because morale matters, our local FOB Prosperity dining facility staff has been very responsive to soldier requests too. New menu items have been added to the main and "grab and go" lines.



Col. Mark Campsey
Commander
Joint Area Support Group—Central

Look around. In the Prosperity Gym, there are now more flat screens for our runners and weight lifters. Enjoy them. It's all for you.

Keep your focus. What happens during the March 7th's elections, on the days shortly after and as the new government is seated will directly impact your life.

We're in the middle of history in the making. Don't forget that.



A Rhino waiting for passengers at sunset in Baghdad, Iraq. *Photo by Texas Army National Guard 1Lt. Darryl Frost.*

JASG-C Command Sergeant Major

The month of February has seen so much happen for the soldiers and for the neighborhood inhabitants here in the International Zone, as well as all of Iraq.

The nation of Iraq moved closer to fair and open elections as candidates were continually added to the roster, while here in our AO we continued to hand properties back over to the Government of Iraq.

Here, in our own back yard, we continue to grow our units through additional augmentees at the same time members of our team begin their mid-tour R&R.

It is this constant state of flux that should remind us all to stay on our toes, ever vigilant against complacency; never taking for granted what we have right now will be here tomorrow.

Complacency is a danger, not just when we are soldiers, but also in our

professional and personal lives.

Each of us should take the time to build and maintain enduring relationships capable of sustaining you throughout your lifetime. This is especially important for those recent arrivals to theater that are here to help ensure our mission will succeed.

In addition, never underestimate the joy it brings to your family to open a letter from you. Take the time to write out detailed emails; send photographs home to give them a window into your current life; make it a point to listen and ask questions when you talk on the phone.

Staying attentive professionally will allow you maintain your motivation and advance your career in ways you never thought possible. Continue to seek opportunities to increase your knowledge and provide mentorship to others through the NCDP and ODP being offered monthly.



Command Sgt. Maj. Alfred Cordova
Command Sergeant Major
Joint Area Support Group—Central

I will continue to challenge each of you to return home a better individual; spiritually, physically and mentally.

Whether it's getting your team involved in a soccer tournament, learning Arabic or participating in one of the many religious discussions that take place weekly, use your time here for growth.



Al Asad Palace at night Photo by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw

Know where to go *Life on the FOBs*

Common Access Cards

The IZ Common Access Card (CAC) office is in Room 110 on the first floor of the Palace (Bldg. 100) at FOB Prosperity, Monday through Saturday from 0800 to 1700. For questions, call DSN 312-239-1765 or e-mail: jasg-chrm@iraq.centcom.mil

TMC

Those eligible for care at Troop Medical Clinics include active-duty U.S. and Coalition Forces, retired U.S. military and Department of Defense federal government employees.

Routine immunizations and Post Deployment Health Assessments are available for individuals during sick-call hours. For groups of 10 or more and immunizations call the TMC to schedule an appointment.

Ortiz Consolidated Medical Clinic is located in Bldg. 87, behind the fuel point. Sick-call hours for walk-ins are Monday through Friday from 0800 to 1000 and 1300 to 1500. Medical staff is present 24/7 in case of emergency. The clinic is closed on Saturdays and Sundays. Services now available include primary care, dental, combat stress control, laboratory, radiology and pharmacy.

The Union III TMC relocated to the west side of Bldg. 5. Sick-call hours for walk-ins are Monday through Friday from 0800 to 1045 and 1300 to 1500, 0800 to 1045 Saturdays.

Audiology services are now located at Phipps TMC in Balad; optometry and dermatology are located at Camp Liberty's Witmer TMC.

Dining facility

The Prosperity dining facility across from the Palace (Bldg. 100) offers four

meals a day with Grab-n-go options between meal hours. Meal hours are:

Breakfast: 0600 to 0830
Grab-n-go: 0830 to 1100
Lunch: 1130 to 1330
Grab-n-go: 1330 to 1700
Dinner: 1730 to 2000
Grab-n-go: 2000 to 2230
Midnight Meal: 2230 to 0100
Grab-n-go: 0100 to 0530

The Union III DFAC across from the Bldg. 1 parking lot offers four meals a day. Meal hours are:

Breakfast: 0530 to 0800
Lunch: 1130 to 1330
Dinner: 1730 to 2000
Midnight meal: 2330 to 0100

Gym/MWR

The Prosperity gym is located on the first floor of the Palace and is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The MWR center, in rooms 122, 125 and 127, are also open 24/7 and offer a large-screen television, DVDs, books, boardgames, and other fun activities.

The Union III gym is located in Bldg. 5 and is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The MWR center, next to the gym, is also open 24/7 and offers a large-screen television, DVDs, books, boardgames, Xbox, and other fun activities.

Post office

Free mail, limited to 13 ounces, still exists for the letter home. If you are mailing pictures, a small souvenir in an envelope or packages, then you must go to the post office. Packages will be inspected and limited to three items per visit. A military ID card is required for the transaction. Civilians need two forms of identification to conduct postal transactions.

Items forbidden to be shipped include weapons items, drugs, alcohol, and perishable material. For a com-

plete list of items, consult CENTCOM AR 25-200 or HRSC Policy 07-26.

FOB Prosperity: Located at the west entrance of the Palace. The hours are **0900 to 1700 Monday through Friday.**

FOB Union III: A mailbox is located in front of Bldg. 6. The post office is located in Bldg. 5. The hours are 0800 to 1730 daily.

Laundry

Since dirty laundry is serious business, the FOBs have a seven-day-a-week laundry service that at a maximum takes three days to complete. Individuals using the service can only have 20 pieces of laundry in each bag. Blankets and comforters must be separated from clothing or uniform items.

FOB Prosperity: 0700 to 2000 daily
FOB Union III: 0700 to 1900 daily



Finance

Finance operations include check cashing, Eagle Cash Card transactions, military pay issues, collection and review of travel vouchers and other military pay-related documents, and more.

Eagle Cash Card (ECC) applications are available. The service member must provide a current bank statement or LES to verify bank routing and account numbers. As a reminder, you can load up to \$350 per day to your card. You can get cash back up to \$200 per month. Checks can also be cashed for up to \$200 per month.

Prosperity finance operations are in Room 108 on the first floor of the Palace. Hours are from 0900 to 1600 Saturday through Thursday.

Union III finance operations are in Bldg. 6, A-Wing, room 2A from 0900 to 1600 Saturday through Thursday.

Concrete and Chai:

A Recipe for Success in Iraq



Entry Control Point on Al Shawaf Road in Baghdad, Iraq.

Story and Photos by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw JASG-C PAO

On Feb. 6th Army Lt. Col. Gregory McVay, Joint Area Support Group security director, and Air Force Anti-terrorism Officer Maj. Frank Vassar met with Lt. Col. Abadi Mashkoor Al-dhalimy of the 1st Battalion, 56th Brigade Iraqi Security Forces, for their regular assessment of the IZ security environment.

The meeting serves as a way to introduce security issues on both the Iraqi and American forces side. These issues can include

the movement of troops through Baghdad or adding safety measures to current checkpoint policies.

The atmosphere is relaxed and allows for deliberation on potential solutions. Additionally, this allows for opportunity to develop better communication and for trust to grow.

Both are necessary to ensuring the long-term success of the JASG mission of supporting

the Iraqi Government as they work toward a safer, more secure environment.

The relationships are developed



Maj. Frank Vassar (front) and Lt. Col. Gregory McVay (back) stand with Lt. Col. Abadi Mashkoor Ald-halimy (middle) and Sam Freeman, cultural advisor for the JASG (left) outside the 1st Bn, 56th Bde Hdqts, in Baghdad.



(right) Capt. Richard Flores, Directorate of Information Management, JASG, looks out over one of the entry control point in Baghdad, Iraq.

slowly, over many cups of chai, small, simple dinners and the sharing of family photos viewed mostly on cell phone screens.

But, both sides agree, the security issue solutions need to come quickly and be flexible and have the ability to expand to meet the needs of the men and women living in the IZ, especially as the March election date draws near and the potential for violence grows.

Through keeping the lines of communication open between the many government agencies, the U.S. is able to support the continued progress on the safety and security of the nation's inhabitants.

The IZ, a 3.8-square-mile area in central Baghdad, Iraq, is comprised of the Presidential Palace, the new U.S. Embassy Annex, several U.S. military forward operating bases, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and Military History Museum, the Al-Rasheed Hotel, the Convention Center and a large park including the much photographed crossed sabers and parade route.

All unsecured areas outside the IZ are referred to as the red zone. The IZ is completely surrounded by twelve-foot high concrete blast walls and barbed wire with access available through only a handful of entry control points (ECP), which are controlled by Iraqi Army troops.



Entry Control Point on Al Shawaf Road in Baghdad Iraq.

*All photos by Texas Army National Guard
Sgt. Melissa Shaw*



For the Iraqi and American security forces charged with keeping the region secure, maintaining safe ECPs between the red zone and the IZ is the highest priority.

The emphasis on safety and security can be seen clearly as McVay and Vassar stopped by what is known as ECP 13 to watch the 336th Military Police Battalion provide protection for the JASG Department of Public Works (DPW) soldiers and heavy equipment crews moving concrete barriers along Al Shawaf Road.

As the cold rain fell from low hanging clouds, the rumbling of heavy equipment competed with the regular sounds of afternoon traffic as crews created a buffer zone to prevent vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices from parking next to the twelve-foot tall concrete T-walls that separate the road from the pedestrian check-point.

This is just one of the many steps taken along the road to ensure the continuation of significant, positive trends in the area's security.



National Elections: Securing a new Future for all of Iraq

Iraq will soon hold national elections — a step critical to strengthening its democracy. These elections said, Commander of U.S. Forces in Iraq General Ray Odierno, “are important to everyone in the region, they are important to the people of Iraq, and they’re important to people outside the region because of the impact it could have on stability not only in Iraq but in the Middle East as a whole.”

Countries surrounding Iraq should not be allowed to influence the elections one way or the other, said General Odierno.

“There have been different agendas, some coming from Sunni Arab countries, some coming from Persian Shi’a Arab countries who are trying to drive the elections a certain way. What we want is it to come back together and be about Iraq,” said General Odierno.

In the meantime, the groundwork is being laid for successful elections on March 7th. There are more than 6,000 Iraqi candidates and 18.9 million registered voters. Three-hundred thousand poll station workers are ready to administer the election.

There are some 50,000 polling stations spread out over 9,000 polling centers. There will also be out-of-country voters in 16 countries, and the U.S. is expecting considerable turnout there. International monitoring teams will fan out across Iraq in addition to U.S. teams.

Ambassador Hill said, “The United States very much desires a strong and long-term relationship with a democratic Iraq, and I think these elections will be a very important element of that relationship as we go forward.”



(left) Maj. David Burger, 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, JASG security directorate, meets with (right) General Ihsan M. Al Fatlawi, Security and Public Safety Office manager for the General Secretary of the Council of Ministers in Baghdad, Iraq, Feb. 3, 2010, to discuss preparations for Iraq's March ■ elections.

Photos by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw

Making history for the future

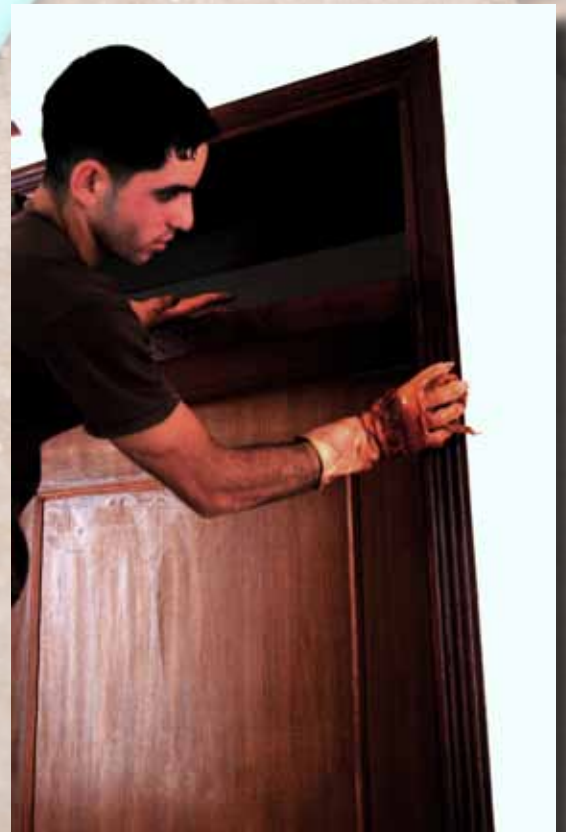
Al Salam School closer to completion



Iraqi workers put the finishing touches on the Al Salam Secondary School for Boys February 2010 as the April deadline for turning over the buildings looms ever closer. U.S. service members have been overseeing the construction done by Iraqi workers since construction began last year. All photos on this page by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw



Capt. Mark Grahmann, 72nd JASG DPW Contract Officer Representative from Camp Prosperity inspects progress made on the Al Salam Secondary School for Boys February 22nd. Construction began after a ground-breaking ceremony held April 2009.



Operation "Outback"

*By Master Sgt. Michael Sweeney
571st Military Police BN*

On July 4, 1918, the first partnership between Australian and American soldiers was formed during the Battle of Hamel, in Northern France. Some 90 years later, the partnership still exists between the two great nations and their Soldiers in Baghdad, Iraq.

Soldiers from the 571st Military Police Company out of Fort Lewis, Washington and Australia's Security Detachment XVI, stationed at the Australian Embassy in Baghdad, combined forces to conduct "Operation Outback," a joint training inside the International Zone.

The 571st MPs serve as the Quick Reactionary Force for the International Zone and the SECDET XVI do the same as the response force for their embassy.

On February 17th, the two forces conducted tough, realistic training that combined battle drills and the warrior ethos.

The training scenario involved an Improvised Explosive Device attack on an Australian convoy. The Australians conducted immediate medical care and attended to the wounded while securing the area and sweeping for secondary devices. They then conducted a self evacuation by alerting their own response force, while requesting the assistance of

the American forces to recover the vehicle and assist in the security operations until the full evacuation of the area could be completed.

"Operation Outback" was a great way to test our communications interoperability and response capabilities with our allies. The QRF conducted link up procedures and established security (Cordon) of the area and commenced recovery operations of the downed vehicle. It was a great way to maintain our response time proficiency and foster our already great relationship with the Australian forces inside the IZ," said Capt. Dan Naab, the 571st commander.

"This training was a great resource

for our detachment and greatly enhanced our current mission by helping us better understand the way U.S. forces work on the battlefield. The lessons learned from the exercise alone was worth the efforts but the continued camaraderie and new friendship formed made the event even more memorable," said Australian Capt. Rod Lang, liaison officer for SECDET XVI.

Although "Operation Outback" may not hold the same significance as the Battle of Hamel, where Lt. Gen. John Monash led the Australian and American forces to victory over the Germans, it does help to enhance the relationship between the two forces that was forged on the battlefield 92 years ago.

**Interaction
between the
Australians and
the 571st MPs
during an exercise
in Baghdad.**

*Photos courtesy of the
571st MPs*



Smart Steps to Reduce Stress

1. Know what stresses you.

Everybody is different. Something that bothers your friend may be fun for you. Today's stresses might be easy to deal with later. Learning what stresses you is the first step to dealing with it.

2. Make a plan.

Address your stress just like you would a bill, upcoming leave, or extra money.

3. Take care of your body.

A healthy body is much more resilient to handle stress of various types. Simply not taking of yourself can cause stress.

4. Take care of your feelings.

Your mind and emotions need attention too.

5. Ask for help.

Get help if stress feels like it is too much to handle by yourself.

Educate Yourself on the New GI Bill

Many soldiers on the path to higher education in and out of theater have been asking the same questions: what's the big difference in the Post-9/11 GI Bill over the Montgomery GI Bill; and why does it matter?

According to the Veteran's Affairs GI Bill Web site, several factors severely limit GI Bill education benefits and, since a service member cannot change their mind once they make the switch, choosing carefully is the best option.

Learning the facts about available benefits is key to utilization and the Department of Veterans Affairs officials are encouraging anyone who is considering enrolling in the Post-9/11 GI Bill program to learn the facts and make sure the Post-9/11 GI Bill is the right fit for them.

Consider the following before changing programs

- Which benefit will pay more?
- What tier of benefit am I eligible for under the Post-9/11 GI Bill?
- What type of training do I want to pursue?
- How long do I expect to take to use the benefit?
- Do I plan to attend school less than full-time?

Keep in Mind

- Payment rates are set for undergraduate tuition rates – this could mean that veterans who wish to attend grad school will need to pay the difference out-of-pocket.
- The housing stipend is not available for students taking all their courses through non-traditional classes – online and other distant learning students won't receive payment for cost of living. In addition, veterans taking courses on a half-time rate and active duty service-members are also excluded from the housing stipend.
- The Post-9/11 GI Bill is set at the in-state undergraduate tuition rate which varies from state-to-state. In some states the tuition rate may severely limit a student's education options. For example, the tuition rate for California is \$0 and Massachusetts is only \$71. That won't go very far in a private college or master's degree program.
- The new Post-9/11 GI Bill does not cover trade schools or on the job training and apprenticeship programs like the Montgomery GI Bill

The Bottom Line. Take your time--don't be in a rush

If you plan to attend classroom-based courses at a state operated college on a more than half-time basis — or you intend to transfer your benefits to a family member, then the Post 9/11 GI Bill most likely fits your needs perfectly.

Camp Victory
Education Office
Robena Tomlinson
Guidance Counselor
318-485-5318

University of
Maryland University
College
Beth Hornick
Field Representative
318-485-6027

Camp Prosperity
Education Office
SSG Daigle-Hutchins
318-239-1104

If you have questions about your personal eligibility or need more assistance, please call the VA at 1-888-GIBILL-1 or visit the VA's GI Bill Web site at www.GIBILL.VA.gov.

GI Bill Benefit Breakdown

	Post-9/11 GI Bill	Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty	Montgomery GI Bill-Reserve	REAP
Tuition and Fees*	Paid directly to school. Not to exceed the highest in-state undergraduate tuition at public IHL.			
Housing Allowance (Based on ZIP Code of school)*	Paid monthly at the E-5 with dependents BAH rate. <i>Not payable for active duty recipients, those training at ½ time or less, or students enrolled entirely in distance learning programs.</i>	Paid directly to recipient	Paid directly to recipient	Paid directly to recipient.
Book Stipend*	Yearly - up to \$1,000 - Paid proportionally each term based on enrollment and as listed in the table below. <i>Not payable to individuals on active duty.</i>	Not Payable		
Rural Benefit	One time - up to \$500	Not Payable		
Time Limit to Use Benefits	15 Years	10 Years	Eligibility normally ends once you leave the service	Can be eligible for 10 years after leaving service
College Fund	Applicable percentage added to Housing Allowance	Added to monthly rate		
\$600 Buy-up	Not Paid	Paid at applicable rate	Not Payable	Paid at applicable rate

Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits rates are tiered based on your time on active duty since Sept. 11, 2001. The following table shows the tiers for reserve and National Guard personnel:

Post-9/11 Service	% of Maximum Amount Payable
At least 36 cumulative months (including Entry Level or Skills Training)	100%
At least 30 continuous days on active duty and discharged due to service-connected disability (including Entry Level or Skills Training)	100%
At least 30 cumulative months (including Entry Level or Skills Training)	90%
At least 24 cumulative months (not including Entry Level or Skills Training)	80%
At least 18 cumulative months (not including Entry Level or Skills Training)	70%
At least 12 cumulative months (not including Entry Level or Skills Training)	60%
At least 6 cumulative months (not including Entry Level or Skills Training)	50%

Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits rates are tiered based on your time in active service since Sept. 11, 2001. The following table shows the tiers for active-duty personnel:

Active Duty Completed after September 10, 2001	% of Maximum Amount Payable
At least 36 months	100%
At least 30 continuous days on active duty and discharged due to service-connected disability	100%
30 months to 36 months	90%
24 months to 30 months	80%
18 months to 24 months	70%
12 months to 18 months	60%
6 months to 12 months	50%
90 days to 12 months	40%

Tax Season is here: Are you Ready?

By 1Lt. Dana Collins
JASG Deputy Judge Advocate General

If you haven't been keeping up with your calendar, then it may come as a shock that the tax filing deadline of April 15 is right around the corner. The good news is that Uncle Sam has seen fit to give you an automatic extension while you are mobilized. This automatic extension allows you to file for up to 180 days after you leave the combat zone.

If you are filing jointly with your spouse, that deadline applies to her income also. You should include a copy of your orders and write "overseas due to military activation in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom" on the top of your tax return.

If you expect a refund, then it is in your best interest to file without the extension so that the money can be deposited in an interest bearing account. Military OneSource provides free tax filing software.

Additionally, the active duty installations of Ft. Sam Houston (San Antonio), Ft. Bliss (El Paso), and Ft. Hood (Killeen) have tax offices that provide free tax filing assistance to service members and their spouses.

These services are available to you during your period of active duty and after your activation as long as you were mobilized sometime during the same year for which you are filing. This year, the Legal Assistance Office at Camp Mabry (Austin) is offering free tax filing assistance on week days and on drill weekends. Your spouse can file your joint tax return for you, at Camp Mabry while you are deployed.



The JASG legal office can give you a specific power of attorney (or an IRS Form 2848) in order to accomplish this filing.

In addition to the automatic extension, there are other tax benefits for deployed soldiers. The income you earn while deployed is free from Federal Income Tax (FIT) up to the highest rate of enlisted pay (plus imminent danger/hostile fire pay) for each month during any part of which you served in a combat zone.

Military One Source –
Tax hotline 1-800-730-3802

www.militaryonesource.com

Camp Mabry Legal Assistance Tax Office

512-782-1169

Fort Hood Tax Center

254-288-5036

Fort Bliss Tax Center

915-568-6079

Fort Sam Houston Tax Center

210-295-1040

IRS Armed Forces Tax Guide

<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p3.pdf>

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

1-800-829-1040

JAG Services

Special/General Power of Attorney

Wills - Notaries

Consultations are available for the following:
Divorce Separations
Child Custody Credit Guidance
Family Financial Support Debtor Issues
Immigration Taxes

Military Personnel Actions
For More Information

BLDG 78 Walk in Hours 0900-1100/1300-1630

usf-jasg.legal.assistance@iraq.centcom.mil

318-239-1708

If FIT is being taken out of your pay and not being refunded every month, then contact your local finance office. Texas does not have a state income tax, but if you and/or your spouse are residents of a state with an income tax, you may be exempt from them due to your deployment and the new Servicemembers Civil Relief Act protections.

Texas does have a special property tax extension for deployed military members. You may delay paying your property taxes in Texas up to 60 days after your return to the U.S. without interest or penalty.

It is recommended that you file a notice with your local tax office to inform it that you are deployed and will be exercising that right.

For additional legal or tax questions please contact your local legal assistance office.

Celebrate President's Day

Presidents Day (or Presidents' Day), is the common name for the federal holiday officially designated as Washington's Birthday. As the first federal holiday to honor an American citizen, the holiday was celebrated on Washington's actual birthday in 1796, the last full year of his presidency on February 22.

While the holiday is still officially known as Washington's Birthday, it has become popularly known as "President's Day", honoring both Washington and Lincoln, as well as all the other men who have served as president.

In 1968, an attempt to officially change the day to Presidents' Day, to celebrate both Abraham Lincoln and Washington on the same day, died in a congressional committee. Since that failed effort, 12 states have designated an official Presidents Day.

In honor of the day, here are some fun facts about the day.

1. In 1971, President Richard Nixon proclaimed one federal holiday, Presidents' Day, honoring all past presidents. Nixon mistakenly thought that a presidential proclamation carried the same longevity as an executive order. Since 1971, the common term has been "President's Day." (No word on why the apostrophe got moved.)
2. In Virginia, Washington's home state, celebrates George Washington Day.
3. Every year Massachusetts issues a proclamation honoring the four presidents who hailed from the commonwealth: John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Calvin Coolidge and John Kennedy.
4. In Arkansas, Washington has to share his day with Daisy Gatson Bates, who worked to end segregation in the 1950s and '60s.
5. In Alabama, President's Day honors both Washington and his fellow Virginian, Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States.
6. In New Mexico, you're already three months late. The Land of Enchantment gives its government employees the day after Thanksgiving off for President's Day.

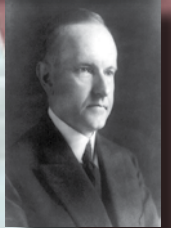


Great is the guilt of an unnecessary war.
President John Adams

The war does not end when you come home. It lives on in memories of your fellow soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who gave their lives. It endures in the wound that is slow to heal, the disability that isn't going away, the dream that wakes you at night, or the stiffening in your spine when a car backfires down the street.

President Barack Obama

The nation which forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten.
President Calvin Coolidge



From time to time, the tree of liberty must be watered with the blood of tyrants and patriots.
President Thomas Jefferson

I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity.
President Dwight D Eisenhower



I can make more generals, but horses cost money.
President Abraham Lincoln



War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today.
President John F. Kennedy



Enriching the soul in a barren land

Chaplain's Corner

By Lt. Col. John Laing
JASG Chaplain

Disappointments—we all have them in life at different times and for various reasons, and they are never fun. One of the keys—perhaps the most important key—to avoiding disappointment is to have realistic expectations. When we set goals or when we plan things out, we need to think about what might actually be the case, not only about how we want things to turn out *perfectly*. Unfortunately, storytellers from ages past all the way up to the present have taught us to expect perfection and bliss in life, with their “happily ever after” endings. Hollywood is no different. Most of the so-called “chick flicks” end with everything working out for the hero/heroine. We are trained, from our earliest years, to expect life to work for us, but that is not reality.

Now, to say that the key to avoiding disappointment is having realistic expectations is not to take the skeptic's approach to life; it is not to say that the only way to avoid all disappointment is to have no expectations! This is the approach some people take: “I'm never disappointed because I just don't have any expectations.”

Such an approach is really not possible. We all have expectations and hopes. We may try to say that we don't have expectations, but whenever we care enough to get involved in something or with someone in a relationship; we have hopes associated with that involvement. That is why we got involved. If we truly did not care, we would not waste our time or energy. So expectations are unavoidable.

This skeptic's attitude (i.e., “have no expectations”) is really a self-protection mechanism. It is born out of fear and anger. It is grounded in a fear of being hurt, and is based in anger over past hurts. We all have a natural tendency to recoil from pain, and when others have disappointed or hurt us, our inclination in the future is to simply not open ourselves up again, even if it is with another person. This, however, will not work because while it may protect us from the pain of unmet expectations, it also prevents us from truly enjoying those that are met. In fact, attempting to take this stance will only lead to misery and a bitter, jaded heart.



It should also be noted that having realistic expectations will not preclude *all* disappointment, for this is not really possible either. Clearly, one can have realistic expectations and still be disappointed. Things rarely go exactly as planned, rather it is more common for things to go awry.

People make mistakes, miscommunication takes place, equipment and items sometimes malfunction or break; Murphy's Law often does hold.

But mishaps, errors, miscommunication and the like can be beneficial, if we allow them to be. As the old sayings go, “variety is the spice of life,” and “*vive le difference*.” The unexpected can make life exciting, interesting and even humorous. Many sit-coms play on the humor in miscommunication or mismatched expectations [*Three's Company* and *Frasier* were classic at this!]. If we can approach these situations with a lighthearted and somewhat dismissive attitude, it will go well for us. Enjoy the strange and quirky things that come up in life, and remember: if everything happened exactly as we expected, life would be much more boring.

Similarly, having a realistic view of what to expect can help avoid let-downs. Before service members go on R & R (2 weeks of leave for rest and recuperation/relaxation), they are required to attend a short briefing in which we talk about managing expectations. Our goal is for

Tips To Help Avoid Disappointment During R & R.

Have Realistic Expectations
Communicate your desires for R&R with Family and Friends
Recognize that there may be barriers to intimacy
Plan some special events
Be laid-back; Have a good sense of humor

Continued on page 24



Leaving Iraq the right way: Better late than never

Sgt. Jay Fain shakes the hand of a soldier during his trip to Camp Prosperity as a part of Operation Proper Exit. Photo by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw

*By Sgt. Melissa Shaw
JASG PAO NCOIC*

More than two-hundred men and women lined the street in front of the Al Asad Palace on Camp Prosperity on February 3rd, watching the sky for a special delivery from Operation Proper Exit (OPE), a program supported jointly by the USO and the Troops First Foundation and endorsed by American military leaders.

The helicopters touched down just before dusk and the passengers; Master Sgt. Tom Carpenter of Lansing, Mich., Sgt. Jay Fain of Columbia, S.C., Capt. Ferris Butler of Port Tobacco, Md., Sgt. Omar Avila of Brownsville, Texas, Cpl. Charles Dominguez of Ontario, Calif., and Capt. John Moore of Chula Vista, Calif., stepped out to find themselves surrounded by men and women waiting to shake their hands in gratitude for their service, courage and determination.

After half an hour of accepting

"I wish my best friend was here, I would love to be able to see her again, but I can't because she was killed when we were here in 2008," said Spc. Amanda Simmons, 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Beaumont, Texas.

handshakes and wishes for their speedy recovery, the soldiers made their way across the FOB to the Iraqi Federal Police compound. Arriving there, they met with Maj. Kenneth Phillips, training advisor for the Federal Police Transition Team Headquarters and Gen. Hussein Al-Awadi, Iraqi Federal Police commander.

During their visit with Phillips and Al-Awadi, the soldiers involved in OPE participated in a traditional Iraqi dinner, drank chai and witnessed first-hand the progress that has been made by the Iraqi forces during their absence.

Through a combined governmental agency effort, Baghdad has seen a tremendous reduction in violence. Federal Police have seen decreases in corruption, improvements in the ethnic and religious diversity in their ranks

and an implementation of a police code of ethics in addition to constantly improving procedures to show the

"I don't know who they are, but I know they sacrificed a lot the last time they were here, it's the least we can do," said Sgt. Miguel Perez, Houston, Texas.



Capt. John Moore is saluted by numerous soldiers proud to honor him during his trip to Camp Prosperity as a part of Operation Proper Exit. Photo by Texas Army National Guard

Sgt. Melissa Shaw



Capt. Ferris Butler and Sgt. Jay Fain smile at, greet and shake hands with soldiers during a trip to Camp Prosperity as a part of Operation Proper Exit.

Photo by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw

Iraqi's abilities to provide security and execute its responsibilities.

Looking back, it was the partnered, full-spectrum operations the Iraqis and Americans performed daily throughout the country that reduced the overall flow of lethal aid and foreign fighters into Iraq. And it was made possible through the sacrifices made by the men returning with OPE.

Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Wilson, United States Forces-Iraq command sergeant major, escorted the wounded veterans to FOB Prosperity. Upon arrival they were greeted with great enthusiasm and ceremony and then escorted them to various forward operating bases over a seven-day visit where they interacted with local sheiks and military groups.

The OPE visit was seen as beneficial to not just to the returning veterans who got to see how far the country has come, but also for the American troops they visited were able to see how life can continue after receiving a life-altering injury.



Soldiers with 571st Military Police Battalion wait to greet Soldiers returning to Iraq as a part of Operation Proper Exit.

Photo by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw

"I don't know who they are, but I know they sacrificed a lot the last time they were here, it's the least we can do," said Sgt. Miguel Perez, Houston, Texas.

"This is my second deployment and we have never had anything like this before, I think it's great."

For some soldiers, it is easy to recognize the trip is a step on the path to recovery, but for others it is a reminder of those friends and leaders that were not able to make the trip.

"I wish my best friend was here, I would love to be able to see her again, but I can't because she was killed when we were here in 2008," said Spc. Amanda Simmons, 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Beaumont, Texas.

"I would give anything to have her here doing this," she said.

Making the best of any situation is part of the survival instruction given to all soldiers during basic training



200 Soldiers watch the retreat of a van full of veterans returning to Iraq with OPE in front of the Al Asad Palace on Camp Prosperity.

Photo by Texas Army National Guard 1Lt. Darryl Frost

and pre-mobilization training. But still, for some it is hard to comprehend the need to visit the place the pain started.

"I don't know how they can do this. I don't know that I would be strong enough to come back here," said Spc. Josh Zey, 571st Military Police Battalion, Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina.

"I don't know if it would help to see the peace or not, if it would make me wonder why I was the one hurt," he said.

This is the second set of individuals to visit with Operation Proper Exit for 2010.

NEWS *to Use* Spouse tuition aid shuts down without warning

By Karen Powers- ArmyTimes
Staff Writer

Defense officials have abruptly shut down the My Career Advancement Accounts, a program that gives qualified military spouses up to \$6,000 in tuition assistance to help them pursue portable careers.

Officials said the MyCAA shutdown is temporary, but no date has been set for resuming operations.

Officials "hope to resume accepting financial assistance applications in a few months," Defense

Department spokeswoman Air Force Maj. April Cunningham said.

Cunningham said defense officials are "reviewing the software applications, financial assistance documents and overall program," but she offered no specific details on the reason for the sudden halt and review.

"We're reviewing it from top to bottom to ensure the program is meeting the intent established in legislation," she said.

Meanwhile, spouses are finding out about the program shutdown at the worst time — when they are trying to request funding for classes that start within a month.

"I found out this morning when I logged in to have money sent to my school," said Army wife Julie Thornton, who lives near Fort Gordon, Ga. Her education plan had been approved, and she had registered for two courses at Augusta State University. But the MyCAA program regulations require that spouses must wait until 30 days before classes start to request payment of funds to their schools. When Thornton called Military OneSource to ask what to do, she said, she was told that employees were informed at 4 p.m. Feb. 16 that the program was shutting down.

"I can't use the application to get the funds for courses already approved," Thornton said. She is taking refresher courses to get her teaching credentials up to date.

When she asked a Military OneSource consultant about what to do, she said, "I was told, 'Can't you apply for other financial assistance?' Where else can I get funds in 30 days?"

Cunningham said no new or pending financial assistance accounts will

be approved during the review period.

Without any formal announcement of the program's existence, nearly 133,000 military spouses have applied for the MyCAA program since it started early last year, Cunningham said. Currently, 98,000 are enrolled in courses or have been approved for tuition assistance.

Although the financial assistance no longer will be available, spouses can receive career counseling support at local installations and through Military OneSource, Cunningham said.

"I sent an e-mail to DoD telling them my problem is with the way they're handling this," said Army wife Julie Thornton. "It's beyond poor."


"We're reviewing it from top to bottom to ensure the program is meeting the intent established in legislation," said Defense Department spokeswoman

Air Force Maj. April Cunningham.

"They should have sent an e-mail to people" in the program, Thornton said, to let them know about the halt, so people could start trying to find alternate funding.

"I sent an e-mail to DoD telling them my problem is with the way they're handling this," Thornton said. "It's beyond poor."

Iraqi Firefighters Demonstrate their Capabilities



"It was amazing that these young firefighters were able to use the ideas and tools they were just taught in a real life situation," said Sgt. Kimball. "Because it showed, during a real life situation, they were able to act and respond effectively."

*By Senior Airman
Jarrod Chavana
U.S. Air Forces
Public Affairs*


Firefighters from the Iraqi Joint Fire Training Academy displayed the abilities taught to them by U.S. Air Force and Army personnel Feb. 17th, during a demonstration.

Air Force and Army instructors from the United States Air Force's 821st Expeditionary Training Squadron, the Army's 110th Chemical and 414th Civil Affairs Battalions mentor Iraqi firefighting students who assembled at the academy to receive formalized training.

The instructors at the Iraqi Joint Fire Training Academy teach six core courses; Basic Firefighting, Rescue Technician 1, Incident Command Systems, Hazardous Materials, First Aid and Explosive Ordinance Disposal.


During the demonstration, the Iraqi Firefighters rappelled from a fiery three-story building, and responded to a simulated vehicle borne improvised explosive device, in which pyrotechnics were used and first aid was administered to the injured.

"The Iraqi Joint Fire Training Academy is currently working to establish an internationally accepted based curriculum,"



said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Kevin Cotton, 821st ETS fire rescue advisor deployed from Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas. "The future vision of the academy is to become internationally certified and become one of the premier fire training institutions in the Middle East."


In addition to responding to everyday local emergencies, the firefighters have been assigned to emergency management duties such as maintaining warning sirens, national disaster notifications, evacuations, bomb shelter maintenance, and recovery of explosive residue of war.



"We are giving these firefighters the basic foundation on how to protect their country by fighting fires and maintaining the protection of their country," said Master Sgt. Jeffrey Kimball 821st ETS, fire rescue advisor. "They will be able to build up their country a lot faster by being able to rescue and respond to

Continued on page 21

All photos by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw



The FOB Prosperity 300 Challenge

6 Mar——Intro/weigh in and Movie (1900 in theater)

7 Mar——It Begins —3 mo program

7 Apr——1 st mo. weigh in/pics

7 May——2nd mo. weigh in/pics

7 June——3rd mo weigh in
300 Challenge

Contact Info

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august.murray@iraq.centcom.mil

any incidents that may occur.”

During one class the students were taught auto extrication. The next day a bomb detonated in Baghdad, which required them to put their training to the test.

“It was amazing that these young firefighters were able to use the ideas and tools they were just taught in a real life situation,” said Sgt. Kimball. “Because it showed, during a real life situation, they were able to act and respond effectively.”

Because the students are picking up the information and are able to use it in real situations, the academy staff uses the “train the trainer” concept; allowing students who’ve successfully completed the course to become future instructors.

“The Iraqis are teaching the basic firefighter course and the hazmat course is about to be turned over to them,” said Army Spc. Michael Burris, 414th Civil Affairs Battalion assistant instructor, deployed from Fort Bragg. “I’m very proud of what they’ve achieved.”

**Iraqi Civil
Defense Training
Academy
student starts
one of the
generators being
used during the
Feb. 17th Fire
Response
Demonstration
held at the ICDT
Academy in
Baghdad, Iraq.**

*Photo by Texas
Army National
Guard Sgt. Melissa
Shaw*



Iraqi Civil Defense



"The future vision of the academy is to become internationally certified and become one of the premier fire training institutions in the Middle East," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Kevin Cotton, 821st ETS Fire Rescue Advisor deployed from Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas. All photos by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw



Steps into Action



During the demonstration, the Iraqi Firefighters rappelled from a fiery three-story building, and responded to a simulated vehicle borne improvised explosive device, in which pyrotechnics were used and first aid was administered to the injured. All photos by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw



everyone to have an enjoyable (and relaxing) time away from the combat zone. In order to do this, we talk about what to expect, what some have experienced and some strategies for having a successful time at home. Prior planning can make all the difference, and it is just wise. Jesus referred to prior planning in order to drive home a spiritual point:

²⁵Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said:

²⁶"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.

²⁷And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?

²⁹For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him,

³⁰saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'

³¹"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?

³²If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a

long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

³³In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

(Luke 14:25-33, New International Version)

Of course, his point was to say that if one is going to be his follower, he/she should have a realistic expectation of what could result. He knew that some persons would be persecuted for their decisions to follow him. Some would lose relationships with family, some would be kicked out of the synagogue, and some would even pay with their lives! On a spiritual level, though, we all are called to sacrifice our own desires to follow God. His desires must come first. If we want to follow him, we should have realistic expectations of what such a commitment requires. This is similar to any relationship. When we get married, our own hopes and dreams get melded with those of our spouses. When we have children, our own desires and needs must take a back seat to those of our kids. We must have realistic expectations of what entering into those relationships requires of us. Otherwise, we will be disappointed, hurt, or even worse, we will fail.



Tips To Help Avoid Disappointment During R & R

Have Realistic Expectations

There probably won't be a ticker-tape parade when you go home for R & R; Family members will probably continue with their routines, etc.

Communicate with Family and Friends about Desires for R & R

Make sure everyone is on the same page; if he wants to go fishing and she wants to go dancing, it may not be restful, recuperative, or relaxing!

Plan a special event

BBQ for friends to drop by, getaway for a couple of days, play-date with children, etc.

Recognize that there may be barriers to intimacy

Stress of knowing the service member is only home for two weeks can create barriers to intimacy; may not connect physically, emotionally, and spiritually like you thought you would, but this is not necessarily an indication that there is a problem with the relationship or with you.

Be laid-back; Have a good sense of humor.



Staff Sgt. Ray Binch, HHC 72nd BSTB, Training NCO pose with his wife and family at a unit luncheon at the National Guard Armory in Huntsville, Texas.

Photo by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw



Maj Sean P. Ibargüen

JASG-C Inspector General

Taking time off from duty here in Iraq is extremely important for all service members. It is usually considered one of the high points of a long and, sometimes, stressful deployment. This month's article will provide general information related to leave, R&R flow and passes.

February Topic Leave – R&R Flow - Pass

It is extremely important for military personnel to become familiar with the associated regulation and policy that may have a direct impact regarding time off. Army Regulation 600-8-10 (Leaves and Passes) dated 15 February 2006 may be found at http://www.army.mil/usapa/epubs/pdf/r600_8_10.pdf.

For military personnel who are required to go through the 72 JASG-C for leave or pass processing, the 72 JASG-C Policy Memorandum 600-02, R&R Leave and Pass Policy dated 26 January 2010 may be found at <https://msc.forces.iraq.centcom.mil/sites/jasg/cmd/cmdgrp/pol/Shared%20Documents/Policy%20Memo%20600-02.pdf>

Note: The policy discussed above only applies to Service Members assigned to the 72 JASG-C. It should be utilized only as a reference for Service Members that fall outside the 72 JASG-C. Much of the information below is a combination of guidance outlined in AR 600-8-10 and the 72 JASG-C R&R Leave and Pass Policy.

Bottom Line: Make sure you are familiar with your own unit policies regarding leave and passes!

Leave:

- R&R leave begins the day after the SM arrives at the CONUS aerial port of debarkation (APOD) and ends the day prior to the SM's return to the CONUS aerial port of embarkation (APOE).
- OCONUS R&R leave requires multiple key steps to be taken prior to execution. One key step involves country clearances which must be submitted at least 45 days prior to leave.
- Emergency leave is chargeable leave and may be authorized in lieu of R&R leave depending on the duration and nature of the situation.
- Emergency leave begins the day after the SM arrives at the CONUS APOD and ends the day prior to return at the CONUS APOE.

R&R Flow:

- For detailed information please review Enclosure 4 (R&R Leave Traveling Tips for Soldiers) of the 72 JASG-C R&R Leave and Pass Policy (hyperlink is listed above). **The information outlined in this enclosure is pertinent to all SMs regardless of unit.**
- Make sure you pack enough clothes for 3-4 days to include personal hygiene items, shower shoes and an alarm clock. Taking a lock may not be a bad idea. Make sure you strip everything from your IOTV except for nametag and rank.
- If you have questions, ask someone. That could be someone in Ali Al Salem (Kuwait) or one of your buddies that just got back. **If this is your first time going on leave, look at it like a mission...you want as much information as possible, so you do not set yourself up for failure when it comes time to execute!**

Pass:

- A four-day pass (not chargeable) is authorized for SMs serving in the AOR for periods of more than 90 consecutive days, and may be taken immediately upon entering the theatre. The pass period must end no later than 30 days prior to the projected outbound transfer of authority.
- Qatar is the only authorized four-day pass destination away from the SM's assigned duty location. SMs may remain at their assigned duty location for pass.

For more information, contact the IG, MAJ Sean P. Ibargüen, on FOB Prosperity at Building 78. He can also be reached at sean.ibarguen@iraq.centcom.mil or at 318-239-7902.

The U.S. Embassy: There's a Lot to Cover

By Sgt. Melissa Shaw
JASG PAO Staff Writer

Protecting life and limb are everyday concerns for the men and women living and working at the U.S. Embassy, or New Embassy Complex (NEC), in Baghdad, Iraq. While violence has decreased significantly in the past several years, the incoming rocket alarms still go off with regularity.

The NEC's permanent inhabitants include diplomats, ambassadors, employees with the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of State (DOS), in addition to the U.S.'s Air Force, Army, Marine and Navy personnel.

This home away from home is often compared to a high security

college campus with professional office buildings, a cafeteria, gyms, a food court and a place for shopping and a haircut.

Located on the banks of the Tigris River, the NEC also has its own water supply, power plant and waste-treatment facility, so it doesn't have to rely on the Iraqis for essential services.

The Embassy Complex is often compared to a high security college campus with professional office buildings, a cafeteria, gyms, a food court and a place for shopping and a hair cut.

However, the comparison to a college campus stops at the entrance of every building outfitted with a blast proof door and at the complex entry point

where there's a badging check and weapons screening for all visitors.

This continues in the dining facility where identification is also checked before getting a plate for dinner.

This difference can also be seen in the housing for the residents of the U.S. Embassy. Evenings find the workers retreating to apartments in hardened high-rise buildings and dual occupancy containerized

Workers with Perini Management Services place the steel bars that will reinforce the footing for the overhead cover located being constructed over the containerized housing units located in the NEC Baghdad, Iraq.



Wet burlap sacks are used to aid the curing process for the concrete blocks that will serve as the footing for the overhead cover going up in the NEC.

All photo by Texas Army National Guard
Sgt. Melissa Shaw

housing units (CHUs) with conveniently placed concrete bunkers surrounded by sand bags placed for safety.

The soft sided CHUs' appearance in the complex was intended as a temporary fix to a housing shortage, but as the years have passed, they have become a more permanent entity. With the need for this housing not going away any time soon, the DOS made the decision to put in a permanent safety covering.

The an Overhead Cover System (OCS) was contracted out to Perini Management Services, a company with a long track record with the Department of Defense.

The design of the OCS uses the Contingency Standard Design (CSD) developed for Army Central Command. The purpose of the design is to provide protection from direct and overhead fire.



The US Embassy; Continued from page 26

It consists of a metal pre-detonation layer level and a protection layer level of E-Glass and concrete slab on metal decking.

Constructed in accordance with current U.S. and host nation standards, this system has been "battle tested" and has performed as designed protecting the men and women that proudly serve our country with no resulting loss of life or equipment.

To date, this is one of the largest construction projects, Perini has undertaken.

It includes on-site development and critical infrastructure to support the facility.

This consists of electrical lighting, mechanical exhaust, rainwater collection and the coordination of the removal and relocation of T-Wall barriers, or standard blast protection from direct and indirect fire in the Middle East.

"Since 2005, Perini has installed 127 separate structures country wide providing Overhead Cover Protection here in Iraq and Afghanistan. That equates to over two million square feet of overhead cover," said Maj. Bruce Whinery, mayor for the embassy complex, Joint Area Support Group- Central, 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.



Men with Perini Management Services set concrete blast protection, measure rebar and prepare the area around housing on the NEC for installation of an overhead cover in Baghdad, Iraq.

All photos by Texas Army National Guard

Sgt. Melissa Shaw



Military Occupational Specialty Corner

Information Systems Operations Analyst

25B Army/3CO31 Air Force/CT9301 Navy



Information Technology Specialists have the great responsibility of maintaining, processing and troubleshooting military computer systems and operations.

Duties performed by Soldiers in this MOS include:

- Installs, operates, and performs unit maintenance on multi-functional multi-user information processing systems and peripheral equipment and auxiliary devices.
- Performs input/ output data control and bulk data storage operations.
- Transfers data between information processing equipment and systems.
- Troubleshoots automation equipment and systems to the degree required for isolation of malfunctions to specific hardware or software.
- Restores equipment to operation by replacement of line replaceable units (LRU).
- Installs, operates, and performs strapping, restrapping, PMCS and unit level maintenance on COMSEC devices.
- Assists in the design, preparation, editing, and testing of computer programs.
- Drafts associated technical documentation for program reference and maintenance purposes.
- Modifies existing application packages using application and operating system software and appropriate computer language commands and files.
- Configures information processing equipment into required operating configurations.
- Performs senior operator and systems administrator duties and unit level maintenance functions on assigned computer systems.
- Compiles production report data and quality control information.
- Assists less experienced soldiers in the installation, operation, and maintenance of information processing equipment. Writes, analyzes, edits, tests, and modifies computer programs. Drafts program operation manuals and technical program requirements documents.
- Troubleshoots software using established debugging procedures.

(right) Help Desk
Assistant Spc.
Gabriela Vaca, Houston, Texas, 72nd IBCT, JASG-C.

Photos by JASG PAO Staff



(left) Help Desk
Assistant Spc. Albert
Steen, San Antonio, Texas, 72nd IBCT, JASG-C.



Baghdad,
On the land of poets and landscape.
The eternal age of gold and the aroma of it's light.
On the Baghdad, your face is as beautiful as the moon.
The land of one thousand nights.
Oh Baghdad the land of happiness moon washes your landscape daily.
Baghdad the land of glory and wonder, one needs to seek no longer.
Baghdad you are the center of gravity for (the Islamic empire).
I came from the land of Lebanon, where even the wind can be defeated.
Where the summer is coated with snow and dew on the flowers
Who can find me and warn about road ahead?
Between us there's not apologies are needed and our defeat is denied.
I am a pained poet and who wrote and what keeps me alive is the love of land and
I'm hosted as my pain is felt through. Oh Baghdad,
Your eyes are like a song that I simply can't describe.
The free spirited were never mentioned in any land,
But in your land, the people were the first to be mentioned.

Baghdad Revealed through the Poetry of Nazar Qabbani

(March 1923-April 1998)

بغداد - الأخوين رحباني

بغداد و الشعراء و الصور ذهب الزمان و ضوعه العطر
يا ألف ليلة يا مكمله الأعراس يغسل وجهك القمر
بغداد هل مجد و رائحة ما كان منك إليهما سفر
أيام أنت الفتح ملعبه أنا يحط جناحه المطر
أنا جئت من لبنان من وطن إن لاعبته الريح تتكسر
صيفاً و لون الثلج حملتي و أرق ما يندى به الزهر
يا من يواجدي و يتكرني حذراً و إن طريقنا الحذر
بيني و بينك ليس من عتب حييت تتكرني و تعتذر
أنا لوعة الشعراء غربتهم و شجي ما نظموا و ما نثروا
أنا حب أهل الأرض يزرعني وتر هنا و يشيل بي وتر
عينك يا بغداد أغنية يغنى الوجود بها و يختصر
لم ينكر الأحرار في وطن إلا و أهلك العلى ذكروا

Iraq Culture Corner

Did you know...

The Arab country of Iraq is the 65th largest nation on Earth, ahead of Japan, Germany and Norway. It -- 168,754 square miles-- is about the size of California.

In the 1950s, Iraq had a relatively high GDP per capita in comparison to most Asian nations, including South Korea, Malaysia and Taiwan.

The California-size land is home to a number of notable women: Sabiha Al-Dabbagh, doctor; Sabiha Al-Khated, feminist; Intisar Shaker, athlete; Take Zaha Hadid, architect; Queen Aliyah; Nzik Al-Mala Ikah, author; Suad Abdallah, performer; Hanaa Busha, feminist.

Arabic Phrases for Solving Misunderstanding

I'm Sorry!
!No Problem!
I Have No Idea.
What Is This?
What's up

Afwan!
Maku moshkelah
Ma adri!
Ma hatha (th as in that)
Shaku Maku



Eucalyptus tree at Camp Cropper. Eucalyptus, native to Australia, was first introduced in the 1920's to address the national demand for wood and wood products.

To the right is the Monument to the Unknown Soldier in Baghdad, Iraq. The overall design is that of a traditional shield called a dira'a dropping from the grasp of a dying Iraqi warrior. The monument also houses an underground museum. Beneath the shield is a cube made of seven layers of metal, said to represent the seven levels of Heaven in the Islamic faith, layered with sheets of red acrylic representing the blood of slain Iraqi soldiers.

Photos by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw



Security Forces Advise Iraqi Police for March 7th Elections

By Senior Airman Jarrod R. Chavana
U.S. Air Forces Public Affairs

TARMIYAH, Iraq— The 732nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron Detachment 3 arrived at their building Feb. 15th, three hours prior to going on a mission to visit with Iraqi police and inspect a polling station.

Before each mission, the unit inspects their vehicles then arms them with heavy weapons, such as 50-caliber machine guns, and tests all communication devices.

After vehicle checks, they enter a room and receive a series of briefings, such as intelligence and patrol, which builds a picture as far back as 90 days. These briefings cover previous dangers, driving routes and battle drills they will perform during their mission.

Before they leave, the patrol goes through another 30 to 45 minutes of scenarios, so that the expected and unexpected dilemmas have been taken into account.

With briefings complete, the 732nd ESFS Det. 3 departed Camp Taji to conduct a joint polling station assessment with the Iraqi police.

The purpose of these assessments is

to build a rapport between U.S. Forces and the Iraqi police, while providing key insights to force protection at polling sites for the March 7th elections.

"It's become a typical day, since we've been doing missions for the last six months," said Staff Sgt. Jared Winker, 732nd ESFS Det. 3 assistant squad leader.

"At first everyone was nervous -- especially the new guys -- because you never know what to expect, so you expect the unexpected."

"Once we got to a polling station, the first thing we wanted to do is cover possible approaches where someone could possibly attack us or the election site," said Sgt. Winker, deployed from Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

"We also look at people who look suspicious, that keep walking by our vehicles over and over with their hands concealed in their pockets, or someone that's wearing bulky clothing."

On this day, the Iraqi police would lead the team to a polling sight that was surrounded by high buildings, children playing soccer in a sand lot and civilians



Air Force Tech Sgt. Dennis Kuzel (left) Interpreter Nas (center) an Iraqi police officer, and Staff Sgt. Jared Winker, 732nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron Detachment 3, speak to school children while conducting a joint polling station assessment Feb. 15, 2010.

Photo by Air Force Sgt. Trish Bunting

coming out of their homes to expect the visitors. The team was on watch because it wasn't the location originally detailed during the earlier brief.

"Today was kind of confusing because we were supposed to go to one grid coordinate and we went to a different location, said Senior Airman Christopher Jodice, a 732nd ESFS Det. 3 convoy driver and close precision engagement counter-sniper, deployed from Hickam AFB, Hawaii.

After creating a security perimeter, Det.3 walked around the building to inspect the cement barriers used to protect the structure from attacks and scanned the roof tops of houses for dangers. American forces collected this information and then provided it to the Iraqi police as suggestions to create a safer environment.

"Today was huge in our standpoint and the Iraqi police as well," said Airman Jodice, a native of Weehawken, N.J.

"This election is what we have been working toward, and everyone is focused on having a successful Iraqi election."

Air Force Tech Sgt. Dennis Kuzel (left), and Staff Sgt. Jared Winker, speak with an Iraqi police officer prior to conducting a joint polling station assessment Feb. 15, 2010.

Photo by Air Force Sgt. Trish Bunting



Texas Soldier speaks to the International Business Council-Iraq

By 1Lt. Darryl Frost
JASG-C PAO OIC

For the first time, at a February meeting of the International Business Council-Iraq (IBC-I), an association focused on Iraqi private sector development, a soldier from the 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team briefed the room of investors, foreign embassy staff members and business owners of the International Zone (IZ) in Baghdad.

Dressed in military fatigues, Maj. David Burger, deputy security director from the Joint Area Support Group-Central addressed the group assembled on security-related issues in the IZ that would affect their local businesses.

"Essentially, the IBC-I's mission is to promote business partnerships, trade and investments between the international business community and Iraq," said Gaynelle Scott, president of IBC-I and managing director, GSI Business Services.

Pointing to a projected map of the IZ behind him, Burger explained how the Iraqi-maintained entry control points

Maj. David Burger, 72nd JASG, deputy security director, addresses the International Business Council-Iraq Feb. 15, 2010.

Photo by Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Melissa Shaw

(ECP) were operating. During the discussion, he noted which gates were having issues and what the business owners could expect at these ECPs with regard to shipping business supplies and moving employees.

"We have isolated ourselves from the rest of Baghdad in the IZ," said Maj. Burger. "This type of meeting is the first step towards bridging these gaps."

At various times, business leaders took the opportunity to ask the JASG-C spokesman questions based on their different concerns involved with new building and road construction, T-wall emplacements and many other general security concerns in the IZ.

During the meeting, the upcoming elections also served as the basis for many questions. With the headquarters of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), the Iraqi government body responsible for conducting the March 2010 elections, located in the IZ, the business leaders listened intently as Burger laid out what to expect.

As the elections draw close, Burger said IZ traffic would be increasing as the ballot transportation process begins. He also said that the increase in indirect fire attacks was a real possibility.

The event proved an excellent opportunity for the military and civilians alike to learn from each other to gain knowledge on Iraq and IZ trends.

"One of the biggest problems in Iraq right now is that we have a nation of extremes: extreme wealth and extreme poverty," said President Scott. "If we can help with building up the middle class, then we can create a strong Iraq."

"It's a daunting task, but we have to start somewhere."



Gaynelle Scott, president of International Business Council-Iraq, addresses the group Feb. 15, 2010. Photo by Sgt. Melissa Shaw

Army Values: A Soldier's Point of View

Personal Courage

Honor

Loyalty

Respect

Duty

Integrity

Fulfill your obligations. Accept responsibility for your own actions and those entrusted to your care. Find opportunities to improve oneself for the good of the group.



"Duty to me is doing what is right despite the sacrifices or consequences."

Sgt. Shawn Cruz
Camp Taji,
Admin. NCO,
A Co 72nd IBCT,
Houston, Tx



"Duty is like a box of chocolates...you never know what you're gonna get."

Spc. Albert Steen,
Camp Prosperity,
Network Help Desk Asst.,
HHC 72nd IBCT,
San Antonio, Tx



"It's about the desire to take care of Soldiers that walk into my office with an issue, regardless of how late at night or how early in the morning. Soldiers first-always....that's duty."

SFC Justin Graham
Camp Cropper,
S1 NCOIC,
HHC 72nd IBCT,
Houston, Tx

Looking Back to Look Ahead

By JASG-C PAO Staff

February is African American History Month. And, like all commemorative occasions, it's a great opportunity to have fun while learning.

On February 6th, the military again honored the contributions and sacrifices made by African Americans in the IZ. At the Black Hawk Conference Center, the United States Force-Iraq's (USF-I) equal opportunity office hosted a "Faith in Our Future" program.

The program highlighted the service of African-American patriots throughout history with artful performances such as; a dynamic interpretive poem by Cpt. Deborah Smith, an interactive monologue of "The Spirit of a Buffalo Soldier", performed by Lt. Col. Charlie Williams and a powerful rendition of "The Blood Stained Banner" by Master Sgt. Rahsan Mitchell, the primary event coordinator.

Referring to the fact that there were no

rehearsals prior, Mitchell said: "Tonight's history was from the heart of those performing based on their past experiences, their own history and what they've learned about African Americans throughout their lifetimes."

During the event, a small choir and the audience sang several uplifting songs. The guest speaker for the evening was Command Sgt. Maj. Kevin B. Stuart.

Sharing a lesson learned from his father, Stuart said to the audience that although they faced road blocks and adversity, they should continue having faith in the future.

Stuart reminded the attendees also of the need to have a dream of ambition and of a world free of discrimination. He then asked the service members in attendance how they could have faith in times like these.

"All you have to do is look back at your history," he said.

It starts off with having faith in a higher power, yourself and in your family and country, Stuart said.



(Above) Lt. Col. Charlie Williams performed "The Spirit of a Buffalo Soldier" Feb. 6, 2010 during the "Faith in our Future" program hosted at the Black Hawk Conference Center in Baghdad Iraq. Photos by Texas Army National Guard 1Lt. Darryl Frost



(right) Capt. Deborah Smith recited a poem during the audience participation portion of the event.

Photos by Texas Army National Guard 1Lt. Darryl Frost



Baghdad on the verge of a new Dawn

. Photo by Sgt. Melissa Shaw