

The North Star

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



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Tomahawks bring heat in Iraqi desert

By Pfc. Adrian Muehe
3SBCT, 2nd Inf Div PAO

“Hang it,” repeated Spc. Nicholas Keim, of Olympia, Wash., and an assistant gunner for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, while holding a 120mm mortar round steady over the massive gun, pointed out of the back of a Stryker vehicle.

While waiting for the call to release, he maintained this position as sweat dripped off his brow in the Iraqi desert.

“Fire,” said Spc. Stephan Forbes of Denver, Colo., a gunner for HHC, 1/23 Inf. After this call, Spc. Keim repeated his order.

He dropped the mortar into the tube and immediately braced himself for the recoil.

A few seconds later the round fired.

The back of the Stryker vehicle sunk down from the force of the shot, sending the dry dirt resting under the vehicle into the air causing a massive cloud of dust. Flames erupted from the end of the mortar tube as it



Photo by Pfc. Adrian Muehe, 3SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. PAO

Specialist Nicholas Keim, an assistant gunner for HHC, 1st Bn., 23rd Inf., 3SBCT, 2nd ID, readies a 120mm mortar round for firing as part of a fire coordination exercise just outside FOB Grizzly, March 21.

fired the 120mm shell down range.

All eyes immediately went to the target, which was engulfed in a cloud of

smoke as the round impacted.

This action was a small part of a fire coordination exercise (FCX) conducted

by 1/23 Inf. It lasted three days and coordinated their assets of forward observers, mortarmen, close air support and field artillery in the desert just outside of Forward Operating Base Grizzly, March 21-23.

“This training happened so that we can clearly and accurately identify targets to the best of our ability,” said Sgt. Victor Ramos, of Hollis, N.Y., and a fire support non-commissioned officer for Blackhawk Company, 1/23 Inf. “We bring in close air support. We bring in rotary wing support. We bring in mortars, and we bring in GLMRS (Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems).”

This training exercise started with the forward observers, who were running this spectacular show. Their role was to confirm and identify targets before they were cleared to call for fire with their available assets.

“We usually don’t get to do this in country,” said Spc. Kerry McDonough, of San Antonio, Texas, and a forward observer with 1st Platoon, Apache Company, 1/23 Inf. “I’ve spent most of this deployment acting as an

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infantryman, out there with them in case something happens and air support needs to be called in.”

After the forward observers identified the targets and their locations, they had to decide what assets to use to minimize the threat.

The preferred way to do this is to call in air support, but if the enemies have anti-air capabilities, they would have to be eliminated before pilots can fly over. This is when mortar fire comes into the situation.

The Tomahawk mortarmen wield three different kinds of artillery. On the ground they fire 60mm and 80mm rounds.

Out of the back of Strykers they have 120mm rounds. The size of the target and how far away the objective is located determines what size round

is used.

Firing these mortars serves two purposes. The first is to destroy targets such as anti-air guns to clear the way for air support. The second is to fire for effect. The purpose of this option is to put a large number of rounds in the same vicinity to scare the enemy as opposed to destroy them.

After the mortars and rockets were fired, the anti-air threat was neutralized.

After the forward observers confirmed this they talked to the pilots of two Kiowa helicopters who were at hand. The Kiowas went in and dropped ordnance on the targets to annihilate the simulated combatant stronghold.

“My Soldiers see how important this job is,” said Sgt. Ramos. “They know

we still have rust on the chains and now we know how to break that rust off.”

After this refresher training, these Soldiers are confident that, if the situation ever arrived, they can effectively call in the support they need to save Soldiers’ lives, said Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Brooks, a native of Johnsonburg, Pa., and the battalion fire support NCO for 1/23 Inf.

“We identified issues we can fix to make our fire support teams better, and found new training objectives,” said Sgt. 1st Class Brooks.

At the beginning of April, the Tomahawks will take what they have learned and perfected from this exercise and teach Iraqi Army soldiers how to effectively use these techniques with their assets.

TF Marne combat Veterans receive Marne patches

By Sgt. Johnathon Jobson
TF Marne PAO

Combat patches are a status symbol in Army life, a visual indicator that a Soldier has done their time in a war environment and lived to tell about it.

That status was bestowed upon a small group of Task Force Marne Soldiers during a patching ceremony, March 27.

The 3rd Infantry Division patch carries with it history dating back to World War I and most recently four tours in Iraq, the most of any division in the Army. This history bears great significance for those who wear the patch.

“I am proud to wear this patch and be in the 3rd ID,” said Pfc. Carlos Diaz, a communications specialist with 3rd Signal Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 3rd ID. I hope to one day live up to the legacy of the division and the Soldiers who have served with it before, he added.



Photo by Sgt Johnathon Jobson, TF Marne PAO

Private Nathaniel Grimsley, a mechanic with HHSC, DSTB, 3rd ID, first-time deployer, watches as Command Sgt. Maj. Jesse Andrews, TF Marne and 3rd ID command sergeant major, affixes a newly earned combat patch to the right shoulder of his uniform, while Maj. Gen. Tony Cucolo, TF Marne commander looks on during a patching ceremony, March 27.

Major General Tony Cucolo, the TF Marne and 3rd ID commander, made sure that everyone in attendance at the ceremony knew at least the key points in the history of the famed blue and white striped patch.

“With this patch on your uniform, you are a walking story,” said Maj. Gen. Cucolo. “You are the living legacy of this division, from the stand on the Marne to

N. Africa, Anzio, the Colmar Pocket and Hitler’s lair. From covering the withdrawal at Hungnam and not giving up Outpost Harry in Korea, to crossing the berm in Iraq and coming back two, three, now four times – more than any other division – that is now you. “You’re a walking, talking representative example of 92 years of service and sacrifice ... you HAVE to

feel like you should stand a little taller, be better at your duties, and be prepared to put the mission first, never accept defeat, never quit, never leave a fallen comrade. You have to feel like your muscles are wrapped in every battle streamer on those division colors and everyone who went before you. Thousands of Dogface Soldiers, living and dead have their eyes on you 24x7 and expect you to dominate an enemy the way they did, and never let them or their memory down. So put on that patch today, and take this on. Continue the incredible tradition of this outfit thru your exceptional personal behavior.”

Following the formal ceremony, other servicemembers from the division and attached units, who had not yet received their combat patch, were given the opportunity to have their patch placed on their uniform by Maj. Gen. Cucolo, Command Sgt. Maj. Andrews or the person of their choice.

USD- N creates Marne Madness

By Spc. Michael Adams
TF Marne PAO

In the last few weeks, Soldiers have been following the 64 best teams in men's college basketball during March Madness.

To crown a champion of its own, Task Force Marne hosted 10 teams from throughout United States Division – North in a double elimination tournament aptly called Marne Madness.

The tournament started at 10 a.m. Thursday and was capped off Friday night after the championship between the once-defeated 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division Dragon and the undefeated 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, 25th Infantry Division "Wings."

With a win, the Dragons could force a second game against the Wings. They were able to do just that, winning 54-50.

The Wings were in top form early, jumping out to a 15-4 lead, but the Dragon's came roaring back, and cut the lead to 3 by halftime thanks to repeated fast-break opportunities. Wings maintained a lead for most of the second quarter, sloppy play and bad defense allowed the Dragons to take the lead in the final minutes. The Dragon forced a deciding game with a final score of 54-50.

The final game started with both sides playing sloppy basketball, Wings regrouped and willed their way to a 38-29 win and the Marne Madness championship.

Sergeant First Class Michael Delaney an air traffic control chief for 3-25th General Support Aviation Battalion, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, and a member of the Wings basketball team was happy to get the win.

The Syracuse, N.Y., native was happy to be a part of the tournament and the break from work.

"It feels good to get away and do something different for awhile," he said.

But playing all that basketball in two days had its bad side as well as its good.



Photo by Spc. Michael Adams, TF Marne PAO

Soldiers with the 25th CAB, 25th ID "Wings" basketball team hold onto their trophy after winning the Marne Madness Basketball Tournament, March 26, at COB Speicher. The Wings defeated the 4IBCT, 1st ID "Dragons" 38-29 to win the Marne Madness title.

"It (really) is madness trying to play that many games in a two-day period," he added. "For an old guy like myself, this is painful, but I really enjoyed it. With all of the young guys that can fly around and shoot, it makes me feel young again."

Captain Alphonso Gilmore, of Jefferson County, Ga., organized the event and was excited by how the Soldiers reacted.

"This is good for morale," he said. "This is needed for Soldiers of all ranks to clear their heads and just have fun."

Captain Gilmore was pleased with what he had seen over the course of the tournament.

"I think this has been an outstanding tournament," he said. "People have come up to me and said 'this is a good tournament.' I don't think anything like this would have happened in my last deployments."

But for him, it wasn't about the tournament it was about the Soldiers.

"This is a big part of morale," he said. "Being in Iraq, we're here to accomplish our mission, but it's always fun to free your mind and do things that you would do back in the states. I would like to thank all the Soldiers who participated in the tournament."

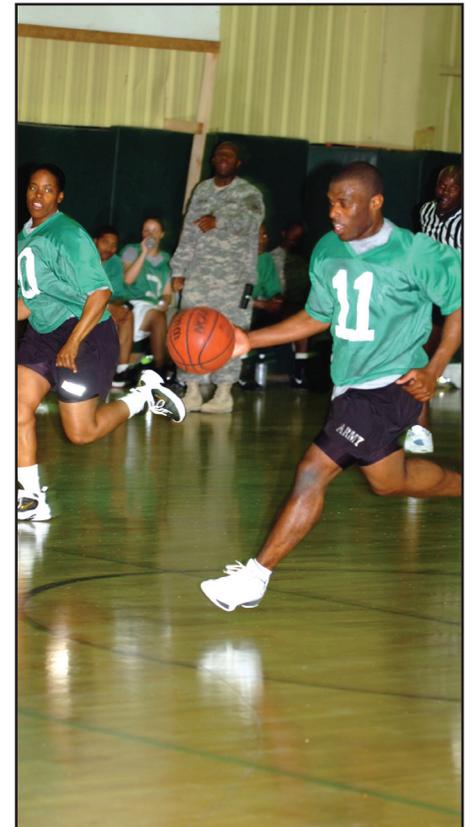


Photo by Spc. Michael Adams, TF Marne PAO

Specialist Shondale Jackson dribbles, while Staff Sgt. Alexis Holbert, runs up the court during the Marne Madness basketball tournament, March 26, at COB Speicher both with the DSTB "Legion," 3rd ID. The Legion fell to 4IBCT, 1st ID Dragons, 50-35.

Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Private First Class Daniel Morales, of Chicago, is a saw gunner assigned to Company C, 1st Platoon, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. While working as part of “Extreme Tomahawk School Makeover” in the city of Salaam, Pfc. Morales refurbished two classrooms while supervising four fellow Soldiers plastering, painting and installing new electrical wiring and lights and putting together several new desks making a lasting, positive impact for the children of Salaam during a 12-hour period. Private First Class Morales’ work ethic and dedication to duty and commitment to professional excellence are in keeping with the highest traditions of his company, his battalion and his brigade.



Specialist Corbin Dale, of Lexington, Ky., is with 724th Transportation Company, 264th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, has flawlessly executed countless convoys in support of United States Division - North as a tractor trailer driver. During his free time he volunteered as the unit carpenter. He designed Basic Issue Item Boxes that are now part of the unit’s standard operating procedure. The boxes are attached to the unit’s tractors and allows all vital BII and other necessary items to be carried on mission. This prevents theft of U.S. Army equipment outside the gate and allows the platoon to have a standard operating procedure for the placement of basic issue items. In order to recognize these accomplishments, he has been selected as today’s Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

You are invited

Four Horseman of the Arockalypse (3rd ID Band)

Where: FOB Q-West, Mosul, FOB Sykes, FOB Warrior
When: April 1-4, Time TBD

Paschal Divine Liturgy

Where: St. George’s Chapel, COB Speicher
When: April 4, 12:45 a.m.

Easter Sunrise Service

Where: Main Gym Stadium, COB Speicher
When: April 4

Chuck Mulligan (Hypnotist)

Where: COB Speicher, FOB Normandy, FOB Warhorse, COL Cobra, FOB Grizzly, COL Bernstein
When: April 4-8, Time TBD

Twista

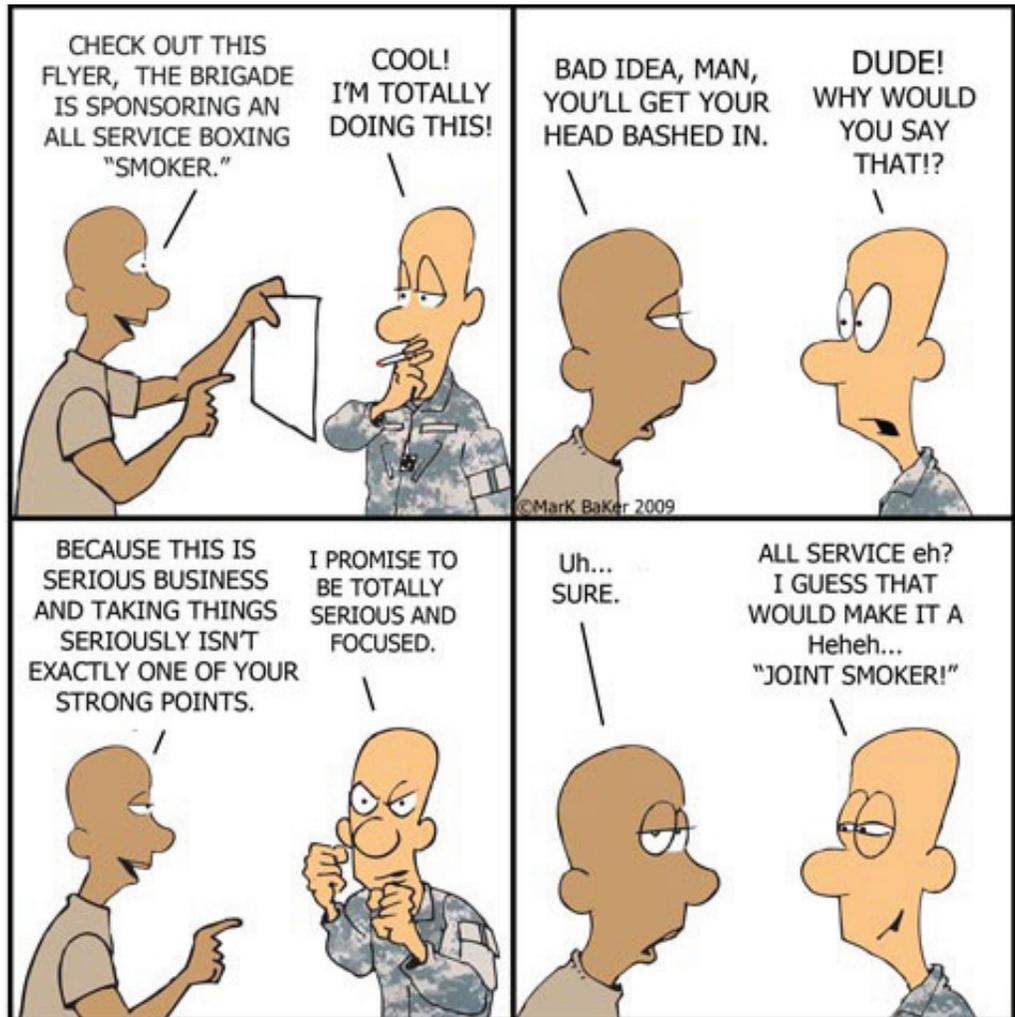
Where: FOB Q-West
When: April 14, Time TBD

Zac Brown Band

Where: FOB Warrior, Mosul
When: April 16-17, Time TBD

Darryl Worley

Where: COB Speicher
When: April 30, Time TBD



REGIONAL HEADLINES

Sinkhole forces Lithonia family from home

Atlanta Journal Constitution

LITHONIA, Ga. - The Corley family viewed their Lithonia home as part of the American Dream.

But then, as Anthony Corley put it, the yard fell in, literally.

The family's Shore Drive home is on a sinkhole, according to CBS Atlanta. They've spent nearly 10 years and \$30,000 trying to fix it, but now the family tells CBS Atlanta that it must move out.

"The damage is too far gone, it's beyond the driveway now," Corley told CBS Atlanta.

On top of that, the homeowner's insurance company dropped them, Corley said.

What's wrong?

Start with the cracks that run throughout the house, CBS said.

The driveway has collapsed – more than once – and the house has shifted to the point that it's "actually ripping the water lines away from the toilet," Corley told CBS.

And in the laundry room, the family can see gas and water lines because of a huge hole, he said.

DeKalb County has deemed the house dangerous, CBS said. The county replaced a pipe leading to a storm drain, and Corley said he thinks it's the faulty one that caused all of the problems.

"The hole is still ... every time it rains, the hole gets bigger and bigger."

School canceled 'due to good weather'

United Press International

BELLINGHAM, Wash. - The principal of a Washington state private school called off classes for a "Sun Day" declared "due to good weather."

Principal Bob Sampson of Bellingham Christian School sent e-mails to parents March 23 and posted a message on the school's Web site declaring a spontaneous day off March 24 to enjoy the sunny spring weather, Seattlepi.com reported March 25.

"Good morning students, parents and staff. Yes, It's a Sun Day! Wahooo," Sampson wrote on the Web site. "That's right, school is CANCELED today due to good weather! Enjoy!"

Sampson said the school had enough leftover snow days to compensate for the "Sun Day" and precedent was set for the nice day off during a similar closing three or four years ago.

He said the school board requires only that the temperature be at least 63 degrees with clear skies for such a closing.

The principal said he accommodated parents who could not afford to have their children at home March 24 by providing day care at the school.

He said five of the school's 183 students arrived to play the day away.

Woman threw baby in car to stop repo man

United Press International

DALLAS - Police in Dallas said a mother threw her 1-year-old baby into her Ford Expedition through the window to prevent a repo man from driving off with the vehicle.

Investigators said recovery agent Luke Ross, 31, had entered the vehicle March 22 and was preparing to drive away when Krystal Gardner, 28, threw her 1-year-old into the back seat through an open window, KTVT-TV, Dallas, reported March 25.

"When people know their car is up for repo, they will go to any extent to keep it," Ross said. "I open the door and I don't even have the door closed when I'm in. I put the key in and start it. I look out of the corner of my eye and I see a baby fly through the window."

Ross said the infant landed hard on the seat and immediately started crying.

He said he climbed out of the car in concurrence with laws preventing the repossession of occupied vehicles and was immediately confronted by a 15-year-old boy that was wielding a shotgun.

"He shot once in the air and then shot once at me and hit me with a couple of pellets in the leg. It's not worth taking someone's life over a car. We're just guys out here trying to make a living," Ross said.

THE

North Star

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

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

25th Combat Aviation Brigade,
25th Infantry Division
130th Engineer Brigade
135th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

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Editorial Staff

Managing Editor – Master Sgt. Marcia Triggs
Editor- Spc. Michael Adams