

The North Star

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



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Stingray crews complete 'no-fail' missions for VIPs regardless of weather conditions

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

On a May afternoon at Contingency Operating Base Speicher in Iraq, visibility diminished from three miles to one in less than an hour, enough to cancel all but the most critical aviation mis-

sions for the most experienced combat aviators.

For the air crew of the "Stingrays," Company A, 3-25th General Support Aviation Battalion, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, the extreme weather amounted to another challenging mis-

sion.

The Stingrays transport some of the most senior and influential personnel throughout U.S. Division - North. It's a "no-fail" mission and, by all accounts, one the unit has performed flawlessly since arriving in Iraq almost nine months ago.

"Our primary mission is to support the Task Force Marne and USD-N Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Tony Cucolo; the TF Marne Deputy Commanding General for Maneuver, Brig. Gen. Patrick Donahue; and the TF Marne Deputy Commanding General for Support, Brig. Gen. Thomas Vandal, as well as [certain] other general support missions," explained Capt. Bonnie Wood, commander, Co. A, 3-25th GSAB, and a native of Artemas, Pa. "The mission is critical because we allow Task Force Marne's senior leaders to move around their battle space quickly, safely and efficiently."

The Stingrays have accomplished their mission with about 50 Soldiers from two locations, COB Speicher, near Tikrit, Iraq, and Contingency Operating Loca-

tion Diamondback in Mosul, Iraq. They are doing it with UH-60L Black Hawk helicopters modified for their unique mission.

Each primary helicopter contains an Army Airborne Command and Control System, also referred to as the A2CS2, and an experienced signal support systems specialist to operate it.

The A2C2S functions like a mobile tactical operations center. In addition to multi-band and satellite radios, this airborne command and control system contains Command Post of the Future and Blue Force Tracker capabilities, among other systems. Both CPOF and BFT give the aircraft's general officer passengers unprecedented communication ability and situational awareness in flight.

Since October 2009, the Stingrays have flown more than 700 missions, accumulated more than 5,000 flight hours, and have earned high praise from TF Marne's most senior leader.

"Alpha Company and my particular pilot and air crew are absolutely invaluable to



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

Sergeant John Stefanik (top left), crew chief and mechanic, Sgt. Estevan Gonzales (right), signal support systems specialist and A2C2S operator, and Pfc. Rebecca Pottebaum (left), crew chief and mechanic, all assigned to Co. A, 3-25th GSAB, conduct pre-flight checks and inspections on a UH-60L Black Hawk at COB Speicher, May 20.

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Promotion reunites father, son in Iraq

By Pfc. Jessica Luhrs,
1BCT, 1st AD PAO

A smiling son and a father, beaming with pride, stood next to Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles on Forward Operating Base Warrior, Kirkuk, Iraq, saying their goodbyes, after reuniting for the first time in over a year.

After a month of planning and help from his chain of command, Sgt. 1st Class Steven Rider, a native of Lowville, N.Y., the brigade battle noncommissioned officer in charge with 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, out of Fort Drum, N.Y., boarded a flight to FOB Warrior, to see and promote his son Sgt. Timothy Miller, a team leader with Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, out of Fort Bliss, Texas, May 30.

Both of the chains of

command were very supportive and did everything they could to help arrange this, Sgt. 1st Class Rider said.

Sergeant Miller also agreed that his supervisor was very helpful. "When my chain of command got a phone call about my dad wanting to promote me, no questions were asked, they just wanted to make it happen," he said.

Upon Sgt. 1st Class Rider's arrival to FOB Warrior, he was reunited with his son and they spent their time hanging out, when Sgt. Miller got off work.

On their third and last day together, June 1, Sgt. 1st Class Rider had the opportunity to pin his son from specialist to sergeant.

Sergeant Miller has only been in a little over two years and he is already an NCO, as a father, Sgt. 1st Class Rider, said it made him really proud.

Sergeant First Class

Rider has been there for his son throughout his military career. "It means the world to do this. I was there for him when he enlisted, when he left for basic and now today the day he crosses over to be an NCO," said Sgt. 1st Class Rider, while he patted

his son on the back.

"It is an honor to have my dad here," said Sgt. Miller. "Other than having my wife here to see me getting promoted I couldn't have asked for anything more than for my dad to be here promoting me."



Photo by Pfc. Jessica Luhrs, 1BCT, 1st AD PAO

Sergeant First Class Steven Rider (right), 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. battle NCOIC, poses with his son Sgt. Timothy Miller, a team leader with Btry. A, 2/3 FA Regt., 1st BCT, 1st AD, after pinning the sergeant rank on him, June 1.

26th BSB surgeon awarded for service in White House



Photo by Master Sgt. Duff McFadden, 2HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

Colonel Daniel Parks, battle surgeon for 26th BSB, 2nd HBCT, 3rd ID, is presented the Defense Superior Service Medal for his duties as a White House physician, during a ceremony at COS Marez in Mosul.

By Master Sgt. Duff McFadden
2BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

It's a long way from the hallowed walls of the White House to the dusty environs of northern Iraq, and for Col. Daniel Parks, the 26th Base Support Battalion surgeon, it's been a wild ride.

From September 2001 to March 2009, this Canton, Mass., resident served as one of the six White House physicians for U.S. Presidents George W. Bush and Barrack Obama.

Quiet and professional, Col. Parks recently received the Defense Superior Service Medal for his duties as a White House physician in a ceremony with the 26th Base Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, in Mosul, Iraq.

With six White House physicians on

the staff at any one time – two from the Army, two from the Navy and two from the Air Force – the Army Medical Branch nominates six physicians. This list, in turn, is scoured by the Department of the Army and then passed along to the White House, who selects three personnel for interviews.

Those selectees underwent three days of interviews at the White House and the following day, Col. Parks received the phone call stating the job was his. "I was totally excited. I mean, this was an opportunity of a lifetime."

His first day of work was Sept. 11, 2001 – he quickly learned the ropes.

After undergoing Emergency Medical training and Nuclear, Biological and Chemical training, he began work-

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my mission," said Maj. Gen. Cucolo.

"We operate in a huge battle space, so much of which is only accessible by rotary-wing aircraft.

Many of the locations I need to go are only accessible by rotary wing. As the commanding general, I simply must have the ability to pick up and move quickly. Alpha Company provides me that ability.

"They also bring much needed agility," continued Maj. Gen. Cucolo. "There have been instances, for example, where I will be meeting with a Sheik in far western Ninewah province and, over the radio, my aide-de-camp will receive word that I am needed in Kirkuk province.

It won't be something that's part of the day's flight plan, but the pilots and air crew who I have are capable of adjusting.

They do it every day, and they bring a level of credibility that makes me feel like I can really do anything, anytime, anywhere. They have done a fantastic job for us. They are all great Soldiers and I am proud to serve with them."

According to Capt. Wood, her unit's success is due, in large part, to the competence of the maintenance test pilots and platoon sergeants who manage a variety of daily, scheduled and phase maintenance demands, as well as the

extraordinary depth of experience of the unit's aviators and air crews.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Boley, instructor pilot and primary CAC pilot, and Sgt. John Stefanik, crew chief and UH-60L Black Hawk mechanic, are two Co. A, 3-25th GSAB Soldiers with prior CAC experience in combat.

Both appreciate the role the Stingrays play in facilitating TF Marne's mission throughout USD-N.

"I am an instructor pilot, but my primary job is to facilitate movement of the commanding general anywhere he needs to go," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Boley, a native of St. Louis.

"Most of us have done this type of mission before. We understand the need to be flexible and dynamic, and to take the general wherever his mission dictates.

"I do mean anywhere," he continued. "For instance, there are times when Maj. Gen. Cucolo needs to land in the middle of the desert and link up with a ground unit operating somewhere in USD-North. So, really, whether it's an established forward operating base or a simple grid location in a remote location it doesn't matter. We do it and I enjoy it."

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Boley's senior crew chief similarly loves performing CAC duties.

"I love this mission because you really feel like you are part of the game so-to-speak, not sitting on the sidelines," explained Sgt. Stefanik, a native of Houston, Texas, who now calls Pensacola, Fla., home.

"We're successful because we have all done this before. We understand the unique equipment requirements ... that a general officer needs. We make sure we're professional and just do what we are all trained to do during every mission."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mike Alberts, 25CAB, 25th Inf. Div. PAO
Task Force Marne Commanding General Maj. Gen. Tony Cucolo, communicates with his command and control team and aide-de-camp from the rear compartment of a UH-60L Black Hawk helicopter maintained and operated by Soldiers from Co. A, 3-25th GSAB, 25 CAB, 25th ID, from COB Speicher, near Tikrit, Iraq, May 20.

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ing side-by-side with the Secret Service and the Marine One air squadron and the Air Force One air crews.

There's always a physician and nurse within two minutes of the president at all times and a physician or physician's assistant with the vice president at all times. It's the responsibility of every medical responder to keep the president and vice president alive until they reach a medical center or medical trauma center.

Part of their mission also consisted of acute care for the president the vice president and their families, also the Secret Service, whether on the road or in the White

House complex.

"Basically we were a small, special operations unit of silent professionals. We had a mission to do, and we did it."

While the position had its benefits, the hardest part had to be the time spent away from home.

"I was away for two- to two-and-a-half weeks a month. It was a 24/7 job and I was always on my blackberry, or watching the TV news. If there was a tornado in the Midwest, we would have to start planning on how to move assets there in case of an impromptu visit by the president.

"Any time we travel, our

mission was to coordinate a contingency plan for anything that could happen. We had to have every possible medical plan in place, no matter where the president or vice president was."

The position is normally a three-year tour, but he was asked to extend by President Bush's administration, and then he assisted with the transition of President Obama's administration.

Once the transition was completed, he began duties at the Pentagon Flight Medical Clinic, where he served as the Army flight surgeon.

However, within three months of Pentagon duty he

received orders to the 26th BSB, 2nd HBCT, to serve as their battalion surgeon.

He deployed to Mosul, Iraq, with the unit. However, he will redeploy this summer to continue his duties at the Pentagon.

Besides retirement in another two years, Col. Parks said he has no idea what he "wants to do when I grow up." He said he'll probably stay in the D.C. area, as he has three children in Maryland -- twins, a boy and girl who are 15 years of age and another daughter, age 12.

Until then, he will reflect on one the most memorable positions anyone could serve in.

Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Specialist Ranferi Jaimes, of Wichita Falls, Texas, is with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. He distinguished himself during Operation Chelan by rendering life-saving treatment to six Iraqi soldiers and policemen who collapsed due to heat exhaustion. Specialist Jaimes carried two cases of water more than a kilometer over mountainous terrain in order to rehydrate the fallen Iraqi Army soldiers and Federal Police officers. Immediately upon arrival, Specialist Jaimes began accurately assessing and triaging casualties and preparing litters to transport them to low ground. Once all injured personnel were evacuated from the hilltop, Spc. Jaimes assisted in clearing a landing zone for casualty evacuation aircraft to evacuate injured members of the Iraqi Security Forces. Specialist Jaimes unequivocally demonstrated the Army values and left an unforgettable impression of caring for one's fallen comrades upon our partnered ISF. His dedication and attention to detail is what makes him today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Private First Class Joshua Gilbert, of Syracuse, N.Y., is with the 130th Engineer Brigade. His hard work and dedication have been instrumental to his platoon's success. On April 10 he found an improvised explosive device while conducting route clearance along an alternate supply route. Private First Class Gilbert initially identified a string running across the road. Upon a more detailed investigation, the platoon found a victim-operated IED, consisting of a propane tank filled with homemade explosives. His expert operation of his assigned vehicle allowed his platoon leader to carefully investigate the source of the string in difficult terrain. Private First Class Gilbert's keen eye and ability to maneuver his vehicle through many obstacles was key to ensuring freedom of maneuver along a key alternate supply route. For his exemplary performance, he is most worthy of being selected as today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

Safety Thought of the Week: Pinch Points

- *Identify pinch points on all vehicles and equipment.*
- *Review hazard areas as part of pre-mission brief.*
- *Label pinch points when possible.*
- *Look out for your Battle Buddy as well as yourself.*
- *Announce the intent to close/open doors and hatches or rotate turrets.*
- *Visually ensure Soldiers are clear before opening/closing doors and hatches.*



Sudoku

Answers will be in Monday's North Star

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REGIONAL HEADLINES

40,000 gather to watch 2,000 candles float to sea

Honolulu Star-Bulletin

HONOLULU - More than 40,000 people watched some 2,000 floating lanterns drift to sea June 1, from Ala Moana Beach, ferrying wishes of healing and peace and honoring those who have died under hardships.

The 12th annual Lantern Floating Hawaii, with the theme "Many Rivers, One Ocean," brought together people of different cultures and beliefs yesterday, focusing on harmony and the hope of world peace.

The lantern-floating occasion, organized by the Na Lei Aloha Foundation and the Buddhist denomination Shinnyo-en, is an Asian spiritual tradition held in Japan at the end of summer as a conclusion of the Obon festival, honoring ancestors. As Memorial Day honored the war dead in the United States June 1, Lantern Floating Hawaii also recognized ancestors and others who have died in calamities including famine, accidents, diseases and disasters.

The Rev. Shinso Ito, head of the Shinnyo-en, said Lantern Floating Hawaii represents the harmonious relationship of the Obon festival and Memorial Day.

The event, opening with a mixture of Japanese taiko drumming, Western music and Hawaiian chant and hula, was attended by elected officials including U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye,

Lt. Gov. James "Duke" Aiona and Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann. Police estimated the crowd at more than 40,000 people.

Ito said the idea for the event started 40 years ago, when she and her father visited the memorials at Pearl Harbor and Punchbowl.

Ito, who succeeded her father as leader of Shinnyo-en upon his death in 1989, said she was grateful for the public support in Hawaii, and she knows her father would have been pleased with the event.

"He would be so happy to see so many find peace and harmony," she said. "This is a harmonious event, a collaboration of cultures."

At the end of the ceremony, each reusable lantern is collected, cleaned and restored.

Shinnyo-en, meaning "a borderless garden of truth," was founded in the 1930s by Ito's father, Shinjo Ito. The denomination has some 100 temples and an estimated 1 million members in several countries, including the United States, Korea, United Kingdom, France, Italy and Germany.

Honolulu resident Ashley Bosque took the opportunity to honor Dominador Navarro Bosque Jr., "who fought a long and hard battle with cancer."

"I miss watching sports and spending time with you. I miss your smiles, hugs, and will always admire your strength. I love and miss you dearly," she wrote.

Job posting excludes unemployed

United Press International

ATLANTA - A Florida-based recruiting company said an Atlanta job posting excluding the unemployed is representative of a growing trend among employers.

Orlando-based, The People Place posted an opening for a Sony Ericsson marketing position in Atlanta with a note at the end reading: "No unemployed candidates will be considered at all," WXIA-TV, Atlanta, reported June 1.

Howard Lawson, a recruiter for The People Place, declined to specifically comment on the posting, but he said there is a "growing trend" of companies seeking to only hire the currently employed.

An Atlanta recruiter unrelated to the posting said companies are employing talent search firms to help find passive job seekers, defined as currently employed people interested in taking new jobs.

The People Place's posting for the Sony Ericsson job was modified Monday afternoon to remove the note at the end, WXIA said.

D-Main TMC Hours

Mon - Sat: 8 a.m. - 10 a.m.

3 p.m. - 5 p.m.

For emergencies, visit the
24th CSH, open 24 hours a day

THE North Star

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4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team,
1st Infantry Division
2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team,
3rd Infantry Division

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

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