

# The North Star

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



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## Tenacious three days Medic teams demonstrate 'know' in challenge

By Sgt. Johnathon Jobson  
TF Marne PAO

Be, Know, Do. These words are part of the core philosophy for the Army Corps of Noncommissioned Officers. To push the Soldiers of his unit to live up to the "know" and to build unit esprit de corps, Command Sgt. Maj. Gerald Ecker, the command sergeant major for the 21st Combat Support Hospital, designed the "Iron Bear -- No Fear" challenge.

### Winners of the "Iron Bear-No Fear" challenge by Location:

#### Team Extreme - COB Speicher:

1st Lt. Jaime Porras  
Sgt. Joshua Cervantes  
Cpl. Viviana Rascon  
Cpl. Victoria Salyers  
Spc. Zack Hudson

#### Team Hard Core - Al Asad Air Base:

Sgt. Sean McNair  
Spc. Michael Sanchez  
Spc. Rachel Cunningham  
1st Lt. Marissa Bernadette  
Lt. Col. Steven Wagers

#### Team Shake-n-Bake - COS Diamondback:

Capt. Megan Morgan  
Sgt. George Rush  
Sgt. Dale Rojas  
Spc. Jonathan Tschudi  
Spc. Nathan Westrick

Held May 28, 29 and June 1 at Contingency Operating Base Speicher; June 4 to 6 at Al-Asad Air Base; and June 6 to 8 at Contingency Operating Site Marez, the challenge was created to test Soldiers' knowledge of basic military tasks and the medical skills that are required for their jobs.

The competition was team based. And although the challenge was primarily based on the medical field, not all participants were medics.

"Each team had to consist of one officer, one noncommissioned officer, one junior enlisted, and one female Soldier," explained Spc. Zack Hudson, a communications specialist with Company B, 21st CSH, and Mobile, Ala., native.

"Once those requirements were met the remaining team members could be any rank or gender."

The physical events consisted of the modified Army physical fitness test; half-mile, patient-litter carry, made harder by having the "patient" hold on to a raw egg. If the patient or egg was dropped, or damaged, the team would lose points.

The primary physical event that day was a six mile tactical movement, while trying to evade a tactical "enemy" force. To increase the challenge of the event the team also had to be able to recite all six articles of the Code of Conduct.

The teams were thoroughly tested each day on their abilities to perform at maximum capacity while maintaining



Photo by Spc. Dustin Gautney, 2nd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO  
**Sergeant George Rush, 21st CSH, applies an intravenous catheter to himself during a three-day combat medic competition held at COS Marez/Diamondback, June 6-8.**

their composure.

Each day also had its share of technical events.

Day one's events required that the Soldiers know how to properly evaluate a crater caused by indirect fire and report the incident to their higher command.

Day two brought knot tying for safety harnesses, hasty rappelling, and demonstrating, as a team, how to create a one-rope bridge. The teams then

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# U.S. troops in Vietnam help CSM make life decision

By Maj. Stephen Holt  
2nd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

The Vietnam War had a tremendous impact on the lives of many people, especially following the fall of Saigon in April 1975.

In particular, the war impacted Command Sgt. Maj. Hai Dang and his Family, who emigrated to the U.S. following the war's end.

Along with an estimated 1.4 million refugees who resettled to the United States, was the command sergeant major of 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, Command Sgt. Maj. Dang.

He came with his mother, sister, two brothers, and three aunts. Life in a new country wasn't easy and brought with it many things that took getting used to.

"One of the first American foods I had was a McDonalds hamburger. I thought it was amazing," Command Sgt. Maj. Dang, an Oxnard, Calif., resident, said. "Something that came out of a wrapper with no preparation

needed, and you just stick it in your mouth and eat it. I thought it was wonderful!"

After arriving to the U.S., it took a while for him and his Family to adjust to the change in culture and their new way of life. It was immediately following the war and life for immigrants, particularly the Vietnamese, wasn't easy.

"We looked and acted like refugees. I remember stepping in front of the automatic door at the supermarket and getting spooked when it would stay open. I remember seeing all the vegetables neatly stacked. It wasn't like an open market in Vietnam with flies and dirt; it was nice and clean," he said.

Command Sergeant Major Dang said his decision to join the Army was the best one he made, although his mother was against the idea.

Memories of American Soldiers in his homeland helped form his decision.

"I remember the American Soldiers in Saigon where I would do various work for them. They were big, powerful men in uniform that wielded authority," Command Sgt. Maj. Dang said. "Once in a while, I would get lucky and they would give me a dollar. Back in those days I could buy a lot of stuff with a dollar.

"That memory helped me decide what I wanted to be. It was a sense of duty, a sense of giving back. I'm the only member of my Family to join the military. I wanted to be an American and the quickest way to citizenship was by being a Soldier," he said.

Not only did he fulfill his dream of becoming an American citizen during his 27 years in the Army, but his decision to join the Army has given him more opportunities than he imagined.

"From my perspective, I get paid for everything: I get clothes; I get fed; I've seen more of the world than all my Family combined; I get a chance to experience more than my Family can imagine. That was the best decision I could possibly make for myself," Command Sgt. Maj. Dang said.

There have been many high points during his years in service – from the

first time he put on a uniform at basic training in Fort Sill, Okla.; to when he became a sergeant; to when he trained Soldiers as a drill sergeant; to when he graduated from Recondo School.

But the event that stands out in his mind is becoming a howitzer section chief.

"That's the first time I was really in charge of Soldiers," Command Sgt. Maj. Dang said. "There is something about being a first-line supervisor, where he makes a difference in whether the section succeeds, does poorly, or is able to meet the mission. He determines whether the Soldiers get chaptered out, or are able to make the rank of command sergeant major.

"That's where the rubber meets the road. It's an opportunity to make a difference," he said.

"I cannot imagine what I would be doing if I were still in Vietnam. But it definitely would not be as rewarding as being in charge of a battalion ... and making a difference in the lives of those Soldiers," Command Sgt. Maj. Dang said.

Last year Command Sgt. Maj. Dang had a chance to visit his Family, some of whom he hadn't seen since 1975. Most importantly, he visited the graves of his grandmother and grandfather. Vietnam has changed a lot since he left, but there are things that still remain.

"The big bomb crater is still there, but it's covered by foliage and filled with water. Although the physical hole is still there, time has allowed the foliage to cover it up," he said.

"Although America is my home, there is still a Vietnam inside me where I feel a welcome when I go back," he said. "If you ask any Asian-American, they will say, 'I am an American.' If they were born in their homeland, you will never take that part of them out. There is a memory of what life used to be, that will be with them forever."

Following his deployment to Iraq, Command Sgt. Maj. Dang plans to get an assignment where he can transition and eventually retire. His goal is to give 30 years of service to his naturalized country.



Photo by Spc. Gregory Gieske, 2nd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO  
**Command Sergeant Major Hai Dang, the command sergeant major for the 1st FA, 2nd HBCT, 3rd ID, feels he's making a difference in the lives of his Soldiers, while deployed to Mosul, Iraq. Seeing American Soldiers in Vietnam, as he was growing up, influenced him to join the U.S. Army, where he recently reached 27 years of service.**



# Airman spreads happiness through soccer balls

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

When Airmen 1st Class Joey Granado, a native of Dallas, and firefighter with 506th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, Crash-Fire-Rescue, from Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., isn't working around Forward Operating Base Warrior, Kirkuk, Iraq, as a firefighter, he is in charge of the program Operation Soccer Ball, which collects soccer balls to give to the children of Kirkuk.

Soccer has always been a way for U.S. servicemembers to connect with children in Iraq. Operation Soccer Ball, gives people in the states a chance to be involved in creating memo-

ries for these children, according to Airmen 1st Class Granado.

The program was started in Kirkuk last year by members of the Rising Four Club, a club for junior-enlisted servicemembers at FOB Warrior.

Since then the club has collected more than 2,000 soccer balls for the children, according to Airmen 1st Class Granado.

"We receive many of the donations because of word-of-mouth. Many of the firefighters have called their bases back home and told their Families to send as many soccer balls as they can to us," he said.

The Rising Four Club accepts donations from people in the U.S., and then gives



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

**Airmen 1st Class Joey Granado, with 506th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, Crash-Fire-Rescue, from Tinker AFB, Okla., poses, while on FOB Warrior.**

the soccer balls to Soldiers of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division out of Fort Bliss, Texas, to pass out to children.

Airmen 1st Class Granado

hopes while he is here he can spread the program across Iraq.

"I hope to get the program started in many different cities before I leave Iraq in September," said Airmen 1st Class Granado, who has collected more than 400 soccer balls in a month for Kirkuk children.

To help spread the program, he said the Rising Four Club members have been contacting servicemembers on different bases and helping them get started with the program.

"We always hear stories about how excited the children in Kirkuk are to receive the soccer balls, and we want to continue to make the same positive impact across Iraq," he said.

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had to cross a "river" using the safety harness made earlier.

On the third day of the competition Soldiers had to demonstrate that they knew the proper steps for performing combat casualty care and a medical evacuation.

They were also required to give themselves an intravenous catheter, mostly referred to as an IV.

"The competition definitely built upon the unit's esprit de corps," said Capt. Megan Morgan, the commander of Co. A, 21st CSH at COS Marez, and a participant in the challenge. "For me, not coming from the medical field, it was an amazing opportunity to learn so much from the Soldiers and noncommissioned officers who are absolute masters at their field."



Photo by Spc. Dustin Gautney, 2nd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

**Captain Megan Morgan (right), commander of Co. A, 21st CSH, applies a tourniquet while Staff Sgt. Damien Williams, 21st CSH, times and grades her during a three-day combat medic competition held at COS Marez/Diamondback, June 6-8.**



## Don't forget Father's Day Sunday, June 20

## Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Sergeant Leslie Clement, of Brooklyn, N.Y., is with the 130th Engineer Brigade. He serves as a construction surveyor, assigned as team leader, machine gunner, and driver on the brigade commander's team. He has spent countless hours of his personal time designing and fabricating six large coin displays, which were presented to the senior officer and enlisted leaders of the brigade, the 3rd Infantry Division, and Command Post North. Sergeant Clement has also personally designed and fabricated numerous other projects, to include the display for a brigade noncommissioned officer induction ceremony and 24 custom knife holders. Sergeant Clement primarily uses Purple Heart Wood, which is notorious for being one of the hardest of the hardwoods to work with, known to break tools and master carpenters alike, and demanding the utmost patience from the craftsman. Sergeant Clement has done all of this while performing admirably on security team missions and taking time to mentor Soldiers. Sergeant Clement and his actions reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army, and make him a most deserving of recognition as the Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Sergeant Angie Kim, of Portland, Ore., is with 2-25 Assault Helicopter Battalion, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, 25th Infantry Division. She serves as the production control day shift noncommissioned officer in charge for her company and recently distinguished herself by maintaining the operational focus of the Production Control Section; the section responsible for her unit's helicopter maintenance, in the absence of the battalion maintenance officer. She performed exceptionally well, serving and leading in a position that is normally filled by a sergeant first class during the highest flight operational period thus far during the deployment. She demonstrated exceptional leadership, and her management skills were exceptional. She is a combat multiplier who enabled the task force to sustain combat power for operational requirements throughout United States Division - North. In addition, Sgt. Kim won the Battalion NCO of the Month Board. She truly has the warrior spirit and her achievements have earned her the honor of being selected as today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

## Christians in Iraq possess thousands of years of history

### Cultural Tidbit Special to the North Star

Today's Iraqi Christians existed in Iraq some 5,000 years before Christianity as the Chaldean and Assyrian Empires. At the end of the first century, St. Thomas travelled to Iraq along with two of his students, Addie and Mari, and started to spread the teachings of Christianity in the Tikrit area and then all over Iraq.

Before 2003, the largest Christian communities were found in Baghdad and some northern cities such as Kirkuk, Mosul, Irbil, Dahuk, and Sulaymaniyah. Smaller communities of Christians are also found in the other provinces such as Basra, Maysan, and Anbar.

Out of a population of 24.2 million, Christians constitute only three percent for a total number of approximately 800,000 people. They belong to different denominations and

rites such as the Assyrian-Nestorian Church, the Syriac-Catholic Church, the Syriac-Orthodox Church; the Armenian Orthodox Church, and the Catholic Church.

From the beginning of Christianity, there was only one church in Iraq, the Nestorian Church (the Eastern Church). In the 16th century, due to corruption in the old church, Catholicism entered Iraq, and the church was split into two major dominations. The Catholics were called Chaldeans after the ancient Chaldean Empire in Babylon whose most famous leader was Hammurabi.

The Nestorians were called Assyrians after the Assyrian Empire. Twenty years ago, efforts were started between the two churches to unite again under the banner of The Eastern Church of Iraq.

Since Islam entered Iraq during the 7th century, Christians had good rela-

tions with the Muslims without any incidents of violence, discrimination or intolerance marring their coexistence.

During the 9th Century, many scientists, doctors, and scholars who were Christians worked for the Caliph, the ruler of the Abbasid era (758 – 1258). These men also aided the expansion of human knowledge by translating scientific writings from Greek and Syriac to Arabic.

Since the collapse of the Ba'ath regime in 2003, religious persecution from violent extremist organizations, have forced many Iraqi Christians to find refuge in neighboring countries to Iraq. There are also tens of thousands of Christians who have become Internally Displaced Persons and live in the Ninawa Plains and in Kurdistan area.

*Editor's note: The Task Force Marne Human Terrain Analyst Team contributed to this cultural tidbit.*

## REGIONAL HEADLINES

### Highway rest area closed due to snoozing black bear

[KOMOnews.com](http://KOMOnews.com)

ELMA, Wash. - A rest area on Highway 8 at Elma, a city located in western Washington, has been closed indefinitely due to a black bear that is making itself at home there.

The rest area was closed at 5 p.m., June 6, and is expected to remain

closed overnight.

"The bear is still there," said Kelly Stowe of the state Department of Transportation.

"It's up in a tree, and so our maintenance crews are out - they've cordoned off the area."

Stowe said the bear is sleeping in a tree between the rest rooms and the parking area for trucks and RVs.

The Department of Fish & Wildlife

can't remove the bear because it could fall and injure itself if it were hit by a tranquilizer dart while laying in the tree.

"My best advice if you're heading eastbound on State Route 8 is to use the facilities at home before you go or wait until you pass the rest area - because until the bear is out of the area they're not going to open it up to the public," Stowe said.



You're invited to a summer bash that will be patriotic, energetic and entertaining. Task Force Marne will celebrate the Army's 235th birthday, June 13 with a live, musical tribute that will give you a glimpse into American history.

Stand proudly and honor Soldiers, both past and present, who are responsible for building the United States' most powerful military force.

The emotionally-provoking ceremony will begin at 5 p.m. in the COB Speicher Main Gym, and the event will conclude with a barbecue at the Speicher Stadium, beginning at 6 p.m. It's not really summer until you enjoy a grilled burger with a refreshing drink.

### THE North Star

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2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team,  
3rd Infantry Division

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#### Editorial Staff

Managing Editor - Master Sgt. Marcia Triggs

Editor- Spc. Michael Adams