

# The North Star

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



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## Tattered stars, stripes stir deep emotions for 2nd HBCT commander

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

“I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands ...”

It goes by many names – Old Glory, the Stars and Stripes, and the Red, White and Blue – but no matter what you call it, the United States flag represents a unified country, indivisible, with freedom and justice for all.

However, for one U.S. servicemember, one, specific U.S. flag provides a far more personal representation. Although worn, tattered, and frayed at the edges, it has witnessed the highs and lows of six different military deployments and has flown in five different countries.

This specific flag has special meaning for Col. Chuck Sexton, the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team Commander, 3rd Infantry Division, who has carried it with him for the past 24 years.

The respect he has for this flag is a quality bestowed upon him by his parents.

“It’s more than just the cloth and material that gives this flag its special mean-

ing. It represents the cause for which Soldiers have given their lives. It represents the Soldiers who serve their country, putting themselves into harm’s way, preserving the freedoms we enjoy today,” Col. Sexton said.

“Both my mother and father’s families were immigrants to the United States, who left Europe to get away from oppression and slavery in Eastern and Western Europe,” said Col. Sexton, a New York City native.

“When they came to this country they valued the country so much they defended it during World War II. They taught me as a kid growing up, to always respect my country and flag.”

Respect for the flag has carried over to Col. Sexton’s military service. After his initial enlistment as a private, he was commissioned as an infantry second lieutenant, July 1985.

“It’s something that’s very comforting to bring with me each time I go,” said the self-assured New Yorker. “When I flew it in Somalia, it got some battle damage there. It also got some



Photo by Spc. Gregory Gieske, 2nd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

**Colonel Chuck Sexton, 2nd HBCT, 3rd ID commander folds his American flag that has travelled with him on multiple deployments.**

damage in the first Gulf War. It’s very comforting to have it with you. Usually I keep it folded now, because it’s frayed at the edges in a couple of places and it’s got some shrapnel rips in it.

“In the first Gulf War the Stars and Stripes got a little greyer from the oil fires. It took a little bit of shrapnel from Iraqi artillery and it put a couple of rips in it. The

wind was really strong then, so it kind of unraveled a little bit at the ends too.”

Colonel Sexton said he remembers, with clarity, a windy day, Feb. 27, 1991, after they captured the Jalibah Airfield, a place south of Talil, along Highway 8, during Operation Desert Storm.

“After we captured the air-

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# NCO departs to support daughter during operation

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

Haley Moss is a 15-year-old girl who was diagnosed at the age of four with two rare heart conditions, Double Outlet Right Ventricle, and Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome, a condition in which both her primary artery and vein share the right side of her abnormal three-chambered heart.

Her father, Sgt. 1st Class David Moss, is the general support squad noncommissioned officer with the 209th Military Intelligence Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, and will be leaving his post at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, to be with Haley as she ventures to the Boston Children's Hospital for her third open heart surgery.

"Her plumbing's all jacked up," said Sgt. 1st Class Moss. "What this causes is that she only gets 75 percent

"The military has been very good at giving me time off when she has an attack or needs treatment. When I was working at a civilian job my boss wasn't as understanding and it was really hard for me to get time off."

*-Sergeant First Class David Moss, general support squadron NCO, 209th MI Co., 296th BSB 3rd SBCT, 2nd ID*

of the oxygen she needs to her blood, so she doesn't have a lot of energy. She can walk a little bit, but she gets tired easily and she usually has blue fingertips and blue lips."

In addition to the heart conditions, she also suffers from tachycardia attacks. The irregular blood flow causes her resting heart rate to rapidly increase to a point that can be fatal if not treated right away.

"About twice a month her heart will instantly go from [a normal] 98bpm (beats per minute) to 180bpm," said Sgt. 1st Class Moss. "We have to rush her to the emergency room where they give her medicine through an IV to slow her heart down."

Instead of struggling with expensive hospital bills for her repeated visits, all her treatments have been paid for by TRICARE, the U.S. Military's health insurance program.

This requires her to go to Madigan Army Medical Center, located at Joint Base Lewis-McCord, Wash., where the doctors and nurses have assisted Haley with her every need.

"Everywhere we've been has had an Army cardiologist that's done a great job with Haley," said Sgt. 1st Class Moss.

Sergeant First Class Moss took a break from his Army career in the 90s just before Haley's birth. Working at a manufacturing plant, he struggled to find the time to be at his daughter's side when she needed him the most.

This, and mounting medical care costs, prompted him to return to active duty.

"The military has been very good

at giving me time off when she has an attack or needs treatment," said Sgt. 1st Class Moss.

"When I was working at a civilian job my boss wasn't as understanding and it was really hard for me to get time off."

Eventually she was referred to the specialists in Boston. The operation Haley will undergo is called a Fontan procedure.

This surgery will re-route some of her blood vessels to pass through her lungs, allowing more oxygen to enter her blood stream.

"If this procedure is successful, she shouldn't go into tachycardia anymore, and she shouldn't have to go to the emergency room anymore," said Haley's father.

"The best thing is that it should give her more energy. It'll take her from 75 percent oxygen to 85 percent or maybe even 90 percent."

Haley and the rest of her Family will take the journey to Boston in July for this procedure. She is expected to stay in the hospital for three weeks before making a full recovery.

"This will help her to walk further and be able to walk up and down stairs without tiring so easily," said Sgt. 1st Class Moss. "It'll also take pressure off her lungs and help her heart heal better."

Despite all these complications and time missed from school to be in the hospital, Haley has maintained straight As, and intends to continue her academic success by pursuing a degree in medicine.

"She wants to be a doctor, or do something in the medical field," said Sgt. 1st Class Moss.

"I don't know if she'll physically be able to be a doctor, but she'll be able to help out people with a condition like hers."

There is no cure for her condition, but operations such as this one can make life more enjoyable.

Although Sgt. 1st Class Moss believes his daughter may never have the normal physical capabilities that most people take for granted, he is confident that Haley will be able to live an easier life for years to come.



Courtesy Photo

**Sergeant First Class David Moss, the general support squadron NCO for the 209th MI Co., 296th BSB 3rd SBCT, 2nd ID, shows his daughter Haley how to hold an M-4 right before he deployed to Iraq from JB Lewis-McCord, Wash., in December.**



## Desert Training



Photo by Sgt. Shantelle Campbell, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. PAO

(Right) Private Patrick Menzie of Haverhill, Mass., an infantryman with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, out of Fort Riley, Kan., tallies his score during a weapons zero and qualification range, June 18 at Contingency Operating Base Speicher. "Anytime you can (conduct) individual training or collective training during peacetime, back in (garrison) or in combat; it keeps the Soldiers on edge, and it makes sure their skills are honed," said Command Sgt. Maj. Michael McCoy, command sergeant major of the 'Dragon' brigade.

### Continued from FLAG, Page 1

field, at eight o'clock in the morning and things were still smoking, we pulled out our flags because we had them stowed during the attack.

"I mounted mine on top of the truck. It was for a good reason – part of it was for morale and the other was so we wouldn't get hit by our own aircraft. It was a really good feeling to see the good old Stars and Stripes unfurled and flying in the breeze. You heard a lot of the guys cheering and it was a good feeling, seeing that flag flying."

It flew every day, and was then re-folded until his next deployment, when he was called to serve in Somalia in 1993, where it was unfurled and once more flew on a daily basis.

"Now, when someone asks me to re-enlist them, or asks me to promote them, I always bring it with me," said Col. Sexton.

"It's kind of neat to look over the last 20-plus years and the number of people that have stood under that flag with their hands up swearing an oath

– either an Oath of Re-enlistment, or an oath to our nation. It's easily in the hundreds now.

"It's even neater to watch the Soldiers you've been with. It causes it to become more tangible and more of a living thing. That is the most critical part – it represents the people. That's what makes our country great. It's the people it represents, instead of one specific leader. The flag talks about that continuity," he said, with a knowing smile.

### **Safety Thought of the Week: Awareness, the first step in prevention**

*The three areas of greatest, unnecessary risk to TF Marne Soldiers involve vehicle operations, weapons handling, and personal injuries. Actions to prevent accidents and reduce losses can be taken once leaders are aware and focused on the problem. Awareness of the risks to Soldiers is essential for developing a coherent plans that reduce risk to Soldiers and material resources. Soldiers that are informed and aware of hazards can also take proper countermeasures: Identify and address the worst risks first; Act to reduce the risk by implementing and enforcing the proper controls.*

***Remember: Safety is leadership in action***



## Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Specialist Ty Veltre, of Fort Worth, Texas, is with 3rd Battalion, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. He actively operates on a combined checkpoint in the Ninewa province. He helps conduct regular patrols with the Iraqi Army and the Regional Guard Brigade to help secure the combined security area; show the local populace how Iraqi, Kurdish and American forces are working together; and help ensure their trust in their country's soldiers. Soldiers from each force work together by accepting each others' cultures and overcome language barriers to ensure successful missions. Specialist Veltre has been called on numerous times to serve as a team leader. The role of a team leader carries the tremendous responsibility of being in charge of four to five Soldiers, ensuring those Soldiers are performing their tasks and making sure they are getting what they need to successfully perform those required tasks. Specialist Veltre discharges these duties with the skill of a seasoned noncommissioned officer, making him a most deserving choice for today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Specialist Natallia Hanson, of Ridgeway, Wis., is with 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. She serves as a health care specialist in the evacuation platoon and is one of few medics in the unit that is paramedic certified. Before her deployment, Spc. Hanson was the senior medic at Nisqually Family Medical Center and was the combat life saver trainer for the brigade. Following her arrival in Iraq, Spc. Hanson eagerly became an integral part of the unit's training programs and combat mission. She supported numerous engineer route clearance missions and then served as part of the brigade's female search team capability, conducting physical searches of more than 80 Iraqi women while treating them with the dignity they rightly deserve. She also supported four military civilian medical operations with two separate units. Specialist Hanson's support and dedication to her unit and the Iraqi people make her a valued asset to her peers, the U.S. military and the Iraqi people and make her an excellent choice for today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

# Shabak search for identity in modern Iraq

## Cultural Tidbit Special to the North Star

The Shabak minority of Ninewa province remains a reclusive and unknown group for many. Confusion reigns as to their ethnic and religious identity, as well as their political allegiances.

Shabak are Muslims and the vast majority Shi'as. Until the mid-20th century, Shi'a Shabak were affiliated with the Alevi Bektashi order which succeeded the Kizilbash in Anatolian Turkey. A small number of urban Shabak later adopted Twelver Shi'ism as part of patronage relationship with local sayids (clerics).

The Shabak combine organizational elements of Sufism with their own interpretations of scripture. The Shabak do not follow Islam's core obligations – prayer, fasting, zakat (alms giving) and pilgrimage to Mecca – and pos-

sess their own sacred book (the Kitab al-manaqib or Buyuruq, originally written in Ottoman Turkish).

Shabak men bond with spiritual mentors, pirs, who guide their ritual practices and play a significant role in public and private religious ceremonies.

Shabak men wear traditional Arab clothes and, other than the difference of language, their villages can hardly be distinguished from those of Arabs.

According to the 1977 census, they numbered approximately 80,000 people. Unofficial estimates today indicate that they may exceed 400,000.

Sources on the history of Shabak are rare, this scarcity of literature has created a mystery around the origins of the group and over the years there has been much questioning of their identity and even attempts to destroy it. According to Hunain Al-Qaddo, the only Shabak representative in the Iraqi

parliament and the president of the Iraqi Minorities Council, "Shabak are not Kurds; they are an independent, Iraqi ethnic component.

The Shabak language contains Kurdish vocabulary, but this does not mean anything; it also contains a wealth of Arabic, Turkish and Persian vocabulary."

Other sources however, state clearly that the Shabak people are Kurds. Khisro Goran, deputy governor of Ninewa and a member of the Kurdish Democratic Party, denies the existence of any kind of conspiracy against the Shabak, emphasizing that "the majority recognizes themselves as Kurds, and they actually descend from well known Kurdish tribes in Irbil and its neighborhoods."

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



# WORTH FIGHTING FOR



## July 4, event

*Task Force Marne Headquarters will celebrate July 4, with a performance from the band Vertical Horizon at the Contingency Operating Base Speicher soccer field. Prior to the event, hot dogs, hamburgers and cold beverages will be available at the stadium.*

Tell us what's worth fighting for to you, along with a picture, and we will run it in the July 2 North Star



My son, my Family and friends back home, and the great United States.

Sergeant Carrie Wali,  
geospatial analyst, TF Marne G-2

### 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,  
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