

The North Star

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



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Strykers sign over their final base to Iraqi Army

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

After the papers were signed, and the ink was dry, Forward Operating Base Grizzly became property of the Iraqi Army during a transfer of authority ceremony as part of the responsible drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq, July 2.

"Today, our nations are bonded together with the ideals that freedom and liberty are the cornerstone of our great nations," said Iraqi Army Lt. Col. Latiff, commander of 1st Battalion, 37th Infantry.

"This has not come cheaply. Thousands of Iraqi and American Soldiers, Marines, Airmen and Sailors have paid for this with their lives. The Soldiers you see in this room, and the ones you'll see in this ceremony today, are representatives of those we have lost."

At the end of the ceremony, members of each Army assisted in handling the flags of both nations as the U.S. flag was lowered and the Iraqi flag was raised.

This is the third base signed over by the 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, in Diyala province. The Tomahawks of 1st Battalion, 23rd

Infantry Regiment have lived here during the past 10 months and have spent their deployment not only conducting combined missions with the Iraqi Security Forces, but spent many days inventorying and cleaning in preparation to hand off the post.

"We started when we first [arrived to] the base," said Lt. Col. Chuck Hodges, the commander of 1/23rd Inf. "We had seven years worth of equipment that had piled up here over the years that we had to turn in. We had over 16,000 individual pieces of equipment."

Much of this equipment was sent back to the U.S., while specific pieces of equipment were sent to Soldiers in Iraq or Afghanistan. Some of it was left behind to be given to the incoming IA battalion, said Capt. Jonathan Cheek, who hails from Highpoint, N.C., and is the transition officer for 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd SBCT, 2nd ID.

"A lot of CHUs [Containerized Housing Units] and a lot of generators were left behind so we can hand them a fully operating base," said Capt. Cheek.

Along with moving equipment and personnel out of the base, murals on large



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

Private First Class Logan Perrault, a vehicle commander for HHC, 1/23rd Inf. Regt., 3rd SBCT, 2nd ID, takes the U.S. flag, with assistance from an Iraqi Army soldier, as it's being lowered during a transfer of authority ceremony at FOB Warhorse, July 2.

T-wall barriers designed by past units were painted over and signs were removed to reduce the size of the footprint left by U.S. forces during their ownership of the base, said Lt. Col. Hodges.

Now that the base that has been home to the Tomahawks for the past year is in the hands of their Iraqi partners, they will begin the

journey home.

"We are happy that we're going home to see our families, but we are sad to say goodbye to our brothers," said Lt. Col. Hodges.

It's been a great experience to see the Iraqis from the beginning to now, providing for a stable and secure Government of Iraq, said Lt. Col. Hodges.

Stop Loss - positive experience for two, 1/64 Soldiers

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

On paper, the concept behind the establishment of the Stop Loss program was to sustain cohesive operational forces that train and serve together through their deployments, as well as keep Soldiers with certain skills needed within those units.

In principle, however, it's not that simple.

For Sgt. Drake Harris and Sgt. Jacob A. Wilson, two Soldiers with the Forward Support Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Stop Loss simply represented a shift in priorities – from preparing for life in the civilian community, to preparing for an Iraq deployment.

It was during the brigade-wide training at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., in July, that a definitive date had been set – anyone with a separation date of August 2009 onward were considered Stop Loss.

Initially, Sgt. Harris, 23, of St. Louis, was supposed to separate from the U.S. Army in Sept. 26, 2009. The prescribed load listing, maintenance control noncommissioned officer in charge planned to start school at the University of St. Louis in September, but fell under the provisions of Stop Loss.

"I enlisted for three years, 26 weeks," said Sgt. Harris. "I had one year in the States, one deployment and one cycle Stateside, all within that window, so I was due. Being in the Army, you might as well go ahead



Sergeant Drake Harris, with FSC, 1/64th Armor, 2nd HBCT, 3rd ID, serves as a prescribed load listing, and maintenance control NCOIC.

and expect it.

"Initially, I was kind of disappointed. I was set up to get out of the Army at a certain point. But it wasn't so bad. I got paid an additional \$500 a month and I came here with the rest of my company, so I'm not too broke up about it."

Sergeant Wilson, of Galivant's Ferry, S.C., found himself in the same situation, even though his separation date wasn't until April 27, 2010.

A maintenance squad leader with the Forward Support Company, the easy-going, 26 year old also had to put future plans on hold. According to Sgt. Wilson, his wife, "Did not like it at all. She was very upset. But, she knew there was nothing we could do about it. She's been really supportive of me and has been there when I needed her."

Both Soldiers deployed previously to Iraq with the 1/64th Armor, when the Fort Stewart-based unit set up shop at Camp Liberty in 2007-08. For Sgt. Wilson, this is his third trip to Iraq, as he deployed to Mosul in 2005-06 with the 94th Engineers, out of Grafenwoehr,



Sergeant Jacob Wilson, with FSC, 1/64th Armor, 2nd HBCT, 3rd ID, serves as the maintenance squad leader for his company.

Germany.

The Soldiers have used this extra "opportunity" to remain focused on their future after the Army. In reality, said Sgt. Harris, deploying with the 1/64th Armor actually put him in a much stronger position to get out of the Army.

"I've been able to save a lot of money and pay off a lot of bills. I've researched other schools, even the ROTC program at St. Louis. I've looked into the new GI Bill and everything it offers. If I had gotten out in September, I wouldn't have been able to research everything as thoroughly as I have."

Sergeant Wilson joined the Army, July 14, 2003. He was a 2002 graduate of Colfax High School in California.

He said he was tired of working part time jobs, and he wanted money for school and a better opportunity.

"You hear stories from others, 'don't go, don't go.' The military is what you make of it and how you take it. I came in really flexible and open-minded. I didn't know what to expect, so I took it day-by-day," he said.

"It does get you ready for the real world, though. It makes you grow up fast."

"They throw a lot of responsibility at you. I learned a lot of everyday things, and not just in my military occupational specialty, like being disciplined, being a supervisor and leading Soldiers," said Sgt. Wilson.

"I have no regrets about this deployment and I haven't been disappointed with it. I served my country during a time of war – actually a few times," Sgt. Wilson said with a laugh, "and I don't feel bad about Stop Loss, or for being sent home early. I don't have any bad feelings about it at all."

"I'm in a lot better position, overall," said Sgt. Harris. "The Army's given you a lot of skills you can't get as a civilian, such as stress management. You gain a lot of experience through the military and it all makes you a better overall person."

Sergeant Harris joined the Army, April 5, 2006, after graduating from Elsberry High School, 2005, in Missouri, for college money and to serve his country.

This is part of a directive, to send Spartan Brigade home between July and August, to meet the Presidential mandate of no more than 50,000 Soldiers in Iraq by Sept. 1.

Stop Loss Soldiers will make up the bulk of these early deployers.

And what's the first thing they want to do once they return to the civilian world? According to Sgt. Harris, it's "all the normal things regular people do." Sergeant Wilson plans to grow a beard, get a job, and hang with his wife and friends.

First responders unite during MASCAL exercise

By Spc. Cassandra Monroe
135th Mobile PA Det.

A large explosion sounded across Contingency Operating Base Speicher, July 2, with emergency medical personnel and first responders chasing the explosive sound, arriving on the scene, and tending to victims. The situation at the scene could've been overwhelming, but the quick response was routine for the first responders on base.

The explosive detonation was planned and the victims suffered nothing but moulage and fake wounds as part of a base-wide mass casualty exercise conducted to train and test emergency medical first responders stationed on base.

A mass casualty exercise has two components to it, said Col. John Alvarez, the deputy commander for administration and operations for the 21st Combat Support Hospital and Task Force 21, which is responsible for the medical care given in U.S. Division-North. The first component is an internal training exercise for the 21st CSH. The CSH receives new physicians and nurses every six months and mass casualty exercises test their skills to handle six or more trauma patients at one time. The exercises also provide an opportunity for more experienced medical professionals to train and oversee the actions of the newer medical personnel.

The second component is cooperation. The base-wide exercise allows the 21st CSH to intertwine with the base fire department, the Base Defense Operations Center at division headquarters, as well as the Provost Marshal



Photo by Spc. Cassandra Monroe, 135th Mobile Public Affairs Det.
Sergeant Jason Owens, a military policeman with the 108th MP Co. prepares to load an injured Soldier onto an ambulance during a mass casualty exercise conducted July 2, at COB Speicher.

Office, explosive ordnance disposal teams and the ambulance and emergency services, added Col. Alvarez.

The teams conducted two mass casualty exercises, the first being the day before the actual testing exercise, where medical physicians and medics, who have been here for six months demonstrated the process. During the second part of the exercise the newer medical personnel performed the tasks under the observation of the soon to be outgoing personnel.

After the explosion, which simulated indirect fire, the teams arrived in a hurry to immediately evaluate the scene and assess the victims. Military police and fire fighters questioned the victims and checked their

vital signs and consciousness. A temporary holding area was set up for on-the-scene treatments. Within a few minutes, an ambulance arrived, ready to be loaded with the victims from the detonation.

"The flow starts at the casualty collection points where we work with the fire servicemembers to triage patients and categorize them from least to worst case," said Col. Alvarez. "They are brought to our emergency room where they are triaged a second time and are either moved to a place where they can be stabilized or are moved immediately into the emergency room. We prepare the victims in the emergency room so they can be ready to be sent to the operating room,

radiology room for X-rays or simply in an in-patient holding center until they are stabilized and further assessed. If the patients need further medical care, we will call the medical evacuation helicopter teams and the patients will be sent to the next level of surgical services at Joint Base Balad."

To a bystander, the scene at the combat support hospital was one of chaos: people running every which way, pushing carts full of medical equipment or moving patients. But in the medical world, this is organized chaos, where the doctors know exactly what they are doing, especially with enough practice and training.

"It teaches them to do and it teaches them to train," said Col. Alvarez.

After a couple hours of patient treatments and medical drills and after all patients were taken care of, the medical teams met for a meeting to discuss what went well with the exercise.

"I think it was very good training and we worked a lot," said Staff Sgt. Trenishia Humphrey, a paralegal non-commissioned officer with the 21st CSH. Staff Sergeant Humphrey worked in the exercise as a team member on the manpower pool. She was responsible for taking patients off vehicles and litter carrying them into the hospital. "We learned to work under a lot of stress and we also worked with patients that were hysterical, so we had to calm them down as well.

"It was really good practice. What I took away from this is how to be a bet-

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Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Sergeant Cristi Pettit, of Steven's Point, Wis., is with Company A, 26th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry division. She serves as a light wheel mechanic currently executing duties outside her formal military training as a vehicle commander and squad leader. Sergeant Pettit has shown exceptional tactical ability while conducting sustainment convoys. She was the first person to respond when another vehicle in her convoy experienced a rollover on Route Tampa. Sergeant Pettit climbed into the downed vehicle and supervised the extraction of personnel injured in the incident. Sergeant Pettit remained on ground to help provide security for the recovery of all sensitive items and the vehicle. She makes herself available at all times to help all Soldiers and she is known as an approachable leader who will help with problems while instilling discipline and a solid work ethic in anyone she has under her command. Sergeant Pettit exemplifies the Noncommissioned Officer's Creed with her dedication to Soldiers and the unit mission. It is for these qualities that she is selected as today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Specialist Rathele Sanders, of Plano, Texas, is responsible for the success of more than 14 recent combat missions, providing the communications needed for their successful completion. His work related duties include troubleshooting radios, maintaining mission tracking systems, and checking crew devices responsible for saving Soldiers lives from potential improvised explosive device blasts. During a recent week, he was able to return more than 60 communication systems to operational status prior to their use on convoy missions. He successfully kept track of sensitive items essential to the company and maintained secret communication keys received from his battalion. He has tracked and set up all appointments for maintenance on the truck's crew devices and routinely works above his rank. His no quit attitude and dogged determination make him an outstanding asset to the company and make him a most deserving Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

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ter manpower team member so that patients can get the appropriate care in time."

By practicing and conducting these drills, it will hone the medical response skills for the Soldiers working at the CSH, as well as the emergency first responders and division response teams on base.

"I hope that my Soldiers take a number of things from this exercise,"

said Col. Alvarez. "First, are the basic medical skills. Second is team building, where they can learn their equipment and learn from their peers' strengths and weaknesses.

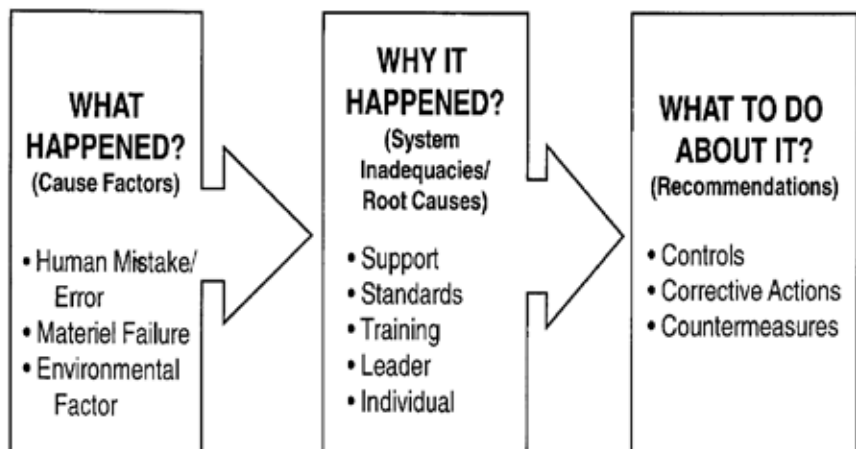
Third, understanding where they are in the medical systems services on base, so that they understand how patients are coming to them and how they can pass on the patient to the next section."

Because these Soldiers and civilians participated in this exercise, they had the chance to work on their skills, become familiar with their equipment and run through communication drills with other first responder agencies.

All of the practice and training will ensure that these teams are prepared for worst case scenarios, and will build a solid, knowledgeable base for the incoming team at the 21st CSH.

SAFETY THOUGHT OF THE WEEK: ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

**The "3W" approach to
information collection,
analysis and
recommendations**



REGIONAL HEADLINES

Seattle sets zombie record

Seattle Times

SEATTLE - They crawled from their crypts — their Beamers, Toyotas, Kias — and lurched through Fremont. Some dripped blood. Some dragged entrails. Some carried brains, playing catch with them as they waited in line.

July 3, thousands of zombies stood outside the Fremont Outdoor Cinema waiting to register for the Red, White and Dead Zombie Block Party, the

second such event in Seattle and one they hope will nab the world record back from Great Britain for the biggest gathering of zombies in one place. The promoters also hope to raise money for a food bank and encourage blood donations.

Last year's gathering set a Guinness World Record, with 3,894, until a British event topped it by 132. And if the afternoon crowd was any indication, the block party's head zombie, Eric Pope, a computer

scientist by day will get that title back.

For the past five years, Pope has been doing zombie walks — a kind of street theater — everywhere from weddings to conventions. So last year when Jon Hegeman, from Fremont Outdoor Cinema, asked if Pope was interested in joining forces, it was a match. An event featuring zombie movies, a zombie fashion show and other entertainment was born, and for one day Fremont became the "Zombie Capital of the World."

Vertical Horizon

Where: South Speicher,
When: July 7

Tops in Blue

Where: FOB Marez
When: July 8
Where: FOB Warrior
When: July 9
Where: COB Speicher
When: July 10

Ja Rule

Where: FOB Warrior
When: July 19
Where: COB Speicher
When: July 20

Sergeant Audie Murphy and MG Aubrey "Red" Newman Induction Ceremony

Where: North MWR,
COB Speicher
When: July 22, 11:30 a.m.

You are invited

Lone Wolf Comedians

Where: FOB Marez
When: July 24
Where: FOB Warrior
When: July 25
Where: FOB McHenry
When: July 25
Where: COB Speicher,
2 shows
When: July 26

Paul Wall, Big Boi and DJ IMan

Where: FOB Warrior
When: Aug. 5

Nathan Lee

Where: FOB Marez
When: Aug. 6
Where: FOB Warhorse
When: Aug 7

Candlebox

Where: COB Speicher
When: Aug. 12

Black Violin

Where: FOB Marez
When: Aug. 15

Sacramento Kings Dancers

Where: FOB Warhorse
When: Aug. 25
Where: FOB Cobra
When: Aug. 25
Where: FOB Warrior
When: Aug. 26
Where: FOB McHenry
When: Aug. 26

Smash Mouth

Where: FOB Warhorse
When: Aug. 29
Where: COB Speicher
When: Aug. 30

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
135th Mobile Public
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