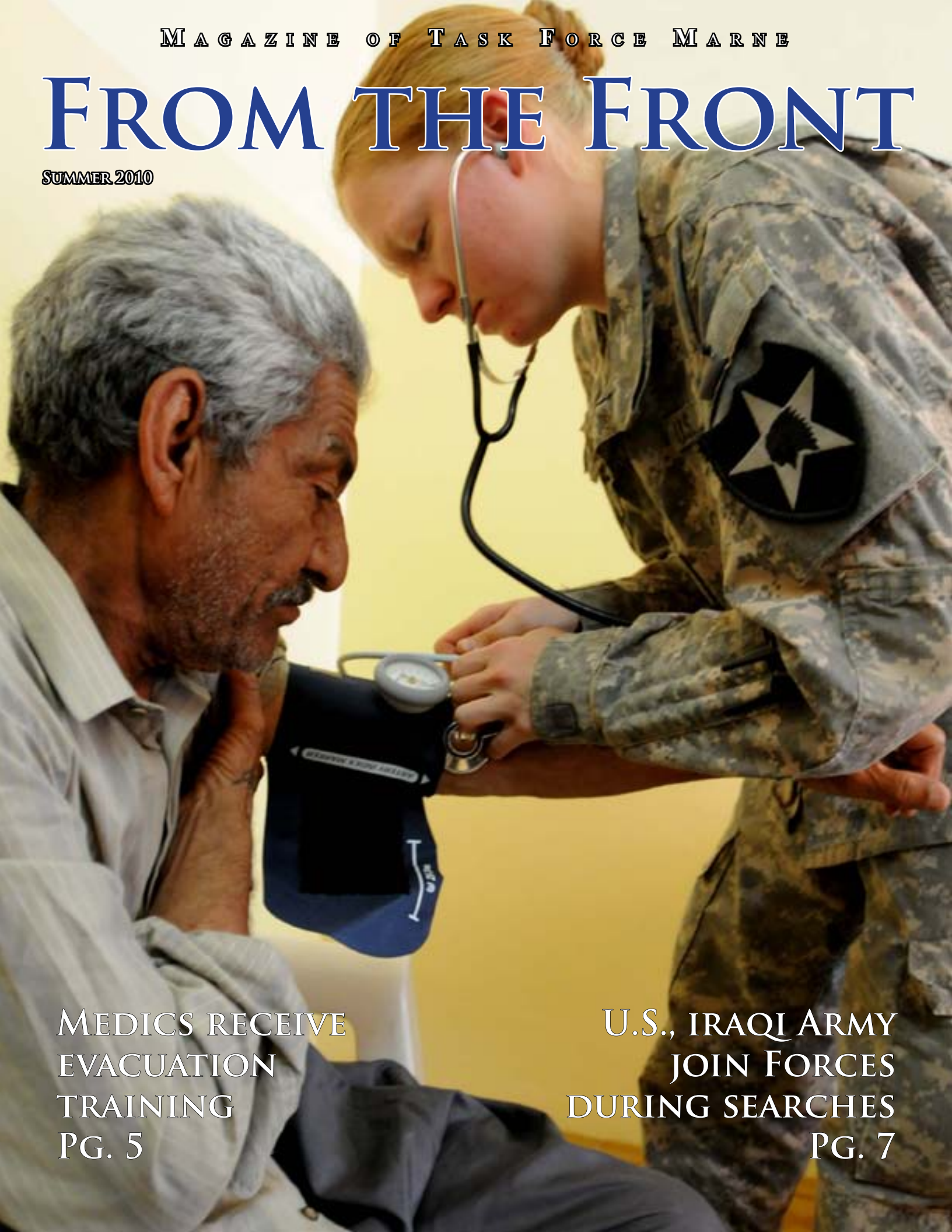


MAGAZINE OF TASK FORCE MARNE

FROM THE FRONT

SUMMER 2010



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FROM THE FRONT

-TASK FORCE MARNE-

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First Lieutenant Joshua Wright, a platoon leader with 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat team, 2nd Infantry Division, prays over a fallen comrade Mar. 18, 2010 at Forward Operation Base Warhorse. Private First Class McLyman died while supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ry Norris)



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TASK FORCE MARNE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

Commanding General
MAJ. GEN. TONY CUCOLO
Command Sergeant Major
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TF Marne PAO – Maj. Jeff Allen
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TF Marne Writer – Sgt. Johnathon Jobson
TF Marne Writer – Spc. Michael Adams

Editorial Staff

Managing Editor – Master Sgt. Marcia Triggs
Editor/Design – Sgt. Chad D. Nelson

Contributing Units

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

Task Force Marne celebrates Army's 235th birthday

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. JOHNATHON JOBSON

[3RD INFANTRY DIVISION PAO](#)

Birthdays are a guarantee in life; however, it is how they are celebrated that makes them memorable. More than 200 Soldiers from Task Force Marne celebrated the Army's 235th birthday at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, June 13, with a trip through the Army's history.

While the Army's official birthday is June 14, the decision was made to hold the celebration a day early due to significant events happening in Iraq.

"Now you might be sitting there thinking, 'But sir, you're a day early, tomorrow is the Army's Birthday,'" and you'd be right," said Task Force Marne Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Tony Cucolo. "I scheduled it today because tomorrow is a special day for Iraq, a day in which you all can take personal, quiet pride. Tomorrow is the first seating of the newly elected council of representatives."

As Iraq makes history, TF Marne recognized its service to the world.

To commemorate the rich past of the United States' oldest fighting force, Soldiers from the Task Force Marne G-6, or communications section, and the Division Special Troops Battalion color guard attached 178 campaign streamers to the Army flag, while a brief history of each conflict was given.

The streamers, earned for participation in the campaigns, were broken down into 20 groups based on the major conflict they were part of; from the Revolutionary and Civil Wars to the World Wars and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

To emphasize the history behind the streamers, four Soldiers were dressed in World War I, World War II, Korean War and modern combat uniforms. These Soldiers placed the main sets of streamers from the time period they represented.

"Those streamers hung today and those uniforms represented here from World War I forward show how after a hundred-plus years of being the most free nation on Earth, as the 20th century dawned, we could not stand by and let others be slaves to tyranny or oppression," expressed Maj. Gen. Cucolo.

"Each streamer represents hundreds if not thousands of lives lost, more Americans, just like you, who left their homes and the United States saying, 'I will not stand by and let this happen. I am one more American since those who came forward in 1775 who will fight to make things right.'"

Following the streamer presentation, the youngest and oldest Soldiers from TF Marne cut the Army's birthday cake. Alongside Maj. Gen Cucolo and Command Sgt. Maj. Jesse Andrews, the TF Marne command sergeant major were Chief Warrant Officer



The Division Special Troops Battalion color guard and Soldiers wearing uniforms from former and current wars stand together during the Army's 235th birthday celebration held at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, June 13. The ceremony included a cake cutting and was followed by a barbecue and concert by the TF Marne rock band, Sasquatch.

5 Ray Noble, the senior maintenance officer for the task force, from Savannah, Ga., and Pfc. Deonne Dore, an intelligence Soldier from G-2 and a native of Miami.

The cake cutting portion of the ceremony is an important part of the ceremony because it represents experienced Soldiers passing on history to younger troops.

"We are celebrating our traditions, what makes us special and different," Maj. Gen. Cucolo said. "We are celebrating the self-

sacrifice of others over the last 235 years. All 178 battle streamers on the Army colors represent the lives lost and the willingness again to go above and beyond for others. We must pass this tradition on."

With the formal birthday ceremony complete, all attendees were invited to take part in festivities outside that included a barbecue and live music from, Sasquatch, the TF Marne rock band.

"I would say everything has gone very well," stated Capt. Charles Gaines-Hager, the TF Marne G-6 network operations battle captain, from Gainesville, Fla. "Throughout the event I have counted over 200 attendees. This is a great turnout."

Soldiers showed their support and dedication to their service and were able to enjoy some of the comforts of home. The celebration also coincided with the division's 235th day in Iraq for this deployment.

"This felt a lot like being at home," said Spc. Paul Vendt, an intelligence analyst with the TF Marne G-2 and a native of St. Louis, Mo. "Obviously, at home everyone is not wearing the same thing or carrying a weapon, but you can still close your eyes, taste

the barbecue, listen to the music and it's almost like home. It's great for morale."



Sasquatch, TF Marne's rock band, performs for servicemembers during the celebration of the Army's 235th birthday at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, June 13.



(left to right) Task Force Marne Commanding General, Major General Tony Cucolo; Chief Warrant Officer 5 Ray Noble, the oldest Soldier in the division and the senior maintenance officer for the TF Marne G-4; Pfc. Deonne Dore, the division's youngest Soldier and an intelligence Soldier with the TF Marne G-2; and Command Sgt. Maj. Jesse Andrews, the senior enlisted advisor to the commanding general, cut the ceremonial cake during the celebration of the Army's 235th birthday at Contingency Operation Base Speicher, June 13.

NCO corps receives 1/28th ‘Black Lions’

STORY AND PHOTO BY SPC. SHANTELE J. CAMPBELL

[4TH INFANTRY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION PAO](#)

■ Thirty-three Soldiers in the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, out of Fort Riley, Kan., were inducted into the noncommissioned officer corps, May 17, during the battalion’s NCO Induction Ceremony at Joint Base Balad.

New NCOs from each company in the battalion were formally inducted into an elite corps of noncommissioned officers who have proudly and continually serve as the “backbone” of the Army.

Command Sergeant Major Rodney Lewis, the ‘Black Lions’ top noncommissioned officer was the guest speaker of the ceremony and gave the inductees words of encouragement and emphasized the importance of becoming an NCO.

“They are at the forefront of what those [younger] Soldiers expect and there is no hiding what they do,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Lewis about his new NCOs. “They have to understand that they have to lead from the front and lead by example every day – there are no short cuts, but there is professionalism – always.”

During the ceremony, each Soldier was recognized and introduced by their respective first sergeants.

Then, the moment came when 33 ‘Black Lions’ crossed over the threshold and officially became a part of the Corps of NCOs.

“Today was a special day for me,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Lewis. “Most of these Soldiers who were inducted into the NCO Corps reported to this unit as a private ... They showed up when

“

Anyone can get inducted in the States, but being able to do that here, in theater, during the middle of a combat zone – it’s a great thing.

”

Sgt. Wilson, “Black Lion” NCO

we started to form this brigade. They were some of the first Soldiers who were in this battalion when we reactivated in January of 2006 and they deployed with us during the Surge. They are a part of this team. It’s like watching my own children grow up and take that next step.

“It’s a proud moment for me and this organization,” he said.

Sergeant Woodrow Wilson of Fayetteville, N.C., a combat medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1/28th Inf., said being inducted into the NCO Corps gave young leaders a moment to be recognized for their achievements and said being inducted while in Iraq made the moment even more special.

“Now, my name will go down in history as being a part of the 1/28th Infantry, ‘Black Lions,’” said Sgt. Wilson. “Anyone can get inducted in the States, but being able to do that here, in theater, during the middle of a combat zone – it’s a great thing.”



Thirty-three Soldiers with the 1/28th Inf., 4th IBCT, 1st ID, out of Fort Riley, Kan., prepare to cross over into the corps of noncommissioned officers during the battalion’s NCO Induction Ceremony at JBB, May 17.

Battery B, 1st Bn, 9th FA Soldiers load a patient onto an MRAP during casualty evacuation training at COS Marez in Mosul, Iraq.

Casualty evacuation training offers Soldiers life-saving advice, realistic training

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MSG. DUFF E. MCFADDEN

2ND HEAVY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION PAO

■ One of the most important aspects of military medical care is the timely evacuation of casualties.

And the clock was ticking during training on casualty evacuation care.

Two Soldiers lay on combat litters in the torrid, Iraqi sun. After being strapped down, they're lifted up and transported onto Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles.

According to Sgt. Ronald Railing, a South Bend, Ind., native and the senior medic with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, the 26 Soldiers surrounding him had two minutes to strap him and the other wounded Soldier onto a litter, then securely into the vehicle.

"As part of casualty evacuation care we're showing a group of Soldiers the proper way to use non-standard evacuation vehicles in a combat situation and how to maximize each vehicle to its full capacity," Sgt. Ronald Railing said. "They need to get the casualty into the vehicle, secure them from any further injury and give the medic enough mobility to take care of the patients."

The battery's main mission is to provide transportation and security for the Provincial Reconstruction Team. The PRT interacts with the provincial governor, helping to ensure jobs are getting done, such as sewage and electrical repairs. They also check with local farmers, advising and assisting them with their crops and livestock, and aid in helping grow Iraqi businesses.

"We spend almost every day outside the wire," said Sgt. Railing.

The unit uses MRAPs for its daily missions.

"Our lieutenant said we needed a class. ... I felt this was one of the more important classes, as the vehicles we usually utilize as an artillery unit, we're not using here," Sgt. Railing said.

Sergeant Railing also added that the Soldiers in his unit didn't fully know the capabilities of their MRAPs in transporting patients until the training.

"We're making sure all of our Soldiers have combat casualty evacuation training. The very nature of our mission puts us in bad places," said 1st Lt. Ryan Greer, the Battery B commander and an Atlanta, Ga., resident. "Our platoon has been hit three times since we've been in Iraq. "It's a good class for our Soldiers and a good one for them to practice on. We need to make sure if anyone gets hurt, we'll be able to take care of them and evacuate them."

One of three medics within the battery, Sgt. Railing returned to the Army in 2002, following an 11-year break in service. After serving as a civilian Emergency Medical Technician, he said he came back in, because he wanted to finish what he had started and use his civilian skills in a combat environment.

It wasn't long, unfortunately, before that opportunity presented itself.

Sergeant Railing served in Mosul, Iraq, in 2004-05, with the 25th Infantry Division out of Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. He was

on duty Dec. 21, 2004 when a suicide bomber attacked the Mosul Dining Facility, killing 22 U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers and civilian contractors and wounding another 69 individuals.

"I treated 11 casualties and only lost one. I was told by the Combat Surgical Hospital, he wouldn't have survived, regardless of my efforts," he said.

Unit training is scheduled on a week-to-week basis. The next class will cover reacting to an improvised explosive device and unexploded ordnance. Previous classes have included laser safety, Mosul cultural awareness, submitting a 9-line Medical Evacuation, map reading and land navigation.



Sergeant Ronald Railing, the senior medic with Battery B, 1st Bn., 9th FA, removes litter straps from an MRAP. The South Bend, Ind., native, deployed as part of the 2nd HBC, 3rd ID, and recently gave casualty evacuation training at COS Marez in Mosul, Iraq.

*When time
is of the essence*

Soldiers take flight to support Iraqi Army, search local community

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PVT. ZACHARY ZUBER

[3RD STRYKER BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 2ND INFANTRY DIVISION PAO](#)

■ Shortly after sunrise, the typically peaceful farms of the Udaim River Valley were bustling with activity for three hours, March 25. While an Air Weapons Team of two Kiowa helicopters circled overhead for security, nearly 100 Soldiers rushed out of Chinooks, then divided into three elements to search over 30 structures throughout the small community outside Udaim.

Organized by the 2nd Battalion, 19th Iraqi Army Brigade, this mission was conducted to locate and capture several warranted individuals responsible for criminal activity. They planned and coordinated the forces necessary to search several houses, fields, and even an abandoned school. These inspections led to confiscation of weapons but no official arrests were made.

The Soldiers of Blackhawk Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, aided in the operation by arranging air assets for this mission and being present to offer advice and assistance if needed.

"We spent a month collecting the information from our sources to get warrants for terror suspects," said Capt. Ahmed Mustafa Al Ali, the operations officer for 2/19th IA. "The final planning and rehearsals have gone on for the last three days to prepare."

Although they did not apprehend the individuals they were after, they still had the opportunity to interact with community members and show their strong focus on a safe village for local citizens.

"An operation like this is extremely valuable if it removes warranted personnel from the area," said Capt. J. M. Phillips, commander of Blackhawk Co. "It also has a public relations benefit because the population can see Iraqi forces leading the way, so it has a very positive effect."

The IA led this mission, but Blackhawk Co. has helped the 2/19th IA with a variety of other endeavors during their past 11 months at Forward Operating Base Grizzly. They have watched as their role in the execution and planning phases of an operation reduced over time, while their Iraqi Army counterparts have taken full control of security measures in their region. Now the IA only request support in acquiring certain assets, such as medical and air support.

"They (2/19th IA) have been conducting unilateral operations for quite some time now," said Capt. Phillips, a native of Opelika, Ala. "They have only needed our help with special assets like this because they have had sustainment capabilities for troop leading, maintenance, and intelligence for months."

The IA has developed such strong capabilities that the only training Blackhawk Co. has provided over the past several months has been medical courses and marksmanship training for new M16 rifles they have received. This proficiency has allowed the 2/19th IA to conduct many patrols that are needed to gather intelligence and collect warrants for missions like this one, Capt.

Phillips said.

Iraqi Army Capt. Ahmed said that the growing strength of his unit is in direct correlation with the strong relationships they have built with U.S. forces over the course of many years.

Blackhawk Co., along with the rest of 1/23 Inf., 3rd SBCT is preparing to return home in the coming months. Though the air assault may not have resulted in arrests, they have confidence that the 2/19th IA will continue to work until these suspects are captured. They will also leave knowing that they will always have a second family with their counterparts here in Iraq.

"The phrase that has always been used is that they (U.S. forces) always have our backs," said Capt. Ahmed. "These people have become our friends and though it will be hard to see them leave, I will always remember the help they have provided us."



Staff Sergeant Timothy Ehrhart, a squad leader in 3rd Platoon, Blackhawk Co., 1/23rd Inf., 3rd SBCT, 2nd ID, verifies the vital search locations with an Iraqi Army soldier. Soldiers assisted the 2/19th IA to search for warranted terror suspects in the Udaim River Valley.



Private First Class Scott Farnsworth, an assistant gunner for Blackhawk Co., 1/23rd Inf., 3rd SBCT, 2nd ID, scans for security threats while waiting for a retrieval flight during an air assault mission in the Udaim River Valley, March 25. The operation brought Blackhawk Co. Soldiers and the 2/19th IA, to the area in search of warranted terror suspects.

100 Iraqi commandos complete live-fire exercise verification

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PFC. JESSICA LUHRS
[1ST HEAVY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 1ST ARMORED DIVISION PAO](#)

More than 100 Commandos with 3rd Company, 12th Iraqi Army Division, proved their abilities after successfully completing a live-fire exercise, which was the final verification in a Commando course given by their 'Blackhawk' partners in Apache Troop, 6th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division out of Fort Bliss, Texas, at the K-1 IA base, Kirkuk province, June 5.

The course was designed by 'Blackhawk' leadership after the Commando's expressed their desire to learn to fire more accurately on multiple targets and develop advanced U.S. infantry skills.

Throughout the 30-day course the Commandos learned leadership, basic rifle marksmanship, combat lifesaving, house clearing procedures, and moving as a squad and as a team, according to Maj. Brian Schoellhorn, 15th IA Brigade, security transition team, operations officer-in-charge, and a native of Columbia, Ill. Major Schoellhorn assisted with training the IA leadership.

All of the training built up to what they are doing today, he said to a crowd of IA and 'Blackhawk' officers who came to observe the verification.

The verification exercise began with the IA Commando platoon leader giving the operation brief on a sand table replica of the course.

The sand table is used to ensure each Commando knows exactly what he needs to do while on the course and what they can expect while engaging a target, said Lt. Ahmed Azher Gedoge, team leader from 3rd platoon, Commando company.

After the operation brief the IA Commandos engaged the targets, assessed casualties, moved

in combat teams to overcome obstacles and cleared a house.

After the operation was completed successfully, Maj. Schoellhorn spoke to the Commandos and the leadership in the audience about how impressed the 'Blackhawks' are with the Commandos success.

"We came out here with the intentions to train on rifle marksmanship and each of you are walking away with skills in training management, leadership and basic soldier skills," he said.

The Commando leadership agreed with him.

"Because of this training we all have more trust in each other. We now know the soldier to the left and to the right knows exactly what to do, and we will all protect each other," said Lt. Ahmed after completing the verification course.

"We are one now," he finished.



Left - An IACommando officer, from 12th IA Div., cheers on his soldiers as they overcome an obstacle, which was the final verification in a Commando course given by their 'Blackhawk' partners in Troop A, 6/1st Cav., 1st BCT, 1st AD, out of Fort Bliss, Texas, at the K-1 IA base, Kirkuk province, June 5. .

This page - An Ia Commando, from 12th IA Div., provides lifesaving care to a fellow Commando during a live-fire validation exercise, which was the final verification in a Commando course given by their 'Blackhawk' partners in Troop A, 6/1st Cav., 1st BCT, 1st AD, out of Fort Bliss, Texas, at the K-1 IA base, Kirkuk province, June 5.



Mission denies violent extremists safe haven

STORY AND PHOTO BY SFC. TYRONE C. MARSHALL

[25TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION PAO](#)

► Tripartite is defined as “containing three parts or involving three participants or elements,” according to the American Heritage Dictionary of English Language.

This definition perfectly describes the combined forces involved in the most recent air assault force inserted by Task Force Wings. This tripartite force consisted of Iraqi Army soldiers, Kurdish and U.S. forces.

The Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 25th General Support Aviation Battalion, TF Hammerhead; 2nd Assault Helicopter Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment, TF Diamond Head; and 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, TF Lightning Horse, supported a tripartite force during Operation Chelan III, April 24.

Iraqi Security Forces consisting of 4th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division; Diyala Iraqi Police; and 3rd Peshmerga Brigade with

their U.S. counterparts, led the air assault into the Lake Hamrin region, in Salah ad-Din province, to deny violent extremist networks areas to stage attacks against the Iraqi people.

“Our objective was on the eastern shore of Lake Hamrin, which had been a support zone for violent extremist networks,” said Maj. Whitney Gardner, CH-47D Chinook helicopter pilot and operations officer, 3/25th GSAB, TF Hammerhead. “It was a place where, in the past, extremists had established a very well hidden cache site for weapons and ammunition. [Extremists] were staged there [smuggling] a lot of weapons, ammunition and explosive-making materials. They were smuggling those things in fishing boats across the lake.”

This mission was significant for 3/25th GSAB, TF Hammerhead, since it is the first time this aviation task force has been the

lead aviation element for a tripartite mission. As Iraq continues its transition to stability operations, it has become increasingly necessary for the existing security forces to work together.

“It is absolutely vital that Iraqi Army, [Iraqi Police], and Peshmerga forces work together in common security operations,” said Lt. Col. Gregory Baker, commander, 3/25th GSAB, TF Hammerhead, and native of Omaha, Neb. “The Iraqi nation is taking steps to overcome the disputed internal boundary question. Having the different forces work together is a way of building trust.”

The scope and size of this clearing operation made aviation assets particularly critical during the mission.

“The assault force wanted to get on the ground as quickly as possible and clear a fairly large area. I’d say about a five-by-five mile area is what they were planning to clear,” said Maj. Gardner, a native of Memphis, Tenn. “They were going in there to disrupt the [extremists’] ongoing efforts and they wanted to find the cache sites and recover the materials that could be used against Iraqi Security Forces in the near future.”

Lieutenant Colonel Baker pointed out some particular challenges in the area making aviation assets crucial.

“Without our aviation assets they would not have been able to execute the operation in the same manner. Our helicopters placed their forces in terrain they would not have been able to [access] via ground movement. The lateral water obstacles, irrigation canals, marsh land and river made the terrain nearly impossible to quickly ingress into. We made that possible using the vertical dimension.”

As the name suggests, Operation Chelan III, is the third operation in the region. Its success has become apparent as the discovery of illicit items has dwindled. This particular operation resulted in two detainees.

“This is the third major operation in the area in a really short amount of time,” said Maj. Gardner. “We believe that the back-to-back operations are having a serious impact on the enemy’s ability to store and stage weapons, explosives and bomb-making materials. I think that during the previous operations we forced the enemy out of this particular area. Altogether, I think the operation has had a pretty dramatic impact on the enemy.”

With the success that the tripartite force has experienced, the picture of the region’s stability has become much clearer. The ISF have taken on the challenge of security with tangible results.

“Operation Chelan III not only allowed ISF to improve overall security in the region,” said Lt. Col. Baker. “It also gave them a chance to undertake a difficult tactical task, planning and conducting an air assault, which builds confidence in their own abilities and is a visible demonstration of their capabilities to the local population.”

Major Gardner, who served as the pilot-in-command for one of the CH-47D Chinooks, was also involved in the planning stages as the operations officer for TF Hammerhead. He shared his thoughts on the ISF progression.

“I’ve been very impressed with every element of the Iraqi Security Forces since we’ve been here,” said Maj. Gardner. “Are they ready to take over? Yes, without a doubt. They’ve demonstrated that over and over again. They’ll be very effective combating the extremists that want to disrupt the government.”

A tripartite force consisting of 4th Bde., 1st IA Div.; Diyala IP; and 3rd Peshmerga Bde., along with Soldiers from Troop A, 1/14th Cav., 3rd SBCT, 2nd ID, position themselves after conducting hot-load training for an air assault mission at COL Cobra, April 24.

Engineers depart after building 'long-lasting projects'

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PFC. JENNIFER MONTAGNA
130TH ENGINEER BRIGADE PAO

► The 130th Engineer Brigade, from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, cased their colors in a ceremony, May 29, on Contingency Operating Site Marez. The ceremony signified the end of the 130th Eng. Bde.'s, tour of duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 130th Eng. Bde., fell under the control of the 25th Infantry Division, out of Schofield Barracks when they began their deployment at COS Marez in June 2009, and completed their service under the 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Stewart, Ga.

During their tour, the 130th Eng. Bde., ensured mobility of travel through route clearance, and embedded Soldiers with Iraqi Security Forces to create an essential partnership for training; and partnered with the Government of Iraq for the reconstruction of the Ninewa province.

The Ninewa Reconstruction Cell, of the 130th Eng. Bde., focused on long lasting projects that positively affected the people of the Ninewa province, including more than \$24 million worth of projects that focused on areas of clean water and electricity distribution.

"You all should be proud of the enduring, positive legacy you've left here in Iraq," said Brig. Gen. Tom Vandal, the Task Force Marne Deputy Commanding General Support, at the ceremony.

"You've helped to start restoring Mosul to the greatness that it once was."

Key leaders in the Iraqi Army also attended the ceremony to express their appreciation and gratitude to the 130th Eng. Bde.

"Thank you for giving us the chance to say goodbye to our friends, the 130th Eng. Bde. We will never forget the 130th and all they've done, and I'm sure every honorable citizen in the Ninewa province will not forget you and your efforts to bring the electricity and water to them. I hope you all return home safe and then next time you come to Iraq it is as a civilian with your Families to visit," said the 2nd Iraqi Army Division commander, while presenting Col. Fabian E. Mendoza, the 130th Eng. Bde. commander a plaque in gratitude and thanks.

Colonel Mendoza humbly addressed his unit.

"I'm overwhelmed with pride for your accomplishments. It's amazing what you've done in a year. Our pride lies in being a small aspect in this partnership with the Iraqi Army brigades. Our partnership with the Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiments is something I respect and am so thankful to be a part of - stay focused and Godspeed," he said.



The 130th Engineer Brigade Commander Col. Fabian E. Mendoza Jr., addresses his Soldiers during a casing of the colors ceremony, May 29 at Contingency Operating Site Marez, Iraq. The Ceremony marks the end of the 130 Eng. Bde's yearlong tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



(Left) The 130th Eng. Bde. Commander, Col. Faibian E. Mendoza, Jr., and Command Sgt. Major Dale A. Moran, 130th command sergeant major, roll their unit flag during a color casing ceremony, May 29 at COS Marez.

Following the ceremony, the 130th and their guest mingled and shared stories of the past year together while saying their goodbyes and reminiscing about their year spent in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Engineers repair craters, promote safe travel

STORY AND PHOTO BY SPC. CASSANDRA MONROE
135TH MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

► It was a quiet night for those on the roads in Salah-ad Din province, the moon was full and hanging over the long stretch of desert terrain. Within that stretch, the calm humming equipment and metal crunching against a mixture of concrete and dirt broke the quiet of the night.

That silence was broken by Soldiers with 3rd Platoon, 573rd Clearance Company, 1st Engineer Battalion, who were repairing a road scattered with potholes and one large crater.

"Primarily, we repair potholes in the road and blast craters caused by improvised explosive devices," said 1st Lt. Matthew O'Shea, 3rd platoon leader with the 573rd. "Insurgents can place IEDs under the same craters, so filling in the blast craters will prevent the enemy from using that same spot again. That protects local nationals from sectarian violence and also U.S. and Iraqi Security forces from the enemy."

Safety of both forces and Iraqi residents is of key importance for those serving under 1st Lt. O'Shea, and preventing threats is one objective they accomplished during their mission.

Some Soldiers maintained security through their gunner's turret, while others were assigned on-the-ground tasks. Ground tasks like measuring the holes in the road, shoveling around them and cleaning them to prepare them for the concrete were the additional tasks.

Soldiers also manned vehicles and heavy operating equipment. The High Mobility Engineer Excavation machine provided construction assistance through hydraulic attachments, like a jackhammer, said 1st Lt. O'Shea.

Because the cement was properly mixed prior to the mission, it was ready to be poured once the holes were prepared. Soldiers placed metal grates inside the holes to keep the concrete steady, and assisted the concrete contractor in pouring the cement properly, making sure it laid out smoothly and was drivable.

The team also removed piles of sand that had accumulated on the roads after severe dust storms.

"The sand pulls up on the road, about two feet high, and the vehicles have to pull off the road and drive on the desert," said 1st Lt. O'Shea. "If the enemy sees it, they can emplace mines. Every time a dust storm happens, we usually add this duty in conjunction with another mission."

For the 3rd Platoon Soldiers, repairing and clearing the roads in Iraq is more than just a duty; they desire safe, easy and accessible travel for all people.

One of the major parts of being an engineer is making sure the routes are clear, said 1st Lt. O'Shea. It's making sure that the road is not only clear of threats but impassable objects, like these sand drifts and potholes are removed.

"I feel like it's important to fix these craters because all of coalition forces use these roads, and if we can't travel, we can't accomplish our missions," said Pfc. Spencer Haines, a combat engineer with 3rd Platoon and a Strasburg, Va., native.

Although the team will redeploy soon, their hard work was completed with the next group of Soldiers in mind.

"This mission is a good way for us to

end our tour here," said 1st Lt. O'Shea. "It's leaving the routes open for the [next engineer unit]. There is still going to be a U.S. presence here, so everything that we do is helping them out for their future. We are making a difference."



A Soldier with 3rd Platoon, 573rd Clearance Company, 1st Engineer Battalion, spreads out cement and maintains proper filling measurements during a crater repair mission, June 25, in Salah-ad Din province, Iraq.



Private First Class Spencer Haines, a combat engineer, with 3rd Platoon, evens out recent cement filling with the help of other Soldiers in his unit during a crater repair mission, June 25.

Air Force ‘operationalize’ weather for Task Force Wings

STORY AND PHOTO BY SSG. MIKE ALBERTS

25TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION PAO

Imagine a blinding, gusting wall of sand and dust five-thousand to eight-thousand feet high, spanning 60 to 90 miles, moving at a rate of 35 to 60 kilometers an hour.

That describes a “haboob,” an Arabic word for a type of intense sandstorm, common to Iraq, that can have a devastating impact on aviation operations.

Now imagine a pilot’s relief in receiving a tactical instant message from a staff weather officer miles away that advises of an approaching haboob in time to avoid it.

That is what is referred to as “operationalizing” weather -- mitigating the impact of weather on Army aviation operations by forecasting and interpreting weather systems and data in real time -- and that is what Task Force Wings’ staff weather team does 24/7 from Contingency Operating Base Speicher, near Tikrit, Iraq.

According to Capt. Erica Haas, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, SWO, 22nd Expeditionary Weather Squadron supporting TF Wings, her core team of six Airmen conduct ‘round-the-clock’ operations in order to do more than simply forecast weather.

“While our job includes forecasting weather, we don’t simply provide data,” explained Capt. Haas, a native of Wheaton, Ill. “We take data and transform it into useable information so that the Brigade Commander can accomplish his mission. In fact, being integrated into tactical aviation operations is really where we add the most value to the task force.”

“We know how weather affects operations. As a result, we are able to assist those who make operational decisions mitigate those effects. We reduce the frequency that pilots fly into dangerous weather conditions. In that sense, we provide an awareness that enables missions to be conducted more safely and effectively.”

The weather team accomplishes their mission by relying on field observations, and by using computer generated models

and satellite images. In addition, they employ a variety of tactical equipment to include Blue Force Tracker and a Tactical Meteorological Observing System (also known as the TMQ-53). The TMQ-53 is used to obtain pressure, wind speed and direction, temperature, dew point, relative humidity, precipitation, surface visibility, cloud height and lightning detection. Captain Haas’ weather team also conducts Forward Area Limited Observer Program training.

FALOP training uses Airmen to teach Soldiers how to perform weather observations and relay pertinent data to the SWO from strategic locations in northern Iraq. According to Capt. Haas, having qualified weather observers in strategic locations is paramount as U.S. forces drawdown and reduce their numbers throughout Iraq.

Major Jeffrey Poquette is Task Force Wings’ chief of operations in charge of synchronizing all brigade-level tactical operations, to include, intelligence, lethal and non-lethal fire support and effects, and all manned and unmanned flight operations. He provides situational awareness for the brigade commander of all aviation assets in USD-North. As a 10-year Veteran on his second combat deployment to Iraq and a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot, Maj. Poquette knows first-hand the value that the SWO team adds to aviation operations.

“Weather is one of our biggest threats, the thing that can place us in dangerous situations,” explained Maj. Poquette, a native of Long Island, N.Y. “For that reason, the weather team’s presence in our tactical operations center is absolutely invaluable.



Senior Airman Deonta Brooks, weather forecaster and staff weather team, 22nd EWXS, supporting TF Wings, performs preventative maintenance on a Tactical Meteorological Observing System, also known as a TMQ-53, at COB Speicher, near Tikrit, Iraq, June 4.

“They provide their analysis to us and to our pilots in real-time. I can tell you as an aviator that having real-time access to weather information removes the concern that our pilots and air crews are receiving inaccurate or incomplete weather information, which can put them in dangerous situations.”

According to Maj. Poquette, TF Wings’ weather team is the best he has ever worked with. For Capt. Haas, her team’s success is due to the quality of her non-commissioned officers and junior Airmen.

Two of those Airmen are Master Sgt. Paul Rogers, weather forecaster and staff

weather team noncommissioned officer in charge, 22nd EWXS, and Senior Airman Cassandra Napolitano-Romero, weather forecaster, 22nd EWXS. Both take pride in the value that they add to Army aviation operations.

Master Sergeant Rogers, a native of Belleville, Ill., is a 20-year veteran on his third combat deployment, all in support of the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade. He recalled how weather first intrigued him as a young Airman.

“Early in my career, an officer showed me a clear picture of the sky and explained to me that while there appears to be nothing happening, a dynamic existed beyond what I could see that was always changing the atmosphere. The ‘unseen’ and [the ability to] predict, with a good degree of accuracy, changes in the atmosphere instilled in me the desire to be a forecaster,” he said. He has worked as a weather forecaster ever since.

“I especially love working tactical operations,” he further explained. “There are instances where I have been relied upon by a commander to identify a very brief window of opportunity in the weather for that unit to deliver resources to troops in need. With weather operations you get those opportunities to help Soldiers in dire situations. That’s when you know you add value. That’s why I do this job.”

Master Sergeant Rogers’ love of his work is shared by Senior Airman Napolitano-Romero, a native of Lynchburg, Va., on her first combat deployment.

“I have never experienced job satisfaction like I have experienced it with [Task Force Wings],” said Senior Airman Napolitano-Romero. “Out here, you know that the work you are doing is being relied upon by pilots and staff. You also know they appreciate that work and that you are making a difference every day. That’s rewarding.”



Senior Airman Deonta Brooks, checks weather observation data from a TMQ-53.



Air Force Master Sergeant Paul Rogers, weather forecaster and staff weather team noncommissioned officer incharge, 22nd EWXS, supporting TF Wings, teaches a Soldier how to perform weather checks measuring winds, temperature, dew point and pressure with a handheld Kestrel at COB Speicher, near Tikrit, Iraq, June 5.

Iraqi QRF disperse mock riot

STORY AND PHOTO BY SGT. RY NORRIS
135TH MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

► The crowd was out of control. What should have been a peaceful protest turned violent within minutes. News of the riot reached the Baqubah Iraqi Police. They sent in the Baqubah IP Quick Reaction Force, which is trained to handle such incidents. The QRF, fully equipped with face visors and body armor, arrived to a chaotic scene.

They formed a line formation and marched toward the protestors, beating their Plexiglas riot shields, in unison, with their batons. The protestors formed a human chain, undaunted by the show of force.

Two massive riot control vehicles with mounted loud speakers pulled up.

From the loud speakers, "Go home!" a QRF IP directed from inside the vehicle.

The protestors retaliated by throwing various objects at the force. The riot was short lived as the QRF engaged the water turbo jets atop the "water buses," shooting water at 20 pounds per square-inch at the crowd. This ended the mock riot training exercise.

Soldiers with 3rd Platoon, 66th Military Police Company trained the IP QRF in crowd control and riot dispersal at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, April 18-19.

"The purpose of this training is to train the trainer," said Staff Sgt. Thomas Garrard, the lead instructor for the training with 66th MP attached to 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. "We train them on certain techniques that they need to be aware of so that they can go back and train their counterparts."

The 66th MPs put together a course that covered safety precautions, each member's roles in different formations, escalation of force and practical applications.

The Baqubah QRF's job is to effectively de-escalate the situation while mini-

mizing casualties. They must be mindful of not only the crowd, but also their own welfare. Full riot protective gear and situational awareness will assist the QRF in safety measures. Safety is always of the utmost importance. The training included the fatal areas on the body that should be avoided if possible.

Different formations are used to control crowds. A line formation is used to drive a crowd back or to prevent further access. A wedge formation is used to penetrate and divide a large group into segments. A left or right echelon is used to move the crowd to one side or the other.

Each member's role will differ depending on which formation the QRF wants to use. For example, the baseman's role in a wedge is to breach the enemy's line. Those behind him widen that breach while protecting the previous flank from being surrounded.

"It's important for them to identify each individual's responsibility; they should know the purpose of their position and the person's next to them," said Staff

Sgt. Garrard. "They can train the others and identify any weaknesses so that they can improve."

The QRF employs an escalation of force at the lowest level possible to disperse the crowd. When one level does not work, they proceed to the next. The QRF vehicle is included in the escalation. It is equipped with cameras all the way around, allowing the two-man team to operate the vehicle without having to leave it. The "water bus" can be equipped with a variety of non-lethal projectile weapons like

bean-bags, rubber bullets and high pressure water dispersal.

"We were able to see what we learned during the practical application," said Maj. Ibrahim Abd-Allah Asskv Al-Saady with the Baqubah QRF. "Now that my men are trained, we can begin training the others in the company."

Major Ibrahim has 40 policemen in his company. He plans to begin training others as soon as possible.



Soldiers with 3rd Platoon, 66th MP Co., protect themselves from the water turbo jets operated by the Baqubah IP QRF during a mock riot at FOB Warhorse, April 19. The riot control vehicle can dispense water at 20 pounds per second.

FRONTLINE ENTERTAINMENT



Photo by Sgt. Jessica Rohr



Photo by Sgt. Chad D. Nelson



Photo by Pfc. Jessica Luhrs



Photo by Spc. Jessica Zullig

A - Country artist, Darryl Worley, reaches out to the crowd of servicemembers during a concert at the stadium on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, April 30.

B - Specialist Avery Cody, bass player for The Four Horsemen of the Arockalypse, 3rd Infantry Division's rock band, performs during Marne-a-palooza, April 24, at COB Speicher.

C - Zac Brown, lead vocalist and guitarist in the Zac Brown Band, performs in Kirkuk, Iraq, for servicemembers on Forward Operating Base Warrior, Kirkuk, Iraq, April 17.

D - Phil Vandel, singer and lead guitarist for The Phil Vandel Band, performs for servicemembers and civilians stationed at COBSpeicher, May 21.

Raising Marine Morale



- A - Soldiers with Task Force Marne perform a traditional Polynesian dance at the TF Marne Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Celebration, May 21, at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq.
- B - Captain Heather L. Guck, the Public Affairs future plans officer for the 135th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Division Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, takes a whack at the Public Affairs Office piñata during the 3rd ID Cinco de Mayo Fiesta at COB Speicher, Iraq, May 5.
- C - More than 1,000 Task Force Marne Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines run during TF Marne's "What's Worth Fighting For" Independence Day Run, July 3, on COB Speicher, Iraq.
- D - A mix of six servicemembers and civilians lay down while bicycle motocross rider Brrad Simms performs a spin over them during a show at Forward operating Base Warhorse, June 12.

REFLECTIONS

A CHANCE TO REMEMBER THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE.

FIRST LIEUTENANT ROBERT W. COLLINS

BRAVO COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION, 64TH ARMOR,
2ND BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION

SPECIALIST WILLIAM A. BLOUNT

BRAVO COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION, 64TH ARMOR,
2ND BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION

SERGEANT KEITH A. COE

CHARLIE BATTALION, 1ST BATTALION, 37TH FIELD ARTILLERY,
3RD STRYKER BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 2ND INFANTRY DIVISION

SPECIALIST STANLEY J. SOKOLOWSKI, III

ALPHA COMPANY, SPECIAL TROOPS BATTALION
1ST BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 1ST ARMORED DIVISION

STAFF SERGEANT AMILCAR H. GONZALEZ

DELTA COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION, 64TH ARMOR,
2ND BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS ALVARO R. REGALADO-SESSAREGO

HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY, 36TH INFANTRY,
2ND BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION

SERGEANT ISRAEL P. O'BRYAN

BRAVO COMPANY, 5TH BATTALION, 20TH INFANTRY
3RD STRYKER BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 2ND INFANTRY DIVISION

CORPORAL WILLIAM C. YAUCH

BRAVO COMPANY, 5TH BATTALION, 20TH INFANTRY
3RD STRYKER BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 2ND INFANTRY DIVISION

SPECIALIST CHRISTOPHER W. OPAT

DELTA COMPANY, 1-14 CAVALRY,
3RD STRYKER BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 2ND INFANTRY DIVISION

CAPTAIN MICHAEL P. CASSIDY

HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS BATTERY, 1ST BATTALION, 9TH FIELD ARTILLERY
2ND BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION

SPECIALIST JACOB P. DOHRENWEND

HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION, 28TH INFANTRY,
4TH INFANTRY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

The above listed Soldiers died between March 15, 2010 and July 1, 2010 and were part of Task Force Marne or the 3rd Infantry Division.