

THE RED BULL REPORT

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January 8, 2010

PASS IN REVIEW: 2009 marks progress, remembrance



Days of plenty, days of austerity, days of stress and days of rest: these were all days we shared with our fellow Soldiers.



These days are our shared memories, our signposts on the terrain of history. For, what is a year but a list of days, and what is a day but another step closer to home?



As this year closes and this decade (whatever we chose to call it) ends, let us look back at this year deployed to Iraq and see it not as a block of time, but as a collection of days spent with our battle buddies, our coworkers and our friends.



Everyone, from the most squared-away sergeant major to the roundest private, can savor the sweets of Halloween, the bounties of Thanksgiving, the joy of Christmas - but let us also remember those days that hold significance in other, more solemn ways.





Photo by Sgt. Dajon Schafer
Commanding General Maj. Gen. Rick Nash speaks during the 34th Red Bull Infantry Division Departure Ceremony at Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul, Minn., Feb. 10, 2009.



Photo by Pfc. Stephanie Cassinos
Commander in Chief of the Minnesota National Guard Gov. Tim Pawlenty speaks to deploying Soldiers, their families and friends during the 34th Red Bull Infantry Division Departure Ceremony at Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul, Minn., Feb. 10, 2009.



Photo by Pfc. Stephanie Cassinos
Families and friends show their support for deploying Soldiers during the 34th Red Bull Infantry Division Departure Ceremony at Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul, Minn., Feb. 10, 2009.

Red Bulls on the move

By 34th Inf. Div. PAO



MINNEAPOLIS - More than 6,000 people assembled at the Roy Wilkins Auditorium Feb. 10 in St. Paul, Minn., to bid farewell to brave citizen-Soldiers of the 34th "Red Bull" Infantry Division, who mobilized for what is shaping up to be an unprecedented deployment.

The upcoming deployment of the Red Bulls to the southern provinces of Iraq is unlike any previous deployment for the division, or for the U.S. Armed Forces. They will be in charge of leadership, command, control and in-depth analysis for a 14,000-person multinational division, and will have direct partnership with more than 40,000 Iraqi security forces.

The gravity of this mission did not escape the outgoing citizens of Minnesota, who were absolutely determined to send off their heroes with Minnesota gratitude.

The Meal

"What we're trying to achieve here is that the family all comes together," said Joe Powers, one of many leaders of Serving Our Troops. "That's how families are built; they're usually around the dinner table. This is our opportunity, really, to give back to the families."

Serving Our Troops is an organization that assembled St. Paul restaurants, businesses and volunteers five different times before this gathering Feb. 10 to enable

ON THE MOVE

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THE RED BULL REPORT

34th Red Bull Infantry Division
Public Affairs Office



Commanding General
Maj. Gen. Rick Nash



Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Doug Julin

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Photo by 34th Infantry Division Public Affairs

Friends, family and more than 1,000 deploying Minnesota National Guard Soldiers gather at Roy Wilkins auditorium for the 34th Red Bull Infantry Division Deployment Ceremony Feb. 10 in St. Paul, Minn. Photo by Sgt. Dajon Schafer.

From Page 2 **ON THE MOVE**

Minnesota's mobilized Soldiers and families to enjoy a family meal together. They have traveled to Kosovo twice and to Iraq once.

For this event, however, hundreds of volunteers served a meal to more than 8,000 Soldiers and families in what was the largest single-seating meal ever held in St. Paul.

The organizations that teamed up to serve the troops were St. Paul City Council; Xcel Energy; Lethert, Skwira, Schultz & Co., CPA; Goff and Howard Communications; Davis Communications; Stockyard Meats; League of Minnesota Cities; Canadian Honker; Tinucci's Restaurant; Mancinni's Char House; Cossetta's Italian Market and Pizzeria; O'Gara's Bar and Grill; and Skinner's Pub and Eatery; St. Paul Police Federation; and Local 21 St. Paul Fire Union.

Just as the sacrifice and significance of the mission did not escape Serving Our Troops, the generosity of the organization is not something that escaped the Soldiers or their families.

"I think it's incredible that these businesses and the community are coming together," said the father of one soldier. "Nothing says 'I appreciate you' like a steak dinner."

The Legacy and the Mission

The Red Bulls are going into this mission charged with carrying on a proud legacy of commitment, sacrifice and the warrior spirit. As a reminder of the sacrifice of the Soldiers who came before them, the Soldiers and family members of the deploying unit were honored by the presence of Red Bull veterans of World War II. Don Halverson and Bill Ward also mobilized on Feb. 10, but they did it 68 years earlier when they mobilized to fight the fascism of the Nazis.

"It's certainly nice to carry on the tradition of the Red Bulls, and all that that stands for and all that those guys fought for," said Chief Warrant Officer Dale A. Towle. "It makes me feel proud that I get to be one of them."

The legacy of the those men who fought and died with the Red Bull Division in World War II has already been carried on by Red Bull Soldiers in today's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The

1/34th Brigade Combat Team fought for 16 months in Iraq from 2005 to 2007, and lost more than 20 Soldiers.

Now, with the transition of power and responsibility that is occurring in the nation of Iraq, the mission itself is more complicated than just eradicating an enemy or capturing insurgents.

The Red Bull Soldiers will be in the southernmost nine provinces of Iraq, where they will be continuing to transfer responsibility to the Iraqi Security Forces. In addition, they will be continuing to develop the nation's civil capacity. Most importantly, however, the Soldiers will be working to establish stability, by, with, and through the Iraqi Government.

Under the policy of the new American administration, the mission will require the "Red Bull" to work with a heightened sense of urgency in order to accomplish the mission in the permitted amount of time.

"We are up to this challenge," said Maj. Gen. Rick Nash, commander of the 34th. "Each one of our Soldiers is a volunteer. Our Soldiers possess the right combination of military training and unique civilian skills."



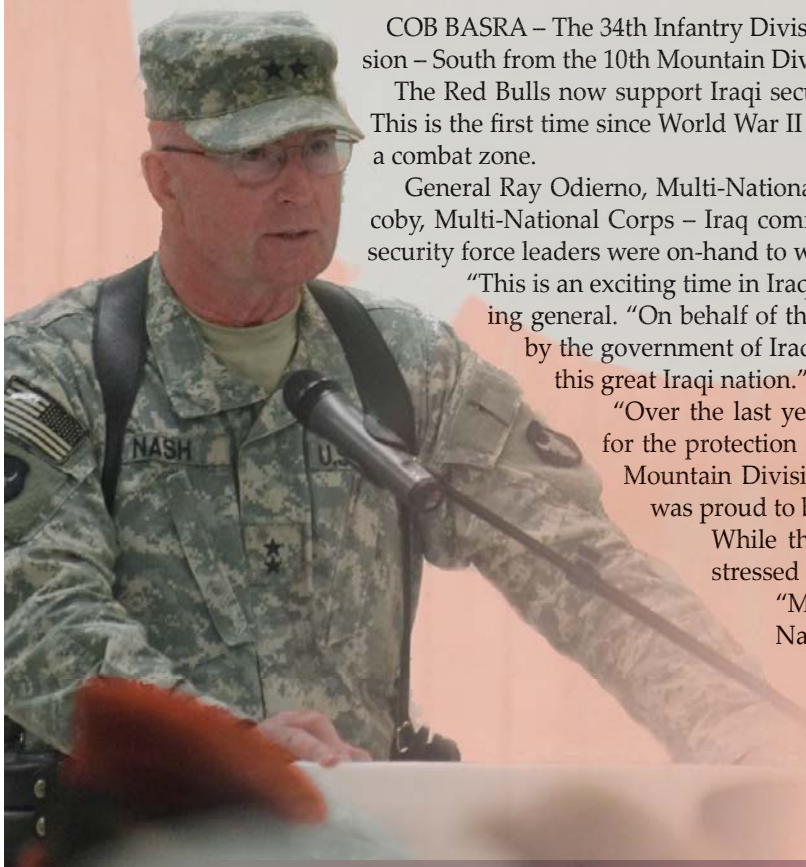
34th Infantry Division assumes control of MND-S



Photo by Pfc. J.P. Lawrence

The state flag of Minnesota, far right, flies over COB Basra along with the flags of Iraq and the U.S. The 34th Inf. Div., an Army National Guard unit based out of Minnesota, assumed control of Basrah and the nine southern provinces of Iraq May 20.

By MND-S PAO



COB BASRA – The 34th Infantry Division “Red Bulls” assumed control of Multi-National Division – South from the 10th Mountain Division in a transfer of authority ceremony here May 20.

The Red Bulls now support Iraqi security forces throughout nine provinces in southern Iraq. This is the first time since World War II that the 34th Inf. Div. has established its headquarters in a combat zone.

General Ray Odierno, Multi-National Force – Iraq commanding general, Lt.Gen. Charles Jacoby, Multi-National Corps – Iraq commanding general, government of Iraq officials and Iraqi security force leaders were on-hand to witness the historic transfer.

“This is an exciting time in Iraq,” said Maj. Gen. Richard Nash, 34th Inf. Div. commanding general. “On behalf of the 34th Infantry Division, we are privileged to be invited by the government of Iraq to be a partner in improving the future of the people of this great Iraqi nation.”

“Over the last year, the Iraqi Army and Police have taken responsibility for the protection of the Iraqi people,” said Maj. Gen. Michael Oates, 10th Mountain Division commanding general. “The 10th Mountain Division was proud to be their partners in this success.”

While the Red Bulls are ready to take hold of the reins, Nash stressed that much work remains ahead of them.

“My Soldiers will be in a supporting partnership role,” said Nash. “Our major partnership focus will be with the Iraqi police and the Department of Border Enforcement in order to assist them as they secure the people of southern Iraq. We are highly impressed with the professionalism and capability of the Iraqi Army.”

Feb 10
Departure

May 20
TOA

June 30 July 4 July 16
SOFA Darkest Night

Sept 9 Sept 11
Labor Day

Oct 31 Nov 26
Halloween Thanksgiving

Dec 25
Christmas



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson

U.S. Army Capt. Rich Turvey, commander, "A" Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, signs over Joint Security Station Salaam to Iraqi Army 1st Lt. Jassim Abbas, commander, 3rd Company, 1st Bn., 32nd Brigade, at the transfer ceremony near Numaniyah June 20. In accordance with the security agreement between the U.S. and Iraq, Iraqi Security Forces now have full ownership of security in their cities, villages and localities.

Historic day for future of Iraq

By Staff Sgt. Dave Lankford
MND-S



COB BASRA – June 30 is an important day for the nation of Iraq. In accordance with Article Five of the security agreement between the United States and the Government of Iraq, signed in Baghdad in November of last year, Iraqi Security Forces now have full ownership of security in their cities, villages and localities.

"As of today, U.S. combat forces will turn over the security of cities to Iraqi Security Forces, and begin a period where our primary security role is one of training, mentoring and advising the ISF," said Maj. Gen. Rick Nash, Multi-National Division-South and 34th Infantry Division commander. "Today's ISF is capable, ready and dedicated to keeping the people of Iraq safe."

Nash praised the dedication of the ISF and the proficiency of the U.S. and coalition forces, and attributed the successful implementation of the security agreement to their actions.

"Iraq's successes and significantly improved security are a testament of the ISF's progress and its dedication to Iraq's sovereignty," said Nash. "The Iraqis have made strides in their ability to protect their citizens, and our

brave Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines are doing a great job in helping them build both their security forces and their civil capacity."

Although U.S. Soldiers will no longer inhabit the cities of Iraq, Nash said, American and coalition forces will continue to support the ISF within the parameters of the security agreement.

"Leaving the cities does not mean that we are backing off; instead, it indicates our confidence in the Iraqis to safeguard their own citizens," Nash said. "Likewise, the security agreement is a tangible, positive sign of a mature relationship between two sovereign nations."

In accordance with the security agreement, U.S. forces will withdraw from all Iraqi territory by Dec. 31, 2011. Today is likely to be remembered as a significant step toward the realization of that objective.

"So, on this important day of transition in Iraq, our two nations move forward together as friends, with the shared goal of the safety and security of the Iraqi people," Nash said. "I am very encouraged about the future success of Iraq."



28th CAB celebrates Fourth of July in traditional and unique ways

By Sgt. Matthew E. Jones
28th CAB

COB ADDER – Celebrating holidays in a familiar way when deployed to Iraq can be tricky, but with traditions like fireworks, none is more so than the Fourth of July.

Yet, when the Soldiers of the Pennsylvania National Guard's 28th Combat Aviation Brigade celebrated July 4th at Contingency Operating Base Adder, they went full-in, "fireworks" and all.

The day began with hundreds of COB Adder Soldiers -- including more than 50 from 28th CAB -- beating the sunrise to participate in the 10K Peachtree Road Race.

Afterward, runners and spectators alike were able to enjoy breakfast at one of the three patriotically decorated dining halls.

The Warrior's dining facility was bedecked in traditional and unique decorations. Red, white and blue were splashed around the room, but so were colorful sculptures of animals and objects designed to remind soldiers of home. The sculptures included geese, houses, a bald eagle and a special touch for the Pennsylvanians, the Liberty Bell.

CELEBRATING 4TH OF JULY
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Photo by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones

Runners begin the Peachtree Road Race at Camp Adder's Memorial Hall July 4. Five hundred troops participated in the race, including more than 50 from the 28th CAB.



From Page 6

CELEBRATING 4TH OF JULY

The Iraqi Business Zone, a collection of local vendors located near the base, was open for business as usual, but additional vendors sold their wares under tents during the Independence Day weekend.

Items for sale included paintings, clothing and electronics, but according to one vendor, the most popular items on July 4th were trinkets and souvenirs such as Iraqi-themed household goods and decorations. Novelty items such as camel rides and Arabic name-plaques were also popular.

Other events included a firefighter competition and a small carnival, but like any good Fourth of July event, the highlight of the day was a fireworks show.

Instead of looking into the air, the troops of Camp Adder were treated with a drive-in style video of a fireworks show projected from the back of a pickup truck onto a pair of concrete barriers. Speakers carried the booms and crackles far enough to bring passersby wandering into the area.

Yet, unlike the fireworks shows that would be happening several hours later on the other side of the globe, at the conclusion of the grand finale, this show started again from the top.



Photos by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones

Spc. Sabrina Bricker, 28th CAB, watches a fireworks video at COB Adder's "Big Top" July 4. Instead of looking into the air, the troops of COB Adder were treated to a drive-in style video of a fireworks show projected from the back of a pickup truck onto a pair of concrete barriers as speakers carried the booms and crackles.

Lebanon, Pa.-based National Guard members (from left) Spc. Maria Schafer, Chief Warrant Officer Charles Tetley and Master Sgt. Patricia Wallace, browse for souvenirs at the Iraqi market near COB Adder July 4. The market was open for business as usual, with additional vendors on-hand for the holiday weekend.





File photo

Darkest Night

By Sgt. Joe Roos
MND-S



COB BASRA – July 16, three young men with their whole lives in front of them died. They were in the Quick Reaction Force compound of Contingency Operating Base Basra when a rocket hit near them around 9:15 p.m.

Soldiers know what a life lost in combat means. Each life lost means that this war will never end for a family, a community and a military unit. For the division headquarters, Thursday, July 16 was our darkest night.

Three Minnesota boys were killed in the attack: Spc. Daniel Drevnick, 22, of Woodbury, Spc. James Wertish, 20, of Olivia, and Spc. Carlos Wilcox, 27, of Cottage Grove. Their families would soon find out that they would

only have a memory of their loved ones.

How sober we quickly became. Snapped out of our stupor and drowning in a harsh and sudden reality, we looked at each other with wide eyes and knew that we were peering through the darkest night that any of us could remember.

Daniel Drevnick planned to earn a degree in law enforcement. He was attending Century College in White Bear Lake, Minn., before deployment. He was a drag racing partner with his dad and raced his Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution at tracks all over the Midwest.

James Wertish loved working on his family farm near Olivia, Minn., and snowmobiling. He broke his collarbone while snowmobiling and de-

ployed late because of his injury. After healing, he was glad to get back to his unit and his buddies were happy to have him.

Carlos Wilcox graduated from Metropolitan State University with a bachelor's degree in biology, and had aspirations of going to medical school and becoming a doctor. He was on track to achieving his goal, working as a military healthcare specialist with the 34th Military Police Company, and looking forward to taking the medical school entrance exam after his deployment..

These men are gone. Their dreams have gone with them. The darkest night of our deployment, without question, is the night that Daniel, James and Carlos reminded everyone the cost of a war, the cost of our freedom.

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Sun-filled, fun-filled Labor Day at COS Hunter



Center Mass, a rock band and detachment of the 34th "Red Bull" Inf. Div. band, plays for the Soldiers of COS Hunter during Labor Day festivities Sept. 6. Center Mass was the first band to ever have played for the Soldiers at COS Hunter.



Soldiers at COS Hunter celebrated Labor Day weekend with a barbeque and a rock concert Sept. 6.



Spc. Richard Niester, a Decatur, Ill., native and cavalry scout with 2nd Sqdn., 13th Cav. Regt., plays football during Labor Day festivities at COS Hunter Sept. 6.



Spc. Roger Salinas, a Corpus Christi, Texas, native and petroleum supply specialist with 121st Brigade Support Battalion, spends his Labor Day weekend pumping iron at COS Hunter Sept. 6.



Soldiers at COS Hunter whip out their lighters during a performance by Center Mass. The Labor Day festivities marked the first time a band played for Soldiers at COS Hunter.

By Pfc. J. Princeville Lawrence
34th Red Bull Infantry Division PAO



COS HUNTER, Iraq – It's Labor Day weekend at Contingency Operating Site Hunter, and it's a sunny afternoon with clear blue skies as far as the eye can see. The weather is cool, almost temperate, with a periodic breeze that carries the smell of charcoal smoke and lemons. There's chicken on the grill and hotdogs and hamburgers on the way. There are the sounds of impromptu football and classic rock music, and there's a band, Center Mass, playing at dusk.

It could almost be like a Labor Day weekend back home, except that the beer has no alcohol, there are dust storms on the horizon and everyone is in uniform.

No, the festivities on COS Hunter didn't quite compare to the fiestas and hoote-nannies back home, but for the Soldiers of 2nd Squadron, 13th Cavalry Regiment, it was a welcome chance to continue the great American tradition of kicking back on Labor Day weekend with loud music, loud company and barbequed meat.

The festivities began, as all good events should, with a hearty meal.

Platoon leaders and platoon sergeants usually spend Sunday's barbequing food for their units. But, because a band was coming, the leadership pooled together and served one gigantic meal for everyone on COS Hunter, with a menu of hot dogs and hamburgers, chicken halves, pork ribs, lobster tails and crab legs. While originally serving as a way to give the cooks of COS Hunter a day off, the barbeques also helped foster camaraderie amongst the troops.

"It's a chance to get together and just sit and talk and enjoy and relax," said Sgt 1st Class Friedel Keene, a Clarksville, Tenn., native and the dining facility manager for 2nd Bn., 13th Cav. Regt. "[The Soldiers] appreciate it and they will talk about it for many days."

"The barbeque was amazing. The burgers are always amazing," said Spc. Rand-in Hood, Brady, Neb. native and a cavalry scout with 2nd Bn., Cav. 13th Regt.

"It gets Soldiers out of their [rooms],"

Photos by Pfc. J. Princeville Lawrence

SUN-FILLED
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Soldiers putting meat on the grill to feed the masses. 2nd Bn., 13th Cav. Regt. is deployed from Fort Bliss, Texas to Maysan Province in Iraq, where they advise and assist Iraqi security forces.



Command Sgt. Maj. Jack Iglesias, 2nd Sqdn., 13th Bn., dishes grub to Spc. John Bonnar, a Boston, Mass., native and cavalry scout with 2nd Sqdn., 13th Cav. Regt.



Photos by Pfc. J. Princeville Lawrence

Staff Sgt. Dean Tracy, a San Diego native and cannon crewmember with 2nd Bn., 29th FAR, barbeques ribs during Labor Day festivities.

From Page 10 SUN-FILLED

said Sgt. Victor Correa, an El Paso, Texas native and squad leader with the 2nd Bn., 29th Field Artillery Regt. "It helps leaders and Soldiers interact."

The Labor Day festivities provided many Soldiers a chance to talk to friends and relatives in the Internet café, lift weights at the gym, shop at the Post Exchange trailer, watch movies in their room or catch up on sleep. Other Soldiers, like Hood and Staff Sgt. Greg Holmes, picked up a football or baseball and played catch until the sun went down.

"It feels great. I like tossing the ball around," said Holmes, a West Palm Beach, Fla. native and a section sergeant with the 2nd Bn., 13th Cav. Regt.

"It brings me back to my days of youth," added Holmes, who played baseball in high school.

Center Mass, one of the 34th "Red Bull" Infantry Division's rock bands, capped off the night with an approximately two hour set list. It was the first time a band has played for the Soldiers

of the 2nd Bn., 13th Cav. Regt. at COS Hunter, and they played on a stage built just days before.

The crowd appeared tentative at first, but as the night went on, audience participation grew, culminating in the highlight of the night, when a Soldier from the crowd took the lead on one of Center Mass's songs.

During a rendition of the song "Hey Ya," by Outkast, Spc. Stewart Donnelly, a native of Washington, D.C., and truck driver with 2nd Bn., 13th Cav. Regt., ran up to the stage, took the microphone and cowbell, and proceeded to sing and dance to the raucous laughter of almost the entire audience.

It almost seemed staged, but Donnelly said it was completely spontaneous.

"It was good to get something different," said Sgt. John Young, an Aurora, Colo., native and medic with 2nd Bn., 29th FAR. "It was something a lot of Soldiers needed."

"Anytime you get entertainment out here it's a great morale booster," said Sgt. 1st Class Alfonso Mendoza, Jr., a native of Muleshoe, Tex., and platoon sergeant with 2nd Bn., 29th FAR. "Any-

thing not related to missions and details is good."

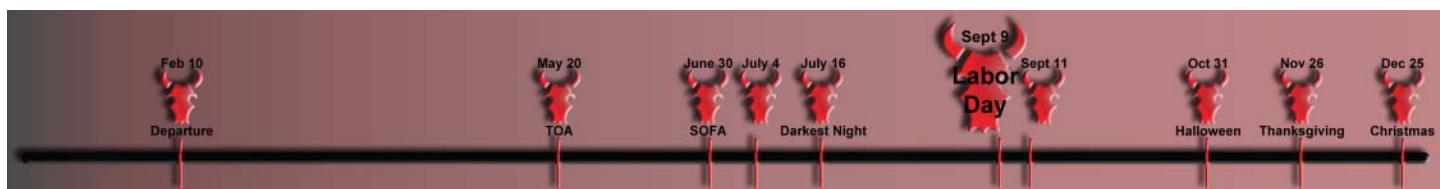
The command shared the sentiments of the Soldiers.

"Since we got here, the taskforce has been going all out at full speed. And we never really got a chance to unwind, kick back," said Command Sgt. Major Jack Iglesias. "I thought that by bringing a band here, and just letting everyone come out with the barbecue earlier, we can show that it's not about work all the time."

"As you can see, it's evident that morale is very upbeat and that the Soldiers are having a great time," he said, as Soldiers began holding up lighters.

After the festivities, the Soldiers went back to their cots and beds to get ready for another day. Many worked through the weekend, even though Sunday is nominally a rest day. And Monday, Labor Day, will be another workday, another day of long hours, constant details and minimal downtime.

Not exactly Labor day at home. But for one afternoon, at least, the Soldiers on COS Hunter were treated to a little taste.



Soldiers remember Sept. 11

By Pfc. J. Princeville Lawrence
4th BCT, 1st Armd. Div.



COB ADDER – I was eleven when Sept. 11 happened. Our sixth-grade class was taking a bus safety course and one of my classmates mentioned he heard a plane had crashed into a skyscraper in New York. I thought nothing of it and we finished the safety lesson.

When we returned to class, the world had turned upside down. I remember watching the same footage over and over again of the towers falling down, the same horrifying images of people jumping from high windows.

Everywhere around the world, there are millions of people with stories like mine, memories of exactly where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news. However, with each passing year, a little bit of the shock fades. While the core memory stays strong, invariably the little bits and pieces around the edges wear away. Eight

years and thousands of miles away from the events of that day, Soldiers of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division gathered Sept. 11 to remember in a ceremony at Contingency Operating Base Adder's Memorial Hall.

There was a gospel choir and a band playing old, sad hymns, but a general hush pervaded the room, which was filled to capacity and then some. Tardy Soldiers stood in the back, some still in their body armor. The gospel choir sang the "Star Spangled Banner" and "America the Beautiful," and some Soldiers in the audience quietly sang along.

Two speakers recounted their memories of Sept. 11.

One had a friend in New York and the other was in the epicenter of U.S. military response at North American Air Defense Command. The theme of both Soldiers' speeches seemed to be 'never forget.'

At 3:45 p.m., everyone observed a

moment of silence. It was a reminder that, as a result of the events of Sept. 11, the three thousand lost that day were joined by the more than 5000 who died in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The names of all COB Adder Soldiers killed were read aloud. The room, filled with hundreds of Soldiers, was completely still, silent; it was like a temple. There were Soldiers crying and wiping away tears; it was a moment laden with palpable emotions, grief, awe and rage: the sum of hundreds of memories.

I am reminded of another rallying call, another demand that tragedy not be forgotten:

"Always will we remember the character of the onslaught against us ... there is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territories and our interests are in grave danger. With confidence in our armed forces – with the unbounding determination of our people – we will gain the inevitable triumph – so help us God."

That onslaught was Pearl Harbor, another day of infamy that awoke the slumbering giant. The speaker was Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a president on the eve of war.

Over and over in this nation's history tragedy has spurred Americans into action: The Alamo or the USS Maine. All of these events have faded into history, but the character of the onslaught is not forgotten. Instead, all of these memories serve as tribute to the American tradition of rallying around a tragedy, stepping forward and serving one's country in its darkest hour.

For many Soldiers on COB Adder, it was a day to remember those who lost their lives on Sept. 11. It was also a day to remember the evil that led them to Iraq and Afghanistan, where so many of their peers gave their lives – for what is Sept. 11 but another Memorial Day?



Photo by Pfc. J. Princeville Lawrence

Soldiers attend a Sept. 11 remembrance ceremony at Memorial Hall at COB Adder, Sept. 11. Memorial Hall was packed with Soldiers paying their respects, some still in their body armor, finding room where they could to stand in the back of the room and in the aisles.



Halloween brings screams of fun to Soldiers



Photos by Capt. Stephen C. Short
Staff Sgt. Tim J. Swanson, squad leader, 2nd Squad, 2nd Platoon, 563rd MP Co., makes a great Terminator at the Blackhawk haunted houses, at FOB Kalsu Oct. 31.

Capt. Stephen C. Short
172nd Inf. Bde.



FOB KALSU – Spirits, monsters and zombies came out to enjoy some Halloween fun with the 172nd Infantry Brigade, Blackhawks, at Forward Operating Base Kalsu Oct. 31.

A formation of troops showed-up ready to enjoy what they had thought they would miss due to deployment, but this time some of the uniforms included the Terminator, a monster-clown and a mummy.



A scary monster clown, Capt. Felix Torres, commander, 57th Signal Co., native of Ponce, Puerto Rico, chases Spc. Bethany Verlich, a medic with HHC, 9th Engineer Bn., native Zephyr Hills, Fla. native, outside the Blackhawk haunted houses.



First Lt's. Joanne M. Doody of Carlisle, Pa., and Renee A. Rysiewicz, of Crown Point, Ind., along with fellow 172nd Support Bn. Soldiers Joshua J. Newby, native of Atlanta, Ga. and Staff Sgt. Lance Tatzel of Sparta, Wis., sit through a story of terror at the Blackhawk haunted houses.

"This was a great way to end the tour and this was a lot of fun and I'm glad the units put it altogether" said Spc. Candice E. Witherington, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 172nd Support Battalion.

"I like to dress up and go to costume parties and get scared and these guys did a great job this time," said the Wilmington, N.C. native

Soldiers had the opportunity to visit the "good ole' days" of trick-or-treating from house to house, but this time it was from unit to unit. Headquarters offices throughout the brigade had prepared candy for wandering trick-or-treaters.

"172nd Infantry Brigade, we always do it big, no matter what the holiday is, we always do it big and we did it again this time for Halloween," said Witherington.

One special treat was the haunted houses built inside the old, abandoned civil affairs compound.

The trick-or-treating Soldiers waited on the dark road to the haunted houses, where macabre scenes of horror endeavored to instill a little fright into the night, as each battalion sunk their teeth into hopes of winning for the best haunted room.

Each battalion had established a room to make it the best haunted house they could in hopes of scaring up some fun. The judges focused on creativity, entertainment value and spookiness.

"I've done this thing before with unlimited materials and I want to see what they have come up with limited materials and I want to see the creativity level," said Staff Sgt. Tim J. Swanson, squad leader, 2nd Squad, 2nd Platoon, 563rd Military Police Company.

"Back home at Halloween, I set up haunted houses and scare people and Halloween is my favorite holiday," said the Warwick, R. I. native.





Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Erika Nyberg

Capt. Michael Lacertosa, an aircraft mission request officer, 28th CAB, serves Soldiers on Thanksgiving at COB Adder.



Sgt. 1st Class Christine Frederick, medical platoon sergeant, 628th Aviation Support Battalion, serves Soldiers on Thanksgiving at COB Adder. Each pulling a half-hour shift, the senior leaders of the 28th CAB stood shoulder-to-shoulder and waited on a crowd that stretched out the door.

Giving thanks by giving back

By Sgt. 1st Class Erika Nyberg
28th CAB



COB ADDER – Senior leaders from every unit in the 28th Combat Aviation Brigade reported for duty Thanksgiving Day to serve their troops.

Standing shoulder-to-shoulder, they pulled half-hour shifts on the dining facility serving line, waiting on a crowd that stretched out the door.

“The leaders serving the led” is a military tradition, said 1st Sgt. Donald Bartch, Headquarters Company first sergeant, 28th CAB.

Spc. John Leddy, an avionics mechanic with “D” Company, 2nd Bn., 104th Aviation Regiment, said he was thankful for the good food at the Contingency Operating Base Adder dining facility, and that it was the best meal he has had in a long time.

Leddy, like most 28th Soldiers, spent the majority of the day on duty. He said that the “mission doesn’t stop,” but that it was “nice to come to the DFAC and take a break.” The Carlisle, Pa. native said he had his family in his thoughts and planned to make many phone calls home after dinner.

Preparations for the first Thanksgiving meal ever served in the Warrior’s dining facility started months ago, said Master Sgt. Patricia Wallace, senior food service operations sergeant for the 28th CAB.

It takes approximately 1,900 pounds of turkey to feed the on-average 4,000 service members and civilians served by the facility, she said. The elaborate decorations and extensive menu came together through the combined efforts of civilian contractors led by Anthony Lugo, Warrior’s dining facility manager, and Wallace’s 31 Soldiers from the 28th CAB.

Yet, the special activities for Thanksgiving started well-before the Soldiers reached the dinner table.

For Soldiers like Spc. Ira Hammond, a force-protection specialist, operational requirements often mean eating on the run. This Thanksgiving, however, leaders from the 28th CAB’s Headquarters also took turns on-duty for Soldiers, letting them enjoy a sit-down meal.

Hammond, of Mount Pleasant, Pa., said he thought the gesture “was really nice, something different” and appreciated the opportunity to relax. When asked what he was thankful for, he replied, “my daughter.”

“A true leader has devoted countless hours in his troops, developing them into Soldiers and watching them grow, praying for them and worrying about their safety,” Bartch said. “A true leader is always happy to show that he is part of this large family; the Army family.”



Christmas Eve message of hope



By Sgt. Benjamin R. Kibbey
367th MPAD



Photos by Sgt. Benjamin R. Kibbey

Faces of the congregation at the COB Basra Christmas Eve service are illuminated by candles lit from the passing of the flame from one person to another. The traditional ceremony is meant to represent the effects of love passing from one person to the next.

COB BASRA – The expansive new chapel at Contingency Operating Base Basra saw its first service Christmas Eve with a crowd that filled the 300 seats and saw more than a few standing to hear the message of hope and vigilance delivered by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) John Morris.

Not traditional in every respect, the service began with a quick note on procedures should an indirect fire warning sound. It was a reminder to those present that, as Morris, the 34th Infantry Division chaplain, had previously noted, the gathering, given its size and purpose, was in many ways the biggest target on the base for that hour.

Still, such realities of a war zone did not deter people from attending the service.

In fact, Morris molded the situation to a purpose, making analogies that brought new life to the Christmas story for many present.

"That's just a style of communication I developed over the years as an Army chaplain," Morris said of his presentation of Herod as a commanding general and of the Magi seeking Jesus' "grid" [map coordinates].

"I try to take the Biblical text and apply it to contemporary reality," he said.

Choir leader Capt. Christen Dixon, Moncks Corner, S.C., 14th Brigade Border Transition Team, said he felt the chaplain's message was "very appropriate."

"Using references to what we're doing now, he made it simple for us to understand in military terms," said Dixon. "But he also made it simple for us to understand in spiritual terms."

The M-Sax-Teens, a detachment of the 34th Inf. Div. band played for the service.

Sgt. Chris Campbell, team leader for the M-Sax-Teens and Waukesha, Wis. native, said they were actually the only detachment still on COB Basra over the Christmas season. The rest of the

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Photos by Sgt. Benjamin R. Kibbey

Sgt. Chris Campbell, team leader for "The M-Sax-Teens," a detachment of the 34th Inf. Div. band, warms up before the Christmas Eve service at COB Basra. "When you go out to a place, and you see a smile on someone's face who maybe hasn't had something to smile about in a while, it's really rewarding," the Waukesha, Wis., native said.



Sgt. Brenda Bushera, vocalist with the 34th Inf. Div. Band, a Chicago native and classically-trained opera singer, accompanied by Sgt. Chris Campbell, from Waukesha, Wis., team leader for "The M-Sax-Teens," a detachment of the 34th Inf. Div. band, sings a rendition of Ave Maria that brought total silence to the chapel.

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band is spread around southern Iraq and Kuwait serving the troops.

The mission of bringing a little cheer to the troops through music is one Campbell said he enjoys.

"When you go out to a place, and you see a smile on someone's face who maybe hasn't had something to smile about in a while, it's really rewarding," he said.

Focusing on stories of "staying awake," Morris had a combined message of awareness – both for one's self and for one's fellow Soldiers – for the congregation.

"It's easy for us to let our guard down, and then we don't pay attention to each

other, we don't pay attention to our spiritual welfare," he said. "We don't pay attention to what we're doing here and the danger of what we're doing."

"Sometimes people get discouraged. They're on their third tour here; they see conditions sometimes that are pretty appalling," Morris said. "Americans are pretty sensitive, and it's easy to despair."

So, one goal of Morris' message was to remind people of the promise of Christmas.

"The Christmas message is, 'Yeah, the world's a bad place; there's a reason why it is, but God hasn't forsaken us,'" he said.



Staff Sgt. Gabriel Carr (far left) 1st Co., 130th ARB, from Raleigh, N.C., does a solo with the COB Basra Gospel Service Choir. The choir had the room swaying in time with several songs during the Christmas Eve service.

