

The North Star

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Agriculture exhibit brings community together

**Article by Sgt. Ry Norris,
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Affairs Det.**

An Agricultural Exhibition and Trade Show took place at Tikrit University, Iraq, Sept. 27 and 28.

The Salah ad Din Agricultural Task Force at Tikrit University and the Salah ad Din Provincial Reconstruction Team sponsored the exhibit.

"This was the first time the exhibit has taken place in Salah ad Din," said Tom Pick, a SaD PRT agricultural

advisor. "Normally, the exhibit is in Baghdad, not in the smaller provinces.

However, during the Saddam regime, the farmers were guaranteed profit since the government provided subsidized seeds in return for subsidized crops. Now, the farmers have to market their products. This [exhibit] is giving them that opportunity."

Salah ad Din's PRT made the trip with Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade,

25th Infantry Division, both days to observe the event.

"You could barely walk through the place yesterday without bumping into someone," said Saud Latif Ahmmed, a farmer. "There is a great variety of things for us to use."

Spectators walked through a crowded room as business owners and vendors displayed their merchandise.

Products included items ranging from fruits and vegetable packaging to supplies for hoop houses and plastic

covered greenhouses.

Most of the items were from Inma, which means "growth" in Arabic.

It is an agricultural program set up by USAID to work with the SaD Provincial Reconstruction Team to assist the agricultural business and market in Iraq.

Inma offered the fruit and vegetable packaging free of charge at the event to help farmers keep their produce fresh longer.

With temperatures as high as 125 degrees Fahrenheit, fresh produce deteriorates at a more rapid pace.

Others, like Ayoub Mahmoud Ahmed, sought to increase sales at the event. He is an authorized vendor of Varuna, a company that specializes in producing pumps and motors for deep water wells.

The company showcased its various products at the convention, comparing the quality difference between a pump made in India versus one in China.

"I like the idea behind this event," said Ayoub Ahmed.

"It gives me a chance to display my products to many who might not have known about them. I hope to see an increase in sales from this [exhibit]."



Photo by Sgt. Ry Norris, 135th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

A vendor discusses his products with Salah-ad Din farmers during an Agricultural Exhibition and Trade show at Tikrit University, Iraq, Sept. 27 and 28. The event allowed farmers to view products and services available to the province.

Commentary *Frequent visits to DFAC pays out*

Article by
Sgt. Johnathon Jobson
TF Marne PAO

You head to the dining facility wondering what is going to be on the specialty bar that day. After getting through the head count you find, to your dismay, they have cancelled the specialty bars.

With no one else to think of, you automatically blame the DFAC contractors and the unit in charge of the DFAC. However, what you do not realize is for the most part the situation is out of their control, but there is something you can do to help. Like everything in the military, the DFAC runs on a budget, and things like specialty bars are actually not covered by that budget.

And again, like everything in the military, myths abound. For instance, you may hear others talking about how the military allocates upwards of \$30 per Soldier, per meal. The first myth here is that the amount is per meal. It is not; the amount is per day.

Another myth is all of the allocation is for food.

The truth is most of that money goes toward paying contractor wages, facility maintenance and the transportation of food to your installation. You are actually allocated less than \$20 per day for food.

"Soldiers get \$16 for meals each day," said Sgt. 1st Class Rodney Jerry, the 3rd Infantry Division Special Troops Battalion DFAC Manager. "It is broken up by meal, with \$3.20 for breakfast and \$6.40 for lunch and dinner. If Soldiers do

not come in and swipe their common access card, we do not get credit for them for that meal.

"If someone comes in at breakfast and takes their lunch to go at that time, then we have two meals going out, but only get the \$3.20 credit. We lose the \$6.40 for their lunch. The other day we spent \$75,000 on meals, but only had enough people swipe their card to earn back \$73,000. Without that money we cannot provide things like the specialty bars."

There are things you can do to help bring back things like the specialty bars. The biggest thing is following the takeout policy.

I realize many do not agree with it, but it is actually there to help the DFAC's ability to provide more for the Soldiers. By following the take-out policy, you help ensure that the DFAC is not losing money that would help fund the specialty bars.

The specialty bars are not part of the contract for the DFAC workers, said Sgt. Maj. Andrew McCaughey, the Task Force Marne and 3rd Infantry Division food services sergeant major. The DFAC staff does them as a treat for the Soldiers if there is enough funding to allow for it, he added.

As for variety, the different entrees, salads, desserts, etc., served at each meal is not decided by anyone at the DFAC, or even in Iraq. The menus for each meal are based on a 28-day cycle established by the Department of the Army.

"The menu cycle is designed to add efficiency to the logistical processes from



Photo by Sgt. Johnathon Jobson, TF Marne Public Affairs

Soldiers wait for cheeseburgers and grilled cheese sandwiches at the COB Speicher Dining Facility. Unlike the main line entrees, which change each day, most of the short order items are constant and available every day. The more Soldiers who go to the DFAC every meal, the more money the DFAC gets for food, allowing for extras such as the specialty bars.

procurement to storage to distribution," Sgt. Maj. McCaughey said. "When you are feeding 150,000 people, and everyone gets to choose what they want, it adds a lot of confusion to the logistical process.

"With this menu process, on any given day, every DFAC in Iraq will have the same menu items. They may not be prepared the same way because the abilities of the chefs at each location differ, but the basic items will be the same."

The recent changes in item brands at the DFAC are also out of local management's control. They have switched to a new product supplier who does not carry Lays-brand potato chips or Rip Its energy drinks, but does carry similar items, said Sgt. Maj. McCaughey.

No need to worry -- they

will continue to stock energy drinks, just not Rip Its.

So there you have it, quick explanations for the recent changes at the DFAC. Remember, you have the ability to help bring things like the specialty bars back.

Just follow the takeout policies (two drinks people and that does not mean two visible ones and four more stuffed in your pockets), and do your best to eat each meal at the DFAC.

The more you are there, the more money the DFAC gets for food, and the sooner we all get the specialty bars back

To voice your input about the DFAC, attend the DFAC council meetings. To find out when the next DFAC council meeting will be held at your base, speak to your food service noncommissioned officer.

Troopers awarded Combat Action Streamer

By 1st Lt. Josh Denney
3/7 Cav., 2nd AAB, 3ID

Cavalrymen of Bonecrusher Troop, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, were awarded the Combat Action Streamer for their efforts while deployed to northern Iraq, during a ceremony held at Contingency Operating Site Diamondback, Sept. 29.

The Combat Action Streamer was awarded to the unit because more than 65 percent of the troop's personnel earned the Combat Action Badge.

The streamer—similar to the Combat Medical Streamer and Combat Infantry Streamer—was recently created; Bonecrusher Troop represents a small percentage of units in the Spartan Brigade to carry the distinction.

"The Combat Action Streamer is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and discipline that all of Bone Troop has continuously demonstrated throughout the deployment," said Capt. Nicholas Simpson, Bonecrusher commander, of his Troop earning the award. "Earning it was a team effort, and I



Courtesy Photo

1st Lt. Brian Kossler, Captain Nicholas Simpson, and 1st Sgt. Felipe Vega, Troop B, 3/7th Cav., 2nd AAB, 3rd ID, pose with their Troop's recently awarded Combat Action Streamer, awarded to the troop after 65 percent of the Troop was awarded the Combat Action Badge for actions during its current deployment to Mosul, Iraq, Sept. 29.

am extremely proud to serve alongside the Soldiers of Bonecrusher Troop."

The streamer will be displayed on the Troop's guidon as a reminder of the distinction the Troop has earned during its current deployment.

"This streamer is proof of the strong team forged by the noncommissioned officers and junior leaders of Bone Troop," said Lt.

Col. Clark Lindner, commander, 3-7 Cavalry, of the troop being awarded the distinction.

"All of you remained cohesive, deadly, professional – and ultimately compassionate – in the face of obviously life-threatening circumstances.

"I cannot ask for much more than that."

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month...

Do YOU have the knowledge to know when to get checked?

What is Breast Cancer? Breast cancer is a type of cancer where cells in the breast tissue divide and grow without normal control. Like other cancers, breast cancer can spread throughout the body. Only a small fraction of breast cancer cases can be linked to genetics.

Who gets breast cancer? Anyone can get breast cancer—women and men. But, the exact causes of breast cancer are not fully understood. Scientists have identified a number of risk factors that increase a person's chance of getting breast cancer:

- All women are at risk for breast cancer. The two most important risk factors for breast cancer are being female and getting older. The risk of getting breast cancer increases as you age. Most breast cancers and breast cancer deaths occur in women aged 50 and older. Until more is known about preventing breast cancer, early detection and effective treatment offer the best defense against breast cancer mortality.
- Although rare, younger women can also get breast cancer. Just five percent of all breast cancers occur in women under age 40.

Signs and Symptoms of Breast Cancer: • A thickening of the breast or armpit • A change in the size or shape of the breast • Changes in the skin of the breast (such as a dimple or skin that looks like an orange peel) • A change in the nipple, such as scaling of the skin or a nipple that turns in • A green or bloody fluid that comes from the nipple • A change in the color or feel of the skin around the nipple.

Schedule an appointment with your doctor to detect Breast Cancer early.

Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Private First Class Joshua Sanchez, a Grand Junction, Colo., native with 556th Signal Company, significantly contributed to the success of his company's mission by thoroughly training coalition forces. Private First Class Sanchez and another Soldier recently trained 18 Iraqi soldiers on combat net radio procedures. The Iraqi Army soldiers benefited immensely from Pfc. Sanchez's extensive knowledge and specifically requested him to continue to train their fellow soldiers because of his expertise and professionalism. Private First Class Sanchez also gave his free time to help maintain another unit's spare network and satellite communications equipment. In addition to his contributions to his own company and the Iraqi Army, Pfc. Sanchez set the standard in his unit for physical fitness, achieving the fastest run time in the company. His professionalism and ability to lead from the front make him a top notch Soldier and an obvious choice for the Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Specialist William Murray, a Haleiwa, Hawaii., native with Headquarters and Headquarters Operations Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, (Attached from 322nd Civil Affairs Brigade,) is the administrative specialist for the division's civil military affairs section. He is a true workhorse for the section, serving as the operations center lead, a provincial desk noncommissioned officer, and the section's information management officer, with each duty previously filled by three different NCOs. In addition to his ability to work well above his grade, his personal initiative and hard work have directly contributed to the section's success. Specialist Murray recently worked late hours in order to locate and classify over 2,700 projects to support a recent system upgrade. His diligence ensured this important transition was an unqualified success. Because he performed the work without a negative impact on his normal duties speaks volumes of his professionalism and commendable work ethic. He's routinely the action agent on briefings to the division's deputy commanding generals, and excels in all tasks. For his outstanding achievements he is an excellent selection for the Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

Safety thought of the week...

Prepare yourself for COLD WEATHER and CHANGING PERSONNEL

As we move into the cooler time of the year, many Soldiers are going to leave their Containerized Housing Units to new occupants. Remember these guidelines to help with your transition:

- 1.) **Don't** let known hazards "fall through the cracks"—notify your Mayor cell and leadership.
- 2.) **Don't** take the issued/provided approved extension cords and adaptors! Leave them for your next user.
- 3.) **Do** get work orders submitted for all repairs that should be made.
- 4.) **Do** check to make sure your smoke detector and fire extinguisher are operational.
- 5.) **Do** check with billeting to confirm air conditioner/heater preventative maintenance checks and services were conducted prior to switching to the heat mode.
- 6.) **Do** touch test air conditioning /heat junction boxes in the office or CHU for elevated temperature which may signal a dangerous over current condition. If problems are found, turn off the air conditioning/heat and call maintenance.

Safety is leadership through action!



REGIONAL HEADLINES

Washington potato official going on all-spud diet

www.mynorthwest.com

PASCO, Wash. — Just super-spud me. The head of the Washington state Potato Commission said he's sick of people linking spuds to junk food. So, starting Friday, Oct. 1, Chris Voight said he's going to eat nothing for 60 days except potatoes.

Twenty plain potatoes a day. And no cheating with cheese toppings or bacon bits.

Voight said potatoes are rich in potassium, fiber and vitamin C and have plenty of protein.

Universe realized in Legos wows Seattle

www.upi.com

SEATTLE, Wash. — Elaborate and imaginative creations crafted from Legos delighted fans at a convention in Seattle the first weekend of October.

The exhibition that drew thousands to Seattle Center was part of BrickCon, a gathering of adult Lego enthusiasts from all over North America, The Seattle Times reported.

The hobbyist group is not affiliated with the Lego company.

"We're primarily here to inspire people to build themselves," said BrickCon director Wayne Hussey, who showed off a 6-foot-tall nutcracker made of Legos Saturday.

"It's a time-consumer, a stress-reliever," said Thomas Prill. He built

an Oktoberfest set with a glockenspiel bell tower, a beer tent, church, sausage vendor, maypole and other Bavarian buildings.

In the art section, someone had recreated an Obama campaign poster in Legos. Another made a giant home pregnancy test in pink and white bricks.

"It is wonderful for imagination," Matthew Crandall of Springfield, Ore., whose wife built a diorama of a Coast Guard rescue. He said of his Legos. "The Internet age stifles creation because everything is online. You can't play with it, you can't hold it in your hands."

Atheists, Jews top religious knowledge survey

www.jacksonville.com

DALLAS, Texas — They may not believe in God or gods but they know a thing or two about them.

Atheists and agnostics topped a survey of religious knowledge among Americans released on Tuesday, Sept. 28, by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

"On average, Americans correctly answer 16 of the 32 religious knowledge questions on the survey. Atheists and agnostics average 20.9 ... Jews and Mormons do about as well, averaging 20.5 and 20.3 correct answers," Pew said.

It found Protestants answered 16 correctly and Catholics averaged 14.7.

On questions about the Bible and Christianity, Mormons and white evangelical Protestants scored the highest.

Jews, atheists and agnostics trumped the other faiths on their knowledge of Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism.

"While previous surveys by the Pew Research Center have shown that America is among the most religious of the world's developed nations, this survey shows that large numbers of Americans are not well informed about the tenets, practices, history and leading figures of major faith traditions -- including their own," said Pew, which is based in Washington.

To see the "U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey" go to: <http://pewforum.org/Other-Beliefs-and-Practices/U-S-Religious-Knowledge-Survey.aspx>

Highlights of the survey include:

— More than four-in-10 Catholics do not know that their church teaches that the bread and wine used in Communion actually become the body and blood of Christ.

— About half of Protestants cannot correctly identify Martin Luther as the person who sparked the Protestant Reformation.

— Less than half identified Buddhism as the Dalai Lama's religion, 51 percent knew that Joseph Smith was Mormon and 54 percent correctly said the Koran is the Islamic holy book.

THE

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