

The North Star

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



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Thunder Horse Soldiers uncase colors, take on new role

By Spc. Angel Washington,
4th AAB, 1st PAO,
1st Cav. Div.

Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, took part in a transfer of authority ceremony in Kirkuk, Oct. 11.

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, cased their colors.

Thunder Horse uncased its colors, accepting authority for the same area of operations while supporting Operation New Dawn.

"This marks the formal transition from 1/30th Infantry to us, it means we now own the mission," said 2-12 Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Joseph Holland.

"It is important because we no longer have anyone overwatching us. The training wheels are off now and we're riding on our own."

For the last month, Cavalry Soldiers have worked with 1/30th Soldiers, the Iraqi police and the Iraqi Army to get them ready for their yearlong deployment.

"Our mission is to impartially advise and assist the Iraqi Security Forces in our



Photo by Spc. Angel Washington, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. PAO
Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Holland, commander of the 2/12th Cav. 4th AAB, 1st Cav. Div., uncases his unit's colors with Command Sgt. Maj. William May during a transfer of authority ceremony in Kirkuk, Oct. 11. The unit is currently deployed in support of Operation New Dawn.

area of operation in order to neutralize the violent extremists, secure the people of Kirkuk, and reduce the tensions politically," said Holland.

Conducting joint patrols and assisting in checkpoint security, Soldiers will use this time to help the Iraqis become independent, enabling them to take control of their country.

"We're the closers; we've built the lead and have had

great success with our Iraqi counterparts. We just need to be able to hand off the security mission to the ISF and have them do it as well as they want to; not as good as us or how we want them to, but as well as they want to be to provide for their country," Holland said.

Making history, Soldiers are eager to work with their counterparts and help stabilize the country.

"I'm expecting to see the

IA and IP really stand up and show us what they have as far as protecting themselves, civilians, and the land," said Spc. Raymond Copeland, an infantryman from Lawton, Okla.

"We've been training with the Iraqis for years, and to see them take the front row seat, it's like watching a child grow and learn. I'm expecting to see good things."

“Rough Riders” relieve Challenger Battalion

By Spc. Terence Ewings,
4th AAB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO

Soldiers assigned to the 27th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division relieved the 26th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division during a transfer of authority ceremony, Oct. 11.

The 27th BSB “Rough Rider” Soldiers will now assume the mission of providing sustainment and force health protection in the 4th AAB’s operational environment in support of Operation New Dawn.

“[As] Lieutenant Colonel Bill Galbraith and the Rough Rider Battalion begin the next leg of this race I have no doubt in my mind that they will rise to the challenge and finish strong,” said Lt. Col. James Kazmierczak, commander of the outgoing 26th Brigade Support Battalion. “[The] 27th BSB is a phenomenal battalion with a long and



Photo by Spc. Terence Ewings, 4th AAB, 1st Cav. PAO

Lieutenant Colonel Bill Galbraith, commander of the 27th BSB, 4th AAB, 1st Cav. Div., and Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmy Rutherford, senior enlisted advisor for the battalion, uncased the battalion colors during the unit’s transfer of authority ceremony Oct. 11. The 27th BSB “Rough Riders” relieved the 26th BSB, 2nd AAB, 3rd ID, and will now assume the mission of providing sustainment and force health protection in the 4th AAB’s operational environment in support of Operation New Dawn.

distinguished history, ready to assume the mission and live the legend.”

Incoming commander of the Rough Rider troops Lt. Col. Bill Galbraith said, “We are ready to meet the missions that lay ahead. Through the training we received over

the past year in Fort Hood and the Joint Readiness Training Center, we have honed our sustainment skills, perfected our lethal expertise and we have come to Iraq leaner in the formation, but disciplined, trained and prepared to adapt to the mission

sets that will befall on us over the year to come.”

The 4th AAB “Long Knife” Soldiers will officially be taking control of the area of operations in Mosul and Ninewa after a brigade transfer of authority ceremony scheduled Oct. 18.

Finding Hope: Casualty assistance officers help grieving Families

By Laura M. Levering
Army Knowledge Online

The Army has come a long way from the days when Families of service members killed on active duty were greeted with telegrams coldly notifying them of their loss.

Today, the Army sends trained notification teams, followed rapidly by casualty assistance officers, to guide Families through decision-making and completion of

the necessary paperwork to receive their benefits.

“The key reason we’re here is to ensure they get what they’re entitled to,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Otis, a casualty assistance officer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 5th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

Otis is currently Erica Paci’s CAO. The two met March 4, shortly after Paci

learned of her husband’s death.

To dispel confusion between a notification team and CAO, Otis explained that although the two work together for a brief time, they are separate.

Notification teams, he said, are composed of two people (holding minimum ranks of sergeant first class, chief warrant officer 2 or captain), and must be of equal or higher rank than the deceased; in addition,

the team always includes a chaplain. It is the notification team’s responsibility to break the news in person to the next of kin. The Family’s CAO then makes initial contact within three hours of notification.

“They go out, do the notification, come back to the casualty assistance office, then I read their briefing sheet and get any heads up on issues that we might

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Commentary

The end begins: Enter the 109th MPAD

**By Spc. Thomas Bixler,
109th Mobile
Public Affairs Detachment**

Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening. Whatever time it is when you read this, hello. I am U.S. Army Spc. Thomas Bixler, a broadcast journalist with the 109th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, part of the 213th Area Support Group – the keystone patch you see to the right – out of Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, Pa., and I am the new Editor of The Task Force Marne North Star Newsletter.

Although I'm a broadcast journalist, my formal education is in Graphic Design. I enjoy creatively expressing ideas in ways that actually engage the viewer.

At Fort Indiantown Gap, I am the J-6 photographer, which entails a lot of internal graphic design, photography, video, and a little web design.

I am going to give you relevant news; news that pertains to things happening on Speicher as well as other areas of operation.

The North Star Newsletter has cultural tidbits to help keep you informed about the people we are working side by side with on a daily basis.

It has everything from a re-



Courtesy Photo

Specialist. Thomas Bixler is a Broadcast Journalist, with the 109th MPAD, 213th ASG from Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, Pa.

gional section to keep you informed on local news within the United States to an events posting to let you know where and when major events are happening.

On a larger scale, there are a lot of questions that the American people want answered.

We are here during a historic time. Our Commander-In-Chief has ordered the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq and the American people want to know: how we are doing it, along with the Iraqi population and are the people of Iraq

ready to do this on their own?

I think I can safely speak for the 109th MPAD when I say that we are especially excited to be responsible for that task.

This is where you come in. If there is a story that is being missed, a convoy we need to be on, a part of the province we need to visit, or a part of your life as a Soldier on ground in Iraq that is not being told – grab somebody with that keystone patch and let us know.

Our responsibility is to the American people and the American Soldier. Keep us informed



Courtesy Photo

The 213 Area Support Group patch is worn by the 109th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Pennsylvania National Guard.

of what you're doing and we'll be sure to tell your story the way it was meant to be told – first hand and factual.

Also, don't forget to look us up around the holidays for holiday greetings and shout-outs that you can e-mail to Family Members.

I ask that you continue supporting us here at The North Star by reading and keeping yourself informed. I am happy to be aboard and look forward to serving you, the reader.

On behalf of the 109th MPAD, our commander, Lt. Col. Desiree Morasco, and our noncommissioned officer in charge, First Sgt. Sean Whelan, we say hello, and we'll talk to you soon. Hooah!

Continued from ASSISTANCE, page 2

already be facing I need to be aware of," Otis said.

After contacting the Family, the CAO arranges to meet them as soon as possible to help ensure their benefits kick in. Some of those entitlements, such as a \$100,000 death gratuity, are automatic. Others must be initiated and require paperwork. While understanding and explaining benefits are large parts of the CAO's responsibilities, his duties

don't end there.

Among the first things he assists with are funeral arrangements. From being present for the dignified transfer of remains to helping plan the funeral and burial, CAOs are available to grieving Families for all administrative matters regarding their deceased loved ones. Most rely heavily on them for guidance.

"They're the ones who ultimately decide on what

they want to do, but we want to give them the best advice we can," Otis said.

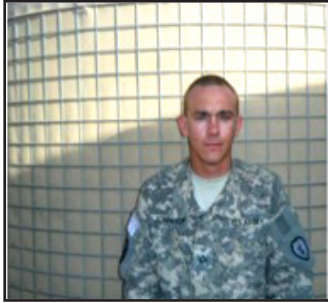
While there is no set duration of time for CAOs to remain with Families, Otis said six months is average. Entering his fourth month with Paci, Otis said the majority of benefits are in place, but they're still waiting on a few pieces of paperwork. Otis will continue to serve as her CAO until those pieces arrive and the loose

ends are tied up.

A final after-action review provides closure and signals the conclusion of their time together. At its end, the Army solicits feedback for continuous improvements based on input from Families.

"My casualty assistance officer is an angel," she said. "He has been so incredible from Day 1, and continues to be...a light in the darkness."

Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Private First Class Johnathan Johnson, a Cincinnati, Ohio, native, with Headquarters Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, is a stryker machine gunner and was selected by his platoon sergeant due to his meticulous attention to detail and keen situational awareness. While serving as the gunner, Pfc. Johnson alerts the convoy of any obstacles or debris that may pose as improvised explosive device or other threats. His aggressive nature towards security and total mission-focused mindset ensured his platoon successfully escorted Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Department of Defense personnel on more than 30 high-visibility missions. His actions have been an inspiration for the rest of his section and mark him as a consummate professional. His outstanding duty performance and "lead from the front attitude" makes him a most worthy selection as the Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Sergeant Black and Spc. Jeffrey Michaud, a Schweinfurt, Germany, native, with Headquarters and Headquarters Operations Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, are selected for their outstanding performance as a Patrol Explosive Detector Dog Team. Through their tactical proficiency, competence, and ability to perform in any environment, they have earned the confidence and respect of the maneuver commanders they support. Sergeant Black and Spc. Michaud have conducted over 55 combat and force protection missions that include raids and cordon and search operations. Sergeant Black and Spc. Michaud are always the first out of the rack ready to train and up for any mission that comes their way. When not on mission, they enjoy working on explosive detection and aggression training, along with catching the occasional frisbee. In order to recognize these accomplishments, they have been selected as the Task Force Marne "Dog Face" Heroes of the North.

For your amusement: Halloween Comics

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LeWenke

"You're lucky - I'm turning into my mother."



search ID: dre1097

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Reynolds

REGIONAL HEADLINES

Family claims water bill 60 times higher than normal

www.wsbtv.com

EAST POINT, Ga. -- An East Point family was steaming because family members said they received a water bill 60 times higher than normal.

According to the city, the two-person house used 137,000 gallons of water in one month.

"I almost fell out on the floor. I just couldn't believe it. I said it just had to be a mistake," homeowner Virginia Reynolds told Channel 2's Tony Thomas. Reynolds said her water and sewer bill has hovered around \$20 a month for years, but this month it shot up to \$1,200.

East Point officials showed Thomas a detector that showed a leak on the property. They said it could have been a leaking toilet, but the family insists that the city is in the wrong.

Reynolds' husband, Fred Holloway, said he did replace a toilet that had a slight drip, but he said it was nowhere near the amount the city claims.

"137,000 [gallons] would fill up this house and float it all the way down the street," said Holloway.

The city meter also showed that the leak stopped one week after the toilet was replaced.

"I think it is a mistake on their part, and I will stand by that," Reynolds said.

But as the dispute continues, the couple remains on the hook to pay the large bill.

Prison inmate spots county's math error

www.upi.com

BREMERTON, Wash.-- Officials in a Washington county say they are rewriting their policy for awarding "good time" to prison inmates after a prisoner discovered a math error.

Robert "Doug" Pierce, 48, who was jailed in December for possession of methamphetamine and earned his GED behind bars, said he wound up serving 10 extra days in jail because Kitsap County did not correctly take his time served into account when calculating his good time, the time taken off his sentence for good behavior, the Kitsap Sun in Bremerton reported Wednesday, Oct. 6.

Pierce said he was eligible for 33 percent of his time to be taken off, the maximum allowed by the state, but the days were calculated incorrectly because his time served was not taken into account. He caught the 35-day mistake but not soon enough to get 10 days more off for finding housing and having his affairs in order before his release date, the newspaper said.

Ned Newlin, the county's corrections chief, said the policy will be completely rewritten to address the

problem. The policy change could affect the sentences of many prisoners in the county.

"Our intention is to be transparent," Newlin said. "We want to do it right."

Newlin said officials are also reviewing the past three years worth of cases to seek out similar errors.

Couple wed at Texas State Fair

www.upi.com

DALLAS, Texas-- A couple exchanged vows at the State Fair of Texas in the shadow of mascot Big Tex and a crowd of about 100 friends and fair-goers on hand.

Sara Rice, 34, of Dallas and Luis Martinez, 25, of Mexico City said they skipped the bureaucracy and held their unsanctioned wedding Tuesday evening, Oct. 5, in the shadow of the 52-foot-tall Big Tex icon, The Dallas Morning News reported Wednesday.

"It's just, like, perfect," Martinez said. "Our personalities and how our love is. We're just crazy and we have a good time."

The ceremony was presided over by the Rev. Pinky Diablo, real name Tom Sale, who was dressed as a miniature version of Big Tex.

"By the power vested in me by Fletcher's Corny Dogs," Sale said at the end of the ceremony, "I pronounce you husband and wife."

THE North Star

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