

Victory Times



Telling the United States Forces - Iraq story

Vol. VI, Issue 3

February 28, 2011



Soldiers gain citizenship on Presidents Day



Photo by Staff Sgt. Edward Daileg

Soldiers take the Oath of Allegiance during a Presidents Day naturalization ceremony at Al Faw Palace on Camp Victory, Feb. 21. During the ceremony, sponsored by United States Forces-Iraq, 53 Soldiers became U.S. citizens.

Story by Spc. Charlene Mendiola
USF-I Public Affairs

As the U.S. commemorates Presidents Day, 53 Soldiers from 31 countries, became citizens of the country they currently serve during a naturalization ceremony in Al Faw Palace, Feb. 21.

This ceremony, the 19th held in Iraq, is the final step toward becoming a U.S. citizen. It also affords an opportunity to recognize the contributions of those who serve in defense of the nation before claiming it as their own.

“These men and women are exceptional because they have risked much to leave their homelands and to swear an oath to protect the United States of America — a country they have loved but couldn’t call their own,” said

See Citizenship, Page 4 —

Iraqi judge advocates, legal counsels observe court martial

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Edward Daileg
USF-I Public Affairs

Iraqi judge advocates and general counsels witnessed a court martial of a U.S. Soldier at the United States Division - Center Court House on Camp Liberty, Feb. 22.

The Iraqis witnessed the trial to see first-hand, how the military judicial system works and what advantages it has

to establish a systematic procedure for them to conduct legal operations in the Iraqi army.

Maj. Joshua Toman, chief of military justice for United States Forces — Iraq, said that having a professional Judge Advocate General Corps is important for the Iraqi army to establish its judicial system.

“Helping the Iraqis have professional JAGs who can administer their own

system of military justice puts the key parts they need together to establish a rule of military law,” he said.

Col. Ali A. Hadi, a legal advisor for the Iraqi army, agreed with Toman and said, “Military discipline is the base of the Iraqi army. If there is no military law we cannot enforce punishment to keep order.”

See Trial, Page 3 —

INSIDE:



Never accept
defeat
Page 5



Unsung
Hero
Page 6



History
remembered
Page 8

Chaplain's Corner

Service members show signs of faith in different ways

By Chaplain (LTC) Terry W. Austin
Deputy USF-I Chaplain

I did something today that everyone does at least once a day. It is something very important and we usually share the experience with others.

In fact, sharing a meal with others is a wonderful way to get to know one another better. But before I enjoy the company of the person I am with, I always pray and thank God for the food. It only takes a moment but it means a lot to me.

So, as I was sitting at the table eating and talking to my friend, I noticed a lot of other people quietly bowing their head and praying before they ate. I was pleased that others took the time to ask God's blessing on their food and saw it as a sign of their faith.

That simple act of saying "grace" before a meal is a sign of a grateful heart and a personal demonstration of faith.

Well, it got me thinking about the signs people show that demonstrate their faith and I want to share just a few of them with you.

The signs of a person's faith are many. They range from that simple act of praying before a meal to spending most of the day in a place of worship.

Some people wear religious ornaments or jewelry

reflecting their faith while others wear a certain type of clothing.

Many students of religion carry their scriptures on them in a book or digitally, on an electronic device. I have even seen tattoos reflecting a person's personal faith in God.

If you are a paratrooper, you probably wear a St. Michael's medal on your "dog tag" chain, as a tangible sign of your faith in your God.

By the way, I would not jump out of a plane without ensuring my faith in God is as strong as it should be.

A paratrooper has to have a lot of faith in their God, their training, and their equipment, in order to have the courage to exit an aircraft traveling 800 feet above the ground at 140 knots per hour.

Signs of one's faith are abundant and meaningful; find them and practice them.

For the Christians in our community an additional sign of faith will be seen on Mar 9. That is Ash Wednesday, and it marks the beginning of the season of Lent.

It is a time of penance, reflection, and fasting, which prepares us for Easter.

Allow me to encourage you to strengthen and practice your faith.

God Bless you richly.

SARC Smarts



The USF-I SAPR office is looking for volunteers to assist with
The Sexual Assault Awareness Month this April.
If you would like to serve in any capacity or for more information, contact
SFC Michael L. Christian at
michael.christian@iraq.centcom.mil
or DSN# 485-5085.

Call the USF-I Deployed Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (DSARC) at 485-5085 or 435-2235 for help. Army members should seek assistance with their Unit Victim Advocate (UVA) or DSARC.



The Victory Times is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of this publication are not necessarily the official views of or endorsed by the U.S. Government or the DOD. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Public Affairs Office of United States Forces-Iraq.

USF - I Commanding General: Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III
USF - I Senior Public Affairs Officer: Col. Kevin V. Arata
USF - I Senior PA Enlisted Advisor: Sgt. Maj. Sharon Opeka
Editor: Staff Sgt. Edward Daileg
Print Staff: Sgt. Aristide LaVey, Sgt. Tanya-Jo Moller
Sgt. Joseph Vine, Spc. Paul Holston
Layout: Spc. Charlene Apatang Mendiola

The Victory Times welcomes columns, commentaries, articles and letters from our readers. Please send submissions, story ideas or comments to the editorial staff at edward.daileg@iraq.centcom.mil. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit for security, accuracy, propriety, policy, clarity and space.



Trial, from page 1

As a member of the old and new Iraqi army, Hadi added that observing trials like the court martial provides them with more options for improvement on existing procedures that they have been practicing since the 1970s.

"Both systems have their positives and negatives, we compare them and try to learn the good points to improve our judicial system," said the Iraqi legal advisor.

Hadi identified the technology gap as one of the major differences he sees between the two systems.

"One of the things we observed is that the U.S. courts have very good technology," he said, as he observed the courtroom recorder using the Marantz voice recording system. "This is the first time I have seen this technology used in a trial."

Toman said technology like the Marantz system plays a big role in keeping the judicial system transparent.

"It gives us a verbatim recording capability which allows us to go back and look at testimonies accurately," he said.

In addition to advanced technology, the Iraqis witness how evidence is presented in the military judicial process. They were able to see how witnesses, cross examinations and testimonies are used to determine the verdict of the case.

"It is important for the Iraqis to see the U.S. judicial system in action," said Toman. "You can give power point presentations,



Maj. Joshua Toman, chief of military justice for United States Forces - Iraq, explains the key parts of the court room to the Iraqi judge advocates and general counsels at United States Division - Center Court House, Feb. 22. The Iraqi legal team visited the court house to observe a court martial trial of a U.S. Soldier to gain a better understanding on how the U.S. military judicial process works.

seminars and conferences, but when they observe it they get a better understanding on why we set our procedures that way."

Toman says he hopes to provide more trial observations and elaborate on the pre-trial and post-trial procedures to expand the knowledge of the Iraqi legal teams with our judiciary system.

As part of the U.S. mission to advise, assist and train, Iraqi judge advocates and general counsels will continue to observe different types of trials to improve their capabilities in establishing their military rule of law in the future.



Iraqi judge advocates and general counsels discuss what they observe during the court martial. Throughout their observation, the Iraqi legal team asked questions about equipment and personnel responsibilities in the courtroom.

Citizenship, from page 1 —

Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, commanding general, United States Forces – Iraq.

“I didn’t think I could be a U.S. citizen by joining the Army,” said Sgt. Castulo Vera, from Mexico, and a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Sustainment Brigade.

“Becoming an American citizen is a great honor,” said Spc. Misael Ramos-Saenz, also from Mexico, and a mechanic with the Combat Repair Team, 2nd Brigade, 11th Field Artillery Regiment. “I am able to give back to the nation for all the great things it has provided for me over these years.”

As the troops took the Oath of Allegiance, pledging to uphold the U.S. Constitution, the star-spangled American flag became their national banner.

“I am proud to earn the right to become an American,” said Sgt. Ramon F. Martin, a Russian, and a team leader for Co. B, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Reg., 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. “It is not about filling out paperwork, but fighting for a nation that has given me so much.”

To gain citizenship in the U.S., service members must qualify for eligibility through demonstrations of good moral character, understanding the U.S. history and government, and most importantly, comprehending the English language.

This is an extensive process which involves detailed applications, interviews and reviews, which usually are the longest phases of the naturalization process. But, from the looks of these newly naturalized citizens, it is well worth the wait.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Edward Daileg

Pfc. Jorge M. Zarate, a Mexico native and an infantryman with Company A, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, looks at his certificate of citizenship after becoming a U.S. citizen during a Presidents Day naturalization ceremony sponsored by United States Forces - Iraq at Al Faw Palace on Camp Victory, Iraq, Feb. 21.

A range of emotions were displayed on the faces of the Soldiers as they listened to Lee Greenwood’s patriotic song, “Proud to be an American.”

“It feels really good to finally be a part of a country I have lived in all my life,” Vera said.

At the end of the ceremony, the new citizens leave with keepsakes marking the end of their journey toward U.S. citizenship. Each one possessed an American flag, a certificate of citizenship and memories of the day he or she became an American.



Photo by Spc. Charlene Mendiola

A row of folded U.S. flags are staged for distribution during the Presidents Day naturalization ceremony. The Soldiers were presented with a flag and a certificate of citizenship after taking their Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America.



Photo by Spc. Charlene Mendiola

Soldiers watch a video message from President Obama who welcomed and congratulated them during the naturalization ceremony.

Suicide prevention, everyone's responsibility

Story and photo by
Spc. Paul Holston
USF-I Public Affairs

"Suicide can dip in to any age group, any rank, from a private to our most senior officers," said Command Sgt. Maj. Earl L. Rice, senior enlisted advisor for the deputy commanding general for operations, United States Forces – Iraq, and 18th Airborne Corps command sergeant major. "Regardless of who you are, you need someone to talk to. Service members need some type of way to communicate their issues and concerns, so that we can get them help."

Service members should not have to fight alone against this silent enemy, and fortunately, the U.S. military forces have many personnel that are able to guide them to a solution, as well as a variety of helpful programs that can assist those who need support.

"Suicide prevention is extremely important to all of our senior leaders," said Rice. "It's about protecting the force, protecting our Army and doing what's right for our Army."

Top leaders, such as Rice, strongly recommend all service members needing help concerning suicide to use all available resources in order to overcome this challenge.

"Obviously the statistics show a significant increase in suicide deaths over the past few years, but I think everyone should understand that one suicide is too much," said Chaplain (Cpt.) Robert Nofsinger, the chaplain of Task Force Dragon, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, XVIII Abn. Corps.

While being deployed can cause various types of stress to many service members, issues such as legal, marital and financial problems, as well as feelings of loneliness and depression, add to the strain that could lead to heavy anxiety.

The 883rd Medical Detachment Combat Stress Control at Camp Liberty Clinic has numerous support programs



Clinics such as Combat Stress Control, located on Camp Liberty, is one of the many resources that are available for a Soldier to use down range in order to discuss his or her issues and find solutions to solve them.

for service members on Victory Base Complex.

Maj. Sandra Pabon, an occupational therapist with 883rd Med. Co., 804th Med. Brigade, and officer-in-charge of Liberty Clinic, said, "Combat Stress Control serves as a force multiplier by providing 13 regularly scheduled psycho-educational classes such as anger management, positive thinking and stress management."

"One of the most important prevention programs is the Unit Behavioral Health Advocate," said Pabon. "This is where we educate and train selected Soldiers at the unit level. They are the eyes and ears of the company and they are the first responders."

Additionally, chaplains, such as Nofsinger, are one of many resources that service members can use in order to discuss their issues and find solutions to their problems.

"The beautiful thing about chaplains is that (they) are separated outside of the chain of command," said Nofsinger. "That is for one specific reason, so that anyone along that chain of command, top and bottom, are able to come to the chaplain and have 100 percent confidentiality."

Whether enlisted or officer, Rice encourages all service members to recognize the symptoms of suicide, know how to prevent a fellow service member from going down that path, as well as continuing to educate those around them.

"We have to know and understand our Soldiers, and leaders at all levels play a critical part in taking care of our Soldiers," said Rice. "There is a way to fix their problems and we can do that by communicating, working together as a team, and utilizing all the resources that we have available to address and find a solution to that issue."

UNSUNG HERO



Pfc. Alberto Noriega is recognized as this week's Unsung Hero and received a Certificate of Achievement from Brig. Gen. Michael X. Garrett, deputy chief of staff, United States Forces - Iraq, at Al Faw Palace, Feb. 25. Noriega received the certificate for his exemplary performance as the administrative clerk for the Headquarters Support Company, XVIII Airborne Corps.

The USF-I Equal Opportunity/ Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office presents "Ask the EO"

- Here is the opportunity for service members to ask questions and interact with our representatives about your concerns, ideas, thoughts, and recommendations.
- Service members can ask questions, make comments, or observe the five protected categories of Equal Opportunity.
 - Sex, race, religion, color and national origin
- Service members' questions and the EO/SAPR Office's response will be published on the following issue of Victory Times.



Please email questions or comments to
SFC Michael L. Christian at
michael.christian@iraq.centcom.mil
or DSN# 485-5085.

What does being an American citizen mean to you?



**Sgt.
Youphin Vanhtha**
Healthcare Specialist
Co. C, 225th Brigade
Support Battalion
*"Being an American, I can
be proud to serve and call
America my country."*



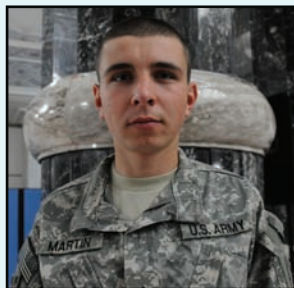
**Spc.
Khoa Pham**
Combat Medic
Co. C, 27th BSB, 4th Brigade
Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division
*"Being able to fully identify
myself as part of the principles
that make America."*



**Spc.
Manuel Ramos-Saenz**
Mechanic
Combat Repair Team
2-11th Field Artillery Regiment
*"It is a great honor to give back
to the nation for all the great
things it has provided me."*



**Sgt. 1st Class
Selau Aiava**
Platoon Sergeant
Co. C 1/21st Infantry Battalion,
2nd Assist and Advise Brigade
*"I have officially become a
citizen of the world's finest
nation."*



**Sgt.
Ramon F. Martin**
Team Leader
Co. B 1st Battalion,
8th IR, 3rd BCT, 4th IR
*"Proud to earn the right to become
an American, fighting for a nation
that has given me so much."*



**Spc.
Ryan McLellan**
Crew Chief
Co. B, 2nd General Support Aviation
Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment
*"I get to be a part of a great
nation of rich history, which I
have always admired."*

VBC Facility Operating Hours

Sports Oasis DFAC
Breakfast 5:00 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Dinner 5 - 8:30 p.m.
Midnight chow 11:00 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.
Sandwich Bar open 24 hours
Sunday brunch 7:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Education Center
8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Camp Liberty Post Exchange
8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Camp Victory Post Exchange
8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Paul Smith Gym
Open 24 Hours

Victory Main Post Office
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

USF-I Unit Mail Room
Customer Services/Mail Call:
Daily 3 - 6 p.m.

Al Faw Palace Post Office
Wednesday and Sunday
12:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Golby TMC Sick Call
Mon, Wed, Thur, Fri
08:30 - 10:30 & 1500 - 1700
Tues and Sat 0830 - 1030
Sunday - Emergency Only

Mental Health Clinic
Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m. - noon

Pharmacy
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - noon;
1 - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. - noon

Websites

Check it out:

USF-I Web pages
www.usf-iraq.com
[www.flickr.com/photos/
mnfiraq](http://www.flickr.com/photos/mnfiraq)
[www.twitter.com/
USF_Iraq](http://www.twitter.com/USF_Iraq)

Facebook -
United States Forces-Iraq
U.S. Army
XVIII Airborne Corps
Fort Bragg

Signal Soldiers commemorate African Americans' service

Story and photos by
SpC. Charlene Mendiola
USF-I Public Affairs

Strength, courage, and determination describe the African-American men and women who have struggled and contributed to their success within the U.S. military.

The 40th Expeditionary Signal Battalion hosted the Black History Month celebration on Camp Victory, Feb. 16, to highlight the distinguished military heritage of African Americans who have, since the Civil War, committed themselves to the nation's defense.

Highlights of the 90-minute event included a slideshow presentation of "Little Known Black History Facts," singing of the National Anthem and the Black National Anthem and keynote speaker, Maj. Ericka M. Brooks, executive officer with the 40th ESB.

Brooks, a U.S. Military Academy graduate, remembers a time when her attendance at West Point as an African American female was not an option. My grandfather and all of his brothers were in the military at a time when only whites could be officers, she said. "I am standing here as an officer in a fully integrated unit."



Maj. Ericka M. Brooks, the executive officer of the 40th ESB, speaks to the Soldiers about the significance of Black History Month during the celebration held in the multipurpose room on Camp Victory, Feb. 16. Brooks was the keynote speaker during the celebration.

Brooks' accomplishments are not insignificant. Despite the number of military conflicts African Americans were involved in, they were not fully integrated into the U.S. armed forces until 1948.

It is important that history is taught and learned, Brooks said, otherwise past mistakes will be repeated.

Photos of African American heroes such as President Obama, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and W.E.B. Du Bois hung on the walls, creating a timeline honoring those who lead, overcame, and broke down barriers to make America a nation of unity.

"Dr. Martin Luther King is a remarkable icon," said Sgt. Dustin Leechadwick Yates, a radio

and communications security repairer with Company B, 40th ESB. "He is known to be one of the initiators of the civil rights movement who fought for fair treatment and equality for every person in America."

Every ethnicity has played a role in getting where we are today, Brooks said. There are values in people, their culture, traditions and experiences; sharing this helps make U.S. forces much more powerful.

"Behind the lines of race, color, or creed, we become a stronger force," said 1st Lt. Anthony Browitt, a battalion maintenance officer with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 40th ESB. "A force united through common goals and through racial lines makes us the strongest military in the world."

"Black history is a part of American history," said Brooks. "We wouldn't be the America we are today if it weren't for that."



SpC. Tyrek Parham, a human resources specialist with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 40th ESB sings the Black National Anthem during the Black History Month celebration.