

Victory Times



Telling the United States Forces - Iraq story

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The Perfume Palace, formerly the building of United States Forces - Iraq joint intelligence operations, officially closed during a ceremony on Camp Slayer, June 1. Camp Slayer will be the first major base to close as part of Operation New Dawn with U.S. forces projected to depart Iraq by the end of 2011.

Perfume Palace closes for handover

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

The Perfume Palace, located on Camp Slayer, officially closed during a ceremony, June 1. The palace closure was a significant step in the closing of Camp Slayer.

During its almost eight years of use, photos were prohibited inside the palace to protect operational security.

"The palace was first used by the U.S. in 2003 by the Iraq Survey Group," said Capt. Drew Smothers, executive officer of joint intelligence,

United States Forces – Iraq. "Their mission was to search and find weapons of mass destruction, and upon their departure in 2005, intelligence operations started and continued through the USF-I [joint intelligence] closing of the palace."

"Because of the nature of operations in the palace, no cameras were allowed inside during the years of the facility being used for intelligence operations," said Smothers. "Cameras were welcomed during the ceremony

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Iraqi corrections officers train on maximum security policies, procedures

Story and photos by Sgt. TJ Moller
USF-I Public Affairs

For the past several months Iraqi corrections officers have been working hand-in-hand with U.S. correctional specialists in order to learn the policies and procedures of the Cropper Theater Internment Facility, which houses detainees who are linked to terrorism and could potentially harm security forces.

ICOs are selected to attend maximum security unit training based on their job performance, said Capt. Stacey N. Sears, officer-in-charge of future operations, 40th Military Police Battalion. "The ICOs who we are training now are the best of the best, the cream of the crop."

"They are highly knowledgeable in their jobs and they are excited and proud that they will be working in a facility that is high not only on the radar of the [government of Iraq], but the world," she said.

Although experts in their field, ICOs, both from the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior, go through refresher training and additional training unique to the C-TIF.

The training covers rules of engagement, Geneva Convention, marksmanship, familiarization with

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Chaplain's Corner

Thinking of the Flag

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Dave Tish
116th Garrison Command

This week we celebrate Flag Day on Tuesday, June 14. All of us serving here in theater, both military and civilian, do so because we are patriotic. We are serving our country. We are supporting and protecting our fellow warriors. Let me remind you what the flag represents.

First, the flag is a piece of cloth designed with specific colors, cut in a particular size, and displayed to represent the nationality of those who cherish this flag. Our flag, the United States Flag, has a history going back to the founding of our nation. Over the years it has gone through numerous revisions, yet basically has maintained its design and colors.

The original flag represented the original 13 colonies as the United

States was founded. As the nation grew, stars and stripes were added. It wasn't long before a permanent design was needed, thus the 13 stripes for the original colonies and stars for each state as it was added.

There is no official assignment of meaning or symbolism to the colors of the flag. However, again, from early times they have been defined. White signifies purity and innocence, red means hardiness and valor and blue stands for vigilance, perseverance and justice.

How fitting it is that the red stripes shield the white ones. For the purity and innocence of our families and nation comes at the cost of lives. Hence the color red signifies the blood that has been shed and the blood our warriors are willing to shed and lay down their lives if need be to protect the nation that this flag represents.

As I am writing this the lives of the

five killed at Loyalty are on my mind. I am also thinking of the other 4,459 killed here in Iraq; men and women paying the price of freedom. Five flag covered caskets left last night and will make their way home. Home -- that which we cherish, that which we build, that which we defend.

For me, as a chaplain, there is also another flag -- the Bible, the cross, or the shepherd's crook. For you there may be a wheel, or tablet, or another item that helps you keep focused mentally and spiritually. Whatever our emblem or symbol is, may it draw us closer to the God we serve.

Further, may this Flag Day remind us that we are not here just to make a political statement in the support of our government and to aid the people of Iraq, but rather for all that the flag and our nation means and has meant over the years -- morally, spiritually, and physical as well.

SAPR Spotlight



American Soldiers are members of a band of brothers and sisters, bonded by Army values, duty to country and loyalty to each other. As Soldiers and leaders, it is our responsibility to set the climate and conditions where safety is promoted and where a fellow Soldier is not hampered by fear of sexual assault or reprisal against reporting a sexual assault.

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.



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and after as everyone enjoyed what the palace had to offer.”

The ceremony began with a ceremonial key presentation by Maj. Gen. Mark W. Perrin, director of joint intelligence, USF-I, to Lt. Col. Jeni Vander Voet, mayor of Camp Slayer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team. The handover of the key signified the turnover of the palace.

Following the presentation, the formal ceremony began on the second floor of the palace. Distinguished visitors from the USF-I command group, as well as guests from other camps, listened as guest speaker, Perrin, spoke of the significance of the closing.

“Camp Slayer is really the first major camp on VBC to be closed and transferred,” said Perrin. “I think this will

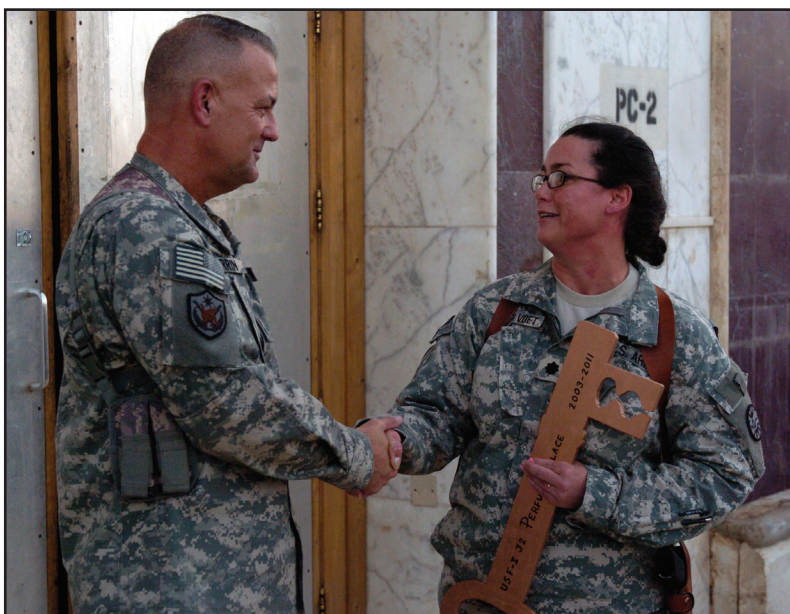
become a model of how other camps on VBC and around the Iraq joint operations area will also be able to close down and clear their areas.”

After the ceremony, attendees were able to explore the palace as well as take photos for themselves.

Col. John Bradsher, chief of operations section, joint intelligence, said the ceremony was great, very fulfilling and the crowd who attended was far more than what he expected.

“We ended an era of intelligence here, a lot of intel professionals have come here and worked to help commanders identify the enemy,” said Bradsher. “It’s a bittersweet, but positive ending to helping the Iraqis move forward.”

Concluding the festivities, the attendees left knowing that they were a part of history.



Maj. Gen. Mark W. Perrin, director of joint intelligence, United States Forces – Iraq, presents the “key” to the Perfume Palace to Lt. Col. Jeni Vander Voet, mayor of Camp Slayer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team, June 1. The handover of the key signified the turnover of the palace.



Service members and civilians had the opportunity to explore the palace as well as take photographs of the Perfume Palace after the closing ceremony.

◀ *The Perfume Palace closing ceremony took place on the second floor of the palace on Camp Slayer and included distinguished visitors from the USF-I command group, as well as guests from other camps.*



Iraqi, From Page 1

a shotgun, weapons safety, familiarization with less than lethal rounds, and force extraction team training, said Staff Sgt. James A. Russell, training noncommissioned officer, 40th MP Bn. The training also covers deviant behaviors of detainees and how those behaviors can affect or manipulate staff members.

The week-long classroom training, followed by on-the-job training, is essential for handling the detainees safely and getting to know the routine of the facility.

"Familiarity of working a correctional facility lends to the efficiency of it working," said Russell. "We are slowly working them into this particular type of facility, where the housing is set up a little bit differently and the security measures are definitely not what they are used to."

"We are teaching the ICOs everything we know, said Spc. Christopher A. Huling, an internment resettlement specialist with the 40th MP Bn., who has been working one-on-one with the ICOs. "Showing them how we run the operation here and telling them why we do what we do; they are learning as they go, and they are doing just fine."

"The training is pretty easy to understand and we already have everything down from day one," said Sgt. Hassan Mani, an Iraqi correctional officer. "As far as pushing chow to the detainees and doing the head counts on the detainees, it is not difficult. We are familiar with the way things are done."

"I'm excited and curious to see how things will evolve over the next few months," said Russell. "We are now starting to get larger groups graduating through courses and passing our security measures. We can start training more of them inside the compound."

The ICOs are currently working the facility in shifts. There are times when there are no ICOs, but as more are trained, ICOs will be on every shift, every day, until the facility is turned over.

Cooperative training like this, as long as it is conducted properly and done with true intentions, can achieve positive results, said Russell.

"When the Iraqis see the Soldiers out there working, they start to emulate and internalize it," said Sears. "When we do the handover, they will be able to maintain it at that level and do an excellent job."

"The end game result is for us to leave here knowing that we gave them the best training we could and gave them all the supplies and tools that they need to maintain this facility after we have picked up and left," said Russell.

With several more cycles of training to go, the Soldiers of the 40th MP Bn. are prepared to teach the already proficient Iraqi correctional officers everything they need to know to be successful.



Iraqi correctional officers transport meals for detainees during on-the-job training with Soldiers from the 40th Military Police Battalion at Camp Cropper, Iraq. ICOs undergo a week of classroom training followed by on-the-job training at the Cropper Theater Internment Facility, a maximum security facility.



Sgt. Ghasan Hamid, an Iraqi correctional officer, ensures meals are properly inventoried during on-the-job training with Sgt. Marco A. Copeland, Alpha Quad leader, and Spc. Christopher A. Huling, an internment resettlement specialist, both with the 40th MP Bn. at Camp Cropper, Iraq. ICOs undergo a week of classroom training followed by on-the-job training at the Cropper Theater Internment Facility, a maximum security facility.

USF-I aims to increase suicide prevention awareness

Story by Sgt. TJ Moller
USF-I Public Affairs

When people think of military operations and mission readiness, physical and weapons training are the first things that pop into their heads. Although vital to mission success, these types of training are not the only ones service members go through to be mission ready. Suicide prevention training is another important aspect when it comes to building a strong, productive force.

Suicide prevention classes help with mission readiness by letting service members know that it is ok to have bad days and encouraging them to have open communications with their chains of command and trusted friends.

"It's about teaching the service members to build resiliency, so that they understand that tomorrow is a new day," said Lt. Col. Rhonda Deen, officer-in-charge of the Al Faw Palace aid station, surgeon, United States Forces-Iraq. "No matter what is going on in their lives, they can make it one more day."

The training emphasizes that service members should reach out for help and talk to friends, leaders, chaplains or behavioral health professionals, if contemplating suicide. It also encourages asking, caring and escorting someone who may be at risk.

"Command involvement is key," said Deen. A lot of people think that it is a chaplain or medical program, but it is a command-emphasized program, she said. The command has the most visibility on their Soldiers and can get ideas on how to read them.

"If leaders know their troops, know what their issues are, what their family problems are and what their personal problems are, then they can intervene sooner," said Col. Chester C. Egert, USF-I command chaplain.

"We have to stress it at every level," said Egert. "It's got to start at headquarters; it's got to be down in the motor pool.

No matter where we are, people have to know the guy on their right and their left. We have to take care of each other."

There are a variety of options available to service members and their families when seeking help.

Some service members are not comfortable with going to their local chaplains or talking to their local behavioral health professionals, said Sgt Maj. Keith Davis, senior enlisted advisor to the USF-I chaplain. Soldiers may be scared of being flagged, sent to mental health or having their weapons taken away.

Another source of help is the veterans' crisis line, available 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week, that connects veterans and family members to trained professionals, some of whom are veterans themselves, for guidance and someone with which to talk.

"Sometimes it's easier to talk to a stranger than it is to talk to a buddy about the fact that you're thinking about killing yourself," said Deen.

"The big thing with the [veterans' crisis line] that's really helped is it has identified Soldiers who have reached out to the hotline," said Deen. If the counselors from the VA hotline are concerned about the Soldier they actually reach back to us and we reach out to the Soldier. We have had cases here in the [Iraq joint operations area] where someone called the hotline and we have gone out to get that Soldier. A life was potentially saved because of the hotline."

This is not just an issue for doctors, psychiatrists, mental health, behavioral health and chaplains, said Egert. "We have to do our part. Everybody has a responsibility to take of his buddy."

The availability of different options and having leadership who are committed to emphasizing the importance of suicide awareness is significant in fighting this battle with suicide.

"Take the time to get to know people," said Deen. "The best resiliency we have is the people around us."



UNSUNG HERO



Sgt. Bianca G. Ayers 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, June 10.

Ayers received the certificate for her outstanding performance as a training noncommissioned officer with Company C, Task Force Dragon, United States Forces - Iraq.

VICTORY VOICES

As part of Flag Day (June 14, 2011), what does the American Flag represent to you?



"Freedom in America and a way of life."

**Staff Sgt.
Arnold Johnson**
Joint Operations Center LNO
PMO, USF-I



"It means pride because it represents a great nation."

**Petty Officer 2nd Class
William Miranda**
Culinary Specialist
SJS, USF-I



"The flag has always been a symbol, it represents what we're fighting for."

**Lt. Col.
John Buse**
Deputy Chief, Enduring Base
Transition
J7, USF-I



"The American Flag represents freedom of people and the pride of being an American."

**Maj.
Madeline Rivero**
Basing Deputy, Large Base
Transition Team
J7, USF-I



Soldiers stood in the position of attention as the national anthem played at their childrens' graduation ceremony on Fort Hood, Texas. The Soldiers participated in a video telecast program, Grad Cast, to watch their children graduate while deployed on Camp Victory, June 6.

Deployed parents witness children graduate

Story and photo by
Spc. Charlene Apatang Mendiola
USF-I Public Affairs

When it comes to graduation day, things like commencement speeches, school-themed caps and gowns, graduates and parents come to mind. For the graduates it is a moment in time that marks the end of their studies and begins the possibilities that lie ahead. For most parents, however, it is simply rewarding to watch their child walk across the stage with a diploma in their hand.

Halfway around the world, eight deployed Soldiers and a civilian had the opportunity to witness their children's graduation ceremonies, which they expected to miss, through a video telecast on Camp Victory, Iraq.

The VTC was made possible by a program called 'Grad Cast' out of Fort Hood, Texas, said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Amy Losoncy, an information system technician with 62nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion. This program allows deployed service members and civilian contractors to watch their children graduate from high school.

"Grad Cast has been around since my deployment back in 2007 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom," Losoncy said. "I took on the role as the coordinator for this program, which has been

successful and pleasing."

As a joint venue linking Fort Hood and its area high schools, Grad Cast was available to several schools including Cooperas Cove High School, Harker Heights High School, Robert M. Shoemaker High School and Ellison High School.

Participating in the program for the first year, 1st Sgt. Reuben Tull, first sergeant for Co. A, 62nd ESB, said it is a great program to have out here for deployed service members.

Watching his daughter, Shayra Lashea, receive her diploma while serving his country was an amazing opportunity, he said.

"We are not there physically, but we can relate to the level of excitement as they walk across the stage through a television," Tull said.

While celebrating his daughter's graduation and his 20th wedding anniversary, Tull said nothing could be more rewarding than to see great things as they happen.

Not new to the program's benefits, Sgt. 1st Class Mervin Manning, liaison officer with 62nd ESB, said he watched the Grad Cast first-hand when he attended a graduation ceremony last year on Fort Hood.

He described the setup as a big screen facing the graduates. His deployed friend appeared on the screen when his daughter

walked on the stage. It was setup to honor the graduate and the Soldier, Manning said. "They were both very happy."

Through the excitement and joy revealed on his face, Staff Sgt. Christopher T. Reed, combat medic team leader with 546th Air Support Medical Company, said he couldn't be more grateful for his command to allow him to sit in the VTC.

"I showed interest in attending the telecast and [my command] supported me all the way," he said. "I was able to realize the same dream my daughter, Lydia, had and I am so proud of her."

"It is a proud day for us to watch our kids graduate," Manning said. "This is the first step for them to be on their own and to witness it while we are away is incredible."

"My wife took on the challenges during this time of my son's achievement," he said. "But I am at ease knowing I was able to support financially and assist in the preparation prior to my deployment."

Not many deployed parents are fortunate to experience an opportunity like this, Losoncy said. The Grad Cast program out of Fort Hood, Texas has done a splendid job supporting the troops in this manner.

"I am so proud of my son, Steven Lee, congratulations to you and to all the graduates of Shoemaker High School," Manning said.