

# THE *Ivy* U.S. DIVISION-NORTH LEAF

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 37



ESTABLISHED IN 1917 TO HONOR THOSE WHO SERVE



JULY 15, 2011



## Footsteps in the sand *Father and son reunite in Iraq*



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kandi Huggins, 1st AATF PAO

First Sergeant Patrick Thomas, senior noncommissioned officer in charge, Company A, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, points in the distance to the Perfume Palace while relating some of the history of Baghdad's sights to his son, Pfc. Tyler Thomas, a multi-channel transmissions systems operator assigned to 50th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, 35th Signal Brigade, during a visit to Victory Base Complex, Iraq, July 9, 2011. The father and son both currently serve in support of Operation New Dawn.

Spc. Kandi Huggins  
1st AATF Public Affairs  
1st Inf. Div., USD-N

VICTORY BASE COMPLEX, Iraq – Despite the strains military life can cause on Families, being Soldiers has proven to be a common denominator that improved the relationship of one father and son pair serving in Iraq.

“We had the typical father and son relationship,” said 1st Sgt. Patrick Thomas. “But in advanced individual training, he started questioning if he could do this, and I would talk to him and work with him, and from that we started getting closer and closer.”

“It was different growing up,” said Pfc. Tyler Thomas. “We didn’t have much of a

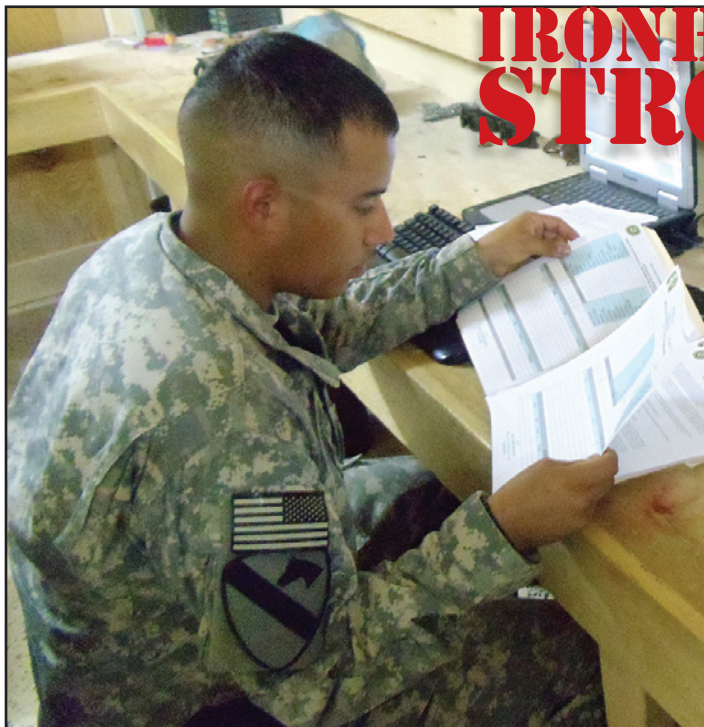
Family life because he was probably deployed every year and a half. Looking back, it seems like he was gone more than he was home, on either a deployment or just being at work before I woke up.”

Now, Patrick, senior non-commissioned officer in charge of Company A, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st

Infantry Division, and Tyler, a multichannel transmissions systems operator with 50th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, 35th Signal Brigade, have reunited and become closer as NCO and Soldier, and as father and son, while the two serve in support of Operation New Dawn.

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U.S. Army photo

# IRONHORSE STRONG:

# Soldier of the Week

Specialist Anthony Ledesma, an intelligence analyst assigned to Company A, 2nd Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, exemplified those words during a convoy mission in northern Iraq, June 26.

Ledesma, currently serving on his first deployment, accompanied Soldiers of 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd AAB, during the mission when his vehicle came under attack, fatally wounding the driver and front passenger.

“He took the responsibility of pulling the (wounded) Soldiers from the truck,” said 1st Sgt. Michael Grand, senior enlisted advisor of Company A, 2nd STB.

Ledesma is a military intelligence Soldier, but acted with the same composure under fire as a combat arms Soldier would, said Grand, who calls Wellsboro, Pa., home.

Ledesma, from Arlington, Texas, assumed the duty of driving the damaged vehicle, ensuring completion of the mission, and providing closure to the Families of the fallen by bringing his brothers-in-arms home.

Ledesma acted above his current rank, becoming a living testament to the Soldier’s creed and the loyalty Soldiers have to each other, unit leaders said.

“He came to the unit a little over a year ago, and since then has consistently performed above his rank and excels at all he does,” said Grand.

For his swift and decisive actions, Ledesma earned the title of U.S. Division – North “Ironhorse Strong” Soldier of the Week.

Specialist Anthony Ledesma, an intelligence analyst assigned to Company A, 2nd Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, reviews unclassified reports at Contingency Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq, July 14, 2011. During a patrol June 26, Ledesma’s vehicle came under attack. Ledesma, a native of Arlington, Texas, treated casualties at the scene and then drove the damaged vehicle, ensuring mission completion. For his actions, Ledesma earned the title of “Ironhorse Strong” Soldier of the Week.

“I will never leave a fallen comrade.” Those words, part of the Soldier’s Creed, live in each Soldier, instilled in them from day one of basic training.

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## THE IVY LEAF

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1st Advise and  
Assist Task Force  
1st Infantry Division

2nd Advise and  
Assist Brigade  
1st Cavalry Division

4th Advise and  
Assist Brigade  
1st Cavalry Division



**SAND, Cont'd from, Pg. 1**

The son of a retired command sergeant major, Patrick enlisted as an infantryman and, after completing basic and advanced individual training, attended airborne school. His first assignment was with Company A, 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, at Fort Bragg, N.C., with whom he deployed in support of Operation Desert Shield.

The Mobile, Ala., native said he credits his father for being the Soldier he has become and hopes to influence Tyler in the same way.

"When I was younger, if I was doing something wrong or messed up, as my dad he would talk to me. If it came to me getting hemmed up and my sergeant major called him, my dad would say he didn't care because the standards are the standards," said Patrick. "And I treat Tyler the same way. You have to teach him to be a Soldier, and that's something my dad did for me growing up in the Army."

"There's a level of professionalism we keep," said Tyler. "Just like any other NCO, he's not my dad when I'm wearing my rank and he's wearing his."

Patrick said, as a Soldier, that is how Tyler learns, and that is how he will build himself to be a better leader. Being there to help also provides Tyler a slight advantage to make

better decisions, and Patrick said his son knows that he will be there for guidance.

"(Being a Soldier) has definitely helped my relationship with my dad," said Tyler. "I wasn't making the best decisions, and I probably didn't live up to his expectations, but I can say after I graduated basic training, it's continued getting better."

Building on common threads as Soldiers, Tyler also began his service at Fort Bragg, and deployed to Iraq within six months, following the same path his father set out on 20 years earlier.

Patrick said he shares a series of interesting and unique experiences with Tyler.

"In October 1990 I deployed for the first time in support of Desert Shield/ Desert Storm," said Patrick. "I remember that Christmas Eve, I came off guard duty and the phones were open to call home. So I called my wife, and her dad said she was having my son."

"I told Tyler on his 20th birthday, last December, that it's crazy because he will turn 21 here," he said. "I was here all those years ago when he was born. Now he's here, helping to close out what I started."

Although Patrick makes it clear to Tyler that he is bound to fulfill his duties as a Soldier, he said he has not taken for granted the moments the two have shared so far.

"I went to his basic training



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kandi Huggins, 1st AATF PAO

**First Sergeant Patrick Thomas, senior enlisted advisor of Company A, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, gives his son, Pfc. Tyler Thomas, a lesson on the M249 squad automatic weapon while the father and son reunite at Victory Base Complex, Iraq, July 9, 2011. Tyler, multi-channel transmissions systems operator, 50th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, 35th Signal Brigade, enlisted and followed his father's footsteps as the two now concurrently serve in support of Operation New Dawn.**

graduation from Fort Gordon. It brought a tear to my eye, especially seeing him as a father," he recalled. "You think, 'Is he going to do good? Did we do everything we could as parents?'"

Patrick added that seeing Tyler in his uniform and beret during graduation made him

very proud as a father.

"I can't measure how proud I am of Tyler," he said. "I'm ecstatic he's done something with himself. Will he ever know how proud I am? Oh yeah, he gets tired of me telling him."

"If there's one thing I've learned from my dad, it's that it takes years to build a reputation and a day to mess it up," said Tyler. "There's a continuous proud moment of knowing how much he has accomplished, how hard he's worked, and how many crazy things he's done that no one but his little group will ever know about."

**Private 1st Class Tyler Thomas, a multi-channel transmissions systems operator with 50th ESB, 35th Signal Bde., left, speaks with his father, 1st Sgt. Patrick Thomas, senior noncommissioned officer in charge of Company A, 1st STB, 1st AATF, 1st Inf. Div., during a visit to Victory Base Complex, Iraq, July 9, 2011.**



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kandi Huggins, 1st AATF PAO



# Military working dogs train for the mission

Sgt. Justin Naylor  
2nd AAB Public Affairs  
1st Cav. Div., USD-N

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE WARHORSE, Iraq – Traversing over mounds of dirt and broken rocks as easily as most people walk down a paved road, nose to the ground and ears alert, the large, sleek dog easily found what he was looking for – a box of explosives.

The dog's handler, not a terrorist network, planted the explosives for training purposes, and to send a message – it's hard to hide from a military working dog's nose.

To help keep themselves and their dogs proficient, Sgt. Stanley Daniels, a military working dog handler with 385th Military Police Battalion out of Fort Stewart, Ga., and Spc. David Collett, a military working dog handler with 91st MP Detachment out of Fort Polk, La., both attached to 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, conducted aggression and explosives detection training at Contingency Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq, July 7.

"It's very important that we keep the dogs up on their training," said Collett, a Douglasville, Ga., native and the handler for Gijs, a Belgian Malinois. "That way, when we get out in the real world, we can do our job effectively."

During the aggression training, one Soldier handled a dog while the other, wearing a thick armguard for protection, played the role of a potential terrorist.

After brief questioning, the role player fled. The dog chased him down, bit and held the armguard until the handler gave the dog the release command.

This training ensures the dogs can effectively slow down subjects that might attempt to flee the scene while being questioned by Soldiers, explained Daniels, a Chicago native and the handler for Bbentley, also a Malinois.

Following the aggression training, Daniels walked Bbentley to a large field where a box of explosives lay hidden. As Daniels walked, Bbentley searched in a circular pattern until he eventually came to the location of the box, then sat down to inform Daniels he found it.

"We can search fields, open areas, buildings or vehicles," explained Daniels.

The dogs fit in smaller spaces than Sol-



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Justin Naylor, 2nd AAB PAO

**Specialist David Collett, a Douglasville, Ga., native, and military working dog handler with the 91st Military Police Detachment out of Fort Polk, La., attached to 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, attempts to flee from Bbentley, a military working dog, during training at Contingency Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq, July 7, 2011.**

diers can, allowing them to search places a human might not be able to, he added.

"(Explosive) detection is very, very important," said Collett.

When a unit requests assistance, it is often to help track down explosives and weapons caches, so handlers have to keep the dogs extremely proficient at these skills, he continued.

Daniels and Collett train with their dogs as frequently as their mission in support of Operation New Dawn allows.

If the dogs do not train on a subject for a while, they might not be as accurate and attentive as handlers need them to be, explained Daniels.

"While we're on deployment, we need the dogs as sharp as possible," he continued.

If the dogs and handlers are not trained proficiently, anyone on the mission, includ-

ing the dogs, could be hurt, Daniels explained. Training ensures that our teams are mission capable whenever we are called upon, he added.

For Soldiers who have worked with the canine counterparts, the benefits of military working dogs and their handlers are clear.

Between searching for explosives and halting fleeing suspects, the life of a working dog can be quite dangerous, making proper training for the dogs and their handlers all the more important.

During his last deployment, Maj. Ian Palmer, executive officer for 2nd AAB, said his unit requested assistance from military working dog teams several times per week. He said Soldiers used dogs to find weapons caches, hidden personnel and narcotics.

"They serve a lot of different purposes," said Palmer. "Commanders want to have those capabilities."

2nd AAB, 1st Cav. Div.



# 'Long Knife' troopers celebrate 93rd birthday of Warrant Officer Corps

4th AAB, 1st Cav. Div.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Terence Ewings, 4th AAB PAO

**Warrant Officer 1 Ezekiel Sheridan, personnel management technician from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, cuts the "warrant-cake" celebrating the 93rd birthday of the Army Warrant Officer Corps at Contingency Operating Site Marez, Iraq, July 9, 2011.**

Spc. Terence Ewings  
4th AAB Public Affairs  
1st Cav. Div., USD-N

CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE MAREZ, Iraq — Soldiers at Contingency Operating Site Marez celebrated the Army Warrant Officer Corps' 93rd birthday, July 9.

From the closing days of World War I through present-day conflicts around the world, Army Warrant Officers operate in multiple occupational specialties in contingency, war

and humanitarian and disaster relief.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Martin Webb, senior warrant officer assigned to 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, spoke to his fellow "warrants" about their heritage and how they contribute to the Army during the observance held at the COS Marez dining facility.

"I believe wholeheartedly that we are more than just technicians. We are the trainers and

leaders of today's Army," said Webb, a native of Hayward, Calif.

As a former enlisted service member, Webb stressed the need for warrant officers to continue mentoring their fellow troops to sustain the successes of their individual units.

"Most of the warrant officers in here are former non-commissioned officers, and as former enlisted Soldiers, we are responsible for assisting not only ... officers, but the enlisted Soldiers within our own ranks,"

said Webb.

In addition to addressing the duties in each of their specialties and charging one another to improve upon their individual skill sets, the warrant officers raised their glasses in a toast to past, present and future warrant officers who have served and will serve in the Army.

"It's an honor to be able to celebrate the Warrant Officer Corps' birthday overseas with my fellow Soldiers," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Richard Pinkerton, 4th AAB maintenance technician.

The event allows us to reflect on who we are, and where we came from, added Pinkerton, who calls New Orleans home.

After the warrant officers broke bread and shared stories with one another, the warrant officers continued the celebration with the time-honored cake cutting tradition.

"It was literally the icing on the cake for me to be a part of this ceremony," said Warrant Officer 1 Ezekiel Sheridan, 4th AAB personnel management technician. "To be able to take time out of the mission to celebrate this event was a blessing and it brought us all closer together."

As the youngest warrant officer to attend the luncheon celebrating the 93rd birthday, Sheridan cut the celebratory cake and served the senior warrant officers, Webb and Pinkerton.

"It's great to be a part of this brotherhood and Family," said Sheridan, a native of Angie, La. "To be able to celebrate it in Iraq just makes the experience that much sweeter."



# NCO leads by example

Spc. Andrew Ingram  
USD-N Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – Sergeant Cynthia Filip says she loves mentoring Soldiers.

Filip, on her third deployment with Company E, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, serves as a mentor by ensuring all Soldiers in her company complete their mission supporting Operation New Dawn.

“I care about my Soldiers,” said Filip, training noncommissioned officer, who hails from Albuquerque, N.M.

“Looking out for them is my number one priority. I do my best to do the right thing every day so I can be a good example for them,” she said.

Filip, originally one of the battalion’s signal support specialists, assumed the role of training NCO to maintain up-to-date training and awards records for Company E Soldiers.

“When I first started working in the training room, things were very disorganized,” she said. “A lot of our Soldiers’ paperwork was outdated or wrong, so right now we are just trying to get everything organized and corrected.”

Captain John Mohundro, commander, Company E, said he has come to trust and rely on Filip as an NCO to consistently get the job done.

“Sergeant Filip is probably the best junior NCO in our company,” said Mohundro, who hails from College Station, Texas. “She is very intuitive and is able to solve a lot of issues before (we) even realize there is a problem.”

Filip stands out as a Soldier who strives to go the extra mile and figure out new ways to assist the mission, in addition to her assigned tasks, said Mohundro.

“Even as a junior NCO, Sgt. Filip took the role of the headquarters platoon sergeant,” said Mohundro. “Then she assumed the role of training NCO because she wanted to make sure the Soldiers were properly taken care of, and she keeps adding jobs to her repertoire, without giving



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Andrew Ingram, USD – N PAO

**Sergeant Cynthia Filip, training noncommissioned officer, Company E, 1st Squadron, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, updates records for a Company E Soldier at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, July 11, 2011. Filip, who hails from Albuquerque, N.M., overhauled the company’s filing and administration systems to better facilitate Soldiers’ needs when she assumed her new position.**

any up.”

Mohundro said he does not know how Filip handles it all, but it is impressive.

“She really loves Soldiers,” he said. “She has been able to guide and mentor a few Soldiers who were displaying some problems and, thanks to her, they are out in other units and doing very well.”

Filip stands out as a role model and mentor for the junior enlisted Soldiers of the company, many on their first deployment, said Pfc. Maria Teresa Alvarez, chemical operations specialist, Company E.

“It is very important for us to have female mentorship,” said Alvarez, who calls Maui, Hawaii, home. “It makes this

deployment a little bit easier because we know that she has been through all of this before.”

“Sometimes females need mentors that can understand their unique problems and I’m glad we have Sgt. Filip,” said Alvarez.

Filip said she looks forward to seeing her Soldiers grow and succeed as the deployment continues.

“I have a great group of Soldiers,” said Filip. “No matter what mission they give us, no matter how impossible it seems, somehow we always get it done.”

“The Soldiers in this company surprise me every day, and I am proud to be a part of this unit,” she added.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Andrew Ingram, USD – N PAO

**Sergeant Cynthia Filip, training noncommissioned officer, Company E, 1st Sqdn, 5th Cav. Regt., 2nd AAB, 1st Cav. Div., files a Soldier’s paperwork with Spc. Vladimir Gonzalez, human resources specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Sqdn., 5th Cav. Regt., at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, July 11, 2011. Filip, an Albuquerque, N.M. native, currently on her third deployment to Iraq, said mentoring and ensuring the welfare of her Soldiers is her main objective during her current deployment in support of Operation New Dawn.**

# 'Task Force Devil' aids in opening of forensics center



U.S. Army photo

Major Thomas Vece, center right, a Murphysboro, Ill., native, and deputy team chief with the 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, Provincial Police Transition Team, stands with Iraqi law enforcement officials during a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the opening of the Criminal Evidence Unit's forensics laboratory in Kirkuk City, Iraq, July 5, 2011. Criminal Evidence Unit officials introduced all of the evidentiary processing equipment to provincial judges, whose job it is to determine verdicts based upon the evidence collected from crime scenes.

Sgt. David Strayer  
109th MPAD  
USD-N Public Affairs

KIRKUK, Iraq – Members of "Task Force Devil," 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, along with the Kirkuk Provincial Police Transition Team, attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony and tour of the newly equipped Criminal Evidence Unit's forensics laboratory in Kirkuk City, Iraq, July 5.

Provincial investigative judges and the provincial director of police, Maj. Gen. Jamal, observed the ribbon cutting, and demonstrations of the new equipment and capabilities of the CEU.

"We have been working in conjunction with the CEU in getting the investigative judges to the forensics lab to see what kind of capabilities the CEU

actually has," said Maj. Edward Bahdi, brigade judge advocate, 1st AATF. "This event has been nine months in the making, and was a combined effort between the Provincial Reconstruction Team, Provincial Police Transition Team, the Brigade Judge Advocate General's office, as well as the Iraqi judiciary. There were a lot of moving pieces, and this was an important event for everyone involved, especially the Iraqi judiciary."

Task Force Devil PPTT members spent the months leading up to the opening advising Iraqi Police staff and local leaders in the area.

"We want to aid these guys in better conducting their policing operations in the province," said Maj. Thomas Vece, deputy team chief of the PPTT. "This includes training, crime scene management, evidence man-

agement, and forensics."

The opening of this forensics facility at the CEU accomplished several of those goals, Vece said.

In Kirkuk province, evidence, testimony and deliberations are laid out before a panel of provincial investigative judges, rather than a jury of peers.

This panel of judges makes a consensus ruling on whether or not the case will go to trial at felonies court, furthering the importance of having reliable forensic evidence, said Bahdi, a native of Hackensack, N.J.

"It is extremely important that these judges have confidence and believe that the evidentiary packets and forensics reports that they receive are accurate and have been scrutinized to the most minute detail," said Bahdi, who worked to coordinate the visit in order

to foster cooperation between the Iraqi police and judiciary in Kirkuk province.

Because the investigative judges determine which cases go to trial at felonies court, Bahdi said witnessing the demonstrations and speaking with the forensics experts provides judges with a new perspective and understanding of what their internal capabilities are, and how to utilize them.

"This ceremony, and the presence of the provincial judges accomplishes several important things here," said Verne Speirs, assistant U.S. attorney and Rule of Law advisory section chief. "It also works toward helping these judges, and rule of law provincial leaders in general, have a better understanding of how evidence is processed so that they can begin to trust more in what the

**See CENTER, Pg. 9**



## 'Rough Rider' medics train troops at U.S. base in Iraq



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Terence Ewings, 4th AAB PAO

Spc. Terence Ewings  
4th AAB Public Affairs  
1st Cav. Div., USD-N

CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE MAREZ, Iraq — Combat medics assigned to Company C, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, conducted a combat lifesaver course for service members stationed at Contingency Operating Site Marez, July 4-8.

During the five-day medical refresher course, the service members trained on how to treat a casualty until professional medical help arrives.

"Two of the most important things that Soldiers need to know are how to protect themselves while moving a casualty to safety and how to apply their CLS skills to potentially save another person's life, and that is what we teach here," said Sgt. Brenda Goode, combat medic assigned to Company C, who calls Comanche, Texas, home.

The medical lifesaving skills taught throughout the course are invaluable and perishable skills on the same level as most civilian emergency medical technicians, said Goode, currently on her second de-

ployment to Iraq.

Goode and other 27th BSB "Rough Rider" combat medics trained the U.S. Army Soldiers and Air Force personnel on how to assess casualties, control bleeding, restore a blocked airway and prepare patients for medical evacuation, if needed.

The service members tested their abilities to use medical items found in the improved first-aid kits attached to their bal-



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Terence Ewings, 4th AAB PAO

Sergeant Brenda Goode, left, a combat medic assigned to Company C, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, teaches an airman with the Air Force Financial Management Detachment from Ohio how to treat an open chest wound during a combat lifesaver class at Contingency Operating Site Marez, Iraq, July 7, 2011. Goode, a native of Comanche, Texas, who served as one of the primary instructors for the five-day combat lifesaver course conducted at the battalion's aid station on COS Marez, also serves as a team leader in the battalion's Medical Evacuation Platoon.

istic vests, such as the combat application tourniquet, which is used to control bleeding.

"The goal of this training is to make sure (the service members) understand the basics of tactical combat casualty care, which allows them to medically treat the patients as the first responders on the scene," said Staff Sgt. John Schmidt, squad leader for Medical Evacuation Platoon, Company C, and native of St. Louis.

Schmidt, senior instructor for the CLS course, ensured service members understood how to treat the three main areas of preventable combat deaths on the battlefield; bleeding, lung collapse and airway blockage.

"It makes me feel good to be able to teach these guys and watch them grow," said Schmidt, currently on his fourth overseas tour. "By the time they leave this class they are trained, certified combat lifesavers, and you can't put a price on that."

Technical Sergeant Tesha Bailey, an airman assigned to the Air Force Financial Management Detachment, attended CLS classes before and feels the course taught by the 27th BSB as one of the better refresher courses.

"After attending this class, I definitely feel that I can competently help someone in a life or death situation," said Bailey, a native of Fairborn, Ohio.

Technical Sergeant Tesha Bailey, a financial management specialist assigned to the Air Force Financial Management Detachment at Contingency Operating Site Marez inserts a nasopharyngeal airway into a medical mannequin to clear an obstructed airway during a tactical field care exercise at COS Marez, Iraq, July 7, 2011. Bailey, a native of Fairborn, Ohio, attended the combat lifesaver refresher course, conducted by combat medics assigned to Company C, 27th BSB, 4th AAB, 1st Cav. Div., who also sustain operations at the battalion's aid station on COS Marez.



# Food service specialist builds morale



U.S. Army photo

Spc. Angel Turner  
4th AAB Public Affairs  
1st Cav. Div., USD-N

CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE MAREZ, Iraq – Before leaving China, Spc. Jun Zhao promised his mother he would go to America and make something of himself.

Zhao, currently assigned to Troop D, 1st Squadron, 9th Squadron, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division,

enlisted in the military four years ago as food service specialist.

“My job is to take care of Soldiers by preparing their food,” said Zhao, a native of Xiang Hai, China. “I’m different from other cooks. I take whatever criticism I get and apply it to improve (my cooking skills).”

Deployed for the second time, Zhao affects Troopers assigned to Troop B, 1st Sqdn.,

Specialist Jun Zhao, food service specialist assigned to Troop B, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, stands next to one of his fruit creations. Zhao, a native of Xiang Hai, China, enlisted in the military four years ago with skills acquired from working previously as an executive chef at a large restaurant. “My job is to take care of Soldiers by preparing their food. I take whatever criticism I get and apply it to improve (my cooking skills),” said Zhao.

9th Cav. Regt., holding true to his promise by going above and beyond to make the best meals possible, utilizing skills from his previous job as an executive chef at a large restaurant.

Zhao also attended culinary arts school following a three-year enlistment in the Chinese Army and continued to work at various restaurants to perfect his cooking skills.

“His culinary skills are unmatched,” said Sgt. 1st Class Bronson Jacoby, the senior food management noncommissioned officer in charge, with Troop D, 1st Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt.

“(His cooking) improves Soldier’s morale greatly,” added Jacoby, a native of Seoul, Korea.

When Zhao prepares a meal for his fellow Soldiers, he uses

his culinary creativity and expertise to give Soldiers something to look forward to each day, said Jacoby.

“He is one of the best food specialists in the Army,” said Staff Sgt. Stephen Zaucha, a Philadelphia-native and food operations specialist with Troop D. “He uses his knowledge to change an ordinary meal and make it better.”

When Zhao works out of a containerized kitchen, a unit with lesser capabilities than a full kitchen, he ensures Soldiers receive full satisfaction from their meal.

“Whether in a (regular) kitchen or in a containerized kitchen, Zhao puts out the best he possibly can,” said Zaucha. “With him, it’s about personal pride, taking care of the Soldiers.”

Zhao not only inspires the Soldiers he works with by his cooking abilities, he also motivates his fellow troopers in their basic soldiering skills.

“He maxes out his PT (physical training) test and always hits at least 35 targets at every range,” said Jacoby.

“He helps Soldiers who lag behind in PT. He operates as a noncommissioned officer,” added Jacoby.

## CENTER, Cont’d from Pg. 7

evidence says in a case.”

Speirs said the CEU forensics facility provides judges with first-hand knowledge of how evidence such as ballistics, fingerprints and documentation verification can help bring clarity to a case.

“This is all a huge step in the right direction for the policing and judiciary leaders in the province,” he said.

Vece said the goal is to synchronize all levels of law enforcement.

“What we want to see is evidence-based convictions, and everyone involved in the legal process understanding the importance

of evidence preservation, collection, and processing,” Vece said.

Bahdi said the judicial visit was also significant in terms of building a stronger relationship between Iraqi Police and Judges.

“We are stepping away from U.S.-conducted forensics capabilities and now the Iraqis are relying on their own systems,” said Bahdi. “This is exactly the end state that we have all been working for.”

**A forensics laboratory technician with the Criminal Evidence Unit demonstrates the capabilities of fingerprint analysis technology to police chiefs and provincial judges at the Criminal Evidence Unit headquarters in Kirkuk City, Iraq, July 5, 2011.**



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. David Strayer, 109th MPAD



# District police, U.S. forces discuss progress

Sgt. David Strayer  
109th MPAD  
USD-N Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE WARRIOR, Iraq – Members of the Provincial Police Transition Team, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, visited the Dibbis district police station, northwest of Kirkuk City, Iraq, July 6.

Lieutenant Colonel Steven Hughes, Team Chief for the Provincial Police Transition Team, 1st AATF, toured the Dibbis police headquarters and met with Lt. Col. Moayed Bakir Sidiq, Dibbis chief of police, to discuss progress, the current state of affairs and future plans for the district.

“Working with the police forces in the province has been the mission of the Provincial Police Transition Team,” said Hughes, who calls Big Springs, Texas, home. “Our whole goal has been to help the police in the area make the transition to being completely self-sufficient and independent from U.S. Forces.”

The PPTT, working with the Dibbis police force since February, identified areas where they could assist in improving the policemen’s skills.

“We have been coming out here to Dibbis since February,” said Sgt. Patrick Tucker, team leader with 272nd Military Police Company. “(We’ve) looked at things that we could . . . help these guys on like weapons maintenance, weapons training, and security methods.”



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. David Strayer, 109th MPAD, USD-N

**Lieutenant Colonel Steven Hughes, left, team chief with the Provincial Police Transition Team, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, discusses policing operations and progress made in the area with Lt. Col. Moayed Bakir Sidiq (right), Chief of Police for the Dibbis Police District, one of the largest districts in Kirkuk province, Iraq, July 6, 2011.**

Civilian law enforcement advisors, part of the PPTT, assist the Iraqi police in improving facilities and operations, as well as intelligence collection and logistics.

“Whenever the Provincial Police Transition Team comes out to Dibbis we come along and our expert advisors will go through and evaluate the systems and methods that the Iraqi Police have in place,” said Randy Andrews, senior civilian police advisor to the Kirkuk chief of police. “If there is any advice or help we can give that will lead to them improving the way they conduct business, we do it.”

Sidiq, recently appointed as chief of police, vowed to continue the strong work of his predecessor in improving the Dibbis

police, who patrol one of the largest districts in Kirkuk province.

“The Dibbis district police are currently running all their own policing operations in their area of responsibility,” said Tucker, a native of Indianapolis. “These guys have improved greatly since February, and continue to look for ways to get better.

They are out there issuing warrants and making arrests based on those warrants and going for evidence based on convictions - They are doing it the right way.”

As U.S. forces decrease the size of their operational foot print, Iraqi Police bear an ever-increasing level of responsibility for the security of the people of Iraq, with the long-term goal of guaranteeing internal security throughout the country.

“We are extremely impressed with the teamwork exhibited between the different agencies within the police force here in Dibbis,” said Hughes. “Working together is going to help them accomplish the mission, as well as continually looking for ways to improve and evolve, which they have been doing.”



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. David Strayer, 109th MPAD, USD-N

**Lieutenant Colonel Steven Hughes, center, team chief of the Provincial Police Transition Team, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, tours facilities at the Dibbis police station with Lt. Col. Moayed Bakir Sidiq, right, police chief for the Dibbis police district in Kirkuk province, Iraq, July 6, 2011. During the visit, Hughes met with the newly instated police chief to discuss the current state of operations in the district, progress made over past few months, and plans for the future of police operations in the area.**



# BRF Soldiers stand ready for any challenge



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Andrew Ingram, USD – N PAO

Spc. Andrew Ingram  
USD-N Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – Day or night, when a security threat is reported on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, the Base Reaction Force responds.

The BRF Soldiers, assigned to Company D, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, remain on call 24 hours a day as one of the first responders to any possible attack on the service members and civilians deployed to COB Speicher.

When it comes to base security, the BRF Soldiers must maintain a proactive posture to deter possible insurgent activity, said Sgt. Christopher Salgado, an infantryman assigned to the BRF.

“We conduct routine perimeter checks to inspect the perimeter fences ensure the base’s defenses remain secure and ... be a deterrent for anyone out there thinking about encroaching on our defenses,” said Sal-

gado, who hails from Kaysville, Utah. “There are people in Iraq watching us, but the more often they see us out there maintaining our security, the less likely they are to attack us.”

After dozens of operations on and around COB Speicher, keeping current on the latest media reports and intelligence keeps the BRF Soldiers focused on their mission, said Salgado.

“I keep up on all the news and reports we are getting from the entry control point and other posts. Just knowing that a threat is out there keeps us sharp,” he said. “Add to that the fact that we have all been on prior deployments, and it is hard to lose that focus when you have been in combat situations. Even during long periods of (inactivity) we always have that feeling that something could always happen.”

Specialist Erick Downs, an all-wheel mechanic who serves primarily as the driver of a Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle for the BRF, said while his mission remains

Sergeant Christopher Salgado, a member of the Base Reaction Force, Company D, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, conducts pre-mission checks on the communications system in a Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected vehicle before an outer perimeter search mission near Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, July 7, 2011.

vitally important as a safety measure and a deterrent, he is grateful for the relative peace he has experienced during his deployment.

“I’m a mechanic, but this is my third deployment operating as an infantry Soldier,” said Downs, a native of Niagara, N.Y. “This is a really big change of pace for me because we aren’t constantly in combat operations, and I think that says a lot about what our guys have done on previous deployments.”

When most U.S. Division – North Soldiers finish work for the day, they retire to a containerized housing unit to relax and rest away from the stresses of the office or coworkers for at least a few hours before returning to work the next morning. Always on call, BRF Soldiers live and work out of the Company D headquarters building.

“There are times when we

get on each other’s nerves, but with everyone working together and living in such proximity we have gained a lot of trust between each other,” said Sgt. Shawn Michael Campbell, a combat medic with Company D. “That just how it has to be – that’s our mission. We have become like a small Family.”

After three deployments, meshing into a cohesive team to accomplish a mission becomes second nature, said Campbell, who hails from Chrystal River, Fla.

“This is why I am here,” he said. “I’m a combat medic – I provide medical attention in the field. I don’t have a problem being away from home, because I have a team here and I am doing what I signed on to do.”

Salgado said he and his team do more than just ensure the personal security of the Soldiers and civilians living and working on COB Speicher.

“The mission we do out here, being a deterrent for possible attackers, helps everyone on COB Speicher sleep in peace,” said Salgado. “We facilitate a safe, secure environment that allows everyone else to complete their parts of Operation New Dawn.”



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Andrew Ingram, USD – N PAO

Soldiers assigned to the Base Reaction Force, Company D, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, begin an outer perimeter inspection in Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, July 7, 2011.





# Chaplain's Corner: \_\_\_\_\_

## Replenish your soul, avoid spiritual dehydration

Chaplain (Capt.) Scott Ingram  
DSTB, 4th Inf. Div., USD-N

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – Most of us have seen movies of a desert traveler who envisions a mirage of water after overexposure to the sun. After discovering that the illusion of water is really just sand, he eventually finds a real water source and is revived.

That works out great for movies, but how do we replenish our souls in real life? Can we be spiritually dehydrated? If so, then how will we know if we are spiritually dehydrated?

### *The Spiritual Reality*

Life's stresses and rigors will deplete your soul of necessary stamina and perspective. "Beating the heat" in our lives means that we cannot ignore the power of a healthy spiritual life. Repeatedly, the ancient and trustworthy witness of the Bible talks about how physical and spiritual realities mirror each other, and that our existence extends beyond the limitations of our five senses into a spiritual realm.

In John 3:8, Jesus likened God's spirit to that of the wind – while we cannot see it or know where it is going, we can hear its sound and know that it's there.

The Apostle Paul said, 2 Corinthians 4:16, "Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day."

In the Army, we even speak of *esprit de corps*, literally translated, "the spirit of the body," and understand that our individual and corporate capabilities – will, resourcefulness, and creative abilities – are tied to what lies within our hearts.

The spiritual dimension of our lives functions much like the bottom half of an iceberg, sustaining the visible part above the surface of the water. We may not see the bottom half or even plumb the entirety of its dimensions, but we do not dismiss it simply on that basis.

In a similar way, though our spiritual life is unseen, its presence is what buoys our lives and keeps us afloat.

### *Evaluating Your Spiritual Vitality*

Discerning your spiritual health is a matter of faith, and is not the same as measuring physical dehydration. However, you can ask similar questions: Are you confused about the meaning of life and your purpose in it? Do you feel that your life is a mirage while your heart aches for something more truthful and sustainable? Water is to your physical body as blank is to your spirit? Through which worldview do you filter your values? Do you have a relationship with God? How do you recalibrate your life? Does your spiritual life depend on what you do or the action of another? Do you feel powerless to affect meaningful change in your life? What or whom is your life's anchor?

Put another way, when you experience the storms of life, what keeps you rock-solid when the debris of your life swirls around you? Thinking through these questions is not as easy, but

is essential in renewing your soul's strength with purpose and meaning.

### *Drink Water Not Sand*

As we draw closer to the end of this deployment, our need for the spiritual qualities of self-control, patience, focus, and steadfastness will increase as well.

Finishing this deployment strong is much like running a race. It is like reaching way down deep inside and squeezing out every last bit of energy that you have, and then making it last as long as you possibly can.

You cannot squeeze out what is not initially there, and spiritual life does not just randomly appear. Though, upon its receipt, your spiritual sense of equilibrium and internal peace will increase in proportion to the increase of your personal, relational, or professional stresses.

I'm not saying that you will become impervious to pain or adverse circumstances, but when you are spiritually hydrated, situations can be put in proper perspective and your endurance factor increases exponentially.

If your spiritual life is brimming over, then encourage your battle buddies to finish well. If you feel spiritually faint and depleted, then you may need to evaluate if what you are feeding your soul can sustain spiritual life, or if it is just an illusion.

Some good places to start are by talking with your unit Chaplain, joining a Bible Study, attending a Chapel service or talking with a close friend.

Whatever you do, do not settle for "spiritual sand" or a mirage, when you can have a real, satisfying, and refreshing drink of water for your soul!

