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ESTABLISHED IN 1917 TO HONOR THOSE WHO SERVE



JULY 29, 2011



U.S. forces vacate COL K1, ISF assumes control

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

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION K1, Iraq – Soldiers of Company C, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion and 101st Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, vacated and transferred control of Contingency Operating Location K1 to Iraqi Security Forces, July 25.

Before the transition of the facility, combat engineers from Company C, 1st BSTB, worked several days to dismantle and pack all U.S. equipment and systems to minimize any operational or physical ‘footprint’ left by U.S. forces following the withdrawal from COL K1.

Sergeant Major Trennel Finch, Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, said the transfer and signing over of COL K1 is a landmark event for U.S. forces as they work toward troop and equipment consolidation.

The transfer is also significant for Iraqi Security Forces in Kirkuk province, who now gain an operational center that will help them facilitate their security mission, Finch added.

After years of residency by U.S. forces and months of preparation, Soldiers of “Devil” Brigade currently occupying COL K1 witnessed the conclusion of their efforts as Iraqi



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

Specialist Richard Baggerly, left, and Pfc. Cody Saenz, both combat engineers with Company C, Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, work into dusk dismantling the Light-weight Counter Mortar Radar system at Contingency Operating Location K1, Kirkuk province, Iraq, July 24, 2011. Soldiers worked throughout the day to disconnect all non-essential electrical systems at the U.S.-controlled portion of COL K1 prior to the official transfer of the facility to Iraqi control.

forces assumed responsibility of the base.

The handover of each U.S. installation to the Government of Iraq exemplifies the progress of Iraqi forces becoming self-sustaining and fully capable

during Operation New Dawn, said Finch.

“This would be the 15th U.S. installation that I have helped to close down and hand over to the Government of Iraq since October of 2010,” said

Finch. “As the noncommissioned officer in charge of base closure for United States Division-North, I personally like to ensure that we turn these installations over to the Government
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STEADFAST AND LOYAL
IRONHORSE
FIT FOR ANY TEST
DEVIL
LONGKNIFE
BLACK JACK

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IRONHORSE STRONG:

Soldier of the Week

To maintain the safety of fellow service members traveling through northern Iraq, U.S. Soldiers conduct counter-improvised explosive device operations, ensuring the removal of roadside bombs and the apprehension of those planting them.

Specialist Patrick Taylor, assigned to the sniper section, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, was engaged by enemy fire while conducting counter-IED operations near Tikrit, Iraq, July 12.

"Taylor and his teammate were operating in the vicinity of Tikrit at an observation point, providing (convoy) security," said Staff Sgt. Mark Filip, sniper section sergeant with HHC, 1st Bn., 5th Cav. Regt. "After two hours they were engaged by small arms fire."

Taylor spotted for his teammate, Sgt. Jonathan Clark, team leader assigned to HHC, who returned fire, wounding one enemy.

During the firefight, Taylor radioed back to his unit for a quick reaction force, who apprehended the members of the attacking cell, including the wounded combatant.

The QRF Soldiers, thanks to direction from Taylor, disrupted direct fire and IED attacks along the supply route for the coming weeks, said Filip.

Taylor, who calls Madison Heights, Mich., home, stands out as a Soldier who will do whatever it takes to complete the mission, he added.

"I've had him now for over a year," said Filip. "He's the kind of guy who goes above and beyond the call of duty."

Taylor also stands out for his unique status regarding his deployment.



U.S. Army photo

Specialist Patrick Taylor, assigned to the sniper section, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, provides overwatch for his unit during a mission in Salah ad-Din province, Iraq, July 27, 2011. Taylor and his teammate, Sgt. Jonathan Clark, suppressed an enemy small-arms attack against U.S. forces, July 12.

Taylor planned to enroll in college with a slot in the Green to Gold program to become an officer, but decided to deploy with his unit.

"He volunteered to come on this deployment," said Filip. "He dropped it all to come with us."

His quick decisive actions resulted in the destruction and disruption of enemy activity, and earned Taylor the title of U.S. Division – North "Ironhorse Strong" Soldier of the Week.

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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



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

VACATE, Cont'd from Pg. 1 of Iraq in a responsible way."

After advising and training Iraqi soldiers for the past year during Operation New Dawn, U.S. forces now look to return operating bases back to ISF control, providing locations to house the newly-trained units.

The transfer marked the official signing over of all the facilities and equipment at COL K1 to the K1 Iraqi Location Command, said Maj. Jeremy Hall, an engineer advisor to the 12th Iraqi Army Stability Transition Team, Company C, 101st BSB.

"The Iraqi Location Command is like one of our garrison commands back home; they are the command element here at K1," Hall explained.

After months of accounting for equipment, property and systems on the U.S.-controlled portion of the COL K1, Devil Brigade Soldiers prepared to sign everything that was not being taken with them over to the ISF.

"Since U.S. forces began using the K1 facility, a lot of property has accumulated here that had to be accounted for so that we could make a responsible handoff to the Iraqis. We wanted them to know exactly what we were giving them," said Hall, a native of Dickinson, N.D. "We downsized as much of our equipment and property as we could by moving it to (another U.S. base) leading up to this base closure,

we also are transitioning much of it to the Iraqis."

In recent years, U.S. and Iraqi forces used training centers at COL K1 as hubs for combined instruction between U.S. Soldiers and various units of Iraqi Security Forces, including Iraqi Army infantry and route clearance units.

"This base will eventually

A recovery vehicle from 101st Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, lifts and loads a pickup truck during the first stages of a base transfer mission at Contingency Operating Location K1, Kirkuk province, Iraq, July 22, 2011. U.S. forces vacated and signed over COL K1 to Iraqi Security Forces, who plan to use the center to continue training Iraqi Security Forces members.

be turned over from Location Command to the 12th Iraqi Army Division," said Hall. "The 12th IA is planning on using the K1 facility to support a new tank regiment that is forming. The regiment is not on the ground yet, but it is in the working for the future."

This base handoff, Hall said, and the responsible manner in which it was completed, is symbolic of everything that U.S. advisory teams have done here since the first teams ar-

rived in country during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Moving out and allowing the ISF to move into this installation demonstrates the confidence we have in our Iraqi counterparts to carry out the security mission here in Kirkuk province," he added.

As U.S. forces move forward with Operation New Dawn, Finch said continued base transitions are symbolic of the partnership created between U.S. and Iraqi forces, and the ability of the Iraqi government to function independently.

"We are on the right track right now, we need to maintain the standard and accountability," said Finch. "We want to make sure that we preserve this great relationship that we have with our Iraqi counterparts so that we move into the future together, as allies and brothers."



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

Private 1st Class Michael Groves, a combat engineer with Company C, Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, tosses a roll of electrical cable from one rooftop to another as he and other Company C Soldiers dismantle and pack non-essential electrical systems at Contingency Operating Location K1, Kirkuk province, Iraq, July 24, 2011. U.S. Forces at COL K1 removed the systems before vacating and transferring the base to Iraqi control.

Deployed Soldiers join NCO Corps

Spc. Andrew Ingram
USD-N Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – Twenty-five Soldiers assigned to Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, joined the ranks of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps during a ceremony at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, July 27.

During the ceremony, the new NCOs, each promoted to the rank of sergeant during the battalion's deployment to northern Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn, crossed the "Line of Authority" representing their readiness to train and lead Soldiers, and officially entered their name into the induction book.

"Today, almost a decade after our nation was attacked, marks the occasion of your transition from simply being a great American Soldier serving your nation, to being a inducted into the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers and becoming a leader of great American Soldiers," said keynote speaker, Sgt. Maj. John Turkal, senior enlisted leader for information operations, 4th Infantry Division and U.S. Division – North.

Turkal encouraged the inductees to lead by example, exceed the standard and exude excellence as they transition from being a junior Soldier to a mentor of others.

"Nurture the idea that minimum standards, while acceptable for the newly initiated into the profession of arms, are to



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

Noncommissioned officers assigned to Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, celebrate the NCO Corps and the NCOs' roles as leaders and trainers of Soldiers during an NCO induction Ceremony at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, July 27, 2011.

be surpassed whenever possible," he told the new NCOs. "Reward those who set themselves apart as above the standard. As noncommissioned officers, you must attain the highest standard possible and you must demand these high standards of your subordinates."

Turkal's words set the bar for the new NCOs, said newly-promoted Sgt. Jose Cruz, a combat medic assigned to Headquarters Support Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Inf. Div.

"His words were inspiring," said Cruz, who calls Colorado Springs, Colo., home. "He hit the nail on the head in regard to what an NCO should be, and what an NCO should do."

Cruz said he was honored and ready to join the ranks of Army leaders who make up the "Backbone of the Army."

Sergeant Jose Cruz, a combat medic assigned to Headquarters Support Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, crosses the "Line of Authority," joining the Noncommissioned Officer Corps and becoming a leader of Soldiers, during an NCO Induction Ceremony at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, July 27, 2011. Cruz, a resident of Colorado Springs, Colo., said he is proud to join the ranks of military leaders call "The Backbone of the Army."



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

"Yesterday, during my promotion, was probably one of the best moments in my life," Cruz said at the ceremony. "You go from being just one of the Joes one minute to being a leader the next. Now I got to share that with all of my peers who received that responsibility at the same time."

Sergeant Winney James, a human resources specialist from 101st Human Resources Casualty Team, attached to DSTB, called the ceremony a life-changing experience that marked the transition from junior Soldier to leader and role model for others.

"I am proud to be a part of such an outstanding corps," said the Castries, St. Lucia, native. "As an NCO, I will strive to set the standard, maintain it, and then enforce it for my Soldiers."

NCOs enforcing those high standards set the U.S. Army apart from every other military in the world, said Turkal.

"To our newest noncommissioned officers, I extend my congratulations for earning your place in our coveted corps," Turkal said. "You have my utmost respect, as well as my gratitude for accepting the incredible responsibility of leading America's greatest as we seek to prosecute those who attempt to destroy our way of life and wish to bring harm to those we are charged to defend."

Keeping spiritually fit in a combat zone

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

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – As 1st Lt. Jeremy Dillard prepared to jump into Iraq as a member of the 173rd Airborne Brigade during Operation Iraqi Freedom, he carried only one personal item with him: his Bible.

Now, years later, he strives to explain to Soldiers the importance of staying spiritually fit while deployed.

Dillard, a former paratrooper and now the assistant intelli-

gence officer for 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, “Red Dragons,” 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, served as the guest speaker for spiritual fitness training at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, July 19.

Dillard spoke about his previous combat deployments, and how staying spiritually fit helped keep him safe and mentally ready.

During his first deployment to Iraq, Dillard met regular contact with enemy forces and went nearly three months before being able to change clothes.

“I only had the Bible that my mother gave me,” said the Kansas City, Kan., native.

Dillard said it was his Bible, and his fellow Soldiers beside him, that helped him stay strong through his deployment.

“It was that spiritual aspect and being able to talk to and rely on one another that got us through,” Dillard said of his unit.

Spiritual strength really helps you get through those difficult times, he continued.

“There are going to be times when you get homesick, when you have a bad day and

can’t go back to the ones you love or even talk to them,” explained Dillard. “Those are the times that you have to rely on your spiritual strength, and the strength of those around you to make it through.”

For Dillard, spiritual fitness training like this is a great opportunity to strengthen the mental and emotional aspects of his life.

“You can look around here and realize that you are not alone,” he said.

This is an opportunity to gather with other spiritual people and support each other, he continued. “We must be able to turn to each other in times of difficulty.”

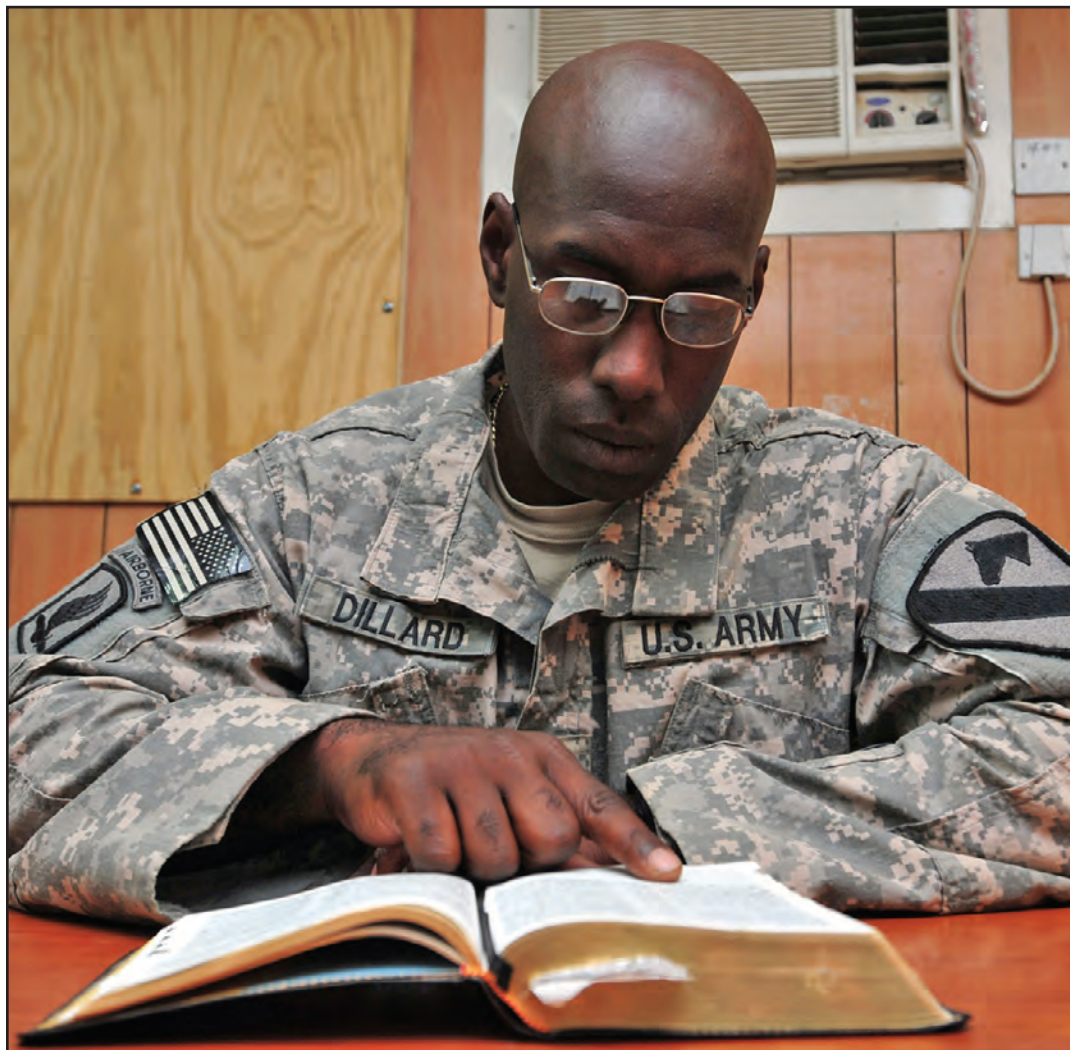
The class is a chance to get together, share a meal, offer up prayers, and listen to the guest speaker, said Chaplain (Capt.) Darrell Burriss of Cincinnati, chaplain for 3rd Bn., 82nd FA Regt.

Burriss explained that the goal of the classes is to give Soldiers of various backgrounds and faiths a common forum to express themselves and learn from one another.

Everyone has different experiences and strengths, and everybody can contribute to building up one another, Burriss said. Additionally, these classes are a nice break from the stress of deployment, he added.

“What I want to show Soldiers is that it’s not just the chaplain; anyone can rely on spirituality to sustain them,” added Burriss.

The “Red Dragon” unit ministry team regularly holds spiritual fitness training and encourages all Soldiers to work on building their spiritual fitness to help sustain them through difficult times during deployment.



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

First Lieutenant Jeremy Dillard, of Kansas City, Kan., assistant intelligence officer for 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, reads his personal Bible at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, July 26, 2011. Dillard’s mother gave him the Bible prior to a deployment in 2003.

Information systems NCO provides technical support to Cavalry troopers

4th AAB, 1st Cav. Div.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Angel Turner, 4th AAB PAO

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

CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE MAREZ, Iraq – Soldiers deployed in support of Operation New Dawn rely heavily on communications to conduct their daily operations, whether it means sending an e-mail or making a phone call.

Sergeant Matthew Cogburn, senior information systems noncommissioned officer assigned to Company B, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, ensures Soldiers stay mission-ready by successfully maintaining communication lines throughout the brigade.

Cogburn, a native of Round Rock, Tex-

as, earned the title of “Long Knife Strong” Soldier of the Week for his technical abilities, knowledge and mentorship of fellow Soldiers.

While deployed to northern Iraq, Cogburn trained nine NCOs and 20 Soldiers on the small aperture antenna used to support one of the brigade’s battalions and provided tactical communications to eight combined checkpoints and joint security stations.

“He’s like our ‘go-to guy’ for all of our signal operations,” said Sgt. 1st Class Caroline Williams, telecommunications systems chief platoon sergeant assigned to Company B, 4th BSTB.

Cogburn enlisted in the military following the 9/11 attacks. He has served in the Army for seven years, but just recently re-classed to his current job after serving as

Sergeant Matthew Cogburn, a native of Round Rock, Texas, and senior information systems noncommissioned officer assigned to Company B, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, prepares a computer to test a Harris 7800W radio at Contingency Operating Site Marez, Iraq, July 21, 2011.

a cook.

Despite only serving two years in his current job field, his supervisors said the senior information systems NCO performs his job well above standard.

“He clearly is highly technical, more so than his peers who have the same military occupational specialty,” said Williams, a native of Atlantic City, N.J. “He learns other systems that he doesn’t typically work on. He is at the staff sergeant level or above as far as his technical expertise.”

Cogburn operates the equipment necessary to provide signal support to the brigade along with five other Soldiers during the night shift.

He also serves as the troubleshooter for the outlying areas of the brigade’s operating environment – roughly the size of West Virginia.

“I provide digital communication so the brigade commander can communicate to leaders throughout the brigade via video conference, e-mail or phone – no matter where they are,” said Cogburn.

Aside from performing his job above standard, Cogburn also encourages his fellow Soldiers to further both their military and civilian education.

As a result of Cogburn’s encouragement, his peers completed more than 500 hours of military correspondence courses and 50 college credit hours while deployed.

“Taking college courses is very important to your professional development in the Army, and it is a good development tool all around,” said Cogburn.

Cogburn also personally completed five online classes as part of his network security degree.

“It feels like I am a vital part of the team, because I’m doing something important,” Cogburn said. “It’s rewarding to know I’m providing services that affect so many people.”

'GOLDEN LIONS' ON PATROL

Expanded CSF conducts first full-strength mission after graduation



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

1st AATF, 1st Inf. Div.

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

CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE WARRIOR, Iraq – The newly expanded Combined Security Force conducted its first patrol as a full-strength element with members of 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, manning an outer security cordon in villages north of Kirkuk City, Iraq, July 19.

Soldiers of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 1st AATF, served in a support-only role, standing by to provide assistance if requested by the eCSF ground commander, Capt. Ahmmad.

"This patrol served several purposes," said 1st Sgt. Steven

Sierras, senior enlisted leader of Company A, 2nd Bn., 12th Cav. Regt., 1st AATF. "It was much more than a normal patrol; it gave the new additions to the (eCSF) some experience out in sector, which is important, and it boosts their confidence level."

The final company of eCSF members recently graduated from training and joined the ranks of the force known as the "Golden Lions."

"With that company's graduation, the (eCSF) has a full battalion of trained, up-to-speed guys from the Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army, and the Kurdish Regional Guard; they all bring something different to the table," said Sierras, a native of Martinez, Calif. "That is one of the things that makes them so flexible and

mission-capable out here."

Now a full strength, battalion-sized combined element with their own base for operations in the Combined Security Area and Kirkuk City, the Golden Lions assumed sole responsibility for the safety and security in the area, allowing U.S. forces to now remain in a "back seat" role, lending support or assistance only if requested.

"This patrol was mostly a presence patrol for the (eCSF) to give them the opportunity to get out in sector and let the citizens see them in action," said Sgt. Michael McCormick, a squad leader assigned to Company A, 2nd Bn., 12th Cav. Regt. "It's reassuring when you can show the citizens that they have a capable force there to protect and look

out for them."

"We were really there to just pull out security for them and be there in case they needed us since this was their first patrol as a battalion," he added. "They did very well; they really didn't need us there."

In recent months, U.S. forces transitioned to an advisory role in the security of Kirkuk province as the Golden Lions became a fully functional battalion.

"Getting out there amongst the people, however, is just as important as anything else," said Sierras. "The citizens in the Combined Security Area now know that there is a capable, combined force present and tangible in their villages, and they can feel safer as a result."

COB Speicher Soldiers, civilians share talents



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

Staff Sergeant Alvin Swayzer, an infantryman assigned to Company D, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, showcases his original hip-hop rhymes for a judge's panel and audience made up of service members and civilians deployed to U.S. Division – North during a talent show at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, July 22, 2011.

Spc. Andrew Ingram
USD-N Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – Service members and civilians deployed to northern Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn spent a night showcasing their talents at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, July 22.

Contestants at the base talent show displayed vocal talents ranging from R&B to Rap to Gospel as they vied for the approval of the judges and audience.

"We had a lot of talented people come out to perform," said Sgt. Maj. Jerry Eddin, 4th Infantry Division and U.S. Division – North senior enlisted advisor for force protection, who served as a judge for the event. "A lot of people were willing to share their gifts and I think everyone enjoyed it. Soldiers need events like this out here, it brings them back home."

Eddin said he hoped Soldiers would continue using their gifts to lift their comrades' spirits over the course of their deployment.

"It's great to get up and sing in front of people," said Jose Flores, a lab technician for the COB Speicher Waste Department, who won the competition. "I came back to Iraq not just because of a job, but because I'm a veteran and I wanted to support the troops, and I really think I was able to raise some spirits tonight."

The audience offered Flores, or "Flo" to his fans, a standing ovation for his rendition of "His Eye is on the Sparrow."

"Nothing beats a good gospel song," said Flores, who calls Bellmore, N.Y., home. "I've been in country now for about two weeks and it just hit me when I saw the signs for the talent show that I should get up and sing for everybody. I hope I was able to lift their spirits and remind them of

better things."

Service members deployed away from their homes and Families need events like the talent show give them a brief reprieve from the rigors of their daily tasks, said Pvt. Isaiah Plummer, Company E, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

"Everybody did a really good job tonight," said Plummer, who hails from Virginia Beach, Va.

"I think everybody that went up on stage had a good time, and I know we had a great time in the audience," he added.

Plummer said he hopes to see more opportunities for service members to socialize and share their talents in the future.

"We need to be able to relax and mix it up with our peers and everybody out here on the COB," said Plummer. "We have to remember that there is more to life than just the work we are doing out here."

Black Dragons bring 'Smoke,' train troops

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

CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE MAREZ, Iraq – Most often known for their duties as platoon sergeants and senior enlisted section leaders, sergeants first class are charged with the responsibility of training and mentoring Soldiers.

Sergeant 1st Class Bobby “Smoke” Brewster, an artillery platoon sergeant assigned to the 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, performs these duties on a daily basis while deployed to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn.

“As a platoon sergeant, it’s very important to get my Soldiers trained and ensure they carry out the mission and complete operations (in a safe manner),” said Brewster, the field artillery platoon sergeant for 2nd Platoon, Battery B, 5th Bn., 82nd FA Regt.

Currently on his seventh overseas tour, and fourth to Iraq, Brewster is the master gunner and noncommissioned officer responsible for teaching classes on M198 155mm howitzers at the Ghuzlani Eagle Training Site on Contingency Operating Site Marez.

“This is my second time here in Mosul, Iraq, training Iraqi Army soldiers,” said Brewster, a native of San Diego. “This time around, I’m showing them how to operate the howitzers, which adds another piece of equipment to their arsenal and allows them to provide better security.”

Prior to teaching the IA field artillerymen how to proficiently operate the weapon system, Brewster trained the majority of his troops on how to operate the “old school” howitzer.



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

Sergeant 1st Class Bobby “Smoke” Brewster, a field artillery platoon sergeant assigned to 2nd Platoon, Battery B, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, reviews a maintenance checklist for an M198 155mm howitzer with 2nd Iraqi Army Division soldiers during a training exercise at the Ghuzlani Eagle Training Site, near Mosul, Iraq, July 19, 2011.

“I know more about this equipment, so I made sure my Soldiers were trained to standard prior to teaching the Iraqis,” said Brewster. “Most of my guys have never used this equipment, so it’s good training for both sides.”

In advanced individual training, field artillery Soldiers are taught how to use the M109 howitzer, which is a self-propelled howitzer, allowing crews to maneuver it on a tracked platform as opposed to the M198, said Brewster.

Brewster and the other “Black Dragon” Soldiers began training their Iraqi counterparts on the indirect fire weapon system in June.

“Brewster is the most experienced artillery platoon sergeant that we have in the battalion,

and he is doing a phenomenal job training the U.S. and Iraqi field artillerymen,” said 1st Sgt. Mario Lindsey, senior enlisted advisor assigned to Battery B, 5th Bn., 82nd FA Regt.

In addition to training the Iraqi soldiers, Brewster and his platoon are also responsible for conducting security missions and escorting the Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team throughout U.S. Division-North.

“I have watched Brewster and his platoon switch from conducting security missions to training brand new IA soldiers and turning them into competent artilleryman by utilizing the crawl, walk and run method,” said Lindsey, a native of DeFuniak Springs, Fla.

“He’s spent countless hours

working to ensure his Soldiers receive nothing short of excellent training. All the work ‘Smoke’ and his troops are doing is paying off,” Lindsey added.

After serving in the Army for more than two decades, Brewster said he still has a couple of years left in him after this deployment.

“I’m going on 22 years of being in the military, and I’m still having fun,” said Brewster. “It’s all about training and being able to be with the troops. I love doing it, so I think I got a couple of years left in me.”

Meanwhile, the Soldiers of 4th AAB will continue their deployment supporting operations in U.S. Division – North before heading home later this fall.

Soldiers offer tips for board success



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

Sergeant Elianna Montemayor, left, a native of La Porte, Texas, and training room noncommissioned officer with Company B, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, checks on her Soldier, Spc. Patrick Eakin, a Winfield, Kan., native, and orderly room clerk with Company B, at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, July 23, 2011.

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

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – Going to a Soldier of the Month board can be a nerve-racking experience for a young Soldier, but with adequate preparation and a little advice from someone who has been to one before, it can be much easier.

Sergeant Elianna Montemayor, a native of La Porte, Texas, and training room noncommissioned officer, and Spc. Frank Warner, a wheeled vehicle mechanic from Tampa, Fla., both with Company B, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, have their fair share of board experiences and a few tips on how to win.

Both Soldiers recently won NCO or Soldier of the Month competitions and the brigade's quarterly NCO and Soldier competitions, respectively.

The boards are an assessment of a Soldier's knowledge of key military subjects, explained Warner.

During the board, a group of senior NCOs tests Soldiers.

"They ask questions and you answer them to the best of your ability," he continued.

During the Soldier of the Month board, Soldiers compete against fellow junior enlisted troops.

Both Montemayor and Warner agree, the first thing a Soldier should do before going to the board is intensive studying.

"I spent countless hours studying before I went," said Montemayor.

Warner's advice is to study alone and then have a friend help review the material. If possible, he said, have it be someone who has already gone to a board who can tell you about the experience.

Warner even developed a special study system that worked well for him.

He studied one subject repetitively, and then moved on to the next subjects. Finally, he would put all the subjects together and have a buddy ask questions about them.

"That way you're not overloading your head with every subject at once," he said.

Montemayor said Soldiers typically just rely on study guides when they are preparing for the board. "Study guides don't always go over everything," she warned, and went on to explain that it is also a good idea to look into the regulations behind them.

After thoroughly studying, Montemayor and Warner recommend holding mock Soldier of the Month boards.

During the mock board, peers and supervisors quiz participants on everything learned, and throw in some questions about current events, chain of command, and anything else that might be asked about during the real board, said Warner.

Such events are chances to assess everything learned before going to the real competition, he continued.

Besides simple studying, Warner also said one of the most important elements to winning is being confident.

"At first you might be a little nervous, maybe even a little shaky, but be confident in what you say," he explained.

When Warner lost his first Soldier of the Month competition, he said his nervousness was a contributing factor. If you lose at the board, study even harder and then go back and try again, he added.

"Always be resilient and strive to be better. I was more confident the second time," explained Warner, who won the second board he attended.

For senior leaders running the board, there are often a few key things they look for in the Soldiers competing.

"I am looking for the total Soldier package," said Sgt. 1st Class Clem Strait, a Wichita Falls, Texas, native, who has served on multiple Soldier of the Month boards.

"Before a Soldier even walks into the board, I'm going to be looking at their physical fitness test scores, their weapons qualification card, their education level, and reading about what they've accomplished and what they are doing to help their fellow Soldiers," he continued.

"Anyone can study," he said. "You have to be able to implement what you've learned. The information should be part of you. Take it to heart."

Although not all Soldiers will win every

See BOARD, Pg. 11

'Long Knife' Soldiers assist Iraqi and Kurdish relations

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

CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE MAREZ, Iraq – Established in 2009, the Ninewa Combined Coordination Center is the organizational center for all missions, activities and operations conducted within combined security areas throughout the province.

Soldiers from 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, partner with Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and Kurdish Security Forces at the NCCC to oversee operations and provide security throughout the region.

"What we're trying to do here is a pretty important part of the overall American effort – leaving behind a stable, peaceful Iraq," said Lt. Col. Ted Stuart, commander of the NCCC.

In addition to advising and training Iraqi counterparts on how to enhance their security operations, Stuart and other U.S. Soldiers act as neutral mediators and liaisons for the Iraqi and Kurdish forces.

"It's a rewarding job," said Stuart, a native of Fort Knox,

Ky. "We work with the ISF 24 hours a day, and we've been able to see them grow and garner a better understanding of each other."

Since deploying to Iraq last fall, 4th AAB Soldiers worked to improve communication between Iraqi and Kurdish forces by conducting regularly scheduled meetings and briefings, which allow both forces to hear the other parties' proposals.

U.S. forces still act as a neutral third party, but every day Soldiers see encouraging changes between the two forces that will hopefully lead to cohesive operations independent of U.S. assistance, Stuart said.

Stuart said Iraqis and Kurds in the area have built significant mutual trust since the NCCC first opened.

"But by the time we got here, their relationships had changed and we noticed they were pretty close with one another," said Stuart.

Currently, NCCC officials are working to ensure the Kurdish and Iraqi forces will be capable of sustaining security operations in Ninewa province after U.S. forces leave.



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

Staff Colonel Hasen Ali, senior Iraqi Army officer for the Ninewa Combined Coordination Center, speaks with Lt. Col. Ted Stuart, commander of the NCCC, about current operations at the center, July 25, 2011.

"We're training and readying them to fill our shoes once we are gone," said Maj. Joseph Lendo, deputy commander of the NCCC. "They sit in on all the daily meetings, and we mentor them on how to run the tactical operating center. They're making good progress, and I believe they will continue to do so in the coming months."

First Lieutenant Waleed Ramabhar, an intelligence officer assigned to 3rd Iraqi Army Di-

vision, witnessed changes and effects of the NCCC since he started working back in 2009.

"The relationship between the Iraqi and Kurdish forces is very strong and very good," said Waleed, a native of Zakho, Iraq. "We are now capable of solving problems and making decisions faster than in the past. The teamwork and partnership between all the military forces here gives me confidence in our mission."

BOARD, Cont'd from Pg. 10

board, the preparation can be a reward in itself.

Studying all the information needed for the board is going to help progress Soldiers' careers and help them develop as professionals, she continued.

Preparing for and competing at a board helps a Soldier excel, and it shows peers that those Soldiers are not content to simply meet the minimum requirements, said Strait.

Once you win, you're not just a mechanic, or a clerk, or whatever your job is, you're also a Soldier of the Month winner, he continued.

"It's a good feeling to win," said Montemayor. "That's when you know all your hard work, all the time you spent studying, has paid off."

Sergeant Elianna Montemayor, left, a La Porte, Texas, native and training room noncommissioned officer, and Spc. Frank Warner, a wheeled vehicle mechanic from Tampa, Fla., both with Company B, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, read through new promotion regulations at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, July 23, 2011. Both Soldiers are recent winners of quarterly NCO or Soldier competitions, respectively, and both said it is important to stay current on current military regulations.



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



Chaplain's Corner: Where's my NFL?

Chaplain (Maj.) Kenneth Hurst
Deputy Chaplain
U.S. Division-North

There has been an obvious uptick in attitude and atmosphere around Division Main these days. I doubt it is related to any new decisions being made by higher or greater variety of healthy meal choices in the dining facility.

No, it has far deeper roots and origin, impacting the mental health of many Soldiers across U.S. Division – North. I am referring to the settlement of the National Football League players' lockout and the return of professional football to our hearts, minds and favorite American Forces Network channel.

This is a topic overflowing with energy and emotion. Now we can enjoy the distraction of essential player trades, once again asking if Brett Favre will come out of retirement. And, will Tim Tebow start at quarterback for the Denver Broncos?

Oh, the delight and distraction of another NFL season. And to think it was almost lost to labor a lockout.

Sports bring out incredible emotion

in people. I grew up in Canada amongst avid hockey fans. It was always funny to observe my grandmother, a saintly old woman, watch a Montreal Canadiens hockey game. She could not sit passively and take in the game, but was constantly animated, bouncing from chair to chair in the living room, frantically screaming and gesturing at the television as if it was somehow in submission to her will. She was emotionally involved.

Counselor and author Winston Smith wrote, "Emotions are the currency of personal involvement."

He went on to explain, emotions communicate the value you place on something the same way a price tag does. The image of "currency" is very useful to our understanding of how relationships work. What do you do with "currency?"

You can save it, invest it, spend it, share it and value it. I am guessing that one of the things that you do not do is ignore it. Folks who ignore "currency" tend to lose it – not a preferred option!

While we may invest a fair degree of emotional currency in our favorite sports teams, the currency we invest with our

spouse and children will continue to pay dividends far into the future.

Our absence from our Families creates tangible debts that need to be filled with our currency of emotional involvement, honesty and encouragement to them.

What are you doing to communicate that currency with those at home?

Solomon gives us wise counsel in Proverbs 16:24, "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body."

Emotional investment comes through gracious words; words that bless the hearer and give them grace. Our culture has minimized the power of words to bless by reducing them to digital shorthand. Use descriptive words frequently with your loved ones.

As we come to the last 90 days of this great mission in U.S. Division – North, let us persevere in blessing our Family, children and friends for their investment in our lives. Speak to your children and/or grandchildren frequently. Use expensive emotional currency statements like, "I love you; I miss you; I can't wait to be with you ..."

Sweeten them with the graciousness that comes from your full heart, separated by all these miles. In the meantime, I am going to continue to root for the Philadelphia Eagles and try not yell at the TV in my room whenever they lose to Dallas.



USD-N Social Media

To read more stories and see the photos that go with them, as well as some videos, check out the links below. Read and share what you see and pass along the Soldiers' stories.

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