

U.S. Marine Cpl. Ben Hoang, Crash, Fire & Rescue Team, Marine Wing Support Squadron 271, cuts a vehicle roof during a simulated car accident training exercise at Forward Operating Base Kalsu, Iraq, Aug. 3. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Nicholas J. Lapinski

One-week extension granted for Iraqi Constitution

Iraqi National Assembly to iron out two key issues holding up draft finalization

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — The Iraqi parliament voted Monday to extend the deadline for finalizing Iraq's new draft constitution by seven days, until Aug. 22, U.S. State Department officials confirmed. The 275-member Iraqi National Assembly had been expected to sign off on the document by midnight Tuesday, the initial deadline established by the Transitional

Administrative Law. The vote to extend the deadline occurred within 20 minutes of the midnight deadline, media reports noted. Speaking on morning talk shows Sunday, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad reported that the Iraqi constitution committee had agreed on most key issues, but was still trying to hammer out differences over two major issues. These involve the role of the central government versus that of regional or state government entities, and the role of Islam, particularly women's rights, in the new Iraqi government. The committee drafting the document left a deci-

sion on these two sticking points to the National Assembly, which opted to postpone the deadline until they can be resolved. The assembly's other options were to reject the draft constitution and trigger national elections or to pass the undisputed parts of the draft and add amendments as the other issues get resolved. Coalition and Iraqi officials agree that passage of an Iraqi Constitution is an essential move toward political progress in Iraq. During his weekly radio address Saturday, President Bush called it "a critical step on the path to Iraqi self-reliance."

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Partnership between U.S., Iraqi logistics forces yielding results, commander in Iraq says

By Sgt. Sara Wood
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — As a result of a training partnership with U.S. logistics support groups, two Iraqi motorized transportation regiments are ready to operate independently, a U.S. commander said Aug. 12.

In a press briefing live from Balad, Iraq, Army Brig. Gen. Yves Fontaine, commander, 1st Corps Support Command, Multi-National Corps - Iraq, said that the two regiments are the beginning of what will eventually be a nine-regiment logistics force for the Iraqi Army. These regiments will be important in helping the Iraqi Army meet conditions for U.S. and Coalition troop withdrawal, as many officials have noted recently.

“One of the keys for a successful logistics

operation, for any army, is the ability to get the supplies from where they are stored to where they are needed in an efficient and reliable manner,” Fontaine said. “With this in mind, it is a crucial task to ensure that the Iraqi Army becomes proficient in warehousing and transportation operations.”

U. S. forces have been working to refine the Iraqi logistics operation so they will be capable of sustaining the Iraqi Army in independent operations, Fontaine said. Training for each Iraqi transportation regiment takes about six months, he said. A third regiment is currently being trained, a fourth will be added in the next couple of months, and he said he predicts the Iraqis will have a large enough logistics force to sustain themselves within one year.

U.S. logistics forces have been performing well, and despite an increase in improvised explosive device attacks on convoys

over the last year, casualties have decreased significantly, Fontaine said. This can be attributed to the armoring of vehicles, which has been a main unit priority, he said.

“Since we arrived, we have not sent an unarmored vehicle outside a secure base,” he said. “Now our Soldiers are safe in their Humvees and their trucks and they walk out of the incidents.”

The effectiveness of IED attacks has also been reduced because military officials review accidents when they occur to determine any new or changing enemy tactics, so they can react accordingly, Fontaine said.

The 1st Corps Support Command is made up of five support teams, one aerial support group, one brigade-sized distribution command and two brigade combat teams. These units conduct sustainment operations to keep Multi-National Corps - Iraq Soldiers fed, equipped, maintained, armed and

fueled, Fontaine said. In an average day, his unit receives and issues 1.4 million gallons of fuel, produces 3 million gallons of water and processes 500 requests for repair parts, he said. The command also works with Air Force and Army air assets to move troops and equipment on planes, reducing the need for supply convoys, which are susceptible to IED attacks, he said.

“The quality and quantity of our effort is enormous,” he said, “and we succeed because we have dedicated Soldiers and civilian contractors who take pride in providing superior support. We’ll do whatever it takes to sustain the fight, maintain the Corps’ momentum and ensure that the combat forces never go without the necessary supplies and equipment they need to win.”

The 1st Corps Support Command is deployed from Fort Bragg, N. C., where it is attached to 18th Airborne Corps.

Insurgents feel ‘Quick Strike’ of Task Force 3/2

Story and photo by
Lance Cpl. Lucian Friel
2nd Marine Division

HADITHA, Iraq — Insurgents in the Haditha region of the Al Anbar province were met by a group of unfamiliar faces Aug. 5 when the Marines of 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment arrived in support of Operation “Quick Strike.”

The Marines traveled about 100 miles southeast of their area of operation in Al Qa’im overnight to help 3rd Bn., 25th Marines, clear the towns of Haqliniyah, Bani Dahri and Barwanah just south of the city of Haditha.

The task force conducting Quick Strike included many different units task organized for the mission. Each unit, including those from Iraqi Security Forces, brings unique skills to the fight that help ensure mission success.

Two buildings used as insurgent bases were destroyed by a coordinated air strike during the mission. The task force located large numbers of improvised explosive devices, including car bombs, and unearthed mines within the city limits.

While Marines with Company L, 3rd Bn., 2nd Marines cleared Haqliniyah, Sgt. Jeffrey J.

Swartzentruber, the leader of 1st Squad, 3rd Platoon and his fellow Marines with Company K cleared the town of Bani Dahri.

“Our mission here was to gain a foothold in our sector of the city, establish a base and send out patrols to continue clearing other sectors,” explained the 24-year-old Coral Springs, Fla., native.

For Swartzentruber and his Marines, this mission was about more than clearing a city; it was about helping out their fellow Marines.

“It feels good to know that we’re helping fellow Marines who are having a hard time right now,” said the 2000 Tarravella High School graduate.

Swartzentruber and the Marines of 1st Squad did not have trouble clearing sections of the city.

“We confiscated a few pistols here and there, but overall this area is pretty friendly,” he said.

His Marines had no problem transitioning to this area of operations away from their own, said the squad leader.

“This is the most flexible group of Marines I’ve ever worked with, and we also had time to study the area and prepare to come down here,” Swartzentruber said. “Their ability to easily transition from being in a firefight to talking to little kids is phenomenal.”



Marines of 3rd Bn., 2nd Marine RCT-2, patrol through the city of Bani Dahri, Iraq, during Operation Quick Strike.

MNF-I Commanding General
Gen. George W. Casey Jr.

MNF-I PAO
Col. Dewey G. Ford

Combined Press Information Center Director

Lt. Col. Steven A. Boylan
steven.boylan@iraq.centcom.mil

Command Information Chief

Maj. Patricia C. Anderson
patricia.anderson@iraq.centcom.mil

Command Information NCOIC
Master Sgt. Michele R. Hammonds
michele.hammonds@iraq.centcom.mil



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Editor.....Staff Sgt. Brett B. McMillan

brett.mcmillan@iraq.centcom.mil

Assistant Editor.....Sgt. Misha King

misha.king@iraq.centcom.mil

Staff.....Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn

timothy.lawn@iraq.centcom.mil

Staff.....Sgt. W. Watson Martin

william.martin@iraq.centcom.mil

Staff.....Spc. Ferdinand Thomas

ferdinand.thomas@iraq.centcom.mil

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PERSPECTIVES

Seeing the difference I make is rewarding

By Tech. Sgt. Kelley Stewart
Combined Press Information Center

When I was asked what the most rewarding thing about my tour here is, my first thought was, I have a desk job — I don't directly affect anything. Then I thought a little more about it, and I realized I do have an impact on events in Iraq.

These events may not be huge in the scheme of things, but all impacts don't have to be huge.

One of the things my section, the Iraqi Media Engagement Team, does is monitor Arabic media. A team of ten translators check out television, radio, Web sites and newspapers for misreports and propaganda. When they find it, a military member of the team checks with the powers that be to see if the story is correct or not.

If the story is not correct, a statement to correct the record is written and sent to the media outlet. Sometimes the media outlet runs the correction, and sometimes they don't. However, there has been an increase in the number of counterstatements being run. It may be as simple as a follow-up story with a sentence denying this happened, but it is getting the word out to the people that everything they see and hear in the media isn't always true.

We also have media outlets calling in with media queries. This is huge because during Saddam Hussein's regime, media folks told the people what the government told them to say. They didn't ask questions. If they did, they could be tortured or killed. Slowly but surely, our little team is showing the media it's OK to call in and ask questions. They're learning they'll get an answer, and it might not be the answer they were expecting.

Another thing we do is help the people at the Combined Press Information Center teach the public

affairs representatives from the Ministry of Defense and other Iraqi government agencies how to do various aspects of public affairs.

Small groups of Iraqis come to the CPIC for five days to learn a variety of tasks, like how to write press releases, public affairs guidance, monitor media, take photos and set up a press conference. They are given practical exercises throughout the week to track their progress, and at the end of the week, they put it all into practice with a mock press conference.

During the mock press conference, the students prepare the "speakers," brief the "media," "prepare" the conference room, and do all the other functions that go with putting on, conducting and concluding a press conference. The day ends with a graduation ceremony, and all the students are awarded a certificate for completing the class they were here to attend. I know this is having an impact in the Iraqi government because I've seen an increase in the number of press releases coming out of some of the Iraq government offices and ministries. I know this is having an impact because more and more government agencies want to send their folks through our training programs.

I'm not out hunting down terrorists or fighting anti-Iraqi forces, nor am I providing convoy security or looking for improvised explosive devices like other military members. But I am in a battle to find and correct propaganda. I am also in a battle against time to help teach people in the Iraqi government how to fight an information war.

The fact I can see the impact my mission here has is probably the most rewarding thing about being deployed to Iraq. It may not be a huge impact in the grand scheme, but it's an important part of the mission as far as I'm concerned.

Passing the buck



U.S. Air Force Photo by Staff Sgt. Suzanne M. Day

Company commanders from Task Force 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, salute during the playing of the national anthem during a transfer of authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Normandy, Iraq, Aug. 1. Soldiers of the 2/2 Iraqi Army Bn. assumed responsibility for the FOB.

Scimitar Pulse

What is the most rewarding part of your tour here?

"I feel great to be doing my part."

**Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class
Wade Henry**
Surgical/Shock Trauma Platoon



"Making sure patients get all of their gear back."

Marine Cpl. Crystal Jackson
2nd Force Service Support Group



"Helping save lives and taking care of the dental patients."

Navy Seaman Manuel Arana
Taqaaddum Dental



"I love seeing the smiling faces and providing service to my Marines."

**Marine Chief Warrant Officer
Parima In**
Headquarters and Service Battalion



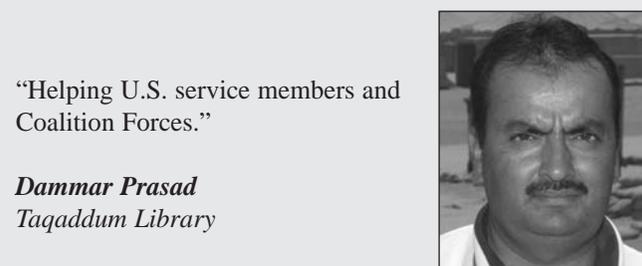
"Getting to interact with Iraqi children has been very satisfying."

Marine Sgt. Leslie E. Johnson
Staff Judge Advocate



"Being able to work with the different services to complete the overall mission has been awesome."

Army 1st Sgt. Thomas Brooks
112th Armored Regiment



"Helping U.S. service members and Coalition Forces."

Dammar Prasad
Taqaaddum Library

Airmen earn Army police combat patch

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Brian Davidson
447th Air Expeditionary Group Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Security Forces Airmen here have earned membership into a unique fraternity for showing bravery in the face of the enemy.

The 447th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron's Airmen were awarded the Army's 18th Military Police Brigade Combat Patch for their role in detainee operations.

In a special ceremony, Army Col. Jim Brown, 18th MP Brigade commander, praised the Airmen for their noble character in the fight for freedom.

"You serve in the knowledge that democratic security is not just the best form of security for our allies and Iraqi partners, but also the best form of security for America herself," he said. "Throughout history, Soldiers have been proud to don a combat patch as a sign of having been in battle."

For the Airmen and Soldiers serving together here, earning the patch, while significant, is also bittersweet.

To wear the patch, service members must have actively participated in or supported ground combat operations against hostile forces in which they are exposed to the threat of enemy action or fire, either directly or indirectly.

The Airmen of the 447 ESFS met those requirements by transporting enemy detainees.

Detainees are brought here from various detention facilities depending on the nature and severity of threat they pose.

Several times each week, on an unpredictable schedule, Airmen and Soldiers oversee the air and ground transportation of detainees.

The types of prisoner vary. Some are considered "small fish" for their role in supporting terrorism and insurgent activities, while others are considered high value and are members of the "52 most-wanted" list pictured on the terrorist deck of cards. One thing they all have in common is that they have been captured for directly or indirectly participating in attacks

against coalition forces and Iraqi civilians.

The security forces Airmen are responsible for the force protection posture and defense of the base, as well as ensuring that everyone has safe passage to and from Baghdad, including Coalition Forces and prisoners, said Maj. Thomas Sherman, 447th ESFS commander, who is deployed from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

"As long as we successfully complete our mission, we can help the Iraqi people exercise their right to self-rule," he said.

During a prisoner transfer, some Soldiers and Airmen take up defensive fighting positions at random locations around the airfield to guard against insurgent attacks, while other Airmen direct the movement of the prisoners.

Once an aircraft lands, prisoners are brought out shackled by the wrists and ankles, wearing a distinctive brightly colored jumpsuit. They are treated with professionalism, courtesy and respect by their military escorts.

Recently, that professionalism was tested when a sniper put one of the 18th MP Soldiers in his cross hairs.

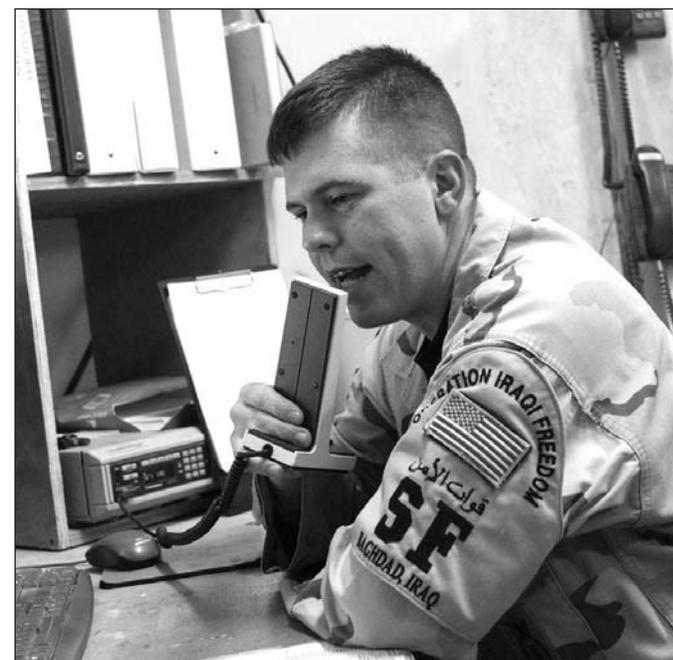
Army Staff Sgt. James McNaughton, who worked closely with the Security Forces Airmen during prisoner transfers, was killed by the sniper's bullet.

Late the following night, more than 120 Soldiers and Airmen, many wearing the 18th MP combat patch, stood solemnly at attention on the flightline near the same place prisoners are brought on and off aircraft, to pay final tribute to their comrade.

For most of the Airmen, his death was their first experience with the reality of war.

Staff Sgt. Amber Cerrato said that knowing the Soldier who was killed, and that some of the insurgents they work with have committed acts of violence against other Coalition Forces, was a shock and an eye-opener. However, she said she would not change how they meet their obligation to adhere to the rules of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions.

"We have a job to do, and we are going to do it," said Sergeant Cerrato, who is deployed from Cannon AFB, N.M.



Staff Sgt. Alan Clontz works from the Battle Defense Operations Center as command and control during prisoner movement. Sergeant Clontz serves as the critical communication link between Soldiers and Airmen.

The Airmen of the 447th ESFS are only permitted to wear the 18th MP combat patch for the duration of their deployment, but the significance will always be theirs.

"It's an honor to wear the patch now and show that we are brothers in arms with the Soldiers of the 18th," said Senior Airman Danny Hubbard, who is deployed from Dyess AFB, Texas. "It means that we fought side by side for the same cause — the people of Iraq."

The 18th MP patch dates back to May 1966 when Soldiers earned the right to wear it during the Vietnam War. It signifies that those awarded the patch since that date are part of a special group of American Soldiers who looked bravely in the face of the enemy in the name of freedom.

Liberty 'Blackhawks' receive CIB, make unit history



Lt. Col. Mark C. Jackson, battalion commander of 2nd Bn., 130th Inf. Regt., pins the CIB on Sgt. 1st Class Timmy McNaught, B Co., 2/130th Inf. McNaught, a National Guard Soldier, is also an officer with the Urbana, Ill., police department.

By Capt. Leyland C. Torres
2/130 Infantry Unit Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, BAGHDAD, Iraq — Nearly 30 Soldiers from Task Force 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 256th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, were awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge July 28 for combat action in Baghdad.

The 28 Soldiers are assigned to the 2nd and 3rd platoons of Company B, 2/130 Infantry known as the "Blackhawks."

The National Guard unit is from Effingham, Ill., and has been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom for 18 months.

The badges were awarded by Lt. Col. Mark C. Jackson from Frankfort, Ill., 2/130 battalion commander.

"I am extremely proud of these Soldiers and the work they are doing," Jackson said. "They are making a difference for the people of Iraq and are placing themselves in harm's way on a daily basis in order to complete their mission."

The company commander, Capt. Eric Kampwerth of St. Louis, Mo., spoke to his Soldiers about the work they have accomplished. He also cautioned them not to let their guard down and continue forward with the mission. "To a man, they should all be proud, both of individual achievement and

what the company has performed daily in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom."

The CIB was established on Oct. 7, 1943, by the Secretary of War and is awarded to infantry Soldiers in the rank of colonel and below who are engaged in actual ground combat with the enemy. These Soldiers are the first to receive the award in the unit since World War II when the Blackhawks served with distinction in the Pacific Theater of Operation.



Lt. Col. Mark C. Jackson awards the Combat Infantryman Badge to Spc. Caleb Gifford from Geff, Ill., of B Co., 2/130th Inf. Regt.

U.S. Army photo

U.S. Army photo

Coalition, Iraqi ministry sign historic charter agreement

By Sgt. Kevin Bromley

3/1 Armored Division Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The children of Husseinia, a town north of Baghdad, play among heaps of trash, lakes of standing groundwater and open sewage.

Several miles away in north Baghdad, Col. David Bishop, commander of 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division; Ayad Al-Safee, the Deputy Minister of Technical Affairs for the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works; Nanjar Manshed, the Al-Istaklah District Advisory Council Delegate; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers signed a charter Aug. 1 that will ensure the citizens and children of Husseinia have a brighter and healthier future.

Husseinia is a settlement that took root in the agricultural region north of Baghdad in the 1980s. Unfortunately, the Baghdad storm drainage and waste treatment facilities were designed and built from the late 1960s to early 1970s, and the previous regime never extended these basic public services to the area.

The population of Husseinia — now nearly 750,000 — steadily increased in size as more and more people moved to the town with their families during the previous regime.

This large influx of people from the towns surrounding Baghdad created a public works crisis situation that continues to this day.

"If there is a situation below poor, we [Husseinia] are underneath that ... it's bad," said Nanjar Manshed, the Al-Istaklah district delegate.

In order to correct these health and public services problems, Coalition Forces and the MMPW decided a charter was needed to detail plans that will bring storm drainage projects, water-quality improvements, and most importantly, sewage treatment facilities.

The Husseinia Charter is the first of its kind in the area, and the projects that spring out of this agreement will improve the city's health and welfare.

"It is a great project to help the people ... we will have healthy water and less disease from the sewage all over the city," said Manshed.

Local Iraqi contractors will perform most of the work on these projects providing the additional benefit of employment for laborers.

"The widespread use of the local workforce not only adds jobs but helps to spike the economy as wage earners buy goods and services in the area," said Maj. Scott Sill, the civil affairs officer for 3rd Bde., 1st Arm. Div., and a resident of Daytona Beach, Fla.

Coalition Forces are involved in the planning and project development stages, but the execution of the plans will be at the directive of the Iraqi government.

"I think this is a tremendous project for the people of Husseinia ... This is an Iraqi project — the U.S. Forces are only providing some funding and oversight," Bishop said, adding that it will provide jobs and invite better living conditions for the people of this area.

Husseinia's programs will serve as the test-bed and guide for other projects in different impoverished areas in and around Baghdad.

"What we do and learn here in Husseinia will be used as a roadmap for projects in other towns that desperately need basic essential services such as clean water, air and waste removal," Sill said.

The MMPW and the organizers of the charter group are hopeful that the newly-signed charter will be the springboard to additional charter groups and spread across the region to improve the lifestyles of Iraqi people across the nation.

"Hopefully, I will see the whole improvement from when they put the first shovel into the ground," said Manshed. "These projects will make the people in Husseinia proud."

Iraqis progress in conditions for troop withdrawal, official says

WASHINGTON — Iraqis are continuing progress toward meeting the two primary conditions for the reduction of Coalition Forces in Iraq, a Multi-National Force - Iraq spokesman said Aug. 11.

In a press briefing from Baghdad, Army Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, a Multi-National Force - Iraq deputy chief of staff, stressed that the decision to move U. S. troops out of Iraq will be based primarily on the political process in the country and on the training and capability of Iraqi Security Forces.

But if progress continues the way it has, it is possible that there could be "fairly substantial reductions" in Coalition Forces after the elections in December, Lynch said. He noted that the Coalition is not setting timelines on conditions for troop withdrawal. "The timelines are not relevant," he said. "What is relevant is that those conditions are indeed met."

"We see significant progress on the political process," Lynch said.

"We're optimistic that since they've got the right people now talking through the issues, that there will be progress ... and they will adhere to the timeline that's been established," he said.

Polls show that the Iraqi people have increased confidence in their government, are optimistic about the future and intend to vote in the referendum and election, Lynch said. Talks with Sunni leaders have given Coalition officials confidence that up to 80 percent of Sunni Arabs will participate in the elections, he added.

Iraqi Security Forces also continue to progress in training and operations, Lynch said. This week, 41 brigade-level operations were conducted throughout Iraq, all of which were combined efforts of Coalition and Iraqi Forces. Also, two sectors in Iraq — one in Baghdad and one in the Diyala province — have been turned over to the control of Iraqi forces, he said.

"We are amazed, on a daily basis, with the capabilities and improvements of the Iraqi Security Forces," he said.

Reconstruction efforts throughout Iraq are further strengthening the country's development, Lynch said. Construction began this week on a \$13.1 million electrical distribution project that will bring power to about 128,000 residents in Sadr City, and a \$17.2 million maternity and children's hospital there is about 40 percent complete, he said. Both projects are slated to be completed by the spring of next year. (By Sgt. Sara Wood, American Forces Press Service.)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Al Qaeda lieutenant killed in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Terrorist Abu Zubair, also known as Mohammed Salah Sultan, was killed Aug. 12 by Iraqi Security Forces in an ambush in the northern city of Mosul.

Zubair was a known member of Al Qaeda in Iraq and a lieutenant in Abu Musab Zarqawi's terrorist operations in Mosul who was being sought by Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces for his involvement in a July suicide bombing attack of a police station in Mosul resulting in the death of five Iraqi police officers. He was also suspected of resourcing and facilitating suicide bomber attacks against Coalition, Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi citizens throughout the country.

When Zubair was killed he was wearing a suicide device consisting of an explosive pack across his stomach armed with pellets.

"Abu Zubair's death, as well as recent captures of terrorists in northern Iraq, is making a difference in Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces efforts to disrupt terrorists operating in this part of the country," said Col. Billy J. Buckner, spokesman for the Multi-National Corps. "Terrorists are doing all they can to stop the rise of a free Iraq, but their bombs and attacks have not prevented Iraqi sovereignty and they will not prevent Iraqi democracy," Buckner said.

Task Force Freedom Soldiers find chemical production facility

MOSUL, Iraq — Coalition Forces, acting on intelligence from detainee interrogations, raided a suspected insurgent chemical production facility and chemical storage locations on Aug. 9. The early morning raids, conducted by Task Force Freedom, uncovered what technical experts assess to be a "clandestine chemical production facility" and possibly related storage sites.

Military officials are careful to state that ongoing analysis of the chemical evidence collected from the sites is currently insufficient to determine what the insurgents had been producing. "We are continuing to investigate the production and storage facilities to determine what type and quantities of chemicals were produced at the facility, and the specific threat posed to our forces. We don't want to speculate on any possibilities until our analysis is complete," said the Multi-National Corps' Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defense Officer Col. Henry Franke. However, military officials are confident that they

Continued on next page

Najaf water projects supply more potable water

By BJ Weiner

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

TALLIL, Iraq — Estimates put the shortage of potable water in the area surrounding Najaf and Kufa at about 40 percent, with existing plants being old or deteriorated because of neglect or lack of maintenance.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region South District has quality assurance responsibilities on 14 water treatment units and three water pipeline projects that will increase that drinkable water flow within the Najaf area.

The water projects, worth approximately \$12 million, involve the installation of 14 compact water treatment units and piping, according to Darrell Flinn. These compact units require highly skilled labor to maintain them, and training the staff is part of the overall package. "These require a technical labor force that has been taught to use this equipment," he said.

Seven of the 14 small units are finished,

and the rest are in various stages of completion. The three pipeline projects are 90 percent completed or better. "It is really critical to bring water to these neighborhoods," said Flinn. "So many people don't have access to good clean drinking water. This is what we are trying to fix now — and I'm happy to say that everything is going very well, but for every project we do, several more are needed."

The average person uses about 71 liters of water a day, and this includes domestic water for cooking and bathing as well, according to the World Health Organization. Each of the units can put out about 200 cubic meters of water an hour, and one cubic meter equals about 1,000 liters. "Assuming the units operate for 10 hours a day, they would put out about 2 million liters of water a day," he said. "And when you divide the total number of liters each unit puts out per day by the number of liters each person uses, you come up with 28,109 people who are able to be served by one unit. Multiply that times 14 plants, and these units can



Courtesy photo

Water compact units are undergoing a normal flushing operation in Najaf. This unit was handed over to the city May 30.

serve 393,926 people. And that is a substantial gain for the people of Najaf."

At the time of transition to sovereignty June 2004, there were just over 200 reconstruction projects started. Today, there are over 2,700 projects started, valued at \$6.4 billion. More than 1,600 projects are finished, with a value of \$1.8 billion.

NEWS IN BRIEF

have disrupted a potentially serious threat to Coalition Forces and the Iraqi people.

Concurrent with the technical analysis, intelligence experts are conducting related investigations to determine which terrorist or insurgent group is responsible for the construction and operation of the secret facility.

Chemical site samples analyzed further

WASHINGTON – Coalition experts continue to analyze samples found in the chemical production facility and storage site discovered in Mosul, Iraq, Aug. 9, officials reported Aug. 14.

Early results suggest that some chemicals are accelerants used in explosive devices.

Specially-trained reconnaissance units collected the samples being tested now in Iraq. The samples will then be sent to the U.S. for composition confirmation.

Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces also continue to investigate more intelligence information.

Officials announced Aug. 13 that Coalition Forces had found the facility and storage site during raids Aug. 9 based on detainee-provided tips. (Compiled by American Forces Press Service from a Multi-National Force - Iraq press release.)

Iraqi Soldiers uncover weapons cache, IEDS

WASHINGTON — Iraqi military units uncovered a weapons cache and roadside bombs, and detained several suspects Aug. 9 and 10, according to multinational force reports.

Iraqi Soldiers were led to a weapons cache in Fallujah while on a dismounted security patrol Aug. 10. The also detained three suspected insurgents.

While conducting a security patrol in the Balad area, Iraqi Soldiers discovered an improvised explosive device under a clothing stand Aug. 10. The stand's owner was detained and transported to a secure facility for questioning. An explosive ordnance disposal team destroyed the claymore with a controlled blast.

Separate operations by Iraqi Security Forces led to the discovery of several IEDs throughout the country Aug 9.

No injuries or damages were reported during the operations. (Compiled by American Forces Press Service from Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq news releases.)

DoD launches Deployment Health, Family Readiness Library

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Service members, their families and their health care providers have a new online Defense Department resource for deployment health issues.

The DoD Deployment Health Risk Communication Working Group and the Joint Task Force for Family Readiness Education on Deployments have joined together to create the Deployment Health and Family Readiness Library.

Ellen P. Embrey, deputy assistant secretary of defense for force health protection and readiness, announced the new online library Aug. 9. It is intended to provide service members, families and healthcare providers a quick and easy way to find the deployment health and family readiness information they value, she said.

"Information is a powerful tool. We must remain proactive in providing deployment-related health information to better safeguard our service members," she said. "Most people fear the

Oooh, yummy!



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo by BJ Weiner

U.S. Air Force Capt. Michelle Harwood hands out Girl Scout cookies to construction workers at the Hamdan Police Station renovation site in Basrah, Iraq.

unknown. Through accurate, timely information, we are able to ensure that our service members are better equipped to prepare for, cope with, and recover from the myriad health risks faced during deployments. "

The online library includes fact sheets, guides and other products on a wide variety of topics. The topic listing was based on feedback from service members, their families, and health care providers, Embrey said. New information will be added to the site as new topics and areas of concern emerge, she added.

In focus group meetings, Embrey explained, service members and their families have said their need for information varies before, during and after deployments. Leaders, in particular, look for accurate information before the deployment. While the service members are deployed, their families are especially interested in getting deployment health-related information, she noted, and following deployments, both service members and families look for this information.

Embrey said many information sources are available on line, but noted that too often it's difficult to tell if the information source is accurate.

"We are absolutely committed to providing the best information found in sound science and based on medical evidence," Embrey said. "We want this site to be the authoritative source for deployment health and family readiness information. This is another step we are taking to ensure that those who protect our country and our freedoms are also protected." (By American Forces Press Service from a DoD Deployment Health Support Directorate news release.)

STARS AND STRIPES

introduces

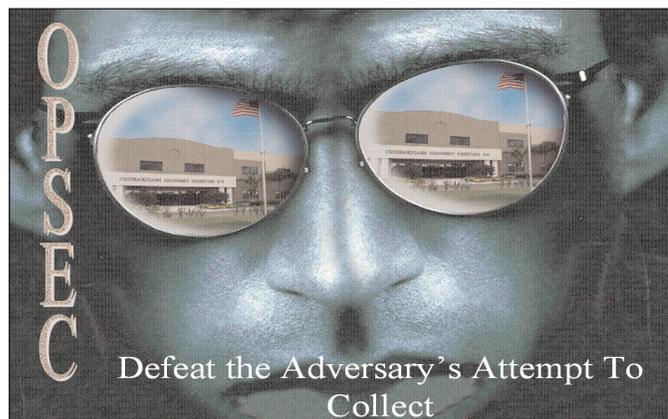
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Balad	107.3 FM	Tal Afar	107.3 FM
Fallujah	105.1 FM	Taqqadum	107.3 FM
Kirkuk	107.3 FM	Tikrit	100.1 FM

Freedom Radio



Two Marine M1A1 tanks and Humvees assigned to 2nd Bn., 7th Marine Regt., 1st Marine Div., establish an observation post and prepare for an evening of overwatch.

In the face of danger

Three Marines in Iraq share lifelong brotherhood bond

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn
Scimitar Staff

AL ANBAR, Iraq — Two U.S. Marine Humvees and two M1A1 tanks crept and snaked their way through soft sand and scrub while conducting an evening presence patrol. Their mission: set up an observation post on the desolate outskirts of the Iraqi village of Qaryat al Ajiz al Gharbi, a suspected insurgent heavy weapon location.

The small convoy, bristling with firepower, lurched to a halt. Three young Marines and their Humvee were from 2nd Platoon, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, and they were attached to Company B, 2nd Assault Amphibious Battalion, 2nd Marine Division.

The Marines prepared their position and settled in for a long evening, as they recounted a harrowing experience of danger, excitement and pure luck.

All three are part of a growing Fallujah brotherhood. The three Marines survived an improvised explosive device that detonated beside that very same Humvee they used for patrol that evening.

The Marines were part of a security convoy providing escort as their commander traveled to a meeting with village elders in a local town Aug. 5.

Lance Cpl. Michael Brown was assigned as the vehicle gunner, and he recalled the IED attack. "When it went off, Pfc. Pedro Gonzales and myself hit the floor," he said. Brown felt that they had saved their lives by diving to the floor.

They had all felt a growing sense of unease, because though Iraqi roadways are usually strewn with mounds of trash, something looked out of the ordinary.

An IED was buried in a pile of trash. Approximately 15 seconds after their Humvee made a right turn, the IED detonated about five feet to the left of the vehicle, between the left front tire and the driver's side door, said 19-year-old Lance Cpl. Michael Harmon, the team leader.

The blast threw shrapnel, debris and dirt in the air, which enveloped the Humvee, recalled Brown.

Brown and Gonzales ducked behind the steel armor that surrounds the vehicle, thereby shielding themselves from most of the blast and shrapnel.

"I heard Harmon screaming to see if everyone was all right," said Brown. The blast had destroyed communications with their team leader and driver.

Harmon is serving his second tour in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Quiet and reserved, he is used to the carnage of war. Harmon recalled some of his previous experiences that have hardened him. In his last tour, a mine rigged high in the trees exploded and killed several members of his unit. He was relieved to see that everyone had survived this attack.

"We are bleeding back here," yelled Gonzales as they checked each other for wounds.

Gonzales and Brown both realized they had shrapnel to their faces; Gonzales also had a finger bent at an odd angle and a burn on his forearm. He had been holding the armored panel for support when the IED went off.

As the medic ran up, Brown stood up to get out, but a sharp pain in his shoulder caused him to collapse. The medic checked Brown and Gonzales, and saw they were not critically wounded; they were medically evacuated to



Left to right, team leader Lance Cpl. Michael Harmon, gunner Lance Cpl. Michael Brown and driver Lance Cpl. Erick Conkle stand outside the Humvee that recently withstood an IED that detonated near the vehicle.

their forward operating base, Camp Smitty.

Back at the FOB, they discovered Gonzales had shrapnel that damaged a nerve in his hand. He was medically evacuated for further treatment. Brown had mostly muscle damage and a few small pieces of shrapnel. He was treated and released back to duty.

At the observation position overlooking the village, Brown and his fellow Marines were hoping for a break. Marines at FOB Smitty had been getting harassed from a suspected 120 mm mortar. Their company had been assigned and conducted a series of successful cache sweeps in the local town, and they hoped someone would return to retrieve the mortar or conduct any other terrorist activity.

Lance Cpl. Erick Conkle was the driver of the Humvee that weathered the IED attack, and again on the patrol mission with his fellow survivors. As the Marine patrol settled in for the evening, he summed up his feelings, which matched his fellow Marines'.

"If it wasn't for this armor, I wouldn't be here," said Conkle.



Right to left, team leader Lance Cpls. Michael Harmon and Michael Brown prepare for an evening presence patrol.



Seaman Clarence Washington, a corpsman with A Co., 1st Bn., 6th Marine Regt., provides security while patrolling the streets of Saqlawiyah, Iraq. The Caruthersville, Mo., native is one of several "docs" who live and work alongside the infantrymen here, administering first aid in combat and treating acute illnesses.

Staring down the ugly face of **WAR**

Corpsman walks dangerous streets of Iraq to heal others

Story and photos by Cpl. Mike Escobar
2nd Marine Division

SAQLAWIYAH, Iraq — The soft, even tone of his voice, and the caring, soulful look in "Doc" Clarence Washington's eyes belie the atrocities this 26-year-old Sailor has witnessed during his past four months in Iraq.

The carnage of war touches every service member here somehow, but in this Caruthersville, Mo., native's case, it is he who touches that carnage back.

Washington serves as a Corpsman with Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, a unit currently working beside Iraqi Security Forces to secure the rural township of Saqlawiyah on the outskirts of Fallujah. In these village streets and fields,

the young Sailor has left behind parts of his soul.

"I'll never forget the events on June 10," said Washington, a former volunteer at St. Mary's Hospital in Jefferson City. "I'll never forget having to take their bodies out of the vehicle. It's something I still see in my mind every day."

That sweltering late-spring day, Lance Cpls. Mario Castillo and Andrew Kilpela were

killed by an insurgent-emplaced roadside bomb. These engineers were supporting Washington's unit by erecting signs along the road, warning the populace to beware of these bombs.

Washington and a group of his Marines were called upon to react to the explosion.

"They told me there were two possible [Marines killed in action], but I didn't really believe anybody was actually dead," Washington recalled. "They told me to take body bags just in case."

"When I got there, I saw the destroyed vehicle,"

Washington said as he cast his eyes down in solemn remembrance. "I walked to it, thinking to myself, 'I have to do this quickly, because I don't want my Marines to see this.'"

The events that day opened Washington's eyes to the realities of war, but no barbaric act of violence would deter him and his Marines' resolve to fight the terrorists who had claimed their friends' lives.

The troops continue conducting daily missions, raids and patrols to wrest the insurgents' grip off Saqlawiyah.

Washington, who is also a former University of Tennessee student of social work, hikes and walks the streets with the best of them.

"My job out here is to look out for my Marines, and provide them with an adequate amount of care," he explained. "I deal with first aid, preventive medicine and hygiene concerns."

"Sometimes this job is kind of like being a mother," Washington said with a slight smile. "The Marines might not always listen to me, but when they have some problem, they don't want to discuss in front of their friends, they come to me."

More than three years of naval service remain on Washington's contract, during which he will continue pondering what career possibilities his future holds.

"I plan to re-enlist if I get to attend [basic] X-ray technician school," he stated. "If not, I'll probably go back to school to be a nurse's assistant. I've already gotten plenty of medical experience in the military."

The mission at hand remains foremost on Washington's mind for now, as he enjoys the rough work to which he dutifully devotes himself.

"Being a corpsman is everything I've always liked doing wrapped into one package: medicine, psychology and counseling," he said. "I believe this to be one of the most rewarding experiences ever. There are lots of things I wish I hadn't seen out here, but they've helped me mature. I can hold my head high, stick my chest out, and say that I've done something special with my life."



Seaman Clarence Washington hands candy to an Iraqi child while conducting a mission alongside Marines.



Seaman Clarence Washington treats an Iraqi citizen's eye infection while patrolling the streets with Marines.

Staging facility takes over after hospital

Story and photos by
Senior Airman Chawntain Sloan
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq — It is 10:30 p.m., and the 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group's contingency aeromedical staging facility here is a flurry of activity.



Senior Airman Richard Reid makes sure an ambulance-type bus is equipped with necessary medical supplies. The bus has been modified to support ambulatory patients who are primarily moved on stretchers.

The doctors, nurses and technicians are making their rounds while other Airmen are checking in new arrivals, processing movement paperwork, palletizing bags and making sure the ambulance-type buses are equipped with necessary medical supplies.

"It may look like chaos, but it's controlled chaos," said Master Sgt. Jeremy Rennahan, noncommissioned officer in charge of staging facility operations.

As a medical holding and staging facility for aeromedical evacuation, the staff takes over where the doctors, nurses, technicians and medics at the Air Force theater hospital here leave off.

While the hospital is primarily responsible for stabilizing patients, the staging facility provides extended care and prepares patients for transportation to a hospital in Germany where they receive long-term treatment.

This evening, the team has less than three hours to get more than 30 troops, Department of Defense employees and contract civilians medically and administratively ready for back-to-back aeromedical evacuation flights.

"My primary job is to nurture them because they are in a lot of pain, and they don't have the people they need most here — their families," said Airman 1st Class Jangmi Vance, a medical technician. "Some of it's mental, and most of it's physical, but I am here for whatever they need, even if that's just listening."

For Vance and the rest of her co-workers,



2nd Lt. Maria Sanchez cares for a patient at the 332nd Exp. Med. Group's contingency aeromedical staging facility.

their job is about more than just having a good bedside manner.

Some of the patients step outside on the patio for an occasional cigarette, and often right behind them trails Vance and one or more of her comrades.

"I don't even smoke, but I will go out to the patio and sit and talk with them," said the

Airman deployed from the 89th Medical Surgical Squadron at Andrews Air Force Base, Md. "I enjoy getting to know them and listening to their stories, and I know they appreciate the company."

The efforts of Vance and the rest of the

See *STAGING*, Page 11

Aeromedical evacuation process key to saving lives in Iraq

By Master Sgt. Christopher Haug
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq — In battle, one of the hardest challenges is saving the wounded. Medical professionals encounter injuries not normally seen in peacetime, and often they see multiple life-threatening injuries requiring immediate treatment on the battlefield.

Another problem is moving patients across hot desert sands on bumpy roads in Iraq, which can be logistically challenging and uncomfortable for the patient. And there is always the danger of roadside bombs.

To solve these problems, military aeromedical planners developed what is now an efficient medical evacuation system that moves patients from where they were injured to definitive care quickly and safely.

Along the way, patients receive the best possible care, said Lt. Col. Jose Soto, chief nurse with the 332nd Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility.

The initial patient movement is done immediately after an injury is reported. Usually an Army helicopter flies the injured troop to a field medical clinic.

"Many times what is done within the first hour of injury determines the chances a patient has for survival," said Maj. David Ball, a 791st Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron flight clinical coordinator from Ramstein Air Base, Germany. "Historically, the medical community calls this the 'golden hour,' and we are trying to extend that."

Service members in Iraq rely on a joint medical evacuation system using Army and Air Force medics spread out along the route. Aeromedical evacuation teams escort injured from Army clinics on the battlefield to the Air Force theater hospital here. The patients are stabilized for flight at the hospital, flown to Europe for further care and finally to stateside hospitals.

"The process is so efficient that we literally have been able to



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Tim Beckham

From left, Airman 1st Class Debra Camacho, Staff Sgt. Fred Mathis, Tech. Sgt. Marsha Madsen, Senior Airman Bradley Cross and Staff Sgt. Raymond Wrentmore carry Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Lorphy Bourque aboard a C-130 to fly him to Germany.

move patients within minutes of their injury to the first echelon of care at Army field clinics, and within hours to the Air Force theater hospital here," said Lt. Col. Laurie Hall, chief nurse at the hospital.

"If we are able to stabilize the patient quickly enough, we can have that patient on their way to more definitive care at

Landstuhl [Regional Medical Center, Germany] within 12 hours, sometimes even less than that," Hall said.

For Army Spc. Brian Scaramuzzo, of the 57th Transportation Company at Taqqadum, Iraq, the care is just "awesome." Scaramuzzo, from Wakefield, Mass., sustained deep cuts in both legs when his 5-ton truck flipped on its side while driving in a convoy from Al Asad, Iraq, to Taqaddum.

"The helicopter was there to pick us up less than 25 minutes after the accident," he said. "They flew us from one helicopter to the next until we reached the [Air Force theater] hospital."

Sometimes stabilizing a patient requires a neurosurgeon to work simultaneously with an orthopedic doctor in the operating room — even while another patient is having surgery in the next bed, Hall said.

Airlifting patients out of the war zone presents other challenges, coordinated by people assigned to the contingency aeromedical staging facility here.

Officials at the staging facility coordinate with several medical and aeromedical evacuation elements throughout the world to ensure each patient receives the proper care and movement throughout the theater. They ensure patients are medically and administratively prepared for intertheater flights.

Aboard the aircraft, aeromedical evacuation teams work with aircrews to configure the plane for patient movement and in-flight care. If there is a critically injured patient, critical care air transport teams join the mix.

"These [teams] are dedicated to care for the most critical patients," Soto said. "The patient, equipment and [critical care air transport team] are moved directly to the aircraft from the intensive care unit at the Air Force theater hospital. Each team has three members — a doctor, an intensive care nurse and an enlisted respiratory technician."

Sometimes, other critical care providers join the team.

While the process for evacuating patients has progressed over the ages, "never has military medicine been able to save so many as they can now," Ball said.

Soldier fights to return to combat zone



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jason Garcia

Spc. Casey Carroll returned to Baghdad to complete his mission with his unit one month after he was wounded in action by a VBIED.

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs

CAMP TIGERLAND, BAGHDAD, Iraq — “Being out here is like living through the Soldiers who came before me—our lives are not free, freedom is not free.”

This is the mentality of Spc. Casey Carroll.

Doctors sent the 22-year-old father of two home in March, after he lost a finger from a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. However, his intentions were not to stay there.

“They sent me home for good, but I went home to build myself back up so I could get back to my unit,” he said.

The Raceland, La., native with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, attached to 1st Bn., 69th Inf. Regt., 256th Brigade Combat Team, said his patrol investigated suspicious activity at a gas station along Route Irish, where they routinely conducted route clearance missions. They had problems with people selling gas

on the side of the road, so their commander wanted to check vehicles to make sure no one had containers that could potentially be used for black market fuel.

A few hours later, the Soldiers went back to the station and noticed some strange activity, and a few people also waved them down. The patrol members exited their vehicle and began investigating the scene. A black BMW sat off to the left, so they cordoned off the area to keep the civilians out of possible harm’s way. The commander saw a man walking down the road, and before the Soldiers could close in on him, a vehicle drove into the intersection behind the BMW and exploded.

One Soldier was killed and four were wounded, including Carroll, who lost his right pinky finger and took shrapnel in his hip and foot. Within 30 days, he returned home to recuperate, and after only one month, was on his way back to Baghdad.

“I always planned on coming back, but I didn’t tell anyone my intentions at first,” said Carroll.

He said coming back to Iraq and fighting this war with his unit was not optional. He said he had a duty to do for his country and he had a responsibility to this unit. He also owed it to his children. He came back to Iraq so they would never have to.

“If we don’t fix these problems now, my kids, and your kids, will have to come back here and do it for us. I don’t want to have to worry about that or people coming into their world and messing it up,” he said.

Carroll has a 3-year-old daughter and a son who was born in November 2004 while he was fighting in Iraq.

After returning to Iraq, his first trip back outside the wire was an eventful one.

“One of our patrols was hit with a [vehicle-borne improvised explosive device], and we responded,” he said. “Everyone came out OK, but we took small-arms fire and I felt like [the terrorists] were saying, ‘Welcome back.’”

Carroll said if given the choice, and knowing what he knows now, he would not change a thing.

Staging

from Page 10

aeromedical staff do not go unnoticed.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Raul Betancourt is all smiles even though an improvised explosive device left him with a broken leg and foot, shattered elbow, and multiple burns and shrapnel wounds.

“The people here are awesome,” said Betancourt, who is deployed from Fort Benning, Ga. “I’ve been in 17 years, and I have never seen people take care of Soldiers like this before. They really go above and beyond to make you comfortable and get you what you need.”

The 65 doctors, nurses, technicians and support staff are not alone in their endeavor to provide a level of care beyond ordinary.

Cards, letters and homemade projects from patriots worldwide line the hallways, and a storage closet is filled with care package items like toiletries, clothes and phone cards sent to “an injured Soldier.”

“Most of the stuff that they send is really useful to patients, and some of it’s unique,” Vance said. “I remember one person sent a bunch of laundry bags, and my first thought was, ‘What are we going to use these for?’ But then I realized, the patients usually have their clothes and other personal items, and all we have are these plastic bags that aren’t very sturdy or big, so I give

them the laundry bags to put their stuff in.”

Aside from helping the staging facility team foster a relaxed, caring atmosphere, more than 300 military volunteers also do their part to alleviate some of the physical strains like lifting and moving ambulatory patients who are primarily carried in and out by stretcher.

“They help out tremendously,” said Rennahan, who is deployed from the 81st Medical Operations Squadron at Keesler AFB, Miss. “If it were not for the volunteers, I believe our staff would have had some injured backs by now. We have been here 90 days and have not had one injury [from lifting patients].”

Having the extra muscle on hand proves to be even more essential once the notification rings down that the planes are ready to be boarded.

There is no time to waste, and the volunteers do not hesitate to spring into action. Within a matter of 30 minutes, all the patients are loaded and the buses are headed to the flightline.

The staff and volunteers each have just enough time to catch their breath before they start boarding patients. Averaging about a minute per patient, the last patient is strapped in, and the aircraft is ready for take off almost 45 minutes later.

As the aircraft door closes, the faint sound of clapping and cheering can be heard.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Chawntain Sloan

2nd Lt. Shandry Goshert briefs Capt. Darrell Saylor on the patients who will be medevaced to Germany. She relays all pertinent medical information regarding the patients’ conditions including treatment received, medication administered and special needs.

“Thanks for being my hero,” the volunteers and medics shout to the patients.

Their mission is complete until tomorrow — a different set of patients, but to them, another group of heroes.

Worship and Prayer Schedule for Camp Liberty

Division Chapel

Monday - Friday
12 p.m. Catholic Mass

Saturday
10 a.m. Seventh Day Adventist

Sunday
9 a.m. Contemporary Protestant
10:30 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
1 p.m. Lutheran
3 p.m. Gospel Protestant
5 p.m. Church of Christ (non-instrumental)
8 p.m. Collective Protestant

Engineer Chapel

Wednesday
7 p.m. Bible Study

Friday
9 p.m. Prayer & Praise

Saturday
10 a.m. Reunion & Suicide Brief

Sunday
8:45 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
10 a.m. Traditional Protestant
12:30 p.m. Latter Day Saints
7 p.m. Traditional Protestant

Tiger Chapel

Wednesday
7:30 p.m. Wicca Circle (briefing tent)

Wed. and Sat.
10:30 a.m. Reunion & Suicide Brief

Saturday
7 p.m. Catholic Mass

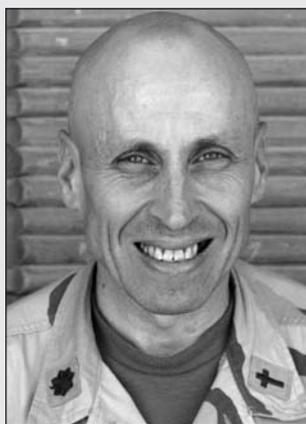
Sunday
9 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
10:30 a.m. Contemporary Mass
1 p.m. Gospel Protestant
3 p.m. Traditional Protestant
7 p.m. Non-Denominational Christian
9:30 p.m. Evening Christian Service

CHAPLAIN'S TALK

Rules of Engagement!

Dealing with Conflict (part two)

Chaplain (Maj.) Doug Peterson
525th Military Intelligence Brigade



Chaplain Peterson

Marriage: the most difficult job in the world. How does one make it work?

This is the fourth of our discussions on why relatively few of us fully and deeply enjoy the marriage relationship and what we can do about it. My encouragement has been to use this deployment as an optimum time for introspection and personal growth toward making what we have back home even better.

Last time, I suggested three critical concepts to govern our handling of conflict:

- Your spouse is not your enemy;
- You can break the cycle of destructive patterns of conflict; and
- Look at conflict as an opportunity for personal growth.

With that context laid, the one practical Rule of Engagement that I would emphasize in managing conflict is this: *Attack the problem, not the person.*

Is it easy and natural to attack the person? You bet it is!

On one occasion while I was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, my wife called and asked me to stop for some bread at the commissary on my way home.

I was tired. It had been a long day, and I didn't feel like messing with anything that I really didn't have to mess with. But I stopped at the commissary just before closing and bought eight loaves for our family of six-and-a-half. After arriving home, I carried the bread through the house to our freezer. I opened its top and impatiently and carelessly dumped the bread in.

My wife happened to be watching and said, "Doug, how come you just dumped the bread into the freezer like that? Normally, you are neat and orderly. Why did you do it like that?"

My reply went something like this: "Hey, I just walked by the kitchen on my way to the freezer, and I saw dirty dishes stacked to the ceiling. What in the world have you been doing for the past week?"

Needless to say, things degenerated from there, and it was a long night for me in the doghouse.

Now, what did I do? What should I have done? The mature thing would be for me to have said, "I'm sorry. Let me straighten out the bread." And that would have been the end of the story.

But instead, reacting to criticism, I verbally attacked my wife. You see, there is something about human nature that doesn't like to be challenged, threatened or attacked. Think again! And too often we are very good at either defending ourselves or attacking the other person in return.

What we need to do is to stop and ask ourselves: "What really is the issue at hand?" And then deal with that rather than attack the other person. Handling conflict should always be a positive, constructive process, not negative and destructive.

And watch out for other forms of personal attack:

- Name calling (labeling detracts from the issue);
- Being historical (bringing up all past crimes avoids the focus on the current issue);
- Mind-reading (pretending to know the person's motives is presumptuous; deal with the issue); or
- Using the words "always" and "never" (blanket condemnatory statements again avoid the current single issue).

Attack the problem rather than the person. Intellectually, it's an easy concept. But putting it into practice may require consistent effort and self-discipline. The results, however, will well be worth it.

Next time: What will hold your marriage together, even in the most difficult of circumstances? We'll look at the Big "C" word.



Cpl. Ahmad M. Ibrahim, a linguist for RCT-2 jump team, conducts a radio check.

Multi-lingual Marine helps unit cross cultural barriers

Story and photo by Cpl. Ken Melton
2nd Marine Division

AL ASAD, Iraq — The language barrier is often the hardest part of any mission in any foreign country. A simple misunderstanding can often make potential friends become enemies and break down the line of communication for peaceful solutions to problems.

Fortunately for the Regimental Combat Team-2 Command Security Team, it has Cpl. Ahmad M. Ibrahim, an infantryman and linguist who uses his knowledge of languages to help deal with the local populace.

"I wanted to make a difference, and I needed a harder challenge," the 27-year-old said. "Being a Marine and doing a job like this, I get the maximum benefit of all my skills."

Ibrahim, who joined the Marine Corps after a short stint in the Army, speaks five languages — Arabic, Farsi, Spanish, Portuguese and German — in addition to English, which is his second language.

He spent his childhood in Syria and Kuwait, where he learned Arabic and Farsi, before moving to America when he was 12.

His first three years in the U.S. were spent learning the English language and adjusting to a vastly different culture and society.

"I was shocked because there were girls in my school," he said with a smile. "Besides that, I was worried about asking questions due to religious concerns. Growing up here definitely opened my eyes to different views of the world, which I hadn't been exposed to previously."

Although Ibrahim was a resident of three countries, he was never an official citizen of any until two years ago. It was then he decided to defend his country, the United States of

America, by joining the Marine Corps.

"It feels right to be here because this is the only place that truly accepted me," the 2003 Temple University graduate said. "I have never been anywhere after the September 11 tragedy where I didn't feel discriminated against except with the Marines."

Ibrahim's job in the security team, which is the colonel's personal security detail, is to assist the interpreters in understanding the intents and actions of the Marines when translating, in addition to providing security for the colonel.

He also translates information for the intelligence Marines and translates for other RCT-2 elements during missions that involve hurt citizens and Iraqi soldiers.

Ibrahim's job is crucial, as he helps bridge communication between local residents and Marines, and he knows that through his actions he is helping win the war in Iraq.

"We're not only fighting a war against insurgency, we are also trying to win the Iraqi people's favor and build up their country," said Ibrahim, whose family background is Sunni Muslim. "We are destroying the image that we Americans are evil and that people view the Muslim people as evil."

"Neither of these could be further from the truth, as most people of the Muslim faith are disgusted, and most Americans see this as an opportunity to extend an olive branch and help a nation and her people," he said.

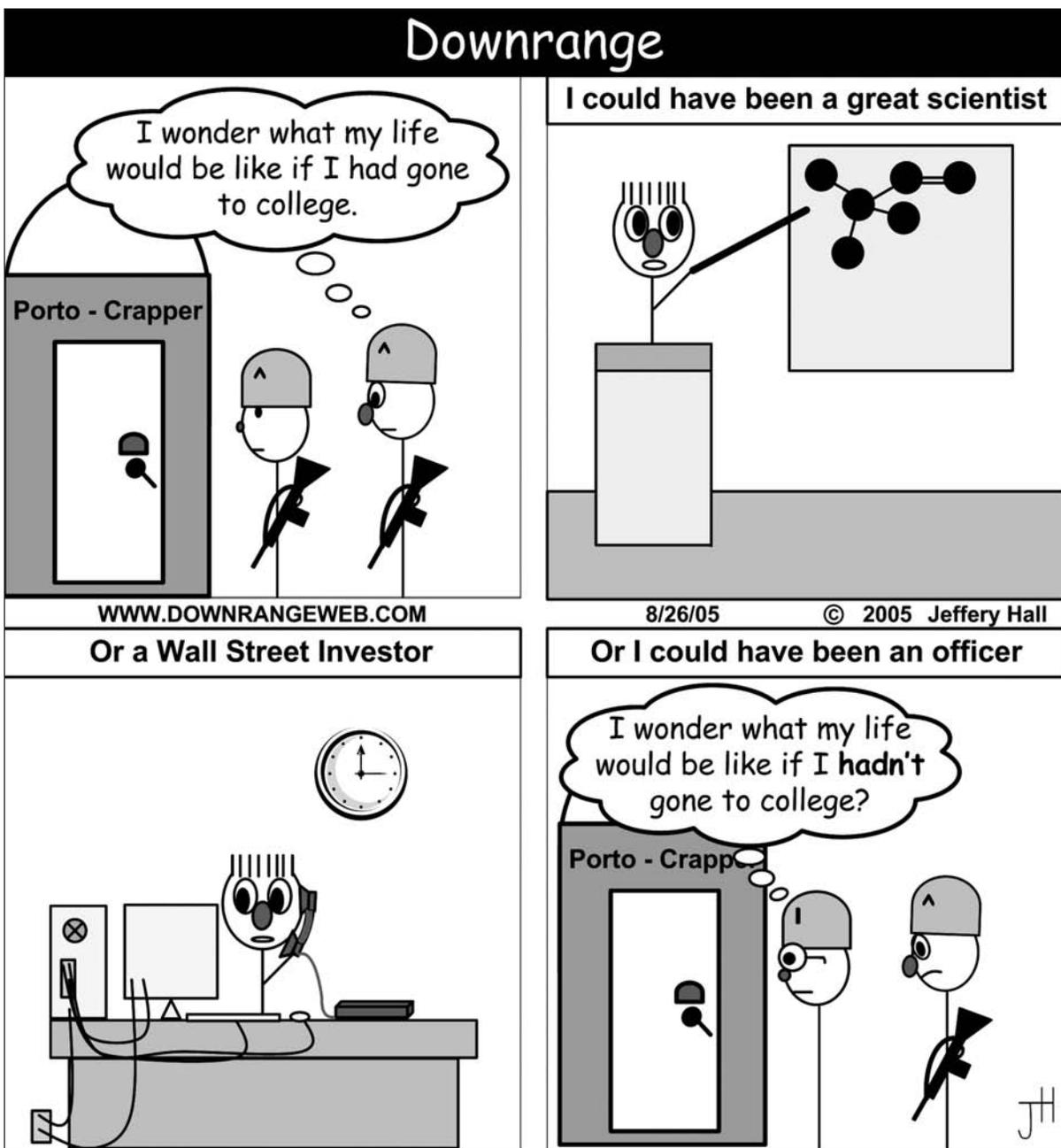
Though the mission can be tough at times, Ibrahim knows his actions and those of his brothers-in-arms are correct, and the result will prove positive.

"Even though I have learned many languages, traveled extensively, and earned two bachelor degrees, this is one of the best accomplishments in my life," Ibrahim said.

Scimitar Slapstick



Art by Staff Sgt. Timothy Lawn



Art by Jeffery Hall



Art by Maj. James D. Crabtree

Story, photo, art and comic submissions are welcome! Please send to the *Scimitar* for consideration at: scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil

WATCH OUT JESSE JAMES:

Colorado Marine builds choppers in Al Asad

Story and photos by Sgt. Juan Vara
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing

ALASAD, Iraq — The high operational tempo of the second largest air base in Iraq requires many of the service members here to find ways to get from place to place faster than by just walking. Bicycles, a cheap and effective mode of transportation, have become the most popular way to overcome this challenge.



Sgts. Samuel W. Dial and Dustin W. Lambert, airframes mechanics with MALS-26, ride around in their choppers.

Sgt. Dustin W. Lambert, an airframes mechanic with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 26, didn't want to be like everyone else riding a stock bike. Inspired by Jesse James, famous builder of motorcycles and host of the Discovery Channel's *Monster Garage*, Lambert built his own bike.

For months before building his chopper, Lambert worked on bikes that service members would bring to the welding and metal shops in MALS-26. "We

would chop the original forks and put extensions there," said Lambert, a native of Alamosa, Colo. Lambert and other MALS-26 Marines worked on about 25 of these bikes when he decided he wanted a bike that was more than just a stock bike with extended forks. "I wanted to build my own because I didn't like the way the rest of the bikes were made," said

Lambert. "They don't look like choppers. I wanted mine to look like a chopper."

The project kicked off in June. In his scarce downtime he read magazines and watched DVDs loaded with tips, tricks and ideas on building choppers. After he found a style he liked, Lambert figured out what size wheels and tires he wanted on it.

Assisted by some

of his buddies in the unit, he searched the Internet for parts he could use and ordered the wheels and tires along with pedals, a seat, the sprocket, the crank and pegs.

Taking time during lunchtime and staying late after work, Lambert began looking around the air base for aluminum he could use to make his project a reality. A spare bike was used as a donor of some hardware, nuts, bolts and bearing braces.

"We drew a life-size diagram on a piece of metal and started piecing the bike together," he said.

Lambert, who had never built a chopper before, said his technique came from watching Jesse James build motorcycles on TV. "He's been my idol for a long time," he said.

The chopper rolls on 26-inch, 144-spoke wheels and has a 110-inch long chain made up by linking two mountain bike chains. "I love it," he said. "I'm not going to build any more bikes here, but I may try to start something up when I get back."

Scheduled to leave the Corps later this year after five years of service,

Lambert will return to the states soon. He plans to open a shop and build custom handmade bicycles on a beach.

Sgt. Samuel W. Dial sits on the chopper he built to move around the air base in a timely and unique fashion.

Marine adds artistic touch to essential mission in Iraq

Story and photo by Cpl. C. Alex Herron
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing

ALASAD, Iraq — As a 15-year-old, Douglas Brown got a summer job at an Atlanta area theme park as a cashier at an airbrush booth. Watching the artist create colorful designs sparked his own artistic talent. Little did he know that eight years later he would be using the skills he learned to show his appreciation to fellow Marines serving in Iraq.

Corporal Douglas Brown, an F/A-18 Hornet engine mechanic with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 26 and Mableton, Ga., native, has spent a bulk of his free time turning unusable aircraft parts into works of art for Marines around Al Asad.

"At first it was just a summer job," Brown said. "Working there piqued my interest, and I began trying it myself. In a few years I had worked my way up to lead artist."

Before his airbrush painting career had a chance to really take off, Brown enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve and left for basic training a week after graduating high school in 1999.

"I always had a general interest in the military," Brown said. "I decided I would join the reserves so I could go to college and still serve my country."

After Marine Corps training and a semester in school, Brown returned to his airbrush stand and retained his position as the lead artist in 2000. After a while though, designing T-shirts got old and started to bore him.

In 2002, Brown traveled to Las Vegas to attend an airbrush convention. While sitting through an automotive airbrush class, he developed a renewed interest in the art.

"The convention just got my juices flowing again," Brown said. "Seeing how to paint objects other than a T-shirt or canvas was a real eye-opener."

Armed with the knowledge and drive to continue painting along with his skills as a jet aircraft mechanic, his two occupations came together for the first time in 2003. When a fellow

Marine was transferred from MALS-42 to another unit aboard Naval Air Station, Atlanta, Brown painted his first aircraft part, a worn blade from the tail-rotor of an AH-1W Super Cobra as a parting gift.

"After that, word got around that I had a little bit of talent, and I was being asked to paint on a more regular basis," Brown said. "I like being able to do something that is unique and different. I can make objects seem to jump off whatever the surface is. I can do things you could never do with a pencil or paintbrush."

Late last year, Brown, along with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 142 and a handful of MALS-42 Marines, received word of this deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I wanted to be here," Brown said. "I wanted to see a different culture. When I was stateside I felt like I was sitting on the sidelines. In the U.S. you don't really know how you contribute to the war. Here I can see how my work has a direct affect on the operations."

Brown's job is to perform intermediate maintenance to jet engines. He mostly repairs small malfunctions that could ground an aircraft.

"We play an important role in keeping the F/A-18s from two squadrons fully operational and mission ready," Brown said.

Brown's work hasn't gone unnoticed with his superiors. Doing whatever he can to accomplish the mission is a big part of his work ethic.

"Brown comes in early and stays late," said Sgt. Jerrami Jones, assistant noncommissioned officer in charge of the power plants division. "He does whatever needs to be done to help the entire shop accomplish its mission. He is one of my most experienced mechanics and is always willing to share his knowledge with the younger Marines."



Cpl. Douglas Brown poses in front of some of his most recent work.

Between repairing engines, Brown has found time to show off his talent to his fellow Leathernecks.

"I told everyone in my shop what I could do. After I did a couple murals and other projects, people just started asking to have different pieces done," Brown said.

Now Brown creates artwork for his squadron, fellow Marines and recently an outgoing commanding officer as a farewell gift. He is glad to be getting all the work. Being able to keep his skills sharp while deployed to Iraq isn't something he thought he would have the opportunity to do here.

"I'm grateful for any work I get," Brown said. "I feel confident when I return home I will be able to step right back into my old job as an art director for a graphics company."

Although known for his artistic flair, Brown's first priority remains the maintenance of the engines used in the F/A-18 Hornets that are used to support the Marines on the ground and aid in making a brighter Iraq for all of its citizens. Without mechanics like Brown, the mission of the forward deployed 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing could never be accomplished. Keeping aircraft operational and ready for another mission is what drives Brown to excel and strive to make a difference.



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Brian Davidson

Country music group Rascal Flatts performs for Airmen and Soldiers at Baghdad International Airport on Aug. 5 during their United Services Organization tour to pay tribute to the people supporting OIF.

USO brings Rascal Flatts to Baghdad

By Tech. Sgt. Brian Davidson
447th Air Expeditionary Group Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq — As the morning temperature passed 100 degrees Aug. 5 and even the shade under camouflage netting brought no relief from the heat, country music group Rascal Flatts offered Airmen and Soldiers at Baghdad International Airport a respite of music and calm.

Traveling throughout the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility on a United Services Organization tour, the group brought a message of thanks to the people fighting the war on terrorism.

“We’re here because we want our service members to know we’re proud of what they are doing, and that we’re deeply grateful for their dedication and sacrifice,” said lead singer Gary LeVox. “We are offering our music as a way to show our gratitude for what they do.”

The mood for many of the Airmen and Soldiers was somber as they gathered for the concert near the flightline where only hours before they had come together to honor four fallen comrades who died in the defense of freedom.

When the concert began and the simple acoustic melody of the trio’s hit song “Mayberry” drifted through the crowd, faces that were drawn and tight soon began to relax.

When LeVox began to sing, some people leaned back and closed their eyes while others leaned forward, quietly singing along.

The group performed from a makeshift stage behind a building that was once Saddam Hussein’s military base operations facility.

With an American flag as their backdrop, the musicians joked with the audience and even sang “Happy Birthday” to one Airman.

Joe Don Rooney, guitarist and mandolin player, talked with Airmen before the show about how sur-

prised he was with the pace of operations.

“You’re here at ground zero, working unbelievably long hours, to offer the Iraqi people peace and a chance to control their own future,” he said. “It reminds us how much we take for granted at home.”

During the show, bass guitarist Jay DeMarcus motioned some Airmen to move closer to the “stage” where he laughed and talked with them between songs.

“I am in awe at how young some of the people serving here are and the incredible responsibility they carry on their shoulders,” he said. “They do what they need to do, and their attitudes are always positive.”

As songwriters, the group agrees that their experiences with America’s service members will serve as an inspiration.

“Our music is based on real life experiences, and being here stimulates the emotions and heightens the senses,” LeVox said. “When we head home, we are going to spread the gospel of what you are accomplishing here.”

“We’ll bring home a positive message and remind people that what you’re doing here is more than what they learn in 15 minutes of daily news,” he added.

Standing close to where DeMarcus was playing, Airman 1st Class Autumn Grasty, deployed to the 447th Expeditionary Communications Squadron from McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., seemed to tune out the busy flightline operations going on only 100 meters behind her to listen to what she calls her favorite musicians.

“I’ve been listening to their music a lot since I deployed,” she said.

“And their live performance was exactly what I hoped it would be.”

After the show, although the group was on a tight schedule, they took time for photographs and to talk with the troops. The group also assured the troops that this would not be their last USO tour.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Thomas Benoit

Gary LeVox, lead vocalist for the country music sensation Rascal Flatts sings a crowd favorite at the top of his lungs Aug. 5.

Coalition Corner

... highlighting countries serving with MNF-Iraq



El Salvador

local name: *El Salvador*

The Republic of El Salvador is located in Central America, bordering the North Pacific Ocean, Guatemala and Honduras. Slightly smaller than Massachusetts, this smallest Central American country is the only one without a coastline on the Caribbean Sea. Spanish is the official language for the 6.6 million Salvadorans who live here, but some indigenous Amerindians still speak Nahuatl. The currency system used in El Salvador is the U.S. Dollar.

Although relatively small in size, El Salvador is bountiful in historic and natural attractions. San Salvador, the country’s capital, lies at the foot of the San Salvador volcano, one of more than 20 volcanoes in El Salvador. La Libertad is one of many surfer destinations along the 307 kilometers, or 191 miles, of beautiful coastline. Just northwest of the capital, in a town called Chalchuapa, lie the ancient Mayan ruins of Tazumal. Situated in an area believed to have been first settled around 5000 B.C., these ruins are considered the most important and best-preserved in El Salvador.

One cannot say he or she has experienced this country until he or she has tried pupusas, a Salvadoran national food. Pupusa is a plump corn tortilla, stuffed with ingredients such as cheese, pork, beans, and loroco, a Salvadoran edible flower. It is then cooked on a griddle until lightly browned and devoured while still warm. A true Salvadoran way to enjoy Pupusa is topped with Curtido, another national food that is the Salvadoran version of sauerkraut.

El Salvador has also made its mark in the world of celebrities. Famous supermodel Christy Turlington, who has been the face of Maybelline Cosmetics and Calvin Klein, was born to a Salvadoran mother. Jaime Rodriguez, a soccer legend who played for El Salvador, Mexico, Germany, Japan and Finland during his career, proudly claims El Salvador his home.

When asked what he misses most about his country, Lt. Col. Nelson E. Hernandez of the Salvadoran Air Force said, “I miss the food, but what I really miss is the volcanoes. There is no place in the country where you can stand and not see at least one volcano!”

El Salvador — yet another piece of the Multi-National Force - Iraq puzzle, dedicated to rebuilding Iraq.



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Coalition Corner is compiled by Sgt. Misha King, assistant editor, scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil.

Soccer goals translate into any language

Story and photos by Pfc. Dan Balda
4th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Similarities were easy to find.

It could have been a soccer game (or football match, as the rest of the world calls it) anywhere. Players fought for an opening in the defense, cheered on their teammates, cajoled for calls, flopped when they thought the referee needed a little help in making (in their eyes) the correct call.

Some aspects of the playing area during the June 17 match, however, were out of place.

To one side of the field, there was a pile of rifles, body armor and Kevlar helmets keeping the requisite water jug company. Later on in the match, play had to be temporarily halted when a dust storm created by a UH-60 Black Hawk made it too difficult to play through. A large swamp took up a quarter of the field where a pipe had burst, causing laughter when players, focused on the game, would become entrenched in the muck.

Then there were the language and cultural barriers, which players said they had no trouble hurdling because soccer speaks the same dialect on any continent.

A team of Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, and Marines assigned to protect the American Embassy was created for two reasons: recreational purposes and a way to interact with the people the Soldiers come into contact with on a daily basis.

The U.S. Soldiers said the June 17 game was one of their most difficult matches—they went head-to-head with the Baghdad University team, which included some members of the Iraqi Olympic team — the same



Pfc. Alejandro Torres, 4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., shakes off a Baghdad Univ. defender during a close game.

team that captivated the world during the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Some of the teams they regularly play are made up of players drawn from Coalition Forces such as British, Danish and Italian forces. They also play Iraqi teams, including one made up of employees from a local radio station.

According to the Federation Internationale de Football Association, the soccer world governing body, 240 million people play soccer in 200 countries all over the world. These are just a few of the reasons why soccer spans the chasm of language, ethnicity and religion.

“Initially we started the team as a way to build relations with people in the International Zone and the Iraqis,” said Staff Sgt. John Travis, the information operations noncommissioned officer in charge for 4th Battalion, 64th Armored Regiment, 4th BCT. “It’s a lot of fun. I

enjoy talking with the other guys, such as the Brits and the Danes, to see how things are going.”

Travis, a native of Paden City, W.Va., also sees the games as a healthy diversion from work. “For the guys who are manning the checkpoints and going out on patrols, it’s a good way to wind down and relax, run around and burn off whatever frustration they might have.”



Right, 1st Lt. Marietta Squires, 4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., attempts to steal the ball from a Baghdad University player.

Travis said the games can get a little heated with each team battling for the win.

“It can get a little rough, but part of the game is trying to get the ball and win,” he said. “Yeah, we take the games seriously, but as soon as that last whistle blows, everybody is shaking hands and taking pictures together.”

Many of the Iraqi players bring their families and friends to cheer them on while they play. Some of the spectators also include local high-ranking politicians.

“We’ve had a district chairman come out and root on some of the teams,” said Capt. John Agnello, the officer in charge of the 4/64th IO section. “The games are a great way for the Iraqi people to see the Soldiers without all their battle rattle, without their weapons, playing a game that they can compete in. It shows that we are just like them; we like to compete in sporting events and we like to win.”

Chef, boxer, Soldier: DSB specialist does it all

3rd Infantry Division
Division Support Brigade
Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — Fresh out of high school, Anthony Zavala had his pick of careers: a boxer, a chef or a Soldier. Eventually he chose the Army and now serves in Iraq as a specialist with Division Support Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division. But he hasn’t left the kitchen or the boxing ring far behind.

The stock control specialist with the Division Ammunition Office, Support Operations, DSB, didn’t even consider the Army as an option until someone he respected brought it to his attention.

“I was 16 when ‘Chef’ told me to join,” Zavala said.

Chef Brian Ferland, Zavala’s instructor at Johnson and Wales Culinary College in Worcester, Mass., was fresh out of basic training for the Army National Guard.

Ferland was highly motivated about the Army and was able to encourage Zavala. Zavala said he listened to the chef because he was one of the very few people in his life who he felt cared about his future. It was caring people who were able to guide me, said Zavala.

Like Ferland, “Big Duke” also cared. Duke ran a boxing club at Boston’s Southeast Community Center. He literally pulled Zavala out of a street fight and taught him discipline in the ring, said Zavala, who is

still passionate about boxing.

He has a passion for cooking, too. Ferland felt the Army was a good way for Zavala to practice his passion for the culinary craft.

“On my 17th birthday, I went to the [Military Entrance Processing Station],” said Zavala, a Boston native. “I tried to be a cook.”

Zavala said he was disappointed to find out he needed a driver’s license to get that specific military occupational specialty. He didn’t have his license yet and left MEPS without joining. It was cooking or nothing, said Zavala.

When Zavala told Ferland what had happened, the chef redirected him back to MEPS by telling him to join the Army for the college benefit and then pursue culinary education after his first tour, said Zavala.

Determined, Zavala said he was back at the MEPS a few days later and chose ammunition specialist as his MOS. However, his determination started to fade at Basic Combat Training at Fort Jackson, S.C.

Zavala, a self-described hard-case, said he loved the physical training, but didn’t care for the Army’s discipline. It was difficult adjusting to his drill sergeants, particularly, Drill Sergeant Phillips. Ironically, it was Phillips who brought Zavala around. Zavala said Phillips sat the platoon down for a “heart-to-heart.” Phillips spoke to the trainees about why they should be Soldiers and showed a caring side.

It seemed so out of character for Phillips, but it worked. Consequently, Zavala “turned a cor-

ner” and became dedicated to being the best Soldier he could be.

Interestingly, the MOS he had settled for became a real joy to him, said Zavala, who was advanced to specialist in March.

“He is a highly motivated Soldier who sets and achieves goals,” said Master Sgt. Thomas J. Rooyackers, the DAO noncommissioned officer in charge.

“He’s been aggressive,” said Sgt. Richard E. Mantooth, an ammunition manager with DAO and Zavala’s first line supervisor.

Zavala’s aggression shows in many ways. He volunteered to be a squad automatic weapon gunner during convoy assault operations from Kuwait to the unit’s area in Iraq, said Rooyackers, who hails from Appleton, Wis.

“He performed outstandingly – never wavering during the intense 72-hour convoy through hostile enemy territory.”

He loves boxing, but has put his eagerness to get back into the ring aside to pursue his military goals, said Rooyackers. His immediate goal is Soldier of the Quarter. His mid-term goal is to be like the NCO who turned him around in basic training.

Zavala wants to become a drill sergeant where he can mold civilians into Soldiers, said Rooyackers. His mark of success is having a Soldier down the line say, “That sergeant helped me get where I am today,” said Zavala, who reenlisted for six years in March.

Zavala’s ultimate goal is to make sergeant



Photo by Spc. Derek Del Rosario
Spc. Anthony J. Zavala, right, won his first fight at Camp Taji, Iraq, recently.

major. He hopes to be able to improve the Army he has come to appreciate.

“I like what I’m doing,” said Zavala. “I like the Army.”

Mostly, Zavala said he likes what the Army has done for him — it gave him the opportunity to escape his former life.

Zavala said he’s glad he’s not dealing with the negative influences or getting into trouble.

“I don’t know what I’d be doing if I was back there,” said Zavala. “I’m just glad I can be proud of what I accomplish here.”