

Photo by Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp

Kentucky Army National Guardsman Sgt. Dustin T. Morris, team leader, 617th Military Police Company, 503rd MP Battalion from Fort Bragg, N.C., stands behind the windshield of the vehicle he was driving when his unit responded to an ambush conducted by terrorists on a route southeast of Baghdad, March 20. The reinforced windshield deflected the small arms rounds, allowing him to escape the battle uninjured.

## MPs thwart ambush, kill 27 terrorists

By Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp  
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — It was supposed to be just another day — another routine mission outside Baghdad for Soldiers from the Kentucky Army National Guard's 617th Military Police Company. What happened in the early morning of March 20 turned a typical patrol into anything but routine.

The Richmond, Ky., based 617th sent out its fourth platoon's second squad to shadow a convoy of transportation vehicles along a supply route southeast of Baghdad. Their mission: provide support for the vehicles in the event of an attack and, if the need came, engage and destroy the enemy.

Twenty-six supply vehicles, many of which were 18-wheel-

ers, were heading south on the heavily-traveled route. They were driving one behind the other like ducks in a row, with a security convoy of three military police vehicles interlaced between — one up front, one in the middle, and one in the rear. Trailing the convoy and not far out of sight was second squad, in three additional heavily-armored Humvees.

Each Humvee contained a trio of Soldiers, each laden with weapons and gear, except for the trail vehicle, which also carried a medic. Gunners stood ready in the turrets with .50-caliber machine guns and Mark-19 grenade launchers. The vehicle commanders, drivers and medic kept their eyes peeled and weapons at the ready just in case something out of the ordinary happened. That morning, something did.

"We observed the convoy we were trailing starting to make erratic movements," said Staff Sgt. Timothy F. Nein, leader, second squad. "We saw a lot of dust being kicked up by the

convoy vehicles, as if they were being engaged by an [improvised explosive device] or an ambush, so we knew something was wrong. My gunner said he could hear shots being fired, so we picked up the pace." The squad proceeded directly into an ambush site.

"We moved to contact," Nein said. "We got the vehicles on the contact side, in between the convoy and the insurgents. As we got up on that side of the road, we realized through previous reconnaissance of the area that there was a road that paralleled the field going south."

The squad then proceeded down the main road and took a right onto the side road to flank the insurgents. "At that time," Nein said, "We noticed seven vehicles the insurgents had staged and ready. Doors open, trunks open; ready for a quick

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### Inside

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**Highest ranking Iraqi-American U.S. Army officer promoted** Page 14

# PCO director relinquishes position to deputy

By George D. Mathews  
PCO Public Affairs

**INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — He took charge of the organization on a broiling day in August and relinquished authority on a chilly, windy night in March. In the interim, he played an instrumental role in leading Iraq towards a stable, democratic, economically prosperous future.

On March 24, Charles Hess, outgoing Director of the Project and Contracting Office, passed the organization's charter to Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr. The Acting Chief of Mission U.S. Embassy Baghdad, Iraq, Ambassador James F. Jeffrey, assisted in the ceremony.

Jeffrey said that Hess accomplished an enormous amount during his time as Director of the PCO.

"Over 2,000 projects of the 2,900 planned are already under way," Jeffrey said. "That's a 600 percent increase since he took over."

However, Hess' role was not just limited to project management. "Charlie did more than just turn dirt and obligate funds," Jeffrey said. "He did the creative work to cut through the red tape and get money to Iraqi contractors."

Jeffrey added, "He re-wrote the book on how to do reconstruction in a wartime environment."

Jeffrey said, initially, there was some

uncertainty as to who would be the first Director of the PCO.

"Who would run this program? Who would be so foolish as to do it?" Jeffrey said. "They got the best in the business. They got Charlie Hess."

Jeffrey said Hess' role in helping re-build Iraq would be his legacy.

"President Reagan will go down in history for saying, 'Tear down that wall.' You will go down in history for building walls."

When it was Hess' turn to take to the podium, he thanked the 135 employees of the PCO and the contractors they manage for all their hard work.

"Your enthusiasm and professionalism will be a source of immense pride until my final days," Hess said. "Tonight I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the support you've given me."

Hess said he was feeling mixed emotions on leaving the directorship. He acknowledged the hardship, danger, and even loss of life PCO employees and contractors have endured. But he said the sacrifices have been worth it.

"As I leave here tonight I can't help but think of the tragic losses," he said, "but also of the achievements made in Iraq."

Hess also advised the members of the PCO to take the long view when they consider their work in Iraq.

"As the sands of time cover what we've built here, the true legacy [of the PCO] will



Photo by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas

**Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr. shares his thoughts after becoming Director of the Project and Contracting Office.**

be the freedom we've created in Iraq."

He then had a final message for his troops. "God bless and stay safe."

Hess' replacement as director, Long, previously served as the organization's deputy director.

Long promised to maintain the high standards set by Hess.

"His fingerprints are all over this organization and I promise to do my best not to mess it up," Long said.

The directors of the various sectors within the PCO also paid tribute to Hess.

Referring to Hess' work at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and at the Federal Emergency Management Agency before taking over the PCO, Tom Waters, the PCO's Director of Programs, said Hess had always been a leader who inspired subordinates.

"He was a hero to the Corps as an [Senior Executive Service], he was a hero at FEMA, and he's a hero here," said Waters.

Lt. Col. Michael Tucker, the PCO's Director of Human Resources, described Hess in more personal terms.

"You're a leader, a statesman, a mentor and friend to everyone in the PCO," Tucker said.

Long summed up the directors' tribute to their former boss.

"I think what they've said is they love you and respect you."

The PCO manages the \$18.4 billion appropriated by the U.S. Congress to support the reconstruction of the Iraqi infrastructure.

To date, the organization has started more than 2,050 projects, including the rehabilitation of 455 schools, 118 medical clinics, and 26 hospitals throughout the country.

The PCO is also helping renovate 242 police facilities and construct 86 fire stations and 148 border forts.

One-hundred thirty-five people work for the PCO — 84 military and 51 civilian.

The organization, and its contractors and sub-contractors, provides employment to over 41,000 Iraqis.

# Service members, civilians celebrate Easter in Iraq

By Sgt. W. Watson Martin  
214th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Service members and civilians flocked to the Joint Area Support Group Community Chapel in the U.S. Embassy Baghdad compound for a 6 a.m. Easter sunrise service Sunday for the second time in as many years.

People walking to the chapel noticed tables outside covered with goodies for after-church fellowship. As the sun rose above the horizon, the chapel filled with the spirit of Easter, one of the holiest days in Christianity.

Music from a band of diverse musicians — an electric keyboardist, a Soldier with his saxophone and flute, two acoustic guitarists and two percussionists — greeted the congregation. The chaplain assistant, Master Sgt. Mark Hanna, played a four-piece bongo set with a low pitch block attached, a pulse pro tambourine, a Latin percussion shaker and chimes. Another percussionist played an American drum set.

Between the music, song, dance and scriptures, two guest

speakers gave the welcome and the morning message.

Col. Neal Barlow, the commander of JASG, welcomed service members and civilians of all faiths. He then shared a personal story of a recent visit he had with one of the Iraqi vice presidents, Ibrahim al-Jafari of the Dawa Party, and likely successor of the Prime Minister position.

Barlow told how he spoke with al-Jafari about many subjects as he had studied in England for several years while in exile. Al-Jafari knows the history of the United States and how President John F. Kennedy tried to bring equal rights to minorities, said Barlow.

Al-Jafari expressed to Barlow that over the centuries nations have conquered lands out of greed and oppressed indigenous populations, but never had he known a nation to come and liberate a people such as the United States has Iraq. Our ability to think of others before ourselves he lends to our belief in the prophet Jesus Christ, our savior.

Shortly after the welcome, the congregation witnessed something many had never seen, a benefit of attending a multi-denominational service. A large wooden cross draped with a robe was placed in the center of the room, and four liturgical

dancers weaved in and fanned around the cross where they danced to recorded music with lyrics about God. During the dance symbolic gestures, such as the bowing of the head or raising one's arms, were made towards the cross.

Liturgical dance has two purposes: worshipping God and communicating to others the liturgy, the Word of God. In both instances the Creator, rather than the creation (the dancer), becomes the focus of and purpose for the dance.

So it was on this day four dancers attempted to draw attention to the resurrection of Jesus Christ by God.

Christ arose from the dead on the day Christians call Easter. "It is probably the most marvelous story known to man, along with the Immaculate Conception," said retired Marine Maj. Gen. Arnold Fields during his morning sermon.

Fields continued with his message, "After his crucifixion Christ appeared before his disciples who were in considerable disbelief. I have often wondered if this resurrection event were to take place today, just how it would be handled. How would any of us handle this extraordinary event? A person being

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**MNF-I PAO**  
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PERSPECTIVES

# Time for us to ignore the naysaying media

By Staff Sgt. David Green  
Combined Press Information Center

OK, it's time for a pop quiz. Following World War II, how many schools did the Allies open in Germany? How many hospitals did they open in Japan? What was the total dollar amount spent between 1945 and 1950 to rebuild former Axis nations? You probably don't know because you were never taught these things. I know I wasn't. That's because the measure of success wasn't in dollars or buildings or death tolls. The measure of success was in the end result.

At this point you're probably wondering why I'm even bringing this up. It seems lately that everywhere I turn, I am bombarded with complaints that the media isn't doing enough reporting of the "good things we're doing here." Open up the letters to the editor in Stars and Stripes letters — yep, at least one a week. In the chow hall — there, too. All these "Blogs" you're hearing so much about — you better believe it! My question is who cares? The number of hospitals built is no more the measure of success now than it was 60 years ago.

You could argue that the mainstream media is a bloodthirsty beast that only awakens when it smells death and destruction. I would argue that it is a business that understands its audience. What is more likely to keep a viewer glued to the tube: Soldiers with hammers pounding in the finishing nails for a

new police station or the smoke and carnage from a recently detonated improvised explosive device? If you answered nails, then you'd be about as in touch with the human psyche as my grandmother is with a VCR. But that is hardly the point.

Why are we so obsessed with what the media is saying? What effect has it really had on what we do? We don't drop what we're doing because it's being ignored. We do it because Iraqi children need schools, old people need flu shots and the Iraqi military needs to be trained, not because we expect a pat on the back, but because it needs to be done. Our president has proven time and again that he is more likely to do what he thinks is right as opposed to what he thinks is popular. No matter what the media says on a daily basis, it won't change his resolve, and it shouldn't change ours.

All people deserve recognition for the good things they do in life. In the military we award medals. Some companies name an employee of the month. But we shouldn't need the media to tell everyone what a good job we're doing. The Iraqi people are free, and it appears that the events of the last few years are causing a chain reaction throughout the greater Middle East. These are the monuments that will stand as a testament to all the good things we've done, not headlines or television specials.

Actions will always speak louder than words. The media will always be a business. Years from now, children aren't going to be taught the number of hospitals we built. However, some of them will be taught in classrooms built by the coalition. In the end, isn't that enough?

## Roadside checkup



Photo by Spc. Kelly Burkhart

A British Soldier of the 4th Brigade watches over Iraqi Police checking a vehicle for illegal weapons at an Iraqi Check Point in Basrah, Iraq March 11. The British Soldiers are training the Iraqi Police on searching procedures for the future security of Iraq.

## Scimitar Pulse

What is the best joke you have played on someone?

"I put hot sauce in someone's mouth while they were sleeping."

Antonio Bryant  
KBR



"I put hair removal cream on someone's eyebrows while they were sleeping."

British Army  
Staff Sgt. Jim Shea  
Personal Security Detail

"I used to tell my girlfriend I was cheating on her with her sister."

Marine Sgt. Gino Marin  
Multi-National Forces – Iraq



"I tricked my girlfriend into believing I had a child in another state for a whole week right before this Valentine's Day."

Matthew Heath  
Blackwater

"I put someone's hands in warm water while they were sleeping to make them urinate on themselves."

Eric Pruitt  
KBR



"We had a guy sleep on shift, so we blacked out his glasses and tied his shoelaces together. He woke up and couldn't see, so he jumped up and fell over."

Air Force Lt. Col. Scott Beidleman  
Multi-National Forces – Iraq

"When I was in college, I lay on the ground outside the dorms and we got my roommate to tell the resident assistant that I had jumped off the roof attempting suicide."

Army Lt. Col. Nathan Freier  
Multi-National Forces – Iraq



# Secretary of Army visits troops at Camp Liberty

Story and photo by Spc. Erin Robicheaux  
Task Force Baghdad

**CAMP LIBERTY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division welcomed a distinguished guest for breakfast March 18 at the Tiger Den dining facility.

Secretary of the Army, Francis Harvey, visited troops serving in Baghdad to find out from them what the experience has been like.

Spc. Jon Vandebogert from Milwaukee, Wis., Battery B, 126th Field Artillery, was one of four Soldiers chosen by his leadership and peers to represent them for the event. He said in a one-on-one conversation with Harvey, he was made to feel that he was an important part of the global war on terror.

"He was very interested in my civilian life and asked me a lot of questions. When he realized that I was a National Guard Soldier, he told me he's noticed that the Army is truly becoming an 'Army of one,' and that a lot of National Guard troops are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan," Vandebogert said.

Harvey later recalled a realization he recently had while attending a briefing in Afghanistan with the 76th Brigade, which is in charge of training the Afghan National Army.

"In the middle of the briefing, I suddenly realized that it was a National Guard unit and there was no difference in the organization, the dedication, or the commitment," he said.

Harvey complimented the contributions of the National Guard and Reserve units involved in the war on terror by saying that all Soldiers, active duty or otherwise, realize they are a part of something important and they are spreading



**Spc. Jon Vandebogert, from Milwaukee, Wis., is all smiles as the Secretary of the Army, Francis Harvey, inquires about his life over breakfast March 18.**

democracy and freedom. He mentioned that he has also heard talk from Guard and Reserve Soldiers of making a permanent transition to active duty.

Retention, then, is not a problem for any aspect of the Army. Harvey says where the challenge comes in is recruiting.

"We're cautiously optimistic. We're putting a lot more recruiters out there, and we're increasing incentives," he said.

He admits it is a challenge, but says the Department of the Army is not giving up. The active duty component is up to 94 percent of its goal, while the Reserves are hitting 90 percent and the National Guard is reaching 75 percent.

"It's only March, and we're talking about a goal [to reach] at the end of the year, and we're working very hard to do that," Harvey said.

The Army Secretary praised the U.S. forces for the job they have done to help the Iraqi people rebuild — rebuild their homes, security force and government. He enlightened the Soldiers on the big picture of the projects they have personally participated in, and gave an overall spectrum of the events of reconstruction. In the past four months, growth has occurred so rapidly that the projects have jumped from 200 in December, to 2,000 to date.

The military, and security overall, in Iraq has grown significantly due to the presence of Multi-National Forces, Harvey said. For example, 150,000 Iraqi troops are trained, equipped, and organized into 96 battalions, with a projected 50,000 preparing for training. The goal is to have 300,000 security personnel, and Harvey attributes this to the teamwork of Iraq and the United States.

"We're starting along that line of doing it together and eventually, they will do it alone, and this is just tremendous progress in the area of security and stability," he said.

In addition, the Iraqi government has seen great success, according to Harvey, first with the elections, and recently, with the first meeting of the Iraqi Interim National Assembly.

After breakfast, Harvey watched Soldiers of the 612th Eng. Bn. demonstrate the Buffalo, a minesweeping vehicle that is the latest technology for effectively recognizing improvised explosive devices. Following the demonstration, Harvey told the Soldiers, "If I were an insurgent, I'd be really discouraged; I have two words to describe what I have seen in the last day: solid progress."

## Ambush

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escape. Once we turned down that road, the insurgents didn't have a choice but to stay and fight. We had just cut off their escape route."

As soon as the squad rolled into the fray, the insurgents adjusted fire. "As we came on the scene, the insurgents' fire all shifted," Nein said. "They realized who they needed to fire on. They quickly shifted all fire from the transportation convoy to us. As soon as we cut back to get in between the convoy and the insurgents, the windshield of my driver (Sgt. Dustin T. Morris) took two direct hits. The bullets failed to defeat the armored glass."

Atop the same truck was .50-cal. gunner Spc. Casey M. Cooper. He said when they turned down the side road, massive gunfire was coming their way. Rounds from small arms came towards them and impacted the rear door and its window, yet again failed to penetrate the Humvee's armor. What hap-



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Marshall P. Ware

**Spc. Jeremy Eades, Sgt. William Baum and Spc. Casey Cooper, all military policemen, 617th MP Co., provide medical assistance to a wounded insurgent after a group of insurgents attacked a supply convoy March 20.**

pened next shocked and stunned Cooper.

"I just saw something coming at me, and fast. It just so happened to be a [rocket propelled grenade]," he said.

The round impacted right above the rear passenger door, right below where Cooper was positioned in the turret. "It knocked me out — completely unconscious," he said.

Only sustaining minor shrapnel wounds around the right eye and hand, Cooper would be fine, but one Soldier in the group thought he was dead. The Soldier said he went up and shook Cooper, at which point he popped awake and started firing again.

In the vehicle following Nein, Cooper and Morris was 23-year-old Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester, team leader and vehicle commander from Bowling Green, Ky. Hester and her crew saw the RPG hit the lead vehicle. "Nein's vehicle took a direct hit with an RPG as soon as we made that turn," Hester said. "I heard it hit, saw the smoke, but we kept pushing on."

"I saw Staff Sgt. Nein jump out of the truck. As soon as I saw him jump out, I was right there," Hester said. From there, Hester, Nein and company pressed their flanking advantage and engaged the enemy full force.

"On the right hand side was a berm. They were still shooting at us from there and from down in a trench line," said Hester. "So we returned fire. I think I shot off three M203 (grenade launcher) rounds, and I don't know how many M-4 (assault rifle) rounds I shot. I know I hit one of the RPK (Russian-made light machine gun) gunners," she said.

Nein and Hester were side by side, and both were being engaged with small arms fire. "Both Sgt. Hester's and my vehicles were being engaged by an insurgent with an RPK somewhere out in the orchard field," Nein said. "I could also see an insurgent with an



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Marshall P. Ware

**This damaged Humvee of the 4th platoon, 617th MP Co., was the lead vehicle when insurgents attacked a Coalition supply convoy March 20 southeast of Baghdad. It received small-arms fire and a direct hit from a rocket-propelled grenade above the right-side passenger window during the attack.**

RPG trying to get around and fire on us. We weren't engaging him at the time, but I think he thought we were going to. He was peering out from behind a tree, so we eliminated him."

Hester, Nein and their comrades continued to press the advantage, completely disrupting any plans the insurgents had at a successful attack. After the approximately 45-minute firefight, only three Soldiers from the 617th were wounded. Conversely, 27 insurgents were dead. Six others were wounded; one was captured. None escaped.

The MPs from 2nd squad also "cached" in, confiscating 22 AK-47 light machine guns, 13 RPKs, 6 RPGs, 16 RPG rockets, 123 full AK-47 ammunition magazines, 52 empty AK-47 magazines, one full AK-47 75-round ammunition drum, about 200 loose AK-47 ammuni-

tion rounds, 2,500 (7.62 mm) belted ammunition rounds and 40 hand grenades.

Capt. Todd M. Lindner, 617th commander, said he went over the scenario in his head a hundred times to see what he might have done differently or done better. He said there was no better way than what his Soldiers did.

"They did exactly what they were supposed to do when supporting a convoy in that situation," Lindner said. "What their mission was in shadowing that convoy was to provide support in the event of an attack. What they were supposed to do was place themselves in between the attacking force and the convoy. This would allow the convoy to escape the kill zone while they returned suppressive fire and ultimately defeated the enemy. That was exactly what they did."

# Medics hold 'element of surprise'

*256th BCT troops start their day surprising a community with medical care, end it capturing a few surprised terrorists*

Story and photo by Spc. Erin Robicheaux  
Task Force Baghdad Public Affairs

**CAMP TIGERLAND, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — With no advance warning, medics of the 256th Brigade Combat Team suddenly appear in neighborhoods, bringing medical care to the people of their Baghdad area — whether it's holding treatment clinics or bringing wheelchairs or other supplies to ailing individuals.

"We always try to surprise them when we go," said Lt. Col. Joseph Dore, 256th BCT's Surgeon. The Charlotte, N.C., native said showing up without warning is safer for the potential patients, because there is a chance that anti-Iraqi forces would try to sabotage the clinic, thus injuring the very people the doctors are trying to heal.

Dore finds that getting there and then making an announcement over a loudspeaker makes for a more effective event. There is less chance of insurgents attacking if they have no knowledge ahead of time.

Spc. Melodi Holliday from Hammond, La., is a medic with Company C, 199th Forward Support Battalion, and this was her first time working with local nationals, and the children of Baghdad continued to surprise her throughout the day.

"They're not like American children," she said. "They almost have an older mentality, and seem like adults in little bodies."

Dore is grateful to be able to help the people in the community, especially knowing that they don't get medical care very often, if ever. For him, a successful medical operation is one where he can see as many patients as possible.

"As long as we can win over some hearts and minds when we do this, it's a success," he said.

For Holliday, an X-ray technician in civilian life, her experiences in Baghdad have shed new light on her occupation in the United States.

"I'm going to take a lot of patience back home with me," she said, "Even though we had interpreters, not being able to speak the same language as the patient was a barrier. It made me appreciate the simplicity of my civilian job, in regards to communication."

The locals of the Bany Zaid community were not the only ones surprised on a recent medical mission.

On the way back to Camp Liberty, the Soldiers of the



**Lt. Col. Joseph Dore, from Charlotte, N.C., 256th BCT Surgeon, listens to a little boy's respiration. His warm caring manner is evident as he and the child laugh and play.**

256th were anticipating hot showers after being out in the rain all day, when the plans officer for 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment noticed something suspicious.

"There was a car in front of us that was going very slowly, and what made me pull it over was that it didn't have a license plate."

Maj. David Gooch, from Abbeville, La., said that the locals usually cooperate with convoys when instructed to get off the road, and when this one did not, he pulled them over. Inside the car were four middle-aged men. When instructed, three of the men exited the car quickly, but one stalled.

"I actually thought that searching them would be a pretty quick process, but when I noticed the front passenger fiddling around by his feet, I started to get suspicious."

After searching the vehicle, Gooch and his Soldiers found a shovel with fresh mud on it, a video camera, and some wire and wire cutters.

This may seem like enough evidence to bring the suspects in for questioning, but according to Gooch, it wasn't enough — at first.

"I almost let them go in the beginning, because I knew that even with all that we'd found, it wouldn't hold up in an Iraqi court."

But he and his Soldiers were persistent, and in no time,

the medical team found what it was looking for.

In the glove compartment, Gooch discovered documents with Arabic writing, and he asked his interpreter to translate. The interpreter's reaction was all that the medics needed to hear.

"Arrest them, arrest them!" he shouted. "They're terrorists!"

When the Soldiers began to search the man, his suspicious behavior set off internal alarm bells. It wasn't long before they found evidence of anti-Iraqi activity.

"Our task force has encountered over 100 IEDs, so we know what they look like," said Gooch.

The Iraqis were also listening to a tape of terrorist propaganda, which confirmed the Soldiers' suspicions that the men were up to no good.

Maj. Rico Alvendia, Deputy Staff Judge Advocate for the 256th BCT, happened to be part of the capture. While the New Orleans, La. native can't work on the case because he was involved in the capture, he will still play a role in the legal process as a witness.

"I think we were fortunate to run into the insurgents on the way back from the medical mission," he said. "They will be prosecuted and I'm looking forward to being a witness."

When asked what he was thinking as they approached the suspects and pulled them over, one Soldier said, "All I thought was, 'Surprise!'"

## Easter

From Page 1

raised from the dead ... how would you handle this? I will tell you, it would be the CNN story of the millennium."

After the meat of his message Fields concluded, "I believe the manifestations of a living Christ are alive and well in my life and in your life as well. We just need to take time to acknowledge it. We just had a considerable revelation right here in this very country where millions of people braved the pen jury, dismemberment and death in order to vote.

"It was one of those miracles in our lives we witnessed. Life has come so that we [as a world] may have life and life more abundantly," Fields said.

This Easter service reminded the congregation of their commitment to Christ, the rebirth of Jesus as well as the rebirth of Iraq.

## Time Changes ...

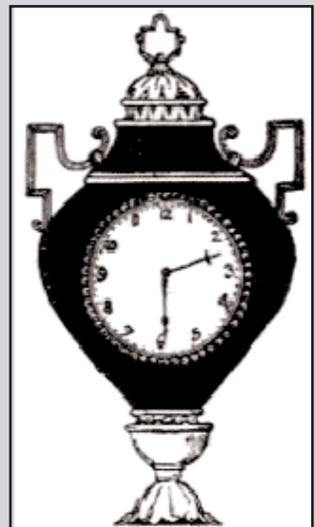
### Spring forward, fall back

During Daylight Saving Time, clocks are turned forward an hour effectively moving an hour of daylight from the morning to the evening.

In the United States, DST begins the first Sunday in April and ends on the last Sunday of October at 2 a.m. in each respective time zone.

In the European Union, DST starts on the last Sunday of March and ends the last Sunday of October at 1 a.m. Universal Time (Greenwich Mean Time).

Although DST begins in Iraq today, Multi-National Force - Iraq personnel will make the time adjustment on Sunday. Remember to set your clocks ahead one hour.



## NEWS BRIEFS

**CENTCOM commander visits Iraq**

**CAMP LIBERTY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Gen. John P. Abizaid, commanding general of U.S. Central Command, and Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, received a warm welcome March 27 upon their arrival at the headquarters of the 3rd Infantry Division here.

The two leaders met with Soldiers from Task Force Baghdad, led by Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr., 3rd Infantry Division and Task Force Baghdad commander, who gave them a display of some of the latest and greatest technology being used in the war against terror. The reception was met with words of praise and encouragement for the Soldiers.

Sappers from the 36th Engineer Group gave a demonstration of the Buffalo, a heavily-armored vehicle equipped to deal with the improvised explosive devices that have killed or wounded many of their comrades. Efficiently and with precision, the Buffalo's hydraulic iron claw was maneuvered to handle a simulated IED. The engineers also showed the CENTCOM commander where their vehicle had already sustained a blast from such ordnance and had survived.

After the display, the general and the senator addressed questions from the troops. Abizaid told the Soldiers their most important missions were to provide the people of Iraq with a chance to create a government and to train the Iraqi Security Forces until they are capable of taking the leading role in their nation's defense. Both of these, he said, are to be the focus through December.

"And I think they've shown, ever since the elections in particular, that they are ready to fight," Abizaid said. "It's their country. They want to be in charge. They want to fight this fight."

Remarking that the fight can't be won without them, he thanked the Soldiers for their sacrifice and courage.

"We don't pay you enough," he said. "...but on the other hand, we're giving you a chance to participate in something like your fathers and grandfathers did in World War II and Korea and Vietnam."

**Ramadi barrage gets needed repairs**

**RAMADI, Iraq** — Barrages in Iraq are of critical national importance and key infrastructure significance for its people. The Ramadi Barrage, on the Euphrates River, is part of a sensitive system designed for flood control and irrigation storage that consists of the Warrar Inlet Canal structure, Al Duban Regulator and the Habbaniyah Reservoir.

During the 1991 Gulf War, seven of the barrage's gates were damaged by air-to-ground missiles. The damaged gates were left in the down position resulting in a loss of performance, particularly during floodwater periods.

"Currently, there are 17 operable gates that cannot handle the flood releases from Haditha Dam," said Brian Anderson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project engineer. "The barrage also has an inoperable navigation lock and an operating fish ladder.

"Since there are seven closed inoperable gates, the structure is not performing as it was designed. To add to the problem the hydraulic characteristics around the barrage have changed, which could cause sedimentation at the inoperable gates. So, it's necessary to repair the gates to decrease upstream flooding," Anderson said.

The Iraqi Ministry of Irrigation and Dams spent the last dozen years repairing the structure. The restoration work on the seven bays was nearly complete when the 2003 war halted installation of the hoisting equipment.

"Inspection revealed the gates are well lubricated and cared for and only need paint for corrosion protection. However, even though the 17 operable gates are greased and operate smoothly, there are other maintenance issues which have been neglected over the past 15 year," Anderson explained.

"The \$3 million repair work is scheduled to begin mid-April or May, pending SPCO approval and contractor



Photo by Sgt. Andrew Miller

**Gen. John P. Abizaid, U.S. Central Command commanding general, answers a question about part of an engineering demonstration for Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island during their visit to the headquarters of the 3rd Infantry Division at Camp Liberty, Baghdad, March 26. The 36th Eng. Group gave the demonstration of some of the latest and greatest equipment being used in the war against terror.**

selection, with a completion date of mid-April 2006," Anderson said. "Repairing the barrage will provide jobs for the Iraqi people and ensure that it will operate properly for its designed purposes, which are irrigation and flood control."

**Iraqi police discover murder victims in parked car**

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Iraqi Police officers found five local nationals killed by small arms fire in a car parked in west Baghdad on March 24.

The policemen approached a blue Opel sedan with multiple bullet holes in the exterior and discovered the bodies of five women inside the car. Four of the women were contractors at a U.S. military installation.

Iraqi police took the vehicle and remains to a nearby police station.

**Task Force Baghdad helps Iraqis improve quality of life**

**MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq** — Renovations and improvements are essential for Iraq to change for the better, and the 1088th Engineer Battalion of the 256th Brigade Combat Team is committed to making that happen.

Pay officers from 1088th Eng. Bn. traveled to Forward Operating Base St. Michael to join forces with the 407th Civil Affairs Battalion to pay Iraqi contractors for the work that they have done to improve the quality of life for their own people.

"[Insurgents] have been putting a lot of improvised explosive devices in the roads, so we've hired local contractors to fix the potholes, and to pave, clear, and widen the streets," said Staff Sgt. Robert Bourgoyne, of Headquarters Company, 1088th. Bourgoyne, who is from Donaldsonville, La., is a pay officer for the 256th BCT, and said this process not only improves the road conditions for the locals in the community, but it's also necessary to keep Soldiers safe.

"By widening the roads, it will deny access to put IEDs really close to where the patrols may pass; it gives a little more standoff distance, and even if an IED is set off, it'll be far enough away from the road that hopefully it will pre-

vent some casualties," he said.

Two projects in Mahmudiyah are bringing water to residents of the area. The East Mahmudiyah Pipe Project is combined with the reconstruction of a local water plant that has not been used since 1972, but thanks to combined efforts of the 256th BCT, 407th CA Bn. and local contractors, it is up and running again. The pipe project is now bringing water into homes in the area.

Maj. David Langfellow, from Minneapolis, Minn., is the commander of Company A, 407th CA Bn., and said this venture is bringing water to at least three neighborhoods in the Mahmudiyah vicinity.

"Basically, the contractor who was overseeing the water plant rebuilt and refurbished the entire building — everything from the power supply to electrical pumps," he said.

Langfellow said the contractor also rebuilt all of the water-holding facilities, fixed windows, cleaned up foliage around the building, and even rebuilt part of the building itself and painted it.

"He really brought it back to life," Langfellow said. "He's a great contractor — he accomplished his mission."

And according to Langfellow, locals accomplishing missions like this are what will help U.S. Forces accomplish theirs.

**Successful Security Force operations continue to stifle terrorists**

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Multi-National Forces from 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team) and Iraqi Security Forces detained a total of 18 suspected terrorist during operations in northern Iraq March 26 and 27.

Troops from 104th Battalion, 23rd Brigade Iraqi Army detained two individuals suspected of terrorist activity during a cordon and search operation in eastern Mosul March 27. No ISF injuries reported.

Multi-National Force Soldiers detained 11 individuals suspected of terrorist activity during a raid south of Al Quayyarah March 27. Soldiers from 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment detained three individuals suspected of terrorist activity during a cordon and search operation in Tal Afar March 27. On March 26, MNF Soldiers detained two individuals suspected of terrorist activity during a raid south of Mosul.

## NEWS BRIEFS

**Insurgent attacks kill innocent Iraqis**

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Three Iraqi citizens were killed and another 20 were injured during two separate attacks by insurgents in northern Iraq March 26.

A mortar attack conducted by insurgents killed two innocent Iraqi citizens and injured another 15 in Tal Afar. The injured were transported to a local hospital by Iraqi Police.

An improvised explosive device detonated near a Multi-National Force convoy, killing one Iraqi citizen and injuring another five in Mosul. The injured were transported to a local hospital. No MNF or ISF injuries were reported during either incident.

**Task Force Baghdad finds, detonate 3 IEDs**

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Three insurgents' improvised explosive attacks failed after explosive ordinance disposal teams detonated three IEDs March 23.

In Southeast Baghdad, Task Force Baghdad Soldiers found an explosive device described as an artillery shell in a box. An explosive ordinance disposal team was called in to detonate the IED. After detonating the device, the Soldiers unearthed a second round. The explosive ordinance team safely detonated the round.

In North Baghdad, an IED consisting of five silver cylinders with wires protruding out was discovered by Task Force Baghdad Soldiers. An explosive ordinance team safely set off the device.

**ISF, MNF collect insurgents, weapons**

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Iraqi Security Forces and Multi-National Forces from 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team) detained 21 suspected insurgents and seized a number of weapons during operations in northern Iraq March 24 and 25.

MNF Soldiers detained 10 individuals suspected of insurgent activity during a cordon and search operation south of Mosul March 25. Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment detained five individuals suspected of insurgent activity during a cordon and search operation in northeastern Mosul today. The 3-21 also killed one insurgent during the operation.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment detained one individual suspected of insurgent activity during a raid in western Mosul March 24. No MNF injuries were reported.

Troops from 23rd Battalion, 6th Brigade and Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment detained four individuals suspected of insurgent activity thanks to a tip from an Iraqi citizen during cordon and search operations in western Mosul March 24.

Troops from 102nd Battalion, 22nd Brigade Iraqi Army and Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment detained an individual suspected of insurgent activity during a cordon and search operation south of Mosul March 25. No ISF or MNF injuries reported.

**Task Force Baghdad Soldiers find cache**

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Task Force Baghdad Soldiers discovered an ammunition cache at a house in southern Baghdad March 23.

While conducting a routine patrol in the neighborhood, the Soldiers spotted four camouflage-type nets in the yard of a house. The Soldiers searched the house and found 100 machine gun rounds, 800 shotgun rounds and timers and wires used to make bombs. Several neighbors reported that the residents of the house were former Iraqi Soldiers. Task Force Baghdad Soldiers confiscated the ammunition.

**Task Force Liberty Soldiers find mortar cache**

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — A Task Force Liberty combat patrol discovered a cache of mortar rounds near Bayji at about 12:30 p.m. March 25. The cache included 25 60mm mortar rounds, four 81mm mortar rounds and one mortar tube.

Task Force Liberty consists of the Army National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division Headquarters and base units along with the 116th Brigade Combat Team and 278th Regimental Combat Team. The task force also includes the 1st and 3rd Brigade Combat Teams from the Army's 3rd Infantry Division.

**I MEF transfers authority to II MEF**

**CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq** — Lt. Gen. John F. Sattler, commanding general, I Marine Expeditionary Force, transferred authority of Multi-National Force-West to Maj. Gen. Stephen T. Johnson, commanding general, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), during a ceremony here Sunday.

"I've never been more optimistic in my almost two years of association with this area," Sattler said. "The energy, the enthusiasm of the people is catapulting this movement forward. The Iraqi security forces are capable, well-led and confident, and that confidence flows over to the Iraqi people."

As the incoming commander, Johnson expressed his view of the future of Iraq. "We are going to see a great increase in the Iraqi Security Forces; they are becoming very effective. We are going to see the emergence of the Iraqi government. Their constitution is being written, elections are being held and political decisions are being made in a democratic fashion. We are going to see their economy pick up. We are going to see opportunities for jobs and for industry. And we are also going to see the emergence of truth. For years, this country has not known truth, and we will be seeing more of that."

More than 41,000 Marines, Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of I MEF have been deployed in western Iraq since early August 2004. While here, they conducted campaigns against terrorists and criminals in Najaf, northern Babil, Karbala and Al Anbar provinces in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

Operations conducted by I MEF ultimately led to Iraqi citizens being able to participate in the first free election in more than 35 years.



Photo by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas

**Splish Splash!**

A group of International Zone residents play water volleyball during MWR's Easter Day Games Sunday. Other activities included a free throw contest, egg throwing contest, three-legged racing, ping pong, tug of war, horseshoes, darts, dominoes and cards contests.

**Worship and Prayer Schedule for the International Zone****Sunday**

9:30 a.m. — Choir Rehearsal  
10 a.m. — Catholic Mass (3rd BTC)  
10:30 a.m. — General Christian  
Noon — Episcopal/Lutheran/Anglican  
2 p.m. — Latter Day Saints  
4 p.m. — Catholic Confession  
4:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass  
6 p.m. — Contemporary Protestant

**Monday-Friday**

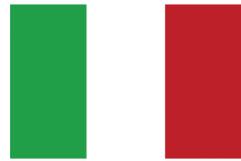
Noon — Catholic Mass (Mon.-Thurs.)  
Noon — Catholic Communion Service (Tues.)  
5:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass (Fri. at Camp Steel Dragon)  
6 p.m. — Jewish Shabbat Services (Fri.)  
7:30 p.m. — Prayer Service (Tue.)  
8 p.m. — Bible Study (Thurs. at Senior Advisors Conf. Rm.)  
8:30 p.m. — Bible Study (Wed. at Ambassadors Conf. Rm.)

**Saturday**

11:30 a.m. — Catholic Mass (Camp Headhunter)  
12:30 p.m. — Buddhist Worship  
4 p.m. — Catholic Confession  
4:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass

**Daily Islamic Prayer**

For more information, call DSN 318-239-8659.



# Italian Combined Joint Task Force - Iraq



Warrant Officer Alessandro Fromboluti explains through an interpreter the mistakes an eight-man team of police trainees made during a quick reaction drill March 17.



Warrant Officer Giuseppe Conforti, an instructor with 2nd Company, 1st Regiment Bersaglieri Garibaldi at Camp Elgife near Tallil, Iraq, listens to class leader Sgt. Major Adnan Lafta as he repeats back the steps of the drills Lafta's platoon is about to practice.



A team of Iraqi Army Soldiers from the 604th Battalion, Company B, practice their reaction drills as three Italian Army Bersaglieri Garibaldi instructors watch.

## Building Italian-Iraqi foundations

By Sgt. Michael J Carden  
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs Office

**AN NASIRIYAH, Iraq** — When the Soldiers of the Italian Army's Garibaldi Brigade arrived in An Nasiriyah in December 2004, they were tasked to train a battalion of Iraqi Army Soldiers. When they got there, they found inadequate training facilities, a language barrier, minimal supplies and inexperienced, but motivated candidates. They knew they had much to accomplish.

The Italians have since transformed almost 1,000 civilians from the Nasiriyah area into some of Iraq's best Soldiers. These men make up the Iraqi Army's 604th Battalion. The men of the 604th Bn. have become the example for their peers in other Iraqi battalions across the country to follow, said Col. Ron Gallimore, chief liaison officer, Multi-National Corps - Iraq.

"The leadership on both sides is great," Gallimore said. "The Italians have been very successful in meeting their training goals with the Iraqis, and in preparing them to assume missions."

In their small base camp outside of Nasiriyah, the Iraqis practice battle drills and squad patrolling methods. They learn how to set up traffic control points, as well as vehicle and personnel search techniques. These are all tactics that were instilled in them by the Italians utilizing the "train-the-trainer" method of teaching, Gallimore said.

The train-the-trainer concept is one the Italians have much experience with. The idea behind this approach is to train the officers and noncommissioned officers away from their unit. Once they become familiar with the tactics, techniques and procedures, the officers and NCOs can go back to their units with the confidence and knowledge to teach their own Soldiers. The Italians have used this method to successfully train Soldiers in Bosnia, Kosovo, Africa and Asia, Gallimore explained.

"Whether it's learning how to run a traffic control point, patrolling or reacting to contact, the Italians use this concept," Gallimore said. "This is important because it reinforces that the Iraqis are in charge of the Iraqis and the Italians are just there to observe."

"We've learned very much from our Italian counterparts," said Col. Amer Hamed Hadad, commander, 604th Bn. "They have taught us much about checkpoints and fighting in an open area. We have become very confident because of them."

Another factor that has helped the 604th Bn. to be so successful is that they

See *BUILDING* Page 11



A platoon of Iraqi Army Soldiers marches to class.



Warrant Officer Guidolin Ferruccio, a Carabinieri with the 1st Regiment Carabinieri Paracadutisti Toscana, shows a class of Iraqi police trainees how to properly use a pistol.

## Two countries, two forces, one common cause

Story and photos by Sgt. Misha King  
Scimitar Assistant Editor

**CAMP MITTICA, TALLIL, Iraq** — When people arrive at Camp Mittica, a military base outside of Tallil, Iraq, the constant flow of jovial Italian Soldiers and Carabinieri speaking their native tongue almost makes them feel like they are not on a military base in the middle of the desert. But like most military installations in Iraq, Camp Mittica revolves around training Iraqi forces in their quest to become self-sufficient, especially when it comes to protecting their country from anti-Iraqi forces.

"Our mission here is to implement the peace process and to create a secure environment for the [Iraqi] population," said Col. Giulio Carletti, head of the Security Sector Reform department (SSR) under the Italian Combined Joint Task Force - Iraq.

The SSR is a catalyst in helping achieve these goals. The department is responsible for implementing training, mentoring Iraqi troops and monitoring activities with the help of the Italian Army and the Carabinieri, the Italian federal police, said Carletti.

Although based at the same camp, the Italian Army and the Carabinieri have different missions. The Soldiers, who mostly work a few miles from Mittica at Camp Elgife, are tasked with training the Iraqi Army, using real-life scenarios the Soldiers may encounter.

"We are developing training activities with and for the Iraqi Army," said Italian Army Warrant Officer Giuseppe Conforti, an instructor with 2nd Company, 1st Regiment Bersaglieri Garibaldi. "My platoon trains an Iraqi Army platoon of about 30-35 Soldiers on manning checkpoints, residential areas, and any other scenarios that may occur while they're out patrolling."

"We are actually in phase two of training," explained Conforti. "In the first phase, we taught the Iraqi platoon. In the second phase, we identified the class leaders and they're teaching their platoon and correcting their mistakes." Conforti said the Italians' role in phase two is to monitor and make sure the training plan is followed.

One of the other scenarios in the phase two training plan is simulating being attacked while on the road.

"We're practicing quick reaction force battle drills with an eight-man team, simulating being attacked and reacting to it," said Sgt. Maj. Adnan Lafta, who is the class leader and is assigned to the Iraqi Army's 604th Battalion, Company B. Lafta said these drills will be especially useful in his role in providing vehicle security while on patrol between An Nasiriyah and Basrah.

Despite long, intense hours of repetitive training, the Iraqi Soldiers seem to thrive in their new jobs.

"They are doing very well," Conforti said. "They understand everything and they want to learn. They want to learn, that's the key."

Just down the street from Camp Elgife, the Carabinieri

at Camp White Horse also transition into phase two of training. The only difference is they are molding young men who will serve in the Iraqi Police Service.

"My squad and I are tasked with training the Iraqi police on urban warfare," said Warrant Officer Guidolin Ferruccio, an instructor with the 1st Regiment Carabinieri Paracadutisti (Paratroopers) Toscana. "In the first phase, they are taught how to move between buildings in teams of four, storm into a residence while faced with different [hostile] scenarios, like dealing with a casualty."

"The second phase consists of patrol movements, or what we call 'RAI,' which are quick reaction movements in an open area to allow for closing in on residences, also with casualty simulations," explained Ferruccio. "After that, they move on to breaking into buildings, how to approach a building and how to enter it, and how to clear it."

The men training at White Horse under Italian supervision are proving themselves capable, but training to be an Iraqi policeman seems to be a task not everyone is cut out for.

"Let's say that 90 percent have reached a good level," said Ferruccio. "There's always that 10 percent that aren't really cut out for these types of activities."

However, they're getting better as they continue to train. Just in the course of two to three days, their attitude changes; they're a lot more professional, for instance. You can tell by the way they handle their

weapons and the way they move on the ground."

Not only have the Italian Soldiers and Carabinieri not had significant problems in their training routines, their training plans also help prepare the Iraqis for their jobs while conducting yet another mission.

"The [Italians] and the Iraqi forces conduct joint patrols of the roads, cities and villages every day," said Carletti. "We have problems with terrorist activity throughout the Dih Qar province, and the joint patrols help foster good cooperation during intelligence activities against terrorists, smugglers and criminals."

With every bad, there's usually a good. In this case, Carletti said besides training the Iraqi forces, creating a good environment for Iraqi population, and establishing a good working relationship with the Iraqi security forces are a few good points of the Italian mission.

"I hope Iraq becomes peaceful soon and the problems they are encountering are resolved quickly," said Carletti. "We will do what we can to help the Iraqi people provide a secure country for themselves."

"We're happy to be here overseeing this training, proud to be a part of these events and this mission," said Ferruccio. "For the rest — we're military and just doing our jobs to the best of our abilities."

Editor's note: To learn more about the Italian Army and the Carabinieri, log on to [www.esercito.difesa.it](http://www.esercito.difesa.it) and [www.carabinieri.it](http://www.carabinieri.it).

# Army Balloons at WAR



Story, photos and art by  
Staff Sgt. Timothy Lawn  
Scimitar Staff

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — As a small group of terrorists slithered along the buildings of a darkened Mosul street. Little

did they know a quick reaction force was swiftly making its way to meet them, intending to stop them dead in their tracks. Their every move was being observed, calculated and relayed back to the QRF troops speeding their way. The terrorists were being observed from a unique and fairly new Army aerial reconnaissance system hovering high in the moonlit sky.

That new reconnaissance system is the Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor System (JLENS), Tactical 15M Aerostat Balloon system. The Mosul balloon is one of three that belongs to 134th Signal Company, 256th Brigade Combat Team from Louisiana. The 256th BCT was cobbled together with signal company Soldiers from many other units throughout Louisiana for the deployment. Their three balloons are 53 ft. in length, 19 ft. in diameter, displace 11,336 cubic ft., are helium filled and can operate in wind speeds of up to 40 knots.

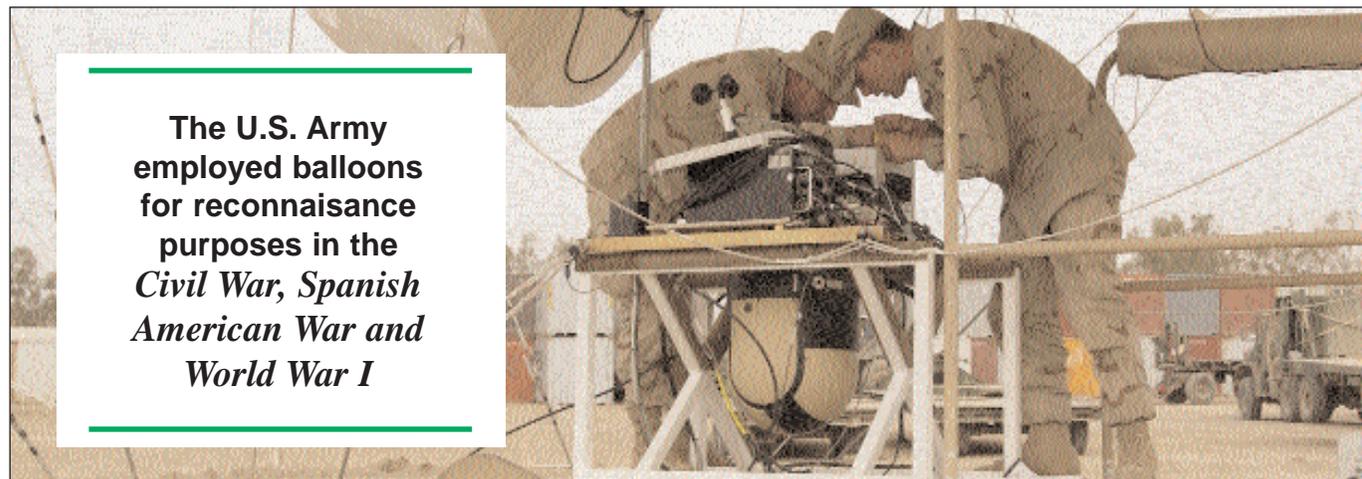
The balloons are low maintenance and can generally stay in the air for several days while being operated around the clock by a small crew. The JLENS system is the balloon with a television camera equipped with zoom, infrared night vision capability and armed with a laser range finder.

Originally, the JLENS was designed as an elevated sensor system that can detect and engage low flying objects such as cruise missiles at long distances. In Iraq and Afghanistan it is

the ground commander's eye in the sky.

Staff Sgt. Sarah Partlow, a 31L — wire and cable installer — from East Grand Forks, Minn., is the JLENS team chief at Camp Victory. Partlow is part of the Active Guard Reserve program. "The balloons are tethered to truck transports, can be operated by as few as three to four Soldiers or civilians and they can be inflated and launched within four hours." Partlow added that, if airborne, a balloon can be deployed in as little time as a half hour. They are manufactured at the Huntsville, Ala., Redstone Armory.

The 256 BCT was activated in March 2004. It was trained stateside and sent to the Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, Ala., in August for JLENS training on the balloons.



The U.S. Army  
employed balloons  
for reconnaissance  
purposes in the  
*Civil War, Spanish  
American War and  
World War I*

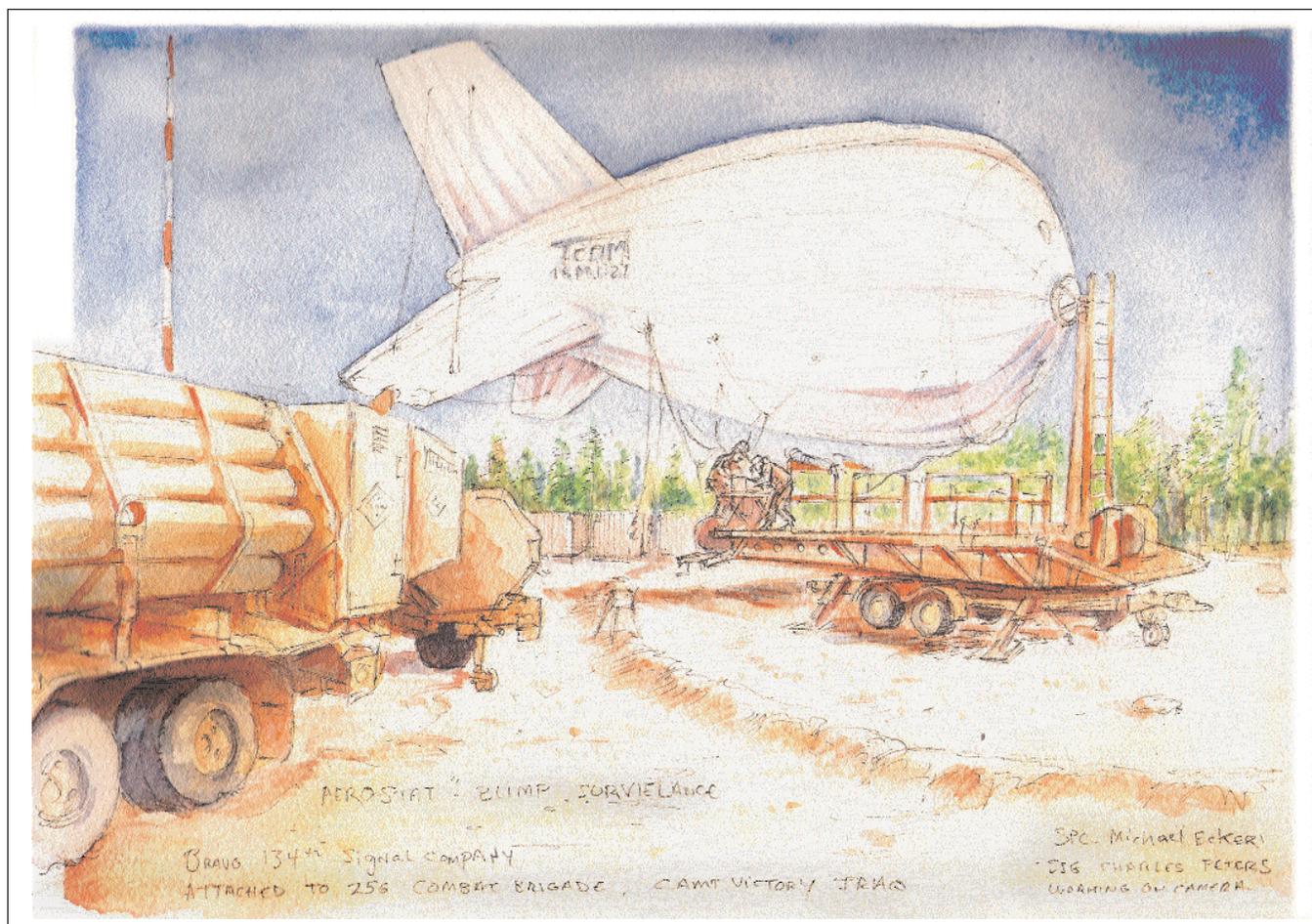
Staff Sgt. Charles Peters and Spc. Michael Ecker, 134th Signal Company, work quickly to repair a camera so that they can get the balloon up in the air.



Staff Sgt. Sara Partlow (left) team chief, Spc. Teah Sylvara operator and Spc. Melissa O'Malley, operator, in the JLENS Ground Station discuss balloon operations maintenance.

Intelligence gathering capabilities of the multi-role balloon include airborne surveillance, still photography and infrared imagery, to name a few. Image collection range on the balloon are from 4-12 km, depending on weather and terrain. Its real intelligence value is its ability to see and track targets at night. Balloons have been discovered to be remarkably resilient and can take battlefield damage, be repaired quickly and easily, and returned to duty.

According to Partlow, the first JLENS balloon systems of the 256th arrived in-theatre in June 2004. The balloons and crew are commanded by 1st Lt. Alec Timmerman and Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Fisher. The Soldiers manning them now are the second crew. There are three balloons here — one team is



A Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor System, Tactical 15M Aerostat Balloon system, is one of three balloons attached to Bravo 134th Signal Company attached to the 256th Combat Brigade.

at Camp Victory, one in Mosul and a third is at Camp Slayer being operated by civilians.

At Camp Victory, the Base Defense Operations Cell, or ground station, is a refurbished quad-con. There Partlow discussed some preventive maintenance issues with Spc. Michael Ecker as the balloon was moored on the ground and Ecker worked on the imagery collection equipment.

"It has been very interesting and new to the Army," Partlow said, describing the balloon system as being somewhat frustrating and a challenge. Though the balloons are fickle, she marveled at the wide range of capabilities the JLENS system offers.

The Battalion is undergoing a re-organization. There will also be some video and communications changes, giving the balloon updated and more advanced battlefield adaptability and flexibility. Some of the improvements will be a fiber line to allow live video feed.

"There are more systems in country than there are people who know how to run them," said Staff Sgt. Charles Peters, from Faribault, Minn. Peters, who has over 20 years in the National Guard, remarked that this was his first deployment.

Though the system is fairly new in Iraq, it was used to monitor polling stations and to communicate with quick reaction forces on the ground during the January elections.

For Partlow and the other balloon team members, the task at hand is to become more proficient with the system, train up new teams and get more balloons in the air. More airborne balloons means more intelligence for the ground commanders. For the Soldiers on the ground, there is never enough intelligence. For would-be terrorists the balloons are another piece of the Allied arsenal that will be brought to bear on them, preventing them from creating mayhem and destruction.

# 520th ASMC cares for Bucca detainees

Story and Photos by Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp  
Multi-National Corps – Iraq Public Affairs

**CAMP BUCCA, Iraq** — Webster's dictionary describes an infirmary as an institution for the care of the sick or disabled. The Geneva Conventions Law of Land Warfare states that every prison camp shall have an adequate infirmary where prisoners of war may have the attention they require.

At the Camp Bucca Internment Facility Aid Station, more than 5,000 enemy POWs are provided the medical attention they are entitled to under the Geneva Conventions, and Soldiers from 520th Area Support Medical Company, 62nd Medical Brigade, Fort Lewis, Wash., provide that medical care.

For these Soldiers, the mission is clear. "We are tasked with providing medical support for the detainees here at Camp Bucca," said Sgt. Dennis R. Clark, a health care specialist and trauma platoon team leader with the 520th. "The aid station provides detainees with sick call, immunizations, physical therapy, x-ray, surgery, dental, etc.; any kind of medical care we possibly give a Soldier, we give the detainees."



**Pvt. Kenneth E. Tyson, health care specialist, 520th Area Support Medical Command, Ft. Lewis, Wash., rehydrates a Camp Bucca Internment Facility detainee by giving an intravenous saline injection. The aid station supports all medical needs for the almost 6,000 detainees at the facility.**

Working out of what one Soldier called "the big circus tent," the medical personnel from the 520th see patients suffering from a gamut of medical conditions, including headaches, rashes, tooth pain, and dehydration. Clark said a translator is paramount in treating these and a variety of other conditions.

"We have civilian translators on hand, but we only have so many," said Clark. "With all the missions that we do, we will sometimes be short



**Pfc. Tiffany M. Shockley, dental assistant, assists Capt. Michael R. Sanders, dentist, both with the 520th Area Support Medical Command from Fort Lewis, Wash., in performing oral surgery on an Iraqi detainee at the Camp Bucca Internment Facility Aid Station.**

a translator. However, we do have detainees who speak English who are willing to help us out in order to better the health of the people in the compound."

One of the biggest barriers to treatment is "the lifestyle the people have lived and become accustomed to," said Clark. "This has led to lack of understanding for some of the medical treatment we are giving them. The immunizations are one of those treatments. They don't understand that we are not trying to give them the flu; we are trying to protect them from getting the flu.

"This apprehension occurs especially in cases like doing the tuberculosis test. We have actually had to do the test on ourselves in front of them just to prove that we aren't trying to give them anything; that we are actually trying to verify information," Clark said.

Minor aches and pains are treated with relative ease and timeliness at the aid station, but when a detainee has a toothache, dentists like Capt. Michael R. Sanders, 520th

ASMC, have their work cut out for them.

"We treat all detainees who have dental issues here," Sanders said, "and just about all of them do." He said the majority of dental work done on the detainees is non-stop and extensive.

"I've seen 15 patients just this morning, and most of those are surgery patients," Sanders said. "We see routine extractions that may take only a few minutes, and we've seen some guys where we've taken 10 or 12 teeth out at a time. You name it, we see it here."

Sanders recently had the opportunity to put his tooth working skills to the test with the help of 520th dental assistant Pfc. Tiffany M. Shockley.

"A detainee came in and had a tooth that needed to come out," Sanders said. "There was a cyst on the end of the tooth that actu-

ally was right on the sinus cavity, so we had to dig out the tooth, and the cyst. We had to surgically remove a fair amount of bone and then suture him up tight, give him his medication and send him on his way. We do a lot of detailed surgeries like this.

"Eight-five percent of the detainees out here have some sort of urgent dental care need. That's what we're working with, we're trying to treat the guys that are in pain, the ones who can't sleep at night, the ones who have acute infections, and there's plenty of them," said Sanders.

Working with just 20 medics and a handful of doctors, Clark said, "The mission we are tasked with is monstrous — on any given day, we can see up to 50 or 60 detainees just at sick call. But with the help from medics with the 105th Military Police Battalion from Asheville, N.C., and treating the detainees in order according to the need and direness of the condition, we can treat all detainees, and treat them effectively."

## Building

from Page 9

converse well with the people of the local and surrounding areas. The local communities have shown a great deal of trust in their Iraqi Soldiers, said Capt. Rita Alessandro, liaison officer, 8th Bersaglieri Battalion, Garibaldi Brigade.

"They gather intelligence about terrorists very well," Alessandro said. "Lots of people don't want violence near their homes, so they give us lots of information and are very cooperative."

Hadad recalled an operation the 604th Bn. conducted on Jan. 29, one day before the Iraqi elections.

"We received intelligence that [insurgents] were going to transport weapons from Yusafiyah to Al Fager," Hadad explained. "The weapons were to be used for an attack on election day."

The 604th immediately went to Al Fager. The operation resulted with the confiscation of a large cache of weapons as well as the detainment of several insurgents.

"[Iraqis] work very hard," Alessandro said. "I see that they want peace and security and a safer environment for their people."

"The Iraqi army in [An Nasiriyah] has very good contacts in the local community," Gallimore said. "They are able to find things out about insurgents, weapons smuggling and kid-

nappings that [Coalition forces] could never find out."

The Iraqis and Italians have also had much success in their convoy security efforts. One of their joint missions is to provide security for supply convoys traveling on a 200-kilometer stretch of Main Support Route Tampa, the main supply road to and from Kuwait, which goes through the Dih Qar province.

The Iraqis and Italians receive and hand off convoy security responsibilities to the British and Iraqi Soldiers to the South and the Polish and Iraqi Soldiers to the North.

This is a critical mission, not only because convoys on MSR Tampa are targets of many insurgent attacks, but because of "blue-on-blue contact," or Coalition Soldiers firing on other Coalition Soldiers, Gallimore explained.

"The biggest problems [Multi-National Forces] have on MSR Tampa throughout Iraq is blue-on-blue contact and insurgent attacks," Gallimore said. "The Italians and Iraqis have not had any of these problems on their section of the road. We know that this is an area where [Coalition forces] convoys can be safe."

As the MNC-I liaison chief, Gallimore often visits Coalition commands throughout Iraq. He has observed many Coalition-trained Iraqi battalions.

"I think that the Italian-Iraqi relationship is the best [MNF-Iraqi relationship] that I've seen," Gallimore said. "I think that if every senior leader in our [Multi-National Corps] would go and observe the relationship between the Garibaldi Bde. and the 604th Bn., [Iraqi Army training] would be easy."

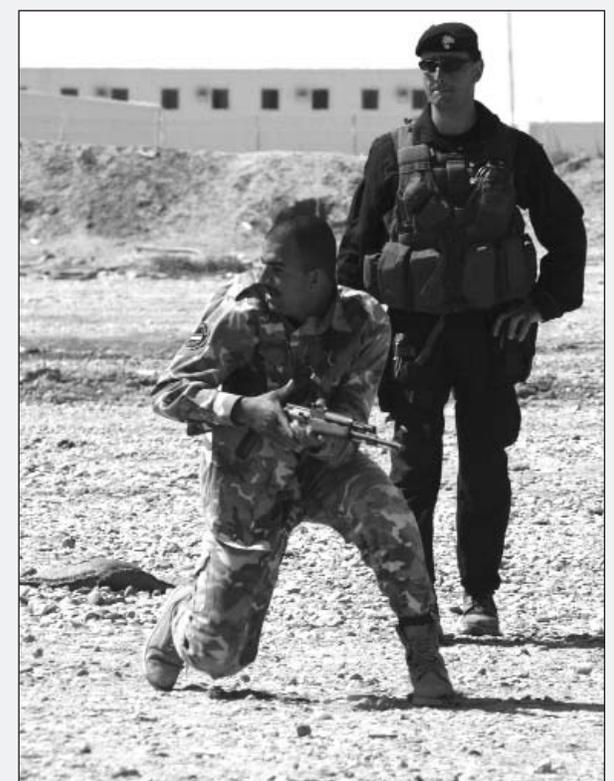


Photo by Sgt. Misha King

**Carabiniere Warrant Officer Alessandro Fromboluti watches as an Iraqi police trainee practices a quick reaction force drill.**

# 2/15 Field Artillery Soldiers use humor to combat stress

Story and photo by  
**Spc. Matthew McLaughlin**  
 Task Force Baghdad Public Affairs

**CAMP LIBERTY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — It was 1 a.m. and the Humvee was dead silent from an exhausting day of patrolling. Soldiers scanned the roads in routine fashion, waiting for something to break the monotony. Suddenly, a booming sound echoed through the vehicle, startling everyone.

“Oklahoma! Where the wind comes sweepin’ down the plain,” a noncommissioned officer in the vehicle sang out.

To some, Staff Sgt. James Smotherman’s unprompted desire to sing show tunes may seem strange. But for the “Roughneck” platoon of Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, it is another humorous way to combat the danger and repetitiveness of everyday life in Baghdad. The Roughnecks pride themselves on professionalism as well as absurdity, Smotherman said.

“The Army has all sorts of regulations saying how professional you have to be on the job,” the section chief from Las Cruces, N.M. said. “They don’t say anything about how much fun you can have. You have to have fun in this job or you’ll go crazy.”

Few understand the use of humor to combat stress on the job more than Smotherman. Before enlisting, he worked as a mortician. He learned that taking work too seriously made daily activities difficult. Laughing at something like an improvised explosive device is an important coping mechanism many Soldiers use, he said.

“An IED is always stressful because we never know when it will go off,” he said. “Then someone will say ‘can we hurry this up because I have to get my nails done?’ You can’t walk around with a frown all the time.”

The humor many Roughnecks share is exemplified in their taste of movies, said Spc. William Lowe, a driver from Ogdensburg, N.Y. Many of their jokes relate back to group favorites like “Team America: World Police” and “Napoleon Dynamite.” The jokes and catch lines from a favorite flick are infectious, and many Soldiers feel compelled to see the movie just to understand the joke, Lowe said.

“When one of us sees a good movie, we don’t rest until everyone in the platoon sees it,” he said.

The movies also include musicals provoked by Smotherman’s after-hours rendition of American classics. Smotherman said he feels right at home with the Roughnecks. They are a collection of wise guys whose unity lies in jabs and cracks on anything, especially each other. They mock each other from things as small as tripping over rubble.

“If we’re on patrol and you stumble, you’ll hear about it for a week,” Lowe said.

Every Soldier has a nickname as unflattering and uncensored as the daily ribbings they give each other. Nothing is sacred and no one is safe, especially Spc. Jeffrey Sharpe, a gunner from Statesville, N.C. If other Soldiers go too far, he said he has to put them in line.



(From left) Spc. Abraham Samaniego, 1st Lt. Dan Ciccarelli and Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Shepherd exchange jokes while on patrol in Baghdad. Soldiers from the “Roughneck” platoon pride themselves on both professionalism and humor.

“Sometimes they go too far. Then I have to take care of them,” he said as he cracked his knuckles and smiled nervously. Smotherman immediately attacked him and Sharpe went limp like a possum to his prey.

When the group gets going, nothing is off limits, said Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Shepherd, chief of firing battery.

“In this platoon I don’t think there is such a thing as too far,” said Shepherd, an Ocala, Fla. native who was the brunt of jokes after he recovered from a head injury earlier in the deployment.

Shepherd is quick to note that his Soldiers are always respectful to superiors and subordinates alike. The fact that everyone is a target is a sign of their camaraderie, he said.

“They are a well-disciplined platoon,” he said. “They never cross the line of disrespect.”

“The proper definition of a senior/subordinate relationship is mutual respect and confidence without undue familiarity,” Smotherman said. “We have that.”

Although the very personal jokes and critiques may seem offensive and disrespectful to an outsider, many Roughnecks said their humor is what makes them so close.

“We’re a real tight-knit group,” Smotherman said. “The cohesion in this group is more than anywhere else I’ve been.”

“This is my family,” Shepherd said. “I have 18 Soldiers as my family.”

Their unity was put to the ultimate test when they lost one of their own, Pfc. Jeff Lebrun, on New Year’s Day. The lighthearted spirit of the group was replaced with deep mourning for a close friend.

“It was pretty somber,” Smotherman said. “It made us aware that we’re not invulnerable.”

The platoon went through a period where no one felt like joking, Smotherman said. The morale was low, but the Soldier’s upbeat spirits eventually prevailed.

“It was definitely subdued,” Smotherman said. “No one wanted to say anything because it’s almost disrespectful to laugh in a situation like that. But over a period of time people started joking with each other. I knew the platoon was going to be OK when people started to laugh again.”

Another day has passed in Baghdad — another patrol finished and another laugh shared. While others may gripe and glower, the Roughnecks will continue living by their simple belief: Soldiers just want to have fun.

## Enlisted leaders report high morale among troops

By **Donna Miles**  
 American Forces Press Service

**CAMP AS SAYLIYAH, Qatar** — Morale is high among troops deployed to Southwest Asia in support of the global war on terror, but many feel frustrated that the American public isn’t hearing about the positive work they’re doing, senior enlisted leaders from U.S. Central Command told the American Forces Press Service here March 25.

The senior enlisted members of U.S. Central Command, Multi-National Force - Iraq and Combined Forces Command Afghanistan, with 97 years of military service among them, said troops here understand their mission and feel good about what they’re accomplishing.

“To a person, nobody has ever said, ‘I don’t understand why I came here,’” said Army Command Sgt. Maj. Cynthia A. Pritchett from Combined Forces Command Afghanistan. “They feel they’re bringing a sense of hope and giving the country a future. They can see the fruit of their labor, but feel that the story doesn’t get out at home.”

Army Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Mellinger from Multi-National Force - Iraq agreed. “If there’s a common theme to the complaints I routinely hear, it’s that nobody knows how well we’re doing,” he said. “The story of what’s being done is not getting out.”

The two leaders ticked off a laundry list of accomplishments in their respective operating areas: national elections in

both Afghanistan and Iraq, progress on the reconstruction front from road projects to new schools, and inroads made in paving a better future for people who have long lived under oppression.

And the reserve components, which they described as a seamless part of the forces here, are bringing talents not typically found in military units — experience in farming, business and civil works, among other specialties.

Servicemembers here “feel a real sense that they are accomplishing something,” said Pritchett.

The noncommissioned officers acknowledged that the war on terror has placed new challenges on the force. Even the most junior troops, they said, are finding themselves in positions where the decisions they make can have international and strategic implications.

“This is not just a military fight,” said Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Curtis Brownhill, command chief master sergeant for U.S. Central Command. “It’s a political issue as well as a military issue, and the actions of one soldier can have a regional effect.”

And that, the NCOs agreed, requires servicemembers with attributes like those troops here are demonstrating. They’re worldly, informed about current events and, unlike during the days when the NCOs entered the military, they’re not afraid to ask the reasons behind the orders they’re given.

“I grew up in an Army that didn’t ask ‘why,’” Pritchett said.

“But ... it’s OK to ask why now, because they need to

know why,” Brownhill said. “They need to understand the implications behind what they’re doing.”

“[Troops here] know their craft,” Mellinger agreed. “But it’s also important that they know the potential impacts — favorable or unfavorable — of what they’re doing.”

With these new demands and responsibilities, the NCOs said, today’s servicemembers are demonstrating strong initiative as well. “They do a lot of things without being asked,” said Mellinger. “They just look and see something and say, ‘Hey, I can make this better.’”

Brownhill called the troops waging the war on terror a testament to the success of the all-volunteer force. “This is the best force we’ve ever fielded,” he said. “They understand the mission, and they’re committed to it.”

The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, instilled a renewed sense of patriotism that’s reflected in today’s armed forces, Pritchett said. “These young people want to give back and be part of something greater than themselves,” she said.

“I bust at the seams looking at these troops,” said Mellinger. “You just have to feel good about what you’re looking at. ... They’re doing fabulous work, day in and day out.”

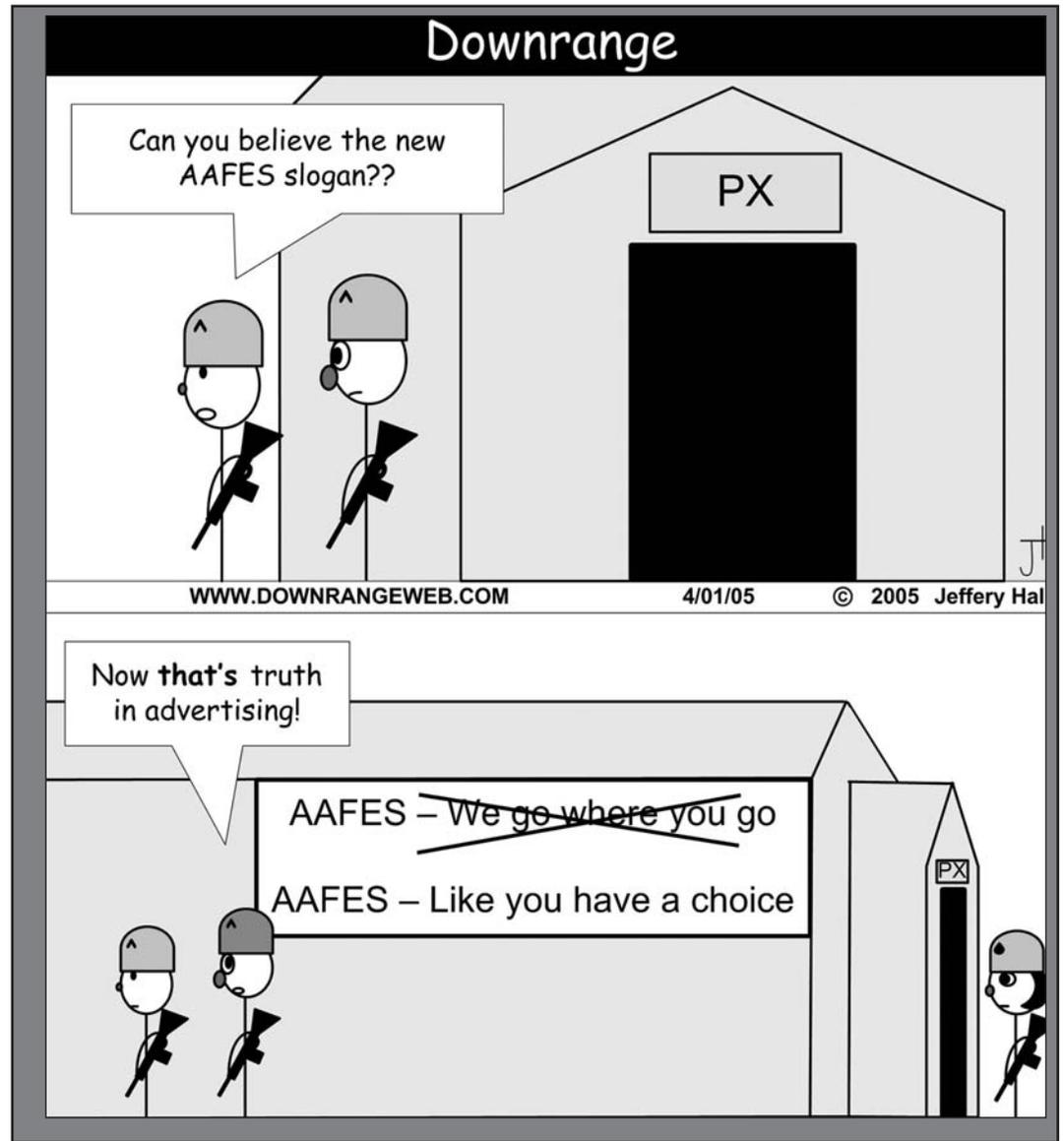
When they finish their deployments and leave the theater, Pritchett said, servicemembers take with them the satisfaction of knowing they’ve playing an important role in an important mission.

“The greatest reward they take with them is the knowledge that ‘I made a difference,’” she said.

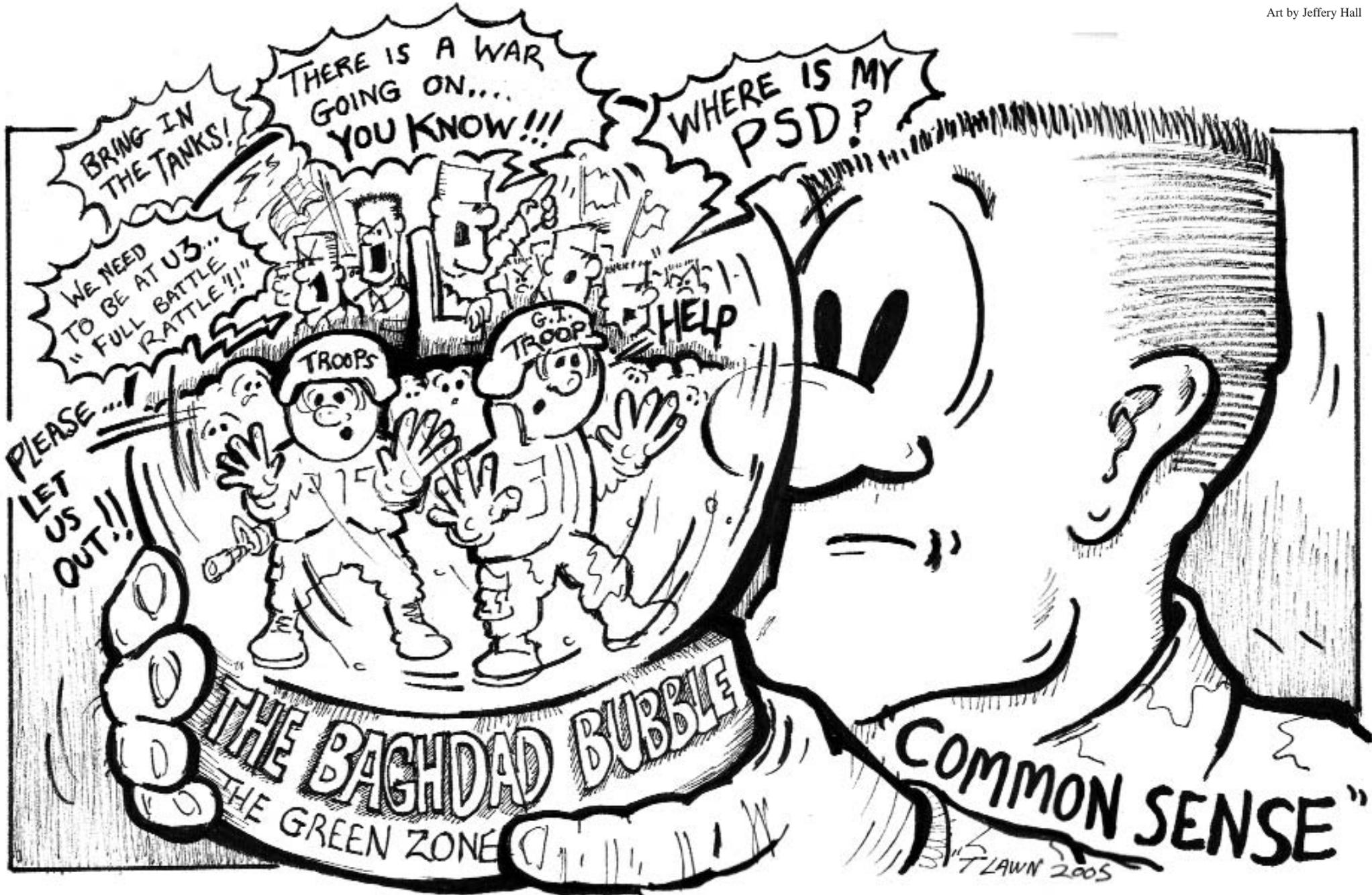
# Scimitar Slapstick



Art by Maj. James D. Crabtree



Art by Jeffery Hall



Art by Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn

# Sale of keepsakes improving Iraq's future

## Embassy souvenir sales create big donations for Iraqi charities

By Staff Sgt. Joseph Belon  
Multi National Force - Iraq Public Affairs

**INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Between day-to-day taskings, carrying out orders, and meeting dynamic deadlines, it's often not easy to know just what kind of a positive impact our actions have on the lives of ordinary Iraqis. But for Anne Pallotta, and those who've browsed her small, makeshift souvenir shop outside her office, a partial answer, at least, hangs tacked next to a simple price list for commemorative coins, pens, and other mementos.

It reads "Total donated to date: \$25,050."

That's the amount of money Anne's sales of souvenir items have made since the last time she printed her report, and every penny of it has gone to supporting local charities.

Her mini souvenir-shop began as a simple project last April to get commemorative coins made for fellow Coalition Provisional Authority employees and coworkers. As the items got around, others expressed an interest in different keepsakes, from pens, to polo shirts, to coffee mugs. And what was originally envisioned to be a nice way to raise a

few thousand dollars to split among few local charities has turned into a money-making machine benefiting many important causes to the tune of several thousand dollars each.

"It's really been a surprising success," said Pallotta. "In the beginning we had no idea these items would be so popular, or even which charities we were going to help. But thanks to everyone's generosity, word getting around, and, of course, Lt. Gen. [David H.] Petraeus putting up with all of this, to date we've given nearly \$7,000 to the Iraqi Battered Women's Shelter alone."

While Anne is quite humble concerning her own role in the success of this souvenir shop, insisting that it's something that just "took on a life of its own," it's hard for her to hide the pleasure she feels in knowing the money from her sales have touched peoples' lives. Whether it's describing a recent trip to see a local sheik with donations of blankets (nearly \$2,000 worth), or relating how nearly \$2,500 of souvenir funds are helping her purchase sewing machines for widowed Iraqi women in need of work, it's clear that this side project which she dismisses as "not even really [her] job" is important to her, and a



Photo by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas

**Anne Pallotta poses with merchandise she sells at her mini-shop at the Presidential Palace to benefit various Iraqi charities.**

big part of the reason she values her opportunity to serve in Baghdad.

"I've been here 19 months, and it's just been great. It's an exciting and important time in history, and I feel like I'm helping make a difference."

Pallotta credits her shop's success mostly to her customers, many of whom, besides

making purchases, also come to her with ideas of different local projects and causes that could benefit from the money her shop makes. She carefully researches each charity she agrees to help, and when it fits into her schedule, she goes out to see firsthand the impact her shop's donations are making.

"It really feels good when people come to me with ideas of ways we can help," Pallotta said. Although she welcomes new ideas from all sides, she's pretty clear who she'd like to help, "We're not really interested in, say, giving 'my friend Ahmet \$500'. Instead, we're looking for ways to improve the lives of many people, who may all have need of the same kind of thing, or suffer from the same kind of difficulty." And the record reflects this, from nearly \$5 thousand in donations to two local orphanages, to another \$5 thousand in donations of prosthetic equipment and supplies to Iraqis who've lost limbs through combat, bombings, or accidents.

So for anyone wanting a nice memento of their tour in Iraq, a quick browse among the wares, or conversation with the proprietor of Anne's informal "souvenir shop" (located at the Embassy Palace's Room 215 North) may make you feel the same.

No purchase required.

# Miskena becomes first Iraqi-American colonel

By Maj. Patricia C. Anderson  
Command Information Officer

**INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Frank Miskena, already the highest-ranking Iraqi-American officer in the U.S. Army, was recently promoted to full bird colonel.

Col. Miskena's rise to excellence did not occur overnight. The son of a Royal Iraqi Air Force officer, he was born in Baghdad in 1949. After graduating from Baghdad University with a doctorate in veterinary medicine and surgery, he was drafted into the Iraqi Army. He was stationed in northern Iraq and served in the Veterinary Corps for two years.

"I worked my butt off," Miskena said. "I worked as a veterinarian, company commander, translator — I had six different jobs!"

After his release, he taught veterinary parasitology at Baghdad University for two and a half years.

However, something just didn't seem right to him about the way his homeland was heading. In August 1977, he decided to leave Iraq with his mother and join his brother and sister in the United States.

"It was not easy to leave," Miskena recalls about the "hardest decision" he has made, but he says that God gave him the insight to do the right thing.

"I decided to leave this republic of fear; it was the turning point."

Because Miskena's Iraqi veterinary license was not recognized in the U.S., his first job was working for minimum wage, a far cry from his comfortable middle-class life in Baghdad. He worked odd jobs until he earned his license again.

Miskena became an American citizen in 1983, and the next year he joined the U.S. Army as a captain. He served on active duty for 12 years. In 1996, he joined an Army Reserve civil affairs unit. He also bought a small animal hospital in the Detroit area, where he makes his home with his wife, Lamia, another Iraqi expatriate. They have three



Photo by Staff Sgt. Angeliqne Perez

**Col. Deborah McManus congratulates Col. Frank Miskena on his promotion at his pinning ceremony March 16 at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.**

children: John, George, and Jessica.

Miskena takes the war on terror personally. On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, his first cousin, Michael Shakib, was on the 82nd floor of tower two of the World Trade Center when the first plane struck. Shakib made it out of the tower just before the building collapsed.

So Miskena was a natural choice for activation in January 2003 for Operation Iraqi Freedom as Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez' cultural advisor. Miskena served as a liaison between the U.S. Army and Iraqi civilian and municipal groups. He had a radio talk show on a city radio station and was known as the "Voice of Baghdad." His tour was officially over in December 2003, but he voluntarily extended his tour to brief deploying Marines about Iraqi cultural issues.

In August 2004 he volunteered for a six-month tour in Iraq after he saw Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus, but he again voluntarily extended his tour another three months. He works as the chief of the media monitoring branch for Multi-National Force - Iraq Strategic Communications.

Miskena is sobered by the change in his native country since the 1970s. He says that the social fabric of the nation has been shattered, "like taking a mirror and shooting it." He hopes the Iraqi people pick up their dream and continue to have hope.

Miskena has no sympathy for the terrorists who seek to undo the work of the coalition troops and the Iraqi people. When he met with Iraqi special forces troops, he told them to "aim, shoot and kill" when they saw terrorists, but warned that any captured terrorists must be treated according to the laws of conflict.

Miskena dismisses the significance of being the first Iraqi-American lieutenant colonel, and now colonel, in the U.S. Army. "I feel I am not really American, not really Iraqi — I feel I am global." But he is honored to be an American Soldier, and he thanks President Bush "for his vision to free my country, Iraq."

He is a strong believer that people who work hard will be rewarded, and that if you give to others, you will receive more than you gave. Miskena teaches Iraqi language and culture classes to IZ residents three nights a week. He prefers to call them "friendship classes," and believe his instruction teaches Coalition forces who attend the heart of Iraqi men and women.

For anyone hoping to follow in his footsteps to wear the eagle, he advises that you have to work hard to be somebody, and don't expect somebody to give you everything.

During OIF I, a young Iraqi man approached him and, speaking in English, offered to sell him cigarettes and soda. Miskena responded in Arabic, and asked why he spoke in English. The young man was blown away that Miskena spoke his language, and Miskena assured him, "I am one of you." The young man was even more impressed when he learned that Miskena was an officer, a veterinarian, special operations, airborne, and had won awards.

"Can I be like you?" the young Iraqi asked.

Miskena, always one to preach the value of education and hard work, told him to go to school and work hard. Then he told the young man, "No. You can be better than me."

# Driving integration

## Italian female Soldier drives for a cause

Story and photo by Sgt. Misha King  
Scimitar Assistant Editor

**CAMP MITTICA, TALLIL, Iraq** — The year 2000 was historic for the Italian Army. For the first time since it was formed in 1861, women joined its ranks and served side-by-side with men. Five years later at Camp Mittica, about 30 women serve alongside almost 4,000 men under the Italian Combined Joint Task Force - Iraq.

One of these women is Caporal Maggiore Valentina Secci (“seh’-chee”), a 24-year-old from Cagliari, Sardegna, an island off the west coast of Italy’s mainland. Although most of her peers are males, Secci said being a female in a newly integrated Army is not as bad as some may think.

“I like being in the Army. I think it’s really no different than being a female working in a hospital or somewhere else where men are the majority,” she said. “The Army isn’t the only occupation that’s predominantly male, so it’s not such a big change for me.

“For the most part, I’m treated fairly and have no problems. But like in everything, there’s always someone who acts stupid and can’t handle having a female as an equal.”

Even though deploying to Iraq can be a significant change, Secci said her life at Camp Mittica isn’t much different than her life back at the Command Division of the Brigata Bersaglieri Garibaldi at Caserta Campagna, a military base near Naples, Italy.

“I’m a transportation specialist, which means I drive all types of military vehicles,” said Secci. “Back home, I might drive someone to Naples, pick up mail, or maybe take a truck out to pick up or deliver supplies. Here, I’m the driver for the public information office. I drive the staff around and do occasional supply runs, but I also help out with various administrative duties. It’s cool because it gives my days some variety.”

Variety is just what the doctor ordered, or in this case, what the public affairs officer ordered.

“It’s a great thing having a female working with us,” said Capt. Giuseppe Celletti, a public affairs officer for ICJTF-I here. “The Army has been predominantly male for years, and it’s refreshing to have females around. It creates a more positive and fun environment.”

A positive environment is not only good for morale, but also good for work ethics, said Celletti.

“Caporal Maggiore Secci is a great Soldier,” Celletti said. “She’s someone who really wants to work and excel. She’s the only female in our office, but she doesn’t act differently about it. She’s very professional and a hard worker.”

“I really enjoy working for the public information office,” said Secci. “I personally haven’t had any issues with any of my coworkers; they treat me with respect and as an equal.”

When Secci’s four-month tour is over, she’ll return to her headquarters in Campania and wait to hear if she’ll be accepted into the Army full-time and



**Caporal Maggiore Valentina Secci looks at a press release as Capt. Giuseppe Celletti, a public affairs officer for the Italian Combined Joint Task Force - Iraq in Tallil, Iraq, explains the process of releasing information to the media.**

become a career Soldier.

“I’d like to make a career out of this,” she said. “My first [enlistment] as a ‘volunteer’ is almost up, and I have to decide whether or not I’ll continue. If I pass [the board], then I’ll stay on full-time.”

Secci explained as a “volunteer,” an Italian Soldier signs up under an initial three-year contract. If the Soldier decides to stay on full-time, he or she is evaluated by a board and if the Soldier passes, he or she is granted permission to become a full-time Soldier. In his or her fourth year, the Soldier is given a promotion under his or her new destination. If the Soldier doesn’t pass, Secci said he or she has the option to extend for two years up to three times before getting out completely.

As the end of her deployment approaches, Secci said she’ll continue to be the best Soldier she can be and try to make a difference for the Iraqi people.

“I’m just one person — one small piece of this big puzzle,” she said. “I’ve participated in activities like delivering supplies to hospitals and such. It was a great feeling being able to contribute to this cause, and I think we’re doing great things here. I’m glad I can contribute, no matter how small my part is.”

Editor’s note: The Italian rank “Caporal Maggiore” is similar to the U.S. Army’s specialist or corporal.

# Coalition Corner

... highlighting countries serving with MNF-Iraq



## Italy

local name: *Italia*

The Italian Republic is located in southern Europe, consisting of a peninsula extending into the central Mediterranean Sea, and two islands, Sicilia and Sardinia. Italy borders Vatican City, Austria, France, Slovenia and Switzerland. Size-wise, it is slightly larger than Arizona.

Italy was one of the founding members of the European Union and traded in its Italian Lira for the Euro in 2002. Italy’s 58 million-plus people primarily speak Italian, although parts of the Trentino-Alto Adige region are predominantly German-speaking. Italy also has many regional dialects, which vary drastically from northern to southern Italy.

From the Italian Riviera to Viareggio, Italy’s peninsula and islands give sea-lovers endless choices of vacation beaches. Moreover, Italy is home to some of the most famous historical cities in the world. Rome, the capital, is a favorite travel destination with famous landmarks, such as the Basilica and the Colosseum, which dates back to 80 A.D. Milan boasts the title of Italy’s financial and fashion capital. To see some of the most-renowned museums and art such as Michelangelo’s David, Florence is the place to go. Venice, the most famous canal city, and Verona, the city of Romeo and Juliet, are just a few more among many other famous Italian cities.

Italy is also known for its delicious food. Pasta, which is Italy’s national food, comes in countless shapes and sizes and is the main ingredient in thousands of dishes. Pizza, another world-famous food, was invented in Naples in 1773 by a cook named Vincenzo Corrado.

Besides boasting historic landmarks and scrumptious food, Italy is also home to many famous people. Luciano Pavarotti, a world-renowned opera singer, and Roberto Benigni, star and director of the 1998 Academy Award-winning movie “Life is Beautiful,” are both from Italy. The Europop group Eiffel 65, whose hit single “Blue (Da Ba Dee)” topped American and European charts in 2000, also claim Italia as their home.

When asked what he misses most about his country, Italian Navy Landing Force (Italian Marines) Cmdr. Donato Castrignano said, “I live near the beach, so I miss taking long bike rides along the coast, and windsurfing at one of the most beautiful beaches in Italy, Torre Guaceto. Those are just two of 218 things I miss dearly!”

Italy — yet another piece of the Multi-National Forces - Iraq puzzle, dedicated to rebuilding Iraq.

References: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), <http://europa.eu.int>, [www.wanderplanet.com](http://www.wanderplanet.com), [www.kidzworld.com](http://www.kidzworld.com), [www.italcultusa.org](http://www.italcultusa.org), [www.surf-sun.com](http://www.surf-sun.com), [www.italiansrus.com](http://www.italiansrus.com), [www.rollingstone.com](http://www.rollingstone.com).

Coalition Corner is compiled by Sgt. Misha King, assistant editor, [cpiccmdinfo@baghdadforum.com](mailto:cpiccmdinfo@baghdadforum.com).



## Frequencies

Al Asad  
Ar Ramadi  
Baghdad

Balad  
Camp Taji

93.3 FM  
107.3 FM  
92.3 FM  
and 107.7 FM  
107.3 FM  
102.5 FM

Fallujah 105.1 FM  
Kirkuk 107.3 FM  
Mosul 105.1 FM  
Q-West 93.3 FM  
Ridgeway 107.1 FM  
Sinjar 107.9 FM  
Talil AB 107.3 FM  
Tikrit 107.3 FM  
Taji 107.7 FM



More than 100 service members and civilians begin the International Zone's second monthly 5K run at the Presidential Palace compound March 25.

## 5K draws more attention, competition

Story and photos by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas  
Scimitar staff

**INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — While temperatures loomed in the 50s and vehicles were parked sporadically on the running route along the Embassy grounds, pedestrians looked confused as they made their ways to their respective jobs. They looked unaware that a group of more than 100 people gathered at the Presidential Palace pool March 25 to start the previously postponed 5K race.

As some individuals stretched and others chatted, it was apparent some of the participants were there strictly to win. Two individuals in particular, Philip Livingood and Wes Hayes, stood out amongst the competition. Livingood was the overall winner of the competition and his age group - 39 and under. He set a record with a time of 17 minutes, 50 seconds, which shattered the previous record of 18:38 set by Hayes Feb. 18. Hayes came in third place overall and second in the 39 and under age group in the current race. Six others shared the glory as the first and second place winners of their respective age groups.

"A lot of people like to run, so we put it together," said

William T. Wilkes III, MWR head coordinator of the event. "We still have to work out a few things, but it is getting bigger and better. Last time we had about 60 participants. This time we had close to 130. We had a lot more participation from the 40 and over level this time. We also gave out gift certificates from the [Army & Air Forces Exchange Services]."

The size of the event was a little surprising due to the amount of time provided to advertise it, he said. "The run was cancelled. It was supposed to be last week. Due to security reasons, we didn't have it."

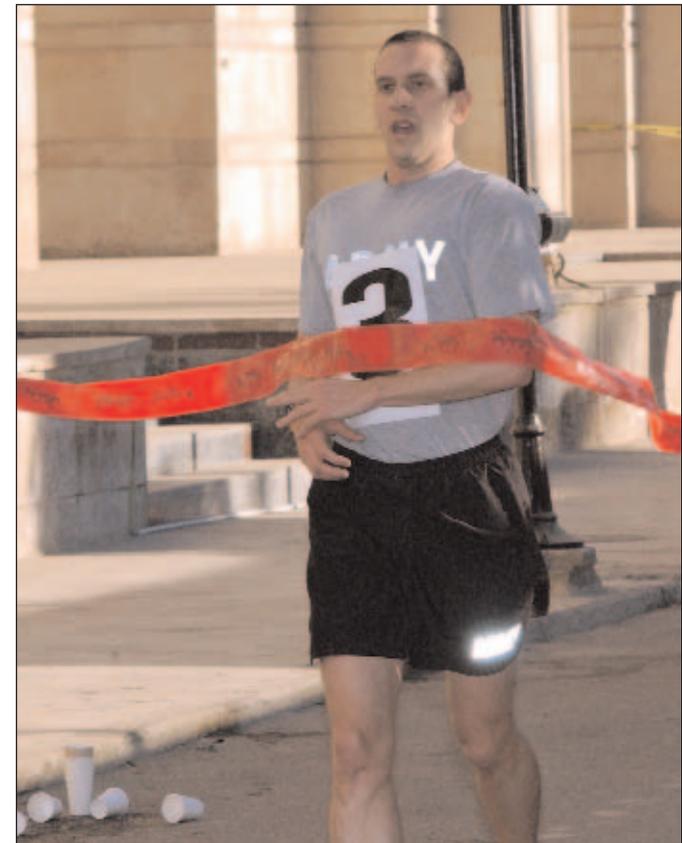
There were not only more participants, there were also many more spectators, Wilkes said. It was made known there needed to be much more cheering and motivation and that is exactly what the runners got. Up and down the route, there were MWR staff and IZ personnel cheering on the runners. The applause and motivational cheers helped some of the participants finish the race, said Renee Kirkland, the first place winner of the women's 40 and over category.

"It was a challenge. I challenged myself and my Wingman to complete the 5K," she said. "Once you get out and start running, it feels really good. We went out there and did the best we could do."

Kirkland's feelings appeared to be shared by most of the competitors. After most of the runners crossed the finish line, their faces lit up with smiles against the bright, warm sunlight.

"We just want to build up morale. It's what we do," Wilkes said.

As a part of building morale, the MWR staff plans to make this event monthly, he said. A 5K run/walk is scheduled for April. MWR also plans to have many more events in



Philip Livingood crosses the finish in 17 minutes, 50 seconds, an event record, as the overall winner and first place finisher of his age group - 39 and under.

the future for IZ personnel.

"These are baby steps for the ultimate goal, which is a marathon," Wilkes added.



Australia's Carney Elias leads the pack en route to the finish line. She finished first for her 39 and under age group.

### IZ March 5K Fun Run 1st and 2nd Place Finishers

#### Males 39 and under:

Philip Livingood 17:50

Wes Hayes 18:48

#### Males 40 and over:

Brendan Vasher 18:15

Bob Kerr 19:20

#### Females 39 and under:

Carney Elias 21:40

Carla Fitch 22:12

#### Females 40 and over

Renee Kirkland 29:27

Karen White 34:00