

SCIMITAR

Printed in the interest of Multi-National Forces - Iraq



Aussie makes history, Page 8

Vol. 3, No. 27

Baghdad, Iraq

July 8, 2005



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt D. Myles Cullen

With three American flags onboard his F-15 Eagle, Lt. Col. Matt Meloy prepares for a mission at a forward-deployed location in Southwest Asia. "I have two in the front of the canopy to represent my two kids, and I carry one on me for my wife," Meloy said.

Sexual assault victim advocate training comes to Iraq

By Spc. Mary Rose
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq — A Department of the Army-directed mobile training team taught sexual assault awareness to more than 200 Soldiers at Camp Victory's Sports Oasis Dining Facility recently.

Training the Soldiers to become either unit victim advocates or sexual assault response coordinators, the multi-disciplinary team — made up of specialists from legal, medical, personnel and investigative fields — qualifies Soldiers to assist and be companions for sexual assault victims while they go through the medical, legal and investigation process after an assault. During the four-day course, students were

also trained to be familiar with local medical processes, so they can give assault victims a general idea of procedures they will go through if an assault should occur.

The Army has always had a program in place to deal with individual assault cases, but the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program is the first open forum to give everyone a standard way of dealing with a situation, said Lt. Col. Mary Dooley-Bernard, Family Advocacy Program Manager, U.S. Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation. The program allows the UVA- and SARC-trained Soldiers to give information and referrals to provide the necessary support to a victim, she said.

"They are not counselors or therapists," Dooley-Bernard said, "but they do need to have the information to provide those resources to that victim."

At least two Soldiers from each U.S. Army battalion-level unit in Iraq attended the course, qualifying them to be UVAs. Also, one Soldier from each brigade-size element qualified to become a SARC.

If an assault occurs, a victim has many options, but by going to a SARC-trained Soldier at his or her brigade, he or she has the opportunity to keep their situation private. Victims are offered a UVA as a companion to assist them with questions about medical and legal support without an investigation being opened, said Sgt. 1st Class Dean Sizemore, Task Force Dragon SARC, Multi-National Corps - Iraq.

"Everything that is told to a Soldier who has been trained

See *ASSAULT*, Page 4

Inside

Gen. Casey gives testimony at Senate committee Page 4

Chaplain says it doesn't get any harder than this Page 12

From school to skies: A Marine's quest for more Page 14

'Five Cs' simplify improvised explosive device fight

By Staff Sgt. Mark St.Clair
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq — Five potentially life-saving words are being driven home to Coalition service members and civilians throughout the Operation Iraqi Freedom theater.

Confirm, clear, call, cordon and control are the "Five Cs" that represent a simple set of guidelines that Coalition Forces can and should use when encountering a suspected improvised explosive device. "The reason we teach the Five Cs is because they make an easy to remember guide for [service members] to follow if they suspect or find an IED," said Alex Szigedi, operations officer, Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Task Force, Camp Victory.

Using methods like the Five Cs simplifies IED awareness and "helps in the decision-making process, helping it become second-nature. They're also on the IED Smart Card," said Lt. Col. Ted Martin, chief, JIEDDTF. The IED Smart Card is produced by the Victory-based IED Working Group.

The IED Working Group, led by British Maj. Gen. Mark Mans, MNC-I deputy commander, meets weekly. Liaisons from major subordinate ground units, information operations delegates, ordnance-destruction contractors and others come together to discuss advances being made in the IED fight, changes in insurgent tactics and the most important issue: how to get valuable information down to where it matters — the troops on the ground.

"We'd never encountered anything like (IEDs) on the battlefield, and we're not shy about going to people with expertise," said Lt. Col. Ted Martin, chief, JIEDDTF. Some of the "people with expertise" have been Coalition Soldiers in the British Army, who have been dealing with IEDs in theaters like Northern Ireland for years. The British used a Four-C model to counter IEDs in the past, and Coalition Forces in Iraq used that as a framework and adapted it to the

present fight, said Martin.

Confirm

The first step when encountering a suspected IED is confirming its existence. If service members suspect an IED while performing 5- and 25-meter searches of their positions, they should act like it could detonate at any moment, even if the suspected IED turns out to be a false alarm. Using as few people as possible, troops should begin looking for telltale signs of IEDs — like wires or pieces of ordnance sticking out of the ground. As Martin said, "There's no place like Iraq when it comes to ammunition on the ground." So what looks like an IED may be a piece of unexploded ordnance, but it should be treated like an IED until it is determined that it is not.

While searching, troops should try to stay as safe as possible, using anything available for protection. If a better view is needed while searching, Soldiers should move as safely as possible while maintaining as much distance as they can from the suspected IED to continue searching. Rifle scopes, binoculars and even cameras can be used to search from a safer distance. It also may be helpful to ask local Iraqis for information, but troops should never ask them to search too. Personnel should never try to touch a suspected IED and should never try to do the job explosive ordnance disposal technicians are specially trained to do.

Clear

If an IED has been confirmed, the next step is to clear the area. The safe distance is determined by several factors: the tactical situation, avoiding being predictable and moving several hundred meters away from the IED. Everyone within the safe distance should be evacuated. If more room is needed, such as when the IED is vehicle-borne, Soldiers should clear a wider area and constantly direct people out of the danger area. The only people going near the IED should be those who are there to diffuse it, such as EOD personnel. While clearing the area, troops should constantly be on the lookout for secondary IEDs. If any such devices are found, they should reposition to a safe area and report the find to the ranking service member on the scene. Soldiers should try not to set patterns while performing clearing procedures, so the enemy will not be able to learn from our tactics and techniques. By not setting patterns and monitoring non-Coalition personnel watching the situation, troops are better protected.

Call

While the area surrounding the IED is being



Joint IED-Defeat Task Force photo

When an improvised explosive device has been found and trained personnel have been called in to manage the situation, troops on the scene should cordon and control all access routes to the danger area.

cleared, a nine-line IED/UXO report should be called in. The report is much like the nine-line report used for medically evacuating casualties, and includes the necessary information for the unit's Tactical Operations Center to assess the situation and prepare an appropriate response to clear the IED as the threat.

Cordon

After the area has been cleared and the IED has been called in, Soldiers should establish blocking positions around the area to prevent vehicle and foot traffic from approaching the IED, make sure the safe area is truly safe by checking for secondary IEDs and make use of all available cover. The affected area's entire perimeter should be secured and dominated by all available personnel, and any available obstacles should be used to block vehicle approach routes.

Troops should scan both near and far and look for an enemy who may be watching and waiting to detonate the IED. Insurgents often hide in locations where they can see the device and ascertain the right moment to detonate. Personnel should randomly check people leaving the area to deter attacks, again avoiding setting patterns. Establishing obstacles to control approaches to security positions is another tactic the JIEDDTF stresses, since insurgents may try to attack local security forces using a vehicle-borne IED.

See *IED*, Page 4



Joint IED-Defeat Task Force photo

Explosive ordnance disposal technicians, such as those pictured above, are called in to deal with improvised explosive device threats throughout Iraq.

MNF-I Commanding General
Gen. George Casey

MNF-I PAO
Col. Dewey G. Ford

Command Information Chief
Maj. Patricia C. Anderson
patricia.anderson@iraq.centcom.mil

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



Editor.....Staff Sgt. Brett B. McMillan
brett.mcmillan@iraq.centcom.mil

Assistant Editor.....Sgt. Misha King
misha.king@iraq.centcom.mil

Staff.....Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn
timothy.lawn@iraq.centcom.mil

Staff.....Sgt. W. Watson Martin
william.martin@iraq.centcom.mil

Staff.....Spc. Ferdinand Thomas
ferdinand.thomas@iraq.centcom.mil

Scimitar welcomes columns, commentaries, articles and letters from readers. Send submissions to scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil

We reserve the right to edit for propriety, clarity and space.

The Scimitar can also be viewed on the Web at http://www.mnf-iraq.com/publications_theater.htm

The Scimitar is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of this paper are not necessarily the official views of or endorsed by the U.S. Government or Department of Defense. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Public Affairs Office of the Multi-National Force - Iraq. Stars and Stripes newspaper is not affiliated with MNF-I and acts only as a distributing source for the Scimitar. Questions and comments should be directed to the editor at scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil.

PERSPECTIVES

Who I'd be if I weren't a Soldier

By Staff Sgt. David Green
Combined Press Information Center

One of my earliest memories is of sirens going off in the middle of the night. I remember waking up incredibly scared. My mom came in to comfort me, but at 4 years old and really scared, I needed the kind of security that only a father can provide. My father came in the room, kissed me on the forehead and left. Like a lot of memories at that age, it is hard to recall all the specifics, but I'm reasonably sure it happened pretty close to the way I just described it. At 4 years old in a time of need, my father walked out the door.

Years later, I recalled the memory and asked my mother about it. Turns out it was a drill. We were living in Germany, and my father was a sergeant in the 11th Cavalry Regiment. His job that night was to secure me — and a lot of other people, too (or at least to practice in case he ever really needed to react). He did what so many over here have done. He left his family when they needed him because others needed him more. My father lived the Army.

Even today, years into retirement, he works as a government contractor doing warfighter exercises to train senior Army leaders. You ask him, and he'll tell you he couldn't see himself doing anything else. My experiences growing up with a military father eventually led me into embarking on my own career in the Army.

Now, 10 years into it and thousands of miles from my wife, with temperatures over 100 degrees, daily power outages and water interruptions, I wonder if I could see myself doing anything else. The answer is a resounding yes, but not because I hate this job. Sure, the hours are horrible and pay isn't the greatest in the world, but at least we get to

help people. And that is exactly what I'd be doing if I weren't in the Army.

Blame it on my upbringing or the stereotypical Irish blood that runs in my veins, but I could never see myself doing a job for just the money. It would have to be a job of substance — a job that means something more than just work. Police officers in any major city can tell you just how dangerous and rewarding a job they have. Firefighters stand ready to rush into a burning building if need be to save a single human life. School teachers work their entire lives in the hope of helping children grow into productive adults. These are the types of jobs I see myself doing if I weren't in the Army.

See, I believe when you strip away the bonuses, the college money, the medals and the uniforms, there beats the heart of a servant in every member of the military. Just like any other heart, it beats stronger in some than others, but it is there somewhere. The desire to help people, to protect and defend those who need defending is there deep down. I know it beats in me, and I'm sure that even faintly, you'll find it in yourself.

This is why I put up with substandard living conditions. This is why I

accept being away from my family in intense heat — because I have an innate need to help people. If I wasn't a Soldier, I'd be a cop, firefighter or teacher. I'm just not sure the end result would be any different.

I can change what I do, but I can't change what I am. The real question isn't what I would be doing if I wasn't in the Army. The question is how I would accomplish the same results. My family knows this, and they understand that if I wasn't in the Army, I'd still be ready to walk out the door as soon as the sirens sounded because ultimately, being a Soldier is what I do, but it is only an outlet for who I am.

“... Ultimately, being a Soldier is what I do, but it is only an outlet for who I am.”

Here we come!



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremy K. Cross

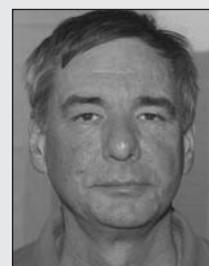
Iraqi Army Soldiers from the 5th Brigade, 6th Division, march in a parade to celebrate the activation of their unit at Muthana Air Field, Baghdad, Iraq, June 29.

Scimitar Pulse

If you were not in the military or working for a federal agency/contractor, what would you be doing for a living?

“I don't know because I never thought about doing anything else.”

Air Force Maj. Randy Workman
Multi-National Force - Iraq



“I am retired military. I'd be playing golf.”

Tim Carney
Iraq Reconstruction Management Office

“I would be a program coordinator for a homeless shelter.”

Army Staff Sgt. Dawn Brewer
55th Medical Company



“I don't know. This is all I've ever done.”

Army Sgt. 1st Class Glen Hawkins
Multi-National Force - Iraq

“I'd be working with the 78th Division as a civilian.”

Army Col. John McLean
78th Division



“I'd be relaxing somewhere on a beach with my wife.”

British Navy Cmdr. Andrew Burns
Multi-National Force - Iraq

“I'd be back in Washington, D.C., working for the Department of Agriculture.”

James Smith
Department of Agriculture



MNF-I commander testifies before Senate committee

The following is testimony given before the Senate Armed Services Committee June 23 by Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., Multi-National Force - Iraq commanding general.

WASHINGTON — As we approach the one-year anniversary of sovereignty in Iraq, I continue to be inspired by the demonstrated courage, conviction, tenacity and commitment of the Iraqi people as they march toward democracy.

After more than three decades of living under a brutal dictator, the Iraqis have embraced the ideals of self-governance and tolerance and are fighting and dying to build a better future for all Iraqis. Such commitment deserves our admiration and continued support.

In the past year, the Iraqis, supported by the Coalition, have established an interim government, neutralized the Shi'a insurgency, eliminated terrorist and insurgent safe havens across Iraq, mobilized their security forces to confront the insurgency, increased the pace of economic development, seated a democratically-elected transitional national assembly, and peacefully passed control from the interim government to the transitional government.

And the new government, after a transitional period, has formed and aggressively continued to campaign against the terrorists and insurgents while building inclusive political, governmental and constitutional processes.

The Iraqi people are serious about their future. And they're serious about building a government that respects the human rights of all Iraqis, and they are serious about defeating the terrorists and the insurgents that are doing the utmost to deny them their dreams.

I sense that many view the daily snapshots of violence in Iraq in isolation and conclude that our efforts in Iraq are not progressing. That is what the terrorists and the insurgents would like you to believe.

Quite the contrary, the Iraqi people make progress every day. They're fighting for their future against the remnants of the regime that tyrannized them for over three decades. And they're fighting for their future against the extremists with the same goals of those who attacked the United States on September 11th.

Now, you hear a lot about what the insurgents do. So I thought it might be useful to consider what the insurgents and the terrorists have not done over the past year.

First of all, they have lost their safe haven in Fallujah, and they have not been able to reconstitute it. Secondly, they have not been able to expand their support base across Iraq, nor have they attracted a broad following, largely because they have no positive vision for Iraq's future to offer.

Even by our most pessimistic estimates on the size of the insurgency, we believe the insurgency constitutes less than one-tenth of one percent of the Iraqi population. And as I have said several times, this is a localized insurgency. And in 14 of the 18 provinces, they still average less than three incidents of violence per day.

The insurgents also have not prevented the growth of the Iraqi Security Forces, even with almost daily attacks. The Iraqi Security Forces, after struggling last spring and fall, drew great confidence from their decisive role in protecting the 30 January elections.

These Iraqi Security Forces, that now number around 170,000, have been further enabled by a more proactive partnership with Coalition Forces that, while only a few months old, has enabled the Iraqis to begin moving toward assuming the lead for their counterinsurgency effort.

The insurgents have also not sparked sectarian violence, although they work hard at it every day. But they can't do this, because the Iraqi commitment to something better is so strong.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the insurgents have not stopped political and economic development in Iraq. The well-known 30 January elections, where eight and a half million Iraqis defied intimidation and terror to take a stake in their future, the formation of the first democratically-elected government in decades, and the beginnings of the development of an Iraqi constitution, all indicate that the momentum is in favor of democracy and not terror.

What perhaps is less well-known is the progress in the economic sector, progress that only begins to meet Iraq's needs, but progress nonetheless. In the last year, through the hard work of Iraqis, the U.S. embassy and Coalition Forces, we have started over 2,500 of the 3,100 reconstruction projects funded by our government, and we've completed over 1,300 of those.

Even more heartening is the private construction of homes and businesses that we witness on a daily basis and attribute to Iraq's growing economy and public confidence. Iraq slowly gets better every day.

Unfortunately, a tough part about counterinsurgencies is that the insurgents don't have to win; they just have to not lose. This, as General Abizaid said, is a battle of wills, and the terrorists and

insurgents are challenging ours.

They will continue to contest the Iraqi political, economic and social advances by attacking the innocent men, women and children, symbols of the government and Coalition Forces. But they will not succeed.

The stark reality is that insurgencies haven't done well against democratically-elected governments, particularly insurgencies that offer no positive vision. Recent polls confirm that Iraqis are, one, confident in their government and in their security forces; they are optimistic about their future; and they intend to vote in large numbers in both the upcoming constitutional referendum and the democratic elections.

The Iraqi people are committed to something better than the tyranny that they have known for the past three decades and are fighting every day for the dream of a better future.

The last year was one of progress and firsts for Iraq, but one also impacted by terror and violence. Yet the Iraqi people persevered to their greatest accomplishment in decades, the January elections.

Six months before the constitutional elections, I will tell you, Mr. Chairman, that we are well-positioned for another Iraqi success. To be sure, there are long-term development challenges and much to be done. And to be sure, Iraq's steady progress will be contested.

But this insurgency and these terrorists will ultimately be defeated as Iraqis elect a government based on an Iraqi constitution that respects the human rights of all Iraqis, as they build Iraqi Security Forces that can maintain domestic order and deny Iraq as a safe haven for terror, and as they continue economic development programs that help Iraq recover from decades of neglect.

The Iraqi people will continue to be enabled in their journey by the determined efforts of the Coalition and our embassy personnel that have done so much and that have given so much over the past two years.

We are humbled by the sacrifices that they and their families have made, and we continue to be humbled by their commitment and their resolve. I could not be prouder of the magnificent men and women of our armed forces.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I can tell you that we make progress in Iraq every day. But it's hard work and it's a challenging environment. And, that said, after a year on the ground, I can tell you that I am more convinced than ever that this mission is both realistic and achievable. It will require patience and will, but both the region and our country will be better when Iraq succeeds.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

IED

from Page 2

Control

Since the distance of all personnel from the IED directly affects their safety, service members should control the site to prevent someone from straying dangerously close to the IED until it is cleared. The task force stresses that no one should leave the area until EOD gives the "all clear." While controlling the site, make sure all the troops in the area know what to do if attacked with small arms or rocket-propelled grenades.

If troops are a part of a patrol or convoy that finds an IED, they should remember the Five Cs in order to deal with the situation as quickly and safely as possible. An IED that is found is still an IED attack, said the JIEDDTF. By finding the IED, it is the enemy's attack that has been disrupted.

"[The Five Cs] reinforce IED awareness and training. It's a checklist that helps you think; it's a common-sense thing ... to help people remember the proper steps when encountering an IED," said Szigedi. (Editor's note: Information in this article was provided by the Joint IED Defeat Task Force.)

Use the five C's to secure an IED site.

- Confirm : the device**
- Clear : the area**
- Call : EOD**
- Cordon : the perimeter**
- Control : site access**



0035

IEDs KILL



Assault

from Page 1

as a SARC or UVA is confidential," Sizemore said. "They are protected by the Department of the Army policy covering the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program."

SARC training is more in-depth training than UVA training, allowing SARCs to become program trainers themselves. The SARCs will be able to train their replacements

using the train-the-trainer approach, Dooley-Bernard said.

"It is an important and informative class. It teaches us how to react to a victim and let them know that they won't get shoved under the carpet," said Staff Sgt. Regina Patton, UVA, Task Force Dragon, Multi-National Corps - Iraq.

There is a selection criterion to become a unit advocate. The commanders look for Soldiers in their unit who are responsible and who want to fill the position, Dooley-Bernard said.

The training is not only for the Army; it is a Department

of Defense initiative.

"All military services will have some type of advocate," Dooley-Bernard said. "Each branch of service will have different policies covering their programs, but they will all have an advocacy program."

All together, the mobile team trained 500 Soldiers throughout the Operation Iraqi Freedom theater. Because of the newly-qualified Soldiers, sexual assault victims in Iraq now have the opportunity to seek assistance and care in private.

Operation Bald Head

Soldiers shave heads in support of kids with cancer

116th Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq — Soldiers from the 116th Brigade Combat Team, in a joint operation with the Airmen of the Air Force's 506th Air Expeditionary Group, participated in a bald-off to show support for kids with cancer June 25.

One hundred and sixteen Soldiers and Airmen stationed in northern Iraq took part in Operation Desert Eagle by volunteering to shave their heads to show their support for children with cancer and to send the message they care.

The event was the brainchild of a Boise

City Police officer from Idaho. He mentioned it to Staff Sgt. Thomas Wilson, 116th BCT operations sergeant. He planned and orchestrated a group photograph and the signing of a poster-sized picture of the newly bald participants, which he will hand-deliver personally to children with cancer when he goes home on leave soon.

"We're here doing a tough, dangerous job for our country. We volunteered to do what we do. Some folks back home think that makes us heroes. These kids didn't choose to go through what they are. They're the real heroes," said Wilson.

These members of the U.S. military recognize the struggle, perseverance and courage of all young people fighting to overcome cancer.

The 116th Brigade Combat Team is composed of units from Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Utah, North Dakota, Maryland and New Jersey. The unit comprises headquarters and staff sections, the 2nd and 3rd Armor Battalions, the 1/148th Field Artillery Battalion, the 1/163rd Mechanized Infantry Battalion, the 145th Support Battalion, the 116th Engineer Battalion and various intelligence, signal and specialized units. The 116th BCT is one of several Army National Guard units deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

The U.S. Air Force's 506th AEG is the unit responsible for security as well as projects and development of Kirkuk Regional Airbase (FOB Warrior). The base serves as home to the headquarters of both units. Some of the current components of the 506th AEG are stationed in Idaho.



Photo by Spc. Cathy S. Alberto

Soldiers and Airmen prepare to take a group photo at FOB Warrior June 25 after shaving their heads to show support for children with cancer.

General provides Iraq update

By Maj. Patricia C. Anderson
Command Information Officer

INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq — Brig. Gen. C. Donald Alston, Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Communication, fielded questions from the press on June 30 at the convention center here.

In a brief opening statement, he highlighted major accomplishments of the Iraqi people in their first year of sovereignty, led by the elections on Jan. 30, and mentioned key future milestones, such as the constitutional referendum in October. He also praised the rapid development of the Iraqi Security Forces.

"These forces have come a long way in a relatively short period of time," he said. "There were four battalions a year ago, and there are over 100 today."

Members of the western media were mostly concerned with the state of the insurgency.

When asked if he viewed the recent incidents in the Al Anbar province as isolated incidents or the symptoms of a renewed push by the insurgency, Alston said that "the insurgents look at Fallujah as a symbol of failure," noting that it was a safe haven for them until last November.

"In June we have seen some losses due to [improvised explosive devices], potent IEDs, and lethal roadside IEDs," he said. "We lost troops in Fallujah in one very tragic event ... last week to a suicide car bomb."

Alston said it is hard to compare the level of the insurgency from one year ago, because so much has transpired during that year, including the Fallujah offensive last November. "We have seen nothing like those levels of attack since then. We have

seen this spring a move towards car bombs because of their lethality and success rate." He noted that not all vehicle-borne IEDs are successful, but they tend to be more "spectacular."

"We have seen an enemy that has adapted, tried to be as productive with the limited means it has," he said. Alston said that it is not particularly difficult to operate a car bomb for someone willing to give his life. "We have had success in preventing bombs," by stopping them from being built, capturing the bomb-making factories, and stopping some vehicles before they reach their intended targets, he said. For example, after Operation Al Barkh, the number of successful car bombs dropped by half, Alston said. But he conceded that the problem with suicide bombs and VBIEDs will continue for some time.

"Clearly the targets [of the terrorists] are Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi civilians when it comes to suicide attacks. The civilians have been targeted by the insurgency."

In response to questioning about the development of the ISF, Alston said he was encouraged by the rapid progress made in the past 18 months. He pointed out Haifa Street as a success story, and he noted portions of Iraq have been transferred from Coalition to Iraqi protection.

Alston noted that protecting Iraq's borders is a difficult task that involves more than posting border guards. He stressed the need for cooperation from Iraq's neighbors.

Finally, Alston stated that if the insurgents do want to negotiate, that the Iraqi government will take the lead, and that Coalition Forces would only facilitate the meeting. He stressed that the insurgents must lay down their arms before taking part in the diplomatic and political process.

Gulf Region Division welcomes new commander

By LuAnne Fantasia
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq — Brig. Gen. William H. McCoy, Jr., took command of the Gulf Region Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers June 29 in a military ceremony at the U.S. Embassy. Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock, Chief of Engineers, and Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, hosted the ceremony. McCoy replaces Brig. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, who returns to Washington, D.C., as the deputy commanding general, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Bostick served as the second commander of the Gulf Region Division, which was activated Jan. 25, 2004.

"Tom Bostick took command of the Gulf Region Division at the same time of the Iraqi transition to sovereignty in June 2004 and proceeded to make steady progress in the largest reconstruction effort undertaken since World War II," Strock said.

"He is a deeply caring and determined leader — tirelessly engaging others ... to give the people of Iraq a sense of hope and a sense of future."

Speaking directly to Bostick, Strock said, "You have every reason to be proud of the work you've done here, Tom, and I look forward to your return to Washington, D.C."

"In the meantime, Bill McCoy will take the Gulf Region Division to the next level," Strock added.

Bostick began his remarks by saying that no one person is as smart, as strong or as capable as everyone together on the team.

"Today, we are working to reconstruct Iraq while fighting a counterinsurgency," Bostick said. "Reconstruction in Iraq is dangerous, historic and very rewarding to those serving here."

"But the Iraqi people are optimistic about everything," Bostick said, adding that he had talked with one of the Iraqi ministers yesterday. "No, they're not satisfied about the water or the electricity, but they remain positive about the reconstruction of their country."

During the formal and traditional ceremony, Bostick and McCoy passed the ceremonial colors, symbolizing the change of command.

McCoy's previous job was assistant commandant for the U.S. Army Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. A native of Texas, McCoy graduated from Texas A&M University with a Bachelor of Science degree

in building construction. He was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers in 1974.

"To the Iraqi employees and the U.S. Soldiers and civilians of GRD ... you make a difference every day," McCoy said to the guests. "Everything you do to work and help the Iraqi people moves them forward in their quest for democracy."

"We take a lot for granted as Americans, including saying the Pledge of Allegiance," he continued. "To pledge our allegiance to a flag ... and to one nation under God is a freedom we take for granted with liberty and justice for all."

As commanding general of the Gulf Region Division, McCoy and the Soldiers and civilian employees of his organization work side-by-side with Iraqi citizens executing the Iraq Reconstruction Program. At transition of sovereignty June 2004 there were over 200 reconstruction projects started. Today, there are more than 2,500 projects started, valued at



Gulf Region Division photo by Jim Gordon

Brig. Gen. William McCoy, Jr. speaks at the change of command ceremony where he took command of the Gulf Region Division June 29.

\$5.8 billion. Currently, over 1,380 projects have been completed, at an associated value of \$1.4 billion.

Nationwide, there are approximately 147,000 Iraqis working in support of the reconstruction effort. Currently, there are 223 local nationals employed by GRD — 31 percent of GRD's total workforce.

DoD announces increase in death gratuity, SGLI

WASHINGTON — Department of Defense announced July 1 a significant increase in the death gratuity for the survivors of service members killed in action and the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance coverage for service members deployed to designated combat zones.

The Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror and Tsunami Relief Act 2005 (Public Law 109-13) increases this immediate cash payment from \$12,420 to \$100,000 for survivors of those whose death is as a result of hostile actions and occurred in a designated combat operation or combat zone or while training for combat or performing hazardous duty.

The supplemental also increases the maximum amount of SGLI coverage from \$250,000 to \$400,000 for all service members, effective Sept. 1, and provides that the department will pay or reimburse the premiums to service members who are deployed in a designated combat zone for \$150,000 of SGLI coverage.

Until the effective date for the SGLI increase, the supplemental provides for a special death gratuity of \$150,000, retroactive to Oct. 7, 2001, for survivors of those whose death is in a designated combat operation or combat zone or occurred while training for combat or performing hazardous duty.

The Secretary of Defense has designated all areas where service members are in receipt of the combat zone tax exclusion as qualifying combat zones and all members deployed outside the United States on orders in support of Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom as participating in qualifying combat operations.

Effective immediately, survivors of service members who die in these qualifying zones or operations will receive the increased benefits. The services will also identify eligible survivors of service members who died in these designated zones and operations since Oct. 7, 2001, and begin making the retroactive payments within a few days.

The process of identifying all eligible beneficiaries and completing these retroactive payments will take several months. Survivors of members who did not die in a designated combat operation or combat zone, but were training for combat or performing hazardous duty, will also qualify for the increased benefits.

Circumstances that qualify include: aerial flight, parachute duty, demolition duty, diving duty, war games, practice alerts, tactical exercises, leadership reaction courses, grenade and live fire exercises, hand-to-hand combat training, confidence and obstacle courses, accidents involving a military vehicle or military weapon, exposure to toxic fumes or gas and explosion of military ordnance.

No amount of monetary compensation or level of assistance can replace a human life. However, it is our country's duty to recognize the loss of a service member with dignified and appropriate support for the family members left behind. These death benefit enhancements recognize the direct sacrifice of life of those service members placed in harm's way and in service to the nation.

All beneficiaries for retroactive payments will be contacted by mail or telephone. If someone is not contacted, but thinks he may be entitled to added benefits, he may inquire at the following addresses or telephone numbers:

Army: Department of the Army Casualty Operations at toll-free 1-800-626-3317.

Navy: Navy Personnel Command (PERS-62), 5720 Integrity Drive, Millington, TN 38055-6200 or call toll-free 1-800-368-3202.

Air Force: Air Force Personnel Center Casualty Services Branch at AFPC/DPFCS, 550 C Street West, Suite 14, Randolph AFB TX 78150-4216 or call toll-free 1-800-433-0048.

USMC: HQMC Casualty Office, 3280 Russell Road, Attn: MRPC, Quantico, VA 22134 or call toll-free 1-800-847-1597.

USCG: Coast Guard Personnel Services Center, 444 SE Quincy St., Topeka KS 66683-3591; Phone 785-339-3570.

Last TSP 'open season' ended June 30

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas — The restrictions of having only two open seasons each year for civilian and military members to sign up for, stop, resume or change their Thrift Savings Plan contributions has ended.

Public Law 108-469 went into effect July 1, eliminating restrictions on contribution elections that have always been tied to TSP open seasons, officials said.

The elimination of open seasons affects civilian and military members who are eligible to contribute to TSP in the following ways:

- Gives people more flexibility in managing their TSP contribution amounts depending on their personal situations.

- Civilians can now make 26 or 27 TSP contribution elections per year (based on pay periods) and service members 24 per year.

- Contribution elections submitted on or after July 1 will be effective at the beginning of the pay period following the one in which the election is submitted.

"What hasn't changed is the contribution limits set for 2005," said Janet Thomas of Air Force Personnel Center's civilian benefits and entitlement service team here.

Employees may continue to contribute to TSP based on the system they are currently under for 2005 — Civil Service Retirement System, 10 percent; Federal Employees' Retirement System, 15 percent; or the military pay system, 10 percent.

The law eliminating open seasons does not eliminate the waiting period that newly hired or rehired FERS employees not previously eligible must serve before they can begin to receive agency contributions. Participants who make an in-service financial hardship withdrawal may not make TSP contribution elections for a six-month period following the withdrawal.

"As a reminder, Air Force-serviced civilian employees must make TSP contribution elections via the (Benefits and Entitlements Service Team) automated phone system or the Employee Benefits Information System," Thomas said.

Instructions on how to access the BEST automated Web

and phone system is available online at:

www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/best/automated.htm.

Information on enrollment in TSP is available online at www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/. Information on the overall TSP is also available at www.tsp.gov. (Courtesy of AFPC News Service)

Air Force approves Afghanistan, Iraqi campaign medals

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas — Air Force officials have authorized Airmen to wear the Afghanistan Campaign Medal and the Iraqi Campaign Medal.

The Department of Defense campaign medals apply to active-duty Airmen, reservists and guardsmen deployed on or after Oct. 24, 2001, for Operation Enduring Freedom and March 19, 2003, for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Airmen must have been assigned, attached or mobilized to units operating in Afghanistan or Iraq for 30 consecutive days or 60 nonconsecutive days to be eligible. The ACM is awarded for service for all land areas within and all airspaces above Afghanistan. The ICM is for service covering all land areas within Iraq, all adjoining water areas out to 12 nautical miles and all airspaces above those areas.

Airmen are not entitled to more than one campaign and/or expeditionary medal for the same action, achievement or period of service. There are also no devices for either campaign medals or the Global War on Terrorism-Expeditionary Medal.

A period of service is defined as an area of deployment and includes the number of days criteria outlined above. Airmen begin a second period of service when they forward deploy or return to home station and then deploy later.

Airmen deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq, who have 30 consecutive or 60 nonconsecutive days between the eligibility period and April 30 may elect to wear either the appropriate campaign medal or the GWOT-E medal, but not both.

Those who deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq, who have 30 consecutive or 60 nonconsecutive days after April 30 can only

Continued on next page

Tip from Iraqi civilian leads to 116 Armor's biggest cache find to date

Story and photo by
Spc. Adam Phelps

22nd Mobile Public Affairs
Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq — Based on information from an Iraqi civilian, Task Force Liberty Soldiers from Company B, 3rd Battalion, 116th Armor Regiment, discovered an unexploded ordnance cache in the Kirkuk Province June 29. "By far, this is the biggest weapons cache the 116th has found," said 1st Lt. John Thew, B Co., 3/116, from Cove, Ore. "We have found in one day what usually takes four months."

"We received a call that a man wanted to show us where some bombs were," Thew added. "We followed him out to the site in the middle of the night, and he pointed to some rounds. After assessing the situation, we realized it was more than we were going to be able to deal with that night."

The Iraqi police guarded the weapons cache until the Explosive Ordnance

Detachment arrived in the morning.

"Finds like this are important," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Michael Becker, 506th Air Expeditionary Group, Explosive Ordnance Detachment, and native of Warrensburg, Mo. "We've seen signs that terrorists are running low on ordnances to use on roadside improvised explosive devices and vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks. This [find] makes it harder for [the terrorists], especially when we take out a major weapons cache."

"The Iraqi police were very helpful. They were working the shovels with us and helping us anyway they could," Becker said. "Most of the [munitions] were in good, safe condition, so we were comfortable with letting the Iraqi army, police and civilians help."

"Hopefully, this can be attributed to saving many lives and combat equipment in the area of Kirkuk," Thew said.



Soldiers with B Co., 3/116th work with the 506th Air Expeditionary Group, EOD, to place C4 on a pile of unexploded ordnance.

NEWS IN BRIEF

earn the respective campaign medal for the area they served in.

Air Force Personnel Center officials here will do a mass system update in August to convert GWOT-E medals to campaign medals for Airmen who are eligible. Airmen who do not want the GWOT-E medal converted need to notify their commander's support staff or military personnel flight, officials said.

The campaign medal for Afghanistan shall be positioned below the one for Kosovo and above the medal for Iraq.

For more information, Airmen can contact their local military personnel flight. (Courtesy of AFPC News Service)

116th BCT delivers needed medical supplies to local hospitals

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq — Soldiers from the 116th Brigade Combat Team delivered medical supplies to a Kirkuk medical supply storage facility for use by local hospitals June 19 to help remedy a temporary supply shortfall.

Kirkuk's hospitals are temporarily short-handed of supplies due to the number of recent attacks on civilians that have left large numbers of casualties.

"After the recent events in the city of Kirkuk, the Directorate of Health and the hospitals were left in short supply of some expendable medical supplies, specifically IV fluids and bandages," said Capt. James Schroeder, a physician assistant with TF 2/116 Armor.

When the 126th Field Surgical Team left FOB Warrior in May, they left behind medical supplies hoping that the 116th BCT could utilize them prior to their expiration.

"FOB Warrior is currently well stocked with medical supplies, so we decided to provide them to local hospitals during this time of shortage," said Schroeder. "They will be able to utilize them quickly."

The Ministry of Health storage facility is located at Kirkuk General Hospital, so the supplies were delivered there to be distributed as needed to local clinics and hospitals by the Kirkuk Directorate of Health.

Providing humanitarian assistance to Iraqi citizens is one of the favorite missions of 116th BCT Soldiers in Iraq. The 116th BCT's multi-faceted mission also includes establishing security, aiding the Iraqi government, supporting economic development and facilitating communications.

322nd CA assumes operations in Baghdad

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

CAMP SLAYER, BAGHDAD, Iraq — Units from opposite sides of the United States came together to transfer authority during a ceremony here June 25.

The 353rd Civil Affairs Brigade, Fort Bragg, N.C., passed the torch of their civil-military operations in Iraq to the 322nd CA Bde., Fort Shafter, Hawaii.

Commander of the 322nd, Col. Joe Uson Jr., welcomes

the new challenges his unit will face during their deployment to Iraq.

"We will do our best to carry on the good work that you have done," Uson said during his remarks to the 353rd. "We are truly humbled and honored by the opportunity to assume this mission."

Col. George Tankersley, commander of 353rd CA Bde., and 1st Sgt. Stephen Coville cased their unit's colors to signify the brigade's relief of command.

"I would like to thank the Multi-National Corps - Iraq for their support, and we wish the 322nd the best of luck," Tankersley said. "Skyrocket, achieve and continue to excel."

Multi-National Corps - Iraq Deputy Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Michael Ferriter, took the podium and gave words of encouragement to the incoming 322nd, while acknowledging the work of the 353rd.

"I can tell you that I am exceedingly proud of the 353rd, and we look forward to the work the 322nd will do in the weeks and months to come," Ferriter said.

The 322nd was alerted Dec. 1, 2004, for mobilization in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 140-member unit comprises Soldiers possessing skills such as language, banking, government, education and disaster relief. The unit was established Aug. 25, 1945, at Presidio of Monterey, Calif., as the 102nd Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, Military Government Group.



1st Sgt. Stephen Coville, 353rd Civil Affairs Brigade, Fort Bragg, N.C., renders a salute in front of the color guard during a Transfer of Authority ceremony June 25 at Camp Slayer, Iraq.

With component units from the states of Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Utah, North Dakota, New Jersey and Maryland, the 116th BCT is one of several Army National Guard units that is deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

Iraqi citizens still eager to join Iraqi police

MOSUL, Iraq — Over 800 new Iraqi policemen crossed paths as new recruits flew to the Jordanian Police Academy June 27 and newly trained policemen arrived in northern Iraq June 26.

Over 330 Iraqi policemen arrived in Mosul following an eight-week training course at the Jordanian Police Academy. The course incorporated training on basic police work including firearms training, drivers training and hand-to-hand combat. Another 481 recruits departed Mosul to begin their training to become Iraqi Police.

Iraqi Police in the Ninewah Province have gained a significant number of new recruits as citizens show growing interest in defending their own freedom.

Worship and Prayer Schedule for the International Zone

All services at the Community Center Chapel unless otherwise noted

For more information, call DSN 318-239-8659

Sunday

- 9:30 a.m. — Choir Rehearsal
- 10 a.m. — Catholic Mass (Camp Prosperity)
- 10:30 a.m. — General Christian Worship
- 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

- 11 a.m. — Bible Study (Fri.)
- Noon — Catholic Mass (Mon.-Thurs.)
- Noon — Catholic Communion Service (Fri.)
- 5:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass (Fri. at Camp Steel Dragon)
- 6 p.m. — Catholic Bible Study (Wed.)
- 6 p.m. — Jewish Shabbat Services (Fri.)
- 7:30 p.m. — Prayer Service (Tue.)
- 8 p.m. — Bible Study (Tue-Thurs.)
- 8 p.m. — "The Measure of a Man" series (Mon.)

Saturday

- 9 a.m. — 7th Day Adventist (CSH)
- 10 a.m. — Catholic Mass (CSH)
- 12:30 p.m. — Buddhist Prayer
- 4 p.m. — Catholic Confession
- 4:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass
- 8 p.m. — Alpha Course

Daily Islamic Prayer

See schedules posted at prayer locations.



Do you know where your



Is?...

FREEDOM RADIO

Frequencies	Al Asad	107.3 FM	Mosul	105.1 FM
	Ar Ramadi	107.3 FM	Q-West	93.3 FM
	Baghdad	107.7 FM	Taji	107.3 FM
	Balad	107.3 FM	Talil AB	107.3 FM
	Fallujah	105.1 FM	Tall Afar	107.3 FM
	Kirkuk	107.3 FM	Taqqadum	107.3 FM
	Kirkush	107.3 FM	Tikrit	100.1 FM

Always there and always on the air!

Australian Commodore and Coalition Task Force 58 make history



Top, Royal Australian Navy Commodore Steven Gilmore (CTF 58) and U.S. Navy Capt. Steven Hampton (captain of U.S.S. Normandy) survey the CTF 58 Task force fleet sailing in the northern Persian Gulf. Middle, left to right: Marim Saad and Majid Kadem, two members of the first Iraqi Marine Battalion, scan the horizon with their U.S. Navy trainer, Chief Petty Officer MAC Justin Anderson. Bottom, U.S. Navy Lt. Alicia A. Rice, main propulsion assistant and fuels officer, directs the refueling operation onboard the Iraqi Southstar coastal patrol boat.



U.S. Navy Lt. j.g. Vince Libasci (navigator) and Royal Australian Navy Commodore Steven Gilmore (CTF 58) and US Navy Captain Steven Hampton (captain of U.S.S. Normandy) discuss the Fleet's position in the gulf.

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Timothy Lawn
Scimitar Staff

ABOARD U.S.S. NORMANDY — Onboard the Ticonderoga class guided missile cruiser and Coalition Task Force flagship U.S.S. Normandy, Royal Australian Navy Commodore Steven R. Gilmore commands naval operations in the northern Persian Gulf. This is the first time since World War II an Australian has commanded a U.S. naval flagship and Coalition Task Force in wartime security operations.

Command of the CTF 58 was officially handed over to Gilmore April 17. He joined CTF with 14 additional RAN officers and sailors. The accompanying staff represents a wide range of skills, including operations, legal, intelligence and more.

"I'm enormously proud for the Australian Navy and personally pleased to be selected for this command," Gilmore said.

Gilmore has more than 28 years of Navy experience with 15 years at sea. From shipboard command to land staff positions in Australia, including an appointment as the RAN liaison officer to the U.S. Navy Doctrine Command in Norfolk, Va., from 1996-1998. There Gilmore served in the international cell alongside officers representing a number of naval forces.

The CTF 58 members are responsible for and focused on maritime security operations in the northern Persian Gulf, from running maritime patrols to the critical



Top, the U.S.S. Normandy, a Ticonderoga class guided missile cruiser, flagship of Coalition Task Force 58 patrolling the northern Persian Gulf.

naval counterpart, consigned a historic document, the Iraqi Navy Transition Roadmap. An Iraqi and Coalition command team drafted the roadmap. It documents a series of guidelines and benchmarks that will be used to integrate the fledgling Iraqi Navy and Marines into a fighting defense force. The Iraqi Navy and Marines will be well equipped to

physical protection of two key offshore Iraqi oil platforms, deep water ports and commercial harbors. They are also tasked with the protection of Coalition and civilian shipping, coordination of operations with Kuwaiti maritime forces and the forbidding of illegal smuggling and trade.

"We play a significant role in detecting, deterring and denying international terrorists of [the northern Persian Gulf] use," said Gilmore.

To accomplish the many tasks assigned, CTF 58 has enormous assets at its disposal. The task force comprises the U.S.S. Normandy, a guided missile cruiser serving as the flagship, one Australian and one British frigate, six U.S. Coast Guard cutters, four U.S. coastal patrol craft, Iraqi patrol and fast attack boats, a U.S. Navy Special Boat Team and two support vessels. Aboard the two offshore oil derricks are two U.S. Navy Maritime Security Detachments and newly formed Iraqi Marine Detachments. Air support is included with land- and shore-based UH-60 Seahawk helicopters.

In addition to CTF 58 serving as protector, it has also assumed a historical role in the development of the fledgling Iraqi Navy and Marines.

CTF 58 made history on June 27, when Gilmore and his Iraqi counterpart, Capt Adel H. Hafiz, operational commander, Iraqi Navy, co-signed a historic document, the Iraqi Navy Transition Roadmap. An Iraqi and Coalition command team drafted the roadmap. It documents a series of guidelines and benchmarks that will be used to integrate the fledgling Iraqi Navy and Marines into a fighting defense force. The Iraqi Navy and Marines will be well equipped to

guard their economic future, which lies in the oil pipelines and drilling derricks located in the northern Persian Gulf, said Gilmore.

"The roadmap is a significant milestone in the evolution of the Iraqi Navy," said Gilmore.

Two years ago, Coalition Forces came together to create a new Iraqi Navy. The new Navy and Marines had to have sustained training and attainable goals. Gilmore emphasized the roadmap as playing a significant part in achieving that. He stressed that it had to be designed to ensure consistency.

In order to create the consistency the CTF staff and Iraqi counterparts desired, they held bi-weekly meetings. Australian Naval Commander Sean O'Dwyer wrote the roadmap from the notes he compiled. The whole process took several months and each of the team members had input, said O'Dwyer.

"[The roadmap] is meant to be a living document," said O'Dwyer.

The roadmap was designed to be changed and updated every several months, said O'Dwyer. Included in its constant improvement is a certification process that is being developed and implemented.

Certification ensures consistency, explained Gilmore. The roadmap articulates the path that the Iraqi Navy takes towards independence. He added all naval forces have evaluation periods to ensure training is adequate.

On training and preparedness, the Iraqi Navy and Marines are the leading light in the development of a viable government service, said O'Dwyer. Their operational commander is setting and maintaining high standards that are not being swayed by political considerations.

"I am encouraged by what I have seen this far — the enthusiasm, commitment, and professional approach," the Iraqi Navy and Marines have taken thus far, said Gilmore.

From training and helping stand up the new Iraqi Navy and Marines, to being responsible for and focused on maritime security operations in the northern Persian Gulf, Gilmore understands that the positive aspects far outweigh the challenges.

While patrolling the gulf aboard the guided missile cruiser and Coalition Task Force flagship, U.S.S. Normandy, Gilmore finds his many tasks and responsibilities to be a great professional opportunity.

"[Australian accompanying staff] and the Coalition have trained and worked hard together for a very long time," said Gilmore. "This experience is a great value to any future service."



Top, an Iraqi Southstar coastal patrol boat prepares to pull alongside U.S.S. Normandy, a Ticonderoga Class guided missile cruiser, flagship of Coalition Task Force 58 (CTF 58) for refueling.



An oil tanker moored alongside the Al Basrah Oil Terminal, one of two oil terminals that contribute to 95 percent of Iraqi oil production or 80 percent of Iraqi gross domestic productivity.

CTF 58 is committed to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq through the training of the Iraqi Navy and Marines and the transition of self-sufficiency of the Iraqi maritime forces.

CTF 58 is a coalition task force made up of over 14 Coalition and Iraqi vessels, whose job it is to conduct maritime security operations and protect the Iraqi oil platforms in the northern Persian Gulf.

Aussies work side by side with Yanks at Balad hospital

Story and photos by
Maj. Patricia C. Anderson
Command Information Officer

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANA-CONDA, BALAD, Iraq — Twenty Australian health care professionals work side by side with a multi-service American staff at the Air Force Theater Hospital here.

The Australian Medical Detachment arrived in March and will redeploy soon. Like all Australians deployed to Iraq, they are volunteers. Members of the Australian Defence Force are not involuntarily deployed outside Australia, according to Australian military officials.

Col. Peter Sharwood, an orthopedic surgeon, is one of those volunteers. Back in Brisbane,



Australian Regular Army Sgt. Tarese Heath cuts the boot off an U.S. Army Soldier with broken toes in the emergency department at the Air Force Theater Hospital in Balad, Iraq.

Australia, he has a practice with the local veterans' hospital and does some consulting work for the Australian Defence Force.

"We get bombed here very regularly," he said as an explosion sounded nearby, describing some of the challenges the team faces here. He greatly misses his family — wife and four children — waiting for him back home. But there are positive returns on his tour.

"Working with the team here, they've been very good to us," Sharwood said. "We teach [the Americans] stuff, and they teach us stuff."

The Australians have their own private temper tent on the edge of the hospital compound. Dubbed the "Camel Club," it serves as a place to decompress between stressful shifts at the hospital. An entertainment system allows the Aussies to watch the latest movies sent from home or an occasional Australian rules football match, and books and periodicals from back

home help ease homesickness. A well-stocked refrigerator contains Australian treats from Tim Tam cookies to Chico candies to Vegemite, the sandwich spread made famous by the 1982 song "Down Under" from the band Men at Work.

Americans and Australians alike stated the most difficult transition for working with one another has been different terminology. Some of the different terms are easy — operating room vs. operating theater — whereas others can cause difficulties — to an American, a "catheter" goes into a patient's vein, while to an Australian, a "catheter" is inserted a bit lower to help a patient urinate. However, according to U.S. Lt. Col. Emily Kent-Street, standards of nursing patient care are fairly universal. "It's been fun working with the Australians," said Kent-Street. "They are extremely dedicated, professional and skillful. I will miss them when they leave."

Sgt. Tarese Heath, a nurse assigned to



Australian Army Capt. (Dr.) Keith Brown discusses a technique with a U.S. Army National Guard doctor recently deployed to the Air Force Theater Hospital in Balad, Iraq.

the emergency department, served in the Australian Regular Army for seven and one-half years. Like Dr. Sharwood, she misses her family — husband and 2-and-one-half year-old daughter — more than anything else back home.

"We have all skill levels here, and we all learn from each other," she said. "Not just the Americans and Australians, but the nurses, doctors, EMTs, technicians and other personnel."

"The Australians are wonderful, just wonderful to work with," said U.S. Air Force Col. Russell Taylor, commander of the hospital. "They are the best thing since Vegemite on sliced bread."

Aid station finds order in chaos

Story and photo by Spc. Tracy J. Smith
48th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MICHAEL, MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq — Spc. Kacy D. Morgan has fond memories of home.

"My grandmother raised me," Morgan said as he recalled his family traditions established in Madison, Ga. "Everyone still lives there, and we get together every Sunday morning for breakfast before church. Nobody cooks like her." He grinned, knowing what he should have added, "Except maybe my wife."

Morgan said this as a patient sat on a treatment table in the bathroom of a former chicken plant located near Al Mahmudiyah. On this ceaselessly hot day, they had not had many visitors.

A hole in the wall (literally — a hole was blasted in the wall of the plant) serves as the entrance to the aid station. A quick trip down the hallway leads to the bathroom location. It was the most logical location, given the layout of the forward operating base and the facility, said 1st Lt. Otis Coles III, the medical platoon leader who also acts as liaison for administration, logistics and tactics for 108th Armor Battalion.

"Space, electricity and air conditioning was the logic behind locating the troop medical clinic here," said Coles, from Albany, Ga. "We have to deal with dirt and sand. This being more inside the facility helps in our constant quest for a sterile environment."

As a level 1 battalion aid station (the TMC staff can perform all hospital functions except surgeries), the facility is adequate for a field environment. The team comprises elements from the 108th's medical team and augmented with Soldiers from Company C, 148th Support Battalion at Camp Stryker, Iraq, affectionately called "Charlie Med."

The "Charlie Med" Soldiers are assigned for 30-day rotations, but the 48th Brigade Combat Team Soldiers from Georgia like Morgan and Pfc. Grace Sigunga appreciate the opportunity to work under these situations.

"I really like it here, even though I realize it seems a bit dirty and at times dangerous," Sigunga said. "But I get a chance to practice field medicine, and I don't get that at a base camp."

Sigunga is a student back in Atlanta and was one of the medics who reacted to recent emergency situations involving Soldiers patrolling their area. Attacks involving improvised explosive devices and guns cause the most traumatic cases.

Serious medical assessments are initiated at the trauma center located outside the TMC. The immediacy for trauma center medical evaluations, or triage, in combat situations helps in identifying causes and treatment for potentially life-threatening injury.

The medics have treated approximately 14 emergency cases in the month the trauma center has been operating. As a laboratory technician, Morgan feels that the path established by the TMC and trauma center is a good one to support the mission for the FOB.

"We work hard for each other," Morgan said. "Taking care of the Soldier is our mission. We want to operate as a tight team. So staying current in our skill training and knowing how we work as individuals helps keep it tight and keep us mission successful."

This personal knowledge gives the team an edge when they need to get things done fast.

"It's a family environment for the most part," Morgan concluded. "I want [the Soldiers who are treated] to trust that we know what we are doing. That way when it gets really [tense] and that Soldier looks to us for reassurance, they aren't thinking, 'I'm not going to enjoy Sunday breakfast with my family again.'"



Pfc. Grace Sigunga, a combat medic with 148th Support Battalion, 48th Brigade Combat Team, administers an IV to a patient as part of her skill level training while Spc. Jonathan Bentjen, a combat medic with 108th Armor Battalion, monitors the procedure.

Iraqi baby gets first line Army care

Story and photo by Task Force 1/163rd Infantry Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq — Soldiers of the 116 Brigade Combat Team assisted an Iraqi family from

Kirkuk Province who brought their 3-month-old baby to Forward Operating Base McHenry June 18.

The family brought the baby to their village doctor and the Hawijah hospital to remove a four-inch abscess from the baby's chest.

Neither the doctor nor the hospital could assist due to the lack of expertise and technology.

"Many areas of Iraq lack sufficient primary health care due to inadequate development of medical service by the previous Saddam regime," said 1st Lt. Patrick McCabe, a 145th Support

Battalion physician assistant attached to Task Force 1/163 Infantry. "As Iraqis trust and work with Coalition Forces, they will quickly realize that the Coalition Soldiers are here to help them, unlike the terrorists who seek to destroy and murder innocent children, men and women of Iraq."

In a last-ditch effort of desperation, the father brought the baby to the FOB McHenry gate. Task Force 1/163 Infantry medics went to work on the small child, opening up the abscess found in the child's chest. The medics drained and cleaned the abscess and, after seeing the severe situation the baby was in, evacuated the infant to the Air Force's emergency medical facility in FOB Warrior.

According to EMEDS personnel, the child only had about 24 hours to live if untreated. The TF 1/163 Infantry medics saved the baby's life, they said.



Task Force 1/163 medics prepare to operate on an Iraqi infant to remove a four-inch abscess from the baby's chest June 18.

School brings Iraqi, U.S. children closer

By Senior Airman Chawntain Sloan
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq — Paper and pencils may just be typical office supplies to many Americans, but for teachers and school children in Iraq, they are treasures.

Children from Al Assa Primary School gathered with eager anticipation of receiving new pens and pencils during a school supply exchange recently in Kadamiyah, Iraq.

Operation Pencil Drop provided the Iraqi school with three much-needed boxes of supplies that included colored pencils, markers, lined and blank writing paper, colored construction paper and spiral writing notebooks.

Aside from the writing utensils given to the children for their immediate use, Lt. Col. Daniel Le Page, Multi-National Corps - Iraq chief of elections, presented the school's headmaster the remainder of supplies donated by Memorial School in his hometown of East Hampton, Conn.

"I initially approached my daughter's teacher, Mary Jane Traska, and told her I would be willing to do a class pen pal exchange," said Le Page. "Because of the position I am in at work, I was unable to make that happen, but the class still

wanted to connect with the Iraqi children."

"I spoke to Le Page's wife, Joann, and asked if we could send the school children in Iraq some school supplies," said Traska, a second grade teacher at Memorial School. "Le Page thought it was a great idea, and made plans to coordinate with an Iraqi school."

While Le Page worked with the Civil Affairs Team from the 3rd Infantry Division to find a school in need, Traska rallied the support of teachers, students and families of the second and third grade classes at Memorial School.

"Coordinating the move out to the field was the most challenging aspect," said Le Page. "In this area, you just don't get in a car and drive down the street. It took close coordination with Maj. Carrie Acree, the CATA team leader from the infantry division that has responsibility north and west of Baghdad."

After six weeks of gathering supplies, Traska shipped the supplies along with a letter and group picture from her class.

"The children helped me compile a letter and four questions to ask the children at the school in Iraq. For example, my class wanted to know, 'What kinds of games do you play? What do you study in school?'" Traska said.

Because it was the last week of school in Iraq and a

response from the Al Assa Primary students was unlikely, Le Page documented the visit and sent a video and pictures to the Memorial School students.

"I spoke to many of the Iraqi children during the course of the day, and I sent a letter that answered some of the questions posed by the class," said Le Page.

While the letter answered their questions, Traska said the video and pictures spoke to her and the children on a whole different level.

"Viewing the video and pictures was a tremendous emotional experience for me," Traska said. "The beautiful children, townspeople, officials and Soldiers all participating in the delivery of the school supplies was touching and made me cry with happiness. The children said, 'Look how happy they are!' and 'They wear the same type of clothing and ride bicycles like we do!'"

The project may have been a huge undertaking, but both Le Page and Traska contend that the overall support they received on both ends made it a success.



Photo by Lt. Col. Phil Andrews

Children from the Al Assa Primary School in Kadamiyah, Iraq, gathered around Lt. Col. Daniel Le Page, Multi-National Corps - Iraq chief of elections, in anticipation of receiving new pens and pencils.

Soldiers can help prevent theft

By Spc. Jerome Bishop

1st Corps Support Command Public Affairs

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, BALAD, Iraq — Nearly a year ago, Soldiers resided in tents that housed as many as 60 troops. Now Soldiers live in secure, two-man trailers complete with locking doors, so why and how are personal belongings still being stolen?

"There's several different thefts that occur," said Sgt 1st Class Kerry Buckner, 939rd Military Police Detachment Law and Order noncommissioned officer in charge. "There's burglary, which is during the night, there's house robbery, which is during the day, and then there's breaking and entering."

Breaking and entering, which is a more serious form of theft, calls for the destruction of any security devices that secure a residence or building.

"The breaking and entering part is not as bad as the theft," he said. "We still have a lot of B and E, about two a week."

The main factor that causes more burglaries and robberies than breaking and entering are that most thefts occur without the need to compromise locked doors or windows.

"Most of the time people don't lock their doors," Buckner said, "or people lock themselves out and break into their own trailer, leaving the lock broken for the thief."

Article 130 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice states "A person subject to this chapter who unlawfully enters the building or structure of another with intent to commit a criminal offense therein is guilty of housebreaking and shall be punished as a court-martial may direct," which is usually a dishonorable discharge with forfeiture of all pay and allowances, loss of rank and confinement of five years, Buckner said.

Burglary as defined in the UCMJ is the same as housebreaking with the exception "that the accused unlawfully broke and entered the dwelling of another; that both the breaking and entering were done in the nighttime."

The latter of the two carries a more serious punishment of 10 years confinement instead of five, Buckner said.

Anyone can make sure that thieves will not have an opportunity to steal from them.

"People should make sure if they aren't in their rooms, that they lock the door," Buckner said, "and if they lock themselves out, don't try to pry the door open. They should get KBR or housing to get in with a key."

Although locking the door is only a deterrent, residents on LSA Anaconda can take steps to make sure that if something is stolen, it can be identified as theirs if it is recovered.

"It is also a good idea to put a marking on valuables such as laptops unique only to you," said Buckner. "Also write down serial numbers because we recover a lot of items that were stolen, but if someone says it's their laptop that was stolen; we have no way of knowing if it's theirs or not."

Another important step that residents can take is to leave the outdoor lights on to help neighbors identify people committing suspicious acts, he added.

"We get a lot of honest people who give us leads to help us get some of the thieves who break into trailers," Buckner said.

Should a theft of any nature occur, residents can help investigators in a very simple way.

"They should definitely report it to us," Buckner said. "It's important not to touch anything. We have methods to get fingerprints and use forensic science.

"If we can go back to the trailer with them, we can get an inventory of what's missing," he added.

Theft will never fully disappear, but if anyone can take one more step to keep the thief from succeeding, then the MPs will have one less thing to interfere with the way of more pressing matters.

CHAPLAIN'S TALK

It Doesn't Get Any Harder Than This!

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

Marriage. It's a condition that many of us find ourselves in, others aspire toward it and all too many want to escape from it. Have you heard of the three rings of marriage? First, you have the engagement ring; then you have the wedding ring; and then you have suffering. Anyone who's been there will attest to that!

This week — and in the future as opportunity comes to write in this space — I will be talking to married couples and singles about this most challenging of human relationships. If you want some practical encouragement, this article is for you.

Take advantage of your time here! Deployments can and should be times of introspection and personal growth. If you're married, be thankful for the positive aspects of your relationship. Then take inventory of those stress points. Ask yourself, "What can I do to make what we have even better?" And for the many of you who are single and anticipate at some time achieving the wedded state, I say: DON'T DO IT!! (Just kidding.) Seriously, your focus should be not so much on finding the right person, but rather on *becoming* the right person.

Marriage was designed to be the most joyful and satisfying of any human relationship. It should be a bit of heaven on earth. But sadly, many would describe it with an opposite term.

I often refer to marriage — that is, marriage done right — as the hardest job in the world. Anyone can get married. But to consistently fathom the depths of its fullness is an entirely different matter. It doesn't happen automatically. I speak from 26 years of experience; it has been the severest challenge I have ever faced.

To set the context for our discussions, I offer five factors as to why marriage is so difficult:

1) **The Surprises.** Someone has rightly said that "no woman ever gets what she expects, and no man ever expects what he gets." Getting married is something like a phone call in the middle of the night: first you get the ring, THEN you wake up. How many of you made shocking discoveries after the fact as to what your husband or wife is really like? In the courtship phase, we're quite good at hiding those quirks and less attractive sides of who we are.

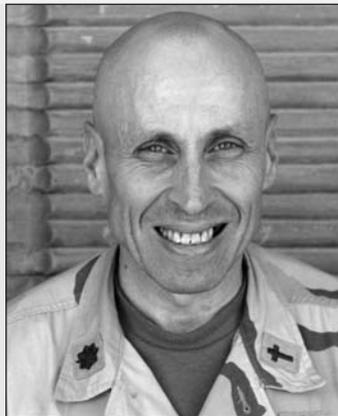
2) **Family of Origin.** Did you know that you married not just your spouse, but his or her mother and father also? As we grow up, where is it that we have seen marriage demonstrated — for good or for bad? And we often — and unconsciously — bring that shaping by perhaps dysfunctional or even absent parents into our own marriage.

3) **Lack of Training.** My observation is that no more than one couple out of five has had any premarital counseling before entering this most trying relationship. They never had a pastor, chaplain or mentor sit down with them for a series of sessions to work through the critical components of making marriage work. Think about it. Some of us in the military have trained in certain skill areas for a full year-and-a-half for a four-year enlistment. That means a government investment of that amount of time plus oodles of dollars for a job that will last only two-and-a-half years. But for the hardest job in the world, which was designed to last a lifetime, most of us have had ZERO training.

4) **Military Lifestyle.** You don't have to be connected with the military (or as a deployed civilian) very long before you realize the challenges of balancing mission and family needs. It is simply not easy, nor is it always convenient. I saw the U.S. Army acknowledge this tension during my tenure in recruiting command. As a brigade chaplain, I received \$80,000 per year to conduct marriage enrichment programs. Why? Because the military recognized the intense demands that it made on its members. And if the recruiter could be encouraged in his or her home life, that success would likely transfer to the mission side. By the way, for our Army folks: as you redeploy, look for Building Strong and Ready Family (BSRF) programs, which are funded at brigade-level to address those very homefront issues.

5) **Human Nature.** Friends, this is the most difficult and serious factor in the marriage dynamic. Have you noticed how marriage brings out the very worst of who you and I are? It can be ugly! We are by nature selfish creatures. Sensitivity, serving and sacrifice do not come naturally to most of us. It is this area of human nature to which we will devote most of our attention.

I hope you continue exploring ways to make this most challenging of relationships happen right.



Chaplain Peterson

Unit Ministry Team devises plan to ease redeployment anxieties

By Staff Sgt. Jennifer K. Yancey
27th Public Affairs Detachment

As Soldiers prepare for redeployment, the joys associated with homecoming might be eclipsed by mounting anxieties about what to expect once they get there.

In an effort to help alleviate some of these pressures, the chaplain's corps here formulated ways in which to simplify troops' return to "the world" after enduring a year or longer in harm's way.

History determined that transition issues were not addressed prior to the Vietnam War. Post-traumatic stress disorder and other stress enhancers, such as grief, loss, and difficulties dealing with transition, were identified but not adequately dealt with. The first visible attempt to address these problems occurred during the gulf war.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains gave his assessment on the effects of multiple deployments on Soldiers and their families, based on the results of a survey circulated to Family Life chaplains from 38 installations.

Their most prominent concerns included lost relationships amongst single Soldiers, increasing divorce rates and its impact on children, and reenlistment issues. The survey also found that multiple deployments seem to affect morale more than the Soldiers' personal health.

One avenue of approach driven by 1st Corps Support Command's unit ministry team here involves a plan referred to as "Warrior Reset." Their focus includes not only married Soldiers, but single Soldiers and troops who are single parents.

This 120- to 180-day reset serves as an outline for the reunion process, from briefings to retreats to personal reflection.

Prior to redeployment, the chaplains give reunion classes to the Soldiers, while rear-detachment chaplains provide similar training for family members.

Reunion briefings have been conducted since Desert Storm, said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Ed Ahl, 1st COSCOM's deputy command chaplain. "They've

been modified over the past 12 years."

Some Soldiers may "tune out" parts of reintegration briefings because they feel it doesn't apply to them, said Chaplain (Col.) David Reese, command chaplain for 1st COSCOM.

Through Warrior Reset, chaplains and Soldiers can discuss specific issues as it pertains to their current deployment situation.

About 120 days after their return, the chaplains hope to give a one-day seminar following up on the reunion process. "If (Soldiers) maintain that honor and respect for their spouse and their children, they will respond in kind," said Ahl, "which will strengthen the bonds between husband and wife, parent and child."

Ahl added such bonds would enable them to handle future separations.

Marriage retreats, single-Soldier retreats and parenting skills classes make just some of the tools used to enhance reunions between Soldiers and family members, "to get Soldiers and their families back into the routine of being together — happily," Ahl said.

Reese recommended brigade UMTs devise a follow-up plan tailored to their units' specific needs.

The Army as a whole made strides in assisting redeploying troops; the Deployment Cycle Support program helps

prepare reserve and guard Soldiers for the challenges facing them upon redeployment, such as reintegrating with their families, readjusting to their communities, financial assistance and reestablishing their jobs.

DCS enables civilian clergy to assist mobilized reserve and guard troops in returning to their home parishes.

As Soldiers count down to the days until they board the plane, some may forget to contemplate their own well-being while still in theater.

"My biggest concern," said Ahl, "is that they start concentrating on home so much that they forget about the safety and discipline standards that keep them alive while they're still here.

"Take the extra time," he said, "to conduct those pre-combat checks, make sure everything is right."

Same holds true once they arrive home. "Be smart," said Ahl. "Enjoy that time with the family."



Courtesy photo

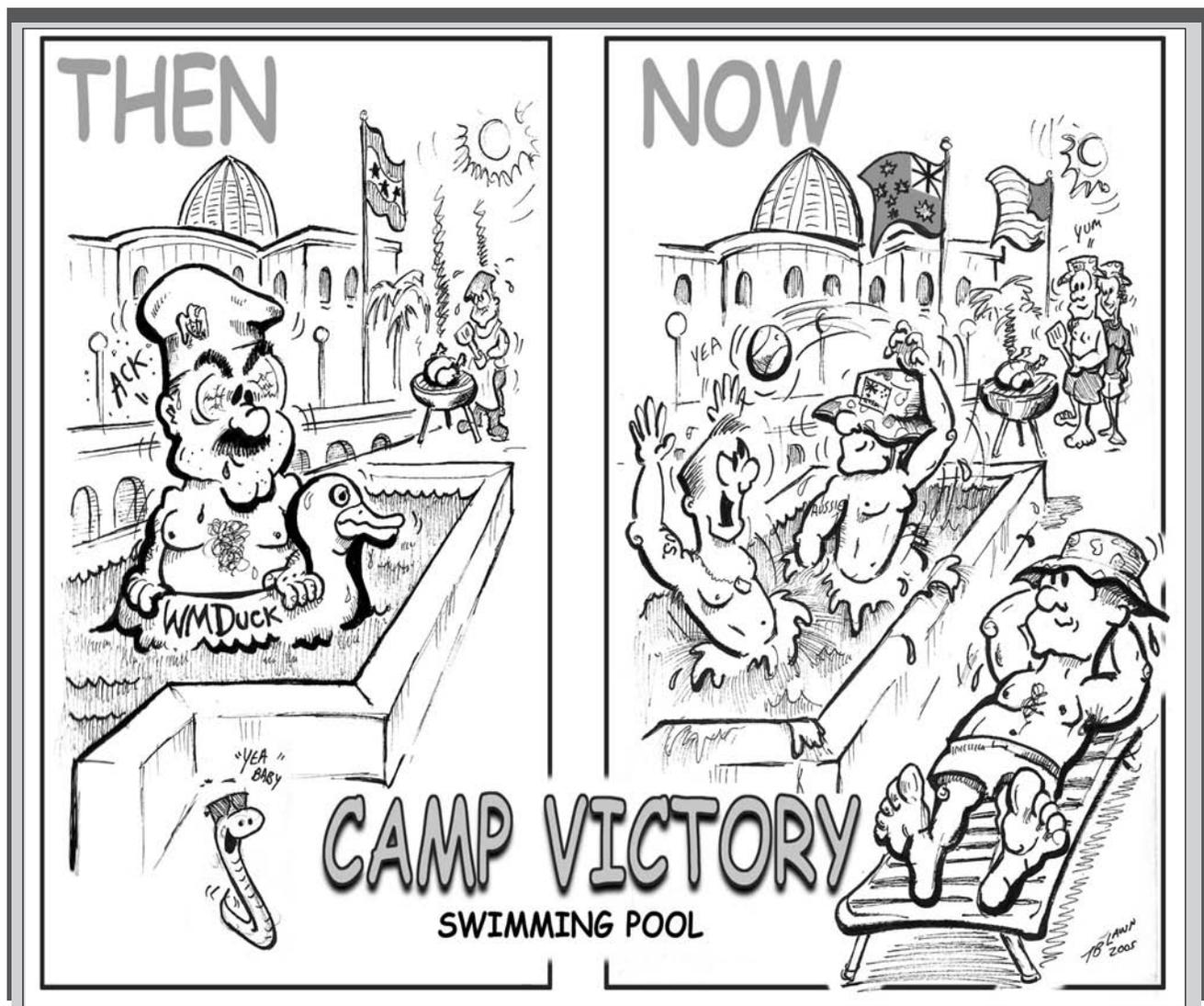
Chaplain (Col.) David Reese, 1st Corps Support Command, command chaplain, offers instruction to his fellow clergymen during their 1st COSCOM Unit Ministry Team Conference held June 22.

The place to access the latest MNF-I/MNC-I news and information is online. Check out www.mnf-iraq.com to stay informed.

Scimitar Slapstick



Art by Chief Warrant Officer Mark J. Hart



Art by Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn



Art by Jeffery Hall



Art by Maj. James D. Crabtree

Remember...

OPSEC

Words can KILL.

Keep cell phone and e-mail commo free of sensitive information.

From school to skies: College graduate seeks more, chooses Corps

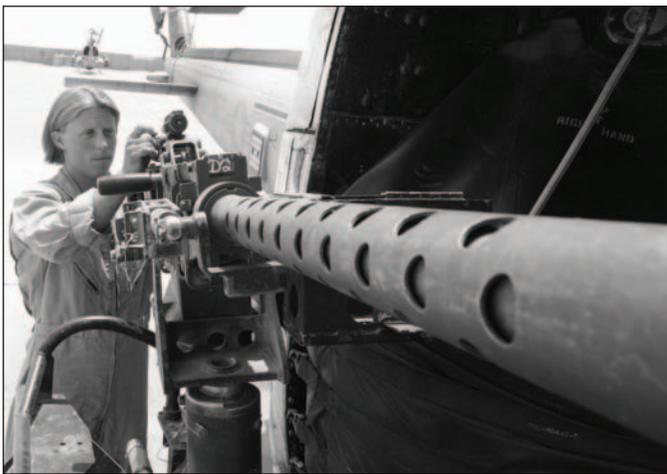
Story and photos by Cpl. C. Alex Herron
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing Public Affairs

AL TAQADDUM, Iraq — After graduating from Camden County High School in 1994, Sgt. Valerie Belue asked her father his thoughts about her joining the Marine Corps. The 25-year Navy veteran convinced her to get her degree before joining the military. Not long after, she left home to attend Brenau Women's College near Atlanta.

After she graduated in 1998 with a degree in history and political science, she held many odd jobs, including commercial and residential heating and air conditioning repair.

In 2000, Belue returned to her original idea of joining the Marine Corps and knew exactly what she wanted to do.

"I like the structured regimen of the military," Belue said. "I



Sgt. Valerie Belue, a crew chief with Marine Light/Attack Squadron 775, checks the .50 caliber machine gun on board the UH-1N Huey.

am also a big history buff, and the Marine Corps is a big part of military history."

With her bachelor's degree, Belue's father was shocked to hear she had enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve to become a UH-1N Huey crew chief.

"I just didn't want to be an officer," she said. "Being a crew chief gives me the best of both worlds. I get to fly and turn wrenches on the aircraft." Picking the Huey was no accident for Belue, either. She chose the Huey from the start of her career.

"The Huey is capable of performing a lot of different missions and is a very distinct aircraft," Belue said. "Close air support, search and rescue and almost any combat operation — it can do a little bit of everything."

After boot camp and initial training, Belue reported to her reserve unit, Marine Light/Attack Helicopter Squadron 773 in Naval Air Station Atlanta.

"I tried being a reserve Marine, but one weekend a month wasn't enough. I wanted to be around the Marine Corps more," said the St. Marys, Ga., native. "I decided to become an activated reservist so I could be in the Marine Corps full-time and keep my family in Atlanta."

Belue's husband, who is a former Marine flightline mechanic, now teaches in the Atlanta area and cares for their two dogs. Her intense deployment schedule is a challenge for her family but nothing they can't handle.

Belue just returned stateside after a seven-month deployment to Afghanistan in September 2004. In February, she deployed again with the Coyotes of Marine Light/Attack Helicopter Squadron 775.

"Being gone so much is hard," Belue said. "Being away is easier this deployment, but it still is a challenge. The family separation is always hard, but I'm doing something I love, so he understands. When he was in the Marine Corps, he deployed a lot, too. Now he gets to see the other side of a deployment by staying home."

Belue's current deployment is similar to what she did last year, but she still takes the time to learn more and seize opportunities to become more efficient at her job. She knows each time her aircraft lifts off, the danger of combat exists.

"It's great to be here and use my training," said Belue. "Working at a faster tempo is also a great learning experience. Being able to work efficiently and smartly is key here. It is a whole different mindset than when we're back in the rear."

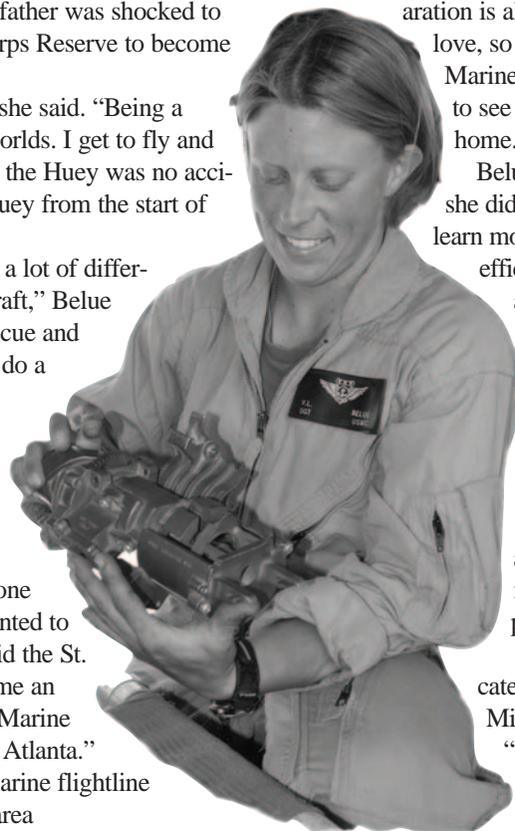
Belue's enthusiasm to fly any mission at any time and work until the job is done has made an impression on her leadership and peers alike.

"Belue is a hard worker. She is very dedicated to her job," said Master Sgt. Michael Mikkelsen a crew chief with HML/A-775.

"She will stay at work until whatever maintenance task she is working on is completed. She is very proficient and knows her stuff, but is always willing to learn from anyone who may have a different way of doing things."

Whether she is flying a close air support mission or repairing one of the heli-

copters, Belue is dedicated to her job. She sets a prime example for others to follow and is dedicated to the mission.



Sgt. Valerie Belue examines a round feeder that allows ammunition to be fed into the mini gun onboard the UH-1N Huey helicopter.

Hornets sting in Operation Spear

Story and photos by
Gunnery Sgt. Shannon Arledge
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing Public Affairs

ALASAD, Iraq — Operation Spear, an offensive in the western part of the Al Anbar province, came to a conclusion the end of June. Over the course of the operation Marine All-



A pilot with Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 224 conducts final checks before launching in support of Operation Spear.

Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 224, flying the F/A-18 Hornet, took to the skies to provide support to the troops on the ground.

The "Bengals" of VMFA(AW)-224 flew 24 sorties in direct combat support as Marines and Soldiers battled insurgents near the Syrian border. The Bengals, armed with laser-guided precision munitions, attacked enemy positions, destroying multiple targets, including enemy

mortar positions and a building used to make vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices from which insurgents were operating. The majority of targets were buildings confirmed as insurgent strongholds from where ground forces were taking fire. The squadron also flew one strafing run firing 20 mm rounds from the aircraft's guns.

Armed with a vast array of specialized equipment and visual contact, Marines on the ground were able to direct and coordinate the strikes.

"The most difficult challenge is positive hostile identification," said Capt. John Bailey, pilot and Wake Forest, N.C., native. "Marine air officers, forward air controllers and joint tactical air controllers on the battlefield ensured that ordnance was accurately assigned to hostile targets with no collateral damage to nearby structures. Their presence in the city was indispensable to meeting rules of engagement criteria required to engage targets with air power."

Operation Spear began June 17 in an

effort to root out insurgents and foreign fighters and disrupt insurgent support systems in the western region of Iraq. The operation lasted four days, and each time a pilot prepared for a mission, close coordination between the pilots and the air controllers with ground forces was paramount.

"We spent much of our airborne time overhead Karabilah, scanning portions of the battlefield our ground counterparts cannot see," said Bailey.

Strong winds and recent sandstorms posed some challenges for the pilots. Their employment on the battlefield was never degraded, but landing the aircraft was difficult. Aircrew would sometimes get a visual of the runway 30 seconds before landing. However, the aircraft performed flawlessly, which is a testament to the true professionalism of the maintenance Marines.

"Marines are working 24 hours a day; each Marine working a minimum of 12 hours a day," said Capt. Ken Miller, pilot, from Lancaster, Pa. "The maintenance department has been working at nearly 100 percent up and ready status, which is almost unheard of. When we return [from a mission], maintenance will turn the jet around, refuel it and rearm it, and have [the Hornet] ready to fly again."



Capt. John Bailey, pilot, and Chad Cipparone, weapons and sensors officer, return from a flight in support of Operation Spear June 20.

"The squadron maintenance department did a Herculean job of ensuring the [Bengals] were always prepared to launch when called upon to support Operation Spear," said Bailey. "They maintained sortie flow required to complete operational requirements through the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Forces battle space."

This fighter squadron is part of the forward deployed 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing that has been providing direct combat air power in Iraq since March. From the weapons and sensors officers and pilots who fly the aircraft to the Marines who turn the wrenches and load the weapons, each successful operation is a team effort. Those who benefit from the success are the Coalition Forces on the ground battling an insurgency up close.

Family has royal reunion in Baghdad

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

INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq — “Nothing can describe it,” said an emotionally charged Royal Air Force Flight Sergeant (senior enlisted sergeant) Sidney Owens, as he spoke about seeing his two Airmen sons, Jonathan, 23, and Neil, 19, for the first time in four months, June 24. Additionally, Owens was celebrating a surprise 50th birthday party and Fathers Day all at the same time.

Sidney was all smiles as his two sons piled out of the Army Land Rover. After some hugs, back-slapping and playful jabs with each other, the Owens family retreated to the rest area behind the headquarters building. There they caught up on some, lost time.

“It’s heart rendering; I had a tough time not crying,” said Sidney, as he recalled seeing his sons arrive.

All three of the British family members are deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Uniquely, the three Owens serve in the RAF and in the same regiment, a light infantry unit primarily tasked with airfield defense.

Though in the same regiment, the elder Owens was separated from his two sons when he deployed. Sidney serves as the senior watch keeper with the NATO Training Mission Iraq in Baghdad.

Sidney said that his mission is to “get all the info the Soldiers need to stay safe.” He also helps train Iraqi officers in English and computer skills at the new Iraqi Staff College Basic Officers Course.

“I am an ordinary guy doing an ordinary job in an ordinary place,” said Sidney.

Jonathan and Neil are based in Basra and are tasked primarily with force protection for the RAF No. 2 Squadron at Basra airfield. They patrol the airfield and surrounding perimeter.

“Last month a passenger airliner landed in Basra from Baghdad,” said Neil when asked about the progress of Coalition efforts there. He proudly added that the flight was the first commercial trip into Basra since the war began, a milestone for security in Iraq.

When asked about his sons serving in the war along with him, Sydney remarked that as a parent he always has concerns, but he feels confident with the knowledge that they are well trained.

“We are even now,” said Jonathan when asked about an Air Force upbringing.

The Owens lost their precious wife and mother around Christmas Eve, 1977. Sidney took on the task of raising

the boys by himself. Laughing, Jonathan recalled inspections at night, marching the hills and polishing his shoes before school.

The Owens family also had a chance to call home to England and have a brief chat with Debbie Lee-Rodgers. Debbie is Sydney’s partner, and together they have a 2-year-old daughter, Olivia. Olivia sang “Happy Birthday” to Sidney over the phone.

After the phone call, the family went to a surprise birthday party for Sidney held at NATO headquarters. There all of Sidney’s co-workers and friends gathered to celebrate with him and shower him with gifts.

Along with the surprise gifts, Sidney had a small cake to cut and a traditional British meal of fish and chips, warm and ready to be eaten.

Incredulously, Sidney remarked, “I’ve only known these people since the end of February — it’s typical of them.”

After the party ended, Sidney, Jonathan and Neil had some time to relax. The boys took off and went for a walk, while Sidney sat by a fountain and relaxed. Baghdad is a real eye-opener for them, Sidney commented. Basra is desolate, he added.

Their time together running out, the Owens made plans for the afternoon. The following morning the sons would depart and return to Basra.

“It’s nice to see them,” Sidney said in a hushed voice.



Neil Owens talks on the with Debbie, his father’s partner at home in England, while his father and brother chat as they await their turn.



Far right, Royal Air Force Flight Sergeant Sidney Owens jokes with his sons Neil, left, and Jonathan, who are also in the Royal Air Force. Neil and Jonathan visited their dad and helped him celebrate his 50th birthday, June 24.

Coalition Corner

... highlighting countries
serving with MNF-Iraq



United Kingdom

Local name: *United Kingdom*

The United Kingdom is located in Western Europe between the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea, and is northwest of France. Also known as Great Britain, the UK comprises England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Over 60 million people live in this country, which is slightly smaller than Oregon. English is the official language, but Welsh and the Scottish form of Gaelic is also spoken in some regions. The UK is both part of NATO and the European Union, however the currency is still the Pound Sterling.

England is the largest country in Great Britain. London, the capital, is full of historical landmarks such as Big Ben, St. Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. Canterbury is home to the Canterbury Cathedral, which is considered the most beautiful in England. This city was also the center of one of the most important medieval pilgrimages in Europe as Geoffrey Chaucer depicted in the “Canterbury Tales.”

Wales is packed with intriguing sites, both historic and natural. Brecon Beacons National Park has four mountain ranges, and its multitude of terrains could make a geologist dizzy. Cardiff, the capital, is a small city with a big personality, with sites such as the massive Millennium Stadium and majestic Cardiff Bay. On the opposite coast of Cardiff lies Conwy, which is considered one of the best examples of a European medieval walled town with its eight huge intricate towers and rock-bound foundations.

Right above England is Scotland, offering attractions like the Aviemore Area, which is a hiking and skiing paradise for its access to the Cairngorm Mountains. Edinburgh is not only the capital, but also a unique multicultural city with the famous Edinburgh castle and an abundance of 15th century buildings.

Northern Ireland completes the UK quadrangle, with just as many landmark castles as its fellow countries. Belfast, the capital, boasts a castle first built in the 12th century by the Normans and was a popular spot for weddings. The Narrow Water Keep, a stone keep built around 1212, is located in Warrenpoint, is at the mouth of the Newry River with a beautiful castle nestled on its shore. A 15th century castle overlooking Lough Erne that started off as a Maguire castle stands tall in the city of Enniskillen.

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

References: www.cia.gov, www.lonelyplanet.com, <http://europa.eu.int>, www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk, www.ukattraction.com.

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



A player weaves through opposing defenders while trying to score during an intramural rugby game at a makeshift field nicknamed the "Dust Bowl" June 12 at Camp Liberty, Iraq.



Australian digs up sport from down under

Story and photo by Pfc. Matthew Clifton
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, BAGHDAD, Iraq — When most people think of rugby, they might think of Australia, but they probably don't know the meanings of a maul, scrum or try.

By organizing and starting a weekly game at Camp Victory, one Australian major is teaching people a maul is where one or more players are in contact with the ball, a scrum is a way to avoid a tackle and a try is how to score.

After hearing a British officer mention there used to be a regular rugby game at Camp Victory, Australian Maj. Andrew "Vargs" Varga, coalition logistics officer, Resources and Sustainment, Multi-National Force - Iraq, took it upon himself to revive the game at Camp Liberty and extend an open invitation to whomever wants to play.

When Varga decided to breathe life back into the Victory game, he ran into a couple of problems, one of which was finding a playing field. He tried to book the softball field at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center on Victory but was unsuccessful because the field couldn't be reserved at the same time every week, he explained.

"We didn't have anywhere to play, so we decided to make our own field," Varga said. "It was a difficult task, because there aren't too many places around here that are unoccupied and big enough to hold a rugby field."

After a long search throughout Camps Victory and Liberty, he found a spot that was unoccupied, big enough and flat enough. The plot of land was on Liberty, and it seemed as if he would get his field, but not without a little more work and effort, Varga said.

He and a small group of equally-devoted rugby players built their field by rigging a discarded piece of fencing to a Humvee to produce a makeshift rake. They proceeded to till and form the

piece of land until they had a field worthy of hosting multiple games of rugby on a weekly basis, Varga said.

"We just took the fence and tied it to the back of our vehicle," Varga said. "It might not have been the most professional method, but it did the trick."

The players have affectionately named their new field the "Dust Bowl" and have played many games in the three months of its existence, Varga said.

It was very important to Varga that the game is made available to everyone who wanted to play. The games are played every Sunday at 6 p.m., and he is happy to see it is a good time for all who come, he said.

Rugby is normally a full contact sport played in two halves, but Varga has made a few changes to the game in order to comply with safety and to make sure the new players can grasp the concept without too many problems, he said.

"We play four, 15-minute quarters," Varga said.

"The game is usually played in halves, but with all of the running involved, most people are too out of breath at the end of the quarters to complain that the quarters weren't long enough."

The offense can either run with the ball or pass, but the ball can only be thrown in a backwards motion. When the offense gets the ball to the end zone, the player with the ball has to force the ball to the ground and maintain contact. This scoring effort is called a "try," Varga said.

A try is worth five points in a normal game of rugby, but Varga said he only counts them as one point when playing on Liberty.

"The defense must make six tackles before they can gain possession of the ball," he said. "In normal rugby they would be actual tackles, but in this game it is simply a one-handed touch."

The defense may also gain possession if the offense drops the ball either while passing or running, Varga added.

The games are played with seven players to a team, and if more than 14 people attend, the game must be played with substitutions, Varga said.

"Players substitute when they get tired, but if someone scores a try, they automatically come out," Varga said. "That way everyone gets a chance to play, and people who need a rest get one."

"There are some regulars who come out on a weekly basis, but there are also a lot of new players who come because they have heard about the game and are curious to learn about it," said Lt. Col. Gerry Omerod, chief logistics officer, Resource and Sustainment, MNF-I. "Most of the people who play say they like to come out as often as possible, but with the hectic schedule of being deployed, it is hard to find the time."

Omerod works with Varga and has been playing the game every week since it started. He never played rugby before he came to Iraq but thought it was easy to pick up on the concept, he said.

A wide variety of people show up every week to play.

Omerod said he thinks it is because most people have heard of rugby but haven't actually played it.

"We don't keep track of the score when we play, and sometimes a person might end up playing for both teams during the course of the game because of the way we substitute," Varga said.

"Playing this game is really more about having a good time than competing against each other, and I haven't seen anybody leave the field who would say they didn't have a load of fun."



A player scrambles past opposing defenders in an attempt to score a point.

A slice of home ...

More than 600 Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, Sailors, Department of Defense employees and contract civilians from various bases throughout Iraq competed in the Peachtree Road Race July 3 at Camp Victory, Iraq. While winners in the women's and men's categories were awarded medals and Army and Air Force Exchange Service gift certificates, each participant received a T-shirt courtesy of the Atlanta Track Club and AAFES phone cards and stationery. The Baghdad division is a subset of the original 6.2-mile road race, which is held annually in downtown Atlanta, Ga., to celebrate Independence Day. The Peachtree Road Race is known to be one of the largest 10K road races in the world.

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

