

Photo by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas

1st Lt. Sungmo Wee, a Republic of Korea Army infantry tactics instructor, coaches an Iraqi Soldier on the proper way to aim at a target. ROK Army Zaytun Division Soldiers and U.S. Army Special Forces Soldiers are training the 103rd Infantry Battalion of the Iraqi Army on advanced infantry tactics in Irbil, Iraq. See story on page 10.

Myers: 'Trend lines' up in Iraq

By Petty Officer 3rd Class John R. Guardiano
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Despite being plagued with ongoing violence that is killing scores of American troops and hundreds of Iraqi civilians, Iraq is making real progress on the path toward democracy and self-rule, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. Richard Myers said Sunday.

Myers spoke about Iraq on two televised news broadcasts: "Fox News Sunday," with Chris Wallace, and CBS's "Face the Nation," with Bob Schieffer. "I think a lot of aspects in Iraq are getting better. ... I think the trend lines are up," Myers said.

The insurgents — whether they're with terrorist ringleader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al Qaeda, or former Sunni regime

elements — have tried and failed to undermine Iraq's key "centers of gravity," he said.

According to Myers, the first center of gravity is the Coalition, which has remained firm and steadfast; the Iraqi security forces, which have grown, both in size and capability, are the second; and Iraqi civilians who support the move to democracy make up the third.

"A recent [May 2005] poll says that 85 percent of Iraqis are going to vote for the new constitution," Myers said. "Iraqi civilians are signing up for the Army and the police in record numbers. And, of course, we have more recruits than we — actually Iraq — can handle."

Terrorists have tried to undermine Iraq's key centers of gravity, Myers said, and "nothing is working. I think that means our strategy is working."

In 14 of 18 provinces, he said, "there is very, very little

violence." Moreover, attacks are down 25 percent from what they were last fall and winter when Iraqis celebrated Ramadan and went to the polls to elect an interim government.

"We've got about 100 Iraqi security force battalions that are equipped and trained," Myers said. "About 25 percent of them can do independent operations — or operations with little help from Coalition forces. But every week that number changes and goes up."

Roughly 40,000 Iraqi troops are now participating in "Operation Al Barkh," which is designed to root out terrorists and insurgents in Baghdad. Myers said the operation breaks new ground in that Iraq's Interior and Defense ministries are working together to coordinate an operation.

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Board results release detainees from Abu Ghraib

By 1st Lt. Kristy Miller
Task Force 134 Public Affairs

ABU GHRAIB, Iraq — More than 200 detainees were released from Abu Ghraib last week after the Combined Review and Release Board determined they had not committed acts of terrorism or insurgency against the Iraqi people or Coalition forces.

Prior to their release, the detainees received information focusing on their reintegration into Iraqi society.

The class was hosted by Col. Frank Miskena, U.S. Army civil affairs officer.

Miskena, born in Baghdad, moved to the United States when he was 26 after serving as a lieutenant in the Iraqi Army. He has since served 22 years with the U.S. Army.

“What we wanted to do with this program is to help these people be good Iraqi citizens for their country and help rally them with good patriotism,” Miskena said. “We want them to do the right thing for themselves as human beings and also for their country and their families.”

Miskena spoke to the detainees in their native language, stressing the importance of being a good citizen upon their release.

“I don’t want to see you here again,” he said. “If you return, you will not come here; you will go to the [Iraqi prison]. Here, you are in heaven,” Miskena said to the detainees awaiting their release. “I want to tell you that the Iraqi forces, Army and police are not only keeping order, they are also protecting and securing. They are stronger, better trained and more capable.”

“We want you to be good citizens,” he said. “I am a U.S. colonel and proud of it. My colleagues here are doing a lot of good things for you. Americans are working day in and day out for the benefit of Iraqis and the country of Iraq.”

Many detainees responded to the colonel saying they were innocent and had done nothing wrong.

Any process in Iraq has to take time, Miskena said. Sometimes for security reasons, you have to do a lot of investigating to determine the truth.

“It is time now to look to the future,” he said. “The past is gone. Our forces and the Iraqis are doing everything they can to avoid picking up innocent Iraqis.”

One of the goals of the class was to hold discussion with the detainees soon to be released, Miskena said. Doing this showed them they are free and no longer a part of a dictatorship.

“They were able to express themselves,” he said. “This proved to Iraqis that if you are innocent, you are released.”

An Iraqi prison official also spoke to the detainees before their release to inform them of conditions on “the other side” in the event of their return to the internment facility.

“Please, brothers, think before you put yourself in any situation,” the official said. “It is rough, real bad ... so don’t think it is good in there because you live in tents. You eat and drink and live better here because the military is providing for you what can’t be done at the hard site.”

“It is the prisoner who suffers,” he said. “Once [you] put on this suit, you become a prisoner, guilty or innocent. So keep this in mind and I hope we do not see you.”

Detainees are released approximately every seven to 10 days following review by the CRRB, officials say. The reintegration classes will continue to be held prior to the detainees’ release.

Trend

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Meanwhile, he noted, Coalition forces have 35 major operations now under way. Thirty of these operations are led by joint Iraqi and Coalition forces working in tandem; five are led by Iraqi security forces.

“What we want to have happen in Iraq,” Myers said, “is Iraqi security forces take charge of their own security; and every day they’re more and more able to do that.”

As for terrorist ringleader Zarqawi, Myers said the Pentagon is inclined to believe he is, in fact, injured, as has been alleged on Zarqawi’s own Web site. But, he added, “people need to understand that we’re going after Zarqawi, his lieutenants, his organization on a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week basis, and we’re getting much, much better at this work.”

According to Myers, Coalition forces have killed about 250 and captured more than 400 of Zarqawi’s closest lieutenants.

Myers noted Iraq also has made strong progress on the path toward political reform: drafting a constitution, holding elections, and establishing an effective, representative government.

“It wasn’t too long ago that people said, ‘Well, you can’t have an interim government,’” he said. “Well, an interim government has stood up; and now we have a transitional government. ... We’ve got some good

ministers that are working the problem really, really hard trying to accommodate the Sunnis who did not vote in the election [and trying to involve them in the] constitutional process.”

For these reasons, Myers dismissed the prospect of a civil war in Iraq.

“I don’t think we’re close to a civil war at this point,” he said. “All the indications are that the religious leaders — particularly the Shiiia religious leaders, [who are] the majority in the country, are very moderate” when it comes to the political process and political involvement.

Myers did acknowledge progress in Iraq has been slower than the Pentagon had initially expected.

“I think what we underestimated was the devastation of the human spirit of the Iraqi people,” he said. “For decades, they suffered under Saddam Hussein and his regime. And if you were somebody who was innovative or entrepreneurial and [put] your hand up, it was likely they were going to either chop the hand off or deal with your family in some way that would cause you to go back to ground. And that was true for their infrastructure as well.”

In light of this deeply ingrained mindset, Iraq “wasn’t just going to naturally blossom” once it had the opportunity for freedom and self-rule, Myers said. “But they’ve pulled themselves up by their bootstraps. ... And it’s up to the international community, and [it’s] up to us to help nurture this, to keep this spirit.”

Army announces approved Combat Action Badge design

WASHINGTON — The Army announced May 27 the design for the Combat Action Badge. The design was approved by Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, Army Chief of Staff.

The CAB, featuring both a bayonet and grenade, may be awarded to any Soldier performing assigned duties in an area where hostile fire pay or imminent danger pay is authorized, who is personally present and actively engaging or being engaged by the enemy, and performing satisfactorily in accordance with the prescribed rules of engagement. Award is not limited by one’s branch or military occupational specialty.

“Warfare is still a human endeavor,” said Schoomaker. “Our intent is to recognize Soldiers who demonstrate and live the Warrior Ethos.”

“The Global War on Terrorism and its associated operations will be the first era of conflict considered for this award,” said Lt. Col. Bill Johnson, Human Resources Command chief of military awards. He added: “Sept. 18, 2001, is the effective date for the new award. That is when President Bush signed Senate Joint Resolution 23, authorizing the use of military force against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States.”

The CAB will go into immediate production and should be available late this summer or early fall through unit supply and military clothing sales stores.



The Combat Action Badge recently approved by the Chief of Staff of the Army.

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PERSPECTIVES



U.S. Air Force photo by Sgt. Cherie A. Thurlby

A Vietnam veteran holds a flag near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington Sunday. Men and women young and old gathered in the nation's capitol to watch as hundreds of thousands of motorcycle riders took part in Rolling Thunder 2005. The annual ride pays tribute to those killed in Vietnam and remembers those missing from all conflicts.

Memorial Rolling Thunder ride focuses on POW/MIA cause

By Steven Donald Smith
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — From the outset it appeared to be a simple festive gathering, but it quickly became apparent that a serious cause was the genesis for bringing this group together.

Hundreds of thousands of Vietnam veterans and motorcycle enthusiasts gathered in the Pentagon's North Parking lot early Sunday for the 18th annual Rolling Thunder Ride for Freedom.

Rolling Thunder, Inc., is a non-profit organization whose goal is to raise public awareness about the prisoner of war/missing in action issue. The ride is meant to bring attention to the fact that many American service members from past wars are still unaccounted for.

Many of the veterans gathered here firmly believe that there are American prisoners of war alive in Southeast Asia. "Most definitely" is how Ray Gray, of Manchester, Md., responded when asked if he thought Vietnam POWs still survive.

Gray said that he felt the only way for the issue to be resolved is for voters to put pressure on politicians to bring the prisoners home.

Throughout the morning veterans re-acquainted themselves with old buddies. Some were overcome with emotion as they hugged and shook hands.

"When I come to the Pentagon parking lot it fills my heart to see a lot of the other brothers here. Some of them I haven't seen in 30 years," said Vietnam veteran Robert Vanstory, of Abilene, Texas. "I always look forward to bonding and uniting with my brothers. Knowing we still stand together regardless of what happened in Vietnam is important."

Shortly after noon, engines began to roar to life, and the parking lot shook with the sound of Harley Davidson motorcycles and a variety of other bikes. Two by two the motorcycles left the Pentagon and crossed the Memorial Bridge into Washington, D.C.

The procession of bikes zoomed along the spectator-lined Constitution Avenue, where the cheering crowd sometimes drowned out the sound of the engines.

There were a few notable individuals among the riders, including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, a fervent motorcyclist.

The riders weaved their way past the Capitol building and back down to the Lincoln and Vietnam memorials on the National Mall. Throughout the afternoon the crowd listened to speeches and was entertained by musical acts, such as Paul Revere & The Raiders and Nancy Sinatra, on a stage set up at the foot of Lincoln Memorial.

"Rolling Thunder makes sure the American people are always mindful of Vietnam and those left behind," said Former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony Principi.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was also on hand. "To the riders of Rolling Thunder, I thank you so very much, for what you are doing for the veterans and the country — patriots all," Rumsfeld said.

The event has changed somewhat over the years. Rolling Thunder began as a demonstration against the government for not doing more to help POWs. That cause remains as important as ever, but the event has also become a patriotic Memorial Day weekend mainstay.

Rolling Thunder has more than 80 chapters with thousands of members spread across the United States and around the world.

The organization also raises funds to help veterans and promotes legislation that advocates veterans issues.

"We don't do anything for the money, we do it for our brothers. When we raise money from selling patches and T-shirts, it goes to the POW/MIA issue and to help disabled veterans," said Artie Muller, president and co-founder of Rolling Thunder.

One piece of legislation that Rolling Thunder successfully advocated and co-authored was the POW/MIA Memorial Flag Act. The act stipulates that the POW/MIA flag must be displayed at the National World War II Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

Its members also volunteer their time and energy to helping veterans in their local communities, Muller said.

Sinatra has been a steady advocate for the POW/MIA cause over the years. She closed out the event and was enthusiastically applauded when she sang her venerable 1960s classic "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'."

As the event came to a close, shouts of, "Bring them home!" could be heard as one last reminder not to forget those left behind.

"Every time we come here it reminds people that we haven't forgotten," said Vietnam veteran Lee Samples, of Starkville, Miss.

Scimitar Pulse

You know you have been in Iraq too long when ...

"... Arabic and Kurdish start making sense."

Army Sgt. John DeHaven
29th Infantry Regiment



"... you start calling Baghdad home."

Army Sgt. Martin Sierra
353rd Civil Affairs Command

"... TNA stands for toes and ankles."

Army Staff Sgt. Barry Colson
377th Field Artillery Battalion



"... it is time to go to my trailer and I say, 'I am going home.'"

Army Command Sgt. Maj.
Joseph Aparo
Joint Area Support Group – Central

"... I notice that the situation here is getting better and I hear fewer bombs."

Durga Gurung
Global Security



"... you start to enjoy the heat and the flies."

Rudy Skonord
Fluor Construction

"... you start having the wrong attitude about serving the troops."

Suzi Silveira
Army & Air Force Exchange Service



Advisory Support Teams help shape Iraqi Army

Story and photos by Sgt. Misha King
Scimitar Assistant Editor

CAMP FALCON, BAGHDAD, Iraq — All throughout Iraq, the Iraqi Army is rigorously training in order to become the main force protection for its people. Alongside these Soldiers are Coalition troops, training them with their vast knowledge and unique experiences. But not all Coalition troops are teaching the Iraqi Army soldiering skills through methods such as conventional classroom instruction and a hands-on approach. The Advisory Support Team for the 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade Iraqi Intervention Force here is one such group using a hands-off approach to achieve the same goal.

“We are American advisors to an Iraqi infantry battalion,” said Marine 1st Sgt. Todd Grimes, senior enlisted advisor for the 2nd Bn., 1st Bde., IIF here. “We’re here to help them set up their Army so they can support themselves during combat operations. This is the first time it’s been done since the Vietnam War at this scale.”

“All we do, basically, is advise them on [combat] tactics,” said Staff Sgt. Jose Sanchez, advisor for 1st Company, 2nd Bn. “The only time we’d ever take over is if the mission is compromised and we’re in a life-threatening situation.”

Sanchez explained an AST is a 10-man team



Staff Sgt. Jose Sanchez, a Chicago resident assigned to the 2nd Bn., 1st Bde. Iraqi Intervention Force's Advisory Support Team, allows an eager IIF Soldier to fire his squad automatic weapon as he coaches him on proper aiming and firing techniques.

divided into smaller two-man teams. “In our case, there are four companies, so there are two American [noncommissioned officers] per company who advise at the company level. Our officers advise the staff and battalion commander in the Iraqi sector.”

People think some of the Iraqi Soldiers can't be trusted because they're from the former regime, said Sanchez. Although at first he was hesitant upon learning he would be in combat situations with them, Sanchez said his feelings changed very quickly after he started patrolling with the Iraqi Soldiers.

“I realized most of these guys love us to death. I mean, on a patrol, they'll go into a house first before they let us [Americans] come in. They'll protect us with their lives. Other Americans think we're crazy — two Americans out there with a bunch of Iraqis.

But they're our buddies — they just speak a different language.”

Although the IIF Soldiers have shown tremendous trust and respect for the ASTs, they are still learning to trust and respect each other, especially among the enlisted ranks.

“They have an NCO corps, but it was misused or not used at all,” Grimes explained. “We want the commander to be able to leverage his time and personnel and be able to pass information down ... and trust these young NCOs to take this information and be able to make decisions on their own without always having to go to an officer.”

“In the old Army, squad leaders and NCOs couldn't lead any Soldiers,” said Staff Sgt. Hameed Jundi, 3rd platoon squad leader, 1/2 IIF. “We couldn't do that because the officers did everything — they made all the decisions. But now, the NCOs have more power to lead the Soldiers.”

Considering that being drill sergeant- and infantry-qualified was one of the prerequisites for the advisory positions, strong leadership and soldiering skills are almost second nature for the members of the AST. With these skills,

along with their NCO knowledge and experience, Sanchez and the other ASTs were able to create an environment for the Iraqi Soldiers to build a strong NCO corps of their own.

“On a regular day on patrols, we let the NCOs take charge,” Sanchez said. “And later on, we have an [after-action review] to let them know what they did well and what they need to improve on. Then we ask *them* what they think they did well and what they need to improve on and on the next patrol, we look to see if they made those improvements or not.”

Even though the IIF Soldiers, who are the Iraqi Army's special operations forces, train hard day in and day out, they get rewarded with a little “play” every now and then — with an occasional teaching point included.

“We also have a little fun,” Sanchez said. “The Iraqis like firing our M4s and our [squad automatic weapons] because they think they're better, so we let them shoot our weapons just for fun. But we always tell them, ‘It's not the weapon, it's the Soldier.’ We emphasize that. We tell them, ‘Don't think that just because we're American and supposedly our weapons are better, that we're better Soldiers. No, we just train more and if you train more, you can be a better Soldier with your [weapons].’”

Watching the Iraqi Soldiers' bright smiles after a fun and productive day on the range is just one of the many good-natured results of the joint training. “The best part of my job is hanging out with the Iraqi Soldiers and talking about family,” Sanchez said. “With my little Arabic and their little English, we learn about each other and our families. It doesn't matter that I'm Christian and they're Muslim. We're all brothers-in-arms.”

“The good thing is our troops can come out here and learn from the Iraqis, and then they can go back and educate the American public on who the Iraqi people really are,” Grimes said.

And who they really are will become that much easier to proudly show without fear as the Iraqi Army slowly but surely takes control of Iraq's security.

“I like being in the Army because I can protect my people,” Jundi said. “When the people see us, they are very happy to see the new Iraqi Army, and it makes me proud. In the old Army, the Soldiers protected the Saddam regime. But now, the Army protects the Iraqi people.”



A member of the Advisory Support Team watches as an Iraqi Intervention Force Soldier and his squad leader check his shot group after firing his weapon during weapons qualification.

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the heat
beat you
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Iraqi Military Academy trains future leaders

Story and photos by Sgt. W. Watson Martin
Scimitar Staff

AL RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq — The Iraqi Military Academy Al Rustamiyah recently re-established its training and educational programs after its abandonment in January 2003, with 135 cadets to develop the qualities of leadership, character and intellect demanded of an Iraqi armed services officer.

The Iraqi leadership modeled IMAR after England's famous Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where its training and curriculum produce some of the world's finest officers. The British and the Iraqi military have very old ties here — the British oversaw the construction of IMAR's first buildings in 1924. Only when the first Gulf War began in 1990 did the British and Iraqis have to break their bonds.

After its abandonment, looting occurred until the U.S. Army occupied the site the summer. The Coalition Military Assistance Training Team took control of the site in March 2004 and began reconstruction two months later, said British Col. Neil Hutton, a paratrooper from the Royal British Army and consultant here. CMATT members here include 16 British, two Danish, two Polish, three Hungarian, two Lithuanian, one Dutch and 12 U.S. troops.

The academy lies six miles southeast of Baghdad where from aboard a Black Hawk helicopter, extensive transformation is visible from the dust and rubble surrounding reconstruction sites. A small northern section of the military compound houses a U.S. Army brigade while the Iraqi military inhabits the mid-section, and about 5,000 squatters illegally stake the southern portion, officials said.

With a \$100 million budget and detailed planning, IMAR will develop into a great training environment, according to academy officials. The base is like many modern military bases and includes a basketball gymnasium, an Olympic-size indoor pool, study halls, base laundry, medical clinic, obstacle courses, weapons ranges, morale welfare and recreation buildings, base exchange, barber shop, motor pool compound, quartermaster store, an armory and warehouses.

The academy's over-arching priorities include the completion of all building projects with the assistance of more than 1,000 Iraqi workers and contractors; the training of the Iraqi staff to take over all logistics functions; the deployment of selected cadets and instructors to British military schools for eight- to 12-week courses; and the commitment to training excellence within the instruction. All of these efforts, projected for December completion, will strengthen and sharpen the one-year concentrated officer basic course, according to IMAR officials.

Until then, CMATT advisors will continue to work hand-



A platoon in its second week of training at the Iraqi Military Academy performs drill and ceremony, raising their arms and knees high and shouting "yes-yum," which loosely translate to "left-right" for cadence calling.

in-hand with the Iraqi officers to provide encouragement and advisement to instructors and students alike.

"They are a very proud people — we must let the non-commissioned officers train the cadets without too much interference from Iraqi officers or the advisors," said Danish Army Sgt. Maj. Stefam Nielsem, a former instructor at the Denmark Army Combat School.

Advisors, nonetheless, work closely with the company commanders during the after-action reviews to ensure proper corrective measures are taken for the instructors, he said.

IMAR plans to start a course for Iraq's pre-war colonels in order to show them how the military can be more effective without the old regime's methods of harsh punishments to its troops, he said. With a new frame of mind on how to punish cadets for breaking the rules, morale should remain stable. For example, if they are caught smoking indoors, they are ordered to pick up cigarette butts instead of standing in the sun or remaining in the front leaning rest position for long periods, he said.

Further training outside of Iraq will help its future leaders incorporate new ways of thinking.

"There will be 34 instructors going to the Wales's Brecon Infantry Training Center for a 12-week course who will teach the third intake of cadets in September," Nielsem said. "I look forward to seeing how many come back."

"You must admire [the cadre and cadets] because they face a lot of danger — one family got beaten for their son's courage," he said.

"The terrorists killed my friend. My brother told me to quit [the academy]," said an Iraqi staff officer. "I am not ready to die as a slave and will never go back to the

old regime. If the bad guys come, I will take some down with me."

"I have been here four days and find [training] good and very easy; I am not afraid to be here," said Saif, a recruit from the second class. On the other hand, another recruit said, "I am very tired and find the jumps (physical exercise) very difficult."

The rigorous training occurs over a concentrated one-year period with three phases. Once the cadets complete the first four-month phase, they are given increased privileges such as moving into four- to six-man room barracks.

"The future of IMAR looks pretty bright," said U.S. Marine Capt. Bryan Esprit, an advisor overseeing the obstacle course. "You can measure the interest of the program from the 40 applicants a week."

Out of the initial 135 candidates, only 90 remain in training. Some quit

because they find it too difficult or receive threats from insurgents. Two of those 90 cadets, in their second phase, will receive further training in England.

"I was at this academy as a cadet just before Saddam fell. Now, I notice [IMAR] is more developed, and I have more enthusiasm," said Cadet Ali Moslom al Saddi.

He is following the footsteps of his brother and uncles, who are officers in the Iraqi military.

Acceptance to the academy is merit-based and does not discriminate on the basis of ethnic or religious backgrounds, according to IMAR officials. Kurdish cadets are integrated here as well as Sunnis and Shiites from all over Iraq. "The [Iraqi officials] are quite satisfied they are getting full representation," Hutton said. "When cadets graduate, they can say, 'I've been through a tough academy,' while holding their heads high."



Staff Sgt. Eddie Williams, a British Army Physical Training Corps qualified instructor and former Royal British Army paratrooper, conducts intense physical training with Iraqi drill instructors.



Iraqi Military Academy recruits test their agility and strength at one of the academy's obstacle courses.

Aviation reaches safety, milestones 50 at a time

By Spc. Derek Del Rosario

Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — Soldiers at the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (General Support) are being recognized for their efforts — in increments of 50.

Since arriving to Camp Taji, the command group of 2/3 GSAB recognizes battalion Soldiers with the “Baghdad 50,” an award that recognizes mission support and safety practices that are completed in 50 consecutive units. This includes either 50 hours of consecutive combat flight hours, 50 days worth of mission completion, or 50 days of accident free and successful aircraft maintenance.

Earlier this month, approximately 30 Soldiers were awarded the Baghdad 50 during a presentation in the 2/3 GSAB Hangar.

Lt. Col. Robert Bannon, 2/3 GSAB commander, presented the Baghdad 50 certificates and special recognition to battalion Soldiers in recognition of their safety practices and mission completion.

“We have great Soldiers, aviators and mechanics in this battalion. The Baghdad 50 is designed to show our appreciation and acknowledge excellence in safety on land and air,” said Bannon. “Since being here we have put in 3,000 flight hours and transported 20,000 Soldiers and 1.5 million pounds of cargo — that’s a lot of business. It couldn’t have been done without good maintenance and safety practice.”

The Soldiers of 2/3 GSAB have been working hard for this first half of deployment, putting in around 1,300 night vision goggle flights and 1,300 hours of day time flying.

In addition, Black Hawk maintainers of the battalion have completed around 20, 100-hour inspections and eight, 250-hour inspections. These are all very admirable accomplishments, but the most important thing to Chief Warrant Officer George M. Arthurs, battalion safety officer, is that these milestones were accomplished in a safe manner.

“The Baghdad 50 represents how unit assets have been working in a very efficient manner with safety always in mind,” said Arthurs. “The NCOs are doing an outstanding job. Standards are being met and safety is always being followed. It means a lot to these Soldiers to be recognized for their effort in such a demanding and harsh environment.”

The Soldiers continue to work hard and recognition for their efforts have a positive affect on their morale, said Spc. Jose L. Trujillo, Black Hawk mechanic in Company C, 2/3 GSAB and one recipient of the Baghdad 50.

“This award just shows us that we are doing our jobs well and we are being recognized for it,” said Trujillo. Safety is paramount when it comes to being a helicopter mechanic, he added.

Baghdad 50 recipient Spc. Jeremy A. Connors, Chinook mechanic in Co. C, 2/3 GSAB, cannot agree more that safety is the most important aspect to keep in mind for a mechanic.

“The job always needs to be done with safety in mind. We are looking out for our buddies out there,” Connors said. “One loose bolt could mean the difference, so we are always working hard to make it safe for the pilots.”

Bannon challenged the battalion Soldiers to continue their hard work throughout their deployment.

“In this business, you are only as good as your last mission,” Bannon said. “As long as the Soldiers continue to do their jobs and mission safely, they will continue to be recognized.”

Mud school replacement projects complete

BABIL PROVINCE, Iraq — Headmasters at three mud schools took charge of their new brick and concrete replacement schools as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Southern District signed the schools over to the education minister in the Babil Province after local laborers completed the three projects May 15. All three mud school replacement schools boast 12 classrooms instead of the usual six, according to Valerie Schaffner, Buildings, Health and Education project manager for the mud school replacement projects. The usual six-classroom design was geared to smaller rural areas, servicing about 100 students, and the schools in Babil — Yaum Al Huria, Al Masoodi and Al Ma’rij — serve 275, 370 and 590 students respectively.

“The cost was about \$160,000 per school,” said Schaffner. “That includes storage space, student and teachers’ bathrooms, electricity for fans, a partially paved playground area and a security fence around the school.”

She added that because of security risks in the area, no opening day ceremonies were held. These schools will be getting some new furniture for the teachers’ and the headmasters’ offices.

Schaffner said that originally 38 mud schools were to be replaced throughout southern Iraq, but that the number has increased to 40.

“We saved enough in negotiations to build two more, which we are now writing contracts for but are not yet advertised,” said Schaffner. “The \$4 million program, funded by the Iraq Restoration and Reconstruction Funds, now is paying for 40 new schools, 36 of which are the standard six-classroom design and four — these three in Babil and one more in the Karbala Province — are of the larger, 12-classroom design.”

Of the 40 mud school replacement projects in southern Iraq, 13 have been completed, 25 are over 70 percent finished. Contracts for two more are being negotiated and are expected to be awarded soon. (By BJ Weiner, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

Coalition arrests former Saddam general

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraqi Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division teamed up with Task Force Baghdad Soldiers to take down a former general from the old

regime in a middle of the night raid carried out in west Baghdad Sunday.

The man captured was part of Saddam Hussein’s intelligence network and was also involved with the Fedayeen, a criminal secret police organization of the old regime.

He now leads the military wings of several terror cells operating in the west Baghdad neighborhood of Ghazaliyah. The terrorist groups concentrate their attacks on U.S. troops using bombs, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades. Another specifically targeted individual was also seized in the same operation. Both men were taken into custody for questioning.

At about the same time, two Iraqi Army platoons conducted another joint operation with Task Force Baghdad Soldiers in a different area of Ghazaliyah. The Soldiers arrested three more suspects and seized four hand grenades in two raids.

“The Iraqi forces are clearly in the fight,” said Lt. Col. Clifford Kent, a Task Force Baghdad spokesperson. “They’re taking the lead in going after these terrorists.”

In other combat operations early Sunday, a Task Force Baghdad patrol working in central Baghdad was fired upon by a terrorist. The Soldiers immediately returned fire and killed the attacker. When the Soldiers searched the house the terrorist had fired from, they found evidence of explosives.

Coalition forces raids net key terrorists

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Acting on intelligence sources and tips provided by Iraqi citizens, Multi-National Forces conducted simultaneous raids in the Rahwah and Karabilah regions to capture or kill terrorists within the Abu Musab al-Zarqawi network.

Multiple sources of intelligence indicated that elements of the Abu Musab al-Zarqawi terrorist network were operating in the area, including key lieutenants, suicide bombers, and a contingent of foreign fighters. Multi-National Forces engaged and destroyed these targets.

Operations against suspected foreign fighter strongholds resulted in killing over a dozen terrorists and foreign fighters. Specifically, the bodies of three Saudis and one Moroccan have been identified, and others are being sought within the destroyed buildings. Coalition forces also destroyed car bombs, bomb-making material and eight buildings that contained large weapons.

Airman sentenced in contraband court martial

By Staff Sgt. Jerron Barnett
and 2nd Lt. David Tomiyama
33rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. — A former 728th Air Control Squadron Airman here was sentenced to confinement for one year and dismissal from active duty in a general court martial May 20.

Maj. Gregory McMillion was found guilty on three of four charges: violating a lawful general order; failure to give notice and turn over to proper authority without delay captured or abandoned property; and wrongfully and dishonorably directing subordinates to help ship home the captured or abandoned property.

The charges are violations of Articles 92, 103 and 133 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. He was found not guilty of giving an official statement with the intent to deceive, which is Article 107 of the UCMJ.

In the fall of 2003, 728th ACS Airmen unpacked several crates of contraband consisting of Iraqi AK-47s, rocket-pro-

pelled grenade launchers, Iraqi uniforms, inert landmines, rifles, knives and bayonets. These items were found among mission equipment after their return from a seven-month deployment supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

During court proceedings, witnesses said McMillion gave orders to 728th ACS Airmen to set the crates aside until he returned from the deployment.

McMillion chose to be tried by a military judge alone versus a trial by a panel of officers.

Military Judge Col. Ronald Gregory recommended a waiver of the automatic forfeitures of pay and allowances that is typically imposed when an Airman is dismissed from active duty or receives six months or more in confinement, said law officials here. Until action is taken on McMillion’s sentence by Maj. Gen. Robert Chedister, commander of the Air Armament Center and convening authority in this case, McMillion’s pay and allowances will be redirected to his dependents.



U.S. Air Force photo

Maj. Gregory McMillion was found guilty of bringing contraband material from Iraq, including the above weapons.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Operation New Market continues in Al Anbar

CAMP BLUE DIAMOND, AR RAMADI, Iraq — Marines and Sailors from Regimental Combat Team 2 and members of the Iraqi Security Forces continue Operation New Market in and around the city of Haditha.

Terrorists attacked Marines and ISF forces May 25 with small arms fire in central Haditha. Six terrorists were killed in the battle and two Marines were wounded. Local citizens identified one of the attackers killed as an imam. The imam was firing on Marines and ISF with an AK-47 assault rifle.

During separate engagements throughout the area four more terrorists were killed. Marines and ISF searched targeted areas, buildings and businesses in an effort to locate terrorists, weapons and ammunition caches. Checkpoints have been established around the city to interdict terrorists leaving the city. A weapons cache consisting of a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, machine gun and ammunition was discovered in a palm grove north of the city.

Terrorist presence and activity have recently increased in the area. Over the course of the three months of the Marines' presence, numerous roadside bombs have been discovered in the vicinity of Haditha and numerous indirect fire attacks have been launched against Coalition forces assigned to protect the Haditha area. Approximately 1,000 Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces are participating in Operation New Market.

Personal shoppers bring comfort to hospitalized troops

DALLAS — Since the beginning of the war on terror in September 2001, almost 13,000 troops have been injured in

Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. Sadly, many of those troops are evacuated from contingency locations to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany often with no personal belongings, other than the clothes they are wearing. With the help of the Army & Air Force Exchange Service's implementation of Public Law 1559, many evacuated patients are assisted by AAFES personal shoppers who supply them with the items they need.

"Wounded service members don't even have to leave the hospital. We go to the Exchange and bring fresh and comfortable clothing to Landstuhl's wounded service members," said Christine Curry, AAFES associate and personal shopper. AAFES associates assist injured service members by visiting AAFES shopping centers at Ramstein AB or Vogelweh Military Complex to pick up clothing and shoes. "This program is a great morale booster, especially since it's unexpected. Several of them have invited us back to check out the clothing they are wearing as they prepared to leave for home."

A clothing request form is used to indicate each service member's sizes, such as waist and length for pants, shoe size, and normal shirt size. The service members can also request special items that make their injuries more comfortable such as sleeveless shirts for arm and shoulder injuries, loose shorts or zip away pants for leg injuries, and hats or scarves for head injuries. Most service members request comfortable clothing such as athletic shorts, T-shirts, and wind suits, for stays in the hospital, and jeans and a polo shirt for the trip home. Levi's jeans, Dockers slacks, and ankle socks are the most requested items.

Section 1319 of Public Law 1559 allows AAFES to allocate \$250 towards the purchase of civilian clothing to qualifying service members who arrive at several military hospitals. To qualify for the allotment, service members must be medically evacuated from Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom or Iraqi Freedom. Ramstein Air Base Exchange has processed 14,364 vouchers since the bill was passed in April 2003. (By Jennifer Johnsen, AAFES Public Affairs)

Stars Wars: Revenge of the Sith premieres in Iraq

BALAD, Iraq — Last month, Star Wars fans around the world filled theaters for the premiere of Episode III — Revenge of the Sith — even those deployed to Iraq.

The Army & Air Force Exchange Service's sustainer theater here ensured that more than a thousand deployed Stars Wars fans didn't miss out on the long-anticipated premiere of the newest and final episode in the saga. All of the air conditioned theater's 740 seats were filled for all three May 19th screenings of the Revenge of the Sith.

Staff Sgt. William Stearns, who grew up watching the Star Wars epic unfold and dreaming of being in the Army, didn't want miss the premier of his favorite story nearly 30 years in the making. "It's my usual day off, and I've been here since 11 a.m. to make sure I have a good seat," said Stearns. "I thought I might miss it being here in Iraq."

"I got really lucky because today is my day off and we just came off a two-week mission," said Sgt. Jason Richardson. "It's great to get a breather and seeing the movie just tops it off. This movie shows that it's true what they say, [AAFES] goes where we go and they're holding it down, too."

Many, like Stearns and Richardson, were anticipating the Revenge of the Sith opening; others just happened to drive up on mission. "We took a four-hour convoy from Ramadi last night and being here is like R&R. [They] have a swimming pool, Star Wars premiering and a 24-hour PX," said Staff Sgt. Joseph Danielson. "You can't beat it; it's good for me and these guys." (By Sgt. 1st Class Heatherann Bozeman, AAFES Public Affairs)

One potato, two ...

Photo by Staff Sgt. Reynaldo Ramon

Capt. Jesse Cornelius, agriculture officer for the 155th Brigade Combat Team, stops by a local market in Dunis, Iraq, to check the quality and price of the vegetables and chickens.

Frequencies

Al Asad	93.3 FM
Ar Ramadi	107.3 FM
Baghdad	92.3 FM
	and 107.7 FM
Balad	107.3 FM
Camp Taji	102.5 FM
Fallujah	105.1 FM
Kirkuk	107.3 FM
Mosul	105.1 FM
Q-West	93.3 FM
Ridgeway	107.1 FM
Sinjar	107.9 FM
Talil AB	107.3 FM
Tikrit	93.3 FM
Taji	107.7 FM

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

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

Monday-Friday

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

Saturday

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

Daily Islamic Prayer

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



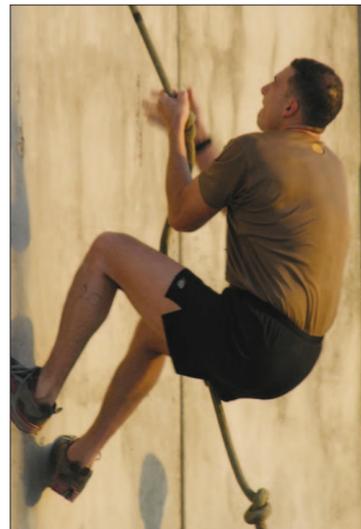
U.S. Army photo by Sgt. W. Watson Martin

U.S. Marine Maj. Nicole Hudspeth (left) and Air Force Maj. Carol Fields show their determination in the Baghdad SUPERFROG challenge, working as a team to disassemble and re-assemble an M-16A2 rifle as quickly as they can. Officials at the weapons station tested participants' abilities to manipulate the small component parts of both the M-9 pistol and the M-16A2 rifle under stressful conditions. The weapons checkpoint was the last stage of the race prior to the finish line.



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

Baghdad SUPERFROG participant U.S. Army Maj. Erik Brown contributes to his team's collective bench press of 10 times their team's total body weight at one stage of the competition.



U.S. Navy photo by Chief Petty Officer Cory Drake



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. W. Watson Martin

Above, a civilian participant grabs the rail at the side of the pool after swimming a lap in uniform during one event of the 12-stage course in the Baghdad SUPERFROG. Left, U.S. Navy Cmdr. Guy Vilardi scales a T-wall as part of the third functional area of the course. Vilardi and his teammates, all activated reserve troops who work for airlines in their civilian careers, called themselves the "Flying Frogs of the SOC." Their combined ages total 140 years, and they scored an 11th-place finish overall.



Baghdad SUPERFROG pits brains, brawn against clock

By Chief Petty Officer Cory Drake
Multi-National Force - Iraq
Combined Press Information Center

INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq — Twenty-two teams competed in a Memorial Day weekend combat conditioning course called the Baghdad SUPERFROG, which began at 5:30 a.m. May 27. The field of 65 athletes raced each other and the clock to compete in a sequence of 12 events.

"Naval Special Warfare missions range from combat swimmer operations to direct action in desert, jungle or winter environments," said Cmdr. Duncan Smith, the overall coordinator of the Baghdad SUPERFROG. "SEALs train to the notion that endurance is required to get to and from a target and strength is required to complete actions at the objective. The Baghdad SUPERFROG combat conditioning course brings this principle of endurance and strength into a physical training environment suitable for athletes from all branches of the service."

The field consisted of teams broken down into four divisions. Male, female, coed and a division for "Old Toads," or teams comprised of 40-plus year-old participants. Team members from several Coalition member nations and a host of civilian contractors all had to meet the same challenges and complete the entire course in fewer than 100 minutes.

The Baghdad SUPERFROG, the first ever held outside the cradle of NSW, Coronado, Calif., served two purposes. According to Smith, the primary aim here was to commemorate the service and sacrifices of American fighting men and women who have gone before, and the second was to provide a unique physical and mental challenge on the grounds of the U.S. Embassy in Iraq.

The event kicked off with piper Marine Lt. Col. Mark Silvia and snare percussionist Navy Lt. Brian Murray playing a bagpipe-and-drum rendition of a Scottish martial tune. In keeping with the Memorial Day theme, the musicians played throughout the morning and again at Friday evening's awards ceremony.

The Baghdad SUPERFROG course consisted of two halves. The first was a 1.5-mile run, followed by a tire obstacle combined with a litter carry, a rope climb, body armor pull-ups, a bench press station, a low crawl and a buddy carry event.

The teams then sprinted 400 meters from the gym to the Olympic-sized pool for the course's second portion. On arrival, two team members put on desert camouflage uniforms.

One at a time, two swimmers from each team swam a length of the pool and climbed out, performed 10 push-ups, re-entered the

water and completed a lap. The third swimmer of each team treaded water the whole time.

"I think a lot of the swimmers were surprised by how much tougher it is to swim in a field uniform. Most seemed to relish the challenge, but we did have to pull two swimmers from different teams from the water when they began to look uncomfortable," said Navy Capt. Rob Monroe, a SEAL who worked the pool portion of the event as a lifeguard. Both teams were given a time penalty for not completing their laps and then pushed on with the course. Monroe said an eye was kept toward safety at all times.

"The swim and push-up phase was by far the most gruesome portion of the race. I thought that I was going to be OK until I had to do 10 push-ups with soaking wet DCUs on. That added about 30 pounds. Then having to complete another half-lap was truly grueling, but well worth the strain," said participant Navy Lt. Alfred Corkran. "I need to pass on my thanks to all the event coordinators and volunteers. They put on a great race."

The swim phase was immediately followed by a grenade-toss simulation at the poolside horseshoe pits. For bonus time off their final scores, team members were encouraged to accurately throw a water bottle at the iron stake in the pit furthest from them.

The racers next headed for an event, next to last on the order of the day, they could not have prepared for, the sniper observation exercise. Snipers have traditionally trained their memories with a game named for one featured in a Rudyard Kipling book titled "Kim." Participants, anxious to gain an advantage over their competitors, sought to remember as many of the 20 items in a covered container they could remember after looking at it for 10 seconds. Results varied.

The sniper observation station was followed immediately by another military skill, weapons breakdown and reassembly. Seven volunteers, themselves a good cross-sectional example of the multi-service and multi-national nature of the event, had spent weeks preparing it, and it was the last skills stop for contestants before the finish line.

"The idea behind the M-16 [rifle] and M-9 [pistol] station was simply to ensure that everyone understands the basic makeup of each weapons system," said Army Staff Sgt. Ken Wilt, a volunteer who works on a protective security detail here. "It's to see who has a general idea of how the rifle and the service pistol function." "All the work [my PSD team] put in for days prior was the key to having a professional, superbly run weapons station for the competitors," Wilt said, adding that it took a little more than an hour to actually prepare the



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. W. Watson Martin

After a low crawl obstacle, participants faced the buddy carry, testing strength and stamina. Although the fireman's carry is only for a few meters, that might be the difference between a comrade lying exposed or being carried to the safety of cover on the battlefield.

weapons station itself once the groundwork had been completed.

Weapons station staffers said they were impressed by several teams. The Banshee Babes, the Flying Frogs of the SOC and the Vikings were by-name mentions.

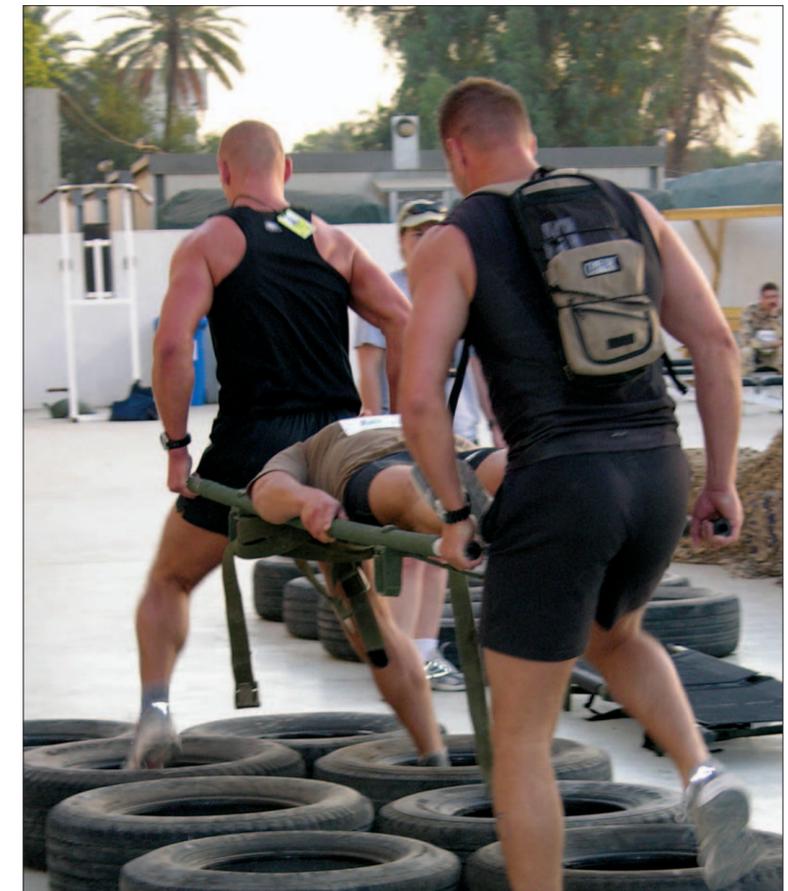
"I have seen events like this many times, but

I have to say this was one of the best-organized events I have been around," said volunteer Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Birthisel, "and to do it in a war zone is outstanding. The biggest surprise to me was that all the teams completed the event and they all had good times."

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Travis Murray, a former Marine, volunteered several hours to help with the Baghdad SUPERFROG event. "I have been in a few events like this one. The 'Swamp Romp' in Hawaii while I was in the Corps, for example, is similar to this. Sure, I'll go for another round if it comes along again. I like these events. They're good for mind and body."

Coordinators spent time outside of duty hours working on scoring tables for each event and team category. To ensure the scoring was fair, Smith and his volunteer staffers put the course to a "test run." Lt. Col. Al Goshi, a co-planner, spent most of the night on his 46th birthday working with other volunteers to craft a clear and specific racer handbook. The booklet ensured the competition was fair for entrants from both genders, all countries and each of the different services involved.

See *SUPERFROG*, Page 16



U.S. Navy photo by Chief Petty Officer Cory Drake

Two Baghdad SUPERFROG participants, fresh from a mile-and-a-half run, carry their teammate over a tire obstacle. The litter-carry simulates the medical evacuation of a casualty.

Experts train Iraq Soldiers to U.S. standards

Story and photos by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas
Scimitar Staff

CAMP ZAYTUN, IRBIL, Iraq — For the last six months, a combined group of U.S. Army Special Forces Soldiers and the Republic of Korea Army Zaytun Division Soldiers have been working together to train the Iraqi Army. Special forces instructors have been educating various platoons and individual Soldiers of the Army of Iraq in basic and advanced Soldier-skills.

“This is why I came into the military and joined the [U.S. Army] Special Forces,” said Staff Sgt. Troy Konvicka about the accomplishments he and his fellow Soldiers have experienced and enjoyed while training the Iraqi Army members.

“We have had a lot of success,” said Konvicka, an engineer sergeant in the combined special forces group here. “They have really come a long way. When we first got them, their shooting techniques and tactical knowledge were very poor. Everything has improved tremendously as we have progressed.”

With Zaytun Division troops supporting most of the logistical needs for this operation, it has allowed SF Soldiers to concentrate mostly on monitoring military training for the IA troops. The Zaytun Division has provided interpreters, instructors, classroom resources and teaching materials. Along with ROK, some of the Army of Iraq units have provided different supplies, especially for the field exercises, such as ammunition and food. Some of the Zaytun Soldiers also provide guidance in the combat teachings.

The knowledge being passed down differs for officers and enlisted troops. The SF Soldiers have organized two different



Capt. Joe Salinas, center, briefs Iraqi Army intelligence officers on a staff planning exercise in Irbil, Iraq.



Sgt. 1st Class Anacleto Zamora (2nd from left) explains to an English-speaking Iraqi Army Soldier to prepare his troops for the next exercise, while Staff Sgt. Troy Konvicka looks on. Zamora, part of 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), and a team of other U.S. Army Special Forces Soldiers are training the 103rd Infantry Bn. of the Iraqi Army in advanced infantry tactics.

five-week courses for enlisted Soldiers and commissioned officers.

Iraqi enlisted troops are learning basic rifle marksmanship, patrolling, platoon movement formations, land navigation and reconnaissance tasks in three phases. The first phase uses the same curriculum as the U.S. Army's basic training. The second phase is advanced marksmanship techniques, reacting to contact, reacting to improvised explosive devices, advanced first aid and the third is the IA doing everything on its own while being evaluated.

The officer training is different. Officers learn some of the same skills, land navigation and basic rifle marksmanship as enlisted Soldiers. Their course of instruction includes basic officer skills, troop-leading procedures, laws of land warfare, combat orders, range training, training management and staff-planning exercises.

“Many of the officers we are working with have a lot of experience, but not a lot of technical proficiency,” said Capt. Joe Salinas, special forces team leader, who helps run the officer training course. “We are helping them to attain those skills.”

Enlisted Soldiers go to school with all ranks, although mainly lower enlisted, and the officers attend their school with the ranks of 2nd lieutenant to brigadier general. Salinas described

the rank issue as one of the difficult parts of training in the mission. He also explained that having the various ranks in the same class can be good by teaching everything to all and refreshing some skills for others.

“The course is taught on a level so it is comprehended by the lowest common denominator and is challenging to the most experienced officer,” Salinas said.

Regardless of the difficulty in the different situations, Salinas made it clear that he and his Soldiers were ready for this mission. “The training we have had in the past has uniquely prepared us for a lot of the challenges and difficulties we face here daily,” he added.

Zaytun and SF prepared the first courses in February. SF instructors graduated their first enlisted and officer classes in April. They are currently instructing their second set of classes, which are in their fifth week of instruction. Salinas said the Soldiers attending this class are all on track to complete the course on time. One enlisted and commissioned class is taught every other month. The commissioned

officers go back to their respective units after completion of the course. The enlisted Soldiers report to a field unit to conduct combat operations against terrorists.

The Army of Iraq has noticed the hard work by the Coalition forces, said IA Brig. Gen. Ieddullie Ramadan. “We thank them very much for the new skills we have acquired,” he said. “The map reading and other Soldier-skills the Coalition forces are teaching are helping us greatly. I see great things happening in the future of Iraq and the world.”

The feelings IA troops have collected are common among the SF Soldiers. “I feel like I have been given the opportunity of a lifetime,” Salinas said. “I have seen the students I guide here progress from various levels of experience to a good understanding of military principles and tactics. Having a small role in that is one of the most significant things I have ever done.”

Every day the mission is different, he explained. The overall mission in Iraq is slowly becoming a success, Salinas said. “As we train up a more professional Iraqi Army force, they become more and more capable of unilateral, self-sustaining operations. It is in all of our best interests to train up a professional, capable IA force that can eventually bear the burden for all of the military responsibilities in Iraq. That is our ultimate goal.”

Anaconda celebrates Asian Pacific Americans heritage

Story and photo by
Spc. Laura E. Ruscio
27th Public Affairs Detachment

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, BALAD, Iraq — Fifteen years ago the United States set aside May as a month to recognize the selfless contributions Asian-Americans and the Pacific Islanders have made to our country.

There were many fun-filled celebrations honoring Asian Pacific Americans last month and, without thinking twice, the Soldiers and civilians of Logistics Support Area Anaconda planned their own celebration.

Civilians and service members gathered at Sustainer Theater for an exciting ceremony honoring these Americans.

Without a dull moment, the crowd was bright-eyed and amazed at the great talent shown by the Soldiers and civilians who gathered in honor of the special occasion.

Since the 29th Brigade originates from Hawaii, it was only natural for their Soldiers

to be eager to participate in the ceremony.

Having everything from Filipino Sinkil dancers and a musical ensemble to the 29th Brigade's senior surgeon from Vietnam as a guest speaker, the Soldiers gave their all in honor of the progression made by the Asian Pacific Americans throughout United States history.

Also performing during the ceremony was the Polynesian Paradise Group. The group of performers originates from Hawaii and decided to visit the service members in the Middle East during this month-long celebration.

Making LSA Anaconda their last stop, the performers were sure to amaze the crowd with their great talents and passion in each performance.

Despite the crowd's willingness to celebrate all night, the ceremony was ended by the Polynesian Paradise Group doing a special performance for the service members who are quick to defend America and our way of life.



The Hawaiian dancers from the Polynesian Paradise Group visited LSA Anaconda in honor of Asian Pacific Heritage Month.

Marines' 'Team America' hits Iraqi streets

Story and photos by Cpl. Ken Melton
2nd Marine Division Public Affairs

ALANBAR, Iraq — Marines with 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment have a large area of operations, and sometimes they need to form new platoons to maintain mili-



itary presence over the areas. The result is a platoon called "Team America," which has staff NCOs and officers in squad leader positions. The unit consists of approximately 40 Marines from a variety of combat military occupational specialties to include snipers, anti-armor men, mortar men, machinegunners and infantrymen from different sections of Weapons Company.

"Some of the Marines have been in the service as long as I have," said Maj. Lawrence J. Catalano, Weapons Company commander and Buffalo, N.Y. native.

"This gives us years of experience, that's what makes this team different from other infantry units." The team operates on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week basis conducting counter-indirect fire, information operation, and civil-

military operations.

"This is a direct action team with a high operational tempo," said the 38-year-old Catalano, who is an 8th grade history teacher at Orchard Park Middle School when not serving on active duty. "We were able to put together an entire platoon and complete our first mission within 24 hours."

The team's first mission was in support of a civil-military operation in South Dam village. The team provided security for a civil affairs officer who visited the local clinic and neighboring school.

"These guys had all their points covered with the greatest precision," said Catalano. "They secured the area within minutes. The operation went off without a hitch and I'm proud of these guys."

Team America's first mission's success is a sign of things to come within the unit.

"This is the first time we ever tried this, and after today's successful mission we can see that we will apply this planning to other platoons like this if we needed to," said the 1985 Clarence High School Graduate.

"This team really represents America's patriotic spirit," said Catalano, who holds a



Communications chief Sgt. Jason D. Hornyak from Ashtabula, Ohio, and other members of Team America, 3/25 Weapons Co., set up perimeter security during a recent mission.

bachelor's degree in American History from Canisius Community College and a master's degree in history and education from Buffalo State University. "This country was suffering before we got here and we are trying to fix that."

Coalition helps turn former base back into school

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Paul Robbins Jr.
2nd Marine Division Public Affairs

FALLUJAH, Iraq — A full company of the Iraqi Army's 2nd Battalion, 4th Regiment, 1st Division, gathered in the yard of a schoolhouse here in the early morning with a mission they deemed crucial — helping the children get their education.



A local elementary school student writes the first words on a new blackboard installed by the Iraqi Army's 2nd Battalion, 4th Regiment, 1st Division.

The A'lia Primary School for Boys, once used as a base by 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, Regimental Combat Team-8, received new blackboards, erasers and boxes of chalk from Iraqi soldiers May 17, in an attempt to improve the learning environment of the children.

"The education of our children is very important," said Col. Monam Hashim Fehed, 2nd Battalion's commander, "We just hope we can continue to help in the future."

The visit and donation of supplies to the schoolhouse was brought forward, organized and executed by Fehed and the soldiers of the battalion, according to Army Sgt. 1st Class H. H. George Luedtke III, a 38-year-old team sergeant for 5th Civil Affairs Team Alpha One, in direct support of 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines.

"We just gave them the boards, chalk and erasers," said Luedtke, a native of San Francisco, Calif. "They did the rest."

Iraqi soldiers hung the new blackboards, the primary tools of instruction in Iraqi schools, in each classroom, carried in all supplies and spoke to each class of young students.

While at the schools, Fehed spoke to each class of children, expressing that the Iraqi Army was not only here to fight terrorists but also to help the people in the city as well.

"We believe the Army should serve the people and hope we can help the renovation process move along quickly," Fehed said. "It was very important that [Coalition forces] turned the school over to the community."



Iraqi Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 4th Regiment, 1st Division, and Iraqi school children hang a new blackboard in the classroom of a school in Fallujah, Iraq.

The school opened April 30 when Marines and Iraqi forces pulled out of the building to give it back to the community.

The following day, the classrooms filled with eager students and proud teachers.

"It had always been the plan to give the school back to the community as soon as possible," said 34-year-old Capt. Stephen J. Nagel, the battalion's information operations officer.

All schools in the battalion's area of operations have been returned to the community, according to Luedtke.

With all of the schools returned and coalition forces donating much-needed supplies, Iraqi and U.S. forces here continue the process of giving the city back to the people.

"We want to help the people of Fallujah to lead normal lives once again," Fehed said.

CHAPLAIN'S TALK

Praise God Anyway

By Chaplain (Maj.) Darrell H. Clark

Multi-National Force - Iraq
Command Chaplain's Office

As I was walking in the sweltering heat recently, I was reminded how much I miss the rain. Dust we have plenty, but where is the rain? And the rainy season is so far off. This part of the world can go for months without seeing a drop. The drought certainly will make us appreciate rain when it returns. Or will it? Could it be that we so quickly forget how good we have it during times of blessings that we take simple things for granted. It could be that we need to be constantly thankful and giving God praise. But one might say, "What about the bad times in my life?" Maybe we should learn to praise God in each and every situation, even the bad times. Maybe God has a special blessing for us to learn in the hard times? Psalm 147 is an example of praising God after learning some important lessons in a place called Babylon (Iraq).

Difficulties are part of the human experience, but the Psalmist tells us that God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds (Psalm 147:3). All of us, I think, can remember when as children that our parents picked us up and "loved" our hurts and told us that everything would be all right. That is what God does for us. He is able to heal our hearts and renew our spirits to face the most difficult challenges. He picks us up and helps us deal with the hardships of life.

God, says the Psalmist, "determines the number of stars and calls them each by name" (Psalms 147:4). His understanding has no limits. The more scientists look into the heavens through the Hubble Space telescope, the more amazed they become at the wonders of our universe. Poets have written about them and lovers have sung about them, but our God know each and every star by name. If that is true about the heavens, how much more does he understand and know our problems and our joys. Jesus said, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matthew 6:26). You are not alone, praise God anyway.

God knows how to sustain his people, but he also knows how to deal with wrongdoers. God makes no mistakes in his judgments; where our judgments are



Chaplain Darrell H. Clark

often flawed. Instead, we are called to abstain from judging, and to emphasize love and forgiveness. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another." (Romans 12:15-16). Do good even to those who do evil to you. Can we praise God anyway even when others are not treating us right? I believe that the Bible teaches us that God has special grace for those who will pray for their enemies. If someone is treating you wrong, praise God anyway.

Storms and dark clouds may be for some a sign of danger and dread, but for people of faith they are a sign of renewal and strength. The same clouds that bring darkness and uncertainty may also bring the rain that "makes the grass grow on the hills ... [and] provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call" (Psalm 147:8b-9). Have you seen dark clouds on your horizon lately? Don't be afraid; continue to thank God and to worship him. It may be those very clouds that bring renewal and freshness to your life.

It has been almost six years ago that my sister found out that she had breast cancer. I remember the emotional pain she went through. Because of her treatments, she lost her beautiful hair. She was required to have her breasts removed to save her life. Her boyfriend that she had been dating for months decided that he no longer wanted to date her. The clouds in her life were dark indeed. But six years later, her faith is stronger and she has found a new focus in her life. Sometimes, the best thing we can do in the midst of pain is to praise God anyway and live by faith each and every day. The beautiful garden that results may just surprise us. Let us listen closely to what the Psalmist says, "His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love" (Psalm 147:10-11). God is not impressed by what we think we can do, but by what he can accomplish through us. Praise God!

U.S. Army Sgt. Lorie Jewell shakes hands with veteran news reporter, Sam Donaldson, who presented her with the Thomas Jefferson award, given each year to the Department of Defense Print Journalist of the Year. The annual event also rewards other public affairs specialists.



Photo by Lori Steenstra

MNSTC-I sergeant wins military journalist award

By Sgt. W. Watson Martin
Scimitar Staff

INTERNATIONAL ZONE BAGHDAD, Iraq — The prestigious Department of Defense Thomas Jefferson award for best print journalist of the year went to Sgt. Lorie Jewell May 20 at the Defense Information School, Fort Meade, Md.

Jewell, a Tampa, Fla., native, returned here Sunday where she edits and writes for the weekly publication, *The Advisor*, representing the Multi-National Security Transition Command — Iraq. The command sends her throughout the country covering the equipping, training and mentoring of the Iraqi security forces.

Prior to her recent deployment to Iraq, Jewell served as a military correspondent for the Army News Service from December 2003 through January 2004. During this time, she wrote the five stories submitted for the award.

According to her biography as seen on the Army Public Affairs Web site, she covered stories on a

wide range of topics, including Soldiers recovering from amputations with the help of advanced prosthetic technology; the Army's involvement in NASCAR; senior leaders testifying before Congressional committees and panels about issues such as transformation, equipping of Soldiers; and investigations into allegations of sexual abuse.

While writing for ARNEWS, Jewell worked simultaneously for the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs' nationwide community outreach program. She traveled extensively to cover homecoming celebrations; citizen-driven programs and events honoring Soldiers and their families; and numerous military appreciation events sponsored by sporting organizations such as the National Football League and Major League Soccer.

"It's an honor to have the title because I know many military journalists work their butts off producing really good stories, photos and news products," said Jewell.

Movie REVIEW

Raw basketball wins this game

By Sgt. Derek F. Meyer

214th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

MTV's latest venture into the sports arena takes a meager stab at placing "Hoosiers" in the hood. Samuel L. Jackson stars in "Coach Carter," a movie that entertains, though at the cost of any real passion or charisma.

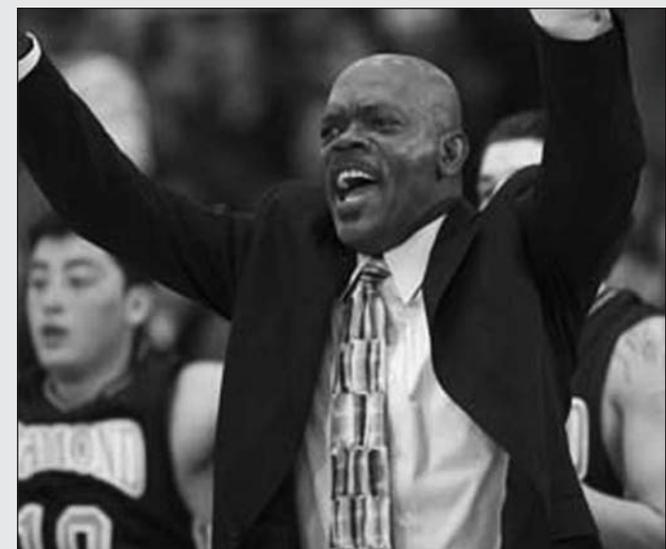
The film is based on the life of Ken Carter, a basketball coach at a troubled California high school who made waves in 1999 when he benched the entire team — in the middle of a phenomenal winning streak — because of academic underperformance and wouldn't let them play again until their grades improved. Surrounding Jackson is a cast of no-name kids who are anything but great actors.

What drives this movie is basketball.

The in-game scenes and the team practices are phe-

nomenal in that they are very real. Forget the "Hoosiers" feel-good vibe and lose the "Basketball Diaries" over-the-top drama. This is just raw basketball. A lack of flashy individualism and impossible feats on the court let the viewer connect to something much better than a slam-dunk fest. One is truly sitting in the bleachers of the Richmond Oilers, watching real high schoolers play real ball.

Perhaps it's the lack of a supporting cast, maybe a misinterpretation of the role, or maybe I'm just too opinionated for my own good, but I wish I had seen more drive in Jackson's character. Unfortunately, since this isn't the case, the movie desperately moves along with nothing more than junk amongst the basketball. If the rest of the movie had as much heart as was put in the basketball, it would be right up there with "Rudy" or "Hoosiers." The movie is still worth seeing.



Samuel L. Jackson portrays Ken Carter in "Coach Carter." The movie is available this month on DVD.

Civil Affairs female gunners protect convoys

By Spc. Jennifer Fitts

100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, BAGHDAD, Iraq — Three Humvees cruise slowly down a city street, the turret gunners scanning the surrounding area for threats. Disinterested neighborhood residents merely glance at them, until one of the gunners abruptly shouts and gestures. Immediately heads snap around and jaws drop when they hear the sound of female voices and notice the feminine features of the Soldiers behind the machine guns.

With an increased operations tempo, female Soldiers are stepping up to take on some of the roles traditionally filled by males such as providing unit and convoy security.

Some units, including military police, are using more females for patrols outside the wire. Despite this, there's often only one female gunner in a particular convoy or patrol at a given time.

What makes the New York-based U.S. Army Reserve unit, Company A, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion, different is that it doesn't have just one female turret gunner, but three. In fact, all of the turret gunners for this particular 10-person civil affairs team are females.

"They point, they look, they're very surprised to see females," said Spc. Amanda N. Godlewski, a chemical observation specialist assigned to the civil affairs unit, recounting the reaction many Iraqis have to seeing a female in the turret.

"[The Iraqis] used to get really confused," said Spc. Robyn L. Murray, a civil affairs specialist from Niagara Falls, N.Y. "I was the first. I volunteered on the second day we were here."

The civil affairs team that Murray was assigned to needed a gunner who knew how to use a squad automatic weapon. Murray said she jumped at the opportunity to "man" the machine gun in the turret.

Soon after volunteering to take the gunner's position, Godlewski, from Syracuse, N.Y., said she enjoyed being up on top of the Humvee, shrugging off the thought of feeling exposed.

Fellow female gunner Spc. Lilly R. Withers, the unit's

mechanic, agreed with Murray and Godlewski. "I wouldn't do anything else," she said.

Withers said the reaction from other U.S. Soldiers occasionally mirrors the initial confusion of the locals. She said most of the other troops she has encountered are receptive to the idea of female gunners and have voiced their support to her.

"I do get a few questions," Withers said. "The infantry thought it was strange [the unit] chose to put us on the guns."

The women's presence in the turrets has had a positive effect during their civil affairs missions.

"They turn a lot of heads, civilian and military," said their team chief, Capt. Timothy H. Wright, of Jamestown, N.Y. "They get a positive reaction from the civilian populace."

Withers said Iraqi women have been very friendly toward her, and judging from their reactions and gestures, she feels they are supportive of female Soldiers. She said after the women figure out she's not a man, "then, they want to come talk to me, see my eyes and hair," said the blond Cortland, N.Y., native.

The reactions the female gunners get from the public can be very helpful in stressful situations since they get a lot of attention, said Wright. "They get the point across and people listen to their voices," he said.

Wright's 10-person team is larger than a standard civil affairs team since it consists of two teams combined into one due to the team often being outside the relative safety of the forward operating base. Venturing outside the wire is something the female gunners accept.

"I get kind of scared sometimes," said Withers, "but I like to be in control to keep my team safe."



Photo by Capt. Timothy Wright

Spc. Robyn L. Murray, Spc. Amanda N. Godlewski and Spc. Lilly R. Withers sit on top of a Humvee, ready to provide security for a mission in Baghdad.

"People call us when they need to go somewhere," Wright said.

With mission tempo in full swing, going "somewhere" is merely a moment away. This means Wright's civil affairs team covers a lot of ground. Patrolling an area that covers nearly 70 square miles, the Soldiers are out on a daily basis, sometimes running more than one mission a day.

"We have the largest operating area in the al-Rashid district," Wright said. "We are helping out in 43 'muhallahs' or towns."

The civil affairs team stays busy performing such diverse tasks as identifying and assessing needed projects in their area, helping coordinate U.S. Army work efforts with key Iraqi leaders and collecting data on local attitudes.

Wright said the overall positive reaction resulting from the female gunners' presence has contributed to the success of their missions. Although the civil affairs team may get a few sideways looks at times, the unit commander has nothing but praise for his female Soldiers.

"I'm proud of them," said Wright. "They listen well and they react when it's needed. They're as motivated and dedicated as any male Soldier I've ever worked with."

U.S. Army doctors give Haifa Street baby hope

Story and photo by

Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper

4th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq — A coincidence has given a 4-month-old child a shot at living, thanks to an operation that 86th Combat Support Hospital doctors performed May 4. The surgery reduced pressure created by fluid build-up in the brain, a disorder known as hydrocephalus.

During a 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment medical assistance program on Haifa Street, the child's mother brought the baby to the U.S. Army doctors and asked if there was anything they could do for him. Local Iraqi doctors had told her nothing could be done and the child would most likely die within the next year.

Capt. Daniel Green, a family practice physician and battalion surgeon for 4/64 Armor, said he went to see the child himself so he could evaluate the situation. "The prognosis was dismal at best."

The child was born without one of the ducts that regulate the flow of cerebral spinal fluid, so with nowhere to go, the fluid built up.

Despite the prognosis, Green went to 86th CSH doctors and asked if there was anything they could do.

"Through my medical training, I knew of a shunting procedure and have seen it done several times," Green said. Usually, it's done in the first two weeks of life, not in the first four months."

The U.S. Army neurosurgeons just happened to have the exact shunt, a specially-designed rubber tubing with a valve that opens and closes under the right amount of pressure.

Green's fellow doctors scheduled a day for the mother and a couple of the relatives to come to the 86th CSH with a translator and conducted a clinical evaluation of the child.

"We evaluated the child's motor skills, learning skills, functioning ... and did a CAT scan," Green said.

The child's brain damage on the CAT scan was extensive, he said. "There was so much fluid build-up in the brain, it compressed all of the brain tissue to a five millimeter thickness to the edge of the skull. It pushed the bones and stretched the skin as far as they would possibly go."

But at the same time the surgeons felt there might be some benefit to helping the child. The direct benefit would be pain relief as the pressure of the fluid decreased.

"You can't ask the child if he is in pain, but it seemed quite evident to the mother and anybody who looked at him. The pain is from the fluid compressing the brain tissue," Green said. "The sheer relief of pressure from the brain might drastically reduce the pain. If he didn't live a day longer, at least whatever days he continued to live would be pain-free, or would be with reduced pain."

There was an added benefit to attempting the procedure. If successful, it could continue to foster good relations with the Iraqis and help instill trust that the Americans are here to help.

"Obviously that is not the reason to do surgery or risk a child's life, but it was an added benefit to the pain reduction, and therefore further encouraged us to offer the

surgery to the family," Green said.

After the evaluation, the family had a very tough decision to make. If something went wrong on the table or the surgery wasn't successful, it could hasten the child's demise; meaning that if the child was left untreated, he would live six months. There was an increased possibility that he might not have survived the surgery or something could happen after the surgery a week later.

"The family was willing to do it ... even just for the pain control," Green said.

There is always the chance for a miracle, of course. The shunt could relieve so much pressure that he will actually begin to develop normally.

"He will never be a normal child, however. There will still be moderate to severe brain damage and lower extremity paralysis, but we might buy him six more months to a year of life so that further medical opportunities might come available so that we might prolong his life further. That's the long shot," Green said.

Two U.S. Army neurosurgeons operated on the child in unison. Despite the difficulties of the operation, the shunt was operating properly while the child was kept under observation after the surgery to watch for infection. He was released from the hospital, healthier than when he came in, and given a shot for a miracle.



A mother stands watch over her 4-month-old son after his operation.

Pick-up, go at Rushing's lumber yard

Story and photo by Spc. Mary Rose
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, BALAD, Iraq — LSA Anaconda, home of Rushing's Lumber Yard, supplies building material to Army engineers from Baghdad to the northern borders of Iraq.

Rushing's Lumber Yard, named after the noncommissioned officer who runs it, holds military building materials.

The 30th Engineer Brigade, a North Carolina National Guard unit, receives all of their building materials from the yard. The materials are used for military projects, base support and troop support.

"Engineers are building a lot of troop living quarters, so troops can get out of tents and into huts with air conditioning," said Master Sgt. Johnny Rushing, noncommissioned officer in charge of the yard.

Units put in a request for materials prior to the start of the project and then all they have to do is come by the yard and pick up their supplies when they are ready to start their project, Rushing said. It's very similar to a lumber yard in the United States.

Personalizing the yard, Rushing took a bowed piece of lumber and painted, "We only sell straight

lumber" on it, and positioned it above another sign that says "Rushing's Lumber Yard." The yard is set up just like a lumber yard one might see in a small town in North Carolina. Rushing, who will be 60 this summer, has given the yard a comfortable country feel.

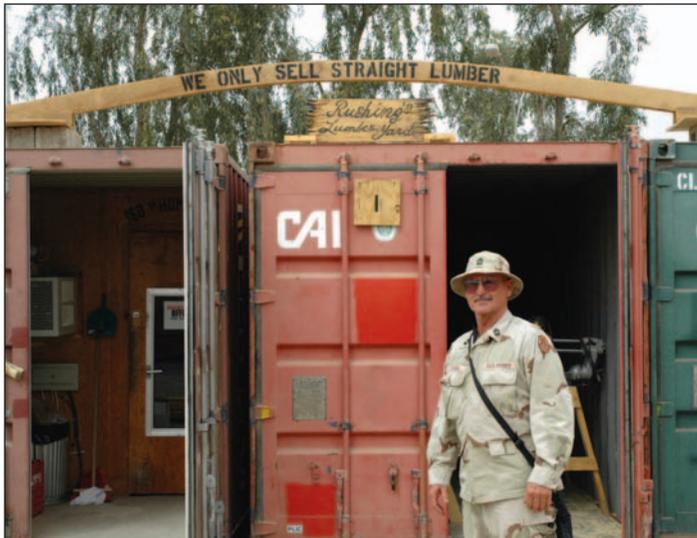
"Having a yard like this, we don't have to depend on others. It's like pre-positioning," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Galen Cassada, yard operations supervisor. "When the project starts, the materials are here so [service members] don't have to wait," he said.

With an excess of \$2.5 million in materials and approximately 110 transportable containers, Rushing's Lumber Yard covers more than 300,000 square feet.

The yard not only supplies lumber to Soldiers. It offers electrical, concrete and plumbing supplies. "We have 9,500 sheets of plywood on-hand and 12,000 bags of concrete in stock," Rushing said.

It also supplies drainage pipes and barriers that are used for troop security.

The yard gets its products from all over the world, including Iraqi businesses, Rushing said. As a volunteer, Rushing has brought his professionalism and country feel to Iraq to support building projects that have enhanced troops' standard of living.



Master Sgt. Johnny Rushing, noncommissioned officer in charge of the lumber yard, stands in front of his work shop at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq.

Life light

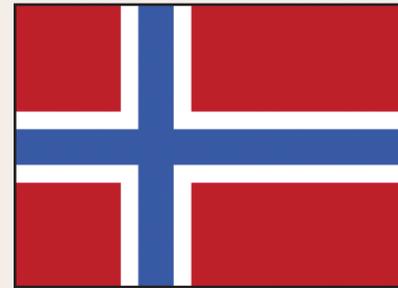


Photo by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas

A Republic of Korea Army Soldier holds his banner proudly as he watches fellow Soldiers and local Kurdish citizens dancing around the fire in celebration of the 10,000th patient being treated at the Camp Zaytun Division hospital in Irbil, Iraq.

Coalition Corner

... highlighting countries serving with MNF-Iraq



Norway

local name: Norge

The Kingdom of Norway is located in northern Europe, bordering the North Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean and neighboring Finland, Sweden and Russia. Including its territories Bouvet Island, Jan Mayen and Svalbard, it is slightly larger than New Mexico size-wise. Almost 4.6 million people live here and use the official currency, the Norwegian Krone. Although a member of NATO, Norway is not part of the European Union like its neighbors Finland and Sweden.

Unlike many of its European neighbors, Norway does not have many historic structures such as castles and churches. However, Norway's natural scenery is among the most beautiful in Europe, making it an outdoorsman's haven. Besides being the capital, Oslo is said to be the place where the summers outwarm its rivals. Central Norway is lined with the country's highest mountains and the largest glacier. The historic city of Bergen is the main jump-off point for some of Norway's main attractions — the fjords, narrow inlets of the sea between cliffs or steep slopes perfect for those who enjoy cliff diving. Tromsø is referred to as the "Gateway to the Arctic" and is on skiers' to-do lists because of the beautiful snow-



capped mountains in the backdrop. Risør has a small fishing harbor lined with a cluster of historic white houses, making it one of Norway's most picture-perfect villages and the subject of artists' creations.

In addition to breathtaking natural landscaping, Norway also has a variety of popular foods that make this country unique. Kjøttboller, which are meat cakes, are considered the national food. However, Fårikål, a Norwegian lamb and cabbage stew, is equally as popular, followed by lutefisk, which is dried codfish.

Norway — 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.eubusiness.com, www.m-w.com, www.tripadvisor.com, www.bergen-guide.com.

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

Mini-Marathon brings more than mini-results

Story and photo by
Spc. Jerome Bishop

1st Corps Support Command
Public Affairs

TAJI, Iraq — The 46th Corps Support Group, 1st Corps Support Command, in conjunction with the 500 Festival of Indianapolis, Ind., hosted a remote version of the OneAmerica 500 Festival Mini-Marathon (half marathon) and 10 kilometer race here, May 7 at 5:30 a.m.

The Mini-Marathon is a kick-off event for the month-long festival held in Indiana leading up to the Indianapolis 500 race on Memorial Day weekend. This remote version of the race held in Iraq is designed for troops who want to participate but couldn't due to deployment.

The half marathon, which took runners on a morning tour of Taji, gave service members an opportunity for friendly competition and a good work out.

"It was a great opportunity to get out before the weather got too hot, and to get out here with troops from the 3rd Infantry Division and 1st COSCOM to do a little esprit de corps morale run," said Capt. Kyle Carone, a logistics officer for 46th CSG and race coordinator.

"We had a lot of coordination with the personnel from the OneAmerica 500 Festival from Indianapolis," he said. "They actually



Soldiers participating in Taji's mini-marathon organized by the 46th Corps Support Group, May 7, ran in conjunction with the OneAmerica 500 Mini-Marathon in Indianapolis, Ind.

sent us T-shirts, pin numbers, banners, Gatorade and cups.

"So between that and asking other units to volunteer medics and drivers [in case of] indirect fire and troops for distribution of water, we pulled it all together," Carone said.

Service members running the 13.1-mile run took off from the starting line in front of the 46th CSG Chapel. The competitors of the

10K run started from the same location sometime shortly after.

"We had 419 originally sign up for the mini-marathon race, and about 300 showed up and ran the race," Carone said. "We ran into a little issue about two and half hours in. [The base] got hit by indirect fire so the race was cancelled. The majority of the people were finished and all were finished with the

10K. Over 120 were finished with the 13.1 mile, so I'd say it was a great turnout."

With a time of one hour and 21 minutes, Spc. Benjamin Piercy, a truck driver from the 137th Transportation Company, 68th Corps Support Command, 46th Corps Support Group, was the first one to cross the finish line of the 13-mile run.

"It [feels] great," Piercy said about winning the race. "I've never ran so far in my life. I ran a lot of track and just wanted to see if I could finish."

Although Piercy ran just to test himself, he didn't know the training he had gone through would help him win the race.

"I was into weight lifting and stopped to train [for the race]," Piercy said. "I lost about 15 lbs. in the process."

Even the man behind the scenes trained up and got out to run for the mini-marathon, making it all worthwhile.

"My run went well; my goal was to finish in an hour and 35 minutes," Carone said. "I came in at an hour and 35 minutes and 17 seconds so I obtained my goal. We had a great group that trained on Sundays, and it was a good time."

The mini-marathon gave troops more than just the opportunity to go out for an early morning run. It gave them a chance to take part in festivities going on halfway around the world and the feeling of a little piece of home.

New school PT, old school flavor

Story and photo by Pvt. Jake McEvoy
27th Public Affairs Detachment

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, BALAD, Iraq — A little motivation and some imagination can go a long way. When Soldiers are deployed they are still expected to keep up with the Army's physical fitness standards. Due to hard work and long hours, it can sometimes be hard to find the motivation to make it to the gym every day.

Sgt. T.J. Bilbrey, 1173rd Transportation Company decided to think outside the box and incorporate something he enjoyed into his physical training program.

Bilbrey has been break dancing for a few years and decided there was no reason to stop now.

"Even though I'm in Iraq there's no reason I can't keep doing what I love to do," Bilbrey said.

Break dancing may not be thought of as physical training, but after 15 minutes of Bilbrey's workout the connection was obvious.

"It's great PT, it's good cardio and a lot of muscle building when you're working on the

floor," Bilbrey said.

Bilbrey is a self-taught break dancer and encourages other people who are interested to get together and do the same. "Most people can do it, but it takes a lot of practice. You have to go through a lot pain while you're trying to learn," he said.

Bilbrey isn't just encouraging people to learn on their own; he is willing to take the time and help them learn, he says.

"It would be great if we could get a crowd out to come in and join, that would be awesome," Bilbrey said.

Bilbrey and others break dance at the gym every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 9:30 p.m.

You don't have to be a professional or have a great sense of rhythm to get a great workout.

"I couldn't dance at all when I started, so if I can learn, anyone can," Bilbrey said.

So the next time you get tired of doing the same old things for PT, remember you have more options than you might think.



Sgt. T.J. Bilbrey, 1173rd Transportation Company, learned a variety of moves practicing at LSA Anaconda.

SUPERFROG

from Page 9

"This was great for morale. More importantly, it reminds us to not forget that there are folks out doing tough and dangerous operations every day," Goshi said. "I'm just glad that I had an opportunity to help give something back to this community by helping make this race happen."

Goshi and Smith both said they got a lot of Morale, Welfare and Recreation help, without which, Smith said, the Baghdad SUPERFROG would not have happened.

"LeAnne Schultze of MWR began planning the event with me two months ago, when she said she was looking for a unique contest or competition for the Memorial Day weekend," Smith said.

"MWR's David Quarterman ran the event and the awards ceremony from an MWR perspective. MWR also provided the winners of each category with commemorative T-shirts, race numbers and trophies."

The original SUPERFROG was created by Lt. Moki Martin, a Navy SEAL who

served multiple tours in Vietnam and competed regularly in Hawaii's Ironman Triathlon. Martin and other SEALs established the official SUPERFROG nearly 30 years ago in order to grow the sport of triathlon in San Diego and in the military. The SUPERFROG is NSW's only sanctioned athletic event.

"Cmdr. Smith had this great idea," said volunteer Army Maj. Scott Meehan. "He kicked the idea around with several people, decided to do something about it and then made it happen. This should become an annual event, and this should go down in history as the pioneer of something really cool that took place while we were in Baghdad. If we do this again next year and I am here, I'll look for an over-40 coed team to participate with. They looked like they were having a lot of fun."

The 27th original SUPERFROG will be held this fall in Coronado.

Editor's note: For more information on the original SUPERFROG, go to www.superfrogtriathlon.com. For information on SEAL and Special Boat teams, go to www.sealchallenge.navy.mil.

Race Results

Male division

1st: Vikings, Danish military (1st overall)
2nd: Recon Bubbas, civilian contractors (2nd overall)
3rd: Sharks, Danish military (3rd overall)

Female division

1st: Banshee Babes, U.S. Marine & Air Force (10th overall)

Coed division

1st: Two to One, U.S. military (5th

overall)

2nd: Ribbit, U.S. military (15th overall)
3rd: 3 the Hard Way, U.S. military and civilian contractor (16th overall)

Old Toad division

1st: Flying Frogs of SOC, U.S. military (ANG & USNR recalled airline pilots) (11th overall)

2nd: 3 the Hard Way, U.S. military and civilian contractor (16th overall)