

SCIMITAR

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Marines recover their own, Page 4

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U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Andy Dunaway

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Doug Gabram runs a preflight check of the AH-64D Longbow Apache helicopter prior to another mission from Forward Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, Oct. 19, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Gabram is a battalion commander assigned to the 1st Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, Fort Campbell, Ky.

Despite media battle, terrorists fail to stop progress in Iraq

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Despite a desperate media battle in Iraq, terrorists are failing to stop Iraqis from advancing on the political and security fronts, a senior military official in Baghdad told reporters Sunday.

“To the terrorists, the media is a vital force multiplier,”

said Air Force Brig. Gen. Donald Alston, spokesman for Multi-National Force - Iraq during a briefing at the Combined Press Information Center in Baghdad.

That is why terrorists targeted Baghdad’s Palestine Hotel, a base for many media outlets, during an Oct. 24 car bombing, Alston said. He called the bombing a signature al Qaeda attack, set to inflict as much death and destruction as possible while guaranteeing maximum media coverage.

“[Terrorists] attempt to use the media to appear more

capable than they really are and to intimidate others with attack videos and Web site postings,” Alston said. Desperate because they can’t gain credibility any other way, they resort to “mindless destruction at the media’s front doorstep,” he said.

A letter from al Qaeda’s second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, reflects that desperation, Alston said. Intelligence

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Procurement training boosts Iraqi contracting skills

By Sgt. Lorie Jewell

Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq
Public Affairs

BAGHDAD — Dozens of Iraqi procurement specialists from the Ministries of Defense and Interior took part in a three-day training workshop featuring a nationally-known Iraqi procurement expert.

The training, held in the International Zone Oct. 24-26, was sponsored by the Joint Contracting Command Iraqi/Afghanistan, with support from the Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq and the ministries.

“We’re trying to establish the ministries’ capacity for operating an ethical, effective procurement system,” said U.S. Army Maj. Jong Lee of the JCCI/A.

The training included a combination of lectures and practical



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ferdinand Thomas

Procurement specialists attending the Building Iraqi Procurement Capacity Course were broken down into small groups to discuss contracting strategies.

exercises, focusing on areas such as ethics, the principles of procurement and the administration of tendering and payment of contracts, Lee said.

Participants were divided into three groups for the hands-on exercise and given hypothetical scenarios, such as administering a life support contract for an Iraqi military installation. Each group had to work together to come up with solutions to the challenges of each scenario and then present their work.

Although the training was arranged and largely supported by the Coalition, the majority of the instruction came from Iraqis, Lee said. Having Iraqi author Numan Salman participate in the training added an extra level of credibility, Lee said. Salman wrote “The Iraqi Procurement Book,” which was published this year and is widely used in Iraqi government offices, particularly those in the ministries of defense, interior and science and technology, Lee said. Salman is also one of four fellows with the World Bank.

“What’s presented here is not coming from the Coalition or from Americans,” Lee said. “It’s coming from Iraqis, for Iraqi workers.”

Salman said he agreed to take part in the workshop because he believes those working in procurement need as much training as possible to develop their skills and gain more experience. Procurement skills stagnated here after the 1990 embargo, which isolated Iraq from the majority of the world, Salman said.

“Iraq stayed in one place; now they need information about how this is being done in the world,” Salman said. “For example, no one has opened a letter of credit since 1990. This is something they need to learn.”

His second book, “General Guide for Procurement Administration,” will be published soon, Salman said. It will include information on letters of credit, as well as procurement philosophy and policy.

Coalition Forces disrupt ambush; U.S. engineers find roadside bomb

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Coalition Forces foiled a terrorist ambush in an area northwest of Baghdad late Saturday, military officials reported today.

The coordinated combat operation against the terrorist forces involved U.S. Army ground and aviation forces and close-air support from a U.S. Air Force F-15E, which dropped a 500-pound precision-guided bomb on the enemy position.

The area was known for multiple ambushes with small arms and rocket-propelled grenades against local Iraqi citizens, Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces, officials said.

Around 9 p.m., a group of terrorists was spotted moving along a canal and getting into position for an ambush. As ground forces from 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, secured the area around the ambush site, attack helicopters arrived at the scene and confirmed that the individuals hiding in the bushes were enemy forces.

When the terrorists fired at the helicopters, the AH-64 Apaches engaged them with return gunfire.

Several enemy forces retreated into a nearby house, but later fled the premises as U.S. forces moved in.

The Apache helicopters continued to engage the terrorists as they scattered and tried to hide in vegetation. When several terrorists converged in one location, ground forces called in the F-15E air strike.

Coalition Forces killed at least six terrorists in the combat operation, and wounded and detained five others. No U.S. or civilian casualties were reported.

In other operations in Iraq, Task Force Baghdad Soldiers discovered a roadside bomb northwest of Baghdad on Friday evening.

Combat engineers from 36th Engineer Group discovered the hidden improvised explosive device before it could be used to harm Iraqi Security Forces, Iraqi civilians or Coalition Forces.

Soldiers from 70th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, quickly secured the site after the discovery. An explosives ordnance disposal team recovered the bomb. (Compiled from Task Force Baghdad and Multi-National Force - Iraq news releases.)

Media

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operatives intercepted the letter before it reached its intended recipient, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the main leader of terrorists in Iraq.

“We are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of the [followers of Islam],” Zawahiri wrote, acknowledging that it is al Qaeda’s only hope of success in Iraq.

But despite their efforts, “Zawahiri, Zarqawi and others have failed to stop the march toward democracy time and time again,” Alston told reporters.

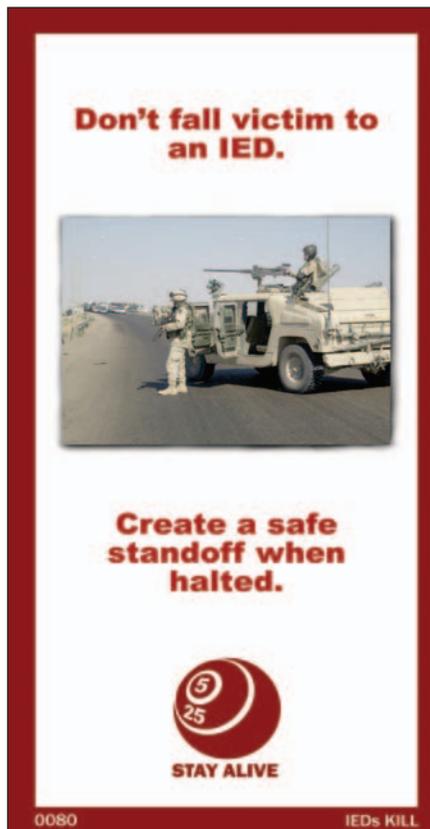
Terrorists failed to stop January elections, the seating and meeting of the Transitional National Assembly, and the drafting of the constitution and the referendum approving it, he said. “They will also fail to stop the elections in December,” he said. Iraq’s parliamentary elections are slated for Dec. 15.

Alston congratulated the 10 million Iraqis who voted during the Oct. 15 constitutional referendum. Eight million supported the draft constitution, and 2 million opposed it. These people, regardless of how they voted, seized the opportunity to decide their country’s future and build a new Iraq, he said.

“A new Iraq is what they will have with the December elections when they select a permanent government,” Alston said.

As the political process advances, Iraq’s Security Forces are gaining in numbers and capability, he said. More than 207,000 Iraqi Soldiers and police are patrolling the country’s streets and borders, and the number of Iraqi battalions taking the lead in combat operations has jumped 50 percent since July.

“These additional forces allow us to continue to put pressure on the enemy every day of the week, and it is paying off,” Alston said.



To learn more about Iraqi and Coalition successes, log on to: www.mnf-iraq.com and click on the logo to download this week’s issue.

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PERSPECTIVES

The wish I wish I didn't have to wish for

By 2nd Lt. Russell Yaune
American Forces Network - Iraq

Throughout time, people have always wanted to make changes to their lives. Whether it be how much money they make, a change to their personal appearances or who they hang out with, everyone has thousands of things that they would love to change. So if you could only change one thing, what would it be?

The first assumption I have to make is this wish only relates to one person. Otherwise, I could just say "world peace" and be done with it. But since this column would not be long enough, I am going to focus more on the personal question, if I could have one wish granted for myself, what would that wish be?

As I pondered this question, many ideas came to mind. Most of the things I would wish for would make me happier for a little while, but in the long run the happiness would probably not last. Maybe I would bring back mullets or make 1990s rapper Vanilla Ice cool again. Of course no amount of wishing will ever make mullets a good move, and Vanilla Ice will always be cool.

I could go with the old standby wish to be invincible, but everyone knows that the invincible guy always ends up miserable in the movies. I also considered wishing for a large amount of money, but then I would have to deal with the Internal Revenue Service and hang out with people like Michael Jackson or Martha Stewart.

Finding myself perplexed by this problem, I asked around my unit for ideas. The results did not help much. Some people told me they wished the voices in their head

would go away. Some people told me they wished a rash they had would go away. Most people told me to go away.

Since my co-workers failed me, I realized I had to rely on myself for the answer to this perplexing question. This scared me. I did not feel comfortable relying on my skills, and I started to wish I had not agreed to write this commentary!

Really, all most of us want is to not fail in the challenges we meet in life. For some, it may be going to college, stopping a bad habit or taking a physical fitness test. For

me, it is this blasted commentary right now. We are all worried about the challenges we face; our challenges cause us a lot of worry and pain when we fail to meet them.

Still, to wish away our trials would be worse than the occasional failures we all face. For example, anyone who has seen toddlers learning to walk will

agree that it is a big trial for them. Like many other trials, it ends up paying off. Once they learn how to walk, they can do all sorts of cool things that drive their parents nuts.

Most of our trials, if not all, are things that we can benefit from, that can make us better if we don't give up. Many of us would use a wish to get rid of these trials. We would, unfortunately, end up wishing away those things that allow us to do all sorts of cool things ... and drive our parents nuts!

We will never be able to convince ourselves that our lives are full of opportunities for growth and that there are no trials. Still, knowing we need our trials to become better helps to take the sting away.

Of course now that I know that, I have to find another use for this stinking wish. How does everyone feel about mullets being popular again?

"To wish away our trials would be worse than the occasional failures we all face"

2nd Lt. Russell Yaune

Scimitar Pulse

If you could have one wish granted, what would it be? Why?

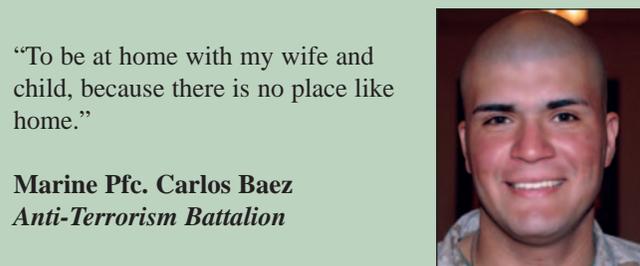
"That I could speak every language, because I have traveled to so many places."

Army Chief Warrant Officer Terry Ricer
Joint Area Support Group - Central



"For this country to prosper and all of us to go home."

Army 1st Lt. James Sanders
55th Signal Company



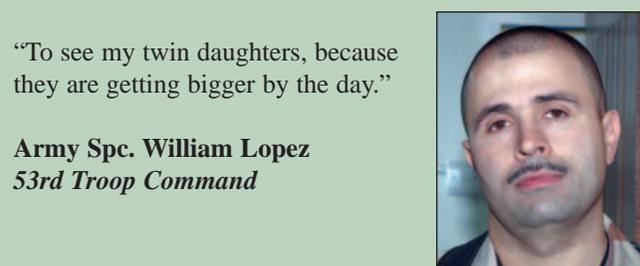
"To be at home with my wife and child, because there is no place like home."

Marine Pfc. Carlos Baez
Anti-Terrorism Battalion



"I would go back in time to change my life."

Diana Barnett
Kellogg Brown & Root



"To see my twin daughters, because they are getting bigger by the day."

Army Spc. William Lopez
53rd Troop Command



"I would like to travel the world."

Army Sgt. Kristina Feldman
3153rd Finance Battalion

"Enough money to do all the things I have always wanted to do."

Army Spc. Meredith Sears
3153rd Finance Battalion



The art of precision



U.S. Army photo

Soldiers from Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 6th Field Artillery, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division conduct a calibration exercise Oct. 1 at Camp Liberty, Baghdad.

Army cooks whip up more than food in Iraq

Story and photos by Spc. Derek Del Rosario
Task Force Baghdad Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, BAGHDAD — This Thanksgiving, Task Force Baghdad Soldiers dining at the Rock of the Marne Sports Oasis can expect to see a 3-foot-tall turkey.

While the turkey will not be edible, it will surely catch the eyes of Soldiers enjoying their holiday meal at this military camp on the outskirts of Baghdad.

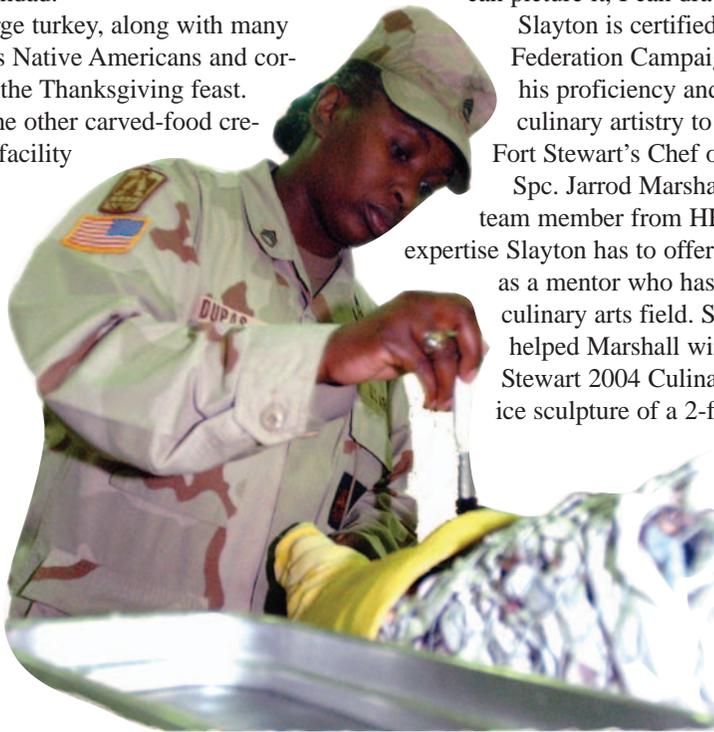
The food sculpture of a large turkey, along with many other large sculptures such as Native Americans and cornucopias, will be featured at the Thanksgiving feast. These, along with many of the other carved-food creations featured in the dining facility throughout the year, are the works of civilian contractors and Soldiers of the Fort Stewart culinary arts team, who are now showcasing their talents here.

Sgt. Onica P. Branche, Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company, said making food appealing to the eye is the team's goal.

"We ensure the quality of the food, but we are also the ones who enhance the food," she noted.

"Basically, we make it look good."

One of the more experienced team members is Sgt. 1st Class Preston Lee



Sgt. 1st Class Leshia Dupas prepares a dough sculpture of a horn of plenty that will be featured Thanksgiving Day at the Camp Liberty dining facility.

Slayton, HHSC platoon leader. With 22 years of culinary art experience behind him, Slayton splits his time between his platoon duties and his job in the kitchen. For him, overseeing ammunition, fuel and trucks is a world apart from building food sculptures.

"It's a big difference — they are two totally different worlds," Slayton said. "Here in the kitchen, I get to really showcase my artistic skills. I've had six years of art in school, so it comes natural to me. If I can picture it, I can draw it with icing."

Slayton is certified by the Culinary Federation Campaign, which testifies to his proficiency and allows him to teach culinary artistry to others. He was also Fort Stewart's Chef of the Year in 2004.

Spc. Jarrod Marshall, another culinary arts team member from HHSC, often relies on the expertise Slayton has to offer. Marshall sees Slayton as a mentor who has a lot to offer in the culinary arts field. Slayton's guidance helped Marshall win first place at the Fort Stewart 2004 Culinary Arts Show for his ice sculpture of a 2-foot-tall globe.

"This work takes a lot of patience," said Marshall.

"[Slayton] has taught me a lot; he knows what he's doing. He has really helped me develop my skills, whether it is preparing icing or making dough from scratch."

Marshall is not the only one who has been recognized for his work while under Slayton's tutelage.



Sgt. 1st Class Preston Lee Slayton forms dough onto the tail of a turkey sculpture.

Branche received two medals during the culinary arts show for her presentation of small, layered cakes known as petit fours. "I learned everything I know from Sgt. 1st Class Slayton," she said.

Being part of the team is something Branche said she started to enjoy once she began training and getting hands-on experience. She has a great passion for her job, something she feels is essential for members of the team.

"Being able to put out something that looks good is the most gratifying part of the job," Branche said. "This job has shown me that no matter how hard a job or project might be, you have to be dedicated and put time into it. If you put your mind to it, it can be done."

Marine Maintenance Company recovers one of its own

Story and photos by
Sgt. Josh H. Hauser
2nd Force Service Support Group

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq — When the Marines of Maintenance Company, Combat Logistics Battalion-8, 2nd Force Service Support Group (Forward) receive a call for a vehicle recovery, it usually means another unit has a vehicle down, but today the Marines had a unique mission ahead of them.

While attempting to recover two Humvees stuck in the mud while conducting a mounted patrol, one of Maintenance Co.'s more than 24-ton MK-36 wreckers fell victim to

the same saturated terrain. After a second wrecker arrived and retrieved the first, it too became mired in the mud while trying to reach the Humvees. It was time to call in a specific piece of equipment in the company's arsenal — the Assault Amphibious Vehicle Recovery 7.

The AAV R-7 is a modified amphibious vehicle designed specifically for recovery missions. Weighing in at upwards of 30-tons, the AAV R-7 is hardly a lightweight itself; however, its design makes it capable of displacing its mammoth girth in unfavorable towing conditions.

"The wrecker's winch sits at an angle, so they were actually pulling [the other wrecker] through the mud," Sgt. Eric J. Campbell said.

Campbell, a 25-year-old Augusta, Ga., native is an assault amphibious vehicle technician and driver with Maintenance Co. "Our winch sits about 14 feet high, so it pulls up and out. That's the worst I've ever seen a truck stuck, but we pulled it out with ease."

The Marines

never waste a chance to brag about their vehicles' capabilities and participate in some friendly mudslinging of their own, according to Campbell.

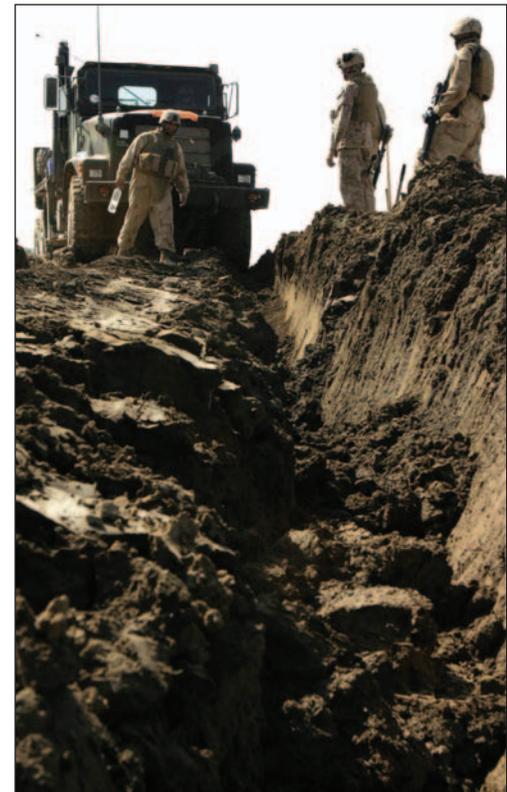
"I think they were a little embarrassed [in needing] us to come and pull them out," Campbell said jokingly. "We've been giving them hell ever since."

Cpl. Jason S. Kleinpeter was the driver of the second wrecker to become stuck. The 21-year-old Lafitte, La., native is a wrecker operator assigned to Maintenance Co. "After we pulled out the first wrecker, we went around and tried to finish the original mission, but the ground was like a sponge," he said. "Every time we would dig, the dirt would just fall right back in."

The top layer of earth was dry and cracked, leading the Marines to believe the ground was solid enough to support the weight of their vehicles, but underneath the surface was a layer of softer, more saturated soil, which slowly bogged down the vehicles.

After attaching cables from the AAV R-7 to the MK-36, the Marines began the process of easing the vehicle from its position. But as the cables tightened, the R-7 began tilting forward. For extra weight, the Marines attached the original wrecker to the R-7, which provided more than enough support to haul the vehicle from the ditch. Then the R-7 went to work on the Humvees.

Finally, with all vehicles on solid ground, the crew members were able to head back to Camp Fallujah with another



Marines stand atop the eight-foot deep rut created after removing an MK-36 wrecker weighing more than 10 tons.

successful mission under their belts.

As for the unit's rivalry among vehicles, the R-7 walked away with bragging rights today. However, no good deed goes unnoticed according to Kleinpeter.

"They got lucky," he said.



Marines work to free a vehicle stuck in mud as an AAV R-7 approaches to assist in the recovery operation.

In the line of fire ...

Soldiers go head-to-head with a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta
42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SUMMERALL, BAYJI, Iraq — Called “VBIEDs” for short, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices are one of the deadliest weapons in the insurgents’ arsenal – mobile car bombs and tools of terrorism faced by Iraqis, Iraqi Security Forces and

Coalition Forces in their fight against the insurgency.

Last May, Humvee gunner Spc. Dean Levy of Plymouth, Mass., went head-to-head with a VBIED and won, saving the lives of his fellow Humvee crewmen.

The Humvee crew, part of the 42nd Infantry Division Artillery Personal Security Detachment, was in a convoy near here when the crew spotted a car speeding toward them in the oncoming lane.

“He started swerving from the left lane to the right lane,” Levy said.

Vehicles driving fast and erratically could be VBIEDs, said 42nd ID Artillery Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Flynn of Tauton Mass., who was part of the Humvee crew. The crew had discussed VBIED signs, were alert to them and ready to respond, he added.

“We talked about this a hundred times ... ‘how do you stop a VBIED?’” Flynn said.

Flynn said the crew, including Levy and driver Staff Sgt. Herminio Rodriguez, had spotted the vehicle and were talking back and forth on the vehicle intercom in a clipped, efficient manner, with Rodriguez asking, “You see him?” and Levy responding, “Got ‘em.”

“If there’s anything out of the ordinary, [the crew] tells me,” Levy said.

The car was 40 meters and closing when Levy fired, upping the ante gradually, a type of engagement Coalition Forces call “escalation of force.”

“I waited for his left front tire to swerve onto the median,” Levy said. “At that moment, he turned and drove straight at us. I put three to four rounds into the ground in front of him. He was still coming at us, so I put three to four more into the engine block of the vehicle.”

But the vehicle kept coming. Levy raised



A 42nd ID Artillery Humvee shows damage inflicted by an exploding VBIED.

his 240-B machine gun, fired seven to ten shots through the windshield, and the vehicle exploded with “a huge flame of smoke, body and car parts,” said Flynn.

“My whole vision was the fireball,” Levy said. “I fell back into the vehicle.” Levy’s first thought was he had suffered shrapnel wounds to his face.

Crater analysis revealed the car was loaded with five 130 mm mortar rounds and 300 pounds of explosives. Flynn believes Levy’s shooting caused the terrorist to detonate it prematurely.

“The entire car was disintegrated,” Flynn said.

The crew’s survival gave Levy a rush. At a Coalition Forces medical facility, Levy initially refused pain medicine before undergoing burn treatments.

“At that moment, I was on such a high because no one else got hurt that I said no,” he said.

The crew was scheduled to redeploy in October. Levy said he won’t miss work details, the heat, the dust and the desert.

“There’ll be a lot I miss, and there’ll be a lot I won’t miss,” he said. “I’m going to miss the friendship we all have, the tight bond. I’m going to miss being on the gun.”



In the gunner’s hatch of his Humvee, Spc. Dean Levy poses with fellow crew members (left to right): Staff Sgt. Herminio Rodriguez, Spc. Patrick Grubert and 42nd ID Artillery Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Flynn. The picture was taken on Levy’s first day back to work after recovering from burns he suffered in a VBIED explosion.

Reserve Airmen clean house, increase F-16 capability

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing
Public Affairs

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq — Desire and motivation drove 14 reserve Airmen from Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fla., to turn a barely functional back shop into one of two fully functional avionics intermediate shops here.

The revamped work center allowed the staff to double the improved avionics intermediate repair capabilities.

“When we first arrived, the alternate shop was dirty, dark and it smelled bad,” said Senior Master Sgt. Huey Hill, 332nd Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron avionics team chief. “This place was a dungeon. The walls were black. It was so filthy it took three days to pressure wash them clean.”

The staff tests, aligns, troubleshoots and repairs mission critical F-16 aircraft line replacement units, including any avionics parts that come off the aircraft.

“The shop was so ill-equipped that to

test any equipment here, we had to use flashlights,” Hill said. “This situation was unacceptable, so our team spent 10 days turning this office around.”

To overhaul the shop, the Airmen cleaned and painted the floors, walls, doors and ceiling of the shop. They removed old items — from old toilets to an air purifier — that cluttered the area. It was a self-help project, and the team only sought outside help from the 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron to fix the lighting.

To add the finishing touches, the team hand-built shelves from salvaged wood and painted a mural on the office door.

Squadron commander Maj. David Nicholson said the unit can now fully test line replacement units. Then they can return them to the supply system to fill mission critical needs for broken aircraft in half the time.

“We have been able to double the avionics repair capability for the F-16 operations being preformed,” Nicholson said.

The team provides another essential tool



(Left to right) Tech. Sgt. Gerardo Diaz, Senior Master Sgt. Huey Hill and Master Sgt. Ralph Cole run a computer confidence check on an improved avionics intermediate system before testing an F-16 Fighting Falcon part.

in accomplishing the mission.

“If the other work center goes down

now, we can continue to support the operations,” Hill said.

Coalition Corner

... highlighting countries
serving with MNF-Iraq



Mongolia

local name: *Mongol Uls*

Mongolia is located in northern Asia between China and Russia. It is slightly smaller than Alaska. Almost 2.8 million people live here, and the Tugrog is their currency system. Khalkha Mongol is the official language, but Turkic and Russian are also spoken in various regions.

Ulaan Baatar, the country's capital, is built along the Tuul river and surrounded by majestic-looking mountains, the Tsetseegum, Chingeltei, Songino Khaikhan and Bayansurkh. Known as the "four holy peaks," these mountains correspond roughly to the four compass points and are popular not only for hiking, but also for their forests, grasslands and beautiful bird and animal life. The Khustain Nuruu Nature Reserve was established in 1993 and is home to the wild takhi horses, also known as Przewalski's horses. Almost becoming extinct in the 1960s because of poachers, these horses have become symbolic of Mongolia's diverse and unique wildlife. Perhaps Mongolia's most gorgeous site is Khövsgöl Nuur, an alpine lake with water pure enough to drink. This lake, the deepest lake in central Asia, is surrounded by dozens of mountains, pine forests and meadows and is sacred to local Mongolians.

The Mongolian diet is based heavily on dairy products, lamb and mutton. Roast lamb is perhaps the most popular food and is typically served when great celebrations are held or at dinner parties in honor of distinguished guests. Mongolian Fire Pot, which is instant-boiled mutton, is just one way Mongolians prepare this delicacy. Cooked mutton is perhaps the most popular version of this dish, and is prepared for special occasions such as offering sacrifices to gods or ancestors, weddings or celebrating elders' birthdays. Milk tea is a traditional Mongolian drink and is made by boiling water with brick tea and fresh milk, and some prefer also adding butter, salt or millet as well.

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



References: www.cia.gov, www.chinats.com, www.lonelyplanet.com, <http://us-mongolia.com>, and www.tripadvisor.com.

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

CHAPLAIN'S TALK

The depth of one's character

By Chaplain (Maj.)
Jeffery D. Houston
35th Signal Brigade Chaplain

Training is the lifeblood of the Army, yet I know of no training program specifically designed to produce character in its recipients. The fact of the matter is that personal depth of character cannot be taught ... or bought. True character is like new wine, slowly distilled from the struggles of life.

I remember as a kid wanting a very expensive musical instrument. My father, though not a wealthy man, could easily have purchased the instrument for me. He instead told me I would

have to earn the money myself to pay for the instrument. I

worked an entire year at odd jobs, finally saving enough money to buy the instrument. Forty years later, I still have the instrument — a treasured possession. But, even more valuable is the character my father instilled in me by making me work and earn the money myself.

In the New Testament we read, "We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know

that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character; and character, hope." (Romans 5: 3-4). Everyone needs some hope in his or her life, but are we willing

to pay the price to produce the character that results in this



Chaplain Houston

much needed hope? We live in a "fast food society;" we have everything from instant potatoes to instant cash. Whatever we desire seems to be readily available — instant credit, six months same as cash, easy divorce, easy reli-

gion and the list could go on and on. Perhaps we should ask ourselves some questions: What am I doing to instill character in my children? What have I done to exhibit character and integrity to those who work around me? Do my neighbors and friends see me as a person of character? Does my character measure up in the eyes of my spouse?

Someone once said, "Our character is who we are when no one else is looking."

Take some time to take a long private look at yourself, and measure your depth of character. Is there just barely enough to get your feet wet — or do you need a boat?

*Character ... grows only in
the garden of time,
in the soil of years,
in the toil of tears.
God plants a garden in the
furrows of our lives,
and reaps a harvest of Joy!*

Chaplain Houston

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S., Iraqi Forces sweep up 49 terror suspects

BAGHDAD — Task Force Baghdad Soldiers, along with Iraqi Security Forces, conducted major combat assaults, dubbed "Operation Clean Sweep" Friday and Saturday in southern Baghdad.

The operation netted 49 terrorists and a large weapons cache.

Soldiers assigned to 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment and Iraqi Forces from the 4th Public Order Brigade swept through the eastern al-Rasheed district Saturday. The multi-pronged assault resulted in more than 350 target houses searched and the detention of 33 suspected terrorists.

Bomb-making materials were also found at several of the target houses.

In an earlier mission Friday, 1/184 Inf. Soldiers detained 16 terror suspects and discovered a large weapons cache during a cordon and search.

The cache was hidden in a second-story crawl space underneath a bathtub and included 13 AK-47 assault rifles, three MPK machine guns, 20 AK-47 barrels, one pistol, U.S. currency and an ammunition stockpile.

Foreign-fighter leader targeted

BAGHDAD — Coalition Forces, using precision air strike capabilities, targeted a senior al Qaeda in Iraq foreign fighter, who was believed to be holding a meeting with other senior members of the terror organization in Husaybah Friday.

Sources indicated Abu Mahmud and the other leaders were meeting to discuss an attack on Iraqi Security or Coalition Forces in the coming days.

Mahmud, believed to be a Saudi, was the com-

mander of several foreign fighter and terrorist cells in Husaybah, and was linked to several al Qaeda in Iraq and foreign fighter facilitators in the al Qaim, Karabilah and Husaybah areas. Mahmud directed, planned and executed a large number of the foreign fighter attacks on Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces. He was also personally active in direct attacks against Iraqi and Coalition Forces.

The use of precision-guided munitions to destroy the two adjoining foreign fighter safe houses and the timing of the strike mitigated the risk to civilians in the local area.

Iraqi Army catches terrorist filming attack sites

BAGHDAD — A suspected terrorist was caught by the Iraqi Army in east Baghdad Oct. 26.

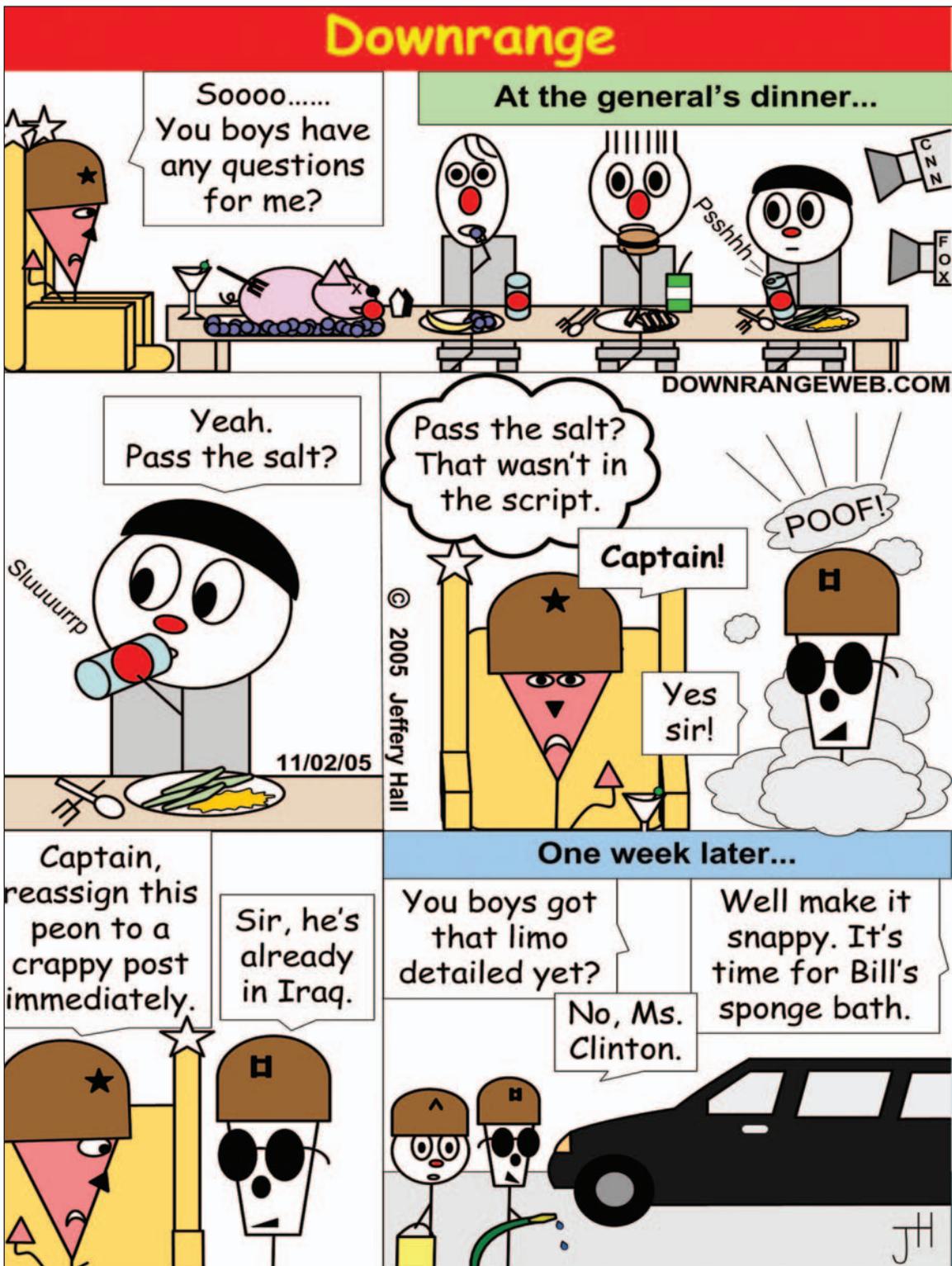
Around 9:30 a.m., Iraqi Soldiers noticed a suspicious individual using a cell phone camera to make a recording of an Iraqi traffic control point. He was immediately apprehended and searched.

The cell phone had video footage of numerous important sites in Baghdad, including recent footage of the Palestine Sheraton Hotel complex, which was attacked by three suicide car bombers Oct. 24.

The suspect was found to be carrying passport material that could be used to make false passports. The suspect was taken to be processed by the Iraqi judicial system.

"It looks like the Iraqi Army caught a scout for the terrorists today," said Capt. Chris Harris, a Task Force Baghdad officer who works with the Iraqi Army. "The performance of the Iraqi Army continues to impress me." (By Maj. Russ Goemaere, 2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs.)

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"The Broadcast Bunker"	2 - 6 p.m.	SSG C.J. Sheely
"The Landing Zone"	6 - 10 p.m.	SPC Cody Graves

Iraqi children chase dreams with American help

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper
4th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

BAGHDAD — In Iraq, \$10 can buy a lot of goodwill. Just ask Soldiers from 4th Brigade Combat Team who regularly give Iraqi children soccer balls they receive from American donors.

“If someone feels good about giving us 10 soccer balls, and we go out on a patrol and make 10 friends and a favorable impression with the families and children, that’s a \$10 invest-



Amu Baba (center), a former member of the Iraqi Olympic soccer team and founder of the camp, poses with a group of young players and their coaches. Baba said he was very grateful for donations delivered by U.S. Soldiers.

ment that has a priceless payoff,” said 1st Sgt. Mark Barnes of Company B, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment.

The regiment went a step further by delivering more than 140 boxes of soccer and office equipment to a soccer league Oct. 10.

As Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers unloaded the supplies at the stadium, hundreds of Iraq children practiced soccer on the green field under the watchful eyes of their coaches.

League founder Amu Baba said when they first started the league, the field was in terrible condition, but he and the coaches worked to get it back into shape.

There are 350 children, ages 6 to 14, in the camp, and the goal is to prepare them to represent Iraq on national teams. The children come from all over Baghdad to participate in the league.

“Soccer gives these kids hope,” Barnes said. “Every one of these kids dreams of playing soccer professionally or playing on the Iraqi national team.”

But there are other benefits to the kids being part of the soccer league.

“I think if they are able to have a successful sports league and the children are able to experience the same type of happiness and healthy competition that we do in the United States, it’s healthy for their families and communities. The children will

grow up healthy and competitive,” Barnes said.

Baba, often called the “Pele” of Iraq, feels this is the way to bring the children of Iraq to peace and help teach them to be good and keep them off the streets.

The more than \$30,000 worth of supplies was donated by businesses and organizations in the U.S. and is part of a continual stream of donations from concerned citizens, Barnes said.

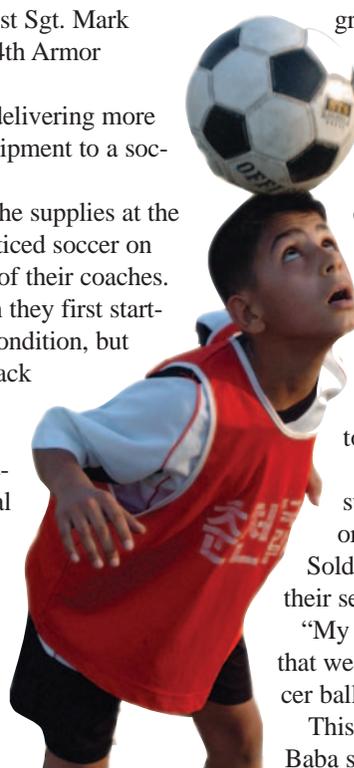
“The support is fantastic,” he said. “It’s been my experience everywhere ... that there is all kinds of support for this. People want to do what they can do, and they see this as a means to be able to do something.”

Barnes explained his company has received a lot of support from his hometown, companies and private organizations all over the country, and he and his Soldiers want to show the people of Iraq they care about their security and their children.

“My company is an infantry company, and we have sectors that we patrol. If the situation allows it, we will take some soccer balls with us and pass them out to the kids,” Barnes said.

This is the best way for the Americans to see the children, Baba said. If a Soldier gives them a ball, they will be happy and tell their parents that this ball is from Americans.

“Soccer is an international language,” Barnes said. “Come out here and kick a soccer ball around, and you can make a whole bunch of friends at one time. These kids are going to grow up and have opinions. Their thoughts are going to be shaped by their experiences and hopefully they will have happy memories of Americans.”



An Iraqi child sharpens his soccer skills at Chapa Stadium.

Bluegrass roots give inspiration to musical Marine serving in Iraq

Story and photo by
Lance Cpl. Wayne Edmiston
2nd Force Service Support Group

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq — Venture to the deep southern parts of the United States, and you will hear the sounds of the famed genre of bluegrass music.

In western parts of Iraq, you can hear the bluegrass imported all the way from the United States by Lance Cpl. Bradford E. Laws, a nuclear, biological and chemical specialist with Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, 2nd Force Service Support Group (Forward).

This Marine’s six years of playing the banjo in the states was not put on hold for his deployment here.

“I love playing the banjo,” Laws said. “It helps me to pass the time and entertain myself and others.”

For Laws it also provides a taste of Hampton, Tenn., his home where his banjo-playing roots extend.

His entire family brought him up around music, and the banjo was something that he picked up from his father.

“Playing the banjo reminds me of what it’s like to be home,” said Laws. “I grew up around the banjo — my father always played, and my family has always been associated with music.”

Laws especially enjoys the banjo because it is very unique compared to other instruments.

“The banjo has a distinct sound, and not a lot of people play it,” Laws said. “It is a lot harder than it looks.”

Every night, Laws plays with a group of Marine musicians who gather to play music for entertainment.

“I play with multiple Marines here,” said Laws. “We play all our instruments together, and it’s very enjoyable.”

One thing Laws especially loves to play is traditional southern bluegrass.

“Bluegrass is great music and especially popular where I am from,” Laws said. “I will play any kind of music, but bluegrass is my favorite.”

Lance Cpl. Jeremiah K. Barr, a financial budget technician with HQ Co., H&S Bn., 2nd FSSG (Fwd.) is a guitarist with the group.

Barr, seeing Laws play, knows the extent of his talent as a banjo player.

“I’ve seen a lot of people play the banjo and guitar; he is quite good,” said Barr. “I love playing music with him.”

Laws’ flexibility as a musician is what makes him an asset to the music group’s unique songs.

“He will play along with heavy metal, classic rock and any type of music that he can play along with,” Barr said. “The funny thing is no one can play along



Lance Cpl. Bradford E. Laws “rocks out” on his banjo here Oct. 20.

with him when he plays his music; he is just too fast.”

For Laws, playing the banjo is just a way he can help cope with the stresses of being deployed to a combat environment.

“I love to go off and just play music,” said Laws. “It just takes my mind off everything for the brief moments I am playing.”

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