



Sgt. Ricardo Smith checks his weld after cutting holes in a plate that will be used in a new humvee gunner's harness on Forward Operating Base Falcon Feb. 22. Smith is a welder with the 503rd Maintenance Company, serving on a fly-away team from Logistical Base Seitz. **Photo by Sgt. Joshua Salmons**

## Falcon fly-away a soaring success

By Sgt. Joshua Salmons  
4TH SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Taking a twist from the “Field of Dreams” adage, a team of mechanics on Camp Falcon has adopted the philosophy: “If we install it, they will come.”

The seven-member “fly-away team” from the 503rd Maintenance Company’s Automotive Platoon took a break from their normal work of replacing engines and other level-three tasks on Logistical Base Seitz in early February to begin working on Falcon; adding new gunner restraints and combat locks to humvees.

The new combat locks are a single-action

mechanism, where one motion opens the door, instead of the normal ‘lift and pull back’ method of operating the old locks.

The gunner restraint is a harness that keeps the Soldier from being ejected from the vehicle during a rollover or sudden stop.

Normally, to get the enhancements, customers would have to go to where the maintenance personnel were – putting their vehicles and crews at risk by traveling to different forward operating bases.

“The benefit of fly-away teams is that the customer doesn’t have to go into harm’s way to get safety upgrades,” said Staff Sgt. John Mickens, team NCOIC. “We come to them

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The 189th Corps Support Battalion command (center front) sit with newly-promoted sergeants during an NCO induction ceremony at the Morale Welfare & Recreation cinema here March. 4. **Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Guadalupe Stratman**

## New CSB NCOs welcomed to the corps

Special to The Wrangler  
189 CORPS SUPPORT BATTALION

**T**he 189th Corps Support Battalion (Airborne) conducted a noncommissioned officer induction ceremony at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Theater here on March 4. Seventy-two Soldiers participated in the ceremony, 68 of whom just made the rank of sergeant, four of them promoted to staff sergeant.

The ceremony started with the entry of the official party and the national anthem. The official party consisted of Lt. Col. Lenny J. Kness, 189th CSB commander and Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth E. Nixon Sr., the senior noncommissioned officer of the 189th, Sgt. Travis Washington, Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery, who is the 4th Sustainment Brigade NCO of the Quarter and Sgt. Amanda Fluery, from the 428th Quartermaster Company, who is the 4th Sustainment Brigade Soldier of the Quarter.

Participants were reminded of the time honored traditions of the

NCO Corps in the U.S. Army. They were given a historical overview of inducting noncommissioned officers as far back as Frederick the Great's Army.

The ceremony also honored Sergeant 1st Class Paul Smith, who was the first Soldier from the Iraq war who received the Medal of Honor with his heroic acts during an attack - in which he lost his life.

The recital of the NCO creed reminded all of what is expected of a noncommissioned officer in the United States Army, and what makes them really the 'backbone' of the Army.

The transition from Soldier to NCO is a very important one. "There is no comparable transitional move from the masses to leadership positions," said Kness. "You are now the first line leaders for the Army's greatest assets, our Soldiers.

Kness also reminded the new NCOs that they have to earn their subordinate's respect, and all of their actions are closely watched by their Soldiers every day.

The ceremony ended with the Army Song.

## The WRANGLER

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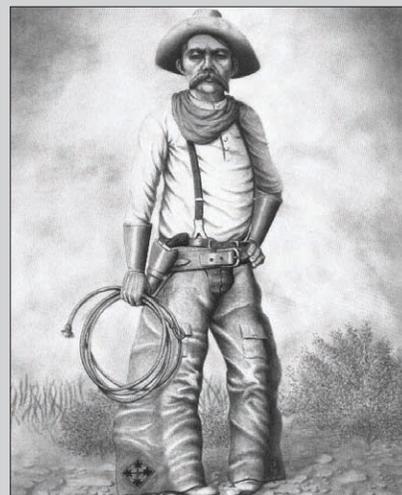
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**4th Sustainment Brigade Commander**  
Col. Gustave Perna

**4th Sustainment Brigade Sergeant Major**  
Command Sgt. Maj. Trent Ellis

**Public Affairs Officer**  
Sgt. 1st Class Guadalupe Stratman

**Editor**  
Sgt. Joshua Salmons



# CG takes stock in Taji Iraqi units' progress

*Also inspects COSCOM units' efforts to improve combat logistic patrols*

By Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux  
207TH MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

**B**rig. Gen. Rebecca Halstead, commander of 3rd Corps Support Command, visited Camp Taji, Iraq, on March 7.

"The purpose of my visit was to visit Soldiers and leaders and see what great things they are doing down here," Halstead said.

The general and a group of her officers met Iraqi Security Force soldiers, U.S. troops and a civilian contractor who provides maintenance services for ISF vehicles as she was escorted around by Col. Gustave Perna, commander of the 4th Sustainment Brigade.

The 4th is a subordinate unit of 3rd COSCOM in theater and provides training and logistical support for several developing Iraqi units and organizations on Taji.

Her first stop was at one of the Iraqi army's Regional Support Unit, which is in the progress of being stood up. She received a detailed brief from Col. Paul Linkenhoker, the senior advisor for the RSU, and his Iraqi counterparts, who briefed her with the help of an interpreter.

The RSU currently focuses on three main areas, which are force protection, life support and base reconstruction.

Since the Iraqi army has its largest base at Camp Taji, the RSU has its work cut out for it.

"I think they are doing an excellent job," said Linkenhoker about the Iraqi leaders he works with. "Given the resources, this staff can do it," he added, referring to the time when the RSU will soon operate on its own.

Halstead then paid a visit to the 1st Motorized Transportation Regiment (1st MTR) who is also partnered with the 4th. This was her first visit with this particular MTR.

"I found them to be disciplined, organized, and enthusiastic . . . you could see



Brig. Gen. Rebecca Halstead talks with an interpreter as she interacted with representatives from the Iraqi 1st Motorized Transportation Regiment during her March 7 visit to Camp Taji. Halstead is the commanding general of 3rd COSCOM. **Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux**

## A Chaplain's Prayer

# March a chance to remember historical women

By Capt. Denise Hagler  
18TH CSB BATTALION CHAPLAIN

This month we celebrate Women's History Month to honor and praise our women who have contributed to our communities, our societies, and our world.

As we look at women who have contributed to our world we have to look at their tenacity, forgiveness and fortitude.

Many women have suffered, endured great affliction and have had the courage to stand against great odds in order to benefit men, women and children.

Women have fought for their children in order for them to have a better life than their own. Many women have fought for other women in order for them to have greater opportunities than their predecessors. Many women have fought along side men in war, to fight against injustices and to provide equal opportunity for all people.

Proverbs 31:10 asks the question: "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies."

Women are so important to our society and to our world.

Where would we be without our mothers? Where would we be without our

grandmothers? Where would we be without mothers cooking the greatest meals ever? Where would we be without mothers sitting us down and giving us wisdom and knowledge – instructing us on how to live; how to walk and how to talk on this road of life? Where would we be without children being born? We would not exist without our mothers laboring to give birth to us.

We have great examples in our lives of women who have conquered and stood in the midst of adversity: Joan of Arc; the biblical characters Esther, Ruth, Deborah, Mary, Miriam and Eve, the first mother of all living.

Many women have suffered, endured great affliction and have had the courage to stand against great odds in order to benefit men, women and children

There are so many who have contributed that I am not able to list them all in this article but if we look presently at the women who have made significant contributions and who are leading the way for women, we would have to look at the examples of Condoleeza Rice, First Lady Bush, Oprah, Hillary Clinton, Maya Angelo, and Rita Moreno. They have paved

the way and are blazing a path for women to expand their horizons, their dreams, and their opportunities in life.

The strongest, most encouraging and most loving woman I have known in my life is my mother.

My mother has stood by me through thick and thin – though the tough times and through the good times. She has instructed me, given me wisdom and shown me what it means to stand in the midst of confusion and adversity.

Most of all, she taught me that there is a power that is the greatest of all powers

that exist and that is the awesome love and omnipotence of our creator.

My mother is great and there will be no one like her.

Therefore, I say to all mothers and women in the world: let us continue to fight the good fight of faith and continue to be the light that shines in the midst of darkness.

## A Few Legal Pointers

# College education pays with opportunity, tax credits

*Those spending personal money for self, dependents entitled to IRS breaks*

Soldiers who are paying for their own, or their dependent's college education, can claim a tax credit for education expenses.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) offers two education tax credits: the Hope credit and the Lifetime Learning credit.

Only one of these education tax credits can be claimed during the tax year, not both.

Although only one of these credits can be claimed, there are some general requirements that both credits share.

### Who can claim a credit?

You can claim a credit if all of the following requirements are met: 1) You paid qualified education expenses of higher education; 2) You paid the education expenses for an eligible student; and 3) The eligible



Capt. Eric Lee  
JUDGE ADVOCATE

student is either yourself, spouse, or a dependent for whom you claim an exemption on your tax return.

### Who cannot claim the credit?

The education credits cannot be claimed if your filing status is married filing separately, and if you are listed as a dependent in the exemptions

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they had a lot of energy,” Halstead said.

“They want to do well. They are very open in their conversation . . . You can sense when someone doesn’t want you around. Or they can handle it thank you very much’ – none of that,” she said. The Iraqi leaders were very open to dialog and sharing their progress.

“Taji had a lot of success,” said Maj. Timothy Kishel, the Iraqi Security Forces Support Operations Officer of 3rd COSCOM, who was one of the visitors.

“One of the big things is the ability of the Iraqi units to start working together on their own,” he said. “You see it with the 1st MTR, the TND [Taji National Depot] and the RSU. It seems like they are working to help each other.”

He mentioned that the security for the TND used to be provided by a contractor, but since the RSU took over security, there are hardly any issues with break-ins. “That is a success story,” Kishel said.

After enjoying lunch at the ‘Wrangler Inn,’ Halstead checked on the National Maintenance Contract (NMC) facility. They

One of the big things is the ability of the Iraqi units to start working together on their own. That is a success story.

**Maj. Timothy Kishel**  
ISF SUPPORT OFFICER, 3RD COSCOM

have been providing maintenance support for Iraqi army vehicles since May.

To put money into the economy, NMC employs local nationals and purchases some of its spare parts locally.

Since the facility will be managed by the Iraqi army at one point, U.S. service members are assigned to the facility to provide support and guidance.



Brig. Gen. Rebecca Halstead receives a salute from Soldiers of the Iraqi army during her Taji visit March 7. Halstead took the opportunity to visit several Iraqi and U.S. units under her command. **Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux**

One of them is Master Sgt. Robert Lewis from the Special Troops Battalion of the 4th. As the commanding general of 3rd COSCOM was passing by, she took the opportunity to present him with the Samuel Sharpe Award, which is an award given by the Ordnance Corps Association.

The visitors then had the chance to meet with Soldiers of the 189th Corps Support Battalion.

Capt. Charles Kean, the commander of Battery C, 1-377 Field Artillery, stood by one

sirens and other improvements. These changes gave Soldiers additional tools that assist them in resolving possible issues the right way, following the proper steps for escalation of force, Kean explained.

The general took the time to speak with the Soldiers who operate the equipment on a daily bases - and gathered feedback from them.

Halstead also had the opportunity to see the Combat Convoy Fire Fighting System for the first time.

“That was very impressive,” Halstead said about the firefighting equipment. “That is going to save lives right there. It doesn’t cost that much, it is not hard to train on, not hard to maintain.”

The final stop of the tour was the 189th CSB’s sand table and briefing facility, used to conduct combat logistics patrol briefings for Soldiers conducting CLPs. Halstead spoke highly of the facility. “That is going to be a total success out on the road,” she said.

When asked what the highlight of her visit was Halstead said: “Listening to a private first class brief intel. I love it! The future of the Army is in such great hands, when you have private first classes giving you briefings. It is awesome.”

of the vehicles his unit uses for its missions as a medium truck company.

“I briefed her on the additions that we put on our gun trucks in order to reduce the amount of weight that gunners field for escalation of force and make it more of a crew drill as opposed to an individual drill,” Kean said.

The unit installed side lights, spot lights,

# Dawn end of day for night-shift troops

By Sgt. Robert Durr  
1011 QUARTERMASTER COMPANY

LOGISTICAL BASE SEITZ – By the time the sun comes up, while most soldiers in the 1011th Quartermaster Company are preparing for work, a few have already put in a full day.

Often overlooked and taken for granted, Soldiers assigned to the night shift keep the 1011th's 24-hour operations rolling smoothly.

Soldiers working the night shift do their job well with little praise or recognition. For these soldiers, knowing that they are indispensable to the success of the mission is more than enough to keep the morale high.

Working nights is standard routine for 31-year-old Spc. Samuel Minchue. He began working nights providing support for the 1011th's fuel mission shortly after arriving in Iraq in November. After moving to days for a short period, Minchue is content working nights again at the Consolidated Receiving Shipping Point where he handles cargo.

"I like it," Minchue said. "The weather is cooler and I feel more productive. Sometimes it's more laid back but it can get just as hectic as during the days."

One aspect Minchue finds challenging about working nights is the competition with the day shift.

"There's such a rivalry between days and



Spc. Samuel Minchue performs an inspection on a pallet as part of his nightly checks on Logistical Base Seitz. *Courtesy photo*

nights," Minchue said. "It's just people's nature, wanting to outdo each other."

The friendly competition has only made Minchue work harder while building camaraderie with his fellow night crew.

"I don't like a thing about Iraq, but the people I work with are great," Minchue said.

Back home in Missouri, Minchue has his fiancé Kim and two children, Samuel and

Meriah Ann, to look after.

Working nights allows him to easily call the people that matter most to him.

After nearly four months of working nights Minchue said he will find it hard to switch, but he is ready for the challenge.

Spc. Whitney Brauch, a 20-year-old from California, Mo., also enjoys working at night.

During his night shift, Brauch avoids the heat in a tower by keeping a vigilant eye for anything suspicious. "I don't have to deal with the heat, that is kind of nice," Brauch said.

Being on a different schedule is just one of the extra burdens Brauch has adapted to.

"You get woken up for mortar drills and stuff like that," he said. He feels he is lucky enough to share the same shift as his battle buddy, which makes everything easier to overcome.

Brauch knows his job is important even if the enemy is the only ones aware of his presence. "I guess you kind of feel like you are responsible for every Soldier's safety on base," he said.

If working nights has taught Brauch one thing it is that he is a Soldier, ready to work anytime, anywhere and under any condition.

Despite their limited visibility in the ranks, Soldiers like Brauch and Minchue working the night shift continue to work hard while the rest of us sleep.

**Don't shoot ...  
call EOD.**



**STAY ALIVE**

## Combat Nutrition Care

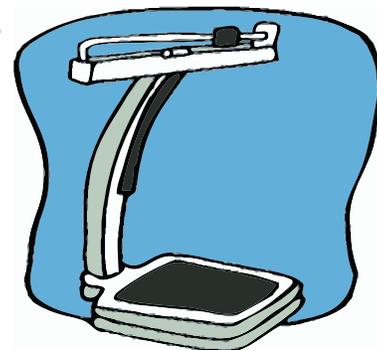
Have you been working out, wearing all this extra gear for months, but do not seem to be losing the pounds or inches?

Are you tired of being taped and would like to avoid that embarrassment?

Are you on the unit's weight control program and would like to get off of it while deployed?

An on-line nutrition program is now available for you. The course will take about five hours (5 x 1 hour sessions).

To sign up, email me at: [dawn.orta@taji.sig54.army.mil](mailto:dawn.orta@taji.sig54.army.mil) or report to the Wrangler Clinic from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.



# ADA Soldiers learn new skills as deployment roles change

By Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux  
207TH MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

When air defense artillery Soldiers from Fort Campbell, Ky., were told that they were deploying to Iraq instead of a medium truck company and would have a transportation mission, their first reaction was: "Are they crazy?"

Almost a year later, Soldiers of Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery all look at the mission and their time spent in Iraq in a slightly different view.

The battery had to go through significant changes to be able to fulfill their new mission, said Capt. Christopher Brough, battery commander. Their battalion shifted some personnel around and doubled the number of Soldiers in the battery. They even received some individual augmentees.

The unit received a two-week crash course on the equipment before they arrived in theater.

"We took over from a transportation unit," said Spc. William Horgus, an Avenger crewmember with C/2-44, now a truck driver. "It was a little bumpy at the beginning, but it has been a fun deployment ever since." This is Horgus' second deployment to Iraq.



Air defense Soldiers give direction to a forklift as it loads a pallet onto the back of a flatbed truck on Camp Taji March 11. The Soldiers are from Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery, based out of Fort Campbell, Ky. **Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux**

The unit maintains 180 pieces of equipment, has ran over 150 missions and travelled almost three-quarters of a million miles since they arrived at Camp Taji May 12, Brough said.

They transported ammunition, vehicles, 40-foot and 20-foot containers. They also had several missions where they were moving Iraqi army equipment. No matter what the mission was, C/2-44 was ready. "They call; we haul," Brough said proudly.

"It is all about getting the mission completed," said Staff Sgt. Michael McKie-Smith, an automated logistician specialist with C/2-44, who is one of the individual augmentees to the battery. He was only at Fort Bragg, N.C., for four months when he found out that he was being deployed with a unit from Fort Campbell.

Initially he was a little skeptical about becoming a truck driver with Soldiers he had never met before. But now, he feels like they are one big family.

"This is one of the best units I have ever been in," said McKie-Smith. "First platoon...is the cream of the crop. If I could stay with these guys [after redeployment], I would."

The Soldiers have all learned new skills and will redeploy with a lot of

memorable experiences.

"We really explored a lot of Iraq that I didn't get to see the first time I was over here," said Horgus.

Others like Staff Sgt. Dustin Woodcock, also an Avenger crewmember, learned how to work and interact with non-combat MOSs, civilians, and the other military branches.

"You have to have a lot of patience," Woodcock said. "You have to be versatile with the people you work with."

Woodcock misses all the physical activity associated with the everyday activities of an air defense artillery battery. "I miss being able to walk and rucking...I like to be out there doing some land navigation and training with my 'Joes.'"

Brough misses the upfront combat action he and his Soldiers would have in their traditional role as an ADA battery. However, he is very pleased with how well they adopted to their new mission.

"I am just overfilled with pride to be the commander..." he said.

"It was a mission we did not ask for, that we didn't know anything about, but in less than 120 days we came together . . . I wake up every day thanking God that I am a part of this team."

## FALCON FROM Page 1

and it's easier for them."

Apart from the distance-saving measure, locating the maintenance personnel near their customers also means a unit doesn't have to take vehicles off of missions just to wait around for upgrades, he said.

Initially processing six trucks a day, the team has improved their output to over 10 trucks per day. The team has installed over 347 locks and restraints since their work began on Feb. 7.

Working with maintenance personnel from the 4th Infantry Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team, the 503rd Fly-Away Team teaches 4th BCT mechanics how to install the upgrades while helping lessen the shop's workload.

"They're coming in and helping train our guys," said Capt. William Rene, 4th BCT maintenance officer. "My guys would have to do their normal work and add these upgrades. But with the fly-away team, my guys can keep working and learn this on the side."

While the Falcon reassignment isn't permanent, the Soldiers see it as a chance to focus on this one task and to try something new.

"It's a nice break from Seitz," said Spc. Robert Onthank, a welder with the team. "It feels good giving these guys these things, especially if it'll keep them safer on the roads."

"It would be incredibly tiring to have to do our old work and these safety installations," said Mickens. "It's good to focus on this. It's helping Soldiers' lives."

Additional fly-away teams operate on FOB Prosperity, Rustamiyah and Iskan, with future plans for one at Mahmudiyah.



Sgt. Jermaine Peters puts the finishing touches on a new combat lock on Forward Operating Base Falcon Feb. 22. Peters is a light-wheel vehicle mechanic with the 503rd Maintenance Company, serving on a fly-away team from Logistical Base Seitz. *Photo by Sgt. Joshua Salmons*

## EDUCATION FROM Page 4

section on another person's tax return (such as your parents). Also, if your modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) is \$53,000 or more (\$107,000 or more in the case the taxpayers files jointly with their spouse) the credit cannot be claimed.

### What expenses qualify?

Student activity fees and expenses for course-related books (conditional), supplies, and equipment are included as qualified education expenses only if the fees and expenses must be paid to the institution as a condition of enrollment or attendance. In most cases, textbooks that are purchased from a friend or from the university bookstore are not a qualified expense because textbooks itself are not required for enrollment or attendance at the university.

However, if a University dental school requires each student to pay a rental fee for

dental equipment (in addition to tuition) to be used as part of the enrollment into the dental school, the rental fee is a qualified expense that can be added towards the credit.

### What expenses do not qualify?

Transportation, room and board, medical expenses (including student health fees), insurance, or similar personal, living, or family expenses.

These are some of the common elements that the Hope and Lifetime Learning Credit share. However there are some differences:

### Hope credit

There is a \$1,500 limit of qualified education expenses paid that can be claimed for each eligible student. The student cannot use the same expenses that were used to calculate the Hope credit in the past two years. The student must not have completed the first two years of postsecondary education (freshman and sophomore years of college) before 2005. At a minimum the student was

enrolled at least half-time in a program that is leading towards a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential. Lastly, the student does not have any federal or state convictions for possessing or distributing a controlled substance.

### Lifetime Learning credit

The Lifetime Learning credit is for eligible students who are enrolled in one or more courses at an educational institution. The most you can claim is up to \$2,000 of qualified education expenses.

Unlike the Hope credit, there is no limit on the number of years that this education credit can be claimed. Furthermore, the felony drug conviction rule does not apply as it does in the Hope credit.

For further information on Education credits, read IRS Publication 970, Tax Benefits for Education and IRS Publication 17, Your Federal Income Tax. Both publications can be found at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).