

Serving Task Force Marne and MND-Center

Thanksgiving Day coverage

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Soldier receives Purple Heart

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Kalsu baptismal ceremony

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Varsity March

Offensive ops lead to capture of HVI

SPC. BEN HUTTO
3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div.

FOB HAMMER — Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, captured 13 suspected insurgents during a nighttime air assault mission in

Sayafiyah, a small village outside of Salman Pak, Nov. 24.

One detainee was a high value individual, a member of al-Qa-eda in Iraq wanted for weapons smuggling and financing attacks on Coalition forces in Salman Pak and Al Ja'ara.

“According to our intelligence, the insurgent we apprehended was an expert bomb maker and (vehicle borne improvised explosive device) maker,” said 1st Lt. Matthew Barwick, from Lanham, Md., fire support officer for Co. B. “By apprehending him, we

have taken a very dangerous person off the streets and made the area safer.”

During the course of the operation Co. B Soldiers cleared eight houses and barns while search-

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Spartans hand reins to Vanguard Brigade

PFC. AMANDA McBRIDE
4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.

FOB KALSU — The 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, Fort Richardson, Alaska, officially handed over operations of Forward Operating Base Kalsu and its surrounding areas to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga., in a transfer of authority ceremony held at the 4th Brigade Quad Courtyard Saturday.

The Paratroopers from the 4th BCT (Abn.), 25th Inf. Div. deployed to Iraq in October 2006 and have participated in combat operations in Anbar, Baghdad, South Baghdad, Babil, Najaf, Karbala, Diwaniyah and along

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Pfc. Amanada McBride
Soldiers and Paratroopers present the colors during the TOA ceremony Dec. 1



Soldiers from Co. B, 1-15th Inf. Regt. run to a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter to return to COP Cahill Nov. 25.

Sgt. Timothy Kingston

Spartan Soldier awarded for heroism

SGT. KEVIN STABINSKY
2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.

FOB KALSU — Soldiers in the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, took time Nov. 22 to thank a fellow Soldier for actions performed in the line of fire.

Sgt. Michael Trump, from Terre Haute, Ind., was awarded the Bronze Star with Valor in a ceremony at Patrol Base Murray.

Trump's heroic acts occurred during what started as a routine combat patrol that morphed into anything but typical.

On July 24, a squad of Company A Bradley fighting vehicles was conducting reconnaissance operations in Maderiyah, hunting for terrorists

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Marne 6 sends

Safety standards keep Soldiers alive

'Leaders should never allow unnecessary risks'

Even though we are forward deployed, appearance matters — you should look as good as you are. And our Soldiers are the very best.

When we wear the uniform — Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, and Marines — we represent the United States Armed Forces. This means that we keep our hair cut and that we stay within the uniform standard. Every Soldier should carry the Task Force Marne Standards book which clearly outlines the standards for Multi-National Division — Center.

Leaders should always been enforcing the standard. I am concerned when I see dirty windshields because it indicates a lack of PMCS.

With winter weather quickly approaching, leaders need to ensure Soldiers are following proper procedures because the probability of accidents increases.

Safety losses are a result of a lack of adherence to standards, and Task Force Marne has suffered two fatal accidents over the past month.

When a Soldier dies in combat it is because the enemy has a vote, but these two Soldiers did not have to die.

We lost one Soldier when he found UXO while conducting a police call. The Soldier and his battle buddy dug up an unidentified plastic object resembling a caulk gun. When they banged it against a concrete wall to remove the dirt, the object exploded.

One of the Soldiers was killed instantly and his battle buddy sustained shrapnel wounds to his arms.

Ten days later we lost another Soldier when he fell eight to 10 feet while trying to gain access to a rooftop using a front end bucket loader as a lifting device.

As leaders we need to ensure



Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch
Task Force Marne commander

our Soldiers are taking their time and are not rushing to failure in a quest to complete the mission.

Leaders should never allow Soldiers to take unnecessary risks. When it comes to non-standard equipment, we need to address the risks and mitigate them.

Across Task Force Marne, Soldiers are falling out of tow-

ers and smashing their fingers in vehicle doors and turrets — all of these risks can be mitigated by leader involvement and creative thinking.

In 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, leaders developed the concept of placing floors every six feet in guard towers so that if Soldiers fall, they fall only six feet and not 30 feet.

Other accidents are prevented by a simple adherence to standards. Eye protection, gloves, ear plugs, IBAs, and proper head gear are simple examples of simple ways to mitigate risks.

As I travel the battlefield, I expect that leaders post Marne Safety Alerts for Soldiers to read — accidents are not only preventable, but something from which we can learn.

ROCK OF THE MARNE!

Veteran shares experience, hope with Marne Soldiers

STAFF SGT. TONY M. LINDBACK
 PFC. MONICA K. SMITH
 MND-C PAO

CAMP VICTORY — Dave Röver, a Vietnam veteran, served in the Navy as a river boat gunner in the Brown Water Black Beret.

Eight months into his tour of duty, Röver was unrecognizably

burned when a phosphorous grenade he was preparing to throw was shot by a sniper and exploded in his hand, inches from his face. He was hospitalized for 14 months and underwent numerous surgeries.

Today, Röver is a motivational speaker on his fourth visit to Iraq thanking Soldiers for the sacrifice they make in serving

their country.

He spoke to 3rd Infantry Division Soldiers at Camps Victory and Striker Nov. 28.

The story Röver told, which had tears welling up in the eyes of many in attendance, was not a tragedy, though.

It was a testimony of his life from the time of his injury till today — a story of perseverance and

giving, mixed with well-placed humor, which gripped his audience. He talked about how love and support from his wife helped him endure his pain and accept his fate.

Röver says he enjoys speaking to Soldiers in theater and is especially concerned about the welfare of the families of deployed Soldiers.



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 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division
 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade
 214th Fires Brigade
 7th Sustainment Brigade
 720th Military Police Battalion
 Mobile Unit 3 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Battalion
 875th Engineering Battalion

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Purple Hearts awarded to 3-1 Cav. troopers

SPC. BEN HUTTO
3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div.

COP CASHE — Two Soldiers from 2nd platoon, Troop B, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, were awarded Purple Heart medals during a ceremony at Combat Outpost Cashe Nov. 29.

Staff Sgt. Sean Kane, from San Jose, Calif., a squad leader in 2nd platoon, and Spc. David Menillo, from Fairfield, Conn., the medic for 2nd squad, were both praised by Maj. Andrew Koloski, from Juneau, Alaska, the executive officer of 3-1 Cav. Regt., for their actions Aug. 18 when they sustained injuries during a suicide bomber attack at a Concerned Local Citizens meeting in Jisr Diyala.

First Lt. Mike Barth, from El Segundo, Calif., the platoon leader for 2nd squad, witnessed the incident and was on hand to recognize his two Soldiers.

"The amazing thing about the whole situation was that, despite being injured, both Soldiers kept doing their jobs and maintained a high level of professionalism throughout the whole incident," Barth said.

"I'm extremely proud of both of them."

Kane thanked everyone for their support, but admitted that the award was something that he was not looking to receive during his current tour in Iraq.

"This is definitely an award that I didn't want to receive, but I'll take it," Kane said. "I'm just glad it wasn't worse."

Menillo said at the time, he didn't really know that he was injured.

His duties as a combat medic caused him to focus on the job at hand and help Kane.

"It happened so fast that I didn't really have time to realize it," he said. "I was dazed, but the adrenaline kicked in and I just did my job. I knew my body was all in one piece so I wasn't too worried."

After the ceremony, Soldiers from Company D, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, the unit to which the squad is currently attached, filed by and shook hands with the two Soldiers.

"Both guys are outstanding Soldiers and deserve the awards they received," Barth said. "I'm just thankful that they are still with us and the incident wasn't fatal."



Spc. Ben Hutto

Maj. Andrew Koloski pins the Purple Heart medal on Staff Sgt. Sean Kane during an awards ceremony at COP Cashe Nov. 29.

MNC-I commander tours Nahrwan, re-enlists Soldiers

MAJ. JOE SOWERS
3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div.

FOB HAMMER — Multi-National Corps — Iraq commander Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno toured Nahrwan with leaders of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team Nov. 29.

The 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery assumed responsibility of Nahrwan and the surrounding area in mid-October.

Since then, the battalion established Combat Outpost Salie and conducted more than 200 patrols to eliminate a potential extremist sanctuary.

Col. Wayne W. Grigsby, Jr., from Prince George's County, Md., commander of the 3rd HBCT, explained to Odierno that Nahrwan has been an area of focus for the brigade for some time, and things continue to get better.

Grigsby also emphasized the work done by Troop B, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, prior to the arrival of the 1-10th FA.

"It didn't happen overnight," Grigsby said. "We've been clearing this place for seven months. It was a sanctuary for extremists."

Grigsby further explained that the deployment of the 1-10th FA to Nahrwan is the "hold" step in the 3rd HBCT "clear, hold, build" strategy for Nahrwan.



Staff Sgt. Curtis Cashour

Maj. Luis Rivera, from Puerto Rico, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery executive officer, leads Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno on a tour of a market in Nahrwan Nov. 29.

Maj. Luis Rivera, from Puerto Rico, the 1-10th FA executive officer, led Odierno on a tour of COP Salie, a medical clinic and a local market adjacent to the new outpost.

Prior to leaving the outpost to see the clinic and market, Odierno re-enlisted three Soldiers and presented awards to six others.

"It (re-enlisting) says a lot about yourselves; your discipline, your dedication and your selfless service," Odierno told the Soldiers prior to the re-enlistment ceremony. "I don't do anything. It is Soldiers like you that make a difference."

Pfc. Alexander Copland, from Garden City, Mich., Pfc. Richard Havellana, from Anchorage, Alaska, and Pfc. Lucero Hernandez-Velasquez, from Tijuana, Mexico, all from Company G, 203rd Brigade Support Battalion, re-enlisted during the ceremony. Company G is in direct support of the 1-10th FA.

Odierno pinned Army Commendation Medals on Pfc. Justin Ballard, from Memphis, Tenn., Pfc. Justin Hayes, from Clarksburg, W. Va., Spc. Nathan Miller, from Parkersburg, W. Va., Sgt. Jonathon Pratt, from Wilmington, Ohio, Sgt. Jonathon Nicholas, from Bessemer, Ala., and Staff Sgt. Peter Dees, from Elkhart, Ind.

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CLC program benefits Coalition, Iraqis

STAFF SGT. TONY M. LINDBACK
MND-C PAO

PB WARRIOR KEEP — In big business it is sometimes better to merge two companies in effort to make one large company with more capability.

In most cases, the resulting unity profits both companies.

The Concerned Local Citizens program works much the same way.

Members of the CLC program who live and operate in the area around Sadr Al Yusufiyah, Patrol Base Warrior Keep, have been operating checkpoints, watching for insurgent activity and working with Coalition Forces.

Helping to maintain security in the area pays off for the CLCs because it not only gives them a safer area to live, but also a safer place to work.

There are approximately 1,500 CLCs in the Sadr Al Yusufiyah area — far more than there are Soldiers.

Many of those 1,500 were struggling to make ends meet before the introduction of the program. Not having enough money to support their families, some took payment to do the dirty work of insurgents.

“A lot of them will tell you they used to do whatever they could for money. If they were offered money to attack U.S. Forces, it was just a job. They needed to provide for their families so they took it,” said Sgt. Zachariah Younker, a forward observer with Company D, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

“The CLC program has pretty much taken the place of that and they understand it’s more permanent employment with a lot less inherent risks,” Younker added.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback

Members of CLC groups in the Sadr Al Yusufiyah area wait outside PB Warrior Keep to receive their wages Nov. 19.

“It’s got the risks of being a police officer, but not the risks of sneaking through the night and potentially getting shot ... Now they’re more interested in ending all the violence around their own homes and their own people,” he said.

Ending violence in their home town is a common goal for the CLCs and the Rakkasans of Co. D, but there are still insurgent influences in the area.

Fighting the insurgency means some are forced into difficult decisions.

Younker said he is convinced the area is coming around.

“In Sadr Al Yusufiyah specifically,” Younker said. “The people are taking more control of their own security and, therefore, their own destiny. We’ve had a father who turned in his own son. That was kind of the turning point in my mind.”

CLC members came into PB

Warrior Keep to receive wages Nov. 19 and it gave the Rakkasans a chance to enter people’s identification information into Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment.

Spc. Justin Arfa, an infantryman with Co. D, said it is basically a database system that they are entered into.

When Soldiers go to a CLC checkpoint, they can bring the system with them and make sure people are who they say they are and that they’re actually supposed to be there.

The HIIDE system works similarly to the Biometric Automated Toolset by capturing and cataloging biometric identification information. HIIDE does not replace the BAT system, but it is better suited for tactical and “outside the wire” operations.

Everything is self-contained in the HIIDE, which is approximate-



To ensure Concerned Local Citizens are who they claim to be, their biometric identification information is entered into the HIIDE system to be verified at Patrol Base Warrior Keep.

ly the same size as a studio quality camera, eliminating the need for a laptop and several minutes of setup and teardown time.

Having more time to spend working with the CLCs has let the rapport between the Soldiers and the citizens grow, improving the area at the same time.

“They’re very helpful,” Arfa said. “They’re definitely helping to secure the areas where they are living.”

“The (improvised explosive devices) have gone way down since (the CLCs) have been implemented. It’s made the area a lot safer for everyone.”

Mada’in Qada sets record lows for crime

SGT. NATALIE ROSTEK
3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div.

FOB HAMMER — Iraqi Police in the Mada’in Qada reported yearly lows for violent crime to officers of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team Nov. 30.

The 3rd HBCT deployed to Iraq in March in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and has operated in the qada, southeast of Baghdad, throughout the deployment.

Iraqi Police in the qada forward crime statistics to their Coalition Force partners at the end of each month. The statistics are compiled by police officers at the five police stations throughout the qada.

For November, Iraqi Police reported eight murders and five kidnappings. This is a significant drop from the yearly high in May of 37 murders and 22 kidnappings.

“In 2005 the Mada’in Qada had 355 murders. In 2006 the qada had 631 mur-

ders. This year we expect to have about 290 murders,” said Maj. David Fivecoat, from Delaware, Ohio, 3rd HBCT operations officer. “The downward trend in murders is due to several reasons: the work of the Soldiers of the 3rd HBCT, the development of over 3,000 Concerned Local Citizens, and the continued improvement of the Iraqi Police. The decrease in murders is a key indicator that safety and security are returning to the qada. It is an encouraging sign for its 1.2 million residents.”

Capt. Liz Cain, 59th Military Police Company commander, attributes the drop in crime to improvements in the Iraqi Police, security, and the economy. She further explained that Concerned Local Citizen groups have contributed to the improving security situation.

“These individuals are not only taking a stand against terrorists, but also against lawless behavior within their communi-

ties,” Cain said.

Mada’in Iraqi Police District Commander, Brig. Gen. Adnan Jamad Kathim said through a translator, “misdemeanor crime decreased 40 percent, improvised explosive device incidents decreased 66 percent and car bombings decreased 100 percent from October.”

Cain believes Iraqi Police training is a significant factor in the criminal activity decrease in the qada as well.

Dozens of Policemen have attended the Ministry of Interior investigative courses in Baghdad.

“Recently, many Iraqi Policemen have been educated on crime scene procedures and evidence collection,” she said. “They have come back from the MOI investigative course with the ability to piece a case together.”

When evidence and paperwork is col-



lect-
ed and

taken to the

judge, Cain said, a warrant is issued for the arrest or the individual already detained is permitted to be held pending a trial date.

“The completion of this process and the actual convictions and jailing of criminals have increased the population’s trust in the Iraqi Police and encourages them to call the police at the first sign of suspicious behavior,” Cain said. “This trust between the populace and the Iraqi Police has grown and they have become partners in fighting crime. We can expect the crime levels to continue to drop.”



Rakkasans establish Euphrates foothold

SGT. 1ST CLASS KERENSA HARDY
3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT)

CAMP STRIKER — The Rakkasans are making significant progress in the follow-on phases of Operation Marne Courageous which kicked off in mid-November.

Now well into the mission, multiple weapons and explosives caches have been recovered, insurgent activity has been thwarted and the operation is progressing smoothly.

The construction of Patrol Base Kemple is ahead of schedule and all force-protection measures have been emplaced.

“The Rakkasans’ mission to establish a footprint just west of the Euphrates proved to be a success and the quintessential model of counter-insurgency operations as defined in Field Manual 3-24,” said Col. Dominic J. Caraccilo, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

“The stars definitely lined up for us on this mission,” said Maj. David Jones, operations officer for the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT). “We conducted the largest air assault since Operation Swarmer without incident and delivered a decisive blow to al-Qaeda.

“If there is any enemy that still remains in Owesat, they no longer have free reign and are incapable of coordinating significant attacks,” Jones said.

Marne Courageous is aimed at securing the population of Owesat and Al Betra, former insurgent sanctuaries, by establishing a permanent presence on the west side of the Euphrates River.

The operation officially began Nov. 16 with the bombing of an island that was a suspected insurgent safehaven and an air assault into Owesat and Al Betra.

Along with elements of the Iraqi Army, Sol-

diers knocked on hundreds of doors in an attempt to identify anti-coalition forces and al-Qaeda and seek information that might lead to the whereabouts of Spc. Alex Jiminez and Pvt. Byron Fouty from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), who went missing May 12.

“Our objective was to talk to each Owetian about (the missing) Soldiers, search every structure and field, establish Patrol Base Kemple, set the conditions for Concerned Local Citizens involvement in Owesat, and develop an assessment of the needs of the Owetians,” said Maj. Will Beck, executive officer for 3-187th Inf. Regt.

Concerned Local Citizens have begun to establish checkpoints in the area, thereby denying insurgents freedom of movement.

“The CLCs have proven themselves to be a proven force capable of guarding key infrastructure and maintaining fixed positions controlling access,” said Maj. Curtis Crum, operations officer for 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT). “CLCs become target groups for economic opportunities, Iraqi Security Force recruitment and future job-placement programs.”

As a means to continue receiving the support of the people of Owesat, Company A, 3-187th Inf. Regt. hosted a veterinary operation and coordinated medical engagement.

The veterinary operation was held Nov. 29 in Owesat and Nov. 30 in North Qarghuli Village to provide veterinary care for the livestock.

A team of four medical personnel saw nearly 200 residents at a CME Dec. 2 with issues such as chronic illnesses, upper-respiratory infections, trauma from previous war wounds, and even cerebral palsy.

“We want to let the local population know we care and that we want to help them,” said Dr. (Lt. Col.) Grant Foster, battalion surgeon for the 3-187th Inf. Regt.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback

Above: Soldiers and translators prepare for an air assault in a CH-47 Chinook en route to Owesat in support of Marne Courageous Nov. 16. Top: Soldiers from 502nd Eng. Co. ferried heavy equipment, to include dump trucks loaded with lime for use in making a landing, from Fire Base Dragon to the west bank of the Euphrates River.



An explosives-finding Marine working dog, with handler, assisted in ensuring security during Operation Marne Courageous Nov. 16.



Sgt. Kevin Stabinsky

Above: Second Lt. Kim Landry, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga., 1st Lt. Brittany Britton and 1st Lt. Kate Wardlow, both Company A, 4 BTB, 4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., celebrate together as they rush toward the finish line on the FOB Kalsu Thanksgiving Turkey Trot 5K run.
 Below: Col. Dan Ball (left), commander, Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, and Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley, 3rd CAB, carve the Thanksgiving turkey at 3rd CAB's flight line dining facility.

A TASK FORCE



Sgt. 1st Class Jason Brown, from Macon, Ga., NCO in charge of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team's fire support element, says grace with Sgt. Steve McKissock, from Boca Raton, Fla., 3rd HBCT FSE,



Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Mills

Marne Soldiers celebrate

MND-C PAO

BAGHDAD — Whether deployed overseas or celebrating Thanksgiving in the traditions of the holiday stateside, Task Force Marne families can rest assured that their deployed Soldier received the same first-rate attention with a holiday feast and all the trimmings in areas in and around Baghdad.

On Nov. 22, TF Marne dining facilities served a warm holiday meal to the courageous men and women who defend freedom all around Multi-National Division - Center.

"For the last four to five months, Soldiers and contractors spent many hours planning and preparing that special item for this special event in support of all Coalition Soldiers," said Master Sgt. Anthony Brown, MND-C Food Service Sergeant Major.

Serving more than 20,000 TF Marne troops in over eight dining facilities across MND-C, the planning for the holiday meal begins months in advance and calls on the specialized talents of every food service staff member.

On Thanksgiving Day, TF Marne served approximately:
 • 8,300 pounds of turkey thighs



John Cordes

Soldiers from 214th Fires Brigade verify their weapons' accuracy at a FOB Delta range Nov. 22.

MARNE THANKSGIVING



Spc. Ben Hutto



Sgt. Luis Delgadillo



Sgt. Luis Delgadillo

Above: Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, Multi-National Division – Center commander, speaks with Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Iskandiriyah, during a Thanksgiving Day visit. Left: Col. Tom James, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Inf. Div., carries a container of Thanksgiving chow to Soldiers of military transition team 840, in Husayniyah, near Karbala, Nov. 22. James joined Col. Michael Garret, commander of the 4th BCT, 25th Inf., Div., a visit to Soldiers of their respective BCTs.

before they eat Thanksgiving dinner at the Hammer Dining Facility Nov. 22 at FOB Hammer. "If home is where you hang your hat, then this is home, and these guys are my family," Brown said.

holiday away from home

- 6,800 pounds of turkey breast
- 6,500 pounds of rib eye steaks
- 6,500 pounds of shrimp
- 3,700 pounds of ham
- 150 cases of cranberry sauce
- 145 cases of stuffing
- 300 cases of eggnog
- 9,500 pies
- 600 cakes

While menu items vary from site to site, all dining facilities had an array of assorted traditional selections that included various fresh fruits, salads, vegetable dishes and homemade baked goods.

Food service staffs across the TF Marne region applied their talents to create decorations using

custom-made sugar-cube sculptures, ice carvings, intricately carved melons, decorated turkeys, and gingerbread house villages.

Special lighting and ornamental displays were created to present a festive and celebratory appearance in the spirit of the season.

"Most think of Thanksgiving as decorations and tasty foods," Brown said. "Task Force Marne food service personnel, KBR and GCC (Gulf Catering Company) think of Thanksgiving by supporting and giving the best possible meal one could ask for away from home."



Staff Sgt. Nicholas Minecci

TF Marne Soldiers enjoy their Thanksgiving dinner at the Marne DFAC on Camp Victory.



Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Mills

Sgt. Matthew Light checks the radios in a Black Hawk Nov. 29.

Flight line electricians use skills to work 'outside the box'

SGT. 1ST CLASS THOMAS MILLS
3rd CAB, 3rd Inf. Div.

CAMP STRIKER — Called "black boxes" by some, many electronic components in the newest versions of the Chinook and Black Hawk helicopters are compartmentalized, making it easier to pull a broken component from the aircraft, put it on a bench and fix it, then reinstall the component.

In this precision world of electronic components, though, there are still those who need to go through the old fashioned process of troubleshooting and hands-on repair of electrical parts.

For that kind of work the Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division turns to the aircraft electricians.

"Any time we get any write-ups, faults, on the aircraft we troubleshoot it then fix it," said Spc. Michael Overman, an aircraft electrician, Co. B, 603rd Aviation Support Battalion. Overman, a Mesa, Az. native, is with the flight line section of the avionics shop.

Working out of a small trailer mounted conex in the 3rd CAB flight line maintenance hangar, the aircraft electricians in the flight line section spend most

of their time outside in aircraft, rather than in the conex doing "bench work," testing and repairing the components.

"We do a little work in our shop, but not too much bench work," said Overman. "I don't like working on little tiny boxes. On them or in them."

The flight line electricians work on the helicopters in phase maintenance, where the aircraft are inspected on a periodic basis and parts that are past their shelf life or in disrepair are replaced, said Sgt. Matthew Light, team leader and aircraft electrician with Co. B. They also take care of work orders for any kind of electrical problems on Chinooks and Black Hawks. The flight line electricians will pull the part off the aircraft and take it in for repairs.

"We'll take it to the bench guys," said Light, from Waldoboro, Maine. "They'll fix it, then we'll put it back in the aircraft and make sure it works."

Making sure it works consists of powering up the aircraft, checking all the lights and ensuring the part does what it's supposed to do. If it doesn't work, the electricians have to find out why, which is one of the reasons they enjoy

their job, said Overman.

Both Overman and Light got into aircraft electronics because of the future possibilities.

Light came from a long line of electricians in his family, and he knows from his father's experience as an electrician that it pays well on the outside. He joined the Army, though, not to be just any average electrician.

"I wanted the challenge and I wanted to be in aviation," he said.

Overman, on the other hand, was given a choice — field artillery or aircraft electrician. The choice was easy for him to make, he said. "It sounded like it had a future to it."

Overman and Light both said working on the aircraft, troubleshooting problems and figuring out how to make things work correctly, is more challenging than sitting in a shop slaving over a bench.

Just being outside is a bonus, too. Rain or shine, heat or cold, Overman said he preferred working outside on the birds.

"Any time of year for me I'd rather be on the aircraft, personally," he said. "It's more of a group thing out on the bird, too. I like that."

Hammer Soldiers flock to FOB's new PX

SGT. NATALIE ROSTEK
3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div.

FOB HAMMER — Soldiers of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat team stood in line Dec. 1 awaiting the opening of the new Post Exchange at FOB Hammer.

The doors were decorated with balloons and streamers. A colorful cake and sparkling grape juice sat on a table next to the ribbon stretched across the threshold.

Managers and sales associates of the Army and Air Force Exchange Service lined the doors awaiting the final moment when the ribbon would be cut and the first patrons shopped in their store.

AAFES of Baghdad General Manager Paula Gunderson spoke first, thanking everyone who was involved in making the grand opening possible.

"We couldn't have done this without the help of Lt. Col. Kelly Lawler, 1st Lt. John Enfinger, the wonderful AAFES staff, the Expeditionary Red Horse Squadron (Air Force engineers), and everyone who was involved in making this PX possible," she said.

3rd HBCT Commander Col. Wayne W. Grigsby, Jr., from Prince George's County, Md., said he was

amazed at how FOB Hammer has changed since the brigade first arrived to the FOB early March.

April 13, FOB Hammer celebrated the grand opening of its first PX: two single-wide trailers setting end to end.

Soldiers would enter one end of the first trailer, make their way down the aisle, and pick up items on the way to the checkout counter at the opposite end.

"A PX like this builds combat power," Grigsby said. "Soldiers can come off of a mission and have some normalcy. They can come here, get what they need and go back to their tents to rest and relax. Then they are ready for another combat patrol. Sledgehammer Soldiers deserve this. They deserve the best for what they have done."

After the ribbon was cut, 20 at a time, Soldiers piled into the now-open doors.

"I'm very excited about this new PX," said Spc. Josh Mims, from Cleveland, Ohio, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery. "The old PX trailer barely held anything. It was small. This place has a lot more supplies. If I need something, I'm pretty sure I can find it here."

The new PX is open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week.

Training as a team



Sgt. 1st Class Stacy Niles

A 9th Cuscatlan Battalion, El Salvador, soldier initiates an intravenous fluid drip during a night-time quick reaction force exercise at Forward Operating Base Delta Nov. 29. The exercises are done to refine and cement relations between the El Salvadoran and Georgian soldiers.



Pfc. Amanada McBride

Vanguard Soldiers salute during the playing of the national anthem at the TOA ceremony Dec. 1. At right, Col. Thomas James and Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Torres uncasing the unit colors.



TOA: Vanguard Brigade takes over for Paratroopers

From Page 1

the Saudi Arabian border.

During the ceremony, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, commanding general of Multi-National Division – Center, showed appreciation for the dedication that the Spartan Brigade showed during their tour in Iraq.

“Today we celebrate one of the most magnificent brigade combat teams in the United States Army,” Lynch said. “The 4th Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division led from the front and achieved measurable success over the last 15 months.

“As I go back to the battlefield, I look in AO Spartan, it’s amazing to me (to see) the progress.

“You can walk through the streets of Jurf as Sahkr wearing a patrol cap and seeing 48 shops open; you can go to JSS Iskan in Hasawa and see the magnificent

progress being made.”

The TOA marks the official start of the Vanguard Brigade mission in Iraq. It is also the start of the brigade’s second deployment in the support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“We are honored to join Task Force Marne, the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraqi people in their efforts to secure their homeland,” said Col. Thomas James, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

Prior to the TOA, individual Soldiers in the Vanguard Brigade had the opportunity to transition with their counterparts from the Spartan Brigade to ensure the overall transition from one unit to the next went smoothly.

The ceremony was marked by the traditional uncasing of the colors by Soldiers from the Vanguard and Spartan Brigades.

VARSITY: New Hammer Brigade offensive ops lead to capture of high-value target

From Page 1

ing for the suspects.

“The operation went perfectly,” said Spc. Lyle Johnson, from Comanche, Okla., an indirect fire specialist in Co. B. “We cleared all of our objectives and got the No. 1 HVI and 12 of his partners. We did all of this without firing a shot, so I’d say it was a good operation.”

Col. Dan Ball, commander, Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division said the capture, while important to Coalition Forces, is a significant event for Iraqis.

Ball said the al-Qaeda leader had no problem setting out improvised explosive devices that kill innocent people, making him a menace to women and children.

Capturing al-Qaeda leaders means Iraqis are more likely to go out to the markets, which in turn will help the economy, he explained.

“I think in the bigger scheme of things what we’re doing by taking these (insurgent leaders) off the street is providing a more safe and secure environment to allow the government and economy to recover,” Ball said.

VALOR: Spartan NCO comes to battle buddies’ rescue

From Page 1

and insurgent resources.

Pfc. John Elliot, the driver for the lead vehicle, pulled his vehicle up to a fork in the road.

“I knew there was an improvised explosive device on the right, so I turned left,” Elliot, from Bloomington, Minn., recalled.

Unfortunately, he was in a no-win situation, and his vehicle rolled over an IED driving down the road.

The next thing Elliot remembered was feeling the wind sucked out of him and not being able to feel his right leg below the knee.

While Elliot laid in pain, his fellow teammates, including Trump and Staff Sgt. Mountain Robicheau, took action. Robicheau directed vehicle recovery operations and Trump ran up to the hatch and pulled Elliot from his position.

In addition to keeping his wits and combat skills about him, Trump also managed to keep his sense of humor.

“The first thing he said to me was ‘You got yourself 35 promotion points’ (for a Purple Heart),” Elliot said.

Trump, who said the only thing he was thinking about was the condition of his fellow Soldiers, pulled Elliot from the driver seat and to a safer location.

Placing Elliot in a safer area, he began basic first aid on Elliot’s wounds, which included a six-inch laceration on his foot, a broken heel and multiple sprains in his ankle.

While he worked on Elliot, the rest of the Bradley team worked to maneuver a

second Bradley to recover the downed vehicle. Leading the efforts was Robicheau, a Whitneyville, Maine, native.

As the second vehicle moved into place, things turned even more chaotic.

Like the vehicle it was attempting to recover, the second Bradley set off another IED.

The blast, which injured several Soldiers in the Bradley, threw Robicheau 10 feet in the air, causing him to land hard on the ground.

Although he said he was able to get back on his feet, Robicheau was unable to walk due to injuries which included torn ligaments in his ankle and a broken nose.

Trump was outside the blast area treating Elliot, but immediately set to work rescuing the latest casualties.

He rushed to Robicheau’s aid, despite the threat of additional IEDs, Trump grabbed his team leader and carried him to safety.

“If you’re in a bad situation, you want someone to come and help you,” Robicheau said. “He did that.”

After a quick assessment, Trump saw there were more seriously injured Soldiers, left Robicheau and began evacuating Soldiers trapped in the second Bradley, pulling two of the more seriously wounded out to safety.

“I kind of just put myself in their place,” Trump said.

Overall, nine Soldiers were injured. Two were evacuated to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., four were ground evacuated to combat support hospitals in Iraq, and the other three were treated by local medics and doctors.



Sgt. Kevin Stabinsky

Col. Terry Ferrell, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division commander, shakes hands with Sgt. Michael Trump Nov. 22 at Patrol Base Murray.

Had it not been for the actions of Trump, the incident could have been much worse, Elliot and Robicheau agreed.

“He definitely went above what he had to do,” Elliot said. “He took a medic’s position. He’s definitely one of a kind.”

Trump doesn’t see himself as different than the rest of his team.

“We’ve been training together since last summer, working together for over a year. We’re a pretty tight crew, more like a family,” Trump said.

Like family members, Trump said he feels that any of his fellow 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. Soldiers, with whom he serves would be willing to step up and deliver help if needed.

Trump, who has since been moved from a gunner’s position to a team leader in 2nd platoon, said he hopes his example inspires his own Soldiers whom he now leads.

“During a time when help is needed, you can stand up,” he said. “Even in harsh conditions, you can still perform admirably.”



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy

An Iraqi woman reassures her son as Dr. (Maj.) Angela Uy, a pediatrician with 626th BSB, and Fawzia, a local surgical nurse, examine him Nov. 30 at a coordinated medical engagement in Iraqi Family Village. At right, 1st Sgt. Lucien Rice, Co. C, 626th BSB, talks to an Iraqi girl waiting in line for medication at the clinic.



Rakkasans put Iraqi face on medical care

SGT. 1ST CLASS KERENSA HARDY
3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT)

CAMP STRIKER — More than 800 Iraqis received medical care during a coordinated medical engagement Nov. 30 in Iraqi Family Village, northeast of Camp Victory, where healthcare is virtually non-existent.

Twenty-five Iraqi and two American providers saw 820 patients ranging in age from several weeks to nearly 80 years old with symptoms varying from the common cold and dermatological issues to chronic issues like asthma.

Task Force Vigilant, the base-defense unit for Camp Victory, was responsible for the overall planning, preparation and execution of the CME since the Iraqi Family Village falls within its operational environment. The Iraqi Family Village has about 8,000 residents, many of whom moved into the area after the fall of the regime in 2003.

Members of the Rakkasans from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) played a role by providing security for all medical operations and medical personnel from Company C, 626th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT).

Team Rak, short for Rakkasan, is an element of TF Vigilant and had 15 Soldiers involved in the CME.

This is the third such event for TF Vigilant in a three-month period, although it is the first mission in which the Rakkasans participated. The task force's stated goal was two-fold: to provide much-needed medical care for the village residents and to promote the

ability of Iraqi leaders to provide for the needs of Iraqis.

Consequently, the residents of the village will have confidence in their town council's ability to coordinate medical undertakings in the future.

The medical engagement was another endeavor to put an Iraqi face on healthcare in the area according to Capt. Alex Montgomery, primary planner for Co. C, 626th BSB, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), which provided dental and medical personnel, supplies and logistical support for the event. It also gave the unit a chance to provide one-on-one medical training with local residents and Iraqi Army doctors.

"Because there is no (medical) facility in the area we wanted to get healthcare and pharmaceuticals to many local nationals who, due to economic issues, don't have a way or financial means to get healthcare and medication for themselves and their children," Montgomery explained.

Task Force 62, a medical brigade formed approximately three months ago, provided two Iraqi-born American doctors who have Iraqi credentials to practice medicine. Several local medical personnel from the Baghdad International Airport Medical Clinic rendered services as well.

Supporting the return to normalcy, TF 62 attempts to add momentum to the medical infrastructure by gathering information about the condition of medical care and clinics, said John Mitchell, military analyst and licensed physician's assistant with TF 62.

"We go out here with cooperative engagements and provide medical care

and get information from the patients as to what kind of care they're getting, how often they get to be seen and how hard it is to be seen and the status of medical care in their communities," Mitchell said. That information is then forwarded to the command of a certain area as a snapshot of what services are necessary in that area of operations.

Ultimately, Mitchell said the goal is to develop clinics and a level of healthcare that will be sustainable once Coalition Forces have left the region.

As an additional push to put Iraqis in the forefront, there is a company within TF 62 that offers Iraqis daily fees to practice medicine at CMEs.

"Part of the return to normalcy is getting Iraqi medical practitioners to return to the area," Mitchell said, adding that some are returning slowly.

While the current state of medical care in many areas of Iraq is bleak and has a long way to go, improvement is on the horizon.

"Our objective of strengthening the villagers' trust in local council and the Government of Iraq, as well as providing much-needed medical care for the community has been achieved," said Capt. Martrell Gamble, Team Rak commander. "Team Rak was able to do our small part of what will be a continuous effort of providing assistance in improving the legitimacy of the GoI and the Iraqi Security Forces while improving the residents' perception of U.S. forces and advocates of human rights.

"We were glad we were able to participate and are looking forward to the next opportunity to provide support to the citizens," Gamble said.



Capt. Alex Montgomery, primary planner for Co. C, 626th BSB, weighs one of the children who came to the coordinated medical engagement at Iraqi Family Village Nov. 30.





Sgt. Kevin Stabinsky

Spc. Nicole Ellis is baptized by Chap. (Capt.) Javon Seaborn Nov. 24.

A 'promotion in Christ'

Spartan Brigade holds baptismal ceremony at Kalsu

SGT. KEVIN STABINSKY
2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.

FOB KALSU — At the Forward Operating Base Kalsu chapel four Soldiers in the Marne Division became Soldiers for God after a baptismal ceremony Nov. 24.

"It's like a promotion, but a promotion in Christ," said Staff Sgt. Laticia Washington, 26th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

Washington attended to see two of her fellow 26th BSB Soldiers, Pvt. Alesha Williamson and Spc. Nicole Ellis, take the plunge into the baptismal font.

Williamson, in the auto section at Company B, said she made the choice after she noticed her faith in God waning.

She said she began to stray away from God and tried to figure things out on her own.

Like her friend Williamson, Ellis, Co. B orderly room clerk, said she also was experiencing doubts in her faith, believing she may have lost it.

Both said the deployment and accompanying strains made them realize they needed a stronger power than themselves.

"The stress, strain of deployment brought me closer to God," Williamson said. "Over here your faith is tried more often and you need to move closer to God rather than away."

Helping Ellis get closer to God were fellow Soldiers in her unit. Talks with her squad leader about the difficulties she was

facing, mainly from leaving her children behind and the strain of deployment on her marriage, led her to begin attending church services on Kalsu.

The fellowship shared within the chapel helped the two become revitalized in their faith.

Just as they went to church together, the two decided to take the next step and become baptized.

"We thought we should do it together," said Ellis, who said it was good to have someone share the experience with her.

In front of several of their peers, the two were baptized by 26th BSB chaplain, Capt. Javon Seaborn.

Christian baptism is a significant event especially in a combat zone, Seaborn said. Though physically it may not change the person, theologically it tells the church community that there is an inward change, he explained.

One thing that won't change is their commitment to the church here.

Both Williamson and Ellis plan to continue this walk by attending church and the weekly women's bible study program.

The event, which also saw the baptism of Sgt. 1st Class Robert Hinkle, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, S3 plans and operations, 4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., and Spc. Heron Seaford, Company G, 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., was collectively planned by Seaborn and chaplains in the 4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.

Photo Contest Winner: Maj. Maria Coats



"This photo was taken during a Cooperative Medical Engagement. This Iraqi baby was so happy with me that his dad had to wait until the baby was no longer awake to take him away from my arms. This was a special day for me full of good feelings, feeling close to God and my grandkids. Of all my photos taken in Iraq, this is my favorite and I pray for all but especially for this baby." Coats is the 3rd Civil Affairs Battalion Public Health officer-in-charge, attached to 3rd Infantry Division.

Photo Contest Get Published!



Want to be famous?

Email your best photo to the editor: michael.connors@iraq.centcom.mil. A photo will be chosen for the next edition of the *Marne Focus*. Include your rank, full name, job title, unit, photo date and a brief caption with rank, full name, job title and unit of each Soldier in the photo.

PVT MURPHY'S LAW



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ATC

CAB controllers keep sky traffic in check

Pfc. MONICA K. SMITH
3rd CAB, 3rd Inf. Div.

CAMP STRIKER — There can never be too many eyes to ensure the safety of Soldiers. This is particularly true in the case of pilots and their crew who must continually be aware of what is ahead of them, behind them, to the right, to the left, in addition to what may be flying above or below them.

The sole purpose of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment is air traffic control. Their mission is to control the routes of aircraft coming in and out of air space and on the flight line to ensure safety.

Falcon Ground, located at the Combat Aviation Brigade flight line, monitors aircraft leaving and returning from flights and missions. As the helicopters taxi toward the take off/landing pads, pilots need to know what vehicles may be coming or what other aircraft may be landing.

“We control the patterns of the aircraft,” said Spc. Robert Smith, F Co., 2-3 Avn who works at Falcon Ground. “Because of the walls they can’t see each other so we tell them where to go. We move them in and out.”

The towers have windows surrounding them at all 360-degrees.

The set-up allows the traffic controllers the ability to see any air or ground traffic or obstacles the aircraft may encounter during take-off and landing.

The controllers are then able to reroute the aircraft to prevent potential injuries to Soldiers or damage to aircraft and to cut down on time wasted.

At the Liberty Tower, members of F Co. 2-3 Avn., provide safe, orderly, expeditious flow of traffic for the eight landing pads they are respon-



Pfc. Monica Smith

Spc. David Burress advises Black Hawks from the Liberty ATC tower prior to take-off.

sible for, said Spc. Melvin Kizzee.

“We separate aircraft to prevent midair collisions,” Kizzee said. “We report traffic, reroute aircraft to avoid traffic, issue advisories, issue clearances for take-off and landing, advise them on closed zones — which is airspace they can’t fly through because of different operations, we advise them on known airport conditions — it’s a lot of things.”

The pilots contact the tower prior to entering that tower’s airspace, usually two to three miles, Kizzee said.

It is then the traffic controllers ensure the airspace is clear. If the airspace is not clear, the air traffic controllers radio the pilots to advise them

on how to safely enter the airspace and land the aircraft. Pilots could depend on their own eyesight or try and talk to other aircraft as they fly, however, with so many landing pads and the numerous units who use helicopters clear communication is lost, said Spc. David Burress, F Co., 2-3 Avn.

“You get eight helicopters flying with all of them trying to talk to one another — it makes a lot of ruckus,” said Burress. “It get’s hectic so instead of trying to talk to each other, they use our frequency and talk to us.”

At Forward Operating Base Kalsu, the air traffic controllers have additional safety precautions they take to ensure the safety of the pilots and the crews of incoming and outgoing aircraft.

“We de-conflict traffic, let pilots know about weather changes, about fire missions, like when we fire out, we monitor the (unmanned aerial vehicles) and handle (medical evacuations),” said Spc. Jennifer Hicks, F Co., 2-3 Avn. “We make sure the MEDEVACS get priority and let the other aircraft know when they’re going.”

Because of the amount of incoming fire FOB Kalsu receives, the FOB is on a blackout at night. Whereas other military complexes have street lights or lights on the flight line, the entire FOB is dark at night which poses an additional challenge for the air traffic controllers.

“The blackout makes it more difficult to see the aircraft,” said Spc. Christina Martinez. “We have (night vision goggles) and we have everyone looking for the aircraft and are always getting position reports. Every few minutes we’ll check back with the aircraft if we still don’t see them and ask, ‘hey, where are you at?’”

The combined efforts of various towers act to further protect the Soldiers who fly during the day and night, said Smith. “They tell us what they want to do and we tell them how to do it safely.”