

# IRON STRONG DAILY



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## Task Force Iron Soldiers compete

**Story and photo by  
Spc. Ryan Elliott  
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Fifty-four Soldiers from across Task Force Iron gathered on Contingency Operating Base Speicher to take part in a three day Multi-National Division North Warrior Competition.

The Warrior Competition pulled together the best Soldiers Task Force Iron had to offer.

“We’ve asked each Multi-National Division North Brigade and Battalion, to provide their best NCO as well as their best soldier to compete in a round-robin competition, said Sgt. Maj. Allen Ashton, First Armored Division Master Gunner and Operations sergeant major.

The main goal of the competition was to crown the best non-commissioned officer and the best junior troop of MND-North.

“The NCOs represent the strong, competent, caring and engaged leaders who challenge their Soldiers to develop and meet their fullest potential,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Roger Blackwood, 1st Armored Division and Multi National Division-North command sergeant major

“This competition is a representation of the troops training readiness and their mission readiness, the competition is a measurement of the excellence these individual soldiers and units have maintained,” Ashton said.

The Warrior Competition consisted of seven individual stations

designed to test the physical fitness as well as the mental dexterity of each of the Iron Soldiers.

Fifty-four soldiers pulled pushed and sweated as they took part in events such as an Army physical fitness test, a three mile combat run in full gear and various ranges.

“They’ve completed a physically challenging and grueling regiment of tasks over the past three days; they’ve done physical events like the range and tested their knowledge on a written test and board, while maintaining exceptionally high moral,” Ashton said.

“The Soldiers are highly motivated, physically fit and well trained in their Warrior Task and Drills,” said Blackwood.

The competition was designed to test soldier’s basic soldiering skill and determine their proficiency.

“This competition recognizes the strength of units. It features the small unit leaders, and the Soldiers conducting operations daily to create a secure environment for Iraq’s citizens,” said Blackwood.

Staff Sgt. Aldo Mercado of the 728th MP Battalion took first place among the NCOs, followed by Sgt Christopher Nelson, 3-3 Armored Cavalry Regiment and Sgt Zackary Bumanglag, 18th Engineer, who placed third place.

Spc. Micheal Pravalenko of the 728th MPs took first place among the junior enlisted, followed by Spc. David Walker Special Troops Battalion, 101st in second place and Spc. Derrick Ckeighton, 3-3 Armored Cavalry Regiment, who took third place.

All the Soldiers who have competed in this three day competition have performed excellently and their units should take a lot of pride in them,” said Ashton.



**Soldiers put rounds down range as part of the Multi-National Division North Soldier Competition, which took place on Contingency Operating Base Speicher. The range tested the Soldier’s accuracy.**

# Oktoberfest Feast



**(ABOVE) The Main Dining Facility on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, celebrates Oktoberfest with a feast. The dining facility cooked a wide variety of traditional German delicacies for hungry Task Force Iron Soldiers.**

**(LEFT) A buffet consisting of a wide variety of traditional German foods was served in the overflow room of the Main Dining Facility on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, in celebration of Oktoberfest.**

*Photos by Spc. Ryan Elliott, 14th PAD*

## Former MLB boost Dragoon morale

**Story and photos by  
Spc. Opal Vaughn  
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Former major league baseball players Andy Ashby, of the San Diego Padres, Sterling Hitchcock, of the New York Yankees and Dean Palmer, of the Detroit Tigers, hung out with 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment Soldiers during the 2008

Heroes of the Diamond Tour™ while at the dining facility at Forward Operating Base Warhorse located in Diyala, Iraq.

The tour began September 19 with the three former major league baseball players making several appearances at bases across Iraq and is scheduled to conclude September 30.

Previous tour participants have included: Rob Dibble, Tim Salmon,

Goose Gossage, Jack McDowell, Jeff Nelson, Mike Remlinger and Turk Wendell.

Even though Ashby, Hitchcock and Palmer have been out of the media spotlight for some time now, Soldiers still lined up in the dining facility to meet and greet the former major league baseball players.

“The response we’ve received

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from the Soldiers has just been so overwhelming,” said Ashby. “I never thought that being over here in Iraq would not only have an impact on the Soldiers, but me as well. Being able to really see what Iraq is all about is totally incredible.”

As a former professional baseball pitcher, Ashby is thankful for what baseball has brought him.

“I’ve been blessed because of baseball and I would like to take that and give it back in any way that I can. The lord has blessed me with a lot of gifts and when you can give something back, that is something to be proud of,” Ashby stated.

“For all of you who are serving and fighting for our country, I thank you,” Ashby continued. “And I would particularly like to thank you for allowing us to partake in a part of your daily lives. It has been an honor.”

Being on the Heroes of the Diamond Tour™ has been a different experience for each of the players. But the enthusiasm of the tour is still mutual.

“This tour has been amazing,” said Hitchcock. “It’s been incredible to see what you guys do here in Iraq



**Former major league baseball players Andy Ashby, of the San Diego Padres, Sterling Hitchcock, of the New York Yankees and Dean Palmer, of the Detroit Tigers, sign souvenirs and chat with 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment Soldiers during the 2008 Heroes of the Diamond Tour™ while at the dining facility at Forward Operating Base Warhorse located in Diyala, Iraq. The tour focuses on increasing morale and showing support for deployed Soldiers.**

on the frontlines as well as around the different bases. I come from a family of service where my father was in the Air Force and served in Nam, and my older brother is currently in the Navy and has served several tours in Iraq.”

So far the tour has included signing autographs, taking pictures and hanging out with servicemembers at different bases. Being able to sit down and eat dinner with 2SCR Soldiers was also a highlight of the evening.

Coming from a military family background, Hitchcock could not thank the Soldiers enough. “We appreciate you guys being over here,” stated Hitchcock, also a former professional baseball pitcher. “I know Soldiers don’t hear that enough, but we really do.”

“You’re over here with a difficult mission but the great nation that we are and the freedoms that we enjoy at home, you guys are helping to bring to the Iraqi people,” Hitchcock added. “You’re helping to bring a country out from under oppression and embrace a new found freedom. I have a deep, deep respect for each and every one of you.”

Spreading the word to support the troops has become something that former third baseman, Palmer, is passionate about. His first tour included a visit to Afghanistan and now he is touring Iraq.

“I’ve been able to see what troops do on a day to day basis and experience a little bit of their lives while on tour of Iraq,” Palmer stated. “The biggest thing for me is to be able to take what I have seen and experienced back with me to the states.”

“It has been great for me to just talk about whatever with the Soldiers and to hang out with you guys,” Palmer added. “There have been a lot of baseball fans I’ve been able to talk with and who have thanked me for supporting them. Unfortunately, it is I who must thank you guys for everything that you’re doing over here.

“It has been wonderful hanging out with you guys,” Palmer stated.

Ashby, Hitchcock and Palmer ended the evening by giving out some baseball pins and a couple of jerseys to the Soldiers. Afterwards they ate dinner with some of the Soldiers and thanked them for having dinner with them.



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## PAUL NEWMAN

(AP) Paul Newman couldn't have existed today — at least, not the way we came to know him.

Sure, the talent would have been there, the classic good looks, the magnetism, the easy charm. But the privacy he demanded (and won), which helped establish and solidify his mystique as a bona fide movie star, never would have been afforded him in our tabloid-driven, celebrity-obsessed culture.

Sad but true. Part of why we were fascinated with Newman, who died Friday at 83 of cancer, was because we didn't know every gory detail of his life, even though he'd reached the zenith of fame and popularity. He left us craving more — and that he lived and died far from Hollywood's glare in the small town of Westport, Conn., in the converted farmhouse he shared with his wife of 50 years, Joanne Woodward, speaks volumes not only about who he was but who he didn't want to be.

It's hard to think of an actor today who compares in that regard: someone who's blazingly confident on-screen but maintains some mystery about who he really is off of it, someone who would make even hardened, cynical journalists go weak in the knees upon meeting face-to-face. Newman's longtime friend and co-star, Robert Redford, certainly qualifies. But of the current generation of stars? We know too much about Tom Cruise. Will Smith? Leonardo DiCaprio? Johnny Depp, maybe — though he's carved out a path of quirky character roles, despite his leading-man looks.

George Clooney springs to mind, but even he has fought public battles with the paparazzi over the need to respect celebrities' privacy. Clooney himself seemed to recognize the legacy Newman left in reacting to his death Saturday morning: "He set the bar too high for the rest of us ... not just actors, but all of us. He will be greatly missed," he said — through his publicist.

Larger than life? Sure. But looking back at Newman's career, which encompassed nearly 60

feature films over the past half-century, it's the range that leaves an impression. You never forgot you were watching Paul Newman. He was a superstar, after all. He was the draw. But he could fit into a wide variety of parts — unlike some other actors with longevity and stature, who shall remain nameless for these purposes, who have devolved into caricatures of themselves as they've aged.

In just a sampling, Newman played:

- A washed-up football player in Tennessee Williams' "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (1958).
- Pool shark "Fast Eddie" Felson in "The Hustler" (1961), the role he would reprise in "The Color of Money" (1986), which, surprisingly, earned him his only Academy Award in 10 nominations.
- A bad-boy cowboy in "Hud" (1963).
- A rebellious prisoner in "Cool Hand Luke" (1967).
- A train robber alongside Redford, iconically, in "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" (1969).
- The player-coach of a small-town hockey team in the comedy cult favorite "Slap Shot" (1977).
- A wrongly accused suspect in a rare film that gets journalism right, "Absence of Malice" (1981).
- A cantankerous grandfather in "Nobody's Fool" (1994).
- A formidable mob boss in "Road to Perdition" (2002).

Newman came up in the Method-acting tradition, a la Brando, but there was never anything obviously studied about him; he made the swagger look natural. And his evolution over the years — from young and dangerous to middle-aged and struggling to older and wiser — constantly carried with it the aura of dignity.

"His powerful eloquence, his consummate sense of craft, so consummate that you didn't see any sense of effort up there on the screen, set a new standard,"

said Martin Scorsese, who directed him in "The Color of Money."

Newman himself didn't enjoy talking about acting, and could come off as a bit distant in interviews when asked about it. He did offer some insight to his motivation, however, in 2002:

"I used to make three pictures a year, and now I make a picture every three years. Things change. There have been a lot of good things out there, but they weren't the kind of pictures that I wanted to make. I didn't want to do pictures about explosions. I don't want to do pictures about shattered glass and broken bodies and blood. That just doesn't interest me."

Of course, we came to understand what interested him through his off-camera pursuits later in life. His passion came shining through in his love of, and talent for, auto racing. But it's through his philanthropy — the Newman's Own Foundation, which has raised more than \$250 million for charities worldwide, and the Hole in the Wall Camps for children with life-threatening diseases — that he showed his true heart.

Maybe Paul Newman wasn't so hard to figure out after all.



## FOOTBALL



**(Reuters)** The Washington Redskins ousted the Dallas Cowboys from the unbeaten ranks with a 26-24 upset victory Sunday.

Jason Campbell passed for two touchdowns and Shaun Suisham kicked four field goals as the Redskins (3-1) ended a three-game winning streak for the Cowboys (3-1).

The victory was only the second for Washington in Dallas in 13 years.

"To come down here in a rivalry game like this and everything, it just means a lot," Campbell told reporters.

Clinton Portis contributed 121 yards rushing, more than the total managed by the Cowboys who finished with 44 yards to the Redskins' 161.

Suisham broke a 17-17 tie with a 33-yard field goal midway the third quarter, his second of the game, and added field goals of 33 and 29 yards

in the fourth.

Tony Romo rallied Dallas to within two points with his third touchdown 1:42 from time and the Cowboys tried an onside kick. The ball bounced off the hands of Dallas's Sam Hurd and went out of bounds before Washington ran out the clock for the victory.

Romo's 10-yard touchdown pass to Terrell Owens early in the third quarter tied the scores at 17-17 before Suisham kicked three successive field goals.

Owens, who had seven catches for 71 yards, said the Cowboys should have used him more often.

"Everybody recognized that I wasn't really getting the ball in the first half," Owens said. "I'm pretty sure everybody watching the game recognized it, people in the stands recognized it, I think my team recognized it. I didn't quit."

## BASEBALL

**(AP)** Ichiro Suzuki had two hits and scored the decisive run as the Seattle Mariners rallied for a 4-3 victory over the Oakland Athletics on Sunday, ending a pair of forgettable seasons.

The perennial All-Star finished the season tied with Boston's Dustin Pedroia for the most hits in the major leagues at 213. It is the fifth time Suzuki has led the majors in hits. Only Cobb, Rose, Musial and Gwynn have done that.

Suzuki finished the season batting .310, his 15th consecutive season above .300 in Japan and the major leagues.

Reloaded Seattle expected to win the AL West this season, or at least make the playoffs for the first time since 2001. Instead, the Mariners fired their manager and general manager, became the first team with a \$100 million payroll to lose 100 games and endured their worst season (61-101) since losing 102 games in 1983.

The young A's (75-86) finished with their worst record since going 74-88 in 1998. They lost 44 of their last 68 games, after being just four games out of first place on July 11.

The Mariners cut a 3-0 deficit to 3-2 on RBI groundouts by Raul Ibanez in the first and rookie Matt Tuiasosopo

in the second. They took the lead in the fifth with the help of Oakland's Josh Outman, who was making his fourth major league start.

Rookie Luis Valbuena chopped an infield single leading off, then Suzuki hit a comebacker that may have been a double play had Outman not thrown the ball wide of second base and into center field.

Yuniesky Betancourt lined his next pitch into the right-center gap. Center fielder Ryan Sweeney offered to cut off the ball then pulled his glove back, tricking right fielder Travis Buck and allowing the ball to reach the wall for a triple. Valbuena and Suzuki scored to put Seattle up 4-3.

Suzuki preserved the lead in the sixth with a strong throw home from right field on a single by Bobby Crosby, Oakland's third consecutive single. The throw kept Daric Barton at third. Reliever Randy Messenger stranded him there by retiring Jeff Baisley to

end the inning.

J.J. Putz struck out the side in the ninth for his 15th save in 23 chances. He finished with 25 fewer saves than he had last season while becoming an All-Star.

R.A. Dickey (5-8) allowed three runs in the first inning, Buck's first leadoff home run of his career and a two-run double by Chris Denorfia. The knuckleballer later retired 12 in a row to get his first win as a starter since July 31. He allowed six hits, struck out two and walked one in 5 2-3 innings.

Outman (1-2) allowed four runs, three earned, on eight hits in six innings.



## FRANCE

**(AP)** The U.S. Navy was honored Saturday for its key role in the massive amphibious wartime invasion that helped propel the Allies to victory in World War II.

Hundreds of uniformed American sailors and French well-wishers — as well as a few Navy veterans of the war — joined U.S. and French officials on Utah Beach for the inauguration of Normandy's first monument honoring the sacrifices of U.S. sailors in the conflict against Nazi Germany.

The U.S. Navy Monument at Normandy features a 12-foot bronze statue of a Navy captain and two sailors overlooking the beach — where a 5,000-vessel armada landed

on June 6, 1944, and unleashed some 156,000 soldiers, mostly Americans, British and Canadians, in a massive assault known as D-Day.

The statue, with the figures crouching or standing around one another, is meant to portray three phases of the landings: the planning, the launch and the follow-up. One figure holds a mortar shell like those fired during the invasion.

The statue was a project of the Naval Order of the United States, and was designed by Stephen Spears of Fair Hope, Alabama, according to Eric Beaty, an official with the U.S. consulate in the western French city of Rennes.

Casualty estimates for the Allied forces on D-Day vary, but

range from 2,500 to more than 5,000 dead.

A total of 1,068 U.S. sailors died in Normandy or off its shores between June 6 and 10, 1944, Beaty said. Among their main roles were to carry ashore or give cover to the Allied troops storming the beaches.



## SOMALIA



**(AFP)** Somali Islamist insurgents attacked African Union peacekeepers and government forces in the capital Mogadishu, and at least four people were killed in the clashes, witnesses said Monday.

Two civilians and a soldier

died in an attack overnight near the presidential palace, Villa Baidoa, they said.

"Three people, one of them a Somali government soldier, died near Villa Baidoa when two mortar shells struck buildings," said Hamad Ali Ahmed, a witness.

Another civilian died in crossfire in southern Mogadishu's Holwadag district, bringing the death toll to four. At least seven others were wounded, residents said.

Islamist rebels confirmed they first attacked the base hosting African Union, Somali and Ethiopian troops.

"We attacked the bases of Ugandan forces, Ethiopians and the Somali stooges. Five of our men were wounded, but they sustained heavy

casualties," Islamist commander Mohamed Mohamud Dulyadeyn told AFP.

Ethiopian troops intervened to prop up the feeble Somali government at the end of 2006 and eventually drove the Islamists from much of the country's southern and central regions, where they had established Sharia law.

Since then, the Islamists have killed numerous government officials and vowed to fight until the Ethiopians, whom they regard as occupiers, withdraw.

Somalia has lacked a functional government since the 1991 ouster of president Mohamed Siad Barre touched off a bloody power struggle that has defied numerous peace initiatives.

## LEBANON

**(AP)** A car bomb exploded near a military bus carrying troops to work in northern Lebanon on Monday, killing at least five people and wounding at least 21, Lebanese security officials said.

Most of the casualties were soldiers, the officials said.

The officials said the car was booby-trapped and parked on a roadside. The bomb was detonated

by remote control as the military bus drove by at the southern entrance to the northern city of Tripoli.

The explosion happened during morning rush hour, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Local TV showed soldiers sealing off the area and preventing people from approaching. The blast shattered windows in several cars parked in the area.

It was the second bomb attack in less than two months targeting troops in Tripoli, which has been rocked by sectarian fighting between pro-government Sunni fighters and pro-Syrian gunmen.

On Aug. 13, 18 soldiers and civilians were killed by a roadside bomb packed with nuts and bolts near a bus carrying troops in Tripoli. It was Lebanon's deadliest bombing in more than three years.