In the Zone Magazine

OCTOBER 2008 • VOL 1 • ISSUE 1

Rising Star
competition brings out troops' best

Time running out for
Absentee Voters

JASG-C Soldiers earn
Combat Patch

Jersey Blues
take helm of Joint Area Support Group-Central

OKLAHOMA, O.K! - Sgt. 1st Class James Barnett prepares to depart Baghdad's International Zone Oct. 8 as one of the last 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Soldiers to leave Iraq. Photo by 1st Sgt. David Moore, JASG-C Public Affairs.

DEPARTMENTS

LEADERS' LOG 3

CHAPLAIN'S WORD 5

JAG CORNER 15

ANNOUNCEMENTS 19

NEWS

'Jersey Blues' take helm of Joint Area Support Group. 4

Savings Deposit Program available now. 5

IZ Fire Station adds new ladder truck to fleet. 8

Time running out for absentee voters. 9

Iraq's Tourism Ministry seeks investors for project. 13

JASG-C Soldiers receive combat patch. 18

Holiday Mailing Deadlines. 19

FEATURES

New Jersey aviators give fellow Soldiers a lift. 6

IZ Police protect and serve local communities. 10-11

Finance NCO secures future through real estate. 12

IZ Police come to school-house bearing gifts. 14

Rising Star competition brings out troops' best. 16-17

PHOTOGRAPHY

Kuwait experience captured through snapshots. 7

Troops tackle Department of State training. 20

ON THE COVER:

Air Force Staff Sgt. Benjamin Funk, JASG-C Security Forces, right, and and an interpreter question an Iraqi during a dismounted patrol. For story and more photos, see page 10.

Photo by Maj. Jon Powers

In the Zone
Magazine

Produced by the Joint Area Support Group-Central Public Affairs Office

JASG-C Commander:
Col. Steve Ferrari

JASG-C Public Affairs Staff:
Maj. Jon Powers
1st Sgt. David Moore
Sgt. 1st Class Robert Stephenson
Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris
Sgt. Bill Addison

Do you have a story to share? In The Zone welcomes columns, commentaries, articles, letters and photos from readers. Submissions should be sent to shawn.morris@iraq.centcom.mil. Include the author's name, rank, unit, and contact information. In The Zone reserves the right to edit submissions selected for the newsletter. For further information or to reqest to be on our distribution list, e-mail the In The Zone staff or call DSN (318) 239-9529.

In The Zone is published monthly as an electronic news magazine under provisions of AR 360-1, para 3-6 by the Command Directorate's (JASG-C) Command for all military personnel serving in the Operation Iraqi Freedom International Zone. The views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy or the Marine Corps, or the National Guard Bureau.

LEADERS' LOG

'One Team, One Mission'

The 3,000 Soldiers of the 50th IBCT survived the 120+ degree heat and dust storms of Kuwait and are now in Iraq at our various locations across the country. All units have completed their transfer of authority with Oklahoma's 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT). The 45th and 50th will always have a unique bond gained from this experience and we proved there is no language barrier between New Jersey and Oklahoma (we think).

For the 50th IBCT Headquarters, we conducted our transfer of authority on Sept. 27 and have assumed the duties of the Joint Area Support Group – Central (JASG-C) in Baghdad. It's a privilege to command a Joint Headquarters and an honor to work with all the assigned service members and coalition partners. Our mission is to provide support to the U.S. Embassy, Multi-National Force - Iraq and all the tenants located in the International Zone. We look forward to the challenges that lay ahead in this complex environment as we transition the International Zone back to the Government of Iraq.

Day-in and day-out, the members of the JASG-C continue to perform magnificently. Our professional and dedicated Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen show their skill and abilities daily as they accomplish their assigned missions. All should be proud of their accomplishments.

As always, a big thanks to our families, friends, family support groups and Rear Det personnel. Their continued support truly makes all the difference in the world and allows all of us to maintain focus and take care of business. Never forget to say thank you to these great Americans.

Always look out for each other and be safe. One Team, One Mission! Thanks for all you do!

Col. Steve Ferrari
Joint Area Support Group – Central
Commanding

'Trained and ready for success'

The Jersey Blues are here and we are already looking at our first 30 days as a joint service team adding to the history where other Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines have walked before with a mission to provide Iraq a safe and secure environment.

The transformed 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team has Soldiers throughout the country. For more than six months we prepared together for each one of our respective unit's mission. We are trained and ready for success.

We are one team here conducting our mission as the Joint Area Support Group-Central. While our many Soldiers and their respective units bear the battle streamers of World War I, World War II and the Global War on Terrorism, all of our brethren services bear their own legacies from the land, sea and air, as well.

In defining what our legacy will be, it will be defined by our values, actions, and commitment to our mission. While most of us are still new here, I have no doubt each of you will do what is right. Remember, when you are conducting your various missions, our legacy not only affects us, but that of Iraq as well.

We have a massive challenge before us with our jobs. We also know the time is coming where the environment for most of us will change, but since change is imminent we must seek ways to improve, and believe our actions will improve this country.

As you take on the next mission, you may not realize how important that mission is for an immediate impact. But someday, maybe not tomorrow or next year, there will be someone here in this country who will remember you for trying to make life safe for them and their families.

Command Sgt. Maj. David Kenna
Joint Area Support Group – Central
Command Sergeant Major

"We stand manned, equipped and trained to assume the duties of the Joint Area Support Group-Central. We look forward to the challenges that lie ahead in this complex environment as we transition the IZ back to the government of Iraq."

- Col. Steve Ferrari

CHANGING OF THE GUARD
Col. Steven Ferrari, incoming commander of the Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C), above left, hands the guidon to Command Sgt. Maj. David Kenna, incoming JASG-C command sergeant major, during the JASG-C Transfer of Authority ceremony Sept. 27 in the U.S. Embassy Annex in Baghdad, Iraq. Col. Larry Fleishamn, outgoing JASG-C deputy commander, near right, and Command Sgt. Maj. Dean Bridges, outgoing JASG-C command sergeant major, case the 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team colors during the ceremony. The outgoing JASG-C commander is Brig. Gen. Myles Deering.

'Thunderbirds' handoff JASG-C to 'Jersey Blues'

Story by Sgt. Bill Addison
Photos by Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris
JASG-C Public Affairs

Soldiers from Oklahoma and New Jersey lined the palace lounge walls at the U.S. Embassy (provisional) in Baghdad as the 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) "Thunderbirds" turned over command of the Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C) to the 50th IBCT "Jersey Blues" in a transfer-of-authority ceremony Sept. 27.

The members of the 45th IBCT, Oklahoma National Guard, have been deployed to Iraq since February of this year, administering and securing the International Zone.

Marine Maj. Gen. Kenneth Gluek, Multi-National Force Iraq chief of staff, presided over the ceremony and thanked the 45th commander, Brig. Gen. Myles Deering, and his Thunderbirds for their accomplishments during the previous year.

"You have professionally managed and secured this global village and you have guided its inhabitants through some very difficult times, at one point enduring 41 consecutive days of indirect fire attacks. You have vigilantly kept watch and we owe the 45th a debt of gratitude," he said.

Gluek also took the time to

continued on page 9

CHAPLAIN'S WORD

Accomplishing mission together

Chap. (Maj.) Jan Koczera
JASG-C Chaplain

Wow! What changes we have seen over the past month! We've moved from McGregor Range at Fort Bliss, Texas, to Camp Buehring, Kuwait, to Baghdad, Iraq. And there are more changes to come as we move from the embassy!

But the uncertainty of the upcoming move has produced some anxieties in all of us; questions such as where will we live, where will we eat, what will it be like to live there, etc., are all unclear right now.

I want to remind us of an event that happened as the last group of the JASG left Camp Buehring on Sept. 4 to fly to Iraq. Those who were with me on that flight will remember that when two buses came that morning to our tents to carry the troops, there was no baggage truck with them. Faced with waiting for the truck and missing our

departure time, the troops - officers and enlisted - came together as one, forming lines to load the buses with all of the luggage before loading ourselves, packing both our belongings and Soldiers tightly into the buses.

And then we did all in reverse as we unloaded the buses together at the terminal. We made it happen; we made the flight on time and arrived later that day in Baghdad.

The experience taught me a great lesson; when we pitch in together, we can overcome any obstacle.

Remember that lesson today. Now that we're in Baghdad, it is easy to separate, to "do our thing," to lose contact with one another due to the variety and location of our jobs. Thinking of our own uncertainties and issues, we start to feel that "it's all on my shoulders, isn't it awful, no one cares, I'm all alone." And suddenly, life here becomes an insurmountable obstacle.

But when we come together, the insurmountable obstacle becomes tiny. Together, we can get it done. Do your part to make things right and together we'll make the move happen. Don't forget your battle buddy, don't forget that we came into this together, we serve here together and we will return to New Jersey together. And we'll not only take care of ourselves, but we'll accomplish our mission and do our part to serve our country and help make Iraq a better place to live.

Saving Deposit Program available

Maj. John Orzol
JASG-C Human Resources

Soldiers from the 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team now assigned to the Joint Area Support Group-Central have surpassed the 31 days in a designated combat zone, which makes them eligible to contribute into the Saving Deposit Program (SDP).

The SDP is available only to those serving in designated combat zones.

Military members deployed in combat zones, qualified hazardous duty areas, or certain contingency operations may be eligible to deposit all or part of their unallotted pay into a Department of Defense (DoD) savings account up to $10,000 during a single deployment. Interest accrues on the account at an annual rate of 10 percent (per Executive Order 11298) and compounds quarterly.

Although federal income earned in hazardous duty zones is tax-free, interest accrued on earnings deposited into the SDP is taxable. Members can designate the allotment amount in $5 increments and deposits may be discontinued at any time.

Funds can be left in an SDP account indefinitely, however, the account will stop accruing interest 90 days after a member returns from the combat zone. Generally, withdrawals may only be made upon termination of program eligibility.

Flying The Force

New Jersey aviators give troops lift from training to theater

Story and photo by
1st Sgt. David Moore
JASG-C Public Affairs

When 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) Soldiers, now assigned throughout Iraq, needed to get to their assigned war zones, they called on New Jersey Army personnel and helicopter assets of Company A., 2nd-104th Aviation Regiment, which is on active-duty in Kuwait.

"It's nice doing that type of flying into the OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom) theater where these Soldiers are going to be assigned," Capt. Sean M. Roughneen, 104th company commander assigned to Camp Buering, Kuwait, said.

In Kuwait, the 104th's normal air duties include providing U.S. Army Central Command with general officer and VIP aviation support with UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters. However, the movement of several IBCT advance-party Soldiers into places like Camp Bucca, Iraq, provided aviators a new mission that was conducted from late August into September this year.

The aviation organization, basically a new air unit for the New Jersey Army National Guard, was flagged in 2006 and immediately began training for its OIF mission in Kuwait. When not deployed, aviators and crews are normally training at the Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Center, N.J.

Some of the New Jersey Army organizations that used these Army air assets to move into Iraq from Kuwait included 2nd-113th Infantry, 102nd Cav., and F Company of the 250th Brigade Support Bn.

Most of the aviators each took a turn with the mission of moving Garden State Soldiers into the combat zone and appreciated getting the support mission.

"Flying these Soldiers is a gratifying mission, particularly those Soldiers doing the grunt work," CW2 Todd Collins, one of the aviators assigned to move the Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, 102nd Cavalry, said.

Several Soldiers flying on the mission claimed it was a program like a neighbor helping a neighbor.

"It's nice to see New Jersey taking care of New Jersey. This mission really makes me think of home and makes the mission we have in Iraq a little more special," Sgt. 1st Class Michael Peterson, of the HHT, 102nd Cav., said before flying to Iraq.

The 104th Aviation personnel are now working with Utah's Army National Guard's 2nd-211th GSAB (General Support Aviation Battalion) while serving at Camp Buering.

First Lt. Sarah B. Moore, a platoon leader with the 104th, said the deployment to Kuwait has been a very rewarding experience.

"It's a very demanding mission and you get plenty of flight time. You really get to know your stuff so when you return home you will go back to the unit with all kinds of up-to-date knowledge," Moore said.

BIRD TO BAGHDAD
Aviators from Company A, 2nd-104th Aviation Regiment, New Jersey Army National Guard, prepare to move Soldiers from Camp Buehring, Kuwait, to Iraq.

> **"It's nice to see New Jersey taking care of New Jersey. This mission really makes me think of home and makes the mission we have in Iraq a little more special."**
>
> - Sgt. 1st Class Michael Peterson, 102nd Cavalry

Snapshots from Kuwait

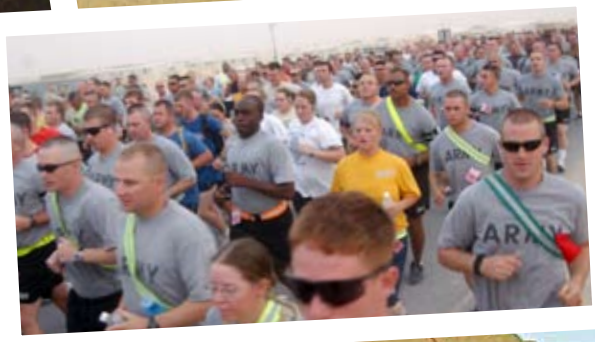
Combat Life Saver training kept our skills sharp.

We were packed in tight for the flight from Kuwait to Iraq.

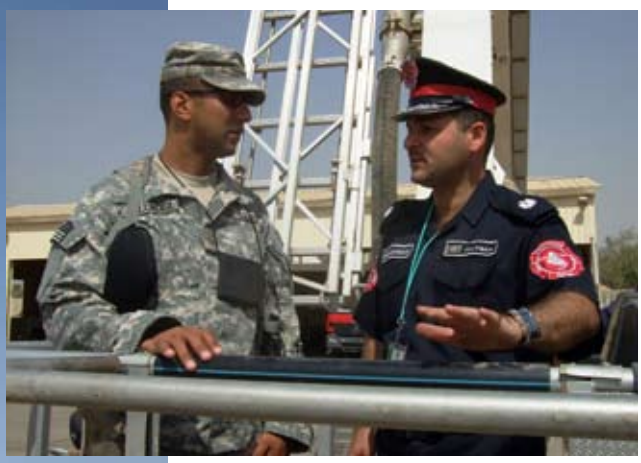
Working out at the gym was a great way to beat the heat.

Keeping our weapons clean and functioning properly was a top priority.

Camp Buehring was beautiful at dawn, but hot as an oven during the mid-morning 9/11 memorial run.



Photos by Public Affairs



REACHING NEW HEIGHTS
Maj. David Melendez, director of Public Safety, Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C), near right, confers with International Zone Fire Station Chief Muneer Al-Hamdanee Sept. 22 regarding the new European-style ladder truck that was delivered to the station by the JASG-C and a coalition team.

Iraqi firefighters add ladder truck to fleet

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris
JASG-C Public Affairs

Eleven days after the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks that took the lives of 343 New York firefighters, one of the Big Apple's bravest brought his expertise – and a new fire engine – to the International Zone (IZ) Fire Station.

Maj. David Melendez, director of Public Safety, Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C), and other coalition members visited the station Sept. 22 to deliver the European-style vehicle to IZ Fire Station Chief Muneer Al-Hamdanee.

Part of Public Safety's mission is to help bring equipment into the IZ for Iraqi use, according to Melendez. This truck is one of several escorted into the IZ since the station's inception in January.

The new Sides-brand fire truck features a telescoping and articulating rescue-ladder platform that will compliment the current fleet by meeting one of the IZ Fire Station's special needs.

"They've had a lot of hi-rise fires, and this is going to help them. This adds to their firefighting capabilities; it's very versatile," explained Melendez.

"This is the first time we've had this type of truck in here and we are very happy," said Hamdanee through an interpreter.

Hamdanee and the coalition team also discussed expanding the IZ Fire Station mission into one of national importance.

"We're looking to make this a national academy," said Melendez. A preliminary class of a dozen students is scheduled to be held in October.

"We're going to do a train-the-trainer at first," explained Melendez, who noted that despite cultural and language barriers, the coalition team and Iraqi firefighters have no problem communicating when it comes to their job.

"We talk the same lingo," he said of his Iraqi brethren. "I couldn't ask for a better mission."

Hamdanee seemed to share Melendez' enthusiasm.

"I thank you because you're helping the Iraqi people," he told the coalition team.

Ballots from Baghdad

Deadline nears for absentee voting in November elections

With Nov. 4 fast approaching, U.S. service members deployed overseas have little time remaining to make their voices heard in the upcoming presidential election.

By now, those wishing to vote should have already requested an absentee ballot from their home state. For those who have not yet taken this step or not received their ballot, don't despair: You still have a chance to exercise your constitutional right this fall.

The first step is to log on to the Federal Voting Assistance Program Web site at www.fvap.gov, which is the official U.S. government Web site for overseas voters. Click on the "Get Started" tab at left for uniformed service members. The next page presents two relevant options.

The first is, "Register to vote and/or request an absentee ballot." Click here and follow the instructions if you have not yet requested an absentee ballot from your home state. This step should be completed as soon as possible for those wishing to vote in November's elections.

For those who have completed this step but have not yet received their absentee ballot, select "Complete a back-up federal write-in absentee ballot." To make use of this special absentee ballot, you must be absent from your voting residence, have applied for a regular absentee ballot from your home state in a timely fashion, and have not received said absentee ballot from your home state.

You may not, however, use the special write-in absentee ballot as a substitute for following the normal absentee voting process detailed above.

Options exist for transmitting requests and ballots via mail, fax and e-mail. When transmitting documents through e-mail, you must follow-up by mailing hardcopies to the appropriate address. Check the FVAP Web site for individual state requirements and addresses.

Those wishing to vote should have already requested an absentee ballot from their home state. For those who have not yet taken this step or not received their ballot, you still have a chance to exercise your constitutional right this fall.

Exercising your voting right while deployed to Iraq is made possible by the Uniformed And Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), which allows members of the U.S. uniformed services to vote absentee while away from their place of voting residence, wherever stationed, either inside or outside the United States.

To facilitate this process, a Voting Assistance Officer (VAO) is assigned at every company-sized element to provide information. The VAO for the Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C) is Capt. Richard Colton, who can be reached at (318) 239-9457 in room M208A of the U.S. Embassy Annex.

JASG-C handoff

continued from page 4

recognize the complexities of the JASG-C's mission, which he equated to performing all the major functions of a medium-sized city.

"To truly understand the scope of this mission, you need to understand that the IZ is no normal city," he said, noting the IZ is a global community with enormously complex administrative, diplomatic and security engagements.

Deering also took the time to recognize his Soldiers' accomplishments during the course of the deployment.

"We've worked together through many events, crisis and issues. We've endured numerous rocket and mortar attacks and we've always looked to the future to ensure a smooth transition to the International Zone," he said.

"While we are going to miss Myles and his team, we are lucky to have Col. Steve Ferrari and the members of the 50th BCT," said Gluek. "Your mission is a difficult one, but I have the utmost confidence that you and your team will continue the essential work of the Joint Area Support Group."

The 50th, commanded by Ferrari, has been deployed since June of this year, and trained at Camp McGregor, N.M., in preparation for its mission in Baghdad.

"For the 50th IBCT, we stand manned, equipped and trained to assume the duties of the Joint Area Support Group-Central. We look forward to the challenges that lie ahead in this complex environment as we transition the IZ back to the government of Iraq," said Ferarri.

"The Jersey Blues have the Con; mission first, people always!" he added.

Eyes on the IZ

Police protect and serve in Baghdad's International Zone

Story and photos by
Maj. Jon Powers
JASG-C Public Affairs

BAGHDAD'S FINEST - Airman 1st Class Jesus Antanacio, Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C) Security Forces, top right, uses a retinal scanning device to identify an Iraqi man during a foot patrol in Baghdad's International Zone. Air Force Staff Sgt. Benjamin Funk, JASG-C Security Forces, right, examines the badge of an Iraqi man.

Community policing is a concept most police officers understand and actively practice. For some, it is their favorite part of police work.

In this particular community, officers will cruise through neighborhoods looking for something out of place. They walk and greet the people they come across, politely declining an offer for something cold to drink. They may swing by the local market and liquor store to check vehicles in the parking lot for anything illegal – and while they are there, pet the shop owner's dog. His name is JuJu, by the way, and he is the best looking dog in the city. It seems the only unusual thing about this community is that it is not small-town America, but the most complicated area in the world – the International Zone of Baghdad.

Unexpected is common, what's common can be dangerous, odd is normal and normal is always incredibly convoluted. This is what the Airmen of the JASG-C Law and Order Directorate (IZ Police) deal with every day.

"I told them this was going to be a totally different deployment and you'll never see anything like this again," stated Lt. Col. Kelly Kanavel, Law and Order Director.

"Anybody can be a bad guy; you have to balance winning the hearts and minds with safety," said

Kanavel. And unlike small town America, the IZ has big surprises for the IZ Police.

"Everybody in the IZ has a gun. Everything is high-risk," said Staff Sgt. Benjamin Funk, deployed from Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. Funk is one of the Airmen responsible for patrolling and policing this town.

"On a base, you may have one unauthorized person a month; here we have hundreds," said Kanavel. One 15-day period this September saw 255 separate escort violations.

To maintain security, the residents of the IZ are issued badges that determine where you can go and whether you can go there by yourself.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY - Air Force Staff Sgt. Benjamin Funk, JASG-C Security Forces, right, examines a local Iraqi boy's toy AK-47 while on a dismounted patrol in Baghdad's International Zone.

"I told them this was going to be a totally different deployment and you'll never see anything like this again."

- Lt. Col. Kelly Kanavel, Law and Order Director

"When we arrived, it was like there's a new sheriff in town," said Funk. Encountering numerous escort violations initially, they went after them diligently.

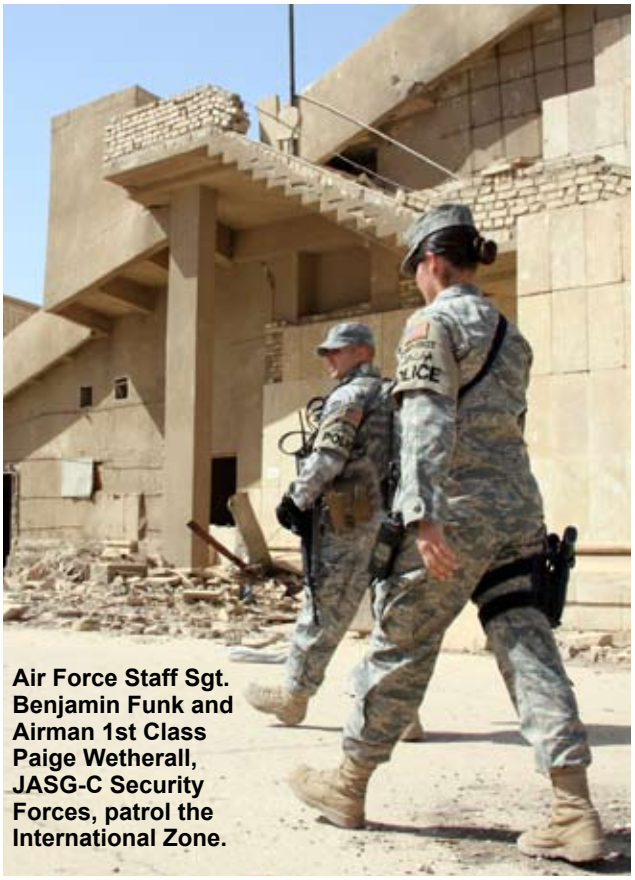
"We set a record for escort violations," said Funk. Stopping and asking to see someone's badge is the most common event during a shift. Although the Security Forces are noticing a decline in undocumented individuals, they continue to be thorough.

The apartments in Area 215 are patrolled on foot. Often, the Security Forces find unauthorized workers there who are unable to locate their escort. To record their identity, a biometric identification unit scans retinas and fingerprints. Unauthorized persons are then removed from the IZ. Though security has improved in every way, there may still be some unfriendly elements. This makes patrols at night worrisome.

On a recent patrol, Funk and his Airmen encountered a raucous group of Iraqis wielding AK-47s and RPGs. If it weren't for the fact that these Iraqis were eight to ten years old and their weapons made of plastic, there may have been trouble. In fact, these youths wanted their "weapons" inspected by the Airmen, who were glad to do so. Throughout the entire patrol the Iraqi boys ran around and played with the Airmen, who took turns to entertain the boys yet keep an appropriate level of security.

Experience in the IZ proves that the most serious and complicated differences between people may have simple solutions. Funk has found barter as the easiest way to establish a beneficial relationship,

"Gatorade is the best political bargaining tool. We have gotten a lot of information just handing out Gatorades," he said.



Air Force Staff Sgt. Benjamin Funk and Airman 1st Class Paige Wetherall, JASG-C Security Forces, patrol the International Zone.

continued on page 15

Finance NCO invests in future

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris
JASG-C Public Affairs

MONEY WELL-SPENT
Staff Sgt. Dimitri Danford, JASG-C finance NCO, owns two homes and plans on using deployment assets to help purchase a third.

When Staff Sgt. Dimitri Danford talks money management, people should listen.

As a finance NCO in the Joint Area Support Group-Central's comptroller office who has served in a similar capacity with the New Jersey Army National Guard for the past seven years, she knows a thing or two about dollars and cents.

But Danford's true claim to fiscal fame lies in the fact that this 25-year-old corrections officer instructor from Sicklerville, N.J., has begun her quest for financial independence through one of the oldest and most reliable means – real estate.

"I want to be a little Donald Trump," joked Danford, who already owns one rental property in addition to her primary residence.

Danford may have some home-buying competition when she and her fellow 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Soldiers return to New Jersey, as increased pay and tax benefits realized during deployment offer savvy service members the chance to become purveyors of property. This is especially true for young troops who may be earning their first income of any significance.

Of course, increased income means heightened danger of wasting money and possibly accumulating unwanted debt, especially for the young and inexperienced.

Danford avoided such pitfalls, purchasing her first home at age 20. She had no money for a down payment, but was able to secure a no-money-down, Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loan.

"I wanted a house," she stated. "I didn't want to waste money on rent."

Danford realized that by paying rent, she would be helping secure her landlord's financial future while her bank account dwindled; but by paying a mortgage, she was lining her own pockets as her home loan decreased each month while her property value steadily increased.

To help that value continue to climb, Danford used money earned from her initial journey to Iraq in 2004 and 2005 to upgrade her home, rather than splurge for a new car or some other losing investment.

> **"I wanted a house. I didn't want to waste money on rent."**
>
> **- Staff Sgt. Dimitri Danford**

"When I came home from my first deployment, I did a lot of renovating," she explained.

When Danford decided to buy her second house, she had no idea it was her first step on the road to financial independence.

"At first, I was going to sell my first home," she explained. "I put a sign out there, and a lot of people were asking about it."

Those inquiries eventually led Danford to rent her first home as she moved on with the purchase of her second, which she again purchased with a 100-percent financed FHA loan.

"It's mainly a long-term investment; they're paying the mortgage, and I'm building equity," she said, explaining that the rent paid by her tenants covers the mortgage each month. By the time the mortgage is fully paid, Danford will have a retirement nest egg into which she invested little of her own money.

She does plan, however, on investing more of her money in additional rental properties.

"I want to start buying more properties, maybe condos," she said. "That's what I plan on doing when I return from this deployment."

For other Soldiers who would like to follow in Danford's footsteps, she has some time-tested advice.

"Do your research as far as different mortgage companies and interest rates," she advised, "and make sure you don't live above your means."

Danford has so far followed her own advice, and seems to have a solid plan for her financial future.

And who knows – one day Mr. Trump may be the world's *second*-most famous land baron.

CRADLE OF TOURISM
Dr. Achmed Ridan, Iraqi National Investment Commission chairman, Humoud Yakobi, Iraq Ministry of State Tourism and Antique Affaires chairman, and Nasr Ganam, general manager of tourism, from left, deliver a press brief in Baghdad's International Zone Sept. 19 in an effort to attract potential investors for Baghdad's Jazirat A'aras island resort.

Tourism Ministry seeks investors

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris
JASG-C Public Affairs

Imagine a vacation resort where guests stay in five-star accommodations, dine in equally stellar restaurants, shop in the finest retail establishments and enjoy recreational activities such as swimming, water skiing and parasailing.

Now imagine all this in the heart of Baghdad.

Iraqi officials brought this dream one step closer to reality when they held a press conference Sept. 19 in an effort to attract potential investors for their Jazirat A'aras island resort.

"We want the world to know that Iraq is open for business," said Humoud Yakobi, Iraq Ministry of State Tourism and Antique Affaires chairman.

Yakobi was joined at the conference by Dr. Achmed Ridan, Iraqi National Investment Commission chairman, and Nasr Ganam, general manager of tourism. The trio detailed their plan to a largely Arab audience, while interpreters provided Arabic-to-English translation through headsets.

Assisting the Government of Iraq (GOI) with this project is the Joint Area Support Group–Central's (JASG-C's) Installations Directorate.

If the Jazirat A'aras project proves successful, it may pave the way for Iraq to become a leading tourism destination for the 21st Century.

"Our main focus is that the GOI is taking the lead, and we're providing support and assistance to help them go in the direction they want to go," said Lt. Col. Robert Jarvis, Installations Directorate deputy director. "The GOI realizes Iraq will open up, that they will have investment in tourism, and they're planning for that."

"Tourism is very important. All Iraqis and non-Iraqis are invited to invest in this," explained Ridan. The five-year plan to develop Jazirat A'aras will cost between $2.5 billion and $4.5 billion and offer investors tax savings and other benefits.

"This is a partnership between the private sector and the public sector," explained Yakobi.

Planning for Jazirat A'aras has been in place for some time, but the outbreak of war in 2003 put development of the resort on hold. The 2,000-by-1,100-meter island is situated on the Tigris River near Baghdad University in what is currently known as the "Red Zone."

In addition to Jazirat A'aras, Iraq has great potential for historical and religious tourism, according to Yakobi. Its land was once part of the Sumerian, Babylonian and Ottoman empires, while many Judeo-Christian traditions – from the Garden of Eden to the Tower of Babel to the birthplace of the patriarch Abraham – are placed within Iraq's borders.

"Iraq is the cradle of human civilization," said Yakobi. "We can see antiquities in all of Iraq."

"We want to give you a new picture of the future of Iraq," said Ridan.

ABCs Of Caring

IZ Security Forces dontate toys, school supplies to local Iraqi children

Story by Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris
Photos by 1st Sgt. David Moore
JASG-C Public Affairs

Life in Baghdad's International Zone got a little warmer and fuzzier when members of the Joint Area Support Group-Central Security Forces donated stuffed animals and school supplies to students at the Al-Watan Elementary School Oct. 8.

"We had over 150 stuffed animals of all sizes, and several boxes of school supplies such as pencils, paper, and notebooks," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Russell Love, a member of the IZ Police who coordinated the donation.

"It's a blessing that we're able to come in to their school and give them things we have that they're not as fortunate to have," he added.

Love and his crew made their way throughout the two-story school, distributing age-appropriate goodies in several classrooms under the guidance of school officials. Both kids and service members seemed to benefit from the spirit of giving.

"It pretty much feels like Christmas," explained Airman 1st Class Peggy Dunkley of New York City, who has eight brothers, three sisters, four nephews and a niece back home.

"It's giving them another reason to smile. They have beautiful smiles," she added.

There were plenty of smiles to go around, as the children showed their gifts to one another and thanked the service members with hand waves and hugs.

"To be part of what we do on the ground is incredible; to be able to help out the little ones – the kids," said Love, who has been serving in Iraq since June.

"It's an awesome feeling," he added.

The IZ Police officers are no strangers to donating to the community. On several occasions, they have pooled their resources to help victims of house fires, Love explained.

He also noted that donating items is not the only interaction he and his fellow IZ Police officers have with these children.

"We patrol these areas at night wearing full battle rattle," he said. The school is located in what is commonly referred to as the "Area 215 Apartments."

While the children will often joke and play with the patrolling officers, this event gave the kids a chance to see Love and his team bearing gifts instead of guns.

"It shows them that we're not only here to protect them," said Dunkley.

As for future donations to the Al-Watan School, Love would like to give for as long as possible.

"We plan on doing as much as we can," he said. "As long as we've got teams here, we can donate."

> **"It's giving them another reason to smile. They have beautiful smiles."**
>
> - Airman 1st Class Peggy Dunkley

FOR THE CHILDREN - Lt. Col. Robert Kolb of Multi-National Force-Iraq's CJ5, above, provides a snack to an Al-Watan Elementary School pupil while on a humanitarian mission to donate toys and school supplies to the children Oct. 9.

JAG CORNER

It has come to our attention that automobile salespersons have represented that there is no sales tax due with the purchase of a motor vehicle through the overseas auto program.

Although there is no New Jersey sales tax due at the time of such a purchase, the New Jersey Sales and Use Tax Act, N.J.S.A. 54:32B-1 et. seq., requires a seven-percent (of the purchase price) Use Tax be paid when the vehicle is taken possession of by the purchaser and brought into New Jersey. The payment is a precondition of registering the vehicle in the state.

Furthermore, there is no provision which exempts military personnel from the Use Tax when a motor vehicle is purchased overseas, even in a statutorily recognized "combat zone," and brought into New Jersey for personal use. So whatever purchase price you negotiate through an overseas purchase program, please take into consideration paying another seven percent of the purchase price when you return to New Jersey and take possession of the motor vehicle.

Also, be advised that when taxable goods and services are purchased in a foreign country, no credit is allowed in New Jersey for any sales tax paid to the foreign country, regardless of whether the purchaser takes possession of the items there or has them delivered to New Jersey.

Col. Daniel Giaquinto
Command Judge Advocate

Police protect and serve

continued from page 11

Some Airmen in the IZ Police have little experience to draw on.

Airman First Class Paige Wetherall, also from Hickam, had less than a year in uniform when she arrived in Iraq. "At Hickam, all the work was on the flight line. Here we had to take in a lot of things at once," said Wetherall. Now she routinely responds to incidents she could have never imagined.

"Things get chaotic; we have to get everyone calmed down," she said. In the few months deployed here she has probably seen a wider variety of policing than a whole career on a base. And there was never the possibility of an international incident like there is here. Stateside police officers deal with unexpected events; here, the IZ Police can't imagine what to expect. Things out in the IZ defy the imagination. So their stories are proportionally unusual.

Just as an example, Airmen have had to swerve around a car driving with the hood up in the wrong lane – while a man worked on the engine. Dutch military misunderstood an order to search their vehicle, leading them to think their vehicle may be blown up. Vehicles carrying political dignitaries that don't stop at temporary check-points may find a rolling road block 200 meters down the road. And how do these men and women handle these circumstances? Flexibility and creativity.

SERVICE WITH A SMILE - Airmen of the JASG-C Security Forces joke with children of the International Zone's Quadisiya Apartments while on a dismounted patrol Oct. 1.

"We asked ourselves, 'How do you want to handle this?'" said Funk. And what was the solution? "We made SOPs on the fly."

"If one of us can't handle it, the other steps in; teamwork- you can't let one personality type rule the situation," noted Wetherall, showing that flexibility is still the most valuable trait in the American military and one an Airman must possess.

"The A1Cs have no problem coping because of our NCOs," said Kanavel. "We have a good mix; some Airmen are on their first deployment, some on their fourth."

Funk has also seen his junior Airman mature. "At first, we (NCOs) responded to everything; now it's the junior enlisted, they got it down, they have the confidence," he said. "Being deployed is being more than a supervisor – it's being an NCO- not just doing paperwork, you're making decisions. It gives the younger Airmen confidence." Confidence they may need to lead on future rotations, protecting and serving, in a whole different world.

Spc. Jerry O'Neal, Alpha Company, 3rd-153rd Infantry, left, takes first place in the Operation Rising Star talent search Sept. 26 at the Forward Operating Base Prosperity dining faciility. Sgt. David Mitchell, Alpha Troop, 1st-151st Cavalry, above, took second place.

Catch A Shooting Star

Soldiers compete in world-wide talent competition

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris
JASG-C Public Affairs

When Cpl. DJ Anderson learned that Operation Rising Star was coming to Baghdad's International Zone (IZ), it was music to his ears.

Anderson, a Soldier with the 3rd-29th Field Artillery Regiment who has been working with the Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C) for the past 10 months, joined six other comrades-in-arms in the dining facility at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Prosperity Sept. 26 to compete in the world-wide talent search.

"I thought it would be something worth doing," he said.

It certainly was for Anderson, who walked away with a $100 prize after displaying his vocal talents in front of nearly 100 coalition members.

"It was the most fun night in a long, long time," he said.

The evening kicked off with vocal performances from the seven competitors, two of whom backed their singing with guitar playing. Each performer was rated by a panel of three judges – Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Miller of the 3rd-29th Field Artillery Regiment, KBR contractor Donald Baptiste and 1st Sgt. Dexter Manning of the 2nd Brigade Training Support Battalion (BTSB) – reminiscent of Randy Jackson, Simon Cowell and Paula Abdul of the popular television show "American Idol."

Spc. Jerry O'Neal of Alpha Company, 3rd-153rd Infantry, started things off country-style with a performance that brought to mind Garth Brooks. He received fairly high marks from the judges, but was told his performance lacked intensity.

He'd make up for that later.

Not fairing as well was Pfc. Chadwick Saladino of the 3rd-29th, whose rendition of the country tune, "What Was I Thinking?" prompted one judge to ask Saladino that same question regarding his performance. Sgt. Lloyd Mageo, 536th Maintenance Company, and Spc. Kyle Climo, 3rd-29th, also received low marks for their respective attempts at stardom.

However, not all the judges' comments were of

the Cowell variety; there was some Abdul-style praise to be had as well, especially for Anderson, who sounded like a one-man 'N Sync revival.

Also scoring well were 1st Lt. Ashlea Cleveland, 3rd-29th, whose hippie-rock stylings carried a Michelle Branch vibe, and Mitchell, who reached down deep to pull out the night's most soulful singing.

After a short break, the judges returned with their decision: O'Neal, Anderson, Mitchell and Cleveland would move to the final round.

Competition got tougher in the finals. Cleveland, who may have turned in the best performance of the first round, was on her way to possible victory with a dead-on version of Janis Joplin's "Mercedes Benz" – that is, until she forgot the lyrics.

Mitchell couldn't recapture his melodic magic from round one, but luckily for him Anderson took on a tune that was, in the judges' words, a bit too much for his voice to handle.

That left the door open for O'Neal, who took full advantage with an impassioned performance of another original country tune that showed off not only his songwriting and guitar-playing ability, but also his vocal prowess. He left the crowd cheering and the judges awed.

It was enough to earn him a first-place finish.

Selecting second and third wasn't as easy. Mitchell and Anderson were neck and neck at the end of the final round, so a sing-off was held as a tie breaker. Audience members joined the judges in casting ballots for the winner, but they made their opinions known even before the votes were in by cheering and chanting the names of their respective candidates.

Possibly feeding off the crowd, Mitchell returned to form with some inspired Motown melodies. Anderson also upped the ante, delivering a rousing rendition of the 4th Infantry Division Song that whipped his fellow Soldiers into a frenzy.

Cpl. DJ Anderson, 3rd-29th Field Artillery Regiment, left, takes third place in the Operation Rising Star talent competition, while 1st Lt. Ashlea Clevelend, also with the 3rd-29th, got knocked out in the semi-finals.

Despite his patriotic performance, Anderson had to settle for third place while Mitchell grabbed the second spot.

As for O'Neal, the first-place prize of $500 and a chance to compete live on the Pentagon Channel Nov. 12-14 wasn't all he was thankful for.

"I cannot say enough about my guys who came out to support me," said O'Neal, who has a chance of winning the Rising Star grand prize of an all-expense-paid trip to Los Angeles to record a three-song demo CD in a professional studio.

"I've always had a passion for singing," explained O'Neal, who tried once before to establish a music career in Nashville.

"My inspiration comes from my life experiences," he said of his craft. "If I live it, I can pretty much write a song about it."

These Soldiers are certainly living through a lot being deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism, and events such as this go a long way toward making life in-theater more livable.

"It's giving these people a chance they may otherwise never get," said Craig Miller, host of the event and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) supervisor for FOBs Prosperity, Union III and Freedom.

"I think it was a great morale booster for all of them," added Sgt. Carla Washington, MWR Non-Commissioned Officer In Charge for the 2nd BTSB, who helped coordinate the competition.

"It relieves a lot of stress for everybody," said O'Neal.

"If I live it, I can pretty much write a song about it." - Spc. Jerry O'Neal, 3/153rd Infantry

Operation Rising Star, formerly known as Military Idol, is open to all active-duty, Reserve and National Guard Soldiers and members of their families. For more information, visit www.OpRisingStar.com.

Patching Things Up

MARK OF HONOR - Capt. Matt Bayless, left, and 1st Lt. Steven Brill of the Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C) affix their combat patches during a ceremony in the U.S. Embassy Annex chapel Oct. 10.

JASG-C Soldiers earn combat patches

Story by 1st Sgt. David Moore
Photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris
JASG-C Public Affairs

New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers of the 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team serving in Baghdad placed the symbol of loyalty to the mission known as the combat patch on their right shoulder sleeves.

During the Oct. 15 military formation held at a chapel near the American Embassy in Baghdad, the Headquarters Company Soldiers who serve as a lead element for the Joint Area Support Group- Central (JASG-C) placed an additional brigade patch on their Army Combat Uniforms.

"The right shoulder patch is a reminder, all Garden State Soldiers are operating in a hostile environment and cannot become complacent during present military operations," said Col. Steven Ferrari, brigade and JASG-C commander.

The 50th patch, approved in January for wear on military uniforms, is a seven-sided embroidered patch vertically divided and contains three stars that represent New Jersey as being the third state to sign the United States Constitution. When worn on the Class A uniform, the tri-colors of the patch represent the brigades' armor and infantry lineage, as well as its alignment with the 42nd Infantry "Rainbow" Division. The patch's shape suggests the letter 'V' for victory.

Ferrari said the organization already has a common bond of wearing the left shoulder patch, but Soldiers standing in the formation are among 3,000 Soldiers now eligible to wear the brigade patch on the right sleeve.

"It is a reminder to watch out for yourself and watch out for each other. The mission is not over until we all come home," Ferrari added.

In addition to the brigade patch, JASG-C Soldiers also have the option of wearing the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) as their Shoulder Sleeve Insignia-Former Wartime Service (SSI-FWS) patch on the right sleeve of the uniform for the remainder of a Soldier's career. The JASG-C is a subordinate unit of MNF-I.

The MNFI-patch has a black shield with a gold border surrounding two crossed silver scimitars (swords). Behind the shield is a wreath of palm branches joined at the bottom with three loops of brown twine. In the center is a gold winged bull of Mesopotamia below a gold, seven-pointed star.

Spc. Jamie Lowe said she was proud that the unit is conducting operations in Iraq.

"The patch will always be a reminder of our mission," she said.

"I am extremely proud of all the Soldiers. The combat patch will always be our bond," Brigade Command Sergeant Major David Kenna said.

NEWS FROM HOME

U.S. Post Office offers discount mailing options

The U.S. Postal Service is making it easier for families to send care packages with a larger flat-rate box and a special discount to FPO/ APO addresses.

The new boxes are 50-percent larger than the current flat-rate box and can be sent to any domestic address for $12.95. A special military version of the box will carry the "America Supports You" logo and can be shipped to any FPO/ APO address for $10.95. The new Priority Mail Large Flat-Rate Box is "12 x 12" x 5½."

For complete guidelines on mail services to military members overseas visit the USPS Web site at: www.usps.com/supporting ourtroops/welcome.htm?from=household&page=troopsupport.

Federal grants available for military spouses

Grants from the Department of Community Affairs are available for spouses of deployed or recently deployed military (all branches).

Typical awards are $2,500 each and are available for financial difficulties (such as past due rent and childcare) as well as for recreational and stress-relieving activities for kids.

For more information call Rene Mainor, military grant liaison, Women's Opportunity Center, YMCA of Burlington County, at (609) 543-6200 Ext. 235, or e-mail fawnm@ymca-bc.org.

Dog Tags for Kids program kicks off

Dog Tags for Kids is a grassroots project that enables service members to send engraved dog tags to their children.

The dog tags are provided free and are sent directly to the service members, who personally send them to their children at home. The dog tags are engraved with, "With Love From Dad/Mom," and include the branch of service, deployment location, and the year.

To donate to the project or to request a dog tag for your children, please go to www.dogtagsforkids.com.

Military vacation club offers affordable lodging

The Armed Forces Vacation Club is a "space available" program offering Department of Defense-affiliated personnel affordable condominium vacations at more than 3,500 resorts around the world.

For more information, visit the club Web site at www.afvclub.com.

For the latest N.J. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Highlights and other information, you can visit www.state.nj.us/military/

MWR Facilities & Contacts

MWR/Recreation Facility Hours

Palace Pool
6 a.m.-midnight
(Quiet hours 10 p.m.-6 a.m.)

Liberty Pool
6 a.m.-midnight

Palace Fitness Center
24/7

Palace Theater
7:30 & 10 p.m., nightly

NEC MWR Desk
239-2222, ext. 560-3459
(Commercial: 240-553-0581, ext. 560-3459)

PROMOTIONS

Maj. David Melendez
Maj. Jose Maldonado
Capt. Juan Abreu
Capt. Francine Remo
1st Lt. Lisa Bethea
1st Lt. Crystal Lane
Sgt. 1st Class Michael Strawn
Sgt. 1st Class Clyde Taylor
Staff Sgt. Daryl Caulfield
Staff Sgt. Gregory Twyman
Sgt. Brendon Gray
Sgt. Khristine Tan
Sgt. Paul Burke
Sgt. Jean Paul Le
Sgt. Daisy Ferreira
Sgt. Sara Vasques
Sgt. Brian Kofsky
Sgt. Philip Purnell
Sgt. Brendon Gray
Sgt. Bill Addison
Spc. John Pastor
Spc. John Schneider
Spc. Jose Rodriguez

Consolidated Worship Schedule

Sunday
0915 – Mass/Camp Prosperity (Confession available before Mass)
1030 – General Protestant Worship
1200 – Catholic Mass/Embassy Chapel
1200 – Episcopal/Lutheran/ Anglican
1400 – Latter Day Saints
1630 – Catholic Mass/Embassy Chapel (Confession available before Mass)
1815 – Contemporary Protestant
2000 – Spanish Latter Day Saints (Chapel Annex)
2000 – Church of Christ (Embassy S214-B)
2000 – Spanish Catholic Mass/ Embassy Chapel

Monday
1200– Catholic Mass/Embassy Chapel

Tuesday
1200 – Catholic Mas/Embassy Chapel
1800 – RCIA/Adult Education/ Embassy Chapel
1900 – Rosary in the Embassy Chapel

Wednesday
1200 – Catholic Mass/Embassy Chapel
1800 – Adult Education/B104

Thursday
1200 – Catholic Mass/Embassy Chapel

Friday
1200 – Catholic Mass/Embassy Chapel
1830 – Jewish Shabbat
2000 – Orthodox "Reader's Service"

Saturday
1100 – Catholic Mass/CSH Compound (Chapel Annex) - Confession available before Mass
1830 – Catholic Mass/Embassy Chapel (Confession available before Mass)

Where not indicated otherwise, services are held at the Palace's Community Chapel, which is located out the South Lobby entrance of the Palace, to the left behind the T-walls.

Prayer Breakfast
First Wednesday of the month
0630 –0730, Palace Rm. M100

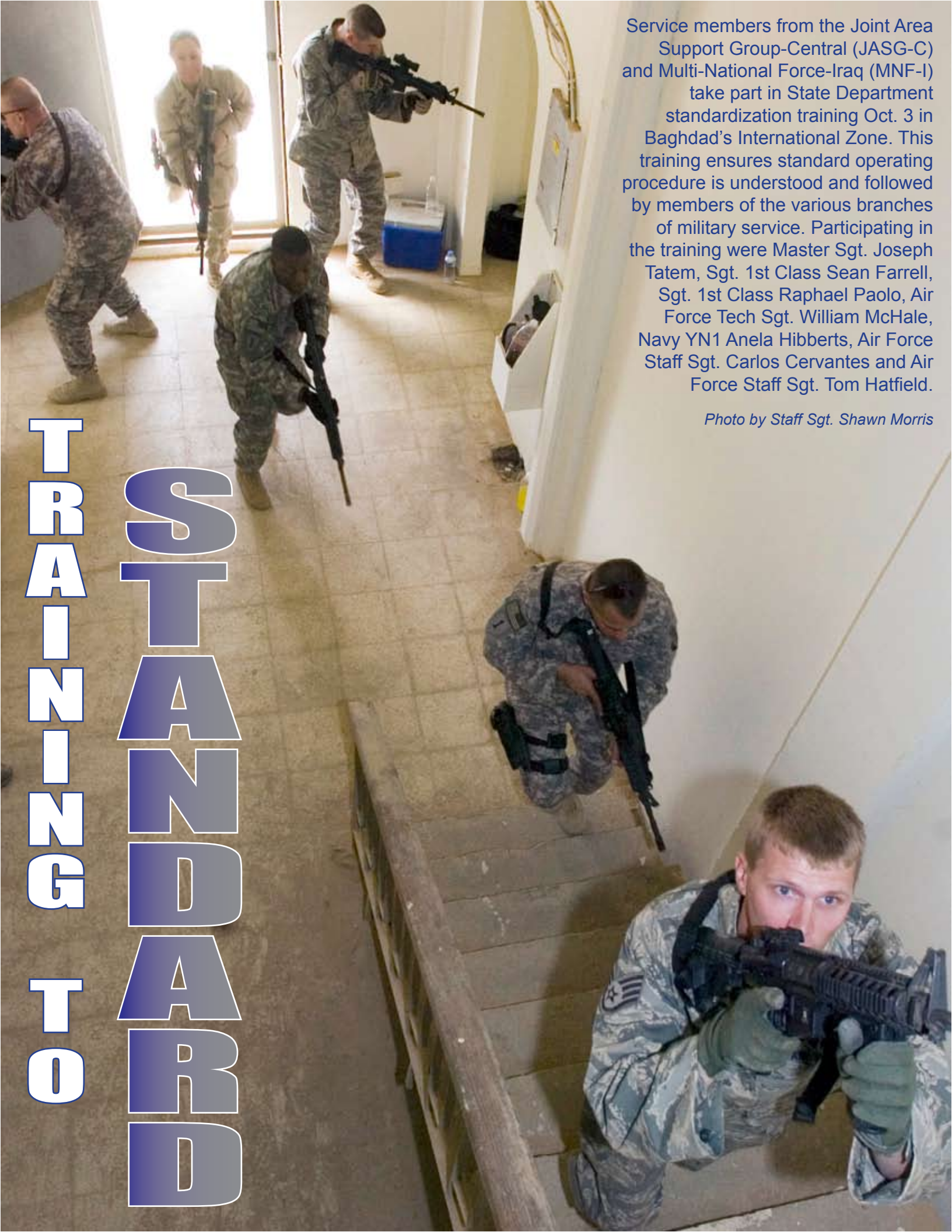
2008 Holiday Mailing Deadlines

Cards and Letters	Home to Iraq- 4 December Iraq to Home- 6 December
Packages / Parcels	Home to Iraq- 21 November Iraq to Home- 19 November

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Check out the Official Website of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq

WWW.MNF-IRAQ.COM



TRAINING TO STANDARD

Service members from the Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C) and Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) take part in State Department standardization training Oct. 3 in Baghdad's International Zone. This training ensures standard operating procedure is understood and followed by members of the various branches of military service. Participating in the training were Master Sgt. Joseph Tatem, Sgt. 1st Class Sean Farrell, Sgt. 1st Class Raphael Paolo, Air Force Tech Sgt. William McHale, Navy YN1 Anela Hibberts, Air Force Staff Sgt. Carlos Cervantes and Air Force Staff Sgt. Tom Hatfield.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris