

IRON STRONG DAILY



PAGE 1

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President recognizes MP for Hispanic Heritage Month



Photo by Donald Wagner

Story by Maj. Edward R. McCray
Photos by Donald Wagner

Hola! Bienvenidos a la Casa Blanca," President George W. Bush opened his White House Hispanic Heritage Month address Oct. 9 in which he recognized a deployed citizen-warrior.

Lt. Col. Enrique M. Guerra, commander of the 744th Military Police Battalion at Camp Cropper, Iraq, was invited to fly back from theater especially to attend the ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House.

"It was an honor to meet the president," Guerra said. "I am humbled to be selected to be here."

"As you may be aware, I was born

in Cuba. I came to this country with my parents and my sister when I was seven months old," Guerra said after the ceremony, adding that he feels a strong sense of American patriotism and commitment to country.

"Enrique has always had a sense of patriotism," said Karen Guerra, Lt. Col. Guerra's wife. "It's in his blood. As a child, he was always playing Army. He always wanted to be a Soldier. He loves doing what he does."

Mrs. Guerra stood proudly by her husband as the President shook his hand, thanked him for his service and presented him with a presidential coin.

Lt. Col. Guerra not only commands the 744th MP Battalion, an Army

Reserve unit from Bethlehem, Pa., he is also currently the theater internment facility commander of Remembrance II at Camp Cropper, Iraq.

Maj. Gen. Adolph McQueen Jr., commander of the 200th Military Police Command at Fort Meade, Md., and former Joint Task Force Detainee Operations Group commander at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, walked the grounds of Camp Cropper with Guerra in July. Camp Cropper is a large internment facility in southern Iraq and McQueen noted that Guerra is the right man for the job.

Guerra is a Political Science graduate of Rutgers University. He

Heritage Continued on Page 3

IA and CF execute another 'good neighbor' mission



Eager hands of Iraqi children, as well as Iraqi women, reach out and try to grab onto something that the Jundi with 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division, toss at them during a food and supply drop on the southeastern region of Mosul, Iraq on Oct. 17.

**Story and photo by
By Spc. Karla Elliott
11th Public Affairs Detachment**

Military leaders and Jundi with 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division along with 3-5-2 Military Transition Team, executed another humanitarian assistance drop in the southeastern region of Mosul, Iraq, on Oct. 17.

This has been one of the many good-neighbor missions the 3-5-2 IA has accomplished over an eight-month period with the help of 3-5-2 MiTT.

"We try to go out on these good neighbor missions at least three times a month," said Maj. Chad Arcand, team chief for 3-5-2 MiTT.

The overall mission is to build rapport and relationships between

the Iraqi Security Forces and the local populace, said Arcand, a native of White Bear Lake, Minn.

Forty bags of humanitarian assistance was coordinated through 1st Battalion, 8th Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, were distributed; along with clothes and beanie babies provided by the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion.

"Today was very good because all this that we do shows that we, the Army, are here to help the people" said Iraqi Army Col. Ahmed Abdul Rahman, commander of 3-5-2 IA.

Even though they average three good neighbor missions a month, this month, the 3-5-2 IA, along with their counterparts, achieved 10 of these missions within the battalion's area of responsibility.

"The biggest challenge during these missions is that we are trying

to help the people, while also facing the enemy," said Iraqi Army Sgt. Maj. Chapok, with 3-5-2 IA.

Right now, a lot of the enemy activity that's going on is because a lot of people are poor, so they're supporting insurgency, Chapok said.

"But I think that once Mosul starts more projects and provides more services for the people, the enemy activity will decrease," he continued. The battalion has been quick to act and try to fix things, knowing what the problem is.

"We also have other projects on hand," said Rahman. "For example, we're working to have water well built in a neighborhood that needs water, a soccer field and such."

And so, 3-5-2 IA will continue executing good neighbor missions to help the people of their area and let them know that they are there to help.

"The next step is for the local civilian leadership to form and start acting," concluded Arcand.



Col. Ahmed Abdul Rahman, commander of 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 2nd Division of the Iraqi Army, shakes the hand of a local national who lives in the southeastern region of Mosul, Iraq.

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Heritage from Page 1

also earned a Master of Science degree in Management from Thomas Edison State College, in New Jersey. He is a graduate of the Army Command and General Staff College and the Multifunction Logisticians Course.

Guerra attributes much of his military success and the confidence that his leaders have expressed in him to the fact that he is a good listener.

"I love being around Soldiers. I talk with them. I listen". "Many of my young Soldiers are volunteering for a second or third tour," said Guerra. "Our morale is high."

In his 2007 departure ceremony speech, Guerra noted that a large number of Soldiers were volunteering to deploy with the 744th. He said he surveyed his young Soldiers and asked why they were volunteering. "The

general theme of the response I received was that unit has a good reputation among the troops and the Soldiers feel that they have leaders that they trust," Guerra said, noting that he went on to fill his ranks with subject-matter experts.

In the President's Hispanic Heritage address on the South Lawn of the White House, he recognized Guerra with these remarks: "I ' m especially proud to be the commander-in-chief of a military in which there's 225,000 Hispanic men and women. One of these Hispanos is an Army lieutenant colonel named Enrique Guerra. Listen to his story."

President Bush briefly recounted the narrative of Lt. Col. Guerra's arrival to America and his current military service.

The president concluded his acknowledgments by saying "And today I ' m proud to honor his service, and the service of all Hispanic Americans, who ensure

that freedom is available to all. Enrique, bienvenidos. Thank you for coming."



Iraqi pilots graduate, flight training wing opens

**Story and photo by
By Spc. Cynthia Teears
11th Public Affairs Detachment**

The Iraqi Air Force Flying Training Wing graduated three pilots and opened a new training facility at the Kirkuk Air Field in Kirkuk City, Iraq, Oct. 13.

The events began in the late morning with a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new training facility, which will accommodate better training and more students in the future. The guests then watched a traditional military ceremony where the flight students of the training wing demonstrated the passing of their guidon to the next class of students to take on their educational endeavors at the school.

"This is the first class to graduate since the fall of Saddam Hussein. So, these are the first three pilots to be trained in this decade in Iraq," said Lt. Col. Nathan Brauner, commander, 52nd Expeditionary Flight Training Squadron. "It is graduation class 67 from the training wing."

The U.S. Air Force has partnered with their

Iraqi counterparts to create and reestablish a successful flight program for Iraqi airmen who want to be pilots for the Iraq military.

"As we train up this new generation and give them the ability and the tools they need to take over their own security, they will enable U.S. forces to gradually draw down our presence here," Brauner stated.

The pilots are trained in many areas including intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions. "Currently, we have 42 students in training and we expect to get another class of approximately 14 students in November. We are also currently training six instructor pilots who will take more control and provide an Iraqi face to the training," Brauner said. "We are training pilots and maintainers in both flying fixed wing aircraft, and soon rotary wing aircraft in the future."

The three pilots who graduated received gifts and diplomas from senior air force officers from both the U.S. and Iraqi Air Force.

"It's a huge feeling...I am really sure that my family will be proud of me," said 2nd Lt. Habeeb Humedan al-Maqsusy, a graduate and an electrical engineer and specialty in

clinical communications.

"It was difficult because we were the first. Every first class...there is a challenge for every starting class," Habeeb said. "I joined the Air Force in 2007 as an engineer, then I passed the medical test, plus the English exam, then they accepted me as a pilot. *Maybe I will be a test pilot in the future.*"



Students and attendants at the Iraqi Air Force pilot graduation on Forward Operating Base Warrior in Kirkuk.

ELECTIONS

(Sydney Morning Herald) Joe the plumber from Ohio may have been the real star of the final US presidential debate, but it was an unrelated Texan who might yet reap the major financial dividends.

Joe Wurzelbacher, who has done little more than question Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama on tax policy earlier this week, was referenced more than 20 times in yesterday's debate between Senator Obama and the Republican candidate, John McCain.

The deluge of media attention quickly transformed into personal scrutiny and before long search engines were flooded with people looking to find out more about Joe the plumber.

At the time of writing, "Joe the plumber" was listed as the second most searched-for term on Yahoo Buzz. Variations of the phrase also appeared in numerous spots on Google's Hot Trends section, including several in the top 20.



One of the first links in search results leads to joetheplumber.com, but the site is not connected with Wurzelbacher in any way.

Instead, the page is owned by Joe Francis of Amarillo, Texas. The Dallas Morning News reported that Francis was out elk hunting this week but his office manager, Ronnie Bishop, had been swamped with calls all day.

Francis was reportedly considering one offer of \$US800,000 to buy the joetheplumber.com domain name.

Mr Bishop told the paper that in the

space of half a day he had fielded calls from 300 people wanting t-shirts and 1000 curious punters, as well as 100,000 emails.

The calls began flowing in almost as soon as "Joe the plumber" was mentioned in the debate.

Wurzelbacher, a tradesman who works 12-hour shifts, had told Senator Obama he planned to buy his own small plumbing business but if he did so he would be earning more than \$US250,000 a year and subject to Senator Obama's planned tax increases.

McCain seized on the exchange as a way of proving Senator Obama was not in touch with the average "Joe Six Pack". Senator Obama quickly dispatched those criticisms by pointing out that less than two per cent of small businesses made more than \$US250,000.

Wurzelbacher told reporters outside his home that the constant references to him in the debate "bothered me".

"I wished that they had talked more about issues that are important to Americans," he said.

Entertainment

Is Britney Spears a Californian or a Louisianan?

Jurors confronted with that question at the pop star's trial for driving without a license spent about two hours deliberating Friday. The panelists are expected to return Monday to resume their discussions.

If convicted of a misdemeanor, Spears, 26, faces a maximum sentence of six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine. The charge stems from an accident last year in which the performer struck a parked car.

The trial, which Spears chose not to attend, turns on whether jurors believe her legal "domicile" -- defined in the vehicle code as the place she "has manifested the intention of returning to after an absence" -- is the Golden State or the Bayou State.

At the time of the fender-bender, Spears did not have a California license. Her defense claims she fell into the exception for those whose

"domicile" is another state. Her father testified she held a valid Louisiana license.

In his closing argument, Spears' attorney said the singer remained in Los Angeles only because of a custody battle for her two young sons.

"She is a Louisiana girl, born there, lived there and is going back there as soon as things are straightened out here," lawyer Michael Flanagan said.

Referring to paparazzi who pursue Spears, he added, "Do you blame the girl for wanting to go home?"

A prosecutor mocked what he called her "Louisiana state of mind," noting that "every significant life event" for Spears -- her marriage, the birth of her children, her divorce -- occurred in Los Angeles. He

presented a partly completed application for a California driver's license Spears filled out four months before the accident.

"Judge her by her actions," Deputy City Atty. Michael Amerian urged the panel.



Football

In some ways, it is very much a classic Frank Beamer team: talented, opportunistic, aggressive on offense and defense, and better than almost anyone at making one of your mistakes show up on the scoreboard.

In other areas, however, there is some head scratching about the Virginia Tech team that will be at Alumni Stadium for tomorrow night's Atlantic Coast Conference battle against Boston College.

The Hokies are ranked 107th nationally in total offense, averaging 292.8 yards per game, their lowest average since 1987, when Virginia Tech averaged 261.7 yards per game in Beamer's first season.

The Hokies' defense, which was ranked third, first, and second the last three seasons, is now ranked 35th, allowing an average of 314.3 yards per game.

But there are other numbers that are encouraging, and some might consider surprising, considering the Hokies were returning only six starters on offense and four on defense from last year's ACC championship team.

"If you had given me the choice of being 5-1 after our first six games, I'd have taken that in a heartbeat," said Beamer. "Five and one, I think, sounds pretty good, but we've still got our work cut out for us."

Although the Hokies will arrive at The Heights ranked 17th nationally and with a 2-0 ACC record, they are slight underdogs to the 4-1 (1-1) Eagles, who still carry warm feelings from their 38-31 victory over North Carolina State two weeks ago, which served as quarterback Chris Crane's coming-out party.

Part of the reason for that may be that the Hokies come into tomorrow night's game at less than full strength, with two starters suffering season-ending injuries the last two games - rover back Davon Morgan (torn anterior cruciate ligament) and tailback Kenny Lewis (ruptured Achilles'). Morgan and Lewis were also the Hokies' primary kick returners.

Tech does have quarterback Tyrod Taylor and cornerback Victor "Macho" Harris



as its offensive and defensive anchors, and both are huge concerns for the Eagles.

"They've come a long way and are just hitting their stride," said Crane, who hit his stride with 470 yards of total offense against N.C. State. "We have BC guys and they have VT guys; they're all fast ballhawks."

With only 10 scholarship seniors on the roster, this figured to be somewhat of a rebuilding year for Tech, which finished 11-3 last season and ranked ninth in the country.

When Beamer was asked about what he expected this season, he sounded as uncertain as anyone. "It's been a long time since we had as many questions or weren't settled," said Beamer, who started the season with the biggest question mark at quarterback.

The original plan was to redshirt the multitalented Taylor, who a year ago started and won five games as a freshman as he battled veteran Sean Glennon for the job. But after a stunning opening loss to East Carolina, that plan was scrapped. By the third game against Georgia Tech (a 20-17 victory), Taylor had emerged as the starter. The Hokies were able to mix and match players on offense in subsequent victories over North Carolina, Nebraska, and Western Kentucky.

Taylor, who is averaging 5.1 yards

per carry, is the catalyst, but others have filled valuable roles, right down to kicker Dustin Keys, who is averaging almost two field goals per game, which is important since three of the Hokies' victories have been by 5 points or fewer.

"I think they're all going to be down to the fourth quarter," said Beamer.

Some parts of the Hokies' game plan have remained unchanged. "Beamer Ball," the term used to describe the propensity of Tech teams to produce special teams turnovers, remains. Highlighting this season's Beamer Ball unit is defensive tackle John Graves, who already has blocked three kicks.

While this may not be a classic Virginia Tech team in terms of talent - it is the youngest team Beamer has had in his tenure - it seems well-equipped to continue the Hokies' run of success. Virginia Tech has averaged 9.5 victories over the past 15 seasons, including 10 or more wins seven times in the last nine years.

Throw in Tech's 16-1 road record since joining the ACC in 2004 and BC is facing its stiffest challenge of the season. But it also should be noted that the one blemish on the Hokies' ACC road record was against BC in 2006.

Turkey



(BBC) Turkish warplanes have bombed Kurdish rebel positions in northern Iraq, Turkey's military says.

The hit targeted a Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) base in Iraq's mountainous Zap region, the Turkish military said.

No details of casualties were given, but the military said its jets bombed the hideout of "a PKK group which included high-level members".

It was the seventh cross-border air strike since a PKK attack on a Turkish outpost on 3 October killed 17 troops.

Turkey has staged other cross-border raids into northern Iraq over recent months in pursuit of the rebels.

'Successful action'

The Turkish government accuses Iraq of failing to stop the guerrillas - who are fighting for greater autonomy in south-east Turkey - from using the mountainous area as a safe haven.

The PKK has been fighting for Kurdish self-rule for the last 25 years

On Wednesday, Turkey's parliament extended the army's mandate to carry out cross-border raids against rebel positions by one year.

The same day, armed gunmen attacked a police bus near the city of Diyarbakir in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish south-east.

Four policemen and a civilian were killed in the strike that was later claimed as a "successful action" by the PKK.

The PKK is designated a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the US and EU.

More than 30,000 people have been killed since the PKK began its armed campaign in 1984.

In February, Ankara launched a week-long ground offensive in northern Iraq which, it said, targeted bases used by up to 3,000 Kurdish rebels as a springboard for attacks across the border

Germany

Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) gathered Saturday to anoint Frank-Walter Steinmeier, 52, the German foreign minister, as its candidate to challenge Chancellor Angela Merkel in the general election next year.

The party was also to appoint a new national chairman, Franz Muntefering, 68.

Both men were the national committee's sole nominees and face a simple yes-no vote at the one-day national conference in Berlin.

The change follows the resignation six weeks ago of Kurt Beck, a state premier who failed as party leader to boost public support for the centre-left party, which rules Germany in an uncomfortable coalition with Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU).

The big parties' weak 2005 showing, with 35 per cent of the votes for the CDU/CSU and 34 per cent for the SPD, forced them into a coalition they hope will become history at the September 27, 2009, polls.

Steinmeier, a grey-haired and bespectacled lawyer, was a longtime aide to former chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and has little electoral experience, but he has enjoyed high personal ratings in public surveys since becoming foreign minister.

The party's dismal rating in opinion surveys - it has not exceeded 27 per cent in Infratest Dimap weekly polls since March - prompted the ouster of Beck.

SPD stalwarts feared Beck, premier of the state of Rhineland Palatinate, lacked the stature and popularity to challenge Merkel at the polls.

Germany's economy is expected to stagnate next year, denying the incumbent parties the benefit of any feel-good factor.

The coalition is expected to become fractious next year as the two parties jostle for position, but feuding between the SPD's left and right wings has eased in recent months as the SPD's star has sunk.

The SPD has been alarmed by the rise of the Left Party, which surged to 13-per-cent national support this week.

The Left is an alliance of disaffected former Social Democrats and easterners with their political roots in the old communist party.

Commentators say the SPD faces a dilemma, since more centrist policies would frighten working-class voters and indirectly aid the Left, whereas more leftist policies or an alliance with the Left Party would frighten centrist voters into Merkel's arms.

The SPD conference, attended by more than 500 delegates, was especially called to appoint the two leaders, not debate new policy.

Key planks in its 2009 election platform are likely to be set next year.

Muntefering, a respected former German labour minister, was party chairman under Schroeder and was recalled by Steinmeier

from retirement as a unity figure to take charge as the party cranks up its election campaign.

The decision was taken before Finance Minister Peer Steinbrueck shot to the fore as the most visible Social Democrat in the Merkel government by announcing bank bail-outs and campaigning for stricter world rules on the finance industry.

The SPD has split the roles of national chairman and of candidate for chancellor several times in its history, but the repeated changes in post since 2004 have been unprecedented.

In short succession, the position has been held by Schroeder, Muntefering, Brandenburg Premier Matthias Platzeck and Beck.

Muntefering resigned the post in late 2005 after a dispute with senior SPD officials, but that feud had been forgiven.

Last year he retired from public life to care for his dying wife, Ankepetra, then returned to active politics after her death. (dpa)

