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Gunny stays “Semper Fi” to MND-C Soldiers

SPC. JUSTIN SNYDER
MND-C



CAMP VICTORY, Iraq – When Sgt. 1st Class Brandon Windes, the last service member in line, walked into the tent behind the Victory Stage Dec. 3, he let out a sigh of relief.

It was 1:39 a.m., and nearly eight hours earlier, R. Lee Ermey, more commonly known as “Gunny,” first took to the stage as part of the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/5th Fleet Holiday tour.

Ermey kicked off the long night by delivering a greeting to the troops similar to the one he gave his trainees in his legendary performance as tough drill instructor Gunnery Sergeant Hartmann in Stanley Kubrick’s “Full Metal Jacket.”

He told stories about his career and movies; he provided holiday care packages and live Christmas trees to the troops.

“Years ago, I had a drill sergeant who told me I could do any mission I set my mind to,” said Ermey. “I’ve been very blessed with a long career, and now, I’m just coasting, and I’m having a great time doing it.”

Gunny told the Soldiers that this was his third trip to Baghdad. He commented on the improvements made since his first visit in the early stages of the war and said to the troops, “You motivate me, and I’m going to see everyone tonight.”

Windes, along with hundreds of other service members, took Gunny up on his promise and waited in the cold weather outside the tent, just for a chance to meet their favorite drill sergeant; some of them for nearly seven hours.

“(Gunny) said he had a flight to catch at 3:30 a.m., and he’d stay right up until then,” said Windes, who was working



Photo by Spc. Justin Snyder

Gunny signs an autograph while a “Gunny Approved” hat sits on the table. Four hundred of these hats were handed out as part of the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/5th Fleet Holiday tour Dec. 3.

late and arrived during the wee hours of the morning. “I was shocked when I came out to see him still here signing away and talking. It’s a true testament to how much this guy really cares.”

Gunny continued greeting each and every service member with a smile, an autograph and a photo; all while engaging in casual conversation before ending with a hand shake and sending them off with a stern “Semper Fi.”

“Semper Fi,” short for “Semper Fidelis,” is most notably known as the Latin motto adopted by the United States Marine Corps in 1883 and translates to “always faithful.”

The motto signifies the dedication and loyalty that individual Marines have for “corps and country,” even after leaving service; something Gunny certainly hasn’t forgotten since his days as

a Marine and a drill instructor.

“He’s a great example for all of us,” said Gunnery Sgt. Miguel Cruz, 12th Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq. “Not just for Marines, but for all service members. Even after retiring, he has continued to serve his country, just as he is today.”

Captain Lee Gessner, 2145th Garrison Support Unit waited for hours to meet Gunny and echoed Cruz’s statements.

“I think it’s great what he is doing,” said Gessner, a native of Nashville. “I’ve memorized about half of his lines from his movies, and this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet a very well known guy. If he’s willing to come here, I’ll wait all night just to shake his

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Gunny: Keeping faithful to the very last troop



Photo by Spc. Justin Snyder

Gunny tells a story about his experience in a movie to troops at the Camp Victory stage Dec. 3.

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hand and get a picture.”

Since his retirement from the Marines in 1972 after 11 years of service and several injuries incurred during his tours in Vietnam and Okinawa, Japan, Gunny has been in or a part of approximately 60 films and served as a spokesman for the military.

Some of his most notable performances were “Full Metal Jacket,” “Mississippi Burning,” the latest remake of “The Texas Chainsaw Massacre,” and serving as the voice for a toy soldier in the Disney Pixar film “Toy Story.”

In 2002, he became the first retired military member in the history of the

Marine Corps to be promoted; he was promoted from Staff Sergeant to Gunnery Sergeant.

His most recent project is a show filmed for the History Channel called “Mail Call,” a viewer dictated show where Erme answers questions regarding the military.

The show brought him to Kuwait during the first phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 to film a segment on mail distribution.

It was recently cancelled after a five year run, but a new show, “Lock and Load,” is due to begin filming in the next few weeks. The new project will focus on the progression of American weaponry.

“They are worthy of everything they get and I’m proud to be here serving them.”

– Gunny R. Lee Erme

“We had a good run with “Mail Call,” said Erme. “It was the highest rated television show on the History Channel for the last five years, but they asked me to create a new show. ‘Lock and Load’ is basically ‘Mail Call’ dressed up.”

Erme’s fans are excited about the new show.

“I’m a big fan of all his work, and my kids watch every episode of ‘Mail Call’ back in the states,” said Lt. Col. Karl Schwartz, MNC-I economic analyst from Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. “Throughout his career, he’s done a lot for the military and our Soldiers.

“Mail Call kind of took that to the next level and has taught the kids and the people who don’t exactly know about the military about what we do and our history. I’m excited for ‘Lock and Load’ for that very reason, and I know he’ll do a great job.”

Erme’s proud of his Marine Corps career, and his experiences in movies and television brought him fame and fortune, but he feels he is most lucky to be doing what he’s done for a long time and to have lived a great life.

“I’m proud of all my work, and I’m proud of all these Soldiers,” said Erme.

“They are over here doing all the hard work, and I’m just talking about it on television. They are worthy of everything they get, and I’m proud to be here serving them.”

THE Mountain View

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Soldiers don't have to 'bite the dust' with restaurants in desert

STAFF SGT. MICHEL SAURET
MND-C



CAMP VICTORY – What would football parties and get-togethers be like without a slice of pizza?

Fortunately, most deployed Soldiers don't have to face that dilemma as military bases in Iraq continue to add brand-name restaurants from home.

This is thanks in part by the Army & Air Force Exchange Service, which helps bring together the stores that fulfill service members' needs – whether in the states or overseas.

"It always goes back to a morale factor," said Roland Knight, the senior AAFES food business manager for military bases in Iraq. "The Soldier having a little taste of home out here in the environment we're working under ... Yeah they have a (dining facility), but (now) they have a piece of Main Street U.S.A. (as well)."

With the help of AAFES, Soldiers can enjoy just about every taste of home they might crave, from coffee with a Cinnabon® to a burger fit for a king. The restaurants give Soldiers additional options and a break from the crowded chow halls.

"It (gives you) a smaller place where you don't have to sit with 500 people in a dining facility," said Sgt. Brandon Bresson, of Minneota, Minn., a paralegal for 2nd Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michel Sauret

Soldiers from the 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade celebrate a birthday party with some pizza at the Green Beans CoffeeSM Worldcafé on Camp Victory Nov. 7.

Regiment.

For some Soldiers, however, health is another motivator, more so than selection.

"That's why I come here," said Sgt. 1st Class Donald Matthews, of Tampa, Fla., after grabbing a toasted turkey on honey oat at Subway®. He is an air traffic controller at the air operations cell for 10th Mountain Division. "It gives you a break

from the grease. I try to stay healthy and lift weights."

Given that most of these restaurants are fast-food places, they also make it easier on Soldiers by allowing them to grab food on the go.

"It beats sitting on the back of my porch trying to shoot my dinner," said

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Inducting our newest NCOs

Photos by Spc. Justin Snyder



(Left) Master Sgt. Joshua Nieratko, 10th Mountain Division acting first sergeant and a native of Santa Barbera, Calif., ceremoniously wets the stripes of Sgt. Jose Cruz Jr., Task Force Mountain Headquarters Supply sergeant and a native of Providence, R.I., during an NCO Induction ceremony held at the Hope Chapel on Camp Victory Dec.6.



(Above) Soldiers from Task Force Gauntlet take their Oath of Charge from Command Sgt. Major Tyrone Smoot, Divison Special Troops Battalion senior noncommissioned officer, during an NCO Induction ceremony held at the Hope Chapel on Camp Victory Dec. 6.

Staff Section Round-up

EO Corner: Religious Accommodation

As the Army becomes a more and more diverse organization comprised of individuals from many faiths and religions, it is important for Soldiers and leaders to understand the Army's policies on religious accommodations.

When the term religion is used, most people think about church, faith or organized beliefs. Webster's defines religion as "an organized system of beliefs and rituals centering on a supernatural being or beings." Religion is basically an outward formal expression of one's spirituality.

The Army places a high value on the rights of service members to observe the tenets of their respective religions. It is the Army's policy to approve requests for accommodation of religious practices when they will not have an adverse impact on readiness, unit cohesion, health, safety, discipline or otherwise interfere with the Soldier's military duties or the mission of the unit. What this means is the accommodation of a Soldier's religious practices cannot be guaranteed at all times, but must depend on military necessity.

When religious faith and practices place Soldiers in conflict with military requirements, Soldiers should submit a written request to their commander for an accommodation of religious practices. In many cases, the unit commander can easily grant the accommodation. In other situations, the commander may be unable to grant full accommodation due to the nature of the request, the mission of the unit or other extenuating circumstances.

Religion is one of the five protected categories within Equal Opportunity and it is part of our mission to advise

leaders on preventing any religious discrimination within the organization. Religious discrimination is any action, intended or unintended, that unlawfully or unjustly results in unequal treatment of a person or groups based on religion and for which distinctions are not rational considerations.

Examples could be:

- o Discounting the religious beliefs of others
- o Religious jokes/slurs
- o Compulsory services
- o Exclusionary prayer
- o Stereotyping people by their religion
- o Not associating with people because of their religious beliefs
- o Not making arrangements to provide alternative services
- o Lack of concern

With the holiday season in full swing, leaders should remember the importance of accommodation to the member. The Army places a high value on the rights of individuals to observe their religious tenets and practice those beliefs. If the accommodation will not have an adverse impact on the unit mission, cohesion, health, safety, discipline or readiness, the request should be granted.

Thanks,
MND-C EO Team

RESTAURANTS: *Wetting palates in the desert*

From page 3

Staff Sgt. Robert Larson, who is actually from Edison, N.J., but was teasing a fellow Soldier who has done just that.

Larson's favorite place is North End Pizza, found on Liberty Base. His favorite toppings are chicken and pineapple, though those are yet to be added to the menu here. He typically grabs a few pizzas with some colleagues from the judge advocate general section and other 10th Mountain Division Soldiers once or twice a month. Though, if he could pick a restaurant to add to Camp Victory, he would choose Olive Garden.

In fact, all of the restaurants on military installations are chosen by the garrison command at the request of its Soldiers.

The process to open a new restaurant takes anywhere between three and six months. The mayor cell from a requesting base will typically help out in bringing the new eatery. They propose it to

AAFES, while also submitting to the military chain of command for approval.

"AAFES is just the executing agent because we're responsible for the franchise," said Knight, who has been with the company for 20 years. "The biggest factor is determined ... by garrison, the mayor cell (and) what they want to have. When they figure that out, and it's pushed through the approval process ... then we can build a unit to send to that location."

The majority of the store units, which are built like trailers, come from Kuwait, though some are fabricated by local companies here in Iraq. It's up to the franchise owner to decide. Then, it's shipped into country as a complete unit. From there, equipment is mostly purchased from the U.S.

"My job being the senior food manager, the support for all the operations within theater is handled by AAFES," said Knight, who has been working in Iraq for eight months. "They are gov-

erned to the same standards, the same rules and regulations as any other operation on any other military installation."

Dividends from these restaurants go back into the Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs on base. This gives benefits right back to the military members purchasing food at the restaurants. The percentage allocated to MWR is decided based on a store's income and the number of troops on post.

"Your MWR programs are benefitted directly from every operation that we have in theater," Knight said.

For Knight, that's what makes the job worthwhile: helping the Soldiers.

"If you can imagine being a forward operating base with nothing else out there, and all of a sudden, here comes a Pizza Hut™ and a Subway®; the reaction we got from the Soldiers on the ground ... it's self rewarding. To be able to see that is priceless. You can't replace the look on a Soldier's face because he has a slice of pizza or Subway out here in theater."

Headline Round-up

U.S. News:

In the harsh light of the morning after his sentencing, O.J. Simpson's future was clear Dec. 6. His new home will be a prison cell in the Nevada desert; his door to freedom an appeal of a trial his lawyers said was filled with errors. Yale Galanter, Simpson's lawyer, has cited six initial issues for appeal. The most significant concern could be the exclusion of blacks from the jury selection. The defense also will protest the judge allowing comments about Simpson's 1994 Los Angeles murder case in which he was acquitted of killing his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ron Goldman. Simpson remained at the Clark County jail where he has been housed since his conviction Oct. 3, along with co-defendant Clarence "C.J." Stewart. The two men were found guilty of 12 criminal charges, including kidnapping, armed robbery and assault with a deadly weapon.

Military News:

Most of the additional American troops arriving in Afghanistan early next year will be deployed near the capital, Kabul, American military commanders there said. It will be the first time American or Coalition forces have been deployed in large numbers on the southern flank of the city. The move underscores the difficult choices confronting American military commanders as they try to apportion a limited number of forces between Afghanistan and Iraq.

Entertainment:

Actress Alyssa Milano has sought a temporary restraining order against a Northern California man who she says hiked miles to try to reach her. A statement from Milano said the man has repeatedly tried to meet her and displayed increasingly threatening behavior. It also said he tried to gain access to an upcoming event where she is scheduled to appear. Milano is also seeking protection for her parents and brother. A hearing is scheduled for January. Milano is best known for her television roles in television "Who's the Boss?" and "Charmed."

Sports News:

Navy beat Army 34-0 Dec. 6 for its seventh straight win between service the academies.

Quote of the Day

"To be satisfied with a little is the greatest wisdom; and he that increaseth his riches, increaseth his cares; but a contented mind is a hidden treasure, and trouble findeth it not." – Akhenaton

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For the answer to today's puzzle, go to:



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WHAT DID YOU THINK OF GUNNY'S VISIT?

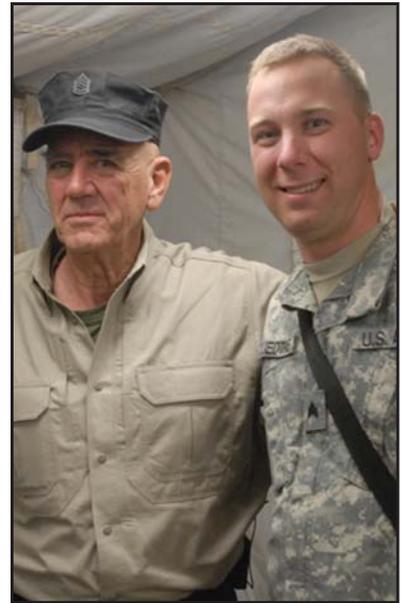


Photo by Spc. Justin Snyder

"I think it's great that he is out here supporting his fellow comrades. He may be a movie star and famous, but tonight, he's just one of us," said Sgt. Kevin Luedtke, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Force Protection, from Thiensville, Wis.

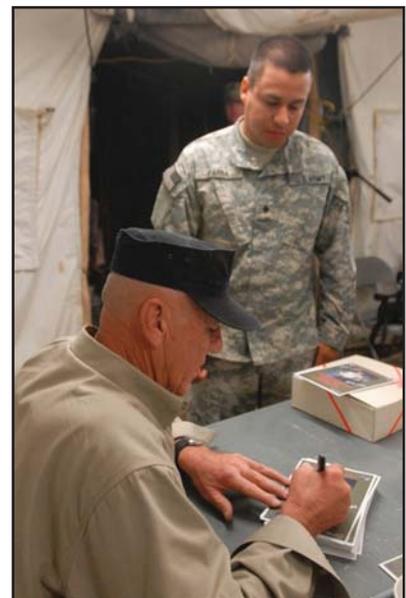


Photo by Spc. Justin Snyder

"It means a lot to me that he came out and visited us in a war zone, especially since he stayed so late," said Spc. Jamie Parra, 124th Cavalry Division and a native of Irving, Texas.