

EXPEDITIONARY TIMES

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Vol. 1, Issue 28

Transfer of Authority

Fort Sill's 100th BSB takes over for 129th CSSB

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Smith rifle range gets restored

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Holiday in Iraq

Sustainers celebrate with parade; Santa runs 5K at Q-West

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SMA brings Tour

Entertainers treat JBB to an early holiday treat

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Soldiers build Swing Set, page 8



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Adam V. Shaw

Children from the Jaddilah Soflih Elementary School in Jaddilah Soflih play on their new swing set. Soldiers from the personal security team, Bravo Company, 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sust. Bde., spent two days building the set and delivered it to the school, Dec. 17.

Iraqi Transportation Network makes history

BY PFC. MICHAEL SYNER
10TH SUST. BDE. PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – In a step forward for Iraqi civil capacity, the Iraqi Transportation Network made history Dec. 20, as it delivered 14 up-armored humvees to Camp Taji.

The ITN is an all-Iraqi consortium of tribally owned trucking companies that moves cargo across Iraq. ITN has completed more than 3,700 missions since May 2, 2008 without incident or loss of cargo. This delivery of M1114 humvees allowed the ITN prove it is ready to start handling other types of cargo essential to the sustainment of Iraq and Coalition forces.

One of the planners for the event, Capt. Carey W. Menifee, logistics planner, 3rd Sustainment

Command (Expeditionary) described the importance of the ITN saying, “our work here is deeply grounded in expanding Iraqi civil capacity, in particular, the birth of the Iraqi Transportation Network.”

“This is the first time that Iraq has had a private sector trucking industry,” he said

The drivers delivered 14 American humvees from Victory Base Complex, near Baghdad to the Redistribution Property Accountability Team at Camp Taji, a movement of approximately 30 miles.

“[The] M1114s are actually up-armored humvees and for this mission, these M1114s are actually being transferred over to the Government of Iraq,” said Menifee.

The ITN’s successful mission means more than just proving it is ready to handle these and other types of cargo. This historic delivery of cargo itself has an

important role in the progress and reconstruction of Iraq.

Menifee explained what would happen next with the humvees.

“A lot of these M1114s will be used by the national police, regional police, and also by the Government of Iraq’s security forces,” he said.

The ITN’s continued success allows Iraqis to take ownership in their transportation networks and future. The ITN also promises jobs to Iraqis, while allowing Coalition forces to gradually transition more and more transportation

and cargo missions to their Iraqi partners.

“If Americans could come and see the progress that has been made here in Iraq they would be overwhelmed,” concluded Menifee.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Beau Stefka

The Iraqi Transportation Network convoy of up-armored M1114 humvees arrives at Camp Taji, Iraq from Victory Base Complex, Dec. 19. The ITN is part of the transfer of humvees to the Iraqi Government for their Iraqi Security Forces.

332 ESFS Blotter

18 Dec. – 24 Dec.

Patrol Response/Verbal Altercation:

An Air Force member telephoned security forces about a verbal altercation. SF patrols arrived on-scene and transported the involved parties to the Eagles Nest. Both individuals provided statements regarding the incident. The members were released to their unit first sergeant.

Suspicious Package:

Fire department personnel notified security forces that they were responding to a report of a suspicious package. SF patrols were dispatched, arrived on-scene, and set up a cordon. The fire department requested bio-environmental respond, who later arrived on-scene. They determined the package and its substance to be non-dangerous.

UXO Discovery:

Fire department personnel notified security forces of a UXO discovery. SF patrols responded, initiated cordon procedures, and stood by for EOD response. EOD arrived on-scene and deemed the UXO to be a 57-mm rocket. The rocket was detonated in-place by EOD.

Larceny of Private Property:

An Air Force member contacted security forces in reference to theft of private property. SF patrols arrived on-scene and made contact with the victim. The patrolmen assisted the victim with a statement. The victim stated that she placed her property on a table, was distracted for a moment, and when she went to retrieve her property, it was missing. Patrolmen advised the victim to report to security forces after 72 hours for a copy of the report.

Theft of Government Property:

A Soldier entered the Eagles Nest to notify security forces of theft of government property. An SF patrol was dispatched to the Eagles Nest and assisted the Soldier with a statement. The Soldier stated that the government property was removed from his van while it was parked. The Soldier was briefed to inform his chain of command and contact security forces if the property was recovered.

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EXPEDITIONARY TIMES

3^d ESC Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Michael J. Lally

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Mission Statement: The Expeditionary Times Staff publishes a weekly newspaper with a primary mission of providing command information to all Servicemembers, partners, and Families of the 3^d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) team and a secondary mission of providing a means for units on Joint Base Balad to disseminate command information to their audiences.

JBB Religious Service Schedule

PROTESTANT

TRADITIONAL

Sunday 0730 Air Force Hospital Chapel
 0930 Provider Chapel
 1030 Freedom Chapel (West side)
 1100 Castle Heights (Bldg 4155)
 1730 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)
 2000 Air Force Hospital Chapel

HISPANIC SERVICE

Saturday 1930 Provider Chapel

GOSPEL

Sunday 1100 MWR East building
 1200 Freedom Chapel (West side)
 1230 Gilbert Mem. Chapel (H-6)
 1900 Provider Chapel

CONTEMPORARY

Sunday 0900 MWR East building
 1030 Gilbert Mem. Chapel (H-6)
 1400 Castle Heights (Bldg 4155)
 1900 Freedom Chapel (West side)
 Wednesday 2000 Gilbert Mem. Chapel (H-6)

LITURGICAL

Sunday 1500 Gilbert Chapel (H-6)

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Saturday 0900 Provider Chapel

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Sunday 1530 Castle Heights (Bldg 4155)

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Call the Provider Chapel

LATTER DAY SAINTS (MORMON)

Sunday 1300 Provider Chapel
 1530 Freedom Chapel (West side)
 1900 Gilbert Mem. Chapel (H-6)

ROMAN CATHOLIC MASS

Saturday 1700 Gilbert Mem. Chapel (H-6)
(Sacrament of Reconciliation Sat 1600 or by appointment)

Sunday 2000 Freedom Chapel (West side)
 0830 Gilbert Mem. Chapel (H-6)
 1100 Provider Chapel
 1100 Air Force Hospital Chapel

Thursday 1100 Air Force Hospital Chapel
 Mon, Wed, Fri 1700 Gilbert Mem. Chapel (H-6)

JEWISH SHABBAT SERVICES

Friday 1700 Gilbert Mem. Chapel (H-6)
 Saturday 0800 Gilbert Mem. Chapel (H-6)
 1700 Gilbert Mem. Chapel (H-6)

ISLAMIC PRAYER

Friday 1230 Provider Chapel

PAGAN/WICCAN FELLOWSHIP

Thursday 1900 Eden Chapel
 Saturday 1900 Eden Chapel

GREEK ORTHODOX

Sunday 0900 Provider Annex

For more information, call
 Gilbert Chapel: 433-7703
 Provider Chapel: 433-2430
 Freedom Chapel: 443-6303

Hooahs of the Week



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Alex N. Snyder

Capt. Christopher A. Roback, of Eau Claire, Wisc. and the deputy chief of reset redistribution section, 3^d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), is congratulated by Brig. Gen. Michael J. Lally, 3^d ESC commanding general, for being selected as a Dec. 14 to 20, "Hooah Soldier of the Week." Roback was given the award for his efforts in putting together a training event on proper blocking and bracing procedures.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Alex N. Snyder

1st Lt. Tabitha Carolina of Oklahoma City and the 3^d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) assistant operations officer, is congratulated by Brig. Gen. Michael J. Lally, 3^d ESC commanding general, for being selected as a Dec. 14 to 20, "Hooah Soldier of the Week." Carolina was given the award for her efforts in coordinating the training event on proper blocking and bracing procedures.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Alex N. Snyder

Sgt. 1st Class, Linda Walls, of Carrollton, Ga. and the 3^d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) operations non-commissioned officer in charge for the reset redistribution, is congratulated by Brig. Gen. Michael J. Lally, 3^d ESC commanding general, for being selected Dec. 14 to 20, "Hooah Soldier of the Week." Walsh was given the award for her efforts in putting together the training event on proper blocking and bracing procedures.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Amanda Tucker

Sgt. 1st Class Terrance Demery, a Detroit, Mich. native and the G1 strength manager for the 3^d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) is congratulated by Brig. Gen. Michael J. Lally, 3^d ESC commanding general, for being selected this week's, "Hooah Soldier of the Week".

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
3^d SUSTAINMENT COMMAND (EXPEDITIONARY)
Joint Base Balad
APO AE 09391

AETV-CG

22 December 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR See Distribution

SUBJECT: Commanding General's Holiday Message 2008

1. Wherever you may find yourself this holiday season – on the road, among friends, or at some remote location - please take time to pause and reflect on the many successes and blessings we've shared in 2008, and prepare yourself for the exciting New Year ahead of us. Regardless of the religion or holiday we observe during this season, let us wish for peace, safety and good will for all in the coming New Year.
2. Whether this is your first or fifth holiday season away from home, understand that Iraq remains a dangerous place and we are all at risk. While escorting convoys, transporting supplies, or simply conducting day-to-day operations, the safety of our service members is paramount. All leaders must review safety guidance and focus on accident prevention. Additionally, this particular time of year combined with separation from home can lead to a number of mental health issues. Remember - everyone has a battle-buddy who watches out for their well-being. If something doesn't seem right with your buddy – ask them if they are ok, demonstrate care and concern, and escort them to a member of the chain of command, a chaplain, or mental health professional. It is never acceptable to leave a comrade behind whether in combat – or on the FOB.
3. This New Year will bring many changes – a new security agreement, provincial elections, and the inauguration of our own president. Our mission, however, remains constant. No matter the size, location, or mission of Coalition Forces in Iraq – we will and must deliver what they need – any time – anywhere – and in any environment. Do not forget that the eyes of your fellow Americans are upon you and your actions. Your efforts and professionalism have earned their heartfelt respect and gratitude.
4. To you and your Families, I extend my undying gratitude for all that you do and continue to do in service to our country. Enjoy the holiday season and I look forward to working with each of you in the exciting and challenging New Year.
5. Sustaining the Line!

*Enjoy the Holidays!
Stay Safe!*

Michael J. Lally
MICHAEL J. LALLY
BG, USA
Commanding

Distribution: A

129th CSSB Transfers Authority to HHC, 100th BSB

BY SPC. KELLY ANNE BECK
Expeditionary Times Staff

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – The 129th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion from Ft. Campbell, Ky. transferred authority to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 100th Brigade Support Battalion from Ft. Sill, Okla. during a ceremony at the Morale Welfare Recreation-East here, Dec. 18.

While supporting the 3^d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), the 129th CSSB was stationed in Taqaddum providing direct logistics and general support to both Army and Marine units.

Within the 13 months spent at TQ, they executed over 900 convoys that escorted more than 13,000 commodity trucks, covered more than 1.2 million vehicle miles, moved more than 45 million gallons of fuel, supported four different combat logistics battalions and supported ten forward and contingency operating bases.

When the deployment started there was an average of eight incidents against Coalition forces a day, thirteen months later it was reduced to two incidents per day. Lt. Col. Doyle Lassitter, a native of Pensacola, Fla. and battalion commander of the 129th said he credits the decrease in incidents to his Soldiers' hard work and their "partnership with Iraqi forces."

Soldiers under the 129th

CSSB built an education center that contains 30 computers and implemented six General Technical improvement classes for 180 Marines, Soldiers and Sailors. "After taking the class, their scores were 12 percent higher on average," said Lassitter.

They conducted one of the two Sept. 11 America Supports You Freedom Walks in remembrance. The 129th CSSB's Command Sgt. Maj. Delbert Hoskins implemented a quarterly warrior skill competition program that is now used by many brigades.

Soldiers, Marines and Sailors would compete with each other on basic warrior tasks and drills. From putting an I.V. in another Soldier, land navigation or basic marksmanship, the service members would compete to

see who would complete the tasks quickest and to the best standard.

"The emphasis was on tasks that would be most beneficial to those Soldiers that would be going outside the wire," said Lassitter.

Several Soldiers from the battalion also trained members of the Iraqi Army in maintenance training on humvees for seven months in Habaniyah. Not only did they train them on how to maintain their vehicles, but also how to conduct maintenance safely and while wearing the correct protective equipment.

Although the Soldiers had many missions throughout their deployment, they feel most accomplished for growing as Soldiers and having everyone return safely.

"The most rewarding is obviously mission accomplishment," said Lassitter, "but more important than that is to see my subordinate staff members as well as company elements professionally develop and grow to become better at executing missions."

More than 2,500 Soldiers are in the battalion, and support 11 different company elements and five separate platoon sized units with logistics and maneuver capabilities.

"I feel like it (the deployment) was a success," said Hoskins. "Having all these Soldiers under our command, and out of the 2,500 Soldiers, no one was injured and everyone is returning home."

Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree!

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SPC. HILLARY R. MCKEY
44th MHD

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq - The Army and Air Force Exchange Service staff here sponsored a Christmas tree competition between Dec. 5 and 18. The competition had five Christmas tree theme categories: deployed; traditional; Charlie Brown; innovative and most original.

The competition was a collaborative effort between the AAFES managers here and shared their spirit of Christmas with service members, according to Kelly Franz, the AAFES east side Base Exchange/ Post Exchange manager and Doug Jeffries, the central Iraq general manager.

The 3^d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) was especially receptive to the Christmas spirit; three of the five categories were won by Soldiers in the 3^d ESC.

Capt. James S. DuPré, a native of Atlanta, Ga. and an administrative and fiscal law attorney for the 3^d ESC, won first place for the Charlie Brown category.

"Christmas tree decorations are one of my obsessions," said DuPré.

DuPré had put up his tree, and found out about the competition through an e-mail. It was an easy choice to enter the competition from there, he said. DuPré was not surprised that he won in the Charlie Brown category.

"Charlie Brown's tree was

all about making a lot out of a little."

Sgt. 1st Class Adam J. McKinney, native of Indianapolis,



Sgt. 1st Class Adam J. McKinney, native of Indianapolis, Ind., and a career counselor for 3^d ESC, won the prize for the traditional category with a Christmas tree with strings of lights and Army themed ornaments.

Ind., and a career counselor for 3^d ESC, won the prize for the traditional category: a tree

with strings of lights and Army-themed ornaments ranging from the 3^d ESC to a United Services Organizations Santa waving at passersby. McKinney was planning to put up a tree in his building and after hearing about the contest at a weekly meeting, decided to enter.

Spc. Thomas A. MacGregor, native of St. Cloud, Minn. and technical engineer for the 3^d ESC G7, won the prize for the deployed themed tree. MacGregor's Christmas tree was made of barbed wire and tinsel, a chimney made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe and a fireplace made



Spc. Thomas A. MacGregor, native of St. Cloud, Minn. and technical engineer for the 3^d ESC G7, won the prize for the deployed themed tree. MacGregor's combat Christmas tree was engineered with barbed wire and tinsel, a chimney made of PVC pipe and a fireplace made of sandbags with stockings.

of sandbags with stockings that hung with care.

"After I built the tree, I needed to decorate it so it wouldn't look like a bunker," said MacGregor.

Senior Airman Matthew K. Mannion from Little Rock, Ark., entered the competition after he received an e-mail. Mannion, with the help of his fellow Airmen: Staff Sgt. Joshua Reddish; Staff Sgt. Tylor Arvidson; Staff Sgt. Robert West; Senior Airman Devin Williams and Senior Airman Josh Brady of the 332nd Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron structural maintenance shop, decorated their 10-foot tall green metal-cutting band saw.

They had created a snow man and a Santa Claus a few days before, but the only thing left to create was the tree. The band saw was delivered a few weeks before they found out about the competition. Since they didn't have a tree to decorate, they chose to decorate their green band saw like a Christmas tree, said Mannion. Because of this team decision, the team took the prize for most original.

Senior Airman Wayne A. Hancock from Moody Air Force Base, Ga. was given an AAFES



Capt. James S. DuPré, native of Atlanta, Ga. and an administrative and fiscal law attorney for the 3^d ESC won first place for the Charlie Brown category at the 2008 AAFES Christmas tree contest held at Joint Base Balad, Dec. 18.

flyer about the contest from his co-workers. This sparked ideas and led to the unusual combination that took the prize for the innovative category.

"It's not every day you see a tree made out of a broom handle, wire and water bottles," said Hancock.

The recipients of the tree competition said they will use their prizes for Christmas parties or other improvements in their work place.

Service members here showed their creativity and details of how much Christmas spirit they have, even when far away from home and their families.

Equal Opportunity Program Celebrates Holiday Diversity

BY SGT. HEATHER WRIGHT
287th Sustainment Brigade
Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE ADDER, Iraq – For many Soldiers, December brings to mind Christmas trees, family feasts, church and “Black Friday,” the big shopping day after Thanksgiving. The contingency operating base Adder’s equal opportunity committee presented a different version of December holiday events on Dec. 20.

The “Celebrations around the World Program” highlighted seven different holidays that occur in December around the world: Saint Nicholas Day; Eid-Adha or Feast of Sacrifice; Saint Lucy’s Day also known as Santa Lucia Day; Hanukkah; Christmas; Kwanzaa and

Omisoka.

Guest speaker Lt. Col. David B. Whaling, commander of the 157th Combat Services Support Battalion reminded the audience of the importance of diversity.

“These equal opportunity celebrations are the key to our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, civilians and Coalition forces, understanding the many cultures which form the very fabric of our great nation,” said Whaling. He said the military allows a unique opportunity for Soldiers to interact and learn about other cultures as they travel. “When we leave here today, we will have a better understanding of our Coalition forces’ diversity,” said Whaling.

The show began with Polynesian dancers dancing a traditional dance, He Mele No Lilo. Dressed in colorful dresses and leis, the four dancers told a story of the ocean and

how families bond during the holidays.

Soldiers and Airmen from COB Adder then outlined six of the seven December celebrations.

Omisoka is a Japanese celebration that begins with Osouji, a ritual cleansing of house and mind in early December and continues through New Year’s Eve. On Dec. 30, the Japanese share a meal of soba, long buckwheat noodles that represent the end of the old year and the beginning of the new. At approximately 11:00 p.m., families will travel to a Buddhist or Shinto temple, where a large brass bell will ring 108 times, one for each of the 108 sins that prevents people from attaining clarity and peace. At midnight, the final strike indicates a cleansing of spirit and mind.

Hanukkah, a Jewish holiday, starts on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev and falls

between the end of November and the end of December, on a Gregorian calendar. Hanukkah is a celebration of the defeat of a large Greek army at the hand of a small Jewish force, the Macabees, and the rededication of the Temple after the Greek occupation. Hanukkah also celebrates the miracle of the sacred oil. There was only one vial of sacred oil to keep the Menorah, or eight-stick candelabra, a-light for the eight day rededication ceremony. The single vial of oil burned for eight days and nights. Today, one candlestick of the Menorah is lit every night, representing the miracle of the oil. It is a tradition to eat fried foods, representing the oil, during Hanukkah. Also a tradition are the giving of money or gifts to children and the playing of games with a dreidel.

Saint Nicolas Day is the celebration of Nicholas, a Bishop of Myra (present day

Turkey) and falls on the sixth of December. He is attributed with many miracles including the resurrection of three murdered children, saving the life of a sailor and providing dowries for three young women. In one version of that story, the young woman hangs her stockings to dry by the fireplace and Saint Nicholas throws a purse of gold down the chimney where it lands in her stocking. Saint Nicholas apparently used the money from his wealthy parents to assist the poor, putting coins in the shoes of people who leave them outside.

Santa Lucia Day is observed on Dec. 13. Santa Lucia was an Italian saint who was martyred under the Roman empire. She is known for helping Christians hiding in the catacombs. In order to bring supplies with her, she needed to have both hands free. She attached candles to a wreath

See Diversity Page 7



Martin Luther King Jr. Day 5K run

JOINT BASE BALAD

Come celebrate. Start the day with a run

Date: Jan. 15, 2009
Start point: Holt Stadium
Opening remarks: 6:15 a.m.
Run start time: 6:30 a.m.

T-shirts to be given to the first 1,000 finishers

POC: SFC Shonda Kelley, 330th Trans. Bn. 433-2417
 MSG Tuynuykua Jackson, 3^d ESC 433-2527
 MSgt Joseph Newton, 332nd AEW 443-8459




JOINT BASE BALAD




OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE



Editor's Note: This is an informational article that describes why some internet websites in Iraq have been slowed or currently restricted. The AP article was originally published on Dec. 23.

Repair crews reach damaged undersea cables

Much of the Middle East without Web, phone access for two days

BY ADAM SCHRECK
The Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A robotic submarine searched beneath the Mediterranean on Dec. 21 for damaged communications cables, two days after Web and telephone access was knocked out for much of the Middle East.

Telecommunication providers from Cairo to Dubai continued Sunday to scramble to reroute voice and data traffic through potentially costly detours in Asia and North America after the lines running under the Mediterranean Sea were damaged Dec. 19.

Internet access was largely

knocked out for two days in at least six countries that were affected — Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Sudan and Yemen.

It is the second time this year that trans-Mediterranean cables to Europe have been severed. The earlier cut, in late January, was apparently caused by a ship's anchor.

A ship operated by France Telecom's marine division arrived Sunday afternoon at what it believes is the accident site south of Sicily, spokesman Louis-Michel Aymard said.

The crew released a robotic submarine named "Hector" to search for two of the three damaged cables, which are owned by a consortium that

includes the Paris-based telecommunications giant. Once found, the cable ends will be pulled to the surface and repaired on deck — a process that could take several days.

"We have to fix the cable fiber by fiber, and it's a very huge cable," Aymard said. He said the company hopes to have the first line fixed by Thursday.

The third cable is operated by Reliance Globalcom. Officials at that company could not be reached for comment.

Regional communication providers' efforts to redirect voice and data traffic brought some areas back online over the weekend. Still, rolling outages continued to plague large parts of the region.

Emirati provider Etisalat said Internet service remained at about 85 percent capacity Sunday. The Abu Dhabi-based company was redirecting some of its data traffic through South Asia, spokesman Saeed al-Badi said.

Dubai-based Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Co., better known as Du, said it was sending data and international voice traffic through Asia and the western United States.

"Due to the diversion of all traffic ... eastbound ... customers may be experiencing slower Internet access time than usual. This is the same for all Internet traffic from the region and is likely to continue until

the cables are repaired," the company said.

The Egyptian government said about 80 percent of Internet services had been restored as of Dec. 21. Access was knocked out Dec. 19 and much of Dec. 20. Connection speeds were down in Yemen and in Jordan. There were no major outages in Lebanon but some users experienced spotty access.

Dubai-based airline Emirates, one of the Middle East's most visible companies, said it had to cope with a 30 percent slowdown in online booking times and initially faced telephone problems.

'Team player' receives award for mechanical excellence

BY SGT. 1ST CLASS
KEN MATTINGLY, UPAR
Co. B, 1st Bn., 184th Inf.
Regt.

Infantry Regiment, 30th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, earned the unit's first maintenance excellence award here, Dec. 12.

The company command team gave McKeever the award based on his motivation and initiative in performing preventive maintenance checks and service and maintaining his platoon's vehicles combat

ready at all times.

"He is constantly making sure vehicles are ready for quality control inspection and does not take any short cuts when it comes to PMCS," said Sgt. 1st Class Rafael Rodriguez, company maintenance non-commissioned officer in charge. "Pfc. McKeever is self-motivated and an asset to his platoon and the mission."

McKeever earned the award

for not only his technical ability, but his ability to help others.

"Ultimately, Pfc. McKeever received this award because he's a team player," said Capt. Peter Lewis, company commander. "Sure he knows a lot about cars and applies it to his job, but he helps his peers do a better job maintaining our combat platforms. That's what's important."

This is the first award of its kind presented by the company command team while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The company plans to make this award a monthly event. The award is designed to recognize Soldiers who go "above and beyond" their duties helping the unit's maintenance section.

CONTINGENCY OPERATING
BASE Q-WEST,
Iraq — Pfc. Jerry
McKeever, Bravo
Company, 1st
Battalion,
184th



Diversity Continued from Page 6

on her head. She is also known for the mystery surrounding the fire that wouldn't burn her when sentenced to burn to death. Many young women in Italy, Scandinavia and other countries honor Santa Lucia by dressing in a white gown with a wreath of candles and presenting sweets and bread to their families.

Eid-al-Adha is a Muslim holiday, and usually is the day after the pilgrimage to Mecca. This year, it was on Dec. 8. The

holiday celebrates sacrifice. In the Quran, Abraham prepares to sacrifice his son as God commands. Instead, God provides Abraham with a ram to sacrifice instead. Muslims sacrifice their finest herd animal on Eid-al-Adha. They give one third of the meat to the poor, one third to friends and neighbors, and one third to their family. Charity and taking care of those in need is an important focus during this holiday.

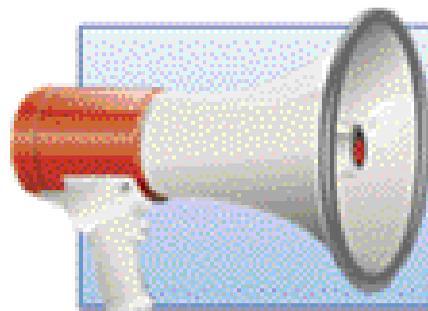
Kwanzaa is a celebration honoring African heritage Dec. 26 to Jan. 1. African-American scholar and social activist, Ron Karenga created Kwanzaa in 1966 as the first African-American holiday. It was created to help African Americans connect with their cultural and historical heritage. Kwanzaa celebrates seven principles: unity; self-determination; collective work and responsibility; cooperative economics; purpose; creativity

and faith. Participants light one candle of the seven-stick kinara, a candelabrum similar to the menorah, every day for each of the seven days. The red, green and black candles represent each of the seven principles.

After the synopsis of the various celebrations, Staff Sgt. Alberto Donato of the 142nd CSSB and guitarist played, and sang Feliz Navidad. The COB Adder gospel choir and the audience completed the celebration with a rousing rendition of "We

Are the World." The audience lingered after the program to enjoy refreshments, gifts of candy and displays, featuring the December's diversity of holiday celebrations.

Col. Robert Schmitt, commander of the 287th Sustainment Brigade, enjoyed the program. "The Equal Opportunity Program did a wonderful job today. I know they'll keep up the good work," he said.



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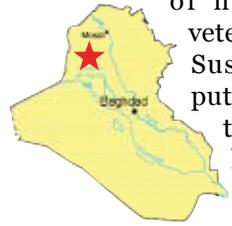
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Personal Security Team swings in to help local Iraqi School

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SGT. 1ST CLASS ADAM V. SHAW
16th Sust. Brigade PAO

JADDILAH SOFLIH, Iraq – A group of hardened combat veterans from the 16th Sustainment Brigade put a lighter touch on their normal duties here, Dec. 17.



Soldiers from the personal security team, Bravo Company, 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sust. Bde. delivered a brand new swing set to the Jaddilah Soflih Elementary School.

Three Soldiers from the PST spent two days building the swing set. The idea came from a Soldier who wanted to do something outside his normal vehicle commander duties.

“We did it for the kids,” said Sgt. Nicholas Nipitella. “They don’t have

much and we’ll do anything we can do to put a smile on their face for a little bit.”

Hussin Ismml, one child’s father said it was a kind gesture from the U.S. Army.

“We thank you very much. We thank the Coalition forces and will do anything we can to help you,” he said.

All the kids rushed to the swing set once it was in place, each one wanting a turn on the school’s new toy.

“It makes me feel good,” said Nipitella as he watched the children swing. “It puts a smile on my face like it does theirs.”

One Iraqi girl, a four-year old named Maehsen, summed up the good deed.

“I love it!”

Approximately 4,000 Soldiers of the 16th Sust. Bde. stationed at contingency operating base Q-West, conducts sustainment operations and logistical

partnerships with Iraqi units across northern Iraq in support of Multi-National Division-North.



Soldiers from the personal security team, Bravo Company, 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, unload a brand new swing set they built for the Jaddilah Soflih Elementary School in Jaddilah Soflih, Iraq, Dec. 17.

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Kenneth O. Preston
Sergeant Major of the Army

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Kut orphans' need for safe haven captures attention of Al Kut Special Weapons and Tactics

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
U.S. AIR FORCE STAFF SGT.
HEIDI DAVIS
SOTF - Central PAO

AL KUT, Iraq – Seven months ago the children's orphanage here was used by terrorists to take aim at those making progress and delivering hope to the area. With no regard for the children's safety inside, criminals climbed to the rooftop and engaged in firefights with local police and Coalition forces.

After months of dedicated policing efforts to defeat terrorists in the region, the Kut Special Weapons and Tactics unit returned to the orphanage recently to turn their attention to the country's future – the children.

With a trailer full of toys donated by their families in America, Coalition forces headed to the orphanage for a medical and humanitarian-assistance visit with KSWAT and Coalition forces medical professionals Dec. 10.

"When we arrived in May, our focus had to be on reducing violence from terrorists," said a Coalition Soldier. "Now, KSWAT and the Iraqi Police are ... planning and executing operations and sending criminals to jail."

Their efforts have led to a reduction



A Coalition forces surgeon checks the ears of an orphan in Al Kut, Iraq, during a joint medical and humanitarian visit, along with Kut Special Weapons and Tactics unit Dec. 10. During the visit, the medics performed routine checkups on approximately 60 children.

in violence over the past several months, which has enabled Coalition forces to focus on missions that go beyond security, he said.

Although violence near the orphanage has diminished immensely, incidents of the past still haunt some of the children.

"Last March, we had to go into one of the inside rooms of the orphanage because the bad guys were shooting from our roof at the Soldiers," said a 13-year-old boy living at the orphanage. "We were caught in the middle."

An orphanage employee explained that most of the children were sent to the facility after terrorists swept into the children's homes and killed many of their parents.

Now, when the children are near people who have weapons

they're fearful, the orphanage employee said, but he tries to quell their apprehension by explaining how KSWAT protects the children from the bad guys.

One of the boys declared, "I feel safe here, and I am happy," he said as a grin swept across his face.

The feeling of trust stems from the personal interaction with KSWAT and CF Soldiers. One of those personal moments was overheard in the orphanage's kitchen, as two Soldiers attempted to break the ice with the boys before their doctor's visit with the medics.

"Who knows a good joke?" one of the Soldiers asked the boys. "OK, well, what kinds of tricks do you play on each other? I know you boys play tricks."

Responding to the sincerity of the Soldiers, the boys began blurting out jokes until their laughter could be heard filling the orphanage. Once the boys were comforted and calm, the Soldiers explained what each boy could expect during the medical exam.

"We evaluated each boy on an individual basis, first asking if they hurt anywhere, if they felt sick or had any rashes," said one of the medics. "Next, we checked their lungs, ears and throat and tested their reflexes, he said.

And like any good doctor's visit for children, each of the boys were handed a lollipop when the exam was complete.

The medics reported the boys to be in good overall health with just a few cases of seasonal influenza, the common cold, or a skin infection.

According to a KSWAT officer, humanitarian and medical visits go a long way to win over the hearts and minds of the children and the adults.

"They take notice and trust us," he said. "This allows us to work together with the community as an organized team to squash terrorism in Iraq and address the well-being of the children."

"One of the simplest ways to meet the needs of a child, especially an orphan, is to give them a piece of this world that they can call their own," said a CF representative. Sometimes, those needs are met by unexpected sources.

"For the spouses at home, it is hard to imagine little children without a mom and dad to love them," said the wife of a Soldier. "We thought the toys would be a small token of kindness from one corner of the world to another."

With boxes of toys within their view, the boys waited eagerly for the moment when the KSWAT would call them forward and pile toys high into their arms.

"They are so beautiful," said a 12-year-old boy, who said his favorite toy received was a soccer ball.

Though each was given several toys to call their own, the boy said he would share with all of "his brothers."

The KSWAT commander, said that the best way to continue support to the children and families in Kut is getting the people involved in KSWAT efforts. He said that as long as KSWAT continues to demonstrate a strong supportive force, the people naturally want to do their part to help.

"We are trying to show them the good we can do for them by giving gifts to poor families, orphans and schools and offering support to solve tribal disputes," the commander said. "Those who were once running scared from KSWAT are now riding behind us in support."



A Kut Special Weapons and Tactics Soldier piles toys into the arms of an orphan in Al Kut, Iraq, during a joint medical and humanitarian visit Coalition forces medical personnel Dec. 10. Each of the approximately 60 orphans received an armful of toys to call their own as a result of a large toy drive conducted by the Families of U.S. Forces in November.

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— General Douglas MacArthur*

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Old soldiers learn a new trade

BY SGT. 1ST CLASS KEN MATTINGLY
UPAR, Co. B, 1st Bn., 184th Inf.
Regt.

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE
Q-WEST, Iraq — Soldiers from Bravo
Company, 1st Battalion,
184th Infantry Regiment,
16th Sustainment Brigade
are preparing for convoy
security missions in
northern Iraq. This is
a new concept for the
light infantry unit



that is equipped to handle movement the old-fashioned way.

“It’s challenging, doing a mission we don’t normally train for back home in the states,” said Sgt. Jurell Snyder, battle sergeant, Co. B, 1st Bn., 184th Inf. Regt. “But it does make us better Soldiers because we cross train in many different areas.”

This deployment marks the second deployment of the company to Iraq.

The first time, the company conducted check point security in and around the International Zone.

“It’s okay, but I would rather be doing an infantryman’s job,” said Staff Sgt. Steven Schmehl, platoon sergeant, 2nd platoon, Co. B. “It’s a challenge learning to prepare for a different type mission.”

“It has definitely helped my military career,” said Staff Sgt. Omar Tejada, the company’s assistant operations non-commissioned officer. “It is more mental than physical.”

For many of the Soldiers in the unit, this is a new mission. The unit is a traditional light infantry maneuver unit. In the past their training had consisted of dismounted combat patrols and combat operations.

The company has rapidly adapted to the new mission, new equipment and new operational procedures. The unit is now currently conducting convoys throughout northern Iraq until next year.



U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. William Gospodnetich
Pfc. Mitchel Miller, gunner, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, 16th Sustainment Brigade conducts final inspections on his vehicle during motor pool operations before moving to the staging area prior to a mission.

Range cleanup pays respect

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SGT. ALEX SNYDER
Expeditionary Times Staff

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq — The Smith Range here wasn’t in the best shape when Sgt. Maj. James Duncan, the sergeant major for the 555th “Triple Nickel” Engineer Brigade, first visited after his unit arrived in August; expended brass, scrap metal and trash littered the area.

“I was kind of shocked and awed (at) the way I’d seen the range,” Duncan said.

After his visit, Duncan decided to do something about it.

The result was Operation Pay Respect; a cleanup effort organized by the Triple Nickel and carried out by a group of approximately 60 volunteers, including Soldiers, Airmen and civilian contractors, from across Joint Base Balad Dec. 13.

Many volunteers picked up trash and debris while others filled and stacked sandbags for the shooting positions. The group removed over 4,600 pounds of debris, Duncan said.

He said the cleanup was designed as a tribute to the range’s namesake, Sgt. 1st Class Paul Smith. Smith was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in 2005 for his efforts to thwart an enemy attack at Baghdad International Airport in 2003.

Duncan said the condition he originally found the range in did not reflect the same standards Smith upheld as a squad leader. Much of the litter was probably left by units who visited the range and failed to clean up afterwards, he said.



Soldiers, Airmen and civilian contractors pose for a photo following Operation Pay Respect, a cleanup event organized by the 555th “Triple Nickel” Engineer Brigade at the Smith Range here Dec. 12. According to Sgt. Maj. James Duncan, the brigade sergeant major, the volunteers removed more than 4,600 pounds of trash and debris from the range.



Pfc. Brook Morse, of the 555th “Triple Nickel” Engineer Brigade’s personal security detail, fills and stacks sandbags during Operation Pay Respect, a cleanup event at the Smith Range here. A group of approximately 60 volunteers, including Soldiers, Airmen, and civilian contractors, turned out for the event.

important than all the others we do each and every day.”

Thompson, who helped advertise the cleanup, said he first met Smith in 1990 when they were stationed together in Bamberg, Germany, before the two deployed in support of Operation Desert Storm. The two became friends and kept in contact with each other over the years, he said.

“We often get so wrapped up in day to day we don’t find time to reflect on those

who have given so much,” Thompson said.

The cleanup concluded with a dedication of a new signboard bearing Smith’s picture and Medal of Honor citation.

Duncan said the Triple Nickel will look after the range until it leaves in August.

“The future projects will be manageable by the Triple Nickel,” Duncan, but said Operation Pay Respect, “could not have been done without all of the support of the volunteers from JBB.”

Future projects include repair work to the bleachers and overhead cover, as well as, some groundwork, he said.

1st Sgt. Patrick Thompson, the first sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 555th Eng. Bde., said he was pleased with the turnout for the cleanup.

“The group of volunteers epitomized the Army values the other day,” Thompson said after the event. “It was great to see so many come out and support a mission no less

Sustainers e



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Adam V. Shaw

Maj. Michael Pierce, communications officer in charge of the 16th Sustainment Brigade, and Maj. Sean Corey, supply officer in charge for the 16th Sust. Bde., race their candy carts during the 16th Sust. Bde. staff's "Christmas 500" at contingency operating base Q-West, Iraq, Dec. 25. The staff had to race their candy carts head-to-head and cross the finish line about 500 centimeters away. Maj. Terry Windmiller, intelligence officer in charge, 16th Sust. Bde., took home the crown.



U.S. Army photo by S

Maj. Michael Mouritsen, human resources team for the 16th Sustainment Brigade, throws a touchdown during the brigade support operation's, "Christmas Battle" at contingency operating base Q-West, Dec. 25. The human resources team pummeled the support operations team, 35-21, in what was billed as the "Battle for SPO Supremacy."



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Mario A. Aguirre

Spc. Amanda Gordon of the 356th Quartermaster Company, sings "Caught in the Rain," at the Joint Base Balad Sustainers Theater, Dec. 25. Gordon, a vocalist for the band DeGeneric, performed live at the holiday variety show.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Alexander Snyder

Members of Alpha Company, 181st Brigade Support Battalion, from Seattle, Wash., roll down New Jersey Avenue as part of the Operation Ho-Ho-Ho Holiday Parade at Joint Base Balad on Dec. 25. The company's float took first place in the parade's float competition.

Enjoy the holiday season in Iraq



Sgt. 1st Class Adam V. Shaw

Brigade looks to
"owl" at contingency
supply and services,

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Adam V. Shaw

Sgt. 1st Class Santa Claus, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, 30th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, runs in the 5K Jingle Bell Jog at contingency operating base Q-West, Iraq, Dec. 25. Sgt. 1st Class Paul Mckenna, operations non-commissioned officer in charge of Alpha Co., 1st Bn., 184th Inf. Regt., 30th CSSB, 16th Sust. Bde., assumed the role of Santa.

Joint Base Balad 2008 Holiday Parade

BY SGT ALEX SNYDER
Expeditionary Times Staff

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – A Christmas parade isn't necessarily what you'd expect to see on your deployment in Iraq.

But for many Soldiers, Airmen and civilians here that's exactly what they saw on Dec. 25 when seven floats scooted down New Jersey Avenue.

The parade was one part of a days-worth of events organized as a joint effort by Army, Air Force, and Morale, Welfare and Recreation personnel here.

Each float paused in front of the judging stand before moving on. Floats were judged by Brig. Gen. Michael J. Lally, the 3^d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) commander, Command Sgt. Maj. Willie C. Tennant Sr., the 3^d ESC command sergeant major, and Air Force Col. Eric H. Best, the director of staff for the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing.

The parade was done both as a morale booster for service members and as a reminder of holiday traditions back home, event organizers said.

"You still have to try and keep some normalcy where you can," said Maj.

Barbara Crawford, an organizer for the event and the E.I.F deputy for the 3^d ESC. "I truly believe that the holiday is not where you are but more about what you make of it."

The parade came about after two months of planning and six weeks of committee meetings, said Master Sgt. Juan Dominguez, the counter-improvised explosive device noncommissioned officer in charge for 3^d ESC.

"If people in the states hear about this, they'll say, 'it's nice to at least know the Soldiers can have somewhat of a normal holiday.'" For others, however, it could send the wrong message, but added: "It's what you make of it."

The parade, while a first for JBB, is not a first for Iraq; a holiday parade was done in 2003 at Log Base Seitz. That event was spearheaded by Col. Curt Higdon, now the operations officer for the 3^d ESC.

Higdon said he thinks this year's events, parade included, went well.

"Things like this take a little time and a lot of dedicated people but the payoff is worth the effort," Higdon said.

Crawford said she will be passing along information on the parade to her replacement.

"Whoever's here next year," she said, "can pick this up and hopefully they will keep the tradition going."



AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq -- Singer Kellie Pickler performs for service members during a USO tour here at the Jordan-Hare Stadium on Dec. 19. Pickler was part of a USO tour that also featured Kid Rock and comedian Lewis Black. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kiyoshi C. Freeman

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Red Cross helps Soldier witness birth of child

STORY AND PHOTO BY
 SPC. KIYOSHI C. FREEMAN
Expeditionary Times Staff

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – An Arizona National Guardsman witnessed the birth of his daughter from halfway around the world at the Red Cross' Legacy Room here on Dec. 15.

Opened in July, the Legacy Room allowed Spc. Mario Aguirre, a personnel administration specialist with the 123rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment and native of El Paso, Texas, to communicate with his wife, who was delivering their second child in Scottsdale, Ariz.

After 16 hours of labor, Aguirre's wife, Elizabeth, gave birth to Gabriela at Scottsdale-Shea Hospital – and Aguirre was there every step of the way.

The Red Cross uses instant messenger services and a webcam to allow Soldiers to experience special, personal events in privacy.

"It's invaluable," said Michael Patton, the team leader for the Red Cross office here. "If a father or a service member gets to witness a special event in their lives that they would normally miss by



Spc. Mario Aguirre, a personnel administrative specialist with the 123rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, and native of El Paso, Texas, shares a joke with his wife, Elizabeth Aguirre, at the Red Cross Legacy Room here on Dec. 15. Elizabeth gave birth to their second child, daughter Gabriela, at the Scottsdale Shea Hospital in Arizona later that day.

being deployed – nothing could replace it."

Aguirre found out about the service through a co-worker, Sgt. Crystal Reidy, a journalist with the 123rd MPAD.

"She got the contact numbers and

all the information," Aguirre said, "and just kept pushing me and pushing me to do it."

The most difficult part was coordinating everything.

Aguirre said it's important to be patient and to get prepared early, at least a week or two in advance. Even with two weeks preparation himself, it took Aguirre a couple hours to establish a good, reliable connection with the hospital's website.

However, Aguirre said it was all worth the effort.

"It almost feels like you're there," he said. "At least it doesn't feel like you're so far away, when you're actually seeing each other and talking to each other and everything."

The Legacy Room is not only for special events. Anyone can reserve time, for whatever they need to do, although special events will always take precedence on the schedule, Patton said.

"All they need to do is give us a call or drop on by," he said.

Presently, about 100 people a week use the Legacy Room, which is a figure Patton said he expects to rise as more people find out about the service.

"The instant communications we have nowadays alleviates a lot of the apprehension and anxiety," Patton said. "We'd go for weeks without getting mail or something like that. You're just kind of wondering – you know something's going on."

A former Soldier himself, Patton said he knows that feeling all too well. He missed the birth of his own child during a deployment, and only saw photographs three weeks afterward, when the mail finally got through.

With modern technology and the assistance of the Red Cross, the Legacy Room aims to alleviate that concern for service members.

"It's not as good as being there, but it's the next best thing," Patton said. "And now (with modern technology) they can sit there and watch it as it happens."

"At least it doesn't feel like you're so far away."

Spc. Mario Aguirre
 123rd MPAD

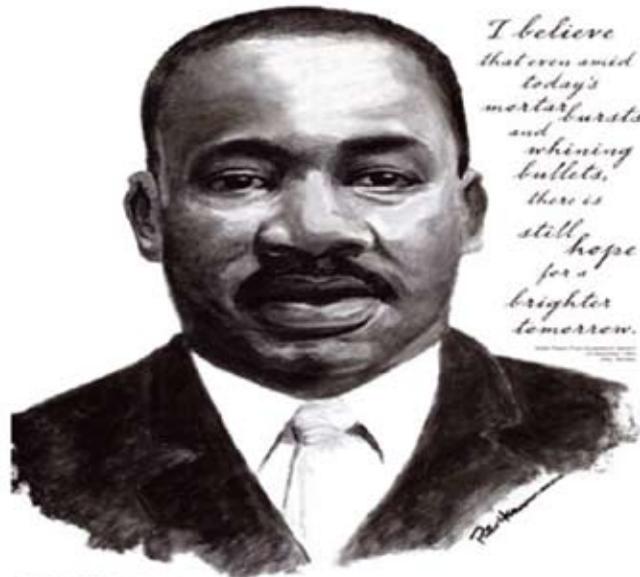


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Prizes for the top three essays will be presented at the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Observance Celebration Luncheon
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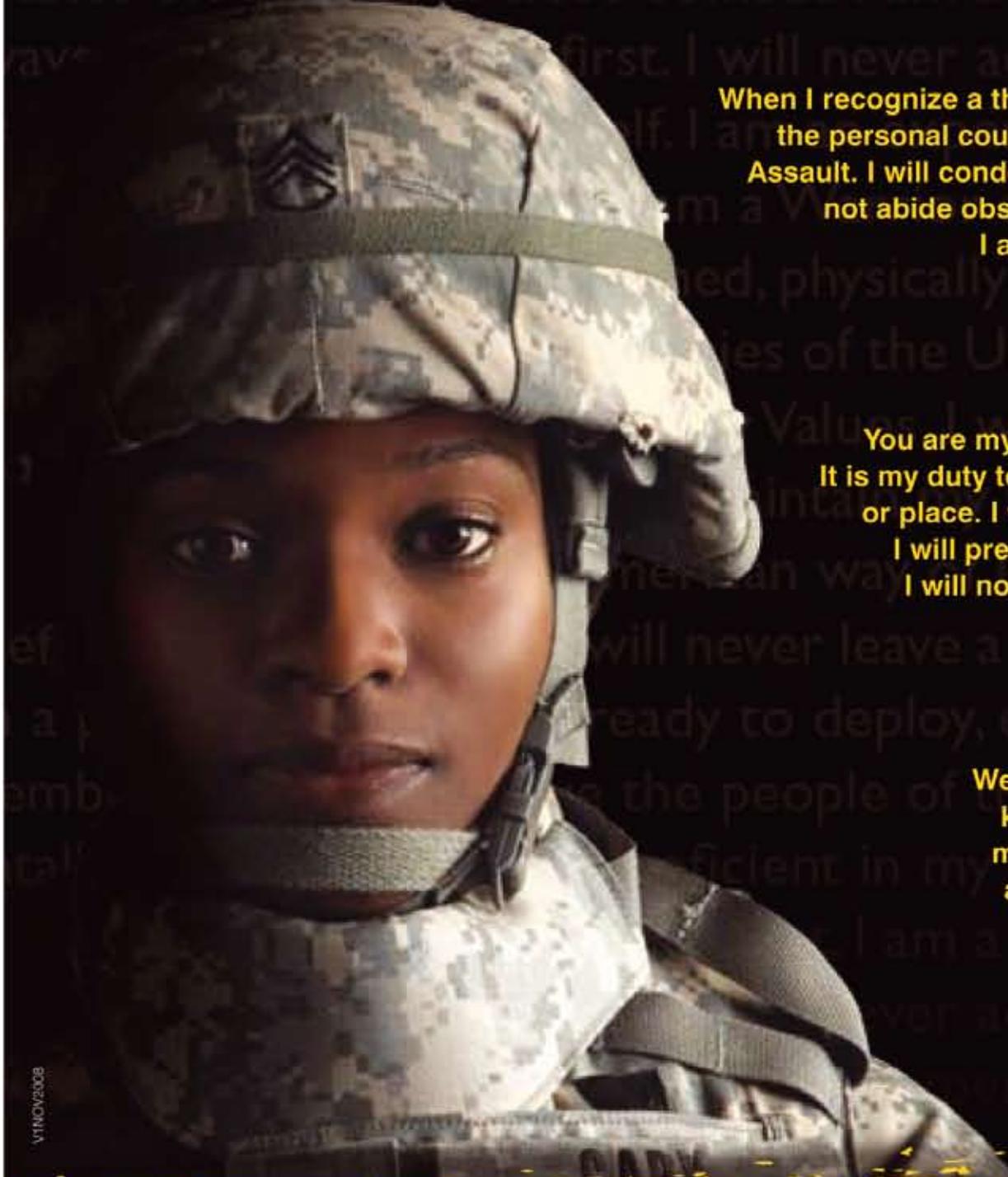
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Sustainers welcome SMA, Hope and Freedom Tour



BY 1ST SGT.
REGINALD M. SMITH
123rd MPAD

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – The Sgt. Maj. of the Army, Kenneth O. Preston, visited with Soldiers Dec. 21 at Joint Base Balad as he joined entertainers from his Hope and Freedom Tour.



Command Sgt. Maj. Willie C. Tennant, 3^d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) command sergeant major, escorted him throughout his tour with one of the first stops being the Air Force Theater Hospital. While there, Preston visited with staff and Soldiers.

During his visit, Preston had lunch with the Soldiers and conducted two separate town hall meetings with junior

enlisted Soldiers and non-commissioned officers stationed at JBB.

“The most important thing for me as I travel and talk to Soldiers is to get your concerns, what’s on your mind, what are you thinking about and what are your questions,” Preston said to the junior enlisted Soldiers.

The SMA also praised the work of Army National Guard and Reserve Soldiers for their continuous support to the war against terrorism.

“We could not do what we’re doing as an Army if it wasn’t for the National Guard and the Reserve,” he said.

In his meeting with the senior leadership, Preston commented on the effectiveness of the Army by saying that, “American Soldiers have done a wonderful job working themselves out of a job.” His statement referenced the success of multiple missions including the Southwest U.S.

border mission, securing airports across the U.S. in the wake of 9-11, and establishing, training, and building Iraqi security forces to help create a more secure Iraq.

While the SMA conducted his town hall meetings, groups of Hope and Freedom Tour entertainers toured JBB and performed at multiple locations throughout the base. Later, the entire Hope and Freedom Tour highlighted by country and western singers, Craig Morgan, Keni Thomas and Mark Wills entertained service members at the Sustainer Theater.

Other entertainers performing at the show were model Leann Tweeden, comedian Louis CK, and the U.S. Army Band Downrange. The freedom show also included the appearance of the Miami Dolphin cheerleaders, Ariana Aubert, Kayla Patterson and Lilly Robbins.

U.S. Army photo by SPC. Brian A. Barbour
Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston speaks with Soldiers during a town hall meeting at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, Dec. 21.



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston greets Master Sgt. Charles Cooley, a Cedarville, Ark. native and member of 42nd Military Police Brigade, during his tour of the Air Force hospital at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, Dec. 21. Preston, met with injured service members and hospital staff during his visit.

U.S. Army photo by SPC. Brian A. Barbour



U.S. Army photo by SPC. Brian A. Barbour
Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston meets with 25th Infantry Division Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Leota and 3^d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) Command Sgt. Maj. Willie C. Tennant Sr., after arriving at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, Dec. 21.



U.S. Army photo by SPC. Brian A. Barbour
Country singer Mark Wills performs for service members at Sustainer Theater on Joint Base Balad, Iraq Dec. 21.



U.S. Army photo by SPC. Brian A. Barbour
Miami Dolphins Cheerleaders Ariana Aubert and Kayla Patterson toss “For the Troops II” CD’s to service members at the end the Sergeant Major of the Army’s 2008 USO Hope and Freedom Tour show.

Johnson and Johnson re-enlist, reflects on their young careers

BY SGT. 1ST CLASS
MIKE BRANTLEY
10th Sustainment Brigade
PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Accustomed

to warm sunrises in her native Manati, Puerto Rico, Spec. Julitza Johnson recently enjoyed

a Kuwaiti sunrise with her husband, Spec. Rickie Johnson, as they both re-enlisted at Camp Buehring, Kuwait on Nov. 18.

The Johnsons, both human resource specialists for the 10th Sustainment Brigade from Fort Drum, N.Y., are serving here together on their first deployment. This also marks the first time they have been separated from their seven-

month-old daughter, Jehaimie. “He misses his baby and it’s only been a month,” she said of her 21-year-old husband. Both said they re-enlisted because of their daughter.

“We’re not thinking of only ourselves,” she said. “For the next 18 years, we will be thinking of her future so she doesn’t have to work as hard as we have.”

A lot has changed in their lives in the past two years.

They met in 2006 at Fort Jackson, S.C., when both were attending advanced initial training. He fell for her at first sight and she fell equally as hard for him, they said.

But there was just one problem.

“When we met, I tried to talk to her but she didn’t know any English,” the Virginia Beach, Va., native said. “We

shared MREs and after she got comfortable with me, then she started talking more.”

Julitza Johnson, 23, who first joined the U.S. Navy Reserve in 2005 and switched to the U.S. Army Reserve in Puerto Rico, decided to go active duty in 2006. “A group of us would have a translator in basic (training),” she said. “I ... followed everyone else’s lead with what to do and learned English in two months.”

She said she joined the military because the economy is low in Puerto Rico and she wanted to find a job. “I thought, ‘I have to do something with my life,’ so I joined the military to make my own money and be proud of myself.” She added that her family is very happy with her decision and they support her.

Rickie Johnson said that his

father always said he was proud of him, and spoke to him about being a leader.

“He is proud of me for having a family and taking care of the bills and being a real man. He wanted more for me,” he said.

Johnson, who worked as a mover, ice cream store manager, and a landscaper before he joined the Army, said he couldn’t keep a stable job. “I stayed with my parents and decided to join the Army because I was tired of being a bum.”

“It is so hard to get a job in the civilian world,” he said.

Johnson says he too feels a lot of pride. “From the lifestyle I used to live, I never thought I’d be in the Army. I was going to do my four years and get out.” He says he has grown up quickly with a wife and baby and now sees the military as a career.

They have each decided to stay in the military for 20 years and both enjoy their jobs as human resource specialists.

“When a Soldier first comes in the military, human resources is usually their first impression of the military,” she said. “It is a lasting impression.”

Johnson manages personnel accountability, finance and leave forms for more than a 1,000 Soldiers and her husband manages the awards section for the brigade. “Without us, who will do the paperwork,” she asked.

They plan to take their rest and relaxation leave to attend their daughter’s first birthday in April 2009.

The Johnsons are set to leave Fort Drum for Fort Eustis, Va., in 2010 after completing their deployment here with the 10th Sust. Bde.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday



DOD National Theme:
“Remember! Celebrate! Act!
A Day On Not A Day Off!”



JOINT BASE BALAD

presents

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Observance

MWR-East facility

Jan. 15, 2009

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.



Guest speaker: CSM Willie C. Tennant Sr.

Command Sergeant Major,

3rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)

- Lunch will be provided
- Essay awards presentation
- A Joyful Noise
- H6 choir

Contact: MSG Tuynuykua Jackson, 3rd ESC HR/EO Advisor @ 433-2527
MSgt Joseph Newton 332nd AEW EO Directory @ 443-8459
SFC Everett Worman 555th EN BDE EO Advisor @ 483-4645
LTC James-Michael Yates Task Force 34 PM/EO Advisor @ 483-4589
SSG DaMon Walker 51st ESB BN EOL @483-2217

Sudoku

The objective is to fill the 9x9 grid so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3x3 boxes contains the digits from 1 to 9 only one time each.

Level: Very Hard

	9		6					8
	7		5	1	2			
	4						1	
5					7			2
1								3
8			9					6
		3						5
			8	6	9			3
	1			3				4

Last weeks answers

6	4	5	1	7	3	9	8	2
9	7	1	4	8	2	3	5	6
3	8	2	9	6	5	4	1	7
8	5	3	6	2	1	7	4	9
4	1	7	3	9	8	6	2	5
2	6	9	7	5	4	8	3	1
5	9	4	2	3	7	1	6	8
7	3	8	5	1	6	2	9	4
1	2	6	8	4	9	5	7	3



PVT. MURPHY'S LAW



UPCOMING SPORTS ON AFN

Wednesday 12/31/08

2008 Roady's Humanitarian Bowl: Maryland vs Nevada (Bronco Stadium, Boise, ID), Live 12:30 a.m. AFN/sports
 2008 Texas Bowl: Western Michigan vs Rice (Reliant Stadium, Houston, TX), Live 4 a.m. AFN/xtra
 2008 Pacific Life Holiday Bowl: Oklahoma State vs Oregon (Qualcomm Stadium, San Diego, CA), Live 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 Illinois @ Purdue, Tape Delayed 8 a.m. AFN/xtra
 2008 Roady's Humanitarian Bowl: Maryland vs Nevada (Bronco Stadium, Boise, ID), Tape Delayed 11 a.m. AFN/sports
 2008 Pacific Life Holiday Bowl: Oklahoma State vs Oregon (Qualcomm Stadium, San Diego, CA), Tape Delayed 3:30 p.m. AFN/sports
 2008 Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl: Houston vs Air Force (Amon G. Carter Stadium, Fort Worth, TX), Live 8 p.m. AFN/sports
 75th Brut Sun Bowl: Oregon State vs Pittsburgh (Sun Bowl Stadium, El Paso, TX), Live 10 p.m. AFN/prime pacific

Thursday 1/1/09

2008 Insight Bowl: Kansas vs Minnesota (Sun Devil Stadium, Tempe, AZ), Live 2 a.m. AFN/xtra
 2008 Chick-Fil-A Bowl: LSU vs Georgia Tech (Georgia Dome, Atlanta, GA), Live 3:30 a.m. AFN/sports
 North Carolina @ Nevada, Live 6 a.m. AFN/xtra
 Wisconsin @ Michigan, Tape Delayed 8 a.m. AFN/xtra
 75th Brut Sun Bowl: Oregon State vs Pittsburgh (Sun Bowl Stadium, El Paso, TX), Tape Delayed 1:30 p.m. AFN/sports
 2008 Capital One Bowl: Georgia vs Michigan State (Florida Citrus Bowl, Orlando, FL), Live 9 p.m. AFN/sports
 64th Konica Minolta Gator Bowl: Nebraska vs Clemson (Jacksonville Municipal Stadium, Jacksonville, FL), Live 9 p.m. AFN/xtra

Friday 1/2/09

The Rose Bowl Game: Penn State vs USC (Rose Bowl, Pasadena, CA), Live 1 a.m. AFN/sports
 Pittsburgh Penguins @ Boston Bruins, Live 3 a.m. AFN/xtra
 2008 Orange Bowl: Cincinnati vs Virginia Tech (Dolphin Stadium, Miami, FL), Live 4:30 a.m. AFN/sports
 2009 NHL WINTER CLASSIC: Detroit Red Wings @ Chicago Blackhawks (Wrigley Field, Chicago, IL), Tape Delayed 7 a.m. AFN/xtra
 2008 Capital One Bowl: Georgia vs Michigan State (Florida Citrus Bowl, Orlando, FL), Tape Delayed 11 a.m. AFN/sports
 The Rose Bowl Game: Penn State vs USC (Rose Bowl, Pasadena, CA), Tape Delayed 4 p.m. AFN/sports

Saturday 1/3/09

2008 AutoZone Liberty Bowl: Kentucky vs East Carolina (Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium, Memphis, TN), Live 1 a.m. AFN/xtra
 2008 Allstate Sugar Bowl: Utah vs Alabama (Superdome, New Orleans, LA), Live 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 Syracuse @ South Florida, Live 4:30 a.m. AFN/xtra
 Philadelphia Flyers @ Anaheim Ducks, Live 6 a.m. AFN/prime pacific
 Utah Jazz @ Los Angeles Lakers, Live 6:30 a.m. AFN/xtra
 2008 Allstate Sugar Bowl: Utah vs Alabama (Superdome,

New Orleans, LA), Tape Delayed 2:30 p.m. AFN/sports
 Pittsburgh @ Georgetown, Live 8 p.m. AFN/prime atlantic
 U.S. Army All-American Bowl (San Antonio, TX), Live 9 p.m. AFN/sports

Sunday 1/4/09

West Virginia @ Seton Hall, Live 12 a.m. AFN/xtra
 North Carolina State @ Florida, Live 12 a.m. AFN/prime atlantic
 Milwaukee Bucks @ Charlotte Bobcats, Live 3 a.m. AFN/xtra
 NFC Wildcard Game: Teams TBD, Live 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 Notre Dame @ St. John's, Live 6 a.m. AFN/prime atlantic
 Missouri @ Georgia, Live 9 a.m. AFN/xtra
 Big Ten Men's Basketball: Ohio State @ Minnesota, Tape Delayed 11 a.m. AFN/xtra
 Philadelphia 76ers @ San Antonio Spurs, Tape Delayed 2 p.m. AFN/xtra
 NFC Wildcard Game: Teams TBD, Tape Delayed 3 p.m. AFN/sports
 New York Rangers @ Washington, Live 5 p.m. AFN/xtra
 Orlando Magic @ Toronto, Live 8:30 p.m. AFN/xtra
 AFC Wildcard Game: Teams TBD, Live 9 p.m. AFN/sports
 Detroit Pistons @ Los Angeles Clippers, Live 11:30 p.m. AFN/xtra

Monday 1/5/09

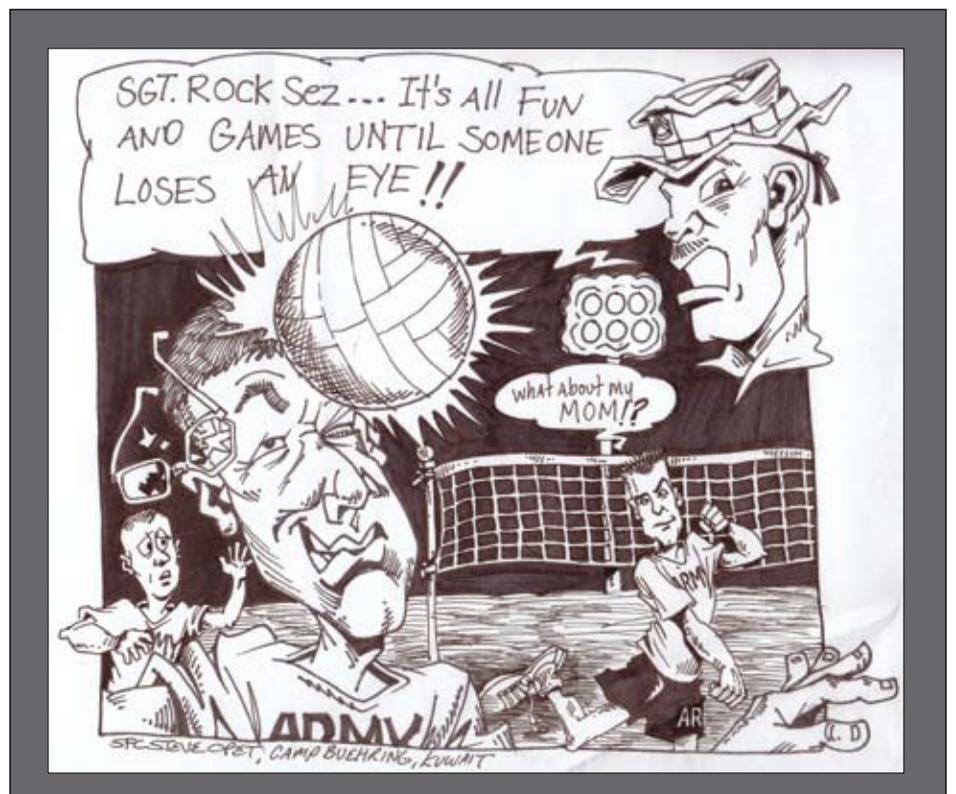
ACC Sunday Night Hoops: Boston College @ North Carolina, Live 1:30 a.m. AFN/prime atlantic
 Boston Celtics @ New York Knicks, Live 2 a.m. AFN/xtra
 Virginia Tech @ Duke, Live 3:45 a.m. AFN/prime atlantic
 Arizona @ Stanford, Live 6 a.m. AFN/xtra
 Ottawa Senators @ New Jersey Devils, Tape Delayed 8 a.m. AFN/xtra
 Minnesota Wild @ Colorado Avalanche, Tape Delayed 10:30 a.m. AFN/xtra
 UFC 92: The Ultimate 2008 (MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas, NV), Tape Delayed 10 a.m. AFN/xtra
 2008 Independence Bowl: Northern Illinois vs Louisiana Tech (Independence Stadium, Shreveport, LA) * ESPN 2-hour Countdown, Live 10:45 a.m. AFN/sports
 NBC Sunday Night Football - Week 17: Teams TBD, Tape Delayed 2 p.m. AFN/sports
 AFC Wildcard Game: Teams TBD, Tape Delayed 1 p.m. AFN/sports
 Kentucky @ Louisville, Tape Delayed 6 p.m. AFN/xtra
 NFC Wildcard Game: Teams TBD, Tape Delayed 9 p.m. AFN/sports

Tuesday 1/6/09

Pittsburgh Penguins @ New York Rangers, Live 3 a.m. AFN/xtra
 2008 Tostitos Fiesta Bowl: Ohio State vs Texas (University of Phoenix Stadium, Glendale, AZ), Live 4 AFN/sports
 NBA on NBA TV: Toronto Raptors @ Golden State Warriors, Live 6:30 a.m. AFN/sports
 New York Islanders @ Edmonton Oilers, Live 5:30 a.m. AFN/xtra
 2008 Tostitos Fiesta Bowl: Ohio State vs Texas (University of Phoenix Stadium, Glendale, AZ), Tape Delayed 9 p.m. AFN/Sports



Iraq according to Opet



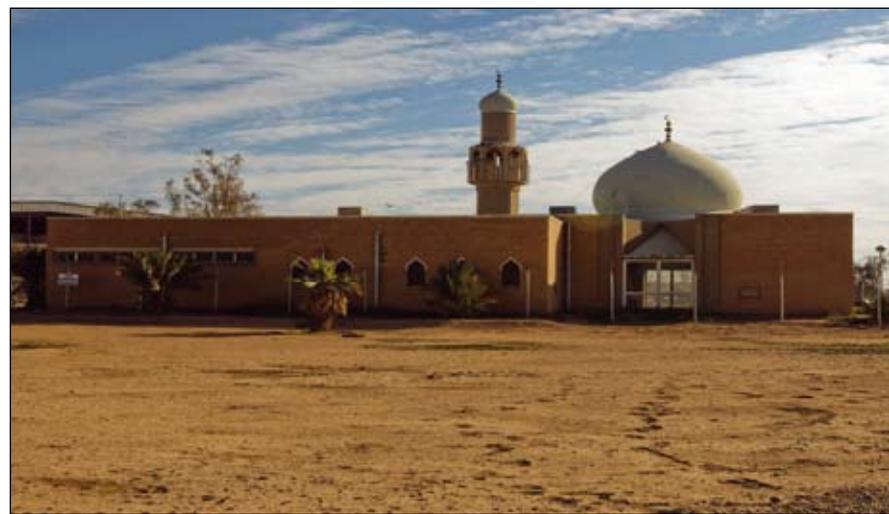
THEN & NOW

2003



U.S. Army courtesy photo

The mosque at Joint Base Balad East side stands untouched in 2003.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Brian A. Barbour

The mosque at Joint Base Balad-East side continues to stand, cleaned and left untouched.

2008

Shout Outs!

TO MY SON PFC MILO ERENBERGER, WITH THE 2/7 CAV, 4TH ID, 1ST AD SOMEWHERE IN IRAQ.

MERRY CHRISTMAS SON AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

**SFC JOE PING
JOINT BASE BALAD**

TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE
CHRISTMAS,
HE LIVED ALL ALONE,
IN A ONE BEDROOM HOUSE MADE
OF
PLASTER AND STONE

I HAD COME DOWN THE CHIMNEY
WITH PRESENTS TO GIVE,
AND TO SEE JUST WHO
IN THIS HOME DID LIVE.

I LOOKED ALL ABOUT,
A STRANGE SIGHT I DID SEE,
NO TINSEL, NO PRESENTS,
NOT EVEN A TREE.

NO STOCKING BY MANTLE,
JUST BOOTS FILLED WITH SAND,
ON THE WALL HUNG PICTURES
OF FAR DISTANT LANDS.

WITH MEDALS AND BADGES,
AWARDS OF ALL KINDS,
A SOBER THOUGHT
CAME THROUGH MY MIND.

FOR THIS HOUSE WAS DIFFERENT,
IT WAS DARK AND DREARY,
I FOUND THE HOME OF A
SOLDIER,
ONCE I COULD SEE CLEARLY.

THE SOLDIER LAY SLEEPING,
SILENT, ALONE,
CURLD UP ON THE FLOOR
IN THIS ONE BEDROOM HOME.

THE FACE WAS SO GENTLE,
THE ROOM IN SUCH DISORDER,
NOT HOW I PICTURED
A UNITED STATES SOLDIER.

WAS THIS THE HERO
OF WHOM I'D JUST READ?
CURLD UP ON A PONCHO,
THE FLOOR FOR A BED?

I REALIZED THE FAMILIES
THAT I SAW THIS NIGHT,
OWED THEIR LIVES TO THESE
SOLDIERS
WHO WERE WILLING TO FIGHT.

SOON ROUND THE WORLD,
THE CHILDREN WOULD PLAY,
AND GROWNUPS WOULD

**CELEBRATE
A BRIGHT CHRISTMAS DAY.**

THEY ALL ENJOYED FREEDOM
EACH MONTH OF THE YEAR,
BECAUSE OF THE SOLDIERS,
LIKE THE ONE LYING HERE.

I COULDN'T HELP WONDER
HOW MANY LAY ALONE,
ON A COLD CHRISTMAS EVE
IN A LAND FAR FROM HOME.

THE VERY THOUGHT
BROUGHT A TEAR TO MY EYE,
I DROPPED TO MY KNEES
AND STARTED TO CRY.

THE SOLDIER AWAKENED
AND I HEARD A ROUGH VOICE,
'SANTA DON'T CRY,
THIS LIFE IS MY CHOICE;

I FIGHT FOR FREEDOM,
I DON'T ASK FOR MORE,
MY LIFE IS MY GOD,
MY COUNTRY, MY CORPS.'

THE SOLDIER ROLLED OVER
AND DRIFTED TO SLEEP,
I COULDN'T CONTROL IT,
I CONTINUED TO WEEP.

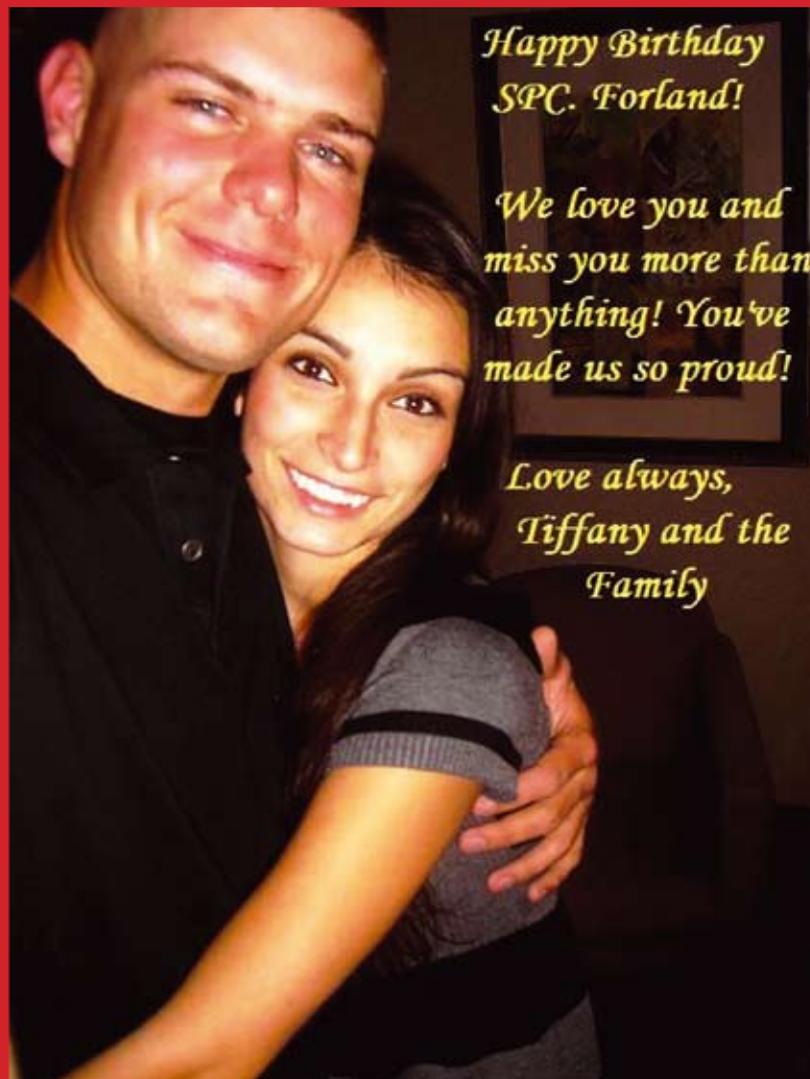
I KEPT WATCH FOR HOURS,
SO SILENT AND STILL
AND WE BOTH SHIVERED
FROM THE COLD NIGHT'S CHILL.

I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE
ON THAT COLD, DARK, NIGHT,
THIS GUARDIAN OF HONOR
SO WILLING TO FIGHT.

THEN THE SOLDIER ROLLED
OVER,
WITH A VOICE SOFT AND PURE,
WHISPERED, 'CARRY ON SANTA,
IT'S CHRISTMAS DAY, ALL IS
SECURE.'

ONE LOOK AT MY WATCH,
AND I KNEW HE WAS RIGHT.
'MERRY CHRISTMAS MY FRIEND,
AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT.'

This poem was written by a
Marine.



*Happy Birthday
SPC. Forland!*

*We love you and
miss you more than
anything! You've
made us so proud!*

*Love always,
Tiffany and the
Family*

JB BALAD ACTIVITIES

INDOOR POOL

Swim Lessons:
 Mon., Wed., - 6 p.m.
 Tue., Thu., Sat., -
 6:30 p.m.
 Aqua Training:
 Tue., Thu., - 7:30 p.m.,
 8:30 p.m.

EAST FITNESS

CENTER

Open Court Volleyball:
 Sunday- 6 p.m.
 Aerobics:
 Mon., Wed., Fri.-
 5:30-6:30 a.m.
 Yoga Class:
 Mon., Fri.- 6-7 a.m.
 Step Aerobics:
 Mon., Wed., Fri.-
 5:30 p.m.
 Conditioning Training
 Class:
 Mon., Wed., Fri.- 7:15-
 8 p.m.
 Brazilian Jui-Jitsu:

Mon., Wed., Fri.-
 8-9 p.m.

Abs-Aerobics:
 Tue., Thu., 6-7 a.m.,
 5-6 p.m.
 Edge Weapons & Stick
 Fighting Combative
 Training:
 Tue., Thur., Sat., -
 8-10 p.m.

EAST RECREATION

CENTER

4-ball tourney:
 Sunday- 8 p.m.
 8-ball tourney:
 Monday- 8 p.m.
 Karaoke:
 Monday- 8 p.m.
 Swing Class:
 Tuesday- 8 p.m.
 Table Tennis:
 Tuesday- 8 p.m.
 9-ball tourney:
 Wednesday- 8 p.m.
 Dungeons & Dragons:

Thursday- 7:30 p.m.

Poetry Night:
 Thursday- 8 p.m.
 6-ball tourney:
 Thursday- 8 p.m.
 Caribbean Night:
 Friday- 8 p.m.
 Chess & Dominoes
 Tourney:
 Friday- 8 p.m.
 Salsa Class:
 Saturday- 8:30 p.m.
 Poker:
 Saturday- 7:30 p.m.

H6 FITNESS CENTER

Spin:
 Sunday- 9 a.m.
 Mon., Wed., Fri., - 2 a.m.,
 8 a.m. 2 p.m., 7 p.m.,
 9 p.m.
 Tue., Thu., -5:45 a.m.,
 9 a.m., 8:30 p.m.
 Saturday- 9 a.m., 7 p.m.
 Boxing:
 Sunday- 4 p.m.

Tue., Thu., - 2 p.m.
 Boot Camp:
 Sunday- 8:45 a.m.
 Tue., Thu., - 7 p.m.
 Power Abs:
 Mon., Tue., Thu., - 8 p.m.
 Friday- 9 p.m.
 CC Cross Fit:
 Monday-Saturday-
 10:30 p.m.
 Cross Fit:
 Mon., Wed., Fri., - 5:45
 a.m., 7 a.m., 3 p.m.,
 6 p.m.
 Tue., Thu., - 7 a.m.,
 3 p.m.
 Sunday- 5:45 a.m.,
 7 a.m., 3 p.m.
 P90x:
 Monday- Saturday- 4:30
 a.m., 4 p.m., 10 p.m.
 12 a.m.
 Soccer:
 Tue., Thu., - 8 p.m.
 Yoga:
 Wednesday- 8 p.m.
 MCAP Level 1:
 Friday- 8 p.m.
 5 on 5 Basketball:

Saturday- 8 p.m.

H6 RECREATION

CENTER

Bingo:
 Sunday- 8 p.m.
 Texas Hold'em:
 Mon., Fri., - 2 p.m.,
 8:30 p.m.
 8-ball tourney:
 Tuesday- 2 a.m.,
 8:30 p.m.
 Ping-pong tourney:
 Tuesday- 8:30 p.m.
 Spades:
 Wednesday- 2 a.m.,
 8:30 p.m.
 Salsa:
 Wednesday- 8:30 p.m.
 9-ball:
 Thursday- 2 a.m.,
 8:30 p.m.
 Karaoke:
 Thursday- 8:30 p.m.
 Dominos:
 Saturday- 8:30 p.m.
 Darts:
 Saturday- 8:30 p.m.

WEST RECREATION

CENTER

Green Bean Karaoke:
 Sun., Wed., 7:30pm
 9-ball tourney:
 Monday- 8 p.m.
 Ping-pong tourney:
 Tuesday- 8 p.m.
 Foosball tourney:
 Tuesday- 8 p.m.
 Jam Session:
 Tuesday- 7:30 p.m.
 8-ball tourney:
 Wednesday- 8 p.m.
 Guitar Lessons:
 Thursday- 7:30 p.m.
 Game tourney:
 Thursday- 1 p.m., 8 p.m.
 Enlisted Poker:
 Friday- 1 p.m., 8 p.m.
 Officer Poker:
 Saturday- 1 p.m., 8 p.m.
 Squat Competition:
 Saturday- 8 p.m.

WEST FITNESS

CENTER

3 on 3 basketball
 tourney:
 Saturday- 7:30 p.m.

6 on 6 volleyball

ourney:
 Friday- 7 p.m.
 Aerobics:
 Monday, Wednesday,
 Friday- 7 p.m.
 Body by Midgett Toning
 Class:
 Tue., Thu., - 7 p.m.
 Dodge ball Game:
 Tuesday- 7:30 p.m.
 Furman's Martial Arts:
 Mon., Wed., Sun., - 1 p.m.
 Gaston's Self-Defense
 Class:
 Fri., Sat.- 7 p.m.
 Open court basketball:
 Thursday- 7 p.m.
 Open court soccer:
 Mon., Wed., - 7 p.m.
 Zingano Brazilian Jui
 Jitsu:
 Tue., Thu., - 8:30 p.m.

CIRCUIT GYM

Floor hockey:
 Mon., Wed., Fri., -
 8-10 p.m

SUSTAINER REEL TIME THEATER

Twilight

When Bella's mother re-marries she is sent to live with her father in the rainy little town of Forks, Washington. There she meets the mysterious and dazlingly beautiful Edward Cullen, a boy unlike any she's ever met. Edward is a vampire, but he doesn't have fangs and his family is unique in that they choose not to drink human blood. Intelligent and witty, Edward sees straight into Bella's soul. Soon, they are swept up in a passionate, thrilling and unorthodox romance. Rated PG-13



QUANTUM OF SOLACE



On a mission that leads him to Austria, Italy and South America, Bond discovers that Greene, conspiring to take total control of one of the worlds most important natural resources, is forging a deal with the exiled General Medrano. Using his associates in the organization, and manipulating his powerful contacts within the CIA and the British government, Greene promises to overthrow the existing regime in a Latin American country, giving the General control of the country in exchange for a seemingly barren piece of land. In a minefield of treachery, murder and deceit, Bond allies with old friends in a battle to uncover the truth. Rated PG-13

Movie Times

Wednesday, Dec. 31
 2 p.m. Soul Men
 5 p.m. Madagascar 2
 8 p.m. Quantum Of Solace
Thursday, Jan. 1
 2 p.m. Quantum Of Solace
 5 p.m. Bedtimes Stories
 8 p.m. Seven Pounds
Friday, Jan. 2
 2 p.m. Bedtimes Stories
 5 p.m. Seven Pounds
 8:30 p.m. Twilight
Saturday, Jan. 3
 2 p.m. Seven Pounds
 5 p.m. Twilight
 8 p.m. Bedtimes Stories
Sunday, Jan. 4
 2 p.m. Twilight
 5 p.m. Bedtimes Stories
 8 p.m. Seven Pounds
Monday, Jan. 5
 5 p.m. Seven Pounds
 8 p.m. Sex Drive
Tuesday, Jan. 6
 5 p.m. Bedtimes Stories
 8 p.m. Twilight

(Schedule is subject to change)

SEX DRIVE



Ian Lafferty sets out on a cross country drive with best friends Lance and Felicia in order to lose his virginity to a red-hot babe he met on the Internet. But the journey, filled with hilarious misadventures and raunchy escapades, teaches all three more than they expected about life and love. Rated R.

Madagascar 2



Alex, Marty, Melman, Gloria, King Julien, Maurice, and the penguins and the chimps find themselves marooned on the distinct shores of Madagascar. In the face of this obstacle, the New Yorkers have hatched a plan so crazy it just might work. With military precision, the penguins have repaired an old crashed plane - sort of. Once aloft, this unlikely crew stays airborne just long enough to make it to the wildest place of all - the vast plains of Africa, where the members of our zoo-raised crew encounter species of their own kind for the very first time. Africa seems like a great place... but is it better than their Central Park home? Rated PG

PHOTOS AROUND IRAQ



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communications Specialist Walter J. Pels

U.S. Army Capt. Scott Edelein and Staff Sgt. Ian Martinez investigate a hole near a suspected weapons trafficking area. Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division and Iraqi Army Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 19th Brigade, 5th Division conduct foot patrol searches of the Udaim River Valley for enemy weapons caches and transport routes, Dec. 11.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kiyoshi C. Freeman

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq -- WPIX reporter Jill Nicolini, center with microphone, interviews New York Governor David Paterson and New York Congressman Steve Israel here at Dining Facility 1 on Dec. 21. Paterson and Israel were having lunch with Soldiers from the 133rd Quartermaster Company, a New York Army National Guard unit from Brooklyn, N.Y.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Rasheen A. Douglas

U.S. Soldiers from the 41st Fires Brigade, Fort Hood, Texas, discuss prices for 205 sheep for needy families of the Wasit Province, Iraq, on Dec. 8, 2008. The sheep were provided to local Iraqi families in the Wasit Province, Iraq.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jason Epley

Army Staff Sgt. Robert Stiles provides security for a casualty extraction during improvised explosive device recognition training at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, Dec. 6. Stiles was part of the first group to use the IED training range since the Air Force took control of it. Stiles is a medic with the Washington National Guard's Alpha Company, 181st Brigade Support Battalion. Stiles' hometown is Yelm, Wash.



U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian L. Short

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Nyx Zaid Nieves Lopez, a videographer with Joint Combat Camera at FOB Warrior, rolls tape while a U.S. Air Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team uses a radio detonation unit to explode charges set on unspent munitions that were left over from the Iran/Iraq war along with other weapons seized from insurgents in Kirkuk, Iraq, Dec. 13.

NEWS AROUND IRAQ

Facilities and areas list passed to the GoI

 BAGHDAD – On Dec. 22, Multi-National Force - Iraq provided a list of agreed facilities and areas that are in use by U.S. Forces, as required under the Security Agreement between the U.S. and the Government of Iraq, ahead of the Jan. 1, 2009 deadline. This demonstrates the determination of the U.S. to honor its obligations through the mutual partnership with the GoI to assist Iraq develop as a nation.

In the past six months, more than 30 facilities and areas have been returned to the GoI by the Coalition forces. Approximately 20 more bases are planned to be returned in the next six months to the GoI in response to improvements in both security conditions and the capability of Iraqi Security Forces, who now take the lead. Each event is an important example of the Coalition forces complying with the Security Agreement and represents an important step in achieving Iraqi security self-reliance.

Through the Joint Ministerial Committee, which implements and interprets the Security Agreement and the subordinate Joint Committee, the Sub-Committee on Facilities and Areas Joint Sub-Committee will continue the process of agreeing the return of facilities and areas to the GoI. The return process is a highly cooperative one that ensures the smoothest possible uptake or reuse of the facilities and areas by the GoI, as well as good governance of equipment and environment.

This joint U.S. and GoI committee is dedicated to support the complete withdrawal of all U.S. combat forces from the cities, villages and localities by June 30, 2009. This date is also significant, because it will be the point at which a second list is provided to the GoI covering the period through the end of the Security Agreement on December 31, 2011.

Field feeding capabilities important step in growing IA

 CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The Iraqi Army is continuing its quest to become an autonomous and efficient force.

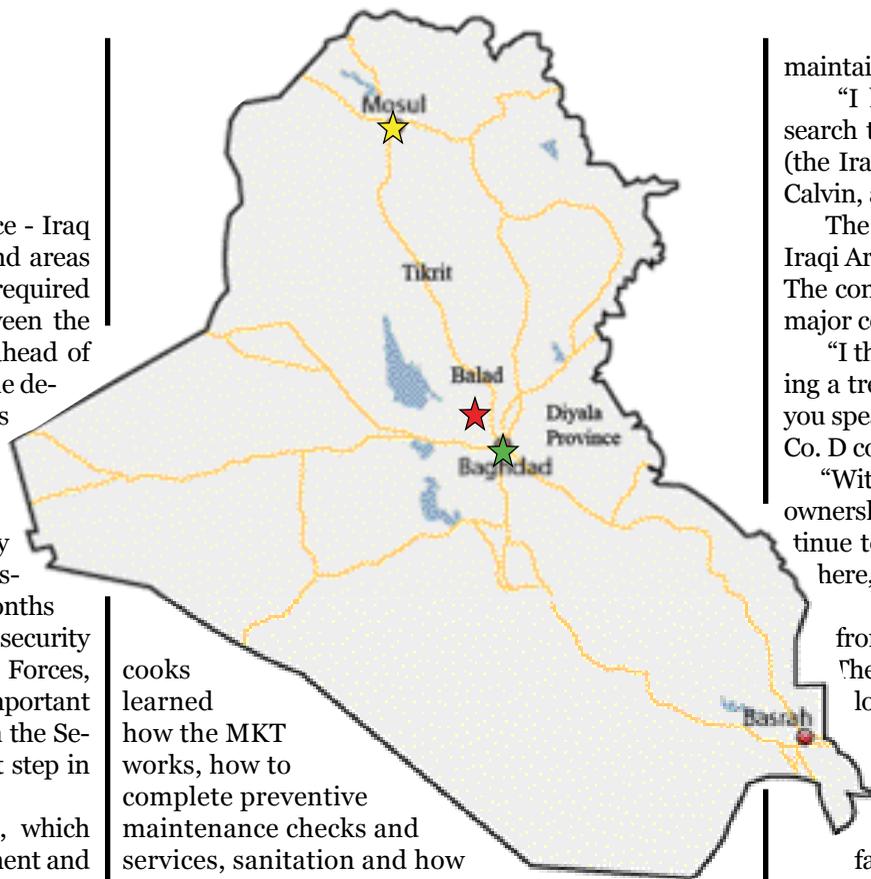
The most recent installment in the IA training package is learning how to prepare fresh and nutritious meals for their soldiers at checkpoints with two Mobile Kitchen Trailers.

Right now, food is cooked at a main cooking station then transported out to the different sites, which causes some problems. The current system is time consuming, expensive, uses too many Soldiers and most importantly doesn't allow for constant temperatures and food begins to spoil before it makes it out to the Soldiers, said Staff Sgt. Christopher Miller-Root, food service specialist assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 225th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

The new MKT systems alleviate these problems.

"These are the same concept as the American systems," said Capt. Alberto Pantoja, commander of HHC, 225th BSB. "They will be able to take the system out to a site and cook meals for soldiers, as well as safely transport food at correct temperatures."

The IA currently has two MKT systems which will service the Soldiers in the Taji Qada, northwest of Baghdad. During the class, which contained IA soldiers from five battalions from two brigades, the



cooks learned how the MKT works, how to complete preventive maintenance checks and services, sanitation and how to cook using the systems inside.

But before Miller-Root and his team could teach, they had to learn the in's and outs of the European system.

"We really just got into it, and experimented, read some manuals we found after they were translated and figured it out."

Once they figured out the quirks of the system, Miller-Root and his team began to teach.

Through demonstration and questions, the cooks learned how to feed their counterparts in a field environment.

"In the end we want them to become more self sufficient," Pantoja said. "Being able to take care of their own is a big part of that process."

Iraqi Security Forces find IED cache in Mosul

 MOSUL, Iraq – An Iraqi Police Emergency Response Battalion discovered four improvised explosive devices Dec. 22 at approximately 1 a.m. in a cache in the Al Wahda neighborhood of Mosul containing approximately 150 pounds of homemade explosives and several blasting caps.

After the discovery, the ERB and Coalition forces cordoned off the area so explosive ordnance disposal teams could remove the explosives from the neighborhood.

"This IED cache find by the Iraqi Police serves as another example to the people of Mosul that their security forces are getting out in front of the insurgents, and that they are committed to making the city a safe place for all of its citizens," said Capt. Tia Winston, spokesperson, Coalition forces in Ninawa Province.

Sol, IP and IA work together to make provinces safe

 DIWANIYA, Iraq – Coalition forces conducted status checks on highway checkpoints controlled by the Sons of Iraq during a patrol Dec. 15.

Soldiers from Company D, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division conducted the patrol and found citizens working diligently to

maintain the safety of their city.

"I have midday duty. I watch the highways and search the areas (around my checkpoint). Sometimes, (the Iraqi police) call on me to help search cars," said Calvin, a member of the SoI.

The SoI program works with the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army to make the provinces safe for their citizens. The combined effort of these organizations has been a major contributor to the improved security of Iraq.

"I think the ISF has progressed a lot. They are making a tremendous difference here. You can see it when you speak with the people," said Capt. Adam Clements, Co. D commander.

"With the SoI, it shows the (people) have taken more ownership of their lands, and that's good. We will continue to support them as they work to make it better here," added Clements.

Calvin is a part of a three-man team working from one of the numerous checkpoints in the city. The SoI monitor the highways tirelessly for their local leaders, working non-stop shifts at checkpoints that sometimes provide very little protection from the weather.

"The SoI are controlled and paid by the local sheikhs. Right now, the U.S. forces are facilitating the money for the SoI, but soon that responsibility will be shift to the Government of Iraq," said 1st Lt. Christopher Henning, Co. D, 2nd CAB, 8th Inf. Regt. executive officer.

"I am happy doing this," said Calvin. "Before, I was sitting at home without a job; now, I'm working. This (life) is better than just doing nothing."

Even though Calvin is content with his current lifestyle, he confessed he does have a future career aspiration. "My dream is to become a Soldier in the Iraqi Army," he said.

GoI payments to Sol, DoI in New Baghdad a success

 FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq Government of Iraq officials made monthly salary payments Dec. 18 to 110 Sons and Daughters of Iraq for the second consecutive month at two sites in New Baghdad. The SoI and DoI, who provide security and assist Iraqi Security Forces at checkpoints within their communities, each received 354,000 Iraqi dinars, equivalent to \$300.

The GoI accepted responsibility for paying SoI and DoI salaries Oct. 1 when they began integrating the community security forces into ISF and GoI civil service.

Before GoI began paying the monthly salaries in October, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers paid the SoI and DoI forces to provide security in their local communities. Now however, MND-B Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, merely observed as GoI officials paid SoI and DoI members in New Baghdad.

"The Government of Iraq obviously has this under control," said Capt. Ben Culver battalion fires and effects coordinator for 1st Bn., 66th Armor Rgt. "The SoI continues to provide valuable checkpoint security throughout the city of Baghdad."

The SoI and DoI are proud to serve their communities. In addition to pride, however, it is good to have the support of the GoI and earn a salary at the same time.

"It makes me happy to know that I am earning my money while keeping my neighborhood safe," expressed Kammraa, one of a handful of DoI operating in New Baghdad. "I do not have a husband to care for me, and this employment allows me to care for myself (financially)."

Sustaining the Line



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kiyoshi C. Freeman
AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq -- Service members listen to comedian Lewis Black perform during a USO show here at the Jordan-Hare Stadium on Dec. 19. Black, Kid Rock, Kellie Pickler, and other entertainers were part of a USO tour through the region.

U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kiyoshi Freeman

AL ASAD, Iraq -- Staff Sgt. Roy Bowers, the assistant mayor with 2nd Battalion, 142nd Infantry Regiment, from Arlington, Texas, explains how he plans to build dip bars here Dec. 5. Bowers is building the dip bars as part of an exercise set for his unit.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Mario A. Aguirre



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kelly Anne Beck
A Department of Defense civilian shows Brig. Gen. Michael J. Lally an up armored M915 from the 402nd Army Field Spt. Bde.'s armored retrofit program during Lally's visit to observe the program's operations at the Joint Base Balad Army Depot's, Dec. 2.

1st Lt. Benjamin D. Johnston, 2nd platoon leader with the 74th MRBC, plays an instrumental guitar solo on Dec. 25 at the Joint Base Balad Sustainer Theater. Johnston entertained the audience at the holiday variety show .