

IN THE ZONE

JANUARY 2009 • VOL 1 • ISSUE 4

MAGAZINE

Transportation guru continues
Legacy of Service

JASG-C troops stroll down
**Main Street,
Union III**

**A Tale of
Two Unions**

unfolds for Directorate
of Public Works

Iraqi government
takes control of

**'Green
Zone'**



FINAL FLAG - Ambassador Ryan Crocker receives the last U.S. Flag to be flown over the U.S. Embassy (Provisional) in Baghdad during a ceremony Jan. 3 marking the building's return to the government of Iraq. Photo by Maj. Jon Powers.

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ON THE COVER:

Troops mount up on Forward Operating Base (FOB) Union III's main street for a mid-morning mission this past week. With the return of the U.S. Embassy building to Iraq, Union III is now home to nearly 1,100 personnel. For stories and more photos, see pages 9, 18-19.

Photo by Maj. Jon Powers

IN THE ZONE

MAGAZINE

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

JASG-C Commander:
Col. Steve Ferrari

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



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LEADERS' LOG

Secure Iraqi elections highest priority



Since the last news letter the 50th Joint Area Support Group – Central not only said goodbye to 2008, but played an integral part in welcoming in the New Year and a new era in Iraq's future as the historic Security Agreement between Iraq and the U.S. went into effect. Phase I of the Green

Zone transition was completed successfully effective Dec. 31, 2008, and the old Embassy Annex Palace was returned to the Government of Iraq Jan. 1 as scheduled. This was no easy task and all should be proud of this accomplishment and the integral part the JASG-C played.

Additionally, on Jan. 1, the security responsibility of the Green Zone was officially transferred to the GoI. The 3-29th Field Artillery Battalion, IZ Police and Security Directorate continue to provide training and support to the Baghdad Brigade to ensure security is maintained. Make no mistake that the Iraqi Security Forces are out in front taking the lead with our support. All should be proud as Article 28 of the Security Agreement was the first article to be fully implemented.

The next major milestone for Iraq is the Provincial elections Jan. 31. This is the current number-one priority, to provide a secure environment for free and fair elections across the country. Successful elections will set the tone for the rest of this year as Iraq continues to

transition and fully implement the Security Agreement. All must understand we are now in a support role and the conditions in which we operate will change. Our priorities will continue to be execution of the Green Zone transition plan, Green Zone security and force protection. Day-in and day-out continue to make a difference!

I want to take this opportunity to thank the 3-29th FA Battalion for their dedicated and professional support of the Green Zone security mission over the past 14 months. Under the leadership of Lt. Col. Kevin Gregory and Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Miller, the Pacesetters worked 24/7 to provide a safe and secure environment for the Iraqi Government to conduct their daily business without incident. These highly motivated and well-trained warriors are all to be commended for their service and sacrifice. We wish the Pacesetters a safe return to Fort Carson and a well-deserved rest!

As always a big thanks to our families, friends, family support groups and Rear Det personnel. Their support and overwhelming generosity over the holidays has been unbelievable. They truly make all the difference in the world. Never forget to say thank you to these great Americans.

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

Col. Steve Ferrari
Joint Area Support Group – Central
Commanding

Avoid complacency, maintain awareness

The JASG-C has done an outstanding job to date. We have passed our midway point and our move to Union III was well executed. As we move into our second half of deployment, I need everyone to remain focused and not become complacent. Maintain your situational awareness, identify duck-and-cover bunkers around your living area, travel in buddy teams, and perform PCIs on your weapon and equipment weekly.

We will be challenged over the next few months as the transition of the IZ continues and our remaining FOBs continue to grow. Safety is a paramount concern and all NCOs need to ensure we are doing everything in our power to minimize our Soldiers' risk. The speed limit in our contonment area is 5 mph; speeding will not be tolerated and running on the main road is not authorized. While moving in PT gear during limited visibility, wear your reflective belt.

When the Status of Forces Agreement went into effect, we met the transition date of Dec. 31 when all of us relocated to our new living locations at Union III

and Prosperity. For most of us, where we conduct our operations changed. More duty locations are expected to change within the next couple of months.

The Republican Guard Palace, formerly the U.S. Embassy, has been returned to the government of Iraq, and Iraqis are rapidly taking the lead in many functions within the IZ.

The next milestone we will face is the Iraqi provincial election which takes place Jan. 31. We anticipate the threat level will increase, so now is the time to maintain accountability of your Soldiers at all times, continue to drive on and Lead the Way.

Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Sheridan
Joint Area Support Group – Central



'Green Zone' returned to Iraq

Story by Sgt. Bill Addison

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

The new year marked a new beginning for the government of Iraq, when control of the "Green Zone" in central Baghdad was transitioned to the Iraqi government in a ceremony marking the first of many changes since the new Security Agreement went into effect Jan. 1.

Col. Steven Ferrari, commander of the Joint Area Support Group – Central (JASG-C), the United States Army unit in charge of the Green Zone, spoke at a ceremony marking the turnover of the area's security to Staff Gen. Emmad Yassir Saed Salman Al-Zuhiri, Baghdad Brigade commander.

"Today is the first day of the security agreement going into effect between our two countries. Our mission is still to provide security and support to the Iraqi government, but truly we are a support element and they are in the lead," said Ferrari.

"The transition of Green Zone control from Coalition Forces to Iraqi forces is considered the first step in the implementation of this agreement. Here is Iraq taking



another step toward the future, signaling to its citizens and the international community the security responsibility for the Green Zone in the heart of Baghdad," he added.

Ferrari, commander of the New Jersey Army National Guard's 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and

resident of Berlin, N.J., noted the historic aspect of the ceremony, turning the seat of Iraqi government back to the government of Iraq since the occupation by Coalition Forces five years earlier.

"It's a good feeling because it's time for change. It's time to give the country back to Iraq. They're proud of their country, they're ready. We're here to support them for as long as they need us to be here. I think it's a great day for them and it's great to be part of this historic day," said Ferrari.



SEASON OF CHANGE - Staff General Emmad Yassir Saed Salman Al-Zuhiri, Baghdad Brigade commander, top left, shakes hands with Col. Steven Ferrari, Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C) commander, during a ceremony Jan. 1 to mark the turnover of security for Baghdad's International Zone to Iraqi. Local and international media turned out in droves to hear Ferrari, left, and others speak during the historic event.

Emmad's Baghdad Brigade Soldiers will begin a six-month training and certifications transition plan with U.S. forces. This transition may be extended up to six months by mutual agreement. Ferrari said he feels confident in the professionalism of the Baghdad Brigade.

"The Baghdad Brigade has been here for a while, this is nothing new to them. We'll continue to support them," he said.

Along with increased Iraqi Security Forces presence at the Entry Control Points (ECPs), new Iraqi flags and Arabic signs advising that the Baghdad Brigade is manning checkpoints in the GZ will mark a new look of change.

"For our part, on this day, during the ceremony for this important mission, we assure you that we are committed to the same goals – full implementation of the security agreement, complete transparency and full partnership," he said in his speech.

"Our focus right now is to ensure that working with General Emmad's brigade, that they are trained and that they're ready to take full control and we can start pulling U.S. Soldiers off the check points," said Ferrari.



“ Our mission is still to provide security and support to the Iraqi government but truly we are a support element and they are in the lead.”

- Col. Steven Ferrari, JASG-C commander



TACTICAL TRAINING

Sgt. Andrew Montes, B Troop, 1-124th Cavalry, oversees an Iraqi "Jundi," or Soldier, of the Baghdad Brigade as he checks the credentials of an Iraqi driver at an Entry Control Point (ECP). Although the Government of Iraq has taken control of the ECPs, Baghdad Brigade Soldiers will continue a six-month training and certifications transition plan with U.S. forces. This transition may be extended up to six months if necessary by mutual U.S.-Iraqi agreement. Photo by Sgt. Bill Addison.

NJ students get long-distance lesson

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

To broaden a child's perception of the world is a gift he or she will keep for a lifetime. To do it and impress your daughter's classmates simultaneously is a gift you both can share. This was the goal for Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Falconer when he arranged to call in to Ms. Terry Collington's social studies students in Hopatcong Middle School in New Jersey.

"I had been conversing back and forth with my daughter's teacher, Ms. Collington, since October 2008," Falconer explained. "The class had sent several shipments of care packages with goodies the students had chosen and cards and letters the students had written. Ms. Collington told me several times how much the students enjoyed writing the letters and cards. One day I thought that it might be nice for them to actually speak with me and other Soldiers."

"I've had a lot of guest speakers over the years and they have been good, but for me - and I have a feeling for the students who attended - this one will be the great one," Collington said. The dozen-or-so students scribbled answers to their questions in preparation for the lecture they would give to other classmates.

"The students were taking themselves so seriously about getting everything written down so that they could present it to their classmates," Collington continued. "This has geared them up for the 'Help Iraqi Students' drive, too. This has also lead to more questions...I have to say I learned enough that some of my thoughts on

LEARNING BY EXAMPLE - Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Falconer, JASG-C, calls his daughter's social studies class in Hopatcong, N.J., with the help of Iraqi cultural advisor Sam Freeman. (Below photo courtesy of Hopatcong Middle School.)



Iraq have taken a subtle shift."

"It was a terrific experience to be able to help the students by answering their questions about Iraq and what we do here," Falconer also noted. "I enjoyed sharing it with a few of my fellow Soldiers also. We all seemed to enjoy the experience."

The students learned about the jobs the JASG-C Soldiers performed, from billeting to badging, and some of the experiences from daily life.

"Having our cultural advisor, Sam Adams, join in was an added bonus. He added his expertise to the conversation," Falconer added.

Born in Iraq, Sam immigrated as a child to the United States after Desert Storm.

His personal understanding of the differences in the two cultures allowed him to add perspective to his answers. Questions ranged from, "What do you do in your free time?" to, "What is does Iraq look like?"

The students learned about the jobs the JASG-C Soldiers performed, from billeting to badging, and some of their experiences from daily life.

Sam shared personal insight on language, dress and lifestyle, including a curiosity in Iraqi preferences in jewelry.

Adams said, "I enjoyed talking to the kids and passing to them some of the fascinating aspects about Iraq. Most people only associate war and turmoil with it, but our young children should also have a balanced picture of the life here".

"I think its great for our children to not only know about a country that we have and will be so involved in, but also be able to develop a better understanding of the region," he continued.

Finally, the JASG-C bid "ma'a salama" to the classroom, the Soldiers headed for bed to dream about being home and the students returned to their studies to learn about being in Iraq. 

CHAPLAIN'S WORD

'Practice makes possible'

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

Have you taken a look at yourself during the months of this deployment and noticed that something is missing? Perhaps a sense that we'd like to learn some new skill, explore some new avenues in life?

Maybe that's not true for you; you have no desire at all and there is nothing that you wish to attain. Well then, please check your pulse, because you may be dead and not know it! But if the above kind of longing is your experience, I want you to know that it's not enough to decide to change.

To get from where we are right now to where we want to be, we need training for new skills. Training is the bridge that makes us do specific actions within our power now that will make us capable of



doing things currently beyond our power.

Whether we'd like to learn a new language, play the violin, deepen our spiritual life, learn soccer, master calculus, become a trout fisherman, or learn tai chi, we have to be trained in the new skill. That training takes time and commitment and, most of all, we cannot do it alone. To acquire the skills that really matter, we need some sort of teacher or

community to impart this new way.

When I came back from my last tour in 2005, I decided to learn to play the harp, and so I've taken lessons with a group dedicated to playing the harp in hospitals and nursing homes. I've done this for two years and now I can enjoy the instrument and play some things, something that was impossible for me in the past.

It has become a source of spiritual refreshment to me and a resource for outreach for others.

Maybe you've heard the old cliché, "Practice makes perfect." I can't speak to that; I certainly don't know "perfect." But practice does make possible.

So think about what is currently impossible for you and what you'd like to attain. And then take steps to grow and learn and practice so it will become possible for you.

Baghdad's Bravest Graduate



Graduates from the Iraqi National Fire Academy in Baghdad's International Zone receive their diplomas Jan. 10. This graduating class is the first in a combined effort between Joint Area Support Group-Central and Coalition Air Force Training Team personnel. Most of the graduates will go on to be instructors at various fire academies in the Iraqi Army and Air Force, with the remainder staying on to teach at the National Academy. Photo by Maj. Jon Powers.



A TALE OF

One
For
Them...

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

Author's Note - Until recently, the Status of Forces Agreement negotiations prevented the JASG-C from releasing stories about property returns to the Government of Iraq. Now that the SOFA is signed, this story is available to tell.

The first major project the Joint Area Support Group-Central's (JASG-C's) Directorate of Public Works completed was preparing FOB Union I to be returned to the Government of Iraq. The property had been occupied by the Georgian troops. Their hastened departure from

Iraq left the entire base empty, with the exception of a few JASG-C personnel left to run basic operations.

On a predictably sunny day in Baghdad, the process of consolidating the military footprint in the International Zone took a giant, palace-sized step forward. Without ceremony, one massive ring of keys changed hands from American to Iraqi, as FOB Union I was returned to the Government of Iraq.

A process nearly two years in the making concluded as Navy Capt. Tom Karnowski placed the keys to the palace in the hands of Dr. Farhad N. Hussain, Deputy Secretary General of the Council Ministers.

Lt. Col Robert Jarvis found the turnover to be very rewarding. "Al Sajoud was the first palace to be turned over to the GoI in the IZ. This was a significant symbol of the progress towards sovereignty. CAPT K told me later in the day that this had been the greatest day he had in all his time in Iraq. We turned over the palace in the morning and lit the tomb of the unknown in the evening. It meant a great deal to him to have accomplished these tasks," he said.

The lack of pomp did not detract from the significance of the day. A building built from funds taken from many and designed for use by just a few was returned to the new freely elected Government of Iraq by the Joint Area Support Group-Central's (JASG-C's) Directorate of Public Works.

Jarvis added, "I too found it to be one of my best days in Iraq to date. Turning over the palace had

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CHANGING OF THE GUARD - Navy Capt. Tom Karnowski, bottom right, places the keys to FOB Union I in the hands of Dr. Farhad N. Hussain, Deputy Secretary General of the Council Ministers, bottom left, as Dr. Mawafek Al-Kurmanji, IZ Real Property director, and Air Force Capt. Wes Glisson look on.

TWO UNIONS

...And
One
For Us

photo courtesy of the Directorate of Public Works

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

When the U.S. Embassy (Provisional) building was returned to the government of Iraq at the end of this past year, the Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C) personnel working and living in the embassy compound needed to find a new home.

They found it at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Union III.

When Soldiers from the New Jersey Army National Guard's 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team arrived in Iraq this past September to take over the JASG-C, Union III was little more than a collection of dilapidated buildings and unimproved land. Since then, the FOB's Mayor's Cell has overseen renovation of several buildings for office space, and the installation of living quarters for JASG-C and other personnel.

"We have come a long way in four months," said Maj. Thomas McGhee, FOB Union III mayor.

That journey began with a general cleanup and assessment of the FOB, and quickly moved into renovations including plumbing, electrical and construction in Buildings 1 and 6, which line the FOB's main street, Building 5, the unfinished Baath Party headquarters, and Building 15, located just west of the dining facility.

"We basically just oversaw the contractors doing the work; we have the subject matter experts," explained Maj. Leo Bondad, Directorate of Public Works project

leader. "Unfortunately, a good chunk of everything on the FOB didn't coincide with U.S. standards and international standards."

Bondad also said that incidents in Baghdad's "Red Zone" sometimes prevented local Iraqi contractors from getting to the FOB as scheduled. Despite these and other issues, the work was completed on time and to standard.

"It was a very aggressive schedule," he said. "But we were able to meet the deadline requirements."

Also working to meet a deadline were the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) contractors

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BRICK BY BRICK - Two Iraqi contractors put their masonry skills to work as they prepare a new home for the JASG-C Installations Directorate near Bldg. 5 on FOB Union III. Photo by Maj. Jon Powers.

'Old Glory' Days



photo by Sgt. 1st Class Juan Plata-Santos, JASG-C

Flag-raising tradition ends with palace return

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

If there is one place Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C) will remember, it's a pole with a squeaky pulley where hundreds, perhaps thousands, of personal American flags were raised, lowered, folded and sent home.

Why military personnel gathered around the flag pole at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad varied. Some

said the flag was flown to honor a family veteran or loved one lost in combat from another war, or simply as a reminder that they are still serving in Iraq for freedom.

For New Jersey Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Juan Plata-Santos, a native of Levittown, Pa., and an Operation Desert Storm veteran, the flag ceremony represents completion of a mission he first started about 19 years ago, serving with the 20th Engineer Battalion (Airborne) to liberate Kuwait.

"When we found out the war was over, we were about 60 miles from Baghdad and we were told to turn around and go back," Plata-Santos said of being near Al Najaf in 1991 during Desert Storm.

"Being here now, I wanted to be a part of history of raising the American flag where a dictator used to be and stand in the same place almost 20 years later that, today for Americans as well as Iraqis, represents freedom."

"What I started then ended well. Ten years from now when you hear about Iraq and the term 'palace' or 'Embassy,' you can tell your children and your grandchildren you were there. I can show them that American flag," he explained.

As the day grew closer to return to the government of Iraq the building formerly known to Americans and Iraqis alike as the Republican Palace, then the U.S. Embassy-Bagdad and finally the U.S. Embassy Annex, flag ceremonies held by uniformed personnel grew.

Command Sgt. Maj. David Kenna, JASG-C command sergeant major and a resident of Newfield, N.J., became the person in charge of the flag ceremonies shortly after the Marines left this past year to prepare for the New Embassy Complex opening in Baghdad.

"Every day, more groups would go to that flag pole. On the final days, people were rushing to that flag pole. I believe everyone who raised their flags on that flag pole knew the symbolism of raising our national colors over a foreign country's soil, because we are still a nation at war," he said.

A minimum of three personnel began each flag ceremony by taking down the old flag and folding it into a triangle with a partner. Then a new flag taken out of a package or box was hooked and raised by one service member, while remaining troops saluted as it travelled up and down the flag pole. Once the

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JAG CORNER

Fraternization punishable under UCMJ

Col. Daniel G. Giaquinto
Command Judge Advocate

Military organizations are like civilian workplaces in that people interact and personal relationships develop, it is human nature. Although the services recognize this and do not prohibit all military personal relationships, due to the unique nature of our profession reasonable and necessary restrictions apply that are commensurate with the need for good order and discipline.

Deployments can be especially challenging to military members in the area of personal relationships, so it is time to revisit relevant legal authorities. In addition to this article you are encouraged to conduct a review of your service's regulations, and to seek legal or Chaplain guidance if you have any concerns or questions regarding the appropriateness of a relationship.

When considering what military relationships are off limits, you should first consider the policy prohibiting fraternization of your military service. In the Army that policy is found in paragraphs 4-14 thru 4-16 of AR 600-20 (Army Command Policy). This policy is gender-neutral and applies to both the senior and subordinate members in a relationship. It also applies across service lines, meaning it applies to the Army member of a relationship even if the other member belongs to another US military service. Examples of fraternization and further guidance are found in PAM 600-35 (Relationships between Soldiers of Different Ranks). Again, you are highly encouraged to review these publications which may be found in the Army Publishing Directorate at www.usapa.army.mil.

The Army policy employs a two part test: 1) is the relationship in a strictly prohibited category? 2) if not, does the relationship create an adverse effect? If the answer to both questions is no then the relationship is not prohibited by the policy. The following relationships **between officer and enlisted members** are strictly prohibited:

-Dating, shared living accommodations (unless an operational requirement), and intimate or sexual relations

-Ongoing business relations (landlord/tenant and one time transactions such as sale of house or car are exceptions)

-Gambling (charitable or other community functions are exceptions)

-Regardless of rank, relationships between recruiter and recruit and between trainee and permanent party soldier are strictly prohibited.

If the relationship is not in the strictly prohibited category, the second part of the analysis is whether the relationship creates an adverse effect on the command or unit of the military members involved in the relationship. This is "perception based" and applies to relationships in which both members are different in rank, even if both are enlisted or both are officers. Violations of this part of the policy are relationships that:

-Compromise or appear to compromise the integrity of supervisory authority or the chain of command

-Cause actual or perceived partiality or unfairness

-Involve or appear to involve improper use of rank or position for personal gain

-Are or are perceived to be exploitative or coercive in nature

-Create an actual or clearly predictable adverse impact on discipline, authority, morale or the ability of command to accomplish its mission

Exceptions to both the "strictly prohibited" and "adverse effects" categories are situations which common sense tells us are normal community based and team building associations, such as community organizations, religious activities, unit social functions, athletic teams and family gatherings.

Should violations of the policy occur, commanders have available a wide range of options. These may include counseling, reprimand, order to cease, reassignment, or adverse administrative action such as a letter of reprimand or separation.

In appropriate cases fraternization may also be the subject of UCMJ action, either nonjudicial punishment (Article 15) or a court martial. It is important to remember that the fraternization section of the Army Command Policy is punitive, meaning violations are punishable under Article 92 of the UCMJ, Failure to Obey a Regulation. In addition, fraternization conduct between military members may be also punishable under other articles of the UCMJ: **officers** may be prosecuted under Article 133, Conduct Unbecoming an Officer and Gentleman, and also under the fraternization clause of Article 134, the General Article (conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline or of a nature to bring discredit upon the armed forces); and **noncommissioned officers** may also be prosecuted under Article 134 for gambling with subordinates.

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Tradition of Selfless Service

JASG-C Soldier third generation to carry 90-year-old Bible into warzone

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

Soldiers typically carry an abundance of Army-issued gear. Firearms, canteens, radios and rations help troops survive in the harshest conditions.

Master Sgt. Richard A. Koch, however, carries something even greater – a legacy of selfless service that dates back three generations.

“It’s a part of history,” said Koch as he pointed to the diary and Bible that once belonged to his grandfather, a doughboy who fought in Europe during World War I, and his father, who sailed the seas as a Merchant Marine in World War II.

“It’s the closest thing I have to them right now,” he added.

“Even though he was on his deathbed, he’d say, ‘See that young man there? He’s going to Iraq.’ He was proud; he’d still be proud today.”

- Master Sgt. Richard A. Koch

Koch, a New Jersey Army National Guard Soldier with the 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team who is currently deployed to Baghdad’s International Zone as fleet vehicle manager for the Joint Area Support Group-Central, is carrying on a tradition of military service that began when his grandfather arrived at Camp Dix in 1918.

Floyd Peter Koch – known as “Pappap” to his grandson – spent nearly three months training at the newly formed camp before deploying to Europe with a machine gun company in the 78th Division’s 309th Infantry Regiment. Floyd returned to the United States in December 1918 after receiving shrapnel wounds in the Battle of St. Mihiel in France three months earlier. He was honorably discharged from the Army at Dix in January 1919 and returned to civilian life as a mechanical-drawing teacher in Phillipsburg, where he lived until his death at age 64.

During his tour of service, Floyd kept a diary filled with detailed accounts of his experiences. This and his Bible were handed down to his son, Charles Floyd Koch, when the latter joined the U.S. Merchant Marine in May 1945. He served as a boiler tender

on the Liberty Ship SS James Ford Rhodes until January 1947, taking his father's tradition of service – and his Book of Scripture – across the globe.

“That Bible has been to Liverpool, England, the Suez Canal, the Panama Canal, Japan, Germany, and also was in Egypt,” explained Koch.

The well-travelled tome continued its journey when Koch received it from his dad upon entering basic training in 1972.

“After my dad gave it to me, that Bible went wherever I went. It went to Fort Polk, La., it went to Fort Sill, Okla., Boise, Idaho, Camp Shelby, Fort Drum, Fort Bliss, Kuwait; it finally ended up in Iraq,” Koch explained. “That Bible's been around the world.”

Koch has had many experiences during his 36 years in the National Guard - including an ongoing 32-year stint as the full-time shop chief at New Jersey's Picatinny Arsenal – but his current sojourn in Iraq marks his first deployment.

To Koch's disappointment, he won't get to share this experience with his dad – Charles died in February 2008 at the age of 81.

“Even though he was on his deathbed, he'd say, ‘See that young man there? He's going to Iraq.’ He was proud – he'd still be proud today,” Koch said. “We were there when he took his last breath; he knew we were there. That was a choker.”

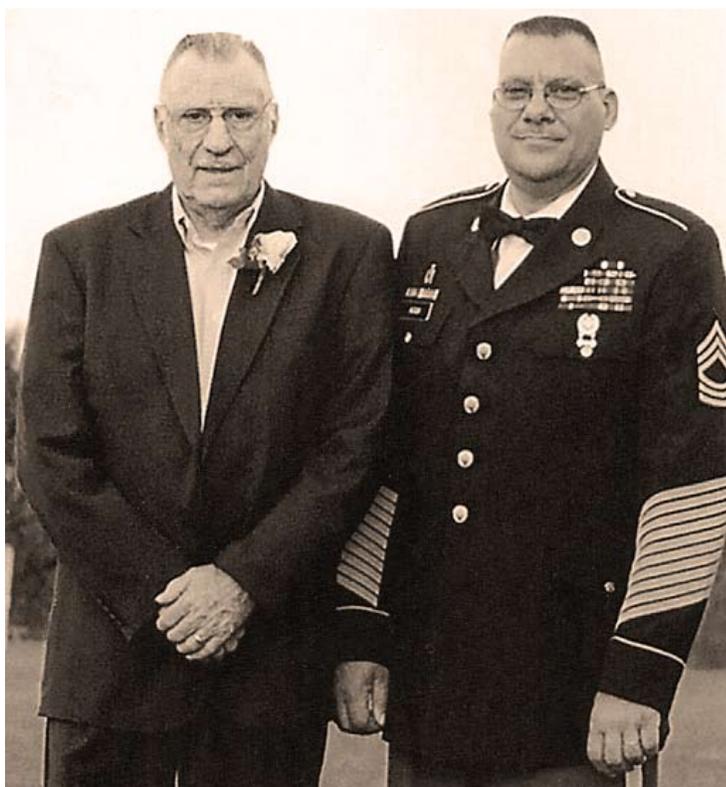
“I wish he would have held on until I got back out of this,” he added.

Koch still holds on to memories of his father, recalling his dad's uncanny ability and creativeness with tools, his love for his great-granddaughters Mylee and Ericka, and his fondness for seeing his son in uniform.

“I was at his side at the funeral. I wore my dress blues; he loved me in my dress blues,” Koch said.

“He was my go-to guy,” Koch added. “I miss him.”

As he prepared to deploy, Koch wasn't going to miss the chance to add Southwest Asia to his Bible's



GENERATIONS - Master Sgt. Richard Koch, a New Jersey Army National Guard Soldier currently deployed to Iraq, right, stands with his father Charles. Koch's most valuable possession on his deployment is a Bible carried by his dad in World War II and his grandfather Floyd in World War I. (Courtesy photo.)

travel record. But prior to his departure from McGuire Air Force Base in June 2008, Koch's mother managed to slip a note of encouragement inside his Bible's cover. It seemed to have its intended effect.

“My Mom said, ‘It brought your grandfather and father home safe; it will do the same for you,’” Koch explained. “This year was hard for the family: I'm not there, my father's not there – but I'm coming home.”

When he does, his Bible will come full circle by ending a three-war, 91-year journey where it began – at an Army fort in central New Jersey known as the Home of the Ultimate Weapon.



This Bible brought Pappap and Pop home safe. You carry it and it will do the same for you. God Bless. Love, Mom.

- From Richard's mother, Fern

Flag-raising tradition ends



continued from page 10
flag was retrieved, two participants would undergo the ceremonial process of folding it into the legendary triangle.

The flag pole was protected by 12-foot-high, concrete T-walls, but when a flag was raised it could be seen flying above the barriers — never hidden — for all passing to see.

Kenna estimated JASG-C personnel flew close to 250 flags on the pole, but an exact count of flags flown in the past three months is anyone's guess. It appeared that Veterans Day and Christmas Day were the busiest times for raising flags.

Flying the flag at the former U.S. Embassy in Baghdad was looked at by all services as both a privilege and a benefit. Early accounts of what became a palace tradition note that prior to the Marines, the Pennsylvania Army National Guard began the flag raising ceremonies.

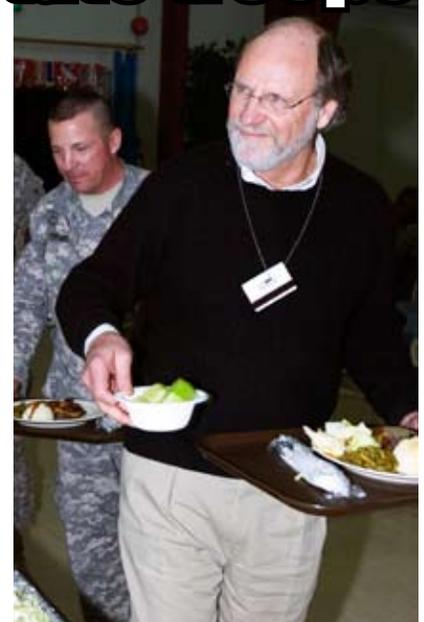
When the grounds were vacated Dec. 30, it's likely a New Jersey Army National Guard Soldier was one of the last at the flag pole. 🇺🇸

FLAGS OF OUR SOLDIERS - New Jersey Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Juan Plata-Santos, a Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran, hoists a flag at the former U.S. Embassy-Baghdad within days of the former Republican Guard Palace being returned to the government of Iraq. The Joint Area Support Group-Central Soldier said whenever he hears the words 'palace' or 'embassy' in reference to Iraq, he'll show his family his flag. Photo by 1st Sgt. David Moore.

NJ governor visits Garden State troops



HAIL TO THE CHIEF - New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, left, meets with Col. Steven Ferrari, commander of the 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, N.J. Army National Guard, above, at the Forward Operating Base Prosperity dining facility Jan. 6. Photos by 1st Sgt. David Moore and Sgt. Bill Addison.





Union III has a new spot "where everybody knows your name" - Holy Joe's Cafe, located in Bldg. 1 outside the Troop Medical Clinic. Open 0800 to 1500 daily, the cafe is averaging more than 100 cups of coffee served each day. A comfortable seating area makes enjoying a complimentary cup of "Holy Joe's" a memorable experience. Donations such as food, snacks, reading material, and - of course - coffee are always welcome. Photo by Maj. Jon Powers.

Fraternization punishable

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So far this article has addressed relationships between military members. When considering whether a relationship is appropriate, it is important to remember that military law also affects relationships where only one member of the relationship (or both) is subject to the UCMJ.

For example, Article 134 prohibits adultery, and applies to all service members regardless of rank. A separate clause of the same article prohibits wrongful cohabitation, which also applies to service members of all ranks. Article 133 always looms as potential punishment for any conduct committed by an officer that is dishonoring or disgracing, or seriously compromises the officer's

character or standing.

Last, but not least, are General Orders. As stated in a previous article in an earlier edition of "In The Zone," in our case there is a United States Central Command GO-1B that applies to the entire USCENTCOM AOR, and an almost identical Multi National Corps- Iraq (MNC-I) GO -1 that applies to Iraq and Kuwait.

Together these general orders prohibit cohabitation of males and females (except lawfully married spouses) during our deployment and also bar sexual contact with Iraqi, foreign or local nationals who are not members of coalition forces. Violations of the punitive section of General Orders are punishable under Article 92 of the UCMJ, Failure to

Obey Lawful General Order.

As is evident from this discussion the universe of potential personal relationships for a soldier or any military member is significantly diminished by the UCMJ, service regulations, and general orders. When considering whether a relationship runs afoul of the various rules, a good barometer is your own common sense, knowledge of the customs of the service, and conscience.

If you have questions in your mind about the legality of a relationship, or if your fellow Soldiers cannot stop "gossiping," it is probably wrong. Seek appropriate guidance if you contemplate or find yourself in such a situation; it could save your military career.

Brigade Divided

New Jersey Soldiers' loyalties split between NFL's Giants, Eagles

Story by Sgt. Bill Addison

Graphic by Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris
JASG-C Public Affairs

John Dickenson, Pennsylvania representative to the Continental Congress, once described New Jersey as being "somewhere between New York and Pennsylvania."

Never has that statement been truer than in terms of the state's football fans. Southern Jersians root for the Philadelphia Eagles, while in the north and Shore areas, New York Giants fans abound. Members of the Joint Area Support Group – Central (JASG-C) came together Jan. 11 to watch the two titan teams battle it out for supremacy in what could easily be the most important game of the playoff series to the "Jersey Blues" Soldiers.

But while the dichotomy of the state's football fans could easily be explained in terms of geography, the ties to one particular team over the other seems to run much deeper to the New Jersey Soldiers.

"We're a state that lacks a true urban identity. So our major metropolitan areas lie outside the political boundaries of our state," said Capt. Richard Colton, 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's HHC commander and Eagles fan from Voorhees, N.J.

"There's a clear line of demarcation somewhere just north of Trenton and if you live south of it you're an Eagles fan, and if you live north of it you're a stinking Giants fan," he said.

"I think the problem is that South Jersey people don't really know who to root for, when they should be rooting for the Giants," said 1st Lt. Anthony Salvani, HHC executive officer and Giants fan from Brick, N.J.

They met in offices, crowded around computer screens, or in some cases, projecting the game onto the wall.



While many Giants fans held on to the hope that last year's Super Bowl champions would clinch another victory this year, ultimately it was the Eagles who clinched the 23-11 victory.

"We've been beaten by better teams," said Salvani.

"The Giants definitely showed a lot more heart in that game than their fans typically do," Colton said.

Super Bowl dreams were not realized by either team this year, with the Eagles losing in the next round to the Arizona Cardinals 32-25.

But New Jersey football fans can agree and enjoy one point of fact.

The Dallas Cowboys didn't make it to the playoffs. 

FOB Union I turnover

continued from page 8

significant personal satisfaction for me. The entire team worked very hard to meet the required timeline."

"The palace area here has been planned over the last year and a half to two years to be returned to the Government of Iraq as a normal part of as the consolidation of forces, and this is an opportunity to have a bare piece of property that may in fact get used for more offices - either rebuilt or torn down and new facilities put in its place," said Karnowski.

Capt. Wes Glisson helped to manage the Real Property portion

of the turnover. "There are something like 15 separate buildings on Union I, including Al Sijud Palace," he said. With an area of 26 acres, the size and location of the property is ideal.

"The turnover itself went fairly smooth. The SPO had a tremendous amount of work to accomplish in a short time frame, and did an outstanding job. The Government of Iraq was very gracious in allowing us the full 30 days to complete the return, and were ecstatic about regaining control of such a large and important property," Glisson continued.

Looking to the future Jarvis said, "While we walked the palace grounds Dr Mawafek and Dr Farhad talked about how much it meant to them to have a palace, a symbol of their culture and government. They spoke about their plans to have contractors assess the palace for renovation. They planned to use it for offices for the Council of Ministers."

Through an interpreter, Hussain said, "This day makes us proud and gives us hope for the future."

As the American contingent left, Iraqi troops replaced the contracted guards and completed the transfer of control. 



photo courtesy of the Directorate of Public Works



photo by Sgt. Bill Addison

FOB Union III

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who had to set up living quarters from scratch, which included digging trenches for power and plumbing and moving Containerized Housing Units (CHUs) from another location.

“Before we got here, our predecessors were handed the task of developing a Life Support Area (LSA), knowing the fact that the (embassy) would be turned back to the government of Iraq,” explained Maj. Paul Rumberger III, FOB governor for the International Zone. “They originally submitted the packet for an entire LSA, which encompassed both the north side and the south side.”

“Due to funding requirements, it was more prudent to split them up,” he added.

The North LSA was completed in a little over three months, just in time for JASG-C personnel from the embassy to move in.

“The timeline was met, it was a successful move, and things are up and running,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Lewis, FOB Union III deputy mayor.

Future projects include finishing the South LSA and possibly reno-

vating Building 14, located behind the dining facility, and Building 18, a former mausoleum.

“As with any large-scale project, it doesn’t go without its hiccups,” said Lewis. “You come here, you transform a piece of real estate into a working FOB – it’s now sustaining almost 1,100 personnel.”

“We’ve had a lot of growing pains, but we’ve overcome and we’ve adapted,” Lewis continued. “But the one thing we have to remember is that we’re still in Iraq,

GENERATIONS - Iraqi contractors have been improving FOB Union III for several months, above, under the guidance of Joint Area Support Group-Central personnel. Work continues on the FOB, including the initial stages of installing Containerized Housing Units in the South Life Support Area, below.

and we’re still in a warzone.”

While there is still much work to do on FOB Union III, McGhee and his team have a clear focus on their priorities.

“The main emphasis is to make sure everyone’s taken care of,” McGhee said. 



photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Morris

UNION AND YOU

"Perfect Together"

With the New Year underway, Soldiers of the Joint Area Support Group-Central (JASG-C) are experiencing new ways of doing their day-to-business. So here's some vital information to help for better planning your time at FOB Union III.

Mayor's Cell

MAJ Thomas McGhee
FOB Union III mayor
DSN 318 239-0232
Asia Cell 0770-444-1653

CSM Scott Lewis
FOB Union III deputy mayor
DSN 318 239-0234
Asia Cell 0770-444-1705

Dining Facility

The Union III Dining Facility (DFAC) across from the Bldg. 1 parking lot offers four meals a day. Meal hours are:

Breakfast: 0530 to 0800
Lunch: 1130 to 1330
Dinner: 1730 to 2000
Midnight Meal: 2330 to 0100

Finance

The International Zone Finance Office conducts business here two days a week; the schedule may expand in the future to meet your budgeting needs.

The times and location for Union III finance operations are Bldg. 6, Rooms 1-4A and 1-4B, from 0900 to 1600, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Finance operations include check cashing, Eagle Cash Card transactions, military pay issues, collection and review of travel vouchers and other military pay-related documents, and more.

Eagle Cash Card (ECC) applications are available. The service member must provide a current bank statement or LES to verify bank routing and account numbers. As a reminder, you can load up to \$350 per day to your card. You can get cash back up to \$200 per month. Checks can also be cashed for up to \$200 per month.

Civilians are also permitted to use finance services, but they must be on an approved check cashing roster.

For more information, call Sgt. Genea L. Michael at DSN 318 239-8570/8571 or e-mail genea.michael@iraq.centcom.mil

Gym/MWR

The Union III Gym is located in Bldg. 5 and is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Treadmills, elliptical trainers, stationary bicycles, weight machines and other equipment are available to help keep you in top form.

The MWR facility, adjacent to the gym, offers a large-screen television, DVDs, books, boardgames, Xbox and other fun activities. The MWR facility is also open 24/7.

The gym/MWR facility host several weekly events, including Karaoke Night Sundays at 1900, Movie Night Saturdays at 2000, ping-pong and pool tournaments

Thursdays at 1930, ab workout classes Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 2000 to 2100, and Texas Hold-Em Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 2000 to 2300. Times and events are subject to change.

Post Office

Free mail, which is limited to 13 ounces, still exists for the letter home and a mailbox is located in front of Bldg. 6. But if you are looking to mail pictures, a small souvenir in an envelope or packages, then you must go to the Post Office located in Bldg. 5.

Your packages will be inspected and limited to three packages or items, such as footlockers, per visit. You are also required to have a military ID card for the transaction. Civilians are required to have two forms of identification to conduct postal transactions.

Items that are forbidden to be shipped include weapons items, drugs, alcohol, and perishable material. For a complete list of items, consult CENTCOM AR 25-200 or HRSC Policy 07-26.

The hours at the Post Office are 0800 to 1730 daily.

Common Access Cards

The IZ Common Access Card (CAC) office is open in Bldg. 1, Room 107, Monday through Saturday from 0830 to 1800. For questions, call DSN 318 239-0641 or 703 270-0641 or e-mail jascchr@iraq.centcom.mil

Chaplain Services

Religious services are offered at various locations on Union III throughout the week:

Sundays

Protestant Service
0900 in the DFAC

Denominational Protestant Service
(Anglican, Episcopal and Lutheran)
1045 in the Bldg. 1
Conference Room

Catholic Mass
1630 at the Bldg 5
Basketball Court

Protestant Service
1815 at the Bldg. 5
Basketball Court

Spanish Catholic Mass
2000 in the Bldg. 1
Conference Room

Tuesdays

“What Catholics Really Believe”
1800 in the Bldg. 1
Conference Room

Wednesdays

“Scripture From Scratch”
1900 in the Bldg. 1
Conference Room

Tuesdays and Thursdays

Catholic Mass
1200 in the Bldg. 1
Conference Room

Fridays

Eastern Orthodox Service
0930 every other Friday
in the Bldg 1 Conference Room

Latter Day Saints Service
1500 in the Bldg. 1
Conference Room

Jewish Service
1800 in the Bldg. 1
Conference Room

Directions to the Building 1 Conference Room: Enter Union III, turn left. The first building to your left is Bldg. 1. Enter and ask for the conference room.

Directions to the Union III DFAC: The DFAC is just beyond Bldg. 1 on the opposite side of the street.

Directions to the Bldg. 5 Basketball Court: Enter Union III, Bldg. 5 is to the right and is the largest building on Union III. A large exterior concrete ramp goes to the second floor. Walk up the ramp and, once inside the building entrance, take the lefthand hall. Follow the hall to the stairwell, continue walking forward into what looks like an abandoned corridor. The basketball court is on the left at the end of the corridor.

Laundry Service

Since dirty laundry is serious business, the FOB has a seven-day-a-week laundry service that at a maximum takes three days to complete. Individuals using the service can only have 20 pieces of laundry in each bag. Blankets and comforters must be separated from clothing or uniform items. The hours of operation are 0700 to 2000 daily.

Medical Treatment

The Union III Troop Medical Clinic, located behind the Mayor’s Cell in Bldg. 1, is open for routine health care needs. Sick-call hours for walk-ins are Monday through Friday from 0800 to 1100 and 1300 to 1500, and Saturdays from 0800 to 1100. The clinic is closed on Sundays.

Those eligible for care include active-duty U.S. and Coalition Forces, retired U.S. military and Department of Defense federal

government employees.

Contractors presenting for care must have it in their contract that they are eligible for routine medical care in order to be seen and must provide a letter of authorization (LOA).

Routine immunizations and Post Deployment Health Assessments are available for individuals during sick call hours. For groups of 10 or more call 239-0680 to schedule.

Safety Items

Military personnel are required to wear a reflective belt one hour before dusk and one hour after dawn to help prevent accidents.

Outside The FOB: Toastmasters Club

Remember the words of Dale Carnegie: “Most people would rather die than speak in public!” Would you like to improve your public speaking skills, briefing skills, leadership skills, listening skills, speech evaluation skills, people skills, networking skills, increase your self confidence/self esteem, all in a friendly supportive environment?

We would like to invite you to the IZ Toastmasters International Club! We meet every Saturday at the GRD Chapel Annex from 1200 to 1300. If you are interested in becoming a Toastmaster or learning more about Toastmasters International, please visit our Web site at www.toastmasters.org. Visitors are always welcome to attend our meetings!

For more information, call Linda Walpole at DSN 318 852-1586 or Dave Schory at DSN 318 239-6177. You can also send e-mail to Linda.walpole.gbr@iraq.centcom.mil or david.schory@iraq.centcom.mil.

CHAPEL

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Chap. (Maj.) Jan Koczera, JASG-C chaplain, above, gets help from Air Force Staff Sgt. Alex Griffin, Armed Forces Network, left, and other service members during a "G.I. party" Jan. 17 to turn the old basketball court in Bldg. 5 into the new Union III chapel.