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# Iraqis celebrate International Women's Day, empower local women

**SGT. RODNEY FOLIENTE**  
2ND BCT, 4TH INF. DIV.



**CAMP ECHO** – A large crowd of Iraqi women, ranging from teenagers to grandmothers, gathered at the al Nehrawan Youth Center in Diwaniya to celebrate International Women's Day with a graduation ceremony March 8.

The graduates received their certificates for completing courses in skills such as making clothes, silk flowers, crafts and art, which offer financial opportunities in the local economy.

In this arid country, such colorful commodities are often in demand, said one of the graduates and ceremony participants. Future classes are also planned, including courses in computer technology, she said during a speech.

"The goal was to develop their skills so they may be more self-reliant eco-

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Photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente  
(Above) Iraqi teenagers and women gaze at art honoring the plight, history, goals, accomplishments and freedom of women after a graduation ceremony and celebration of International Women's Day at al Nehrawan Youth Center in Diwaniya March 8. (Left) A mother smiles at her daughter during an art show honoring International Women's Day at al Nehrawan Youth Center in Diwaniya March 8.

# Long Knives receive comic relief in Iraq

SPC. TERENCE EWINGS  
4TH BCT, 1ST CAV. DIV.



COB ADDER— Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division 'Long Knife' Brigade took a break from their normal routine to enjoy performances of the 'Comics Ready To Entertain' tour that visited troops at Forward Operating Base Blackhawk and Joint Security Station Apache, Iraq, March 8.

"It's an honor and a privilege to be able to do this for the Soldiers out here," said Scott Kennedy, the headline act of the comedy tour.

Kennedy said he has traveled overseas more than 27 times performing for troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan. "I feel that it brings a little of home to the Soldiers, and it allows them to take a break from the mission to just sit back and have a laugh."

After the show, the comedians toured the military installations, where

the laughter and smiles continued to roll as the performers spoke with some of the deployed Soldiers.

"This is definitely one of the better days of the deployment," said Pfc. Nathaniel Chance from Sacramento, CA. "It's always good to see people from home- makes you feel special."

With the Long Knives' comedy show complete, the comedians prepared to travel to their next destination to entertain troops during their three-day stay in Iraq.



Photo by Spc. Terence Ewings

Soldiers from the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division share a laugh during a comedic performance from the 'Comics Ready To Entertain' tour that visited the troops at Joint Security Station Apache, Iraq, March 8. This was the first Morale, Welfare and Recreation event at the remote military installation in al Sheeb, Iraq.

## THE Mountain View

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Task Force 449



# Iraqi security forces take helm of JSS 2 in Diwaniya



**SGT. RODNEY FOLIENTE**  
2ND BCT, 4TH INF. DIV.



CAMP ECHO, Iraq – Iraqi Security Forces and the local government assumed full responsibility for manning and operating the Joint Security Station 2 in Diwaniya during a ceremony March 14.

The 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, transferred full authority to the ISF, offering the symbolic JSS 2 key to Col. Abed al Jalil Abdul Amir, chief of staff for the Diwaniya Provincial Department of Police.

“The Iraqi Security Forces are willing, ready and capable to conduct all operations. This has been evident with the recent holidays, as well as the (provincial) elections,” said Maj. William Sachse, executive officer for 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt. During those events, the ISF provided the majority of the security, keeping the citizens safe and maintaining the peace.

The security the people of Diwaniya are experiencing is largely due to the outstanding leadership and efforts of the ISF, said Sachse.

He also applauded the work of the Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., who worked and lived with the Iraqi Army Soldiers and Iraqi Police at JSS 2.

“Today marks an important day for the Iraqi people of Diwaniya. The transfer of JSS 2 highlights the irreversible momentum toward a free and prosperous Iraq. Although U.S. forces are leaving JSS 2, our relationship will not change. I look forward to our continued partnership,” said Sachse in a speech during the ceremony.

“The Iraqi Security Forces are ready and capable to take over the responsibility and operations of this station,” said Amir, through an interpreter. “The training we received from Coalition forces has improved our capabilities and we’re now able to defend our country and protect our province.”

Photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente

Maj. William Sachse, executive officer for 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., and Col. Abed al Jalil Abdul Amir, chief of staff for the Diwaniya Provincial Department of Police, cut a cake after a ceremony turning over the JSS 2 to ISF control in Diwaniya March 14.

## **WOMEN:** *Iraqis celebrate International Women’s Day*

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onomically,” said Mike Klecheski, Provincial Reconstruction Team leader for Diwaniya. “It was really encouraging and nice to see so many people so enthusiastic and upbeat. It was partly because I think they were so satisfied and proud that they had accomplished so much and learned some very important skills.”

The project was initiated by local women and an Iraqi non-government organization. The PRT helped facilitate the program, but the NGO and local Iraqis “took the lead in the program of encouraging civil society activity – organizing

and developing a strong program to help individuals with their needs,” said Klecheski.

“We supported the training and the NGO. Supporting efforts that empower people, strengthen their ability to earn money and strengthen the economy are all elements that the PRT is working on,” said Klecheski. “This was just one example. We work very closely with our Iraqi partners. We try to implement what they suggest. They know what their needs are. It was their idea to do this training.”

“This was a great example of economic development, civil society development and celebrating International Women’s Day. Women organizing themselves for a very positive goal, that’s what Women’s International Day is about: that sense of consciousness and being able to do things for themselves.”

Women in Iraq are becoming increasingly more active in

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**Staff Section Round-up**


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# Wandering in the Desert.

The religious connotation of wandering in the desert implies that one is traveling through an area that is devoid of some desirable thing or overwhelmed by an undesirable thing. While our Iraqi neighbors find the desert home, most of us from the U.S. find our existence here in the desert an undesirable thing. We miss our families, our homes, the forests, plains or hills from where we have come. We dream of our return to the comfortable familiarity of the land that we love.

Many influential religious leaders of the past found a

deeper level of spirituality by spending time in the desert. It is living in the midst of the void of what is comfortable that we can clarify that which is most important. While we are here in the desert we do yearn for better things. May you take the motivation that comes from yearning and grow in living for what is important and what will last for your legacy.

Ch. (Maj.) Carl Rosenberg  
Deputy Division Chaplain

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## Children of deployed Soldiers receive grants for extracurricular activities

PFC. JASMINE N. WALTHALL  
TF 449



Our Military Kids is an organization whose purpose is to supply the families of deployed Reservists and Guardsmen with funding so that they can either start or continue extracurricular activities while parents are deployed.

The foundation was founded in 2004 to assist families of deployed members, in providing their children with activities that may help them cope through a deployment, as well as assist

with tutoring, if needed.

The grant is in the amount of \$500 and covers youth sports, fine arts, and tutorial programs, as well as activities such as beauty pageants and school trips.

Children ages three to 12th grade whose parents are deployed members of the National Guard or the Reserves are eligible to apply. There is no income qualification for the program and children may receive up to two grants during a deployment of 365 days or more. Applications may be submitted on their website, [www.ourmilitarykids.org](http://www.ourmilitarykids.org).



Courtesy photo

A child paints a picture in an art class thanks to the Our Military Kids foundation that supplies children of deployed Soldiers with grants for extracurricular activities.

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## WOMEN

From page 3

ensuring their rights and creating more economic opportunities, said Esraa, an Iraqi interpreter who witnessed the ceremony.

She said that women's rights in Iraq have increased by at least 50 percent since the fall of the old regime, and the changes have been more drastic recently.

There are still many people who cling to how things were, when not as many women were encouraged to own shops or work as professionals, such as doctors, teachers and government workers. Some families still don't allow girls to get past secondary school and they are forced to quit education when they get married, continued Esraa.

"Many are not allowed to go to college because their families don't want them to," explained Esraa. But, there is an

improvement and the number of women going to college or making a living for their families is on the rise.

Single mothers or widows are getting a better chance to take care of their children, she said. There is still more to do, but the road is getting easier and more promising.

A display of artwork aimed at celebrating International Women's Day was comprised of art made by male and female artists. The themes touched upon the plight, history, goals, accomplishments and freedom of women.

"There is progress here in Diwaniya and in much of Iraq. The future looks much better for women and self-sufficiency for us is more possible," said Esraa. "I felt proud and surprised to see those women who are working hard to build upon their lives and not have to always count on others. I cheered for them. It's good to have information and knowledge to improve their lives. I have a greater hope for the future."

# Headline Round-up

## U.S. News:

**MONTPELIER, Vermont** - Nine years after it played host to a bitter fight over civil unions, the state of Vermont is again a gay rights battleground. More than 200 same-sex marriage opponents, cheering and wearing buttons that read "Marriage — A Mother & Father for Every Child," converged Monday on the state capital of Montpelier as lawmakers began a week's worth of hearings on a bill that would allow gay and lesbian couples to marry. If approved, Vermont would join fellow northeastern states Massachusetts and Connecticut as the only U.S. states that allow gay marriage.

## World News:

**YAOUNDE, Cameroon** - Work crews finished renovating sites Monday and choirs practiced inside a soccer stadium where more than 100,000 faithful are expected for a Mass this week with Pope Benedict XVI. The pope's seven-day trip to Africa — the fastest-growing region for the Roman Catholic church — begins Tuesday and includes stops in both Cameroon and Angola.

## Buisness News:

**SEATTLE** - The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, which has chronicled the news of the city since logs slid down its steep streets to the harbor and miners caroused in its bars before heading north to Alaska's gold fields, will print its final edition Tuesday. Hearst Corp., which owns the 146-year-old P-I, said Monday that it failed to find a buyer for the newspaper, which it put up for a 60-day sale in January after years of losing money. Now the P-I will shift entirely to the Web.

## Science News:

**WASHINGTON** - Oklahoma politician Mike Reynolds believes the federal government has gone too far this time. Days after President Barack Obama lifted limits on federal funding of human embryonic stem cell research this month, the Republican state representative introduced a bill that would make much of such work illegal in his state. "I absolutely believe that if the federal government messes things up, states have a right to straighten it out," Reynolds said in a telephone interview.

## Quote of the Day

*"From time to time, the tree of liberty must be watered with the blood of tyrants and patriots."*  
 — Thomas Jefferson

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



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## AROUND THE COMMUNITY

### Lions Den

Madden '09 @ 7:30 p.m.

Spades @ 8 p.m.

### Fishbowl Gym

March 27

Relay for Life HOPE Ceremony @ 8 p.m.

March 28

Cancer awareness 5K/10K walk run. Free t-shirt and continental breakfast. Race begins @ 7 a.m.

April 11

Pirate's Cove Run 5K/10K.

Registration begins @ 7 a.m., race begins @ w8 a.m.

T-shirts awarded to top finishers.

### Babylon Theater

March 17

Fire Warden Class @ 1 p.m.

Fire Extinguisher Class @ 2 p.m.

Flash of Genius @ 4 p.m.

Transporter 3 @ 7 p.m.

Seven Pounds @ 9:30 p.m.

March 20

Town Hall Meeting @ 1 p.m.

### Freedom Chapel

Sundays

Protestant (Traditional) @ 10 a.m.

Roman Catholic Mass @ 12 p.m.

LDS service @ 2 p.m.

Eastern Orthodox @ 4 p.m.

Protestant (Contemporary) @ 12 p.m.

Mondays

A History of Christianity @ 7 p.m.

Tuesdays

God & the Military @ 6:30 p.m.

Wednesdays

Guitar Lessons @ 7 p.m.

Thursdays

Catholic Choir practice @ 5:30 p.m.

Fridays

Catholic hour @ 6:30 p.m.