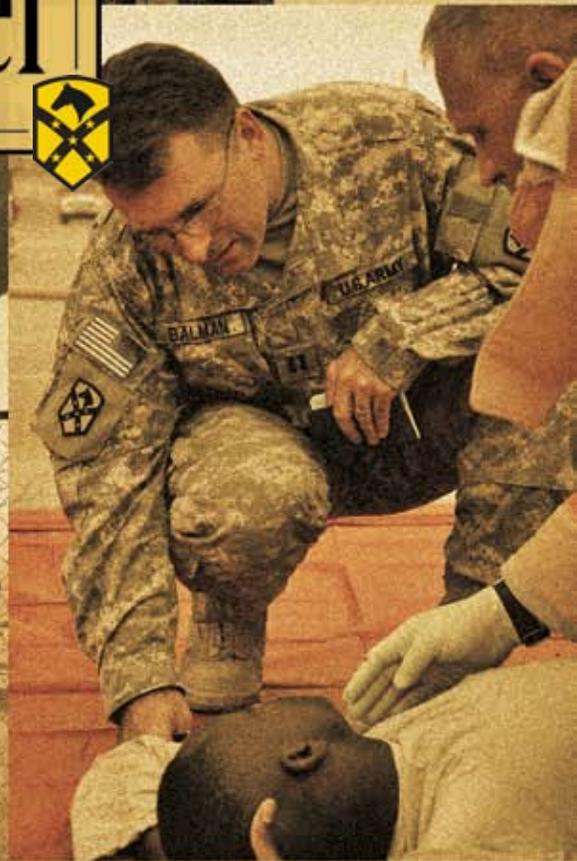


The Wagon Wheel

15th Sustainment Brigade



Thanksgiving,
Wagonmaster Style Pg. 3

Aaron Tippin performs for
troops Pg. 10



In This Issue

Q-West celebrates Thanksgiving
"Wagonmaster" style 3

Mass casualty exercise 5

Mississippians maintain a
hawk's eye view for Q-West 6

Company supports CrossFit 7

Three star visits Iraq 8

Q-West shines the light on
sexual assault with walk 9

Chaplain works to strengthen
marriages 9

Aaron Tippin performs for
troops 10

Like father, like son 11

Cartoonists draw inspiration
from Q-West troops 12

Go with the flow 14

FUN 15

Wagonmaster 6 Sends ...

First of all, as we approach another Thanksgiving away from our beloved Families, I just want you all to know how much I appreciate what each of you are doing for our Country.

To our Rear Detachment...LTC Saiz, your Team, Lisa, and Henry and ALL of the great spouses and RD personnel. We are thankful to you, and all Task Force Wagonmaster Rear Detachments, for your silent work behind the scenes supporting us from afar. We feel your support tangibly every day. You are the "Power Behind the Power", and we are so lucky to have you and Army Families behind us. We could not do what we do without you. We don't tell our Rear Dets and Families how much we appreciate them often enough, so I will start my "Thank You's" with Task Force Wagonmaster RDs and Families... God Bless you all this day and every day for your sacrifice, your service, and your support.

To the countless communities that support us, our sincere thanks. For our Fort Hood-based units, our thanks go out to all of Central Texas and our "home town" of Belton, represented by the greatest supporters any Army unit could ever ask for. Mr. Jay Taggart, you represent what the word "Support" means, and not a day goes by that we don't hold you up in our prayers. We are thankful for you, Stephanie, and the entire Belton community. You, and countless other communities in Mississippi, New Mexico, Connecticut, Fayetteville, across the country and around

the world, keep our Families in your palms while we do the hard work of protecting freedom's frontier. We love you. God Bless you all.

To the Soldiers of the 15th STB, the 2-198 CAB, the 515th CSSB, the 264th CSSB, and the 395th CSSB... You and your attached companies represent what is best about our great country, and you have my undying gratitude. Every day, every convoy, every mission...you just put your heads down and "Soldier on"...when something is just too tough for someone else, it is just about right for Task Force Wagonmaster, and you just "get 'er done" every day. You truly make Every Day Better, and I am honored to be here by your side. You are quietly making history, and I am proud to serve with you.

To all of us...those here, those at home in RDs, and those that love and support us...my Thanks to you all on this day of thanks. My Thanksgiving wish for you all is that you will share next Thanksgiving with the ones at home you love and care about. We'll share THIS one with our Family in ACUs that we love and cherish. God Bless you all...

Wagonmaster 6



Wagon Wheel

15th Sustainment Brigade

Commander
Col. Larry Phelps

Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Nathaniel Bartee

Public Affairs Chief
Staff Sgt. Rob Strain

Wagon Wheel Editor
Sgt. Matthew C. Cooley

Rear Detachment Public Affairs
Cpl. Jessica Hampton

Contributing Writers
Capt. Murray Shugars
1st Lt. Maria Schmitz
Spc. Lisa Cope

Contact the editor through email at
matthew.cooley@iraq.centcom.mil or call
DSN 318-827-6101

The Wagon Wheel is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the Wagon Wheel are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, or the 15th Sustainment Brigade.

CORRECTION NOTICE: The November issue incorrectly identified the author of "Education a priority for 395th CSSB" as Staff Sgt. Rob Strain, the author is 1st Lt. Danielle Gordon.

On the cover: A compilation of photos from around the Wagonmaster area of operations showing the variety of activities the 15th is involved with. (Photo Illustration: Sgt. Matthew C. Cooley and Staff Sgt. Rob Strain)

Q-West celebrates Thanksgiving “Wagonmaster” style



Thousands of Soldiers eat Thanksgiving dinner at the dining facility here, Nov.26, surrounded by decorations including a large model of pilgrim's ship.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jonathan Ward, 3rd Infantry Division bandmen, plays Christmas music on his trumpet with the 3rd Infantry Division's The Marine Jazz Ensemble behind a large model ship in the dining facility here Nov. 26 as part of the Thanksgiving festivities.



A large turkey made out of crackers, cereal, and dough sits on the serving line in the foreground while a “Wagonmaster” patch made of hardened sugar sits in the background.



A 3-D cake made by Sixto Jimenez, a San Jose Del Monte, Philippines, native and head baker for the dining facility here, sits on display at Thanksgiving dinner next to a dining facility entrance here, Nov. 26, showing a Bible open to the 23rd Psalm.



Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Finley, 15th Sustainment Brigade schools and training noncommissioned officer, serves Thanksgiving dinner in the dining facility here, Nov. 26. It is traditional for senior noncommissioned officers and commissioned officers to serve their subordinates Thanksgiving dinner.

Story and Photos by Sgt. Matthew C. Cooley
CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq – Ice sculptures glistened next to massive 3-D cakes. Thousands of Soldiers listened to Christmas music performed by a jazz band while feasting on turkey, ham, dressing, and more. Soldiers dressed as Native Americans, pilgrim settlers, and even a turkey roamed about taking pictures with others.

Thanksgiving had come to Contingency Operating Location Q-West.

The 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), operated dining facility hosted Thanksgiving dinner for U.S. and Iraqi service members and civilian contractors working on base from around the world here Nov. 26.

For Sgt. Brenda Berger, a Raleigh, Miss., native and battle desk noncommissioned officer for A Company, 106th Brigade Support Battalion, this was her second Thanksgiving in Iraq.

Continued on 4

Continued from "Thanksgiving"

"I don't particularly like it ... it's just part of the deal," she said.

Master Sgt. Vanessa Price, a Shreveport, La., native and senior food management NCO in charge, said that they tried to provide a feeling of home, although it was not like grandma's cooking.

"[The cooks] worked a lot of late hours. A lot of them had only maybe one or two hours of sleep," she said, referring to the night before Thanksgiving.

"It's all worth it just to see the smiling faces," she said.

Their hard work didn't go unnoticed either.

"It's a nice change from the everyday thing," Berger said.

"The ice sculptures are really nice. I never had ice sculptures at my Thanksgiving before!"

"They did an awesome job on the decorations!" Spc. Willie Copeland, a B Company, 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms Brigade, convoy security driver and Senatobia, Miss., native said.

He agreed with Berger that it was hard to be away from family and friends back home during this time of year, but the cooks' efforts to make Thanksgiving better for the Soldiers helped.

"Thanksgiving is the Super Bowl for us cooks," Pfc. Daniel Rivera, an Apple Valley, Calif., resident from Ceiba, Puerto Rico,

and 15th Sust. Bde. cook, said.

Rivera, with coaching and assistance from Sgt. 1st Class Jason Cecil, a Nashville, Tenn., native and DFAC manager, carved several ice sculptures including a horse's head like the one in the 15th's patch.

"[It makes you feel good] if you can sit down, eat a good meal, and have good art made by the same cooks who cook your meals every day," Rivera said.

According to Cpl. Joseph Williams, a Baton Rouge, La., native and 15th cook, most of the preparation work was done by the scores of civilian contract workers at the DFAC.

"A lot of these people don't get the recognition that they should," Williams said.

"They work real hard."

Workers like Sixto Jimenez, a San Jose Del Monte, Philippines, native and head baker for the dining facility here,

who made all ten of the decorative cakes at the feast with assistance from his baking team, a process that took him five days while carrying out his normal daily duties.

"I didn't focus on that only," Jimenez said in a thick Filipino accent.

"If I have free time, I make one."

Jimenez, a baker for U.S. forces in Iraq for four years, said that he was excited to have so many people enjoy his work.

Around 3,000 pounds of meat, including 1,920 pounds of turkey, were cooked for the feast, Price said.

Although the feast was a lot of work, doing more with less is business as usual for these cooks.

"The kitchen has a feeding capacity of 3,500 and we feed 13,000 a day," Staff Sgt. Ron Adams, a Danielson, Conn., native and DFAC assistant manager said.

At the end of the meal, many were reminded of the day's main theme – giving thanks.

Berger said she could think of a long list of things to be thankful for.

"I'm thankful that in about 90 days I'll be going home [and] our company has had no major injuries or deaths," she said.

She smiled and added, "And the Saints have a perfect season so far!"

Copeland also said he had something to be thankful for.

"I'm thankful to be alive ... to enjoy thanksgiving."



Story and photos by Sgt. Matthew C. Cooley
CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST,
Iraq – Rain water caused small puddles of blood to stream
across the pavement under the boots of men wearing what
looked like silver spacesuits.

Red and blue flashing lights reflected off of yellow
uniforms and the chrome-like surfaces of fire trucks.

15th Sustainment Brigade medics along with
Q-West firefighters and medical contractors conducted a
realistic mass casualty exercise here Oct. 29 simulating a
downed helicopter.

The exercise was the first time that these services
all worked together on Q-West for an exercise of this type
according to Drexel Garland, Q-West fire department's as-
sistant chief of operations.

"The main thing is working together," he said.

The exercise used a small bus to simulate a
crashed helicopter and Soldiers role played victims with
fake blood and injuries. Dummies were also used to simu-
late the dead.

"We drill every other day out here," Drexel, a San

Continued on 6

Role player Sgt.
Josh Tharpe, a tank
crewmember with C
Company, 2nd Bat-
talion 198th Com-
bined Arms Brigade
and Grenada, Miss.,
native, watches as
Q-West firefighters
examine him during a
mass casualty exer-
cise here Oct. 28.



A Q-West firefighter gives direction while another holds a man who role played a fleeing delusional victim of a simulated helicopter crash during a mass casualty exercise here Oct. 28.

Q-West firefighters wearing protective gear react to a simulated helicopter crash during a mass casualty exercise here Oct. 28.



Capt. John Balman, a Temple, Texas, native and 15th Sustainment Brigade surgeon, examines a role player patient during a mass casualty exercise here Oct. 28.



Q-West firefighters Chas Cosgrave (right), a Zanesville, Oh., native and Michael Winter, a Salt Lake City native, take care of role playing patient, Sgt. Josh Tharpe, a tank crewmember with C Company, 2nd Battalion 198th Combined Arms Brigade and Grenada, Miss., native, during a mass casualty exercise here Oct. 28.

MASS CASUALTY EXERCISE

Continued from "Casualty"

Angelo, Texas, native said.

"[But] when you got a person actually in front of you bleeding [or with] broken legs ... it's a lot different."

Firefighters wearing silver flame resistant suits and masks were faced with a surprise twist when they arrived at the scene only to discover a role player simulating a civilian who was in the area at the time of the crash. The role player ran around frantically as if delusional forcing the firefighters to give chase.

Drexel explained that communication between the organizations and conducting triage was challenging.

"[It] was a new experience for a lot of people, but it went well," Master Sgt. Stanley Dyches, a Copperas Cove, Texas, native and the 15th Sus. Bde. Surgeon cell noncommissioned officer in charge, said.

He didn't complain about the weather either.

"If it ain't raining, we ain't training," he said laughing. Many of those involved in the training said that

the exercise helped the collaborative efforts of the different groups involved.

"How can we make that better? How can we make that more efficient?" John Petrovic, Q-West's fire chief asked of his firefighters during an after action review.

He also stressed the importance of being capable of handling any emergency situation that might arise due to the remote location of the base.

"We're it. We're not only the A team but he B team too."

Mississippians maintain a hawk's eye view for Q-West

Story and photos by Capt. Murray Shugars
2-198th CAB

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq — Members of the Mississippi Army National Guard marked their fourth month of maintaining and operating the base defense 17-meter Aerostat balloon for Contingency Operating Location Q-West Nov. 7.

The crewmembers – all members of A Company, 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms, headquartered in Hernando, Miss., and attached to the Base Defense Operations Center – operate in two teams, maintaining the balloon and surveillance 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The aerostat teams are a key asset of the Base Defense Operations Center, said Maj. Doug Ferguson, operations officer for 2/198th CAB, 155th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, out of Senatobia, Miss.

"The teams have been vigilant," said Ferguson, a Hernando, Miss., native. "They have been a combat-multiplier in the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance fight."

Their vigilance helped in numerous missions, said Sgt. Maj. John T. Raines III, operations sergeant major for the 2/198th



The 17-meter Aerostat of Contingency Operating Location Q-West secured to its mobile mooring station during a windy night Nov. 2. The aerostat – maintained and operated by crewmembers from A Company, 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms, out of Hernando, Miss., and attached to the Base Defense Operations Center – provides a key element of base defense.

CAB.

"They made a couple of key observations," said Raines, a native of Flowood, Miss.

To qualify as crewmembers, the Soldiers underwent 30 days of training on the technology and procedures for operating the balloon, said Sgt. Wesley G. Patrick, noncommissioned officer in charge of Bravo Team.

"The training was pretty thorough," said Patrick of Southaven, Miss. "It doesn't take a genius to fly the aerostat balloon, but it takes a lot of training and skill to operate the [equipment]. This is a very technical job. We need to know computers and electronics, and still there are numerous components beyond our knowledge."

"The aerostat is excellent for base defense surveillance," said Staff Sgt. John W. Pidgette, NCOIC of Alpha Team and a native of Horn Lake, Miss.

The job can be sedate, such as monitoring the camera systems, but it can also be very physical, said Patrick.

In spite of challenges, all the crewmembers enjoy their



Pfc. William C. Williamson, an aerostat crewmember from Seattle, Wash., stands ready on the main platform of the mobile mooring station of Q-West's 17-meter Aerostat as his team prepared to hoist the balloon Nov. 6. The aerostat crewmembers – all from A Company, 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms, out of Hernando, Miss., and attached to the Base Defense Operations Center – provide a key element of base defense, maintaining the balloon and surveillance 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Continued on 7

Continued from "Hawk's Eye"

job, and they are impressed by the technology, said Pidgette.

"I love doing this and have learned a lot," said Pfc. William C. Williamson, a crewmember from Seattle.

"The technology and the science are very interesting, and I plan to learn more when I get home. The system is very accurate."

While they may enjoy their mission, the Soldiers know that challenges can arise at any time, said Spc. Joshua M. Jenkins.

"This mission is great," said Jenkins, a Hernando, Miss., native.

The Soldiers have developed tight-knit bonds over the past months, said Sgt. Joanna J. Brown, assistant NCOIC and computer operator. Previously a supply clerk, Brown said she likes not to be working alone.

"I like this because I'm working more with other Soldiers," said Brown, a Columbus, Miss., native.

"There's great camaraderie here, and the two teams have a healthy competition. The Soldiers are well trained and confident. I don't have to push them to do their jobs."

Some of the Soldiers like the mission so much that, when we get home, we want to find civilian jobs with companies that provide this technology to the Department of Homeland Security, said Pidgette.

"Going through all the training and getting this experience gives us opportunities for employment when we get home," said Spc. Andrew N. Faulkner, a camera technician from Hernando, Miss.

For the present, the crewmembers are staying focused on their mission, said Hardy.

"This is an important mission," said Hardy.

"We contribute to the surveillance and security of the base. Just having the balloon up there is a deterrent because it tells the enemy that we are always watching."

Company supports CrossFit with new gym

Story and photos by Sgt. Matthew C. Cooley

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq – The Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 15th Special Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, completed a gym in the company area here in mid-Oct. specifically for CrossFit.

CrossFit is a high intensity physical training program the Army uses created by Greg Glassman, a former gymnast, that combines strength and cardio exercises in a circuit training format.

Master Sgt. Marcus Woody, a Moody, Texas, native and maintenance noncommissioned officer in charge, along with Sgt. Mike Martin, a Las Vegas native and ammo supply sergeant, built the small gym.

The pair are the company's CrossFit instructors and planned to create the gym here long before either arrived in Iraq.

"It's actually better than I thought it was going to be," Woody said.

Woody explained that the company supported the idea from the beginning and said the room was larger than what they had hoped for.

He admitted that they would have settled for something outside.

Currently, the gym contains floor mats, a complete home gym, dumbbells, a barbell and bench, 2 treadmills, a dip and pull-up station, medicine balls, and kettle bells.

Before receiving new medicine balls, a soccer ball was cut open, filled with sand, and taped up for use instead Woody explained.

Woody said he plans to hang a rope from the ceiling and get rings to hang from the pull-up bars. He also plans to have an outside area for flipping tires and carrying full buckets.

"No money has changed hands at this point," he added, as everything has been donated, improvised, or brought from

the U.S.

"We can do about 80% of the workouts with what we got here."

Why such a fuss about Crossfit? "It works. It's high intensity," Martin said.

"When you [lift weights], all you're doing is building muscle, nothing else," he explained.

CrossFit is intended to make someone healthier all around and includes

Continued on 8



Sgt. Mike Martin, a Las Vegas native and ammo supply sergeant spots Staff Sgt. Sabrina Barragan, 15th Sus. Bde. ammo supply sergeant and Brownsville, Texas, native during part of a CrossFit training session in the new Headquarters and Headquarters, 15th Special Troops Battalion, 15th Sus. Bde. Crossfit gym here, Oct. 28.

Continued from "CrossFit"

nutrition and lifestyle choices Martin said.

CrossFit has two main categories of workouts: Heroes and Nasty Girls, named after heroes who have died while deployed and girl's names, he said. Hero workouts are the most challenging.

"Force multiplied by distance over time equals power," Martin said, explaining the CrossFit formula. "We want

maximum power of output."

Soldiers and even Army employed civilians workout in the new gym with Woody and Martin.

"It's very intense. It's crazy. It's a good workout," Staff Sgt. Sabrina Barragan, 15th Sus. Bde. ammo supply sergeant and Brownsville, Texas, native said.

Barragan said that she started CrossFit at an NCO school and was the

primary reason she was able to score around 270 out of a possible 300 on an Army physical fitness test only four months after having a child.

Ken Patterson, a field support engineer for 15th Sus. Bde. and Baltimore native had his own reasons for doing CrossFit.

"Every day is different. You never get bored."

Three star visits deployed Soldiers in Iraq



Vice Adm. Alan Thompson, the director of the Defense Logistics Agency, speaks to Soldiers from the 2025th Trans. Co. of the Alabama National Guard Nov. 13 at the Contingency Operating Location Speicher dining facility.

Story by 1st Lt. Maria Schmitz
264th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION SPEICHER, Iraq - Navy Vice Adm. Alan Thompson, the director of the Defense Logistics Agency, or DLA, had lunch here Nov. 13 with some Alabama National Guard Soldiers from the 2025th Transportation Company out of Jacksonville, Ala.

The 2025th Trans. Co. is assigned to the 264th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, and four Soldiers from the unit, including its senior noncommissioned officer, work for the DLA as civilians at the Defense Depot at Anniston, Ala.

Thompson talked to the Soldiers about their overall mission, how missions "outside the wire" go, and about their civilian

work.

First Sgt. James Ponder, of Jacksonville, Ala., works as the shop chief at the Anniston Army Depot; Sgt. 1st Class Wendell Thompson of Jacksonville, Ala., works as a heavy mobile equipment mechanic at the depot; Sgt. Eric Deramus, of Oxford, Ala., and Spc. Jamal Morris of Jacksonville, Ala., are responsible for loading containers at the depot.

This division focuses on most tracked-vehicles in the U.S. inventory.

This focus includes inspecting overhauled vehicles, storing them, minor repair and preparation for shipping to various units throughout the world, said Ponder.

The DLA is a logistics combat support agency whose primary role is to provide supplies and services to America's military forces world-wide.

They support every branch of the military and have approximately 21,000 military and civilian employees worldwide. Thompson has been the director of the DLA since Nov. 2008, explained Ponder.

"It is a remarkable coincidence," said Thompson, about meeting four Soldiers in one unit that work for DLA.

"The services provided by these Soldiers while they work for DLA on the civilian side will in turn benefit those in their military unit."

Thompson said the DLA provides spare parts that are keeping trucks like those used by units like the 2025th Trans. Co. running.

Thompson visits Iraq a couple of times a year to check on the support DLA provides. He said it also gives him the opportunity to thank his DLA team members that are deployed to Iraq.

"Three-hundred and fifty DLA employees are forward deployed," said Thompson.

These employees are a combination of both civilian and military personnel, he said.

There is also a team at the Taji Depot helping build Iraqi Security Forces logistics capabilities.

"It was an honor to meet my civilian boss and I never dreamed I would meet the DLA commander here in Iraq," said Ponder.

"Our Soldiers were glad to have a chance to meet their DLA director."

Q-West shines the light on sexual assault with walk

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Rob Strain
CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq – The 395th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion hosted a “Shine the Light” two-mile walk here Nov. 20.

Nearly 300 service members and civilians turned out for the night time walk intended to raise awareness of sexual assault prevention and let potential perpetrators know that people are watching, said Staff Sgt. Elaine Gray, a unit victim advocate with the 395th CSSB.

“It’s like a neighborhood watch,” Gray, a Wolcott, Conn., native, said.

The walk took a two-mile route through COL Q-West and focused on using proper night safety equipment, such as flashlights and reflective belts, as well as the buddy system for both Soldiers and civilians, Gray said.

Gray explained that it was important for Soldiers to take a buddy with them whenever they went anywhere, especially after dark, and to let someone else know where they are going, in order to prevent becoming a victim of sexual assault.

“We are a family,” Gray said. “It affects all of us.”

The event also emphasized the importance of reporting cases of sexual assault, said Capt. Jack Strong, a mental health provider with the Combat Stress Center here. According to Strong, only 25

percent of active-duty victims report cases of sexual assault.

“It’s unacceptable,” Strong said.

There are several reasons why victims choose not to report, including embarrassment or they just may not know how.

“We need to get the message out,” he said.

Strong encouraged the audience of walkers to look out for their buddies,

and make sure those that need help, get it – by talking to a mental health specialist or a chaplain.

There were more than 2,900 cases of sexual assault in the Department of Defense in 2008, said Lt. Col. Dennis Dockery, the commander of the 395th CSSB.

“One was too many,” he said.

“The answer starts with engaged leadership.”



Service members at Contingency Operating Location Q-West, Iraq, walk down the street here Nov. 20 during the 395th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion’s “Shine the Light Walk.”

Chaplain works to strengthen marriages

By Staff Sgt. Rob Strain

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq – The Special Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade kicked off a weekly marriage enrichment class here Nov. 3.

The class, aimed at Soldiers that are either married or planning to get married, is led by Chaplain (Capt.) Brent Crosswhite, the battalion’s chaplain.

His wife Sarah is scheduled to lead a similar bi-weekly class for spouses at Fort Hood, Texas, the unit’s home station. Both classes will cover the same material over a six-week period, Crosswhite, a Blanchard, Okla., native, said.

According to Crosswhite, the average brigade-sized unit, which consists of nearly 5,000 Soldiers, has between 20 and 30 divorces during the course of a deployment.

“I wanted to see if we could stop that at the battalion level,” he said.

It’s not the actual deployments that can break a mar-

riage, but people.

Deployment won’t make a make a bad marriage better, just as it won’t harm a strong marriage, Crosswhite said.

“I want to work on our people skills,” he said to the group. “Work on our marriages as a whole; strengthen them and strengthen our coping skills.”

In addition to the statistics, Crosswhite noticed that 80 percent of counseling he does is related to marriage, but the class isn’t just about marriage.

“I want to help people have healthy relationships,” Crosswhite said.

He explained that by having healthy relationships, Soldiers will be able to keep their focus on the mission, without worrying about distractions at home.

Crosswhite plans to run the class in six-week sessions, featuring a video-conference with the spouses’ class in Texas

Continued on 10

Continued from "Marriages"

at the end of each session.

He encouraged each Soldier in the class to get something out of it.

"Have a goal to accomplish [in your relationship] during the deployment," Crosswhite said.

One Soldier, Spc. Tom Lauderdale, a fueler with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, looks forward to gaining

from the class.

Lauderdale, a Bay Town, Texas, native, is on his first deployment since getting married in Jan.

He hopes to improve long-distance communication skills with his wife over the course of the deployment.

Following the deployment, the participants will be able to take part in a marriage retreat, Crosswhite said.

The class meets Tuesdays at lunch at STB headquarters.

Aaron Tippin performs for troops



Country music singer and Pensacola, Fla., native, Aaron Tippin performs for the troops at a concert at the Morale Welfare and Recreation tent here, Nov. 27.

Story and photos by Sgt. Matthew C. Cooley
CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq – Country music singer and Pensacola, Fla., native, Aaron Tippin performed for and met with troops and civilian contractors at the Morale Welfare and Recreation tent here, Nov. 27.

The concert on Q-West was one stop on the singer's Iraq "In Overdrive" tour, named after his latest album of the same name, and the tour marked the latest of several to the country.

"It's either seven or eight times," Tippin said, unable to recall exactly how many times he toured in Iraq.

"I come to see the guys and gals ... that's the greatest reward," he said, referring to the troops he performed for.

Tippin said that performing for troops started his career.

"[This] gives me a chance to bring it home," he said.

Retired Marine Lt. Col. Bill Cowan, a Fox news analyst and Sacramento, Calif., native, told a few jokes and praised the professionalism and performance of the young troops of today before introducing Tippin to begin the show.

"You all are going to be the next Great Generation," he said.



Country music singer and Pensacola, Fla., native, Aaron Tippin sounds a semitrailer horn rigged to a portable air compressor at a concert for the troops at the Morale Welfare and Recreation tent here, Nov. 27.

He encouraged the Troops to serve again by running for public office when they one day leave service.

Tippin played a number of his chart-topping songs and covers of other popular country songs.

He also made use of a semitrailer horn rigged to a portable air compressor via plastic pipes for occasional humorous effect.

Spc. Jon Voelkel, a fueler for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 15th Special Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), was one of the Soldiers who enjoyed the show.

"It's awesome! Got everybody together ... [it's] a big morale bonus," he said. "It takes the monotony from the everyday grind."



Staff Sgt. Norman G. Myers, a truck driver with the 724th Transportation Company out of Bartonville, Ill., asks his son, Spc. Michael R. Myers, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter repairer for D Company, 225th Aviation Regiment out of Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, a question about the UH-60 his son works on.

Like father, like son

Father, son pairs deployed together

Story and photo by Spc. Lisa A. Cope
13th ESC PAO

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION SPEICHER, Iraq – Family is never too far away at Contingency Operating Location Speicher, Iraq, where not one, but two father and son teams are stationed together.

When Spc. Michael R. Myers, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter repairer for D Company, 225th Aviation Regiment out of Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, mobilized to go to Iraq, his father, Staff Sgt. Norman G. Myers, a truck driver for the 724th Transportation Company out of Bartonville, Ill., said he decided to volunteer to join him.

While this is Michael Myers' first deployment, Norman Myers is on his fourth deployment in his 27-year Army career. "I found the 724th and joined them so I could come over here with him," said Norman Myers, a Centralia, Ill., native. Although the pair live on different parts of the base and work different shifts, they find time to spend together.

"By the time I get off work, it is time for him to get up and go to work," said Norman Meyers. "I come over and we eat chow, sit around, talk for a little bit, and visit with the people he works with."

Michael Myers, a Centralia, Ill., native, said having his father here with him makes him feel more at home in Iraq.

"Honestly, sometimes I forget we are deployed," he said. Spc. Brandon M. Lester, a cavalry scout for B Troop, 1st Battalion, 98th Cavalry Regiment out of Booneville, Miss., and his father Sgt. Duane A. Lester, a truck commander for the same unit, are in the same platoon and go out on missions together.

Brandon Lester, a Hickory Flat, Miss., native, said having his father here gives him someone to talk with about home and conduct physical training with.

"(It's) pretty neat – I get to have family here," said Brandon Lester. "Last night I went running with the man ... I have someone I can talk to that kind of can relate."

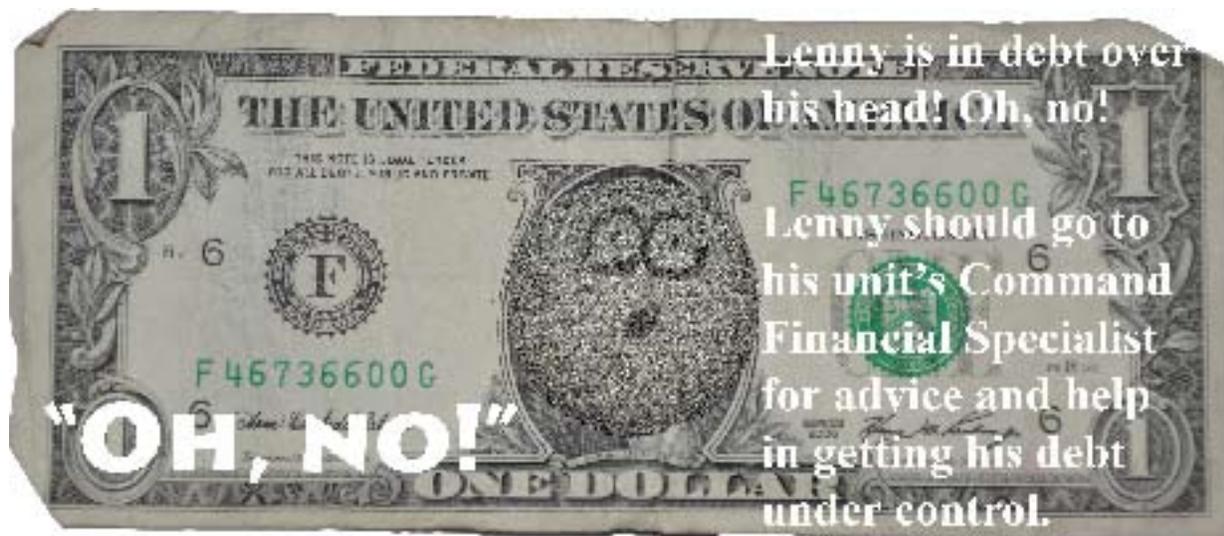
Both father and son said they enjoy having someone from home to talk to.

"I can talk to him on the same level as everyone else, but then again we can talk about family stuff," said Duane Lester, also a Hickory Flat, Miss., native.

The elder Lester said he had previously served in the Marine Corps as an air frame mechanic, but was on a break in service when his son joined. He thought he was too old to re-enlist, but he and his son spoke to the recruiter the same day and enlisted together, he said.

Duane Lester said he never gets nervous about his son going on missions because they always go together.

"He is usually in the vehicle right behind my vehicle, so I know where he is all the time," said Duane Lester. "We all have good radio communication ... We've got a good group we are with."



Cartoonists draw inspiration from Q-West troops



Satirical cartoonist Tom Richmond, Mad Magazine, draws a caricature of a Soldier during a visit here Oct. 20.

Story and photos by Capt. Murray Shugars
2-198th CAB

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq — Five popular cartoonists and caricaturists on a tour sponsored by the United Service Organizations and the National Cartoonists Society entertained troops at the main dining facility at Contingency Operating Location Q-West Oct. 20.

Garry Trudeau, Jeff Keane, Stephan Pastis, Chip Bok and Tom Richmond spent from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. talking with and drawing for long lines of service members.

“We deeply appreciate visits like this,” said Lt. Col. William B. Smith, Jr., mayor of Q-West and native of Hattiesburg, Miss. “Their drawings entertained the troops, but they showed they cared by talking with the troops, by listening. This was a great stress reliever.”

The five visitors were among 10 artists on a weeklong tour of bases in the region, said Jeremy Wilcox, tour manager out of the USO World Headquarters in Arlington, Va.

The trip began in Germany with visits to Ramstein Air Base and the Wounded Warrior Center at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Landstuhl. In

Kuwait, the tour stopped at Camp Virginia, Camp Buehring and Ali Al Salem Air Base, and spent two days in Iraq, said Wilcox.

The 10 artists divided into two groups so the tour could visit as many bases as possible, said Wilcox.

“We try to make sure both groups have a balance of caricaturists and cartoonists so we can take advantage of everybody’s strengths,” said Wilcox.

Command Sgt. Major Perry Campbell, 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms out of Senatobia, Miss., said the event lifted the spirits of the troops.

Our Soldiers really enjoyed the cartoonists, and the entertainment was a great morale booster,” said Campbell, a Senatobia, Miss., native. “I think most of them will be sending these drawings home to bring a smile to their families. Mr. Bok did a funny drawing of me that I’m going to send to my wife so she can laugh at it.”

Bok, an editorial cartoonist from Akron, Ohio, said he wanted to come to Iraq for a long time.

“I wanted to embed early in the war, to actually see first-hand what it’s really like over here, but I was unable,” said Bok. “Instead, I sat in my office and read about it in the paper, on the Internet, watched it on the news. I am glad to come here finally. Being here makes it real, helps me understand the conditions on the ground.”

Tom Bok said that he was grateful to bring cheer to the troops.

“Drawing satirical cartoons is pretty much a negative art,” said Bok. “My job is to tear things down, so I am happy to get the chance to give a drawing, to make someone feel good.”

One Soldier Bok cheered up was Capt. John L. Moore, officer-in-charge of badging for the 2/198th Mayor Cell.

“I enjoyed sitting down for a few minutes and talking to Mr. Bok,” said Moore, of Caledonia, Miss. “He was very supportive of the military. I’m sending my family the drawing he did of me. My wife and kids will get a kick out of that. I had a great time, and it was a great event.”

Tom Richmond, satirical illustrator for Mad Magazine, said that he felt

a strong conviction to participate in this tour.

“I had personal reasons for wanting to come,” said Richmond, a native of Burnsville, Minn. “I wanted to give something back to people risking their lives in the service of our country. I can’t give much, my time and talent, but I feel privileged to give what I can.”

First Lt. Krishina Y. Turnipseed, billeting officer-in-charge for the Mayor Cell, said she waited an hour for the chance to meet one of the cartoonists.

“They were very popular, considering how long the lines were,” said Turnipseed, from Starkville, Miss. “I think it was very generous that they came. They put themselves in harm’s way to support us, and it was a great event.”

Jeff Keane, who draws “The Family Circus,” a cartoon his father Bill Keane created, said that it was important to show support for the troops.

“It’s really a minor thing for a bunch of cartoonists to come work like this for people dedicating their lives for

“I wanted to give something back to people risking their lives.”

the country,” said Keane, current president of the National Cartoonists Society and native of Laguna Hills, Calif. “‘Family Circus’ is like a little bit of home, and I’m grateful to share it.”

Drawing pictures of Jeffy, the character his father based on him, Keane said this entertainment tour was something of a family tradition.

“My dad went to Vietnam and did drawings for the troops, and it stuck with me all these years, him doing that. So I was determined to follow lead, and in my role as president of the NCS, I gave this tour as much support as I could,” said Keane.

The cartoonists seldom see each other, so the tour was both a reunion and a time of fellowship, said Keane.

Continued on 10

Continued from "CrossFit"

"Being a cartoonist is an isolated life, so having 10 days to be together with fellow cartoonists is wonderful," said Keane. "We hear all these incredible stories from the troops, and we get together each night and share the stories we've heard. It's inspirational for us, and we get a lot out of it."

This willingness to ask questions and listen to the answers pleasantly surprised Capt. J.J. Hatcher, officer-in-charge of the 2/198th CAB Mayor Cell water team.

"Jeff Keane was so personable," said Hatcher of Clarksville, Tenn. "While he was drawing, he asked about my family and about me. He asked me about my schooling and my military training, about my civilian job and how well my military training prepared me for the job I'm doing here. It was a good conversation, and I was surprised that he really seemed to listen. The whole event was great for morale. I'm sending the drawing he did of Jeffy home to my wife who loves 'The Family Circus.'"

Stephan Pastis, creator of "Pearls Before Swine," said that the tour would have a powerful impact his ideas and writing.

"Every experience you have affects you, and the greater the experience the greater the affect," said Pastis, a native of Santa Rosa, Calif. "This visit is going to have a significant impact on my writing. It gives me many ideas I would not have had otherwise."

Pastis said that he left a nine-year career as a lawyer to become a full-time cartoonist, a career change for which he had no formal training.

"I am a much better writer than an artist," said Pastis. "I see myself first as a writer. There's a saying in cartooning, 'Good writing will carry bad art, but good art will not carry bad writing.'"

Garry Trudeau, creator of 'Doonesbury,' said that the tour directly relates to current developments in his comic strip, especially in the recent story of longstanding character, B.D., now an Iraq War amputee.

"The story of wounded veterans is important to me, and that's been my focus" said Trudeau. "B.D.'s injuries gave me a relevant, respectful and creative way to enter the lives of wounded warriors. It may seem illogical, but it allows me to draw further attention to serious results of this war, such as the common traumatic brain injury. With B.D.'s rehabilitation in Veteran centers, I can describe the nature of the sacrifice some of our countrymen and women are making in our name."

Trudeau, a native of New York City, said that doors opened immediately after he published the strip in which an explosion injures B.D. in the First Battle of Fallujah.

"The day after B.D. got injured, the (Department of Defense) phoned and invited me to visit Walter Reed (Army Medical Center)," said Trudeau. "I guess they wanted to make sure that I described the rehabilitation process accurately, and the story of B.D.'s injuries has helped me earn people's trust. Visiting with wounded vets, my goal is to entertain, using humor as a

way to keep despair at bay, of making difficult subjects bearable. It's a challenge for a satirist, for mostly we cause pain; we don't describe pain. For my writing, this has been a rolling experiment in naturalism. This is a fantastic experience for me."

The tour is also field research for Trudeau, he said, to help him tell stories of service members.

"My characters are the tools of my craft and nothing more. I try to build them sturdy, but I remain dispassionate about them. After all, B.D. loses a leg, which is an awful thing to do to a character but useful for what it allows me to explore and say. I do a fair amount of research in creating a country for my characters to inhabit, and that's one of the reasons this visit is so important to me. Being here helps me achieve my ultimate purpose, which is to tell the stories of people sacrificing for us. I can ask questions and hear their stories."

Capt. Bob Sayle, safety officer for 2/198th CAB and Q-West, said he had more respect for the cartoonists because of the visit.

"I really appreciate them coming over here, well-known cartoonists stopping here to show us they care," said Sayle, a native of Lake Cormorant, Miss. "They are going where the troops are and seeing how we live, and that gives me a lot more respect for them, especially for someone like Trudeau because for the past years he has been doing a lot of stories about the military."

Maj. John Herd, director of Morale, Welfare and Recreation for the 2/198th Mayor Cell, said the event was the best he has seen in two deployments.

"The USO really sent us a great entertainment event," said Herd, a Florence, Miss., native. "This turned out to be more of a success than I anticipated. During my two deployments, one to Afghanistan and now in Iraq, this was the highest quality event I have experienced. The troops had the chance to spend one-on-one time with their favorite cartoonist, and the cartoonists focused on the troops, asking questions and really listening to the answers. This was a class act."



Stephan Pastis, "Pearls Before Swine," draws a Soldier.


Problem?
 You have a voice!
 Use the commander's hotline on www.supporttheaction.net
Recommendation?
 Click "CDR's Hotline"
 Help us... help you.

GO WITH THE FLOW

U.S., Iraqi Soldiers partner to protect Q-West water supply

Story and photos by Capt. Murray Shugars
2-198th CAB

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq — Members of the Mississippi Army National Guard consulted with elements of the Iraqi Army at the Al-Qayyarah pump house Oct. 26.

Leaders from A Company, 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms from Hernando, Miss., and their counterparts in 1st Company, 2nd Battalion, 26th Brigade, reviewed the Iraqi Army's security measures for the Tigris River site.

"The pump house is a critical facility in the province because it is the primary source of raw water to Al-Qayyarah and to Q-West," said Lt. Col. Kerry

Sgt. Joshua Haycraft (left) Brandon, Miss., native and member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms out of Senatobia, Miss., briefs 2nd Lt. Hassan Kalid of 1st Company, 2nd Battalion, 26th Brigade, Iraqi Army, on the workings of the lift station at the Al-Qayyarah pump house Oct. 26, as Mark Crow, a civil general foreman from Louisville, Ky., listens.



Goodman, commander of the 2/198th CAB and native of Meridian, Miss. "The 26th Brigade, Iraqi Army, has worked closely with the Q-West force protection company to provide security."

1st Lt. Salah Joad, commander of 1st Company, agreed that the mission is

vital, noting that his soldiers enjoyed it.

"We have to protect the pump house because it helps sustain our operations and the local people in the region," Joad said through an interpreter. "My men like the mission because the pump house has plentiful water, reliable electricity and scenic landscapes. They also can visit Al-Qayyarah when they have time off."

Capt. Drew Clark, Q-West force protection company commander, said he was impressed with the 26th Brigade's performance.

"I've worked closely with the 26th Brigade element here since they took over the mission about a month ago," said Clark, a native of Madison, Miss. "The

last Iraqi unit was not serious about this mission. There were times when I had to station my Soldiers here because there was no security element, and we always had to man the towers and entrance when we came to the pump house. The 26th Brigade committed four times the number of troops

here, and they are eager to do the job."

The senior noncommissioned officer of 1st Company, Sgt. Major Fadiil Abbas, said that he visits the pump house regularly to inspect his men and address any needs they might have.

"When I visit, I conduct a hygiene inspection of the area and living quarters. I inspect the weapons, check the towers and see if my men need supplies," Abbas said through an interpreter. "I tell them how important it is to protect the water supply for the Iraqi people, and they make sure terrorists cannot take over the pump house."

The senior noncommissioned officer in A Company, 1st Sgt. John L. Beasley, native of Henando, Miss., said he respected the 26th Brigade's professionalism.

"The 26th is more engaged than the last unit," Beasley said. "They are more professional and enthusiastic about the mission. Their troops are always in uniform and alert, which is a huge improvement."

2nd Lt. Hassan Kalid, a platoon leader with 1st Company, said the Mississippians were good partners.

"I like working with the Soldiers from Mississippi," said Kalid. "They are friendly, hardworking Soldiers, and they welcomed us with a good meal."

The A Company Soldiers celebrated the handover of defensive operations by hosting a cook out, said Clark.

"It was essential that we conducted a thorough battle handoff with the Iraqi Army to ensure that they understood the mission," said Clark. "The initial training took only a day. The next day, they were ready to assume responsibilities, and we couldn't have been happier. That was worth celebrating with a Mississippi cook out."

Lenny didn't conserve water and now has to take water bottle showers! Oh, no!

Lenny should have taken combat showers, reported leaks, and only used water he needed.



Wagonmaster Fun

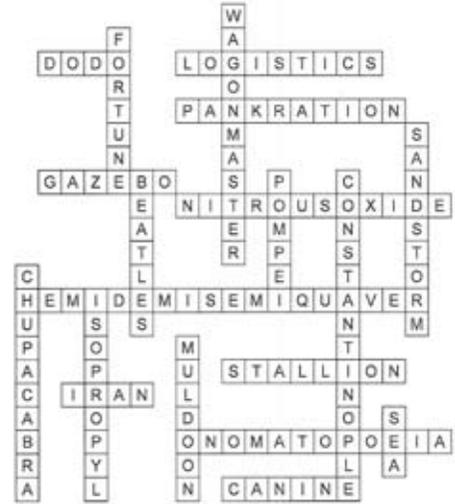


Answers to puzzles available in next month's issue.

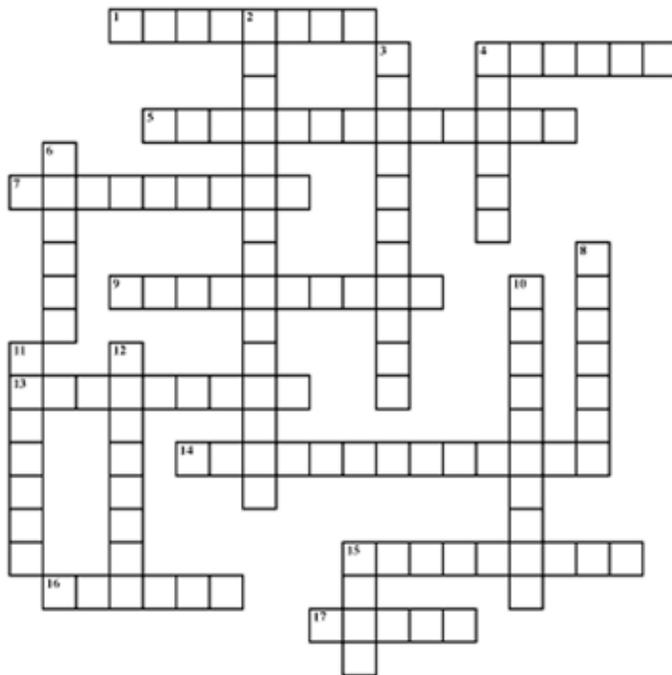
4	6	2	5	7	8	9	1	3
1	5	8	6	9	3	4	2	7
3	7	9	4	1	2	5	6	8
8	2	5	9	3	6	1	7	4
7	1	6	8	5	4	2	3	9
9	4	3	1	2	7	6	8	5
2	3	1	7	4	9	8	5	6
5	8	4	3	6	1	7	9	2
6	9	7	2	8	5	3	4	1

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

Brain Picker



Holiday Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

- 1 This beverage company was the first to use Santa in a winter promotion.
- 4 Glittery trim for a tree.
- 5 Chop down a pine tree and it becomes this in your home.
- 7 Trim the tree with these small glass balls.
- 9 Seasonal plant from Mexico - often red in color.
- 13 What you eat the day after Thanksgiving.
- 14 This football team started hosting annual Thanksgiving Day games in 1966.
- 15 Hang these by the fireplace.
- 16 These electric decorations were first used in 1895.
- 17 Mail these to family and friends.

DOWN

- 2 Holiday songs sung from door to door.
- 3 Shopping day after Thanksgiving.
- 4 Traditional Thanksgiving entree.
- 6 Hang this on your front door.
- 8 Baked holiday treat that sometimes has chocolate chips.
- 10 This state raises the most turkeys.
- 11 The first state to officially recognize the Christmas holiday.
- 12 Popular Thanksgiving side dish otherwise known as dressing.
- 15 Atop the Christmas tree.

