

The Expeditionary Times

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General visit



Deputy commanding general visits Taji

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Problem solvers



VIPs tour Taji, meet with troops

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Monumental event



Texas National Guard unit holds combat patch ceremony at Ziggurat

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Medics compete in three-day skills test

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U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ryan Twist

Spc. Ray E. Brown, a health care specialist with the 501st Area Support Medical Company out of Fort Campbell, Ky., Task Force 61st Multifunctional Medical Battalion, low crawls under barbed wire to inspect for enemy threats during the litter obstacle course at the Brave Mercy Medical Stakes competition at Jameson Combat Medic Training Center Jan. 25 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

Provider leaders discuss movement of troops, equipment in Iraq



Brig. Gen. Paul L. Wentz, commanding general of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) out of Fort Hood, Texas, and a Mansfield, Ohio, native, spoke to the commanders and detachment sergeants with the 49th Transportation Battalion out of Fort Hood, Texas, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th ESC and its subordinate units at the Mirage dining facility during the Green Tab Huddle Jan. 27 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SGT. RYAN TWIST
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – The 49th Transportation Battalion out of Fort Hood, Texas, and 19 subordinate units throughout Iraq participated in a quarterly Green Tab Huddle Jan. 25 through Jan. 27 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

Lt. Col. Peter M. Haas, commander of the 49th Transportation Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and a Fleetwood, Pa., native, said the battalion held the leadership training event to gather all move-

ment control team commanders and detachment sergeants together to talk about relevant operational issues and conduct officer and noncommissioned officer professional development.

“The Green Tab Huddle is an important event because our battalion is dispersed throughout the entire country of Iraq,” said Haas.

It is difficult to command such a widely dispersed organization, he said. To deal with this problem, the command staff and detachment sergeants go to their subordinate units or meet at JBB, he said.

The first objective of the Green Tab Huddle was to ensure that commanders and detachment
SEE DISCUSS ON PAGE 4

Balad Blotter January 29 - February 3

DAMAGE TO GOVERNMENT PROPERTY

A complainant notified the Joint Defense Operations Center via radio that property damage had occurred at building 7303. A patrol was briefed and dispatched. The complainant said, via Air Force Form 1168 Statement of Complainant, he went to the building to use the bathroom and noticed a door to an office had been kicked in. The complainant said there was a boot print and the door had been splintered. The damage was photographed Jan. 28. There are no leads, suspects or witnesses at this time.

ASSAULT:

A complainant telephoned the Law Enforcement Desk to report an assault at building 7714/532 headquarters. A patrol was briefed and dispatched. Witness statements indicate an argument occurred between subjects one and two regarding rumors about subject one and witness one's husband. The argument escalated into a physical altercation resulting in a minor abrasion on subject two's face. Subject one turned herself in to the LED. Upon arrival at the LED, she was advised of her Article 31 rights for violation of Article 128/Assault via Air Force IMT 1168/Statement of Suspect/Witness/Complainant, which she acknowledged. Subject one requested legal counsel and declined to write a statement. Subject one was released via Department of Defense Form 2708/Receipt for Inmate or Detained Person. Subject two was advised of her Article 31 rights for violation of Article 128/Assault via AF IMT 1168/Statement of Suspect/Witness/Complainant, which she acknowledged. Subject two requested legal counsel and declined to write a statement. Subject two was released via DD Form 2708/Receipt for Inmate or Detained Person.

UNLAWFUL ENTRY:

A complainant notified the Law Enforcement Desk to report an unlawful entry at the gym. A patrol was briefed and dispatched. The witness said, via Air Force IMT 1168/Statement of Complainant, subject two tried to gain entry to the gym without his common access card. The witness told subject two he needed to contact the provost marshal office to report his lost CAC. The witness observed subject one hand subject two his CAC through the fence. Subject one was advised of his Article 31 rights via AF IMT 1168/Statement of Suspect/Witness/Complainant for violation of Article 92/Failure to Obey a Lawful Order/Regulation. While being advised of his rights, subject one refused to cooperate and stopped all questioning. Subject one was released via Department of Defense Form 2708/Receipt for Inmate or Detained Person. Subject was advised of his Article 31 rights via Air Force IMT 1168/Statement of Suspect for violation of Article 92/Failure to Obey a Lawful Order/Regulation. Subject two acknowledged his rights, declined legal counsel and wrote a statement that he and subject one were going to the gym when he remembered he had left his CAC in his room. When they arrived at the gym, he was denied entry for not having proper identification. Subject two said the only reason he had subject one's CAC was because he had dropped it and was attempting to give it back to him. Subject two said, at that time, the guards detained him. Subject two was released via DD Form 2708/Receipt for Inmate or Detained Person.

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Chaplain's Corner: Valentine's Day

BY CAPT. DANIEL P. KERSEY
80TH ORD. BN. CHAPLAIN



Gentlemen, I'm giving you fair warning, Valentine's Day is mere days away, and even though you may be thousands of miles from your wife, girlfriend or significant other, I guarantee you she still expects something for the occasion.

I can also guarantee you she's had your carefully thought-through and personal Valentine's gift picked out for you since about Halloween.

No amount of apology or repeating "But I really do love you, babe!" will make up for the fact that you forgot. She expects you to show your love by doing something to show it.

In the marriage-enrichment Strong Bonds retreats that I conduct, as well as in the couple's marriage training that I offer in my office, I always ask the couples a simple question: "What is love?"

And at first both husband and wife look at me like I'm an idiot, which might be true, and then they look a little confused as it dawns on them that they've never really considered that question beyond dancing back in the day.

Then they inevitably stumble over an answer, saying something like this: "Love is when you just want to be with that person no matter what. It's the best feeling in the world, and you dream about that person and get butterflies in your stomach every time you think of them."

They almost all emphasize feelings. So, love is a warm and squishy feeling. It's either love, or I sat in something.

It's interesting to me that we all think of love as a feeling, but demand that love be an action.

It's not enough to simply have someone insist that they love us. That insistence means nothing if it's not backed up by loving, considerate actions.

In his first letter to the church in Corinth, the apostle Paul makes much the same point. Now mind you, he's writing here about God's love for humanity, but if our love for one another is meant to be a reflection and imitation of God's love for us, then we can learn something of profound importance from this passage. So consider Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

Take a second look at these verses. Look carefully at the words Paul uses to characterize love.

How many of them are feelings? You might try to argue

that "easily angered" is a feeling. But I would ask you if it's possible to choose to be angry or not to be.

You may even argue that "proud" is a feeling. But I would again ask the same thing. Is it possible for me to choose pride and arrogance?

My point is that even though some of these descriptors may have a feeling involved with them, they are all fundamentally choices and actions. According to Paul, love is primarily an issue of choice and only secondarily one of feeling.

As I study scripture, I see that, when the topic is love, the issue of feelings is rarely mentioned. What is consistently mentioned is not how I feel, but rather what I do to show love.

In America, and much of the western world, we've been poisoned by the romantic comedy into believing love is about gooey feelings and fateful circumstances that bring together kindred soul mates.

We get married because of the feelings we have for someone. I do loving things because I get the "tingles" for that other person. So, my feelings give rise to my actions.

There's only one problem with that. What happens when, inevitably, the novelty wears off and the feelings go away?

We're left with dishes to be washed, laundry to be folded, toilet seats to be put down and toothpaste tubes to be squeezed from the end instead of the middle.

If my relationship and marriage are built on romantic feelings and those feelings erode in time, the temptation is to get out because I'm not getting what I want from the relationship anymore.

According to the biblical picture, that's putting the cart before the horse. According to Paul and other biblical passages concerning love, love is shown by what we do, not by what I happen to feel at any given moment.

In fact, there's a sense in which love doesn't become love until we perform those loving and considerate acts when they're the last thing in the world we want to do.

In other words, I am never more loving toward my wife than when I cannot stand being with her because of how angry I am at her – and yet still care for her needs and put her first anyway.

So love is about putting the needs, wants and desires of our spouses ahead of our own needs, wants and desires – especially when it's hard and costs us something. This includes when I'm thousands of miles away from home on Valentine's Day and it would be so much more convenient to just not bother.

Love isn't about what I get from it but about what I can give to it.

Get some roses, gentlemen.

EXPEDITIONARY TIMES

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13th ESC Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Paul L. Wentz

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The Weekly Standard: tattoos on leave

BY MASTER SGT. RICHARD P. FAUST
13TH ESC ASSISTANT INSPECTOR GENERAL



Here's what you need to know about getting a tattoo while on leave.

Under most circumstances, small, inconspicuous or inoffensive tattoos are authorized.

Tattoos anywhere on the head or face are prohibited, except for permanent makeup such as eyebrow or

eyeliner for female Soldiers.

Prohibited tattoos are those that show alliance or association with extremist organizations.

Other prohibited tattoos are those of images that are indecent, vulgar, disgusting in nature, incite lustful thoughts or are grossly offensive. Additionally, tattoos that have sexist or racist content are also prohibited.

The Army Medical Command will assist in removing those tattoos that do not comply with the policy.

If Soldiers refuse to have a tattoo

removed, commanders should take the following actions:

- Ensure that the Soldier understands the policy.
- Ensure the Soldier has the opportunity to seek medical advice about the process of removing a tattoo.
- Counsel the Soldier in writing. The counseling form will state that refusal to remove prohibited tattoos anywhere on the body will result in discharge.
- Commanders may not order Soldiers to remove tattoos or brands.
- Commanders should consult with

the staff judge advocate on enforcement issues.

Commanders are encouraged to seek equal opportunity assistance on tattoo identification and SJA assistance concerning inspection procedures and adverse administrative action to be taken against Soldiers not in compliance with the Army clothing wear and appearance standards.

References: Army Regulation 670-1, Wear and Appearance of the Army Uniform and ALARACT message dated Dec. 19.

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Legal Rights for Reserves, National Guard

BY 1ST LT. MELVIN RAINES II
CHIEF, LEGAL ASSISTANCE
13TH ESC JUDGE AVOCATE GENERAL



If you are a mobilized member of the Reserves or National Guard, you should be aware of important legal rights and benefits.

Employment rights

It is illegal for an employer to discriminate against you, or to take unfavorable action against you, because of your military service. If you already have a job and are called to active duty, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act protects you. To be protected, however, you must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- You must leave a civilian job for the purpose of service, and you must give prior notice to the employer that you are leaving for that purpose.
- Your cumulative period of service, relating to that particular civilian employer, must not exceed five years. Certain categories of service are exempt from this five-year limit.
- You must be released from active duty under honorable conditions.
- You must make a timely application for re-employment after you complete your period of service - 14 days after deployments of more than 30 days or 90 days after deployments of more than 180 days.

If you meet all of these requirements, you are legally entitled to get your job back, as well as to be treated as if you had been continuously employed for seniority and pension purposes. USERRA applies to voluntary as well as involun-

tary service. Visit <http://www.esgr.org> for more information.

Your rights under the Servicemember's Civil Relief Act

These were covered in detail in an earlier article. But to summarize, as a mobilized Reservist, you have the following legal rights:

- You are entitled to a stay to halt legal proceedings while your military service affects your ability to go to court.
- Debts incurred before active duty have their interest rates capped at 6 percent if your military service affects your ability to pay the loan.
- The SCRA protects service members against foreclosures of mortgages.

With regard to USERRA and the SCRA, it is very important to give written notices and keep copies to prove that you invoked your rights.

For example, you should give your employer a written letter, along with your orders, as early as possible before the deployment to protect your right to return to your job.

When exercising your right to the 6 percent interest cap with your creditors, provide written notice along with a copy of your orders, keeping copies of proof that you made the request. Documentary proof is the best way to establish in court that you did the right by the creditors, should it ever be necessary to go to court.

Before or after a deployment, a family would be well-advised to take advantage of a Strong Bonds retreat. For this retreat, you and your spouse are put on orders and sent to a nice hotel for a conference on how to maintain a strong marriage.

For more information or to find an event near you, visit <http://www.strongbonds.org>. This is one of the more pleasant benefits members of the Guard and Reserve can enjoy.

Medical coverage under Tricare

After your active duty ends, you are still entitled to 180 days of transitional Tricare coverage for free.

Afterward, you may elect to purchase Tricare Reserve Select coverage, which costs \$81 per month for an individual or \$253 per month for a family. If you don't have health insurance through your job, you should give this serious thought. Health care coverage for a family could easily cost \$1,200 or more per month, depending on where you live. So TRS is a very significant benefit for reservists.

For more information, visit <http://www.tricare.mil>.

Shopping

Finally, you are entitled to unlimited shopping at a base commissary or Army and Air Force Post Exchange/Base Exchange. The shopping on base can sometimes offer savings, especially in the commissary, which is subsidized and much cheaper than local markets.

The Reserve Officers Association has a Web site filled with useful information on other reserve benefits. It is well worth your time to look at <http://www.roa.org>. Consider membership in an organization dedicated to protecting your interests as a Reservist or member of the National Guard.

For further assistance, please feel free to contact our office at DSN 318-433-2836. The building number is 7235, the castle on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Sexual Assault

Response Coordinator

If someone you know has been sexually assaulted DO NOT:

- attempt to seek revenge.
- make jokes.
- be angry with your friend.
- force them to talk and/or take control from them.
- ask your friend how they could "let this happen."
- assume you understand how your friend feels.
- discuss the incident with others unless you have permission from your friend.

If someone you know has been sexually assaulted DO:

- be supportive and listen to them.
- communicate to your friend that he or she is not responsible for what happened.
- allow your friend to regain control by making his or her own decisions.

Call the Joint Base Balad sexual assault response coordinator at 443-7272 or contact via pager 443-9001, 159 for help. Army members should seek assistance with their unit victim advocate or deployed-SARC; you may also call 433-7272 or 443-9001, 122/135 for assistance.

Interested in a movie?

Check the movie
schedule on Page 20

Big Red One commander visits Adder

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SGT. 1ST CLASS TAD BROWNING
36TH SUST. BDE. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE

ADDER, Iraq – Maj. Gen. Vincent Brooks, commander of the 1st Infantry Division and the incoming commander for United States Division – South, met with Col. Sean Ryan, commander of the 36th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and his staff Jan. 24 at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq.

During his visit, Brooks toured the Adder fuel farm and the ice house and discussed the importance of the 36th Sust. Bde.'s mission during the responsible drawdown of forces from Iraq.

The 36th Sust. Bde.'s logistics mission is critical to successful operations in southern Iraq, said Brooks.

"Without the 36th, we wouldn't be able to figure this out," said Brooks. "They're our operators for all the complex logistics associated with reducing the number of forces in theater, moving our equipment out and sustaining us on a daily basis."

The 1st Inf. Div. Big Red One will take over for the 34th Infantry Division as it leaves Iraq.



Lt. Col. Stanley Golaboff, deputy commander of the 36th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) briefs Col. Sean Ryan, commander of the 36th Sust. Bde., and Maj. Gen. Vincent Brooks, 1st Infantry Division commanding general, on fuel farm construction Jan. 24 at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq.

"Our mission is to advise and assist the Iraqi Army and help build up the civil capacity of the Iraqi government," said Col. Chuck Hensley, operations officer with the 1st Inf. Div.,

This also includes overseeing the responsible drawdown of U.S. forces from the country, he said.

Because logistics plays a vital role

in the overall process, Hensley, a Brooksbury, Pa., native, said careful monitoring of equipment is essential.

"We have to make sure we have the right equipment so we're not sending stuff out of theater that we need in theater to accomplish that mission," he said.

Brooks said consideration of chang-

es in the mission will ensure its overall success.

"(We are) thinking through the future requirements of the mission, what that new posture is going to be after the elections, and seeing enough into the future that we can begin to shape it without putting our Soldiers at undue risk and without putting the mission at undue risk," said Brooks.

Ryan looked at the importance of 1st Inf. Div.'s mission and what its plan is for the responsible drawdown of forces.

"The importance of it really is for us to understand what the division is doing as they draw down from approximately 34 locations we are at now to anywhere from 8 to 11," said Ryan. "As they draw down their bases, we have to ensure we have everything in place to keep the commodities drawn down at the same time. That's really the importance of working together as we retrograde personnel, equipment and draw down the commodities that we have supporting those outlying forward operating bases."

After visiting with Ryan and his staff, Brooks said he looked forward to the mission ahead.

"The Big Red One is excited to be back into the business of fighting our wars and serving our country in theater and we're glad to be a partner with the 36th and others to get it done," said Brooks.

DISCUSSION: Green Tab Huddle held to assess problems

DISCUSS FROM PAGE 1

sergeants left with a thorough understanding of the movement, and removal, of equipment and personnel in Iraq, especially as it pertains specifically to their units during the drawdown, he said.

The 13th ESC command described the transportation forces' plans to draw down within the 13th ESC, including changes in techniques and procedures for moving cargo throughout Iraq, said Haas.

"We briefed them in detail on the battalions' strategic reduction plan, from now till August when the U.S. forces here have to be down to 50,000," said Haas.

Maj. John M. DiDonato, the commander of the 427th Movement Control Team out of Norristown, Pa., said this Green Tab Huddle focused on the drawdown and the consolidation of the forward operating bases. DiDonato, a Burlington, N.J., native, said not all MCTs will be replaced, some will move and finish their missions in new locations.

Haas said the second goal determine the best practices for their mission and leave those as part of their after action reviews for the next battalion to pick up where they left off.

DiDonato said the Green Tab Huddle was productive and the 49th Trans.

Bn. gathered all of the MCT senior leaders throughout Iraq excellently.

During a break out session, each section presented its best practices used during the deployment and its suggestions for improvement, he said.

"That gave a lot of us new insight to things that ... we can incorporate into our operation when we go back to our respective COBs," said DiDonato. "It's a chance for all of us to get together and decide how we can improve our operations."

The meeting served as a tool for leaders to understand how their counterparts operate, said DiDonato.

Writing after action reviews, high-

lighting successes and areas of improvement in the meeting, creates a tangible final product for the leaders, DiDonato said.

"We ask them what was good and bad in the conference," said DiDonato.

Haas said other events held at the Green Tab Huddle consisted of training officers on career management, leadership, counseling and the corrective tools available to them and their subordinate leaders.

He said discussing the drawdown and the lessons learned from the MCTs will help with unit transitions and overall mission success.



Give a Shout Out!

Tell your family and friends how much you miss them.

Send a brief message to: expeditionarytimes@iraq.centcom.mil Subject line: "Shout Out"

Providers save Army more than \$380 million

BY STAFF SGT. JOEL F. GIBSON
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – Soldiers with the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) saved the Army more than \$380 million by coordinating the cataloging and redistribution of excess equipment throughout Iraq since August.

Through Operation Clean Sweep, the 13th ESC recovers excess equipment that is not in use or needed for operations here in Iraq. The equipment is returned to the supply system for redistribution in theater, in Afghanistan and throughout the Army, said Col. Gus Pagonis, the support operations officer with the 13th ESC and a Copperas Cove, Texas, native.

Operation Clean Sweep was designed to address the massive build up of equipment since Operation Iraqi Freedom started in 2003, Pagonis said.

“Imagine if you did not go through your garage or your attic for about seven years, what would be left there?” he said. “Now multiply that by about 150,000 and that’s what we have here in Iraq right now.”

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Guy Hunter II, the senior logistics adviser for the reset and redistribution branch with the 13th ESC and a Victorville, Calif., native, said this represents years of backup.

“You have a unit that falls in on another unit’s location that they (transferred authority) with, and into a motor pool that already has 25 or 30 containers,” said Hunter. “Before Operation Clean Sweep, units throughout Iraq were not doing the normal day to day supply operations of command supply discipline because (operational tempo) was so high, so that kind of got left behind.”

Because combat operations slowed down during this phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, units across Iraq, along with the 13th ESC, can focus on identifying excess equipment and bringing it back to the supply system for other units to use or send back to the United States, said Hunter.

Pagonis said Operation Clean Sweep is about pro-

viding an easy way for units to maintain supply discipline.

To facilitate the redistribution of supplies and equipment, the 13th ESC coordinates with its subordinate sustainment brigades to send materiel redistribution teams to forward operating bases throughout Iraq, said Lt. Col. Ben Harvey, the reset and redistribution branch chief with the 13th ESC and a Chattanooga, Tenn., native.

As a drawdown tool, Operation Clean Sweep has been instrumental in making the transition easier for redeploying units because MRTs can go to their locations and assume control of the excess equipment for proper disposal, said Hunter, but the program also has long-lasting potential.

“Operation Clean Sweep is an enduring process that we need to continue to do all the time,” Hunter said. “It’s not just because we’re here in Iraq, we also need to do it in the states. Things accumulate and it’s easier to say, if you’ve got a container, ‘Oh just put it in the container,’ when it should actually go back into the supply system so somebody else can use it.”

“As long as we continue ordering and purchasing things, we need to continue doing clean sweeps.”

Sgt. Maj. Dennis Strubhart, the senior noncommissioned officer for support operations, 13th ESC and a Riviera, Texas, native, said Operation Clean Sweep’s capacity to catalog and redistribute items speeds those processes along.

“It could take years for them to get back in the supply system,” said Strubhart. “The Army doesn’t have to keep spitting out money for items it already has, and it only takes a month or two from the initial cataloging of items to redistribution to units that need those items.”

As important as the money Operation Clean Sweep saves is the time it creates for units, said Hunter.

“They’re just doing a unit move back to the states – they’re not competing with transportation assets for all their equipment and all the excess equipment that has to go home,” Hunter said. “It’s an immense time savings for them.”

Pagonis said the materiel redistribution teams are



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Spc. Michael Camacho

Capt. Leonard Joyner, a logistics officer with the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment and a Muleshoe, Texas, native, surveys a holding area for retrograde materials Oct. 18 at Contingency Operating Location Normandy, Iraq, as part of Operation Clean Sweep.

the driving force behind Operation Clean Sweep.

“It’s the Soldiers on the ground who are making the difference, the 13th ESC Soldiers who are down there every day going through all this stuff, cleaning out your garage every day for a year would be a tough thing to do, especially if every night the garage filled back up,” Pagonis said.

Transportation Soldiers escort local nationals to work yard

STORY AND PHOTO BY SGT. JOHN STIMAC
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – At Joint Base Balad, Iraq’s recycling yard, Soldiers with the 547th Transportation Company, out of Washington, work to make JBB environmentally friendly, employ nearby villagers and stimulate the local economy.

Soldiers with the 547th Trans. Co. escort the Iraqis on base and at the yard, where they work for the United Mandour Company, which is contracted to recycle unusable items from JBB.

Spc. Robert Matthews, an escort with the 547th Trans. Co., 49th Transportation Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and a Washington native, said he provides security at the recycling yard and ensures that the contracted workers stay in their designated areas.

“It’s exciting that they want to work here every day,” said Matthews. “They love the opportunity to get a chance to make money for their families.”

Abdulnabey Atteya Abd, a truck driver with the United Mandour Company, a contracted Iraqi company, said through a translator he is happy work here.

“I have a big family with 10 children and now I can pro-



Iraqi workers, contracted by the United Mandour Company, load wood onto a truck Feb. 1 at the recycling yard at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. The pallets will be resold or reused in nearby villages.

vide them with food and everything,” said Abd.

He said he used to drive to Baghdad on truck convoys with U.S. forces and he was scared, but since he has started working with the Iraqi company, he does not get as many threats.

“In my opinion, the relations have been getting much better recently between Iraqis and the Americans,” said Abd.

Spc. Vanessa Manford, an escort with the 547th Trans. Co. and a Laurel, Md., native, said she makes sure the Iraqis stay on track and do their jobs.

“We have to watch that they don’t pick up any contraband in the yard and try to hide it,” said Manford. “We are actually working with them and not so much protecting the people anymore. I think it is a good thing that we are doing over here, and I feel I am making a difference in a small way.”

Matthews said the workers haul wood, metal, water bottles, furniture, etc.

“One thing we do not accept are weapons, weapons parts or ammunition; pretty much anything else we can take,” said Matthews.

He said the company takes the trucks full of recycled items off of the base to be sold.

“Some of it gets used for the welfare of the community,” said Matthews. “We are helping them with jobs and also helping them with their community outside these gates.”

Alaa Abdel Mouhsin Abbass, the owner of United Mandour Company, said, through a translator, he has hired between 75 and 100 workers here and their jobs depend on the company’s working relationship with the Americans.

He said he has seen a lot of progress in the last few years. Before this, many of the people near JBB were jobless, and U.S. forces provided them with good jobs, he said.

“I would like to thank the U.S. for helping our economy and (I) hope they can provide more work for us in the future,” said Abbass.

Provider commander visits Wagonmasters at Habur Gate

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SGT. MATTHEW C. COOLEY
15TH SUST. BDE.

HABUR GATE, Iraq – In Habur Gate, nestled in the hills of Iraq's border with Turkey, the U.S. Army works alongside the Iraqi-Kurdistan government to maintain the flow of supplies between Turkey and Iraq to U.S. forces.

Brig. Gen. Paul L. Wentz, commander of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) out of Fort Hood, Texas, visited the border town Jan. 21, to assess the mission of Logistical Task Force 15, 15th Special Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th ESC and to make plans for the future.

Col. Larry Phelps, the 15th Sust. Bde. commander and a Greenville, Ala., native, along with other Wagonmaster leaders, accompanied the general.

Habur Gate is controlled by the Iraqi-Kurdistan government's customs officials. The U.S. Army's presence is primarily logistical support to the Army, the Department of Defense, and its civilian contractors, said Capt. Estan Davis, the commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 15th STB, 15th Sust. Bde., former commander of Logistical Task Force 15 and a Waterford, Va., native.

Capt. Noah Segal, Task Force 15 commander and a New York native, said they provide fuel, maintenance, medical support, lodging, latrine, shower, meal, barber, postal service, Internet and phone services to the combat logistics patrols that pass through to keep the U.S. military's northern supply chain going.

Wentz said, "This is the theater's entry point from the north."

Segal greeted the group outside of the Marble Palace, the nickname given to the small former mall used as the task force's headquarters building.

"(Habur Gate) is a self contained (forward operating base), it's basically one building," Phelps said.

Segal led the group to the building's large balcony, which extends around the building on three sides and offers a view of the border crossing into Turkey and a scenic vista of the surrounding Kurdistan region's mountains.

Below, local Kurds went in and out of the area's shops and restaurants while the daily deluge of semitrailers crossed the border over the Habur River.



Brig. Gen. Paul L. Wentz (left), commander of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) out of Fort Hood, Texas, discusses the units' mission with Col. Larry Phelps, commander of the 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th ESC and a Greenville, Ala., native, Jan. 21 on a balcony in Habur Gate, Iraq.

On average, Habur Gate sees 2,000 trucks per month, said Staff Sgt. Joe Herman, the acting noncommissioned officer in charge of the 561st Movement Control Team working with the task force and a Springfield, Mo., native.

Herman said 14,208 trucks passed through from May 2009 to January 2010.

"We're not just a ground mission," Herman said.

He said helicopters also stop in Habur Gate on missions to and from Mosul, Iraq.

"We facilitate (U.S. forces') travel throughout theater," he said. "Basically, everything that moves in and out I count it, I control it."

Herman said Habur Gate has access to Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish and English civilian translators.

After visiting the balcony, the general's briefing began. The leaders discussed security, schedules, anti-contraband practices, traffic control, procedures to ensure drivers sleep enough, how to ensure uninterrupted fuel supply, how the drawdown of U.S. forces would affect Habur Gate, and the positive effects of the mission on the local economy.

Phelps told Wentz that, before the

15th Sust. Bde. took charge, there were longer delays in getting through Habur Gate. The improvements, he said, were made possible through improved relations with the movement control team.

Since the Wagonmasters gained responsibility of the Habur Gate mission, \$280,000 in non-mission essential equipment was identified for turn in, Segal said.

He said relations with the local populace continue to improve. The task force handed out 25 boxes of school supplies for the new school year, but one Soldier took the initiative to do a little more.

Sgt. Adam Dilts, the task force's medical NCOIC and a Saint Cloud, Minn., native, teaches the Zerivani, part of the unofficial Iraqi-Kurdish Army known as the Peshmerga, about first aid and medicine.

Dilts said he began by teaching some Zerivani officers combat life saving techniques taught in the U.S. Army.

Shortly after teaching some of the officers CLS, there was an explosion in the Kurdistan region that killed Zerivani Soldiers, Dilts said.

"They expressed that the knowledge that I was giving them could

have saved some lives," he said. "I kind of took the ball and started running with it."

After that, Dilts said he expanded his efforts to include Zerivani NCOs and medics, giving them all the ability to return to their troops and teach them the same life-saving techniques.

As of January 2010, 70 unofficial CLS certifications were awarded to the Zerivani, Segal said.

"The locals here love us," Herman said. "They make life here better."

Edward Collins, the foreman of the KBR, Inc. civilian contractors working with the task force here, said it was good for the general and the Wagonmaster leadership to visit.

"You see an operation, but you don't see the detail that goes into it," he said. "We get all the trucks together and push them down South. This is the only place where you'll see (KBR) with military 24 hours a day."

After the briefing and lunch at the dining facility, the leaders toured the marshalling yard where the trucks park, the communications room, the MCT orderly room, the Morale, Welfare and Recreation room, and the aid station before moving on to visit another base.

Unit flag cased after tour completion

By Cpl. Richmond Barkemeyer
96th Sust. Bde. Public Affairs

VICTORY BASE COMPLEX, Iraq – The 620th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) cased its flag in a ceremony Jan.



28 at Victory Base Complex, Iraq, signifying the end of the unit's mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The next time the battalion's colors will be displayed will be when the unit returns to its home in St. Louis, said Master Sgt. Jomarquita Jett, the non-commissioned officer in charge of operations and a Copperas Cove, Texas, native.

The 620th CSSB began its mission July 2, assuming responsibility from the 398th CSSB. Composed of five companies and three attached platoons, the 620th was tasked with providing supply support, local transportation support, maintenance support, shower, laundry, and clothing repair for more than 100,000 customers in Iraq, said Jett.

The battalion's primary responsibilities included the VBC bulk fuel farm, the Container Shipping and Receiving Point, the arrival and departure airfield control group at Baghdad International Airport, the Oasis bottled water plant,

the ammunition supply point at Camp Liberty, and the BIAP mortuary affairs team, said Jett.

On hand to speak at the ceremony was Brig. Gen. Paul L. Wentz, commanding general of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and a Mansfield, Ohio, native. Wentz praised the 620th for its hard work and spoke about how its efforts fit into the draw-down of troops.

"You should all be proud of your accomplishments," said Wentz. "Your role was vital to the sustainment command. You've all done a great job, and my hat is off to you.

"As we draw down, this is exactly what winning looks like. This is all good news. This is what we hoped it would be, so we can leave this place with honor and leave it better than it was, and develop a strategic partner in the Iraqis that will last well into the future."

Col. C.J. Read, commander of the 96th Sustainment Brigade and a Layton, Utah, native, spoke during the ceremony and presented the 620th CSSB leadership with a commemorative plaque.

"You've had many complex missions throughout Iraq," said Read. "What you've done has not gone unnoticed, and it's been appreciated by many."

When it was his turn to address the troops, Lt. Col. Douglas Stubbe, commander of the 620th CSSB and a Wausau, Wis., native, recapped the high-



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Anthony John

Lt. Col. Douglas Stubbe, commander of the 620th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and a Wausau, Wis., native, and 1st Sgt. Dwayne Robinson, a St. Louis native, prepare to case the battalion's flag in a ceremony Jan. 28 at Victory Base Complex, Iraq. The battalion is redeploying to St. Louis after completing its tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

lights of the unit's work in Iraq.

"Our mission resulted in the receipt and distribution of 61 million gallons of fuel, the distribution of 30,000 cases of (meals, ready-to-eat) and 3.5 million cases of water, movement of 70,000 pieces of equipment through the busiest CRSP in theater, and nearly 200,000 bundles of laundry washed," said Stubbe. "At the ammunition sup-

ply point, 2.9 million rounds were issued and 1.3 million rounds were received. Our transportation platoon traveled 80,000 miles on VBC without an accident.

"To all the Soldiers of the 620th CSSB, I say thank you. Thank you for your service, and thank you for the honor and privilege of serving with you. Now, let's go home."

Mississippi Guardsman honored for integrity

STORY AND PHOTO BY
CAPT. MURRAY SHUGARS
2/198TH CAB

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq – A Mississippi Army National Guardsman received a command sergeant major award during a ceremony Jan. 29 at Contingency Operating Base Q-West, Iraq.

Sgt. Eric S. Pettis, the noncommissioned officer in charge of water mission-planning and container management for the Mayor Cell, 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms, 155th Brigade Combat Team, out of Senatobia, Miss., 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and an Oxford, Miss., native, was recognized for embodying integrity, one of the seven Army values.

To honor outstanding service at the end of the deployment, the senior NCOs of the battalion recognized seven Soldiers from throughout the battalion who embody one of the Army values – loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage, said Command Sgt. Maj. Perry Campbell.

"This is an NCO-driven effort to honor Soldiers who stood out during the deployment," said Campbell, a Senatobia, Miss., native. "The NCOs wanted to remind every Soldier in the battalion that outstanding service is not always the result of a single act. It is the everyday practice of upholding the Army values."

First Sgt. Carl Hunt, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Mayor Cell, said he could think of no Soldier in the Mayor Cell who better embodied integrity than Pettis.



Sgt. Eric S. Pettis (left), noncommissioned officer in charge of water mission planning and container management for the Mayor Cell and an Oxford, Miss., native, receives a command sergeant major award from Command Sgt. Maj. Perry Campbell, a Senatobia, Miss., native, for embodying integrity, one of the seven Army values, in a ceremony Jan. 29 at Contingency Operating Base Q-West, Iraq.

"The Army defines integrity as doing what's right, legally and morally; it's our moral compass, our guide for doing the right thing always," said Hunt, a Louisville, Miss., native. "During this deployment, Sgt. Pettis has shown great integrity. On day one, he was pulled out of his (military occupational specialty), which is Army cook, and put in the Mayor Cell water operations team, which he didn't know anything about. He worked hard and mastered water operations planning and execution, helping to keep water coming to COB Q-West. He went on numerous water missions, putting the health and welfare of his peers before his own."

Capt. John E. Satterfield, director of Public Works

and a Midway, Ga., native, said he agreed that Pettis deserved the recognition.

"Sgt. Pettis does the right thing even when no one else is around," said Satterfield. "His integrity is impeccable, and his word is his bond. When Sgt. Pettis tells me that he is going to take care of an issue or problem, he always gets it done. I never have to check behind him. This is a defining quality of the best NCOs, and it is why we say NCOs are the backbone of the Army."

Sgt. James C. Haycraft, NCOIC of water missions, said he has grown to trust Pettis without question.

"I've known Sgt. Pettis since we deployed to Iraq together in 2005, and I have always trusted his words and actions," said Haycraft, a Brandon, Miss., native. "Whenever he tells me he has done something, I know it's done. For instance, Sgt. Pettis manages all the daily reports that must be submitted for the Water Ops, and that's a lot of paperwork that he has always completed without fail."

Haycraft said a person reveals integrity in the smallest acts.

"Sgt. Pettis shows his integrity by the little things," said Haycraft. "For instance, he recently took a mission to the pump house for me because I couldn't make it. After he got back, he went ahead and topped the truck off. We usually don't refuel the truck till the day before a mission, as that's when we do our preventative maintenance, checks and services on the truck. A hundred small acts like that are what show Sgt. Pettis' integrity."

Pettis said he was proud to be singled out for the distinction.

"I'm honored by this recognition," said Pettis.

514th Maintenance Company convoys to Speicher for command visit

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SGT. JOHN STIMAC
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – Members of the 514th Maintenance Company's movement control team out of Fort Drum, N.Y., went on a convoy to Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, as part of a command visit Jan. 30.



The command's mission was to deliver mail for the Soldiers temporarily reassigned to Speicher, promote a Soldier into the noncommissioned officer ranks, and tow a Humvee back to Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

First Sgt. Vincent L. Autry, an Elizabethtown, N.C., native with the 514th Maint. Co., 80th Ordnance Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) said the command visit served as a morale booster to the Soldiers at Speicher.

"We try to do a command visit at least once a month," said Autry. "We still have nine Soldiers here at Speicher and we like to see how they are doing, and it gives them a chance to see some of the fellow Soldiers from JBB."

Second Lt. Walter Sprengeler Jr., the convoy commander and a platoon leader with the 514th Maint. Co., said the Soldiers assigned to Speicher are part of Operation Clean Sweep and all of their mail still comes to JBB.

"Some of these guys have been wait-

ing for more than three weeks to receive stuff they have ordered on Amazon or letters and packages from home," said Sprengeler. "They are all happy to see us because they know we have their mail, but it also gives us a chance to see what's going on here and the Soldier's well being."

Sprengeler said they did not get to spend as much time at Speicher as they would have liked to, but next time they will make it a point to stay longer.

Autry promoted one of his Soldiers to the rank of sergeant while at COB Speicher.

Sgt. Salvador Mayoral, a test measurement and diagnostic specialist and a San Diego native, said the promotion meant a lot to him, that his hard work finally paid off.

"I was happy that first sergeant was able to pin me here today," said Mayoral. "My wife and family back home are very proud of me and I am happy that someone in my company was able to do this at Speicher."

Autry said part of the mission was to bring a Humvee from Speicher back to JBB, to be used for missions on convoys.

Autry said the extra vehicle would strengthen the unit's mission capabilities in the coming months.

Sprengeler said the mission was a success.

"We did exactly what we set out to do," said Sprengeler. "Even though we had a minor glitch in our plan, we got the job done."

One of the Mine-Resistant Ambush



Spc. Bradley A. McLemore, a Pauls Valley Okla., native, hands Spc. Hans-Kevin Colbert, an Ardmore, Okla., native, a package that was delivered by convoy from Joint Base Balad, Iraq, to Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, Jan. 30 by the 514th Maintenance Company, out of Fort Drum, N.Y., 80th Ordnance Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

Protected-Vehicles had a mechanical error and needed to be towed to a nearby base.

"I was very happy at the way the guys recovered the vehicle so quickly," said Sprengeler. "Nobody panicked and we executed the recovery very well. It's hard to compensate for some setbacks that happen on the road, and the worst thing that happened was we lost a little time."

This was Sprengeler's first mission as a convoy commander and, in an after action review, he praised his team for the team effort it displayed outside of the wire.

"We sustained good communication throughout the mission and showed a lot of team cohesion with the recovery and it went quick and smoothly," said Sprengeler.

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Deputy commanding general visits Contingency Operating Site Taji

By Cpl. Richmond Barkemeyer
96th Sust. Bde. Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE

TAJI, Iraq – Lt. Gen. Kenneth Hunzeker, deputy commanding general of United States Forces – Iraq, visited Contingency Operating Base Taji, Iraq, Jan. 27 to view the progress made in retrograde operations as part of the United States' drawdown of troops and equipment from Iraq.

Brig. Gen. Gustave F. Perna, director of the Combined Joint 1/4/8 with USF-I, and Brig. Gen. Heidi V. Brown, the effects coordinator with USF-I, joined Hunzeker on the tour.

The first stop for the group was the Taji Mobile Retrograde Team, 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), led by Capt. Carey McIntyre, officer in charge and a Milwaukee native.

McIntyre walked Hunzeker around the MRT area, explained how the team operates, and introduced Hunzeker to his team members. McIntyre said the MRT is responsible for receiving items that move through Contingency Operating Base Taji. It sorts the items into categories based on their condition, then ships them to the United States, and other parts of Iraq or Afghanistan to support Operation Enduring Freedom, he said.

The team has processed 105,822 items, and recovered \$12,611,947.25 to date, said McIntyre.

The next stop for Hunzeker was Project Phoenix, a motor pool operation run by the Phoenix-based 3666th



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Anthony John

Lt. Gen. Kenneth Hunzeker, deputy commanding general of United States Forces – Iraq, receives a tour of Project Phoenix from Spc. Glen Ferguson, a heavy equipment repairer with the 3666th Maintenance Company, 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and a Salt Lake City native. Under Project Phoenix, Ferguson and the other members of the team take non-mission-capable vehicles, rebuild them and put them back on the road.

Maintenance Company, 541st CSSB, 15th Sust. Bde., 13th ESC. Under Project Phoenix, mechanics with the 3666th take an out-of-service heavy equipment transporter and completely rebuild it until it can be put back on the road, said Staff Sgt. Terry Stallings, the shop foreman and a Buckeye, Ariz., native.

“These trucks are brought to the unit completely dead-lined, and we rebuild them from the ground up, bring them to fully mission-capable status, and put them back out on the road,” said Stallings.

While speaking to Hunzeker, Stallings pointed out that Project Phoenix is saving money by rebuilding the trucks more efficiently than a comparable civilian operation.

“We do it faster and more efficiently than a civilian contractor,” said Stallings. “In some cases, a civilian contractor will charge \$60,000 to \$300,000 for the same job.”

Stallings said his mechanics are dedicated to the mis-

sion, often working more hours than is expected of them.

“The first truck we did, I had to tell these guys to go home,” said Stallings. “They wanted to stay and keep working.”

Sgt. Barry Lundquest, the floor supervisor and a Mesa, Ariz., native, said the 3666th mechanics focus on their work with Project Phoenix so intensely because they have fellow Soldiers on the road in those trucks.

“Their lives depend on it,” said Lundquest. “If I see anything I don’t feel comfortable with, I’m not going to roll it until it’s done.”

The final stop was on the Iraqi side of Contingency Operating Base Taji, where Hunzeker viewed the Iraqi equivalent of Project Phoenix. Hunzeker toured new facilities where Iraqis rebuild engines and transmissions, test the results on dynamometers, and paint the finished vehicles.

“It went well,” said Capt. Adrian Nickyson, commander of the 3666th Maint. Co. and a Tallahassee, Fla., native. “I have some of the best noncommissioned officers, and the best Soldiers, in the United States Army. It’s good to see them get the recognition they deserve.”



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Anthony John

Lt. Gen. Kenneth Hunzeker, deputy commanding general of United States Forces – Iraq, tours the vehicle restoration operations on the Iraqi side of Contingency Operating Base Taji during his tour Jan. 27. Since receiving new equipment in December, the Iraqi-run operation rebuilds and puts back on the road an average of eight vehicles per month.

VIPs tour Taji, meet with troops

STORY AND PHOTO BY
CPL RICHMOND BARKEMEYER
96TH SUST. BDE. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE

TAJI, Iraq – Maj. Gen. James B. Mallory III and Command Sgt. Maj. William J. Payne, the commanding general and senior enlisted adviser, respectively, of the 108th Training Command (Initial Entry Training), out of Charlotte, N.C., came to tour the facilities at Contingency Operating Base Taji, Iraq.

The visit was part of the Joint Monthly Access for Reserve Components program. Under JMARC, four general officers, three from the National Guard and one from the Army Reserve, along with their command sergeants major, are brought into theater for roughly two and a half days to meet with troops, said Mallory.

“This is kind of like a drive-by,” said Mallory. “The purpose is to be able to do some battlefield circulation among the units and to capture issues that Soldiers may have in terms of their support while they’re deployed or (in) the mobilization process. That helps us go back and solve systemic issues and improve the process.”

On the tour of COB Taji, Mallory and Payne visited the Mobile Retrograde Team, the Central Receiving and Shipping Point, and the Redistribution Property Assistance Team.

At the MRT stop, Mallory met with Capt. Carey McIntyre, officer in charge of the MRT with the 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment



First Lt. Gina Cherne, officer in charge of the Central Receiving and Shipping Point with the 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and a Fort Eustice, Va., native, speaks with Maj. Gen. James B. Mallory III and Command Sgt. Maj. William J. Payne, respectively the commander and senior enlisted adviser of the 108th Training Command, about operations at the Contingency Operating Base Taji, Iraq, CRSP yard.

Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and a Milwaukee native.

McIntyre explained to Mallory the basics of MRT operations. McIntyre said the MRT is responsible for receiving items that move through COB Taji. They sort the items into categories based on their condition, then ship them to the United States, another part of Iraq or Afghanistan to support Operation Enduring Freedom, he said.

The team has processed 105,822 items

and recovered \$12,611,947.25 to date, said McIntyre.

At the CRSP yard, Mallory and Payne met with 1st Lt. Gina Cherne, the officer in charge of the yard with the 169th Sea-port Operations Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 541st CSSB, 15th Sust. Bde., 13th ESC and a Fort Eustis, Va., native. Cherne explained to Mallory and Payne how the CRSP does business.

“We make sure cargo is shipped out of

here to other locations such as Kuwait, (Joint Base) Balad and Camp Victory, (Iraq),” said Cherne. “We also receive cargo from other camps and distribute local cargo to customers around Taji.”

Originally, Cherne and her staff were told to process and ship cargo within 96 hours, she said. However, they now average a roughly one day turn around, said Cherne.

“They’re like a pit crew,” said Lt. Col. Paul Dismar, commander of the 541st CSSB and a Morgan City, La., native. “As soon as an item hits the ground, the clock is ticking. Speed is important.”

The final stop for Mallory and Payne was the RPAT yard, where Air Force 1st Lt. Brian Bennion, the officer in charge with the 2nd Battalion, 402nd Army Field Support Brigade and a Salt Lake City native, gave the visitors a tour.

The RPAT yard is a joint operation between the Army and Air Force. Bennion has a team of 10 Airmen, nine Soldiers and 14 contractors to help process and redistribute the goods that come through the yard, he said.

The RPAT yard helps process the vehicles that pass through COB Taji. The team can process up to 200 per day, and no vehicle stays on the yard for more than two weeks, Bennion said.

Bennion said visits like this mean a lot to him and his staff.

“These mean quite a bit,” he said. “They give us a chance to show off what we do here. We’re a group of Air Force Airmen and Army Soldiers, and we get to show off what we do to help other units get out of town.”

Finance team provides pay assistance to Soldiers in remote locations

STORY AND PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY
SGT. KEITH S. VAN KLOMPENBERG
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION

SYKES, Iraq – The Florida National Guard’s 3153rd Financial Management Detachment travels to northern Iraq to ensure Soldiers in remote locations are provided the same financial support as Soldiers on major forward operating bases.

“We visit the units that can’t get to a finance office,” said Pfc. William Montgomery, a military pay technician with the 3153rd FMD, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

Montgomery, a Jacksonville, Fla., native, said Soldiers with the FMD travel in two-man Financial Management Support Teams to provide Soldiers with cash and take care of any of their pay problems.

“We handle all pay problems the best we can,” said Staff Sgt. Eric

Brown, the FMST team leader and a Jacksonville, Fla., native.

Brown said the team can often fix problems in the field, but for more serious issues they return to their office at Sykes to find solutions. The most common issue they face is with pay entitlements due to changes in marital status or number of dependents, he said.

Brown said pay problems are not very common among the Soldiers he visits and are not the biggest part of the mission.

“The most important thing is to make sure they have their money,” he said.

Remote bases do not have Eagle Cash machines because they do not have finance offices to service them, he said. This means Soldiers have to make all purchases with cash, said Brown.

Brown said Soldiers up north do not have many opportunities to spend their money, for better or worse.

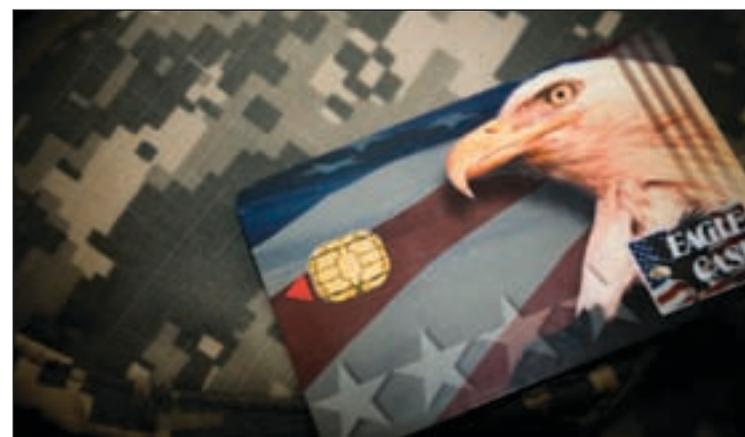
“For one, they don’t have a (post exchange) to spend their money,”

he said. “But they still find a way to blow it. They’ll go out in the cities and spend it on the local economy.”

Because the U.S. is getting away from using U.S. dollars in Iraq, they have limited most Soldiers to withdrawing \$100 per month, Brown said. Soldiers without access to Eagle Cash are still allowed to take out \$200 per month, he said.

Montgomery, who just returned from his first mission as part of the FMST, said the Soldiers in the FMD are on a rotation to go out on missions. The team has been on six missions since arriving in theater in November, he said.

To make it out to remote locations,



Though Eagle Cash is the preferred method of payment for Soldiers in Iraq, it is not available everywhere, so Financial Management Support Teams deliver cash to Soldiers who need it.

Montgomery said the team has to catch a ride on a convoy with another unit.

Brown, who has been part of every FMST mission, said they generally travel with one of the 82nd Airborne Regiment units that conduct resupply missions to the outlying bases.

“It’s a good ride,” said Brown. “I’d rather be out in the field than stuck in the office anyway.”

Service members, third country nationals come together at Oasis dining facility

STORY AND PHOTO BY
PFC. LISA A. COPE
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – Every day Oasis dining facility at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, serves roughly 18,000 to 20,000 meals to the service members and civilians here.

From the warehouse and storage facilities to the kitchen and dining room, countless hands come together for each meal.

Sgt. Ronald O. Kirby, a food service noncommissioned officer with the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), works in the Oasis DFAC.

Kirby, an Atlanta native, said he and his Soldiers escort the trucks that deliver the supplies from the gates and inspect the cargo to ensure the quality and accuracy of the shipment.

At any given time, the warehouse contains roughly 200 to 300 pallets of supplies, and roughly \$1 million of supplies rotate through the warehouse each month, Kirby said.

Kirby said the management of the warehouse is one of the most important factors in efficiently operating a DFAC.

“If you have poor management of your warehouse, basically it is just like running

a restaurant, your not going to be in business long, because you have to be able to manage your products,” said Kirby.

Spc. Danielle Marsha, a food service specialist with the 514th Maintenance Company out of Fort Drum N.Y., works in the kitchen with the third country nationals at Oasis.

“We have several jobs,” said Marsha, a Columbia, Md., native. “The main job that I do is, I am in the kitchen, and I monitor all the TCNs. I make sure they are following proper procedures.”

Soldiers in the kitchen ensure that workers meet all safety and sanitary requirements as well as follow the recipe cards that are distributed by the Army Food Management Information System, she said.

Marsha said she enjoys the opportunity to encounter other cultures.

“It means a lot to me to be working here with different people and different cultures,” said Marsha. “I learn from them, and they learn from us, so it is a very good experience.”

Courtney M. Grimes, a quality assurance evaluator with the 514th Maint. Co. and an Atlanta native, said she ensures service members and civilians meet the standard.

“My job (is) to make sure that the Soldiers, contractors, TCNs, whoever comes through that door, has the proper creden-



Sgt. Ronald O. Kirby, a food service noncommissioned officer with the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), shows how the warehouse in Oasis dining facility at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, is organized, Feb. 2.

tials to eat in the DFAC,” said Grimes.

This includes ensuring Soldiers carry their weapon, everyone has the correct identification, no bags or unauthorized items are brought into the DFAC, that no one takes out too many items, she said.

For any given meal, roughly 4,000 to 7,000 people come through the DFAC, Grimes said.

She said she typically sees roughly 1,000 to 1,500 more people at the lunch

and dinner meals than breakfast or midnight meals.

The correct head count ensures the proper amount of food is cooked, Grimes said.

“At the end of the meal, we have to store the food, or properly dispose of the food, but you would rather have too much than have too little,” said Grimes. “If you have too little, that is taking away from somebody’s meal.”

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Medics compete in

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. RYAN TWIST
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – Four-man teams carried litters through an obstacle course Jan. 25 for the Brave Mercy Medic Stakes competition at the Jameson Combat Medic Training Center at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

The competition included units from Task Force 61st Multifunctional Medical Battalion, 1st Medical Brigade, a subordinate unit of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) at Fort Hood, Texas, and took place Jan. 25 through Jan. 27.

“The purpose of the event was to test the combat medic and Soldier skills of the competitors over the course of a physically and mentally demanding three-day event,” said Master Sgt. Michael J. Rubio, the chief veterinary noncommissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 61st MMB.

Rubio, a San Antonio native, said the Brave Mercy Medic Stakes was designed to evaluate the medics’ competence in medical skills, common military tasks, and overall physical fitness.

Second Lt. Jason A. Browning, the civil military operations officer with TF 61st MMB, said the medical competition encouraged the best medics in the task force to compete and have fun.

Browning, the officer in charge of the Brave Mercy Medic Stakes and a Marlow, Okla., native, said the 18 Soldiers were tested on an individual basis, competing in events ranging from a litter obstacle course, evacuation lanes, an Army physical fitness test, a six-mile road march, Soldier skills, emergency medical technician skills and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation.

There were 11 graded lanes in the three-day event.

The litter obstacle course was a favorite among the Soldiers, said Browning. In this event, four-man teams carried a casualty on a litter throughout an obstacle course that started in a narrow passage, included low crawling under barbed wire, overcoming high and low wall obstacles and maneuvering on rough terrain, he said.

Spc. Ray E. Brown, a health care specialist with the 501st Area Support Medical Company out of Fort Campbell, Ky., said his team had to keep constant communication with their teammates and make sure they used proper commands during the obstacle course.

“The most interesting (event) was the litter obstacle course,” said Brown, a Colleyville, Texas, native.

He said the competition offered a variation in his routine, helped him stay motivated and allowed him to meet some new faces.

“There is plenty to learn from other medics while you’re here,” said Brown.

Browning said this is the first time they have conducted an event of this nature within the task force, and the event allowed for a healthy competition.

“The importance of a competition like this, is it builds cohesion within the units,” said Browning. “(It) gives people over here in Iraq a mission to train for and then rewards our Soldiers for their hard work.”

Sgt. 1st Class Gregory G. Barriffe, noncommissioned officer in charge of the Brave Mercy Medic Stakes with the TF 61st MMB and a New York native, said the com-



(Above) Spc. Ray E. Brown, a Colleyville, Texas, native, and Sgt. Adam M. Voydik, a Pottsville, Pa., native, health care specialists with the 501st Area Support Medical Company out of Fort Campbell, Ky., Task Force 61st Multifunctional Medical Battalion, participate in a recon scenario during the Brave Mercy Medical Stakes competition at Jameson Combat Medic Training Center Jan. 25 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

Spc. Ray E. Brown, a health care specialist with the 501st Area Support Medical Company out of Fort Campbell, Ky., Task Force 61st Multifunctional Medical Battalion and a Colleyville, Texas, native, low crawls under barbed wire to inspect for enemy threats during the litter obstacle course at the Brave Mercy Medical Stakes competition at Jameson Combat Medic Training Center Jan. 25 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

petition will help participants prepare to test for and earn their Expert Field Medical Badge.

“I think it is a good competition,” said Barriffe. “It will get Soldiers to prepare for the future and know how to do basic medical Soldier skills, and have a good feel for the EFMB.”

Rubio said the Soldiers were exposed to the same tasks, conditions and standards they would encounter during the EFMB standardization and testing, with the exception of a land navigation course.

“It puts the responsibility of standardization (or) training back onto the individual Soldier prior to competition,” he said.

Browning said the event went smoothly.

“I expect the Soldiers to leave this competition feeling like they were tasked and tested on their medical, technical and Soldier skills, and come out of this competition feeling that the winners really earned the title Brave Mercy Medical Stakes,” he said.

three-day skills test



Spc. Ray E. Brown, a Colleyville, Texas, native, and Sgt. Adam M. Voydik, a Pottsville, Pa., native, health care specialists with the 501st Area Support Medical Company out of Fort Campbell, Ky., Task Force 61st Multifunctional Medical Battalion, carry the litter over the high wall of the litter obstacle course during the Brave Mercy Medical Stakes competition at Jameson Combat Medic Training Center Jan. 25 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.



(Above) A four-man litter team walks up and down the stairs during Task Force 61st Multifunctional Medical Battalion's Brave Mercy Medical Stakes competition at Jameson Combat Medic Training Center Jan. 25 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.



(Right) Spc. Ray E. Brown, a health care specialist with the 501st Area Support Medical Company out of Fort Campbell, Ky., Task Force 61st Multifunctional Medical Battalion and a Colleyville, Texas, native, sets the litter on the wall as his team waits for him to climb over the wall and carry the litter on to the next scenario during the Brave Mercy Medical Stakes competition at Jameson Combat Medic Training Center Jan. 25 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

New Jersey Reservists take over amnesty collection point

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SPC. MICHAEL V. CAMACHO
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – The 716th Quartermaster Company took control of the amnesty collection point, a cargo yard that supports Operation Clean Sweep, from the 910th Quartermaster Company Feb. 1 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

The 716th QM Co., 80th Ordnance Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) is the second quartermaster company to operate the amnesty collection point since its opening in October, said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Anthony Potenzzone, officer in charge of the amnesty collection point at JBB.

The 716th QM Co., an Army Reserve unit out of Jersey City, N.J., arrived in country in December. The 716th QM Co. Soldiers began to work hand in hand with the 910th QM Co. Soldiers to learn the operations for the logistical support they would provide when they replaced the 910th QM Co., said Potenzzone.

The 716th manages the collection point with the support of the 80th Ord. Bn., said Capt. James Beck, commander of the 716th QM Co.

The amnesty yard at JBB is one of the larger collection points in Iraq and supports the largest Support Supply Activity in theater, he said. The amnesty yard processes a high volume of retrograde material because JBB serves as a major logistic hub for the surrounding bases,



Spc. Delaina Strickland, a cargo processor with the 716th Quartermaster Company, 80th Ordnance Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and a Philadelphia native, ground guides for Spc. Lauren Goss, a forklift operator with the 716th QM Co. and a Pittsburgh native, as she moves retrograde cargo to be sorted Feb. 1 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

said Beck, a Pittsburgh native.

The amnesty collection point processes retrograde materials from JBB and the smaller bases that surround it, said Potenzzone.

Retrograde materials are put back into the supply system either as reusable supplies or recyclable materials, he said.

Unused new equipment is sent to the SSA, reusable items are sent to the Redistribution Property Accountability Team and scrap metals sent to the Defense Retrograde Material Office, said Potenzzone.

"Any equipment in theater that is ex-

cess or unaccounted for can be turned into this yard no questions asked," said Potenzzone. "We process it and send it where it needs to go . . . the supply system."

Originally, the collection point was solely for the retrograde materials sent from the smaller bases slated to close, said 1st Lt. Robert McGrath, officer with the 80th Ord. Bn.

The yard changed to daily operations due to the overwhelming base-wide response to the collection point's Amnesty Day Sept. 12, said McGrath, a Castle Rock, Wash., native.

This retrograde method allows sup-

plies already in Iraq to be redistributed and reduces additional expenses, said McGrath.

Only the prices of unused supplies sent to the SSA are documented; the dollar amount of retrograde materials sent to DRMO and RPAT is not recorded, McGrath said. Within the roughly four months the collection point has been open, it has saved millions of dollars in unused supplies alone, he said.

"We've put \$225 million worth of supplies back into the Army system," said McGrath. "We average nearly \$10 million a week."

Soldiers at the collection point go through the cargo by hand and visually check the items, said Spc. Lauren Goss, a forklift operator with the 716th QM Co. The cargo is packed and loaded onto a flatbed or trailer and sent to be processed into the supply system, she said.

"We separate it so it can be filtered back into the Army supply," said Goss, a Pittsburgh native.

With Soldiers from various military occupational backgrounds, the unit has adapted well to its mission at the amnesty yard, Beck said.

"Some of these Soldiers have never done this kind of work, but because of their versatility, and for some of them their civilian careers, they create a synergistic effect," said Beck. "They can see materials that are coming in and say 'this is good' or 'this is no good' and get supplies back into the system."

The amnesty collection point at JBB saves millions of dollars for taxpayers and provides logistical support for the Soldiers deployed in Iraq, Beck said.

Surgeon cell provides medical training to commanders

BY 1ST LT. MICHAEL ANDERSON
15TH SUST. BDE.

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq – Soldiers with the 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) surgeon cell taught 15th Special Troops Battalion, 15th Sust. Bde. leaders about medical processes that could benefit their Soldiers Jan. 13 at Contingency Operating Base Q-West, Iraq.

The lessons were a key training point in a three-day leadership conference.

"Col. (Larry) Phelps (the 15th Sust. Bde. commander) wanted this training

to be given to the battalion, so this presented a perfect opportunity because our units are uniquely challenged by geographic dispersion, and this was a great way to provide the brigade standard to all of them at the same time," said Lt. Col. Paula Lodi, the 15th STB commander and a Franklin, Mass., native.

Staff Sgt. Edward Closson, brigade medical planner and a Killeen, Texas native, presented a class on training combat life saver personnel in the units.

"CLS training allows Soldiers to increase their medical effectiveness and survive injury," said Closson. "Soldiers have to retain and constantly practice their training because they will never

know when they might be called upon to use those skills."

Another class covered the nine-line medical evacuation request.

"Leaders have to be creative and use their imagination in their training," said Closson. "This will help Soldiers remember the proper procedures and be comfortable and confident enough to call for a medevac."

Finally, 1st Lt. Joshua Singleton, medical operations officer in charge and a Beaufort, S.C., native, taught a class on establishing a proper landing zone.

"The key to successfully establishing a landing zone is to know the basics and to constantly practice the procedures

until it becomes second nature," said Singleton.

First Sgt. Enrique Gomez a San Antonio native with the 387th Human Resources Company participated in the training.

"It is imperative that our Soldiers become familiar with this medical training and equipment," said Gomez. "As leaders, we are responsible in making sure that our Soldiers make these skills and procedures part of their tasks to focus their training on."

After the training, the battalion was more prepared for any situation, Lodi said. The leaders will continue to engage with their Soldiers to prepare for any future challenges, Lodi said.

13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)
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Container repair yard operations expand at JBB

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SPC. MICHAEL V. CAMACHO
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – Operations at the newly relocated container repair yard, which is roughly four times larger, began Feb. 1 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

The CRY was moved to an expanded location to increase the sites' storage and production capabilities, said Capt. Jason Vivian, officer in charge of transportation with the 80th Ordnance Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

In May 2009, the CRY was contracted to repair no less than 120 containers per month, said Vivian, a South Fork, Pa., native. The overall production rate at the CRY steadily increased as the demand for transportation worthy containers increased, Vivian said. As the months passed, the total was gradually increased to 250 containers per month, he said.

Eventually, the greatest limitation for the CRY's production rate was the limited storage capacity, said Vivian.

With the drawdown approaching and the restructuring of forces in theater, the contract was once again increased to 3,000 containers repaired per month, he said. The increase was set in increments spread out in time so the team in the CRY could progress to their target number, he said.

"The small yard (the workers were) in, wasn't going to have the capacity to hold the amount of containers we needed (them) to bring in, fix, repair and bring back out to the empty container collection point," said Vivian. "We can easily put in over 3,000 containers at a given time."

The original CRY was on a three-acre plot, said Hashim Mahdi, the CRY managing director with Miran Village Company. The new CRY area is a 28-acre plot, which allows for much more work space, he said.

Workers operate in pairs to fix broken containers; with limited space, those groups worked in close quarters, said Mahdi, a Bakr Village, Iraq, native. At the old site, there would be up to six workers in a 100-square-meter section at one time, Mahdi said.

In their expanded space, the groups can focus on the set up and repair of more containers, increasing productivity, said Mahdi.

"With 100 square meters, each group can get at least 20 connexes a month," said Mahdi. "Before, each group could only get 10."

Site safety increased with more open space, which gave forklifts and workers more room to maneuver, said Mahdi. Risk management is a top priority with 500 personnel on site, Mahdi said.

The CRY repairs 100 containers per day, he said. The CRY repaired roughly 2,000 containers in January, moving closer and closer to its goal of 3,000 repaired containers per month, he said.



Iraqi employees, with the Miran Village Company, make repairs to damaged containers Feb. 3 at the Joint Base Balad, Iraq, Container Repair Yard. With a workforce of roughly 500 employees, the CRY repairs at least 100 containers per day.

The CRY repairs containers so they can pass customs inspections and be used for the transportation of cargo back to the U.S., said Vivian.

"These containers are being repaired to meet the (International Convention for Safe Containers) certifications and are now able to go seaworthy by ship," said Vivian. "Before, we weren't able to put these containers on ships because they wouldn't meet the standards that are out there for us to ship stuff back to the states."

The average cost for a new container is roughly \$4,000, said Vivian. The CRY can repair these containers for less than \$1,000, saving millions of dollars in a few months, he said.

The Iraqi CRY jobs put money back into the Iraqi infrastructure, said Vivian. With the expansion of the CRY, the workforce has increased, said Vivian.

When Mr. Hashim first started this project back in 2008, he had 20 workers," said Vivian. "Today, he has over 475 workers."

To ensure U.S. forces are ready to meet the timelines to withdraw from Iraq, steps must be taken now, including increasing the size of the CRY, said Vivian.

Vivian said the Central Receiving and Shipping Point is slated to begin operation Feb. 15, at its new location adjacent to the CRY.

Local nationals work to keep JBB clean

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SGT. JOHN STIMAC
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – Soldiers with the 547th Transportation Company, 49th Transportation Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) escort the local nationals who work to beautify Joint Base Balad, Iraq, and keep it clean.

They accomplish this through a joint Army and Air Force Department of Public Works program. The Army provides the security of the local nationals and the Air Force has contracted out the work to the Iraq-based Noor Al-Belad Company.

Air Force Master Sgt. Glen Brown, the self help noncommissioned officer in charge with the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing and a Winona, Mo., native, said the goal manage units' requests for ground maintenance and have the local nationals clean those designated areas.

"This is basically base beautification," said Brown. "We organize the areas



Iraqi workers with Noor Al-Belad Company wait to be placed into crews to perform base beautification Feb. 2 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Members of the 547th Transportation Company, 49th Transportation Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) escort the local nationals around JBB.

that need to be taken care of and they clean around the buildings and the busy streets at JBB."

Brown said there are roughly 175 people who come through the gates daily to work here.

"We normally split them up into different crews and then send them out

with the Army escorts to clean the base," said Brown.

He said a lot of paperwork goes into doing this.

The Iraqis start coming through the gates around 8 a.m. and are ready to start being put into crews by 9 a.m., when operations go smoothly.

"For the most part, we have had good interaction with the locals," said Brown. "We have a good bond with them and it is fun to work with them."

Pfc. Daniel A. Jones, an escort with the 547th Trans Co. and a Washington native, said he escorts different crews of local nationals around JBB every day.

"Today, the LN's are cutting off branches from trees around the fence line," said Jones. "Besides cleaning up the debris, it also helps with the force protection, so the tree branches are not hindering the sight of someone looking outside."

Jones said the Iraqis are always eager to come to work and show up with a smile on their face day after day.

"Them being happy makes my job that much easier," said Jones. "These guys that we're around are just like us, trying to support their family, and they love to work."

Hameed Rashed Abdullateef, a worker for the Noor Al-Belad Company, said through an interpreter that he has worked here for two years.

"I love to come to work with the Americans every day," said Abdullateef. "Thank God the work is good and I can support my family."

Medical battalion hosts formal dinner to honor Soldiers

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SGT. RYAN TWIST
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – Task Force 61st Multifunctional Medical Battalion, 1st Medical Brigade, a 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) subordinate unit at Fort Hood, Texas, hosted a formal dinner at Morale, Welfare and Recreation east Feb. 2 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

The TF 61st MMB Brave Mercy Combat Dining In brought officers and non-commissioned officers together to socialize and recognize individual and unit achievements.

Master Sgt. Michael J. Rubio, chief veterinary noncommissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, TF 61st MMB, said such events may also be held to honor distinguished visitors and should be viewed as an association, not a mandatory formation for all parties.

“The dining in is an effective way to build and maintain esprit de corps,” said Rubio, a San Antonio native.

Rubio said the event allowed the task force to gather some of its Soldiers, who are spread throughout Iraq, to share a meal and build camaraderie amongst one another.

The event kicked off with the arrival of the official party and a TF color guard presentation, he said.

Rubio played Mr. Vice, the host for the evening, and Lt. Col. Keith A. Rigdon played Mr. President. They incorporated



Soldiers pour grog out during the Task Force 61st Multifunctional Medical Battalion Brave Mercy Combat Dining In at Morale, Welfare and Recreation east Feb. 2 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. The dining in brought Soldiers together to eat and be honored for their accomplishments.

other members of the units in speeches about the tradition and reasoning behind dining in ceremonies. They provided part of the entertainment, Rubio said.

In the grog bowl ceremony, Soldiers from each unit brought an ingredient to pour into a communal punch bowl, he said. Each ingredient symbolized an event or otherwise significant aspect of the units' history, he said.

Soldiers had to drink from the grog bowl if they failed to follow a rule and failed to give a good reason for why they did not follow the rule, Rubio said.

Sgt. Justine R. Vitug, a patient administration noncommissioned officer in

charge with the HHD TF 61st MMB, said the drinking the grog was his favorite part of the event.

Vitug, a volunteer with the color guard team and a Dededo, Guam, native, said the event started out slow, but the grog ceremony increased the crowd participation and Soldiers began enjoying themselves.

Rubio said the guest speaker, Brig. Gen. Paul L. Wentz, the commanding general of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) out of Fort Hood, Texas, spoke after the grog ceremony about the battalion's achievements.

Wentz, a Mansfield, Ohio, native, said

the 61st epitomizes the hard work and perseverance of the military.

“You exemplify what teamwork is all about,” Wentz said to them.

To date more than 58,000 Soldiers have been treated by their medical professionals, with more than 140 air evacuations, he said.

He said roughly 5,000 glasses have been made by the battalion's optometry units.

“You are making things happen,” Wentz said to them.

Rubio said they paid tribute to two Soldiers after the commanding general spoke, Wentz and Col. Rochelle T. Wasserman, the task force battalion surgeon and a California native. Wentz received a certificate of appreciation and Wasserman received a bronze star.

“Her responsibilities included coordinating medical functions in support and enabling the delivery of high-quality, customer-focused, evidence-based health-care to over 150,000 U.S. and Coalition forces, and eligible civilian personnel,” said Rubio.

At the end of the night, the task force finalized the event with a fallen comrade ceremony, he said. Vitug said he appreciated the recognition the fallen Soldiers received.

“The fallen comrades that are not here deserve to be recognized, even though they are not here, they still fought for our country,” said Vitug.

Rubio said the dining in was a great opportunity to sit down with fellow Soldiers to relieve stress, share stories and bond.

“I think the event went well,” said Rubio. “I couldn't ask for anything better.”

Texas National Guard unit holds combat patch ceremony at Ziggurat

BY SGT. CANDACE WESTLUND
41ST IBCT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE ADDER, Iraq – The Texas National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment out of Weslaco, Texas, with the Oregon National Guard's 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) held a combat patch ceremony Jan. 26 at the Ziggurat of Ur.

The ceremony was held after the Ziggurat tour, which was coordinated by Chaplain Lt. Col. Ron McKay, with the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment out of Jacksonville, Ore., 41st IBCT.

Ur is said to be the birthplace of Abraham, who was considered a prophet in Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Security for the tour and ceremony

was provided by B Company, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry.

“This is my first time at the Ziggurat,” said Sgt. Dahir Jacobo, an infantryman with B Co. and a Salem, Ore., native. “It's a great opportunity to be here but hard to enjoy the significance since I have to focus on my duties.”

Soldiers toured the Ziggurat and the city ruins of Ur.

“This is something outstanding that I never imagined seeing,” said Spc. Mario Enriquez, a mechanic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry and an El Paso, Texas, native. “To see the center of Earth's creation is amazing, almost extravagant.”

The Texas National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment out of Weslaco, Texas, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) held a combat patch ceremony Jan. 26 at the Ziggurat of Ur.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Cory Grogan

Sykes' Logistics Task Force keeps surrounding bases thriving

By SGT. KEITH S. VAN KLOMPENBERG
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION SYKES, Iraq – The Soldiers with the 506th Quartermaster Company's Logistics Task Force work with little supervision to support at operations at Contingency Operating Location Sykes as well as the surrounding bases.

At COL Sykes, the LTF runs a fuel yard and the base's Central Receiving and Shipping Point, where it processes incoming and outgoing equipment and vehicles between Sykes and Contingency Operating Base Q-West, Iraq.

Supporting COL Sykes is just one facet of the 43-man LTF's mission.

A five-man food service team works to feed the smaller bases outside of COL Sykes.

"We provide sustenance for the outlying bases," said Pfc. Giovanni Perez, a food service specialist with the Logistics Task Force, 506th QM Co., 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

Perez said his team consists of one noncommissioned officer, four junior enlisted Soldiers and a dozen local nationals.

Together they fill food and drink

orders for outside units to pick up, he said.

"We help the (local nationals) as much as we can, and they help us," said Perez.

The sustenance warehouse is the only site at COL Sykes that uses local nationals instead of government contractors, said Staff Sgt. Cristian Solano, the LTF platoon sergeant and an Elizabeth, N.J., native.

Although food is picked up by the units in need, the LTF transportation team delivers the other necessities, fuel and water, said Solano.

"We take fuel and water and resupply (forward operating bases) Nimir and Heider," said Spc. Raymond Chew, a petroleum supply specialist on the LTF and a Fort Pierce, Fla., native.

Chew, who is serving his first deployment, said he moved the fuel yard to the transportation team and enjoyed the opportunity to travel.

"It's cool to get off the (base) and see the little kids and things," he said.

When they are not convoying to resupply other bases, Chew said his team works on its vehicles with the maintenance team.

"Our maintenance team provides service for the whole platoon," said Solano. "It's a lot of work considering it's really only three mechanics."

The maintenance team has cross-

trained Soldiers, including a plumber and two nuclear, biological and chemical equipment repairers, but they all work together to keep the LTF's vehicles on the road, said Solano.

Solano said roughly 60 percent of the LTF Soldiers are cross-trained, doing work outside their military occupational specialty, but it has not affected their mission effectiveness.

"They've done outstanding work since we've been here," Solano said. "They've been doing all this without the direct supervision of an officer."

The command staff of the 506th is stationed at Q-West, but the noncommissioned officers at COL Sykes ensure the team accomplishes their mission, said Solano.

"As a whole we've never failed," he said.



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Darrell Melrose

Spc. Joseph Nelson, a mechanic with the 506th Quartermaster Company Logistics Task Force maintenance team, cuts wood to use as a connex wall, Feb. 3 at Contingency Operating Location Sykes, Iraq. Nelson, a Springfield, Ohio, native, is traditionally a plumber, but like many Soldiers in the LTF, has cross-trained to perform missions outside of his specialty.

Perez said the key to the LTF's success is in its teamwork.

"Everybody's got to do their part," said Perez.

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Sheila Marshall Band performs at Taji

By CPL. RICHMOND BARKEMEYER
96TH SUST. BDE. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE
TAJI, Iraq – The Sheila Marshall Band, a country and rock outfit out of Houston, has performed all over the world, from California to Japan to the U.S. Virgin

Islands.

On Jan. 24, the group ended a seven-show stretch in the Middle East, performing for more than 400 service members at the Jon Schoolcraft Pavilion at Contingency Operating Base Taji, Iraq.

“It’s probably been one of the most exciting trips we’ve done because I’ve done things I never thought I would do,” said Marshall, the lead vocalist and a Houston native. “I never thought I’d be in Iraq, first of all, and staying in one of Saddam Hussein’s palaces.”

Guitarist Scott Steinsiek, a Houston native, said his trip into the Baghdad area offered him rare opportunities.

“Smoking Cuban cigars and hitting golf balls off the back porch of Al Faw Palace was pretty remarkable,” said Steinsiek.

In addition to seeing the sites in Iraq, band members tasted Army life for a few

days, flying around the country in UH-60 Black Hawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters, and training on weapons and vehicle-rollover simulators.

“Sheila pretty much fired every weapon there is,” said Steinsiek.

Marshall said firing the weapons made this a unique trip.

The band found its uniformed audiences different as well, said drummer Rick Weinland, a New Waverly, Texas, native.

“Without all the beer and whatnot, they’re pretty reserved,” said Weinland. “But you could tell everybody was listening and enjoying it. It was nice.”

Staff Sgt. Heber Rasmussen, a paralegal with the 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and an Idaho Falls, Idaho, native, attended the concert.

“It was awesome,” Rasmussen said. “She’s got kind of a blues-pop-country sound, and I thought she was amazing.”

“These tours are a great thing. You sit here, and you’ve got nothing to do but think about home. This takes your mind off work and keeps you motivated and gives you a little taste of home, too.”

During the performance, four Soldiers from the 96th Sust. Bde. were brought onstage and recognized for re-



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Anthony John

Sheila Marshall, a Houston native, sings during her band’s performance Jan. 24 at the Jon Schoolcraft Pavilion at Camp Taji, Iraq. The band played six shows in Iraq. Contingency Operating Base Taji was the final stop.

enlisting in the Army Reserve.

Supporting deployed troops was one of the main reasons Marshall chose to bring the band to Iraq, she said.

“We wanted to give back, because (service members) do so much, and this was the least we could do,” she said. “We’ve

had a great time. Everybody’s been very generous in showing us around. We’ve been really busy.”

With their voyage to Iraq complete, the band will return to the U.S. and continue to tour in support of its latest album, “What if I Was.”

Florida Marlins players, dancers visit troops in Basra

STORY AND PHOTO BY
PFC. LISA A. COPE
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE
BASRA, Iraq – Two players for the Florida Marlins baseball team, as well as their coach and four members of the Marlins Mermaid dance squad, visited

service members Jan. 30 at the United Services Organization building at Contingency Operating Base Basra, Iraq.

The group signed autographs and took pictures with the service members, and the dancers performed and distributed free Marlins T-shirts.

John Baker, a catcher for the Florida Marlins and a Walnut Creek, Calif., native, said the trip was an eye-opening experience for him.

“We really have no idea at home what it is like over here,” said Baker. “I have (two) cousins that served in the Marines here ... in country, and to hear what they say about it and then to be able to see it for yourself are two different things.”

Baker said he was most interested in meeting the individual service members to thank them for their service.

“Everybody has been just fantastic with us,” said Baker. “We have a chance to look beyond the ... politics of what is



Chris Coghlan, a left fielder for the Florida Marlins, 2009 National League Rookie of the Year and a Tampa, Fla., native, and John Baker, a catcher for the Florida Marlins and a Walnut Creek, Calif., native, sign autographs for service members Jan. 30 at the United Services Organization building at Contingency Operating Base Basra, Iraq.

going on, look beyond the generalizations, the ideas and just get face to face and meet people. We get told thank you a lot, and we are here to say thank you. I think that it is an interesting dynamic when you have a conversation, because people are grateful that you are there, but we are here because we are grateful for what they do.”

Sgt. Cruz I. Flores, a Defense Operations Center noncommissioned officer with the 601st Movement Control Team out of Santa Fe, N.M., and an Albuquerque, N.M., native, said although his team is the New York Yankees, he has watched Baker play since he was in the minor leagues.

“John Baker, he played for the

Albuquerque Isotopes, so I got to see him when he was in Division III, or Triple-A,” said Flores. “So, I have seen him play in Albuquerque, (I have) seen him in the majors already, and (I have) seen him out here in Iraq.”

Flores said he believes the visit was a morale booster for the troops stationed at COB Basra.

“It is nice to see that people do care about what we are still doing out here,” said Flores. “It gives us stuff to look forward to.”

Chris Coghlan, a left fielder for the Florida Marlins and 2009 National League Rookie of the Year, said it was important to him to visit Iraq because his brother spent two tours here with the Marines.

“(The decision) was easy,” said Coghlan, a Tampa, Fla., native. “My brother was in the Marines for four years and he served two terms over here, and he is the most important person in my life. Listening to his stories and things that he went through and what he did means a lot to me.”

He said it meant a lot to him to go on this trip and be able to support the troops through the USO.

Coghlan said, “On the Florida Marlins’ behalf, our organization, and everybody back home in America ... we support and love and appreciate what you guys do for our country.”

Sudoku

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

Level: Hard

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

Last week's answers

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

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What Georgia rockers resurrected Dan Rather's mysterious 1986 mugging in their 1994 track, "What's the Frequency, Kenneth?"
2. What's the only group to claim two of the top 10 best-selling singles of the 1970s?
3. How many former Beatles had chart-topping singles from 1973 to 1974?
4. What rock star did Lou Diamond Phillips' wife leave him for?
5. What veteran British rock star explained: "I smash guitars because I like them?"

1. R.E.M. 2. The Bee Gees 3. Four 4. Melissa Etheridge 5. Pete Townshend

JB BALAD WORSHIP SERVICES

TRADITIONAL - Sunday

0200 Air Force Hospital Chapel 0930 Provider Chapel
 1030 Freedom Chapel (West side) 1100 Castle Heights (Bldg. 7562)
 1400 Air Force Hospital Chapel 1730 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)
 2000 Air Force Hospital Chapel

GOSPEL - Sunday

1100 MWR East Building 1200 Freedom Chapel (West Side)
 1230 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

CONTEMPORARY - Sunday

0900 Chapel- Next Iraq/MWR East
 1030 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)
 1400 Castle Heights (Bldg. 7562) 1900 Freedom Chapel (West Side)

Wednesday

2000 Gilbert Memorial Chapel

LITURGICAL (Episcopal, Anglican, Presbyterian) - Sunday

1700 Provider Chapel

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST - Saturday

1000 Provider Chapel

CHURCH OF CHRIST - Sunday

1530 Castle Heights (Bldg. 7562)

LATTER DAY SAINTS (MORMON)- Sunday

1300 Provider Chapel 1530 Freedom Chapel (West side)
 1900 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

MASS - Saturday

1700 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)
 2000 Freedom Chapel (West Side)
Sunday 0830 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

Thursday

1100 Air Force Hospital

Mon., Wed., Fri.

1700 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

Monday-Friday

1130 555th Engineer Bde. (Bldg. 7200)

JEWISH SHABBAT SERVICES- Friday

1700 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

Saturday

0930 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

ISLAMIC PRAYER - Friday

1230 Provider Chapel

PAGAN/WICCAN FELLOWSHIP - Thursday

1900 The Shack

Saturday

1900 The Shack

GREEK ORTHODOX - Sunday

0900 Provider Annex

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CALL:

Gilbert Chapel: 443-7703

Provider Chapel: 433-2430

Freedom Chapel: 443-6303

JB BALAD ACTIVITIES

INDOOR POOL Swim Lessons: Mon., Wed., - 6 p.m. Tue., Thu., Sat., - 6:30 p.m. Aqua Training: Tue., Thu., - 7:30 p.m., 8:30 p.m.	a.m., 5-6 p.m. Edge Weapons & Stick Fighting Training: Tue., Thur., Sat., - 8-10 p.m.	p.m. Caribbean Night: Friday- 8 p.m. Chess & Dominoes Tourney: Friday- 8 p.m. Salsa Class: Saturday- 8:30 p.m. Poker: Saturday- 7:30 p.m.	CC Cross Fit: Monday- Saturday- 10:30 p.m. Cross Fit: Mon., Wed., Fri., - 5:45 a.m., 7 a.m., 3 p.m., 6 p.m. Tue., Thu., - 7 a.m., 3 p.m.	Hold'em: Mon., Fri., - 2 p.m., 8:30 p.m. 8-ball tourney: Tuesday- 2 a.m., 8:30 p.m. Ping-pong tourney: Tuesday- 8:30 p.m. Spades: Wednesday- 2 a.m., 8:30 p.m. Salsa: Wednesday- 8:30 p.m. 9-ball: Thursday- 2 a.m., 12 a.m., 8:30 p.m. Karaoke: Thursday- 8:30 p.m. Yoga: Wednesday- 8 p.m. MACP Level 1: Friday- 8 p.m. 5 on 5 Basketball: Saturday- 8 p.m.	Ping-pong tourney: Tuesday- 8 p.m. Foosball tourney: Tuesday- 8 p.m. Jam Session: Tuesday- 7:30 p.m. 8-ball tourney: Wednesday- 8 p.m. Guitar Lessons: Thursday- 7:30 p.m. Game tourney: Thursday- 1 p.m., 8 p.m. Enlisted Poker: Friday- 1 p.m., 8 p.m. Officer Poker: Saturday- 1 p.m., 8 p.m. Squat Competition: Saturday- 8 p.m.	Friday- 7 p.m. Aerobics: Monday, Wednesday, Friday- 7 p.m. Body by Midget Toning Class: Tue., Thu., - 7 p.m. Dodge ball Game: Tuesday- 7:30 p.m. Furman's Martial Arts: Mon., Wed., Sun., - 1 p.m. Gaston's Self-Defense Class: Fri., Sat., - 7 p.m. Open court basketball: Thursday- 7 p.m. Open court soccer: Mon., Wed., - 7 p.m. Zingano Brazilian Jui Jitsu: Tue., Thu., - 8:30 p.m.
EAST FIT-NESS CENTER Open Court Volleyball: Sunday- 6 p.m. Aerobics: Mon., Wed., Fri., - 5:30-6:30 a.m. Yoga Class: Mon., Fri., - 6-7 a.m. Step Aerobics: Mon., Wed., Fri., - 5:30 p.m. Conditioning Training Class: Mon., Wed., Fri., - 7:15-8 p.m. Brazilian Jui-Jitsu: Mon., Wed., Fri., - 8-9 p.m. Abs-Aerobics: Tue., Thu., 6-7	EAST RECREATION CENTER 4-ball tourney: Sunday- 8 p.m. Karaoke: Monday- 8 p.m. 8-ball tourney: Monday- 8 p.m. Spin: Sunday- 9 a.m. Mon., Wed., Fri., - 2 a.m., 8 a.m. 2 p.m., 7 p.m., 9 p.m. Tue., Thu., - 5:45 a.m., 9 a.m., 8:30 p.m. Soccer: Tue., Thu., - 8 p.m. Yoga: Saturday- 9 a.m., 7 p.m. Boxing: Sunday- 4 p.m. Tue., Thu., - 2 p.m. Boot Camp: Sunday- 8:45 a.m. Tue., Thu., - 7 p.m. Power Abs: Mon., Tue., Thu., - 8 p.m. Friday- 9 p.m.	H6 FITNESS CENTER Spin: Sunday- 9 a.m. Monday- Saturday- 4:30 a.m., 4 p.m., 10 p.m. 12 a.m. Soccer: Tue., Thu., - 8 p.m. Wednesday- 8 p.m. MACP Level 1: Friday- 8 p.m. 5 on 5 Basketball: Saturday- 8 p.m.	H6 RECREATION CENTER Bingo: Sunday- 8 p.m. Texas	WEST RECREATION CENTER Green Bean Karaoke: Sun., Wed., 7:30pm 9-ball tourney: Monday- 8 p.m.	WEST FIT-NESS CENTER 3 on 3 basketball tourney: Saturday- 7:30 p.m. 6 on 6 volleyball tourney: Friday, - 8-10 p.m.	CIRCUIT GYM Floor hockey: Mon., Wed., Fri., - 8-10 p.m.

UPCOMING SPORTS ON AFN



Thursday 02/11/10

Nashville Predators @ New York Rangers, Tape Delayed 12 a.m. AFN/sports
 Boston Celtics @ New Orleans Hornets, Tape Delayed 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 Los Angeles Lakers @ Utah Jazz, Tape Delayed 7:30 a.m. AFN/sports
 NBA on TNT: Orlando Magic @ Cleveland Cavaliers, Live 5 p.m. AFN/ sports

Friday 02/12/10

Thursday Night Showcase: Michigan @ Minnesota, Tape Delayed 12 a.m. AFN/sports
 Thursday Night Showcase: St. Mary's @ Gonzaga, Tape Delayed 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 San Jose Sharks @ Detroit Redwings, Tape Delayed 7 a.m. AFN/sports
 NBA All-Star Weekend: All-Star Celebrity Game (Cowboys Stadium, Dallas, TX), Live 4 p.m. AFN/ sports

Saturday 02/13/10

West Virginia @ Pittsburgh, Tape Delayed 12 a.m. AFN/sports
 NBA All-Star Weekend: Rookie Challenge and Youth Jam, Tape Delayed 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 Michigan State @ Penn State, Live 9 a.m. AFN/sports
 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, Live 11 a.m. AFN/ prime atlantic

Sunday 02/14/10

NASCAR Nationwide Series (Daytona International Speedway, Daytona, FL), Tape Delayed 2 a.m. AFN/xtra
 NBA All-Star Saturday Night: Shooting Stars, Skills Challenge, Three-Point Shootout, Slam Dunk Contest, Tape Delayed 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 North Carolina State @ North Carolina, Tape Delayed 6 a.m. AFN/xtra
 Louisville @ Syracuse, Live 10 a.m. AFN/xtra

Monday 02/15/10

NASCAR Sprint Cup Series: Daytona 500 (Daytona International Speedway, Daytona, FL), Tape Delayed 1 a.m. AFN/sports
 Boston College @ Florida State, Tape Delayed 6:30 a.m. AFN/sports
 59th NBA All-Star Game: East All-Stars vs West All-Stars (Cowboys Stadium, Dallas, TX), Tape Delayed 7 a.m. AFN/xtra

Tuesday 02/16/10

South Carolina State @ Morgan, Tape Delayed 12 a.m. AFN/sports
 Hawaii @ New Mexico, Tape Delayed 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games: Men's Curling-USA vs. Germany, Live 9 a.m. AFN/sports

Wednesday 02/17/10

New York Knicks @ Chicago Bulls, Tape Delayed 6:30 a.m. AFN/sports
 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games: Women's Curling-USA vs. Germany, Live 9 a.m. AFN/sports
 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games: Men's Ice Hockey-Finland vs. Belarus, Live 12 p.m. AFN/xtra
 Phoenix Suns @ Dallas Mavericks, Live 6 p.m. AFN/ xtra

Arts & Entertainment

'Legion' was a bad movie

BY STAFF SGT. JOEL F. GIBSON
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF



"Legion" was as bad a movie as I've ever seen. I'll qualify that by saying it was terrible for a theatrical feature film.

I don't like giving away plot specifics, even for bad movies, because I believe it may ruin the movie for someone who wants to go see it anyway. However, I have to use the plot to explain how terrible "Legion" truly is.

Spoiler alert: If you have any inclination to go see this colossal waste of time and money, stop reading this review right now.

The film is incongruity come to life. Pieces of the plot exist for no reason other than to justify ridiculous aspects of the movie.

The setting makes less sense than the plot. The writers tried to fool the viewers into believing the best place to set an apocalyptic movie is a gas station in the middle

of nowhere. The gas station was clearly a budget cut, not a brilliant approach to apocalyptic setting.

Character development was an accident created by the talent of the actors. Most of the characters in the movie are two dimensional. The main characters run the gambit of ludicrousness, from the yuppy couple with a troubled teenage daughter, to a wounded veteran fry cook – complete with hook hand and tacky dog tags, to a troubled redneck pregnant with the only baby that could stave off the apocalypse.

Unfortunately, they never clarified why that baby was special – whether it was the second coming of Jesus or just the baby that, according to prophecy, could not be born.

The main story arc involves God becoming tired of and disenchanted with humanity. He decides to eradicate the human race by possessing weak-willed people with angels, thus turning them into killer zombies with super powers, some of whom can communicate with their intended victims.

Following so far? Yeah, me neither.

In case the super freak zombies fail to kill the savior-baby momma, God sends his archangels, including Michael and Gabriel, to make sure the job is done correctly.

Apparently, the zombies couldn't go near the savior baby after it is born, so the angels must kill it themselves

Michael, who has not lost faith in humanity, cuts off his wings to free himself from his God collar and steals a bunch of guns to help the humans ... because archangels apparently need guns.

However, only some archangels need guns, because Gabriel shows up with a crazy mechanical mace with a hydraulic handle spike and kills a bunch of people and Michael, as the primary humans escape out the back door of the gas station they've been fighting from.

The main character, a goofy guy named Jeep, the mother of the savior baby, the savior baby, and the now orphaned troubled teenage daughter escape down the road in front of the gas station.

Gabriel catches the car, and they all

crash at a speed close to 100 miles per hour. Only the teenage girl dies. Apparently, 20-minute-old babies, born one month prematurely, are perfectly built for surviving 100 mph car crashes with no restraining devices.

At this point, I was just as desperate for the movie to end as you are for this review to end.

The car wreck survivors climb a cliff, as directed by Michael before he died. Then Gabriel attacks. Jeep tackles him and they both fall over the cliff, but Jeep doesn't die. As he is about to be killed, by the super mace, reincarnated Michael shows up and saves the humans with his angel sword, but doesn't kill Gabriel.

One cheesy line later, I escaped the theater with most of my remaining sanity intact.

On a scale of one to 10, I give "Legion" a one; only because that is the bottom number on the arbitrary rating system I've developed for myself. The film had no redeeming qualities. I am dumber for having seen it.

'Whip It' whipped it good

BY SGT. JAYSON A. HOFFMAN
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF



"Whip It" is a fun, oddball, rock 'n' roll comedy, with a solid mixture of teen angst and drama.

This movie is definitely worth its \$19.95 price tag.

Ellen Page ("Juno") plays Bliss Caven-der, a.k.a. Babe Ruthless, a lost indie-nerd trying to find herself in small-town Texas. Bliss sneaks off to Austin to watch a women's roller derby match and instantly falls in love with the sport. She tries out for the

team, makes it, and becomes the surprise star of the league. Through the league, she discovers unrequited teenage love, heart-break and the strength to become a strong, independent woman.

The film has a great cast. Drew Barrymore ("The Wedding Singer"), a.k.a. Smashley Simpson, plays a great hard-edged, air head. Jimmy Fallon ("Almost Famous") is funny, something he manages to do from time to time, as Johnny "Hot Tub" Rocket, the pathetically funny derby announcer. Kristen Wiig ("Extract") plays the big sister role of Maggie Mayhem. Andrew Wilson ("The Big Bounce"), the not-so-famous older brother of Owen

and Luke Wilson, is great as the coach of the Hurl Scouts

Page shows she has depth and doesn't need annoying Diablo Cody, the writer of "Juno," to show she can play a tough, witty girl.

Now that I've described half of the cast, I have to give kudos to Marcia Gay Harden ("The Mist") and Daniel Stern ("Home Alone") as Bliss' flawed, but caring, parents. Stern plays a father who wished his daughter was a boy, but supports her no matter what. In the end, he stands up for her new-found happiness in roller derby. Harden plays a realistically overbearing mother, who is sweet, but wants her

daughter to be a beauty queen. In the end, the parents realize that the happiness of their daughter is more important than her social image. I really liked this pair.

The story telling was great. It was a coming-of-age story with a rock 'n' roll twist. The derby girls were very punk in their lack of cares and hard hits. Bliss found a unique subculture where she was not only welcomed, but adored by many fans.

"Whip It" is quirky and fun, and I suggest this movie to everyone. Not many movies pull off social commentary on women's independence that can be liked by all ages and genders, but this one does.

PVT MURPHY



Sustainer Reel Time Theater

Wednesday, Feb. 10

5 p.m. Edge of Darkness
8 p.m. Ninja Assassin

Sunday, Feb. 14

2 p.m. Dear John
5 p.m. Did You Hear About The Morgans
8 p.m. Sherlock Holmes

Thursday, Feb. 11

5 p.m. Invictus
8 p.m. Edge of Darkness

Monday, Feb. 15

5 p.m. Sherlock Holmes
8 p.m. Precious

Friday, Feb. 12

2 p.m. Precious
5 p.m. Sherlock Holmes
8:30 p.m. Dear John

Tuesday, Feb. 16

5 p.m. Dear John
8 p.m. Sherlock Holmes

Saturday, Feb. 13

2 p.m. Sherlock Holmes
5 p.m. Dear John
8 p.m. Precious

Wednesday, Feb. 17

5 p.m. Precious
8 p.m. Dear John



PHOTOS AROUND IRAQ



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Anderson Savoy



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Gavriel Bar-Tzur

Iraqi Army Soldiers form human pyramids to demonstrate their strength during a parade honoring the Iraqi Army Jan. 5 near Joint Security Station Sparrowhawk, Iraq.

(Above) An Iraqi Soldier disassembles a rifle as they attend an armor class given by Soldiers with the 2nd Infantry Division Jan. 18 at Contingency Operating Site Warhorse, Iraq.

U.S. Army photo by Spc. Canean Radcliffe



(Right) Soldiers with the 545th Military Police Company, out of Fort Richardson, Alaska, enter the Sulayman Bak Iraqi police station while an Iraqi policeman posts guard outside of the building Jan. 20 in Sulayman Bak, Iraq.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ernest E. Siva III



(Above) Staff Sgt. Richard Thompson, with the 393rd Tactical Psychological Operations Company, 16th Psychological Operations Battalion and a Waterford, Wis., native, plays soccer with local children Jan. 18 in Al Batha, Dhi Qar, Iraq.

Children stand, near Saff Al Tuff primary school during its reopening ceremony Jan. 23 near Ash Shura, Iraq.

U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Ali Hargis

NEWS AROUND IRAQ

Iraqi Security Forces pursue Mosul extortion network, arrest 2 suspects

★ BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces arrested two suspected terrorists Jan. 26 during a joint security operation in western Mosul, Iraq, targeting a suspected al-Qaeda in Iraq extortion-cell leader.

Acting on a warrant issued by an Iraqi court, ISF and U.S. advisers searched a residential building for the suspected AQI extortion-cell leader wanted for targeting private citizens as well as oil companies within the area for extortion.

Based on preliminary questioning and evidence collected at the scene, ISF arrested two suspected criminal associates of the warranted individual.

Iraqi Special Operations Forces arrest four suspected terrorists in central Baghdad

★ BAGHDAD – Iraqi Special Operations Forces, with U.S. forces advisers, arrested four suspected terrorists Jan. 25 in Salman Pak East, Iraq.

The Soldiers operated under the authority of a warrant issued by the Central Investigative Court of Karkh.

The detained individuals are allegedly affiliated with an Al-Qaeda terrorist cell operation in central Iraq. They are wanted for conducting attacks against the people of Iraq and U.S. forces, as well as training suicide bombers.

Two of the suspects were women believed to be training to conduct suicide missions using vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices.

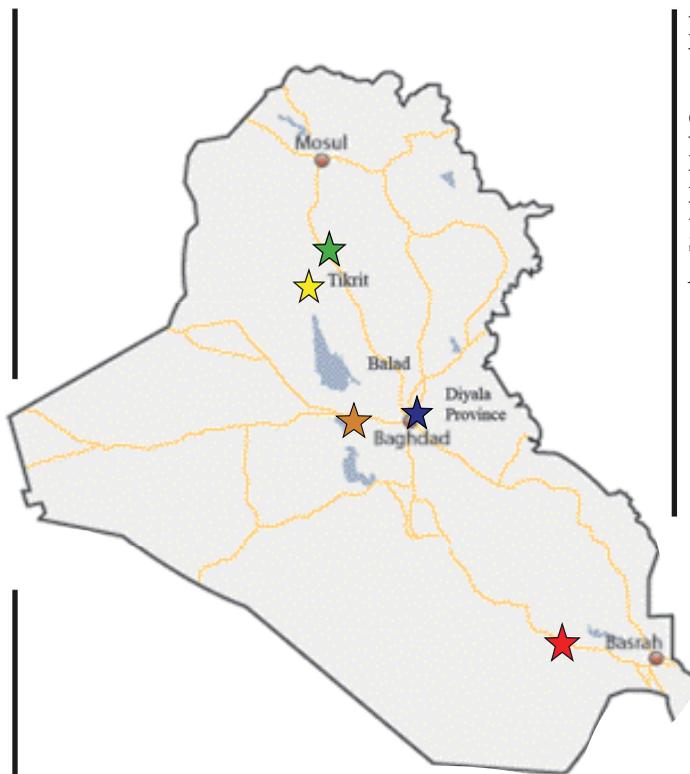
All of the suspects were transferred to a counter-terrorism command detention facility for processing under Iraqi law.

“The Iraqi Special Operations Forces’ dedication to delivering a sense of safety and security to the country was evident in this operation,” said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Daniel Bernardi, a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – Arabian Peninsula spokesman. “It highlights their commitment to ensure every terrorist is held responsible for their actions.”

Iraqi Joint Staff College graduates earn red stripe

★ BAGHDAD, Ar-Rustamiyah – Ninety-six Iraqi officers graduated from a year-long course at the Joint Staff Command College Jan. 25 in Baghdad.

The graduates, from the Iraqi armed



forces and the Ministry of Interior, are now qualified as staff officers, which is distinguished on their uniforms by a red stripe on the shoulder epaulettes. Graduation from the course is a part of progression into the senior ranks for these Iraqi officers, who can now put the title of staff before their rank. Distinguished guests attending the event included Gen. Babakir Zebari, chief of staff of the Iraqi Army, Staff Lt. Gen. Jasim Salem Hussein, deputy chief of staff for training, Staff Brig. Gen. Mohammed Jawhar, commander of the Joint Staff Command College and other senior Iraqi officers. NATO was represented by U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Michael Barbero, NATO Training Mission – Iraq commanding general, and Italian Maj. Gen. Giuseppe Spinelli, deputy commander of NTM-I. Jawhar opened the ceremony by congratulating the graduates, stressing the complexity of the course, which covered theoretical and practical subjects. He also thanked NTM-I for its partnership and support to the JSCC.

Barbero, in his remarks, praised the class and the leadership of Zebari as well as the JSCC staff for their efforts in providing this crucial training.

Barbero said the course and the armed forces will continue to improve in the future.

“The NATO mission has watched the steady evolution and development of the Joint Staff Course,” said Barbero.

“Change takes time, but change is essential to the rebuilding of Iraqi armed forces. The challenge posed by the task of rebuilding should not be underestimated, but I am confident that the Joint Staff Course has well prepared today’s graduates for the vital role that they must play in this rebuilding process.

In his speech, Zebari said the Iraqi Army is an important tool to uphold the constitutional protection against dictatorship. He told the graduates to follow the path of obedience and loyalty, stressing the need for neutrality toward all entities in the country, in view of the upcoming elections. He also thanked NTM-I for its support and assistance in training the Iraqi Security Forces.

Spinelli expressed his personal satisfaction for this achievement, highlighting the strong relationship between NTM-I and its Iraqi partners. He

praised the graduates as well as the NATO staff for their success in developing the JSCC.

Ar Rustamiyah hosts the Iraqi Military Academy along with the Joint Staff Command College. These institutions are included in the Iraqi National Defence University as well as the Iraqi National Defence College, the Defence Strategic Studies Institute and Defence Language Institute. All are supported by NTM-I.

US forces convoy assists Iraqi Police at scene of accident

★ CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE ADDER, Iraq – Oregon National Guard Soldiers with C Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) provided support to Iraqi Police at the scene of a vehicle accident that killed two Iraqis Feb. 3.

The Soldiers, whose convoy was passing through the area, spotted the aftermath of a head-on collision between a motorcycle and a car, and halted their movement to assist the Iraqi Police.

“The Iraqi Police were already on scene, and I would have been content to let them handle it until I saw a pedestrian getting nearly run over by another car,” said Staff Sgt. Taylor Letsis, the convoy commander. “I did not want there to be any more casualties.”

Letsis said he used his skills as a police officer to gain control of the situation.

He dispersed his vehicles to provide security and traffic control because there were more than 50 Iraqis at the scene of the accident, he said.

Soldiers were also dismounted to provide security on the ground and help with crowd control, said Letsis.

The Soldiers also helped with the recovery of the bodies at the request of the local police and provided them with medical supplies, Letsis said.

Iraqi Security Forces pursue Promised Day Brigade network, arrest 2 suspects

★ BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces arrested two suspected terrorists Jan. 25 during a joint security operation in southeast Baghdad to arrest a suspected Promised Day Brigade leader.

ISF and U.S. advisers searched two residential buildings for a suspected PDB leader believed to be responsible for kidnappings and assassinations targeting security forces in Iraq and Iraqi government officials.

Preliminary questioning and evidence collected at the scene led ISF to arrest two suspected criminal associates of the targeted individual.

Iraqi Security Forces pursue northern Iraq al-Qaeda network, arrest 1

 BAGHDAD – The 3rd Emergency Response Unit arrested a suspected terrorist Jan. 27 during a joint security operation in Ad Duluiyah, roughly 75 km north of Baghdad.

Acting on a warrant issued by an Iraqi court, Iraqi Police and U.S. advisers searched a residential building for a suspected al-Qaeda in Iraq member who is in direct association with AQI leadership.

The security team discovered possible improvised explosive device-related material, including large batteries and a passive infrared sensor, as well as a note hidden in a piece of clothing that specifically mentioned AQI, the Islamic State of Iraq and some of the terrorist groups' activities.

Based on preliminary questioning and evidence collected at the scene, Iraqi Police arrested a suspected terrorist.

Iraqi Police arrest 4 in operation targeting al-Qaeda explosives cell

 BAGHDAD – The 3rd Emergency Response Unit arrested four individuals Jan. 25 during a joint security operation in Bayji, roughly 99 km southwest of Kirkuk, Iraq, to arrest a suspected member of an al-Qaeda in Iraq explosives cell.

Based on a warrant issued by an Iraqi court, Iraqi Police and U.S. advisers searched two residential buildings for a suspected AQI member believed to have been involved in planning vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks in the region.

An individual who attempted to flee the scene on foot into another building was later caught by the security team.

Evidence collected at the scene and preliminary questioning led Iraqi Police to arrest four suspected criminal associates of the warranted individual.

Last Marine operational command departs Iraq

 CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE RAMADI, Iraq – In the past six years, thousands of Marines deployed to Al Anbar province, Iraq, the largest and once most volatile province in the country.

On Jan. 23, Maj. Gen. R.T. Tryon, the commanding general of II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), transferred authority of Al Anbar from United States Force – West to United States Division – Center, filled by the Army's 1st Armored Division. In a milestone in the responsible drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq, one of the four division-level units is departing without replacement and Marine Corps

deployments to Iraq are coming to an end. U.S. military responsibility for Al Anbar passed to Baghdad-based USD-C, commanded by Army Maj. Gen. Terry A. Wolff.

A gathering of Iraqi Soldiers, police, shaykhs and government officials joined U.S. service members for the transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Ramadi.

"It is an understatement to say that we have witnessed historic events this year in Iraq, and today's ceremony is certainly an example of continued positive change as we transition and consolidate U.S. forces under the flag of United States Division - Center," said Tryon. "There have been many significant security gains in Anbar over the last couple of years, and many of the people responsible for these gains are here in the audience today ... we praise you for your courage and determination."

Though the ceremony focused on the fruitfulness of the Marines' mission in Iraq, Tryon stressed that their success would not have been possible without the efforts of the Iraqi people.

"These gains have not been accomplished over the course of the last several years because of what U.S. forces have done alone, nor have they been accomplished because of what the security forces from Iraq have done; rather, these achievements are a result of what we have done together, in partnership with one another and with the leadership of the Iraqi civil sector," Tryon said. "Much has been done to advance the goals of stability and prosperity, yet there is still much to do.

There continues to be a lingering element bent on creating havoc and preventing the good people of Anbar from enjoying the fruits of a normal, peaceful life."

Wolff and his Soldiers from the 1st Armored Division will continue to partner with Iraqis and work to ensure the progress Marines have made in the last several years in Anbar is steadily built upon.

"Today marks the final chapter of the (Marine Expeditionary Force's) participation in Iraq and Al Anbar," said Wolff. "For many of us who have served with you on multiple tours across Iraq, we will never forget your sacrifices and all that you have given on our behalf. We look forward to partnering with (the Iraqis), and we thank you for all you have done to make us feel welcome. As we move forward, we understand the importance of this year in Iraq and the USD-C team is dedicated to that mission and the tasks ahead."

Tryon said, "As the Marines complete their mission in Anbar, we are grateful for the new beginning in an ancient land and for the many strong friendships we have forged. From all the Marines who have served in this historic effort, we wish the people of Anbar and Iraq peace and prosperity."

US Military Police teach Iraqis to properly handle evidence

 AL SINIYAH AIR BASE, Iraq – Iraqi Soldiers trained at Al Siniyah Air Base, Iraq Jan. 17 through Jan. 19 to collect evidence in a course organized by D Company, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and taught by Soldiers of 1st Platoon, 363rd Military Police Company, an Army Reserve unit out of Jane Lew, W. Va.

"What's the most important thing to remember when collecting evidence?" said Staff Sgt. James Upton, a squad leader in 1st Platoon, 363rd Military Police Company.

"Wear gloves," said the Iraqi Army Soldiers in unison.

Twelve Soldiers with the 14th Iraqi Army Brigade attended the training and learned basic forensics skills. The training was for Iraqi intelligence or reconnaissance Sol-

diers who respond to attacks or crimes and must properly handle the evidence. The training was aimed to make the Iraqi Soldiers more thorough and efficient at collecting and handling evidence.

"The better they learn these skills, the easier it will be to prosecute suspected criminals or insurgents," said Upton, the primary instructor and a Hurricane, W. Va., native.

The purpose of the class was to make the proper custodial transfer of evidence from the scene of the incident to the courtroom as smooth as possible.

Through a combination of presentations in a classroom and practical exercises in multi-room buildings, students learned subjects ranging from handling, storing and labelling evidence to identifying key indicators of improvised explosive devices.

"The most important thing I learned was to wear gloves because you don't want to leave your fingerprints on evidence," said 1st Lt. Mohammed, an intelligence officer with the 14th Iraqi Army Brigade.

The Iraqi Soldiers learned that labs can lift evidence off of the most obscure or simple objects. Therefore, it is important to recognize the evidence and know how to treat it.

Much of the training focused on how to collect evidence at checkpoints. The 14th IA Bde. is responsible for more than a dozen checkpoints in the northern Salah ad-Din province, said Upton as he taught IA Soldiers how to search a vehicle and pointed out places to hide suspicious or illegal items.

Capt. Fowzi, the intelligence officer with 2nd Battalion, 14th IA Bde, said this portion of the course was especially valuable because "we can go back and teach our IA Soldiers how to search cars at their checkpoints."

Jundi Zuhayr, an IA Soldier and student in the class agreed.

"This is my job," he said. "Before I didn't know how to search a vehicle but now I know."

On the final day of the course, the Soldiers competed to determine which team could best search a building using proper techniques taught from the class. Each team navigated the rooms, systematically examining every corner and piece of furniture.

"The contest was good because we could see how much we learned during the course," said Sgt. Mazin, an intelligence Soldier with 1st Battalion, 14th IA Bde.

The Iraqi Soldiers were graded on their teamwork, overall organization, how well they collected the evidence, their handling of evidence, and finally, how they packaged the evidence.

"They learned very quickly and used knowledge from the previous days in the final practical exercise," said Upton. "They were one of the best groups I've ever taught."

Iraqi Police shoot potential bomber

 CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – A suicide bomber disguised as a policeman was killed while attempting to enter a Zamar IP compound in Ninevah province in late January.

Iraqi Policemen at the compound's gate noticed the bomber and shot him as he attempted to attack the compound.

The attacker's explosives-packed vest detonated and injured three IPs and a U.S. Soldier from Task Force Marne, United States Division – North.

Immediate medical attention was administered to the injured. They were all evacuated to nearby medical facilities.

The U.S. Soldier is listed in stable condition by doctors at a military base in Mosul.

The name of the U.S. Soldier is being withheld pending notification of kin.

Phantom Support



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Anita VanderMolen

Cpl. David McGuffy of Monmouth, Ore., and truck commander with B Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, prepares to leave on an early morning convoy Jan. 7 from Al Asad, Iraq.

U.S. Army photo by Capt. Scott Peterson



A Soldier with the 1218th Transportation Company fires his Pistol during the unit's recent qualification range Jan. 26 at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq Small Arms Range 2.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Anita VanderMolen

Soldiers with B Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team prepare for a convoy Jan. 5 at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq. The brigade's mission includes convoy security, force protection and civilian and military operations.

Members of the Iraqi Army Special Forces and A Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team prepare to bring school supplies to children outside Contingency Operating Location Scania, Iraq.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Cory Grogan



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Cory Grogan

(Above) A bombed out hole on Sadaam Husseins Al Faw Palace, formerly known as the Victory Over America Palace on Victory Base Complex in Baghdad. Members of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team toured the palace during a day off at Victory Base Complex.