



The Expeditionary Times

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Strategy



Unit creates new drawdown plan

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Soldiers maintain vehicle readiness

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System advances logistical ops

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Courtesy photo

A Bravo Troop, 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), convoy of MRAPs makes its way across the Iraqi countryside to support the reduction of U.S. Troops and equipment in Iraq. The 2-108th is currently deployed with the 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team to provide convoy escort teams.

Logistical operation to break records

STORY AND BY
CAPT. STANLEY WESTMORELAND
256TH INFANTRY BRIGADE

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE ADDER, Iraq— Somewhere on one of Iraq's main highways, a 3-mile-long convoy of fuel tankers, flatbeds and box cars is stopped as a civilian truck driver works to change a flat tire. Gunners perched atop their gun trucks scan their sectors and guide civilian traffic safely around the convoy.

There is audible radio traffic, calling out suspicious occurrences moving around the convoy, and all eyes watch the sides of the roads for improvised explosive devices. About half an hour later, the tire is replaced and the convoy begins moving again. If all goes well, they will arrive at their destination in 12 more hours. It is all in a day's

work for these Soldiers.

Soldiers from Bravo Troop, 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), headquartered at Fort Humbug in Shreveport, La., lead the way as millions of pieces of equipment are moved out of Iraq, bound for Afghanistan or back to the United States.

Cpl. Eddie Kocmich, a gunner with the 108th Cav., and Shreveport, La., native, talked about the conditions on the road. "The road is so hot, that it blows the tires. It feels like a blow dryer in the gunner's hatch."

Spc. Tyler Green, a gunner from B Company, 199th Support Battalion in Alexandria, La., added, referring to the road conditions along the highway, "It's bumpy. It can wear you out."

Lt. Col. William Rachal, the commanding officer of the 108th Cav., explained how his Troopers play their part in the operation: "As part of the responsible drawdown of forces, the United

States has committed to decreasing the number of military personnel in Iraq to 50,000 by September 1, down from 170,000 during the 2007 surge. The unit is responsible for providing security for the hundreds of trucks that carry fuel, food and supplies to the remaining Coalition forces and bring equipment out of southern Iraq every day."

For the Troopers this means a lot of time on the road, up to 16 hours a day, all while dealing with mechanical issues and breakdowns, insurgent attacks, erratic local traffic, language barriers, and oppressive heat. Soldiers are typically away from their base camp three days at a time, living in tents and sleeping on cots as opposed to the more comfortable containerized housing units with mattress beds and internet connections. As the deadline approaches, the Soldiers are on the road nearly every day.

Sgt. 1st Class Roy Nugent, the operations

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Iraqi Kids Day attracts service members and Iraqi children from all backgrounds for a day of fun activities

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Moral compass gives life direction

1ST LT. BRANDT KLAWITTER
14TH TRANSPORTATION BATTALION



When the Army teaches land-naviga- tion, one of the lessons it instills is that a map that isn't properly oriented is useless. In order to get your map oriented you'll need some sort of compass to get you pointed in the right direction. What happens, though, if your compass doesn't point you in the right direction? What happens if your compass points anything other than due north? Obviously, your map won't help you and you won't end up where you need to be. Even more, you'll be lost, delayed, and perhaps even in danger.

The same is true when it comes to morality. Now we're talking about right and wrong. We're talking about the choices that you and I make each and every day, the things we say and the actions we take. Whether we want to admit it or not, all of these things are directed by what one might call a "moral compass." And this moral compass, believe it or not, causes us to make all of our decisions based upon what we think is the best thing to do—even if only for a fleeting moment. After all, I don't know anyone who makes a decision because he wants to get morally lost or because she wants to mess up her life. We make our decisions because we think they are somehow good decisions—as defined by

the moral compasses all of us have adopted. Yes, even deci- sions to use and abuse, to cheat and break promises to loved ones, to hurt someone's reputation, lie or to do violence are all directed by what one person, at least, considers to be the "right thing." Yet, the end result of a messed up moral compass is often a messed up life, broken relationships, or even a crumbling career—sooner or later. In light of this, it's a good thing for all of us to be asking ourselves, "How is my moral compass? Is it leading me in the right direction?"

That brings me to a reminder about your chaplain. Aside from being that person who's "there for you" on your good days and your bad ones, who goes out and visits you just to ask "How are you doing today?" and who serves to help ensure that your First Amendment freedom to practice your faith is both protected and provided for, your chaplain is also there to provide ethical guidance. In other words, to give good advice and counsel—especially in matters of right and wrong. Maybe even in the often unwelcome but much-needed voice of conscience.

In conclusion: an encouraging word, a friendly smile, a listening ear, spiritual support—your chaplain is here for all of these things. Don't forget, though, that your chaplain is a great resource for ethical questions. Yes, since 1775, we've been charting the course and helping to guide moral compasses. Just one more way chaplains serve both God and country. Pro deo et patria!



EXPEDITIONARY TIMES

103rd ESC Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Mark W. Corson

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The Weekly Standard 'Counseling is a responsibility'

MAJ. ERIK VERHOEF
103RD ESC DEPUTY I.G.



Counseling is a basic responsibility of every leader and an important part of taking care of Soldiers. Counseling responsibilities range from holding scheduled, structured counseling sessions to reacting to positive and negative situations as they occur.

Counseling will be conducted within 30 days after the beginning of the rating period, and quarterly for all noncommissioned officers, warrant officers 1 and 2, and 2nd lieutenant through captain. All other ranks should receive an initial counseling and then be counseled on a quarterly basis as needed.

During performance counseling sessions, leaders conduct a review of a subordinate's duty performance over a certain period. Simultaneously, the leader and subordinate jointly establish performance objectives and standards for the next period. Rather than dwelling on the past, they focus on the future, including the subordinate's strengths, areas of improvement, and potential.

Event-oriented counseling involves a specific event or

situation. It may precede events such as appearing before a promotion board or attending training sessions. It can also follow events such as noteworthy duty performance, problems with performance or mission accomplishment, or a personal issue. Examples of event-oriented counseling include:

- Crisis counseling
- Instances of superior or substandard performance
- Promotion counseling
- Reception and integration counseling
- Separation counseling

Counseling is important for the Soldier and leader alike. Counseling provides a path to success or a way forward from a setback. Leaders need to look at counseling as a way to shape their subordinates, not as a way to "check the block." Sometimes Soldiers deserve a poor evaluation or to be chaptered from the Army. In those instances, the leader is making the call that the Army does not condone his/her performance and/or need the Soldier's continued service. The leader cannot justify the poor evaluation or chapter from the Army without the required counseling that should accompany the action.

Be a leader and counsel when needed, good or bad!

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Special Troops Battalions hold transfer-of-authority ceremony



Lt. Col. Joachim Strenk, former garrison commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Carter from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), from Weslaco, Texas, prepare to receive their unit's colors before casing them July 29 at the garrison command transfer-of-authority ceremony with the 224th Special Troops Battalion, 224th Sust. Bde., 103rd ESC, from Long Beach, Calif., at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq.

STORY AND PHOTO BY
1ST LT. NATHAN LAVY
224TH SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE ADDER, Iraq—

Soldiers with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, and the 224th Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), conducted a transfer-of-authority ceremony July 29 at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq.

The ceremony marked the end of a successful four-month-long mission for the company from Waslaco, Texas. The STB from Long Beach, Calif., took on the mission of providing base life support and infrastructure to one of the largest COBs in Iraq during a time of transition.

Lt. Col. Joachim Strenk, the outgoing garrison commander with HHC, 3rd Bn., 141st Inf. Regt., and a Cedar Park, Texas,

native, said, "We welcome Lt. Col. Balliet, Command Sgt. Maj. White, and the officers and Soldiers of the 224th STB with great confidence and peace of mind. Having watched you and your team during the longest relief-in-place in the history of Operation Iraqi Freedom, I know that you assembled a team that is up to the task. I know that you will do a great job and that you are ready for the challenges before you."

Guest speaker Col. Lisa Costanza, commander of the 224th Sust. Bde., and a Long Beach, Calif., native, said the outgoing unit has proven that they are incredibly adaptive and flexible; they showed, once again, that National Guard units and Soldiers are and have always been America's minutemen, ready and responsive.

Lt. Col. Nicole Balliet, the incoming garrison commander and an Atascadero, Calif., native, said her unit is ready and cited the hard work and dedication of the HHC.

"Lt. Col. Strenk and Command Sgt. Maj. Carter, you and your Soldiers leave behind the 224th STB with the conviction and will to carry on your noble work, a brilliant legacy that will indeed endure."

Combat Stress: Resources are always available

This column is derived from a July 26 article posted online by Dr. Jeff Cook, psychologist with the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury

With the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, our nation's service members are often repeatedly called to duty in dangerous places and exposure to combat is a common reality. The Department of Defense's scientific understanding of combat stress reactions has advanced rapidly to meet these new demands. These advances have allowed the department to enhance and refine its efforts to minimize the adverse effects of combat exposure and provide cutting-edge assessment and treatment when service members develop reactions.

In an effort to prevent the development of combat stress conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder, select programs are aimed at building resilience to the potentially damaging effects of combat exposure. Examples of DoD resilience efforts include:

- the Marine Corps Combat Operational Stress

Control (COSC) program

- the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program, which is a resilience training program (formerly known as BattleMind)

Additional emphasis has been placed on education and training for the providers who identify and treat combat stress reactions and PTSD. Several DCoE component centers are working directly to address this need.

- The Center for Deployment Psychology provides training to military and government-employed psychological health providers in evidence-based interventions for PTSD.

- The Deployment Health Clinical Center has created a treatment model which enhances the recognition and effective management of PTSD in primary care settings (Respect-mil). Additionally, the DHCC provides an intensive, three-week, evidence-based intervention program for deployment-related stress conditions that includes multidisciplinary evaluation and treatment.

A major barrier to care associated with poor outcomes

in combat stress-related conditions is the reluctance to seek treatment for these problems. DCoE has launched the Real Warriors campaign in an effort to reduce the negative connotations of psychological health evaluation and treatment. If service members get help early, the impact of combat stress on their careers, family and psychological health can be greatly reduced.

In addition to existing DoD programs, the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) will provide state-of-the-art, comprehensive evaluation of service members who have PTSD, a traumatic brain injury, or both. Besides being a center of excellence for holistic evaluation and treatment planning, NICoE will also serve as a focal point for research and will guide the development of new best-practices for military medicine.

The DoD encourages service members and health professionals to participate in such programs. With heightened deployment and combat exposure rates, programs such as these are essential to warrior resilience and readiness.

Unit implements new drawdown strategy



Sgt. Andrew Gardelle, a liaison officer coordinator with the 240th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and a Jacksonville, Fla., native, plans for an upcoming redeployment mission with Soldiers July 25 at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.

STORY AND PHOTO BY
1ST LT. JULIANA REGIS
240T COMBAT SUSTAINMENT SUPPORT BATTALION

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq— Soldiers with the 240th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), implemented a new strategy for withdrawing U.S. forces, July 10 at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.

The 240th CSSB, from Fort Lee, Va., arrived at Al Asad Air Base in April, and quickly discovered that they would be back filling the 1218th Transportation Company's Reception, Staging and Onward movement mission. The 1218th Trans. RSO team was tasked to conduct deployment operations and redeploy thousands of troops.

The 240th CSSB team has since updated its operation process by forming a new liaison officer cell to assist in bringing the total number of U.S. forces in Iraq to 50,000 by Sept. 1.

They also began working with LNO teams from the 224th Sust. Bde., United States Division-North, and United States Division-Central.

The LNO teams were tasked with learning the intra-theater movement process and redeployment process. The training consisted of an area walk-through and rock drill, shadowing mission commanders through the process and making the LNO teams more self-sufficient.

Mission command teams work hand-in-hand with Soldiers who continuously monitor flight databases to receive up-to-date flight information and produce on-the-spot timelines. These Soldiers are responsible for everything from coordinating personnel and baggage transportation, to moving the Soldiers on redeployment day.

This RSO became Deployment/Redeployment Operations (D/ROPS). In support of this new process, the 240th CSSB team has been working to establish new operations at the Joint Air Cargo Operations Terminal.

Under the guidance of 1st Lt. Julianna Regis, operations officer-in-charge with the 240th CSSB, and a Phoenix, Ariz., native, and Sgt. 1st Class Jamil Long, operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge, and a Panama City, Fla., native, the new mission model was established, and the LNO cell now supports the LNO teams.

"So far, the D/ROPS team along with the brigade LNOs, have redeployed more than 4,000 personnel in May and 4,700 personnel in June, totaling more than 9,000 in 2 months," said Sgt. 1st Class Jamil Long, the operations NCOIC with the 240th CSSB, and a Panama City, Fla., native. "These past missions have given D/ROPS and BDE LNO teams the opportunity to execute missions, improve the process and develop battle drills."

Staff Sgt. Brian Lagesse, the operations NCOIC with the 240th CSSB, and a Stockton, Calif., native, said the mission is not a standard mission for a CSSB, but it gave the Soldiers an opportunity to work outside of their military occupational specialty.

Lagesse added, "It is nice to know that we are here in Iraq doing something important: sending Soldiers home to their families."

NCOPD training teaches about roles of NCOs

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SGT GAELLEN LOWERS
3RD SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq— "A plan is not a plan until you give it to a (noncommissioned officer)," said Command Sgt. Maj. Clifton Johnson, command sergeant major of the 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary). "An NCO is the one that will execute the plan that the Army has set in motion."

Johnson, a Lima, Ohio, native, was the keynote speaker at the 3rd Sust. Bde.'s Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development training July 29 at the Sustainer Theater on Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

A brigade-level NCOPD is a meeting held quarterly for the purpose of developing and improving NCOs, Johnson said.

"It's really about making the NCO Corps better," he said. "It doesn't matter what grade the NCO is – sergeant through sergeant major. It brings us up to date with all of the new knowledge and pulls out some of the old. Knowledge is power. That's what an NCOPD is about. It's about empowering NCOs with knowledge."

The day began at the break of dawn with

the brigade's NCOs meeting for a 5K run. Then, after conducting personal hygiene, they all met at Sustainer Theater.

The main theme of this NCOPD, which more than 150 NCOs attended, was team-building and reminding all NCOs that the Army is a team, regardless of what component a Soldier is involved with, Johnson said.

"We all follow the same rules, standards and disciplines," said Command Sgt. Maj. LeRoy Haugland, command sergeant major with the 103rd ESC, the guest speaker for NCOPD, and a Cresco, Iowa, native. "NCOs are the backbone across the Army and they enforce the standard."

Johnson said that an NCO needs to be vigilant at all times and must avoid complacency.

"You cannot take a day off from being a leader," he said. "We will not lose a Soldier due to complacency."

Johnson ended the NCOPD by presenting brigade coins to one Soldier from each company. Each Soldier was selected by his or her first sergeant. Johnson reminded each of them to continue doing the right thing and to maintain his or her leadership.

"Remember that 1.9 percent of Soldiers will always be knuckleheads," Johnson said. "It's lonely at the top. By doing the right thing, you may not always be popular, but you will be respected."



More than 150 Soldiers with the 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), run a 5K as part of the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development training July 29 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

Maintenance Co. fixes disabled vehicles



Spc. Evan Wilson, track vehicle mechanic (top left), a Cedar Rapids, Iowa, native, and Sgt. Charles A. Burton, wheeled vehicle mechanic (bottom right), and a Cincinnati, Ohio, native, both from the 632nd Maintenance Company, 110th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 224th Special Troops Battalion, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), prepare their wrecker July 13 for their upcoming missions throughout United States Division-South at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq.

STORY AND PHOTO BY
2ND LT. DERRICK S. SMITH
632ND MAINTENANCE COMPANY

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE ADDER, Iraq— Soldiers with the 632nd Maintenance Company, 110th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), started convoy recovery missions July 15 to help maintain the 110th CSSB's logistical convoys.

The convoys flow in and out of COB Adder. The 110th CSSB has command and control of transportation, quartermaster, ordnance, and maintenance units and the 632nd MC maintains and recovers any vehicles that break down on the road.

The 632nd MC employs five wrecker teams, each with its own wrecker to maintain and inspect. They are on call 24 hours per day and seven days per week.

The recovery teams travel with the Heavy Equipment Transporters, Light Medium Tactical Vehicles, or other cargo-laden vehicles as well as the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected gun trucks used to secure the convoys. In addition to its 10-ton towing capacity, each wrecker is equipped with an overhead crane capable of lifting 10,000 pounds, and a heavy-duty recovery winch. The wrecker's easy-to-use lift-tow system allows a vehicle to be recovered in less than three minutes, which improves the safety of everyone involved in the convoy by not requiring each vehicle to sit stationary on the road for an extended period of time when one vehicle breaks down.

"Everyone is excited about being able to go out on these missions," said Sgt. Charles Burton, wheeled vehicle mechanic with the 632nd MC, and a Cincinnati, Ohio, native.

When asked about how he feels about the upcoming missions, Spc. Evan G. Wilson, track vehicle mechanic with the 632nd MC, and a Cedar Rapids, Iowa, native, said, "This will be a great experience; I will be able to see different areas in Iraq that I would not be able to see if I was not on the recovery team."

'Cold Steel' mechanics keep unit prepared

STORY AND PHOTO BY
1ST LT. TREY WHITE
256TH INFANTRY BRIGADE

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE ADDER, Iraq—

Recently relocated to Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq, from Convoy Support Center Scania, Iraq, the maintenance section of Charlie Troop, 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), has had a huge impact on the unit's new convoy escort mission.

After an 11-hour ride from Scania to Adder, the maintenance team wasted no time in establishing their new motor pool and preparing many of the unit's mine resistant, ambush protected vehicles to the required standard before the first mission started.

Staff Sgt. David Houston, C Troop motor sergeant and a Shreveport, La., native, is currently on his second tour in Iraq. His many years of experience as a mechanic have allowed Houston to adjust to his role as a supervisor. However, it is not unusual to find him out turning wrenches when the need arises.

Houston runs a tight ship, but he always puts the safety and welfare of his mechanics first. He demonstrates a can-do attitude every day by ensuring that the Cold Steel fleet is properly maintained.

"Staff Sgt. Houston is old and crusty but I wouldn't trade him for anything," laughed Sgt. 1st Class Michael Braswell, C Troop operations noncommissioned officer and a Coushatta, La., native. He gets the job done. Period."

Sgt. Michael Kramer and Sgt. Charles

Olsen, both Bossier City, La., natives, and Sgt. Aaron Hockenberry, a Shreveport, La., native, are the lead mechanics in the shop. Spc. Robert McCall, a Minden, La., native, Spc. Robert Stephens, a New Llano, La., native, and Pfc. Caleb Cloud, a Glenmora, La., native, are mechanics. They form the backbone of the maintenance team.

Kramer can troubleshoot any piece of equipment.

Hockenberry is the resident jokester of the bunch and his witty sayings always put a smile on the faces of those that are around him. Hockenberry's love for the Auburn Tigers is not held against him, even though he is surrounded by diehard LSU Tiger fans.

Olsen is the quiet, lead mechanic who gets the job done quickly. He does not have to be told to do a task. When he hears that something is needed, he makes it happen.

McCall is another of Cold Steel's go-to-guys in the maintenance shop. He has been insight and an aggressive approach to repairing C Troop's vehicles. He is also very skilled at inventorying all classes of parts and he knows where to find them at all times.

Stephens was attached to Cold Steel from another unit but has definitely become an integral part of the team. Last, but certainly not least, is Cloud, fresh out of Advanced Individual Training. Cloud has demonstrated an extremely positive attitude, as well as being able to "learn the ropes" as a new mechanic.

"This group of mechanics is one of the best teams I have been associated with in my 18 years in the military," said Maj. Jeremy Cook, C Troop commander and a Lake Charles, La., native.

The lone female in the group, Spc. Holly Hobson, a Shreveport, La., native, is the Cold Steel Standard Army Maintenance System-Enhanced clerk. Her willingness to learn has brought her a long way since

the beginning of this deployment. She has become extremely effective in ordering parts and dispatching vehicles, ensuring Cold Steel is always 100-percent mission capable.

Hobson keeps the mechanics honest and ensures that all paperwork is completed

correctly. She does not hesitate to send it back until it is correct.

One of her favorite sayings is "I'll take care of it, Sir."

This positive attitude is echoed by all members of the Cold Steel team.



From left to right: Spc. Robert Stephens, Sgt. Aaron Hockenberry, Spc. Holly Hobson, Pfc. Caleb Cloud, Staff Sgt. David Houston, Sgt. Michael Kramer, Spc. Robert McCall. The maintenance section from the Louisiana National Guard's Charlie Troop, 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), stand in front of the unit's primary mode of transportation, the mine resistant, ambush protected vehicle.



Pvt. Benjamin Garcia, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with the 298th Support Maintenance Company, 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and a Woonsocket, R.I., native, works on the wheel bearing of a Humvee during its annual maintenance inspection. The Soldiers of the 298th have capabilities and parts to repair any vehicle their fellow service members use during operations.



Two Soldiers with 298th Support Maintenance Company, 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), work on the front wheel mount of a Humvee during its annual maintenance. The Soldiers in the shop provide service for any wheeled vehicle used during daily convoys.



Spc. Kimberly Becker, a mechanic with the 298th Support Maintenance Company, 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and a Pittsburgh, Penn., native, moves a forklift in place to remove a piece of armor plating from a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle. The mechanics in the shop are prepared to deal with a variety of vehicles and issues, large or small.

Mechanics ensure vehicle readiness

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
PVT. ZACHARY ZUBER
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq— Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles are the workhorse of operations in Iraq. A majority of Soldiers who travel off-base will ride in one, but few know all the steps it takes to replace an engine in one of these trucks.

That is where the Soldiers with the 298th Support Maintenance Company, 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), come in. Each day, these Soldiers are able to perfect their skills on equipment like MRAPs, while keeping the vehicles used in daily missions in top operating condition.

There are Soldiers in the maintenance shop at Joint Base Balad seven days a week to ensure that any problems their comrades encounter can be quickly serviced and repaired. Repairs are not just limited to MRAPs, they also maintain and fix equipment transports and Humvees.

“Anything that rolls out on the road on convoys that needs fixed gets brought in here,” said Spc. Kimberly Becker, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with the 298th SMC, and a Pittsburgh, Penn., native. “All of our brothers and sisters are out driving these trucks, and it helps to know that if we can get the work done right and quickly, they will be safe.”

This isn’t just a place to get new tires or an oil change, as most of the drivers will do that themselves. These mechanics focus on large fixes for the most part, but they are still ready to help with even the smallest problems.

“We have done pretty much anything from engine replacements to cab replacements, because most operators will do the basics like tire changes,” said Becker. “If any operator that comes in needs help figuring out how to do some of the simple fixes, we will show them how so they know in case they were to get stuck somewhere on the road.”

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Starner, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the automotive platoon with the 298th SMC, and a Richland, Mo., native, explained the unit’s operations: “Our shop’s mission here is to perform maintenance on basically anything on post, whether that is through forward support, direct support or organizational maintenance

for units without mechanics. Right now we are doing a lot of MRAP support, and a lot of cab jobs on transports because those trucks are constantly out on the roads getting beat up.”

While his Soldiers enjoy their job because of their impact on fellow service members, Starner said he enjoys seeing a different effect the daily work creates.

“What brings me the most satisfaction is seeing a Soldier who was a little unsure of their skills gain the confidence to say ‘I can fix that,’” said Starner.

The Soldiers are very dedicated to their mission, working in the shop regardless of heat, time of day or injury.

“From 0800-1800 this shop is bloody knuckles, grease flying, changing parts and getting trucks fixed,” said Starner.

That is why the best place for a vehicle with mechanical faults is in the maintenance shop with the 298th SMC Soldiers. They will make sure that any problem is fixed and every vehicle is road-ready.

“All of [the mechanics] have a no-quit attitude; they go until they can’t go anymore or until the job is complete,” said Starner. “There is nothing that these guys can’t do if they have the right tools and right parts.”

Unit maintains safety, keeps supplies rolling

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SGT. KIMBERLY JOHNSON
196TH MPAD

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq— Soldiers with the 512th Quartermaster Company, 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), carry out base security and deliver life support to service members and civilians on Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

The Iraqi Transportation Network trucks that haul commodities over the road reduce the requirement for U.S. forces to be out on the roads. Once they reach the gates of JBB, the 512th Soldiers escort these trucks and ensure their safety as they move throughout the base.

“From the time the trucks come to the (Entry Control Point), we are responsible for them until the time they leave the gate,” said Capt. Alphonso P. Harrell, commander of the 512th and a Philadelphia native. “That entails processing the trucks through the biometric scanner to check for any bombs they might have on the truck.

“Once the trucks are processed through the scanner, Soldiers visually inspect the trucks. All the drivers are escorted from their trucks and physically scanned and background checks are conducted, ensuring we do not allow anyone on the base that could be a possible threat.”

After the drivers and their trucks are finished with the scanning process, the 512th Soldiers escort them to and from the fuel

point or anywhere else they need to go to download their cargo. They are responsible for the supervision of each driver from the time they download their trucks until they deliver them back out of the ECP, Harrell said.

“We have a big mission, as far as keeping the base safe, in addition to making sure fuel and all other goods are properly delivered on base,” Harrell said.

Nowadays, due to the responsible drawdown of forces and equipment in Iraq, there is a great need for more fuel to power the additional transportation assets, moving troops and equipment out of Iraq, said Sgt. Eugene Cepin, a security escort with the 512th, and a Brooklyn, N.Y., native.

In addition to the ITN trucks the 512th Soldiers escort, their Soldiers participate in a new mission, coined as ‘the Jassim push’.

“The Jassim push takes priority over all other fuel,” Cepin said.

The Army is losing money pushing fuel trucks from the north, as opposed to pushing trucks from southern Iraq, up through northern Iraq, according to Harrell. He said the Jassim trucks take precedence, because that fuel is easier to process.

On a day-to-day basis, the escorts try to download 20-30 fuel trucks during their 12-hour shift, Cepin said.

“While we are downloading trucks, we might have another (fuel) convoy come to the yard,” Cepin said. “So in addition to the trucks waiting to download, another convoy might come in. We are going to have to complete the downloading of the initial trucks while trying to add in the additional trucks. It’s just a rotation of trucks every day.”



Staff Sergeant Patrick Bates, a fuel escort shift supervisor with the 512th Quartermaster Company, 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and a Brooklyn, N.Y., native, oversees and directs fuel truck movements on Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

“That’s the most important piece of this mission: keeping the base safe,” Harrell said. “The second important piece is we are getting all the logistics delivered so other people can do their missions. What we do is

one of the most important, thankless jobs. I tell them even though people do not know what you do, I’m sure if they came out and saw what you do, they would be very appreciative.”

Soldiers receive awards for outstanding dedication

STORY AND PHOTO BY
MAJ. PATRICK O. ROBERT
840TH TRANSPORTATION BATTALION

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq— Sgt. 1st Class Robert Hale, acting first sergeant of the headquarters detachment with the 840th Transportation Battalion, 402nd Army Field Support Brigade; Sgt. 1st Class Robert Morel, operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge with the 840th Trans. Bn.; and Capt. Joshua Turner, deployment and distribution support team officer-in-charge, all received the Military Order of St. Christopher award July 27 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

The recipients received the award for their outstanding service and dedication to the transportation branch.

Col. John Sullivan, commander of the 595th Transportation Brigade, presented the awards and stated, “It is my pleasure to be here to recognize this group of transporters. They are a part of the distinguished Army Transportation Corps that also represents core Army values.”

Sullivan told the story of St. Christopher to the audience during the award presentation and explained how the image of St. Christopher was a symbol of strength, loyalty and safety for transporters charged with moving the force.

The 840th Trans. Bn. supports all redeploying units from Iraq with the Transportation Coordinator’s Automated Information for Movement System II, Radio Frequency Identification tag production, Convention for Safe Container inspections, and hazardous material inspections. The battalion supports the responsible drawdown of forces from Iraq with its door-to-door redeployment process of shipping DoD cargo from Forward Operating Bases in Iraq through the ports of Umm Qasr, Iraq, and Aqaba, Jordan, to the continental U.S.

“This mission is successful because of transporters like the ones being recognized today,” Sullivan said.

“I feel pride that I’m being recognized by my profession by receiving this award,” said Turner. “It means a lot to us that such a distinguished transporter like Colonel Sullivan is here to present the awards.”

Hale said being nominated for the award shows the confidence that his leaders have in him.

“It was an honor,” he said.



The recipients of the “Honorable Order of Saint Christopher’s” medallion are: Capt. Joshua Turner, Deployment and Distribution Support Team officer-in-charge with the 840th Transportation Battalion, 402nd Army Field Support Brigade; Sergeant 1st Class Robert Hale, acting first sergeant of the 840th Trans. Bn.; and Sergeant 1st Class Robert Morel, operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge with the 840th Trans. Bn., all received the Military Order of St. Christopher award July 27 at Joint Base Balad in Iraq.

Morel, who has served in the Transportation Corps since 1992, currently on his first deployment to Iraq, said he joined the Army for new challenges. Eighteen years later and he said he is still welcoming new challenges every day.

“I just wanted to be a part of a team, do something new, and challenge myself,” Morel said. “I’ve enjoyed every day and take a great deal of pride at what I accomplish.”

Building connections



ABOVE: An Iraqi boy lines up a shot during a game of pool on Iraqi Kids Day July 31 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Playing pool was just one of the many activities the local children could participate in at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation center in the H-6 housing area.

BELOW: Master Sgt. Kevin Zavala, a chaplain's assistant with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and a Necedah, Wis., native, poses as an Iraqi boy takes a photo of him during Iraqi Kids Day July 31 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Zavala has seven children of his own and wanted to use his experience with children to help out in this event.



STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SPC. ADRIAN MUEHE
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq— Service members assembled on July 31 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, to visit with 102 Iraqi children. The children were greeted with an array of toys, coloring books, snacks and smiles as part of Iraqi Kids Day.

“The most important thing we can do today is to let them know that we are not the enemy,” said Sgt. 1st Class Loretta Battle, the hospital liaison officer with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and an Atlanta, Ga., native, who organized this event.

“We want them to smile. We have them playing with games, Play-Doh, hula-hoops and coloring books. You name it; we have it here for them,” said Battle.

The event is held monthly and on this particular day, 120 troops from different units across JBB volunteered to take part and bond with the Iraqi children and communicate a friendship with American forces.

Throughout the course of the program more than 1,000 children have made the journey to JBB for Iraqi Kids Day, said Battle. This is the last event she will volunteer for as she is slated to redeploy next month and return to her civilian job at a women's shelter.

One of the things that stood out about this particular Iraqi Kids Day was that everyone involved was a volunteer with a desire to brighten the day of children who have lived most, if not all, of their lives in a war zone, constantly exposed to a strong military presence.

“We had 100% volunteers, I cannot explain how awesome that is,” said Battle.

Volunteers came from all units and all branches represented on JBB. The service members showed for a variety of reasons, because they love children or wanted to help out the JBB community. Some wanted to make a difference in the eyes of the local populace.

One particular Soldier, Master Sgt.

Kevin Zavala, a chaplain's assistant with the 103rd ESC, and a Necedah, Wis., native, chose to volunteer his time because he felt he had a lot of experience to offer.

“I have seven children of my own back home, so I definitely know how to interact with them,” said Zavala, who sponsored two Iraqi siblings. “So far today we played some soccer, shot some baskets, did some coloring, and now they seem preoccupied with my camera.”

The children who came to JBB brought with them a variety of backgrounds. Many were orphans as a direct result of the sectarian violence that has plagued their homeland. Some came from richer families, which created a balance between the experiences they could take back to their homes.

“We have high-maintenance kids as well as low-maintenance kids,” said Battle. “Regardless of their background, we want them to have a good time today.”

After the children were finished with their indoor activities, they were fed lunch and then they headed outside to cool off in a large, inflatable pool set up on a basketball court. Children and service members alike stormed the pool as a splash fight ensued, ensuring that no one around was left with a dry spot on their body.

As the children left JBB to return home, they wore smiles that were a reflection of the fun-filled events of the day.

With August holding the Islamic holiday Ramadan, JBB will schedule the next Iraqi Kids Day for September, and while Battle will no longer be around to organize the event, there are others ready to help ensure the initiative continues. Col. Kenneth Jones, the deputy commander of the 103rd ESC, and a Kansas City, Mo., native, who also works for Hallmark, has a plan up his sleeve that will further bridge the gap between two communities separated by thousands of miles.

“I am planning an event in partnership with my employer that will provide an artistic and creative outlet for these children,” said Jones.

“Regardless of their background, we want them to have a good time today.”

-Sgt. 1st Class Loretta Battle

...with fun & games



LEFT: An Iraqi boy makes a splash as service members watch him and other children play in a pool on Iraqi Kids Day July 31 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. With temperatures soaring over 120 degrees Fahrenheit, many hit the pool to cool down.

BOTTOM RIGHT: An Airman covers his face as Iraqi children team up against him during a splash fight on July 31 in a pool set up for Iraqi Kids Day at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. The Airman was one of 120 volunteers that came out to make a difference in the lives of the Iraqi children that came to JBB to partake in the event.

BOTTOM LEFT: Col. Kenneth Jones, the deputy commander of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and a Kansas City, Mo., native, poses for a photo with two Iraqi girls and their sponsors from the U.S. Air Force during Iraqi Kids Day July 31 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

“I have seven children of my own back home, so I definitely know how to interact with (the Iraqi kids).”

-Master Sgt. Kevin Zavala



Historic Virginia 10-miler draws a crowd

STORY AND PHOTO BY
2ND LT. BLAIR MILLER
512TH QUARTERMASTER COMPANY

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE

ADDER, Iraq— Lynchburg's own 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), hosted an Iraq version of the historic Virginia 10 Miler race July 27th.

The race was organized by Soldiers from 1-116th Inf. Reg. and had the full support and encouragement of Lynchburg, Virginia's Riverside Runners. Stateside race director Jeff Fedorko of Lynchburg, Va., worked with dozens of volunteers in the community in just over thirty days to collect all the race supplies, custom t-shirts and prizes.

A total of 359 runners completed the race, which included those who ruck-marched with a pack and weapon, and those who competed as part of company teams. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and civilians all participated in this version of the Hill City classic. The overall men's champion was Pfc. Jarred Hall from Alpha Company 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment. He finished in just over 66 minutes. Sgt. Jannelle Drennon from the 201st Battlefield Surveillance Brigade topped the women's field.

"The race was a great success," said Lt. Col. Scott Smith, battalion commander of the 1-116th Inf. Reg., and a Lynchburg, Va.,

native. "We are so grateful to the community back in Lynchburg who made this event possible. The volunteers from Riverside Runners provided all of the T-shirts, race bib numbers, medals and the same start/finish banner used back home in Lynchburg's race. It was 100% authentic."

Smith was joined at the start by 224th Sust. Bde. commander, Col. Lisa Costanza. Smith and 84 of his Soldiers completed the race.

The battalion's top runners included brothers Spc. Eskinder Zemene and Spc. Solomon Zemene, both with the 1-116th Inf. Reg., and Alexandria, Va., natives. They deployed together and both attend North Virginia Community College.

"It's a great accomplishment for these soldiers and we are very proud of the way they represented Bravo Company and the entire battalion," said Capt. Heath Phillips, B Co. commander, and a Elkton, Va., native.

Bravo Company subsequently won the company team competition and was presented with a ceremonial "battle streamer" by the 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team commander, Col. Jonathan Ball, at an awards ceremony held later.

"An event like this demonstrates the far-reaching impact a community event like the Virginia Ten Miler can have," said race director Jeff Fedorko. "It is our goal to increase troop morale both here and abroad, and highlight the commitment and sacrifice our troops are making."

Emily Foutz, Director of Military Affairs



The gun goes off at the start of the July 25, 2010 Virginia 10 Miler at COB Adder, Iraq hosted by the Soldiers of the 1st battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 224th Sust. Bde., 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), from Lynchburg, VA.

at Liberty University, the institution that helped support the race, described how honored they were to assist the military.

"Liberty University is proud to be a part of this event to show our appreciation to our

dedicated service members," Foutz said. "We are honored to have the opportunity to serve over 15,000 military personnel, veterans and their spouses as they work toward their educational goals."

New motor pool built by teamwork, ingenuity

STORY AND PHOTO BY
CAPT. THOMAS PORTER
108TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE ADDER, Iraq

Soldiers of Alpha Troop, 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), were relatively comfortable. With a command post located in a hard stand building, nice offices and a roomy, fully functional motor pool, there was not anything the Troop needed at Contingency Operating Base Kalsu, Iraq.

The facilities the Soldiers had there were some of the best. They had an ideal set up from which to execute convoy escort missions - something the Dragoon Troopers did with a steely professionalism borne from their experiences in Iraq during their last tour of duty.

Then the order came: "Move Out!" Leaving behind the operational luxury to which they had become accustomed, the Troop prepared to move with not so much as an idea of what might await them.

Upon arriving at their new contingency operating base, the Soldiers faced a hard reality. Their command post facilities would not be ready for another two weeks, and motor pool facilities were nonexistent. There was a plot of ground occupied by another unit and plans to cover it with gravel, but maintenance bays, concrete pads, and wash racks were nowhere to be seen - except as a rough sketch somewhere in an engineering officer's notebook. New missions were looming and a deadline had to be met, so the Soldiers of A Troop did what they always do—they got to work.

Sergeant 1st Class Earl McGee, platoon sergeant of A Troop, and a Pineville, La., native, had been acting as the unit's liaison prior to their move, and had scrounged up an old tent that was scheduled to be demolished. It acted as

the command post until the unit's permanent facilities were complete. The unit's command and control cell was cramped and hot, but functional.

The motor pool was another issue. Without a place to park vehicles or even download equipment, something had to be done. In stepped two battle-hardened veterans, Capt. William Besselman, executive officer, 2/108 Cav., and a River Ridge, La., native, with Sgt. 1st Class Gerry Taylor, motor sergeant, A Troop, 2/108 Cav., and a Florien, La., native. They came bringing years of experienced, know-how into play.

Never has a unit had two individuals better suited for an important task. With Besselman's engineering and logistical experience, and his penchant for acquisition, along with Taylor's bulldog demeanor, things were about to change. Coordination with a local engineer company ensured the ground in the motor pool area was properly graded, prepared and graveled for use by mine resistant, ambush protected vehicles. With the ground prepared and Soldiers still repairing vehicles in the open, the maintenance bays were the next priority.

Over the next few weeks, Besselman and Taylor acquired three maintenance tents, a significant amount of airfield matting and a large quantity of lumber. With these items on hand, Taylor and his mechanics went to work, moving concrete barriers, equipment containers and tents. The motor pool slowly began to take shape.

First, one bay was erected and matting laid, then another, and then another. Despite the hot temperatures and the requirement to ensure that the unit's vehicles remained fully mission-capable, the Dragoon Troopers built a fully functional motor pool, including three covered maintenance bays with flooring, electricity and a vehicle inspection pad. While it may not be as pretty as the one they left behind, the facility is fully functional, safe and Soldier-friendly.

As the Soldiers of A Troop conduct the business of escorting convoys, there is a group of guys whose primary

mission it is to ensure that their trucks can roll; if vehicles ever stop breaking down, they might even pick up a few side jobs doing construction work. There is a motor pool in central Iraq that stands as a testament to Soldiers' can-do attitude and professionalism.



The newly built maintenance facility for the Louisiana National Guard's Alpha Troop, 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), stands at Contingency Operating Base Kalsu, Iraq. A Troop is currently deployed with the 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team to assist in setting the conditions for the responsible drawdown of U.S. forces and equipment in Iraq.

Brigade strengthens relations with younger generation

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SGT. GAELN LOWERS
3RD SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq— Soldiers with the 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), participated in Iraqi Kids Day July 31 at the Air Force Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center here and entertained and fed more than 100 local Iraqi children.



Iraqi Kids Day is a monthly community service event and joint service operation that brings children from local communities and orphanages onto the base for a day of fun, games, gifts and food.

“This is a great event,” said Sgt. 1st Class Loretta Battle, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) liaison for the Air Force Theatre hospital, a Atlanta, Ga. native, and the coordinator of the event. “We have an abundance of volunteers. It’s an awesome thing how many people show up to participate in this event.”

In addition to the 3rd Sust. Bde., members of the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club also took part in the day’s activities.

“One thing that my command always stresses that rings true with me is that it’s important to be a part of something much bigger than yourself,” said Sgt. 1st Class William Byrd, platoon sergeant for Battery B, Task Force 5th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, Counter Rocket, Artillery and Mortar, a Trenton, N.J., native, and president of the SAMC on JBB. “Volunteer work is showing your selfless service. It’s giving up yourself: your time, effort and energy. That is what the [SAMC] is about. That is what each member is about.”

Working with the children is also a way to help bridge the culture gap between the Iraqis and the Americans, said Spc. Keisha Williams, patient administrator for the Air Force Theatre hospital, a medic with 3rd Sust. Bde., 103rd ESC, and a Atlanta, Ga., native.

“By winning the hearts of this generation, I think it will break the stereotype that we’re bad people,” she said. “I think, as this generation gets older, they will teach younger generations about the good things that Americans have done for them and their country. We want to show them that the

U.S. people are not bad people and that we’re looking out for their welfare.”

Staff Sgt. Shaniqua Stokley, a legal assistant for the 3rd Sust. Bde., and a Tobyhanna, Pa., native, echoed Williams’ feelings, and added that learning about the Iraqi culture is just as important.

“I think things like this are important because kids take this experience and grow from it,” Stokley said. “They learn that not everything they see on TV is real, that everybody that is not like them isn’t bad, and we’re not over here trying

to [harm] everybody. They get to see a different side of us than what they see on TV. It’s a good cultural experience for both of us.”

Sgt. 1st Class Byrd said volunteering in one’s community is important anywhere in the world.

“It’s important to show that we care about the community, whether it’s back home or out here in theater,” he said. “I think that it’s good that we’re showing what we’re willing to do for the kids of the local community. They are the future of Iraq.”



Master Sgt. Verna Bellamy, noncommissioned officer-in-charge of food service with the 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), plays with two Iraqi girls during Iraqi Kids Day July 31 at the Air Force Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center on Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Iraqi Kids Day is a monthly, joint service operation that brings together Iraqi children and service members with food, fun and games.

BCS3 system provides promising future for logistics

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SPC. ADRIAN MUEHE
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF



JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq— Select Soldiers from the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) took part in a leader’s course on the Battle Command Sustainment Support System July 28 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

The BCS3 is a logistics command and control tool used to monitor the movement of convoys and supplies all over the world, and it is being used more frequently in Iraq. This course focused on the Logistics Reporting Tool, one of the features the BCS3 has to offer.

“What it does, is that it takes feeds from different sources, whether it’s transponders from vehicles, radio frequency tags, or sustainment systems, and it uses it all in one system so commanders can make good decisions based on the best information available,” said Jeremy Lowe, a field support engineer for Tapestry Solutions, and a Lometa, Texas, native.

The system has been in use since 2005, but until recently it wasn’t widely used in theater. According to Lowe, this is due in part to how often the program has been updated, with the latest update happening in August 2009.

With logistical equipment being moved constantly as part of the responsible drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq, the BCS3 is starting to draw attention.

“Right now the conditions are right for this system to be implemented,” said Lowe. “(United States Division–South)

is using it heavily. The conditions in theater are set for an explosion in use of the BCS3.”

The 103rd ESC is prepared to be the first ESC to fully implement the system in Iraq. Soldiers have been training on the program since the unit started to prepare for their deployment.

“We have several Soldiers that are already trained to use this system, and we continue to train soldiers to build upon this level of experience,” said Sgt. Maj. Monte Waller, the support operations sergeant major with the 103rd ESC, and a Dodge City, Kan., native. “I am fully confident we can get this system up and running.”

The date for the completion of the drawdown continues to creep closer as U.S. forces move into Operation New Dawn. As one of the last ESCs to deploy to Iraq, one responsibility the 103rd ESC has is to move a majority of the equipment that has been collected and left in Iraq over the years of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Waller said this tracking system will make that task a lot easier.

“It will save a lot of time and man-hours,” said Waller. “We have Soldiers that are very concerned as they try to calculate how much of this equipment is being moved and track where it’s going.”

After all the updates, Lowe feels that the BCS3 will be a vital factor in the final days of U.S. operations in Iraq, especially for the 103rd ESC, who will be overseeing most of the logistical operations.

“Past ESCs have said they were going to use BCS3, but they only made inches of progress,” Lowe said to the class. “I feel these guys are going to make miles.”

Sgt. Maj. Tim Sallach, supply sergeant major with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and an Oakfield, Wis., native, asks a question during a leader’s course for the Battle Command Sustainment Support System at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, on July 28. This system is used to track movement of supplies and equipment all over theater.



Basics on the blogosphere

MAJ. ANGEL WALLACE
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

Each week I get new questions about blogs: can they be used while deployed, do they need to be registered, are there official blog pages, what are my parameters??

These are all very good questions and it shows everyone's eagerness to tell the story of their individual experiences which, as a public affairs officer, makes my heart sing! Blogs are one of our most popular social media tools because they're structured as online journals, which gives the content more perceived credibility because it's being written in a first-person point of view.

Think about it – growing up as a teenager, you heard many rumors whispered about friends of friends and their various plots, but gossip was always most interesting when your best friend gave you first-hand insight. This works as grown-ups too, so I'm going to give you some tips about how to use blogging to share your experiences in a helpful way that can be fun while keeping information safe.

By blogging about your experiences while you are deployed, you are already using your position in the military to give your opinions an extra level of importance. Always remember this when you are talking about sensitive or political subjects, as you've agreed to represent the military by acknowledging your presence in uniform.

When talking about different missions, avoid talking about things that may put your fellow servicemembers in danger: Exact movement times, number of trucks in a convoy, exact numbers of personnel scheduled to move, types of cargo due to be moved, flight times or important personnel that may be moving during a specific time, rules of engagement or tactics, techniques and procedures are all things that should not be disclosed to the general public for the safety of our personnel.

When posting photos from different places during your deployment, make sure they are cleared by your unit PAO to ensure it isn't inadvertently giving away information about your unit or base that the enemy can use against U.S. Forces and/or other partners on our bases. Did you know that the numbers displayed on aircraft, the inside of MRAPs, vehicle damage due to accidents or IEDs, and pictures that communicate your base's force protection posture are all classified and should not be posted to the outside public?

Be mindful that lots of people will come across your shared thoughts, which can be both helpful and educational for many. Ensure you are arming everyone with the best information about your particular experiences while considering those that may want to use that against you or others. Register your blog with your PAO and G2 section so that they can provide an extra level of protection for you, and then – share!

In no particular order, these are some user-friendly sites to get you on your way toward blogging!

- Blogger.com
- [Blogonize \(www.blogonize.com\)](http://www.blogonize.com)
- [Livejournal \(www.livejournal.com\)](http://www.livejournal.com)
- [Weebly \(www.weebly.com\)](http://www.weebly.com)
- [Wordpress \(wordpress.com\)](http://wordpress.com)

Correction

An article published in the August 4 issue of the paper about Soldiers with the 40th Quartermaster Company out of Contingency Operating Base Adder, who visited the Ziggurat of Ur June 30, incorrectly attributed the byline to 1st Lt. Rosa Cannaverde. The story and photos were by Sgt. Jorge Anaya, 40th Quartermaster Co.

The Expeditionary Times welcomes comments, suggestions and/or complaints about errors that warrant corrections. Please e-mail us at expeditionarytimes@iraq.centcom.mil

Word on the street

Who is your favorite superhero and why?



"Spiderman, because he never hesitates to help somebody in need. I have the same philosophy with my Soldiers"

Master Sgt. Darnell Jones, G-6 noncommissioned officer-in-charge with the 103rd ESC, and a Des Moines, Iowa, native.



"Ironman, he is indestructible."

Staff Sgt. Stephan Brooks, strategy communications staff noncommissioned officer, and a Harcourt, Iowa, native.



"The punisher, because he operates outside the realm of super hero rules."

Sgt. Gregory Ruske, commanding general's driver with the 103rd ESC, and a Colorado Springs, Colo., native.

DRAWDOWN, from page 1

sergeant for Bravo Troop, explained the amount of planning that goes into each mission.

"Each mission requires days of planning and preparation at multiple levels," he said. "As Soldiers rehearse for the mission and conduct maintenance on their vehicles, commodity trucks are assigned, load plans are developed and movement windows are created to prevent massive traffic jams on the roads. Coordination between Kellogg, Brown and Root, Army transportation units, and third-country national trucks add another level of complexity to the mission. The convoy security team is responsible for bringing everyone together and ensuring all the vehicles make it to their destination safely."

The Troopers' primary vehicle, the International MaxxPro Plus, is one of the mine resistant, ambush protected vehicles. The MRAP is designed to provide more protection against small-arms fire and IEDs but lacks in comfort, according to Spc. Kyle Rosalies, an MRAP driver with the 108th Cav., and a Shreveport, La., native, who said, "It's a tough ride but I feel protected."

Keeping the fleet of vehicles on the road requires constant maintenance by mechanics who learned about the vehicle while on the

job in Iraq. Sgt. Charlandis Nunsant, one of the mechanics with the 108th Cav., and a Shreveport, La., native, summed up the experience.

"It's been a huge task to learn how to work on them but we've got some good mechanics. We keep them going pretty well, but it took a while at first," he said.

The convoy security mission is a slight change from the reconnaissance scout mission the unit has traditionally trained for. However, the combat training has developed Soldiers who are ready for anything.

"They've adapted well in picking up the security aspect of the mission," said 2nd Lt. Kevin Pickering, a platoon leader with the 108th Cav., and a Bossier City, La., native. "It's still a scout job."

To date, Bravo Troopers have conducted more than 100 missions across 20,000 miles, escorting hundreds of trucks and millions of gallons of fuel. Many members of the squadron saw combat with the 256th Infantry Brigade Combat during its first deployment to Iraq in 2004, and have noticed how different Iraq has become.

"Since our last deployment in 2004, there has been significant change in Iraq," said Sgt. Roy Carter, a truck commander with the 108th Cav., and Shreveport, La., native. "Iraq as a people and country has become more stable, more liberated and more dependent on each other."

THEATER PERSPECTIVES

“Of course music helps the kids psychologically, especially after everything that Iraq has been through. Music is a rhythm, it’s like a day and night, life and death, it helps organize what’s inside us.”

Music instructor Nashat Majeed, on teaching music to Iraqi children

“Any effort by any party...aimed at resolving the crisis without intervention...ensuring Iraq’s security, sovereignty and independence, is welcome.”

Iraqiya member Abdel Karim al-Hattab, on international intervention

The new border drawing clearly demonstrates transgression on...the rights of the Iraqi people.”

Basra Provincial Council vice-chairman Ahmen as-Suleiti, on Iraq’s borders

“We believe that Kurdish rights will not be achieved by denying the rights of other ethnic groups. In the meantime, Arabic or foreign solutions should not be offered for Kirkuk. The issue should be resolved according to the law.”

Kurdish Prime Minister Barham Salih, on the status of Kirkuk

“The reopening of these streets reflects the obvious control of the security situation by the Iraqi forces.”

Maj. Gen. Qassim Atta on the reopening of major Baghdad streets

THE NEW FACE OF CENTCOM

August 6 marked the day Gen. James Mattis won a unanimous senate confirmation as the new head of U.S. Central Command, which has overall control of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Mattis replaced Gen. David Petraeus, who took over command following Gen. Stanley McChrystal’s resignation. Defense Secretary Robert Gates praised Mattis, calling him one of the U.S. military’s “outstanding combat leaders and strategic thinkers.” Mattis, a four-star Marine general, possesses an impressive resume of leadership roles and accomplishments that reinforce Gates’ and the senate’s confidence in his abilities to lead the U.S. military in war.



- Commanded a rifle company and a weapons company in 1st Marine Brigade
- Commanded 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, one of Task Force Ripper’s assault battalions in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm
- Commanded 7th Marines (Reinforced)
- Commanded the 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade in Operation Enduring Freedom
- Commanded 1st Marine Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom
- Commanded the I Marine Expeditionary
- In 2007, was appointed commander of U.S. Joint Forces Command and Supreme Allied Comander Transformation
- Awards:** Defense Distinguished Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster; Navy Distinguished Service Medal; Defense Superior Service Medal; Legion of Merit; Bronze Star with V
- Education:** graduate of the Amphibious Warfare School, Marine Corps Command and Staff College; National War College graduate

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

'The Sports Lounge': Baseball heating up

BY SGT. 1ST CLASS RAY CALEF
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF



I would like to introduce you to a new column debuting in this week's Expeditionary Times. I will be writing about anything and everything to do with sports. With a caveat, of course. I will focus on the main sports that most Soldiers here on JBB can relate to, that being Major League Baseball, college football, pro football, basketball, etc. I will give my two cents, if you will, on these topics that so many of us hold near and dear to our hearts (at least I do, as I have a sports bar in my home).

Oh yes. I have a bar that was built in the basement of my home, which I call the 1st and Tenn Sports Lounge; we live on Tennessee Dr, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, hence the spelling (or misspelling) of "Ten." I have gone so far as to have t-shirts and hats made up with my own logo, have bar signs made, essentially making my wife roll her eyes a number of times at my going overboard with my "hobby." That is the reason I chose to name my column "The Sports Lounge".

I will also level with you, sports fans. I am an avid Iowa Hawkeye fan. Absolutely live and die by them. I am also an unabashed fan of the St. Louis Cardinals and the Minnesota

Vikings, the latter of which I have begun referring to as the Cubs of the NFL, much to my chagrin. Don't be alarmed at my level of adoration for my teams, however. I have been made aware by a person of a higher pay grade than I (the PAO) that I will remain objective in this column regarding my teams. We will see how that goes.

I thought I would examine Major League Baseball this week, specifically the American League. One notable item to bring up is the fact that, for the first time seemingly since dinosaurs walked the earth, the National League won the All-Star game, and with it, gained home field advantage in the World Series. This is no small point to belabor. My personal feelings aside, and in spite of the fact that the American League has had home field advantage in each of the last seven World Series and only owns a 4-3 record over the National League in that time period, the 20 previous World Series saw the team with home field advantage win 17 times. So it is significant.

There are a few surprises thus far regarding the American League races. Tampa Bay started hot with a 36-13 record in mid-May, cooled off considerably, and then caught fire again to catch the Yankees. That race should go down to the wire in September, as both teams are most likely the best the American League has to offer. It appears that, if they continue with their current winning percentage the rest of the way, each team will

make the playoffs, one as a wildcard, one as the champion of the East. In this case, always err on the side of the Yankees when picking a division winner.

Thanks to the Chicago White Sox with their longest winning streak in 49 years (11) and a later nine game win streak, they find themselves on top of the Central with a precarious 1½-game lead on the Minnesota Twins. Both are playing good baseball now, but if I had to choose, the Twins lead both leagues in hitting, and are nearly even with the White Sox in earned run average. Based on that, I will say the Twins win Central by a game over the South-Siders.

Lastly, the Rangers of Texas have all but turned the lights out in the West regarding a race. Sitting at 18 games above .500, they are 8 ½ games up on Oakland. They are third overall in hitting, including both leagues, and seventh in pitching. The Rangers are my own personal wild card to make some noise and possibly attain their first-ever World Series birth. That would be significant as well, since the Rangers franchise is the oldest team in any of the major North American professional leagues that has never won a league championship, going back to the days when they were the Washington Senators.

So my crystal ball shows New York, Minnesota and Texas as division winners, and Tampa Bay as the wild card team. Next week...a look at the National League races and predictions.

'1372 Overton Park' is major label rock done right

BY CPL. RICH BARKEMEYER
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF



Few things frighten me more than when a band I like signs to a major label. It seems that no matter what the group promises, their major label debut always sounds like a hollow shell of their former self. So I naturally felt some trepidation when Lucero, an alternative-country/rock group based in Memphis, Tenn., left the indie ranks to sign with Republic Records, a subsidiary of Universal Records, which is the label that chooses to release albums by Three Doors Down and Jamiroquai and tons of other acts that I truly loathe.

I've been a casual fan of Lucero since 2000 or so. Sounding like early-Wilco or late-Replacements, they're not the most original band, but singer Ben Nichols has a killer voice, and they're always fun to listen to. Even though I'm not a diehard fan, I was upset by their decision to end their careers by signing

to a major label.

Luckily, Lucero didn't listen to pessimistic indie-snob jerks like me. Their latest album, "1372 Overton Park," is the strongest release in the band's catalog, and one of my favorite records in recent memory.

From the opening track, "Smoke," it's clear that the band has updated their sound. For starters, there's a horn section now, which adds a smooth mid-'70s soul vibe. The horns may be a new addition, but they fit perfectly; I can't imagine these songs without them, and they add a new dynamic to the music.

The music may be slightly different, but singer/songwriter Nichols hasn't changed at all, which is a plus. Nichols has always been one of the best at writing songs about troubled souls, and "What Are You Willing To Lose," and "Can't Feel A Thing" both rank among his best.

The songwriting is consistently strong on "1372 Overton Park," and Nichols' ability to bring realism to the songs' characters helps them connect with the listener. The album manages

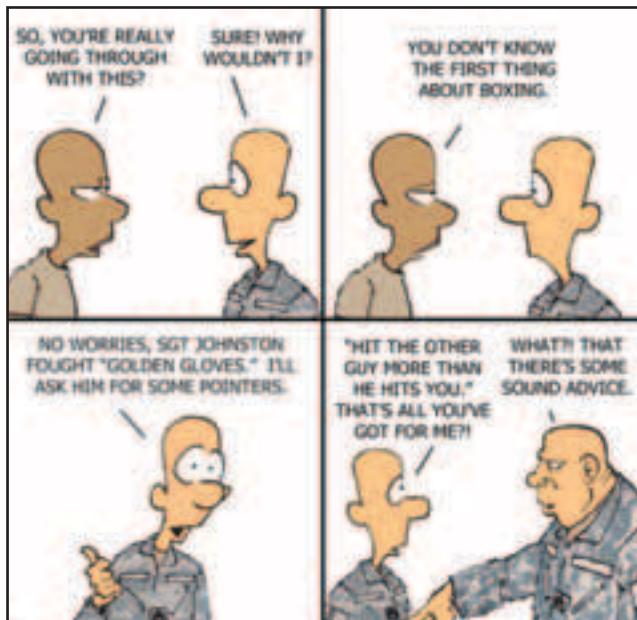
to sound familiar and unique at the same time, like a modern update to a classic.

While Nichols is the focus, the band sounds better than it ever has, especially guitarist Brian Venable. This is the sound of a band that is thoroughly comfortable, even while breaking new ground.

"1372 Overton Park" won't win any awards for being the most original record of all time; its sound is rooted in the past. At times, it sounds like what Bruce Springsteen may have been if he had never gone through that depressing "Nebraska" phase.

All in all, Lucero's major label debut is a rousing success. The band manages to stay true to the rough-edged sound that brought them to this stage in the game, while also following their artistic vision into new territory. If every indie-turned-major band followed that formula, I would have no reason to be afraid every time a group jumps ship to the big leagues. Lucero's "1372 Overton Park" is an example of the way things should be done, and I give it 8.5/10.

PVT MURPHY'S LAW



Wednesday August 11
1700: Cats & Dogs (PG-13)
2000: The A-Team (PG-13)

Thursday August 12
1700: Splice (R)
2000: Toy Story 3 (G)

Friday August 13
1700: Knight and Day (PG-13)
2000: The Other Guys (PG-13)(1stRun)

Saturday August 14
1400: Grown Ups (PG-13)
1700: The Other Guys (PG-13)
2000: Knight and Day (PG-13)

Sunday August 15
1400: The Other Guys (PG-13)
1700: Knight and Day (PG-13)
2030: Grown Ups (PG-13)

Monday August 16
1700: Grown Ups (PG-13)
2000: The Other Guys (PG-13)



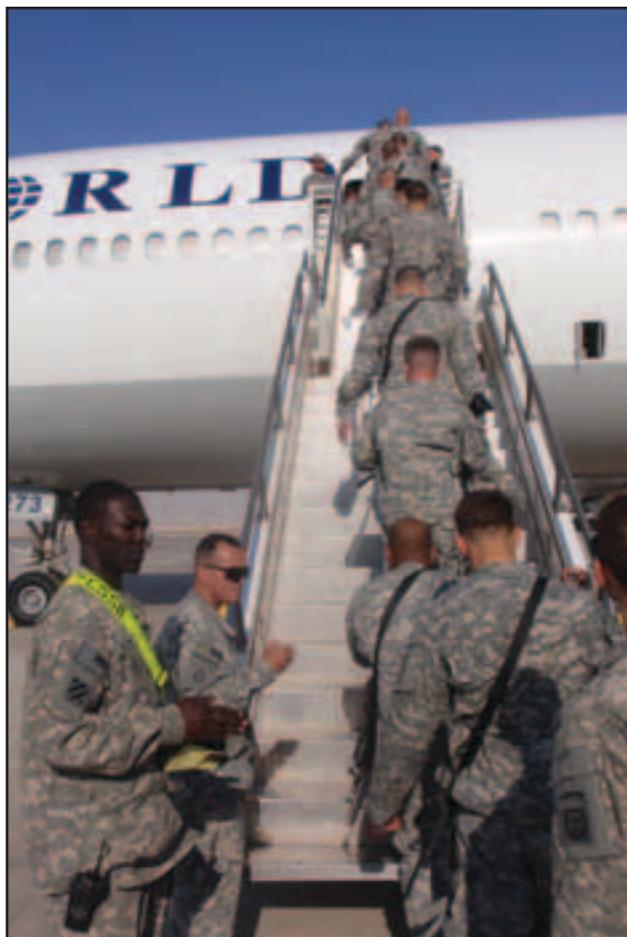
U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Julianna Regis

Soldiers from the 240th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), Deployment/Redeployment Operations Cell guide Soldiers of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-82nd Infantry Battalion, onto a plane headed back to Fort Bragg N.C., in support of the responsible drawdown of forces in Iraq July 25th at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.



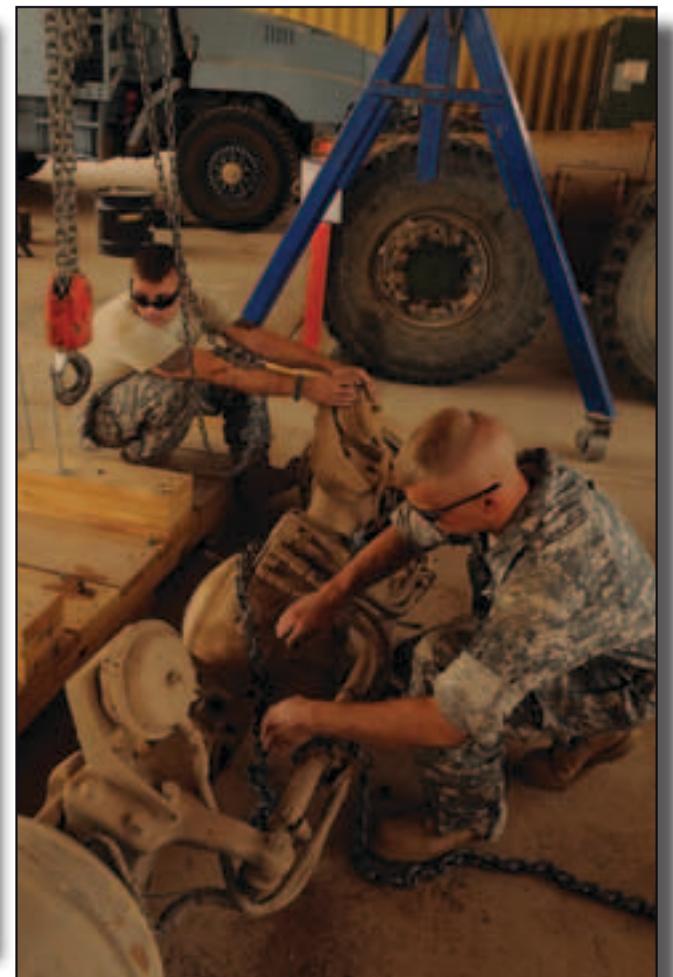
U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Gaelen Lowers

Master Sgt. Verna Bellamy, noncommissioned officer-in-charge of food service for the 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), helps a local Iraqi girl pick out her lunch during Iraqi Kids Day, a joint service operation, July 31 at the Air Force Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center on Joint Base Balad, Iraq.



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Julianna Regis

Staff Sgt. Earny Wilson, a Liaison Officer coordinator with the 240th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 224th Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and a Charleston, S.C., native, counts Soldiers of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-82nd Infantry Battalion June 25 as they board a plane to Fort Bragg, N.C., in support of the drawdown of forces in Iraq at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.



U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Zachary Zuber

Two mechanics from the 298th Support Maintenance Company, 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), prepare an axle from a Heavy Equipment Transport to be shipped for demilitarization. All faulty parts are examined before being taken out of inventory.