

Victory Times



Telling the United States Forces - Iraq story

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Task Force Safe spreads word on fire and electrical safety

Story and photos by Sgt. Gaelen Lowers
103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) Public Affairs

In the past year and a half, inspectors have made more than 167,000 fire and electrical inspections on U.S. and Iraqi facilities throughout the theater of Iraq, said Capt. Brian Moore, deputy chief of Task Force Safe, and Port O'Connor, Texas, native.

"Since Task Force Safe's start in 2008, we have been making the country safer for Soldiers, contractors and local nationals alike," he said.

Protecting the force from electrocution and fire sounds daunting, but it is accomplished by the joint effort of Task Force Safe and 46 Stanley, Baker and Hill employees throughout the entire country.

"Prior to August 2008 there were some safety issues which were addressed," said Moore. "It's hard to hold camps to any type of electrical code, so basically what our inspectors are going out and looking for is if it will kill or shock you. If it hurts, then it is a life, health, safety issue."

Besides the more than 2,300 weekly inspections or the 44,000 repairs they have made since forming, TF Safe holds a bimonthly class to teach Soldiers and contractors, and anyone who would like to attend, electrical and fire safety classes, said Mike Lauret, Texas City, Texas, native and Task Force Safe's theater master electrician.

"Electrical safety is important because there have been 19 fatalities in theater due to electrical circumstances," Lauret said. "A lot of electrical installations were not installed correctly, and the majority of people in theater didn't know how the system was supposed to function."

Lauret has worked as an electrician for more than 40 years. He is described by his peers and coworkers as their "go-to" guy.

"He's a master electrician, the top of his field," said

Maj. Corey William, chief of TF Safe, and Erie, Pa., native. "He's the glue that holds us all together."

While Lauret handles the electrical portion of the class, Michael Wreyford, a fire protection specialist for Stanley, Baker, Hill from Pine Mountain, Ga., takes care of the fire protection portion.

"On the fire side of the course, this is a real basic rundown of fire safety in Iraq," said Wreyford. "I believe it really opens some eyes. They get to see what 'right' looks like, especially on the electrical side."

The course is just one of many things TF Safe does to get that word out, said Moore. The number of repairs and inspections has contributed to making Iraq a safer place to live and work.

"I believe we have been very successful in our campaign," Moore said. "We'll be here until the end. We'll continue to do the mission, continue to make inspections, and continue to make Iraq a safer place for everyone."



Mike Lauret, Task Force Safe's theater master electrician, teaches electrical safety during a recent electrical and fire safety class at Victory Base Complex.

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Chaplain's Corner

Overcoming the 'existential boredom' of deployment

By Chaplain (Capt.) Larry Van Hook
Task Force Phantom Special Troops Battalion Chaplain

The chaplain's staff thought it was funny when I referred to an article about "existential boredom."

This is what most of us here feel — not necessarily the boredom of routine, but the boredom that comes from being in a monotonous environment.

I tell people it is like that polar bear or leopard in the zoo that paces back and forth as if attempting exercise but is really bored out of his mind.

It's like "Ground Hog Day," the movie with Bill Murray who wakes up each morning to relive the same day. We laugh about it but it is less funny when the boredom begins to affect you.

Military personnel come to my office with unexplained impatience and even depression.

"It doesn't make any sense," people say, "My life is going okay. Why do I feel this way?"

Often they are under the influence of existential boredom. The general cure is to shake things up a bit — vary the routine, call home more often, pick up a new hobby, or innovate at your job.

It's funny how our mind plays tricks on us isn't it? What

we think determines our ability to survive, or even thrive, more than our circumstances. Sometimes I wish I were like the Vulcan characters in "Star Trek." They don't get existential boredom because their preoccupations are purely logical. Thinking about how or why they should or shouldn't feel is irrelevant.

There is a reason we call this science fiction. We cannot be like that.

We position ourselves in our world, our thoughts embrace it and we feel our environment deeply. That's all right, but the difference between feeling it in a healthy way instead of an unhealthy way depends on how we choose to interpret our preoccupations.

An early christian writer encouraged his readers to consider how they think and what they set their minds on.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God," he wrote.

He wisely encouraged them, "Whatever is noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things."

I've seen and experienced it myself.

When I choose to interpret my circumstance by faith, the power of existential boredom weakens and withers away.

SARC Smarts



Do you know your reporting options?

An unrestricted report is made when a victim wants to participate in the military justice process, or when the chain of command or law enforcement becomes involved. A victim advocate is assigned, command and law enforcement are notified, and medical care is provided.

Active duty victims have the option of making a Restricted Report. Restricted Reports are kept confidential, and command and law enforcement aren't notified. The victim can access care and services without participating in the military justice system.

Call the USF-I Deployed Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (DSARC) at 485-5085 or 435-2235 for help.

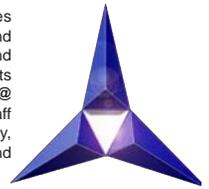
Army members should seek assistance with their Unit Victim Advocate (UVA) or DSARC.



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An open letter to USF-I from Gen. Austin

T*o the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and Civilians of United States Forces-Iraq:*

I consider it a distinct honor to return to Iraq and serve with each of you at this historic time. Operation New Dawn represents a change in our mission, but it does not mean an end to our commitment to Iraq. The United States of America, the Iraqis, and our coalition partners have committed many lives and resources to this endeavor — but our work is not over. We must remain committed to working with the Iraqis so they can be a more stable, secure, self-reliant nation and enjoy many of the freedoms we enjoy back home. I cannot think of a more important task. What we do over the next 16 months will have an impact for years to come.

I commend each member of the USF-I for your contributions. I know many of you have served on multiple deployments, leaving family and loved ones behind. I am personally grateful for your hard work and sacrifices — past, present, and future. We have a remarkable team of professionals from all uniformed services as well as a corps of dedicated and capable civilians to undertake the hard work ahead.

Under Operation New Dawn we must maintain vigilance and appropriate force protection. I fully expect our enemies to take advantage of any opportunity to inflict harm upon our forces and other US personnel. Maintain daily contact with your counterparts in the ISF to make the most of the time we have with them. Continue to train, advise, and assist them to ensure they have the capability to maintain lasting security in Iraq. Finally, work closely with our State Department partners, including our teammates on the provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs), so they are fully prepared to assume the lead role in continuing to build our enduring relationship with Iraq.

Remember: our individual actions can have strategic consequences and a lack of discipline may jeopardize that relationship. Adhere to our code of conduct and the values that make our military the most respected institution in the United States. Demonstrate inspired leadership by doing what is right, embodying the warrior ethos, respecting the dignity and rights of others, and being accountable in everything you do. Through your disciplined conduct, honor the sacrifices of the thousands of brothers and sisters in arms who served before you.

Our work is of paramount importance and will impact the future of Iraq for many years. We have enjoyed many successes; however, there is still work to be done. I have every confidence that our service members and civilians will do what is required to achieve lasting success. I am proud to serve with you.




LLOYD J. AUSTIN III
General, US Army
Commanding

Phantom Battalion adjusts to New Dawn

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

Soldiers deployed to Iraq with the III Corps Special Troops Battalion are unlikely to see a dramatic shift in their day-to-day missions following the transition of United States Forces-Iraq to Operation New Dawn, Sept. 1.

“We’re here to support the USF-I headquarters personnel with logistics and administrative support and that mission really doesn’t change, whether it’s Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation New Dawn,” said Maj. Kevin Kugel, III Corps STB executive officer.

Task Force Phantom had its share of challenges going into Operation New Dawn, having redeployed approximately 10 percent of the Soldiers who came with III Corps in March.

The battalion had to make a lot of tough decisions about who was going to stay and who was going to be sent home, Kugel said.

Capt. Brian Hollandsworth, the personnel officer for the STB, said the challenge was determining how to meet the mission in Iraq while balancing the needs of the Soldiers, their families and the Army.

Leaders within the task force determined how best to complete their section’s mission while simultaneously setting up their Soldiers for success. They worked to redeploy Soldiers who might benefit by returning to the states for training and reassignment, who could move on to a different duty station to meet the needs of the Army, or who may have had family situations to deal with.

As the Responsible Drawdown of Forces began to affect the STB, battalion leadership had to rethink their approach to certain missions in order to meet their goals.

“With the reduction of people we had to consolidate certain tasks and adjust the workload of the people who remained,” Kugel said.

Hollandsworth has seen his shop take one of the largest force reduction hits.

“We’ve probably dropped about 20 percent of our Soldiers from within the shop,” he said.

Despite the loss of manpower, Hollandsworth said the quality of the services his shop provides to Soldiers hasn’t fallen because they anticipated force reductions and started cross training and cross-leveling early on.

Soldiers who used to have only one focus, such as dealing exclusively with promotions or awards have been multi-tasked to keep everything running efficiently.



Spc. Richard Howard, a human resources specialist with III Corps Special Troops Battalion, updates ID card information for a customer, Sept. 10. The III Corps STB personnel shop was one of the most affected in the Corps by the Responsible Drawdown of Forces, losing almost 20 percent of its staff.

“Cross training helped out a lot and a lot of the Soldiers stepped up and asked ‘how can I fill a gap?,’” he said. “It’s done pretty well for us.”

Kugel said another challenge for the Phantom Battalion is dealing with the excess equipment that the Responsible Drawdown of Forces has generated.

“It’s not just going to disappear,” Kugel said. “It has to be shipped to Kuwait or to one of the airfields and then it has to get out of here. That’s a big job that takes a lot of planning.”

Much of that task has fallen to the troops who work for Capt. Garren Bremer, the battalion’s supply officer.

Although spared a loss of manpower, Bremer and his property book officer, Chief Warrant Officer Jubaba Kemp, have been busy turning in and redistributing equipment from units that are standing down, dealing with everything from excess office equipment to vehicles.

I would say the big thing that’s going on with New Dawn and RDoF is taking equipment from units that are standing down and redistributing it,” Bremer said.

Bremer credits Kemp with shouldering the bulk of the effort to turn in or transfer equipment from roughly 18 units that redeployed without a unit coming in to replace them.

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Service members commemorate Labor Day with flag flying



Photo by Staff Sgt. Edward Daileg

Lt. Col. Regina Cox, commander for Defense Information Systems Agency of Iraq, flies an American flag in honor of her parents, Sept. 6.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Edward Daileg

▲ Spc. Jonathan Santiago (left) and Spc. Tomasz Zak fold an American flag during the Labor Day Flag Flying Event, Sept. 6.

The Camp Slayer Mayor Cell hosted flag flying events at the Victory over America Palace Sept. 6 and Sept. 11 to commemorate Labor Day and Patriots Day.

Such events are usually held in honor of Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day and recently, to remember the attacks on September 11.

An average of about than 200 service members show up on those days to fly flags.

Participants can fly up to four flags and receive a certificate to certify each one.

For more information about the flag flying and weekly Camp Slayer palace tours, contact Sgt. Monica Registe, Camp Slayer Mayor MWR noncommissioned officer, at 318-835-1011 or monica.registe@iraq.centcom.mil.

▼ Capt. Kyle Smith, with the 167th Medical Detachment Optometry Team, takes in the view as he flies a flag from the Victory Over America Palace.



Photo by Spc. Joseph Vine

How did September 11 affect you?



Lt. Jonathan Parker, U.S. Navy

"As a young Naval Academy midshipman, I had the general idea that I was looking for a challenge. After that day, it became clear what that challenge would entail."



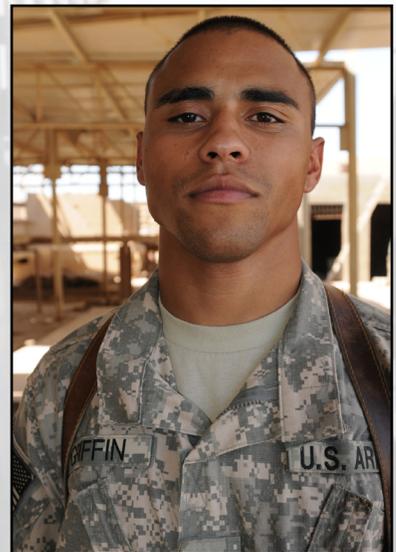
Lt. Natalie Augustine, U.S. Navy

"It had a significant impact on our nation. It was an event that brought me and the other service members I was with, closer together."



Capt. Jesse Lee White, U.S. Marine

"I joined the Marine Corps two days after, so it had a pretty heavy affect. I figured I needed to do something for my country"



Sgt. Rasheen Griffin, U.S. Army

"When it happened I knew my time in the military would be well spent. I knew I would fight in a war and have been deployed five times since."

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According to Bremer, units in the battalion have also been working to turn in excess equipment that has been left behind by units during previous deployments. Much of that equipment, which is not on unit property books, is turned in through the Mobile Reconstruction Team Yard.

The MRT then redistributes it to units here in Iraq or prepares it for shipment to

Afghanistan.

Although the jobs and expectations of Phantom Battalion Soldiers haven't changed under Operation New Dawn, Kugel doesn't expect to know the full impact on support requirements until they get used to having fewer people around.

"Right now it's business as usual, but we expect the support requirements to decrease as personnel decrease," he said.

ELECTION DAY IS NOV. 2
ABSENTEE BALLOTS MUST BE MAILED OUT BY OCT. 26
TO BE RECEIVED BY LOCAL ELECTION OFFICES IN THE CONTINENTAL U.S. IN TIME FOR THE ELECTIONS.
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
WWW.FVAP.GOV

VBC Facility Operating Hours

Sports Oasis DFAC
Breakfast 5:00 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Dinner 5 - 8:30 p.m.
Midnight chow 11:00 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.
Sandwich Bar open 24 hours

Education Center
8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Camp Liberty Post Exchange
8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Camp Victory Post Exchange
8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Paul Smith Gym
Open 24 Hours

Victory Main Post Office
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

USF-I Unit Mail Room
Customer Services/Mail Call:
Daily 3 - 6 p.m.

Al Faw Palace Post Office
Wednesday and Sunday
12:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Golby TMC Sick Call
Monday - Friday 7:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Saturday & Sunday 9 - 11:30 a.m.

Mental Health Clinic
Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m. - noon

Pharmacy
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - noon;
1 - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. - noon

Websites

Check it out:

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United States Forces-Iraq
U.S. Army III Corps
Phantom Battalion
III Corps Fort Hood

Mom attends deployed daughter's promotion

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Edward Daileg
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

Most Soldiers call or e-mail their families back home to share news about a promotion, but one Army officer had the unique opportunity to have a family member at her promotion ceremony during her deployment to Iraq.

Capt. Jennipher E. Cannan, commander of the 261st Movement Control Team, 14th Transportation Battalion, was fortunate enough to have her civilian mother, Annmarie R. Cannan, "pin on" her rank at her promotion ceremony Sept. 2.

"I didn't expect her to come out to Iraq to be with me. It meant a lot for my mother to be here for my promotion ceremony," said Cannan.

Annmarie, the assistant station manager for the American Red Cross at Camp Liberty, has always been close to her daughter Jennipher and attended her first promotion ceremony at Fort Bragg in March 2009, when she was promoted to first lieutenant.

Shortly afterward, Annmarie found herself unemployed due to the economic downturn in early 2009 and moved in with Cannan while looking for work. She soon became a volunteer case worker for the Red Cross.

When Cannan deployed in March 2010, Annmarie moved to California and found a job at the Bernardo Winery in San Francisco. However, Annmarie continued to pursue employment with the Red Cross.

In Iraq, Cannan took command of the 261st MCT, where she oversees the tracking of cargo and convoy movement in support of the Victory Base Complex and the units of the 1st Advise and Assistance Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, stationed in and around Baghdad.

In April 2010, Annmarie was offered an assistant station manager position by the Red Cross. She was contracted to deploy and had the opportunity to choose a duty location. She chose Baghdad, knowing her daughter was stationed here.

Now just several minutes away from her daughter, Annmarie was able to attend Cannan's promotion ceremony at Sather Air Base on the rooftop of the distinguished visitor's terminal, known as the Glass House.

"I never thought it would be possible for both of us to deploy in Iraq," said Annmarie. "It came, and I'm honored to be here to pin

her captain rank on."

"It shows a lot for my mother to volunteer and be out here with me. She has always been my right hand all throughout my life," said Cannan.

With a four-and-a-half month deployment in Iraq for the Red Cross, Annmarie has the opportunity to spend time with her deployed daughter, something few parents of Soldiers are able to do.

Cannan and Annmarie have been together in Iraq for almost two months. They see each other at least once a week and will be in Iraq until Annmarie leaves in November. Until then Cannan will enjoy the time here with her mother.

"How many people can say that they see their mom while deployed?" Cannan asked.

Cannan expects to redeploy in the spring of 2011.



Capt. Jennipher E. Cannan and her mother, Annmarie R. Cannan, pose for a photo on the rooftop of the Sather Air Base Glass House terminal after Cannan's promotion to captain Sept. 2.