

Victory Times



Telling the United States Forces - Iraq story

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Gen. Austin meets with service members



Story and photo by Spc. Joseph Vine
USF-I Public Affairs

Service members got a chance to speak directly to the United States Forces-Iraq commander and his senior enlisted advisor during a meeting Oct. 13, on Camp Victory.

The USF-I command team of Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen met with about 120 service members at the Sports Oasis Dining Facility to talk about what is taking place in Iraq and to listen to any issues and questions the troops had.

With the recent change of mission in Iraq, Austin said he realizes that many

Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, United States Forces-Iraq, fields questions from approximately 120 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines, Oct. 13, at the Sports Oasis dining facility, Camp Victory. Austin held the meet and greet to answer questions and address concerns of service members.

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Sailors gather to celebrate 235 years of Navy history

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Edward Daileg
USF-Iraq Public Affairs

More than 200 service members gathered Oct. 13 to celebrate the Navy's 235th birthday during a ceremony at the Al Faw Palace at Camp Victory, Iraq.

During the event, guests learned about the Navy's history and heard about the service's current role in Operation New Dawn, which includes the efforts of about 1,500 Sailors, said Master Chief Petty Officer David Lofton, senior enlisted advisor for the United States

Forces-Iraq secretary of the joint staff.

"We have Sailors in Iraq embedded in most operations, serving side-by-side with our sister services," Lofton said.

Rear Adm. David G. Simpson, USF-I director of communications and information systems, spoke at the celebration and emphasized the importance of the Navy's mission in Iraq

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Members of the Baghdad Chief Petty Officer Association render honors as Rear Adm. David G. Simpson enters the Al Faw Palace rotunda at the start of the U.S. Navy's 235th birthday celebration, Oct. 13, on Camp Victory.

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Chaplain's Corner

Inside, outside, upside down

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Keith Goode
Deputy USF-I Chaplain

“Inside, outside, upside down” is an old rhyme from childhood that pretty well describes the focus of our lives most days.

This simple children’s rhyme echoes an adult effort to focus on the wholeness, wellness, and perspective we must sort out each hectic day of our lives. When we get all these things right, we move through the day’s activities with purpose and confidence. When we get them wrong, we feel as though the world is crashing down around us.

Wholeness is the inside look that touches the soul. Each individual must forge connections that will be strong enough to endure the storms of life that inevitably come to every person. Faith, family and friends are the cornerstones of wholeness.

Wellness is the outside look that is shown to the world. This is a reality that has a way of working from the “inside” to the “outside.” If there is a strong heart, then it will certainly be revealed by the actions that are seen in the

person’s daily life.

It’s recognized that a proper understanding of an individual’s wholeness and wellness is vital to living, but it is in the area of perspective where things can go “upside down.” When the heart, mind, and body are distressed, it is easier to see things in a jumbled and confused manner, even to the point of despairing of life itself.

The goal is to keep proper perspective. Helping every service member view life from the proper perspective is a worthy goal for all of us.

Already, too many among us have lost the ability to see life in the right perspective and have made choices that have left behind only pain and loss.

Everyday living is tough, but as we work together, we can encourage one another to keep perspective. Honesty acknowledges that there are often difficulties in life, but a strong heart and a healthy outlook refuses to allow those difficulties to define our whole life.

Let us make a commitment once again to do more to help everyone in theater look inside and outside with the goal of keeping life from going upside down.

SARC Smarts

Sexual Assault Affects Mission Readiness!



Mission readiness is negatively impacted in three ways:

1. The alleged perpetrators are often placed on administrative hold and may not redeploy with their units.
2. Victims may not be able to fulfill their duties or may otherwise have their ability to perform the mission compromised as a result of the traumatic events.
3. The attention of the unit leadership shifts from the normal duties involved in maintaining readiness to addressing a victim’s needs, investigating the alleged perpetration, and restoring the unit’s cohesion and trust.

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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service members have concerns about what the future holds.

"It's been an interesting thing to see how things have evolved over time," he said. "As I come back to Iraq this third time, it's clear to me we're making progress. About a year ago we had 160,000 (service members), now we're down to 50,000."

"We got down to (50,000) because of the good job of training and equipping the Iraqi security forces and we have to finish that work," said Austin.

This event provided the opportunity for the service members to talk about those concerns and hear firsthand what Austin and Allen had to say about the changes.

The service members said they really appreciated having the USF-I senior leaders take the time to speak to them.

"It was a direct link to the general for any questions that service members may have had," said 1st Lt. Darryl D. McGrath, a platoon leader for Task Force Phantom.

"The session gave us the chance to interact with and meet the senior leadership team and talk about our issues," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Travis Barrino, a chaplain's assistant for USF-I.

The questions asked by those who attended covered topics from base closures, to contingency plans for worst case scenarios.

"It showed that he is concerned about the thoughts and questions that the personnel in his charge have," said McGrath.

The meeting was also a chance for the senior leadership to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of USF-I service members.

"The sergeant major and I do care about you and what you're doing, and we appreciate the work that you are doing," said Austin.

For McGrath, the session showed him that the general and command sergeant major value the individual service member's thoughts and concerns.

He also sees it as a sign that the command will do everything within their power to ensure that proper information is passed down to everyone in USF-I who needs it.

Austin said he will continue to meet with service members throughout his time as commanding general of USF-I.

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"No person was ever honored for what he received.
Honor has been the reward for what he gave"

- Calvin Coolidge



Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen stands with Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery during a recent visit to JSS Loyalty. Allen accompanied Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, USF-I commanding general, to speak with the battalion leadership and to recognize Soldiers for their job performance. (Photo illustration by Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey)

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey
USF-Iraq Public Affairs

Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen, the United States Forces-Iraq command sergeant major, has seen just about everything during his 35 years as a Soldier, and during his time as a noncommissioned officer, he said the one thing that has remained a constant is the expectations Soldiers have of their NCOs.

“If you ask any Soldier out there, they’ll probably tell you they expect their noncommissioned officers to get them to the right place at the right time, with the right equipment to do whatever mission they’re given,” Allen said. “They expect noncommissioned officers, more than any other leader, to protect them from all the stuff that rolls down hill, to provide them with good leadership, and they expect noncommissioned officers to take care of their families. They expect that of you, and if you’re not providing that, then shame on you, you’re not

doing what we’re paying you to do.”

Allen has worked hard to live up to those expectations, and has stood up for Soldiers and fought for what he thought was right.

As a brigade command sergeant major, he once appeared before a court-martial as a character witness for a Soldier his leadership had recommended for punishment. It’s Allen’s willingness to go out on a limb and fight for Soldiers that has earned him the respect of the troops he has led throughout his career. He said to this day, he still hears from Soldiers that he’s served with and mentored.

Without a doubt, Allen believes leaders want to do the right thing and for the most part they get it right, but you have to keep working to make sure nothing falls through the cracks.

“I have to make the system work,” he said. “We’ve got a great system, but sometimes you’ve got to tweak it. I’ll always make sure Soldiers are getting a fair shake and that leaders are looking out for the Soldier. I’ve done it all my life and it’s all I know how to do.”

how to do.”

Allen said he recently caught a group of Soldiers off guard by telling them something they weren’t used to hearing from such a senior NCO.

“I work for you,” he told them. “If there’s something I need to do, you need to tell me.”

While taking action is a big part of being an NCO, Allen said the simple act of listening is a powerful tool for leaders, and it’s a big part of his approach to dealing with service members.

“Sometimes they just need an ear,” he said. “They just need somebody to listen to their problem.”



Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen speaks with the first sergeants of 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery, during a recent visit to JSS Loyalty.

And with the stresses of deployment and the military's high operational tempo, service members' problems can't be overlooked by NCOs.

During a recent trip to Joint Security Station Loyalty with Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, USF-I commanding general, Allen talked to the senior NCOs of the 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery, 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, and drove home the importance of listening to junior service members.

While Austin later spoke with troops preparing for a mission, Allen pulled the first sergeants aside for a huddle.

He shared with them his certainty that everyone has something significant going on in their lives that might affect their performance and encouraged them to bear that in mind as they deal with their subordinates.

He also shared some wisdom from Winston Churchill, which he often passes along to service members who are having a difficult time.

"The bottom line is, when you think it's hell that you're going through, keep going man, just keep going," he told them. "You only get in trouble when you stop. Keep going, talk to somebody, but keep going. Don't stop, whatever you do."

Five combat tours and three and half decades in the Army have taught Allen a lot about service members and leaders. One thing he feels strongly about is that to truly be effective as a leader and taking care of your troops, you have to take care of yourself.

He says that when you start to feel stress overtake your mind and body, you've got to get away from the situation, regroup and come back ready to take on the situation.

"Go get your 'me-time' in and get yourself back together," he said. "That's what it takes most of the time, even if it's a walk somewhere. My whole attitude will change just because I went on a walk."

As the U.S. military mission in Iraq continues to move forward, Allen said his job is to make sure the troops are performing at their best and that the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines understand that although the mission has changed, Iraq can still be a dangerous place, and that it's imperative that



Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen speaks with Soldiers at JSS Loyalty.

sees junior NCOs entrusted with life-or-death decisions on a daily basis because they understand the commander's intent and the rules of engagement.

"Those young guys and gals out there, give 'em basic focusing guidance and let them go get at it. We empower them to use their own decision making process to execute their mission. I see that a lot now," he said.

According to Allen a big part of the success in Iraq is because of the dedication and commitment of young service members and junior leaders.

And now, with the Iraqi Security Forces in the lead and U.S. forces advising assisting and training, he said young leaders are still just as critical to the mission.

"We've come a long way but we've still got work to do. Our continued success will, in large part, depend on the conduct and professionalism of our force. I'm confident that our young men and women will keep doing the right thing and will stay focused and committed to the mission. Got to do it, that's the job, and we need to work together to be effective."

35 years of soldiering and leading has taught him that.

everyone stay committed and focused.

"We still partner with the Iraqi Security Forces, Border Patrols and the Iraqi Police," Allen said. "Yes, we have a new mission set ... but the fact of the matter is any time a Soldier goes outside the gate they're in the same posture that they were at the height of this war. I mean full (personal protective equipment), ready to defend themselves and their fellow Soldiers each and every day."

While the mission may still be challenging, Allen is confident that, thanks to today's leadership culture, Soldiers are up to the task. He now



Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen speaks to service members at an Oct. 6, chaplain's luncheon about the importance of persevering through difficult times.

A second chance for al Amreeki



Al Amreeki plays while Maj. Joseph Torok, USF-I officer-in-charge of civil information management, and Hussein Mansoor, USF-I senior agricultural advisor, look on. Mansoor and Torok are helping Amreeki make his way to the United States for plastic surgery that will improve his quality of life.

Story and photos by Spc. Joseph Vine
USF-I Public Affairs

Two years ago a propane tank exploded in Baghdad leaving a 3-year-old Iraqi boy with burns covering more than 50 percent of his body.

He was transported to an American surgical hospital in Iraq, where doctors determined he needed more medical attention than they could provide.

Although the boy was not expected to live, Maj. Joseph M. Torok Jr., from Bethel, Ohio, who was serving in Iraq as a nurse at the time of the accident, was responsible for his care.

While caring for him, Torok worked with service members and non-profit organizations to get the boy, known as al Amreeki, to the Shriners Hospital for Children in Cincinnati, where he could receive the surgeries and skin grafts he desperately needed to survive.

Amreeki's burns healed, leaving behind a memory of that fateful day in the form of scars that cover most of his body, but because the skin grafts he received do not grow, he now needs additional surgeries as he grows into a young man.

Now, Torok and the non-governmental organizations who helped Amreeki

in 2008, are stepping up to help him once again.

"I was informed that he was having issues with his surgical scars," said Torok, who recently returned to the U.S. after a tour serving as the United States Forces-Iraq officer-in-charge of the civil information management cell.

"He was having contractures that were affecting his daily activities, and causing him pain," he said.

Amreeki will have plastic surgery to release the contractures, permanent tightening of scars and muscles, on his lips, face, hands and groin area, he said.

As a result, he will have greater dexterity with his hands, and will finally be able to stand straight up.

"He'll be able to interact like a normal child does," said Torok.

While in the U.S., Amreeki will receive the best medical treatment possible from Shriners' Hospital, said Hussein Mansoor, the USF-I senior agricultural advisor, who worked with Torok.

"There is no special system in place to take care of people with these types of injuries. There are thousands of children with similar cases in Iraq," said Mansoor. Although Torok played "point man" to help Amreeki, he could not have done

it alone.

"It's coming out of people's hearts, and of people's pocket books," said Torok. "He's also receiving help from American companies to help fund the mission to bring this little boy to the U.S. for surgery."

"Everyone who hears this story asks the same question – 'How can I help?'" said Mansoor.

"The people of Iraq have heard this story, and it has touched many hearts," he said.

Torok said that when Amreeki comes back to Iraq, neighbors and friends will see him and know that the Americans helped this boy. His story will spread through the village, bringing a better understanding that American Soldiers are here to help.

Al Amreeki left for the U.S. on Oct. 14, and is scheduled to return to Iraq in two months.

Torok who has also returned to the U.S., said he hopes to keep tabs on Amreeki. "I grew to really respect Amreeki for all the struggles that he went through. He has a strong will to survive," said Torok. "I see a child and a family who don't have the resources to help themselves. I couldn't live with myself if I let this go."

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and his appreciation for the Sailors who are deployed here.

“Most importantly, we appreciate the service and contributions of all the Sailors and thank them for their sacrifices,” said Simpson.

“Sand Sailors” can be proud of their contributions toward achieving a secure, stable and self-sustaining Iraq, he said.

Jeff Bacon, a retired Navy captain and a cartoonist who has had his work published in the Navy Times and Marine Corps Times, also spoke at the event. Bacon shared some of his work with the crowd, and drew laughter from the service members with cartoons showing daily duties of a Sailor’s life.

The youngest and the oldest Sailors in USF-I escorted the Navy birthday-cake through the rotunda and met with Simpson for the traditional birthday cake cutting.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Michelle Darrington, an information technology

specialist for Joint Forces Special Operations Component Command, was the youngest Sailor present.

“I am honored to be chosen to cut the Navy’s birthday cake,” Darrington, a native of Mobile, Ala., said, “This was something special that I never expected in my young Navy career.”

Navy Capt. Michael Berry, the logistics civil augmentation program budget officer for the USF-I comptroller finance staff, was the oldest Sailor on hand.

The Denver, Colo., native described the opportunity to cut the Navy’s birthday cake as a “surprise and an honor.”

For Simpson, the dedication of Sailors, both young and old, is emblematic of Navy tradition.

“Honor, courage, and commitment are the foundation for their service. Sailors can be proud of their service away from home,” he said.



(From left to right) Master Chief David Lofton, Rear Adm. Kevin Kovacich, Capt. Michael Berry, Rear Adm. David Simpson, Rear Adm. Kelvin Dixon, and Petty Officer 3rd Class Michelle Darrington prepare to cut the Navy birthday cake at Al Faw Palace, Oct. 13. Berry and Darrington are the oldest and youngest Sailors on the United States Force-Iraq staff.

Electrical Fire Safety

Never overload extension cords or wall sockets.

Do not place cords and wires under rugs, over nails, or in high traffic areas.

Replace all worn, old, or damaged appliance cords immediately.

Look for products that meet the UL standard for safety when buying electrical appliances.

Do not trap electric cords against walls where heat can build up.

If an appliance has a three-prong plug, use it only in a three-slot outlet.

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:

USF-I Web pages

www.usf-iraq.com
[www.flickr.com/photos/
mnfiraq](http://www.flickr.com/photos/mnfiraq/)
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U.S. Army III Corps
Phantom Battalion
III Corps Fort Hood

Bank of Baghdad opens branch on Camp Liberty

Story by Sgt. Gaelen Lowers
3rd Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs

The Bank of Baghdad celebrated the opening of a branch on Camp Liberty recently as part of Army Central Command's Banks on Bases initiative.

The initiative, created to help strengthen Iraqi business and banking by transitioning to the use of Iraqi dinar and e-commerce tools, will reduce the flow of U.S. currency throughout the region, said Brig. Gen. Mark Corson, commander of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

According to Corson, one of the ways they plan do that is by ensuring contracts with non-U.S. vendors are paid in dinar or by electronic funds transfer, which will push business to the Iraqi banks and away from military finance offices.

Currently, many local businesses use finance offices to cash their checks, said Maj. Andrea Singer, liaison officer for the 326th Theater Financial Management Center.

Singer, an Omaha, Neb. native based in Kuwait, has seen this project through from "cradle to grave," and said one of the goals of this program is to take the burden off of the military financial management companies so they no longer have to cash business and payroll checks.

"That is a lot of cash floating around the battlefield," she said. "With the Banks on Bases initiative, those local contractors can come to the bank, they can open payroll accounts, they have access to an ATM, and they can pay their employees through direct deposit versus having to go to the finance office and take out all the cash to pay their employees."

This will help the Iraqi financial system become stronger and give the Iraqi population more confidence in it, said Dr. Younes Brouche, deputy chairman of the Board of Directors for the Bank of Baghdad.



Two Iraqi bankers put up the sign for the grand opening of the Bank of Baghdad Sept. 29 on Camp Liberty.



Dr. Younes Brouche, deputy chairman of the Board of Directors for the Bank of Baghdad, and Brig. Gen. Mark Corson, commander of the 103rd ESC pose after cutting the ribbon during the grand opening of the Bank of Baghdad, Sept. 29, on Camp Liberty.

"What we want is (for) the Iraqi people to have more trust in banking and to put their faith in others to help Iraq and the Iraqi economy," Brouche said. "With more trust from them, I hope to be able to have more expansion, which will help serve them with more efficiency. Our goal is to help the Iraqi people transition from the 'mattress system' to the financial system."

Singer conducted most of the coordination with the help of the military finance companies at VBC, said Capt. Michael Wallet, executive officer for the 15th Financial Management Company, Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd ESC, and Wadsworth, Ohio native.

"One of the most important parts of this bank's opening, as a financial management company," Wallet said, "is that we can come to the bank and withdraw dinar to pay workers, and I don't have to put Soldiers out on the road, which can be dangerous."

The Banks on Bases initiative also helped established a strong bond and partnership between the U.S. and Iraq.

"These folks, just like us, want to have a better life. We are here to help them and they know it," said Singer, who sees the importance building that bond. "I think that if we take these opportunities and build on them, then this will be a very successful partnership."

The opening of this bank and others like it show that Iraq and its people are moving toward financial independence, Wallet said.

"This bank will be a beacon for the people of Baghdad to come and invest their money, have proper modern banking services and to really make an investment in their future," Corson said.

The Bank of Baghdad has more than 40 branches throughout Iraq and has three more slated to open on U.S. bases in the near future, Singer said.