



Telling the United States Forces - Iraq story

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Photo by Sgt. Steven Schneider

Lt. Gen. Bob Cone, United States Forces-Iraq deputy commanding general for operations and III Corps commander, and his senior enlisted advisor, Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur L. Coleman Jr., conduct frequent battlefield circulations like the one pictured above. These visits allow them to gauge the situation on the ground throughout Iraq.

USF-I leadership sees continued progress in Iraq

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey
USF-I Public Affairs

“We still have work to do here,” said Lt. Gen. Bob Cone, deputy commanding general for operations and III Corps commanding general, as he reaffirmed U.S. service members’ commitment to helping Iraq become a secure and stable nation during a Nov. 8 Pentagon press conference.

Cone has led U.S. operations in Iraq since he took over as the DCG-O in March, and has partnered with military leaders to strengthen the Iraqi Security Forces

“We are focused on working with

the Iraqi (Security Forces),” he said, “to ensure they are both a learning and adaptive organization with the practices necessary to professionally grow and improve in the future.”

Cone credits U.S. forces with helping their Iraqi counterparts learn to be a better team by being more reflective and self-critical.

“We don’t do anything without an after-action review. We don’t do things without a risk assessment and we’re teaching the Iraqis to do the same kinds of things,” he said.

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NCOs compete for prestigious club

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

The room is quiet. Some Soldiers are pacing back and forth while others let the stress show with the tapping of a foot or constant fidgeting.

The noncommissioned officers wait for their turn to go inside for what is considered by many as the toughest board an NCO will attend, the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club board.

One-by-one they go in and report to six command sergeants major including Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur L. Coleman Jr., the senior enlisted advisor to the United States Forces-Iraq deputy commanding general, III Corps command sergeant major, and president of the board.

The NCOs are then given several commands of facing movements that must be performed with precision. Once complete, the NCOs sit down and heart rates start to rise.

This was the scene for seven NCOs who attended the SAMC board at Al Faw Palace, Baghdad, Nov. 15.

The SAMC began in 1986 as an effort to recognize the NCOs who emulate Sgt. Audie Murphy’s

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Chaplain's Corner

Everyone has something to be thankful for

By Chaplain (Maj.) Stephen Cozzens
TF 807th Medical Brigade

This month we celebrate Thanksgiving Day. It's a day that we should think about all that we have to be grateful for, and I hope that everyone will find something to be thankful for.

Since we will be thinking about home on Thanksgiving, there may be some homesick feelings because we cannot be with our families. This is when we will need each other. One of the benefits that we have as deployed service members is camaraderie.

With camaraderie, we build strong relationships with each other, which helps us cope with separation from our families. When special days such as Thanksgiving occur while we are here, we are able to cope with the separation much better.

Although camaraderie cannot replace our families, it can be the next best thing to it. When we are deployed, we make memories that will last for the rest of our lives, and

we will cherish them.

Camaraderie also helps us build our resiliency.

Resilience is the ability to recover from hardships and other painful periods in our lives. One of the key areas that give us resilience is the relationships that we develop in our families, friends, faith, and community organizations. When we have good relationships with these, we gain resilience from it. Our fellow service members give us the

assurance that we are important and meaningful because they know our capabilities, which they appreciate and depend on.

I hope that you will enjoy this Thanksgiving day. I also hope that you will spend the time up to Turkey Day counting your blessings and remembering all the things to be thankful for. This is a good month to tell your families how much you are thinking about

them. You can let them know you are so thankful to have friends that you serve with who give you so much support while deployed.

Indeed, we have much to be thankful for.



SARC Smarts

Tips for newcomers: "Be safe!"



- Be familiar with your surroundings and stay in lighted areas as much as possible.
- Be vigilant and mindful of whom you talk to and share your email addresses with.
- Don't visit with each other in CHUs - use the day room or MWR to visit or watch movies.
- Travel with a battle buddy and be mindful of where you go and who you go with.
- DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response website - www.sapr.mil

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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Chaplains train on new spiritual initiative

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

Chaplains and their assistants throughout Iraq were among the first to receive training on a new spiritual fitness program the Army is studying as a way to improve Soldier resiliency.

The Spiritual Fitness Initiative conference, held at the Hope Chapel on Camp Victory, Nov. 15, gave the participants insight into the program and how it can help Soldiers improve their mental and physical health.

Chaplain (Col.) Mike Lembke, United States Forces-Iraq chaplain, led the initiative to bring the SFI program to Iraq. The USF-I command team and Lembke brought in the SFI creators to inform the chaplains and the chaplain assistants about how this program can help Soldiers focus on positive aspects in their lives.

Lembke said this new initiative can strengthen the Army's resiliency program.

"SFI augments the spirituality section of the five dimensions of strength in the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program," said Lembke.

The goal of the conference was to educate the chaplains and to expand the program Army-wide through leadership support.

The program's trainers and creators, Dr. Chrys L. Parker and Dr. Glenn C. Sammis, said this initiative is currently in its beginning stages.

"So far we have established SFI training at Kalsu and Mosul," said Sammis. "We look forward to doing the SFI training for the chaplains and their assistants who are interested in the program."

Parker said the Spiritual Fitness Initiative takes a different approach from standard Army training.

"SFI is not a bible study, a class, a PowerPoint presentation, or a lecture," said Parker. "Instead, it's an experience of spiritual education and training developed to spark interest and allow Soldiers to find their own spirituality."

"In most programs you have to indicate what's wrong with you, but the SFI takes a different approach and finds out what's right with you," said Lembke.

For chaplain assistant Pfc. Lori McKenzie, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, the atmosphere and the program was different from other Army training she's been to.

"A little twist with a different training approach, together with an interactive environment is what separates this conference from any other conference," she said. "This will help me share the information with other Soldiers."

For others like Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer M. Alexis-Isaac, a volunteer chaplain assistant for the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Support Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, SFI helped her realize what it takes to gain spirituality.

"I learned that Spirituality is a group effort," said Alexis-Isaac. "As senior leaders we have to maintain an open line of communication and reach out to our Soldiers to help them find their own spirituality."

While the conferences and training in Iraq is the starting point for this program, Parker and Sammis hope the Spiritual Fitness Initiative will gain Army-wide support.

"The long term goal for the SFI is for battalion chaplains to initiate the training and for the commanders to embrace the program," said Lembke.

Before departing Iraq, Parker and Sammis will conduct several more training conferences throughout the country.



Dr. Chrys L. Parker co-creator of the Spiritual Fitness Initiative listens to questions from the chaplains who participated in the conference at the Hope Chapel on Camp Victory, Nov. 15.



Lt. Gen. Bob Cone, United States Forces-Iraq deputy commanding general for operations and III Corps commander, meets with Lt. Gen. Ali Ghaidan, Iraqi Ground Forces commander, at Camp Iraqi Heroes. During their weekly meeting, the generals discuss current operations in the Iraq.

Photo by Sgt. Steven Schneider

Cone, from page 1

Cone has helped Iraqi military leadership embrace the need for such self examination and sees them succeeding, taking what the U.S. military has taught them over the years and adapting it to their own culture.

“It’s a different culture; it’s slightly different when you see it on the ground, but they get it,” he said.

He cited a recent Ministry of Defense national after-action review in which the MOD assessed their response to recent attacks.

“They were quite critical of their own performance, I think, in a healthy way in terms of improving for the future,” Cone said.

Cone also credits U.S. service members for their ability to shift gears and take on a supporting role in Iraq’s security.

“There is nothing more adaptable than the American Soldier,” Cone said. “The (noncommissioned officers), the Soldiers, the junior officers get it, and ... understand the importance of being a coach.”

“One of our strengths is that we know how to teach, coach and mentor,” he said. “That’s part of our system, that’s part of our NCO professional development system, and the Iraqis really appreciate that.”

Cone, who spent 18 months in command of the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan,

understands that a personal, hands-on approach to mentoring carries a lot of weight.

“In this part of the world it is all about personal relationships,” Cone said. “The more time you spend with your Iraqi counterparts, the more trust you build, the more comfortable you are with them and they are with you.”

Cone explained that a well-placed comment over a cup of chai will go farther in making a point than an entire stack of PowerPoint slides.

“It is about those relationships,” he said, “so it’s an investment in success.”

Cone has guided U.S. operations as they evolved away from combat into stability operations with the onset of Operation New Dawn, and has watched as the Iraqi Security Forces developed into an entity that has learned to serve the citizens of Iraq rather than the political establishment, in spite of what may be considered overwhelming challenges.

“When we got here in March, the elections were being conducted, and in this period of time since the election, a lot of people speculated that this would be difficult,” he said.

“But what we’ve really seen is the Iraqi Security Forces definitely stepping up in terms of understanding their role in a constitutional democracy: to serve the people and to serve the constitution.

“In many cases, back in Saddam’s day, it was all about a guy that you worked

for and served for.

Today it’s all about the people, and that causes you to act differently.”

Cone pointed out that the ISF’s dedication to the people of Iraq is reflected in the record low violence of the recent months.

During the press conference, Cone noted that there are nearly 650,000 members of the ISF who are fully responsible for maintaining security in Iraq. In spite of recent high-profile attacks, violence is 20 percent lower than the 2009 average, he said, adding that September and October have been two of the least violent months on record since 2003.

“We are supporting them in their efforts and are proud of how far they’ve come to date,” he said.

Despite the improvements in Iraq and in the ISF, Cone remains focused on the work that needs to be accomplished during the next 14 months.

“There are things that (we) must accomplish and there are the nice-to-do things. We’re focused right now on the must-accomplish tasks, in terms of developing the security forces so that they have the foundation to continue into the future.”

As USF-I continues to work with the Iraqis, everyone is on track to complete those tasks, and Cone is confident in the capabilities of the ISF to continue to secure their country well into the future.

Induction, from page 1

qualities in loyalty, caring, discipline, leadership and professionalism. These characteristics are why Sgt. Audie Murphy is America's most decorated soldier; receiving every decoration for valor the military had to offer during WWII, including the Medal of Honor.

"When we think about Sgt. Audie Murphy, we think about the cream of the crop, the best of the best, and all the things he represented," said Coleman.

"The board was very tough and very stressful, but with a lot of preparation it made it somewhat easier to cope with," said SAMC inductee, Staff Sgt. Corey Daniels, from Groshen, Ind., and the battalion aid-station noncommissioned officer-in-charge, with the 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division.

"While you're sitting there you automatically think that you're doing horrible," said SAMC inductee Sgt. Dustin Yates, from Fruitland Park, Fla., and radio sections supervisor with the 40th Expeditionary Signal Battalion. "By the end of the board you're stressed and confused. When I came out of the board, I honestly thought I wasn't going



Staff Sgt. Corey Daniels, from Groshen, Ind., and a battalion aid-station noncommissioned officer-in-charge, with the 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, receives congratulatory handshakes from the command sergeants major after he is informed that he is accepted into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club, Nov. 15.

to make it."

"It was challenging and it makes you

tap the knowledge that you don't think about all the time," said Sgt. Thomas Gutierrez, from San Antonio, Texas, and a communications team chief with the 108th Military Police Company.

To be inducted into the SAMC is considered one of the highest honors for an NCO to achieve.

"For what it represents and who it represents, it was a very proud day as I look over my 32 years in service," said Coleman who is a member of the SAMC. "That was truly one of the highlights of my career."

"This was a long road for me," said Daniels.

"This was the second time I went to the board and it really is an honor to be inducted."

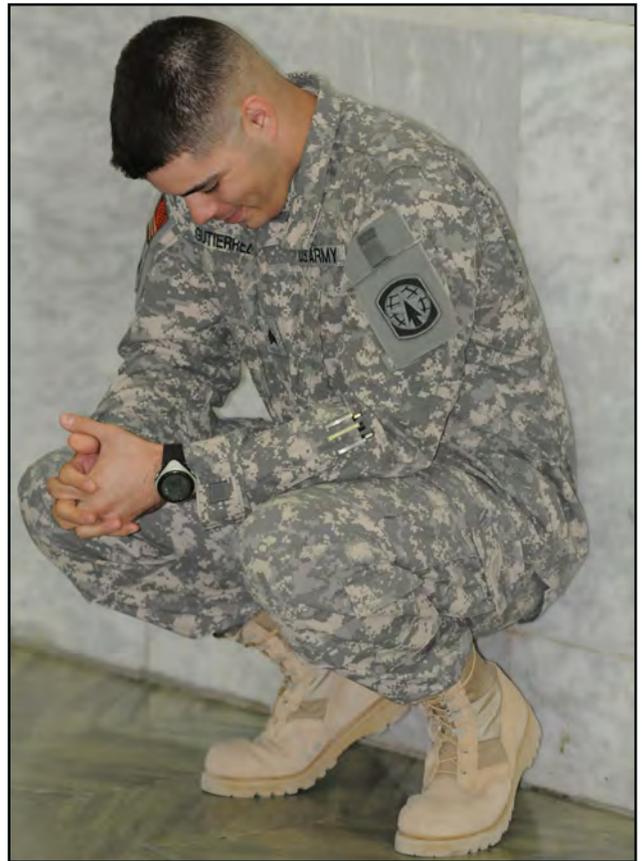
"It means a lot, but now is when the hard work actually starts," said

Yates. "Being inducted is just the beginning. Now I have to take what I've learned to my Soldiers and my peers to ensure they're squared away."

"I will definitely try to go again," said Gutierrez, who did not get inducted into the SAMC. "This is a volunteer board. You don't do it for recognition; you do it to keep traditions alive."

"These are truly the best of the best of the noncommissioned officers that are represented from the different brigades and battalions," said Coleman.

Two NCOs were accepted into the prestigious club Daniels is scheduled to be given an induction



Sgt. Thomas Gutierrez, from San Antonio, Texas, and a communications team chief with the 108th Military Police Company, tries to calm his nerves before going into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club board at Al Faw Palace, Camp Victory, Nov. 15.

ceremony and presentation of the SAMC medallion when he redeploys in December. Yates is scheduled to receive his in January.



Sgt. Dustin Yates, from Fruitland Park, Fla., a radio sections supervisor with the 40th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, gets word from the board president that he was accepted into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club.

Four star re-enlistment



Photos by Sgt. Caleb Barrieau

Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, commanding general, United States Forces-Iraq, speaks as he prepares to re-enlist Sgt. 1st Class Steven A. Marty and Staff Sgt. Christine Menendez at Al Faw Palace on Camp Victory, Nov. 19. The Brooklyn, N.Y. natives are assigned to the USF-I J2, Analysis and Production Section. Marty, is the NCOIC of the Geospatial Intelligence section and Menendez works at the Signals Intelligence Section. Marty has been in the Army for 12 years with two deployments to Afghanistan and Menendez has been in the Army for eight years. This is the first Iraq deployment for both Soldiers.



Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, commanding general, United States Forces-Iraq, gives the oath of re-enlistment to Sgt. 1st Class Steven A. Marty and Staff Sgt. Christine Menendez.



Sgt. 1st Class Steven A. Marty and Staff Sgt. Christine Menendez raise their right hands as they are given the oath of re-enlistment.



**Combined Federal Campaign
Overseas**
Make a World of Difference
October 4 – December 3
**For more information contact your unit
CFC-O representative or go to:**
<http://www.cfcoverseas.org/>



How do you plan to celebrate Thanksgiving this year?

V
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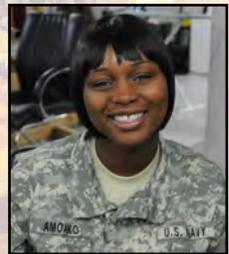
"I will enjoy a meal with my fellow SJS service members."

Private 1st Class Wendy Reyes
Unit Supply Specialist
SJS Command Group



"I will be working."

Spc. Tyrell Bivins
Unit Supply Clerk / Armorer
III Corps B Co. STB



"I will be cooking a family style dinner for the SJS team."

Petty Officer Class I Pearl Amoako
Culinary Specialist Supervisor
SJS Command Group



"I will be calling my family and hopefully eat some turkey at the dfac."

Sgt. Owen Zechman
Operations NCOIC
HSC III Corps



"Be at an MWR event and have my guitar signed."

Staff Sgt. Leon Madrigal
Automations NCOIC
USF-I Plans and Operations Section



"Celebrate it with my medical team."

Spc. Edward Givens
Healthcare Specialist
HSC III Corps STB

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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

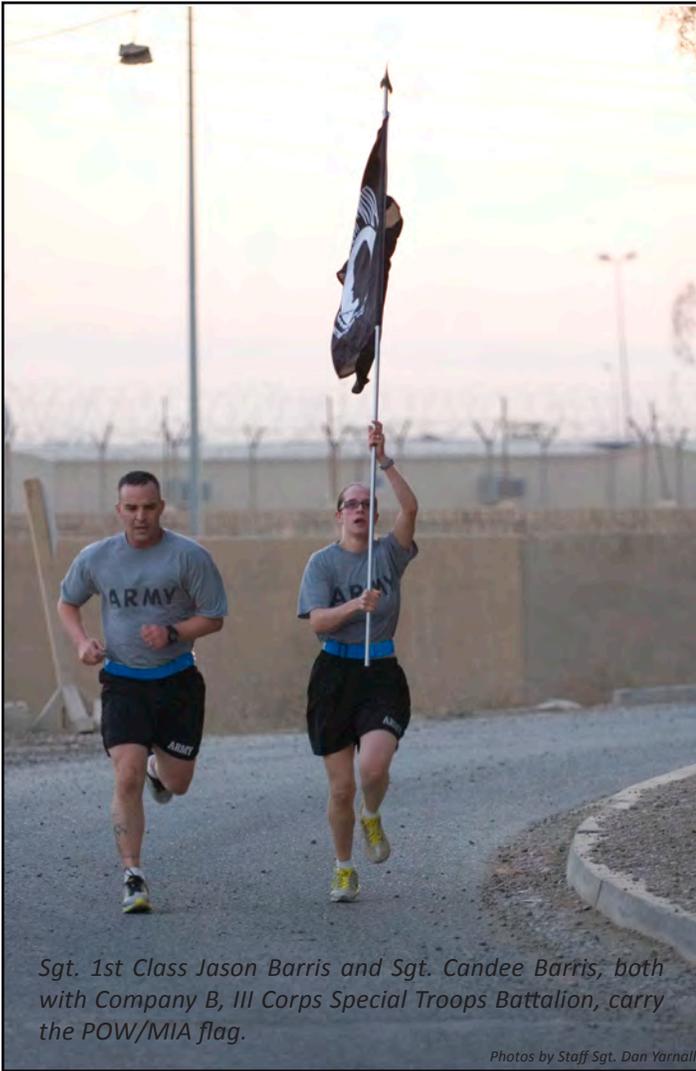
Pharmacy
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - noon;
1 - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. - noon

Websites

Check it out:

USF-I Web pages
www.usf-iraq.com
www.flickr.com/photos/mnfiraq
www.twitter.com/USF_Iraq

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



Sgt. 1st Class Jason Barris and Sgt. Candee Barris, both with Company B, III Corps Special Troops Battalion, carry the POW/MIA flag.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall



Two Soldiers exchange the POW/MIA flag during the run.

Running to remember

Service members honor POW/MIA during 12-hour flag run event

Runners and walkers honored United States military personnel who were prisoners of war or missing in action during a 12 hour POW/MIA flag run at Camp Slayer Nov. 13. The run, sponsored by the United States forces-Iraq J2, lasted from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Service members took turns carrying a POW/MIA flag, handing it off every 15 minutes throughout the run.



Iraqi Boy Scouts, Girl Guides raise awareness through 5K



Photo by Spc. Charlene Mendiola

Members of the Iraqi Boy Scouts hand out water to runners during the Kashafa 5k run on Camp Victory, Nov. 14. More than 500 service members and civilians participated in the run to support and raise awareness for the Iraqi Boy Scouts and Girl Guides program. If interested in volunteering with the scouting program, contact Timothy Norwood at timothy.norwood@iraq.centcom.mil or DSN (318) 835-1609. For more information, view their website at <http://victorybasecouncil.org/>.