DANGER FORWARD

November 29, 2010 | Issue 44

SAYING THANKS

Big Red One leaders take to the skies to celebrate Thanksgiving

Photo by Spc. Eve Ililau

Maj. Gen. Vincent Brooks (2nd from right), 1st Infantry Division and U.S. Division-South Commanding General, serves a Thanksgiving meal alongside officers from the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment at Camp Delta in southern Iraq. Brooks and other senior leaders of the Big Red One visited 23 dining facilities on 20 posts spread over nine provinces in southern Iraq to spread holiday cheer.

By Master Sgt. Matt Howard
1st Inf. Div., USD-S PAO

BASRA, Iraq – The plan was an ambitious one: visit 23 dining facilities in nine hours spread over nine provinces in southern Iraq, an area the size of Washington state.

The 1st Infantry Division command team, also known as the "Victory 5," visited almost every camp, base and airfield in the United States Division-South operating environment to talk and eat with USD-S personnel on Thanksgiving Day.

Maj. Gen. Vincent Brooks, 1st Inf. Div. Commanding General, Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne, division command sergeant major, Brig. Gen. Randal Dragon, deputy commanding general for support, Brig. Gen. Ricky Gibbs, deputy commanding general for maneuver, and Col. Richard Piscal, division chief of staff, each visited multiple dining facilities, serving food and chatting with the Soldiers.

"Our Soldiers serve us every day, and we just take this opportunity on a day of thanks, to thank them by serving them ourselves," Brooks said.

The locations they served the troops ranged from tiny joint security stations on the Iranian border with less than a hundred people to massive U.S. hubs that house several thousand people.

"This is unprecedented," said Sgt. Maj. Juan Abreu, the 1st Infantry Division's food services sergeant major. "As far as I know, this has never been done before."

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Iraqi air force takes off - p. 7

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Iraq Army aviators complete Mi-17 weapons qualification

By Sgt. Chad Menegay
USF-I, DCG A&T PAO

BAGHDAD - Three Iraq Army Aviation Directorate instructor pilots completed the flying portion of Mi-17 weapons re-qualification training Oct. 27.

Assisted by representatives of United States Forces-Iraq's Iraq Training and Advisory Mission-Air Force, the instructor pilots were required to plan the mission and then execute firing operations for 80mm rockets at targets.

The MI-17 can be armed with an array of rockets, missiles and guns. The Russian-designed helicopter can be used for a multitude of missions such as: resupply, troop transport, air assault of enemy forces, and search and rescue.

"It is a multi-mission helicopter," said Iraqi Army Brig. Gen. Kalaf Mohammad Frak, commander of Taji Air Base. "We can use the Mi-17s to fight terrorism, to conduct night missions and for medical evacuations."

The successful completion of this exercise signifies that the Iraqi Army Aviation Directorate is capable of safely training its personnel to execute live-fire events with its Mi-17 fleet, said U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Scott M. Hanson, director ITAM-Air Force.

Iraqi weapons handlers safely transported and installed the rockets on the two mission-certified Mi-17 helicopters, and implemented usual safety measures to ensure the training event's success.

"They're working toward taking over security of the country," said Air Force Lt. Col. Scott Curtin, commander of the 721st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron and senior Iraq Training and Advisory Mission-Air Force advisor to the Taji Air Base commander. "This training is a step forward and will help them take over air missions.

Photo by Sgt. Chad Menegay

Iraqi Army Brig. Gen. Kalaf Mohammad Frak, Taji Air Base commander, directs U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Scott Curtin, 721st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron commander and senior Iraq Training and Advisory Mission-Air Force advisor to the Taji Air Base commander, to the After Action Review following a successful Iraqi Army Aviation Directorate Mi-17 helicopter live-fire exercise at the Besmaya Combat Training Center.

The Iraqi Army Aviation Directorate leadership and aircrew coordinated the mission with the approval of the Iraqi Army, and the instructor pilots successfully fired 36 of 40 rockets. The remaining rockets were properly secured and safely returned to the IA Aviation Directorate's home base in Taji.

"Our advisors will continue to monitor this training and help determine steps for the Iraqi Army Aviation Directorate to transition to real-world employment of these weapons in support of Iraqi Army and other Iraqi Security Forces," Hanson said. ■

Commanding General
Major General
Vincent K. Brooks

Command Sergeant Major
Command Sergeant Major
Jim Champagne

DANGER FORWARD

PAO

1st Inf. Div. PAO: Lt. Col. Sophie Gainey

Command Info OIC: Capt. Brian Melanephy
Command Info NCOIC: 1st Sgt. Charles Owens

Email: MND-S_PAO@iraq.centcom.mil
Phone: (Iraqna) (0790)-194-2865
(770)-263-9379.

Danger Forward

Print NCOIC: Staff Sgt. Nathan Smith
Editor/Layout: Sgt. Jason Kaneshiro

Staff Writers: Staff Sgt. Chanelcherie DeMello, Staff Sgt. Cody Harding, Sgt. Jason Kemp, Sgt. Raymond Quintanilla, Sgt. James Kennedy Benjamin, Spc. Eve Ililau

Contributing Units
3rd ACR
3rd AAB, 4th Inf. Div.
305th MPAD

WINTER SAFETY

By Joe Zelko
USD-S Safety

The winter holiday season is a time of joy, hope, fellowship and giving thanks for our blessings. But it also involves activities that expose each of us to increased risk. I know what you are thinking; we are still in Iraq what does winter safety have to do with me? Soon enough we will all return to the states and, during that time, old man winter will be in full force. Following these guidelines will help make your holiday season safer and more enjoyable.

Hazardous weather and road conditions, reduced hours of daylight, alcohol, fatigue and vehicle breakdowns, which are all common to the holiday season, can make operating vehicles an extremely dangerous undertaking.

During the coming holidays, the likelihood of being involved in an accident on the highways and interstates is greatly intensified. Predominant factors are the increased use of intoxicants and the tendency to travel long distances during this season.

Fatigue and excessive speed can be natural by products of these factors. As a fatigued driver becomes less alert, his ability to judge distance, depth and speed is reduced. Accidents involving sleepy drivers are usually the most serious because a sleeping driver cannot exercise any degree of control.

Fortunately, drivers can take measures to ensure their personal safety – and that of their passengers – by keeping these precautions in mind:

•Wear your seat belt and make sure your passengers buckle up. If you're involved in an accident, your chances of avoiding serious injury or death are significantly greater. Furthermore, wearing a seat belt reduces the secondary impact of an accident, which is the collision between the passenger and the interior of the vehicle.

•Get adequate rest before and during the trip, and avoid driving more than eight hours in one day. Be sure to take short, 15-minute breaks every hour.

•Avoid night driving as much as possible and leaving for a trip after performing a full day of duty.

•Avoid alcohol before and during the trip. After consuming a few drinks, a driver is unable to accurately judge speeds and distances, follow traffic patterns or react quickly to hazards or emergencies.

•Maintain adequate ventilation in the vehicle at all times. This will reduce the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning. Ensure

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This week in Army history...

1st Infantry Division History

December 1, 1994 – The Associated Press reports that the Army is considering a proposal to deactivate the headquarters of the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kan. and to reactivate it in Germany. Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, R-Kan., said, "I am confident that if the Big Red One's flag is deployed to Europe, it will eventually return to Fort Riley."

Operation Iraqi Freedom History

December 5, 2004 – The Guardian reports that gunmen in Tikrit opened fire on two buses, killing 17 and injuring 13. The buses were carrying Iraqi contractors on their way to work at a weapons dump.

4th Infantry Division History

November 29, 1966 – The St. Petersburg Times reports that Soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division have been using a counter-mortar radar that tracks incoming fire and calculates where they were fired from, enabling U.S. aircraft and artillery to deliver accurate counter fire.

Chief of Chaplains comes to Basra

Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Douglas Carver spends Thanksgiving with troops in southern Iraq

By Staff Sgt. Chanelcherie DeMello
305th MPAD, USD-S PAO

BASRA, Iraq – For service members and Department of Defense civilians in Basra, time away from loved ones did not deter the spirit of gratefulness as they attended the Thanksgiving Day service at Basra Chapel, Nov. 25.

Those who were present listened to the words of the Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Douglas Carver, U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains, highest ranking chaplain in the Army, spread the Thanksgiving spirit.

"Thanksgiving should be one of the central and most important holiday observances in our nation," said Carver.

In his sermon, Carver said he felt that the true meaning of Thanksgiving had become obscured by a society of advertisement and sports since the first Thanksgiving almost four centuries ago. He added that he felt that the spirit of Thanksgiving remained true among deployed Soldiers.

"It's plain and simple out here," said Carver. "You don't have all the distracters."

Reflecting on a family tradition, Carver said every Thanksgiving his mother and father would ask him to name one thing he was thankful for and, though he couldn't recall much gratitude he had as a child, he is always reminded by a scripture.

"Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love and mercy endures forever," Carver recited. "In everything, give thanks."

Spc. Jared Cooper, a native of Defiance, Ohio, and a chaplain's assistant with the 1st Infantry Division said the visit was very special.

"Knowing he left his family this time of the year to visit us" said Cooper, "is just really amazing. It shows he has a heart for the Soldiers and their well-being."

Grateful for his many blessings, Carver said the occasion is a time for him to pause and thank God.

"I enjoy my health, my life and my family," said Carver, "and the opportunity to serve as a chaplain, a Soldier in the military. Thanksgiving gives me the opportunity to give thanks to our creator, the giver of all things."

Cooper, excited to be redeploying home soon, said he is also thankful for the memories of his friends he leaves behind in Basra.

> *"Knowing he left his family this time of year to visit us is just really amazing. It shows he has a heart for the Soldiers and their well-being."*
>
> -Spc. Jared Cooper

"For me, it is a time to gather around with family," Cooper said, "but also to spend quality time with close friends. Build and share memories we normally wouldn't have."

After delivering the Thanksgiving service, Chaplain Carver traveled with 1st Inf. Div. Commanding General Maj. Gen. Vincent Brooks to six dining facilities across southern Iraq to share Thanksgiving meals with Soldiers.

Marking the fifth year to visit deployed troops and staff for the holidays, Carver feels considerably fortunate to minister to Soldiers, commands and other chaplains.

"If I cannot be with my family," Carver said, "I can't think of any place else I'd rather be than here with my other very important family." ■

Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Douglas Carver, United States Army chaplain sings and plays a church melody at the Post Chapel Thanksgiving worship service Nov. 25 in Basra, Iraq. The ceremony featured a sermon and testament from Carver, the guest speaker, in honor of Thanksgiving.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Chanelcherie DeMello

WHAT'S NEXT?

Mapping the way ahead in Iraq

Mr. Martin Quinn, the Minister Counselor for Public Affairs, left, speaks with Ambassador James Jeffrey, the American Ambassador to Iraq, during a break in the 3rd Engagement Strategy Conference on Contingency Operating Base Adder Nov. 23. Several other members of the Embassy Staff also came to the conference on the Provincial Reconstruction teams to help plan for the future as United States involvement in Iraq draws down.

By Staff Sgt. Cody Harding
1st Inf. Div., USD-S PAO

BASRA, Iraq – As the U.S. Forces continue the responsible drawdown of forces, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams are adjusting their own missions. To help plan for the change, the leaders of the 1st Infantry Division, the PRTs and liaisons from several U.S. Government agencies gathered on COB Adder for the 3rd Engagement Strategy Conference Nov. 23.

Ensuring the future of a sovereign and stable Iraq takes more than a military effort. Combating an insurgency means taking care of the population, strengthening their infrastructure and building meaningful projects for the future.

This is the role of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Staffed by experts in several fields, the PRTs provide the Iraqis a way to stabilize the province in real and lasting ways while the U.S. Forces and Iraqi Security Forces provide security to the people. Their staffs coordinate construction projects, reach out to the surrounding communities and improve the conditions of the cities and towns in the provinces of Iraq.

Ambassador James Jeffrey, the current Ambassador to Iraq, and Ms. Alcy Frelick, the Office of Provincial Affairs director, flew from the Embassy at Baghdad to attend the conference. Maj. Gen. Vincent Brooks, the commander of the 1st Inf. Div. and United States Division - South, Brig. Gen. Randal Dragon, the USD-S deputy commanding general for support, and Air Force Brig. Gen. Bob Ranck, the deputy J-9 for United States Forces – Iraq, sat beside their civilian partners in the PRTs as the brief began.

The first half of the day focused on the plans and efforts needed for the drawdown of the PRTs throughout the country, and how their change would affect the area as a whole. The PRTs are preparing for a shift in their role as the U.S. Forces responsibly draw down throughout the country, preparing their Iraqi counterparts to continue their work in improving the provinces.

Frelick said that the meeting allows for needed dialog between the civilian PRTs and the military leadership as the mission changes.

"When you look at what it is that makes a society stable, it's not just the police and military but a lot of different factors," said Frelick. "So this is where we've been able to bring real experts together with a variety of different educational and experience backgrounds to give guidance and provide a platform."

The second part of the day focused on each province in detail, including what sorts of challenges and opportunities they faced in the next year. Questions about new projects, the shift in leaders that came about from the elections and funding for continued operations turned into discussions on the way ahead for Iraq. As the PRTs prepare for their own reduced role, their commitment to the provinces was still first on their agenda.

Martin Quinn, the Minister Council for Public Affairs in the Embassy, said that the conference was a great opportunity to learn.

"It's good to have a sense of what's going on here," Quinn said. "It's also good to see concerns about the mission, and as the ambassador said, we have to be honest about our message."

Frelick compared the current role of the PRTs to a 'senior year' in the mission, not just for the U.S. involvement but for their Iraqi counterparts, who face increased responsibility over the future of the country.

"Ultimately, it's about the Iraqi people," said Frelick. "And I think that the provincial teams are the place where you really see that. You really see that it's all about Iraq, you really see it's about the future of Iraq and building a peaceful platform for this country's future. ■

CONTAIN YOURSELF: *Big Red One Soldiers pack up and prepare for redeployment*

Sgt. 1st Class Earl Brown, a telephone communications officer with Signal Company, Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, inventories boxes in Basra Nov. 27. The inventory is a necessary part of the process of getting DHHB, its equipment and its Soldiers back to Fort Riley, Kan.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathaniel Smith

By Staff Sgt. Nathaniel Smith
1st Inf. Div., USD-S PAO

BASRA, Iraq – The first Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division Soldiers to redeploy are scheduled to arrive at Fort Riley, Kan., before Christmas, but there is still a lot to be done between now and then to ensure they have smooth travels home.

Step one of that is the packing and inspection of the unit's shipping containers to get Soldiers' personal gear from southern Iraq back to home station.

If any unauthorized goods are found in a container, that container and all its contents can be in limbo for up to 18 months, but luckily for the troops of DHHB, they have Sgt. 1st Class Lilia Schoenhofer, the unit's customs program manager who has completed almost 1,000 inspections over the course of her tour in southern Iraq.

"Customs is a very, very fun job because you're busy all day every day," Schoenhofer said. "It may seem like a tedious task, but thank your customs inspectors because they're the ones that are going to get you home."

Schoenhofer said the best way she prepares Soldiers for their customs inspection is by providing them with timely and accurate information to prepare.

"A lot of people think it's kind of like at the airport where you walk up and they're ready for you. In order to maintain the integrity of the inspection, I give a briefing at the very beginning," Schoenhofer said. "I usually block it for three hours. After the briefing, it literally takes that long to get the inspection knocked out. It really depends on making sure everybody knows that they're probably going to be there awhile."

Since day-to-day operations continue, the Chicago native said scheduling conflicts can be a big problem for taking care of the inspection requirement, but she schedules personal inspections for those who are simply too busy to be at their container for an inspection.

Maj. Terri Andreoni, the officer-in-charge of one of the shipping containers going back to Fort Riley, said the information the customs inspectors provide has helped the process go smoothly so far.

"All the guidance that's come out from both (Division Transportation Office) and the customs people of (Provost Marshall Office) and out of the company, it's laid out pretty specifically how things are supposed to go," Andreoni said. "We're just waiting for our designated time that we'll do our inspections."

Schoenhofer said another issue is conflicts of interest where Soldiers may be inspecting bags that belong to their supervisors. To negate this, Soldiers of the 3rd Advise and Assist Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, currently attached to the 1st Inf. Div. as part of United States Division-South, have been helping with the inspections.

Andreoni, a St. Marys, Wisc., native, said while the inspections are a sign that she will be going home soon, her work continues.

"This is just one of the things that we are checking off," she said, "but we're still focused on doing a lot of good work here." ■

Iraq Air Force soars to new level, activates squadron in Nasiriyah

By Maj. Alan S. Brown
3rd AAB, 4th Inf. Div., PAO

Photo by Pvt. DeAngelo Wells

An Iraqi air force pilot shows off a CH2000 reconnaissance plane based at Tallil Air Base. The 70th Iraqi Sqdn. was activated on the base Nov. 23 and will continue training and conducting operations to support Operation New Dawn.

NASIRIYAH, Iraq – The Iraqi air force made a huge advance Nov. 23 with the activation of the 70th Iraqi Air Force Squadron on Tallil Air Base.

The air base outside of Nasiriyah is a strategic location for southern Iraq, enabling the Iraqis to respond more quickly to an internal or external threat to the region. The 70th AF Sqdn. will also train closely with the U.S. Air Force as it builds its capabilities.

The future for the 70th AF Sqdn. appears to be as bright as the day of its activation ceremony. Set on the east ramp of the airfield amidst calm, clear skies and mild temperatures, the ceremony officially marked the arrival of the squadron to the base and celebrated the tremendous progress of the Iraqi air force over the last several years.

The 70th AF Sqdn. is currently training under the guidance of the 321st Air Expeditionary Wing, which is overseeing a rigorous program involving aerial maneuvering, radio communications and air-to-ground attack capabilities.

The Iraqi air force is not new to air operations over its homeland. According to Brig. Gen. Scott Hansen, commander, 321st AEW, Iraqi pilots and aircraft have already played a significant role in Operation New Dawn.

"Before today, the Iraqi air force has been flying operational missions, helping to secure borders, important infrastructures, and protecting the people of Iraq," said Hansen.

The new unit proudly displayed its new aircraft, a group of CH 2000 reconnaissance planes, an AC-208 and an Iraqi C-130 cargo plane, similar to the U.S. version. The single propeller CH2000 has already logged many flight hours patrolling southern Iraq, providing valuable information to Iraqi commanders on the ground.

The Iraqi air force has plans to increase its number of aircraft in the future, as it takes a greater responsibility for Iraqi airspace, said Brig. Gen. Hassan, operations officer for the Iraqi air force.

"Recently we agreed to receive the last planes for the initial training which will allow us to progress more. We will soon make an agreement to gain fighter jets to enable us to get the fighter power we need to be able to support the Iraqi government," said Hassan.

Lt. Gen. Babeker Zebari, the chief of staff of the Iraqi army, said that the addition of the 70th AF Sqdn. to Tallil Air Base is the first step by the Iraqis to assume control of the base, as U.S. forces continue to reduce in number.

Until the official end of the current advise and assist mission, U.S. and Iraqi forces will live and work side-by-side on Tallil Air Base and the adjacent Camp Adder.

The Commandant of the Iraqi Air Force, Lt. Gen. Anwar Hamed Amen and the Deputy Commanding General—Maneuver, United States Division—South, Brig. Gen. Ricky Gibbs, also attended the event to show their support for the new squadron. An Iraqi C-130 from Baghdad landed at the airfield with a host of officers and troops to attend the ceremony.

"This marks not only the past and the present, but also the future of the Iraqi air force. There will be a really strong presence of the Iraqi air force in Nasiriyah," said Gibbs. ■

Photo by Pvt. DeAngelo Wells

Brig. Gen. Scott Hanson, commander, 321st AEW, hands over a flag to Brig. Gen. Hakeem, commander, 70th Iraqi AF Sqdn., to symbolize the activation of his unit at Tallil Air Base Nov 23.

1 in 50,000

There are 50,000 troops from the U.S. currently deployed to Iraq. They all have a story to tell. This is one of them...

*Between raising a family and enduring overseas deployments, **Staff Sgt. Christopher Fuller** earned his associate degree and is on track to earn his bachelor degree. But his daughter's own educational ambitions are what really inspires him.*

By Sgt. Jason Kaneshiro
305th MPAD, USD-S PAO

Courtesy photo

While deployed to Iraq, Staff Sgt. Christopher Fuller, a paralegal specialist with the 1st Infantry Division, has made strides towards his bachelor degree. His daughter has seen his struggles juggling work, school, family and deployments and was inspired to enroll herself in college while still in high school. While Staff Sgt. Fuller has completed eight courses while here, his daughter back home has inspired him after finishing her first college class while still a high school sophomore.

BASRA, Iraq - "Back at Fort Riley, on a normal day, I'd work until maybe eight or nine at night. When I got home, I'd spend about an hour with my kids and then after that I'd start doing my schoolwork," said Fuller.

Fuller, who is a paralegal specialist with the 1st Infantry Division, has been taking classes since 2006. On most nights, he would devote three to four hours on schoolwork, staying up until one or two in the morning to complete his assignments before finally getting some rest and waking up at five-thirty in the morning for physical training and starting the cycle over again.

Unknown to him, his eldest daughter, 14 at the time, knew he had been plugging away at his schoolwork after everyone else had gone to bed. It was seeing those nightly efforts that inspired her and spurred her into action.

On her own initiative, she inquired into a local college and was able to enroll in classes while still attending high school. Not wanting the same struggles her father has endured in trying to balance the competing commitments in his life, she became determined to complete her college education as quickly as she could before a family and a career would demand her attention.

"Kids pay attention to what you do," Fuller said. "She saw how hard I had to work, staying up so late."

Being deployed has not stopped the elder Fuller from striving for his degree. Since arriving in Iraq earlier this year, he has completed eight classes. He hopes to finish his degree before being deployed again.

He has only six more required courses before being awarded his degree in Criminal and Social Justice.

His daughter that enrolled herself in college, still only a sophomore in high school, recently completed her first college course. She earned an 'A'.

"She amazes me with her ambition," said Fuller. "If I had to do it over again, I'd go to college straight out of high school, or at least when I was still a private."

When he joined the Army over 12 years ago, his first noncommissioned officer in charge of him preached to him to start his college education early. Knowing firsthand the challenges that face Soldiers that put off their education until their later years, as he did, he will pass that same advice on to his junior Soldiers, hopefully with better results.

But in the end, his own achievements, however much he has struggled to reach them, are not what he is most proud of in his life.

"It's more meaningful to see that it encouraged her," he said of his daughter. "It means more to me than getting my own degree." ■

VICTORY 5, from front page

Abreu and Chief Warrant Officer Eunice Buffington spent months planning the mission with the 1st Infantry Division's aviation section. Four sets of aircraft were dedicated for the day, logging thousands of miles to successfully complete the mission.

The visits were appreciated by the troops.

"They've done a good job of capturing the feeling and spirit of Thanksgiving here in Iraq," said Pfc. Zack Davidson of Reston, Va., while dining on deep fried turkey at Camp Garryowen in Maysan Province.

"It's one of the best Thanksgivings I've ever had," agreed Pfc. Armando DeLeon of Brownsville, Texas. "It's an amazing day for us ... having a fun time with all of our comrades."

As the 1st Infantry Division's command team toured southern Iraq, they weren't alone. The 1st Inf. Div. Band's brass quintet and rock bands accompanied Brooks and Champagne respectively, setting up, performing 20-30 minute sets and then racing to the helicopters for the next stop.

"The bands were really the unsung heroes of the day. They played first, they ate last," said Abreu. "They worked really hard and the Soldiers really enjoyed it."

Cooks also worked overtime to create a special Thanksgiving for the troops.

Spc. James Grantham, a cook at Joint Security Station Al Sheeb on the Iranian border, stayed up all night before Thanksgiving preparing the feast and the decorations.

"I try to put my heart into it," said Grantham. "It's not easy, but to see their faces after I get the job done it just makes me feel good. It's not just for Thanksgiving, it's every day when I cook a meal. It makes me feel good to see their faces smile and no complaints."

By 7 pm, with thousands of Soldiers fed, and thousands of miles logged, the Victory 5 converged on Basra's Fighting First Dining Facility for their final stop, serving the Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division Headquarters. ■

WINTER, from page 3

the entire exhaust system is completely free of leaks.

•Operate your vehicle at speeds appropriate for weather and road conditions and avoid overdriving your field of vision.

•Have your vehicle inspected for proper operation of brakes, steering, windshield wipers, tires, heater and defroster, lights and the exhaust system. Mechanical safety of the vehicle is very important all year, especially in the winter as conditions demand more from your vehicle and you.

You have completed a one year deployment and with distinction, so it would be a real shame to lose anyone this holiday season due to drinking and driving, not wearing a seatbelt or trying to drive 1200 miles in one day. Enjoy your well deserved time with family and friends and be safe in all you do. Remember to use the 5 step composite risk management process. Safety first. ■

1st Infantry Division leaders visited almost every camp, small and large, in less than nine hours on Thanksgiving. (top) Brig. Gen. Ricky Gibbs, 1st Infantry Division Deputy Commanding General for Maneuver, shakes hands with one of the cooks at Camp Hamiyah, a tiny post just south of Baghdad in Babil Province. (center) Brig. Gen. Randal Dragon, 1st Inf. Div. Deputy Commanding General for Support, serves mashed potatoes for Thanksgiving at Joint Security Station Wessam in Basra Province, Iraq. (bottom) 1st Inf. Div. Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne serves turkey to a civilian employee at Camp Shocker near the Iraq-Iran border in Wasit Province. Champagne visited five different camps in four provinces on Thanksgiving Day.

We wanted to know what was on your mind so we asked...

What does Thanksgiving mean to you?

Sgt. 1st Class Luis Torres III, a native of Sinajana, Guam, and the communication security noncommissioned officer in charge for the 1st Infantry Division.

"Food, family, good times of the past and present, and always know Family comes first before anything else."

Staff Sgt. Tyler Fujimoto, a native of Kalihi, Hawaii, and the operations noncommissioned officer in charge with 322nd Civil Affairs Brigade, Fort Shafter Flats, Honolulu, Hawaii.

"It's a day to reflect on the days passed and be grateful for today and tomorrow. It's a time to examine my life and remember wherever I am and whatever I am doing, I am grateful for my family waiting for my return home."

Chief Warrant Officer Parry Preuc, a native of Dededo, Guam and the legal administrator for Operations Company, Division Headquarters and Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division.

"It's always been about being with my family. I am blessed with a beautiful, caring, and loving family who has always been there for me, thank the Lord."

Master Sgt. Raymond Quitugua Jr. a native of Sinajana, Guam, and the anti-terrorism officer and vulnerability assessment team leader for Operations Company, Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division.

"Thanksgiving is the time to recognize and appreciate the blessings I've been given in life; which is easy since the Lord has given me so much."

Fort Hood adds stitches to 9/11 flag and to legacy of healing

By Michael Heckman
Fort Hood Sentinel staff

FORT HOOD, Texas - Americans have experienced many tragedies, some before and others since the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center Sept. 11, 2001.

A stitch at a time, the largest flag to survive that attack is being restored. During a ceremony held Friday at Abrams Physical Fitness Center, several hundred students, first responders, Soldiers and members of the public sewed parts of the flag that flew at Duncan Elementary School on Fort Hood Nov. 5, 2009, during the worst shooting rampage on a U.S. military installation into the National 9/11 Flag.

Restoring the 30- by 40-foot flag by the 10th anniversary of 9/11 is a process Jeff Parness, founder of the New York Says Thank You Foundation, and others, believe will help unite and heal the nation.

"We just want to remind people about the healing nature of the tragedies that hurt all of us... that when you come together and help each other it just makes us that much stronger," Parness said before the flag stitching ceremony. Sites for the events were selected, he added, based upon what happened there and upon the healing potential the flag can bring to those communities.

In addition to Fort Hood, stops in the national tour will include Oklahoma City, site of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, and, on Dec. 7, on the deck of the battleship USS Missouri at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

"This whole process just kind of stitches all of our stories together. But the flag is not about 9/11.

"It's about 9/12. It's about honoring that sense of service and volunteerism and spirit when people come together to heal and recover," Parness emphasized.

Although many Americans recall the flag firefighters hung from steel beams at ground zero, just as members of an earlier generation remember the flag Marines raised on Mount Suribachi on the island of Iwo Jima in the Pacific Ocean during World War II, the National 9/11 Flag came from a building adjacent to the World Trade Center. Its tattered remains were found by Charlie Bridges, the ground zero cleanup superintendent.

Restoration of the flag began seven years later in Greensburg, Kan. Women in that community, destroyed by a tornado, stitched pieces of several flags that survived the natural disaster onto a cotton backing along with the tattered remnants of the flag found in New York.

"Each good deed is like a stitch in the flag to restore America," firefighter John Wallace, FDNY Ladder 173, said. Arriving shortly after Tower 1 fell, Wallace helped rescue survivors at ground zero.

"I said goodbye to my wife, Debbie, told her I loved her and went to my firehouse," Wallace said.

"It was a brilliant, sunny day but the devastation was unimaginable. I just focused on rescuing anyone I could," he added.

Wallace said participating in community restoration projects and in the flag stitching ceremony helps him to heal and "... to keep the memory alive of the 343 firefighters who were killed that day. Going to these communities and seeing the outpouring of help and caring is the best symbol of the selflessness that day."

Despite recent depictions of America as a country divided between east and west coasts and red and blue states, he added,

Photo by Michael Heckman

First responders honor the flag during a flag stitching ceremony for the National 9/11 Flag held Friday at Abrams Physical Fitness Center, Fort Hood.

"I don't look at the country in that light. We're all citizens of this country and in a time of need that's what we do as Americans; we help each other out."

After adding his stitch to the flag, 1st Sgt. Galen T. Bowens, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division West, said, "It meant to me we're still resilient and that one stitch shows that Soldiers and the American people are going to pull together and mend this flag and drive on and put this behind us ... that we are all together."

Bowens was at the Battle Simulation Center on post when he heard about the 9/11 attacks.

"It brought tears to my eyes and my heart was pounding. But I'm a Soldier and the patriotic symbolism of that flag flying there (over ground zero) was awesome," he added.

About 30 fourth- and fifth-grade students, including members of the National Elementary Honor Society and student council, added stitches to the flag.

Marie Davis, Duncan Elementary School principal, said three stripes from the school's flag were donated to the national flag project.

"This is a momentous event," Davis said. "This flag, we hope, is something future generations of Americans will look back on as joining us together as communities. So, for my students to be involved ... I told them, they'll be telling their children and grandchildren, 'I put a stitch in this.'"

Although school age students might be too young to remember 9/11, Parness acknowledged, "They remember what happened last year. And I think as they get older, they'll understand the similarities and not just the unique aspects of the tragedies but of the kindness and sense of humanity that follows a tragedy."

In the future, he added, "They'll be able to travel to New York someday and visit the national museum and recall that they put a stitch in it."

Once completed, the National 9/11 Flag will become part of the permanent collection of the national September 11th Memorial Museum which is being built at ground zero. ■

This week's BRO Pet Photo Contest winner is CSM Samson R. Harvey, the U.S. Army National Guard "Dog". Congratulations to our winner and thank you to all who participated and voted! We're not done yet so stay tuned for more photos and contests to come.

Have a photo from around USD-S?

Email it, along with the photographer's name, rank and unit, the date and place it was taken, and a short description, to:

nathaniel.smith5@iraq.centcom.mil

You could have it featured here and receive a coin from DCSM Jim Champagne.

Basra Betty says...

Dear Betty,

I was wondering if you had any suggestions on making the holidays a special one for my family this year, since I won't home before Christmas. Any gift ideas? It's hard to shop from here, and with all my deployments, my family has enough keepsake boxes and camel statues. Any thoughts?

Signed,

Homesick

Dear "Homesick,"

Geez, I can't even begin to tell you how many birthdays, holidays, etc., I've missed! Luckily, over the last two deployments I've learned a few tricks that have helped to let my daughter and other family and friends know I'm thinking of them.

So then..on to the suggestions:

1) Order balloons, they go with anything! This is particularly true for younger kids between say 3 years to 9 years…the bright colors make them smile almost immediately.

2) Even though you can't be with your loved ones, do all you can to connect with them. Skype while they are decorating the tree and be a part of the festivities.

3) Send personalized gifts. I can't stress that enough. I'd much rather have something that is personalized, even if it only costs ten bucks versus a much more expensive DVD player.

4) Speaking of new DVD players, men... if it's for the house it is not a present for your wife. This isn't sexist either... ladies, do not get your husband a lawnmower. Not cool.

5) When you get home, celebrate all the holidays you've missed. One year my daughter and I had Halloween, Thanksgiving, our Birthday's, Christmas and New Year's celebrations all in the same week! It was a blast! I missed her and wanted to share these memories. Just because you aren't home on Christmas doesn't mean you can't have a tree in February. Believe me, the kids will love it!

Thankfully, it's almost time to go home and reunite with our loved ones, so I'll leave you with one last suggestion… give them the gifts of love, respect and patience. Things have changed some, but that's ok, just love them deeply and the holidays will be a wonderful time, even if you get there shortly after.

Unexpectedly sappy,

-Betty

Rock and Roll Trivia

When a lead singer of a successful band leaves for "artistic reasons" (or dies, as occasionally happens) it's usually the kiss of death. Some bands, such as Alice In Chains and Judas Priest had modest success PV (post vocalist) but a select few have recaptured the band's glory or even risen to new heights.

1) The Doobie Brothers' Tom Johnston and Patrick Simmons shared most vocal duties on mega-hits like "Black Water," and "China Grove." By 1975, however, Johnston was so worn out from touring, including a bleeding ulcer, that the Doobies hired what singer to fill in while Johnston recuperated? His soulful voice dominated the band's late 70s sound with hits like "What A Fool Believes."

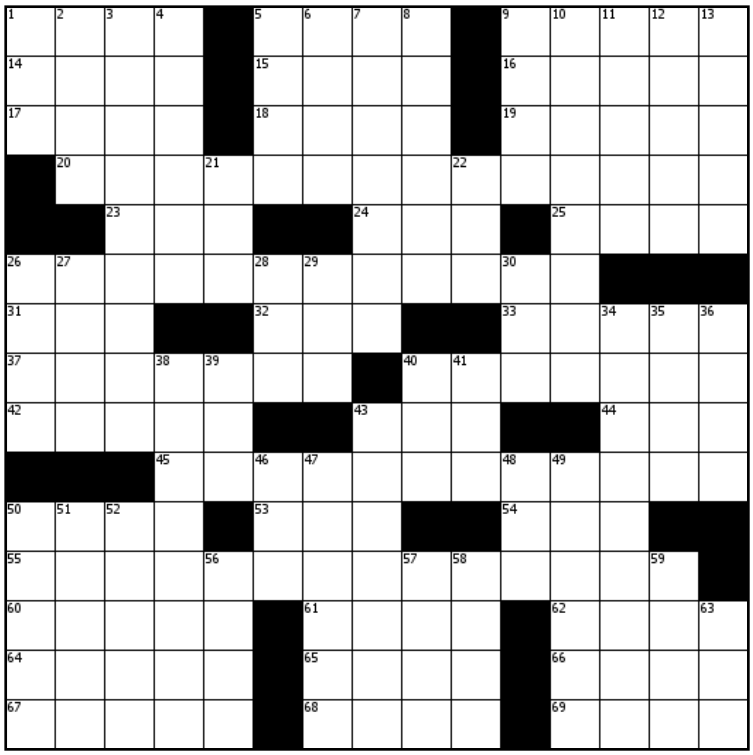
2) Although frequently criticized by the band's hardcore fans, Sammy Hagar recorded several multi-platinum albums with what band after replacing David Lee Roth.

3) Journey was formed by a bunch of hot shot musicians from San Francisco who unfortunately weren't great singers. After two poor selling albums, Columbia Records demanded they find a new singer or find a new label. They chose the former, and the rest is rock and roll history with smash hits like "Faithfully" and "Anyway You Want It." Who did they hire?

4) When their original lead singer, Bon Scott, died from "misadventure," aka drinking too much, most people wrote off his up and coming Australian band. After some soul searching, they signed up Scottish belter Brian Johnson and recorded one of the most successful albums of all time. What was the band and what was the album?

5) Fleetwood Mac was a struggling blues band with a cult following when they recruited guitarist/vocalist Lindsey Buckingham. Buckingham insisted his girlfriend and singing partner also had to be part of the band. The band agreed, and four number one albums later it was obvious they made a good choice. Who was Buckingham's girlfriend?

Answers to this week's trivia:
(1) Michael McDonald (2) Van Halen (3) Steve Perry (4) AC/DC's Back in Black (5) Stevie Nicks



Across

1. Fawcett's "Charlie's Angels" replacement
5. Bird that is no more
9. Took the wheel
14. Home of the Taj Mahal
15. Certain util.
16. DJ's output
17. Word with has
18. Float, as a fragrance
19. Nintendo precursor
20. Notice to employees, part 1
23. ___ culpa
24. "The Simpsons" convenience store clerk
25. Real scream
26. Notice to employees, part 2
31. Menu phrase
32. Middling grade
33. Roman holiday
37. Marked like a gridiron
40. Democratic party symbol, once
42. Presidential bear
43. "Oh wow!"
44. Tolkien's talking tree
45. Notice to employees, part 3
50. "Ben-Hur," for one
53. "Grand" ice cream maker
54. Archer's asset
55. Notice to employees, part 4
60. Don't just please
61. Brilliantly colored food fish
62. Jazz singer Anita
64. Hoopsters Archibald and Thurmond
65. Selfish one's exclamation
66. Turn a violin's pegs
67. Word with cocktail or wedding
68. Heroic chronicle
69. Erupt, as Etna

Down

1. Forensic site
2. Like fine wine or cheese
3. Realm of Morpheus
4. Old Testament hero
5. Like morning grass
6. Norse saint
7. Pop, as a balloon
8. Well-armed mollusks
9. Aerodynamic force
10. AARP members
11. Muscat resident, for one
12. Sixth zodiac sign
13. Are real
21. Fond du ___, Wisconsin
22. Revolver, e.g.
26. Roy Disney's brother
27. Netman Nastase
28. World Series mo.
29. Society-page word
30. Tabloid topic
34. Like some bathroom mirrors
35. Neighbor of Ala.
36. Full of pretensions
38. Makes like a teacher
39. "Atlas Shrugged" author Rand
40. "Arabian Nights" creature
41. "I see it all now!"
43. Ancient Greek games site
46. Casual shirt
47. Dialects of a region
48. '60s Chinese chairman
49. Turning points
50. Correct
51. Certain bear
52. At pique's peak
56. More, philosophically speaking
57. Gut feeling?
58. Ostrich relative
59. With all one's marbles
63. Bow-making material

Big Red One
Puzzle of the Week

Each week, look for a new brain teaser here, with the answer in the following week's Danger Forward.

Solution for last week: Pie in the sky

Brought to you by the 1st Inf. Div. ORSA Cell

Sudoku

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

For solutions to this week's puzzle and for more sudoku puzzles, visit:

www.puzzles.ca/sudoku_puzzles/