

The Expeditionary Times

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Vol. 3 Issue 8

January 13, 2010

<http://www.hood.army.mil/13sce/>

Hydration station



Quartermaster Soldiers provide potable water at Poliwooda

Page 5

Team battle



Oregon Soldiers take top honors in Iraq-wide combatives tournament

Page 6

Unit history



National Guard Soldiers in for long haul

Page 12

Provider Soldiers inducted into club



Brig. Gen. Paul L. Wentz, commanding general, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and Command Sgt. Maj. Mark D. Joseph, the senior noncommissioned officer, 13th ESC, present a medallion and plaque to Sgt. Jeremy Jackson, a Sgt. Audie Murphy Club inductee, during a ceremony Jan. 4 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SPC. NAVEED ALI SHAH
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – Seven Soldiers were inducted into the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club during a ceremony Jan. 4 at Joint Base

Balad, Iraq.

The Soldiers represented units, including the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) out of Fort Hood, Texas, the 37th Engineer Battalion, and the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Artillery Regiment.

The 13th ESC Soldier and noncommissioned officer of the quarter were also recognized for their accomplishments, and awarded Army Achievement Medals for their efforts.

The Balad SAMC invited Brig. Gen. Paul L. Wentz, commanding general of the 13th
SEE CLUB ON PAGE 4

Command sergeant major honors six Soldiers

STORY AND PHOTO BY
PFC. LISA A. COPE
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq – First Corps Command Sgt. Maj. Frank A. Grippe, the former Multi-National Corps-Iraq CSM, met with members of the personal security detachment with the 36th Sustainment Brigade out of Temple, Texas, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), Jan. 3 at Al Faw Palace at Camp Victory, Iraq.

Grippe recognized six outstanding Soldiers in the PSD by presenting them with a coin for excellence.

“Over the last six and a half years, we have put a lot of blood and treasure into this country,” said Grippe. “Because of all that hard work we

have done at the lowest tactical level, we are starting to have all this success here in Iraq, (with) capacities building in the government, the economy and the military. It is because of young women and men ... who come over here for multiple tours and successfully get out there and interact with the Iraqi military and civilian sector.”

Grippe said he relies heavily on his own PSD, and believed it was important to meet with the 36th Sust. Bde. PSD Soldiers to thank them for their service.

“It really means a lot to me as a corps sergeant major to continually be out myself, with my own PSD, out battlefield circulating and visiting young Soldiers ... to ensure that they know what the commander and I are thinking of
SEE HONOR ON PAGE 4



Command Sgt. Maj. Frank A. Grippe, former Multi-National Corps-Iraq CSM with United States Forces – Iraq, presents Spc. Michael A. Johnson, a gunner and driver with the 36th Sustainment Brigade's personal security detachment and a San Antonio native, with a coin for excellence Jan. 3 in Grippe's office at Al Faw Palace, Camp Victory, Iraq.

Balad Blotter December 31 - January 6

ESCORT VIOLATION:

A complainant notified the Law Enforcement Desk of an escort violation. The subject was operating vehicle and searching for the fueling point. After checking the subject's credentials, the witness noticed the subject required an escort and was without one. A patrol was briefed, dispatched and arrived on the scene and initiated search of the subject. The subject's vehicle remained outside of the location. The patrol initiated transport of the subject to the LED for questioning. The battle noncommissioned officer was briefed. The subject's escort arrived at the LED. The patrol assisted the subject's escort in writing statement. The subject's escort said, via Air Force IMT 1168, the subject was escorted from his mission by Army military escorts to the agility office where he was instructed to remain. The subject left to fuel his vehicle without authorization or the knowledge of his escorts. The subject was released to his escort, who was briefed on escort procedures and responsibilities.

LARCENY OF SECURE PROPERTY:

A complainant entered the Law Enforcement Desk and reported he noticed property was missing from building 7500. The complainant said, via Air Force Form 1168/Statement of Complainant, he last saw the property Jan. 1 at roughly 1 p.m. The complainant further said he conducted a sweep of the surrounding facilities to make sure the property was not moved to another location. The complainant said, after conducting the sweep, the property was still missing. The complainant further said the property was attached to a trailer and is easy to relocate. There are no further suspects, witnesses or investigative leads.

COMMUNICATING A THREAT:

A complainant telephoned the Law Enforcement Desk and said he would like to make a statement about an incident. A patrol arrived on the scene and made contact with the complainant. The complainant said, via Air Force FM 1168, the subject called the passenger terminal twice for information about the flight schedule and was frustrated both times when he did not get the information. The subject called a third time and, when he was again denied information, said was "about to come and shoot the PAX terminal up." The subject called again for more information and the complainant asked for the subject's name, which he received and wrote the subject's number down from the caller identification on the phone. The patrol terminated response at the PAX terminal and returned to the LED. The patrol made contact with the subject via telephone and told the subject to report to the LED. The subject arrived at the LED and the patrol advised the subject of his Article 31 Rights via Air Force IMT 1168. The subject was charged with Article 133/Conduct Unbecoming an Officer and Gentleman and Article 134, Communicating a Threat. The subject declined to make a statement and requested legal counsel.

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Mental Health: take charge

BY NAVY CAPT. STEVE BRASINGTON
COMBAT STRESS CONTROL PSYCHIATRIST



To control your destiny, you need to take charge of your life by making decisions about your future.

If you wait to be told to do something, then someone is deciding for you.

Identifying barriers that could interfere with attaining your goals is crucial. Think critically about how prolonged emotional or psychological problems could prevent you from reaching your goals. Get professional assistance when stuck.

Know your resources. Military One Source is a good place to look. From the Web site, Soldiers and their Families can navigate to the online library, read articles or e-mail questions. A toll free number is available by dialing 1-800-342-9647. To benefit from the full features, you are required to register, but registration is fast and easy. The Web site posts the national suicide prevention line, which can be reached by calling 1-800-273-TALK. No registration is needed to call these phone numbers.

If your emotions manage you and not the other way around, then you may find someone else managing you.

In particular, it is better to come to combat stress voluntarily on your own, before you are ordered to come as part of a misconduct investigation.

Asking permission to visit the Combat Stress Clinic or requesting time off to make a medical appointment is adult behavior.

Get over feeling squeamish about your chain of command knowing you are seeking care at combat stress.

Keep your chain of command informed. Let your leaders know if you are fatigued or tapped out of energy.

Make sure you are not sleep deprived because you watch movies all night or stay glued to video game controls.

You need to stay sharp and rested to ensure the mission is completed successfully.

There is no need to sneak over to combat stress and hope no one sees you go in or out.

Let people know you stay ahead of problems before your work performance suffers.

Often, a unit leader may want to know if you are taking medication.

I recommend openness. Tell your chain of com-

mand you are following a medical treatment plan and invite your senior officer to communicate with the treatment team.

Your commander is authorized to know your medical condition. Importantly, your commander or the commander's designee is obliged to protect your health information.

Collaboration between the therapist and your command will enhance the care you receive.

Problems overtake individuals who are too busy to address serious concerns.

Instead of preventing the escalation of an issue, the burdened Soldier experiences a lapse in judgment due to excess frustration. A lapse in good judgment can lead to misconduct and subsequent investigation.

When mental health evaluation intersects with an investigation, questions inevitably arise: Is the patient seeking help now because he or she is in trouble and wants to avoid full punishment? Is the patient trying to manipulate the system? Is the Soldier actually so sick he or she could not understand the consequences of his or her actions?

Sometimes, Soldiers with well-established patterns of trouble are ordered to go to combat stress to determine if they are suffering from a mental disorder. Being ordered to seek medical care implies a significant problem exists that the Soldier has failed to resolve. Ordering a Soldier suggests a lack of faith in the Soldier's ability to balance the needs of the self with the needs of the team.

Yes, some warriors are uncomfortable stepping away from the mission when it means others must cover but, oddly, I do not hear about Soldiers refusing leave on those grounds.

Of course, there is a difference. Junior enlisted Soldiers all take leave, but all do not necessarily go to combat stress.

That is true, but if your teammate needed to go to dental call or sick call, then that Soldier would arrange it with the team leader or platoon sergeant and go to stay healthy.

Treat your psychological health with the same regard.

Let your chain know when you need to go and tell them the plan. Most importantly, tell your leaders when it has helped. Tell us if it does not help.

Know your resources, stay ahead of problems and take charge of your destiny.

The combat stress prevention team wishes you bountiful success in 2010.

EXPEDITIONARY TIMES

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194th Engineer Brigade

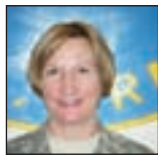
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13th ESC Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Paul L. Wentz

Mission Statement: The Expeditionary Times Staff publishes a weekly newspaper with the primary mission of providing command information to all service members, partners, and Families of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) team and a secondary mission of providing a means for units on Joint Base Balad to disseminate command information to their audiences.

The Weekly Standard: sanctuary packets

By MAJ. ANDREA SHEALY
13TH ESC INSPECTOR GENERAL



Sanctuary is commonly referred to as the "18-year lock-in" and is defined by Title 10 United States Code 12686 (a).

It generally applies to Reserve Soldiers who are mobilized and have achieved at least 18 years, but less than 20 years, active federal service.

After a Soldier is accepted for sanctuary, the Soldier can be retained on active duty until reaching 20 years AFS.

At the 20-year mark, the Soldier can either retire or request to serve longer. A Soldier who wishes to serve longer must submit an application for Regular Army.

If a Soldier will achieve 18 years AFS while on mobilization orders, that Soldier should submit a packet for sanctuary roughly 120 days prior to the projected demobilization date. The packet must include all documents that verify any AFS periods. Department of Defense form 214s are preferred and required for any period of service of more than 89 days of active duty. If a DD-214 is not available, the Soldier must provide orders, plus leave

and earnings statements that verify the Soldier completed the time period listed on the orders.

It is a Soldier's responsibility to apply for sanctuary. Sanctuary is not an automatic entitlement.

An information sheet on sanctuary can be found through AKO at <https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/protect/reserve/soldierservices/mobilization/support/index.htm>.

This Web site also includes the sanctuary request checklist. The checklist includes how to submit a sanctuary packet, what documentation must be included in that packet and where to submit the packet.

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator

Be sexual assault response coordinator smart: Not stopping when someone is indicating that they want you to stop, be it with words, actions or both, is sexual assault. If a person seems hesitant, do not try to convince them to give in, just stop. Call the Joint Base Balad SARC at 443-7272 or contact via pager 443-9001, 159 for help. Army members should seek assistance with their unit victim advocate or deployed-SARC; you may also call 433-7272 or 443-9001, 122/135 for assistance.

Corrections

The Expeditionary Times regrets these errors:

In the Jan. 6 edition of the Expeditionary Times, the article "Q-West service members, civilians celebrate the holidays," should have been attributed to Sgt. Matthew Cooley, 15th Sustainment Brigade public affairs.

In the Phantom Support photo page the cutline should have said, "Cpl. Deirdre Ethington, an administrative specialist with the 1161st Transportation Company, 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion ..."

Joint Base Balad (304th Sust. Bde.): DSN 433-2125
Lt. Col. Reginald Howard (Command Inspector General)
Maj. Christopher Minor (Deputy)
Master Sgt. Roy Thacker (NCOIC)

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Lt. Col. Gary Davis

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Master Sgt. Marta Cruz - DSN 883-1710

Al Asad: DSN 440-7049
Sgt. 1st class Alexander Arce

Chaplain's Corner: every challenge is an opportunity

By CHAPLAIN LT. COL. ROY T. WALKER
13TH ESC COMMAND CHAPLAIN



Here we sit in a foreign country many miles from home as time continues to move forward and the days march ahead.

The days of last year are gone and the time in front of us is at hand.

As you start this year, I would encourage you to live in the now and not in the past or in the future. I am convinced this is what Moses meant in Psalm 90: 12.

Moses asked the Lord, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

He knew our circumstances can influence us to desire to move back into

the past, to more comfortable times, or to the future, to a time past what we are currently encountering.

As I contemplated this tendency in my own life, I remembered words of wisdom I once received.

As a young teenager, I was upset when struggling with a difficult class in high school.

I told my father, "I will be glad when school is over and I can start living my life."

I will never forget the surprised look that flashed across his face.

He then asked me, "Think about how many great people and events you would miss if you were able to jump straight to the end."

"Life does not stop because you are encountering difficulty; it is just sharpening your skills for later."

Our life has not stopped because we are away from home and away from the ones we love.

Moses offered you and I these words of wisdom as an encouragement to live life as it is given, where you are right now and with those who are near you right now.

For many Soldiers, this deployment is just one of many times away from home; for others, it is the first.

Yet I would encourage you to take every opportunity to make a difference with the moment you have been given.

As I contemplate being away from home, I am filled with a sense of pride and unspeakable joy.

I feel pride because I am serving a cause far greater than myself.

Also, I know I am making a difference in the world.

Dr. Martin Luther King said, "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."

It is important for us to look beyond our own comforts and desires to make a difference in the world.

It is also important to capture every opportunity life gives. We must meet the challenges of today without hiding in the memories of yesterday or deserting to the safety of the future.

So, try viewing today's challenges as an opportunity to better develop tomorrow.

Remember, life does not stop because you are encountering difficulties; it is just sharpening your skills for later.

Happy New Year and may this year be your greatest year ever.

SHOUT OUT!!!

Contact the Expeditionary Times for more information.

E-mail: escpao@iraq.centcom.mil

Sergeant Audie Murphy Club inducts new members

CLUB FROM PAGE 1

ESC, to be the guest speaker.

"These new Sgt. Audie Murphy Club members are going to go on and do great things and continue to train these young Soldiers," said Wentz.

The club was established in 1986 at the 13th ESC's home in Fort Hood, Texas. Carrying on the tradition of excellence, Command Sgt. Maj. Mark D. Joseph, senior enlisted adviser with the 13th ESC, said he decided to hold the board during this deployment to challenge his Soldiers.

"The most important quality a candidate needs to have is confidence," said Joseph. "It's not about knowing the answer. The Soldier also needs to be able to maintain military bearing throughout the process."

The Balad SAMC is an active chapter, frequently volunteering at events around the installation. Its president is Sgt. 1st Class Frederick Thompson, the operations NCO with the 159th Seaport Operations Company.

"I want to thank Sgt. 1st Class Thompson, from the 159th Seaport Operations Company, for providing leadership, mentorship and guidance for the Audie Murphy Club here on JBB," said Wentz.

The Sgt. Audie Murphy Club is an exclusive organization with a rigor-



Sgt. 1st Class Frederick Thompson, the operations noncommissioned officer with the 159th Seaport Operations Company, leads the inductees in the oath of the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club during a ceremony Jan. 4 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

ous selection process. NCOs from the rank of sergeant to sergeant first class are eligible to come before the board.

"Only a small percentage of non-commissioned officers are selected for induction into this organization," said Wentz. "They have definitely earned it."

Soldiers and Airmen from through-

out Balad attended the ceremony, including Command Chief Master Sgt. Paul Burgess, the senior NCO with the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing.

"I loved the ceremony," said inductee Sgt. 1st Class Marlon Williamson, the senior NCO for Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 49th Transportation Battalion, 15th Sus-

tainment Brigade, 13th ESC. "I think the ceremony was outstanding. A lot of time and effort went into it, just like a lot of hard work and dedication went into becoming a member of the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club."

Williamson, a Detroit native, said he worked to be inducted for years.

"I finally got the opportunity to go before the board and be recommended, and it feels outstanding," he said.

Events like the Soldier of the quarter board allow Soldiers the chance to better themselves, said Sgt. Miriam Espinoza-Torres, the 13th ESC NCO of the quarter and command group operations NCOIC with the 15th Special Troops Battalion, 15th SB, 13th ESC.

"It's a great opportunity for Soldiers to ... get out there and do something for themselves and improve themselves," said Espinoza-Torres, a Rock Island, Wash., native.

The inductees and the NCO and Soldier of the quarter worked hard and earned the recognition they deserved, said Wentz.

"Today's inductees have demonstrated the ability and fortitude to accept and engage the challenge," he said, "knowing that they and those with whom they serve will be better for it."

Soldiers recognized for hard work

HONOR FROM PAGE 1

your hard work out there," he said.

Spc. Christopher L. Vinson, a driver with the 36th Sust. Bde. PSD, was recognized by Grippe and his command as one of the Soldiers who went above and beyond the call of duty. He was selected from among his peers for working as a gunner and assisting with communications and electronic warfare operations, in addition to his primary job as a driver.

"It made me feel good (to be recognized)," said Vinson, a Daingerfield, Texas, native, "good about myself as a person and about the difference I am making in Iraq."

Vinson said the meeting with Grippe highlighted the important role he and his teammates play in Iraq.

"It made me feel like I am actually a part of something, like I am actually making a difference," he said.



Joint Base Balad
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Commemoration Ceremony



Join us as we pay tribute to his life and legacy.

1st Lt. 1st Class Johnnie Mitchell, 433-2327 or Master Sgt. Janice Taylor, 443-5433

Location: MWD East
Date: 22 Jan. 2010
Time: 11:30 a.m.

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724th Transportation Company adapts to changing mission

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SGT. KEITH S. VAN KLOMPENBERG
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION SPEICHER, Iraq – Soldiers with the 724th Transportation Company came to Iraq to carry out a mission unlike any they had done before, and find themselves adapting as their mission changes once again in the middle of their year-long deployment.

Traditionally a fuel tanker unit, the 724th Trans. Co., an Army Reserve unit out of Bartonville, Ill., trained for a year to deploy as a security element for convoy recovery missions, said Staff Sgt. Jacob Ista, a motor transport operator and a squad leader with the 724th's second platoon.

Ista, a Peoria, Ill., native, said most of the Soldiers in his platoon were used to driving fuel tankers and flat-bed trucks, but trained to deploy driving gun trucks such as Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles and Humvees.

Then the mission changed again. "Second platoon is now a line-haul unit," he said.

Ista said he welcomed the change

and did not care which type of vehicle he drove, as long as he continued to drive.

"I joined to be a truck driver," he said.

Sgt. 1st Class Melvil Lail, platoon sergeant with third platoon, 724th Trans. Co., said the mission is changing as the U.S. prepares for the upcoming drawdown of troops and equipment from Iraq.

"Our mission is to move most material out of the north section (of Iraq)," said Lail, a Maysville, Ky., native.

Lail said the Soldiers with the 724th will now move excess cargo and vehicles instead of driving gun trucks, but the change in mission is something they are prepared for.

"As a Soldier, you will be faced with many tasks," he said.

One of the ways the service members prepare for the change is by conducting drivers training with the flat-bed trucks.

The Soldiers have improvised prac-

tice lanes in an empty lot at Contingency Operating Location Speicher, to practice maneuvers such as alley docking, parallel parking and serpentine backing, said Lail.

"Not everyone has the same skill level," he said. "This gives you a mea-

suring stick."

Ista said he was confident in his unit's ability to adapt to any mission it is given.

"We exceeded the standard on that mission and we'll exceed the standard on this mission," he said.



Soldiers with the 724th Transportation Company, 264th Combat Support Sustainment Battalion, conduct driver's training Dec. 31 at Contingency Operating Location Speicher, Iraq.

Soldiers provide potable water at Poliwoda

STORY AND PHOTO BY SPC. MICHAEL V. CAMACHO
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION POLIWODA, Iraq – A single team of Soldiers provide all the potable water used for the shower and latrine trailers, the dining facility and all other running-water facilities at Contingency Operating Location Poliwoda, Iraq.

The 102nd Quartermaster Company, 80th Ordnance Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) runs water and purification operations to supply the daily water needs for roughly 500 service members and civilian contractors at COL Poliwoda, said Pfc. Gregory Shearer, a reverse osmosis water purification unit operator with the 102nd QM Co. It is a vital job, he said.

Raw water taken from a well at Poliwoda is pumped into a 50,000 gallon storage bladder before it is processed by the ROWPU, said Shearer, a Casper, Wyo., native. A filled water bladder can support the COL's average water consumption for roughly three days, he said.

Every day KBR Inc. takes more than 12,000 gallons of water to fill tanks throughout COL Poliwoda, said Shearer.

The 102nd QM Co., originally a fuel supply unit, crossed trained in the use of the ROWPU prior to its deployment to Iraq, said Sgt. Brian Gil, the 102nd's noncommissioned officer in charge of the water site at COL Poliwoda. Although fuel and water supply jobs are similar in theory,



Sgt. Brian Gil, noncommissioned officer in charge of the water site at Contingency Operating Location Poliwoda, Iraq, with the 102nd Quartermaster Company, 80th Ordnance Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), tightens valves leading to the potable water tank Jan. 5 at the COL Poliwoda water site.

training in the use of the ROWPU and its maintenance were the major part of the transition, said Gil.

COL Poliwoda is one of four water processing sites operated by the 102nd QM Co., said Gil.

The site produces roughly 15,000 gallons of water a day during the winter months and roughly 20,000 gallons a day in the summer time, he said. The amount of water produced daily is determined by average consumption and base population. Peak water consumption during the year averages 140,000 gallons a week, said Gil.

"You have to adhere to your demand and make sure you have enough water on hand," he said.

Gil said they keep a minimum supply of two days worth of water, roughly 42 gallons, for each Soldier stationed in that area of responsibility. With the well at Poliwoda, the water operations have an abundant source of raw water to draw from, he said.

The raw water is pumped from the well into the first water bladder, where it is fed into the ROWPU, he said. The ROWPU filters sediments and particles unsafe for consumption from the water, said Gil.

The Poliwoda water site draws in 100 gallons per minute and processes 70 gallons per minute during its purification cycle through the ROWPU, he said.

Gil said during the overall process, roughly 30 percent of the initial raw water is released as waste water that contains the solids, particles and sediments that were filtered out.

After the water has been filtered, chlorine is injected to purify it from any other contaminants and bacteria, Gil said.

The final product is potable water, said Shearer. The water is safe for drinking but, without any way to bottle it, it is used to fill water tanks for all running water facilities. The water is then used by the dining facility for cooking and to fill the water tanks at the latrines and showers, he said.

The drinking water at Poliwoda is conveyed in from the Oasis International Waters purification facility, located at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

Gil said the team at the water site appreciates its role, and takes pride in supporting the Warfighters at COL Poliwoda.

Mississippi Guardsman recognized for excellence during convoy mission

STORY AND PHOTO BY
CAPT. MURRAY SHUGARS
2/198TH COMBINED ARMS

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq — A



Mississippi Army National Guardsman serving at Contingency Operating Location Q-West, Iraq, received a letter of recognition from the

deputy commanding general of the 3rd Infantry Division Dec. 30.

Staff Sgt. Donovan Smith, noncommissioned officer in charge of maintenance with A Company, 106th Brigade Support Battalion out of Magee, Miss., 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms out of Senatobia, Miss., and a Taylorsville, Miss., native, received the letter from Brig. Gen. Patrick J. Donahue, II, after being chosen Task Force Marne Hero of the North Dec. 20 for outstanding performance during a vehicle recovery mission.

"I wanted to send a short note to give you my personal thanks for your accomplishments in defense of our country," Donahue wrote. "Your tremendous abilities and dedication are of great credit to you, the 106th BSB and Task Force Marne. We are all proud of you."

Smith said he was surprised by the attention.

"I'm honored to be recognized, but I just (did) my job," he said. "And it wasn't just me. Everybody was helpful, doing anything I asked them to do."

During a Nov. 27 convoy escort mission from Contingency Operating Location Warrior, Iraq, to Q-West, a civilian truck and trailer rolled over, spilling a generator, and a Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle broke down, according to the citation commending Smith's actions.



Staff Sgt. Donovan Smith (left), noncommissioned officer in charge of maintenance with A Company, 106th Brigade Support Battalion out of Magee, Miss., 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms out of Senatobia, Miss., and a Taylorsville, Miss., native, receives an impact Army Achievement Medal from Lt. Col. Kerry Goodman, commander of the 2/198th CAB and a Quitman, Miss., native, during an award ceremony in the A Co. motor pool, Dec. 11 at Contingency Operating Location Q-West, Iraq. Smith was awarded the AAM for outstanding actions during a convoy escort mission, which earned him the title Task Force Marne Hero of the North Dec. 20, for which he received a letter of recognition from Brig. Gen. Patrick J. Donahue, II, deputy commanding general of the 3rd Infantry Division.

Sgt. 1st Class Bradley Johnson, company motor sergeant and native of Brookhaven, Miss., praised Smith's performance.

"Staff Sgt. Smith supervised the vehicle recoveries with complete competence and professionalism, using meager assets," said Johnson. "Smith is a firm and determined leader, and he performed very well during this mission, as he always does."

According to the citation, Smith upturned the civilian truck, offloaded the trailer and attached it to the spare civilian bobtail, a tractor used for such contingencies. He readied the disabled MRAP for movement by hooking it to another

MRAP with a tow bar, and then focused on the civilian cargo.

After the quick reaction recovery team arrived, Smith aided them in loading the spilled cargo onto a heavy equipment transport system. On the return trip, Smith coached, via radio, the MRAP driver towing the broken vehicle through the mountain pass and back to Q-West.

Capt. Bradley Hollingsworth, Smith's company commander and a Florence, Miss., native, said Smith's actions made the mission successful.

"He worked in a timely manner, directly resulting in the convoy reaching its destination in a safe, timely manner and with minimal security halts," said

Hollingsworth. "Staff Sgt. Smith is constantly working behind the scenes, when not on a convoy, to ensure vehicles are in top condition to avoid mechanical issues while on missions."

To recognize these accomplishments, Lt. Col. Kerry Goodman, commander of the 2/198th CAB, awarded Smith an impact Army Achievement Medal.

"One of my greatest pleasures as a commander is to recognize outstanding achievement," said Goodman, a Quitman, Miss., native. "Staff Sgt. Smith had a significant impact on completing the mission. He has raised the level of performance of those around him."

Smith said his civilian profession and military training gave him the skills necessary for recovery missions.

"I'm a rigger and crane operator on a drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico, so I know how to rig equipment," he said. "Plus, I've been to the Army's recovery school, and I was raised on a farm, working a lot by myself. But ... it was a team effort, and my mechanic, Spc. Joseph Morgan, helped a lot. I couldn't have done it without him."

Morgan, a Seminary, Miss., native, said he learned some new skills during the recovery.

"Trying to consider the best way to upright the truck and generator it was hauling was challenging, but we finally figured it out," said Morgan. "My job assisting involved helping Staff Sgt. Smith make all connections and operating our recovery vehicle while he monitored the progress, as well as giving directions."

Morgan said he finds his job very rewarding.

"When I get home, I can honestly say my job was worthwhile," he said. "I am able to say I was part of the best maintenance shop in Northern Iraq. After all, Staff Sgt. Smith, a Marne Hero of the North, is my squad leader."

Oregon Soldiers take top honors in Iraq-wide combatives tournament

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SPC. CORY GROGAN
41ST IBCT

CAMP BUCCA, Iraq — Soldiers with A Company, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team brought a blend of teamwork, skill, heart and competition to the Dec. 19 combatives tournament at Camp Bucca, Iraq.

The All Iraq Combatives Tournament consisted of 23 teams from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, composed of 104 competitors in six weight classes.

Capt. Brian Moyer, A Co., 1/186 commander, said his company brought two teams to the tournament — one of which won the championship, with nearly double the second place team's score.

A Co. had winners in four of the six weight classes at the tournament.

"They have a lot of heart and they really pulled together as a team and, at the end of the day, they just don't give up," said Moyer, a Central Point, Ore., native.

He also said his Soldiers presented themselves as professionals, who did their talking on the mat.

A Co. learned out about the tournament a week in advance, but dominated teams that had trained for two months thanks to the teamwork and talent of a company full of skilled wrestlers, cage fighters and martial arts experts, said Moyer.

Spc. Devon Zeller, a competitor from A Co. and an Eagle Point, Ore., native, said, "It was a great environment. It felt like we were back home at a wrestling tournament. Everyone who convoyed down with us was cheering and that helped out a lot."



Pfc. Juan Aguilar, with A Company, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team and a Medford, Ore., native, gets focused for his match while two service members battle at the All Iraq Combatives Tournament Dec. 19 at Camp Bucca, Iraq.

A Piece of Mind Soldier center opens at Q-West



(From left to right) Lt. Col. Dennis Dockery, commander of the 395th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, and Command Sgt. Maj. Gerry-Jay James, senior noncommissioned officer with the 395th CSSB, cut the ribbon to officially open the Piece of Mind Soldier center Dec. 31 at Contingency Operating Location Q-West, Iraq. Not pictured are Lt. Col. William Smith, the Contingency Operating Location Q-West, Iraq, mayor and Command Sgt. Maj. Perry Campbell, the senior noncommissioned officer with the 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms, who were also in attendance.

STORY AND PHOTO BY
STAFF SGT. ROB STRAIN
15TH SUST. BDE.

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq – The 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), opened the Piece of Mind Soldier center Dec. 31 at Contingency Operating Location Q-West, Iraq.

The center, a place for Soldiers to rest and relax their mind, body and soul, was created as a joint effort between Soldiers with the 395th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion and the 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms, said Capt. Amy Noble, the 395th CSSB's chaplain and a Park River, N.D., native.

"Soldiers often complained that the chapel was too far away, or not open late enough," she said.

Noble said Soldiers may eat or drink, read, play video games, or sit and relax with friends. She said the center also has a chaplain assistant's office, if Soldiers feel like they need to contact a chaplain.

Everything in the center was donated, said Noble.

Col. Larry Phelps, commander of the 15th Sust. Bde. and a Greenville, Ala., native, said taking care of Soldiers was extremely important, especially with the changes in mission coming in the next year.

"There is a lot coming," he said. "It makes places like this even more important."

Phelps said places like Piece of Mind allow Soldiers to take care of one another. Most imperative to peace of mind are the people with which Soldiers surround themselves, said Phelps.

"That's the secret," he said.

According to the Army's Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer, one of the two basic responsibilities of an NCO is the welfare of their Soldiers, Phelps said.

"Anything we can do to contribute to Soldiers' welfare is worth it," he said.

The center, which is operated by Soldiers, is open daily from noon until 1 p.m., and from 3 p.m. to 3 a.m.

Noble said she hopes to extend the United Service Organizations' United Through Reading program at Piece of Mind, which allows Soldiers to record themselves reading books to their children.

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Each TUESDAY
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Following
in Your CHU

1. Power strips are free of debris and clothing.
2. Electrical devices not in use are unplugged.
3. Power strips and outlets are not overloaded.
4. Smoke detector is operational.
5. Fire extinguisher is serviceable (in the green)
6. Room is neat and orderly

Camp Taji unveils new rotary passenger terminal

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SGT. KEITH S. VAN KLOMPENBERG
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Command elements from the 49th Transportation Battalion, 155th Heavy Brigade Combat Team garrison command and 1st Air Cavalry Brigade took part in a ribbon cutting ceremony Jan. 5, celebrating the opening of the Capt. Edward "Too Tall" Freeman Rotary Wing Passenger Terminal at Camp Taji, Iraq.

The new terminal features two hardened structures capable of holding up to 300 passengers and replaces a small trailer, comparable in size to a containerized housing unit, said Lt. Col. Peter Haas, commander of the 49th Trans. Bn., 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), an a Fleetwood, Pa., native.

Haas said he flew in from Joint Base Balad, Iraq, and was impressed with the work of the 384th Movement Control Team, which runs the terminal under the command of the 49th, and the improvements from the old terminal.

"You can hardly compare the two," he said.

Haas said the terminal at Camp Taji is the last of eight terminals run by the 49th to receive renovations.

"We always like to be a part of making things better for our Soldiers," he said.

Capt. William Bailey, commander of the 384th MCT out of Fort Eustis, Va., said his team has moved 2,100 Soldiers per week, for a total of 30,000 since its arrival in September. The new terminal, he said, is making the process smoother and more comfortable.

Officers from the 384th Movement Control Team, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade and the 155th Brigade Combat Team garrison command cut the ribbon at the unveiling ceremony for the Capt. Edward "Too Tall" Freeman Rotary Wing Passenger Terminal Jan. 5 at Camp Taji, Iraq. Freeman, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions in the Battle of Ia Drang Valley during the Vietnam conflict, was a helicopter pilot for 1st Air Cav. Bde. and a native of Mississippi, the home state of the 155th BCT.

"We've seen a lot of smiles on people's faces," said Bailey, a Huntsville, Ala., native. "It shows what we're doing here in Iraq ... making our footprint better."

Ground work for the project began with the 974th Transportation Detachment, which preceded his team, he said, and continued with a partnership between the 384th, the 155th BCT garrison command and the 1st Air Cav. Bde.

Bailey said the 1st Air Cav. Bde. provided guidance and specifications for the construction of the helicopter pad and the 155th managed work orders and maintenance, while the 384th managed the building with support from its higher headquarters at the 49th Trans. Bn.

Dedicating the building to Capt. Edward Freeman was an example of this partnership, he said.

Freeman, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions in the Battle of Ia Drang Valley during the Vietnam conflict, was a helicopter pilot for the 1st Air Cav. Bde. and a native of Mississippi, the home state of the 155th BCT.

Bailey said the terminal began operations the day before the official unveiling, and had already succeeded in redeploying a battalion-sized element.

"I'm just proud to be a part of it," he said.



JBB to open tax center to assist service members

STORY AND PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY
SGT. KEITH S. VAN KLOMPENBERG
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – By federal law, service members deployed to a combat zone are exempt from filing taxes but the Joint Base Balad, Iraq, tax center is scheduled to open in mid-February, offering free assistance and service to those who want their refunds now.

“It’s going to be a small tax center this year because everyone has the option to extend and file next year,” said Sgt. Jon Swink, the battalion paralegal noncommissioned officer with the 72nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion and a Dayton, Ohio, native.

The deadline for filing a 2009 tax return for a qualifying service member is extended for 180 days after the last day the service member is in a combat zone or qualified hazardous duty area, according to the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing legal office.

Sgt. David Dawley, the legal assistance noncommissioned officer in charge with the 49th Transportation Battalion and the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) consolidated legal center, said service members do not have to file an extension with the Internal Revenue Service while they are deployed to a combat zone.

“A Soldier’s extension is automatic,” said Dawley, a Hastings, Mich., native.

Although many states allow the same extension as the federal government,

each state has its own rules, according to the 332nd AEW.

Though it is not required, it can be beneficial for Soldiers to file while serving overseas as it tends to be simpler than filing two year’s returns at once when they get home, Dawley said.

The tax center – at building 8272, the 332nd AEW financial management office – will focus its efforts on assisting junior enlisted service members, said Air Force Senior Master Sgt. J. Ashley Apple, the law office superintendent with the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing and a Greensboro, N.C., native.

Apple, who is coordinating the tax center, said the goal is to eliminate the need for service members to pay to file a simple tax return.

“Here at JBB, we will be able to generally support the less complicated tax returns,” he said.

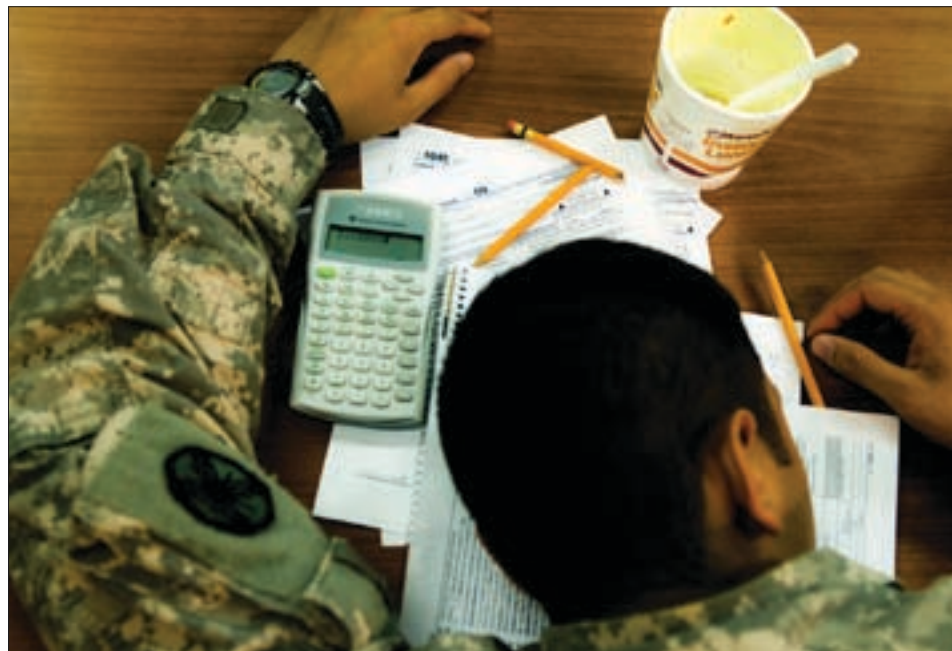
The tax center will be volunteer driven, using a mix of experienced tax filers and trained beginners to provide assistance to those in need, said Apple.

Swink said they are seeking volunteers for the program, looking for those who want to help others more than those with experience.

“We’re looking for motivated people first,” he said.

Apple said anyone interested in becoming a certified volunteer income tax assistant will need to undergo training through a roughly 40-hour online course, or by attending a seminar held by a civilian tax consultant.

The seminar is still being scheduled,



Volunteers will provide income tax preparation and filing assistance at a tax center at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, scheduled to open from February through April. Service members deployed to combat zones are not required to file taxes, but may choose to do so to receive their refunds or avoid filing two tax returns next year.

but will require service members to be relieved from duty for four to five days to attend, he said.

The biggest hurdle facing service members who choose to file during their deployment is gathering the necessary documents, said Apple. He said gathering dividends, bank statements, mortgage information and student loan repayment information together can be complicated while overseas.

“It’s also deciding whether or not to file,” said Swink.

Apple said they will instruct most service members to either use the extension or, if they are married, use power of attorney to allow their spouses to file for them.

Service members can stop by the consolidated legal center – at building 7235 – to get assistance in providing a spouse with power of attorney, said Dawley.

Apple said interested volunteers should e-mail the tax center organization box at 332AEW.TaxCenter@blab.afcent.af.mil.

Tips to file your taxes from a deployed location

Tax season is upon us and some of you here may be wondering how you can get your taxes filed from a deployed location, or why you would want to.

There will be a tax office at 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing – Financial Management building, near Mirage, dining facility two, on Sapper Street. There volunteers and trained tax professionals may be able to assist you with your taxes.

The government may owe you money, in the form of a tax refund, and you have the right to have it at the earliest lawful time. Whether for the money or to avoid filing two returns next year, the JBB tax office can help you file your tax return if you so choose.

We also realize not everyone will be able to use the tax service while at JBB. Therefore we have listed several additional tax options:

Power of Attorney: A power of attorney can be given to a trusted individual to file state or federal taxes on your behalf.

For federal taxes, you can fill out an IRS Power of Attorney Form 2848. This form can be obtained on the 332nd AEW/Judge Advocate Web site on the JBB homepage -<https://mydirect.blab.afcent.af.mil/1/AFCENT/WINGS/332/spstf/JA/Wiki/Wiki%20Pages/Home.aspx>.

Just click on right-hand side of the page on Tax Assistance. There is also a link to the instructions for filling out this form. If you authorize someone to file your taxes on your behalf, your base legal office normally has a tax center that will prepare and file your taxes at no charge.

The non-deployed spouse of a member serving in a combat zone or qualified hazardous duty area may also sign for their spouse without a power of attorney if the couple files a joint return. The spouse must attach a statement to the tax form explaining the circumstances not permitting the member to sign and file the form.

Online: Through a partnership agreement with the Internal Revenue Service, a number of private sector tax firms offer

free online tax preparation and electronic filing. These services may be accessed from the IRS’ home Web page. However, each private firm has its own specific eligibility criteria, so everyone may not be eligible for the free filing service. To determine eligibility, click on “Free File Services.” After the questionnaire is submitted, a list of firms that can provide free filing services will be provided.

Automatic six-month extension: The deadline for filing a 2009 tax return for a qualifying service member is extended for 180 days after the last day the service member is in a combat zone or qualified hazardous duty area. There is no need to file for an extension. Simply write “COMBAT ZONE” and the location or operation in which you served, on the top front of your tax return when you file. No interest or penalties will be charged if you have a debt.

State Returns: Although many states

allow the same extension as the federal government, each state has its own rules. A service member will need to verify the filling procedures with his or her individual state to assure that he or she is not late filing a state tax return.

Should I wait or should I file? That will depend on your individual circumstances. If the IRS owes you money, you’re losing the benefit of having those funds in your bank account. Besides, depending on your pay scale, the interest you earn in savings will likely be “free” because of your combat zone tax exclusion. If you owe the IRS money, you can defer payment with no penalty or interest. We recommend that you pull out a calculator and seriously assess what’s best for you. Also, take a look at the information made available by the IRS at <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/military/index.html>. For any other questions-concerns, please e-mail 332AEW.TaxCenter@blab.afcent.af.mil.

Airmen, Soldiers fight fires together downrange

BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS ALLISON M. BOEHM
332ND AIR EXPEDITIONARY WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – Sept. 19, Army and Air Force firefighters ran together into the night. They knew a UH-60 Black Hawk had crashed on base and there would be casualties. It was no time to question each other's skills or training or experience. It was time to save lives.

As they neared the scene, they heard the panicked voices of nearly 20 other service members who were already caring for the casualties. A wounded pilot guided them to the site and they began using their medic skills to save the crash victims.

The joint team worked for hours, stabilized 12 casualties and helped transport them to the Air Force Theater Hospital for additional care.

"When it comes down to it, we are all firefighters," said Tech Sgt. Raymond Granillo, 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron station chief. "We are here to protect everyone on JBB. It doesn't matter who is on the scene. I know, no matter what, the job will get done when lives are on the line."

The JBB firefighters work together during major emergencies on base, including fires and multiple-vehicle accidents. This includes regular training exercises, such as the joint training exercise they participated in Dec. 16.

Although all Department of Defense firefighters are trained together at Goodfellow Air Force Base,

Texas, once they arrive at their respective duty stations, the focus is redirected toward service-specific needs.

However, in the joint-focused environment downrange, the firefighters exchange their knowledge and add to their skills.

"We all have something to bring to the table and we have all learned a little bit about something from each other," said Sgt. Chester Jenkins, 63rd Ordnance Company fire inspector. "The Air Force firefighters are very spun-up with training. As Army personnel, we have the availability to gain that knowledge and further our training. Working with the Air Force is a great asset and a very good learning experience."

Granillo said the different perspective his Army counterparts provide is a definite asset in the deployed environment.

"Working with our Army counterparts has been very beneficial," said Granillo. "The Army looks at things a little differently. It definitely broadens our horizons and allows us to analyze things differently and do our jobs better."

In reality, though, the firefighters spend less time talking about their service-specific differences and more time working as a team.

"We take the greatest pride in the fact that we don't consider ourselves Army or Air Force – we consider ourselves one fire department," said Chief Master Sgt. Michael Rosser, base fire chief. "We take the joint portion to heart. We consider ourselves a brotherhood and sisterhood – we're all equal. We take care of each other the same and are proud to do so."



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Brittany Y. Bateman

Firefighters with the 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron and the 63rd Ordnance Company conduct a joint training exercise Dec. 16 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. The training scenario gave Air Force and Army firefighters the opportunity to practice extinguishing a live fire together.

Transportation Soldier earns battlefield promotion

STORY AND PHOTO BY
2ND LT. NICHOLAS A. SWAB
96TH SUST. BDE.

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq – After serving seven years as a sergeant, Carl Woolridge, a motor transport operator in the 47th Transportation Company, received a battlefield promotion to staff sergeant Dec. 1 at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.

Woolridge, a Washington native with the 751st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), said the promotion was a culminating event to years of work, and a rejuvenated desire to lead Soldiers.

"This is something that will boost my level of leadership even higher, and receiving this rank is something

I take very seriously," Woolridge said. "To know that my superiors had this much trust and confidence in my leadership abilities and thought I was performing my duties at a staff sergeant level brings me much joy."

He acted as commodities manager for one of the largest pushes of supply the company has convoyed since being deployed, said Sgt. 1st Class Brandon Edwards, truckmaster with the 47th Transportation Company and a Dallas native.

It encompassed nearly one third of the company's personnel, Edwards said.

"We have come a long way," Woolridge said. "It's nice to be winning the hearts and minds of the people and know that we are directly contributing to the rebuilding of Iraq. It's nice to know that I have an opportunity as a leader to pass down the experiences I have had to my Soldiers and fellow noncommissioned officers."



First Lt. Mark Alfors (left), the executive officer with the 47th Transportation Company, and Staff Sgt. Carl Woolridge, commodities manager and motor transport operator with the 47th Trans. Co., 751st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), pause for a photo after Woolridge's battlefield promotion ceremony to staff sergeant Dec. 1 at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.

Wagonmasters dedicate education center at Q-West to 90-year-old Vet

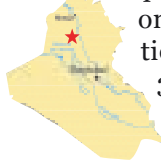


U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Rob Strain

Col. Larry Phelps, the commander of the 15th Sustainment Brigade, drives a screw into a wall at the newly dedicated McKay Educational Center Dec. 31 at Contingency Operating Location Q-West, Iraq. The center was named after retired Lt. Col. Ivor McKay, Phelps' mentor.

BY STAFF SGT. ROB STRAIN AND
SGT. MATTHEW C. COOLEY
15TH SUST. BDE.

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq – The 15th Sustainment Brigade Wagonmasters dedicated the McKay Educational Center, during a ceremony Dec. 31 at Contingency Operating Location Q-West, Iraq.



The Q-West education center has served more than 1,000 Soldiers since it opened Nov. 5 and has been a centerpiece of Soldier support services here, said Col. Larry Phelps, commander of the 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

He said choosing to whom the center would be dedicated was easy.

“We knew we had to dedicate it to a Soldier who epitomizes wisdom, mentoring and grooming our next generation of Army leaders,” said Phelps, a Greenville, Ala., native.

Phelps chose retired Lt. Col. Ivor McKay, a Veteran of World War II and the Korean War – Phelps' mentor for roughly 10 years.

“Today, we rename our education center in honor of a Soldier with over 60 years of experience in

training, mentoring and growing Soldiers,” he said. “We dedicate it to a man who spends his time, even today, despite the fact that he will soon be 90 years old, sitting together with junior leaders and sharing his experiences and knowledge.”

“More than any other officer, Ivor has been fundamental to my own success as a battalion commander, a division rear detachment commander and, now, as a brigade commander. I have always relied on him to be my teacher and adviser ... and can think of no one who has done more to pass on the lessons of the past to countless Soldiers.”

Staff Sgt. Bridget Savage, the education center's noncommissioned officer in charge with the 15th Sust. Bde. and Princeville, N.C., native, said the center has 4 classrooms, 20 Internet-enabled computers, a printer and phones, all for student use.

Savage said interested service members can take a Functional Academic Skills Training class, the Defense Language Aptitude Battery, Army Correspondence Courses, proctored exams and college courses through GoArmyEd.

“If I can't do it myself, I have contacts on (Contingency Operating Location Speicher) and (Joint Base Balad),” she said.

The McKay Educational Center is located on the corner of Main Street and Idaho Street, and is open from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily.

Transportation Soldiers train with heavy equipment transport systems

BY SGT. LASSANDRA KEY
96TH SUST. BDE.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers with the 498th Transportation Company displayed their skills driving the Army's heavy equipment transport system during a training session Dec. 24 at Camp Taji, Iraq, held to help them adjust to the changing mission in Iraq.

Twelve Soldiers with the 498th Trans. Co., 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), were instructed by Spc. Todd Tipton, a heavy equipment operator and a Robertsdale, Ala., native, and three of his fellow Soldiers.

Tipton is one of a few Soldiers assigned to the unit who are licensed on the HET system, said Sgt. Alexander Reese Tolbert, the operations assistant with the 498th and a Mason, Ariz., native.

“Helping train Soldiers to operate and maneuver these vehicles will help make

the Soldiers mission-ready,” Tipton said.

The two-week, 40-hour HET training class covered various topics including the maintenance of the vehicle, changing tires and properly maneuvering the HET system trailer.

Staff Sgt. Veronica Mond, a squad leader with the 498th Trans. Co. and a Gunnison, Miss., native, said Tipton designed a course to allow them to practice serpentine and night maneuvers.

“Soldiers were able to gain an enormous amount of knowledge because of Spc. Tipton's ability to properly instruct and train,” she said.

Pfc. Brandon Swiger, a vehicle operator and a Mobile, Ala., native, said he gained confidence from the experience. He said Tipton's previous driving experience enabled him to give his fellow Soldiers valuable pointers on driving the HET system.

Tipton spent time driving in the active duty Army, which he said developed the skills that have allowed him to properly train Soldiers.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Julie Waldroup

Spc. Todd Tipton, a heavy equipment operator with the 498th Transportation Company, 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and a Robertsdale, Ala., native, demonstrates how to couple the truck and trailer of a heavy equipment transport system, during a class he taught for Soldiers from his platoon to prepare them for a change in their mission.

13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)

“Phantom Support”



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This film is suitable for persons 17 years and older.

National Guard Soldiers in for long haul

Indiana Soldiers serve more than 20 years with same units

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
STAFF SGT. KIMBERLY CALKINS
96TH SUST. BDE.

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq – Eight Soldiers with the 138th Quartermaster Support Company out of Brazil, Ind., and the 1218th Transportation Company out of West Palm Beach, Fla., devoted themselves to the National Guard for the long haul – serving more than 20 years with the same unit.

Master Sgt. Randall Knox, senior maintenance supervisor and operations noncommissioned officer in charge with the 138th QM Co. and a Center Point, Ind., native, said the unit has changed considerably in his nearly 40 years in the Indiana Army National Guard.

“In 1970, when I first joined the unit, it was the 38th Supply and Transportation Company,” said Knox. “The unit equipment consisted of the M151Jeep, M52 five-ton tractors, M818 five-ton tractor, (M127) 12-ton S&P trailers, 25-ton lowboy trailers, and M35 two and a half-ton cargo trucks. In 1993, when the unit became B Company, 38th Main Support Battalion, the unit equipment started to change extensively.”

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert McKenzie, unit maintenance officer with the 1218th Trans. Co., and a Stuart, Fla., native, has also seen changes in the course of his 30-year career, from vintage 1950’s equipment to the up-armored vehicles of today.

“I can still remember thinking that, because we were the National Guard, we would never see the ‘high speed’ equipment the Army had,” said McKenzie. “We were always five to six years behind our active components. Now we have the same equipment.”

After 31 years in the same National

Guard unit, Sgt. 1st Class Joe Cortinas, a maintenance supervisor with the 1218th Trans. Co. and a West Palm Beach, Fla., native, said the face of the unit has changed as well.

“Things seemed smaller, our main mode of transportation used to be the M151 Jeep as compared to today’s behemoth M1070 heavy equipment transporter,” said Cortinas. “Our unit transformed over the years from air defense to transportation.”

As Knox prepares for redeployment this month, he will also prepare to celebrate his 40-year anniversary in the Indiana Army National Guard in February.

“It was only seven miles from home and, at the time, the unit had the (Military Occupational Specialty) I wanted to make a military career in,” he said. “The staff and its noncommissioned officer leadership were outstanding and did a great job of mentoring the younger enlisted Soldiers. Their leadership has made me what I am today. ... That is why, 39 years later, I am still giving advice and mentoring the younger Soldiers who join the unit.”

In 1989, as Knox approached his first 20 years in the 138th, Sgt. 1st Class Neil Brown, the unit’s readiness noncommissioned officer and a Brazil, Ind., native, began his 20-year career.

Brown said he joined B Co., 38th Supply and Trans. Co. during his senior year of high school. His father, a retired readiness NCO and first sergeant with B Co., 38th MSB, pushed him to join the unit, telling him the community would support the unit, and him by extension.

His father served as a truck driver, a squad leader and platoon sergeant, as well as the recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer for the unit while it was B Co., said Brown.

“He helped build the unit from the



Proud of the heritage of the 138th Quartermaster Support Company, Sgt. 1st Class Neil Brown, the Joint Distribution Center noncommissioned officer and a Brazil, Ind., native, stands next to his 20-year mentor, Master Sgt. Randall Knox, the operation supervisor and a Center Point, Ind., native. Brown has been with the 138th QM Support Co. for 20 years and Knox will celebrate his 40th year in the same unit in February. The 138th QM Support Co. is supported by the 751st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

community during his years as a very successful recruiter,” he said.

Sgt. Gary Nuckols, motor vehicle operator and a Brazil, Ind., native, joined the unit in 1979 as well. Although Nuckols had a break in service, he has still served the same unit for 20 years.

“It was 10 miles from my home and the unit had good leaders,” he said. “I can still remember wearing solid green uniforms.”

Sgt. Alan White, a mechanic with the 1218th and a West Palm Beach, Fla., native, said he sees the benefits of serving the same unit, regardless of the equip-

ment changes and challenges he has experienced in his 24-year career.

“The unit is my family, plus it has challenged my career, improved my skills as a Soldier and a person,” he said. “I can pass on my expertise to new Soldiers in the unit, not only as a noncommissioned officer but also as a teacher.”

Sgt. Willie Daggins, a light wheel mechanic with the 743rd Maint. Co. and a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., native, is attached to the 1218th. Daggins has spent 28 years with the unit and said he enjoyed it because of its friendly atmosphere and proximity to home.

“The biggest change I’ve seen is that the vehicles have become more difficult to repair and maintain,” Daggins said. “The location of the unit never changed, only the people.”

Staff Sgt. Agnes Thompson, supply sergeant with the 1218th and a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., native, said she is no stranger to changing faces and has seen many during her 25 years with the unit.

“It is a unit that makes all Soldiers feel at home when they are not at home with their family,” she said.

Sgt. Willie Daggins, a light wheel vehicle mechanic with the 1218th Transportation Company and a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., native, has served 28 years in the same National Guard unit. The 1218th Trans. Co. is supported by the 751st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).



724th Transportation Soldiers compete for commander's cup

By SGT. JENNA REESE AND
SPC. HEATHER CULLEN
15TH SUST. BDE.

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION SPEICHER, Iraq – A



team of Soldiers with the 724th Transportation Company won a taillight and five lug nuts by competing in the Commander's Cup

softball tournament Dec. 19 at Contingency Operating Location Speicher, Iraq.

The Commander's Cup trophy is a taillight on a rod with five lug nuts, decorated by and representing the company's five platoons, said Maj. Sean Counihan, the commander of the 724th Trans. Co., 264th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and an Avon, Ind., native. The platoon that wins the Cup brings it to all formations, he said.



Courtesy photo

The 724th Transportation Company's 2nd Platoon Wolverines take on the 1st Platoon Dragons in the 724th Trans. Co. Commander's Cup volleyball game Dec. 19 at Contingency Operating Location Speicher, Iraq.

The first Commander's Cup was a volleyball competition held in observance of Thanksgiving, said Spc. Mat-

thew Stephenson, a gunner with the company's 2nd Platoon and Griggsville, Ill., native. The 2nd Platoon

Wolverines were the tournament champions, said Stephenson.

The second Commander's Cup was the softball tournament held Dec. 19. The headquarters and maintenance platoons combined forces and, in both games, they came from behind to win, said Sgt. 1st Class Brian Peterson, a motor sergeant from Fort Bliss, Texas.

This surprised everyone, as they were considered the underdog team, he said.

Staff Sgt. Johnathan Gregory, the company's senior mechanic and a Reno, Nev., native, was presented with the Commander's Cup for driving in the winning run.

Staff Sgt. Jay Hammel, a maintenance clerk and a Troy, Mo., native, was named the most valuable player for his overall performance.

Counihan said, "All platoons are working hard. The smack talk has already begun, but it will come down to the platoon that doesn't give up the big play."

24th Finance Co. brings cash to outlying posts

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
PFC. JUSTIN A. NAYLOR
15TH SUST. BDE.

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq – For Soldiers at small outposts in Iraq, buying movies, hygiene products and luxury items is not as simple as going to a store and swiping a credit card – they do not have daily access to cash.

The finance troops with C Detachment, 24th Finance Company, Special Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) bring much-needed cash to small outposts throughout Kirkuk province.

"You can't get anything out here without cash," said Spc. Jacob Sanchez, a human resources specialist with 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division at Joint Security Station McHenry in Kirkuk province, Iraq, and a Norwalk, Calif., native. "There are no ATMs, and you can't use credit or debit cards at the stores."

Once a month, the finance troops

supply the Soldiers at this and other bases in the province with cash.

"We give financial support to the Soldiers that don't have the option of coming in to the main finance office," said Sgt. Philip Smith, a financial management support team noncommissioned officer in charge with C Det. and a Camarillo, Calif., native.

Smith and other Soldiers from his detachment at Contingency Operating Location Warrior in Kirkuk, Iraq, visit three different outposts – Contingency Operating Location Zaytun, Joint Security Station McHenry and Patrol Base Doria – for several days each month.

"We support about 1,200 Soldiers at these bases," said Smith.

For the Soldiers at these locations, the finance Soldiers also provide other financial assistance, such as assisting with paperwork to fix pay problems and answering financial questions, he said.

Although traveling to remote bases throughout the province once a month can be quite a challenge, the rewards of helping Soldiers access the money and resources they need outweigh the trouble involved with the travel, Smith said.

"My job is to support the Soldiers



Sgt. Philip Smith, a financial management support team noncommissioned officer in charge with C Detachment, 24th Finance Company and a Camarillo, Calif., native, types up financial information as a Soldier fills out paperwork to receive cash at Joint Security Station McHenry Dec. 4 in Kirkuk province, Iraq. C Det. visits three outposts a month to allow Soldiers to withdraw cash

with what they are doing here," he said, "and that is the biggest reward for me."

Spc. Blaine Berquist, a cashier with C Det. and a Puyallup, Wash., native,

said, "If a Soldier has messed up pay, it hurts them and their families, so we try to fix that for them.





"They hate our lines, but they love the end product," he said.

Do you have a story idea?

Contact us at:

expeditionarytimes@iraq.centcom.mil

Force protection uniform postures

	IBA	Kevlar	Uniform	Conduct PT
U1 	Accessible within 10 minutes.	Accessible within 10 minutes.	DCU/ACU/ service equivalent. PT uniform allowed for PT or off duty and can be worn in DFAC/PX.	No restrictions.
U2 	Worn when outdoors for specified time or event.	Worn when outdoors for specified time or event.	DCU/ACU/ service equivalent. PT uniform allowed for PT only and cannot be worn in DFAC/PX.	Restriction: PT only in hardened facilities. Can run with IBA and Kevlar.
U3 	Worn outside hardened facility.	Worn outside hardened facility.	Same as U2. DCU/ACU/ service equivalent. PT uniform allowed for PT only and cannot be worn in DFAC/PX.	Restriction: PT only in hardened facilities. Can run with IBA and Kevlar.
U4 	Worn.	Worn.	Same as U3, but with ballistic goggles and combat earplugs.	Not authorized.

Soldiers learn biblical history at Al Asad Air Base

STORY AND PHOTO BY PFC. LISA A. COPE
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq – In the past 4,000 years the terrain in Iraq has changed, but according to the oral tradition of the Bedouins, one of the resting places along the biblical journey of Abraham from Ur to Canaan is located at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.



The oasis at Al Asad, commonly referred to as Abraham's Oasis or Abraham's Well, would have been critical to Abraham's travels through the desert.

Capt. Michael T. Lanigan, the chaplain with Task Force Atlas, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team out of Portland, Ore., has studied the Bible and the history of the site.

"Abraham's oasis was one of the few stopping points that ... according to the oral tradition of the Bedouins, was where Abraham and his family stopped before going on to Canaan, which is Jerusalem, the promised land, where God had called him," said Lanigan, a Salem, Ore., native.

Travel from Ur, now Contingency Operating Location Adder, Iraq, to Al Asad can be accomplished in a matter of hours in present times, but Lanigan said he estimates Abraham and his family would have spent at least 58 days traveling this 700 mile distance on foot.

Although there is no proof that Abraham stopped at this particular oasis, Lanigan said it would have made sense for Abraham to have followed a path through this area.

"(Abraham) definitely traveled north, instead of going all the way west," he said. "That would be a deadly march because there really is not any fresh water. So he had to have moved along the Euphrates (River)."

First Lt. Amaris A. Cervantes, the staff duty officer in charge with the 36th Special Troops Battalion out of Temple, Texas, visited Abraham's oasis Jan. 4 with Lanigan and a small group of Soldiers.

Cervantes said, because the oasis is considered a holy site, the Soldiers were asked to secure their weapons in the truck, away from the sacred place.

Her visit to the oasis is one of the special experiences the Army has made possible for her, said Cervantes.

"Just being here (in Iraq) has been pretty exciting," she said. "A lot of people pay a lot of money to come do stuff like this, to go (visit) this religious site. I get to do it for fun."

Lanigan said he facilitates trips to the oasis on a monthly basis, but smaller groups are easier to accommodate.

This experience is a good way to educate service members about the history of the land they are in, as well as give them a much-needed break, said Lanigan.

"It is something to kind of get their minds off of always rolling out on missions," he said. "(It helps them) realize there is something bigger and more important, significant, in this land than just electronics and warfare."

He said the history behind the oasis is what makes it so special.

"That is why it is a pretty cool thing, to have some geographical tie to something spiritual," he said.



Capt. Michael T. Lanigan, the chaplain with Task Force Atlas, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team out of Portland, Ore., and a Salem, Ore., native, explains the history and significance of Abraham's Oasis Jan. 4 during a tour of the oasis at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.



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Deployed Airman witnesses birth of son

BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS ALLISON M. BOEHM
332ND AIR EXPEDITIONARY WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – In the early morning hours of Dec. 23, in a private room, a young Airman's life changed forever.

Although he had been awake through the night, he sat smiling, eyes glued to the real-time image of his wife on the computer monitor.

Staff Sgt. Shane Evans, deployed here from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, watched his wife give birth to their first child, a boy they named Weylin.

"I desperately wanted to reach through the screen," said Evans. "But I was just happy to be able to see the whole process and be there for my wife. Although I wasn't able to hold my wife or newborn son, I feel as though I was there."

What made it all possible was the Red Cross Legacy Room at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. When the situation calls for it, the room's privacy and solid Internet connection allow service members to escape the desert environment, even if only for a short while.

"For many, being deployed is challenging because they miss special events – whether it's a graduation, a wedding, an anniversary, a birthday or the birth of child," said Kenneth Romero, team leader and station manager of the American Red Cross JBB. "The legacy room helps service members to be beamed back home and witness with their own

eyes those life-changing events while they are here."

Service members can reserve the room for any time, day or night, in blocks of one hour or more. Evans stayed in the room for nearly 15 hours waiting for his son's birth.

"The whole time I was in the room, I didn't feel like I was deployed," said Evans, a force protection escort assigned to the 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron. "Yes, I was still in uniform, but everything else just disappeared and I got to spend time with my wife.

"Being able to see the birth made it seem like I didn't miss one of the biggest parts of my son's life. I didn't get to hold him, but I still got to see and hear him. When they set him on my wife and he cried, it broke my heart but filled me with happiness.



Air Force photo by Senior Airman Christopher Hubenthal

Staff Sgt. Shane Evans, 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron force protection escort, talks to his pregnant wife at the Red Cross Legacy Room via webcam Dec. 22, hours before she gave birth to their first child. Evans is deployed from Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

"I don't think I'll ever be able to repay the Red Cross members for the opportunity of feeling like I was in the room with my wife watching my son's birth."

Providers run laundry facility for Soldiers at Poliwoda

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SPC. MICHAEL V. CAMACHO
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION POLIWODA, Iraq – A shower, laundry and clothing repair team provides daily laundry operations for the roughly 500 Soldiers and civilian contractors stationed at Contingency Operating Location Poliwoda, Iraq.

The SLCR team with the 263rd Quartermaster Company, 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), is one of a few such teams in Iraq, as most SLCR teams were replaced by contractors on larger bases. However, the SLCR teams remain useful for remote locations, said Sgt. Jake Rademacher noncommissioned officer of the COL Poliwoda laundry facility.

One SLCR team can provide uniform and shower maintenance for 1,500 to 3,000 Soldiers at a base, said Rademacher, a North Platt, Neb., native.

The SLCR team, comprised of five Soldiers, uses the Laundry Advance System, an industrial size washing machine with a user interface able to monitor the status and problems that may occur during the washing process,

said Rademacher. It takes roughly five hours from the time clothes are turned in to wash, dry and fold them, he said, and most Soldiers retrieve their laundry within 24 hours.

The laundry point processes roughly 250 bundles a day, said Spc. Winston Ryan, a textile service specialist with the 263rd QM Co.

Bundles can consist of as little as one set of ACUs or a set of sheets, said Ryan, a North Platt, Neb., native. The SLCR team puts 25 to 30 bundles into the LADS, roughly 200 pounds of laundry, to make up each load, he said.

The gratitude of patrons is obvious when they receive their clean laundry, said Rademacher.

"One of the best things about this job is the level of appreciation that you get from the Soldiers you support," he said.

The SLCR team provides clean uniforms and socks, which alone should earn them high praise, said Capt. Ronald Opperman, the personnel officer with 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment and an Oklahoma City, native.

"They keep us clean and we love what they do for us," he said.

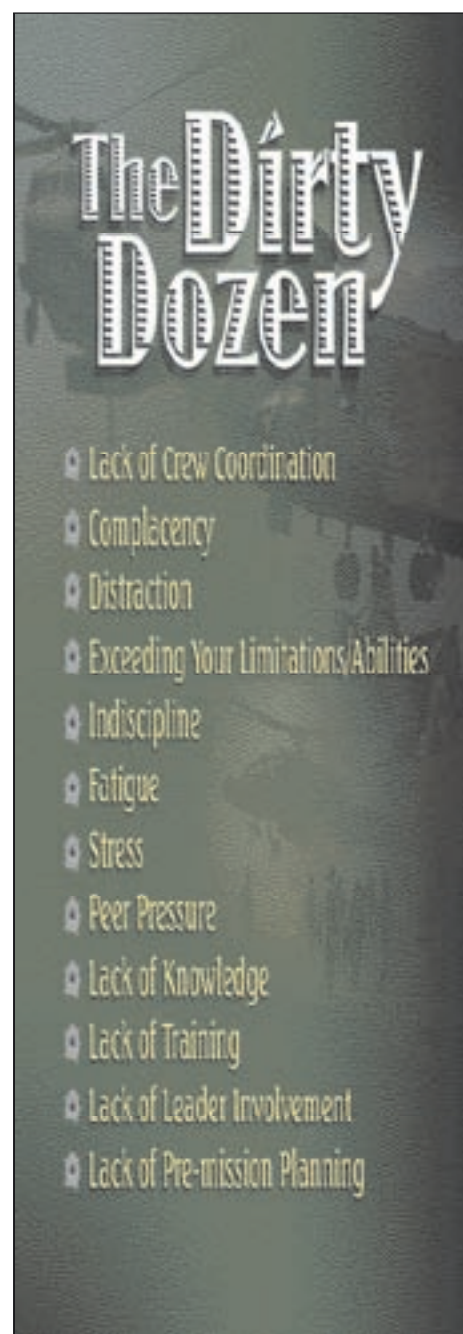
Rademacher said the importance of clean laundry is essential to the day to day mission of the personnel they support. Without a laundry facility, service members would have to find their own means to wash clothes, he



Spc. Nicholas Diaz, a textile specialist with the 263rd Quartermaster Company, 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and an El Paso, Texas, native, folds freshly cleaned laundry at the laundry facility Dec. 5 at Contingency Operating Location Poliwoda, Iraq.

said, which could lead to substandard hygiene.

"Without our services, the Soldiers here on post would have definite threat of disease," he said.



Paradoxical nicknames, resilient robots, avatars



**"The Stress Doc"
Mark Gorkin**

Recently, an Internet colleague asked me to share how my mind works when it's in creative gear. The question has motivated this essay: an examination of how a second colleague's brainstorming request initially stirred those creative

juices and how a sci-fi cinema classic and a mega-movie really got the electricity flowing ... or jolted me over the creative edge. I'll let you decide.

A few days ago, I woke in the middle of the night thinking about a team icebreaker exercise to be shared with a colleague who had requested a phone consultation for her upcoming team building workshop.

The small group exercise involves coming up with a nickname for fellow members. Specifically, I want each person to be interviewed about qualities, predispositions and preferences that capture something essential and contradictory or paradoxical about each individual's nature, personality, etc.

I also encourage participants to use these seemingly contradictory qualities to poke some good-natured fun. The first nickname focuses on a seemingly contradictory or somewhat ironic nature; the others also have a more playful, pointed zing:

- Baseball icon, Ted Williams, tall and lean of build, and perhaps the game's greatest pure hitter, had a visual and alliterative nickname that certainly had an ironical edge: "The Splendid Splinter." And, while it may be a bit of a stretch to see the similarities between a wooden splinter and a "Louisville Slugger," many who dealt with Williams knew that, while splendid with the bat, he could also be a pain in the butt.

- A math professor who described himself as a pretty calm person, while also acknowledging he could be kind of nerdy, garnered the nickname, "Zen Squared."

- A no-nonsense supervisor who was stylishly attired was given a classic punch-line label: "Elegant Taskmaster."

- Then we see my own self-proclaimed media moniker, "Psychohumorist"™. Of course, I let audiences decide where the emphasis on that word should go.

I would be remiss in not noting that the nickname exercise was inspired by Professor Dacher Keltner's article, "In Defense of Teasing," published about a year ago in the Sunday New York Times Magazine Section. But back to the middle-of-the-night story...

As I was pondering the nickname exercise, I began seeing paradoxical and playful thinking in a more individual and team light. I suspect my working on a proposal for the book, "There Is No 'I' in Team ... but there Are Two 'I's in Winning: Strategies for Inspiring Individual Creativity and Interactive Community," helped prime the paradoxical pump. More specifically, I began focusing on how identifying, acknowledging and embracing contradictory or paradoxical traits,

especially one's own, might have distinct personal and team benefits.

Here are four benefits of group members engaging in "Purposeful, Paradoxical and Playfully Provocative Sharing and Brainstorming":

1. Being Real. The exercise provides people a chance to share meaningful things about themselves, their characteristics, idiosyncrasies or hobbies, etc., that don't typically come up in workplace conversation. It also challenges the group to capture seemingly contradictory aspects about each member. None of us are one-dimensional. One important component of "being real" is owning up to our contradictions, comprising the complex tapestry of who we genuinely are.

Of course, we don't have to simply rest on our contradictory laurels, but can channel these paradoxical traits, talents and tensions to further develop or discover new strengths and positively self-defining attributes.

2. Being Resilient. In the articles, "The Secrets of Resilient People," in the November and December editions of AARPMagazine, author Beth Howard adapts a rating scale, "How Resilient Are You?" from "The Resiliency Advantage" by Dr. Al Siebert. Two aspects of resilience reflect a paradoxical pendant:

- a) Ambiguity Tolerance. The first involves tolerating "high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty about situations: I'm flexible and comfortable with my paradoxical traits; optimistic/pessimistic; trusting/cautious; unselfish/selfish; etc."

- b) Yin-Yang Perspective. "I've converted misfortune into good luck and found benefits in bad experiences." Resilient folks know, only after you genuinely understand the lemon are you in position to make real lemonade as opposed to a drink that is saccharine sweet. And with such insight, resilient people realize that the glass more often than not is half empty and half full. In fact, these individuals harness and transform the tension in ambiguity.

3. Being Creative. Here's a personal illustration of how the tension between "thesis and antithesis" yielded an integrative "Aha!" Back in the early '90s, I wound up writing some rap-like lyrics for a black beauty contest theme song. (Don't ask. I had periodically tried my hand at poetry, including a bluesy number called "The Burnout Boogie.") One morning, shortly after my noble, beauty contest effort, I awoke chastising myself: I was a university professor, a psychotherapist (thesis) ... What was I doing trying to write rap lyrics (antithesis)?

A blazing flash scattered my sleepy haze. I was no longer just playing in a field of dreams: If you write and "Shrink Rap,"™ they will come (creative synthesis).

Actually, many in the arts and sciences have embraced the words of noted 20th century author, F. Scott Fitzgerald: "The test of a first-rate intelligence is the capacity to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function. For example, one should see things as hopeless yet determined to make them otherwise."

4. Being Cohesive. In our closing seg-

ment, let's return to Keltner and his use of a teasing nickname exercise. His research design has a somewhat different structure and focus than my adaptation.

Keltner studied fraternity brothers and the salient findings were that, not surprisingly, the upper classmen fraternity brothers received more benign nicknames from the lower classmen brothers.

However, even though the junior frat brothers received more pointed or putdown nicknames, there was a seemingly paradoxical outcome. Each time the younger brother seemed to accept or laugh knowingly at his nickname, when the junior accepted the senior's ribbing, he was seen in a more positive light and was embraced by the whole fraternity. This group interaction ultimately led to a greater sense of group cohesion, if not "liberte, egalite, fraternite."

Teasing is surely double-edged. When the nickname exercise pokes fun while capturing something essential or valuable about a team member, I believe you are helping to build both a sense of trust and a feeling of closeness – two vital aspects of group cohesion.

And one final benefit of the exercise involves another component of the above-mentioned resiliency scale, one that also has links to group cohesion. Find humor in rough situations and laugh at yourself. I believe some affirmation occurs in one's own eyes as well as in the eyes of others when a person can laugh at his flaws and foibles, especially when highlighted by another in a public forum. Actually, one may even become a model for others to let down their guard and get playfully real. Shared laughter fosters empathy and camaraderie.

From "Star Wars" and robots to avatars and a new "A" team

Being "Real and Resilient," being "Creative and Cohesive," how could one not make the "Star Wars" association to that delightfully quirky, mini-robot. R2C2 morphs into R2D2 and back again. Why couldn't a purposeful, paradoxical and playful R2C2 group potentially become a "Robo-Team," with some Stress Doc variation, naturally? "Robo," however, is not short for robot. An R2C2 exercise has the potential of generating a "Robo" – "Really Out of the Box" – Team."

Again, there was an event facilitating all these sci-fi associations. I was shortly to see the movie "Avatar," and another conceptual-cinematic reformulation was doing mental gymnastics in my head. Viewing the movie clinched it. According to The New York Times review of the movie, the protagonist (a disabled marine who – with head, heart and new found mobility – inhabits the 10-foot, human/animal body of the native population) is an avatar "because he's both a special being and an embodiment of an idea, namely that of the hero's journey."

Avatar has other meanings:

- Deification – "the manifestation of a deity, notably in human, superhuman or animal form;" in the Hindu cosmology, the Buddha is considered an avatar of the god Vishnu.

- Personification – "an embodiment, as

of a quality or concept; an archetype: the very avatar of cunning."

And, a final definition, that most suits my purposes:

- Manifestation – "a temporary manifestation or aspect of a continuing entity." Why couldn't a small group, thinking and laughing in an uncommon manner, being momentarily induced "out of the box" have an avatar of "Robo-Team?"

From paradoxical and playfully teasing nicknames to renamed robots and resiliency-minded "Robo-Teams," and finally to Avatars and Ava-teams ... I'd say there's potential for an insightfully imaginative and integrative journey.

Closing Summary

This essay, sparked by requests from colleagues, and early morning ruminating, has illustrated a path of imaginative mental meandering:

- 1) First, we explored an exercise for generating paradoxical and playfully provocative nicknames along with the potential benefits to individuals and teams being real and resilient, and creative and cohesive.

- 2) This evoked a sci-fi alliteration sparked by R2C2 of "Star Wars."

- 3) From here we took another sci-fi leap; yielding a "Robo-Team."

- 4) However, this team is less robotic than artistic. It's a "Robo – Really out of the Box – Team."

- 5) Inspired by the mega-movie, "Avatar," and armed with definitions of the word, we made a final transformation: "Robo-Team" as an "avatar" – a temporary manifestation or an embodiment of a "Really Out of the Box Team."

- 6) The linguist evolution from "Avatar" to Ava-team. Ava-team first reflects its etymology – the Sanskrit, "ava," meaning "going down" – as a god descending to earth; and then an R2C2 team take on avatar. In example, a temporary manifestation of an out of the box team potentially inspiring both individual creativity and transformative interactive community.

I hope the ideas shared open up some new mind-expanding pathways, models and conceptual-motivational exercises enabling individuals and teams to better realize their higher, deeper and wider natures, and to help one and all ... "Practice Safe Stress."

Mark Gorkin, LICSW, "The Stress Doc"™, is an acclaimed keynote and kick-off speaker, training/organizational development and team building consultant, psychotherapist and "motivational humorist." He is the author of "Practice Safe Stress: Healing and Laughing in the Face of Stress, Burnout & Depression" and "The Four Faces of Anger: Transforming Anger, Rage, and Conflict into Inspiring Attitude & Behavior." A kickoff speaker for Estrin Legal Education Conferences, Gorkin is America Online's online psychohumorist™ and pioneer of a USA Today Online "HotSite" – <http://www.stressdoc.com> – recognized as a workplace resource by National Public Radio. For more info on Gorkin's speaking and training programs and products, email stressdoc@aol.com or call 301-875-2567.

Soldiers play flag football at Adder

STORY AND PHOTO BY CAPT. MICHAEL LEDFORD
36TH SUST. BDE.

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION ADDER, Iraq – As the National Football League and collegiate football seasons come to an end, the Contingency Operating Location Adder, Iraq, football league starts its season, having held six games so far.



Soldiers with the 36th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), played flag football Dec. 29 at COL Adder.

The league is composed of 28 teams of service members and civilians, and plays most evenings on the COL Adder football field.

Teams pick their own names and some wear team T-shirts, complete with numbers and nicknames.

The Renegades with the 28th Combat Support Hospital, the 36th Thrillers with the 36th Sust. Bde., 121st Brigade Support Battalion Iron Hammer with 4th Brigade, 1st Armored Division, and the Sappers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 7th Engineers are all undefeated.

The game does not revolve around statistics, said wide receiver Spc. Derek Carraway, with the 36th Special Troops Battalion's Team Trail Boss and a Port Leyden, N.Y., native.

"Playing flag football is a lot of fun regardless of whether you win or lose, and is great for morale in



Team Trail Boss (in black), from the 36th Special Troops Battalion, face off against the 732nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion's Belligerent Badgers. The Badgers defeated Team Trail Boss 29-16 Dec. 28 at Contingency Operating Location Adder, Iraq.

addition to breaking up the monotony of the day," Carraway said.

First Lt. Bradley Smejkal, with 36th STB's Team Trail Boss, a medical logistics officer in charge and an Austin, Texas, native, said the game builds camaraderie.

"Playing flag football allows interaction outside of the work environment between officers and enlisted

Soldiers," he said. "(It) is great for stress relief, physical fitness and esprit de corps."

The season is scheduled to conclude in February.

"While it is undetermined which team will be the (COL) Adder football champions, one thing for certain is that all of the players in the league will continue to have a great time while trying to score the next touchdown," Smejkal said.

Soldiers receive praise for by-the-book arms room in theater

STORY AND PHOTO BY
STAFF SGT. OSHAWNA TACKETT
96TH SUST. BDE.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Two Soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), received commendations for bringing the brigade arms room up to standard in mid-December.



Spc. Christopher Blaisdell, the brigade's armorer and a Sacramento, Calif., native, and Pvt. Martin Rodriguez, the alternate armorer and a Phoenix native, were responsible for making adjustments to the arms room, which holds all of the brigade's night vision devices, extra communication equipment and weapon systems.

"When we arrived, we had to clean up a lot of mess from the room and get all the regulations met," said Blaisdell.

Blaisdell has been in the military for two years, working as a supply specialist until he went to school to become an armorer five months ago, he said.

"I like learning new things and taking on more responsibility of control and tracking weapons; it gives me a sense of leadership and makes me feel like I have an important role in the unit," he said.



Pvt. Martin Rodriguez, the alternate armorer with the 96th Sustainment Brigade and a Phoenix native, and Spc. Christopher Blaisdell, the brigade's armorer and a Sacramento, Calif., native, conduct an inventory by serial number of the sensitive items in the 96th Sust. Bde. arms room in mid-December at Camp Taji, Iraq.

Staff Sgt. William Yazzie, HHC's supply sergeant, noncommissioned officer in charge of the arms room and a Westwender, Nev., native, said Blaisdell earned the Soldier of the Week award for the brigade for his efforts.

"They are self-driven, good Soldiers,"

Yazzie said. "(Former Secretary of Defense) Donald Rumsfeld said, 'You go to war with what you got.' We did what we could with what we had. I told them to clean it up, and gave them the regulation, and they made it happen."

Blaisdell said the improvements in-

clude cleanliness; securing all weapon racks, weighing roughly 500 pounds, to the wall; and posting necessary memorandums at the entrance of the room.

"We didn't really have all the resources needed to do exactly what the regulation stated, but we found some heavy chains and got the racks secured," he said.

Maj. Dino Angelbuer, the intelligence officer with the brigade and a Bountiful, Utah, native, was present when Lt. Col. Angelo Williams, the 13th ESC intelligence officer responsible for conducting physical security inspections, conducted a staff assistance visit to the 96th Sust. Bde.

"I'm the unit's physical security manager for A, A and E, which stands for arms, ammunition and explosives," said Williams, a New Haven, Conn., native.

Angelbuer said Williams thought it was the best looking arms room he had seen in theater. Without these inspections and guidance, many times arms rooms are most likely not done to standard, he added.

The two Soldiers received praise from their supervisors as well as their higher command.

"They have a good sense of organization and attention to detail," said Angelbuer. "They demonstrated an innovative use of resources to accomplish the mission."

TELL YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS HOW MUCH YOU MISS THEM
E-mail: expeditionarytimes@iraq.centcom.mil

Sudoku

The objective is to fill the 9x9 grid so each column, each row and each of the nine 3x3 boxes contains the digits from 1 to 9 only one time each.

Last week's answers

5	9	7	6	3	8	2	4	1
3	1	6	2	4	7	9	8	5
8	2	4	9	1	5	6	7	3
7	8	9	4	2	1	3	5	6
6	5	2	8	7	3	1	9	4
1	4	3	5	9	6	7	2	8
2	6	8	3	5	9	4	1	7
9	7	5	1	6	4	8	3	2
4	3	1	7	8	2	5	6	9

Level: Hard

4			7			6		
8			9		6		2	5
		6					1	
			1				7	
2	8		4		9		3	1
	1				3			
	4					7		
9	5		8		7			6
		2			4			9

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which state produces two-thirds of America's iron ore?
2. Where is the divorce capital of Nevada?
3. In 1988, which city had the highest murder rate of any in the U.S.?
4. Which state with access to an ocean has the shortest coastline?
5. Which is the only U.S. state to have been an independent republic?

1. Minnesota 2. Reno 3. Washington 4. New Hampshire 5. Texas

JB BALAD WORSHIP SERVICES

TRADITIONAL - Sunday

0200 Air Force Hospital Chapel 0930 Provider Chapel
 1030 Freedom Chapel (West side) 1100 Castle Heights (Bldg. 7562)
 1400 Air Force Hospital Chapel 1730 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)
 2000 Air Force Hospital Chapel

GOSPEL - Sunday

1100 MWR East Building 1200 Freedom Chapel (West Side)
 1230 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

CONTEMPORARY - Sunday

0900 Chapel- Next Iraq/MWR East
 1030 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)
 1400 Castle Heights (Bldg. 7562) 1900 Freedom Chapel (West Side)

Wednesday

2000 Gilbert Memorial Chapel

LITURGICAL (Episcopal, Anglican, Presbyterian) - Sunday

1700 Provider Chapel

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST - Saturday

1000 Provider Chapel

CHURCH OF CHRIST - Sunday

1530 Castle Heights (Bldg. 7562)

LATTER DAY SAINTS (MORMON) - Sunday

1300 Provider Chapel 1530 Freedom Chapel (West side)
 1900 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

MASS - Saturday

1700 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)
 2000 Freedom Chapel (West Side)

Sunday

0830 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

Thursday

1100 Air Force Hospital

Mon., Wed., Fri.

1700 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

Monday-Friday

1130 555th Engineer Bde. (Bldg. 7200)

JEWISH SHABBAT SERVICES- Friday

1700 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

Saturday

0930 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

1700 Gilbert Memorial Chapel (H-6)

ISLAMIC PRAYER - Friday

1230 Provider Chapel

PAGAN/WICCAN FELLOWSHIP - Thursday

1900 The Shack

Saturday

1900 The Shack

GREEK ORTHODOX - Sunday

0900 Provider Annex

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CALL:

Gilbert Chapel: 443-7703

Provider Chapel: 433-2430

Freedom Chapel: 443-6303

JB BALAD ACTIVITIES

INDOOR POOL Swim Lessons: Mon., Wed., - 6 p.m. Tue., Thu., Sat., - 6:30 p.m. Aqua Training: Tue., Thu., - 7:30 p.m., 8:30 p.m.	a.m., 5-6 p.m. Edge Weapons & Stick Fighting Training: Tue., Thur., Sat., - 8-10 p.m.	p.m. Caribbean Night: Friday- 8 p.m. Chess & Dominoes Tourney: Friday- 8 p.m. Salsa Class: Saturday- 8:30 p.m. Poker: Saturday- 7:30 p.m.	CC Cross Fit: Monday- Saturday- 10:30 p.m. Cross Fit: Mon., Wed., Fri., - 5:45 a.m., 7 a.m., 3 p.m., 6 p.m. Tue., Thu., - 7 a.m., 3 p.m. Sunday- 5:45 a.m., 3 p.m. P90x: Monday- Saturday- 4:30 a.m., 4 p.m., 10 p.m., 12 a.m. Soccer: Tue., Thu., - 8 p.m. Wednesday- 8 p.m. MACP Level 1: Friday- 8 p.m. 5 on 5 Basketball: Saturday- 8 p.m.	Hold'em: Mon., Fri., - 2 p.m., 8:30 p.m. 8-ball tourney: Tuesday- 2 a.m., 8:30 p.m. Ping-pong tourney: Tuesday- 8:30 p.m. Spades: Wednesday- 2 a.m., 8:30 p.m. Salsa: Wednesday- 8:30 p.m. 9-ball: Thursday- 2 a.m., 8:30 p.m. Karaoke: Thursday- 8:30 p.m. Yoga: Wednesday- 8 p.m. Saturday- 9 a.m., 7 p.m. Boxing: Sunday- 4 p.m. Friday- 8 p.m. 5 on 5 Basketball: Saturday- 8 p.m.	Ping-pong tourney: Tuesday- 8 p.m. Foosball tourney: Tuesday- 8 p.m. Jam Session: Tuesday- 7:30 p.m. 8-ball tourney: Wednesday- 8 p.m. Guitar Lessons: Thursday- 7:30 p.m. Game tourney: Thursday- 1 p.m., 8 p.m. Enlisted Poker: Friday- 1 p.m., 8 p.m. Officer Poker: Saturday- 1 p.m., 8 p.m. Squat Competition: Saturday- 8 p.m. Darts: Saturday- 8:30 p.m. WEST REC- NESS CENTER Green Bean Karaoke: Sun., Wed., 7:30pm 9-ball tourney: Monday- 8 p.m.	Friday- 7 p.m. Aerobics: Monday, Wednesday, Friday- 7 p.m. Body by Midget Toning Class: Tue., Thu., - 7 p.m. Dodge ball Game: Tuesday- 7:30 p.m. Furman's Martial Arts: Mon., Wed., Sun., - 1 p.m. Gaston's Self-Defense Class: Fri., Sat., - 7 p.m. Open court basketball: Thursday- 7 p.m. Open court soccer: Mon., Wed., - 7 p.m. Zingano Brazilian Jui Jitsu: Tue., Thu., - 8:30 p.m. CIRCUIT GYM Floor hockey: Mon., Wed., Fri., - 8-10 p.m.
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UPCOMING SPORTS ON AFN



Thursday 01/14/10

Wednesday Night Hoops: Boston College @ Duke, Live 3 a.m. AFN/sports
 New York Knicks @ Philadelphia 76ers, Live 3 a.m. AFN/xtra
 Wednesday Night Hoops: North Carolina @ Clemson, Live 5 a.m. AFN/sports
 Boston Bruins @ Anaheim Ducks, Live 6 a.m. AFN/ xtra

Friday 01/15/10

NBA on TNT: Chicago Bulls @ Boston Celtics, Live 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 NBA on TNT: Cleveland Cavaliers @ Utah Jazz, Live 6:30 a.m. AFN/sports
 Stanford @ Washington, Tape Delayed 7 p.m. AFN/xtra

Saturday 01/16/10

Toronto Maple Leafs @ Washington Capitals, Live 3 a.m. AFN/xtra
 NBA Friday: Phoenix Suns @ Atlanta Hawks, Live 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 Nashville Predators @ Calgary Flames, Live 5 a.m. AFN/prime pacific
 Los Angeles Clippers @ Los Angeles Lakers, Live 6:30 a.m. AFN/xtra

Sunday 01/17/10

NFC Division Game: Teams TBD, Live 12:30 a.m. AFN/sports
 Arizona @ Oregon, Live 12:30 a.m. AFN/prime atlantic
 Texas A&M @ Texas, Live 2 a.m. AFN/xtra
 AFC Division Game: Teams TBD, Live 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 New York Rangers @ St. Louis Blues, Live 4 a.m. AFN/ xtra

Monday 01/18/10

UConn @ Michigan, Live 12:30 a.m. AFN/prime atlantic
 NFC Division Game: Teams TBD, Live 12:30 a.m. AFN/sports
 Sony Open in Hawaii: Final Round (Waialae Country Club; Honolulu, HI), Live 5 a.m. AFN/prime atlantic
 Dallas Mavericks @ Toronto Raptors, Tape Delayed 10:30 a.m. AFN/ xtra

Tuesday 01/19/10

NBA on TNT: Phoenix Suns @ Memphis Grizzlies, Live 1:30 a.m. AFN/sports
 Syracuse @ Notre Dame, Live 3 a.m. AFN/xtra
 Dallas Mavericks @ Boston Celtics, Live 4 a.m. AFN/sports
 Orlando Magic @ Los Angeles Lakers, Live 6:30 a.m. AFN/ sports

Wednesday 01/20/10

Super Tuesday: Tennessee @ Alabama, Live 3 a.m. AFN/sports
 Clemson @ Georgia Tech, Live 3 a.m. AFN/xtra
 Super Tuesday: Purdue @ Illinois, Live 5 a.m. AFN/sports
 Australian Open Tennis Championships 2010, Live 5 a.m. AFN/ xtra

Arts & Entertainment

'Sherlock Holmes,' displays solid chemistry, elementary story

BY SGT. JAYSON A. HOFFMAN
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF



"Sherlock Holmes" started with a bang and ended with a fizzle.

The movie had great chemistry between Holmes (Robert Downey Jr.) and Dr. Watson (Jude Law), and action with classic Guy Ritchie flare – all of which was overshadowed by a boring story and lame villain.

Holmes and Dr. Watson chase Lord Blackwood (Mark Strong), the leader of an occult group, who plans to take over England and then the rest of the world with his powers of magic. Blackwood strikes fear in London by rising from

the dead and killing off the powers that could stand in the way of world domination. Detective Holmes seeks to solve this mystery with his superior wit and logic before it is too late.

Ritchie ("Snatch") sets a beautiful, 19th century scene. The special effects aren't over the top – they're rough and grimy, in a good way that makes audience feel that this is what London must have looked like all of those years ago.

The chemistry between Downey ("Iron Man") and Law ("The Holiday") was the most entertaining part of the film. Dr. Watson is bound to get engaged, which threatens his bond with Holmes. The two bicker and fight like brothers, but are always ready to defend the other at all costs. This relationship was the comedy and the heart of the film.

Law played Dr. Watson as a clean respectable doctor who made up for Holmes' many character flaws.

Downey's Holmes was a flawed man with vices galore, but still the keen eye for detail that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote about all those years ago.

Rachel McAdams ("The Time Traveler's Wife") portrayed Irene Adler, who not only holds Holmes' heart, but also has the distinction of outwitting the world's greatest detective, twice.

The problem is, there is no way the audience could believe her Adler could outwit Holmes. All the examples in the movie of her outwitting him are really just her pulling conniving tricks to stop him from solving the crime. She was truly a disappointment.

Strong's ("Stardust") Blackwood

was lame. He was absolutely one of the lamest villains in recent years. I had a very difficult time believing he struck fear in all of London. His performance wasn't terrible, but what was written for him was awful.

The film's action and fight scenes were wonderful, very reminiscent of "Snatch," with a Sherlock Holmes twist. Ritchie knows how to do action.

A beautiful setting, beautiful action and great chemistry saved this film from being garbage, but the weak story made the film a disappointment.

However, I look forward to what I expect to be a great sequel. The film ends with mention of Holmes' greatest foe and, if the writers get it right, it could be great.

'Going Rogue': love to hate it

BY SPC. NAVEED ALI SHAH
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF



Ah, how unfortunate that the Christmas season has come and gone so quickly in Iraq.

Luckily, Santa Claus brought me the gift that keeps on giving: "Going Rogue: An American Life" by Sarah Palin.

The former Alaska governor's highly anticipated memoir falls short of everything but a glorious defeat. In an interesting note, the former vice presidential candidate was reportedly paid \$5 million in advance of the book's release, and for good reason: since the book's November release, it has sat at the top of the New York Times best

seller list for six straight weeks.

Republican radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh called the book "truly one of the more substantive policy books I've read." That doesn't say much for Limbaugh's reading list.

In case there is any doubt that the book lacks substance, let me dispel it for you now.

"Going Rogue" is not a book about policy at all, Limbaugh, it's a personal memoir in which an obscure and unimportant politician suddenly thrust into the limelight attempts to cover up the darker parts of her life with prose so tacky, it's almost unrefined. All she needs is the hot-orange shorts and white tank-top.

"... I breathed in an autumn bouquet that combined everything small-town

America with rugged splashes of the Last Frontier."

That's just a portion of the opening sentence. She tries so hard to be sincere that she ends up sounding like a fool instead.

For all of its nuances, "Going Rogue" reads well. I think this was largely thanks to Lynn Vincent, a senior writer and former features editor at World, an evangelical magazine, and Palin's collaborator on the book.

Palin covers topics ranging from her upbringing in rural Alaska to her time as mayor, running for governor, being chosen as vice presidential candidate, the campaign, the aftermath, and even "trooper-gate."

Although the biographical portions of "Going Rogue" seem like something out of a fairytale, other parts, particularly about

the campaign and the trooper-gate scandal surrounding the firing of her brother-in-law, Mike Wooten, sound more like a cornered animal, hurling accusations as the only weapon she's got left.

Later she writes, "And no matter how many times and in how many ways I repeated the plain fact that Alaska came first, the opposition interpreted every position I took through the prism of my supposed 'national ambitions.'"

Not to fit into the stereotype, but I also believe "Going Rogue" was just a step in the road to 2012 for Palin. She used the book to answer any and all issues that have blemished her lipstick smeared face in the past and present. Unfortunately for her, "Going Rogue" could be the biggest stain on her future political aspirations.

CLASSIC PVT MURPHY



Sustainer Reel Time Theater

Wednesday, Jan. 13

5 p.m. The Twilight Saga: New Moon
8 p.m. 2012

Sunday, Jan. 17

2 p.m. Ninja Assassin
5 p.m. Daybreakers
8 p.m. Armored

Thursday, Jan. 14

5 p.m. Old Dogs
8 p.m. The Twilight Saga: New Moon

Monday, Jan. 18

5 p.m. Ninja Assassin
8 p.m. Daybreakers

Friday, Jan. 15

2 p.m. Armored
5 p.m. Ninja Assassin
8:30 p.m. Daybreakers

Tuesday, Jan. 19

5 p.m. The Men Who Stare At Goats
8 p.m. Ninja Assassin

Saturday, Jan. 16

2 p.m. Daybreakers
5 p.m. Armored
8 p.m. Ninja Assassin

Wednesday, Jan. 20

5 p.m. Armored
8 p.m. Daybreakers



PHOTOS AROUND IRAQ

U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Matthew D. Leistikow



A member of Iraq's Emergency Response Unit, practices fastening handcuffs on U.S. Army Cpl. Antony Powell, a squad leader with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, during police training Dec. 26, in Kirkuk, Iraq. U.S. Soldiers taught the ERU how to bring down suspects, regardless of size, and properly handcuff them to help improve the professionalism and capabilities of the ERU.

U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Matthew D. Leistikow



A few children leap for candy tossed to them over a wall by Soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division Dec. 24, during a visit to all 37 of the emergency response unit's checkpoints around Kirkuk, Iraq. The Soldiers shared the holiday spirit by passing out candy to members of the ERU and local citizens.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jesse Gross

Iraqi Federal Police search civilians and vehicles at a traffic control point with the observation assistance of B Troop, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division Dec. 13, at Taha Mosque, Baghdad.



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Matthew D. Leistikow

Cars drive by as Iraqi police and U.S. Army Soldiers with D Company, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team look on during a joint traffic control point operation Dec. 27 in Kirkuk, Iraq. The Soldiers observed the operations, conducted by elements of the Iraqi Army, including Special Weapons and Tactics teams, military police, emergency services and secret police, to emphasize cohesion within the units of Iraqi Security Forces.



U.S. Army photo by Pic. Ali Hargis

An Iraqi policeman, with the 3rd Iraqi Federal Police Division, demonstrates ways to quickly disarm a gunman during a demonstration for Personal Security Detail training Dec. 22 at Spear Base, near Mosul, Iraq. The training consisted of combatives, as well as mounted and dismounted patrols.

NEWS AROUND IRAQ

US, Iraq Federal Police conduct patrol, search

BAGHDAD – U.S. Soldiers and Air Force military dog handlers, working jointly with Iraqi Federal Police, conducted a cordon and search of the Abid Allha ibn al-Khabib graveyard, near the town of Abu Roes, east of Baghdad, Dec. 29, to search for a weapons cache.

It was rumored that in 2007, the same graveyard had been the site of a cache, which produced more than two tons of dynamite and C4 explosives.

With the FP taking the lead, followed closely by the dog handlers and their dogs, Bak and Chukky, the search began. Walking carefully across the crowded cemetery, the FP scoured the ground visually as Bak and Chukky ran off-leash, sniffing mounds of dirt, stone sarcophagi and simple gravestones. As the FP found areas they considered suspicious, they yelled to the dog handlers, who directed the dogs to search a specific area.

"We are here with the dogs to deny the enemy the advantage of using explosives against Iraqi civilians, Security Forces and U.S. forces," said Staff Sgt. Joshua Webster, a Fayetteville, N.C., native, with the 732nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron.

The search lasted roughly an hour, but no explosives or weapons were uncovered.

First Lt. Jeff Johnson, a Shreveport, La, native, worked side by side with his Iraqi counter parts, Iraqi Lieutenant's Hussein and Ihman, to jointly coordinate the mission.

"It was a great experience," said Johnson. "We showed them how to use their assets. We showed them what right looks like and how to use the working dogs."

After the search of the graveyard was complete, the troops loaded back up into their Humvees and the FP led the convoy to a housing compound in the area of Umm al-Abid, Iraq.

Dismounting from the vehicles, the FP took the lead, with the working dogs and U.S. Soldiers directly behind.

Overall, the mission was a success, said Capt. Steve Chadwick, commander of A Troop, 1st Battalion, 89th Cavalry Squadron.

"The FP did a good job of searching – they got experience with working dogs," said Chadwick. "They've already asked to use (the dogs) again."

Baghdad Police College begins cultural awareness curriculum

BAGHDAD – An American cultural awareness class started Dec. 22 at the Baghdad Police College in Baghdad.

The American cultural awareness class is a small part of the three-year police college curriculum, but it plays a major role in shaping the hearts and minds of the students here, said Col. Randall Twitchell, police training and qualification institute director with Iraq Training and Advising Mission.

The goal is to teach the more than 6,000 students



who now flow through the institute that there is more to Americans than what they see here, he said.

"The course teaches students an overview of American history, the process of our government and historical figures," said Twitchell.

Included in the 90-minute course is a brief summary of the types of homes American live in and the kind of cars Americans buy.

"This course is significant because these officers will go out to every province in Iraq and the impression we leave will go with them," said Twitchell.

Students ask questions throughout the course and most of them want to know how much a house in the U.S. costs and at what age most Americans get married.

The advisers want the students to have a broader sense of the world and more awareness of other nations' cultures, Twitchell said. The police college is working on adding a Dutch cultural awareness course to begin in the next few weeks, he said.

Arab, Kurd Iraqis graduate Waterborne Operations Course

BAGHDAD– Iraqi police officers, including nine Arab and eight Kurdish officers graduated from the Waterborne Operations course Dec. 24 in Baghdad.

The graduation ceremony was the culmination of a six-week class included physical and mental challenges. This combined class was designed to provide law enforcement personnel with the skills and training necessary to function effectively as a member of a river patrol unit.

Senior Iraqi and U.S. officers congratulated the graduates and praised the teamwork the officers displayed as the course progressed.

"This course has significantly improved your ability to safeguard your country," said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Richard Rowe, Iraqi Training and Advisory Mission – Iraq director. "In just one year since the formation of

the Baghdad River Patrol, there has been significant progress made."

Iraqi Brig. Gen. Hussein Jadoa, patrol commander for Rusafa district, said, "The mission of the river patrol is to protect bridges and waterways, prevent illegal fishing and stop terrorists from moving supplies and blowing up bridges."

Kurdish police officer Delawar Mohammed Abdul, a graduate of the course, said he is proud of the accomplishments of his fellow graduates.

"I'll go anywhere in Iraq to do my job," Delawar said. "I've worked in the Security Forces in Dahuk, but will go wherever I am needed."

Iraqi Security Forces arrest 8 suspected Al-Qaeda terrorists

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces arrested eight suspected terrorists Dec. 29 during three joint security operations in northern and central Iraq.

In western Baghdad, ISF and U.S. advisers searched two residential buildings for a suspected Al-Qaeda leader in the Karkh region.

Following a preliminary investigation of the evidence at the scene, ISF arrested two suspected criminal associates of the targeted individual.

During a second operation in a rural area north of Baghdad, ISF and U.S. advisers searched a building for a suspected AQI explosives expert who builds suicide vests and improvised explosive devices used to carry out attacks throughout the area. Based on evidence collected at the scene, ISF arrested four suspected criminal associates of the warranted individual.

During a third security operation in a rural area northeast of Baghdad, the 1st Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Iraqi Army and U.S. advisers searched buildings for a suspected member of AQI who facilitates high-level meetings between leaders of the terrorist group.

The security team discovered two grenades that belonged to an individual present in one of the searched buildings. Explosive ordnance disposal technicians destroyed the grenades before departing the area.

Evidence collected at the scene led the Iraqi Army Soldiers to arrest two suspected criminal associates of the warranted individual.

Iraqi Security Forces arrests 4 suspected terrorists

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces arrested four suspected al-Qaeda in Iraq terrorists Dec. 30 during two joint operations in Baghdad and Bayji, Iraq.

Intelligence sources led ISF and U.S. advisers to search a residential building in Baghdad for a suspected AQI leader believed to have direct involvement in several deadly, large-scale bombings targeting government buildings in Baghdad.


Following a preliminary investigation of evidence

found at the scene, ISF arrested the AQI suspect without incident.

During a second operation in Bayji, southwest of Kirkuk, the 3rd Emergency Response Unit and U.S. advisers searched buildings for a suspected Ansar al Sunnah leader allegedly involved in suicide-vest attacks against ISF in the Tikrit, Iraq, area.

Iraqi Police arrested three suspected criminal accomplices linked to the Ansar al Sunnah individual without incident.


Iraqi Security Forces arrest suspected terrorist tied to Kata'ib Hezbollah

 BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces arrested a suspected terrorist Dec. 29 during a joint security operation in northern Baghdad to arrest a suspected weapons facilitator for the Kata'ib Hezbollah terrorist group.

Pursuant to a warrant issued by an Iraqi court, ISF and U.S. advisers searched a building for the suspected KH member who is alleged to acquire weapons, including improvised explosive devices, for the terrorist group to use when conducting attacks in the capital city.

Based on preliminary questioning and evidence collected at the scene, ISF arrested a suspected criminal associate of the warranted individual without incident.

New Iraqi recruits train in reverse order

 CAMP TAJI, Iraq – More than 330 Iraqi Air Force recruits, the largest graduating class since 2007, marched in a parade before starting their basic military training course Dec. 28 at Camp Taji, Iraq.

Recruits normally attend a 12-week BMT course at the Iraqi Army Regional Training Center prior to reporting to the Air Force training school at Camp Taji for the BMT Top Off Course. However, the RTC will not have the capacity to house the recruits until January 2010.

Instead of sending the recruits home, Master Sgt. Paula Gaffney, a BMT instructor and Air Force adviser, suggested they have the BMT Top Off Course first, said Maj. Bill Holl, the 821st Expeditionary Training Squadron chief of professional military training.

Because the trainees remained at Camp Taji, they received additional training they would not normally get at the BMT Top Off course.

"Over a period of three weeks, the BMT Top Off Course teaches recruits what kind of Air Force benefits they will receive, rank structure and leadership," said Holl. "(Because) the recruits were brand new, the staff incorporated discipline, marching and drill, during the morning, and academics in the afternoon.

"Because of money restraints, basic military training was suspended for nearly a year."

This graduation is significant for several reasons, he said.

"Other than being the largest class to graduate, it's the first time the Iraqis were trained solely by Iraqis with very little U.S. involvement," he said.


With the drawdown of troops, part of the U.S. mission is to help the Iraqi schoolhouse build a self-sufficient, self-enduring technical training course, he said. This will allow Iraq to build its own military, trained by Iraqis, without the need of Coalition forces, Holl said.

"The instructors are completely certified," Holl said. "As far as basic training goes, the Iraqis have an outstanding group of instructors. They have been doing this for nearly a year and a half and they have done a great job of preparing these recruits for basic training. With the quality of leadership and preparation, the Iraqi Air Force has shown they are well on their way to having an enduring Air Force."

Lt. Col. Ali Hussein Muhaimed, the Iraqi Air Force Training Squadron BMT director, praised the unorthodox training.

"We are very proud to see one of the first groups to build our new Iraqi Air Force," he said. "We want our Air Force to be built on the modern sands of Iraq."

US engineers complete Al-Mazraa Elementary School

 RAMADI, Iraq – With more than 1,135 school projects completed and operational, the Gulf Region District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq finished and turned the Al-Mazraa Elementary School in western city of Ramadi, Iraq, over to the Iraqi Ministry of Education the last week of December.

Paul Ijames, project engineer for the Al-Mazraa School and several other schools in Al-Anbar province, has been overseeing service projects in Iraq for the past 18 months.

"I've been involved with many things, but school projects like this are right at the top of the list (because) they provide many children access to an education they would otherwise not have been able to get," said Ijames. "We're making a difference in people's lives."

Ijames said the pride the Iraqi workers continued to display throughout the construction of the school made this project exceptional.

"It's their children, nephews and nieces, and other kids residing in that neighborhood, who will be going to school there," he said. "They now have a good environment in which they can learn."

The new six-classroom school, which replaces the existing old two-room house, will accommodate 200 to 300 students and teachers. The school complex also includes administrative offices, playground, guard house, backup generator, a security wall around the entire school property and a supply of school furnishings.

Local leaders, residents and the children said they were excited about the completion of the new school.

Hamed, a 7-year-old boy, and his friend both who will be students at the new school, stood at the entrance of the school smiling.


"This will be my school," Hamed said. "Thank you for giving me a new school."

Beyond the bricks and mortar, schools like Al-Mazraa, represent an investment in the future of Iraq, said Ijames.

"You can see it in the smiles of the local residents who are diligently working every day to provide a brighter future for their children and grandchildren," he said. "They know that the key to success is hard work and education. Just like in the United States, their schools are the heart of their community – a place for hope."

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq has completed thousands of reconstruction projects in partnership with the U.S. government and the Government of Iraq. Since 2004, USACE has completed 5,257 projects throughout Iraq, valued at more than \$9.1 billion, and has 350 projects ongoing.

Joint mission delivers supplies to school near Kirkuk

 KIRKUK, Iraq – Three hundred Iraqi children in the village of Faylaq, Iraq, were treated to a surprise donation of school necessities Dec. 22 near Kirkuk, Iraq.

In an effort to improve education here, Iraqi Police and members of the Atyah Women's Organization, assisted by Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, donated the school supplies for the children.

This humanitarian mission was a part of a larger goal to reach out to the people in this neighborhood, said Hanna Hasan Husein, a leader with the AWO.

First Lt. Russell Raines, 30th Inf. Regt., whose platoon helped the IP and AWO members in delivering the supplies, said he believes these combined activities are important to stability in the region.

The progress the IP, AWO and U.S. forces make in the villages can already be seen, said Husein. The children talk to the IP and Soldiers, laughing, smiling and sometimes even singing.

Humanitarian aid plays a huge part in the mission, said Husein. It allows the people to see the IP are here to help them, not just to conduct raids or combat patrols.

Raines said it is important for the Iraqi population to see the IP and U.S. forces conduct these operations, which prove Americans are allies and not occupiers.

Raines said it is a welcome change of pace for him and his Soldiers to help children.

"For everyone involved it is a powerful experience," Raines said. "Through partnership we were able to improve the lives of these students."

"The IP and U.S. forces mission here is the people of Iraq. We want them to know we are all here to protect them and keep them safe. Throughout their time here, 1st Bn., 30th Inf. Reg. plans on assisting the Iraqi Police and AWO."

Raines said U.S. forces, IP and the AWO will continue to deliver school supplies and other items needed by the students.

"This helps the community build a relationship of trust with the IP, and hopefully a better future," said Raines.

Iraqi operation detains 20 persons lacking proper identification

 KIRKUK, Iraq – Brig. Gen. Khatub Umer Aref led more than 400 Iraqi Emergency Service Unit Lions in Operation Lion Dragon Hunt Dec. 30 in Kirkuk, Iraq, working to prove the skill, determination and professionalism of his unit.

The Lions had assistance from D Company, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division Dragons, led by Capt. Jeremiah Fritz, commander of D Co. In addition to the D Co. Soldiers, the U.S. Army also provided military working dogs to assist in the mission, said Fritz.

"We had two main purposes today," said Fritz. "One was to demonstrate the ability of the Kirkuk ESU to perform clearing operations and also to disrupt the enemy."

In addition to these missions, the ESU and U.S. military looked for anyone staying in the area illegally, according to Fritz.

Even though no hidden weapons were located, more than 20 people were detained and taken to the Amal Shabi Iraqi Police station for lacking proper identification to be in the area, said Fritz.

Phantom Support



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Misty Aycock

Staff Sgt. Melinda Gates, an Elgin, S.C., native, is congratulated by her supervisor, Staff Sgt. Hugh Fowler, a Columbia, S.C. native, during Gates' promotion ceremony. Capt. William A. Thompson, the Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander looks on during the ceremony. Gates is the human resource noncommissioned officer and Fowler is the human resources noncommissioned officer with charge for the 751st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Fern Freeman

(Above) Spc. Jonathan McGahee, a Brooklet, Ga., native, and Cpl. Jonathan Mai (kneeling) a Lakeland, Fla., native, both heavy equipment transporter operators with the 296th Transportation Company, 260th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), team up for the battalion's first truck rodeo, designed to test the battalion Soldiers' truck driving skills. McGahee and Mai chain and bind a loaded vehicle safely and in record time. They placed first with a time of 17 minutes.

Sgt. William Gonzales, a senior cargo handler and nightshift noncommissioned officer in charge and a Queens, N.Y., native, and Spc. Mitchell Killeen, a cargo handler and forklift operator and a Littleton, Pa., native, push a newly loaded 463L also known as an Air Force cargo pallet, into the unit's new helicopter mock up. The 169th Seaport Operations Company, 260th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 96th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), fabricated the helicopter mock up out of a 20-foot container and to the exact cargo hold dimensions of the CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Zackery Gurley



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Lisa A. Cope

The United States Forces – Iraq headquarters at Al Faw Palace, Camp Victory, Iraq reflects off of the lake surrounding it.