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LIGHTNING STRIKES



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UNITED STATES DIVISION - CENTER

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TROPIC LIGHTNING TAKES OVER USD-C MISSION



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Maj. Gen. Nelson J. Cannon (left), commanding general for detainee operations and provost marshal general with United States Forces Iraq, and Pfc. Jacob Wood, with Troop B, 2nd Squadron, 116th Garrison Command, United States Division – Center, and a Sandpoint, Idaho, native, cut a cake with a sabre Dec. 13 to celebrate the National Guard's 374th birthday inside Al Faw Palace at Camp Victory, Iraq. Cannon is currently the most senior ranking National Guard service member and Wood is currently the most junior ranking National Guard service member at Victory Base Complex, Iraq.

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. April Davis
116th Garrison Command, USD-C

BAGHDAD—Members of the National Guard serving in Iraq, with United States Division – Center, gathered among distinguished guests Dec. 13 inside Al Faw Palace at Camp Victory, Iraq, to celebrate the birthday of the oldest component of the U.S. Armed Forces.

“Today we celebrate the 374th anniversary of the creation of the National Guard,” said Lt. Col. Robert Preiss, deputy of National Guard Affairs with United States Forces – Iraq.

The National Guard traces its heritage back to its “first muster” on Dec. 13, 1636, when English colonists gathered in Salem, Mass. to form organized militia regiments. In 1775, the colonial militias defended

National Guard celebrates 374th birthday

freedom and gained independence from British rule during the Revolutionary War. State militias were preserved under the U.S. Constitution, ensuring each state retained its own military force that could also be federally activated for national defense. The National Guard has fought in all of the nation's major wars and conflicts since its inception.

National Guard members serving in Iraq today carry on the traditions of the colonial state militias. Just as the Minutemen dropped their plows and took up arms in defense of the nation, today's Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen leave behind their Families and employers to serve where they are needed.

“Today there are nearly 500,000 serving in the Guard, and over 50,000 of those are deployed. They are regular folks who—on a moment's notice—will stop what they are doing, set their personal and professional lives aside, in order to respond to the community, the state or the nation's call without hesitation,” said Maj. Gen. Nelson J. Cannon, commanding general for detainee operations and provost marshal general, with USF-I.

According to the USF-I National Guard Affairs office, Guard members account for nearly one-fifth of the overall U.S. military force in Iraq, with about 7,200 members of the Army and Air National Guard from 25 different states. The largest National Guard formations currently in Iraq represent the states of Idaho, Texas, California, Montana, Oregon, Wisconsin and Alabama. They perform a wide array of missions including clearing routes of roadside bombs, driving and escorting con-

voys, performing advanced disposal of explosive ordnance, as well as providing command, support and security for military installations.

“There is no better venue for today's celebration than being here in this palace in Iraq,” Cannon said. “There are many great parallels to how and why the National Guard was created 374 years ago and being here helping establish democracy for people who haven't had it for more than 30 years. The people here embrace these ideas of freedom, and I can't think of any organization better suited to do this job than the U.S. military and, in particular, the National Guard.”

The birthday celebration began with a color guard of National Guard Soldiers posting the U.S. flag, and ended with the most senior ranking and junior ranking members of the National Guard present cutting the birthday cake.

“Honestly, I was a little embarrassed to find out I'm the youngest (guardsman) here, but it's a privilege to be chosen for this honor,” said Pfc. Jacob Wood, 19, with Troop B, 2nd Squadron, 116th Garrison Command, United States Division – Center, and a Sandpoint, Idaho, native.

Leadership from National Guard units currently serving in Iraq were joined by their active duty and reserve counterparts in celebrating the occasion, including several senior representatives from USF-I: Maj. Gen. Art Bartell, Brig. Gen. Kendall Cox and Col. Robert Whaley, as well as Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur Coleman, command sergeant major with III Corps. The event was hosted by Col. Heather Meeds, chief of National Guard Affairs with USF-I. 🇺🇸



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Public Affairs Officer
Lt. Col. Sean Wilson

196th MPAD Commander,
Command Information Chief
Maj. Marshall K. Jackson

Commanding General
Maj. Gen. Bernard S. Champoux

196th MPAD First Sergeant,
Command Information Supervisor
1st Sgt. Steve Toth

Managing Editors,
Layout & Design Editors
Staff Sgt. Randall P. Carey
Sgt. Kimberly A. Johnson

25th Infantry Division Public Affairs Office; 196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment; 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division Public Affairs Office; 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Public Affairs Office; 116th Garrison Command Public Affairs Office



CONTRIBUTORS

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Col. Guy Thomas (left) and Command Sgt. Major Steven Woodall (right), of the 116th Garrison Command, Idaho Army National Guard, uncase the 116th Garrison Command colors Dec. 3 signifying the beginning of their mission under United States Division Center in Baghdad. The 116th Garrison Command will maintain infrastructure and provide support services to thousands of Coalition military and civilians residing at Victory Base Complex, Iraq.

116th Garrison Command begins mission in Iraq

Story by Staff Sgt. April Davis
116th Garrison Command, USD-C

BAGHDAD—The 116th Garrison Command, United States Division - Center, assumed command Dec. 3 during two official transfer of authority ceremonies in Baghdad.

The 116th Garrison Command, a Cavalry Brigade Combat Team (as they are known in the United States), is headquartered in Boise, Idaho, and now known as “Task Force Snake,” assumed garrison command over Victory Base Complex, a large U.S. military installation. Col. Guy Thomas, brigade commander and Command

Sgt. Maj. Steven Woodall, brigade command sergeant major, uncased the 116th Garrison Command colors signifying the beginning of their mission. The outgoing unit, the 199th Garrison Command, 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, USD-C, cased their flag symbolizing the transfer of authority to the 116th and the end of their tour in Iraq.

“We have a very challenging mission ahead of us and the bar has been set high,” Thomas said, as he addressed his Soldiers during the ceremony. “I know you will get the job done with enthusiasm, determination and I have no doubt you are prepared for what challenges lay ahead.”

The 116th Garrison Command will be working much like a city or state government office, responsible for maintaining infrastructure and support services to thousands of U.S. military and civilians occupying VBC. Operating as a garrison command includes departments for public works, logistics, human resources, operations and camp mayors. The departments and mayor cells work cooperatively to ensure VBC residents have adequate housing, electricity, water and other essential life-support resources.

The 2nd Squadron, 116th Armored Reconnaissance, 116 CBCT, now known as “Task Force Rattler,” assumed responsibility for force protec-

tion and base defense of VBC, relieving Louisiana’s 256th Brigade Special Troops Battalion of the 256th IBCT, in a separate Transfer of Authority ceremony.

“We are very proud to be here and to be selected for this challenging and important mission,” said Lt. Col. Todd Edgar, commander of 2nd Sqdn., 116 Armd. Recon., during the ceremony. “The chance to give and sacrifice for the protection of others is an honor.”

Other elements of the 116th Garrison Command throughout Iraq will continue to assume command of their new missions this week as they complete the relief-in-place training process with units they are replacing. 🇺🇸

MORTARS & MISSILES: IRAQI ARMY PULLS OUT THE BIG GUNS

STORY BY SPC. DANIEL STOUTAMIRE, 2ND AAB, 1ST INF. DIV., USD-C



(ABOVE) Iraqi Air Force helicopters fly past spectators during a live-fire exercise Nov. 29 at Qa qaa range formerly Qa qaa weapons facility south of Baghdad. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Daniel Stoutamire)

"IRAQIS
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CAN DO."

(LEFT) An Iraqi Soldier with the 17th Iraqi Army Division instructs other IA Soldiers on a plan for a mock attack Nov. 29 in Baghdad. For this simulated raid, the IA and the Iraqi Air Force worked together to accomplish the mission without direct U.S. involvement. (U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Daniel Eddy, 196th MPAD, 25th Inf. Div., USD-C)

BAGHDAD—When President Barack Obama announced in August 2010 the transition of the American mission in Iraq from a combat mission to one of advising, training and assisting Iraqi Security Forces, a key part of that decision was the ISF's ability to close and engage the enemy independently. On Nov. 30, ISF leaders and Soldiers proved themselves worthy of that trust.

Elements of the Iraqi Army's 17th Division, along with aviation assets from the Iraqi Air Force, successfully planned, resourced, and ran a complex live-fire exercise at Qa'qaa range—formerly Qa'qaa weapons facility—south of Baghdad.

U.S. leaders and Soldiers present at the event were strictly there in an advisory role.

“This has been what everybody is working up to”, said Capt. Daniel LaBar, fire support officer with 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division – Center, and a Harleysville, Pa., native. “This is what we've been advising, training and assisting the Iraqi Security Forces on—this year and a lot longer—getting them up to this point where they can demonstrate how much training they've been doing.”

Using a combined-arms approach, the 17th Division opened the exercise by firing mortars to clear potential defenses. This barrage was followed by IqAF helicopters firing

missiles and evasive flares, before other helicopters landed with commando elements in an air-assault maneuver.

Simultaneously, forces from the 17th IA Division assaulted a

second target location. Finally, IqAF helicopters used smoke to shield the area where they picked up the commando team.

LaBar said the operations went smoothly, and the ISF added some complex elements

to the final operation that had not been anticipated by U.S. advisers.

“There are a lot of events that happened today that we didn't expect—(like the) downed pilot scenario,” he said. “I've been here for two rehearsals, and I haven't seen them rehearse that. That's exactly something that a U.S. force would prepare for, too.”

An Iraqi squadron commander was similarly impressed by his Soldiers' execution of the exercise.

“I feel very happy,” he said. “I see my army becoming very strong, and we have powerful army aviation.”

Lt. Col. Gregory Sierra, commander of 2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt., 1st AAB, 3rd Inf. Div., said this exercise was the culmination of a yearlong partnership with the 17th IA Division.

“Back in January, we were conducting an aerial reconnaissance (mission) with (17th IA Division commander) Gen. Ali and there were a couple of different objectives we talked about—this being one of them—doing a combined live fire at Qa'qaa training range,” Sierra said. “He planned, resourced and executed this training on his own, so it's an amazing growth over the course of the year.”

In attendance were representatives of the unit who will be partnering with the 17th IA Division over the next year, the 1st Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, that will be replacing the 2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt., 1st AAB, 3rd Inf. Div. LaBar says they are now fully aware of the capabilities of the unit they will be advising.

“Handing over this type of event on the first day of (relief in place) is (essential) to continuing this type of effort,” he said. “(1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt.) will know exactly what the 17th IA Division is capable of, and they know what they are going to be pushing for, as far as training for the future.”

LaBar said, in addition, that the exercise was observed by several Iraqi Ministry of Defense officials.

“Iraqis showing Iraqis,” he said, “this is the kind of thing they can do.”

SHOWING
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HING THEY



An Iraqi security guard stands watch Nov. 29 at the Qa qaa range in Baghdad, while the 17th Army Iraqi Division and the Iraqi Air Force demonstrate their ability to properly plan and execute a mission without direct U.S. involvement. (U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Daniel Eddy, 196th MPAD, 25th Inf. Div., USD-C)



Maintaining

Story and photos by
Capt. Tiffany Collins
 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div., USD-C

Progress

AL ANBAR, Iraq—Seen as a rite of passage among the U.S. Armed Forces, the Initial Entry Training graduation brings a certain enthusiasm and anxiety to the day's air.

That same elation was captured Nov. 29 in al -Anbar, Iraq, as the passing of the flag from the senior graduating class of Iraqi Army Soldiers to the junior class, symbolized change and the forward movement of troops as they were assigned to their first units and continue their military careers.

“Ten weeks ago, you were civilians and now you are warriors for your

country,” said Lt. Col. Jeffrey Shoemaker, commander of 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division – Center, as he addressed the graduating class.

The most recent formation of about 1,250 troops marked the largest Initial Entry Training class to graduate from the Al-Habbaniya Training Center, with about 70 soldiers graduating in December.

Constructed on the west bank of the Euphrates River, the Al-Habbaniya Training Center dates back to 1936

when the British initially established it as the Royal Air Force Station Habbaniya, and was utilized as a flight training school and a transport staging airfield during World War II. Most recently, HTC was used by Coalition Forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom as a forward operating base to run combat missions throughout al-Anbar province, to include Fallujah and Ramadi.

Habbaniya has evolved into a regional training center, supporting both the 1st and 7th Iraqi Army Divisions, training about 12,000 Soldiers this year.

Staff Col. Zuhair Dhurgham, as-

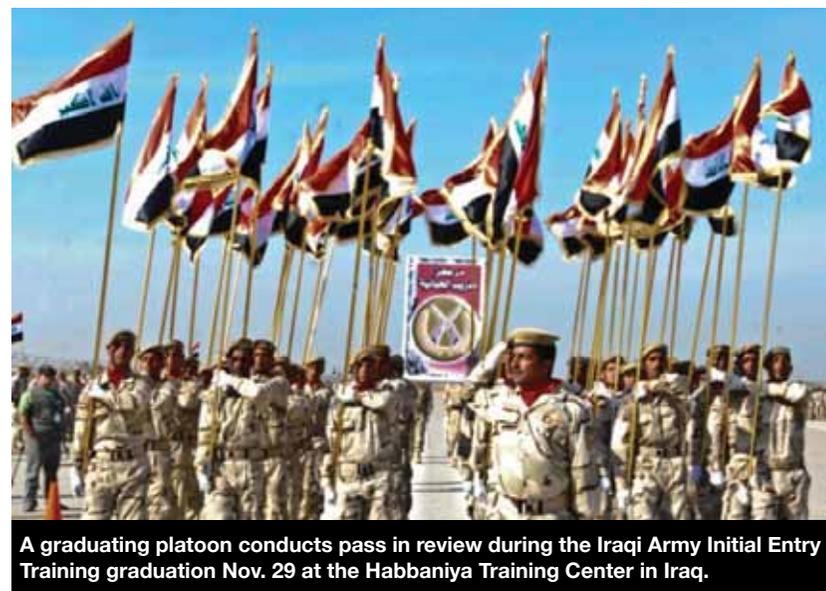
signed as the commandant for the past year and a half, comes from a long line of military officers. Previously charged with training the Iraqi Army's Military Police, Dhurgham commands a cadre of 110 personnel.

In addition to the Initial Entry Training Course, the HTC also provides instruction for military occupational specialty qualifications, the Noncommissioned Officer Educational System and two unit-level programs—the Commando Course and the Warrior Training Program.

Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Snow, director of



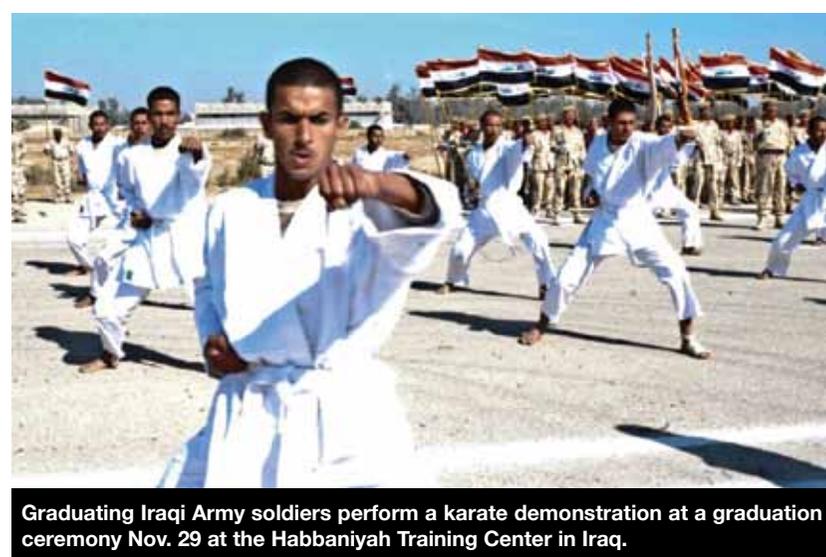
Iraqi Army Soldiers stand at ease during their graduation ceremony Nov. 29 at the Habbaniyah Training Center in Iraq.



A graduating platoon conducts pass in review during the Iraqi Army Initial Entry Training graduation Nov. 29 at the Habbaniya Training Center in Iraq.



Formation of graduating Iraqi Army Soldiers stand at attention Nov. 29 at the al-Habbaniya Training Center in Iraq.



Graduating Iraqi Army soldiers perform a karate demonstration at a graduation ceremony Nov. 29 at the Habbaniyah Training Center in Iraq.



The senior graduating Initial Entry Training class passes the flag to the junior class Nov. 29 at Al-Habbaniya Training Center in Iraq.

Iraq Training and Advisory Mission, U.S. Forces-Iraq, declared HTC mission complete, signifying U.S. Forces advisory role as hands-on trainers is no longer necessary.

“With the downsizing of U.S. Forces, ITAM personnel no longer consist of specialized training teams,” said 1st Lt. Katherine Schultz, adviser for ITAM. “Essentially, our role at the Habbaniya Training Center now consists of working logistics requests through the Ministry of Defense.”

Upon receipt of the mission to train more than 1,300 Soldiers during this rotation, Dhurgham immediately began to request the necessary logistics capabilities. Simultaneously, he refocused all cadre and training efforts on the basic training mission.

Capt. Joe Pimentel, adviser for ITAM, commander of Company B., 3rd Batt., 15th Inf. Regt., 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div., USD-C, said the only assistance Dhurgham requested was refresher training for his cadre on the M-16 rifle.

The curriculum at HTC is similar to

the U.S. Army Basic Training Course. It consists of basic soldier skills, including physical fitness, basic rifle marksmanship, radio communications, medical skills, and values and ethics, adopted by Dhurgham from the “Army Values.”

There are more similarities in the training curriculum at the HCT adopted from the U.S. Army. For example, an ever popular obstacle, “the weaver,” can be found among the various obstacles at the HTC endurance course. And at the entry to every classroom, the latest version of the program of instruction is posted. Recent additions to the POI were written by Dhurgham, approved by the Iraq Ministry of Defense and are now model doctrine for the IETC.

Dhurgham said his cadre performed their duties and set new standards for training Iraq’s Army.

“This course trains the professional Soldier,” he said. “They will make dramatic changes to the Iraqi Army. They love their country and their job and if the lord wishes, they will successfully serve and protect the country of Iraq.”

PHOTOS BY
STAFF SGT. TANYA THOMAS
4TH AAB, 3RD INF. DIV., USD-C



HUMANITARIAN

ABOVE: An Iraqi Police officer (left) distributes blankets and food Dec. 4 to residents of Tash, Iraq, as part of a combined humanitarian assistance mission. A total of 400 bags of food, containing rice, powdered milk, flour, sugar and 200 blankets, were handed out to those in need at the Tash Iraqi Police Station.



ASSISTANCE

ABOVE: Maj. Jorge Melendez (right), executive officer with 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division Center, looks on as residents from Tash, Iraq, take home bags of food and blankets Dec. 4 from Tash Iraqi Police Station. Melendez and other members with 3rd Bn., 15 Inf. Regt. joined their Iraqi Police counterparts to take part in a humanitarian assistance mission which provided about 200 residents with much-needed items.



Pfc. Jonathan Mount (left), an infantryman assigned to Company D, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division Center, and a Las Vegas, native, along with an Iraqi Police officer (right), hand out books Dec. 4 to children in Tash, Iraq. Mount received candy, books and toys from a hometown charity to distribute at the combined humanitarian assistance mission.

LIFE SAVERS

USD-C SOLDIERS TEACH INFANT RESUSCITATION

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
STAFF SGT. TANYA THOMAS
4TH AAB, 3RD INF. DIV., USD-C

AL ANBAR, Iraq— U.S. Army medics have been teaching lifesaving skills to their Iraqi Security Force counterparts, as part of their advise, train and assist mission under Operation New Dawn. Now these military doctors are extending their expertise into the delivery room.

During a two-day class, Soldiers with United States Division-Center taught about 20 Iraqi nurses and midwives neonatal resuscitation techniques Nov. 28-29 at the al-Anbar Provincial Government Center, Iraq.

“Iraq has a high birth rate, but also a high infant mortality rate and this training will help,” said the lead instructor for the class, Lt. Col. Vincent Barnhart, 1st Armored Division surgeon, and a Chambersburg, Pa., native.

The Army doctors

taught the Iraqi nurses basic steps of handling an infant after birth and the appropriate interventions, through lectures and hands-on practical exercises.

“Initial medical care the first few minutes after a baby is born is crucial,” said Capt. Baruch Zobrist, a physician assistant with Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division-Center. “Statistically, nine out of every 10 babies are born healthy births, and the 1 percent of infants who experience problems can usually be cared for through proper ventilation.”

The medics introduced positive pressure ventilation with a bag-valve mask to the nurses who said they typically use antibiotics to treat non-responsive infants.

“The bag-valve mask



Lt. Col. Vincent Barnhart (center), division surgeon with 1st Armored Division, United States Division Center, and a Chambersburg, Pa., native, demonstrates how to apply positive pressure ventilation with a bag valve mask, during a neonatal resuscitation class Nov. 29 at al-Anbar Provincial Government Center, Iraq. Also pictured are instructor-doctors Adel Hansen (left), medical adviser with United States Forces-Iraq, and Capt. Joseph Roarty, brigade surgeon with 4th AAB.

is a piece of equipment they don't normally use,” said Capt. John Pillen, physician assistant with the 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th AAB. “That was something new to them—a new skill, a new idea. They were a little bit hesitant at first to accept it, because it was new, but I think they've come to embrace it and are excited to take it back home to their communities and use it to improve the lives of infants.”

The attendees were provided a training kit and a delivery room kit, donated by a U.S. nongovernmental organization. The training kits include a stethoscope, bulb suction device, bag-valve mask, towels and a baby mannequin.

“They now have all the tools they need,” assured Barnhart, who encouraged the nurses to teach others in their community and potentially increase the odds of saving lives.

Osama Abdulrahman, al-Anbar director of health, said the neonatal resuscitation training now serves as the nucleus for future medical training in the province.

“Depending on the

outcome of this ‘train-the-trainer,’ we will establish a second workshop and invite more attendees to do this again,” he said. “These students have made me proud and I hope this will continue.”

One of the students, a nurse of 29 years, said the neonatal class was very beneficial.

“Before this class, I needed to see a doctor when a baby stopped breathing,” she said, “but now I feel confident that I can handle any baby (experiencing birth complications) on my own.”

The self-confidence and the success of the students gave a greater sense of accomplishment to Pillen.

“I really appreciated working with them,” he said. “They surprised me at how much they embraced the training, how enthusiastic they were, how strong their participation was and how interested they were in the material. They were really involved and wanted to learn. I think this is one of the most significant things I've done here in Iraq, and I really appreciate the opportunity to take part in this training.”



About 20 Iraqi nurses and midwives take part in a two-day course on neonatal resuscitation Nov. 28-29 at the al-Anbar Provincial Government Center, Iraq, using delivery training kits donated by U.S. nongovernmental organizations.



Capt. John Pillen, physician assistant with 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division Center, teaches resuscitation techniques to an Iraqi nurse neonatal nurse Nov. 29 during a class held at al-Anbar Provincial Government Center, Iraq.

USD-C bids farewell to Old Ironsides

Story by Sgt. Kimberly Johnson, 196th MPAD, 25th Inf. Div., USD-C

BAGHDAD—Soldiers with 1st Armored Division, United States Division – Center passed the torch to 25th Infantry Division, USD-C Soldiers, during a transfer of authority ceremony Dec. 20 at Camp Liberty, Iraq.

The 25th Inf. Div. has the task of continuing the advise, train and assist mission their predecessors, the 1st Armored Division, worked diligently to establish, by working consistently with senior Iraqi Security Forces and Government of Iraq leaders, throughout the greater Baghdad area and Anbar province.

At the beginning of the ‘Old Ironsides’ deployment in December 2009, U.S. forces in Iraq were still operating in a combat capacity. Although

the U.S. was training the Iraqi Security Forces before that, the partnership between U.S. forces and their ISF counterparts has since evolved to where the ISF is taking full control of the security in Iraq.

“I am very optimistic about the Iraqi leaders who have been conducting security in Iraq, since July 2009,” said Maj. Gen. Terry Wolff, commanding general of 1st Armored Division, USD-C and an Elk Grove, Calif., native. “Since then, the Iraqis took ownership, responsibility and accountability for the security in Iraq. U.S. forces are the minority partner; The Iraqis are the majority partner. It’s their responsibility and they have to answer to their prime minister, their government and their people, and we’re privileged to be a part of helping them do that.”

From the beginning of its deployment, 1st Armored Div. has played a major role in helping Iraqis make history—a positive history—beginning with the first official elections, held in March 2010, under the newly formed democratic Government of Iraq. The U.S. forces, along with ISF—Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police—provided security for the elections.

Even though the Iraqis now have full responsibility for the security of their country under Operation New Dawn, the partnership between USD-C Soldiers and ISF existed long before the September 2010 transition from Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“Partnering with the Iraqis didn’t change with the onset of Operation New Dawn,” Wolff said. “We were partnering with the Iraqis in a particular manner, and that has continued. We have been working with the Iraqi

Security Forces for years, which is why we military are quite optimistic about what we are seeing, and their ability to astound us.”

Wolff said what has changed throughout the 1st Armored Div.’s tenure in Baghdad, was the number of Soldiers responsible for training and advising Iraqi Soldiers, due to the reduction in U.S. forces.

In addition to the advise, train and assist mission, the 1st Armored Div. headquarters was charged with transitioning U.S. forces out of the USD-C area of operations, helping reduce U.S. forces to less than 50,000 Soldiers, throughout Iraq, as part of Operation New Dawn.

“The drawdown, for USD-C, involved going from more than 24,000 Soldiers to 8,000,” Wolff said. “We never doubted we could do this. We were confident. Military organizations can execute complex tasks. We met those goals, because of the hard work of the Iraqi Soldiers and America’s sons and daughters.”

As the 1st Armored Div. hands over the advise, train and assist mission to the 25th Inf. Div., they are also handing over a partnership established with 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, USD-C.

“Under the 1st Armored Div. leadership, we have a situational awareness on the ground, that helped us move into the advise and assist mission in Anbar province,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Altman, senior enlisted advisor with 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div. and a Tifton, Ga., native. “That’s been extremely beneficial knowledge, not only to us and our Soldiers, but to the Iraqis as well. Because of that leadership, we are seeing a lot of progress, as far as the Iraqis moving forward and building capacity within their government, their army and police forces.”

Wolff said communication has been constant between the incoming and outgoing divisions, respectively, since the summer of 2010. The 1st Armored Div. sent Soldiers to train and advise the 25th Inf. Div. on what to expect when then go into theater.

“The 25th Inf. Div. falls in on a well-oiled process and they will make the necessary adjustments they see fit, based on (incoming commanding general) Maj. Gen. (Bernard S.) Champoux’s actions,” Wolff said.

As Wolff departs theater, his advice to the incoming division is ‘it’s all about the Iraqis,’ a phrase he used often when talking about the continued partnership he helped build with senior leaders of Iraq.

“Enjoy your time with the Iraqis,” he said to Champoux. “The Iraqi leaders we deal with are quite remarkable. And virtually all of them are for a greater good. We spend an enormous amount of time with them and they are incredibly grand men who want a better Iraq.”

“The drawdown, for USD-C, involved going from more than 24,000 Soldiers to 8,000,” Wolff said. “We never doubted we could do this. We were confident. ...”

-Maj. Gen. Terry Wolff, commanding general of 1st Armored Division, United States Division - Center



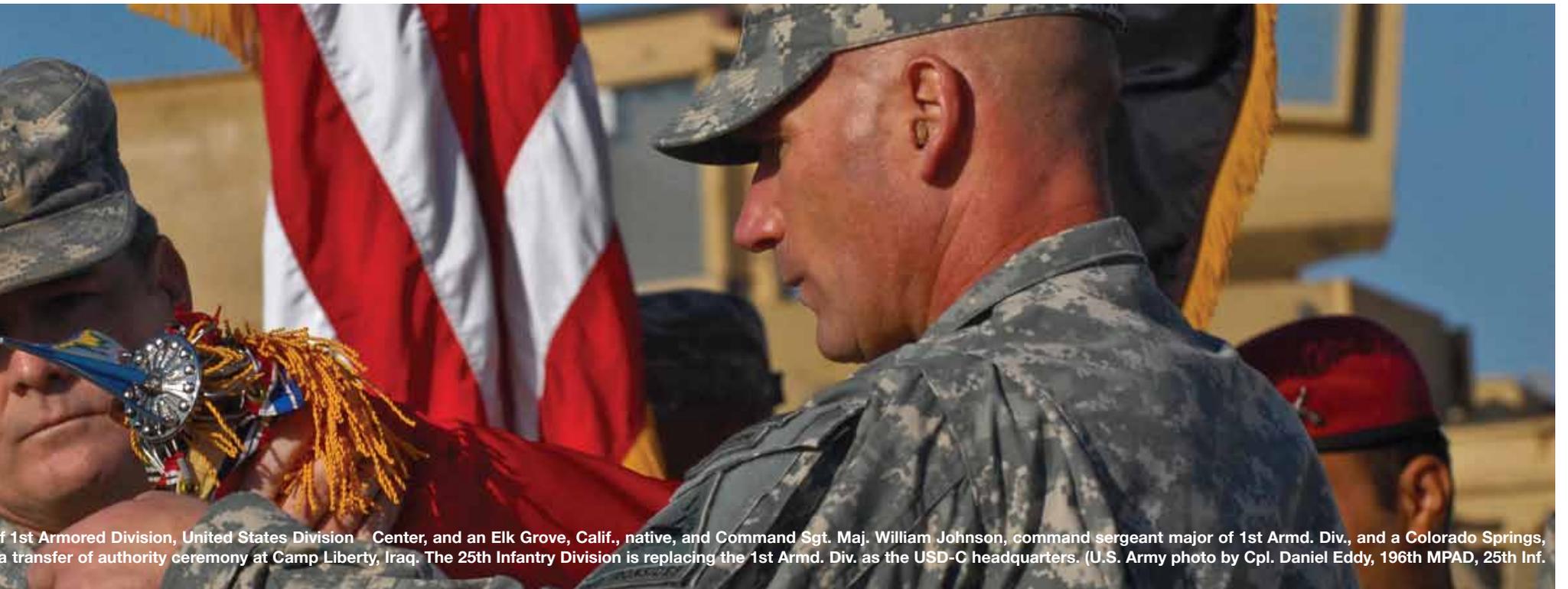
Maj. Gen. Terry A. Wolff (left), commanding general of 1st Armored Division, USD-C, and Maj. Gen. Bernard S. Champoux (right), commander of 25th Infantry Division, USD-C, during a transfer of authority ceremony.



Maj. Gen. Bernard S. Champoux (right), commander of 25th Infantry Division, USD-C, during a transfer of authority ceremony.



U.S. Soldiers and Iraqi security forces members march out of United States Division - Center headquarters Dec. 20 to begin a transfer of authority ceremony, in which the 1st Armored Division gave responsibilities for USD-C over to the 25th Infantry Division. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kimberly Johnson, 196th MPAD, 25th Inf. Div., USD-C)



of 1st Armored Division, United States Division Center, and an Elk Grove, Calif., native, and Command Sgt. Maj. William Johnson, command sergeant major of 1st Armored Div., and a Colorado Springs, a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Liberty, Iraq. The 25th Infantry Division is replacing the 1st Armored Div. as the USD-C headquarters. (U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Daniel Eddy, 196th MPAD, 25th Inf.



of 25th Infantry Division, United States Division Center, and Command Sgt. Maj. Frank M. Leota, command sergeant major of the 25th Inf. Div., salute the American flag, while the Star-Spangle Banner in which the 1st Armored Division handed the responsibility of running USD-C headquarters over to the 25th Inf. Div. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kimberly Johnson, 196th MPAD, 25th Inf. Div., USD-C)



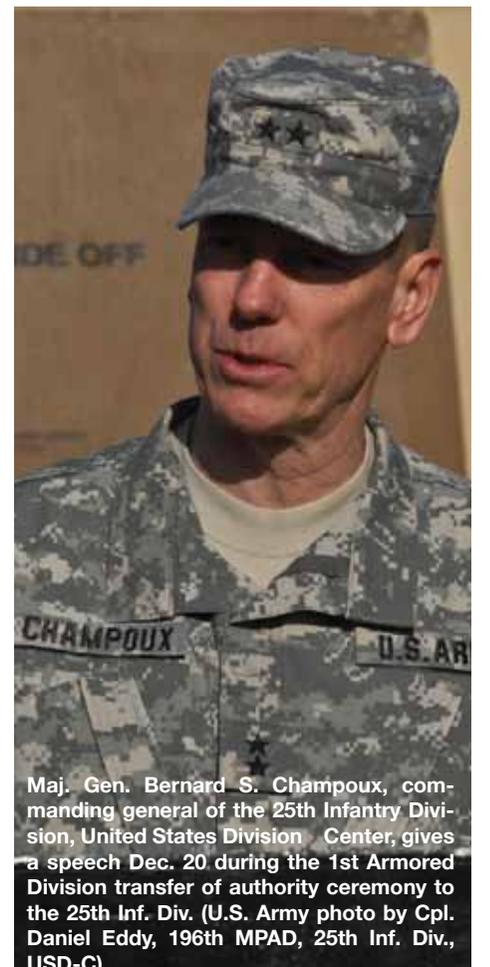
Maj. Gen. Terry A. Wolff, commanding general of 1st Armored Division, United States Division Center, and an Elk Grove, Calif., native, gives a speech Dec. 20 during the 1st Armored Div. transfer of authority ceremony to the 25th Infantry Division at Camp Liberty, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Daniel Eddy, 196th MPAD, 25th Inf. Div., USD-C)



Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, commanding general of United States Forces Iraq, speaks Dec. 20 during a transfer of authority ceremony between the 1st Armored Division and the 25th Infantry Division at Camp Liberty, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Daniel Eddy, 196th MPAD, 25th Inf. Div., USD-C)



Command Sgt. Maj. William Johnson (left), command sergeant major of 1st Armored Div., USD-C and a Colorado Springs, Colo., native, leads Staff Sgt. Bradley Haywood, a physiological operations specialist with 1st Armored Div., and a Mt. Carmel, Ill., native, after casing the colors. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kimberly Johnson, 196th MPAD, 25th Inf. Div., USD-C)



Maj. Gen. Bernard S. Champoux, commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division, United States Division Center, gives a speech Dec. 20 during the 1st Armored Division transfer of authority ceremony to the 25th Inf. Div. (U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Daniel Eddy, 196th MPAD, 25th Inf. Div., USD-C)



Sgt. Timothy Miller (left), a military police officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division - Center, and Bridgeton, N.J., native, evaluates an Iraqi Police officer as he questions witnesses.



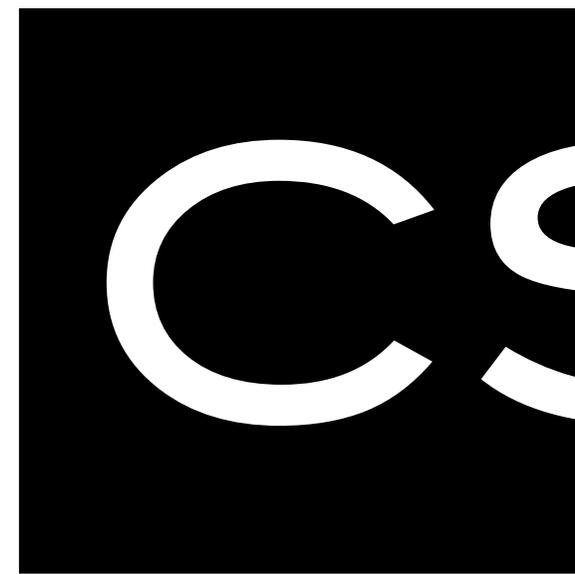
An Iraqi Police officer questions an eyewitness of a mock vehicle-borne improvised explosive attack Nov. 30 during an incident response exercise at the Ramadi Urban District Police Station in Ramadi, Iraq.



Iraqi Police cordon off a simulated crime scene Nov. 30 during an incident response exercise at the Ramadi Urban District Police Station in Ramadi, Iraq.



Iraqi Police rush to a simulated crime scene Nov. 30 during an incident response exercise hosted by U.S. Soldiers with Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division - Center.



Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas
 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div., USD-C



Incident response exercise at



An Iraqi Police officer collects fingerprints from a simulated crime scene Nov. 30, as part of an incident response exercise at the Ramadi Urban District Police Station in Ramadi, Iraq.



An Iraqi Police officer gathers evidence Nov. 30 after a simulated vehicle-borne improvised explosive detonates during an incident response exercise at the Ramadi Urban District Police Station in Ramadi, Iraq.



S I :

RAMADI, Iraq—A loud blast resounds and a cloud of smoke hovers over a vehicle. Inside the hazy automobile lay the body of the terrorist who detonated the vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, killing himself and an innocent bystander. As the smoke clears, sirens soon replace echoes of the explosion.

Iraqi Police officers from Ramadi Urban Police Headquarters arrive at the simulated crime scene to take part in an incident response exercise Nov. 30 in Ramadi, Iraq.

"This exercise provided the U.S. forces with an assessment of what the Iraqi Police are good at and what they need to work on," said Staff Sgt. Michael Burgos, a military police Soldier offi-

cer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division - Center, and Philadelphia, native.

Burgos and two fellow MPs have been training their IP counterparts on valuable skills such as crime investigation and evidence collection during their tour in Iraq.

"By evaluating different aspects of the IPs, we can identify future training options and help the Iraqi Security Forces become stronger against threats like VBIEDS," Burgos said.

Within 30 seconds of the mock explosion, the IPs arrived to the scene and began detective-type work,

dusting for fingerprints, questioning witnesses and collecting any remaining evidence.

"Overall, I think they did a good job," said Sgt. Timothy Miller, a military police officer with HHC, BSTB, 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div., and Bridgeton, N.J. native. "They came in and reacted quickly."

This was the first exercise of its kind for the Ramadi Urban District Headquarters IPs, who invited their sister stations to attend.

Miller said his team plans to host similar incident response exercises for the other local police stations.

"We also are planning to conduct training on kidnapping and assassinations," he said, "and other threats in

the Ramadi area."

Lt. Col. Hashim Ahmed Hamid, training officer with Ramadi Urban District Headquarters police station, said he was grateful for the training experience and requested more training from the MPs.

"We know the U.S. military trains and trains and trains until they get it right," Hamid said. "And we plan to do the same. I am confident there will be fewer mistakes next time. It was a very effective training tool."

Burgos said the training was twofold, an opportunity for the ISF to excel and a opportunity for him to do something meaningful.

"It makes me feel good to know I am making a difference for the Iraqi people," he said. 🇮🇶

OPERATION
ATTENTION



Wounded warriors and Soldiers with 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division Center, pose for a photo Dec. 10 at Camp Ramadi, Iraq. The wounded warriors returned to Iraq, as part of Operation Proper Exit, years after they were medically evacuated from the war zone.

PROPER



Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Goodwater (right), command sergeant major with 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, United States Division Center, escorts Marine Cpl. Michael Campbell (left) and Army Sgt. 1st Class Joe James (center), to a helicopter Dec. 10 where they departed al-Anbar, Iraq, on their own accord. Campbell, James and six other wounded warriors returned to Iraq, as part of Operation Proper Exit.



Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas
4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div., USD-C

CAMP RAMADI, Iraq—Eight service members returned to Iraq—a place where they nearly lost their lives—and were welcomed back Dec. 10 by Soldiers with 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division – Center, upon their visit to al-Anbar, Iraq.

“Operation Proper Exit” allows wounded warriors to revisit the country they were once medically evacuated from, to find closure to a chapter of their lives that has since remained open.

“In making this journey, I hope each of you gain a perspective from this chapter of your life and these experiences will assist you in writing the next,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Joe Altman, command sergeant major of 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div., USD-C, as he spoke to the wounded heroes at Camp Ramadi, Iraq.

The warriors—six Soldiers, a Marine, and one Airman—returned Dec. 6 to Iraq, and spent a week travelling throughout the country they involuntarily left.

Marine Cpl. Michael Campbell, a Pinetop, La., native, deployed in March 2003 to Fallujah, Iraq, with the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment. Two months later, he was severely wounded when an improvised explosive device detonated and left him with Traumatic Brain Injury, chronic seizures, loss of short-term memory, loss of speech for two years, but most importantly, the loss of his fellow comrades who were killed in the blast.

“I wanted to come back here, where I was injured, to say goodbye to my friends,” he said. He said this visit back to the province he left more than seven years ago would help with his healing process and allow him to mentally move forward from the tragedies of war.

A little more than a year after Campbell was injured, Spc. Derek Bradshaw, a Yucca Valley, Calif., native, deployed to Kirkuk, Iraq, with the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division. While out on patrol, his vehicle rolled off a 20-foot cliff, killing the driver, Spc. Daniel McConnell, and leaving Bradshaw and the other passengers disabled.

“They didn’t think I was going to make it,” Bradshaw said, recalling the Nov. 16, 2004 incident that left him with TBI, multiple facial fractures, a broken arm and nerve damage.

Bradshaw heard about Operation Proper Exit through his battle buddy, Spc. Carlos Ortiz, with 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div., and a Seaside Heights, N.J., native, who also almost plummeted to his death in the same roll-over accident.

“Ortiz told me about this opportunity

Spc. Derek Bradshaw (right), deployed to Kirkuk with the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, and a Yucca Valley, Calif. native shows Spc. Todd Davis (center), with Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division – Center, some of his injuries he sustained Nov. 16, 2004 when his humvee plummeted off a 20-foot cliff. Bradshaw and seven other wounded warriors returned to Iraq, Dec. 10 as part of Operation Proper Exit, a program designed to help wounded warriors seek a sense of closure.



to come back and without hesitation I jumped onboard,” Bradshaw said. “It gives Soldiers like me a chance to return, talk to the other Soldiers who are currently deployed, and gives us a chance to leave—this time, on our own two feet.”

Bradshaw, Ortiz, Campbell and the other wounded warriors met with 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div. Soldiers and discussed the days that nearly claimed their lives.

“This is allowing us to get closure a lot of us need,” Bradshaw said. “Most of this closure comes from talking one-on-one with the Soldiers—people we can relate to—and it really helps.”

The wounded warriors agreed a little small talk with their brothers- and sisters-in-arms helped them cope, and said it was good to see their personal sacrifices helped to make a difference for the people of America and Iraq.

“It’s awesome to see how much the Iraqi forces have grown in confidence and in numbers,” Bradshaw said. “It’s phenomenal to be able to come back and see this firsthand.”

Sgt. 1st Class Joe James, a Bethpage, Tenn., native, and returning wounded warrior agrees.

“It’s only been a few years, but I feel like Iraq is a completely different place,” he said of the improvements he has seen since he last left.

James, who has deployed to combat four times, was wounded in 2008 when an IED hit his humvee, killing one and wounding him and two others. He said it was nice to see the combat roles have finally shifted to advise, train and assist.

“Iraq today is nothing like it was in 2005 and 2006, and that’s because of you,” Altman told James and the rest of

the wounded warriors. “Our Soldiers are safer, more secure and are able to advise and assist the Iraqis, due to your hard work and sacrifice.”

Altman and Command Sgt. Maj. William Johnson, command sergeant major with 1st Armored Division, United States Division – Center, handed each of the warriors a certificate of appreciation as a small token of their gratitude toward the heroes who have helped pave the way for other service members and the Government of Iraq today.

“Whether you realize it or not, each of you are truly an inspiration,” Altman said to the wounded warriors. “To return to a place where you nearly lost your lives takes courage and gives me direct insight into the type of servicemen you were and veterans you are, as you are still committed to serving our country.”

BIKES

OVER

BAGHDAD



STORY AND PHOTOS BY CPL. DANIEL EDDY
196TH MPAD, 25TH INF. DIV., USD-C

Mykel Larrin with Bikes over Baghdad, entertains a crowd of Soldiers Dec. 4, while performing a backflip at Camp Liberty, Iraq. The riders also gave prizes to cheering troops during the evening's events.



Drew Bezanson (in the air) a BMX rider with Bikes over Baghdad, performs a stunt while other riders and a crowd of Soldiers watch Dec. 4 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. During the show the riders handed out free shirts, snacks and at the end of the night, gave a bike to a Soldier.

BAGHDAD—Lights, cheering and BMX riders filled the cool December Iraq air as Bikes over Baghdad displayed a show of tricks and jumps for service members.

United States Division – Center Soldiers came out Dec. 4 to watch professional bike riders perform tricks and stunts at Camp Liberty, Iraq.

While some of the riders were entertaining the crowd with airborne stunts, others interacted with the crowd, shaking hands with the Soldiers and giving out prizes.

At the end of the night, a BMX rider rode around the ring of cheering Soldiers, trying to find the Soldier who was most enthusiastic, because he was giving away the big ticket item—a \$400 bike.

“I think the (BMX riders) were really awesome,” said Spc. Amanda Dumas, a defense paralegal with Trial Defense

Service, USF-I, and a Fort Worth, Texas, native. “I think it was great they came out here. I think it was incredible they came right up close with us, and they are so down to earth and willing to take pictures with us too. They almost made us feel like celebrities too.”

Dumas said during a long deployment, a show like Bikes over Baghdad is beneficial to Soldiers, because it helps them forget they are deployed. She said she would not normally get an opportunity to see this kind of a show back in the states.

Dumas said the best part for her, was having her lieutenant colonel go on stage and have a rider do a backflip over him.

Right before the lieutenant colonel went to sit in a chair for the rider to flip over, the rider did a “practice run” in which he barely clipped the chair mak-

ing it fall over. In the end, the BMX rider safely cleared the lieutenant colonel, to the approval of a cheering crowd.

Lt. Col. Anthony Febbo, a regional defense counsel with Trial Defense Service, USF-I and Newtown Square, Pa., native, and the Soldier who was flipped over, said he had never been to a BMX show and has a son back home who likes BMX and could not wait to tell him about it.

“It was neat,” Febbo said about being flipped over. “I didn’t know what to expect, but I enjoyed it and I trusted (the BMX riders). Seeing them do the jumps all night, it was incredible.”

While the bikers ramped the course, an announcer helped keep the crowd cheering with jokes, jeers and brief facts about the current rider performing the trick. He also pointed out the names of the tricks the rider did, for anyone who was a novice to the BMX world.

With the announcer and riders so close and constantly interacting with the crowd, it helped the audience members feel like they were apart of the show.

“I felt like I was one the bike myself,” Dumas said. “Especially when they were coming up on the ramps behind us. I felt like I was on the bike and about to fall off. It was incredible to be right up close, and smell their sweat almost.”

Dumas said she was at a previous Bikes over Baghdad and this show had a lot more high energy. She said it seemed like the tricks were a little bit more dangerous, which definitely got the crowd excited.

Having the BMX riders come to Iraq not only benefits the Soldiers who watch the bikers, but also the riders take something away from their trip to Southwest Asia as well.

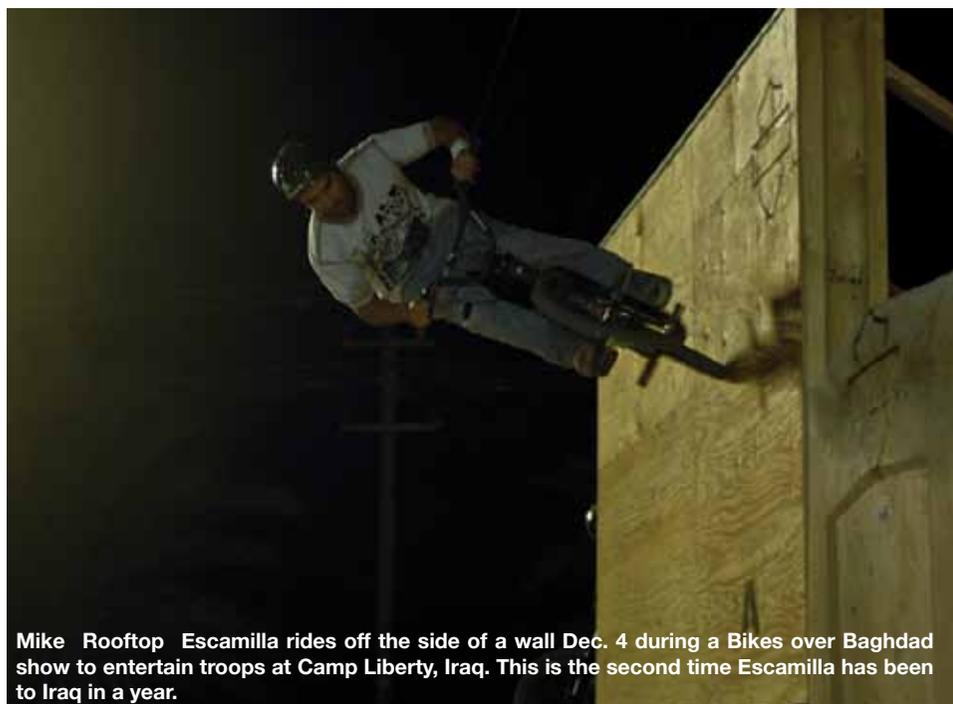
“I have wanted to come to Iraq for a long time,” said Mike “Rooftop” Escamilla, BMX rider with Bikes over Baghdad, who has been here once before. “Even though I wanted to come here, I didn’t realize what affect it would have on my life. Everyone says how much we affect Soldiers, but I think it effected me on such a higher level. Being able to do something for troops, and really seeing people who appreciate it, will be something I carry for the rest of my life.”

Escamilla, in 2000, backflipped a helicopter with the blades spinning, and said he was not able to come to Iraq earlier due to scheduling conflicts but made sure he cleared his calendar so he was able to make this tour.

“I really didn’t know that I was going to feel the way I did after the first time I came, but it changed the way I feel about the people over here and changed the way I feel about what I do,” he said. “Knowing, even though, for me, it’s just fun and games the whole time, things we do could mean something good for someone else and we don’t have to try that hard.”

Escamilla said all the Soldiers’ attitudes are great and they are appreciative of the BMX riders visiting them in Iraq.

“I would say 100 out of 100 Soldiers are excited,” he said. “I think some of them don’t know what to expect and, after the show, I can’t imagine someone going home not psyched.”



Mike Rooftop Escamilla rides off the side of a wall Dec. 4 during a Bikes over Baghdad show to entertain troops at Camp Liberty, Iraq. This is the second time Escamilla has been to Iraq in a year.



Zack Yankush (right) entertains a crowd of Soldiers while Nate Wessel, with Bikes over Baghdad, performs a bike trick Dec. 4 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. This trip marks the third time the bikers have been to Iraq in 2010.

Keni Thomas (right) performs for service members, Department of Defense employees and civilian contractors Dec. 18, during the Sergeant Major of the Army Hope and Freedom Tour 2010 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. The USO tour brought different artists together to cheer and support troops in Baghdad.



SMA visits USD-C Soldiers for holidays

Story and photos by Sgt. Mahlet Tesfaye
25th Inf. Div., USD-C

BAGHDAD—Service members, Department of Defense employees and civilian contractors gathered to enjoy a variety of entertainment by several artists who came to Iraq to support the troops during their mission overseas.

The Sergeant Major of the Army 'Hope and Freedom' Tour 2010 brought entertainers to Camp Liberty, Iraq Dec. 18, to put on a show for the troops. Part of the USO tour package, this event included performances by the U.S. Army Band, country music artists Keni Thomas and Buddy Jewell, and pop artist Alana Grace. Comedian Chonda Pierce and the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders also entertained the crowd.

"I came out here on this tour, because I wanted to bring you a piece of home, and to tell you how much I appreciate you," Pierce said to the audience, during the show.

"The most important job military bands can do is come out and raise the morale of Soldiers who are sta-

tioned in overseas," said Staff Sgt. Ronald Strayhorn, a band member with 25th Infantry Division, United States Division – Center, and a New Smyrna Beach, Fla. native. "We bring a little bit of home to the Soldiers and make them feel good, even if it's just for a little bit."

Strayhorn said these kinds of shows give Soldiers that little boost of energy to keep them going and smiling.

Popular songs such as "Sweet Home Alabama," "Help Pour out the Rain" and "Seven Month Itch," got the crowd tapping their feet, clapping their hands and singing.

"The show was definitely uplifting and heartwarming—especially this time of the year—for the artists to take time out of their busy schedules and come here, when they can be with their families," said Spc. Juan Reyes, a band member with 25th Inf. Div., and a Duncan, Okla., native.

"It was great to see the Army band here," said Sgt. Erin Bentz, a band member with 25th Inf. Div., and an Emporium, Pa., native. "I think everybody seems to love it. It was great to let loose and have some time to laugh." 🍷



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston speaks to service members, Department of Defense employees and civilian contractors Dec. 18, during the Sergeant Major of the Army Hope and Freedom Tour 2010 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. The USO tour brought different artists together to cheer and support troops in Baghdad.

FITNESS CORNER

Box Jumps Week

Fitness Myths

The world of fitness flourishes with myths, fables and “do this, not that” sayings. There is so much information about exercise, diet and fitness that it is hard to decipher what is truth and what is fiction. One reason myths get started in the first place is because everyone’s body reacts differently to exercises. So what’s true for one person may not be true for another. The best way to find out if the myth is true is to try it yourself. Here’s the lowdown on what’s true and what’s not when it comes to exercise techniques.

1. If you don’t sweat, you’re not working hard enough.

Sweat, as stinky and uncomfortable as it can be, is a natural and healthy part of life. It helps to cool your body. There is a gland in your brain called the hypothalamus that controls your internal temperature. When your body is too hot, the hypothalamus sends a message to your nerve cells to contact your sweat glands. When these glands are stimulated, they secrete sweat. The amount of sweat considered normal is quite variable and depends on the demands of the body. Don’t feel intimidated if you walk out of the gym with your shirt a different color because it is soaked with sweat. Remember that everyone is unique, just because the person beside you on the bicycle begins to sweat within five minutes, does not necessarily mean that he is working harder than you. To make sure you are getting a good workout, you need to push yourself at a level appropriate for you.

2. A longer workout equals better workouts.

With most exercise goals, quality is more important than quantity. Each of your workouts should contain two components: duration and intensity. Intensity is how hard you are working compared to duration is how long you workout. If you do not limit your duration of your exercise session, it most likely lacked in intensity. The people that spend countless hours at the gym every night are just comical. Do your workout and leave. Three 10-minute cardio stints offer the same healthy payback as a single 30-minute one. If you are trying to peel off pounds, of course, the more you do, the faster you’ll succeed. But don’t feel guilty if all you can squeeze in is a few minutes here and a few minutes there—it all adds up.

3. Muscle can turn into fat.

Muscle doesn’t turn to fat—ever. Muscle and fat are two completely different tissues that have different functions. It is physiologically impossible for muscle to turn to fat and vice versa. If you stop training, your lean muscle mass will reduce, which ultimately lowers your metabolism, thus contributing to more fat accumulating on your body. We lose fat by burning more energy than we put into our bodies. We lose muscle by giving our muscles less stress. The more stress muscles have, the more they grow; the less stress they have, the less they grow. It’s that simple. So keep exercising and enjoy it.

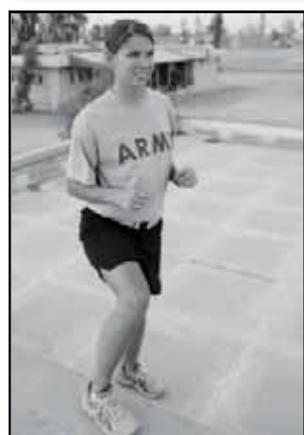
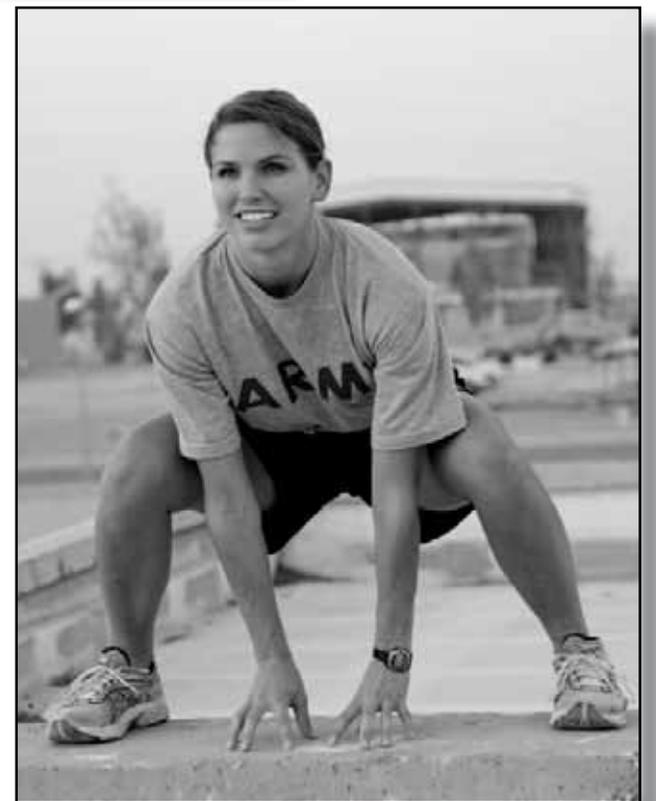
4. Machines are safer than free weights

While machines are a safe start for beginners to weight lifting, you still must ensure you adjust the settings to properly fit your body. Machines are limiting because of the rigidness and the movement is along a fixed plane, therefore limiting your natural movements. When you use free weights your body naturally makes adjustments throughout the exercise’s range of motion according to your strength level, speed of movement and proficiency at executing your repetitions. Both types of equipment are important to include in your workout routine.



Frog Jumps

Start facing the box with your feet on the ground. Bend your knees and jump up, landing with your feet on the box. Simultaneously squat down and touch your hands to the ground. Be sure to keep your butt back and ensure your knees do not exceed your toes. Perform three sets of 20 repetitions.



Lateral Jumps

Start with your left foot on the step (box or ledge, like in the photos) keep your right foot on the ground. Bend your knees and jump up and over the box, landing with your right foot on the box and your left foot on the ground. Repeat on the right side. This is one repetition. Perform three sets of 20 repetitions.



Switch Foot Jumps

Start with your right foot on the box, facing the box. Bend your knees and jump up in the air switching feet midair. Land with you left foot on the box. Perform this exercise quickly switching feet back and forth, staying on your toes. Every time your right foot lands on the box, this counts as one repetition. Perform three sets of 20 repetitions.

Try performing the exercises as a circuit. Perform each exercise once, then cycle through them two more times.



Capt. Sarah Baumgardner is a graduate of Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, where she majored in exercise physiology. She is certified by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) as a Health Fitness Specialist (HFS). She has worked as a personal trainer and nutritional consultant, training a wide range of demographics. She brings enthusiasm and motivation to inspiring, coaching and increasing Soldiers’ fitness levels.



"LIGHTNING IN THE NEW DAWN"

LIGHTNING SIX SENDS



25 December 2010

United States Division-Center

To: Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Civilians of United States Division-Center

Season's Greetings!

Although not easy, especially separated from family and loved ones, we find ourselves manning one of America's outposts during this holiday season. It really isn't supposed to be easy, but this is who we are, this is what we do, and we are all in it together.

You don't need me to mention, as you all well know, that there is an element of pride involved in the selfless contribution you are making. Not every American was moved to serve....some can't, and others won't. You stepped up in simple obedience to duty and your example is powerful. You are needed not only to protect our great Country, but to also help bring a better future to Iraq. We also own the legacy of those that came before us. We have a sacred trust to honor their service and sacrifices, some paying the last full measure of devotion, by serving with commitment and dedication.

Our gift to America and Iraq this Holiday is to stand watch. It is our turn. It is a precious gift that comes at a personal cost, but it is also a special gift that not everyone can offer. Although they miss you, your families are proud of you, as are those of us that stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you.

Thank you. God bless you. Merry Christmas!


BERNARD S. CHAMPOUX
Major General, USA
Commanding