



The Mountain View

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January 16, 2009

Wasit IPs celebrate 87th Anniversary



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson

(Right) Wasit Governor Abd al-Latif Hamad Tarfah cuts the first piece of cake for the 87th anniversary of the Wasit General Police Department at the Wasit Iraqi Police Headquarters in Kut, Jan. 11.



(Left) Members of the Kut Special Tactics and Weapons Team lead the vehicle parade during the 87th anniversary of the Wasit General Police Department at the Wasit IP Headquarters.

Iraqi Police graduate PSD course

Pfc. Terence Ewings
4TH BCT, 1ST CAV. DIV.



COB ADDER – Seven Iraqi Police from the Dhi Qar Province, graduated from the Protective Security Detail course at Camp Dhi Qar Jan. 8.

U.S. civilian law enforcement and Soldiers of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division trained the police on advanced marksmanship, neighborhood surveillance techniques and vehicle searching.

Maj. Khalid al Jubory, the officer-in-charge of the newly-trained Police,

believes his men have greatly benefited from working with the Americans.

“They have done a lot of work with (us) within a short amount of time,” said Khalid.

“We all had a big role in training the Iraqis,” said David Wooldridge, a civilian law enforcement officer.

The graduating students are part of a specialized Tactical Security Unit for the IP.

The unit will be working with the rest of the Iraqi Security Forces to protect the leaders and people of the Dhi Qar Province.



Photo by Pfc. Terence Ewings

An IP, from the specialized Tactical Security Unit in the Dhi Qar Province, demonstrates a reloading technique that was taught in the Personal Security Detail course at Camp Dhi Qar Jan. 8.



Photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliante

Soldiers from Co. D, 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., roar with laughter during a comedy show at COP 4 in Diwaniya Province Jan 6.

Comedians bring comic relief to 2-8 IN Soldiers

SGT. RODNEY FOLIANTE
2ND BCT, 4TH INF. DIV.



CAMP ECHO – As days drag on through a long deployment, it is easy for Soldiers to get caught in the gray haze. They are bereft of the typical comforts and entertainments so easily taken for granted back home. Amidst a rough string of physically grueling patrols and details, a light moment of entertainment can easily brighten their days.

Such was the case when a comedy tour rolled through Combat Outpost 4 and the Joint Security Station 2 for Soldiers from 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, in Diwaniya Province Jan. 6.

Comedians Joe Charles, John McDonnell and Scott Kennedy received streams of laughter from Soldiers at the small posts.

The comedians all expressed their

gratitude to the Soldiers and said they were happy for the opportunity to perform for them.

“This was my first time out of the U.S. ... other than Tijuana (Mexico),” said Charles with a smile.

Charles served in the military for eight years, both in the Air Force and Marines. Though he never deployed while in either branch, he said he is glad to be able to contribute now.

“There are so many people who want to give more and show their support for the deployed (military members). Soldiers need to know that. I’ve wanted to do this for a long time, so when I got an opportunity, I came. It’s the (most) that I can do to help,” said Charles, who lives in San Diego.

“It’s been awesome! Every show has been great,” continued Charles. “I enjoy making people laugh and I think service members deserve to laugh more than anyone and they’ve been the best crowds

I’ve ever had. I’ve never cared more to make people laugh than out here.”

After each of the shows, the comedians visited the Soldiers unable to attend because of their duties. They also hung out and talked with the troops, leaving a trail of laughter following as they walked through the bases.

“This makes me happy because we know we’re making a difference. You’re being invited into a Family, a brotherhood. When you leave, you are a part of that and I can’t think of a greater honor,” said McDonnell, who comes from Chicago.

Though he has never served in the Armed Forces, he said the military has always meant a great deal to him and his family. His great uncle served with the Army Air Corps in World War II and was a prisoner of war for 13 months in Europe. His father and older brother both

See COMEDY, page 3

THE Mountain View

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Sons of Iraq receive pay checks in Babil Province

Pfc. BETHANY L. LITTLE
172ND INFANTRY BDE.



MAHAWIL – The Government of Iraq achieved another milestone in self-sustainment, taking control of the Sons of Iraq payments here.

Recently the Babil Province SoI members received pay at a local Iraqi Police station Jan 2, with help from the Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment.

Established since Spring of 2008, the SoI program creates jobs for local Sunni and Shiite citizens by asking them to maintain security check points throughout their areas.

“They provide security by working the check points and going on patrols both day and night,” said Sheik Shalal Hasson Fayad, chief of the Al-Jabori tribe. “Before, this area was a hot spot for terror-



Photo by Pfc. Bethany L. Little

Sol members wait to receive payment at an IP station in the Babil Province.

ists. But now, the SoI help minimize the threat of terrorists and criminals attacking people freely.”

By providing security for the surrounding areas, the SoI help to support their own government and minimize U.S. military assistance.

“With a stabilized government and better security, the people of Iraq are able

to have more political interaction without the fear of hostilities or interference,” said Sgt. Tyler J. Zelko, Company B team leader.

Beginning in March, the GoI will have sole responsibility of the SoI program. This includes using GoI money to pay members of the SoI program.

The U.S. Military currently provides \$240, the equivalent to 274,464 Iraqi Dinar, for each SoI member.

The sheiks controlled and facilitated the SoI payments with minimal help from the U.S. Military. By doing so, the SoI members can gain more confidence in their government.

“It’s liberating for the SoI members,” said Zelko. “They can wake up in the morning and know they have money to feed their families because their government is taking care of them.”

COMEDY

From previous page

served with the Navy Reserve in the Korean War.

He also has many friends who have served in WWII, the Vietnam Conflict and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“All these people – Family and friends – are my inspiration to do this. But my most immediate reason is the response I get from military members out here. There are no better crowds anywhere I’ve been doing comedy, and I’ve been doing this stuff for 20 years,” said McDonnell. “I meet (service members) all over the world who I’ve performed for. Civilians may remember me, but Soldiers and Marines never forget. They can’t be grateful enough. Once you know what it means to them, there’s no way you can’t do it! As long as they’ll have me, I can’t imagine a day where I won’t do this, no matter what else is going on.”

Kennedy said he felt the same way after his initial trips began in 2004. He said he felt so strongly about it that he put together Comics Ready to Entertain, which is devoted to making deployed service members laugh in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait.

This trip marked his 25th tour to Iraq, spending approximately two weeks per month with deployed service members since he started the program, working with Morale, Welfare and Recreation.

“Once you do it, it’s addictive and the guys out here are so appreciative.

I couldn’t get enough of the tours, so I started to come out here myself through the MWR,” said Kennedy, a comedian for 20 years.

He had two nephews in the Marines who deployed for the initial push into Iraq in 2003. He also attended the New Mexico Military Institute for high school. Kennedy said these factors contributed to his appreciation for the deployed service members.

“From the bottom of my heart, thank you for serving. I don’t know any better way to say thank you than to come out here before you,” said Kennedy to assembled Soldiers. “As long as you are out here, I’ll keep coming.”

He emphasized his preference for touring the smaller bases and his belief that those Soldiers need it more, since they typically have less entertainment visiting them than the larger bases do.

“That’s why we like to come to places like this,” added Kennedy, who lives in Los Angeles. He said the Soldiers don’t have much in the way of entertainment and normalcy, especially at the small posts. “We provide a break and a little bit of home for the Soldiers.”

Although Soldiers do have means for entertainment during deployment, many complain that they still get bored with doing the same things day in day out. They can find ways to pass the time, but shows like this are a rare luxury.

“I loved the show! It was great because it kind of took us away from the environment for a second; kind of made us feel

like things were normal. It was a chance for all of us to get together and get away from our jobs for a moment to just laugh and forget about missions and all the stuff we have to deal with out here,” said Spc. Jay Rayburn, tank loader, 1st Platoon, Company D, 2-8 IN.

“It made me happy and it was great to laugh and hear everyone else laugh. We laughed a lot,” he said, chuckling at a remembered joke. “That helps a lot with the morale of the Soldiers.

“I don’t know any better way to say thank you than to come out here for you.”

– Scott Kennedy
Comedian

“I really appreciate that they took the time for us. They’re out here volunteering when they could be back in the States making money. I’m honored that they came out here for us,” said Rayburn, who comes from Clarksdale, Miss.

“It’s nice to have something different from the monotony of everyday deployment life,” agreed Spc. Corey Gilbert, tank loader, 1st Plt., Co. C, 2-8 IN.

“I thought it was hilarious!” he exclaimed with a grin. Gilbert hails from Detroit.

“It’s fun to hang out with the Soldiers. It’s like a big sleepover ... but with getting shot at and mortared,” quipped Kennedy.

MND-C Soldiers honor Martin Luther King Jr.

Photos by Sgt. Daniel T. West



(Left) Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, Multi-National Division – Center deputy commanding general for operations, Pfc. Adam Silva, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th Mountain Division, and Master Sgt. Edward Bowden, 10th Mtn. Div. Equal Opportunity representative, cut a cake during a ceremony honoring the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. Approximately 20 people, led by the EO office staff, planned the event, which took place at Hope Chapel on Camp Victory Jan. 15.



(Above) Pfc. Gary McCormick, of Decatur, Ga., performed “Amazing Grace” on the piano and, along with Spc. John Robinson Jr., of Charlotte, N.C., on drums, accompanied the gospel choir.

(Right) Buchanan speaks to the crowd about the importance of unity.



(Left) Chaplain Capt. Terry D. Hill delivers excerpts from “I have been to the mountain,” an address originally given by MLK on Apr. 3, 1968 in Memphis, Tenn.; and “Where do we go from here?” delivered Aug. 16, 1967 in Atlanta.



The 20-person MND-C gospel choir sang “Be Blessed” and “Jesus Promised” for those honoring the life of MLK at a ceremony at the Hope Chapel on Camp Victory Jan. 15.



(Left) Approximately 150 Soldiers and civilians of MND-C attended the MLK birthday ceremony; a Soldier records the ceremony on his phone.

Staff Section Round-up

IG Corner: TRICARE - What is Your Family Plan

This article really stems from the question, often heard, why doesn't Fort Drum have a hospital? In a recent article on Then News Tribune.com, titled "Military Health System Rates Middling Marks," Maj. Gen. Elder Granger, deputy director of TRICARE, asked many of the same questions we often hear and gave the military health system an overall grade of C-plus or B-minus. Too many beneficiaries of the military direct-care health system still can't get timely appointments, nor can they reach doctors after hours or establish a close family-doctor relationship with a single military physician or group.

The fact is military hospitals are the exception not the rule. According to the TRICARE website, there are 63 military hospitals and 413 military clinics. The good news is in fiscal year 2008, the number of civilian providers accepting TRICARE patients grew by 115,000 to reach 1.1 million nationwide.

Granger said users of military hospital and clinics too often face busy signals in trying to make appointments. He wants more consistency in administrative support from how phones are answered to how appointments are booked, from how providers are reached after hours to how health readiness is tracked and preventive care services are offered.

There are three TRICARE plans: Prime, Standard and Extra. Do service members know which plan covers their family and the potential benefits from each? I'll be honest I have never really been involved in the decision-making process when it comes to my family's TRICARE plan. To be eligible for TRICARE benefits, service members must be registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System. TRICARE offers several health plan options to meet the needs of its beneficiary population.

- TRICARE Prime is a managed care option offering the most affordable and comprehensive coverage.

- TRICARE Standard is a fee-for-service option. When TRICARE Standard is used, service members have more choice in providers, as they can seek care from any TRICARE-authorized provider, network or non-network, but pay higher out-of-pocket costs.

- To reduce out-of-pocket costs, use the TRICARE Extra option by seeking care with TRICARE network providers. Using TRICARE Extra is like using a Preferred Provider Option.

Service members will need to figure out what is best for their family and select the best option.

Thanks, your IG Team.

Opet's Odyssey



Headline Round-up

U.S. News:

The avalanche of legal and personal problems tumbling onto a brazen investor grew with the addition of federal charges from faking a distress call and crashing his plane in an attempt to foil authorities. The charges were announced Jan. 14 as Marcus Schrenker recovered in a heavily guarded hospital room after an apparent suicide attempt. His three-day run from the law — and impending financial and personal ruin — ended late Jan. 13 when U.S. Marshals found him semiconscious inside a tent at a Florida campground, muttering the word “die” as he bled from a self-inflicted gash to his left wrist.

World News:

China’s economy grew to the world’s third-largest in 2007, new data showed Jan. 14, another milestone in the country’s stunning ascent in the global pecking order that puts it behind only Japan and the United States. China has grown tenfold in the past 30 years. The revised data leapfrogged it ahead of Germany, but overtaking the United States is another matter.

Entertainment:

Indiana Jones and “The Mummy” slayer are teaming up on the big screen — to battle not ancient, otherworldly baddies but a big medical dilemma. Brendan Fraser will join Harrison Ford for a medical drama set to begin filming in April, CBS Films announced Jan. 14. The untitled movie will be the first production for CBS Films, a feature film division established in 2007. Fraser will play a father who recruits the help of a medical researcher portrayed by Ford. CBS Films said the film’s screenplay is inspired by “The Cure,” a book by Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Geeta Anand about John F. Crowley, a former Bristol Myers Squibb executive who started his own biotech company to save his two children from a rare muscular disorder.

Sports News:

Heisman Trophy winner Sam Bradford wasn’t ready to give up the life of a college quarterback — not without a national championship. The third-year sophomore quarterback will return to Oklahoma next season, passing on a chance to be a high NFL draft pick.

Quote of the Day

“Some people like my advice so much that they frame it upon the wall instead of using it.” – Gordon R. Dickson

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For the answer to today’s puzzle, go to:



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WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GREW UP?



Photo by Spc. Tiffany Evans

“I wanted to be a sports commentator. I live, breath and eat sports. It’s my passion,” said Chief Warrant Officer Bryan McDonald, of New Orleans, a network engineer, Network Support Company, 10th Mountain Division.



Photo by Spc. Tiffany Evans

“At one point as a kid, I wanted to be a Dairy Queen worker so I could get all the ice cream I wanted,” said Sgt. 1st Class Kay Johnston, of Casper, Wyo., G-6 administrative noncommissioned officer-in-charge, Network Support Company, 10th Mountain Division.