

The North Star

Serving Task Force Marne
U. S. Division- North, Iraq



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USD-N Cdr. lays out priorities with Pentagon press

By Master Sgt. Marcia Triggs
TF Marne PAO

The U.S. Division – North area is probably the most demographically complex battle space in Iraq, and Soldiers are fully aware of this as they work with their Kurd and Arab partners to demolish violence and plan for a safe and secure election day scheduled this March.

The USD-N Commander, Maj. Gen. Tony Cucolo, explained to Pentagon reporters, via a satellite interview Jan. 13, that the 21,000 servicemembers under his command are conducting a multitude of joint operations in seven different provinces, and there's no quick summation of Task Force Marne's responsibilities because the needs of each province are different.

However, he emphasized several priorities, which include sustaining pressure against exhausted violent extremist cells. "There is a weak AQI

(al-Qaeda in Iraq) and ISI (Islamic State of Iraq) ... We knocked back their access to weapons, ammunition and explosives," Maj. Gen. Cucolo said, who is also the 3rd Infantry Division commander, from Fort Stewart, Ga.

He also added that extremists are trying to stay relevant and if given the opportunity would capitalize on the tensions between the Kurds and Arabs during this historical ramp-up toward elections.

"I believe we can avoid fighting between the two forces because I talk to the commanders of each side, and we partner with them daily," Maj. Gen. Cucolo said. "They are rational. ... And if something unexplained happens, no one leaps to conclusions; no one mobilizes troops; no one goes to guns. That's a good news story."

Working with the Iraqi Army to clamp down on insurgency is part of the combat operations role of the task force, but the commanding general



also discussed the contributions of his troops in building, training and sustaining an Iraqi Security Force that is capable of protecting its people after U.S. forces are gone.

"I've been very impressed by the quality of the Iraqi Security Forces, particularly the Army," Maj. Gen.

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Soldiers wrongfully claim money from GI Bill program

Special to the North Star

Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric K. Shinseki authorized advance payments up to \$3,000 for Veterans who have applied for VA educational benefits and who have not yet received their monthly education payments.

A message was posted on the Department of Veterans Affairs Web site informing Veterans that they could receive emergency benefits for the Fall 2009 term.

Now Armywide, Education Centers

are becoming aware that ineligible Soldiers are applying for and receiving the cash payment.

Most active-duty Soldiers are not eligible because they use tuition assistance to pay for classes, and they cannot use both TA and VA benefits for the same classes.

To be eligible for the advance payment the Soldier must be enrolled in a VA approved program, have been approved to use VA benefits to pay for classes, and have paperwork from a school verifying this.

Most active-duty Soldiers don't know that to claim any GI Bill benefits, they must have served three years. Soldiers who apply for this benefit and are not eligible will be charged with fraud and disciplinary action will be taken. Soldiers will also have to pay back the money claimed from the program.

For more information on education benefits, visit www.gibill.va.gov, www.vba.va.gov/vba/benefits/offices.asp or contact your local education center. These sites will explain the GI Bill benefits.

TM Marne to Celebrate King's Birthday

By Spc. Cassandra Monroe
135th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Throughout Task Force Marne's battle space, both Soldiers and civilians will celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Jan. 18.

It is one of four U.S. holidays that commemorate an individual person. It falls on the third Monday in January, which is near King's birthday, Jan. 15.

The 3rd Division Special Troops Battalion will honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during an invitation-only prayer breakfast to reflect on his ideas.

The ceremony will be held at the Contingency Operating Base Speicher Main Dining Facility in overflow room one. Guests will be asked to be seated by 8:30 a.m. for a formal introduction of the ceremony, followed by breakfast.

Following the breakfast, division chaplains will read excerpts from Martin Luther King's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, in which he speaks about overcoming oppression and violence without resorting to the same offensive acts.

"Martin Luther King Jr. committed his life to bridging the gap of cultural, racial and social indifferences," said Lt. Col. Shatrece W.B. Buchanan, the Equal Opportunity program manager and deployed sexual assault response coordinator for United States Division – North.

"He was a great man of history and God," said Maj. Bill Killough, the

deputy for the USD-N Chaplain Office, 3rd Infantry Division Special Troops Battalion.

Major Killough will be one of the chaplains reading from Martin Luther King's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. "To read from one of his speeches is an honor."

According to Maj. Killough, a line from the speech that moves him is "I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history," because it implies to stay positive, even amidst a storm, even amidst challenges. Additionally, participants from the base legal department will give testimonials on how they overcame injustice in their lives.

The ceremony will also include gospel musical performances by the Spirit of the Rock Gospel Choir, as well as more readings, testimonials and songs.

Because the church was used as a platform or foundation for hope during the civil rights movement, we're giving people a taste of the spirit that encouraged and evoked hope from within, said Lt. Col. Buchanan.

"Martin Luther King Jr. realized that if you want to promote wholeness within a culture, you must do it in a unified front," said Lt. Col. Buchanan. "If you want this, you must include ingredients such as diversity, brotherhood, increased commitment and Selfless Service."

In the military, selfless service is one of the seven army values that servicemembers incorporate in their

Army lives by serving here in Iraq and modeling the unified front by working and living together.

We must pursue peace through non-violence by using peace and harmony, just as King did himself. Let the military serve as a model for showing unity, strength and diversity by bridging the cultural gaps of the United States forces with Iraqi forces, said Lt. Col. Buchanan.

Points of note about Martin Luther King Jr.

-In 1964, at the age of 35, he was the youngest person to ever receive the Nobel Peace Prize. He donated the prize money, \$54,123, to the civil rights movement.

-He graduated from high school at the age of 15.

-He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1977 and the Congressional Gold Medal in 2004.

-Martin Luther King's birthday was established as a national holiday in 1986.

-Kings pacifist philosophy to ending segregation in America was largely inspired by Mohandas Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent social protest

-More than 730 cities have streets named after him. King County, Wash., is named after him as well.

MWR brings events and concerts to combat

By Spc. Michael Adams
TF Marne PAO

Aubrey Kiemnac, of Kaneohe, Hawaii, never took an oath of enlistment or received a commission as an officer.

She is however one of the hardest-working people in Task Force Marne when it comes to taking care of Soldiers.

As Morale, Welfare and Recreation coordinator for United States Division – North, she oversees all entertainment that comes to northern Iraq.

"I love supporting the troops, and I

love doing my job," she said. "I get a lot of satisfaction out of doing my job."

Her work is not just planning the events.

She schedules all of the acts that come to USD-N at all of the different bases all over the task force's area of operations.

Her job includes arranging transportation to and from USD-N and making sure they move from base from base in a safe manner ensuring the acts receive meals and proper lodging and escorting them around northern Iraq to make sure their visit and

their performances go as planned.

She also coordinates with contractors, to make sure the stage and venues are set up and makes sure the acts receive any equipment they need, like microphones and speakers.

Kiemnac is an employee for MWR, but she volunteered to come to Iraq.

While the job sometimes requires long hours, and a lot of work, Kiemnac says her job is enjoyable and believes that what she does is just a little bit to make the stress of deployment a little

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Photo by Spc. Michael Adams, TF Marne PAO
Soldiers with TF Marne watch the Harlem Globetrotters mascot, Globie, at an event planned and coordinated by MWR, Dec. 12.

easier.

"It's a morale booster," she said. "MWR in general is a morale booster. They have community centers, gyms and many other things for the troops. But I think entertainment acts are something people especially look forward to. We don't get a lot of entertainment acts but when they do come, it gives Soldiers a chance to interact with someone they normally wouldn't."

She has brought in a number of concerts, but MWR brought in other events, like the Lone Wolf Comedy Tour, the Scott Kennedy Comedy Tour

and the Harlem Globetrotters.

All of the concerts and events visited some of the most remote locations all over northern Iraq, including Patrol Base Doria, Joint Service Station India, and Command Post North.

Kiemnac stated her favorite event was the Lone Wolf Comedy Tour. Every base she visited, the comedians had the Soldiers who were at the show dying with laughter.

Sergeant First Class Siatuu Quarterman, of Pago Pago, American Samoa, is the TF Marne Personnel plans and operations noncommissioned officer.

She works with Kiemnac to make sure the events operate smoothly.

"She works really hard," said Sgt. 1st Class Quarterman. "She makes my job a lot easier."

Sergeant First Class Quarterman works to bring in the shows, but she enjoys watching the different acts as well.

"Everyday, we're around Soldiers," she added. "When you have a new face coming in, especially new faces that entertain Soldiers, it gives us a chance to have a break and enjoy themselves."

But for Sgt. 1st class Quarterman, the troops come first.

"Nine times out of 10 a Soldier will tell you, 'thank you' for what were doing. It makes me happy, it makes my

job worth it," Sgt. 1st Class Quarterman added.

Until TF Marne redeploys in the fall, there will be more than 30 acts that will perform in the TF Marne area.

Upcoming MWR events

-Celtic Group- Jan. 17- A U.S. Air Force Central Band that puts a spin on classic Irish music.

-Thund Her Struck- Jan. 25- An all-female AC/DC tribute band that has entertained the troops in Iraq during previous years.

-Lonewolf Comedians- Feb. 14-16- A group of three interchanging comedians that come every month to entertain the troops.

-Charlie Wilson and the Gap Band- Feb. 21- A soul and funk group that formed in the 1970s with such hits as "You Dropped a Bomb on Me" and "Party Train."

-Saving Abel- Feb. 23-26 Presented by the USO. A new age rock group with hits such as "Addicted" and "New Tattoo".

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Cucolo said. "They are beginning to conduct intelligence-driven operations, but there are some capabilities that they need to acquire to properly take the battle space."

The commander said that the Iraqi Army and Police institutions are still being formed. The institutions he referred to are the ones that get them spare parts, bullets and the supply-items they need to sustain routine operations. As a caveat, Maj. Gen. Cucolo added that the right people are already involved in the resolution. As the support services are being injected into the Iraqi military system, simultaneously U.S. forces and their Iraqi partners are sharpening their air assault, route reconnaissance, and ground-dismount skills.

Iraqi Policemen are working with

military and civilian experts on the intricacies of rule of law and crime scene investigations. State department civilians on the provincial reconstruction teams are also woven into the stratagem.

They work with local sheiks and military commanders to identify and fund renovation projects or needed essential services in the local communities.

The trilateral entities – Iraqis, state and military – are also part of the security plan discussions for the March elections. "The Independent High Electoral Committee has the lead," said Maj. Gen. Cucolo. "Of course there will not be a Soldier in or near a polling site. We will be doing some outer-ring security with our Iraqi partners.

"We're looking to rock the vote here; we're looking to get as many Iraqis out to vote as we can, and so we want the security conditions that will allow that."

Before concluding the interview, Maj. Gen. Cucolo acknowledged that the focus of the war is on Afghanistan, but he commended the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen and Coast Guardsmen on his vanguard team. He also sincerely recognized the Americans who send his troops cards, letters and care packages, especially during the holiday season.

"The outreach, the love and the warmth that came from the United States, from folks we don't even know, was absolutely fantastic," Maj. Gen. Cucolo said. "[It] was a real morale boost for all the Soldiers over here."

Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Private First Class Albert Chapa, of San Antonio, Texas, is with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 37th Armor, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division. He constantly displays infectious enthusiasm, leadership skills and high personal standards that exceed his rank. Private First Class Chapa is the lead gunner in an element of four Mine Resister Ambush Protected vehicles that conduct combat patrols throughout the 1/37th area of operations. He diligently secures his own sector while continually updating both his fellow gunners and the leadership in the patrol of potential dangers they may encounter. His ability to communicate with the entire element while leading from the front and his meticulous attention to detail are shining examples of his exceptional leadership abilities. His actions epitomize the best Soldier attitudes of motivation, commitment and loyalty. This makes him a clear choice as today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Sergeant Daniel Templeton, of Linton, Ind., is with Troop B, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, 2nd Brigade combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. He is a Bradley Cavalry Fighting Vehicle gunner whose scouting abilities were tested on Jan. 7 during Operation Rogue Sentinel. While on an observation post observing a main supply route for several hours, Sgt. Templeton spotted four individuals moving through his assigned sectors on foot. His accurate spot report prompted the platoon leader to maneuver and destroy the dismounted improvised explosive device cell. Sergeant Templeton has exhibited flawless cavalry skills throughout the deployment and is a key member of the troop's numerous project oversight skills. Sergeant Templeton's professionalism and effective field craft are a credit to Bonecrusher Troop and make him a natural choice for Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

Fun facts about winter

✧ In 1816, the 'Year Without Summer' occurred in northern Europe, the northeastern United States and eastern Canada. Abnormally cold temperatures throughout the year caused what is considered to be the last crop shortage in the affected nations.

✧ The largest snowball fight on record had 3,749 students at Michigan Technological University throwing snowballs at each other Feb. 10, 2006.

✧ In 2008, Concord, N.H., received 100.1 inches of snowfall. This was 22 inches above the previous record set in the winter of 1886-87

✧ The greatest snowfall in the Phoenix, Ariz., happened in 1933, producing a grand total of one inch.

✧ New York City averages 94 inches of snow pre year

✧ Skiing was used in the pre-historic era, primarily for hunting and military maneuvers.

Sudoku

Answers will be printed in Monday's edition of "The North Star"

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

REGIONAL HEADLINES

Liberal's 94-year-old fire bell rings again

www.swdtimes.com

LIBERAL, Kan.- John Allen and Guy Rice have never met but share a common bond.

Both their fathers served many years in the Liberal Fire Department. For the past two weeks, both Allen and Rice have undertaken a task to help their fathers and LFD.

Allen, now living in of Kearney, Neb., donated a near 100-year-old brass fire bell back to the LFD in honor of his father.

"I talked to my sister and we both felt the bell should go back to Liberal to be a part of the archives," said Allen. "The note that I put on it was in memory of our father, Bill Allen."

Guy Rice, of Liberal, drove the 360 miles to get the brass bell back to Liberal with his father, retired fire chief Milton Rice in tow.

"The whole point of me being involved was because of my dad," said Guy Rice. "That was the reason why I drove to Kearney, Neb., and that was the reason why I picked up the bell and that was the reason why I brought it back.

The sentimental value for my dad of having the bell back in Liberal."

After many years and many miles away from Liberal, the bell arrived to LFD's north station Thursday. Upon arrival, LFD officials announced the bell was a siren from the first fire truck to serve Liberal in 1916.

John Allen, 63, has cared for the bell the past 40 years. His father was a volunteer firefighter in Liberal during the 1950s and 1960s. During Bill Allen's service, the bell was given to him from a fire apparatus vehicle. John Allen said he could not remember why and how his father ended up with the bell.

"He brought it home and we had it mounted in the backyard," said Allen. "It was used to call myself and my older sister for dinner.

When the dinner bell rang, we literally dropped what we were doing and head home for dinner. It was substantial enough that we could hear it from more then a block away. When I graduated from college, moved away and started a family, we used the same dinner bell to call our family for dinner."

Boy, 4, told to braid hair in compromise

United Press International

MESQUITE, Texas- A Texas school board said a 4-year-old removed from his pre-kindergarten class for his long hair can return to class if his locks are braided.

The Mesquite school board said Taylor Pugh, 4, who has been learning alone in the Floyd Elementary School library since he was removed from class for having hair longer than allowed by a dress code in November, can return to class if he wears his hair

in braids that don't reach his collar, The Dallas Morning News reported Jan. 12.

However, parents Delton Pugh and Elizabeth Taylor said after the meeting the compromise is unacceptable.

"We just spent 30 minutes telling them why we couldn't do that," Pugh said of braiding. Taylor said braiding her son's hair is too time consuming and he can't keep them in for too long before they start to hurt.

The parents said they plan to send their son to school with a ponytail. Officials said the boy will be sent to the library again if his hair does not comply with the district's ruling.

Scammer sends \$4,000 check to police

Associated Press

RICHLAND, Wash.- Not even the police are immune from those offers of free money from African countries that are really scams.

Richland police could use another \$4,000, but the department wasn't tempted by the cashier's check it received Jan. 8 in the mail from the country of Benin.

Officer Erica Tungesvik said officers immediately recognized it as a bogus attempt to learn bank account information if the check were deposited.

An officer wrote up a report on the incident and Tungesvik said it serves as a reminder that if the police can be the target of such a scam, anyone can.

THE North Star

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