

The North Star

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



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Photo by Spc. Rye Norris, CP South PAO

An Iraqi Army, Peshmerga and U.S. Soldier work together at a combined checkpoint in the Diyala province, Feb. 2. This is part of a tripartite plan to make Iraq a safer place.

CSA fights common enemy

By Spc. Ry Norris
CP South PAO

Rocks and sand kicked up as two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters landed. The crew chiefs debarked the aircraft, scanning the remote area for signs of danger. The sands of Iraq stretched as far as the eye could see. Off to the side stood a compound walled off from the threat of violent extremists.

Iraqi Army Brig. Gen. Jamill Abdullah, the Diyala operations deputy commander, debarked the first helicopter, followed by U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Patrick Donahue, the United States Division - North deputy commanding general, and Iraqi Maj. Abdul-Sattar, of the Kurdistan Regional Guard. Their entourage followed closely behind from the other helicopter. The command group was paying a visit to the combined checkpoints in Diyala province, Feb. 2.

For centuries, the Arabs and Kurds of Iraq have fought over religion, territorial boundaries and

cultural dominance. Between the two groups are the disputed internal boundaries. This mass of undefined land caused a security gap for violent extremists to exploit. Today, as in the past, extremists threaten the families, friends and livelihoods of both groups.

"Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and President Masoud Barzani of the Kurdistan Regional Government agreed to establish Combined Security Areas to close the security seam, build confidence between the Arabs and the Kurds, and to allow political development to continue," said U.S. Army Capt. Jerry T. Brenner, Brig. Gen. Donahue's engagement officer.

The security gap was filled in January with the implementation of the combined checkpoints. The areas are now protected by a tripartite force consisting of Iraqi Army, Peshmerga, and U.S. Soldiers. They report any incidents within the combined security area

See FIGHT, Page 2 —

Task Force Marne rejoices over history of 'black economic empowerment'

By Sgt. Johnathon Jobson
TF Marne PAO

Task Force Marne Soldiers gathered at the division headquarters, Feb. 19, to celebrate Black History Month by recognizing their contributions across history. The theme was "The History of Black Economic Empowerment."

Soldiers attending the ceremony were treated to readings and songs

written by popular African-American performers, and a history lesson on famous entrepreneurs like Barry Gordy, the founder of Motown, Clarence Otis, chief executive officer of Darden Restaurants, Inc. and Kathy Hughes, the owner of Radio One, the largest African-American owned radio chain in the

See HISTORY, Page 3 —

Three diehard Soldiers become American citizens

By 1st Lt. Elizabeth Hill
1st Eng. Bn. PAO

One hundred and seven foreign-born U.S. troops currently serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom became American citizens at al-Faw Palace in Baghdad, Feb. 15.

Among the newest citizens were three Soldiers from the 1st Engineer Battalion, out of Fort Riley, Kan., attached to 130th Engineer Brigade. All three Soldiers, including Spc. Tri Lam, of the 72nd Mobility Augmentation Company, were proud to become Americans in the ceremony.

"I am excited to become a citizen because now I can apply for a secret security clearance which will allow me to further my career in the Army even more. I am happy to become a citizen of the country that I have served, and

I will continue to deploy, fight, and win for my Family and the United States of America," said Spc. Lam.

Specialist Lam, who joined the Army in 2008, as a combat engineer, grew up in Vietnam. He and his Family left the country when he was 15 and moved to Hungary. In 1999, he immigrated to the U.S. This is his first deployment.

The ceremony, held in Al-Faw Palace on Camp Liberty near Baghdad, included a message to the newest American citizens from President Barack Obama. Following the Oath of Citizenship, the Soldiers received a standing ovation from the



Photo by 1st Lt. Elizabeth Hill, 1st Eng. Bn. PAO

Soldiers raise their right hands as they repeat the Oath of Citizenship during their Naturalization Ceremony at Camp Victory, Iraq.

Soldiers and leaders in attendance.

The presiding officer, Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby, Jr., addressed the new citizens during the ceremony. "We eagerly look forward to the good things you will do as United States citizens," he said.

continued from FIGHT, Page 1

to the Combined Coordination Center.

Colonel Marc Axelberg, the senior ranking U.S. officer at the Diyala CCC, said that it's amazing to see them laughing and joking with one another as they work together.

"You can't tell them apart if it weren't for their uniforms," Col. Axelberg said.

There are three senior ranking of-

ficers in charge of the CCC, one from each organization. They also act as liaisons for their respective military force. As agreed between Prime Minister Maliki and President Barzani, no operation or troop movement will be executed without the authorization of all three officers; however, if they cannot come to an agreement, the issue is then

elevated to a higher level to resolve.

"This is the first step for the unity of Iraq and her future," Brig. Gen. Abdullah said. "We are moving from a combined check point to just a check point, regardless of the Soldier's background."

With the CCPs in place blocking their route, insurgents are now targeting them. In preparation for this, the CCPs were fortified with HESCO and T-wall barriers. Stryker vehicles stand ready and air support is a call away.

Two check points have received indirect fire. When this occurs, the three senior ranking officers at the CCC will agree on a plan of action based on gathered intelligence. A time-sensitive target mission is coordinated with the Combined Security Force, a platoon of Iraqi Army, Peshmerga and U.S. Soldiers that act as a maneuver element for offensive operations. At this point the CSF will most likely execute the mission. This demonstrates the quick efficiency of the tripartite force in the event of an attack.

"The success of the combined checkpoints serves as a clear message to Iraq's enemies," said Maj. Sattar. "Background does not make a difference to the people of Iraq. We join to fight a common enemy."



Photo by Spc. Rye Norris, CP South PAO

Iraqi Army, Peshmerga and U.S. forces stand together to listen to statements from U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Patrick Donahue, the USD-N deputy commanding general, Iraqi Army Staff Brig. Gen. Jamill Abdullah, and Maj. Abdul-Sattar at a combined checkpoint, Feb. 3. The combined checkpoint is part of a tripartite plan to make Iraq a safer place.

Charlie Wilson performs in midst of Iraqi sandstorm

By Master Sgt. Marcia Triggs
TF Marne PAO

He went from rags to riches – to homeless. However, in his testimonial to troops and civilians on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, he said his faith brought him back to the stage and back to the top of the music charts.

This funkadelic and soulful artist is known for 80s hits like, “You Dropped a Bomb on Me” and “Burn Rubber on Me”. However, in the midst of an Iraqi sandstorm younger troops braved the weather to hear the artist croon his most recent lyrics “My Name is Charlie, Last Name Wilson”, Feb. 21 at the Speicher Main Gym.

Charlie Wilson, 57, the former lead singer of the Gap Band, gave a 93-minute, nonstop concert that was packed with energy, inspiration and rhythm and soul.

“Real music isn’t easy to do,” Wilson told the crowd, after harmoniously belting out a ballad, “but somebody’s got to do it.” Along with the music, Wilson openly acknowledged that he still has the energy he brought to the stage more than 40 years ago. During the show Wilson and his dancers changed three times, within minutes. However, the audience didn’t mind those few moments to listen to the instrumentals of his band members, who are also his nephews.

Wilson, a Grammy Award nominee, from Tulsa, Okla., admitted that he remembers at one point ignoring troops

when he saw them out in their uniform, but said that now he’s a changed man. He fought prostate cancer and won. He’s also vowed to never use drugs and alcohol again. “I’ve been clean for 15 years,” he said.

He also threw out selfishness, he added. “You go outside the wire. You

modern R&B songs very appealing.

“He has this never-ending soul voice and his music touches us,” said Pfc. Goode, who is a radio transmitter operator with 3rd Division Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, out of Fort Stewart, Ga.

All ages and ranks filled the gym from the bottom of the stage to the top of the bleachers. Very seldom, could a person be seen sitting down during the hour-and-a-half performance. Some stood to rock to the beat, and others stood because their hearts wouldn’t let them sit down.

“I found it invigorating. His songs touched my soul,” said Sgt. Cortez Anderson, from the 249th Quartermaster Company, out of Fort Bragg, N.C. “He inspired me because we all make mistakes, but if we have faith another door will open.”

Sergeant Anderson said he’s been listening to Charlie Wilson since he sang with his brothers in the Gap Band, and now he has even more respect for the artist because he came to Iraq to bring some enjoyment and a piece of home to the troops.

Prior to the concert, Wilson and his band members visited servicemembers and civilians in the Task Force Marne Headquarters. While posing for photos with troops, Maj. Gen. Tony Cucolo, the commander and Command Sgt. Maj. Jesse Andrews, the task force command sergeant major stopped by to thank Wilson and his crew for their support to the troops.



Photo by Master Sgt. Marcia Triggs, TF Marne PAO
Charlie Wilson, a Grammy Award nominee, performs for servicemembers and civilians on COB Speicher, Feb. 21. The funkadelic performer treated the audience to 93 minutes of an energy-filled concert.

lay it on the line, and I love you for that,” Wilson said to the troops. “And for your sacrifices, I’m not afraid to come over here when you want me to. Regardless, if it’s during the heat of the battle, if you ask me, I’ll come and perform.”

This was Wilson’s second trip to Iraq. He performed in Mosul last year. However, this was the first time some Soldiers were able to see him on stage. Private First Class Tiffany Goode wasn’t aware of Charlie Wilson until he collaborated with younger artists like Justin Timberlake and Snoop Dogg. However, she said she finds his smooth voice and

continued from HISTORY, Page 1

United States.

“The passage of time we have made in a democracy, for equality and justice is a story that we have to tell over and over again because I am not sure they are being told outside the military,” said Maj. Gen. Tony Cucolo, commander of TF Marne.

Specialist Bradley Bynum, who is part of the TF Marne G-6 server team, and Sgt. Curtis Whittaker, a financial management technician with

the 82nd Financial Management Company, performed a mime routine to a stirring gospel song.

“It means a lot to me that I can participate in these programs and that I was asked to participate,” said Spc. Bynum. “I feel honored that I was able to contribute and I think it’s great that we can honor African-Americans and their contributions to the United States and the world.”

Following a speech about Barry Gordy, Jr., some of his songs were performed for the audience.

The speakers and performers from the ceremony then gathered with Maj. Gen. Cucolo and Command Sgt. Major Jesse Andrews, the TF Marne command sergeant major, for a cake cutting to end the ceremony.

The remembrance activities did not end there. Soldiers from many of the units

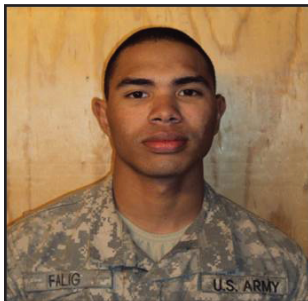
stationed at Contingency Operating Base Speicher gathered the next morning for a 5 kilometer fun-run.

“Every time we have one of these observances, I look around and I say to myself, ‘I am proud to be in this Army and we are going to be all right,’ because we pause to take the time to do this and remind ourselves the power of diversity and the diversity of our formation,” Maj. Gen. Cucolo said.

Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Specialist Alexander McCaskey's duty performance as the Company B, 701st Brigade Support Battalion Communications Section Chief has been exemplary. He ensures that all three HEMMT wreckers' and one M88 Tracked Recovery Vehicle's communications systems are fully operational for each mission, more than 115 to date. He also supported 13 combat logistics patrols to other FOBs in support of the company's Iraqi partnership mission. Specialist McCaskey has troubleshoot and conducted countless quick fixes on numerous radio and AN/VIC-3 systems for units throughout the Dragon Brigade and also for various units on COB Speicher not assigned to the brigade. His willingness to work tirelessly and without complaint in order to get units' equipment fully-mission capable reflects his selfless service to his unit and to the United States Army. It is for these outstanding qualities that he is selected as today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



As a member of the Convoy Security Element, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, Pfc. Lee-Andrew Falig has proven himself an invaluable asset to the company mission since his arrival in theater. As the lead gunner for his platoon, Pfc. Falig's sharp situational awareness helped him notice the suspicious wire laid across the road surface while traveling along an alternate supply route. He immediately notified his truck commander and stopped the patrol. Private 1st Class Falig takes the role of point-man and always maintains focus and alertness while on missions, he's known as "the eyes and ears of the combat logistics patrol." He routinely demonstrates his initiative and responsibility in maintaining his crew-served M240B weapon. Private 1st Class Falig keeps a "can-do" attitude at all times and is a valuable attribute to the "Renegades." This outstanding Soldier always ensures the mission is accomplished, and his performance makes him a truly deserving choice for today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

Al- Mawlid Al-Nabawi: The Birth of Prophet Muhammad

**Cultural Tidbit
Special to the North Star**

Mawlid means "birthday" and Mawlid Al-Nabi means "The birth of the Prophet."

Mawlid is the day when Sunnis and Shi'a mark the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. In fact, the 12th of Rabi'ul'Awwal, or 17th for Shi'a, is traditionally believed to be the date of Muhammad's death. It was arbitrarily fixed as the date to celebrate his birth in 1207.

There are mixed beliefs on how one observes Muhammad's birthday. Some people see the prophet's birthday as an event worthy of praise. Others view the celebration of birthdays as contradictory to Islamic law.

Mawlid is celebrated in most Muslim countries; Saudi Arabia is the only Muslim country where Mawlid is not an official public holiday.



Courtesy Photo

Al-Masjid al-Nabawi ("Mosque of the Prophet"), is the final resting place of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. It is considered the second holiest site in Islam.

Sunni Wahabi (strict Sunni Muslims) believes participation in the ritual celebration of popular Islamic holidays is seen as an expression of the Islamic revival.

Shi'a celebration of Muhammad's birthday coincides with the birth of the sixth Imam, Ja'far Al-Sadiq; their

celebration will include a visit to their local Husainiyah, listening to stories about the life of Muhammad and reciting verses from the Qur'an.

Special religious TV and Radio programs will be played all day. Government offices will be closed.

This is an official Holiday in Iraq

REGIONAL HEADLINES

Stolen watch back after 51 years

United Press International

FORT MEYERS, Fla. - A Florida man said an heirloom watch stolen from his family 51 years ago in Michigan mysteriously turned up at a supermarket near his Florida home.

Piero Ramos, 18, an employee at Publix in North Fort Myers said he saw the watch at the top of a trash can at the store, Feb. 23, and noticed the inscription, "John Iwanacki," the dates 1922-1957 and the signature of automaker Henry Ford.

Ramos said he checked a phone book and was able to find Bill Iwanacki of Fort Myers, grandson of the watch's original owner.

Iwanacki said the watch, a retirement gift from the Ford Motor Co., was stolen from his family's home in 1959.

"I'm just feeling goosebumps. I'm beside myself," Iwanacki said.

Dog survives 300-foot cliff jump

United Press International

SEAFORD, England - Two dogwalkers said they feared the worst when their springer spaniel leaped from a 300-foot cliff, but the dog bounced off a wave and swam to shore.

Lia Markwick and Stephen Winslade, who were walking Poppy as a favor for Lia's brother, said the canine was chasing a seagull and made a flying leap from the cliff, Feb. 22.

Markwick and Winslade said they expected to look down and see Poppy's body, but instead the dog had managed to avoid hitting the rocks below and landed in the high tide, allowing her to swim to a nearby beach. Markwick said they called Coast Guard authorities, who recovered the canine after it made its way to dry land.

Poppy suffered a collapsed lung but is expected to make a full recovery.

Vancouver Schedule

(All times listed are local Iraq time)

-Feb. 24, 4 a.m.: Women's Bobsled - Heat 1

-Feb. 24, 5 a.m.: Women's Bobsled - Heat 2

-Feb. 25, 4 a.m.: Women's Bobsled - Heat 3

-Feb. 25, 5 a.m.: Women's Bobsled - Heat 4

-Feb. 26, 10:30 p.m.: Men's Biathlon 4x7.5km Relay

-Feb. 27, 12 a.m.: Men's Four-Man Bobsled - Heat 1

-Feb. 27, 1:30 a.m.: Men's Four-Man Bobsled, Heat 2

-Feb. 28, 12 a.m.: Men's Four-Man Bobsled, Heat 3

-Feb. 28, 1:15 a.m.: Men's Four-Man Bobsled - Heat 4

2010 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES MEDAL COUNT

				
 United States	7	8	10	25
 Germany	7	9	5	21
 Norway	6	3	5	14
 Russian Fed.	2	3	6	11

THE North Star

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1st Infantry Division
2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team,
3rd Infantry Division

3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team,
2nd Infantry Division
1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team,
1st Armored Division

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