

The North Star

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



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Photo by Sgt. Johnathon Jobson, TF Marne PAO

Biathlon Glory

Troops from across Task Force Marne take off from the starting line for the TF Marne Biathlon. The troops had to run 3.7 miles in duty uniform with their weapon, fire 10 rounds at a target, and then run back to the start point. The biathlon coincided with the 2010 Winter Olympics held in Vancouver, Canada, where seven Soldiers competed.

Iowa, Maryland Governors visit Speicher

By Spc. Jessica Zullig
135th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Two governors visited Contingency Operation Base Speicher to express their gratitude for Soldiers deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Governors Martin O'Malley, from Maryland, and Chet Culver, from Iowa, joined 58 Soldiers from their states for lunch. Major General Tony Cucolo, Task Force Marne Command-

ing General, hosted the luncheon where Soldiers talked about their mission and asked about home.

"I couldn't be more excited to be here to talk with our Iowa Soldiers," said Gov. Culver. "It's one thing to talk about support at home and another thing to actually be on the ground with them."

Iowa native, Sgt. Michael W. Volkert, 209th Aviation Support Battalion,

25th Combat Aviation Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, stationed at Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii, said the visit from the governors lets him know their politicians care.

"It brings kinship from your home state to know that they are taking time to come half way across the world to see us," he said.

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Soldiers teach English at Tikrit University

By Capt. Rebecca Walsh
4IBCT 1st Inf. Div. PAO

Chating lessons break ice

The site of U.S. Soldiers on the campus of Tikrit University is common, but the Soldiers don't come to secure the university, instead they come to interact with Iraqi students as part of the "Soldier to Student" chat program.

"Soldier to student" chats were developed through partnership efforts between the U.S. State Department Provincial Reconstruction Team, leaders and administrators at Tikrit University and the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

The original goal of the chats was to assist Iraqi students learning English, but the weekly chats have the added benefit of providing American Soldiers a glimpse into the daily lives of Iraqi college students and dissolving cultural and language barriers.



Photo by Capt. Heather Guck, 135th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Captain Jason Gordon, a legal officer with TF Marne chats with students at Tikrit University, Feb. 25. Captain Gordon and several Soldiers from the "Dragon", 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. and TF Marne visit the university weekly to help Iraqi students learn English, and build friendships.

"I learned that [Iraqi students] are very similar to my college friends. They feared exams, and strove for jobs after graduation, they wanted to meet their girlfriend in the seat next to them during class and spoke about their hometown friends," Navy Lt. Allen E. Linken said, a New Winsor, N.Y. native. "Meeting with the students gave me a completely new perspective on the people I met and talked with.

"I enjoyed the candor of the conversation. The students were engaged with us and talked about everything from their families to their lecturers, to gender roles within Iraq, and each thought and conversation was well-articulated and thought out."

Other Soldiers were impressed at the resources available for Iraqi students.

"The students were very friendly and entertaining, while the facilities appeared very well equipped as an educational environment," said Capt. Jason Gordon, a legal officer from Bennettsville, S.C.

As Iraq preps for local and national elections, recent chats have helped Soldiers understand the political situation in Salah ad-Din province as well.

"It was great to hear opinions on the political landscape in Iraq from the people who are most affected, Iraqi citizens," said Glenn Falls, N.Y., native, Capt. Todd Chard. "I was impressed by the level of passion displayed over

the upcoming national elections."

In addition to the chats, Iraqi students are also given the opportunity to take a class preparing them for the Test of English as a Foreign Language. The TOEFL class is taught by Soldier volunteers.

"The overall objective is for students to have the chance to take the TOEFL, pass it and move on," Sgt. 1st Class Kurt Harnstine said.

Passing the TOEFL class can help students reach their goals of studying at a Western University. According to Sgt. 1st Class Harnstine, a TOEFL instructor, about 30 - 40 students show up each week for chats and the TOEFL class.

"Their efforts make it worthwhile," Sgt. 1st Class Harnstine said.

The learning doesn't stop once TOEFL classes and chats are over. At the end of each session new friendships are formed and e-mail addresses exchanged as Soldiers and students continue to communicate and learn from each other.

Currently Tikrit University has more than 15,000 students studying in 16 colleges. The university is partnered with several U.S. universities including, the University of South Carolina, The University of North Carolina, the Rochester Institute of Technology, the University of Utah, the University of Wisconsin and Truman State University.

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Governor O'Malley said that he tries to be at every deployment ceremony and homecoming to show support, but sometimes it's not enough to be there for the ceremonies.

"I'm proud of our men and women over here. It's a humbling inspiration to all of us for what they do for our country," he said.

Major General Cucolo was equally encouraged by the governors' visit.

"I've been in the Army 31 years in June and I've never seen the support so strong," commented Maj. Gen. Cucolo. "It gives you energy for the long run. It gives you energy to put up with

what we put up with."

After the luncheon, the governors headed for a tour of route clearance vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles and the Joint Operations Center.

"My goals for today were to show off the great Soldiers from Iowa and Maryland to their chiefs of state and to have two significant civilian leaders depart Northern Iraq with a better understanding of how complex this battle space is and how hard the mission is," said Maj. Gen. Cucolo.

"That way, they can take that back home and talk to other senior civilian leaders."



Photo by Spc. Jessica Zullig, 135th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Governors Martin O'Malley, from Maryland, and Chet Culver, from Iowa, receive a demonstration about cameras used on unmanned aerial vehicles from a Soldier in the 573rd Clearance Company, 1st Eng. Bn., from White Sands, N.M., at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, Feb. 27.

Nebraska Guard Soldier contributes with medical aide

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

As a platoon of male combat Soldiers prepare for a mission, it is not difficult to spot out one petite female, preparing a large Army Combat Uniform patterned bag. A bag that's almost bigger than the person. That bag is what one would call a medical-aide bag, or "A-Bag," and that bag belongs to 21-year-old Sgt. Topacio Ortiz, a medic with the 313th Medical Company, Nebraska National Guard.

The Lincoln, Neb., native joined the Nebraska Guard because of the great benefits that the guard has to offer, such as full-tuition benefits for college as well as extra money. As a student, Sgt. Ortiz continues to work toward becoming a nutritionist. As a civilian, she works in a lab at Pathology Medical Services where she processes blood samples. Because of her track record with the medical field, a military health-care profession seemed natural to choose.

"I was always interested in medical work," said Sgt. Ortiz, who follows in the footsteps of her grandmother, who was a health care specialist in Mexico. "I was interested in sports medicine and therapy primarily. The Army has a program for a health care specialist, so I joined."

The young Soldier soon found herself enduring a rigorous training schedule at Fort. Sam Houston, Texas, training to become a combat medic.

"We trained every day for eight hours and went through basic emergency medical courses," said Ortiz.

However, during the last 10 weeks of the training, Sgt. Ortiz had to put her Soldier skills to use by training under pressure.

"We had to perform the duties under battlefield circumstances," she said. This could include trying to start an IV on a wounded Soldier in a moving, dimly lit vehicle, or applying a pressure dressing to control hemorrhage bleeding while taking direct fire.

After completing her training, Sgt. Ortiz arrived to her unit in Nebraska. Just a few months later, she joined the 313th Medical Company and was scheduled for deployment.

"It was a learning experience for me, because they were more of a field unit as opposed to a medical detachment, where I did a lot of medical physicals," said Sgt. Ortiz. "With this unit here, I learned a lot as far as operating a vehicle and other tactical standard operating procedures."

"I didn't have a problem with deploying. You always know you're going to go eventually, and I wouldn't have chosen a better unit then the one I am with now. The last year and a half of training and drills really helped with getting to know each other and preparing for this deployment."

Once her boots hit the ground, Sgt. Ortiz, along with other medics in her unit, were attached to convoys and other missions, providing critical medical support to the mission.

"Typically we escort different American engineering and construction

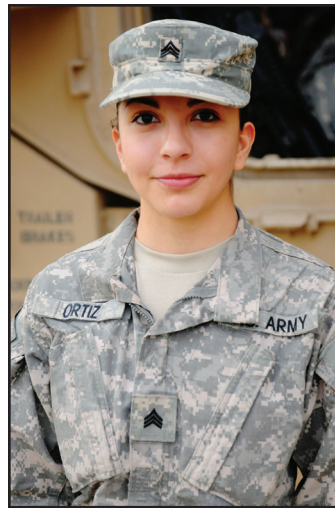


Photo by Spc. Cassandra Monroe

Sergeant Topacio Ortiz, a medic currently deployed with the 313th Med. Det., Nebraska National Guard.

companies, such as Kellogg, Brown and Root as well as foreign national trucks from one base to the next," said Sgt. Ortiz. "I supply medical support if anything were to happen on the way."

Although most missions are usually safe, there are some emergencies that may be presented, and Sgt. Ortiz and the other 313th medics are there to help. During one particular incident, she was able to put her good training to use.

"We had an incident where a foreign national truck broke down; they had hooked it up to the tow bar, and the tow bar broke," said Sgt. Ortiz. "It ripped out the engine, and it slammed into the front of the vehicle. The man injured got out of the vehicle and looked scared; he had a broken wrist from bracing himself from the engine, his chest had hit the steering wheel, and he had some deep cuts on his shin."

"First, I needed to reassure the casualty. They are going to be more scared after seeing blood and seeing themselves hurt even

if it might not be that bad. You have to tell them that they're going to be okay."

However, working on foreign soil sometimes comes with challenges, especially during emergency situations.

Sometimes, there are challenges, like language barriers, said Sgt. Ortiz. Also, the casualty had bruising on his chest from the accident. He was breathing just fine, but he may have had internal injuries.

Another incident happened shortly before a unit was scheduled to redeploy. Army leadership repeatedly warns Soldiers to not get complacent, even with a whole year's worth of missions under the belt.

There was a rollover where the driver over corrected himself and flipped the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle, said Sgt. Ortiz. If the gunner hadn't been wearing his restraints, he would have been thrown out.

As far as the rest of the deployment goes, Sgt. Ortiz expects life to become a little busy.

"With elections coming up, the operations might be picking up," she said. "I am expecting to see more patients, but I am not hoping to. You never know what's going to happen in an environment like this."

However, whatever happens next for Sgt. Ortiz will be met with a good attitude and a love for the job.

"My favorite part of this job is being able to help people," she said. "With my job, I can go ahead and jump in and help. I am able to help my unit with medical support but also other Soldiers."

Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Sergeant Jeremy Darty, Company Alpha, 2nd Brigade, 13th Infantry, arrived at Alpha Company, November 2009 and as the platoon's newest team leader, he instantly bonded with the children of Al Khala School. He and his team helped rebuild more than 40 desks and chairs. Simultaneously, Sgt. Darty contacted his Family Members, who promptly contributed to the mission by sending supplies for the schools throughout Diyala province. His initiative resulted in more than 50 boxes of pens, pencils, paper, markers, and 20 soccer balls. In addition, Sgt. Darty inspired his squad members to create 20 certificates of appreciation and presented them to the teachers for their hard work and dedication. Sergeant Darty's selfless service and compassion helped build a better learning environment for the future leaders of Iraq. Sergeant Darty's dedication made a lasting impression on the Iraqi community and speaks volumes of the caliber of TF Patriot Soldiers, and makes him a perfect choice for today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Staff Sergeant Daniel Monnell, Troop B, 1st Brigade, 14th Cavalry, demonstrated extraordinary professionalism and remarkable tactical flexibility as he led his platoon through the first round of checkpoint training. Staff Sgt. Monnell, the acting platoon leader, quickly internalized the training concepts and led a tripartite force of more than 100 Soldiers from the local Iraqi Police, Peshmerga, and Iraqi Army through a 12-hour block of training over two days. By the end of the training, the entire checkpoint force was not only able to conduct routine checkpoint operations, but also react as a single entity to the dynamic variety of scenarios presented. He set a standard of which no other junior leader has been able to match in the ensuing nine sessions. The marked success of the tripartite training and ultimately the success of checkpoint operations were due in part to his phenomenal leadership. His commitment to excellence and dedication to furthering the strategic partnership in northern Iraq make him an obvious choice for today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

You're invited

Cheer on your Soldiers at The Salah ad-Din Marathon

Speicher- 5 a.m. March 5
Place: Soccer Stadium

Five Finger Death Punch

Q-West - March 5
Mosul - March 6
Speicher - March 7

35+ Basketball Tournament

Speicher - 7 p.m. March 6
Place: Main Gym

Bad Company

Speicher - March 14
Place: TBD

Women's History Celebration

Speicher - 11:30 a.m. March 19
Place: dmain

BOB ON THE FOB by Sgt Albert J. Merrifield

Say this: "I know we've always done it this way, but I think we should do it my way from now on..."

You know, I think that I've got a great way to do this from now on...



Good idea fairy n. (gŭd ī-dē'-ə fār'-ē)

1. Mischievous and highly dangerous sprite; known for planting the seeds of faulty ideas within the brains of those around it. Good idea fairies feed upon the frustration and confusion created by the implementation and use of those ideas it suggests. Found most often around TOCs and other areas with high concentrations of fobbits or tacroaches. The feeble-minded, inexperienced, and easily confused are most often targeted by the good idea fairy. Causes the brains of those affected to become addled, unable to tell good idea from bad, and utterly incapable of hearing actual good advice.

REGIONAL HEADLINES

Emergency shipment of condoms headed to Olympic athletes

National Post

Rowdy curling crowds; spontaneous street parties; public drunkenness. You don't have to look far for evidence that the crowds at Winter Games in Vancouver know how to have a good time.

And, as if anymore proof is needed that a wild Olympic atmosphere permeates B.C.'s largest city, now there's an apparent condom shortage.

That's right. As you read this, an emergency shipment of condoms is desperately making its way across Canada to the West Coast city.

Health officials in Vancouver have already provided 100,000 free condoms to the roughly 7,000 athletes and officials at the Games. That's about 14 condoms per person. But as of Wednesday, those supplies started running dangerously low.

So naturally, the Canadian Founda-

tion for AIDS research decided to step in and make sure there were no hitches in Olympic action.

"When we heard about the condom shortage in Vancouver, we felt it important to respond immediately," said Kerry Whiteside, CANFAR's Executive Director. The organization assembled three large boxes of about 8,500 condoms, much to the relief of libidos at the Olympic Village. They're expected to arrive on Thursday.

Free condoms first started to be distributed at the Olympics in Barcelona at the 1992 Games. This appears to be the first time that a shortage has struck the Games.

The U.S. and Canada split the overall and gold-medal count lead at the Vancouver Olympics, with the U.S. breaking the record for overall medals won in a Winter Games and Canada winning a record of golds.

Jordan strikes deal to buy Bobcats

Associated Press

He has been called the NBA's greatest player and one of the country's top pitchers.









Now Michael Jordan, a former Lakers player, is ready for a new title: NBA owner.

With minutes to go until his exclusive negotiating window was to expire, Jordan struck a deal late Feb. 26 to buy controlling interest of the Charlotte Bobcats, putting the six-time NBA champion in charge of the money-losing team in his home state.

Owner Bob Johnson announced in a statement that he's agreed to sell the Bobcats to Jordan, who's been a part-owner since 2006. Jordan has been running the team's basketball operations.

The league's owners must still approve the purchase.

2010 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES MEDAL COUNT

				
 United States	9	14	13	36
 Germany	10	12	7	29
 Canada	13	7	5	25
 Norway	8	8	6	22

Answers to Friday's Sudoku

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

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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