

The North Star

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



Volume 1, Issue 53

March 8, 2010

USD-N assists historic elections

By Spc. Jessica Rohr
135th Mobile PA Det.

Task Force Marne units in United States Division-North successfully fulfilled their supporting role to the Iraqi Security Forces, March 7, as the citizens of Iraq went to the polls to vote for their next leaders.

It is estimated that more than 1 million Iraqi citizens voted in Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah ad-Din and Diyala provinces, contributing to an extremely successful election.

Soldiers throughout the task force assisted their Iraqi counterparts by securing outer perimeters of their areas to add another layer of protection for the Iraqi citizens.

In Hamadi Shahab, where there were 2,350 registered voters, a team of Soldiers from the Division Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division were asked for their assistance.

The Iraqi Police have been taking a lead role in joint missions like this one.

"We are here to provide security and observe guidelines that have been put out," said Pfc. Anthony D. Ford, on the day of elections, from the Personal Se-



Photo by Spc. Jessica Rohr, 135th Mobile Public Affairs Det.
Sergeant John Oshon and Sgt. Raymond Irrizarry Jr., with the PSD, HHSC, DSTB, 3rd Inf. Div., team up during a mission in support of the parliamentary elections, March 7.

curity Detachment, Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company, DSTB, 3rd ID. "While working hand in hand with the Iraqi Police, we are helping make sure nothing out of the ordinary happens to allow for a peaceful voting process."

The security detachment made its presence known in the days leading up to the election by conducting foot patrols through the village and searching outlying areas for potential threats on Election Day.

"We go out to provide

security because there are some people that might oppose the whole process of voting, oppose one candidate or another," Pfc. Ford said. "We are going to make sure that nothing gets out of hand, that we can maintain the peace, and it can be a peaceful voting process without interruptions."

On the day of parliamentary elections, members from the Iraqi Army, Police and Sons of Iraq, stood tall and proud as they worked to make potentially apprehensive voters feel secure.

"It's a partnership operation between coalition forces and Iraqi Police, and Iraqi Army," said Lt. Col. Ghazi Hamed Goma'a, station commander of the Al Aswar Iraqi Police Station in Al Sequor. "Our main goal is to protect the polling site; that way, we can protect the local citizens from suspicious actives."

On Election Day, the PSD checked with Lt. Col. Ghazi on security. The station commander informed Capt. David T. Bright, the PSD commander that the village was safe with the Iraqi forces he had in place. With great confidence in the Iraqis, Capt. Bright took his team to their next area of operations: the open land

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Photo by Spc. Jessica Rohr,
135th Mobile PA Det.

An Iraqi citizen shows his ink-covered finger, indicating he voted in the Iraqi parliamentary elections, March 7.

Signal Soldiers provide link home

By Pvt. Zachary Zuber
3SBCT, 2nd Inf Div PAO

It's essential that forces are able to communicate with each other no matter the distance that separates them.

The 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, has an entire company of Soldiers dedicated to keeping proper lines of communication open.

A few of those Soldiers have taken part in a program which starts another line of communication between those who are deployed and their Families at home. In February, members of the 334th Signal Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team 2nd Infantry Division, started working with the United Through Reading program to allow Soldiers to send videos of themselves reading stories to their Family Members.

The videos are a great way to improve morale of both Families and servicemembers who have to deal with the difficulties in communication that worldwide deployments can cause.

"Our goal for taking part in this program was to connect parents to their kids," said 2nd Lt. Chauncey Henry, a Frostproof, Fla., native. "It's easy for parents to call but with this their kids get to see them and make a visual connection, so that if you're reading a book to them they can read along."

Providing this extra bit of communication for deployed troops helps ease

their transition when they get back home. It also can fill in gaps when the child and parent are separated.

"For me, being on my third deployment, I don't get a lot of face time with my son, who is four," said Sgt. Benjamin Seibert, a noncommissioned officer in the 334th Sig. Co. "With this he can have recognition of who I am, so I did a nighttime thing for him to watch before he goes to bed at night."

For such a seemingly simple method of communication, there is a lot that goes into producing these videos, as well as implementation of the program itself.

"I e-mailed several different organizations, and after training and certification I received the materials to begin the program, including 25 books to start a permanent library," said 2nd Lt. Henry.

After the start-up process, things became simpler, especially the preparation of the DVDs for the Soldiers to send home.

"Each video can take anywhere from 30 minutes to three or four hours depending on the length of the recording," said Staff Sgt. Christopher



Photo by Pvt. Zachary Zuber, 3SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. PAO
Staff Sergeant Christopher W. Miller, a video manager for the United Through Reading Program, with 334th Sig. Co., 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division changes settings while recording a video for the program.

W. Miller, the video manager for the program. "Usually we are able to get the completed DVDs to Soldiers by the next day for them to send out."

Their goal for the program is to make sure that every Soldier on Forward Operating Base Warhorse has the opportunity to provide this unique connection.

"We think this is a great thing for people with Families, and it can really help build better morale," said Staff Sgt. Miller.

The United Through Reading Program gives deployed Soldiers the opportunity to read a book and have it recorded as a DVD and sent to their children.

For more information on how to participate in the program, visit www.unitedthroughreading.org/military.

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surrounding the polling site.

"The coalition forces, the Sons of Iraq, and Iraqi Police have been working together even before the election," Lt Col. Ghazi said. "We have been assisted by the coalition forces by training our IPs and the SOIs, and by their logistics support. When the citizens see us work together hand in hand, they will feel safer to come today and vote."

An optimistic and hopeful citizen of Iraq, Lt. Col. Ghazi sees great progress.

"There has been a big change between the last election and today," he

stated. "Before, there used to be a lot of insurgents inside the villages. As of today, the situation is totally different. Before, a citizen hardly could make it to his work from the fear that he had, but today they are free to go everywhere they want. They can go to their work. They can come to vote."

The IP commander acknowledged his team's efforts and their progress.

"The experience of the IPs has been increasing, which goes back to a partnership between us and the coalition forces and the training they have given us," said Lt. Col. Ghazi.

During their Election Day sweep of the surrounding polling site area, the PSD came across some unidentified explosive ordnance.

A thorough observation by the Navy's Task Force Troy, Mobile Unit 12, Explosive Ordnance Disposal team, was conducted and the area was cleared.

At the end of the day, the ISF with assistance from their Task Force Marne partners, found and cleared more than 30 improvised explosive devices before they injured or killed innocent Iraqis.

Multi-reasons inspire marathoners

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

Nearly 400 servicemembers and civilians from throughout Salah ad-Din province in northern Iraq participated in the "Dragon" Brigade half and full marathons, March 5.

Some raced to win, others raced to see if they had what it takes to make it physically and mentally through 26.2 miles.

Major Wesley Richardson, the brigade intelligence officer with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, out of Fort Riley, Kan., won the half marathon and said he was "just enjoying the morning" as he ran to victory.

Captain Evelyn Santos, who works with Maj. Richardson in the "Dragon" Brigade intelligence section, was excited to finish her first marathon.

For Capt. Santos, running a marathon in Iraq had personal significance. "My brother, who worked in the twin towers, was injured on Sept. 11," Capt. Santos said. "He runs a marathon every Sept. 11 now. After my deployment I'm going to run with him. I want to train for the next marathon; I'm motivated to try again."

Private Brandon Hephner, with Company F, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 4th IBCT, deployed to Iraq in September and was excited to see if his hard work to improve his physical fitness paid off.

"I just wanted to prove to myself that I could do it and push myself a little bit," the Wichita, Kan., native said.

Private Hephner, who ran the half marathon, was excited at the finish. "When we came out here, I couldn't

even pass the (Army Physical Fitness) test—I'm pretty proud of myself," he added.

According to the winner of the full marathon, Staff Sgt. Roderick Reeves with the 3rd Infantry Division, Special Troops Battalion, pushing the pace through the finish line was the key to his success.

"There's no feeling like it, to get past that mile 20 and to finish up strong. I'm sorry to say it, but I was singing the 'Dogface Soldier' song," he said with a smile.

Eight transition team Soldiers who are partnered with the 4th Iraqi Army Division at Forward Operating Base Dagger completed their own version of the half marathon by running laps around the Iraqi Army compound.

It was Pvt. 1st Class Steven Young's first half marathon.

"I'm in pain right now, but it was fun," the Beacon, N.Y., native said.

First Lieutenant Valeria Aquino, a Soldier with the 209th Aviation Battalion, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, has a holistic approach to running.

"It's kind of my release, my therapy; it makes me feel good about myself," the Seattle and Boston Marathon veteran said.

For 1st Lt. Aquino, running the marathon was about setting an example for her Soldiers to follow.

"It's great to be able to do a marathon in Iraq," she said. "All my Soldiers, they're always cheering me on, and it gives

them something to look up to."

Preparation for the Dragon Marathon began soon after the 4th IBCT arrived on Contingency Operating Base Speicher last fall. The race was sponsored by the Manhattan Running Company in Manhattan, Kan., and shadowed the Snickers Marathon Energy Bar Marathon and Half Marathon in Albany, Ga.

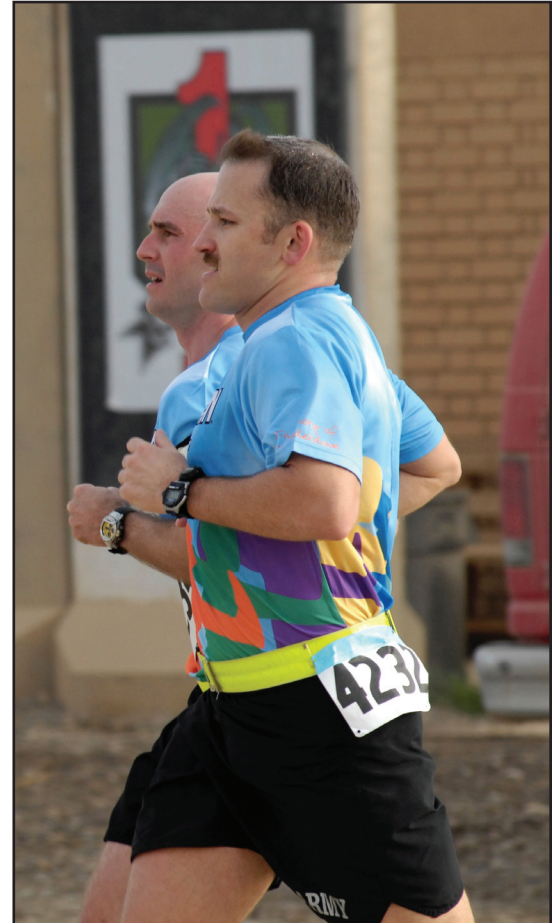


Photo by Chief Petty Officer Michael Heckman

Major Mark Chandler, civil affairs officer for the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and Capt. Matt Miskowski, aviation officer for the 4th IBCT, near the halfway point of the Dragon Marathon, March 5.

Safety Thought of the Week: Weapons Safety

Weapons should only be cleared at the clearing barrel upon arrival at your destination. Ensure leadership is actively engaged in validating that their crew served and small arms weapons are properly cleared. Drill home the importance of "T.H.I.N.K."

Treat every weapon as if it were loaded.

Handle every weapon with care.

Identify the target before you fire.

Never point the muzzle at anything you don't intend to shoot.

Keep the weapon on safe and your finger off the trigger until you intend to fire

For a detailed description of unloading and clearing procedures for Army small arms and crew served weapons, see the Safe Weapons Handling Procedure Pamphlet.

Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Private Jacob Stegall, of Pearland, Texas, is assigned to Apache Troop 6th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division. Private Stegall's platoon was responding to a found improvised explosive device, and upon arrival at the scene his platoon observed two individuals acting suspiciously. Private Stegall, his team leader and a squad of Iraqi soldiers moved to investigate. As they approached, the suspects started to move quickly away, the combined squad cut off the suspects retreat. Once the situation was under control, Pvt. Stegall immediately and without guidance from his team leader began to instruct his Iraqi counterparts on proper procedures based on the 'five S's': silence, search, segregate, speed and safeguard. Although the two individuals questioned did not emplace the IED, his platoon was able to gain intelligence on the violent extremists who did. Most remarkable is that Pvt. Stegall is a late-deployer and has only been with his platoon for a month. Private Stegall's motivation, maturity and dedication to mission accomplishment were an inspiration to all and make him worthy of recognition as today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Specialist Roger Arnberg, of Fort Meyers, Fla., is with the 631st Support Maintenance Company, 395th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. He is currently working in the supply section in support of the Redistribution Property Assistance Team process at Q-West. Specialist Arnberg assisted in the turn-in of more than \$1 million worth of equipment. He has shown great leadership qualities in absence of his NCO. He has stepped up and taken charge of his team, ensuring they perform all tasks to standard. His work and leadership of his team are vital to the transition of Q-West to the government of Iraq. He is responsible for ensuring equipment is removed from the vehicles. He is assisting in making sure all equipment is cleaned, tagged, and ready to be shipped. Specialist Arnberg's knowledge of the RPAT process was able to assist the team in COB Speicher ensuring their yard was operating at full capacity. He is truly deserving selection of today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

Running for Warriors



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mike Alberts, 25CAB, 25th Inf. Div. PAO

Soldiers and civilians participate in the Contingency Operating Location Sykes Half Marathon Wounded Warrior Project Fundraiser, at Sykes, Feb. 24. The half-marathon was hosted by the Tennessee Army National Guard's 1st Squadron, 230th Air Cavalry Squadron, Task Force Desperado. The 13.1 mile race raised \$4,000 for the Wounded Warrior Program.

REGIONAL HEADLINES

Man dumped money while fleeing police

United Press International

JONESBORO, Ga. - Authorities in Georgia said a man threw \$76,656 from a duffel bag while fleeing sheriff's deputies on foot.

The Clayton County Sheriff's Tactical Operations unit said Torian Shahun Sharpe, 33, fled on foot March 2 when deputies attempted to pull him over for making an improper lane change and driving on the wrong side of the road, WSB-TV, Atlanta, reported March 4.

Deputies said Sharpe carried a duffel bag during the chase and emptied it of money, which was recovered and counted at \$76,656. A department canine indicated there was drug residue on the money.

Sharpe, who was caught after a short foot chase, was arrested and charged with making an improper lane change, obstruction of an officer, fleeing from police, car window tint violations, reckless driving and driving on the wrong side of the road.

Authorities said the money is being considered abandoned property and may be donated to a program for unclaimed drug proceeds.

Pair hikes 26 miles, all night, wrong way

The Seattle Times

MOUNT RAINEER, Wash. - The call came at 1 a.m., New York time. His girlfriend said Jason Mielcarek

and his friend Taylor Cameron hadn't come home from a ski trip to Crystal Mountain.

Patti Mielcarek said she thought about all her son's strengths: He runs marathons, rock climbs and has skied since he was 3 years old.

And then she looked up Crystal Mountain on the Internet. She saw a panorama of mountains, a vast expanse of mountains.

"We had confidence in him, but we started to worry about the elements. How cold it was going to get, wolves, avalanches."

"We didn't sleep at all," said his father, Daniel Mielcarek.

The story ends happily.

Mielcarek and Cameron walked into the Ohanapecosh Ranger Station in Mount Rainier National Park — about 26 miles from where they'd started — before noon Friday. The pair sounded sheepish about the search they'd touched off but also grateful to would-be rescuers.

"We just want to thank everyone who was looking out for us. They did a really fine job," Mielcarek told KING-TV after the pair was flown by helicopter from the campground back to Crystal Mountain.

The two men, both 27, had met at the University of Vermont, where they both graduated in 2005, Mielcarek's parents said. Cameron was originally from Pennsylvania; Mielcarek grew up in New York.

Mielcarek moved to Seattle in November, his parents said, drawn

here by a number of friends and by the prospect of a job in the out-of-doors. Patti Mielcarek said her son had just landed work with the Redmond Parks Department.

After they were found, the two men told rangers that they hadn't realized they were straying out of bounds from the ski area into the Norse Peak Wilderness. When they discovered they were lost, they followed the Morse Creek drainage about 3 miles down to Highway 410, which is closed for the winter.

They skied and snowboarded 6 miles to Chinook Pass and another 3 to Cayuse Pass, where they hit Highway 123, said Uwe Nehring, acting chief ranger at Mount Rainier.

St. Patrick's Day Limerock Writing Contest

All military and civilian members of TF Marne are invited to write a lyric about life in United States Division - North.

All limericks must be 5 lines in length. Lines one, two and five must have seven to 10 syllables that rhyme with each other. Lines three and four must have five to seven syllables that rhyme.

All limericks must conform to Army Values and contain no profanity.

For more information on the contest or to submit a lyric, contact Maj. Mark Kurowski at mark.kurowski@3id.army.mil or call on SVOIP at 670-2146



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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