

The North Star

Serving Task Force Marne
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Tomahawk Makeover Soldiers renovate Diyala school

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

Tomahawk Soldiers began renovations to the Al-Salaam Secondary School in Diyala, Iraq, March 12.

For each individual, this means for two weeks their job tools will be paintbrushes, plaster, and

electrical wire.

As part of their Extreme Tomahawk Makeover program, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Soldiers are performing a massive overhaul to the school's vital systems, as well as making cosmetic

improvements to give students a better educational environment. This is the second school receiving renovations under the program.

"I am very satisfied with the progress we are making so far," said Pfc. Nathaniel Lawrence, a painter on the project.

"This has been a great experience for me to help out the children."

The second time around is going smoother, according to the Tomahawk crew, due to the differences between the two schools and the experience gained from the first makeover.

"This school is smaller, and there is not as much that needs to be done, like replacing windows," said Pvt. Howard Leonard.

"The process is going much faster so far."

Though it may not be as difficult the Soldiers are hoping for great results.

"Because the school is smaller, it allows us to focus more on the details, and hopefully provide an even higher quality school when we're done," said Pfc. Lawrence. "We have been



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

Showing their artistic skills, Soldiers from 1/23rd Inf. Regt., 3SBCT, 2nd ID, paint a mural for the walls of the Al-Salaam Secondary School in the Diyala province, March 12.

doing a lot more painting for this school."

From paint to plumbing, the Tomahawks working on the project are sure to bring all their skills together to achieve their goal of a high quality school for local students.



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

Staff Sergeant Cody Bryan, with 1/23rd Inf. Regt., 3SBCT, 2nd ID, paints the outer walls of the Al-Salaam Secondary School during the second round of renovations for the Extreme Tomahawk Makeover, March 12.

Shamrock of the Marne boosts morale

By Sgt. Johnathon Jobson
TF Marne PAO



They were more than 6,000 miles from the St. Patrick's Day festivities in the states, but Soldiers from Task Force Marne paused to celebrate the day, Marne style, March 17.

With multiple festivities hosted by the TF Marne G-6 section, there was something for everyone.

"We had a leprechaun look-a-like contest, limerick writing contest and pool tournament, as well as a large St. Patrick's Day cake," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 James Henry, an information systems technician for the TF Marne G-6 Automations section.

For the leprechaun look-a-like contest Soldiers from TF Marne submitted images of themselves or others with their faces digitally edited on to leprechaun bodies.

Approximately 20 images were submitted to be voted on by the Soldiers who work in the D-Main building.

"We have about 20 leprechauns vying to be the king of the leprechauns, even though I am the true king of the leprechauns," explained Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Ferrera, a network management technician for the TF

Marne G6, who was dressed up as a leprechaun, beard and all, for the festivities. "The winner will receive a \$25 AAFES gift card."

The first-place winner for the Leprechaun look-a-like contest was Col. Thomas James, the TF Marne chief of staff. Specialist Shondale Jackson, a human resources specialist for the TF Marne G-1, won the pool tournament.

The second contest, the Limerock o' the Marne was based on people's description of life on Contingency Operation Base Speicher. Competitors mainly described life working in the Joint Operations Center and food at the dining facilities. Other subjects included deployment life and relationships. Major Jeffrey Allen won the "limerock" contest with his woes from eating three meals a day.

As the evening continued, Soldiers gathered to watch the Savannah St. Patrick's Day Parade as it was streamed live from the U.S.

"It's different [celebrating St. Patrick's Day here], but I have to say that I am happy to see everyone breaking away from their job to spend some time together," said Sgt. 1st Class Chris Patel, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the TF Marne G-2 Geospatial Intelligence. "Little events like this help raise morale."



Photo by Sgt Johnathon Jobson, TF Marne PAO
Sergeant Matthew Longwell, with the TF Marne G-6 Joint Network Node section, serves up pieces of the St. Patrick's Day cake to fellow Soldiers during the festivities at the division headquarters.

Complete List of Winners from St. Patrick's Day Celebration

Leprechaun Look-a-like Contest

1st Place: Col. Thomas James, TF Marne Chief of Staff, and



Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Ferrera

CW3 Michael Ferrera, G-6

Limerock o' the Marne

First Place:
Maj. Jeff Allen, PAO

In the DFAC is
where the Soldiers all eat
They arrive very slim and petite
After three meals a day,
All work and no play
They fly home and take up two seats

Second Place:
Lt. Col David Rosenblum, TF Marne Deputy Chief of Staff

We have a Marne Rock with stars two
Who lives in the Taj MaCHU
Not a hair out of place

And a smile on his face
Three stars surely he's due

Third Place:
Master Sgt. Glenn Mitchell, G3

I miss my MWR
I'd go, not having to walk far
It burnt down one night
Because of a light
Electrically safe - not so far

Pool Tournament

1st Place:
Specialist Shondale Jackson, G-1

2nd Place:
Sergeant Matthew Longwell, G-6

Soldier creates CHU fit for king

By Master Sgt. Duff McFadden
2BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

If a man's home is his castle, then a Soldier's containerized housing unit, must be his sanctuary, his personal oasis, within the hustle and bustle of military life in Iraq.

The contained housing unit, basically a shipping container which may have carried anything from stereos to automobile parts during a previous life, now serves as living quarters for many Soldiers throughout Iraq.

At Forward Operation Base Marez, home to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, these standardized, 9-by-20 feet CHUs come with a pair of beds, lockers and nightstands.

However an individual Soldier can decide to customize his or her CHU,

within reason.

Staff Sergeant Andrew Debastiani, 28, of Masontown, W.Va., is a geospatial topographical engineer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BCT, 3rd ID. He shares a two-man CHU with Staff Sgt. Angus.

With a little bit of Mountaineer ingenuity, Staff Sgt. Debastiani has fabricated a castle fit for a king complete with all the creature comforts.

"Along one wall, I made a 6-by-6 feet desk with four shelves and two long, single top shelves," he said. "I have my television, laptop and personal stuff on it. The other wall is covered with pictures drawn by my three-year-old daughter."

Staff Sergeant Debastiani, who's been here with the brigade since November, sized up his CHU and immediately set to work to



Photo by Master Sgt. Duff McFadden, 2BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

Private First Class Andrew Lamar, a welder from FSC, 1/64th Armor, 2BCT, 3rd ID, stationed at FOB Q-West, used his talents to build a foldable projection screen to save space inside his CHU.

make it more "homey." He started his initial projects while he was undergoing left-seat right-seat training, so he had time to improve his "area of operations" before his schedule was too full to spend time on his CHU.

"When I first saw my CHU, I figured I didn't have much room, so I would have to build up, rather than out," Staff Sgt. Debastiani said. "I made everything from scratch, but built it up. You can't do much with the bed, so I had to elevate it to put stuff underneath."

He used foot-long poles to elevate his bed so he could put some homemade storage shelves under it. He also found a shower curtain rod which he used, along with some material, to divide the room between himself and his roommate.

"You need to build up, instead of out, to maximize your space," he said. "You can build up to 10-feet tall in order to go up. You can go another 10-feet out to

build out. You'll still need a walkway to get around though

The project took him approximately six to seven hours to accomplish. Once he had the design down, with the help of fellow engineers, he measured, made straight edges and began cutting wood.

"The hardest part was putting together everything by myself, especially drilling everything together," Staff Sgt. Debastiani said. "I tried to pre-drill, but I was then trying to balance everything with my feet and legs while I put it all together."

He has since made a desk for Capt. Andrew Petrie and Chief Warrant Officer Merrill, as well as other stuff for some of his friends."

At home, he said he enjoys carpentry, but admits he's "just not the best at it." "I see my CHU as a comfortable living space," he said. "Not that I'm that good at construction, compared to a lot of others. I have to make do with what I have available. I know I will be able to do a much better job, when I get home."

His wife has already established a "honey-do list," for when he returns home. Staff Sergeant Debastiani said he'll need to build more saddle racks for their horses, and, since they'll be moving into a new house, he'll need to make a new home entertainment center, as well as shelves for the garage and a workbench.

Staff Sergeant Debastiani's advice to others is, "You can always improve your room ... This all began when I added a nightstand, so I'd have a little more shelf space."



Photo by Master Sgt. Duff McFadden, 2BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

Staff Sergeant Andrew DeBastiani, an engineer with 2BCT, 3rd ID, relaxes in his CHU after a long night of work at FOB Marez.

Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Corporal Ralph Olson, from Chicago, is with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. He has continually proven to be a competent driver since October 2009. He has often operated in unpredictable terrain that is full of hidden hazards. On Feb. 4, his stryker became stuck after the ground along a canal gave way under the weight of the vehicle. The Stryker pitched into the canal at an angle so dangerous that the only safe way to recover it would require Cpl. Olson to simultaneously drive while operating the vehicle's winch. Once his vehicle was securely anchored to another Stryker, Cpl. Olson operated the vehicle's winch while driving his vehicle back onto the roadway surface. His ability to keep a cool head and operate effectively under pressure played a crucial part in the safe and efficient recovery of his Stryker. His actions enabled the platoon to continue their mission and deliver humanitarian aid to families in need, making him a most deserving Task Force Marne Hero of the North.



Neil Olson, of Roland, Iowa, is a dedicated professional, focused on supporting the war fighter with imagery, human and signal intelligence, and data analysis to create a common operating picture on any "battlefield" with geospatial technology. He serves as a Geospatial Analyst for Task Force Marne and provides first-class service to the division staff by providing quality products and packaging critical intelligence into comprehensive formats. Olson is a five-year NGIA Veteran, has supported U.S. Forces in Iraq and has provided Geospatial expertise in support of the U.S. military while deployed at several locations around the world. He recently supported the Iraqi elections with polling site data and critical security intelligence and recently created an overall picture of civil capacity efforts that enabled collaborative planning within the Civil Capacity community. Neil Olson's work ethic is second to none and makes him an excellent choice for this week's Task Force Marne Service Provider of the Week.

Iraqi Newspaper placed in American museum

Cultural Tidbit Special to the North Star

When America was still a colony rebelling against the British Empire, the main way Americans stayed informed of the progress during the revolution was through newspapers.

As America became a budding young democracy, one of the ways in which its citizenry exchanged ideas and found out about events in their young country was reading news.

The Freedom of the press remains a cornerstone of American democracy to this day.

Iraq also relies on its press as well, as it's young democracy takes shape.

One of the newspapers that has become one of the most popular since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein is Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed.

The newspaper has a turbulent history while it was establishing itself as an independent voice for Iraq, not associated with any ideology.

The translation of Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed is 'The New Morning.' The old newspaper was called simply Al-Sabah, which meant 'The Morning.'

Under Hussein, Al-Sabah was a newspaper published as propaganda for the government.

After the overthrow of Hussein's government the old Al Sabah dissolved as a voice of the government and reconstituted itself as an independent newspaper.

It's self-proclaimed independence comes at a price, as its reporters and editor have experienced assassination attempts and death threats.

Despite this, Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed has continued publication. The organization has continued to be unaligned with any group or government since it's beginning in 2004.

In order to become an independent voice, the newspaper sought help from the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, and even individual countries, including the United States.

However, now the newspaper boasts, that advertisements and sales not make up the paper's budget.

Recently, the newspaper found itself being honored in America, by being placed in the Newseum, located in Washington D.C.

The Newseum is a museum to help visitors understand freedom of the press that displays news publications as well as displays of prominent events and that have made the news over the years.

The newest version of the museum was built in 2002 and is funded by the Freedom Forum, a foundation dedicated to "free press, free speech and free spirit for all people."

Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed's entry into this museum will place it alongside other world publications that have been the foundation of internationally renowned newspapers with a proud history of advocating free speech like The New York Times, The Washington Post and The London Times.

REGIONAL HEADLINES

Manoa's elusive, night-shrieking coqui frog finally bagged

Honolulu Advertiser

It took a lot of trying, but the lone Mānoa coqui frog has been captured. The presence of the coqui, known for its piercing, loud shrieks, had dismayed residents of Melemele Place, a quiet dead-end road on the east side of Mānoa Valley.

Neighbors went out on many nights trying to catch the frog, which is about the size of a quarter (typical for the species).

The problem was every time residents went looking for it, their flashlights would scare the frog into silence.

"I would hear it and go out there and it would stop, so I would turn off my flashlight and just wait in the dark," said Laka Preis Carpenter, who lives on that street and went on several frog-hunting missions.

The recent cold and windy weather also foiled the hunt.

Department of Agriculture inspectors went out to the area to hunt for the frog two weeks ago in less than optimal weather, but were unsuccessful.

"They are more apt to call when it is warm and humid," state Agriculture Department spokeswoman Janelle Saneishi said.

But a week ago today, the weather was warm, the flashlights were off, and inspectors returned to the same

area. They were confident that the coqui wasn't going anywhere. Once coquis find a place they like, you can count on them being there, Saneishi said.

Within 20 minutes, the frog had been captured.

No frog traps or poisons were used.

The frog was caught by hand. "They're not poisonous or anything," Saneishi said.

The hunt was conducted by Agriculture Department plant quarantine inspectors and a member of the O'ahu Invasive Species Committee.

It is not the first coqui frog found on O'ahu. One was caught in Waikiki in the past year, possibly a stowaway in a shipment of landscaping materials. And recently, the frog has been reported making a "second invasion" in Waimānalo.

Saneishi said it is not known how this coqui got to Mānoa Valley, and though the noise has stopped, there could be others out there, particularly the female frogs, which are quiet.

"We need everyone to be our eyes and ears and report suspected coqui and other invasive species to the state's Pest Hotline — 643-PEST (7378)," Saneishi said. "If we can catch these individual frogs and small infestations of frogs, there is a good chance we can eradicate them and prevent them from becoming established like they are on the Big Island."

The Mānoa coqui frog is alive and

being cared for at the Department of Agriculture "for educational purposes," Saneishi said.

Student prepares for Rock Paper Scissors Competition

United Press International

AUSTIN, Texas - A University of Texas at Austin student says he is ready to vie for the title of rock-paper-scissors champion in a competition in Mexico.

Texas student Nick Caporale, 21, said he and 13 other college students will compete in the USA Rock Paper Scissors League College Championships with hopes of winning the event's main prize of a \$25,000 scholarship, the Austin (Texas) American-Statesman said March 13.

Caporale said he reached the tournament by defeating his sister, Brittany, in a February tournament at his university.

Caporale admits he and his 20-year-old sister only took part in last month's event because it failed to draw a lot of competitors due to being scheduled on Valentine's Day.

"Not too many people played so we just jumped in," he told the American-Statesman.

Caporale said the key to being good at rock-paper-scissors is reading your opponent.

"What is the other person going to throw? It's nerve racking, but I can actually read pretty well when I'm calm," he said of the hand game.

THE North Star

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3rd Infantry Division

3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team,
2nd Infantry Division
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