



Bridging the gap

Soldiers build relationships with Iraq's next generation

Story, photo by
Marine Cpl. Jessica Kent
MNC-I PAO

Service members who conduct patrols in Baghdad may catch a glimpse of what makes life so great at home.

In a country where electricity is scarce and mud huts are common homes, many Iraqi families struggle to make a living. The trash-lined streets — often hiding explosives — are dangerous for children at play.

One aspect of a child's life that usually remains a steady influence is going to school. When Soldiers with the 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd Division National Police Transition Team visited a local elementary school, they found the rooms so packed to capacity with small students that desks were moved outside to make an additional classroom.

Although the school was for girls, several small boys were spotted among the rows. Some families were granted permission to enroll males in the school because sectarian violence made others too dangerous.

While the boys' parents believe the elementary school is safer, each child there has been touched by violence. Many lost parents and other family members who were murdered. Others lost a sibling or friend who



Lt. Col. Anthony Cornett, team chief, 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd Division National Police Transition Team, speaks to children at an elementary school in Baghdad.

left school one day and never returned.

"Some were kidnapped and never came back," a school administrator said.

"We support (the children) and give special attention to the orphans who miss their mothers or fathers."

Most of the students are accustomed to hearing gunfire on the streets, seeing the destruction left by a mortar round, watching Soldiers at traffic checkpoints, and chasing military convoys.

"We travel down parts of Baghdad and then go to our sector and see the downtrod-

den areas," said Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Andrus, communications NCOIC, 3rd Bn., 7th Bde., 2nd Div. NPTT. "It definitely makes me appreciate

what I have as an American."

Andrus said it's hard to see Iraqi kids without the opportunities American children often have.

He added that the worst part is that Iraqi children do not know to expect any better.

"It saddens my heart sometimes to see the conditions they live in, when it's cold outside and kids are wearing flip-flops without jackets," he said. "So many of

these kids don't even have a ball to play with, something we think is simple."

Because the children have very little, transition team members provided any help they could. They packed clothing donated from the U.S. and delivered it to the school. Team members also helped find desks and new doors for the school.

"The new units are welcome here," the administrator said. "I welcome them because they help me."

During his last visit to drop off children's clothing, Lt. Col. Anthony Cornett, team chief, 3rd Bn., 7th Bde., 2nd Div. NPTT, addressed a classroom of bright-eyed students. A young girl asked about terrorism in her country, and how he would help the Iraqi people.

"I work every day to ensure that you're protected; so does the National Police," he replied. "They're my friends. But I'm a human being just like you. Here (in the classroom) is where you can make a difference for Iraq."

Because children are the future of their country, Andrus said school students make up a generation that can bring positive changes to Iraq. Transition team members will spend the remainder of their tour guiding National Policemen as they struggle to make those changes.

"Here is where you can make a difference for Iraq."

-Lt. Col. Anthony Cornett
team chief, 3rd Bn., 7th
Bde., 2nd Div. NPTT

Commentary

Leadership days - motivating the troops

It's another chilly, damp, wet and muddy day in central Iraq. While walking to headquarters today as I always do, I was thinking about how cold it actually gets in the desert compared to how miserably hot it can and will soon be. I thought of home – Fort Hood, Texas – and how pleasant the spring and fall are. I thought of riding my brother's Harley Road King and feeling the breeze on my face. I thought of how easy it is, relatively speaking, to be out doing what we Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, Airmen and Civilians do on those days when it's in the 60s, 70s and 80s temperature-wise.

I thought of how many days, in my 31 years of service to our great coun-



**Command Sgt. Maj.
Neil Ciotola**
MNC-I Command
Sergeant Major

try, that I've endured the bitter cold and the stifling heat. I thought of all those nights on guard duty and how miserable and alone I felt. I thought of the nights when I felt sure there was not another soul awake and how easy it would be to close my eyes, go somewhere else (figuratively speaking), doze off, sneak away and steal some time in a warm building or in my sleeping bag.

I thought of how many special moments, holidays, birthdays, losses of loved ones, and missed opportunities with my true love that I have sacrificed. I thought of the only two things that got me through those days: sheer determination and leadership.

I'm convinced my depth of character (no matter how shallow at the time), and the thought of better times and more pleasant temperatures, got me through the vast majority of the tough days and nights. I'm also convinced, on those days when my self-discipline was about to fail me, leadership got me through the toughest times. Leadership in the form of

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Chaplain's Corner

Freedom to worship

Chaplain Dan Stallard

MNC-I JOC chaplain

Freedom of religion is one our Nation's most cherished civil liberties. The U.S. Bill of Rights outlines the five fundamentals of freedom in the first amendment. The president, in the National Security Strategy, promotes human rights and freedom of religion as a national interest.

The State Department has an Office of International Religious Freedom, which promotes "religious freedom as a core objective of U.S. foreign policy," according to www.state.gov. "This office monitors religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, recommends and implements policies in respective regions or countries, and develops programs to promote religious freedom.

"Given the U.S. commitment to religious freedom, and to the international covenants that guarantee it as the inalienable right of every human being, the United States seeks to promote freedom of religion and conscience throughout the world as a fundamental human right and as a source of stability for all countries; assists newly formed democracies in implementing freedom of religion and conscience; assists religious and human rights non-government organizations in promoting religious freedom; and identi-

fies and denounces regimes that are severe persecutors of their citizens or others on the basis of religious belief."

In the military, we have the privilege of helping secure freedom for people who are oppressed by tyrannical governments. Freedom is not free. Our service members carry the burden of battle and experience firsthand the cost of individual lives for the cause of freedom. The Christian Scriptures teach that there is no greater love than one's willingness to lay down their life for others. We owe so much to the young men and women who serve daily on the battlefields of freedom.

What can we do to support our warriors of freedom? We can give medals, which they do appreciate. We can tell their stories in newspapers and on the Internet to ensure they are not forgotten. We can build memorials to honor the fallen. One very important thing we can do is pray for them and their families.

A patriotic call to prayer – please pray for courage and vigilance for all our coalition forces; world peace, especially in the Middle East; all families and especially those who have lost loved ones to war; the innocent women and children who face the collateral effects of war and who are directly exposed to war because of extremist ideologies; national leaders to make sound decisions and good policy for a just and lasting peace; and military leaders to develop strategies and tactics to defeat the enemies of freedom.

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Zeroing in



Photo by Marine Cpl. Shane S. Keller

Marines from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Regimental Combat Team 2, check their targets and make adjustments to their sights during a range at Camp Al Asad. RCT 2 is deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq to develop the Iraqi Security Forces, facilitate the development of official rule of law through democratic government reforms, and continue the development of a market-based economy centered on Iraqi reconstruction.

Tax center helps VBC personnel file on time

Software, advisors help those in need meet deadline

Spc. Laura M. Bigenho
28th Public Affairs Detachment

Service members who want help filing their taxes can take advantage of the Camp Liberty Tax Center beginning Feb. 1.

Customers will have access to free tax preparation software with attorneys on-site to answer questions and offer guidance.

"We've built a center where you can come in exclusively for tax use," said Capt. Rob Michaels, legal assistance attorney, 1st Cavalry Division. Customers can also choose from a variety of popular software.

In addition to providing assistance, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance-certified personnel will be available to prepare and submit returns for those preferring to have somebody else do the work.

Michaels recommends service members take advantage of the tax center's advantages.

"A lot of folks don't really understand what types of benefits are out

there by virtue of our deployment, so we're going to have somebody who can help to make sure you max out all possible benefits," Michaels said.

While a simple tax return takes about 15 minutes to file, Michaels recommended those who anticipate more complex returns call the center ahead of time.

"We'll take a stab at anything, but Soldiers need to be prepared if they have something that's more complicated," he said. "I suggest you call so we can ensure you bring everything you need."

Capt. Dan Boeskin, legal assistance attorney, Multi-National Corps-Iraq Office of Client Services, said service members should know they have an automatic extension.

"Soldiers should understand they are under no obligation for quite some time to file for taxes," he said.

Michaels and Boeskin agreed those who own small businesses or have more complicated returns should take advantage of the automatic extension, which can extend your filing deadline

to 180 days after redeployment.

"Even if you file late and you get a notice, simply write 'combat zone OIF,' your deployment date, and send the notice back," Boeskin said. "The IRS will update your account to reflect your new filing deadline."

Michaels encouraged filing early and coordinating with finance to put the refund in a savings plan.

"You can wait, but if you have a simple return, you might as well file for it," he said. "For many of us, if we can get the money sooner than later, it's good for us."

The tax center will be open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. As April 16 approaches, the hours will expand if demand increases, Michaels said. They are also willing to make special arrangements for those working night shifts or odd hours.

"Our first priority is going to be Soldiers, but we're willing to help anybody," Michaels said.

The tax center is located in Bldg. C25, near the Mayor's Cell on Camp Liberty.



Sgt. Edgar Campuzano and Spc. Tamaryn Swickheimer, members of the 61st Medical Detachment, test water samples.

Preventive medicine team protects peers

Story, photos by Spc. D. A. Dickinson
28th Public Affairs Detachment

Soldiers with the 61st Medical Detachment's preventive medicine team train continually to identify health threats to service members at Victory Base Complex.

"We ensure the health of the Soldiers to make sure they're ready to do their mission," said Sgt. Edgar Campuzano, preventive medicine team leader for the 61st Med. Det., which is deployed from Fort Campbell, Ky.

Typically, the better a preventive medicine unit executes its mission, the fewer people are aware of it, said Spc. Tamaryn Swickheimer, a preventive medicine technician with the unit.

"When we are successful, we largely go unnoticed," she said. "We try to keep Soldiers healthy."



Campuzano sets up a device that tests air quality for Soldiers.

This involves them looking for possible threats to service members' health by policing water production facilities, AAFES and the dining facility in ad-

dition to conducting wastewater surveillance. Members of the detachment also conduct surveys to see how the military presence here is impacting the environment, said Swickheimer, a Roscommon, Mich., native.

"Water production is our biggest concern," she said.

Another task the detachment's Soldiers handle is training their Iraqi equivalents.

"We are working with our Iraqi counterparts — trying to help them be mission ready," said Campuzano, a Houston native.

The detachment's mission standard is to be able to perform preventive medicine for 28,000 personnel. They are exceeding that standard, Campuzano said.

"We cover roughly 40,000 to 50,000 and we're still doing our job," he said.



Maj. Benito Perez, detachment commander, 389th Finance Detachment, 15th Finance Battalion, holds an EagleCash card. The card can be used like cash at various places throughout the Victory Base Complex and other posts Iraq-wide.

EagleCash makes spending safe, simple

Story, photo by Spc. Laura M. Bigenho
28th Public Affairs Detachment

Service members and U.S. contractors who want to closely monitor their spending might consider enrolling in EagleCash. The cash-management program was developed by the U.S. Army Finance Command and the U.S. Treasury Department to support the financial needs of deployed personnel.

There is no fee associated with EagleCash, and cardholders have access to their banks' checking accounts 24 hours a day. The card "monitors the amount of cash being used in theater while helping deployed personnel manage their finances," said Maj. Benito Perez, detachment commander, 389th Finance Detachment, 15th Finance Battalion.

Cardholders can make purchases at Post Exchanges and restaurants throughout theatre.

To enroll, customers need to take their bank account information to the finance office on post. Service members can access the information online through myPay. Others should bring voided checks from their bank accounts.

Enrolling takes a few minutes. After enrollment, cardholders manage their accounts at kiosks across post.

The kiosks have a smart-card reader that requires a PIN. Once the PIN is accepted, cardholders have access to account information and transaction history. They can also transfer funds. Cardholders with a balance on the card may receive the remaining balance back in cash.

In addition to being simple to use, EagleCash is a good preventive measure against identity theft, Perez said.

"Personal information is saved in the kiosk, but the card itself doesn't list any," he said.

If a cardholder loses his card, he should immediately report it to finance, Perez said.

"Since AAFES is linked to the bank, the bank will automatically send a message that the card has been reported stolen or lost so transactions cannot be made."

Because no PIN is required to make transactions, anyone can use EagleCash if they find the card.

"As a measure to avoid that type of situation, we instruct AAFES not to take any cards that do not have the name and signature of the card owner," Perez said.

Although EagleCash has been around since June 2006, it is catching on fast among people here.

"We issue approximately 50 to 60 cards per week," Perez said about the card's growing use at Camp Victory. "It's a good, safe way to manage your finances."

Lying in wait



Sgt. 1st Class Robert C. Brogan

Sgt. Steven DeBrew, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, checks his area while securing the perimeter of a joint U.S and Iraqi Army operation in Tall Aswad, Iraq, Jan. 12.

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my supervisor, my platoon sergeant, my first sergeant or even my battle buddy.

Can you remember those days and nights when out of nowhere there appeared a senior NCO in your chain of command or NCO support channel? Do you remember thinking where did that son of a @\$%^ come from? Do you remember him or her carrying you through the toughest part of the day or night?

If not, I feel for you, because you have not experienced the essence of true leadership. If you can understand what I'm talking about, then you've experienced a leadership day. Those days when it's so damned miserable or hard that the mere presence of a leader carries you through the moment, the event or the fight. You've experienced a leadership day — one in which not a word need be spoken, but strength is drawn from the presence of the leader.

Young men and women repeatedly ask me what I do or what I'm doing with them at that moment. I tell them that that first and foremost I accomplish much by just sharing time

with them. I accomplish much by just watching, listening and communicating. I instill or affect what is occurring at that moment merely by my presence.

Don't think it's true? How many times have you seen or been the one standing there with your hands jammed in your pockets, or the one at the clearing barrel about to cut corners and you look up and see a senior NCO and err on the side of right? In other words, you remove those hands without being told or get out of the vehicle. Because in the end you knew what right was but you just needed that slight nudge of encouragement in the form of an adult?

There are some leaders who do not think they have an effect on the masses — don't look at those around you, look inside yourself. Do you effect your troopers on a daily, consistently positive basis? Are you the one with your head hanging down around your chest or the one reciting "Same S@#\$, different day?"

Or are you the one that revels in the break of dawn? Are you the one that revels in God's greatest gift — the opportunity to share our lives one time with one another. Are you the

one who sustains your troops with steadfast conviction and or a smile? Are you the one who recognizes the tremendous responsibility we have had bestowed on us? You know, the life of another human being.

This morning I watched as a senior noncommissioned officer expressed his frustration over his inability to motivate his troops out of fear that his unit may be extended in theater. I watched as he stripped the very prestige from the institution with his words. I watched as he diminished what others have died doing. I watched, and came to the realization that he did not know what a leadership day was or the professional obligation he had to inspire his troops every darn day. Yes, this Soldier was a sergeant first class with many years of service. What have we failed to do when it comes to instilling a sense of pride and contagious affection for our country, our people and our service?

This sergeant first class convinced me he did not understand the essence of leadership, or the affect it can and must have every day. He in effect lost sight of the fact that he was being confronted with a leadership day and let the day slip right through his fingers.

Announcements

Tae kwon do lessons

Grand Master Sung Bok Nam, coach of the 1993 U.S. National Tae Kwon Do Team and the 2003 Iraqi National Tae Kwon Do Team, offers tae kwon do lessons Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 6-7 p.m. at the Camp Victory Fitness Center.

Foreign disclosure training

Those in need of foreign disclosure training can call 822-2262 or go to mnci.intranet.iraq.mil/C12/FDO/default.aspx.

Tejano & Norteno Night

MWR Bldg. 124 offers Tejano and Norteno music every Friday at 8:30 p.m. Contact Staff Sgt. Raymond Edwards at 822-2514 for more information.

IMO training

Training for information management officers is held Sundays at 3 p.m. in the Euphrates Conference Room in Al Faw Palace.

Tae kwon do lessons

The American Tae Kwon Do Association offers tae kwon do lessons Tuesdays and Saturdays from 5-6 p.m. at the South Victory Gym.

Contact Sgt. Maj. Frank Zepp at 822-3296 for more information.

Customs class

A customs class for all separate brigades on the Victory Base Complex will be held Feb. 1 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Al Faw Palace. The class will allow brigades to have certified customs inspectors to inspect subordinate units redeploying within each brigade. The class is limited to 50 participants and spots are reserved on a first-come, first-served basis.

Contact Sgt. 1st Class Frank Koptya for more information.

Karaoke Tuesdays

DJ Tek offers karaoke and mixed music Tuesdays at 8:30 p.m. at MWR Bldg. 124.

Old-school Saturdays

DJ Tek plays R&B and old-school hip-hop Saturdays at 9 p.m. at MWR Bldg. 124.

Newcomers' brief

Newcomers' briefs for all incoming personnel to Camp Victory are held Saturdays at 2:30 p.m. in the Coalition Cafe.

ATV and Gator training

ATV and Gator drivers' training will be held Feb. 5-6 at the STB motor pool. Contact Staff Sgt. Yvonne Thomas for more information.

Lost & Found

Cell phone

A cell phone was found at the Liberty Helipad Dec. 18.

Contact Staff Sgt. Jeffery Stacy at 822-3299 to confirm the type of phone.

Eyeglasses

A black metal set of prescription eyeglasses in a black nylon pouch was found on the Rhino to the International Zone Jan. 18.

Contact Lt. Col. Kevin Walker at 822-2541.

Area 51 Weekly Schedule

Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Halo 2 Tournament 8 p.m.	Halo 2 Tournament 8 p.m.	Halo 2 Tournament 8 p.m.	Dominoes Tournament 8 p.m.	Latin Night 8 p.m.		SUPER BOWL XLI

Do you have an announcement about an event of interest to the Camp Victory community? Contact Sgt. Jacob Boyer at jacob.boyer@iraq.centcom.mil with the

information. Information for community announcements needs to be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event to allow for timely publication.

Operating Hours

Coalition Cafe
Breakfast 5:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Dinner 5:30 - 8 p.m.
Midnight Dining 11 p.m. - 1 a.m.

Sports Oasis
Breakfast 5:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Dinner 5 - 9 p.m.

Shopette
Open 24 Hours

Camp Liberty Post Exchange
8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Fitness Center
Open 24 Hours

MNC-I STB Mailroom
9 a.m. - noon
5 - 7 p.m.

Golby Troop Medical Clinic Sick Call:
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - noon
Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. - noon

Dental Sick Call:
Monday - Friday 7:30 - 10:30 a.m.
Saturday 9 - 10:30 a.m.

Mental Health Clinic:
Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m. - noon

Post-Deployment Health Briefings:
Monday, Wednesday and Friday 1 p.m.

Pharmacy:
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - noon;
1 - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday 7:30 a.m. - noon

Legal Assistance/Claims
Saturday - Thursday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Friday 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Personnel Service Support Centers
Monday - Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

ID Cards
Monday - Friday 6 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Worship Hours

Victory Chapel (Bldg. 31)
Sunday
7 a.m. Collective Protestant
8:45 a.m. Collective Protestant
10 a.m. Catholic Confession
10:30 a.m. Catholic Mass
noon. Gospel Protestant
2 p.m. Latter Day Saints
4 p.m. Episcopal/Lutheran
6 p.m. Contemporary Protestant
8 p.m. Kingdoms of Columbus
(1st & 3rd Sundays)

Saturday
11 a.m. Seventh Day Adventist
8 p.m. Catholic Mass

Mini Chapel (Bldg. 2)
Sunday
9:30 a.m. Breaking of Bread
3 p.m. Church of Christ
7:30 p.m. Latter Day Saints

Monday-Friday
4 p.m. Daily Mass

Friday
6:30 p.m. Jewish Service

AFN Freedom Radio

Al Asad 107.3	Kirkush..... 107.3
Ali Base 107.3	Mosul 105.1
Ar Ramadi... 107.3	Q-West 93.3
Baghdad ... 107.3	Taji 107.3
Balad 107.3	Tal Afar..... 107.3
Fallujah..... 105.1	Taqquadum. 107.3
Kirkuk..... 107.3	Tikrit..... 100.1

All stations are FM

New season, new driver

Mears takes seat in National Guard car

Story, photo by Sgt. Jim Greenhill

Army News Service

ARLINGTON, Va. — Casey Mears says the honor is all his.

"It's just a big honor," Mears said shortly after he was introduced as the National Guard's new Guard Car driver at the Army National Guard Readiness Center Jan. 12. Mears will drive the No. 25 National Guard/GMAC Chevy Monte Carlo SS in the 2007 NASCAR Nextel Cup and the No. 24 National Guard Chevy in the Busch Racing Series. This is the first year that the Guard will have cars competing in both divisions.

"It's just so different than any other normal sponsor," Mears said. "You're not just representing a brand, you're representing a portion of the country, what the country stands for, and all the men and women who fight for us. We get to do what we do because we're protected by the National Guard, so it's just a big honor to be representing them and hopefully hold them up proud and do well."

Lt. Gen. Clyde A. Vaughn, director of the Army National Guard, said the Guard's NASCAR sponsorship is one key to successful recruiting.

"We have a lot of fun with this," Vaughn said. "We recruit 70,000 Soldiers a year. It's about recruiting, and it's about maintaining the strength of this great organization, and part and parcel of that is this fun we have with NASCAR, because it puts that National Guard name right up there in front in the nation's largest market on any one weekend outside the Super Bowl."

Driving for Hendrick Motorsports, Mears is the successor to Greg Biffle, driver of the No. 16 National Guard Ford for the past three seasons. Biffle's accomplishments included winning six races and finishing 2nd in the Nextel Cup series in 2005.

"We've gone through a great three seasons with the No. 16 car," said Lt. Gen. Clyde A. Vaughn, director of the



The No. 25 National Guard GMAC Chevy Monte Carlo SS that will be driven by Casey Mears in the NASCAR Nextel Cup Series this year was unveiled at the Army National Guard Readiness Center in Arlington, Va.

Army National Guard.

Defending Nextel Cup champion Jimmie Johnson, Jeff Gordon and Kyle Busch also drive for Hendrick Motorsports.

The Daytona 500 will kick off the 2007 Nextel Cup season Feb. 18.

In another life, Mears might have enlisted himself, but he said racing demands total focus and commitment that precludes other activities.

"I knew I was going to be racing from the time I was really young," the 28-year-old Mears said. His father is Roger Mears, Indianapolis 500 and off-road veteran; his uncle is Rick Mears, four-time Indy winner; his grandfather also raced. Casey Mears began racing BMX bicycles when he was 4, then he graduated to ATVs.

He also played high school football.

"The physical aspect of the training, the things that you did in football always made me wonder. I always wanted to maybe go through basic combat training and just see how I would be affected by it or how well I would get through it."

Mears said he would like to visit

with Guard members serving at home or abroad if given the opportunity.

"It would be great to do that," he said. "I can only imagine. I still have a lot to understand and learn of what citizen-Soldiers go through. It would be great to try to lift their spirits."

Mears is optimistic about the year ahead.

"I'm more excited this year than I ever have been," he said. "This is going to be my fifth year in the Nextel Cup. My first couple of seasons were a huge learning curve, coming from the open-wheel side of things. Having the experience that I have now at this level and moving to an organization like Hendrick Motorsports, it's the best opportunity and the best situation I could possibly be in to go out and win races and do well."

In 2006, Mears won the 44th annual Rolex 24 Hours of Daytona for Chip Ganassi Racing while teamed with Scott Dixon and Dan Wheldon. He was the first full-time NASCAR driver to win the Rolex 24. He won his first NASCAR race last July 8 at Chicagoland Speedway.