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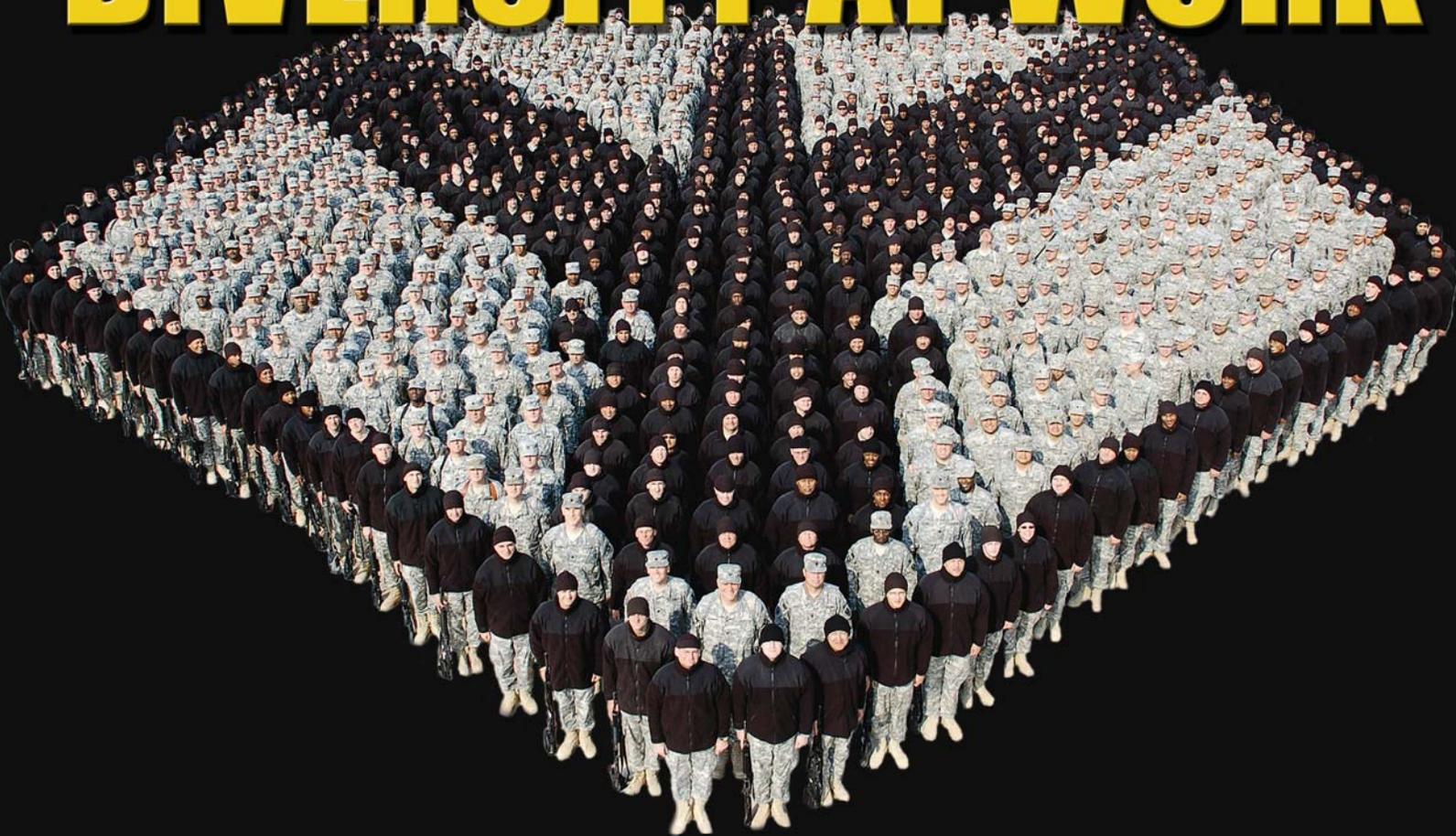
The Sustainment Times

FORWARD
Camp Taji, Iraq

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1ST SB

DIVERSITY AT WORK



Commander's Corner

Col. Kevin G. O'Connell, Commander

Diversity @ work

Dear 1st Sustainment Brigade Soldiers and Families,

This month's newsletter focuses on diversity. The 1st Sustainment Brigade's mission is very diverse. Our Soldiers conduct a myriad of different missions, to include financial management, human resources, signal, force protection, supply, maintenance, transportation, and services. Our Soldiers pay contractors and Soldiers; run Army Post Offices; man perimeter towers and entry control points; protect deliberate combat logistics patrols; receive, store, issue, and account for food, water, ice, fuel, ammunition, repair parts; fix all types of equipment; distribute everything in and around Baghdad; provide showers, laundry, and clothing renovation; and even process remains and personal effects. You can see by the list, our Soldiers cover the gamut of sustainment operations on a complex and distributed battlefield. We also have civilian interpreters with diverse backgrounds that assist us with communicating with our Iraqi counterparts as we partner and train, in order to help the Iraqi Security Forces rebuild their Army.

Our Soldiers are also diverse in background. We've got soldiers that were born in Asia, Africa, North America, South America, and Europe. We might have Soldiers born in Australia and Antarctica, but I haven't found them yet. To me, one of the Army's strength is its diversity. Nowhere else in the world can people from all walks of life and



Col. O'Connell presents Capt. Flores with a Brigade coin

backgrounds, come together and perform a critical mission for one Nation - the United States of America.

Our Families are diverse too, in size, ages, birthplaces, ethnicity, and religions. My roots are from Ireland, and my father was the first in my Family born in the United States. We were raised Catholic. My wife is from Indonesia. Even though she's Christian, Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world. My kids are first generation American. Our Families keep us strong and keep us grounded. To many of us, there is nothing more important than Family, and we all look forward to being reunited again after the deployment. I want to thank all the Families for everything they do to support their Soldiers and units, and the sacrifices they make on a daily basis, so their Soldier can do his or

her part to fight and win the Nation's wars. We couldn't do it without you.

Understanding each other's cultural backgrounds is very important. By understanding where others are coming from, it strengthens the overall team and makes mission accomplishment much easier. The Army is a team of teams, and is definitely a team sport. Nobody can do it by themselves. Get to know someone on the team better, share your experiences, and take care of your teammates. You all are doing a fantastic job and I greatly appreciate it. Keep up the good work. No matter what your rank, military occupational specialty, or job is, you are a critical component of the team. Thanks for all you do for the 1st Sustainment Brigade, the Army, and the Nation.

*Durable 6
Col. Kevin G. O'Connell
Commander, 1st Sustainment
Brigade*

CSM Time

CSM Frank G. Cardoza



THROUGH THE GLASS CEILING

By Spc. Andrea Merritt

Since the formation of the U.S. Army more than 200 years ago, it has become one of the most diverse organizations in the world. Today, its Soldiers are comprised of different races, religions, and gender; greatly reflecting the Nation they serve.

Enlisted personnel make up about 82 percent of the active duty force, but less than one percent hold the rank of Sergeant Major or Command Sergeants Major, the highest enlisted rank. Of the 3,500 Sergeant Major's in the active Army, about 300 of them are women.

"It's an honor to be a Sergeant Major, and it's just an honor to be in the Army at this point and time and obtain the rank of Sergeant Major. I

don't want it to be just for females because obtaining the rank of Sergeant Major is not an easy thing to do. You can do it as a Soldier," said Sgt. Maj. Terry McKenzie, the acting command sergeant major for the Special Troops Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade.

McKenzie, a Trenton, N.J. native, has been in the Army 25 years. She joined the military in September 1983 as a finance specialist. Her main reason for joining was to travel.

"My focus was to travel and get to see other things you don't see growing up in New Jersey. I wanted to get out of my mother's house. I wanted to be independent," said McKenzie.

As a senior noncommissioned officer, she has had plenty of experience leading Soldiers. She spent four years throughout her career as a first sergeant, and she also deployed to Iraq during the Gulf War for Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

While in the Army, McKenzie has also earned a bachelor's degree and is working on her master's in management and leadership.

"People do what they want to do, and they make allowances for what they value. If you value education, you're going to make it happen," said McKenzie. "You may not be able to complete that degree in two or four years; but if you're adamant that you want something, then you're going to make the time to get it."

Before arriving to the STB, McKenzie served as the finance operations sergeant major for the 24th Financial Management Company, a Fort Stewart, Ga., unit attached to the STB, 1st Sust. Bde.

The 24th FM Co. has been providing financial services to the greater Multi-National Division – Baghdad

area since its arrival to Iraq ten months ago.

Although McKenzie's background is in finance, she looks forward to being a leader in an organization with a bigger function.

The STB, 1st Sust. Bde., is comprised of more than 700 Soldiers who work in a variety of fields such as: human resources, support operations, signal, supply, postal, as well as, financial management.

"The STB is an organization that is dynamic in the sense that you have all these different MOSs and functions ... There's so many different MOSs in this STB and different functions that it's challenging," McKenzie stated.

After 25 years of service in the Army, McKenzie declares that it is the end of the road for her. After she redeploys with the 24th FM Co., she plans to retire so she can spend more time with her husband and three children.

"I am proud of my service and the 25 years that I gave the Army," stated McKenzie.

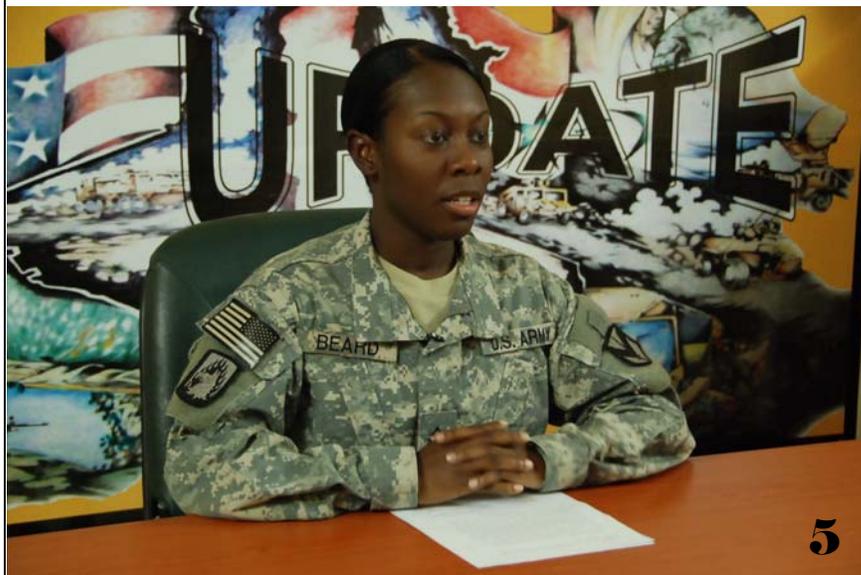
Although she plans to retire, she knows her job isn't done yet. While McKenzie is with the STB, 1st Sust. Bde., she plans to offer the necessary guidance and mentorship to the Soldiers in the organization.

"I know you all are on your down slope of deployment, but I do want to add to the fight. I want to be able to say that I didn't just come up here to fill a position. I pray that at some point I can make a difference in the STB," McKenzie stated.

"I think these days Soldiers lack mentorship. I'm hoping that I can add to the leadership and be a standard bearer and just allow Soldiers to see an example of leadership," McKenzie added. **STF**

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FEATURES



5

16 FIREPROOF

A look at Alex Kendrick's latest film "Fireproof." This movie talks about building up your marriage.



16



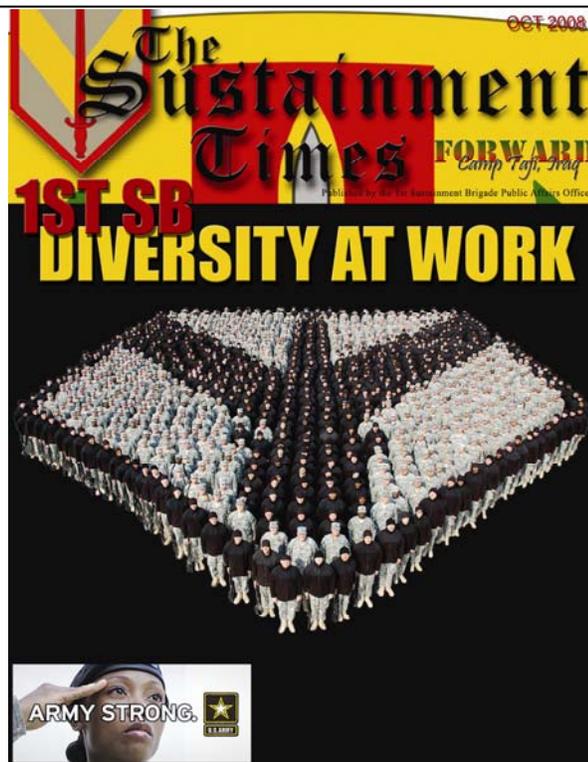
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5 Quiet on the set

Meet a unique 1st Sustainment Brigade Soldier who is fulfilling a dream she had as a little girl.

By Spc. Andrea Merritt

24 Leading the way

Two female captains were thrust into leadership positions and are performing very well.

By Spc. Andrea Merritt

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Cover photo by Staff Sgt. Bryant Maude.



Quiet on the set

Story by Spc. Andrea Merritt

Soldiers are trained to be highly proficient in their jobs, but sometimes, unexpected opportunities come along and they are able to showcase other gifts and talents.

Sgt. Franshun Beard, a human resources noncommissioned officer for the 1st Sustainment Brigade, has used her deployment as a time to focus on advancing in her military career. While trying to better herself, she showed her versatility and landed another role.

“Deployments are hard for everyone. You’re away from Family, you’re away from friends, and you’re away from the normality of everyday life. While I’m over here, I try to be

positive and optimistic,” said Beard, a Jackson, Miss., native.

“You want to surround yourself with positive people and engage in positive activities. I miss my son a lot, but to take my mind off of missing special occasions, I study for the boards and take college classes to help get me promoted,” Beard explained.

During this deployment, Beard has won two NCO of the Month Boards and the Special Troops Battalion, 1st Sust. Bde., NCO of the Quarter Board.

While videotaping a speech for the Brigade NCO of the Quarter Board, it was discovered that Beard had a knack for the camera.

Staff Sgt. Bryant Maude, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Brigade’s public affairs office, asked her to be the new personality for

the 1st Sustainment Brigade Update, a weekly roll-up of news from within the Brigade.

“She came to our office to record a message for Brigade NCO of the Quarter, and the minute I heard her speak I knew she would be great. She has a very natural presence on camera and a very pleasant look,” said Maude, an Atlanta native.

Beard, who revealed she attended a performing arts school as a child and once had dreams of becoming a news broadcaster, accepted the offer. After six weeks of filming the update, Beard has really grown into the anchor position and has added a little of her own flair.

“This has been a wonderful experience. It has been a learning experience. The deployment can be stressful and it’s good to have an outlet. I can come over here and have a little fun doing something that I enjoy doing,” Beard said. **STF**



CLOSING IN ON 35 YEARS OF SERVICE

By Staff Sgt. James Brown Jr.

The year was 1971, and the Vietnam War was still raging. Joe Frazier defeated Muhammad Ali at Madison Square Garden, Apollo 15 was launched, Walt Disney World opened its gates in Orlando, Florida, and Lance Armstrong, Mary J Blige, and Kid Rock were born. These were only a few of the significant events that happened that year. 1971 was also the year Sgt. Maj. Kevin Bateman, a native of Salem, Indiana, entered the Army and 34 years later he's still going strong.

His first enlistment was for three years with the XVIII Airborne Corps based out of Fort Bragg, N.C., where he served as an Infantryman. Immediately following his departure from the active Army component, he decided to give the Indiana Army National Guard a try.

Bateman worked his way up through the ranks to become the fifth

First Sergeant of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment, to transfer to Scottsburg, Ind., and become the First Sergeant of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment. However, in 2003, he moved to the Camp Atterbury Joint Maneuver Training Center (CAJMTC), located near

“Here I sat with 30 plus years of military service and had never been in a combat environment, and I felt it was time I did my part over here. So, when I found out the 76th Infantry Brigade was being mobilized, I volunteered to deploy with them.”

Edinburg, Indiana, to serve as the Installation G3 Operations Sergeant Major. His reason - he wanted to deploy to Iraq.

“Here I sat with 30 plus years of military service and had never been in a combat environment, and I felt it was time I did my part over here. So, when I found out the 76th Infantry Brigade was being mobilized, I volunteered to deploy with them,” recalled Bateman. “I had too long watched Soldiers that had been in my platoon or in one of the companies I had as a First Sergeant, be deployed overseas as many as three times. It was time I took one of those slots and let someone else stay at home for a change.”

Bateman currently serves with the Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 152nd Cavalry Regiment, 1st Sustainment Brigade as the Operations Sergeant Major.

STF

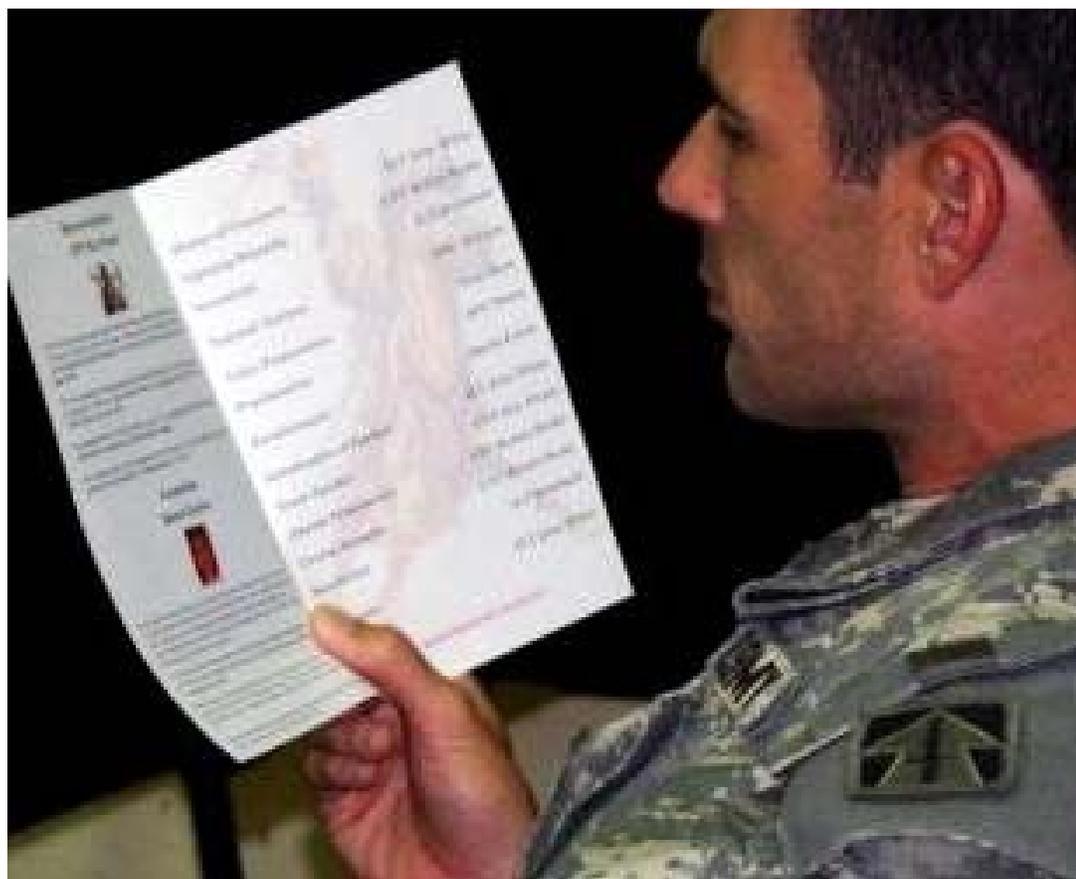




SPANISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

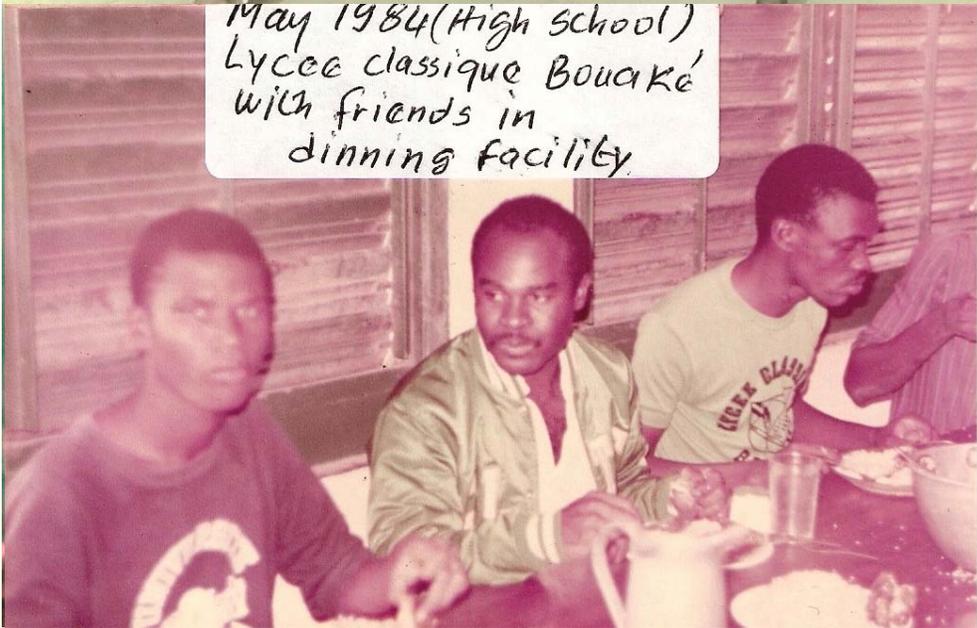
By Spc. Andrea Merritt

A group of 1st Sustainment Brigade Soldiers gathered at the Taji Theater to celebrate Hispanic heritage month. In addition to a guest speaker, comedian, and slide presentation, everyone enjoyed some Spanish cuisine after the celebration of the Hispanic Heritage Month ceremony concluded. Hispanic Heritage Month is a dedication to celebrate and honor Hispanic-American culture and heritage. "I think it is an opportunity for the Hispanic Soldier to get recognized because we are not often recognized, and I think it's a time to at least focus on their accomplishments in which they contribute to the Army now." said Staff Sgt. Pavel Robledo, a member of the Logistical Training Advisory Team attached to the 1st Squadron, 152nd Cavalry Regiment, 1st Sustainment Brigade. **STF**





April 1984 (High School)
Lycee classique Bouake
with a friend - Faber Yues



May 1984 (High School)
Lycee classique Bouake
with friends in
dinning facility.

COMING TO AMERICA

By Spc. Andrea Merritt

Between 1892 and 1954, more than 12 million people came to the United States through Ellis Island in pursuit of the American Dream, hoping to find a better life in the Land of Opportunity.

Like the immigrants who passed through Ellis Island, Staff Sgt. Vincent Zokou, the items manager for the General Supply Branch of the 1st Sustainment Brigade, came to the U.S. in search of the same dream; but during his journey, he decided to

serve the country that provided him a new way of life.

The 1st Sust. Bde., the unit that Zokou serves with, is currently serving a 15-month deployment in Iraq. It is a diverse organization in terms of the various missions it

When I left the Ivory Coast on Oct. 7, 1988, I knew no one. I didn't even know where to spend the first night, and at that time I only had \$137 in my pocket when I left the airport.

conducts as well as the Soldiers who carry them out.

There are Soldiers of different races and religions and some who come from about 20 different countries all over the world. Despite which ends of the earth they originated from, they all have sworn to defend the United States of America.

"In a unit, we all have different backgrounds. It's really important get to know about people's backgrounds just to better interact with each other," Zokou stated.

Zokou was born in Saioua, Côte d'Ivoire, a French-speaking country located in West Africa, which in English is known as the Ivory Coast.

He grew up in a relatively large family, with a total of 32 siblings. At the age of five, his parents divorced, and he went to live with his father. Although his father made a living as a registered nurse, he did not make enough money to support his children and nine wives.

At the age of 13, Zokou left the rural area of Saioua and headed to Yamoussoukro, the capital of the Ivory Coast, to live with his uncle.

"My uncle took me in to put me in a better school. I only went home every summer vacation to work in the wood plant from age 13 to 20," Zokou said.

After graduating from high school in 1982, Zokou had trouble finding work. After four years of being unable to find a satisfactory job, he made the decision to leave his country and go to the U.S.

"When I left the Ivory Coast on Oct. 7, 1988, I knew no one. I didn't even know where to spend the first night, and at that time, I only had \$137 in my pocket when I left the airport," said Zokou.

Zokou landed in New York City on Oct. 8, 1988, and aside from being alone in a strange land ➤

» with only \$137 to his name and nowhere to go, he also faced another problem. He only spoke French.

Although some people may have started to question their decision to leave home, Zokou was determined. Fate also seemed to intervene that day because through the kindness of a stranger, he was able to begin his new life in America.

“I was standing at a Metro Pass station when all of a sudden, I heard two people speaking French. I approached them and told them where I was coming from and that I was just coming to the United States. One of them took me in and helped me out to get back on my feet,” Zokou recalled.

After a few months, Zokou found a job as a dishwasher at a nursing home. While working there, he taught himself how to speak English by conversing with his co-workers.

“What I learned from people by talking at work actually helped me when I went to school for English as a Second Language. It only took

me one semester to master the college-level English,” said Zokou.

After learning English, Zokou decided to continue his education and pursue a career as a registered nurse. During his first semester in college, he took a step in another direction and joined the Army. At the time, he was 33 years old.

In his 14-year career in the Army, Zokou received his citizenship and has earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology. He plans to retire as a Master Sergeant and then pursue a career as a high school teacher or a psychologist.

In August, while on R&R leave from Iraq, he went home for the first time in 13 years. He took the long trip home in order to attend his mother’s funeral.

Although he went home to attend his mother’s funeral, he was still grateful to go home because he hadn’t been there in so long.

While at home, Zokou visited his elementary school, high school, and a couple of colleges he attended when he was younger.

“I was with my brother, and he saw the happiness on my face. To be able to come back to my roots and see where I came from, there were tremendous feelings.”

Looking back, Zokou is proud of where he came from and the direction that his life has taken. His Family is also proud of the decision he made, he said.

“They don’t just see me as a Soldier, but they see me as someone who has been successful,” Zokou stated.

Throughout his life, Zokou has known what it means to struggle, and today, he is reaping the benefits of all his hard work and perseverance.

“If you want something, you can have it. Looking at my story, I came to the U.S. with no money in my pocket and today I’m a Staff Sergeant in the U.S. Army,” said Zokou.

“Coming in at 33 years old in the Army as a Private and today I’m a Staff Sergeant after 14 years, I think that’s pretty good. I’m not quite where I need to be at, but I have come a long way,” Zokou concluded. **STF**





A DIVERSE SET OF SKILLS

By Staff Sgt. James Brown Jr.

The Army National Guard is a large and diverse institution that is spread throughout each of the 50 states. This organization is made up of Citizen Soldiers who essentially lead double lives.

Each Soldier serves their Nation by performing their duty one weekend a month and two weeks a year during their annual training. At the same time, they maintain full-time employment in the civilian world.

For some National Guard Soldiers, their civilian job mirrors their military duties; but in most cases, it does not. They must master two sets of skills – one for their Nation and the other to provide for their Families.

The following Soldiers of the Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 152nd Cavalry Regiment, an Indiana Army National Guard unit attached to the 1st Sustainment Brigade, are a snapshot of the diversity in its ranks.

2nd Lt. Shaun Tompkins is a native of Whiteland, Ind., and works as a lead pharmacy technician in his civilian career. As a pharmacy technician, he fills prescriptions, inputs prescriptions into a database, troubleshoots insurance issues, and also runs the register. He has been doing this for almost five years, and he enjoys it.

Although he works as a pharmacy technician in the civilian world, Tompkins has served as the unit's signal officer for the past two years. He supplies the communication needs for the Squadron Commander,

troubleshoots and maintains network and radio equipment, and runs telephone and internet wire to create much needed communications connectivity.

"The Signal Corps is more challenging than what I do in the civilian sector. (I) can take a lot of the experiences that (I've) learned in the military and transverse that into the civilian sector making a pretty good career in Information Technology, and use that if I ever decide to make a career change," said Tompkins.

When not serving in her military capacity, Pvt. 1st Class Jennifer Bowser serves up hot wings and fries at a local restaurant and also works as a hostess at a crab joint in her hometown of Indianapolis. >>

» “I deliver food and drinks, greet customers that enter the business, arrange seating for everyone, and ensure that their visit was a good one,” stated Bowser.

Although Bowser has been serving customers for a year in the food service arena, she serves customers in a different capacity in her military job. Bowser works as a human resource specialist for the 1st Sqdn., 152nd Cav. Regt.

It is her job to prepare and process recommendations for awards and decorations as well as handle the unit’s personnel accounting, strength management, and overall administration requirements.

When asked what she thought about her military occupational skill, she stated, “It’s an opportunity to serve with the Guard, do different things, and get more experience, not only in my civilian life, but also the military life.”

For Sgt. Charles Hayes, being a chaplain’s assistant is a lot different

than working as a shipping and receiving dock team leader back home in West Point, Ky.

In his civilian career, Hayes ships and receives items through courier services, manually loads and unloads semi trucks, and also refurbishes laptops and screen TVs for various businesses and individuals.

Hayes has been working in the shipping and receiving field for 12 years and as a chaplain’s assistant for 11 years. While the two jobs have nothing in common, Hayes revealed he chose his particular MOS to fulfill a more spiritual and personal need.

“I assist the chaplain in setting up religious services, administrative paperwork, and (personal security),” said Hayes. “I became a chaplain’s assistant because I wasn’t sure on my religious background, and I figured that this job would help me find my religious background.”

Even though most National Guard Soldiers have military duties that don’t mirror their civilian jobs,



this type of job skill diversity can prove much more valuable when they are deployed because they have something extra to add to the fight. **STF**





Soldier guides a barrier into place at Joint Security Station Ur

MISSION MELTING POT

Story by Sgt. Aaron LeBlanc

The 165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion is currently performing a dynamic mission that ranges from managing various types of supplies, to distributing fuel and concrete barriers throughout central Iraq, to the administration of the premier maintenance operation on Camp Taji. This diversity of mission is made possible through the Army's "plug and play" philosophy that has gained wide acceptance as it continues to increase the flexibility and utility of military force.

This 165th's flexibility is reflected by its designation as a CSSB; the unit's former titles include "165th Transportation Battalion," and "165th Quartermaster Battalion." As late as the mid-90's, battalions like the 165th may have been completely dedicated to a single skill set. Today, U.S. Army battalions focused entirely on transportation are becoming an anomaly, soon to be relegated to the annals of history.

The headquarters company of the 165th, a Louisiana National Guard Battalion from Bossier City, is the only company within the Battalion

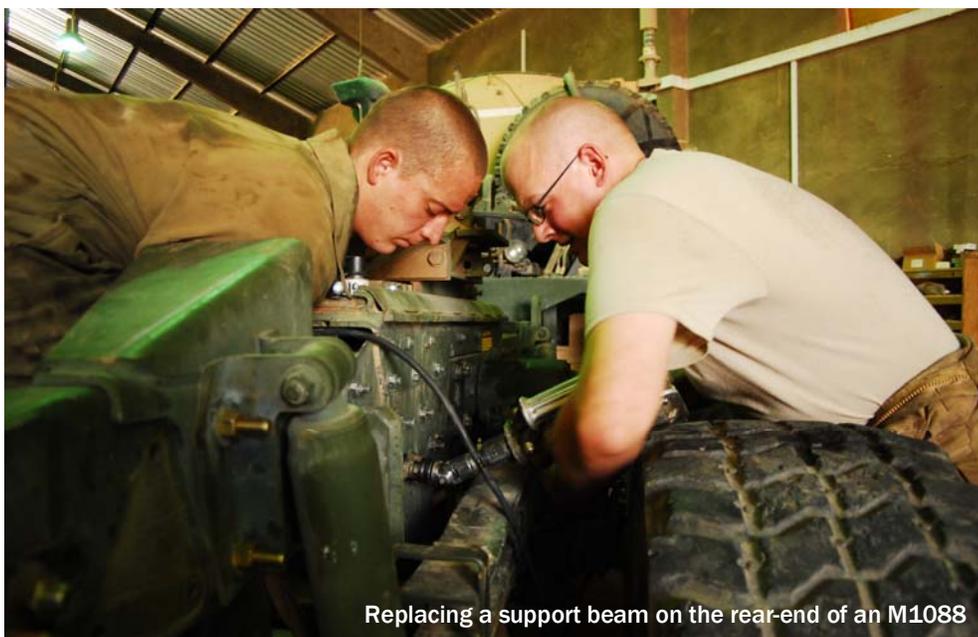
native to the lineage of the unit. The remainder of the Battalion, comprised of National Guard, Active Duty, and Army Reserve companies of combat arms units, transportation units, and maintenance units, was assembled in country.

Thanks to an Army-wide adherence to training standards and the "plug and play" system, this seemingly cobbled together conglomeration of troops, hailing

literally from all over the world, functions as a single, seamless, cohesive entity. In addition to moving every class of supply while providing their own security, the Soldiers of the 165th bear the brunt of the logistics effort that allows Camp Taji to function.

The 165th's 515th Transportation Company, an Active Duty unit from Manheim, Germany, was, for over a year, responsible for the delivery of all diesel fuel, MOGAS, and JP8 on Camp Taji, and a good chunk of the same in the surrounding Baghdad area. Every drop of fuel passing through the main generators here got to where it was needed thanks in part to the tireless efforts of the 515th. As their 15-month tour comes to a close, the Soldiers of the 515th have handed the torch off to the 1538th Transportation Company, an Indiana National Guard unit, which has hit the ground running without missing a beat.

The 165th's 536th Maintenance Company, out of Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, manages the largest and most comprehensive maintenance operation on the base, and boasts command and control of one of the largest Supply Support Activity warehouse complexes in the country. If it's broken, the professionals of the 536th can probably fix it; their capabilities include not only >>



Replacing a support beam on the rear-end of an M1088

» vehicle repair, but also small arms and radio equipment repair.

A detachment of the 297th Inland Cargo Transfer Company, also belonging to the 165th, is responsible for the administration of the Camp Taji Centralized Receiving and Shipping Point, or CRSP Yard, and has received high praise from Brig. Gen Michael Lally, the commanding general of the 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command.

The 165th's Support Operations Shop oversees the administration of Camp Taji's Class I yard and bulk fuel yard, and are responsible for focusing the concerted efforts of the Battalion's various transportation and combat arms companies, who together have delivered over 20,000 concrete barriers and an estimated 150,000 STONS of supplies into the heart of Baghdad, and have completed over 10,000 maintenance jobs.

Soldiers pulled from various units within the 165th are spear-heading the effort to turn over U.S. Army Humvees to the Iraqi Army, and have delivered

more than 2,000 Humvees since the 165th's arrival in April.

As part of an ongoing push to form a more effective and efficient logistics apparatus, Soldiers from the headquarters company, along with Soldiers of the 536th, are working closely with mechanics of the Iraqi Army, helping them to become better able to maintain their ever-growing fleet of Humvees.

Finally, the 377th Combat HET (heavy equipment transport) Company from Fort Bliss, Texas, is capable of transporting and delivering the Army's largest tracked vehicles, including 80-ton M1 Abrams main battle tanks, to wherever they may be needed in the theater of operations.

Thanks to the modular system in today's "plug and play" Army, all of these capabilities, from heavy equipment transport, to the combat capabilities of the convoy security elements attached to the Battalion, to the ability to deliver vast quantities of any class of supply anywhere in Multi-National Division – Baghdad, coexist under a single guidon: the Battalion colors of the 165th CSSB. **STF**



A steady supply of fuel



Company G, 39th Brigade Support Battalion, participate in a live-fire exercise in Kuwait



Shawn (2nd from left) interprets during a dinner hosted by Col. Muhammad

BRIDGING THE LANGUAGE GAP

Story by Spc. Andrea Merritt

For years, Coalition Forces have been training and advising Iraqi Forces with the goal of helping the once war-torn country become a more stable, independent, and, self-sustaining country.

Through the help of interpreters, who sometimes help Coalition Forces at the risk of their own personal safety, training and advisory teams are able to be more effective in the way they teach the Iraqis.

“For the most part, they can make things flow a lot faster,” said Capt. Jeffrey Stuke, a member of the Force Protection Training Team from the 1st Squadron, 152nd Cavalry Regiment, an Indiana National Guard unit attached to the 1st Sustainment Brigade.

In the 1st Sustainment Brigade, there are 11 interpreters who aid the Brigade’s training teams in their mission. Although interpreting provides a source of income for them and their Families, many do this job

because they simply believe in what they do.

“I believe in the changes in my country brought by the U.S. I do this to help my country and my people and to support my Family,” said Johnnie, an interpreter assigned to the 1st Sust. Bde.

Johnnie’s main job is to interpret for Col. Kevin O’Connell, the commander of the 1st Sustainment Brigade, when he interacts with his Iraqi counterparts. When Johnnie is not assisting the Brigade Commander, he works with the Brigade’s Iraqi Security Forces Cell.

As an Iraqi native, Johnnie was raised during the rule of Saddam Hussein and his regime. During Saddam’s reign, Johnnie’s uncle was executed and his Family was targeted by the Baath Party.

“Whenever someone was executed in Saddam’s system, that person’s Family was considered a bad Family who didn’t deserve to make a living. My father couldn’t work. At that time, there was a file at the Baath Party office, and they would place an

“X” on that Family. My Family had an “X” on them,” Johnnie explained.

“It was a nightmare. No one could ever dream that Saddam would be gone one day,” he added.

After Saddam was removed from power, Johnnie’s father began working as an interpreter with U.S. Forces on Taji. Soon, his uncles and he followed in his father’s footsteps.

For the past five years, Johnnie has worked as an interpreter. Earlier in his career, he was assigned to a 3rd Infantry Division unit and assisted Soldiers during patrols in different neighborhoods.

“I have been on about 400 patrols and hit by IEDs seven times and survived. Their job was to secure the (Main Supply Route) and find insurgents and IEDs. At checkpoints, we stopped a lot of insurgents and IEDs from killing innocent people,” said Johnnie.

Another interpreter in the Brigade is Ibrahim. He is originally from Kurdistan, but he moved to the United States and has become a naturalized citizen since then. Ibrahim works as an interpreter for the 1st Sqdn., 152nd Cav. Regt.

“In ‘91, when the Kurds revolted against Sadaam, his army came up there, so most of the population ran away from their cities and their homes to the Turkey border and the Iranian border,” said Ibrahim. “That was my beginning to get out of Iraq. I stayed in Turkey for a year and then I got a visa to come to the United States as a refugee.”

While in the U.S., Ibrahim attended the Tennessee State University in Nashville and obtained a degree in engineering. When he did not get the job he applied for to be interpreter for an overseas engineering company, he applied to be an interpreter for U.S. Forces in Iraq.

“I’m really happy with my job out here working with the Army, especially the group that I work with now. I enjoy it. Every day I learn something new. >>

» It feels real good because I get to help these guys that don't understand their language," said Ibrahim.

"It's fun to be between two people that don't understand each other and translate. It makes me feel proud of what I am doing," Ibrahim added.

Since returning to the Middle East, Ibrahim has seen many notable changes in society.

"This is the country that was under the dictatorship, now it's liberated. It was nice to see Iraq taking a step toward democracy. It makes me feel (good) to work with those advisors that work with the Iraqis every day to try to make things work. This Army is going to be Iraq's Army; it's not going to be under dictatorship where somebody is oppressing the Iraqi people," said Ibrahim.

Like Ibrahim, Shawn also fled to the U.S. in search of a better life, but returned to Iraq to work as an interpreter. He was born and raised in the Baghdad area, but in 1978, he journeyed to the U.S and settled in Los Angeles, where many of his Family members went earlier in the decade.

"In high school, they were imposing on us to be part of student militia armies. I didn't want to join the Baath Party Army, so I was very determined to leave Iraq because I envisioned the future would be very devastating in Iraq. I was lucky to envision that at that age," Shawn explained.

"That was not my goal. I was a student and I wanted to be free, not to be imposed to join any party. I was eager to get my education. I realized my freedoms were going to be restricted in Iraq, so I convinced my parents to allow me to leave," he said.

On his way to the U.S., Shawn stopped in Italy and waited for his older brother, who left two days after he did so they wouldn't arouse suspicion. After they were together, Shawn and his brother managed to go to Greece for a year and a half before coming to the United States and

applying for political asylum.

About a year after Shawn and his brother came to the U.S., their parents followed. Today, Shawn and the rest of his Family are proud U.S. citizens. Out of dedication to his country, Shawn chose to become an interpreter after a friend told him about the job.

"I have a friend who has been working in theater for about three years in the Diyala province area. He is close to me, and he encouraged me to apply for this job. When I heard the job involved the United States Army, I always admired the Armed Forces, so that was an area I was interested in," Shawn said.

Four months ago, Shawn returned to the country where he was born, and began working as an interpreter for the 1st Sust. Bde.'s ISF Cell. He works with the Soldiers who advise Iraqi Army Soldiers, Iraqi Military Police, and the Level III Maintenance Facility.

Although Johnnie, Ibrahim, and Shawn enjoy their jobs, they have to keep safety uppermost in their minds.

"All interpreters have fear because we're not Soldiers. We're not trained to handle hostile actions, but our faith keeps us strong and the company and unit we work with are superb people. They really make life easier here," Shawn stated.

In 2004, while working as an interpreter, Johnnie and his Family received death threats because people in his neighborhood found out he was working with the U.S. Army. Although he had to move his Family, he never once thought of quitting his job.

"I didn't stop. I believe in my job and changes. If I think like that about my own safety and quitting, nothing will be changed, so I believe I can continue," Johnnie stated.

Without the dedication of interpreters, the mission of U.S. Forces who train Iraqis wouldn't be possible. Interpreters, in essence bridge the gap that is often brought by

the language barrier. Through them, U.S. Soldiers are able to communicate effectively with Iraqis in order to get the mission accomplished.

The interpreters not only translate, but they also keep Soldiers mindful of the Iraqi culture, which helps in keeping good relationships with the Iraqi Soldiers.

"We both know we have a job to do here, and we are going to focus on the job. If we don't have a friendly relationship, then the job would be very difficult and neither my interpreter nor I would want that," Stukey said.

At the end of the day, despite any cultural differences, the interpreters and the advisors all have the same vision and goal in mind.

"Iraq as a country, I wish them stability. That's my vision for them, stability and peace so they can join other countries and live a better standard of life. There are a lot of good people in Iraq," said Shawn.

"We did the right thing to come to this country and save it from the previous government, the dictatorship that ruled this country for three decades. I think we're planting the seeds in them for their future generation, and I think they're going to appreciate us a lot in the future," Shawn concluded. **STF**



FIREPROOF: Your marriage



Movie suggests ways to fix marital problems

By Dana Massing

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"You never leave your partner," Capt. Caleb Holt told his firefighters.

But that commandment didn't apply to his marriage.

After seven years, Caleb and Catherine were headed for divorce.

Then his father asked him to try the 40-day "Love Dare," a book that challenged Caleb to do things like

"resolve to demonstrate patience and say nothing negative to your spouse."

"The Love Dare' changed my life," Caleb told his father.

"God changed your life," his father responded. "The Love Dare' was just a tool he used."

The book and "Fireproof," the new movie in which "The Love Dare" is featured, are devices a Georgia church is using to "put wind in the sails of married couples," said Stephen Kendrick, one of the authors of both.

"Fireproof," which stars Kirk Cameron as Caleb, opened Sept. 26 in more than 800 U.S. theaters and took in \$6.8 million its first weekend, officials said.

The independent, PG-rated film came from Sherwood Pictures, part of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga., creators of "Facing the Giants."

Paul McNulty, general manager at Movies at Meadville, said his theater showed "Facing the Giants" and heard from people wanting to see "Fireproof" there.

"We have a market for it," he said.

McNulty said he thinks some theater owners didn't expect the movie to draw crowds.

"It's doing very well," he said.

Weekend shows at the Meadville theater were close to full, several moviegoers said.

One of them, Claudette Bedard, of Erie's First >>





appreciate about it is it wasn't a preachy movie," he said.

One of the few changes made to the film was the reshooting of the Internet pornography scene, Kendrick said.

Scarlett said it still left him with no doubt that Caleb had an addiction, but "they handled it very subtly so it's a very family-friendly movie."

Ken Mink and his wife of 29 years had reservations about taking their youngest son to see "Fireproof."

But Mink, 53, found it appropriate for both boys, ages 11 and 14. "This movie depicts the difference God can make in our lives if we allow

» Church of Christ, Scientist, called "Fireproof" very positive.

"It has good ideas on how to solve marital problems," said Bedard, 67, a wife of 13 years from Cooperstown. "I think all marriages could use some of the ideas."

Some marriage organizations estimate that nearly half of all weddings lead to divorce. "Fireproof" officials provided statistics showing 2.3 million marriages in 2005 and 1.2 million divorces.

"Even good marriages need attention and work, but there's a whole lot of marriages today that are really struggling," said the Rev. Jim Moelk, 55, pastor at Church of the Cross in Fairview Township, Pa.

He saw "Fireproof" with his wife of 34 years.

The movie will serve as the basis for a series of six sermons starting Sunday at his church.

Roger Scarlett, 53, of McLane Church in Edinboro, said "Fireproof" lacked the "cheesiness" of some Christian movies, especially low-budget ones.

Kendrick, senior associate pastor at Sherwood Church, said the film had a \$500,000 budget and only a few paid crew. Sets and equipment were donated. Sunday-school classes catered meals.

"Everyone you'll see on the screen is a volunteer, even Kirk Cameron," Kendrick said.

He wrote, produced, and directed, "Fireproof" with his brother. Bedard liked it, but said it might not work for all audiences.

"It is an inspiring movie, but it is strictly a Christian message," she said.

Scarlett said it didn't feel like going to church.

"It is a Christian movie, but one of the things I

him to," he said.

Monica Kerr, of Beaverdam Mennonite Church near Corry, also liked "Fireproof." She saw it with her husband of 12 years. "It was entertaining and challenging both," she said.

Kerr, 34, said she enjoyed the funny characters, who lightened up the overall serious theme. **STF**



AROUND THE BRIGADE

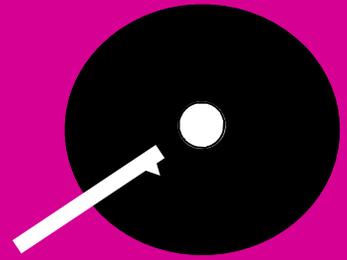






Bailey's

Hot Tracks



By Rashi Bailey

Hello, my fellow lovers of music... It has been a few months since I graced you with the latest and greatest of the music industry. There have been a lot of great tracks that have come out in the 3rd quarter of the celestial composition cycle. I'm going to give you what I think are some great up and coming artists in R&B and crossover rock.

Let's start with Jazmine Sullivan, the 21-year-old singer / songwriter from Philadelphia. With the help of Salaam Remi, super house producers, and fellow songwriter Missy Elliott, the new album "*Fearless*" has a strong blend and reminder of Lauran Hill's great songwriting ability. Sullivan has a soulful voice that empowers every track like Mary J. Blige on her "*What's the 411?*" album. "*Fearless*" is Sullivan's debut album and she's already showing sign of longevity. Her lead song "*Need You Bad*," has a catchy melody with a calypso experience and a soulful breakdown about her feelings for the love she lost. "*Lions, Tigers, and Bears*," is a very cleverly writing jam with a symphonic melody that talks about her only apprehension in life - being with the one she loves.

If Ms. Sullivan continues to make music like this, she will be here for a long time to come. If you are a fan of great R&B with a good tempo and great lyrics, then this is the album for you. Go pick up the newly released album "*Fearless*" by J Records newest songbird, Jazmine Sullivan.

In the world of Rock, which is forever changing, we have a new sound - Pop Rock. This new Rock genre is played with up-tempo breaks that are more commonly heard in Hip Hop and R&B. One of the newest bands to become a part of this new Rock sound is Colorado's own OneRepublic. This band is not new to the music scene; however, they have received mild success from their internet following since their first postings in early 2006. The band was formed by Grammy-

nominated producer Ryan Tedder, who is responsible for such hits as Leona Lewis's "*Bleeding Love*" and Natasha Bedingfield's "*Love Like This*." Ryan got together with a old, high school friend Zach Filkins after OneRepublic caught the eye of Prouder / Rapper Timothy Z. Mosley, better known as Timberland. The band was able to feature their first hit single "*Apologize*" on his compilation album "*Shock Value*." The band went on to cut their first album "*Dreaming Out Loud*," with the help of Timberland and Greg Wells. This album is a fresh sound and very upbeat songs, as well as, slow-paced songs for a change of speed, which you can see with the second single "*Stop and Stare*." I can say I have always been a strong lover of music, but it takes a lot for me to say "I like ever song on and album" OneRepublic's "*Dreaming Out Loud*" is definitely one of the few. **STF**





Lt. Col. Koller, the commander of the 553rd CSSB stands at attention as the colors center themselves

553rd hands off to 398th

By Spc. Andrea Merritt

The 553rd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion officially gave over the keys to their office to the 398th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, an Army Reserve unit based out of Rockville, Md., during a transfer of authority ceremony on Sept. 21.

Although the 553rd CSSB has cased its colors and left its former responsibilities in capable hands, the unit's mission is far from complete. The Battalion is not quite heading home, but to a different location on the camp.

The 553rd CSSB, an active duty,

Fort Hood, Texas, unit, transitioned with the 168th Brigade Support Battalion and took on a new mission. The 553rd CSSB is now responsible for a multi-class Supply Support Activity and conducting direct support maintenance.

The unit also transports supplies directly to about 80,000 warfighters throughout MND – B and MND – C.

“We were aware before our deployment that our mission was going to change. That wasn't an issue for the Battalion Headquarters since we'd already trained on both mission sets at the National Training Center in November 2007,” said Lt. Col. Gregory Koller, the commander of the 553rd CSSB.

The 398th CSSB now has command and control of the Victory Base Complex Bulk Fuel Farm, Centralized Receiving and Shipping Point, Liberty Ammunition Supply Point, and Shower, Laundry, and Clothing Renovation teams in Multi-National Divisions – Baghdad and Center.

In order to prepare for their new mission, the 398th CSSB underwent months of pre-mobilization and mobilization training. Upon arriving in Iraq, the Soldiers of the 398th CSSB trained closely with their counterparts in the 553rd CSSB to fully understand how to >>

» perform their duties.

“The 398th (CSSB) is fully ready to support the mission,” said Lt. Col. William Arther, an Eldersburg, Md. native, and the 398th CSSB Commander.

“(Our goal) is to get the mission done and try to make a positive impact to the mission,” added Arther. “The main purpose here is the warfighters and the decision makers.”

“We look forward to our new mission and will continue to provide great support to our customers,” added Koller, a Mobile, Ala. native. **STF**



Soldier sings the National Anthem



Col. Kevin O'Connell addresses the crowd



Lt. Col. Koller rolls up their unit flag



Capt. Allen hands out awards to her Soldiers

Leading the way

Story by Spc. Andrea Merritt

Throughout military history, women have proudly served their Nation, and even though it was a struggle, they continued to serve while simultaneously striving for equality in the force.

In June 2008, Lt. Gen. Anne E. Dunwoody, the Deputy Commanding General of the Army Materiel Command, was nominated by President George W. Bush for promotion to four-star general, which will make her the highest-ranking woman in military history.

From Dunwoody's accomplishment, it is evident how drastically things have changed for military women over the years. Although women make up a smaller percentage of the Army force, women

in leadership positions have become more common. The road has been paved, and they continue to lead the way.

When the 398th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, an Army Reserve unit from Maryland, arrived to Iraq and took over the mission of the 553rd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, it gained control of five companies, whose missions combined, extend support throughout Multi-National Divisions – Baghdad and Center.

Of those five companies, two are led by young, female officers who were unexpectedly hoisted into leadership positions, but continued to thrive and guide their organizations in the necessary direction to successfully complete their missions.

"I don't necessarily think it's harder for women in positions of

leadership," said 1st Lt. Celia Nowicki, the commander of the 503rd Maintenance Company, attached to the 398th CSSB, 1st Sustainment Brigade.

"I think it was harder for them 10 or 15 years ago; but with all of the advances, progression, and active roles and efforts on their behalf, they have made it easier and more accepting in the workplace and in the military," continued Nowicki, a native of Cincinnati.

As the Commander of the 503rd Maint. Co., a Fort Bragg, N.C., unit currently deployed to Iraq on a 15-month rotation, it is Nowicki's duty to make sure her unit successfully completes its wartime mission.

After high school, Nowicki passed up a few softball scholarships and applied to go to West Point, the most prestigious military academy in the U.S. Upon graduating from the Academy in 2006, she was on track to go to the World Class Athlete Program and serve a portion of her military obligation with the U.S. Team Handball Women's National Team in New York.

Instead of continuing to train with the team in hopes of going to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, she received orders to go to Fort Bragg, N.C., where she initially served with the 249th Quartermaster Company.

In May 2007, Nowicki was assigned to the 503rd Maintenance Company and served as the platoon leader for the Supply Support Activity. In January 2008, she became the executive officer for the Company.

Before she had a chance to become comfortable in her new job as executive officer, she was assigned to a new duty position. In March 2008, less than a week before the unit departed for Iraq, she was appointed as the unit's new company commander. >>

» “I was nervous, but that’s a normal human emotion when you’re named commander five days before your unit leaves to come to Iraq,” Nowicki stated. “I’ve got a better grasp on it now. It was a little shaky those first 90 days, but I continue to give that effort and praise to everyone else who has helped inform me and keep me in line with information. If it wasn’t for them, I wouldn’t be able to be as quality of a leader.”

Another leader in the 398th CSSB is Capt. DeShaunda Allen, the commander of the 62nd Quartermaster Co., out of Fort Hood, Texas. Although the unit has been in theater since January, Allen didn’t take control of the unit until May.

Despite receiving a new commander in the midst of their deployment, the Soldiers never lost their momentum and continued to give great customer service as Allen stepped in.

The Soldiers in the unit are responsible for carrying out a bulk of the Battalion’s mission, which includes running the second largest bulk fuel farm in Iraq, managing the base’s water bottling plant, operating the Class I point, and providing real-time route status information for combat logistics patrols.

“All of the platoons are executing their missions superbly with limited resources, and I know that their performances are evidence of the forte and technical proficiency that make this organization exceptional,” said Allen, a Dallas native.

Although Allen is a commissioned officer, she began her Army career ten years ago as a private. It was during basic training that she found she would always have to prove herself as a leader.

“Early on in my career in basic training, I had a male Soldier who

refused to follow a female Soldier and that has stayed in my mind ever since,” said Allen candidly. “I haven’t been faced with challenges as of now though, because I see myself as an equal with my male counterparts.”

“I constantly speak with all the leaders in my organization for feedback on how they believe I am doing as a leader, and they believe I am doing a great job. They are able to continue doing their missions and tasks as a leader because I have inspired them to give me 100 percent effort knowing they will receive 100 percent from me in return,” stated Allen.

Though Nowicki and Allen are new to command, they have led their units to successfully perform

their wartime missions thus far. As their deployments continue, they continue to learn and become more confident in their abilities to lead troops.

“We have females that are moving up to the General position as well as higher ranking NCOs,” said Nowicki.

“I think that while there may be a select few who experience a more difficult task when they move into a leadership position, I think it’s how they go about reacting to the natural things that come up that determine their confidence level and the perception of them by their peers, subordinates, as well as their superiors with looking past who they are in terms of gender to the type of leader they are,” Nowicki said.

STF





Chaplain's Thoughts

Chaplain Terrence E. Hayes, Brigade Chaplain



TAKE YOUR SPIRITUAL PICK

By Maj. Terrence Hayes

Through our 15-month deployment, the First Sustainment Brigade has offered a variety of religious opportunities for Soldiers to grow and practice their faith. If you're a spouse, Family member, or friend of a deployed Soldier, I hope this article answers some of your questions about what was available to your loved ones during our time at Taji or wherever they served.

First of all, since most Soldiers usually have some sort of Christian background, it should not be surprising that most of our chaplains are Christian themselves and conduct Christian services. We've enjoyed good support from Chaplain Pamela, the Roman Catholic priest on Taji and a good number from the Brigade attend Mass Saturday evenings at the Tigris River Chapel.

Here in the Argonne Chapel, in the Brigade area, we conduct a Contemporary Christian service and a Traditional Service. Chaplains VanHook and Hayes lead these worship services. Down the street at the Chariot Chapel, Chaplains Jones and Muhlbach pastor a Gospel Service and a Lutheran Service. These services feature a variety of music, worship and preaching styles. Some have small worship, teams of guitars, keyboards, and drums and others use musical videos to assist in worship. Some are small and some larger, but each has its own attraction to those who attend. These chapels become a small community of faith and are extremely important for spiritual and emotional health on a long deployment.

In addition to the chapel services, religious education has been a focus of the Brigade Unit Ministry Teams.

Our Brigade Deputy Commander, Lt. Col. Chris McCurry, leads a weekly Sunday School class that covers a variety of biblical topics and issues. Several Bible studies are also held through the week. A video study is held each Wednesday in the dining facility where Soldiers can eat and get some spiritual nourishment. Also on Wednesday night at the Mudhouse, the local coffee house sponsored by the STB, we host a small Bible study with a little sing-along to Chaplain Hayes guitar.

Our Soldiers deployed on other FOBs also have opportunities for worship and study, and we appreciate those chaplains who make those services available. There's an amazing variety of religious services available to our Soldiers - Jewish, Islamic Prayer, Seventh Day Adventist, LDS, and Wiccan, to name the major groups.

It's been our pleasure to provide these services and trust they have been uplifting and beneficial to those who have been part of them. **STF**

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SPC KEITH PUGH

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