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MAY 2010

VOL. 16, Number 5



**GEN. PETRAEUS**  
 May Speaker

General David H. Petraeus, USA, assumed command of the United States Central Command in October 2008, after serving for over 19 months as the Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq. Prior to his tour as MNF-I Commander, he commanded the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth. Before that assignment, he was the first commander of the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, which he led from June 2004 to September 2005, and the NATO Training Mission-Iraq, which he commanded from October 2004 to September 2005. That deployment to Iraq followed his command of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), during which he led the "Screaming Eagles" in combat throughout the first year of Operation Iraqi Freedom. His command of the 101st followed a year deployed on Operation Joint Forge in Bosnia, where he was the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations of the NATO Stabilization Force and the Deputy Commander of the US Joint Interagency Counter-Terrorism Task Force-Bosnia. Prior to his tour in Bosnia, he spent two years at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, serving first as the Assistant Division Commander for Operations of the 82nd Airborne

*(Continued on page 6, see PETRAEUS)*

**CHAPTER AWARD TO BE PRESENTED BY  
 VADM NORBERT R RYAN, JR, USN-RET, MOAA PRESIDENT**

*Military Officers Association of America*  
 presents this

**Fiftieth Anniversary Affiliate Award**  
 to  
**Tampa Chapter, MOAA**  
 commemorating 50 years  
 of exceptional service  
 as an affiliate  
 of the  
**Military Officers Association of America**

2/11/2010  
*Date*

*Norbert Ryan Vadm USN(RET)*  
*President*

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**COMING EVENTS AT THE BAYSHORE CLUB**

|                                     |                                  |                                  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 06 MAY 2010<br>10:00 BOD Meeting    | 03 JUN 2010<br>10:00 BOD Meeting | 01 JUL 2010<br>10:00 BOD Meeting |
| 13 MAY 2010<br>11:30 Joint Luncheon | 10 JUN 2010<br>11:30 Luncheon    | 08 JUL 2010<br>11:30 Luncheon    |

## TAMPA CHAPTER NEWS

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**THIS IS, INDEED, A GREAT TIME TO BE A TAMPA CHAPTER MEMBER.** Starting in April, we are giving special recognition to the JROTC and ROTC programs in the area.

Many MOAA members volunteer to be presenters of our MOAA medal and certificate, as well as the hours of labor consumed with the printing and gathering all of the names of the deserving cadets from all of the JROTC and ROTC programs throughout the TAMPA CHAPTER area. Tom South is one of the main "Troopers" that allows this program to be very successful.

I was honored and privileged to be the presenter of the MOAA medal and Certificate to USF ARMY ROTC Cadet David J. Marcello. The entire ceremony was conducted in the greatest traditions of the US ARMY. LTC Clark, Professor of Military Science, has a group of future officers of whom he can be proud.

In case you forgot, this year is our 50th anniversary of being a MOAA Affiliate. We are honored to have the MOAA President, VADM Norb Ryan Jr., USN (RET) to present the award to us. But wait, there's more. As our speaker, we are very fortunate to have the Commanding General of CENTCOM, GEN David Petraeus.

So, as I began this message-**THIS IS, INDEED, A GREAT TIME TO BE A TAMPA CHAPTER MEMBER.** Make your reservations early to attend the luncheon. Hope to see you there.

**APRIL SPEAKER: RADM LEROY COLLINS, JR, USN (RET)**

Following his presentation of the *Governor's Point of Light Award*, RADM Leroy Collins, USN (Ret), the Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs asked for a show of hands for each of the following questions:

How many of you are enrolled with the Veterans' Administration? (most)

How many have claims that are unresolved for three months? (about ten)

How many have claims that are unresolved for six months? (three)

How many have claims that are unresolved for one year? (one)

He stated that there is a room in the Bay Pines VA Hospital that maintains all of the Veterans' records—some of the records can be measured to be about three feet high.

His job and that of his staff is to advocate for claimants and to oversee the six Veterans Administration Nursing Homes for an area that includes sixty-eight hospitals: VAMC Bay Pines, VAMC Miami, VAMC Tampa, VAMC Gainesville, VAMC Lake City, and VAMC West Palm Beach and six Nursing Homes with a new one under construction near St. Augustine. Forty per cent of the patients are there because of Alzheimer's. He travels between 40,000 and 50,000 miles each year.

His legislative duties include advocating for Veterans with legislators in an attempt to keep bills pertaining to Veterans moving along through the legislative process which he described as an art. Three areas which the Legislature does not want to cut are for the elderly, for children, and for veterans.

In an attempt to forestall the moment when a vet must enter a nursing home, he has implemented a program which gives assistance at home through TeleHelp.

Further information is available on line at <http://www.floridavets.org/index.asp>

**THIS 'N THAT THIS 'N THAT THIS 'N THAT**

- ≈ You know this, but...fly the U.S. Flag on VE Day, 8 May, & Memorial Day, 31 May
- ≈ VADM Norm Ryan, MOAA President, will attend the May luncheon
- ≈ Send USPS and email address changes to [moaatampachapter@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:moaatampachapter@tampabay.rr.com)
- ≈ Be sure that your dependents' ID cards are renewed on time
- ≈ Pick up or order your name tag at the luncheon check-in table
- ≈ Begin preparing now for the hurricane season that begins 1 June



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(Vol. 16, Number 5 - MAY 2010)

CDR STAN EWANOWSKI,

## TAMPA CHAPTER NEWS CONTINUED

## LEGISLATIVE LOWDOWN: COL RON BUCHERT, USAF (RET)



"TRICARE benefits will not be affected by (the healthcare) reform (law)," Charles Rice, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs said after President Obama signed the bill that added TRICARE to the list of military healthcare plans that satisfy the requirement for everyone to have healthcare insurance. TRICARE for Life, Medicare, and VA healthcare were specifically protected in the final healthcare bill, but there was doubt by many Congressmen that TRICARE itself may have been overlooked so this bill was passed. The bottom line is that now all plans for military personnel (including retirees) and their families are safe.

But there are some possible "unintended consequences" that could affect the availability of services. The most obvious one is that with the implementation of healthcare reform, an additional 32 million new patients with medical insurance could enter the picture. Without a significant increase in the number of physicians, healthcare providers will be overwhelmed. This will result in longer waits for appointments and delays in obtaining test results and many other services. Another possibility is that if the fees paid by the new insurance plans are better than those paid by Medicare/TRICARE physicians could gradually shift their patient load away from Medicare/TRICARE beneficiaries; this doesn't even address the effects on your healthcare from what will be a monumental administrative operation.

Congress finally passed legislation that delayed the mandatory 21% decrease in fees paid to Medicare/TRICARE physicians, but the delay is only until June 1st. Legislation will be required to extend the delay until either the beginning of the next fiscal year or the beginning of the next calendar year. There is a bill in Congress at this time to fix the flawed formula that causes the fees to be decreased, however similar bills have been submitted many times and never passed—mainly because the required 10 year cost projections and the permanence of the fix discourage too many Congressmen.

A Presidential Debt Commission has been formed whose task is to scrutinize all government spending, including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, federal/military retirement, and other defense and veteran programs. The goal is to reduce the federal deficit as well as to produce options for revenue increases. The commission is co-chaired by former Senator, Alan Simson, and former Clinton Chief of Staff, Erskine Bowers, and includes 16 others Republicans and Democrats.

MOAA Government Affairs head Col. Steve Strobridge said, "Hold onto your hats. When Simpson sat on a similar commission in the mid-1990s, he expressed the view that COLAs weren't part of the promised federal benefit package and proposed severe limits on COLAs, among

*(Continued on page 12, see LEGISLATIVE)*

- The team installed mirrors so managers can observe the number of cars in line
- They developed standard work processes for all employees (staff/volunteers) and Staff was rearranged based on workload

**They added more detailed guidelines/instructions for using the call-in system:**

- It is mandatory to call-in refills at (813) 828-5367 or (800)272-0201
- Refills must be picked up within 7 days (hand-written scripts will not be accepted in the Drive-Thru lanes)
- When arriving at the Drive-Thru please provide the following:

Last 4#'s of sponsor's SS#; Last & First Name of the patient; Address of patient; the number of refills you are picking-up  
**So call-in your refills and pick-them up at the Drive-Thru pharmacy because there is generally no waiting and the longest anyone waits is 12 minutes.**

(Active duty military in uniform & handicapped patients may go inside the PharmaCARE for service). PharmaCARE Center (8:30am to 5pm M-F), 7101 Kingfisher Dr (MAFB) (813) 828-2226

Accepts hand-written prescriptions from civilian/military doctors. Doctors may also fax prescriptions

All faxed prescriptions must be faxed to (813) 828-0088 from doctor's office (type written/computer generated); Include full name of patient, date of birth, phone # and last four # of sponsor's SSN#

NOTE: Faxed prescriptions for CONTROLLED (NARCOTIC) drugs will not be accepted

Brandon (0730am to 8pm M-F), 220 Grand Regency Dr, Brandon FL (813) 827-9737. ALL patients (retirees included) may order refills via phone-in line to be picked-up at the Brandon Clinic

MAIN CLINIC (0730am to 5pm M-F), 3250 Zemke Ave (MAFB) (813) 827-9300. Prescriptions will ONLY be filled for patients that were put in the computer by Doctors at the Clinic

All pharmacies will be closed all federal holidays and at 1200 on training days (3rd Wednesday of each month). The PharmaCARE and Drive-Thru pharmacies will be closed 29 April for an official function, please plan accordingly. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Lt Col Ghitiana Oatis at 827-9764 or 827-9310. You can also contact us at 6MDG.Patients@macdill.af.mil

ERIN K. O'CONNOR, 1Lt, USAF, BSC, Director of Operations, 6th Medical Group



## MACDILL PHARMACY SERVICES

The Refill Drive-Thru Pharmacy is located behind the PharmaCARE Center at 7101 Kingfisher Dr.; enter the Drive-Thru area from Kingfisher Drive near the Armed Forces ATM machine. There are three lanes open daily from 0830 to 1700. Please pick-up all called-in refills at the Refill Drive-Thru pharmacy.

The MacDill Pharmacy Drive-Thru Service recently completed the AF's AFSO-21 process to tackle long wait times in the Drive-Thru lanes. A team of 15 pharmacy and ABW members worked on the process for 6 months and the end results are astonishing. The average wait time for customers decreased from 16 to 6 minutes and the maximum wait from 30 minutes to 12.6 minutes. The team implemented numerous changes that brought about these great results:

- They installed head-sets to communicate with patients as they drive into the lane
- They installed red/green lights so patients know if lanes are open or closed
- They separated the PharmaCARE service from the Drive-Thru service →

## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER: CDR R R HELVESTON, CHC, USNR (RET)



Someone said that there's nothing wrong with the average person that a good psychiatrist can't exaggerate. But most of us can manage to exaggerate our fears without benefit of psychiatrists and we invariably do until often the fear of the evil is worse than the evil itself. The dread of illness can be more damaging than the illness itself. The fear of failure can be more fatal than failure. Go through the list of phobias which have been multiplied in an age of anxiety and see how many of them are what Archibald MacLeish called, "faceless fears." That is, they have no substance, no shape, no bodily image that you can face or fight. They are shadows: fear of the dark; fear of open places; fear of closed places; fear of criticism; fear of the future; fear of old age; fear of death; all the way to phobophobia which is fear of fear itself. Apparently, those early Christians had plenty of fears so Timothy wrote, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." 2 Timothy 1:7

## TAMPA CHAPTER NEWS CONTINUED



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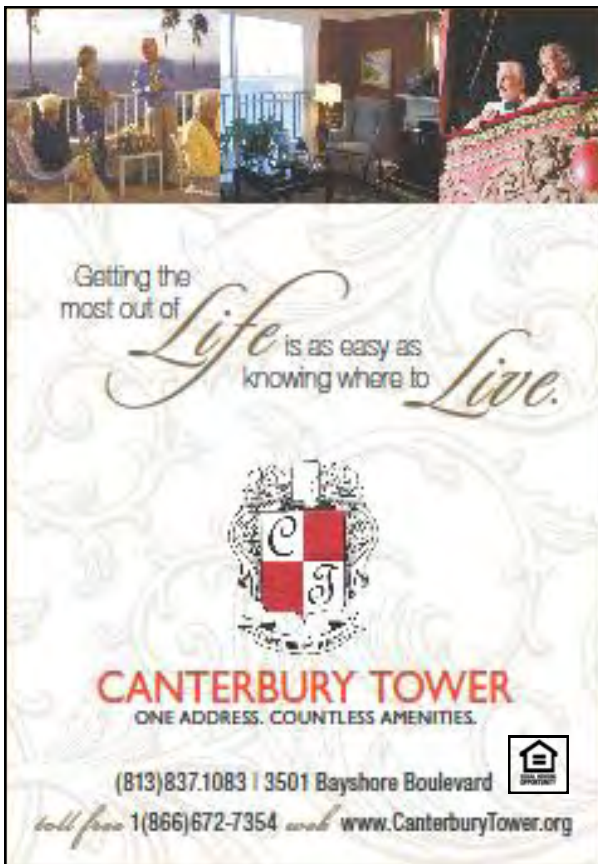
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## BULLETIN BOARD

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS: COL CRAIG BROWN, USA (RET)**

Unfortunately, no new members have joined our Chapter this month.

**TAPS: LT COL ED GEASA, USAF (RET)**

Fortunately, no deaths have been reported.

**A SPONSOR'S NEW ARRIVAL**

Proud grandfather and chapter member Maj John Massey shared the following with us. His daughter, Willa, and her husband, Robert A. Powless, D.M.D., a longtime *RETROSPECT* sponsor, had a son on 16 February 2010 whom they named, Jacob Nicolas. "Grandpa John" wanted to tell us more than just the fact of he and his wife having a new grandson. He wanted to share the unusual fact that his son-in-law and grandson have the same date of birth—16 February!!! How often does that happen? Congratulations!

*Editor*

CG

**OPERATION HELPING HAND RECEIVED GOVERNOR'S POINT OF LIGHT AWARD: CAPT BOB SILAH, USN (RET)**

It has been another busy and rewarding month for Operation Helping Hand, our Chapter's primary project. In discussions with the VA Hospital staff, the good news is that there is a definite slowdown in the number of incoming wounded/injured with many either being medically discharged or going on to various other medical centers for further treatment. As we have in the past years, we stand by to help those being treated and those coming in.

We will celebrate our sixth anniversary at our Operation Helping Hand dinner at the hospital Thursday, 20 May and again when General David Petraeus joins us at our 13 May Chapter luncheon. All Tampa Chapter members are invited to join us.

When we started in May 2004, I never envisioned that we'd still be operating six years later. We have been blessed with superb support from our contributors that has allowed us to provide the necessary assistance to those who need our help.

At the Chapter luncheon in April, RADM Collins, USN (Ret), the Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs presented CAPT Bob Silah, President, Operation Helping Hand, a certificate from Governor Charlie Crist, recognizing Operation Helping Hand at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa with the *Governor's Point of Light Award* and sent the following message:

"Operation Helping Hand at Haley Veterans' Hospital is generously helping our active duty servicemen and women adjust to civilian life upon their return home," said Governor Crist. "The volunteers' compassion and dedication to our veterans' well being and quality of life is a gracious undertaking, and I am grateful they are giving back to those who have given so much to our state and country."

Since our Tampa Chapter agreed to start Operation Helping Hand in 2004, we have assisted more than 600 seriously injured active duty and reserve service members and their visiting families at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital. Through our fundraising efforts, we have been able to give well over \$300,000 in cash or checks directly to service member patients and their families plus an additional \$600,000 in services and materi-

*(Continued on page 5 see OPERATION HELPING HAND)*

## DECORATION DAY INSTITUTED

**HEADQUARTERS GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC**  
**General Orders No.11, WASHINGTON, D.C., May 5, 1868**

- i. The 30th day of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet church-yard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.

We are organized, comrades, as our regulations tell us, for the purpose among other things, "of preserving and strengthening those kind and fraternal feelings which have bound together the soldiers, sailors, and marines who united to suppress the late rebellion." What can aid more to assure this result than cherishing tenderly the memory of our heroic dead, who made their breasts a barricade between our country and its foes? Their soldier lives were the reveille of freedom to a race in chains, and their deaths the tattoo of rebellious tyranny in arms. We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. All that the consecrated wealth and taste of the nation can add to their adornment and security is but a fitting tribute to the memory of her slain defenders. Let no wanton foot tread rudely on such hallowed grounds. Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no vandalism of avarice or neglect, no ravages of time testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided republic.

If other eyes grow dull, other hands slack, and other hearts cold in the solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as the light and warmth of life remain to us.

Let us, then, at the time appointed gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with the choicest flowers of spring-time; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from his honor; let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us a sacred charge upon a nation's gratitude, the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan.

- ii. It is the purpose of the Commander-in-Chief to inaugurate this observance with the hope that it will be kept up from year to year, while a survivor of the war remains to honor the memory of his departed comrades. He earnestly desires the public press to lend its friendly aid in bringing to the notice of comrades in all parts of the country in time for simultaneous compliance therewith.
- iii. Department commanders will use efforts to make this order effective.

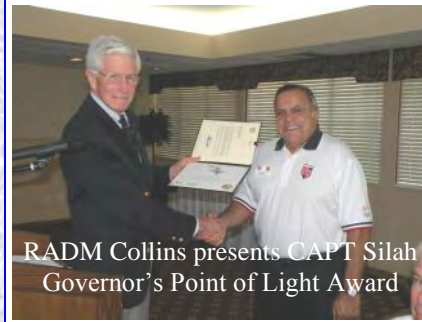
By order of  
**JOHN A. LOGAN**  
 Commander-in-Chief

**N.P. CHIPMAN**  
 Adjutant General

Official:  
**WM. T. COLLINS, A.A.G.**

## TAMPA CHAPTER NEWS CONTINUED

(OPERATION HELPING HAND, continued from page 4)



RADM Collins presents CAPT Silah Governor's Point of Light Award

als such as rental cars, phone cards, prepaid cell phones, and assorted health and comfort items. Coupled with our meeting the requests of these patients and their families each month, we host a

dinner at the hospital for more than 300 service members and their families, hospital staff, volunteers and supporters. The James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital, which serves more than 116,000 veterans, is the busiest of four Polytrauma Facilities in the nation.

AAA-South is the supporting sponsor of the *Governor's Points of Light Award*. This program recognizes Florida residents who demonstrate exemplary service to the community. A panel of judges comprised of leaders in the areas of volunteerism and service evaluate all nominations and make recommendations to the Governor. Usually the award is presented to individuals, but occasionally, the award is presented to outstanding organizations. The Volunteer Florida Foundation manages the program.

CS

## 2010 FLORIDA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS CONVENTION

For details and registration form, go to the Florida Council of Chapters website [www.moaafl.org](http://www.moaafl.org), click on the "convention" tab; then choose "2010" or you can contact Jim Conner at 239-542-5627 or [jmcf1@comcast.net](mailto:jmcf1@comcast.net).

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## TAMPA CHAPTER NEWS CONTINUED

(PETRAEUS, continued from page 1)

Division and then as the Chief of Staff of XVIII Airborne Corps.

General Petraeus was commissioned in the Infantry upon graduation from the United States Military Academy in 1974. He has held leadership positions in airborne, mechanized, and air assault infantry units in Europe and the United States, including command of a battalion in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and a brigade in the 82nd Airborne Division. In addition, he has held a number of staff assignments: Aide to the Chief of Staff of the Army; battalion, brigade, and division operations officer; Military Assistant to the Supreme Allied Commander - Europe; Chief of Operations of the United Nations Force in Haiti; and Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

General Petraeus was the General George C. Marshall Award winner as the top graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Class of 1983. He subsequently earned MPA and Ph.D. degrees in international relations from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, and he later served as an Assistant Professor of International Relations at the US Military Academy. He also completed a fellowship at Georgetown University.

Awards and decorations earned by General Petraeus include two awards of the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, two awards of the Distinguished Service Medal, two awards of the Defense Superior Service Medal, four awards of the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal for valor, the State Department Distinguished Service Award, the NATO Meritorious Service Medal, the Gold Award of the Iraqi Order of the Date Palm, the French Légion d'Honneur, and the National Defense Cross of the Czech Republic. He is a Master Parachutist and Air Assault and Ranger qualified. He has also earned the Combat Action Badge and French, British, and German Jump Wings. In 2005 he was recognized by the U.S. News and World Report as one of America's 25 Best Leaders, and in 2007 he was named by Time magazine as one of the 100 most influential leaders of the year and one of four runners-up for Time Person of the Year. Most recently, he was selected by Foreign Policy magazine as one of the world's top 100 public intellectuals and by Esquire magazine as one of the 75 Most Influential People of the 21st Century.

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USSOCOM Parachute Team the Para-Commandos

The Para-Commandos perform precision freefall parachute demonstrations across the United States, informing the public about the Special Operations Command, it's mission, and the great work being performed by the Special Operations Command's Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen deployed to over

100 countries around the world.

The team normally jumps from an altitude of 12,500 feet above the ground, freefalling approximately 2 miles and reaching speeds in excess of 120 miles per hour wearing smoke canisters on their feet to make them visible to the public below. During their freefall, the members of the team maneuver their bodies like an aircraft to form formations in the sky. When the jumpers approach an altitude of 4,000 feet, they break their formation and glide in different directions, opening their parachutes approximately 2,500 feet above the ground. Once open, the members steer their parachutes and land one behind the other with precision accuracy in the landing area.

The Para-Commandos are all active duty military or Department of Defense civilians assigned to the Special Operations Command. Most are combat veterans and have a Special Operations background. Many served with the US Army Special Forces, commonly known as the elite Green Berets. Others served with US Army Rangers, the world's premier light infantry fighting force. The US Air Force is well represented with specialized combat controllers, para-rescue men and combat air crewmen. The US Navy is represented with US Navy SEALs and Special Warfare Combat Crewmen, and the US Marine Corps is represented by Special Operations Marines.

These men and women all have full time jobs at the Special Operations Command Headquarters, located at MacDill Air Force Base in beautiful Tampa, FL. They volunteer to serve as Para-Commandos as an additional duty, spending their weekends honing their skills and performing for the US public.

The Para-Commandos have performed at numerous military and civilian air shows, college and professional sporting events, and various patriotic, civic and school celebrations throughout the United States, and hope to have the opportunity to perform for you!



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JROTC MOAA Medal presentation photo taken at Newsome High School on March 30th. The medal was presented to Cadet Alexander Fontana by Col. Luke Lloyd, USA (Ret), Tampa Chapter member.



## AROUND THE SERVICES CONTINUED

### COMMENTARY: SOLDIERS SEE SUBTLE SHIFT IN IRAQI CULTURE

(Sgt. Michael J. MacLeod writes for the 1/82 AAB, USD-C)



2nd Lt. Andrew Berreth, a platoon leader of 3rd platoon, Company A, Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division (Advise and Assist), discusses threat activity with Iraqi police officer 1st Lt. Haithem at an Iraqi police checkpoint near Ramadi, Iraq, March 23.

CAMP RAMADI, Iraq—There is a tendency here in Iraq to cast any story in its shadow, to find meaning in not what is but from what was.

Recasting the peace among Anbaris during the recent national election in such terms, we might recall how, only two years ago, a U.S. military official declared Al Anbar province lost. What a difference.

In more clinical terms, the 50 attacks during September 2009 are astounding weighed against the 1,350 in March of 2007.

However, the constant breathing of life into the past can give it

legs of its own: continuing a well-worn narrative, a journalist declares that "a series of blasts shattered the peace in the months leading up to the election," as if the past is the rightful heir to the future, as though a marketing campaign by a handful of terrorists is enough to negate the efforts of a 100,000 boots on the ground and the hopes and determination of millions of Iraqi citizens grown tired of anguish and turmoil.

Sometimes, as 2nd Lt. Andrew Berreth discovered during a recent visit to an Iraqi police checkpoint, it's the subtle shifts, the casual comments, what fringe has grown from the new fabric of Iraqi life that let on where they are as a people and a nation. Just as cattails growing along a water's margin best describe a relative tranquility—the germination of a new way can be both subtle and dramatic.

Berreth is a platoon leader of a route-clearance team: 3rd platoon, Company A, Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division (Advise and Assist). His platoon hunts for roadside bombs. The brigade is of a special type, one developed specifically to partner with Iraqi police and army to harden and sharpen their skills.

Two other engineering platoons in his company are partnered with Iraqi army troops to teach them the latest in route-clearing techniques and tactics - one with 7th Iraqi Army Division in Al Asad, the other with 1st Division in Fallujah. Berreth's team, however, is not partnered, but rather, provides a foundational service—keeping the main supply routes clear and safe for the brigade's other activities to continue. In seven months, 1/82 AAB has taken no casualties to improvised explosive devices.

"We aren't finding much lately," says Berreth. "We'll stop and talk with IP to gather intelligence, find out what they need, and figure out what we can do to assist them. Our advise-and-assist role is to gauge the workability of the traffic control points and to see if they can be improved upon."

Since November, the platoon has found three IEDs, none causing injury. "We see plenty of dead donkeys along the road," said Pfc. Chad Turner.

"And that monkey," added Pfc. Zachary McCoy.

"We swear we've seen a monkey twice," laughed Turner. "The most remarkable thing we've seen is in the improved construction of IP check points."

Outside Ramadi, the IED hunters stopped at an Iraqi police check →



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point to visit with the police. Berreth dismounts his MRAP as does Jorgensen and a handful of others.

Along this stretch of road, there is little noise beside the banter of policemen and U.S. troops. Semi-feral dogs wander in the periphery of light cast by the station's floodlights.

First Lt. Haithem, the officer in charge of the dozen policemen, gathered to chat with the Americans. He reported that the situation is very stable and safe.

"We can walk outside anytime, daylight or dark, and as you can see, everything is safe," he said.

Haithem has been stationed here for 2.5 years. He says his

(Continued on page 9, see *CULTURE*)



## AROUND THE SERVICES CONTINUED

(CULTURE, continued from page 8)

men have learned much from the Americans, techniques such as searching and how to approach dangerous targets. Skills that keep his men alive.

But as much as his men enjoy visiting with the Americans, it is good that they are leaving, he said. "If you stay here, I am going to depend on you. I am going to do nothing."

Berreth asked the silver-haired police officer whether all his men voted in the recent national elections.

"All of my men, without exception," he replied.

"Congratulations on a successful vote."

"We hope," Haithem said wistfully, "We hope everything is okay after the election results are announced."

And casually, as if he were talking to a neighbor, the Iraqi said, "We congratulate you on the healthcare plan in America."

Mildly shocked, Berreth was taken aback.

"You track our news?" he asked.

"Yes we do," responded Ali, another policeman.

"We saw President Obama, and he was so excited and happy."

And, tempted to engage the Iraqis on the healthcare debate, the American paratroopers realized the subtle and astonishing change that had occurred, said Berreth.

Saddam had kept his subjects blinded to the world by prohibiting Internet and cell phones; insurgent and terrorist violence had kept them too afraid and too busy to care. With peace and stability and the tools of a modern, free society on the table before them, Iraqis are picking them up and becoming world citizens. They know what's going on.

"You could stay here five years more, maybe 10," says Haithem, "but then we will do nothing. You have taught us very well, and as you see, all the police are doing their jobs. It is very peaceful now."



### JSF F-35B PERFORMS FIRST VERTICAL LANDING

Headquarters Marine Corps Capt. Craig W. Thomas



HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS, Washington, D.C.—The Marine Corps moved closer today to adding the Joint Strike Fighter F-35B STOVL (Short Take-Off Vertical Landing) variant to its

arsenal. The test plane, BF-1, rode more than 41,000 pounds of thrust to a vertical landing for the first time, confirming its required ability to land in confined areas both ashore and afloat.

"Having the F-35B perform its first vertical landing underscores the reality of the Marine Corps achieving its goal of an all STOVL force," said Lt. Gen. George J. Trautman III, Deputy Commandant for Aviation. "Being able to operate and land virtually anywhere, the STOVL JSF is a unique fixed wing aircraft that can deploy, collocate, train and fight with Marine ground forces while operating from a wider range of bases ashore and afloat than any other TacAir platform."

BF-1 lifted off at 80 knots using less than 1000 feet of runway from Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., at 1:09 EST. About 13 minutes into the flight; the pilot positioned the aircraft 150 →

feet above the airfield, where he brought the F-35 to a hover and then descended to the runway. BF-1 is one of three F-35B STOVL jets currently undergoing flight trials at the Patuxent River test site.

On April 2, 2010, Marine Fighter/Attack Training Squadron - 501 (VMFAT-501) will officially stood up as part of the Joint Integrated Training Center located at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. The work being done at Patuxent River will enable the Marine Corps to start training Marine pilots and maintainers during the fall of 2010.

The Marine Corps anticipates reaching JSF F-35B initial operational capability (IOC) in December 2012. IOC assets will include the first F-35B training squadron of 15 aircraft in VMFAT-501 at Eglin AFB, an operational test and evaluation detachment of 4 aircraft at Edwards AFB, and VMFA-332, the Corps' first operational squadron of 10 aircraft at MCAS Yuma. The VMFA-332 aircraft will be equipped, manned and trained to execute Marine missions and deploy ashore or afloat.

The STOVL F-35B Lightning II is scheduled to replace three different variants of USMC combat aircraft (F/A-18, AV-8B and EA-6B). This 5th generation multi-role fighter has significant advantages over the Marine Corps' current tactical fixed-wing squadrons and will dramatically amplify strategic agility, vastly enhance operational flexibility and capabilities, provide tactical adaptability for basing options ashore and afloat, and reduce aviation training and maintenance costs across the Corps.

The STOVL JSF will carry more ordnance with greater range than the F/A-18 Hornet, operate from austere expeditionary environments like the AV-8B Harrier, and ultimately possess electronic warfare technology similar to the EA-6B Prowler.



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## AROUND THE SERVICES CONTINUED

### INDEPENDENCE BEGINS MAIDEN VOYAGE

From Surface Forces Public Affairs



The new littoral combat ship, USS Independence (LCS 2) is pier side during her commissioning ceremony. Independence is the second of two littoral combat ships designed to operate in shallow water environments to counter threats in coastal regions. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communications Specialist 1st Class Tiffini Jones Vanderwyst/Released)

MOBILE, AL (NNS) -- The Navy's newest littoral combat ship, USS Independence (LCS 2), sailed away from Mobile, AL for the first time 26 March. The milestone marks the commencement of initial testing and evaluation of the aluminum vessel.

"We are excited to set sail, and remain grateful for the incredible support offered by the city of Mobile in helping us reach this milestone," said CDR Curt Renshaw, Independence Blue Crew CO. "This transit will allow us to gain valuable operational experience and is another large step toward bringing our unique and versatile capabilities to the fleet."

Independence's maiden voyage will include stops in Key West and Mayport, FL, before pulling into Naval Station Norfolk, VA for additional testing and specialized crew training.

"This is an exciting time for all of us," said Fire Controlman 1st Class Jeffrey Gibson. "To be a part of bringing the Navy's newest, most advanced ship to the Fleet is something we all take a great deal of pride in."

The littoral combat ship (LCS) is a fast, agile, mission-focused ship that demonstrates the latest in naval technology. The ship is specifically designed to defeat "anti-access" threats in shallow, coastal water regions, including surface craft, diesel submarines and mines. LCS features an interchangeable modular design that allows the ship to be reconfigured to meet mission requirements.

Independence, the Navy's second LCS ship and the first Independence Class LCS, was commissioned 16 Jan in Mobile, AL. It spans 419 feet, has a displacement of 2,800 metric tons and can operate in water less than 20 feet deep. Propelled by four water jets, along with two diesel and two gas turbine engines, Independence is capable of speeds in excess of 45 knots and boasts a range of over 3,500 nautical miles. Independence will be homeported in San Diego.



### TESTIMONIES ON HEALTH CARE BILL AND TRICARE

IAVA is pleased to see that military and veterans health care will not be negatively impacted by the new health care reform bill. Under this new plan, the administration of health care for service members, veterans and their families, will remain protected under the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Throughout the health care conversations over the past several months, IAVA has worked hard to ensure that the best interests of our membership are protected and that new legislation does not infringe on veterans' hard earned right to health care. As the process continues, in the Senate and through its implementation, IAVA will continue to do the same.

It is unfortunate that throughout this debate, some have used→

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service members and veterans as political props instead of focusing on the issues. With the health care vote now complete, we hope the Administration and Congress will work with the VA to improve quality of and access to health care for America's veterans.

Paul Rieckhoff (Director, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America)

As a proud veteran, I want to underscore that the health reform legislation will not adversely impact our nation's veterans. While the bill was inherently clear in its protection of VA health care, after Chairman Skelton's fix, it was also imminently clear that those who depend on Tri-CARE could also rest assured. President Obama stands firm in his commitment to veterans, and that is why he has provided an historic increase in benefits for our veterans and has upheld every pledge to protect the benefits our veterans have earned in service to our nation.

Matt Flavin (White House Director of Veterans and Wounded Warrior Policy, vet who completed deployments to Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq)

The legislation redesigning the administration of health care in America is done. The Fat Lady sings. Unfortunately, rumors, propaganda and hype persist. Tokyo Rose couldn't do a better job of spreading lies about what's happened and how it will affect you. The most militant nattering nabobs of negativity now accept that there aren't any death panels and that the feds won't tell you

(Continued on page 11, see **HEALTH CARE**)



## AROUND THE SERVICES CONTINUED

### RESCUE CREWS FLY INTO HOSTILE ZONES TO SAVE LIVES



Capt. Josh Irvine and Capt. Rob Roth conduct a routine preflight check on a HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter March 5, 2010, at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. Captain Irvine is the crew's aircraft commander and Captain Roth is the mission pilot. Both are assigned to the 66th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron from Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Nancy Hooks)

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (AFNS) -- Men and women of the 41st Expeditionary Rescue Squadron here provide around-the-clock personnel recovery, commonly known as combat search and rescue, for American and coalition warfighters supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.

But unlike past wars where aircraft were lost every week, the mission in Afghanistan has changed and taken on an additional role here in Regional Command-South to conduct casualty evacuations, said Maj. Christopher Escajeda, the 41st ERQS

director of operations.

The majority of the unit is composed mainly of members from the 41st Rescue Squadron from Moody Air Force Base, GA., but the unit also includes aircrew, pararescuemen and support members from the 55th Rescue Squadron at Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ., the 66th Rescue Squadron at Nellis AFB, NV, and the 304th Rescue Squadron from Portland, OR.

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates requires teams to respond within 60 minutes from the time a medical alert drops to the time wheels touch down at a medical facility to transfer a patient to a higher level of care; a concept commonly referred to as the "Golden Hour," he said.

Crews work on a 24/7 operations tempo and are always on alert. Often referred to as the "9-1-1 of southern Afghanistan," the squadron staff provides critical medical care not only for all International Security Assistance Force members, but also for local Afghan civilians, Afghan National Army and Police. Forty to 50 percent of their operations result in the medical evacuation and care of Afghans.

"What makes the (unit members) unique compared to other medical evacuation teams is their training and equipment. They use their personnel recovery and CSAR skill-set to conduct CASEVAC quicker and better than anyone in theater," Major Escajeda said.

They are able to go into hostile situations to rescue downed aircrew or ground forces and have the defensive capabilities to protect their aircraft and troops on the ground.

Pararescue men and combat rescue officers are specially trained for a variety of situations, to include mountaineering, skydiving, and scuba diving, in addition to a variety of specialty training in weapons and rescue equipment. What makes them unique is all pararescuemen are trained paramedics and emergency medical technicians.

HH-60G Pave Hawk aircrews go through years→

of extensive training to include low-level terrain flight, instrument and night-vision goggle use, shipboard operations, and helicopter aerial refueling.

They are some of the world's best trained aviators and can fly in any environment, anywhere in the world, he said.

"Every day these Air Force warriors go into harm's way, ready and willing to do whatever it takes to get to those in need. Risking their lives, they hold true to their motto: These things we do so that others may live," he said.

CS

(HEALTH CARE, Continued from page 10)

doctor how to treat you. But...what about those who receive veterans benefits? I'm being asked, "Jim, is it true veterans with TRICARE will have to purchase additional insurance because TRICARE is not recognized as health coverage under this legislation?"

Don't listen to Rumor Control Headquarters. The current administration has supported veterans causes in ways not seen before. In the pipeline are new AO and Gulf War presumptive benefits, the largest VA budget increase in over 30 years, and innovations not dreamed of in decades. These aren't the people who will weaken your benefits. These are the people who may make your health care system more of a model for others to follow than it is already. And that's a good thing!

Jim Strickland (Vietnam era Army veteran, Veterans Advocate writer)

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**FIRST RUNNER-UP**

MOAA National recently completed judging all Chapters for their annual Communications Award. Chapters are judged according to membership size. In our category, we were awarded 1st Runner-Up for our Web.

See what you think at <http://www.moaatampa.com/> *Editor* 

*(LEGISLATIVE, continued from page 3)*

other things, during the same time period."

The commission is tasked to deliver its recommendations by December 1. That could prove a challenge as 14 of the 18 members must agree on all official commission recommendations. Given the disparity of views among the members, that kind of consensus may be difficult to achieve.

*Col. Ron Buchert, USAF, (Ret.) MOAA Board of Directors (2000-2006)/  
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