

101st celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. holiday



A cake featuring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the noted civil rights activist, stands in the Kellogg, Brown and Root dining facility at the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Main compound in Mosul. Despite being in Iraq, the division still took time out to observe the holiday celebrating civil rights.

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On the cover: Col. Michael Linnington, commander, 3rd Brigade, 187t Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Command Sgt. Maj. Jaoquin Diaz, brigade command sergeant major, fold up the brigade colors symbolizing that 3rd Brigade is leaving Tallafar in northern Iraq and relinquishing comtrol to 1st squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, Arrowhead Brigade. (photo by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson)



Spc. Joshua Hutcheson

From left to right, Lt. Col. Buddy Carmen, commander, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, Arrowhead Brigade, Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander 101st Airborne Divsion (Air Assault) and Col. Michael Linnington, commander 3rd Brigade, 101st, stand at attention during a relief in place ceremony outside the northwestern Iraq town of Tallafar. The ceremony symbolizes the soldiers of the 101st reliquishing control of the area to the new soldiers coming in.

Rakkasans leave things in hands of Strykers

by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson 101st Abn. Div. (AAslt.) PAO

he 187th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) handed over control over part of Northwest Iraq today to the 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, in a ceremony outside the town of Tallafar.

Col. Michael Linnington, commander, 187th, Inf. Rgt. released control to Lt. Col. Buddy Carman, commander, 1st Squadron, 14th Cav. Rgt. during the relief in place ceremony in front of an audience of the leaders of the 101st, including

Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, division commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin L. Hill, division command sergeant major.

Since arriving in Iraq, the 3rd Brigade Rakkasans participated in many key battles during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Once major combat operations stopped, the Rakkasans made their way to Northern Iraq and worked hard on stabilizing and rebuilding the region. They helped with local government elections, trained Iraqi military and police, and worked on several projects in the region, Petraeus said

"(The Rakkasans) have spent \$7 million on over a thousand projects," Petraeus told the audience.

They repaired schools, hospitals, water

treatment centers, oil fields and participated in various other areas such as weapon turn in programs and securing key infrastructure sites.

"(This) showed what could be done to improve the life of the Iraqi people," Petraeus said. "By working with Iraqis of all tribes, ethnicities and religions."

The Rakkasans will soon be leaving for America, leaving the Stryker Brigade in charge of the area and completing projects.

"We look forward to the great accomplishments (1st Sqd, 14th Cav. Rgt.) Will achieve in western Nineveh," Petraeus

First 101st Airborne troops leave Kuwait for Fort Campbell

by Pfc. Thomas Day 40th PAD

AMP WOLVERINE, Kuwait -- The floodgates have opened as the first flights of 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) soldiers left here Wednesday and Thursday from the Kuwait City Airport for Fort Campbell, Ky.

101st Airborne Division soldiers began arriving at Fort Campbell directly from Mosul earlier this month. Those fortunate soldiers were not necessary for the three-day convoys necessary to move their unit's equipment back to Kuwait for shipping home.

The lead elements of the 159th Aviation Regiment, a 101st Airborne unit, are the first to finish processing through Kuwait. The chartered flights were due to arrive home late-afternoon the day after their flights left Kuwait.

"It's a good break that we've all been waiting for," said Sgt. Ruy Diaz of San Juan, Puerto Rico, 159th Aviation Regiment. "It's awesome."

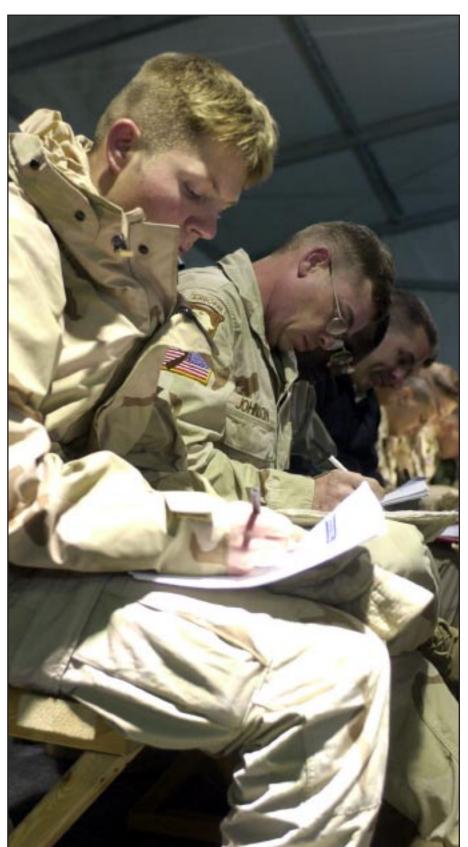
Diaz, like so many soldiers arriving home after their lengthy combat tours, will be coming home to his spouse and kids. His wife Frances and daughters Coraliz, 7, Anbrea, 5, and Alejandra, 3, have waited for his return since March 1. This week they finally got their wish. "They bring joy to my life," Diaz said of his family.

The pre-departure rigmaroles were tedious for certain. Soldiers received briefing after briefing before finally swiping their ID cards and boarding the planes around 1:30 A.M. local time. Col. William T. Harrison, 159th Aviation Regiment commander, made the 45 minute drive from Camp Doha, Kuwait, to the local airport just to send the soldiers off.

"It's been a great honor to serve with you," Harrison said. "Thanks again for everything you've done over here."

For a number of soldiers with the aviation unit, the redeployment culminates their service in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Afghanistan. Chief Warrant Officer 3 Rob Devlin of Clarksville, Tenn., for example, returned home last year after an eight month tour in Afghanistan – only to be whisked away to Kuwait two weeks later to begin what would be a year long combat tour.

His wife Gaylynn and son Brandon, 10, and daughter Vanessa, 6, have endured nearly two years of Devlin deployments. "Being deployed has made the family stronger and made the time that we spend together that much more important. You kind of take that for granted when you're home all the time."



Pfc. Thomas Day

Soldiers from the 159th Aviation Regiment complete their U.S. Customs forms at Camp Wolverine before flying back to Fort Campbell, Ky.



photos by Capt. Andrew D'amico

An AH-64 Apache helicopters from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) lands at a port in Kuwait so that it can be partially disassembled, shrink wrapped and sent home on the U.S.N.S. Benavidez. The "shrink wrap" plastic coating is used to protect the aircraft from exposure to the salt air.

Navy ship steams for U.S. with 101st equipment

by Staff Sgt. Mark Swart 40th PAD

The first of a number of cargo ships transporting 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) equipment back to the United States left port in Kuwait Saturday morning.

Loading the division's equipment onto the U.S.N.S. Benavidez took approximately three days. 101st cargo includes a variety of helicopters, as well as ground equipment such as Humvees and Light Medium Tactical Vehicles. All helicopters were shrink wrapped with plastic to protect them from the ocean environment over the course of the voyage.

Most of the equipment belongs to the 159th Aviation Brigade, which redeployed from Iraq to Kuwait earlier this month. Before being loaded on the ship, all equipment was extensively cleaned, then inspected and certified by U.S. customs. After inspection, equipment was stored in secure "sterile yards" to prevent it from getting dirty or being tampered with.

The ship also underwent a day of maintenance while in port.



CH-47 Chinook helicopters from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) are stored on the upper deck of the U.S.N.S. Benevidez for shipping back to the United States. The "shrink wrap" plastic coating is used to protect the aircraft from exposure to the salt air.

"Four Corners" provides easy, one-stop method of downloading equipment for redeploying soldiers

by Pfc. Thomas Day 40th PAD

AMP VICTORY, Kuwait -- One of the first tasks for soldiers crossing into Kuwait on their way home is to turn over all equipment that won't be heading home. At camps throughout Kuwait used by the 101st, that potentially cumbersome process has been organized and expedited with a streamlined system called "Four Corners."

"It prepares them for redeployment by getting rid of all the equipment they don't need," said Maj. Kevin Berry, whose unit, the 356th Quartermaster Battalion,, took control of the Four Corners operations at the beginning of the year. "The whole reason we have Four Corners is so all redeploying units can turn in their supplies so they can be reissued in theatre."

The Coalition's giant recycling bin is collecting ammunition, Meals Ready-to-Eat (MREs), cots, body armor, chemical protective equipment, barrier materials, and repair products. These will be reissued to units on their way into Iraq for the second wave of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

One vehicle, according to Berry, typically takes around 30 minutes to unload and calibrate all its equipment.

Recently, no unit has appreciated the speedy system like the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), which is currently in middle of redeployment operations after a nearly one-year combat tour.

"There's a lot of excess stuff coming from the units from up north, like say the water and MREs," said Staff Sgt. Reginal Brooks, a supply noncommissioned officer with the division. "It's a great help to the units to have one designated point to download."

The division's First Brigade is currently moving through Four Corners at Camp Arifjan; additional units will be unloading equipment at both camps in the coming weeks.

The name "Four Corners" is somewhat misleading, the unloading regimen is not a four-step process as the name might suggest. In fact, the origins of the name "Four Corners" come from the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Ca., where their similar equipment recycling center takes the same name.



Elements of the 187th Infantry Regiment cross into Kuwait for redeployment. One of their first stops will be the Four Corners, where they will turn in any equipment that they will no longer need.

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Linnington thanked his soldiers for their exceptional duty and Iraqis for their help in restoring the country.

"Today is a great day for the Rakkasan soldiers who are heading home to family and friend," he said.

Linnington also spoke about the deeds his soldiers accomplished during their year in Iraq and his eagerness to return to America.

"It's been a whirlwind journey with adventures not imagined," Linnington said. "It feels great, I'm relieved. I think that we set the conditions for continued success in this region. There's a lot of work to be done and Task Force Warhorse is the unit to

Carman spoke about his readiness to finish off where the 101st soldiers

"Thank you for your excellent

work," he told the Rakkasans. "We have our work ahead of us now. We're up to the task and poised to complete this mission so that one day we too will return to our fami-

"I'm excited. It's a big challenge, but this unit's ready, and the Rakkasans have set us up for success," Carman said.

The departing soldiers are ready to get home to their families, and satisfied with the job they did to bring stability and peace to Iraq.

"It feels great," said Sgt. Rickey Flagg, Charlie Company, 326th Engineer Battalion, attached to 3rd Bn. 187th Inf. Rgt. "I've been away a whole year and my wife had my first son on Aug. 13th.

"I think we've done a lot for these people. They've been oppressed for years and we came over here and helped them learn how to live independently," he said.