



Photo by David Ruderman

Maliana and Command Sgt. Maj. Ioakimo Falaniko of 1st Armored Division's Division Engineers, point to the name of their son, Pvt. Jonathan Falaniko, who was killed Oct. 27, 2003, while on patrol in Baghdad.

## Remembering the fallen

Wiesbaden monument dedicated to 'our heroes'

By David Ruderman  
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Task Force 1st Armored Division Soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom were memorialized in a solemn ceremony on Wiesbaden Army Airfield Oct. 7.

In consecrating a monument to the 130 Task Force Soldiers killed in the line of duty, their families, friends, commanders and fellow Soldiers will ensure the memory of their lives and sacrifice will be remembered among the living, said division leaders.

"We remember the Soldiers of the Task Force who are listed before us on the monument, who now rest in your dwelling place in paradise," said 1st AD Chaplain (Lt. Col.) LaMar Griffin in his invocation. "Inspire us with renewed faith, greater devotion and courage as we face the challenges of the world. ... Grant each of us a consuming desire that dignity and freedom might become available to all mankind. ... For this high and noble purpose we dedicate our lives to God and country."

"Heroes live their lives with courage, and I'm sure you'll agree with me that we know a lot more about real courage today than we did a year ago," said Maj. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, 1st AD commander, addressing the assembly.

"Today we remember those Soldiers who gave all. The Soldiers we memorialize here today did their duty for our nation, for the ideals that define us, for their families and for you and me — their fellow Soldiers.

"At an age when most young men and women worry about who will advance to the next round of American Idol, which team will make the Super Bowl or who's ahead in the NASCAR standings, they took a stand and decided that they would try to make a difference in the world."

**'Shouldn't mourn them'**  
"We really can't honor them; they did that for themselves. And we really shouldn't mourn them because their lives weren't taken; they were given. We should celebrate their lives, remember their families and recommit ourselves to the hard work remaining to ensure we live up to their example."

"This memorial monument will ensure that others remember with us. ... I know I speak for all of you in promising that we will not forget. We will live up to their example. We

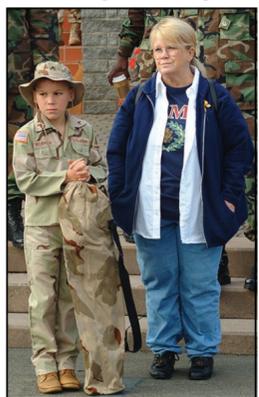


Photo by Karl Weisel  
Michael King, age 11, and Phyllis Morrow pay their respects at the Wiesbaden memorial dedication.

will continue our mission and we will make it matter," said Dempsey.

He and Command Sgt. Maj. Roger P. Blackwood laid a wreath at the replica of the monument that will be erected on the division's parade ground.

"It was a great ceremony, very moving," said Command Sgt. Maj. Ioakimo Falaniko of Division Engineers, 1st AD. He and his wife Maliana inspected the memorial which bears among others the name of their son, Pvt. Jonathan Falaniko, Company A, 70th Engineer Battalion, 1st AD, who was killed Oct. 27, 2003, while on patrol in Baghdad, Iraq.

"I'm leaving on the 25th of this month to go visit him in Arlington National Cemetery, and I'll visit all the heroes over there," said Falaniko.

"These kinds of ceremonies are very necessary to the memory of our heroes," said Capt. Jaan Kapp, defense attache at the Estonian Embassy in Berlin, one of the high ranking officials at the ceremony. "The Estonian navy stands ready at any time to participate in strengthening freedom and democracy."

"They were a lot of really great guys. It's kind of sad," said Spc. Patrick Wickens, 4-27th Field Artillery. Wickens was one of a dozen severely wounded Soldiers who returned to Germany from the United States to witness the ceremony. Wickens lost his right leg and continues to undergo physical rehabilitation at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

"We've got a lot of friends up there," he said, gesturing to the names on the monument.



Photo by Karl Weisel

Soldiers of the 1st Armored Division's brigades and battalions parade on Wiesbaden Army Airfield during the Welcome Home Celebration Oct. 7.

# Welcoming them home in Wiesbaden

By Karl Weisel  
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

It was a striking contrast to the reception U.S. Soldiers received upon their return from Vietnam three decades ago.

The fourth in a series of Welcome Home Celebrations for 1st Armored Division Soldiers, Wiesbaden's was yet another day to observe the end of a long 15 months in Iraq, to remember those killed and wounded, and to celebrate the reunion of friends and families.

"You have worked for the cause of liberty and the peace of the world," said Ambassador Daniel R. Coats, U.S. ambassador to Germany. "You and your fellow Soldiers are changing the course of history in Iraq. ... We can never thank you enough for what you did."

"We rejoice in this moment, but we also remember your fellow Soldiers who fell in combat," Coats added.

The day started with a tribute to 130 division Soldiers who failed to return from Operation Iraqi Freedom and the dedication of a monument in their honor at the 1st Armored Division parade field (see related story).

Phyllis Morrow, wife of Sgt. Robert Morrow, and 11-year-old Michael King (dressed in a desert

combat uniform) stood by as Maj. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, 1st AD commander, recalled "heroes who lived their lives with courage."

"It hurts," said Morrow. "Some of these guys were in my husband's unit."

As Soldiers and families gathered at the monument after the dedication, they shared memories with friends and the media before moving on to the airfield for a day of celebration including a formal ceremony, entertainment, free food and a host of children's games.

"President Bush said the enemies of freedom would hear from America and they did — they heard from you," said Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary of defense, during remarks on the airfield.

"Our enemies will never forget, and our friends will always remember what the 1st Armored Division did in Iraq," — Paul Wolfowitz.

Reading from a letter written by President George W. Bush, Wolfowitz said, "Our country is proud of your service and I am proud to be your commander in chief."

"This is the way we should do things," said Joe Mulligan, commander of the Veterans of Foreign



Photo by Karl Weisel

Joe Mulligan (center), commander of VFW Post 27, talks to Soldiers, veterans and family members at the Welcome Home Celebration.

Wars Post 27 and a Gulf War veteran, about the Welcome Home Celebrations. "I had good friends who came back from Vietnam and were spit on. Regardless of what your politics are, that's no way to treat folks."

"People have to remember that these are all volunteers out there doing the country's work," said Mulligan. "These are some of America's finest."

Having supported the Wiesbaden Welcome Home Celebration with a financial contribution, Mulligan said, the VFW helps ensure continued protection of future military benefits. "A lot of folks don't understand the power of this organization. It's impor-

tant to the Soldiers because we're the 13th most important lobbying group on Capitol Hill. We fight the fight for all services. ... VFW does incredible things across the country — it's very community and family oriented."

Among VFW lobbying efforts, he said, are moves to sustain GI Bill benefits, obtain better health care and ensure the needs of the more than 9,000 wounded service members in Operation Iraqi Freedom are taken care of when they leave the military [for more information about local VFW posts, call Mulligan at civ (0171) 2229359].

Being deployed for so long made Sgt. 1st Class Timothy O'Bryan, 501st



Photo by David Ruderman

USO volunteer Anne Shewmaker hands out teddy bears. Photo left: Pfc. Matthew Cutting, 501st Military Intelligence Battalion, enjoys a mechanical bull ride.

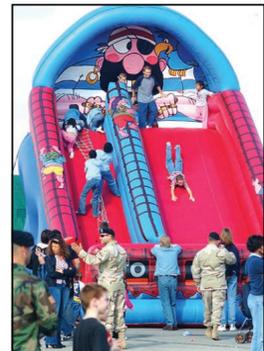


Photo by David Ruderman

Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, V Corps commander, talks to the media in Wiesbaden. Photo left: Children go for a giant slide on the airfield.



Photo by Karl Weisel

Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary of defense, talks with Purple Heart recipient Staff Sgt. Jason Pepper of Company B, 16th Engineer Battalion, his wife Heather (right) and mother-in-law Denise von Wieckl. Pepper suffered major injuries after an attack in Iraq including the loss of his vision.

Military Intelligence Battalion, appreciate more the routine of day-to-day life, his wife and three children. "While you're gone you miss them immensely. You do appreciate the family a whole lot more after the deployment."

"Every minute I can spend with them I do," said O'Bryan, who first saw photos of his newborn son on email and later by video teleconference. "It was real heart wrenching to see them on a video when you can't

touch them."

"We owe it to our children and our grandchildren to make the world a safer place," said Roland Koch, Hessen's minister president, during remarks.

"We live in a dangerous world and it's going to become even more dangerous," Koch said, citing the "deep-rooted friendship" between the United States and Germany which will prevail.

While Soldiers served in Iraq,

Hessen and Rheinland-Pfalz authorities provided a range of support for Soldiers and families in Germany including free recreation, trips, security support by the police and German army, and day-long outings such as Rhein River boat cruises, a Christmas party in Wiesbaden's Schloss Biebrich and an open house at Hessenpark.

"It's a great honor and a privilege to be here and to wish you a warm welcome," Koch said.