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## Chaplain inspires hope, courage in soldiers

*Editor's Note: The following story was submitted to the Heppner Gazette-Times by Staff Sgt. Pat Caldwell, 3rd Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs.*

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq—Silhouetted against the shadows of a dozen Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, the chaplain prayed.

He prayed for the men standing around him in a semi-circle; he prayed for their families back home in places like Oregon and Idaho. He prayed for their spouses and daughters and sons and brothers and most of all, he prayed that on this cold January night, the men in the MRAPs would be safe.

Then the prayer ended. The soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 103rd Sustainment Brigade (Expeditionary), slowly began to wander away, back to their MRAPs that would, in a few short hours, carry them down a stretch of Iraqi highway that may or may not be safe.

A soldier lingered. He chatted with 1st Lt. Jock Johnson, chaplain for 3rd Battalion, 116th Cav. Regt., 3rd Sus. Bde. Then, he too walked away, back to his MRAP.

"It was good," Johnson said. "I think they appreciate that the chaplain showed up." Johnson walked slowly down the line of MRAPs from Alpha Company, 3rd Bn., 116th Cav. Regt., 3rd Sus. Bde., talking, laughing, pointing. He stood at the end of the line and surveyed the vehicles.

For Johnson, the very act of meeting and praying with soldiers before they go outside the wire carries its own kind of significance, its own form of sanctity. There, down the line of MRAPs, the 3rd Battalion chaplain can recognize devotion and fellowship and, in a strange way, purity.

"This is one of those things you can't measure," he said.

He probably wouldn't label his profile as a "beacon of light" to soldiers, but Johnson fills a role that is distinctive, at times challenging and more often than not, rewarding.

Chaplains are woven into the very fabric of today's Army. They exist at a rare intersection between counselor and religious mentor where they balance faith with the mission and nurture soldiers while



First Lt. Johnson, chaplain for 3rd Battalion, 116th Cav. Regt., 3rd Sus. Bde. prays with soldiers in Iraq. —Contributed Photo

furnishing a foundation of encouragement.

"The chaplain's role is kind of unique in that we provide religious support and, at the same time, we offer aspects of well-being life counseling," Johnson said.

More than 25,000 chaplains have served in Army ranks through its history, and more than 700 are now serving soldiers in places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

As a chaplain, Johnson must minister to a large group of men and women with diverse beliefs. Some are Catholic or Protestant or Baptist. Some place their convictions in other faiths. All of them though, by virtue of their calling as soldiers, are members of Johnson's ministry in Iraq.

"I think my job is real critical," Johnson said. "It isn't [as] critical when

things are going well. But it is when things are not going so well."

One key goal of chaplains in the Army is to help with the free exercise of religion, an aim Johnson takes seriously. "My job allows soldiers to express themselves and protect their religious practices," he said.

Johnson is well-versed in scripture and can discuss religious philosophy easily, but his real focus is on the average soldier. It is there, among the soldiers, where Johnson said he secures the most reward. "Me going out to a CET [Convoy Escort Team] shows them I'm approachable. I'm someone they can confide in. The easiest thing (about my job) is going out and visiting troops. I enjoy praying with the troops," Johnson said.

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HEPPNER

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## City to continue with sheriff's police service Approves \$181,272 contract

By David Sykes

The city of Heppner will once again use the county sheriff's department for its police services, the council ruled Monday night.

After a lengthy discussion with Sheriff Ken Matlack, the council voted unanimously to move forward with the \$181,272 contract for the coming year's police services. The amount, and the services the sheriff will provide, remain almost the same as in past years.

Before approval however, the council spent quite a bit of time going over details of the contract on how to improve the service they are receiving. "This is a lot of money and basically we want to know are we getting our money's worth," councilmember Judy Buschke said. "We have a lot of concerns," Mayor Les Paustian told Matlack. Most council members said they had also heard comments from Heppner citizens wondering if the city was getting its money's worth.

"Are the people getting what they pay for?" councilmember Keith Lewis asked. "We have two people (deputies) but we don't know when they are working." Under the contract the city gets 80

hours of police patrolling per week, which works out roughly to two deputies working 40 hours each per week in Heppner. Questions were raised if the city was getting those 80 hours of coverage. Matlack reassured the council that the city was getting the hours they are paying for.

"We have a schedule. It is just not made public," he said. He said that City Manager Dave DeMayo knows what the deputies' patrol schedules are but the information is not made public so law breakers cannot use the information.

Mayor Paustian said a lack of communication between the sheriff's department and the city has sometimes been an issue. "We have had police commission meetings and I don't think our concerns are making it out the door," he told Matlack. "We are paying some pretty good sized dollars and people don't think they are getting their money's worth," he added.

Matlack said he would like to see deputies in the Heppner area get out of their vehicles more and meet people. "I know we have deputies who have benefited from getting out of their cars. I want deputies to engage with people," he said. Deputies are ro-

tated between the north and south ends of the county, and Matlack said he has to impress upon his deputies that policing in the north end is different than in Heppner. "There is flexibility in Heppner," Matlack said in how he wants deputies to interact with residents here. "You don't have gang bangers here and we can be more user-friendly, so to speak," he told the council. He said he likes to see deputies give more warnings on the first minor offense and that seems to work better in the Heppner area. "But then we want them to know that if we catch them again they are going to get hammered," he said.

Some council members said they would like to be kept more informed on what is going on around town. They cited times in the past when deputies would attend council meetings and pass out code infraction pictures (such as yard trash and abandoned vehicles), and also a police log to the council members to keep them up on police activities. "We are not getting that anymore. We want to know what is going on," council member Cindy Doherty said. She said that as an elected official she wants to be able

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## City moves forward with improvements to Hager Park

By David Sykes

The Heppner City Council Monday gave its okay for the city to spend \$14,000 for purchase of a picnic pavilion and playground set for Hager Park. The equipment was purchased from a Baker company and will be kept in storage until 2012 when the Army National Guard will be in Heppner to put in the equipment. City Manager Dave DeMayo also announced that he gave approval to develop the north end of the park into a soccer field.

In other business the council learned that the Heppner Fire Department has negotiated a new contract with the Rural Fire District that will give the department 70 percent of its annual gross income from taxes. City Fire Chief Rusty Estes said, "They came up with this and we are very happy with it."

Estes also said fire-

man Steve Rhea is applying for a \$9,000 Wildhorse grant that would be used to purchase a new piece of rescue equipment that will help cut people out of car wrecks in conjunction with the Jaws of Life already used by the fire department.

Heard that the St. Patrick's Senior Center has four vacancies. Housing Authority Chairman and city council member Judy Buschke said they have more applications but restrictions on the amount of income have kept some people from being able to move in. Some of the rooms require that a person have no more than \$18,000 per year in income in order to live there.

The council heard from Public Works Director Brian Harmon who said the crew had discovered a major leak on the city's main line between well one and two that had been cause a

loss of "50 percent of the water. It was major," Harmon told the council. He said the leak was fixed.

Anderson and Perry engineers will be at the next council meeting to talk about the upcoming city sewer upgrade project.

The council voted to continue its auditing contract with Barnett and Moro to provide the city yearly financial audit for \$9,800.

Learned that the city will mostly likely purchase a HUD (Housing and Urban Development) repossessed home in Heppner for \$1. The house is located on Chase Street. HUD has a program where cities may purchase repossessed homes after they are on the market unsold for a certain length of time.

Sheriffs Report for January 2011

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## Morrow County School Board officially hires Dirksen, Mendoza

The Morrow County School Board Monday night officially approved hiring Dirk Dirksen as district superintendent and George Mendoza as assistant superintendent.



Dirk Dirksen

Dirksen replaces current Superintendent Mark Burrows who will retire at the end of this school year and Mendoza replaces current Assistant Superintendent Phyllis Danielson who also retires at the end of the school year.



George Mendoza

Dirksen is currently

the Riverside High School principal and Mendoza the RHS assistant principal.

The board opted to dispense with interviews of other candidates upon Burrows' recommendation to hire the two from within the district based on their job performance.

At the meeting, the board approved a 2011-2012 service plan with the newly-formed Intermountain Education Service District. IMESD resulted from a state recommended merger of the Umatilla-Morrow ESD and Union Baker ESD.

Intermountain ESD provides services to Morrow County School District and Ione School District, as well as the following districts: Athena, Echo, Helix, Hermiston, Milton-Freewater, Pendleton, Pilot Rock, Stanfield, Ukiah, Umatilla, Cove, Elgin, Imbler, LaGrande, North Powder, Union, Baker City, Unity and Halfway.

Intermountain ESD provides programs for children with special needs, technology support, school improvement services and administrative and support services.

According to information supplied by Michael Lasher, Umatilla-Morrow ESD deputy superintendent, UMESD will lose \$223,260 for the 2010-11 fiscal year, based on budget expenditures. UBESD has \$232,424 in unspent resolution funds.

UMESD's budgeted funds for 2010-2011 include: \$3,100,000 from local property taxes, \$2,399,713 from state school support; \$98,390 from federal stimulus monies for \$5,598,103 in total state school support funds with 90 percent dedicated to resolution services for \$5,038,293 in total resolution services funding.

UMESD's 2010- —See SCHOOL DISTRICT/ Page TEN

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