



**3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command
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Mortuary affairs Soldiers in Mosul deal with stressors

By Cpt. Natalia Mercedes-Williams
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CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE MAREZ-EAST, Iraq — Mortuary Affairs
Soldiers here, in one of the most dangerous spots in Iraq, deal with stress in different ways.

“It takes a lot to do this job,” said Staff Sgt. Stittgen, mortuary affairs collection point non-commissioned officer in charge, 111th Quartermaster Co., 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade.

Mortuary affairs Soldiers recover, process, and ship the remains of U.S. service members, Department of Defense contractors, Coalition forces and Iraqi Security Forces who lose their lives while supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Stittgen goes for long runs most days.

“It is a real stress burner and I feel pretty good physically and mentally,” Stittgen said. “That is one way to handle this job and the situations that come with it.”

Stittgen’s team arrived at Marez-East in November of 2008. They will be deployed for six months due to the psychological stress that is an occupational by-product of the performance of their mortuary affairs duties in a combat zone.

This particular team is composed of the following Soldiers: Spc. Britney Brooks, from Virginia Beach, Va., Spc. Jesus Munoz Aviles, from Arecibo, P.R., Spc. Kimberly Gallegos, from Pueblo, Colo., Spc. Kenneth McWilliams, from Philadelphia, Miss., Spc. Eduardo Santiago Bonilla, from Aguada, P.R., and Staff Sgt. John Stittgen Jr., from Frederick, Md.

“The way I cope with the stress of the job is by reading my Bible and praying,” said McWilliams. “I love my MOS (military occupational specialty).”

The priority of the team is to treat all remains with dignity and respect; ensuring American casualties return to the continental United States as quickly as possible.



Spc. Jesus Munoz Aviles, from Arecibo, P.R.; Spc. Kimberly Gallegos, from Pueblo, Colo.; Spc. Britney Brooks, from Virginia Beach, Va.; Spc. Kenneth McWilliams, from

Philadelphia, Miss.; and Staff Sgt. John Stittgen Jr., from Frederick, Md.; all members of the MAPC (mortuary affairs collection point) team, 111th Quartermaster Co., 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, at Contingency Operating Site Marez-East, Iraq, recover, process, and ship the remains of U.S. service members, Department of Defense contractors, Coalition forces and Iraqi Security Forces who lose their lives while supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. The team arrived at Marez-East in November of 2008, and is five months into a six-month deployment due to the psychological stress that is an occupational byproduct of the performance of their mortuary affairs duties in a combat zone. (Photo by Sgt. Jerome Gisclair)