

America supports you

Rumsfeld praises actor Sinise for troop support

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American Forces Press Service

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — Each week the cast of “CSI: NY” uses scientific skill to solve mysteries. But the reason Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld visited the show’s set in Studio City here Aug. 4 was no mystery: actor Gary Sinise is a solid supporter of U.S. servicemembers, and Rumsfeld’s a big fan of Sinise and his efforts.

Rumsfeld visited the CSI set to thank Sinise personally for his support of the “America Supports You” program through his “Operation Iraqi Children” effort.

Sinise, who stars in “CSI: NY” as Detective Mac Taylor, co-founded Operation Iraqi Children with Seabiscuit author Laura Hillenbrand in March 2004. The organization collects and ships school supplies and toys to Iraq for distribution by U.S. troops, providing much-needed materials for Iraqi children while boosting the morale of the servicemembers who pass them out, Sinise said.

In addition, Sinise has made two visits to Iraq as part of USO shows and uses his rock group, “The Lt. Dan Band,” named after the character Sinise played in the movie, “Forest Gump,” to entertain the troops.

Rumsfeld praised Sinise’s efforts to the cast and crew of “CSI: NY,” who took a short break from shooting an episode during his visit.

The tides were temporarily turned on the set, as the show’s cast and crew gathered around Rumsfeld, shaking hands, snapping photos and asking for autographs, as they watched Rumsfeld and Sinise step into Sinise’s trailer for a private chat.

“I’ve never seen Gary so excited,” said Anthony E. Zuiker, creator of the CSI franchise and executive producer of “CSI: NY.”

“This man is such a patriot and loves his country so much,” Zuiker said.

So much so, Zuiker said, that he always knows the perfect gift to give Sinise for his birthday or any other special occasion: a check for his



TECH. SGT. KEVIN J. GRUENWALD

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld (right) and actor Gary Sinise tour the set of the series CSI: NY, during a visit to CBS Studios in Los Angeles Aug. 4.

Operation Iraqi Children effort.

Rumsfeld, who joked with Sinise about going to rival high schools in Chicago, told the cast about “all the wonderful things this man has done for the men and women in uniform across the country.” He thanked Sinise for his personal involvement in supporting the troops and presented him with a commemorative Pentagon paperweight and official secretary of defense coin to add to Sinise’s extensive coin collection gathered during

troop visits.

The secretary also shared Sinise’s hopes of expanding the program into Afghanistan as well as Iraq.

Sinise told the American Forces Press Service he feels honored to be doing his part of help the troops. “They need us out there,” he said. “We’re blessed in this country to have an all-volunteer service, not a mandatory service. And I feel obligated to support them as they keep very, very busy on several fronts.”

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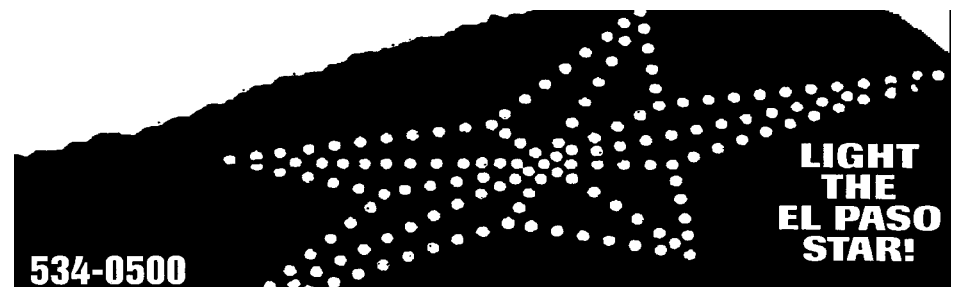
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