

# She's heading for Iraq, instruments and band in tow

FRONT PAGE

Music and faith inspire  
King scholar to entertain  
U.S. troops in Mideast

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Good will played a part in it, but when The Fuzz Band applied three years ago to entertain U.S. troops abroad, the main motivation was to heighten its own profile and win new fans.

Applicants were asked to select which areas of the world they hoped to visit, recalled singer Nakia Madry, who grew up singing songs of the spirit as the daughter of the Rev. Jack E. Madry of the Madry Temple, a Pentecostal church in New London.

"You could pick a Caribbean tour, a

Mediterranean tour, a Southeast Asian tour," she said. "We actually asked to go anywhere but Iraq."

But in entertaining as well as soldiering, the military doesn't guarantee a choice. When Armed Forces Entertainment (AFE) finally called, offering a Middle Eastern concert tour departing today and returning March 10, The Fuzz Band said yes.

"You change, and I guess we've grown a lot," said the 29-year-old Madry last week from her home in Hampton, Va., where the eight-member band was formed.

"Strangely, I'm not afraid at all," she said. "We'll have a military escort everywhere we go. And I'm a strong believer in God."

In 1993, Nakia Madry was the winner of a local Martin Luther King Jr. scholarship. She graduated from East Lyme High School in 1994, and went on to earn a bachelor's de-

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Courtesy of Nakia Madry

■ Nakia Madry, left, a graduate of East Lyme High School, recipient of a local King scholarship and the daughter of a local minister, poses with some members of a band she will travel with to the Mideast.

## Band to take its music to Mideast to entertain U.S. soldiers

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gree from Hampton University in Hampton, Va.

Last year she received a master's degree in business administration, specializing in marketing, from Old Dominion University.

"Nakia has always been extremely independent, strong-willed and strong-minded," said her father. "She knew where she wanted to go, and was a take-control type of person. Everything she did, she was just driven."

He said his daughter told him she weighed the risks and requirements of this trip against the rewards, and concluded she had to go.

For security reasons, Madry didn't have her precise itinerary, but expected it to include stops in Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates.

The band's expenses will all be paid, but they won't receive a salary, which is why they only signed up for a 3-week tour, she said.

"Most of us are employed," she said, "and one is in college." She works in sales at the Virginian Pilot newspaper in Hampton, focusing on online employment services.

The entire AFE tour will be con-

finied to U.S. military installations, Madry said, and they'll fly between engagements to avoid running into an IED (improvised explosive device). "No road travel whatsoever," she said. "Guaranteed."

Still, the risks everywhere are real.

Thursday night The Fuzz Band gave a farewell concert in Hampton, where Madry said they were the talk of the town. Driving to and from her day job, she said, she heard all about her upcoming tour on the radio.

One disc jockey opined, "What, are they crazy?"

Madry described The Fuzz Band's music as an eclectic mix of jazz, rhythm and blues, hip-hop, rock, classical and reggae. Each band member gets a chance to be out front on the music they love best, she said.

While Madry loves gospel, it wasn't her calling. "Both my grandfathers were pastors as well," she said, "so I was raised on church music." But her family encouraged her to explore other genres, she said, noting that her father is a jazz pianist. Her one regret, she said, is that she didn't stick with piano lessons.

Madry wrote six of the songs on The Fuzz Band's latest album, "Colli-

sion," a follow-up to "Without Boundaries" in 2003. The band's name derives from "Peach Fuzz," nickname of band leader Duane Smith.

If Madry's parents are worried about this trip, they've resolved not to show it.

"I've always taught that to be successful, you have to take risks," said the Rev. Jack E. Madry, who offers motivational enhancement classes at his Pentecostal Temple and dispensed a good deal of it at home.

He and his wife, Faye, live in Preston. They also have a 26-year-old son, Joaquin, who is an attorney.

"I have faith in her ability, and faith in her dreams," the Rev. Madry

said. "Of course this is dangerous, but it's great exposure, and something she'll never be able to do again in her life. We're just hoping and praying that everything will go well."

Nakia Madry said her group will take a commercial flight to Germany from Dulles International Airport, followed by a military flight to Kuwait.

She packed everything she was told to, including "massive amounts of sun screen" and "one thing (that) was funny": a treated bed net.

Madry said she's read that AFE is having a hard time recruiting entertainers either because they are

afraid, or opposed to the war.

"Politically, I'm not going to get into it," she said. "Our stance is, you don't have to support the war to support the troops."

Aside from performing, what Madry is most looking forward to is delivering personal messages to the troops from friends and family. It won't be possible to find everyone, she said, but the band can at least "yell out their names from the stage."

Mothers have been leaving messages on their Web site that say, "Please tell my son I love him," she said.

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