

Mideast briefs:**Online financial analysis made available to troops****Stars and Stripes**

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WASHINGTON — The University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business is offering free online financial analysis lectures to military personnel stationed around the world.

The effort, also sponsored by the Chartered Financial Analysts Society of Los Angeles, is designed to prepare troops interested in the career field a chance to study and prepare for the CFA qualification tests, regardless where they are stationed.

The CFA designation typically takes three years of classwork and three separate exams. The USC program for off-site military members will begin in January, school officials said.

Servicemembers must apply to the program in advance to participate. Applications and more information on the program are available at www.cfala.org.

2 Army officers convicted in contract rigging

WASHINGTON — A pair of Army officers were convicted this week of bribery and fraud charges for a contract rigging scheme that diverted millions in Iraqi reconstruction money into their pockets.

Department of Justice officials said Col. Curtis Whiteford, formerly military official in charge of contracting for the Coalition Provisional Authority's South Central region, and Lt. Col. Michael Wheeler, a soldier in his command, were found guilty by a federal jury in Trenton, N.J.

The men were part of a larger scheme to divert \$8.6 million in federal contracts to businessman Philip Bloom, who in turn gave Whiteford, Wheeler and three other accomplices new cars, jewelry, liquor and more than \$1 million in cash.

Bloom admitted to the crimes in March 2006, and is currently serving a four-year prison term.