

The Marne Express

"Mission, Soldiers, Teamwork"

Volume 2, Issue 4

Serving the Soldiers of Task Force Baghdad

April 10, 2005

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Express*



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Gaining ground ...

Iraqi, U.S. forces work side-by-side in Baghdad

TF Baghdad Press Release
Special to The Marne Express

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces and Task Force Baghdad Soldiers are gathering strength and putting a dent in the fighting capabilities of international terrorists and insurgents.

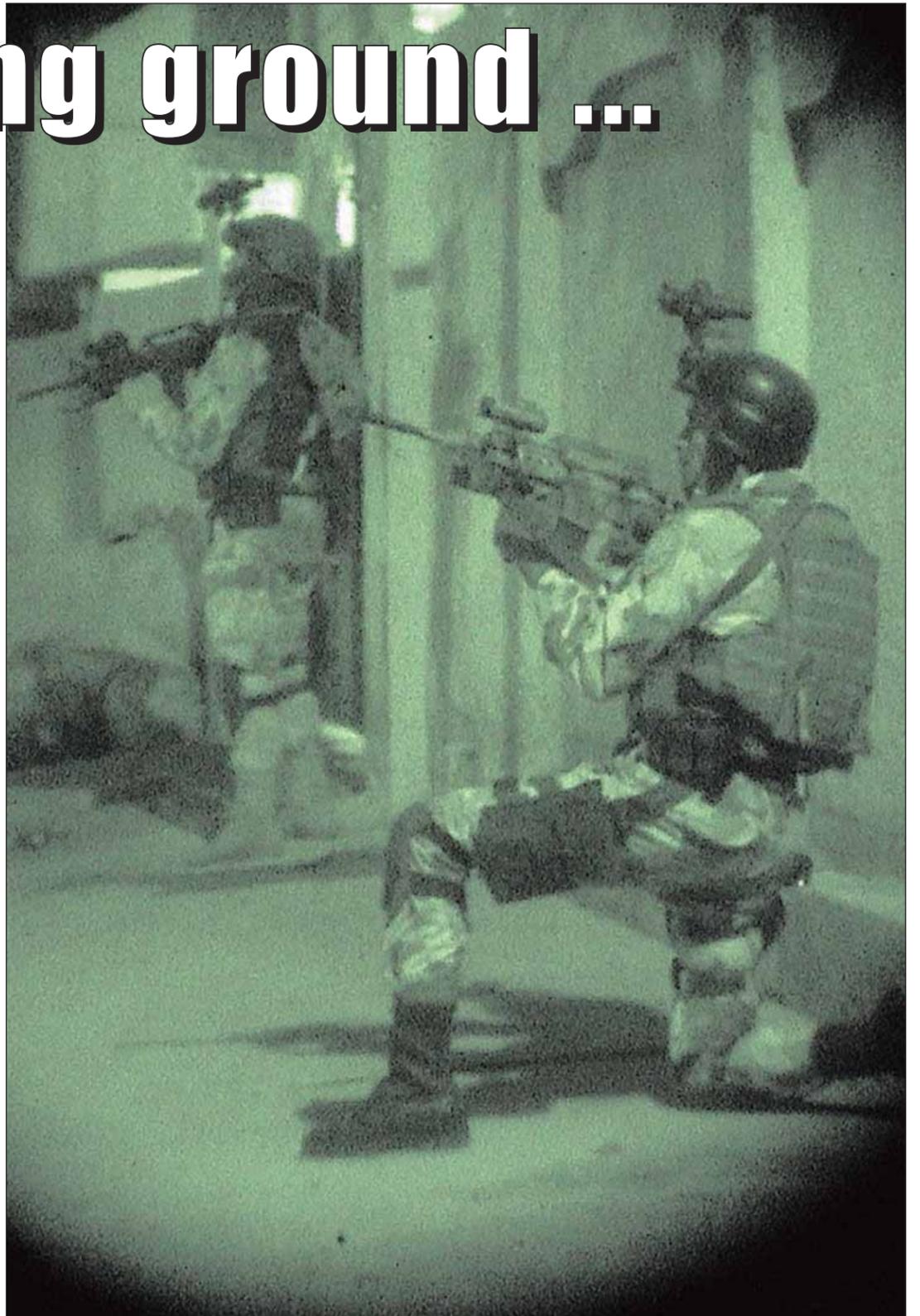
Iraqi Security Forces discovered a large terrorist's base March 28 in Salman Pak, south of Baghdad.

The Iraqi forces stormed the base, overcame light resistance and disabled several improvised explosive devices. Several weapons, munitions and two IEDs were found on the scene. More than 90 suspected terrorists were captured and are being questioned. The Soldiers were acting on tips from concerned citizens.

The Iraqi Security Forces, led by the Iraqi Special Operations Forces Brigade, planned and executed multiple raids into Salman Pak, which was used by anti-Iraqi force networks for planning and staging attacks.

"This operation was the first major joint operation between the ISOF Brigade, Iraqi Police forces and conventional coalition forces," said Brig. Gen.

See GAIN, page 10



Courtesy photos
Iraqi Army Soldiers with the Special Operations Forces Brigade, conducted a raid March 28 based on information they received. The raid was conducted in Salman Pak.

Medal of Honor to be awarded to 3rd Inf. Div. Soldier's family

Army News Service
Special to The Marne Express

WASHINGTON — The White House announced

March 29 that President George W. Bush will honor Sgt. 1st Class Paul R. Smith by presenting his family the Medal of Honor on April 4,



Courtesy photo
Sgt. 1st Class Paul R. Smith's family will receive the first Medal of Honor awarded in OIF. Here, Smith is shown in the field in Iraq.

the second anniversary of his courageous actions during the Battle of Baghdad Airport.

Smith is the first to receive the military's highest award for actions in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In action near the Baghdad Airport on April 4, 2003, Smith, a Soldier in Company B, 11th Engineer Battalion, working with units of the 3rd Infantry Division, was tasked to build a compound to hold enemy prisoners, when his small force came under attack by more than 100 enemies.

Smith threw two grenades and fired rocket launchers at the enemy before manning a .50-caliber machine gun on an M-113 Armored Personnel Carrier to protect his troops.

While engaging an enemy attacking from three sides,

Smith fired more than 300 rounds from the machinegun before being killed.

He prevented the enemy from overtaking his unit's position, protected his Task Force's flank, and defended the lives of more than 100 Soldiers, according to his award citation.

Smith was serving as a platoon sergeant in B Company, 11th Engineer Battalion, Task Force 2-7, 3rd Infantry Division.

He had been serving in the Army since October 1989.

For more information about Smith, including detailed accounts of his action, see other stories on the Army News Service Web site at www.army.mil/arnws or visit the special tribute Web site at <http://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/>.

m7 sends

Stay focused on standards

Command Sgt. Maj. William M. Grant

Task Force Baghdad command sergeant major

Noncommissioned officer leadership ... time out!

The two basic responsibilities which will always be upper-most in my mind are the accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers.

As our stay here in Iraq lengthens or shortens, it's imperative that we continue to recommit ourselves to the priorities that drive good order and discipline – standards.

The main points indicated in the opening sentence drives the point home.

What are the kinds of things that we allow to stand in the way of mission accomplishment and the welfare of our Soldiers?

One point is distractions.

We have occupied this Headquarters for less than two months, after TOA, and instead of focusing on battle position improvement we have leaders inquiring about MWR dance

lessons, which would lead to dances (I would speculate).

We have the greatest Warriors on today's battlefield, but if we fail to keep these young heroes gainfully employed the opportunity for disaster increases.

Some points of interest today are:

- Muzzle awareness. This is especially important for all Soldiers carrying crew-serve weapons.
- Accountability of sensitive items/equipment.
- Tactical/NTV safety.

We must make the right choice not just sometimes, but all the time.

I thank you all for your diligence and hard work. Let's commit ourselves to staying the course.

We are doing great as a Division and I'm proud of everyone – please relay this to the rest of the "Team."

"ROCK OF THE MARNE" – Striving to reach the mark.

Commentary

Power of pride, or pride of power?

As a Washington, D.C., area native, it's easy to spot changes in the region during my regrettably brief and infrequent visits home.

Sgt. Andrew Miller



While attending school there from July to October last year, I saw something new that disturbed me – a bumper sticker bearing the U.S.

flag with an inscription that read: The Power of Pride.

This sticker was everywhere, being displayed with other symbols of national pride that became so popular after September 11, 2001 and as the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq raged on.

At the time, though, I couldn't say why the sight of that sign caused me distress.

Recently, after deploying to Baghdad and meditating on some history, I once again saw the bumper sticker.

This time I was in the "Water Palace," one of many beautiful and depressing reminders of Saddam Hussein's oppressive regime. In the palace, I witnessed the evidence of one dictatorship just after reading about the rise of another – Hitler's Third Reich.

Displayed in an area used as an office by U.S. forces, the sign now triggered conscious thoughts.

I realized that I was upset because I had spoken with too many people who had an erroneous concept of patriotism.

Too many people have the idea that, as patriots, we should

believe our country is inherently better than others.

For me, the sign represented those who feel that furthering our own interests at others' expense is what a patriotic America is about.

But that is wrong. The original American patriots never poked out their chests and proclaimed that U.S.A. was number one.

What they so daringly claimed was that Americans, equal to Britons, should be treated as well as anyone else, and that that the principal was so important, it was worth dying for.

They were patriots.

Americans who laugh about the ability of their nation to oppress another are not patriots.

Those who claim to be superior because they were born in a given land are not patriots; they are nationalists. And nationalism is as dangerous as anything man has invented.

Hussein and Hitler were nationalists. They aroused in their subjects the idea that conquering a lesser people was both natural and their right.

Both of those dictators have now been stripped of their rule by our nation and its allies.

Because of that, our Soldiers here in Iraq have something they can point to and be proud of.

Moreover, it's becoming difficult to claim that our controversial invasion, regardless of how it began, will not yield liberating results that will expand beyond Iraq.

But while our military successes are rightly a source of national pride, such events must never overshadow that which American patriots should consider second to none – when we declared the equality of man, we restricted it by no boundaries, national or otherwise.

With that declaration and the birth of our country, a new way of thinking was set in motion which will one day be cherished by the entire world.

At home and here in Baghdad, however, it is unfortunate to note that some of our most vocal patriots have begun to let our nation's founding principal slip away.

Due to our ignorance, most of us fail to consider that military victory, without any righteous cause, is nothing to be proud of.

But it is to our shame that some of us have created a class differentiation between those who are liberated and those who liberate.

In our fight against the insurgency in Iraq, we have a hard time distinguishing friend from foe. That is a burden that falls on our shoulders.

This fight can't and shouldn't be won without the help of the Iraqi people.

The brave citizens who are willing to risk their lives for their freedom and country – our allies – deserve the same respect and compassion that we give to our fellow Soldiers.

It is important to remember not that our country is great, but why it is great.

Accordingly, it must be acknowledged that we are not superior for being born American just as those who were born kings were not superior to their American subjects.

If our countrymen would degrade others in the name of patriotism, we have a responsibility to teach them better.

Otherwise, our national "pride" might just become a dangerous flirtation with nationalism, summed up in a mindless slogan.

Sgt. Andrew Miller is an Army journalist from the 100th MPAD

The Word on the Street

How do you spend your downtime?



"I usually catch up on personal business – call my family, do laundry, weapons maintenance – just get ready for the next day."

Sgt. 1st Class Rodney Santiago
A Btry., 1/9 FA
Mayaguez, Puerto Rico

"I take it easy, lounge around and go to the pool."



Spc. Jennifer Robellard
HHC 2nd BCT
Herkimer, N.Y.

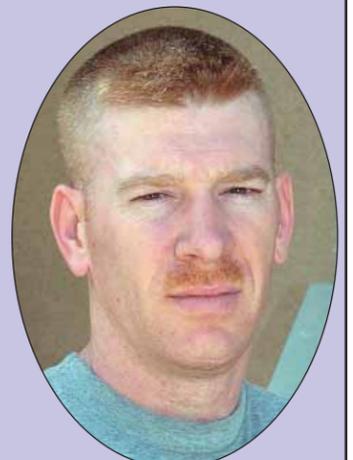
"I play video games, write letters and work on a journal."

Sgt. Carlos Valladares
HHC, 2nd BCT
Charlottesville, Va.



"I go to the gym and lift weights whenever I get a chance."

Sgt. 1st Class Chad Ullery
HHC, 2nd BCT
Falkville, Ala.



"I don't have any downtime, but if I did I'd watch some movies."

2nd Lt. Jonathan Kirkland
F Co., 26th FSB
Yuma, Ariz.



The Marne Express

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Sgt. Andrew Miller

Gen. John P. Abizaid, U.S. Central Command commanding general, answers a question about part of an engineering demonstration for Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island during their visit to Task Force Baghdad headquarters March 26. Abizaid and Reed were also given a demonstration of the new Buffalo by 36th Eng. Grp.

TF Baghdad welcomes CENTCOM cdr.

Sgt. Andrew A. Miller
100th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Gen. John P. Abizaid, commanding general of U.S. Central Command, and Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island received a warm welcome today upon their arrival at the Task Force Baghdad headquarters.

The two leaders met with Soldiers, led by Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr., TF Baghdad commander, who gave them a display of some of the latest and greatest technology being used in the war against terror.

The demonstration was followed with words of praise and encouragement for the Soldiers.

Sappers from 36th Engineer Group provided a demonstration of the Buffalo, a heavily-armored vehicle equipped to deal with the improvised explosive devices that have killed or wounded many of their comrades.

Efficiently and with precision, the Buffalo's 30-foot, hydraulic Iron Claw was maneuvered to handle a simulated IED.

The Engineers were also able to show Abizaid where their vehicle had sustained a blast from such ordinance and had survived.

After the display, Abizaid and Reed addressed and took questions from the troops.

Abizaid told the Soldiers that their most important missions were to provide the people of Iraq with a

chance to create a government, and to train the Iraqi Security Forces until they are capable of taking the leading role in their nation's defense. Both of these, he said, are to be the focus through December.

"I think (the ISF have) shown, ever since the elections in particular, that they're ready to fight," Abizaid said. "It's their country. They want to be in charge. They want to fight this fight."

Reminding Soldiers that the fight can't be won without them, he thanked them for their sacrifice and courage.

"We don't pay you enough," he said. "...but on the other hand, we're giving you a chance to participate in something like your fathers and grandfathers did in World War II and Korea and Vietnam."

Defelice takes over HHSC, STB

Spc. Jennifer Fitts
100th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Maj. Bill Papanastasiou, Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company, Special Troops Battalion's former commander, passed the company's guidon and the responsibilities it represents to Capt. David M. Defelice during a change of command ceremony here March 21.

"Maj. Papanastasiou took command of the company in November 2003, after redeployment from (Operation Iraqi Freedom 1), and the Marne Express did not slow down a minute for him," said Lt. Col. Kathleen Gavle, STB commander.

She praised Papanastasiou's leadership and dedication to duty, as well as his hard work preparing the company for deployment to OIF 3.

In addition to reorganizing the company to reflect the Army's new modular force structure, Papanastasiou "established a rigorous and realistic training program...that included not only the Marne Marksmanship program, but also a series of classes, drills and lanes to fully prepare Soldiers for conducting operations in theater," Gavle said.

Papanastasiou is a graduate of the Armor Officer Basic

Course, Air Defense Artillery Officer Advanced Course, the Combined Arms Services Staff School, Battalion Maintenance Officer Course, and Master Fitness Course at West Point, Airborne School, and the Air Assault School.

His previous assignments include tank platoon leader, tank company executive officer, and headquarters company executive officer.

Papanastasiou's awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Achievement Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Parachutist Badge, and the Air Assault Badge.

"I can honestly say that my objective has been met," said Papanastasiou, talking about the past 17 months in command of HHSC, and the deployment to Iraq.

He added that he was grateful to have served as the commander of HHSC as the unit trained, deployed to OIF 3 and began its mission at Camp Liberty.

Looking back at the hard work that went into the reorganization of the unit and the deployment, Papanastasiou said, "I see that the value [of the experience] lies with the relationships made with Soldiers."

He leaves HHSC to join the 3rd Infantry Division staff to

help plan deployment and redeployment operations for the division.

New company commander Defelice has served with both armor and cavalry units, providing them with guidance and experience as a squadron maintenance officer and squadron S-4.

Most recently, Defelice worked as the assistant S-3 for STB, assisting with the coordination of training, operations and plans, as well as force modernization and development.

He has experience in many different positions of leadership, including platoon leader, company executive officer and commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment during OIF 1.

Defelice showed confidence in the Soldiers he would now be commanding, and said the groundwork Papanastasiou laid would be invaluable. "Major P. did an incredible job ... training Soldiers to overcome weaknesses and conduct wartime missions."

"Our biggest challenge is maintaining our organization and to focus on our combat mission," said Defelice.

Confident and ready to get down to work, Defelice said "I look forward to the next year. We'll have fun and all come home."



Spc. Jennifer Fitts

Lt. Col. Kathleen Gavle, Special Troops Battalion commander, passes the HHSC guidon to its new commander, Capt. David M. Defelice.

256th Soldiers recognized for excellence

Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT

CAMP TIGERLAND, Iraq — Many Soldiers from the 256th Brigade Combat Team competed for the distinguished titles of Enlisted Soldier

Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter, but only two were able to earn the coveted honor.

"It's an honor, and it's something I'm really proud of," said Sgt. Robert Baggett.

Baggett, an infantryman in the Louisiana National Guard and a junior at McNeese State

University in Lake Charles, La., majoring in Sociology, has nine years of total military experience to his credit. After serving in the Marine Corps, he returned to his hometown of Ragley, La. to attend school. There he became a member of A Company, 3rd

Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment. His service over the past several years has given his leadership and peers a high opinion of him — so high, in fact, that they felt that he should be the one to represent their company at the battalion-level competition.

"Initially, my platoon and platoon leaders selected me to compete at the company level," he said, "I ultimately won the company and battalion level NCO of the Quarter competitions and went on to compete at the brigade level."

Spc. Jon Vandebogert of B Battery, 126th Field Artillery, is a fire direction specialist from Milwaukee, Wis. His primary function is to pre-screen local nationals coming onto Camp Liberty, and as a result of his sharp attention to detail, he was selected by his leadership to compete in the battery level Enlisted Soldier of the Quarter, which ended up taking him to the brigade level competition.

"I was chosen for observing a cell phone (detonator) trying to come onto the point," he said.

Both Vandebogert and Baggett, along with approximately 20 other Soldiers, appeared before the brigade panel, which consisted of all the sergeants major from 256th BCT. They were judged on uniform inspections, facing movements, marching and common task knowledge.

After the questioning was

complete, the points were totaled and the enlisted Soldier and NCO with the highest scores were the winners. There will be two more competitions of this kind, and then at the end of this rotation, the best of the three quarters will compete for the Enlisted Soldier and NCO of the Year.

Each Soldier spent hours studying from the Army Board Study Guide. Vandebogert and Baggett said they felt well prepared for the competition.

"I pretty much studied night and day, memorizing Army regulations and field manuals," said Vandebogert.

Baggett studied so much, he said, he would have been surprised if he hadn't won at the brigade level.

"I learned about three years' worth of information in three weeks," he said, "I knew most of it, but some of it I'd never even heard of before."

Command Sgt. Maj. James H. Mays, from Pineville, La., is the 256th BCT command sergeant major. He said the two Soldiers chosen for the recognition exemplify what the Louisiana National Guard has to offer.

"They stood out, they knew the answers to all of the questions, and they presented themselves well and as good Soldiers," he said, "They're the best Soldiers in the front, the ones who want to step up and be front line leaders."



Sgt. Shelley Landry

Command Sgt. Maj. James H. Mays, Sgt. Maj. for the 256th Brigade Combat Team, awards Sgt. Robert Baggett, an 3/156 Inf. Regt. infantryman, the honor for Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter.

87th keeps supplies flowing out of Taji

Sgt. 1st Class Peter Chadwick
DSB

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — If a river is dammed up, someone's not going to get water. If supplies get held up, some Soldiers are going to be in great need.

"I don't make cubby holes," said Capt. Curt A. Hinton, a support operations officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 87th Combat Support Battalion. "We keep things fluid. It's important for me to push out."

Hinton, the officer in charge of the Division Support Brigade's Division

Distribution Center, said his center handles everything from soccer balls and Meals Ready to eat, to tires and engines.

The supply system is working very well, said the Peoria, Ill. native.

Hinton said Army transporters move equipment and supplies, while Kellogg, Brown and Root's movers take care of the retrograde.

Retrograde items are either excess supplies that need to be relocated, or unserviceable items, like worn tires, marked for disposal.

Another method of transporting supplies is by air, said Hinton.

The more pallets of supplies that can be sent by aircraft, the fewer convoys there will be on hazardous roads.

Spc. Levester J. Musgrove, a 104th Transportation Company truck driver, expressed concern for his fellow "road warriors."

"We have to make sure they have the right stuff the first time," said Musgrove, who operates a forklift in the center's yard. "The more they have to come back and forth, the more they are on the road where bad things can happen."

Bad things can happen in the yard, too. That's where Sgt. 1st Class Miguel A. Merritt, a laundry, shower, and logistic sergeant with HHD, weighs in.

"Safety first, of course," said the

DDC's noncommissioned officer in charge who calls Columbus, Ga., home. "We make sure everyone's wearing seatbelts and are trained up on the fork lifts."

Musgrove said he had driven a smaller forklift back at Benning, but had to be trained on the larger version used at the center.

Merritt said training and supervision on regular primary checks and services are critical to the safe operation of the heavy equipment.

The equipment is used to move palletized loads from the delivery truck to the forward operating base lanes and then from the lanes to the pick-up transports.

"I give a Soldier responsibility for each lane," said Hinton. The FOB lanes are assigned to specific customers to keep the flow organized.

Hinton said Soldiers track their lanes during one of three eight-hour shifts. He feels it's important to give specialists and privates this responsibility for

professional development as account managers, as well as instilling the pride of ownership. There has to be someone at the lanes 24 hours a day because transporters come any time of the day or night, said Hinton.

These Soldiers have no formal training in this kind of responsibility, Hinton said. He said he had every military occupation from truck driver to cook working with him. They learn the tasks when they arrive.

Hinton said, when he arrived, the system of moving supplies continually was already in place.

"I learned a lot from the 'Cavalry,'" said Hinton of his 1st Cavalry Division counterparts. Hinton said he is glad the command sent him with the advanced party so he could learn the system and ensure a seamless transition.

Because of the smooth change of responsibility between the two divisions, the seamless flow of supplies continued up and down the dusty roads of Iraq.



Sgt. 1st Class Peter Chadwick

Spc. Levester J. Musgrove, a 104th Trans. Co., truck driver, off-loads newly arrived equipment at the Division Distribution Center at Camp Taji.

Miles to go before they sleep ...

Shiites make traditional Arba'iniyyah pilgrimage from Najaf to Karbala

Sgt. Thomas Benoit
256th BCT

The desert is a harsh environment; the nights are cold and the days are brutally hot.

This marks the second year since the time Saddam Hussein took power, that the indigenous Shiite Muslims have been able to make the journey from Najaf to Karbala, Iraq, in celebration of Arba'iniyyah.

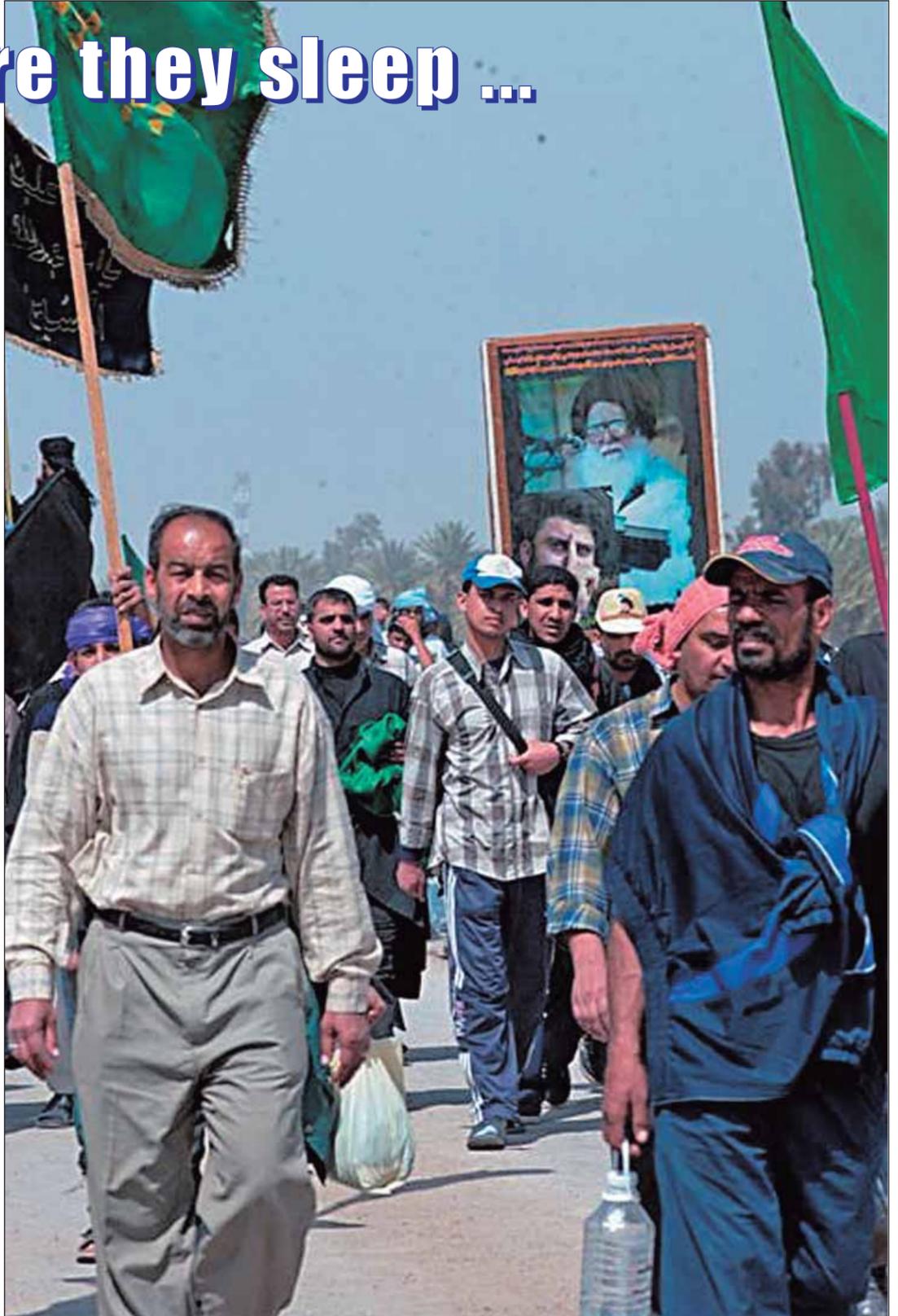
The first year Arba'iniyyah took place was in 680, to honor the third Imam Hussein. The pilgrimage to Karbala

during Arba'iniyyah is difficult and takes three days to complete.

Many Shiite Muslims practice self-flagellation during their journey, other non-traditional Muslims chant prayers and lightly thump their chest while walking.

This year, it's estimated that more than a million people will make the epic journey.

The route traverses near the front gates of forward operating base Mahmudiyah, located nearly 45 miles south of Baghdad.



Photos by Sgt. Thomas Benoit

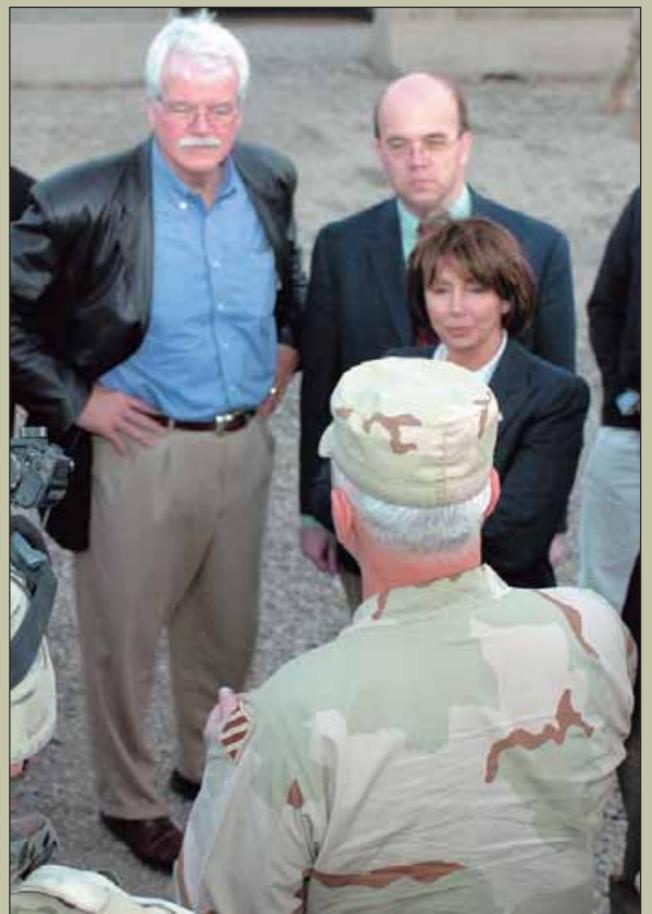
The pain and hardship of Shiite Muslims observing Arba'iniyyah can be seen on their faces during the three-day journey to Karbala, Iraq from Najaf, Iraq, along the Euphrates River.



Top: Spc. Scott W. Parker, a Coalition Forces Soldier, helps quench the dusty thirst of several Iraqi citizens during their journey. Above: Thousands of Shiite Muslims can be seen walking for miles.



House Dem. leader visits Tigerland



Photos by Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft

Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Democratic Leader for the House of Representatives, and six other representatives from California and Massachusetts, spent time with Soldiers at Camp Tigerland March 24. The delegates were given a brief by Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr., Task Force Baghdad commander, about the Army's up-armor humvees (top right), followed by dinner with Soldiers from their respective states (top left). Pelosi commented, "It's so important to pay respects to our Soldiers, for their courage and their pride in our country ... especially our Californians!"



Petty Officer 1st Class James L. Overton, a robotics maintenance chief from Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center in San Diego, Calif., works to repair a Talon robot at the Joint Robotics Repair Facility March 25. Overton repairs robots used to inspect and detonate ordnance in Iraq.

Photos by Sgt. Andrew Miller

JRRF keeps robots running, Soldiers safe

Sgt. Andrew A. Miller
100th MPAD

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq – Since being welcomed into the ordnance community, robots have helped save countless lives by making their human counterparts' role a little more remote.

Here at the Joint Robotics Repair Facility, though, it is people who are working hard to extend the lives of robots.

In their two repair shops, specialists are on call around the clock, ready to get the damaged machines back on the streets.

"We're like the emergency room for robots," said Navy Petty Officer 1st Class James L. Overton, a robotics maintenance chief from Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center in San Diego, Calif.

As such, the technicians at the facility can do everything from the replacement of inoperative parts to the rebuilding of robots that have been blown up by improvised explosive devices.

They maintain complex robotics systems from three different manufacturers, and they can work fast.

Operating out of what look like garages, crowded with parts, they have made it their policy to turn whatever they're given into a functional robot within four hours.

In some cases, if the damage is too extensive, an injured robot can be swapped for a working one.

With only four technicians supporting explosive ordnance disposal units all over Iraq, the crew stay pretty busy.

"We have responsibility for all robotic repairs for the entire theater," Overton said.

On average, the facility receives for service four or five robots daily.

They have seen as many as 22 in a single day, he said.

As often as once weekly, a

machine comes in that has been all but ruined by an IED.

According to Overton, the robots have some of the latest and greatest technology onboard.

Resting upon tank-like tracks can be anywhere from \$60,000 to much more than \$100,000 worth of different gadgets, depending on the model and the included accessories.

Robots are built and rebuilt according to the needs of the unit who will use it, Overton said.

Each of them is unique, and at least at the repair facility, they get their own names.

Partly because playing with the robots is an element of the job, the technicians say they like their robots and their jobs.

"The (explosive ordnance disposal) community is really tight," said Overton. "That's what I like more than anything else. It's like a family."

Accordingly, technicians like Overton appreciate the importance of the job, he said.

Robots that became casualties could have been one of their comrades, so they work hard to ensure that EOD teams have what they need as soon as possible.

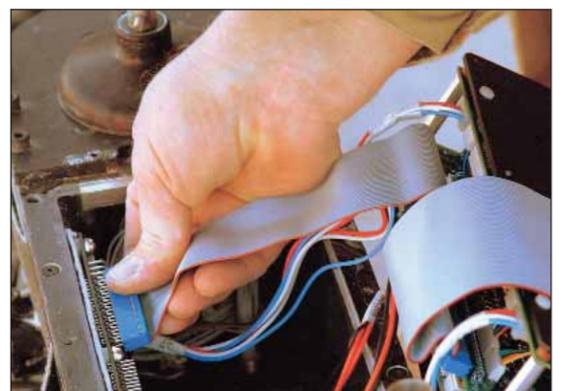
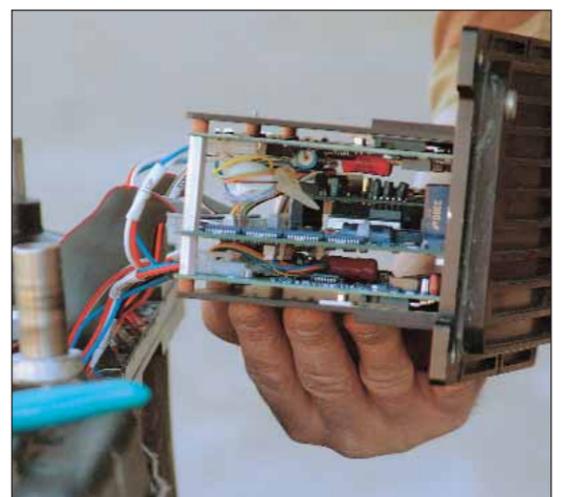
"We have units that come in at 10, 11, or 12 o'clock at night," said Overton. "They come knocking on our door and we're there for them."

Navy Petty Officer 2nd class Jennifer S. Smith, a robotics repair technician, who is also from the San Diego Center, said she finds it disheartening to see one of her robots fall to an insurgent's bomb.

"You kind of forget the human aspect as you spend most of your time working on a piece of equipment," she said. "And then you look up at that tech, and you know that's a person you get to send home, back to their family."



Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Jennifer S. Smith, a robotics repair technician from Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center, reinstalls a track on a Talon robot after repairing the machine at the JRRF.



Overton replaces (top) and reconnects (bottom) the guts of a Talon robot at the JRRF March 25.



Operation Backpack helps children carry smiles

Happy Iraqi children sit in class with the new backpacks, toys and other items 256th Brigade Combat Team Soldiers gave them during Operation Backpack March 23. Sgt. Vern Rennie

Al-Dora teddy bear, shoe donations go extra mile

1st Lt. Cameron Murphy
1/184 Inf. Regt.

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Soldiers from the California Army National Guard’s 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment “Nightstalkers” traveled to the Southern Baghdad neighborhood of Al-Dora March 16.

The visit was designed to distribute aid to local children and assess the needs of local families.

Many families in this economically depressed area make only \$30 to \$40 a month and many cannot afford shoes for their children.

As Soldiers on the outer perimeter provided security, Lt. Col. Patrick Frey, the 184th commander, spoke with the parents assembled at the scene.

Frey, through his interpreter, relayed his vision for the local

neighborhood stressing the actions that were being taken to improve essential services.

Locals in turn expressed their concerns to Frey regarding a lack of electricity, and the sewage problems faced by many residents.

Children were fitted for shoes by Spc. Jeffrey Sinclair, a Modesto, Calif., native.

Sinclair said he enjoyed performing this type of mission because he could see an immediate and direct impact on the life of a child.

“It’s hard to believe that some of these kids have never had a pair of shoes before,” Sinclair said as he fitted a little girl for a pair of sandals.

“Nightstalker” Soldiers will continue to distribute shoes and toys to children as they conduct operations in order to determine the needs of the local populace.



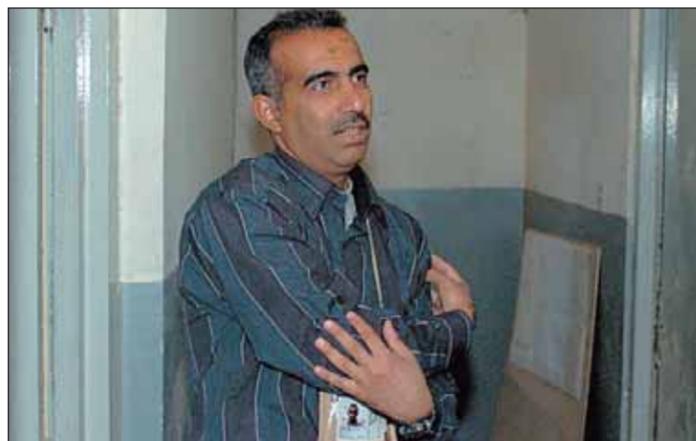
Above: Spc. Jeff Sinclair, an infantryman assigned to 1/184 Inf. Regt. and a native of Modesto, Calif., straps a sandal on an Iraqi girl in the Southern Baghdad neighborhood of Al-Dora March 16. Sinclair is employed as a police officer in Calif.
Left: Sinclair hands a teddy bear to an Al-Dora child March 16.



Useful Arabic Phrases

English	Iraqi Arabic	English	Iraqi Arabic
Where is/are ... ?	Weyn ... ?	I’m lost	anna toht
What’s this/that?	Shinu hatha ?	Excuse me (bump into)	AFwaan
I am an American	anna AMRIKi	Excuse me (question)	Min Fadh Lak
This is mine	Haatha li	No smoking	mem NOO’H ALTAdkhin

Ex-political prisoner recalls incarceration



Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich
2nd BCT

CAMP LOYALTY, Iraq – The Directorate of General Security and Special Security office – the compound that is now Camp Loyalty.

To some Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, it is their home.

To some Iraqis, it is still a symbol of fear, torture and death at the hands of the former regime.

Most Iraqis, like Anmar Abdel Ali, knew, or at least believed, if you were sent to the compound and its prison, you weren't leaving there alive.

The prison held anyone who was considered a "threat to the regime." Ali was one of those threats.

On Mar. 11, he visited Camp Loyalty and the prison where he was held for three months.

At 22, Ali was arrested in Baghdad at his place of work by Baath Party security. He was forced into a vehicle, had his eyes covered and was transported to a military police camp. Hours later, he arrived at the DGS prison.

"The security stopped me on the street, asked if I was Anmar ... then asked me for my ID card," he said, adding that the former regime's Iraqi police, military police and special security all dressed in civilian clothes. "When I asked why they wanted to see my ID card, seven men surrounded me, took my ID, and forced me into a vehicle."

Ali said, "I thought this was the end, that I was going to die."

He was suspected of doing business with Kurdistan, and in possession of a fake ID – he had deserted the Iraqi Army in 1992.

When he first arrived at the

prison, the interrogations began. He was questioned on his dealings with the Kurds, being hit repeatedly in the process.

"I don't want to remember some of the other things they did," Ali said, and referred to incidents of prisoners being hung from the ceiling by their feet, being hit with a reed and having salt rubbed in their wounds.

"On my first (rough interrogation), they put me in a cell by myself ... took my clothes ... and (guards) would pour buckets of water on me." It was February.

Incidents of torture during interrogations were the rule, not the exception.

According to 1st Lt. Gregory Holmes, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, brigade human intelligence analysis chief, a variety of barbaric methods were used to interrogate prisoners throughout Iraq.

"You name it, they did it," he said. In addition to what Ali experienced, "(the guards) practiced (strategically placed) electroshock and slicing, sensory deprivation, various methods of (suspending prisoners) with hooks and eyelets, starvation ... and severe beatings."

Some of the prisoners' sensory deprivation was ongoing.

Window openings, which now offer refreshing beams of sunlight into the prison, were blackened – inmates did not know if it was night or day.

The living conditions were equally horrific. According to Ali, his six- by nine-foot cell held as many as 18 prisoners at a time.

"We had no bathroom," he said. "After they fed us ... a piece of bread and maybe some soup for the day ... we had to use the food tray for a toilet."

When the U.S. first made the compound into a military camp,

many locals seeking work would not enter the compound, according to Hayder Abdul-Nabi.

Abdul-Nabi, a contracted interpreter, had two brothers incarcerated at the DGS prison. His older brother, whom he would not name, was a prisoner there for seven years.

"My brother was an (armor-er) for the (old Iraqi Army)," he said. "The (regime) found out he (sold) a pistol, and he was arrested."

Abdul-Nabi added that his family had no idea where his brother was for those seven years – they suspected he was dead.

It wasn't until the brother was transferred to Abu Ghraib, where he spent another 10 years incarcerated, that the family discovered he was still alive.

"My brother won't speak a word of what happened in (the DGS prison)," Abdul-Nabi said. "But when we sleep in the same place, I always awake to hear him talking in his sleep, having nightmares of the things they did to him."

Abdul-Nabi himself would not set foot in the prison during his visit.

For Ali, his incarceration was all for naught.

He spent three months at the DGS prison in Baghdad before being transferred to Kirkuk for four more months. There was no evidence against him for dealings with the Kurds.

Someone else who shared the same name was the suspected threat to the regime.

Ali spent the next three months in a military prison for his desertion from the Army before his father sold his house and bought his son's freedom.

Ali, now 34, and Abdul-Nabi both left the former DGS compound March 11 of their own free will – alive, and no longer living in fear.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich
Top: A view from above in the DGS prison's general population block shows where families and petty criminals were held. Above: Anmar Abdel Ali, an inmate at the DGS prison for three months, describes how guards would press salt into open wounds during interrogations.

GRS builds a brighter hospital for a brighter future

Denise Calabria
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

TALLIL, Iraq – It is widely recognized that a country's future rests squarely on the shoulders of its children.

Therefore, in a land where most children have seen more than their fair share of sickness, poverty, and war for the past three decades, it follows that lowering the infant mortality rate and providing children an improved standard of medical care would rank high on the nation's list of priorities.

That is the case in Iraq. With a focus on these child-centered goals, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region South, or GRS, manages the renovation and rebuilding of Iraq's Public Health Sector in the southern portion of the country.

As construction managers for the Projects and Contracting Office, PCO, GRS verifies all construction work with quality assurance checks.

Representatives from both organizations recently visited a maternity and pediatrics hospital in southern Iraq to perform such a check.

The hospital name will remain undisclosed in the interest of patient and staff security.

Upon entering the facility, the main

floor appears dark and unadorned ... threadbare, yet clean. Several women clad in abayahs busily mop the floors.

Their efforts are noble, but not enough to raise the facility to current appropriate medical standards.

"The existing hospital is in terrible shape," says Juan Vargas, PCO project manager-Southern Facilities. "Renovating it answers our mandate to reduce the infant mortality rate."

Vargas says the complete Iraqi hospital system is under stress due to antiquity, lack of maintenance, separate issues, and the wars.

"Anything we can do [regarding renovations] will help this particular hospital, as well as lift the pressure from the entire hospital system," he said.

According to Bob Hanacek, GRS resident engineer, the \$10M contract includes improvements to the water, sewer, and power systems; roof replacement, heating/ventilation/air conditioning systems, medical supplies, and cosmetics.

"Every portion of the 260-bed hospital will be touched," said Hanacek. "The contract also includes new operating suites, tons of new medical equipment, and many donated medical supplies. We are re-equipping the entire facility."

Vargas addressed a primary upgrade of the hospital's sewer system that will go unnoticed by the hospital's future patients.

"The groundwater table is very high and the hospital sits very low, thereby resulting in contamination between the sewer pipes and the water table," he said. "We are putting a brand new drain system throughout the hospital grounds. Although the problem extends beyond the hospital, we will make provisions to isolate the hospital from the problem and make improvements as well," he said.

One noticeable improvement is the installation of an elevator to the third floor children's ward.

In the past, the hospital's elevators only operated between the first and second floors. Hospital employees had to carry their young patients to the top floor on a litter.

By using hoisting equipment on the

"Due to the addition of these two elevators, for the first time, the children's ward will be fully functional."

Bob Hanacek
GRS resident engineer

roof, workers installed extended elevator shafts and cables to provide service to all levels of the facility.

"Due to the addition of these two elevators, for the first time, the children's ward will be fully functional," said Hanacek.

In the interest of stimulating the local economy, an Iraqi design-build contractor was awarded the extensive hospital renovation project. Iraqi contractors are performing approximately 90 percent of the work.

When asked for his summation of the hospital project, Vargas said, "I think we are on the right track."

That summation suggests a brighter future for the mothers, infants, and children who will occupy the cheerful, renovated hospital rooms. The project's scheduled completion date is by the end of April 2006.

This project is one of 27 being incorporated into the construction or rehabilitation of 22 hospitals nationwide.

No Soldier left behind

Spc. Matthew Maupin

"I will not leave a fallen comrade"

These well known words from the Warrior Ethos ring true for Spc. Matt Maupin. Maupin is an Army Reserve Soldier from the 724th Transportation Company who was captured April 9, 2004 during Operation Iraqi Freedom 1. Spc. Maupin – we are still looking for you and we will find you. You have not been forgotten.





Semper fi ...

Marines vital in supply missions

Sgt. Thomas Benoit

Lance Cpls. Richard J. Sejkora and Shane B. Shade, both of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Marine Support Service Group 15, provide security for fellow Marines as they unload equipment, supplies and mail to several satellite forward operating bases near Baghdad. On March 22, the Marines conducted a night re-supply mission to several FOBs. Marine Corps units have been running operations at Mahmudiya to prepare forward operating bases for future use. The 15th MEU is under the tactical operation of the 256th Brigade Combat Team.

'Roughnecks' use humor to combat daily stresses

Spc. Matthew McLaughlin
2/10 Mtn. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – It's 1 a.m. The humvee is dead silent from an exhausting day of patrolling. Soldiers scan the roads in routine fashion, waiting for something to break the monotony.

Suddenly, a booming sound echoed through the vehicle, startling everyone. "Oklahoma! Where the wind comes sweepin' down the plain," a voice sings out.

To some, Staff Sgt. James Smotherman's unprompted desire to sing show tunes may seem strange.

But for the "Roughneck" platoon of C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, it is a humorous way to combat the danger and repetitiveness of every day life in Baghdad.

The Roughnecks pride themselves on professionalism as well as absurdity, Smotherman said.

"The Army has all sorts of regulations saying how professional you have to be on the job," he added. "They don't say anything about how much fun you can have. You have to have fun in this job or you'll go crazy."

Few understand the use of humor to combat stress on the job more than Smotherman. Before enlisting, he worked as a mortician, and learned that taking work too seriously made daily activities difficult.

Laughing at something like an improvised explosive device is an important coping mechanism many Soldiers use, he said.

"An IED is always stressful because we never know when it will go off," he said. "Then someone will say 'Can we hurry this up? Because I have to get my nails done.' You can't walk around with a frown all the time."

The humor many Roughnecks share is exemplified in their taste of movies, according to Spc. William Lowe, a driver from Ogdensburg, N.Y.

Many of their jokes relate back to group favorites like "Team America: World Police" and "Napoleon Dynamite." The jokes and catch lines from a favorite flick are infectious and many Soldiers feel compelled to see the movie just to understand the joke, Lowe said.

"When one of us sees a good movie, we don't rest until everyone in the platoon sees it," he said.

The movies also include musicals provoked by Smotherman's after-hours rendition of American classics. Smotherman said he feels right at home with the Roughnecks.

They are a collection of wise guys whose unity lies in jabs and cracks on anything, especially each other. They mock each other about things as small as tripping over rubble.

"If we're on patrol and you stumble, you'll hear about it for a week," Lowe said.

Every Soldier has a nickname as unflattering and uncensored as the daily ribbings they give each other. Nothing is sacred and no one is safe, especially Spc. Jeffrey Sharpe, a gunner from Statesville, N.C. If other Soldiers go too far, he said he has to put them in line.

"Sometimes they go too far. Then I have to take care of them," he said as he cracked his knuckles and smiled nervously. Smotherman immediately attacked him and Sharpe went limp like a possum to his prey.

"When the group gets going, nothing is off limits," said Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Shepherd, who was the brunt of jokes after he recovered from a head injury earlier in the deployment. "In



Spc. Matthew McLaughlin

Spc. Abraham Samaniego, 1st Lt. Dan Ciccarelli and Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Shepherd, all 2/15 FA, exchange jokes while on patrol in Baghdad. Soldiers from the "Roughneck" platoon pride themselves' on both professionalism and humor.

this platoon I don't think there is such a thing as too far."

Shepherd was quick to note that his Soldiers are always respectful to superiors and subordinates alike. The fact that everyone is a target is a sign of their comradeship, he said.

"They are a well disciplined platoon," he said. "They never cross the line of disrespect."

"The proper definition of a senior (to) subordinate relationship is mutual respect and confidence without undue familiarity," Smotherman said. "We have that."

Although the very personal jokes and critiques may seem offensive and disrespectful to an outsider, many Roughnecks believe their humor is what makes them so close.

"We're a real tight knit group," Smotherman said. "The cohesion in this group is more than anywhere else I've been."

"This is my family," Shepherd said. "I have 18 Soldiers as my family."

Their unity was put to the ultimate

test when they lost one of their own, Pfc. Jeff Lebrun, on New Year's Day. The lighthearted spirit of the group was replaced with deep mourning for a close friend.

"It was pretty somber," Smotherman said. "It made us aware that we're not (invincible)."

The platoon went through a period where no one felt like joking, Smotherman said. The moral was low, but the Soldier's upbeat spirits eventually prevailed.

"It was definitely subdued," Smotherman said. "No one wanted to say anything because it's almost disrespectful to laugh in a situation like that. But over a period of time people started joking with each other. I knew the platoon was going to be okay when people started to laugh again."

Another day has passed in Baghdad, another patrol finished and another laugh shared.

While others may "gripe and gloom," the Roughnecks will continue living by their simple belief: Soldiers just want to have fun.

Missing the mom in your life?

Now you can tell her how much you care.

Beginning April 6, Stars and Stripes – the only daily publication serving the U.S. military – will be accepting FREE Mother's Day messages online!

Whether "Mom" is deployed, back home waiting for her Soldier's return, or in the next room helping the kids with their homework, she still deserves some special words of appreciation on Mother's Day, and this year you can give her those words with the click of a mouse.

Send your message to www.stripes.com any time from April 6 to 27 at 5 p.m. (EST), and show that special woman how much she means to you!



Tending to the future

Sgt. Thomas Benoit

Spc. Jennifer Edgar from Loreauville, La., of C Company, 199th Forward Support Battalion, checks the temperature of an Iraqi child, whose mother looks on, during an Operation Iraqi Children medical mission with 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment March 19.

2/14 Infantry medic 'amazing' under pressure

Spc. Matthew McLaughlin

Task Force Baghdad

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – “Now is the time,” he thought to himself as he gazed in shock at his wounded comrades.

This is the reason for all of his training as a medic; the reason he joined the Army; possibly the reason for his very existence. Without hesitation, he grabbed his equipment and raced across a field toward his destiny.

Pfc. Jacob Torres, a medic with 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, tested his training and his mettle Feb. 28 when he treated nine Soldiers and Marines after an insurgent attack.

Soldiers from 2/14 Inf. found an improvised explosive device while on patrol along Route Tampa in Baghdad.

They secured the area and waited for the explosive ordinance detachment team to arrive.

While waiting for EOD, a Marine convoy heading towards Fallujah approached.

There was no way around the road and the Marines were in a rush, so they decided to pass, against the Soldiers' advice.

The convoy passed between the IED

and a 2/14 Inf. humvee.

Suddenly the IED detonated, hitting a truck containing several Marines.

“The whole passenger side of the seven ton (truck) collapsed,” said Torres, a Bakersville, Calif., native. “I was about 100 meters away in a field. I saw everyone was down and I took my (medic) bag and went running.”

Torres said the reality of the situation did not hit him immediately.

“At first I was nervous,” he said. “I realized all these people were hurt. It took a moment to register that I was the one who had to help them. No one else could do it. Once I started with the first patient I knew what to do.”

Sgt. Shawn Coyle, a fire direction center Soldier from Quincy, Ill., said Torres took complete control of the situation.

He immediately tended to the most seriously wounded patient, a Marine hit in the armpit with shrapnel.

“It was amazing how he did under pressure,” Coyle said.

All eyes turned to Torres for help. He was not without help, however. Fellow Soldiers and Marines assisted Torres as he went from patient to patient treating them.

“I had a lot of help from everyone there,” Torres said. “Two female Marines were injured but were still trying to help.”

Although he was one of the lowest ranking Soldiers present, everyone followed his lead and obeyed his orders, Coyle said.

“Rank goes out the window and they have to understand that,” he said. “He took control of the whole situation. It was amazing how well he did under

“It took a moment to register that I was the one who had to help them. No one else could do it.”

Pfc. Jacob Torres
2/14 Inf. medic

GAIN, continued from page 1

“This operation represents the significant progress that Iraqi Security Forces are making to make all of Iraq a safer place for its citizens.”

Task Force Baghdad Soldiers discovered eight weapons caches in close proximity to a U.S. military supply route south of Baghdad March 27.

Soldiers used metal detectors to find the hidden weapons, which included 58 assorted artillery and mortar rounds, 11 rocket-propelled grenade heat rounds and three RPG launchers.

The Soldiers also uncovered six RPG anti-personnel rounds,

1,000 6.3 millimeter primers, a machine gun, an AK-47 rifle, and more than 400 rounds of ammunition.

Other munitions found include 100 time fuses, 39 booster charges of various sizes, 10 blasting caps, five mortar fuses, two armored vests, detonation cord and a wide assortment of electronic equipment.

Also March 27, Soldiers with the 1st Iraqi Army Brigade, 6th Division, arrested an Iraqi Police master sergeant, who has been accused of being the leader of a terror cell.

The suspect is also believed to be responsible for the bomb-

ing of the Al-Baratha Mosque.

While on patrol IA Soldiers found three RPGs. The Soldiers arrested an individual who fired one of the RPGs.

In central Baghdad, Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 69th Armor found an IED in a shoe box. A Navy explosive ordnance detachment was on the scene and safely detonated the IED.

Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 13th Armor reported an IED on a military service route. The device was made from a 130mm projectile. EOD arrived on the scene and conducted a controlled detonation.

“On the average we find 50

percent of the IEDs. In a given 24-hour period, we have found 60 percent,” said Lt. Col. Clifford Kent, Task Force Baghdad spokesperson.

“In IED attacks initiated against Multi-National Division Baghdad, 70 percent have been ineffective at producing a casualty,” he said.

“This can be attributed to the technological advances in equipment, armor protection and the fact that we are capturing or killing experienced anti-Iraqi forces,” he added.

Iraqi Police took control of a situation around 11:30 p.m. March 27 in South Central Baghdad when Soldiers with

3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry came under small-arms fire.

IPs pursued the suspect down the street. The IPs and 3/7 Inf. Soldiers secured the area and searched for the suspect, who was on foot.

About 10 minutes later, the IPs caught the suspect and took him in custody.

Iraqi Army Soldiers were equally busy March 26 in the fight against insurgents; they arrested a Pakistani father and two of his sons after receiving a tip.

The men were found with cell phones, false passports, passport-making equipment and anti-coalition propaganda.

IA delivers sheep to community

Spc. Ben Brody
2nd BCT

BAGHDAD – During the Arba'iniyyah holiday, Iraqis typically celebrate with a huge feast.

But for some of the people of Baghdad, it is often difficult or impossible to afford such a meal.

In an attempt to provide traditional meals for the holiday feast, Iraqi Soldiers from 305th Iraqi Army Battalion, in conjunction with Soldiers from A Troop, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, distributed 60 sheep to residents of Eastern Baghdad March 26.

"It's the 305th's mission to secure our area, and also to help the people of Baghdad," said 1st Lt. Ali Adel Abdul Wahed al-Saidi, 305th IAB operations officer. "It makes you feel good to make the people happy like this. We like to patrol and keep the streets safe, but my men really like doing the sheep drops. I joined the Iraqi Army for one reason: to serve my country," he added.

Soldiers from 3/7 Cav. work with the 305th IAB at Camp Volunteer, as the Iraqi unit takes on increasing responsibilities in Baghdad.

"The 305th trains constantly, and they've proven themselves in combat operations," said Staff Sgt. Mark Huey, A Troop, 3/7 Cav., sniper and tank commander. "It's pretty much their show if we go out together. We just over-watch and provide additional security during some of their missions."

Huey, from Plano, Texas, and others live amongst the Iraqi Soldiers at Camp Volunteer and oversee much of their battle drills and train-

ing. Although neither unit advertised the sheep drop, a large crowd gathered quickly.

Iraqi troops lined the people up, and let one person at a time approach the truck and grab a sheep.

Two men wearing business suits each received a sheep, and walked back into the city together, each with a kicking, "baa-aa"-ing sheep under his arm.

By the time nearly 40 sheep had been distributed, the crowd had become too large for the small contingent of Iraqi and American troops.

Showing good judgment, the convoy packed up and rolled out as quickly as they had come.

A few miles away, in a quiet neighborhood, the convoy stopped and gave the remaining sheep to local residents. People there appeared just as excited to get the sheep, but did so in a much more orderly fashion.

"The sheep were a gift from the Americans, and we know the neediest areas of Baghdad, so it's good we're working together," said Capt. Ebaa Taha al-Abodi, 305th IAB. "We've learned a lot working with the American Army. Our Soldiers always want to go on missions. We're proud to serve our country."

Taha said since the elections, people have been much friendlier to his troops.

"It's important we're out here, helping people who maybe don't have enough to eat and showing people we're here to help," Taha said. "I think 90 percent of Iraqis like us. No one likes car bombs and murders, and people see we are working hard so they can have a better life."



Spc. Ben Brody

Iraqi Army Capt. Ebaa Taha al-Abodi, 305th IA Bn., hands a sheep to a Baghdad woman March 26.

New 'Buffalo' now roaming through Iraqi desert

Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin
10th Mtn. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – If the mighty thundering buffalo that once roamed the great plains of America had the advantage of an impenetrable metal frame and a gigantic claw, it probably wouldn't be endangered today.

In fact, if buffaloes possessed these improvements denied by genetics, they could prove quite resourceful in the global war against terrorism.

Soldiers from the 27th

Engineer Company, Fort Bragg, N.C., are keeping the streets safe from improvised explosive devices with the modern day "Buffalo," a massive armored Mine Clearing Purpose Vehicle built to uncover IEDs and minimize the effects of their dangerous explosions.

The Buffalo was originally designed to encounter land mines, but the Army has adapted the vehicle to deal with the constant problem of IEDs.

Currently, there are 14 Buffaloes in Iraq, with as

many as 15 being contracted for production, according to Defense Daily.

The 27th Engineers use Buffaloes to clear roads within the Commando Brigade's area of responsibility.

Sgt. Kevin Chose, a team leader with the 27th, said he and his Soldiers are having a tremendous positive impact on keeping the streets of Baghdad safe from IEDs.

"Every day before we go out, we say 'let's go find some bombs,'" Chose said.

"Even finding one IED makes a big difference. We

know finding one saved lives. We're all motivated to find something."

Fellow bomb seekers from 58th Engineers have already discovered and helped disarm many IEDs in less than a month, Chose said.

They also helped take out several IEDs in the unconventional way: getting hit.

"We get a first hand view of IED impacts," said Spc. Mark Campo, 27th Engineers. "It was like slow motion. I saw the cloud of debris coming toward me."

All Soldiers who ride in the Buffalo said they would rather have an IED hit them in a well-protected Buffalo than explode near their comrades in a humvee.

Engineers are especially proud that the Buffalo helped save the lives of unsuspecting Iraqi Army Soldiers.

On Dec. 4 they were approaching a suspected IED when it detonated only a few feet in front of them.

No one was hurt in the attack and the Buffalo was not damaged. Moments later IA Soldiers passed by in an unarmored humvee.

Chose said that if the IED had detonated on the IA troops, the consequences would have been far worse.

"It reaffirmed to me what we are doing over here," he said. "If we weren't there, eight or 10 guys wouldn't be going home."

Soldiers operating the Buffalo also gained confidence in the abilities of their vehicle.

A blast at such a close range would cause serious damage to a regular armored vehicle, but the Buffalo kept rolling, Campo said.

"I opened the top hatch to pull security," he said. "There was debris everywhere, but there wasn't a scratch on it (the Buffalo.)"

The design and intention of this explosion resistant machine are different from any armored vehicle.

The outside looks like a disgruntled trucker's dream come true.

Aside from its nearly impenetrable exterior, the Buffalo also features a remote-controlled mechanical claw used for inspecting IEDs.

The interior of the Buffalo, however, looks more like a commercial aircraft than a combat vehicle.

Five imitation-leather seats line the right and left windows.

There's even a television monitor, much like those used in high-priced automobiles, to examine potential IEDs.

Gale Aguilar, Force Protection executive officer, said the vehicle's success directly contributes to the Army's decision to spend \$11.8 million on new Buffaloes.

In the war against terrorism, money spent means lives saved.

"Our vehicles are saving lives by protecting our troops against the threat of landmine attacks and improvised explosive devices, which have been a deadly feature of the current combat."



Spc. Erin Robicheaux

Spc. Tracy Duhe, from New Roads, La., installs a radio at the rear of one of her unit's new Buffaloes.

Ali promises 'terrorists will die' in Iraq

Capt. Bryan K. Cecrle
TF 2-70th Armor

MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq – If you are a terrorist in Iraq, Col. Ali Jasim Mohammed has some advice for you: "Iraq is not good for you. Of course, they (the terrorists) will die."



Sgt. Thomas Benoit
Col. Ali Jasim Mohammed, commander of the 1st Presidential Battalion, Iraqi Army, works in his Mahمودiyah headquarters.

Ali is the commander of the 1st Presidential Battalion, Iraqi Army, headquartered in Mahمودiyah, Iraq.

On the evening of March 25, his unit was responsible for manning a traffic control point south of Mahمودiyah, locally known as the IED Bridge. Maj.

Adnan Hashim Ali is the TCP commander.

He explained that his Soldier, Hamid, was directing traffic through the TCP when it was noticed that the driver was acting suspicious. Hamid directed the car to stop and was preparing to search the vehicle when the driver detonated a bomb concealed in the car.

Iraqi Army Soldiers immediately secured the area and notified Ali. When asked if they needed additional Soldiers to come to the TCP, Adnan told his boss that none were needed. They had the situation under control. The TCP opened again to traffic shortly afterward.

Ali explained that only three Soldiers were injured in the attack. His Soldiers provided buddy aid and then evacuated them to further medical care.

Two were immediately stabilized and the third was undergoing further evaluation.

Ali said that his Soldiers actions saved many lives that evening, because he believed that this vehicle-borne improvised explosive device was intended for the Arba'iniyyah pilgrims on the route north of the TCP.

Adnan concurred, and said, "What happened proved they do their jobs in a good way."

The VBIED was stopped, he said, "due to the diligence of the Iraqi Army Soldier."

Iraqi civilians provided a tip that may have saved even more lives just after this VBIED, informing the Soldiers that there was another suspicious car just down the road from the TCP with three people.

IA Soldiers approached the vehicle to question the occupants, who attempted to flee, but lost control of their car.

The Soldiers engaged the three occupants, injuring one, but were unable to detain

them.

Local civilians later confirmed that one of the occupants was injured, but was carried off by the others.

The vehicle had another improvised explosive device that was ready to emplace.

The 1st Presidential rendered the bomb safe and moved both it and the car to their compound for further investigation.

When Ali first arrived here four months ago, people were afraid to approach the Iraqi Army with information, he said.

Now, the local populace provides information that he is able to use to stop IEDs.

Speaking of his Soldiers, Ali said he is "proud all of the time. My Soldiers are here to fight for peace in Iraq. Terrorists have no place because of the Iraqi Army presence."

1088th services essential for community growth

Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT

MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq – Renovations and improvements are essential for the nation of Iraq to change for the better, and 1088th Engineer Battalion, 256th Brigade Combat Team is committed to making them happen.

Pay officers from 1088th traveled to Forward Operating Base St. Michael to join forces with the 407th Civil Affairs Battalion to pay Iraqi contractors for the work that they have done to improve the quality of life for their own people.

Three contractors and three projects are on or near completion, and the community is already reaping the benefits.

"(Insurgents) have been putting a lot of improvised explosive devices in the roads, so we've hired local contractors to fix (and pave) the potholes, and to clear and widen the streets," said Staff Sgt. Robert Bourgoyne, Headquarters Company, 1088th Eng. Bn. Bourgoyne, a pay officer for 256th Brigade Combat Team, said this process is important and necessary for keeping Soldiers safe. It will also improve the road conditions for the locals in the community.

"By widening the roads, it will deny access to put IEDs really close to where the patrols may pass, it

gives a little more standoff distance; and even if an IED is set off, it'll be far enough away from the road that hopefully it will save some casualties," he said.

Two projects in Mahمودiyah are involved with bringing water to residents of the area.

The East Mahمودiyah Pipe Project is in combination with the reconstruction of a local water plant and is now successfully bringing water into homes.

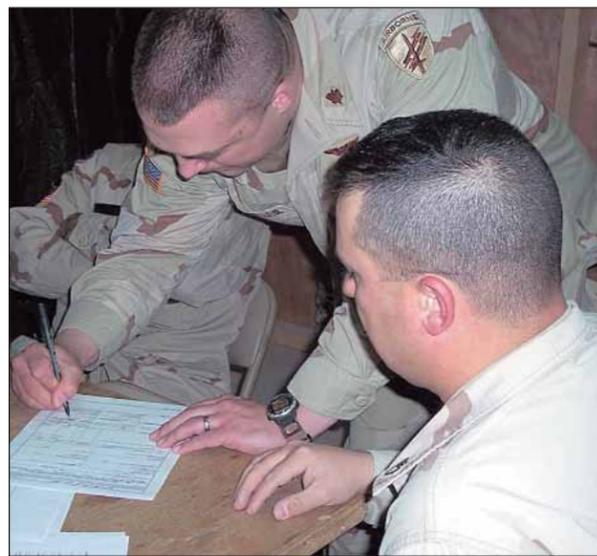
The plant had not been used since 1972, but now, thanks to conjunctive efforts of 256th BCT, 407th CA Bn. and local contractors, it is up and running again.

Maj. David Langfellow, A Company, 407th CA commander, said this venture is bringing water to at least three neighborhoods in the Mahمودiyah vicinity.

"Basically, the contractor who was overseeing the water plant rebuilt and refurbished the entire building ... from the power supply to electrical pumps," he said.

He added that the contractor also rebuilt all of the water holding facilities, fixed windows, cleaned up foliage around the building, and even rebuilt part of the building itself and painted it.

"He really brought it back to life, he's a great contractor," Langfellow said. "He accomplished his mission ... locals accomplishing missions like this are what will help U.S. Forces accomplish theirs."



Spc. Erin Robicheaux
Staff Sgt. Robert Bourgoyne, a pay officer with the 1088th Eng. Bn., observes Maj. David Langfellow, A Co., 407th CA Bn. commander, as he signs paperwork to pay a local contractor for his work.

Infantry officer plays for spirituality, troops, himself

Sgt. Andrew A. Miller
100th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The congregation is on its feet, singing along with the energized spiritual sounds of the praise band.

In a bright, populated chapel, singers, players and listeners alike harmonize and create an almost graspable feeling of fellowship, welcome and praise.

Amid all the harmony and move-

ment, however, Capt. Michael L. Kolodzie, the executive officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, appears as if he is alone with his guitar.

His eyes are almost completely closed, and concentration masks his face as he plays and sings.

"I've been playing ever since I was in junior high school," Kolodzie said.

And he has been performing in front of crowds since he joined the

choir at the U.S. Military Academy.

Throughout the six years which have followed his days at West Point, he hasn't stopped. Wherever the Canastota, N.Y., native has been assigned, he has been working with chaplains and letting his music be heard by anyone who wants to hear it, he said.

Anyone interested can hear him and others every Sunday here at the 3rd Infantry Division Chapel or at the Engineer Chapel, where Kolodzie plays at the 9 to 10 a.m. and 10 to 11 a.m. services, respectively.

He also spends many evenings playing music in the chaplain's area of the division main building here.

But Kolodzie doesn't limit himself to just worship music — during the evenings, or in the life support areas or even before the chapel services begin, he can be heard playing whatever comes to mind.

"It's great to sit back and play some nice, laid back blues licks," he said. "I really feel that blues has been designed around the guitar."

And while his rapport with guitars is easy to see and hear, he does not limit himself to one instrument either. However, when taking his show on the road — "the road" presently being Baghdad — a six-string is easier to transport than a bass or a keyboard, he said.

"A guitar is just about right," he said.

Kolodzie's commitment to the guitar is due to more than just its portability.

"I really love to play," he

explained. "It's a great stress reliever; it's a lot of fun and at some point it can become kind of a science."

Much of the fun and the stress relief may come from the science of collaboration. As any young child can testify, the only thing better than playing is playing with friends.

"You get two or three guys who know what they're doing to get together, you don't even have to say any words," he said. "You just start playing and you can have a really great time."

Being a well-rounded infantry captain, Kolodzie has hobbies other than playing music.

Originally from Syracuse, N.Y., he, his father and his brother are all known as cooks. Each of them has his own area of responsibility on the grill.

For Kolodzie, the music and the food go hand in hand.

"If I was going to relax for a weekend, it would include a six-string, a few beers and a good, hot grill," he said.

For U.S. service members stationed in Iraq, weekends and beer were left behind when they deployed.

Guitars and grills, however, are accessible to all, and now that most of the rainwater has evaporated, Kolodzie will be out enjoying two of his favorite things.

"We'll just get together and jam with whoever it is who happens to show up," he said, naming the LSAs as his venue. "We'll grill some hot dogs and steaks and enjoy some music."



Sgt. Andrew Miller
Capt. Michael L. Kolodzie, HHC, 2/10 Mtn. Div., executive officer, sings and plays guitar with the praise team at the 3rd Inf. Div. Chapel March 13.



Courtesy photo

Iraqi people are enjoying more freedoms now than ever before, including the freedom to make their pilgrimage to Karbala during the commemoration of Arba' iniyyah.

Mohammed paves way for safe pilgrimage to Karbala

Capt. Brian K. Ceclre
TF 2-70 Armor

If you want to know the meaning of sacrifice for the future of one's country, you need look no farther than Brig. Gen. Mohammed Iesa Baher.

He has had one son killed by terrorists, another son kidnapped who is still missing, his home in Mahmudiyah has been blown up, and he's forced to secretly move his family around daily in order to keep them safe.

Mohammed, the current commander of the Iraqi Army's 507th Battalion, headquartered in Mahmudiyah, Iraq, worked selflessly for 54 hours non-stop ensuring that all operations in his area of responsibility were running smoothly to keep the streets safe during the Arba' iniyyah pilgrimage.

Hundreds of thousands of Shiite Muslims from all over Iraq and surrounding countries make the trek to Karbala to commemorate Arba'iniyyah. Keeping

everyone safe is a major undertaking.

When Mohammed first assumed command, he had only himself and 26 Soldiers. They received additional Soldiers by making requests at the city councils, and there are now two battalions and part of a third securing the area.

Asked about his plan to protect the pilgrims, he stated that it has been successful so far.

His Soldiers have been manning checkpoints up and down supply routes. He directed and coordinated that the route be closed to all but emergency vehicular traffic from just south of Baghdad, all the way south to Lutafiyah.

Proof of Mohammed's success was an unsuccessful attack of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, the second of which was discovered at a checkpoint on the evening of March 25.

Mohammed was recently selected as the new commander of the 4th "South of Baghdad" Brigade with responsibility for the area of operations south of

the city bordered by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

Mohammed believes that a key to further success for Iraq is the quick establishment of a new government, and that his area will become more secure and safer for all Iraqi people once that occurs.

He further stated that joint patrols of the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, Coalition Forces, and "the help of good people currently secure this area."

When it comes to his Soldiers, Mohammed said he commands the best battalion in the Iraqi Army. He has tried to implement shift work for his Soldiers so they can get more time off, but they insist that they need to work more hours in order to secure their country. He and his Soldiers also look forward to the joint patrols with the Coalition Forces and other training opportunities.

Mohammed's message for the terrorists in his country?

"No more conversation or talking. I will kill all of you."



Operation Aid Drop

TF Baghdad Press Release
Special to The Marne Express

BAGHDAD – In a mission dubbed Operation Aid Drop, Soldiers from D Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment delivered donated items ranging from bottled water to clothing to the residents in the central Baghdad area March 21.

Many of the items were donated from organizations in the United States.



Courtesy photos

Above: Staff Sgt. Licedric Spearmon, 4/64 Armor, hands a box of water to a Baghdad resident during Operation Aid Drop March 21. Left: Capt. Thomas Venable, Joint Area Support Group, helps an Iraqi child blow bubbles. Bubbles and other children's toys were some of the items the Soldiers delivered.



Staff Sgt. Joe Speck

Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Bryant from Shreveport, La., of B Co. 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, excitedly looks on as a new bike is presented to his little friend.

Soldier brings bike, happiness to child

Spc. Erin Robicheaux

256th BCT

CAMP JUSTICE, Baghdad - Two Soldiers from the 256th Brigade Combat Team have made a new friend, and they want to show him what he means to them.

Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Bryant from Shreveport, La., of B Co. 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, and Staff Sgt. Joe Speck from Deville, La., of C Co. 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, were won over by a little boy, whose mother is a first sergeant in the 36th Commando Iraqi Battalion.

The 36th falls under the command of the 40th Iraqi National Guard, and Speck and Bryant are stationed at Camp Justice training them.

"His father was with the Iraqi Army and killed by an insurgent about a year ago," said Speck. "This kid has the biggest smile. We just wanted to do something to make him happy."

Actually acquiring the bike proved to be a challenge.

Bryant tried to purchase one in the Camp Justice area, and when all attempts failed, he turned to the 256th Brigade Combat Team historian.

"He (Bryant) came to the office and mentioned that he was trying to find a bike for a little boy, but that he was having some trouble," said Sgt. Jessica Dubois from Abbeville, La., of Headquarters Co. 256th Brigade Combat Team.

"A man in one of the shops here usually gets me things pretty quickly, so I asked him about this, and in two weeks he had it for me," she said.

Dubois said that she feels good to have been able to participate in this, even if she had to do it from an office.

"I wish that I could get out more in the community and do something to help the people. I work in homeless shelters in the States, and I just want to contribute in whatever way that I can."

Bryant recalls the moment that the little boy stole his heart.

"I was having dinner with one of our interpreters and the little boy was there with a female Soldier. I gave the Soldier a candy bar that I'd had in my pocket and asked her to give it to the little boy. She told him that if he ate everything on his plate that he could have it."

Bryant said that he laughed at the child's reaction.

"I've never seen a kid eat so fast, he looked like he was actually starting to break a sweat!"

When the Soldiers finally had the bike in hand and presented it to the child, Bryant says that his smile lit up the room.

"He was so cute, it just made my day to see his reaction."

The Soldiers are not finished, yet. After much probing, they finally found out from the mother what she and the child needed.

"We asked her what else we could do for her and she kept saying nothing," said Speck, "but we knew that there just had to be something that they could use."

The Soldiers kept asking, until she told them that they both needed clothes and shoes.

"We're going to do everything for them that we can," said Speck.

Spartans continue infrastructure improvements

Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich

2nd BCT

BAGHDAD - The 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Brigade Troops Battalion, is comprised of Soldiers from the signal, military intelligence, military police and engineer communities.

Their mission is a non-lethal one - to provide support to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team by providing communications, intelligence, police and engineer assets.

The latter, engineer support, is critical in the coalition's continuing effort to rebuild and improve Iraq's infrastructure, according to Lt. Col. Jamie Gayton, 2/3 BTB, commander.

Gayton, a career engineer officer, along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, serve as project assessment, construction management and quality control. He sees the multitude of engineer projects in the brigade's sector, specifically Sadr City, as an opportunity to garner support from the local populace.

"(Iraqis) are looking for someone to grab onto to make things better," he said. "More importantly, they need to know that we'll follow through with the projects."

In Sadr City, more than \$380 million has been put into improving the quality of life for two million Iraqis. There are over 100 sewer, trash, power and water projects in the area either under way or have been completed, Gayton said.

"(Sadr City and) Baghdad east of the Tigris was ignored by Saddam's regime."

One of the major problems in Sadr, as well as the rest of the sector, is an inadequate sewage system or complete lack of one.

"What has been our major obstacle to this point is discovering which areas do or don't have a functioning sewer system," said 1st Lt. Joshua Conary, 2/3 BTB, brigade wastewater officer. "Poor record keeping in the past ... and years of construction and paving over existing manholes has made (discovering sewer

lines) especially difficult."

Sadr City has one main sewer line, with multiple lateral lines from each neighborhood that feed into it.

The gravity line, which rests 10 - 15 meters below the surface, is three meters in diameter and runs from the geographic center of Sadr 15 miles south to the Rustimiya North Sewer Treatment Plant, one of only two plants east of the Tigris.

The problem, according to Gayton, is a lack of sewage lines that run from homes to the main sewer line. "For the most part," he said, "(residents') sewage runs from their home into street trenches."

Ten miles southeast of Sadr City, in Mahalla 745, a street and sewer project was recently completed to the delight of residents.

One of the locals stated (through an interpreter) that he had lived in the neighborhood for more than 15 years and never had a subterranean sewage system, paved streets or curb stones.

This elation is spreading, albeit slowly, to other parts of Baghdad, including Sadr. There, the Office of Transition Initiatives, a branch of the U.S. Agency for International Development, hired more than 12,000 residents to clean up the streets and free them of trash. Gayton said, "When residents start to see positive things, there's a snowball effect."

The push for power in Sadr City has been ongoing since heavy fighting in the sector came to an end in June.

Of the 83 sub-divided sectors of Sadr, 15 of them either have power contracts in the works or are completed. For the remaining sectors, a \$121 million contract is in the works. The contracts cover parts and labor for utility poles, transformers, and lines that run directly to panel boxes in homes.

Currently, 12 sectors of Sadr have been contracted to have potable water piped to residences, four of which are nearing completion. A contract is prepared and awaiting funding for the remaining sectors. "There is a large



Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich

Lt. Col. Jamie Gayton, 2/3 BTB, commander, speaks with a local woman in Baghdad March 19. Work was recently completed on the neighborhood's first-ever sewer line.

number of residents, children specifically, who become very ill because they drink non potable water," Gayton said, adding that these projects will eventually remedy the problem.

All infrastructure repair projects in the city are funded from a combination of Iraqi government, U.S. government, and non-government organization funds.

They utilize local contractors and laborers from the immediate area which, according to Gayton, is a motivating factor in ensuring the area is free of insurgents.

"We tell local leaders that we can't contract the (infrastructure improvements in their area) if there's violence toward coalition forces," Gayton said. "The local leaders take it upon themselves to deal with insurgents."

In addition to visiting work sites, USACE and the 2/3 BTB project teams receive feedback daily from maneuver

units that patrol each area.

Spartan BCT units like 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, who regularly patrol Sadr City, speak with its local leaders and advisory council daily, to not only gauge the presence of insurgent forces in the area, but to assess the quality of life for the residents.

Units also check with locals to ensure the contractors and laborers are doing what's in the neighborhood's best interest.

Overall, Gayton feels that improvements throughout Eastern Baghdad are going very well, much to the credit of the Iraqi people.

"Right now ... our job is to help Iraqis help themselves - to show them the path to success," he said. "They're doing the work to rebuild their country."

Gayton concluded, "That's the only way we'll be successful - to establish a safe, secure environment through helping them improve their daily lives."

The day they slipped away

Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT

CAMP TIGERLAND, Iraq — “They’re our friends, our brothers...but please remember that our loss is Heaven’s gain.”

A somber Lt Col. Thomas Plunkett, battalion commander for 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, bid farewell to two of his fallen Soldiers.

Sgt. Lee Godbolt and Sgt. Isiah Sinclair, both of 1st Battalion 141st Field Artillery, were tragically taken from their families and fellow Soldiers as the result of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device March 25.

On March 30, the friends and leaders they left behind gathered to celebrate their lives and mourn their deaths.

Plunkett rejoiced in the legacy that his men became a part of by honoring the sacrifice they made for their country.

He referenced the founding fathers who sacrificed for nothing more than an idea, and he forcefully declared that his Soldiers would meet any challenge and defeat all enemies so that their two comrades will not have died in vain.

Cpt. Michael W. Hicks, A Co. commander, gave an emotional and tearful tribute to his two Soldiers and reflected on qualities in each that he came to love and admire.

“He was always prepared to execute 24/7,” he said of Sinclair. “(He) was dependable, squared away and liked things in order. We always

said, if you want something secure, put Sinclair on it.”

Hicks also spoke about Godbolt, his “insane” desire to learn more about his job, and how he had a positive effect on all who came into contact with him.

In regards to both Soldiers, Hicks recognized that they were exceptional men who helped define the “citizen Soldier.”

Sgt. John Roger, III, also in A Co., was close to Godbolt and stated that his admiration was, at times, parental.

“I realized that being a noncommissioned officer is a lot like being a father,” he said. “You do your best to instill discipline, honor, integrity, and courage into your Soldiers, much like you would to a child. I guess that’s why I feel like I’ve lost a son.”

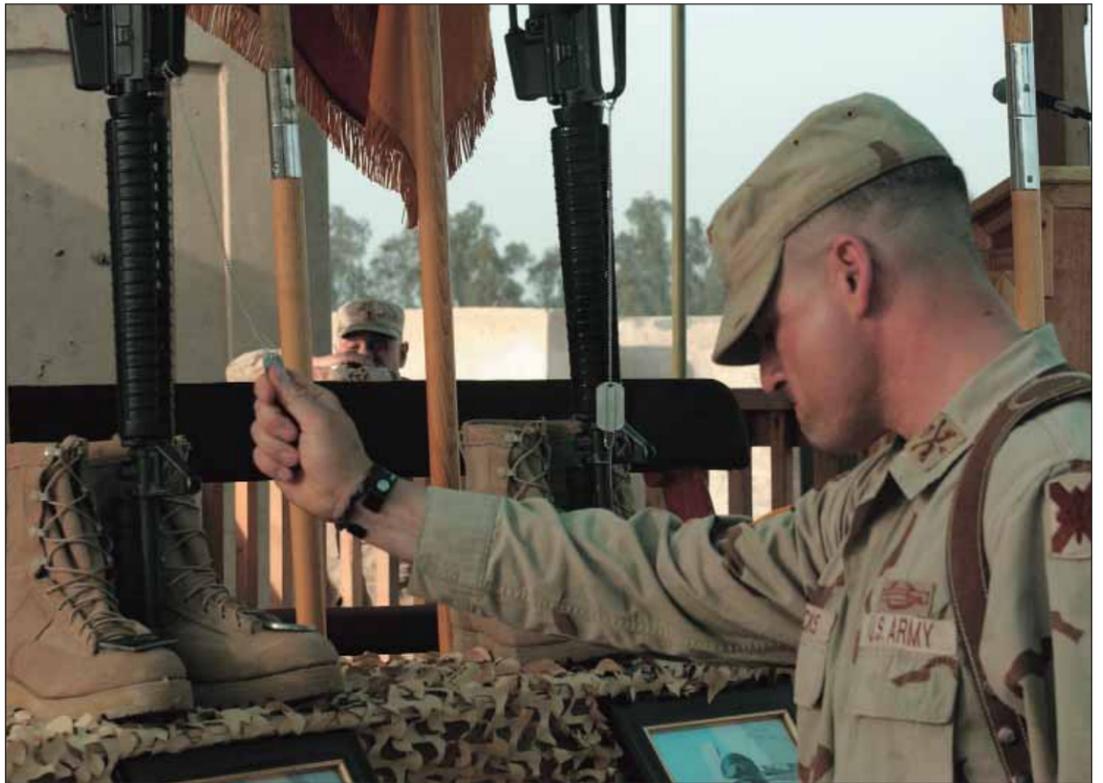
Lt. Col. Jordan Jones, 1/141 FA commander, boasted about Godbolt’s dependability and his capacity to do the right thing. He avowed that no leader could ask for more of a Soldier than Godbolt proved to be.

“He gave all,” Jones said.

Jones also told those in attendance that the Soldiers’ families are coping the best they can and they will continue to pray for the 256th Soldiers’ safe return.

Staff Sgt. Jonathan Meziere, also from A Co., paid homage to Sinclair and told the crowd of Soldiers about his friend’s love of military life.

He spoke of Sinclair’s enthusiasm for whatever he did.



Spc. Chris Foster

Cpt. Michael W. Hicks, commander of A Co., 1/156th Armor holds on to the identification tags of Sgt. Isiah Sinclair. The memorial service paid respect to the fallen Soldiers of the 256th BCT March 30.

Sinclair had been an active duty Soldier in both the Army and Marine Corps, and enlisted in the Army National Guard in 2002.

Meziere joked about how his friend was in awe of a certain comic book hero.

“He collected Spider Man stuff!” he said with a laugh.

Sinclair had a plethora of Spider Man memorabilia, including cereal boxes in his

room depicting the “Webbed One.”

In true form, Meziere said, his friend had a reminder of his favorite comic book character with him on his last patrol.

He claimed Sinclair was always prepared and always on the go.

Meziere thought back to their drill days at the National Guard Armory in Louisiana, the

unit’s home.

“He either rode his bike or ran to drill, and he was never late. There were some Soldiers who lived less than a mile away and came in cars, but were still late at times,” he said.

Both Soldiers will be remembered by their comrades for their sacrifices, loved and eternally missed by their families, and have the gratitude of countless Americans.

256 Soldiers raise hands to remain in 256th BCT

Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT

CAMP LIBERTY, Baghdad - Raising their right hands and swearing to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic,” 256 Soldiers of the 256th Brigade Combat Team officially extended their service to the Army National Guard, in a ceremony with the perfect facilitator — Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, chief of the Army National Guard Bureau.

“People back home look at you as superheroes,” Blum proudly informed the Soldiers, “You have tremendous support.”

To date, 334 Soldiers of the 256th BCT have opted to re-enlist, and with a year end goal of just under 1000, Sgt. 1st Class Philip Flowers has faith that the numbers will remain steady. Flowers,

the noncommissioned officer in charge of 256th BCT retention, and said that if events continue along their current pace, there will be no problems reaching the goal. Currently, the 256th is tracking roughly 26 extensions per week.

Though there is a significant bonus involved, Flowers feels that the Soldiers who extend care about more than the money.

“The bottom line is, if you want to get out, you’re going to get out, and no amount of money can make you stay in,” he said. “I think that it says a lot for the leadership of the 256th BCT, when you consider how many Soldiers are sticking around.”

He also believes that National Guard Soldiers are taking more pride in their jobs, now that they are able to perform them to full capacity.

“During our regular status, Soldiers come to drill, train, and never really get

to put to use the skills that they have learned. Since the deployment, though, they have been able to do their jobs, and they have done them well,” he said.

Staff Sgt. Melchiorre L. Chiarenza, Personnel Strength Non-Commissioned Officer for 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 256th BCT, has extended his service after racking up 15 years to his credit.

“After that long, six more doesn’t seem like much time out of my life,” he said.

A school teacher from Staten Island, N.Y., Chiarenza not only signed up for more time with the National Guard, he is also considering making it a full-time career.

“I’ll be doing the same job that I’m doing here in Iraq, either with the 1/69th or with the La. National Guard,” he said.

Chiarenza has made so many new friends as a result of the deployment, that he might possibly decide to make a permanent move to Louisiana.

“I’ve been working with a great group of people, and it’s going to be hard to let them go,” he said.

Blum reflected on the significance of National Guard Soldiers re-enlisting in a combat zone, and said that he was impressed at how many signed up for more time with the military, especially when they are still just under halfway through their tour in Iraq.

He also noted that the same Soldiers who postponed civilian careers and college educations to fight the war on terrorism, were still patriotic enough to raise their right hands and promise to protect their country.

“They care about what they are doing here and know that what they are doing is making a difference, and will make America safer,” he said, “they are truly

“I think it says a lot for the leadership ... when you consider how many Soldiers are sticking around.”

Sgt. 1st Class Philip Flowers
256th BCT retention NCOIC

an American treasure.”

Sgt. Corey Allbritton, from New Orleans, La., of Headquarters Company, 256th, has been a member of the Louisiana

National Guard for almost nine years.

Just prior to deployment he was performing force protection duties in his home state, but says that he will eventually go back to school.

“I’m interested in biology and will probably major in a science related field,” he said.

Allbritton will pursue a civilian education, but has full intentions of staying in the Guard for twenty years.

“Quitting after almost nine years would be like quitting high school when you’re 16 years old,” he said.

In addition, he has high aspirations for his military career.

“My goal is to be a Brigade Sgt. Maj.,” said Allbritton.

“It’s funny, though,” he said, “when I was a Pfc. it was simple, I just wanted to be a sergeant.”

Should Allbritton and his fellow “citizen Soldiers” get the call again to serve, Blum says that it won’t be anytime soon.

According to him, the National Guard will not be used at this rate all the time, and the troops’ patriotism and willingness to serve will not be abused.

“We need to make sure that when these Soldiers return home, we don’t call them for another five or six years,” he said, “We need to give the families, the employers, and the Soldiers some predictability and certainty.”

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Blum walked through the ranks and shook all 256 hands that had just been raised in promise to the United States.

He told the Soldiers, “Ladies and gentlemen, you have just re-enlisted in the Tiger Brigade, and I salute you.”



Spc. Chris Foster

Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, chief of the Army National Guard Bureau, swears in 256 Soldiers of the 256th Brigade Combat Team. The Soldiers significantly extended their service in a combat zone, just under halfway through their tour in Iraq.

Learning the "Dos and Don'ts"

Soldiers educated on Iraqi culture at Liberty

Spc. Ricardo Branch
3rd Inf. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – To familiarize individuals with the dos and don'ts of local culture, Task Force Baghdad Soldiers were given the opportunity to attend a cultural awareness class held by the 3rd Infantry Division cultural and political advisory cell at the Marne Legal Center March 25.

The class was developed in an effort to make Soldiers in the legal department more aware with the customs and behaviors of the Iraqi culture.

More than 40 Soldiers, representing the legal sections of six different 3rd Inf. Div. brigades, attended the class.

"To be effective communicators, we have to be sensitive to the country's customs," said Lt. Col. Christopher Royer, deputy staff judge advocate, 3rd Inf. Div.

Royer said that the legal departments of the brigades have interactions with the local population, which made it necessary for a class to better understand the people they will deal with.

"There could be an incident where a local needs to be brought in for a witness, and we need to be able to handle the coordination and flexibility for it without offending anyone by being culturally insensitive," he said.

Guest speaker and instructor for the class, Dr. Alaa A. Abdelazim, division cultural and political advisor, began his course with an overview of the U.S. agenda in Iraq.

"Our mission here requires winning and keeping popular support," Abdelazim said. "People must feel under all circumstances that Americans are their friends."

Excellent treatment should therefore be extended to people under all circumstances, he said.

All searches, including those of houses and of people, should be conducted in a highly professional manner with a prime focus on showing special respect for any men involved.

The man of the house is usually the head of household, therefore it's customary to greet him first, then greet the woman if she's introduced to you, he said.

Respect was just one of the many items of discussion, which included lectures and a condensed breakdown

of the Iraqi culture, its customs and numerous gestures.

"In Iraq, many gestures that Soldiers use mean different things," Abdelazim said. "Knowing those differences in gestures will help break down the cultural wall and help in communicating positive information."

"Simple things like waving someone to go away from a convoy can mean come toward it if the wrong gesture is done," he said. "That's why we're trying to show the differences because if people can understand it they can achieve many things."

Soldiers attending the class agreed that learning the basic gestures and customs would be beneficial in their dealings with the locals.

"Learning the culture and customs of Iraq helps make Soldiers diplomatic and better warriors in their fields," said Col. William A. Hudson Jr., staff judge advocate, multinational division Baghdad.

"This is very helpful," said Spc. David Hoke, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division Support Brigade. "We'll have a better understanding of some of the gestures, which will help us in our inter-

action with Iraqis."

"In our field, we need to be familiar with the customs and culture to prevent any legal issues from arising when Soldiers deal with the locals," Hoke said. "Too often when Soldiers are out they do the wrong things that can offend the locals, he said.

After the class, Abdelazim presented examples of situations in which problems could arise if cultural issues and differences were not understood.

Abdelazim said, It is easy to imagine just how many new enemies you make when you insult, offend, injure, or kill an Iraqi.

In collecting the debt of revenge due from American forces to an injured party and act of retribution may be directed toward anyone wearing the American uniform.

"Therefore, if we can teach Soldiers more of the Iraqi culture, you lift the misunderstanding and could possibly gain a brother, not an enemy."

For information regarding upcoming classes contact Dr. Alaa A. Abdelazim at the 3rd Inf. Div. G-5 cultural and political advisory cell VOIP 242-4474 or send an e-mail to abdelazim.al@id3.army.mil.

In America ...		In Iraq ...	
Good job!		The American "okay" sign is offensive to Iraqis. Do not use it.	
Stop		A closed fist will not be understood; use your open palm instead.	
Nice to meet you		When greeting an Iraqi woman, modesty prohibits her from shaking hands. Instead, place your hand over your heart, and she will do the same.	
			Nice to meet you

Iraqi democratic government on the right track

SJA Staff Report
Special to The Marne Express

On June 28, 2004, the Iraqi Interim Government assumed power in Iraq from the Coalition Provisional Authority.

The United States and the United Kingdom headed the CPA with United Nations backing after the fall of Saddam Hussein's Regime.

The CPA enacted orders which became governing law in Iraq and remain in effect until overturned by legislation.

The Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the

Transitional Period outlines the transition of government from the IIG through the Iraqi Transitional Government to a permanent elected government with a ratified National Constitution in place.

On Jan. 30, the Iraqi people elected a 275-member Transitional National Assembly.

The TNA will name a Presidency Council which consists of a President and two Deputy Presidents. They act as the heads of State for Iraq managing the higher affairs of the country.

The Presidency Council

names a Prime Minister and a Council of Ministers. They manage the day to day affairs of the country, and must receive a vote of confidence from the TNA in order to take their seats.

The Presidency Council also names a National Supreme Court.

The current challenges facing the TNA are to name the Presidency Council and to draft the National Constitution.

The Constitution must be completed by Aug. 15.

The TNA may request a one-time, six-month extension if they believe that they will

need more time to complete the task.

If the Constitution is complete by Aug. 15, a national referendum will be held on Oct. 15 giving the Iraqi people a chance to ratify it by a majority vote.

If the constitution is not ratified or if it is rejected by two out of three voters in three Governorates, or if the TNA fails to draft it in time after being given a requested extension, then the ITG will be dissolved and new elections will be held.

If the Constitution is ratified then national elections will be

held by the end of December for a permanent Iraqi Government.

The various political parties, ethnic and religious groups in the TNA will need to work together to successfully draft a Constitution for all of the Iraqi people.

The process will be difficult and full of debate, but the final outcome will be a Constitution that works for all Iraqi citizens no matter what their ethnic or religious background may be and a government elected by the people that will continue to lead Iraq in freedom and justice.

The Local Beat: Task Force Liberty News Briefs

Hospital leaders discuss ways to improve care

KIRKUK, Iraq – Kirkuk General Hospital staff and Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, met earlier this month to discuss ways to improve medical care for Iraqis.

The first step is to offer an Emergency Medical Technician-Basic Course for Iraqi Soldiers.

The course will allow the Soldiers to offer first-line care when EMS personnel cannot get to a scene because of insurgent activity. The Joint Coordination Center has also offered to work with the hospital's EMS to provide security. Soldiers from 2/116th Cav. continue to work with the hospital administrators to obtain medical supplies.

Soldiers visit children at newly-opened school

MAMDODA, Iraq – Soldiers and students came together for the opening of the Ghusoon Kindergarten School. Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment handed out school supplies to the 80 students.

The school was opened on March 7, following renovations. The project is one of many in Iraq showing the new government's resolve to offer a quality, formal education for all children.

Police station gets makeover, offers better security

KIRKUK, Iraq – The Aruba Police station re-opened on March 10 with new security measures in place.

The renovation project includes fighting positions on the roof, a new

checkpoint at the entrance to the station and a weatherproof guard shack.

In addition, the police station has a new generator, living quarters for the officers and new office equipment and furniture. The project offers a more secure and modern building for officers to conduct their job.

Schools now co-ed

TAZA CITY, Iraq – Boys and girls across Iraq are being afforded the opportunity to earn a quality education in this new democratic society.

Under the former regime only boys were sent to school, but now girls are getting the same opportunity.

To ease the influx of students at the Shead Primary School, the headmaster has divided the school day in half, educating almost 300 boys in the morning and 400 girls in the afternoon.

Iraqi Soldiers continue to work on individual skills

KIRKUK, Iraq – Iraqi Security Forces personnel continue to enhance their individual Soldier skills while performing the task of making Iraq a safe country. Soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, Iraqi Army, train on tasks such as navigating with a compass and how to properly dismount from a vehicle if attacked.

The ISF also continues to receive new equipment for use in making Iraq a secure country.

Villagers receive medical check-up

BABAA MAHMOOD, Iraq –

Medical personnel from 3rd Squadron, 278th Regimental Combat Team, conducted a medical screening of villagers on March 16.

The medical review was done in conjunction with the delivery of personal hygiene items to the residents.

Intelligence tip leads to discovery of weapons cache

BAYJI, Iraq – A weapons cache was discovered and destroyed at an abandoned military base south of here.

The cache, which was discovered by C Company, 201st Battalion, Iraqi Army, and A Company, 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry Regiment, included nearly 100 air to ground rockets and five 120mm rounds.

A tip to an Iraqi Soldier led the units to search the site.

Police presence leads to increased activity in samarra

SAMARRA, Iraq – Samarra police officers have stepped up their presence around the Golden Mosque and adjacent shopping areas.

The patrols have shown a marked increase in the numbers of shoppers and visitors at the religious site.

Aviators spot anti-aircraft gun

AD DUJAYL, Iraq – An aviation crew flying over a farmer's field spotted an anti-aircraft gun and reported it to higher headquarters.

A patrol of Iraqi Army Soldiers and 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, Soldiers was dispatched to

the site to retrieve the weapon.

Although the gun was unusable in its current state it could have become a viable weapon with some parts and a little maintenance.

Medics provide aid to Iraqi boy

BAQUBAH, Iraq – As medics from 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, applied antibiotic cream to a little boy's eye, the child's mother's eyes began to water with tears of joy.

The boy was brought to the medics with an eye infection yesterday. The mother was very appreciative of the care given her son.

Iraqi Army improves highway checkpoints

DIYALA, Iraq – Iraqi Army Soldiers upgraded security measures along Blue Babe Highway checkpoints on March 20.

The Soldiers also worked on improving the appearance of the checkpoints as well. D Company, 213th Battalion, Iraqi Army, worked on techniques for securing the highway and over-watching the surrounding area.

Security stepped up following blast

KHALIS, Iraq – The 204th Iraqi Army Battalion has increased force protection procedures after a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device was detonated in the area.

The Soldiers are conducting thorough vehicle searches and moving traffic through the checkpoints.

A cuppa joe for a camp o' Joes



Maj. Joseph D'Angelo, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 299th Infantry Regiment, and a native of Hilo, Hawaii, is all smiles as he gets a steaming cup of cappuccino from manager Imran Thange at the grand opening of the Tigerland Green Beans Coffee Cafe March 28. Army/Air Force Exchange Service officials said the coffee house, located in the food court, gives Task Force Baghdad Soldiers "a little taste of the finer things in life" while they're in a combat zone.

Sgt. 1st Class David Abrams

MPs get Iraqi street smarts

Spc. Brian Schroeder
10th Mtn. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Military police from a different desert thousands of miles away found themselves in semi-familiar territory while patrolling the dusty streets of Baghdad.

Soldiers from the 126th Military Police Company, a New Mexico Army Reserve unit, were mentored during several days of “left seat/right seat” rides through Western Baghdad to familiarize themselves with their new area of responsibility.

Their mentors, the Soldiers of the 127th Military Police Company offered them much more than a ride through the city.

The first phase of the “left seat/right seat” rides taught the incoming Reserve Soldiers the various aspects of the area and the different techniques that have been beneficial to the street-savvy 127th MPs.

In this case, members of the new unit learned the names of the roads, the locations of Iraqi Police stations and how to interact with their Iraqi counterparts.

“(The 126th MPs) are asking a lot of questions about their new area,” said Sgt. James Becker, 127th MP Co. team leader.

Before going out on patrol, Becker said the incoming unit was given a three-hour block

of instruction including safety and battle drills.

“They are teaching us a lot of good stuff,” said Spc. Shannon Thomas, 126th MP Co. driver. “Safety has been a big deal here.”

Thomas said he has learned how very important it is to be cautious and alert while out on patrol.

He said he is trying to soak in as much information about the roads and terrain as possible.

“We have been picking everybody’s brain trying to figure out all that we need to know,” he said.

Following the pre-combat checks and inspections, the new MPs rode in the same vehicles as the Western Baghdad area veterans, who indicated points of interest within their patrol area.

During the familiarization ride Becker quizzed Thomas on his knowledge of the road names in his new sector.

“What road are we on?” Becker asked.

With his eyebrows scrunched together, Thomas concentrated on all of the information he had received over the past three days – the answer was nearly on the tip of his tongue.

“This is Route Vernon,” Becker the mentor replied.

Thomas’ future street memorization skills will play a vital role in his safety.

On the sometimes danger-



Spc. Brian Schroeder

Spc. Nick Wilson, 127th Military Police Company driver stands guard while MPs and Iraqi Police officers examine the aftermath of an improvised explosive device. in Baghdad.

ous streets of Baghdad, getting lost or forgetting a time-saving, life-saving short cut could have horrible consequences.

Prior to their Iraq deployment, the Army Reservists trained at the Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. MP school followed by a one month rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La.

Military policeman Spc. Dale Fishgrab said his unit is receiving more information and having better hands-on experiences from the “right seat/left seat” ride compared

to what he learned while attending MP school.

“These guys know exactly what’s going on out here,” he said. “They know more than what a book can teach us.”

Although they’ve been in Iraq for fewer than two weeks and patrolling for only three days, Sgt. Ian Parker, a 127th MP team leader said the Soldiers of the 126th are doing an exceptional job and they are right on target with their training.

After meeting with IPs at two different police stations

within their patrol sector, the Soldiers then took a tour of other Iraqi Police stations in the Western Baghdad area.

With newly found confidence in his voice, Thomas asked, “We’re on Route Senators, right?”

His question was silently answered with an affirmative nod and a smile of approval from Baghdad veteran Becker.

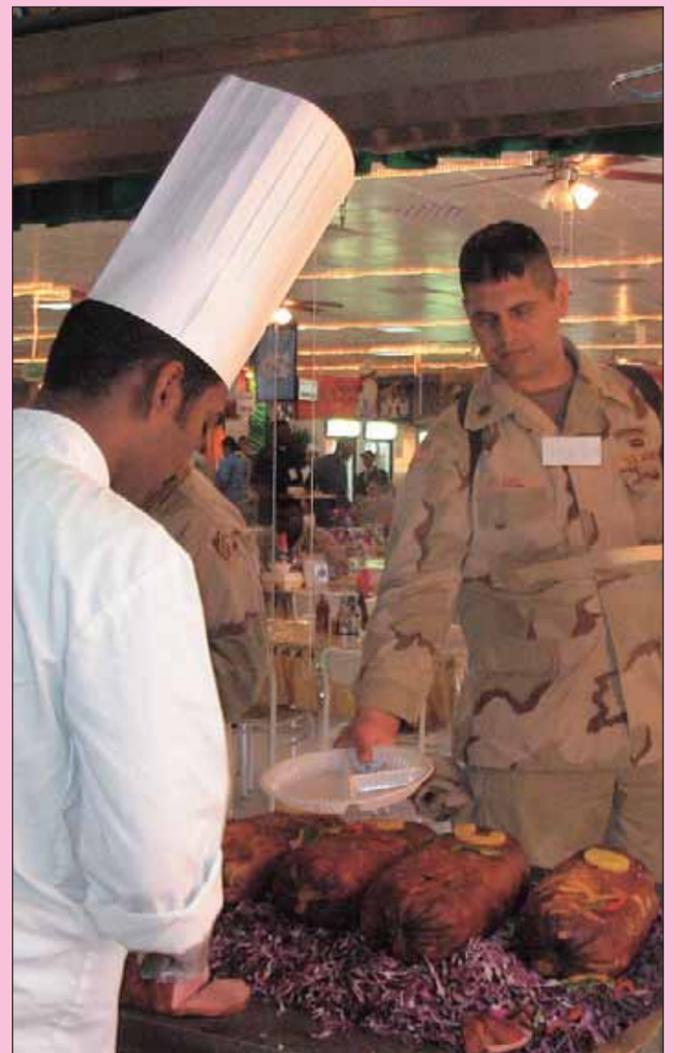
The transfer of street smarts was gaining momentum, block by block, mile by mile.

Liberty DFAC gives Soldiers Easter feast



Sgt. 1st Class David Abrams

Above: Pfc. Priscila Rodriguez, a Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company medic, grabs some fresh fruit to go with her Easter lunch March 27. Among other mouth-watering dishes, the dining facility served Task Force Baghdad Soldiers ham, turkey, cornbread stuffing, yams and holiday desserts.



Sgt. 1st Class Brenda Benner

Above: Maj. Pat Nigl, a construction manager with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers celebrated Easter at the sports oasis dining facility. The Dayton, Ohio, native said that the holiday meal was “absolutely great!”



Left: Spc. Sandra Wilson and 1st Sgt. Reginald Moore, both of HHSC, STB, surprised Soldiers with traditional Easter candy. “The troops were excited, Wilson said. “It just shows you’re never to old for candy.”

He is risen, indeed!



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class David Abrams

As the sun breaks over the lake in front of Task Force Baghdad headquarters, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Fred Catchings leads the 3rd Inf. Div. Band, "Rhythm of the Marne," in a hymn during an Easter sunrise worship service March 27. More than 250 TF Baghdad Soldiers attended the lakeside service.

Liberty Soldiers worship at Easter sunrise service

Sgt. 1st Class David Abrams
3rd Inf. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – As the sun rose over Baghdad on Easter morning, 250 Task Force Baghdad Soldiers gathered for a sunrise worship service on the shores of an artificial lake built during Saddam Hussein's reign.

"This is the day we look forward to all year," said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) James White, Task Force Baghdad chaplain. "Yes, there's a risk involved in coming out here to hold a service by the lake, but

my message to those who have gathered here today is that we have freedom of worship. I'm just thankful to be back here in Iraq worshipping the Lord on this beautiful day."

As the Soldiers sat in rows of chairs in front of Task Force Baghdad headquarters and bowed their heads in prayer, two Blackhawk helicopters flew low overhead, a reminder that the Operation Iraqi Freedom mission still continued outside the secure boundaries of the U.S. camp.

After scripture reading and hymns

played by the Task Force Baghdad Band, Chaplain (Col.) Glenn Bloomstrom, from the Department of the Army's Office of the Chief of Chaplains, delivered a special "dialogue sermon" with his co-worker Chaplain (Maj.) Maury Stout, focusing on the freedoms Soldiers enjoy, even in the midst of a combat zone.

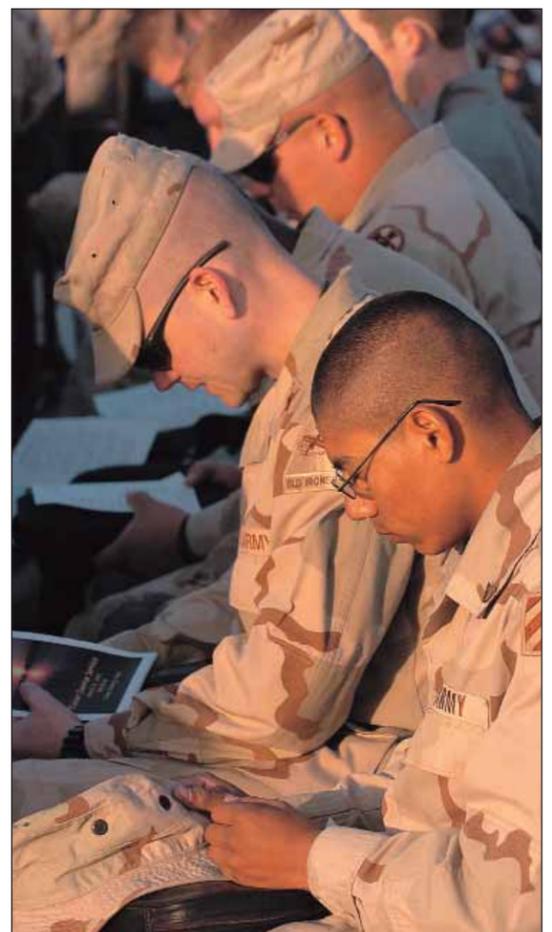
"How many of you dog-face Soldiers are glad to know that Jesus is alive?" Bloomstrom asked the congregation. "If you are, give me a big hooah."

The early-morning lakeside still-

ness was broken by an enthusiastic rendering of the all-purpose Army shout from more than 200 Soldiers celebrating their Easter tradition 2,000 miles from home.

"It was a good message and a beautiful site to hold a service," said Sgt. Maj. James Bennett, Task Force Baghdad G-6 sergeant major. "I think everyone got something out of it."

Services like this help foster camaraderie among Soldiers, he added. "Just being here brings everyone closer to each other and to the Lord."



Above: Chaplain (Col.) Glenn Bloomstrom, from the DA Office of the Chief of Chaplains, delivers an Easter message. Right: Pfc. Juan-Carlos Hernandez, 92nd Engineer Battalion, joins 250 other Task Force Baghdad Soldiers in prayer.



Photos by Spc. Ricardo Branch

Above: Sgt. Dennis Mathews, A Company, 6th Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, clears his weapon after returning from a mission.
 Left: Staff Sgt. Richard Valencia, Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company, Special Troops Battalion, sings for Soldiers outside the Rock of the Marne Sports Oasis at Camp Liberty April 1. Valencia is assigned to the 3rd Inf. Div. headquarters commandant and can be seen singing with the 3rd Inf. Div. band.



Photos by Spc. Jennifer Fitts (above), Spc. Matthew Wester (below) and Spc. Ricardo Branch (right)

Above: Maj. David Oeschger, Task Force Baghdad staff general secretary, waits for a humvee to pull his truck out of the mud at Camp Liberty March 21. "This is as close as I'll get to going to the field," he said.
 Below: Pfc. Lavar Watson, a combat engineer in B Company, 70th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, stays alert as his armored personal carrier moves from Camp Taji to Forward Operating Base Comanche March 28.
 Right: Pfc. David Smith, B Company, 1st Battalion, 39th Field Artillery Regiment, throws a football in a game of catch at Camp Liberty April 1.



Vehicle safety a must for all Coalition Forces

Lt. Gen. John R. Vines
MNC-I Commander

Since Dec. 20, 2004, Multi-National Corps — Iraq has lost 19 Coalition members in Army Motor Vehicle accidents.

These casualties account for 49 percent of the total accident fatalities to date. These numbers are totally unacceptable.

Needless accidents are a detriment to our combat fighting capabilities. I need your help to stop this heartbreaking adverse trend.

Unnecessary vehicle speed is one of the major

factors in many of our tragic accidents. Although Soldiers have been told that speed “gets us out of the kill zone,” excessive speed is causing us problems.

If the tactical situation does not require speed, SLOW DOWN. Some of our accidents attributed to speed have occurred in areas where the risk of enemy action is low.

Reaction time, stopping distance and vehicle control are dramatically impaired by excessive speed, especially during inclement weather and poor road conditions and operating heavier-than-normal vehicles such as the M1114.

To reduce the severity of injuries when an accident does occur, personnel operating or riding in a

vehicle off post must wear a Kevlar helmet, fragmentation vest and seatbelt.

Many of our accident investigation reports reveal that personnel wearing seatbelts experience far less injuries than unbuckled occupants.

I will state again that no one has the authority to waive the requirement to wear seatbelts. Properly fastened seatbelts are the standard.

Losing coalition members and damaging equipment is not “just the cost of doing business.”

Our troops must understand that excessive speed is not the standard. Commanders and leaders must remain 100% engaged and committed to training and enforcing these and all standards.

SHOW ME THE MONEY: financial dues during deployment

Sgt. 1st Class Charles Fowler
3rd SSB Finance Section

Deployments can often be very expensive for Soldiers.

Preparing to deploy for an entire year and all the related costs can put a strain on the budget.

Those who are affected the most are the Soldiers who have to relocate their dependent children or family members to stay with relatives or care providers.

Once deployed, Soldiers receive additional deployment entitlements but it may not be soon enough to help with relocation expenses.

In an effort to help Soldiers with the extra out of pocket expenses caused by deployments, the Army has decided to authorize an Advance Pay. This will help to ease the financial burden to

Soldiers and their families.

The Fiscal Year 2005 National Defense Authorization Act, Public Law 108-275, Section 606 provides an Advance Pay for Soldiers under deployment orders for one year or more to a hostile fire/imminent danger pay area.

Although this became effective Oct. 28, 2004, the Defense Finance Accounting Service did not release its guidance until February.

This means even if you are already deployed and would like to request a one month advance pay, you can do so. Temporary Change of Station orders normally have a proceed date.

The proceed date is the earliest a Soldier can request an AP.

The approving authority is delegated to the company commander. All

you have to do is complete a DD Form 2560 and have your commander approve and sign your request.

In block #12 for the justification, write, “deployment related expenses”. Submit this to your local finance office and the funds will be Electronically Transferred to your savings or checking account within 72 hours.

Just like requesting an AP for a Permanent Change of Station move, sergeants and above may sign their own DD 2560. Specialists and below must get approval from the company commander.

So how much will you receive? The computation is based on your basic pay for your grade, minus your monthly deductions.

The pay back period will be prorated over 12 months beginning the

month after you receive your advance.

For more information, please contact your local 3rd Finance office for details.

The 3rd Finance Company is making great efforts to make sure your pay is straight.

At this point in the deployment, you should be receiving all your monthly deployment entitlements to include Hostile Fire Pay, \$225 Combat Zone Tax Exclusion, up to the sergeant major of the Army’s pay of \$6,304.20; Hardship Duty Pay-Location, \$100; and if you qualify, a Family Separation Allowance, \$250.

If you or any of your Soldiers are missing any of these entitlements, please bring this to the attention of your local 3rd Finance office immediately.

COURT-MARTIAL REPORT

Name: Pfc. Michael Butler

Unit: HHOC, STB

Date: Feb. 20

Charge: Conspiracy to commit wrongful appropriation, false official statement, wrongfully disposing of government property, wrongful appropriation of a military firearm

Sentence: Reduction to E-1, nine-month confinement, Bad-Conduct Discharge

Name: Pfc. Okpara Arnold

Unit: HHC, 1/156 Armor, 256th BCT

Date: March 25

Charge: Disrespect to a commissioned officer, disobeying a commissioned officer, disrespect to a non-

commissioned officer, disobeying a noncommissioned officer, provoking speeches or gestures, assaulting a noncommissioned officer, wrongfully communicating a threat

Sentence: Reprimand, to forfeit of \$750 pay per month for 10 months, 10 months confinement

Name: Pvt. (E-2) Alexis Richardson

Unit: A Co., 603rd ASB

Date: March 26

Charge: False official statement, wrongful use of marijuana, larceny, housebreaking

Sentence: Reduction to E-1, forfeiture of two-thirds of pay per month for 12 months, 12 months confine-

ment, Bad-Conduct Discharge

Name: Spc. Brandon Landry

Date: March 26

Unit: A Co., 1088th Eng. Bn., 256th BCT

Charge: Violation of General Order Number 1, wrongful possession of valium, wrongful use of valium, wrongful use of marijuana, larceny

Sentence: Reduction to E-1, forfeiture of \$750 pay per month for nine months, nine months confinement, Bad-Conduct Discharge

Name: Pvt. William Eggers

Date: March 28

Unit: HHC, 1/41 Infantry, 2/10th

Mtn. Div.

Charge: Use of oxycontin, use of marijuana, distribution of oxycontin, distribution of marijuana, distribution of valium

Sentence: Three years confinement, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, Bad-Conduct Discharge.

Name: Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Wade

Date: March 29

Unit: D Co., 1/101st Cav., 2/156th Inf., 256th BCT

Charge: False official statement
Sentence: Reprimand, 45 days hard-labor without confinement, forfeiture of \$750 per month for seven months

Unsung heroes

Command Sgt. Maj. William M. Grant

Task Force Baghdad command sergeant major

The way out of Iraq is training the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and Iraqi Security Forces.

While conducting this training, Soldiers have to travel throughout the theater.

Of course, Soldiers need vehicles to get the from place to place, especially up-armor humvees, which provide an enormous amount of protection for their crews and are currently the primary vehicles used in motorized combat operations.

But if it weren't for the maintainers, these vehicles wouldn't go anywhere.

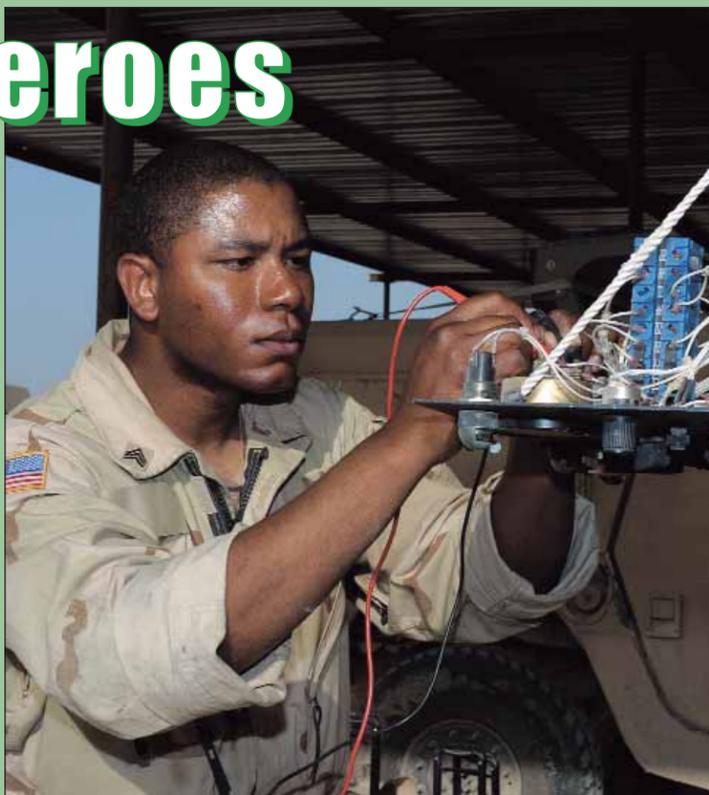
“Our mechanics are real professionals,” said Sgt. Jason Weburg, Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company, Special Troops Battalion, who is in the battle platoon and provides convoy security. “They give 110 percent. We just got new humvees, but our old ones really kept them busy.”

I want to give a shout out to the fantastic Marne, Dogface Soldier mechanics and the excellent work they're doing to support Soldiers daily.

Continue to support and defend!

To the team (and especially leaders): take some time out from your schedule to go down and thank these Soldiers, because it would really mean a lot!

Rock of the Marne!



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Brenda Benner

Above: Sgt. Franco Smith, a 1st Detachment, 3rd Signal Battalion power generations equipment repairer, checks the continuity of the circuits in the control panel of a 10KW generator.

Right: Sgt. Tanyta Morgan, a 92nd Chemical Company squad leader, inventories a general mechanics' toolbox. Morgan said she spends most of her time working on wheeled vehicles.



DESERT JUSTICE

Civil Relief Act prevents undue consequences

Capt. Gary McNeal
SJA

Many Soldiers put plans for one thing or another on hold prior to deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. One facet of life that continues on, though, is the law.

In many cases, the long arm of the law reaches out across the ocean and touches Soldiers in theater.

What are your options when you receive notice of a court date for a hearing on a case?

What are the consequences of not attending?

Can the court actually make a decision without your presence?

These issues are addressed by the Service Member's Civil Relief Act.

The Service Member's Civil Relief Act provides service members who receive a notice to attend a court date a way to deal with the issue rather than allowing the court to make a decision in the service member's absence.

Service members may request the court to stay the proceedings until such a time as the service member may attend.

They stay only applies to civil court matters and administrative hearings. It does not extend to criminal matters.

For example, if a service member is being sued, or receives a notice of hearing on a domestic issue involving divorce matters, the service member may request that the court stay the proceedings.

The court must grant a stay for at least 90 days, and the service member may then petition for a longer stay.

If the court does not grant a longer stay, it must at least appoint counsel to protect the interests of the service member.

This does not mean that

the court appointed counsel will fully litigate your case, but will work to insure that your rights to fair proceedings are protected. Usually the court will grant a longer stay.

The issue they look at is the reason for the service member's absence.

If a service member is deployed, and provides orders to the court to that effect, the court will likely grant a stay for the length of the deployment, depending on the case.

To request a stay of civil legal proceedings Soldiers should have their commander draft a letter of request to the court.

If the service member drafts the letter the court may perceive that as an appearance before the court and not grant the stay.

The command should simply state to the court that the Soldier is deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and that they will be on military orders for a certain length of time thus requiring the stay of proceedings because they will not be able to attend court. It helps to include a copy of your orders with the request.

Once you return from deployment you should contact the court as soon as possible to get a court date scheduled.

Make sure that you keep informed as to the status of your case. If the court holds the hearing in your absence and issues a default against you as a result of your non-appearance, you may petition the court to set aside the default.

The key is to communicate with the court once you return.

Just remember that if you receive a notice to attend a court hearing while you are deployed, don't just let the matter go.

Do something about it and seek to have the court stay the proceedings until you can return and have your day in court.

Chaplain's Corner

The value of having one's freedom

Chaplain (Maj.) Bobby Whitlock
3rd Inf. Div.

This Easter Sunday, thousands of Soldiers, Department of Defense civilians and contractors all over Iraq got up very early in the morning to gather as Christians boldly exercised one of their most cherished freedoms, the freedom of religion.

In chapels, around lakes, in palaces and at food courts these men and women, so different from one another, came together in one accord in an atmosphere of anticipation to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The fact that we, as Christian brothers and sisters, were able to gather in Iraq on Easter morning to freely exercise our faith is a kind of miracle – not a supernatural occurrence that surprises and startles everyone, but a miracle that we experience on a daily basis and, because of its commonness, often fail to recognize its significance.

We are free to express our faith only because so many who have gone before us valued the blessings of freedom more than the comforts of home, loved ones, and often more than life itself.

Husbands, fathers, wives, mothers, sons,

and daughters have throughout our history offered up their very lives to ensure that their generation and those that follow might live free.

What an amazing act of love, courage, and dedication!

I am amazed and humbled every day as I witness the same levels of love, courage, and dedication exhibited by our forces and so many of the Iraqi people – those who daily risk life and limb in an effort to ensure their generation and those to follow will live free.

Many people, mostly those not associated with the military, have asked me if the time spent away from home, the hardships on families, the pain and suffering experienced by so many, and the deaths of young Soldiers is worth it.

I can't give them a simple yes or no answer because sacrifice is not something that is simply measured. What I do, say and know beyond any doubt is that nothing good comes without sacrifice.

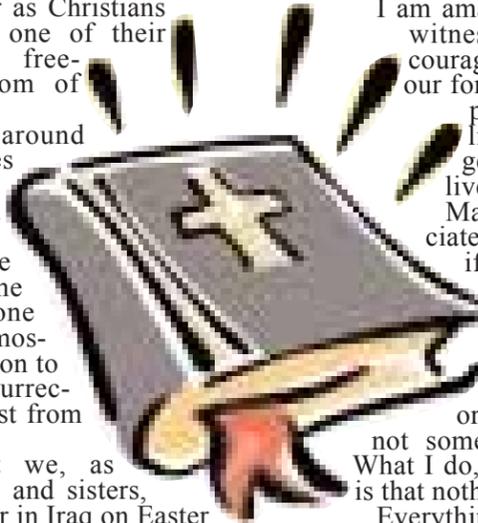
Everything of great value has a great cost. But what is the value of freedom?

For me as a Christian Soldier, I can only measure that in the context of my faith.

The price paid for our freedom was the suffering and death of God's Son on the cross.

Jesus sacrificed all for the purpose of setting us free.

The magnitude of His sacrifice convinces me that freedom is precious indeed, and that no matter what the cost there will always be men and women, who like Christ, will take up their cross for the cause of freedom.



Division Chapel Services Camp Liberty

Friday
7 p.m. Jewish Service

Saturday
10 p.m.: Seventh Day Adventist

Sunday
9 a.m.: Contemporary

Protestant
10:30 a.m.: Roman Catholic Mass
1 p.m.: Lutheran
3 p.m.: Gospel Protestant
5 p.m.: Christian Non-instrumental
8 p.m.: Collective Protestant

Marne Medical Mentor ... a prescription for good health from your Docs in the Rock

Applying the Emergency Elastic Dressing as a tourniquet

Master Sgt. Tony Williams
Division Surgeon's office

Your Emergency Elastic Dressing is a combat proven first-aid device for stopping blood flow from traumatic bleeding wounds in an emergency.

The FDA approved this Emergency Bandage as the first major pressure dressing innovation in over 50 years!

The Emergency Bandage combines: primary dressing, pressure applicators,

secondary dressing and tourniquet into one unit.

It was designed with the most extreme conditions in mind and designed to treat many types of bleeding wounds.

The bandage applies pressure to the site, is easily wrapped and secured and can serve as a tourniquet when pressure doesn't stop the bleeding and every second counts.

The emergency bandage is so easy

to use that even injured people can apply the bandage to themselves with only one hand.

If additional pressure is required to stop bleeding after wrapping the dressing around the wound, you can weave the closure bar underneath layers of the wrapped bandage then rotate the closure bar to tighten the bandage into a tourniquet.

This rotation acts to screw down the pressure bar onto the wound to

exert blood-stopping pressure.

The closure bar is then hooked onto top layers to hold the dressing in place.

Remember to quickly go to your tourniquet if you are still unable to stop the bleeding with your Emergency Dressing.

1. Secure closure bar without rotating if bleeding stopped.

2. Rotate closure bar if tourniquet is needed.

In Memory of ...

Spc. Isiah J. Sinclair, 1/156 Armor
Sgt. Kelly Morris, 1/64 Armor

Spc. Lee M. Godbolt, 1/156 Armor



Army tennis players 'best friends' on, off court

www.goarmyports.com
Special to The Marne Express

WEST POINT, N.Y. — As spring approaches and the weather on the banks of the Hudson grows warmer, seniors Pam Chavez and Lyndsey Nott prepare to conclude a journey that began five years ago on the hardcourts of the United States Military Academy Prep School.

The pair arrived at the Fort Monmouth, N.J., institution in the summer of 2000 without any friends and unsure of what lay ahead.

Wary from their trans-continental trips, Pam coming from Albuquerque, N.M., Lyndsey from West Richland, Wash., the twosome prepared for five years of growth, development and opportunity.

"Pam has been one of my best friends for five years," Nott said. "Meeting Pam at the prep school really helped when we entered West Point. It was good to know I had at least one friend coming into the Academy."

Both athletes began their respective tennis careers relatively late in their childhood with neither picking up a racket before their 10th birthday.

Nott came from the Pacific Northwest, known more for its overcast skies and rugged wilderness than its tennis stars, while Chavez was a product of a more suitable climate for tennis in New Mexico.

By the age of 12, Lyndsey was competing in regional and national tournaments, which she continued to enter throughout her high school career for the Richland Bombers.

Pam took a different route to achieving her goal of a spot on a Division I college tennis roster.

For three years, Chavez attended the world-renowned and highly competitive Bollettieri Tennis Academy in Bradenton, Fla. Bollettieri's, which is part of the IMG's multi-sport academy complex, has produced such tennis superstars as Anna Kournikova and 2004 Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova.

Under the tutelage of legendary instructor Nick Bollettieri and his army of assistants, Chavez honed her skills via two practice sessions per day, intra-academy tournaments on the weekends and traveling to major competitions throughout the United States.

Living two time zones away from her home in Albuquerque forced Chavez to grow up at a much younger age than most teens as she resided on her own in an apartment from the

time she was 15 until she completed her studies at the academy at 18.

"It freed me to be independent because I wasn't with my parents," Chavez commented. "I already had an away-from-home feeling by the time I arrived at the prep school."

"I was able to compete in a lot of tournaments, and that helped me when I came to West Point because we play many different schools, so I had some experience with traveling."

What Bollettieri provided in athletic training it lacked in academics.

"School there wasn't the main concern because most of the people who go to Bollettieri's are trying to make it as a professional," Chavez added.

Following a year at USMAPS, where Nott and Chavez practiced every morning with the men's team captain Sebastian Salas, the duo enrolled at West Point for their plebe year in 2001.

"Academically, [the prep school] was definitely necessary," said Nott of her experience at USMAPS.

"Without the prep school, I don't think I would have made it into West Point. It also gave me an extra year to play tennis and at the same time almost take a break from the competitiveness of the sport. All through juniors, you're playing year round."

Both Chavez and Nott used their freshman campaigns to become acclimated to the nuances of collegiate tennis and with life at West Point.

As sophomores in 2003, the pair posted winning records in singles play as the Black Knights won their fifth Patriot League crown and fourth in five years.

Their junior season proved to be a springboard to success for both athletes. Chavez posted a 23-9 mark in doubles action, teaming primarily with Amanda Paluch at No. 3 in dual matches, while Nott registered a 16-9 ledger in singles competition.

Their final season has the potential to be their best. Army is off to a 14-4 start and is only six victories shy of eclipsing the Academy record for wins in a season set last year at 19.

The Black Knights also got a monkey off of their back last month when they beat Air Force for the first time in six years and regained the prestigious Gideon Cup for the fifth time since its inception in the 1990-91 season.

"It was one of the best wins the team has ever had," Chavez said. "We really struggled with them the last five years and winning that match was one of our main goals this season."

The 2003 conference crown, which included an automatic berth to the NCAA Tournament, gave Chavez and Nott a taste of postseason play as the Black Knights begin their quest for the 2005 Patriot League championship.

"We've had a very good season thus far," Chavez said. "We are really close, all of us, and that helps a lot. We have excellent team chemistry and that is helping us win tough matches."

The doubles squad of Chavez and Paluch, a junior, anchors the No. 3 position in the lineup for the Black Knights with a 13-7 record, while Nott is holding her own in singles play at 12-12 and 8-7 on the spring.

"Our teammates call us the odd couple because we're so different," explained Chavez of her partnership with Paluch. "We know each other so well. We know how to pump each other up, and we know how to act and react to each other no matter what happens on the court."

Even though these seniors are in their fifth year with the program, they are still learning and improving their game everyday.

"I think I've gotten a lot better this season," said Nott. "I'm practicing even more now than I did last year because the strength of our freshmen class."

Chavez and Nott enjoy a symbiotic relationship with the class of 2008. The firsties provide the leadership and experience the plebes need, while the freshmen motivate the upperclassmen to work harder.

"We are the most experienced players on the team," Nott mentioned. "The freshmen were playing in the under-12 division when we were playing in the under-18. I think it is good for them to see people who have been through it for five years and can help them out."

Following graduation in May, Chavez, Nott and senior captain Marissa Limsiaco will spend a week together in Greece before reporting to Officer Basic Course.

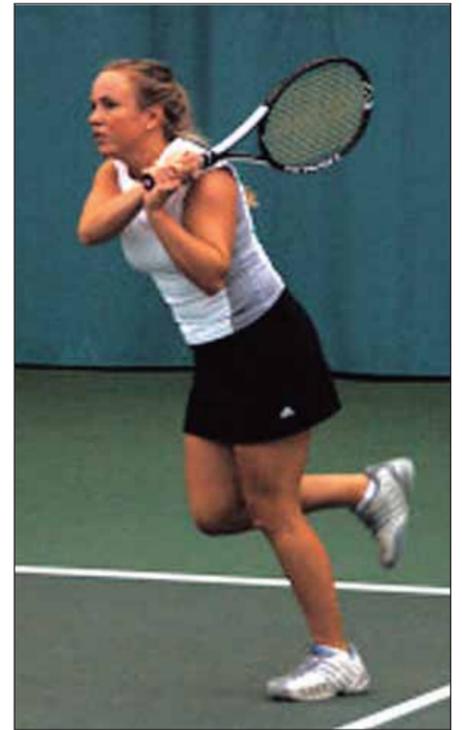
Nott is slated to go to Fort Campbell in Kentucky where she will work as a shop officer in charge of mechanics. Chavez and Limsiaco are both going to Fort Hood in Texas. Chavez is set to the Adjutant General branch.

While they plan on playing tennis recreationally after graduation, there are several aspects of competitive tennis they will miss.

"I'm going to miss the girls," Chavez explained. "I am going to

miss little things like practice, the Florida trips, the tournaments and spending hours and hours at the tennis center."

"I am going to miss the dual matches when you have your teammates next to you and everyone is pulling together," Nott added.



Courtesy photos

Top: Lyndsey Nott, Army women's tennis team, rushes forward to hit the ball. Above: Pam Chavez, Army women's team, prepares to receive a serve.

Cartoon Corner

★ OPERATION ELUSIVE CONCEPT ★

BY CHRIS ASHBY - WWW.ELUSIVE-CONCEPT.COM

THROUGHOUT THE AGES, THE AMERICAN FIGHTING MAN HAS ALWAYS KNOWN ONE MAIN COMPLAINT -

THIS IS SOME LOUSY CHOW!



The Marne Express is looking for artists for a bi-weekly comic strip! Contact ricardo.branch@id3.army.mil.

Shooting from the thumbs: the gamer's review

'Tekken 5' vastly superior to everything

Spc. Ricardo Branch
3rd Inf. Div.

Like a sleek, devastating cruise missile, a new fighting game streaks onto the Playstation 2 with little advance warning.

Remember those days when you and your buddies got together, put a fighting game into your Playstation and stayed glued to the screen for hours on end?

Now you can have those days back, because Tekken 5 has surfaced to allow the fight to begin anew.

Rather than rehash a fighting game with a different storyline, Namco uses the existing Tekken engine and modifies it for the better, and I say, great! It's about time they listened.

Slow characters are faster, those which were too strong are more balanced, and graphics have been overhauled to bring a more realistic and well-rounded fighter to the PS2.

On to the plot:
The story unfolds following the end

of Tekken 4, when Hehachi and Kazuya have just woken up from their defeat at the hands of Jin Kazama.

Suddenly, a host of Jack-5 combat robots break into the room and attack the pair of exhausted fighters.

Hehachi and Kazuya vanquish the robots as quickly as they arrive and appear to be winning the fight.

Unfortunately, Kazuya doesn't want to play nice and throws dear old dad into the center of the Jacks and flies away, leaving Hehachi to fend for himself.

Overpowered and outnumbered, Hehachi can only look on as one of the robots shows him a countdown to a bomb.

Following a huge explosion, "Hehachi Mishima is dead..." flashes across the screen.

Sound exciting yet?

Now players have the option of beginning the battle to find out the answer to the question in their minds: "Is Hehachi really dead?"

Unlike the previous game, the roster

of combatants for Tekken 5 has been expanded to a hefty 30 characters to choose from, although initially there are only 18, with the rest unlocked after countless duels to the top.

Like any standard fighting game, the end boss is insanely tough (play it on Hard to find out for yourself).

There will most likely be some who will whine that the end boss is too difficult, but come on, it's supposed to be tough. If the game was easy, it wouldn't be enough of a challenge to be fun.

With practice, and a lot of patience, players shouldn't have a problem beating the stuffing out of the new "King of the Ironfist" champion — me, of course.

See how much better Tekken 5 is from Tekken 4? Tekken 5's last boss (Heihachi's dad) is way cooler than Tekken 4's boss, which is Heihachi, wearing something that looks like a diaper.

I really enjoy fighting games and have played most that have been released.

It can be easy to start comparing them to each other and to look for the best of all possible worlds in each game. Tekken 5 really does a great job compared to most of what is on the market today!

If you are a fan of Mortal Kombat, Street Fighter, Budokai, Soul Caliber, Tekken 4, or Smackdown VS. Raw, this game is made for you, and I highly recommend it.

Plus the added feature of customizing your player makes the game play truly unique and gave me a sense of ownership of my character.

There is also a ranking system from "Beginner" to the final "Tekken Lord" in the arcade mode, which should please those that want to see how good they really are.

So if a rousing good time with your buddies is on your agenda, buy this game — you won't be disappointed.

This is one hell of a game, a definite must-have, and once you master this you'll have to come fight me to find out if you truly are a "Tekken Lord."



In the Movies



'Sideways' is surprisingly guy-friendly, even without explosions

Spc. Derek Del Rosario
100th MPAD

If you asked a guy what defines a "guy movie" he would probably use words like "action," "explosions," "car chases" and "Steven Seagal."

"Sideways" has none of that (okay, it does have a short car chase scene where an angry naked guy chases a Volvo) but in my opinion it is the epitome of what a real guy movie is about.

The characters will leave most guys saying, "That's me!" or "That's just like (insert friend's name here)."

"Sideways" is director Alexander Payne's ("Election" and "About Schmidt") retelling of Rex Pickett's novel.

The film's protagonist is Miles (Paul Giamatti), an 8th grade English teacher and an aspiring novelist.

Miles is the best man for the wedding of his college roommate Jack Summersby (Thomas Haden Church), former soaps actor who is bottom-feeding by doing commercial voice-overs.

Luckily for Jack, he is marrying a wealthy, beautiful woman — or is he really so lucky?

The movie follows these two buddies up the coast into the California wine country for a road-trip style bachelor party as Miles tries to show Jack a good time, but what the audience gets to see is how different a man's thoughts about love can be.

Giamatti plays the sad, disheartened, and sometimes pathetic divorcee to perfection, while Thomas Haden Church provides comic relief as the big, surfer-dude jock type.

The characters are mismatched, but it is somehow acceptable seeing them as best friends.

Excellent supporting performances by the two love interests of the story, Maya and Stephanie

(Virginia Madsen and Sandra Oh) complete an overall outstanding cast.

Numerous misadventures arise as both characters discover more about themselves during a trip that was originally intended for wine tasting and playing golf.

What I loved about this film is that it has the tragedy — drama and sad moments, but not to the point where it leaves people depressed — and the comedy — jokes and hilarity to keep my mood upbeat. Think "American Beauty," taken down a notch.

This movie allows us guys to live vicariously through the characters and re-live old college boy antics, inner-struggles with love, and tip-toeing the line of infidelity.

In other words, one of those films that guys can appreciate as a buddy film and that women can use against us.

Crossword: A Step Outside

Across

- 1. Aglow
- 4. In ___ far as ...
- 6. Move through water
- 10. First garden
- 12. Typing measure
- 13. In real time
- 14. M*A*S*H's Alda
- 15. Great height (abbr.)
- 16. Not quite a couple
- 17. Cowardly offense
- 21. "N.Y. ___ Blue"
- 22. Option indicator
- 23. Precedes "gee"
- 24. Wonderment
- 25. Attack
- 28. Knife wound

Last issue's solution:

P	A	B	S	T		I	Y		D	R	O	P			
I	N	R	E			Y	O		R	A	N	T			
S	T	A	T			R	N		U	P	O	N			
H	I	G	H	S	P	E	E	D		G					
						S	E	E							
						R	O	G	E	R	E	A	T		
H	I	D	D	E	N				A	D	A	M			
O	L	E	O			I	S	L	A	N	D				
L	O	W				D	O	W	N	S					
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S	O	S	O			T	O			I	D	O	L		
I	D	E	A			A	N			M	E	N	A		
N	E	E	D			G	S			M	E	S	S	Y	

- 31. "___ornot.com"
- 33. Brit's latrine
- 34. "___ carte"
- 35. Put right
- 36. One end of an electrical cord
- 37. Long-distance correspondant
- 39. Muhammed or Tatyana
- 41. Med. professional
- 42. Egyptian sun-god
- 43. You and I
- 44. Whirling dervish of the Southwest
- 51. Bombeck column "At ___'s End"
- 52. Negative answer
- 53. Sacred act
- 54. Agreement
- 55. ___ and fro
- 56. Aid in crime
- 57. "___ Breaky Heart"
- 58. Powered up
- 59. Fast-acting docs

Down

- 1. "___ from the front"
- 2. Unoccupied
- 3. Chamomile and green
- 4. Partial prefix
- 5. "They're ___ us!"
- 6. Skiers' destinations
- 7. Bonus
- 8. "___ Just Seen A Face"
- 9. Half of us
- 11. Compass dir.
- 18. Use oars
- 19. Three (Ital.)
- 20. Tidy
- 24. "Say ___"
- 26. Debtor's note
- 27. Captain's record
- 28. Space
- 29. Alcoholic beverage
- 30. School lunch element, often
- 31. Friendly greeting
- 32. Beast of burden

- 35. Ran in terror
- 36. 3.14 ...
- 38. "I Feel ___"
- 39. Louvre display
- 40. Young boy
- 45. "Do ___ others ..."
- 46. In a little while

- 47. Age of consequence
- 48. Feeling
- 49. Part of a list
- 50. Allows
- 51. Female Soldier in WWII
- 54. Ma's other half

1	2	3		4	5		6	7	8	9			
10			11		12			13					
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