

The Warrior

April 2005

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Following training from 3-7 Cav. and other Spartan BCT units, the streets of Baghdad now have...

IRAQIS ON POINT

1-9 raid

3-15 in the streets of Sadr

1-64 on patrol

Contents

The Warrior April 2005 Volume 2, Number 3

Cover Story

10



Iraqis on Point -

With the continued support and training from 3-7 Cav. and other Spartan BCT units, the Iraqi Army and police force lead from the front in Baghdad

On the cover: An Iraqi Police officer is joined by Sgt. Felix Sobalvarro, B Btry., 1-9 FA, during the search of an abandoned chicken farm in Baghdad March 22. Photo by Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich

Features

4

3-15 Inf. take to the streets - 'Can Do' infantrymen pull double duty in the streets of Sadr City - patrolling to rid the area of anti-Iraqi forces and supporting multiple humanitarian aid missions

8



BTB infrastructure improvements update -

2-3 BTB engineers work with local leaders and residents in Baghdad to keep water flowing, sewers working and power running

14

Prison story - Iraqi man recalls incarceration at the former regime's DGS prison - located on what is now Camp Loyalty



16



1-64 Armor on patrol -

Rogues patrol the streets of Mamum, checking up on local public works projects

18

Battlekings raid - 1-9 FA conducts raid, nabbing anti-Iraqi forces and freeing hostages



20

Got 'em covered-
26th FSB secure supply convoys and keep gas tanks in the brigade filled up



21

Battlekings MEDCAP - Battlekings hold a MEDCAP for residents at a local sheik's home



Monthly

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|---|
| 2 | Spartan 6 | 23 | Take Motrin, Drink Water
JAG says... |
| 3 | Shots from the field | 24 | News |
| 22 | It's your money
From the chaplain | | |
- 

Spartan Warriors,

After only 2 months in zone, we are shifting our main effort with respect to our mission. The Spartan Brigade Combat Team will focus more on training and integrating with Iraqi Security Forces in our current area of operations. Although Garry Owen and China have already been working with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 2nd Iraqi Army Brigade, you all will start seeing more ISF units operating in our zone. Eventually the 2nd Iraqi Army Brigade will have 5 battalions covering down in our zone.

This will not happen overnight. We must ensure that all Iraqi Soldiers, squads, platoons, companies, and battalions are certified to execute combined operations with us and independent operations. Some will be at the crawl stage of competency, others at the walk stage, and there are some at the run stage right now.

Regardless, we owe it to these Iraqi Soldiers and units to be trained to standard so they can be successful in securing their own country—and that is our ultimate goal. This shift in the main effort may prove to be frustrating at times, however, the more competent our Iraqi brothers in arms are, the more secure our zone will become.

A couple of things I want to emphasize. First, this shift in main effort will not detract at all from our ability to protect ourselves. Second, we must continue to co-op the citizens by way of courtesy, dignity, and respect.

Along with that, we must instill this approach and conduct to the Iraqi Soldiers that we are training. As the Iraqi citizens see more of their own patriots securing their neighborhoods with competency and professionalism, the faster the terrorists

and insurgents will be defeated. Iraqi Soldiers respect Spartan Warriors and will act on your example. I expect them to see nothing but highly professional, competent, and disciplined Soldiers that are indicative of all Spartan Warriors.

How are the Spartan Warriors doing? After only two months, you all are making a positive difference.

Yes, there are still people complaining, but as each day passes, more people are optimistic about their future because of the superb job you all are doing. We still have a long way to go. There are still too many terrorists and insurgents that must face the Spartan wrath, and we will continue to afford the enemy plenty of opportunity to experience this wrath. Do not let your guard down—game face on always.

Environmental morale leave has started and will continue until we redeploy. The chain of command will make every effort to maximize this opportunity, so make sure your chain of command knows your preference. The Rear Detachment continues to do superb work in support of us and our families back at Fort Stewart. My sincere thanks to Maj. Saltus and the rear detachment commands, your great efforts allow the Spartans to focus on our mission without distractions. Same goes for the families. Although it has only been three months since we deployed, your courage and support has been an inspiration to us all. Until next month,



God Bless,
SEND ME

Col Joseph DiSalvo



The Warrior

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Spartan Brigade Combat Team and its Soldiers*

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ATTENTION!

“Shots from the field” is always looking for photos taken by Spartan Brigade Combat Team Soldiers serving in Iraq. If you have a good photo, and we have room, we’ll print it. Email your photos via AKO to: craig.zentkovich@us.army.mil, Subject: Shots from the field. Be sure to include your rank, name, and unit as well as a caption for the photograph that includes the subject of the photograph with names and dates. I look forward to receiving your shots.

Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich
Editor, *The Warrior*



Anonymous Contributor

Chaplain (Maj.) Peter Brzezinski blesses tanks and Soldiers of 1-64 Armor before they head out on a mission.



Anonymous Contributor

Soldiers from 3-7 Cav. occupy an observation point in Baghdad.



Maj. John Stone

The 41st IAB at BIAP



Staff Sgt. Jim Bob Litwalk

A view of Baghdad from atop the Sheraton Hotel.

'Can Do' troops tackle multi-faceted mission

Story and photos by Spc. Ben Brody

BAGHDAD, Iraq – As the new Iraqi government takes shape, responsibility for providing basic services is shifting from U.S. forces to local government channels.

Still, Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry, do what they can to help the neediest residents of Sadr City, while securing the area as well.

Iraqi army units like 306th Iraqi Army Battalion work closely with 3-15 Inf., particularly with humanitarian aid and security missions.

In an increasingly common joint mission, troops from D Co., 3-15 Inf., and 306th distributed 630 frozen chickens in two Sadr City neighborhoods, April 3.

"The idea is to give out half the chickens at one spot, then

move down the road a bit and distribute the rest," said 1st Lt. Michael Sehzie, D Co., 3-15, platoon leader. "We coordinated with one of the local community leaders to help set this up."

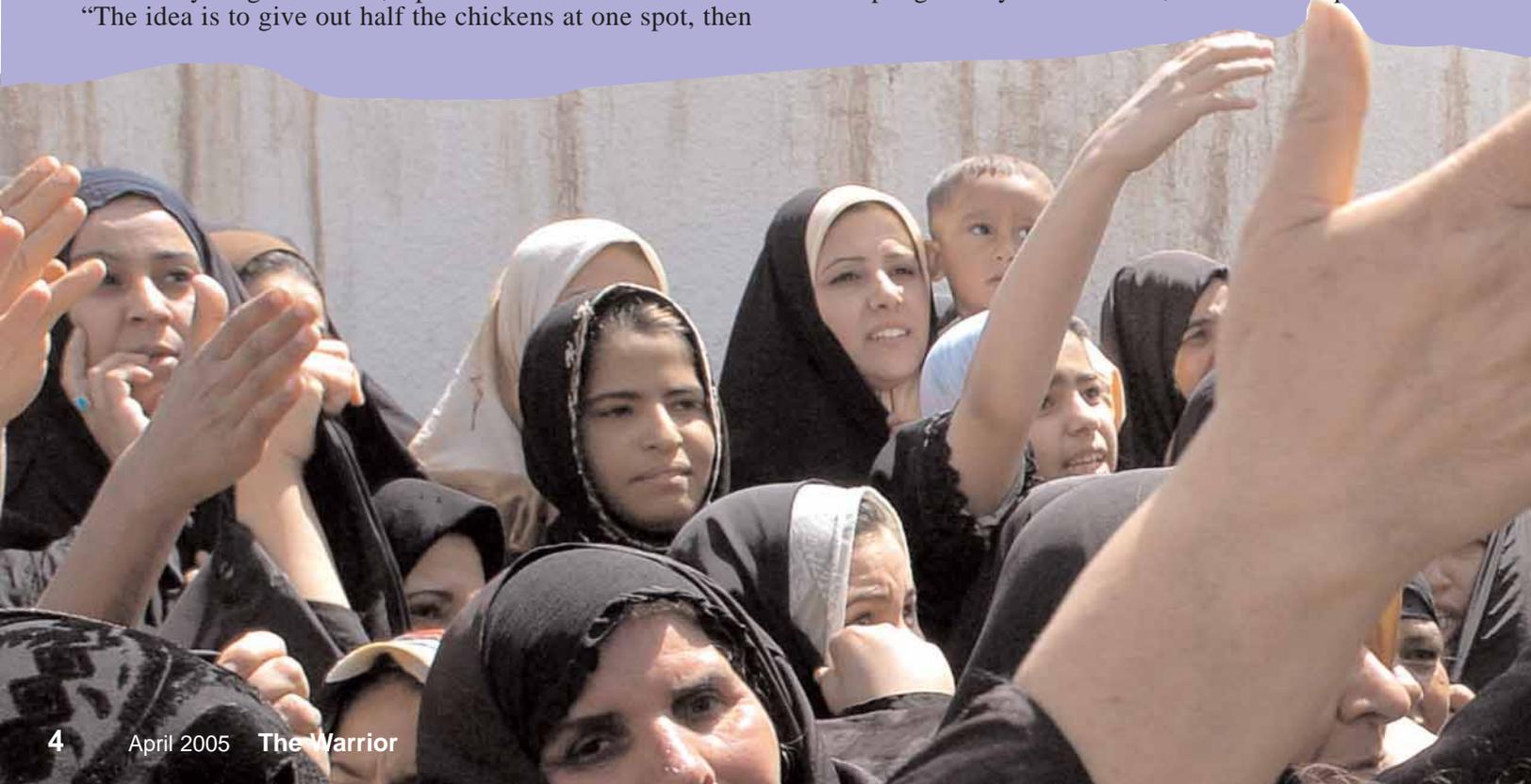


Sehzie, from Akron, Ohio, met up with the man, who helped pass chickens from 3-15's truck to waiting residents. A large crowd gathered quickly on the narrow street.

Iraqi Army troops quickly separated men and women into two lines, and kept order, while most of the 3-15 Soldiers secured the perimeter with some of the

306th's gun trucks.

"People go crazy for this stuff," said Pfc. Stephen



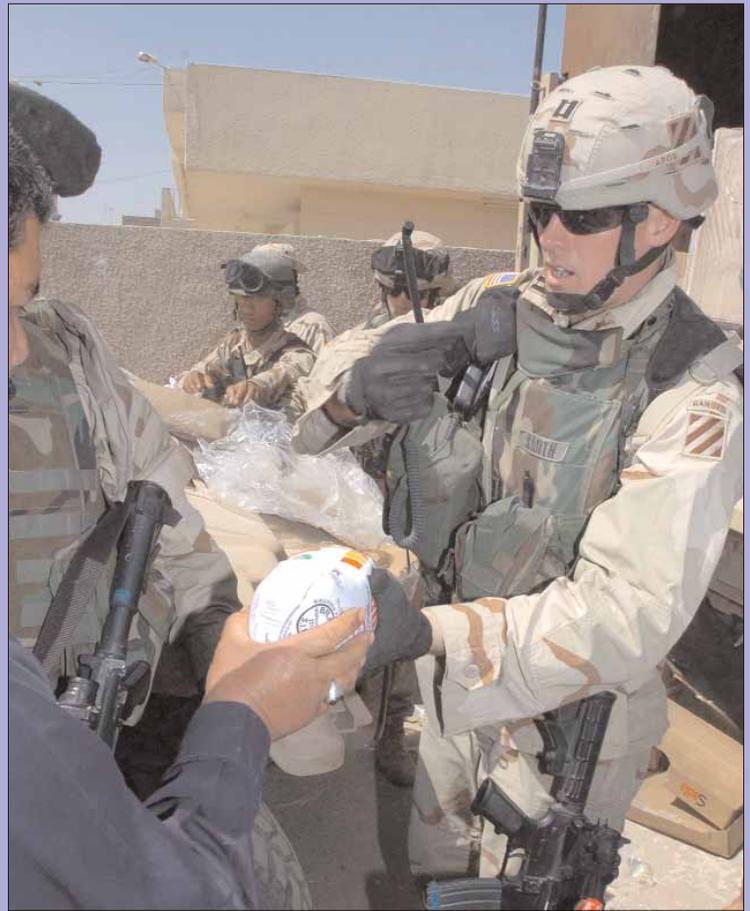


Jordan, D Co., 3-15, fire support specialist. "I definitely like doing anything that makes the people here like us more. These missions pay off – we haven't had many problems around here."

At the second chicken drop site, Soldiers from 307th Psychological Operations Company, a Missouri Reserve unit, handed out copies of Baghdad Kids, a children's magazine produced by U.S. troops. Local children swarmed the PSYOP truck to get copies.

Jordan, from Wilmington, N.C., quietly gave the magazine to smaller children who couldn't reach the front of the line.

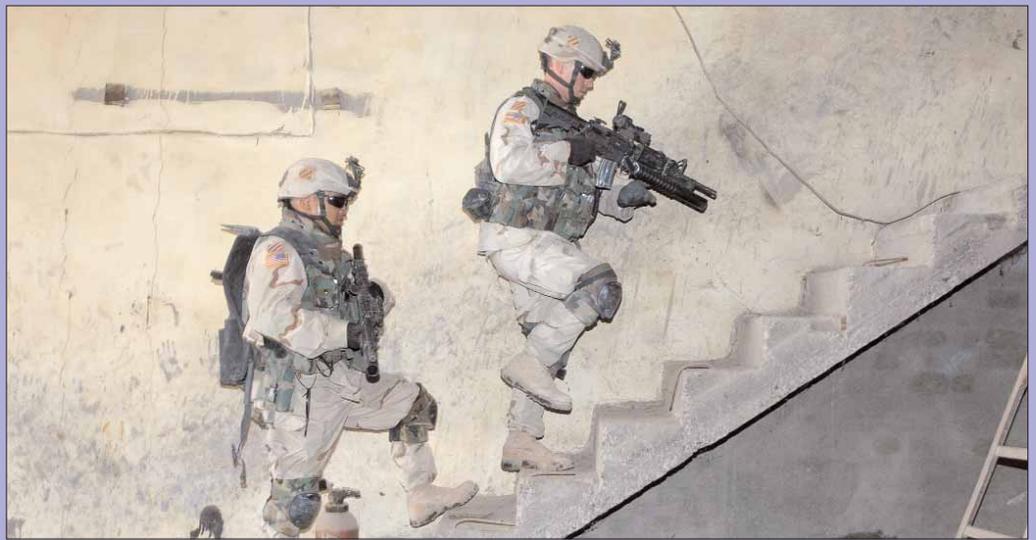
"People are used to coming to us for absolutely everything, but now the government is taking care of people's issues," said Staff Sgt. Benjamin Phinney, D Co., 3-15, com-



(Opposite page) Soldiers from 3-15 Inf., and 306th IAB, pull security during a chicken drop in Sadr City, Iraq, April 3. (Left) A Soldier from the 306th hands a sheep to a woman in Sadr City March 29. (Above) Capt. Jimmy Smith, D Co., 3-15 Inf., commander, hands an Iraqi man a frozen chicken during the chicken drop.



Humanitarian Aid



(Left) Sgt. Tony Semeato, A Co., 3-15 Inf., breaks a padlock to a garage in Sadr City, Iraq, March 29. (Above) Semeato and another A Co. Soldier search another garage in the neighborhood, looking for illegal weapons.

pany master gunner. “It’s important that we do what we still can, and provide some food for people who need it.”

Phinney, from Rochester, N.Y., said the chicken drops give people a better perspective toward U.S. forces.

“It shows people we’re not here to fight everyone,” Phinney said. “It makes me feel good to help out the kids, because they’re the future of Iraq.”

A week earlier, Soldiers from A Co., 3-15, conducted a similar operation in Sadr, except with 30 live sheep instead of frozen chickens.

After the sheep drop, A Co. went directly to another Sadr neighborhood and searched several large garages for weapons caches.

Switching continuously between humanitarian and combat missions, 3-15 Soldiers, in cooperation with Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army personnel, fill both roles to keep the peace in a former insurgent stronghold.

On a typical night patrol, Soldiers will check up on local police stations, speak with shopkeepers and show a presence on the streets and alleyways of the most densely populated area of Baghdad.

While many examples of these rifts cripple progress in other war-torn areas, Sadr City has been the focus of a monumental rebuilding effort from both Iraqi government and coalition forces, so its future may well be brighter as a result.

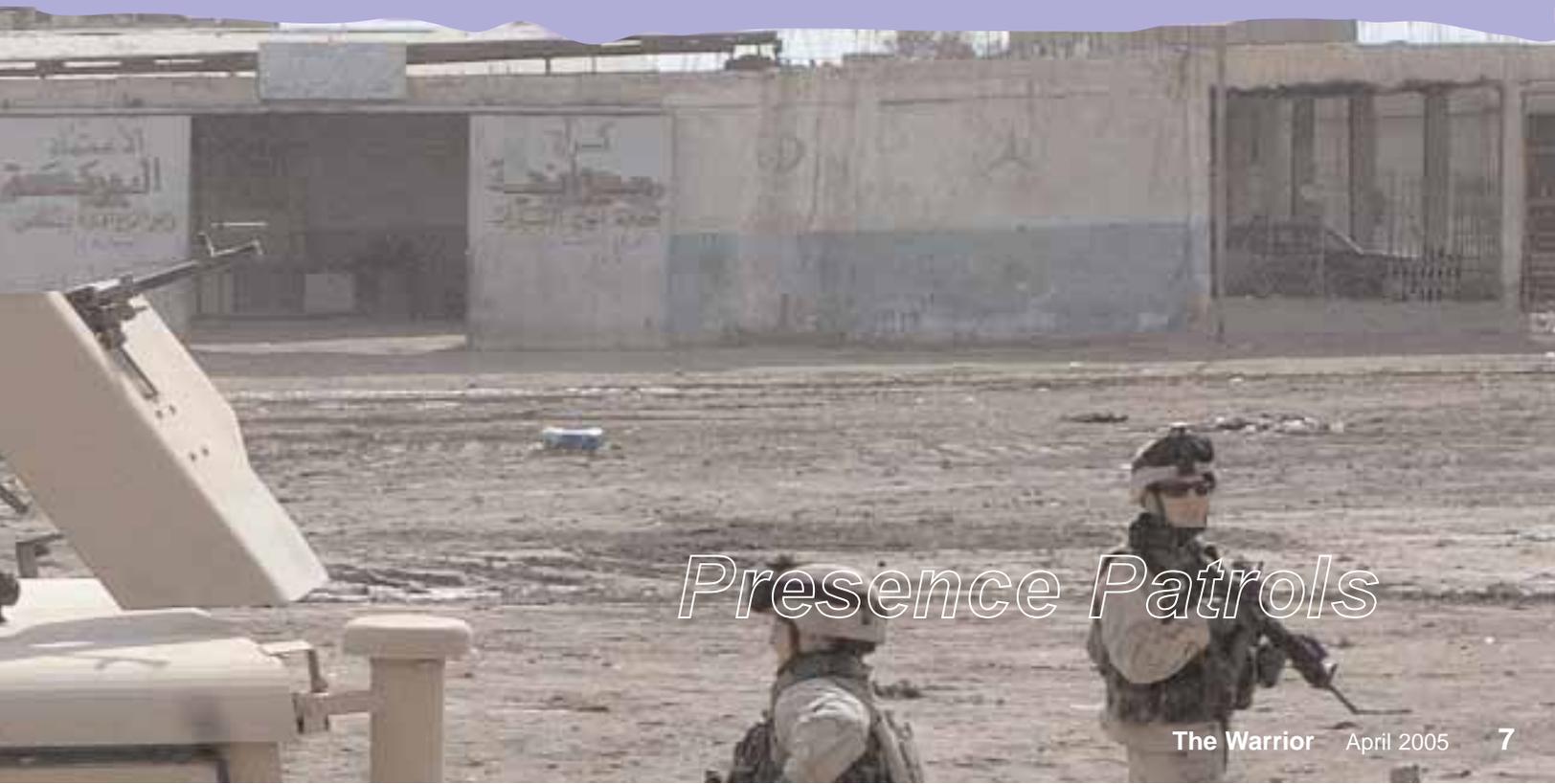




(Left) 3-15 Inf. Soldiers perform a dismounted patrol on a back street in Sadr City March 29.

(Above) Spc. David Motes, A Co., 3-15 Inf., gunner, pulls rear security behind an M240B machine gun during a night patrol.

(Below) Soldiers continue both mounted and dismounted patrols throughout Eastern Baghdad. 'Can Do' troops execute multiple patrol missions daily in their sector of Baghdad. More than two million people live in Sadr City.



Presence Patrols



Engineer projects continue to improve infrastructure

Story by Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich

BAGHDAD, Iraq – 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 support to the 2nd Brigade Combat

Team by providing communications, intelligence and engineer assets.

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,

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. More than 100 sewer, trash, power and water projects in the area are under way, Gayton said.

“(Sadr City and) Baghdad east of the Tigris was ignored by Saddam’s regime.” Predominately Shia, the area housed the “have-nots” of the capital, according to Gayton.

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.

Sadr City has one main sewer line. 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



Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich

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



2-3 BTB

(Opposite page) The Rustimiya North sewage treatment plant operates at near full capacity. The plant processes most of the sewage from Baghdad east of the Tigris River.

(Left) Local workers dig a trench for a sewer line in Baghdad in early March.

(Above) Residents of Sadr City shovel trash in an effort to clean up their neighborhood.

south to the Rustimiya 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) 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 Initiations hired 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

completed. A contract is pending for the remaining sectors. "There is a large 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-governmental organization funds. They utilize local contractors and laborers from the immediate area which, according to Gayton, is a motivating factor in ensuring the area



2-3 BTB

The power plant in Al Ameen, Baghdad, is operational. It provides power to more than two million Baghdad homes.

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."

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and 2-3 BTB serve as project assessment and quality control for all contracted projects in the sector. In addition to visiting work sites, they 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."



Iraqi Soldiers from 305th IAB pull security during training at Camp Volunteer, Iraq, March 25.

IRAQIS ON POINT

The 305th Iraqi Army Battalion uses training from 3-7 Cav. to lead military and humanitarian assistance missions in their sector

Story and photos by Spc. Ben Brody

BAGHDAD, Iraq – One of the most important steps in helping the new Iraqi government achieve self-sufficiency, is to ensure the nation is secure from insurgent threats, both foreign and domestic.

Soldiers from A Troop, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry have been working closely with Soldiers of 305th Iraqi Army Battalion in order to prepare them for that mission.

“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. We like to patrol and keep the streets safe, but my men really like providing assistance to people who need it.

“I joined the Iraqi Army for one reason: to serve my country,” he added.

Soldiers from 3-7 Cav. work with 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., 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 training.

Joint Iraqi-American operations have included traffic control points, patrols, searches and humanitarian assistance missions.

Iraqi Soldiers said the public views them more favorably since the elections, which were successful largely because Iraqi forces provided tight security at polling

places.

“Sometimes people bring us water and food, even though they know we have it already,” Ali said. “People say ‘God help you’ to us on the street and wish us luck when they see us. It’s a big change from before the elections.”

Capt. Ebaa Taha al-Abodi, 305th IAB, who often finds himself in charge of the battalion when the command staff is away, said it is very important that the Iraqi Army does not repeat the mistakes of Saddam’s military.

“I always make sure my Soldiers respect civilians when they’re on missions,” Ebaa said. “There is so much at stake now that we must keep the people’s respect, which we’ve worked hard to earn.”

As the Arba’een holiday drew near, Iraqis typically would have celebrated with a huge feast. But for some in 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, in conjunction with Soldiers from A Troop, 3-7 Cav., distributed 60 sheep to residents of Baghdad March 26.

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 about 40 sheep had been distributed, the crowd had become too large and excited for the small contingent of Iraqi and American troops. The convoy packed up and rolled out as quickly as they came.

A few miles away, in a quiet neighborhood, the convoy stopped and gave the rest of the sheep to local residents.

Capt. James Turner, A Troop, 3-7 Cav., commander, goes over a battle drill with Soldiers of 305th IAB.



Staff Sgt. Timothy Tutini, A Troop, 3-7 Cav., sniper, explains a battle drill to Soldiers of 305th Iraqi Army Battalion at Camp Volunteer, Iraq, March 25.

People there appeared just as eager 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



(Left) Soldiers from 305th IAB maintain security at a sheep drop in Baghdad, Iraq, March 26. More than 200 residents showed up for the event. (Below) A very lucky Baghdad man is overjoyed after receiving a very unlucky sheep.

working together,” Ebaa said. “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.

“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,” Ebaa 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.”



Iraqi Army Capt. Ebaa Taha al-Abodi, 305th IAB, hands a sheep to a woman in Baghdad March 26. The 305th, in coordination with A Troop, 3-7 Cav., distributed the sheep as local residents prepared for the Arba’een holiday, which ends with a feast.



A Prison Story...

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich

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 Abd Al-Jli Khadm, 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." Khadm was one of those threats.

At 22, Khadm 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. On Mar. 11, he visited Camp Loyalty and the prison where he was held for three months.

"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."

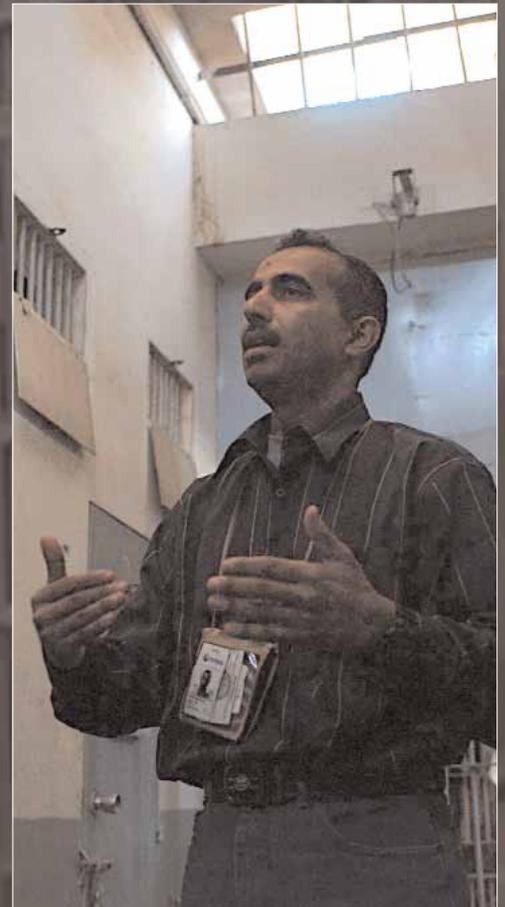
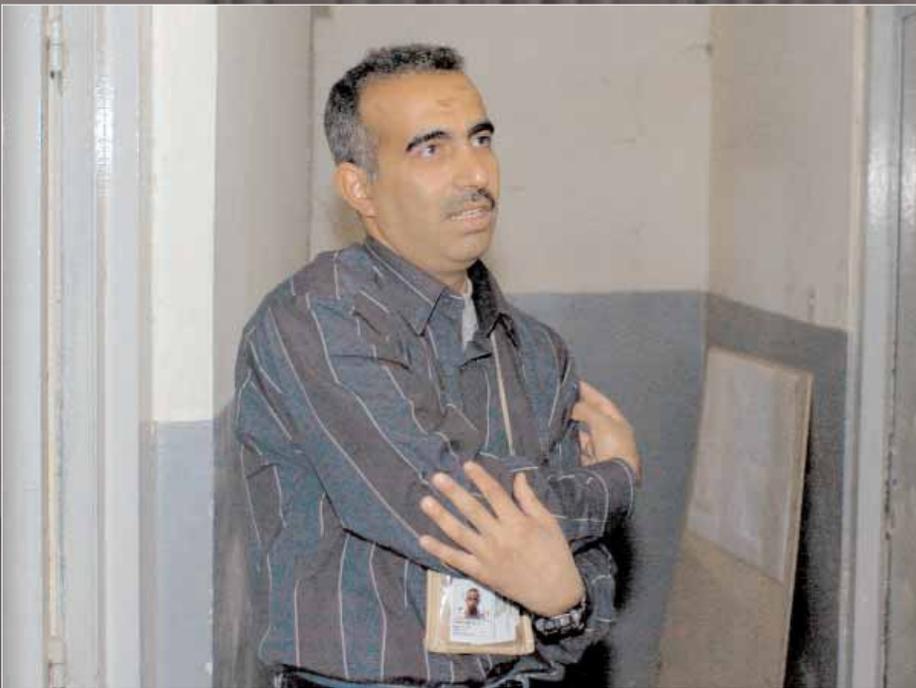
Khadm said, "I thought this was the end; that I was going to die." He was suspected of doing business with Kurdistan, and in possession of a fake ID – he had deserted the Iraqi army in 1992.

When he first arrived at the prison, the interrogations began. He was questioned on his dealings with the Kurds, being repeatedly hit in the process.

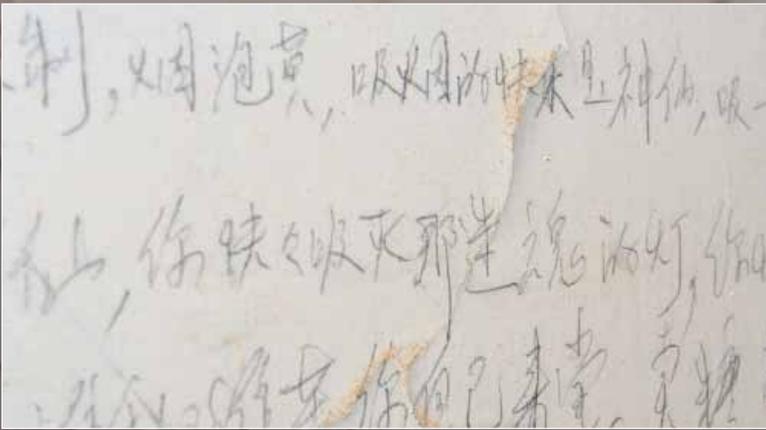
"I don't want to remember some of the other things they did," Khadm said, and referred to incidents of prisoners being hung from the ceiling by their feet, being hit with a reed and having salt rubbed in their wounds. "On my first (rough interrogation), they put me in a cell by myself ... took my clothes ... 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 BCT, human intelligence analyst, a variety of barbaric methods were used to interrogate prisoners throughout Iraq.

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



(Above) Anmar Abdel Al-Jli Khadm, an inmate at the former regime's DGS prison for three months, describes how guards would press salt into open wounds during interrogations and (right) details his incarceration, which included a multitude of other torture techniques guards utilized throughout the prison. The former DGS prison is located on what is now Camp Loyalty.



(Above) One of many cell walls at the former DGS prison covered in Cantonese writing - proof there were many Chinese nationals incarcerated at the prison.

(Right) Outdoors, within the confines of the prison, is a courtyard where prisoners were reportedly shackled to the concrete for, in some cases, weeks at a time.

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 at the prison were equally horrific. According to Khadm, his 6'x9' 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) 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.

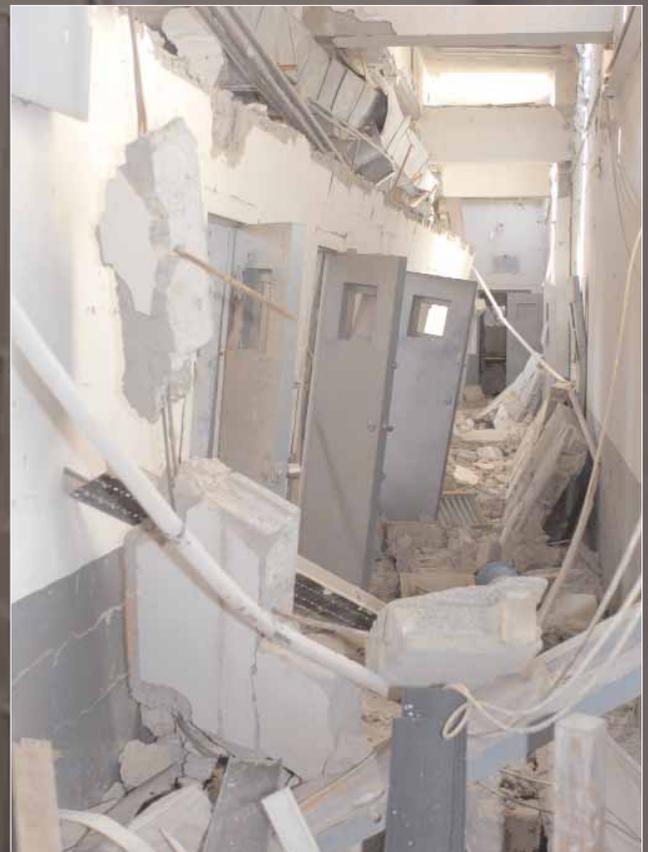
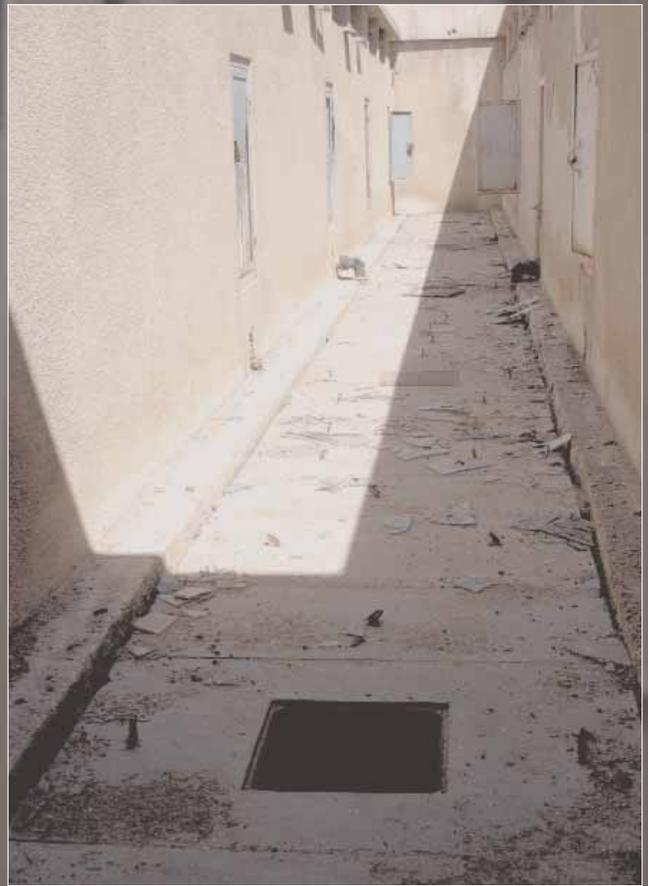
"My brother won't speak a word of what happened in (the DGS prison)," Abdul-Nabi said. "But when we sleep in the same place, I always awake to hear him talking in his sleep, having nightmares of the things they did to him."

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

For Khadm, his incarceration was all for naught. Khadm 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, also named Anmar Abdel Al-Jli Khadm, was the suspected threat to the regime.

He spent the next three months in a military prison for deserting the army before his father sold his house and bought his son's freedom.

Khadm, now 33, and Abdul-Nabi both left the former DGS compound on their own free will, alive.



During initial major combat operations in OIF, the abandoned prison was targeted by U.S. artillery and air support.

Rogues on

Story and photos by Spc. Ben Brody

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Soldiers from A Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor, conducted a routine presence patrol and checked up on public works in Mamum, a northeastern section of Baghdad, March 23.

Mamum is a part of Kamiliya, an area which has been the focus of much-needed coalition sewage projects and humanitarian assistance.

“We’re here to show our presence, which can disrupt enemy activity, and to make sure the trash is getting picked up and the sewage lift station is operational,” said 1st Lt. Walter Pridgen, A Co., 1-64, platoon leader. “When we walk around the neighborhood, it gives us a chance to speak with residents in person, so we can find out from them what the problems in town are.”

After speaking with the operator of Mamum’s sewage lift station, Pridgen found the station to be functioning well.

Mamum, a predominantly Shia area, is considered

friendly toward coalition forces. A neighborhood advisory council serves as the official liaison between 1-64 and residents.

Pridgen, from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., said the residents he spoke with feel the NAC represents them well and addresses their concerns.

As the Soldiers walked down narrow streets, a group of children steadily grew around them. They asked for water, pens, candy, sunglasses – anything the Soldiers would give them. Some of the children spoke enough English to communicate fairly well with the troops who would engage them in conversation.

An interpreter helped bridge the language barrier between Pridgen and local residents, who seemed hesitant, but cooperative.

“I’ve been to lots of different places – the kids here love us, but the adults are apprehensive,” said Staff Sgt. Kevin



Soldiers from A Co., 1-64 Armor, followed by some children, patrol the streets of Mamum, Iraq, March 23.

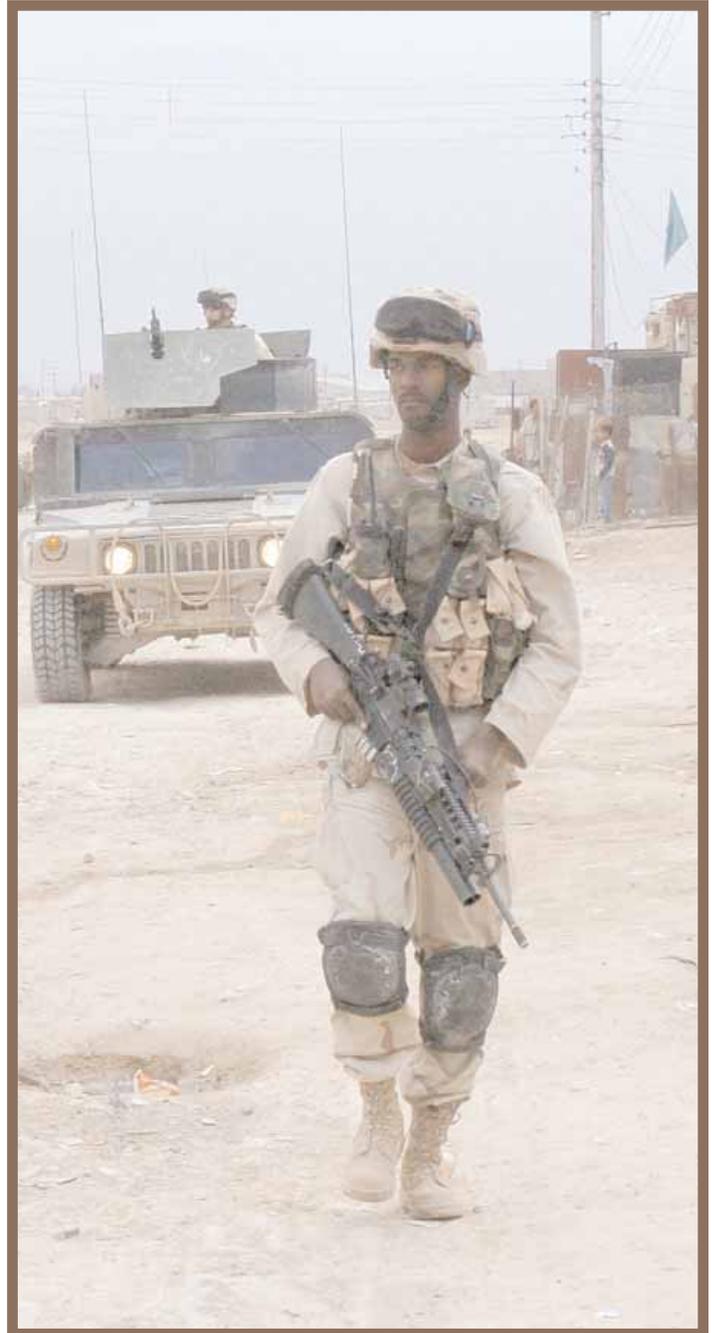
patrol

Duquette, A Co., squad leader. “It’s important we come here and break the ice – show people we’re here to help.”

Duquette, of Orlando, Fla., said he sees the security situation in Kamiliya improving as residents express disgust over nearby insurgent attacks.

“We’re infantrymen – we’re trained to fight, so it’s easy to go from peacekeeper to warfighter in an instant,” he said. “It’s harder to go from warfighter to peacekeeper, but 99.9 percent of the people here are friendly to us, so it gets easier as we go.”

According to Pridgen, patrols like this will continue to strengthen relations between coalition forces and residents of Baghdad.



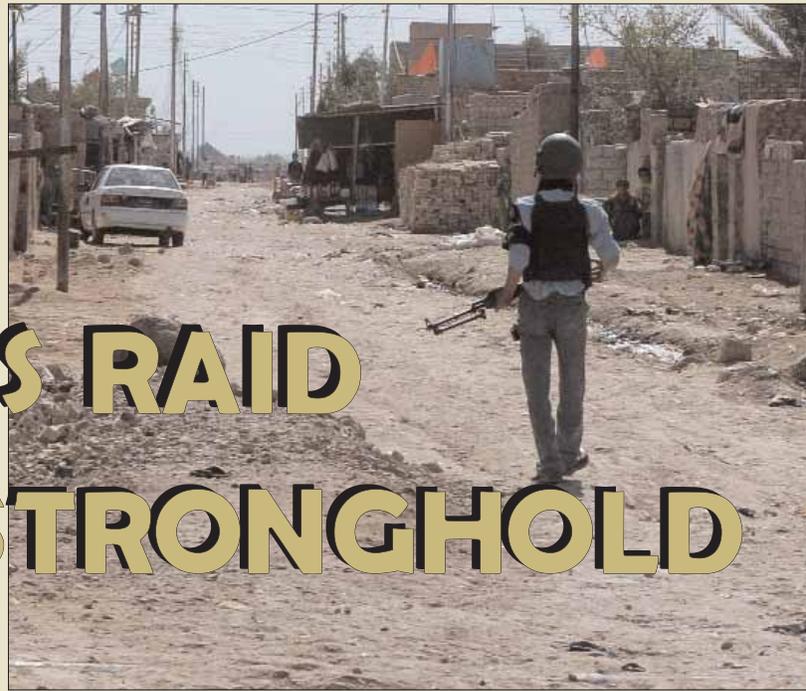
(Above) Sgt. Quanell Prothero, A Co., 1-64, team leader, patrols a road in Mamum.

(Left) 1st Lt. Walter Pridgen, A Co., 1-64, platoon leader, speaks with the operator of a sewage pump station in Mamum.

Enemy captured, hostages freed and a weapons cache discovered when...

BATTLEKINGS RAID INSURGENT STRONGHOLD

Story and photos by Spc. Ben Brody



BAGHDAD, Iraq – Iraqi Police, in coordination with Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, and Spartan Brigade Combat Team Military Police, raided an insurgent stronghold in southern Baghdad April 5.

The raid resulted in the apprehension of 15 insurgents, liberation of 8 hostages, and the discovery of a small weapons cache.

After taking small arms fire from

buildings in Awhida, IPs and U.S. forces searched several blocks of the densely populated residential area.

Many residents waved to the IPs, and pointed to the buildings where the insurgents were eventually captured. Several fleeing insurgents were also caught by a team of IPs as they moved to the south.

The joint force freed eight hostages in two buildings during the raid. One said he was a 65-year-old schoolteacher

and that the insurgents didn't like what he was teaching. The man's hands were badly bruised during his captivity. Another hostage was thought to be an IP officer.

Among the 12 weapons confiscated were several AK-47 assault rifles and a 7.62mm sniper rifle.

Awhida is currently a troubled area, the northern tip of the notorious Salman Pak neighborhood, where many insurgents are known to live.

According to Lt. Col. Steven Merkel, 1-9 FA, commander, residents of Awhida stood up to local insurgents several months ago, and were met with an extremely violent reaction. Merkel said he believes security in the neighborhood is now starting to improve again with the IP's hard work.

"It was outstanding to watch the citizens of Awhida as their police force moved against the insurgents among them," he said. "People got up on the roofs, standing on empty insurgent fighting positions, and pointed where they fled to. I think the citizens are ready to take back their neighborhood from (Anti-Iraqi Forces)."

Soldiers from Spartan BCT mainly secured the outer perimeter during the raid, as IPs cleared buildings and detained insurgents.

Sgt. Courtnee Downs, Spartan MP platoon, team leader, and Sgt. Sandy Rivera, an MP squad leader, secured a long alley and helped evacuate a young IP wounded while clearing a building.



(Above) Sgt. Courtnee Downs, 2-3 BTB, military police, comforts a wounded IP during a raid in Salman Pak, Iraq, April 5.

(Right) Sgt. Sandy Rivera, 2-3 BTB, military police, and Downs help carry the wounded IP to safety during the raid.

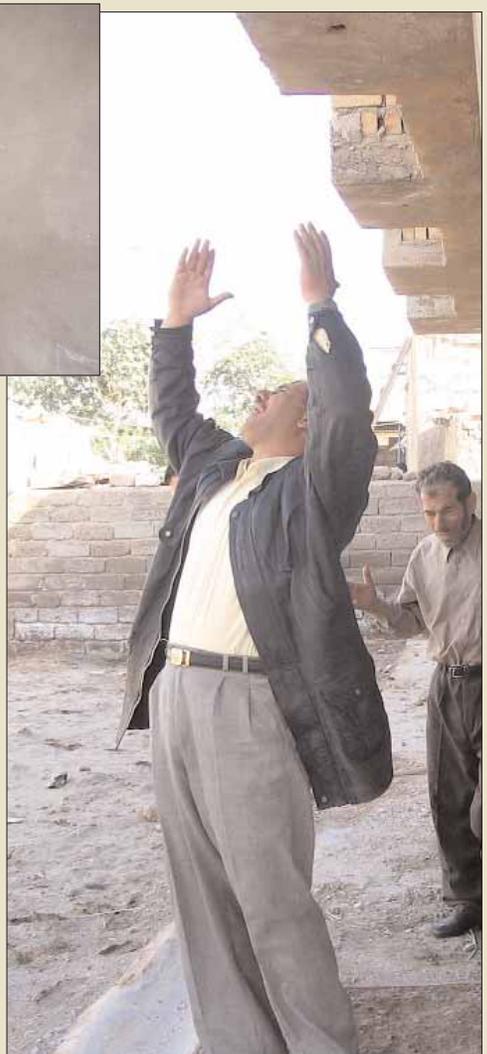




(Left) IP officers secure an alley during a raid in Awhida, Iraq, April 5. The joint IP and U.S. forces raid netted 15 suspected insurgents, 12 weapons, and freed eight hostages.

(Above) Capt. Matthew Wheeler, 1-9 FA, intelligence officer, comforts an Iraqi man after he was freed from insurgent captivity.

(Right) The former captive raises his hands in joy after leaving the building where he was held.



Downs, of Rollinsford, N.H., and Rivera, of Gainesville, Fla., agreed that it was good to see the IPs taking charge of the operation.

“The IPs in our area are some of the most disciplined and professional we’ve ever worked with,” Merkel said. “They take every opportunity they get to become more experienced.”

Merkel estimates his battalion goes on four to six patrols a day with IPs.

Earlier in the day, Merkel and Capt.

Matthew Wheeler, 1-9 FA, intelligence officer, met with IP chief Col. Ahmad and discussed progress in the Jasir-Diyala area, just north of Awhida.

Wheeler, who cleared buildings with Merkel and an IP during the raid, said he was pleased at how the mission unfolded.

“Nobody got badly hurt, and the Iraqi Police led the effort,” Wheeler, from Kissimmee, Fla., said. “That’s the way it should be.”



(Above) Lt. Col. Steven Merkel, 1-9 FA, commander, pulls security outside his humvee while IPs initiate the raid.

(Left) Iraqi Police storm a building where anti-Iraqi forces were hiding.

1-9 FA holds MEDCAP

Battlekings work out of sheik's home to help people

Story by Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Medical personnel and others from 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, journeyed to Jifr Nadaf to hold a medical capabilities assessment March 27.

What was unique about this MEDCAP was that it was not held in a hospital or medical center, for Jifr Nadaf has neither, but a local sheik's home.

Sheik Shakur, a Sunni cleric, opened his home to the Battlekings' medical personnel as well as residents of the seven-village sector of Baghdad.

Long before the coalition forces' invasion, Jifr Nadaf had been neglected and punished by the former regime for refusing to become Baathist, according to Maj. Terry Cook, 1-9 FA, executive officer.

"There was a medical clinic, but it was destroyed because of their refusal," the Destin, Fla.,

native said. "That was one of the motivating factors in providing the service."

Following a recent neighborhood council meeting, Jifr Nadaf was deemed a priority for medical assistance. "This was a great opportunity to empower the neighborhood council," Cook said.

A Battlekings medical team provided basic medical care and examinations for close to 120 residents. Staff Sgt. Gilberto Colon, 1-9 FA medic and Camp Loyalty Aid Station NCOIC, triaged and screened all the patients, then sent them on to Capt. Scott Baumgartner, 1-9 FA, physician's assistant, for treatment.

Baumgartner treated what he estimated as 60-70 patients. "I was treating patients for about two-and-a-half hours," said the Dubuque, Iowa, native. "Most of (the patients) were relatively healthy."

He added that many of the infants and toddlers had upper respiratory infections, but the older children and teens had no ailments.

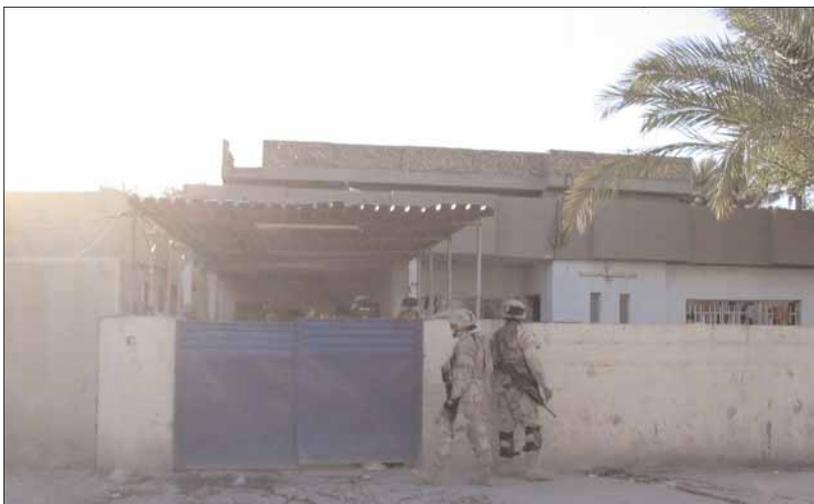
"I really thought we weren't going to be able to do a lot," Baumgartner said, "but it turned into a really good event."

Outside the sheik's home during the MEDCAP, Iraqi Police, who three months ago wouldn't enter Jifr Nadaf, secured the road and immediate area while simultaneously conducting dismounted joint patrols with 1-9 FA soldiers.

Additionally, civil affairs teams delivered humanitarian assistance packages to the residents in the neighborhood.

"This was a complete success," Cook said. "It empowered the neighborhood council, Iraqi Police and local leadership.

"Most importantly, it helped the people of Jifr Nadaf."



1-9 FA

(Above) Jifr Nadaf's Sheik Shakur opened his home to 1-9 FA and hosted a medical capabilities assessment March 27. (Right) Capt. Scott Baumgartner, 1-9 FA, physician's assistant, shows an 8-year-old child how much fluid was drained from a seroma on his back. The child developed the seroma after being hit by a car six weeks earlier.



1-9 FA photo



Sgt. Angela Wharton, 26th FSB, petroleum supply NCO, refills a static fuel tank from her HEMMT fueler at Butler Range, Iraq, March 24. The 26th FSB runs daily convoys with Kellogg, Brown and Root.

Challengers keep supplies rolling

Story and photo by Spc. Ben Brody

CAMP RUSTIMIYA, Iraq – Throughout history, armies have won and lost battles based on how well their supply chains functioned.

Today, Soldiers of 26th Forward Support Battalion, based at Camp Rustimiya, push essential supplies out to Spartan Soldiers all over eastern Baghdad with speed and efficiency.

The unit did just that by convoying a logistics package to Soldiers at Butler Range March 24.

In addition to 26th's fuel tanker, the convoy included 18-wheelers from Kellogg, Brown and Root carrying food, mail and a forklift.

"We go out whenever Soldiers need supplies – there's no set schedule," said Sgt. Angela Wharton, A Co., 26th FSB, petroleum supply noncommissioned officer. "We're always on the move."

Butler Range is a somewhat remote installation in the desert east of Baghdad, and the 40-mile drive makes preparation especially crucial, according to Sgt. 1st Class Courtney Henry, HHC, 26th FSB, security platoon NCOIC.

Henry, of Rochester, N.Y., conducted a detailed briefing before departing, and made sure everyone knew the plan for dealing with vehicle breakdowns, accidents, insurgent attacks and other scenarios.

"It's a lot of responsibility going out with the KBR drivers because they don't have the training we do, so our eyes have to be wide open," Henry said. "You've got to always be looking at your surroundings and making sure everyone's on the same sheet of music when you're traveling along the convoy route."

Once at Butler, Wharton, of Lawstontown, Ala., and Spc. Markeith Sams, also of A Co., refilled one of Butler's fuel

tanks from the tanker they had driven. Sams, from Macon, Ga., said he regularly makes trips to the range.

Soldiers from 26th's security platoon characterize the unit as being close-knit. They depend on a wide array of skills for success.

"There's a great deal of camaraderie in the unit – it's a tight, cohesive family," said Staff Sgt. David "Bones" Logan, HHC, 26th FSB, team chief. "It's a high-stress environment, so you've got to know when it's ok to joke around and when it's time to put your game face on. You always have to expect the unexpected here."

Logan, of Huntingdon Woods, Mich., said the days are flying by, and that he gets a sense of satisfaction from working in Iraq.

"We're so busy, always driving somewhere, that the days go by pretty fast," he said. "The best feeling is when you see some little Iraqi kid smile and wave at you. It really humbles you, because there's so much we take for granted that they don't have."

After helping guide the KBR rigs into Butler's dusty parking lot, Pfc. Nathan Hadd, HHC, 26th FSB, driver, said his company is a strong mix of talents.

"Everyone brings something different to the table in HHC," Hadd, of Bay City, Mich., said. "We've got great mechanics, medics, drivers, fuelers – it's a solid team."

"Driving the big trucks through the traffic in Baghdad is a huge responsibility," he added. "You've got to be respectful of civilians while keeping yourself safe – otherwise you might make a new enemy."

Given the 26th's teamwork and competence, the thousands of Spartan Soldiers who depend on them for critical supplies should have nothing to worry about.

A sound investment...

The Thrift Savings Plan

Sgt. Christian Stephenson
2nd Brigade Finance NCOIC

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a Federal Government-sponsored retirement savings and investment plan. Congress established the TSP in the Federal Employees' Retirement System Act of 1986. The purpose of the TSP is to provide retirement income.

The TSP is a defined contribution plan. The retirement income that you receive from your TSP account will depend on how much you have contributed to your account during your working years and the earnings on those contributions.

The TSP offers the same type of savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer their employees under so-called "401(k)" plans. Note: Unlike the Federal Employee TSP, the Uniformed Services TSP does not allow for "matching contributions."

In contrast to the TSP, the uniformed services retirement system is a defined benefit program. This means that the benefit you receive from the uniformed services retirement system (i.e., your retired pay) is based on your years of service and TSP is optional.

To participate in the TSP, you must sign up with your service during the "open season" which occurs in June and December of each year. You contribute to the TSP from your own pay, and the amount you contribute and the earnings attributable to your contributions belong to you. They are yours to keep even if you do not serve the 20 or more years



ordinarily necessary to receive uniformed services retired pay. TSP offers many benefits. For example:

1. You have the flexibility to contribute as little as 1 percent, or as much as 10%, of your basic pay - plus any amount of incentive pay or special pay, including bonus pay.

2. Your TSP contributions are taken out of your pay before taxes are computed, so you pay less withholding tax now.

3. TSP earnings are tax-deferred. This means you don't pay Federal (and, in most cases, state) income taxes on your contributions or earnings until you withdraw the money - usually at retirement, when you are in a lower tax bracket.

4. You can diversify your TSP investment among five different investment funds: the Government Securities Investment (G) Fund, the Fixed Income Index Investment (F) Fund, the Common Stock Index Investment (C) Fund, the Small Capitalization Stock Index Investment (S) Fund, and the International Stock Index Investment (I) Fund.

5. You can transfer any amount of money into the TSP from certain qualified retirement savings plans in which you are already invested. For example, if you have money in a 401(k) plan from previous employment, you can transfer all or part of it into the TSP. Similarly, you can transfer your TSP account balance to an eligible retirement plan when you leave Federal service.

Open Season is April 15th - June 30th. For more information, check out www.tsp.gov, or see your S-1 NCOIC.

Remembering David Bloom

From the Chaplain

Chaplain (Capt.) Steve Hommel
3rd Bn., 15th Inf., Chaplain

It has been two years since the Spartan BCT captured Baghdad. Those of us who were there will probably never forget the sights, sounds, smells, sadness, and elation of those days. As Sir Winston Churchill said, "Nothing in life is so exhilarating as to be shot at without result." My part in the Thunder Run was with 3-15 Inf. at Objective Curly. In the two years since April 7, 2003, I have replayed the battle over and over in my mind, but for as much as I have thought about it, it always surprises me how little I actually remember of what happened that day.

What I do clearly remember was the profound sadness I felt when I woke up. Just the day before our imbedded reporter, and my friend, David Bloom of NBC News died suddenly from a pulmonary embolism.

When David and his NBC News crew joined us before the start of OIF, I had no idea who he was. As the father of two small children, the extent of my TV viewing was pretty much limited to the Disney Channel. Ultimately, what endeared me to David was how serious he was about his faith.

The final month of his life was when it all came together for David spiritually. In his last e-mail to his wife, Melanie,



David wrote: "... You can't begin to fathom, cannot begin to even glimpse the enormity of the changes I have and am continuing to undergo. God takes you to the depths of your being, until you're at rock bottom, and then, if you turn to Him with utter and blind faith and resolve in your heart... He picks you up with your boot straps and leads you home. I hope and pray that all my guys get out of this in one piece, but I tell you, Mel, I am at peace ... Save this note. Look at it a month from now, a year from now, ten years from now. You cannot know now, nor do I, whether you will look back at it with tears, heart-break, and a sense of anguish and regret over what might have been ... "

One day after David's death, Staff Sgt. Robert Stever and Sgt. 1st Class John Marshall were both killed in action when the re-supply convoy they were traveling in was ambushed. Whenever I think of the Thunder Run and the fall of the regime, I feel a sense of pride in the accomplishment, but

also a deep, persistent sadness for the good men we lost, one of whom was my friend. My heart also goes out to the friends, comrades, and families of all the Spartan BCT soldiers that have given their lives for freedom in Iraq; most recently Sgt. Garcia, Sgt. Morris, Pfc. Lewis, Staff Sgt. Kieffer, and Spc Anderson. May God bless their families and friends, and the just war on terrorism.

Beware...

'Tis the season

Capt. Nicole Zuena

2nd Brigade Preventive Medicine Officer

It's that time of year again. No, it's not Christmas, but it is mosquito and sand fly season. You can feel it in the air. Bug zappers are zapping and the itchy wraths of those pesky critters are felt by all during the aftermath of their feedings. So why should we, as soldiers, care about this particular time of year? Besides those critters being such an annoyance in our everyday lives, they also carry a lot of diseases that can take us out of the fight for extended periods of time. Take for example the "Baghdad Boil", also known as Leishmaniasis.

Leishmaniasis is a parasitic disease spread by infected sand flies. The most common form of the disease in Southwest Asia is a skin infection known as Cutaneous Leishmaniasis. People with CL usually develop one or more open skin sores weeks to months after being bitten by an infected sand fly.

Currently, there are no vaccines or medications that can effectively prevent Leishmaniasis. However, CL can be successfully treated. This treatment, which can be painful, is only provided at Walter Reed and Brooke Army Medical Center. The good news is there are preventive measures that we can take to avoid being bitten by sand flies and mosquitoes.

The first step to prevention is to KNOW THY ENEMY. Sand flies can bite anytime, but prefer to bite at night. Why should we know this? Because soldiers tend to wear their PT uniform, i.e. PT shorts and short sleeve shirts during the night time hours. Exposed skin means more opportunities for sand

flies and mosquitoes to feast.

Also, did you know that sand flies are so small that they can fit through the tiny holes in our mosquito netting? Now that we know a little bit about the enemy, the second step to prevention is PROTECTION. There are many ways that we can protect ourselves from sand flies and mosquitoes.

The first step is to protect our skin using the DOD DEET skin repellent or some commercial form of mosquito repellent that contains DEET.

Secondly, treat your uniforms using the Individual Dynamic Absorption Application kit, also known as the "Shake and Bake" method. This treatment stays on your uniform for 50 launderings. The great feature about the "Shake and Bake" method is that the IDAA kits not only act as a repellent, but also act as an insecticide. One treatment will last you about the length of the deployment. These kits can be ordered through regular supply channels.

Thirdly, if you have an insect problem in your living quarters and decide to use the mosquito netting for protection, treat the netting with the insect repellent aerosol can. Use about ¼ of the can and saturate the netting and let air dry. This treatment will last approximately six weeks. Additionally, spray some of the can around the window screens and any cracks or crevices that might let insects in. This will minimize the amount of insects that enter your living areas.

Knowing how to minimize exposure and using these simple steps to protect ourselves will keep us fit for the fight and will conserve the fighting strength.



General Order #2

Capt. Lanny Acosta

2nd Brigade Attorney

There has been a significant amount of confusion over General Order #2: Visitation and Cohabitation in Living Areas for U.S. Department of Defense Personnel Assigned to Task Force Baghdad or Present Within the Task Force Baghdad Area of Responsibility.

The purpose of GO#2 is to prohibit certain relationships which detract from a professional command climate. The policy is meant not only to prevent those relationships that are improper but also to prevent relationships that appear improper and detract from unit cohesion.

Army Regulation 600-20, Army Command Policy, prohibits certain relationships in an effort to maintain good order and discipline.

Prohibited relationships include relationships that compromise or even appear to compromise the integrity of the chain of command, relationships that cause or appear to result in unfair treatment, or those that use or appear to use rank or position for personal gain.

General Order #2 reinforces this policy in our deployed environment as well as places restriction on other activities

in order to maintain good order and discipline. Other prohibited activities include visiting the living quarters of soldiers of the opposite gender, visiting any non-Department of Defense personnel or coalition forces, and visiting the living quarters of any contract personnel or employees of contractors.

The most widely discussed prohibition in GO#2 is the prohibition against cohabitation with soldiers of the opposite gender. Soldiers may not take up short or long term residence in assigned or unassigned rooms with members of the opposite gender. Exceptions to this prohibition may be obtained by lawfully married couples. Couples must submit requests through both soldiers chain of command stating whether the request is for visitation or cohabitation. The requests will be forwarded from the soldiers' brigade commander through the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commander, Task Force Baghdad. Requests will not be forwarded to the commander until both service members requests have been processed to the Staff Judge Advocate.

Any questions about GO #2 or any order or rule should be addressed to your chain of command or the brigade legal office located on your camp.



JAG says...

Govt: U.S. gasoline use strong despite record prices

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Demand this summer for U.S. gasoline will rise 1.8 percent from last summer, helping push pump prices to a peak monthly average of \$2.35 a gallon in May, the federal government said on Thursday.

American drivers will consume an average 9.331 million barrels per day of gasoline this summer, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The forecast from Energy Department's analytical arm is for the busy summer driving season running from April through September.

The expected growth in summer gasoline demand, would remain above the five-year average, the agency said, although it would be slightly lower than previously estimated as some drivers flinch at higher pump prices.

"We're looking at a global crude market that is straining" to meet world demand, said EIA administrator Guy Caruso.

U.S. crude oil prices initially rose on the government's new forecast.

On the New York Mercantile Exchange, crude oil futures for May delivery peaked at \$56.84 a barrel for a 89-cent gain before profit-taking and an ease of supply fears erased the rise. Oil ended down \$1.74 at \$54.11 a barrel.

In its report, EIA estimated China's oil demand will jump 12 percent this year to 7.4 million bpd.

China's runaway growth in oil consumption has helped to push crude prices higher.

The higher demand for U.S. gasoline "is caused by the increasing number of drivers and vehicles, and increasing miles traveled per vehicle," the EIA said.

A flat to declining fuel efficiency in the entire U.S. vehicle fleet is also a factor.

With no slowdown in U.S. gasoline demand, refiners will have to pump out more fuel, the EIA said.

Experts question worth of \$16 million U.S. terror drill

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The

largest-ever U.S. terrorism drill was staged this week in New Jersey and Connecticut with a cast of thousands and a cost of \$16 million, but experts wonder how much it will help in the face of another attack.

The five-day exercise replicated a bioterrorism attack in New Jersey and a chemical blast in Connecticut.

It set in motion more than 200 government agencies and local organizations and businesses poised to respond.

First responders rushed to the scenes in Union, New Jersey, and in New London, Connecticut.

Dummy victims were taken to hospitals, medicines were rationed and more than 10,000 people acted out roles in the operation.

All that was missing was the element of surprise and the panic a real attack would trigger.

Joseph King, an associate professor of law and police science at New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice, said making the exercise a surprise was not practical.

He added, "You can't, for fear of causing panic. I guarantee there would be some who would watch these drills ... run home and jump out the window."

Robert McCrie, professor of security management at John Jay College, questioned the focus of the exercises.

"The assumption has been there are atomic, biological, chemical and nuclear risks that put society on edge," he said. "A future attack might be much different.

"People that hate government or hate America are likely to turn to something cheap and surprising .. like an attack on our poorly protected technology infrastructure. That would be symbolic."

U.S. border militia avoids charges in immigrant case

DOUGLAS, Ariz. (Reuters) - Militia volunteers patrolling the U.S.-Mexico border were accused of holding a Mexican immigrant against his will and making him pose with a joke T-shirt but law enforcement officials ruled on Thursday no crime had been committed.

The man filed a legal complaint

charging that he was held and forced to display a T-shirt, distributed by "Minuteman" volunteer Bryan Barton, that said: "Bryan Barton caught me crossing the border and all I got was this lousy T-shirt."

The sheriff of Cochise County met with a county attorney, a Mexican consular official and U.S. Border Patrol officials, and they determined there was no case to answer.

"They found no information suggesting that the subject had been held against his will, so no action will be taken," said Carol Capas, spokeswoman for Cochise County Sheriff's Department.

The 26-year-old Mexican, who was picked up on Wednesday, was being held in federal custody.

Bizarre twist in case of finger found in Wendy's chili

LAS VEGAS (ABC News) - A bizarre twist to the story of a finger found in a bowl of chili at a Wendy's. It happened a couple of weeks ago in San Jose. It has been reported that investigators got a search warrant for the Las Vegas home of the woman who found the finger.

An ABC correspondent has reported that this new twist may have something to do with the woman's dead aunt.

San Jose police confirmed today that they did go to Las Vegas, and working with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, served a search warrant yesterday on a home on Coral Berry Street. They are investigating the possibility that the finger that was found in the bowl of chili in the Bay Area could belong to the deceased aunt of the woman who found the finger.

It was two weeks ago, on March 27th, that Ana Ayala found that one-and-half inch long portion of a human finger cooked into her portion of a bowl of Wendy's chili.

It was determined to be a woman's finger with a manicured nail.

Forensic experts could find no match among 50 million fingerprints in the FBI database.

DNA tests were conducted by the medical examiner's office. Wendy's workers were also investigated.

Jaafari named as Iraqi PM

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - Islamist Shi'ite Ibrahim Jaafari was named as Iraq's next prime minister on Thursday, moving the country a step closer to its first democratically elected government in more than 50 years.

Jaafari announced his own nomination shortly after Iraq's new president, Kurdish former guerrilla leader Jalal Talabani, was sworn into office in parliament, along with two deputies.

"Today represents a big step forward for Iraq and a big responsibility for me," Jaafari, who spent more than two decades opposing Saddam Hussein from exile, told reporters.

His appointment to the most powerful post under the interim constitution had long been agreed in principle but was held up by weeks of bargaining over other jobs among the Shi'ite and Kurdish groups that dominate the parliament elected on Jan. 30.

Jaafari is seen as a moderate Islamist, favoring a strong role for Muslim teachings but seeking to embrace all communities.

U.S. officials say they are confident Iraq will not emulate Shi'ite Iran in establishing an Islamic state hostile to Washington. Jaafari says he backs the U.S. military presence in Iraq — at least until the country's own security forces are better able to tackle the mostly Sunni Arab insurgency.

He said on Thursday that interim prime minister Iyad Allawi, a secular Shi'ite appointed under U.S. supervision 10 months ago, had resigned but would carry on as a caretaker while Jaafari worked on the finishing touches to his cabinet line-up.

"I hope within one or two weeks maximum I will name the cabinet," a smiling Jaafari said after his formal appointment by Talabani and the Shi'ite and Sunni Arab vice presidents.

'That's no camel, that's my baggage!'

SYDNEY (Reuters) - A baggage handler wearing a camel suit taken from a passenger's luggage has left Qantas Airways red-faced, with Australia's national carrier investigating a potentially embarrassing security

lapse.

Passenger David Cox complained after he saw a baggage handler driven across the Sydney airport tarmac Wednesday wearing the camel suit that had been packed into the baggage he had checked in only minutes earlier.

Cox, a marketing manager, had checked the camel suit and a crocodile costume onto Qantas flight 425 from Sydney to Melbourne in a large bag which had been marked to say it was carrying animal costumes.

He said he was standing near his boarding gate and at first thought nothing when a child said "there's a guy with a moose head." But then he looked up and saw his camel costume.

"I obviously was flabbergasted. My jaw dropped to the ground," Cox told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio.

Qantas chief executive Geoff Dixon said Friday the incident was being investigated. A baggage handler had been identified on closed-circuit television and faced disciplinary action that could include dismissal.

"What has happened is completely unacceptable and is unacceptable to the vast majority of decent, hard-working Qantas employees," Dixon said in a statement.

U.S. delays missile test over Canada oil platform

CALGARY, Alberta (Reuters) - The United States has postponed the launch of a missile that would have forced the shutdown of production at the huge Hibernia oil project off Canada's Atlantic coast, officials said on Thursday.

Defense Minister Bill Graham told reporters in Ottawa the U.S. Department of Defense had agreed to delay the launch of the Titan IV rocket, which had been set to drop a 10-ton booster in an area near the offshore Newfoundland project on Monday.

Oil companies were preparing to evacuate 250 workers aboard the massive concrete platform this weekend and turn off output of about 200,000 barrels a day as a precaution for when the unmanned rocket blasted off from Cape Canaveral, Florida.

A nearby drilling rig, contracted to Husky Energy Inc.'s White Rose development, was also to have been towed away, the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board said.

Canadian Broadcasting Corp. reported officials in Ottawa and Newfoundland had reacted strongly to the missile test creating a "hazard area" around Hibernia, located 315 km (196 miles) southeast of St. John's Newfoundland, and quickly lobbied for an indefinite postponement.

"We just need written confirmation, and once we have that then the rigs are free to resume their normal operations," Petroleum Board spokeswoman Simone Keough said.

Poles bid farewell to Pope John Paul II

KRAKOW, Poland (Reuters) - Cannon roared, sirens wailed and church bells rang in Poland where millions of people prayed and wept for Pope John Paul II, their greatest native son and spiritual leader.

Poles gathered Friday at churches and open-air masses, where giant-screen televisions showed the Vatican funeral service, to bid farewell to a man who inspired their fight against communism and pushed them toward mainstream Europe.

About half a million gathered at the Blonie public meadows in Krakow — the southern Polish city where Karol Wojtyla served as archbishop before becoming Pope in 1978 and the place of John Paul's last mass on Polish soil three years ago.

"We have to understand John Paul has gone but remains with us," said Dominik Talar, 30, standing in a solemn crowd of worshippers. "Even though my eyes are filled with tears I feel a strange strength inside me which says: 'I will manage'." The chair in which the Pope sat during his last mass, in which a record nearly 3 million Poles took part, stood empty on a makeshift altar, decorated only with a black ribbon.

At 9.37 (1737 GMT), the time of the Pope's death last Saturday, Poles planned to turn off all lights for five minutes in another gesture of respect for the deceased Pontiff.

To Our Fallen Warriors

Soldier's Creed

I am an American Soldier.

I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills. I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional. I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier.



Staff Sgt. Ricky Kieffer
720th MP Bn.
Killed in action
March 15



Pfc. Lee A. Lewis
3-15 Inf
Killed in action
March 18



Sgt. Kelly S. Morris
1-64 Armor
Killed in action
March 30



Sgt. Javier Garcia
1-64 Armor
Killed in action
April 5