

Fighting through ambush, Page 8



Photo by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas

A Mongolian Soldier salutes his country's flag as an honor guard marches in front of a morning formation to respectfully greet the battalion commander. The infantry Soldiers are part of the joint effort in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and conduct patrols and raids from their base at Camp Charlie, Al Hillah, Iraq. Mongolian troops volunteer to serve six-month rotations in Iraq.

## NIAC provides alternative medical solutions

By Sgt. Misha King  
Scimitar Assistant Editor

**INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — At first glance, the Iraqi Forum and Convention Center looks just like that: a convention center. That same first glance, however, does not reveal the many organizations spearheading activities, missions and programs that go on besides the occasional convention. One such organization is the National Iraqi Assistance Center, located immediately to the right of the main entrance on the bottom floor.

"NIAC's mission is to provide country-wide humanitarian, medical treatment alternatives, including a fully-functional prosthesis clinic, and women and children assistance for Multi-National Force - Iraq," said Col. Chet Wernicki,

director of the NIAC.

Wernicki explained the overall center, which sees about 5,000 people monthly, is called the NIAC, but is comprised of two internal sections — the NIAC and the Iraqi Assistance Center — Baghdad. The IAC-B handles mostly local walk-ins, whereas NIAC extends to the rest of the country, although any Iraqi who walks in will be assisted by either section.

The NIAC has several different programs geared toward helping the Iraqi people regain control of their country, but perhaps the most crucial of these programs is the medical mission. The main purpose of this program is to coordinate and locate medical care for Iraqi citizens who cannot receive care within the current health care system, said Lt. Col. Norma G. Sandow, medical care coordinator for NIAC.

"Patients go through processing and screening at Baghdad Medical City, which is a complex of hospitals near the

Ministry of Health," Sandow elaborated. "If they can't find medical care within the complex, their records are then reviewed by Ministry of Health board. If care can't be rendered within the Iraqi health care system, they are given an approval statement, which is brought back here, put on file and the process continues to find care for that citizen."

The expression "money doesn't grow on trees" is something most can relate to, and NIAC is no exception to this rule.

"We have sponsors who take care of funding health care for qualified patients," Sandow said. "These sponsors are non-government organizations, international organizations, national organizations, private volunteer organizations, and even government organizations. For example, Global Med and the Shriners Hospital system are examples of NGOs."

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# Iraqi, U.S. Soldiers detain more than 65 terrorists

By Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft  
Task Force Baghdad Public Affairs

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq** — Iraqi Army members teamed up with elements of 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, for Operation Vanguard Tempest, an early-morning raid on the Baghdad neighborhood of al-Dora April 11.

Their mission: hunt down nearly 90 known terrorist ringleaders — anti-Iraqi forces whose charges include donating money and supplies for the building of improvised explosive devices — and bring them back here to be detained and questioned.

The raid stood out as the first to name such a high number of targets as its goal.

“We’re going in to get these high-priority targets, and we’re trying to hit everyone at once,” said Sgt. 1st Class Stephon Garrett, a platoon sergeant with Company C, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment. “If we get them, it’ll be like finding the Holy Grail.”

“These guys are trying to kill Americans, Iraqi Soldiers and Iraqi police,” added Pfc. Richard Kasserman, a company tank loader from Aiken, S.C. “It’s best to get them off the streets as soon as possible.”

At 3 a.m. Soldiers began to move among the dimly lit and nearly silent rows of houses, taking care to stop only at those homes identified in the intelligence they had been given.

Upon entering the residences, they searched for evidence of the hunted person, and if there was none, questioned the occupants to glean any available information.

“So-and-so just moved away from here,” some would say, or, “I don’t know where so-and-so could be.”

Even though not every team was able to locate its assigned targets, most of the suspected terrorists accompanied the Soldiers back to Falcon by the time the operation was over at 8:30 a.m.

Garrett, from Talladega, Ala., said he would have been happy with the capture of even one of the infamous criminals. “Even if we just

save one person from an IED, I’ll feel it was a success,” he said. “We’ll be taking a lot of money out of a lot of terrorists’ hands.”

The operation’s success far exceeded that, though. At last count, the U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers had detained at least 67 suspected terrorists, making the operation one of the largest conducted by Task Force Baghdad since 3rd Infantry Division taking over from 1st Cavalry Division in February.

“There are now criminals who are off the street for the time being,” said Capt. Raymond Hill, 184th Infantry Regiment’s 1st Battalion information operations officer. “It went well. ... [The Soldiers] have been trained to do this and I know they executed the missions well.”

Iraqi Army elements who accompanied the U.S. Soldiers played a crucial role in the operation, according to 1st Lt. Bryan Bonnema, the platoon leader of C Co.’s 3rd Platoon.

“They are a great asset,” said the Clifton, Va., native. “They know the area and they

know the culture. They are our intelligence on the ground, and they are definitely important. ... I enjoy working with them.”

“The [Iraqi Army’s] integrity and values have changed since the last time we were over here,” said 1st Sgt. Darren Woodland, the company’s first sergeant, from Fayetteville, N.C. “It used to be, they saw something they wanted and took it. Now, they see there’s a right way to do things, and that you have to treat people the way you want to be treated.”

Out of the hundreds of U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers who took part in the raid, none was hurt during the mission — a goal shared by everyone.

“Ultimately, we want to bring all our guys home and accomplish the mission,” Woodland said.

Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Tucker, platoon sergeant of C Co.’s 3rd platoon, agreed. “If I got all my guys with me, safe and sound, that’s the biggest reward,” Tucker said. “If we get the bad guys, that’s good, too.”

## First House call ...



Photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn

**Kassim Ahmed Ali, a medical doctor from the 6th Battalion of the Iraqi Army, explains to the children why he is checking their mother’s blood pressure. Ali was part of a joint U.S. and Iraqi civil affairs mission based out of Forward Operating Base Caldwell near the Turki village. This was the first time an Iraqi Army doctor went out into a village to examine citizens’ health.**

# Iraqi woman-owned company wins construction contract bid

By Denise Calabria  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**TALLIL, Iraq** — Normally, awarding a construction contract is literally a ground-breaking event. However, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contract awarded earlier this month in Southern Iraq is ground-breaking from a sociological perspective as well, because a female-owned business submitted the winning bid.

With recent contracting initiatives for the reconstruction effort, the Corps offers opportunities to female-owned businesses as well as those from local provinces when awarding construction and renovation contracts. In this particular instance, the company name will remain undisclosed in the interest of ensuring safety and security for the construction company, its employees, and the construction site.

The contract is for the renovation of an existing police station.

At a preconstruction conference, the Iraqi company owner (name withheld in the interest of ensuring safety and security), her mechanical engineer and civil engineer (both female), her female manager, and male translator were acquainted with the Corps’ contracting and construction management procedures.

During the conference, Robert Hanacek, a Corps

resident engineer, emphasized to the women the contract requirements considered most essential, as well as introduced the group to Corps personnel who will oversee the construction, including the Iraqi quality assurance engineer assigned to the project. Hanacek also covered the Corps’ payment schedule, the 90-day construction period, site safety requirements, and the general scope of work.

Following the meeting, the owner graciously agreed to an interview regarding the rarity of her circumstances in Iraqi society.

Born in Kuwait to Iraqi parents, she said her upbringing had mirrored one typical for women in her culture and society.

“My family offered interference when I attempted to study at the college level, but that situation changed after the death of my father,” she said. “It was then that I was able to continue my education.”

The woman claims her education changed her life by giving her a motive to advance herself.

She viewed the recent Iraqi elections and female representation in the new government as positive advances for Iraqi women.

“We progress step by step. It is the beginning of the way,” she said.

“Our company is also an attempt to prove that Iraqi women can be as educated, skillful, and successful as men.”

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PERSPECTIVES

# While enjoying operations in Iraq it's natural to miss things at home

**By Capt. Patricia Brewer**  
214th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

As a U.S. Army Reserve Soldier working in the Combined Press Information Center, I have the unique perspective of a Soldier who works with the civilian media. I enjoy the challenges of telling the Soldiers' story, exploring the International Zone, and meeting local Iraqis as well as service members from the Coalition. Nevertheless there are some things I miss about my home, Washington, D.C.

I miss traffic lights. Once I head home I'm going to be dangerous behind the wheel because I've gotten out of the habit of stopping at intersections or yielding to any vehicle smaller than my Humvee.

I miss using my credit card, but we are so well taken care of! Who else can brag about a palace banquet every night, free daily laundry, a luxurious palace pool, or home association benefits without the high-priced association fees. Gas, coffee, laundry...all the errands I normally run on Saturday mornings at home are impossible without cash, or my two best friends, Visa and MasterCard. Here, it is just a matter of knowing where to go and having the right documents.

I miss reliable salon appointments. I know the guys can't believe this, but I can't find anyone to cut my hair. Few Iraqi barbers will cut a female's hair. Furthermore, I can't gossip with the hairdresser. How am I supposed to find out the latest news?

I miss my hour-long commute via Metro. I used that time to catch up with emails or other work-related readings. Now, a quick trip from where I live, and I am ready for work.

I miss fashion choices. My desert camouflage uniform, with the requisite body armor and weapon, makes life easy. I don't have to worry about what I will wear during the week; what has to be pressed, mended, shined, or pressed. But occasionally a deviation away from tan and brown would be a welcome change.

I miss diversity in activity. Work, gym, trailer ... add in time for lunch and dinner and that's about the extent of the day. I miss the phone call from friends saying, hey, we're headed out to the mountains ... out to dinner ... out to the book store ...

But really what I miss are those great spring days that Washington, D.C. is famous for. I miss walking through the cherry trees in full bloom, kayaking in the Potomac, paddling past Georgetown and the Kennedy Center. I miss strolling through Old Town Alexandria with a final refreshing stop at Murphy's pub. I find myself reminiscing about lunch in the park with my co-workers, stealing a few minutes of sunshine and sharing crackers with the squirrels.

All that being said, once I head home to my family and my civilian job these small sacrifices will seem insignificant to the adventure, purpose, and fellowship I now enjoy during deployment. So while I'm here, I'll count my blessings and enjoy the days. Meanwhile, who wants to go for a drive with me along the International Zone speedway? I have to pick up a reporter from their embed assignment.

## Special delivery



Photo by Photographer's Mate Airman Joshua Hammond

An MH-60S Seahawk Helicopter transports supplies during an underway replenishment between USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) and USS Camden (AOE 2) as USS Antietam (CG 54) steams in the background in the Persian Gulf on April 1, 2005. The Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group is conducting operations in support of Multi-National Forces - Iraq and maritime security operations in the Persian Gulf. Carl Vinson will end its deployment with a homeport shift to Norfolk, Va., and will conduct a three-year refuel and complex overhaul.

## Scimitar Pulse

*What do you miss most about your country while serving in Iraq?*

"It would have to be my freedom to go where I want to go when I want."

**Air Force Capt. Jenise M. Carroll**  
*MNF-I*



"I really miss Wal-Mart. I am used to going there and picking up what I want."

**Judith Risch**  
*KBR*

"I miss the rain and the effects it provides."

**British Army**  
**Capt. Damian Flanagan**  
*MNF-I*



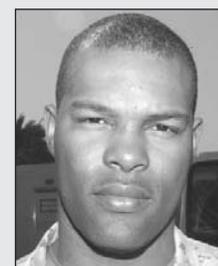
"I miss food, real American food."



**Kanika Grant**  
*KBR*

"I miss the freedom at home. I miss the culture and everything like that."

**Marine Pfc. Andre Adams**  
*4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade*



"There is no place like home. I miss the culture and way of life in Australia."

**Australian Army Sgt. Karl Hans**  
*Strategic Operations*

"I miss my freedom, my clothes, my life, my everything."

**Army Sgt. Betzaida Santos**  
*807th Signal Company*



# Brigade combat team builds driver's course to save lives

Story and photo by

Spc. Chris Foster

256th Brigade Combat Team  
Public Affairs

## CAMP LIBERTY, BAGHDAD, Iraq —

The 256th Brigade Combat Team broke ground with the help of two D7 dozers and a front loader for the first ever Driver's Confidence Course in North Liberty, Iraq, on April 4.

256th BCT has lost three Soldiers as a result of vehicle accidents on dangerous terrain conditions since being deployed. Most roads in and around Baghdad are narrow, raised roads, bordered by canals or ditches that can have five to 10 feet of mud and water. Those conditions make the roads just as dangerous as terrorist activities.

The 256th BCT Commander, Brig. Gen. John Basilica Jr., said he felt the best way to prevent these types of accidents was to provide a realistic and challenging driving confidence course on which Soldiers will be able to train. To that end, the operations command sergeant major and the unit's master drivers worked with the brigade safety officer to develop the first enduring driver's training course on Camp Liberty.

The course, which consists of both classroom training and practical exer-

cises, allows drivers the opportunity to test the limitations of their equipment and skills in a controlled environment.

Sgt. 1st Class Donald Boutte from Lafayette, La., with Headquarters Company, 256th BCT, and the noncommissioned officer in charge of the project, said the course will provide driving scenarios as close to real-world challenges as possible.

The driver's training course is designed to provide Tiger Brigade Soldiers with a challenging, realistic training experience that closely mirrors the environment in which we fight, said Maj. Kenneth Copple, the 256th's safety officer.



**Staff Sgt. Terry Readoux, from Lafayette, La, with Headquarters 1088th Engineer Battalion, of the 256th Brigade Combat Team, clears the area in a front end loader for the new Driver Confidence Courses at Camp Liberty, Iraq.**

"The BCT Master Drivers designed this driver's training course to combine classroom instruction and practical, hands-on training by replicating raised canal roads, serpentine barricades and narrow lanes drivers must negotiate," Copple said. "The course is a great tool to prepare newly arriving replacements as well as providing sustainment training, both day and night for our experienced drivers."

This Driver's Confidence Course will be beneficial to experienced and inexperienced drivers alike. Though the focus of the course is to improve a Soldier's driving skills, the secondary effect is the prevention of accidents caused by careless mistakes made in combat.

"The sooner we get the course, the sooner we can have Soldiers honing their driving skills before they get outside the wire," Boutte said.

Use of the course, designed for day training and night training with night-vision goggles, may be scheduled by a unit's master driver. In addition to being licensed on military tactical vehicles, one other prerequisite to training is attending a safety briefing prior to driving on the course, Boutte noted.

## Suicide bombers in Iraqi attacks are mostly foreigners

By Gerry J. Gilmore

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Most of the people committing suicide bombings in Iraq today are foreigners, not Iraqis, a senior Multi-National Force - Iraq official told reporters at an April 14 meeting with reporters in Baghdad.

"The sense is that many of the suicide bombers are in fact foreign jihadists, not Iraqis, for the most part," the official said, speaking to reporters on background.

"The ones that we've gotten our hands on are certainly foreigners," he pointed out.

Foreign insurgents operating in Iraq seem to be coming from about 25 countries, the official noted. The majority, he observed, are from Syria, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

However, U.S. military analysts in Iraq "don't see that foreign fighters have become a significant force in the insurgency," the official noted. Out of about 10,000 detainees now being held in Iraq, only "357, 358, something like that" are non-Iraqis.

The official also cited reports that say Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's anti-American militia, the so-called Mahdi Army, is undergoing "some regeneration." However, the official added, Sadr's Baghdad-based group, which had been blamed for several atrocities, had "lost a lot of public support" since the Jan. 30 Iraqi elections.

The official declined to comment on the idea of any possible amnesty program for former insurgents. "That will obviously be a government of Iraq decision," the official said.

## Assistance

from Page 1

"We also have hospital foundations and groups that help, like a hospital group in Maine that has been providing cardiac care for Iraqi children," she added. "We've also contacted rotary clubs in different states for assistance."

Even though NIAC has several outstanding sponsors dedicated to helping needy Iraqi citizens get the care they need and deserve, the amount of care needed compared to the amount given is extremely high.

"We have over one thousand files in our collection, and that's not including those at the Ministry of Health," Sandow clarified. "Unfortunately, the amount of care we actually have is far less than the cases we have. We really need a lot more sponsors."

More sponsors and more money are not the only things NIAC could really use, Sandow said. "We also need a full-time person who can locate health care sponsors, or some way to provide a liaison between NIAC and the Ministry of Health to locate sponsors. [This person could help] get the ministry actively engaged in providing monetary support and sponsorship to render health care until it can rebuild the Iraqi health care system. For the sophisticated level of health care that is required for the citizens coming to the NIAC, it'll take a couple of years for that to happen."

Although the end of the rainbow is years

away, efforts are already under way to turn the Iraqi health care system into a pot of gold.

"It's a combined effort through coalition forces, U.S. and the Iraqi Ministry of Health," said Sandow. "This is all being brokered through the MNF-I surgeon's office — they're coordinating all the efforts to get the health system back up."

The surgeon's office is pulling in all the components to assist, Sandow said. These components are comprised of civilians and military. The civilian assistance includes the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which is the civilian counterpart for education and training. Also, engineer contractors to rebuild hospitals, and the Project Coordination Organization and the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office to coordinate and manage the projects. The U.S. military will help locate and ship equipment to the newly-built installations, and the United Nations is also getting involved in the reconstruction effort, Sandow added.

Once the hospital systems are brought up to par, the Iraqi health care system will face yet another challenge — training personnel and staffing the hospitals.

"There is a medical school at the University of Baghdad that trains Iraqi doctors," said

Sandow, who is an operating room nurse back home. "The nursing system, however, is not on par with the rest of the world; it needs to be rehabilitated."

Currently, the MNF-I surgeon's office and the assisting organizations are rebuilding the Academy of Health Sciences, which is scheduled to open by October 2005. Doctors, nurses and allied health workers will be trained there. Nonetheless, training Iraq's own doctors and nurses may not be enough to meet supply and demand issues of staffing the new health care facilities.

"I believe there will be a deficit of workers to man these facilities like it was prior to the war," said Sandow. "It may end up like it is in other Middle Eastern countries, where hospitals are staffed by foreigners."

The various civilian and military organizations spearheading reconstruction projects are all critical pieces in the immense puzzle of rebuilding the Iraqi healthcare system. But gaining the assistance of such organizations requires a key factor: good old communication. Besides the old-fashioned word-of-mouth technique, the NIAC has also employed a powerful and more modern tool to assist in its efforts to reach out to needy Iraqi citizens.

"We launched our interactive Web site

toward the end of March," boasted Wernicki. "It has links to different organizations and questionnaires that route people to the appropriate NIAC section for help."

"It's a great site because not only do we put out our background and information for needy citizens," Sandow elaborated, "but we have an interactive Web site for questions about donations and contributions for volunteers."

"We also hope to reach different Civil Military Operations Centers through our Web site," said Wernicki. "They are maneuver elements, so we lose oversight of them. We have about 770 personnel out in these companies and battalions throughout the country. Hopefully, this Web site will help us reach out to them and get feedback on what the needs and desires are of the Iraqis outside of Baghdad."

As Sandow leaves the convention center every day, she looks back with a look of satisfaction, knowing she will return the next day to her job that has proven to be worthwhile.

"We've sent several children to the U.S. to get care that they wouldn't have gotten otherwise, and their families were extremely grateful," Sandow said proudly. "We're providing an opportunity for these children and adults to come back healthy, productive, and confident for the future of Iraq. It's definitely a rewarding mission."

To learn more about NIAC, make contributions or become a sponsor, please log on to: [www.natiac.org](http://www.natiac.org).

**"The amount of care we actually have is far less than the cases we have. We really need a lot more sponsors."**

Lt. Col. Norma G. Sandow

# Rapid Fielding Initiative Advanced Combat Helmet saves Soldier's life

Story and photos by Sgt. David Foley  
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq** — While most Soldiers were dreaming up ways to make their loved ones feel special this Valentine's Day, one Soldier was deciding how to tell his wife just how close he came to death.

Staff Sgt. Shannon West, 377th Transportation Company, 68th Corps Support Battalion, Fort Bragg, N.C., was riding in the passenger seat of a heavy equipment transport vehicle Feb. 14 with a convoy on its way from Baghdad International Airport to Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq, to drop off supplies



This heavy equipment transportation vehicle Staff Sgt. Shannon West was riding in was destroyed by an improvised explosive device Feb. 14, one mile outside of Camp Taji, Iraq. West's advanced combat helmet saved his life.

when his vehicle was struck with an improvised explosive device about one mile away from Camp Taji.

The IED instantly disabled West's vehicle, forcing him and his driver, Sgt. Brandon Askew, who was deafened by the blast, to exit the vehicle and get into defensive fighting positions.

"Everything we had was just blown to bits," Askew said.

When the two Soldiers exited the vehicle, they were then confronted with increasing levels of small-arms fire. West and his comrades returned fire while devising a plan to get everyone back on the move. However, their troubles were compounded when the driver of the truck two

vehicles behind West's HET was unable to see through the cloud of dust and smoke and crashed into the rear of another vehicle, pinning the passenger under the dashboard, making the rescue more complicated.

Askew provided cover fire while West and one of his comrades moved to the rear vehicle where they dislodged the wounded Soldier and carried him about 100 yards to a Humvee from another convoy that had

stopped to help.

All of the Soldiers made it out of the situation with minimal wounds, the most severe being torn ligaments in the knee of the Soldier who was pinned under the dashboard.

More than three hours passed between the time of the blast and when West and his comrades made it back to Camp Taji for a debriefing. That's when West realized he had been hit by fragments of the IED.

"The funny thing was, I didn't know until I got here," West said. "My squad leader said 'Hey sergeant West, have you seen your Kevlar?'"

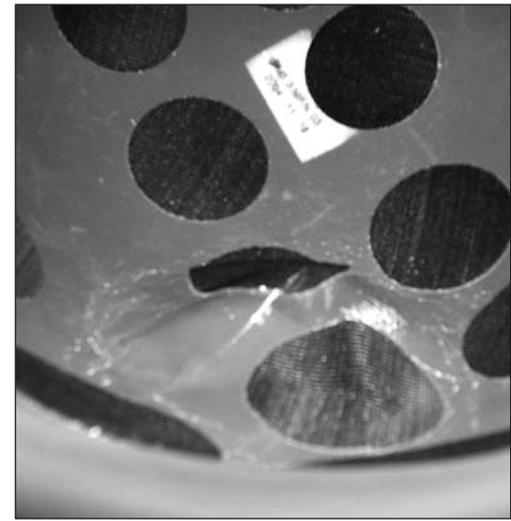
"When I took it off, I saw a big cut in it," he said. "When I looked inside [the helmet] I realized what had actually happened. I was surprised."

A fragment of the IED had lodged itself into West's helmet creating a hole the size of a pencil in the outer shell, but the inside of the helmet was protruding into the padding with a bump the size of a golf ball.

West said he had his doubts about the Advanced Combat Helmet when it was first issued to him, but he has changed his mind since.

"I didn't like it. It feels funny on your head and you need to adjust it every time you take it off. The only thing I liked about it is that it's light," he said. "But my faith in the [ACH] is really there. I am glad to see it actually works."

After losing one Soldier and two others receiving serious wounds because of IED attacks, West's company commander, Capt. Scott Williams, was also glad to see the effectiveness of the helmet.



Staff Sgt. Shannon West's advanced combat helmet (shown here) was struck with fragments of an improvised explosive device that disabled his vehicle. Despite extensive damage to the vehicle, West escaped with a mild concussion.

"This definitely saved his life," Williams said while holding West's ACH.

The angle of trajectory probably had a lot to do with it, but if he weren't wearing the helmet, West would have probably died, he said.

Because of the effectiveness of the ACH, West will be awarded the Purple Heart for suffering a mild concussion rather than receiving a posthumous medal, something West said is a blessing, but doesn't completely settle his nerves.

"My first few missions back, I was terrified," he said. "I was actually paranoid but after getting back into it, I'm OK. The first two missions were nerve-racking, but now it's not too bad."

West and his comrades continue to drive the streets of Iraq taking supplies wherever they are needed, and they always wear their individual body armor and ACHs.

## Guardsmen, 'COLTS' train Iraqi Army to lead fight

Story and photo by Sgt. Matthew Acosta  
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE McHENRY, Iraq** — As the war in Iraq continues, Iraqi Army Soldiers are receiving more responsibilities and additional training by U.S. Army Soldiers theatre-wide.

Idaho National Guardsmen assigned to the Combat Observation and Lasing Team (COLT) platoon, of the 116th Brigade Combat Team's 1st Battalion, 148th Field Artillery, frequently train Iraqi Army Soldiers by including them in their patrols when possible.

Although training the Iraqi Army is not their assigned tasking, the "Colts" will allow the Iraqi Soldiers to lead joint combat patrols and counter IED patrols whenever possible.

"Sometimes while out on counter-IED missions or combat patrols, we may stop at an Iraqi Army traffic checkpoint and coordinated a joint patrol with the Iraqi Soldiers," said 1st Lt. Chad Knowles, the 1st Bn., 148th FA COLT platoon leader. "In doing so we can see what level they're at in their training and how much they have learned."

Knowles said they let the Iraqi platoon sergeant plan the patrol, vehicle sequence and interval and how he was going to employ the American Soldiers in the patrol.

"Doing this gives them the opportunity to use us as a resource but lets them start taking charge of the situations, and it gets them in the thought process of taking control of patrols," he added.



Idaho National Guardsman Sgt. Brent Peterson, a field artilleryman of 1st Battalion, 148th Field Artillery, 116th Brigade Combat Team, checks the ID of an Iraqi driver at a traffic control point in Iraq.

The National Guardsmen routinely patrol the streets around Forward Operating Base McHenry, where they are currently stationed, passing through several Iraqi checkpoints and sometimes stop to assist the Iraqis in searching vehicles.

the Iraqi people look to the Iraqi Army and for security," he added.

"We want them to be successful because they will eventually be taking the reins," said Knowles.

"We have seen a difference in the way they operate in just the last three weeks," Knowles said. "They have absorbed what we have taught them and even the Iraqi people have more respect for the checkpoints and are more patient, knowing it is their job to search the vehicles."

Although the Iraqi Soldiers are doing well with taking charge of certain areas of responsibility, they still need continuing training until they are ready to completely take over operations.

"Training the Iraqis to take over the combat patrols and operations is going to be a long process," said Sgt. Brent Peterson, a 1st Bn., 148th FA artilleryman. "But I think the fact that they are willing to go out and show they want to be independent makes them feel like they're becoming the force they need to be for their own country."

"It's only a matter of time before

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Myers challenges editors to tell full story in war coverage

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff encouraged newspaper editors April 15, to tell America the full story of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"It's particularly important today ... the American people need to know the full story," said Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, "because it is going to be their resolve that is so critical to our ability to confront the extremist threat."

Myers told the editors that he reads far more about the problems of service members' equipment and the latest insurgent attack than about "the thousands of amazing things our troops are accomplishing." This concerns him, he said, because American resolve is key to success.

The chairman said part of the problem lies with the military. He said commanders must be more responsive and give more access to reporters. "We're working on that."

But still, "a bomb blast is seen as more newsworthy than the steady progress of rebuilding communities and lives, remodeling schools and running vaccination programs and water purification plants."

Myers said about 140,000 U.S. service members are in Iraq, 20,000 in Afghanistan and about 25,000 in other countries in the region. "They are doing absolutely remarkable work. They have the best training, the best equipment and the best of America's values and professionalism.

"They are rebuilding these countries after years of oppression and restoring hope for generations where there just hasn't been any hope," he continued.

Myers said he and other Defense Department leaders pushed for the media "embed" program in Iraq, in which reporters traveled with military units in the war zone. He said DoD officials were not afraid of what service members would tell reporters.

"Our troops accurately represent the armed forces and their missions," he said. "Every day, they understand they are improving life in Iraq and Afghanistan and other places around the world."

Myers challenged the editors to ensure the American people understand the hundreds of ways their sons and daughters are improving lives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"In your profession and mine, [we are] working hard to defend our values, our way of life and our Constitution," Myers said. "We risk our comfort, our safety and our lives for what we believe in." More than 40 journalists have been killed while covering operations in Iraq, the chairman noted. The "Fourth Estate" always has covered conflicts, but what is different today is the amount of news and that it travels so much faster than in the past.

"What questions are the news reports trying to answer?" the chairman asked. "The theme of the coverage lately seems to be 'When are the troops coming home?' rather than 'What are we accomplishing?'"

He said he understands that editors are wrestling with the problem. "But I don't think that both sides of the equation ... are being covered adequately," he said. "There really is so much more news out there, stories that go untold because, frankly, the stories are harder to tell."

He said the military will work with the press. "Our task is to give you better access, more timely information and we will do that," he said. "In return I would ask you to keep at the task of trying to show as complete a picture as you can. I know our troops deserve that, and I think the American people deserve it as well."

### DoD launches military spouse career center

WASHINGTON — A new Military Spouse Career Center commissioned by the Department of Defense Office of Military Community & Family Policy launched today at [www.Military.com/spouse](http://www.Military.com/spouse). The new resource connects America's 1 million military spouses with education options, scholarships, training programs, career planning tips and employment opportunities.

The new Military Spouse Career Center was developed under contract by Monster, the leading global online careers property, and it's Military.com subsidiary.

"Military spouses also serve, and we aim to put career, education and training opportunities and resources at their fingertips," said John Molino, Deputy Under Secretary for Defense for Military Community and Family Policy.

"We aim to make it easier for employers and educational institutions to reach this large, attractive talent pool that has proven elusive to date," says Christopher Michel, President of Military.com, a subsidiary of Monster.

The new Military Spouse Career Center offers an extensive job board that includes hundreds of thousands of jobs from the public and private sectors. A list of Military Spouse-Friendly employers is included, and will grow as more employers step forward to participate.

The new Career Center includes information on entering and advancing in popular career fields, especially when military relocation requires finding a new role. The Career Center covers many so-called "portable" career fields that lend themselves to continuity despite frequent relocations. Also included is information regarding jobs on military installations, overseas employment opportunities, and volunteer options.

For those exploring career options, the Military Spouse Career Center has a "Career Advice" section outlining a step-by-step approach to career planning. Tools and tips for assessing personal goals, skills and interests are included. This section culminates in tips for job searches, resumes, interviews, and starting a career, as well as, family support resources that can be key enablers to pursuing a career. Topics include career counseling, licensing and certification, childcare and youth programs.

The Center also includes links to the personal support services offered to military families at Military OneSource 24/7 at 1-800-342-9647 and [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com).

### 'Help Our Troops Call Home' contributions approach \$2 million on first anniversary

DALLAS — On April 15, 2004, the Department of Defense made an unprecedented move; it authorized the Exchange Services to sell prepaid calling cards to any individual or organization that wished to purchase cards for deployed troops. Never in the Army & Air Force Exchange Service's 109-year history had the organization sold anything to anyone other than authorized customers, primarily active-duty, guard and reserve members, retirees and their family members. As the first anniversary of this decision approaches, the since-named "Help Our Troops Call Home" program is within striking distance of the \$2 million mark.

As of April 12, AAFES' calling card initiative had generated \$1,980,030 to help Airmen, Soldiers, Marines and Sailors stay in touch with loved ones back home. Those funds were used to purchase and distribute 78,431 Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone cards.

Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone cards purchased through the "Help Our Troops Call Home" program can be sent to individual service members or "any service member" through the American Red Cross, USO, Air Force Aid Society or the Fisher House Foundation. These charitable partners have distributed 26,767 phone cards since the "Help Our Troops Call Home" program began last year.

"The outpouring of support over the course of the past 12 months has been inspiring," said AAFES' Chief of Corporate Communication Lt. Col. Debra Pressley. "The decision to allow the Exchange Services to work directly with the American Public has provided a textbook study in how to safely and effectively support our troops."

Sixty-four AAFES phone centers throughout Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom have helped keep deployed troops and their families in touch. Troops using Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone cards at these calling centers generated nearly 20 million total minutes of calls in February alone.

The Military Exchange 550- and 200-Unit Prepaid Phone cards offer the best value for troops who enjoy calls home from any of AAFES' call centers in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan. In addition to offering the lowest rates, Military

*Continued on next page*



Photo by Staff Sgt. Ken Walker

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld answers questions from Task Force Baghdad Soldiers with the 3rd Infantry Division's mascot, "Rocky the Bulldog," looming in the background at the Rock of the Marne Sports Oasis dining facility April 12 at Camp Liberty. During his breakfast visit, Rumsfeld administered the oath of reenlistment to 100 Task Force Baghdad Soldiers, presented awards and mingled with troops.

NEWS BRIEFS

Exchange Global Prepaid Phone cards do not expire and are not subject to any additional charges or connection fees. The "Help Our Troops Call Home" initiative allows any American to make a direct contribution to the morale of troops who find themselves far from home. Individuals, organizations and businesses can log on to [www.aafes.com](http://www.aafes.com) and click the "Help Our Troops Call Home" link or call 800-527-2345 for more information.

**Ten escaped detainees recaptured**

**BAGHDAD** — Eleven detainees escaped from the Camp Bucca theater internment facility during the early morning hours of April 16. At approximately 1:30 a.m., U.S. Forces found indications of an escape. The quick reaction force and all available guards responded and conducted a comprehensive search of the interior and exterior perimeter of Camp Bucca and alerted Iraqi Security Forces and other Coalition service members.

During the search, a head count was conducted in the compound and 11 detainees were unaccounted for. The Iraqi secu-

rity personnel were able to quickly recapture 10 of the escapees April 17.

All 11 have been recaptured and transferred back to Camp Bucca. Officials said an investigation showed the detainees used a makeshift tool to break the fence wire and dig a hole that enabled them to slip below the perimeter fence and exit the compound. All other detainees at Camp Bucca have been accounted for.

**TF Baghdad Soldiers nab former Iraqi general**

**BAGHDAD** — Task Force Baghdad Soldiers detained a former regime intelligence service brigadier general during a targeted raid April 15 in the Ghazaliya district of Baghdad.

Information on the former general's alleged involvement with terrorist activities was obtained from tips from local residents and informants.

During the raid, TF Baghdad Soldiers also seized several AK-47 rifles with ammunition and several computers and data storage devices. The former general and one other individual

are being held for questioning.

"This was an important success for the forces of good here in Iraq as the Iraqi Army and coalition units continue to chip away at the crumbling terrorist network," said Lt. Col. Clifford Kent, Task Force Baghdad spokesperson. "But what's even more significant, I think, is the fact that we received a tip which enabled us to find and detain the former general."

**Kirkuk lands \$2.5 million worth of machinery for dump site**

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK** — Officials of the Kirkuk Governorate, United States Agency for International Development and the U.S. Army signed a memorandum of understanding April 7 that will bring \$2.5 million worth of machinery to Kirkuk, for use at its dump site, once chosen.

Governor H. E. Abdulrahman Mustafa, Governor of Kirkuk Province, Robert E. Davidson, USAID coordinator for northern Iraq, and Lt. Col. Steven Knutzen of the 116 Brigade Combat Team signed the agreement that brings two bulldozers, a landfill compactor, two front end loaders, a dump truck and a grader, plus spare parts, for use at the landfill site. The governorate must find a suitable location for the landfill, but that is expected to happen by this summer following public hearings.

**Task Force Liberty Soldiers detain suspected terrorist cell leader**

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — Task Force Liberty Soldiers detained a suspected terrorist cell leader near Hawija during a raid at about 3 a.m. Monday. The detainee was an intelligence officer in the former regime, and is suspected of leading a terrorist cell responsible for attacks on oil pipelines in Kirkuk Province and improvised explosive device attacks against Coalition Soldiers and Iraqi Security Forces.

There were no injuries to Coalition Soldiers during the raid.

**Camp Taji airfield expands for larger aviation brigade**

Story and photos by  
**Spc. Derek Del Rosario**  
3rd Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq** — The airfield at this military encampment is lined with Chinook, Black Hawk and Apache helicopters, and soon there will be more area for these aircraft thanks to an ongoing project to expand the airfield.

The project, which began Feb. 9 and is expected to finish this month, will expand the airfield by about 600,000 square feet. Nine Air Force engineering units were brought in to help work on the project.



**Air Force Staff Sgt. A I Q o y a w a m a Baddmoccasin-Barnes, 50th Civil Engineering Squadron, is part of the form repair team, which helps form the rebar that will be placed under the cement for the expansion project.**

"The airfield needs to be extended because our brigade is so much larger in terms of number of aircraft than the previous unit here," said Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Stidley, Aviation Brigade command sergeant major. "Successive aviation brigades that come in to occupy Taji Airfield will be the same size as ours."

The project creates more space for aircraft to park, and the added space will allow for more hangars to be emplaced, said Air Force Master Sgt. Patrick M.



From left, Air Force Staff Sgt. Andy J. Hikes, 201st Expeditionary Red Horse Squadron; Senior Airman Thomas N. Davidson and Staff Sgt. Robert A. Skomrock, both of 200th ERHS, lay concrete as part of the expansion of Camp Taji Airfield.

Wahlers of the 200th Expeditionary Red Horse Squadron and noncommissioned officer in charge of the expansion project.

Once complete, the airfield will be capable of handling about 120 aircraft, but a project of this caliber doesn't come without a lot of work and planning.

"We are cutting 40,000 linear feet of rebar (metal rods) a day," said Wahlers. "We have to be precise down to one-tenth of an inch in making the ground or else helicopters will be landing in valleys of water."

The airmen are working diligently to finish the project, logging up to 13 hours a day with about 95 Airmen working on any given day, Wahlers said.

"It can be extremely exhausting," he said. "An Airman's effort reflects on his job, and they are putting out a great effort to complete the project."

**Frequencies**



Al Asad	93.3 FM
Ar Ramadi	107.3 FM
Baghdad	92.3 FM
	and 107.7 FM
Balad	107.3 FM
Camp Taji	102.5 FM
Fallujah	105.1 FM
Kirkuk	107.3 FM
Mosul	105.1 FM
Q-West	93.3 FM
Ridgeway	107.1 FM
Sinjar	107.9 FM
Talil AB	107.3 FM
Tikrit	93.3 FM
Taji	107.7 FM

**Worship and Prayer Schedule for the International Zone**

**Sunday**

- 9:30 a.m. — Choir Rehearsal
- 10 a.m. — Catholic Mass (3rd BTC)
- 10:30 a.m. — General Christian
- Noon — Episcopal/Lutheran/Anglican
- 2 p.m. — Latter Day Saints
- 4 p.m. — Catholic Confession
- 4:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass
- 6 p.m. — Contemporary Protestant

**Monday-Friday**

- Noon — Catholic Mass (Mon.-Thurs.)
- Noon — Catholic Communion Service (Tues.)
- 5:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass (Fri. at Camp Steel Dragon)
- 6 p.m. — Jewish Shabbat Services (Fri.)
- 7:30 p.m. — Prayer Service (Tue.)
- 8 p.m. — Bible Study (Thurs. at Senior Advisors Conf. Rm.)
- 8:30 p.m. — Bible Study (Wed. at Ambassadors Conf. Rm.)

**Saturday**

- 11:30 a.m. — Catholic Mass (Camp Headhunter)
- 12:30 p.m. — Buddhist Worship
- 4 p.m. — Catholic Confession
- 4:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass

**Daily Islamic Prayer**

For more information, call DSN 318-239-8659.

# Combined Forces Tackle Terrorists



Some of the captured terrorists' weapons lie stacked after the battle.



A Soldier scans the horizon at night looking for terrorists.



The 278th rides into battle as the glowing sun sets on the horizon.

Story and photos by  
Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn  
Scimitar Staff

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE CALDWELL, DIYALA, Iraq** — The battle under way south of Turki village between terrorists and the U.S. and Iraqi Army Soldiers, had been raging for over three hours when the armored Humvee column pulled into the hasty defensive perimeter.

Two companies of Iraqi Army, U.S. Special Forces teams, and Soldiers from the 278th Tennessee Army National Guard were following a lead to a possible terrorists arms cache recently, but instead found themselves battling for their lives when they were ambushed by terrorists.

Describing the sequence of events, Lt. Col. William Hart, commander of 1st Squadron, 1/278th Regimental Combat Team, said this was the first mission for the U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers in that sector where the bulk of the battle force was trained Iraqi troops. Special Forces and Soldiers of the 278th were there mainly to supervise and assist their Iraqi counterparts with operational issues.

"We were military advisors to the two Iraqi Army companies," Hart remarked. The American forces consisted of several teams broken down into three to five men, each with an up-armored Humvee. The joint American and Iraqi force had nine gun trucks in the lead element. "That set the stage."

After hitting one suspected cache location with no success their informant led them to another. The time was 3:32 p.m. and "that's when the lead element came under fire..." Hart said his soldiers reported, "a big barrage of rocket propelled grenades lit the sky."

The intensity and ferocity of the ambush was clear, the lead Iraqi gun truck had a burning RPG round lodged in its grill. At the same time the Special Forces and 278th Soldiers came under intensive and accurate mortar and machine gun fire. The coalition Soldiers broke the initial contact and requested close air support and fast movers. Continuing to fight and maneuver, the Soldiers proceeded to clear a nearby trench line of a well-armed terrorist.

The bulk of Iraqi troops were still in the vicinity of the initial objective and had to remount vehicles and negotiate difficult terrain crisscrossed by a maze of irrigation canals. This made it difficult to provide immediate assistance to the teams in contact.

Meanwhile Hart was at Camp Caldwell listening to the battle unfold. He summoned his personal security team and his Combat Observation Lasing Teams. This brought his troop strength up by another six gun trucks. By 4:30 p.m., Hart had ordered his M1A1 tanks and Bradleys to maneuver to the battle area. At 5:58 p.m., Hart arrived at the scene.

The terrorists had constructed an L-shaped ambush using the irrigation ditches for both cover and concealment and channelizing the coalition force. While well-designed, the insurgents were eventually flanked by Iraqi forces and Hart's arriving element on two sides. Finally, the enemy had been fixed in place. The battle was so close at times that hand grenades were being lobbed to fend off counterattacks by each side. As the American Soldiers expended most of their initial load of ammunition, they picked up and employed captured insurgent machine guns.

While Hart was accessing the situation and managing medevac requests, Special Operation forces were con-



Humvees from the 278th Tenn. Army National Guard stand ready the morning after Operation Fort Sanders.

ducting additional attacks by air. A pair of F-18 fighter jets and Kiowa Warrior attack helicopters arrived and pounded the insurgent positions.

1st Lt. Dave Tiedeman from Watkins, Colo., was the leader for 4th Company of the Iraqi Army. When the assistance teams were being assembled, he recruited some of his old platoon's best and brightest. Teidman's team lost a Soldier that day, and he described the entrance of the ambush area as a fatal funnel.

"Driving down the road, everything opened up," Tiedeman said. To survive, they had to pull back a little as the fire was too much. He described how his troops chased down a terrorist loaded with rounds. The insurgent managed to fire off three RPG rounds before he was brought down.

Tiedeman remarked that every time the airpower left to reload or refuel, the insurgents came alive. After about 10 minutes, they picked up and used some insurgent weapons.

Tiedeman and some of his men went to clear a trench line. One of his men, Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Kennedy, and another member of the assistance teams, Staff Sgt. Christopher Dill, were mortally struck down after they took out an insurgent. As Tiedeman went to his Soldier's aid, another one of his men, Sgt. Bob Betterton, single-handedly jumped into the trench and attempted to clear it. Betterton went down, severely wounded, after being shot several times.

UH-60 Black Hawk medevac helicopters arrived at the scene by 6:15 p.m. to pick up wounded. Brewmaster 07 and 08, from the 54th Medevac Company out of Fort Lewis, Wash.

discovered they were in for a long night.

"It was the longest five minutes of my life," said Chief Warrant Officer Eric Bray, pilot of Brewmaster 07. Describing the battlefield situation as tenuous, he was relieved when it came time to leave.

### Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Kennedy.



*Hey Steve, we'll all see you later in Hallelujah Square. And what a wonderful time we'll have up there. We'll sing and praise Jesus, his glory to share. And they'll be no more wars in Hallelujah Square.*

*Only good game. Peace out.*

*-Angelo Buckner*

*Poem found on memorial post in FOB Caldwell dedicated to Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Kennedy.*

This page is dedicated to all of the U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers who passed away or were wounded in Operation Fort Sanders April 3rd, 2005.

impression was that they were up against a small group of terrorists. Within a moment they had lost an officer and had 13 wounded stalling their counterattack.

The terrorists occupied a series of canals and trench lines that offered them concealment and cover from undergrowth and mounds of dirt. The American and Iraqi forces found themselves in a killing field.

The F-18 fighter jets and Kiowa attack helicopters made several low level passes over the area, incinerating several insurgent vehicles, some of which were loaded with weapons. An AC-130 Spooky Gunship arrived at 8:18 p.m. and flew several deadly passes over the area. The air power coupled with several counterattacks caused the terrorists to ceasefire.

At 8:45 p.m. the desert was cloaked in darkness, the dead and wounded were evacuated and the smell of gunpowder hung in the air. Soldiers of the 278th RCT, Special Forces and Iraqi Army took advantage of the lull to get more ammo and to regroup their forces. They had no intentions of leaving the field of battle without clearing it of their foes.

They didn't have long to wait. At 3:52 a.m., backed by AC-130 gunships, Hart and the 278th RCT Soldiers along with the Special Forces teams engaged the surviving terrorists. The battle ended within the hour.

At 7 a.m. the sun had broken the desert horizon and the first searches of the battlefield began. Over a dozen well-armed dead enemy lined the trenches and canals and numerous abandoned weapons and ammo caches were found.

For Soldiers of the 278th and the Iraqi Army their victory was bittersweet. Initial battlefield estimates put insurgent strength at 30 to 40, but only 12 to 17 bodies were recovered. Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Kennedy from Oak Ridge, Tenn., was killed in action.

Kennedy was married and the father of four. An ordained Minister for the Universal Life Church, he was beloved by his fellow Soldiers and the command. Sgt. Bob Betterton was severely wounded in action while attempting to defend Kennedy as they tried to rescue him. 1st Lt. Christopher Ruel was also wounded. The two companies of Iraqi Army troops lost an officer and had 14 Soldiers wounded.

The battle was code named Operation Fort Sanders after a Tennessee Civil War battle. The 278th made it a tradition to name all battles and operations after Tennessee Civil War battles for historical record keeping. To the men of the 278th and the Iraqi Army, the battle was nicknamed "the Bloody Corner." To Hart, the men were "heroic and courageous people who did fantastic things ... valour," he said.

Col. Dennis J. Adams (Grizzly Adams), commander of the 278th, spoke of his men and the unit. "I'm very proud of what they did" he said. "They showed true Calvary spirit — young leaders put in harsh conditions stepping up to the plate and performing in combat as if it was second nature." In the end, the men stood and fought the enemy, alongside of the Iraqi Army, their battle buddies and bringing them back home.



Iraqi Soldiers relax the following morning before patrolling the battlefield and searching for enemy soldiers and weapons.



A U.S. Soldier zeroes in with his weapon on a potential terrorist fleeing the battlefield.



The 54th Medevac Company, Air Ambulance, Fort Lewis, Wash. medevac flight crews of Brewmaster 07 and 08 pose for a group photo several days after the battle.



# Preventive medicine teams squash mosquito threat

Story and photos by  
Spc. Brian Schroeder  
10th Mountain Division Public Affairs

**CAMP LIBERTY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — “There are thousands of them!” exclaimed 2nd Lt. Dawn Hill as she fished out thousands of squirming mosquito larvae from a pool of water. “This is really disgusting.”

At Camp Gator, home of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, Hill, a 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division environmental officer, conducted a follow-up base camp assessment of the compound. While she was inspecting the outer area of the Gator’s operations center she noticed the mosquito larvae in a pool of water.

Hill, a native of Bath, N.Y., is part of the 2nd BCT “Commandos” preventive medicine team, who work closely with the brigade pre-



**2nd Lt. Dawn Hill fishes out mosquito larvae from a pool of standing water.**

ventive medicine officer. They help combat diseases and non-battle injuries for the brigade. They observe and document the possible occupational and health threats the brigade encounters through health surveillance, medical threat analysis, assessing the air and water quality, field hygiene and sanitation where every Soldier in the brigade operates.

“Most people don’t even know we exist until there is a problem,” said Pfc. Suri



**2nd Lt. Dawn Hill, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division environmental officer and a native of Bath, N.Y., displays mosquito larvae she fished out of a pool of water at a forward operating base in western Baghdad.**

Morales-Jones, 210th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd BCT preventive medicine specialist and a Laurel, Md., native. “When people don’t hear about us, it means we are doing our job.”

Once Capt. James Birk, Battery A, 2-15 FAR executive officer and officer in-charge of FOB Gator, received word of the mosquito infestation he gathered a group of Soldiers and began fixing the problem. He noticed a leaky pipe, which was feeding water to the existing pool. He and his Soldiers jumped on the opportunity to mend the pipe and fill in the puddle with dirt.

Hill and Morales-Jones then sprayed insecticide around the outside of the operations center to limit the Soldiers’ exposure to the bugs and to prevent the spread of Leishmaniasis, a parasitic disease transmitted through the bite of sand flies.



**Pfc. Suri Morales-Jones, 210th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd BCT preventive medicine specialist and a native of Laurel, Md., sprays insecticide along the walls of the operations center near the Saddam Tower in Western Baghdad.**

Hill said the majority of the Soldiers are receptive to the suggestions or countermeasures she recommends. “Most of our work is done to prevent Soldiers from missing days of work because of something they were exposed to that could have been prevented,” she said. “The Soldiers understand we are here to help them live safely and healthy.”

Another of the team’s stops was at a base camp near Saddam Tower, a 674-foot space needle that served as a restaurant during the Saddam Hussein regime. Hill examined several aspects of the camp, such as the workout area, kitchen area and living quarters that Soldiers from Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment call home.

Though a few minor problems were noticed on her first visit, Hill said the Soldiers have made improvements on all of the problems she pointed out on her first visit.

“When Soldiers are in the field they do not have time to think about things like having adequate living space or using hand sanitizer before they eat,” Hill said. “[Our job] is about educating Soldiers so they understand why we recommend certain countermeasures.”

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Carlin, B Battery, 2-15 FAR platoon sergeant, said he appreciates the work the preventive medicine team does for the welfare of his Soldiers. He said being in a different environment had made him realize how careful the Soldiers must be to maintain a healthy living environment.

“This is a dangerous place and they are helping us out a lot,” Carlin said. “There is so much going on out here we are not used to back in the States. The changes they are making are always good because they are here to improve our quality of life.”

## Vehicle maintainers keep Balad base moving

Story and photo by  
Master Sgt. Jim Randall  
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing  
Public Affairs

**BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq** — People here rely on hundreds of vehicles every day to accomplish the mission, and the Airmen of the 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron’s vehicle maintenance section are responsible for keeping those vehicles on the road.

“We have more than 800 vehicles in our fleet,” said Chief Master Sgt. Steven Chandler, vehicle management flight chief. “About 550 of those are military vehicles; the rest are leased.”

Since the majority of the fleet comprises military vehicles, it is especially important for vehicle operators to take good care of them.

“These are the only military vehicles we have, so we can’t afford to neglect them,” said Tech. Sgt. John Calsada, noncommissioned officer in charge of vehicle maintenance.



**Senior Airman William Meredith tops off a flight line truck with transmission fluid. He is a mechanic with the 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron.**

“Simple things like checking tires, lights and fluids, can help them last longer and keep them safe to drive.”

With the harsh environment and the

demand for vehicles here, 332nd ELRS maintainers and fleet managers stay very busy.

“The biggest challenge of working here is making sure that units get the support they need with the limited resources that we have available,” said Tech. Sgt. Miriam Alexander, a vehicle dispatcher.

Vehicle operations have three main sections: fleet management, vehicle maintenance

and heavy equipment maintenance.

Dispatchers in the fleet management section make sure units get the vehicles they need, facilitate cargo movement and make

sure water gets delivered to the housing area. They also support transient aircrews, move medical patients from the Army’s passenger terminal to the Air Force Theater Hospital and provide vehicles for distinguished visitors.

In the vehicle maintenance section, mechanics repair and maintain vehicles like Humvees and the bobtails used to tow aircraft support equipment on the flight line.

Mechanics in the heavy equipment section repair and maintain refueling, firefighting and material-handling vehicles like K-loaders, fire trucks, tankers and forklifts.

“All the other missions here really depend on us, but the cargo mission is one of our most important,” Chandler said. “Keeping fuel trucks and K-loaders moving is important, because [airlift] keeps a lot of convoys off the road. That makes for a safer operation.”

“It’s rewarding to work here because we help people and we enable everyone to accomplish the mission,” Alexander said. “The bottom line is without us, nothing moves.”

# On counter-mortar patrol with TF 1-163 Inf.

Story and photos by  
**Capt. Monte Hibbert**  
 116th Brigade Combat Team  
 Public Affairs

## FORWARD OPERATING BASE

**McHENRY, Iraq** — Suddenly, the all-too-familiar sound of an enemy rocket whizzes overhead. The tower quickly identifies the location from which it was fired and fires two high explosive artillery rounds in response.

Even though the location was known and the artillery fired, Soldiers arrived in the area to find that the mysterious “rocket man” had escaped them.

Soldiers from the 116th Brigade Combat Team’s Task Force 1-163 Infantry are working hard each day to deter, find and capture terrorists who fire rockets or mortars at their base. They regularly patrol areas identified as potential firing positions. Such was the case April 7, when the Montana Army National Guard’s 2nd Platoon, Company C, TF 1-163 conducted a counter-mortar patrol in the countryside near Hawijah.

“This is a pretty simple, easy patrol,” said Sgt. 1st Class John Wood, the patrol’s non-commissioned officer in charge. “We normally patrol the streets of Hawijah.”

At the northern tip of the Sunni triangle, Hawijah is known to be a hotbed of terrorist activity. Last April insurgents here went head-to-head with coalition forces in clash now known as the “Battle of Hawijah.” That battle is one reason regular patrols scour the area.

“The Hawijah area has a history of instability,” said Staff Sgt. Larry Dunlap, 2nd platoon sergeant, who was also on the counter-mortar patrol. “We want to be sure we don’t have a repeat of last year’s hostilities.”

The region around Hawijah is also believed to have housed up to two full divisions of Saddam’s military during the height of his dictatorship, and some of those former regime elements are believed to be fostering current terrorist activity in the area, including the rocket and mortar attacks on coalition force bases.

Once the patrol exited the FOB and crossed



From right, Sgt. Adam McElderry searches a vehicle at a hasty traffic control point set up during a counter-mortar patrol April 7 near Hawijah, Iraq. Left, Spc. Jake Ruel and “Doc,” an interpreter, explains the vehicle search to the driver. Sgt. 1st Class John Wood and Staff Sgt. Allen Hunt watch for vehicles further up the road.

a bridge the patrol continued along a tree line and out into the countryside of grain fields and irrigation ditches.

“Out here is where we think they launch from — out in these fields,” said Dunlap, motioning toward some grain fields to the left of the patrol.

While no terrorists could be seen emplacing or firing rounds that morning, evidence of recent related activity abounded. At one point the patrol halted at a suspiciously fresh burn spot in the middle of the road and carefully recorded its location for reporting to higher headquarters.

As the patrol was driving through an area used as a garbage dump, one of the vehicles identified a casing for a .50 mm mortar round lying in the debris.

“The people here told us that people come and shoot things here and then leave,” Dunlap said. “We’ve got some pre-plotted locations in areas that aren’t populated in case we identify that they are firing from this area.”

As the patrol wove its way through the maze of dirt roads and fields, there were some surprises to be had. Several times the patrol had close encounters with animals, including



Sgt. 1st Class John Wood discusses the patrol’s next move with Staff Sgt. Allen Hunt, while Staff Sgt. James Zimmerman and Staff Sgt. Larry Dunlap stand by during a counter-mortar patrol April 7 near Hawijah, Iraq.

sheep, water buffalo and dogs. The patrol also passed through some small villages and was greeted alternately by waving children running toward them or the typical motionless stares of their parents and grandparents.

“The only ones I recognize over and over are the Iraqi Army guys,” said Dunlap when asked whether he recognized any of the people seen in passing. “I think you just don’t let your guard down enough to get to know them.”

## Military confronts combat stress at front lines

By Donna Miles  
 American Forces Press Service

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — As troops here deal with stressors ranging from roadside bombs to checkpoints where it’s hard to tell friend from foe, the military is ensuring they get the mental health support they need to remain with their units and avoid long-term problems.

Everyone in a combat zone experiences some degree of stress, Army Maj. Dara Josiah-Howze, a psychiatrist with the 55th Medical Company (Combat Stress Control) in Baghdad, told the American Forces Press Service. “You have a normal person in an abnormal environment, and you’re exposing them to abnormal situations.”

When the Iraq operation began two years ago, the biggest source of stress was the combat operations, she said. Now it’s the more elusive threats — improvised explosive devices, vehicle-borne IEDs and suicide bombers — that stress troops.

Symptoms run the gamut, Josiah-Howze said, from eating and sleeping disorders to irritability or anxiousness. Some people startle easily; others demonstrate low energy levels or

wake up with nightmares. Others have trouble maintaining focus or following through on a project or just feel generally down, she said.

Army Col. Thomas Burke, DoD director of mental health policy in Washington, said troops have experienced these symptoms throughout American military history. During the Civil War, they were called “nostalgia” or “soldier’s heart,” he said. During World War I, the affliction was “shell shock” and during World War II, “combat fatigue” or “battle fatigue.”

Today, these symptoms are called “combat and operational stress reactions,” the result of the extreme stress troops are exposed to in combat as well as the unpredictable counterinsurgency operations currently taking place in Iraq.

Sleep deprivation during extended operations, exposure to noise, heat or smoke and the danger of being hurt or killed or seeing others get hurt or killed, “all take a toll on a person’s mental state,” Burke said.

But this doesn’t mean affected troops are mentally ill, Burke stressed. “What they are experiencing is a normal human reaction to an abnormal situation,” he said.

And experience and research proves that the best way to treat these troops is to offer care as close to their units as

possible, rather than “labeling them as broken” and evacuating them from the region. The latter approach actually puts them at higher risk of developing longer-term problems, Burke said.

“The whole approach to mental health is different than it once was,” he said. “We’re not pulling people out of line and sending them back to the states. Now the philosophy is to treat these symptoms early, treat them far forward, treat them aggressively, and get these soldiers back to their jobs.”

This proactive, preventive approach to treatment keeps troops as close to their unit as possible so their friends and chain of command can maintain contact with them until they return to duty. And the treatment offered is relatively simple: sleep, rest and workshops rather than elaborate psychoanalyst techniques and procedures, Burke said.

“We refer to it as PIES,” he explained. “Proximity, as close to the unit as possible. Immediacy, providing treatment now, not evacuating them to the rear and treating them in a week. Expectation, maintaining the assumption that they will return to duty. And simplicity, keeping the treatment simple.”

# Marine MPs patrol, provide security, press on

Story and photo by Cpl. C.J. Yard  
2nd Force Service Support Group

**CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq** — Imagine patrolling the treacherous roads of Iraq for improvised explosive devices on a daily basis — stopping at commonly used IED sites and putting your life at risk to check a block of concrete along the road that was not there the day before.

Now, imagine yourself in the lead vehicle of a 20 to 30 vehicle convoy, driving down the same roads, past the same commonly used IED sites, but this time it is at night. All you can wonder is: Do my headlights reach far enough ahead to see anything in the road that should not be there? Did the other military policemen patrol this far out on their security patrol to deter insurgents from placing IEDs? Could the approaching car be a suicide bomber with a vehicle-borne IED?

This is what the MPs of Company B, 2nd Military Police Battalion, encounter every day doing their part in the Global War on Terrorism. For two weeks, the team named “Evil Eye” patrol convoy routes to detect IEDs and deter insurgents from placing IEDs along the road. After their two weeks of daytime security patrols, the teams are then employed as convoy security during nighttime convoy operations.

“I like working on the daytime patrols more because you interact with the nationals more often,” said Sgt. Keith Littreal, A team leader, 3rd platoon and Greensboro, N.C., native. “I feel like we do more on the security patrols. There are a lot of Marines depending on us to make sure the roads are safe.”

“I love what we are doing,” said Cpl. Zack Doty, vehicle commander and native of Graham, N.C. “We are making sure convoys can travel these routes safely. We don’t only do security patrols, though. We also do [personal security detachment] route reconnaissance missions and nighttime convoy security as well.”

Security patrols are generally defensive in nature, but the MPs are prepared to counter-attack at a moment’s notice. MPs patrol

Main Supply Routes in their up-armored Humvees with heavy machine guns such as the M2 .50-caliber machine gun and the M240-G machine gun.

The heavy machine guns are a last resort for the gunners when applying escalation of force. The gunners first fire a green star cluster illumination round at them. If that does not stop oncoming motorists, the gunners use their M-16A2 service rifle to shoot the engine block.

This standard operating procedure is drilled into the MPs to ensure the safety of the Iraqi citizens.

“Show, shout, shove, shoot!” echoed the MPs as Gunnery Sgt. Sean Spatar, 3rd platoon’s platoon sergeant, gave them their convoy brief. “We use 5.56 rounds to shoot the engine block, why?”

“Because every gunner has an M-16 in the turret,” responded the Marines.

Spatar, a native of Logan, Ohio, reminded the Marines to remain vigilant on their security patrol.

“Every day we go out there, you have to be observant; keep your eyes open,” he said. “The day that we get complacent is the day something is going to happen.”

Over the course of 10 days conducting security patrols the MPs found three IEDs — five pieces of unexploded ordnance and wires with an actuator on the top of them. Along with the wires they also found a pouch filled with receipts and documents, some of which were photos of the person who put them there, according to Spatar.

“Every Marine is a rifleman, but out there what else are they?” asked Spatar.

“Information collector,” resounded the Marines.

When the Marines of the team are not patrolling MSRs, they are providing convoy security at night.

For Doty, providing convoy security is what he likes most and has come to terms with the fact that his life is in danger. “I would rather do convoy security. You’re more apt to see action at night. So far



**Lt. Cmdr. Timothy Hogan, chaplain and Southgate, Mich., native, prays with Marines before they conduct a re-supply convoy. The Marines run nighttime re-supply convoys to move under the cover of darkness.**

though, we haven’t seen much of anything, which is a good thing. But, going to war; that’s why people come into the Marine Corps.”

“I don’t really have any apprehension at all about nighttime convoys,” said Littreal. “I know that we’ve got a strict purpose; provide the convoy with the best security we can give them.”

The Humvees the MPs call home for hours at a time are dispersed within the line of trucks to provide quick response to any hostile intent or attempt to hinder the progress of the convoy.

“I try to keep it light and joke around,” said Doty, known as “Legs” by the rest of his team. “It’s good for morale if we joke around, but when it comes to business, I can be a jerk. My guys know when we have to work.”

“We’ve got a really good truck,” said Lance Cpl. Jonathon Burks, a military policeman. “I think we’ve got the best truck out here; we’re the most disciplined truck. We’re more like a family.”

“We have our ups and downs,” continued Burks, a Cullman, Ala., native. “Corporal Doty is more like a big brother to us. He makes sure that we’re doing what we’re sup-

posed to do and pushes us to do our best. We give each other a hard time because it keeps us awake and alert in the truck. I couldn’t just sit there and not have anybody talk.”

Burks’ current deployment puts him in Iraq for the second time, and he is patrolling the same routes he did during his previous deployment.

“I love it out here,” said the 20-year-old, nicknamed “Boomhower” after a TV show cartoon character because of his tendency to become incomprehensible when he gets excited. “This is like my second home now, and I would rather be out here, feeling like I’m serving a purpose, than pulling gate duty back in the states. That’s still doing something, but here I feel like I’m making a difference.”

The teams have been together for four months. They went through various training exercises such as a combined arms exercise, stability and security operations training at March Air Reserve Base and Military Operations in Urban Terrain.

“I’ve got a good group of guys here. They are doing really well and I am very proud of them,” Littreal said. “They are doing great things and never cease to amaze me.”

## Stress

from Page 11

to duty. And simplicity, keeping the treatment simple.”

Combat stress control teams are fanned out throughout Iraq to provide mental healthcare to service members experiencing combat and operational stress reactions, and to help prevent others from developing them. In addition, behavioral health teams are embedded in units in Iraq as well as Afghanistan.

Much of the mobile teams’ focus is on prevention. They educate service members and their chains of command about symptoms of combat and operational stress reactions, self-help techniques and exercises they can use to counter these reactions, and professional services available to help them.

Troops who request it or appear to need extra help are typically referred for “restorative care,” Josiah-Howze explained. This care, offered at fixed locations, is generally limited to 72 hours and includes more intensive stress and anger management, relaxation training and counseling through individual and group sessions.

During their unit visits, combat stress teams emphasize that

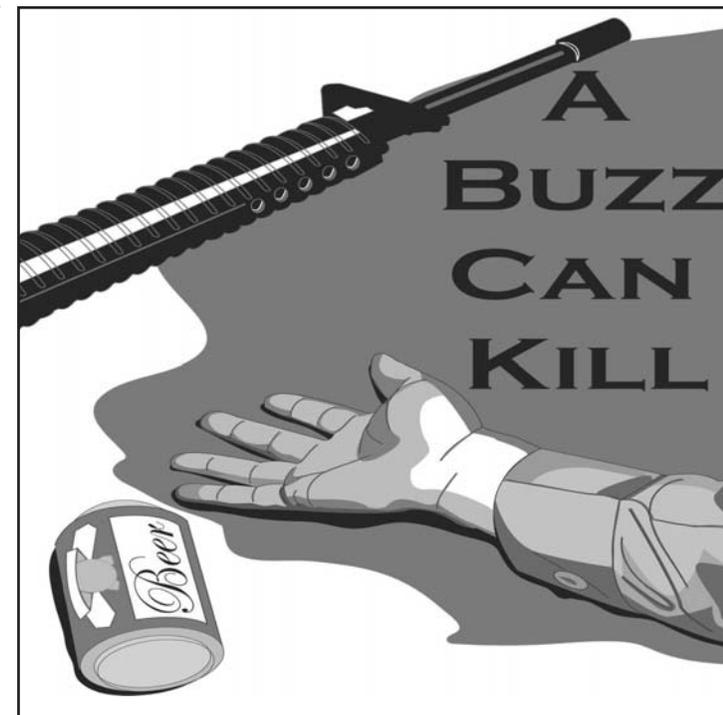
nobody is immune to combat stress, regardless of their rank or position in the unit. “It affects everyone,” said Josiah-Howze. “We’ve treated everyone from the single teenager to senior officers.”

Josiah-Howze said she’s convinced that treating combat stress quickly and in the environment can help prevent the condition from evolving into more serious acute stress or post-traumatic stress disorders.

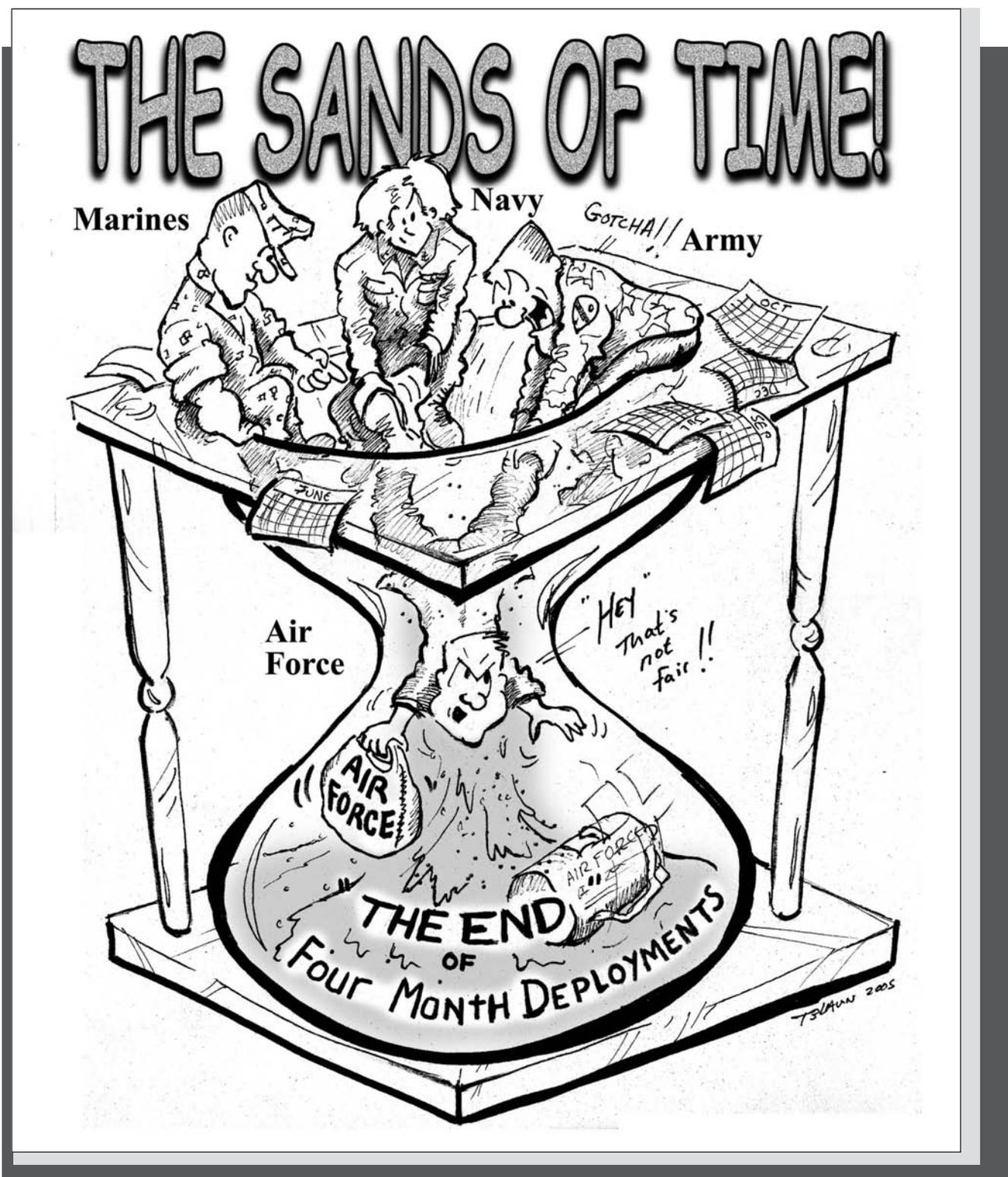
“Through the years, the military has realized that if you wait too long [to provide care], it can have negative effects,” she said. “The best way to deal with the issue is to keep [the affected troops] in the environment and to address the problem then and there.”

This approach will likely reduce the number of service members who will need Veterans Affairs Department mental health services later on, she said, and has the immediate advantage of keeping military units intact during their operations.

“Our motto is to ‘Conserve the Fighting Spirit,’” Josiah-Howze said. “We’re not here to remove Soldiers. We’re here to help them with the problems they’re having so they can return to their units and keep fighting.”

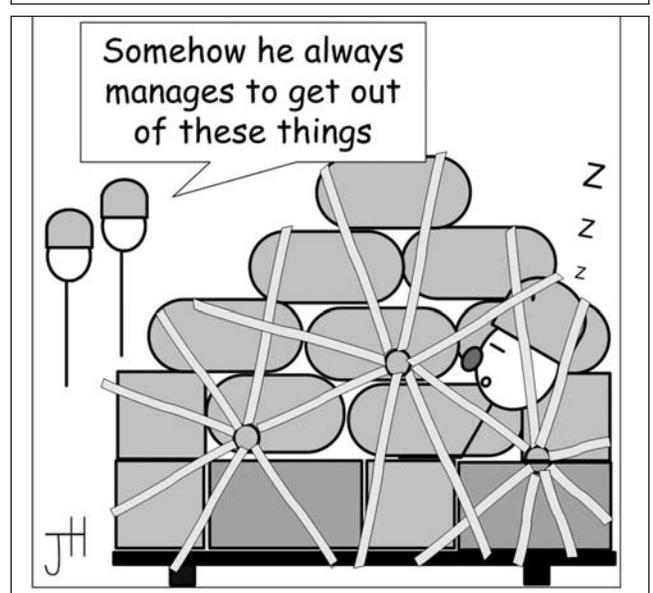
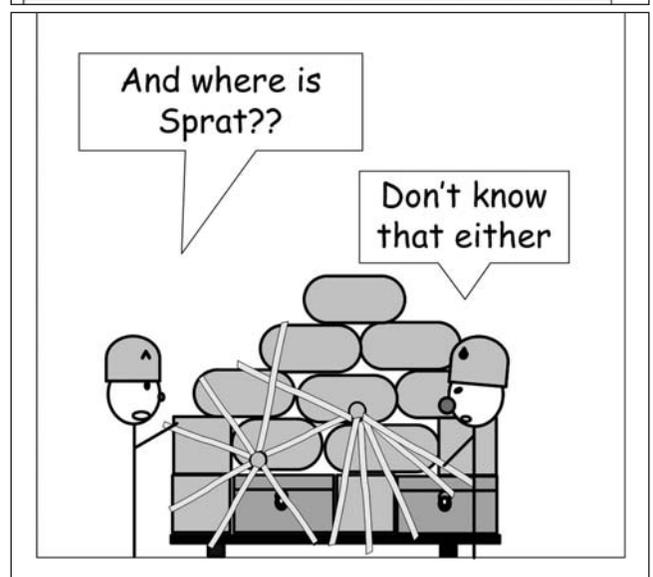
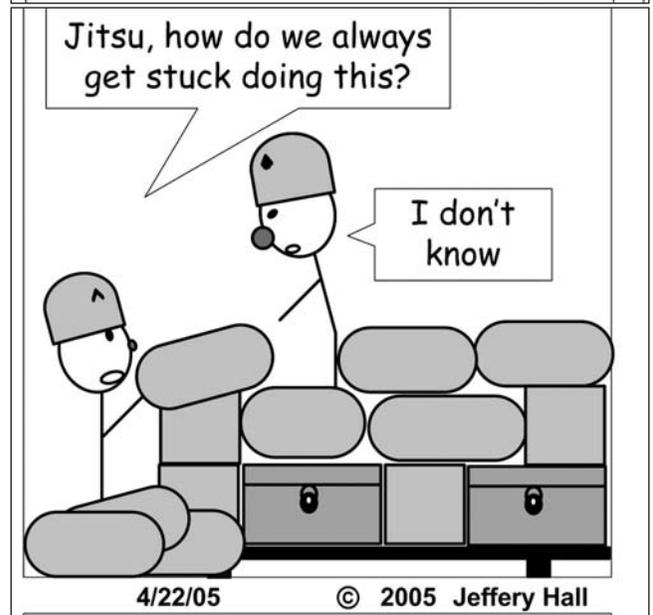


# Scimitar Slapstick

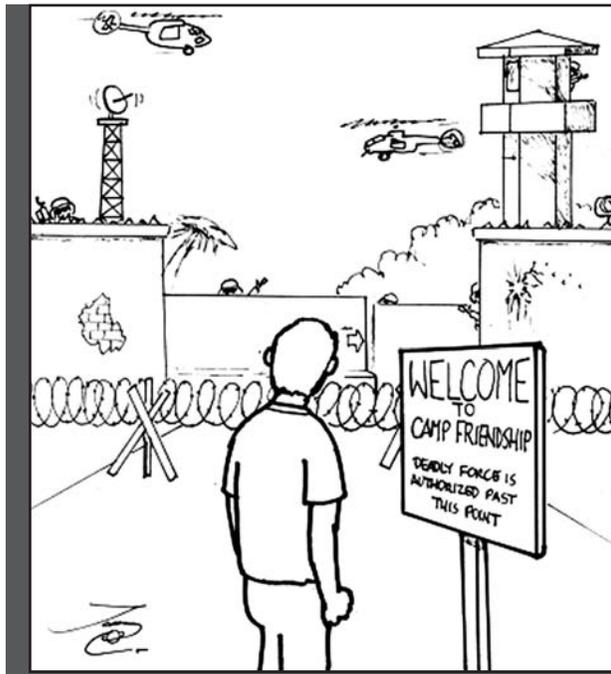


Art by Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn

## Downrange



Art by Jeffery Hall



Art by Maj. James D. Crabtree

# Soldier loses foot in Iraq, returns for 2nd tour

Story and photo by  
Pfc. Matthew Clifton  
Multi-National Corps - Iraq  
Public Affairs Office

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — An Army captain who lost his lower right ankle and foot while deployed during the initial stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom has returned to Iraq for a second tour.

Capt. David M. Rozelle, commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Carson, Colo., is the first amputee to return to Iraq.

"When I deployed for the first time, I was the K Troop commander for 3rd ACR, and my area of operation was around Hit, Iraq," Rozelle said. "While conducting an operation, I ran over an anti-tank mine with my Humvee. The mine destroyed both my Humvee and my right lower leg, causing the amputation of my foot and ankle.

"I was immediately evacuated to a combat support hospital outside of Baghdad," Rozelle said. "From there I was flown to Qatar, then to Germany where I received a couple of operations before being taken to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., where I stayed for about three weeks."

"The first reaction from my family and friends upon hearing about my injury was shock and horror," Rozelle said. "They said to me, 'This is something Dave can handle. Let's give him some time and see what he does.'"

There was, however, a silver lining, Rozelle said. After three weeks at Walter Reed, he was rushed home to be present for the birth of his son, Forrest.

"If this accident wouldn't have happened, I would not have seen my son until he was nine months old, so I guess it was really a blessing in disguise," Rozelle said.

"My family and friends knew I would not give up, and that's when I charged head-on into my recovery," Rozelle said.

"Like anyone who is injured in a war, an amputee has to come back and prove to the Army medical system they are fit to fight," Rozelle said. "You have to be able to pass an Army Physical Fitness Test, and basically you are re-entering the service."

Officer evaluation reports, letters of recommendation from a Soldier's chain of command and job performance are accounted for, Rozelle said. Potential to continue, lead and serve in a Military Occupational Specialty are evaluated, along with the obvious medical considerations when being qualified as "fit for duty."

Rozelle received word through his chain of command that if he could recover from his injury, another position waited for him with the 3rd ACR, he said. His first goal was to be declared fit for duty when the regiment returned to take command again.

Great leadership was displayed on behalf of the command to give him that incentive, Rozelle said. Nine months after the injury he was found fit for duty.

"I had many different job opportunities within the Army that would have taken me away and given me a lighter duty for a period of time, but I turned them all down," Rozelle said. "I wanted to come back to Iraq and serve with my regiment."

Just like his Soldiers, his friends and family thought he was crazy since he had the opportunity to leave, Rozelle said. "I could have



Capt. David M. Rozelle

retired as a captain and had a pretty good retirement.

"I never really thought about retirement," Rozelle said. "When I took the Oath of Office, I knew I was going to spend my life in the military.

"The troops I commanded in the beginning of the war are very proud of me," Rozelle said. "They come to check on me all of the time to make sure I am doing

OK. It is a good feeling to hear your troops say how much they miss you after two years."

"I have an enormous amount of respect for the captain's decision to come back to Iraq," said Pfc. Joshua Cartee, driver, 3rd ACR. "He is a good commander and leads by example."

Rozelle said: "I used to be in charge of 22 tanks, but I have been promoted in job title and took command of the regimental commander's headquarters on June 17, 2004."

Obviously it is a different kind of job, Rozelle said. He said he won't be clearing too many houses, but he still has the responsibility to train his Soldiers on how to fight and do all of the things required of them in the Army.

"I will keep this command until June, at which time I will return to Walter Reed to become a program manager for the new amputee center there," Rozelle said. "I will take the knowledge of what is required to return to theater back with me to Walter Reed. The Armed Services are going to get used to seeing guys with mechanical parts, because there are many others who want to continue to serve after suffering a serious injury.

"It will be a different kind of command, but

it will still be a command," Rozelle said. "I am showing the Army an amputee can return and be useful in a combat environment. I am showing other amputees who want to come back it can be done."

His main focus at the amputee center will be to help the Army in making decisions on programs that will allow Soldiers to continue service after injury, Rozelle said.

"We will also help Soldiers make the transition into civilian life if their injury is too serious to return to service. There are a lot of Soldiers counting on me to give them the right advice," Rozelle said. "This new program will be opening with the amputee center at the end of October.

"I want Soldiers in a similar situation as mine to know the only way to recover from a major injury or surgery is to take the physical therapy very seriously and never give up," Rozelle said. "Meet your goals. The therapy is continuous and will be something you do every day to stay fit for your prosthetic device."

He doesn't see these injuries any differently than someone who might have a bad knee or back and has to go through rehabilitation, Rozelle said. It is necessary to be conscious about the injury; to be prepared.

"I can run, jump or walk on my leg, but obviously just not as fast as I use to," Rozelle said. "I pass the normal APFT, so I think that speaks for itself."

Rozelle asks people not to feel sorry for him or others in his situation. They are not quitters and give just as much if not more than anyone else in the Army, and that is commitment, he added.

Since his injury, Rozelle has written the book, "Back In Action: An American Soldier's Story of Courage, Faith and Fortitude." He also completed the New York Marathon.

## Stepping into a different type of war

Story and photo by Sgt. Kristin S. Jochums  
2nd Force Service Support Group

**CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq** — Coming from a time when warfighting was a different beast, five gray-haired men, who were awarded the highest medal given for valor in action against an enemy force that can be bestowed upon an individual serving in the Armed Forces of the United States, stepped off a KC-130 onto Iraqi soil.

Marines, Sailors, Airmen and Soldiers from Camp Taqaddum had the privilege of meeting five of the 124, still living, Medal of Honor recipients April 7.

During their visit, retired Army Sgt. Maj. Gary Littrell talked about his experiences during a war that was fought much differently than today's. He fought in the Vietnam War, America's longest war.

Sgt. James R. Vandever, the disbursing noncommissioned officer, Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Support Battalion, 2d Force Service Support Group (Forward), was just one of the hundreds of service members who spent a few hours listening to a lifetime's worth of stories.

"We are fighting a different war only because of technology," said Vandever. "There are a lot of similarities between Vietnam and Iraq. We are training Iraqi Soldiers to defend themselves and the Iraqi Soldiers are fighting alongside Marines just like the South Vietnamese did back then. Just think of the North Vietnamese as the insurgents."

The Medal of Honor citation was nothing like the real story,

said Vandever, the 25 year-old Spiro, Okla., native, when speaking of Littrell's story.

"He told the story in detail. He talked about after fighting for four days and four nights, his platoon ran out of ammo and the only thing left was a snub nose .38 [caliber pistol] with five rounds," Vandever said. "He decided to take a smoke break in the middle of combat, which was unheard of, but he had no air support and knew this was the end so 'why the hell not.' Just then a North Vietnamese soldier ran up over the hill and stopped to ask him for a cigarette, he gave him one and then he went on his way. The soldier, who was carrying a fully automatic rifle, could have killed him because all he had was that .38, which was holstered at the time, but neither one of them fired a shot.

"I guess I learned that even when two countries are involved in battle there are still individual personalities and everyone gets tired of fighting at some point," he continued.

Some of the gentlemen spoke to groups, while others spread out aboard the base to talk to individuals and groups.

While speaking with the service members from Combat Logistics Regiment 25, retired Air Force Col. Leo K. Thorsness tapped on his microphone to demonstrate the communication process he and the other prisoners came up with during his six years of confinement in a prisoner of war camp.

Then, retired Army Col. Jack H. Jacobs stepped up to the lectern and jokingly commented on how his short stature saved his life when bullets were flying over his head during the war.

"If I would have been 2 inches taller, I would have been dead," Jacobs said as he stepped to the side of the lectern mak-



Col. Jim E. McCown III greets retired Army Sgt. Maj. Gary Littrell and four other Medal of Honor recipients who visited the Marines, Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen Camp Taqaddum April 7.

ing sure everyone could see him.

After the men were done speaking, the service members had a few moments to express their gratitude and talk to the recipients.

"It was motivational, inspirational and unforgettable," Vandever said. "It was an honor just to hear them speak."

Despite everything these men endured, their commitment never faltered and they were relentless until their time to defend a nation was complete.

# Charlie Daniels Band visits Camp Victory during Iraq tour

Story and photo by  
Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp  
Multi-National Corps - Iraq  
Public Affairs Office

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — To the cheers and delight of thousands of fans, the Charlie Daniels band, on a tour through Iraq and Afghanistan, put on a two-hour performance for Coalition troops near the Camp Victory Sports Oasis Dining Facility, April 10.

Daniels, a North Carolinian, said he enjoys putting on shows for troops, and all his band members jump at the chance to go on a tour like this.

"I told the guys, 'Anyone that doesn't want to go doesn't have to, but would you like to go to Iraq and entertain the troops?' Everybody wanted to go," Daniels said. "There were people that wanted to go, but we just didn't have the room. Everybody was excited about this opportunity and everybody is having a good time."

Daniels and his band put on a show that included timeless favorites like "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," "Legend of Woolly Swamp," and "Drinking My Baby Goodbye," along with other songs using a Daniels-esque mix of country, bluegrass, jazz and blues.

When asked why he does these types of shows and tours, Daniels said "You guys don't get a show every day. You can't walk down the street and go into a club and hear a band play," he said. "That's what makes this so very special for us. We came over here to try and make some people happy, that's all we want to do."

In full desert camouflage and a black Cavalry Stetson hat, Daniels put on a meet and greet with fans after the show. He signed autographs, shook hands and had pictures taken with troops before he and his band members closed out the evening.



Charlie Daniels and fellow band members pick away during their show at Camp Victory, Iraq, April 10.

Spc. Laura A. Drake, a human resource specialist with Detachment B., 18th Personnel Service Battalion, Fort Bragg, N.C., said a show like this boosts morale and allows Soldiers to get away and relax.

"I definitely had a great time," Drake said. "It's a chance to get away and do something fun. Being able to come to something like this lifts all of our spirits. It feels like I'm back home."

Daniels said he and the band let the fans back home know they were coming to do this tour, and asked for their support for all the service members fighting for the United States.

"When we would go to our concert dates back home, I would tell the crowd that we were going to embark on a tour through Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait," Daniels said. "I would tell the crowd, 'We would like to know if you would like to send a message to the troops?' And the crowd would stand up and give a thunderous yell, and I said, 'We'll tell them you care.' That's what we're doing."

"I'm telling you now," said Daniels. "The people of America care for the troops and they have great respect for their mission; nobody more so than I."

# From basketball to Baghdad

## A search for true love

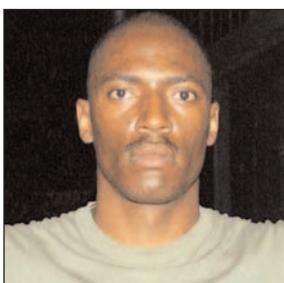
Story and photos by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas  
Scimitar Staff

**INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Imagine a 6-foot-7-inch, skinny, young man as a drummer boy in formation at the homecoming football game. That was Navy Seaman Marcus Porter 15 years ago. Now 31, the Chicago native gave up his percussion instruments for a basketball and the opportunities they have presented him.

As an adolescent, basketball was never in Porter's big picture of life. His first love has always been music, he said. "I was in the band when I was younger. I didn't start playing basketball until the 11th grade."

From 1991 until 2003, playing basketball was Porter's job. Dunking on people and blocking shots has been his specialty in professional leagues all over the world including the National Basketball Association. Five years ago, Porter gave up his hoop dreams to serve his country.

Now a corpsman with the Anti-terrorism Battalion, 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade here, Porter said he does



Seaman Marcus Porter

not miss playing competitive basketball. He wants to do his best on this deployment and return home to live comfortably with his wife, two daughters, and 11-month-old son.

"I am glad I am done with basketball," he added. "I don't even watch the game on TV any more."

That was not the case years earlier. Porter constantly studied basketball and lived to perfect his skills. After the 2000 NBA summer league ended, his life changed drastically for a year. Low-crawling, ruck-marching, and scrubbing floors with his toothbrush were new things for him, he said.

Once he finished basic training and his job training for the Navy, Porter joined the all-Navy basketball team. It seemed like he was playing professional basketball again, he said. The Navy team played college teams, semi-professional teams, professional teams and all of the Armed

# Coalition Corner

... highlighting countries  
serving with MNF-Iraq



## Poland

local name: *Polska*

The Republic of Poland is located in central Europe and east of Germany. Size-wise, it is slightly smaller than New Mexico. Polish is the official language for the 39 million Poles who live in this country. Poland is one of the newest members of the European Union, joining in 2004. However, the Polish currency system is still the Zloty.

Poland is full of historic and modern sites to satisfy almost anyone's interests. This land is graced with intriguing medieval castles and Baroque palaces. Some of the castles in the north were built in the 13th and 14th centuries by the Teutonic Knights, and southern Poland is home to the Eagles' Nest Trail, which boasts dozens of 14-15th century castle ruins. The city of Czestochowa is home to the holiest relic in Poland, the Black Madonna, also known as "Our Lady of Czestochowa." The Old Market Square, the largest medieval square in all of Europe, which is lined with historic buildings and modern restaurants and shops, is in Krakow. For sea-lovers, Leba has a resort with tall, Sahara-like sand dunes and long, beautiful beaches along the Baltic Sea.

Poland is well-known for its foods, sausages in particular. Bigos, Poland's national food, is one of many dishes with sausage as a main ingredient. Bigos, which is a traditional centuries-old Polish hunter's stew, is made with sausage and cabbage as the main ingredients, while different spices and additional meats and vegetables give this dish endless variety. Poles also consume large quantities of potatoes in their diets. Many of their main courses and side dishes include potatoes prepared in one countless ways.

Besides historic landmarks and mouthwatering foods, Poland is also home to several world-famous people.

Perhaps the most prominent Pole is the late Pope John Paul II, who was born Karol Jozef Wojtyla. Fryderyk Chopin, the famous 19th century composer and pianist, is also a renowned Pole. Famous temperature-gauging pioneer Gabriel Fahrenheit was born in the old port city of Gdansk.

When asked what he misses most about his country, Polish Army Maj. Krzysztof Hojna said, "Springtime — all the blooming trees. I also miss my city Krakow and the market square restaurant where I used to take my wife when we were dating."

Poland — yet another piece of the Multi-National Force - Iraq puzzle, dedicated to rebuilding Iraq.

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# Anaheim Angel turned Marine follows two dreams

Story and photo by

Lance Cpl. Athanasios L. Genos  
2nd Marine Division Public Affairs

**CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq** — Jeff Stockton, a former Anaheim Angel, recently traded in his mitt and baseball cap for an M-16A4 service rifle and Marine Corps digital utilities.

After returning from an injury two years into his Major League career, Cpl. Stockton didn't see things going as well as when he began, so he decided to follow another childhood dream; he joined the Marines.

The St. Petersburg, Fla., native grew up on the baseball diamond and playing war with his friends.

"If I wasn't out playing baseball with my friends we were out playing war," explained the 1996 Northeast High School graduate.

As he entered high school, Stockton's love for the game drove him to excel, playing for the school varsity baseball team and earning himself a scholarship to the University of North Florida.

During his final year, the Anaheim Angels drafted Stockton.

"I was only a few classes away from finishing school when I was drafted," he explained.

"I left school and played for a while until I was injured about two years into my career."

Stockton looked at his situation as a perfect opportunity to pursue his other childhood dream.

He put studies in criminal law aside for a while and signed his release from Major League Baseball. He then proceeded to the Marine Corps recruiting office.

"Things weren't going the way I wanted them to, and I decided it was time to go into the military," he said.

His immediate family was concerned at first by his decision since he is the first to join the service.

"We have always supported Jeff," said his mother, Donna Stull. "He has always made good decisions. It was just at the time we knew he would be sent to Iraq."



**Jeff Stockton, a former Anaheim Angel, recently traded in his mitt and baseball cap for an M-16A4 service rifle and Marine Corps digital utilities.**

3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment from Feb. 28 to June 30, 2004.

"We were policing the area while we were there and keeping order," explained Stockton. "It was great preparation for the

But soon they were in complete support of his current career as he continued to be a role model for his younger brother, who has followed in his footsteps in sports and school.

"We are completely confident in Jeff and the Marines. And his brother Matt really looks up to him," Stull said. "Matt is a junior in high school and plays baseball and is a great student just like his older brother."

"They have always been close even though they are 10 years apart."

Soon after completing recruiting training and the school of infantry, Stockton found himself deployed to Haiti as a machine gunner with

bigger picture in Iraq."

Approximately six months after returning from Haiti, the new machine gun squad leader found himself in the sandy deserts of Iraq fighting in the Global War on Terrorism.

"I think it is a good thing we turned around and deployed shortly after returning to the United States," Stockton said. "I wouldn't mind being deployed for most of my enlistment; it's our job to be out here fighting wars, not sitting at home."

When he arrived in Iraq he found himself, a lance corporal, serving as a machine gun squad leader, a sergeant's billet. Then in his first few weeks here, he took over a rifle fire team in addition to his machine gun squad.

Stockton received a meritorious promotion to corporal for his initiative, dedication and service.

"With the way sports are going in the world today, it is an admirable and honorable thing he did becoming a Marine," said Staff Sgt.

Thomas Hill, the platoon sergeant for 2nd Platoon and a Chincoteague Island, Va., native. "He went from being a professional baseball player to being a professional Marine who does his job humbly and with competence far beyond most Marines of his rank."

## Basketball

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Forces' teams. That lasted for two years, and then reality hit Porter like a ton of bricks.

In 2003, the Navy informed Porter that it was time for him to do the job he signed up for. "When tensions lit up in Iraq, things changed a lot for me," he said. "Once wartime kicked in, there was only one option for me — Marines."

Porter joined AT Battalion, 4th MEB, as their corpsmen and started training immediately. He knew then that was the end of his basketball career. "When I got to the Marines, the first thing they said was, 'If you play basketball, it is going to be with your platoon. I appreciate you being in shape once you get here because you are going to need it,'" he said.

Ever since Porter joined his unit he has not missed playing competitive basketball because of the camaraderie he sees every day from his buddies in his unit. That kind of camaraderie is only dreamt of, he said. "In my life I have never met a group of guys who treat you so good. They protect their corpsman. To them, their corpsman is the only one who can keep them alive. They know their job — war — and there is only one person in their mind who can guarantee their survival — 'Doc.'"

"The Doc is on the ground with them. Doc has just as many rounds as them. Doc has one little bag on his back for three things: burns, bullets and breaks," Porter said. "They know that if they make it out, it is because Doc made it to them."

The Marines of AT do value and protect their corpsmen and think highly of them, said Marine 1st Sgt. George S. Sanchez, Company A, AT Battalion. "Doc Porter has a lot of heart. He is ok and good to go."

Seaman Patrick James, a fellow corpsman in the same unit, feels Porter is good at his job and he does not question his integrity, he said. "Porter knows his stuff really well. I definitely trust him with my life."

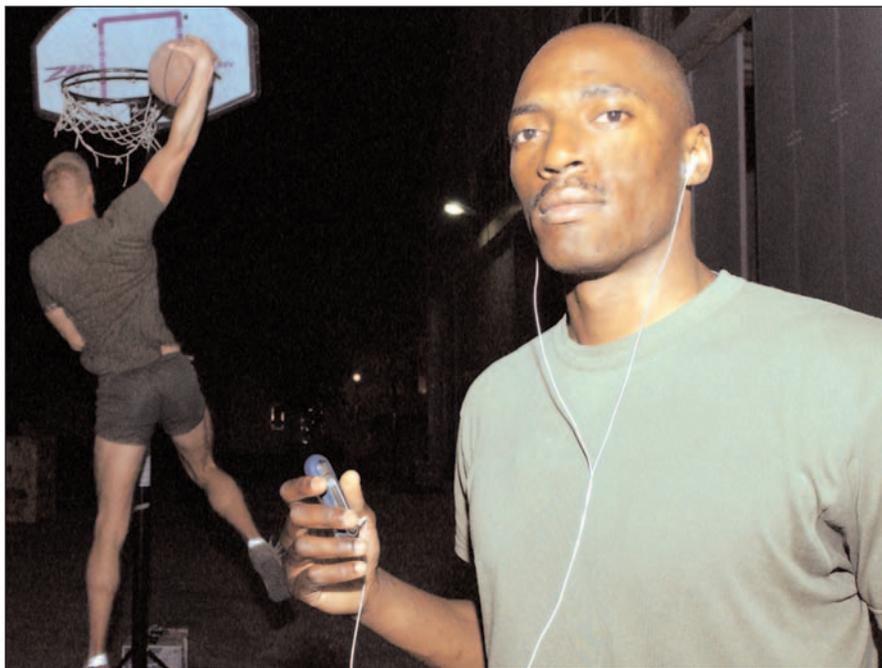
The feelings which have been displayed on both sides are one of the reasons Porter does not regret the decision he made to serve his country. He describes basketball as just a phase and not a way of life.

While his basketball journey started late in high school, his

desire to play the game didn't show until he discovered how much his father and his coaches believed in him. Once it was revealed to Porter how to use his body, he slowly became unstoppable, he added. "I went from not knowing how to do anything to dunking. I also specialized in blocking shots."

He took those skills out to local playgrounds and matured slowly. As time passed, Porter played in more and more tournaments, which opened doors for him to play ball at several colleges.

Before Porter entered the 12th grade, the Sailor said there is one moment he will never forget. He said he gained the self-



**Navy Seaman Marcus Porter listens to one of his favorite tunes while his buddy, Marine Cpl. Robert "Silky" Smith, practices his aerial assault.**

assurance to believe he could be successful at basketball's collegiate level, he said. "In the beginning of 12th grade I won a dunk contest wearing blue jeans, a pager, and a 'wife beater.' I jumped over two dudes on their knees and a chair with some Eastland boots on. The crowd said, 'You can't do that again!' I did it again and everybody hit the floor laughing. That is when I started to feel more confident about basketball."

Regardless of college recruiters and coaches keeping their eye on him, Porter still wasn't interested in pursuing more education after he graduated from high school, he said. "I

wasn't going to go to college. My buddy and I wanted to be like Easy E and other rap stars. All of a sudden, a buddy of mine called me and said, 'I told my coach at Illinois Valley Community College about you. He said, he needs a big man. I told him you could touch the backboard without jumping or tiptoeing. He wants to meet you.'"

It took one visit to the school and Porter was hooked. Two years of blocking shots, dunking on people, winning individual awards and championships in high school earned him a spot on IVCC's basketball team. Porter excelled in education and basketball there, which made him a shoo-in at the

University of Illinois. He played basketball there for two years and finished up his degree at Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Ark. After his collegiate basketball career and education were complete, he decided to take basketball to the next level.

The Continental Basketball Association was that next level. Porter went on to play there for a couple of years. He played for several teams, he said. "I played for Darryl Dawkins, who coached Rockford Lightning, and Keith Smart, who coached the Fort Wayne Fury."

His thirst for basketball had not yet been quenched, so he started playing in professional international basketball leagues. Porter did that for two years and gained the confidence to enter the National Basketball Association draft. Picked up by the Denver Nuggets, he played in the summer league putting up some impressive numbers. The Nuggets offered him a practice position on the team due to his age, 26. The position was not the opportunity he had in mind, so he declined. Porter felt unfulfilled.

Porter did not know what he was searching for. However, he had previously been interested in serving in the Navy. He searched the service for something to complete him. The answer was at home

where he left it. After Porter finishes this deployment, he will have a year left on his enlistment contract. His plans after the Navy will be a reunion with old friends he left behind 15 years ago.

As the saying goes, if you love something, let it go and if it is meant to be yours, it will come back to you. Not too many people can say that happened to them, Porter said. "When I was back in the states, I was building my music studio. That is my goal — to just make music. I strayed away from my first love, played ball all over the world, and now I am going back to it. I love music."