

Changing the guard, Page 8



Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Brien Aho

## Crossing paths ...

Soldiers of 2-114 Field Artillery Battalion from Starkville, Miss., pass an Iraqi family while on foot patrol near Forward Operating Base Lima near Karbala, Iraq. Units are sent out into the local neighborhoods to interact with the community to build relations and deliver candy to the children.

# 3rd ID assumes Task Force Baghdad mission

Story and photos by Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft  
3rd Infantry Division

**INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The 3rd Infantry Division officially jumped back into action here Sunday, when a transition-of-authority ceremony transferred command of Task Force Baghdad from Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, 1st Cavalry Division commander, to Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr., 3rd Infantry Division commander, at the Sahet Alihtifalat Alkubra (Ceremonial Circle) parade grounds.

“Today marks the passing of the torch for advancing the freedom of the people of Baghdad,” Chiarelli said. “The 1st Cav. drew upon the important lessons gained by those who preceded us and our sincere wish is that we have contributed wisely to the 3rd ID in their preparation for this mission.”

The 1st ID has had elements in Iraq since relieving 1st Armor Division Soldiers. Now, after more than a year serving as Task Force Baghdad headquarters, 1st Cav. Soldiers are heading back to the United States for a well-deserved break.

With the famous giant crossed-scimitar statues looming over the parade grounds, the transition was presided over by Lt. Gen. John Vines, Multi-National Corps - Iraq commander.

“Today, we welcome Maj. Gen. William Webster and Task Force Rock of the Marne back to Iraq,” Vines said. “Twenty-two months ago, your division spearheaded Coalition Forces attacks as it fought its way to Baghdad, leading to the toppling of Saddam Hussein and his imposed tyranny on the Iraqi people. Twenty-two months ago, you stood on this very ground in victory.”

Vines congratulated Chiarelli and 1st Cav. for a job well done, referencing Iraq’s Jan. 30 elections and other benchmarks of progress.

“Together, you and our Iraqi partners improved the way of

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OIF amputee returns to Iraq to continue the cause Page 15

# Myers: Troops got 'very close' to Zarqawi

By Donna Miles  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — U.S. forces got "very close" to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and are keeping the fugitive Jordanian terrorist with ties to al Qaeda on the run, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said Feb. 23 on Fox News Channel.

Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers said he believes Zarqawi, a former senior aide to Saddam Hussein who tops a new U.S. list of most-wanted supporters of the Iraqi insurgency, "is checking into lots of different motels every night" because "he's got to stay on the move."

The U.S. and Iraqi crackdown on insurgents has resulted in "lots and lots" of Zarqawi's followers, including his lieutenants and people he trusted, being rounded

up and detained in Iraq, the chairman said. "And so his effectiveness has to have been diminished somewhat," he said.

Myers said Operation River Blitz, which kicked off Feb. 20 to help increase security in and around Ramadi and throughout Iraq's Anbar province, is focusing on areas where insurgents are intimidating the local population and trying to prevent a peaceful transition of power between the interim Iraqi government and the Iraqi transitional government.

Members of the 1st Marine Division of the



Gen. Richard B. Myers

1st Marine Expeditionary Force and Iraqi security forces stepped up security operations in the region, introducing a curfew from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. and controlling access into the city.

The province "has been a problem area," Myers said, subject to two primary threats he said make up the insurgency: Zarqawi-type extremists with jihadist ties and former regime elements made up largely of Sunni extremists. Also a threat, he said, are "hired guns," who support the insurgency for purely economic reasons, and criminals.

Despite widespread media coverage of insurgent activity, Myers said the number of attacks has remained "fairly constant" since last spring, except for a few spikes. "It looks like they're capable of 50 to 60 attacks per day, over half of which have no effect, and many of which are thwarted by coalition and

Iraqi forces," he said. "So they seem to have limited capacity and capability."

Myers credited increasing capabilities among the Iraqi security forces with reducing the insurgents' effectiveness. "They're becoming much more effective in stopping vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices ... [and] at protecting their police stations and other government institutions," he said.

The U.S. government is offering rewards of \$50,000 to \$25 million for the 29 people on the list, which the U.S. Central Command published earlier this month. The Iraqi government has issued arrest warrants for all 29, a statement from the command says.

The network of Zarqawi is suspected of killing more than 500 Iraqis in the last year in attacks aimed at fomenting a civil war. The reward for information leading to his capture is \$25 million.



Command Sgt. Maj. William M. Grant, 3rd Infantry Division command sergeant major, and Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr., 3rd ID commander, uncase the Marne Division colors during a transition-of-authority ceremony Sunday.

## Transition

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life for the Iraqi people, conducting more than 800 civil engineering projects totaling more than \$104 million in Baghdad," he said.

"You've sponsored 14 Iraqi police academies, rebuilt 600 schools, conducted more than 70 electrical projects totaling \$1.8 million, and contributed \$8.3 million in grants to Iraqi businesses. Finally, under Task Force Pegasus tutelage, the 40th Iraqi National Guard Brigade took control of its own operational area in Baghdad, marking the first time an Iraqi Brigade has done so. Without question, you have positively touched every aspect of Iraqi life — truly a phenomenal feat!"

He also emphasized the need to continue the hard work that began with last month's elections.

"As great and historic a day as Jan. 30 was for the Iraqi people — and frankly the world — it was not the ultimate goal, which is a free and secure Iraq," Vines said. "We, the Iraqi government and the Coalition know there is still much work to be done, but Iraq's progress to date is both extraordinary and irreversible."

Chiarelli welcomed the Marne division and expressed his confidence in the Soldiers and commander who will be taking on the duties 1st Cav. has performed for the past year.

"The 3rd ID is well-trained, led by gifted officers and non-commissioned officers, and blessed with great Soldiers," Chiarelli said. "The division is poised to ensure Baghdad moves powerfully toward complete self-sufficiency. The people of Baghdad have a partner in the 3rd Infantry Division as committed to the mission as any they will ever see on their streets."

"Maj. Gen. Webster, you've been a great friend to the



Command Sgt. Maj. Neil L. Ciotola, 1st Cavalry Division command sergeant major, participates in the casing of his division's colors with Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, 1st CD commanding general, during a transition-of-authority ceremony at the parade grounds in Baghdad Sunday.

Cav., and I know that the people of Baghdad will embrace you and your Soldiers as warmly as they have the 1st Cav. Baghdad has a special place in the history of the world and it stands on the precipice of greatness once again."

Upon taking command of TF Baghdad, Webster acknowledged the responsibility being given to him and the Marne Soldiers, and accepted the mission at hand.

"The 3rd Infantry Division has trained hard and is ready," he said. "We will work with our Iraqi partners as they continue to increase their capability to protect the Iraqi people from any foe."

"We will help the people of Iraq maintain their right to freedom and the pursuit of a prosperous future for all Iraqi citizens. Our Soldiers know this is right and just."

MNF-I Commanding General  
Gen. George Casey

MNF-I PAO  
Col. Robert A. Potter

Command Information Chief  
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PERSPECTIVES

# Drive and ride to arrive alive

By Maj. Patricia C. Anderson  
Command Information Officer

Until I was mobilized, I worked as a paralegal for a large law firm. My co-workers and I defended auto manufacturers in products liability cases. In a nutshell, these cases were brought by people who claimed an accident was caused by the vehicle's design (i.e., faulty steering or brakes) or, more often, they claimed that while the accident was not our client's fault, their injuries were worse than they should have been because of the vehicle's design (i.e., inadequate roof strength in a rollover, collapsing seatbacks in rear-end accidents). Most of our cases involved catastrophic injuries: brain damage, paraplegia, the occasional amputation, and too often, death.

Because my firm represented the manufacturers, claims were brought by the "enemy." Sometimes I allowed myself a small tear for especially heart-wrenching cases, but usually I just got mad when accidents were caused by a drunk driver or injuries were caused because a person chose not to wear a seat belt.

Recently, I have seen many more cases on my desk involving people who have been maimed or killed in vehicle accidents, but they aren't lawsuits sent from my office back home; rather, they are press releases about troops here in Iraq. The combat deaths are always quite sobering. However, because of my background, the large number of non-combat deaths, especially those caused by vehicle accidents, seem so senseless to me. And for the families of those troops, they won't shed just one small tear. They will answer the knock of a casualty notification team, followed by the gut-wrenching wail and bone-shaking sobs caused by the knowledge that a loved one will come home in a flag-draped coffin.

The number of troops killed in vehicle accidents skyrocketed in February. Nine U.S. Soldiers and Marines died in Iraq from non-combat related vehicle accidents from February 12-17 alone. That doesn't include the injuries in vehicle accidents during that same period. These are fellow service members, not the enemy, and I can only imagine the grief their loved ones suffer. But why? Why all of these senseless deaths?

Some have suggested that the increased motor vehicle deaths were caused by the influx of service members in theater. More

service members equals more vehicles. I'm not quite buying that, but I will concede that there are drivers who are new to the roads here, which may lead to more accidents. Some accidents are caused by excessive speed or careless driving. Some may be caused when a driver makes a sleep-deprived decision or sleep-deprived reflexes don't respond quickly enough. Other accidents may be unavoidable, but the injuries would have been far less severe if the occupants had been wearing their seat belts.

Last week, an NCO in my office was driving through an intersection in the International Zone we not-so-fondly refer to as "the intersection of death," when his SUV was struck by an armored Humvee. The Humvee fared far better than the SUV, which was totaled. But our lucky NCO was wearing his seat belt and walked away from the accident. At home, everyone knows that wearing seat belts saves lives. But in Iraq, no one wants to buckle up. Why?

My unit went through convoy live fire training during annual training, at our mobilization station, and again in Kuwait. Over and over, we were told that "speed is your friend during convoys." Ironically, there was always a speed limit during training because the trainers didn't want anyone to get hurt. But we were all good students, so we do as we were told, and we don't buckle up so we can jump out of our vehicles faster, and drivers push the pedal to the metal so we can escape whatever mayhem the enemy has planned for us. Then a bump in the road, an overcorrection, a misjudgment of distance, over-steering after missing a turn becomes a tragedy when vehicles collide or vehicles flip upside down into canals.

I certainly do not recommend driving through hostile areas at a snail's pace, but there has to be a reasonable compromise where drivers drive fast enough to evade the enemy but slowly enough to be in control of their vehicle. And for gosh sake, everyone needs to buckle up. It only takes a second to undo a seat belt, but that belt could save your life. I know, it can be tough to stretch a buckle around your equipment, but it can be done. Leaders should ensure that drivers have enough sleep before they are slowed behind the wheel.

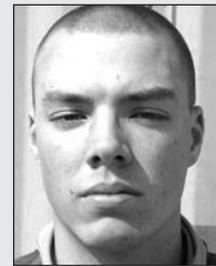
General George Patton said, "The object of war is not to die for your country, but to make the other bastard die for his." Don't be the next service member to give his or her life as a statistic in the number of non-battle deaths. Come home alive — not in a coffin.

## Scimitar Pulse

Do you wear a seat belt while driving or riding here in Iraq?

"Not really. If you got to get out, you don't want to be fooling with the seat belt."

Army Spc. Justin T. Robinson  
278th Regimental Combat Team



"No, because I ride the bus."

Danish Air Force Lt. Col.  
Max A. Nielsen  
NATO

"No. We stay in the International Zone and go on short rides."

Army Lt. Col. Pat E. Champion  
Multi-National Forces - Iraq



"Definitely, because it has been proven time and time again that seat belts save lives."

Army Capt. Robin B. Mooney  
3rd Infantry Division

"I don't wear it because you got to move fast."

Army Spc. Brian A. Foley  
National Joint Operations Center



"Yes, I think car accidents are more likely here."

Icelandic Army Maj.  
Borkur Gunnarsson  
NATO

"Yes, because it's a habit and it's a Army regulation."

Army Sgt. 1st Class  
Darrin K. Benson  
3rd Infantry Division



Photo by Staff Sgt. Brett B. McMillan

## Solemn farewell

Soldiers say good bye to their fallen comrades, saluting the helmets and rifles of 1st Lt. Jason G. Timmerman, Staff Sgt. David E. Day and Sgt. Jessee M. Lhotka at a memorial service at the U.S. Embassy, Baghdad, chapel Feb. 25. The Soliders, assigned to the Minnesota National Guard's 151st Field Artillery, 34th Inf. Div., Montevideo, Minn., were killed by an improvised explosive device that exploded while they were preparing to evacuate a casualty Feb. 21.

# Stress: The *other* battle in Iraq

By Pfc. Abel Trevino

28th Public Affairs Detachment

**LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, BALAD, Iraq** — There are many daily combats service members have to face, from the constant threat of attack to the elements, all adding up to one battle all service members must overcome: stress.

“All of us have our limits, and anyone is susceptible to battle fatigue symptoms or behavior if the circumstances are sufficiently extreme,” said Maj. Richard R. Boone, a clinical psychologist with the 55th Medical Company (Combat Stress Control).

The symptoms of battle fatigue, post-holiday blues and depression are similar and include changes in behavior, sleeping patterns, eating, method of speech and thoughts of hurting themselves, Boone said.

Soldiers who have recently arrived also carry their problems with them, resulting in a greater chance of problems adjusting to this theater.

“If people are having interpersonal problems when they arrive, this environment is more likely than not to cause an exacerbation or worsening of that stress,” Boone said.

The nature of the missions here increases stress on service members because of the increased workloads and decreased personal time coupled with the inability to

properly communicate and address home front problems, Boone said.

These problems can sometimes become magnified after the holiday season.

“I think that it’s possible that the holidays can serve as a distraction from the normal everyday problems,” Boone said.

The real problems occur in the aftermath when people have to recognize that nothing has really changed and life continues as normal, which can lead to depression.

“When it comes to depression, you’re looking for changes in a person’s mood where they are sort of persistently down in the dumps,” Boone said.

If commanders notice these changes in their troops, they should act immediately.

“The advice [to commanders] is to act in a timely fashion to have your Soldier evaluated, because regardless if it’s a primary psychiatric problem or a combat/operational stress problem, the sooner the individual has a chance to be evaluated and intervention is introduced, the more likely it is that he’ll have a full and quick recovery,” Boone said.

Boone cautioned that to allow such problems to continue could lead to larger behavioral health issues that could permanently prevent the Soldier from returning to duty.

“Our policy is to try to see people as early as possible into their problem and to treat them as effectively and

briefly as their symptoms and circumstances will allow,” Boone said.

Fellow Soldiers can also help their brethren get through the rough times.

“Most of us can tell when the people we are close to, like battle buddies, are experiencing some things that are abnormal or dysfunctional, and that’s when we can all sort of help each other just by [talking to them],” Boone said.

Boone encouraged Soldiers feeling stressed or depressed to talk to friends, chaplains and platoon leaders about their problems.

When problems arise and service members need to chat with behavioral health professionals, they will be exposed to classes that help deal with issues such as anger and stress management, relaxation techniques, communication skills and home front issues.

“We also do one-on-one counseling if we believe that an individual has an issue that can’t really be resolved in just 72 hours,” Boone said.

For Soldiers experiencing operational or combat stress, most problems are resolved after the basic needs of Soldiers — rest, hot meals and hygiene — are met.

“It’s been my personal experience that most Soldiers want to get well, want to complete their mission. They want to go back to their unit, and we’re here to support that effort on their part,” Boone said.

## Guard helps restore ‘village’ of orphans

Story and photo by  
Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp

Multi-National Corps - Iraq  
Public Affairs Office

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** —

Reconstruction is now full swing in a section of Baghdad known as “Iraqi Village.”

Numerous recreational facilities and utility projects are completed and others remain underway, thanks to work over the past year by National Guard Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 303rd Armor Regiment, 81st Brigade, from Kent, Wash.

Iraqi Village was originally built by Saddam Hussein as an orphanage for the widows and children of Iraqi Soldiers who were killed during the Iran-Iraq war, explained Maj. Patrick M. Barry, executive officer, 1st Bn., 303rd Armor.

“[Iraqi Village] was quickly evacuated due to the Baathist affiliation as Operation Iraqi Freedom began, leaving a vacuum. The people are there because they have fallen on hard times,” said Barry.

When elements of the 81st Brigade first rolled in last year, Iraqi Village was in a state of disarray.

“The contractors used to use the village as a dumping ground, and the vegetation was all grown up,” Barry said. “Also, when the war began, there was a big problem with looting.”

“Every electrical transformer was looted,” Barry said. “If there was any electrical wire, anything of value, it was taken.”

Concerned with the electrical system in the village, Barry and local contractors decided to

solve the problem by putting anything electrical above ground, rather than underneath. This helped ward off further looting.

The citizens of the village were also having trouble finding a voice to speak on their behalf.

“When we came here, no one here knew who to go to for help. None of the citizens could say who was in charge,” said Barry.

Subsequently, the task of helping the citizens of Iraqi Village help themselves fell on the shoulders of Barry and his Soldiers. One of the first items on the 303rd Armor’s agenda was setting up an interim government.

Barry said the citizens of Iraqi Village wanted and worked hard for their local government. “They didn’t know how to go about doing it though,” he said.

“They decided they wanted to form a council. They were looking for guidance on how to do that. And we worked with them on how to do that, in an advisory role only. They were calling the shots and they came up with a fairly decent plan,” Barry said. “We supported their plan in securing their election. About 500 people showed up for the election in July. They ended up electing a president who elected a city council. Eventually, just five city council members were elected.”

Once a week, Barry meets with his interpreter, Jamal “Jimmy” Samo, and the Iraqi Village city council members to listen to any issues or concerns the council and citizens of Iraqi Village may have. Barry then works through Samo to convey any guidance he may have for the council, or to let them know what he can and cannot do to help them.



**Lt. Col. Ronald M. Kapral, commander, 1st Battalion, 303rd Armor, takes time to visit with the children at the opening of the Iraqi Village playground, Feb. 17.**

In a recent council meeting with Barry and 303rd Armor medical officer 1st Lt. Glenn Allen, council members expressed their concerns about the completion of the water and electrical systems and a broken sewer pipe. Also on the agenda was the discussion of various recreational facilities that have been built and are in the process of opening.

The 303rd has overseen and helped facilitate the construction of tennis and basketball courts, a playground, and a soccer field, explained Capt. Jason A. Bleadsoe, assistant training and operations officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Bn., 303rd Armor. “All these completed projects were worked through us and the village council,” he said.

The day of the meeting, the village council wanted to know when they could open up the playground. Two days later, a line of more than 100 village children stood in front of the playground gates, smiling and waiting. With Soldiers from the 303rd overlooking, the gates

opened and the children of Iraqi Village poured in. Playground equipment was put to the test; every see-saw, swing and merry-go-round had throngs of children vying for their turn.

Although facility completions was a mainstay for coalition forces in Iraqi Village, Barry said the local village election held in July was their high point.

“The single biggest thing we’ve done here is help them govern themselves,” Barry said.

Other coalition accomplishments in Iraqi Village include a fully functional daycare center, and a nearly-operational medical clinic. A council building was built, and “for their protection, we repaired all the walls and gates,” Barry said.

As the 303rd prepares to head home to Washington state, Barry said that there is still work to be done, but “we’ve moved the ball a little closer to the goal line. It’s been a rewarding experience for us all.”

# 3rd ID Soldiers help ready Iraqi Forces

Story and photo by Spc. Ben Brody  
2nd Brigade Combat Team

**CAMP VOLUNTEER, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — As the new Iraqi government continues to develop, the fledgling Iraqi Army is beginning to hold its own and take increasing responsibility for securing the country, with the support of U.S. troops.

Soldiers from 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, are helping to train 305th Battalion, an Iraqi Army unit, on areas ranging from basic Soldier skills to effective leadership.

The Soldiers of the 305th are stationed at Camp Volunteer, in Baghdad, and are responsible for securing the peace in two mid-sized sectors of the city.

"We're focusing on basic combat and patrolling skills for junior Iraqi Soldiers, and helping develop [noncommissioned officers] and junior officers into good leaders," said Capt. James Turner, A Troop, 3/7 Cav commander. "Iraqi Soldiers are like any other Soldiers — they do very well under good leadership."

Previous coalition units have taught these IA troops how to first function as a platoon, then as a company. Now, 3/7 will oversee the 305th learning how to react as a battalion.

"I don't foresee any major obstacles, beyond the normal hiccups when you integrate two different units," said Turner, a North Branch, Mich., native. "The best thing at this stage is watching the Iraqi Soldiers really internalize the training and the mindset that they are fighting for the good of their country."

Language barriers slow the training down, but 3/7 has interpreters and some Iraqi Soldiers speak very good English. One such individual is 1st Lt. Yarub al-Taweed, 305th, security platoon leader.

"Our unit has come a long way over the past year — and our responsibilities have increased accordingly," al-Taweed said. "When we formed the unit, we didn't have vehicles or armor, and now we've got [body] armor with plates, trucks

and heavy weapons. We've had a lot of success on patrols because of our training, but mostly because we know the areas, we know the people and speak the language."

He said the success of the recent elections has raised public opinion of the IA considerably.

"Different people have different views of us, but before the elections, we were not very popular with Iraqis," al-Taweed said. "The elections gave us a chance to prove that we can protect people and want a secure Iraq. Now we are enjoying some more support. What they will think tomorrow, I don't know."

The young officer said he hopes to eventually see the cities secured by police, and the Iraqi Army defending the country's long, porous border.

"People can see we are working hard," he said. "If you are good and fair to the people, they will be good and fair to you."

As a small assembly of IA troops prepared to leave Volunteer for a security patrol, A Troop's Staff Sgt. Mark Scott helped them check their weapons and vehicles.

Scott, along with the Soldiers' platoon sergeant, inspected the pickup trucks' fluid levels and condition. The two made sure the drivers knew how to perform preventive maintenance checks and services to Army standard.

"Your mission is a patrol, but before you can accomplish that, your mission is to make sure everyone is ready," Smith told the NCO through an interpreter. "Make your Soldiers do the right thing and eventually they'll do it on their own."

Scott, a sniper section NCO from Syracuse, N.Y., has spent time teaching IA leaders to utilize army rank structure to their advantage.

"What we saw was the officers trying to micromanage everything down to the individual Soldiers," Scott said. "I told them, 'let your first sergeant manage the company's Soldiers, let a platoon sergeant handle his platoon, let the squad leaders take care of their squads.' Now the commander sets company policy, and the first sergeant enforces it, which works much better."

"There are some promising leaders in the 305th that really believe in what they're doing," he added. "I've got a first sergeant, who goes by the nickname 'Wolf,' who keeps his troops in line like no other. You can just tell by looking at him — he's the man."

Scott and others from 3/7 will continue to work with the 305th throughout the year, and further refine the battalion's capabilities.

Hopeful for the future of Iraq, al-Taweed said he thinks the terrorists he fights will gradually disappear as people find jobs and can enjoy their freedoms.



Staff Sgt. Mark Scott inspects an Iraqi Army Soldier's rifle with the Soldier's platoon sergeant. The IA soldiers lined up for pre-combat checks before heading out on a security patrol from Camp Volunteer, Iraq, Feb. 22.

## Changes sweep across local Iraqi police stations

By Denise Calabria  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Winds of change are sweeping across Iraq and affecting everything in their path. Local Iraqi police forces and police stations are no exception; they are undergoing both procedural and physical adjustments through the combined guidance of coalition members from Italy and the United States.

The Italian Army and Carabinieri (federal police) are responsible for performing patrols, providing security, training local Iraqi police officers, and equipping them with weapons and law enforcement systems in the local southern province of Dhi Qar.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has responsibility for overseeing part of the physical reconstruction of Iraq, and the Corps' Gulf Region South is responsible for part of the reconstruction efforts in the Basrah, Tallil and Hillah areas.

Part of GRS's mission is to provide quality facilities for basic security services to include local police stations. To complete required renovations in the region, USACE assesses the sites under security provided by the Carabinieri, develops courses of action, and initiates construction contracts. The contractors use local Iraqi laborers to perform the required construction work.

GRS has been tasked with approximately 275 stations for renovations — 181 of which have been assessed. The Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq identified the requirements from input from maneuver commands, e.g., Multi-National Division Southeast. In the region, 135 contracts have been awarded and over 100 sites have begun construction.

Members of a local police force are anxious to share their opinions and have an encouraging reaction to the changes taking place around them.

The situation has changed for the better, said 1st Lt. Haider, a 12-year police force veteran of the Nasiriyah Police Department Serious Crimes Unit. "Our salaries have increased. The Iraqi people are more cooperative now. Even though there is still some danger, we are more ready to work in a good way."

One of the changes Haider's unit experienced is the result of training provided by the Carabinieri.

"The Italians are very cooperative. They provided us with police training and a new way to register criminals with a new computer system and equipment," Haider said. "There is now a cooperation and respect from the two sides. People now think the police work for their sake due to a thorough change in the way the police perform. They are working closer with the people."

Haider said he hopes to see many improvements to his workplace. "We would like to see the station totally refurbished with towers, an internal garage and outside guard rooms."

Mark Bennett, a Corps construction manager, said Haider and his police unit will eventually see those improvements and more. Bennett said to ensure the protection and safety of each police force staff, police station requirements include security walls, guard towers, generator installation, exterior lighting, bullet-proof glass, bars on exterior windows, steel exterior doors, and an antenna. To make the stations habitable for employees, toilets, plumbing and electricity will also be included in all Corps total renovations of facilities.

In some cases, said Bennett, renovations instead of rebuilding will ensure that existing police stations — some 50, 60, or 70 years old and lacking healthy maintenance over the years — are brought to an acceptable standard. That standard includes the required security features.

Whether the issue is renovating existing stations, or identifying those locations that warrant newly built stations, substantial efforts are in place to help Iraq prepare more capable and formidable security forces. It is through these carefully coordinated efforts that the Iraqi people will be able to assume responsibility for their own security.



Courtesy photo

Bob Hanacek and Rick Mers take measurements and notes during an assessment visit at Nasiriyah police station.

## NEWS BRIEFS

**Task Force Baghdad safely detonates IED**

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — An explosive ordnance detachment team with Task Force Baghdad was able to safely detonate a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in western Baghdad Feb. 22.

Soldiers with 1st Brigade, 41st Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division found an abandoned vehicle around midnight that morning. The Soldiers suspected the vehicle contained an IED. After blocking traffic, Soldiers were able to control the detonation.

**Citizen tip leads Iraqi police to potential car bomb**

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Iraqi police officers discovered a car containing explosive devices parked about 90 meters behind the Bab Al Muadam Police Station Feb. 21 after a woman reported suspicious wires protruding from it.

Police officers investigating the woman's report saw unexploded munitions inside the blue car, parked near the station and the Islamic Bank. They notified the Iraqi Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit, which took apart and destroyed the bomb inside. Six artillery rounds and three propane tanks were wired to blow the car up.

**Task Force Liberty Soldiers stop VBIED**

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — Task Force Liberty Soldiers stopped terrorists from detonating a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in Samarra about 6 p.m. Feb. 27.

The vehicle charged a Coalition combat patrol, but crashed into a wall after being fired on by the patrol. The terrorists fled the scene without detonating the device, which contained more than a dozen artillery rounds. The vehicle was destroyed in a controlled blast at the scene.

There were no Coalition injuries or damage to equipment.

**ISF take fight to insurgents**

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Iraqi Security Forces and Multi-National Forces detained 18 individuals suspected of insurgent activity during operations in northern Iraq Feb. 24.

Iraqi Intervention Force troops and Multi-National Force Soldiers detained ten individuals suspected of conducting a car bomb attack during cordon and search operations in western Mosul. Suspects are in custody with no ISF or MNF injuries reported.

Iraqi Intervention Force troops and Multi-National Force Soldiers also detained five individuals suspected of insurgent activity during a cordon and search operation in western Mosul. The suspects are in custody with no ISF or MNF injuries reported.

Iraqi Intervention Force troops were hit with small arms fire while patrolling in western Mosul. IIF troops were able to detain three individuals suspected of being involved in the shooting. Suspects are in custody with no ISF injuries reported.

Insurgent detentions are on the rise due to the increase in information being provided by Iraqi citizens about insurgent activity, the increase in effectiveness of ISF, and the increase in their operations.

**ISF continue to suppress insurgency**

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Iraqi Security Forces and Multi-National Forces detained 16 individuals suspected of insurgent activity and confiscated materials during operations in northern Iraq Feb. 22.

Iraqi Intervention Forces and Multi-National Forces detained 14 individuals suspected of conducting improvised explosive device attacks against ISF and MNF during a raid in southwestern Mosul. ISF also confiscated IED making material during the operation. Suspects are in custody with no ISF or MNF injuries reported.

Multi-National Force Soldiers detained two individuals suspected of planning attacks on ISF and MNF during a cordon and search operation in southern Mosul. Suspects are in custody with no MNF injuries reported.



Photo by Pfc. Mike Prior

**Soldiers with Company A, 3/325 Airborne Infantry Regiment, participate in a humanitarian aid mission in the Tahrir Theater neighborhood. They distributed clothes, toys and other items donated by the Spring, Texas community.**

**Raid nets three suspects**

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE COBRA, SABIYAH, Iraq** — Three Iraqi men were detained Feb. 21 during a raid on homes of suspected improvised explosive device makers in Sabiyah, Iraq.

Soldiers from 2nd Platoon, 3rd Squadron, 278th Regimental Combat Team, led the way by coordinating a night mission involving Iraqi Armed Forces, U.S. ground troops, helicopters and M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles.

"We entered the homes and grabbed the subjects right off the bat," said 1st Lt. Gregory W. Smith, platoon leader and native of Nashville, Tenn. "After detaining the individuals, we began questioning them and conducted simultaneous searches of their homes."

Detainees were questioned for intelligence pertaining to the network of anti-Coalition resistance in Sabiyah. Homes were also searched for IED building material and any documentation that could lead to other members of the IED network.

"Mainly we just got a few more IED makers off the streets," Smith said. "These guys, both U.S. and IAF Soldiers, did a wonderful job."

A lot of the reason for the 278th success goes all the way back to the states, long before the mission briefing and rehearsals, said Sgt. Leo Shinkle, a unit gunner.

"After a six month train-up at Camp Shelby, Miss., I think we came to Iraq ready to go," said the native of Gallatin, Tenn.

By conducting these types of missions, offenders in Sabiyah are getting a clear message.

"Together with the IAF, we are letting offenders know they are not beyond our reach. If they come out and start setting up IEDs, we'll come after them even if it means going to their homes to get them," Shinkle said.

**ISF detain 11 during operations in northern Iraq**

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Iraqi Security Forces and Multi-National Forces detained 11 individuals suspected of insurgent activity during operations in northern Iraq Feb. 23 and Feb. 22.

Troops of the 104th Iraqi Army detained two individuals suspected of conducting attacks against ISF and MNF dur-

ing a cordon and search operation in central Mosul Feb. 23. Suspects are in custody with no ISF injuries reported.

Iraqi Intervention Force troops and Multi-National Force Soldiers detained five individuals suspected of insurgent activity during cordon and search operations in southeastern Mosul Feb. 22.

Troops from 1st Company, 23rd Iraqi Intervention Force and Multi-National Force Soldiers detained three individuals suspected of insurgency during a raid in western Mosul Feb. 22.

101st Iraqi Army troops and Multi-National Force Soldiers detained one individual suspected of insurgency during a cordon and search operation in northeastern Mosul Feb. 22.

**Military Forces seize large weapons caches**

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Multi-National Forces discovered four large weapons caches in northern Iraq Feb. 20.

Multi-National Force Soldiers discovered three large weapons caches during cordon and search operations in southern Mosul. The caches included numerous artillery rounds and mortar rounds, rifles, explosive charges, rocket propelled grenade launchers, rockets, and hundreds of rounds of ammunition. The weapons and ammunition were confiscated for future destruction.

Multi-National Force Soldiers discovered a large cache of improvised explosive devices while conducting a cordon and search operation in western Mosul. The cache included 65 artillery rounds, detonation cord, a wired car bomb, and an explosive charge. The munitions were confiscated and destroyed.

**ISF discover large weapons cache**

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Iraqi Security Forces discovered a large cache during operations in northern Iraq Feb. 23.

Initial reports had indicated Multi-National Force Soldiers were involved in discovering an extremely large cache of improvised explosive devices. Iraqi Intervention Force troops led in the discovery of the cache while conducting the cordon and search operation in western Mosul.

The cache included 65 artillery rounds, detonation cord, a wired car bomb, an explosive charge, and other IED materials. The munitions were confiscated and destroyed.

## NEWS BRIEFS

**Iraq Police graduate new police officers**

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The Iraq Police Service this week graduated 1,993 new police officers from basic police training courses in Sulaymaniyah and Baghdad. Completing the eight-week training courses were 259 police recruits from the Sulaymaniyah Regional Police Training Center and 1,734 recruits from the Baghdad Police Academy. The Baghdad class included 46 female police recruits.

**Iraqi citizens head to academy to become police officers**

**MOSUL, Iraq** — One hundred-fifty Iraqi police recruits were flown to Jordan to begin training in a police academy there Feb. 20.

The recruits received a farewell ceremony in Mosul before leaving for Jordan where they will undergo an eight-week course in order to become trained Iraqi policemen. All of the individuals were personally recruited by Mosul Police Chief Maj. Gen. Ahmad Kalif Mohammed Al Jaburi. The future policemen were very proud of their new careers and excited to help ensure security in Mosul.

These individuals' actions to join the Iraqi Police demonstrate the commitment of Iraqi citizens to ensuring a safe and peaceful Iraq. Iraqi Security Forces and Multi-National Forces encourage citizens of Iraq to continue to cooperate with security forces and continue to build a secure Iraq.

**ISF gets a boost in numbers with arrival of new troops**

**MOSUL, Iraq** — The number of troops ready to provide security in northern Iraq increased Feb. 24 with the arrival of new Iraqi Security Force troops.

Over 500 new 3rd Division Iraqi Army troops arrived in Al Kisik training base following the completion of basic training. The number of ISF troops continues to rise with the growing number of Iraqi citizens ready to help keep their country safe and secure from terrorists.

**Australia to send more troops to Iraq**

**WASHINGTON** — Noting that Iraq is at "a tilting point," Australian Prime Minister John Howard announced plans to send more troops to Iraq.

The Australian government announced Feb. 22 that it will send a 450-member task group to the southern Iraqi province of Muthanna to provide security for Japanese engineers and to train Iraqi security forces in the province.

The deployment, scheduled for April, will increase Australia's presence in Iraq, known as Operation Catalyst, from about 920 to 1,370 troops.

Howard told reporters in Canberra the added troops were being sent at the request of Japan and Great Britain.

The announcement follows Australia's Feb. 15 announcement that it was deploying a contingent of logistics specialists to Iraq to train elements of the Iraqi Army in logistics operations and resource management.

Australian Defense Minister Robert Hill said the increased troop presence will help "maintain the momentum toward freedom" in Iraq, particularly during the critical period following the Jan. 30 elections.

"The ultimate goal," he said, "is free Iraq and an Iraq that can be a constructive contributor to the Middle East region and the world."

**DoD not conducting flights over Iran, spokesman says**

**WASHINGTON** — Despite Iranian claims to the contrary, U.S. military aircraft are not flying missions in Iran's airspace, Pentagon spokesman Larry Di Rita said here Feb. 22.

"I would consider the source and leave it at that," Di Rita told reporters at a Pentagon news conference. "I'm telling you that we're not doing those kinds of activities."

Di Rita emphasized he speaks only for the Defense Department, but cautioned reporters not to interpret that to mean other agencies may be flying over Iran. "It's not for me to speak for other departments," he said. "It is our belief that it's not happening elsewhere [in the government] either."

At the same news conference, Army Brig. Gen. David Rodriguez, the Joint Staff's deputy operations director, said that as more associates of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi are killed and captured, the noose continues to tighten around the fugitive Jordanian terrorist who has masterminded much of the violence in Iraq.

"We've got more of his associates and people in the last couple of weeks than we had before," Rodriguez said. He declined to address whether the captured associates have been helpful in trying to track Zarqawi down, but did say coalition forces continue to pursue intelligence leads.

Rodriguez also noted that Operation River Blitz, which kicked off Feb. 19, is focused, like other similar recent operations on getting "rid of insurgents who are preventing security" in Anbar province. He said attacks have been down since the Jan. 30 elections, noting that casualties — deaths and injuries — during the Ashura holiday Feb. 18-19 was down two-thirds from last year's violence.

The insurgents continue to kill "a lot of innocent civilians inside of Iraq," Di Rita added. "Most Iraqis do not want what the insurgents want, which is a country that's thrown itself back into the Dark Ages," he said.

Di Rita expressed gratitude to Australia for its decision to send more troops to Iraq, and said such decisions rightly rest

with each country and its own situation. "We obviously are very grateful for Australia's continued involvement in this important mission," he said. "But each coalition country will determine its own way ahead."

Rodriguez noted that troops held over in Iraq for election security have begun to return home, and that the current U.S. force level in Iraq of 155,000 would drop to the pre-election level of about 138,000 "in the next few weeks."

**Scam targets families of service members killed in action**

**WASHINGTON** — Officials with the Department of Homeland Security are warning the public about two new Iraq-related Internet scams, including one directed at the relatives of fallen U.S. soldiers.

The first scheme involves e-mail sent to relatives of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq. Claiming to be a volunteer working with U.S. forces, the sender states that a late friend, who also was a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq, was a very good friend of the relatives' slain son or daughter. The sender then goes on to ask for assistance in obtaining funds kept for them by the deceased friend, promising more details when the relative responds to the e-mail. The sender then adds a link to the portion of Immigration and Customs Enforcement's actual Web site discussing ICE operations in Iraq.

In the second scheme, a blanket e-mail is being distributed that claims to be from an Immigration and Customs Enforcement official in Iraq who is responsible for tracking down funds looted from the Iraqi Central Bank by Saddam Hussein's son. The sender lists ICE's Web site address in the e-mail in an effort to seem credible. The sender then asks for confirmation of the e-mail address of the recipient, stating, "there is a very important and confidential matter which I want us both to discuss."

The ICE Cyber Crimes Center in northern Virginia, in conjunction with the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility here, is investigating the schemes.

**2005 Army Times Soldier of the Year nominations sought**

*Army Times* wants your help to find an everyday hero to be the 2005 Army Times Soldier of the Year. Nominate someone today.

This annual award, sponsored by TriWest Healthcare Alliance, is unique because nominations come from readers. So tell us about someone you know whose professionalism, concern for their fellow Soldiers and commitment to community service stand out — someone you're proud to serve with; someone who deserves recognition.

Just go to [www.armytimes.com/soldier](http://www.armytimes.com/soldier) and fill out the short online nomination form telling us why your nominee deserves this award. Please keep the nomination to no more than 300 words — nothing fancy.

The *Army Times* Soldier of the Year will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC in July to join the other Military Times Service Members of the Year at the formal awards ceremony, hosted by Senator Daniel Inouye at the Reserve Officers Association (ROA) building located on Capitol Hill.

**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**



# Southern gents and Yankee-spirited Taji defenders head home



## Artillerymen make history using history



The gunner goes through the steps of loading a high explosive round during a training mission.

**CAMP COOKE, TAJI, Iraq** — “One-O-Duce” 105 mm howitzers of the Arkansas Battery B, 1st of the 206th, are pulling stakes and heading home after using history to make history.

After a year in Iraq, next to “the boneyard” (piles of destroyed Iraqi war machines), the proud and anxious crew of country boys are more than ready to head out.

Battery B has set a record using combat-proven Vietnam-era 105 mm howitzers. The battery fired almost 1,000 rounds of high explosive

rounds in support of maneuver elements, the most rounds fired since the Vietnam War.

First Lt. Patrick Hawkins, executive officer for the battery, proudly talked of his unit being the first artillery battery in the Army shooting with the new computer system, Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System. “It is a new system that calculates firing data quicker and more dependably,” he said.

Sgt. Larry Dorrrough, ammo team chief, described how one round charged with seven bags of powder can travel up to 11,500 meters, or close to seven miles, making the field pieces pretty lethal.

When talking about the speed of firing Sgt. Jeremy Griffith, assistant gunner from Booneville, Ark. said the weapon will fire, “10 rounds per minute for the first three minutes without overheating the tube.”

Not only did they provide direct and indirect fire support, but they were tasked with much more.

### HOWITZER Lightweight, Towed 105mm M102

The 105-mm howitzer is lightweight and has a low silhouette in firing position.

It can be airlifted, dropped by parachute or towed into position.

Being part of the Arkansas National Guard’s 39th (Infantry) Brigade Combat Team, they had to rotate through quick reaction force missions, security, perimeter defense and gate detail.

On these details they would square off with the insurgency who used improvised explosive devices and vehicle borne IEDs, along with ambushes and decoys, mortars, and small arms to try to ruin their days.

Though proud and dedicated, most of the Soldiers are ready to head home and leave the war behind. Most every one is married, with children, and looking forward to returning to their wives and children, careers, school, fishing, farming, hunting and the auto body shop.

Battery commander, Capt. Joel Garrison, probably most eloquently relayed his troop’s feelings when he talked about his marriage to his wife, Leighann, and his young soon-to-be 3-year-old son. Garrison quietly whispered, “I will have missed all three of my son’s birthdays,” for this war.

As the night illumination team fired the last couple of rounds, the chilly crisp Iraq night air provided an awesome backdrop for the slow-floating flares. It offered a spectacular finale to a long, sometimes unforgiving, year of hardship, stress, happiness, suffering, pain and pride.

### The battery fired almost 1,000 rounds in support of 1st Cav. maneuver elements

The boys of B battery are heading home in a couple weeks with a guarded sense of optimism and anxious joy.

Spc. James Canada from Paris, Ark., said he can’t wait to see his wife, Jessica, and two boys, Luke and Levi. When asked what he’d like to do, Canada thoughtfully said, “maybe do a little coon hunting.”

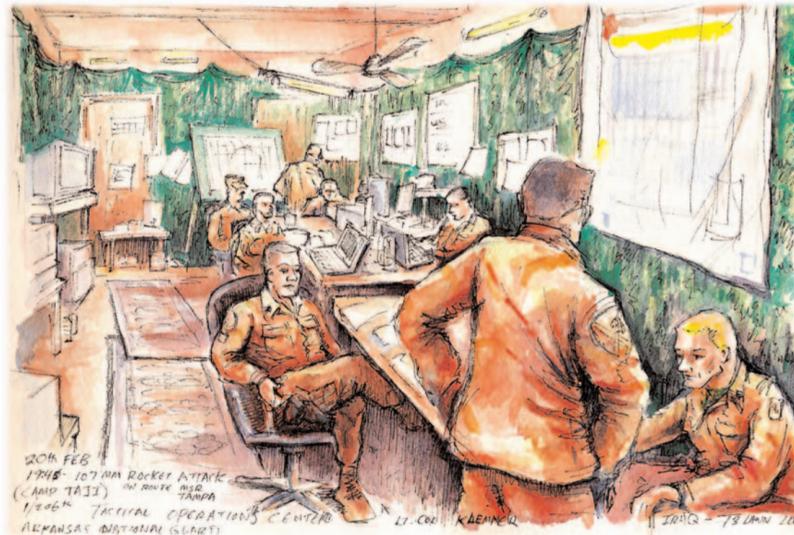


Firing a 33-pound projectile at charge 7 will fire 11,500 meters. It also has a roller tire attached to the trail assembly of the M102 which permits the weapon to be rotated 6,400 mills around a firing platform.

The howitzer can be depressed to a minimum of 5 degrees to a maximum of 75 degrees.



Left, Lt. Col. Keith Klemmer looks on as his staff listen to radio chatter about a rocket attack underway on the highway into Camp Cooke.



## “The Arkansas Brigade” wraps up year of hard duty in Iraq

Stories, photos and artwork by Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn  
214th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

After a year of bravely defending Camp Cooke and keeping the area around Taji safe from the hostile and bloody intents of an armed insurgency, a proud brigade of stout artillerymen from New England and West South Central are busting at the seams to head home.

Southern good old boys from the 1st Battalion, 206th Field Artillery Regiment, 39th (Infantry) Brigade Combat Team of the Arkansas National Guard were brought up to strength with a battery of Yankee-spirited members of the Rhode Island National Guard 1st Battalion, 103rd Field Artillery.

The historical 39th Brigade Combat Team hails from Russell, Ark. and is commanded by the fatherly Brig. Gen. Ronald S. Chastain. The brigade, with the attached Rhode Island battery, is staffed with over 4,200 Soldiers and operates as an independent infantry brigade subordinate to the 1st Cavalry Division.

The unit is uniquely identified by the bowie knife embedded in its patch and carried by field grade officers and honorees who were presented with it.

Lt. Col. Keith Klemmer, the 1st battalion commander of the 1-206, is a quiet but commanding gentleman. He leads the scrappy and tough unit which fought and bled together to keep Camp Cooke, Taji and the surrounding countryside secure.

On the enlisted side, the non-commissioned officers were equally professional, armed with a warrior’s mindset and the personality of a parent; they were fair but tough.

“I feel good about what we’ve done, and saddened by the insurgents and the death coming to them,” said Command Sgt. Major Jimmy Dickerson, a Vietnam veteran. “It was an honor to serve with the 1-206.”

“I feel optimistic about the future of Iraq,” Dickerson said. “The Iraqi army has come a long way and it will only get better as time goes on.”

This is the first time the battalion has been deployed since Vietnam. Arriving in-country March 17, 2004, they hit the ground running, armed with four historic, but lethal, batteries of M-102 – 105 mm howitzers.

Each battery has six of the field pieces capable of firing up to 10 rounds per minute for the first three minutes. The guns have been in active service since 1968 and were even fired in Vietnam.

The 1-206 and 1-103 were tasked with patrolling and keeping secure the largest area of operations assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division. They were also the first maneuver battalion north of Baghdad and will hold the dubious distinction of being the last maneuver battalion out.

They were tasked with manning all entry and exit points to Camp Cooke, including gates, watchtowers and forward positions surrounding and outside of the perimeter, provided security, conducted sweeps and raid and cleaned up local villages. They also ran quick reaction force and civil affairs missions and more.

The battalion also worked hand-in-hand with the fledgling Iraqi National Guard, which is now officially part of the Iraqi Army. Serving together in training and combat, the battalion created a lasting bond.

Maj. Damon Cluck, operations officer for the 1-206 said, “The biggest impact we had was the bond developed with the new Iraqi Army. Their situation was pretty dire, no radios and equipment,” Cluck said. “We traded Soldiers for gear.” The Iraqi Army received gear; the 1-206 received Soldiers.

“Every cordon and search has had Iraqi Army participation,” Cluck boasted. “Pretty proud and pretty tired,” he added about the Iraqis and the 1-206.

See *SOLDIERS* page 15

## Rhode Island battery serves year with Southern Pride

**CAMP COOKE, TAJI, Iraq** — It was 7:20 a.m. The ground was muddy, the sky was gray and chilly and the air was filled with the daily Iraqi haze, pollution and sand and it threatened rain. It was time for a shift change. The night watch was preparing to go to bed and the day watch assumed duty. The quick reaction force was getting ready to patrol the perimeter of Taji.

Being in Iraq and assigned to a quick reaction force is a large part routine boredom, interspersed with a few minutes of sheer excitement and possibly some terror. It is one of the deadliest jobs to be assigned.

Soldiers walked over to a grimy war-worn Humvee numbered A-23, armed with a .50 calibre machine gun. A-23 was the last vehicle in a line of four armored beasts that would set out on the QRF patrol.

A-23 was driven by Spc. Christopher “Mat” Mckenzie, gunned by Pfc. Patrick Taschuk, Troop commanded by Staff Sgt. Scottie Huffman and staffed with a quiet combat medic, Pfc. Jimmy Hand.

The interior of the Humvee was dark, dank and dirty, and loaded to the gills with gear. Initially the men were all quiet; Huffman’s radio cackled through the metallic roar of the vehicle. In the windshield hung two crucifixes; they were black and stood out in stark contrast to the hazy light coming in through the dirty glass.

The Soldiers were not warmongers nor were they pacifists. They were men called from home to do their duty, and when they mounted up and were ready to roll they didn’t complain, grumble or bellyache; it was a job they were trained to do, and they would do it with quiet professionalism.

It was early and not much was said between the Soldiers after pleasantries were exchanged. For them, their tour was almost over. These were combat vets and they had seen and done it all — raids, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, raids, snipings, mortars and the wounding and untimely deaths of a few of their brothers in arms.

Taschuk, the .50 cal gunner, spoke with pride about one of their prior missions. “We participated in one of the largest raids in Taji.” When asked what they found, he replied, “What didn’t we find?”

He said during one mission, the unit filled two five-ton trucks with rockets, AK-47 rifles, mortar rounds, a mortar weapon and rockets. An enormous find, they spent the whole day finding weapons, ammo and equipment and even detained a couple insurgents.

At 8 a.m. the QRF team stepped out, orders were barked, gear was stowed, weapons were loaded and the vehicles lined up in order. They began their sweep.



The QRF dismounts and checks out a disabled vehicle and its driver.



Spc. Ernest Craigmyle from the 1-103 Field Artillery, Rhode Island National Guard scans the perimeter from a lookout tower.

A sweep is done about three to four times a day. It’s when the quick reaction force leaves the safety of the forward operating base and heads out into the badlands. The mission is to travel routes that head into and out of base camps, search for explosives, bad guys or anything out of the ordinary. As Taschuk said, “anything outside of the wire.”

On the inside of the Humvee door, in large black lettering, was written the standard nine-line medical evacuation procedure. These are the step-by-step life saving directions the military seared into the Soldier’s memories. It is used to identify your casualties to higher headquarters and to call in the support needed to save them. Many Soldiers are probably alive today because of that nine line brief.

The route went onto Main Supply Route Tampa. As they left the safety of Camp Cooke the convoy passed several locations the Soldiers seemed endeared to, such as Castle Gate, the first checkpoint they had to man upon arriving in Iraq. A crowded market area that was a VBIED blast scene — “strange,” Huffman noted. “Though it happened a couple weeks ago, no one set up shop where it went off.”

The QRF team stopped several times securing the lane to search broken-down vehicles. In Iraq every broken-down vehicle is a potential bomb or ambush site. The worst thing is, broken down vehicles are everywhere here. You have to use your wits, they said.

As the patrol returned to Camp Cooke, they went about cleaning weapons, having a cup of joe. Maybe they had done something extraordinary, maybe they didn’t. Though they had lives they wanted to live, families and loves they wanted to experience and share, careers to return to, they put their lives on the line, and performed a duty to the best of their ability.



# 82nd provides security for convention center

Story and photos by Pfc. Mike Pryor  
82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs

**INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, IRAQ** — Amid the noise and chaos of Baghdad, the Iraqi Convention Center stands like an oasis of calm. With its sleek, modern architecture, sunlit atrium, and gently swaying palm trees, the building feels miles away from the violence plaguing other parts of the city.

Paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division aim to keep it that way.

Approximately 150 paratroopers from Company A of the 82nd's 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment moved into the convention center in early February to provide security and protection for the government officials, diplomats, contractors, aid workers, and journalists who regularly conduct business at the facility.

While the mission bears little resemblance to the airborne assaults that have traditionally been the 82nd's specialty, the paratroopers of A Co. are taking their current assignment just as seriously.

"It's a very important job. World leaders meet here on a daily basis and it's our job to protect them," said Pfc. John Debrock.

The paratroopers' tasks include manning checkpoints, guard towers and observation points at various strategic positions around the area, which also include the swank Al Rasheed Hotel and the Iraqi Interim Government building.

Security is tight. Anyone coming into the area must pass through multiple search points. To enter the main pedestrian checkpoint requires undergoing two pat-downs, four identification checks and a 'once over' by a military working dog, said Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Daniels, one of A Co.'s squad leaders.

The security is necessary because of the strategic importance of the facility. The ICC is the nexus for much of what's happening in Iraq today. Inside its conference rooms and auditoriums, issues of government, diplomacy, reconstruction and security are debated by some of the biggest movers and shakers in the country.

"This is like the center of Iraq right now, which basically makes it the center of the world," said Spc. Timothy Viccari, as he and Debrock screened for weapons and IDs at a checkpoint one day.

Hour after hour, a steady stream of people from all walks of life flowed through Viccari and Debrock's gate. Their faces were a snapshot of post-war Iraq. At one point, an ancient, robed Iraqi woman with faded blue tribal tattoos on her face waited just behind a slick-looking reporter with thousands of dollars worth of high-tech cam-



**Spc. Timothy Viccari of Tampa, FL, a paratrooper with A Company, 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, examines identification paperwork of an Iraqi woman looking to enter a checkpoint at the Iraqi Convention Center in Baghdad.**

era gear strapped around his neck. They each received the same thorough inspection.

As the day dragged on, Viccari and Debrock cracked jokes and bantered with their interpreter to break the monotony. Manning checkpoints and guard towers is not exciting work. It's not "hooah," they said. But despite their occasional grumbles, the men know how important their job is.

Providing security so the new government can get up and running is a part of finishing what America started when it toppled Saddam Hussein from power, Debrock said.

"Some people may have been skeptical about the invasion, so helping with the rebuilding is a chance to show that our intentions were good," he said.

For A Co. paratroopers, the trade-off for their hard work out at the checkpoints is the perk of living in the convention center. Inside their sectioned-off area on the ground floor of the building, the paratroopers have bunks, wall-to-wall carpeting, heating and air conditioning, indoor plumbing, free phones, and other amenities.

A Co.'s first sergeant, 1st Sgt. Mark Byrd, finally got an office all to himself when he moved into the ICC after months of sharing a cramped room with his commander and executive officer. The spacious, oval-shaped office with leather couches, carpeting, and central air became a source of pride. As he walked around the convention center he sang the praises of the office to people he met like a proud new father.

"You know what the best part

is?" he asked one curious state department contractor. "Being able to walk to the latrine in bare feet!"

The ICC is like a mini United Nations. At various times, the paratroopers have found themselves rubbing elbows with Ghurka security guards, Iraqi Sheiks, Egyptian Al-Jazeera reporters, South African mercenaries, and American politicians. The unusual mixture of personalities and backgrounds in the facility has led to some strange occurrences.

One day, Pfc. Chris Norris was coming inside from playing touch football on the lawn when someone hurried past him surrounded by bodyguards.

"Someone said, 'Hey look, Hillary Clinton!' I was like, 'Shut up.' But then I turned around and, yup, it was Hillary Clinton," said Norris.

Another time, an informal pie-eating contest among the paratroopers was captured on tape by a passing TV news crew. The footage ran that night on Fox News.

When they're not on shift, doing PT, or making the nightly news, the paratroopers have been occupying themselves by training for the future.

"We're making the most of our time here," said Sgt. Darrel Patterson.

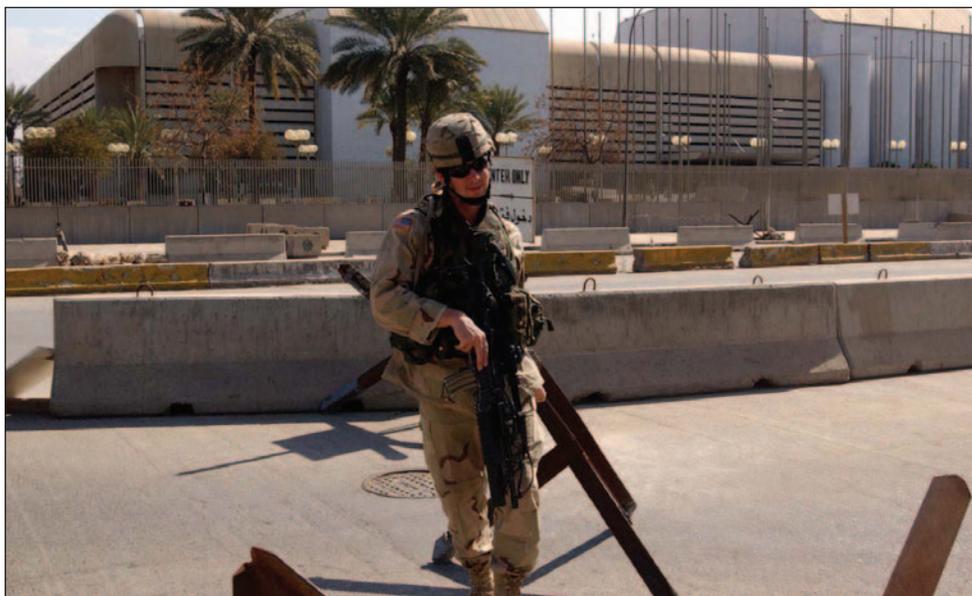
In the next month, they plan to conduct training on airborne procedures, land navigation, first aid, military history, issuing and reading operation orders, and other topics, Patterson said. They've even scheduled a ruck march.

In the meantime, A Co.'s paratroopers are just enjoying their new surroundings. They have good reason to — their previous home was an underground abandoned parking garage that flooded with raw sewage every time it rained. But they all know everything good comes to an end, especially in the Army. The bottom line, said Viccari, is that A Co. should enjoy what it has while it has it.

"Last time we were here, we dug a hole and lived in it for five days. Now, I've got wireless Internet running right up to my bed. I can't complain," he said.

"Most infantry Soldiers don't get to live like we're doing right now," Daniels said.

"But they all should," added Viccari.



**Pfc. Nicholas Strong, a paratrooper with A Co, 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, moves a barrier allowing a vehicle to pass through a checkpoint at the Iraqi Convention Center.**

# Civil affairs Soldiers help Iraqis with businesses

Story and photo by  
Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta  
42nd Infantry Division

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, TIKRIT, Iraq** — Like all forays outside the wire here, the Soldiers had their game faces on, and rolled out of the gate with loaded weapons, body armor, in armored Humvees.

But this patrol had a friendly face, because it was from the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion. Supporting the commander in his relationship with the populace is civil affairs' main mission, according to Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Edwin Miranda, of Miami, Fla.

"You want to give the impression that you're there to help," he said. "You want to build relationships."

The battalion's civil affairs Soldiers are doing that, and more, in Task Force Liberty's area of operations. On a recent patrol here, Soldiers of the battalion's Headquarters and Headquarters Company hit the streets to talk to Iraqi businessmen, assess the effects of Iraq's recent elections on business and ask about establishing a chamber of commerce, said Civil Affairs Team Chief Staff Sgt. John Imperato, of Rhinebeck, N.Y.

"The goal was to get the feel of the business community, to see how they feel about a chamber of commerce, and if they would participate in it," added Sgt. Michael Rothermel, civil affairs team sergeant, of Boyertown, Pa.

Self-reliance is the ultimate goal, Miranda said. "The Iraqis need to get back on their feet, and get back to work," he said. "They need to take vested interest in their own affairs."

Imperato is a Bedford, N.Y., police officer and former New York Army National Guard Soldier. During the patrol, Imperato moved from business to business like a cop walking his beat, chatting easily, through an interpreter, to Tikrit business owners.

"I can read people well. I'm used to dealing with people on



Staff Sgt. John Imperato speaks with an Iraqi businessman (center) through an interpreter (right), during a recent patrol in Tikrit.

foot patrol," Imperato said, referring to his police experience. "It's similar. You still have to be on your guard."

Finding the mean between security and sociability is difficult, Miranda said.

"They have to find a balance between force protection and conducting civil-military operations," Miranda emphasized. He stressed that civil affairs Soldiers can protect themselves just like other Soldiers, while treating civilians respectfully — something all Soldiers should do.

"The average soldier must fully understand the rules of engagement," he said. "He must understand in a split second who the enemy is, and who the civilians are. The average soldier should remember that, like civil affairs Soldiers, they are ambassadors. While they are expected to defend themselves, they should treat Iraqis with dignity and respect. It's not easy. In this environment, anyone can come out from the

crowd and kill you."

That's why Imperato, Rothermel, an interpreter and Imperato's Iraqi counterpart walked the streets surrounded by a moving perimeter of 360-degree security. This perimeter was formed by American and Iraqi soldiers, who also stood guard at each business the team stopped at.

"We had a good perimeter outside, so I could relax and talk to people," Imperato said. Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment helped provide security on the patrol.

There was no negative feedback from the businessmen they spoke with, he added.

"They're all excited about starting a chamber of commerce," Imperato said. "They felt if all businesses met, they could pool their resources to improve the economy."

The response was great, Rothermel said.

"They're looking forward to having a chamber of commerce," he said. "One thing we're giving them, which they never had before, is a voice. Now they can discuss how they'll collaborate, and how they'll pool their resources."

The next step, Rothermel said, will be for Iraqis to pick chamber of commerce representatives who will communicate their issues.

"You can only meet so many needs," Rothermel said. "You want to help everyone, but you can only help some of them. You do what you can. You can't let that burden weigh you down."

Once they were approached by an Iraqi family whose home was destroyed by a mortar round, Rothermel recalled.

See **BUSINESS** page 15

## Apache spearheads joint patrols

Story and photos by  
Staff Sgt. Duane M. Brown  
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**BALAD RUZ, Iraq** — To help Iraqis build themselves a more safe and secure country, Soldiers of the Tennessee National Guard have been providing direct support to the Iraqi Armed Forces.

Soldiers of 1st Squadron, Apache Troop, 278th Regimental Combat Team, conduct daily joint operations with the IAF to give them the support necessary to ensure they reach their potential as soldiers.

"Our overall focus ... is to push the IAF and the Iraqi Police up front and make them do their jobs," said 2nd Lt. Brian S. Powell,

Apache Troop platoon leader and Seymour, Tenn., resident.

Apache spearheads this push by conducting daily operations with the IAF soldiers in the city of Balad Ruz.

A normal patrol begins at a prearranged location, Powell said. It is at this rendezvous point the IAF is briefed on personnel and vehicle support necessary for the mission. The patrols are usually supported by Bradley M2 Infantry Fighting Vehicles, M113 armored personnel carriers, armored Humvees and a troop of combat Soldiers, Powell said.

With these assets in place the unit is able to conduct day and night joint patrols.

"At this time we brief the IAF command on what the mission is and tell them we would like to be involved,"

Powell said. "Sometimes this takes some work because of the language barrier."

To deal with this issue, Powell said he works smarter not harder.

"Some of these guys speak really good English, so we pair [them] up to ensure the mission is clear to all involved," he said.

Since it's a joint operation, Apache does not always take the lead.

"When the IAF has an idea for a patrol, we let them run it — we are purely there as back up," Powell said.

"The IAF is getting a good grasp of the concept we are trying to teach them," Powell said. "They do very aggressive training, which is mentored by [Coalition] forces."

Iraqi Armed Forces soldiers have proven themselves operating under strenuous conditions, he added.

Last week the city's joint coordination center was hit by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device that took the lives of five IAF soldiers. The IAF handled the situation very professionally, Powell stated.

Coalition troops will begin to take on a different mission as the IAF becomes more effective in its role as peacekeepers, he added. The troops will become liaisons, teachers and IAF observers.

All this close training has had a positive effect on Apache Troop, some of the Soldiers said.

"Having been with my guys when they first arrived and seeing them now, you can see a change in them that will stick with them long after this deployment," Powell said.



Sgt. Mitchell L. Chastain and 2nd Lt. Brian S. Powell take the name and personal information of an uncooperative store owner at a Balad Ruz, Iraq, market.

"As long as they want democracy and want to be free, I don't mind helping these people out," said Spc. Brice C. Whaley, Apache Troop scout and native of McMinnville, Tenn. "Together, we keep insurgents from hurting the innocent people, especially the kids. With any luck, they will grow up and go into school having a better chance at life than some of the adults had."

When asked how they felt about working so closely with the IAF on such dangerous missions, the answer came with no hesitation.

"Things are going pretty good, actually better than expected," said Spc. Mika L. Jefferson, Apache Troop scout and native of Memphis, Tenn. "Hopefully this will foster a smooth transition toward democracy."



Sgt. Mitchell L. Chastain, squad leader, 2nd Lt. Brian S. Powell, platoon leader and Spc. Kevin M. Zuhn, scout, conduct a dismounted patrol on the streets of Balad Ruz, Iraq.

# Commo 'Quick Reaction Force' keeps IZ connected

Story and photos by  
Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas  
Scimitar Staff

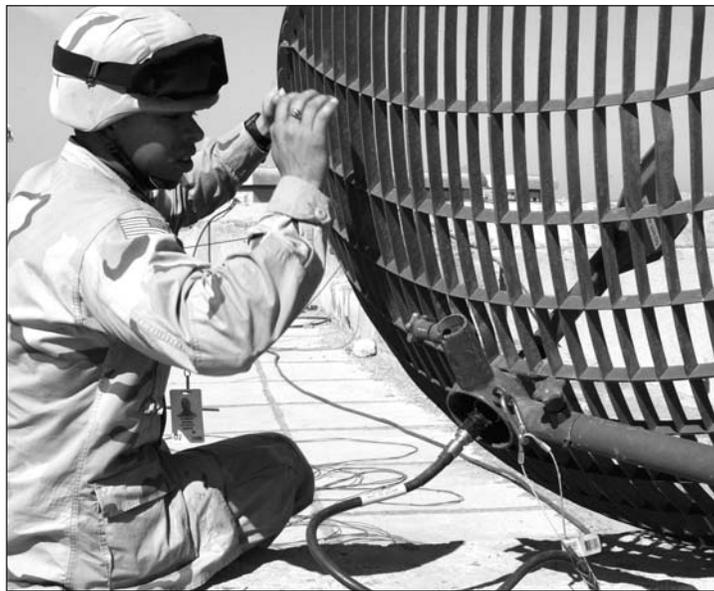
**INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — “If an [antenna] goes down, we fix it. If a phone line malfunctions, we fix it,” said Sgt. Michael P. Cote, communications sergeant for 327th Signal Battalion. Those antennas and phone lines are the lines of communication the personnel of the IZ use for business and pleasure every day.

A communications “Quick Reaction Force,” Company B, 1st Platoon, 327th Signal Battalion, 35th Brigade, makes sure the internet and phone lines are working properly around the clock. This active duty unit from Fort Bragg, N.C., keeps the various switch boxes, Internet and phone lines and antennas fully operational. When these communication devices malfunction, the Soldiers of this 24-hour operation fix the problem immediately.

“These guys work a 12-hour shift rather than a 9-to-5 job. There are two personnel at the Node center at all times,” said 1st Lt. Scott T. Fisher, platoon leader for B Co. “They monitor equipment and receive information from the battalion communications command. I also have ‘cable dogs’ who run Internet wire or any other wire that needs to be run.”

Besides getting communication up and running when it goes down, these Soldiers monitor the non-secure Internet (NIPR), the secure Internet (SIPR), and another secure civilian and military-used Internet connection called Centrex. They also maintain and monitor the digital non-secure voice terminal (DNVT) and voice over Internet protocol (VOIP).

These different secure and non-secure



**Staff Sgt. Luis A. Matias, transmission sergeant with 327th Signal Battalion, troubleshoots a line-of-sight antenna on the Presidential Palace roof.**

ways of communication are vital to everyday duties, Fisher said. Whenever the lines malfunction or fail to operate, it can be a difficult problem to fix.

“The phones go down and after a while, like everything else, it just breaks. You can’t pull all this stuff out of the working environment and fix or clean it,” Fisher said. “When you do that, you are taking down multiple phone lines and the communication in the palace is cut off for hours at a time. So a lot of the challenges we run into are things breaking down and trying to find a way to fix it.”

Different weather conditions and the amount of usage through these communication lines cause them to malfunction, Cote said. Trying to fix communication lines at the palace is not the only problem they have run into. B Co. usually sets up its

equipment in the field. The antenna setup has also been a challenge to get up and running.

“Normally the antennas are set up in the field. You are in a wooded area and you shoot the signal across the trees. It is different here because we have to get up on the roof,” Cote said. “We are tying the equipment down to anything available. It’s a big challenge and a whole lot different than putting stakes in the ground.”

The antennas use a line of sight shot, which is one antenna pointing and sending a signal directly to another antenna. In sending the straight line signal, there cannot be a large structure in the way.

Despite all the different challenges they encounter on a daily basis, B Co. finds ways to keep their head up. This deployment has been pretty smooth so far, said Fisher, a former enlisted infantry Soldier. “I like the idea of getting to work with a great group of guys and working at the platoon level. This is the third platoon I have been a platoon leader for. I like working with the Soldiers. It’s better than strategic planning because you are allowed to work first-hand with them. We have some really hard-working guys. They come in and do their job. It seems like they are not here for the money. I believe they do their job because they like it.”

As a result of the great attitudes and

cohesiveness of these Soldiers, their work has been far above average, Fisher said. Being apart of this operation brings a sense of pride to B Co. regardless of the lack of recognition they receive for a job well done.

“Some people will say, ‘This is not a very rewarding job,’ because your reward is no one asking any questions,” Fisher said. “We get our calls when the communication lines go down.”

Even though personnel working in communications do not get recognized as much as others, they feel like they are doing a great service, said Sgt. 1st Class Delton D. Roberts, platoon sergeant.

“You can talk about us, but you can’t talk without us.”



**Soldiers of 327th Signal Battalion work together to lay a line-of-sight antenna down and perform maintenance on it.**

## LSA Anaconda's history unveiled

Story and photo by Pfc. Jerome Bishop  
1st Corps Support Command Public Affairs Office

**LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Balad, Iraq** — Twenty-three thousand people call Logistic Support Area Anaconda home, but who called it home before the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and what did they do here?

Balad Southeast Air Base, as it was called before the start of OIF, was the site of the Iraqi Air Force Academy and the home of several MiG fighter jet battalions. Although the base didn’t have a large role in the defense of Iraq during the combat of OIF, it has played important roles in the military of Iraq in previous wars, said an Iraqi local national who wished to remain anonymous as a former Iraqi service member and resident of Balad SE AB.

Construction of the base began in what used to be open farmland in 1978 by a Yugoslavian company contracted to design and build it. It wasn’t completed until Sept. 1, 1983, said the Iraqi.

The decision to construct the base was made before the start of the Iraq-Iran War, and although the base’s purpose wasn’t specifically for the war, it played an important role in the defense against the Iranian air force.

“It was used for training as well as operations,” said the Iraqi worker.

Balad SE housed hundreds of aircraft of Soviet origin

such as the MiG 23, MiG 21, Su-22, 24, and 25, he added.

“Some of the aircraft were used for training, the rest were used for scramble to protect Baghdad and the border to the north,” said the Iraqi. “Iraq had a strong air force; none of the aircraft were damaged.”

The base was considered a super-base to the Iraqi military because of the size, location in relation to the border and the number of troops and equipment stationed here, he said.

Several other bases in Iraq were created from the same design. Although the base played a significant role in the Iraq-Iran War, it wasn’t able to maintain its high standards during Operation Desert Storm. In order to undermine the base’s role in the defense, the U.S. military bombed the communication centers, hangars, unit offices, the runways, and the taxiways, making the base otherwise useless. However, no ground forces made it to the base, said the Iraqi.

In hopes of maintaining the air force, the Iraqis moved 186 aircraft off the base. Most of them went to Iran where some still remain today. After Operation Desert Storm, an Iraqi company was employed to reconstruct the base; however, the aircraft on post was limited or around 50, said the Iraqi.

The base maintained regular operations until the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The military presence left the base on or around April 9, 2003, eight days before U.S. forces landed on the base and took over. The sensitive materials



**LSA Anaconda was originally an Iraqi air base, which housed many Russian made fighter planes, including the MiG and Su series.**

that the post housed were taken by the Iraqis and moved to Baghdad and other higher military offices, he said.

Soon after the takeover, U.S. troops began traveling to the nearby villages to gain support from the Iraqi civilians and former military service members. Iraqis began coming onto the base to work for the U.S. military May 17, 2003. They had jobs ranging from post reconstruction to providing information to help with operations, said the Iraqi.

Although the United States controls LSA Anaconda, the Iraqis will have another chance in the coming years to allow it to hold an essential place among the Iraqi military.



# First sergeant prevents potential ambush

Story and photos by  
Pfc. Laura M. Bigenho  
42nd MP Brigade Public Affairs

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — For Soldiers with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 42nd Military Police Brigade, a drive back from a typical training mission took an unexpected turn, and has earned 1st Sgt. Kelvin Mayes the title of a true American hero to many.

Insurgents have become notorious for hiding improvised explosive devices along commonly-traveled roads throughout Iraq, often using piles of trash or concrete as their concealment of choice. However, as 1st Sgt. Mayes was traveling through an open, less-traveled road, a rare sighting occurred that compelled him to turn his vehicle around and take a closer look at what caught his eye.

"I was driving the last of three vehicles when I spotted holes in the center of the road. As I got up on top of the holes, I realized there was something inside of them. Then I saw the yellow band on the second IED, and that's when I knew," he said.

Turning around and back-tracking his route off-road, Mayes parked his Humvee in the center of the road, several meters away



**Sgt. 1st Class Kay Sweitzer pulls security while 1st Sgt. Kelvin Mayes orders a suspicious Iraqi out of his vehicle and thoroughly inspects it.**

from the holes. Taking proper safety measures, he instructed his fellow Soldiers to pull security while he took a closer look at his findings, confirming what he had found.

"I wanted to make sure that nobody else drove over them, so we secured both ends of the road, keeping back civilian traffic," Mayes said. "You have to think about other peoples' lives, as well as your own. I wanted to make sure we didn't end up killing [innocent Iraqis] at the same time [the enemy] tried to kill us."

Unaware that Mayes had stopped, the other two Humvees continued traveling before realizing he was no longer in their convoy. Lacking radio communication in that area, they immediately turned around, arriving at the scene about 15 minutes later. By that time, Mayes' team had successfully secured the area, redirecting traffic to the side of the road and out of harm's way.

"When we pulled up, the first sergeant gave us a situation report. All of our guys came out and joined the others in taking up the security perimeter and directing traffic. I didn't really have to tell the guys what to do; everyone just knew their jobs," said Sgt. Jeremy King, armorer for HHC and driver of the second Humvee.

Once the remaining Soldiers dismounted, Mayes had enough personnel to dispatch for explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and to further investigate the scene. Approaching closer to the holes, Mayes discovered two 155 rounds, with a third hole yet to be filled. Leading away from the holes, thin, strong copper wire made its way up to the top of a sandy hillside, just meters from the center of the road. Taking another Soldier with him, Mayes proceeded with caution to the top of the hill.

"I kind of expected the enemy to be on the other side of the hill. You never leave an ambush site unattended. There are always

guys on target," he said. With that in mind, he planned to clear the area, gain fire superiority and wipe out any resistance. "The idea was to go and eliminate [enemies] and secure the high ground, because it was the highest ground for miles," Mayes added.

Filled with a sense of relief, he found an unoccupied ambush site, equipped with a weapons mount, large shovel, concrete block and several dug out hiding positions. "These guys had a good position set up. They had left and right security, there were no footprints leading from the IEDs to the ambush site, and they had several firing positions," Mayes said. "If the job had been completed, it would have demolished at least one truck and most likely everyone inside, followed by small-arms fire," he added.

Fresh footprints and tire tracks indicated that the enemy had recently tended to the site. It was only a matter of time before the enemy would have finished setting up their last IED and attacked the next American convoy or even some Iraqi civilians. "They didn't appear to be in a hurry, and they weren't too worried about the equipment," he said, pointing to a large shovel and weapons mount.

Pfc. Patrick Ahner, a mechanic and gunner for the first Humvee, was somewhat startled when he first heard over the radio that they had driven over IEDs. "I did not see the [detonation] cord on the road. I was in awe, but at the time felt reassured, when I learned that there we IEDs. We drove right over top of them and never even noticed," Ahner said.

For that reason, among others, Mayes' Soldiers are seeing him in a different light since the incident. Despite his eagerness to return back to Victory after a long day of training, his acute attention to the road and his surroundings never declined, and quite frankly, potentially saved lives.

"1st Sgt. Mayes was truly a hero in all of



**First Sgt. Kelvin Mayes displays the copper wire leading from the IEDs to the top of the hill.**

this. He saved nine to 12 American lives. With three 155 rounds, the setup on the hill and any other weapons they might have used, they probably could have done serious damage to the whole squad," King said.

Mayes, on the other hand, feels more humble about the situation. "I didn't really start thinking about it until some of the guys started talking afterwards. "I spent 15 years as a Special Operations Soldier, and before that, an infantryman, so it was pretty much a natural reaction," he added. "I just looked at it as thwarting one of the enemies' possibilities to hurt us, but I guess it feels pretty good. That's [potentially] three or more Soldiers that have lived and a bunch more insurgents that have to start over," Mayes said, smiling.

## Marine Sniper receives Bronze Star Medal for valor

By Sgt. Stephen D'Alessio  
2nd Marine Division combat correspondent

**MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C.** — In the early morning hours of April 9, 2004, a Marine sniper and his spotter crawled on top of an abandoned oil storage tank in Lutafiyah, Iraq. Their mission was routine, as they covered their squad's patrol movement through the small town during the Arbaeen pilgrimage. But it became a mission that will go down in the annals of Marine Corps history.

Staff Sgt. Steve Reichert, a 25-year-old scout sniper with Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, was recently awarded one of the Corps' top medals, the Bronze Star with a combat 'V' for valorous action, for his actions that day.

During this particular mission atop the oil tank, Reichert settled himself in a very exposed position — though he was able to prop up a few steel plates on some sand bags. He and his spotter occupied that position knowing they were extremely vulnerable to enemy fire.

"I didn't really think about it at the time," said Reichert. "But when we heard the [.50-caliber] rounds impacting the oil tank, we took what little cover there was."

As the patrol moved toward the town, Reichert observed a dead animal located in the patrol's path. It was then when he

recalled his training in enemy tactics, techniques and procedures for improvised explosive devices and made radio contact to redirect the patrol. The patrol leader radioed back to Reichert and confirmed his suspicion that two wires were leading out of the dog carcass.

"We encountered IEDs daily," said Reichert. "The IED that the squad came upon was in a dead animal, and with my spotting scope I could see the slight reflection of the wires coming out of the animal."

But despite the squad's preventive measures, a routine situation turned treacherous. A rocket-propelled grenade was fired at the Marine patrol, and seconds later enemy machine-gun and small-arms fire pinned them down, according to



Courtesy Marine Corps photo

**Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Steve Reichert was recently awarded the Bronze Star with a combat 'V' for valorous action in Iraq in April.**

Reichert. The Marines couldn't effectively engage the enemy machine gunner on the rooftop of a nearby building, so they radioed to Reichert on the oil storage tank. He took one shot and missed, then made the proper wind and elevation calculations to make his mark. A moment and a trigger pull later, Reichert took out the gunner.

In the after-action report, the platoon leader made a remarkable account: that Reichert made the shot from 1,614 meters — about a mile away. His accuracy was the deciding factor in the outcome of the firefight.

Soon after, a few insurgents began to climb a set of stairs on the backside of the building where the firefight was taking place. Reichert aimed into the brick wall where he thought the men were and fired. All three of the men dropped. Reichert's armor-piercing round penetrated the wall and killed one man — possibly wounding the other two with bullet and brick fragmentation.

"I could see that two Marines got separated [from the platoon] and saw that a small group of insurgents were maneuvering into position to ambush the Marines. Once they stopped moving I shot one; the other two ran."

Reichert looks back at his mission as a learning experience — not only for him, but also for others who follow in his footsteps. "I've learned a few lessons in life that I think helped me along the way," said Reichert. "Never quit, no matter how tough life can get."

# Declared 'fit for duty'

## Amputee plans return to Iraq

Story and photo by  
Samantha L. Quigley  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Like many Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans, U.S. Army Capt. David Rozelle's story began in Iraq. Unlike many of those same veterans, his is set to continue there as well.

Cleared to return to the same battlefield where he was injured, Rozelle said he is the first amputee in recent military history to be returned to a dangerous command.

Rozelle arrived in Hit, Iraq, with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Carson, Colo., in April 2003. Initially, his role in the town was as the "de facto sheriff," he said.

Aside from the fact that it was hot, he said, what stood out about the mission was that it was a success.

"From the time we hit the ground in Hit, from the first recon day to the point of my injury, it truly was a successful mission," Rozelle said. "We, within days, got the things back working. We made some good friends quite quickly."

He also was tapped to become one of the first service members outside of special operations to train Iraqis to defend themselves. However, that never came to be.

On June 21, 2003, Rozelle was traveling the road that led to the police academy to participate in the program to train Iraqis when his Humvee hit an anti-tank mine buried by insurgents. Later he found out that the mine his Humvee hit was the last in a line of nine mines the insurgents had buried.

The Humvee became airborne and landed on Rozelle's right leg. Of the three Soldiers in

the vehicle, he was the only one injured.

"At first, I really didn't realize I was injured," he said. "The vehicle blew up, and I looked down and had what looked like all my parts and I had some good shrapnel and some bleeding, but I was alive and grateful."

The incident cost him his right foot, but earned him a Bronze Star with 'V' device and a Purple Heart Medal for his service in Iraq.

Following the usual medical route, Rozelle went through Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany before ending up at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. There, he bargained with the hospital commander, promising to meet amazing goals in his recovery, if he could make it to Colorado for the birth of his son. He arrived two days before the due date and ended up waiting for a week before his son was born.

"The baby was waiting on me to get home," Rozelle said.

The baby may have been waiting, but so were the amputee patients at Walter Reed — whether they knew it or not.

Back at Walter Reed, Rozelle was one of the first OIF amputee patients, and he had to find his own way through the healing process. It started when his boss made it clear to Rozelle and his rear detachment commander that his only mission was to get fit for active duty.

He took that mission very seriously, spending three to four hours per day training, likening the experience to basic training.

"The other four to five hours a day I spent staying in touch with other Soldiers, calling back to Walter Reed, sending e-mails to other guys that are injured, creating awareness for people with disabilities from the very start. I wanted to help take care of Soldiers, give them

what I didn't have, which was knowledge of what's next," he said. "I found a leadership role for myself within the Army for amputees."

The training got him in shape and gave him a way to connect with and encourage other amputees to get back to their lives. He is snow skiing again and runs everything from Turkey Trots to marathons. He even organized a Walter Reed team for the Army Ten-miler.

A group of doctors at the hospital had put a team together for the race when Rozelle approached them with the idea to let some of the patients take some of the slots. And so the "Missing Parts in Action Team: Some Assembly Required" was born.

"I beat most of the Navy and Air Force and kept up with the Marines," he said. "We just need to make people aware."

When Rozelle returns from Iraq, he has been asked to return to a position at Walter Reed before going on to Command and General Staff College. It will be doing one of the things he does best: Encouraging amputee patients to not give up and helping them realize that they can do the things they used to do.

"I am amazed ... by the spirit of the American Soldier," he said. "That's what I say to America: 'Celebrate the spirit of the American Soldier.'"

"These guys need to understand that, both the amputees and the able-bodied Soldiers, ... that the Soldiers that are shown at Walter Reed are not ready to quit. They want to come back and join [their units] in combat, in a combat role. With modern science, that's a possibility."

Rozelle said the celebration of that spirit is readily evident.

"All you have to do is go over to Walter Reed sometime," he said, recounting stories of



Army Capt. David Rozelle wraps up a tour to promote his book.

Walter Reed patients needing items and receiving an overwhelming response, and of a pillow company catching wind of plans to send pillows to troops in Iraq.

"They sent ... 6,000 pillows for our Soldiers," he said. "That is incredible."

Beyond these acts of support and generosity, Rozelle told of an individual who was supporting troops in a very big way.

"There's a guy over at Walter Reed who has now started an organization to continue it, but he, out of his own pocket, [is] giving every injured soldier that separated from service \$30,000 to get his life started again," he said. "America supports our soldiers."

The captain, who claims to be an excellent hop-scotcher, also has found time during his recovery to write a book. "Back in Action: An American Soldier's Story of Courage, Faith, and Fortitude" is Rozelle's story of his injury, recovery and return to a command on the same battlefield.

He said the book, which he dedicated to his wife and son, came about at the suggestion of his friends and family. They are also the reason, he said, why he is going back to Iraq.

"There's a job to be done," he said.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn

A convoy of Quick Reaction Force troops prepares to roll out of Camp Cooke, near Taji, Iraq.

## Soldiers

from Page 9

Hard and gritty-tough Soldiers, together the Arkansas and Rhode Island artillery batteries endured improvised explosive devices and vehicle-borne IEDs, attacks, mortars, raids and rockets, sniper fire and outright hostility. In October the battalion suffered a devastating blow when it lost two of its Soldiers in a firefight.

Staff Sgt. Christopher S. Potts of Tiverton, R.I., and Sgt. Russell L. Collier, of Harrison, Ark., were caught in a firefight during a combat patrol. Potts, a squad leader, fell mortally wounded. Collier, a combat medic, rushed to his fallen comrade and was struck and killed

while attempting to provide aid. The two brave men from two different units served together and died together.

Later, the unit and their Iraqi Army compatriots conducted a raid in the same area and uncovered a major weapons cache. The raid helped add closure to the loss and also helped forged a bond of friendship and professionalism between the U.S. and fledgling Iraqi Army.

Standing tall, heads held high and hearts filled with pride, the Soldiers of the 1-206th Field Artillery Regiment, 39th (Infantry) BCT of the Arkansas National Guard and members of the 1-103rd Rhode Island National Guard served with honor and courage. They now have one final goal in sight: to arrive home safe and sound and renew lives and loves that had been put on hold.

## Business

from Page 11

The family was seeking shelter — something the civil affairs Soldiers couldn't provide. What they did supply, however, was food and hygiene items from the stock they always have handy, and information on how to get in touch with an Iraqi government agency that could help.

"Sometimes we can only point people in the right direction," he said. "That helps them more

than we could help them on our own."

"We're structuring a government," Imperato said. "If we can get the smaller government organizations running smoothly, and the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army up to speed, things will be great."

The unit is also training an Iraqi force to take over the civil affairs mission, Imperato said. "They do well. They go out once a week by themselves."

Based in Danbury, Conn., the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion is coordinating \$8 million of

projects in Task Force Liberty's area of operations, said Capt. Tammie Perreault, battalion personnel officer, from Seattle. These include minor school renovations, urban clean-up by local labor, the preservation of Iraqi historic sites, and improvement of Iraqi governance facilities.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company is supporting the 42nd Infantry Division, Miranda said, and his other companies are supporting Task Force Liberty's combat teams. The civil affairs Soldiers helped coordinate elections

with local officials, and recently, the battalion's public health team conducted a health assessment in Samarra, and was able to provide Iraqi health professionals with new medical equipment, sanitation support and medical reference material.

"It's rewarding when you see needs and issues being resolved and taken care of," Miranda said.

Rothermel said he "absolutely loves" civil affairs work. "Having a positive effect on people's lives here, like we do, is very rewarding."



Donald Exler, 327th Signal Battalion, Fort Bragg, N.C., rounds first base during the Valentines Softball Championship tournament Feb. 20.



Clarence Gilliam, Meck-A-Nicks pitcher, tosses the ball back to home plate.



Samuel Castle, 327 Signal Battalion, takes a well deserved breather on 2nd base as the Meck-A-Nicks are crowned champs.



Ball Hogs 1st baseman, Michael Danielson, B. Co., 319th Military Intelligence Bat., 325th MI Bde., Fort Bragg, N.C., waits for a throw from the shortstop.



Ball Hogs shortstop Cesar Turcios of B. Co., 327th Signal Battalion, gets ready to swing at the incoming ball as the catcher stands ready for a strike or foul ball.

# Nickin' The Win

## Meck-A-Nicks take championship

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

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The Camp Victory Morale Welfare and Recreation office held a Valentine's Softball Championship tournament Feb. 18 - 20 at the MWR field here.

The three day tournament saw 11 teams compete, culminating in the two-game championship between the Meck-A-Nicks, 327th Signal Battalion, 35th Signal Brigade, Fort Bragg, N.C., and the Ball Hogs, whom are a combination of the 319th Military Intelligence Bn., Fort Bragg, and the 297th MI Bn., Fort Gordon, Ga.

Game one saw the Meck-A-Nicks jump off to an early lead, scoring six runs in the first inning. With help from the long-ball hitting Donald Exler, 327th battalion maintenance officer, the Meck-A-Nicks easily followed up the first inning with 10 runs in the second.

The undefeated Ball Hogs struggled against the pitching of Clarence Gilliam, 327th maintenance noncommissioned officer-in-charge, and managed to only score two runs in the first two innings.

The Meck-A-Nicks wasted no time in closing out game one by adding six runs in the third. The Ball Hogs added just two more runs, making the final score 21 - 5.

The tournament was played using modified National Softball Association rules, which states that if a team is up by 10 runs after the third inning, or 15 runs after the fourth, the

team with the lead is automatically deemed the winner.

Game two of the championship started off with defense on both ends. The bats and gloves of Ball Hogs' first baseman Michael Danielson, night shift NCOIC, 319th MI Bn., and right fielder Ty Simmons, night-shift team leader, 297th MI Bn., initially helped their team keep the Meck-A-Nicks at bay.

With the score at 2 - 3 after the first, the Ball Hogs tried to add to their lead and did so, but it wasn't enough to hold off the Meck-A-Nicks.

The bats of Meck-A-Nicks Michael Holeman and Luis Perez led the way in the third inning, helping their team add five quick runs. This put the game out of reach for the Ball Hogs, giving the Meck-A-Nicks a commanding 18-5 victory after five innings.

Meck-A-Nicks first baseman Jeff T. Witkowski, battalion maintenance technician, 327th Sig. Bn., said that their team wins by playing as a team. "We have great unit cohesiveness," he said. "We played together back home also, so that helps."

The champion Meck-A-Nicks are 10-1 in their two tournaments since coming to Victory, with 160 runs and 13 home runs.

Signup for the upcoming intramural softball league can be done at the Camp

Victory MWR, located in area 51, building 51P. Deadline for entry is March 8. For more information on the softball league, please contact Camp Victory MWR Sports Coordinator Bernard Creque at: [B\\_Creque@yahoo.com](mailto:B_Creque@yahoo.com).



MWR Valentine's Softball tournament champions, the Meck-a-Nicks, 327th Signal Battalion, 35th Signal Brigade, Fort Bragg, N.C. are, left to right, Donald Exler, Chris Walker, Jeff Witkowski, Michael Holeman, Jon Gano, Eric Petty, Samuel Castle, Lucas King, Michael Martin, Cesar Turcios, Luis Perez, Clarence Gilliam, Jeffrey Cherubino.