



Vets win hearts, minds, Page 8



Photo courtesy of 116th Brigade Combat Team

*Say aaah ...*

Capt. Jeffrey Kesling, a 116th Brigade Combat Team dentist, teaches children proper dental hygiene during a recent medical and dental assistance visit to Abu Karja and Shahal, Iraq. This humanitarian assistance mission came about from BCT and local leaders identifying areas of need. More than 350 medical and dental patients were seen in the two-day mission.

## Iraqi desert yields more mass graves

### *Thousands still remain unidentified*

By Chief Petty Officer James M. Drake  
Combined Press Informatin Center

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Forensics experts are working in the Iraqi desert to analyze the remains of some of more than one thousand people buried in mass graves near As Samawah in the Muthanna province of southwestern Iraq.

The mass-grave sites date from the Iran-Iraq War, according to Iraqi Minister for Human Rights Dr. Bakhtiar Amin. He estimates

the total number of mass-grave sites discovered throughout Iraq to be at 295 and climbing. Amin adds the total number of dead discovered in the last three years is upward of 600,000, many of whom may never be identified. Memorials for the unidentified are being planned.

“We have been able to organize approximately 15 countries, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, International Commission for Missing Persons, Physicians for Human Rights, forensic pathologists and academics, representatives from all communities and relevant ministries, about 20 associations of Iraqi families and family associations of victims,” Amin said on April 21 at the Muthanna site in Iraq’s southwestern desert.

The Muthanna Province mass-grave site was discovered by Bedouins in the late 1980s. The site is also an ancient Bedouin burial ground and a site of specific interest to paleontologists.

Bedouins reported the site to Coalition Forces. Within a short time of discovery, Coalition Forces reported the site through their chain of command, and it immediately gained the attention of the Iraqi Human Rights Ministry.

The current site is indicative of the other sites unearthed in the past few years. Most of the bodies found here are those of women and children gunned down by firing squads standing just east of the shallow north-south trenches their victims died in. Many of the children here appear to have been riddled with bullets as they clung to their dead mothers’ legs. Everyone involved with this work has been affected by their findings, according to a leading scientist working for the Iraqi Special Tribunal.

“I think you’ll find all the people working on this really feel a kinship with these people. They’re around them all day and

See *GRAVES*, Page 4

### **Inside**

**Desert critters more than just a nuisance** Page 2

**Georgians understand Iraqi struggle** Page 12

**Corps’ small world brings siblings closer** Page 14

# Desert critters: more than just a nuisance

By Sgt. Misha King  
Scimitar Assistant Editor

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — We've all heard the infamous pre-deployment lectures. Who could forget — make sure you put on some insect repellent. You really should treat your clothing with permethrin. Don't forget to keep your sleeves rolled down. These are just a few pieces of sage advice given to help prevent two vector-borne diseases caused by two pesky insects: leishmaniasis transmitted by sand flies and malaria transferred through mosquitoes.

Although both diseases are serious, one of them poses more of a threat to forces in Iraq. "I think the greatest insect-borne threat facing U.S. and Coalition forces is probably leishmaniasis," said Lt. Col. Steve Horosko, Force Health Protection Chief, Multi-National Corps - Iraq surgeon's office.

"Leishmaniasis is caused by a parasite that is transmitted by sand flies," said Staff Sgt. Steven Thiede, operations noncommissioned officer of the 12th Medical Detachment. "There are two types in Iraq — cutaneous and visceral. Cutaneous leishmaniasis, the most common form, is characterized by a purplish, crater-like sore at the site of the bite and can leave scars if left untreated. It could take weeks to months to form. Visceral leishmaniasis can cause swelling of the glands and can affect internal organs, such as the liver and spleen, and can cause death if left untreated."

"In the past two years [our forces] have been in Iraq, we've had about 1,500 cases of cutaneous leishmaniasis diagnosed among U.S. forces," said Horosko. "Only four have been diagnosed with the visceral disease, so it's not quite as serious of a threat to our forces here."

Although not as common in Iraq as leishmaniasis, malaria is still a threat to forces and should not be completely disregarded.

"The other vector-borne threat here in Iraq is malaria, the most prevalent form being vivax," Horosko said. "It is dangerous and makes people sick. Falciparum is the most deadly dangerous form, and it is more of a threat in Afghanistan."

Over the past two years, forces in Iraq have had to take one of the two forms of malaria pills as a precaution, Horosko said. This year, preventive medicine officials are recommending troops not take them.

"Last year, we had four cases of malaria among U.S. troops in Iraq, and all of those cases were believed to have originated outside of the country," he said. "So, the malaria threat here is really quite low."

Some of us may have already noticed an increase of the pesky winged nuisances. Unfortunately, they will torture us with their presence for a while longer before they grace us with their departure.

"Mosquitoes and sand flies are going to be more active as the weather warms up, like March through November in Iraq, so we're in the season now," Horosko explained. "The threat for leishmaniasis seems to be greater for our forces in the central

and northern parts of Iraq, but one can get leishmaniasis anywhere in the country. We base this primarily on the number of Coalition cases in the past two years. There may be more sand flies in these areas, or just more of the sand flies are infected with the parasite. Either way, we'll probably start seeing some cases here real soon."

Unlike man, not all insects are created equal. "We're only concerned with female sand flies and mosquitoes because they're the ones that take blood meals and can transmit disease through their bites," said Capt. Ira Heimler, executive officer for 12th Medical Detachment. "Male mosquitoes and sand flies have no medical significance."

Usually when there is a problem, a solution is not far behind. There are several ways for deployed personnel to protect themselves from vector-borne diseases in Iraq.

"Every [U.S. troop] in the U.S. Central Command area of operation should have deployed with a variety of personal protective materials, one of which is DEET skin repellent," Horosko said. "It's a cream that is applied to the skin and works well at protecting from biting insects. There's also a kit, called IDA, or shake-and-bake kit, that has permethrin to treat your clothing to help protect from biting insects like mosquitoes, sand flies, chiggers and ticks. There's also a can of permethrin used to treat bed netting — the weave is very small, and many sand flies are small enough to fit through the netting. The permethrin kills and prevents them from getting through."

Horosko also said troops need to keep in mind that there are no vaccines or pills to protect them from many vector-borne diseases like leishmaniasis.; only using DEET and permethrin will provide protection.

Prevention does not fall strictly on the individual, however. Keeping troops disease-free is something leaders can help facilitate.

"In the Army, every company-sized unit is supposed to have a trained and equipped field sanitation team," Horosko said. "This team has a wide variety of materials that help protect Soldiers from threats and help make their deployment here more comfortable, such as simple insecticides to kill sand flies and mosquitoes, bait boxes and snap traps to kill rats and mice, water purification materials, and wet-bulb-globe temperature kits to monitor the heat index.

As if constantly watching out for mini bloodsucking stealth bombers wasn't enough, there are also non-disease carrying varmints that could rattle your cage a bit, or even put you out of commission for a while.



Photo by Sgt. Misha King

**Spc. Kimberly A. Cupery, preventive medicine specialist with the 12th Medical Detachment at Camp Victory, Iraq, looks at sand flies under a microscope to determine their sex.**



Photos courtesy of the McGill Centre for Tropical Disease  
**A cutaneous leishmaniasis ulcer on a person's arm in the beginning stages, inset, and after two years left untreated.**

See **CRITTERS**, Page 4

"There are other creepy-crawler-types that are non-disease transmitting in Iraq," Horosko said. "There are about 15 species of scorpions, six of which are quite poisonous and can kill a healthy adult. They're nocturnal, so they only come out at night. Troops usually only come in contact with them when they don't check their boots, or if they reach under their bed for something without paying attention, or maybe walk around bare-footed or in showers sandals."

Scorpions are not the only sneaky-type perpetrators that make people's visit to the sandbox quite memorable. Several different types of snakes and spiders are also found in the Iraqi desert.

"All spiders are venomous," said Heimler. "The amount and

<p><b>MNF-I Commanding General</b> Gen. George Casey</p> <p><b>MNF-I PAO</b> Col. Robert A. Potter</p> <p><b>Command Information Chief</b> Maj. Patricia C. Anderson patricia.anderson@iraq.centcom.mil</p> <p><b>Command Information NCOIC</b> Master Sgt. Michele R. Hammonds michele.hammonds@iraq.centcom.mil</p>		<p><b>Editor</b>.....Staff Sgt. Brett B. McMillan brett.mcmillan@iraq.centcom.mil</p> <p><b>Assistant Editor</b>.....Sgt. Misha King misha.king@iraq.centcom.mil</p> <p><b>Staff</b>.....Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn timothy.lawn@iraq.centcom.mil</p> <p><b>Staff</b>.....Sgt. W. Watson Martin william.martin@iraq.centcom.mil</p> <p><b>Staff</b>.....Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas ferdinand.thomas@iraq.centcom.mil</p>	<p>Scimitar welcomes columns, commentaries, articles and letters from readers. Send submissions to <a href="mailto:scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil">scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil</a></p> <p>We reserve the right to edit for propriety, clarity and space.</p> <p>The Scimitar can also be viewed on the Web at <a href="http://www.mnf-iraq.com/coalition-news/publications.htm">http://www.mnf-iraq.com/coalition-news/publications.htm</a></p>
---	--	---	--

The Scimitar is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of this paper are not necessarily the official views of or endorsed by the U.S. Government or Department of Defense. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Public Affairs Office of the Multi-National Force - Iraq. Stars and Stripes newspaper is not affiliated with MNF-I and acts only as a distributing source for the Scimitar. Questions and comments should be directed to the editor at [scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil).

PERSPECTIVES

# Mothers are foot soldiers for society

By Staff Sgt. David M. Green  
Combined Press Information Center

**T**hey kiss boo-boos and bake cookies. Do laundry and wash dishes. Once a year, we take time to honor the first woman in our lives, our mothers, and for the most part, it is a time to stop and thank them for all the things they have done for us. A time to return the love they so willingly give and reflect on the copious memories they've provided. But this year, I stand not in mere loving reflection, but in sheer awe of my mother and the many like her.

My mother was born in a small town in Missouri in the 1950s (she'd kill me if I gave away her actual age) and like many of her generation, she grew into a woman in a world that was constantly challenging social norms of the day. On the one hand, she was told to get married, have kids, and grow old. On the other encouraged to shrug off the yoke of traditional marriage and childbirth to strike her own destiny. The women's liberation movement was firmly entrenched when she finally graduated high school. Like many in her generation, she opted for a do-it-all path. She got married and had children while working and taking occasional night classes. Somehow she made it all work. Awake well before I ever got out of bed, and still working on the house when I'd finally go to sleep, even today, I wonder how she did it.

In addition, she took on the added stress and difficulties that accompany being the wife of a career Soldier. In her day, there was no formal recognition for the sacrifices military families lived with on a daily basis. In response, she joined with many other spouses and devoted an incredible amount of time helping to console and advise younger members of the military family while transforming the Army by helping senior staff formalize policies that considered and supported families. Not many Soldiers have a mother who can beat them every time in a "coin challenge" because of the work they've done (I'm still working on getting the Chief of Staff of the Army's coin so I can at least tie her,) but the really incredible thing that she did all this while raising a family and managing a household.

But this isn't about my mother. It's about all the mothers who have shared the same experiences between themselves and with us. Mothers and Soldiers actually share a great deal in common. We share sacrifice. We are the foot soldiers for our nation and they the soldiers for our very society. They find a way day in and day out to "accomplish the mission." Often doing more with less and overcoming incredible odds because in the end lives depend on it, the lives of their children. So this year, don't simply tell your mother you love her. Thank her, tell her you're proud of her and you support her. Not just because of the sacrifices she's made, but because she'd say the same about you.

## Scimitar Pulse

What are the most important lessons to be learned from the Holocaust?

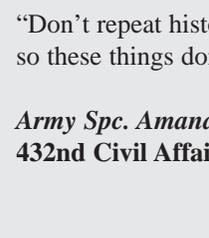
"Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Army Sgt. Steven Lorey  
301st Military Intelligence Battalion



"People can be horrible to each other, but we must have the courage to stand up to evil people."

Army Staff Sgt. Norman Hall  
407th Civil Affairs Battalion



"Don't repeat history. Learn from it, so these things don't happen again."

Army Spc. Amanda Pieschek  
432nd Civil Affairs Battalion



"We should not judge people by their ethnic background or religious beliefs."

Army Spc. Brian Avery  
70th Armored Regiment

"We all need to get along."

Army Chief Warrant Officer  
Greg Savage  
3rd Infantry Division



"No one is better than anyone else."

Army Spc. Hamed Heider  
66th Military Intelligence Company

"We should have tolerance of different beliefs and cultures. If you have that, you won't have things like the Holocaust happening."

Army Spc. Gloria Crossett  
3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment



## There she blows



Photo by Cpl. Alicia M. Garcia

A massive sandstorm rolls over Al Asad, Iraq, just before nightfall April 27. Sandstorms are caused by strong winds blowing over loose sand and picking up so much of it, visibility is reduced. At certain times of the year in desert regions, sandstorms become more frequent because the strong heating of the air over the desert causes the lower atmosphere to become unstable. This instability mixes high-winds in the middle troposphere downward, producing stronger winds at the surface.

## Graves

from Page 1

they're very attached to them. When we do the forensic analysis, we break it down into two parts. We do an analysis to find out how that individual died, and then we look at the clothing and the personal effects to determine again what killed them and in exactly what circumstances," said Amin.

Amin went on to explain how identification cards, sometimes recovered with the remains, are not always the IDs of the bodies they are found with. It happens often that a body will be found with identification papers for an entire group of people; sometimes for a whole family. It is possible, therefore, for the ID card or papers to not belong to a deceased person at all.

Amin admits that literally thousands of kilograms of paper records in his care are a challenge for him and his staff. "You can come to my Ministry and photograph them. They are stacked on the floor. I have sought international support because I can't deal with the tons of records," he said. "We are thinking of (how to create) our own database to process these documents. The original archives were looted and disturbed right after the war, and now are in the hands of dozens of political parties. They are being used for different purposes."

The records are deteriorating, Amin said, and they need to be collected and brought to one place. He would like to see a national archive of some kind. "We need to have them preserved in an appropriate and scientific manner. They are like dossiers; they are thin and over time they become more and more fragile. We have begun to process them at our Ministry."

The on-site identification process is based in part on forensic analysis, done in a laboratory setting established temporarily near each mass-grave site. There is very little connectivity between records kept at the Ministry right now and the sites in the field, except what the staff transport back and forth.

The security situation has not allowed Amin to deal with families just yet, and the laboratory's positive identification work is held up somewhat as a result. Justice needs to be done, he said, and so as many details as can be recorded in the absence of relatives needs to be collected carefully and painstakingly, and cross-referenced when it can be.

"After the formation of the new government, the trials for the people who (murdered these people) should be able to start. We have an independent court system, and they should be able to say when there will be trials. After the case is ready, I would think it will be able to start,"

Trials for those responsible for the atrocities which we are finding now will be able to begin after the new government is seated, Minister Amin said as he looked around the vast field of 18 three-meter-wide trenches, each 15 meters long.

"They have a place in the jail for the half-brother of Saddam and for the members of the former Ba'ath party and for the others who are involved. There are people buried here from the time of the former regime, and that includes Kuwaitis. These will be the [bodies of] people brought here from the oldest prison in Iraq. It is terrible there and there are mass graves there also."

Amin said the rounded number of souls missing was approximate, but that it was better than an educated guess. "Nobody can give you the exact figure, but the estimation goes from 600,000 to one million people, based on what we know about the casualties and missing persons of three Persian Gulf wars between 1980 and 1988, 1991, and then again in 2003.

Roughly 182,000 Kurds disappeared in Anfal campaigns in 1988, including these victims found at Muthanna. In the summer of 1983, 8,000 members of the Barzani and Kurds, disappeared. In 1980, more than 10,000 Feyli Kurds also disappeared, according to Amin. "We have hundreds, even thousands of people who were killed during the uprising of 1991 in the south and in the north."

Families from the Iran-Iraq War era are not the only ones with missing persons reports on file, and the present-day slaughter of large groups of people is hampering efforts to identify the war-dead even further. According to Amin, the number of relatively recent mass graves is growing by the day.

"This is a country which doesn't have its own expertise in forensics," said Amin. "In 12 of 18 provinces, there are no forensic pathologists. We have about 20 forensic pathologists all told, mostly in Baghdad, and they are overwhelmed by the amount of bodies that they are finding from recent murders."

By current situations, Amin said, he is making

a reference to current events which require identifications on a mass-scale.

"Kidnappings, beheadings, killings since the fall of the regime; from Jan. of 2004 to Jan. 2005, about 1,435 bodies have turned up, and about 1,000 of them are unidentifiable and unclaimed. Just recently, there were 58 bodies found in Swaira on the banks of the Tigris, close to Madain.

"Every week you hear about bodies found in this and that place," he said. "We have recently found several mass grave sites. My team in Basra found actually five mass graves. We haven't announced the names of the sites. One of them contains about 5,000 people. We have others with between a couple of people and 50, from 50 to 100, and then one with about 1,000 people buried in it. We have also found mortal remains of 552 bodies in one place and 29 bodies in another place.

"We are all under pressure to get this (identification business) completed, and I joined the corps of these people to help these people to bring the people who did this to justice," Amin said of the people he's working with. "It's very courageous. I mean, they are putting their lives on the line to do this. I highly appreciate the work of people working in the area of forensics, whether they are pathologists or odontologists or archaeologists or anthropologists. They have a hard job.

"Iraq is a land of mass graves. It's a museum of crimes. And we have about 1 million people missing and who have disappeared in this country. I think that for decades to come, if not for even centuries to come," Amin said, "that one might find in this country bones and carcasses of victims — bodies, mortal remains — of victims of an era which is one of the worst eras of the human history, the era that was ruled by the Stalin of Iraq or Hitler of Iraq, Saddam Hussein."

Two years ago, another mass-grave site, at Haptra, was unearthed for the first time. The bodies there were buried as deep as four meters below the surface of the earth. A scientific method was used to recover as much information as possible from the dead there while leaving the bodies as intact as was practical. Both the topography and the geophysics of the Haptra site are different, allowing for the deeper holes. Here, at the current site, the ground is only loose dirt and sand for less than one meter, and then there is a thick layer of rocks.



Photo by Lt. Cmdr. Scott Allen

**Pathologists and archaeologists work to exhume the remains of Kurdish women and children from the Muthanna mass graves site.**

That isn't the only difference. Paleontologists are now also interested in artifacts here which date back to as long ago as 9,000 years. The site is laden with flint chips and prehistoric cutting tools made of flint stones. Research into those artifacts will have to wait until the area is no longer a crime scene.

"Usually, these graves — indeed graves like these around the world — are six to eight feet deep. The geology here is really, really severe," Amin said. "There is so much rock, at about 60 centimeters down, that they could not have dug any deeper a hole. So I think they came here only because they thought they could dig deeper holes."

"I seize this opportunity to make an appeal to the international community, to the Arab world, Islamic world, to the Europeans and to the Americans that our means are extremely limited," said Amin. "Our expertise is extremely limited. It's not within the capacity of any single group to deal with such a huge problem.

"So we are thinking of creating a national center for missing and disappeared in this country," Amin said. "We need to build our own capacity to train Iraqis, to open information and identification centers, DNA labs, and to do this work properly, scientifically and in a dignified manner. We owe this to the families of our victims and to the victims themselves, to rebury them in a dignified and proper manner."



Photo by Lt. Cmdr. Scott Allen

**A radiographer examines remains showing the impact of a bullet that penetrated the bone of a victim exhumed from a mass grave site in Iraq.**

## Critters

from Page 2

potency of venom released through a bite is what determines its severity to the victim — whether it's deadly or not."

"There are also a number of venomous snakes in Iraq," Horosko added. "Many of these have the viper-like characteristics of dangerous snakes in the U.S. However, there are a couple of venomous species here that resemble nonpoisonous snakes back home. The best thing to do with snakes is to leave them all alone."

And who could forget the notorious camel spiders? "Contrary to popular belief, camel spiders are not really spiders, and do not transmit disease and are not venomous," explained Horosko. "However, they're quite fast, aggressive, and also nocturnal."

But how can something so grotesquely ugly that grows to be the size of a miniature elephant *not* be a threat to someone?

"Soldiers may get the idea that they're pretty big," Horosko said grinning. "I've seen a photo floating around on the Web — there are two of them latched together and they look like gopher-sized or something. No, they're really not that big. The biggest they'll get is about as big as a tarantula, which is about 4 or 5 inches from the tip of the nose to the end of the abdomen, but not as fat, and it has longer and skinnier legs. However, they're still pretty fast and aggressive and if you get bitten by something like that, you'll know it."

Whether you are dealing with pesky, disease-carrying insects or scary, venomous critters, the bottom line is the same: be constantly aware of your surroundings and just as importantly, don't take the information from those pre-deployment lectures for granted. It just may save your life.



Photo by Sgt. Misha King

**A sample of sand flies is prepped for examination under a microscope to determine the sex. Only female bites can transmit disease.**

# U.S. Air Force trains Iraqis to fly C-130 cargo planes

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

**ALI AIR BASE, TALIL, Iraq** — As 2005 marks major shifts in the Coalition's role in Iraq, the Iraqi Army is beginning to take care of its own, and one Air Force unit is making sure the new Iraqi Army has competent counterparts in the skies.

The Department of Defense recently provided the new Iraqi Air Force with three American C-130 aircraft, and Airmen from 777th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron out of Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., are in Talil, Iraq, training Iraqis to fly them.

The Airmen, who were hand-picked from C-130 units across the country by Lt. Gen. William Welser, 18th Air Force commander, are working hand in hand with pilots and crewmembers who served in Saddam's air force before Operation Iraqi Freedom, teaching them the basics of operating the airborne workhorses.

"By the time the program is over, which we estimate to be May 2006, they will be a fully functional squadron," said Air Force Maj. Roger Redwood, operations flight commander, 23rd Advisory Support Team, 777th EAS. The 23rd AST is training the Iraqi Air Force's 23rd Squadron.

While many of the new recruits have ample flight experience, there is one major obstacle in training them to fly American aircraft.

"The hard part of our job is teaching them to fly this airplane when they can't speak basic English," Redwood said. "Most of the officers can communicate pretty well, but they have a hard time understanding the radio calls from air traffic control."

Redwood said the enlisted Airmen barely speak any English at all, so they are constantly having the officers translate instructions in the aircraft, which only compounds things while training the troops.

"That's why it's taking the enlisted troops longer to qualify out," he said. "They know the airplanes. They know the systems. They can do it all in Arabic, but we require them to do it in English, because if they are going to fly worldwide, they will need to be able to do it in English."

Normally, the 777th would train pilots from other countries at its base in Little Rock, Ark., but the DoD requires students to

pass an English test prior to attending the course. The need for Iraqi pilots is so critical right now, there was no time to teach them the language before teaching them to fly, Redwood said.

By bringing the school to Iraq, the squadron is making military history.

"This is the first time the (U.S.) Air Force has had an advisory support team conducting training in a combat zone," said Air Force Master Sgt. John Spillane, 23rd AST chief loadmaster. "This is one of the coolest things I've ever done. No one has ever done what we're doing."

The Airmen all seem to agree working with the Iraqis is an inspiring experience. "These guys are all true patriots. They want to help their country," Redwood said.

One Iraqi pilot, who wanted to remain anonymous, said he lives in fear of the insurgency every day because of what he is doing. He said none of his friends or neighbors know where he is while he is going through the training, and his wife and the wives of other pilots need to make up stories to explain their whereabouts.

"There is a threat for anyone who is trying to build this country at this time," he said.

The pilot added that the threats don't come from Iraqi citizens. They are people from other countries who want to make trouble in Iraq.

"I do not know why they do this," he said. "I just know they do."

The threat is so real, the pilots-in-training won't even ride the



A pilot in training with the 23rd Squadron (Transport), Iraqi Air Force, runs through a systems check, April 18, in Talil, Iraq, before taking off in one of three C-130 aircraft that were provided to the Iraqi Air Force by the U.S.

same taxi all the way home from the base, Redwood said.

"They will take one cab into the city, and take another one to their house so no one knows where they live," he said.

The Airmen of the Iraqi air force's 23rd Squadron recently came face to face with what the insurgency is willing to do to try and stop the reconstruction of Iraq.

An Iraqi loadmaster's brother was killed because of his involvement with the new Iraqi Air Force. The loadmaster then took time off to move his brother's family into his house, and considered quitting the force, but his comrades supported him and convinced him to continue training.

Redwood said there have been several other incidents where insurgents have targeted family members of the Airmen, and every time he wonders if they will come back to the training, but they always do.

## 'Triangle of Death's EOD team stays ahead of terrorists

Story and photo by  
Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas  
Scimitar Staff

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE ST. MICHAEL, AL MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq** — Disarming and detonating one improvised explosive device at a time is how Soldiers of the 767th Ordnance Company, Explosive Ordnance Disposal team handle their jobs every day. They said there are IEDs, vehicle-borne IEDs, and UXOs (unexploded ordnance) scattered throughout their area of operation, the "Triangle of Death."

These dangerous devices can be found in anything. The IEDs have been found in dead animals, rice sacks, concrete blocks, tires and in the roads they drive. They said they have encountered 220 cases of IEDs, VBIEDs, and UXOs. This three-Soldier team from Fort McNair, Washington, D.C., explained that their jobs are never done and what they do is an essential piece to the puzzle of success in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We're on standby 24 hours a day," said Spc. Michael S. Hockman, team member of the 767th. "There are no days off. There is no time off. Without us, ground traffic stops and people get hurt."

Standby is their status from day to day until

they receive a call from someone on the road. Living every minute like it is their last, the Soldiers make every minute count, Hockman said. "Sometimes we give classes to other Soldiers as well as to ourselves. We give UXO awareness classes and IED awareness classes."

Classes help protect troops but so does their robot, which is used to get up close and personal with the different ordnances. The Soldiers train each other to stay combat ready with these robots and tasks of the EOD Soldier. One of the exercises the Soldiers work on is opening the door of a vehicle and inspecting it with the robot.

"Working the robot is challenging," said Pfc. Adam DeMoss, team member of 767th. "The terrain features and garbage everywhere make the job challenging."

DeMoss graduated from Advanced Individual Training in October and was deployed here a month later. The experience of



Pfc. Adam DeMoss of the 767th Ordnance Co. performs maintenance to the robot he uses to get close to improvised explosive devices, vehicle-borne IEDs and unexploded ordnance.

doing his job in a combat zone has given him a different outlook on life, he said. "When we got hit by our first IED, it was something that got me thinking." The experience shook him up but injured no one; it did minimal damage to one of their vehicles.

Their team leader, Staff Sgt. Nicholas Tritto, explained that during his first deployment to Afghanistan he was actually hit by numerous

IEDs. "I got hurt when I was deployed to Afghanistan. I lost one of my fingers. My right side has been reconstructed. We were doing demolition. We had about 450 pounds of explosives out there. One of our interpreters flipped on us and sold our information to anti-Coalition forces. They booby-trapped our demolition spot, placing IEDs in various places in the dirt. We couldn't tell that anything had been disturbed because it was all gravel out there. They waited for us to get in the middle of the field and they blew each of them." It took a lot of surgeries and physical therapy to get back in shape to soldier again, he said.

"Some days, it feels like a never-ending battle," Hockman added. "It feels like you are sweeping the porch off and the wind is blowing the dirt right back in. Other days, you sweep the porch off and it stays clean for a few days. You have your highs and your lows. We are definitely making a difference."

It is due to the Soldiers' cohesiveness and the trust they have for each other, Hockman said. "I care about these guys I am working with more than anyone else. If I don't do my job correctly, they die. I don't have to worry about anything with my team. I don't worry about them clearing their weapons — I know they did it. We depend on each other. If we can't depend on each other, we're already dead."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Pesticide spraying to begin May 10 throughout Iraq

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The Iraqi government plans to spray date palms for insects beginning May 10 for approximately one month to revitalize the local date palm industry. The coalition is working with the Iraqi government to ensure that spraying, which will occur in Baghdad, Divala, Karbala, Hilla, Kut and Najaf, will be safe for local and Coalition personnel.

The airplanes spraying the pesticide will be CH-801 light airplanes painted yellow with a lateral blue stripe on each side.

All personnel should stay at least 800 feet away from spraying, if possible, and avoid the sprayed area for 24 hours. Carry a poncho or rain gear in case of pesticide drift or if planes spray off-target. The signs of pesticide exposure include sudden headache, shortness of breath, coughing, runny or stuffy nose, nausea, involuntary twitching, chest pain and difficulty breathing. First aid for accidental exposure is to remove the person from further exposure, wash with soap and water and seek medical attention.

## Aircraft lighter ban also applies to service members

By Gerry J. Gilmore

American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** — Anyone — including service members — carrying lighters will be required to surrender them at U.S. airport security checkpoints before boarding aircraft under a new federal law that became effective April 14, Transportation Security Administration officials said.

The new law also applies to military and civilian passengers on commercially chartered U.S. military overseas flights, noted Army Lt. Col. Scott Ross, a spokesman with U.S. Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

“Due to al Qaeda’s continued efforts to create improvised explosive devices, prohibiting lighters onboard aircraft and in the sterile areas of airports will reduce current security vulnerabilities and add another layer of defense,” a TSA document stated.

President Bush signed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 on Dec. 17, 2004. The act mandates that butane lighters be added to the list of items prohibited from being carried aboard aircraft that depart from or land at U.S. commercial airports.

The new law applies to “anything that produces a flame,” including Zippo brand and other lighters, said TSA spokesman Chris Jolma. However, aircraft passengers may still carry up to four books of matches, according to TSA documents.

The law also bans lighters from being placed in both carry-on luggage and cargo baggage, according to the TSA.

“Wherever there’s a TSA [security] checkpoint, we’re responsible for enforcing the law,” Jolma noted, adding, “Folks should definitely inspect their baggage before going to the airport, just to avoid the hassle.”

On Dec. 22, 2001, passengers aboard American Airlines Flight 63 en route from Paris to Miami stopped British citizen Richard Reid from lighting a fuse attached to an explosive hidden inside his sneakers.

Reid, a self-confessed al-Qaeda sympathizer, was later convicted in a U.S. federal court of trying to blow up the plane. He is now serving a life sentence.

Jolma agreed Reid’s failed attempt to bring down Flight 63 alerted U.S. authorities of the need to tighten up airline security. And, he pointed out, global terrorists continue to look for “innovative means” to bring down aircraft.

## Military jury gives Akbar death penalty

**FORT BRAGG, N.C.** — Sgt. Hasan Akbar was sentenced to death by a military panel at 8:40 p.m. April 28. Akbar had been found guilty of murder by a general court-martial at Fort Bragg April 21. The panel was unanimous on two specifications of premeditated murder and three specifications of attempted premeditated murder.

Akbar was convicted of throwing grenades into the tents of fellow 101st Airborne Division Soldiers the night before they left Kuwait to advance into Iraq, March 23, 2003. The grenade attack on three tents in Camp Pennsylvania, Kuwait, took the lives of Capt. Christopher Seifert and Maj. Gregory Stone and wounded 14 others from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky. The results of trial will next be reviewed by the general court-martial convening authority, Maj. Gen. Virgil L. Packett II. Packett may approve the sentence as adjudged, or reduce it in part or in whole.

Upon completion of Packett’s review, the case will automatically be reviewed by the Army Court of Criminal Appeals, officials said, and then by the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces.

## U.S. Army announces investigation results of Italian death

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The military investigating officer completed his Army Regulation 15-6 investigation report, which was approved April 29, regarding the March 4 incident at a traffic-control point in Baghdad resulting in the death of one Italian and the wounding of two others.

Brig. Gen. Peter Vangjel, Multi-National Corps - Iraq inves-

tigating officer, was appointed March 8 by Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, MNC-I commander, to investigate all the circumstances surrounding the death of Nicola Calipari, an Italian intelligence officer, and the wounding of Guiliana Sgrena, an Italian journalist, and their driver.

“This was a tragic accident and MNF-I expresses its deepest sympathies to the Calipari family,” said Vangjel.

The AR 15-6 investigation concluded that the vehicle approaching the checkpoint failed to reduce speed until fired upon and that the Soldiers manning the checkpoint acted in accordance with the rules of engagement.

Vangjel’s recommendation that no disciplinary action be taken against any Soldier was approved by Vines.

“The Italian military is making significant contributions everyday to help secure the future of Iraq,” said Gen. George W. Casey, commanding general of Multi-National Force - Iraq, “and we are proud to be serving beside them.”

## Rice urges continued momentum in Iraq

**WASHINGTON** — It is important for the momentum in Iraq’s political process to continue as the country forms its new government, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told reporters during an April 25 briefing in Crawford, Texas.

Rice said this progress will continue to send a message to the Iraqi people that their future lies in the political process, not in the violence espoused by terrorists.

Inclusiveness is key as Iraq continues to build its government institutions, the secretary said. “Everybody agrees that the Sunni population must be included and that the Sunni population needs to participate,” she said.

*Continued on next page*



Members of the Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 11 based in Whidbey, Wash., prepare to dispose of ordnance found in the area of An Najaf, Iraq.

## Iraqi Army finds cache: U.S. Sailors, Soldiers destroy it

Story and photo by

Sgt. 1st Class Kevin W. Reeves

155th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE KALSU, Iraq** — Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal team members, along with Soldiers of the 155th Brigade Combat Team, disposed of ordnance found in the area of An Najaf, Iraq, by members of the Iraqi Army on the way back to their base after completing training with Coalition Forces on April 21.

The Iraqi Soldiers discovered the cache in the desert near a site used by Coalition Forces to train members of

the Iraqi Army and Iraqi police. The IA Soldiers had just completed a training exercise with 155th BCT Soldiers and were returning to their base in An Najaf, Iraq, when they spotted something they suspected was unexploded ordnance. Upon closer investigation, the IA commander decided he should report this to Coalition Forces.

The rounds were lying on top of the ground near an intersection of two heavily-traveled roads. They appeared to have been buried, but recent winds had unearthed them so they could be seen.

Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 98th Armor collected the munitions, took them into coalition force control and later disposed of them.

NEWS IN BRIEF

# Setting records



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Peter Chadwick

**Soldiers of the Iraqi Army Training Academy Class 05-08 and their invited U.S. Army guests salute the Iraqi flag during the playing of the Iraqi National Anthem at their graduation ceremony. The class, 330 strong, is the largest class at the school in Camp Taji, Iraq, since the 3rd Infantry Division assumed responsibility in March.**

Iraqi leaders are reaching out to the minority Sunnis to include them in the governmental process, and the Sunnis, in turn, are reaching back, the secretary said. "It's a two-way street," she said.

Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who was elected prime minister by the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly April 7, said earlier this month that Iraq will overcome its differences to build a strong, unified government.

"I am sure we are going to form very good ministries," Jaafari said during an April 12 press conference in Baghdad with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. "All of [the ministers] are good technocrats. They are very efficient [and] from different backgrounds. So I think we can cooperate, all of us, and face these challenges together."

Rice emphasized during the April 25 press conference that this effort must be left to the Iraqis. "The process of trying to form a government out of the very successful election is an Iraqi process, and it has to be an Iraqi process," she said. "I think everyone believes that the Iraqi people now deserve a government, given that they took risks to vote."

The secretary delivered her remarks following a series of meetings between President Bush and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah. In addition to progress in Iraq, the leaders discussed terrorism and their common strategy of dealing with extremism by fighting terrorists in the near term, Rice said. "The Saudis have made some real good progress in that

respect." (By Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service)

## DoD announces TRICARE program for guard, reserve

**WASHINGTON** — The Department of Defense announced the start of health care coverage under TRICARE Reserve Select — a new premium-based health plan for certain eligible National Guard and Reserve (reserve component) members and family members. For a monthly premium of \$75 for TRS member-only coverage and \$233 for TRS member and family member coverage, TRS offers Comprehensive health coverage.

A TRS handbook, a list of Service contacts to verify eligibility and contacts for TRICARE regional contractors for TRS benefit information are available on the TRICARE Web site. at [www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve/reserveselect](http://www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve/reserveselect).

## Plans for American Cancer Society fundraiser underway

**LOG BASE SEITZ, Iraq** — The 169th Corps Support Battalion, a reserve battalion from Olathe, Kansas plans to conduct a Relay for Life fundraiser for the American Cancer Society May 28 at Log Base Seitz.

The fundraiser was planned by 2nd Lt. Peter Euler, a Reserve Soldier from Pittsburg, Kan., and sports writer for the Pittsburg newspaper, because he was not able to take part in this year's event back home. He has participated for the past five years and decided not to let a deployment keep him from continuing to help raise money. Euler is assigned to the 169th CSB and attached to the 546th Transportation Company from Fort Bragg, N.C., as a platoon leader for the transportation company.

The Relay for Life will consist of teams from six companies within the battalion in which they will be competing in seven categories to include most money raised, most overall mileage, most mileage in the run, bike and elliptical trainer, and most push-ups and sit-ups.

Each company in the battalion is raising money for the American Cancer Society and its local charity back in the states. The communities benefiting are Johnson County, Kan.; Cumberland County, N.C.; Comanche County, Okla.; Killeen Relay for Life, Texas; and Columbus-Muscogee County, Ga.

Fort Hood, Texas, and Fort Bragg, N.C., have already donated pens and cups for the event, and both plan to donate T-shirts as well.

The place to access the latest MNF-I/MNC-I news, information and policies, is online. Check out [www.mnf-iraq.com](http://www.mnf-iraq.com) to stay informed.



## Frequencies

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

## Worship and Prayer Schedule for the International Zone

### Sunday

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

### Monday-Friday

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

### Saturday

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

### Daily Islamic Prayer

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



Capt. Katherine Knake, along with assistance from a local Iraqi boy, successfully injects a dose of dewormer medicine into the mouth of a sheep. Knake, a veterinarian in the 407th Civil Affairs Battalion in Al Mahmudiyah travels to different cities in Iraq giving care to mostly chickens, sheep, goats and cows. Knake and her team from the 407th dewormed more than 500 sheep in one day.

## CA unit wins hearts, minds through vet care

Story and photo by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas  
Scimitar Staff

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE SAINT MICHAEL, AL MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq** — Sheep, goats, donkeys and chickens — those are the patients the veterinarian team of the 407th Civil Affairs Battalion usually encounters during their daily missions.

What kind of medical care do the animals need? How can we help them? Those are the usual questions asked by Capt. Katherine Knake, veterinary preventive health officer, team leader of Company A, 407th CA.

Knake explained her team tries to help the Iraqi people in any way possible, especially with preventing disease in their livestock. They deal with local veterinarians at government clinics.

“We are trying to help them get education programs on board, getting pamphlets out to local farmers,” Knake said. “We want them to understand the importance of preventive health care.”

In addition, Knake and her team visit local farmers. “Most of the time they say, ‘I’m losing sheep. I’m losing cows.’ We ask them, ‘Did you vaccinate?’ They usually say, ‘no.’ The locals either didn’t know about it or they didn’t bother to do it. We are trying to preach the importance of preventing disease,” she said.

Getting the message out has proven difficult, so Knake and her team convoy dangerous streets of the ‘Triangle of Death’ knocking on doors to make sure the people hear her. The vet team usually stops at farms in their area of operation to deworm the sheep and goats as often as possible.

“Deworming is giving a medication that will kill off parasites that are inside the intestinal track,” she said. “A lot of the diseases they have around here are contagious between animals. Most are fatal and it stops animals from reproducing and results in a loss of produce as well. Economically it is important to prevent the diseases. Most of it is preventable with vaccines and deworming.”

Many of the animals the vet team works with are animals that pose very little threat. Anti-coalition forces that use improvised explosive devices cause enough of a hazard for the vet team when they are out on missions, although rendering medical care to animals can sometimes be hazardous, Knake said.

“We mainly work with sheep and goats. Those animals are the easiest to work with for us, physically,” she said. “Unlike cows at home, these cows here act differently. These animals demonstrate wilder and more aggressive behavior.”

Providing care to animals here affords Knake and her team with an opportunity to meet and mingle with the Iraqi people in their own neighborhoods. Many of the locals they help are

uneasy about inviting Soldiers into their homes at first because they are from different cultures, said Spc. Amanda Pieschek, veterinary assistant, Co. A, 407th CA.

“When we first come, the people are usually frightened or scared. A lot of women will usually run into their houses and won’t talk to us, but then we show we are here to help them. When we leave, they are happy and excited we came. They are glad they got to talk to us. They will bring us bread and tea. They try to give us gifts. The next time we drive past, they will wave instead of giving nasty looks.”

For the smiles and changing the morale of each person they touch, the Soldiers feel they are making a difference and a big impact in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Pieschek said. “Our job is very important. Going to the farms gives us a chance to go out and talk to the locals. It gives us a chance to find out about them and other things that are going on in the area. We improve their livestock, which helps them improve their lives.”

Saving one sheep or goat every day, let alone 500 or more a day, has helped improve the Iraqi people’s lives. It helps her enjoy her job by seeing the change it is making, Knake said. “It’s a great job. It’s a lot of fun. I love getting to meet the people. It’s what we’re here for. I think them seeing us as people makes a big difference.”

## Renovations complete in two more Baghdad schools

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

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Two ribbon cutting ceremonies were held in the Mansour district of Baghdad here to celebrate the completion of recent renovations at local schools.

One primary and one secondary school received new bathroom plumbing, fresh paint on all the walls and a reconstructed playground area. The three-month project, costing over \$70,000, was completed by local Iraqi contractors with financial assistance from the U.S. Army. The ribbon cutting ceremony at the primary school was conducted with much fan-

fare. Students lined the hallways, sang songs and danced. The Iraqi flag was raised, and the children recited the Iraqi pledge of allegiance and sang the Iraqi National Anthem. Before the ribbon cutting, the headmistress of the school thanked the Army for their efforts. She said the renovations are an extremely generous asset for education of the children who are the “people of the upcoming and prosperous future” of Iraq.

“We are extremely happy with the new renovations,” said a primary school teacher. “I felt bad teaching the kids under the old conditions. These kids are the future of Iraq and, we should take care of them and give them a good environment to learn.”

The ceremony at the secondary school was not as jubilant, but rather sobering. Upon arriving at the school, Maj. Rob Menist, 1st Battalion, 41st Infantry Regiment executive officer, was presented with a threat letter the school received just a few days prior. The letter stipulated that if Americans are welcomed back into the school, “God’s law” would be brought to the school.

Despite the threat, the headmistress invited the Soldiers into her school. She said the threat will not discourage her from providing a safe place for her students to learn. “Thank you for what you have done for our school and for the girls; it is nice now,” she said. “It is now a much better place for the girls to learn.”



Two Iraqi boys salute their country’s flag and recite their national anthem at their renovated school.

# C 1/5 warriors undaunted by terrorists' evil attacks



Lance Cpl. Christopher C. Bennett, a rifleman with C Co., 1st Bn., posts security from a street corner and keeps vigilant watch on Iraqis in the street ahead of him. Locals living in the southern outskirts of the city here have been known to harbor hatred toward Marines visiting their neighborhoods. Bennett, a 24-year-old from Dansville, Mich., joined other Marines in visiting an area where, just two weeks earlier, they engaged insurgents in the biggest firefight they've had since deploying here in early March.

Story and photos by Cpl. Tom Sloan  
2nd Marine Division Public Affairs

**AR RAMADI, Iraq** — A squad of Marines drinks fruit punch-flavored sport drinks they picked up from the dining facility as they sit cross-legged and cramped in the back of a seven-ton truck. The big rig snorts like a rogue elephant as it accelerates around a street corner transporting the warriors to their drop-off point.

Marines with Company C, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, revisited and patrolled a section of Ramadi where, just two weeks ago, they engaged terrorists in the biggest firefight they've had since deploying here in early March.

"We're not going to let a bunch of thugs scare us away from patrolling a part of our [area of operations]," said Staff Sgt. John R. Walthour, platoon sergeant.

The Edmond, Okla., native said he and his platoon had finished a mission there and were heading back on foot to their extraction point when they got an eerie feeling something bad was about to happen.

"The locals started giving us mean looks on the way back, which made us think something was up; something was wrong," he recalled.

An unknown group of terrorists ambushed the Marines from behind.

"They laid into us from the rear with machine gun fire," said Sgt. Richard A. Gubbins, squad leader. "We returned fire and the fight lasted about five minutes. It was long enough for one of my Marines to unload three 30-round magazines as he laid down suppressive fire," continued the Detroit native.

When the smoke settled, one Marine was hit in the arm; however, he was returned to full duty a few days later.

Despite the engagement, the Marines weren't reluctant about being back and walking through the notorious neighborhoods again during the three-hour patrol.

"We want to get into a fight," said Cpl. Paul M. Odonnell, a team leader with 3rd Squad. "I'm not uneasy. We need to find these guys and stop them."

According to the Newburgh, N.Y., native, the recent



Knowing the importance of hydration, 3rd Pltn. Marines of Co. C, 1st Bn., 5th Marine Reg. sit in the back of a seven-ton truck and drink sports drinks before hitting the streets and conducting an aggressive combat patrol.

ambush is not the only incident in this area where terrorists have attacked C Co. Marines.

"See that building right there," Odonnell said as he pointed to an abandoned two-story structure while passing it during the patrol. "That's a sniper position. Someone shot at us from there before. There's also a road up here where 12 [improvised explosive devices] were found. This is one of the most dangerous areas in our AO."

Gubbins led his squad of Marines up and down the streets in the terrorist stronghold.

The Marines finished conducting their patrol without incident and returned to their base, Camp Snake Pit, safely.

"The patrol went well, and I was surprised we didn't make contact," he said. "The insurgents are still out there, though. We'll eventually find them."

## Tennessee Soldiers buy back weapons, munitions

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

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE CALDWELL, DIYALA, Iraq** — The \$1,000 check Sgt. Montgomery handed to the young Iraqi man on April 26 brought a broad grin to his face. On that rainy, windswept day Montgomery handed out several thousand U.S. dollars to citizens of the Al-Hizam village.

Sgt. Philip Montgomery from Murray, Ky., is the Rewards for Information coordinator for the 278th Regimental Combat Team, Tennessee Army National Guard. Montgomery is using American funds from the commander's rewards program to help keep deadly explosives, munitions and potential terrorists out of the Diyala area.

"The primary purpose of the rewards program is to take [weapons and munitions] off the market," said 1st Sgt. Robert Billings of Team Bravo. "We patrol local villages and seek out citizens who may know where old caches are at," he said.

"Repeat customers are a big thing," said Montgomery. "They usually flag us down. We call them 'Iraqi Hell's Angels' or 'the Three Amigos.' They ride all over the desert

on motorcycles, find ammunition and explosives, hide it till they get enough, then turn it in."

More than 20 to 30 tons of explosives have been recovered or destroyed, Billings and Montgomery estimate. There has been so much turned in, it is hard to keep track of, said Billings.

In March alone, 52 caches were recovered, said Montgomery, and 18 payments went to the village of Al Hizam and six to Masaleen.

Some of the local men do so well they turn in four to five caches a month, potentially earning hundreds to thousands of extra dollars per month, said Montgomery. The largest payout was more than a couple thousand dollars.

Payments for caches vary, because some munitions are worth more than others. There is no set amount, Montgomery said.

More than \$5,200 was paid to the villagers at the end of the day.

As far as the program's effectiveness, 2nd Lt. Jeffrey Pettee, Team Bravo platoon commander, said he had "mixed



Villagers gather and wait around Sgt. Phillip Montgomery as he sorts through checks and paperwork for the rewards program.

feelings, but overall it's very positive."

"Somebody will buy [the ammunition and weapons]," Montgomery said. "With us buying them, it takes them safely off the street."

# Fort Bragg Soldiers refurbish, redistribute ammo

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

**CAMP TAQQADUM, Iraq** — Soldiers are told to clean their rifles on a regular basis, paying little attention to the other, equally important component that makes their rifle effective, ammunition.

Ammunition is necessary in combat, but the harsh climate of the desert can render a Soldier's weapon, as well as his rounds, unserviceable unless proper maintenance is performed.

When ammunition is left in the open, rounds will collect dirt or rust and start becoming corroded; however, ammunition exposed to the elements may not always be useless because of a refurbishment program that is saving the Army thousands of dollars in small-arms ammunition expenses.

The 2nd Detachment, 8th Ordnance Company, 620th Corps Support Battalion, 1st Corps Support Command, Fort Bragg, N.C., runs the ammunition supply point for the western part of the country and has an active involvement in the refurbishment of small-arms

ammunition, said 1st Lt. Joshua D. Clark, 2nd Det. Commander.

"We are here for life support, and we run the ASP, which is designed to support at least a division-sized element," Clark said. "We stock anything from small-arms rounds all the way up to guided missiles,"

"There are four ASPs in theater, and ours is a platoon-size element with 49 Soldiers," Clark said.

"In the refurbishment program, we take ammunition that is considered condition code H, — meaning it is unserviceable for issue — clean it and see what we can



**Sgt. Patricia Maxi, ammunition sergeant, 8th Ordnance Co., 620th Corps Support Battalion, inspects a box of unexpended ammunition that will be refurbished and redistributed as usable pieces.**

do to repair the ammo," said Chief Warrant Officer Cheryl Mike, accountable officer, 2nd Det. "We use any spare parts we have to replenish the broken parts."

The units turn in what would typically be considered unserviceable ammunition, Clark said. The detachment can arrange transportation for the ammunition which comes on convoys. "It is a challenge, but it is exciting because we are able to do our mission."

The process of refurbishment starts when "customer" units outside Camp Taqqadum send in the unserviceable ammunition, said Mike, who then identifies the ammo that is unserviceable and moves it to technical support Soldiers, who go through the ammunition to check its serviceability.

"If it can be refurbished we will do everything within our means to do it here," Mike said. "Sometimes we have to request parts from other places. They get sent to us, and we refurbish the ammo that way."

"What we are looking to do is make sure all of the ammo is

not rusted or beat up too much," said Staff Sgt. Thomas Clancy, ammunition sergeant, 2nd Det. "We check the tips, check the primers to make sure they are intact and make sure the ammo is entirely clean."

The process of refurbishment involves cleaning the ammo with a stiff brush to get rid of any dirt, corrosion or things of that nature, Clancy said. "Our biggest concern is to make sure we are putting clean and serviceable ammunition back into the system. All of the refurbished ammo will be put into a local lot and will probably be used as training rounds."

On the back of each round of ammunition is a number that identifies where it was made, and if the number is not readable when it is refurbished, it is put into the local lot, Clancy said. The local lot lets the Soldiers using the ammunition know that it is not new ammo.

"This type of ammunition is used for training, because we don't want to put rounds we are unsure about back into circulation to be used in a real fight," Clancy said. "Our goal is to save as much ammunition as we can and do it safely. On a good day we normally get through a couple thousand rounds of ammunition."

However, some of the rounds sent to the ASP are beyond repair.

"Ammo that is unserviceable is taken to Paladin, a civilian-contracted company, and disposed of," Clancy said. "The ammo has to be in pretty bad shape for us not to be able to fix it. In that case we package it up, send it to Paladin and they blow it up on the spot to make sure no Soldiers will ever receive that ammo again."

"So far we have saved the Army around \$50,000 with ammunition we were able to put back into the supply system," Mike said. For now the refurbishment program is directed toward small arms ammo. Once that process is perfected the program will move up to heavier ammunition.

"One thing we like to emphasize is for Soldiers to clean their ammo," Clancy said. "Soldiers always clean their weapon but rarely do they take the time to check their ammunition."

"Take it out of the magazine, wipe it off make sure it's clean, and there should be no problem," Clancy explained. "Ammo can only get beaten up so much before it just isn't safe to shoot. Unserviceable ammo can cause weapon jams, weapon malfunctions or misfires, but if you take care of the ammo, the ammo will take care of you when it really counts."



**A partially-corroded belt of unexpended ammunition is checked for usable pieces for redistribution.**

## First female rabbi helps troops celebrate Passover

Story and photo by Spc. Mary Rose  
Multi-National Corps - Iraq  
Public Affairs Office

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Troops and contractors stationed at Camp Victory, Iraq, joined together April 23 for a Passover Seder in observance of the Jewish holiday.

Passover is the most celebrated Jewish holiday and is filled with traditional food, prayers, storytelling and rituals.

With only nine active duty rabbis in the U.S. Army, Chaplain (Col.) Bonnie Koppell, a rabbi with the Army Reserve, volunteered to travel from Fort Bliss, Texas, to Iraq to share the Passover holiday with other Jewish service members.

"It isn't every day that I get to be a rabbi in the Army," Koppell said.

She explained why the holiday is so important to those with Jewish beliefs and how the story of Passover is similar to the situation here in Iraq.

"Passover is a celebration of the exodus of

the Jews from [ancient Egypt]," Koppell said. She then explained the similarities by quoting a Jewish book Haggadah, which is read at the Seder: "We have dedicated this festival tonight to the dream and the hope of freedom. Though the sacrifice be great, and the hardships many, we shall not rest until the chains that enslave all men and women be broken."

"Liberation is costly. We need to acknowledge our enemy," she said, adding that it is very easy to objectify our enemy and to see them as less than human.

During the Seder celebrants represent their traditions and beliefs using traditional Jewish foods, like unleavened bread called matzah, wine, a roasted egg, a bitter herb called maror and roasted lamb shank bone.

"I think the importance of the tradition of Passover and Seder is that you have to have compassion for the humanity of others and the suffering they endure for the gaining of their freedom," Koppell said.

Being saved and fighting and struggling for freedom seem so relevant and contemporary right now in this environment, she said.

"Passover is a major Jewish holiday," said 1st Lt. Erin Sadownik, 20th Engineer Brigade, Fort Bragg, N.C. "You know your family is doing the same thing, so you can have that connection."

It is important to keep part of yourself that isn't just military in a combat zone, and that includes religion and beliefs, Sadownik said.

Koppell, who has been in the service for 26 years and was the first female rabbi commissioned in the Army, said the U.S. government is taking care of its Soldiers when it comes to their religious traditions and beliefs.

"The Army is now producing kosher and unleavened-for-Passover [meals ready to eat]," Koppell said.

Even though Koppell was only on Victory for about a week, she said she wanted to come back to Iraq to worship again with the



**U.S. Army Chaplain (Col.) Bonnie Koppell, a rabbi, traveled from Fort Bliss, Texas, to Iraq to share the Passover holiday with other Jewish service members.**

service members during the Jewish holidays later this year.

"It touched my heart to be able to do this," Koppell said. She planned to continue traveling Iraq, worshiping and celebrating Passover with Jewish troops, until her scheduled return to the United States in early May.

# Saddam-defying colonel leads Iraqi Army battalion

Story and photo by Spc. Matthew McLaughlin  
10th Mountain Division Public Affairs

## FORWARD OPERATING BASE HAWK, BAGHDAD, Iraq

— When coalition forces were faced with having to help Iraq rebuild its Army, they knew they needed someone who would walk down the most dangerous street in Baghdad without fear, someone who would ignore religious differences for the greater good, and someone who once told Saddam Hussein where to go.

They needed a leader and found an outspoken warrior.

Col. Mohammad Faik Rauf al-Samarai, 2nd Battalion, 1st Iraqi Army Brigade commander, is a stark contrast to the image of a ruthless Iraqi Army commander. Known to all as “Colonel Mohammad,” his graying hair and wrinkles around his eyes and mouth from years of laughter mask a hardened warrior’s heart. He has experienced both national and personal struggles yet manages to laugh in the face of strife.

Mohammad served as an air defense officer in Hussein’s regime. He boasted that he excelled beyond officers who outranked him and was a valued asset to the Army. He received 14 medals from Saddam — awards he now gives as gifts to American allies. As proud as he is of his accomplishments, he spoke with equal pride of his imprisonment after an alleged argument with Hussein, the tyrant known for executing dissenters.

“I told Saddam I don’t care about him, I care about God,” Mohammad recalled of the comment that sent him away for eight months and 11 days, a number Mohammad kept track of by marking every day on the wall of his cell in between beatings from the prison guards.

“Every day they beat me,” he said as if reading the memories from a book, apparently without hatred.

Eventually, Hussein released Mohammad and reinstated him as an officer. Mohammad no longer wished to serve in the Army.

“I told Saddam I need to quit. I told him that I’ve gone crazy and I can’t work. He said if I can’t work I’ll go back to jail. I said ‘OK, I’ll go back to work,’” Mohammad said and laughed.

After coalition forces defeated Hussein’s Army, Mohammad joined the Iraqi National Guard. He joined as a captain for opera-



**Col. Mohammad Faik Rauf al-Samarai, 2nd Battalion, 1st Iraqi Army Brigade commander, talks with Lt. Col. David B. Batchelor, 1st Bn., 41st Inf. Reg. 2nd BCT, during cordon and search recently.**

tions and in less than a year worked his way up to colonel. After several unsuccessful battalion commanders, Mohammad became commander of the 303rd ING, now known as the 2-1 IA.

Under Mohammad’s leadership, the 2-1 IA flourished, said Staff Sgt. Kiplangat D. Marisin, an IA advisor from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division.

“He is the type of leader they needed to get things done,” the South Bend, Ind. native said. “He’s compassionate to the Iraqi people, but if you’re bad ...”

A major contribution to Mohammad’s success was his personal selection of 2-1 IA leadership. Mohammad, a Sunni Muslim, is in charge of an overwhelmingly Shia battalion. He ignored religious and political affiliations and selected officers and non-commissioned officers for promotion based on performance, said Capt. Christopher G. Johnson, a 2-1 IA advisor from Kent, Ohio.

“He operates no differently with Sunnis, Shias and Christians,” he said. “They are all Soldiers first.”

Mohammad and his 2-1 IA Soldiers faced a major challenge in February when they assumed responsibility over part of Haifa Street, a notoriously dangerous road in Baghdad. Violent hostilities towards coalition forces earned the street the title “Death Street” to media outlets.

“It was hell,” Mohammad said. “No one could open shops, no one could leave their house and no one could go to school. Many people were killed.”

Mohammad combated the terrorists by saturating the streets with dismounted Soldiers and working with the community to uncover terrorist operations. After several weeks of intense fighting, 2-1 IA significantly reduced terrorist activities.

“When my 303rd [Soldiers] go to Haifa Street, they take care of the problem,” Mohammad boasted. “They captured many terrorists and worked very hard. They cleaned the roads, cleaned up the trash and helped people.”

Mohammad led the pack of motivated Soldiers on the front lines. He gained respect from U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers by leading from the front and willingly putting himself in danger’s way. Mohammad made his presence felt to Haifa Street, residents, introducing himself to everyone he could, said Capt. Mike Campbell, an IA advisor from Celina, Tenn.

“Mohammad will walk the streets and talk to people,” he said. “Someone will wave at him and he will go and talk to them. Twenty feet later he’s talking to someone else.”

His willingness to face danger as well as his loyalty to his troops is matched by the Soldiers’ loyalty to Mohammad and their fearlessness in battle.

His Soldiers don’t run from a fight and their courage is a reflection of their leader, said Lt. Col. Mark Kneram, officer in charge of 2nd BCT advisors.

“They respond to the fact he leads from the front,” said the New Castle, Penn., native. “He cares about his Soldiers and they know that.”

Mohammad’s success and high profile has come at a price, however. He is under constant threat from terrorist attacks, claiming he’s escaped 42 assassination attempts. He joked that if cats have nine lives, he must have at least 43.

His family is also subjected to attacks. His cousin was reportedly kidnapped by terrorists and Mohammad had to restrain himself from retaliation. Even his mother was attacked and threatened. His wife and children must take tremendous precautions to ensure their safety.

“It is hard for them,” he said. “We continue with our lives. It is worth it if it gives my son a future, En shaa Allah (God willing).”

## Detention center operates under new, stricter guidelines



**A detainee patiently awaits in the facility’s courtyard.**

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

### FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, TIKRIT, Iraq

— Blindfolded and restrained, the carefully-guarded group of brooding detainees knelt on the ground. Occasionally they shifted their positions to comfort themselves. The chain-link gate looming in front of them would soon be their entrance to justice or freedom.

Detention camps have gone a long way since Abu-Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, said Maj. Andrew Young of Ossining, N.Y., operations officer for the 642nd Military Intelligence Battalion. Soldiers of the 642nd MI Bn. inprocess detainees.

Army Field Manual 34-52, Interrogator Operations, has been revised since Abu-Ghraib, and now the Army has, “a double set of eyes, almost a mom and dad approach [to handling detainees],” said Young.

The double set of eyes Young referred to are the rigid accountability and command relationships detention facilities now maintain. Military intelligence handles all command and control, while military police handle day-to-day operations, Young said.

“It’s like a county jail, where the deputies maintain life support, and we are the investigators that cover the case,” Joel said.

FOB Danger’s camp has been inspected three times. The head of detention operations in Iraq, Maj. Gen. Brandenburg of Task Force 134, visited the camp late last month..

The military police officer in charge of the detention facility, 2nd Lt. Mark (last name withheld for security) supervises a platoon of military police from the 42nd Military Police Company.

“We follow standard operating procedure to the letter,” he said.

The military police provide security and handle detainee life support, from in-processing to meals and transportation to issuing the Koran. All aspects of detainee operations are handled by the military police company.

“We have a job to do; we can’t let personal feelings interfere,” said Mark. “The detention facility can hold 400 people. Right now there are fewer than 200,” he said. Male, female, young and old, Iraqi citizen to foreign fighter, all detainees are treated the same.

“The MPs only have 14 days to process them,” Young said.

“From the time they are captured to making the decision to forward them up for more exploitation, or release, we are lucky if we have two days with the detainees” said Warrant Officer Joel (last name withheld for security). “It takes time to process someone, through.” Joel is a counter intelligence technician and manages the human

intelligence gathering support element.

“Most detainees are willing to talk,” said Sgt. John (last name withheld for security). “In the screening process we gauge the detainee’s attitude and demeanor. Sometimes you sit down and find out it might be the wrong guy. We don’t want to create insurgents by wrongfully detaining them.”

“We are more selective; we build a case,” Joel said. A large percentage of the detainees who are forwarded up are proven to be of aggressive enough nature to warrant long-term internment, he added.

Each detainee is processed in steps, from initial entrance, where the paperwork begins, to determining what level of detainment they will be kept in. They are separated by gender, religion, age and ethnicity, said Mark.

The Soldiers guarding the detainees have to know over 75 commands in Arabic. They do head counts three times a shift, and they deal with aggressive detainees.

“This is a very tough job and they do a great job at it; I’m very proud of them,” said Mark.

The detainees are protected by the Geneva Convention, while the Soldiers of the 642nd and 42nd are bound by duty and regulations. Whether sent up for further processing or released, the detainees are treated with respect, cared for and protected during the 14 days assigned to the MPs.

# Georgian troops serve with coalition, understand struggle of Iraqi people

Story and photos by Sgt. W. Watson Martin  
Scimitar Staff

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHAVNABADA, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Soldiers from Georgia arrived in Baghdad recently to help the 3rd Infantry Division man checkpoints in the International Zone.

The Shavnabada, a 550-Soldier battalion, took responsibility for security at two of the most important sites in Baghdad, the al-Rasheed Hotel and the Iraqi Baghdad Forum and Convention Center, the home to the newly elected Iraqi National Assembly. The battalion will also provide security for United Nations convoys in Baghdad, said U.S. Army Capt. Stephen L. Gifford, liaison officer from 4th Brigade, 3rd ID.

Battle-hardened and experienced from years of conflict, the Soldiers of the Shavnabada were invited to become a part of the coalition forces in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as part of the U.S. Army 4th Brigade, 3rd ID. The unit has been designated the 13th Inf. Bn. instead of the 1-13th.

The Shavnabada and a sister battalion hit the ground running in Kuwait, equipped with U.S. desert fatigues and military trucks. They carried their own Russian-made AK-47s, crew-served weapons and dragunov sniper rifles, as

well as an assortment of explosives. "We have over 900 highly motivated Soldiers in Iraq," said Capt. Gocha Talakhadze, a liaison officer and interpreter with the Shavnabada.

"Our mission is to help with the security and freedom of Iraq. We are here to protect innocent civilians from terrorists. We have had no major difficulties so far," said Capt. Gela Kilasonia, Bn. S1 commander of the Shavnabada.

One obstacle, the language barrier, was overcome by special interpreters. There are no Georgians or Arabic speakers who speak both languages, but they share the Russian language, which is then translated by a Russian/English interpreter when necessary, said Gifford.

Most of the Soldiers in the 13th Battalion speak both Georgian and Russian. They also understand a few English words and can read letters and numbers. All important checkpoints and Georgian missions include interpreters,



A Georgian officer walks among his troops after returning from a training mission in the International Zone.

Gifford said.

"Sometimes interpreters can prevent conflicts with Iraqi congressional members at the checkpoints," said Kilasonia.

Georgian Soldiers have something in common with the Iraqis. The Georgians experienced in the past 15 years

See *GEORGIANS*, Page 15

## Technology unites separated Airmen in matrimony

By Staff Sgt. C. Todd Lopez  
Air Force Print News

**WASHINGTON** — Nearly 7,000 miles of desert and ocean could not keep two Airmen from tying the knot.

Maj. Heather Villasenor, who is at a forward-deployed location in Southwest Asia, married Lt. Col. Michael Bryant on April 26. The wedding was held in Southwest Asia — and Virginia.

Bryant, the Joint Staff target operations chief, showed up at his lawyer's office in McLean, Va., dressed in his Air Force blues and armed with a calling card to pay for the long-distance call.

"I'm standing in the hallway of the trailer I live in," said Villasenor from her deployed location. "There [are] 10 people here in my wedding party — my commanding officer, my close personal friends since I've been here and people from back home in my old unit."

After the call was placed and Villasenor was on speakerphone, Virginia attorney Conrad Marshall conducted a quick wedding ceremony over the telephone. Shortly after, the two Air Force officers were married.

"When it first started, I was getting emotional," Bryant said. "But this is the right thing for both of us. She is going to be really happy about it, and so am I. It's a happy day for both of us."

Villasenor said she would have liked for her mother to be present at the speedy telephone wedding, but she knows her mom understands the needs of the military come first.

"Well, my mom is really happy, and she



Photo by Master Sgt. Jim Varhegyi

**In McLean, Va., Lt. Col. Michael Bryant talks to his new bride, Maj. Heather Villasenor, after their phone marriage April 26.**

just wants me to be happy too," she said. "She knows it's tough in the military, but she wants what's best for me."

Villasenor, a senior intelligence duty officer, calls Texas her home. Her husband, Bryant, is a native of Middleboro, Mass. They met at a party here in early 2004.

The two travel in close circles, as they both work in the intelligence community. And it was not too long after they met that they started talking about getting married, Villasenor said.

"We officially got engaged in October 2004, but we were talking about it well before then," she said. "We were probably talking about it just three months after we met."

Plans for a wedding had to be put on hold when Villasenor deployed. But in February, her fiancée learned he had been selected for promotion to colonel. Along with that promotion he received a new assignment, this



Photo by Capt. David Small

**Maj. Heather Villasenor exchanges wedding vows with Lt. Col. Michael Bryant over the phone at a forward-deployed location in Southwest Asia April 26.**

time in Germany. He wanted to make sure they married in time to ensure the two could both get assignments to Stuttgart, Germany together under the joint spouse rules.

"They are sending me to European Command," Bryant said. "I will move this summer, and in order for her to move with me under the joint spouse rules, we have to be married. So we didn't want to wait until she got back."

Most people have not considered getting married over the phone. In fact, it is not even possible in most places. But Bryant said a phone conversation with a friend of his — his wife's director of operations — let him know that it was possible.

"He said, 'you know, you can [get married] over the phone,'" Bryant said. "I started looking around and called the county courthouse, and they gave me a list of names of people [who] do weddings."

Bryant contacted Marshall for more infor-

mation about how two people might get married under Virginia law, but not be physically together for the ceremony.

"It turns out that he is the [person who] many years ago got this process approved," Bryant said.

In the 1970s, Marshall was one of four lawyers in the county who performed weddings. He said he was privy to many requests for weddings between people who could not be in the same place at the same time. That is what prompted him to investigate the matter further.

The Virginia attorney general's opinion was that under the Virginia law at the time, it was permissible for two people to get married over the telephone, Marshall said.

"They gave us a favorable opinion, saying it was perfectly legal, just as long as we could identify who was on the other end," he said. "That's why we had the commanding officer there."

Armed with the knowledge, Bryant needed only to get the necessary paperwork signed and filed in the county courthouse.

"The main thing we were anxious about was getting the forms back and forth from her to here," Bryant said. He said it was a little nerve-racking trying to get legal documents to Southwest Asia and back to get them signed and notarized.

Once all the documents were signed, the wedding proceeded. Marshall said he has performed more than 40 such weddings over the past 30 years, some in Korea, Japan and the Middle East.

"I even did a wedding in Baghdad over the phone about a month ago," he said.

Major Villasenor will return to the United States in mid-May. The couple has a traditional wedding ceremony planned for July.



# Corps' 'small world' brings siblings closer

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Amy Contreras  
2nd Force Service Support Group

**CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq** — Since the beginning of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, many parents have had to deal with the fear of having a son or daughter in a combat zone. This harsh reality is something the Eberle family has dealt with the past three years with not one, but all three of their children.

The Eberle children include two girls and one boy. Sgt. Leah D. Eberle, signals intelligence analyst in Hawaii, the eldest of the three siblings, joined the Marine Corps in 2001 at the start of OIF, thus beginning the cycle of Eberles in combat zones.

"It's hard for our mom," said Lance Cpl. Scott L. Eberle, a combat correspondent and the youngest of the three. "She obviously worries a lot about us."

However, according to the lance corporal, their parents also understand more about the Marine Corps than most do. They were both Marines in the late 70s. Penny, their mother, was a corporal when she met James, who was a sergeant at the time, at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. After dating for a while, they married and Penny was soon pregnant with Leah.

Though she enjoyed the Marine Corps, Penny was given a choice to get out of the Corps. Females who became pregnant were given the option to stay in or take an early discharge. She chose to get out after serving three years, and at the end of James' enlistment, he too decided it was time to leave. He said no child of his would be born in California, Scott recalled his father saying of the choice they made to relocate.

The Eberles moved to Texas, James' home state, where their family grew. About two years after Leah, Nicole was born, and about two years later Scott was born. The children were all raised in the small town of Liberty Hill, where their parents taught them to be self-sufficient and caring.

"If we got into a fight my parents would make us walk around holding hands for awhile," said Scott, who is currently deployed with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, I



**Siblings Cpl. Nicole Eberle, Headquarters and Service Battalion, 2nd Force Service Support Group (Forward) and Lance Cpl. Scott Eberle, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, take some time out from their duties to share a few laughs before the lance corporal redeployed with the MEU from Iraq recently.**

Marine Expeditionary Force. "I remember my sisters having to do that a lot. Our parents taught us to be good people."

Although their parents decided to leave the Marine Corps behind, they shared their memories with their children. "I remember looking at old pictures from when they were Marines and playing with their old gear and uniforms," Scott said.

The Eberles pushed their children, not toward military service, but instead to strive for good grades. All three succeeded, graduating from Liberty Hill High School in the top 10 percent of their class. The two girls did not know what they wanted to do right away. Leah tried college and was not satisfied, so she joined the Marine Corps. A year later, Nicole decided the Marine Corps was also something she wanted to do. "I was burnt out on getting an education, and I wanted to take a little breather," Nicole said. "I was interested in the

Marine Corps because it would allow me the opportunity to spread my wings."

Scott claims from the time he was young, playing with his parents' gear and looking at their pictures, the military was something that interested him. After his sisters joined he learned more about the Marine Corps from them. "The more I learned about the Marine Corps, the more I wanted to learn and the more I liked it," Scott said. "I couldn't see myself doing anything else. Looking back, I would have regretted not joining the Marine Corps."

Since all three children are now in the service, they do not see each other as much, even during the holidays. This past Christmas was the first time none of them were able to be at home. "We couldn't be more spread out if we had tried," Scott said. "It was hard, but my parents understand."

Although the Marine Corps has separated them geographically, they feel it has made them closer in many ways. "We have a lot more in common now," said Nicole, an electrical repair specialist with Headquarters and Service Battalion, 2nd Force Service Support Group.

"We have experienced a lot of the same things." Such as boot camp and being deployed to Iraq, Scott added. "Not many siblings share those experiences."

However close the Marine Corps has helped them become, Scott ensures professionalism is of the utmost importance while in uniform, and he does not have a problem with his sisters outranking him. "They've always done things first, like driving; they are older so that's how it goes," he said.

Recently Scott was able to spend a few days here to see Nicole. After spending some time with her younger brother in a combat environment and seeing how he handles the pressures, she could see him making the Marine Corps a long-term career. "I think he could be a lifer," she said.

According to Scott, he does not know how long he will stay in the Marine Corps. His sisters, though, will probably be getting out soon. "They've done so much and they aren't like a lot of other female Marines — if you know what I mean," he said with a smile.

Nicole retorted with a smirk, "Hey, watch it killer."

## Marine stops enemy attack, saves other Marines



**Pfc. Bryan J. Nagel destroyed a rolling bomb — a sewer truck — saving the lives of his fellow Marines during an organized attack terrorists launched on an observation post in Ar Ramadi April 20. Nagel is a squad automatic weapon gunner with Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment.**

Story and photo by Cpl. Tom Sloan  
2nd Marine Division

**AR RAMADI, Iraq** — Terrorists launched an attack against one of 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment's observation posts in the city here the evening of April 20, but they didn't count on one Marine: Pfc. Bryan J. Nagel.

While receiving sporadic enemy fire, the Jamestown, N.D., native stood his ground, took out a suicide truck bomb and fought off an insurgent attack, preventing major property damage and casualties to the Marines and civilians in the area.

The 20-year-old squad automatic weapon gunner with 2nd Squad, 2nd Platoon, Company B, was responsible for thwarting the attack and preventing a potential disaster that day, according to his company first sergeant, 1st Sgt. Scott A. Van De Ven.

"His quick thinking and actions under fire clearly foiled the enemy's plans," said the Grayling, Mich, native. "Nagel's initiative destroyed the enemy vehicle before it reached the Marines' position."

Nagel was manning an observation post in downtown Ramadi and being fired at by insurgents when a mid-sized passenger car detonated near his position injuring two Marines.

"I was getting shot at, so I started returning fire," said Nagel, who disregarded his own safety and moved

above the protection of the position's bulletproof glass to engage the enemy. "Then the first [suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device] hit."

The blast breached the OP's main entrance.

"There was smoke everywhere," recalled the 2003 Jamestown High School graduate. "I was reloading when, through a patch of the smoke, I saw the second vehicle coming our way. I knew what I had to do."

Nagel employed his weapon with precision, hitting the yellow sewage tanker truck's windshield and killing the driver.

"I shot about 60 or 70 rounds at him," Nagel said. "I never thought I would have to make a decision like that."

Other Marines were alerted by Nagel's fire and engaged the vehicle as well.

"The truck swerved to one side of the road and detonated," he said. "It all happened so fast."

No one was injured by the second blast, but it left a large crater in the main street.

According to Van De Ven, Nagel's heroic actions are a testament to his character.

"He's hardworking, polite and is someone who cares for his fellow Marines," he said.

Though Nagel's command is recommending him for an award for his courage under fire, he is just happy his comrades are all OK.

"I'm overwhelmed knowing that I saved the lives of my Marines," Nagel said.



Georgian Soldier Jr. Sgt. Paata Gambarashvili power washes one of his unit's five-ton trucks.

## Georgians

from Page 12

what the Iraqis are now beginning to experience — the birth of a new government and the growing pains that inevitably follow.

In 1991, Georgia broke away from the Soviet Empire after a two-year revolution; democracy was born. Georgians embarked on a grand experiment to grant individuals a life of liberty, dignity, security of person, work and a pursuit of happiness.

Internal conflicts backed by foreign enemies sought to divide Georgia in the early years of its newfound democracy. To protect its territorial unity, the fledgling government formed the Shavnabada, an infantry battalion.

A year later it saw combat when it took the offensive that began with an amphibious assault from the Black Sea in northwest Georgia. It helped to defeat thousands of enemy advancing to the rear of the Georgian Army. The cost of the victory was great to the Shavnabada, but the unity of Georgia stood strong, said Kilasonia.

The following years took great effort to become an independent nation, which did not go unnoticed by the international community.

In 2003 the U.S. Marine Corps worked with the Georgia Training and Equipment Program to fully equip the 113th Inf. Bn. Shavnabada as a mobile NATO-standard unit in the Georgian Army. The following year the battalion received further training from both U.S. and U.K. military instructors to provide peace support operations.

The military's courage and honor emboldened the people of Georgia to stand up against the still-corrupt government, tainted with remnants of the Soviet era.

Over a year and a half ago, hundreds of thousands of Georgian citizens, armed only with red roses, took to the streets to demand an end to a government that had deceived them for too long — known as the "Rose Revolution." Corruption was rampant, the economy stagnant and the latest elections had been rigged to favor former president, Eduard Shevardnadze, and his party.

Government bodies were cleansed of corrupt officials and replaced with well-paid civil

servants, including a respectable police force that no longer extorted citizens. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness began to shine even brighter.

However, a separatist's plan of genocide aimed at native Georgians in the former South Ossetia region took shape between August and September of 2004. The Shavnabada readied to put down the attack. The battalion sacrificed one of their own but was able to reestablish law and order to protect the local population.

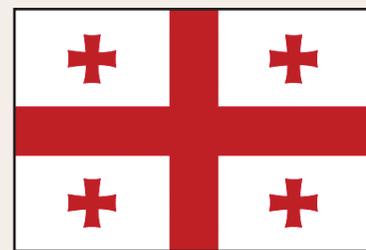
In Baghdad and Baquba, missions have gone well for this hardened and ready force of over 900 Soldiers shadowed by existing turmoil back home. Their mere presence shows to the world that justice can be had anywhere and spread from a once heavy-handed government to another.



Sgt. Vitali Beridz raises the gate to the Georgian forward operating base.

## Coalition Corner

... highlighting countries serving with MNF-Iraq



## Georgia

local name: *Sak'art'velo*

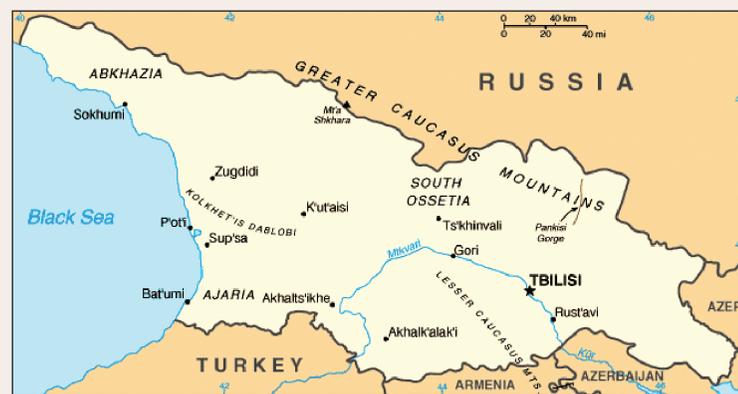
Georgia is located in Southwest Asia, although it has also been described as part of Europe, central Asia and the Middle East. It borders the Black Sea, Turkey and Russia, and it is slightly smaller than South Carolina. Georgian is the official language for the 4.7 million people living here, although Russian, Armenian, and Azeri are also spoken in various areas. The Georgian currency system is the Lari.

Georgia has a very rich history dating back over 3,000 years ago to the ancient kingdoms of Colchis and Kartli-Iberia. Many of its cities are endowed with castles, churches and fortresses from the medieval times. The capital, Tbilisi, is home to the ancient Narikala fortress, which is the Persian name for "inaccessible fortress," was built in the fourth century and stood up to long centuries of invasion. The Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, built in the 11th century, and the Jvari church, built in the sixth century, are both located in Mtskheta, which was the ancient Georgian capital. The Bagrati Cathedral and the Gelati Cloister, two of Georgia's most important architectural monuments, boast their splendor in the city of Kutaisi and are great examples of stone carvings and mural paintings. Although 80 percent of the country is covered by mountains, it has beautiful semi-tropical beaches lined with palm and eucalyptus trees along the Black Sea coast that rival beaches in Eurasia.

One cannot say he or she has experienced this country until he or she has tried at least a few of Georgia's many flavorful traditional dishes and wines. A mixture of meat, cheese, greens and spices are the ingredients to the delicious dumplings called khinkali. Pkahi, spinach leaves mixed with various spices; shashlik, lamb shish kebab; and churchkhela, a sweet walnut dessert cut into rolls, are just a few more saliva-inducing typical Georgian foods. Wine is also a major Georgian tradition and history. Archaeologists and historians have found grape stones and vessels over 7,000 years old, making Georgia the believed homeland of wine. Millenniums of experience and about 500 types of grapevines make Georgia home to some of the world's most renowned wines.

When asked what he misses most about his country, Georgian Army Lt. George Dumbadze said, "I miss Georgian cuisine and especially the wine. But most of all, I miss attending Orthodox services."

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



References: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com), [www.gws.ge](http://www.gws.ge), [www.suite101.com](http://www.suite101.com), <http://travelgeorgia.gol.ge>, [www.gcof.org](http://www.gcof.org), [www.virtualtourist.com](http://www.virtualtourist.com), [www.great-adventures.com](http://www.great-adventures.com).

Coalition Corner is compiled by Sgt. Misha King, assistant editor, [scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil).

# Warriors stay in shape 'McLaurin-style'

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

**CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq** — Master Gunnery Sgt. Marcia J. McLaurin stands at the front of the class counting down each exercise. Echoing her count is a room full of service members who can be heard over the blaring Billy Idol's "White Wedding."

McLaurin, an American Council on Exercise certified instructor who taught aerobics three times a week in the states, now works the sweat out of her aerobics class patrons Monday and Wednesday evenings here.

"She knows what she's doing when it comes to aerobics, there's no question about it!" said Lance Cpl. Claudia L. Sanchez, an operations clerk for Communication Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, 2nd Force Service Support Group and San Diego native.

A Trinidad, West Indies, native McLaurin said she started attending aerobic classes in 1987 in North Carolina at Camp Johnson. A year after she started taking the classes, the instructor had to leave and handed her the reigns. The rest, as they say, is history.

In 1994, while stationed in Okinawa, Japan, McLaurin and other instructors worked together to obtain ACE certification. Besides ACE certification, she also had to get her cardiopulmonary resuscitation qualification.

The ACE certification programs are among the most respected in the fitness industry. The exams and study materials have been developed by leading experts, both researchers and practitioners, in the fitness field. In 2003, the American Council on Exercise was granted accreditation for its certification programs by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies. The ACE is one of only two certifying organizations in the entire fitness industry whose programs have been accredited, according to



**Lt. Col. John R. Gambrino, Headquarters and Service Battalion commanding officer, 2nd Force Service Support Group, counts off while doing aerobics at a Camp Taqaddum fitness center.**

[www.acefitness.org](http://www.acefitness.org).

The Marine Corps has taken McLaurin all over the world and with her, she has taken her love of aerobics.

This is McLaurin's fifth deployment, and with each one the conditions for leading her aerobic classes improve.

"When in Norway for a training exercise, we did [aerobics] in the middle of a motor pool bay, and it was cold," said the administration chief for 2nd FSSG. "The conditions were unique, but people still attended."

When facilities are not adequate, McLaurin will make do with whatever is



**Master Gunnery Sgt. Marcia J. McLaurin, takes a second to make sure all the service members in her class are doing the exercises correctly.**

available to her because of the importance of staying active. "If room is not available for aerobics, we will do some sort of exercise like belly burner," she continued. "It's better than being sedentary."

Belly burners are a series of different abdominal exercises, given that name because of the way the abdominal muscles feel after doing them.

Camp Taqaddum has the best facilities for aerobics out of all the places she has been deployed, as well as an

impressive turn out of troops, she said.

"Of all the years I have taught, I have never had a commander come to the class faithfully and lead from the front," she said, speaking of Lt. Col. John R. Gambrino, H and S Bn. commanding officer.

McLaurin said she was really impressed, even though he doesn't get all the moves and everyone behind him is laughing, he still hangs in there and has fun.

"The last time I did aerobics was about 22 years ago for pre-season basketball workouts when I played in college," said Gambrino, a St. Cloud, Minn., native, as he sat on a bag

of ice to nurse his sore muscles. "After one hour on Monday, you could wring a cup of water out of my shirt, and I was beat.

"The next day I was sore in some new places. I went back for more pain on Wednesday and [McLaurin] threw in some Taebo — jab, jab, jab, punch action. Again, I was soaked and beat," he said.

McLaurin uses different music to ensure her classes are fun and interesting. "I have so much music it's ridiculous," she laughed.

"I like to have a variety of music," she said. "When I get to the class, I go in and look around to see the different patrons, and I cater to them. If they are older I play 70s and 80s music. For the younger people I play the top 40."

McLaurin has people of all different ages participate in her class.

"It is important for them to know that it doesn't matter how old you are, because as long as you push yourself, you can do it," the 47-year-old instructor said. "I hope that I am an example for them, and once I leave the Marine Corps, maybe one of them can step up and say, 'I can teach this, it's not too bad.'"

Through the years, she's been able to see people change and improve themselves; even if it's just two more pull-ups on the physical fitness test, she feels that she helped them.

"I think this is a great opportunity for [service members] to learn more about exercise because they don't have any distractions like the ones back home," McLaurin said. "It's so easy to go to a movie, or just go home and watch TV. My goal is they will like it so much when they get back to the [states] they can pick it up and realize exercise is not so bad."

## Hawaiian Guardsmen win Victory softball championship

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

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — A three-day softball tournament ended April 25 at Camp Victory's 'The Beach' softball field, culminating in a dramatic extra-inning final game where the Hawaii National Guard's Alpha Dogs eked out a 7-6 win against the civilian/military KICC — Kuwait, Iraq, C4 Logistics and Commercial — Camels to take the championship.

The Camels came into to the final game having dropped only one of the four games played in the preliminary rounds, while the Hawaiians had rolled through all other opponents.

Alpha Dogs pitcher William Castillo Jr., from Kalaheo, Kauai, led off the bottom of the first inning by whacking a shot into left field that the Camels' outfielders couldn't corral. Castillo sprinted around every bag to come in with an inside-the-park home run. Shortstop Richard M. Largo, from Honolulu, added another run behind Castillo to put the Dogs up 2-0 at the end of the first inning.

The consistent defense and solid fielding of the Hawaiians allowed them to keep the Camels scoreless through the first three innings, while they tacked on three more runs to put them up 5-0.

After leading off the fourth with two runs, the Camels kept the



**The Alpha Dogs from the Hawaii National Guard's A Co., 2nd Bn, rejoice after pitcher William Castillo Jr. (center) knocked in the game-winning home run during the Camp Victory, Iraq, softball championship, April 25.**

win in reach and left the Hawaiians scoreless, closing the gap 5-2.

The hitting and fielding of Camels' Tim E. Sartori and Steffen "Tuffy" Morris — both Soldiers with the Oklahoma National Guard stationed at Camp Victory — allowed the Camels to sneak

up on the Dogs in the 5th with a three-run rally. After a one-run sixth, the Camels squared off with the Hawaiians in the 7th tied 6-6, taking the game into extra innings.

The Dogs put down the Camels in textbook style in the top of the 8th: three up, three down.

The Soldiers from the Alpha Dogs came up to bat in the 8th with a chance to slam the door shut and take the win, but the Camels put the first two batters down with ease. Then it was time for Castillo to bat again.

In deja-vu fashion, Castillo drove a shot into left field and scurried around the bases for another in-the-park home run, ending the game the way it started, giving the Dogs the championship, 7-6.

"I was just trying to hit it up the middle," Castillo said. "It just happened to travel further than I thought. You go up to the plate planning for a base hit, not something like that."

Bernard Creque, Camp Victory's MWR sports coordinator, said it was an excellent game and it was good to see so many teams come out to play. Creque said that this was just a spring training tournament and the actual softball league will start in a month.

"We put this tournament together to get the troops out to play and get them up to speed before the league starts."

For more information about sporting events at Camp Victory, contact Creque at [b\\_creque@yahoo.com](mailto:b_creque@yahoo.com).