



Photo by Sgt. W. Watson Martin

Spc. Daniel Hamm displays fireworks on Armed Forces Day, Saturday, at Camp Prosperity, in Baghdad's International Zone while welding 20 heavy-duty grill guards for Humvees. Hamm is helping the 703rd Forward Support Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, fabricate the grill guards. See how other service members spent their Armed Forces Day on page 8.

## Iraqi, Coalition joint operation detains 285 in first 24 hours

By 3rd Infantry Division Public Affairs Office

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Iraqi Army and Ministry of Interior Forces, in conjunction with Coalition forces, detained 285 suspected terrorists in the western Baghdad district of Abu Ghraib in the first 24 hours of the combined effort to capture terrorists that began Sunday.

Combined forces detained 143 suspects in the second 24-hour period of the ongoing effort.

The massive joint combat operation involves two battalions from the 3rd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, two battalions from the 1st Brigade, 1st Iraqi Intervention Force, three battalions from the 2nd Brigade Special Police Commandos, and Soldiers from Task Force 2-14, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division.

Task Force Baghdad officials said the purpose of the operation is to hunt down, kill or capture terrorists who have been staging attacks in the Iraqi capital.

"This is the largest combined operation with Iraqi security forces to date," said Lt. Col. Clifford Kent, a Task Force Baghdad spokesperson. "The Iraqi security forces have the lead in this operation while we perform shaping and supporting roles."

Local commanders from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, and Coalition forces met Saturday to discuss the operation and how to deal with terrorist actions in Rusafa.

"This is just the beginning of a new era of cooperation between the Iraqi Police, Public Order Brigades and the Iraqi Army. From now on, forces from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense and Coalition Forces will work together to defeat the terrorists in Baghdad," said Col. Joseph DiSalvo, Commander of Coalition forces in Rusafa (eastern Baghdad), to open the meeting.

One Iraqi commander said it was important to note this was the first time all the different MOI and MOD units were meeting to talk about an operation. "This will go a long way toward making all of our groups more effective and unified," he said.

The meeting was scheduled so DiSalvo could brief the Iraqi commanders on a plan to reduce the amount of vehicle bombs in the city. "The operation is a combined mission; we need the Iraqi forces to work together to make it a success," he said.

Iraqi commanders seemed very interested in planning the operation and offered advice on how to identify vehicle bombs. They offered comments on who they think are making the bombs, how to seal off Baghdad from terrorist infiltration, and how to improve communications among themselves and with the Coalition forces.

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Country music star performs for troops in Iraq Page 15

# Iraqi Army opens Ground Forces Command Headquarters

By Sgt. David Foley

Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — A small group of Iraqi and Coalition dignitaries gathered in Baghdad May 15 for a ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the opening of the Iraqi Ground Forces Headquarters.

During the Multi-National Corps - Iraq transition of authority ceremony less than a month after the Jan. 30 Iraqi elections, Gen. George Casey, Multi-National Force – Iraq commander, said 2005 would be a year of critical transitions that will inevitably prepare the Iraqi people to create a secure and democratic society.

This ceremony marks another step forward in the Coalition's goal of returning power to the Iraqi people.

"We are celebrating today a historical event and the rebuilding of the Iraqi Army," said Iraqi Gen. Abdul Qadir Jassim, Iraqi Ground Forces commander. "Having the headquarters of our ground forces here is an indication of the Iraqi Army controlling its own destiny."

The new Iraqi Army is comprised mostly of Soldiers who served under Saddam's regime but have gone through a stringent

screening process by Abdul Qadir and Iraq's Minister of Defense. Many of them have taken pay cuts under the new administration.

Despite a reduction in wages and the constant threat of insurgent attacks against him and his family, one Iraqi general, who wished to remain anonymous, said he is honored to serve his country, and the opening of the headquarters signifies a great transition for the Iraqi Army.

"I want to thank [the Coalition] for giving us this chance for a better future, and for helping us to open a new page that will lead us to freedom and a democratic society," the general said.

The location of the new headquarters building is a starting place to grow the new Iraqi Army, the general said. With help from the Coalition, they will be able to advance as a military and as a country, to destroy the insurgency.

"Our streets have been covered in blood by [the terrorists], and we want to clean this place with the help of our friends the Americans," he said.

Iraqi Soldiers will continue to work together to strengthen the Iraqi Army, and during a conversation between Jassim and Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, Multi-National Corps – Iraq commander, both agreed they had a lot of work ahead of them.

"I will assure you that we will be good students and learn from you," Jassim said. "We appreciate your help."

Vines replied by saying both armies will learn from each other and will continue to move forward in their mutual goals.

"You are writing history as you form and lead your military," Vines said. "It is my honor to serve with you in this endeavor."

"Our goal is a free Iraq," he said. "As soon as you feel you are ready, we will hand over operations, and the Coalition will return to their own countries."

Closing out Sunday's ceremony, Broska Noori Shawees, secretary general of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, said it is important for the Iraqi Army to continue to improve and prepare for the future of their nation.

"The Minister of Defense has a lot of responsibility on his shoulders," Shawees said. "This is the first time that we are taking command of our armed forces, and in the days ahead we will gain control of our army."

"Every step we make from this day forth is being watched by friends and helped by them," Shawees said during the ceremony. "You will be the baseline in our country and in the constitution for Iraq. We are all here and will help you, and if not for the help of the Coalition forces we would not be here today."

"Long live the Iraqi Army."

## Defense Department examines high operational tempo's effect on equipment

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** — Equipment service members are using in Iraq and Afghanistan is getting years worth of use in just one year on the ground, and the Defense Department is taking steps to ensure the tanks, Bradleys, Strykers, Humvees, helicopters, and unmanned aerial vehicles stay in a high state of readiness.

No one is going into combat in standard equipment, a DoD report concluded.

The report — "Ground Force Equipment Repair, Replacement and Recapitalization Requirements Resulting from Sustained Combat Operations" — went to Congress two weeks ago.

The department was concerned about the effect prolonged combat would have on equipment even before Congress asked for the issue to be examined.

"Equipment is being used at a much higher rate than it is in peacetime — two to eight times higher, depending on the piece of equipment you are talking about," said Mark Franklin Cancian, director of the Land Forces Division of DoD's Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation. "As a

result, it needs a lot more maintenance."

In addition, problems caused by the high operational tempo are further aggravated by the harsh environmental conditions. Equipment operating in Iraq and Afghanistan face problems from dust, dirt and heat, Cancian said. Other equipment, especially trucks and Humvees, are running with added armor, which taxes the engines, springs and brakes.

The Abrams tank is a perfect example of the extent of the problem. In peacetime, Abrams tanks drive about 65 miles a month. In Iraq, Soldiers are driving them about 325 miles each month.

Other pieces of equipment have similar statistics. Humvees are being driven more than twice as far each month as in peacetime. Armored security vehicles are being driven about eight times as much, and Bradley fighting vehicles about five times their peacetime average. And helicopters are being flown about twice as much as in peacetime.

"The question we asked was, 'What's the long-term effect of combat operations on our equipment?'" Cancian said.

DoD used the results of the study to help inform officials for the fiscal 2005 supplemental budget request. That request funds

all the work that can be accomplished this fiscal year to repair or replace equipment. Portions of the \$82 billion request fund depot maintenance and procurement actions.

Cancian said a lot of maintenance is done in theater. Most equipment does not have to be shipped back to the states for major overhauls. When equipment does get shipped back, some maintenance is done in the units and some in depots. The depots have "all the funding and capacity to do the work."

There are some equipment "washouts," and there is procurement money in the supplemental to cover pieces of equipment that are not economical to fix. Cancian said these washouts are mostly trucks. Combat losses also need to be replaced.

Most procurements can be handled by current production lines, Cancian said. But some, such as the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior observation helicopter, have been discontinued. The Army will accept some risk in using this helicopter until a replacement comes on line in fiscal 2007 or 2008.

"The risk isn't that we can't fight a war," he said. "It means units may have to rotate more quickly than they otherwise would."

## Detail

from Page 1

One Iraqi general provided some observations he has made about vehicle bombs. Citizens need to be on the lookout for vehicles with tinted windows; vehicles riding low or tilted to one side due to carrying a heavy load of explosives; religious writing on the side of a vehicle, so a terrorist photographer will be able to recognize the vehicle; vehicles with usually only one occupant; and vehicles driving very fast.

The Iraqi general said actions by the ISF and CF alone are not enough to defeat the terrorist threat. "It is important for the citizens to report suspicious persons or vehicles to the police and Army. This is not something the ISF can do on its own," he said.

Maj. Daniel Cormier, an operations officer with 2nd Brigade Combat Team, briefed the concept of the operation and roles of both the U.S. and ISF units. He stressed the need for crosstalk and coordination between all forces involved. He emphasized that through cooperation, "The Iraqi people will see a surge of ISF presence and need to understand we are doing this for their safety."

"It is very important for the Iraqi people to know that the ISF is here to help," DiSalvo said. "By the end of the summer, the terrorists will be captured, dead or, in the least, severely disrupted, because of [ISF] efforts in this operation," DiSalvo said.

**MNF-I Commanding General**  
Gen. George Casey

**MNF-I PAO**  
Col. Robert A. Potter

**Command Information Chief**  
Maj. Patricia C. Anderson  
patricia.anderson@iraq.centcom.mil

**Command Information NCOIC**  
Master Sgt. Michele R. Hammonds  
michele.hammonds@iraq.centcom.mil



**Editor**.....Staff Sgt. Brett B. McMillan  
brett.mcmillan@iraq.centcom.mil

**Assistant Editor**.....Sgt. Misha King  
misha.king@iraq.centcom.mil

**Staff**.....Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn  
timothy.lawn@iraq.centcom.mil

**Staff**.....Sgt. W. Watson Martin  
william.martin@iraq.centcom.mil

**Staff**.....Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas  
ferdinand.thomas@iraq.centcom.mil

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PERSPECTIVES

# Rumsfeld gives memorial message

I am pleased to join millions of Americans in honoring the brave men and women in uniform — those who serve today, those who have fallen in battle and those veterans who proudly served in the past.

My father volunteered to serve in the Navy after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Millions enlisted to battle against the tide of tyranny then threatening the world. And I was privileged to serve in the Navy some 50 years ago. Now, more than 50 years later, I count my time in uniform as a most important period in my life. Thousands, if not millions, of others who have served undoubtedly feel the same way.

Military service has always been one of our country's most noble callings. America has long been the defender of liberty — the country that has stepped forward to defend those who could not defend themselves. This was true from our country's early days at Lexington and Concord, where the earliest citizen soldiers defended their farms and homes, their new country, and the cause of freedom.

In the years that followed, the U.S. armed forces have become freedom's champion — at Gettysburg; in the forest of the Argonne; on the beaches of Normandy and Iwo Jima; in the air during the Berlin blockade; and today in places like Kabul and Baghdad.

This new war we face has required our military to adapt its thinking and challenged us to prepare in new ways. Yet whatever the mission, whatever the challenge that lies before us, each of you who are serving our country are confronting it with grit and courage. I thank each of you and your fami-

lies for your service to our country.

When my father passed away some 30 years ago, I found a letter in his papers that he had received from then Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal — who later became the first secretary of defense. Secretary Forrestal apparently sent this letter to all those who served to arrive after they had returned to civilian life. Noting the historic achievements made by the U.S. military, he wrote: "You have served in the greatest Navy in the world. ... It crushed two enemy fleets at once, receiving their surrenders only four months apart. It brought our land-based air power within bombing range of the enemy and set our ground armies on the beachheads of final victory. ... For your part in these achievements you deserve to be proud as long as you live. The nation you served at a time of crisis will remember you with gratitude."

That letter to my father now hangs on my office wall in the Pentagon. It is a reminder to me of our country's fighting spirit. And I see that same spirit in the actions of the men and women in uniform every day. It is that spirit that we honor on this holiday: the selfless duty and devotion passed down from generations who served before, and the courage of those who sacrificed their lives in service to our country.

Our country is proud of every member of our armed forces — volunteers all — and we are deeply grateful to those who have sacrificed for the cause of liberty. May God bless each of you, may God bless your families and may God bless our wonderful country.

*Donald H. Rumsfeld*



May 30, 2005

**Members of the Coalition:**

In the effort to preserve the unity of the nation after the end of the Civil War, Americans established Memorial Day to remember and honor those who had paid the ultimate sacrifice during that conflict. After World War I, this tribute was extended to all who gave their lives in the service of their country in defense of the principles of freedom and justice.

As we remember those fallen heroes of yesterday and pay homage to their sacrifices, we also recall and honor our fallen comrades here in Iraq. These brave warriors gave their last full measure of devotion for the noble and just cause of bringing democracy to 25 million Iraqis. The sacrifices of men and women from across our Coalition will not be forgotten by their comrades, their countrymen, or the people of Iraq.

Our purpose in remembrance is to recognize and honor their efforts. We are bound to ensure their sacrifices are remembered and that the causes for which they fought — freedom, justice and equality — are not forgotten. We honor their memories by continuing our mission with renewed commitment and focus.

I encourage you to take a moment during your day to pause and remember these fallen heroes and renew your commitment to our current effort.

Sincerely,

*George W. Casey, Jr.*  
 George W. Casey, Jr.  
 General, United States Army  
 Commanding

## Scimitar Pulse

*How do you feel about the punishments given to service members involved in the Abu Graib incident?*

"I never think about it."

**Army Spc. John Komeau**  
*101st Field Artillery*



"I think the punishments were fair. I don't think those guys had any right to do what they did."

**Army Spc. Kasey Morris**  
*Multi-National Force - Iraq*

"I think they shouldn't have done it. I don't think they should have gotten kicked out for it though."

**Air Force Senior Airman Stacey Cooper**  
*Security Forces*



"They knew right from wrong."

**Army Spc. Dave Persad**  
*Multi-National Force - Iraq*

"I haven't really been following the case. I am more worried about what is going on here."

**Army Sgt. Jason Obrebski**  
*101st Field Artillery*



"I don't really care."

**Air Force Senior Airman Sharif Price**  
*Component Maintenance Squadron*

"Every man is responsible for his own actions."

**Army Pfc. Craig Williams**  
*1035th Maintenance Company*



# '5-25' campaign increases IED awareness

By Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Improvised explosive devices are the number one killers of America's sons and daughters serving in Iraq, and the Joint IED Defeat Task Force at Camp Victory kicked off an information campaign May 25 in an effort to increase IED awareness and save lives.

The "5-and-25" campaign, as it is called, is designed to increase IED awareness and reduce the effectiveness of the mountain of makeshift bombs being produced by insurgents. Officials say the deceptive devices account for more than half of the Coalition deaths that have occurred since the start of the Iraq war in March 2003.

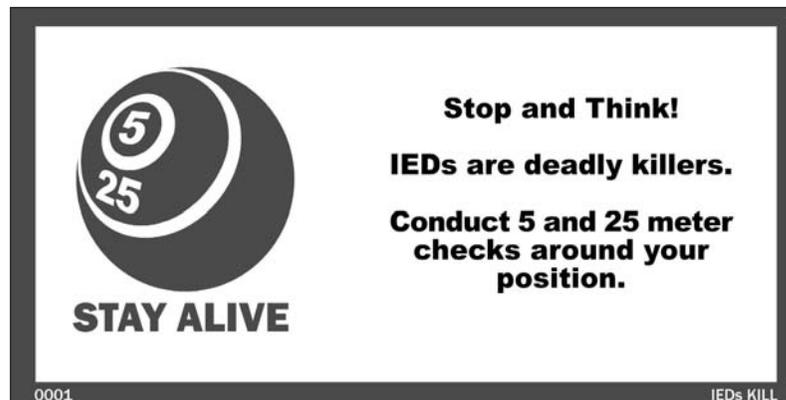
Efforts to date have reduced the IED casualty rate by more than 45 percent during the period of April 2004 through February 2005 — but that is not seen as enough.

"IEDs are our number one killers here," said Eric Eglund, who works at the Iraq headquarters of Joint IED Defeat Task Force at Camp Victory. The task force is responsible for developing innovative ways to rid the country of IEDs.

The deadly devices are considered a highly effective means of killing people because they can quickly be set up anywhere and be set to blow at any time. They have been disguised as virtually everything from tree trunks and dead animals to bicycles and pregnant women. Royal Australian Air Force Group Capt. David Stockdale, deputy chair of the IED Working Group at Multi-National Corps - Iraq, said there is no limit to what insurgents will use for IEDs.

Stockdale, who serves as the equivalent of a colonel in the American Air Force, has been actively working the issue of IEDs and their effects since arriving in Iraq a few months ago.

"The IED is one of the most dangerous threats to Coalition forces," Stockdale said. "To mitigate their effects, we wanted to put together an information campaign that would make the IED reaction drill a normal part of daily activities for the Coalition forces."



Eglund said several different counter-IED organizations were already delivering good messages and possible solutions out there, but with no real emphasis or impact to the troops who needed it the most. "It wasn't as good as it could be. Some channels just naturally don't flow as well as others," he said.

The working group, deputy-chaired by Stockdale, represents a cross-section of Coalition forces formed as a result of this issue.

The group's solution for getting vital information to the forces required three objectives: First, ensure information gets to those troops who need it most; second, develop an effective counter-IED organization that can take the fight to the enemy; third, produce pinpointed products from one organization that can be approved and delivered in a timely fashion.

"IEDs can be anytime, anywhere, any shape; the trends change," Stockdale said. "The aim is to get the message to the field. It's dangerous out there."

To push information to the troops anywhere and anytime trends change, the working group assembled a small team of designers to brainstorm effective ways to get the word out. The first idea also seemed the most obvious one to start the campaign — military publications.

Task force members agreed they needed some common thread to tie all the messages together — like a logo.

"The [designers] suggested we needed to have [a logo] that

everybody recognizes," said Lt. Col. Theodore Martin, field team leader, Joint IED Defeat Task Force-Iraq. "5-and-25" became that logo. "The most important thing Coalition forces can accomplish is situational awareness when they're outside the wire; it is the most basic [tactic] that you have to master."

"This seemed appropriate because 5-and-25 means awareness," said Master Sgt. William Johnson, one of three designers. "5-and-25 means checking the area around you for a threat. Every time you stop outside a secure area, you always should check. Not checking could get you killed."

More specifically, 5-and-25 requires that troops look for anything out of the ordinary within a five-meter radius of their vehicles, according to counter-IED policies. If halted long enough, forces should then exit their vehicles and conduct a 25-meter sweep around their position. Halting for as little as four minutes can prove costly.

"Evidence shows that [many] Soldiers who are at a short halt [for as little as] four to five minutes are getting hit by IEDs near their vehicles," Martin said.

Besides the recognizable 5-and-25 logo getting printed in military publications, the campaign will also produce messages to other outlets that could potentially reach as far away as the Department of Defense and Afghanistan.

"This time it's [newspaper ads], next time it will be commercials on TV and radio," Martin said. "After that, we're looking at expanding it. The sky is the limit."

Included in the laundry list of ideas are bumper stickers, flash screens on Web sites, stress balls and even Frisbees, according to Martin.

Whatever the means, Stockdale said the message must stay focused with one purpose: to save lives.

"There's no predicting exactly where, when or how you're going to meet an IED when you're driving around," Stockdale said. "Practicing those basic methods and regularly using them significantly enhances your chances of survival."

## IED hits 3 armored Humvees

Story by Sgt. W. Watson Martin  
Scimitar Staff

**INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — A security escort's three Humvees were hit by an improvised explosive device while returning here after providing an early morning escort May 15.

The Forward Support Company Soldiers of the 176th Field Artillery Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division escorted four semi-trailers and a non-tactical vehicle along a 60-mile stretch to Scania with three M114s and one M1025 — Class I and II armored Humvees.

"On the way back, I noticed what appeared to a burlap bag approximately three feet long and rather bulky on the left side of the road," said Staff Sgt. Jay Wheeler, point man in the lead vehicle. The lead vehicle then swerved right and called back to the other Humvees.

The second Humvee moved 50 feet to the side but caught the main blast. Oil and steam blew up and over the windshield, covered the turret's shield and soaked the crew-served weapon, an M249 squad automatic weapon. "I had just ducked down after going through an underpass," said Pfc. Brandon Simmons, "and then boom, it went off."

Another M114 and the M1025 received minor damage to their windshields and engine covers.

They were able to move out of the kill zone to a safe rally point where a mechanic assist-

ed in hooking up a tow bar before heading back to camp.

Once back at in the IZ at Camp Honor, they discovered there were no injuries, however the Soldiers were visibly shaken by the incident, but not as bad as the last time, said Sgt. 1st Class Tony Robinson, the motor sergeant of the FSC. This had been the second attack on the same route.

The incapacitated vehicle turned out to have a pierced oil cooler and some damage to the driver's door. The next day on a test run, however, the mechanics discovered the engine had been run too far without oil, so it was replaced.

"All the trucks will be mission-capable by tomorrow morning," Robinson said. "These properly armored vehicles saved lives today and will continue to roll."

Recently, the Department of Defense released a letter to commanders that only Class I and Class II Humvees are allowed to travel in the Red Zone, Robinson said. Class I includes factory armored M114 Humvees, and Class II includes the M1025 with added armor. In order for the M998 Humvee to meet the Class II level, it must have the specially designed and manufactured add-on armor kit along with additional armor bolted to the undercarriage and the roof of the vehicle.

Soldiers should not travel out in the Red Zone without proper protection, Robinson said.

## Cargo trucks major boost in IPs transporting goods, equipment

By Pfc. Laura M. Bigenho  
42nd Military Police Brigade  
Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Iraqi police are speeding up the distribution of logistics and supplies, thanks to the Iraqi Police Station team from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 42nd Military Police Brigade, a key participant in the Police Partnership Program.

IPS team members, Maj. Curtis Schroeder, Capt. Jason Bradley, Capt. Beth Hurlburt, Staff Sgt. Ruben Covarrubias and Staff Sgt. Christine Roberts, presented Iraqi police with keys to four cargo trucks recently. The vehicle presentation was one of many building blocks in developing a stronger relationship with Iraqi forces.

Four 2004 Ashok Leyland cargo trucks were distributed to Baghdad Police Headquarters, Al Khark Police Headquarters, Traffic Patrol Headquarters and the Rusafa Directorate, said Col. Richard Swengros, 42nd MP Brigade commander. The trucks are being used to transport supplies from the logistics warehouse to the Iraqi police headquarters and their police stations.

The logistics warehouse, which stores hundreds of vests, uniforms, ballistic plates, ammunition and other supplies, is the place

where Baghdad's Iraqi police pick up essential equipment, said Bradley, the logistics officer in charge of IPS. "Prior to having these cargo trucks, they were using small pickup trucks, minivans and pretty much anything they could get their hands on."

"Having these [cargo trucks] is going to increase the flow of logistics and speed up the process of getting items out to the police," Swengros said. "One thing about the Iraqi police is that they always do a good job with what they have, but a lot of times, they don't have the right equipment."

Swengros noted the Iraqi police played an important part in the selection and ordering process. Doing so, he said, "They become even more appreciative once they see all of the work that goes into ordering and maintaining the vehicles. It also teaches them responsibility."

In exchange for the trucks, the IPS simply expects the Iraqi police use the trucks to distribute the equipment given to them, said Bradley. "Once the vehicles are handed over to the Iraqis, they sign for the trucks and become fully responsible for them. It really helps build the relationship we have with [the Iraqi police], especially when we come through with 'big ticket' items, like vehicles and cargo trucks, ... which can definitely be used."

# EOD techs hold 2nd annual memorial at Camp Victory

Story and photo by  
Sgt. Michael J. Carden  
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — More than 50 explosive ordnance disposal service members and civilians serving throughout Iraq gathered for the 2nd Annual EOD Memorial (Forward) May 7 at Al-Faw Palace here, to honor the memory and sacrifice of EOD technicians who lost their lives during the past year.

The evening began with toasts and tributes to the fallen EOD techs and their families, including a slideshow of the fallen troops in action during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

A table and setting “in the place of honor” served as a reminder to those in attendance “that all of our soldiers could not be here with us” on this occasion, said 1st Lt. Phil Cordaro, officer in charge, personnel operations, 184th Ordnance Battalion (EOD), Fort Gillem, Ga.

“The table is small and is set for one — symbolizing the facility of a prisoner — alone against his oppressors and the singular life given in defense of our nation,” said Cordaro, who was the narrator for the evening. “The single yellow rose inside the vase reminds us of the families and loved ones who kept the faith and remember. The glass is inverted, for they cannot toast with us tonight.”

The event was intended to replicate the EOD Memorial Ball, which is held every year in May at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., but for those EOD techs who are deployed to Iraq, said Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Udelhofen,

sergeant major, 184th EOD Bn.

“The EOD field is a very close community,” Udelhofen said. “When one of us dies, we all feel it. This is just our way to remember them and pay our respects.”

The events are held simultaneously, preceding a ceremony the following day at Eglin AFB to add the names of the past year’s fallen EOD service members to the EOD Memorial Wall.

The memorial consists of four cenotaphs, each representing its own branch of service.

They are engraved with the names of 182 Army, Marine, Navy and Air Force EOD techs who have died on active duty as a result of an EOD operation. The early names date back to World War II.

This year the names of four Soldiers and two Marines were added to the wall. All six were killed while performing missions in Iraq. Their names will live on and always be remembered by their comrades, Udelhofen said.

“It’s important to remember those who have fallen, especially those in [Iraq],” said British Maj. Gen. Mark Mans, deputy commanding general, Multi-National Corps - Iraq. “It is my privilege and an honor to be here with you to remember those Soldiers

and Marines who lost their lives.”

Mans was the evening’s guest speaker. He was commissioned into the Corps of Royal Engineers from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, England in 1974. He has spent the majority of his 30-year-career dealing with ordnance and IEDs, he said.

He commanded British troops in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and in the Middle East during the first Gulf War. “IEDs have been around for many, many years. It’s nothing new. Counter-IED issues ... that’s where the changes have happened.”

Mans said there has been great improvements in counter-IED equipment over the years, but counter-IED personnel have made the greatest contribution and are the most important element in reducing the threat of IEDs.

“The human who is brave and courageous, well-trained and skillful ... that’s the person we want,” Mans said to the EOD techs. “You guys epitomize that in every sense. You guys and girls are at the forefront of the IED fight.”

Near the evening’s end, the newest and oldest graduates of the EOD school were recognized by cutting the first pieces of a cake, which was decorated with icing in the design of the EOD badge worn by all EOD school

graduates. This signifies the old always being faithful and the new carrying on the EOD tradition, Udelhofen said.

Jim Ennis, project manager for a civilian contracted ordnance disposal company working in Iraq, was the oldest graduate. He completed EOD School in September 1962 and retired in 1981 as a lieutenant commander in the Navy EOD branch.

1st Lt. Sarah Treveloni, executive officer, 38th Ordnance Company (EOD), Fort Stewart, Ga., was the most recent graduate.

She said graduating and earning her EOD badge was one the proudest moments of her life. She completed the year-long course Feb. 25, only to find herself almost immediately deployed to Iraq. She and her unit arrived in Iraq the first week in May.

“Being here makes you realize the reality of our job,” Treveloni said. “I know what the risks are, but I know we make Soldiers safer because of what we do. That’s what attracted me to EOD in the first place.”

Udelhofen said it takes a dedicated person to be an EOD tech. “Even when they are not deployed, they’re training, learning the latest tactics, techniques and procedures in dealing with explosive ordnance. They’re constantly risking their own lives to make the lives of others safer.

“The hardest walk in the world is when a guy puts on a bomb suit and walks toward a suspect item or vehicle, knowing that it’s a bomb and that it could blow up,” Udelhofen said. “You’ve got to be dedicated. To me, there is no greater job than being an EOD tech.”



This table display was set in “the place of honor” as a reminder of the EOD technicians who died in combat and could not be with their comrades during the EOD Memorial May 7.

## ‘We’re ready for more’: Iraqi Army expands area of operation

By Spc. Matthew Wester  
3/1 Armor Division Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Iraq Army’s 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 6th Division extended its area of responsibility last week, taking over security for a larger part of northwest and north central Baghdad.

“This was a transfer of authority of two large districts in the capitol city of Baghdad from the 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division to the Iraqi Army,” said Col. David Bishop, commander of 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division.

“We have looked forward to expanding our operation and our work,” said Lt. Col. Karben Qussay, commander of the 1st Bn., based in the Adamiya section of Baghdad. “We have the full ability to expand our area of operations.”

The battalion’s sector now includes about a quarter of Baghdad, according to Qussay.

“There are seven zones in the area of Adamiya, and when I came here in January, we controlled five of those seven zones,” said Lt. Col. Jim Blackburn, commander of the 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, which is responsible for training the 1st Bn. “Now, the 1st Bn. controls all seven.”

“The bar has been raised now,” said Lt. Col. Mark Kerry, of the 256th Brigade Combat Team, Louisiana National Guard, and commander of a military transition team working with the 6th Iraqi Army Division. “They have proven they can handle it.”

The 1st Bn. will now patrol areas like the Al’ Shab section of Baghdad on its own, Kerry said. The addi-

tional area secured by the battalion is about three square miles, but is a densely populated urban zone of about 500,000 people. “It is substantial.”

The turnover of security operations was based on how well the Iraqi troops policed their neighborhoods.

Blackburn said 1st Bn. has shown “an excellent display of leadership and technical capabilities.”

Qussay stated the expansion came with a lot of hard work and was possible because of the successes his battalion has had against insurgents.

One of the recent successes of Qussay’s troops was the seizure of nearly 100 sticks of plastic explosive C-4, false identification cards and vests and belts that could have been used for suicide attacks during a night raid in north central Baghdad May 8.

Four terror suspects were detained in the raid, and 1st Bn. Soldiers found a possible “hit list” of names the suspected terrorists were targeting.

The names of Iraqi Army and Iraqi police members and other officials were reportedly on the list.

Blackburn explained the 1st Bn. has routinely captured similar caches and followed up with additional raids to seize higher-level members of the insurgency.

Qussay’s Soldiers also proved themselves during the Ashura holy days, limiting insurgent attacks against pilgrims marching to mosques in Baghdad.

The transition occurring in northwest Baghdad will continue, as Iraqi security forces assume greater control of the security of their own country.

“One day, Baghdad will be controlled totally by the Iraqi security forces,” Kerry said.

Qussay is ready for that day to come. “We are ready to be responsible for more,” he said.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker

## Down, boy!

Thai kickboxing instructor Sgt. Ryan J. LaBar, 3rd Signal Company, knocks down fellow Baghdad Boxing Club member Spc. Charles Eich, also of 3rd Signal Co. during a demonstration for the Multi-National Division Baghdad Asian-Pacific Heritage program at Camp Liberty Saturday.

## \$3.5 million project pumps fresh water to Zafaraniya

By Maj. Russ Goemaere

2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Readily available fresh water is something most Americans take for granted. In Iraq, many areas suffered from severe neglect under the former regime, and fresh water became a luxury.

The residents of Zafaraniya, a suburb of Baghdad, are benefiting from the completion of a water system that is bringing fresh, clean, potable water to the edge of their residential lots.

"Water is pumped from the Rasheed water treatment plant to the gates of each residential lot," said an Iraqi engineer, who preferred not to be identified. He said the water in Zafaraniya was very poor before these projects were completed.

The water system was built in the 1970s and 1980s and had seen very little maintenance and repair, he said.

He added that it was necessary to rebuild the entire system to improve the lives of the residents.

"All of the residents I have spoken to have told me how nice it is to have clean water available once again," the engineer said.

The Ministry of Health has completed surveys of the water the new system is delivering, and the water has been verified as fit to drink, he said.

The water pressure is also good, but will get even better in the next few weeks when final work is completed at the Rasheed water treatment plant, he said.

The engineer, who was educated at the University of Technology in Baghdad, explained that the water is free to all the residents. "They will start paying for their water once the water department starts to collect money. Each home has a gauge for the water department to check every month or so to assess a cost to residents," he said.

Under the contract, water is pumped only to the gates of each home's courtyard, but he said it is very easy and inexpensive for the residents to complete the work and bring the water into their homes.

More than 6,500 homes and about 200,000 people in Zafaraniya will benefit from the water project. About 300 Iraqi workers and more than \$3.5 million were invested in the project, said Maj. Alexander Fullerton, an engineer for 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

Fullerton, of Leavenworth, Kan., has been involved with projects in east Baghdad since his unit arrived in January.

"Many projects have been completed recently. The water project in Zafaraniya is one part of the much larger civil reconstruction plan which focuses on building and repairing the sewers, water, electricity, and trash removal systems in east Baghdad," he said.

## Terrorists attack Abu Ghraib, 5 detainees wounded

**WASHINGTON** — Five detainees were wounded in a terrorist rocket attack on Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison May 20, military officials reported.

Three of the five had serious injuries.

The rocket landed in one of the internment facility's detainee compounds at about 10:15 a.m. U.S. forces quickly responded to defend the facility and safeguard the detainees, U.S. military officials said. The injured were immediately taken to the 115th Field Hospital.

Officials said no coalition forces were injured in the incident.

Also in Iraq, a 1st Corps Support Command Soldier was killed in a vehicle accident after an improvised explosive-device attack during a logistics patrol north of Taji May 20. The Soldier was evacuated to a nearby medical facility, where he was pronounced dead. The name of the Soldier is being withheld pending next-of-kin notification. (Compiled by American Forces Press Service from Multi-National Force - Iraq news releases.)

## New law to affect SGLI payments, premiums

**WASHINGTON** — Defense and Veterans Affairs officials are ironing out details of programs that will expand benefits provided through Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance.

The \$82 billion supplemental legislation signed into law by President Bush May 11, increases maximum SGLI coverage to \$400,000 and provides payouts of up to \$100,000 for service members with traumatic injuries, explained Stephen Wurtz, the VA's deputy assistant director for insurance.

The increased SGLI coverage will take effect Sept. 1, and the so-called "traumatic SGLI" benefit, Dec. 1. Wurtz said the legislation directs that both benefits will be retroactive to Oct. 7, 2001.

Traumatic SGLI benefits will be retroactive for troops who have lost limbs, eyesight or speech or received other traumatic injuries as a direct result of injuries received during Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom. The benefit does not apply to service members suffering from disease.

The retroactive coverage increase is payable as a result of deaths in either operation, or under other conditions prescribed by the secretary of defense, Wurtz said.

Service members enrolled in the SGLI program will notice an increase in their premiums when the increases take effect. The traumatic SGLI benefit will be rolled into the basic SGLI program and will likely cost about \$1 a month, Wurtz said.

Troops opting for maximum SGLI coverage — \$400,000 vs. the current \$250,000 — will see their monthly premiums increase from \$16.25 to \$26, Wurtz said. This is based on the rate of 6.5 cents per \$1,000 of insurance coverage.

SGLI coverage is currently available in \$10,000 increments, but as of Sept. 1, the increments will increase to \$50,000.

Because the rates have not changed, service members who retain \$250,000 or less coverage will see no increase in their premiums, Wurtz said, except for the \$1 "traumatic SGLI" premium.

While these expanded benefits will be provided retroactively, affected service members won't be charged retroactive payments, he said. DoD will absorb that cost.

In a new twist introduced through the supplemental legislation, troops with dependents must get their spouse's approval to purchase less than the full amount of SGLI coverage. In the case of members who are not married, notice will be provided to the designated beneficiary when the member purchases less than the

maximum coverage.

The new traumatic SGLI benefit is designed to provide "a quick infusion of cash" for cash-strapped families of troops recuperating from traumatic injuries received in the line of duty, Wurtz said.

Compensation will range from \$25,000 to \$100,000, and is designed to help families of severely wounded troops leave their homes and jobs to be with their loved one during recovery. "These families incur a lot of expenses, and this is designed to help them financially," Wurtz said.

While VA staff members consult with DoD to write regulations that will put the new SGLI benefits into effect, Wurtz said, "lots and lots of details have to be worked out."

Among outstanding issues is the fact that the expanded SGLI coverage is part of the supplemental legislation package that funds operations only through Sept. 30. That's 30 days after the new SGLI limit takes effect and two months before the traumatic SGLI benefit begins.

Wurtz said VA is confident Congress will resolve this issue before there's any lapse in coverage.

VA will continue to oversee and control the SGLI program. (By Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service)

## Two Kirkuk rail stations' projects complete

**KIRKUK, Iraq** — Passengers and consumers in the Kirkuk area will be pleased to learn that two rail station rehabilitation projects were recently completed in Kirkuk. The Kirkuk and Al Maraai stations are the first two completed of four station renovations scheduled in Kirkuk Governorate.

Stations in Al Thawra and Al Reyadh are scheduled for completion later this year. From all indications, the once bustling Iraqi rail system is on the track to steady recovery.

Both station renovation projects took about four months to complete at a cost of more than \$70,000 each. The initial work mainly consisted of cleaning and removing rubbish from the sites and demolishing unsafe portions of the buildings. Station renovations included repair and replacement of plumbing and sewer systems, replacement of roofing and other structural components, painting, plastering, installing new windows, doors and frames, as well as flooring and tile.

The Iraq Republic Railroad supervised all of the renovations

*Continued on next page*

## Army Chief of Staff pins Purple Heart on Vanguard Soldier

By Spc. Ricardo Branch  
3rd Infantry Division Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The Purple Heart was awarded to Pfc. Donald M. Urbany, a fire support specialist assigned to Company B, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, and native of Troy, Mich., for wounds received as a result of enemy actions while serving in Iraq.

Soldiers from Urbany's company were on a patrol in central Baghdad May 10. They were traveling to provide support to an Iraqi kindergarten school graduation located in the Karradah district. A vehicle-borne improvised explosive device hit their patrol wounding three Soldiers and one interpreter. Urbany received shrapnel wounds to his right arm, neck, and right eye. The attack caused him to lose his right eye.

The Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, personally presented Urbany the Purple Heart Medal during a ceremony at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.



U.S. Army photo  
**Pfc. Donald M. Urbany, Co. B, 4th Bn., 64th Armor Regt., and Troy, Mich., native, speaks with Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, chief of staff of the Army, after receiving the Purple Heart at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany May 12.**

## NEWS IN BRIEF

performed. Prior to 2003, the IRR operated a network of 2,603 kilometers of railway.

The main railway routes are Um Qasr/Basra-Baghdad and Baghdad-Husaiba on the Syrian border. There are also branches to Kirkuk and Akashat.

"There are 105 kilometers of railway in Kirkuk," said Shakir Mahmoud Shukri, manager for Kirkuk Region IRR. Renovations to these stations and others around Iraq are restoring the operational readiness of the IRR.

"Rehabilitation of the railway and stations will allow the IRR to move passengers and commodities throughout the region and connect Kirkuk by rail to the other parts of the country," Shukri said.

Operational readiness and safety were exacerbated by the lack of pre-war maintenance and post-conflict looting. According to Shukri, work on the railway and the stations improves as the local security situation improves.

A local contractor employed about 30 local hire Iraqi trade workers and artisans, who applied their skills to reach the finished product. The use of local contractors and labor has been instrumental in inspiring pride in the communities and injecting money into the economies.

The stations in Kirkuk are part of a 15-station project that includes the reconstruction of 11 stations in Ninewa Governate. The goal of the project is to repair the stations and make them safe and efficient again.

Rebuilding the train stations allows the Iraqi people to see steps are being taken to restore the country's infrastructure. At the same time, renovation projects such as these send a clear message to terrorists that, despite their attacks, Iraq is moving forward, Shukri said. "I am looking forward to the return of full operation of the IRR serving the people of Kirkuk and being part of the national rail system." (By Mike McAleer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

**Al-Rasheed infrastructure keeps improving**

**RADWANIYA, Iraq** — After spending a few months in Iraq, Soldiers soon forget the ease of being able to travel within the United States over more than two million miles of paved roads and streets. It is a little-known fact that the first constructed roads date from about 4,000 B.C. and were built in Ur, or modern-day Iraq.

Iraq today has plenty of roadways but for small neighborhoods like Radwaniya, a paved road goes a long way in improving transportation and the economy.

Iraqi leaders from the Radwaniya Neighborhood Advisory Council along with Coalition forces completed a road project that spans more than four kilometers and cost about \$565,000.

Radwaniya is a neighborhood located in the district of Al Rasheed.

"The paving of the Hamourabi village road is great for the community," said Capt. Christian Neels, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry

Regiment civil-military operations officer, and native of Muscatine, Iowa. "The completion of the road will offer a quicker means of allowing farmers and the local population to get to the market and in the long run, contribute to the economic progress of the area."

Neels added that unemployment in the surrounding towns of Mufafer and the Hey Al Askari area is high. With few jobs available in the community, the roadway will allow the population to get into Baghdad where employment opportunities are greater.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery, 1st Cavalry Division initially proposed the project to provide easier access for farmers and the local population to get to the market and to operate their vehicles after rains. Prior to the paving of the roadway, civilian traffic was severely restricted by the mud roads and the adjacent canal.

After the transition of authority between 1st Cav. Div. and 3rd Inf. Div. in February, 3/7 Inf. inherited the project and worked closely with Sheikh Ali Muttar, the Radwaniya NAC chairman, Neels said. Sheikh Ali has overseen other infrastructure improvement projects in the Radwaniya neighborhood.

A 3,000 meter waterline that runs alongside the Hamourabi Road was built and works in conjunction with two water towers in the area, said Sheikh Ali.

"The two water towers in Hey Al Askari and Al Mufafer have the potential of providing drinking water for at least 7,000 people," he said.

He also said that before the water project can be accepted by the Municipality of Baghdad, the local contractor must make some modifications.

The NAC has also renovated a school for the area, led a campaign of removing trash and built two soccer fields.

Although the Radwaniya area now falls under the control of 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, the Soldiers of 3/7 Inf. keep in touch with the progress of Sheikh Ali and his community and there is still much work to be done in other areas.

"Continuing roadway and water improvements and establishing long-term employment of the local population in our sector will continue to be our emphasis," Neels said. (By Maj. Alayne Conway, 4th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs)

## Passing out patriotism



Photo by Spc. Ricardo Branch

Sgt. 1st Class Alex Mejia, 256th Brigade Combat Team, distributes Iraqi flags to people along the streets of Baghdad, Iraq, May 14. The 256th BCT Civil Affairs were out among the locals in various meetings and inspections to assess ongoing renovation efforts and ways to better help the Iraqi people.

## Frequencies



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

Listen in May to win an EarRadio courtesy of [www.americasupportsyou.mil](http://www.americasupportsyou.mil).

## 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.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. W. Watson Martin

Mechanics from Forward Support Co., 76th Field Artillery Bn., 3rd Inf. Div. stand before a treasured national symbol of freedom for a group photo on Armed Forces Day, Saturday. The flag was left by their predecessor, the 82nd Airborne Division. These Soldiers decided to hang it in their maintenance tent at Camp Honor, Baghdad.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Mary Rose

Pfc. Michael Ringman, 401st Military Police Co., 42nd Military Police Bde., Fort Hood, Texas, sits in the turret of a Humvee in preparation for a convoy on Armed Forces Day Saturday.

# Armed Forces Day 2005

## Defense leaders praise freedom's warriors at Joint Service Open House

By Scimitar Staff

While America celebrated Armed Forces Day May 21, with open houses at military bases across the United States, and will celebrate Memorial Day on Monday, it was and will be business as usual for most of the troops in Iraq, as they serve to change the course of history.

But from the U.S. capital region, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld proclaimed service members "are on freedom's side," at opening ceremonies for the Joint Service Open House at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., May 20.

Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers both spoke of history and the future at the ceremony, which began a weekend of Armed Forces Day celebrations there.

Myers said the defense department's military equipment on display often draws crowds to events like this. "But our greatest asset, of course, always remains our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and DoD civilians."

The chairman said the World War II generation fought tyranny, hatred and oppression, and sacrificed much at home "to bring hope and freedom from fear to the world."

Today's generation is much the same, he said. "They are in the fight for freedom and an ongoing struggle against violent extremism."

Rumsfeld said men and women making history often

don't realize they are doing it. "I'm sure the Union Soldiers fighting at Little Round Top had no idea that their victory would begin the path to the Civil War's end," he said. "Soldiers, Sailors and Marines had little opportunity to reflect on the impact of their actions as they swept onto beaches at Normandy or Iwo Jima."

The men and women serving the country around the world also are making history, and Armed Forces Day is a day to reflect on their contributions to history, Rumsfeld said. "Across the world, outstanding men and women are preserving freedom for millions and bringing freedom to millions more."

He listed some of the modern military's achievements in the war on terrorism: American forces helped liberate 50 million people from two oppressive dictatorships. They are rebuilding societies decimated by war and fear. They have brought thousands of terrorists around the world to justice.

"Whatever the mission and whatever the challenges that lie ahead, members of the United States armed forces are facing them with courage and with great skill," the secretary added.

Myers also praised American service members and made some predictions. "We will win this struggle against extremism, and we will have a peaceful democratic Iraq and Afghanistan," he said. "How do I know this? I know our people — their focus, their determination, their professionalism, their courage, their compassion will help ensure our success in this struggle." (Jim Garamone of American Forces Press Service contributed to this article.)



U.S. Marine photo by Lance Cpl. Athanasios L. Genos

Third Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment Bn. commander, Lt. Col. Stephen M. Neary, gives his final salute to Lance Cpl. John T. Schmidt during a memorial service at Camp Fallujah Saturday, honoring Schmidt's life as a Marine. He succumbed to his wounds received from a rocket propelled grenade attack Jan. 30 at Observation Post 2.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker

Col. James E. Brooks, commander of 36th Engineer Combat Group, demonstrates his newly acquired hula dancing skills during the Multi-National Division Baghdad Asian Pacific Heritage Observance program at Camp Liberty Saturday.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Darcie Ibdapo

Senior Airman Juan Loya, assigned to the 305th Logistics Readiness Squadron, McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., deployed to the 407th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, Tallil Air Base, Iraq, spends Armed Forces Day performing Humvee maintenance.



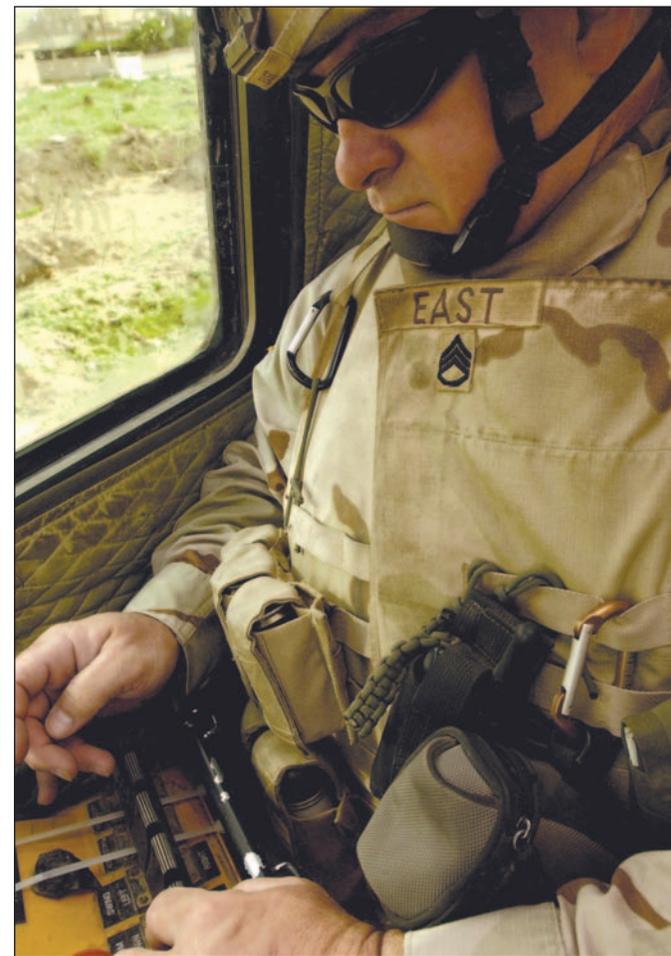
Photo courtesy of 42nd Infantry Division

A Soldier operating a large mechanical spork digs up an improvised explosive device. Two 155 mm Howitzer rounds were in a burlap sack and were in the pre-arming phase. The IED was missing an arming device - timer and detonating device.

# BUFFALO engineers dig IEDs



The interior of the Buffalo, manned by driver Spc. Patrick Lynch from Rochester, N.Y., and Staff Sgt. Paul East from Clewiston, Fla. East operates the spork.



Staff Sgt. Paul East, a "Trailblazer" Soldier of 3rd Platoon, Company A, 467 Engineer Battalion, 42nd Infantry Division, from Clewiston, Fla., operates the spork using a joystick. The spork can be operated from within the relative safety of the Buffalo cab.

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Timothy Lawn  
Scimitar Staff

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARHORSE, BA'QUBAH, Iraq** — Though innocent in appearance, the stuffed burlap bag with protruding wires could potentially be much more deadly than a bag of garbage.

For the "Trailblazer" Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company A, 467 Engineer Battalion, patrolling main supply route Vanessa, the stuffed bag could possibly contain an improvised explosive device.

"We use specialty equipment and patrol routes looking for IEDs," said Capt. Jesse Shulaw, A Co. commander. "Our mission is to ensure mobility along corps and division main supply routes."

The specialty equipment the Trailblazers, who are assigned to the 42nd Infantry Division, employ to find IEDs is the Buffalo, also known as the Mine Protected Clearance Vehicle. The MPCV is a 23-ton, armored vehicle operated by two Soldiers — a driver and a boom operator, with room for four other Soldiers. The Buffalo is cross-country, all-weather and equipped with a long boom called a "spork." The spork is safely operated from within the cab by a crew member and can dig, push, pull or drag garbage or dirt while looking for or inspecting potential IEDs, protecting its crew from harm at the same time.

Embarking on a recent mission, 3rd platoon left FOB Warhorse with a Buffalo and three Humvees. Their mission was to sweep MSR Detroit and Vanessa and keep them clear of IEDs.

The Buffalo was driven by Spc. Patrick Lynch, a Rochester, N.Y., native, and Staff Sgt. Paul East, who is from

Clewiston, Fla., operated the spork.

"We travel about 25 miles an hour, looking for IED indicators," East said. "Anyone in the convoy can stop to investigate a suspicious site or object."

An IED indicator is anything out of the ordinary. It could be a previous IED site, empty cardboard box, bags, piles of loose gravel, dirt or garbage — nothing can be taken for granted, according to military officials.

The roadways in Iraq are strewn with trash. "The way it looks, we could sit here and inspect trash all day," East said.

Within 10 minutes of leaving FOB Warhorse, East called the mine sweeping detail to a halt. An orange traffic cone had caught his attention. It appeared out of place, and the earth around it looked disturbed.

The convoy of Soldiers pulled back to safe distances and blocked the highway from incoming traffic. East manipulated the boom, knocking over the cone and scraping the earth. It turned out to be a false alarm and within a few minutes, traffic was cleared and the convoy was on its way.

"An IED hidden in a traffic cone had gone off near a convoy last week," said East, adding that no one was hurt.

Several hours later, the convoy returned safely to Warhorse. "Last week, A Co. found five IEDs," East said. "Our purpose for being there is to reduce the insurgents opportunities to place IEDs,"

Soldiers of Trailblazers admit to being satisfied with their job, although dangerous. Keeping the roads safe for Iraqi civilians and Soldiers means a lot. "I couldn't ask for a better job," said 2nd Lt. Randall Summerhill, platoon leader for A Co.

"Most people in this country go out of their way to avoid IEDs; we go out to find them," Summerhill said. "It is a sense of satisfaction when the roads are safer."



"Trailblazer" Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company A, 467 Engineer Battalion, 42nd Infantry Division, taking a break while patrolling main supply route Vanessa.

## Mine Protected Clearance Vehicle Buffalo

Weight: 23 tons

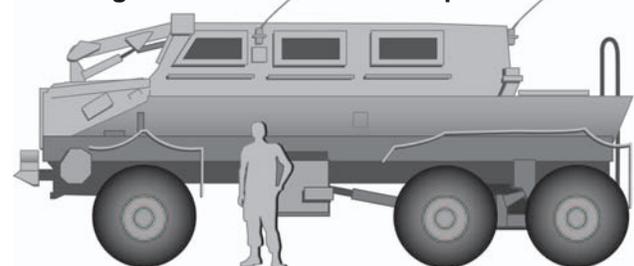
Crew: 2

Passengers: 4

Speed

High: 40 mph

Low: 25 mph



6-foot  
Soldier

size comparison



# Pennsylvania Soldiers fuel fight in Iraq

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

**CAMP TAQQADUM, Iraq** — As the sun sets across the dessert in Iraq, Soldiers finish preparing. Vehicles ready, they receive their mission brief and form a misshapen circle around the camp chaplain as he recites words of strength to troops who now stand silently hand-in-hand with heads bowed.

The experience is one Soldiers from 223rd Transportation Company are used to. The troops pulling rear security strap themselves into their Humvee and wait for the guards to open the gate. They make a few jokes and quietly prepare themselves for the evening's mission.

The 223rd, an Army Reserve transportation company from Pennsylvania attached to the 620th Corps Support Battalion, 1st Corps Support Command, Fort Bragg, N.C., is responsible for transporting fuel to several camps and forward operating bases in Iraq.

Their mission on April 16 was to transport 17 truckloads of fuel to Camps Ramadi and Fallujah. Their mission took slightly less than eight hours, and the convoy was stopped numerous times because of possible improvised explosive devices.

The convoy left at about 9 p.m. and returned slightly after dawn the next day, mission complete, without a casualty. The 223rd has been in Iraq since August 2004, and a lot of the Soldiers attribute the success of their convoys to being prepared and knowing their jobs.

"I drive trucks for a living back in the U.S., and I had the most experience so they put me here," said Cpl. Johnathan Jenson, driver, 2nd Platoon, 223rd Trans. Co. "One of the biggest differences between driving trucks back home and hauling fuel in Iraq is that over here, we do a lot of defensive driving. The roads are in really bad shape, and the situations we get put

in require a lot of skill.

"It's not like driving down the street back home. I am kind of an adrenaline junkie, so I was excited about coming over here," Jenson said. "I like the adrenaline rush of going outside the gate, and hauling fuel makes it that much more exciting."

While convoying, the Soldiers encounter all types of situations, Jenson said. There have been civilians walking on roads, and the traffic during the day is horrible. Certain parts of the route are extremely dangerous, and the convoys have had sniper shots fired at them.

"In November, I was hit with an IED during a mission, and it was very surprising," Jenson said. "It isn't something you can fully prepare for. It happens very quickly and is over just as fast."

"When we were hit, the first thing I did was make sure the co-driver was OK. We then tried to get communication with the other vehicles in the convoy — as well as the convoy commander — to let them know we were OK and were continuing to roll. That was my first priority."

Jenson said it took about three or four days before he realized what actually could have happened and how lucky he was. When he did, he became somewhat subdued.

"There were a lot of thoughts rolling through my mind, like how close we were," Jenson said. "A couple of weeks later I informed my wife and let her know I was OK."

"You hope for the best when you head out. If something happens, your training takes over," he said. "You make sure everybody is all right and you get your mission done."

Jenson has completed about 60 missions since he arrived in Iraq, totaling about



**Sgt. Brian Jones, gunner, 223rd Transportation Company, 620th Corps Support Battalion, 1st Corps Support Command, Fort Bragg, N.C., checks a .50-caliber machine gun before convoying tankers of fuel between Camps Taqqadum and Fallujah, Iraq.**

25,000 miles.

"We usually go on the road a minimum of two, sometimes three times a week, and most of our missions involve taking fuel to Ramadi and Fallujah," said 1st Lt. Linnea Hand, platoon leader, 2nd Platoon, 223rd. "We have been here since August and are pretty much into the swing of things, so the operations usually go pretty smoothly."

"You never take anything for granted on the roads. There are times when it is really calm, and then there are times when the intelligence report says there are IEDs and small arms fire everywhere," Hand said.

Preparing for the mission involves the Soldiers knowing who they are riding with, Hand said. They make sure their vehicle is fully prepared and try to stay healthy, especially in the heat.

"We make sure they are properly hydrated and fed, so they can perform and properly handle the mission," Hand said. "We have a strong sense of camaraderie within the platoon, so we can ease each others' nerves before we go out on the road."

"The stress level from being outside the gate wears on you," Jenson said. "It is combat stress, and although we are not getting engaged every time we go out, with the hours that we run, it is very hard to detect what is out there."

With all of the things going on — small arms fire, IEDs — they never know if they will make it back when they leave, Jenson said. But the job must be done.

The saying is, "No fuel, no fight," so if the fuel doesn't get to the places that need it, they won't be mission-capable, Hand said. Some of the places the 223rd delivers to have a lot of vehicles, and without those vehicles on the road, missions could not be accomplished.

"In the buildup to the offensive in Fallujah, we were really busy hauling fuel to support the operation," Hand said.

"We were responsible for getting the Soldiers to maximum capacity so when the roads were closed they could function until we were able to get fuel to them again."

Besides fuel, the 223rd sometimes delivers water and other necessities to some of the smaller forward operating bases that don't have easy access to certain supplies, Hand said.

"We have three months left, and a lot of the Soldiers are anxious to go home," Hand said. "It is easier, but at the same time it's not, because you want to take everyone home safely, and the closer you get, the scarier it is every time you go out. We have been pretty lucky overall."

"I am looking forward to going home, and I have been gone for so long I just want to go home and stay home," Jenson said.

"We have made some very good friends here, and we have done a lot of bonding. We talk about [the missions] a little bit, but everybody goes through the same things, so there is a lot of stuff that just goes unsaid."

## Airmen use 'tree house' as temporary tower

By Senior Airman Shaun Emery  
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

**BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq** — In many deployed locations, temporary quarters are commonplace. Taking that to a whole new level, air traffic controllers with the 332nd Expeditionary Airfield Operations Squadron here have set up shop in a plywood tower nicknamed the "tree house."

"When we arrived ... a renovation project on the existing tower was already scheduled," said Capt. James Anderson, the squadron's flight commander. "We inherited the plan, had to fine-tune it and implement it."

In two weeks, 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron Airmen constructed an alternate tower out of plywood. Although the plywood tower is temporary, it still has to be fully operational. To make that happen, airfield operations Airmen coordinated with 332nd Communications Squadron Airmen to get contingency equipment connected to the tower.

The location of the new tower required a remote system to be implemented, Anderson said.

"We were the first ones to use [this] remoting kit," said Chief Master Sgt. Mike Hanning, 332nd EAOS chief controller. "And we're the first to use it at full distance, so we've

expanded the capability over what has been done before."

"We couldn't have done this without the CE and [communications] squadrons," Anderson said. "Their support was phenomenal. We basically moved from a large fixed facility to a very small facility with no degradation in service or capability."

Based on traffic count, the air control tower here is among the busiest in the active-duty Air Force, averaging 13,000 operations per month.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua Hower

**A C-130 Hercules passes by the temporary air control tower nicknamed the "tree house," as it taxis down the runway. The tower was set up here to sustain flying missions while crews renovate the existing tower.**

Working through a difficult situation, the controllers quickly formed a bond.

"Working in the new tower built camaraderie among controllers," Hanning said. "Working in such tight quarters, people have to get to know each other. Being in a combat environment really cemented that bond."

Manning said he often hears people say today's generation of controllers is not as good as previous ones, many people assuming today's Airmen have it easy.

Manning does not agree.

"These Airmen are smarter, more adaptable and more capable of getting the mission done no matter what the challenge," he said. "Doing this job in the temporary tower was quite a challenge."

"We have been able to make positives out of this opportunity, because people have learned what they're capable of and what the equipment is capable of while keeping mission focus," he said. "Our Airmen are leaving as better controllers. They know they've worked more aircraft movements than anyone else in the Air Force."

Big state-of-the-art facilities may make work easier or are more comfortable, but the lessons learned and the camaraderie gained by the controllers here will benefit them throughout their careers.

# Cav pilots prove to be heroes in the sky

By Sgt. Blake Kent

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE MCKENZIE, Iraq** — Keeping OH-58D Kiowa Warriors in the air has proven a useful tactic for 17th Cavalry Soldiers, allowing them to react quickly to situations as they are happening.

Kiowa teams from 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Division, Task Force Liberty, have been able to cut their reaction time to events by running 24-hour operations that keep at least two Kiowas airborne at all times.

“Because we keep them in the air, they are always able to react,” said Col. Mark Burke of Hamburg, N.Y., 42nd Aviation Brigade commander.

“There are a few techniques for doing this,” said Lt. Col. Frank M. Muth of Columbia, Md., 1/17th Cav commander. “You can use a quick reaction force team that is standing by, here on the FOB waiting to react, or you can have what we call a ‘first responder.’”

Where it would take at least 12 minutes to get a QRF team in the air, having aircraft in the air at all times allows for air support to be on-site within less time, Muth said.

“Being in the air allows you to have situational awareness and be already fully integrated into the fight, right from when you receive the radio call,” he added.

In the past month the teams have been able to react to an event near Lake Tharthar, southwest of Samarra, and a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack near Ba’qubah. Both events proved the value of the Kiowas through their ability to gain situational awareness and relay that information to the Soldiers on the ground and their ability to provide rocket and .50-caliber machine gun fire to disrupt attacks by anti-Iraqi forces.

In the Ba’qubah attack, the Kiowa team reacted to the site of the VBIED explosion only to find it was the beginning of an AIF attack against an Iraq Army compound.

“The AIF were infiltrating inside the compound, so we suppressed their advance,” said Chief Warrant Officer Edwin L. Annis, of Portland, Ore., a pilot with Troop C, 1st Squadron, and air-mission commander on the day of the event.

The team saw AIF moving into the IA compound and had



Photo courtesy 17th Cavalry Regiment

**A Kiowa helicopter flies in to support troops on the ground during a mission in the 278th Armored Cav. Regt. area of operations.**

to visually distinguish between the IA Soldiers and the AIF, and then react quickly with suppressive fire to stop the AIF advance on the compound with no communication with IA troops on the ground.

A U.S. Army quick-reaction ground team was already en route to the attack but had not yet arrived. The Kiowa team was in contact with the arriving troops, keeping them abreast of the situation as it developed.

“We started taking fire from two large weapons systems

and rocket fire, but stayed in the area to develop the situation for the Soldiers on the ground,” said Capt. Ashley F. Thames, of Manchester, Tenn., pilot with Troop C, 1st Squadron.

“We were close enough to hear them shooting at us through our intercom mikes,” said Chief Warrant Officer Scott H. Stradley, a pilot from Tehachapi, Calif. “The larger tracer fire we were taking was like softballs.”

“I think the two weapons systems were probably meant for our ground guys coming in response to the VBIED, but we were able to draw the fire away from them and onto us,” Thames said.

With the information provided by the Kiowa team, the ground troops were able to move into the area of the attack and secure it without putting themselves in the way of the planned AIF ambush.

“We try to give the best picture that we can to the leaders on the ground as the situation develops, so that they can best move their men around the battlefield,” Stradley said.

“We can influence the ground space of the battle but can’t control it,” Annis said. “That is where you have to have the ground troops.”

The Soldiers on the ground gave credit for their safety and ability to secure the area to the Kiowa team.

“I read the after-action report, and the ground troops gave direct credit to the Kiowa Warriors,” said crew chief Staff Sgt. Michael Touchet, of St. Martinville, La.

“Without a doubt, we were able to save lives,” Thames said. “The AIF weren’t expecting us, and we completely disrupted their operations.”

The training the pilots receive and the care and attention the aircraft receive from the crew chiefs is what allows the Kiowa teams to react quickly, proficiently and safely while on their missions, all of the team members said.

“We train to fight the battle every day — practice our skills on the ranges and talk about how we are going to engage the targets,” Annis said.

Annis, Stradley, Thames and Muth all received the Air Medal with “V” Device for their actions.

“I’ll be proud to receive this award. It is a real honor,” Stradley said. “Initially I came here thinking finding IEDs and mortar tubes was going to be about it, without having much shooting, but I am glad we were in the right place at the right time to help those guys out.”

## FARP defies danger to keep birds flying

Story and photo by Sgt. Blake Kent

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE MCKENZIE, Iraq** — The list of dangerous jobs for most people may not include pumping fuel, but then most people don’t pump



**Spc. Brian A. Patterson, an armament specialist with Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry, loads rockets on an OH-58 Kiowa Warrior at FOB McKenzie’s Forward Armament Refuel Point before it goes on patrol.**

fuel with the danger of ammunition and rockets, and the possibility of explosion if anything should go wrong.

For the refuel and armament specialists of Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry, dealing with the dangers of the Forward Arming Refuel Point is an everyday task.

The Soldiers’ primary responsibility is fueling OH-58D Kiowa Warriors, but they also refuel and arm other rotary-wing aircraft that come to Forward Operating Base McKenzie.

The refuel point is the most dangerous place on the FOB, said Maj. Chris Downey of Philadelphia, Pa., 1-17 Cav. executive officer. If anything is going to go wrong, it’s going to be there, he added.

There’s a lot of static electricity, so they have to ground the aircraft before fueling it, said fuel special-

ist Staff Sgt. Todd Bailey of Kenton, Ohio.

“Static electricity and fuel do not mix,” Bailey said. “If a hose busts or leaks in some way, it could get sucked up into the engine, and that is an instant fire.”

The Soldiers also must be careful working around the aircraft, steering clear of the tail rotor and looking out for each other to ensure everyone is moving safely.

The team provides fuel, rockets and .50-caliber machine gun ammunition to helicopters.

“We have anywhere between 10 and 20 birds come through the FARP every day,” said armament specialist Pfc. Heath Andrews of Morganton, N.C.

To meet the demanding needs of the deployment, the crew chiefs have removed a lot of things on the Kiowa that add unneeded weight. This allows the Kiowas to carry more fuel and ammo.

“The Kiowa can carry about 700 pounds of fuel, but they usually only take about 600 pounds,” Andrews said.

When the aircraft land they tell the pilots how much fuel, ammo and rockets they need to support their mission requirements.

“It depends on their mission as to how

much ammo they take, like with the Lake Tharthar event, when they came back through for fuel, they were taking all the rockets and ammo they could carry,” Bailey said.

The Kiowas can carry up to seven rockets when also carrying the .50-caliber machine gun.

From the time the Kiowa lands to the time it leaves the ground, it takes four minutes to refuel and arm. It takes about 12 minutes for the team to refuel Apaches and Black Hawks because of the amount of fuel they can carry.

“I have a real good group of guys,” Bailey said. “They really like what they’re doing, so they are always trying to top themselves in being faster, safer and more efficient.

“Our birds are going out and are doing some important missions, so we know how important it is to get them back in the air quickly,” Bailey said. “It’s a good feeling knowing that you are keeping the birds in the fight.”

They contribute as much to the mission as the guys at the tip of the spear, Downey said. “Our FARP is the best I’ve been to.”

# Soldier wins new home while deployed to Iraq

By Master Sgt. Michele R. Hammonds  
Command Information NCOIC

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The dream of owning a brand-new home became a reality for one Soldier deployed to Iraq.

Sgt. Charles Edward Petry, a light-wheeled vehicle mechanic, had received an early morning phone call May 17 from Evangeline, his wife of 22 years. He didn't know she had left a message for him to call home. He assumed one of the truck drivers needed roadside assistance because of a flat tire. Having only been back from rest and recuperation leave for a week, he thought if it wasn't a flat tire or a vehicle breakdown, then he was being summoned for a surprise drug test. He was unprepared to learn neither was the reason he had been woken up at 4 a.m. — he just needed to call home.

"Once I got through, somebody else answered the phone at my house, and I thought it was a law enforcement officer and that something really bad had happened," said Petry, age 42, who is assigned to Company C, 386th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, at Forward Operating Base McKenzie. "But to my surprise, they had called to tell me I had won that house. It was like a dream come true."

On the other end of the phone, Charles heard a lot of noise because his house was full of family members and friends. Earlier Evangeline, 39, had been told she needed to sign additional paperwork as a finalist for the Military Makeover contest her oldest daughter, Kara, had entered. Pioneer Homes, Gallery Furniture and Houston's KHOU Channel 11 News sponsored the contest.

"My whole yard was so filled up with people," Evangeline said by telephone. "I was in shock. I felt like I was in a dream, and I still feel that way."

When the event coordinator stopped by with the paperwork for Evangeline to sign, she heard a band playing outside.

Charles was able to see his family's first reaction on hearing the news about the house during an on-camera interview with CBS News Saturday. The news affiliate taped Petry's reaction as he saw the video footage of his wife and five daughters, who were all hug-



Photo by Staff Sgt. Brett B. McMillan

**During an interview with CBS News, Sgt. Charles E. Petry, a light-wheeled mechanic with C Co., 386th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, watches a video recording of his wife and daughters accepting their new home.**

ging each other and crying over their good fortune. His eyes filled with tears of happiness as he saw them walk through their new home.

***"My dad has always provided for his family and did without so his family could have the necessities of life."***

Kara Petry

would find the money to get a house," said Charles, a Texas Army National Guard Soldier with 19 years of military service to his credit. "We often discussed on the tele-

"I have never won anything in my life; in fact, I don't even know anyone who has ever won anything," said Charles, who was chosen out of 250 applicants.

The couple said it was no coincidence they won the fully-furnished four-bedroom brick home equipped with a two-car garage. Instead, Charles and Evangeline attribute prayer to their positive turn of events.

"My wife and I had been praying that we would get a house and that somehow, we

now in desperate need of plumbing and electrical work, and the foundation needed repairs. Kara saw a commercial advertising the Military Makeover contest. She decided to enter after she learned that Pioneer Homes and Channel 11 planned to give away a brand-new home to a deserving military family, and Gallery furniture would furnish the entire place. Missing her father and reflecting on his service in Iraq, Kara wrote an essay. She highlighted her dad's military accomplishments and service to his country while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III and the personal sacrifices he had made for his family.

"My dad has always provided for his family and did without so his family could have the necessities of life," Kara said in a telephone interview.

Charles won't have to do without because he plans to join his family in their new home when he returns to Houston near the end of the year. As part of the prize, all utilities and the alarm system will be paid until Charles returns.

His family can finally realize that dreams do come true when they move to their new residence in the Houston suburbs in June.

## *Iraqi Army ready to take over reins in Sadr City*

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

**CAMP HOPE, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — History is being made at Camp Hope — currently home of the U.S. Army's 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division — as 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division prepares to take charge of half of Sadr City in June.

Only a creaky iron gate separates the two units' bases, and 3/15 takes every opportunity to mentor the growing Iraqi unit and conduct joint operations.

"These troops will be taking over half of our sector, a large area in Sadr City," said Staff Sgt. Michael Allen, Headquarters and

Headquarters Company, 3/15 Inf. mortarman. "We're helping to fine-tune their skills at this point — all of them are experienced patrolling the sector."

Allen, of Bryan, Texas, and other leaders from HHC's mortar platoon conduct daily classes at the Iraqi Army battalion compound, focusing on essential Soldier skills, such as map reading and battle drills.

"The Iraqi Army battalion guys are like sponges when we teach our classes," Allen said. "We've been working closely with them for a month and a half, and in that time, they've improved really quickly."

Sadr City, the northeast section of Baghdad, is the most densely-populated area in Iraq, with about two million residents in an area about 10 square miles.

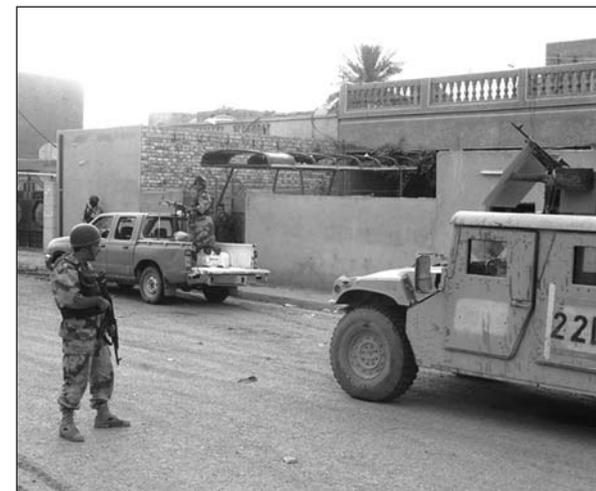
The sector, formerly called Saddam City, has erupted in violence several times

since the liberation of Iraq in March 2003, making it critical the IAB is up to the task, Allen said.

Inside the 3/2 IAB's tactical operations center, Pfc. Travis Carney, HHC, 3/15 Inf. mortarman, acts as a battle captain, tracking every Iraqi patrol in Sadr City and keeping tabs on major incidents.

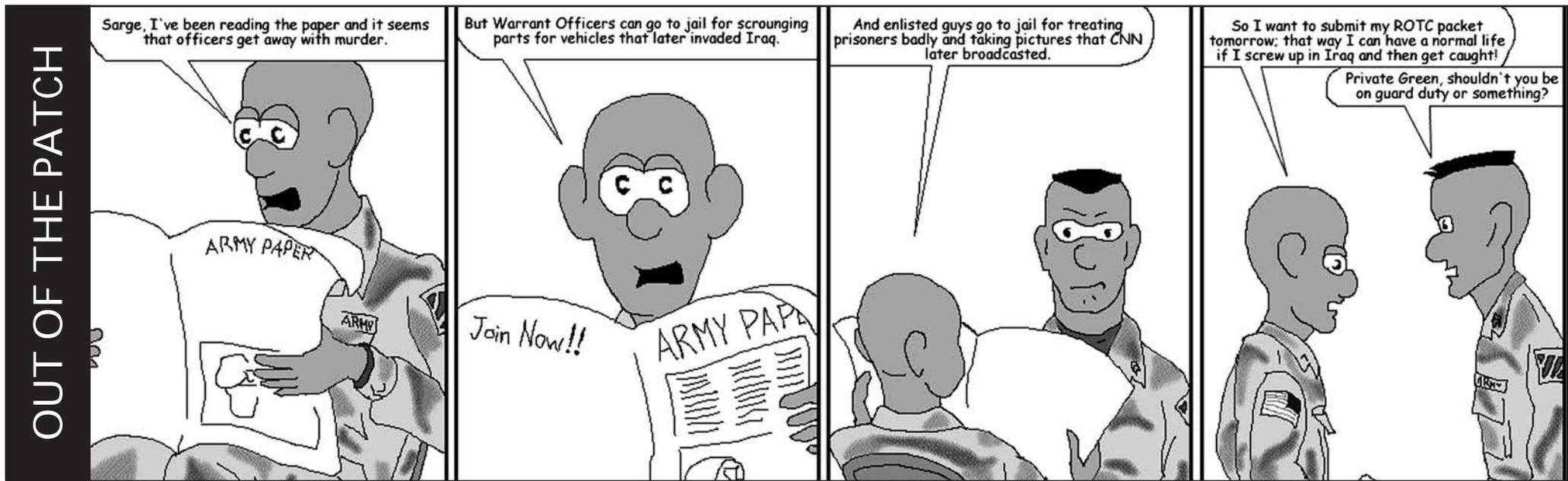
Carney and other junior Soldiers from the mortar platoon work in shifts to cover the 3/2 IAB's TOC 24 hours a day.

"I'm here to help the IAB operate the TOC the right way, and to give them someone they can ask questions of anytime," Carney said. "There's a lot of violence in the city, at least two explosions or ambushes every day, but I haven't lost a single IAB Soldier since I started. It takes hard work and patience, but they've come a long way."



**Soldiers from B Co., 3rd Bn., 15th Infantry, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, and Iraqi Army troops patrol Sadr City, Iraq, May 16.**

# Scimitar Slapstick



Art by Chief Warrant Officer Mark J. Hart

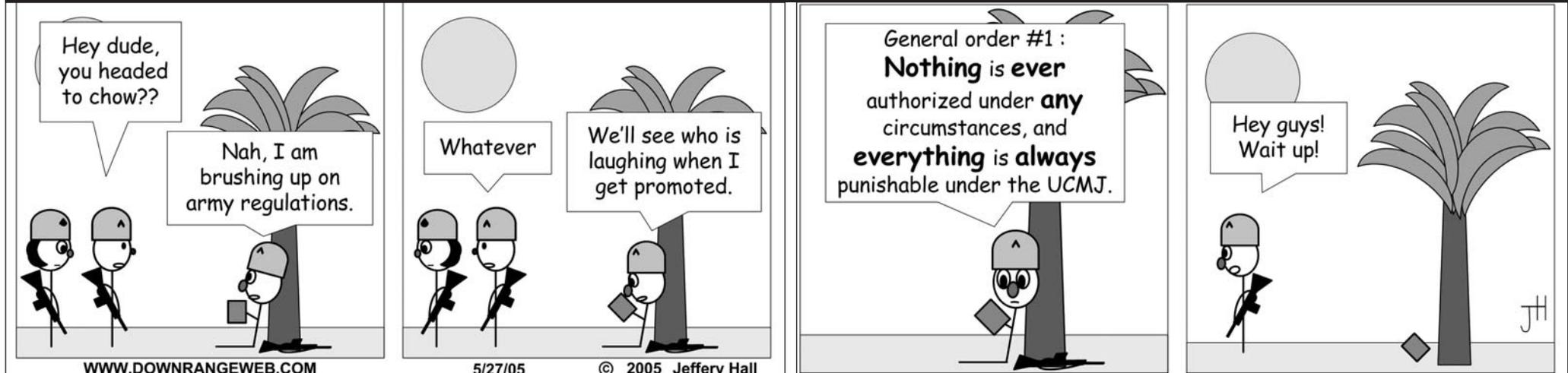


Art by Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn



Art by Maj. James D. Crabtree

## Downrange



# Double take: Identical twins serve together in Iraq

By Pfc. Dan Balda

4th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — It is not unusual for identical twins to play the same sports, go to the same college, or choose the same profession.

It is unusual, however, for those who choose the Army to be assigned to the same division, let alone the same brigade.

First Lieutenants Deeon and Reeon Brown, natives of Walterboro, S.C., are assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. Deeon is a platoon leader with Company A, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor. Reeon is assigned to Company A, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment.

The twins say there are some differences, though they are hard to spot. Deeon says he is “more stout” than his brother, and Reeon says he is taller and has a gold tooth.

During their sophomore year of high school, they knew they wanted to join the Army. Initially they joined the Reserve and enrolled in the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps at South Carolina State University. They chose the same major: computer science.

“The only time I get to use my major in the Army is when I type up a memorandum,” said Deeon, the self-described “talker” of the two.

While in school, they played the standard twin jokes, going to each other’s classes and taking each other’s tests.

While in ROTC, they chose the same branch, infantry, but knew the realities of the military and readied themselves to be split up for the first time in their lives.

“We didn’t even ask to be stationed at the same place, it just worked out that way,” Deeon said. “We found out while we were at [Officer Basic Course]. We said, ‘hey all right, we’re going to [Fort] Stewart, to 3rd Infantry Division.’ We both knew that 3rd ID is the most lethal mechanized unit that the Army has. I knew it was a high-speed unit, and I wanted to be there.”

Their experience in Iraq has not changed their perception.

“It’s everything and more than I thought it was,” said Reeon. “You’ve got Soldiers who look to you when they don’t know what to do on the ground. It can be the difference between life and death, that’s a lot of responsibility. It’s scary sometimes.”



U.S. Army photo

**First Lieutenants Deeon and Reeon Brown share a joke while talking about their experiences growing up as twins. Deeon is a platoon leader with Company A, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor. Reeon is assigned to A Co., 3rd Bn., 7th Infantry Regiment. This deployment is the longest the twins have been apart in their lives.**

Their parents are a little wary of having their two sons so close to the action at the same time, but they realize this is what their sons have chosen to do with their lives and support them all the way.

Both men plan on staying in the Army until “we get kicked out.” They plan to attend as many schools as possible when they redeploy.

This is the longest the brothers have been apart in their lives. Even though the situation is very different for them, a lot of their experiences remain the same.

“It’s kind of nice to be in separate units for once, just because we don’t get mixed up as much,” Deeon said. “But I’ll still be walking around and see one of his Soldiers and he will ask me something about their unit, and I have to tell them that I’m not who he thinks I am.”

Throughout their lives, they have competed in everything possible. They wanted to see who was the fastest,

the strongest, who could get the better grades and who looked better. When asked who usually won, they answered at the same time, “I did.”

The competitive spirit has not changed since they arrived in Baghdad.

“We try to top each other,” they said. “Who has the worst sector, who’s doing the most things. It keeps us going.”

Both of their platoons spend ample time out on patrol.

“Every time I go out on patrol, I ask the [Iraqi] people if the situation is getting any better, and they always say yes. They are glad we are here,” Deeon said.

Reeon agreed with his brother but added one caveat.

“We work a lot with the Iraqi Army, going through the neighborhoods,” he said. “Those guys have been working hard, and the Iraqi people seem grateful to see their own Soldiers out on patrol with us.”



**Sgt. James Billington, a Task Force 3-116 medic, prepares to insert an intravenous fluid tube into Staff Sgt. Mike Creeden’s arm as part of the “Sidewinder Combat Medic Challenge” April 23 at Forward Operating Base Warrior, Iraq. Creeden is a TF 1-163 medic. The duo took first place.**

## Ready? SAVE!

*FOB Warrior’s 116th Brigade Combat Team’s 145th Support Battalion tests Coalition medics’ physical fitness and technical proficiency in a simulated combat environment by hosting “Sidewinder Combat Medic Challenge.”*



Photos by 2nd Lt. Jason Smith

**Sgt. James Billington (left) and Staff Sgt. Mike Creeden treat a simulated casualty as part of the “Sidewinder Combat Medic Challenge” April 23 at Forward Operating Base Warrior, Iraq.**



Photo by Sgt. Derek M. Smith

American country music star Toby Keith strums on his guitar during a USO tour at Camp Victory, Iraq.

## Angry American conquers Victory

By Sgt. Derek M. Smith

214th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The sun relentlessly pounded the desert landscape, pushing temperatures over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Undeterred by the blistering heat, troops converged upon a tiny site nestled tightly within the confines of Camp Victory. Spirits soared as members of every service continued to amass upon their objective. This was no normal mission. It was time to go to school: a homegrown slice of country known as “Honkytonk University.”

The resident professor on this searing May afternoon, country music star Toby Keith, stepped onto the small wooden stage armed only with a guitar, but that was all he would need to appease the excited crowd. With a strum across the strings and a sly grin, he approached the microphone — and turned up the heat.

Toby Keith has visited troops abroad for several years, and this is the second consecutive year he has visited Iraq. The patriotic and sometimes controversial artist felt compelled to visit service members around the world, and those in Iraq could not be left out.

“This time of year, we always pick a place to go on a USO tour,” Keith explained. “The first one we ever did was in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia. This year, we are [visiting] Baghdad, but we also went up around Mosul, Tikrit and Samarra. I did six shows in about 35 hours. We wanted to go up to places where entertainment doesn’t go.”

Keith capped off his visit to Iraq with the concert in Camp Victory on May 17, which is the same date his new album, “Honkytonk University,” hit the streets. The event featured a performance of his new single, “As Good as I Once Was,” which was broadcast via satellite on the Academy of Country Music Awards that same day.

Accompanied by his friend and song collaborator, Scotty Emerick, Keith took the stage framed tightly by service members for an acoustical performance of some of his most popular songs. Fans were treated to such favorites as “I Love This Bar,” “Should’ve been a Cowboy,” “Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue” and “American Soldier.”

“My tour starts in June in the states. We would usually be back home promoting an album right

now, but I wasn’t going to miss my USO tour to do it,” stressed the singer and songwriter.

Often referred to as the “Angry American” after the release of his chart-topping hit “Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American),” Toby Keith remains outspoken on his views in support of his country and the troops protecting it.

“Yeah, I’m always angry,” Keith said as he reflected on his trip. “I went up to Samarra. It was the first time they had entertainment up there in months. Nobody’s come through. Nobody wants to go up there. The first group [of personnel stationed there who witnessed the show] that I was taking pictures with were all vested up, locked and loaded, and ready to go on patrol. They instantly had to go back out. It’s an honor to get to those guys.”

Keith said he has made a lot of friends, referring to the service members he meets in his travels.

“They’re not always here in Baghdad or Kuwait City, so you have to go into some nasty places. Getting to go in there and get down-and-dirty with those guys is a little rush for me.”

Keith is quick to point out that although he is happy to go where other performers haven’t, he has no illusions about the life of a deployed service member.

“The American Soldier I see is an amazing cat; some-

See **KEITH**, Page 16



Photo by Pfc. Laura M. Bigenho

Sgt. Anthony Cimino, of Cleveland, Ohio, joins in singing along to “American Soldier,” while proudly holding up a photo of his 5-year-old son, Ben.

## Coalition Corner

... highlighting countries serving with MNF-Iraq



### Jordan

local name: *Al Urdun*

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is located in the Middle East, bordering Saudi Arabia, Israel, West Bank, Syria and Iraq. Almost six million people live in this country, which is slightly smaller than Indiana. Arabic is the official language, but English is widely understood among middle and upper economic classes.

Jordan has a very impressive history, dating back to around 9,000 B.C. Archeological finds from the west bank of the Jordan River were dated to be over 11,000 years old, making this area home to one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Jordan also has ruins from different eras. The capital city, Amman, boasts a Roman amphitheater set into the side of a mountain and is connected via a tunnel to the Citadel, an area packed with more ruins from various ages. Besides the Jordan Archaeological Museum, the Citadel is home to three important structures. The Byzantine Church, a small Byzantine Basilica with Corinthian columns, is thought to have been built in the sixth or seventh century. Just a short distance from the church lies what is believed to have been the Temple of Hercules, also known as the Great Temple of Amman. The Umayyad Palace Complex dates back to the Islamic Umayyad period around 720 A.D.

Just 50 kilometers, or 31 miles, north of Amman is well-preserved Jerash, considered one of the best examples of a Roman provincial city, boasting structures such as the Temple of Zeus and the Temple of Aremis. One cannot visit Jordan, however, without stopping in Petra, a unique city literally carved from a towering rock wall. This city was forgotten for 1,000 years after a third century Arab dynasty and was rediscovered in 1812, and was boosted into the public eye when it appeared in “Indiana Jones & the Last Crusade.”

Jordan’s national food is Mansaf, a lamb seasoned with aromatic herbs, cooked in yogurt-based sauce and served with an abundance of rice. Feasting on Mansaf is serious business, for hours are spent on preparation, and it is usually served at large celebratory feasts. Mahshis, vegetables stuffed with meat and rice, and Yakhneh, meat, onions, tomatoes and other vegetables cooked as a casserole, are just two more of Jordan’s palate-satisfying favorites.

Jordan — 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.atlastours.net](http://www.atlastours.net), [www.ammantoday.com](http://www.ammantoday.com).

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



# 603rd sergeants train boxers, sponsor 'Taji Fight Night'

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

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq** — The air was thick with anticipation as music pumped through speakers placed around the ring. Spectators brought out their folding chairs and some sat on top of trucks to get a better view. The athletes were anxious, too — jumping up and down to psych themselves up.

This was the setting when hundreds of Soldiers from Camp Taji gathered together earlier this month to see the action — the blow-for-blow excitement that is Camp Taji's Fight Night.

The boxing event paired service members around the camp by gender and weight classes for eight bouts. Each bout consisted of three 2-minute rounds. An event of such proportions didn't come without a great deal of preparation, both in terms of the event and preparing the boxers.

Two sergeants in 603rd Aviation Support Battalion got the ball rolling on the event, training boxers and setting up the Camp Taji Fight Night.

"During my last deployment, I would watch the boxing fight night at Camp Udari," said Sgt. David M. Joseph, Headquarters Supply Company, 603rd Food Service. "When



"Let's get ready to RUMBLE!" shouts Staff Sgt. Vernon Williams, HSC 603rd ASB.

Command Sgt. Maj. Stidley (Aviation Brigade command sergeant major) said he could get us a ring, I knew I wanted to do something similar."

Stidley sought out Joseph, as well as fellow boxing fanatic Staff Sgt. Vernon Williams Jr., HSC 603rd ASB Support Operations Transportation noncommissioned officer in charge, to organize the fight nights since they both are former boxers and had experience organizing a boxing event.

"Sgt. Joseph and I wanted to create a program that everyone could enjoy," said Williams, who ran boxing events from 1994 through 1997 while stationed in Haiti. "We wanted to provide a stress relief for both the boxers and the audience. This event was an opportunity to get people out of their rooms, watch competition and bring people together."

Joseph and Williams were the main organizers of the event, but they attribute its success to many people who volunteered their help. Fight Night is a non-MWR event, so they had to depend on the volunteerism of fellow Soldiers to make sure the event could occur.

"Safety was our biggest challenge," Joseph said. "We don't want anyone to get hurt." They enlisted a medical team to check out the fighters before, during and after the match to make sure no one was seriously injured."

Along with medical team, Joseph and Williams depended on volunteers who handled lighting, audio and a disc jockey for the event. They also received sponsorship from Army & Air Force Exchange Service's vendors who helped with prizes and giveaways.

To help train potential boxers and get more competitors for future Fight Nights, Joseph and Williams provide boxing training to service members around Camp Taji. Five days a week, Williams and Joseph coach trainees on cardio workouts specific to boxers, and give boxing trainees instruction on how to box.

"The training is open to everyone on post. It's a great opportunity for people who want to get in shape," said Williams. "Whatever your goal is — to lose weight, get in shape, learn how to box or to relieve some stress — we try to provide a program to help peo-



Chelsea "Lady Killer" Platter, 3-3 ARB, avoids the left hook of Lawann Stone "Cold."

ple achieve their goals."

Joseph said he feels coaching and boxing instruction is his calling, and helping others is his greatest motivation. He provided boxing instruction at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., prior to deployment.

"I get my energy from [the trainees]; it's what gets me up in the morning," Joseph said. "I show them all I know because I want everyone involved to take something out of it."

Williams was anxious to see how the event

would turn out, but in the end, both Williams and Joseph said the first Taji Fight Night was a success.

"I wanted it to all come together, so I was nervous the night before," Williams said. "I am 100 percent satisfied. I've gotten a positive response from many people, and overall people are really pleased. People come up to me all the time wondering when the next event will be."

Joseph said he was pleased with Fight Night's success as well. "I am proud of every one of those Soldiers I trained who stepped in that ring. They fought like champions. Seeing them in that ring was my biggest satisfaction."

Williams said the Fight Night is ultimately for service members. To be able to give back to those working hard during the deployment is a great personal accomplishment for him.

"The Fight Night is all about the morale of the Soldiers; it is for everyone who is fulfilling their role to complete the mission," he said. "I feel I have achieved a personal milestone, helping organize this event for the Soldiers on this camp. Seeing all those people in the crowd was such a great feeling of accomplishment."



Sgt. David M. Joseph (right), Headquarters Supply Company, 603rd ASB, prepares Pfc. Carmen Montes for her bout.

## Keith

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body who's willing to put [his life] on the line for me. I'm a [tough guy] in America, but I'm not over here," grinned the performer. "I'm past my prime. I don't want to get out, put that gear on and get in there to do that [job]. I admire the people who do and at least I can show up with a song. They have bills to pay. They're just working people, and they're just willing to come over here and work a little harder for their dollar than the rest of us."

The effects of Toby Keith's visit were easy to see. Troops started arriving for the show eight hours early to ensure their chances of a good view of arguably the biggest star in country music.

"Not many people come out here. He supports us," said Spc. Sergio Delagarza, a fuel supply specialist with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. "Not a lot of people like coming over here. He doesn't have to, and he still comes over here. It means a lot for him to come over here and support us and boost morale."

"I couldn't sleep for three days, I was so excited to see him!" exclaimed Staff Sgt. John Hayes, postal noncommissioned officer with the 729 Adjutant General Company. "My Soldiers worked harder the last couple of days because they wanted to get out early enough to get good seats. Here in the middle of Baghdad, we've had a lot of ups and downs. This is definitely the biggest morale booster we can have this year."

Toby Keith plans to continue his relationship with American troops through the USO and knows how far he wants to take it.

"The USO is such a great organization," Keith said. "I think I can create something really special as far as entertainment goes, and it's going to take me some years to get [my performance to the level I want it to be]. Right now, I'm not going to spoil it by using that as an excuse not to come. We'll be part of the USO for a long time. Wherever troops are, we'll go!"

As the show drew to a close, the sunlight faded into the ever-darkening evening sky. The troops departed knowing their memories of this day, and of the Angry American who brought them a song and a smile, would burn more brightly than any desert sun.



Photo by Pfc. Laura M. Bigenho

Toby Keith sings into the microphone during his outdoor concert at Camp Victory, Baghdad.