



RAIDERS DOWN RANGE



Volume 1 Issue 4

Diary of the Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team

June 1, 2005

Iraqi Army shows progress during CPX

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

TIKRIT, Iraq—Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team and the 30th Iraqi Army Brigade met in Tikrit for a command post exercise to see the progress and ability of the IA's mission execution ability.

The IA's mission during the CPX was to show the 1st BCT how they are able to plan, communicate and execute missions according to the training they have received.

"The Iraqi battalions are doing a terrain board brief, or a rock drill, to the Iraqi brigade," said Maj. Kelly Donna, 1st BCT Military Transition Team officer in charge. "The Iraqi brigade got an order sent down from the Coalition Forces MiTT. The MiTT was simulating being the Iraqi Division. They were giving them their operations order. Then what the Iraqis do is write a brigade order that they deliver to the battalions. Battalions write an operations order for the companies, and now the battalions are briefing back to brigade their understanding of what they have to do."

Both Coalition Forces Soldiers and IA Soldiers learned something during the CPX.

"It's interesting to see how their structure works," Sgt. Chris S. Dilks the 1st Brigade Combat Team Military Transition Team Personal Security Detachment noncommissioned officer in charge. "I learned a lot about their culture."

The purpose of the CPX was to see how ready the IA was for real world missions using what they have been taught.

"I think they'll be ready for an actual operation, but it depends on if they have all their equipment. They have their good habits and their bad habits," said Capt. Mariano Wecker, the 1st BCT MiTT operations officer. "Overall the brigade staff is a solid team. They're doing the exact same thing that will happen in an actual operation."

"They're doing real good," said Staff Sgt. David Smith-Barry, 1st BCT MiTT intelligence noncom-



Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

An Iraqi officer briefs Soldiers of the 1st BCT and the 30th IA during a training mission using a sand table they created as a template for the surrounding landscape at the IA compound in Tikrit.

missioned officer. "They're being a lot more aggressive than we thought they would. They need to get into the habit of following up. We're trying to instill the habit of updating. They've improved in that in just the last four hours. They're doing a lot more than we have planned."

The IA has come upon a few challenges during the training, as much of the content in this type of mission is new to them.

"There's a huge learning curve in using available assets and economy of force," said 1st Lt. David T. Light 1st BCT MiTT fire support officer. "That's integrating the use of artillery, mortars, close air support, and air weapons teams. It's integrating all fire support assets into combined arms operations."

Soldiers of the IA involved in the CPX agreed that it was a very helpful operation, and that they learned much during the training.

"It was a good exercise because it was important

to see our ability to work with a map," said Lt. Col. Aiad Ebrahim, 30th IA Brigade finance officer. "The map was a new way to see each battalion's plan and refresh my mind on the information. If there were any problems, we were able to take care of it there. It gives my force an idea of what we can handle during a battle."

Soldiers involved in training the IA over the last few months said the Iraqis have come a long way since they first met them and began working with them. The Soldiers feel the IA is ready to conduct missions on a higher level.

"From the start point we had a fledgling staff with little experience," said Maj. John Williams, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment MiTT leader. "I had a hard time envisioning what we did here a few months ago. They went from a completely inexperienced group to a functional staff that can actually plan military operations."

Identical twins serve together in Iraq

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

FOB BRASSFIELD-MORA, Iraq—In a combat situation, Soldiers have referred to each other as a band of brothers. This term is used for men who serve together in extreme situations. Sometimes, the Soldiers are actually serving with their brothers. In the case of Spc. Todd and Tim Phelps, quartermaster chemical equipment repairmen from 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, they are not only brothers, but identical twins.

The twins were raised as Army brats, and had aspirations of joining since they were children. Their father is still in the Army, Todd said.

"We always knew we were going to come in the Army," Tim said. "Ever since we were small, we knew it would be a stepping stone for us."

"I just wanted to join to start my life off," Todd said.

The odds of twin brothers getting the same job and being placed in the same unit at the same time are pretty scarce, but the brothers said they made sure it all happened so they could be together.

"There are waivers for everything," Todd said. "Tim was going to be a scout, but I wanted to do the mechanic thing."

"He had some experience in high school as a mechanic, but I took carpentry," Tim said.

"I went to sign up, and there was a slot for two mechanics," Todd said. "Instead of Tim waiting to leave for the scout slot, we decided to come in together."

The twins both said they were planning on staying in the Army for another 4 years, although they both had plans for when they got out.

"We just reenlisted, so we're staying in," Todd said. "With the bonus from reenlistment and four more years to save, I think I'll be alright."

"We're going to be police officers," Tim said. "I need to get some more schooling before I get out."



Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

Specialists Todd and Tim Phelps, both assigned to 3/69 Armor, smile as they look at music on their computer at FOB Brassfield-Mora.

The twins said they have pretty much done everything together. Being deployed to Iraq was no different.

"I wouldn't know what it would be like if I was by myself," Todd said. "We've always been together."

Lane Down Range

Visit Warriors' Walk on Memorial Day

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

As a kid, Memorial Day was just another chance for me to sham out of school. I usually went to the beach or somewhere with my family. I know my dad always got the day off, because he was in the Air Force.

I look at my dad now, who is retired from the Air Force and still working, and I can really understand what Memorial Day means. We came from a generation after the Cold War, and I feel like the Global War on Terrorism was waiting to happen for a long time. I didn't join the military until I was 30.

All of us have seen the movies about war, those who died and the ones who came home. It is different when you know someone who has passed away. Some of them are so young, others have children and wives. They give up the comforts of home because they believe in what they do. When they pay the ultimate sacrifice, they should never be forgotten.

As a public affairs specialist, I am

responsible for writing memorial pieces on any Soldier who has fallen in this brigade. I have to talk to his buddies, gather information and record their deepest thoughts.

I have to tell you, by the time I am finished, I feel like I know these Soldiers. I remember every one of their names. I pray every day that the list does not get longer, or that the people who murder in the name of God will be touched by His hand and abandon their radical ideas, and embrace the comfort of peace.

The courageous Soldiers who fall during the performance of their tasks will never be forgotten. I did not know all of them, but I have met some of them in my travels around our area of operations. All of them will be remembered by somebody.

During their memorial ceremonies, they do a thing called last roll call. The first sergeant of their company calls out the names of a few Soldiers in the formation. They answer back "here first sergeant." The first sergeant calls the name of the fallen; no answer. He calls it



again; no answer. By the third time he calls it, even those who never met the fallen Soldier miss him in their hearts.

There is no greater hero to me than a military member who falls in the line of his selfless duty. I have said it a thousand times before. We are volunteers. We had choices that could have kept us out of the military. The people you meet in my Army are a different breed than you will meet anywhere else. They are brave, strong, selfless, caring and a few thousand miles from home helping a group of people they never thought twice about before coming here. They joined because they felt a sense of duty, and they perform missions at a speed that would drive the average American crazy. I heard a man on television once say we were a lazy race, we Americans. Obviously he never stayed with any Soldiers. I am sure he would be freaking

out looking for a place to sit and hide from any of our noncommissioned officers.

For those back at Fort Stewart, I know you drive by Cottrell Field every day. I know you see the trees planted along Warriors' Walk. I was wondering if you would do something for us; pull your car in by the track, pull your kids out on Memorial Day, and walk down through there. Stop and read the names of the Soldiers who served our country. Explain as best you can to the little ones the sacrifice they have made.

We do this job with a smile (most of the time), and are ready to react to any situation. We are all races, creeds and colors. We all have a common goal; protect our country and our loved ones from those who mean us harm. We have taken this fight to the terrorists' backyard, and we will not falter in our duties.

Remember us on Memorial Day. I would say hug a Soldier but I don't know if your spouses would appreciate it too much. But take a few moments to remember the fallens' sacrifice.

3rd FSB hones multiple skills at range

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

OBJECTIVE HAWAII, Iraq-Not all the Soldiers who are deployed to Iraq get a chance to participate in missions that involve direct frequent contact with the enemy. Many of the skills that make them Soldiers are perishable. To keep that from happening, Soldiers take part in training such as the live fire range conducted by the 3rd Forward Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team.

The exercise consisted of several different ranges to train the Soldiers on an array of weapons systems and movement techniques.

"We wanted to get the Soldiers off the (forward operating base) and send them through reflexive fire and M240B (machine gun) qualification," said 1st Lt. David Steves, a 3rd FSB platoon leader. "We're also doing vehicle moving fire. It's great, every time you can get out, fire your weapon and familiarize yourself with your weapon. Every Soldier takes that opportunity."

"We're doing a series of ranges, and right now I'm responsible for the reflexive fire," said Staff Sgt. Dwayne Wallace, a 3rd FSB platoon sergeant. "We're practicing firing short distances from different angles. Due to the fact that some of the Soldiers end up in urban areas, it will help them acquire targets in alleyways and doorways; things of that nature."

Soldiers who took part in the training found it sharpened their skills and made them more confident in themselves.

"We're practicing reflexive fire and close quarters combat," Spc. Andrew Mabie, 3rd FSB medic. "If you're walking through an urban area and someone jumps up on you, you're prepared to kill with a deadly force. I feel pretty confident with this training. It helps me feel confident in myself and what I'm doing. If you practice it over and over again, it becomes second nature. It makes me feel better when I'm walking through areas."

The unit had to do a little more work than usual to get the range ready for the Soldiers.



Photos Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

A 3rd FSB Soldier takes aim at a paper target with a M240B machine gun during a training range.

"Normally in the rear, we already have ranges set up," Wallace said. "Out here, we have to come out and set the range up."

Steves said that the hardest part of the range was the preparation.

"It entails a lot of prior planning," Steves said. "We have to come out and make sure the range is safe. We have to make sure our range of fire isn't intersecting.

We actually have two ranges going on concurrently, so we have to make sure our sectors of fire aren't interlocking together."

Leaders who were responsible for the ranges said they were impressed with the Soldiers' actions during the exercise.

"They have performed well. They have more of a sense of urgency to get it right," Wallace said. "Being able to come out here in a combat zone to familiarize with your weapon and use it the way you would if you came upon contact is a benefit to the average Soldier who hasn't got a chance to leave the FOB. It gives them more confidence in themselves, their weapon and their fellow Soldier."

Steves said the range exercise is an important part of keeping the Soldiers up to date on their skills. The weapons the Soldiers carry everyday are meant for killing, and there are inherent dangers. One purpose of the exercise was to remind the Soldiers of their responsibility with that kind of power, he said.

"The ranges are definitely beneficial to the Soldiers because it keeps them aware," Steves said. "It keeps them constantly thinking about where they are pointing their weapon; who they are pointing it at. They know when they point it at a target they intend to kill that target. You're going to kill the person that is on the receiving end of your bullet."



Sp. Peter Kessinger, a 3rd FSB intelligence analyst, counts ammunition rounds before the range.

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Toby Keith jams for troops at Danger



Photos by Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

Troops listen as Toby Keith plays one of his hits. Servicemembers and civilian contractors alike showed up at the concert at FOB Danger in Tikrit, Iraq May 16.

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

FOB DANGER, Iraq-Country singer Toby Keith made a stop at Forward Operating Base Danger to sing a few songs for deployed troops while on tour with the Uniformed Services Organization May 16.

Soldiers and Airmen from FOB Danger and other FOBs in the area traveled to the site of the concert to listen to the singer crank out a few tunes before he left for his next stop.

"Toby Keith is one of my favorite singers," said Spc. Frankie Souther a Headquarters and Headquarters Company 1st Brigade Combat Team radio telephone operator. "I think it was great that he took time out of his busy schedule to come and sing for us."

"It seemed like he was more excited to see us," Souther continued. "He sang some of my favorite songs and put on a good show. Even when he lost power to the speakers, he still made everybody laugh."



Maj. Kelly Donna and Capt. Mariano Wecer of HHC 1st BCT cheer for Keith during the concert.

Members of the Armed Forces who are deployed hear evidence of the support of the American people everyday. Yet for someone to come visit them and show them support firsthand is rare.

"There is a lot of us that like country music, and he put himself in harm's way to increase our morale," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Tony Hall, an HHC 1st BCT tactical air contact and control specialist. "You see commercials all the time that say America supports us, and I believe they do. He doesn't just tell us, he shows us. To me that's pretty selfless of him."

Keith played a set of music for a little more than an hour. The concert started at 12:15 p.m., which was the hottest part of the day.

Despite the heat of the day, many servicemembers still showed up to watch Keith perform.

"That was my last song," Keith said to the crowd. "I want to play longer, but I got two more of these shows to do today."

After his set, he stayed to patiently shake as many of his fans' hands and pose for as many photographs with the servicemembers as he could.



Keith smiles at the crowd while playing one of his famous songs.



Keith took time after his performance to meet and greet the Soldiers. He stayed to sign autographs and pose for the troops. The smile never left his face as he patiently took time to shake hands and talk to his fans.

On the frontline

Classes keep medics' skills sharp

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq- A medical training program has been implemented to keep 1st Brigade Combat Team medics up to date on the skills that could save a life on the battlefield. The training is part of a program to keep the medics' skills sharp and up to date.

"We establish classes for the 91 whiskeys, which are otherwise known as our medics," said Capt. Rob Klingensmith, 1st BCT nurse. "The purpose of the 91 whiskey sustainment training is to keep the medics' skills current, so that when they do have to treat real life casualties on the battlefield, their skills are crisp and sharp so they don't miss a beat. We have set up a classroom environment in which we teach 91 whiskey skills on a continuous basis.

There are four classes, which are offered at Logistics Support Area Anaconda.

"For this classroom that we open up to the 1st (Brigade Combat Team) we teach four primary classes," Klingensmith said. "We teach combat lifesaver, which is a three-day course and we teach basic life support, which is a one-day course. We also do the hospital pre-trauma life support class, which is a three day class. Also, because all of our medics are (emergency medical technician basic) certified, we also offer an EMTB refresher class which is a four-day class."

The medics are currently undergoing a transition in



Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

Sgt. 1st Class Richard Hester, 1st BCT medical trainer, demonstrates to students how to clear a casualty's throat before performing resuscitation on a training aid at LSA Anaconda.

their military occupational specialty, which makes the classes not only important, but mandatory.

"I'm responsible for ensuring all the medical personnel in the 1st Brigade are currently trained in the 91

whiskey transition courses," said Sgt. 1st Class Richard Hester, 1st BCT medical instructor. "The courses are required as part of the new MOS."

Klingensmith said there are

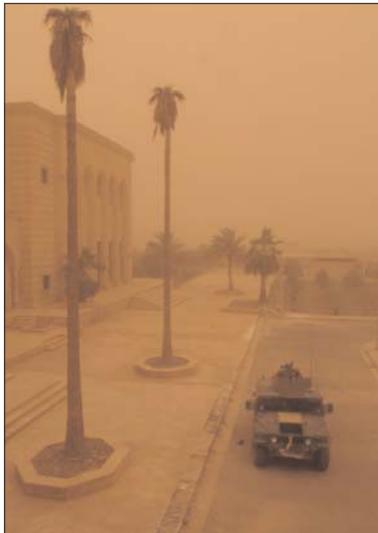
See **MEDICS**, page 6

Our home in Iraq



Photos by Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

Sgt. Michael Debow, repair and utilities noncommissioned officer in charge at FOB Dagger, listens to an Iraqi worker explain how to fix a hole caused by a rocket.



The sky takes on an eery hue due to a sandstorm that blew over FOB Dagger May 15.



A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter passes over the Tigris River north of Tikrit while carrying troops to Baiji. Just beyond the river is desert.



The minaret in Samarra has existed since medieval times, and is still intact.



Soldiers of C Co., 3/69 Armor walk through their sandbagged company area at FOB Brassfield-Mora.



Lt. Col. Mark Wald, 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment commander, plays a few tunes on the guitar.



The sun sets over the horizon near the city of Samarra.

Nana takes care of Soldiers

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

FOB DAGGER, Iraq—There are many Americans doing their part to support troops deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Some, however, are doing far more than people would expect.

A five-ton truck pulls into Forward Operating Base Dagger laden with mail and packages. As the Soldiers unload the mail, many of the packages are taken to a separate location. An officer tells the Soldier where to put the numerous packages. The officer is 1st Lt. John Moore, and the packages are from his Nana.

"The way it got started was Gracie Brown, or Nana, was looking for someone who would be able to get boxes of items she felt Soldiers needed," Moore said. "One of the parishioners at her church gave her my name. We talked on the phone several times and she



Courtesy photo

Nana prepares packages for Soldiers in the bedroom of her home in Maryland.

began to send boxes to me."

When Moore arrived at FOB Dagger, he saw a need for the packages to keep coming.

"When I got orders to come here to FOB Dagger, I found that there was no real (Post Exchange) at the time," Moore said. "I got in contact with her and told her about it. She began to send boxes here because she felt there was a great need here at Dagger. When the 1st Brigade first got here there were very few items for the Soldiers. That's how it began. She got with people in the community and her church, and everybody started giving her stuff. We started trying to take care of the Soldiers here in this brigade."

The items that Nana sends are geared towards the Soldiers' needs while deployed to Iraq. There are also many types of food and drink sent to make the Soldiers feel more at home.

"She sends socks, deodorant, water juice, food, Gatorade, soap, you name it, it's pretty much in there," Moore said. "If there is something Soldiers can buy at the PX, she has it. There is absolutely nothing a Soldier would have to worry about purchasing or needing."

Moore has talked to Nana many times, and they often discussed why she does so much for the Soldiers.

"She told me God has blessed her over all her years, and it's her ministry in a lot of ways," Moore said. "It's a way to give back and show support for the Soldiers. A couple of weeks ago she



Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

A Soldier waits as 1st Lt. John Moore looks through a box before giving the Soldier some of the contents. Behind Moore are shelves stacked with boxes sent from Nana, who has sent hundreds of packages to deployed Soldiers.

turned seventy years old. She does all this with one other person."

Nana has sent a few hundred packages to Soldiers since Moore arrived at FOB Dagger.

Other Soldiers on FOB Dagger have lent a helping hand with the distribution.

"I love Soldiers too, and it's just a way while we're here to provide support," said Sgt. 1st Class Felice Newsome, the Headquarters and Headquarters Company 1st Brigade Combat Team equal opportunity adviser. "I'm a peo-

ple person, and I try to keep up the morale of the Soldiers. A lot of people don't get gifts, packages or anything. It's just a fulfillment. I didn't realize so many people cared about the Soldiers."

Nana said many things motivate her to do what she does.

"I love Soldiers and my country," Nana said. "God wants me to do this. I will work as long as there is breath in my body. I get a high from watching the packages leaving my back door. I will do it as long as there are Soldiers in harm's way."

'5-25' increases IED awareness

MNC-I Public Affairs

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 is kicking 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 which can be approved and delivered in a timely fashion.

"IEDs can be any time, 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 any time 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

STAY ALIVE

Stop and Think!

IEDs are deadly killers.

Conduct 5 and 25 meter checks around your position.

0001 IEDs KILL

Chaplain's Corner

Remember our heroes on Memorial Day

Chaplain Mark Nordstrom
1st BCT Chaplain

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. There are many stories as to its actual beginnings, with over two dozen cities and towns laying claim to being the birthplace of Memorial Day. That's appropriate, for our fallen Soldiers now belong to all of us, not just to some.

Decoration Day was a day of decorating the graves of fallen soldiers. If you go to any National Cemetery on Memorial Day you will see flags decorating each grave. This practice started during the Civil War when organized women's groups in the South decorated graves of their Soldiers.

It's difficult to prove conclusively the origins of the day. It is likely that it had many separate beginnings; each of the many towns across the North and South, scarred by the loss of so many Soldiers, and every planned or spontaneous gathering of people to honor the war dead in the 1860's tapped into the general human need to honor our dead; each contributed honorably to the growing move-



Memorial Day was first observed on May 30, 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate Soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

In 1915, inspired by the poem, "In Flanders Fields," Moina Michael replied with her own poem:

We cherish too, the Poppy red
That grows on fields where valor led,
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies.

ment that became Memorial Day. It is not important who was the very first, what is important is that Memorial Day was established. Memorial Day is not about division. It is about reconciliation; it is about coming together to honor those who gave their all.

She then conceived of an idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day in honor of those who died serving the nation during war. Today you can observe the Veterans of Foreign Wars giving poppies out for donations which will be used to benefit some of our own Soldiers. One of my earliest memories is of my grandfather, a WWI veteran of the horse-drawn artillery and the battles of the Muese-Argonne Forest making these little poppies as he listened to his beloved Twins play baseball. I didn't understand the significance until I went to that battlefield in France and saw all the poppies: his friends were buried under them.

For those of you at home, perhaps you plan to visit the Memorial Walk at Ft. Stewart and place a flag or a flower. Maybe you'll bring a poppy and remember the Soldiers we've lost and pray for them and their families.

This Memorial Day, the Soldiers of the Raider Brigade will honor those Soldiers who have died while serving with the Raider Brigade from March of 2003 to this day, in both Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom III during a special ceremony on each FOB. We remember, and will always remember, our comrades and friends.

Soldiers lose friend, role model

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

FOB SUMMERALL, Iraq—Soldiers of B Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment mourned the loss of one of their own in a memorial ceremony at Forward Operating Base Summerall May 18.

Pfc. Travis Anderson, a 1st Platoon, B Co., 2/7 Inf. Pfc. Joe Sternhagen, a 1st Platoon, B Co., 2/7 Inf. crew served gunner. "He would always push you to do better. Whether it was lifting weights, running or anything else, he would always make you do one more, or run that last mile harder. He taught me a lot, and made me a better person and a better Soldier."

"Anderson's youth was filled with activities that many Americans dream of; growing up on a ranch, learning how to hunt and fish in the Rocky Mountains," said Staff Sgt. William Fojas, Anderson's squad leader. "Later he moved to Nevada to work on his uncle's ranch, hunting buck and elk in some of the most beautiful country in the world. Travis clearly earned the nickname Cowboy."

Cowboy was respected by the members of his platoon for his actions during missions and his personality while inside the wire.

"He was the epitome of a Soldier," said 1st Lt. George Daforno, 1st Platoon, B Co., 2/7 Inf. platoon leader. "Cowboy would do anything that was asked of him, no matter what. He always volunteered with enthusiasm. When he was hurting, he would try to conceal his injuries just so he could go out on mission. When I think about the little pains

and aches and just want to rest, I will think of what Cowboy would have done. He would have pushed himself on and simply smiled because he loved what he did."

Cowboy was the kind of Soldier who inspired those who came in contact with him. He was always striving to get better at everything he did.

"He was always moving at top speed," said Pfc. Joe Sternhagen, a 1st Platoon, B Co., 2/7 Inf. crew served gunner. "He would always push you to do better. Whether it was lifting weights, running or anything else, he would always make you do one more, or run that last mile harder. He taught me a lot, and made me a better person and a better Soldier."

During missions with Cowboy, his peers were sometimes amazed at his abilities and drive. He often worked faster and harder than those around him.

"On one particular mission, we were tasked with conducting the reconnaissance of a future raid site in which we had to cross a steep mountain," Daforno said. "Cowboy, in his normal fashion, had his sniper rifle, camouflage and optics. Needless to say he was carrying the heaviest load, yet he was up front practically running up the mountain to get to the observation point. When he wasn't being used as the company sniper, he would be the lead man going into to houses (during raids) with no fear. No matter what was asked of him, he just simply got it done. A lot can be

learned from this man's actions, and I am blessed just to have known him."

Cowboy was always willing to lend a hand to anyone in his company who needed it, even when they didn't ask first.

"I can think of many times when I would be working and Cowboy would come over and try to do it for me," Sternhagen said. "I would always have to tell him to go away and leave me alone. He never complained and you could always depend on him to get the job done. Cowboy was the kind of person that would rather work into exhaustion than ever give up. That's the kind of person Cowboy was."

"The Cowboy I knew was always upbeat, with a smile on his face and a bounce in his step," Fojas said. "Whenever I needed help with something, all I would hear was 'Roger sergeant.' I'd turn around and he was right there."

Cowboy's passing has taken a great toll on his friends and leaders. They say it will be hard to work without him and he will never be forgotten.

"I still can't believe Cowboy is gone," Sternhagen said. "I keep thinking he is going to walk around the corner with that smile on his face. We are all fortunate to have known Cowboy, and he will be missed by all who knew him. I know the memories I have of him will live with me forever. He will never be



Courtesy photo

Pfc. Travis "Cowboy" Anderson was a friend to all who knew and worked with him.

forgotten."

"This is why I joined the Army, to serve with guys like Cowboy," said Sgt. 1st Class Brad McNish, Cowboy's platoon sergeant. "He was a father figure to all the other guys, they looked up to him. He had such a big heart."

"Travis Cowboy Anderson exemplifies the true greatness of America, a land where free men, citizens, hear the call to contribute to maintaining freedom for all," Fojas said. "He answered that call, and we are all better for having known him as a friend and Soldier."

MEDICS from page 4

challenges to getting everyone to one place.

"We are constantly teaching our medics classes back to back," Klingensmith said. "The challenges first off would be the coordination of the medics from the units to come down here to take these classes."

Since the classes have just started, the trainers have had to adapt and overcome any new challenges that may present themselves.

"We just started off," Klingensmith said. "If there's any obstacles to come, we're gonna basically figure that out and work it out as it comes along."

Hester said despite the challenges, his main concern is keeping his classroom full of new students. So far it hasn't been a problem, as students are plen-

ty and they show up with the right attitude. This includes not only Soldiers, but anyone who is interested in taking the classes.

"The training has gone well," Hester said. "We've started gathering supplies. We're still waiting for more training aids to come in, but with what I have now, I can still put on a course. The people we train are generally highly motivated. These are classes that they need, classes that they want. They are very enthusiastic and eager to learn. If anyone wants to come from outside LSA Anaconda to take the courses, they are welcome," Hester said. "My training is not just for 1st Brigade. We open up the training to anybody. As long as I get my seats full I'll be happy."

The trainers agreed the classes were very important to the medics' ability to handle themselves.

"The classes are very important for combat readiness," Hester said. "Take for example the combat lifesavers. They are the first person that is going to come up to a casualty before the medics. It's important for them to be knowledgeable in their combat lifesaver skills until the medic or further help arrives."

"I think it's a really good opportunity for our medics to stay current with their training while we are deployed," Klingensmith said. "The main reason we bring our medics from different (forward operating bases) to a collective training point is so when they are out on the battlefield they are able to treat casualties in a precise and efficient manner. By providing a centralized location for training to bring the medics down, we can do that."

Cottonbalers lose the one who made them smile

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

PATROL BASE OMAHA, Iraq- Soldiers of D Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment lost one of the youngest members of their company when an improvised explosive device exploded near the vehicle he was riding in May 17.

Those who knew Pfc. Wesley Riggs remember him as the kind of guy who would always make you smile in the worst of times. Some of the Soldiers who worked with Riggs had known him since basic training.

"I met Riggs in basic at Fort Knox, Kentucky," said Pfc. Radek Wazny, a 2/7 Inf. driver. "Riggs was a person that always brought a smile no matter how bad that day might have been. He was a loyal and honest friend who was there for you no matter what. He had a bright future and dreams just like the rest of us. Unfortunately they got cut short. Riggs had a talent of making people laugh, smile; just his presence changed the mood around. I will always remember Riggs as a soldier who never complained about what he had to do, he just did it. He will always be remembered as a really good friend that stood by you and lent a helping hand."

The daily tasks put before the

Soldiers of D Co. were trying, but Riggs was always ready to take on any mission, and lift the morale of the Soldiers around him.

"At the time I met Riggs I was the platoon sergeant of 2nd platoon," Staff Sgt. James Currence, a 2/7 Inf. section leader, tank commander. "Since we were a new company, we were being told that we would be doing a lot of dismounted missions. So when I knew that I was getting Riggs I told him that he was going to be my dismounted M240B gunner and he just smiled. Ever since then no matter what I needed him to do he would go out and just do it, never once did he turn down a mission. You could always count on him."

Riggs was an inspiration not only to his peers, but also his leaders. D Co. was a fairly new unit, and Riggs was a part of it from the beginning.

"Riggs was one of only five soldiers to start this company with me," said Capt. Dene R. Leonard III, D Co., 2/7 Inf. commander. "He is a soldier that every commander wishes for but very rarely gets the opportunity to command. Riggs's personality helped mold the company into the close, cohesive unit that we are today. He always had a smile on his face and way about him that made others smile. Regardless of the type of day I was

having, Riggs could make me forget the negatives and concentrate on the positives. Riggs is a man that will always be remembered in the hearts of the soldiers in this company."

"When Riggs was assigned to Delta Company at Fort Stewart, I was the company first sergeant," said Sgt. 1st Class Harley C. Crawford Jr., a D Co., 2/7 Inf. platoon sergeant. "The first time I saw him he had a very boyish look, with some mischief, so I nicknamed him Spanky. He always had a good disposition, and was able to make you smile by just looking at him. Even though he was not a member of my platoon, he was close to all of us. I will definitely miss him, and am honored to have served with him." Riggs earned a place in all his peers'



Courtesy photo

Riggs sits in a pile of Girls Scout cookies and delivers that funny smile he was so famous for wearing all the time.

hearts, and they say he will never be forgotten.

"The world is less of a place now without him," said Pfc. Omar Thomas, a 2/7 Inf. gunner. "But in me, in my heart, I will always be thankful for the opportunity of even knowing Riggs."

Engineers remember leader as friend, professional

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

SAMARRA, Iraq- Soldiers mourned the loss of an inspirational leader and friend who fell while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 3.

Sgt. Andrew Jodon, an E Company, 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment team leader, was killed when an improvised explosive device detonated near the vehicle he was traveling in on a highway southwest of Samarra.

The Soldiers Jodon worked with remember him as a trusted leader, an excellent noncommissioned officer and a Soldier who always upheld and enforced Army standards.

"Sgt. Jodon made sure that all soldiers adhered to the standards," said Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Britting, Jodon's platoon sergeant. "He led and trained Soldiers, and they followed his leadership not because of his rank but from the respect he had earned. Sgt. Jodon quickly adapted to the harsh environment in Samarra, Iraq, learning and teaching the ever changing (tactics, techniques and procedures) of the anti-Iraqi forces, and training his men and the Iraqi Army. Sgt. Jodon was an outstanding man and an even better NCO."

"As my Alpha Team Leader, he took his job to heart ensuring our soldiers were doing the right thing all the time," said Sgt. Cassidy Larsen, Jodon's squad leader. "He expected nothing less than 110%, and his Soldiers, to include myself, respected him for



Courtesy photo

Sgt. Andrew Jodon gives the thumbs up on his hair-cutting ability as a baffled Cpl. Mitchell Roe looks on.

that. He was one of the best Soldiers I have had the honor to serve with."

Jodon was also remembered as a friend by his peers. Even in the worst of circumstances, Jodon found a way to make light of the situation.

"There is so much to say about him," said Cpl. Mitchell Roe, a member of Jodon's platoon and his best friend. "Like any best friend he was always there for you, through rough times and good. A quote that I would like to use to best describe his

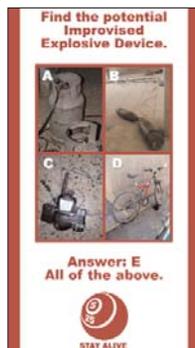
friendship is: 'Life is one long bumpy road, and a good friend is the best tool to assist one down that road.' His sense of humor was unique. He always managed to put a smile on your face. He would always make the worst of times seem like the best of times. He was a simple man with simple needs. He always strived to do the right thing no matter what the consequences or repercussions. You couldn't ask for a better friend than him."

The junior enlisted Soldiers looked up to Jodon as a leader, and followed his example even in the worst of situations.

"Sgt. Jodon was a Soldier who would go on any mission despite his feelings toward the mission," said Pfc. Nathaniel Morris, a member of Jodon's team. "He was a strict and professional noncommissioned officer, enforcing rules and regulations. He was a friend; one you could go to and depend on despite the gravity of any situation. He was a family man, both military and civilian, always talking fondly of both. Sgt. Jodon was always expecting me and the rest of the squad to do the right thing. Lying was unacceptable, and excuses were never accepted. He always did his absolute best to keep us informed of whatever situation. Sgt. Jodon was always teaching me, correcting me, encouraging me, and motivating me to be the best Soldier I could be."

A memorial ceremony was held for Jodon at Forward Operating Base Brassfield-Mora May 18.

Jodon is survived by his wife, Bobbi Jo, and his stepdaughters, Ronni Sue and Kailin.



5-25 CAMPAIGN from page 5

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," Johnson said.

"Every time you stop outside a secure area, you always should check," Johnson continued. "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."