

TIGER Tracks



To:

How to E-mail pictures home...

256th awards first Bronze Star for OIF III...

A message from the Louisiana Governor...

1088th Engineers are close to finishing...

Photo by Sgt. Thomas Benoit

256th Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs Office

FREE MAIL

Please forward to your loved ones...Seal with tape or staples

To the Families and Troops

BG John Basilica, Jr.
256 BCT Commander



As calendar year 2004 comes to a close, it has truly been a historic year for the 256 BCT and our families. We have accomplished so much and every step of the way the Tiger Brigade has set a new standard for future units to emulate.

In the upcoming year we will shape the history of the Middle East for years to come. Our service here will set the stage for a free and democratic Iraq. The Iraqi people will come to appreciate (and will want to defend for themselves), the priceless gift of freedom and liberty. We will continue to help them achieve this goal by providing full spectrum operations, with emphasis on stability, support and security missions. The Iraqi people are suffering now and much of our efforts will be devoted to restoring and improving essential services and providing humanitarian support. We will accomplish this mission without

sacrificing our security. Force protection remains our #1 priority. We should expect our enemies to increase their efforts to disrupt the elections process through the indiscriminant use of violence. We must remain ever vigilant and avoid predictable behavior and patterns. *Do not compromise* on security or the standards of force protection. Cooperate with your fellow soldiers in the conduct of their duties as we implement additional force protection measures here on Camp Liberty.

We continue to enjoy the unqualified support and appreciation of the American people. The outpouring of support in the way of packages and gifts during the holidays was nothing short of amazing. I especially want to thank the families and FRGs for their unwavering encouragement. I also want to publicly commend our partners at the Tiger Den and the many Brigade soldiers who worked tirelessly to provide two very special meals during the holiday period. We have much to be thankful for. I want to wish everyone a Happy New Year and ask you to...

continue to look after one another and never let your guard down. !TIGER BRIGADE!

CSM James Mays
256 BCT Sergeant Major



Soldiers of the Tiger Brigade,

I hope the holidays were enjoyable for you and your families back home. This is the start of a new year and I have two goals for you this year: to improve our, ***Force protection and Safety.***

Lets talk about

Force Protection. As a soldier you should always be aware of your surroundings, and never take anything for granted. Always wear your uniform to standard. If you don't know what the standard uniform is, you need to ask your First Sergeant, and he will explain the standards of the 256 BCT. When you have a mission, make sure that

you are fully briefed and understand your part you

play, and the part of the other elements on the mission. Do your job to standard. The last thing is to never let your guard down, no exceptions. Always be aware of what is around you. Stay alert, Stay alive.

Safety, safety, safety. There is no way to be to safe. As i walk around, I see a lot of unsafe acts. I stop what i can, but I cant stop them all. All of you are safety officers, and i need you to do your job. If you see an unsafe act, stop it. No questions asked. There are a lot of issues to address, but I the one i want to talk about is driving. I see too many soldiers speeding, driving without a seatbelt, exceeding the max number aloud in a vehicle, not using troop straps, and being unsafe while driving ATVS. I could give you more, but i am going to stop there. The point is, if it don't feel right or look right, then it is probably not safe.

Every soldier is a force protection and safety officer. ***Help me, so I can help you to have a safer place to live in.***

Governor Blanco's New Year's Message :

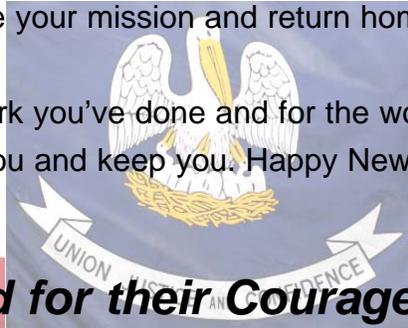
To The Louisiana Troops

"This is Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco. On behalf of the citizens of Louisiana, I'd like to wish our troops at home and abroad a very happy, healthy, and safe new year. You put your lives on the line everyday to protect our freedom. For this we are grateful and proud."

"Many soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice in the fight for freedom in 2004. To the families who have lost loved ones, please know that my thoughts and prayers are with you. May you find peace in your faith and in the cherished memory of the one you've lost.

"Soldiers, as we enter 2005, please know that all of us in Louisiana are thinking of and praying for you. We pray that you will complete your mission and return home safely.

"You are to be commended for the work you've done and for the work yet to be accomplished." "May God bless you and keep you. Happy New Year!"



Soldiers Awarded for their Courage



Brig. Gen. John Basilica, Jr. started the New Year off right by giving awards to a handful of very deserving Soldiers. He began with awarding the 256th Brigade Combat Team's first Bronze Star with Valor to Sgt. David L. Bernal of D. Co. 1st Battalion, 101st Cavalry Regiment, attached to 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, 256th BCT. Bernal surpassed the responsibilities of a Soldier when he repeatedly entered into a kill zone to help his buddies, with no concern for his own life or safety. As a result of Bernal's actions all of the lives of the members of 2nd Platoon were spared.

Basilica continued by recognizing Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division who were instrumental in assisting the 256th BCT in preparing for arrival into Iraq. Because of their help the Tiger Brigade was five days ahead of schedule which allowed for more training time.

The BCT Commander also gave 3 commemorative Christmas coins to the Soldiers whose creativity and artistic gifts contributed to making the BCTs Christmas celebration the event that it was. The Soldiers were tasked with painting the backdrop for the pictures with Santa and assisting the Tiger Den staff in decorating the dining facility.

In addition, numerous Army Commendation and Army Achievement Medals were distributed to Soldiers who displayed outstanding to taking their duties above and beyond the call of duty.

The evening was concluded with Basilica recognizing the forty Soldiers who have performed the ultimate duty of a Soldier and completed their missions while under fire. Thirty-two Soldiers were awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge and eight war "docs" earned the Combat Medic Badge.



Chaplain's Corner



New Chapel

Lt. Col. Robert Baker Jr
256 BCT Chaplain

Christmas is over and we are headed into the New Year whether we are ready for it or not. Remember, do not make those resolutions you made last year if you know you are not going to keep them.

We have much in which to praise God for here at the 256th. We have a brand new chapel, which is light and pleasing to the eye. The chapel tent that we moved from was dark, damp, and dreary, but the new chapel will have a seating capacity of over 300 and we plan to fill it up.

The contrast between these two chapels is similar to life itself. Sometimes our lives are dark and dreary, but if we open up the doors and windows and

let the Son shine in as well as the sunshine in, our entire beings will be flooded with light.

Jesus said He is the light of the world and we are the children of light if we have asked him into our lives. This is not a mere acquaintance with God, but an ongoing and intimate experiential knowledge of Him.

I hope you start off the New Year with God in your life. May God bless each of you richly and give a prosperous New Year.

The History of the Chaplaincy

"Pro Deo et Patria" or "For God and Country," is the longstanding motto of the United States Military Chaplaincy Corps. The word "chaplain" comes from medieval times. In the 4th century a Roman Soldier named Martin of Tours encountered a beggar shivering from the cold. Martin cut off half of his cloak and gave it to him. That night, Martin had a powerful vision of Christ wearing his cloak, and he decided to dedicate his life to service of God. After a lifetime of wonderful service, he was later canonized as Martin of Tours, and he is the patron saint of France. His legacy is maintained in the name of the town that is home station for C Co. 199th Forward Support Battalion (FSB), or "Charlie Med."

Both St. Martinville, La., and the surrounding parish of St. Martin bear his name. St. Martin's cloak was carried into battle by the Frankish kings. The Latin word for cloak is "cappa." The caretaker priest who was responsible for it was called a "cappellanus" or in French, "chapelain." It is this word that is the origin for the English word "chaplain." The early medieval chaplains were not supposed to bear arms but for practical reasons many did.

By the time of the 16th Century Reformation, the chaplain's duty was defined as follows: "to have care of the souls and it is well if he meddle with not other business." The original continental army of the United States had fifteen chaplains who were paid

twenty dollars a month. When Gen. George Washington took command, one of his first actions was to get the chaplains a raise of thirteen dollars and thirty-three cents. The chaplain corps has continued to distinguish itself both in times of war and peace in our nation. At the time of WWII, it was often difficult for chaplains to get good assistants.

While many men served honorably, commanders sometimes assigned troublesome Soldiers to assist the chaplain in hopes that the Soldier would be bettered by the association.

During the post WWII draw down, manpower shortages caused chaplains to use civilian assistants. The birth of the modern chaplain assistant came in 1949 when a military study recommended a special course of for assistants at the Army Chaplain School.

The chaplaincy mission can be summarized as "nurture the living, care for the wounded, and honor the dead."

The point of contact for the Tiger Unit Ministry teams is your chain of command or the chaplains' assistants. These talented Soldiers stand ready to serve and epitomize the motto "Pro Deo et Patria!"

By Maj. Whit Gallaspy

Soldier Receives Honors



By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT PAO



photo by: Chris Foster

Sgt. David Bernal puts heart and soul into his job as a civilian police officer in Staten Island, New York, and his work ethics are only mirrored as a Soldier fighting the war on terror.

Bernal is the recipient of the 256th Brigade Combat Team's first Bronze Star with a V Device. This particular award is reserved for Soldiers who exemplify valor and courage beyond compare. Bernal is a product of D Co. 101 Cav, but the 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment is lucky to have him attached for the deployment. On a fateful night in December as families across America were warm and cozy in their homes enjoying the holiday season, Bernal and his fellow Soldiers were a fight for their lives.

"We went back into the kill zone and used our vehicles to push the others out of the road and before long all of the vehicles were disabled. We jumped out of them and did individual movements into a berm about 500 meters away and held the fight there."

Bernal reflected on the events that led up to this struggle, and explained why he felt the need to repeatedly put his own life in danger.

He said that it was an average patrol, their third since arriving into Baghdad, and they were still doing ride-alongs with the 10th Mountain Division. They were in an area where a unit had previously been hit during the day with rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) and small arms fire. They had four vehicles and as they made a turn onto Route Avalanche, he had a clear view of what happened next.

"I was in the last vehicle so I could see everything. We (the vehicles in the front) started receiving RPGs and small arms fire from one direction," he said.

Bernal recalled that when those vehicles tried to move away a tractor trailer came in and blocked the rest of the vehicles off. When that happened the convoy started to get hit from the other direction. Someone came over the radio and gave alternate directions to Bernal and his crew, but when they were reunited with the front half of the convoy they only had two vehicles. The problem was that the vehicles on the other side of the ambush assumed the same thing, and thought that each other was in the kill

zone. Bernal turned back. When his truck got to the scene the other two trucks were dead and the Soldiers started to receive heavy weapons fire.

"We used our trucks to move the others out of the kill zone," said Bernal, "but before long all of the vehicles were disabled." That's when the 256th Soldiers took to the ground and began pounding the earth to find cover in a berm. He said that they sat there for a couple of hours and eventually either the enemy ran out of ammunition or they just couldn't proceed any further. After that the American heroes just waited for recovery assets.

When asked of what was running through his mind through all of this, Bernal smiled slyly as he recalls that all he could think of were his buddies lives.

"They all owe me money," he smirked, "and it's kind of hard to get cash around here sometimes."

It wasn't long before Bernal and the rest of the survivors of the event were right back out doing their duty. He said that three days later they all decided together that it would be best to get right back into the saddle. They felt that the longer they sat back and dwelled on it the easier it would be to start asking the question, "Why am I here?"

He said that they were all a little anxious to be going back to the same area.

"We drove past the area, stopped, and took a look around to check the enemy positions out (from that night). They were well fortified."

Bernal said that no matter what happens from here on out, he has full confidence in his fellow Soldiers and in the lessons that they've all learned.

"If it's one thing that the military has taught me, it's that if you're on the other side of our ambush, you usually don't make it out."



Quenching a Thirsty Nation

1088th "Bayou Sappers"



By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT PAO

The 1088th Engineer (EN) Battalion, 256th Brigade Combat Team is one step away from completing a project that will enrich the lives of the Iraqi people. For the past three months, the 414th Civil Affairs (CA) and 1088th EN Battalions have been working hand in hand to bring more clean water to the homes of those who reside in the Tiger Brigade's area of operation.

Capt. Jessy Yeates from Thibodeaux, La. and of HHC 1088th 256th BCT, has been spearheading the project and says that this is a much needed addition for the locals.

"The water that supplies the town has been repeatedly tapped," he said, "The original line was designed for 25,000 people and now there are 80,000 people living in the town. There's just not enough water getting to them."

The project began three months ago when the 414th received a request from the Taji Nahia Council. The civil affairs team went out and assessed the situation, which was considered a high priority as a result. The process began with providing the area with a new 9 kilometer water line that will help to increase the pressure as well as give the people in the area a better supply of clean drinking water. The water is coming directly from the Taji water treatment facility, so it comes off of the main line. It is already clean and treated so clearing the water of impurities is not an issue. Although the

project has been overseen by the engineers and civil affairs teams, the manual labor and provisions have been supplied by the Iraqi people themselves. Yeates says that he has been involved in getting the funds to the people and making sure that things run smoothly, but the contracting



was done through the Taji community.

"We went through the Abu Sami Company and about thirty-five local nationals were involved in actually building the pipeline." said Yeates.

Spc. Justin Godfrey from Syracuse, New York and of the 414th CA Bn. has been singing the praises of the job that has been done by the people of this country.

"We have a real good working relationship with the local government. We meet with them at least once a week and make it a point to sit with them and explain fully what's going on." He said that the two groups of world citizens are literally working together to make it all happen.

"They are just as much a part of this as we are; they're the ones who are going to use it, after all." Yeates says that the 1088th has spent their project money in record time to try to

enhance the lives of the Iraqi people. In the two months that the Tiger Brigade has been in the country, they have used over one million dollars to fund the abundance of projects that they have currently in the works.

"When we first got here everybody said that there was no way that we'd be able to spend a million dollars in one month. We were the first BCT to ever do that."

The money was used for materials and logistics for various ongoing projects, including water networks, intersection projects, pipelines, and trash cleanup projects. About three hundred eighty-eight thousand dollars was allocated for this particular water project.

The current endeavor is 90% complete. All that is left is for the Abu Sami Company to finish construction of the pump station, which will re-pressurize the system. It will be done far enough ahead so that the people will have time to fix their damaged water lines in their houses. They haven't had water coming through their pipes for a long time and may need to make repairs to the household pipes before their water is turned on.



Operation: Tiger Aid

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT PAO

C Co. 199th
Medics

In a collective effort to help heal the people of Iraq, Company C, 199th Forward Support Battalion (FSB), 256th Brigade Combat Team, collaborated with several units from Camp Liberty to conduct a medical screening at a local school. On Dec. 18, units from the 18th Military Police Brigade, 16th MP Brigade, 617th MP Brigade, 307th Psychological Operations Battalion, and the Iraqi Highway Patrol (IHP) joined the medics of the 256th BCT at the Shatt Al Arab School in hopes of curing some of the common ailments that might be plaguing the children.

Maj. Alan Kabakoff, with the 16th MP Brigade, explained that humanitarian missions like this play a vital role in winning the war on terror, although sometimes it's hard to see.

"It's like fire prevention," he said, "Everyone knows that it works, it's just hard to prove, unless something bad happens."

Kabakoff has worked with the Iraqi Highway Patrol on several missions and said that the unions have always proven to be successful. They have linked up to distribute shoes, school supplies, and at one time even Beanie Babies. He said that you never know what one simple act of kindness can lead to or what the long term effects will turn out to be. "These people want the same things that we do," Kabakoff said. "They want safe schools, safe homes, and safe areas to raise their kids. The IHP and U.S. forces working together proves that they (the IHP) are not puppets of the government."

Staff Sgt. Jason Escoyne, Co. C, 199th FSB, was involved in getting the vital signs of the children and said that luckily they didn't find anything seriously wrong with anyone.

"If they had anything wrong at all it was mainly just the common cold," he said. "We saw a lot of runny noses and coughing, but the main thing that we were happy to see was that the kids were in good spirits." The collective group of Soldiers handed out soccer balls, candy, and school supplies, which no doubt, contributed to the excitement of the children, but it was also an effort to calm their fears. "Some of them (the kids) were a little frightened at first," Escoyne noted. "I don't think that the majority of them had ever seen a thermometer before."

The medics cured this ailment by demonstrating on

themselves and also by showing the children that their classmates, who went before them weren't harmed in the process.

Sgt. Jeanne Marie Crochet, Co. C, 199th FSB, works as a pediatric nurse in her civilian field. She said the illnesses they encounter here in Iraq were not so different from the common cold season in the states. This is the busy season for the common cold, even at home, but that was the main sickness that we saw here," she said. In addition, Crochet said that a lot of the kids had impacted ears which are easily cured with warm water and hydrogen peroxide.

Unfortunately, the supplies for the medics are very limited right now.

"I'm extremely spoiled at my (civilian) job with equipment and supplies," she said, "Slowly, we're getting the things in that we need, but for the most part we have been dealing with the bare minimum."

Crochet added that she has taken it for granted to have a machine that will tell you all of the vital signs in seconds. She said that even doing a very simple thing

like that took a while with the kids, because they just didn't have the technology to do it quickly.

Crochet's job was to do a complete head-to-toe assessment of the children after all of their vitals had been taken. She conducted an eyes, ears, nose, and throat evaluation and worked her way through all of the systems. The kids were screened for pulmonary, cardio, and gastro-intestinal illnesses. The pediatric medications were also a big issue, but the team worked around them as much as they could.

"We have no pediatric meds here, so we are having to convert what we could in order to get the children well," Crochet said.

Maj. Whit Gallaspy is a physician with the 199th FSB. He said the operation was a huge success. He admits that the kids were a little frightened at first, but once they realized that the Soldiers were there to help them, they really warmed up. He also said the outlook for continuing missions such as this one is very hopeful. "I think that the opportunities are almost endless for the 256th medical staff to do this type of thing and establish trust and good will with the people," Gallaspy said. "We can take care of some of the medical problems that are out there."



How the Grinch Couldn't Steal Christmas

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT PAO

A Tiger Brigade Carol

Every Tiger down in Tigerland liked Christmas a lot, but the Grinch (in the form of insurgents) who lived not far from Tigerland, did not. Dr. Seuss' funny tale of The Grinch Who Stole Christmas is a favorite of people young and old and has worked its way into the American ideals of Christmas tradition. It may have been a typical assumption, to think that Christmas would not feel the same to the Soldiers stationed in and around Baghdad, but as the 256th Brigade Combat Team proved on Christmas Day, almost anywhere can feel like home with the help and dedication of leadership and fellow Soldiers.

With today's technology, Soldiers do not have to rely on letters or waiting in long lines to use the phones to be able to give their holiday greetings to their loved ones at home.

Cpl. Gregory Doucet from Opelousas, La., of A Co. 1088th Engineer Battalion and the women in his life not only got to speak to each other for Christmas, but through the power of the internet they also got to see each other.

As his mother and wife were each getting ready for a Christmas party, Doucet was able to chat with them and see their new Christmas outfits through a webcam.

"I chat online with my wife every night and with the holidays and everything it's really been great to have access to something like this."

Doucet said that being

away for the holidays has been rough, but his wife just received a great present from Santa, and as long as she's happy that's all that he cares about.

"About a week ago, she got a brand new Honda Accord, so she's floating on cloud nine right now," he said mischievously, "I wish that I could be there to see her in it, but I can picture how excited she must have been when she drove it off of the lot."

The saying "some things never change" sticks like glue to

"I know that this is last minute, but I promise I have a good reason this time."

-SPC Ryan LeBlanc

some Soldiers of the 256 BCT, who are true holiday shoppers when the season of giving comes around. At the North Victory Post Exchange (PX) in the late afternoon of Christmas Eve, some troops bought those last minute gifts, just as they would have if they were back home.

Spc. Ryan LeBlanc of HHC 256th Infantry Brigade was seen searching the cluttered store for that perfect gift to send back to Lafayette, La.

"I know that this is last minute, but I promise I have a good reason this time," he said with a grin.

LeBlanc and his fellow Soldiers in the Military Police

(MP) Platoon had been awake for over thirty-six hours, due to the heightened security on Camp Al Tahreer in Baghdad.

"The threat level has gone up significantly since the events in Mosul," said Staff Sgt. Chad Rodriguez, LeBlanc's Platoon Sgt.

"We've been pulling extra security to ensure that our Soldiers are well protected during the Christmas holidays."

LeBlanc says that his Christmas Day will be spent watching the visions of sugarplums dance on the back of his eyelids.

"I plan to sleep, sleep, and sleep!"

Sgt. John Chalker from Long Island, N.Y. of HHC 1st Battalion 69th Infantry Regiment is anxiously awaiting the voices that will come across the world on Christmas Day.

"I can't wait to call home! It's not the same, but it'll bring me closer to them, if only for a little while." His fiancé is in New York looking forward to the call from her man.

At the Onwardi-Shondee Troop Medical Clinic (TMC), the hard working medics of C Co. 199th Forward Support Battalion (FSB) received a Christmas surprise from their very own Santa.

First Sgt. Jerry Harvey of Alexandria, La. barbecued steaks for his company and made a special trip to the clinic for those who were on shift.

"They (the medics) are

dedicated to what they do and this is just my way of showing them a little appreciation," he said.

Complete with a Santa cap and a John Deere Gator for a sleigh, Harvey pulled up and gave out the Christmas Dinner to all the good little Soldiers. He even added some favorite spices of the Louisiana troops.

"You have to have the Tony's Chachere's!" he exclaimed.

The reason for the season, the birth of Baby Jesus, was celebrated in a brand new chapel. Lt. Col. Chaplain Robert Baker, Chaplain for the 256th BCT said that this was a most special gift for the Soldiers of the brigade.

The new Chapel, which holds a capacity of at least three hundred people, will hold its official dedication in January, but the inaugural service was a Christmas Eve candlelight vigil held on the night before the birth of the Lord.

"We had a choir and excellent participation from the congregation," he said, "and everyone seemed to love coming to the new chapel." The chapel was a gift from B Co. 411th Engineer Battalion from Hawaii.

The perfect highlight to any major event is a feast sent from Heaven. And on this holiest of days, the staff and volunteer Soldiers at the Tiger Den Dining Facility, once again outdid themselves. Much like the Thanksgiving Day oasis that they created, the Gulf Catering Company produced a delectable vision that seemed as if it was taken straight out of the pages of *Good Housekeeping*. Draped with red and white satin

fabric the elegant spread that graced the tables inside the facility were symbolic of royalty for the Tiger Brigade Soldiers. Festive dining ware and utensils brought an element of boldness to the normally white dining area. Splashes of red, green, and gold decorations were displayed throughout, as well as the unbelievable desserts and baked creations that the Tiger Den staff is so famous for.

The main attraction was good old Kris Kringle himself (Kris

Signal Office (S-6) and Col. John Angeloz, 256th Deputy Brigade Commander (DBC), to have the photos emailed back to the Soldiers' families.

Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, 1st Cav. Division Commander showed up to help serve the meal to the 256th troops. Alongside 1st Cav. Div. Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Ciotola they gave all Soldiers who passed through their line a welcome surprise. Chiarelli was impressed with the atmosphere and awarded the eight Soldiers who made it possible with his commemorative holiday coin. The Soldiers volunteered to decorate the dining facility and to paint a mural style backdrop for the photographs with Santa and Ms. Clause.

The leadership and enlisted of the Tiger Brigade may not have the luxury of sprawling out on mom's sofa after stuffing themselves on everything imaginable, but thanks to many of

Brig. Gen. John Basilica's (256th BCT Commander) elves, Christmas Day at Tigerland was as festive and heartwarming as possible.

The Grinch himself could have come through the door, with a bang and boom, and thrown mud on the floor. If the insurgents themselves could have seen such a sight as the Tiger Brigade doing Christmas up right, they would have been stunned and been speechless and not known what to say; their way too small hearts would have grown three sizes that day! As the Grinch of Who-ville would likely tell them on sight, Merry Christmas to all, and to all, a good night!



Kringle was derived from the German word "Kristkindl," which means "Christ child.") More commonly known as Santa Clause, he paid a visit to the Tiger Soldiers along with his wife, Ms. Clause, and his Chief of Staff of the Reindeer, Rudolph.

Clause stayed for quite some time and posed for pictures with as many troops as he could. He was even so gracious that he coordinated with the 256 BCT Public Affairs Office, 256 BCT

Let There Be Peace on Earth

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT PAO

*Wisconsin Unit makes
New Friends*

As the guardian angels of the 256th Brigade Combat Team (BCT), the 1st Battalion 141st Field Artillery Regiment has joined forces with the Iraqi Police (IP) of Station 21 to ensure that little to no harm comes to the Soldiers and workers who inhabit Camp Liberty.

At the gate of an entrance check point (ECP), B Bat. 1st Battalion 126th Field Artillery Regiment, attached to 1/141 FA, 256 BCT has made some very unique friends. Capt. Craig VanKirk, from Hartland, Wis. and Commander of B Bat. 1/126 explained how the two nations came together for the betterment of the IP's.

"Their (the IP's) generator broke and we had an extra one that we weren't using. It wasn't the best but we made it work until we could get theirs fixed," he said.

The generator supplies the power for all of the electricity in the police station, including security lights that shine right onto the ECP.

"It's a really large checkpoint," said VanKirk, "we search around 220-270 trucks a day so it's pretty busy most of the time."

The lack of power would also be extremely detrimental to the functions of the Iraqi Police. Currently, the station houses around forty-five prisoners so it's crucial that the officers have electricity and are able to keep their operations running at all times.

As a result of this gesture of goodwill a friendship has been established between the two forces. The day after the Soldiers donated the generator to the police, they were invit-

suspicious car sitting in our area of operation. He wasn't doing anything, but the police came into our checkpoint to chase him off, just in case."

The leadership at the police station is very grateful for the help that the Americans have given them and say that they will do whatever they can in the future to help their new friends. Col. Kareem Mahood Selman, commander at Station 21, is very thankful for the help of the Soldiers and has said that he will find a way to pay them back.

"The generosity of the Soldiers goes beyond the government," he said.

The IPs have a variety of missions on their own, including manning checkpoints, chasing down thieves and terrorists, and basically being on the lookout for anyone who needs help.

Lt. Col Mohad Dahesh, assistant commander of Station 21, is ready to work with the Americans to establish solidarity however he can.

"It will take a long time to make things better, but maybe in the future we will find peace."

Dahesh also gave a piece of advice for winning over the Iraqi people. "Soldiers and the media must work to show the people of this country the good things that they are doing. The media only shows when things are blown up, the people need to see good things."



Sgt. First Class Jeffery Demet from Delevan, Wis. And of B 1/126 and the non-commissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) of the ECP, pours gasoline into a generator donated to the Iraqi Police at Station 21. The IPs generator broke and the 1/141 FA, who B 1/126 is attached to, gave them one of their own as a gesture of kindness.

ed in for tea symbolizing that the involved parties were now friends. Since that day there exists a bond that could very well lead to the healing of two countries who have been so much at odds with each other.

The IP's have already helped B Bat. 1/126 out, according to 2Lt. Nicholas Braun of Burlington, Wis.

"Just the other day there was a

Christmas in Baghdad

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT PAO

2/156th and 199th

Santa Claus came to town bringing toys and goodies to all of the good little Soldiers of the 256th Tiger Brigade. On Dec. 20 the 199th Forward Support Battalion (FSB) and 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment of the 256th Brigade Combat Team (BCT) joined together to bring the meaning of Christmas to "Tigerland," the brigade's portion of Camp Al Tahreer.

The two units had many gifts for their audience. After opening with a prayer and a moment of silence for the four fallen Soldiers of the

256th and their families, several troops gave their renditions of what Christmas is all about. Some read short essays, while others shared classics, as well as original poems on the meaning of the holiday season.

In another beautifully wrapped box, a few Soldiers shared their gift of song with everyone in attendance. In addition to solos and a choir made up of both units, there was also a skit celebrating Christmas in many cultures. A family sat around their tree as the mother and father attempted to explain to their children that the holidays were about more than receiving gifts.

Spc. Keith Istre of Mermentau, La., Company C, 199th FSB sang "O, Holy Night" in the Cajun French language, native to the Louisiana Brigade. Shortly thereafter, the children's old Cajun uncle, Uncle Pete showed up to tell the story, *Twas the Cajun Night Before Christmas*, by Trosclair, Howard Jacobs, and James Rice. Uncle Pete, who was played by Maj. Andre Vige from St. Martinville, La., the

operations officer for the 199th FSB, stole the show and was able to convince the kids of what the true meaning of Christmas was about.

The program was concluded by a concert of Christmas carols and gifts were handed out to each person in the audience. The event was produced entirely by Spc. Trilisa Merrill from Leesville, La. a member of Headquarters Company, 199th FSB. Everyone received little stockings filled with treats, and overall, what a wonderful present from the 199th FSB and 2-156th to the entire family of the 256th Tiger Brigade.



2nd Lt. Candace Biery from Missoula, Mont., Headquarters Company, 199th Forward Support Battalion, plays a mother who is trying to teach her children of the true meaning of Christmas during a holiday event Dec. 20. Sitting next to her is her "daughter," Sgt. Victoria Carey, from Alexandria La., and also a member of Headquarters Company.



Maj. Andre Vige, from St. Martinville, La., and the operations officer for the 199th Forward Support Battalion, portrays "Uncle Pete," an old Cajun relative who surprises the "children". Uncle Pete told the story, *Twas the Cajun Night Before Christmas*.

256 BCT Families Reunite

During "Tiger" Christmas Holidays...



Sgt. First Class Gregory Martin, Support Platoon Sgt. for HHC 1/156, reunites with his brother, Spc. Glenn Martin of HHC 2/12 Cavalry Division, S4. Glenn is currently stationed at Camp Stryker, but will soon be relocating to FOB Dogwood.

Sgt. Johnny Berry of B Co. 199th FSB, from Leesville, La., visits the Clause's with his brothers, Randy and Chris Berry. Randy and Chris are civilian contractors with Kellogg, Brown, and Root.



Patricia Mouton of Houston, Tx. and her sister, Ms. Clause, of the North Pole, stop for a mini-family reunion with their niece's husband, Staff Sgt. Jud Adams of HHC 256, from Welsh, La. Ms. Clause's alias is Carmen Duplechin from Natchitoches, La. The sisters

Spc. Greg Smith of B Bat. 1/141 FA Bn., and his brother, Cpl. Andrew Smith of HHC 3/156 Inf. Bn., spend Christmas Day together in the Tiger Den Dining Facility. The siblings are from LaPlace, La.



The Tiger Tracks is a publication of the 256th Brigade Public Affairs Office. This Soldier and Family Support Group newsletter contains official information and complies with the provisions of AR 360-81 and AR 25-51. Questions or concerns can be directed to the editor at taysha.deaton@us.army.mil.

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Soldier's Voice

Inside of their heads...

What are your plans when you return home and are you making a career of the Guard?



Staff Sgt.
Robbie Barras
HHC 2/156

"I plan on spending as much time with my family and hope-

fully remember how to do my civilian job. I have 20 years in the Guard already, but I'll make a decision in Nov. of 2006 on whether or not to re-enlist."



Sgt. Colva Eglip
C Co. 3/156
Church Point

"I'm going to start school and go back to work. I'm not, however going to stay in the Guard."



Spc. Timothy Neary
B/126 attached to 1/141
Milwaukee, WI

"When I get home I plan on finishing school and becoming a firefighter. I hope to get on with the Milwaukee Fire Department."



Sgt. Marcus Zebbs
HHC 1/156
Mansfield, LA

"I plan on finishing college at LSU with a degree in education. As far as making a career of the Guard, only time will tell."



Spc. Trista Racca
A Co. 199th FSB
Lake Charles, LA

"I feel that my job definitely contributes to the Soldiers. I'm the Admin Clerk for my company and I receive daily reports and help to coordinate the leave schedules, among many other functions that are important for day to day operations."



Spc. Amie Benoit
HHC 256
Maurice, LA

"I don't think that anything needs to change. I don't see any problems and everything seems just fine as it is."

This is a chance for Soldiers and family members to express themselves (ie. poems, stories, quotes, pictures from home, etc). If you would like to submit something for the next edition, please feel free to email us
256_BCT_PublicAffairsOfficer@1cd.army.mil.

What do you have to say?

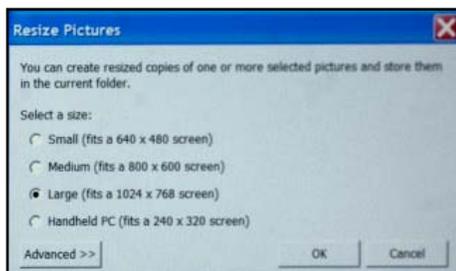
Shutter Bug 101

By Sgt. Thomas Benoit
256th BCT PAO

Say cheese!

Are you having a tough time emailing your precious moments in time? Enjoying your new Canon EOS, Canon Rebel, Nikon Coolpix and becoming a regular shutter bug. But you're unable to send a single photo for your family to enjoy. You finally found out your new 5 mega pixel camera really makes a large image file between 1.5MB - 2.5MB. Large files are no problem for a broadband connection (high speed internet) to handle.

The problem is that a dialup connection trying to download 5 or 6 pictures will take too long. Army Knowledge Online (AKO) will only allow a sender to email 1MB. The solution is to resize your images to a manageable file size for AKO. New computers running Windows XP operating system is already configured with Image Resizer. The program can be found online at <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/powertoys/xppowertoys.msp>. It is a very small file 521KB, using a modem rate of 28.8Kbps it will take only two minutes to download. Once ImageResizer is installed it will not appear on your desktop. It becomes one of the choices available once you right

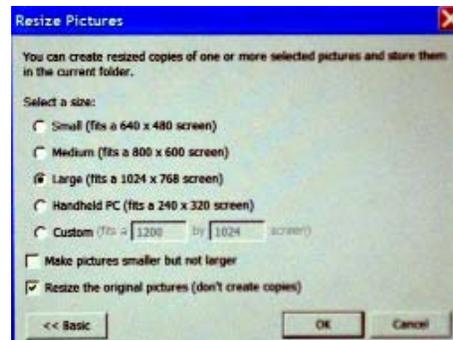


click over an image.

After right clicking, select **Resize Pictures** in the dialogue box. After launching ImageResizer, its dialogue box will appear. There will be four choices available, *Small*, *Medium*, *Large* and *Handheld PC*. I recommend using the *Large* option. It will automatically make copies and rename the selected pictures you resize.

Don't get confused about the image being renamed *originalname(Large).jpg*.

The (*Large*) is only in reference to the file size you selected (*Small*), (*Medium*) or (*Large*). There is an Advanced TAB that will allow you to resize the originals. Use **CAUTION** with



this option, once you resize the image, the original image is lost forever. Always back up your priceless photographs before doing any type of alterations.

There are several methods of backing up your data. It is dangerous to only back up onto an external hard drive. External hard drives do crash, I also recommend backing up onto CD's. Always store your CD's indoors, never expose them to direct sunlight or place them near a magnetic source (i.e. computer speakers).

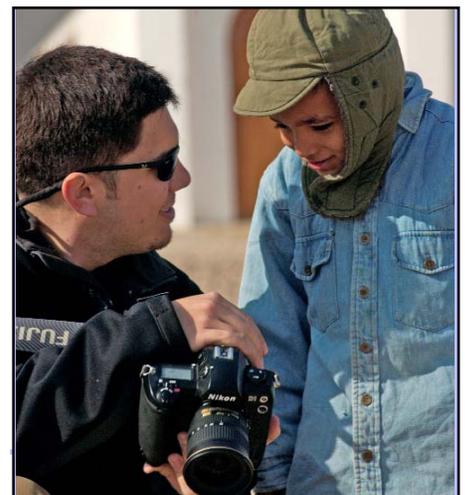
If your photograph has a yellow, green or blue overcast don't delete them, they are still good photographs. The only thing wrong is the white balance (WB). WB can be corrected by nearly all photo editing software programs. Most consumer digital camera's have WB settings i.e. cloudy, shade, incandescent, fluorescent, direct sunlight, flash, WB preset, and auto. If WB is set to fluorescent and you take a photograph outdoors the picture will have a blue tint or light purple.

You can use auto WB, not recommended, it doesn't consistently give you the best colors, either from an accurate or creative point of view. The preferred setting, is **WB preset**, this is the best way to get accurate, brilliant colors from every situation. Take a sheet of white paper or a

napkin etc. reference your owner's manual for the correct procedures on setting WB.

You're telling your camera what is white for the lighting conditions you are currently working under. WB has to be reset every time the light conditions change. It's always best to set your camera for the highest resolution possible. RAW or TIFF is the highest resolution, and is the preferred setting. The disadvantage to RAW or TIFF is the very large file it creates. My Nikon D1X makes a 2.5MB file on *JPEG Fine* and 16MB file on *RAW*.

The major concern in the past was the cost of a memory card. A 1GB memory card was over \$600, today the same memory card is only \$99. TIFF will give you more control over manipulating the data contained inside the image file that will give you better results to your final photograph. After your initial purchase, digital photography is free, so when instinct tells you to stop, keep shooting.



Joe Giordano a reporter with Stars and Strips mesmerizes a young Iraqi boy using the LCD, after taking his picture with a Nikon D-1X. Joe is covering the 256th BCT through the holidays.

1/156 Remembers

****Special to the Tiger Tracks****

*In Memory of
a Fallen Comrade*

**By Spc. Brian Schroeder
10th Mountain Division Public Affairs**

In a memorial ceremony in Italy during World War II, Gen. George S. Patton said, "In my mind we came here to thank God that men like these lived, rather than regret that they died."

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 156th Artillery Regiment gathered for a memorial ceremony on Dec. 27th. They came together to remember the life of 1st Lt. Christopher W. Barnett, who passed away Dec. 23 from wounds received from an improvised explosive device (IED).

"Our country is so committed to the cause of freedom and the ideals of our constitution that she sends only the very best of her sons and daughters into harms way," said Lt. Col. Thomas B. Plunkett III, 1st/156th AR commander. "Lt. Barnett was one of the best. He lived the Army Values and embodied the Soldier's Creed."

Barnett, 32, was remembered for his jovial mood and outlook on life. Capt. Michael Hicks, 1st/156th AR A Co. Commander, recalled one of the many times Barnett brought a smile to his face.

"In a command and staff meeting, he passed a note to me that read, 'Do you like me? Check yes or no,'" Hicks said. "I took the note and wrote 'always' and gave the note back to him. He was a great friend to everybody in our unit. He took time out of his life to lead men (while in) harms way."

Capt. (CH) Tyler Wagenmaker, 1st/156th AR A Co. Chaplain said Barnett will be remembered for his willingness to perform his job in the face of danger, even if it meant putting himself in harm's way to protect his Soldiers. He added that Barnett's life, though short, touched many other lives and he will be remembered in the hearts and souls of those who served with him.

"Length of days does not always mean completeness of life," Wagenmaker said of Barnett. "Some of the finest things on earth do not last long. Some of the most beautiful flowers last but only a season. He has become a hero that is not limited to any length of time."



Sgt. 1st Class Don Robinson, 1st Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, clenches the dog tags of his fallen comrade, 1st Lt. Christopher W. Barnett, a platoon leader for 1/156th.

Barnett lived a life of great quality, doing for others in his shorter number of years than many do in a whole lengthy lifetime."

Barnett joined the Louisiana Army National Guard after his enlistment in the regular Army expired. His first day of drill with his new unit was one 1st Sgt. Albert Vanzant, 1st/156th AR A Co., said he will never forget.

"On his first day of drill, I remember Chris stumbling in late," Vanzant recalled. "I called him out in the formation and said we needed to talk because I heard some disturbing things about him. He replied 'I can guarantee they are all lies.'"

"From that day, Chris and I started a lasting friendship, and his death will forever be a time in my life that I will not soon forget," Vanzant said. "I miss you Chris. You will be my brother forever."

Barnett, a Baton Rouge, La. native, was posthumously promoted to the rank of first lieutenant and was awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star. He is survived by his wife, Amanda, of Denham Springs, La., and his parents, Robert and Judith Barnett of Baker, La.

Fallen Soldier

In Loving Memory

1Lt. Christopher William Barnett

Sgt. Craig Nelson

A Soldiers Story

I was that which others did not want to be
I went where others feared to go
And did what others feared to do
I asked nothing from those who gave nothing
And reluctantly accepted the thought of eternal
Loneliness.....Should I fail
I have seen the face of Terror
Felt the stinging cold of fear
And enjoyed the sweet taste of a moments Love
I Have Cried, Pained, and Hoped
But most of all I have lived times
Others would say were best forgotten
At least I am able to say that
I Am Proud of what I was....A Soldier

-Anonymous