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Designed by: Spc. Chris Foster FREE MAIL

256th Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs Office

Please forward to your loved ones

To:

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This Edition

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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 or Soldiers can call VOIP 242-4644.

BG John Basilica, Jr.
256 BCT Commander



On 30 May, Americans observed Memorial Day. For the 256th BCT and all of its families and friends it now has the very special and very personal significance for which the observance was always intended: to honor

those who gave their lives in the service of their country. The 256th BCT, in its service to OIF III, joins the proud ranks of those units in previous conflicts that fought and died to protect and defend our way of life, not only for Americans, but for other oppressed peoples of the world. For the Tiger Brigade and its families, it's very personal now. We know all too well the magnitude of the sacrifice and the price of freedom. Memorial Day for us will never be the same. Our thoughts and prayers are especially with the families this day. We also recommit ourselves to carry on the mission for which they gave their last full measure of devotion.

The 256th continues to adapt to the changing operational needs of Task Force Baghdad. Our responsibilities will now expand again over the coming month and we will assume command of the 1-11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (from the renowned Black Horse Regiment) and the 2-130th Infantry Battalion from the Illinois National Guard. They, along with the rest of the BCT and our Iraqi partners, will

continue to keep the pressure on the enemies of freedom and remove them as a threat to the Iraqi people. The Brigade performed extremely well during the month of May as Operation Cobra Venom resulted in over 60 specific targets being captured and detained. Our partners in the 1st Iraqi Brigade achieved another milestone during this period as we assisted them in assuming full responsibility for FOB Justice. It should be noted that most of the combat operations during Cobra Venom were joint operations with the battalions of the 1st Iraqi Brigade.

I am concerned about the recent spike in negligent discharges, losses of sensitive items, accidents and uniform violations. These are indicators of failures in discipline. They reflect a lack of the type of attention to detail and care required to stay razor sharp and stay alive. The BCT has been in sustained combat now for some time but we must not relax nor become complacent. Leaders at all levels must be relentless in ensuring that soldiers maintain standards and operate safely. I again remind all soldiers to continue to stay hydrated, eat properly and to exercise. Always use all elements of your Personal Protective Equipment. Force protection remains your first priority.

I am intensely proud of you. Continue to take care of one another.

TIGER BRIGADE!

CSM James Mays
256 BCT Sergeant Major



NCOs: ENFORCE THE STANDARDS! DISCIPLINE & SAFETY!

Soldiers of the Tiger Brigade, there have been a lot of misunderstandings of the uniform policy and smoking in the tactical vehicles. This policy has

not changed. We are still under the same policy we were seven months ago. We are getting closer to the end of the rotation and we don't need to let our guard down. Stay in line with the policy.

To all leaders in the 256 BCT, it is your responsibility to ensure Soldiers are following the rules and policies the brigade has set forth. This is your job as a leader to make sure your Soldier is following all of the rules. I want every NCO in this brigade to go back and re-read the Soldier's creed and follow it. The creed is the guide that we follow and should never forget it. So let's make sure

Editor's Note

Dear Soldiers and Families,
I would like to get more feedback from all of you. What do you want to see more or less of in the *Tiger Tracks*? Please remember this publication is yours. If you have photos, story ideas, or even your own submissions, please feel free to email them to us or bring them by the PAO office. Please keep in mind, that not all submissions will be printed, but we will showcase as much of your work as possible. I know Soldiers would like to see pictures and submissions from their families, as much as families need to know what is happening with their Soldiers.

I Lt. Taysha Deaton
256th BCT PAO

that we are correct in all that we do from here on out.

The 256 BCT is a great brigade and we do many admirable and upstanding deeds. So, let's not stop here. I want to keep it that way. Everyone must understand, if you break the rule, you will take the punishment.

Lt. Col. Robert Baker, Jr.
256th BCT Chaplain

The message contained in the old testament book of Jonah is very relevant for us today. The book of Jonah takes place in the ancient city of Nineveh, or today's Mosul, right here in Iraq. Jonah was whining to God because God told him to do something that Jonah did not agree with. God told Jonah to go and preach the message of repentance to the people of Nineveh, the arch-enemy of the people of Israel. Jonah did not want to go because he would be considered a traitor by Israel if his preaching resulted in the people of Nineveh repenting thus vacating the upcoming judgment of the Lord in this great city.

The book of Jonah has four chapters. In these chapters, we see four phases of Jonah's life. In the first, we see Jonah running from God. In the second, he is running to

God. In the third, he is running with God and in the fourth chapter, Jonah is running ahead of God. After being swallowed by a giant fish, Jonah finally did what God wanted him to do although he was still reluctant. One of the lessons from this book for us today is that we, too, know what God's will for

I Love the Lord for He has heard my appeal for mercy because He has turned His ear towards me, I will call out to Him for as long as I live. The ropes of death were wrapped around me, and the torments of hell overcame me; I encountered trouble and sorrow, then I called upon the name of the Lord: Lord save me!!! The Lord is gracious and righteous, our God is compassionate.
PSALMS 116

our lives is, yet, we whine and cry to God. We make excuses why we cannot complete the mission instead of how we are going to accomplish the mission. In spite of Jonah's disobedience, God used the message that Jonah preached to save the people of the city of Nineveh. How many people do we pass each day that could use a kind word, a hug, or a little encouragement?

Sunday:

- 0900 Roman Catholic Mass - CH Sanchez
- 1030 Contemporary Protestant - CH Madrid / Gillett
- 1230 Gospel Protestant - CH Baker
- 1500 Traditional Protestant - CH Lucas
- 1900 Non Denominational Christian - CH Staunton

Monday:

- 0900 "The Gospel of John" - CH Lucas (p)
- 1830 Roman Catholic Mass - CH Sanchez (p)
- 1900 "R.C.L.A. Catechetical Instruction" - CH Sanchez (p)
- 1900 "The Gospel of John" - CH Lucas (s)
- 2000 "Tough Questions Bible Study" - CH Wagenmaker

Tuesday:

- 1900 "Wild At Heart" (Men's Bible Study) - CH Madrid (s)

Wednesday:

- 0900 "Old Testament Shadows of Christ" - CH Lucas (p)
- 1800 Catholic Choir practice - SPC Istre (s)
- 1830 Roman Catholic Mass - CH Sanchez (p)
- 1900 Midweek Worship Service - CH Gillett (p)

Thursday:

- 2000 "Old Testament Shadows of Christ" - CH Lucas (p)
- 0900 "Gospel According to Isaiah" - CH Lucas (p)
- 1900 Contemporary Praise Team Practice - SPC Istre (s)
- 1900 "Gospel According to Isaiah" - CH Lucas (p)

Friday:

- 1830 Roman Catholic Mass - CH Sanchez (p)
- 1900 Bible Study - SPC Dotson (c)
- 1900 Catholic Apologetic - CH Sanchez (p)
- 2000 Gospel Choir - Instrumental only practice- SGT Amis (s)

Saturday:

- 0900 Lutheran Worship Service - CH Lucas (p)
- 1800 Women's Bible Study - CH Madrid (p)
- 1900 Roman Catholic Mass - CH Sanchez (s)
- 1900 Intercessory Prayer Group - Full Gospel Service (c)
- 1900 "Every Man's Battle" - SFC Martin (p)
- 2000 Gospel Choir practice - SGT Amis (s)

(s) = Sanctuary
 (p) = Prayer Room
 (c) = Counseling Room

Letter to the Editor

Hello from the lovely country of Iraq. My name is Daniel Prime, and I haven't written in quite a while. As a matter of fact, I have found it hard to even call home lately. It isn't due to a lack of resources or desire, but to be more honest than I have ever been in my life...it is hard to pretend that I am the same person. There are really great days, and then there are the bad. I remind you that I cannot speak for every Soldier, but there are many who share my feelings. I still laugh, joke, and relax the same. I can look back only months ago and see how differently I think. For those families out there who have noticed a change in their loved ones, or who receive calls less frequently than they did before, the following story of a few days of my life may provide answers, to varying degrees, to your questions. In this article you will notice a lack of names and locations. This is to ensure the protection of my fellow Soldiers. I hope you can close your eyes and envision what my words depict, and I apologize in advance for falling short of the reality.

It is midnight and you are around Baghdad, Iraq. All day you have heard bombs and explosions, but you are fine, having become acclimated to their frequency. You and your men practically live "outside the wire" and you are among the best of the best. Constant combat operations have left you wary and you can see the same in every Soldier next to you. Two Soldiers are being painted up for insertion into one of the toughest neighborhoods on this earth. It will take a team of ten men and two vehicles to make the drop, and make no mistake about the consequences of your failure. Your patrol leader has a map and is going over the details of the operation, over and over again. He is your leader and in him you place your trust and your life. In you he does the same, for he is beside you throughout the night.

Everyone puts on their sixty-pound body armor, inspects their weapons, and prepares to go into the night. The vehicles are loaded and you make your way to exit the protective gates of your camp. Your NVGs (night vision goggles) are on your helmets and they go down as your headlights go off. It is completely dark as you hear a Soldier recite The Lord's Prayer. The gate and the lights of the camp behind it fade away behind you as you race violently into the night. Your adrenaline is peaked and all signs of your fatigue are lifted as you hear the clicking of your rounds chambering in your weapons. You look to your right, and all you see is the white of a fellow Soldier's eyes. In those eyes you see a number of things. You see determination, dedication, and professionalism. You see courage. You see a little fear. You see our own fallen heroes.

You make your way through a maze of alleys and streets deep within enemy territory in what seems to be a chaotic tumble. In reality it is carefully orchestrated and meticulously planned warfare. I can't get into the rest, but you do your job and go home. You are all alive and feeling great about your success. You go to bed, but the adrenaline rush from before makes the six hours of sleep seem like two or three.

The next day you are on an M1A1 Abrams Tank in the middle of a similar neighborhood. You have met and laughed with so many good Iraqi citizens from this neighborhood, but the insurgents are there too, causing problems for both of us. You are clearing a route when you hear traffic over the radio that your other section is receiving enemy mortar fire and needs assistance and support. Your pulse jumps to uncharted levels as you race to help your brothers. You reach the spot to see that your men are okay, but another convoy has taken casualties. One Soldier has shrapnel to the face, and an innocent Iraqi woman was hit as well. You care for both with equal urgency, and they both will make full recoveries. This doesn't happen every single day, but it happens frequently. It is getting so much better, and all our families can do is watch the news and get obscure calls from us.

When you see the television, please know that the good things going on here in Iraq are so much better than the media would have you to believe. Also know that the bad does exist, and it takes a toll on Soldiers day in and day out. Some days it is very easy to be myself and laugh and joke with my wife and tell my son how much I miss riding bikes with him. Other days I don't call at all, or make them short. I fear that they will detect stress in my voice and that will, in turn, cause them to hurt more than they already do. Sometimes it is better if we don't call. We need time to get our minds off the bad, and focus on tomorrow, so we can all get home safely to those who are the very thread of our existence.

The other motivation for this letter was to express my personal thoughts on this war. I have come to know that it isn't about the reasons or purpose of this war. It is about the Soldiers. We are here. I owe a debt to those who have fallen before me, those who have fallen beside me, and those who have yet to fall. I will pay my debt and serve my nation proudly alongside the finest men this earth has to offer. All of whom reside in the Great State of Louisiana. We love you all so much and we are so very proud of the strong families and communities that we will soon return to. God Bless You.

--Sgt. Daniel Prime

Asian Pacific Heritage Month



Photo by Staff Sgt. Don Dees

1st Lt. Michael Ruffin, an Equal Opportunity representative, reads Brook Mahealani Lee's biography during the Asian-Pacific Heritage Month observance.

Staff Sgt. Don Dees
214th MPAD

256th Brigade Combat Team Soldiers observed Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month May 30 during a program at the Tigerland Dining Facility.

The Army's Equal Opportunity program holds cultural observances to educate, and raise awareness of other cultures, said Maj. Michael Gillet, 1088th Engineer Battalion Chaplain, during the invocation.

"Our country is made richer and more prosperous because of the many different people who call it home," he said.

The program began with a slide show featuring ancient and contemporary art from China. Following the presentation of the images, Equal Opportunity representatives and volunteers from throughout the 256th Brigade Combat Team read biographic tributes to Asian Pacific Americans who have contributed to American culture, business, science, and the armed forces.

Featured personalities included news and media icon Ann Curry; musician Yo-Yo Ma; and Hawaiian Sen. Daniel K. Inouye, a World War II Medal of Honor recipient.

Attendees appreciated the presentation.

"I've been to several of

these, and I've always learned something," said 256th Deputy Brigade Commander-Support, Col. John Angelloz, of the cultural awareness program. "It's always a first-class product."

Angelloz said diversity makes America great.

"It's the best thing about America—celebrating where we come from...it really is the land of equality. It doesn't matter what your background is, we're all American," he said.

Observations like Asian-Pacific Heritage Month, which promotes the theme "Liberty and Freedom for All," highlight Soldiers' responsibilities when it comes to Equal Opportunity, said Capt. John Allen of 1st Battalion, 141st Field Artillery.

"Equal Opportunity is about fair play. Discrimination is just wrong and we all have a duty to stop it," he said.

Well-produced programs do more than simply raise awareness, he said. "They make it fun and educational. The programs enlighten people to a segment of society they probably know very little about."

It's the education aspect that gives 256th BCT's Equal Opportunity Officer, Capt. Samantha Wade, the most satisfaction.

"It's a chance to celebrate different cultures and to learn. It brings me pleasure to know that I helped educate someone."

Maintaining the fighting vehicles

By Spc. Ricardo Branch
3rd ID PAO

The roaring of loud turbine engines, along with the hammering and clanging of equipment can often be heard spewing loudly from one place on Camp Tigerland.

At the place of origin, the 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team motor pool, 20 track-vehicle mechanics work long hours maintaining the many tanks and armored fighting vehicles of the brigade.

"We're here to keep the vehicles going so Soldiers can accomplish their mission," said Staff Sgt. David Hicks, Headquarters Co., 1-156th. "Sometimes you'll get a slow day but you have to always be prepared."

During a normal work day, the Soldiers can be seen working on 10 to 20 track vehicles for repairs.

"Tankers mostly have engine or turret trouble when they bring something to the motor pool for repairs," said Sgt. Kye Modisette, from Shreveport, La., of HHC, 1-156th.

He said the trouble mostly comes from erratic tracking and gun jumping on the tanks because they move fast and occasionally across uneven terrain.

Every so often, though, a mechanic's job changes and he has to leave Camp Liberty to recover a downed vehicle, said Hicks.

The downed vehicles, fortunately, are not very frequent in the unit's new area of responsibility, but regardless the mechanics are ready.

"Once we had to leave and recover a Bradley that was stuck in the mud," Modisette said.

The recovery vehicle rushed to the aid of the bogged down Soldiers. Arriving on the scene, however; the Soldiers found themselves in a difficult position due to the uneven terrain surrounding the area.

"The Bradley broke through the pavement on the narrow road and was stuck in really deep mud unable to be self-recovered," Modisette said.

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Amber Waves

By Spc. Ricardo Branch
3rd ID PAO

Soldiers of the 256th Brigade Combat Team ensured farmers of the greater Baghdad area will be able to boost their agricultural development immensely with farm equipment during an equipment sign off event at the Al Radwanayah Provincial Civil Military Operations Center May 2.

"We're about to make a bit of history today," said Brig. Gen. John Basilica, Jr., commander of the 256th BCT. "Handing off this equipment will give assistance to the farmers of the region and provide a better agriculture to the Iraqi people."

256th BCT signed over 37 tractors, 16 water pumps, and 56 five-horsepower generators to the Ministry of Agriculture to pass down to farmers in need of the equipment.

The equipment, originally purchased under the old regime, lay dormant in a Sadr City warehouse for the past three years. Upon finding the equipment, the Soldiers transported it to a secure area for repairs and eventual distribution to the farmers.



Photo by Sgt. Thomas Benoit

The 37 tractors being turned over to the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture. Originally found in Sadr City, the tractors were repaired and transported by the 256th BCT Soldiers to be signed over and eventually released to the farmers in need of the equipment.

Present to receive the farming equipment, Saub Hussien, a representative of the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture, who said the equipment being signed over will be put to good use for the Iraqi people.

"We want to thank the U.S. government and U.S. Army for their support and efforts to make this happen," he said. "Their help will make Iraqi's agriculture better and assist many farmers of this area and many others like it."

The hand off of equipment is part of an effort for the Soldiers of 256th BCT,

Continued on Page 11..

Iraqi Forces defeat

terrorist attacks

Iraqi Security Forces, with support from Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team, defeated multiple terrorist attacks in west Baghdad May 29.

A 3-156th patrol passing a warehouse near the Major Crimes Unit facility in the Ameriyah district came under small-arms fire from anti-Iraqi forces.

This attack was followed by mortar rounds and small-arms fire directed against the main MCU complex, which set fire to one warehouse on the corner of the MCU compound and another warehouse near the compound.

Iraqi Police guarding the compound fought back, killing a reported seven terrorists, while wounding and detaining one more.

Meanwhile, 3-156th Soldiers cordoned off the area to ensure the terrorists could not continue the attack around the compound.

Elsewhere, terrorists detonated a car bomb near Forward Operating Base Hawk, an Iraqi Army base, and followed the bomb with more small-arms fire. The Iraqi Soldiers killed one terrorist and laid down suppressive fire to prevent the anti-Iraqi forces from advancing any closer to the base.

Over the next hour and 45 minutes, terrorists detonated one roadside bomb and engaged with sporadic small-arms fire, to no affect, any Iraqi or 3-156th unit.

And 3-156th patrols in the vicinity of the warehouses and the MCU complex came under small-arms fire from the Ahuah Saleighin Mosque, a mosque known to preach anti-coalition messages. The patrols immediately

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Smoke rises from the Major Crimes Unit in the Ameriyah district of west Baghdad following a failed AIF attack on the compound May 29.

All Day, Every Day:



Photo by Spc. Ricardo Branch

Comanche unit on the prowl

By Spc. Ricardo Branch
3rd Inf. Div. PAO

Prowling the many streets of Baghdad, the M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks of C Co., 1st Battalion, 156th Armor, 256th Brigade Combat Team, have accomplished one mission in its new AO – to intimidate and stop the anti-coalition forces harassing Soldiers.

“When you’re making a ‘Thunder Run’ and you hear the sound of a 60-ton vehicle coming your way, nothing can stop it,” said 1st Lt. Stephen Luebbert, executive officer, C Co., 1-156th. “They (insurgents) don’t have much success stopping it.”

“It has a fierce history to them dating all the way back to Desert Storm, and they haven’t had much success against one. You just need too much to stop a tank,” said the Bossier City, La. native.

Having recently moved from the Abu Ghraib area, what many Soldiers refer to as a fierce section to operate in, the unit is now responsible for f Ghazaliyah.

Their new AO has a lot more civilians, according to Soldiers of C Co. 1-156th. It is in a more urban part of Baghdad and the people seem to care about themselves and the way they act. They see the Soldiers and realize they are there to ensure they have a better life, so they’re willing to work with them.

They also said unlike Abu Ghraib, the people can work with them without fear for their lives.

That factor makes the Soldiers’ task a little easier to manage with the locals aiding them.

In Abut Ghraib, people walked all the way to a checkpoint to tell the troops about insurgents. One time a child even ran into the street to warn them about an IED in their path.

However, danger is still out there. Anytime they leave the safe confines of their forward operating base things can quickly turn the wrong way. Even a routine combat mission can easily become a brush with death, as in the unit’s recent encounter of a drive-by shooting on April 28.

“We were fired on during a route clearance operation,” Luebbert said. “I was in the tank commander hatch and I could only duck and think about the Soldiers outside of the tanks.”

“The actual encounter was really quick, but for those 30 seconds while the men were outside it felt like forever,” he said. “That’s a long time to worry.”

During their time in Iraq, the Soldiers have dealt with anything the insurgents can throw at them. The constant attacks from the insurgents in the past have not deterred the Soldiers working the Ghazaliyah beat.

The Soldiers have been hit with everything in their arsenal from VBIEDS to “They’ve hit us with everything in their arsenal, from VBIEDs to RPGs and various other small arms fire. It hasn’t stopped them yet,

though. The Soldiers say they will keep going after them.

That dedication fuels them and keeps the Armor of 1-156th rolling out on constant combat operations.

“We’ve got to maintain a constant presence 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” Luebbert said. “The day we’re not out there, a convoy could be hit, so we’re there to keep the routes open.”

The Armor unit has responded to numerous engagements in its old AO of Abu Ghraib. Its current area of operations has thus far remained silent, but the Soldiers are always ready.

They act as a heavy force when stuff goes down, according to the troops. If a convoy gets hit in their AO, they will be there within five minutes to help their buddies

Seeing an Abrams come in when a Soldier needs its assistance brings a comfort to him and helps diffuse any hostile situation.

Despite the constant dangers they face, the Soldiers are always ready and know what they do is helping shape the country of Iraq for the better.

“We’re helping improve the quality of life here,” said Spc. Tyrone Merritt from Shreveport, La., of C Co., 1-156th. “By having a presence in Baghdad, we’re keeping insurgents off the streets and giving the people back a sense of security in their country.”

Iraqi forces defeat terrorist attacks

Continued from page 7

set up a cordon to prevent civilians from entering the area and getting hurt. As a sniper in the mosque's minaret continued to fire on the Soldiers, the patrol called for support from Iraqi Police, Police Commandos and Iraqi Army. Iraqi forces responded by storming the mosque, capturing the sniper and another man inside.

When the Iraqi Soldiers searched the mosque, they found five AK-47 assault rifles and several hundred rounds of ammunition, garage door openers used to detonate bombs, six cell phones and binoculars. The Iraqi Army Soldiers also discovered several military uniforms and boots hidden on the roof of the mosque.

Summing up the evening's events hours after the attacks, Iraqi and U.S. military officials said the coordinated response demonstrated the increasingly close working relationship between ISF and Task Force Baghdad units.

Maj. Tom Friloux, 3-156th plans officer from Lafayette, La., stated that the events of the night are an example of the progress that the Iraqi Forces have made since the entrance of 3-156th into Baghdad.

"I think the Anti-Iraqi Forces know that progress is being made and it was a last ditch effort," he said.

"By the actions that happened in the last 24 hours, the Iraqi Army came through and was successful in defeating those enemy forces."

Officials of the 256th BCT reported that in four hours of contact, Iraqi and 3-156th forces came under nine small-arms fire attacks, one mortar attack, five roadside bomb attacks, and three car bomb attacks.

Seven terrorists were killed, one wounded and three detained. Three Iraqi Soldiers were wounded in the attacks. One U.S. Soldier was treated on site for minor wounds and returned to duty.

Iraqi Army, U.S. forces arrest former Saddam general

Iraqi Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division teamed up with 256th BCT Soldiers to take down a former general from the old regime in a middle of the night raid carried out in west Baghdad May 29.

The man captured was part of Saddam Hussein's intelligence network and was also involved with the Fedayeen, a criminal secret police organization of the old regime.

He now leads the military wings of several terror cells operating in the west Baghdad neighborhood of Ghazaliyah. The terrorist groups concentrate their attacks on U.S. troops using bombs, mortars and rocket propelled grenades. Another specifically targeted individual was also seized in the same operation. Both men were taken into custody for questioning.

At about the same time, two Iraqi Army platoons conducted another joint operation with 256th BCT Soldiers from 2nd and 3rd Platoon of C Company 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment "Charlie Rock", attached to 1st Battalion, 156th AR, in a different area of Ghazaliyah. The Soldiers arrested three more suspects and seized four hand grenades in two raids.

In other combat operations early May 29, a patrol team with 1-156th working in central Baghdad was fired upon by a terrorist. The Soldiers immediately returned fire and killed the attacker. When the Soldiers searched the house the terrorist had fired from they found evidence of explosives.

Just a Coincidence?



This picture was taken by Spc. Renalta Hollins, with HHC 1088th Eng. Bn. She was taking a picture of an Iraqi Army convoy going through a check point near Mahmudiyah, previously FOB St. Michael. As she snapped the picture, an IED exploded and the blast cloud took the shape of an angel. There were no deaths or severe injuries in the explosion.

**Stay in neck
defilade when
in the turret.**



Upholders of the LAW



Photo by Spc. Chris Foster

300 Iraqi men took the final step to becoming members of the Iraqi Police force. Two hundred and nine Iraqi Police recruits were manifested through the 256th Brigade Combat Team Military Police platoon.

By Spc. Chris Foster

Three hundred Iraqi men took the final step to becoming members of the Iraqi Police force. Two hundred and nine Iraqi Police recruits were manifested through the 256th Brigade Combat Team Military Police platoon and the remaining 91 recruits were manifested through other Brigade Combat Teams in the 3rd Infantry Division.

These men went through all the necessary screening showing that they are serious about the commitments and sacrifices that they will face as Iraqi Police officers. With the support of the HHC 256th BCT Military Police, the Iraqi Police force made substantial progress as the number of volunteers grows with each recruiting drive.

The recruits volunteered for the force on March 28. At that time, those who passed the screening process received a letter stating they were accepted into the academy, and given a time and place for the next phase of training.

Staff Sgt. David Billings, a native of Lafayette, La., an MP platoon sergeant, said the recent turnout was more than the platoon expected.

"The recruits are really dedicated to their training

and they are taking their job seriously," said Billings.

The 3rd Infantry Division's effort to add new members to the Iraqi Police force is obvious in the number of recruits that are in police academy and working at the police stations in Baghdad. They are using the training to uphold the law in the streets of Iraq. The training is an eight-week course, which is the recruits' first step into law enforcement.

They are trained by military police and department of defense police instructors who provide the candidates with the basics of police training. Their goal is for the recruits to be equipped with the basic aspects of law enforcement by the time they leave the academy.

The training began with the classes on the new Iraqi Police mission, philosophy and role as law enforcement officials. Later on in the course the recruits gain a basic understanding of weapon systems, which leads into strenuous live-fire situations.

The challenge is to make good decisions to keep the recruit safe while protecting those around them and to stress the importance of maintaining situational awareness at all times.

The recruits will perfect their shooting skills on the firing range, rehearse the tactical and proper way to apprehend a suspect, and maintain self defense skills. They will also attend classes that cover different situations which require the recruit to think and give input on what they think needs to be done in these events. As the students progress in their training, they will become more confident in themselves and their fellow officers.

One to two new classes begin each month. The Iraqi Police Academy remains full because of Iraq's desire to help their country in its fight for a better life.

**Once, they see you.
Twice, you're known.
Three times you're
dead.**

Don't be predictable.



Continued from Page 7...

who have provided aid to the agriculture for some time.

"This is all part of Operation Amber Waves, which was initiated during 1st Cavalry Division's time," Basilica said. "The 256th BCT is out here to assist the local farmers with improving their farming and really just make this sign off happen."

"It's really been a three-fold mission however, as we've already given seeds, fertilizer and now equipment," he said. "This will help promote and improve the chances for Iraqis to feed themselves."

Approximately 100 local farmers and members of the United Farmers of Iraq witnessed the transfer.

Sheik Rasheed Al Shably, director of the UFI, says the tractors will be a great help in reconstructing and improving the Iraqi agriculture economy.

By providing tractors and a trained operator to any farmer submitting a request, the farmers and government of Iraq are committing themselves to improving agriculture for all of the Iraqi people, he said.

With the Ministry of Agriculture and government working side-by-side, farmers now turn to the government for aid.

"This sends a strong signal that the Iraqi government and Ministry of Agriculture are working together and providing the level of assistance that they should," Basilica said. "Now if a farmer has an issue, he turns to the Ministry of Agriculture, who will assist them further."

Can We Talk?

The 256th BCT now has its own dedicated Combat Stress Team located behind the C-199th TMC.

Cpt. Jill Bruno and Spc. Nicholas Banta are available for counseling, smoking cessation programs, or help with grief after the death of a close friend. They are available by appointments and they also take walk-ins.

Hours 10:00 - 16:00 Mon-Thur
Available 24 hours for emergencies
Call 539-2291 for appointments

Lt. Col. Joseph Dore
256th Brigade Brigade Combat Team Surgeon

Iraqi Soldiers lead raids, capture 18 terror suspects

Iraqi Army Soldiers from 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division brought in 18 people suspected of or having ties to terrorist activities during combat operations May 31.

The Iraqi Soldiers also seized one AK-47 rifle, eight gas masks and 10 full magazines of ammunition.

The arrests were a part of the brigade's Operation Cobra Lightning II, a push to rid the Baghdad area of its main terrorist cells.

"The Iraqi Army captured every single one of the targets that were brought in," said Maj. David Gooch, plans officer for the 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment from Lafayette, La. "This operation shows that they can certainly defend this area—they proved that in the last 12 hours."

Gooch added that the people living in the area

seemed pleased to see their own forces taking the lead in the push to take terrorists off the streets.

"They took commands from the Iraqi Army and seemed to appreciate the fact that their own Soldiers were out there doing it as opposed to Coalition Forces coming in," Gooch said. "Not just in the events of last night, but when the sun came up you could see they were capable and that the entire neighborhood was happy to see the Iraqi Soldiers doing the exact same thing we've been doing for the last three years in this country."



Process of Elimination Part II The Conviction

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux

May 26 is a day that will go down in history for the 256th Brigade Combat Team Staff Judge Advocate Office. In the Central Criminal Court of Iraq, American and Iraqi lawyers worked together by the letter of the Iraqi law and sought justice for the tragic death of Staff Sgt. Henry Irizarry—and won. As a result, Ziyad Hassin Ali Hammedi was convicted in an Iraqi court of law of murdering an American Soldier and will spend the next 15 years of his life in an Iraqi prison.

On December 3, 2004, Infantry Scouts of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment were hit by an improvised explosive device. The attack seriously injured three Soldiers and left Irizzary dead. The gunner on the truck in front of Irizarry's saw the triggerman and, along with air support and the quick reaction force, chased him into a house and detained him.

It was then up to 256th BCT Staff Judge Advocate's Office and the tactical human intelligence teams to extract information from the suspect. Along with evidence collected by the Soldiers at the scene, the legal process of keeping the killer of an American Soldier off of the streets began.

Major Roderick Alvendia, from New Orleans, La., deputy Staff Judge Advocate for the 256th BCT, worked on the case from start to finish, along with 256 BCT paralegal Spc. Nathaniel Orphey from Lake Charles, La. Alvendia said considering a triggerman of an IED is rarely caught at the scene, it was pertinent to get the case moved along as quickly as possible. Among the thousands of cases pending trial at Abu Ghraib, this one was pushed to the front because it

was so important.

"There was a KIA involved and we knew who the triggerman was, so it was important for us to move it ahead of all the others, and that's exactly what the Central Criminal Court of Iraq did," said Alvendia.

The Central Criminal Court of Iraq, or CCCI, was established to address serious crimes that most directly threaten public order and safety in Iraq, which may include crimes against Coalition Forces by Anti-Iraqi Forces, according to www.iraqcoalition.org. It is an Iraqi court, which means that there is an Iraqi judge, prosecutor, and defense attorney. In a case like this, American lawyers, or Judge Advocates, collected the evidence and put the case together, then gave it to the Iraqi lawyers to try. The trial process is set up into two phases: the investigative phase, which can be compared to a grand jury, where it is determined if there is sufficient evidence to go to the second phase, the trial. The investigative hearing is the prosecution's time to present all evidence and submit any information that they feel is important to the case.

Soldiers on patrol with Irizarry and the other victims of the attack were brought in to the CCCI as witnesses for the investigative hearing. In the judge's chambers, they each gave testimony of the night's events and provided evidence such as pictures, maps and eye-witness accounts. At an intense moment of the hearing, each Soldier was asked to identify the triggerman, who was seated only a few feet away.

Alvendia worked with the Soldiers, and they gathered evidence and made sure that no stone went unturned. The evidence presented in the Iraqi court

system is quite different from the American system, according to Alvendia.

"There are no formal rules of evidence in place and just about any evidence that you find is admissible," he said. "Anything that you find at the scene or even hear about the person is considered by the judges, that's why it's so important to enter whatever you have. These judges aren't concerned with excluding evidence, as we see sometimes in the United States."

Once it was determined by the investigative judge that there was enough evidence to go to trial, the case was given to a panel of three trial judges who determined the fate of Ziyad.

Continued on page 18

**Don't approach
IEDs.**



That's EODs job.



Paying tribute to our Fallen

By Spc. D. C. Langlinais
HHC 256th BCT

Its ten minutes until the service begins. "God Bless America" plays softly over the PA system. In small groups, a never-ending trickle of 256th Soldiers began filling the main chamber of the Tiger Brigade Chapel. By the time "Anchors Away" began playing, the pews were half-filled and filling faster. My friend, Spc. Christopher Foster, trots about, finding all the best angles for his camera, and proper lighting for his shots. On the pew at my side rests a little service program, entitled "Memorial Day Service: Remembering our Fallen Heroes." Within it are written the *Sacred Names*. Sacred to us, who recognize every one of those names: the names of our comrades and brethren, our brothers and neighbors. Soldiers, yes, but otherwise people we've known all our lives. Those we knew, who laid down their own lives for a nation struggling to attain freedom.

The service begins. The contents of the chamber blend voices together in singing "The Star Spangled Banner." After an opening prayer by Chaplain Alejandro Sanchez, we all join in singing "The Army Song". Though I have not sung the song since basic training five years ago, I get goosebumps across my back and neck, singing today with my comrades. Next, "America the Beautiful," The lyrics are different, rewritten, but wonderful, speaking to those who sang it of the

past determination and endurance of our great heroes.

"Why is there war?". Maj. James Lucas began, retelling the Old Testament story of Lott's capture. Abram's conflict was called to mind; whether to appease the raiders who captured Lott, to do nothing, or to go to war. "Abram," Lucas spoke, "was not looking for a fight, but war was brought on him anyway, and he did what he had to do." Lucas cited the names of history's war-bringers and bullies, who, like the raiders from the story, brought wars of aggression and conquest to the world, while we, like Abram, opposed them and fought back for the sake of freedom: Hitler, Emperor Hirohito, the Veit Kong, Milosevic, Saddam Hussein, and others. "And eventually," Lucas concluded, "We, as Abram once did, will return home, our duty done, with the blessings of God and country."

Next was the reading of the Sacred Names, the occupants of the room all standing in silent, solemn, heartfelt tribute. The list was long, each name a tiny weight added to a stack resting on the scales of our hearts. The list was finished; we felt their weight grow heavier still, and we added our silence to the long silence of our fallen brethren.

After a final benediction by CH. Sanchez, the service was concluded with "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," the last two lines of the song standing sharp and fresh in our minds as we left: "As he [Christ] died to make men holy, let us die to make men free."

Remember those who sacrificed all today,

--Anonymous

so we can have a tomorrow

One day many years ago, two Soldiers walked towards a small building in Fort Polk to finalize what had been one of the hardest and most painful experiences of their lives. It was frigid as the wind dried the sweat from their mud-stained uniforms. Five days without adequate sleep, food, or shelter had left these men exhausted and it was finally over! The young private and freshly promoted sergeant rounded the final corner to the entrance when they heard a couple of soldiers who were outside smoking. The soldiers were complaining about the weather and sleeping in cots. These men went silent and the shivering ceased as the two M1A1 tankers silently marched on and entered the door.

A couple of minutes and a few signatures later, they were in a black Ford Mustang racing up towards Shreveport. The private looked at the sergeant a few miles down the road and asked, "Did you see those guys when we walked past? What was up with that?" The sergeant replied, "Those men were in the presence of Soldiers." The young private's eyes filled with life, and he smiled. At that moment he knew that all of his sacrifice, labor, and pain had been worth it. He knew he had achieved greatness against the odds, and overcome what most men would have considered insurmountable. That private was more than a man. He was a Soldier.

From that day until May 19, 2005, he would set the standard and lead by example, changing the lives of everyone he met. That private was Sgt. Bernard Sembly III, and on May 23, 2005 he attended his final formation along with Sgt. Robin V. Fell in front of his fellow soldiers and under a Cross of God

in Baghdad, Iraq. Over 200 men waited hours to salute their fallen brothers on that scorching afternoon, forever indebted to these warriors. One by one, soldiers ranking from the lowest private to the highest general officer knelt before these giants, grabbed the dog tags hanging from their weapons, and stared into their eyes. Looking down upon those photos, every one of would have gladly traded places to bring them back. Since this is not possible, all that we can do is drive on with our mission and cherish the memories and examples they left us with, praying for the anguished families left victim to this tragedy. Uplifting us from our sorrow is the knowledge that these soldiers will live on forever inside each of us. Gazing down on us from Heaven, they are strength that overcomes our weakness, the warmth that overcomes our cold, and the gentle breeze that guides our rounds onto our cowardly enemy. Through our screams of pain and agony comes their soft whisper to carry on.

Many of Shreveport and Bossier City's finest men and women have fallen bravely on this and many other battlefields throughout time, giving us the honor and the privilege to wear this uniform. They marched straight-faced into battle, never knowing if they would return. We understand that all is not lost, as long as what we stood for and believed in remains after we fall. This Memorial Day, please don't forget the fallen. Please don't forget the soldiers, firefighters, police and patriots who have sacrificed beyond measure to ensure our freedoms. Let us remember those who asked for so little, yet were willing to give so much.

REMEMBERING



Photo by Spc. Chris Easter

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux

The 256th Brigade Combat Team suffered many losses since arriving in Baghdad, and on this Memorial Day, they had one more fallen veteran to honor.

Seated in the turret of his M2 Bradley, thirty-one year old Sgt. 1st Class Peter J. Hahn from Kenner, La., was at an observation point with his unit, C Company, 2-156th Infantry Regiment, attached to 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment of the 256th Brigade Combat Team, when he came under enemy fire and was killed on May 24.

Born and raised in New York, Hahn later moved to Louisiana and joined the Army, and served three years on active duty. He joined the Louisiana National Guard in 1996, and was once again reunited with his fellow New Yorkers when his unit was mobilized for Operation Iraqi

Soldiers of the 256th Brigade Combat Team kneel before the empty boots of their fallen comrade Sgt. 1st Class Peter J. Hahn, of C Company 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, attached to 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment.

Freedom III and attached to the 1-69th.

At the memorial service, his gunner, Spc. Jack Venable, Jr. from Houma, La. remembered his first encounter with his platoon sergeant, and how he felt the day he realized they would go to war together.

"I first met him upon my return from basic training," he said.

"He graded me on my first physical fitness test, and I remember that he told me that for my age I could have done better."

While training for deployment at Fort Hood, Tex., Venable learned that he would be working side by side with Hahn for the duration of the deployment in Iraq. He was not pleased at first, to say the least.

"I thought, 'this is going to be a long deployment if I have to sit next to him everyday.'"

But that all changed very quickly. Venable said that Hahn made him a stronger person and forced him to grow and learn throughout the recent months. They still had their little arguments, though, and Venable recalled the rest of their Bradley crew calling them "The Hahn and Venable Show."

"Right at the beginning of the day, he had something to say, and I'd always have something to come back with, and it went on and on," he said.

Hahn was a hard man, except when it came to his little girl, as Venable reflected. He said they spent a good portion of their off time shopping for presents for her, and he remembers one day in particular.

"She told him that she wanted 'Princess Diaries 2', so he and I spent the entire day looking for it," he said.

"I've never seen a man talk so much about his child, and he always bought her things he knew she would break," Venable recalled.

One day they were in a gift shop and Hahn purchased a very delicate necklace for his daughter. When they walked out of the store he told Venable that he knew it wouldn't last a day, but he bought it anyway.

Venable said that Hahn was a good man who worried about everybody, and he always looked out for his Soldiers. He stayed the same, his personality never wavered from one mission to the next and his Soldiers knew that they could count on him.

Just a little over a week before his death, Hahn and his platoon came under attack and was hit by multiple rocket propelled grenades. He ended up on the ground helping to control the situation and Venable said this was a testament to his leadership.

"He always led by example, and never asked us to do anything that he wouldn't do himself," he said.

As the somber harmony of "Taps" rang through the tiny chapel in Baghdad, Iraq, Soldiers and friends of Peter J. Hahn saluted him and paid tribute to the Soldier, the man, and the friend.

"He will forever be missed and I'm a better man because of him," said Venable.

THE FALLEN



Photo by Spc. Chris Foster

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux

On May 23, Soldiers of the 256th Brigade Combat Team honored two fallen comrades who perished on May 19 from gunshot wounds sustained by sniper fire.

Sergeants Robin Vincent Fell and Bernard Leon Sembly II of C Company, 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, were attached to A Company, 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment in October 2004 for deployment to Iraq. Both Soldiers served as armored crewmen since their initial enlistments into the Louisiana National Guard.

Lt. Col. Thomas Plunkett, from New Orleans, La., commander of 1-156th AR, paid tribute to the two Soldiers and witnessed that they gave their lives to uphold the sacred oath they pledged to defend against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Plunkett called on the peers of Fell and Sembly to pray for their families and he asked them to remember that although the trials of the fallen Soldiers have ceased, for their loved ones, the turmoil was just beginning.

Lt. Col. Conrad Gavel from Mandeville, La., commander of 2-156th Inf. Bn., said both Fell and Sembly represented the characteristics required to be good Soldiers. "Their techniques, competence and attention to detail were part of the reason that the separate companies worked well together from the beginning," said Gavel.

He testified that their loyalty to each other and their cause was evident, and that their fellow Soldiers must keep them in mind to better serve their country.

Sgt. Tremaine Myles from Shreveport, La., of C Co. 1-156th AR, attached to 2-156th Inf. Bn. said that although the Soldiers were like night and day, they

Soldiers of the 256th Brigade Combat Team say a silent prayer for their friends, Sergeants Robin Vincent Fell and Bernard Leon Sembly II, during a memorial ceremony on May 23.

worked together as if they were one. He said they displayed the qualities that a good Soldier should possess, such as courage, discipline and honor.

According to Myles, Fell, a 22 year old resident of Shreveport, La., was very dedicated to the job of being a Soldier and lived by the phrase "no fear." Similarly, Sembly was always ready to hit the pavement running.

"If we had a mission at five o'clock in the morning, you could bet that Sembly would be there at two-thirty to make sure that you were ready," said Myles.

Second Lt. Keith Bores, from Shreveport, La., agreed with Myles. He was the Soldiers' platoon leader and said that unlike the majority of National Guard Soldiers, Sembly's life was consumed by the military.

"He joined the Guard because he wasn't sure if he wanted to be active duty, even though a lot of his family is in the military." This deployment is when he decided that he wanted to make the Army his full time career.

"He was a squared away Soldier," said Bores, "His goal was to be a good non-commissioned officer."

Bores also attested to Fell's "deadpan" sense of humor.

"The guy was funny, laid back, and a joker," he said.

Fell was a technical expert on the tank and took great pride in his missions, not only in his technical job, but in the overall purpose that the Army is here to do.

"Even though he couldn't wait to get back to the FOB, he loved interacting with the kids in the city and he believed in the cause of being here."

Bores praised his Soldiers and shared his admiration for them.

"They were both incredible people and great Americans who wanted to make a difference," he said.

Myles said they went after everything they attempted with a vengeance, and their death was no different.

"A coward dies a million deaths, but a Soldier only dies once," he said.

Court Martials

1. Pvt. Ryan C. Heyd, Battery B, 1-141 FA, charged with possession and use of steroids and possession of valium, sentenced at Summary Court-Martial to reduction in rank from E-4 to E-1, forfeiture of 2/3 pay for one month, confinement in a Military Detention Facility for 30 days.
2. Pvt. Brian K. Reyes, Battery B, 1-141 FA, charged with possession and use of valium, sentenced at Summary Court-Martial to Reduction in rank from E2 to E-1, forfeiture of 2/3 month's pay for one month, confinement in a Military Detention Facility for 30 days.
3. Pvt. Lee M. Veals, Co B, 199th, charged with wrongful use of marijuana, sentenced at Summary Court-Martial to reduction in rank from E-3 to E-2, forfeiture of \$200, confinement in a Military Detention Facility for 15 days.
4. Pvt. Frank Greene - Co. B, 199th, charged with being absent without Leave, sentenced at Summary Court-Martial to reduction in rank from E-4 to E-2, forfeiture of 1/2 months pay, confinement in a Military Detention Facility for 30 days.
5. Pvt. Marvin Bolton, Jr., Co. A, 3-156th, charged with wrongful use of drugs, sentenced at Summary Court-Martial to reduction in rank from E-4 to E-1 and forfeiture of 2/3 of one month's pay.
6. Pvt. Ryan Richard, 256 MI Co., charged with wrongful possession of drugs, sentenced at Summary Court-Martial to reduction in rank from E-4 to E-2 and forfeiture of 1/2 of one month's pay.
7. Pfc. Herbert Lemon II, HHC 1-156th, charged with being absent without leave, sentenced at Summary Court-Martial to reduction in rank from E-4 to E-3 and forfeiture of \$895. Further reduction to E-2 suspended for 180 days.
8. Pvt. Roqueland Silvia, HHC 199th, charged with wrongful possession of valium and steroids, sentenced at Summary Court-Martial to reduction in rank from E-3 to E-2, forfeiture of 1/2 of one month's pay, and confinement in a Military Detention Facility for 30 days.
9. Pvt. Jared Townley, HHC 199th, charged with wrongful possession, distribution and use of drugs (Valium and Marijuana), sentenced at Summary Court-Martial to reduction in rank from E-2 to E-1, forfeiture of \$500 and confinement in a Military Detention Facility for 30 days. Processed for separation from the Armed Forces with an Other than Honorable Discharge.

MAINTAINING BRADLEY FIGHTING VEHICLES

Continued from Page 6...



Photo by Spc. Ricardo Branch

Spc. Dredatis Cook, with HHC 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, tightens the bolts on a generator for an M1A1 Abrams.

The conditions of the land forced the recovery efforts to go at a slow pace and additional units coming to assist them got stuck also.

A lot of other units got involved to help out and recover this one vehicle, he said. They all ended up getting stuck making one day a six night job with an encounter of insurgent activity ending at day break on the six day.

"The last day out a mortar struck about 50 feet from the site," Hicks said. "Except for one killed cow, everyone walked out okay."

Working at the motor pool can sometimes run all night, and judging by the sweat pouring off of the mechanics, and the readiness to leave for bogged-down Soldiers, the days can be demanding.

Staff Sgt. Gerry Taylor from, Florien, La., is the sergeant in charge for vehicle recovery operations with HHC, 1-156th, and he said the operations and the duties

the mechanics perform in theater have made their jobs difficult but rewarding when they see Soldiers move out after the repairs the mechanics complete.

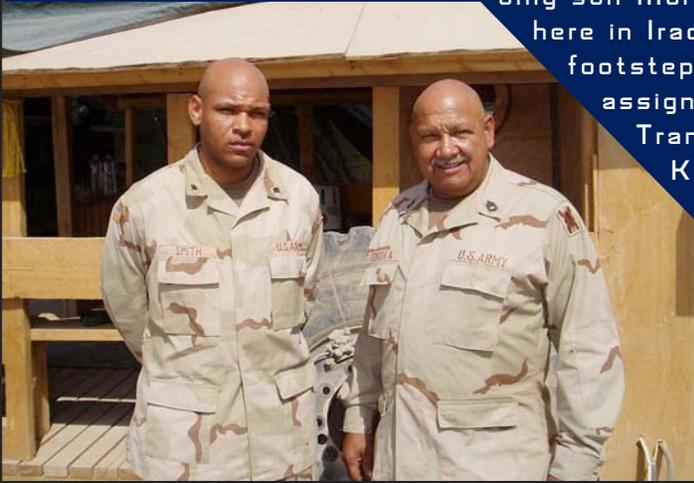
"It's rewarding," he said. "Knowing the vehicle is fixed and working properly as it goes outside on a mission gives the crew ease." Despite the long strenuous hours spent fixing the many vehicles and constant demand for their skill, the mechanics are aware of the importance of their mission and continue to do what they do.

"We're helping make Soldiers get to where they need to, which accomplishes their mission and ours," said Lake Charles native, Spc. Ricky Guillory, HHC, 1-156th. "They will get the best quality of work we can provide, and they know if they need us, we're always available anytime, day or night, here at the motor pool."

256th BCT Families

"Happy Early Father's Day"

Sgt. 1st Class Archie Smith of the 199th FSB who serves as maintenance support team chief, and supports I-141 FA, received an early Father's Day gift on May 24, when his only son Morris A. Smith paid him a visit. His son is stationed here in Iraq at Camp Anaconda. He followed in his father's footsteps, acquiring a mechanic related MOS. Spc. Smith is assigned to the 24 Transportation Group of the 457th Transportation battalion which deployed from Ft. Reilly, Kan. in December of 2004.



Sgt. Dwayne Gibson, a fueler for 2-156th, and his father, Master Sgt. Wilton Gibson, civil military operations sergeant for 2-156th, both from Jeanrette, La., and with HHC 2-156th Inf. Bn. Shown here, father and son extend their service together in the Louisiana National Guard. Dwayne re-enlisted for three years and Wilton for one year.



Maj. Christopher Cerniauskas, from Carville, La., I-69th operations officer and his brother Maj. Paul Cerniauskas, with the 56th BCT, Texas ARNG and stationed at Tallil Air Base.

Process of Elimination

Part II

Continued from page 12

"Though the defense attorney speaks on behalf of the defendant, he does not ask any questions, nor does the prosecution," said Lt. Tyler Stone, a Navy Liaison Officer for the CCCI.

"The Iraqi court is kind of based on the inquisitional system, which means that unlike the American system where the attorneys do the questioning and the judges almost act like referees, the three judges on the panel drive the questions. There are no objections," he said.

The defense attorney and prosecution may suggest questions to the panel of judges, but in most cases, they will only give a closing argument.

Normally no more evidence is entered beyond the investigative hearing, but in an unorthodox move, the panel allowed Stone, who worked with Alvendia and the witnesses on the case, to enter what is called "victim-impact evidence."

"What I'm trying to do is to give them (the judges) a sense of 'Hey, this person wasn't just a number or a rank, or even a Soldier.' This person was a human being who had a wife, kids, a new grandchild, and the ending to his life, though noble in service to his country, was tragic how it occurred with the IED," said Stone.

He entered photos of Irizarry showing his life as a Soldier, as a husband and father, and even entered photos of his funeral in his hometown of Waterbury, Conn.

On May 26, the legal team, who worked so closely on the case, and a handful of Irizarry's fellow 1-69th Soldiers, crowded into the main courtroom at the CCCI. After the prosecutor and defense attorney read their closing arguments, the chief judge announced in Arabic the long-awaited verdict. Anxious Soldiers and lawyers instinctively turned to the interpreter, who said, "Guilty, 15 years."

Alvendia said that though a 15-year conviction may sound low for a murder case, there are many factors to consider. For example, a life sentence in Iraq is 20 years, and the conditions in an Iraqi prison are not comparable to that of an American prison.

He also said he believes although Ziyad was not put away for a full life sentence, he will be in prison for the rest of his life. This is the second murder conviction for crimes against an American Soldier since the CCCI was created.

Alvendia said that the success of this case and the justice that was served is due largely in part to the patrols—the Soldiers literally on the battlefield who collect evidence and put their packets together.

"If we want to continue to get convictions on future cases, we need to pay attention to details as much as possible involving the crimes the Iraqis commit against American forces," he said.

He also said that every little piece of evidence is extremely important, since the Iraqi judges consider everything that is turned in.

All in all, Alvendia and the legal team feel that the outcome is an extremely successful one.

"We won playing by their rules," he said. "An Iraqi insurgent tried in an Iraqi court, by Iraqi judges and lawyers, was convicted of murdering an American Soldier—that's a success."

Improving utilities in Baghdad



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jorge A. Rodriguez

Lt. Col. Lee Hopkins, battalion commander for 1088th Eng. Bat. and Cpt. Jesy Yeates, project payment and management officer for HHC 1088th EST, assess the Muheet Electrical Substation.

The Essential Services Team of the 256th Brigade Combat Team currently oversees 211 projects throughout the 3rd Infantry Division's area of operations in and around the capitol.

The three main focuses are electrical, sewage, and trash cleanup projects, said Capt. Jesy Yeates, Project Manager for the EST.

"Right now we have about \$210 million total invested," he said.

With the assistance of the 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division; 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, and C Company, 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion handling the smaller projects, such as schools, the 256th BCT EST is able to help the Iraqi people with funding and any other necessities critical to the mission at hand.

The joint effort is resulting in substantial progress in fixing these problems that face the Iraqi people on a daily basis. Different units within the joint task force assist in overseeing the projects and providing security to the local contractors.



256th BCT Photo Album

Soldiers with HHC 2-156th stop at the Khadamiyah Fire Department to check the operational status of their equipment.



Staff Sgt. Albert Delaunay, from Earlton, N.Y., of HHC 1-69th Inf. Bn., and Lt. Col.

Derek Grossman, provide medical assistance to local nationals as a part of an operation to bring medical

assistance to the community.

Staff Sgt. Tiger Chaplain, from New Orleans, La., with HHC 1-141st FA, distributes clothing to local children during a Kids-for-Kids mission in support of A Co. 1-69th Inf. Bn.



Soldiers from 1-141st FA fly an American flag that once covered the casket of a past Battalion Commander. When the unit returns home, the flag will reside at the 1-141st Field Artillery, Washington Artillery Veterans Association meeting hall.

FALLEN SOLDIERS



YOU ARE
FOREVER IN
OUR HEARTS.



SGT. ROBIN FELL C CO. 1-156TH

SGT. BERNARD SEMBLY C CO. 1-156TH

SGT. 1ST CLASS PETER HAHN
C CO. 2-156TH

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