



VANGUARD POINT

Volume II, Issue 8
June 30, 2005



*Training
to protect
their
streets ...*

Inside



Soldiers from 4-64 Armor hit the streets to gather intelligence and greet locals.



Soldiers from 3-7 Inf. are walking the beat to do their part to secure Iraq.



3-7 Inf. and 1-184 Inf. honor their fallen comrades with memorial services.



Capt. Ike Sallee, the A Co. commander, presents a little girl with a gift Sallee's daughter had sent from the United States.

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Hitting the streets in Al Dora

For one 1-184 Soldier, dismounted patrols in Al Dora have given him a unique perspective on Iraq. **Page 3**

Do you have a letter to the editor, photo or story to send in? Send it to

raymond.piper@us.army.mil

Please include your full name and rank. If you send a photo, include what's going on in the photo, full names of people, rank, units and date.

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On the cover: Iraqi Policemen and civil affairs Soldiers check targets during a training exercise at Camp Prosperity.



Chaplain's corner ... God doesn't just love one type of music

Chaplain (Maj.) Blake Bowers
4th BCT Chaplain

If I asked you what kind of music you like I'd get as many answers as there is varieties of music: rap, hip hop, country, blues, gospel, southern gospel, country gospel, rock gospel hip hop gospel, bluegrass, opera, hard rock, soft rock, light rock and the list goes on and on.

Likewise, if I asked you what is your favorite instrument I would get the piano, the sax, the trumpet, the flute, the tambourine, the trombone, the clarinet, the base drum, the electric guitar, the bongos, the steel guitar, the stringed guitar, the banjo, the violin, or any other of the unnamed instruments.

If I asked you who your favorite singer is I would get names like Chubby Checker, Elvis, The Sensations, Celine

Dion, Bette Middler, George Beverly Shea, Glen Campbell, Kid Rock, Alan Jackson, Clint Black, LeAnn Rimes and the list would go on; some known, some unknown.

Did you ever wonder about God's favorite types of worship, praise and music? God is a great music lover. He loves singing. He loves all kinds of music, songs and he welcomes all singers. He loves dance. The scriptures tell us praise Him with our instruments and to lift our voices in praise. God has meant for worship to be a powerful experience running the range of emotions. Soft songs, fast songs, songs in between. Soulful songs, music and beats that would stir the soul and emotions, Music and worship that encourages us to reach out and dance.

Some think that God is boring. I say give it a try. Look it up for yourself. God

has room for all sorts and all backgrounds. Sometimes we were taught or think that God is somber with no room for joy, fun or dance. Quite the opposite. He desires us to laugh, to lift up in song with joy, dance in praise to His truth and His name, to shout for joy at all that He provides and does for us. God is a mix of reverence and praise. Sometimes He wants us to make more noise than a crowd at the super bowl. Other times He wants us to revel in the quiet solace of his comfort and grace.

God wants you to play your music of praise. He wants you to sing and make a joyful noise using all sorts of music and forms of praise lifted up to heaven. If you asked me if God is boring, I'd say a resounding no. Far from it. Give him a try and you'll get the ride of your life. God's cool. God Rocks! 

How I learned to love the dismounted patrol

Spc. David Leite
A Co. 1-184 Inf.

As we walk through the Al Dora market on one of our dismounted patrols, I reflect back on 3rd platoon closing in on a month here at the power plant. Not really, I'm mostly surveying my surroundings and handing out the occasional hard candy, thanks mom.

It's a bit easier to reflect upon our weary month here at the power plant from our air conditioned trailer we, in 4th squad, have dubbed home. It's amazing how home can be so many different things in such a short period of time. Since our deployment, home has been both big and little tents, barracks of all repair and small

patches of land that we huddled together on in the heat and cold. Home is all these things to us.

We have camaraderie and whether it be a rock or a pillow to lay our heads on we have the kind thoughts of our families with us always. So, we make what we have home and carry on as we do, settling into this one of our many homes, which is sure not to be our last before we join those sure to be smiling faces state-side.

So back to the dismounted patrol, a possible "barometer for success" in this country or maybe just in our sector. We see the many faces of this city daily. The cradle of civilization it is said, yet, this country is in democratic infancy.

It's a society eking its way out of the 18th century yet still immersed in the technology of cell phones, computers and automobiles. We have stepped in to nurture this fledgling democracy. The Iraqis are paying the toll daily for their freedom with the loss of Iraqi Police and Army lives. It's a strain on the senses but, that's what we are submerged in on a daily basis ... upheaval and turmoil side by side with hope.

A stroll through the market is not quite a trip to the local supermarket but, a step back in time or more likely a leap back into a time forgotten. We enjoy our leisurely patrol ever cognizant of our surroundings.

We walk around and hand out candy and smiles, as freely as we may. We are not universally loved or adored, but we do well. We work at the hearts and minds of the willing and hope for converts along the way. It'll take time.

And that is all that we can do -- keep doing good and let time show our actions are honorable. Times are often hard, but what in life that is worth it isn't difficult. Look at the world we are building for our children. 



Sgt. Johnny Caldera of Fresno, Calif., Spc. Michael Loyd of Riverside, Calif., Staff Sgt. Carlos Levario of Los Angeles, Calif., and Spc. Jason Murphy of Orange County, Calif.

Soldiers use cordon and search to gain information

Pfc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

Sometimes the goal of a mission is to go into a dangerous area under the cover of night and to detain those who attempt to derail the democratic process here, but missions can be just as successful without detaining anybody or securing any weapons caches.

Members of D Company, 4th Battalion, 64 Armor Regiment, set out on one such mission, a cordon and search June 14.

The Soldiers searched a building in Karada, while the Iraqi Police provided perimeter security. The Soldiers were



The Iraqi police provide perimeter security during the Soldier's mission.

acting on intelligence they had received during one of their daily patrols through the area.

"We get our information from our patrols that we do every day, talking to the people asking them how things are going in their area," said 1st Lt. Gabriel Dicola, the company executive officer. "We knew before we went in that we probably weren't going to find anything; we were mainly there to make sure our information was coming from a credible source."

Some of the Soldiers engaged the local population while other Soldiers checked a set of apartments above a beauty salon whose owner was reputed

"Mainly we want to show that we aren't tolerating AIF in our sector."



Photos by Pfc. Dan Balda

A Soldier cuts a lock while searching the roof area of an apartment complex for contraband items.

to have bragged about keeping bomb making materials in the area, said Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Sloan, a platoon sergeant assigned to the unit.

The Soldiers were instructed to detain an individual if they found some kind of hard evidence.

"Mainly we want to show that we aren't tolerating AIF in our sector, and if we do suspect something then we will take action," Dicola, a Winston-Salem, N.C., native said. "If something comes out of this then it's just a bonus."

The civilians living in the area were aware of the Soldiers presence as evidenced in the scores of people hanging over their balconies to see what was happening on the streets below them.

"A lot of it is just deterrence of anti-coalition activity. Even if we didn't find anything at least the people know 'The Americans are on to us,' which might deter them from doing anything in the future," Sloan said. "We do three patrols out there everyday. We get a lot of people that stop us and tell us if something unusual is going on, or they'll walk up to the checkpoints and tell us. At the same time we are handing out soccer balls and other things to let the people know that we are their friends."

The Soldiers were as pleasant as possible during the searches of the rooms. They went out of their way to let the people know that they were only there to make sure they knew it was only for the residents' safety.

"Since I've been here we've had a great relationship with the people we meet on our patrols," Sloan said. "I think that goes a long way in intelligence gathering."

According to Sloan, a native of Lecanto, Fla., the success of the mission had nothing to do with him personally, it was his Soldiers who did all the work.

"The Soldiers did an outstanding job despite a slight breakdown in the plan," Sloan said. "They took the proper corrective actions, executed the mission, everybody knew exactly where they were going. Everything went 100 percent the way I wanted it, every body got their piece of the pie." 

Soldier works hard to stay ahead of the pack

Spc. Scott Carlson

A Company, 1-184 Inf.

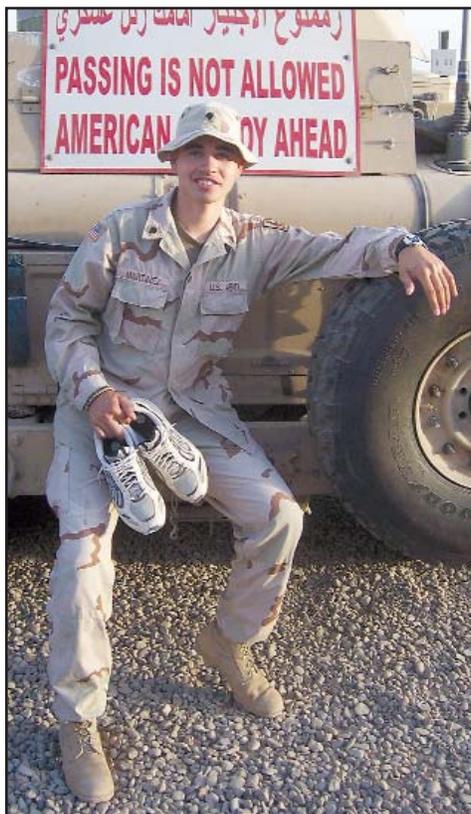
It's almost 7:30 a.m. and second and third squads are just getting back to Forward Operating Base Falcon from a five-hour patrol in the Al Dora neighborhood in southern Baghdad. While most of the returning soldiers will shed clothing, shower and get some much-needed rest, there is one who will not sleep until all his gear is put away and his weapon thoroughly cleaned.

Spc. Ruben Martinez, Infantryman, 1st Platoon, A Company 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, never skips this routine and approaches life with this meticulous attitude day in and day out. That's what sets this soldier apart from the rest.

"I've got the cleanest SAW (Squad Automatic Weapon) in the company," he said confidently of his weapon while he cleans it.

It might be, it might not, but his assurance can make one believe so. Taking one look at his room and at how neat and tidy everything is, will further back up this claim.

"Growing up, I never thought I'd



Spc. Scott Carlson

Martinez poses with the running shoes that he's logged many miles on since he's been to Iraq

long," Martinez said. The two spend so much time together; they refer to each other as "cuate," Spanish for "twin."

Martinez's confidence still shines in other aspects of his life, even here in the desert of the Middle East.

His real claim to fame is his ability to run. And run fast.

"I was the Camp New York, Kuwait, 5.2 mile champion. But I don't think I got enough recognition for it," he said laughingly.

Martinez said that when it comes to running, his confidence goes up and he knows he can win.

"It doesn't surprise me anymore when I win," he said.

Most everyone in Martinez's company, if not Battalion, is aware of his Forest Gump-like ability.

"I think it's admirable that he put aside his athletic career to pursue a military career," said A Co. 1st Sgt. Kevin Kothlow. "He's one of those people that do what's right as opposed to what's right for him."

Upon completion of his tour in Iraq, Martinez plans to resume college at Citrus Community College and transfer to Colorado University to pursue a degree in criminal justice.

"Growing up, I never thought I'd join the military. I never even knew the National Guard existed."

join the military," said the 20-year-old Los Angeles native. "I never even knew the National Guard existed."

However, when he graduated from Glen A. Wilson High School in Hacienda Heights, Calif., he opted for an eight-year commitment with the National Guard to help fund his higher education.

"I figured, one weekend a month, two weeks a year, that's not so bad," he said. "Now, I'm going home for two

weeks in a year."

This is Martinez's first military deployment. "I didn't think I'd end up in Iraq. Never!"

Fortunately for Martinez, his best friend serves right alongside him in the platoon, making the 18-month mobilization a little easier to swallow. And like him, Spc. Ivan Nunez also carries the SAW for his squad.

"He's taught me a lot about the SAW, because he's carried one for so

"But, before I become a police officer, I'm going to win an NCAA championship," he said. A more long-term goal of his is to compete in the Summer Olympics someday.

Keeping true to his meticulous, almost obsessive-compulsive, lifestyle, Martinez works out daily keeping one goal running through his mind.

"It's all about results ... NCAA champion." 

What you don't see could kill you.

Look for secondary explosive devices.



The enemy regularly changes his tactics.

Do you?



IPs train for 'hardest cop job in the world'

Pfc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

Soldiers assigned to the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion forged an early bond with the Iraqi policemen they worked with.

Despite the language and cultural barriers present this bond was created because of a commonality the Soldiers shared with their Iraqi charges. Many of the Civil Affairs Soldiers are policemen in their civilian lives.

One such Soldier, Staff Sgt. Daniel MacDonald, a team sergeant with B Company, 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, has plied his trade on the streets of Philadelphia as a police officer.

"Cops in the states are like brothers and it's the same thing here," MacDonald said. "I look at it as helping my brothers out, keeping them safe. They probably have the hardest cop job in the world. I enjoy helping these guys out, hopefully, some of the stuff I teach them will save their lives one day."

MacDonald and his cohorts invited the Iraqi Policemen they had been working with to come to the firing range at FOB Prosperity to practice and learn skills that should make jobs easier, but more importantly, safer.

This was not the first time the CA team had worked on police tactics with the IPs, but it was the first time they had brought them to Prosperity to train, said Maj. James Joos, B Co., 443rd CA Bn. commander.

"The intent is to help the IP increase their skills; the skills they initially learned at the Police Academy," Joos, a civilian policeman, said. "As reservists, many of us are police officers in our civilian lives. Many of us have been police officers for many years in dangerous cities in America and we believe that our experience can be passed on to the Iraqis."

"We taught them how to conduct a frisk, weapons retention, use of a night-

stick or a baton, how to stop a car, how to place your vehicle when you are stopping a car," MacDonald said. "How to watch people's eyes, what to look for in a car when you stop them. Cop 101 stuff, how you interact with people on a daily basis. Whether it's going to escalate into an arrest, or you're going to do an investigation."

Joss said the goal was to train the cops there so they could pass on their new knowledge to the other policemen in their units.

"Some of these guys are already very skilled with their weapons," Joos said. "It will be those guys to train their fellow officers later, they see how they carry themselves and look up to them."

Since the Civil Affairs Soldiers have been working with the IP's MacDonald has seen a marked improvement in many different areas.

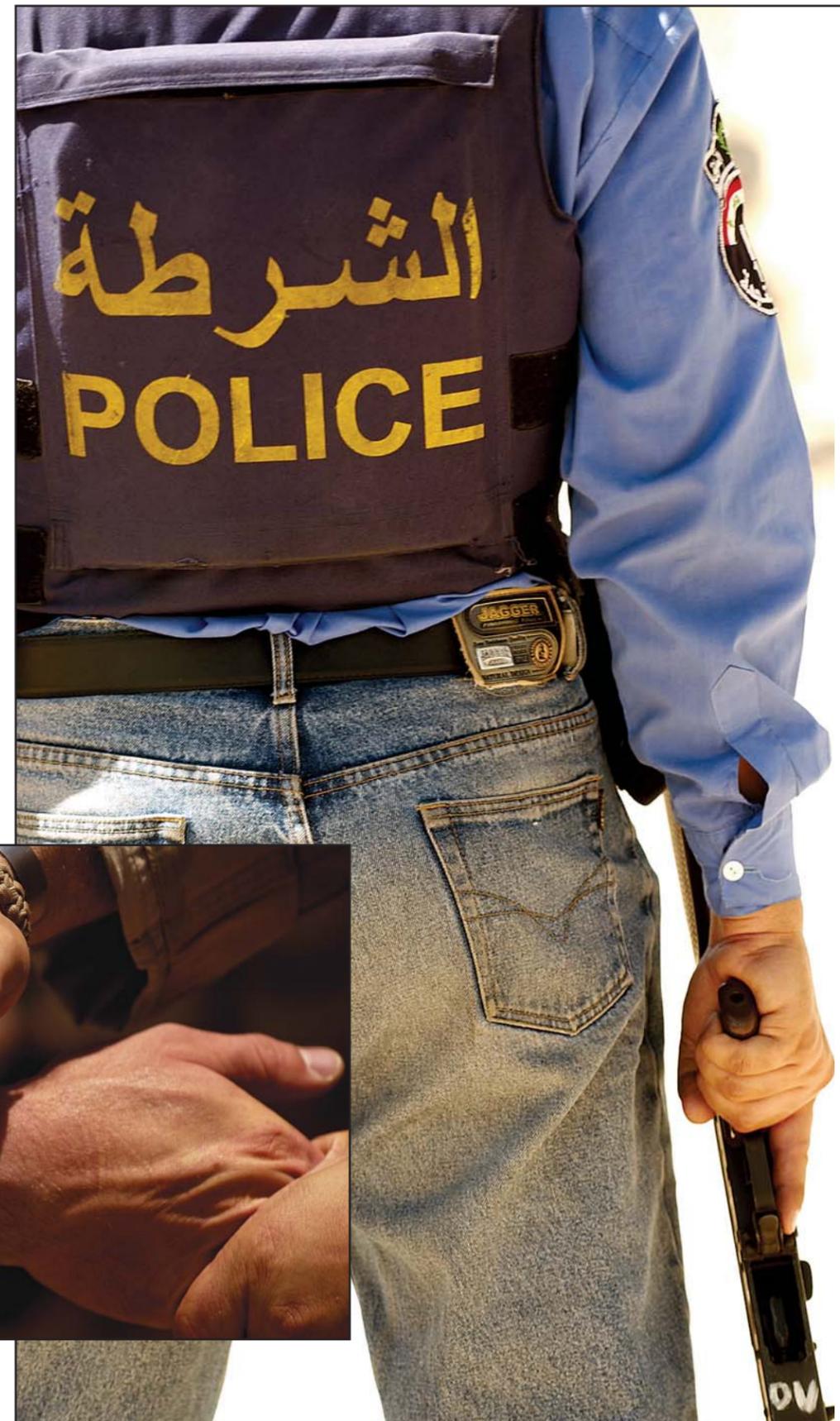
"From where they were when we got here to where we are now it's like two different groups of people," MacDonald said. "When we first got them they had no attention span, their uniforms were unkempt. Now they are hyped up, they look sharp, a lot better with their weapons, a lot more enthusiastic."

The IP's level of professionalism has impressed MacDonald.

"I'd take these guys out with me back home," MacDonald said. "These guys are hardcore, six months ago, no. These guys are as hard as any cop in the world now, especially with what they see. Their level of professionalism has gone up quite a bit. You can see it in the way they interact with the civilian populace."

As a Civil Affairs Soldier, MacDonald interacts with the people of Iraq on a regular basis. He said the increased skill level of the IP's is welcomed by the people he has spoken with.

"I go out in the neighborhood and talk to the people," MacDonald said. "Their opinion of the police has gone up 100 percent, real positive. We were going into some rough areas and the people really appreciated having the cops around."



(Left) Staff Sgt. Daniel MacDonald, a team sergeant with B Co., 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, demonstrates how not to use a night stick as Cpl. Keith Strong, a civil affairs specialist with B Co., 443rd, blocks his blow during training with Iraqi Policemen.

(Above) An Iraqi Policeman covers Strong during a traffic stop scenario.

Photos by Air Force Tech Sgt. Russell Cooley
An Iraqi Policeman slaps the cuffs onto Strong. The officers went through a variety of scenarios that they may encounter on the streets of Baghdad.

Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper

Cottonbalers walk beat to keep Iraq safe



Pfc. Dan Balda

An Iraqi national checks out a Bradley Fighting Vehicle while the Bradley guards an A Co., 3-7 Inf. patrol June 9.

Pfc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

Military patrols in Baghdad beg the metaphor of a policeman on his beat.

In both instances, one goal is to provide safety by mere presence. People naturally feel safer when the police are visible. Another goal is to glean intelligence. To know where criminals work, their methods and how to better counteract the threat posed to the civilian population on the cop's beat.

Soldiers assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment do many of the same jobs as policemen but there is a much more grave threat than pickpockets and burglars.

Even though his platoon has not been attacked while on a dismounted patrol through the neighborhoods, one noncommissioned officer holds his Soldiers' safety above everything else.

"As soon as you leave the gate you are always locked and loaded and alert," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Sammons, a platoon sergeant assigned to A Company, 3-7 Inf. "We're always scanning everything around us; watching the rooftops and the streets."

Sammons thought his unit's mission would involve more conflict but his relatively uneventful job has not come without loss that has struck close to his heart.

"I lost two Soldiers on the 19th of April," Sammons, a Roanoke, Va., native said. "That was a reality check."

Sammons' Soldiers level of intensity was raised, but he had to remind them to keep their emotions in check so as not to compromise the greater mission.

That mission involves defeating the insurgency and helping the Iraqi people to understand they need to rebuild their country with as little help from American forces as possible.

"A lot of (our mission) is intelligence gathering, but at the same time we are building relationships too," Sammons said. "We treat them with respect and dignity. Everybody in our area is very compliant. The unit before us didn't get out and walk around the neighborhood as much because we have more infantry capabilities and twice the amount of people they did."

Another way in which the battalion gathers intelligence is to listen to various sermons by the Imams. The Soldiers tape the sermon and have it translated to make sure the religious leaders are not preaching any anti-coalition or anti-Iraqi messages, which they often do, said Sgt. 1st Class Roy Dyer, a platoon sergeant assigned to D Co. 3-7.

Dyer, a native of Knoxville, Tenn., thinks the religious leaders feel threatened because they don't want to lose the power and influence they now hold.

"They are worried that when the Iraqi government is ready to stand on their own, they aren't going to be able to control the people the same way they are used to," Dyer said.

Dyer doesn't feel that the imams are attempting to target the insurgents with their messages but the civilian people.

They are trying to change the minds of the people: whether they are for us or against us," Dyer said. "If we ride around and shoot at whoever we want without going through the proper steps, that is going to make the people think, 'Oh I don't like these guys.' If we go into every house, kicking in doors, throwing people to the ground they are going to think, 'They aren't here to help us, they're here to bully us.'"

Dyer believes that if the Soldiers use the proper measures, and treat the people with the proper respect, it's not going to matter what the mosque leaders say.

There are going to be able to influence some people, but the majority of the people aren't going to go off only what their religious leaders say.

For many Soldiers interacting with the Iraqi people is one of the best parts of their job.

"It's rewarding being able to help these people," Sammons said. "I miss my kid, I tell him what I'm doing here, meeting all the people. You can make a big impact on the kids especially. The parents get a big kick out of it when their kids are happy."

Spc. Tony Benning, a combat medic assigned to A Co., 3-7 Inf., has seen a marked difference in the way the people interact with the Soldiers while on patrol.

"The people are more friendly towards us (since we first began patrols)," Benning said. "They realize we are just doing our job and trying to help them."

For Benning, much like other Soldiers, walking through the neighborhoods is more satisfying than staying on the FOB all day long.

"I enjoy going on these patrols, it beats hanging out in the FOB killing time. It's nice seeing all the little kids and interacting with them, but sometimes they get in the way of the mission, and you have to be a little more stern with them."

For the Cottonbalers of 3-7, interacting with the children in their areas of operations is just one more way to make the future of Iraq more peaceful. 

Cottonbalers remember leader, true friend

Pfc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team came together June 16 at FOB Falcon to remember one of their brethren.

Cpl. Stanley Lapinski, B Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, was killed by an improvised explosive device.

Lt. Col. David Funk, the battalion commander began the service by reading off the number of United States service members killed in action in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“Cpl. Stanley Lapinski was not number or statistic,” Funk said. “He was in fact a remarkable human being. He was a promising leader and a true friend. He was a Cottonbaler by God, and a damn fine Soldier.”



Photos by Pfc. Dan Balda

A Soldier holds the program at Cpl. Stanley Lapinski's memorial service held at FOB Falcon June 16.

“Ski” as he was known around the company, was a man of many talents, immense intellect and eclectic interests. He held a bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of Nevada Las Vegas. One of the reoccurring themes of the service was Ski’s personal library.

“Imagine how intimidating it must be when you are sitting in your room leafing through the latest edition of Maxim, and your roommate sits down with his copy of the ‘Origin of the Species,’” Funk said.

There are many Soldiers who are prolific readers; who always have a new book they are working on.

Capt. Paul Hilaski, Ski’s company commander, didn’t understand the scope of his Soldier’s reading interests until he helped inventory Lapinski’s personal belongings.

“I know now that Cpl. Lapinski may have been the best read man in the company,” Hilaski said. “The collection of books he had here in Iraq was impressive. I think his collection speaks volumes of who this man was. Some of his collected works include, ‘The Collected Works of Aristotle,’ ‘The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich,’ ‘The Complete Stories of Mark Twain,’ ‘1984’ by George Orwell, ‘Capitalism and Freedom,’ by Milton Freeman and ‘Inquires’ by David Hume.”

“He didn’t overvalue his education,” said Spc. Matthew Moyer, one of Lapinski’s friends. “He saw his education as something that could better his life and the life of others. He wanted to squeeze every last drop of enjoyment out of existence.”

Besides his prolific reading habits, Lapinski’s age was another fact that helped him stand out among his peers.

“Cpl. Lapinski did not have to join the Army, none of us do; but at age 33, Stanley Lapinski decided for himself that he had to be a Soldier,” Hilaski said. “I do not think for a minute that this was a whimsical, spur-of-the-moment decision, but one he made deliberately with the full knowledge of what he was doing.”

Prior to joining the Army he held many jobs, among them; truck driver, salesman, disc jockey.

“In a way he was the prototypical restless wanderer in life,” Funk said. “He found his calling the day he raised his right hand and joined our Army. He felt it was his solemn duty to contribute to this great cause, and our lives were forever better when he did it.”

“When I met him I asked him why he joined the Army so relatively late in life,”



Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team salute during the National Anthem while the battalion flag hangs at half-staff.

said Sgt. 1st Class James Assail, Lapinski’s platoon sergeant. “He told me that he felt he had an obligation to himself and to his country; he had to do this. The Soldiers loved him like an older brother. He’d give them advice on everything from girls to investment strategy, to what movie they should see that weekend.”

“He was a good friend and a mentor,” Moyer said. “Above all Ski was a realist, he knew perfection in personal life could not be attained, but he did his darndest for those around him. He had extraordinarily high ideals for the world, that’s why he joined the Army. Knowledge was the end all for him. In one breath he could explain the philosophies of Hegel, raw guitar chords of the Velvet Underground, or he could talk about how Sonny Liston threw the fight to Mohammed Ali.”

Moyer told his fellow mourners about the last night he spoke with Lapinski. The two Soldiers were discussing the books they were reading. Moyer was reading, “The Grapes of Wrath,” and Lapinski wanted to show him his favorite passage. It seemed almost prophetic at the time, Moyer said.

“The characters are at their grandfathers funeral and they give a prayer,” Moyer said. The prayer says, ‘Give one prayer for the dead, for they have but one direction to go. A thousand prayers for the living, for we have one thousand directions in which to go.’”

Nightstalkers remember brother's rhythm

Pfc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

For Soldiers on deployment they have one major event they look forward to – leave.

One of the reasons for this is that they believe that can relax in the safety their home affords them. They are thousands of miles away from Kevlars, body armor and the dangers associated with combat.

For Spc. Jorge Estrada, a communications specialist assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry, home could not offer him the sanctuary from the storm. He was killed while on Environmental and Morale Leave to be present for his daughter's birth.

Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team came together June 17, to make some kind of sense out of this tragedy.

"After two combat tours and everything he had seen in his life, Jorge was taken from us," said Capt. Douglas Williams, HHC Commander. "But not on a battlefield, he was taken in his home one evening, in the very place we take for granted. A place we consider safe. We were all fortunate

to have known Spc. Estrada, although it was not nearly long enough. But his life was not wasted, our time, though such a small piece of Jorge's life, was still long enough to make lasting impressions on all of us here."

Two Soldiers, Sgt. Juan Valencia and Sgt. Douglas Gonzalez shared their lasting impressions of a man who they had only known for over a year, a man who still managed to bring a smile to their faces even while they mourned his loss.

"We were from the same areas so we had a lot of old stories to tell. We became friends right away," Valencia said. "He was always there to listen and to rag on you when you deserved it. He pretty much told it like it was. I remember he came into the office one day, singing this annoying song from Sesame Street. That stupid song was stuck in my head for two days. I'll miss that song."

"Jorge was an intuitive young man, he was caring and motivated," Gonzalez said. "He was always out to help anyone in need. He was a quiet dude. Once you got to know him, it was like growing up with a childhood friend. What brought us closer was the love we both had for music. Jorge was a great friend to all of us, one of those special people that no one wants to give up. He will be missed."

The battalion commander, Lt. Col. Patrick Frey, attempted to

make sense of the situation for the mourners present.

"I feel it is incumbent upon me because of my position, to make some sense of the senselessness of this tragic loss. I cannot. The bible informs us that the wages of sin are death. We know the wages of war are death. It takes little imagination to see that the wages of life are death. These are the bitter facts of existence as I know them."

Frey reminded the Soldiers that in this situation, it is important that they choose a path through life that has a heart. "Jorge's path had heart. His life was like music; which he loved. It compels us to tap our feet to his rhythm, it captures our imagi-

nation, sticks in our minds it will forever trigger warm memories when we remember its sweet melody," Frey said. "His heart, like music itself, had room for everyone. He opened his heart to his new wife Vicki, and her daughter. Surely his heart was expanded by the recent birth of his daughter Lillyana."

Once he had quoted the laws of the universe, Frey reminded the Soldiers that laws are open to interpretation.

"Jorge is with us still and will always be for we all know the real power of life, it

continues" Frey said. "The band may stop playing from time to time, but the music lives on in our hearts forever."

"Some of the finest things on earth do not last long," said Chap. (Maj.) Robert Blessing. "The finest flower lasts but a season. God is more concerned with life's quality than with its durability."

Echoing the theme of time on this earth, Williams bemoaned the fact that he, along with the rest who were fortunate to know Estrada, were not given as much time with him as they would have liked.

"We were all fortunate to have known Spc. Estrada, although it was not nearly long enough," Williams said. "But his life was not wasted, our time, though such a small piece of Jorge's life, was still long enough to make lasting impressions on all of us here. He was always motivated, always took the initiative expected of a Soldier. He was focused but yet always found a way to play and enjoy himself, enjoy his friends, but most importantly, to enjoy his family."

Music was important enough to Estrada that he asked Valencia to pass along that love if he should pass away while on deployment.

"He told me once, 'If I ever go, don't mourn me with silence but with happiness and music,' Valencia said. "With that I say, wipe your tears away, and stop thinking of the sadness of his death, but remember the greatness of his life." 



Pfc. Dan Balda

A Soldier pays his final respects to Spc. Jorge Estrada, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment. Estrada was killed while on leave in California June 13.

Reports of eroding support for war effort concern troops, general says

Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Media reports that Americans are losing support for the war effort concern military leaders and troops serving abroad, the general responsible for troops in the Middle East said in congressional testimony June 23.

Gen. John Abizaid, chief of U.S. Central Command, was responding to questions from members of the Senate Armed Services Committee who said media polls show support for the war effort unraveling. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and other senior defense leaders also spoke at the hearing.

Some in Congress have expressed support for a resolution calling for a timeline for withdrawing troops from Iraq.

Abizaid recently returned from the region, where he met with U.S. commanders in both Afghanistan and in Iraq. “It was interesting to me how many of our commanders and our troops ask me the question, ‘Are we losing support at home?’” he said. A poll by CBS News on the organization’s Web site shows the country is closely divided on the issue, with the percentage of Americans who say taking military action against Iraq was the right thing to do now at 45 percent. The poll shows 51 percent think the United States should have stayed out of Iraq.

Interestingly, Abizaid told the committee, he is asked the same question about U.S. commitment to the mission in Iraq and Afghanistan by those country’s military leaders as well.

If we’re successful in stabilizing Iraq and Afghanistan, we will be successful in really tamping down extremism in a tough part of the world, which will directly make our security back home better.

“Contrary to popular opinion, they want us there,” he said. “They need us there. They appreciate our support, and they worry that we don’t have the staying power to see the mission through.

“It’s not that they necessarily want us there forever,” the general added. “But ... they do want us there long enough so that they can be successful.”

Abizaid said he’s never seen such a gap between confidence in the mission area and lack of confidence in the Washington area.

“I think it’s very important that we just keep talking to people about how confident we are in our ability to accomplish these missions out there, and how we need to understand that Iraqis and Afghans are fighting and dying for their own country side by side with our own soldiers,” he emphasized.

“This is a worthy endeavor; it’s a revolutionary endeavor. And if we’re successful in stabilizing Iraq and Afghanistan, we will be successful in really tamping down extremism in a tough part of the world, which will directly make our security back home better,” Abizaid said.

Gen. George W. Casey Jr., commander of Multinational Force Iraq, said in his testimony that after a year on the ground he is “more convinced than ever” that the mis-

sion in Iraq is both “realistic and achievable.”

“It will require patience, and it will require our will,” he said. “But both the region and our country will be better when Iraq succeeds.”

Giving credit to those who are fighting the war, Rumsfeld said in his opening statement that, “Today’s servicemen and women, like the generations before them, are performing noble work.”

“Though some pundits and observers — nonparticipants — have criticized the American military with inaccurate comparisons and purple rhetoric, those of us who work with the men and women in uniform know otherwise,” he said. “Our fellow citizens in uniform serve with great compassion and with professionalism amid danger and provocation.”

Rumsfeld went on to offer his “heartfelt and full appreciation” to the military families that sacrifice when their loved ones are deployed.

“And one day, all those who have made sacrifices on behalf of this cause — and the American people who support their important work — will find a place of honor in our country’s history,” he said. “And they will have won the appreciation and respect that they have richly earned.”

Bush: No timetable set for U.S. troop separation from Iraq

Gerry J. Gilmore
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – There will not be any timetables to schedule the departure of U.S. troops from Iraq, President Bush said June 24 at a White House news conference.

As U.S. and allied forces continue to help Iraqis battle insurgents, Bush noted it makes no sense to announce a withdrawal timetable. The enemy, the president said, would then simply “just go ahead and wait us out.”

Flanked by Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Bush characterized insurgents in Iraq as “a violent and ruthless enemy with no regard for human life.”

Deadly bombings carried out by insurgents are designed to drive U.S. troops out of Iraq “before the Iraqis have established a secure democratic government,” Bush said.

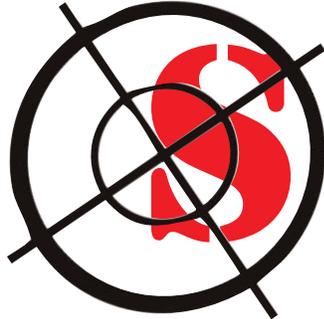
Bush asserted that the insurgents are “an enemy that will be defeated.”

Jaafari thanked the American people for their help in confronting the insurgency, noting, “This is not the time to fall back.” The Iraqi prime minister said he believes that “steady and substantial progress” is being made against the insurgents.

Democratization in Iraq is going forward, with nationwide voting on a new constitution slated for the fall, Bush said. And, the task of growing Iraqi security forces continues, Bush said, noting, “We’re making good progress.”

Bush said Iraqi army recruiting continues to be strong, and those recruits are being trained to fight terrorists. “That’s our strategy, and it is working, and it’s going to work,” Bush said.

And, as Iraqis assume their country’s security and national defense missions, then U.S. troops “will eventually return home with the honor they have earned.”



HARPSHOOTERS

Photos from around the brigade by the Soldiers of 4th BCT



Sgt. Anthony Trout, assigned to B Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment and Monrovia, Calif., native, checks vehicles at a snap traffic control point in the International Zone.



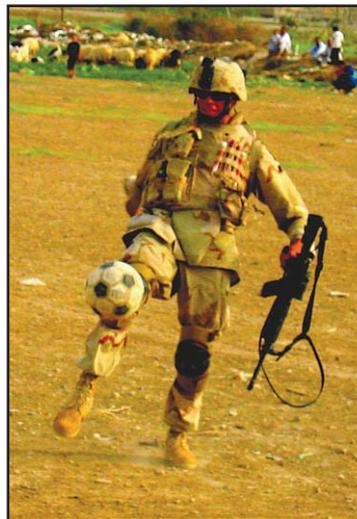
Staff Sgt. Matthew Cousins, a Mount Carmel, Tenn., native organizes security for an explosive ordnance detachment team after a vehicle borne improvised explosive device was detonated.



1st Sgt. John Cartwright and Cpl Anthony Madison of Bristol, Tenn., check IDs at a check point while the Iraqis exercise their freedom of speech rights.



Sgt. Robert Pitts of Long Beach, Calif., and Spc. Michael Loyd from Riverside, Calif., conduct a dismounted patrol through the crowded Al Dora market.



Spc. Jose Gomez of Mexicali, Calif., shows the locals his soccer skills.