



VANGUARD POINT

Volume II, Issue 7
June 9, 2005



**U.S. Vets help farmers
keep animals healthy ...**

Inside



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1/76 FA and 4/64 Armor Soldiers remember their fellow Soldiers.



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Members of the 3rd Infantry Division come together to remember their fallen brethren. For story and photos by Pfc. Dan Balda, see Pages 8, 9.

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Taking the time to listen may save a life

It can be quite emotionally and physically draining here in Iraq. Some Soldiers might think they have nowhere to turn to in times of need. Letting those you serve with know you are there to listen to them could help more than you will ever know. **Page 10**

Investing in the future of the Iraq

The Iraqi Schools Program harnesses the generosity of Americans and adds the hard work of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment Cottonbalers to distribute vital school supplies, medical supplies and clothing to local Iraqis in need. **Page 11**

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: Capt. Michael Simpson from the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion and Las Vegas, Nev., native, injects evanomic into a cow to kill internal parasites during veterinarian assistance program May 19.



Chaplain's corner ...

An eye for an eye or turning the other cheek?

Chap. (Maj.) Blake Bowers

4th BCT Chaplain

The 14th of April was a challenging day for me. I saw first hand the aftermath of two VBIED's. A third one was discovered, but failed to detonate. The site was not pretty and I will spare you the details of gore. I watched as firefighters, without proper firefighting gear, no breathing apparatus and ill equipped in other ways used grit and determination along with water to put out multiple stubborn fires that could have caused secondary explosions at any moment. I saw determined Iraqi police take charge of a chaotic event and restore some sort of semblance to a stressful scene of a horrific and tragic event. Two thoughts crossed my mind as I walked through the smell of burning fuel, rubber and the old familiar smell of burnt flesh I thought I had forgotten so long ago from my active firefighting days.

My first thought was how could any one be so vile, sick, and possess so much hatred as to kill and destroy fellow humans? It makes you angry to see such senseless devastation. Perhaps G.I's from other wars have had similar thoughts when they too witnessed acts of horror. You want to get back, retaliate, get even, and

perhaps even mutter a prayer something like God help us find these killers so we can send them to hell. Not a very Christian like thought for a chaplain is it? I'd probably get lot of Hooahs if I said it loud enough for all to hear. Then, upon later reflection I checked my spirit. Recently in the chapel, I mentioned about praying for your enemies. "Oh God not today, not when so many suffered, not when so many died," I said to myself.

Sometimes God does not ask us to do the easy thing. Many times as Soldiers we are called to rise above the chaos and do the right thing when our natural spirit cries out to get even. So I prayed for our enemies and that God would bring peace.

The other thought was of compassion. As I walked with my colonel and the security team through the disaster I wanted to grab the fire hose, attack the fire and help the Iraqi fire service put it out. I wanted to will in my mind that then and there, poof, they had fire retardant protective clothing, vehicle extraction tools and breathing apparatus like we have in my home fire department back in Delaware. The one scene that struck me the most was a boy not much more than seven sitting off to the side, with several women tending to him as he was balling his eyes out. How I

ached in my heart for what he must have witnessed. How I wanted to go over, pick him up in my arms and tell him it was going to be okay. That God heard his cries and wanted to heal his pain. It was hard for me to keep my emotions in check. I had to keep a straight head. After all I had no idea if someone was going to start shooting at us at any minute or if another VBIED was nearby, which there was we discovered shortly. We had to keep our eyes and ears open in an already chaotic scene. Most here want peace and stability. They want to worship as they see fit. They want some of the same priveleges we have in our country.

Soldiering in this kind of environment is tough. One minute your asked to be kind and nice. In the next few minutes you could be shooting at at target or taking down a door to reach an objective. Not so nice. I have found that faith in God, even in the midst of the events I witnessed, is a steady-ing force to keep my mindset in the right place. I have to trust God to show me those times when I have to be tough and hard. Then afterwards to pray for my enemies. I also have to trust God to show me those times I need to show compassion. I can only balance this with God. My prayer as a Soldier, is that you can do the same. 

Buster's

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AT AND T... IF YOU ARE DIALING FROM A TOUCH-TONE PHONE AND ARE USING A CALLING CARD, ENTER THE 1-800 NUMBER NOW...>*****< THANK YOU FOR YOUR GREAT SERVICE AND FOR MAKING AAFES A PART OF YOUR LIFE... PLEASE ENTER YOUR PIN... >*****<... IF YOU



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OTHER CALLING CARD OPTIC WHEN THIS CALL IS OVER, SUCH

All of us...

In all the days to come
in all the days we see
all of us together, is all that there will be
depending on my brother, him depending
on me
when we land in a new place, far across the
sea

In a time of turmoil, when you reall need a
hand
look about you anywhere and just hold out
your hand
for your brothers are here with you and are
waiting on your call
for we are all brothers, we brothers one and
all

And when duty calls us, we go as one, for
all
never will I leave my brother, be him
known or not
for he would do the same for me, I know

this in my heart

My heart will be with you, in the land I
leave today
smiling faces that I remember, of family
and of friends
that's what I'll remember in this place of
dust and sand
My memories of home and of the ones I
love
that will keep me going through the times
I need a hug

So I say these words today
and I say them from my heart
no matter where I am, we're never really
apart
for all I have to do is look into my heart
and there I find my love, she was with me
from the start

For my wife and my brothers,
Staff Sgt. John S. Jones
278th Regimental Combat Team

Vets lead multi-faceted attack on parasites



Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper

Capt. Michael Simpson, a veterinarian from the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, pours Alfapor onto a cow to prevent flies, fleas and mosquitoes from bothering her during a veterinarian assistance program May 19.

Pfc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

For the majority of its storied history, Iraq has been an agrarian society. Even in today's modern society a large portion of Iraqi's population rely on animals for survival.

With that in mind, Iraqi veterinarians and Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team set out to help ease some of the local citizens' farm animals discomfort May 19.

The vets conducted external and internal parasite control.

"This time of year the flies are very bad, you'll see them swatting their tails quite a bit and that's very aggravating for them," said Capt. Michael Simpson, a veterinarian assigned to 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion. "Mostly it's a production problem meaning whenever you have parasites it usually brings down their ability to gain weight, or to be comfortable in order to gain weight. Like these flies for example, which are very bad this time of year. They spend a lot of time and energy swatting at flies."

In his civilian life, Simpson practices veterinary medicine at a humane shelter in his hometown of Las Vegas. He sees a lot of parallels in the way American's view their pets and how the Iraqis treat their farm animals.

"They look at their animals as a human necessity," he said. "But their pets are also their friends. They won't let on to that but they take a lot of pride in their animals, and they try to take very good care of them. There's a very strong bond between the ani-

mals and these farmers."

Cpl. Keith Strong, a civil affairs specialist with the 443rd helped set up the "VETCAP."

"We were out talking to people and they wanted to show us their animals," said the Lakeville, Mass., native. "I figured we already had the vets we just needed the medicine. I passed it along to higher. I wanted to make sure we could help the farmers so I made sure I kept pushing for this."

The American vets had help from an Iraqi vet as well.

Doctor Bilal Abdul Jabbar wanted to help because, "I think they help Iraqi people and I try to help my friends and my people. I saw that they wanted to treat all these cows free of charge and this is good for my people. Therefore I am very happy and it is my pleasure to work with Americans."

Strong thought is was "just part of the job."

"That's what we do in Civil Affairs, but I really like helping these people, building a rapport with them. We help them and they help us with information. Despite it being 104 degrees out here, I'm having a great time."

Simpson enjoyed helping in anyway he could.

"These local farmers don't have a whole lot of money, so the Army's out here trying to help these guys trying to build better fences, better relationships and just try to be good to these people," Simpson said. "I'm a veterinarian so anything we can do to help animals which further helps people, we're all for it. These people have a lot of problems with their agricultural needs and we're just trying to help them out the best we can." 

"They take a lot of pride in their animals, and they try to take very good care of them."

'5-25' campaign raises bar for IED awareness

MNC-I Public Affairs

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

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

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

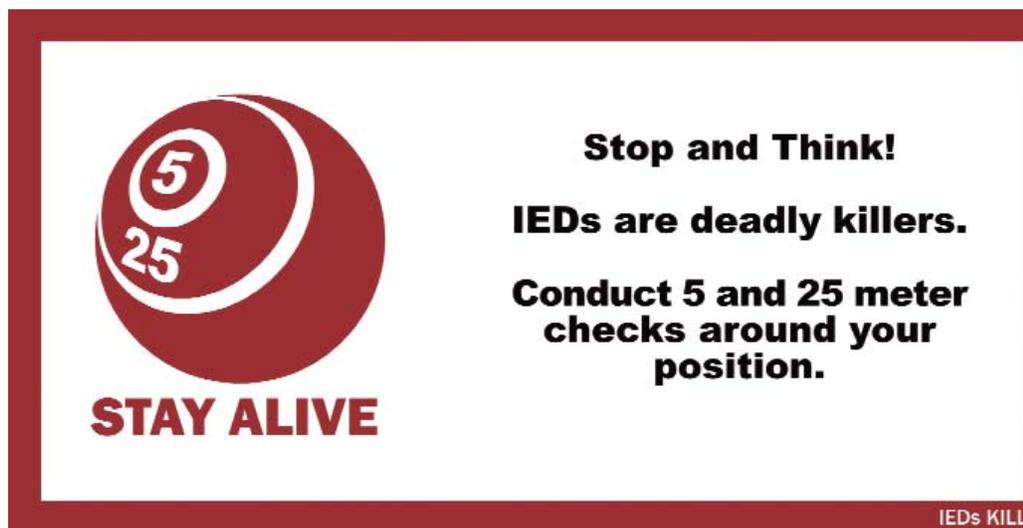
"IEDs are our number one killers here," said Eric Eglund, who works at the Iraq headquarters of Joint IED Defeat Task Force at Camp Victory. The task force is responsible for developing innovative ways to rid the country of IEDs.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Continued page 10

4th BCT celebrates 1st year

Pfc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

The 4th Brigade Combat Team came together to celebrate the Brigade's first birthday May 27.

Col. Edward Cardon, the 4th BCT commander visited various bases in and around the International Zone to share in the festivities with his troops.

"Not since Vietnam or even Korea has the Army asked a unit to create itself in eight months and deploy to a combat zone," Cardon said. "Some people have said this was only possible because of talent in the brigade. I have a little saying: talent hires talent. But talent is nothing if you are not a team. And this is one heck of a brigade combat team."

The 3rd Infantry Division activated its 4th Brigade Combat Team in a ceremony on May 26, 2004 at Fort Stewart, Ga. Col. Edward C. Cardon assumed command of the 4th BCT, "Vanguard," adding a fourth brigade unit of action to the 3rd ID, the first division to reorganize under the Army's new modularity concept.

Consisting of a Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment (Cottonbalers), 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment (Tuskers), 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment (Mustangs), 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment (Patriot), and the 703rd Forward Support Battalion, and 4-3 Brigade Troops Battalion (Sentinel), both in direct support, the 4th BCT is organized to combine combat, combat support, and combat-service-support Soldiers under the same command.

The story of the 4th BCT is one that epitomizes the transformation philosophy. The unit had about 21 soldiers when it began to build its ranks, and over a six month period gained approximately 3,000 Soldiers, garnered new equipment and conducted three major training exercises. The Army took three different battalions from three different brigades with three different cultures and joined them together as one team.

Speaking to the assembled Soldiers, Cardon said, "It's your efforts that have made this brigade better. It's the culture that we have in the brigade, a culture of empowerment, a can do attitude and a winning spirit that you can't buy. But that is what you represent out there everyday. Yes, we have some tough days. What impresses me is that every morning we get up, put our uniforms on, get our weapons ready to go, and get back out on the streets

doing what we have been asked to do."

The first group of Vanguard Soldiers left for Operation Iraqi Freedom III in early January and deployed the remainder of the brigade to Kuwait throughout the month. Upon arrival in Kuwait, 4th BCT assumed command and control of 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, the only California National Guard Air Assault Infantry Battalion in existence. The unit moved to Baghdad, Iraq, in February and conducted Transition of Authority with two brigades from the 1st Cavalry Division March 4.

4th BCT has responsibility for the Karkh, Karradah and Al Rasheed districts of Baghdad with a population of more than 1,440,000 people. The three districts occupy about 66 square miles.

Since assuming control of its sector, the strength of 4th BCT has grown to more than 8,000 Soldiers and currently oversees operations for approximately 16 battalions. Units now serving in the BCT include the 13th Infantry (Georgian) Battalion, Iraqi Army forces, the Naval Special Warfare Detachment, and

numerous units and service members from within the Department of Defense.

Although the Brigade conducts a myriad of missions on a daily basis, three missions have remained constant since arrival in theater: maintaining a safe environment for those who live and work in the Vanguard area of operations, helping to rebuild the civilian infrastructure and training the Iraqi Security Forces.

As of May 18, the brigade completed approximately 8,100 operations including Operation Vanguard Tempest, the largest combined operation between ISF and coalition forces ever conducted. This operation, executed April 11, netted 67 suspected insurgents in the Al Rasheed District.

Three battalions, 3/7 Inf., 4/64 Armor and 6/8 Cav., have taken the lead in training the ISF. These Iraqi warriors will eventually assume full control of the safety and security of Iraq. 3,000 Iraqi Soldiers have been trained thus far by Iraqi Leaders and their American counterparts.

"In the end it is they who will secure Iraq, not us." Cardon said. "We are just helping them. As these units grow, we have to remember that we grew as a unit in eight months, we are growing these units in six months. I'm proud of the team we have and I'm proud to be your commander." 



Photos by Pfc. Dan Balda

(Above) Col. Edward Cardon, the 4th BCT commander, hands a piece of cake to a Soldier during the 4th BCT Birthday celebration at FOB Honor.

(Right) The Rhythm of the Marne rock band entertains Soldiers at FOB Falcon in honor of the 4th BCT birthday.



(Above) Pfc. David Best, 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment and Sgt. David Camargo, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry, the youngest and oldest Soldiers serving the 4th BCT at FOB Falcon, cut the Brigade birthday cake. (Below) Cardon speaks to the assembled Soldiers at FOB Honor.



Pfc. Dan Balda
**Sgt. Robert Keller
shares his memories
of Cortez with the
members of the 4th
Brigade Combat
Team.**



Soldiers gather to share grief, remember joy Soldier brought

Pfc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

Sgt. Cortez, by all accounts, was a tremendous noncommissioned officer.

"The other day Command Sgt. Maj. Stanley asked me into his office to look at a noncommissioned officer evaluation record," said Lt. Col. Robert Roth, the commander of 4th Battalion, 64th Armored Regiment. "It said: Sergeant Victor Cortez: phenomenal leader, best Bradley mechanic in the unit, promote to staff sergeant immediately, keep with troops, a natural born leader."

Roth saw Cortez a couple of days before his death carrying on a conversation with Stanley. He was in good spirits, laughing and taking an active part in the conversation. His pleasant demeanor belied the anxiety and stress he was putting himself under, Roth said.

"Sgt. Cortez didn't want us to know about his problems," Roth said. "Sgt. Cortez was a professional in every respect and he wanted to handle his problems himself."

Sgt. Cortez, a mechanic assigned to the Forward Support Company supporting 4/64 Armor, saw only one way to handle those problems.

On May 29 he died of nonbattle related injuries.

On June 2, Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team gathered at FOB Prosperity to share their grief; but they also gathered to remember the joy he brought to their lives.

"If every day was sunny and it never rained, what fun would that be?" Roth said. "We need rainy days in order to make the sunny days that much better. Those rainy days are meant to be shared with friends. One famous writer once wrote, to live is to laugh and cry every day, today is our day to laugh and to cry. Today is our day to remember Sgt. Cortez and remember what he meant to us. Today is our day to joke, to laugh, to talk about how he made us better and how he made us want to be better."

"Sgt. Cortez was an American Soldier, serving his country in a far away land, putting his life and the lives of the Soldiers he led on the line in the name of freedom," Roth said. "Cortez was admired and respected by his Soldiers, his peers and his superiors. When there was a tough job to do, he was the one the leaders in the forward support company looked upon to do it right the first time."

"He always volunteered for tough missions," said Forward Support Company Commander Capt. Jason Redmon. "He went on as many tough missions as he was allowed. He took care of his Soldiers. Every day he would check on his Soldiers, not only how they were doing in Iraq, but how their families were doing back home. I witnessed him on many occasions leading by example. Not telling Soldiers what to do, but showing them."

Sgt Robert Keller, attempted to cope with his grief by sharing what he will remember of Cortez.

"He was a good man and a better friend," Keller said. "His work ethic was

incomparable. His dedication was one that no one could hold a light to. He offered his friendship to anyone who needed it. He enjoyed life to its' fullest, and that is how I will remember him."

Roth summed up many of the conflicting thoughts many of the assembled were dealing with.

"We gather here today not to wonder what he was thinking or how we could have helped," Roth said. "We gather here today to say goodbye to a friend, a leader a warrior, to celebrate a life. One of the most important reasons we fight so hard is for each other ... Roth continued, "What seemed to upset most of us was thinking, 'How could he do this to us?' He didn't give us a chance, he left us at a time when we needed him, in a place of uncertainty with so much to do. Sgt. Cortez was a source of strength, guidance and a rock many felt they could turn to."

"Now he was gone and we were sad, angry and later numb. Several days later I realized what hurt most of all was that he didn't have anybody he felt he could talk with. We must understand none of us are alone in this world. None of us are perfect and we all make mistakes."

Chap. (Capt.) Lee Harms, the 4-64 chaplain reminded the Soldiers in attendance they can always look to their faith for comfort in times of need.

"True peace comes only from God, so in times like this we cry with the psalmist, 'From the depths of my despair I call to you O Lord. Hear my cry O Lord. Listen to my call for help.'" 



Pfc. Dan Balda

Sgt. Kevin Cantley says goodbye to his friend, Sgt. Charles "Chuck" Drier at a memorial service held at FOB Honor.

Patriots remember three patriots

Pfc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team came together May 30, at Forward Operating Base Honor to remember three of their fallen brethren at a memorial service.

Sgt. Charles "Chuck" Drier, Spc. Dustin Fisher and Pfc. Jeffery Wallace all of B Battery 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery were killed while returning from an escort mission when their vehicle struck an improvised explosive device.

"Their discipline, tenacity, camaraderie was the stuff of legend, said Lt. Col. Daniel Pinnell, the 1/76 commander. "They traveled every bad road, every day of the week. Professionally they made the trip easy."

Pinnell went on to espouse the qualities that made Drier a great leader.

"Sgt. Drier was the rock on which his squad was built, he took his duties as an NCO seriously, but he did not do so without a good sense of humor," Pinnell said. "He was a positive motivational leader and Soldier focused. His squad was diligent and serious but full of life and joy."

Capt. Michael Kolinski, B Battery's commander shared his commander's faith in his noncommissioned officer.

"As a commander it was a blessing to have an NCO of Sgt. Drier's caliber," Kolinski said. "He was spirited and always kept his Soldiers spirits up as well. He accomplished every task I asked of him. Every time I asked him to do something he would respond with a smile and say, 'Too easy, Sir.' As NCO's are the backbone of the Army, so was Sgt. Drier the backbone of his battery."

Pfc. Jordan Gilstrap, said that Fisher was like a brother to everybody he knew in the battery.

"He was the kind of person that if you asked, would give you the world," Gilstrap said. "What was his was everyone's."

Pinnell shared what he had learned of Fisher's character in the time he had known him.

"Spc. Fisher was cool and calm under pressure, he was a good listener and a good confidant," Pinnell said. "His word was his bond,

and you could count on his to get the job done."

Fisher's company commander spoke of a "quiet individual" who nonetheless spoke up when the situation called for it.

"At work he would let his leadership know if something was on his mind," Kolinski said. "On the weekends, when I would see him out, he would have no problem letting me know it was my turn to buy the next round for him and the other Soldiers he was with. He lived the way he knew he should, and he was happy living that way."

Two of Fisher's friends, Sgt. Kevin Cantley and Spc. Matthew Kerbawy remembered their buddy as a thin guy with a huge beer belly, and claimed said beer belly was adored by the fairer gender. Apparently he was correct because he married a wonderful Savannah girl named Alicia, who complemented him perfectly, Cantley and Kerbawy said. But to get the full scope of Fisher's personality one had to accompany him to the club.

"He would go into a club with full confidence, pull the craziest moves on the dance floor and not care how ridiculous they looked," his friends said. "The lawnmower, the motorcycle and the sprinkler were made famous by Fisher."

Wallace was another Soldier whose positive energy helped make his fellow Soldiers deployment easier.

"He was one of those kids who could bring your mood up just by being around him," Kolinski said. "He was proud to be part of the team and proud of his wife and his soon-to-be-born daughter. His face was always lit up, but it seemed to shine brighter when he spoke about his family."

Pfc. Demarcus Wilson met Wallace in basic training but had not seen as much of him in Iraq as he would have liked, nevertheless to Wilson, Wallace was as good as family.

"Make sure when you say goodbye to somebody that you say a silent prayer for them," Wilson said. "Sometimes it takes a loss to see how much you miss someone."

Kolinski ended his speech with a thought shared by many of the Soldiers in attendance.

"I am proud to have worked with these men and to say they have touched my life. Thank you for your service and your sacrifice for your nation, you will be cherished and missed by many." 

Taking the time to listen may save a life

Pfc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

The young man sits in his darkened room alone. More alone than most; he has nobody to talk to. Nobody to share the stress of being thousands of miles away from those he loves. Nobody to talk to after his convoy narrowly missed being hit by a rocket. He picks up his M-16, thinking nobody will miss the bullet, just like no one will miss him. He knows the chamber of the weapon is clean; he lovingly cleaned and oiled it in hopes that it would serve him well while in country. Now the rifle has the chance to repay him for its upkeep. His final thought is of his mother and the hopes that his life insurance will soften the blow of his loss.

Boom! This Soldier's life here is over ... but it didn't have to end this way.

More than 30,000 people in the United States die by suicide every year. It is the country's 11th leading cause of death, and is often characterized as a response to a

single event or set of circumstances. However, unlike these popular conceptions, suicide is a much more involved phenomenon. The factors that contribute any particular suicide are diverse and complex, so our efforts to understand it must incorporate many approaches, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (www.afsp.org.)

One of the approaches incorporated by Chap. (Maj.) Blake Bowers, 4th Brigade Chaplain and a resident of Smyrna, Del., is also the easiest.

"The most important aspect of suicide prevention is caring for other people," Bowers said. "I think when you take the time to care about people and take an interest in their lives, you are going to do a lot to prevent suicides."

The statistics, Bowers said, tell us that 80 percent of people who are suicidal will always leave some sort of a sign. Sometimes it can be as simple as a slip of the tongue by the person, "You guys would be better off without me."

Usually the signs tend to be more subtle. If someone tends to eat small portions of food, and then all of a sudden they gorge themselves at meals, or they might read books about death. If a number of these signs are seen together that would be a good time to start asking questions.

"I think a lot of people are afraid to ask someone if they are

contemplating suicide," Bowers said. "That, however, is the best question you can ask someone who you are worried about."

He continued, people tend to hide the outward signs such as cutting their arms or wrists. They will hide the pills they are trying to take. "Here in Iraq, it is a little more dangerous because of the live ammunition everybody is carrying around. Statistically speaking, males use guns to commit suicide and females chose to take pills. I think you just have to confront people but do it in a caring and friendly way," Bowers said.

Bowers said to remind them that everyone makes mistakes, but most important to talk to them and listen when the need be.

"The best thing you can do is find a friend you can talk to," Bowers said. "Sometimes those friends are peers, sometimes they are subordinates, sometimes they are superiors, nevertheless if the person has demonstrated care and fairness in the past, and you approach them with your problems and your issues. Those leaders should be willing to listen."

Bowers has two other places people can turn to for help.

"We as chaplains have a spiritual aspect we put on things," Bowers said. "From my perspective there is no situation too big or too small that God can't handle."

The mental health professionals in the brigade are very helpful as well.

"A lot of us think that by going to mental health it's going to be a smudge on your record, or that it's a sign of weakness," Bowers said. "I think that it's a sign of strength. You're able to admit that you have some weaknesses, we all get down from time to time; we all get depressed from time to time."

When a Soldier visits mental health on their own, it's much like visiting a chaplain. It's very confidential. The only time they might share your visit with your chain of command would be if you were a danger to others, along with being a threat to yourself, Bowers said. When you hear someone say they are hopeless, helpless or worthless, that is the time to step in. Sometimes it just takes a basic greeting.

"Often times we meet someone and ask them how their day is going. We expect to hear good, sometimes people walk by and say, 'It's not a good day.'" Bowers said. "We keep on walking like we're not hearing what they are saying. Instead we should listen, turnaround and say, 'Hey, I heard what you just said, is there any way I can help you?'"



Continued from Page 5

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

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

tion. Halting for as little as four minutes can prove costly.

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

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

"This time it's [newspaper ads], next time it will be commercials on TV and radio," Martin said. "After that, we're

looking at expanding it. The sky is the limit."

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

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

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

Iraqi Schools Program: An “Ad Hoc” Investment in the Future of Iraq

1st Lt. Kevin Norton
3/7 Inf. PAO

West Rashid, Baghdad – French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville, after traveling through America in 1815, wrote that the most impressive aspect of the “American National Character” was the “Ad Hoc Committee.” According to Tocqueville, whenever a crisis arises, Americans get together to form a group dedicated to solving that problem. It is not government-appointed or selected by local elders. For every problem that needed to be solved, Americans form a group of like-minded individuals that cooperate closely in order to accomplish the task at hand or solve the problem.

Tocqueville was writing about the vibrancy and representative nature of our civic society almost 200 years ago, but it is the same principle which has made The Iraqi Schools Program a huge success.

The program continued by the men of 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment was founded by Maj. Greg Softy in August, 2003. Softy was the squadron operations officer with 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regt., 1st Armored Division.

Iraqi Schools is a widely successful program that links the American people at home with an actual neighborhood of Iraqis who need help. The enormous generosity of Americans has allowed the Cottonbalers to distribute vital school supplies, medical supplies and clothing to local Iraqis in need. The American people have truly answered the call of the program. As of May 25th, 42,682 packages have been received with 1,013,274 pounds of school supplies, clothing, and toys have been distributed in West Rashid. The incredible success of the pro-

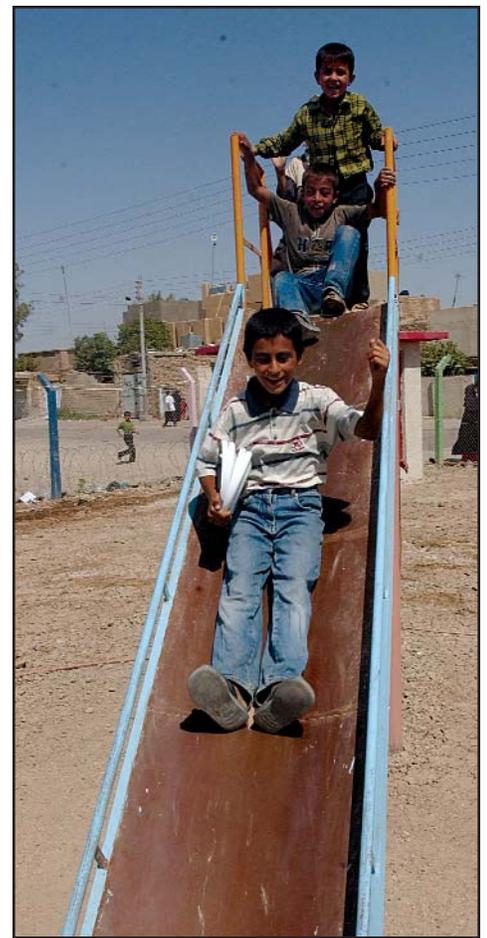
gram has even caught the attention of President George W. Bush, who acknowledged the program in a weekly radio address, “The response was overwhelming; hundreds of packages were shipped, and a website was established to encourage other Americans to contribute.”

The program continues to grow under the operation of Maj. Dave Priatko and the men of 3/7 Inf. The Cottonbalers are extremely excited about working with the program. “It’s absolutely amazing how much we’ve been able to distribute” said 1st Lt Steve Weber of 3/7’s B Company. “We’ve been able to give out school supplies to smiling children on every patrol we conduct.”

Priatko, the battalion Executive Officer, serves as the director of the program and main point of contact. It is Priatko, Chaplain (Capt.) Suk Kim, the battalion chaplain, and his assistant Sgt. Robert Harris that do most of the heavy lifting in terms of running the program. They receive and sort mail, collate the different types of supplies, and repackage them for the line companies to distribute in sector. Priatko and the chaplain then update a website dedicated to publicizing the program (www.iraqischools.com). Every month they send up a progress report and post pictures for the people back home to enjoy. The line companies do the rest.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Iraqi Schools Program is not the net gain of goods or the services it allows the Cottonbalers to provide in sector., but the effect the program has on the soldiers of 3/7 Inf.

“My favorite missions are those that are geared specifically to handing stuff out to kids and visiting the schools” said Staff Sgt.



3-7 Inf. Photos

A child goes down a slide holding the school supplies given to him by Soldiers from 3/7 Inf.

Ortiz Arroyo of the battalion primary security detachment. “There isn’t a man out here who doesn’t thoroughly enjoy the smiles of the school kids.”

Priatko also sees the huge boost in morale that comes from taking part in the Iraqi Schools Program, “The experience is equally gratifying for our soldiers when they see the smiles on the faces of each of these children.”

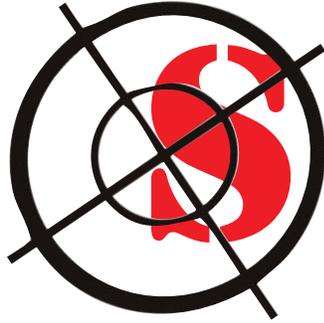
In short, the Iraqi Schools Program is not only valuable in terms of building relations with the people; it also serves to provide an even greater sense of purpose in fulfilling the battalion’s mission in Iraq

The most important part of the Iraqi Schools Program is not lost on the men of 3/7 Inf. The generosity and dedication of the American people is what makes the program happen. This fact is a great source of pride among the Cottonbalers. The ability and willingness of the people they represent to provide for others far away makes what the Soldiers’ do worthwhile.

“The efforts of our friends and families at home are deeply humbling. It’s things like this that make it an honor to represent the American people” said 1st Lt. Ryan Tate a member of the battalion’s intelligence section. 



Soldiers and students pose for a photo with the school supplies donated through www.iraqischools.com.

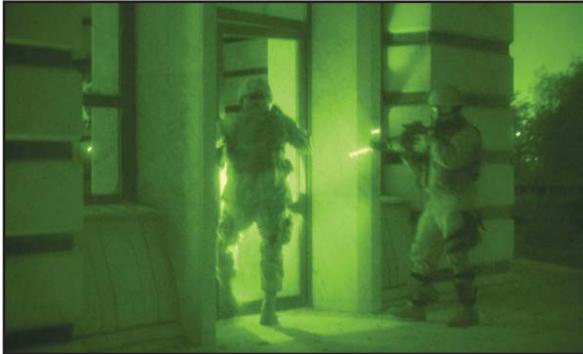


HARPSHOOTERS

Photos from around the brigade by the Soldiers of 4th BC7

Sgt Jerry Bonifacio, a squad leader with D Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment and Vacaville, Calif., native, and his squad greet locals as they patrol the streets.

(Courtesy Photos)



Spc. Timothy Belt

Staff Sgt. John Spears, Bristol, Va, And Spc. Adam Bain, Johnson City, Tenn., clear the mushroom in Zarwa Zoo.



Sgt Victor Avilla, Las Vegas, Nev., and Pfc Jeremy Frank, Rochester, N.Y., get some trigger time at Anaconda Range.



Soldiers from 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment work one on one with Iraqi soldiers.



Sgt Mark Snead, Bristol, Tenn., checks tires of M1114 during command maintenance.