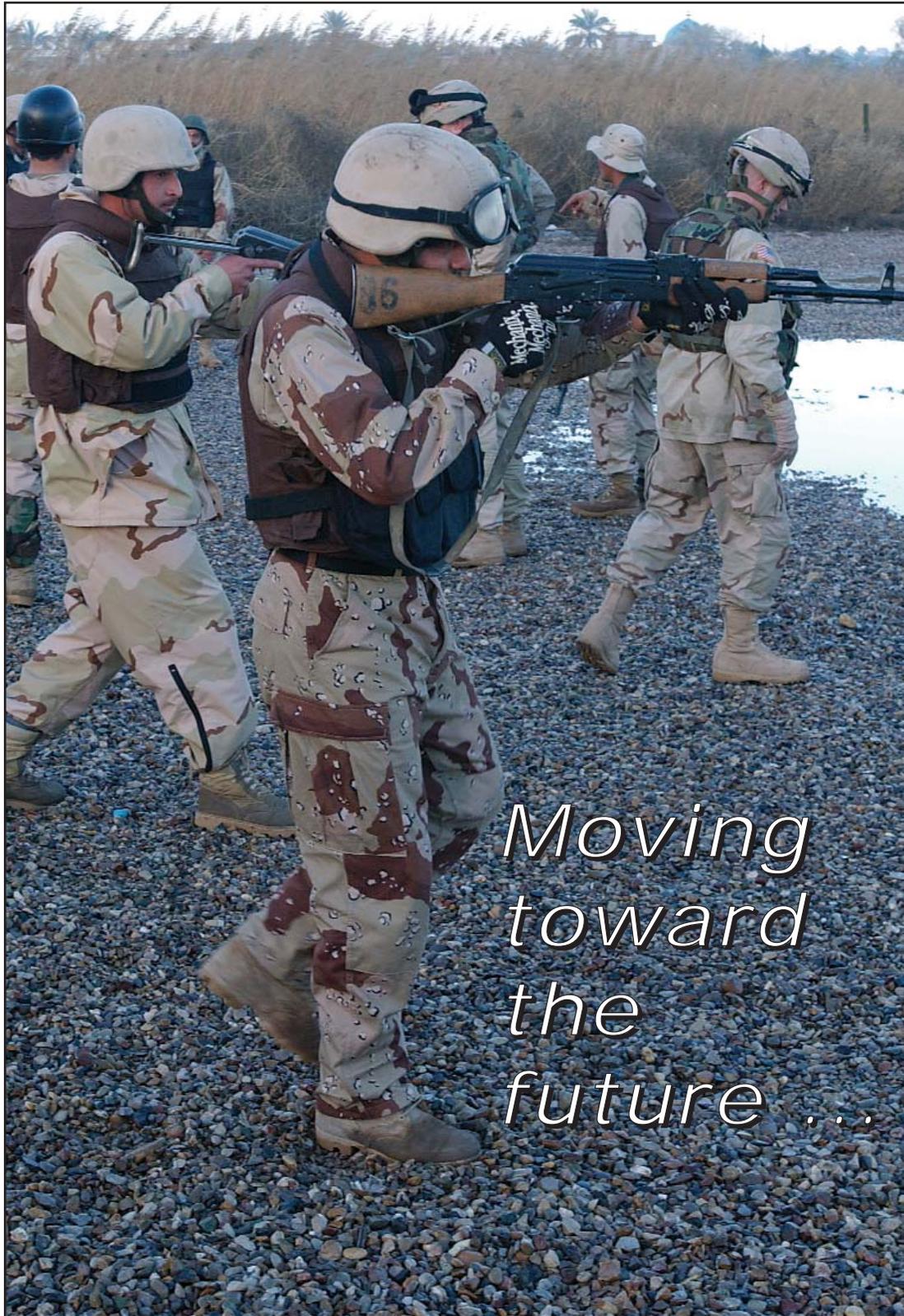




VANGUARD POINT

Volume II, Issue 2
March 17, 2005



*Moving
toward
the
future ...*

Inside



Soldiers from 4/64 reach out to residents of the Janain neighborhood with medicine.



4th Brigade displays its strength with Operation Casablanca.



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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.

Around the Point: Stories from around the Brigade

ING training today for a better tomorrow

Soldiers from 4/64 Armor are working with the Iraqi security forces to train them and make them all they can be, but being a member of Iraq's fledgling security forces doesn't come without risk. **Page 4, 5**

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It wasn't Nazi's that spurred the brigade to launch it's largest operation, but rather, the intelligence that showed where the missiles of insurgents were coming from. **Page 7**

Truckload of terror cut off at the pass

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The VANGUARD POINT is produced in the interest of the servicemembers of the 4th Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division. The VANGUARD POINT is an Army-funded newspaper authorized under provision of AR 360-1.

Contents of the Vanguard Point are not necessarily the views of, nor endorsed by, the U.S. government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 3rd Infantry Division. Circulation: 2,500

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On the cover: Iraqi National Guardsmen rehearse the steps for reflexive fire March 12.



Chaplain's corner ...

Body and Spirit: Protecting against dangerous influences

Chaplain (Capt.) Lee Harms

Task Force 4-64

In the New Testament we are encouraged to think about things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy. (see Philippians 4:8)

In our day we have become very aware of the many harmful substances that can hurt our bodies.

Harmful drugs, some artificial sweeteners and preservatives, many food dyes, too much fat or sugar in our diet, tobacco and alcohol are all products that health professionals warn may cause our bodies harm. However, have you ever considered what products can cause harm to your mind and spirit?

Violent images, pornography, filthy

language, or cursing are just a few of the things that may be most damaging to our spirit.

Imagine for a moment that you have been invited to a marvelous banquet in your honor. Your favorite foods are spread out on a large table. All of them prepared just the way you like them. You are very hungry and so you sit down to begin your feast. Right as you begin to take the first bite you are told that there is a small amount of poison spread throughout the food. Would you still eat it?

Regardless of how wonderful the food looks, would it still be worth eating?

There is so much information available to us today. The internet has become a great tool for obtaining knowledge. Just about anything you want to

know or see is at the click of your fingers.

Just like a large feast, we can fill our mind and spirit with whatever we want. However, we must be aware of the spiritual poison that can cause great harm to us.

Our physical bodies have the ability to get rid of many substances that are harmful.

Even a bad case of food poisoning may go away after 24 to 48 hours. However, a pornographic image goes into the corridors of our memory and can flash its perverted image across our minds years later.

Let us be wise, and not allow damaging words and images to enter our minds. Instead, we should take advantage of the wonderful opportunity to fill our minds with good things. 

“One Shining Moment”: why March Madness is the best American sports has to offer

Pfc. Dan Balda

commentary

Spring is my favorite time of year, hands down. The flowers, the hayfever, the sun warming your back as the anticipation of another baseball season builds. All these make spring worthwhile, but one thing makes it memorable, March Madness.

When I was going to college I would make sure my professors knew that I would not be in class for the first couple of days of the tournament. I would make my normal hour-long commute to school just because there was a big screen at the student center to watch the game on. Plus, I could justify missing the class under the pretense of at least being on the premises of the school.

The only championship game I've missed since 1990 was last year's game, and not by choice. I went to AIT on the East Coast and the game started after bed check. I did have the fire guard giving me constant updates, much to my sleep-deprived roommate's chagrin. I put the blame for Duke's loss to Connecticut squarely on the drill sergeant's shoulders for not allowing me to watch the game.

I have played all major sports (baseball, basketball, soccer, football, and yes, even hockey) during my 25 years on this planet. I have watched even more (cricket anybody?). Nothing compares to the excitement of wondering which teams will make a run at the Final Four, and have their footage played during the “One Shining Moment” montage after the National Championship game. Or the excitement of

In post-season basketball, baseball and hockey, the teams have a seven game series to make adjustments in hopes of winning the four games it takes to move on. Some of the teams have already faced each other over the course of the season.

In the NCAA basketball tournament, they have one game to either move on or go home. There are teams that have no business

being there let alone winning a game. Villanova played the near-perfect game to beat the Patrick Ewing led Georgetown-led Hoyas in the 1986 championship game, I remember watching the replays of Jimmy Valvano running madly from the sideline, looking for one of his players to hug after a last-second buzzer beater over the heavily favored University of Houston Cougars.

I have never been threatened with being kicked out of the home as fervently as during the national championship game involving Duke and Arizona. I was told numerous times that the players in the game could not hear the instructions I was barking at them mid-game.

At one point I think I pulled a Bobby Knight chair-throwing incident, although I blacked out for portions of the game due to a lack of blood flow to my brain from screaming so much.

I'm not saying the level of commentary involved with the college game is worthy of a Peabody award, but it beats the heck out of the NAB announcers. I faintly remember sending threatening letters to NBC about Bill Walton. He no longer works for NBC, it may not have anything to do with me, but I'm just saying. Before I leave you, let me give two quick comparisons of what the pro game offers versus the college game.

College: One month (give or take), 65 teams, 6 rounds, one game a piece, win or go home.

Pro: I think the playoffs last about 4 months, with 16 teams, playing the best-of-seven series.

College: Mascots such as the Banana Slugs (UC Santa Cruz), Anteaters (UC Irvine) and Lumberjacks (Northern Arizona University). I mean c'mon do you realize how uber-tough a lumberjack is?

If you want to discuss the merits of NAB vs. NCAA, you will be able to find me by the screams of protest emitting from the HHC 4th Brigade company area as I watch the tournament all night long. Cheers! 



Pfc. Balda, in his former life as a student athlete at Hope International University, Fullerton, Calif., circa 2002



Staff Sgt. Pete Peters teaches an Iraqi National Guardsman the proper posture during a dry fire.



Peters demonstrates the correct position for an ING member.

Preparing Iraq's future

Despite risk 302nd continues to train, patrol

Story and Photos Pfc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

"There is a list for people who are in the (Iraqi National Guard) that the terrorists want to kill," said Sgt. 1st Class James Uas, an interpreter with the D Company, 302nd Battalion, 40th Iraqi Army Brigade. "My name is second on that list. If somebody kills me they will get \$1,000."

So is the life of an Iraqi Soldier while undergoing reflexive live-fire training March 12, at Camp Independence.

"We are teaching the ING how to do reflexive fire," said Staff Sgt. Pete Peters, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment. "It's the same training all the Soldiers in the division receive before they come over here to Iraq. We do this training in hopes that the training will carry over when they go out on the Iraqi streets and do patrols on their own."

Even though 4/64 has been working with this group for a short while, they have been able to focus on more advanced training due to the fact that the previous American unit did such a great job with the ING.

"We've been working with them for a couple of weeks, they had a lot of training in advance," Peters, a South Portland, Maine native said. "It's been real easy for us to just jump in and continue their training. 1/9 Cav. did a great job of bringing this group up to where we didn't have to change anything when we took over for them."

Instead of taking an entire battalion of ING and training them all at the same time, the Soldiers use the "train the trainer" method. After learning how to properly use the training, the assorted Iraqi platoon leaders, platoon sergeants and section sergeants, go back to their squads and platoons to share what they have learned with their troops, Peters said.

"They have been getting real good since we've got here," Peters said. "They are real quick learners. They want to succeed and to achieve something special. They have a huge desire to learn."

Capt. Mark McClellan, scout platoon leader for HHC, 4/64, likens their motivation to why people join the U.S. Army but there is an extra incentive.

"They understand that they are here to take their country back from the insurgents and terrorists, and to make Iraq a better place," he said. "I believe that some of them join up because of the money, just like in the U.S. Army, but most do it because they want to help their fellow Iraqis."

Uas agrees with McClellan.

"I like my job," he said. "Before, in Saddam's army, nobody really liked their job. In one month we made two dollars, now I make \$400 a month. It's very different, now I can eat or go out and have fun with people. I love my job a lot."

McClellan has already seen the fruits of his and the ING's labors.

"I've already seen it on Haifa Street," he said. "People are cleaning up their own streets, putting in their own sewer systems. This ING group is the one that cleaned up Haifa Street. They are the ones taking grenades and getting shot at, and they have a lot of pride behind what they are doing right now."

Uas has enjoyed working with the Army thus far regardless of the danger factor.

"I have been working with the Americans for two years," he said. "It's been very nice, I get to help people and kill terrorists, I like my job except when we get attacked. A grenade went off behind me and I had all kinds of marks on my weapon."

Uas hasn't been back to his home in one week because he has been staying at Independence training or going out on patrols.

"I do this because I like to help people, I like to help kids, he said."

McClellan has seen an improvement in their military skills, he said. But the real success is out on the streets.

"You can see how proud they are when they drive around in their trucks with the Iraqi flag flying in the wind, and people in the streets are waving to them," he said. "One time we came back from a patrol and there were all these children cheering for their troops. You could see the smiles on the Iraqi Soldiers faces. That's why they do this."

The doctor is in

4/64 Armor aids Baghdad neighborhood with medical outreach program

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper
4th BCT PAO NCOIC

As the convoy pulled into the Janain neighborhood, people started to come out of their houses. The speakers on top of the psychological operation's Humvee announced the Soldiers arrival. The message was simple – the Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment were there to provide medical assistance to the residents.

The medics setup a makeshift aid station to treat the residents as an area was cordoned off with concertina wire March 9.

“In order to develop a relationship with the people, we decided to come out today to treat as many minor ailments as possible,” Capt. Daniel Green, battalion surgeon for 4th Battalion, 64th Armor. “Today the idea is volume instead of severity.”

People lined up at the makeshift entrance between two strands of concertina wire where they were searched before medics took over. They did an initial screening of the residents, checking blood pressure and temperature, and through the help of an interpreter, discussed the patients medical problem.

Green said the focus was on minor injuries and illnesses, partly, because he's currently not equipped to provide more advance care.

The injuries ran from minor aches and pains to broken limbs and a variety of colds and minor illnesses. Some had injuries that the medics could not treat, such as the son of the area mayor, who was blind due to an injury during the Iran/Iraq war.

Although the Soldiers couldn't heal all of the resident's ills, they were eager to be seen.

“A lot of the children need medication for asthma or allergies, or they have gotten into something and have a rash,” Green said. “For women that are with infants, they don't have adequate supplies of formula so we try to give that out.”

Staff Sgt. Jenny Vega, a medic with the 703rd Forward Support Battalion, was one of the Soldiers that helped hand out diapers, formula and dental kits for the children.

She said, the dental kits will help the children keep their teeth healthy and formula will help the babies develop properly. “I love helping out. I love to see the kids and their mothers smiling.”

The focus was on providing medical help to the residents, but the benefits go further than just the immediate help.

Capt. Shane Garrison, 4/64 Armor information operations officer explained that if all the commander did was come here to get bad guys, the residents would never see any of the good that Soldiers are doing.

Green said, “Ultimately I feel that any time you reach out to help somebody you develop a relationship. However, we have already had a very positive outcome from doing things like this. It is small things like this that make them comfortable with our presence.”

He recounted how in one area after the Army treated one woman's son for asthma, she led them to a hidden weapons cache. “That wasn't the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal was to take care of her children, but it fosters a relationship where people help us with our overall mission.”



Capt. Daniel Green numbs the finger of a small before dressing the wound.



Staff Sgt. Jenny Vega smiles after placing a bandaid on an Iraqi child's hand.

“I love helping out. I love to see the kids and their mothers, smiling.”

Rockets, not Nazis, spur Operation Casablanca

Pfc. Dan Balda

4th Brigade Combat Team

I fought off sleep knowing that one hour of sleep was not going to be that helpful. Besides, I told myself, I can sleep after the mission is completed.

I set out at “oh-dark-thirty” March 1, from Camp Falcon with a number of Soldiers assigned to 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry on a cordon and search mission in an area southwest of Baghdad called



A Soldier checks for illegal items with a metal detector

6/8 Cav. patrol cuts truckload of terror off at the pass

6th Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment

A potential large scale attack was thwarted Monday in the Al Rasheed district two days before the first session of the Transitional National Assembly.

Soldiers from 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment discovered a truck loaded with terror. The vehicle contained 13 suicide-bomber vests, 20 x 107mm Russian rocket warheads, 9 x improvised grenades, 8 x improvised bombs, modified propane tanks filled with explosives, 4 x sticks of PE-4, 2 x bicycle bombs, couple hundred pounds of propellant, miscellaneous number of electric blasting caps, tools, medical supplies, and improvised-explosive device making equipment.

“This operation was a success because

we removed a significant amount of terrorist materials off the street that could have had devastating effects and potentially killed hundreds of innocent people,” said Maj. Ross Coffman, 4th Brigade Combat Team Operations Officer. “Top-notch technology and teamwork between the Iraqis and multinational forces paved the way for safer conditions for the first session of the TNA.”

The truck was discovered by an airborne platform on the east side of the Tigris River in southeastern Baghdad. This coverage tracked the truck’s movement until forces could arrive on the scene.

The Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell was dispatched to the site and conducted an emergency detonation after exploring the site. 

Casablanca.

We rolled quietly through the still hours of the early morning Baghdad darkness. Stray dogs heralding our arrival while at the same time trying to keep pace with the vehicles.

Not knowing what to expect once I reached Casablanca, I did know that Humphrey Bogart was not going to meet us there.

The mission involved moving a number of elements into an area named Casablanca. No Nazi’s, rather, rockets had been fired from the location at coalition troops, spurring the operation.

Even though 6/8 had already completed approximately 280 missions since their arrival, they had yet to carry out a mission of this scope, said Capt. Doug Hoyt, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 6/8 Cav.’s battalion governance officer. The unit used six UH-60 Blackhawks, about 20 Humvees, 10 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and close to 120 Soldiers, Hoyt said.

Besides negating the ability to fire rockets from the site, the Soldiers had other reasons for moving in on the site, Hoyt said.

The Columbus, Ohio, native explained, “it’s important to show our strength in these areas because this is where we think all the bad guys are coming from. I think by bringing all that stuff down here, showing what we can do, its going to make them think twice about messing with us.”

Some of the troops were brought in by Blackhawk and laid in wait while their compatriots convoyed to the site. Once the outer cordon was in place, the Soldiers swooped onto the site, catching the residents by surprise.

Soldiers gave the area a thorough search using metal detectors. The search came up empty but one Soldier saw nothing but positives in the operation.

“We let the terrorists know that we’re out there and that we are coming to get them,” said Staff Sgt. Alan Belisle a scout with B Troop 6/8 Cav. “It also helps the pro-US people to see that we’re serious about clearing the bad apples out of the bunch.”

Col. Edward Cardon, the 4th Brigade Combat Team commander echoed Belisle’s thoughts. “We didn’t get everything that we wanted, but the important thing was that we showed that when we get the intelligence we are willing to act on it without delay,” he said. “We cooperated with the local Iraqis to secure the site which is important to show the terrorists. The fact that we led the way out of there in a convoy of Bradley’s showed our strength as well.” 



Soldiers from 6/8 Cav. lay out 107mm Russian rocket warheads.



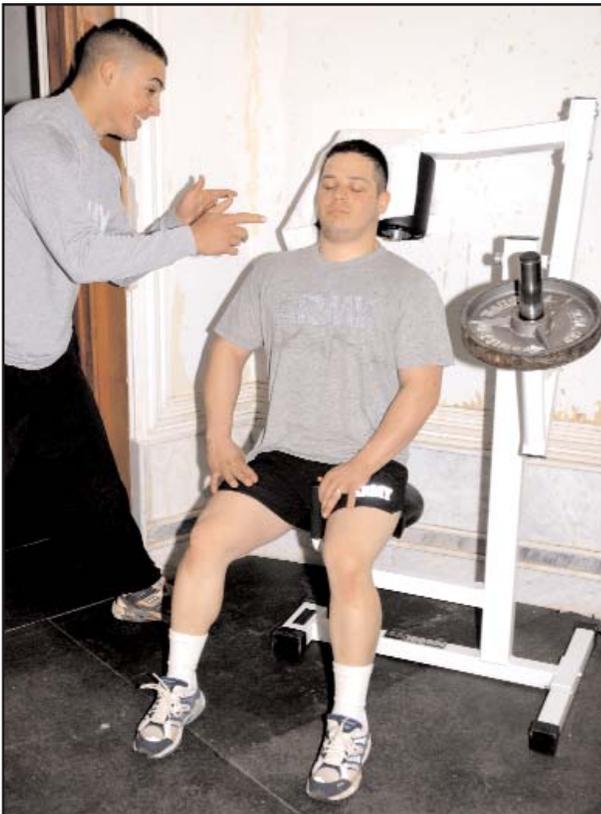
Eight propane gas cylinders were part of an IED and explosive making cache found by 6/8 Cav.

A day at Prosperity ...

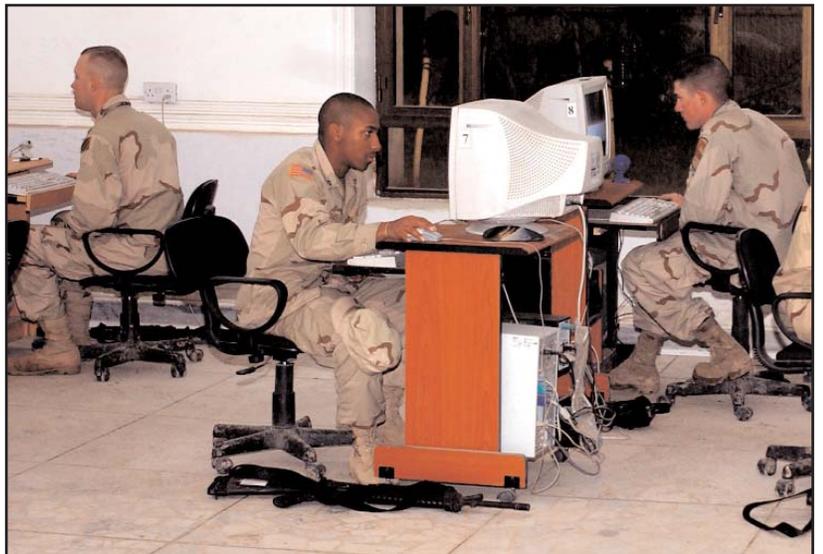


Photos by Pfc. Dan Balda

Soldiers take a seat and enjoy lunch at Camp Prosperity's dining facility inside the palace.



Two Soldiers exercise during their free time at the MWR fitness center.



Members of the 4th Brigade take the time to catch up on news from back home. Hint, hint ... email your Soldier!



Watching movies is one of the most popular ways to pass the down time here at Camp Prosperity.

Send an Easter message home.

The 4th BCT Public Affairs team will record an Easter message from you to your family March 22 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. outside the chapel on Camp Prosperity. The messages will be marketed to TV stations in your hometown.