



VANGUARD POINT

Volume II, Issue 5
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Inside



For EOD teams, it's more than a love of explosives that gets them out on the road.



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A beneficiary of the sheep drop walks away with the sheep that Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Soldier gave to Haifa Street residents April 20 during Operation Sheep Drop. For story and photos by Pfc. Dan Balda, see Page 6.

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On the cover: Sgt. Travis, 4th Battalion, 64th Armored brings an unwilling sheep to a needy Iraqi family on Haifa Street during Operation Sheep Drop April 20.



VANGUARD 6 SENDS ...

Three Months in and getting better everyday

Col. Edward Cardon

4th BCT commander

We are already more than three months of our deployment, and we have come a long way since our activation as the 4th Brigade Combat Team May 26, 2004 and the assumption of our mission March 4.

All of us have become more proficient in the performance of our duties and we continue to improve in both our skills and warrior tasks everyday here in Iraq.

We are working very hard on training Iraqi Security Forces – both the Army and the police. Our mobile training teams are working directly with Iraqi forces every day, and we are making good progress. We expect to have over 2,000 more Iraqi Soldiers on the streets within two months.

At the diplomatic level, the government is meeting regularly and has selected the men and women to lead its ministries. Although there are challenges as the government tries to satisfy several different ethnic and religious groups, these democratically chosen Iraqis will draft the constitution and later hold direct elections.

While success is all around us, the news continues extensive coverage of violence in Baghdad. It is true there have been some terrorist attacks that have had a high number of casualties, but we would like to put this in some context for our operational area. We had a few days with a very low number of attacks – we actually had two days with no attacks at all.

After these days of relative calm, we had one day with a

higher number of attacks including suicide car bombs, roadside bombs and small arms attacks – primarily against Iraqi Security Forces. This was a tough day because eight Iraqi Soldiers were killed and six wounded in one suicide car bomb attack against an Iraqi Army checkpoint during shift change.

That same day, six Iraqi policemen were killed and six wounded by two separate roadside bomb attacks. Enemy activity then dropped back down to low numbers.

Even the days of high enemy activity are below the levels of activity we experienced in February. We believe that this cycle is indicative of an enemy that is growing weaker, but they are still dangerous and we must remain vigilant.

In order to be better positioned for our mission in the future, we will reposition our forces to different forward operating bases over the next three months.

Although we will have fewer bases, we will reset in a deliberate manner to account for all the changes with mail, internet and support.

We are here at a critical time in Iraq's history. We are a team of teams working toward a common goal of a better Iraq for the future.

Thanks for what each of you do everyday. Every job in Iraq is important to the overall accomplishment of our mission, and I am very proud of all our accomplishments.

Vanguard! Rock of the Marne!

Chaplain's corner ...

However it's done prayer makes the difference

Chaplain Lee Harms

Task Force 4-64 Chaplain

Psalm 121 says, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth"

There is a story of a little boy who was going into surgery to have his appendix removed. The little boy lay on his hospital bed waiting to be taken into surgery.

Finally, the doctor who would perform the surgery arrived along with the anesthesiologist and some nurses. The doctor asked the little boy if he had any questions before they began.

The little boy looked up at the doctor and said, "I was wondering if you would say a prayer for me before we begin?"

The doctor responded, "I can't pray

for you young man! I am not a minister I am a doctor!"

At first, the little boy had a look of disappointment on his face. However, with courage in his heart he said, "Well, if you can't pray for me then I guess I will have to pray for myself."

The little boy rolled over and knelt down on his hospital bed and began to pray.

He prayed that the doctors and nurses might have God's help while doing the surgery and he prayed that God would go with him into surgery.

The little boy finished his prayer, rolled back over in bed, and said, "Now I am ready to go!"

There are various ways that people pray. Some pray in a very formal way, while others are more casual in their manner of prayer. Some religions look

to prayer as a form of communication with God.

Others religions view prayer as a form of worship. In many religions prayers are given in behalf of those around us.

As soldiers in the United States Army we have a sacred obligation to pray not only for ourselves but for all those around us. In many ways prayer is a principle of leadership.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "I have always taken counsel of Him, and referred to Him my plans, and have never adopted a course of proceeding without being assured, as far as I could be, of His approbation."

My prayer is that in our time of need we may look to God in prayer and also remember those around us in need in our prayers.

EOD saves lives by blowing things up

Pfc Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

April 14 was a day I will never forget, it was the first time I ever saw a dead body. I was called out to document the destruction of a vehicle borne improvised explosive device. There were many people that had either been killed or badly injured due to the car bomb.

There were two other bombs that had been placed at the site. Lucky for the people in the vicinity, an explosive ordnance disposal team assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team came to the site to take care of the unexploded ordnance.

They calmly cleared the area of civilians and established a safety cordon around the car. Once everybody was clear, they reduced the once deadly bomb to dust.

"I love being able to go to a situation that's chaos, where nobody knows what's going on and you have media and civilians milling around. I love going to a situation and making things happen, making it organized," said Navy Lt. Mark Yoon, the officer in charge of the EOD Mobile Detachment Unit 2.

It's not all about dismantling bombs though.

As a part of a Navy EOD team Yoon does a number of different jobs such as diving to make sure ships are in safe areas to force protection.

"IED's are a small part of it, but it's definitely the sexy part of the job, especially with the climate here in Iraq," said the Huntsville, Ala., native. "This is an IED war, we not realize it. You're not going to see a company or a platoon of insurgents storming a wall, its going to be an IED placed somewhere. There are smart guys out there and we have to counter their tactics with our own, just be smarter than them."

The best tactic Soldiers can use to counteract the threat of IED's is to do a better job when they dismount from the vehicles to do their "5's and 25's." This refers to walking five meters around your vehicle in every direction, scanning the ground to make sure there are no explosive devices planted there and then visually checking the perimeter 25 meters in every direction.

"It's scary driving around Baghdad and not knowing what's laying by the side of the road or sitting in someone's trunk," said Sgt. Brandon Sanders, a driver assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team.

"Take more time with your 5's and 25's, they will save your life," Yoon said. "If you have to dismount from your vehicle, do them extremely thoroughly. Kick the dirt around, move trash with your feet. Your feet are your best friend when you are doing 5's

and 25's."

Like a lot of his coworkers in EOD, Yoon attributes his love of his job to childhood experimentation.

"I was like a lot of little kids, I liked to blow stuff up," Yoon said. "Demo is definitely the cool part of the job. We use it as a tool; we're not just here to blow the heck out of everything. We're here to save personal property and lives."

Yoon and his comrades do as much as possible to make the blast as little of a threat to the local citizens and buildings as possible.

"We weigh in what the surrounding environment is," Yoon said. "If it's in a deserted field, I'm going to blow it, but if its in a residential area, I'm going to do something completely different. We go to huge lengths to make sure personal property isn't harmed. If it was my car or my house, I wouldn't want it messed up. I always try to take that into consideration."

"I was in the chow hall at (FOB) Falcon when they had a controlled detonation for a bunch of weapons they confiscated," Sanders said. "They didn't tell anybody before hand, so when they blew the stuff up everybody thought we were being attacked. People were diving under tables, throwing all their gear on, it was pretty funny. But when I thought about it, I was pretty glad (EOD) blew that stuff up before it was used on some Soldiers."

The success of the EOD team can be attributed to two main things; teamwork and education.

Yoon has an E-5 working for him here as his only staff on shift. But saying that the Sailor "works for him" is a misnomer.

Sometimes they take turns as far as who is in charge of a site.

"I'll get people that say, 'Oh he's just an E-5,' no way, he's just as smart, if not

smarter than me on this stuff," Yoon said. "He can do everything I can do. In Navy EOD we are all trained the same. He has a different perspective on things, it's a partnership. I work in a small shop so I get to know the people real well. I know how they are going to react in any given situation."

The schooling to become trained in EOD is longer than most vocational colleges.

"EOD school plus dive school, all the training it takes a year and a half to two years for all the schools. EOD school is extremely academic, most of the people in your class don't make it through."

The psychological facet is one of the reasons Yoon loves his job.

"I like this job because of the mental aspect of it," Yoon said. "It's very intense, it's you versus the bombmaker. It's a little like chess, you have to plan out all your moves beforehand. You have to do everything in your power to make sure its safe for you to go downrange in that bombsuit. How can I do this to make sure I save as many lives as possible?"



Soldiers shepherd sheep to needy families

Pfc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

Sgt. Luis Herrera, a fueler assigned to Forward Support Company, 4th Battalion 64th Armor Battalion, normally spends his days bringing ammunition and gas to Soldiers in need.

The cargo he brought to needy residents of the al Sayiah and al Marouf districts April 20 was not bullets and gas, but something that is going to help us win the war.

The cargo you ask?

Twenty-five sheep, driven around by a local butcher, were delivered to families that a civil affairs team had sought out a week before. These families had anywhere from 20 to 25 people living together under one roof and could use the help, said Staff Sgt. Daniel MacDonald, B Co., 443rd Civil Affairs Bn. team sergeant.

“These people have been hurting for a long time,” Herrera said. “It’s nice to give them something back in addition to freedom, which is not a bad thing by itself.”

Continued next page



Pfc. Dan Balda
Pfc. Brendan Piper, a civil affairs specialist with the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, carries a stubborn sheep to a needy family April 20, during Operation Sheep Drop.

Mapping the battlefield

Topo helps the pieces move to the right place

Pfc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

If I were to ask 10 Soldiers what they thought the “Topo” section did for 4th Brigade. I would probably get 10 different answers, unless three of those Soldiers were the topographical analysts who work in the section.

“Our mission is to provide terrain analysis to the brigade and supporting units as well as the multinational units,” said Sgt. 1st Class Charles Purnell, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the section.

Topo, as they refer to their section, help Soldier’s see what’s out there, so they don’t have to go and find out for themselves.

“We give them eyes before they get on the ground,” Purnell said. “We give them the quickest route with the best terrain based on the vehicles they are driving. We try to get them from point A to point B in the most expedient and safest way.”

Sgt. Enrique Villarreal, a native of Indio, Calif., enjoys his job because of the complexity inherent in helping Soldiers by mapping out most of Baghdad and the surrounding areas.

“Whenever I talk to someone I’ll ask them if they have maps for their given

patrol sector,” said Villarreal. “Then I ask them what kind of maps they have, have you gotten anything from us? If they haven’t then I tell them to stop by, and we will get them something that’s going to make their job easier. It’s upsetting that sometimes those guys don’t stop by. They don’t realize how much our products can help them. We can build a product specifically for each mission they do. They think they are just going to give us something they can get from supply.”

Sgt. Gary Worley credits the other topo teams in the division with helping his section to thrive by sharing information and resources.

“More people know about us now, so we are able to help more because people are coming to us, knowing we have the tools to help them succeed,” he said.

Purnell, a native of Kansas City, Mo., started out in an offshoot of topography that has changed much over his 14 years in the Army.

“I’ve gone from alcohol makers and cotton balls to fix your mistakes, to sticking a disc in a computer and having all the information brought up on the screen,” Purnell said.

Villarreal has had to gain quite a bit of new knowledge in his time serving his

country as well.

“A lot of people think of war in chessboard terms,” Villarreal said. “Pawns are basic soldiers, the king is the General. If you want to put our job into that equation, we would be the people who make the chessboard. Each piece is only allowed to move in a certain way. That’s what we do. We lay down a map and show people where they can move.”

The role of topo can play a part in keeping Soldiers safe while moving through out Baghdad.

“It’s the difference between life or death,” Purnell said. “Our products can help save lives. If they can take a route that’s less dangerous than Route Irish, and helps them get to their destination 10 minutes earlier, with less personnel, less insurgents less constricted urbanized areas, especially if it’s just going down there to pick up supplies. They won’t have to deal with the traffic on Irish.”

Purnell has a very succinct way of letting people know how their products can help any Soldier.

“Imagine how much better off Jessica Lynch would have been if she had an updated map that showed her exactly where she was at to help her and that convoy not make the wrong turn.”

Australian, U.S. Soldiers remember ANZAC Day

1LT Marietta Squire
HHC, 4-3 BTB PAO

Australian and U.S. Soldiers celebrated ANZAC Day April 25 at Forward Operating Base Union III.

ANZAC day commemorates the 90th anniversary of the Australian and New Zealander Army Corps conducting an amphibious assault at Gallipoli. The Australian and New Zealander Army Corps conducted the assault in conjunction with British, Canadian, and Indian troops. This operation is similar to the Australians as D-Day is to United States citizens.

The day was a celebration for multi-national forces. Americans, Australians, and Iraqis of all ranks, from private to general, came together to celebrate this day.

The morning began with a memorial service at 5:30 a.m. on the roof of the Ba’ath party headquarters. Amidst drizzling rain, wind, and darkness, tribute was paid to soldiers who have served their countries in wartime and peacetime. The memorial service was followed by a breakfast and Australian traditional game. 1st Lt. Patrick Southerland took part in the Australian game, “Two up.” The person in the middle of the circle, throws two coins into the air, trying to get either two heads, or two tails.

The day marked a celebration and tribute to all coalition forces

and their service to their nations.



1st Lt. Squire, 4-3 BTB

1st Lt. Patrick Southerland participates in a traditional Australian game “Two up” after a ceremony commemorating ANZAC Day April 25.



Soldiers from 4th Brigade Combat Team raise their right hands as Gen. Peter Schoomaker leads them through the oath of reenlistment May 7 at FOB Falcon.



Staff Sgt. Michael Baroni, C Co., 3/7 Inf., and Crestwood, Ky., native, receives the Purple Heart from Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker May 7 at FOB Falcon.

Army Chief of Staff visits Vanguard troops

Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper
4th BCT PA NCOIC

Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker visited Vanguard Soldiers at FOB Falcon May 7 to present seven with Purple Hearts and reenlist 29 others.

Before presenting the awards, Schoomaker said, "It's my pleasure and a great honor to do this today."

The recipients of the award were: 1st Lt.

Cameron Murphy, Headquarters and Headquarters, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment and Clovis, Calif., native; Staff Sgt. Michael Baroni, C Co., 3rd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt., and Crestwood, Ky., native; Spc. Douglas Fessenden, A Co., 3/7 Inf., and Brookline, N.H., native; Spc. Aric Mason, A Co. 1/184 Inf. and Temecula, Calif., native; Pfc. Daniel Bottom, D Co., 3/7 Inf., and Springfield, Ill., Native, and Pvt. Owen Halfman, A Co., 3/7 Inf., and a Sacramento,

Calif., native.

He told the reenlisting Soldiers that he is told every day from people around the United States that they are proud of the Soldiers serving in Iraq and thanked them for choosing to reenlist.

The Chief of Staff of the Army also saw a demonstration of the Buffalo Ironclaw by the 36th Engineer Group. The Buffalo is one of the ways the Army is combating the threat of improvised explosive devices. 

Continued from previous page

The logistics of the operation was the easy part. The hard part was getting the stubborn sheep out of the back of the truck to the families.

MacDonald, a police officer from Philadelphia, has not had much hands-on contact with sheep in the past.

"It's definitely a new experience," MacDonald said. "I don't know if the sheep knew what was going on, but there was no way they were going to cooperate with going to the families."

Besides helping the residents, MacDonald enjoyed the comedy inherent in a bunch of city boys wrangling sheep.

"We got to see the look on the company commander's face when we told him he had to hand the first sheep out," MacDonald said. "That and the sheep bumping into the Soldiers was pretty funny."

MacDonald enjoyed himself, but there were still hard parts involved in the mission.

"The crowds were the only difficult part," MacDonald said.



Pfc. Dan Balda

An Iraqi woman is excited to receive a sheep for her family during Operation Sheep Drop April 20. Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division gave sheep to needy Baghdad families.

"There are a lot of poor needy people in Baghdad, and whenever you're giving stuff out, there's never enough for everyone. You feel bad that you can't help everybody."

Herrera, a New York native, was glad to get outside of the FOB and help the people he flew halfway around the world to protect.

"I want to come out here and do stuff like this as much as I can," Herrera said. "I just like meeting people, seeing how the rest of the world lives. Being away from home is hard, but seeing how the people live here, and you get to put a smile on their face, that makes it all worthwhile."

MacDonald would like to do something along the lines of donating sheep in the future.

"We could probably do it bigger and better next time if we get the chance," MacDonald said. "We all like handing the sheep out better than the other animal donations we've had. "Donkeys and frozen chickens are a lot harder, believe me." 

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.

What's up Doc?

'Charlie Med' ready to keep Soldiers healthy

Pfc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

Traditionally, the title "doctor" is bestowed on those who have earned an advanced degree, whether it is medical or philosophy; either way, the term is used as a measure of respect.

In much the same way, medics in the military are affectionately known as "doc" because of the respect they are shown by their fellow troops.

Medics assigned to C Company, 703rd Forward Support Battalion are no different.

Capt. Matt Farishon, the company commander, entered the medical branch after enlisting in the combat arms during the Cold War.

"At that time in combat arms there's only so much I can do in a given situation, training wise," he said. "In medicine, you can see your impact on a daily basis as far as helping Soldiers. That self satisfaction of knowing that you're helping so many Soldiers and actually seeing it with your own eyes is what filled a lot of my career needs."

"Charlie Med's' mission is to provide level two combat healthcare to units at FOB Falcon. This includes approximately 5,500 Soldiers assigned to the 4th BCT as well as tenant units.

"We have a very young company, only six of us came over the last time," Farishon said. "We do a lot of training, but there is still that uncertainty that when you are under fire, or you get that first U.S. casualty. They have developed a huge sense of confidence knowing that they have the training and are able to use that training to save lives."

One grizzled veteran who has served as a doctor in the Army for 14 years manages to undergo new training all the time.

Lt. Col. Jeremiah Stubbs the battalion surgeon grew up on a farm helping the animals give birth to their young. While in school, his love for biology coupled with the guidance of a trusted teacher, nudged him towards practicing medicine.

Stubbs deployed from the Medical Activity Command at Fort Jackson, S.C., where he is a family practice doctor. Since he has been in Iraq, he has dealt with far more than he is used to.

"This is far beyond what I would nor-



Pfc. Dan Balda

Spc. Eric Ingram, a native of Dallas and a medic assigned to HHC, 3rd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt., checks an Iraqi Army Soldier's progress after taking shrapnel during a patrol. All the medics assigned to FOB Falcon support C Co., 703rd FSB in their mission.

mally see as far the trauma," Stubbs said. "I look at this as an opportunity for expansion because I don't get to do all the stuff I'm doing here back in garrison. At the same time we still get to take care of Soldiers. This is what really makes us Army physicians, real army doctors."

Back in garrison, Stubbs deals primarily with Initial Entry Training Soldiers and retirees. Here he is able to focus on more mission-specific care for the deployed Soldiers.

"By the time we get the Soldiers here, most everybody that's over here knows the dangers," Stubbs said. "We want to mitigate those dangers by keeping them healthy, functioning, keep 'em going and get them home safe."

Stubbs credits his Soldiers for helping him to succeed at his job.

"We have a great staff here including our mental health people, our chaplain, our (noncommissioned officers) that are keeping the Soldiers' spirits up and mentoring the younger Soldiers. I can give you pills all day long, but the thing that's going to keep the Soldiers going."

Although he is not directly assigned to 703rd, Staff Sgt. Ronald Diaz is one of

those Soldiers mentoring the uninitiated. Diaz is assigned to 1st Battalion 184th Infantry, a National Guard unit from Modesto, Calif. Like most of the medics assigned to his unit, Diaz works in the medical field as a civilian. The medics assigned to 1/184 support 703rd in many ways. Because the majority of the 1/184 medics are emergency medical technicians back in the states, they have all kinds of experience dealing with the trauma found in a war zone, Diaz said.

For Fairschon, there is nothing better than seeing his Soldiers do their job.

"When I see a casualty come in, and I watch my medics take care of him, going through all their steps such as IV's and bandaging wounds, whatever they have to do, calling a helicopter to get them to the CSH and then hearing that they have been stabilized, that is the most tremendous feeling of 'what I'm doing is worthwhile and making a difference,'" Fairschon said. "To me it means a lot, it's important for me to have my company in the mindset that what you're doing is for everybody because there isn't a single person back in the states that doesn't want their loved one to come back home." 

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” John 15:13

Cottonbalers remember two who were “on point”

Pfc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” John 15:13.

Lt. Col. David Funk began Cpl. Jacob Pfister and Spc. Kevin Wessel’s memorial service with these words, and from the outpouring of support and words of those involved with the ceremony, there were scores of Soldiers Pfister and Wessel could have given their lives for.

Funk, the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry’s commander referred to both men as hero’s, but apologized to the assembled mourners due to the fact that his limited infantryman’s vocabulary could not come up with a stronger word to ascribe to the two men.

Nonetheless, he did his best to illustrate the kind men that had laid down their lives in defense of their country and the Iraqi peoples.

“(Both men) were on point the day they died,” Funk said. “I mean that both literally and figuratively. They were on point for our nation for this Global War on Terrorism. As Cottonbalers, they were on point for the Iraqi people, patrolling the streets of Baghdad, everyday to ensure that this inexorable move towards democracy we have been witnessing will not slow down. As members of 1st Platoon, A Company they were on point for their squad mates, their friends, their brothers the day they died.”

Their brothers did their best to describe what Pfister and Wessel meant to them.

Funk thought that Pfister was everything a Soldier and a man should be. In the same fashion he was a superb infantry team leader as well as a loving and devoted husband to his wife Ashley who is pregnant with their first child, a girl who is due in June.

“Jake insisted on doing the hard jobs, he never shirked his duty,” Funk said. “It made the Soldiers around him work harder in an effort to keep up with him.”

“Cpl. Pfister has always been a hard charger, always in the front,” said Capt. Sallee, A Co.’s commander. “He was the con-



Photos by Pfc. Dan Balda

Soldiers assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division bow their heads during prayer at Pfister and Wessel’s memorial service. They were killed when an IED stuck their vehicle.

summate professional; physically strong, mentally alert and morally straight. He delayed his inevitable success at Ranger School in order to come on this deployment with the squad who he loved so much. Nevertheless, Cpl. Pfister lived the Ranger creed everyday.”

Sallee then turned his attention to Wessel.

“His initiative and enthusiasm were models for us all to follow,” Sallee said. “When most of us would take a knee in the sewage and trash piles while out on patrol, Wessel was probably in the prone. When most of us were satisfied with our knowledge, Wessel was seeking more. Spc. Wessel, what an honor it has been for all of us to know you.”

Cpl. Sciria took the podium to tell his fellow Cottonbalers about Pfister.

“He was a friend’s friend, for me, he was my best friend,” Sciria said. “We were brothers and he has in many ways influenced my life. He was a man of great character who would in a second help anyone in need. He had a way to make you feel great about yourself in his presence.”

Staff Sgt. Kern followed Sciria with an emotional tribute to the person that taught him more about being a leader than anybody could.

“I don’t think I’ll ever have the privilege of knowing a more motivated Soldier than Kevin Wessel,” Kern said. “The weasel as we knew him, didn’t join the Army for money. He didn’t spend his money on cars or going to the clubs. He didn’t own a car. What money he had was spent on two things; TA-50 and flight lessons. I don’t think I’ve ever met anybody that is so immersed in the military culture or more proud to be a Soldier.”

Fighting back tears, Kern addressed Wessel directly.

“You challenged me, you asked me questions that I had to go and research, I’m a better leader and a better person for having known you. My only regret is that I didn’t tell you how proud I was of you. Thank you for your selfless service and for giving your life in defense of our country, our freedom and our way of life. Spc. Wessel, I know you never thought I’d say this, but you’re my hero, and you always will be.”



Col. Edward Cardon, 4th BCT commander, says goodbye to two Vanguard Soldiers at their memorial service.

Some gave all...

Dragon Fighters pay homage to a 'model'

Pfc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

"You know what Lathers? I could have been the next Gap girl. I had a modeling contract and everything. But no, look at me I'm in this awful country, wearing (desert combat uniforms), carrying around a weapon wherever I go and fighting for my country," said Pfc. Ashley Lathers, a military policeman, 170th Military Police Company. "I can't count how many times Pfc. Huff said this to me day after day. Always with a smile and a laugh after she said it. Followed by, 'I wouldn't change where I'm at for anything.' That's the kind of person she was. In all honesty she was a model; a model Soldier."

Lathers was talking about her "sister," Pfc. Sam Huff, at Huff's memorial service, April 22. Huff was killed while returning from the al Dora police station when the vehicle she was traveling in was struck by an improvised explosive device.

According to her battalion commander, Lt. Col. James Switzer, she was not a typical Soldier.

"Within two weeks of her arriving in our unit, even I knew who she was," Switzer said. "Battalion commanders get to know their Soldiers for two reasons. They got in trouble or they are very unique individuals. Pfc. Huff was a unique individual. Her smile could light up a room. She could lighten the mood of any hardcore (non-commissioned officer) and even bring a smile to an old warrior's face."

Switzer told his fellow Soldiers that he had spoken to Huff's parents. They told him they knew their daughter might perish in combat, but that Huff felt she was doing what she always wanted to do; serve in the United States Army. Huff felt she was in the right place, doing the right thing, with the right people.

Lathers shared many fond memories of

Huff with her fellow Dragonslayers as well as the assembled mourners.

"If you knew Sam at all, you knew her two loves; dancing and her fiancé Nick," Lathers said. "That girl would dance any

world. But know this, she lived a life that many people only dream about."

Huff's team leader, Sgt. Sam James praised her for her beauty as well as her brains.

"Her thirst for knowledge sometimes overwhelmed me as a leader, leaving me scrambling to answer question after question," James said. "She was also a beautiful young lady, the kind that would turn heads in the mall."

James continued to extol the virtues of his Soldier.

"You would be hard pressed to find a Soldier that could learn and retain knowledge as fast as she did,"

James said. "If I wrote down every positive quality I'd want in a Soldier, Huff would still be better. She was the kind of Soldier that made being a leader in the Army fun."

Capt. Robert Matthews, Huff's company commander, described which of Huff's many qualities he will miss the most.

"She was a quiet professional who took her job seriously," Matthews said. "Her dedication to duty and pursuit of excellence was an example for us all to emulate. Sam was a brave and honorable woman. She did her duty without complaint and earned nothing but respect and admiration from those of us that served with her. Her death was tragic and has left a void that will never be filled."

Switzer mentioned that Huff will be laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery, an appropriate resting place for a young hero.

"I can bet you the sun will be shining that day (the day she will be laid to rest), and up in heaven a bunch of old warriors will be smiling." 



Pfc. Sam Huff, a military policeman assigned to 170th MP Co., in an undated photo. Huff was killed while on patrol when her vehicle was struck by an IED.

time she got the chance, I'd catch her dancing in our room, dancing down the hall. She danced with a confidence and grace most people lack. 18 is a tender age to leave this

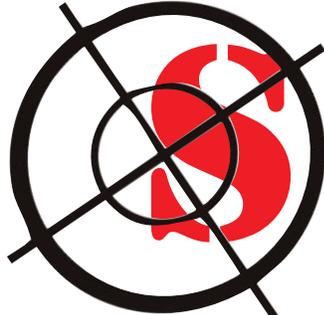
This war isn't over, nor has it begun
Each day it cost the lives of our daughters and sons
They leave behind loved ones and unfinished stories
Never to be washed away by our ears of mourning

It's hard to lose such a sweet caring friend
Even harder to admit, that it's really the end
Although to most it seems like an ending
But for her it's the dawn of a new beginning

We wish we had time to have said good bye
Though you're gone you are still by our sides
Never giving up, and fighting till the end
You were our sister, so much more than a friend

You have touched our lives in so many ways
We'll always remember you day after day
When we look to the stars, on a cold dark night
The brightest star shines with you never fading light

"I could have been the next Gap girl. I had a modeling contract and everything ...
In all honesty she was a model; a model Soldier."



HARPSHOOTERS

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



Courtesy Photos

(Above) Soldiers from Forward Support Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment rehearse nonlethal formations and tactics to control a crowd.

(Left) Spc. Jose DeFuentes from 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment and a Martinez, Calif., native, patrols the streets in the Karradah District.



Sgt. XXXXXX Thornton and Spc. XXXXX Curtis, both from FSC, 4/64, work to keep a humvee running.



(Above) An Iraqi Soldiers rushes forward as his fellow Soldier provides cover as they train to become the future "Defenders of the Green Zone" April 26 at Muthana Airfield.

(Below) Sgt. Brian Leiser from 1/184 Infantry and Valley Springs, Calif., native, lowers the hood after inspecting a vehicle.

Sgt. Chris Wilburn from 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, stands watch as the sun sets.

