



# Assault Battalion transports 25,000th passenger



Photo courtesy of 4th Battalion 3rd Aviation Brigade

SGT Joseph Duke(left), Charlie Company, 4th Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Assault) presents a Certificate of Achievement to Sgt. Cory Bonebrake, Bravo Company, 1-34 Signal Battalion, 256th Brigade. Sgt. Bonebrake became the 25,000 passenger flown by the battalion on May 25.

## Commander's Column:

The month of May brings with it good weather, graduations and an end of the school year for many. It also marks the unofficial start of summer and Memorial Day, which is a time to reflect and honor the memory of those that gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Memorial Day, a day unlike any other holiday, should serve as a reminder of why you chose to join the Army, and why you are here today. Memorial Day, is an American holiday and one that provides all of us with the opportunity to recognize those who have served in the Armed Forces.

Memorial Day as we know it, was not an official national holiday until 1971. It started as Decoration Day, and was established immediately following the Civil War, as a day to mourn, and honor the lives of those who fought and died during the Civil War. At the end of World War I Memorial Day, was expanded to honor all Americans who bravely served and died fighting for our country, dating back to the American Revolution.

Since the first shots fired at Concord, New Hampshire, to the Global War on Terrorism, countless Americans have risen to the challenge and answered the call to arms; a call which continues to

see **COMMANDER**, page 2

### Superman visits



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### 3-3 ARB Mechanics



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### Teddy Bear Drop



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## What do you do on your spare time?

*"I'm enrolled in college studying business management. All my spare time is devoted to studying."*



Sgt. 1st Class  
Gloria Bell, HHC  
Aviation Brigade



Spc. Christopher  
D. Cluever, 3rd  
Battalion, 3rd  
Aviation Regiment

*"I train to box. I do push-ups, sit-ups, run and some sparring. I work out six times a week so eventually I can step in the ring."*



CW2 Tanya  
Shuford, HSC  
603rd Aviation  
Support Battalion



Sgt. Richard  
Bowman, 3rd  
Battalion, 3rd  
Aviation Regiment

*"I watch a lot of movies, especially horror ones. I have over 150 movies with me."*

# Commander: a time to remember

*continued from page 1*

this very day. Memorial Day offers Americans, the opportunity to honor our nation's sons and daughters.

It provides us with an opportunity to thank those who have answered the call to arms, and to pause and reflect on those who serve our nation today.

I thank each and every one of you for your dedication and service to our nation. Your continued professionalism, commitment and dedication to duty is a tribute to your love of country and honors all those who have fought and sacrificed to preserve our rights and freedoms. Your efforts continue to make a difference and you are a key reason why the people of Iraq have a brighter future.

A sign of the commitment to duty and the type of dedication displayed by the Soldiers in this brigade, is highlighted by the number of Soldiers who have raised their hand and signed up for continued service to our nation. Since our deployment, 347 Falcon Soldiers have re-enlisted. Thank you for your continued commitment to this great nation and our Army!

I also want to thank our family members for the continued support of our Soldiers. Our success is a

direct result of your support. From the Revolutionary War, through the Civil War, and continuing with the Global War on Terror, families have played a critical role in the success of the mission. Like the countless families before, you too have rallied support on the home-front for our Soldiers on the frontlines. The amount of mail and care packages that arrive everyday lets the Soldiers know how much you care. While email makes communicating with family faster and more convenient, there is always that little bit of excitement and happiness on a Soldiers face when they receive a big box of goodies-just like Christmas!

I thank all the families back home and the Soldiers of the Falcon Brigade thank you and appreciate your continued support.

Finally, I want to congratulate all of those individuals who were promoted this month. Congratulations! You will be given increased responsibility and I challenge you to increase your attention to detail and enforcing standards-this is the key to being part of a disciplined force that accomplishes all tasks safely and to standard.

"WINGS OF THE MARNE"  
COL. TUGGLE

## Promotions

1-3 ARB  
Staff Sgt. Chris Green  
Sgt. Jer Dotterweich  
Sgt. James Purdom  
2-3 GSAB  
Staff Sgt. Brian Cork  
Sgt. John Romanello  
Sgt. Travis Rondeau  
3-3 ARB  
Sgt. Leopold Garcia  
Sgt. Pedro Portoreal  
Staff Sgt. Chris Waddell  
4-3 AHB  
Staff Sgt. J Harris  
603rd ASB  
Sgt. Andrew Chiu  
Sgt. Joey Gruber  
Sgt. Larry Hailes  
Sgt. Christopher Semler  
HHC  
Staff Sgt. Jesse Fennell

## Re-Enlistments

SSG Johnny Arguello	SGT Richard Chambers
SPC Ifeanyi Rapu	SGT Myrna Ojeda
SSG Richard Marsh	SSG Gahn Haigler
SPC Decarcus Mcmillan	SGT Megan Williams
SPC Jose Barba	SPC Ian McCarthy
SPC Aaron Hartley	SPC Jay Bradshaw
SPC Judith Beltowski	SPC Robert Crisp
SGT Richard Bowman	SPC Jose Rodrigueztorres
SSG Richard Laplant	SPC David Morley
SPC Lucas Hicok	SPC Kenneth Brooks
SGT Aaron Downey	SSG Julius Chatters
SGT Brandon Shafikhani	SSG Letito Tucker
SPC Justin Wagner	SPC Craig Kauzlaric
SSG Kenneth Robinson	SSG Timothy Williams
SGT Stephen Hammontree	SGT Blanca Alfarolopez
	SGT Michael Adler

# Camp Welcomes Superman

## 'Ambassadors of Hollywood' fly into Taji

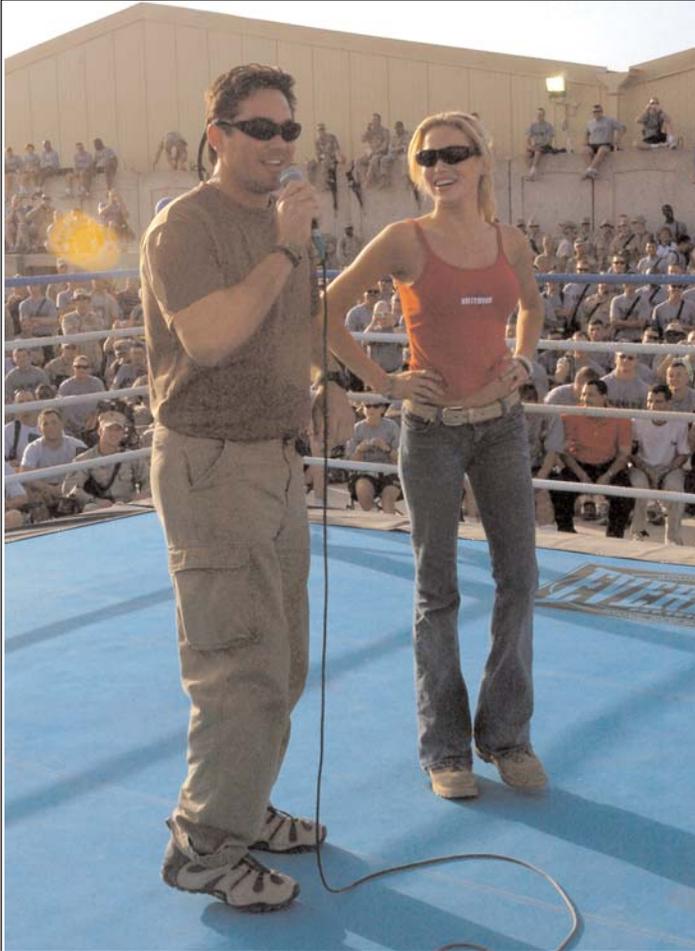


Photo by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

**Hollywood actors Dean Cain and Amanda Swisten give words of appreciation for the Troops during 'Taji Fight Night' at Camp Taji May 22. Cain and Swisten visited Soldiers in Iraq as part of a two week 'Ambassadors of Hollywood' tour.**

**by Spc. Derek Del Rosario**

Finally the phrase, "It's a bird..It's a plane..It's Superman!" can be correct in all aspects.

A Blackhawk helicopter transporting Hollywood actors Dean Cain (best known for his role as Superman in *Lois and Clark*) and Amanda Swisten (*The Girl Next Door*, *American Wedding*) arrived here as part of the "Ambassadors of Hollywood" tour on May 22.

The Tour was an MWR event to boost morale by giving service members a chance to meet and interact with the celebrities. Camp Taji was the last visit on the two week tour. Capt. David J. Brodsky, HHC Aviation Brigade S-1 and event coordinator, planned

the evening events for the actors.

"I had to consider both the Soldier and the actors in my planning," said Brodsky. "I wanted max participation from Soldiers and also wanted to make it fun for the celebrities. The actors needed an environment where they can exchange and interact with Soldiers."

Upon arrival, the actors got a chance to eat and talk with Soldiers at the Dining facility. The conversations that Cain has had with Soldiers during the Tour have reaffirmed his thoughts of the teamwork and brotherhood among Soldiers.

"It is amazing to see the spirit and morale of the troops," said Cain. "I come from a military background, but seeing the soldiers first hand in the war zone is amazing. It reminds me of when I used to play football--these soldiers have so much camaraderie and teamwork."

After giving Soldiers a chance for autographs and photo opportunities, the actors got a front row seat at "Taji Fight Night," the camp's weekly boxing event. The celebrities were welcomed as special guests and were given a chance to share their appreciation for the troops.

"This (the tour) has given us a great opportunity to show our support for the troops," Swisten said to hundreds of Fight Night spectators. "We are going to go back to the States and tell everyone what a great job you (the service members) are doing."

The tour was an eye opening experience for Cain, who learned more about Iraq and its liberators.

"It's a phenomenal experience. I got a chance to see two different worlds--the one you see on television and the one you see first hand," said Cain. "These Soldiers are not automatons; they are regular, hard working people, fighting for our liberty."

The ambassadors of Hollywood provided a positive boost to Soldier morale. Brodsky also feels it was a visit the actors enjoyed as well.

"The visit turned out well. The Soldiers had a chance to interact, take pictures and get autographs from the actors," Brodsky said. "The celebrities had fun as well. They told me it was the best stop they had on their two week tour. It was a very nice gesture for them to come and show their support."

Showing support for the troops was an honor for Cain, who feels that the people serving in Iraq are the real heroes.

"On television I played one of the greatest superhero icons," he said. "But the truth is that these people are the real heroes, and I completely acknowledge and respect them."

# Modern day Riveters: 3-3 Attack Bn Mechanics keep Apaches flying high

by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

Everyone knows Rosie the Riveter. You might not recognize the name, but you most likely have seen the picture. Rosie the Riveter is most famous for her poster--a female in blue overalls, rolling up her sleeve, flexing her bicep and exclaiming, "We can do it!" During WWII, Rosie the Riveter was a figure that paid homage to the females who worked in factories and shipyards building planes, fixing ships and turning wrenches. Rosie symbolized how women didn't mind getting dirty to help the war efforts. This message holds strong today, especially for two female mechanics in Delta Co. 3rd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Attack Reconnaissance).

On the surface, Specialists Melissa D. Crawford and Damaris Young look poles apart--Crawford stands 6-foot-1 while Young is 4-foot-10. What they do share however, is that they are both hard working, female mechanics doing their job in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Both Crawford and Young had different motives for being a helicopter mechanic. Young's choice to join was mostly driven by patriotism, while Crawford was inspired by her son.

"I have great pride for my country; I wanted to get deployed," Young said. "Working on helicopters is a great thrill for me. I am very interested in how helicopters work, and working on them also makes me feel important," she added.

"I wanted to be a mechanic for my son," said Crawford. "We were driving by Fort Hood one day, and my son was so excited to see a helicopter fly by. He wanted to see one up close, so I decided that I wanted to be a mechanic so that his wish would one day come true."

Young surprises most people when she tells them she maintains Apaches. Her fellow workers sometimes tease her for being uncharacteristic of what most people see as a typical mechanic.

"No one believes me when I say I'm a mechanic. Some of my buddies tease me when I can't reach high places and need a stepstool," Young said. "But I'm a tomboy. I've been working with my Dad on cars and motorcycles since I was a child."

Before joining the Army, Crawford wasn't really exposed to mechanics. She graduated with a Bachelors degree in Computer Science and held mostly office jobs. The extent of her experience was helping her father work on the car, but it was a far stretch from working an Apaches. For Crawford, she gained a lot of confidence as a mechanic during Operation Iraqi Freedom I.

"When I got my first certificate of achievement, that's when I felt like a real mechanic," said Crawford. "During the first deployment here in Iraq, the chain of command really noticed the hard work we (the unit) put in and they let us know how proud they were."

Females are rare in the mechanics field, so working in an environment made up of mostly males was daunting at first for Crawford, but she now has a



Photo by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

**Specialists Damaris A. Young (in front) and Melissa D. Crawford represent the two female mechanics of Delta Co. 3rd Battalion 3rd Aviation Regiment.**

strong bond with her fellow coworkers.

"They were scared of offending me at first, so they would often watch what they would say around me," said Crawford. "You have to have a sense of humor as a female in this line of work. We joke and laugh together now. They are like my brothers. To them I'm not just 'some female,' I'm Crawford."

The mechanics of Delta co. must work together in order to handle their huge workload. The battalion is flying six times more

**see MECHANICS, page 10**

# 603rd Sgts sponsor 'Taji fight night'



Photo by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

**"Let's get ready to RUMBLE!!" shouted Staff Sgt. Vernon Williams, HSC 603rd ASB, to introduce the first Camp Taji Fight Night.**

**by Spc. Derek Del Rosario**

The air was thick with anticipation as music pumped through speakers placed around the ring. Spectators brought out their folding chairs, some sat on top of connex boxes or trucks just to get a better view. This was the setting on May 8 when hundreds of Soldiers from Camp Taji gathered together earlier this month to see the action - the blow-for-blow excitement that is Camp Taji's Fight Night.

The boxing event paired servicemembers around the camp by gender and weight classes for eight bouts. Each bout consisted of three 3-minute rounds. An event of such proportions didn't come without a great deal of preparation, both in terms of the event and preparing the boxers. Two sergeants in 603rd Aviation Support Battalion (ASB) got the ball rolling on the event, training boxers and setting up the Camp Taji Fight Night.

"During my last deployment, I would watch the boxing fight night at Camp Udari," said Sgt. David M. Joseph, Headquarters Supply Company (HSC) 603rd Food Service NCO. "When Command Sgt. Maj. Stidley (Aviation Brigade CSM) said he could get us a ring, I knew I wanted to do something similar."

Stidley sought out Joseph, as well as fellow boxing fanatic Staff Sgt. Vernon Williams Jr., HSC 603rd ASB Support Operations Transportation NCOIC, to organize the fight nights since they both are former boxers and had prior experience organizing a boxing event.

"We wanted to provide a stress relief for both the boxers and the audience," said Williams. "This event was an opportunity to get people out of their rooms, watch competition and bring people together."

Joseph and Williams were the main organizers of the event, but they attribute its success to many people who volunteered their help. The Fight Nights was a non-MWR event, so they had to depend on the volunteerism of fellow Soldiers to make sure the event could occur.

"Safety was our biggest challenge," Joseph said. "We don't want anyone to get hurt, so we couldn't have done this without the help of a medical team to make sure that safety was always in mind. They would check out the fighters before, during and after the match to make sure no one was seriously injured."

Along with medical team, Joseph and Williams depended on volunteers who handled lighting, audio and a Disc Jockey for the event.

To help train potential boxers and even possibly get more competitors for future Fight Nights, Joseph and Williams provide boxing training to servicemembers around Camp Taji. Five days a week, Williams and Joseph coach trainees on cardio workouts specific to boxers, and give boxing trainees instruction on how to box.

"The training is open to everyone on post. It's a great opportunity for people who want to get in shape," said Williams. "Whatever your goal is--to lose weight, get in shape, learn how to box or to relieve some stress--we try to provide a program to help people achieve their goals."

Joseph feels that coaching and boxing instruction is his calling. Joseph feels helping others is his greatest motivation.

"I get my energy from them (the trainees), it's what gets me up in the morning," said Joseph. "I show them all I know because I want everyone involved to take something out of it."

Williams says that the Fight Night is ultimately for servicemembers. To be able to give back to those working hard during the deployment is a great personal accomplishment for him.

"The Fight Night is all about the morale of the Soldiers; it's for everyone who is fulfilling their role to complete the mission," he said. "I feel I have achieved a personal milestone, helping organize this event for the Soldiers. Seeing all those people in the crowd was such a great feeling of accomplishment."

# Aviation Soldiers in Action

photos by Spc. Derek Del Rosario



Specialists Cliff Widget (left) and Pedro Colon, both of Alpha Co. 603rd ASB, prep an engine to get ready for maintenance.



Pfc. Daniel A. Duncan(left), Delta Co. 1-3 ARB, and Spc. Matt S. McDaniel, Alpha co. 1-3 ARB, work on maintenance of an Apache helicopter.



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Mike B. Doyer, A Co. 3rd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment, checks the Identification cards of dining facility patrons.



(left to right) Spc. Christina Aaron, Spc. Joshua Nielson and Staff Sgt. Charles Wilkinson, all of the brigade Commo shop, sing the "dog-faced Soldier" song.



Command Sgt. Maj. Stidley presents a Mother's Day basket to Spc. Felicia Liburd, HSC 603rd, the youngest mother in the Brigade. Liburd has a 4 year old daughter, Shikeria.



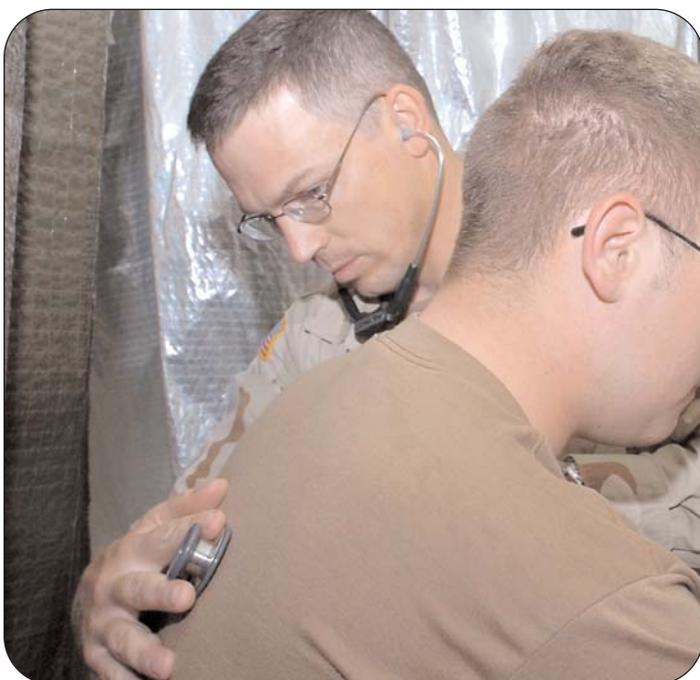
Spc. Rick Anderson, Charlie co. 4-3 AHB crew chief, prepares the M240H prior to gunnery training.



Ethan "Quiet Man" Orneals (left), 3-3 ARB, exchanges blows with Jesus "The Shocker" Ramirez, Alpha Co. 603rd ASB.



Jeris "The Stinger" Casey, HSC 603rd ASB, comes in with a right hook against his opponent Derek "Big Game" Hobbs, Alpha Co. 603rd ASB.



Dr. (Maj.) Scott Pocha, HHC Aviation Brigade, gets the heart rate of a patient at the brigade medical center.

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## 2-3 General Support rewarded in Fifties

### Soldiers recognized with 'Baghdad 50'



Photo by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

(left to right) Specialists Jeremy A. Connors, Jose L. Trujillo, and Sakpraneth Khim, all of Charlie Co. 2-3 GSAB, stand in line to receive the "Baghdad 50" certificate by Lt. Col. Bannon, battalion commander, to recognize their safe execution of aircraft maintenance.

#### by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion 3rd Aviation Regiment (General Support) are being recognized for their efforts-in increments of 50. Since arriving to Camp Taji, the command group of 2-3 GSAB recognizes battalion Soldiers with the 'Baghdad 50,' an award that recognizes mission support and safety practices that are completed in 50 consecutive units. This can include 50 hours of consecutive combat flight hours, 50 days worth of mission completion, or 50 days of accident free and successful aircraft maintenance. Earlier this month, approximately 30 Soldiers were awarded the Baghdad 50 during a presentation in the 2-3 GSAB Hangar.

Lt. Col. Robert Bannon, 2-3 GSAB commander, presented the Baghdad 50 certificates and special recognition to battalion Soldiers in recognition of their safety practices

and mission completion.

"We have great Soldiers, aviators and mechanics in this battalion. The Baghdad 50 is designed to show our appreciation and acknowledge excellence in safety on land and air," said Bannon. "Since being here we have put in approximately 3000 total flight hours and transported approximately 20,000 Soldiers and 1.5 million pounds of cargo-that's a lot of business. It couldn't have been done without good maintenance and safety practice."

The Soldiers of 2-3 GSAB have been working hard for this first half of deployment, putting in around 1300 night vision goggle flight hours and 1300 hours of day time flying. In addition, Blackhawk maintainers of the battalion have completed around twenty 100-hour inspections and eight 250-hour inspections. These are all very admirable accomplishments, but

the most important thing to Chief Warrant Officer 4 George M. Arthurs, battalion safety officer, is that these milestones were accomplished in a safe manner.

"The Baghdad 50 represents how unit assets have been working in a very efficient manner with safety always in mind," said Arthurs. "The NCOs are doing an outstanding job. Standards are being met and safety is always being followed. It means a lot to these Soldiers to be recognized for their effort in such a demanding and harsh environment."

The Soldiers continue to work hard and recognition for their efforts has a positive affect on their morale, said Spc. Jose L. Trujillo, Blackhawk mechanic in Charlie Co. 2-3 GSAB and one recipient of the Baghdad 50.

"This award just shows us that we are doing our jobs well and we are being recognized for it," said Trujillo. Safety is paramount when it comes to being a helicopter mechanic, he added.

Baghdad 50 recipient Spc. Jeremy A. Connors, Chinook mechanic in Charlie Co. 2-3 GSAB, cannot agree more that safety is the most important aspect to keep in mind for a mechanic.

"The job always needs to be done with safety in mind. We are looking out for our buddies out there," said Connors. "One loose bolt could mean the difference, so we are always working hard to make it safe for the pilots."

Bannon challenged the battalion Soldiers to continue their hard work throughout the rest of their deployment.

"In this business, you are only as good as your last mission," said Bannon. "As long as the Soldiers continue to do their jobs and mission safely, they will continued to be recognized."

# Operation Teddy Drop: 'Airborne Teddy Bears' for Iraqi kids

by *Spc. Derek Del Rosario*

They can be seen parachuting down into various areas around Baghdad. A special unit created during Operation Iraqi Freedom III, whose mission is to bring smiles to the faces of Iraqi children. These airborne "Soldiers" are actually "Teddy Troopers" and "Para-Bears," stuffed animals with makeshift parachutes jumping as part of Operation Teddy Drop.

The commander of this operation is Chief Warrant Officer 4 Randy M. Kirgiss, pilot for Charlie Co. 4th Battalion 3rd Aviation Regiment (Assault Helicopter). He started the operation as a way to impact the lives of Iraqi children. He began the operation in mid-April, inspired by previous humanitarian efforts he witnessed, as well as Col. Gail Halvorsen, the 'Berlin Candy Bomber' who dropped candy to German children during the Berlin Airlift.

"I got the idea from a lot of my friends who conducted humanitarian missions on some of my previous deployments," said Kirgiss. "In Bosnia, I saw school supplies donated; in Kosovo, Teddy Bears were given out. I wanted to model something after the Candy Bomber who parachuted bags of candy to kids. It was from this the idea that Operation Teddy Drop began."

In order for Operation Teddy Drop to get off the ground, Kirgiss needed support from his chain of command, unit, friends and family to help him gather stuffed animals. He received complete support to help him commence his humanitarian efforts.

"Capt. Kirk (Charlie Co. commander) and Lt. Col. Haraldsen (4-3 AHB commander) were very helpful, they wanted this to happen," Kirgiss said. "They were very supportive, and they helped me brainstorm ideas to make the operation run safely and smoothly."

In conjunction with missions he goes on, Kirgiss brings boxes of stuffed animals with makeshift parachutes along with him. When he sees a child down below, he instructs a crew member to drop a parabear.

"There is a mission to be done, but dropping bears doesn't take away from that mission," Kirgiss said. "We have the assets to do both our mission and execute Operation Teddy Drop effectively."

Kirgiss originally told a group of about eight friends and family members about the operation. He received help in the form of donated stuffed animals and parachute supplies. This original network of eight grew immensely, and Kirgiss began to receive donations from everywhere around the States, receiving donations such as old parachutes to boxes of Teddy Bears. Kirgiss is even getting a donation from



Photo by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

**Spc. Benjamin L. Kenepke, C co. 4-3 AHB crew chief, prepares a 'Teddy Trooper' for its descent while on route to Baghdad. 'Operation Teddy Drop' is a humanitarian effort that gives Teddy Bears to Iraqi children.**

a well-known Teddy Bear manufacturer.

"Originally, I just wanted my friends and families to look into their kid's closet to find old teddy bears to donate," said Kirgiss. "When unit members started talking and my friends started talking, through word of mouth it just got out and now I get donations from everywhere."

Kirgiss will spend a lot of his off time, usually at night, making the parachutes for the Teddy Troopers. The recruits come in all shapes and sizes, so specialized parachutes usually have to be made. Using material from old, donated parachutes, Kirgiss makes the parachute that is best suited for his troopers so they can complete their mission. It takes Kirgiss

see *TEDDY DROP*, page 10

# Mechanics vital to Apache mission

*continued from page 4*

than they did in the rear, so team cohesion is needed to help maintain the Apaches. Young practices a strong work ethic when working in delta co.

"In a way I have to prove myself as a mechanic," said Young. "I continue to work hard and hold my own weight, I don't mind getting dirty. I will do whatever it takes to get the job done."

Crawford understands that being a female mechanic can come with labels. When someone challenges her abilities, Crawford lets her actions take care of the pigeon-holing.

"You let them talk their trash and then you correct them with action," said Crawford. "I've gotten used to the trash-talk from people who think I can't do the job or handle it. I just show them up by working better and faster."

The entire company has been working better and faster, as the battalion puts in more than 2000 flight hours a month, a feat that couldn't be done without the efforts of the dedicated mechanics of Delta co.

"We play a huge role in the Apaches, they couldn't fully function without maintenance," said Crawford. "And without Apaches, it would all fall on the infantrymen. Apaches are needed to help on convoys, prevent ambushes and react to fire."

Young also recognizes the importance of mechan-



Photo by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

**Specialists Melissa Crawford (left) and Damaris Young work on an Apache rotorhead.**

ics to the Aviation Brigade, and the dedication it takes to support the mission.

"As a mechanic, working hard and staying motivated is essential for mission completion," Young said. "The lives of those two (Apache) pilots are in our hands, as well as the Soldiers they save when they support infantrymen on the ground."

## 'Teddy Drop' brings smiles to kids

*continued from page 9*

around three minutes to make each chute. The Teddy Drop unit's largest recruit jumped on May 21 as part of the largest parabear drop in the unit's short history.

"We received eight boxes of donated stuffed animals one day. The boxes stacked to my ceiling," said Kirgiss. "The following day we dropped over 200 stuffed animals, including the largest one we have ever received--a bear that was about 3 feet tall and weighed around six pounds. I needed to make a special chute for that trooper."

Kirgiss tries to get the plush toys to all kids, but his main aim is the poorer Iraqi kids in the countryside.

"It can be a safety hazard to drop them in the city. We don't want kids running into the streets

to get them," said Kirgiss, also the safety officer of the company. "When we can, we try to send the bears to urban and poorer areas, and for each kid we see we send down a bear so there is no fighting among the children."

Sending these Parabears on their mission is very fulfilling for Kirgiss. For him, he enjoys seeing the smile on the kids faces when they get a hold of their new, stuffed trooper.

"It's a great thing to see even from 200 feet above," Kirgiss said. "When we see those kids wave and we send down a bear, most kids will not know what it is at first. Some hide behind their parents, some stay back in hesitancy, but once they see that parachute open, they know what it is and go running towards it. Some even catch them before they hit the ground."

Over 900 Parabears have bravely jumped since the start of the operation. It is Kirgiss' hope to continue to have the Operation conducted for the duration of this deployment, and hopefully pass on the operation to the next aviation unit that comes to Taji. For Kirgiss, it is a personal gratifying experience to be a part of the operation, and an operation he hopes will have an impact on the future.

"It is something I find very fun and constructive. Talking about it also helps me stay grounded to my two young children," he said. "I can't help but think that somewhere down the line we might be influencing the future decision makers of Iraq. This operation is only a small way to show that we are humane and compassionate. We are Soldiers, but we are human as well."

# 1-3 Attack Bn remembers Holocaust

by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

When the US military invaded Iraq and brought down Saddam's regime, it marked the end of that era of evil—a time when Saddam subjected his people to poisonous gas, torture and death. But the atrocity of these modern times is not unique—history has had its share of eras of violence and bloodshed. During a ceremony on May 8, Soldiers here at Taji remembered those who suffered in one of the biggest acts of violence in world history.

The 1st Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Attack Reconnaissance) sponsored the "Days of Remembrance" ceremony as a way to pay respects to the victims of the Holocaust. The ceremony also marked 60 years since the liberation of the Nazi death camps which took the lives of more than six million Jews.

"Today we remember the victory in Europe, when 60 years ago the Nazis surrendered," said Lt. Col. Pedro G. Almeida, 1-3 ARB commander, in the ceremonies opening remarks. "We also pay



Photo by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

**Maj. Robert L. Littman, Aviation Brigade S-6, was the guest speaker at the "Days of Remembrance" ceremony May 8.**

tribute to Holocaust survivors. We will never forget the sacrifice of the victims of the Holocaust."

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Angel Gutierrez, 1-3 ARB equal opportunity representative and main organizer of the event, made a flyer for the ceremony that depicted a lone tree on an island. Underneath the picture was the quote, "Trees don't talk, but they have a great deal to say, and one of the most amazing things a tree says is about survival."

"During the Holocaust, Jews couldn't speak for themselves,"

said Gutierrez. "But they still stayed strong, and their strength is a great lesson learned as we try to spread democracy throughout Iraq."

Maj. Robert L. Littman, Avn Brigade S-6, was the guest speaker for the observance. He drew upon the initiative of America to help during WWII to parallel the fight for Iraq's freedom.

"Imagine if Soldiers didn't fight away from home during WWII. America took on that challenge and were successful," Littman said. "We confronted evil with action, and we must remember that lesson while here in Iraq."

May 8 marked the day to remember the Holocaust, but for Littman, the evil that was ended on that day 60 years ago is not forgotten as the US continues to fight for freedom today.

"The evil of the Holocaust is the same evil we saw on September 11 and during Saddam's regime," said Littman. "We remember the Holocaust everyday by continuing America's legacy in the fight against evil."

## 1-3 Attack Bn Pilots foil terrorist attack

All the training and experience paid off for two AH-64 crews from C Co. 1st Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Attack Reconnaissance) when they disrupted a potential terrorist attack on May 15.

While providing security to ground forces from the 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, the crews spotted what later was determined to be an improvised rocket launcher.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jerry Frye, 1-3 ARB Safety Officer, was one of the pilots who saw the rocket launcher.

"We were on a counter-mortar mission when we received a request to provide aerial security for ground forces," said Frye. "On the way back to our mission, we saw an object that just didn't look right. We sent the grid to our ground forces and they found that it was a rocket launcher."

The Soldiers of 1-3 ARB continue to make huge strides during the war on terror. They're hard work and dedication is recognized by leadership within the brigade.

"The brigade has a talented group of aviators whose sole purpose is to support the Soldiers on the ground," said Maj. Mike Musiol, 1-3 ARB Executive Officer and one of the pilots in the operation. "We were fortunate to locate a launcher that was going to be used against our troops or the Iraqi Army and prevent that from happening. We'll continue to make every effort to be in the correct place at the critical time and influence the outcome of each engagement."

Frye also feels that presence of Apaches is a great asset to ground troops. For Frye, the ability to help the ground forces keeps morale high within the battalion.

"I see morale is high when I talk with Soldiers across the battalion," said Frye. "The crew chiefs and pilots are seeing their hard work play out in a wartime environment. They are all busy because the operation tempo is high, but it helps morale when they see they are making a difference in helping ground forces."

After the launcher was found, the Soldiers secured the area, and an explosives team safely disposed of the rocket launcher.

## SAFETY CORNER: '5-25' for IED awareness

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 is kicking 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 Egland, 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.

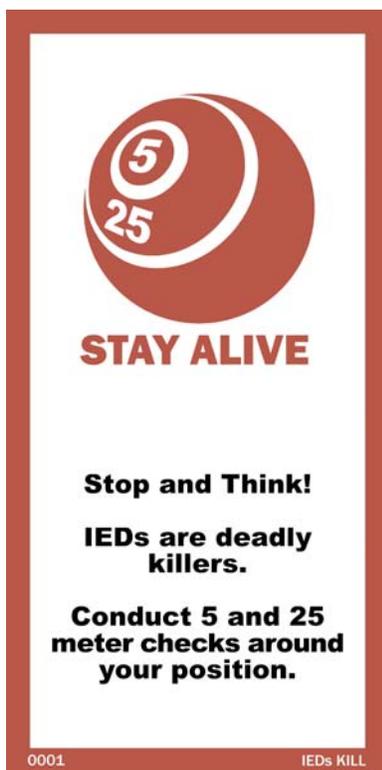
The deadly devices are considered a highly effective means of killing people because they can quickly be set up anywhere and be set to blow at any time. They have been disguised as virtually everything from tree trunks and dead animals to bicycles and pregnant women. Royal Australian Air Force Group 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."

Egland 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 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 [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."

"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 position. 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."

"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."