



DISPATCH

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Task Force Liberty Guardians that never sleep

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Peter K. Towse
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FORWARD OPERATING BASE GABE, IRAQ --There are no walls here, just some patched razor wire on mounds of dirt and sand. There are no attack helicopters patrolling the sky, just a few lonely guard shacks atop cement towers ... no elaborate fortifications, just tents and a small number of battle-ridden buildings.

But Forward Operating Base (FOB) Gabe has a secret; a very loud secret. Metal behemoths, machines of formed steel, called Paladins, are the walls of this base and draw the line in the sand—seemingly beckoning to anti-Iraqi forces to cross it.

Soldiers of Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, stand ready and resolved to protect FOB Gabe and guard other forward operating bases as well.

"Our mission is threefold," said Cpt. Joshua A. Snyder, commander of Headquarters, Headquarters Battery and a native of Carlyle, PA. "We provide [fire] support for missions outside the FOB and provide counter-fire against insurgent mortar and rocket attacks. We also provide [fire] support for Forward Operating Bases Warhorse and Scunion and the Iraq cities of Baqubah and Balad."

Weighing 31 tons, the 155mm Paladin stands motionless waiting for the command to release the fury held within it—enough fire power to level a small city.

"This is the main artillery piece of the Army...it is the Cadillac of guns", said Staff Sgt. Hefence C. Lubrin, a native of Pembroke Pines, FL, and gun chief of fifth section. "We have to make sure that if anyone goes out the gate we have to be ready to support them."

In the early hours, they get their chance—insurgents launched a mortar round just north of Baqubah,

Iraq in the hopes of hitting Forward Operating Base Warhorse, not knowing that 6 miles away, the crew of the Paladin wait in the last shadows of dawn.

The radio in gun five comes alive. "Fire mission comin' down!" says Staff Sgt. Vincent Anderson, the fire direction control noncommissioned officer in charge from Fort Pierce, FL. Within seconds, fire coordinates flash across the automatic fire control system. In unison, Lubrin and his crew yell "Fire mission!"

Lubrin's crew jumps to action and flow over the controls with the harmony of an orchestra to bring the Paladin to life. The driver of the Paladin and a native of Fort Worth, TX, Pfc. Thomas P. Johnson jumps in the driver's hatch and revs the engine to 1000 rpm as Lubrin turns on the hydraulics and raises the tube. Pfc. Luke F. Connelly, Number 1 man for fifth section from Wautoma, WI, prepares the 100 pound projectile for placement into the tube.

"Permission to ram", Connelly says to the chief. Lubrin confirms the round and gives the command to ram. Connelly rams the round into the tube and steps back as the gunner, Spc. Christopher L. McCall, a native of Mobile, AL cuts the gun powder, verifies the cut and charge with the chief and places it into the tube and yells "I see red!" letting everyone know that the powder is in correctly and the breach is ready to close.

Lubrin gives the command to close the breach. "Gun laid on target," Lubrin says.

"Permission to prime and hook up," Connelly says, and Lubrin gives the okay to prime the cannon and hook up the lanyard. Eleven seconds have passed as Lubrin, with his hand raised in the air, awaits the final approval to unleash the deadly weapon.

He receives the order and brings his arm down, yelling "Number five, FIRE!"

The silence of the morning is broken as the Paladin fires. Smoke and fire fill the air as the ground trembles with a terrifying power. The cannon rocks as the tube is slammed back and the breach is opened.

Inside the smoke filled gun, the crew is ready with another round and within seconds another round goes down range. Then another is

fired. Four rounds in all are fired toward the enemy.

As the smoke clears, the sun breaks the horizon. The crew hears mission complete over the radio and the chief orders everyone to stand down. The crew gives a sigh of relief as the tube is moved back into place and the Goliath waits again.

"We come in, we occupy, we fire," Lubrin said. "It is that simple."



A 155mm Paladin howitzer with 1st Battery, 10th Field Artillery, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Liberty, stands ready for a fire mission at Forward Operating Base Gabe.

Soldiers provide medical care to local Iraqis

By Capt. Heidi Munro,
Company C, 145th Support Battalion

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, IRAQ — Task Force Liberty Soldiers and local Iraqis worked together to provide healthcare to two villages near Dibbis, Iraq.

The Medical and Dental Assistance Visit was a humanitarian mission organized by Capt. Travis Weiszhaar, physician assistant for Task Force 1-148 Field Artillery. Weiszhaar began planning this event several months ago by first identifying an area of need.

"We did a number of patrols to different villages, talked with the Muktars and local leaders, and enlisted the help of local healthcare professionals," said Weiszhaar. "Two sites in particular were found lacking basic health care access, and identified as ideal locations."

The two day visit was held in mid-April in the Arab village of Abu Karja and in the Kurdish village of Shahal.

"The event was quite successful," said Weiszhaar. "Over 350 medical and dental patients were seen."

Treatment was provided for acute illness and injuries, arrangements were made for the chronically ill, and referrals were made for specialty consults and surgery. Childhood immunizations were administered, and blood was screened for malaria. In addition, about 80 children were given instruction on dental hygiene.

Medical professionals supporting the visit from the 116th BCT Medical Team included Capt. Weiszhaar, Capt. Heidi Munro, physician assistant, and Capt. Jeffrey Kesling, dentist, both from C Co., 145th Support Battalion. Iraqi professionals included two physicians and two dentists from the Dibis area. Additionally,

there were medics and dental technicians, nurses, lab technicians, and administrative staff from the 116th and the local community.

"The majority of medications were provided as donations by clinics and hospitals in the Pocatello and Rexburg area, as well as the Dibis clinic," said Weiszhaar. "There were also many gift donations from anysoldier.com, and the 'Beanie Baby Brigade.'"

According to the providers, the visit proved to be more than just medical care. It provided a demonstration of diversity and cooperation in many areas.

"The Badger and Outlaw teams of the 148 FA provided security in conjunction with nearly 80 Iraqi army and Iraqi police," said Weiszhaar. "Together they re-conned the area, provided QRF [quick reaction force] for medical staff, transported patients to the site, and provided crowd control and inner security."

Combined forces set up for the event, and conducted a "hands across the desert" clean up afterwards. Over the course of two days, the American Soldiers worked closely with the Iraqi military as well as both Arab and Kurdish men, women and children.

Capt. Erick Wiedmeir, Forward Operating Base Dibis commander, was pleased with the outcome.

"Overall, it was a success for combined operations between our medical team and theirs, and our security forces and theirs," he said. "It was also good to see the interaction between the Kurds and the Arabs. I would like to see us do this more often."

According to Capt. Weiszhaar, "there are areas that are in need of health care. This is an opportunity for local providers and coalition forces to come together to provide basic health care, identify chronic problems, and provide education. It is our hope that every Iraqi

individual, especially the children, have the opportunity to receive quality healthcare as this country continues to recognize and respect the many needs of its great citizens."

This event was the fifth major assistance visit for the 116th BCT. Similar smaller events have been ongoing with the 163rd Infantry Battalion.

Providing medical support to the Iraqi people is part of the 116th BCT's mission in Iraq, which also includes establishing security, assisting Iraq's new government, supporting economic development and facilitating communications.



Capt. Jeffrey Kesling, a 116th Brigade Combat Team dentist, teaches a group of children proper dental hygiene procedure during a medical and dental assistance visit to Abu Karja and Shahal, Iraq, in April.

Suspected terrorist cell leader surrenders to Iraqi army



Capt. Hussein Ali Suleman, commander of Company C, 201st Iraqi Army Battalion with his soldiers. Capt. Hussein Ali Suleman and the actions of his company led to the suspected terrorist Nabil Badriyah Al Nasiri surrendering into Iraqi custody May 2, 2005.

Story and Photo by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta
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TIKRIT, IRAQ — A suspected terrorist turned himself in to soldiers of the 201st Iraqi Army Battalion in Tikrit on May 2. The detainee is a suspected terrorist cell leader from Bayji believed responsible for recent Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device attacks against the Iraqi police. His actions contributed directly to attempts to undermine stability in and around Bayji, Tikrit and Samarra. The suspected terrorist was transported to a Coalition Forces detention facility.

Pressure from Iraqi army and Task Force Liberty forces operating near Bayji led to the surrender of wanted Iraqi terrorist Nabil Badriyah Al Nasiri, according to Capt. Hussein Ali Suleman, commander of Company C, 201st Iraqi Army Battalion.

The detainee is suspected of being involved in IED attacks and other terrorist activities. He surrendered to

the 201st Iraqi Army Battalion in Tikrit.

Badriyah reportedly admitted that he felt compelled to give himself up because of pressure from Iraqi army and Task Force Liberty forces.

Badriyah "found himself in a tight circle," Hussein explained, because of the intense, intelligence-driven manhunt for him by Company C, 201st Iraqi Army Battalion and Task Force Dragoon. Task Force Dragoon is part of Task Force Liberty's 1st Brigade Combat Team, operating in the northern part of Salah Ad Din Province since January.

"We've been hunting for him since we got here," said Lt. Col. Philip Logan, Task Force Dragoon commander. "It started to turn for us when we conducted a series of raids in Bayji and picked up some of his bodyguards."

Task Force Dragoon and Company C, 201st Iraqi Army Battalion, had been "closing the noose" on Badriyah, Logan said, and that the arrest of his bodyguards and breakup of area terrorist cells had "reduced his ability

to maneuver."

Capt. Hussein likened the manhunt, which included a series of raids on Badriyah's sanctuaries and arrest of his other associates, as a "stranglehold" on Badriyah.

"What led up to that (surrender) was very hard work by Iraqi army and American Soldiers to put the pieces of the puzzle together," Logan said. He added that Badriyah's unconditional surrender sends a message that the Iraqi army and Coalition forces do not negotiate with terrorists.

Both Hussein and Logan said aggressive patrolling and implementing traffic control points by their units also played a part in Badriyah's surrender.

Task Force Dragoon and Company C, 201st Iraqi Army Battalion are based on Forward Operating Base Summerall. Task Force Dragoon's sector, which includes Bayji, is 7000 square kilometers, Logan said - larger than the state of Delaware, and one of the biggest sectors in Task Force Liberty's area of operations.

"We're a motorized infantry task force made up primarily of Pennsylvania Army National Guard Soldiers," Logan said.

In addition to conducting missions, Company C, 201st Iraqi Army Battalion is receiving continuous training from Task Force Dragoon Soldiers.

"Tactically they're operating at a platoon level," said Logan. "They are able to work with my platoons on operations such as traffic control points, dismounted and mounted patrols, raids and cordons and searches."

Iraqi soldiers will be conducting company-level operations by summer, Logan predicted.

"When they begin to work at company level, they'll have their own sector they'll be responsible for," he said.

"I believe my soldiers to be brave and strong," Hussein said. "They are not afraid of dying. We are ready to take on any mission." Their hunt for other terrorists continues, he added.

"Everywhere we go, we will capture terrorists," he said. "When I took command, I told my soldiers if I don't catch Badriyah, I am a loser. This is my war. I will win."