



# DISPATCH

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## Task Force Liberty Soldiers make 'special' stop for Iraqi children

Story and photo by F Battery, 188th Air Defense Artillery

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, Iraq—While there are plenty of differences, the Soldiers of the 116<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team's F Battery, 188<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery from Grand Forks, North Dakota, are finding that they share many things in common with the people of Iraq.

To no one's surprise, the men of "Fox" Battery, attached to Task Force 1-148 Field Artillery, have found life in Iraq much different than what they are familiar with back home. They see evidence of that each day they travel the paved highways and gravel roads around the city of Kirkuk.

"The cultural training we received prior to deployment was beneficial to a degree, but only first hand experience really prepared us for interacting with Iraqi civilians and the army soldiers we are training," said Staff Sgt. Gregory Brockberg, an F Battery communications non-commissioned officer. "Cultural and social peculiarities bombard us from all sides."

According to the Soldiers, the number one difference is language. Both Arabic and Kurdish are commonly spoken in North-Central Iraq. The Soldiers have all picked up various terms and phrases from their interpreters who travel with them during interactions with Iraqi nationals. Food is another major dissimilarity.

"We've have had the opportunity to sample Iraqi cuisine while performing numerous missions with Iraqi army soldiers," said Brockberg. "Many say the bread is very good—other food items they're not so sure about!"

But along with the differences come many similarities. A smile, a wave, and a 'thumbs-up' gesture seem to be universal non-verbal methods of communication. This is especially apparent when interacting with Iraqi children in this country that is all too familiar with war and hardship.

"We enjoy the sight of waving children as we speed through neighborhoods and by villages while performing missions in the vicinity of our forward operating base," Brockberg said.

It was after one such mission that Fox Battery Soldiers sought, in a small way, to improve the lives of several children who live in crumbling houses outside of FOB Warrior. First Platoon, under the leadership of 1Lt. Virgil Perez and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Cory Nygord, took a slight detour while returning from a mission in early May.

"The side trip was suggested by Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Gary DeLorme, one of our squad leaders who had recently returned from leave carrying a special duffel bag," said Brockberg. "Inside the bag were twenty pairs of children's shoes and sandals that had been collected by his mother back in Fargo."

The platoon conducted a short halt on the road just

outside one of the gates to FOB Warrior. With gunners providing security, other Soldiers exited gun trucks ready to distribute candy to the many children running from their dilapidated houses toward the road. While opening his duffel bag, DeLorme motioned for the kids to approach his vehicle.

"Like a Footlocker salesman, the 6'2" DeLorme bent down and began fitting shoes and sandals to small feet," said Brockberg. "In a short time, all the footwear was handed out and several smiling Iraqi children had new shoes. It's safe to say that the Soldiers enjoyed the occasion just as much as the needy kids did."

Fox Battery was activated for 18 months back in June 2004 and has been stationed in Iraq since December.

"That is a long period of time away from wives, children, moms and dads, and girlfriends," said

Brockberg. "Every Soldier needs to experience certain situations that help him forget, if only for a short time, the death and destruction that continue to plague this country. Seeing the waves and the smiles of Iraqi children when U.S. Soldiers pass by builds confidence that our battery mission here will be a success, and that the future of this embattled country will be a bright one."

The 116<sup>th</sup> BCT took over responsibility for combat operations in Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah Provinces in February. Besides providing humanitarian assistance, the unit is accomplishing a four-fold mission that includes developing Iraqi security forces, supporting Iraq's elected leaders, helping jump-start economic development and assisting Iraqis to better communicate with the populace.



Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Gary DeLorme, a Fox Battery, 188<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery squad leader, fits a pair of shoes donated by his mother to an Iraqi girl outside of Forward Operating Base Warrior, Iraq, during a recent patrol.

## Task Force Liberty Engineers clear Iraqi farm of UXOs



A cache consisting of a few hundred rounds of unexploded ordnance is destroyed in a controlled blast near Balad, Iraq in mid-May. The UXO's were discovered buried in adjacent fields at the Tarmiyah Poultry Farm.

Story and Photos by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey  
22<sup>nd</sup> Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, BALAD, Iraq –Task Force Liberty Soldiers worked to clear a cache of more than 2,500 57mm and larger rounds of unexploded ordnance near Balad, Iraq, in mid-May.

Eight combat engineers from 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 69<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment, stationed at Forward Operating Base Brassfield-Mora were assigned to assist Task Force 1-128 at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan in finding

and destroying the UXOs from fields at the Tarmiyah Poultry Farm, one of countless caches that litter the Iraqi countryside.

“Our overall mission was to come out collect up and destroy as many UXOs as we could find,” said Staff Sgt. Dennis Kradel, Company C, 3-69. “I’d say we’ve been fairly successful.”

The UXOs in the fields which surround the farm were supposedly left behind by the former Iraqi army.

“Rumor has it, (the fields) used to be an air defense and artillery site back in Saddam’s days and they just buried all their stuff when they left,” said Capt. Paul Shannon, Commander, Troop K, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 278<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment, whose Soldiers patrol the area the farm is on.

The engineers collected the UXOs off of the ground surface and from underground, using mine detectors, shovels and an M-9 Armored Combat Earth Mover, and then moved them to a centralized location for the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Detachment to destroy with a controlled detonation daily, explained Sgt. Kevin Hanson, Company C, 3-69.

“We’ve got to get rid of them because the anti-Iraqi forces can come in here anytime they want,” said Hanson, a native of Maryville, Tenn. “If they can find this stuff they’ll use it as (improvised explosive devices) on the roadsides. They can use the 57mm rounds as improvised grenades, and they can use them to harm troops, so we’re basically stopping that from happening or at least trying to slow them down.”

This isn’t the first time that UXOs have been removed from the fields at the poultry farm as a previous unit had performed some excavation of UXOs.

“They thought it was all cleaned out and there wasn’t anymore there, said Shannon, a Clarksville, Tenn. native. “We’ve been going through patrolling it every so often

and, in so doing guys have been finding stuff, so we had some engineers come down, do an assessment, and they said ‘yeah there’s a lot of stuff here.’”

Now that the engineers worked on the field, Shannon’s men will continue to patrol the area and make sure that no one messes with the fields in case there are more UXOs .

“Primarily it’s more for taking it out of the insurgent’s hands than it is anything else,” said Shannon, “but it is also a safety concern for the populace to clean up all these UXOs around Iraq.



More than 400 rounds from a cache of unexploded ordnance are lined up in preparation for detonation at the farm.



Spec. Gary Morrissey, uses a mine detector to search for buried unexploded ordnance while Pvt. Mark Hughes waits to dig in the field.

## Soldiers watch for Improvised Explosive Devices

Sp. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.  
1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

OUTSIDE BALAD, Iraq-One of the most effective weapons used by insurgents against Coalition Forces is improvised explosive devices. IEDs are usually placed along the roadside and detonated when a convoy passes.

Soldiers are constantly patrolling the roadways of Iraq. One of the counter insurgency methods they have begun to employ is to set up observation points to watch the highways for insurgents attempting to set up IEDs.

“Our intent is to kill or capture insurgents placing IEDs on our main supply routes,” said Capt. Ralph Elder, commander of B Troop, 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. “Our secondary intent is to identify insurgent cells in our area.”

The way the Soldiers accomplish this task is by patrolling the immediate off road area where an IED had been placed.

A lot of times when a convoy passes through, insurgents come up behind them and set up IEDs, said Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Jeff Bush, a 5/7 Cav. platoon sergeant. “We set up the Observation Points to watch for that kind of activity.”

“The Soldiers not only set up patrols off road, but watch it from places where they have a good view of the highway.

“We set up an OP at an old base that was used by the guys before us,” Bush said. “It is a good OP because you can see pretty far up and down the supply route. Insurgents have been using that stretch of highway to set up IEDs.”

The Soldiers teamed up with Iraqi army elements to help them accomplish this task. Teaching the Iraqi army how to conduct these types of operations is part of handing over the responsibility of security to them. “We linked up with the IA on this patrol,” Bush said. “They are doing pretty much the same thing we were.



Team leader Sgt. Shannon Garstka and Pvt. 1st Class Mitch Shelton, a dismount gunner from the 5/7 Cavalry patrol terrain beside a main supply route.

We are trying to bring them along on missions like this so they can be ready to take over when we move out. We are showing them the ropes. Right now, we are pretty much the main force, and they are supporting us. We want to make the transition to where they are the main force and we support them.”

“It is important for the IA to be with us and learn how to properly do patrols,” said Sgt Shannon Garstka, a 5/7 Cav. Team leader. “By coming with us, they learn

the correct way to catch terrorists.”

Bush said his guys were new at this kind of thing when they first got to Iraq, but they have improved greatly through constant patrolling.

“I am satisfied with their performance,” Bush said. “My guys are doing a great job. A lot of the guys are in different positions than they were back in the rear. They are a lot better than they were a few months ago.”



Pvt. 1st Class Mitch Shelton, a 5/7 Cavalry dismount gunner keeps an eye on a main supply route from an observation point near the highway. The Soldiers watch for vehicles stopping along the roadway attempting to set up IEDs.

**What you don't see could kill you.**



**Look for secondary explosive devices.**



**STAY ALIVE**