

DISPATCH

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Task Force Liberty Soldier Fights to Return to War

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FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Tikrit, Iraq – After an accident in February caused his humvee to overturn and throw him out, doctors told Spc. William Boyd that it would take him a year to recover from his injury and that he would not be able to rejoin his unit in Iraq.

But that didn't stop Boyd. It only made him strive harder to defy the doctors' diagnosis and return to Iraq in June to finish out his deployment.

Boyd is a communications and electronics repairer, whose unit, Company D, 735th Main Support Battalion, Missouri Army National Guard, is serving here. Company D, based in Jefferson City, Mo., deployed to Iraq as part of the 50th Main Support Battalion.

He said he felt it was important to return to Iraq because he had been asked to serve and it was his duty to do so.

"The Army had called me up, my nation had called me up to be over here at this time," Boyd said. "They needed me in the job here, so I said, 'You know this part of my life has already been cut out, it has already been set aside to be used by the military, and rather than just sit here and



Spc. William Boyd, a communications and electronics repairer checks out the vehicle he had an accident in February.



Boyd shows off the scars on his left leg, which was broken in a vehicle accident in February.

heal, I'd rather be over there. If I can function and do the job, then I rather be over there doing the job and doing what I've been asked to do."

Boyd said the work he does to keep Soldiers able to communicate is important to the mission here.

"In the Army, they say you have to shoot, move and communicate, so communication is one of the main components that the Army needs here in Operation Iraqi Freedom," he said. "Our job here to maintain communications, maintain electronics and keep people ready for their part in the battle, makes it important that we keep the stuff repaired."

Boyd said he went through a lot of surgeries and did a lot of traveling in order to make it back to Iraq.

"I have been in hospitals all over the world because of this," he said. "I started out here at the (Combat Support Hospital) on FOB Speicher. I had two surgeries and they placed an external fixator on my leg."

Boyd said the device was screwed into his left leg from the outside in order to hold his bones in place.

He said he was then transferred to Germany where they removed the fixator and placed a titanium rod from his ankle to his knee to stabilize

the bone.

After spending a week in Germany, he was transferred to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Maryland.

Boyd then was able to spend 30 days of convalescent leave at home, before starting physical therapy at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

He battled doctors every step of the way who told him he would not return to Iraq and that he might not even be able to stay in the Army.

"In Germany is where they started telling me it would take me a year to be fully functional, and at Walter Reed they sort of reiterated that," Boyd said.

"From the first day that I was here in the hospital, my buddies would come in to see me and I told everybody, 'I'm coming back, don't worry. I'll be back here,' and they just thought maybe it was the morphine talking or something."

The doctors along the way had been telling him that he might be medically discharged from the Army and "that there is no way I'll go back to Iraq, but I told them all 'No, I am going to be fine. I am going to heal and I am going to go back,'" Boyd said. The Soldier's supervisor, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Roger Groves said he didn't think they would see Boyd back with the unit in Iraq.

"I told everybody, 'I'm coming back, don't worry. I'll be back here.'"

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PLDC Graduation: Iraq's Future Leaders look to Ensure Iraq's Future

*Photo and story by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta
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FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, Tikrit, Iraq - Over 150 Iraqi soldiers graduated from the Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC) in commencement ceremonies at the 4th Iraqi Army Training Academy here August 15.

The soldiers, who were nominated by their units to take the course, underwent training at the academy ranging from basic map reading and weapons proficiency to leading physical training formations, human rights, drill and ceremony, military courtesy and marching.

The focus of the course was for the soldiers "to show what they already know and for us to hone their skills into squad and platoon leaders for their units," said Staff Sgt. Sean Knudsen, academy trainer.

"This was a good group of soldiers," Knudsen said. "Each class has more experience and development. The Iraqi army is making some positive headway."

Some of that headway can be seen in the cadre of the academy itself. Once wholly run by Coalition Forces, it is now "almost entirely Iraqi

run," according to Master Sgt. Chris Sharpe, the academy's senior drill instructor.

"I hate to say it, but there's really not a whole heck of a lot for us to do," said Sharpe. "We check up on them a couple of times during the day, but they're running this academy almost 100 percent."

Sharpe made these remarks some weeks ago, following the graduation of 193 Iraqi police officers from the cohort training class here. The recent PLDC graduates were visibly elated following the commencement ceremonies and some spoke about their futures and the future of Iraq.

"I hope to help civilians and keep my country safe," said Kurdish Sgt. Achmed Kareem Hiyas. "The only flag to us is the Iraqi flag. The important thing to remember is that there is no difference between any of us - Kurds, Sunni, Shia, Turkomen, or Arab."

"I am honored to graduate today," said Sgt.



"Ardeef!" Elated Iraqi army soldiers shout the Arabic word for sergeant following their graduation from Primary Leadership Development School. Now sergeants themselves, they will rejoin their units to serve as junior leaders.

Omar Kaleefa Ishmael. "I was with the old army under Saddam Hussein. What I see now is different. This is progress."

Sgt. Ali Rasheed Hamid said he is proud to be Iraqi and an Iraqi soldier. Democracy means unity, he added.

"We want democracy," he said. "With democracy, our rights will be saved. Under democracy, all the lakes flow into one river."

Iraqis Taught Tactics

FORWARD OPERATING BASE NORMANDY, Muqadiyah, Iraq - Task Force Liberty Soldiers are working with the Iraqi army to develop more proficient combat leaders able to lead troops in the fight against terrorists.

In the Combat Leaders Course (CLC) at the Diyala Regional Training Facility here, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Soldiers work with their Iraqi counterparts to train soldiers from the Iraqi army's 5th division to be better battlefield leaders.

The 14-day course helps build on the Iraqi soldiers basic military knowledge and skills, said Staff Sgt. Lloyd Pegues, the senior Coalition Forces' Instructor at the CLC.

"We train the platoon sergeants, platoon leaders and company leadership to be able to take control and make decisions," said Pegues, a native of St. Louis, Mo. "We do this by taking what they already know and then building on their knowledge base of tactics, leadership combat tactics and general leadership skills."

Pegues said Iraqi cadre do most of the teaching and Coalition Soldiers supervise - observing and instructing when needed.

"Most of [the instructors] were chosen prior to us getting here by [2nd Battalion, 33rd Infantry] out of Germany," he said. "When we got here, we put them through rigorous training and tests and some instructors, sad to say, didn't meet the potential, so we downsized and kept a base of experienced instructors capable of accomplishing the mission."

"This training makes us better for our next missions," said Sgt. Gasem Abed, with D Company, 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division. "For example, we need new information about military things that make the soldiers better in the future."

Task Force Liberty Soldier Returns

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"Finding out the severity of his injury, I figured that he had a one-way ticket home and wouldn't be coming back and finishing up the tour," Groves said. "His injury was severe enough that I just didn't think that he'd get healed up in time to come back and finish out."

Groves said the Soldiers in the unit kept in touch with Boyd and knew of his plans to come back, but they were not betting on seeing him back in Iraq.

"We kept up contact with him through e-mail," Groves said. "He told us he was going to be back. We told him, 'You might think in your mind your going to come back, but I don't think the doctors are going to let you come back,' but he fooled everybody, he got healed up . . ." And he came back.

Groves said it is nice having Boyd back, not just because they need his help with the work load, but because he is an all-around good guy.

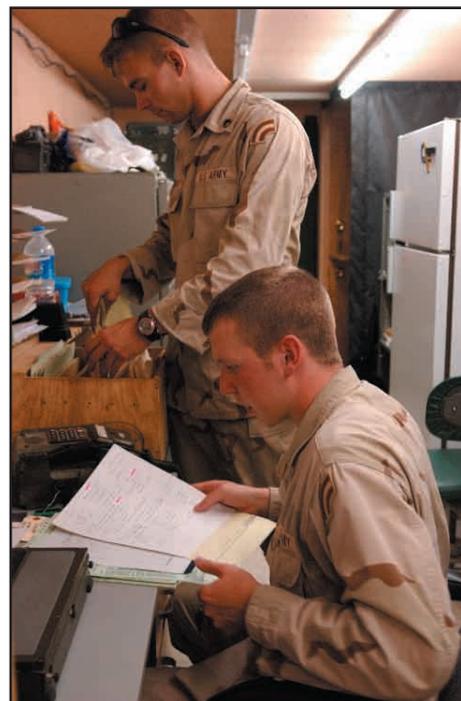
"Specialist Boyd is an outstanding Soldier," Groves said. "He is somebody that other Soldiers could strive to become. He is dedicated. He believes in what we are doing here. He is just an all-around American young man. I am sure glad to have him back."

Boyd said his story might seem special because he fought the odds to come back to Iraq, but he isn't the only Soldier with a story to tell.

"Every Soldier who is out here is really a story to tell," he said. "There is something about selfless service and making a sacrifice that people who haven't made that sacrifice can't possibly understand."

"What we have gone through, not only that, but our families back home, they make a sacrifice, they know what it is like to have Soldiers over

here," he said. "So I would say that while my story is somewhat unique, everybody has a unique story of serving their country and doing their part in Operation Iraqi Freedom."



Back on the job, Boyd makes his end of the day checks. Boyd fought to come back to Iraq after breaking his leg in a humvee accident. After several surgeries, Boyd returned to finish his deployment at Forward Operating Base Speicher.