The Marne Express

"Mission, Soldiers, Teamwork"

Volume 2, Issue 14 | ***Serving the Soldiers of Task Force Baghdad*** | **August 28, 2005**

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Spc. Tracy J. Smith

Gen. Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, speaks to Soldiers of Task Force Baghdad during a USO visit to Camp Liberty Aug. 17. Myers dined and took pictures with troops, and thanked them for "befriending the Iraqis and making a better life for the children in Iraq."

USO entertains Task Force Baghdad troops

Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – It was a star-studded day for Task Force Baghdad Soldiers.

Gen. Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, brought an unforgettable USO Show to Soldiers on Camp Liberty Aug. 17. NBC-TV's "Today Show" co-host Matt Lauer also broadcast live from the Tigerland Dining Facility.

Myers was accompanied by Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., commander of Multi-National Forces-Iraq; Leeann Tweeden, from Fox-TV's "The Best Damn Sports Show Period;" comedians Jeffrey Ross and Colin Quinn; and NFL Chicago Bears football Hall of Famer Gayle Sayers.

"One reason I do this is to thank you," Myers told the troops. "I know it's tough. We've lost a lot of really good men and women, and we're grateful for their sacrifice."

Myers singled out the reservists, and recognized the lives they left behind in the United States.

"You left jobs, schools, families, and both you and your families are making great sacrifices," he said.

Tweeden, acting as the mistress of ceremonies, told the Soldiers how the USO always made a great impact on her life, even as a small child. She said her father was an Air Force pilot in Vietnam, and when she was a little girl she found an autographed photo of Raquel Welch made out to her father. He told Tweeden he met Welch when she visited the troops on a USO tour.

"My dad told me that for one afternoon, she made him feel like he was normal

See USO, page 19

Coalition, Iraqi ministry sign historic charter

Sgt. Kevin Bromley
3/1 AD PAO

BAGHDAD – The children of Husseiniya, a town north of Baghdad, play among heaps of trash, lakes of standing groundwater and open sewage.

Several miles away in north Baghdad, Col. David Bishop, commander of 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division; Ayad Al-Safee, the Deputy Minister of Technical Affairs for the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works; Nanjar Manshed, the Al-Istaklah District Advisory Council Delegate; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers signed a charter Aug. 1 that will ensure the citizens and children of Husseiniya have a brighter and healthier future.

Husseiniya is a settlement that took root in the agricultural region north of Baghdad in the 1980s. Unfortunately, the Baghdad storm drainage and waste treatment facilities were designed and built during the late 1960s to early 1970s and the previous regime never extended these basic public services to the area.

The population of Husseiniya, now nearly 750,000, steadily increased in size as more and more people moved to the town with their families.

This large influx of people from the towns surrounding

See CHARTER, page 19

Sgt. Kevin Bromley

(left to right) Ayad Al-Safee the Deputy Minister of Technical Affairs for the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works; Col. David Bishop, commander of 3rd Brigade Combat Team; 2nd Lt. Shirley Kim, and Nanjar Manshed, the Al-Istaklah District Advisory Council Delegate, sign the Husseiniya Working Group Charter into effect.

Marne Six Sends

'Boots on the ground' policy offers redeployment guidance

Maj. General William G. Webster Jr.
Task Force Baghdad Commander

The Marne team continues to demonstrate outstanding teamwork in taking the fight to the enemy. Our teams continue to keep the enemy off balance and unable to achieve his objectives of disrupting and destroying the Iraqi Transitional Government in its capital city.

A great majority of our teammates have been able to take environmental leave or enjoy some well earned time off in Qatar and Freedom Rest.

Many spouses and family members have asked us when we are coming home.

Is the deployment timeline of a year holding?

These are logical questions that I'll attempt to explain.

Here are some points for all Marne Team members to consider:

When we deployed we knew that our mission was for at least 12 months and possibly several months longer due to tactical requirements and continuously changing situations. Most rotations have seen some units extended for some period of time.

The Central Command commander is committed to maintaining the 12-month rotation policy; however, he must simultaneously maintain the necessary forces here to ensure mission success.

Our mission will end when the theater commander releases our units from the mission.

The vast majority of forces have departed Iraq in keeping with the 12-month "boots on the ground" policy. This policy is based on the date that 51 percent of the unit arrived in theater. Without a Secretary of Defense approved extension, policy requires that 51 percent of the unit be redeployed within 364 days. A few exceptions have been due to unique situations and the need for a larger force presence.

Unless there is a significant change in the tactical situation - remember the enemy always gets a vote - most units of the 3rd Infantry Division should return home no later than Feb. 1, 2006 and be stabilized for 90 days, with the stabilization period ending on or about April 30.

We all look forward to returning home and reuniting with friends and family, however we remain aware of our mission requirements here, and that the enemy gets a vote.

Take time to share with your spouses and family members what your unit's time line looks like to alleviate any concerns that rumors may have started. If the tactical situation remains unchanged most Marne Soldiers can expect to be home by the end of the first week of February.

We have a great team of Marne Soldiers who achieve daily success against an adaptive enemy. Stay focused on your mission and together we will ensure the defeat of the terrorists, insurgents and criminal elements in Iraq.

Mission……Soldiers……..Teamwork
"Rock of the Marne!"

THE ARMY VALUES

Selfless-Service

"Put the welfare of the nation, the Army and your subordinates above your own."

Do you have a creative story idea for use in *The Marne Express*? Do you have a funny or exceptional photo you want to share with others?

If so, contact brenda.benner@id3.army.mil

All submissions are welcome and valued!

The Word on the Street

Who would you like to visit your camp on a USO tour?"

"Either J-Lo or Shakira. I'm a big fan of them and they would be a big morale boost for me and my troops."

Capt. Shannon M. Hagar
HHC, 612th Eng. Bn.
Norwalk, Ohio

"I'd like to see President Bush so I can hear his messages straight from him instead of from others."

Sgt. Wil V. Steinhauer
108th MP Co., 503rd MP Bn.
Columbus, Ohio

"I'm not big on celebrities, so I'd choose one of my Illinois state politicians so they can see for themselves the good things that we're doing here."

Capt. Leyland C. Torres
HHC, 2nd Bn., 130th Inf.
Oak Forest, Ill.

"I'd pick Colin Powell. He's very trustworthy and respected for his frankness and ideas. He tells it like it is. He's prior military, so he can relate to us."

Master Sgt. Thomas L. Francis
HHC, 18th MP Bde.
Mannheim, Germany

"I grew up watching the Atlanta Braves and it would be nice to see some athletes here, so I would pick their third baseman Chipper Jones."

Spc. Rachel L. Cooper
HHC, 48th BCT
Lafayette, Ga.

The Marne Express

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Commentary

Careless negligent weapon discharges are preventable

Staff Sgt. Thomas Mills
1BCT PAO

Soldiers are funny.

They have a hard life for the most part. Even folks supposedly "in the rear with the gear" aren't living easy. When faced with hard living the first thing a Soldier does is try to figure out how to make it easier. Soldiers will cut corners on everything. They'll expend more energy looking for an easy way to do something than they would if they did it the way it was originally meant to be done.

Part of that "make it easier" style of thinking bleeds over into safety.

One of the biggest problems regarding safety here in Iraq is negligent discharges.

Many of us have heard that dreaded noise at the clearing barrels. The hollow "pop" of a round going off into the clearing barrel because someone didn't clear his or her weapon correctly. According to the safety office the vast majority of negligent discharges happen at the clearing barrels.

It's easy to understand why. People simply aren't clearing their weapons correctly. That's an easy theory to agree with, and it would seem an easy thing to correct, and yet Soldiers still have negligent discharges at the barrels.

It often boils down to a lack of supervision. Soldiers need an extra set of eyes at the clearing barrels; someone else to catch a mistake and make sure their weapons are being cleared correctly. If you've ever spent any time really observing what goes on at the clearing barrels after a patrol you would understand why supervision is important.

Some of the scariest moments I've ever experienced have been at clearing barrels. Troops jump out of their humvees, juggle their fully locked and loaded weapons, stagger to the clearing barrel tiredly after a night's mission, and hurriedly "clear" their weapons. I've seen troops pulling the magazine out before they leave the vehicle. I saw a Soldier pull the charging handle of his M4 back slowly so that the round didn't eject, then he let the charging handle go forward and reached for the trigger before being stopped by his supervisor.

To some people, clearing weapons seems to be a process they must rush through in order to get on with their lives. After spending many hours on a patrol no one wants to stop at the clearing barrels, get out of the vehicle, go through all the proper steps to clear his or her weapon and get back into the vehicle before pulling away. If other Soldiers weren't such knuckleheads there wouldn't be a need for clearing barrels.

In fact, while a lack of supervision is the most obvious reason for negligent discharges, one of the underlying reasons is just as obvious. Overconfidence, in an environment lacking supervision, is one of the main causes of negligent discharges according to the safety office.

Soldiers have told me that they don't need clearing barrels, and that they could clear their weapons in the vehicle coming in the gate. It's the easiest part of any combat patrol. Just unload your weapon.

How difficult can that be?

Only stupid, incompetent Soldiers with no knowledge of how firearms work have negligent discharges, they say.

A Soldier told me that the process of clearing a weapon can be reduced to two steps: magazine out, round out. That, he told me, is all you need to worry about. If people concentrated on that, he said, there wouldn't be negligent discharges.

Often, Soldiers saying those things have cleared their weapons an untold number of times and, with half a mind on it, they go through the motions. Sometimes they cut the steps in clearing a weapon to save precious time. The internet computers are calling out to them, they're tired and they've cleared their weapons that way countless times before. Sometimes they forget one of the most important of the nine steps to clearing an M4/M16A2 – they forget to drop the magazine.

Clearing weapons is easy as long as both the Soldier clearing the weapon and the supervisor are involved in the process. As the Soldier follows the proper steps to clearing his weapon he should hand the ejected magazine to the TC, then after ejecting the round, hand that to the TC as well. After visually observing the cleared chamber the TC should load the ejected round back into the ejected magazine. If those steps are followed everyone will be assured that the weapon is cleared.

Clearing a weapon, like any other potentially dangerous act, demands supervision and care. No one should clear a weapon alone, and no one should cut corners when clearing a weapon. You're messing with a weapon designed to kill people.

One day I'm afraid we'll hear that "pop" of a round going off, but it won't be into a clearing barrel. It will be into someone's body and someone may die.

Unsung Heroes

Sgt. 1st Class Brenda Benner

Spc. Daniel A. Schiavi, a fire direction specialist with B Co., 139th Field Artillery, watches KBR workers remove weeds from a ditch as part of his escort duties.

Command Sgt. Maj. William M. Grant
TF Baghdad command sergeant major

Soldiers don't often realize how much work goes into maintaining their living areas here.

Fortunately there are Soldiers working tirelessly to escort workers with Kellogg Brown & Root to ensure other troops can concentrate on their missions instead of performing police calls, pulling weeds, cleaning showers and latrines, removing trash and repairing living quarters.

These Soldiers on escort duty often spend their entire day in the sun wearing full body armor to ensure things run smoothly.

They provide the security that allows everyone to live in the most well maintained atmosphere possible.

I'm impressed with their ability to take on any mission and execute it all the way.

To all of you assigned to this critical role, thank you on behalf of myself and your fellow Soldiers. The security you provide us is invaluable.

Thank you for being a part of our great team.

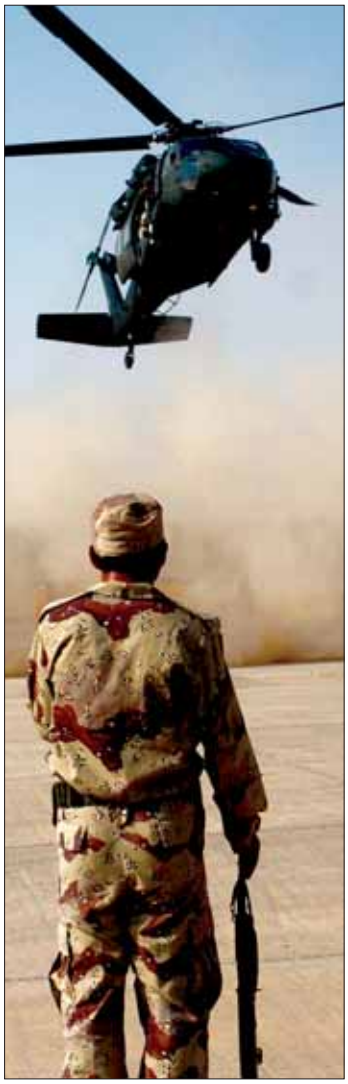
"Rock of the Marne"

Sgt. 1st Class Brenda Benner

Pfc. Natisha Bastien, a motor vehicle operator with HHSC, STB, gives a Soldier notice before maintainance workers enter the trailer.

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

Col. Mark E. McKnight, 1st BCT commander, speaks to dignitaries, fellow Soldiers and provincial leaders during a Transition of Authority ceremony at FOB Dagger Aug. 14.



Iraqi Soldiers take control of FOB Dagger

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DAGGER, Iraq – Iraqi Army units are slowly gaining more responsibility and control of their own country. This trend is evident as more IA forces are tasked with assuming control of previously U.S. commanded military camps.

Recently, 1st Brigade Combat Team and other Coalition Forces units participated in a relief-in-place ceremony with the IA's 4th Division at Forward Operating Base Dagger. "These guys … are the higher headquarters for the brigade that the 1st BCT is partnered with," said Maj. Robert M. Butts, executive officer for the 1/3 Brigade Troops Battalion. "Anytime you have a unit that relieves another unit, you should do a relief in place," he said. "You typically spend some time shadowing them, and when you feel they're ready to handle a mission, you let them have the driver's seat."

For the IA Soldiers, a portion of the RIP involved a training exercise in force protection, more specifically, reacting to indirect and direct fire attacks.

"We let the Iraqis react to something that we planned for them, to be assured that they are ready to assume the security of the FOB," Butts said.

Prior to the turnover of control, Coalition Forces had the opportunity to work directly with IA Soldiers who were replacing them. During their stay at the FOB, the Iraqis were shown firsthand how the CF Soldiers provided security.

"For the last three days, we have been sharing the guard posts with the Iraqis," Butts said.

As the days progressed, the Iraqis assumed more and more control he said.

Showing the Iraqis how to defend the FOB and making sure they were capable of the task was a vital part in relinquishing control of the installation.

Butts said sharing guard responsibilities was only a small part of the initial RIP process.

The IA Soldiers' performance was more than satisfactory. Based on that, the CF Soldiers knew it was time to let the Iraqis control the FOB on their own.

"Once we observed their reaction during the exercise, and their leaders' involvement in the mission, we felt very confident that they would be able to defend themselves," Butts said.

Many Soldiers stationed at FOB Dagger over the past six months haven't really had a chance to work hand in hand with any Iraqi Security Forces. But during the last few days the remaining CF Soldiers on the FOB had a chance to do just that.

"It was really rewarding," Butts said. "I think that most of (the) U.S. Soldiers felt like they were contributing to the progress of Iraq. The consistent message we are sending all the way up to the Department of Defense is that our main effort is to train the Iraqi Army. This gave our Soldiers an opportunity to experience that firsthand."

Butts said that many of the CF Soldiers at FOB Dagger had performed more than 1,000 hours of guard duty.

"Today they actually got to go out and do something different," Butts said.

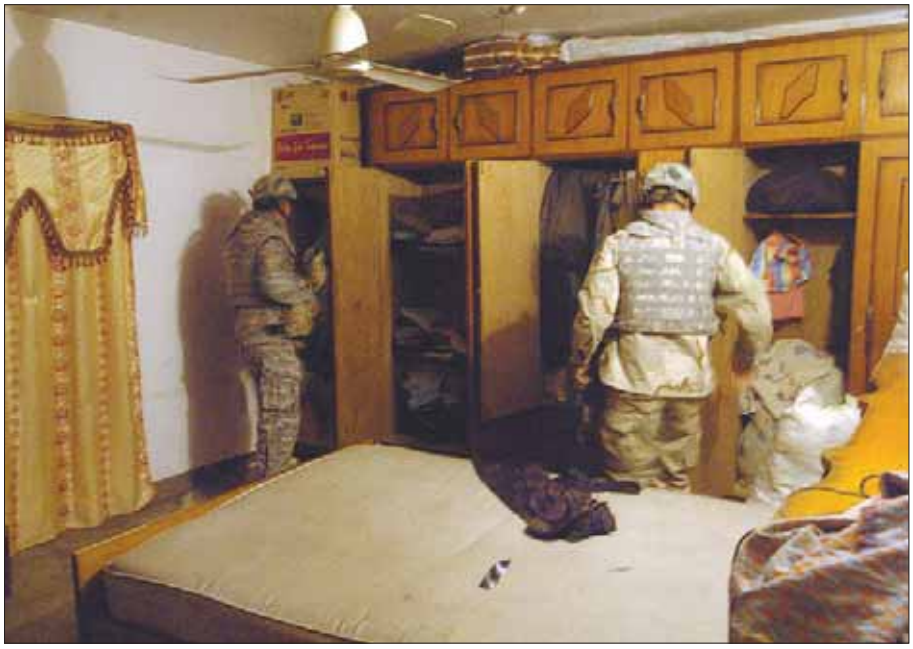
Taking over FOB Dagger held a deeper meaning for the Iraqi Soldiers than just assuming control of an installation. The Iraqis said they felt like it was a step in solidifying their identity and getting a chance to be a part of the development of a better nation.

The Iraqi officers said that although the division is made up of Kurds, Sunni and Shia Muslims, the Soldiers have a heightened sense of patriotism, and feel like they're part of a single, unified nation.

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

(far left) An Iraqi Soldier from the 4th Iraqi Army Division stands by to greet a group of dignitaries arriving on a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter for the Transition of Authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Dagger Aug. 14. (left) Iraqi Soldiers honor their national flag with a salute during the TOA ceremony.

Puerto Rico Reservists capture 16 in raids



Sgt. David Bill

Soldiers from C Company, 1st Battalion, 295th Infantry from Juncos, Puerto Rico, search a suspected terrorist's bedroom during Operation Able Warrior Aug. 4. The mission to capture suspected terrorist operators in Southwest Baghdad was conducted in response to recent attacks on U.S. Soldiers in the area.

Sgt David Bill
48th BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – More than 60 suspected insurgents were detained in the early-morning darkness of Aug. 4, by Soldiers from C Company, 1st Battalion, 295th Infantry, from Juncos, Puerto Rico, during Operation Able Warrior.

The mission was a coordinated strike to capture and seize suspected terrorist operators in the southwest Baghdad area, and was conducted in response to recent attacks which have claimed the lives of eight Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 48th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. Three additional brigade Soldiers were killed just before the start of this operation, putting a deeper emphasis on mission success.

The coordinated mission was conducted by 2nd Bn. to reduce the threat posed by improvised explosive device operators and triggermen by taking the fight to them.

Even during the early morning darkness, the Soldiers from Puerto Rico were dedicated to the cause and were anxious to get the mission underway. Their reward at the end of the mission: C Co. alone was responsible for capturing 16 rebels.

The Soldiers from C Co. have a strong bond with each other and with their fellow Soldiers of the 48th BCT. The company joined the brigade in March and prepared for their deployment as a unit within 2nd Bn. They have shown a strong sense of loss for those Soldiers from the brigade who have been recently killed, by posting their photos in the company tactical operations center and by attending the memorials held for those fallen warriors.

On Aug. 4, the unit moved into position with lightning speed around the various houses and working quickly, the Soldiers began moving throughout the residences, looking for suspects, weapons and bomb-making materials. Even "Staff Sgt. Rambo," a military-trained bomb-sniffing dog was on hand to search for materials.

"The mission would not have been conducted as well as it was if we were not trained as well as we are," said Sgt. 1st. Class Hector Perez, from Aborito, Puerto Rico.

"The men did a great job" said Capt. Jose Lopez-Molina, from Caguaz, Puerto Rico, and C Co. commander, as he effortlessly switched between Spanish and English while talking with his Solders and to battalion headquarters.

As each house was searched, Soldiers could be heard speaking in Spanish and English. With help from Arabic speaking interpreters, local residents were questioned for any helpful information they could provide.

Soldiers began gathering all the detainees together for transport to the battalion area for additional questioning.

Many of the houses were vacant of males, but the women and children found in the houses were asked to move to a designated area as Soldiers moved from room to room. Many of the women and children told the Soldiers that some of their men had not been seen for quite a while. At one house, an elderly Iraqi man was treated by a unit medic for dizziness.

"We got good information from the detainees," Perez said.

The mission came to a successful close at dawn as all the 2nd Bn. units rolled back into Camp Striker, their trucks loaded with detainees.

"It was good for us to come together to get all these detainees," said 1st Lt. Eduardo Roman, 1st platoon leader, C Co., from Salinas, Puerto Rico.

"This came off as a picture-perfect mission," said Lt. Col. Steve McCorkle, 2nd Bn. commander from Warner Robins, Ga. "Everything went well and all of our Soldiers are back inside the wire safe and sound. It was a good operation."

Task Force Baghdad medic receives Bronze Star

DSB PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – A combat medic assigned to the Division Support Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division received a Bronze Star with "V" device Aug. 11 at the DSB Ministry Center.

Sgt. Eric G. Sullivan, 550th Area Support Medical Company, Brigade Troops Battalion, was awarded the prestigious medal by Brig. Gen. Mark E. O'Neill, the assistant division commander for support for the 3rd Inf. Div.

"Someone once said, the difference between being courageous and not being courageous is the last decision you make," said O'Neill, after pinning the medal on Sullivan. "When you're in a really tough spot, and you're scared, and there are a lot of things going on around you, those decisions can be very, very clear or they can be very muddled.

"We are all very fortunate to have leaders, noncommissioned officers of the caliber of Sgt. Sullivan who, in that moment when they had to make that one decision, they were very clear about what they needed to do."

Sullivan, from Tampa Bay, Fla., was honored for his actions during an April 20 attack on the convoy he was supporting.

A vehicle in the convoy was hit by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, said Capt. Kenneth A. Hoisington, the adjutant for BTB. Sullivan's vehicle pulled alongside the burning heavy equipment transporter and checked to see if the vehicle had been evacuated.

Fortunately, the truck was empty.

However, the convoy was unable to move out of the area while engaged in a terrorist cross-fire. Heroically, Sullivan and his fellow Soldiers dismounted and returned fire, Hoisington said.

During the engagement, Sullivan spent two magazines of ammunition defending his fellow Soldiers before noticing multiple Iraqi civilian casualties wounded during the attack.

Sullivan immediately designated a casualty collection point and started directing Soldiers to collect the casualties, said Hoisington. He then decisively directed combat life savers and other Soldiers, then began to triage the casualties.

Because of his quick thinking, his ability to remain calm under fire and his knowledgeable medical treatment, 11 of the 14 casualties survived, said Hoisington.

Sullivan then helped evacuate the casualties to Camp Liberty where he continued to direct the patient carrying vehicles to various treatment facilities, effectively managing resources, said Hoisington.

After the ceremony, Sullivan modestly deferred honor to the 3rd Battalion, 117th Field Artillery Regiment, Alabama Army National Guard, for their force protection support during the ambush.

"Everybody in the Army is a warrior and a member of a team," Sullivan said.

O'Neill summed it up simply.

"I think we'd all agree that if we were going outside the wire, we'd want you with us," he said.

Sgt. 1st Class Peter Chadwick

Brig. Gen. Mark E. O'Neill, left, assistant 3rd Inf. Div. commander for support, pins the Bronze Medal, with "V" device, on Sgt. Eric G. Sullivan, a combat medic with the 550th Area Support Medical Company, Brigade Troops Battalion, Division Support Brigade, in a ceremony August 11. Sullivan was awarded the medal for courage under fire and saving 11 Iraqi Civilian lives during an ambush April 20.

Spartan Bde. dentists help Soldiers smile

Spc. Ben Brody
2nd BCT PAO

CAMP RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq – Traditionally, members of the military have been labeled as having filthy mouths, but two Army dentists at Camp Rustamiyah aim to change that.

"Just raise your left arm if you need me to stop," said Capt. Jesse Engle, 26th Forward Support Battalion dentist as he went to work filling a Soldier's cavities June 26.

Engle and Capt. Philip Livingood of 464th Medical Company, are available to more than 10,000 2nd Brigade Combat Team Soldiers, National Guard and Reserve Soldiers, and U.S. military contractors in east Baghdad.

"It can be a madhouse sometimes, but we are able to provide Soldiers with a very high level of care here," said Engle, from Tucson, Ariz. "We run a sick call, which is walk-in, and take appointments in the afternoon."

Engle and Livingood provide what they refer to as "definitive care," which means that patients who come to them with dental conditions leave with the problem fixed, not just with an interim solution to hold them over until they redeploy.

"A lot of deployed troops don't have access to this level of care, so they just get patched up well enough to ease the pain," said Livingood, of Phoenix. "Anything we start here, we finish."

Both are doctors of dentistry who came into the Army through a scholarship program. The Army paid for four years of dental school, in return for a four-year service obligation.

Spc. Ben Brody

Capt. Jesse Engle, 26th FSB, dentist, and his dental assistant, Spc. Juliann Bernardi, fill a few cavities for Spc. Jack Miles, a cook with D Co., 26th FSB.

Livingood and Spc. Jerry Richard, dental hygienist, are assigned to 464th Medical Co., from Landstuhl, Germany, and are deployed in support of 2nd BCT, 3rd Infantry Division.

Richard and Spc. Juliann Bernardi, 26th FSB, Engle's dental assistant, play a crucial role in the day-to-day dental operations at Rustamiyah, said the two dentists.

"Without our assistants, the dental clinic would fall apart – they do everything," Engle said.

Their duties include assisting with procedures, sterilizing equipment, preparing X-rays and procuring supplies.

Bernardi, from Chicago, said she joined the career field because she enjoys dealing with teeth.

Richard, from Dallas, is a dental assistant who received additional training to become a dental hygienist. He said the most common problems he sees are caused by Soldiers not brushing their teeth properly.

"Most people brush in a haphazard manner, which doesn't do your teeth much good," Richard said. "You need to look at what you're trying to brush, and take the time to get every surface with a soft bristle brush. Especially the rear molars – hardly anyone sticks the brush back far enough to clean those well."

Livingood said the primary procedures he performs are fillings, root canals and wisdom tooth extractions.

"It's hot outside, and Soldiers are drinking a lot of sugary drinks, which increases the risk of cavities," Livingood said. "Compounding the problem, Soldiers are sometimes too tired from the day's missions to brush their teeth regularly."

Engle said he is sometimes called upon to assist in case of casualties coming onto Rustamiyah after an attack. Since sewing stitches in the mouth is notoriously difficult to do, his skills are often in demand when Soldiers come in with facial wounds.

"I'm the officer in charge of mass-casualty triage, if the situation ever arose; but in reality, I just do whatever's needed when wounded troops come in," Engle said. "It's happened before – I just run around like a medic, and help whoever I can. If a litter needs carrying, or if a Soldier needs someone to talk to, that's what I do."

U.S. medics treat Iraqi woman injured by car bomb

Sgt. Andrew Miller
2nd BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – U.S. Army medics rendered immediate aid to an east Baghdad resident who was injured by a suicide car bomb at 9:30 a.m. Aug. 6.

In the terrorist attack, a van swerved from an eastbound highway in the direction of a U.S. military convoy parked on a parallel residential street, detonating just short of the lead vehicle. The thunderous explosion sent fire and debris in every direction, blowing out windows and setting nearby palm trees aflame.

Even before the dust cleared, Spc. Victoria Elordi and Staff Sgt. Sean Stout, both combat medics from B Company, 448th Civil Affairs Battalion, were already working on their first patient.

"Our first reaction was to initially check everybody on the ground, make sure all the troops were okay and get accountability," said Elordi, a Caldwell, Idaho, native. "After that, I checked on the civilians."

Although there were several people in close proximity to the explosion, only one local Iraqi woman was seriously injured. She sustained shrapnel wounds to both legs and was soon surrounded by a frantic crowd.

The medics splinted and dressed each leg but had to work around the woman, who was constantly pulling down her dress – concerned the men on the scene would see her exposed legs, Elordi said.

"UXO in the hole!" a Soldier hollered from beyond the crowd, referring to a 155-millimeter mortar round uncovered by the car bomb's blast.

The medics and some of the injured woman's family members reacted quickly.

"We had heard that there were additional (explosives near) the blast site, so we immediately took the woman into her house," Elordi said.

Stout, of Pascagoula, Miss., remained outside to secure the area.

Once inside, Elordi soon found herself in a small room with the injured woman, an interpreter and a swarm of frenzied relatives and neighbors.

"Everybody was trying to take care of everything outside and get accountability of things," she said. "I had a couple of Soldiers in there with me who tried to control the crowd, but the problem was, we had two doors, two entries – concerned family members and children. Everybody was concerned about the woman."

Sgt. Andrew A. Miller

Spc. Victoria Elordi, a combat medic with B Company, 448th Civil Affairs Battalion, renders aid to an Iraqi woman moments after she was wounded by a homicide car bomber in east Baghdad Aug 6. Elordi is from Caldwell, Idaho.

Spc. Adam Musil, a broadcast journalist with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs Office, was one of the two soldiers who aided Elordi in the injured woman's house.

"It was mass hysteria in that room," said Musil, from Austin, Texas. "People were screaming and crying."

Elordi administered a saline IV and, through the interpreter, assured the woman she would be alright, Musil said.

Twenty minutes later, Iraqi emergency medical workers arrived with a stretcher at the home. They rushed the woman to a hospital.

As the woman was taken away, the previously chaotic room slowly became quite and calm until only the sniffling of teary-eyed relatives could be heard.

One young girl had been sobbing throughout the entire scene. She had only watched through the doorway, unable to help during all of the commotion. With her eyes blurry and her face red, she had something simple yet significant to say as the last Soldier backed out of the room.

"Shokran" – a simple thank you.

Iraqi citizens build spontaneous safety barricade for Soldiers

2BCT PAO
Media Release

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Following a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack on Coalition Forces in Baghdad Aug. 6, residents of the Sumer Al Ghadier District took action – action that was a pleasant surprise to the Soldiers at the scene.

After the medics treated the wounded, local residents constructed a hasty barricade with trees, bricks, and anything else available, to further protect the Soldiers from danger.

"This is the first time that I can remember where normal Iraqi people actually built a barrier to protect my Soldiers" said Lt. Col. Steven Merkel, 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery commander. "The Soldiers are still talking about the helpful actions of the local community and have asked to go back to the neighborhood to thank those responsible."

Capt. David Ahl, 1/9FA information operations officer, said, "It became very obvious that the Iraqi people are tired of insurgent activity. When I saw them putting up barricades to protect us after the VBIED exploded, I knew right then that the days of insurgent activity are counting down fast."

The Baghdad citizens, who were ready to lend a hand, not only helped to physically protect the U.S. Soldiers, but were also forthcoming with valuable information about the area which led to the apprehension of a man suspected of involvement in a previous VBIED attack.

Courtesy Photo

A wall of debris protects U.S. Soldiers located up the road. The wall, built by Iraqi civilians to protect Soldiers treating wounded, was a sign from the locals that they won't tolerate insurgent attacks in their neighborhood.

"The continued commitment of the Iraqi people to help their Iraqi Security Forces and the Coalition Forces demonstrates, more than ever, that they are growing increasingly intolerant of the violence brought on by the insurgents," Merkel said, "and more eager to play a positive role in the future of Iraq,"

In Memory of ...

Sgt. Brahim J. Jeffcoat, 1/111 Inf.
Spc. Kurt E. Krout, 1/111 Inf.
Spc. Seferino J. Reyna, 70 Eng.
Pfc. Hernando Ríos, 1/69 Armor
Sgt. Anthony N. Kalladeen, 1/69 Armor
Spc. Miguel Carrasquillo, 1/76 FA
Sgt. Francais J. Straub, 1/111 Inf.
Spc. Gennaro Pellegrini Jr., 1/111 Inf.
Spc. John Kulick, 1/111 Inf.
Pfc. Nathaniel E. Detample, 1/111 Inf.
1LT. David L. Giamo, 2/7 Inf.
Spc. Rusty W. Bell, 603 Avn.
Spc.Brian K. Derks,1/11 ACR
Sgt.Thomas J. Strickland, 1/108 Armor
Sgt. Paul A. Saylor, 1/108 Armor
Spc. Joshua P. Dingler, 1/108 Armor
Sgt. Michael J. Stokely, 348 Armor

You may be gone, but you're not forgotten.
We will continue the fight ...

Suicide bomber fails attempt to kill others

2nd BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – A terrorist failed to cause significant U.S. casualties or damage in a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack Aug. 6 in east Baghdad.

Two U.S. Soldiers and one Iraqi civilian sustained minor wounds from the attack.

The vehicle, described by Soldiers on the scene as a Volkswagen van, approached the halted convoy of 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, around 9:30 a.m.

Soldiers from 1/9 FA were investigating a tip from a local Iraqi about a terrorist in the area who was associated with the July 13 vehicle bomb attack at the same location which killed one U.S. Soldier and 24 Iraqi children.

While they were moving in to detain the suspected terrorist, the bomb detonated.

"(I was) 15 to 20 feet from the explosion," said Sgt. Eric Hollis, F Company, 26th Forward Support Battalion, attached to 1/9 FA. "We were standing right there – nothing hit us!"

At the time of the explosion, Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 64th Armor, 2nd BCT who were in a nearby observation tower noticed two suspected terrorists in a vehicle over-watching the attack. 1/64 Armor dispatched a quick-reaction force which detained the men.

Additionally, a 155-millimeter artillery round was discovered near the VBIED attack site. An explosive ordnance disposal team was called in to perform a controlled detonation.

The VBIED attack also failed to deter the Task Force Baghdad Soldiers from their original mission. Soon after the attack, they found and detained the terrorist for whom they were looking.

Sgt. Andrew A. Miller

Debris surrounds the crater caused by a car bomb attack in Eastern Baghdad Aug. 8 while palm trees smolder from the explosion. The attack wounded a local resident who was treated by U.S. medics and then taken to a nearby hospital. Another local and two U.S. Soldiers suffered minor injuries and were treated on the scene.

No Soldier left behind

Sgt. Matthew Maupin

"I will not leave a fallen comrade"

These well known words from the Warrior Ethos ring true for Sgt. Matt Maupin.
Maupin is an Army Reserve Soldier from 724th Transportation Company who was captured April 9, 2004 during Operation Iraqi Freedom 2.
Sgt. Maupin – we are still looking for you and we will find you.
You have not been forgotten.

Spc. Dan Balda

Cpl. Byron Rhames, a radio communications security repair specialist assigned to B. Company, 703rd Forward Support Battalion, and a native of Mayesville, S.C., takes the casing off a radio Aug. 2.

'Fobbits' essential to base operations in Iraq

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – Some might call them "Fobbits," a crude term for a Soldier who does not leave the forward operating base, or FOB. But what the Soldiers of B Company, 703rd Forward Support Battalion should be called instead is mission essential.

"We don't go out on patrol," said Capt. Billy Eckstein, B Co. commander. "For the most part, our life is here on the FOB."

But that doesn't mean their job isn't important.

Without Eckstein's company, the well-oiled machine of Task Force Baghdad operations in the International Zone would grind to a screeching halt.

The Greenville, S.C., native's company was originally tasked to support all of the units assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. His unit's mission has now evolved into supporting "everybody and everything in the IZ," to include the combat support hospital, the Marines, the Georgians and anybody else who calls the IZ their temporary home.

B Co. has twice the workload of any maintenance company in the 3rd Inf. Div., Eckstein said.

"Here in Iraq, everything is focused around the forward operating bases," said Lt. Col. Jack Haley, 703rd FSB battalion commander. "We are asking them to do a lot more than the battalions are designed for, but they have risen to the challenge. It's a lot of work."

"My Soldiers are awesome," Eckstein said. "I say this not just because I am the company commander, but this is a great group of people to work with."

The "great group" includes 27 different military occupational specialties, covering a wide variety of tasks, such as night vision goggle repair, machinists, turret repair and missile repair. The company is able to maintain its high level of tempo because, Eckstein said, each Soldier can perform any job in the section, regardless of rank or time in service.

He attributes the cross training to the fact that 65 percent of his company deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom I.

"It helps me as a commander because I have experienced people working for me," he said. "We've worked together for a long time as a team. Our noncommissioned officers and the other experienced Soldiers have really taken the lead in making sure the less-experienced Soldiers know what to expect and are trained to handle the difficulties of a deployment."

Sgt. 1st Class Greg Nettles, the maintenance control sergeant, agrees with his commander.

"Everybody in the unit knows their mission," said the Linden, Ala., native. "Everybody is focused in getting their job done, it's hard work, but we know that the more we work, the busier we stay; the faster our time here will go by."

Although Eckstein's Soldiers rarely leave the IZ, their job can be just as grueling as any one else.

"It's hot as hell and 80 percent of my company works outside in this heat," Eckstein said. "What a lot of units don't understand is if I have a guy working all day on a transmission or on NVGs, he still has to be able to ruck up and go guard a tower as well as be proficient with his weapon."

Career counselors assist Soldiers seeking reenlistment

Spc. Maria Mengrone
100th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – When it comes to facing the inevitable dilemma of staying in the Army or getting out, most Soldiers turn to their career counselors to help them carefully sort out their options.

Career counselors primarily serve the Soldiers and are members of the special staff of commanders and command sergeant majors.

Task Force Baghdad career counselors have armed thousands of Soldiers with the critical data they need to make well-informed decisions about their future in the Army.

The retention office is staffed with personnel who are ready to handle queries for all Soldiers, whether they're active duty, Army Reserve or National Guard.

"No matter what component they're from, if there's any type of retention related issue or situation here in our battle space, this office is the primary agency that will facilitate the matter," said Sgt. Maj. Craig T. Lott, Multi-National Division–Baghdad retention sergeant major, Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division.

"Our primary mission when someone walks into our office is to look at their desires first and then we look at what their desires are in conjunction with the Army's needs and then we try to marry up the two," Lott said.

Soldiers considering reenlistment are advised to speak to their career counselor 13 months before their end term of service date. In some instances the Army has allowed Soldiers to reenlist up to two years before their ETS.

"There are a lot of variables that go into a reenlistment and a counselor can break down all the variables and answer any concerns they may have," Lott said.

So far, approximately 3,100 Soldiers assigned to Task Force Baghdad have reenlisted this fiscal year, earning a total payout of more than $23 million in tax-free bonuses.

Reenlistments have already exceeded the accumulative reenlistment goal of 2,925 troops, which encompasses the combination of all initial term, mid-career and career Soldiers' reenlistments.

Even though the number of accumulative reenlistments is promising, Lott believes the mission of retaining Soldiers in the Army is an ever-changing cycle that challenges career counselors and leaders every day.

"I think with a month and a half left in this fiscal year there are many more Soldiers out there that can reenlist," Lott said. "We can be proud of what we have done on one hand, however, to humbly evaluate the situation – we are not quite done."

National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers make up a substantial portion of the reenlistment totals for Task Force Baghdad, so keeping troops properly informed of all their options is important. Soldiers are warned not to reach final conclusions on reenlistment bonuses or incentives until they speak to a career counselor and their chain of command.

"A lot of National Guard and Reserve Soldiers read what the media puts out about bonuses and incentives, but they need to keep in mind that it may only pertain to active duty Soldiers," said Master Sgt. Harl A. Marzan, senior retention career counselor, STB, 3rd Inf. Div.

For some, the decision to reenlist is not taken lightly. Especially since there are many factors that can influence their decision to remain a Soldier, such as the bonus amount, family security, duty location, potential promotions and many more.

Spc. Shaun M. Cook, petroleum specialist, 4th Platoon, 92nd Engineer Battalion, said he appreciates the advice he's gotten from his counselor.

"I am still weighing my options and still talking to my family about reenlisting, but I am glad my career counselor is always accessible and very interactive," Cook said.

"We can approach him and not feel any pressure. I feel reassured because he has all the up-to-date information about what is available to me."

The duty of maintaining a well staffed Army is not only the mission of career counselors, but also the duty of leaders. Leaders at all levels are instrumental in the entire retention process.

"Soldiers for the most part can see if a leader cares or doesn't," Lott said. "If you wait until the very last minute to show some concern, then they in all probability are not going to stay. But if you show them that you care and you actually take the time to counsel them, then chances are they'll stay."

Summing up the last seven months, Lott said 3rd Inf. Div. reenlistments have been historical because several have occurred en masse and high ranking Army and Department of Defense officials have presided over many of the ceremonies.

Lott added, "It has been very challenging because we are at war and many don't know what to expect. It's been a very interesting journey for everyone."

Spc. Maria Mengrone

Staff Sgt. Gregory C. Koval, a native of Arvada, Colo., and career counselor with Headquarters and Service Company, 92nd Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, explains reenlistment options to a Soldier during a recent visit.

Georgia Military College cadets

From books smarts to real-life in Iraq

Sgt. David Bill
48th BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – Since January, more than 50 cadets and alumni from Georgia Military College, in Milledgeville, Ga., have put their lives on hold to serve with the 48th Brigade Combat Team currently operating in and around Iraq

For many of these young Soldiers, men and women from Canton to Savannah, and all points in between, this experience has already given them a lifetime of memories.

"I wish the cadets in Milledgeville (could) experience what I'm experiencing over here" said Spc. Donna Sanders, 20, from Hinesville, Ga. "I'm experiencing a different culture. I can appreciate what I have back at home."

These Lightning Brigade Soldiers serve in every capacity within the 48th BCT from infantry to military police, medics, truck drivers, personnel clerks, radio operators and many other military occupational specialties.

"It's good to be squared away, but a sense of humor can get you through this place. I've seen Soldiers use laughter to help them get through the days here."
Spc. Marcello Curtis

"Adaptability is something that you need over here," said Spc. Marcello Curtis, an infantry Soldier who works in the Headquarters Command section as a driver and a gunner. "It's good to be squared away, but a sense of humor can get you through this place. I've seen Soldiers use laughter to help them get through the days here."

The 20-year-old from Macon, Ga., has decided to major in accounting when he returns from Iraq.

Both Curtis and Sanders have completed one year at GMC and look forward to continuing their education. They both said that GMC provided them training that has helped them here in Iraq.

"Having a routine and preparing each day for the next day has helped me," Sanders said.

Curtis said Soldiers can't forget the smallest of details.

"Being well prepared for a convoy here is critical, GMC taught me to prepare early," he said.

These dedicated cadets entered the Georgia Army National Guard as a requirement for the State Service Scholarship, a state-funded program, which allows recipients to attend GMC as cadets virtually free during their education. In return, they must serve in the National Guard while attending GMC and for a similar amount of time after they complete their education at the two-year military college.

Sanders, a medical supply specialist for C Company, 148th Support Battalion from Forsyth, Ga., has a message for those State Service Scholarship cadets back in Milledgeville: "Enjoy what you have and really think hard about what you're doing," he said. "It's what I joined for."

Sgts. Barron Durden and Karl Auer, both from Macon, Ga., attended GMC under the scholarship program.

"Stay in school, get your education," Durden advised.

He attended GMC from 1999-2000 and was 10 credits short of graduation when he was activated with the 48th Brigade to serve in Bosnia.

Auer completed his associate degree from GMC in 2001.

Both NCOs work in the 48th BCT Tactical Operations Center and know each other well, but did not realize that each had attended GMC.

They both voiced the same sentiments about GMC. "It is not easy, but stick to it and get your education."

The words "Duty, Honor, Country" are the backbone of what cadets live by at GMC. Cadets said these words mean more now that the GMC community has felt the ultimate loss.

Sgt. David Bill

Maj. Jeffery Dickerson, a Georgia Military College graduate, gives a farewell salute as a tribute to fellow GMC graduate Sgt Chad Mercer who died while serving in Iraq.

GMC graduate Sgt. Chad Mercer, 25, died in an accident in Iraq in July. He was a Bradley commander who was killed when his vehicle rolled over into a canal.

He was remembered by his fellow Soldiers during a touching memorial held at Camp Striker.

"He was a good Soldier and a good friend," said Capt. Brian Lassitter, his company commander.

Mercer was selected as the NCO of the Year for the 48th BCT in February.

Spc. Vanessa Harris, 19, of Augusta, Ga., a current cadet at GMC, was injured in a rocket attack on the post exchange at Camp Liberty just days after her arrival in June. She was transported home to the U.S. for treatment and is expected to return to Iraq in September. She was awarded the Purple Heart for her injuries.

The life of a Soldier in Iraq can be both stressful and harsh. The daily conditions in which Soldiers have to live and work are far from the comforts of home.

"The heat is not as bad as people expected" Curtis said. "People can still work during the day."

Each day, the temperatures climb to 115 degrees and higher, but one thing Soldiers here in Iraq have that GMC cadets back home do not, is air conditioning. Each tent has AC units pumping out cool air 24 hours a day to provide much-needed relief from the scorching heat. The cadets shouldn't ever complain about a hot humid Georgia summer ever again.

When the cadets return to the historic Milledgeville campus, they will have rightfully earned the respect of not only the cadets and students they attend classes with, but of the staff and faculty who will mentor and teach them.

Most of them said they did not realize when they applied for the scholarship while in high school that someday they would have to put their education and lives on hold to serve in a combat zone. But that is a realization that they all had to face when they raised their right hand as they were sworn into the Georgia Army National Guard. The realization was confirmed when they stepped off the plane into the heat of Baghdad's combat zone.

What many of these young cadets may later realize is that their deployment to Iraq taught them invaluable life lessons about teamwork, adversity, character, compassion, friendship and duty. Topics discussed and studied in classrooms, but experienced every day here in Iraq.

Sgt. David Bill

Spc. Donna Sanders, a medical supply specialist, checks the pharmacy inventory of C Company, 148th Support Battalion. Sanders, 20, is a cadet at Georgia Military College in Milledgeville, Ga.

Video link brings Soldiers face-to-face with families

photos by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

(left) Sgt. Jeffrey J. Garner, 3rd Signal, 3rd Detachment, and Baltimore native, recites the oath of re-enlistment while his wife, Stephanie, and son, Jaheim, watch over video teleconference during a ceremony at Camp Liberty July 31. (above) Sgt. Jeffrey J. Garner (upper left screen), exchanges conversation with his wife, Stephanie, and son, Jaheim, over video teleconference. VTC personnel have facilitated approximately 150 morale conferences since the beginning of the deployment. This is the second opportunity Garner has had to use the VTC. He enjoys using the system because "It gives me a chance to see my family face-to-face without any delay.

Spc. Derek Del Rosario
100th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – A smile appeared on Sgt. Jeffrey J. Garner's face as he looked at his wife and child on the large screen.

Soldiers deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom 3 cherish the times they can hear the voice of their loved ones. Garner had the pleasure of both talking with and seeing his family, even from thousands of miles away.

This was possible thanks to video teleconferencing which allows Soldiers to see and hear from their loved ones on the other side of the world in real time.

Garner, from 3rd Detachment, 3rd Signal Company, 3rd Infantry Division, and a Baltimore native, re-enlisted during a VTC broadcast in order for his wife and son to watch. He then had a chance to speak with his family and see their reactions.

Garner is not new to the VTC experience.

"I've used VTC before," he said. "It allowed me to see my son for the first time. I am happy we have VTC available. It gives me a chance to see my family face-to-face without delay and it's much smoother than a web cam."

Any Soldier can take part in VTC said Staff Sgt. Michael Anderson, a Cincinnati native and noncommissioned officer in charge of the VTC.

"Units fill out a form on the 3ID website and then we schedule a time for a conference," Anderson said. "We coordinate with the unit family readiness group in the rear and set up a time that Soldiers can meet with their family."

In order for families to talk to their Soldiers via VTC, they must go to a military base in the U.S. that has that capability. Setting up VTC reunions also require prior planning.

"It can be a challenge to coordinate a meeting time for the Soldier and family to meet," Anderson said. "But it is worth it. VTC is important because it's a morale builder. It allows Soldiers to see their family members even from so far away."

Maj. John Moelter, 3rd Sig. Co. commander and a Sturgis, S.D., native, knows the importance of VTC. He encourages Soldiers from his unit to participate whenever they get the chance. Moelter said he tries to give those interested the opportunity as often as possible.

"Soldiers wish they can see their families, and through this technology, we can make it happen," Moelter said. "Soldiers are so grateful and happy to be a part of this."

VTC personnel have facilitated approximately 150 morale conferences since they have been in theater, Anderson said. While re-enlistments and ceremonies can be broadcast for the families to see, VTC is also a great way for Soldiers here to witness those "can't miss" moments back home.

Anderson said one of the most gratifying VTC conferences he helped set up involved the graduation of the seniors at Liberty County High School and Bradwell Institute in Hinesville, Ga.

"About 20 Soldiers here who couldn't make it to their kids' graduation were able to see their child walk across that stage," he said. "Everyone was so happy and thankful."

Being away from family can be hard on Soldiers who have been gone for so long, but VTC helps bring families together. Moelter has used the VTC himself and he believes Soldiers shouldn't pass it up.

"I got a chance to see my 1-year-old child walk over VTC," Moelter said. "I think every company should take advantage of this opportunity. The Soldiers love it and so do the families."

Truck driver receives Purple Heart

DSB PAO Media Release

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – A truck driver with the Division Support Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division was awarded the Military Order of the Purple Heart Aug. 11 in a ceremony held at the DSB Ministry Center.

Staff Sgt. Khevin G. Smith, a heavy-wheel vehicle operator with the 104th Transportation Company, 87th Corps Support Battalion, was awarded the medal by Brig. Gen. Mark E. O'Neill, the assistant division commander for support for the 3rd Inf. Div.

Although this is the award that nobody wants to get, said O'Neill, "to be able to pin this award on a Soldier is a great joy."

"It means the equipment, the training, and circumstance, which none of us get to predict or script, allowed him to be standing here with us," he said.

Smith, of Dallas, received his medal for wounds received in action April 20 when his convoy was ambushed during his return to Camp Liberty.

Smith's heavy equipment transporter was struck by a vehicle-borne explosive device. He managed to evacuate his truck commander, Spc. Morris Smith, who was sitting in the passenger seat. The two of them were picked up by Sgt. Eric L. Martin, who had pulled his HET next to them as they exited their damaged truck.

> **"You don't need to go get another one of those. One's enough."**
> Brig. Gen. Mark O'Neill

"The actions of Martin and the escorts from the 3rd Battalion, 117th Field Artillery Regiment, Alabama Army National Guard are the reason we're here," said Smith, whose unit deployed from Fort Benning, Ga.

Smith praised God for their safety under fire.

O'Neill said it was a blessing that Smith's equipment and training proved themselves. He also had advice for the Soldier.

"You don't need to go get another one of those," said O'Neill. "One's enough."

Sgt. 1st Class Peter Chadwick

Staff Sgt. Khevin G. Smith, a heavy wheel vehicle operator with the 104th Transportation Company, 87th Corps Support Battalion, Division Support Brigade, is overcome with emotion after receiving the Military Order of the Purple Heart August 11 from Gen. Mark E. O'Neill, assistant division commander for support for the 3rd Infantry Division. Smith, a Dallas, Texas, native, received the award for injuries sustained during an during an ambush on his convoy Apr. 20.

Courtesy Photo

(above) Spc. Jon Vandebogert, from Milwaukee, Wis., of B Battery, 126th Field Artillery, attached to 1st Battalion, 141st FA, 256th BCT. Vandebogert was selected 256th Brigade Combat Team Soldier of the Year following a board against the brigade's three other Soldiers of the Quarter. (right) Staff Sgt. Daniel Slone from New Iberia, La., with B Company, 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, attached to C Company, 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team receives the Army Commendation Medal Aug. 1 from 256th BCT commander, John Basilica Jr. after being selected non-commissioned officer of the Quarter for the 256th BCT. Slone went on to win NCO of the Year one week later.

Sgt. Thomas Benoit

256th BCT announce Soldier, NCO of the Year

Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT PAO

CAMP TIGERLAND, Iraq – Winners of the Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter competitions throughout the 256th Brigade Combat Team's deployment had one last competition to endure, but only two Soldiers would end up at the top.

Spc. Jon Vandebogert from Milwaukee, Wis., of B Battery, 126th Field Artillery, attached to 1st Battalion, 141st FA, 256th BCT, said the process of the competition was the same, but since it was at a higher level the questions were more difficult.

"Some of the current events questions threw me off. They asked about a tropical storm I didn't know much about," he said.

Vandebogert won the first Soldier of the Quarter competition in March, and even received the chance to meet the Honorable Francis Harvey, United States Secretary of the Army.

"He was very interested in my civilian life and asked me a lot of questions," Vandebogert said.

Though he felt confident during the competition, he was still surprised he won. He answered a couple of questions wrong, and said one, in particular, he knew the answer to, but went blank when he was asked.

"What made me mad was that I remembered it right after I walked out of the room," he said.

The screening process, no different than the Soldier and NCO of the Quarter competitions, consisted of such questions as basic knowledge of military field functions and manuals, drill and ceremony procedures, facing movements, and uniform appearance. The leadership provided Soldiers with a study guide with all possible questions, though the majority knew the answers from performing their everyday jobs. Each Soldier stood before a panel of senior enlisted non-commissioned officers from all battalions of the 256th BCT, with the brigade command sergeant major acting as the chairman of the board.

Staff Sgt. Daniel Slone from New Iberia, La., with B Company, 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, attached to C Company, 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, who won the most recent NCO of the Quarter competition, beat out all others for the title of NCO of the Year.

"I had the advantage of doing both competitions the same day, so it's not like the criteria wasn't fresh," he said.

The Soldier/NCO of the Year competition occurred only a few hours after the last quarter selection board.

Slone said what he exemplifies that would cause the panel of non-commissioned officers to look at him and think "NCO of the Year," is an age old Army ideal, "Mission first, Soldiers always."

Even before the 256th arrived in Baghdad, Slone took care of his Soldiers' needs.

"We were getting all of our paperwork in order, and I can specifically remember talking to one Soldier about his will," he said.

The Soldier did not want to consider it, but after probing from his NCO, finally decided to put it forth.

"It's not like saving his life on the battlefield," Slone said, "but things like that need to be dealt with."

Both Vandebogert and Slone feel the competition made them better Soldiers. Vandebogert said the knowledge he gained preparing for the board will make him a better NCO.

"I learned a lot about the Army, and I now have a greater general knowledge than I would, had I not been involved in this," he said.

Slone feels one of the goals of competitions like this are to enhance the individual Soldier's field of vision.

"They could ask us questions about things we do everyday, but if we didn't have to learn from the study guide, we wouldn't learn anything new," Slone said. "And that's what being a good Soldier and NCO is all about."

Attention Soldiers interested in Officer Candidate School

Listed below are the dates for OCS selection boards.
-Board one: Jan. 30, 2006 - Feb. 3, 2006
-Board two: Apr. 10, 2006 - Apr. 14, 2006
-Board three: July 17, 2006 - July 21, 2006
-Board four: Sept. 11, 2006 - Sept. 15, 2006

Boards are scheduled for one week, but may last longer.

OCS application files must be to Department of the Army Headquarters a minimum of 30 days before the start of each board. Late applications will be held until the next scheduled board. The address is:

200 Stovall St.,
Alexandria, VA 22332-0413

There will be a local OCS board here in late November (dates to be determined). Candidates need to turn in packets by early November. The DA photo can be taken in DCUs and Soldiers can go to the photo lab next to the Camp Liberty PX to have their photos taken. The charge is $1.00 per photo.

Injured Tiger Brigade Soldier fights to return to combat zone

Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT PAO

CAMP TIGERLAND, Iraq – "Being out here is like living through the Soldiers who came before me– our lives are not free, freedom is not free."

This is the mentality of Spc. Casey Carroll.

Doctors sent the 22-year-old, father of two, home in March after he lost a finger from a vehicle-borne improvised-explosive device. However, his intentions were not to stay there.

"They sent me home for good, but I went home to build myself back up so I could get back to my unit," he said.

The Raceland, La., native with C Company, 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, attached to 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team, said his patrol investigated suspicious activity at a gas station along Route Irish where they routinely conducted route clearance missions. They had problems with people selling gas on the side of the road so their commander wanted to check vehicles to make sure no one had containers which could potentially be used for black market fuel.

A few hours later, the Soldiers went back to the station and noticed strange activity. A few people also waved them down. The patrol exited their vehicle and began investigating the scene. A black BMW sat off to the left, so they cordoned off the area to keep the civilians out of possible harm's way. The commander saw a man walking down the road, and before the Soldiers could close in on him, a vehicle drove into the intersection behind the BMW and exploded.

One Soldier was killed and four were wounded, including Carroll, who lost his right pinky finger and took shrapnel in his hip and foot. Within 30 days he returned home to recuperate, and after only one month, was on his way back to Baghdad.

"I always planned on coming back, but I didn't tell anyone my intentions at first," Carroll said.

He said coming back to Iraq and fighting this war with his unit was not optional. He said he had a duty to fulfill for his country and he had a responsibility to this unit. He also owed it to his children.

He came back to Iraq so they would never have to.

"If we don't fix these problems now, my kids, and your kids, will have to come back here and do it for us. I don't want to have to worry about that or people coming into their world and messing it up," he said.

Carroll has a 3-year-old daughter, and a son who was born November 2004 while he was fighting in Iraq.

After returning to Iraq, his first trip back outside the wire was an eventful one.

"One of our patrols was hit with a VBIED and we responded," he said. "Everyone came out okay, but we took small-arms fire and I felt like they (the terrorists) were saying, 'Welcome back.'"

Carroll said if given the choice, and knowing what he knows now, he would not change a thing.

Courtesy Photo

Spc. Casey Carroll from Raceland, La., an infantryman with C Company, 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, attached to 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team, recovers in a military hospital after sustaining injuries from a vehicle borne improvised explosive device.

Staff Sgt. Britt Smith

Staff Sgt. Ron Deloach, from Glennville, Ga. performs fuel truck maintenance for HHC 48th BCT, 3ID. Deloach is a 19 year veteran of the Georgia Army National Guard.

48th Brigade maintenance shop: It's the little section that could

Staff Sgt. Britt Smith
48th BCT PAO

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq – The 48th Brigade Combat Team's motor pool is not fancy. It's not even paved, but it's the place to be when the brigade's vehicles need some attention.

The maintenance section is made up of mechanics and dispatchers. The hours are long and the air conditioning is definitely in short supply, but the men and women who work there don't mind – they know they have a job to do.

Staff Sgt. Terrence Williams, an 18-year veteran from Milledgeville, Ga., knows how important his job is.

"It feels good getting troops' vehicles ready," he said. "Their lives depend on it."

The key to mission success in Iraq is mobility. That can't happen if the Army can't roll, so it's up to Soldiers like Milledgeville, Ga., resident Staff Sgt. Danny Sallad, a mechanic who has but one impressive standard to adhere to.

"Our goal is have them (brigade vehicles) 100 percent combat ready when they move out of the wire," Sallad said.

Going out of the wire requires that a Soldier is prepared and with everything that can be thrown at them on any given day, the last thing they need to worry about is their transportation.

Sallad understands this fact well.

"We are a key component to the brigade," he said.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company's 1st Sgt. Barry Smallwood, from Griffin, Ga., puts it simply, "Without those Soldiers to check and fix our vehicles, we are broke. They are on call 24 hours a day – you call, they haul."

The business of maintenance is a numbers game. Take 16 Soldiers and put them in charge of maintaining 82 pieces of rolling stock and you have a section that not only meets the standard, but by all accounts far exceeds it.

"They are a company-sized element functioning at a battalion level," said Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander Capt. Michael Lipper, from Macon, Ga. "It's amazing how fast they fix vehicles."

Even with the high number of daily missions, everything from combat patrols to mail pick-up, each is equally important in the function of the 48th BCT's overall mission.

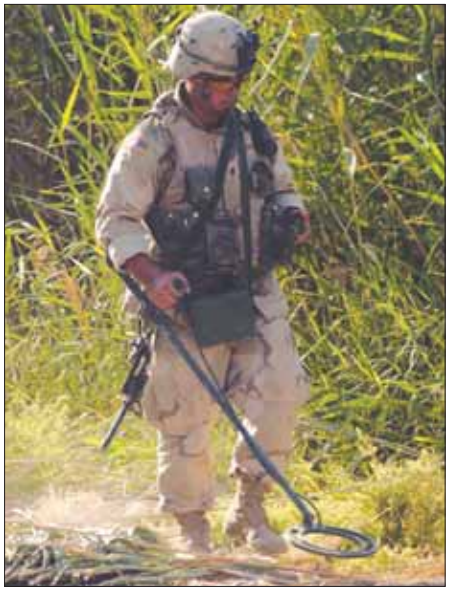
Teamwork is not always an easy thing to accomplish because various methods work with different units and tasks.

Staff Sgt. Michael Price, of Thomaston, Ga., is in charge of the maintenance section and his method seems easy enough.

"One person puts out the instructions and everybody else follows it," he said. "We are good at working as a cohesive team. We have a good attitude and we pick each other up when we are down."

Attention weightlifters: Never attempt to lift more than you should. Don't compare yourself to others. It's a slow, steady process to get the body you want. An injury will quickly end that dream.

1/11 Cavalry Soldiers destroy terror cell, find cash, weapons



Sgt. Thomas Benoit

A Soldier with 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team, searches the area for underground weapon caches with a metal detector in western Baghdad Aug. 4.

Capt. Marc Pelini
1/11th ACR Public Affairs Rep.

ABU GHRAIB, Iraq – In the 48 hours spanning Aug. 3 and 4, Soldiers of 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division conducted a series of raids to nab key planners of terrorist attacks and to seize weapons and bomb-making materials in Abu Ghraib.

The Soldiers captured four suspected terrorists, discovered five weapons caches, and confiscated more than $2,000 in U.S. currency.

Beginning at 8:30 p.m. Aug. 3, Soldiers from B Troop, 1/11th ACR searched five locations in the Khandari district, where they detained one terrorist who positively identified three other members of his cell after he was captured.

The unit also unearthed two weapons caches shortly before midnight.

The first cache consisted of a mortar tube with more than 50 mortar rounds, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher with two grenades and a sighting device, and a recoilless rifle with a tripod mount. The Soldiers also found 100 feet of detonation cord, 100 blasting caps and a videotape.

Twenty minutes later, they found another weapons collections which contained $2,200 in U.S. currency, four hand grenades and a cell phone wired to a bomb detonation device.

The four terror suspects were taken into custody for questioning.

The first detainee also told U.S. Soldiers about the location of an already-emplaced roadside bomb. An explosives ordnance disposal team located and destroyed the bomb.

Troops from 1/11th ACR also carried out several missions to arrest terrorists and uncover their logistical bases in Abu Ghraib as part of Operation Thunder Cat, conducted by 256th BCT.

Since July, members of 1/11th ACR have uncovered more than five major cache sites and arrested 28 insurgents working as part of terror cells conducting attacks against both Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces.

"The discovery of these caches and detainment of the individuals associated with (them) has dealt a serious blow to the terrorists operating in Abu Ghraib," said Maj. Brian Robertson, squadron executive officer, from Wilkesboro, N.C. "This success is a direct result of the persistence and hard work of the troopers of Bravo Troop and 1/11th ACR."

Iraqi Army battle staff trains on Civil Military Operations

1st Lt. Michael Klaphake
4th BCT PAO

Maj. Carlos Molina

An Iraqi Army officer from the 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division completes a CMO practical training exercise with fellow staff officers July 25.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HONOR, Iraq – Iraqi Army officers from 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, trained on an important aspect of their profession during a coalition-sponsored exercise July 25.

The U.S. military calls it civil military operations, which includes missions such as providing humanitarian assistance to communities when needed, or conducting an economic assessment of a district in Baghdad.

Civil affairs Soldiers from 4th Brigade Troops Battalion; 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment; 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment; and all of 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, provided the training to the 17 members of the IA brigade battle staff.

"If the Iraqis only take away one thing from the training, I hope that they understand how important it is to develop an advance planning capability," said Maj. Daniel Canales, of Point Pleasant, N.J., the 4th BCT civil military operations officer and one of the primary instructors for the class.

The training was focused on CMO considerations in planning and conducting military operations for the IA command staff, said Maj. Carlos Molina, the 1/184 Inf. CA team commander and native of Puerto Rico.

The training was extremely well received by the IA staff members and included interactive practical exercises. The exercise put the Iraqi officers in the various scenarios they will encounter in future real-world missions.

The primary purpose of the training was to give the staff considerations when planning CMO and to train them in such a way as to make a difference in their communities.

"This type of training is important because the Iraqi Security Forces need to demonstrate to their communities that they are a security force there for the protection and well-being of the populace," Molina said.

Soldiers fly 'Marne Express' between camps

Avn. Bde. PAO Press Release

Spc. Jennifer Fitts

Sgt. Randel E. Beyer, crew chief with A Company, 4th Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Attack Helicopter), waits for passengers to board during a stop on the Marne Express service.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Moving Soldiers, civilians and other military personnel by convoy can poses various challenges. A certain number of vehicles and troops are needed to provide security whenever convoys leaves a base.

It would be a virtual nightmare to assemble these elements every time an officer attends a meeting, paperwork needs to be delivered, or a Soldier goes to another camp before heading out on leave.

Enter the "Marne Express," the air shuttle that hops between military camps in central Iraq.

Hard-working pilots and crew chiefs of the 3rd Infantry Division's 4th Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Attack Helicopter) work long hours to transport Soldiers all over the Baghdad area and to surrounding camps.

"There were so many requests for aircraft to move personnel on routine business that the division decided to set up a shuttle," said Capt. Mary Beth Thompson, a pilot with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Aviation Brigade. The Philadelphia native occasionally takes the controls as a pilot for the Marne Express, as well as working with supply and logistics for HHC.

The Marne Express air shuttle provides a quick and easy method of moving Soldiers who are taking care of the day-to-day business of the division.

While to some it may seem impractical to use aviation assets as a shuttle, the Marne Express greatly reduces the number of Soldiers and equipment needed to transport personnel from one FOB to another who would typically have to convoy.

Making such frequent trips means spending a lot of hours in the air – so many that in the time since the beginning of the deployment in January, pilots of A Company have already surpassed the number of hours they spent in the air during all of Operation Iraqi Freedom 1.

That many hours in the air means more hours maintaining the aircraft on the ground. Between maintenance and flying, Soldiers from A Co. routinely work long days with little time off.

"We work extremely hard to keep the aircraft going," said Sgt. Randel E. Beyer, Blackhawk crew chief with A Co., 4-3 AHB "It's not because they're broken, but for routine maintenance."

Approximately six aircraft in A Co. are up and running on a daily basis, handling not only the Marne Express duties but also day-to-day missions, such as requested personnel movement.

The company runs in cycles; a "day heavy" and a "night heavy" cycle. During day heavy cycles, the night shift picks up a lot of the scheduled maintenance and helps handle the non-scheduled maintenance that comes up, said Beyer, a Tacoma, Wash., native. Since there are two shifts, when the night cycle picks up, the day crews help out with maintenance.

"It's a team effort," Beyer said. "Besides, who wants to go home with something unaccomplished?"

The days may be long and difficult, but A Co. Soldiers don't let that get them down. They get along well and there's no strife in the company, said Beyer.

"We're one of the companies that pushes hard," Beyer said. "We try to lead. We're competitive and put in those extra hours to keep the aircraft fixed. We just love our jobs."

256th BCT holds prayer breakfast

Sgt. Thomas Benoit

Lt. Col. James Waskom, 199th FSB, 256th BCT commander, from Abbeville, La., gives a testimony at a prayer breakfast Aug. 6 in the Tiger Den Dining Facility.

Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT PAO

CAMP TIGERLAND, Iraq – Feeding one's soul with spirituality can be as important as feeding the body, especially during times of uncertainty.

256th Brigade Combat Team Soldiers and their leaders combined fellowship and their convictions during a prayer breakfast at the Tiger Den Dining Facility on Camp Liberty Aug. 6. The Tigerland Gospel Choir provided an uplifting atmosphere as guests shared breakfast.

Lt. Col. James Waskom, from Abbeville, La., commander of 199th Forward Support Battalion, 256th BCT, spoke of how he had God with him all his life, though he did not realize it until just a few years ago.

He said he recalled little pieces of his childhood that stuck with him, such as listening to gospel music at his grandmother's house. He went to church as a child, but said he stopped when he grew older. Waskom went on to say that over the years, events occurred which would later be revealed to him as the work of God. He said he moved home after several years of school and worked with his father, who passed away only one year later.

Waskom went through a particularly hard time a few years ago.

One day, his wife walked into his office, grabbed his hand, and silently led him to church. As he knelt beside his wife and began to pray, Waskom said he never felt a peace like that before or since. He gave his life to God right then and there.

While thousands of miles away from home, Waskom was baptized in the Tigerland Chapel only a few months ago.

He said the events of his life were planned by God.

"Listening to my grandmother's records, moving home to live with my dad just before he died, meeting my wife; if that's not grace, I don't know what is," he said.

Brig. Gen. John Basilica, Jr., from Baton Rouge, La., and 256th BCT commander, was the guest speaker at the breakfast. He said he recently finished the book "The Purpose Driven Life" and testified to the positive influence it already showed in his day-to-day attitude.

"I intend to refocus my life and my purpose in greater service to God," he said.

Basilica went on to share something he learned from the book. It was that his life should not be about him, but about what God wants for him. He said he realized there are no accidents. That everything that fails or succeeds is God's will.

Following the speakers, Basilica presented Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Robert Baker with the book, "Faith of an American Soldier," and thanked him for his service to the Lord, the brigade, and the Soldiers.

"This man, as chaplain, has the hardest job in the brigade," Basilica said.

Sgt. Thomas Benoit

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Robert Baker from Stonewall, La., 256th BCT chaplain, leads Soldiers in prayer Aug. 6. The troops came together to worship and celebrate their beliefs in the Tiger Den Dining Facility located on Camp Liberty, Baghdad.

Sgt. Thomas Benoit

The Tigerland Gospel Choir sings the hymn "His Praises" at a prayer breakfast Aug. 6 in the Tiger Den Dining Facility. The breakfast was attended by 256th BCT Soldiers.

2nd BCT's Buffalo joins hunt for IEDs around Baghdad

Spc. Ben Brody

Cpl. Jason Nolen, E Co., 1/64 Armor, uses the Buffalo's robotic arm to inspect a metal box alongside a Baghdad road.

Spc. Ben Brody
2nd BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – Looking like a creation from the TV show "Monster Garage," 1st Battalion, 64th Armor's Buffalo lumbers down the streets of Baghdad, searching for improvised explosive devices.

The Buffalo stands far taller than a tank and boasts a robotic arm tipped with a pitchfork-like hand and a camera for seeing into hard-to-reach areas.

"We travel slowly along our routes, looking out the windows for anything suspicious," said Spc. Fred Cotten, a driver with E Company, 1/64 Armor, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. "We know the routes like the backs of our hands. We're out there every day, so it's pretty obvious when something is out of place."

A departure from typical military vehicles, the Buffalo has large windows of armored glass which offer much better side visibility than humvees or armored personnel carriers.

The engineer company's Buffalo team spotted several IEDs in their previous area of responsibility, and though they have not found one yet in their new sector, they boast about the Buffalo's effectiveness.

"IEDs have never gone off in the areas we've swept," said Cpl. Jason Nolen, E Co., 1/64 Armor, Buffalo arm operator. "Every time an IED explodes in our sector, it's on a route we didn't patrol that day."

On a patrol July 27, the Buffalo team inspected several bags in the street, and poked through piles of rubble on the shoulder, common hiding places for IEDs.

Using the hydraulic arm's electronic controller, Nolen, from Florence, Ala., guided the arm's sharp tines into a garbage bag and lifted it, revealing … garbage.

"There's so much trash on the roads, it's very time-consuming to clear all the pieces that could hide an explosive," Nolen said.

Soldiers in humvees travel with the Buffalo and pull security for the slow-moving convoy.

"We're out there looking primarily for IEDs, but anything that catches our eye, we'll investigate," said Staff Sgt. Perre Echolz, obstacle section sergeant and a native of Brooklyn, N.Y. "Being in the lead vehicle, you've got to be a leader, you can't be nervous at all."

Soldiers speak highly of the Buffalo's reliability and durability under fire.

"Every Buffalo we've heard of getting hit has rolled back to base under its own power," said Cotten, who is from Charleston, Miss. "It's tough as nails. Between driving either this or a tracked vehicle, I'd take the Buffalo, hands down."

The E Co. team picked up their Buffalo in April after receiving a class from 612th Engineers, an Ohio National Guard unit stationed in Baghdad.

"It was a good class – we learned how to identify an IED, what to look for and where to look," Cotten said. "Since then, we've learned quite a bit on our own that is helping us to keep the roadways safe."

Nolen said the group changes up their routes and departure times constantly to avoid setting patterns for potential ambushers to follow.

"We know when we go out and clear a route, we're responsible for the safety of our fellow Soldiers in the area," Nolen said. "We go out every day and do what we can to keep the routes safe for our guys."

Spc. Erin Robicheaux

A recent graduate of the Iraqi Army Leadership Training Course salutes Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Rachal, who modified the training from his knowledge as an instructor at the Primary Leadership Development Course at Camp Cook, La.

Spc. Erin Robicheaux

Noncommissioned officers of the 1st Iraqi Army Brigade march onto the parade field for their graduation ceremony Aug. 6. They are the final class to be instructed by the U.S. Soldiers who implemented the course.

New Iraqi Army leaders graduate from course

Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT PAO

CAMP JUSTICE, Iraq – The 1st Iraqi Army Brigade faced the challenge of implementing the first Noncommissioned Officer Academy in the country, and succeeded. Now their challenge is to spread the knowledge to brigades throughout Iraq.

"Grab hold of the NCOs and give them the knowledge and skill to succeed on the battlefield," said Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Rachal from Alexandria, La., instructor for the Iraqi Army Leadership Training Course as he addressed a group of freshly-graduated NCOs.

IA Soldiers from the most recent class, Class 0505, graduated Aug 6 as the last group to be instructed by the U.S. Soldiers who developed the training.

Rachal, on a one-year tour in Iraq with 256th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, took his experience as an instructor at the Primary Leadership Development Course at Camp Cook, La., and transformed it into something beneficial for the Iraqi NCO Corps.

This was not easy, considering there was no official NCO Corps in the IA until just a few months ago. There were only officers, warrant officers and lower enlisted Soldiers – no NCOs.

In fact, the IA did not know about the NCO Corps, thanks to the former rule of Saddam Hussein, said Sgt. 1st Class Dean Davis, an instructor at both the IALTC and PLDC with Rachal.

"The old regime held them back so much," Davis said. "Their eyes opened wider every time we sat and talked with them. It was amazing for them to see the feelings of the NCOs now, compared to what they saw in the past."

Command Sgt. Maj. Hassan Abdul Kadum, senior enlisted advisor for the 1st IA Brigade, said his NCOs and their brigade are paving the way for all of the IA.

"This brigade is the history of the Iraqi Army," said Hassan. "We are the first to take full responsibility of our own area of operations in the new IA, the first to lose Soldiers in a combat zone, and the first to train NCOs to be proficient, with the help of the U.S. Army."

Spc. Erin Robicheaux

Command Sgt. Maj. Hassan Abdul Kadum, senior enlisted advisor for the 1st IA Brigade, spoke to his NCOs Aug. 6. They are the final class to graduate having U.S. Soldiers as instructors.

The academy was the vision of Hassan and Command Sgt. Maj. James Mays, senior enlisted advisor for 256th BCT. Brig. Generals John Basilica, Jr. and Jalil Khalaf Shwayel, commander of the 256th and 1st IA Brigade, respectively, realized the importance of the NCO Corps and supported the course fully.

"When the United States instructors leave, I don't want all of the experience and knowledge we have gained from them to be lost," Jalil said. "And it will be if we don't use what they taught us."

Jalil told his Soldiers he would continually walk beside them, and whoever would not wear the uniform in the middle of the street was not someone who should lead the country of Iraq.

Spc. Jade Bernard from Abbeville, La., of Headquarters Company, 256th BCT, helped with the classes on an administrative level and said her involvement helped the female Soldiers relate better to their male instructors.

"They've done really well with the course and started to pull together once they saw they could do it better and faster if they worked together as a team," she said, referring to teamwork obstacles the instructors gave them to perform.

Bernard was part of the military police platoon in her unit and she played an integral part in training the Iraqi Police for the elections in January. She said working with the IA Soldiers was just as rewarding, though on an individual basis.

"The opportunity to help the Soldiers work as a team and come together, instead of working against each other, was overwhelming," Bernard said.

The leadership course will continue after the U.S. instructors leave. Classes will be taught by NCOs from the 1st IA who assisted Rachal. The course will build on the base laid out before them.

At the end of the graduation ceremony, Rachal thanked Jalil, Hassan, and the IA NCOs, as well as the 256th leadership for allowing him the privilege of bringing his skills to the table in Iraq.

"I can't go through this last graduation without saying a few words," Rachal said. "This IALTC has greatly impacted my life and will always be a part of me. After what I have seen these past few months, I know your challenge can be met."

Spartan Mayor Cells support Soldiers, boost economy

Spc. Ben Brody
2nd BCT PAO

BAGHDAD, Iraq – The Camp Loyalty and Rustamiyah Mayor Cells are one-stop shops for answering questions, providing transient billeting and managing local labor.

Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Brigade Troops Battalion, staff the Mayor Cell.

"We're the people to see for any questions about the FOB or if you're just passing through and need a place to spend the night," said 1st Lt. Ruth Levy, HHC, 2-3 BTB, executive officer and deputy mayor. Levy, from Syracuse, N.Y., said the mayor's office also oversees the labor contracts and operates the troop store.

The mayor cell has two buildings that visitors can sleep in at Camp Loyalty, as well as the Spartan Troop Store, where Soldiers can buy food, toiletries and other essentials.

"We go out to other camps and shop for all the wonderful things you can buy here," said Sgt. Byrdine Dean, troop store manager. "We welcome suggestions on what to stock. Our mission is to keep our Soldiers happy."

Dean, from Lloyd, Fla., said the store has a much wider selection of items since 2nd BCT took over Camp Loyalty in February. In addition to general items like shaving cream and animal crackers, the troop store also carries crafts from local vendors.

"We're usually pretty busy here," Dean said. "Locals bring in artwork all the time that appeals to Soldiers."

Mayor cell personnel also manage contracts with local laborers in conjunction with Kellogg, Brown and Root.

Sgt. 1st Class Anthony McCloyn, the noncommissioned officer in charge, handles purchasing and serves as the company pay officer.

"A big part of our mission is to help put money into the local economy by hiring workers from the neighborhood," McCloyn, from Kansas City, Kan., said. "We find local contractors who bring in skilled local laborers, and problems get fixed."

At Camp Rustamiyah, the mayor cell is composed of Soldiers from different units, who have wide ranging duties, from coordinating Morale Welfare and Recreation events to regular inspections of the Brigade Internment Facility.

Rustamiyah's mayor cell is currently coordinating the renovation of a building that will become an electronics store and Iraqi grocery store.

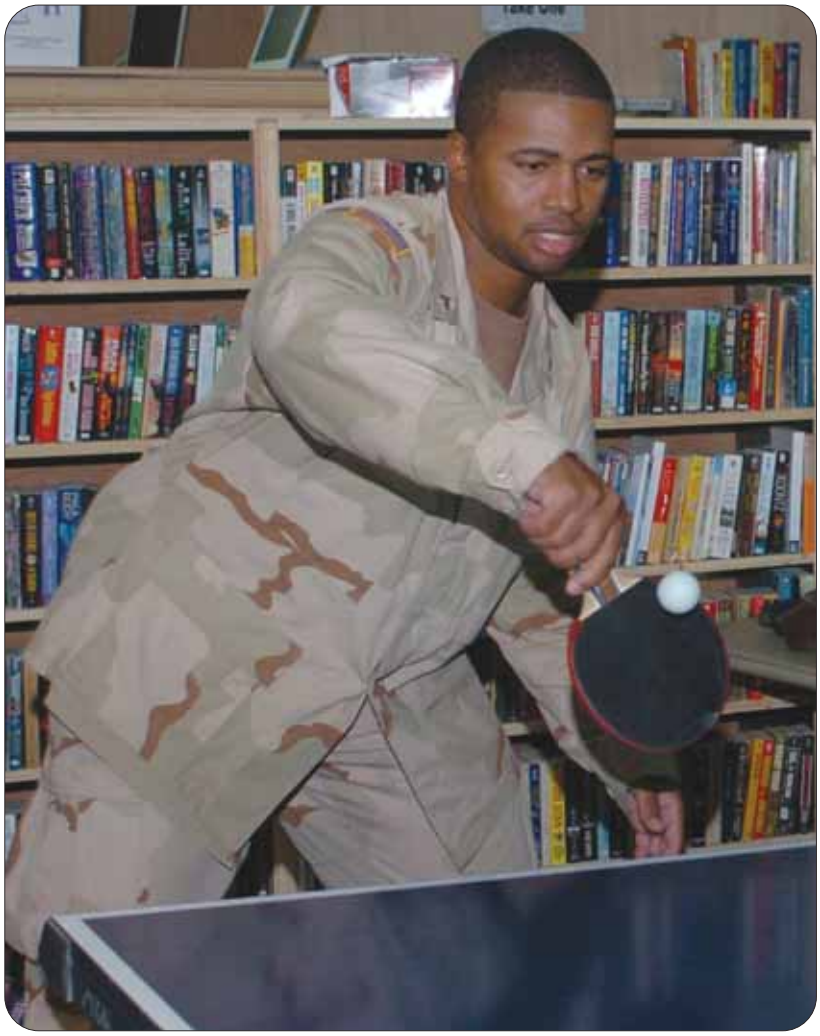
"We're trying to get Soldiers involved in local culture with the grocery store," said Sgt. Brian Applewhite, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, mayor cell NCOIC. "It's also one less bombed-out building on the camp."

Rustamiyah also sponsors "free phone Sundays," when Soldiers can make free satellite phone calls all day.

"It's our job to make sure Soldiers are happy," Applewhite, of San Bernardino, Calif., said. "They go out there in the fight, and we stay in here, so we've got to make sure the PX is stocked, the chow hall is running smoothly and that the internet is up so they can relax when they come in."

Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker

Pfc. Gerado Gallardo, a mechanic with 94th Maintenance Co., 87th Combat Support Brigade, and San Antonio native, is recognized by Col. Brian R. Layer, Division Support Brigade commander, for his efforts in producing a custom designed guide-on stand for the commanders' office. "I was just doing the job that was assigned to me," Gallardo said. "I'm really surprised and honored the commander wanted to meet me."



Spc. Maria Mengrone

Cpl. Eric Robinson, an administrative noncommissioned officer for the assistant division commander, support, with Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company, Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, plays table tennis after reciting a poem on stage at the Morale Welfare and Recreation center's Poetry Slam night, Aug. 13.

Liu Jin, AFP

(above) Soldiers of the 3rd Bn., 117 Field Artillery Regiment, receive their safety brief before a recent convoy escort mission at Camp Taji. (below) Staff Sgt. Edward L. Lenore, a radio communications repairer with 632nd Maintenance Company, 87th Corps Support Battalion, Division Support Brigade, checks an amplifier adapter.

Sgt. 1st Class Peter Chadwick

Chef, boxer, future NCO:

This DSB stock control specialist does it all

DSB PAO Media Release

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Fresh out of high school, Anthony Zavala had his pick of careers: boxer, chef or Soldier.

Eventually he chose the Army and now serves in Iraq as a specialist with Division Support Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division. But he hasn't left the kitchen or the boxing ring far behind.

The stock control specialist with the division ammunition office, support operations, didn't even consider the Army as an option until someone he respected brought it to his attention.

"I was 16 when chef told me to join," Zavala said.

Chef Brian Ferland, Zavala's instructor at Johnson and Wales Culinary College in Worcester, Mass., was fresh out of basic training for the Army National Guard.

Ferland was highly motivated about the Army and was able to encourage Zavala.

Zavala said he listened to the chef because he was one of the very few people in his life who he felt cared about his future.

Zavala said it was caring people who were able to guide him to success.

Like Ferland, Big Duke also cared.

Big Duke ran a boxing club at Boston's Southeast Community Center. He literally pulled Zavala out of a street fight and taught him discipline in the ring, said Zavala, who is still passionate about boxing.

He has a passion for cooking too.

Ferland felt the Army was a good way for Zavala to practice his passion for the culinary craft.

"On my 17th birthday, I went to the (Military Entrance Processing Station)," said Zavala, a Boston native. "I tried to be a cook."

Zavala said he was disappointed to find out he needed a driver's license to get that specific military occupational specialty. He didn't have his license yet and left MEPS without joining.

At the time, Zavala said it was cooking or nothing.

When Zavala told Ferland what had happened, the chef redirected him back to MEPS by telling him to join the Army for the college benefit and then pursue culinary education after his first tour.

Determined, Zavala said he was back at the MEPS a few days later and chose ammunition specialist as his MOS.

However, his determination started to fade at Basic Combat Training at Fort Jackson, S.C.

Zavala, a self-described hard-case, said he loved the physical training, but didn't care for the Army's discipline.

He had difficulty adjusting to his drill sergeants, particularly, Drill Sergeant Phillips.

Ironically, it was Phillips who brought Zavala around.

One day Zavala said Phillips sat the platoon down for a "heart to heart." Phillips spoke to the trainees about why they should be Soldiers and surprisingly showed a caring side.

It seemed so out of character for Phillips, but it worked.

Consequently, Zavala "turned a corner" and became dedicated to being the best Soldier he could be.

Interestingly, the MOS he'd settled for became a real joy to him, said Zavala, who was promoted to specialist in March.

"He is a highly-motivated Soldier who sets and achieves goals," said Master Sgt. Thomas J. Rooyakkers, the DAO noncommissioned officer in charge.

"He's been aggressive," said Sgt. Richard E. Mantooth, an ammunition manager with DAO and Zavala's first line supervisor.

Zavala's aggression shows in many ways.

He volunteered to be a squad automatic weapon gunner during convoy assault operations from Kuwait to the unit's area in Iraq, said Rooyakkers, who hails from Appleton, Wis. "He performed outstanding, never wavering during the intense 72-hour convoy through hostile enemy territory."

Zavala has not wavered in his attempt to achieve his goal to make sergeant before his unit redeploys to Fort Stewart, Ga. He is focused on the sergeant's board.

Mantooth, from Biloxi, Miss., said Zavala always has a regulation in his hand and is begging, "Hey, sergeant, ask me some questions."

He has taken the initiative by participating in practice boards when ever they're offered, said Mantooth.

"When the opportunity came to attend the Soldier of the Month board, Zavala jumped at the chance to represent 3rd Platoon with just a four-day notice," Rooyakkers said. "Zavala performed outstanding, winning the company Soldier of the Month for July."

Rooyakkers said Zavala was able to prepare even though he was working odd hours.

Working through adversity is what drives Zavala.

Zavala said he likes the "hard-earned rewards."

He also prioritizes those rewards.

He loves boxing, but has put his eagerness to get back into the ring aside to pursue his military goals.

His immediate goal is Soldier of the Quarter.

His mid-term goal is to be like the NCO who turned him around in basic training.

Spc. Derek Del Rosario

Spc. Anthony J. Zavala, right, a stock control clerk with the division ammunition office, support operations, Division Support Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, won his first fight here May 15. Zavala, a Boston native, has a passion for boxing, cooking and the Army.

Rooyakkers said Zavala wants to become a drill sergeant so he too can mold civilians into Soldiers.

His mark of success will be having a Soldier down the line say, "That sergeant helped me get where I am today," said Zavala, who reenlisted for six years in March.

Zavala's ultimate goal is to make sergeant major. He hopes to improve the Army he's come to appreciate.

"I like what I'm doing," Zavala said. "I like the Army."

Mostly, Zavala said he likes what the Army has done for him.

The Army gave him the opportunity to escape his former life.

Zavala said he's glad he's not dealing with the negative influences or getting into trouble.

"I don't know what I'd be doing if I was back there," he said. "I'm just glad I can be proud of what I accomplish here."

Ballistic safety glasses: an unsung hero in battle for safety

Courtesy Photo

A pair of safety glasses belonging to Sgt. Derrick White rest on top of a humvee after being hit by shrapnel in an IED attack near Balad. White said the glasses saved his vision.

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT PAO

Before deploying to Iraq, Soldiers of 1st Brigade Combat Team were issued rapid field initiative equipment. The RFI items included safety gear approved for duty in a combat zone, including knee and elbow pads, a new Kevlar helmet and ballistic eye protection.

Often overlooked, the ballistic eye protection has proven its value time and time again.

Soldiers of 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment have experienced a few situations where their BEP has helped them avoid permanent injury to their eyes.

"I'm 100 percent sure I would have lost my eyesight if I hadn't been wearing those," said Sgt. Derrick White, a C Troop, 5/7 Cav. dismount team commander. "A lot of people don't realize the importance of safety goggles until it is too late. I was one of those people. It was a real eye opener for me."

White was involved in an improvised explosive device attack near Balad. He said he was grateful the injuries he received didn't extend to his eyesight.

"I got a few little nicks like when you cut yourself shaving," he said. "It makes me feel good that I still have my eyesight."

White was not the only 5/7 Cav. Soldier to avoid eye injuries.

"Eye protection has saved partial or total eyesight in many cases," said 1st Lt. Chad Hauge platoon leader for C Troop, 5/7 Cav. "Over here with everything that's going on, pretty much every time we're doing anything, our Soldiers are required to wear their ballistic eye protection."

Hauge said even Soldiers who wear prescription eyeglasses have been required to switch to BEP as a precaution.

"We had Soldiers who wore glasses, but after we'd seen the damage that could be done we told them to start wearing BEP," he said.

Hauge speaks from experience.

He had a close call when a rocket-propelled grenade was fired at him by an insurgent.

"I heard an RPG hit," Hauge said. "I turned around and got a nice big cut on my leg, and a piece of debris hit my glasses. It hit the frame hard enough to push it back into my face and give me a black eye. The glasses never broke. Even the lenses never popped out."

The BEP is standard gear because of the quality of the lenses. They are made of a material that will withstand a certain amount of damage and help Soldiers avoid losing their eyesight.

"All of the safety ballistic lenses that are issued in theater are made of a polycarbonate material," said Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Kelley, 1st BCT safety noncommissioned officer in charge. "It's a proven fact that they are ballistically approved. There is actually a number printed on the lens showing their ballistic quality."

Kelley said many Soldiers in theater still wear sunglasses or other eyewear that will not hold up if an attack occurs. He said if they want to retain their eyesight, they should switch to the BEP.

"There are Soldiers in theater that have chosen to wear lenses other than the polycarbonate lenses that are issued," he said. "It is a definite safety violation. If I was still wearing those lenses after the incidents down at 5/7 Cav., I would switch."

Spc. Ricardo Branch
Spc. Jake Butler from Pekin, Ill., of B Company, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry, 256th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, defends the goal against an Iraqi boy during the unit's humanitarian mission in Abu Ghraib July 29.

Infantrymen make a difference in Abu Ghraib district

Spc. Ricardo Branch
Task Force Baghdad PAO

ABU GHRAIB, Iraq – The platoon of U.S. Soldiers donned their combat gear, climbed aboard humvees and prepared to roll out for another day's duty in Baghdad.

This time, however, the Task Force Baghdad Soldiers were on a different kind of mission.

The Soldiers – from 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, attached to 256th Brigade Combat Team, were not out to fight terrorists, but to do something special by cleaning up a soccer field for the children in their sector of Abu Ghraib July 29.

"It's really sad when you see kids walk around barefoot playing soccer in a trash-filled lot," said Spc. Jake Butler of 2/130th Inf.

"They (Iraqi kids) don't have much and are always asking for things," said the Pekin, Ill. native. "We can't give them everything, but we'll do what we can to make them happy."

The desire to make a difference for the children prompted one member of the team, Cpl. Samuel Shehorn, of Mt. Carmel, Ill., to coordinate the effort to visit and set up a soccer field for the kids.

"Back at home, I have two girls who can go play soccer anytime," Shehorn said. "Over here, the older kids use the soccer field while the younger ones play in a small trash-filled lot."

Bothered by the fact that small children played in a trash dump, Shehorn gathered soccer supplies, coordinated the construction of goals and planned with his company commander, Capt. Eric Kampwerth, to visit the small "soccer" lot along with his platoon.

"I thought it was a great idea, which showed a junior noncommissioned officer taking the initiative and getting the support of his entire platoon in coordinating the effort (for this mission)," said Kampwerth, of Godfrey, Ill.

The commander credits the soccer field cleanup as a success when Soldiers are permitted to go above their duty to achieve something.

"This is a fantastic example of what Soldiers are capable of doing if you allow them to," he said. "I can't say enough about these men. They've always done extremely well and it's gratifying to see them perform what they want to do."

Armed with shovels, rakes, and trash bags, the infantrymen of 2/130th Inf. began the task of clearing years of neglect from the small lot.

Many of the infantrymen, some who volunteered on their day off, realized their goodwill gesture may be overlooked, but if their work brings happiness to even one child, then their effort will have been worth it.

"What we're doing is showing the kids we care," Shehorn said. "If the area looks good, the kids may get a little pride in their surroundings (and keep the area up)."

It also helped put a personal face on the U.S. Soldiers who patrol their neighborhoods, said Spc. Kevin Briner, B Co., 2/130 Inf.

"We don't mind doing more than just combat missions out here because it helps assure the people in our area that we're concerned about their community just as much as they are," Briner said.

After their two trailers were loaded with broken glass, stones, and hundreds of pounds of trash, the infantrymen got out the soccer balls and played with the children.

Spc. Ricardo Branch
Spc. Mike Campbell from Effingham, Ill., a Soldier with B Company, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry, 256th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, paints the chain link fence posts surrounding the small soccer lot during the unit's humanitarian mission in Abu Ghraib July 29.

"The Soldiers enjoy playing with the kids," said 2nd Lt. Henry Mullins, platoon leader, B Co., 2/130 Inf. "When we interact with the kids, people see that we're out to do positive things because a lot of our time is devoted to force protection which involves searching homes."

"Doing this (cleanup) can make the kids growing up realize we're out to make a difference," said Mullins, a Thomaston, Ga., native. "We are helping their community as well as searching for the insurgents."

FACT: IEDs are the number one kill of Coalition Forces. Stay Alert, Stay Alive

Save your eyesight!! Wear protective goggles or safety glasses during appropriate tasks.
Be smart!

SOLDIERS, continued from page 1

Baghdad created a public works crisis situation that continues to this day.

"If there is a situation below poor, we (Husseiniya) are underneath that … it's bad," said Nanjar Manshed the Al-Istaklah District Delegate.

In order to correct these health and public services problems, Coalition Forces and the MMPW decided a charter was needed to detail plans that will bring storm drainage projects, water-quality improvements, and most importantly sewage treatment facilities.

The Husseiniya Charter is the first of its kind in the area and the projects that develop of this agreement will improve the city's health and welfare.

"It is a great project to help the people … we will have healthy water and less disease from the sewage all over the city," Manshed said.

Local Iraqi contractors will perform most of the work on these projects, providing the additional benefit of employment for laborers.

"The widespread use of the local workforce not only adds jobs, but helps to spike the economy as wage earners buy goods and services in the area," said Maj. Scott Sill, civil affairs officer for 3rd Bde., 1st Armored Div., and a native of Daytona Beach, Fla.

Coalition Forces are involved in the planning and project development stages, but the execution of the plans will be at the directive of the Iraqi government.

"I think this is a tremendous project for the people of Husseiniya," Bishop said. "This is an Iraqi project, the U.S. Forces are only providing some funding and oversight." He added that the charter agreement will provide jobs and result in better living conditions for the people of the area.

Husseiniya's programs will serve as the test-bed and guide for other projects in different impoverished areas in and around Baghdad.

"What we do and learn here in Husseiniya will be used as a road-map for projects in other towns that desperately need basic essential services such as clean water, air, and waste removal," Sill said.

The MMPW and the organizers of the charter group are hopeful that the newly-signed agreement will be the springboard to additional charter groups that will spread across the region to improve the lifestyles of Iraqi people across the nation.

"Hopefully, I will see the whole improvement from when they put the first shovel into the ground," Mashed said. "These projects will make the people in Husseiniya proud."

USO, continued from page 1

photos by Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker(above) and Spc. Erin Robicheaux (right)

(above) Actor and comedian Colin Quinn, who was a cast member on Saturday Night Live and host of Comedy Central's "Tough Crowd with Colin Quinn, performs a comedy routine for Soldiers at the USO show. (right) Matt Lauer interviews Chief Warrant Officer 4 Randy Kirgiss from Hector, Minn., with C Company, 4-3 Aviation Regiment. Kirgiss founded "Operation Teddy Drop" in his Baghdad area of operations.

again," Tweeden reflected. "When I got invited a few years ago to be part of the tour, I felt like my life had come full circle."

This is Tweeden's seventh tour with the USO, and she hopes she is making a difference in the lives of the troops.

"My father still talks about meeting Raquel Welch, and maybe 20 years from now, one of you will be telling your children about me, and I'll know I've made an impact," she said.

Tweeden also took the opportunity to thank the female Soldiers for their service. She said she admires their perseverance and dedication and said they make her proud to be a woman.

In addition to two comedy routines by Jeffrey Ross and Colin Quinn, Sayers spoke on the value of teamwork and counting on your fellow man.

"You can't do it by yourself, you have to rely on your team members," said Sayers, the former Chicago Bears running back and current motivational speaker. He told the Soldiers to put everything they could into this experience and hold onto it for all that it's worth.

"Winston Churchill once said, 'You make a living by what you make, but you make a life by what you give,'" he said. "You Soldiers are making a life right now. Life is measured by donation, not duration."

As the USO events took place, Lauer interviewed Soldiers from Task Force Baghdad, including Spc. Steven Tschiderer of the 256th Brigade Combat Team.

Nearly two months ago, a sniper shot Tschiderer in the chest, but he survived thanks to his armored vest. After a chase which resulted in a few gunshot wounds to the shooter, the terrorist was captured by Tschiderer and his unit. Tschiderer, a medic, started giving medical care to the very terrorist who had tried to take his life.

Lauer interviewed Tschiderer about his story and asked him to explain the functions and aspects of the body armor. Because Tschiderer wore his ballistic vest and helmet the day of the attack, he only sustained a large bruise on his chest, rather than the fatal alternative.

Tschiderer, a native of Mendon, N.Y., with E Troop, 101st Cavalry attached to 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, 256th BCT, said meeting Casey was a highlight in his day.

The feeling seemed to be reciprocal.

"You're not just a hero, you're my hero," Casey told the overwhelmed Soldier.

Lauer also interviewed Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Wells, from Newark, Ohio, about his two tours in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Wells, a platoon sergeant with 4th Battalion, 64th Armor, 4th Brigade Combat Team, conducted operations during OIF 1 and said over the course of the last two years, the situation greatly changed.

"It's a complete difference in the way we conduct combat operations," he said. "Before, if you saw the enemy, you shot the enemy, but now it's so hard to tell who the enemy even is."

Spc. Erin Robicheaux

Leeann Tweeden, mistress of ceremonies at the USO show Aug. 17, fitness model, television personality and correspondent on the television series "The Best Damn Sports Show Period," speaks to the Soldiers in attendance. This was Tweeden's seventh USO tour.

Capt. Sherman Powell from Newport, R.I., agreed with Wells' assessment. He was also interviewed about his experiences during OIF 1. During his last tour in Iraq, as a company commander with 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, Powell and his troops fought in central Baghdad and captured what is now the International Zone.

Today, he conducts operations in Baghdad and said the focus right now is building up the Iraqi Army, and essentially, the Iraqi government.

"The last time we were here, the government and the military basically collapsed, and this time around, the country is getting back on its feet," he said.

Powell said he is a first-hand witness to the progress Iraq has made in the time since the war began. He said one large improvement is the presence of the Iraqi Security Forces.

"When we were here before, there were no Iraqi Police or Iraqi Army Soldiers, there wasn't even anyone to collect the trash," he said. "This time instead of being the government, which we were before, we're helping build it."

Lauer also interviewed Chief Warrant Officer Randy Kirgiss from Hector, Minn., with C Company, 4th Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Assault Helicopter). Kirgiss founded Operation Teddy Drop, which has brought more than 5,000 teddy bears to children in the Baghdad area.

A recent donation of 15,000 bears are still awaiting distribution.

Kirgiss and his crew receive donations of teddy bears and parachute material from people throughout the U.S. The bears are rigged with parachutes and dropped out of aircraft during routine missions.

"We began taking donations in January and made our first drop in April," he said. The idea was based on humanitarian missions he performed while deployed to Bosnia.

"We do this just about each time we fly, as long as it's not a combat mission," Kirgiss said. "We can get into areas a lot of the ground troops don't get to, but we do try to stay out of the urban areas so the kids don't run into streets."

Task Force Baghdad Soldiers enjoyed the day's events, and Tweeden had a few parting words for them just prior to leaving the dining facility: "I know that there's a lot of negativity in the media and the message you guys are getting probably isn't the greatest, but please know that the people back home love you and support you. You are our heroes."

Cadets, professors donate 'books for Baghdad'

Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker

Hundreds of boxes of college textbooks collected from cadets and professors at West Point are unloaded from trucks and delivered to the University of Baghdad. The books covered most collegiate topics including English, physics, economics and management.

Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker

Assistant professor Shatha Alsaadi, head of the English Department at the Women's College of Education and Shakir Hammoudi, dean of the Women's College at the University of Baghdad leaf through two of the donated books.

Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker
100th MPAD

BAGHDAD – Hundreds of boxes containing thousands of textbooks donated by cadets at the United States Military Academy were delivered to the University of Baghdad's Women's College recently in a humanitarian aid effort between cadets and professors at West Point and the U.S. Army and Air Force.

What began as merely an idea became a coordinated logistical mission between the military academy, Charleston Air Force Base, Sather Air Base (Baghdad International Airport) and the University of Baghdad.

Professor Tom Lainis, Associate Dean of Plans and Resources at West Point, coordinated the collection effort at West Point. Cadets who normally sell their textbooks back to campus bookstores, donated them to the Denton humanitarian relief program to help the students at the University of Baghdad.

The Denton program is a Department of Defense logistics program that transports State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development-approved, privately donated humanitarian cargo worldwide by land, sea and air on a space-available basis within the Defense Transportation System.

Historically, the most common cargo has been medical and dental supplies, school supplies, furniture, vehicles, agricultural supplies, clothing, machinery, and vocational training equipment. These items are used to support on-going relief and development projects in underdeveloped regions of the world.

"The (Denton) humanitarian relief program is a great opportunity to provide relief and assist in the reconstruction for the locals in Baghdad," said Staff Sgt. Jason Stonehocker, 447th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, Aerial Port Flight, Cargo. Stonehocker works at BIAP and hails from Sumter, South Carolina. "It is a privilege to assist in getting the supplies and materials to the local communities."

The textbook delivery isn't the first humanitarian relief that Baghdad has received, and it certainly won't be the last. The 3rd Infantry Division is providing support to the mission by picking up supplies and materials.

"We greatly appreciate the initiative that the 3ID has had," Stonehocker said. "The 3ID makes sure that the cargo gets in the right hands.

Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker

Sgt.1st Class Brian Rauschuber, of 3rd Inf. Div. Civil Affairs listens as Assistant Professor Shatha Alsaadi and Shakir Hammoudi express their appreciation at receiving textbooks donated by West Point cadets and professors.

Ken Hundemer, of the Denton program, coordinated the operational aspects at Charleston AFB. As the project gained momentum, he contacted Sgt.1st Class Brian Rauschuber, of 3rd Inf. Div. Civil Affairs in June and informed him the books were being collected, palletized, and shipped to BIAP.

With an anticipated arrival of early August, contact was made with Dr. Saadi Shakir Hammoudi, Dean of the Women's College at the University of Baghdad and Assistant Professor Shatha Alsaadi, head of the Department of English at the Women's College of Education to arrange delivery.

Shakir and Shatha were present when the 3rd Inf. Div. trucks arrived to greet and thank the Soldiers involved with the convoy for their efforts to make the delivery possible.

"We are grateful," said Shatha. "We thank them (Soldiers, cadets and professors) for thinking of us, but to give us books because they're thinking of us is great. It's just wonderful!"

Books from all subjects were donated, including English, chemistry, physics, economics, sociology and psychology, to name a few.

"Our books need to be updated," said Shakir. "For students and professors who care, care about us and our future, this means a lot. This will help so many departments. Our students need books on education and teaching, literature, English language and linguistics."

Shatha also conveyed her appreciation on behalf of the university.

"Thanks to the U.S.," Shatha said. "Thanks to the U.S. students and the ambassadors of (the) U.S. for donating these (books) to us and our students."

Procedural changes for official military photographs

The purpose of the new guidance is to eliminate the requirement for photography facilities to print hardcopy photographs. As a result, this eliminates the requirement for Military Personnel Divisions, Personnel Service Battalions, and Brigade Combat Teams to forward hardcopies of the official photographs to Human Resources Command on officer personnel.

New procedural guidance:

Effective immediately, Army multimedia and visual information and supporting Department of Defense activities are no longer required to provide hardcopy photographs for active Army officer personnel. The Army National Guard and the Army Reserve whose selection boards utilize an automated board process with DAPMIS, also no longer require a hardcopy of the photograph.

Army National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers who fall under the jurisdiction of state adjutants general or under troop program unit commanders, may still require hardcopy photos. Photo studios will upload the photograph to DAPMIS and produce hardcopy photos as required for this population of Soldiers.

Contracted Army multimedia and visual facilities should contact their contracting office representative to modify their existing contract and include the new requirement in any future statement of work.

Photography facilities must ensure that all of the photographs are uploaded into DAPMIS as required by AR 640-30. Current policy allows reserve component officers enroute to phase three of basic officer leader course, captains career course and the warrant officer basic course to be photographed during their training.

For photography facilities that do not upload photographs to DAPMIS, the photographer must save the photographic images as a .jpg file with 300 dpi resolution (about 350k file size), four inches wide by six inches long and email them to dapmis@hoffman.army.mil.

In order to ensure image integrity, the photographer will not give the Soldier a digital file copy. Active measures must be taken to ensure the accuracy and integrity of all official DA photographs.

The Department of Defense zero tolerance policy, DODD 5040.5, alteration of official DOD imagery on altering photographs must be strictly enforced. Multimedia and visual information managers at all levels are responsible for enforcing this policy. Photographers can improve the contrast, color balance, and light levels electronically, but will not alter the image in any way as to misrepresent the actual image.

The only uniform authorized for official photographs is the class-A green service uniform. The photographer will ensure that official photographs are not taken in unauthorized uniforms such as the DCU and BDU, or in civilian attire.

The photographer will destroy all devices which contain the Soldier's social security number. This includes hard drives, and printer cartridges based on AR 380-5, paragraphs 3-16, 4-27, and 4-32. All hard copies of photographs and emails with a service member's SSN will be destroyed. This information is considered "for official use only."

Commanders are asked to help photography facility personnel avoid reshoots by ensuring that the Soldier reports to the photo facility in class-A green service uniform wearing all current authorized permanent accessories, decorations, and insignia per AR 670-1.

Soldiers can click on this address to locate the nearest authorized photograph facility and select a map. https://vifp.afis.osd.mil <https://vifp.afis.osd.mil/> .

These changes in procedures will be updated in AR 640-30.

Point of contact is Ms. D. J. Williams at commercial: (703) 325-3834, DSN: 221-3834 or at e-mail dapmis@hoffman.army.mil.

For additional information see the following references:

AR 640-30, photographs for military personnel files
AR 670-1, wear and appearance of army uniforms and insignia
AR 600-8-104, military personnel information management/records
DA PAM 25-91, visual information procedures
DODD 5040.5, alteration of official DOD imagery

Vehicle rollovers: a senseless way to die

Sgt. Major Kenneth A. Hinckley
STB Safety Sgt. Major

Imagine a 9,800 pound M1114 humvee tumbling end over end, or side to side with you and your squad inside-all the while not wearing seatbelt.

Your gunner will be ejected like a missile to almost certain death before the humvee makes the first impact with the road.

Inside, unbelted, you will be a rag doll, thrown around to strike your battle buddies, the windshield, the steering wheel, and all those unsecured items inside. The chance of survival without your seatbelt is zero to none. The gunner was ejected because you were not in your seat to grab and hold him or her in the turret.

Think it can't happen to you?

It happens often in Iraq.

Rollovers are one of the most preventable accidents. The two major causes are excessive speed and a lack of situational awareness. To simplify, some M1114s are driven too fast when outside the wire and their drivers are not paying attention to their surroundings.

The M1114 is a great vehicle.

It provides armor protection to stop powerful rifle rounds, shrapnel, and it can absorb tremendous damage from IED strikes. It is both an offensive and defensive vehicle. The mounted machine gun or grenade launcher can kill an enemy driver of a bomb-laden car during an ambush attempt.

Like all systems it has disadvantages.

It is top-heavy and will not respond well to rapid, jerking turns of the steering wheel at "high" speeds. Remember that "high" speed is all relative to the driving conditions. Fast is not always "fast."

This is not to say that when outside the wire, speed at certain times is not necessary; but not at all times. If simply parked next to a canal or drop off, the heavy vehicle will often cause the ground to give way, leading to a rollover that sometimes ends in water.

Keep this in mind:

No Soldier here has ever drowned or burned to death due to wearing their seatbelt!

The exact opposite is true.

Your seatbelt will keep you in place, protect you, and keep you conscious, allowing you the opportunity to prevent drowning.

As Soldiers, our mission is to close with the enemy and defeat him.

Your seatbelt will not stop you from that mission; it will keep you alive to fight the enemy!

Unless you are ready to dismount, your seatbelt must be worn at all times while the vehicle is moving. If your M1114 is the target of an IED and is tossed into the air, the seatbelt will keep you in place when the vehicle returns to earth. Without it, you are subject to ejection and death.

Some troops will not wear their seatbelt; thinking it will keep them from rapidly dismounting and slugging it out with the enemy.

This is foolish macho thinking!

Your training has taught you that you should never jump out of the vehicle without first performing a sector scan to locate IEDs or enemy.

Recent vehicle inspections by safety officers have shown that many vehicles do not have the proper seatbelt, have broken seatbelt, or have no seatbelt at all! If your belt is too short to reach around you and your equipment, notify your maintenance section ASAP and they will install the proper length belts or extenders.

There is no excuse.

Courtesy photo

Turning too quickly can cause rollovers such as this one. Passengers risk serious injury if they neglect to wear their seatbelt at all times, as a rollover can happen anywhere. Be sure to practice rollover drills to help bring the gunner inside the vehicle.

Here is the bottom line: TCs, drivers … slow down your M1114, avoid jerky maneuvers, and do not drive in areas where you cannot see the hazards awaiting you and your crew on the sides.

It is foolish to blindly drive or park on terrain that could cause you to lose your humvee or your life to a rollover.

To drive at any time without your seatbelt is not only criminal, it demonstrates a total lack of concern for your life and the lives of your battle buddies.

Rollover drills must be practiced repeatedly until the actions are automatic.

Anything less is too little-too late.

A drill that is merely talked through is NOT a drill.

Drills must be rehearsed while sitting in the vehicle buckled up.

They must become second nature.

Your seatbelt is just as important as your rifle or machine gun. You must survive to fight the enemy!

Use all of the tools, equipment, techniques and procedures you have been taught.

Dying in a rollover accident gives aid and comfort to the enemy, and suffering to your comrades and family forever!

Marne Medical Mentor *... a prescription for good health from your Docs in the Rock*

Washing your hands: Removing germs, dirt can save lives

1LT Christina Johnson
STB Physician's Assistant-Certified

Hand washing. It's something our parents taught and retaught us at least a million times.

Why is such a critical life lesson forgotten or ignored when living with thousands of people?

Everyone must be reminded of the importance of practicing this simple and often overlooked, but essential component of disease prevention.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, washing your hands "is the single most important means of preventing the spread of infection."

Each year, an estimated 22 million productive school and work days are lost due to the common cold alone.

Some viruses and bacteria can live from 20 minutes up to two hours or more on contaminated objects or surfaces such as keyboards, phone receivers, doorknobs, and desks.

Once your hands have these microbes on them, you may touch your face (mouth, nose, and eyes) where the microbes may take hold and start an infection. These transmittable organisms can cause more serious illnesses such as hepatitis A, conjunctivitis, meningitis, bronchiolitis, influenza, pneumonia, and most types of infectious diarrhea.

Thorough hand washing is your first line of defense against infecting yourself. You should wash your hands often.

It is especially important to wash your hands:

-Before preparing or eating food.
-After going to the bathroom.
-When tending to someone who is sick.
-After handling uncooked foods, particularly raw meat, poultry, or fish.
-After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
-After handling animals or animal waste.
-After handling garbage.
-When treating a cut or wound.

It is best to wash your hands with soap and water, especially when visibly soiled.

But when water isn't available, you can use alcohol-based products made for cleaning your hands.

When using an alcohol-based hand rub, apply it to the palm of one hand and rub both hands together, covering all surfaces of hands and fingers, until both hands are dry. Note that the volume needed to reduce the number of bacteria on hands varies by product. Alcohol-based hand rubs significantly reduce the number of microorganisms on skin, are fast acting, and cause less skin irritation.

Proper techniques to use when washing your hands with soap and water:

Place hands together under water (warm water if possible).

Rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds. Wash all surfaces thoroughly, including wrists, palms, backs of hands and finger tips.

Clean the dirt from under your fingernails.

Rinse the soap from your hands.

Dry your hands completely with a clean towel if possible (this helps remove the germs).

Pat your skin rather than rubbing to avoid chapping and cracking.

If you use a disposable towel, throw it in the trash so that no one else will get your germs.

Don't underestimate the power of properly washing your hands!

We've all seen those lightening-fast hand washers at the dining facilities who believe that merely wetting their hands as they rush to the service line is enough to kill their germs.

Speed washers beware! Your buddies notice you.

The 20 seconds you spend at the sink could save you – and your buddies – from several gut-wrenching trips to the troop medical clinic.

Soldiers! Keep your combustibles, such as pressurized aerosol cans of paint, cleaners, and the like, in shaded areas. Intense heat has recently caused fires.

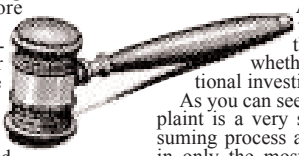
DESERT JUSTICE

Properly reporting grievances

Capt. Christopher Glascott
Division Legal Assistance Attorney

If you have a grievance with your chain of command, or the Army as a whole, there are many options out there to help you find resolution.

One option, in many ways the most serious, is the Article 138 complaint. The following guidance explains the Article 138 process and provides some other, and often more appropriate, options.



An Article 138 complaint allows a Soldier to take their grievance all the way to the Secretary of the Army. Only grievances against your commanding officer, not your 1st Sgt. or Sgt. Maj., are appropriate.

First, the complaint must concern an act by that officer that was arbitrary; an abuse of discretion, materially unfair, and beyond his or her legitimate authority or in violation of a law or regulation.

Secondly, the complaint must concern a matter that does not already have an appeal or grievance process in place. In other words, you cannot file an Article 138 complaint relating to such matters as UCMJ actions, Article 15s, Officer Evaluation Report appeals or involuntary separations since they already include an opportunity for rebuttal or appeal.

The Article 138 process has three steps.

Before a formal Article 138 complaint can be submitted, you must present a written objection to the commanding officer who you believe is at fault. The complaint must clearly identify the date and nature of the alleged wrong and the desired solution. This request must be submitted through command channels to the commanding officer. The officer then has 15 days to issue a written response.

If you submit this objection, and your request for redress is refused, you are then eligible to file a formal Article 138 complaint.

The format and substance of the complaint is detailed in AR 27-10, para. 20-7.

The complaint must be attached to your previous memorandum to the commanding officer and his or her response. You may also attach any supporting information or documents that you wish to be considered.

The complaint must be submitted to your immediate superior commissioned officer within 90 days of the alleged wrongful act. The complaint will then be forwarded to an officer exercising General Court Martial Jurisdiction, usually the commanding general. He is required to personally investigate the matter and then notify the complainant, in writing, of the action to be taken on the complaint.

The complaint is then forwarded to the Department of the Army Headquarters where The Judge Advocate General of the Army will review the file and determine whether to return it for additional investigation or action.

As you can see, the Article 138 complaint is a very serious and time-consuming process and should be utilized in only the most exceptional circumstances. A vast majority of complaints can be resolved through other channels, some more formal than others.

These are just a few:

Inspector General: One role of the IG is to ensure that service members and agencies follow proper Army Regulations and procedures. If you have a complaint in this area, the IG may conduct and investigation and, if warranted, report the results to the appropriate commander for correction.

Equal Opportunity: The EO office will investigate allegations of harassment or mistreatment based on race, color, religion, gender or national origin.

Congressional Complaints: You have the right to contact your congressional representative for assistance with issues involving your military service. The representative will often forward your complaint to the Department of the Army for an investigation and response.

While there are many different formal (methods) to submit a complaint in the Army, more often than not, the best way to resolve disputes is through informal conversation with your chain of command.

Almost all commanders, first sergeants and others in positions of authority are willing to discuss your grievances.

Simply talking to them will solve most problems.

If it doesn't, consider speaking with the battalion Sgt. Major or someone similarly higher in the chain of command by using their open door policy. If these options do not work, then you may want to begin a more formal complaint.

For more information, contact your Brigade Legal Assistance Attorney or the Camp Liberty Legal Services Center across from pad #11 at 242-4568.

CRIME PREVENTION BULLETIN: MAIL TAMPERING & LARCENY

Mail Tampering and Larceny reduces our mission effectiveness in Iraq by lowering a Soldier's Morale. The CID office has received numerous complaints involving stolen items from packages and damaged packages sent through the U.S. Postal Service.

To avoid being a victim, ensure all packages coming in and out of theater are insured. All high dollar items should be sent Registered Mail. These services provide compensation in case of loss or damage.

Soldier's who discover items missing or damaged packages should immediately notify their Postal Clerk, Chain of Command and their Post Office. Do not throw away the packaging or contents. Keep all receipts of purchased items and postal documents.

Contact the Post Office and file a claim if you suspect items were stolen.

30th MP DET (CID)
Camp Liberty, Iraq APO AE 09344
242-4286

Chaplain's Corner

Today's lesson: Guard Duty

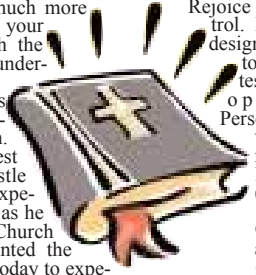
Chaplain (Capt) Jesse Staunton
1/141 FA Battalion Chaplain

Philippians 4:7 states, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

The word "guard" in this verse is the same word used to describe the ancient soldiers who stood atop the city wall watching, ready to repel any enemy attack.

Soldiers will brave blistering heat, scorching wind, torrential rain, severe cold, deadly enemy attacks and relentless boredom as they guard their post and everything within the limits of their post until properly relieved.

If you, America's fighting Soldiers will faithfully guard your posts in spite of such adversity, how much more will Almighty God guard your hearts, blessing you with the peace that surpasses all understanding.



Satan however, wants your life to be full of anxiety, worry and frustration.

In spite of Satan's best efforts to rob the Apostle Paul of contentment, he experienced the peace of God as he wrote to the Philippian Church from prison, and he wanted the recipients as well as you today to experience the same kind of peace.

As you pay heed to the Apostle's exhortations in Philippians 4:4-9, use the acronym **"STOP RaGN"** as a memory device.

The peace of God will guard your hearts.

First, verse 6 says you must make a conscious decision to **S**top being anxious. Secondly, Paul exhorts that, "whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, **T**hink about such things.

Elsewhere, the Apostle commands his recipients to, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." God has given you the Bible which fulfills all of these characteristics and is alone sufficient to transform your life. Therefore, we should read, study, listen to, memorize and meditate upon the Word of God.

Third, **O**ffer prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (v.6b). Instead of petitioning God to take your problems away, thank God, and trust Him to lead you victoriously through the trial.

Fourth, "whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into **P**ractice" (v.9).

A Bible scholar was once asked if the things he did not understand about the Scriptures bothered him. He answered by saying that what bothered him the most was all that he did understand and did not practice.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice!

Rejoice because God is in control. He loves you and He has designed this trial specifically to test your faith. "The testing of our faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete not lacking anything" (James 1:3b-4).

Sixth, "let your **G**entleness be evident to all." Those who are gentle do not demand their own way; they lay aside their own wishes for the sake of others, they consider others as more important than themselves.

Finally, "the Lord is **N**ear." (v.5). The Lord did not keep Daniel out of the Lion's den nor did he keep Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego out of the fiery furnace, but He went through the trials with his people.

We have his great and precious promises which state that, "He will never leave you nor forsake you." (Deut.31:6) "Surely I will be with you always, even to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

While at war you have much to be concerned about, but if you can remember to STOP RaGN, you will experience the supernatural peace of God in the midst of adverse circumstances.

Camp Liberty religious services

Division Chapel

Mon. – Fri.
12. p.m. Catholic
Mon.,Wed., Fri.
6 p.m. Reunion & Suicide Brief
Saturday
10 a.m. Seventh Day Adventist

Sunday
9 a.m. Contemporary Protestant
10:30 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
1 p.m. Lutheran
3 p.m. Gospel Protestant
5 p.m. Church of Christ (noninstrumental)
8 p.m. Collective Protestant

Engineer Chapel

Wednesday
7 p.m. Bible Study
Friday
9 p.m. Prayer & Praise
Saturday
10 a.m. Reunion & Suicide Brief

Sunday
8:45 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
10 a.m. Traditional Protestant
12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Latter Day Saints
7 p.m. Traditional Protestant

Tiger Chapel

Wednesday
7:30 p.m. Wicca Circle – briefing tent
Wed & Sat
10:30 a.m. Reunion & Suicide Brief
Saturday
7 p.m. Catholic Mass

Sunday
9 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
10:30 a.m. Contemporary Mass
1 p.m. Gospel Protestant
3 p.m. Traditional Protestant
7 p.m. Non Denominational Christian
9:30 p.m. Evening Christian Service

NFL season preview part one

Spc. Derek Del Rosario
100th MPAD

NFL season is here and although Soldiers won't be able to root for their team back home from their couch on Sunday afternoons, it is still possible to catch football fever – even if your team is thousands of miles away.

In this and the next issue, I will preview the upcoming NFL season, starting first with the AFC.

The AFC was the home for most of the breakthrough stories last season. Peyton Manning broke Dan Marino's single-season touchdown record, rookie Ben Roethlisberger took over the Steelers in week 3 and won every game until the AFC championship game, finally losing to the New England Patriots, who went on to elevate themselves up to dynasty status by bringing home another Super Bowl trophy to Massachusetts.

This season, expect some seasoned veterans to continue making an impact, and keep a lookout for some of the up and coming players:

AFC Teams to watch

Top of their game: Indianapolis Colts – The best offense in the NFL returns practically intact. Quarterback Peyton Manning still has his triple threat of receivers to throw to: Marvin Harrison, Reggie Wayne and Brandon Stokley. Running back Edgerrin James is on the last year of his contract, so you might expect a breakthrough year from him, as he will be playing for a hefty resigning contract or to increase his free agency value. The defense is led by Dwight Freeney, last season's NFL sack leader, who leads a defense that should be able to hold off opponents while their offense racks up the points.

Courtesy Photo
Peyton Manning

Stock rising: Kansas City Chiefs – Their success lately has been a rollercoaster, but this might be an up year for the Chiefs. Trent Green is a very capable and underrated quarterback who threw 27 touchdowns and more than 4,500 yards last season. His receiving corps is questionable, but he does have the best tight end in the game, Tony Gonzalez, to throw to. Priest Holmes remains one of the best backs in the league. The defense was horrible last season, but the Chiefs made several off-season transactions to address this with the additions of former Dolphins Sammy Knight and Patrick Surtain, who will boost the secondary.

Quarterbacks to watch

Top of their game: Tom Brady (Patriots) and Peyton Manning (Colts). Let's face it; coming off a record-breaking year, it is hard not to pick Manning as a standout quarterback. Tom Brady is an obvious winner who has accuracy and a play action that makes it seem that the ball practically disappears.

Stock Rising: Kerry Collins (Raiders) – You might have forgotten about this former Super Bowl quarterback, but you will likely hear his name repeatedly in 2006. Collins came off the sideline during the middle of last season to throw 20 touchdowns. The acquisitions of receiver Randy Moss will make Collins' effectiveness rise exponentially. A dynamic duo of Moss and Jerry Porter will have defenses scrambling to defend the pass.

Running backs to watch

Top of their game: LaDainian Tomlinson (Chargers) – This back has been a critical part of the Charger offense since his rookie year. He averages 15 touchdowns a season, has remained injury-free and is arguably the best back in the game. He's also a threat as a receiver coming out of the backfield.

Courtesy Photo
Willis McGahee

Stock Rising: Willis McGahee (Bills) – This will be the first year McGahee begins the season as a starter. During his rookie year he was rehabilitating his knee, while last season he was competing with Travis Henry. In just 11 starts last season he surprised everyone with seven 100-plus yard games and 13 touchdowns. This could be a pro bowl year for McGahee.

Wide receivers to watch

Top of their game: Randy Moss (Raiders) – Despite injury and his questionable work ethic, Moss is still one of the best receivers in the game, and maybe a change of scenery in Oakland is what he needs to bounce back and shine as he did in 2003 when he had over 1,500 yards on over 100 receptions.

Stock Rising: Andre Johnson (Texans) – Johnson is a talented wide receiver with incredible breakaway speed. He was noticeably stagnant late last season, but going into his third year expect him to build off of his 1,100 yard previous season.

Defensive players to watch

Top of their game: Ed Reed (Ravens) – One of the best plays of last year epitomized Reed's season. His record-breaking 106-yard interception return for a touchdown in week nine was just one of nine picks the defensive back recorded in 2004. Expect more from this gifted athlete.

Stock Rising: Jonathan Vilma (Jets) – Vilma earned Defensive Rookie of the Year honors for recording 108 tackles, two sacks, three interceptions and a defensive touchdown.

How they will finish:

AFC North
Baltimore Ravens
Pittsburgh Steelers
Cincinnati Bengals
Cleveland Browns

AFC East
New England Patriots
Buffalo Bills
New York Jets
Miami Dolphins

AFC South
Indianapolis Colts
Tennessee Titans
Jacksonville Jaguars
Houston Texans

AFC West
Kansas City Chiefs
San Diego Chargers
Oakland Raiders
Denver Broncos

AFC Champion: Indianapolis Colts

See the next issue for the NFC preview, along with my predicted Super Bowl match up.

Courtesy Photo
Army QB Zac Dahman last season against Cinncinati.

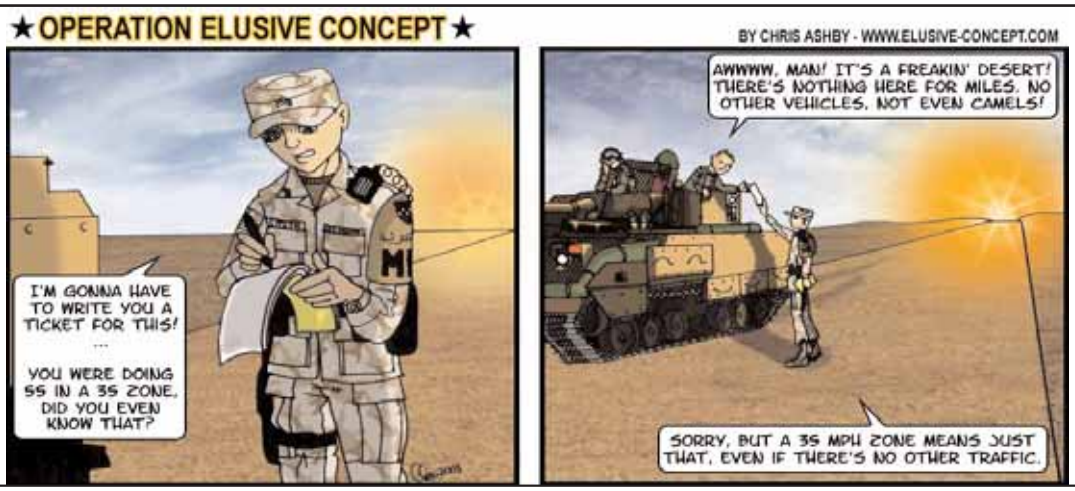
Are you ready for some Army football?

The Army Black Knights are gearing up for their 2005 season, looking to improve on last year's disapointing 2-9 record. In their first season back in the independent leagues after seven years in Conference USA, the Black Knights are led by Junior QB Zac Dahman and second year head coach Bobby Ross. While most analysts aren't expecting too much from Army, the team is attempting to have their first winning season since 1996. As always, Army looks forward to their final game of the season against rival Navy, and can take pride in their season with a victory over the Midshipmen. Navy has won five of the last six encounters.

Date	Opponent	Location
09/10/2005	at Boston College	Chestnut Hill, Mass.
09/17/2005	BAYLOR	West Point, N.Y.
09/23/2005	IOWA STATE	West Point, N.Y.
10/01/2005	CONNECTICUT	West Point, N.Y.
10/08/2005	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	West Point, N.Y.
10/15/2005	at TCU	Fort Worth, Texas
10/22/2005	at Akron	Akron, Ohio
11/05/2005	at Air Force	USAFA, Colo.
11/12/2005	MASSACHUSETTS	West Point, N.Y.
11/19/2005	ARKANSAS STATE	West Point, N.Y.
12/03/2005	vs. Navy	Philadelphia, Pa.

Home games at Michie Stadium
Game dates subject to change

COMICS



In the Movies

Stale taste of 'Chocolate' will disappoint you

Spc. Adam Musil
2BCT PAO

When I think back to my childhood memories of watching "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," the first scene I remember is when Willy Wonka, played by Gene Wilder, takes the children and their parents on a boat ride down a river of chocolate through a dark tunnel.

In the tunnel Wonka begins to mumble an eerie tune as the children and their parents' senses are assaulted by a psychedelic light show and random images bordering on the grotesque.

In the film the children were scared and in reality so was I.

This scene alone represents what I think makes the original Chocolate Factory succeed and what makes the new "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" fail. The new Chocolate Factory, while beautiful to look at, has no emotional depth.

As with most Tim Burton movies the sets and characters look amazing, however the characters have little soul.

This example is no more apparent than in Willy Wonka himself. Played by Johnny Depp, Willy Wonka is a squeaky voiced tall thin man with a Prince Valiant haircut and clearly a man with issues. We find out later that these issues are from a troubled childhood as he was never loved by his father. Because of this, Wonka is reclusive, shy and rude to many of the children.

In your role as an audience member, Depp's performance will most likely make or break the movie for you.

For me, it broke it.

I never believed him to be anything more than a superficial rich guy who never really connected to anything.

When you watch Wilder's performance in the original movie, there are moments where he looks sad and depressed at what his life has become. He sings songs that are somber in tone and mocks the children and their parents. However, through it all there is a glimmer in his eye and as an audience member you are left wondering what will charm this poor man who seems to have everything.

courtesy photo
Johny Depp (in center with top hat) plays Willy Wonka in Tim Burton's remake; Charile and the Chocolate Factory.

Depp's character has none of this. At the end of the movie when Depp's Wonka gives Charlie the factory I couldn't figure out why.

Is he giving it up because he is getting old and wishes he has a dad? It doesn't hold up. Conversely, in the original version, you understand Wilder's reasoning; he sees himself in Charlie. He believes that there may still be hope in the world. Depp's Wonka is too wrapped up in his own world to care about these things.

Halfway through the film I was checking my watch. The visuals were amazing, but in this day-and-age, I don't think this is enough to make a movie watchable. There has to be something more to draw the audience in.

In the end, "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" simply falls flat and will leave a lingering bad taste in your mouth.

MWR Poetry Slam is a slam dunk

By Spc. Maria Mengrone
100th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – More than 100 Soldiers and civilians from across Task Force Baghdad came out to show their support for the first ever Poetry Slam, held at the 3rd Infantry Division's Morale, Welfare and Recreation facility on Saturday, August 13.

Alliterations, personifications and even onomatopoeias ran rampant throughout the course of the night. It wasn't a competition; it was Soldiers and civilians simply expressing their poetic creativity and musical talents, some even adding a spice of their own comedic styles.

The event was hosted by a well known figure in the sphere of the 3rd Inf. Div.

"I am very proud of the 3rd Inf. Div. troops; they absolutely made the event a party. We shared poetry and we jammed," said Retired Sgt. 1st Class Floyd Lee, Food service supervisor, Marne Oasis Dining Facility, a native from Hampton, Va.

"Poetry is a great way to bridge the age gap and it gave Soldiers a means to release some stress. I was really impressed with the talent that is out there," Lee said.

Many performers engaged in free-style verses that highlighted serious social issues affecting their lives such as taking responsibilities for ones actions and addressing the racial divides that exist among various ethnic groups. While other performers got down to the beat of their own drum and flaunted their musical and vocal talents. Others poured their heart out as they spoke about love and its many facets.

"It's the way I grew up and when you learn a lesson it inspires you. I live life happy and I just want to tell people to get over what's keeping them under," said Spc. Emmanuel L. Miles, Topography analyst, Headquarters and Headquarters Operation Company, Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Inf. Div.

One of the reasons the Poetry Slam was such a great success was due to the hard work and lyrical abilities of Miles who goes by the nickname, "Boss E" and has been involved with music since the age of nine.

Another crowd favorite had audiences laughing and clapping to a musical ditty that highlighted the importance of drinking water. The now famous lyrics "man it's hot in this (expletive), man it's hot in this (expletive), drink water, drink water, drink water!" stole the show.

"I didn't expect the crowd to get into it so much. I thought I'd do something that everyone could relate to … the heat, drinking lots of water," said Sgt. Neffite Davis, Motor pool vehicle dispatcher, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Soldier Support Battalion, 3rd Inf. Div.

Even though Lee will be relocating to the International Zone and will no longer supervise the Marne Oasis DFAC he is grateful to have had an opportunity to host the Poetry Slam and show his support for the troops.

Lee said, "even though I am leaving, I really hope the event continues because I believe it really made a difference to all those that attended. Everyone needs to vent and there is just so much talent out there, it needs to continue."

Spc. Maria Mengrone
Spc. Emmanuel L. Miles, topography analyst with HHOC, Special Troops Bn., 3rd Inf. Div., shows no fear when freestyling about issues that have affected his life, during the first ever Poetry Slam at the division MWR facility.

Spc. Maria Mengrone
(left) The crowd is entertained as Sgt. Neffite Davis, motor pool vehicle dispatcher, HHC, 3rd Soldier Support Bn, 3rd Inf. Div. performs his comic ditty, "Man it's hot in this (expletive), drink water, drink water!" (right) Retired Sgt. 1st Class Floyd Lee, food service supervisor for the Marne Oasis Dining Facility, and native of Hampton, Va. begins his hosting duties of the first ever Poetry Slam by sharing a poem of his own with Soldiers and civilians from Task Force Baghdad.