

The Marne Express

"Mission, Soldiers, Teamwork"

Volume 2, Issue 16

Serving the Soldiers of Task Force Baghdad

September 25, 2005

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Iraqi, U.S. search yields car bomb

Spc. Matthew Wester
3/1 AD PAO

TAJI, Iraq – Iraqi Soldiers walk back toward the palm-lined road. They have two detainees with them, and, in the absence of a translator, make gestures to American Soldiers to show them what they saw in a nearby farmyard — one of the terrorist's deadliest weapons: a car bomb.

The Iraqi Soldiers are members of 2nd Mechanized Battalion, 1st Mechanized Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division and on Sept. 6 they teamed up with Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 70th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, nicknamed "Thunderbolt," to cordon and search an area northwest of Baghdad that has been a flash-point of terrorist activity.

The 3rd Infantry Division's Aviation Brigade also provided air support during the search.

"The operation was in an area known as the 'Circle of Death' in the Thunderbolt area of operations where five major routes come together," said Maj. Steve Lutsky, operations officer for 2/70 Armor Bn. "We've had intelligence reports of terrorist activity plus we've had several improvised explosive devices in the area."

Lutsky, from Hinesville, Ga., said the main goal of the mission, called "Operation Royalty," was to break up two terrorist cells in the village.

The operation paid off when IA Soldiers caught one group of terrorists red-handed as they were putting the finishing touches on a car modified to be used in a suicide attack.

The terrorists didn't get to finish the job.

See SEARCH, page 18



Staff Sgt. Kevin Bromley

Master Sgt. Ronnie Reece, a native of Abilene, Texas (left), Capt. Jason Foote of West Palm Beach, Fla. (right) and 2nd Lt. Steven Ackerson, of O'Fallon, Ill. (rear), patrol a foot path during Operation Royalty Sept. 6. The Soldiers of Civil Affairs Team 5, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion and 4th Battalion, 1st Field Artillery Regiment questioned residents of the village to gain information regarding terrorists operating in the area.



Spc. Ben Brody

Col. Joseph DiSalvo, commander 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., speaks with District Advisory Council members at a ceremony for the opening of the Rustimiyah Bypass Bridge, Sept. 9.

Local leaders celebrate Baghdad bridge opening

2nd BCT PAO
Media Release

BAGHDAD – Task Force Baghdad Soldiers and leaders from the Tissa Nissan District in eastern Baghdad cut the ribbon on a much anticipated bypass Sept. 9.

The opening of the Rustimiyah Traffic Bypass represents the culmination of a \$2 million project conceived by the Tissa Nissan District Advisory Council with assistance from 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division; the 36th Engineer Group; and 1st

Battalion, 64th Armor, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

"The idea for the bypass was the brainchild of the Nine Nissan DAC," said Lt. Col. Kevin Farrell, commander of 1st Bn., 64th Armor. "It's benefited the local economy by creating jobs, but also by improving the traffic flow in the area."

As attack helicopters circled the area and tanks patrolled the streets, Iraqis and U.S. Soldiers gathered on the bridge for the

See BRIDGE, page 13

m7 sends

Make time work for you

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

Time is our more precious asset and wasted time cannot be recovered.

Our great Division has been engaged in the business of our country for the past nine months enjoying successes and hard times.

We all understand the rigors of combat and some much more than others through our personal experiences. The painful realities of losing a Battle Buddy leave lasting memories in our minds that will be with us for years to come. These events are indicative of time we can't re-live.

Meanwhile, how are you maximizing your time to make your life, profession, and working environment the very best it can be?

We as professional Soldiers (not simply commissioned and non-commissioned officers) have an inherent responsibility for taking ownership in that we don't accept mediocrity but, instead strive to shape our organizations making them places

that you want to come to daily. Are you taking every advantage to tell someone how much you appreciate their service to the Team and mission?

I read a publication sometime ago entitled, "One Minute of Praise," that highlighted the same. This type of direct feedback is important to some while not to others but, the irony of the matter is we don't know the difference; therefore, take the time to touch someone in a positive way.

During the ensuing months it will be increasing important to stabilize all of our teams. The time is now for over watching one another in regards to safety and combat operations. Just as the enemy has a vote in this environment, you have the distinct opportunity, ability, and flexibility to make the team better now.

I would ask that all Marne Teammates spend your time thinking on those things that are good, true, teambuilding, and up-lifting as we complete our mission here in Iraq.

"Rock of the Marne"

Your equipment can't save your life if it's not turned on.



STAY ALIVE

0009

IEDs KILL

THE ARMY VALUES

Honor Live up to all the Army Values

"The untruthful Soldier trifles with the lives of his countrymen and the honor and safety of his country."
- Gen. Douglas Mac Arthur, Supreme Allied Commander, Southwest Pacific theater Word War II.

The Word on the Street

Which team do you think will make it all the way this year in?

"Steelers. I like their Quarterback. He had a good year last year and he'll do better this year."



Maj. Nick Mauldin
17th FA Bde.
Shawnee, Okla.

"The Eagles are an all-around strong team. They have the offense, defense and special teams. McNabb is a proven leader."



Spc. Robbie Kirby
HHC, 4th Bn., 3rd Avn. Reg.
Dallas, Texas

"I think the Patriots are definitely the team to beat. They are a dynasty."



Spc. Samathia Fuller
HSC, 603rd ASB
Savannah, Ga.

"Baltimore Ravens are Super Bowl bound. Jamal Lewis is back, and they definitely have the defense to help them go all the way."



Sgt. Kenneth Preyer
HHC, Avn. Bde.
Hartford, Ala.

"Pittsburgh Steelers. One for the thumb - it's overdue."



Col. Bruce Resnak
166th ASG
Fayetteville, GA

The Marne Express

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Commentary

Reasons why vegetables never sleep

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

When I was back at Fort Stewart, I didn't really have a hard time waking up. It was like I had an internal alarm clock. Even when my external alarm clock didn't work, I would still always wake up an hour before I had to be somewhere.

Since coming to Iraq, I have had a hard time waking up and going to sleep. Like many other Soldiers, I sit up at night and watch movies, play games or frequent the Morale, Welfare and Recreation center. I think that a chaotic work schedule lends to a chaotic lifestyle.

I have tried to live normally. We find the time to do physical training two or three times a week. On those days, I usually am able to fall fast asleep.

I try to talk myself into going to the gym, running a few times a week, or just doing something besides going into a vegetative state as soon as I leave work. In an environment where

so much is expected of a Soldier, it is hard to motivate myself to do extracurricular physical activities.

I did go to the gym on a regular basis for about four months during the deployment. Then I went on the road, and after running around with the tankers all day every day, I was too tired to go to the gym.

I believe as Soldiers, we harbor a certain amount of self pity, and think that after a hard day's work we are entitled to self indulgence. We aren't on mission, so why not take our personal time to make ourselves feel good?

One reason is that the things we do to make ourselves feel good are usually not good for us. Eating rich foods and lying around any chance we get can distract us from mission readiness.

I have felt that way too often; let me off of work so I can disappear. After being released, I don't want to see my boss or have anything to do with work. Some Soldiers like to take pictures. After being responsible for

taking official photographs all day long, I hide my camera and distance myself from it.

I know this is wrong, and I need to do things that are better for me. Eating too much, laying around and just opening myself up to every indulgence has got to stop. The lifestyle I and many other Soldiers are leading over here is taking a toll on our bodies and minds.

I keep saying I will work out tomorrow. I say that almost every day. Tomorrow hasn't come yet. I think what I need to do is go work out today, and every day. I will feel better about myself, and I will be able to get a good night's rest after doing so.

Someone who believed they were wise told me you should never take leisure time in the same place you sleep, because it makes it hard to fall asleep if you have been in bed all day. You should really stay out of your room until you are ready to pass out. I have yet to test that theory, because I get off of work and immediately chill

out in my rack. I watch the hours go by, and for some reason can't fall asleep until one or two in the morning. I know I have to get up in five or six hours, but I still can't bring myself to go to sleep. I lay awake, my mind racing with thoughts. I have a hard time clearing my head, because I am not physically or mentally tired.

I am going to get myself to that point today. I am going to work my mind and my body until I am ready to pass out. I know that after I do that for awhile, my body will continue to adjust until I not only have a clear conscience, but am pleased with the results of the work I put in. If you stay in a sedentary state, I don't see how your body can be tired. In other words, if you rest all day, how are you going to be able to rest at night?

I will still find time to chill in my rack. Hopefully I will not find too much time. I know many people who want to do the same. After exhausting myself, maybe I can get a good night's sleep.

Commentary

IA, IP Security Forces getting a bad "rap"

Staff Sgt. Thomas Mills
1st BCT PAO

For more centuries than many of us can count the people of Iraq have lived along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. During that time they have fought countless wars, been invaded more times than I can imagine and here they are, still existing, many in the same manner they have existed for millennia. They are a resilient people. A tough, hardened people accustomed to rolling with the many punches history has thrown at them.

Still, there are doubters among Americans who see the Iraqi Army Soldiers, and the Iraqi Police officers, and

compare them to our own Soldiers and police. They compare an organization that is all of two years old to ours. There is no comparison, of course, and there doesn't need to be one.

The Iraqi Security Forces, both IA and IP are targets here in Iraq. Insurgents understand that the ISF are the key to Iraq's future and they try all they can to disrupt the development of the IA and IP.

Suicide bombers, wrapped in vests of explosives or driving cars weighed down with artillery rounds, actively seek out the ISF and try to destroy as many IA or IP as they can in one fiery explosion.

And even with that, the Iraqi forces continue to show

up, continue to come to work as police, or come back from their leave as Soldiers. They still wear the uniforms and they still fight back.

It's tough to put this into perspective for some people. Yet all one has to do is enter one of the many forward operating bases here in Iraq where there is a joint Coalition Force and IA presence and you'll understand. The first guard you will encounter is an Iraqi Army soldier. The first guard a suicide bomber encounters at our gates is also an Iraqi Army soldier.

Many Coalition Forces Soldiers here in Iraq don't understand the significance of this. Sure, we're attacked. Many of us, while roaming

the roads of Salah Ad Din Province, have encountered a roadside bomb or a car bomb. Insurgent snipers have taken shots at us, armed men have attacked our battle positions with rocket propelled grenade launchers, and our FOBs take mortar and rocket fire just about every day.

But when it comes down to it, we are not on the front lines here. The Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police force are on the front line.

About a month ago a U.S. Army platoon leader told me he figured that at least ninety percent of the Iraqi Police officers he knows suffer from post traumatic stress disorder. "Can you imagine?" he asked me. "All of them have bud-

dies that have been blown to bits right in front of them." Certainly an unscientific assessment, but it points out how resilient the Iraqis are.

The IA and IP are not the U.S. Army. For years they have done things the way Saddam Hussein wanted them done. It has taken us years to develop the professional organization that we are today. The Iraqis aren't going to do it overnight.

So maybe we should give these guys a break. They are taking the brunt of these attacks and somehow they find the fortitude to keep coming back. The ISF here in Iraq will prevail, I know, and they will keep going strong long after we are gone.

Unsung Heroes

Command Sgt. Maj. Grant
3rd Inf. Div. command sergeant major

The morale of Soldiers is an important factor in the success of any military operation, it always has been. Having a place to go and relax, play games or enjoy a little entertainment is a great way to relieve stress and allows us to "decompress."

Soldier entertainment had its earliest origins in the American Revolution and the Civil War. Army camp shows were often spontaneously organized in companies, battalions or other units with volunteer soldier entertainers.

All we have to do is walk a short distance to a Morale, Welfare, and Recreation center nearby to participate with other Soldiers or take a few moments to ourselves.

A Soldier can stop by anytime; the MWR is open 24 hours-a-day offering board games, ping-pong, pool, a library and the latest movies. There isn't a day that goes by without a planned event.

Today we recognize a small group of Soldiers working with the MWR who make all this happen. They are dedicated men and women who have made a commitment to the well being of 3rd Infantry Division Soldiers. These Soldiers work behind the scene planning and ensuring the daily events run smoothly and on time.

The division's leadership salutes you and your efforts in support of mission and service to your country.

Thank you for being a part of a great team!
"Rock of the Marne"



Spc. Derek Del Rosario
Sgt. 1st Class Belinda Rhames, from Brunswick Ga., and Capt. Edward Sostre, from Navanjito, Puerto Rico, plan an upcoming MWR 10K marathon run for the Soldiers on Camp Liberty. Rhames and Sostre, both from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion 3rd Infantry Division, are responsible for the MWR activities for the 3rd Inf. Div. Soldiers and various units on Camp Liberty.



Spc. Matthew Wester
Spc. Douglas S. Wilson, a College Park, Md., native and gunner for B Company, 1st Battalion, 115th Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, Maryland National Guard, cleans his M-249 machine gun before a patrol near Camp Taji. Wilson's company helped divert a car bomber Aug. 28 near Saba Al Bor, Iraq.

Maryland Soldiers divert car bomb, save lives

Spc. Matthew Wester
 3/1 AD PAO

TAJI, Iraq – Sometimes Soldiers perform best when they are in the most stressful situations.

That was true of troops from B Company, 1st Battalion, 115th Regiment, 29th Infantry Division on the morning of Aug. 28.

Through quick and decisive action, the Maryland National Guard Soldiers diverted a car bomb from its intended target and saved many lives.

According to B Co. commander, Capt. Brian S. Borakove, an Arlington, Va., native, Soldiers from his company's 1st Platoon were conducting a mounted patrol when they noticed a suspicious vehicle driving through the town of Saba Al Bor.

B Co. runs patrols in the area around the clock and has become very familiar with the residents and traffic patterns.

"By living there, you know what should and shouldn't be there," Borakove said.

The platoon leader, 1st Lt. Michael Kirtland, from Burtonsville, Md., decided to search the car and another car traveling with it. He directed the drivers to pull to the side of the road.

When the Soldiers were preparing to search the rear car, the driver detonated the explosives-laden vehicle.

The dismounted Soldiers were wounded and their vehicle became a burning hulk.

Their comrades sprang into action, securing

the area and aiding the wounded.

"One of the guys ran through a cloud of black smoke, found his buddy, pulled him to safety and started treatment," said Sgt. 1st Class Patrick M. Carey, platoon sergeant for 1st Plt. and a Silver Spring, Md., resident. "Everybody did a great job. The lieutenant's driver, Spc. Ernest Miller IV, from Baltimore, was still working the radio while the vehicle was on fire."

Kirtland pulled the vehicle's gunner out of the burning humvee.

If the Soldiers hadn't stopped the two cars, "it would have been a mass casualty incident," Carey said. "The cars were completely destroyed, so we know they were packing a lot of explosives."

"We believe (the car bomber) was headed to another target," Borakove said. "I believe the Soldiers on the patrol saved the lives of others at checkpoints in the area."

The senior leaders of the company praised the performance of their troops.

"Our Soldiers performed well during crisis," said 1st Sgt. Donald R. Connolly, from Silver Spring, Md. "Their training and skill showed through and they all made us very proud."

"I'm extremely proud of how they handled themselves after contact with the enemy," Borakove said. "Their actions showed the great confidence they have in each other."

The two Soldiers wounded in the attack were evacuated to a medical facility in Germany and are recovering from their wounds.

"Our Soldiers performed well during crisis. Their training and skill showed through and they all made us very proud."

1st Sgt. Donald R. Connolly
 1/115 Infantry

1st Brigade's cavalry unit prepares for Iraq mission

1st Lt. Chad Lawrence
 1/71 Cav.Regt.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Less than one year ago, 1st Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment was little more than a few key leaders meeting in a closet in the gym at the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division headquarters building at Fort Drum, N.Y.

Since then, Lt. Col. Mark Meadows and Command Sgt. Maj. Myron Lehman have taken a group of Soldiers from that small beginning to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., where the unit was validated after only two field problems and are now primed to support the 1st BCT in the war on terror at the tip of the spear in Baghdad.

For the first time in more than 50 years the initial advance party of Soldiers from 1/71 Cav. landed on foreign soil on Aug. 5. The Soldiers took up brief residence in Kuwait in order to complete training for their mission in Iraq.

A week later, the entire squadron landed in Kuwait, making the 13-hour flight from family and friends in northern New York.

Throughout August, 1/71 Cav. Soldiers began acclimatizing to the heat and time-zone change by qualifying with their primary weapons systems, making finishing touches on preparing their vehicles and performing final pre-combat inspections.

All in all, the Soldiers of 1/71 Cav. have done everything possible to prepare

for their deployment in Iraq, said 1/71 Cav.'s chemical officer 1st Lt. Brett Steele Berry of Orlando, Fla.

After a particularly difficult day of training, Spc. Danny Figueroa, of Orocovis, Puerto Rico, sat on his cot surrounded by friends, cleaning his weapon.

"My leadership is constantly preparing me and quizzing me on the many tasks that we have learned," said Figueroa. "I am confident that they have prepared me well for the challenges I will face in Iraq. Every day I feel more a part of the team than the day before."

With white sweat stains forming at the collar of his shirt, he resumed the task at hand. Realizing the importance of a well-working weapon, Figueroa, a for-

mer professional minor league baseball player, continued to brush and oil his weapon.

"Today, I spent four hours reconfirming my zero and acclimating myself to the heat. I feel that in the next couple of days I will be completely prepared for the coming year," Figueroa said.

Figueroa is just one of the countless Soldiers within the squadron who have united for the Operation Iraqi Freedom 3 mission.

"Men from Puerto Rico to Maine, and from Connecticut to Alaska have come together to form a cohesive machine that will support each other for the entire deployment," said Capt. Matthew Brown, 1/71 Cav. operations officer from Eau Claire, Wis.

**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. Tracey Smith
 (left) Pfc. Justin Hair, a Task Force Baghdad infantryman, is congratulated by his 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment commander, Lt. Col. Steve McCorkle. Hair was one of several Soldiers awarded Combat Infantry Badges and the Purple Heart. But as a standout for the days' occasion, he was the only Soldier awarded the Bronze Star. (above) Decorated for eliminating a suicide bomber at a vital checkpoint, Pfc. Justin Hair, A. Co., 2nd Bn., 121st Inf. Regt. 3rd Inf. Div., renders a salute at the start of the 'Devil' Soldier's first awards ceremony. Hair received three awards for his June 16th actions.

Unit gets first combat awards since World War II

Spc. Tracy J. Smith
 48th BCT PAO

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq – A Georgia Army National Guard unit deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom 3 recently received its first combat awards since World War II.

The ceremony was filled with mixed emotions for the 48th Brigade Combat Team Soldiers as they gathered in the same location where they had previously held memorial services for fallen Soldiers from the unit.

Soldiers were awarded the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal and the Combat Infantryman Badge.

"Many of our Soldiers are not here with us," said Lt. Col. Steve McCorkle, commander of 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th BCT, 3rd Infantry Division. "We honor their memory today and will continue to have ceremonies like this so that we continue to award our Soldiers who fight so bravely on the

battlefield."

One Soldier, Pfc. Justin Hair, A Company, 1st Battalion, 121st Inf. Reg., made Georgia Army National Guard history by receiving three of the awards recognizing him as the first to engage and eliminate the enemy in combat for the 48th BCT in 60 years.

Hair thwarted the deadly attempts of a suicide bomber to penetrate a security checkpoint with a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device June 13.

"Pfc. Hair engaged and killed the enemy before he actually detonated the device," explained 1/121 Inf., Command Sgt. Maj. Cheyenne Fields

of Albany, Ga. "He was, unfortunately, injured in that attack and is receiving the Purple Heart as a result."

Hair remains humble and does not speak of his actions. However, Fields and the battalion commander know the importance of recognizing Soldiers, when a job is done well.

"Although we could have easily given these awards to him at the company level, we wanted everyone to know that this one private, applying his basic soldiering skills, saved many of my Soldiers' lives. He deserves to be rewarded and honored for that."

At least one of the CIBs was given to a 48th BCT Soldier who had

decades of experience under his belt. Decorated with his second CIB, Sgt. Leroy Kirkpatrick, a Bradley gunner, knew this day would come.

"Being in combat arms, things happen," said Kirkpatrick, of Lawrenceville, Ga. "I knew even before we got boots on the ground that I would get a second award."

A veteran of the Vietnam War, Kirkpatrick is able to share his experience with his fellow Soldiers. "I've got a few tricks up my sleeve. I believe in getting the job done."

The occasion was perhaps best summed up by Chaplain (1st Lt.) Jonathan Fisher, 2nd Bn., 121st Inf. Regt., in his opening remarks at the ceremony.

"Courage takes many forms. I think there is no greater courage than to see Soldiers who know the dangers, who know what is under the road and yet go out anyway," Fisher said. "You face it and you overcome it. I walk among men who have faced their strongest fears and won."

"I think there is no greater courage than to see Soldiers who know the danger... You face it and you overcome it."

Chaplain (1st Lt.) Jonathan Fisher
 2/121 Inf.

Task Force Soldiers hold farewell prayer service

Spc. Erin Robicheaux
 256th BCT PAO

CAMP TIGERLAND, Iraq – Task Force Baghdad Soldiers nearing the end of their tour of duty gathered together recently to give thanks for their lives and ask blessings on their fallen brothers.

At the request of 256th Brigade Combat Team Commander Brig. Gen. John Basilica Jr., Chaplain (Maj.) Alejandro Sanchez held a Catholic Mass for the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment Soldiers.

"Just under one year ago, we gathered together in the Mojave Desert to remember your friends, your families, and two of your fallen Soldiers, lost in the attacks on New York City," Basilica said.

Soldiers of the 1/69th Inf. Bn. survived the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, and after three years of active-duty service, the New York National Guard Soldiers continued to fight the war on terror, taking the fight from their own streets to the streets of Baghdad.

"You may not have known it at the time, but a year ago, I knew that you and the Soldiers of the 256th Brigade Combat Team were about to be pushed into the front lines of Baghdad," Basilica said.

The 1/69th endured a year of two of the toughest areas of operation in Baghdad, first at Taji then on Route Irish.

Sanchez told the Soldiers the past year changed

him, and made him a better man in their presence.

"You are men of bravery and magnificent human beings full of courage," he told the group.

Basilica thanked the Soldiers for their year of service and assured them the Louisiana Brigade will stand behind them when they call.

"You represent the reason for our deployment; you were at ground zero from the very beginning and stepped it up to come here, and you came right to the worst of it," Basilica said.

Lt. Col. Geoffrey Slack, 1/69th Inf. Bn. Commander, told his Soldiers a part of them will always be in Baghdad, in the spirit of their fallen brothers. He said the ground is now sacred where the Soldiers fought and gave their lives.

1st Brigade commander meets with key Iraqi leader

Pvt. Jason Jordan
1/10th Inf. PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Leaders from the newly-arrived 10th Mountain Division met with prominent Iraqis within their area of operations Aug. 28.

Soon after arriving in Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom 3, Col. Jeffrey Snow, commander of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mtn. Div., met with the Ayatollah Al-Sayuid Hussein al-Sadr, the most prominent Iraqi leader in the Khadamiyah district.

“Al-Sadr is an incredibly influential figure not only in our area of operations, but in all of Iraq,” Snow said. “He is a very connected man and he just happens to reside in the (1st BCT) AO.”

The meeting, held in the Khadamiyah Shrine, introduced al-Sadr to the leaders of 1st BCT so they could discuss operations in the area.

“I just wanted to meet with him to introduce myself and to let him know that our brigade is committed to doing our part to make our portion of Baghdad a safe and secure environment,” Snow said. “It is very important to the success of our mission that we establish relations with both political and religious leaders here.”

Al-Sadr began by expressing his thanks to the Coalition for their efforts to create a free democratic Iraq, and he warmly welcomed the 1st BCT to the task at hand.

“There is still work ahead of us, but both Iraq and the U.S. have the same

goal for our country and we must continue to work together,” he said.

Snow commented on the fact that al-Sadr was a very learned man and very connected to the people, therefore able to give sage advice and counsel.

“Although we work hard to understand the dynamics that exist in this area, he clearly has the pulse of the people, and as such, he can point out things to us that we may not see or know,” Snow said.

“America and its Soldiers are so successful because of the message of human rights they convey and fight for,” al-Sadr said.

Al-Sadr believes that the Iraqi Army is stronger now because of American guidance, and he said that it still needs the training and cooperation from the U.S. Army.

While he stressed that the Iraqi Army still needs American support, he expressed appreciation for the increasing responsibility being given to them.

Although much work is still to be done in securing Iraq’s future, al-Sadr expressed his confidence in the mission.

“Deciding on a constitution is a very important step toward our country becoming free and democratic,” he said. “While this will be difficult, I am confident that Iraq will succeed.”

Snow expressed his good fortune on being able to meet with al-Sadr, but explained that thousands of troops in his command would never have that opportunity.

“Most of my Soldiers do not have



Pvt. Jason Jordan

Brig. Gen. John Basilica, Jr., commander 256 BCT, along with Col. Jeffrey Snow, commander 1st BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., meet with Ayatollah Al-Sayuid Hussein Al-Sadr. The meeting introduced Al-Sadr to the newly arrived 10th Mtn., Div., Soldiers so they could discuss operations in the area.

the opportunity to meet with such influential individuals as you,” Snow told al-Sadr during the meeting. “Is there anything you would like me to pass on to my Soldiers?”

“Let your Soldiers know that they

are contributing to a noble cause,” responded al-Sadr, “and that their support is vital in the success of Iraq’s efforts to create a democracy, and to establish a safe and secure environment.”

Working together for the future of Iraq



Spc. Adams Phelps

Staff Sgt. Robert Young, 1st Battalion, 112 Infantry, guides members of the Provincial High Crimes unit in taking on enemy targets around buildings in Tikrit, Iraq.



Sgt. Kevin Pantoja, a combat medic assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, checks a Soldier's temperature during sick-call hours at the Squadron aid station.

Combat medics ready for whatever ails Soldiers

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

BAGHDAD — The medics assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, joined the Army for the same reasons most involved in the medical profession can attest to: they enjoy helping people.

For one combat medic, Staff Sgt. Aaron Stone, the reason was a little closer to home. Stone's mother was always patching up the usual childhood injuries like scraped knees and twisted ankles. When Stone was 12 years old, his mother diagnosed his stomachache as something a little more serious than a run-of-the-mill ailment; her son had appendicitis.

On that day, Stone knew he wanted to be a medic.

Now on his second combat tour in Iraq, Stone and the medics who work with him are able to give back to the Soldiers out on the front lines.

The HHT medics assist their squadron in a number of ways, starting with running an aid station to provide Level One healthcare to their Soldiers.

"Level One care is basi-

cally sick call, stuff like a fever or flu-like symptoms," said Sgt. Kevin Pantoja, a native of Puerto Rico. "Having our own aid station helps us keep our skills current while also taking care of our own."

Pantoja had something else in mind when he joined the Army as a medic. He imagined he'd be working in a hospital, taking patients' blood pressure and starting write-ups. Once he got to Iraq, however, that world of white lab coats and squeaky, sterile hallways gave way to dust, dirt and combat.

"At Advanced Individual Training they teach you basic Emergency Medical Technician stuff, send you to your unit and you go from there," said Stone, a native of Goldsboro, N.C.

Stone used his squadron's mission readiness exercise as an opportunity to train his Soldiers, new and old, to be prepared for the non-linear battlefield of Iraq.

"We had nothing but mass casualties for a whole week," Stone said. "It was basically the worst week of our lives. It gave the guys a heads up on what to expect out here. It was an eye-opener to say to ourselves, 'Hey this could really happen over there.'"

Luckily, the kind of trau-

ma the medics spent so much time training for has not reared its ugly head, but that doesn't mean they don't constantly exceed the standard when it comes to training.

"Whenever we aren't busy, we are training on everything we might see out here," Pantoja said. "We go through all the steps involved in the treatment so we know we are ready if they need us."

When they aren't seeing Soldiers during sick call hours, the medics are out on missions supporting the line units.

"The missions here are constant, not only for us, but for our line medics as well," Stone said. "We have four medics assigned to each line company. Every single mission our squadron goes out on takes at least one medic with them."

When the squadron undertakes large missions, the medics ride along for treatment and evacuation if the need arises.

"All the noncommissioned officers are our instructors here," Stone said. "They have been doing a great job to make sure everybody is up to speed on their training and are ready to assist the squadron if they get called out on a mission."

48th Brigade veterinarians reach out to local farmers

Sgt. David Bill
48th BCT PAO

BAGHDAD — Cows and sheep are being used to help develop trust and friendship between local Iraqi farmers and Task Force Baghdad Soldiers.

The Soldiers from C Company, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion, 48th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division conducted a veterinarian community health outreach program mission Aug. 22 southwest of Baghdad.

Under this program, Army veterinarians go into local communities and provide a quick health check on the livestock in the area. If required, they also provide medication to help keep them healthy.

"We try to go out to various areas a couple times per week to check on which animals have been treated recently and which have not," said Maj. Daniel Cardosa, a veterinarian from C Co.

More than 60 sheep and two dozen cows were medicated during the day's mission.

"We were de-worming the sheep with an oral medication. Cows were being treated with a topical medication. Both medications are used to kill most internal parasites and a good number of external parasites as well," added Cardosa.

The process of medicating the animals is a team effort as the farmer or

his children assist in getting the sheep, one by one, in a steady position so the veterinarian can insert a medical injector.

"I think it allows us to put a friendly face on the United States and get a foot in the door to show that we're here to help them not hurt them," explained Cardosa, a West Greenwich, R.I. native. "Then at another time we can come back and do assessments for electrical and water problems we may be able to solve for them."

Getting Iraqi veterinarians out to work with the farmers has also been a focus of the CA team, so more can be done for the animals.

When asked about what Coalition Forces were doing on a larger scale, Cardosa replied, "In the bigger scheme of things we are working with the Ministry of Agriculture to develop animal health and agricultural programs, so they are not solely dependent on oil for their income. We're trying to develop other economic sectors for the country."

C Co.'s overall mission is to provide more than just the basic services for Iraqis. The unit conducts a wide range of operations to include humanitarian support, coordination with government entities and community outreach.

Services such as sewage, water, electricity and trash are important to the local population and are some of the main priorities of the CA Team.



Maj. Daniel Cardosa, a veterinarian from C Company, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion, gets some assistance from a young Iraqi boy in medicating a sheep with de-worming medicine.

Instructor pilots help aviators train as they fight

Spc. Derek Del Rosario
Avn. Bde. PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — The engine whine decreased and the rotors slowly came to a stop. After a few minutes to collect their thoughts, Chief Warrant Officers Charlie Magness and Michael Lembo emerged from the Apache cockpit just a couple of hours after the sun peaked over Taji airfield.

The two seasoned pilots had just completed another successful security and reconnaissance mission patrolling the skies over Baghdad, an essential mission to the ground troops they have supported since arriving in theater.

After completing their post-flight inspections, the two pilots walked down the flight line to receive their mission debriefing. They discussed what they saw during their mission, but this walk also allowed Magness the opportunity to evaluate Lembo, and it gave Lembo the chance to learn from his instructor pilot.

For these two pilots of C Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Attack Reconnaissance), 3rd Infantry Division, providing aerial security is not only a mission, but a training opportunity as well.

Magness, of Falls Church, Va., is an instructor pilot, a job he feels is vital and involves a lot of responsibility.

"Instructor pilots help administer the commander's flight program and standards, as well as provide annual evaluation for crew members," Magness said. "When a new pilot comes into the unit, it is the instructor's responsibility to bring the pilot up to mission readiness."

Capt. CJ Jacobs, C Co., 1/3 ARB commander and Laconia, N.H., native, said the training given by instructor pilots leaves an indelible mark on young aviators.

"Instructor pilots are in charge of all the tactical and technical training in the unit,



Spc. Derek Del Rosario
Chief Warrant Officers Charlie Magness (left) and Michael Lembo, both of C Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Attack Reconnaissance), 3rd Infantry Division, head to the pilot's ready room to discuss the mission and training the two pilots just completed.

a very vital and essential role," he noted. "These instructors make sure the pilots are trained and ready to fight, ensuring the well-being of all men in the company."

Chief Warrant Officer Brian Callahan, 1/3 ARB standardization officer, advises and guides the instructors in the battalion. He ensures instructor pilots see "the big picture" by helping them achieve the focus needed to help advance pilots from readiness level three, the lowest readiness level, to readiness level one.

"A pilot's readiness level is determined once they arrive to the unit, and it is determined based on previous assignments and what prior

experience they have," said Callahan, a Charleston, S.C. native. "Usually most pilots start at RL3. Pilots receive refresher training and get the base tasks down, then they move to RL2, which is more mission tasks. Once they are proficient, they are ready to move to RL1."

On average, pilots get three months of training at each level, but they can advance up the levels quicker if they show enough proficiency. At RL3, pilots must fly with an instructor pilot. Pilots can fly with a pilot in command at RL2 and are considered mission ready at RL1.

Lembo, a Lindenhurst, N.Y., native, hopes to acquire more

experience so he can become a maintenance test pilot. He said the training and knowledge he's received from Magness is invaluable.

"It is always a learning process and there is always something you can improve on," Lembo said.

Pilots are continuously put to the test by their instructors, so it is important for pilots to stay focused and be ready for the unexpected.

"Pilots constantly have to study and always seek improvement," Callahan said. "The pilots take classes, receive written and oral tests, and can get evaluations without notice. It is a very complex job that takes a lot of proficiency. Testing them

keeps them on their toes."

The high operation tempo in Iraq has led to a lot of missions, which in turn means a lot of training opportunity for pilots.

"We can train pilots in combat operations here that we don't get the opportunity to while in garrison," Magness said. "Flying here allows pilots to go through combat scenarios and react to non-standard procedures. The pilots are put under stress and we get to see how they react in certain given situations."

Many agree that being an instructor pilot takes a lot of technical and interpersonal skills, things that Callahan said instructors in his battalion have.

"They have to be able to multi-task and operate multiple functions, they have to be able to look one way and flip a switch without even looking," Callahan said. "They also have to be proficient in their job and be able to teach it. These instructor pilots understand and know how to help pilots and explain things to them. They have the ability to teach these pilots things and make sure they get the message."

"It takes a certain breed of pilot to make a good instructor," he added. "They have to have a personality that demands respect, while still remaining approachable. My guys are really good about that — they have the experience and personality that allows the junior aviators to learn a lot."

While providing missions that are helping Iraq develop its democracy is a reward in itself, the instructor pilots and leadership of C. Co. 1/3 ARB said that seeing young aviators learn and progress in their careers is very rewarding.

"Seeing them overcome their struggles and succeed is gratifying," Callahan said. "When instructors help young pilots achieve their goals, it's gratification in a very demanding profession."

Aviation team provides link between air, ground

Staff Sgt. Britt Smith
48th BCT PAO

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — The familiar "whop-whop-whop" of a UH-60A Blackhawk helicopter is a comforting sound for Soldiers on the ground.

Whether Soldiers are conducting operations or walking across the forward operating base here in the heart of Baghdad, just knowing the birds are in the air ready to go is a true force multiplier.

The role of aviation is closely linked to Task Force Baghdad units' combat operations, providing everything from close combat attacks, air assault operations, air medical evacuations as well as the Marine Express shuttle.

Tight coordination between the ground and the air is required for this to happen. That's where the Brigade Aviation Element in the 48th Brigade Combat Team comes in. The BAE is a new idea born out of the Army's transformation, based on lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Under the old system, temporary liai-

son officers helped combat brigades work with aviation assets. The LNOs were among the best Army pilots, but often came without proper equipment, training and personnel to plan missions for the various brigades.

"LNO is the old way of doing business," said Lt. Col. Bruce Chick, 48th BCT Aviation Officer. "Usually when they (48th Brigade) would mobilize or deploy, they would rely on the aviation brigades to send down LNOs."

Rather than being on "loan" to a brigade, the BAE concept puts aviation capabilities and assets with the ground commander for the duration of an operation or deployment.

With the 48th BCT primed for a deployment earlier this year, their

commander, Brig. Gen. Stewart Rodeheaver, saw the need for a BAE within the brigade and started looking for the right Soldiers to work effectively as a team.

It paid off when the BAE stood up with a staff of six highly experienced

officers and noncommissioned officers. Before the team deployed, they became the first Army National Guard Brigade Aviation Element to be certified "combat ready" by the 24th Infantry Division.

They join two other active duty BAEs who have already gone through the certification process.

"What it (a BAE) provides is an enhanced combat multiplier which the brigade has never had in the past," said

"For every Soldier we put on an aircraft, that's one less Soldier in a convoy that has the threat of improvised explosive devices."

Sgt. 1st Class Terry Sanders
48th BCT

Chick, a Monroe, Ga., resident. "It provides aviation support not only lift, but attack, unmanned aerial vehicle, and fixed-wing capability to ground commanders."

The BAE team members know that what they do makes a difference in the lives of Soldiers.

"For every Soldier we put on an aircraft, that's one less Soldier in a convoy that has the threat of improvised explosive devices," said Sgt. 1st Class Terry Sanders, operations noncommissioned officer in charge and a resident of Temple, Ga.

The team has been putting plenty of Soldiers in aircraft during Operation Iraqi Freedom 3. In the first 90 days in Iraq, the aviation team successfully completed more than 500 combat aviation missions, to include more than 2,600 flight hours, and nearly 3,300 personnel moved by air.

"We set precedence here. When the aircraft gets called up to help troops in contact, it gives us a good feeling to know we did something to help," said Staff Sgt. Cecil Beamon, Operations NCO, a resident of Loganville, Ga.

Task Force Baghdad delivers medicine, goodwill to Taji

Spc. Matthew Wester
3/1 AD PAO

TAJI, Iraq – Temperatures soared as hundreds of Iraqi villagers waited patiently outside a school northwest of Baghdad.

They weren't deterred by the searing heat because they knew Army healthcare providers were inside the school setting up a temporary clinic to help meet their medical needs.

Members of 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division and supporting units ran the impromptu treatment center as part of the Civilian Health Outreach Program Aug. 26 in Saba Al Bor.

"We go out in the local community and set up with basic medications, pain relievers, that kind of stuff," said Lt. James Arrington, physician's assistant for 3rd Brigade, 2nd Battalion, 70th Armor Regiment.

"We see whoever walks in."

Arrington, of Houston, said Soldiers used a loudspeaker to notify local residents of the program. Soon after, lines started forming outside the school.

"We basically did sick call for this town south of Taji," said Capt. Jacqueline L. Graul, a nurse from 3rd Bde.

Graul set up one treatment station while two other providers, Arrington and Dr. (Maj.) Troy Denunzio, from El Paso, Texas, field surgeon for 2nd Bn., 70th Armor Bn., tended to patients.

"We saw about 250 patients while we were there," said Graul, a native of Hildreth, Neb.

The long line of patients wound around military vehicles placed near a courtyard for security. The school's shady breezeway was buzzing with activity as the providers examined the vil-

lagers and tried their best to alleviate a wide range of symptoms.

"Commonly, we saw a lot of joint pain, fevers and upper respiratory infections," Arrington said.

The medical team treated a range of health problems, referring those needing urgent care to the nearest hospital.

A constant stream of patients entered the school during the five-hour mission. The children were treated to an extra surprise from civil affairs troops who passed out toys and T-shirts in the courtyard.

After hours of non-stop treatment, the providers and troops had a chance to reflect on the medical mission.

"It feels good to take care of people," Arrington said. "You don't see the terrorists going out there and providing medications or treatments."

"I think it shows the Iraqis that we do care about them and that we're here to help them," said Spc. Gregory M. Dent, a 3rd Bde. medic who helped with treatment during the mission.

Graul said the medical effort was primarily to promote goodwill and to support Iraqi medical providers.

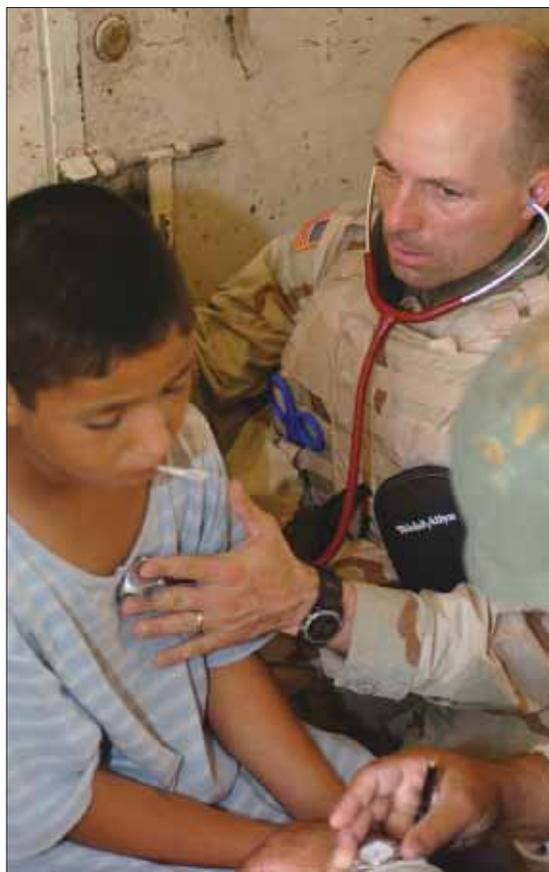
The mission was also a chance for medical personnel who spend most of their time treating Soldiers on Camp Taji to get out among the Iraqi people and provide direct help to the local community.

"I enjoyed it ... I volunteered for this one," said Dent, of Decker, Ind. "It's better than being behind a desk."

"I think it's a good break," Graul agreed. "I like going out (in the community). I'd go out every week if I could."

"... It shows the Iraqis that we do care about them and that we're here to help them."

Spc. Gregory M. Dent
3/1 Armor Division medic



Spc. Matthew Wester
Dr. (Maj.) Troy Denunzio, from El Paso, Texas, field surgeon for 2nd Battalion, 70th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division checks a patient's breathing during a medical mission northwest of Baghdad Aug. 26.

New equipment generates smiles at Salhiya orphanage

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – The humvees descended on Salhiya in the blink of an eye. Roads were closed and cordons were established as armor-clad Soldiers stepped from their vehicles, wary eyes hidden behind dark glasses.

As the dismounted U.S. Soldiers got closer to the crowd, their tight-lipped expressions suddenly turned into smiles as children circled around for hugs.

The children were orphans excited about another visit from the Soldiers of A Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor, 4th Brigade Combat Team.

The orphanage fell under the company's normal patrol route so the Soldiers and the children were well acquainted, but today, Aug. 29, was different. The assembled parties were together to celebrate a new generator the U.S. Soldiers had purchased for their little friends.

"(The orphanage) had an old generator provided by the old government that was run down," said Capt. Steve Wood, A Co. commander. "They didn't have power too often and the temperature inside the building would get

into the triple digits. In an effort to make things better, to enhance the living conditions, we bought them a new generator."

The generator works with the city power which is notorious for its shortages. The orphanage can turn it on when the Baghdad power grid shuts down.

The security officer who protects the orphanage moonlights as the handyman, so if the generator breaks down the children at the orphanage won't have to put up with too much unbearable heat, said 1st Lt. Kevin Siegrist, a civil military operations officer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Bn. 64th Armor.

The civil-military operations section researched the project to make sure it would be feasible for the area and that the generator would be maintained.

"We don't want to start a project where, once we leave, the work that we have completed goes to waste," said Siegrist, a native of Denver.

The bid process is a way for the civil-military operations section to teach Iraqi citizens the intricacies of capitalism. They take a minimum of

three bids from area contractors and then choose the best qualified candidate.

"We don't choose them based on who knows who," Siegrist said. "It's based on who can provide the best product for the best price in the least amount of time."

The previous U.S. Army unit in the area started the project but the paperwork was lost in a bureaucratic maze. When Wood saw the process was stalled, he loaned a military generator to the orphanage until the project was finished.

Once A Co. got involved, things moved much faster. Within a matter of days after the contract was approved the contractor was at the site, laying the concrete slab for the base. There was less than an eight-hour period where the military generator was removed from the site and the new generator was powered up.

Finally, on Aug. 29, Wood and the orphanage manager cut a ribbon as the Soldiers and civilians assembled for the ceremony applauded. The troops and children were soon interacting as they nibbled on pieces of cake brought to celebrate the occasion.

Soon the Soldiers moved inside to give the orphans stuffed animals and clothes donated by families in the United States.

One Soldier, a father himself, rocked a little girl as he remarked that she just needed to be held. For many of the Soldiers, seeing the children laugh and play is a tangible result of their hard work here in Iraq.

"It's great to come in here and see a smile on the children's faces and they know based on the rapport that we have, that we are here to help," said Wood, a native of Woodbridge, Va. "They come out in the streets when we come through. It's great to see them smile and know that you improved their quality of life. It's nice to see that we are focused on what the Iraqis have."

Wood also sees the humanitarian effort in his area of operations helping the operational aspect of his mission.

"Salhiya is the closest neighborhood to the Green Zone, and we can give them a visible sign of change for the better," he said. "This is really a joint effort between Coalition Forces and the Iraqi government and that's what really matters."

Iraqi Soldiers graduate leadership course

1st Lt. Chad Lawrence
1/71 Cav.

CAMP JUSTICE, Iraq – On a balmy September morning, the Iraqi Army added a dozen men to the ranks of its noncommissioned officers corps with their graduation from the Iraqi Primary Leadership Development Course.

This was the first class taught entirely by Iraqi Army instructors. Previously, U.S. Army NCOs helped instruct the course.

Those in the audience at the Sept. 3 graduation ceremony included representatives from 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division; and 1st Squadron, 71st Cavalry, and 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment — both from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division.

“Everyone in attendance could see the pride and determination etched on each Soldier’s face as he walked across the stage bordered by the Iraqi flag,” said Sgt. 1st Class William Torres from Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico.

“These Soldiers are continuing the proud course set by all the NCOs before them—Soldiers from around the world leading from the front. These men are the backbone of this army,” Torres said.

“We have trained our NCOs to lead our Soldiers after receiving valuable information from the U.S. Army on how to train our people,” said Sgt. 1st Class Raad Mousah Hasoon, senior NCO for



1st Lt. Chad Lawrence

Maj. Brian W. Reardon and 1st Sgt. Rodolfo Beltran discuss the future of the Iraqi Army Primary Leadership Development Course with Sgt. 1st Class Raad Mousah Hasoon, senior noncommissioned officer for the PLDC academy following a graduation ceremony Sept. 3. Reardon and Beltran are from 1st Squadron, 71st Cavalry, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division.

the Iraqi Army PLDC Academy. “We’ve learned how to take care of our Soldiers and how to make our program as efficient as we can.”

“We are making history here,” said 1-

71’s 1st Sgt. Rodolfo Beltran of Fairfield, Calif. “The NCO is the foundation of the U.S. Army and the Iraqi Soldiers are beginning to realize that. The Iraqis conduct business the way you would run a

household family. They take each other in and care for each other. The senior leadership here can now rely on NCOs to guide their Soldiers on a more personal level.”



Sgt. Kevin Bromley

The gunners view of the highway taken from a C Company humvee near Camp Taji.

Task Force Baghdad gunners embrace transition to new type of mission mid-way through deployment

Capt. Brian Spurlock

4/1 FA

TAJI, Iraq – At least one Task Force Baghdad unit has recently been adjusting to a new mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 3.

To the Soldiers of C Company, 4th Battalion, 1st Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, transitions come pretty naturally and now they are again being asked to transition from one mission to another.

The Soldiers of C Co. were initially organized and trained as an eight-gun howitzer battery tasked with providing indirect fire support for 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division. The battery completed the first half of its deployment fulfilling its role as the providers of artillery fire for 3/1 AD, 10th Mountain Division, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, and the 7th Marine Regiment.

Recently, the battery found itself tossed into a completely different mission, that of providing

maneuver forces in the battalion’s area of responsibility near Taji, Iraq. The two firing platoons of C Co. were reunited at Taji to perform a new set of missions, working solely for the 4/1 FA, known as the “Gunner Battalion.” The men of 2nd Platoon, C Battery immediately transitioned to providing fixed-site security for key locations in their area of operations. They parked their howitzers in the motor pool, polished up their rifle marksmanship and went to work as a motorized battery.

After spending five months providing indirect fire and firing more than 1,000 rounds while supporting the tankers of Task Force 2-70, the men of 1st Platoon, C Btry. were moved to Camp Taji to assume this new mission.

With only a few days to adjust to their new mission, the men of the platoon quickly recovered their gear, collected new equipment such as; optics, up-armored vehicles and spotlights — and hit the streets, embracing transition as a way of life during this OIF rotation.

Attention Soldiers! Due to the size and volume of footlockers being received for processing in the states, the Army Post Office is advising patrons of a possible 30 day delay in delivery.



Sgt. David Kerr

(top) Sgt. Barry Lawrence, a wheel vehicle mechanic from, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 70th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division from Fort Riley, Kan., watches as another boat hits a wake behind his.

(left) From Left to Right: Spc. Denise Batista, a chemical specialist from New York, N.Y., Spc Levi Van Pelt, a combat engineer from Austin, Minn., and 1st Sgt. Harold McVicker from Mannington, W.VA., all with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 70th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Bde., 1st Armored Div., practice maneuvers down the Tigris River.

Soldiers take to the rivers in Iraq

Sgt. David Kerr
70th Engineer Battalion

BAGHDAD – Several Iraqis looked on in interest as the large green boats with mounted machine guns maneuvered down the wide river lined with tall grass, reeds, and bushes.

The U.S. Soldiers on the boats remained alert, scanning the river banks for any sign of danger while the pilot maneuvered across choppy waters, soaking the Soldiers with river spray.

If this sounds like a scene from another war movie, think again. The Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 70th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, are taking to the water in another chapter of their fight against terrorism in Iraq.

“The boat missions are going to be used to provide the task force commander another asset in order to deter terrorism within Task Force Kodiak’s area of

operation,” said HHC’s 1st Sgt. Harold McVicker, of Mannington, W.Va.

The Aug. 30 mission was part of training and familiarization with the equipment, a chance to ensure all crew members, made up of mechanics and various support personnel, were able to pilot the watercraft down the Tigris River safely and expeditiously.

The MKII Bridge Erection Boat is a multi-purpose watercraft currently deployed within the unit and is used primarily for assault and extraction missions on the Tigris River.

“These boats can be used for bridging,” McVicker said. “They can also be used for assaulting an island or assault-and-extraction missions.”

During this training, everyone on board was smiling underneath the protective gear worn by all Soldiers outside the safety of their camp.

“It was my first time in a boat,” said Spc. Denise Batista, a chemical specialist assigned to

HHC and a native of New York. “It was fun. It was the best training that I’ve had.”

All the Soldiers on board piloted the

boat in various movements, including steering techniques and how to make abrupt stops. The training time paled in comparison to the actual mission times they face, but these fine Soldiers are now fully prepared.

The focus remained on the wartime mission. Weapons were manned and armed, ready for anything.

During the training, two shots rang out from nearby, a local boat watched from down the river, and several local residents stood on the high shoreline—stark reminders of the dangers the crews face, even in the water.

With Combat Survival Rescue Swimmers, medics, life preservers, and now a full complement of licensed boat operators on board, these engineers wait anxiously for the next call to run a river mission.

“They’re fully trained and they’re ready to go on a moment’s notice,” McVicker said.

“The boat missions are going to be used to provide the task force commander another asset in order to deter terrorism.”

1st Sgt. Harold McVicker
HHC, 70th Eng. Bn.

A Soldier’s Guide for the month of Ramadan

Muslims believe that god revealed the first revelations of the Qu’an to the prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel during the month of Ramadan. The month is the holiest of all months to Muslims, Shiites and Sunnis alike.

The first day of Ramadan is determined by the visual sighting of the new crescent – not by astrological calculation. This makes the calendar somewhat unpredictable. There is no way to accurately predict the first day of Ramadan. This year, it is most likely to fall on Tuesday the 4th or Wednesday the 5th of October.

In Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset every day. The fast requires every Muslim to abstain from drinking, smoking, sex, and any other type of indulgence or sin, including obscene words. Engaging in any of the prohibited acts between sunrise and sunset means that the fast has been broken unjustifiably – an act that cannot be adequately made up for in his life.

Muslims take fasting very seriously. Many Muslims who do not pray or

follow all of the rules have been known to become very pious during Ramadan. Many will stay up all night in prayer and reading the Qu’an, sometimes in groups. Fasting may be broken only for compelling reasons. Understandably, those who are not fasting will not show it in public.

The month of Ramadan is one of the Haram months, in which fighting is prohibited unless a war is ongoing or one is initiated against one’s people. This however does not mean that fighting will stop in Iraq during Ramadan if anything it is more likely to increase.

Here are some dos and don’ts about Ramadan:

DON’Ts

During Ramadan, all coalition forces should abstain from drinking, eating, and smoking in front of the population. Public eating, drinking, and smoking will be taken as a sign of disrespect.

Females should be careful to be chastely covered. Veils are not necessary, but this would be a good time to abstain from all provocative behavior including public displays of affection for the opposite sex. Even the slightest display of affection may be seen to provoke lust from the males of the population.

DOs

At the time of the sunset call to prayer, some charitably – minded citizens will be on the streets offering dates and water to people still on the road. Similar action on our part should be well received. Small packages of dates and cold water will be sufficient. However, we will have to offer these tokens rather than wait to be asked.

During the three days of Eid-al-Fitr, a gift of money to the children is not a bad idea. The amount should not be too much. Preferably the money should be given to the child in the presence of the parent. Chocolates and other small symbolic gifts are likely to be well received.

Impact on Operations

Increased traffic one or two hours before breaking of fast at sunset. The streets will become virtually empty just minutes before the sunset prayer. Ninety minutes later, traffic will resume as worshippers socialize and visit mosques.

Some accommodation is recommended to allow ISF, Muslim U.S. service members and Department Of Defense civilians to observe the celebration of Eid al-Fitr.

Expect to see some streets completely blocked off with the establishment of temporary eateries for feeding the poor, especially near mosques.

Expect celebratory gunfire around sunset marking the time of Iftar (breaking of the fast), especially on Eid al-Fitr which is on or about the fourth through the sixth of November.

Expect large crowds of shoppers with children in markets in last ten days of Ramadan as locals prepare for Eid al-Fitr.

10th Mtn. Soldiers train Iraqi Army in Abu Ghraib

1st Lt. Kristopher Deniger
1/10th Inf. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Two U.S. Army task forces have been working together to transfer responsibility of the Abu Ghraib district.

Task Force Courage, which includes units organic to 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division has taken over operations from Task Force Blackhawk, comprised of units from the Illinois Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry.

This period has been filled with many events these Soldiers will face throughout their deployment. TF Courage has hit the ground running, which was eased by the extensive training conducted prior to deployment.

"The Soldiers of the task force are focused on the mission and ready to make a difference in the local community as well as tackle the insurgency," said TF Courage, Command Sgt. Maj. Raul Huerta, from Tucson, Ariz.

While assuming the duties of 2nd Bn., 130th Inf., Soldiers from TF Courage have found themselves doing more than just fighting terrorists, Huerta said. Some Soldiers are being asked to fulfill traditional roles such as patrols, guard duty, and traffic control points. Other Soldiers are training the Iraqi Army



Sgt. Cory Smith, from Davenport, Iowa, observes Iraqi Army basic first aid training Sept. 1. Soldiers from Task Force Courage have taken over operations from the Illinois Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry.

and conducting Civil Military Operations.

"Coalition Forces are working to hand over the destiny of the country to the people of Iraq," Huerta said.

TF Courage has put together a team of experienced Soldiers to train the Iraqi Army. This team has all the aspects of a regular U.S. Army battalion; from infantry Soldiers, to medics, supply, and maintenance personnel.

This effort is being headed by the TF Courage Headquarters Company, commanded by Capt. Willie Garfield, of Killeen, Texas, and 1st Sgt. Carl Ashmead, from Fairfield, Ohio.

The experienced officers and noncommissioned officers have teamed with three companies in the Iraqi battalion. The U.S. Soldiers share their skills and experience each day training the Iraqi Army in

everything from basic Soldier skills to rifle marksmanship and infantry battle drills, Garfield said.

"The team goes out on missions with the Iraqi Army and helps command and control these units at the company and platoon levels," he said.

Garfield said his team is excited to help the Iraqi Army become a force that will ensure future liberty in Iraq.

At a Civil Military

Operations Center near Camp Liberty, CMOs are conducted. It is another important aspect of the TF Courage mission.

Sgt. 1st Class Lee Power, of Boston, CMOC noncommissioned officer in charge, works with Iraqi citizens to get contracts for projects in the area that will help rebuild the basic utilities and infrastructure of Abu Ghraib.

Working in conjunction with the task force is a civil affairs team headed by Maj. Michael Lawson, of the 448th Civil Affairs Battalion from Fort Lewis, Wash.

Lawson is specially trained to access the Abu Ghraib district and make recommendations on projects that will better the community.

"We also conduct missions that promote positive programs in the community such as handing out school supplies to the local children," said Lawson, a native of Durham, Conn.

"The entire deployment has gone very well," said Lt. Col. Kevin Brown, commander of TF Courage from Uncasville, Conn. "The smooth departure

from Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield (Fort Drum, N.Y.), the excellent training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, and the experience gained by some very significant events during our first week in sector, have all made me very proud of the team, and all those who helped us get to this point."

U.S. Soldiers train Iraqi Police on 'CSI' skills

Spc. Ben Brody
2nd BCT PAO

CAMP RUSTIMIYAH, Iraq – U.S. military police are training junior Iraqi Police officers in skills they need to conduct thorough crime scene investigations.

Soldiers from 720th Military Police Battalion, operating in support of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, set up three stations in a Rustimiyah building designed to train IP lieutenants and captains to document evidence properly, identify and safeguard important evidence and secure a crime scene.

"These lieutenants and captains are out on the streets, responding to crimes, so it's important we help them become as capable and knowledgeable as possible," said Capt. John Copeland, an IP advisor with the 720th MP Bn. "They typically have quite a few patrolmen under them that they'll train.

"We're focusing on the mid-level

managers because they're fairly fresh to the force, eager to learn and willing to change," added Copeland, a San Antonio, Texas, native. "At the same time, they have enough rank to effect change within the force."

Four groups of IPs moved through the three training stations throughout the day, and seemed receptive to the training.

"It's very good – we're learning about fingerprinting and collecting evidence today," said 1st Lt. Ahmed Abdel Rahman, an IP officer in Baghdad. "I am responsible for almost 200 people, and I will show them what I have learned."

At one station, IPs were presented with a simulated murder scene, which they had to secure and comb for evidence. They then carefully collected and documented the evidence.

Another station involved watching clips from the television show "CSI (Crime Scene Investigators)," which they then discussed. Copeland

described the exercise as a test of the IPs' attention to detail.

At the third station, MPs showed the IPs how to document evidence on standardized forms. Currently, police reports are often presented to Iraqi courts as informal notes.

"This is advanced training that most IPs have limited experience with," Copeland said. "When they implement these skills into their police work, we'll start to see more convictions stick."

Rahman said his experiences working with Iraqi Police liaison officers have been extremely beneficial. IPIOs are typically former U.S. police officers who train IPs in Iraq on a daily basis.

IPIO Jose Guillan, a former member of the Houston PD, said the 720th MP Bn. deserves a great deal of credit for helping bring the IPs where they are today.

"The Army got stations up and running by providing infrastructure like

barriers and guard towers," Guillan said. "The IPs have really responded to the military support they receive – they're taking more initiative every day."

Although many of the junior officers are relatively new to the force, some are veterans who were forced out under Saddam Hussein's regime.

"I've been a police officer since 1970, until Saddam drove me out in 1995," said Warrant Officer Kadim Hassan Kadim, who currently serves in Sadr City. "This is very important training – we will conduct our work with less mistakes. It gives us a good advantage against the criminals in Baghdad."

Kadim said he is hopeful for the future of Baghdad under the protection of the Iraqi Police.

"We put our hand in the people's hand, and lead them to a better future," the experienced officer said. "It is the beginning of a change that all Arabs can be proud of."

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.

Aviation Medic supports ground convoys

Spc. Derek Del Rosario
Avn. Bde. PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – For many Soldiers in the Aviation Brigade, a trip outside the wire of the secure forward operating base usually takes place aboard a helicopter. However, when the opportunity arose to spend time with a ground unit, Pfc. Oscar Grado didn't hesitate to volunteer.

Grado, a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (General Support), has provided essential medical support for 2nd Battalion, 70th Armor Regiment, since May. This means he spends a lot of time outside the wire on missions which include civil affairs projects.

Grado, a Stockton, Calif., native, spends about six days a week on convoys attached with the unit, something that he was eager to do.

"I volunteered to go because it was something different," Grado said. "I wanted to be outside the wire. It's a change of scenery."

During the missions, Grado is the medical specialist for the convoy.

"We were hit by an improvised

explosive device, but luckily everyone was all right," the 21-year-old medic said recalling an August mission. "At the time our convoy was hit, I was excited and scared. Once it hit, I knew very well that I might have to use my skills."

Grado's noncommissioned officer in charge, Staff Sgt. Rey Flete of HHC, 2/3 GSAB, said IED incidents are one reason that having a medic in convoys is important. Grado, he added, is very capable at handling the job.

"He is a good Soldier and a very proficient medic,"

Flete said. "He's doing an outstanding job in his position and I am very proud of him for volunteering."

Grado's main motivation for enlisting, much like his motivation to volunteer to join 2/70th Armor, was to change his daily

routine and to gain training opportunities.

"I wanted to get out, get away and do something different with my life," he said. "I also wanted to train as a medic. I thought it was a good chance to learn things I could use later in the civilian world."

Grado joined the Army near the end of 2003, months after the beginning of the Iraqi war. He was aware that a deployment was a possibility in his future, and when he learned that his unit

"I was looking forward to ... Iraq because I thought it would give me a chance to be part of something bigger than myself."

Pfc. Oscar Grado
 HHC, 2/3 GSAB



Spc. Matthew Wester

Pfc. Oscar Grado, HHC 2-3 GSAB, provides a couple of Iraqi kids with medical items outside of a temporary clinic on Aug. 26. The clinic was set up in Saba Al Bor to provide Iraqi citizens free medical support.

was going to Iraq, he welcomed the opportunity.

"I felt prepared to deploy and I was confident and ready to go," Grado said. "I was looking forward to doing my job in Iraq because I thought it would give me a chance to be part of something bigger than myself."

Grado's confidence is important in

his line of work, especially in a unit that conducts so many convoys. The medic said he has earned the trust of the Soldiers he is supporting.

"They rely on me a lot," he said. "When we roll out I might be responsible for around 15 to 20 Soldiers. They depend on the medic. I feel like I'm part of a strong team now."

BRIDGE, continued from page 1

ceremony.

Tissa Nissan DAC member Dr. Karim Al Amber cut the ribbon and officially opened the bypass. She praised the project as representing a bridge of peace between Iraqis and Americans.

"This is a great project which will shorten the age and the time of the terrorists," Amber said. "The motivation from this will promote hope in the souls of the

people."

Since the liberation of Iraq in 2003 and the continued presence of Coalition Forces on the Rustamiyah Military Academy Compound, residents of Baghdad have found it difficult to travel easily on the nearby Canal Road due to the high volume of military and logistical traffic.

The compound and travelers in its vicinity have been at

increased risk for car bombs because of traffic congestion. The Rustamiyah Bypass attempts to solve these problems.

"The heavy traffic near Rustamiyah posed a threat to both civilians and Soldiers from (vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices)," Farrell, of Harrison, N.Y., said. "The area is safer for everyone now."

The project included a

bridge, one-and-a-half kilometers of roadway, curb construction and emplacement of roadside lighting. The bridge itself is a concrete girder bridge with a concrete deck and asphalt surface able to handle loads in excess of 70 tons.

This project is one of many road and infrastructure improvements completed or currently underway under the guidance of the leaders and citizens of Tissa

Nissan in partnership with 1/64 Armor Soldiers.

Since February 2005, local leaders with the help of the 1/64 Armor, have supervised the completion of \$3 million worth of projects with another \$2 million worth of projects ongoing throughout the Tissa Nissan District. All projects share the same goal of improving the quality of life of the district's citizens.



Photos by Spc. Ben Brody

(top) The newest bridge for the people of Rustamiyah stands ready for the traffic soon to be crossing it. (right) Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division and local leaders from the Tissa Nissan District of East Baghdad cut the ribbon on the Rustamiyah Traffic Bypass Sept. 9, signaling the project's much-anticipated completion.





Pvt. Jason Jordan

An Iraqi citizen complains of chest pains and is seen and treated during an Iraqi Army-led joint medical operation between the 1st Brigade Combat Team and the 256th BCT. The operation was designed to bring food, water and medical aid to the Iraqi citizens of Abu Ghraib.

Aiding Abu Ghraib Iraqi, U.S. forces bring medical aid to Abu Ghraib residents

Pvt. Jason Jordan
1/10th Inf. PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq — Iraqi Army and U.S. Soldiers from Task Force Baghdad recently teamed up to bring medical care to residents of the Abu Ghraib district in west Baghdad.

Even as the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division prepared to take over operations from the 256th Brigade Combat Team, they hit the ground running with a humanitarian mission.

Led by the Iraqi Army, the mission provided food and medical aid to Iraqi citizens in the most impoverished area of Abu Ghraib. Soldiers from 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment and brigade civil affairs along with medical staff handed out toys and school supplies to children.

The Iraqi Army, which set up the mission, helped with crowd control and provided security around the site.

“The purpose of a medical civil affairs mission is to see as many citizens as possible and provide them with the best care possible in the time we are allotted for the mission,” said Los Angeles native Maj. Sean Doyle, squadron surgeon for the 1/11th ACR. “We provide them food, water and solutions for minor medical problems.”

The site was chosen because of the large number of children and the overwhelming poverty in the area, said Capt. Seth Hall, officer in charge of the operation.

A normal mission like this sees about 150 to 300 people in a few hours. However, this particular mission was a huge success, said 1st Lt. Aaron Ashoff, 1/11th ACR civil affairs officer.

“We saw and treated over 500 people today, making this mission a success in every sense of the word. To our knowledge, this is the largest

number our brigade has seen to date,” said Ashoff, of Pittsburgh.

The Soldiers set up a tent at a local school where they handed out food and water.

“It is so rewarding to be able to conduct a mission like this,” said Hall, of Cedar Falls, Iowa. “I have kids myself, and to see them smile when they get things they want makes me smile myself. To see these kids light up brought a joy altogether different because they have so little.”

The U.S. medical team was also kept busy with patients during the mission to the area.

“Many of their problems are associated with heartburn, diarrhea, muscle pains and prenatal care,” said Capt. Shonnel Makakwa, 1/10th medical officer, and a resident of New Orleans.

The Soldiers provided patients with vitamins, antacids, pain medications and antibiotics for parasitic worms. Pregnant women were provided with prenatal vitamins and all patients were instructed on how to take their medications.

“It is a great feeling to be able to alleviate problems for these people who we don’t really encounter in America because of sanitation and nutrition,” said Doyle. “Letting the population know we care about them in this way is a pleasant contrast to the darker side of the conflict they are used to seeing.”

Overall, the mission was a huge success that provided much-needed aid to the poverty-stricken citizens and helped build relations at the humanitarian level, said Ashoff.

“You know, at the end of the day, that is what we are out there for,” he said. “You would do anything for a child — anything to see them smile. If I can make a difference in one child’s life, see one smile, then I consider this mission a success.”

4th Brigade honors life of ‘determined’ Soldier

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

BAGHDAD — Spc. Hatim Kathiria, was not one to conform, said Lt. Col. David Funk, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment’s commander.

“Kathiria was a man who seemed constantly bent on discovering his own genius and he rarely conformed to other people’s models,” Funk said.

Kathiria was a prescribed load list clerk assigned to F Company, 703rd Forward Support Battalion, but worked in direct support of the 3/7 Inf. “Cottonbalers.”

He was killed in a rocket attack Aug. 22. Fellow Soldiers gathered to honor his life at a memorial service three days later.

Kathiria was born in India and immigrated to the U.S. as an adult in order to further his already considerable education. Rather than go straight to college as some expected, he decided to join the U.S. Army in 2003. He became a Marine Soldier in the 3rd Infantry Division in 2004. Shortly before his unit deployed to Iraq, he became something else: a U.S. citizen.

His fellow Soldiers remembered him as hard-working, studious, intensely private,

extremely competitive and confident in everything he did.

Those who really took the time to know him and break down the barriers of privacy that he’d built said it was worth it. His friendship was true and genuine.

“Of course, some barriers are never broken, and there was one in particular that no one ever breached. That was his relationship to Pfc. Lissie Jean Pierre. Only upon his death did we learn that the two of them had secretly married just prior to deployment,” Funk said.

The commander went on to discuss Kathiria’s competitive nature. “It seems whether he was playing simple board games in the barracks or in a heated discussion with his fellow PLL clerks about the status of parts in the parts bin, he was sure he was right and he would go to extreme lengths to prove just that. He wouldn’t, and indeed he couldn’t, accept any other outcome than the one he had ordained,” Funk said.

Of all the stories his fellow Soldiers told him, Funk remembered one in particular: “You might think an immigrant from India might know very little about how to play basketball, in which case you would be right. You might

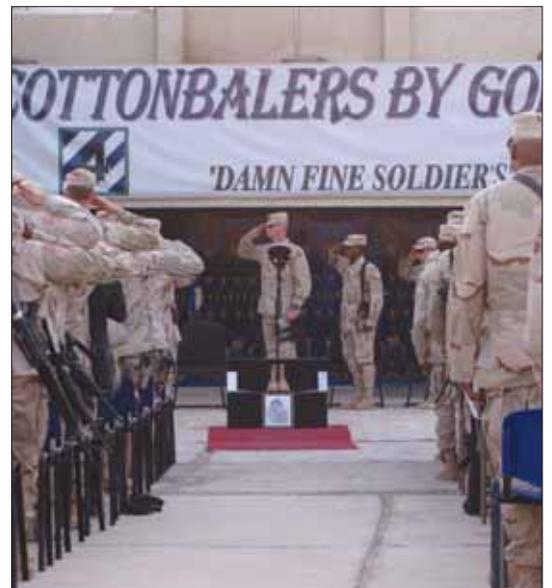
think having been coaxed onto the court for the first time he would be rather shy and would defer to the more experienced players when it came to who committed a foul or what constituted traveling. There you would be wrong. Except for his rather inconsiderable and somewhat humorous playing abilities, you’d think he had been ‘hooping’ his whole life. He could talk smack with the best of them on the court. He argued every call, insisting of course that he was right.”

Capt. Taurus Smith, Kathiria’s company commander, shared some of his memories with the assembled mourners.

“He spoke six different languages and volunteered to serve as my interpreter here,” Smith said. “He was constantly asking how to better his leadership abilities in hopes of competing for an Officer Candidate School slot.”

Funk ended his remarks trying to break down, in the simplest terms possible, what kind of man Kathiria was.

“Very simply, he was a man who did not conform to other peoples’ models, a man who had learned to be himself, but he was also this: a damn fine Soldier, a Cottonbaler by God. A man because of his intense desire to be better completed



Spc. Dan Balda

Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team salute during the National Anthem at Spc. Hatim Kathiria’s memorial service held at Forward Operating Base Falcon Aug. 25.

every task and made those around him better. He made this unit better,” Funk said. “My brother, thank you for your commitment to a nation

you barely knew. Thank you for being yourself and in so doing, teaching us a little about ourselves,” Funk said. “You have not died in vain.”



Spc. Derek Del Rosario

San Diego native Sgt. Andrzej Kujawski of the brigade legal office, helps a Soldier fill out a power of attorney. Legal services is only one of many support offices in the ALOC.

Soldiers get one-stop shopping for personnel issues

Spc. Derek Del Rosario

Avn. Bde. PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Good morale plays an important role in a Soldier's readiness. Ensuring personnel issues are squared away is one way leaders make certain their Soldiers are focused and prepared for their duties as a fighting force.

For Soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division's Aviation Brigade, there is a place where Soldiers can re-enlist, get a power of attorney, request supplies and handle their leave issues. All of these services are located in one place, the Administration and Logistical Operations Center.

The ALOC serves as the hub for all personnel and logistical concerns an Aviation Brigade Soldier might encounter. The brigade personnel office, located in the ALOC, is prepared to handle human resource issues.

Also located in the ALOC are different services such as legal assistance, finance, food services, property book office, retention office and equal opportunity services.

"The ALOC is a consolidated mix of staff offices," said Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Parker, equal opportunity noncommissioned officer in charge and Washington, D.C., native. "By having all these staff offices in one place, it allows us and Soldiers coming here to get a lot done. It's like a one-stop shop."

Master Sgt. Rick Jay, retention NCO and Alexandria, Ala., native, said the ALOC staff attempts to closely mirror support that is provided while back in garrison.

"It is a broad spectrum of support," Jay said. "The ALOC offers every logistical support a Soldier needs that he or she would receive in the rear. We try to ensure normal logistical flow while in theater."

Soldiers in the personnel office handle human resource issues, such as career management, reception, redeployment and leave. Lakewood, Colo., native Capt. David Brodsky, personnel officer, feels that the many services, from pay to promotions, are a valuable part of a Soldier's readiness.

Legal support is also offered to Soldiers in the brigade, a service that Toccoa, Ga., native Sgt. John Sosebee of the legal office feels is an integral part of unit integrity.

"The legal office assists commanders with disciplinary issues, ensuring everything stays under control," Sosebee said. "We also provide essential legal assistance to Soldiers, which can help Soldiers take care of their families even from far away."

One of the more extensive yet sometimes underrated staff offices is the logistics office. Few realize the variety of services that fall under logis-

tics, such as supply, contracts, property book and food service.

Maj. Andy Watson, logistical officer from Overland Park, Kan., said logistics personnel benefit from working closely together.

"I think everyone's job dovetails with another, so it is a great asset to be working in a common location," Watson said.

Pittsburgh native Warrant Officer Roberta Sheffield, food service officer, said food service plays an integral part in a Soldier's everyday life.

"Being deployed, Soldiers work long and strenuous hours, making the need for a well-balanced meal with variety very important," Sheffield said. "We also bring food to the guards and occasionally plan for birthday celebrations, thus making food services both a health and morale issue."

Along with the well-being of the troops, Chief Warrant Officer Sandra Pack, property book officer and Ft. Sumter, S.C., resident, considers logistic services mission-essential.

"The property book office accounts for all the Army equipment and requisitions," Pack said. "We handle brigade-specific equipment so the mission can be completed."

Services provided in the ALOC help Soldiers do their job.

Sgt. Regina Douge, of Brooklyn, N.Y., a contracting NCO develops projects that help Soldiers during their off-duty time.

"Some projects that I've coordinated have been important for mission and security, like setting up fences around the flight line," Douge said. "But our services can extend to things like getting sandbags and gravel around the living areas and maintenance in the rooms."

Even though ALOC services provide the backbone to mission readiness, they often go unnoticed.

"The personnel in the support offices know they are doing their jobs because Soldiers have their food, equipment and issues squared away," Watson said. "If you look at the basic needs of Soldiers such as food, shelter, and a means to survive, then you realize that a Soldier can't eat, communicate, or have the equipment they need ... without logistics having a hand in the operation."

Sgt. 1st Class Olivette Stepney of Talladega, Ala., the logistics NCOIC, said making sure all of the Soldiers are provided for is not an easy task, but it is something the ALOC personnel work hard to accomplish.

"Getting what everyone needs in a timely manner can be a challenge, especially when Soldiers want things right away," Stepney said. "But for me, there is no such thing as 'I can't.' It makes me feel good when I go above the call of duty ... when I say, 'I can.'"

Keeping wheels "rolling" in Iraq 3/1 AD mechanics ensure vehicles always ready

Spc. Matthew Wester

3/1 AD PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – "We've got an excellent crew," said Sgt. Jermane Holloway, a Goldsboro, N.C., native and mechanic for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division.

Holloway was describing the group of mechanics he works with in the HHC vehicle maintenance facility at this camp north of Baghdad.

The facility provides maintenance and repairs for vehicles used by HHC and platoons from the 64th and 977th Military Police companies.

"We get about four to five vehicles a day," said Staff Sgt. Donald Brannon, HHC motor sergeant.

Brannon, from Calaveras County, Calif., says the mechanics do everything from basic maintenance to complicated repairs.

One of the main tasks for the Soldiers who staff the facility is to help drivers inspect their vehicles to make sure they are functioning properly.

"When someone comes in for a dispatch, we make sure they (drivers) do a 20-point check," Holloway said.

These checks have identified small problems with the vehicles before they become big problems.

The bulk of the mechanics' work involves replacing parts worn down from the rigors of daily use.

"The majority of what we've done is suspension work and steering," said Spc. Jordan Byrd, an HHC mechanic from West Terre Haute, Ind.

Brannon agrees.

He said suspensions, shocks, springs and ball joints are the main parts his crew has replaced.

The mechanics who work on the Military Police vehicles see even more parts worn-out by the demands of missions outside the wire of the military camp.

Sgt. Jose J. Fuentes, a mechanic for the 64th Military Police Company, 720th Military Police Battalion, based at Fort Hood, Texas, said the MP vehicles wear out more quickly, "because of all the ammunition and extra weight they carry."

The MP mechanics are part of an experienced crew.

Many of the Headquarters Co. mechanics are Operation Iraqi Freedom I veterans.

"Our E-4s were here during OIF 1, and we're trying to cross-train our new mechanics," Holloway said.

"We did a good job last time," Brannon said. "We kept things running."

He thinks his crew is doing even better during this deployment. "It is running smoother. We are a team."

Iraqi school year begins with school supply donations

4th BCT PAO

Media Release

BAGHDAD – More than 200 students, teachers, and family members attended a humanitarian event sponsored by Task Force Baghdad Soldiers in the Karradah district Aug. 28.

Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division distributed various school supplies to the Al-Aman Primary School. Attendees from 15 different Iraqi schools in the Baghdad area were present at the giveaway.

"We never saw anything like this under the old regime," said Nadhera Abbood Mohammed, a sports teacher at the school. "Under Saddam, they had many meetings about getting supplies but were told by the government they would have to get it themselves."

Several students who achieved high academic marks were recognized publicly by the Karradah district council chairman, Dr. Mohammed Al-Rubaie. These high achievers were given special awards which included backpacks full of school supplies donated by U.S. non-profit organizations as well as friends and families of deployed Soldiers.

The remaining students received a plastic packet containing a large amount of school supplies for the upcoming school year.

"Projects like this assist the communities in Baghdad and the local governments," said Capt. John Agnello, the civil-military operations officer for 4th Bn., 64th Armor Reg. "We hope that our efforts help the local populace trust their government and as a result, maybe they will give democracy a chance."

Soldiers help Soldiers find work after storm

Sgt. Andrew Miller
100th MPAD

CAMP TIGERLAND, Iraq – As Tiger Brigade Soldiers redeploy to hurricane devastated Louisiana, many will take off the uniform only to be out of a job altogether.

Several 256th Brigade Combat Team commanders recognized this problem well before Hurricane Katrina hit and developed a new employment assistance program for their Soldiers. The program is unprecedented in the Army National Guard and it is already shaping up to be a big success since it was initiated less than two months ago.

Soldiers looking for full or part time jobs, through the state government or otherwise, now have a noncommissioned officer available to assist them through the job search and application process.

Staff Sgt. Scott Gulina, from Watson, La., is the employment specialist for the 256th BCT. He locates available jobs and helps interested Soldiers to get them.

This is a tall order. "When this program was first implemented," Gulina said, "within two days I received over 200 email addresses."

These addresses belong to Soldiers interested in employment opportunities. Many more have come since - and Gulina believes he has yet to hear from those whose jobs were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

According to Gulina, the overwhelming number of Soldiers looking for work indicates a need for just the kind of program the 256th BCT has created.

Finding Soldiers who want work is only the first step.

Once the Soldiers have been identified, they will receive emails with the latest job information put out by the state of Louisiana. Gulina said he also shows

Soldiers where they can find information on available Active Guard or Reserve positions. He has also been developing contacts and career opportunities within the civilian market.

Whether or not Soldiers know what job they want, Gulina can help.

About 40 people have been in his office working toward new employment. Some are facing unemployment while others are simply looking for a career change, he said. Many soon to be students are interested in part-time work.

When a Soldier first arrives in Gulina's office, he tries to help them determine exactly what they want. Most looking for full time work are interested in active guard/reserve positions. Gulina discusses these and the other options available to well trained Soldiers, he said.

"Sometimes they'll actually change their minds once you start throwing different stuff out there," he said.

Once a goal has been established, Soldiers begin the application process.

Gulina teaches Soldiers how they can make their application stand out. He said they'll review applications to ensure they reflect professionalism, what the Soldier wants and what the Soldier brings to the table.

"I'm not going to put words in their mouths," he said, "but at the same time I'm going to set them up for success."

To do that, Gulina suggests going the extra mile. He recommends getting letters of recommendation from commanders in the field.

Gulina can also help work out waivers for state jobs if, for example, a Soldier has too few evaluation reports on record. Soldiers without official photographs or recent physical training evaluations can also apply with waivers.

Sgt. James Kester, a logistics NCO



Sgt. Andrew Miller

Staff Sgts. Scott Gulina and Kennery Foster discuss Foster's application for a recruiting position in the Louisiana National Guard Sept. 8 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. Gulina, from Watson, La., is 256th Brigade Combat Team's new employment specialist and Foster, of Lafayette, La., is the brigade warden.

with 1st Battalion, 156th Armor Regiment, said the Tiger Brigade's employment program greatly helped him as he applied for an AGR position.

"The program allows Soldiers in theater to compete more fairly for jobs opening up back home," Kester said.

Staff Sgt. Kennery Foster, the 256th BCT warden from Lafayette, La., said the program indicates just how much leaders care about their troops' welfare.

"We've always taken care of our own," Foster said, "and we're going to continue to do that."

Both Kester and Foster agree that Gulina is a big part of the program's

success.

"You can tell he genuinely cares, Foster said. "He's very involved with each of us."

Gulina said he recognizes the gratitude he gets, and he loves his "dream job" because of it. He also believes that he and the program can do more.

Despite the initial success of the program, no official plans have been made to continue it, he said. Gulina is hoping the program is something that will be built on rather than discarded.

"I don't want it to stop here," he said. "This is a great program and why should it stop because the 256th goes home?"



Courtesy Photo

Sgt. Tracy E. Perfors poses with Hawra in the Camp Falcon troop medical clinic. Hawra has been receiving physical therapy at the TMC for the past eight months and is currently recovering in her home in east Rashid but she still walks with a slight limp.

Injured Iraqi girl captures U.S. medic's heart

4th BCT PAO
Media Release

BAGHDAD – By the time she was 15 years old, Hawra had already suffered a lifetime of pain. Her father was killed by the old regime; then, one year ago, her sister was killed when she and Hawra were caught in a cross-fire between terrorists and Coalition Forces.

Hawra was trapped in the burning car, leaving her with severe burns on both her legs. She was taken to an Iraqi hospital, but after several unsuccessful skin grafts, her legs healed incorrectly in a bent-knee position. An Iraqi doctor had to break her knees in order to straighten her legs once again.

Hawra's case eventually came to the attention of a U.S. Army civil affairs unit working with the 1st Cavalry Division in February and she was taken to the military hospital in the International Zone for care.

After her release, Hawra returned home but continued to receive medical care from doctors and medics at the 4th Brigade Combat Team Falcon Troop Medical Clinic.

That's where Sgt. Tracy Perfors first met her.

Perfors, a medic assigned to C Company, 703rd Forward Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, said she walked into the aid station for work that day as she would any other.

"But this time, instead of being

greeted by only sick and injured Soldiers, a small, wheelchair-bound Iraqi girl captured my attention," said the native of Montrose, Colo. "Though frail and small for a teenager, she was the most animated person in the waiting room. Her eyes shone brightly and her smile radiated as she laughed and joked with everyone in broken English."

Perfors was the only female medic on shift that day, so she spent the afternoon with Hawra assisting with her medical care. She listened as the little girl told stories of life in Iraq since Saddam and of living with her 11 brothers and sisters. Hawra raved about the chance to eat cheeseburgers and macaroni and cheese when she visited the aid station. Perfors said it was the largest meal she had eaten all week.

Hawra also told Perfors about her dream of going to school in the fall and maybe one day having a family of her own.

"Hawra had captivated me," Perfors said. "I found it astonishing that a person with her medical problems and family history could remain so upbeat."

Perfors continued to work with her week after week when she came to the aid station, and with each visit she amazed the sergeant further. Each week Hawra returned with good news of her continued recovery, as she built up enough strength in her muscles and brittle bones to walk short distances around her home.

Hawra's steady recovery did not

last long, however.

Perfors returned to the aid station one day to discover that Hawra had broken her hip. She had been brought to the aid station, but she was going to have to be evacuated to the hospital for surgery.

"It struck me that although Hawra was in great pain, she had remembered to bring some pictures she had promised to share with her friends at the clinic," Perfors said. "At times, she would be in tears from the pain of her broken hip, yet she continued to talk and joke to keep everyone else optimistic."

By this time Hawra and Perfors had become friends, so the medic insisted on riding in the back of the ambulance to keep the girl comfortable during the convoy to the hospital.

Hawra is currently recovering at her home in east Rashid but she still walks with a slight limp.

Soldiers from the civil affairs team with 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, 4th BCT still visit Hawra to make sure her recovery is coming along. During their periodic visits they also deliver humanitarian assistance packs to her family. Perfors and other medics from the Camp Falcon Troop Medical Clinic often ride along on those patrols.

"Through her courage and unbeatable determination, Hawra continues to remind me of why the U.S. is in Iraq: to give the innocent people who have suffered under Saddam's regime a chance at a prosperous life," Perfors said.

4th Brigade holds 9/11 candlelight ceremony

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT Team PAO

BAGHDAD – The events of 9/11 touched every American's life in some way, shape or form. Whether that date was remembered for the tragedy or the heroic acts carried out that day, Americans will never forget where they were or what they were feeling during the terrorist attacks.

Four years later, Soldiers assigned to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division came together Sept. 11, to remember those who lost their lives in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and also to pay tribute to the service members who have lost their lives fighting the Global War on Terror since then.

"You remember where you were, who you were with, what you were doing," said Col. Edward Cardon, 4th BCT commander. "How can we forget those images, images of death, images of bravery, images of America? Thousands of people lost their lives during the attack and several more lost their lives trying to save others. It is these lives that we remember today."

Pvt. Shareef Carey, a generator mechanic assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery, said he was relaxing at his Philadelphia home when he saw the news. His anger and shock manifested itself into something positive. He decided to join the Army, to go out and help people who could not enjoy the freedom he had as an American.

Cardon spoke to the Soldiers, Marines, and civilians assembled for the candlelight service about the changes brought about by the attacks.

"We became more aware of our blessings as America, the land of the free and brave," he said. "We became more aware of our impact and those people around us. We became more aware of the intangibles; it's not about money but it's about the way we live our lives."

"It made me realize that I was in the military for something more than a paycheck," said Spc. Romel Petitfere, a gun truck driver assigned to HHB, 1/76 FA and native of Fort Lauderdale,

Fla. "I get the big picture now," Petitfere said. "Before, I didn't really know what piece of the puzzle I was. Now, I know why I am here. I'm doing something worthwhile."

Chaplain (Maj.) Blake Bowers, the 4th BCT chaplain, tried to put together a larger puzzle while also attempting to put words to various feelings the Soldiers were experiencing.

"Maybe you are like me, here to remember that though we are troubled on every side, we are not distressed," Bowers said. "We might be perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted perhaps, but not forsaken. Cast down, but not destroyed. In times of tragedy, personal or national, for whatever reasons it occurs, God stands with us in the midst, He is our beacon of hope."

Staff Sgt. Jason Floyd, a gun truck platoon sergeant with HHB 1/76 FA, used his feelings to motivate himself for the deployments that he knew would be forthcoming.

"It got me excited to go to Afghanistan so I could do my part to help the country," said the Joliet, Ill., native. "It influenced me to reenlist and come to Iraq with the 3rd ID. Serving over here has made me realize that we have not finished the job yet. We still have a lot to do and I'm just happy to be here doing my part."

Bowers asked the Soldiers to perform what could be the hardest task: to love.

"Even during a terrible event, love can conquer," he continued. "Hatred was the evil behind 9/11. The only medicine that can counter hatred is love. Not revenge, though we might feel better for it. Not war, though it might solve some problems. But love, when it is hardest to love, is the choice we must make. Let us reach out, even to our enemy. We will not forget 9/11, we will continue to remember it, but let our remembrance be tempered by God and our love for others."

Cardon wrapped up his remarks on a positive note.

"The terrorists thought America was weak and decadent," he said. "They were wrong then and they are wrong now. We know we will win, because good triumphs every time. All we need to do is remember and never forget."



1st Lt. Shenell Watson, 4th Brigade Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, holds a candle during the 9/11 remembrance ceremony at Forward Operating Base Prosperity Sept. 11.

Sergeant Major of the Army visits Task Force Baghdad

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

BAGHDAD — It's not every day that the average Soldier gets to ask the highest-ranking noncommissioned officer in the Army questions their chain of command might not be able to answer.

Well, that day came to Forward Operating Base Prosperity Aug. 27 when Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston talked to Soldiers about some of the changes the Army will be going through and to answer some of their questions.

He spoke of the reorganization of the Army into combat ready brigades—the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division being one of the first to



The Army's 13th appointed senior enlisted Soldier, Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston, listens to an Iraqi Army NCO training outline presentation.

be deployed to a war zone. He used the 4th BCT as an example of how successful the program has been so far.

Another program Preston discussed was the three-year life cycle. Once a brigade is at 100 percent strength, assigned Soldiers cannot move from their unit which enables the battalions within the brigade to grow their own leaders and to keep those leaders with the Soldiers they have trained with. This program coincides with the stabilization program designed to foster esprit de corps within the Army and give a more stable home life to its Soldiers.

Preston brought up the streamlining of military occupational specialties. Some MOSes are being eliminated altogether; others are being consolidated to easier fill the slots at the brigade and battalion levels. The promotion points for some MOSes have hovered around 798. The consolidation will give those Soldiers who still have a high number of points to be promoted without maxing out their points in every section.

One of the lighter moments of the afternoon came when Preston brought a number of Soldiers in front of the crowd to recite the Warrior Ethos. Each Soldier said one line, followed by the next Soldier with the next line. One Soldier who seemed flustered to be in front of the SMA kept having problems with his part, much to the delight of his company first sergeant.

Once the group had settled down, Preston opened up the meeting for questions.

He began by addressing the rumor of six-month deployments for the Army. He said at this point there were plans to possibly implement shorter combat tours but at this time it was too hard with the troop strength needed to accomplish on-going missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

One Soldier asked Preston about possibly waiving the requirement that an E-5 attend the primary leadership development course before they were eligible for the E-6 board. Preston said there were no plans to change the current requirements because the course was a good primer for those looking to advance in their Army careers.

A battalion sergeant major used one of his Soldiers as an example for the following question. He said that his Soldier had performed the job of a cavalry scout while here in Iraq even though he was a different MOS. Previously, sergeants major could fill out a form and if it was approved, the Soldier could change their MOS without attending school for that job. Preston said the program was changed because the leadership wanted to make sure the Soldier was properly trained before awarding them a new career designation.

The last question Preston answered involved Army Regulation 600-9. Soldiers who are over the allowed level for body fat percentage are flagged regardless of their score on the physical training test. Preston said he was working on a new regulation that would allow Soldiers who score at least a 270 aggregate (90 in each event) to be allowed to be 3 percent over their allowable body fat percentage.

He said the current regulation has been in effect since the 1980s and was outdated.

Preston closed the meeting by thanking the assembled Soldiers for their service in defense of their country. He then took time to pose for pictures with Soldiers and leaders.

Every Soldier left the meeting with a better understanding of what their senior leadership was planning for the future of the Army, and with a picture to remember the time when the SMA took the time to come to their forward operating base to listen to them and address their concerns.



Spc. Matthew Wester (below) A Soldier, from 2nd Mechanized Battalion, 1st Mechanized Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division, provides security during a cordon and search operation northwest of Baghdad Sept. 6.



Sgt. Kevin Bromley (above), Spc. Matthew Wester (right) (above) An Iraqi Army Soldier provides tactical guidance to his fellow Soldiers during Operation Royalty Sept. 6, while an AH 64 Apache helicopter provides air cover. Operation Royalty resulted in the capture of a team of bomb makers while they were building a car bomb to be used against Coalition and Iraqi Forces. The battalion-sized cordon and search operation northwest of Baghdad was a joint effort between 2nd Battalion, 70th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, the 1st Mechanized Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division and 3rd Infantry Division's Aviation Brigade. (right) A Soldier, from 2nd Mechanized Battalion, 1st Mechanized Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division, shows his troops which houses need to be searched during a cordon and search operation northwest of Baghdad Sept. 6.



SEARCH, continued from page 1

“The IA Soldiers were going down a driveway to a house that was set back from the road. They identified two men who were working on a car, and when they saw the Iraqi Soldiers, they attempted to push the car,” Lutsky said. The men ran away from the Iraqi Soldiers, but were soon apprehended. “The Iraqi Soldiers noticed something suspicious, the two men fled the car with the engine still running, and the IA chased them down,” said Capt. Bryan Ceerle, commander of Thunderbolt’s A Company. Ceerle, who recently took command of A Co., saw the action unfold firsthand during his first major operation in charge of a tank company. “I was able to get up on the roof of a house and observe the search along the edge of the canal for the two individuals who fled,” he said. Ceerle said the success of Iraqi Soldiers during the mission was part of a trend he has noticed since he worked alongside them in Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad, and has seen exponential growth in their abilities. “Every time you show them something, they grab that, take it as their own and continue on,” he said. “It’s amazing to watch them developing as they go.”

“Our intent is to take that one (Iraqi Army) company and to integrate them so that we can turn the terrain over to them,” Lutsky said. The 1st Mech. Bde. troops are well on their way—as shown by the vehicle-borne IED find, Lutsky said. “Just the ammunition contained in the car, when it was destroyed by explosive ordnance disposal team, created a 25-foot by 15-foot crater. It was going to be a big VBIED,” he said. “It would have done some damage.” The vehicle contained “at least 500 pounds of ordnance,” said the 47th Ordnance Company’s Staff Sgt. Josh Z. Liles, noncommissioned officer in charge of the team that destroyed the car at the site. “The wheel wells were low. There was something pretty heavy in the trunk,” said the Fort Hood, Texas, resident. After the detonation, EOD Soldiers verified the car contained five propane tanks, eight 130-millimeter high-explosive shells and a large number of anti-aircraft rounds. “If it hit a convoy, it could have destroyed at least one humvee and killed anyone within 50 meters,” Liles said. “We know this mission was successful, and we saved lives,” Lutsky said.



Sgt. Kevin Bromley (above) Master Sgt. Ronnie Reece (left), and Spc. Allen Hill, both natives of Abilene, Texas, question a resident about insurgent activity in his neighborhood. (left) Spc. Billy Allen (left) of Phoenix, Ariz., and Spc. Allen Hill of Abilene, Texas, search a scrap pile behind a home during Operation Royalty.

World War II footlocker follows second generation Soldier

Sgt. 1st Class Peter Chadwick
DSB PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The old footlocker had been semi-retired for nearly 50 years. Oh sure, it had been used for storage. It had even seen a few Army National Guard annual training sessions.

But retired Master Sgt. Robert M. Rawls' Army-issue footlocker had not been to combat since World War II. Now it serves his son in Operation Iraqi Freedom 3.

"He had several," said Capt. Charles R. Rawls, referring to his father's footlockers. "This is the one he always used."

The vintage storage box is complete, right down to the pull-out shelf, said Rawls, a fire direction officer with 3rd Battalion, 117th Field Artillery Regiment, Alabama Army National Guard.

His unit is providing force protection and convoy support for 3rd Infantry Division units.

"I joined the National Guard in 1989," said Rawls, who grew up in Troy, Ala. He was 27 years old at the time.

His father asked him to join at 18, but Rawls said he wasn't ready then. He attended Troy State University in

his hometown, graduated, and then started working for the Alabama State Forestry Commission.

Finally, after nine years, he joined the military his father had loved for 32 years.

Eventually, it came time for Rawls, who has lived most of his life in Troy, to attend annual training with his unit. It was before that yearly, two-week field duty that Rawls' father gave him the footlocker. Rawls has used it ever since.

But the father and son warriors share more than an antique piece of luggage. They both mobilized for war from the same location.

Rawls said his father left for the Pacific theater of operations during World War II from Camp Shelby, Miss. He was on active duty at the time, having answered his country's call to arms.

When he returned from the war, the elder Rawls joined the National Guard and stayed until he retired.

Eventually, the camp, which is the largest National Guard training area in the U.S., changed its name to Mobilization Center Shelby, Rawls said. His unit has conducted many annual training exercises there and it's where he and his unit mobilized from as he prepared for Iraq.

Even if Rawls never gets deployed



Sgt. 1st Class Peter Chadwick
Capt. Charles R. Rawls, a fire direction officer with the 3rd Battalion, 117th Field Artillery Regiment, Alabama Army National Guard, shows off his father's World War II footlocker.

again, the vintage footlocker may still see a few more summer training sessions before he retires. Perhaps then, the seasoned footlocker can finally

settle into a garage for a well-deserved retirement.

Then again, Rawls does have a son of his own.

Taking the weapons off the streets

Spc. Adam Durocher

Soldiers from D Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, Rhode Island National Guard found bomb-making materials and mortar aiming stakes in a house northwest of Baghdad on Sept. 8. The troops detained three male suspects at the house and confiscated terrorist propaganda, two expended rocket casings, two timers and the aiming stakes.

Faces and Places



Spc. Matthew Wester
Spc. Jeff Brelsford, from Warwick, R.I., and an infantryman for D Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, Rhode Island National Guard, loads a M240 B machine gun before a patrol at Camp Taji Aug. 9.



Spc. Derek Del Rosario
Capt. Jermal Scarbrough (middle) supervises Staff Sgt. Ray Flete (right) and Pfc. Mike Duran, all of Headquarters and Headquarters Company 2nd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (General Support), while they prepare Spc. Erick Garcia, Headquarters Support Company 603rd Aviation Support Battalion, for an IV.



Spc. Brian P. Henretta (above), Spc. Derek Del Rosario (right)
(above) Col. Jeffrey Snow, 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division commander, unfurls his brigade's guidon for the first time since taking over for the 256 Brigade Combat Team during a transition of authority ceremony at the Camp Liberty, Sept. 10.
(right) A Blackhawk lifts off of the helipad at Camp Taji Aug. 25, to drop off passengers as part of the Marne Express.



Spc. Derek Del Rosario
Capt. Todd Thornburg, A Co. 3rd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Attack Reconnaissance) inspects the Apache 30mm machine gun as part of the pre-flight checks.



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

The personal information carrier has come to Multi-National Division-Baghdad and will be used by Soldiers in the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division in a proof of concept demonstration sponsored by U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command and AMC Field Assistance for Science and Technology.

What exactly is the PIC and how can it help Soldiers?

The PIC is a small physical 64 MB data storage device designed to store the essential elements of a soldier's personal medical history so it can be readily accessed and updated by medical personnel via laptop or personal data assistant when real-time connectivity to a database is unavailable.

The PIC allows patient encounters and other medical information including digital x-rays, magnetic resonance images, or electrocardiograms to be transferred with

the Soldier between the combat medics, battalion aid station, forward support medical company and the combat support hospital. The PIC will allow a Soldier to maintain their own medical history from point of injury throughout evacuation thus creating a digital healthcare record of all treatment provided on the battlefield.

The PICs are a result of lessons learned following the Gulf War where defense officials found medical services performed in the field did not always reach service members' permanent paper medical records.

A 1998 presidential report on Gulf War illness directed the department to develop a force health protection program and maintain consistent, continuous records.

The PIC will provide more statistical analysis on the battlefield, making off the battlefield treatment and record keeping better in the long run.



Courtesy Photo

The personnel information carrier, which is being used by some 3rd Infantry Division Soldiers will make treatment better with more available knowledge about a patient's medical history.

Serving others through a shared set of values

CH(Maj) Don Zapsic
612th En. Bn.

The New England Patriots are starting the season with an opportunity to win their third straight Super Bowl title. No team has ever done it. They have the talent and good coaching, but there's more.

The Patriots share a common set of values that give them the competitive edge. A Patriot is a dedicated team player committed to winning.

Football teaches us a lot about life. In the game of football, it takes considerable effort and coordination to come out on top. The Patriots have managed to do that because they understand the power of a shared value system.

What we value in life says a lot about who we are. Teams, not individuals, win football games. One player may excel at any given moment, but it is always a part of a greater combined effort.

Likewise, the Army is another organization that has its own set of values. These are called "Army Values," even though they are really just good old-fashioned common sense. The Army didn't invent them.

They merely identified seven personal virtues that are essential to winning on and off the battlefield. These seven core values are the heart and soul of today's Army.

Army classroom training is not always as exciting as it could be; in fact, it can sometimes be downright painful. The last time I taught an Army Values class, the Soldiers looked like they would rather be sitting in a dentist office waiting on a root canal.

I often begin class by saying, "I am going to teach Army Values for the next hour. You may or may not agree with what I am about to say. However, if you don't agree with me, then ask yourself the question, "What do I believe in?"

I proceed to teach the seven Army Values under the mnemonic: LDR-SHIP: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless service, Honor, Integrity and Personal courage.

At this point you are probably expecting me to rattle off what these values mean. Instead, I will embark upon the "road less traveled" and play the devil's advocate.

The values model that I am about to introduce is the antithesis of Army

Values. These values are known by the mnemonic; REJECTS: Royalty, Elective service, Jostle, Egotism, Cunning, Talk-the-walk and Survival.

"Loyalty" - I am special and therefore due allegiance. Loyalty is a one-way street that always goes my way. It is my divine right but never my human responsibility.

"Elective Service" - I will do my duty until inconvenienced or annoyed. My highest duty is to myself and those who can help me get ahead in life. America can fend for herself. I only live there.

"Jostle" - I will push my way through life and not care if I offend or hurt others. If someone is different than me, I will keep my distance and surround myself with people who only think like me.

"Egotism" - I will only do that which I can gain recognition for. I will jealously guard my accomplishments and not share the credit, only the blame!

"Cunning" - The only real dishonor in life is getting caught. What makes me feel good or happy is my only concern. Nice guys finish last so why even bother?

"Talk-the-Walk" - I only need to

talk a good game. Words are the perfect substitute for action. Only a fool would take me serious anyways.

"Survival" - I will not do anything that will get me hurt or hinder my career. I will let others take the risk. I will mask my own fear by trivializing the courage of others calling their actions unnecessary and even "irresponsible."

I have merely catalogued the worst that lies deeply within us all.

The seven Army Values were selected and designed to bring out the best in us. They serve as a yardstick of our own actions and also as a reminder of the great legacies of those who have gone before us.

One such legacy is that of Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. 1st Class Paul Ray Smith, a 3rd Infantry Division Soldier who sacrificed his life to carry out his mission while leading his Soldiers in battle.

So, the next time that you hear about the Patriot's winning ways or Army Values training, remember that we were all meant to be part of something bigger than ourselves.

In becoming a team player, we participate in a transformation on the path to serving others through a

Religious Service and Prayer Schedule for Camp Liberty

Division Chapel

Mon. - Fri.
12 p.m. Catholic

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

DESERT JUSTICE ...And justice for all!!

**Sergeant 1st Class
David Diaz**
NCOIC, TDS, Region IX

Soldiers are faced with numerous decisions everyday and often need advice and guidance to make decisions regarding their legal rights. At times the actions or decisions of these Soldiers may cause the command to view Soldiers as having committed

offenses punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. An investigation might ensue and questions will be asked. The Soldier becomes confused and sometimes scared. Who can they turn to? Where can they go?

Any judge advocate can answer these questions, but most work for the command and must protect the interest of the commander. The attorneys assigned to the Trial Defense Service work for and protect the interests of the Soldier. A TDS attorney is available to answer any questions a Soldier may have regarding these offenses or allegations.

The mission of TDS is to provide free defense attorneys to Soldiers serving in numerous commands worldwide. These services include: representing Soldiers suspected of committing an offense under the UCMJ who have requested counsel; representing Soldiers facing court-martials; representing Soldiers during criminal investigations by the military; representing Soldiers before eliminations or grade reduction boards;

and counseling Soldiers regarding nonjudicial punishment, pretrial restraint, and other adverse administrative actions taken pursuant to military regulations.

Client counseling is the largest part of the TDS Mission. The TDS support personnel plays a critical role in this area. They screen clients, set-up appointments, provide initial information, and ensure that counseling is conducted efficiently and effectively.

The TDS attorneys are here to provide effective and competent advice to Soldiers who need the services of a defense attorney. They will zealously defend the best interests of the Soldier.

TDS attorneys are completely independent of local commands and the post legal advisors. This is to ensure objectivity and fairness for the Soldier. We work for you, not your commander!

Presently there are nine TDS offices in Iraq, one in Kuwait, and two in Afghanistan. There are approximately 23 defense attorneys assigned to the region. For more information, office hours, or to set up an appointment, please call your servicing TDS office.

Baghdad Offices

Victory Field Office
Camp Victory
DSN (318) 822-2865

Liberty Field Office
Camp Liberty
DNVT (302) 242-4725
DSN (318) 847-2144

Camp Taji
DNVT (302) 242-6124



Chaplain's Corner

Winning the battle of love, happiness

CH (CPT) Stan Jasiurkowski
87th CSB Chaplain

The six month mark in our journey through Operation Iraqi Freedom III has come and gone!

As we have been busy conducting different missions, we try to find time to build our spiritual, moral, and physical strength, as well as communicate with our loved ones in order to keep our relationships strong.

From time to time, we think how our relationship or our marriage will look like upon our return home once our mission is accomplished. I'm convinced that this thought will be coming back to our minds more frequently as we get closer and closer to the end.

Recently, I read information saying that the divorce rate has increased significantly last year. Most desire a happy marriage that lasts a life time, but we know many couples do not achieve it.

We have to keep in mind that we may have changed during this time of separation from our families and our loved ones. Therefore, we need to learn constructive ways to handle our differences. Learning this will be one of the most important things we can do to help us protect our promise: "...I will love you, cherish you, and not abandon you until death."

As a pastor and chaplain, I've encountered many different marriage problems and have noticed certain negative patterns that can destroy a relationship.

In the Book of Proverbs (12:18) we can read: "The prating of some men is like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise is healing."

We need to work hard in order to eliminate, or at least to keep to minimum, some key negative patterns and develop the positive things in our relationship. The good news is that some of the most important elements that raise the risk for a relationship are the things that can be changed or prevented.

Some things that put our marriage at risk have to do with how we think and interact, and especially how we handle conflicts in our marriage. If we can stop doing those things that put our marriage at risk, we have a much better chance of experiencing a long and happy marriage.

Based on scripture and experience, it is very clear that how we treat one another when we have disagreements or when conflict erupts says how our marriage will be after deployment and in the years to come.

Let's keep in mind that "little negatives" can destroy an incredible amount of good we've achieved over the years.

Peter in his First Letter (3:9-11) gives us the following warning: "Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing. For whoever would love life and see good days must keep the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking deceit, must turn from evil and do good, seek peace and follow after it."

Let's take a look at a couple of negative patterns that we should avoid in our marriage in order to be happy and successful.

Have you noticed that at times your conversation might go back and forth negatively and gets increasingly hostile? During escalation, negative words and comments can spiral into increasing anger and frustration. As frustration

and hostility grow, couples try to hurt each other by launching verbal and some times physical "arguments."

Reckless words do an unimaginable damage to unity, intimacy and a sense of safety in your relationship. If this sounds familiar to you, recognize it, control yourself, and to do whatever you can in order to stop the negative process before it explodes into a fight.

Just softening your tone and acknowledging your partner's point of view are simple but very effective tools you can always use to scatter tension and obviously end escalation.

You may also have a tendency to "put-down" the thoughts, feelings, character, achievements or decisions of your spouse.

Invalidation builds barriers, hurts very much and leads to covering up who we are and what we think. To prevent relationship destruction, you need to validate your partner so she or he can bring the concern up to the table and be respected, acknowledged and heard. It's obvious that you don't have to agree with your partner, but it is your obligation to validate and respect her or his feelings.

Negative interpretation occurs when one spouse believes the motives of the other are more negative than they really are. This pattern makes every disagreement or conflict harder to solve. Often, we assume that we know what our spouse thinks and what his or her motives are for doing something. Even though we are completely wrong in our assumptions, we have a habit of seeing what we expect to see.

If this applies to you, you will need to reconsider what you think is true about your spouse's motives. They (their motives) are possibly much more positive than you have assumed. Keep in mind that only you can control how you interpret your companion's behavior.

It is not unusual that when couples are unwilling to discuss important issues or hang ups, they get up and leave the room. They might "turn off" during the argument when the other partner pushes an issue or agree quickly just to end the conversation, but they have no intention of any cooperation.

Many studies show clearly that the couples who are the happiest, most relaxed together and who are best friends are those who stay far away from this pattern of behavior.

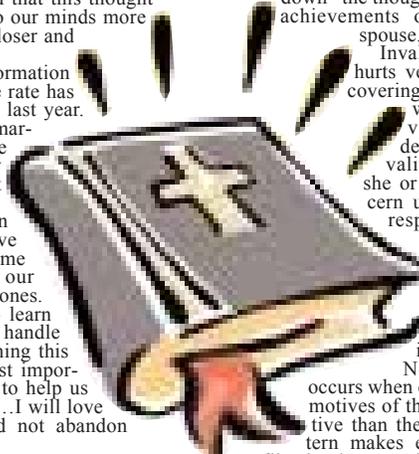
If you have this tendency to avoid discussion, realize that you are not independent, but you need to work as a team. Realize that you are not a "domestic" drill sergeant.

Your marriage will be successful if you decide to work together to prevent or change these negative patterns. Perfection is not possible, but it is possible to avoid those kinds of traps that can destroy the love, confidence and happiness of your marriage.

If you really love your partner, you have to begin changing your heart, mind and behavior; not your partner's. You need to learn how to be different and still respect, love, and care for each other.

One of the most beautiful lessons from the Bible is enclosed in this scripture verse: "Do to others as you would have them do to you." Luke 6:31.

If you always have a rose in your hand instead of a saber, you will win your battle for love and happiness.



In Memory of ...

- Spc. Luke C. Williams, 3/7 Cav.*
- Sgt. Matthew C. Bohling, 2/69 Armor*
- Staff Sgt. Jude R. Jonaus, BTB, DSB*
- Sgt. Franklin R. Vilorio, BTB, DSB*
- Sgt. Kurtis D. K. Arcala, 2/7 Inf.*



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

Columbian-born Castellanos Leads Army Soccer

goarmysports.com
Special to The Marne Express

Army men's soccer suffered two heartbreaking defeats Labor Day weekend to Air Force (1-0) and Birmingham-Southern (2-0) where all the goals they gave up were in the last eight minutes of the matches.

However, despite the losses, the team is looking forward to the season ahead with hopes of doing great things.

"In tough times, such as (Sunday's loss to Birmingham-Southern), I tried to keep everyone together and told them the season starts Tuesday," said senior forward Juan Castellanos. "Two tough losses, you can't do anything about them — you got to keep a positive attitude and hopefully the guys will follow me."

Castellanos was elected team captain by his teammates and hopes he can lead them in the right direction through the rest of the campaign.

"For me it's an honor for them to acknowledge me as their leader of leaders," said Castellanos, referring to West Point's leadership and captaining this group of future officers.

The 5'8", 170-pound senior was born in Cartatena, Columbia, and has traveled to Brazil, England and Spain, so soccer has always been in his blood.

"I've been playing soccer all my life, I grew up in a country that loves soccer," Castellanos said. "(After I moved to the United States) I was lucky to live

in Miami and Houston where the Latino communities are big into soccer, we had all the Spanish channels and I would watch soccer every weekend.

"So when I came (to West Point), it was weird that on Saturday nights the sport on TV was football or whatever and not soccer," Castellanos added.

Castellanos' lifetime of soccer experience serves him well as he only played three games in the past two fall seasons. He spent last fall at the Academia Militar General (Spanish Military Academy) in Zaragoza, Spain.

"The thing I loved about (going to the Spanish Military Academy), is 10, 15 years down the line I might end up working with these guys, so establishing that relationship by going to their academy is a friendship that will last forever," Castellanos said.

Castellanos needed a certain level of Spanish to go, had to write an essay and do three interviews with Spanish professors.

"The (Spanish professors), the dean and the commandant had to look at my

grades, physical standing and all that and in the end I was lucky enough to go," Castellanos said. "When I was told that I was nominated, I went to the coach (Kurt Swanbeck) and told him that, 'I really wanted to play and I'm serious about it since I did well in the spring (rehabbing after his knee injury), but this was an opportunity that I didn't know I would ever get again.'"

"He told me, 'you blew your knee in your sophomore year, but if you don't do this you will regret it the rest of your life,' so he gave me that last nudge to actually do it — and I appreciated that," Castellanos said. In 2003, he dealt with a torn meniscus in his knee that kept him out of all but three games, and coach Swanbeck has noticed a great change in Juan since his return from the Spanish Military Academy to as far back as to his freshman year before the knee injury.

"He struggled here in Division I soccer because it was bigger, faster, stronger and he didn't have the strength his first year," Swanbeck said. "In Spain, they really worked him hard over there, the military side, he said he never

ran so much in his life and then he came back so fit and so strong, that coupled with his experience and expertise about the game — he's now a more well-rounded player."

Castellanos, who moved to the U. S. in 1997 and became a citizen in 2002, has been working hard since his knee injury crippled his sophomore year.

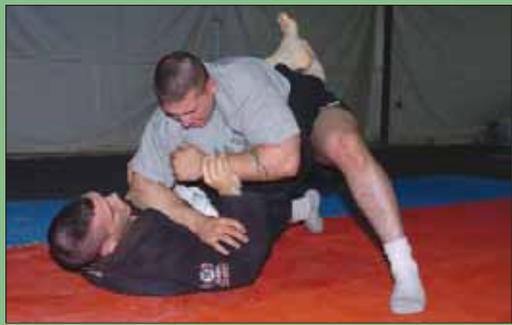
"When I had the surgery, the next day I was doing the bike because I told the trainers that I wanted to get back before the end of the year," Castellanos explained. "I did get back for the last three games (of the spring season) although I didn't play much because I was out of shape."

"I was in the weight room, running on my own, I ran a lot in Spain just so I could come back here and have a good spring season and I did," added Castellanos, who played some soccer in the streets of Madrid during his six months there. "I just worked hard, what I don't have in physical fitness I try to make up in heart."

Now healthy, focused and ready to make an impact, Castellanos sees the team ready to make a big jump despite two early losses.

"This is probably the best talent we've ever had with the mix of guys and the closeness of the team," Castellanos said. "The talent is there, we dominated the Air Force game, but we just couldn't get that goal, we hung in with Birmingham-Southern the whole game, but couldn't get that goal."

"I've been playing soccer all my life, I grew up in a country that loves soccer."
Juan Castellanos
senior forward
Mens Army Soccer



Spc. Ricardo Branch

Pfc. Christopher Hopkins, HHOC, STB and Pfc. George Pearce, HHSC, STB, spar in a Jiu-Jitsu match at the 3rd Infantry Division LSA Gym Sept. 16. Jiu-Jitsu matches involves getting your opponent in a submission hold or him tapping out to constitute a win.

Baghdad Jiu-Jitsu Academy

Come join the "Baghdad Jiu-Jitsu Academy," and learn the basics of the combat fighting Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu!
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Cartoon Corner

★ OPERATION ELUSIVE CONCEPT ★

BY CHRIS ASHBY - WWW.ELUSIVE-CONCEPT.COM



Have something you'd like to contribute to the bi-weekly comic strip? Contact ricardo.branch@id3.army.mil.

So there has been a slump in the box offices lately. It's not surprising with the summer now officially over. Anyhow, because people might be curious, here are the top of the charts, the number #1s, ... what you should have seen at least once thus far in your life, the ...

ALL TIME TOP FIVE MOVIES

Titanic

Lifetime Gross: \$600.788
Release Date: December 19, 1997
Rated: PG-13
Studio: Paramount Pictures

Star Wars: Episode IV- A New Hope (1977)

Lifetime Gross: \$460.988
Release Date: May 25, 1977
Rated: PG
Studio: 20th Century Fox

Shrek 2 (2004)

Lifetime Gross: \$436.721
Release Date: May 19, 2004
Rated: PG
Studio: Dreamworks Pictures

E.T. Extra Terrestrial (1982)

Lifetime Gross: \$433.005
Release Date: June 11, 1982
Rated: PG-13
Studio: Universal Pictures

Star Wars: Episode I- The Phantom Menace (1999)

Lifetime Gross: \$431.088
Release Date: May 19, 1999
Rated: PG
Studio: 20th Century Fox

Numbers based on box office figures last tallied on September 19, 2005

The Book Nook

'Bringing Down the House' tells true tale of MIT blackjack team

Sp. **Derek Del Rosario**
100 MPAD

In the movie "Rain Man," Dustin Hoffman plays an autistic character, Raymond, who is a mathematical savant. Viewers see the extent of his genius when Raymond and Tom Cruise's character are in Las Vegas, and Raymond starts to win big by counting cards at the blackjack table. "Queens, lots of queens," Raymond mutters, as his chip stack grows higher.

While the movie is fictional, card counting is real. It is this skill that is featured in "Bringing Down the House," a novel by Ben Mezrich about a group of students who took Las Vegas for millions.

The story is based on real events that occurred in the 1990s.

Through Mezrich's words, readers learn that card counting is an extremely difficult skill to learn and master, although it is absolutely legal in U.S. casinos.

It is the casino's right, however, to deny anyone access to their casino for virtually any reason (for example: winning too much money). If a casino pit boss or security camera, known as "the eye in the sky," sees a player counting cards, that player will be asked to leave. Such policy ensures that "the house always wins."

Mezrich tells the true tale of a group of MIT math nerds who decided to extend their smarts from the classroom to the felt tables on the Vegas strip. They form a team to not only pool their mathematical skills of card counting, but to use their sophisticated method of counting to beat the house.

What follows is "Robin Hood" meets "Ocean's 11." The group of students uses disguises, aliases, acting and signals in their attempt to win big money. What the MIT blackjack team find, however, is that casinos are a lot like the mafia—when people get over on them, the Casinos will do anything to stop them.

Most of the story revolves around Kevin Lewis,

an upstanding MIT student and athlete in a family with successful siblings. Readers see his initiation into the team and the tests he goes through—a series of counting exercises set in fake casino environments to see if he can handle the pressure.

He learns the hand signs and the roles each teammate plays—whether it is the drunken yuppie who's throwing his money away, or the "big player" who calculates the exact counts and knows when to bet it all. Through the mix of signals and role players, and backed by

"investors" who supplement their big bank role, the MIT blackjack team take casinos around the U.S. for millions.

When the casinos catch on, though, the players get more than just a slap on the wrist.

Private investigators, back-room interrogations, bathroom beatings and IRS audits follow, and many members of the team find themselves in over their heads.

Lewis struggles with his double life and family issues as he keeps his secret Vegas lifestyle from his family. He also wrestles with balancing his secure job with his exciting

high roller lifestyle.

The action in "Bringing Down the House" is most exciting when the team members try to escape the grips of casino pit bosses and private investigators. But it's also interesting to see how the team was formed, how far they made it, how they got there, and how drastically money can change people - even teammates.

This book will definitely appeal to those who love the thrill of Vegas. But this true story of risk and reward brings enough chips to the table to peak anyone's interest — even if you don't know much about Las Vegas or blackjack. Despite a lackluster ending, "Bringing Down the House" will keep readers turning the pages, and they'll be happy they did.



In the Movies



Strap in and hold on tight – here comes the incredible Steamboy

Sp. **Adam Musil**
2nd BCT PAO

Besides picking up the newest copy of whatever mainstream America cinema is pumping out, I am often hard pressed to find anything in the video store that piques my interest. Therefore, I usually end up buying something because they are only two bucks. Usually, I will watch these movies once (if at all) and then add them to the large stack of DVD's I have amassed since being delayed in Iraq.

I was pleasantly surprised when I looked past the latest Sharon Stone box set (Sharon Stone box set? She's made what, two or three decent movies?) and fixed my gaze on Steamboy, the latest film from critically acclaimed Japanese director, Katsuhiro Otomo. Many of you may not recognize the name, but Mr. Otomo is the creative force behind Akira – probably the most popular

anime in the United States.

Steamboy is a science-fiction epic set in an alternate Victorian England era. The story centers on Ray Steam, a misunderstood boy genius who spends his time building grand machines that no one seems to understand.

When he is not working on an invention, Ray often finds himself the butt of jokes because of his father and grandfather – two inventors who are seen as scientific hacks by the public.

Ray's world is turned upside down when he receives a package from his grandfather, Lloyd. Inside the package is a steam ball which Ray will later discover has enough energy to power all of England.

Things get interesting when members of the mysterious O'Hara foundation arrive to get the ball from Ray. After refusing to give the ball away, Ray soon finds himself being chased by the O'Hara foundation's henchmen. Here, the action picks up as Ray, riding one of his inventions, is chased

by a large steam engine. After an intense chase Ray is apprehended and taken to the O'Hara foundation where he learns that the science of the steam ball is being used to create war machines.

With the help of his grandfather, who is being held prisoner by the O'Hara Corporation, Ray escapes and gives the ball over to the British government, only to find that their intentions for the ball are no different than that of the O'Hara Corporation.

Ray now finds himself the innocent caught between two groups of men twisted by greed and ambition.

While the plot of Steamboy is not out-of-the-ordinary science fiction, visually it has no equal – in either live action or animation.

Mr. Otomo uses the medium of animation to the fullest, creating a deeply realized world of ornately designed steam-powered machines, including Soldiers' battle armor, jet packs and hang-gliders, to name a few.

When someone in the United States mentions a visual filmmaker, the people that spring to mind are Tim Burton or George Lucas. Mr. Otomo is just as good if not better than these men and it's not only his design. He is also a master behind the "camera," and unlike most animated films, the fluidity of the camera movements can easily trick the viewer into believing they are watching live action.

This movie may turn you off because it is a cartoon. Many fans of anime scoff when someone calls an "animated film" a cartoon, but that is what it is. But while the Japanese have embraced animation as an art form, most Americans still see animation as something for kids. I dare anyone to watch Steamboy and tell me it's not for an adult audience.

So next time you are in the video shop and looking for something new, I suggest you pick up Steamboy and strap in for a intriguing story and an unparalleled visual experience.