

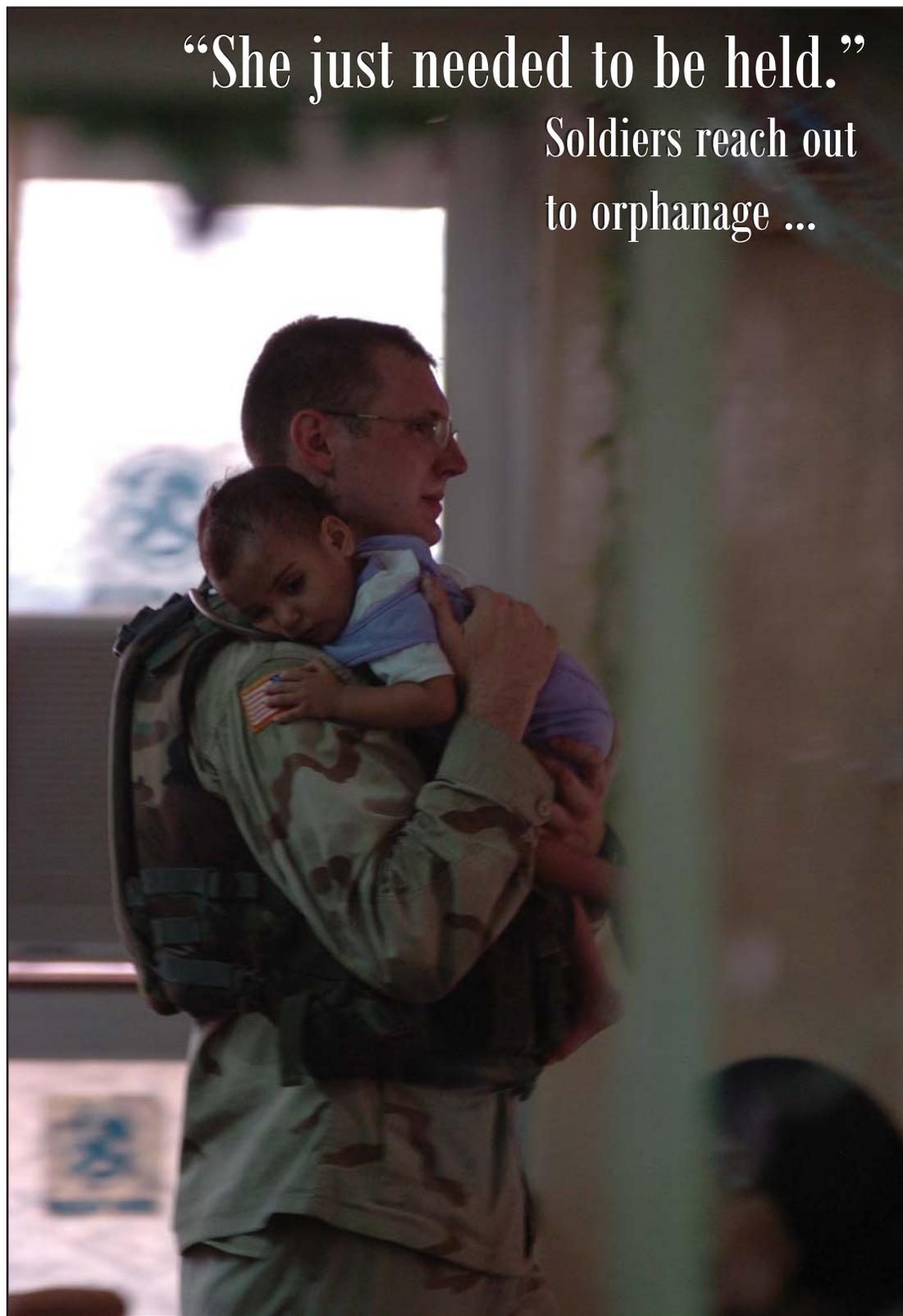


VANGUARD POINT

Volume II, Issue 13
September 2005

“She just needed to be held.”

Soldiers reach out
to orphanage ...



Inside



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to chat with Soldiers about
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*3-7 Inf. PSD excels at jobs
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*A young Iraqi girl gives 703rd
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A military policeman assigned to 4th Brigade Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division teaches an Iraqi Soldier how to properly search a vehicle at a checkpoint. For story by 1st Lt. Lloyd Warren, see Page 15.

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The VANGUARD POINT is produced in the interest of the servicemembers of the 4th Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division. The VANGUARD POINT is an Army-funded newspaper authorized under provision of AR 360-1.

Contents of the Vanguard Point are not necessarily the views of, nor endorsed by, the U.S. government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 3rd Infantry Division. Circulation: 2,500

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On the cover:

"She just needed to be held," said Sgt. Kelly Johnson, a native of Great Falls, Mont., about this little girl he met at the Salhiya Orphanage.

Photo by Spc. Dan Balda



Vanguard 7 sends: stay focused on the mission!

Command Sgt. Maj. Louis M. Torres Sr.
4th BCT CSM



Greetings Vanguard Soldiers, comrades, friends and families. As we prepare ourselves mentally, physically, and spiritually for another challenging month, I often remind myself just what we, the Vanguard family, have accomplished since we've been here.

Soldiers often forget this Brigade Combat Team is a newly formed military organization, and because of that, everything we are executing is contributing to our new brigade and division history.

Our Vanguard Soldiers continue to amaze me everyday. Many are working continuous operations doing a multitude of jobs; patrolling, escorting, guarding, supplying and transmitting, just to mention a few. They conduct these missions proficiently and professionally with very little gripe, whine, or complaint, at least not while I'm with them! But overall they are doing great things to help this country develop into a society that the Iraqi people and our Soldiers can be

proud of. Continue the great work Soldiers. Stay safe, stay alert and stay aware; you are all heroes in my book.

My most serious concern as we enter this next month, is not complacency but with becoming too comfortable. There is a huge difference between the two and as dangerous as they both can be, becoming too comfortable with our surroundings concerns me the most. We tend to forget sometimes there is a real threat to our mission and our welfare.

As I visit guard towers, or go out on patrols, it becomes increasingly evident that some of our great Soldiers forget about the threat. We forget that the local nationals we engage with, in or out of the FOBs, or the pedestrian that passes your guard tower every morning in his car could be a legitimate threat to our security. Vanguards, do not allow yourself to get comfortable out there, remain vigilant, remain defensive and remember who you are and why you are here. Stop thinking that nothing will ever happen on that patrol, on that Entry Control Point or in that tower. The minute you allow yourself to believe that everything is good, the enemy has taken the initiative and the offensive.

Treat every mission like it's the first one; ensure you have the right equipment to perform every mission, and most importantly

correct your comrades when they may falter. The enemy is a very patient and opportunistic individual, waiting for the right time to strike as soon as we drop our guard. We are a team, and we are a family; we take care of each other! Do not fail your brother or sister!

Finally, our Soldiers are great! We have so many heroes in this Brigade Combat Team. Everyday our Soldiers are performing outstanding, particularly the young specialists and below. They work, guard, search, detain and perform all those everyday dirty details that always seem to come around. To you, I salute you, I thank you for your service, and I thank you for being a Vanguard.

I'd like to recognize some of the unsung heroes in the Vanguard family below. These Soldiers were recognized by their senior Noncommissioned Officer chain for going above and beyond everyday, while not always receiving the credit they justly deserve.

Lastly, again, to our families back on the home front, many thanks for being there for us, for continuing to sacrifice and commit your lives to our nation's goals. You also are real American heroes and as always we will not fail you!

Thank You, Godspeed
VANGUARD!

VANGUARD'S UNSUNG HEROES



Pfc. John R. Thompson
A Troop, 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment

A great scout working as a radio telephone operator recovering from an IED injury and soldiering on.



Spc. Jean Meritil
C Company 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment

He is an Operation Iraqi Freedom I veteran and a solid performer daily during OIF-III as a tank loader and assistant patrol leader.



Cpl. Jose Chapa
Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment

A young corporal who is performing as FOB Prosperity mayor cell noncommissioned officer in charge, a senior NCO duty position responsible for keeping the FOB running.



Spc Jonathan Carr
Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment

An intelligence analyst and detainee processor who goes above and beyond his current grade and level of responsibility.

Buster's

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Chaplain's corner ...

Passion and purpose will aid in maximizing your potential

Chap. (Capt.) Theiring Alexander

6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment

September gives us opportunities to maximize our God-given potential in so many ways. As we stare into the bright view of an approaching new year, it's extremely important to be prepared for the journey.

Do you feel that your life is on the right track and your living the "dream life?" Are you enjoying where you are and what you're doing in life?

Life consists of all kinds of events, changes, lessons, losses, achievements and sometimes failures. Regardless of where you are in life, with passion and purpose fueling your life, you can win and enjoy a fulfilling life.

Webster's dictionary defines passion as "a strong emotion, an ardent love, zeal, eager desire, hope and joy."

You and I know what it is to be passionate about something and someone. Misdirected passion can invite trouble. There can be an obsession over something and someone. Passion is positive, controllable, and energizing. Passion gives you the winning edge and enables you to be a peak performer.

Directed passion founded on an ethical and moral base gives you and me the best opportunity to reach our full potential. Passion and purpose inspires you to keep going forward in hope when the going gets tough.

Many people have had their life ignited and empowered with passion and purpose. Let's rewind time momentarily and take a trip down memory lane.

The founding fathers were spawned by a passionate purpose to break free from the tyranny of Great Britain and enjoy "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

George Washington led and fought major battles in wartime and experienced great success with passion and purpose empowering him. Nothing could stop him from becoming a great military commander and commander-in-chief.

George Handel was challenged on every side with financial debt, personal problems and illness. Nothing stopped him from writing the musical masterpiece called, "The Messiah."

Henry Ford failed and went broke five times before literally striking it rich. Through imagination, hard work and a bulldogged determination, Ford pulled off one of the greatest feats of American history.

Think about "Hammering Hank Aaron" who fought through many obstacles and batted his way into history with the most home-runs of any baseball player to ever play America's beloved pastime.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur was turned down for admission to West Point twice before he was finally accepted. He fought the good fight of faith and stood for duty, honor and country.

Martin Luther King Jr., was a burning light for justice and love for all of God's children. He preached; he marched and told the world about a dream that all of God's people would be "Free at Last."

Last but not least there lived the greatest warrior and soldier over thousands of years ago. He still lives. The scriptures teach that He went about doing good works and healing people of all kinds of diseases. He cared for the poor, comforted the grieving, and befriended the friendless. He preached about the Kingdom of God and loved people unconditionally. Jesus lived a passionate and purposeful life.

What is the common thread that runs through the lives of these successful men? They were on a mission. They wanted to make a positive difference in the lives of others. They were passionate and purposeful.

What contributions are you making to better your life and the life of others? Our families, communities and nation are counting on us. We have a calling in this generation to make a positive difference for a safer and more prosperous life for all.

Answer the call and become passionate and purposeful in living your life to the fullest.

Become a better husband and father. Take your soldiering skills and leadership to the next level of responsibility. Start your business that will provide a great service and quality products. Enroll in those courses you've been putting off.

Get involved in church, community and social activities that expand your understanding. Give to your favorite charities. Sharpen your public speaking skills. Learn more about better financial investing opportunities. Increase your knowledge about technology, fine arts,

languages and sciences. Give yourself the best opportunities to live a full life.

Let's continue to add two of the most important ingredients to your life: passion and purpose. Live with passion and understand your purpose so life will not be a drag or just an experiment, but a masterful and colorful tapestry.

God bless you and yours richly. Congratulations to those with a newborn or wedding anniversary this month. Let's stay the course and finish strong. 

Poem: Author unknown

Life is a giftaccept it.

Life is an adventure...dare it.

Life is a mystery...unfold it.

Life is a game...play it.

Life is a struggle...persevere through it.

Life is beautiful...cherish it.

Life is a puzzle...solve it.

Life is an opportunity...take it.

Life is sorrowful...grieve it.

Life is a song...sing it.

Life is a goal...achieve it.

Life is a mission...fulfill it.

Life is from God...celebrate it for Him.

The deployment mustache: friend or foe?

Spc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

Since the 4th Brigade Combat Team, and the Army at large have been deployed, I have noticed an alarming trend.

I have noticed that small-scale animals have taken up residence on the small area of skin in between a Soldiers' upper lip and nose.

I am talking of course, about the dreaded deployment mustache.

Now don't get me wrong, some people look decent with a "nose broom" attached to their upper lip.

Would Magnum P.I. (Tom Selleck) have been so successful without his trademark 'stache? Do you think Albert Einstein could have thought of the Theory of Relativity if he was shorn smooth? I think not. I believe in certain cases a moustache is needed, nay, required.

Police officers for one should be required by law to grow some kind of moustache. When I see an officer glance up from underneath their Smokey, I want to be reassured that he is secure enough in his job that he knows the mustache will only enhance his mystique. Crime in his city would drop precipitously if the criminals knew the man on their tail sported a "lip jacket."

Soldiers on deployment seem to belong to an entirely different sub-genre of the facial-hair nation. Some have nurtured their patch of follicles as some would tend a garden; lovingly and over a long period of time. Their significant others heartily approve, and perhaps derive some satisfaction from being seen in public with a well-mustachioed man.

Soldiers who left home station with this facial adornment are not where my issue lies. My consternation does not originate from these brave men; rather, it draws from Soldiers who don't have

somebody to tell them their mustache is more akin to a stray raccoon than a noble Arabian steed.

Maybe neglecting to shave their mustache reminds a Soldier of their single, pre-Army days when they could roll out of bed unkempt and still tend the espresso machine at Starbucks. Perhaps the extra five seconds saved each morning by growing their mustache makes them feel especially motivated. Do the math, 365 days here, five seconds saved a day. That comes out to about 30 minutes saved a year. There is a lot you could do I guess, hopefully enough to justify your 'stache.

I wish that only junior-enlisted Soldiers were guilty of this infraction and one could chalk-up the violation to youthful exuberance and experimentation with the first post-pubescent facial hair, but sadly, the mustache knows no rank or age. I have seen staff officers who seem almost giddy, as they roam the halls of the palace like packs of wolves; well wolves who had their upper lip trimmed by Stevie Wonder in a blender.

Now I have a confession to make. I too was once guilty of growing an ugly mustache. In my defense, it was a self-proclaimed "Mustache of Protest."

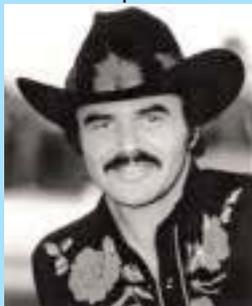
I had run into a spate of trouble at Advanced Individual Training, and during my punishment phase I, along with my co-conspirators, wanted to make a statement against the injustice we faced. We felt like Gandhi protesting against the British, wearing our hairy badge of dissent on our faces with pride. Eventually, when the itching grew too much to handle, we shaved them off.

I use this illustration to commiserate with you, deployment-mustache man. I raise my glass of non-alcoholic beer in recognition of your chutzpah. But could you do us all a favor, and shave the ghastly thing off your lip? You're scaring the children. 

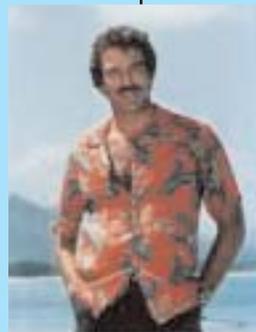
Some men can get away with the mustache. A quick rule of thumb. if you can hold a candle to these "manstache's" the article might not apply to you.



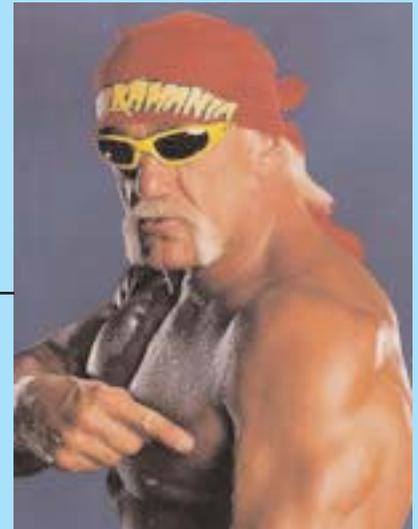
Hidilly-ho neighbor? Ned Flanders mustache is a sign of piety. It must be good if it is a sign of holiness.



Burt Reynolds... Smokey and the Bandit plus decades of making ladies' knees buckle with his lip jacket equals one 'stache for the ages.



Magnum freaking P.I.!



This right here is my brother-from-another-mother Hulk Hogan who single handedly started the phenomena known as "Hulkamania." "What's that mom? (Hand cupped over ear to better hear delirious fans) No, I don't know why all my t-shirts are torn down the middle."

Preston visits Vanguard Soldiers

Spc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

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.

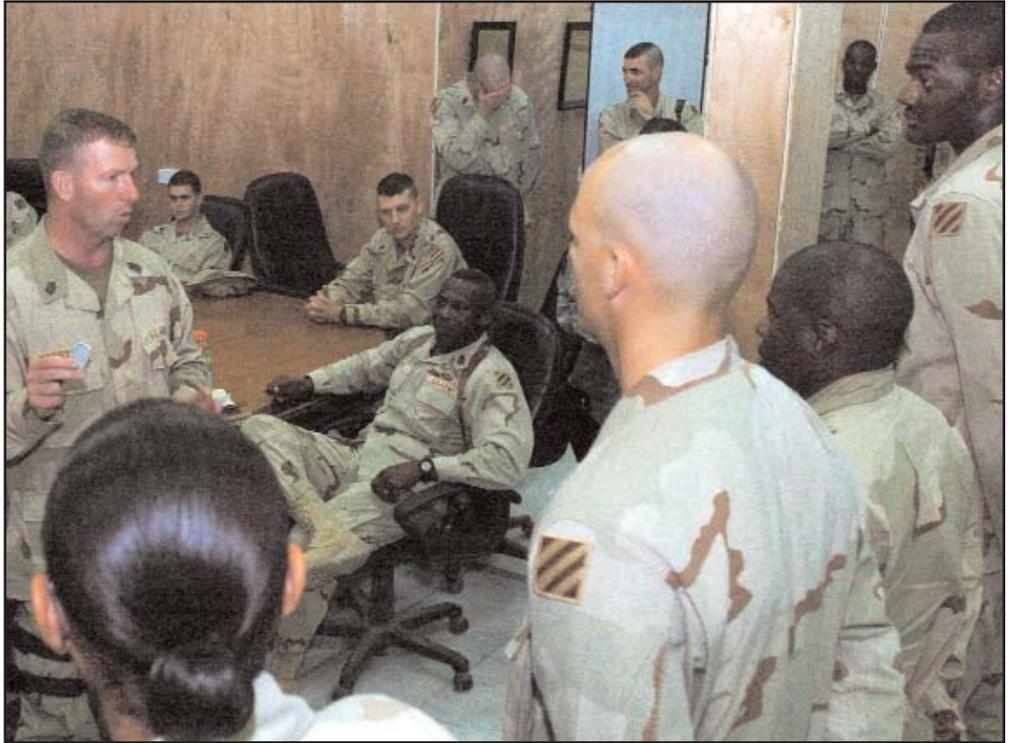
He spoke of the reorganization of the Army into combat ready brigades -- the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division being one of the first to be deployed to a war zone. He used the 4th BCT as an example of how successful the program has been so far.

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 MOSs are being eliminated altogether; others are being consolidated to easier fill the slots at the brigade and battalion levels. The promotion points for some MOSs 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.



Spc. Dan Balda

Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth O. Preston, Sergeant Major of the Army, hands out coins and commemorative identification tags for Soldiers who recited the Warrior Creed in front of the audience.

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 three 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. 



Soldiers remember sacrifices of 9-11

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

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; one will never forget where they were or what they were feeling.

Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division came together at the FOB Prosperity Chapel Sept. 11, to remember those who lost their lives in the 9-11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and to pay tribute to the service members that have lost their lives fighting the global war against terrorism.

"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, 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 enjoyed as an American.

Cardon spoke to the Soldiers, Marines, and civilians assembled for the services about the new awareness many gained from the attacks.

"We became more aware of our blessings as America; the land of the free and brave," Cardon 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 Petitfrere, a gun truck driver assigned to HHB, 1-76 FA and native of Fort Lauderdale, FL. "I get the big picture now. 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



Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

1st Lt. Shanell Watson, 4th Brigade Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, holds a candle during the ceremony at FOB Prosperity.

Continued next page

Soldiers foil ambush, find weapons cache in Al-Rashid

4th Brigade Combat Team PAO

Task Force Baghdad Soldiers thwarted a potential ambush and found a weapons cache after investigating suspicious vehicles on a southwest Baghdad road Sept. 16.

The patrol from 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team spotted two stationary vehicles with seven dismounted individuals nearby and moved in closer to investigate.

One vehicle attempted to drive off, crashed into the lead humvee in the patrol, and fled the area.

The remaining six men, who ran away from the van, scaled a fence and fled the scene. They were not located by the patrol.

The ambush was discovered by 3-7 Inf. Soldiers near a checkpoint controlling access into the city from the south.

"The insurgents had two machine gun positions set up, hidden behind the guardrails," said Sgt. First Class Rony Michel, an acting platoon leader from C Company, 3-7 Inf. "It was unclear whether the ambush was intended for us or Iraqi Security Force Soldiers who operate in the area."



Courtesy Photo

Soldiers captured a variety of weapons when they spotted two suspicious vehicles with seven dismounted individuals nearby near one of their checkpoints.

The patrol searched the van and confiscated three rocket-propelled grenade rounds, one RPG launcher, seven hand

grenades, three fully-loaded AK-47 assault rifles, and two fully-loaded PKC machine guns. 

Continued from previous page

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, 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 that God stands with us in the midst, He is our beacon of hope."

Staff Sgt. Jason Floyd, gun truck platoon sergeant, 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 do what could be the hardest: to love.

"Even during a terrible event; love can conquer," Bowers said. "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 left his Soldiers with some "fighting words."

"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." 



Spc. Dan Balda

Chap. (Maj.) Blake Bowers, 4th BCT chaplain, reminds the attendees about the conquering power of love.

Replacing Pain with Smiles

Sgt. Tracy E. Perfors
C Co., 703 FSB

Only 15 years old, Hawra has already suffered a lifetime of pain. Her father was killed by the old Saddam regime. One year ago, her sister was killed while they were driving in a car and were caught in a cross-fire between insurgents 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 civil affairs unit working with 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 doctor's and medics at the 4th Brigade Combat Team Falcon Troop Medical Clinic. That is where I first met her.

I walked into the aid station for work that day as I 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.

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



Courtesy photos

Sgt. Tracy Perfors with her young charge, Hawra.



Soldiers assigned to C Company, 703rd Forward Support Battalion, pose with Hawra and her brother.

English. When she shook my hand, she told me her name was Hawra and joked that she was at the aid station "for surgery for crazy."

I was the only female medic on shift that day, so I spent the afternoon with Hawra assisting with her medical care.

She told me stories of life in Iraq since Saddam and of living with her 11 brothers and sisters. She raved about the chance to eat cheeseburgers and macaroni and cheese when she visited the aid station, which was the largest meal she ate all week. Hawra also dreamed about going to school in the fall and maybe one day having a family of her own.

Hawra had captivated me. I continued to work with her week after week when she came to the aid station, and with each visit she amazed me further. I found it astonishing that a person with her medical problems and family history could remain so upbeat.

Each week she returned with good news of her continued recovery, for she had built up enough strength in her muscles and brittle bones to walk short distances around her home.

Her steady recovery did not last long. I 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. 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 I had become friends, so I insisted on riding in the back of the ambulance to keep her comfortable during the convoy to the hospital. When we arrived, I made sure that she was admitted into the hospital with no problems.

Her bones may have broken, but her spirit remained intact.

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.

It is people like Hawra who will see Iraq through the tough times it will face. Her courageousness, strength, and honesty will persevere.

Smiles continued page 16

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Taking care of their own

Thunder Squadron medics ready to help whenever, wherever needed

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

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

Staff Sgt. Aaron Stone, a combat medic, joined and chose to be a medic because someone helped him. His mother was a nurse and as such, was in a unique position to help with the scraped knees and twisted ankles that seem to come stock with childhood. When Stone was 12 years old his mother diagnosed a stomach-ache as appendicitis. Since that day he has known he wanted to be a medic.

Now on his second combat tour of Iraq, Stone, along with the medics who work for 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.

One way in which they support the mission is to run an aid station to provide level one healthcare to their Soldiers.



Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

The medics assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, stand ready to assist their unit. Staff Sgt. Aaron Stone (second from left) credits his NCO's with preparing the junior Soldiers for the rigors of combat.

"Level one care is basically 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 to 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 foresaw working in a hospital assisting the doctors there by taking patient's blood pressure and starting write-ups.

Once he got to Iraq his Shangri-La 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 that is 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 trauma the Soldiers spent

so much time training for has yet to rear 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 up on everything we might see out here," said Pantoja. "We go through all the steps involved in the treatment so we know we are ready if they need us."

When they aren't taking care of their own during their sick call hours or if a Soldier stops by with a question, the medics are out on missions supporting their 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 in their track vehicle dedicated to the medics for treatment and evacuation if the need be.

"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." 



Sgt. Kevin Pantoja, takes a Soldier's temperature during sick call hours at the HHT aid station at FOB Falcon.

"We are also focusing on creating a thoroughfare to connect the two main roads. We hope this will stimulate the local economy."



Photos by Maj. Alayne Conway

A civil affairs team with 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment pulls security along a newly-paved street in the Al-Doura neighborhood of Baghdad. The street was impassable two months ago when Iraqi contractors started the project and removed trash and obstructions.

Local leaders, U.S. Soldiers fix 'impassable' roads

4th Brigade Combat Team PAO

Just two months ago, the children living in the Al-Doura district could not pedal their bikes without riding along dirt pathways and dodging large ruts to avoid collisions.

Cars chose to avoid this route because of water and sewage in the street earning it the nickname, "The Green-Mile."

These images are now just a memory after Task Force Baghdad Soldiers teamed up with local leaders from the Al-Rashid District Council to fix the road.

They hosted a media event and showcased the one-mile stretch of paved road in the Al Doura neighborhood Sept. 13.

Soldiers assigned to 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment began the project in July as part of an ongoing reconstruction campaign in the 4th Brigade Combat Team's area of operations. A contractor paved the previously dirt road, installed a gutter system and added a sidewalk.

The project is well over halfway complete and should be completed by the end of September, said Sgt. Matthew See, a civil military operations sergeant assigned to 1st Bn., 184th Inf. and a native of

Roseville, Calif. "Besides the drainage, we are also focusing on creating a thoroughfare to connect the two main roads. We hope this will stimulate the local economy."

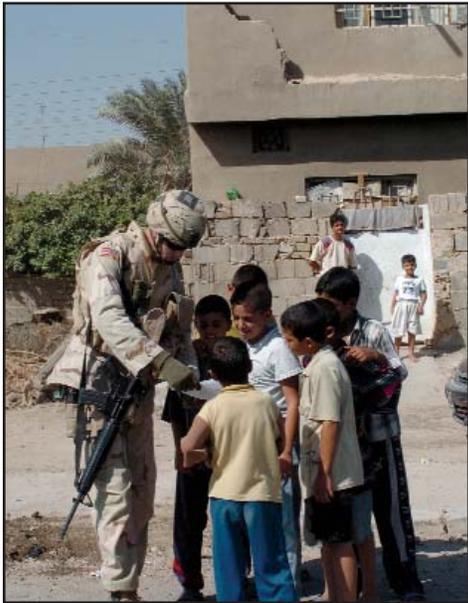
The completion of one mile of road included more than 1,200 cubic meters of asphalt and 2,630 meters of curb.

The Al-Doura project is a prime example of developing infrastructure that works for the people and encourages their ideas for future developments.

Paving the road was suggested by a member of one of the neighborhood councils, said Abbas Al-Ta'aei, the Al-Rashid DC chairman. "One of the NC members who lives in this neighborhood brought the issue to the NC chairman who then took the suggestion to the DC."

Jobs created for this project helped lower the unemployment in the area and the residents were thankful for the serviceability of the road that was previously impassable, said Al-Ta'aei.

He added, "The people of the neighborhood are very happy for the road repairs and thank the Coalition Forces for establishing the project. I hope that cooperation will continue for future projects in the area." 



Children from the Al-Rashid district gather around Sgt. Matthew See, a civil-military operations Soldier assigned to 1-184 Inf., Sept. 13 as he shows the children pictures of what the street used to look like.

New generator reduces heat, brings smiles to Salhiya orphanage

By Spc. Dan Balda

The Humvee's descended on Salhiya in the blink of an eye. Roads were shut off and cordons were established as armor-clad Soldiers stepped from their vehicles, wary eyes hidden behind dark glasses.

The convoy, now on foot, walked toward the unruly mob in tired resignation. As the Soldiers got closer the tight-lipped grimaces turned into smiles as the children that made up the mob circled around for their hugs.

The children were orphans excited about another visit from the A Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Soldiers. The orphanage fell under the company's normal patrol route so the Soldiers and the kids were well acquainted, but today, Aug. 29, was different. The assembled parties were together to celebrate a ribbon-cutting ceremony regarding the new generator A Co. 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 new 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. Through this arrangement the kids at the orphanage have to put up with less time where the heat is unbearable, said 1st Lt. Kevin Siegrist, a civil-military operations officer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4-64.

Having an on-site generator mechanic helps the approval process move in a positive direction.

The civil-military operations section researched the project to make sure it is feasible to the area. They want to make sure the people benefiting from the work are going to maintain the work the Soldiers started. "We don't want to start a project where once we leave the work that we have completed is going to go to waste," Siegrist said, a native of Denver.

The bid process is a way for the CMO section to teach the Iraqis the intricacies of capitalism. They take a minimum of three bids from area contractors and then choose 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 unit started the project but the paperwork was lost in a bureaucratic maze. When Wood saw that the process was stalled he brought over a military generator on loan status 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.

A ribbon was cut by Wood and the orphanage manager as the Soldiers and civilians assembled for the ceremony applauded.

Soldiers 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 kids stuffed animals



Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

(Above) Capt. Steve Wood, A Company, 4th Battalion 64th Armor Regiment commander, and the manager of the Salhiya Orphanage prepare to cut the ceremonial ribbon on the generator at the Orphanage.

(Right) A Soldier assigned to A Co., 4-64 Armor, plays with a little girl and her new stuffed animal.



Continued next page

U.S. Soldiers, Iraqis repair Karradah sewage facilities

4th Brigade Combat Team PAO

"The station is working in an area that previously had sewage system problems and would not have been possible without help from the U.S. Army,"

Task Force Baghdad Soldiers are working closely with local leaders from the Karradah District Council to improve sewage treatment facilities throughout South Baghdad.

Soldiers assigned to 4th Brigade Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division sponsored a media event Sept. 15, showcasing recent accomplishments and progress made over the last six months at three sewage pump stations in Karradah.

"The local sewer department completed several previous projects to control leakage at one of the pump stations prior to our efforts," said Lt. Col. Vincent Quarles, the 4-3 BTB commander. "We worked closely with professors from Baghdad University, the Baghdad Sewer design department, and our contractor to carefully study problems and develop a design to correct them. Today, we are able to begin executing this design

because of our joint efforts."

Recent ground excavation at another of the stations has revealed the damages that lie beneath the facility. Coalition Forces will provide this pump station with the necessary mechanical and electrical utilities.

At least 40 skilled workers from the community will be hired to rebuild and repair this pump station.

Quarles also talked about coordination between his unit and the Karradah District Council. "Dr. Mohammed Al-Rubaie, the Karradah District Council chairman, worked closely with us to overcome many challenges and to keep the local residents informed of our efforts. It is important to repair the pump station because of the large number of residents it will support."

"The station is working in an area that previously had sewage system problems and would not have been possible without help from the U.S. Army," said Dr. Mohammed. 

Continued from previous page

and clothes donated by families in the United States.

Soldiers dropped their gear to better play with the children. 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 face 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. A lot of times we focus on what's happening with the Americans. It's nice to see that we are focused on what the Iraqis have."

Wood also sees his 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 the coalition forces and the Iraqi government and that's what really matters." 



Spc. Dan Balda

Soldiers pull security at the orphanage that received a new generator from 4-64 Armor.

Stay in neck defilade when in the turret.




STAY ALIVE

0068 IEDs KILL

Don't fall victim to an IED.

Create a safe standoff when halted.




STAY ALIVE

0080 IEDs KILL

Sentinel cops train Iraqi brethren through MITT

1st Lt. Lloyd Warren

A Co. 4-3 BTB

The versatility of the Military Police Platoon of the 4th Brigade Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division is proven once again with the establishment of a Military Transition Team to support their newest mission.

The MP's MITT works with the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and has formed a partnership between 4th BCT, the Ministry of Defense and the Iraqi Army Security Forces stationed there. The Iraqi security forces stationed at the MOD are comprised of three different Iraqi units totaling around 500 soldiers, with three distinct job functions.

4th BCT's MP MITT has been tasked to assess, train, help resource and equip the Iraqi Soldiers, and upgrade the overall force protection of the highly visible and targeted Iraqi MOD compound. This partnership and training is critical to the Iraqi Security Forces learning to secure, fight and defend their newly-formed government.

On average more than 400 vehicles and 500 pedestrians enter the MOD Compound on a daily basis. Demonstrations occur regularly across the street in the Haifa Street Park. The guard towers, entrance guards and the ministry building are often the target of small arms fire, mortar and rocket attacks.

Training is centered on these events. Vehicle and personnel searches, reaction drills (sniper, suicide bomber, VBIED, mortar attack), and guard tower responsibilities are some of the basics being taught. The MITT is looking to establish, work with and train an internal quick reaction force as well as help upgrade physical force protection.

The operational tempo for the MOD is very high so training must be completed during the workday.

That is where the MPs come into play, working along side the security forces, training and teaching as they go.

Working with and alongside the ISF is nothing new to the "Gunslingers" of BTB.

Prior to taking on the MOD MITT mission, the Gunslinger Platoon worked directly with the Iraqi Police forces in the Karkh District of Baghdad.

Their task was to establish police station operations, train, help equip, upgrade force protection and get the Iraqi Police patrolling the streets.

The platoon was very successful working with area IP stations. After passing the reins to the 42nd Military Police Brigade, the platoon took on convoy security operations, VIP transports, personal security detachment missions and detainee escorts. The Gunslingers continue to perform these missions while training the ISF.

The importance of this MOD mission is evident to the soldiers of the Gunslinger Platoon.

Helping and training the Iraqi Soldiers to defend themselves and their country brings the Iraqi government one step closer to democracy, the U.S. and coalition forces closer to overwhelming success and the Gunslinger Soldiers one step closer to home.

But until then, no matter if it's running the brigade internment facility, working with the maneuver units, conducting convoy security operations, escort missions, ISF Training, the MOD MITT or any other mission the 4th BCT needs accomplished, the Gunslingers stand ready to execute. 



A Soldier assigned to the Military Police Platoon, 4th Brigade Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division shows an Iraqi Soldier how to properly search a car coming through a checkpoint.

1st Lt. Lloyd Warren

Atmospherics: taking the pulse of Baghdad

Spc. Christopher Mallard

425th Civil Affairs Battalion

What does the price of eggs have to do with the Global War on Terrorism?

For some Coalition Forces, it has a lot to do with helping commanders assess their areas of responsibility. Progress in the Iraq theater of operations is measured differently than in former conflicts. What may seem mundane is precisely the type of information Coalition Forces routinely collect as they assist the Iraqi government on all levels in its efforts to revive civil institutions.

Civil affairs teams are trained to conduct these assessments, also known as "atmospherics." Raw data, which could be as dull as measuring the price of eggs from one week to the next, is continuously being compiled, charted, then transformed into reliable information for commanders to use.

Commanders need to have a much greater understanding today than in previous conflicts, not just of the ongoing battle-space, but how the opinion of a grocer across the street ties into a much larger framework of the conflict.

Atmospherics is just one of many tools available to leaders to gain a greater understanding of the overall dynamics that are the lifeblood of the community.

A Civil Military Operations Center uses several guidelines to collect and analyze critical information streaming in daily. As assessments and atmospherics are being conducted by civil affairs teams out in the field, the maneuver element tries to piece this information



File Photo

One part of atmospheric interviews is talking with local shop keepers to see what areas need improvement.

together so priorities can be set for future projects.

Sgt. Matthew See of 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, said civil-military operators are primarily responsible for providing commanders with courses of action in all areas of civil military operations, including essential services, economic development and governance.

"We can only do so much during a year's rotation," said See, a native of Roseville, Calif., who is on a one-year contract with the National Guard and holds a Masters degree in public policy

from Pepperdine University. "There is certainly a lot of creativity out there, but when new people come in and take charge, their priorities may not be the same as those who have gone before them. Circumstances change on a day-to-day basis around here, yet continuity of vision is the key to ensuring that all these efforts contribute to Iraq's progress toward not only a free society, but one in which the people here can take pride in an economically, socially and politically sustainable homeland."

On one morning in late August, See accompanied Maj. Mike Ellis, Civil Affairs Team 3, A Company, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, to conduct an atmospheric mission in nearby Hor Rajeb.

Ellis and See interviewed the manager of a local grocery store regarding the price of lamb, heating oil, perishables and security. Standing underneath an awning of rippled aluminum slabs, Ellis stepped into the shade to ask several questions of the grocer through his assigned interpreter. Meanwhile, See went across the street to speak to the butcher.

Civil affairs Soldiers spend many hours learning the proper techniques for conducting an atmospheric interview.

"It is important to make an introduction and greet these people using local customs and gestures before jumping right into the interview," explained Ellis, a resident of Atlanta. "The people seem to relax and share more of their problems and concerns instead of feeling that they are being interrogated."

Atmospherics continued, Page 19

Smiles continued from Page 9

Until that time, however, my thoughts and prayers are with Hawra and all the other innocent Iraqis who are trying nothing more than to make their country a safe place to live.

Editor's note:

Major Carlos Molina, a civil affairs team leader serving with 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment has made visits to Hawra's home and had the following updates to the story.

Hawra has been receiving physical therapy at the Falcon TMC for the past eight months and is currently recovering from her home in east Rashid but she still walks with a slight limp.

Soldiers from the 1/184th Inf. civil affairs team still visit Hawra to make sure her recovery is coming along. During their periodic visits they also deliver humanitarian assistance packs to her family.

The TMC staff at FOB Falcon is very fond of her and looks forward to seeing her as often as they can. Molina and the 1-184 Inf. civil affairs team takes the staff to Hawra's home when they have a patrol planned in her neighborhood. 



Courtesy Photo

Hawra receives physical therapy at FOB Falcon while on her path to recovery. She received regular treatment at the Falcon TMC and is currently recovering at her home.

Cottonbalers gather to honor the life and memory of "nonconformist" Soldier

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

Spc. Hatim Kathiria, was not one to conform according to 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 peoples' models," Funk said.

Kathiria was a Prescribed Load List clerk assigned to F Company, 703rd Forward Support Battalion, but worked in direct support of 3-7 Inf. He was killed in a rocket attack Aug. 22.

Kathiria was born to a traditional family in India. He 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 as a way to better himself financially and in other ways. Having then raised his right hand, he later became a Marine Soldier, a Cottonbaler and a Forager in 2004. Shortly before his unit deployed to Iraq he became something else;



A member of the firing squad fires his weapon as part of the 21-gun salute during Spc. Hatim Kathiria's memorial service Aug. 25.



Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

Soldiers salute during the National Anthem at the beginning of the service.

a U.S. citizen, Funk said.

His fellow Soldiers remembered him as hardworking, studious intensely private and extremely competitive and confident in everything he did.

Those that really took the time to know him, and those that took the time to break down the barriers of privacy that he had 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.

Funk 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 his 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, his 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 every task and made those around him better. He made this unit better. 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. You have not died in vain." 



Courtesy photo

Members of 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment's Personal Security Detachment prepare to clear a room during a raid. "I would take any of these guys to any combat zone," said one NCO.

PSD: MOS isn't everything

Capt. Jaison Bloom
3-7 Inf. PAO

Before every patrol these men form a huge hugging circle and recite the Lord's Prayer. For more than seven months now, these Soldiers have been charged with protecting their leadership while out in sector.

They have dealt with small arms fire, improvised explosive devices and have conducted cordon and searches as well as raids against suspected insurgents. These men make up the Personal Security Detachment for 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment.

These Soldiers did not come into the Army as infantrymen but as the 92G Military Occupational Specialty or food service workers. Nearly 80 percent of the 22 soldiers in the PSD platoon are cooks by first trade. The remainder are infantrymen and tankers.

"I would take these guys to any combat zone", says Staff Sgt. Christopher Williams. "Most of these guys are in the wrong MOS, they should have been 11B."

These men have become an extremely tight group and have come a long way from being cooks to becoming Infantryman.

The mission of the PSD in Iraq is to provide security for the command staff of the battalion, while finding better ways to stabilize the battalion sector," said Spc. Tino Trujillo, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3-7 Inf. and native of Mensherville, Ore.

The team was trained by experienced infantrymen from HHC,

3-7 Inf. like Williams from Eagle Rock, Va., Staff Sgt. Rodney Alexander of Tylertown, Miss., and Staff Sgt. Raphael Arroyo of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

"It has been dangerous out there, and I didn't expect to be doing half the stuff we are doing on a daily basis," said Trujillo. "But I am pleased that we are getting to broaden our experiences."

Spc. Anthony Rush of Andover, Minn., HHC, 3-7 Inf., knew that he would be escorting the command staff but didn't expect to conduct daily patrols and go out on raids.

Iraq has been in the midst of change during the last two and a half years and the Soldiers that make up the Cottonbaler's PSD have been in the center of it all during Operation Iraqi Freedom III. A lot of their success can be attributed to their training back in U.S. prior to the deployment both at home station and temporary duty.

The unit participated in the usual Mission Readiness Exercise at Fort Polk, La. in 2004.

"We participated in another unique training event during a one-week crash course from the Tactical Intelligence and Investigation of Orlando, Fla.," said Trujillo.

In addition, the PSD conducted Expert Infantryman Badge type training on several Soldier skills to include land navigation, weapons training, communications training, map reading, and battle drills.

This was all in preparation for living the reality of a new job in Iraq, where MOS isn't everything. 

Atmospherics from Page 16

Grocer Kareem Arabi told Ellis' interpreter that he believes there are potential agricultural jobs in the area. Even though there is a language barrier Ellis did not divert his attention from the person to whom he is speaking. This way, the conversation remained personal and confidential.

"There is a lack of irrigation water and more importantly, electricity, which is critical to making sure the irrigation pumps work," repeated Ellis, listening intently to the store owner explain his concerns. "Young men and women in the town could be gainfully employed if the pumps were working and the farms fully utilized."

Stepping back into the midday heat, he walked toward his vehicle, closing his note pad. "Unfortunately, this community will remain underemployed and a lot of people in this sector will remain jobless until these problems are addressed by local government," Ellis said. "If civil affairs can help, we certainly would like to participate in those discussions."

For now, the team would have to return to Hor Rajeb to reassess irrigation and electricity issues that were brought up from the interviews. If a project is funded, civil affairs will return to follow up on the progress of work requests that were submitted.

Atmospherics is a relatively new methodology and cannot be statistically verified like a detailed study or various methods of American style polling. Until there is greater stability and more secure conditions in Iraq, atmospherics is the most reliable method available for acquiring knowledge on peo-

based on economic data, implementing the most modern and best practices in good governance."

Disheartening to many number crunchers is the unreliable demographic information in the country due to the fact that no census has been conducted in more than 20 years.

"So much information is simply lost. So, even though we use atmospherics to gather information and determine which way the wind is blowing in a particular muhalla, people's attitudes, thoughts and beliefs may be entirely different across the street," explained See. "There needs to be long-term continuity, not only of vision, but also of the means to achieve it, including information gathering." 



File Photo

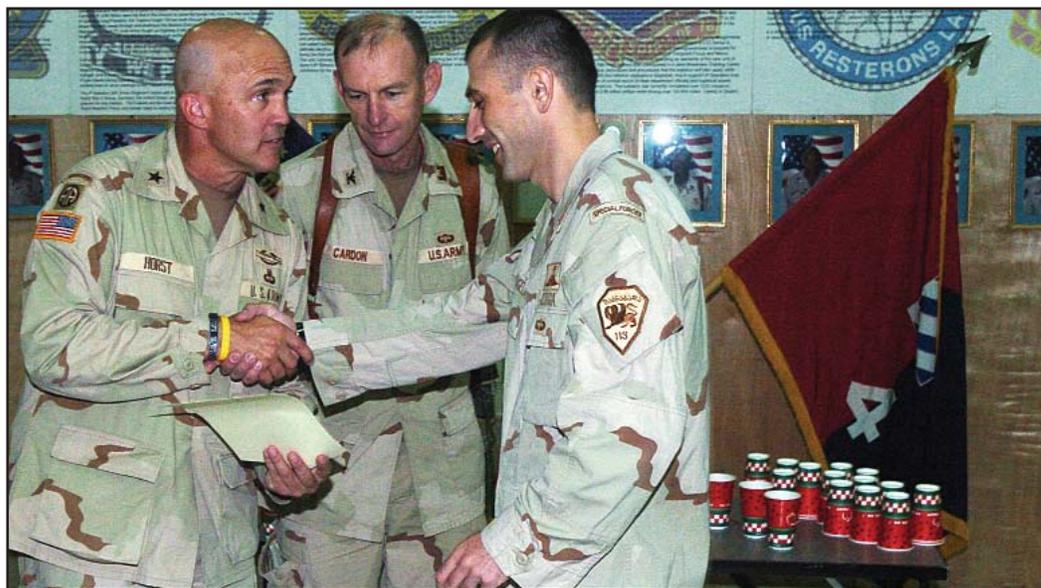
"The people seem to relax and share more of their problems and concerns instead of feeling that they are being interrogated."

ple's thoughts concerning the government and Coalition Forces.

There are several institutions that are normally reliable places to look for these studies. In the case of Iraq, the Department of Defense has been working with U.S. Agency for International Development, which for decades has collected information on issues related to sustained development. According to its Website, "Working with Iraqi institutions to establish an environment for sustainable economic growth empowers policy makers to formulate and execute decisions

These Soldiers have had extensive Middle Eastern studies course work and in many cases are encouraged to become functional in the Arabic language. Commanders rely on them and their unique ability to discern what is actually being said, especially in the densely-populated areas around Baghdad.

Civil affairs teams' ability to glean information from atmospherics and then use that data to aid the Iraqi people and unit commanders in daily operations makes them an invaluable and sometimes untapped resource in the Operation Iraqi Freedom mission. 

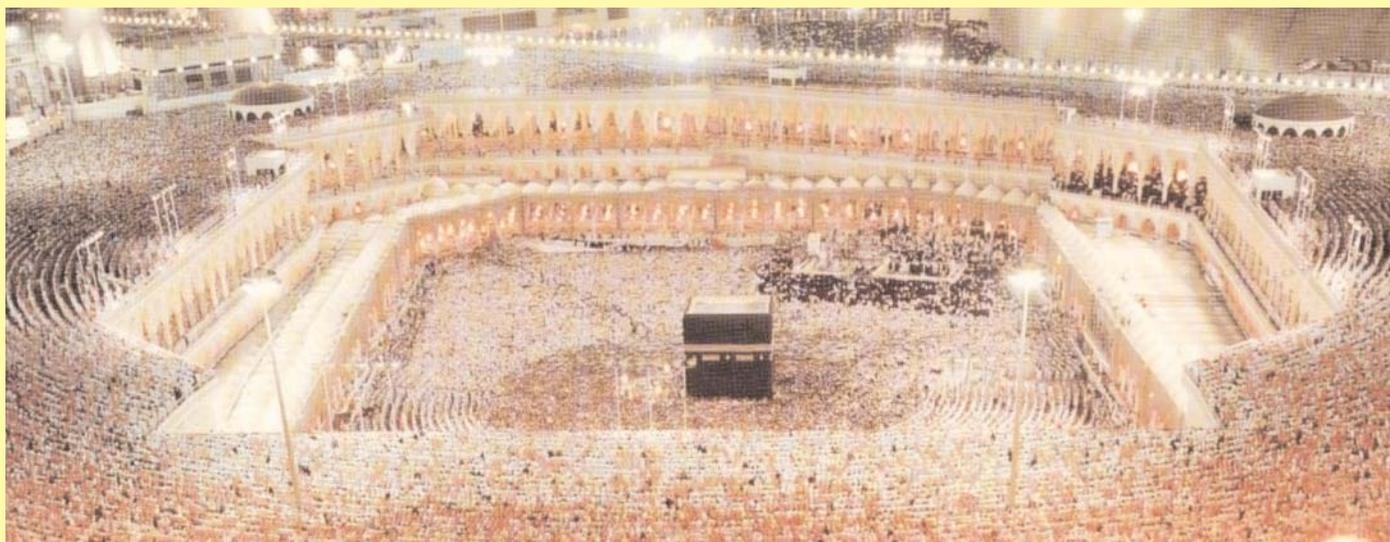


Thank you!

Brig. Gen. Karl Horst, the 3rd Infantry Division Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver) shakes the hand of Capt. George Shengalia, Republic of Georgia's 13th Battalion Commander, while presenting him with an honorary membership in the 3rd Infantry Division Sept. 16 at FOB Prosperity as Col. Edward Cardon, the 4th Brigade Combat Team's commander looks on.

The Georgians were recognized for their service during Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

Spc. Dan Balda



Courtesy photo

Muslims celebrate the Hajji in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Hajji, like Ramadan, is one of the five Pillars of Islam. Muslims celebrate Ramadan during the ninth month of the Muslim calendar with prayer, fasting and charity. It commemorates Mohammed receiving the first verses of the Koran from Allah.

Understanding one of the largest Muslim holidays

Spc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

Before Soldiers deployed to the Middle East, they attended classes to familiarize themselves with many of the tenants of Islam, the predominate religion in this region of the world. The reasons for these classes were varied, but one of the main reasons for attendance was so Soldiers could better understand the people they were deploying a world away to defend.

Within Islam there are five “pillars” that make up the most important tenants of Muslim’s faith.

One of those pillars is celebrating Ramadan; the “month of blessing” with prayer, fasting and charity.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. The Month of Ramadan is also when it is believed the Holy Koran “was sent down from heaven, guidance unto men, a declaration of direction, and a means of Salvation,” according to www.holidays.net. It is during this month that Muslims fast. It is called the Fast of Ramadan and lasts the entire month. Ramadan is a time when Muslims concentrate on their faith and spend less time on the concerns of their everyday lives. It is a time of worship and contemplation.

This year the Fast of Ramadan will begin Oct. 5 and will conclude with the festival of Eid al-Fitr November 4. Literally the “Festival of Breaking the Fast,” Eid al-Fitr is one of the two most important Islamic celebrations (the other occurs after the Hajji, or pilgrimage to Mecca). At Eid al-Fitr people dress in their finest clothes, adorn their homes with lights and decorations, give treats to children, and enjoy visits with friends and family, according to www.holidays.net.

Muslims believe that during the month of Ramadan, Allah revealed the first verses of the Koran, the holy book of Islam. Around 610 A.D., a caravan trader named Mohammed took to wandering the desert near Mecca (in today’s Saudi Arabia) while thinking about his faith. One night a voice called to him from the night sky. It was the angel Gabriel, who told Mohammed he had been chosen to

receive the word of Allah. In the days that followed, Mohammed found himself speaking the verses that would be transcribed as the Koran.

At many mosques during Ramadan, about one thirtieth of the Koran is recited each night in prayers known as tarawih. In this way, by the end of the month the complete scripture will have been recited.

Muslims practice sawm, or fasting, for the entire month of Ramadan. This means that they may not eat or drink nothing, including water, while the sun shines. Fasting is one of the Five Pillars (duties) of Islam. As with other Islamic duties, all able Muslims take part in sawm from about age twelve.

During Ramadan in the Muslim world, most restaurants are closed during the daylight hours. Families get up early for suhoor, a meal eaten before the sun rises. After the sun sets, the fast is broken with a meal known as iftar. Iftar usually begins with dates and sweet drinks that provide a quick energy boost.

Fasting serves many purposes. While they are hungry and thirsty, Muslims are reminded of the suffering of the poor. Fasting is also an opportunity to practice self-control and to cleanse the body and mind. And in this most sacred month, fasting helps Muslims feel the peace that comes from spiritual devotion as well as kinship with fellow believers.

The Siyam (fasting) are intended to teach the believers patience and self-control, and to remind them of the less fortunate in the world. The fast is also seen as a debt owed by the believer to God. Faithful observance of the Siyam is believed to atone for personal faults and misdeeds, at least in part, and to help earn a place in paradise.

It is also believed to be beneficial for personal conduct, that is, to help control passions and temper. The fast is also meant to provide time for meditation and to strengthen one’s faith.

Hopefully, the better we as Soldiers can understand the Iraqi peoples’ religious holidays, the better we can work with them to rebuild Iraq. 

Operation scores big against insurgency

Staff Sgt. Ron Eberhardt

1/184 Inf. PAO

Sports fans use the term smashmouth when they are describing a hard charging football play, but the rules of the game were a little different for Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment Sept. 10.

The players came from D Company, 1-184th Inf. and C Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment along with a Navy bomb sniffing dog team. They departed Forward Operating Base Falcon and kicked off Operation Smashmouth in the Al Rashid district with the mission of raiding four insurgent strongholds.

While moving toward the first objective, one of the tanks from C Co., 4/64

was struck by an improvised explosive device but shrugged off the explosion that caused no damage to the occupants or the vehicle.

Less than 30 minutes after leaving the base, the Smashmouth team hit the first three targets – Objective Green, Objective Red and Objective Blue. Soldiers searched the objectives for insurgent activities and the terrorists themselves. Two of the three objectives were “dry holes” but Red turned out to be a good target for the coalition forces and a bad hiding spot for the wanted men. D Co., 1-184 Inf. detained two of the suspected insurgents they had been looking for.

With these three targets complete the team moved on to the final play of the night, searching for insurgent strongholds

on Objective Starkist.

At about 3 a.m., word was given to take-down the objective and the Soldiers surged into action. They had been sitting patiently at predetermined blocking positions for more than an hour ensuring that the site was protected and no one went in or out of the cordoned area. Two suspicious men were found hiding in a shed at this location and were later detained for further questioning.

As the strike was taking place, an element from D Co., 1-184 Inf. was headed back to the base with the two detainees from Objective Red.

Six hours later, everyone had safely made their way back to FOB Falcon, and the mission was complete, final score coalition 4 terrorists 0. 

Bush, Putin pledge cooperation in fighting terrorism, weapons proliferation

John D. Banusiewicz

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON -- President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin emerged from a Sept. 16 meeting with a renewed commitment to working together in fighting terrorism and preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the two leaders told reporters at a White House news conference.

Bush noted that both countries have felt the scourge of terrorism - the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, and Russia in September 2004, when a school siege in Beslan left 331 people, 186 of them children, dead.

"We've got a strong ally in Russia in fighting the war on terror," Bush said. "And it was about four years ago that our country got attacked; one year ago there was Beslan -- both of them brutal attacks, both of them attacks by people who have no regard for innocent life. And we understand we have a duty to protect our citizens and to work together and to do everything we can to stop the killing. That's why we hold office."

Speaking through an interpreter, Putin said he and Bush agreed in their meeting to enhance U.S.-Russian coordination, down to the working-group level, in fighting terrorism.

"We believe that special attention should be paid to joint effort to avert terrorist activities generally," Putin said, "and of course, with the possible use by terrorists of weapons of mass destruction."

Bush said he and Putin recognize the importance of working together to keep catastrophic weapons out of terrorists' hands. "We understand the stakes -- that people who kill in cold blood, if they have weapons of mass destruction, will kill in cold blood on a massive scale," he said.

Putin noted that the two leaders discussed nuclear nonproliferation in general, and two countries in particular. "Significant attention was paid to the subject of nonproliferation, and here we have discussed the North Korean problem and the Iranian nuclear dossier," he said. "And I must say that our positions are very close with the American partners here. We will continue to coordinate our work."

"We understand we have a duty to protect our citizens and to work together and to do everything we can to stop the killing. That's why we hold office."

President George W. Bush

The Russian president emphasized that possible diplomatic solutions have not yet run out. "We will undertake all the steps necessary to settle all these problems and issues, not to aggravate them," he said.

Bush thanked Putin for Russia's offer of medical supplies within hours after Hurricane Katrina struck the U.S. Gulf Coast, and Putin in turn said the two countries can work together to study the lessons learned in responding to catastrophes.

"It meant a lot to know that you cared enough to send critical supplies, and our country really appreciates it," Bush told Putin. "People are going through some tough times down there, and I think it lifts their spirits to know that not only Americans, but Russians care about their future."

Putin called Hurricane Katrina an "absolutely global catastrophe," and said he and Bush discussed how the United States and Russia can cooperate to refine response procedures.

"In Russia, we too will draw our conclusions regarding organization of activities of services related to averting such catastrophes with efficient response to the similar catastrophes which are indeed of a global nature," he said. "This is precisely why we've discussed these tragic events and our cooperation as regards averting these ... catastrophes, infectious disease and so forth. I'm sure if we pool our effort, then our activities will become more efficient." 

After Katrina: A look at the Army's support in the aftermath of a natural disaster

Army to help with nation's largest reconstruction effort

Editor's note: Information for this article compiled by Army News Service editor Gary Sheftick from Corps of Engineers news releases and an article about the Army Reserve's 159th Aviation Regiment by Chuck Prichard.

WASHINGTON -- President Bush promised "one of the largest reconstruction efforts the world has ever seen" in his speech to the nation Sept. 15 and just a few hours earlier, the Army Corps of Engineers awarded contracts totaling up to \$4 billion for debris removal in areas hit by Hurricane Katrina.

One contract was to clean up the state of Mississippi and another three were for Louisiana. Each of the four contracts had a value of up to \$500 million, officials said, with the option to add an additional \$500 million each.

The Corps of Engineers and National Guard actually began debris removal in some of the areas two weeks ago, upon request of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Mississippi's debris: 5.8 million cubic yards

In Mississippi, debris removal began in Hancock County and the town of Waveland, one of the areas hardest hit by the hurricane.

To assist in making the operation as efficient as possible, the Corps requested residents to place debris on right-aways and sort it into the following piles: construction and demolition materials, vegetation, household waste items, white items (large appliances such as refrigerators and TVs) and hazardous waste.

More than 150 large trucks are in the area and more than 10,000 cubic yards of debris has been removed so far. The Corps expects to increase the number of trucks hauling in increments of 50 a day for some time, officials said.

Debris removal from Hancock County is being coordinated with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality and is being removed to debris landfills, where it will be separated, reduced and then disposed of in the proper manner, officials said.

The Corps' overall Mississippi debris removal mission to date stands at 5.8 million cubic yards.

Army mends levees in Louisiana

In New Orleans, Army helicopters have been helping mend the city's canal and levee system by hauling large sandbags that they dropped to seal the breaches.

Earlier this week the Corps of Engineers announced that the four main breaches had been repaired in the 17th Street Canal and London Avenue Canal system, and officials shortened their estimate on how long it would take to pump floodwaters out of the city. They said most areas should be dry by mid October.

Helicopters key for search & rescue

When the storm surge caused breaches in New Orleans' canal system Army helicopters were there to help rescue residents from the floodwaters.

For instance, since arriving in Louisiana nine days ago, five CH-47 Chinooks of the Army Reserve's 159th Aviation



Chuck Prichard

Members of a FEMA search and rescue team prepare to board a CH-47 Chinook helicopter from the Army Reserve's B Co., 5th Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment, near the devastated town of Empire, La.

Regiment have transported about 1,400 Soldiers and rescue workers; 115,000 pounds of cargo inside, consisting of mostly food and water; and 1.7 million pounds of sling-loaded cargo, mostly large sandbags to fix the levees. The crews have also transported 128 residents and several pets that were rescued from the flood waters.

"We picked up one grandmother in a wheelchair who had been up in her attic since the storm came through," said Chief Warrant Officer Glenn Coffin, a pilot with the 159th Aviation Regiment. "She was a tough lady but she was glad we came along and got her out. That's what we came here for - to help people."

Military best equipped for logistics

In his speech to the nation Sept. 15, President Bush said the military is best equipped to quickly provide the level of logistics needed in a major disaster.

So far, the military has assisted with the following logistics in the three states most affected by Hurricane Katrina:

■ In Louisiana, more than 41,200 tons of ice and 27 million liters of drinking water have been delivered. More than 80 generators have been put in place, restoring power to 95 sites. More than 194,500 cubic yards of debris have been removed, including 53,000 in the last 24 hours. More than 530 roofs have been repaired.

■ In Mississippi, more than 43,600 tons of ice and 16.2 million liters of drinking water have been delivered. More than 481,000 cubic yards of debris have been removed, including 132,000 in the last 24 hours. More than 830 roofs have been installed.

■ In Alabama, more than 20,400 tons of ice has been distributed. More than 111,000 cubic yards of debris have been removed, including 29,600 in the last 24 hours. More than 180 travel trailers have arrived at Summerdale for housing, and 200 more have been ordered. So far 22 trailers have been installed.



New Orleans resident Alexcener Reaux, 74, thanks Staff Sgt. Samuel H. Zoker, a 29-year-old 82nd Airborne Division paratrooper, from Trenton, N.J., outside her home in Algiers, an old neighborhood in New Orleans Sept. 17. Zoker's unit, A Battery, 2nd Bn., 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regt., has been conducting neighborhood patrols through Algiers since Sept. 15.

Photo by Gerry J. Gilmore

Paratroopers keep watch over New Orleans neighborhood

Gerry J. Gilmore

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON -- Two Army Humvees chugged their way into another ravaged section of Algiers, an old New Orleans neighborhood set just across the Mississippi River from the French Quarter.

It was early evening Sept. 17, but the 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers had been up since first light. A few blocks back the squad of soldiers, from A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, searched a bat-



Sgt. Michael J. Carden

Sgt. Daniel Loeffler, a team leader with C Co., 2nd Bn., 505th Parachute Inf. Regt., and his team tread their way through the flooded streets of New Orleans Sept. 9 during a patrol of the French Quarter.

tered multistoried apartment complex for anyone who'd survived Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath.

Sgt. Maaka K. Tuionetoa, a 25-year-old from the Tonga Islands in the Pacific Ocean, led a group of troopers on a door-to-door search of the faded-brick complex. The soldiers' repeated knocking seemed an unwelcome visitor amid the unnatural stillness.

"It's kind of eerie," Tuionetoa said. "You hope to find someone" who needs help. The sergeant added that he didn't know if the soldiers would find any residents at the seemingly deserted complex. They found no one.

Half an hour later and a few blocks farther down on Murl Street, the soldiers met Willie Patterson, a New Orleans Housing Authority employee. The soldiers' neighborhood patrols "have been a great help to us" in keeping down looting and other crime, Patterson said.

The soldiers conduct neighborhood-watch-like patrols in Algiers to assist local authorities to find out "how people are doing" after the storm, explained Capt. Kenton R. Barber, A Battery's 28-year-old executive officer.

The captain noted that he and his soldiers don't have authority to conduct law-enforcement missions. Barber's soldiers carry live ammunition for their M-4 carbines, but the weapons aren't loaded, he said.

Barber, who hails from Petoskey, Mich., said his soldiers also check to see if power and other utilities are being restored and help distribute food, ice and other items to the Algiers community.

Alexcener Reaux, a 74-year-old townhouse resident on Murl Street who stayed on through the storm, said she's glad the soldiers are around. "I feel safer; I go to bed and sleep good," she said.

A helicopter came to evacuate her after

the storm, but Reaux said she refused to leave because the aircraft scared her. Two days later, Reaux's daughter arrived to take care of her.

Pfc. Oliver D. Butler, 19, said he helps distribute food, water and other items during the day to Algiers residents at a local mission.

"It's a catastrophe that's happened in this area," Butler said. Helping Algiers residents get back on their feet "makes me feel good inside," he said.

Home based at Fort Bragg, N.C., the paratroopers' temporary New Orleans headquarters is at the Naval Support Activity New Orleans, a reserve Navy and Marine base in Algiers. They've been conducting humanitarian missions here since Sept. 15, Maj. Kelly W. Ivanoff, the 2nd Battalion's executive officer, said, helping the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

The paratroopers arrived in Louisiana on Sept. 3. They first helped to support evacuation operations at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, Ivanoff said, and also assisted security forces and search-and-rescue teams in water-covered areas of the city. About 3,600 paratroopers are deployed in the New Orleans area as part of Task Force All American.

"Now the city is beginning to come back to life, and they're assisting in that transition period," Ivanoff noted.

Other members of TF All American in New Orleans include: 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, from Fort Hood, Texas; 1st Aviation Brigade, from Fort Rucker, Ala.; 13th Corps Support Command, from Fort Hood; and a support hospital. TF All American has just over 6,300 soldiers.

The 82nd's continuing assistance to New Orleans residents following Katrina is "history being made," Barber said.

"These are Americans that need our help," he said. 



HARPSHOOTERS

Photos from around the brigade by the Soldiers of 4th BC7



A Soldier assigned to A Troop, 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment, takes cover behind part of a wall during a patrol Sept. 15.



Soldiers assigned to B Co. 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, pray together before going on a night time raid in Southern Baghdad Sept. 1.



A Co.'s 1st. Sgt. Jeff B. Loper receives a plaque and a wheelchair from his Soldiers before he goes back to the United States to receive surgery.



Sgt. Jason Nichols, of Coronado, Calif. and Sgt. Ian Leary of Mill Valley, Calif., both of B Company, 4th Battalion, 64 Armor make some new friends in Tashree.



Capt. Kenneth Dojaques, A Troop Commander, 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment, speaks to an Iraqi man while conducting a joint patrol with 3rd Battalion, 5th Iraqi Army in the Al Aamel neighborhood Sept. 15.