

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron D. Allmon II

Airman 1st Class Melody Boates, a flight engineer in the 64th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron, stands ready with her .50-caliber machine gun. The Air Force HH-60G Pavehawk helicopter is used for combat search and rescue missions.

Hotels in Baghdad rocked by three car bombs

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — A combination two SUVs and a cement truck exploded near the outer walls of the Palestine and Sheraton hotels in downtown Baghdad Monday, military officials reported.

A statement from Multi-National Force - Iraq said civil-

ian casualties are approximately 20, but that no Coalition Forces were injured in the attack. Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces secured the area and brought order to the bombing site, the statement said.

The Palestine Hotel is where several news bureaus operate from and house its staff.

In other Iraq news, Iraqi Army troops detained two men and their stash of ordnance and cash Sunday in western Fallujah. Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st

Iraqi Intervention Force, nabbed the two military-aged males and seized contraband that included 19 rounds of assorted loose ammunition, three spools of fishing wire, a fuse switch, blasting caps, black powder, lead ammunition components and 183,000 Iraqi dinar in currency.

The same day, soldiers from 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment (172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team), seized a

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PERSPECTIVES

Halloween: scaring away the evil spirits

By Maj. Patricia C. Anderson
Command Information Chief

Last Halloween, I was a citizen-Soldier enjoying my last night of “freedom” — my Army Reserve unit began active duty in preparation for our mobilization here Nov. 1. I was far too busy packing, saying my good-byes and fretting about the future to dress up for Halloween. Now as my unit draws near the one-year anniversary of our activation, I wonder what costume I should have ordered back in September so I could wear it next Monday. Another unit recently arrived in our office, and its family support group shipped those Soldiers fanciful masks — not full-blown costumes, but just enough make-believe to take us away from the grim reality of a war zone for a few minutes.

Halloween is commonly believed to have originated from the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain. The end of the Celtic year was October 31, when the Celts believed the spirits of the dead would come back to earth in search of a body to inhabit for the next year. So the Celts wore scary costumes to frighten away those spirits. Later when Christianity was the dominant religion in Ireland, the Catholic Church created All Hallows Day to fall on Nov. 1, which of course meant All Hallows Eve was the night before. Eventually the name was shortened to Halloween.

Over the years, I’ve worn a wide variety of Halloween costumes, but I’ve rarely been into scary costumes to ward away evil spirits. When I was a child, I was Casper one year, a bunny another, and of course there were the

obvious Disney costumes, such as Snow White and Bambi. When I was in high school, I was too cool (or so I imagined myself) to dress up, but I donned costumes again in college, when I was a pirate wench (which was truly an inspired costume, if I may say so myself), a ghost (at the other extreme of my inspired costume, how much easier a costume is there?), Rambo and various other characters.

Since then, whether or not I’ve bothered with a costume has depended on what Halloween party I might be attending, or if Halloween fell on a workday, whether I worked for an employer that would allow costumes in the office. One year while working for a law firm, inspired by the then-recent O.J. Simpson trial, I dressed up as Judge Ito (another truly-inspired costume). The old pirate wench costume has been trotted out a few times, but not at work — it’s a bit too “saucy” for a professional environment. I’ve

played dress-up as a hockey goalie, which is a logical choice for an avid hockey fan like me. I’ve been both a witch and an angel, although most people who know me would tell you the former far more closely matches my personality.

Now after a year of active duty, there are no doubt plenty of service members here who would agree that my old witch’s hat and broom would fit me to a T. However, the only “costume” I plan to wear is my desert camouflage uniform. The presence of the Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces may serve to scare away different types of evil spirits — those of the terrorists who want to see democracy fail in Iraq. So while my costume this year may be rather unoriginal, I still think it’s pretty cool.

“The presence of the Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces may serve to scare away a different type of evil spirits — those of the terrorists who want to see democracy fail in Iraq.”

Maj. Patricia C. Anderson
Command Information Chief

Scimitar Pulse

What is the craziest or coolest Halloween costume you have ever worn or seen?

“People at school used to dress up as the opposite sex.”



Army Pfc. Robin Grabowski
212th Field Artillery Brigade



“1970s pimp.”

Army Sgt. David Tennant
Joint Area Support Group - Central

“The wildest one I have ever seen was Osama Bin Laden.”



Air Force Staff Sgt. Christopher Garrett
509th Civil Engineers Squadron



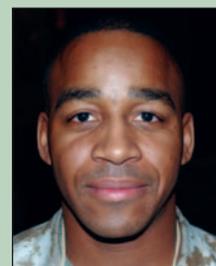
“I saw a couple of people show up to a Halloween party wearing ‘The Who’ t-shirts with foot prints on the back of it.”

Army Col. James Brenner
Multi-National Force - Iraq

“One Halloween, my brother and some of his friends went to San Diego, Calif., dressed as [sex fiends].”



Marine Lance Cpl. Tomas Becerra
Anti-Terrorism Battalion



“A woman dressed as Santa Claus.”

Marine Capt. Marc Walker
Multi-National Force - Iraq

“A person dressed as a pack of cigarettes.”



Army Spc. Chastity Odell
69th Signal Company

After the treat ...



U.S. Navy Photo by Photographer's Mate First Class Alan D. Monyelle

Local Iraqi children gather around the camera for a picture at the castle in downtown Tall Afar, Iraq.

'Makos' in sky support warriors on ground



Lt. Col. Jose Monteagudo gets into the cockpit of his F-16 Fighting Falcon Oct. 18 after being diverted due to weather conditions. Monteagudo flies with the 332nd EFS at Balad Air Base, Iraq.

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Paul Dean
407th Air Expeditionary Group Public Affairs

ALI BASE, Iraq — The sky above Balad Air Base was thick with dust and sand when four F-16 Fighting Falcon pilots completed another mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

They were headed to their deployment "home" in Balad, Iraq, when they were eventually diverted here Oct. 17.

Their mission started early that morning, but it was well past lunch when they traveled in a holding pattern above a dusty Balad. The four F-16 pilots from the 332nd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron had aerial refueled and were waiting for the sandstorm to pass. But weather forecasters determined the storm would not break until much later in the evening, so the planes were diverted here.

It was just another instance that proves there is no such thing as a routine day when you are an F-16 pilot supporting ground forces in Iraq, said Maj. Darren Censullo, a reserve pilot deployed with the 93rd Fighter Squadron, known as the "Makos," from Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fla. It was just another long day in a small cockpit, he said.

Censullo and his fellow pilots were diverted to a deployed air base similar to their home station Balad where Airmen and Soldiers serve alongside each other. It was another opportunity for them to see the ground customers they serve from the air.

"I eat dinner with some of these guys," said Lt. Col. Jose Monteagudo, commander of the diverted combat air mission. "We have Army guys all over [Balad Air Base], so I get to know some of them and talk to them about their jobs," But unlike



Maj. Darren Censullo, an F-16 Fighting Falcon pilot, conducts a preflight walk around his aircraft before takeoff after being diverted at Ali Base, Iraq, due to weather.

relaxed conversation at the dinner table, Monteagudo also knows the tense chatter while on the job.

"There's no simulator that can teach you the feeling you get when you hear the guy on the ground yell into the radio, 'We need help now! Take care of it.'"

Monteagudo said helping the ground forces is the most gratifying part of what has been an exciting deployment.

"Every day something's happening. Every day we're up here providing cover for [ground forces]. I really respect the job they're doing down there, and I am glad we can help anyway we can," the colonel said.

Seeing ground combat from his vantage point in the air is an experience Monteagudo said he will never forget.



Far right, Pfc. Christopher Scott operates a mine detector while Staff Sgt. Shaun Brant, middle, scans the base of a dirt mound. Pfc. Benjamin Gibson stands by with a shovel. A U.S. Army M113 Armored Personnel Carrier parks close by, and the crew of a U.S. Marine Amphibian Assault Vehicle provides security a short distance away.

Army, Marines sweep desert for enemy caches

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn
Scimitar Staff

AL AMIRIYAH, Iraq — U.S. Soldiers steeled themselves to the hot desert wind that stung their eyes, parched their throats and added grit to their already sweat-drenched bodies. They meticulously picked through mounds of dirt, trash and rubble as a few dozen U.S. Marines and their armored assault vehicles stood by, alert and prepared for any potential terrorist activity that might occur.

Army combat engineers from Task Force Iron Hawk and infantry assault Marines from 2nd Platoon, Company B, 2nd Amphibian Assault Battalion, 2nd Marine Division worked as a team to find and rid the arid Iraqi countryside around Fallujah of enemy weapons caches.

"We are doing a check — sweeping for weapons, ammunition, artillery rounds ... any insurgent weapon we can find," said Army Staff Sgt. Mathew Thornton, squad leader, Company C, 224th Engineer Battalion, Iowa National Guard.

Finding hidden caches can be an art form. The Soldiers used the AN-19/2 mine detector and their hunches, experience and good old back-breaking digging. If the detector emits an audible beep, it found metal. The Soldiers dig until they find something or until they feel it is time to move on.

After the detector finally let off a squeal, Thornton strode over to Gaines, and Spc. Aaron Bixler from C Co., 224th Eng. Bn., grabbed his shovel and began digging. Thornton and several other Soldiers watched in anticipation. Large caliber ammunition spilled out of the soil. "Great. Now let's look

for the pay dirt," said Thornton.

While the Soldiers continued to search for cleverly-hidden ammunition, weapons or other destructive terrorists' items, the Marine infantrymen fanned out and searched local residents, farm buildings and livestock pens.

Keeping a watchful eye on the male members of an Iraqi family was the responsibility of Cpl. Manual Cuevas, 2nd Plt., B Co., 2nd AAB, 2nd Mar. Div. Cuevas' duties were to serve as a sentry and an Arabic interpreter.

"We are trackers, infantry and combat engineers. It's a little hard to do it all," said Cuevas of his training as an amphibian warrior and the irony of roaming the desert as an infantryman and interpreter.

Cuevas attended a one-month training course on Arabic cultures, customs and language. "I practice — I have to keep on speaking to [Iraqi] people to understand it," he said.

"They are pretty good guys — a lot of help," said Marine Cpl. Miguel Oviedo, 2nd Plt., B Co., 2nd AAV, 2nd Mar. Div., as he described the Army engineers assigned to his unit.

Exhausted, dirty and frustrated, the Soldiers and Marines did not find much — just a handful of rusty and corroded machine gun rounds and some dingy combat gear.

Task Force Iron Hawk may not have had much success that day, but the combined Army and Marine task force is credited with finding an estimated 70 tons of ordinance, said Capt. James Higginbotham of the 224th Eng. Bn.

The Soldiers and Marines of Task Force Iron Hawk returned to their vehicles after ending their current search. Their work was not done; they had another dusty farm to search and a possible weapons cache to find.

Soldiers in Iraq reunite thirty years after graduation

By Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp

Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs Office

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq — There are three Vikings serving for the deployed forces of the U.S. Army. These Vikings aren't the ones of Nordic fame, but they do share a common bond.

The three Soldiers are actually Northwest High School Vikings from Clarksville, Tenn. Thirty years after graduation, the long-lost troops have found each other in the most unlikely of places — Iraq.

As a graduate of the NHS Class of 1973, Col. James H. Huggins II, Multi-National Corps - Iraq inspector general, was sitting in a briefing inspecting a personnel chart when he happened to notice a familiar name. It was that of Maj. Parris McCullah, the stay-behind equipment liaison for the MNC-I Reserve Component Division and member of the NHS Class of 1974.

The two had classes together in their high school days, and once Huggins saw that his former classmate was deployed to Camp Victory as well, he got in touch with McCullah over dinner.

"We got together at the chow hall to shoot the breeze and catch up on old times," Huggins said. But there was one more Viking out there, and Huggins knew this one was on the same camp as McCullah and him.

While the two were catching up over dinner, Huggins relayed this interesting piece of information to McCullah.

"Hey, did you know Mike Fant is here?" Huggins asked his former classmate.

"You've got to be joking me!" replied McCullah.

"No, I'm not. Matter of fact," Huggins grinned, pointed a finger, and said, "there he goes right there!"

Col. Mike Fant, graduate from the NHS Class of 1975 and now the commander of the 525th Military Intelligence Brigade, Fort Bragg, N.C., had just walked into the dining facility, Huggins explained.

Three former Vikings got together as Soldiers and fin-



U.S. Army photo

Col. Mike Fant, Col. James H. Huggins II and Maj. Parris McCullah stand in front of the Al-Faw Palace at Camp Victory, Iraq. The three Soldiers are graduates of Northwest High School in Clarksville, Tenn.

ished their meals while chatting of life back then. They had to go their separate ways, but not before a snapshot was taken of the three outside one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces.

Growing up, McCullah lived a distance down the road from Huggins. The former was a suburbanite, while the latter was out in the country. The two had class together off and on throughout their high school careers, but because of the distance between homes, they did not spend much time together after school.

"I would get a little jealous sometimes because McCullah

lived in town and could hang out with everybody after school," Huggins said. "We had horses and cattle and lots of other things to do after school. I don't consider them chores now and would love to go back to that life, but when I was 16 or 17, I'd grumble because Parris got to hang out with all our buddies."

While Huggins was two grades ahead of Fant, he didn't have much interaction with the youngest Viking. He remembers him now as the same way he saw him in school.

"You meet him now, he's the same as he was," Huggins said. "He's quiet, and back then, he just went to class and probably made straight-As."

After high school, Fant and McCullah both enlisted in the Army and later accepted commissions into the Army Officer Corps. Huggins attended the Reserve Officer Training Course at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in 1977.

Fant and McCullah had classes together while attending NHS, but neither had seen each other since high school, explained McCullah. He added that he was glad they have all had the chance to get together now.

"It's good to see people you haven't seen in years," McCullah said. "It's kind of funny to see who looks older and who looks younger."

When asked who has aged the best, McCullah responded with a laugh.

"I'll get in trouble answering that one," he said.

Though the three have separate missions, they still try to see each other when they can.

"We catch each other off and on," Huggins said. "My weekly schedule is not the same as McCullah's or Fant's, and Fant is the hardest to track down since his brigade is spread all over the country, but I still see the guys around. It's good just knowing they are here. It gives a feeling of home."

All three still have family in the Clarksville area, and McCullah, a full-time Army National Guardsman, has a residence in his hometown.

Round 3: Georgia Marine proud to serve third tour in Iraq

Story and photo by Sgt. Josh H. Hauser

2nd Force Service Support Group

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq — Our 40th President Ronald Reagan once said, "Some people go their whole life wondering if they ever made a difference. Marines don't have that problem."

One Marine who says he will never have that problem as well is Cpl. David P. Dees of Loganville, Ga. Dees is a motor transportation operator assigned to Transportation Support Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 8, 2nd Force Service Support Group (Forward), here.

At 22, Dees has just begun his third tour in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. His first stint to historic Mesopotamia began in the early months of 2004. His unit at the time was staged in Kuwait, awaiting orders for its next movement. After a month, word finally came. The unit then began what would be a three-day journey into the heart of the Sunni Triangle. His unit was headed to Camp Taqaddum in the country's Al Anbar province, west of Baghdad. Taqaddum was to be his unit's base of operations for the length of his tour.

"I remember the exact spot where we crossed the border," Dees said. "I was scared, nervous, excited, anxious ... you name it."

His perch offered him a view of some of the country's best and worst sights. Traveling northbound from southern Iraq, Dees remembers pictures of Iraq he had never imagined. Surrounding the Euphrates River is an oasis of dense, green palms and plant life.

"As we went through towns and villages, we got to see



Cpl. David P. Dees, a 22-year-old native of Loganville, Ga., is currently serving his third tour in Iraq.

the 'jungle side' of Iraq," he said. "I didn't know there were areas like that here. I always thought it was just sand and desert."

Along with Iraq's beauty, Dees' unit also encountered the realities of war as the convoy encountered sporadic firefights and improvised explosive device attacks — events that Dees would continue to encounter occasionally during his time in Iraq.

"During my first tour, we would get in firefights or get

mortared here and there — not nearly as [much] as the infantry, but enough to keep [us on our] toes," he said.

Dees returned to Iraq a second time in February of this year and was stationed at Camp Fallujah, a Marine Corps camp located west of Baghdad. After seven months in country, he was extended for a third tour.

Dees admits that reenlisting is a topic he still has not decided on, however, he feels strongly about the service and commitment he and other Marines have demonstrated here.

"I wouldn't trade the honor for anything. There are a lot of people willing to sacrifice their lives for their country and a lot of people who just aren't. You have people wanting handouts and not willing to sacrifice for it," Dees said matter-of-factly. "This generation seems a lot different than those past. You hear stories from the world wars and Korea where guys were dying to enlist; nowadays there are [people] who don't want to join or do anything."

Dees recently faced another round of elections in Iraq. He was here last year when the people of Iraq spoke out against the insurgency and raised their ink-stained fingers in the air for the first time in history in favor of freedom and democracy, and looked forward to seeing those images again as the Iraqis voted on the referendum.

As he runs a hand across his head under the blazing Iraqi sun, he states that he not only fights for Iraq's future, but he believes in it as well and looks forward to the day when the country he has helped free can stand on its own.

"One day when this country is a better place, I can look back and know I busted my [butt] helping to make that happen," he said.

Coalition Corner

... highlighting countries
serving with MNF-Iraq



Romania

local name: *Romania*

Romania is located in southeastern Europe and borders the Black Sea, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro, Moldova, Hungary and Ukraine. It is slightly smaller than Oregon. Over 22 million people live here, and the Leu is their currency system. Romanian is their official language, but Hungarian and German are also widely spoken throughout the country. Romania joined NATO in March 2004 and is projected to join the European Union in 2007.

Romania is full of enough historic sites and famous legends to fill an entire library. Once known as "the Paris of the East," Bucharest, the capital, is home to the 12-story Palace of Parliament, which is second to the Pentagon for the title of largest building in the world. Surrounded by beautiful Transylvanian hills, Brasov is one of Romania's most visited places. The main attraction of this historic city is the Black Church, which is said to be the largest Gothic church between Vienna and Istanbul. Sighisoara, only 30 kilometers from Brasov, is home to one of the most legendary structures — Bran Castle, commonly known as "Dracula's Castle." This tourist trap was the birthplace of Vlad "the impaler" Tepes, who is said to be the basis of Bram Stoker's famous book, "Dracula."

Not only does Romania have sites to quench one's thirst for history and legendary characters, it also has an array of foods that would make Dracula himself come off his liquid diet. One such food is sarmale, which is made with a mixture of rice and hacked meat, wrapped in cabbage leaves. Mamaliga, a hard or soft cornmeal mush that is boiled, baked or fried, and is often served with cheese and cream, is associated with traditional Romanian culture. Most Romanian lunches are not complete without a bowl of soup, or ciorba, which comes in so many varieties it takes up entire cookbooks.

Romania — yet another piece of the Multi-National Force - Iraq puzzle, dedicated to rebuilding Iraq.



References: www.cia.gov, www.lonelyplanet.com, www.iasicity.ro, www.ucs.mun.ca, www.mapzones.com.

Coalition Corner is compiled by Sgt. Misha King, editor, scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil.

CHAPLAIN'S TALK

Our brother's keeper

By Cmdr. Mitchell Schranz,
Chaplain
Multi-National Force – Iraq

Someone sent me this beautiful story a few years ago, and I've tried to pass it along whenever possible. It shows us, more than anything else, that no one ever makes it alone.

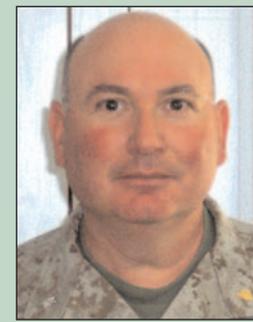
Back in the fifteenth century, in a tiny village near Nuremberg, lived a family with eighteen children. Eighteen! In order merely to keep food on the table for this mob, the father and head of the household, a goldsmith by profession, worked almost eighteen hours a day at his trade and any other paying chore he could find in the neighborhood.

Despite their seemingly hopeless condition, two of the Durer children had a dream. They both wanted to pursue their talent for art, but they knew full well that their father would never be financially able to send either of them to Nuremberg to study at the academy.

After many long discussions at night in their crowded bed, the two boys finally worked out a pact. They would toss a coin. The loser would go down into the nearby mines and, with his earnings, support his brother while he attended the academy. Then, when that brother who won the toss completed his studies, in four years, he would support the other brother at the academy, either with sales of his artwork or, if necessary, also by laboring in the mines.

They tossed a coin on a Sunday morning after church. Albrecht Durer won the toss and went off to

Nuremberg. Albert went down into the dangerous mines and, for the next four years, financed his brother, whose work at the academy was almost an immediate sensation. Albrecht's etchings, his woodcuts, and his oils were far better than those of



Chaplain Schranz

most of his professors, and by the time he graduated, he was beginning to earn considerable fees for his commissioned works.

When the young artist returned to his village, the Durer family held a festive dinner on their lawn to celebrate Albrecht's triumphant homecoming. After a long and memorable meal, punctuated with music and laughter, Albrecht rose from his honored position at the head of the table to drink a toast to his beloved brother for the years of sacrifice that had enabled him to fulfill his ambition. His closing words were, "And now, Albrecht, blessed brother of mine, now it is your turn. Now you can go to Nuremberg to pursue your dream, and I will take care of you."

All heads turned in eager expectation to the far end of the table where Albert sat, tears streaming down his pale face, shaking his lowered head from side to side while he sobbed and repeated, over and over, "No ... no ... no ... no!"

Finally, Albert rose and wiped the tears from his cheeks. He glanced down the long table at the faces he loved, and then, holding his hands close to his right cheek, he said softly, "No, brother. I cannot go to Nuremberg. It is too late

for me. Look ... look what four years in the mines have done to my hands! The bones in every finger have been smashed at least once, and lately I have been suffering from arthritis so badly in my right hand that I cannot even hold a glass to return your toast,

much less make delicate lines on parchment or canvas with a pen or a bush. No, brother ... for me it is too late."

More than 450 years have passed. By now, Albrecht Durer's hundreds of masterful portraits, pen and silver-point sketches, watercolors, charcoals, wood cuts and copper engravings hang in every great museum in the world, but the odds are great that you, like most people, are familiar with only one of Albrecht Durer's works. More than merely being familiar with it, you very well may have a reproduction hanging in your home or office.

One day, to pay homage to Albert for all that he had sacrificed, Albrecht Durer painstakingly drew his brother's abused hands with palms together and thin fingers stretched skyward. He called his powerful drawing simply "Hands," but the entire world almost immediately opened their hearts to his great masterpiece and renamed his tribute of love "The Praying Hands."

The next time you see a copy of that touching creation, take a second look. Let it be your reminder, if you still need one, that we all have someone, or many people, to thank for our good fortune.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Four bombs destroyed before detonation

BAGHDAD — Task Force Baghdad Soldiers found and destroyed four bombs before they could detonate and harm Iraqi civilians or Iraqi and U.S. military forces during combat operations Saturday.

The first improvised explosive device, made from two 120 mm mortar rounds, was discovered by Soldiers from 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division east of Abu Ghraib in the early-morning hours. An explosive ordnance disposal team destroyed the bomb through controlled-detonation procedures.

Another bomb was discovered by 2/22 Inf. in the same area several hours later. It was also destroyed by explosive experts.

About one hour later, Soldiers from 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry, attached to 1st BCT, 10th Mountain Div., and Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Iraqi Army Brigade discovered a 155 mm round in West Abu Ghraib, which appeared to be an improvised explosive device in the preliminary stages of construction. Bomb experts removed the ordnance from the area.

In the early afternoon, 1/11th ACR Soldiers came across a vehicle near the same area of Abu Ghraib that contained two 30-pound propane tanks and five 120 mm mortar rounds. After the area was cordoned off and secured, explosive experts destroyed the bomb, which was determined to be a vehicle-borne IED.

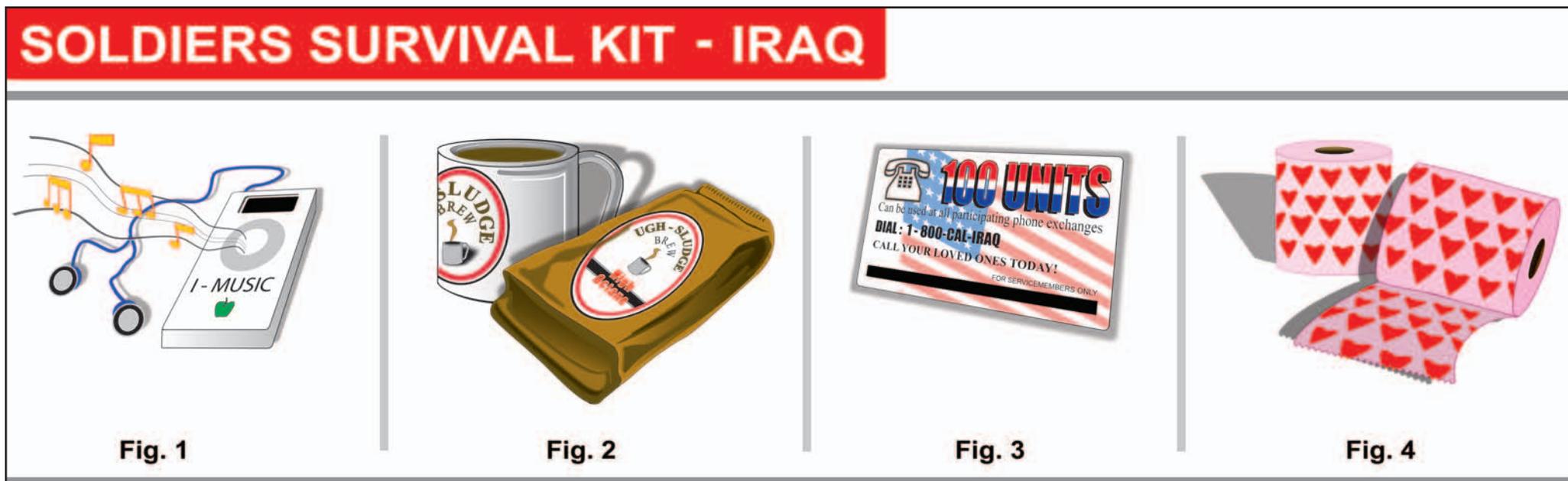
Terrorists detained, VBIEDs destroyed in Husaybah

BAGHDAD — Coalition Forces found two car bombs and detained four suspected terrorists during raids in Husaybah Monday.

The safe houses were suspected of housing senior al Qaeda in Iraq terrorists and foreign fighters who used them as operational bases to plan and conduct attacks against Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces in the Husaybah and Karabilah areas.

The two vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices were found outside the safe houses and were fully operational for use against Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces. The VBIEDs were destroyed.

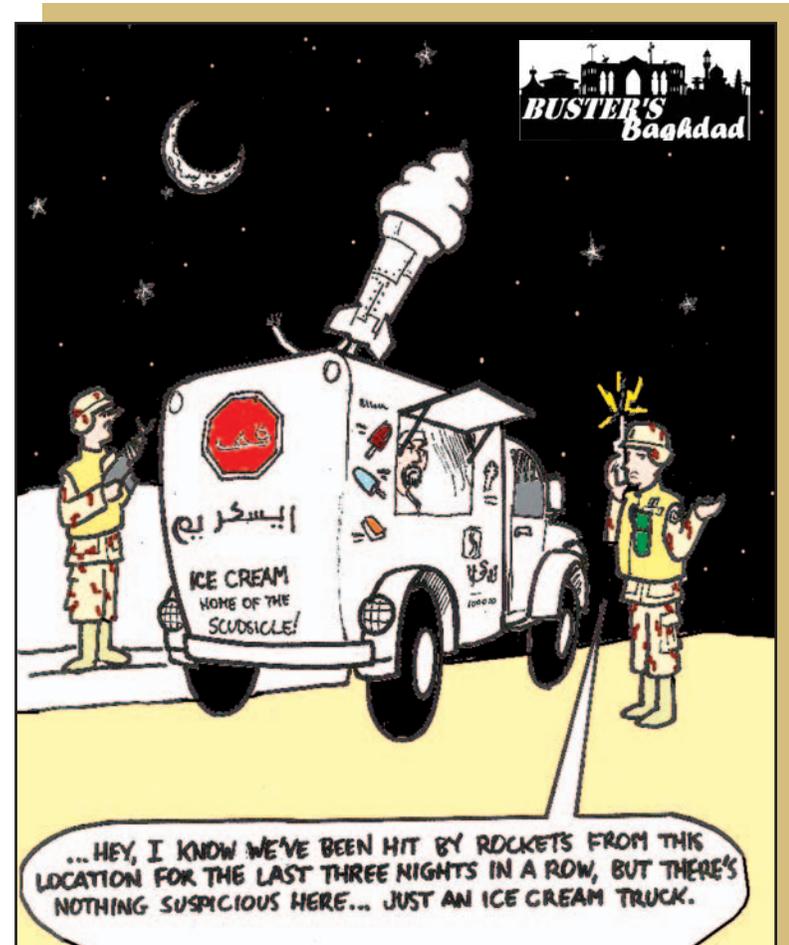
Scimitar Slapstick



Art by Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn



Art by Jeffery Hall



Art by Maj. James D. Crabtree

Story, photo, art and comic submissions are welcome! Please send to the *Scimitar* for consideration at: scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil

Big Easy 5K participants run for Hurricane Katrina victims

By Staff Sgt. Robert Timmons
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, TIKRIT, Iraq — While Iraqi citizens were helping themselves take a step forward to a representative government during the constitutional referendum, some U.S. Soldiers were helping those struck hard by Hurricane Katrina by donating time and money to the Big Easy 5K run held here Oct. 16.

"It is important because it shows solidarity," said Damian Gonzalez, a member of the Forward Operating Base Speicher Fire Department and overall winner of the race.

"We saw it after 9/11 when we as Americans came together."

Gonzalez added that it was part of the relief and a way that those deployed to Iraq can help raise money.

Along with Gonzalez, 500 people signed up for the run and another 200 donated money to the relief, said 1st Lt. Alisha Ramsey, the event founder and coordinator. The event raised more than \$6,200 for the American Red Cross Hurricane Relief Fund.

"This is way beyond the money," said Ramsey, a platoon leader with 578th Signal Company, 17th Signal Battalion based out of Darmstadt, Germany. "It is a symbol of who cared. It allowed everyone involved to release their stress and closed out their frustration."

Even though Soldiers were arriving and leaving Iraq, the race was planned to coincide with that transition to allow a maximum of participants.

"Soldiers are starting to redeploy," the California native said, "and a lot of stuff is going on. I wanted to act fast so the sooner they could get the money the better. A lot of new and old Soldiers were able to take part in the race because of the timing."

The race's roots lay in that besides donating money online, it is difficult for deployed Soldiers to help.

"Donating money online didn't help make me feel like I was contributing," she said. "If I could get 500 people to participate, it would compound it 18-fold."

The overall second place finisher behind Gonzalez said it was a worthwhile cause he was more than happy to support.

"I like to run and it was a good cause," said Pfc. Michael Laforest, a laundry and textile specialist with 16th Quartermaster Company. "This was the best way I could help those affected by the hurricane," he said.

While the run was overshadowed by the Iraqi referendum vote, Soldiers were



Photo courtesy of 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Runners sign a banner donated by AAFES before the Big Easy 5K run Oct. 16 at FOB Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq.

still very appreciative.

"Soldiers, who told me their houses were flooded by 18 inches of water and their pets survived because they climbed on top of something, have come up to me and said thank you," said a visibly happy Ramsey.



Photo courtesy of 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Runners line up behind a fire truck seconds before the truck's siren wailed signifying the start of the Big Easy 5K run to benefit victims of Hurricane Katrina Oct. 16.

Big Easy 5K winners

Men's Division

- 1st Place:** Damian Gonzalez, 14:52, FOB Speicher firefighter from Houston
- 2nd Place:** Pfc. Michael Laforest, 14:55, 16th Quartermaster Company from Missoula, Mont.
- 3rd Place:** Pfc. Timothy Bobakov, 15:25, 101st Aviation Brigade from Caluga, Russia

Women's Division

- 1st Place:** Spc. Jessica Reed, 17:20, 313th Medevac Company from Lincoln, Neb.
- 2nd Place:** 1st Lt. Staci Hopkins, 18:42, 32nd Medlog Bn. from Fort Bragg, N.C.
- 3rd Place:** Maj. Cynthia Hargrove, 19:14, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 101st Aviation Brigade




Do you know where your **J** is?...

Disc Jockey

FREEDOM RADIO

Frequencies	Al Asad	107.3 FM	Mosul	105.1 FM
	Ar Ramadi	107.3 FM	Q-West	93.3 FM
	Baghdad	107.7 FM	Taji	107.3 FM
	Balad	107.3 FM	Talil	107.3 FM
	Fallujah	105.1 FM	Tall Afar	107.3 FM
	Kirkuk	107.3 FM	Taqqadum	107.3 FM
	Kirkush	107.3 FM	Tikrit	100.1 FM

Playing the music you want to hear!

Verify your surroundings.



Anything could contain an IED.



STAY ALIVE

0051
IEDs KILL

Camp Victory Boxing Club Presents Fight Night November

Nov. 5, 2005 Camp Victory, Iraq

Boxers and Coaches Meeting
4 p.m. Oct. 21 in Bldg. 124

Weigh in
6 - 9 a.m. Nov. 4
All fighters must weigh in

Contact Sgt. Rosado
or Staff Sgt. Evans to sign up
jamie.rosado@iraq.centcom.mil
benjamin.evans@iraq.centom.mil



AMERICA SUPPORTS YOU

OUR MILITARY MEN & WOMEN