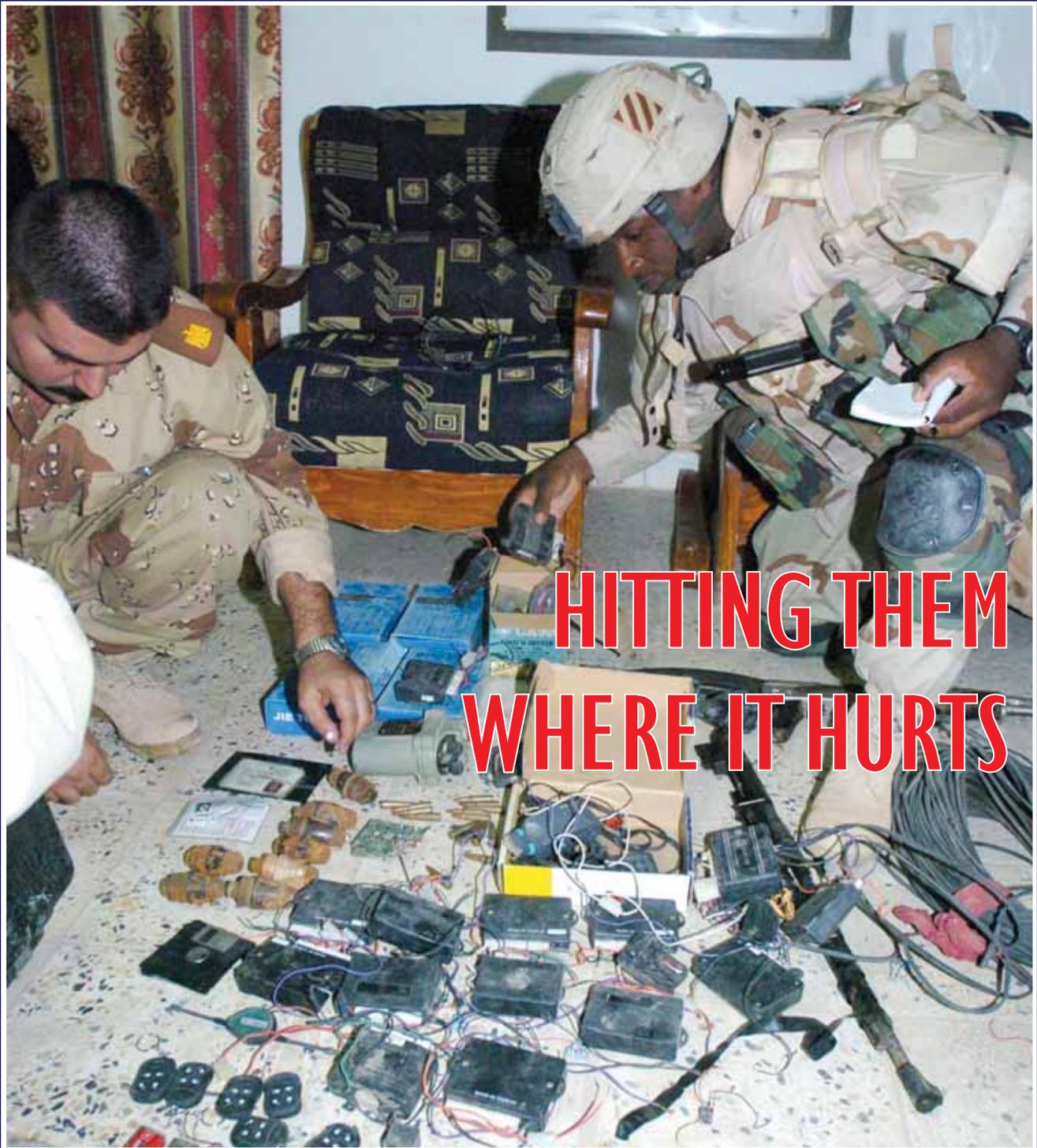


The Warrior

October 2005

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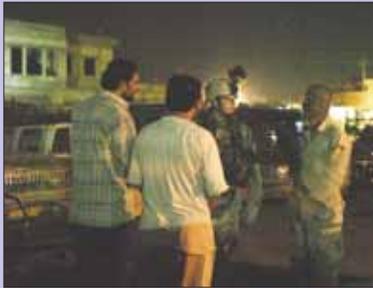
**HITTING THEM
WHERE IT HURTS**

Contents

The Warrior October 2005 Volume 2, Number 9

Cover Story

8



3-15 Inf. takes it to the terrorists -

China conducts multiple operations to clear terrorists out of east Baghdad, detaining multiple suspects and scores of bomb-making materials.

On the cover: Staff Sgt. William Council, HHC, 3-15 Inf., examines bomb-triggering devices found during an Iraqi Army raid of insurgents' homes in Sadr City Oct. 6.

Features

4

Spartan NETOPS - Brigade and 2-3 BTB Soldiers work 'round-the-clock to maintain network connectivity between all units in the 2nd BCT.



6



Saber maintains security -

3-7 Cav. continues their mission to secure-southeast Baghdad, and gauges the needs of the people.

12

Battlekings driving on - 1-9 FA conducts successful raids in September and October.

16

Iraqis vote on constitution - More than 600,00 Iraqis in east Baghdad exercised their democratic right to vote during the constitutional referendum Oct. 15.



18

SPTT and POB - Special Police Training Teams send the POB off to conduct a successful and autonomous anti-terrorist operation.

19

BTB gets together for fun - Titan Soldiers take some time off to have an organizational day.

20

Rogue and Challenger deliver - 1-64 Armor and 26th FSB deliver and emplace concrete barriers to secure polling sites for the referendum.

21



Filling up the tanks -

Soldiers of the 26th FSB travel to all FOBs across the 2nd BCT AO, delivering the fuel necessary to keep the Spartan machine rolling.





Monthly

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--------------------------|
| 2 | Spartan 6 | 23 | Take Motrin, Drink Water |
| 3 | Words from the field | 24 | News |
| 22 | From the Chaplain
Where the \$ goes | | |

Referendum Complete; Next...

A week ago the world was officially notified that the Iraqi constitution passed the vote; the people have spoken and support this critical document.

Things are going to get real busy real quick, but I would like to give you all the following observations pertaining to October's referendum: 1) The Iraqi Security Forces stepped up and performed superbly during the referendum week. There was marked improvement with Iraqi Army and Police coordination; 2) The Civil Affairs folks really earned their pay; Spartan put their arms around the United Nations election folks, as well as the IECI workers, and established a great rapport; 3) All the Battalions managed the hundreds of polling stations superbly; be it security, counter mobility, outer cordon, etc. A tremendous effort by all – no surprise here.

What's next? First, our main effort will remain defeating the terrorists. We will continue to use every option we have to shut the door on these bastards.

Second, we will continue to facilitate constructive interaction with Iraqi Army and police/public order brigades—they remain our ticket out of here.

Third, we will start working the details for redeployment and battle handoff with our successor brigade.

All that said, November will be critical as we set the stage for a super critical December-January period.

How are we going to guarantee success? As always, continue executing the Big 4 to standard (know task & purpose, PCC/PCIs, rehearse everything, and do risk mitigation). Nothing is routine, expect the unexpected with respect to the enemy.

They will continue to stop at nothing, and we will continue to drive the enemy towards accomplishing nothing except their own demise.

Be very flexible as battle space adjusts to accommodate our successors. Our charter is simple: set the incoming BCT and their great Battalions up for success out to APR 06.

Start planning the details for what you need to pass on to your counterpart; this must be done efficiently because we will not have a lot of time to execute this relief in contact.

December's election will be more complicated and contentious than October's referendum.

Expect increased intimidation tactics, political sabotage, and extortion as individuals and various parties compete for power. The polls will be targeted by the enemy as they try and prove they can disrupt this key event (the terrorists failed in October, so they will pull out all the stops to get credibility).

December's election combined redeployment prep and battle hand off prep will be our biggest challenge yet. No

big deal, this is what Spartan Warriors get paid to do.

As we enter our 11th month in zone, I will state the obvious: you all continue to make a positive difference.

Your commitment, stamina, and dedication are second to none. Our Nation remains in awe of your courage.

Keep focused and thank you, thank you, and thank you. God Bless,

SEND ME,
DiSalvo



The Warrior

The official magazine of the
Spartan Brigade Combat Team and its Soldiers

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In this issue of *The Warrior*, we're highlighting the poetry of Sgt. Glenn Schuller, a Spartan Soldier from F Co., 26th FSB, attached to 1-9 FA. Enjoy!

Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich
Editor, *The Warrior*

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER

I fight for freedom and the American way
I am willing to give my life every day
I am one of many but one of a kind
I swore an oath to never leave a fallen
comrade behind
I am from every nation and I am of many
colors
I am made up of sisters and brothers
In time of war I stand by myself shoulder
to shoulder
For I am an American Soldier

Sgt. Glenn J. Schuller

SPARTAN NETOPS

Soldiers from brigade headquarters and 2-3 BTB keep BCT connected

Story by Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich

In the modern digital age, network and internet connectivity is something that people at work and at home have come to expect.

Whether it's a simple telephone line, a dial-up internet connection or a local area network, technology has enabled millions to stay connected.

That's no different for the modern fighting force and Soldiers deployed with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team in Baghdad.

With the help of satellites, on-the-ground equipment and technical know-how, Soldiers of the 2nd BCT Network Operations Center at Camp Loyalty keep units, commanders and Soldiers up to date on what's going on in their battle space, back home and throughout the world.

Comprised of Soldiers from 2nd BCT's automation section and A Company, 2nd Brigade Troops Battalion, Spartan NETOPS is responsible for maintaining around-the-clock connectivity with units in the BCT and beyond.

"Our job is to make sure all distant nodes (or camps) stay connected at all times," said Maj. Curtis Geiger, 2nd BCT, network administrator. Those nodes include Camps Volunteer, Hope, Rustamiya, Loyalty, the old Ministry of Defense compound and Adhamiyah Palace. "(The BCT network) encompasses about 1,100 users, or pieces of equipment we are monitoring."

From the time Spartan NETOPS touched down in Baghdad, they had their work cut out for them.

"When we got (to Iraq), we hit the ground running," Geiger said. "We had to build a complete automation network from scratch – from network routers and lines to components. It took us about 30 days working 20 to 22 hour days to get the system up and running."

The connectivity is dependent on a new piece of

equipment that the Spartan BCT is the first to put in place – the Joint Network Node. The JNN is a centralized network hub, located at BCT headquarters, that utilizes line-of-sight and satellite communications technology to route Secure Internet Protocol Receiver, Non-secure Internet Protocol Receiver and Voice-over Internet Protocol traffic to and from elements of the 2nd BCT.

Because the JNN is brand new to the brigade, Soldiers had to be trained extensively and quickly by independent contractors – JNN subject-matter experts. Each Soldier from A Co., 2-3 BTB, in NETOPS has amassed the knowledge of the system and plays a critical role in maintaining the network.

They also use a multitude of software programs which track potential problems all the way down to an individual router port.

"If anything pops up, we have a trained technician who goes out (to the JNN hub) and troubleshoots the problem," said Staff Sgt. Andy Oates, A Co., 2-3 BTB, NETOPS frequency manager. "Fortunately, we have a lot of

(Soldiers) who are well trained and get it right the first time."

The JNN hub itself is sheltered and fits on the back of a humvee. It handles fiber-optic cables and standard network cables through a series of routers which, according to Oates, "makes it much easier to get both voice and computer data faster."

Before JNN, BCT-level units utilized only line-of-site and frequency modulation technology to communicate with other each other and higher headquarters. The advantages of the system, according to Chief Warrant Officer Daryl Rounds, are obvious to everyone affected by the new technology.

"There's a substantial amount of bandwidth with this system, which leads to increased service," Rounds, the A Co., 2-3 BTB, network manager, said. "(The JNN) allows



commanders, staff and Soldiers to communicate via secure and non-secure internet, and secure voice-over IP phones at the same time. From commanders speaking to one another to Soldiers using the internet café – everyone benefits.”

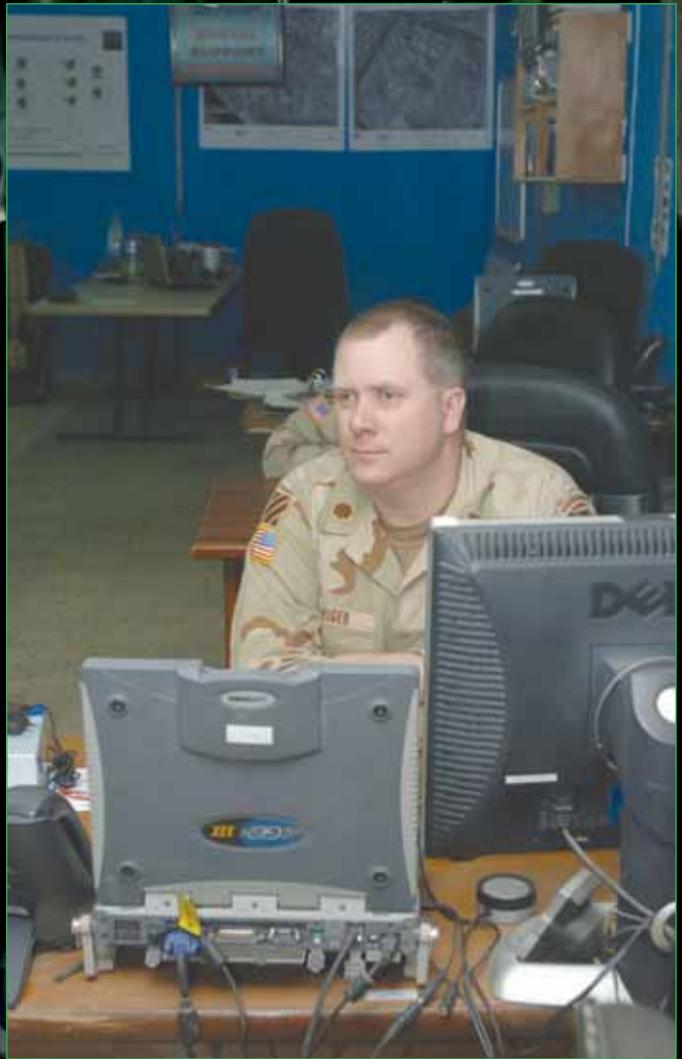
Prior to the 3rd Infantry Division’s initial assault into Iraq in March 2003, the BCT battlefield planning was limited to radio communications, butcher block paper and paper maps in the tactical operations center.

“We are now a little more than half-way through our tour (in Iraq), and (the brigade TOC) is able to do all the same things as before, but it’s all automated and digitized,” Geiger said.

The most noticeable difference is the Command Post of the Future. CPOF, as it is called, is an independent server which connects BCTs and higher headquarters with each other. It utilizes an interactive program which allows users to view identical maps, graphics and pieces of information on a computer monitor in real time. For example, when a commander briefs a specific event over the radio, he can simultaneously open a map and highlight, with a digital marker, the specific location on the map where the event occurred. All units with the CPOF online will view the commander’s marking of the area on the same map at the same time.

According to Rounds, CPOF has “exposed the entire battle space to the commanders ... and they’re real pleased with its capabilities.”

For Spartan NETOPS, monitoring and sustaining the network is their primary task, 24 hours per day. If there are hiccups, they find them. If there are problems, they fix them. If there is an outage, they bring the network back up – and fast. With an uptime of 98% since February, NETOPS is sure to keep all members of the Spartan BCT connected.



Above) Maj. Curtis Geiger, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, network operations manager, monitors network activity on the big screen during the CPOF briefing.



(Left) Sgt. Phillip Marshall, 2nd BCT, network administrator, conducts a check of the Spartan Web. Marshall, who constructed the site, is also responsible for its updates and maintenance.

SABER SCOUTS:

Working to secure and rebuild Baghdad

Story and photos by Spc. Ben Brody

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Troopers from 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, conduct wide-ranging operations in Eastern Baghdad, from refurbishing local schools to hunting insurgents who place improvised explosive device on roadways.

Keeping roads safe

A Troop, 3-7 Cav., maintains its vigilance on the roads, constantly watching for IED-emplacers.

“We’re hunting the bad guys every night, every day,” said Spc. Dwayne Jackson, A Troop, 3-7 Cav., driver. “We all want to go home together at the end of our rotation.”

Jackson, from Atlanta, Ga., said he feels well-trained for the task at hand.

“We spent a year training for these kinds of missions before we came here,” he said. “Everything comes naturally to us now.”

The night of Sept. 22, A Troop set up observation points on a major roadway in their sector, looking for signs of insurgent activity.

At one OP, Soldiers painted over inflammatory graffiti on a brick wall near the highway.

“The wall said, ‘Long live the mujahideen’ and some Koranic verses that talk about fighting the infidels,” said Sgt. Matt Parker, 301st Psychological Operations Company, operating in support of 3-7 Cav.

“We’re painting over it to send a message that insurgent’s aren’t welcome here.”

Parker also brought posters advertising the Baghdad Tips Hotline, a phone number and email address that Baghdad residents can use to report criminal activity.

“The program has been increasing in effectiveness,” Parker, from San Diego, Calif., said. “The locals are interested in getting terrorists out of their country.”

“We’ve seen IED and rocket attacks decrease since we took over the sector,” said 1st Sgt. John Campbell, A Troop, 3-7 Cav., first sergeant.

“Since we’ve been running with the increased presence, attacks have sharply dropped off. We’re out every night in force, showing people we’re keeping them safe.”



2nd Lt. Kyle Hemminger, A Troop, 3-7 Cav., tank platoon leader, searches an abandoned building in Baghdad for signs of terrorist activity Sept. 23, while (right) a humvee maintains security on the road below.





Rebuilding neglected areas

Saber is involved in numerous projects in their sector, rebuilding infrastructure neglected under Saddam Hussein's regime.

Civil military operations officers from 3-7 Cav. inspected project sites in Jisr-Diyala and Medain to assess their progress Sept. 20.

"We're focused on schools, water, electricity, sewers and government sites," said 1st Lt. Richard Paco, 3-7 Cav., assistant CMO officer. "These have a great impact on the economy – in the short term by providing jobs and in the long term by creating a healthy infrastructure."

At an elementary school in Jisr-Diyala, Paco, from Nogales, Ariz., inspected a generator, new desks and repairs paid for by Saber's commander's emergency relief program.

CERP provides funds for battalion-sized units to contract out improvements on local infrastructure in their areas.

According to Paco, work is prioritized according to need. Outlying villages tend to need improved water and electric service the most, he said.

"The kids love school projects," Paco said. "One of our contractors paints pictures of soccer players on the walls – the children like that guy a lot."

School guard Majeed Mohammed Jassim described the condition of the school two years ago – a laundry list of deficiencies.

"There were no lights, the walls were broken, with big holes in the ceiling and the bathroom didn't work," Jassim said. "The work repairing the school is good for the children, they are happy to come to school now."

Further down the road, near the for-



(Above) Capt. Onni Hynninen, 3-7 Cav., adjutant, speaks with members of the community at a checkpoint in Baghdad. (Left) A Baghdad school guard shows his children a classroom refurbished with funds from 3-7 Cav., Sept 20.

mer site of the Tawaitha nuclear reactor, local government is working from a refurbished District Advisory Council hall.

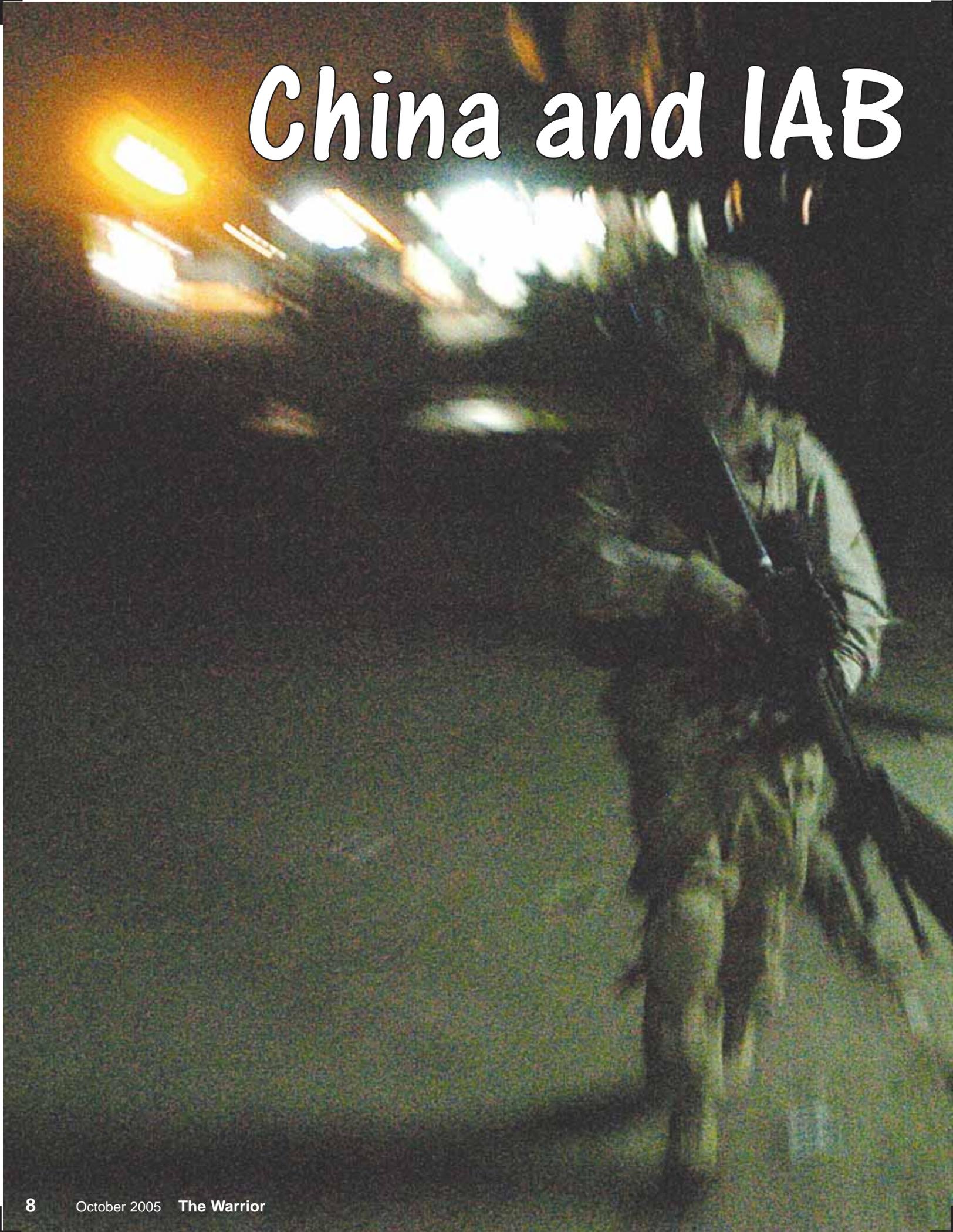
"The DAC building is a big improvement over the youth center they used as temporary offices," Paco said. "It is dedicated for their exclusive use, they can provide their own security and it gives the council members a sense of ownership."

From the DAC hall, signs that the local government is providing essential services to its citizens are emerging. Brand new power lines cross the roads, as garbage collectors empty dumpsters at a nearby market.

"Some of the projects we see, we had nothing to do with, which is a good sign," Paco said. "People's confidence in their government is growing because of these projects, and the huge turnout during voter registration reflects that."

"People's confidence in their government is growing because of these projects, and the turnout during voter registration reflects that."

China and IAB

A dark, grainy photograph of a person in a trench coat walking at night. The person is seen from the side, walking away from the camera. The background is filled with blurred, bright lights, likely from streetlights or traffic, creating a bokeh effect. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and somewhat somber.

take it to the terrorists

Story and photos by Spc. Ben Brody

Sadr City. Even for those relatively uninformed about the war in Iraq, the name evokes images of narrow dusty streets patrolled by Soldiers.

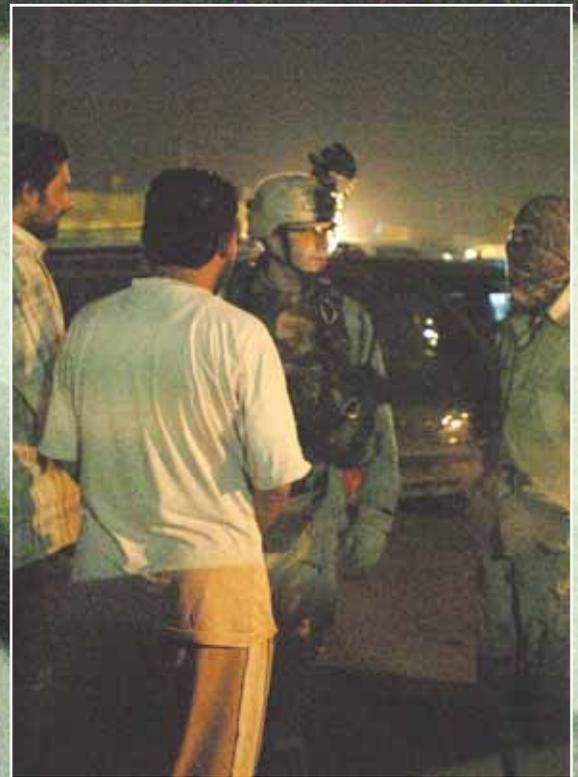
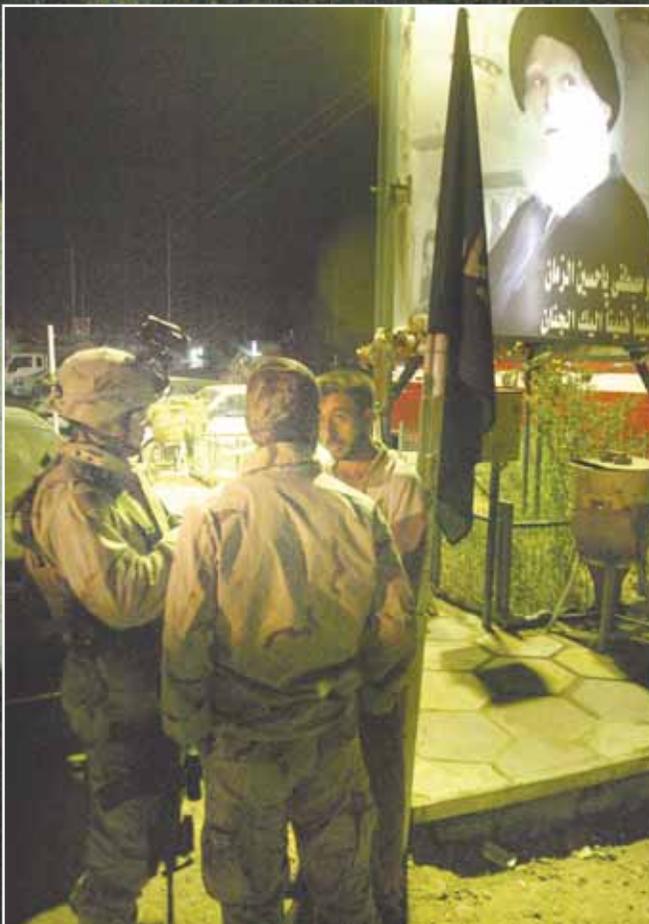
Though vast infrastructure improvements have been made since last year's heavy fighting, Sadr City still presents unique challenges to Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry, who are tasked with maintaining its security.

Capt. G. Mike Ohman, D Company, 3-15 Inf., commander thinks that "Sadr is the most politically important zone in the whole country – If Sadr City fails, Iraq will fall. There's a huge responsibility on our part and on the Iraqi Security Forces to keep the peace."

Insurgent groups, some claiming to be legitimate political organizations, hold tremendous sway in Sadr, where members enforce a harsh brand of Islamic law through a notorious punishment committee.

In many other areas, Soldiers do not have to worry about who they're upsetting when they go to arrest a criminal or insurgent. According to Ohman, Sadr City is not that simple. "It takes patience and finesse – and that's tough on Soldiers."

Earlier in September, Soldiers from 3-15 Inf. were involved in several firefights in Sadr City, which resulted in a number of insurgents killed.



(Above and left) Capt. G. Mike Ohman, D Co., 3-15 Inf., commander, speaks with Sadr City residents Oct. 4.



Ohman and 1st Lt. Don Bailey, both of D Co., 3-15 Inf., speak with Sadr City residents at the scene of a murder during a patrol Oct. 4. A raid of a suspected terrorist's home was conducted two nights later, and led by Special Forces-trained Iraqi Soldiers.

“Our Red Platoon was involved in an all-out firefight in Sadr – I’ve got a lot of vehicles with bullet holes in them,” Ohman said. “During an Iraqi Army cordon and knock, the terrorists mobilized, and 25 to 30 sectors opened fire. We responded appropriately and engaged the targets we could identify.”

The incident was widely covered in U.S. newspapers, and the published accounts were based on unreliable sources, he said.

“The stories in the paper were totally inaccurate – they reported that we were firing randomly in all directions, which couldn’t be further from the truth,” Ohman said. “Our guys are showing incredible restraint in tough situations. They take a constant beating from thrown rocks, and they don’t cuss people out, throw rocks back or open fire.”

Ohman said he would like to leave knowing Dragon Company made people’s lives better in Sadr City. The company leads 3-15 Inf. in humanitarian aid drops, and Ohman is a regular presence at Neighborhood Advisory Council

meetings in Sadr City.

“We’ve been fortunate to have a good group of informants – they provide key intel that’s been consistently reliable,” Ohman said.

“Getting good informants has to be your number one priority in Sadr City – if you don’t have informants you’re just wasting your time here.”

Sadr City, formerly known as Saddam City, is the most densely populated area in Iraq and home to the majority of Baghdad’s youth population. About two million people live in Sadr City’s nine square miles.

“(Many young people) are from Sadr City, which makes the sector crucial to the success of any national election held in Iraq,” said 1st Lt. Don Bailey, D Co., 3-15 Inf., fire support officer. “Most of the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army (posted in Sadr City) are from there too, so it’s never ‘just a firefight’ for them – it’s their neighborhood and people they know are involved.

“It’s tough to put them in a position to choose, when their neighbors are breaking laws,” Bailey

continued. “Most guys involved in the (local militias) just want to secure their city, to live in peace – but there are some really bad characters in there too.”

Within Sadr City’s insurgent groups, there are numerous factions with different goals. For instance, a political wing is involved with local and national government, while criminal gangs are operating under the same banner.

“(Sadr City) is trying to find its place in Iraq’s government, but at the same time hardcore militia members are influencing the populace with fear,” Bailey, from Woodbridge, Va., said. He thinks some of them “are just drunks who are paid to kill anyone the militia has a problem with.”

Bailey said he wants to help make an environment where Sadr City residents can vote and work in safety.

“First, we’ve got to prevent anything catastrophic from happening, but still continue to build Sadr City’s infrastructure,” he said. “At the same time, we have to do what we can to keep the (militia) hon-



(Left) A Soldier from D Co., 3-15 Inf., investigates the scene of a murder during a patrol in Sadr City Oct. 4. (Below) Capt. Matt Morgan, C Co., 3-15 Inf., commander, speaks with a guard at a warehouse where ballots for Iraq's constitutional referendum were stored.

est.”

To minimize political repercussions with local leaders and maintain relations with residents, Soldiers from 3-15 Inf. keep their operations short and focused.

Iraqi Soldiers trained by 3-15 Inf. and Special Forces increasingly take the lead during such missions, as their capabilities steadily grow.

In a lightning fast predawn raid, Iraqi Army troops raided the homes of two notorious terrorists in Sadr City Oct. 6.

Taking the lead during the operation was Iraqi Army's strike platoon, an elite unit trained extensively by U.S. Special Forces. SF Soldiers were present on the mission to observe the Iraqi unit in action.

During the operation, troops from Jaguar Company, 3-2 Iraqi Army Battalion, set up an outer cordon, preventing insurgent forces from reaching the target, and making sure the targets didn't escape.

Captured in the raid were two terrorists.

One of the terrorists was known for emplacing roadside bombs and rocket-propelled grenade attacks on coalition forces. He reportedly received a car for shooting down of



a U.S. Army helicopter last year.

The other terrorist was known as “The Engineer” for his expertise manufacturing and emplacing bombs.

The raid uncovered a cache of bomb triggering devices at his residence.

“The raid shows the capability of the IAB to plan and execute a complex mission,” said Capt. Zan Hornbuckle, HHC, 3-15 Inf., commander. “They're totally competent at the squad and platoon level, and getting better at the company

level.”

Hornbuckle is in charge of 3-15 Inf.'s Military Transition Team, who work with the IAB daily, mentoring and observing their progress.

While Special Forces observed the strike platoon, Hornbuckle and his Soldiers rode with Jaguar Company.

“They did a great job, everything went really smoothly,” Hornbuckle said. “It gives the Iraqi soldiers confidence in their capabilities to pull off such a complex mission flawlessly.”

RAID!

Battlekings capture terrorists on multiple missions in Zafaraniya

Story and photos by Spc. Ben Brody

Residents of Zafarania are enjoying more security due to the efforts of Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, who operate in the Southeastern Baghdad district.

Numerous recent missions have resulted in the discovery and destruction of weapons caches and the detention of wanted insurgents.

POB and 1-9 FA conduct Flea Flicker

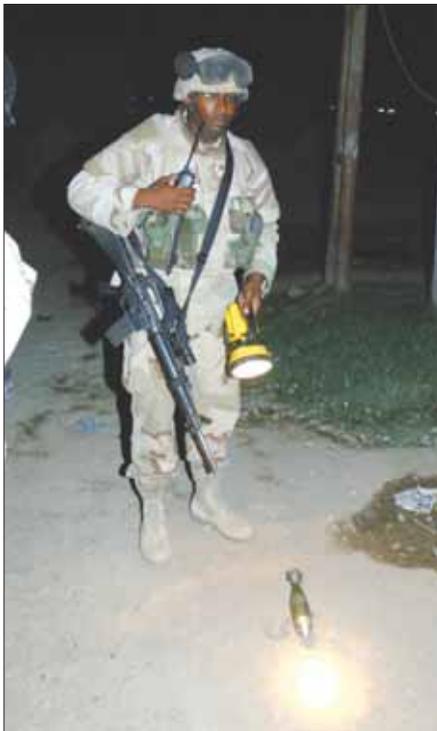
Soldiers from 1-9 FA and Iraqi Public Order Brigade troops searched houses and fields during Operation Flea Flicker in Zafaraniya, Sept. 14.

The operation was designed to disrupt anti-Iraqi activity in the area near a voting station, in preparation for the Oct. 15 referendum vote.

“With the (referendum) coming up, it (was) important to show more presence in the area,” said Capt. Dan Golini, A Battery, 1-9 FA, fire direction officer. “Anytime you put a large force on the ground in one area, it’s going to significantly disrupt enemy activi-

ty.”

The joint force swept through neighborhoods in the early morning mission, searching for illegal



Sgt. Shaun Mance, A Btry., 1-9 FA, inspects a mortar round found in a Zafarania residence during a search Sept. 14.

weapons, propaganda and other contraband.

POB troops spoke with residents, attempting to reinforce their relationship with the community.

“We come here to show that we are here for security, to help the people,” said 2nd Lt. Khalid Wissam of the POB. “The people see us and they are not afraid.”

Troops discovered several minor weapons violations, and detained a man found with a 60mm mortar round hidden in a plastic bag under his bed.

“It’s always good to get a dangerous weapon off the streets,” said Pfc. Luke Garcia, A Btry., 1-9 FA, gunner. “A mortar looks small, but it can do some damage.”

Working with the POB, a paramilitary branch of the Iraqi Police, and training them to be an effective police force is routine for A Btry. Soldiers, who say they have seen marked improvement in the Iraqi troops.

“The POB guys have come a long way,” said Sgt. Shaun Mance, A Btry., 1-9 FA, truck leader. “We’re working hard to keep them on the right track, and it shows



Spc. Milton Gonzales, B Btry., 1-9 FA, smashes a gate open during a raid in Baghdad that netted several wanted insurgents Oct. 8.

when you have a successful day like today.”

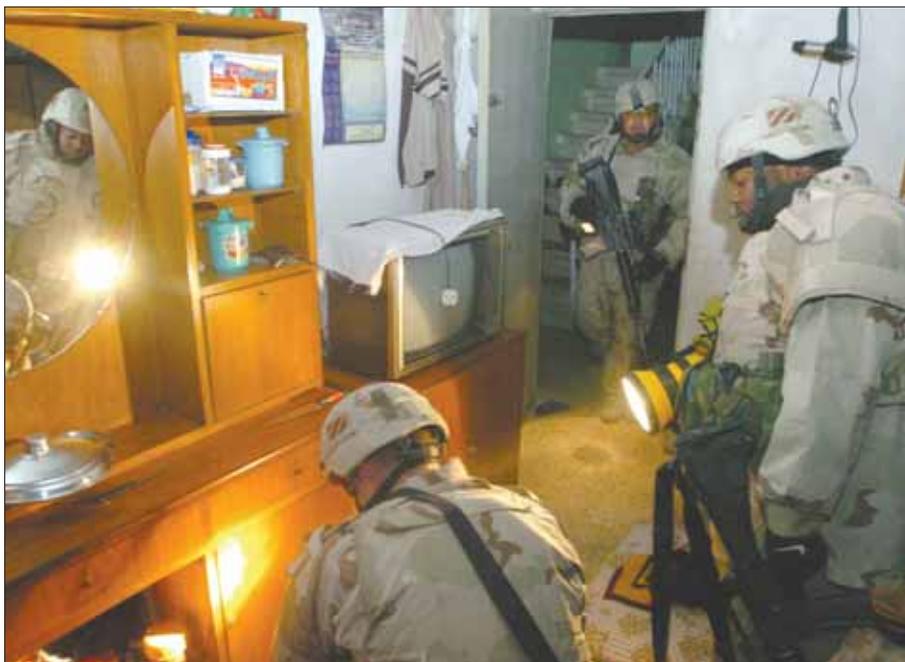
Golini said he leaves his non-commissioned officers to focus on training and correcting the junior POB troops, while he spends time with their officers.

“My NCOs are there to make sure the POB guys are being safe with their weapons and acting professionally – I try and help develop the lieutenants’ and captains’ leadership skills,” Golini said. “We learn a lot from each other.”

Mance, from Chicago, Ill., and other Soldiers passed out T-shirts, pencils and other treats to children in the area.

“The humanitarian assistance part of our mission is crucial,” Golini, from Long Island, N.Y., said. “It shows the kids, who might be scared of the trucks and troops, that we’re here to help.”

A local baker brought out fresh bread for the Soldiers as the sun



Soldiers from B Btry., 1-9 FA, search a home during the raid.

rose over Zafarania.

“It seems like people are more receptive to us when we’ve got the

POB or Iraqi Police with us,”

Garcia said. “When the POB takes charge and detains dangerous peo-



(Above) Staff Sgt. James Nock, B Btry., 1-9 FA, gives instructions to a suspect while Pvt. Peter Rautio, also of B Btry., provides security during the Oct. 8 raid.
(Left) 1st Sgt. William Zito and Capt. Sam Allen, both of B Btry., 1-9 FA, examine a man's identification papers during the raid.

ple, you can see the people in the neighborhood are happy about it.”

Battlekings detain insurgents in Baghdad raid

Soldiers from 1-9 FA detained five wanted insurgents during an early morning raid in Zafarania Oct.

8.

The suspects are members of Ansar Al Sunna, a Sunni extremist group responsible for attacks against coalition forces and Iraqi civilians.

Several AK-47s and handguns were also confiscated from the suspects. Troops raided the suspects' residences and then conducted a cor-

don-and-knock in the surrounding neighborhoods.

“We picked up the number 11 guy on the brigade's most wanted list today,” said Staff Sgt. James Nock, B Battery, 1-9 FA, section chief. “It feels pretty good to be a part of that, to get someone dangerous off the street.”

Nock, from Newport News, Va., and other Soldiers moved methodically through homes in the middle-class neighborhood, looking for illegal weapons and any hiding suspects.

Residents seemed happy to see Soldiers working, and Staff Sgt. Corey Townsend, B Btry., 1-9 FA, section chief, said he appreciated their hospitality.

“We get a lot of support from the Iraqi people, and we need that support,” Townsend, of Fayetteville, N.C., said. “The people see us trying to get the bad guys off the streets, and they come out and help us. That's what made today so successful.”

Spc. Milton Gonzales, B Btry., 1-9 FA, breacher, said he feels the Iraqi people are taking the steps



U.S. and Public Order Brigade troops search houses in Zafaraniya, Iraq, as part of Operation Flea Flicker, Sept. 14.



Battlekling and Iraqi POB troops dismount and continue their search of houses during Operation Flea Flicker. The home above (inset) was one of more than 50 houses searched by 1-9 FA on Sept. 14.

needed to live in a peaceful, free society. “The change is gradual, but it’s there – the Iraqi citizens are stepping up,” Gonzales, from Bronx, N.Y., said. “We’re living in the pages of history right now, and what’s starting here is going to affect us in the states.”

“After we didn’t find our suspects initially, we moved out into the neighborhood to search other homes,” said Capt. Sam Allen, B Btry., 1-9 FA, platoon leader. “In one house, hours later, the (noncommissioned officers) were on the ball and thought one guy was acting suspiciously. The neighbors, after seeing that we were there to help, told us that he was lying about his name, and it turned out that he was number 11 on the brigade’s list of wanted insurgents.”

Since locals cooperated with Soldiers, force was not necessary in apprehending the suspect, according to Allen, who is from Versailles, Ky.

“It had already been a long day when we found the suspect – we had searched about 50 homes – and that speaks volumes of our Soldiers’

work ethic and dedication,” Allen said. “They always put 100 percent into every mission and it pays off every day.”



Mance hands out T-shirts to Zafaraniya children Sept. 14.

IRAQIS

Photos by Spc. Ben Brody



Iraqis in east Baghdad came out in droves Oct. 15 to vote on their country's constitution. There were more than 60 polling sites for the hundreds of thousands who turned out for the vote.

All voters were required to dip their right index finger in ink following voting. Meant as a deterrent to those looking to vote more than once, it became a symbol of the Iraqis' pride in having an opportunity to decide their own political fate for the first time in over 2,000 years.

If the constitution passes, elections will be held Dec. 15 to choose Iraq's permanent government.



(Clockwise from top) Col. Joseph DiSalvo, 2nd BCT, commander, shakes the hand of an Iraqi child during the referendum vote; A mosque in east Baghdad was one of many polling sites for citizens to vote on the constitution; Two Iraqi Army Soldiers maintain security outside of a polling site. Spartan Soldiers' role in the referendum security was minimal - they provided an outer cordon and acted as a quick reaction force.

Vote



(Above and right) Two citizens of Baghdad beam with pride after exercising their democratic right to vote. The ink on the finger served as a deterrent to those who may have had an urge to vote more than once.

SPTT, POB milestone

Public Order Brigade conducts first mission without U.S. oversight

Story and photos by Spc. Ben Brody

BAGHDAD, Iraq – In the dead of night Sept. 24, troops from Iraqi Police's 2nd Public Order Brigade conducted a historic mission – their first raid without coalition oversight.

The mission was directed against members of insurgent groups and criminal gangs in Medain, a district in Southern Baghdad.

In all, the POB detained 20 suspects and confiscated several AK-47 assault rifles.

"Medain is a very important area for us to secure – many people suspected of terrorism live in that region," said Brig. Gen. Hamed Aabdullah Abraham, 2nd POB, commander. "Our brigade is conducting qualitative operations, not quantitative, and it has resulted in a safer Baghdad."

Abraham set up a command center at the outskirts of the target neighborhood, where U.S. Soldiers from 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, set up an outer cordon.

"This is the first POB-planned and let joint mission – the Iraqis are out front," said Maj. Rick Ackerman, Special Police Transition Team. "There was no American intervention – 3-7 Cavalry provided an outer cordon and the SPTT provided a liaison between coalition forces and the POB."

The SPTT is a Fort Drum, N.Y., based unit that specializes in training Soldiers for combat and military police work.

They have worked extensively with 2nd POB in Baghdad for the past six months.

"The POB will be instrumental in keeping Baghdad safe," said Maj. John Hinrichs of the SPTT. "They are critical to security in the city."

The POB is a paramilitary wing of the Iraqi Police, designed to provide large-scale law enforcement operations in Baghdad in order to avoid using Iraqi Army troops in dense civilian populations.

According to Ackerman, from Jamestown, N.D., the next step is to repeat the type of mission to establish a pattern of competence that will help the SPTT assess the POB's readiness.

"The POB will continue doing what they demonstrated today – taking the lead in every aspect of the mission, while they further refine their planning," Ackerman said. "We're moving towards a point where the POB won't need us – our job is put ourselves out of a job."

"Conducting joint operations helps both U.S. and Iraqi units," said Lt. Col. Robert Kerecz, SPTT commander. "The more we understand and appreciate each other's capabilities, the more effective team we are."

"We will hunt terrorists wherever they dwell," Abraham said after the mission. "We give the Iraqi people hope as we develop our army, and make it more advanced – so we may live in peace."



POB troops proudly display the Iraqi flag after conducting their first raid without U.S. oversight.

Titans - Together as one

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Shutts - *Special to The Warrior*

CAMP LOYALTY, Iraq – The Soldiers of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Brigade Troops Battalion, normally spend their days contributing to the fight against Iraq’s insurgent forces.

Sept. 10 brought something special to the battalion – a chance to forget about the insurgency for awhile and concentrate on a different type of contest – a struggle among the companies to claim the coveted “Titan Cup” during the battalion’s organizational day.

The Titan Cup is awarded to the company that bests all others in a series of team and individual competitions. While the rivalry for the cup drives each company to compete, the overall effect is one of unity. The organizational day was designed as a unifying, first-ever event to bring all Soldiers of the battalion together regardless of rank or occupation.

“It was the first time we had unity as a battalion – it eased a lot of stress by giving soldiers a chance to take a break,” said Staff Sgt. Kevin Charlot of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-3 BTB.

The Soldiers of 2-3 BTB have been involved in almost constant operations since the activation of the battalion almost 14 months ago – first training rotations, then deployment operations, and finally stability and reconstruction operations in Iraq.

Because 2-3 BTB is composed of over 300 Soldiers from many different military occupational specialties, including military police, military intelligence, and signal, the BTB can accomplish a wide variety of battle tasks.

Given the unit’s high operational tempo and diverse company missions, an organizational day and Titan Cup competition seemed the ideal way to strengthen the battalion, according to Lt. Col. Jamie Gayton, 2-3 BTB, commander.

The events began early that morning with a three-Soldier Army physical fitness test. Dozens of Soldiers from every company came out at dawn to cheer and motivate their company’s APFT team.

Spc. Stephanie Jones, A Co., 2-3 BTB, said she had “good support” from her company as she participated in the early morning APFT.

The events that followed were ultimate frisbee, soccer, flag football, and volleyball for the outdoor events.

The indoor events featured spades, darts, dominos, and ping-pong. Pvt. Bernabe Cobos, B Co., 2-3 BTB, a member of the soccer team, said he enjoyed “the overall camaraderie” and “Soldiers supporting other Soldiers by cheering on the side lines.” Cobos also said he liked seeing the

“rivalry between the companies.”

Between the outdoor and indoor events, the soldiers enjoyed a barbeque that brought a touch of home to all. Sgt. Michael Ruff, A Co., 2-3 BTB, said he was pleased with the barbeque.

“It was a good social event with great food and lots of variety,” Ruff said.

A senior leadership event pitted Command Sgt. Maj. Gregory Watkins, 2-3 BTB, command sergeant major and company first sergeants versus Gayton and the company commanders in a game of basketball.

1st Sgt. Joseph Rodgers, HHC, 2-3 BTB, first sergeant, said he thought the senior leadership basketball game “showed great senior leader team work as well as a great time to get together outside of work.”

Fighting the sweltering heat and soaking up the crowd’s cheers, the noncommissioned officers came out

on top. The day ended at the Camp Loyalty Theater with an awards ceremony. The Soldiers of the BTB watched a “Hooah” video created by Chaplain (Capt.) Ric Thompson, 2-3 BTB, chaplain.

The clip of the events set to an audio/ visual musical display featured the spirit and teamwork of

“It was the first time we had unity as a battalion.”

the day.

Sgt. Reymon Hernandez, HHC, 2-3 BTB, said the “Hooah” clip was “very exciting and well put together.”

Gayton and Watkins recognized all of the event champions and the overall unit champion with trophies. Second place finishing teams and second place overall received battalion certificates of appreciation.

The highlight of the awards ceremony was the announcement of the overall winner. While the scoring was close, the soldiers of A Co. came out on top and took possession of the Titan Cup until the next competition.

Capt. Byron Johnson, A Co., 2-3 BTB, commander, spoke about his company’s performance as the overall points champion for the landmark BTB event.

“I was pleased with the company’s overall performance,” Johnson said. “If we fight as one, there’s no way we can lose.” Johnson had given his Soldiers a pep talk before the events began.

Capt. Joshua Shaw, HHC, 2-3 BTB, commander, said he was “very proud of his company,” which came in second. Shaw brought a challenge and warning for the next Organizational Day.

He said, “Next Organizational Day, HHC will be on top – even though we didn’t win. it was great to finish ahead of Bravo Company!”

Rogue, Challenger work to protect Iraqi voters

Story and photos by Spc. Ben Brody

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 64th Armor, and 26th Forward Support Battalion erected concrete barriers around polling places in Baghdad Sept. 21, to keep Iraqis safe during the Oct. 15 referendum.

Both D Company, 1-64 Armor and A Company, 26th FSB, brought barriers to three Al Ameen and Paladiat schools.

Because of their relative security and central locations, schools are commonly used as voting locations in Baghdad.

“This will help Iraqis vote in safety, which is crucial in a democracy,” said Cpl. Luis Corea, A Co., 26th FSB, driver. “If people are scared to vote, the democracy breaks down.”

Corea, from Waterbury, Conn., and Spc. Jason Bishop, also of A Co., loaded barriers from their vehicle to a forklift, which moved the huge barricades into position.

Bishop is from Augusta, Ga.

The Oct. 15 referendum gave Iraqis a chance to vote for or against the ratification of the country’s new constitution. The barriers will likely remain in place until the Dec. 15 governmental elections are complete.

At an Al Ameen polling place, school guard Ali Khalid came out to investigate the commotion outside his school. He emerged to find a large assortment of military vehicles and Soldiers working in the street.

“It is a very good thing for us to work with the U.S.,”

Capt. Scott Stine, D Co., 1-64 Armor, civil military operations officer, guides a concrete barrier into place in front of a school in Baghdad. The school served as a polling place for the Oct. 15 referendum.

Khalid said. “We get the security, and people will come to vote.”

Despite the late hour, residents gathered and watched Soldiers set up the barriers. Some offered tea, and many wanted their photographs taken with U.S. troops.

“People around here are pretty friendly with us – we haven’t had too many problems,” said Spc. Marcos Perez, D Co., 1-64 Armor, tank driver. “We come around sometimes giving out food, water, candy and shoes for kids – they’re decent people.”

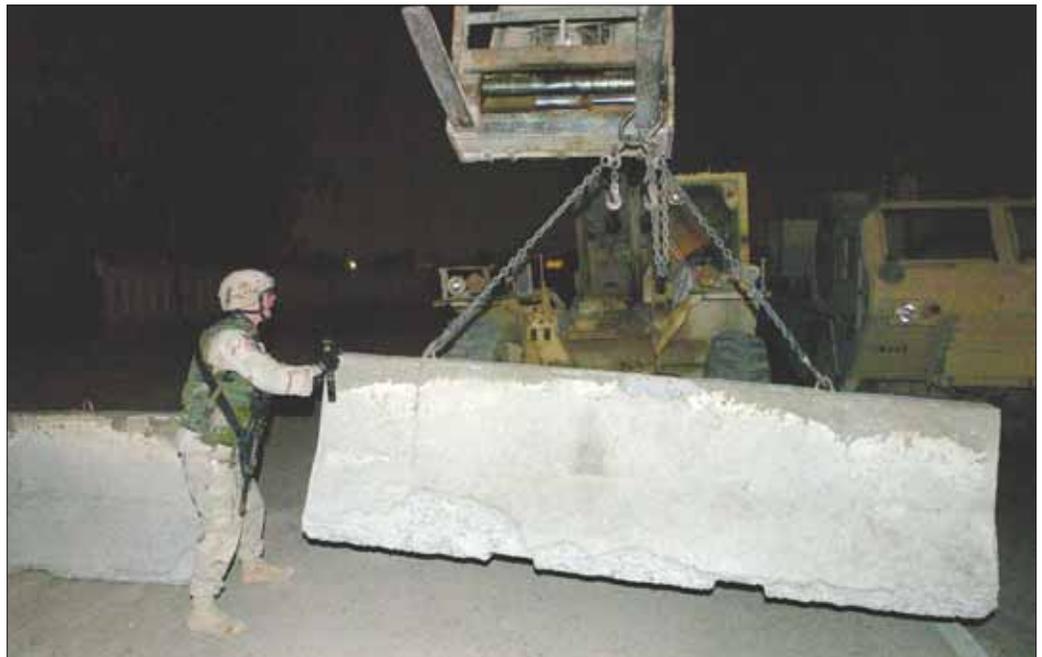
Perez is from Miami, Fla.

“We’ve put barriers at seven locations so far – the total will be about 20,” said Capt. Scott Stine, D Co., 1-64 Armor, civil affairs officer. “The guards appreciate it, but most people don’t see us putting them up – we’re like the barrier fairy.”

After completing the night’s work, the convoy snaked through side roads back to Camp Rustimiyah, the home of both units.

Stine, from Hershey, Pa., said while the barriers are not an infallible security solution for the voting places, the project shows local people that coalition forces are looking out for them.

“It’s a good project to make a visible difference in our sector,” Stine said. “People see it and know we’re concerned, and know we’re here to help. We demonstrate that every chance we get.”



26th FSB Fuelers

Keeping tanks topped off across east Baghdad

Story and photos by Spc. Ben Brody

CAMP RUSTIMIYAH, Iraq – Three blasts from the “War Horn” and the 26th Forward Support Battalion fuelers are on their way, delivering JP8 diesel fuel across the Spartan Brigade Combat Team area of operations.

The fuelers, based at Rustimiyah, conduct daily runs to the bases of the Spartan BCT, keeping fuel tanks full and the BCT mobile.

“Everything runs on JP8 – it’s the lifeblood of the ground force,” said Staff Sgt. Larry Grate, A Company, 26th FSB, fueler section sergeant. “We’re the only fueler company in Iraq making fuel runs every day.”



Certain checks the fuel level of his tanker during the delivery mission to Camp Hope.



Spc. Kris Davis and Sgt. Gregory Certain, both of A Co., 26th FSB, transfer fuel to a stationary tanker at Camp Hope, Iraq, Sept. 19.

Literally every Army vehicle, from the mightiest M1 Abrams main battle tank to the most stripped-down humvee, uses JP8.

Even Army helicopters use it, though they use a more refined version.

A Co. Soldiers brought 10,000 gallons of JP8 to Camp Hope Sept. 19, and filled two stationary fuel tanks there.

The fuelers conduct two basic delivery missions – bulk and retail, according to Sgt. Shonette Durham, A Co., 26th FSB, fueler.

During a bulk mission, fuelers transfer JP8 from their tanker trucks to stationary tanks, which hold 5,000 gallons each.

Retail means they set up an improvised gas station, and refuel military vehicles as they come.

“The missions are going smoothly – people are good about telling us what they need and when – then we make it happen,” Durham, from Winterville, Ga., said. “Good security is the most important thing when we’re rolling out with the fuel.”

Keeping the fuelers safe are members of 26th FSB’s security platoon, who provide an escort on missions.

“The War Horn gets us motivated for the mission when we roll out with the fuelers,” said Capt. Jim Gerbisz, 26th FSB, security platoon leader, referring to the deafening Viking horn attached to his humvee.

A Co. is responsible for camps Hope, Loyalty and Rustimiyah, as well as Butler Range Complex, 30 miles east of Baghdad.

“Our fuelers work hard to keep the force moving,” Grate, from Myrtle Beach, S.C., said. “It’s a tough, dangerous job, but they make it look easy.”

For such a time as this

Chaplain (Maj.) Peter Brzezinski
2nd Brigade Combat Team Chaplain

If all continues to progress as it is now, we have three months left on this deployment. Talking with soldiers throughout the brigade, many have said that at times time seems to stand still while at other times a month passes by quickly, making it hard to recall all we have done. What ever your experience, we all realize that we are here in Iraq at a historical moment. When again will we be a part of a newly-formed government writing its nation's constitution for the first time in its 2,000 year history?

The motto of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team is "SEND ME". We had no idea that we would be sent here at such an important time and have a direct hand in promoting the life and liberty of the people of Iraq. The majority of Iraqi citizens are grateful for the sacrifice and service of the US Military. I believe we will look back later in life and be amazed that we were here making a positive difference in so many ways.

As Soldiers today, we have more access to information and media than in any other time of war. We have all read the views of those that continue to cast doubt on our purpose and mission. This is the price of freedom and democracy; where we are free to voice our views. Our Soldiers know firsthand that we are making a difference here everyday in everything from raids to building projects to humanitarian aid to ensuring that the people of Iraq get the chance to vote. There are times in history we



look back on and wonder what it must have been like to be a part of it all. Make no mistake about it - this is our time to make history. We are taking part in a very special event in history!

Some three thousand years ago, there was a brave woman named Esther. People were in grave danger and she had a choice to make. If she remained quiet and refused to take a stand, her own people would be wiped out. If she went to the king and spoke up for the people, she risked her own life but she also stood a very good chance that her people would live. She struggled for a while with what to do but eventually she decided to speak up for those who had no voice. A friend warned her that she was risking her own life. Her response was, "If I perish, I perish; but who knows that I have not come here for such a time as this." She made her peace with God, confident that He would take care of her no matter what the cost. I believe that the Spartan Soldiers are here making a difference at a very important time in history; when the freedom of a people and an entire region is hanging in the balance. We are here "for such a time as this." None of this would be possible without the prayers and support of our families and friends back home. You too are a part of this crucial time in history!

When it is all said and done, years later, we can recall with pride that we answered the call and said "Here Am I. Send Me". We all stood up to be counted and entrusted ourselves to God, and determined to make a difference for freedom "For Such A Time As This."

CERP funds

Cpt. Gary Ducote
2nd Brigade Combat Team Assistant S-5

Working in east Baghdad, Spartan Soldiers can definitely attest to the power of the All-American Dollar. With inflation on the rise, pay agents throughout the brigade's area of operations use government funds to help the Iraqi economy get back on its feet and provide temporary jobs to the local populace. Congress provides these funds in support of the Commander's Emergency Response Program in order to allow leaders to directly influence their battle space. From distributing frozen chickens in Zafaraniya to refurbishing sewage pumps in Sadr City, commanders can shape the battlefield using the most effective tool of all, money.

Spartan leaders can influence their AO by using CERP projects to provide urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction in a short amount of time. Possibly taking less than one day, commanders can have an immediate, positive impact in their AO without having to go through a lot of bureaucratic red tape. While some of the larger infrastructure projects can take months or even years to complete, small CERP projects can fill in the gaps and provide citizens with hope and optimism toward the future. Working hand in hand, both CERP immediate gratification and infrastructure projects help reduce the amount of insurgent activity, promote the local economy, and make for a better Iraq.

The life of a CERP project begins at the District or Neighborhood Council meetings where the local government officials establish the desires, concerns, and needs of the people.



Where the \$ goes

Task force representatives take notes and work in conjunction with the Iraqi officials to develop a project that fits into the battalion non-lethal strategy and benefits the local populace. The project is open to a public bidding process for local vendors to jockey for the lowest quote. Once the bids are consolidated, battalions determine the winning vendor and award a contract based upon project approval. The task forces then submit the project to the brigade S5 section for QA/QC. Once reviewed, the command judge advocate team checks for legality and provides a recommendation. The brigade S5 consolidates and prioritizes the projects according to the guidance given by the commander for final approval and signatures. After the brigade commander signs off on the project, it goes to division for funding. Pay agents can pick up a maximum of \$2 million dollars in cash to pay the local vendors. When the work is complete, the pay agents conduct the final inspection; pay the contractor based on their assessments and close out the project.

Although this process might seem tedious, all of the moving parts are working simultaneously to minimize the amount of time needed and ensure maximum impact. So far, the brigade has spent over \$50 million in CERP projects. None of this would be possible without the help from all of the key players to include pay agents, commanders, the command judge advocate section, the infrastructure cell, and the battalion and brigade S5 sections. With money in hand, leaders throughout the Spartan Brigade can venture out into the battle space confident of their abilities to effectively shape their AO's, one project at a time.

Can I have a shot?

Sgt. 1st Class David Brissett

2nd BCT Medical Operations NCOIC

The year, 1918; the place, Fort Riley, Ka., or so the story goes, where on March 4, 1918, a young cook named Albert Gitchell went to the infirmary with a temperature of 103°F. Within two days, 522 other soldiers would become sick. These Soldiers would be the first documented cases of what would eventually be known as the Spanish Flu Pandemic, also known as the Great Influenza Pandemic, or the 1918 Flu Epidemic. It was an unusually severe and deadly strain of influenza, that killed some 25 - 50 million people worldwide in 1918 and 1919 - more than all combat deaths during World War I.

This particular strain or variant was unusual in that it killed many otherwise young and healthy people, as opposed to the more common influenzas which normally caused most fatalities among newborns and the very old and very sick. It is thought that the "Asian Flu" of 1957 was responsible for more than one million deaths worldwide and caused an estimated 72,000 fatalities in the United States. The "Hong Kong Flu" of 1968, which originated in Hong Kong and then spread to the US, was believed to be responsible for over 750,000 people dying from the virus worldwide including 34,000 people in the United States. Experts at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Ga., believe that it's not a matter of "if," but "when" the next pandemic will strike.

Now that I have your attention here, is some background information on the "Flu". Influenza is a highly contagious virus transmitted through respiratory droplets or by direct contact with contaminated surfaces. The virus is spread during coughing and sneezing. Hand washing is highly effective in stopping cross contamination.

- Influenza is a respiratory infection that produces fever,

chills, sore throat, muscle aches, and cough that lasts a week or more.

- The flu vaccine is prepared from the fluids of chick embryos inoculated with a specific type(s) of influenza virus. The strains of flu virus in the vaccine are inactivated with formaldehyde as a preservative; it cannot "give" you the Flu.

- The flu vaccine only protects against the specific viral strains which are included in any given year's flu vaccine. Throat, respiratory, gastrointestinal and ear infections caused by bacteria or other kinds of viruses are not prevented by getting an annual flu shot. The most common reactions, which begin within 12 hours after vaccination and can last several days, are:

fever, fatigue, painful joints and headache. Again, you can get other strains of influenza that may be present in your particular region or that are not included in your vaccine.

- Flu season is generally considered to last from late October through April (peaking in December to early March), but can start earlier and last longer.

- It takes about two weeks for the body to build up an immune response after vaccination. If you had a Flu shot last year, it is unlikely that it will protect you from this season's influenza virus because the virus usually changes from year to year and your immunity is temporary.

- If you are pregnant or think you are, consult with your surgeon or physician's assistant - they will decide if you should be exempt from receiving the vaccine. Guys, don't even think about it.

- Influenza is caused by a virus and as such there is no "cure." Viruses can only be prevented and or symptoms treated. Finally, vaccination against influenza IS a force protection issue and failure to implement it can adversely affect the mission.

For more information go to the CDC website, <http://www.cdc.gov/>.



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at the robot now...**

**... so you can
watch outside the
cordon later.**



STAY ALIVE



Stateside

Fla. Worker Stabbed in Microwave Dispute

TAMARAC, Fla. - Things got very ugly at a Walgreens when police said one employee stabbed a co-worker over who could microwave her soup first.

Both women wanted to use the microwave in the employee break room Wednesday afternoon, according to the Broward County Sheriff's Office.

While they were fighting over who could use the microwave first, Mellesia Grant grabbed a large kitchen knife off the counter and stabbed Merloze Tilme in the abdomen, the sheriff's office said.

"They didn't get along to begin with. Who could use the microwave first became a major issue," Broward County Sheriff's Office spokesman Jim Leljedal said.

The two women then wrestled for the knife, each cutting their hands, before the store manager could stop the fight, Leljedal said.

Tilme, 20, was hospitalized in good condition, officials said.

Grant, 23, of North Lauderdale, was charged with aggravated battery with a deadly weapon after being treated at a hospital for her wounds, officials said.

After Burger King Crash, Man Parks, Eats

WAUSAU, Wis. - A man whose car ran into the front entry of a fast-food restaurant backed away, parked and went in for breakfast, officials say.

Police Patrol Inspector Bryan Hilts said 78-year-old Rouland Steppert's car struck the glass entryway of the downtown Burger King Friday.

After he backed up, parked and went inside, he was served his food, and police called to the scene found him eating at a table.

General manager Kathy Fasse declined to say what he ordered.

By lunchtime, glass and other debris had been cleared away and customers were able to use the normal entry.

Because the accident was on private property, the man was not cited, Hilt said.

No phone listing could be found for Steppert when The Associated Press tried to reach him for comment Monday night.

U.S. rejects Katrina meals, offers them to others

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States on Friday offered needy countries more than 330,000 packaged meals donated by Britain to feed Hurricane Katrina victims but rejected due to a U.S. ban on British beef.

State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said the "Meals Ready to Eat," or MREs, had been held in a warehouse in Little Rock, Arkansas, for more than a month after U.S. Agriculture Department officials said they could not be distributed in the United States because they contained British beef products.

"We are certainly, for our part, looking to dispose of these MREs that were offered in the spirit of friendship," Ereli told a State Department briefing.

The United States bans the import of products containing British beef because of fears of mad cow disease, a chronic, degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of cattle.

An additional 33,000 MREs from Germany, Russia, Spain and France had also not been distributed to victims because of U.S. legal restrictions, Ereli said.

More than 100 nations offered assistance to the U.S. after Katrina devastated New Orleans and other U.S. Gulf Coast communities on August 29.

The U.S. relief effort to help victims of the hurricane was criticized as too slow and inefficient and bogged down by bureaucracy

and in-fighting among government departments.

Early on, there was a need for about 500,000 readily packaged meals and the State Department asked its embassies worldwide to seek food donations. Britain was among the first countries to offer MREs.

The State Department said it did not want to appear ungrateful for the British donation and that it was working hard to pass on the meals to another country in need.

"We obviously want to find needy populations and get them these supplies as soon as possible, because if you need them, you need them now. So we're eager to resolve this soon," said Ereli.

Dog attacks anti-dangerous dog bill author

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. - The author of a new state law that allows felony charges against owners of dangerous dogs was hospitalized over the weekend after his own dog attacked him.

Bob Schwartz, who also is Gov. Bill Richardson's crime adviser, was hospitalized at University of New Mexico Hospital on Sunday night with bites on both his arms, said Pahl Shipley, who added that Schwartz is "going to be fine."

Schwartz has three dogs registered with the city.

He was instrumental in getting a law passed during this year's regular legislative session that would allow felony charges to be filed against owners of dogs deemed dangerous or potentially dangerous and that seriously injure or kill another animal or person.

The law was designed to make dog owners accountable, said Sen. Sue Wilson Beffort, who worked with Schwartz to pass the bill.

"But I guess when it happens in your own family, that's another story," she said. "That's tragic."

Around the world

Half-century in mental asylum a mistake

SILCHANG, India - More than half-a-century ago, Machal Lalung was thought to be insane and sent to a mental asylum in India's remote northeast.

A few months ago, he was set free after authorities had found Lalung suffered only from epilepsy.

Lalung's confinement for 54 years has shocked rights activists and mental health experts in a country where it is not uncommon for people to be branded insane and locked up in homes or asylums for months, if not a few years.

"Machal Lalung's case was not in our knowledge but once it was brought to our notice, we immediately completed all legal formalities to secure his release," Assam's Home Minister Rokybul Hussain told Reuters.

The 77-year-old frail tribal man was 23 when he was sent to the state-run mental hospital in the Assamese city of Tezpur.

Fifty-four years with psychiatric patients has dulled his senses, made him forget his family, his tribal dialect and even the taste of the food he liked.

Today Lalung said he awaits peace in death.

"I feel sad at what happened to my life but there is no use grumbling now. I am just waiting for death," he told Reuters at his nephew's home in Silchang village, about 55 miles east of Assam's main city of Guwahati.

"Initially, I used to miss my family and always begged my wardens to send me home. But they never listened to me," he said with tears in his eyes.

Lalung's only family members — his father and elder sister — are dead.

Although there were many women in the hospital, Lalung never tried to make friends with them or consider marriage.

"Who would want to marry an insane woman?" he asks.

Birds battle buttocks, bike for top UK art prize

LONDON - A pink hummingbird battled with a weather-beaten shed Monday for the Turner prize, one of the world's most contentious art awards, but they face stiff competition from a pair of pallid buttocks.

The quirky nature of the Turner prize entries invariably draws scorn from the critics, but up to 100,000 people flock to the Tate Britain museum every year to judge for themselves.

Simon Starling pitched for the 25,000 pound prize this year with an electric bicycle he rode across a Spanish desert and "Shedboatshed" — a shed he turned into a boat, floated down the Rhine and then rebuilt as a shed again.

For those seeking enlightenment as to what it all means, he explained that his works were "the physical manifestation of my thought process."

Gillian Carnegie, one of the rare painters picked by Turner judges over the years, offered up for competition her "bum paintings."

Seeking to explain their purport, her Tate Britain biography said: "While apparently following the conventions of representational painting, Carnegie challenges its established languages and unsettles its assumptions."

The Turner offers Britain's scandal-hungry tabloids an annual opportunity to mock. This year offers plenty of grist to the mill, but Tate Britain director Stephen Deuchar insisted British modern art was "in roaringly good health."

"I think in the last five to six years people have become much less scared of contemporary art.

This is one of the most engaging and accessible of Turner shortlists," he told Reuters.

First day of school for aspiring Vatican exorcists

ROME (Reuters) - It was the first day of school, so students were understandably nervous. But then again, they were not taking just any course, but one run by a Vatican school to teach aspiring demonologists and exorcists.

"There is no doubt that the devil is intervening more in the life of man these days," Father Paolo Scarafoni told the students, most of them priests.

"Not all of you will become exorcists but ... every priest must know how to discern between demonic possession and psychological problems," he said.

The four-month course, called "Exorcism and the Prayer of Liberation," is being offered for the second year by Pontifical Regina Apostolorum University on Rome's outskirts.

The about 120 students from around the world will hear lectures on topics such as the pastoral, spiritual, theological, liturgical, medical, legal and criminological aspects of Satanism and demonic possession.

One planned lecture is called: "Problems related to exorcism and correlated issues."

One priest, who asked not to be identified, said he decided to take the course after a "very unsettling experience" while hearing the confession of one young member of his parish.

"Her voice changed, her face was transformed and she started speaking in a language that she did not know," he said. "I've met people who are suffering from this problem and it is not as rare as we might imagine."

So, will he be ready to wrestle with demons of the kind who may have possessed his parishioner in the confessional box?

"If, after this course, my superiors decide that it will be useful for me to become an exorcist, I will do it," he said.

Downtime on the FOB



Soldiers from 3-15 Infantry on Camp Hope partake in their Sunday ritual - a dodgeball tournament.



Staff Sgt. Matthew Force rolls the kickball toward the plate on Camp Loyalty.



2-3 BTB Soldiers get together for a game of flag football.