



VANGUARD POINT

Volume II, Issue 14
October 2005



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Patriot medics train ISF security forces on life-saving techniques.



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On the cover:

Iraqi children wave the Iraqi flags they were given at one of the polling stations in celebration Oct. 15.
Photo by Spc. David Kobi



VANGUARD 6 SENDS ...

Hard work of Soldiers, ISF set conditions for Iraqis to vote

Col. Edward Cardon

4th BCT commander

I am very proud of the actions of every Soldier in the Brigade Combat Team – Oct. 15 was a great day for Iraq! This may be one of our greatest accomplishments: helping create the secure environment where Iraqis could take to the streets and vote for their Constitution. The Iraqi Police, the Police Commandos, the Public Order Brigades, and the Iraqi Army all surged their forces to provide an exceptionally high level of security. Combine the Iraqi Security Forces' growing capabilities with our own capabilities and the result is powerful. This combination of forces defeated both insurgents' and terrorists' claims of impending violence, setting conditions for Iraqis to vote on their Constitution.

Without regard to the numerous threat warnings and predictions of violence, it was a very quiet day in our area of operations. Nothing impacted the Referendum. Each of you can be very proud of this feat for the rest of your lives.

Activity around the different polling centers was steady, and we would say the citizens' mood was one of quiet determination – determination to vote. This determination was also seen in every Soldier – we have been working very hard for the past few weeks to prepare for this referendum.

There have been thousands of patrols and operations. You poured your heart and soul into the referendum. You relentlessly pursued enemy forces and worked tirelessly to improve force protection. After all this hard work, including partnering with Iraqi



“Combine the Iraqi Security Forces' growing capabilities with our own capabilities and the result is powerful. This combination of forces defeated both insurgents' and terrorists' claims of impending violence.”

Security Forces, you should feel tremendous satisfaction in the payoff – Iraqis deciding their future for their country.

Days like October 15th are great days of optimism for the future of Iraq. Freedom wins over terror, and we see this as a positive step in the continuing political growth within Iraq.

We have at least one major milestone left before we redeploy. Dec. 15 will be the election of the permanent Iraqi government. We will be faced with challenges similar to those we have already overcome. We will apply the knowledge we gained during the Referendum. I have no doubt that we will triumph over any new challenges we may face.

Statistics show that the last 90 days of a deployment, accidents become more and more common as Soldiers look forward to going home. I challenge all leaders to enforce all of the safety standards and fight complacency so we all make it home safely.

Thank you for professionalism and personal dedication to this mission.

VANGUARD! ROCK OF THE MARNE!

VANGUARD 7 asks: 'Are you staying the course?'

Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Torres

4th BCT Command Sergeant Major

Greetings Vanguard Soldiers, friends, and most importantly, families of our great Brigade Combat Team. I recently attended a Prayer Luncheon sponsored by the great “Maintain the Line” 703rd Forward Support Battalion. The theme of the luncheon was “Staying the Course.” As I listened to the comments and remarks from all the key speakers that day, I was forced to ask the question, “Are we staying the course?”

Approximately nine months ago when we hit the ground running, every Soldier in this great BCT was thinking of only one thing, mission.

We knew the long dangerous road that lay ahead, and we were determined to use all our training to meet our commander's intent; and we have accomplished just that.

But as the light at the end of the tun-



nel gets brighter, I remind all our Soldiers, and leaders, to continue to practice, and meet the standards we so diligently followed and enforced when we first arrived in theatre.

So with that said, here are some questions to ponder. “Why is it that so many Soldiers are caught without their personal weapons?” I don't ever remember back in February or March having to worry about weapons. Everyone carried them, everywhere, and they were aware of muzzle orientation and were properly maintained!

“Why is it that Soldiers stopped wearing ballistic eye protection while walking around the FOBs or even in sector?” I remember back when we first arrived, everyone maintained this standard. In fact, the only issue was how you

wore them when they weren't on your face!

“Why is it that we are now bypassing the crew-serve clearing areas”? Back early in the year, everyone conducted crew serve clearing procedures step by step, and the patrol leader would verify every weapon! “Why have leaders stopped checking and verifying the clearing procedures of individual weapons at clearing barrels”? Is that not a leader responsibility and duty?

These are just a few examples, and there are many more.

Our Soldiers continue to perform great and at a high level, but we cannot stray from our basic responsibilities and duties. We must continue to do the right things, especially as we get closer and closer to achieving our goal. We must set the right precedent and example for those that follow us.

We as leaders can't take shortcuts, we

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as Soldiers, can't take everything for granted. I ask you to always do the right thing, the way we were trained, the way we arrived in theatre, and the way I know our Soldiers can perform! I ask all the Vanguards to "Stay the Course."

As always congratulations on another great couple of weeks of outstanding performance and selfless duty. I remind everyone that we are at a dangerous period in this deployment. A period when complacency starts settling in and safety tends to take a back seat. Don't let this happen to you. Remember the enemy isn't the only adversary out there.

Again, thanks to our home front, our families and friends that continue to support Vanguard Soldiers through this most critical mission. Our gratitude will never equal your sacrifice! You continue to be our heroes, our inspiration, and our hope. We will not fail you!

Finally, I'd like to recognize our unsung heroes for this month. These are our Soldiers who consistently go above and beyond accomplishing and contributing to our overall mission.

The Vanguard Team thanks you and salutes you for everything you do.

Stay alert and stay safe, "Vanguards out front!"

VANGUARD'S UNSUNG HEROES



Spc. German Lopez

Headquarters and Headquarters Company supporting E Company 4th Battalion 64th Armor Regiment (Tuskers)

A combat medic attached to E Company, has been on every Sapper mission providing medical support, and most recently following an improvised explosive device attack administered lifesaving care to a Vanguard non-commissioned officer.



Spc. Kais Escotto

Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment

Serves on the Personal Security Detachment for the Squadron command sergeant major, and as a translator for documents, staff briefs, and training material.



Spc. Matthew Hunt

A Battery 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery

Gunner and driver in second platoon, performing numerous escort missions, and recently distinguishing himself by winning the Battalion Soldier of the Year Competition.



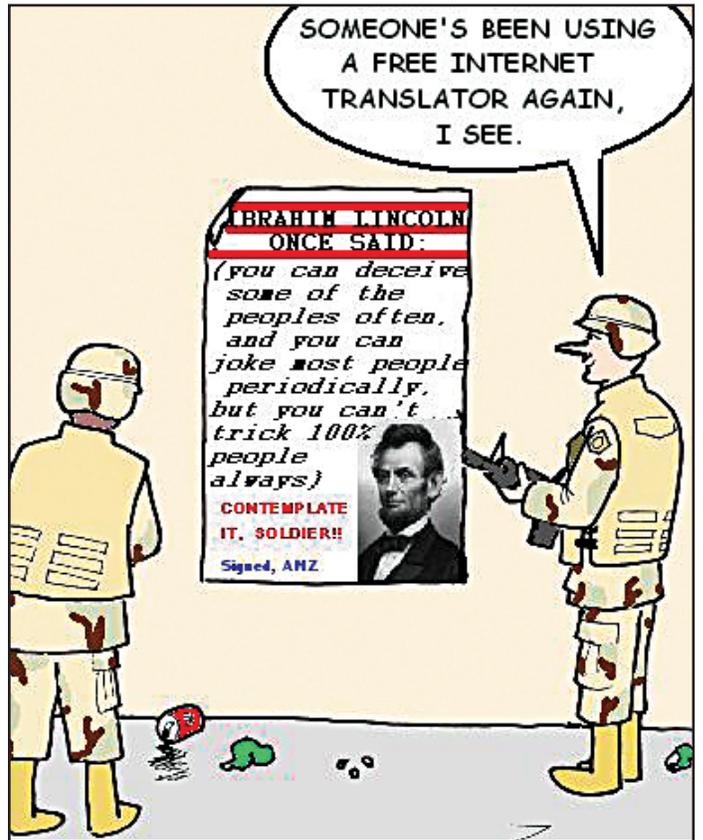
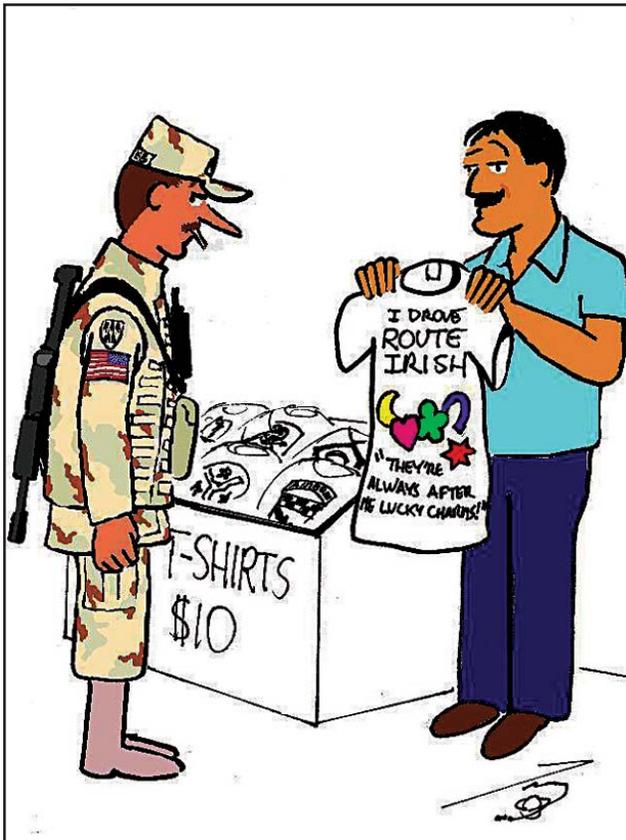
Pfc. Jeffrey L. Smith

D Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment

His courage under fire as a member of an assault team has earned him the respect and admiration of his peers and leaders. Despite being injured, he continued the mission with no regard for his personal welfare.

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Chaplain's corner ...

Keeping the home front alive while deployed

By Chaplain (Maj.) Blake Bowers
4th BCT Chaplain

Home is a place most of us remember with happy moments and warm thought, and the distance from home grows shorter everyday as we near the end of the deployment. We may think of funny moments with our siblings or perhaps a special time with parents or the children comes to mind.

Others may contemplate a romantic time with a loved one or a moment with your husband or wife. Most often we contemplate everyday activities like being the taxi driver bringing our children to sports events or jobs or listening to the chatter at the supper table.

Maybe it is the comfort of everyone pitching in to do the varied chores. Maybe it's a laugh or something else that turns our thoughts towards home.



Deployments do not make separation easy for single or married soldiers.

So what can we do keep the home front alive and meaningful for us while we are away?

Remember special events. Send your mother that special something on the day she brought you into the world. Send a note to your dad on his birthday or to your siblings. Remember anniversaries and children's birthdays. Proper planning, being a little creative and thinking ahead can make all of this special.

We can also be faithful to our commitments we make. We will all make new friends and some of us will make some friends for life. Each relationship we have must be kept in its proper perspective.

Guard the boundaries to your marriage or relationship. If you are engaged this is an opportunity to test those boundaries and deepen those relationships. If you have a boyfriend or girlfriend at home this is a time to see how you react in a diverse and difficult environment. It may help you decide if you want to pursue the relationship deeper or to end it. If you have children and promised them something make sure you fulfill that promise.

Communicate to your family on level each one will understand a little of what you do every day. Tell them something about how your day went. Tell them something about your feelings and moods. Tell them what your environment is like. Share a funny story with them.

Tell them a new joke you

heard. This will lend to making adjustments coming home easier. Send those special letters home to siblings telling them that you appreciate them.

Maybe it's a note to your best friend or you thank your parents for their efforts and support in your life, to your children for being great kids highlighting something positive they have contributed to the family and don't forget those mushy letters to your wife or husband that speaks of your intimate love for each other.

Remember to let some things go and realize you don't have a whole lot of say to what happens at home during your deployment. A lot of us will unnecessarily feel bad if something happens at home while we are deployed. We run our minds and spirits into the ground going over "if only I had been there" scenarios.

Use the systems the Army has in place to help you or your family. A lot of Soldiers make the mistake of moving their spouses away from the support systems the Army has in place for families.

Learning these systems, trusting them, and telling your family about them helps provide your family security, eases some of the stress on you and can help make life better overall.

The problems come when we bring things on ourselves. If we make sound moral choices, think with our heads and not our emotions, leaders, chaplains and other support systems can generally help make life a little smoother.

About this time we start thinking about getting home. We are three-quarters of the way through this deployment. The danger to this is that you lose focus on your mission.

You can help your home front by keeping your mind on the present, focused and sharp at the many and varied task at hand. We still have a ways to go. Your attentiveness to mission and standards can go a long way ensuring your safe return to your family.

Let them do their job and you do yours. There will be plenty of time for getting together once we are on the ground at home station.

Keep your home fires alive and stay focused on your mission. God bless you.

Soldiers, donations help children chase soccer dream

Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper
4th BCT PA NCOIC

There isn't much that someone could spend \$10 dollars on that could potentially save a life. One item that Soldiers receive on a regular basis through donations is soccer balls that they give to the children in the neighborhoods they patrol.

"If someone feels good about giving us 10 soccer balls, and we go out on a patrol and make 10 friends and a favorable impression with the families and children ... That's a \$10 dollar investment that has a priceless pay off," said B Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment 1st Sgt. Mark Barnes, a Opp, Ala., native.

The regiment went a step further by delivering more than 140 boxes of soccer and office equipment to a soccer league ran by Amu Baba, often called the Pele of Iraq, Oct. 10.

As Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers unloaded the supplies at the stadium, hundreds of Iraq children practiced soccer on the green field under the watchful eyes of their coaches.

According to Baba, when they first started the league the field was in terrible condition, but he and the coaches worked to get it back into shape.

There are 350 children, ages 6 to 14-years old, in the camp, and the goal is to prepare them to represent Iraq on national teams. The children come from all over Baghdad to participate in the league.

"Soccer gives these kids hope," Barnes said. "Every one of these kids dreams of playing soccer professionally or playing on the Iraqi national team."

But there are other benefits to the kids being part of the soccer league.

"I think that if they are able to have a successful sports league and the children are able to experience the same type of happiness and healthy competition that we do in the United States, it's healthy for their families and communities. The children will grow up healthy and competitive," Barnes said.

Continued next page

Iraqi children sharpen their soccer skills at Al Shaab Stadium Oct. 10. 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment delivered \$30,000 worth of donated soccer equipment and office supplies for the children's soccer league.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper



A UH-60 Blackhawk gunner surveys the house where Hallums was held captive for 10 months.

Spc. Dan Balda



3-3 Soldiers honored for

h o s t a g e r e s c u e

Spc. Dan Balda

4th Brigade Combat Team PAO

As the urban sprawl of Baghdad bleeds south, the concrete roads turn to dirt pathways cutting between fields tended by the farmers who call this sparsely-populated area home.

Roy Hallums called one of these farmhouses home for 10 months, although it was not by choice. He was kidnapped Nov. 1, 2004 while supplying the Iraqi Army with food.

His captivity came to an end during a daring nighttime rescue Sept. 7. Soldiers assigned to 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, provided valuable assistance during the raid on the farmhouse where Hallums had been held by terrorists.

The Task Force Baghdad Soldiers—1st Lt. Stephen Young, Sgt. Lee Prather, Sgt. Anthony Signorello, Spc. William Forsyth, Spc. Forrest Gielenz and Pfc. Christopher Carter, all assigned to K Troop, 3-3 ACR—were honored by the State Department during an informal ceremony Sept. 21 at Forward Operating Base Falcon. They were members of the tank crew that set up a protective outer cordon to protect the UH-60 Blackhawk carrying the rescue team as it moved in on the farmhouse.

Hallums was discovered bound and gagged in a tiny cellar-like

room. The only ventilation came from a small fan and cracks in the concrete slab that doubled as his door. Each time his captors opened the door to give him food or water they would put a fresh coat of cement over the “door.”

Although they were unable to personally talk to Hallums, the Soldiers still felt they played an integral part in the rescue.

“Our overall mission here is a hard one, but to be able to help rescue an American reminds me of who I am and what I do every day,” said Prather, a tank gunner from Woodbridge, Va. “I later found out that we also rescued a young Iraqi boy. It reminded me of the good coming from (our mission).”

“It was an honor (to help free Hallums),” Signorello said. “I was proud that after 10 months he did not give up.”

Gielenz, a native of Grass Valley, Calif., felt the ceremony was very personal. “It was a real sincere thanks that you could tell came from the heart,” he said.

He valued the certificate of appreciation signed by the ambassador but he had already received the one thing that really made him feel like he had contributed to something important.

“Knowing that I participated in the rescue of an American who is now home safe and sound with his family was the best part of the whole thing.”

Continued from previous page

Baba feels that this is the way to bring the children of Iraq to peace and help teach them to be good and keep them off the streets.

The more than \$30,000 worth of supplies was donated by businesses and organizations in the United States, and according to Barnes, is part of a continual stream of donations from concerned citizens.

“The support is fantastic. It’s been my experience everywhere. ... that there is all kind of support for this. People want to do what they can do, and they see this as a means to be able to do something,” Barnes said.

Barnes explained that his company has received a lot of support from his hometown, companies and private organizations all over the country, and through their support, he and his Soldiers want to show the people of Iraq that they care about their security and their children.

“My company is an infantry company, and we have sectors that we patrol. If the situation allows it, we will take some soccer balls with us and pass them out to the kids,” Barnes said. “They remember us and over time they might tell us where a terrorist lives or where a weapon cache is because they care about us and don’t want to see us get hurt.”

This is the best way for the Americans to see the children, Baba said. If a Soldier gives them a ball, they will be happy and tell their mother and father that this ball is from Americans.

“Soccer is an international language. Come out here and kick a soccer ball around you can make a whole bunch of friends at one time,” Barnes said.

“These kids are going to grow up and have opinions. Their thoughts are going to be shaped by their experiences and hopefully they will have happy memories of America,” he added.



Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper

B Co., 4-64 Armor 1st Sgt. Mark Barnes prepares to snap a picture of the Iraqi children playing soccer.

Providing a link from the air to the ground

Support specialists keep aviators flying high

Spc. Jennifer D. Atkinson

Aviation Brigade PAO

Aviation support — in the form of air assaults, raids, and security and reconnaissance — can make a huge difference in the day-to-day operations of Task Force Baghdad Soldiers.

However, these missions don't just appear out of thin air. They are planned and executed with the help of a special group of Soldiers known as the Brigade Aviation Element.

The BAE is a new concept in supporting maneuver brigades. In years

past, an aviation officer, often a junior officer, acted as a liaison to a ground unit. Because there was no requirement to permanently assign an aviator to do this mission, liaisons changed frequently, resulting in little to no continuity from mission to mission. Thus, a long-term relationship between the ground forces and the aviation unit didn't exist.

To better serve both the aviation community and the ground forces, a new BAE program was developed to permanently assign an aviator and team of aviation operations specialists to the ground maneuver unit to integrate and

festivals are correct and routed to the right places.

"We work hand in hand with the division, the ground units and the aviation brigade," Navarro said.

The BAE team started training with 3rd Inf. Div.'s 4th Brigade Combat Team at Fort Stewart. Learning how the ground units worked was critical to accomplishing the mission.

The training that the BAE and 4th BCT conducted at Stewart helped to integrate the BAE into the brigade, said Maj. Ross Coffman, 4th BCT executive officer and native of Fort Knox, Ky.



Spc. Jennifer D. Atkinson

Spc. Danielle S. Navarro, aviation operations specialist, manifests a passenger on a flight. Navarro, from Culver City, Calif., and other members of the Brigade Aviation Element, 4th Brigade Combat Team, coordinate aviation assets and ground maneuver units.

"Some days, missions come fast and furious; other days are more relaxed. It all depends on the day and the mission."

work directly with the brigade staff.

The BAE team trains and deploys with the unit, working to coordinate all aviation requests and acting as the aviation subject matter expert for the ground brigade commander.

"Some days, missions come fast and furious; other days are more relaxed. It all depends on the day and the mission," said Spc. Danielle S. Navarro, an Aviation Operations specialist.

Navarro, a native of Culver City, Calif., keeps track of everything from coordinating travel on the "Marne Express" helicopter shuttle to submitting aviation movement requests and coordinating attack helicopter assets in support of ongoing operations.

Navarro's job is a bit different from what her counterparts in the 3rd Infantry Division's Aviation Brigade do on a daily basis. If she were assigned to an aviation battalion, she would manage flight records for the pilots, track flights and maintain a mission log. In the combat theater of operations, Navarro and the other aviation specialists in the BAE are responsible for making sure missions are coordinated properly, mani-

"The BAE has been nothing but an asset," said Coffman, since "it takes more effort and resources when you don't know what's right."

"It was all on-the-job training," said Maj. Patrick T.O. Wright, an aviation officer with the BAE. "We trained each other to understand aviation operations."

Having the BAE integrated into the maneuver brigade enhances the information flow between the aviation units and the ground forces, Wright said.

"I make sure that (the request) is clear and concise and that it makes sense to me as an aviator before I send it on," added the Gig Harbor, Wash., native.

Being able to speak the language and communicate clearly with the aviation units has been a huge advantage, said Coffman, adding, "They provide a subject matter expert from the planning to the execution on every operation."

Having a dedicated section to coordinate aviation support has taken an extra task off the shoulders of battle captains, Coffman said.

"The BAE is a dynamite force multiplier," he added.

Do you have a letter to the editor, photo or story to send in? Send it to raymond.piper@us.army.mil. Please include your full name and rank. If you send a photo, include what's going on in the photo, full names of people, rank, units and date.



Sgt. Maj. Tammara Wipf, A Company, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, checks an Iraqi woman's blood pressure at a Medical Civil Assistance Program visit in Horajeb Sept. 16.

Photos by Spc. Christopher Mallard

Iraqi, U.S. forces aid hundreds with medical project

Spc. Christopher Mallard
425th Civil Affairs Battalion

Hundreds of local residents from the town of Horajeb lined up Sept. 16 to receive medical care from U.S. Soldiers. Iraqi forces also supported the medical project, dubbed Operation Thunder Care.

It was the third Medical Civil Assistance Program visit of the year for Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, along with elements from the 425th Civil Affairs Battalion and a psychological operations detachment.

American forces joined their counterparts in the 4th Public Order Brigade to set up a temporary clinic at a school near the town center. The Army took the opportunity to evaluate community health conditions while giving residents a chance to receive a basic health check.

The intent behind Operation Thunder Care was to show the citizens a measure of goodwill by treating minor medical problems and ailments. The four stations were designed to provide care in a timely manner with as little disruption to town activities as possible. By the early-morning hours, scores of women, children, and elderly were lined up outside the school entrance in a staging area waiting to be seen.

The mid-September morning was already heating up as Soldiers began to broadcast a message over huge loudspeakers mounted on their vehicles, inviting the people of Horajeb to visit the school and explaining in Arabic that Soldiers had come to the village to help them.

A baker brought kahi — warm fried dough — over to the school for Soldiers to eat before they began to admit the first group of patients.

“We can’t provide extensive services today but we can leave the



Wipf lets an Iraqi girl try out her stethoscope.

poorest among them with something more than they came with,” said 1st Lt. Loren Thomson, a native of Vacavilla, Calif., and a civil-military operations in 1-184, as he handed a care package to an elderly woman and her granddaughter.

“I helped to organize the sundry packs and humanitarian assistance rations,” Thomson said. “I’m finding out kids like beanie babies almost as much as they do the soccer balls.”

Staff Sgt. Ronald Diez, a medic who serves with A Company, 1/184th, has assisted in MEDCAPs in Albania and Rwanda. He said he’s a big believer in the healing that mercy and compassion bring to the poor and disadvantaged.

At the Horajeb school, Diez stocked his station with everything from Motrin to antacid to personal hygiene products.

Unit officials at the MEDCAP said they’re making strides in their efforts to empower local leaders. Civil affairs Soldiers said a little care goes a long way in building trust, which in turn provides hope in these smaller, out-of-the-way communities.

“A MEDCAP traditionally provides an opportunity for people who would not normally have access to medical care to seek out a physician for minor aches and pains,” said Sgt. Maj. Tammara Wipf, of A Co., 425th CA Bn.

As he took a break in the shaded area of the school’s courtyard, Doctor (Maj.) Ernesto Quinto, the 1/184 Inf. acting battalion surgeon, said, “The medical care we were able to provide the community today was simple and straightforward. I am very impressed and think it goes a long way in showing the true heart of American Soldiers to leave their comfort zone by coming over here and helping those who are less fortunate.”



A Soldier speaks through an interpreter to two Iraqi people during a cordon and search mission in the Al-Dora neighborhood of Baghdad, Oct. 7.

Photo by Spc. Dan Balda

Mustangs work to make the streets safe for democracy

Spc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

For the majority of Soldiers who spent a year deployed during Operation Iraqi Freedom II, the moment that they thought was the most memorable was the election Jan. 31. News casts around the world showed Iraqis uncowed by the death threats, joyously hoisting their newly ink-stained fingers after voting for the first time in many of their lives.

Many Soldiers serving during OIF 3 looked forward to the Constitutional Referendum with optimism. A new dawn for a country that by all accounts is brand new in itself. Before the Iraqis turn out to vote on the new constitution, Soldiers worked to make sure the streets were safe and that terrorists were not using known hideouts to manufacture explosives.

The Soldiers of B Troop, 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment executed a late-night cordon and search Oct. 7 to make some of the vermin of Al Dora did not return to their homes.

“All the targets are tied to insurgent cells,” said Capt. Timon Groves, the B Troop commander.

He explained that many of the targets were known for making and placing improvised explosive devices around the Al-Dora area. Some of their houses had been raided previously and IED-making material and car bombs were found during the

searches.

“We are going before the (Referendum) to see what they have, and to see if (they’re) back,” Groves said.

The targets supposedly all moved to Syria, but Groves said they wanted to see if any of the insurgents popped their ugly heads back in.

The American media has dubbed Al-Dora one of the most dangerous areas in all of Iraq. Groves brings up the now placated Haifa Street, known as “Purple Heart Alley” at the beginning of his unit’s deployment. Almost every day, Soldiers reported receiving small-arms fire and grenades thrown at them almost every day.

“We are not at that level (in Al-Dora),” he said. “If this is the most hostile area then things are looking pretty good.”

Groves said he hasn’t really seen anything that would point to a raised danger level in his sector due mostly to his unit’s presence there as well as the presence of the Iraqi Public Order Brigade.

“We’ve got 24-hour operations in the area,” said Groves a Murray, Ky., native. “We’ve got guys maintaining their presence doing mounted and dismounted patrols and the POB has many checkpoints throughout the area 24-hours a day.”

B Troop does joint missions with the POB on many occa-

Continued next page

“It’s something that is so big most people won’t realize what impact it has on their future.”

sions but on this particular moonless night, they completed the mission solo. During the course of the mission, no terror suspects were actually detained but that was not necessarily the intent said Capt. Mike Martin, the troop executive officer.

“All the targets were old targets,” said the Mt. Gilead, N.C., native. “Since we were getting close to the elections we wanted to hit as many houses as possible and make sure these guys didn’t come back and disrupt the democratic process. Even if it is their families’ house, they get the word that we are out there actively looking for them.”

The only nail-biting moment of the night was when one keen-eyed Soldier noticed what appeared to be an AK-47 in the window of one of the homes. The Soldiers investigated, and it turned out to be a toy a little boy had left in the window, much to his father’s chagrin. Martin politely knocked on the door and through an interpreter, asked the owner of the house what the weapon was doing in his window.

The important thing for Martin was checking out the potential threat but to do it as politely as he could.

“If we don’t think that it’s going to be that big of a deal, we bring the man outside and have him walk us through the house. In this case there were women and children in the house trying to sleep, so you want to check it out but you don’t want to disturb them too much. Be as polite as you can be, but still do your job.”

Even though the raid did not catch any terrorists, Martin was glad that he and his Soldiers were able to help make sure the referendum happen as safely as possible.

“I think (the referendum) are going to be a huge thing for this country,” he said. “It’s something that is so big most people won’t realize what impact it has on their future. We are going to see a huge change in the country. It’s good to see that we are going to see this country set up right, and we are not going to leave until we see that done and done right.”



Capt. Mike Martin, the B Troop executive officer, searches a house during a cordon and search mission in the Al-Dora district of Baghdad, Oct. 7.

Warlocks only work...

if they're turned on.

STAY ALIVE

0061 IEDs KILL



Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

Soldiers assigned to B Troop, 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment, perform a cordon and search mission in the Al-Dora neighborhood of Baghdad, Oct. 7.



Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

Iraqis leave a polling station in the Al Rasheed District. Soldiers from 3-7 Inf. provided an outer cordon and roving patrols.

Referendum puts U.S. Soldiers at crossroads of history

Spc. Dan Balda
4th Brigade Combat Team PAO

As anybody who has seen “Saving Private Ryan” can attest, D-Day was a dangerous, yet pivotal day in world history. The Soldiers who took part in the assault gave no thought to what their place in history would be; they were mainly concerned with making it up the Normandy beaches alive.

Lt. Col. David Funk, the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment commander used D-Day as an example of how his Soldiers will one day view the Oct. 15 Constitutional Referendum in Iraq.

“We look now on our grandfathers, the men who stormed the beaches of Normandy, June 6, 1944, and we marvel at what they accomplished,” Funk said. “We call them the greatest generation. Now we realize that that moment was the seminal moment in the 20th century, the moment on which the rest of the century turned. They didn’t realize that at the time. They were just trying to survive a bloody day on a bloody beach; much the same way we will not understand, indeed the world will not understand, how significant this moment is until we have five, 10 or 20 years of hindsight. Our Soldiers will someday be able to bounce their grandkids on their laps and say, ‘Daddy did that.’”

Much like any military operation, there was plenty of planning before the voting actually took place.

Funk’s unit, 3-7 Inf., was responsible for the most polling sites (more than 100) in the 4th Brigade Combat Team’s area of operations.

His Soldiers readied those sites to withstand any attack designed to disrupt the democratic process. The security included concrete barriers requested by Iraq’s Ministry of the Interior to protect against car bombs.

In the days leading up to the referendum, 3-7 Soldiers captured car bombs Funk thought were destined to be used during the election. In the last 30 days, his unit has put more than 50 suspected terrorists in detention facilities.

“The last couple of weeks have been busy,” Funk, a native of Bronson, Fla., said. “In addition to (securing polling sites), we have been doing our normal operations — conducting reconnaissance and gathering intelligence and information about those individuals or groups who are trying to interdict the vote and the democratic process. We’ve also been quite busy with detainee operations the last couple of weeks.”

Iraqi Security Forces took the lead on the security of the sites themselves on the

day of the referendum, but that doesn’t mean Funk’s Soldiers were sitting on their hands. They moved through the streets unencumbered by the normal Baghdad gridlock.

“What we can provide is a larger, mobile force that can react to various threats,” Funk said.

As voters headed to the polls, ISF set up an inner and outer cordon to protect the voting areas while U.S. Army patrols orbited the outskirts of the cordon.

Some commanders might chomp at the bit, wanting their Soldiers to have a more active, visible role in the day’s proceedings; but Funk was pleased to see the ISF were the only ones seen securing the inner cordon of the polling sites.

“The thing that helps (the Iraqis) most of all is seeing their own Iraqi Security Forces out there,” Funk said. “Time and again, the Iraqi people clamor for more ISF out there whether it be police, commandos or whatever. They want ISF securing them. That’s what we want, too. Our presence out there should have a calming effect because they will see that we are vested in helping them work through this democratic process and have a free and fair vote to determine the future of their country.”

Task Force Baghdad Command Sgt. Maj. William Grant accompanied C Company, 3-7 Inf., on an election-day patrol because, he said, “I like hanging with Soldiers and this is the only way I can really know what’s going on, to see what they do and to talk to their leadership. So I can understand their mission and see them carry it out.”

Grant was happy to share his views on the election and the professionalism exhibited by the 3rd Infantry Division.

“The only way the country is going to get itself on track is to have a successful election,” he said. “A lot of Soldiers talk very positively about what’s going on with the elections. Whatever function they are filling out there is showing that they are willing to do whatever it takes to make (their given mission) successful.”

The battalion commander said his Soldiers understand their role at this crossroads of history.

“Our Soldiers know why they are here,” Funk said. “They understand the significance of what is (happening) here. This is an historic time here in Iraq.

“I’m just as proud as I can be of our Soldiers,” he continued. “They amaze me every time I go out and see them operate. The things our young sergeants, our young lieutenants and our young captains accomplish out there every day would and should make the American people proud. They understand what they are doing, they realize the significance of what they are doing and they are proud of what they are doing.”



A Soldier from C Co., 3-7 Inf. conducts a random search during the Referendum to help keep the voters and the streets safe.

*Iraqis make
their voice
heard*



Spc. Timothy Belt

An Iraqi family walks toward a polling site in western Baghdad to cast their vote in the landmark Constitutional Referendum process.



Spc. David Kobi



Spc. Timothy Belt

Iraqis have their identification checked against the voters registration before they are allowed to enter.



Spc. Timothy Belt

(Above) An Iraqi Soldier searches a voter before he is allowed into the polling site.

(Left) An Iraqi citizen displays his purple finger after taking part in the constitutional referendum Oct. 15.



Spc. Dan Balda

Khazal Chassib Augla, a lawyer who works for a non-governmental organization called Civic Dialogue Group speaks to a group at the Al Rashid District Council Oct. 3, about the constitutional process.

Women learn about constitution, help community

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

Oct. 15, the day Iraqis voted on their constitution, was one of the most important days in the budding democracy's history. For its historical scope to be fully realized, a large percentage of Iraqis needed to make their voices heard through their newfound freedom to choose their future.

With this in mind, the Al Rashid District Council along with a women's group held a conference to educate and promote a greater understanding of the constitution and encourage dialogue on the constitutional drafting process in Iraq.

Task Force Baghdad Soldiers helped organize the conference and were also on hand to observe the proceedings.

"Back home we have sections we vote on, and if you don't read it right, no means yes and yes means no," said Sgt. Maj. Tammara Wipf, the A Company, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion First Sergeant. "They wanted information on this constitution so they would know how to vote."

Khazal Chassib Augla, a lawyer who works for a non-governmental organization called Civic Dialogue Group, sees it as his mission to explain the sometimes befuddling language to various groups.

Augla has spoken to doctors, sports teams, young adults and teachers among others about the constitution.

For Augla, the women hold a special place in his heart as well as the Arab culture.

"I'd love to see a very active role (for women) in the government because women represent the mother, the professor and the lawyer in our society so we would like to see the role enhanced," Augla said.

According to Augla, mothers by nature want peace and pros-

perity for their children; ergo women want Iraq to have a peaceful and prosperous future.

The women who attended the conference also hold influential positions as teachers, administrators or members of their respective neighborhood councils.

The women's group does many other positive things for the Al Rashid area. They assist widows of the war by helping them with clothing, food and personal items. They provide diapers, baby formula and other infant items to needy women.

They can then bring their newfound knowledge to their jobs, families and friends to make the constitutional process more accessible to everybody regardless of political standing or level of education.

Wipf, a native of Santa Ana, Calif., believes the women showed up because information is power and she wants to provide as much "power" to these women as possible.

Wipf said that she feels a certain kinship with the women.

"I do like working with these women, they are going through a lot of struggles that we in the United States went through 50 years ago, so I want to help them," she said. "That would be my small contribution to this process, but it would mean a lot to me."

After learning such facets of the constitution like who should participate in the process, whose rights should be protected by the document and explaining essential elements of constitutions in general, Augla held a mock-drafting to show the women how difficult it can be to make sure all groups are represented fairly and equally.

"Hopefully in a couple of years when everything is settled down and Iraq is safe and flourishing, these women will feel like they played a very important part in one of the most pivotal moments in their countries' history," Wipf said. 

Patriots' medics share skills with Iraqi charges

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

Combat medics are used to giving combat lifesaver classes to Soldiers to make sure they are ready for any contingency.

What medics are not used to is speaking through an interpreter to a class of Iraqis, eager to learn all they can about saving lives, so they can take their new-found knowledge outside the wire.

The students are from the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq compound in Baghdad, according to Spc. Ryan Walker, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery. The class covers basic

human physiology, basic medical terms, intravenous therapy and most importantly here in Iraq, how to treat trauma.

The battalion commander, Lt. Col. Daniel Pinnell, had the initial idea to pass on his medics' field knowledge to their Iraqi counterparts.

"Col. Pinnell was trying to look around the different ministries and police groups and ask them if they have any people they want to send over here for this training," said Walker, a native of Pendleton, Ore.

The training lasts two weeks which includes classroom instruction as well as hands-on training such as running an IV. After they finish the lectures and they feel more comfortable with the training, they start the trauma assessment with the head

to toe exam. "We have plenty of medical equipment for them to train on, so they feel confident with their hands which is the most important thing when it comes to medical stuff. It gives them a better understanding of how and why they are learning these skills," Walker explained.

"We teach them just a skosh more than combat lifesaver stuff," Walker said. "Towards the end of the class we give them some-

thing like an oversize combat lifesaver bag full of goodies they can use to save their comrades."

One of the students is taking his second class, not because of failure to grasp the material, but because he realizes the importance of the training and wants to learn as much as possible.

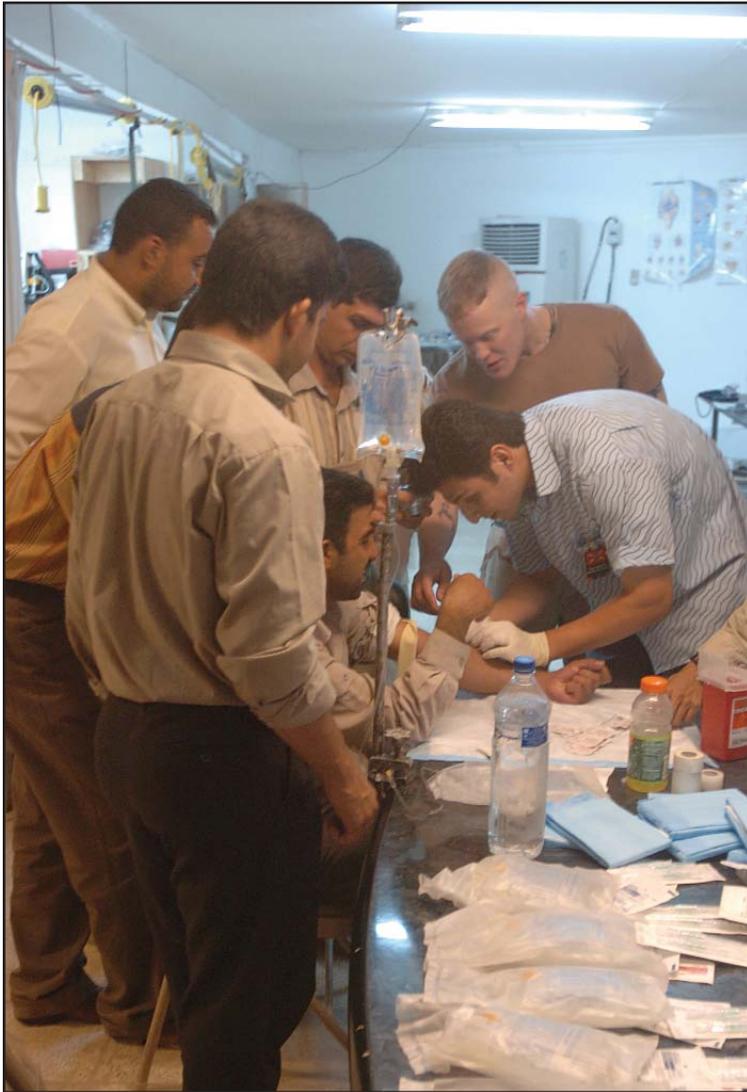
"He is constantly coming back, asking for more training, asking for supplies, asking for more teaching, more knowledge, we like to help him as much as we can whether it is giving him a couple of supplies or having him sit in on some classes," Walker said. "He's actually saved a couple of guy's lives in the unit he is with."

The only difficulties the Soldiers run into while teaching the class is the language barrier, but with patience they manage to get the important parts understood by their students.

"I really have to slow it down a lot to make sure I give the interpreter plenty of time to throw out the information," Walker said. "Sometimes we get a translator that has a harder time turning the medical terms into Arabic, that's why the slides are a lot of help. We have the Arabic words on there so that helps explain it a little better.

Walker, a firefighter/emergency medical technician before joining the military, has always enjoyed helping to "fix" people. Helping to train the Iraqis in lifesaving techniques is just an extension of that.

"I like doing these classes because if someone gets (attacked) these guys are more than willing to help and they can assist us with their medical knowledge as best they can," Walker said. "I miss going out on the line but this is going to help us and Iraq as a whole out quite a bit." 



Spc. Dan Balda

(Above) Spc. Ryan Walker, a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery, advises a student from the SCIRI security detachment on how to properly give an IV.

(Right) One of the students prepares the needle of an IV.



VSAT helps maintenance sections get 'synced'

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

Sometimes smaller is better.

U.S. Army maintenance sections across Iraq have seen their jobs made easier and safer with the implementation of the Very Small Aperture Terminal satellite.

The VSAT uses a small satellite to connect units to the main parts warehouses through an internet connection, said Spc. Ricardo Iglesias, an automated logistics specialist assigned to 703rd Forward Support Battalion. His forward support company works in direct support of 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment.

"We tried it out at (the Joint Readiness Training Center)," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Kevin Fiorillo, the battalion maintenance technician. "It was

explained that it connected everyone; we were all getting synchronized, getting on the same wavelength by using the same internet server to connect everyone."

Previously there were two means of connecting to the networks used to order parts and supplies; the internet or diskette. The computer had to be configured to either one or the other which caused difficulties, said Fiorillo, a native of Hudson Falls, N.Y.

"If I'm using the internet one day, and it's not that reliable that day we would have to reconfigure the box. If they don't reconfigure the box we'd have a loss of data," Fiorillo said.

Another issue with the diskettes was that they had to be hand carried from each unit. The information would be copied onto the diskette and dropped off, which was fine if all the information made it onto the disk like it was supposed to. If not, the whole process would have to be repeated, said Iglesias, a native of Miami.

Besides being a time-waster, this could also mean putting the unit under extra stress through another trip to the unit needing the information.

"It could save lives just having one around," said Iglesias. The unit would not have to pull together the requisite number of Soldiers and vehicles for the convoy to the unit. If the unit was stationed at a forward operating base in the "Red Zone," the chance of attack would increase, and the time spent actually working on the task at hand would decrease.

"Instead of copying the disk, which takes about 10 or 20 minutes, conveying down, processing it; we put it in the computer, hit enter and BAM! You're done. It saves us a couple of hours a day," Iglesias said.

"Learning the system and getting it connected was a little painful, after that was completed and we all got trained up; it's been a very valuable asset to us," Fiorillo said.

He did offer some constructive criticism as to what he would like to see improved with the VSAT's capabilities. He said that it is set up for a maximum of 10 people to work on it at one time, any more and its abilities are severely downgraded.

"One improvement would be to expand its size," he said. "I would love to have each one of my maintenance sergeants with internet capability so they can do their research. All our technical manuals have gone paperless, and as we've headed that way, we've just not provided the team chiefs with what they need to go out and get that information."

Nonetheless, the VSAT is a vast improvement over the previous system and Fiorillo is happy to have one for his unit.

"It has significantly reduced the number of errors of what we are requesting and what we are receiving, by the direct communication link we've established," he said. "It has alleviated the possibility of Soldier error or not configuring the box properly." 



Spc. Ricardo Iglesias, an automated logistics specialist assigned to 703rd Forward Support Battalion, performs maintenance on the VSAT system. The system helps maintenance communicate more easily and is designed to streamline the part-ordering process.

Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

Small businesses in Baghdad

Capt. Ryan Avila
4th BCT PA Operations Officer

More than 40 business owners from the Baghdad area took a crucial first step toward the economic development of their country at a small-business seminar Oct. 8.

This first-ever event was sponsored by the Al Rasheed Chamber of Commerce but primarily planned by three individuals: Khalid Jamel, the Al Rashid Chamber of Commerce director general; Baljit Vohra, an expert on regional small business loans; and Maj.

Carlos Molina, a civil-military operations officer from 4th Brigade Combat Team.

Subjects covered during the seminar at the Baghdad University campus in Karradah included small business loan criteria, business plan development and banking relationships.

Vohra brought some hope to the attendees when he talked about banks that have pledged support for developing economic pluralism in Baghdad.

“There are eight banks in and around Baghdad that have already lent a combined \$2.26 million to local businesses

in Baghdad since the fall of the old regime in 2003,” said Vohra.

These same banks are continuing their support through additional loan programs based on business’ individual needs. He added that banks in the area are becoming more aggressive in their lending practices, by tailoring loans in relation to the business’s profits. The goal is to invigorate the local economy and encourage business development and growth.

Molina, a native of Puerto Rico, is assigned to A Company, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion and works as an international business consultant when not deployed with the military.

During the seminar he addressed techniques that could be used by the entrepreneurs to assist their businesses in development. The subject that he stressed most was the need for businesses to develop a business plan. A business plan summarizes a business’ goals and the intended strategy for achieving those goals.

Molina described two potential techniques businesses may use to create their business plan during the seminar.

He noted that it is key for businesses to provide a clear and concise business plan to lending institutions as part of the loan application process.

All attendees expressed gratitude for the seminar. “The strategy and insight provided today will help me finance and achieve my business objectives,” said one small business owner.

Due to the overwhelming success of the seminar, future business seminars have been planned, focusing on small business finance. 



Capt. Ryan Avila

Maj. Carlos Molina, a civil-military operations officer from A Company, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, talks about techniques that could be used by entrepreneurs to help them achieve their business goals.

Moonlighting professor detained in Saydiyah

4th Brigade Combat Team PAO

BAGHDAD – A physics professor, allegedly moonlighting as a terror cell leader in west Baghdad, was one of seven suspected terrorists detained during an early-morning raid Oct. 2.

Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment found bomb-making materials and various chemicals and detained

seven men in two separate locations in Saydiyah. The men were suspected of using the materials and chemicals to make lethal roadside bombs that target Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces.

Other items found during the raid included electronic circuit boards, circuit testers, wireless car alarms, spools of wire, a computer CPU, a loaded AK-47 assault rifle and a pistol. 



Staff Sgt. Isaiah Montfort, a squad leader with B Co., 4-64 Armor and Rochester, N.Y., native, teaches an Iraqi girl how to play paddy cake during a school supply donation Sept. 25.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper

Agencies team up to help children continue education

Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper
4th Brigade Combat Team PAO

The Iraqi and coalition security forces work together every day to make Iraq a safer place. During a school supply donation Sept. 25, Iraqi Army Soldiers and the Karkh District Council took the lead to distribute the supplies to students.

“We came here to support the schools in the Karkh District and make the children happy. I feel great about being here,” said Iraqi Army Lt. Ali Abbas, security platoon leader for 1st Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division. He added that this helps to show that the Soldiers and the local government are here to help and protect people from all walks of life.

The Soldiers from A Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment brought more than 200 packets of school supplies that are designed to give students the basic items they will need for class along with extra pens, pencils and paper that were given to teachers. The DC identified students from the five area schools that needed supplies, and the Iraqi Army helped to transport and pass out the items.

“It was the partnership between coalition forces, the district council and the Iraqi Army that made the day a success,” said Abdu Al-Sattar, chairman of the Karkh District Council.

As the supplies were carried in, the Iraqi and American Soldiers stopped by the different groups of students as they waited. The students were divided into five groups from each of the area schools. One student told an Iraqi Soldier that he knew that the Iraqi Army was there to protect him.

“We want to assure the children that we are here to stop ter-

rorism, and when they see us they can feel safe,” Abbas said.

For many of the U.S. Soldiers, the Iraqi children remind them of the sons and daughters they left behind when they deployed so they made an extra effort to connect with them. Staff Sgt. Isaiah Montfort, a squad leader from B Company, 4-

64 Armor, said he taught one student how to play paddy cake because he loves kids and has a daughter her age.

The school supplies were donated by a variety of non-profit organizations to help the students with their studies.

“The donations will help them continue their education and become good citizens,” Abbas said. “This period of terrorism will end soon, so we want them to never hesitate in studying and finishing their schooling.”

This was the first event for this school year in the Karkh district, but Al-Sattar said that he would work hard to ensure that there are many more events for the area schools.

“I am proud that all of us could gather together to help the children of this area continue their education.”

The coalition has a close relationship with the Iraqi Army and government agencies when conducting any type of operation, but it’s important for the Iraqi leaders to take the lead on operations to demonstrate they are in charge, said Capt. Scott Ginsburg, one of the team leaders from A Company, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion.

“It’s easy to say that they are in charge, but actions speak louder than words,” he added.

“Today, they (U.S. Soldiers) were a great help in working with the both the Iraqi Army and Karkh District Council,” Abbas said. “The two Armies have such a great cooperation because our goals are the same – the end of terrorism and a safe and secure Iraq.”



Iraqi Army Lt. Ali Abbas, security platoon leader for 1st Battalion, 5th Brigade 6th Iraqi Army Division, kisses a young girl on the cheek before giving her school supplies Sept. 25.

Soldiers assigned to 1-184 share their grief over the loss of Sgt. Jerry Lee Bonifacio, Jr.

Photos Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper



Soldiers gather to share grief, remember joy Soldier brought

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

Soldiers assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division came together Oct. 13 at Forward Operating Base Prosperity to honor the memory of Sgt. Jerry Lee Bonifacio Jr. The mortar man assigned to B Company 1st Battalion, 184 Infantry Regiment but working in support of 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment was killed in an attack by a car bomb.

Lt. Col. William Wood, 1-184 battalion commander did not have the pleasure of knowing Bonifacio but was impressed and humbled by his sacrifice.

"He was a Soldier, a patriot, a man who answered his nations call," Wood said. "He could have stayed home safe in the United States and allow others to go in his place, Because he answered the call he became a national treasure, a hero and a man we owe a great debt to."

Wood quoted John Stuart Mill, a 19th century philosopher: "The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertion of better men."

"Sgt. Bonifacio was one of those better men. I know that on his fateful day he saved the lives of several of his comrades."

Capt. Paul Judge, the D Co., 4-64 commander remembered Bonifacio as a non-commissioned officer that far was from

"old and crusty" but was no less professional than any sergeant major. Professionalism means a lot to Judge and Bonifacio brought a platoon of Soldiers that fit the description of professionalism to a "T."

"He was always straightforward and honest," Judge said. "He'd ask simple questions, make corrections and like all of us worked tirelessly to complete the mission and make sure everyone came home safe."

The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertion of better men.

John Stuart Mill, Philosopher

A fellow 1-184 Soldier, Sgt. Gerritt Hylkema said that Bonifacio's friends came before anything else for him, but his Soldiers were just as important.

"The Soldiers respected him and their respect for him went far past what any NCO could expect from one of their Soldiers because of the type of leader he was. Whatever knowledge he had; life, military, he was more than willing to share with his guys. No matter how you approached him, whether you were mad or angry, in any way shape or form, he would stand there and take it without any emotion and be there for you."

Like any good NCO, Bonifacio would

not ask his Soldiers to do something he himself would not do.

"If his men were exhausted he would take it upon himself to finish the mission so his men could rest," Hylkema said. "He did it without any gripes or complaints."

Hylkema went on to share what Bonifacio was like when not outside the wire.

"I don't think I've ever seen him angry," he said. "He was a happy guy no matter what time of day or night. He'd wake every morning singing, before he went to sleep he would blast his stereo, his life was a simple one; from reading comic books to playing video games and watching cartoons. If there was anything you ever wanted to know about those subjects you could go ask him."

Instead of talking about his memories of Bonifacio for "days or months" Hylkema offered one final thought.

"For those of us who really knew him, we loved him; we loved him as a member of our own family, we will continue to do so for the rest of our lives." 



Trio of Tuskers remembered at FOB Falcon

Spc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

When we are faced with losing someone dear to us to an untimely death, the natural reaction is why. Why was this person whom I care about taken from me? Too often we focus on the negatives rather than the difference made by those who are no longer serving beside us.

Lt. Col. Robert Roth, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor's battalion commander tried to make some sense of the conflicting feelings he felt during the memorial service held at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Sept. 21, for 1st Sgt. Alan Gifford, Sgt. Matthew Deckard and Spc. David Ford, all assigned to C Company, 4-64.

The Soldiers were killed when an improvised explosive device detonated next to their tank Sept. 17.

"I believe that for every horrible thing that happens on this earth; something very good comes from it," Roth said.

He continued to share what positives he had gleaned from the loss of three of his Soldiers.

"I remember the night of the attack, at the hospital seeing one of the Soldiers," Roth said. "The first thing he said to me was, 'Give it to me straight, sir. How is everyone?' When I replied that they were being attended to by doctors, and he only need worry about himself, the next thing he said was, 'I'm sorry sir.'"

Roth couldn't believe that this young Soldier, bleeding internally, who had just experienced the single most traumatic event of his young life was more concerned with his buddies and how his commander was handling the situation, than his own condition.

Roth found it to be same when he spoke with the loved ones of the fallen Soldiers. They told him, "Tell the Soldiers that our husbands are with God in heaven now. They are home and safe; please tell them that it is okay. I want everyone else to finish the job so they can come home and celebrate with everyone else."

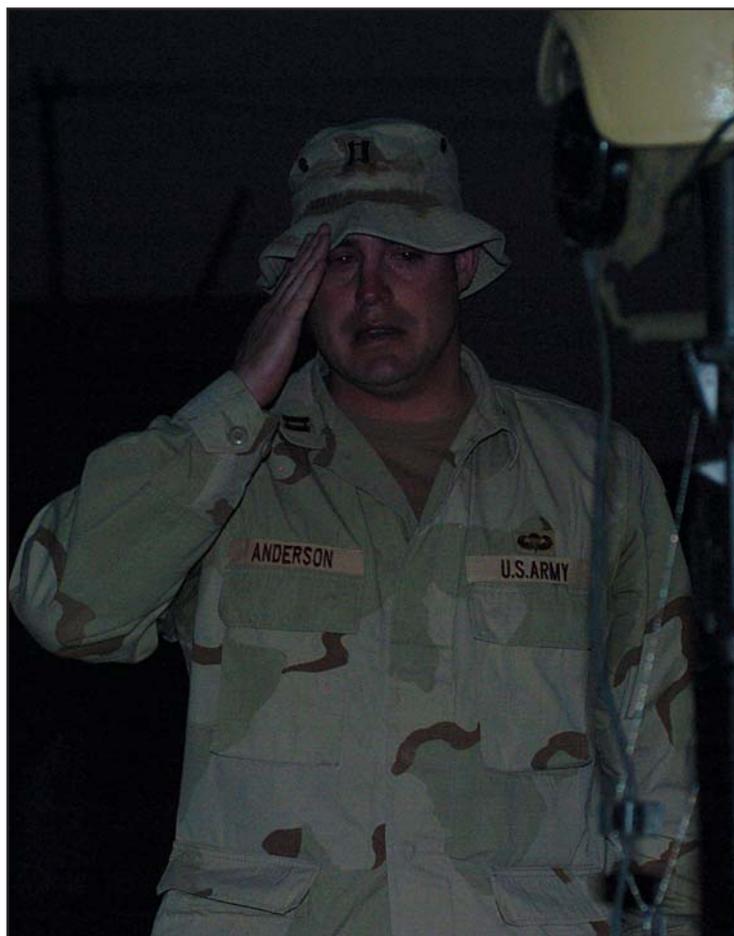
After this conversation, Roth shared his epiphany, "The single most important thing we have on this earth is each other. The actions I saw that night and the following days, made us remember that all we have in this sometimes cruel world is each other."

He saw the incredible love that came from everyone that night. The crews who never gave up and did whatever it took to save these soldiers lives. The families back home who took care of the wives and children of those that perished. The people who don't even live in Georgia who wanted to go to the hospital in Washington D.C. to visit the injured as they returned.



Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

Spc. Nathan Parks, C Co., 4-64 Armor, shares his fond memories of his "little brother" Spc. David Ford, at the memorial service held at FOB Falcon Sept. 21.



Capt. David Anderson, C Co. commander, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor, pays his respects to his fallen Soldiers

"Ladies and gentleman this is love for one another, which is the most powerful force on earth," Roth said. "That is what makes America great. In my mind, that is why we are here in Iraq today. We are here to show the rest of the world how to love one another, and live in peace."

"God put these men here on earth for a purpose. Perhaps their purpose was to do what they could in the short time they had here in Iraq, and perhaps, it is also to remind us that there is no greater love than the love of a friend, regardless of color, race or religion," he said.

There is a time for everything, according to the book of Ecclesiastes. Roth asked that his Soldiers turn from their season of mourning, leave their grief by the wayside and embrace the joy the fallen Soldiers had brought to their lives.

"Don't tell me nothing good came from the deaths of these men, because I don't believe it. Let us put grief aside; the time to celebrate their lives has begun. Walk away today and honor these men by talking about them; laughing, joking and sharing stories about them that brought us all closer together. Thank these heroes for their sacrifice and for reminding us all that all we have is each other."

Capt. David Anderson, C Co., 4-64 Armor commander followed Roth by sharing memories of his Soldiers. He began by quoting his company first sergeant, "Sir, if it's stupid and it works; it isn't stupid.

"I hope this works," Anderson said, his voice choked with emotion as he began to share his memories of his top NCO.

Continued page 23

Stalkers remember respected NCO

Capt. Kyle Yonemura

29th BCT PAO

Soldiers assigned to 4th Brigade Combat Team assembled to honor the memory Staff Sgt. Alfredo Barajas Silva at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Sept. 19.

Silva was a forward artillery observer assigned to D Company, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment. He was killed Sept. 7 after the vehicle he was traveling in was struck by an improvised explosive device.

Silva joined the Army in July, 1995, and served three years on active duty as a forward artillery observer. He later joined the California Army National Guard and served as a combat engineer. In 2001, he began working as a member of California's Counter-Drug Task Force.

While training for the deployment at Fort Bliss, Texas, a strong bond formed between the artillerymen and their infantry counterparts after Silva joined the team.

"We melded together when Staff Sgt. Silva joined us and he made us into a team," said Silva's close friend and platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Barker.

Silva was respected by his subordinates and leaders alike. Though some who didn't know him well may have perceived him

as having a hard exterior, he was a generous, charismatic leader who took care of his soldiers.

"Professionalism and dedication to his guys were first and foremost in his mind," Barker said.

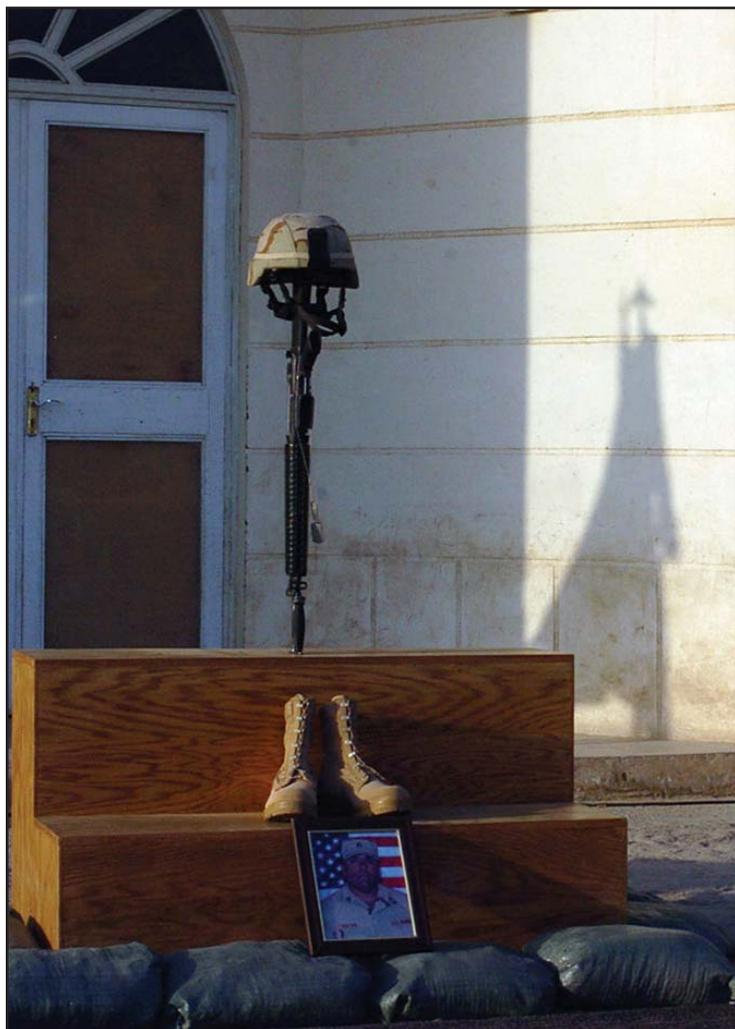
Capt. Raymond Hill, the Fire Support Officer for 1-184 Inf., said Silva was known to his buddies as "Chamuco," or "The Bogeyman," in Spanish. The nickname was a misnomer for a firm leader who tried-unsuccessfully -- to hide a soft and generous heart.

"He would try to get things to give out to the kids and his team," Hill said.

"He was the first to start throwing Beanie Babies and soccer balls to the (Iraqi) kids (on patrols). He made sure every kid got something, even if it was just a pen or a pencil lying around the truck," Barker said.

"I have so many memories of Silva," Barker said. "He is the reason Delta FIST is such a tight team. When we first came together as Delta FIST we were a bunch of guys that got pulled from other units to fill out the detachment. Because of him we became a team. Thank you 'Chamuco.' I'm proud to have known you. and I will never forget you."

"One of the things I will always remember about Silva is his pride," Barker said. "He was proud of who he was and where he came from. He was proud to be Hispanic, proud to be in the Army and he was proud of his Soldiers. But most of all he was proud of his daughter Mariel. We used to tease him because he only had one child. We'd ask him why he didn't have more kids. He told us, 'If you get it right the first time, you don't need to do it again.'" 



Photos by the 29th BCT PAO

Staff Sgt. Alfredo Barajas Silva's weapon, helmet, boots and picture at his memorial service held at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Sept. 19.



Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr., 3rd Infantry Division Commander, pays his respects to Silva.

D 1-184 Inf. honor fallen brothers

Capt. Kyle Yonemura

29th BCT PAO

"There are over 300,000 words in the English language and I can't seem to find any good enough to describe Sgt. Michael Sonoda. Nothing I can say will make Mike's death more tolerable or less painful," said his friend and fellow warrior Spc. Jorge Sanchez.

Neither could any of the Soldiers present at Sonoda's, Sgt. Paul Christian Neubauer's and Staff Sgt. Daniel Scheile's, all assigned to D Company, 1st Battalion, 184 Infantry Regiment, memorial service held at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Sept. 27.

Scheile known to buddies as, "The Shyster," was remembered as "happy," by his company commander Capt. Jeff Dirske. "He was so happy it was often hard to get him to focus on the seriousness of the situation."

Some of the things that always lifted his spirits, according to Dirske were his daughters, cats, motorcycles and playing video games. Dirske remember one pursuit that really seemed to "catch" Scheile's attention.

"He had a love of fishing, Dirske said. When we lived up at FOB Freedom someone sent him a whole pile of fishing poles.

He wanted to fish in the Tigris, though I doubt anyone would eat whatever he may have caught. We agreed on catch and release only," said Dirkse.

According to Dirske, Scheile's greatest catch was his wife, and his gifts from his marriage; his daughters.

"His passion and fire were for his wife Jennifer, and two daughters Kelly and Marisa," said Cpl. Scott Reynal. "I can't remember a day that went by that he wouldn't tell me a story of how proud he was to be their dad."

Sonoda was another family man, who's friends spoke glowingly about him.

Sgt. Sonoda was very close to his family and often talked about his father Takeshi, mother Emiko and his sister Irene.

"I can't imagine what his family is going through right now, to think that something like this could happen to such a great son, brother, and soldier. It feels a little colder now that he's gone," Sanchez said.

"Sgt. Sonoda had a long history with the company and he had been in every platoon, served in every capacity as the need arose. Ready and willing for anything, he would give you the shirt off of his back," Dirske said.

"Mike died serving his God and coun-

try," Sanchez said. "But most of all, he fought for us, the Delta Demons. He fought to keep us all safe and went on every patrol with the intent to find IED's and terrorists -- so the rest of us could do our patrols as safely as possible."

Dirske said that he never once heard Neubauer complain because he loved being a Soldier and everything that came with it including the "toys" that came with being an infantryman.

"Paul was a soldier that would do any task placed before him. He was a master of his weapons systems, be it a M-16 series rifle or any crew-served weapon in the platoon's inventory," said his platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Chebatah.

Sgt. Neubauer enjoyed performing his mission in Iraq and believed in the mission he and his fellow soldiers were assigned to carry out.

"Paul totally believed in this mission, and enjoyed going out and performing our assignments," said Chebatah. "I never heard him complain about any of our tasks. It was always 'Roger sergeant!' He treasured working and interacting with the local populace."

These heroes will live on in their fellow Soldiers hearts and minds. Their sacrifice is not forgotten. 

Continued from previous page

"1st Sgt. Gifford had the ability to make me smile no matter how mad I was or the situation," Anderson said. He remembered one angry episode in particular. He was in a particularly foul mood when Gifford told him. "Sir, I cursed during my church-league softball game last week. Think they are going to let me play next week?"

"Suddenly all my anger was gone, and I was smiling," Anderson said. "I apologized and realized that what I was getting mad about wasn't really worth getting mad about at all."

Though his voice was cracking, Anderson still managed to edify his first sergeant.

"He was respected by all and loved by the Cyclones. He was a family man; he would beam with pride and joy as he talked about his wife and son. If the company had nothing to do at 1700, and I was trudging through paperwork, he would release the company and head home to his family because he had completed all his work much earlier. My job was made so easy because my first sergeant was by my side."

Anderson remembered Decker as an information sponge whose eyes would shine brightly as he acquired new knowledge and a mild-mannered Soldier who gave everyone around him reassurance and confidence.

"He told me when I promoted him to sergeant that his promotion was for his family," Anderson said. "He loved his family more than anything."

Sgt. John Durst remembered "that Damn Decker" as a great

person, always there for Durst and anybody else who needed him. "He would help anyone and never ask anything in return."

When someone who was like a brother to him died earlier in the deployment, Decker told Durst he could not sleep until he comforted Durst. "When your head is messed up, my head is messed up."

"I could never repay him for the things he did for me," Durst said. "He held my head while I sobbed and endured the brunt of the blast while I raged. He kept asking me, 'What else can I do man?'"

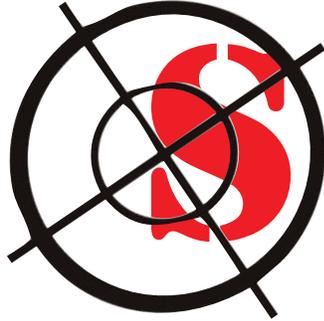
Durst told the assembled mourners something they could do to help his grief. "When you say your prayers, or crack open that first beer, I hope you will all remember that 'damn Decker.'"

Ford's roommate at Stewart and battle buddy Spc. Nathan Parks remembered his "little brother" as one who didn't love the Army, or even plan on staying in, but one who was a great Soldier.

"He was a smart kid and a hard worker," Parks said. "He motivated me on several occasions. He just loved life."

Anderson's first thought when he met Ford was, "My goodness, this kid looks too young." During the time Anderson knew Ford, he watched him mature into a man and remembered him as one whom never complained, never questioned his orders. He gave all.

Anderson's parting words were, "We shall not mourn their deaths as a tragedy, that in itself would be a tragedy. We shall learn from them and speak of their strength, courage in the face of adversity. They were doing what they wanted; being Soldiers and acting with selfless service. They gave their lives in the noblest of ways so that people would know freedom." 



HARPSHOOTERS

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



Maj. Alayne Conway

A U.S. Soldier from 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment remains vigilant on a street corner along an outer cordon in western Baghdad Oct. 15. Meanwhile, Iraqi Army Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade provided security for the inner cordon of this polling station along Airport Road.



Spc. Dan Balda

Soldiers assigned to 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment share a conversation with their Iraqi Army counterparts while patrolling during the Referendum.



Lt. Col. William Wood, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment and Panama City, Fla., native, administers the oath of reenlistment for Sgt. Julio Alfaro, assigned to B Company, 1-184 Infantry and San Francisco native, Oct. 18 at a checkpoint outside of the International Zone.

Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper



Sgt. Tony Caradine, a squad leader and a native of Jefferson, Ala., helps his Soldier Pvt. Richard Bentley, a SAW Gunner and native of Sacramento, Calif., zero his weapon. Both Soldiers are assigned to 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, the famed Rakkasans.

Spc. Dan Balda