



RAIDERS DOWN RANGE



Volume 1 Issue 17

Diary of the Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team

December 1, 2005

FOB Danger transferred to Iraqis

101st ABN PAO
News Release

TIKRIT, Iraq — The Iraqi government took control of Saddam Hussein's palace complex from U.S. coalition forces in a historic ceremony November 22 in Tikrit.

Three different U.S. Army units have used the complex as a forward operating base since 2003.

"Now it is the property of the Iraqi people," said Hamad Hamood Shekti, governor of Salah Ad Din Province. "Tourists will be allowed to see the palaces."

Colonel Mark McKnight, commander of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, handed the "key to the palace" to Shekti during the ceremony, signifying the release of U.S. control.

"The passing of this facility is a simple ceremony that vividly demonstrates the continuing progress being made by the Iraqi government and their people," McKnight said.

"Two years ago, coalition forces fought to rid this nation of an oppressive regime. Since that time, coalition forces... have resided on FOB Danger, working alongside Iraqis to protect the four provinces of north central Iraq," McKnight added.

Although 24 other coalition operating bases have been turned over to the people of Iraq, ten of them in north central Iraq, the Tikrit palace complex is the most significant transition to date. The complex is on more than 1,000 acres of land along the Tigris River. There are 136 buildings on the property, with a combined 1.5 million square feet of administrative and living space.

The province was and will stay "a

symbol of national unity and brotherhood in Iraq" Shekti said.

"[Today], we celebrate the transfer of the presidential palaces to the patriotic Iraqi hands, signifying the many aspirations and goals of the great citizens of the Salah Ad Din province," Shekti said.

Shekti said he looks forward to Iraq's independence, when all multinational forces are able to leave Iraq, and wants to prove the people of Iraq can manage their issues independently.

"These palaces are owned by not one person anymore," he said, "and no one will be prevented from entering them in the future, because now it is the property of the Iraqi people."

The palace complex was initially secured by the 4th Infantry Division in 2003 and designated as Camp Iron Horse during Operation Iraqi Freedom I. Saddam Hussein was captured near Camp Iron Horse in December 2003.

The base was redesignated FOB Danger once it came under the control of the 1st Infantry Division out of Wurzburg, Germany.

The 42nd Infantry Division, a National Guard unit based in New York, took over the FOB Feb. 14, and in July, began the process of returning the complex to the Iraqi people.

Many Iraqi officials attended the momentous event, including Lt. Gen. Shahid Aziz, commander of the 4th Iraqi Army; Rasheed Ahmad, chairman of the Salah Ad Din provincial council; and Judge Abd al Hussein Shandal, the minister of justice. U.S. Ambassador Dr. Zalmay Khalilzad and Gen. George Casey, commander of Multi-National Force - Iraq were also in attendance.



Sgt. Dallas Walker

Abdullah Hussein, deputy governor of Salah Ad Din Province, raises the Iraqi flag in a symbolic moment in history as the people of Iraq took control of Forward Operating Base Danger during a ceremony in Tikrit Nov. 22.

Civil military operations center opens

Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Mills
1 BCT PAO

FOB SPEICHER, IRAQ -- Coalition Forces opened a new civil military operations center near Tikrit November 21. The new CMOC is now located just inside the main entry control point to Forward Operating Base Speicher, just north of the city.

The former sight of the civil military information center at Forward Operating Base Danger in downtown Tikrit was closed in anticipation of returning that base to Iraqi control.

According to Cpt. David Williams, civil affairs officer, Co. B, 445th Civil Affairs Battalion, the difference between the old CMIC and the new CMOC is more than just location. Williams said the CMIC was more of a mixture of centers, dealing with business, medical and legal assistance, designed to help the Iraqi people in the province.

"They (Iraqis) contact Civil Affairs for medical



Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Mills

Cpt. Brant Diefenderfer, foreign claims legal officer, 101st Airborne Division, speaks with an Iraqi man about a legal claim at the opening of the civil military operations center at FOB Speicher. The CMOC handles everything from foreign damage claims to business and medical assistance.

assistance or Coalition Forces for official business," said Sgt. Bobby Mateo, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

"The CMOC takes everyone, processes them and sends them out to the proper center," Williams said, instead of having all those centers in one location, which is logistically difficult.

One of the main functions of the CMOC will be dealing with legal affairs, said Mateo.

"This is where Iraqis claim foreign damages," Mateo said. Foreign damages are mostly classed as injury or damage to property caused by Coalition Forces, Mateo explained.

Along with Coalition Forces representatives there will be Iraqi Army representatives as well, said Williams. An IA CA officer will be on hand to deal with the cases that are culturally sensitive, or difficult for a US Army Soldier to deal with.

"The (challenge is) to get the right things to the right people," said Williams.

Voices and Viewpoints

Riding the Marne Express to a holiday season

Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Mills
1st BCT PAO

When I was growing up my father was a firefighter in Los Angeles City. Being a firefighter in LA runs the gamut, from taking it easy in the valley, to working all night in the inner city.

His career was spent mostly in LA's inner city. He started in the downtown district, moved to the Echo Park area of East Los Angeles, and ended up as a Task Force Commander in South-Central LA, namely Watts.

Let me tell you, it was cool having a firefighter as a dad. Career day, people -- think about it.

The fathers would line up to talk about what they did for a living and there would be my dad, in his full "turn-outs," breathing apparatus weezing, and everything smelling of smoke.

Little Johnny's dad's a lawyer, Jacob's dad's a certified public accountant.

My dad's a firefighter. How cool is that?

He'd bring in "Resuscitating

Annie," the CPR training dummy and the kids would practice the "precardial thump" to their delight.

While he was a firefighter he figured out how to play the system to a certain extent. He would work his regular 24 hour shift, barely sleeping if at all during that time considering where he was working.

Then he would find out if someone called in sick in the valley, where nothing very exciting happened, and he would work another shift.

That would double his money and the shift in the valley was as near to a day off as you could get.

Sometimes he'd work at the airport, where crashes rarely happened, or at the port, where fires were rare as well.

Then back he'd go to the dangerous and exciting grind of whatever violent, gang-ridden part of the city he normally worked in.

He always worked on the holidays, filling in for people who wanted to be with their families.



I celebrated many a holiday the day before everyone else did, just because my dad was going to be at work during the actual date.

Whether it was worth it or not is a question I'm sure he asked himself.

You see, I would go days without seeing my dad; and as cool as it is to have a dad

who's a firefighter, that part is the payment.

Nothing is free.

Since 1999 I've spent every odd year away from my family. That's a lot of Thanksgivings, Christmas's and various other holidays over the years.

As much as I loved Chusok, the Korean version of Thanksgiving, kimchi and fried octopus are not the same as turkey and mashed potatoes.

The cooks here at Forward Operating Base Speicher did a good job Thanksgiving Day preparing the food we love for that holiday. But it could never live up to my wife's version.

Every holiday I'm gone I ask the

question as to whether it's worth it or not.

This isn't about political affiliations, or whether I believe the Iraqi government will survive. It's about my family.

When I'm feeling particularly down during a holiday I think about my dad and what he actually did for a living those 25 years he was a firefighter.

Beyond the cool factor was the fact that he was serving the public like the Soldiers, Marines, Sailors and Airmen here in the Middle East.

Sacrifices were made. There must surely have been an inner struggle as well, as he juggled his professional life and what he loved doing with his family life and who he loved.

Just recently I re-enlisted for another 6 years.

I just hope that one day, when my kids are grown, that they will think of me in the same terms as I think of my father now.

I would want to be thought of not as that guy who was always gone, but as the guy who served his country even when it wasn't easy.

Chaplain's Corner

Chaplain sends a letter of thanks

Ch. (Maj.) Mark Nordstrom
1st BCT Chaplain

This Thanksgiving I flew with Colonel Mark E. McKnight, 1st Brigade Combat Team commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Gallagher, 1st Brigade Combat Team command sgt. maj., to five different Forward Operating Bases to wish our soldiers a Happy Thanksgiving.

I thought I would try to encourage soldiers a long way from home and family. As often happens, I was the one who was encouraged and strengthened.

This day I'm thankful for our soldiers.

I'm also thankful, believe it or not, for this time and place. As the Preacher in John Wayne's "The Alamo" answers the boy's question of why he is always giving God thanks, "I thank God for the time and the place, boy...that's all a man can ask for."

For those of you reading this at home with spouses or family members here, understand that we would all really rather be home with you, but the bonds forged by combat and a long deployment help us to meet many challenges.

One of those challenges is to find family in the midst of hardship -- to be thankful in this time and this place.

I sent the following in an email this morning, the



day after Thanksgiving, to our Commanders. I meant to say thanks to them for their leadership of our soldiers, but I'm sure they, like me, simply feel privileged to walk the same ground as our soldiers, and count themselves fortunate to know them.

Here's what I wrote:

Gentlemen,

I saw many soldiers on my Thanksgiving travels. These could have belonged to any of you.

As I approached a table occupied with a squad of soldiers just back from a patrol they were busting on each other and grabbing the condiments from each other and I told them, "Stop the fighting at the table!"

Then to all of them, "Does that sound like home?"

They laughed and insincerely but with good humor said -- "Yes sir, thanks."

"So do your parents ask you to say what you're thankful for during your meal?" I asked them.

Most of them nodded, slurping up huge helpings of meat and potatoes and stuffing. Each of them volunteered immediately what they were thankful for.

"I'm thankful for my .50 cal."

"I'm thankful for this meal."

"I'm thankful that we're going home in xx days."

Then one soldier, with a mouthful of food, pointed at his buddies with his fork and said, "I'm thankful for these guys. I'd rather be here with them than with my family."

The table went quiet for a brief moment, but being guys and unable to deal with the emotional tension, they immediately started in on him.

"Ooooh, how nice!"

"We love you too, honey."

One soldier laid his head on the other's shoulder, cuddling him and making goo goo noises, all with a big hunk of turkey on his fork.

I told them, "Don't worry guys, what happens inside the wire stays inside the wire. I won't ask any more questions and you don't have to tell me anything."

They were roaring laughing -- all young bright faces, enjoying immensely their youth and strength and friendship and their bond as soldiers.

Thank you for your excellent leadership of these young soldiers during a long year. They are finishing well.

Respectfully,
CH Nordstrom

Your commentary is
needed!

Write your thoughts down and send to:
richard.bartoszuk@us.army.mil
thomas.mills@us.army.mil



Cpl. David Zickafoose

School bound...

The Provincial Police sent over 230 men from Salah Ad Din province to the Baghdad Police Academy November 25. Of that number nearly 90 men are currently police officers in the province. The remaining men, numbering over 140, are new recruits who will work in Balad or Samarra when they graduate.

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Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Mills

Sgt. Manwell Grant (left), supply sergeant, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Combat Team, and Maj. Pamela Roof (center), 1-3 Brigade Troops Battalion, help transport a mock-injured Soldier during 1-3 BTB's first casualty evacuation exercise at FOB Speicher. 1-3 BTB, formerly at FOB Dagger, a small, isolated FOB south of Tikrit, were training in their new environment and experiencing the changes that come with living on a much larger FOB.

Soldiers see changes in Medevac procedures

Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Mills
1st BCT PAO

When the 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Brigade Troops Battalion was on Forward Operating Base Dagger, a small FOB just south of Tikrit, they were responsible for the medical evacuation and care of troops stationed there. It was a risky proposition, considering FOB Dagger was isolated and injured troops had to wait for medevac helicopters to be flown in.

That all changed in late July, though, when 1-3 BTB moved to FOB Speicher, a huge logistics base and home to a combat support hospital.

Those changes were most apparent at a mass casualty evacuation exercise November 12.

"Life saving didn't change from Dagger," said Maj. Pamela Roof, physician assistant, 1-3 BTB. The way the injured are moved and sustained changed, said Roof.

During the exercise a number of Soldiers role-playing as injured were found after a mock indirect fire attack near the 1st Brigade Combat Team head-

quarters building. The call went over the radio for help and a series of actions were set into motion.

Soldiers certified as combat life savers quickly assembled at the 1-3 BTB troop medical clinic. Soldiers designated as non-standard ambulance drivers prepped their Humvees to carry litters and brought them to the TMC. A team of combat life savers responded to the site of the attack and began organizing and prioritizing the injured Soldiers according to the extent of their injuries.

Some of the injured were put in Humvees and sent directly to the Combat Surgical Hospital on FOB Speicher. Others were sent to the casualty collection point at the TMC.

According to Roof it went well, and the difference between being at FOB Dagger and FOB Speicher was marked.

"We didn't have to stabilize and wait for air. We could just take them to the CSH," said Roof. "If someone is urgent instead of going to the casualty collection point they are taken directly to the CSH."

Being at FOB Speicher has other advantages besides the CSH. "It changed dramatically because the fire department augmented

us," said Roof.

Roof said that although a communication problem caused the fire department to show up later than they would normally it was nice to have that asset available. In fact, Roof said, the Soldiers responded so quickly with treatment, triage and delivery of victims that the fire department didn't have time to respond.

In the end, though, it comes down to basic life-saving and this type of training only brings to light how the environment has changed.

Since the exercise was scheduled everyone knew it was going to happen, said Sgt. Sherrie Cooper, fuel handler, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, but the important thing was it gave everyone an idea of where they need to be if something were to actually happen.

"I needed it because next time something happens I'll need to know how things go, where I need to go," said Cooper.



Maj. Pamela Roof, physician assistant with 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Brigade Troops Battalion, assesses a mock-injured Soldier during a mass casualty exercise November 12 on Forward Operating Base Speicher. The 1-3 BTB Soldiers were experiencing their first training exercise of this type on Speicher, which is much larger than the last FOB they lived on.



Cpt. (Chap.) Nathan Kline, 1-3 BTB chaplain, comforts Spc. Jermetta Hannor, 1-3 BTB, after a mock attack on the 1st Brigade Combat Team HQ during a mass casualty evacuation exercise November 12.

Thanksgiving in Iraq



Lt. Col. Robert Butts (right), executive officer, 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Brigade Troops Battalion, serves turkey to Sgt. 1st Class Keith Jamison (left) and Staff Sgt. Alexis Morales (center) both of 1-3 BTB, while Lt. Col. Douglas Victor, 1-3 BTB commander, moves down the line.



Cpt. Leila Pedroso, brigade medical planner, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division serves up a meal to a Soldier during the Thanksgiving meal at Forward Operating Base Speicher.



Spc. Josiah Kaehele, 1st BCT, spoons up some gravy for Thanksgiving at Forward Operating Base Speicher.



Lt. Col. John Charvat, executive officer, 1st Brigade Combat Team, serves up Thanksgiving chow.

The Soldiers of 1st Brigade Combat Team celebrated Thanksgiving across Salah Ad Din province with feasts of turkey, ham, prime rib and sometimes even crab legs. Col. Mark McKnight, 1st BCT commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Gallagher, 1st BCT command sgt. major, travelled the province, bouncing from FOB to FOB to wish the 1st BCT Soldiers a Happy Thanksgiving. On FOB Speicher, where 1st BCT is headquartered, the small dining facility there was overflowing with Soldiers. These photos were all taken at FOB Speicher, but are representative of this day in Iraq.



Soldiers from 1st Brigade Combat Team, and 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division, enjoy their Thanksgiving dinner at FOB Speicher in Tikrit. photos by Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Mills

Raiders Down Range is looking for your photos, commentaries and stories. Send submissions to the 1st Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs Office via email (richard.bartoszuk@us.army.mil, thomas.mills@us.army.mil) or call us at 670-5127

3rd FSB, 5/7 Cav deliver school supplies

Spc. Anna-Marie Risner
133rd MPAD

YETHRIB, Iraq — Many troops serving in Iraq spend their time hunting insurgents and tracking down those who wish to hurt Coalition forces; but some Soldiers occasionally get the opportunity to show Iraqi people another side of the military.

Soldiers with Company B, 3rd Forward Support Battalion and Troop A, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, Fort Stewart, Ga., spent most of today getting to know schoolchildren near the town of Yethrib, Iraq, at a school Cav troops opened earlier this year.

The Soldiers dropped off an assortment of supplies including notebooks, pencils, desks and shoes — all of which were donated by FSB Soldiers' families.

"Back around the April or May time frame [we decided] that we would try to adopt a school here in Iraq," said Capt. Kate Jackson, commander, Co. B, 3rd FSB. "Several Soldiers' parents got with their churches or other organizations they were involved with like their work and they all collected up ... school supplies that these children could use."

Security for the mission was provided by 5/7th, commanded by Capt. Joel Jackson — marking the first joint operation for the husband and wife.

The operation came to a head when Joel discovered his wife had a plethora of school supplies, but no school to donate them to.

"I walked into my wife's office one day and she had all these school supplies and I've been wanting to do a school drop, and this is one of the areas where I really needed to do something for the peo-

ple," he said. "I asked her if she had a school lined up and she didn't, so it evolved from there."

Soldiers handed out bags of supplies, helped some children find new shoes for the cold months ahead, played games and interacted with Iraq's younger generation — a task many Soldiers feel is important to the country's success.

"It's great to be able to go out and meet the kids because the kids are the ones we're really trying to make an impact on," said Spc. Joseph Dupree, 5/7th Cav. "I know that if we can interact with the kids and help them to like us, the future generations will be a lot more open and cooperative with the United States."

"It's all about the relationships that you can build ... for us to get out there and show that we do care and that we have a genuine interest in their well being," Kate said. "Whether it was just a sticker or it was us playing soccer with them it lets them know that we do care."

The day wrapped up with a game of soccer between Soldiers and children, followed by good-byes and thank-yous as tanks and trucks rolled out of sight. Leaders hope their actions today will make a lasting impact on the children and the town.

"By [the families] taking the time to send the supplies over here and us taking the time to go out and interact with the children and to play games with them, they know that we genuinely do care," Kate said. "At the national level, there's a lot of efforts going on but to truly [be successful] it takes the boots on the ground, the daily interaction with them and especially with the children ... hopefully that carries over to the other generations."



Spc. Anna-Marie Risner

Sergeant Jessica Acosta shares a photo of her father and brother with school children. Soldiers with 3rd Forward Support Battalion, and Troop A, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, Fort Stewart, Ga., spent the day dropping off supplies to an elementary school near the town of Yethrib, Iraq. The Seattle, Wa., native interacted with the children by dancing, sharing photos from home and handing out star stickers.

Joint raid kicks off Operation Able Sumpter

Spc. Wayne D. Haley
133rd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE REMAGEN, Tikrit, Iraq - Operation Able Sumpter commenced in the early morning hours of November 10, in Al Hamara using Coalition Forces in a joint effort with Iraqi Security Forces to locate and detain suspected improvised explosive device cell members.

During the raids approximately 90 Coalition Soldiers, 40 ISF troops and multiple contractors conducted three simultaneous raids. The three platoons, made up of two Coalition platoons and one Iraqi platoon captured one targeted suspected IED cell leader and another detainee.

This was the first raid mission for Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, since they took over in this sector 10 days ago after the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) relocated to the area. However the Iraqi army has been conducting this kind of mission in this sector for about six months.

"A small group of U.S. troops are embedded in the Iraqi's platoon for reporting purposes (to the operation commander)," said Capt. Michael Gruber, battle captain, "IAs work parallel with their American counterparts, they have their own piece of the pie. They have their own training, their own planning, their own mission to complete."

The mission was considered a success with the capture of the suspected cell leader maker of a July 8 vehicle born improvised explosive device. At



Iraqi Army soldiers rally with U.S. troops at a checkpoint outside the target area just moments before the Operation Able Sumpter start in Tikrit, Iraq.



photos by Spc. Wayne D. Haley

An unnamed interpreter works with U.S. troops questioning an Iraqi citizen while U.S. troops search an IED cell leader's home near Tikrit, Iraq during Operation Able Sumpter, a joint U.S. Army and Iraqi Army raid.

At this point the detainees will be brought in and questioned by Coalition and Iraqi military and police intelligence experts.

"It doesn't necessarily stop attacks in the area but it will make them reset their planning phase and/or their operations," Gruber said. "It's a big deal for us."

"It was a full company operation with multiple objectives simultaneously executed using two U.S. Army platoons and one IA Platoon."

On the day before the operation, three IEDs were set off in the Forward Operating Base Remagen sector. One person received minor injuries to the face and there was some damage to the vehicle. The other two IEDs caused no damage or injuries.

Before this incidences there hadn't been an IED attack in the area since Nov 3.

"One of the attacks targeted Iraqi Police, one targeted a main supply route sweep and one targeted a combat logistics patrol," Gruber said.

The raid missions will continue and are anticipated to escalate with the up-coming elections, Gruber added.

Use the five C's to secure an IED site.

- Confirm** : the device
- Clear** : the area
- Call** : EOD
- Cordon** : the perimeter
- Control** : site access



0035

IEDs KILL

Rage Company works with IA at carbomb site

Sgt. 1st Class Walter E. van Ochten
133rd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE REMAGEN, Tikrit, Iraq - A convoy of Coalition humvees "snaked" its way through the streets and alleys of Tikrit on Nov. 10. They were doing a main route sweep, a routine they've done for almost a year now.

Capt. Sam Donnelly, commander of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, was leading this convoy. He said the sweeps are done to look for improvised explosive devices and other sights that might look unusual for the area.

"It also gives the villagers a chance to see us, and we can see the tone of the community," said Donnelly who hails from Richmond Hills, Ga.

These kinds of sweeps are an almost daily job for his Soldiers,

Donnelly said.

For this trip, Donnelly said he had also planned on checking in with the local "spheres of influence" in the Tikrit area. They are the movers and shakers in the community; government officials, religious leaders, the police and Iraqi Army personnel.

Coalition Forces work closely with Tikrit's community leaders training and supplying them so they can bring peace and stability to the Tikrit area.

"We like to get and meet with Iraqi leaders and have a rapport with them," Donnelly said. "It helps us to have a situational awareness, learn what's going on and stay current on what the atmosphere is like."

Today, the local religious leader had to reschedule, so Donnelly and his Soldiers pressed on with their route sweeping mission.

As humvees from Company A, also known as "Rage," made their way through the dusty streets, they would pass fruit vendors hawking their products, men fixing vehicles, children playing in the streets and flocks of sheep being led along the roadway.

Staff Sgt. Joshua Hanks, who kept the truck's radio handset pressed to his ear to hear over the constant rumbling of the Humvee's engine, commanded the third Humvee in the "Rage" convoy. He kept an eye on the road ahead, watching children playing nearby and Iraqi vehicles as they approached. He is always on the look out for things that have changed or look unusual.

About an hour and a half in to the mission, Hanks took the handset away from his ear, looked over and spoke to his crew. "That smoke off to the



Sgt. 1st Class Walter E. van Ochten

Iraqi ambulances rush to the scene of a car bombing outside of a hospital in Tikrit, Iraq on Nov. 10.

right is a (vehicle born improvised explosive device)," Hanks said to his Soldiers.

With that the convoy of humvees raced off towards the rising smoke in the distance.

Donnelly later said that the blast was an attack by anti-Iraqi forces on a hospital used by the Iraqi army for physicals.

The blast had happened in Catasea, Iraq just north of Tikrit, not in "Rage's" area of operations, but they were the closest Coalition unit to the city and were instructed go to the scene, Hanks said.

The trip took "Rage" less then five minutes to complete.

As the "Rage" humvees pulled up to the scene, they could see a wave of Iraqis moving away from the blast area. The Iraqi Army and police had already taken control of the area around the blast site and set up roadblocks to cordon it off.

Without stopping, the "Rage"

vehicles went around an Iraqi police roadblock. The first two humvees in the convoy moved on up to the blast area to do a situation report as the other two pulled out to the side of the police roadblock to lend additional security.

Moments later, Iraqi fire engines, ambulances, more police and Iraqi Army personnel arrive on the scene.

Hanks said the Iraqi forces in the Tikrit area are now at a level that when something like this happens, they are able to deal with it on their own. Mostly what the Coalition forces do now is see what happened and lend support if they are need.

That day they didn't need support.

As other Coalition Forces got to the site, Donnelly did a quick battle hand off to another convoy, telling them what was going on and what had happened. He then took his "Rage" convoy back to its route sweeping duties. They had been at the scene for only 15 minutes.

"Six months ago, we would still have been there," Hanks said as his convoy drove from the site. "But now they (Iraqis) can take care of every thing."

The Iraqi Army in the Tikrit area has come a long way during the past few months while working with their Coalition counterparts, Donnelly said.

"The people here have really toughened up a lot," he said. "The Iraqi Army now takes the lead in situations like this and we just get situational awareness."

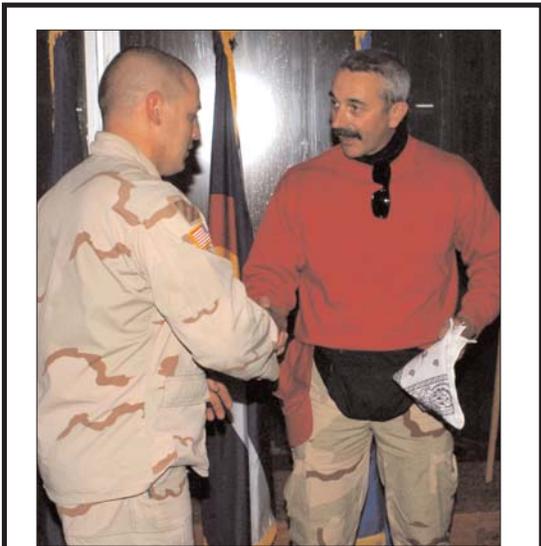
"A VBIED is not able to stop the whole day like it use to."



A U.S. Soldier stands guard at the scene of a car bombing outside of a hospital in Tikrit, Iraq, on Nov. 10.



Capt. Sam Donnelly commander of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, inspects the damage done by a car bombing outside a hospital in Tikrit, Iraq, on Nov. 10.



Maj. Richard Bartoszuk

Totally Tippin...

Country music star Aaron Tippin (right) hangs out with a Soldier at the 1st BCT headquarters building. Tippin was visiting the troops on Forward Operating Base Speicher. Tippin spent an hour at the 1st BCT HQ where he posed for photos and signed autographs.

Use the five C's to secure an IED site.

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