

The Marne Express

"Mission, Soldiers, Teamwork"

Volume 2, Issue 21

Serving the Soldiers of Task Force Baghdad

December 4, 2005

In this week's edition of *The Marne Express*



IA basic training page 5



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Iraqi, U.S. forces work side by side after attack

Press Release
Task Force Baghdad PAO

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces and Task Force Baghdad Soldiers quickly began search-and-rescue operations in the wake of two suicide car bomb attacks in central Baghdad around 8:20 a.m. Nov. 18.

Initial reports indicated at least three Iraqi civilians were killed and 43 others were wounded when terrorists detonated two car bombs near the Al-Hamra Hotel on the Karradah Peninsula.

There were no Task Force Baghdad casualties.

The explosions, coming within seconds of each other, damaged an apartment complex near the hotel. Portions of the building collapsed, trapping residents in the rubble.

See **TEAM**, page 12

Teamwork in troubled times



Maj. Aylane Conway

Iraqi firefighters work diligently to clear rubble while rescuing trapped Iraqis in an apartment building after two car bomb explosions rocked a neighborhood in the Karradah district Nov. 18.

Weapons cache grows as 1/75th Cav. Soldiers continue to dig

Spc. Kelly K. McDowell
2/101st Abn. Div. PAO

BAGHDAD – After receiving a tip from a local resident, Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division uncovered what turned out to be a large weapons cache west of Baghdad.

The unit initially found a small cache consisting of two rocket-propelled grenades and one AK-47 assault rifle Nov. 14.

After uncovering this weapons cache, the Soldiers of 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment expanded the search of the area, resulting in one of the largest of 17 weapons cache discoveries by

2/101st Abn. Div. to date.

After receiving the informant's tip, the Soldiers started their search by using a metal detector.

They began to dig up munitions and weapons at 3 p.m. and the dig continued until after midnight Nov. 16.

When an explosives ordnance disposal team arrived at the site, the Soldiers were still

discovering more weapons caches buried in the field.

"After we found the smaller cache, it just kept going," said Staff. Sgt. Joel Killian, 1st Platoon, B Troop, 1/75th Cavalry. "First we would find a mortar plate, then we would find the tube. Next, every side road was filled with

See **CACHE**, page 12



Pfc. Jason Jordan

Sgt. Jason Millay, 2/22nd Inf., inspects the shell of an explosive round found in a home during a night raid Nov. 11.

'Triple Deuce' Soldiers get results with foot patrol

Pfc. Jason Jordan
1/10th Mtn. Div. PAO

ABU GHRAIB, Iraq – It was Veterans' Day in America as Task Force Baghdad warriors walked the streets of Baghdad searching for terrorists.

The neighborhood of Abu Ghraib was quiet on the night of Nov. 11, but the streets were far from empty. While many unsuspecting citizens sat in their homes, two companies from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division's 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, walked up and down the streets in search of terrorists.

While the sight of convoys leaving Camp Liberty is a common occurrence for local Iraqi citizens, Soldiers are rarely seen leaving the "wire" on foot. However, the 2/22 Inf. Soldiers did just that during Operation Roundup.

"We will conduct a series of raids ... to gather information about the whereabouts of some big players in al-Qaeda and other

insurgencies," said Capt. James Kleager, A Company commander, as he briefed the Soldiers for the upcoming mission using a small model of the neighborhood.

Soon after the mission began, it was clear that citizens were not expecting to see a large number of Soldiers on foot in the area, and the surprise worked toward the Soldiers' benefit.

"The sight of such a large number of Soldiers dismounted in their neighborhood really brought the heat down on these people," said 2nd Lt. Kip Remsburg of A Co. "The sight of us prompted them to speak out more than usual as they were questioned – and we received more information than usual."

The Soldiers capitalized on the fact that the dismounted rifle platoons would be a complete surprise.

"It was a shock for these people to see us on their streets like this," Kleager said. "We are keeping (the terrorists) on their

See **DEUCE**, page 12

m7 sends

Light at the end of the tunnel

Command Sgt. Maj. William M. Grant
3rd Inf. Div. command sergeant major

First things first – I would like to thank you all on the Marne team for your commitment, dedication, professional excellence and sacrifices over the past 11 months that we’ve conducted our mission.

Your actions in whatever capacity you are serving has perpetuated the support of our nation while simultaneously winning the hearts of the Iraqis (all you need to do is look into their eyes, and I have experienced that opportunity).

You have performed your duties with honor in the midst of extremely dangerous operating environments – superb.

You, the Marne team, have placed your thumbprint on history with your efforts during the very successful October Referendum and now, during preparations for the December elections.

Therefore, we can say the light at the end of the tunnel is shining – but the mission isn’t over. I ask all of you to maintain your

focus until we officially receive a change of mission.

Safety must be enforced daily. We all know that factors such as failure to properly prepare for a mission coupled with speed and fatigue equate to unnecessary risks.

Conducting a risk analysis mitigates risk to our teammates and limits equipment losses.

Likewise, as we prepare to return home we must “think safety” to create a safe environment for ourselves and those around us.

The division has tools to sustain unity through teamwork. These tools include documents such as A Soldier’s Promise, Defensive Driver and Motorcycle Training Requirements, and Family and Buddy Posters, which can be found on the 3rd Inf. Div. TACWEB within the Safety section.

But even the use of all these tools without making good, sound decisions, will ultimately lead to disaster. We are asking you to be safe, be smart, and watch out for your buddy.

Don’t become a statistic.

Rock of the Marne!

Hoaxes are a real threat.

Always treat them as real.



STAY ALIVE

0015 IEDs KILL

The Word on the Street

What are you doing to get into the holiday spirit?

“I think about home a lot, and I picture it snowing here in Iraq.”



Spc. Lawson Conner
HHC, 2/502nd Inf.
Pennsylvania

“I have been writing letters home, sending t-shirts and teddy bears to my wife and try to stay in touch with everyone.”



Pfc. Michael Parker
HHC, 2/101st Abn. Div.
Tennessee

“I have been calling my family and talking to them.”



Pfc. Jason Koenig
HHC, 2/101st Abn. Div.
Arizona

“I have ordered a few gifts from [the internet] and sent emails home to my family.”



Capt. Michael Smith
HHC, 2/101st Abn. Div.
Florida

“I wrote a group letter to my family so they can all read it and I am making a video to send back home of the Soldiers and Iraq.”



Sgt. Rachael Eding
HHC, 2/101st Abn. Div.
Indiana

The Marne Express

Task Force Baghdad Public Affairs Office

Commanding General: Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr.

Public Affairs Officer: Lt. Col. Robert Whetstone

Public Affairs Supervisor: Sgt. 1st Class David Abrams

The Marne Express Staff

Editor: Sgt. 1st Class Brenda Benner

Layout and Design: Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft

Staff Writers: Sgt. 1st Class Peter Chadwick, Sgt. 1st Class David Abrams, Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker, Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper, Staff Sgt. Kevin Bromley, Staff Sgt. Russ Rozean, Sgt. Andrew Miller, Sgt. Matthew Wester, Spc. Ricardo Branch, Spc. Ben Brody, Spc. Jennifer D. Atkinson, Spc. Derek Del Rosario, Spc. Brian Henretta, Spc. Maria Mengrone, Spc. George Welcome, Spc. Daniel Balda, Spc. Kelly McDowell, Pfc. Jason Jordan.

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Commentary

From front line to support, we all play a role

Spc. Derek Del Rosario
100th MPAD

I have talked with some Soldiers who have questioned the reason they are here. Some feel their time has been wasted. These Soldiers do not understand why they were sent to Iraq; some are even working outside their job specialty.

"I am supposed to be a (fill in job specialty), not a (fill in undesired job). I wasn't sent here to (fill in undesired detail or guard duty)," some may say.

Despite this, they still get up every day, put on their uniform and do their job, and that kind of commitment is what drives this military.

One of the things that makes our military the best in the world is the fact that we never quit. I commend everyone who does their job out here in such trying circumstances. We all miss home, but we all know there is a job to do as well. I also commend those who put aside their personal beliefs and political affiliation and come together to complete the mission.

Our frontline forces are leaving an indelible mark. The service members who practically live outside the wire, the pilots flying these dangerous skies and the people who know the streets of

Baghdad by memory deserve the utmost respect of their fellow Soldiers and the people of America.

Supporting units and local contractors also play an important role in our mission, but their service sometimes gets overlooked. All the supporting units provide an essential service, but from my point of view, there are a few groups who are sometimes slighted and not recognized for the work they do:

Dining facility workers – I have never seen a more motivated group of people than the contracted workers who prepare and serve our food everyday. They make sure to serve every meal with a smile, and that is why I make it a point to thank the person who serves me my food. Yet on many occasions, I've seen people act very rudely toward them. I have seen attitudes sour over petty things like serving too much or too little food, or for not assuming people wanted bread with their meals. In the same position, some of us might curse at the person across the counter. Still, despite such attitudes, these committed workers take it in stride and serve food in the same manner as they do everyone—with respect. Thank you dining facility workers, for serving me food everyday for the last year and putting up with people who are having a

bad day.

Mechanics – I am going to admit that I really don't like working on vehicles, so the fact that these Soldiers' full-time job is to do something I hate is already a plus in my book. But the mechanics in the motor pools and aircraft hangars also show a commitment to their job that I wholeheartedly respect. I have interviewed many mechanics in the last year, and one common theme I've noticed is commitment and dedication to personal perfection. They realize that one overlooked item in vehicle or helicopter maintenance can cost lives. They play an integral role in the mission. Thank you mechanics, for doing the job that I don't want to do, and for your commitment to perfection.

Supply personnel – These are the troops providing equipment essential to our job and their services are sometimes underappreciated. Some people can look at their printers, paper, water and other essentials without a second thought as to how those items got to them. Supply personnel got us what we needed to deploy, supplied us throughout this deployment, and will be accounting for all the equipment we will turn in when we redeploy. Personally, I feel quite overwhelmed by all the paper-

work and hand receipts I have to handle, but the supply personnel handle paperwork for entire companies, battalions and brigades. Thank you supply personnel, for handling paperwork and red tape so I don't have to, and for providing me the essential equipment I needed all year.

As I said earlier, we all play an important role, we wouldn't be here if we weren't important. Mail service, medics, chaplain services – the list goes on.

When I was first deploying, some of my family didn't understand why I was leaving. "Your job is not on the front line," they said. "They need fighters, not journalists."

And when I first thought about that, I agreed with them. But now that I've been here for several months, I realized how important my role truly is. I am a journalist, and my job is to tell the Soldiers' story – from the front line troops to the people supporting them.



Iraq is a roller coaster, and the ride is almost over

Sgt. Matthew Wester
100th MPAD

I've learned a lot during my tour in Iraq.

I know how to navigate around north-west Baghdad. I know a chem-light gives off the perfect amount of illumination to light the inside a portable toilet at night. And I have also learned that Taco Bell tastes almost exactly the same in Iraq as it does in the States.

Valuable lessons all, but the main lesson of this deployment and the most important thing I can pass on to incoming troops is this: the only thing you can expect here is the unexpected.

I know you can't prepare for everything, but it has really helped my state-of-mind this year to expect that anything can happen.

As an Army journalist, I have seen all kinds of missions and written stories about almost every kind of Army job. I have been outside the wire plenty, and those missions are especially fluid.

One morning, I went out with a Civil Affairs unit to cover a story on a new trend of Iraqi farmers raising fish in

our sector - a quick trip off post and back by lunch to write my story.

I didn't end up seeing any fish that day, but I did come away with a story.

An improvised explosive device was buried on our route, diverting our original mission. In Iraq, these things happen.

The day was a blur of activity including finding the bomb, searching houses, and taking detainees. Finally, at midnight, we rolled back to Taji and reflected on the day.

The mission consisted of long lulls punctuated by a few minutes of quick, adrenaline-charged action – a roller coaster.

I was really riding the rails on the Iraqi roller coaster during a mission in the middle of the tour.

I covered a cordon and search mission and was right there for a big find.

The Iraqi Army Soldiers we were with searched a long line of houses set back from the road in a palm grove. My non-commissioned officer and I were walking toward a house to take photos of the IA troops conducting searches when we noticed a column of IA Soldiers walking back toward us.

In the absence of a translator, their officer made a signal with his hand like a fountain or a flower blooming. He wasn't imitating a blooming flower. We realized he was making a sign for an explosion. His guys had found a car bomb.

They stumbled upon two men (a

father and his son) who were feverishly working on hooking up wires and explosives to finish the car bomb. They were caught red-handed. Only later (it's always later when I think of these things) did I think about how the car bombers were probably trying to hurry up and finish so they could drive the car out of the driveway, onto the street, and slam it into our convoy, which was parked nearby.

I don't know if you want to call it dumb luck or good timing, but we avoided disaster. The tour has been like that for my team. Bad stuff might be happening around us, but we seem to slide by unharmed – whistling past the graveyard.

The stark contrasts of my job have surprised me throughout my tour.

I went out to a local school with civil affairs Soldiers to drop off donated school supplies in the morning. The school was in a little village with mud-brick homes and sheep roamed on the school's playground. I took pictures and did my normal public affairs thing.

That night, I covered the Asian-Pacific Heritage Month Celebration. Basically, it was a show put on by all of the Equal Opportunity Soldiers from all of the different units.

The celebration consisted of different dance performances and songs.

It was strange that at 10:00 a.m. that day I had been in a village made of mud and at 7:00 p.m. I was watching a group of Soldiers wearing physical fitness uni-

forms and colorful plastic flower leis dance to the lively ukulele playing of a tank mechanic.

This place is full of surprises, even on the FOB.

One night, I was smoking cigars next to my trailer with my buddies, and I saw something fly past my buddy's head. It didn't look like a bird and if it was an insect, it would have to be some kind of crazy, mutant moth.

We figured out that it was a bat. We have bats living under the concrete roof above our trailers. They look like mice with wings. Now, we sit outside, and watch them swoop and dive at insects at dusk. I never thought I would see bats in Iraq. I also never thought I would miss anything about this place, but I think I will.

I'll miss the way Soldiers tell stories, the way they find humor in even the darkest situations, and the way they look out for one another.

Above all, I think I'll miss the feeling that I'm truly living, that anything can happen with the next adventure right around the corner.

I feel like I'm finally used to the roller coaster, even to the point of riding with my hands in the air instead of nervously clutching the bar.

For me, the ride is almost over. I can finally see the end of the twisting tracks. It's time for another group of ticket holders to climb aboard.




Unsung Heroes
Command Sgt. Maj. William M. Grant
3rd Inf. Div. command sergeant major

This "shout out" goes to the supply clerks, supply sergeants, and property book teams who work behind the scenes to support our missions.

As human nature would have it, most of us don't really think of the supply troops until we need something we don't have.

Marne Soldiers within the logistical field work diligently, doing everything within the regulations to get us what we need. Whether it's simply a package of

Sgt. Tonya Hines, Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company, Special Troops Battalion supply sergeant, and Pfc. Anthony Howell, HHSC supply clerk, inventory equipment at Camp Liberty Nov. 28.

Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncraft

paper clips or a multi-thousand dollar high-tech item, they understand our need for precious supplies and equipment.

Supply specialists not only have tasks related to researching and ordering items, but also coordinating methods to get those items to us through the many logistical challenges of Iraq. They help us keep track of our equipment through hand receipts and periodic inspections.

Marne supply personnel conduct repeated inventories until all of the quantities and endless stock numbers are as close to perfect as possible. Those of you who have attempted to track equipment that you do not physically control know this is certainly no quick or easy task.

Their supply mission involves facilitating lateral transfer transactions, tracking and exchanging our clothing items and turning in unserviceable equipment.

With our rapidly approaching redeployment, the supply specialists are very busy coordinating everything involved with getting our equipment home.

This includes acquiring blocking and bracing materials, synchronizing the movement and turn-in of theater specific equipment, and making sure the thousands upon thousands of packed items are accounted for.

I'm sure I speak for many other Marne Soldiers who appreciate all of your hard work and attention to detail as you complete your mission "by the numbers."

Rock of the Marne!!



Photos by Spc. Ben Brody

Spc. David Tan, 1/9 FA medic, determines a Baghdad woman's vital signs during a medical capabilities assessment and clinic operation at a Baghdad school Nov. 18.



Above: Capt. Scott Baumgartner, 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery physician's assistant, examines a Baghdad resident's injured leg Nov. 18.

Right: Spc. Felipe Rodriguez, 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery medic, takes an elderly man's vital signs at a Baghdad school during a MEDCAP operation Nov. 18.



1/9 FA medics hold clinic for Iraqi citizens

Spc. Ben Brody
2nd BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, conducted a medical capabilities assessment and health clinic in Baghdad Nov. 18.

Medics set up the clinic in a local school, seeing more than 100 residents, and dispensing medical advice and basic treatments.

"It's basically a sick call for the people of Baghdad that we're running here," said Capt. Scott Baumgartner, 1st Bn., 9th FA physician's assistant. "We saw an opportunity to do something good for the

Iraqi people and followed up on it.

School workers cleaned out two classrooms and medics set up a triage room where they took patients' vital signs and made a list of their complaints.

After a screening in the triage room, the patients saw Baumgartner and Staff Sgt. Gilberto Colon, 1/9 FA medic platoon sergeant.

"At the triage room, we're just looking for blood pressure, temperature, and to try and figure out what's bothering them," said Spc. Felipe Rodriguez, 1/9 FA medic.

Rodriguez said people were helpful in describing

their symptoms to him.

An hour after the clinic opened, a large crowd had already formed outside the schoolhouse. Soldiers from A Battery, 1/9 FA formed them into orderly lines and passed out stuffed animals and small Iraqi flags while they waited.

"Most of the complaints are pretty routine – upper respiratory infections, joint pain in older people and stomach aches," Baumgartner said.

"It feels good to do this kind of thing," Colon said, referring to both providing medical treatment and handing out gifts to kids. "You can see the people really appreciate it."

1st BCT headquarters dedicated to one of brigade's fallen troops

Press Release
1st BCT PAO

FOB SPEICHER, Iraq – Soldiers from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division gathered to honor one of their own for Veterans' Day.

They dedicated their headquarters building Nov. 11 to Cpl. Aleina Ramirez, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., Brigade Troops Battalion, who died April 15 in an indirect fire attack on Forward Operating Base Dagger near Tikrit.

Lt. Col. Douglas Victor, 1/3 BTB commander, said the dedication was to honor Ramirez along with all of America's veterans.

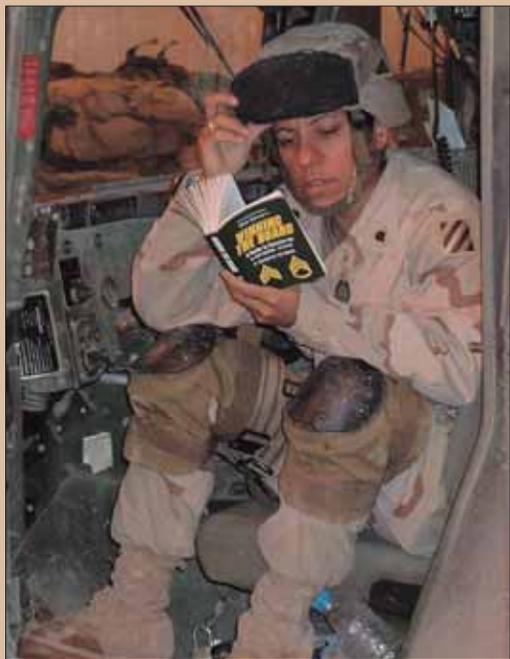
"Because Corporal Ramirez earned our respect as a person and as a Soldier it is

only fitting to set aside something permanent in her name," said Victor during the ceremony.

"As we celebrate Veterans' Day, Corporal Ramirez is obviously one of those American veterans who accepted her responsibility to do something for her country and to defend freedom."

During the ceremony a plaque and photo of Ramirez was placed on the building in memoriam.

Ramirez, from Hormiguero, Puerto Rico, first enlisted as an administrative specialist with the Puerto Rico National Guard in 1992 and joined the active duty ranks in 2004. During Operation Iraqi Freedom 3 she was assigned as a 1/3 BTB battalion personal security detachment member.



Courtesy photo

Cpl. Aleina Ramirez studies for the board before a mission.

No Soldier left behind

Sgt. Matthew Maupin

"I will not leave a fallen comrade"

These well known words from the Warrior Ethos ring true for Sgt. Matt Maupin.

Maupin is an Army Reserve Soldier from 724th Transportation Company who was captured April 9, 2004 during Operation Iraqi Freedom 2.

Sgt. Maupin – we are still looking for you and we will find you. You have not been forgotten.





Photos by Sgt. Matthew Wester
Above: An Iraqi instructor inspects a recruit's disassembled AK-47 rifle at the Iraqi Army Basic Training Academy at Taji, Iraq, Nov. 2.
Left: An Iraqi recruit shoots an AK-47 rifle during training at the academy. Iraqi recruits learned basic combat skills as part of an expanded program.

Iraqis train fellow Soldiers in expanded basic training

Sgt. Matthew Wester
 3/1 AD PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The Iraqi Soldiers here don't spend their time shining boots, singing cadences or pumping out countless push-ups, but they are in basic training.

They carry AK-47 rifles on their shoulders as they march smartly from one instruction area to another and when a sergeant calls them to attention, they shout in unison, "Long live Iraq!"

Iraqi recruits learned crucial basic combat skills as part of an expanded program at the Iraqi Army Basic Training Academy in early November. This is the second group of Soldiers to go through a new, extended cycle.

"It started off as a two-week program and right now, we're conducting a 24-day cycle," said Staff Sgt. Michael J. Munoz, operations noncom-

missioned officer at the Academy, who serves with 80th Division, U.S. Army Reserve.

During the 24 days of training, Munoz said the recruits learn drill and ceremony, weapons marksmanship, squad-level movement techniques, room-clearing procedures and how to operate traffic-control points.

Instructors are able to go into greater detail when teaching the individual skills because they have more time with the new Soldiers than they did during the 14-day cycles, Munoz added.

At the academy, recruits listened intently Nov. 2 as an instructor taught them hand-and-arm signals. All the instruction was in Arabic — no translator needed. Iraqi non-commissioned officers were teaching the course.

"We're at a phase now where we mainly just advise

the Iraqi instructors," said Sgt. 1st Class Naymon Mack, an advisor at the academy who also serves in the 80th Div. "Two years ago, we started off with Americans giving all the training. American drill instructors did all the training through interpreters."

"Now, we pretty much just oversee (Iraqi instructors) and make sure the training is conducted properly," Mack said. "We've moved to another level."

Munoz said the recruits' skills have moved to another level as well. They leave the academy better prepared for the challenges of combat.

In the Iraqi Army system, Soldiers are assigned to a unit, attend basic training and then go back to their unit after the training is completed.

"The units can see a difference between the Soldiers who have attended basic training and those who have not,"

Munoz said. "There is a difference in discipline as well as skills."

That discipline is crucial for the troops in training, who are sure to see action while defending their country.

"In the U.S. Army, when we graduate basic training, we don't know for sure if we're going to be in combat or not," Munoz said. "When these guys graduate, they know they're going to be in combat."

"Once they finish their training, within a couple of weeks, they are outside the wire conducting patrols," Mack said. "It is very important that they work as hard as they can to learn everything they need to know."

During a block of rifle-marksmanship training, the Iraqi cadre members moved the recruits' arms into proper firing positions and gave them tips for acquiring targets while standing and while on the

move. The young Soldiers asked questions, making sure they were positioned exactly as they were instructed.

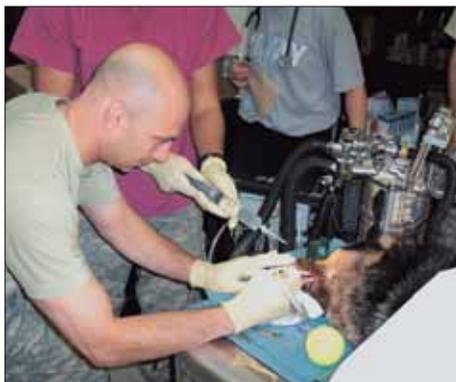
The instructors' techniques are hands-on, and they are determined to teach the Soldiers to a high standard.

"They've been doing a good job training the Soldiers since we've handed over things to the Iraqis," Munoz said. "They've got it down as far as training Iraqi troops."

In a couple of weeks, the troops of this second expanded cycle will graduate, go back to their units and conduct missions to combat the insurgency.

The Americans working at the Academy see the basic training program as an important part of transitioning Iraq's defense to Iraqi forces.

"(The Iraqi instructors) are very motivated," Mack said. "They want to get things done."



Maj. Jerry Carbone
Maj. Richard Padron, a surgeon with 10th BSB, 1/10th Mtn. Div., operates on a 10-year-old German Shepherd named Blesky at the 1/10th Troop Medical Clinic.

U.S. Army doc helps military dog stay in fight

Pfc. Jason Jordan
 1/10th Mtn. Div. PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Maj. Richard Padron, a surgeon with 10th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, recently had an unusual patient on his operating table – a dog named Blesky.

Blesky is a military working dog who provides valuable assistance to the brigade as units conduct combat operations in the Abu Ghraib area of Baghdad.

Soldiers from 1st BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. brought the 10-year-old German Shepherd to the surgeon in hopes the doctor could help relieve their four-legged friend's pain. Blesky had been whimpering for a while and medics eventually narrowed the problem down to the dog's mouth.

"Blesky had already received a previous root canal, but he was in need of a new filling and it was causing him problems," Padron said.

Medics usually treat between eight and 10 military working dogs per year, but this was Padron's first oper-

ation on an animal.

"It was very interesting operating on the dog," he said. "The anatomy of their mouth is very similar to a human's – except the angle of their teeth is different, and they are longer. I used just as much care on that fellow as I would use on my patients any other time."

The dog's handler was very concerned after Blesky was administered anesthesia for the operation, and he fretted the whole time over his best friend, said Pfc. Rafael Diaz, assistant medic on the scene.

"Blesky's caretaker was very concerned to see his best friend being operated on," Diaz said. "He stayed by his side the entire time and stroked his belly until it was over. The relief on his face was very heartfelt."

The procedure went well and Blesky is now back on the streets of Baghdad, patrolling with 1/10th Mountain Div. Soldiers.

"It felt very rewarding being able to help out Blesky," Padron said. "Just like any one of us, we didn't want to see him in pain. We wanted to get him back on the streets again so he can continue helping his troops."

Iraqi, U.S. Soldiers keep pressure on

Spc. Michael Leslie
3/1 AD PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The lights are out. The streets are dark. Soldiers are trudging down the alley in silence to find a target.

Early in the morning of Nov. 9, Soldiers of 2nd Mechanized Battalion, 1st Mechanized Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division, walk from their patrol base in Saba al Bor to a strategic area to catch terrorists before they have a chance to escape.

They start at their target house, knocking on the front door as an early-morning surprise. Their targeted suspect is in the house and the Soldiers detain him without a struggle.

"I think they did really well," said Maj. Steve Lutsky, 2nd Battalion, 70th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division operations officer. "This was their first dismounted attack. We moved dismounted in the cover of darkness, and doing that, they did very well."

The Iraqi Army's participation was just part of a bigger operation by the 2nd Bn., 70th Armor Regt. searching the surrounding area.

Iraqi Soldiers were conducting most of the mission on their own with little American intervention.

"We let them do their own thing," said Sgt. Troy Krahmer, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2/70th. "We were just there to kind of look over them, but we were always there to point them in the (right) direction."

Lutsky said the Iraqi Soldiers had their own objectives, so they conducted a company operation.

The Iraqi Army was successful in finding who they were looking for – as well as someone they weren't expecting to run into during the operation.

"The IA caught one of the targets, and also a target of opportunity that we have been looking for," Lutsky said.

They went from house to house, knocking on doors and searching for contraband.

"They found a couple of weapons that the Iraqis aren't allowed to have," Krahmer said. "Everything was good. There was nothing bad that happened, so it was all a good mission."

Lutsky thinks the operation also showed local residents that the Iraqi Army is here to help them build a safer life.

"The goal of the operation was to cordon and search areas to provide a safer environment for Iraqi people in Saba al Bor and also show that the Iraqi

Army is here and capable of protecting them," Lutsky said.

"It's their country. It's good that they're out," Krahmer said. "(The Iraqis) want their own people. They see their own people; they're going to respect them because it's Iraq."

Out on the streets, the IA Soldiers joked around with kids and gave out Iraqi flags.

"It's good to go out and have the people see that the IA is out there doing the work," Krahmer said. "Everybody seemed to interact with them and liked what was going on."

Lutsky believes continuing to conduct company-level operations will help guide the Iraqi Army to bigger operations in the future.

"The more often they get out and do this, and the more often they can exercise as a company, the better off they'll be," he said. "Eventually they will be conducting battalion-level operations without our assistance."

Lutsky thinks the Iraqi Army is getting close to taking over their areas and leading the way as they should.

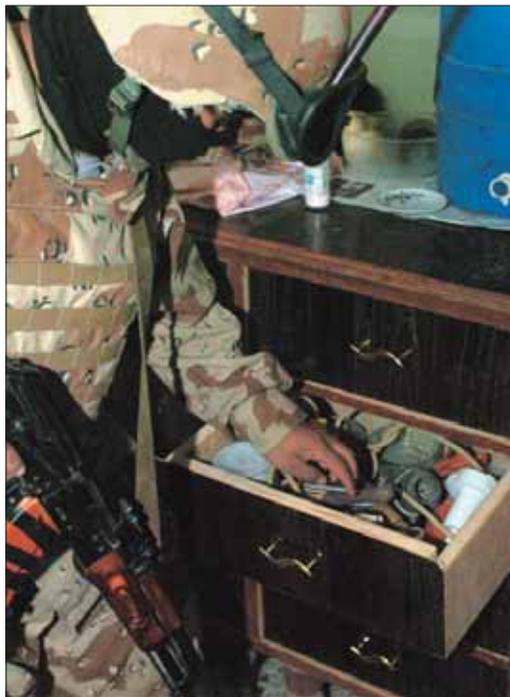
"I think we are well on our way to turning this area of Iraq back over to the Iraqi Army with their set of governance and security," he said.

"At this rate, we will have the Iraqis leading Iraqis very soon."



Staff Sgt. Kevin Bromley

An Iraqi Army Soldier interviews a home owner about terrorist activities in the town of Sab al Bor, north of Baghdad, Nov. 9.



Sgt. Matthew Wester

Above: A Soldier from 1/2 Mech. Bn., 1st Mech. Bde., 9th IA Div., searches a house for illegal weapons during a cordon and search operation Nov. 9.

Right: Maj. Steve Lutsky, 2/70 Armor operations officer, uses a radio to check the progress of the mission.

Far right: A 1/2 Mech. Bn. Soldier gives out Iraqi flags to children.



Staff Sgt. Kevin Bromley

Iraqi Army Soldiers patrol the streets of Saba al Bor in the early-morning hours of Nov. 9. The early-morning search of the city resulted in several detainees and the confiscation of weapons.



Operation National Unity unites forces against terrorists

Sgt. 1st Class David Abrams
Task Force Baghdad PAO

BAGHDAD – Operation National Unity, an ongoing mission which began Sept. 29, continues to produce impressive results in rooting out terrorist activity in and around Baghdad, said military officials.

Statistics from Task Force Baghdad are proof of the hard work by Iraqi and U.S. forces: 25,401 patrols, 14,895 traffic control points, and 1,082 raids and cordon-and-searches.

Add to those figures the rates of success: 36 percent fewer detonated car bombs, a 50 percent increase in improvised explosive devices found before they could explode, and a 67 percent increase in weapons caches discovered and, in most cases, destroyed.

Amid the blur of numbers, officials said one thing stands out: U.S. and Iraqi forces are effective in their missions to secure Baghdad, provide a safe environment for democracy to take root, and stymie terrorist operations at the street level.

As proof of the effectiveness of one piece of a larger puzzle, TF Baghdad officials cite the successes of Operation National Unity.

“Operation National Unity does exactly what it implies – it presents a united front against terrorism,” said Col. Charles Honoré, chief of operations for TF Baghdad. “Iraqi Security Forces and

Coalition Forces, working together and independently, have stopped Anti-Iraqi Forces from carrying out their objectives. We have attacked their safe havens, prevented them from reconstituting those havens, and remain successful in keeping them from expanding their base of operations in the Baghdad area.”

Since Operation National Unity began, Iraq has faced several watershed events: the Oct. 15 Constitutional Referendum vote, the start of Saddam Hussein’s trial, turning over key battlespace to ISF, and the annual Ramadan observance.

In the near future, the Dec. 15 national elections will be one more opportunity for Iraqi citizens to participate in the democratic process in a safe environment.

TF Baghdad officials said it’s the day-to-day aggressive operations of Iraqi and Coalition Forces in the city which make historic events like the Dec. 15 vote such a safe prospect for Iraqi citizens.

“The Iraqi people have shown they are committed to the political process,” said Lt. Col. Mark Sullivan, TF Baghdad elections chief. “The statistics bear witness to this fact – 8 million voted in January, 10 million voted in October, and we expect an even higher turnout in December.”

U.S. and Iraqi officials are already planning to implement tight security on voting day, just as they did during the Oct. 15 Constitutional Referendum. While they anticipate incidents of violence, officials said they will not allow violence to disrupt the democratic process.

“As I often tell people, the enemy always has a vote in what happens over

here – but he votes with violence,” said Maj. Gen. William Webster Jr., TF Baghdad commander. “On Dec. 15, we will do everything within our power to prevent him from casting that vote.”

By maintaining a steady, visible presence on Baghdad streets with their combat patrols, Webster said Iraqi and U.S. forces send a message both to terrorists (“we’re vigilant and will not tolerate insurgent activity”) and to local residents (“we’re here to protect you and clean up the neighborhood”).

Of the more than 25,000 patrols between Sept. 29 and Nov. 12, 16,632 were conducted by Coalition Forces; 1,445 were joint U.S.-Iraqi patrols; and 7,324 were patrols conducted independently by Iraqi Security Forces.

ISF took the lead in setting up and conducting traffic control points throughout the city during that same period. Coalition Forces were responsible for 4,827 TCPs, but Iraqi forces independently manned 9,576 TCPs.

During an incident on Nov. 9, Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment discovered \$16,000 in one vehicle passing through a traffic control point. Upon further investigation, the Soldiers learned the individual had previously been questioned about a suspected kidnapping. Soldiers at the TCP quickly detained the terror suspect.

Though there have been isolated incidents of suicide bombers carrying out attacks against ISF and Coalition Forces, military officials said the number of vehicle-borne IEDs detonated by terrorists has decreased during Operation National Unity. Compared to the previous month, there were 36 percent fewer detonated VBIEDs – down from an aver-

age of about nine per week to about six per week.

In addition, Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers on patrol have discovered 50 percent more unexploded IEDs than the previous month’s average, an increase from about 33 per week to nearly 50 per week.

“That is a weekly average of 17 more bombs we’re preventing terrorists from using against Iraqi civilians, ISF and Coalition Forces,” Honoré said. “By disrupting these potential attacks and seizing weapons caches, we are literally taking ammunition out of the hands of the enemy.”

Patrols reported finding an average of nearly 10 weapons caches per week, up from approximately six per week during the previous month. This equates to a 67 percent increase in the stockpiles of weapons and ammunition seized by Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers on patrol in and around Baghdad.

Some caches, like one found Nov. 10, were the result of tips from local residents. In this particular instance, Task Force Baghdad Soldiers were told of suspicious activity at a house, which led to the discovery of a large number of weapons and munitions, including 28 57-millimeter rockets, 26 cases of 14.5-millimeter ammunition, 12 80-millimeter rockets, 10 rocket-propelled grenades and a 55-gallon barrel of fertilizer to be used in making bombs. The Soldiers detained one individual for further questioning about the cache.

Through all of this activity, TF Baghdad officials said they are setting the conditions for successful elections in December and a secure Iraq where Iraqi forces take the lead on anti-terrorism operations.



Sgt. Thomas Benoit



Spc. Nathan Carr

Above: Iraqi citizens display their ink-stained fingers in the Ghazaliya district of western Baghdad.

Left: Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, stationed at Camp Hawk, provide security from a side street during a cordon and search mission in Ameriya.



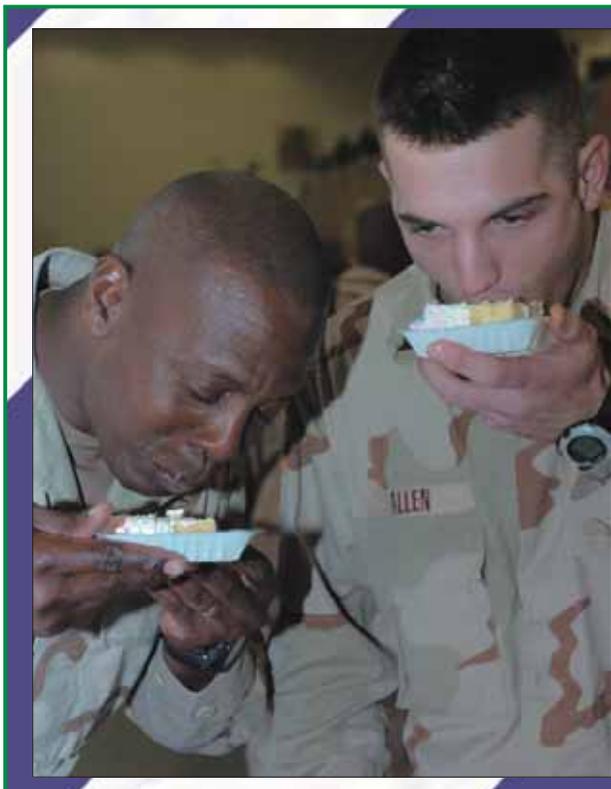
Maj. Russ Goemaere



Sgt. Matthew Wester

Above: Spc. Mike Zehner surveys an Iraqi street while working with Iraqi Soldiers providing security around Al Nida Mosque in Baghdad. Zehner is assigned to a special embed platoon of Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, which trains Iraqi Army Soldiers.

Left: An Iraqi woman jubilantly lifts her purple-stained finger moments after voting in the Oct. 15 Constitutional Referendum in the Tissa Nissan district of east Baghdad.



Happy Birthday, Marne Division!



Photos by Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft
 Above: Maj. General William G. Webster Jr., 3rd Infantry Division commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. William M. Grant, division command sergeant major, cut the first slices of the 3rd Inf. Div.'s birthday cake at Camp Liberty, Iraq.
 Left: Grant and Spc. Jeremy Allen, Headquarters and Headquarters Operations Company, Special Troops Battalion, enjoy their cake the "Dog Faced Soldier" way. The division celebrated its 88th birthday Nov. 21.

Insurgents' weapons refurbished for Iraqi Army use

Pfc. Joshua R. Ford
 MNC-1 PAO

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Iraq – From small arms to M-1 Abrams tank weapon systems, Soldiers of 3rd Forward Support Battalion, 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division armory can repair just about any U.S. Army ground weapon. When the order came down to refurbish 88 AK-47s, they were up for the challenge.

Some might ask why U.S. forces are refurbishing old enemy weapons, but the rifles are cleverly being used to arm Iraqi Army Soldiers, Iraqi Police and other security forces, putting the insurgents' own weapons to use – this time against insurgents.

Chief Warrant Officer Pedro Munoz, 3rd FSB armament and repair technician said when the IPs were being put together they were short on weaponry and this

program is solving the shortage problem. "This saves the Iraqis money from having to buy new AK-47s," said Spc. Philipp Arthur, small arms repairman.

Explosives ordnance disposal teams, U.S. military patrols and civilian contractors find enemy weapons caches and the proper authority will bring the weapons found in the cache to the arms shop for repair, Munoz said.

"I don't see why we should destroy the weapons we find when we can easily arm the Iraqi forces with those weapons," Arthur added.

Munoz couldn't agree more. "In helping them we are helping ourselves because the program is saving the U.S. and the Iraqi Army money and bringing the country one step closer to being self sufficient," he said.

Munoz said he and his weapons specialists were trained by Special Forces troops who guided them on how to train

the Iraqis.

"We trained them to professionally clean, operate and maintain the weapon systems they use," Arthur said. "We also taught them basic skills that all U.S. Soldiers should know."

"Before our training, the Iraqis were cleaning their weapons with gasoline and kerosene which helps the weapon acquire more dirt and deteriorates the metal the weapon is made out of," Arthur added.

Munoz stated the partnership has been an advantage for everyone.

"The Iraqis have taught us just as much as we taught them during training," he said.

The Iraqis taught the arms workers how to look for booby traps on AK-47s and how to disassemble the weapons even faster.

"I never thought I would be working on these weapon systems when I arrived

here," Arthur said.

He added that Soldiers of the 3rd FSB arms room have repaired hundreds of weapons that Iraqi forces are using today.

The first time the 3rd FSB troops were tasked with the mission, an explosive ordnance disposal team brought in 453 foreign weapon systems to the armory. Of these, 420 rifles were candidates for repairs.

"Sometimes you can fix most of the weapons, other times you can only fix some of them," Arthur said.

Spc. Evan Lewis, a fire control repairman from 3rd FSB who usually works on tank weapon systems, has gained cross-training in small arms weapons repair and helps train the Iraqi troops.

"Cross-training everyone in the shop has helped out a lot," Lewis said.

"It feels good to take weapons out of the insurgents' hands and put them into play against them."

Building a bridge over troubled waters

Tom Clarkson
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

SALAH AL-DIN PROVINCE, Iraq – Alongside the longest inhabited region in the world – the very birthplace of civilization – the Tigris River has flowed unceasingly for thousands of generations.

Its 1,146 miles have seen empires come and go. It's been a party to birth and death; a participant in destruction and construction. Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians have traveled its waters for centuries. The river has been a constant, uninterrupted source of life for thousands of years.

Once again, the Tigris is the focus of attention and the object of activity by man. This time, it's through the building of a structure to span over its waters

– the al Shirqat bridge.

When completed, the bridge will provide a safe and reliable river crossing. Every bit as important, it will be a most vital component for enhanced commerce in the region.

But beyond that is the increased morale it will provide for the local populace and the role it will play girding the restoration of national security.

Including a two kilometer two-lane approach on each end of the finished structure, the 560 meter bridge will be 12 meters in width and incorporate two sidewalks to accommodate pedestrian traffic. In addition to appropriate bridge railings, lighting systems will be included on the bridge and along the approaches.

Presently, river crossings at this location are accommodated



The present mode of transport across the Tigris River until the al Shirqat bridge is completed.

by small "homemade" ferries at a cost of 1000 dinars (approximately 60 U.S. cents) per vehicle. The bridge project has been designed and is being built

wholly by Iraqis with oversight and quality assurance provided by the Gulf Region North District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Construction is

underway on this exceedingly large endeavor.

Completion of the bridge is not anticipated until the middle of 2008.

Iraqi Security Forces paint the town clean

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – Armed with paint rollers and paint cans, Iraqi troops assigned to the 1st Battalion, 4th Public Order Brigade set out Nov. 15 to perform a two-fold mission: cover up graffiti on the walls of a school, and bring school supplies and other surprises to the students there.

U.S. Army officials who oversaw the POB mission said even the simple act of scrubbing away graffiti has an impact on the democratic process in Iraq.

“This will be one of the future

polling sites for the upcoming elections (on Dec. 15),” said 1st Sgt. Emanuel Valdez, team chief for Task Force Baghdad’s Civil Affairs Team Four, A Company, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion. “We want to make them an ‘intimidation-free’ area. When (Iraqis) come out to vote, they don’t want to see signs that say, ‘The only road to paradise is through death.’ No pro-American, no pro-Anti-Iraqi Forces graffiti – everything is wiped clean so the people can go in there and make their own decisions.”

After the Constitutional Referendum vote in October, Valdez attended an after-action review to discuss ways to

improve the voting process the next time around.

One of the issues that came up was a need to improve the polling sites. Valdez got in touch with the POB commanders and proposed working together to improve a number of sites in Dora.

“We are trying to get the POB integrated into civil-military operations which means getting them involved in the community,” Valdez said. “Right now, they are doing a great job going out on raids, securing the area and running checkpoints, but what we want to do is move them to the next step, which is giving the public confidence in the POB so they can talk to them and say,

‘Hey, we’ve got some bad guys down the street. Can you take care of it?’”

Iraqis and Americans painted side-by-side as children chased each other around the humvees.

After the painting was finished, the POB Soldiers grabbed the goodies from the back of the vehicles as children and elderly men alike clamored for soccer balls. The students were also given backpacks filled with pencils and paper as well as Beanie Babies, which Valdez said are quite the rage with the children of Iraq. To show their appreciation, the children serenaded the Soldiers, much to the delight of both the Americans and the Iraqis.

Staff Sgt. Ron Eberhardt, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, was at the event to coordinate the Iraqi media’s coverage of the occasion.

“We wanted to show the people of Iraq through newspapers and television how the Iraqi Security Forces cooperate with the U.S. troops,” Eberhardt said.

For Valdez, the key to mission success was to show the local community the partnership between the Iraqi and American forces.

“It shows the local nationals that Coalition Forces aren’t out there by themselves and the ISF aren’t by themselves – they are working in concert,” Valdez said. “For the locals, they can see this is one team we are working together toward one common goal.”

Some people might say that painting over graffiti and handing out stuffed animals is not going to make much of an impact with the Iraqi people. Valdez believes the improvements might be small, but “the gesture is grand.”

“Right now we have millions and millions of dollars slated for big projects, but the problem is the time from start to finish is so long that people get upset and frustrated,” Valdez said. “What we are trying to do is give them a little something to keep them going. We do little improvements here and there and all of a sudden the local nationals are saying, ‘Wow, these guys are actually trying to improve the area.’ I know the improvements aren’t the biggest, but we help a couple of schools, put in some new windows, clean up the area—that goes a long way for the people.”



Spc. Dan Balda

A Soldier assigned to 1st Battalion, 4th Public Order Brigade, paints over graffiti in Horajeb Nov. 15. U.S. Army officials who oversaw the POB mission said even the simple act of scrubbing away graffiti has an impact on the democratic process in Iraq.

3rd FSB up-armors Iraqi service vehicles

Pfc. Joshua R. Ford
MNC-1 PAO

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Iraq – Since 3rd Forward Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division mechanics have been in Iraq, they have worked on everything from basic humvees to M-1 Abrams tanks.

When Soldiers were told that they’d be armoring Iraqi Army vehicles, the mechanics didn’t miss a step.

“We can fix, weld and tow anything, so we were up for the challenge,” said Sgt. Shawn Landeen, auto shop foreman for the service and recovery section, B Company.

For the past six months, mechanics and metal workers from 3rd FSB have been helping the Iraqi Security Forces up-armor their vehicles.

“The purpose of up-armoring these vehicles is to give the Iraqis added protection while conducting operations,” said Maj. Phillip E. Graham, military transition team leader, 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 1st BCT.

“The Iraqi Army needs assistance up-armoring their trucks so they send the trucks here,” said Staff Sgt. Benjamin Nicholson, a B Co., 3rd FSB

machinist.

Nicholson said the motor pool support operations shop has been pushing the mechanics to get the vehicles armored so Iraqi forces can conduct operations on their own.

There are no instructions on how to up-armor the vehicles, so the mechanics had to come up with their own blueprints and start from scratch, said Spc. Ernesto Almazan, a B Co. metal worker.

Some of the trucks the 3rd FSB mechanics have armored are Russian five-ton trucks, civilian pickup trucks and what the mechanics call civilian long bed “bongo” trucks, Nicholson said. These trucks primarily serve as troop carriers for the Iraqis.

The mechanics have to look at the structure design for each of these vehicles before armoring them.

“After we look at the structure design we take measurements on the vehicle,” Almazan said. “We take measurements of the gas tank, the bed of the truck, the cab and the sides.”

Next, they cut the metal to match the precise measurements they’ve taken.

“The floor bed is the hardest part to armor on the trucks because we have

to pull the whole thing out, armor it, and then put it back in,” Almazan said.

The mechanics also have to check if the vehicle is structurally sound.

“We have to make sure that the truck won’t roll over easily after the armor has been put on,” Almazan added.

“Once we look at that, we will put an armor plate anywhere we can,” Landeen said. “This is really giving us the chance to do something challenging and different. It’s a good change of pace.”

The 3rd FSB motor pool works on three or four trucks at a time and each truck takes anywhere from three to four days to complete.

“This is just part of our mission here to assist the Iraqi Army, so they can conduct independent operations and that brings the U.S. one step closer to pulling out of Iraq,” Landeen said.

As long as the Iraqis keep bringing trucks to be up armored, the 3rd FSB mechanics will be there to get the job done.

“So far these guys have done an outstanding job,” Nicholson said. “And the Iraqis seem to think so as well.”



Pfc. Joshua R. Ford

Spc. Ernesto Almazan, B company, 3rd FSB, 1st BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., welds a piece of armor to a vehicles frame at LSA Anaconda, Oct. 24, 2005.

Sec. of State Rice inaugurates first PRT in Iraq

Polli Keller
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

MOSUL, Iraq – Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made a surprise appearance at the inauguration of the Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team.

Rice, along with Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, Deputy Regional Coordinator Clarence Hudson and Greg Bates, director of the National Coordination Team, established Iraq's first Provincial Reconstruction Team on Veterans' Day.

The ceremony took place on Forward Operating Base Courage located in Mosul, one day after the Ninewa PRT completed its initial training. It inaugurated the first of fifteen PRTs that will deploy across Iraq by next summer; two more PRTs are being fielded in November to demonstrate a "proof of principle" and provide lessons for further implementation.

The remaining 12 PRTs and one Regional Reconstruction Team are scheduled for implementation by July 2006.

The PRT is designed to lead the efforts of building capability and sustainability within Iraq's provincial governments, eventually allowing them to function independent of Coalition assistance.

This transition to Iraqi leadership will be achieved by developing a transparent and sustained capability to govern, increasing security and assuring rule of law, promoting political and economic

development, and by providing provincial administration necessary to meet the basic needs of the population.

Accomplishing these efforts is essential to a stable democracy evolving in Iraq and increased stability spreading throughout the Middle East.

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is fundamental to the success of the PRT in building capable and sustainable institutions for Iraq's local and provincial governments," said Col. Richard Jenkins, USACE Gulf Region North commander.

Major Mike Farrell is the USACE engineer officer assigned to the Ninewa PRT.

"As a U.S. Army officer, I swore to support and defend the U.S. Constitution. Now, I have the opportunity to help implement a constitution and mentor fellow engineers on providing for their citizens' basic needs," Farrell said.

"The USACE has been fundamental in executing the Iraqi reconstruction program," he continued. "Now, through PRT, we will be instrumental in helping the Iraqis learn to do it for themselves."

The Iraqis are first in the planning and implementation of reconstruction efforts because it is their future and they have both the responsibility and the capability to make it work, according to Jenkins.

The reconstruction program has become the front line in Iraq.

Although insurgents have caused delays and damage, both in lives and increased costs for the



Courtesy photo
Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice addresses attendees of the Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team inauguration ceremony in Mosul Nov. 11.

reconstruction effort, the U.S. and Iraqi governments remain steadfast in their joint efforts to help rebuild Iraq.

The formation of the PRT will help develop effective solutions to some of the challenges facing Iraq; an important step as Iraq takes the lead in addressing their problems with the U.S. serving as a true partner, assisting in their efforts.

TF Baghdad Soldiers receive combat awards



Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – Soldiers assigned to 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team received combat decorations during a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Honor Nov. 6.

Soldiers were awarded a total of 54 Combat Action Badges, three Combat Infantry Badges and three Combat Medical Badges.

"My Grandfather won (a Combat Infantry Badge) in World War II and my uncle won his during Operation Desert Storm," said 1st Lt. Eric Woolf, a platoon leader with 6/8 Cav. "Ever since I joined the infantry, I wanted to get this award – so it means a lot."

After he received his award, another Soldier said his situation was completely opposite from Woolf's.

"I am proud to be the first Soldier in my family to earn the Combat Action Badge," said Spc. Daniel Meservey, B Troop, 6/8 Cav. "It is an honor and a privilege."

Spc. Dan Balda
Lt. Col. Michael Harris, 6/8 Cav. commander, presents the CAB to Staff Sgt. Christopher Mills during a ceremony Nov. 6.

IPs, U.S. forces visit Ghazaliyah school

Press Release
1/10th Mtn. Div. PAO

BAGHDAD, Iraq— Soldiers from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division and Iraqi Police helped the Ghazaliyah Neighborhood Advisory Council deliver schools sup-

plies to the Badir Primary School Nov. 9.

The school was in serious need of school supplies, said 1st Lt. Ty Adelman, of B Company, 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry.

By bringing the supplies directly to the children, Adelman said, "We are helping to build relations."



Courtesy photo
An Iraqi Police member hands out school bags Nov. 9 to Badir Primary School students, a project facilitated by a joint effort between the police, U.S. Soldiers from 1/10th Mtn. Div., and the Ghazaliyah Neighborhood Advisory Council.



Making a clean sweep

Iraqi, U.S. teams provide protection in south Baghdad neighborhoods

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – Iraqi and U.S. forces detained dozens of terror suspects during searches in south Baghdad as Operation Clean Sweep continued to clear neighborhoods of terrorist activity.

“Operation Clean Sweep was intended to clean out an area that was known to be used as a way for insurgents to come toward Baghdad from the south as well as an area that a lot of (vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices) and IEDs were coming from,” said Lt. Col. Everett Knapp, commander of 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment.

In anticipation of the Dec. 15 nationwide elections, the Soldiers of 1st Bn., 184th Inf., as well as Iraqi forces from the 4th Public Order Brigade and 1st Commando Brigade, raided nearly 350 homes and detained 49 suspected terrorists. Military officials said 10 of the suspects were forwarded to detention facilities.

Some of the 1/184 Soldiers set up the outer cordon of the mission while others shadowed their Iraqi counterparts during the operation in late October.

“The Iraqi Soldiers really took the lead (on this mission),” Knapp said. “They don’t need translators; they can tell who the good guys are and who doesn’t belong in a certain situation.”

During the Oct. 15 Constitutional Referendum vote, clearing the area of possible dangers to the democratic process was one of the reasons the U.S. Soldiers swept through the fields, clearing every building that stood in their path.

“We want the people to see the Iraqi Security Forces protecting them,” Knapp said. “This election has



A group of Iraqi forces from the 4th Public Order Brigade prepare to search a house during Operation Clean Sweep. U.S. and Iraqi forces searched 350 houses and detained nearly 50 terror suspects during the operation Oct. 28-29.

Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

nothing to do with us. This whole operation is about making this area safe for the Iraqi people to see their own Soldiers protecting them.”

1st Lt. Jim Waters, of C Company, 1/184, said his Soldiers joined Iraqi Commandos during the operation.

“The message we’re trying to convey is that the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Security Forces are capable of securing the country,” Waters said. “The citizens of Iraq who are in cooperative support of the new government don’t have anything to fear from the power of the American military or the power of Iraq’s security forces.”

Knapp said he looks forward to continuing to work with the ISF in the future, adding, “These guys get better every single day. Their professionalism is outstanding.”



A U.S. Soldier from 1/184th Inf. teams up with a member of the Iraqi Security Forces as they clear a house as a part of Operation Clean Sweep.



Workers break up and remove asphalt in preparation for the digging of a power cable trench in Greette, Baghdad.

Courtesy of PCO

New power cable brings reliable electricity to northern Baghdad

Jenna Bisenius
Iraq Project and Contracting Office

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Greette residents in the northern Baghdad district of Adhamiyah will soon be the recipients of more reliable electricity, due in part to the installation of two and a half miles of underground power cable.

The cable will connect two new substations, helping bring power to approximately 2,500 to 3,000 local homes.

Experts expect the power cable project, which began in July 2005, to be finished this month once testing is complete.

The Project and Contracting Office’s Electricity Sector is overseeing the \$1.4 million project; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Regional

Division is responsible for project quality control.

The underground cable will take 33,000 volts of power from one substation to another, where it will be converted down to 11,000 volts.

From there, power will feed to a distribution network of poles, cables, and overhead lines supplying electricity to homes and businesses.

During its active phase, the project employed approximately 100 Iraqi workers per day.

They performed power cable work by hand, from the digging of the trench and laying of cable to the sidewalk restoration above the cables.

This method allowed for employing more Iraqi workers, thereby helping the local economy benefit by more dollars staying in the

surrounding community.

The Electricity Sector is one of four PCO sectors managing reconstruction projects throughout Iraq. The other sectors are Oil, Public Works and Water, and Facilities and Transportation.

In total, the PCO Electrical Sector is responsible for 434 projects valued at approximately \$3.2 billion.

To date, the Electricity Sector has completed more than 80 projects totaling an estimated \$660 million.

Currently, an estimated \$1.3 billion is being used on projects that are now in progress. This leaves \$1.2 billion for remaining projects.

The majority of 352 remaining Electricity Sector projects are scheduled for completion by December 2006.



Maj. Alayne Conway

Spc. Alberto Cruz, a medic from HHC, 4/64 Armor, tends to some of the minor injuries after two car bombs exploded near a residential area in the Karradah district Nov. 18. Those seriously injured in the terrorist attack were evacuated by Iraqi ambulances to local hospitals.

TEAM, continued from page 1

Other buildings in the area and at least 30 vehicles were also damaged.

Initial reports indicated the first car was a 16-passenger van which carried approximately 400 pounds of explosives; the second vehicle, a water truck, carried nearly 1,000 pounds of explosives.

Iraqi Police and Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 5th Iraqi Army Brigade secured the site and took charge of the rescue operation as Iraqi firefighters put out the fires caused by the blasts.

Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment also responded to the site, along with troops from the 92nd Engineer Battalion and the 36th Engineer Group, to help in rescue efforts of the trapped Iraqi civilians.

Medics from 4th Bn., 64th Armor Regt. gave immediate first aid to the victims and

helped evacuate the more seriously wounded to local area hospitals.

"The diligence of the local rescue forces was excellent as they immediately took the lead in response and recovery efforts," said Capt. Daniel Green, 4/64's surgeon. "When you look out here, the ratio of responders is pretty heavily weighted in favor of Iraqis versus U.S. forces."

Local government officials were also on the scene assessing the damage and planning for the repair of water, sewage and electric lines damaged by the attack.

"Our first response is to take care of the immediate needs of our residents; food, water and humanitarian aid," said Dr. Mohammed Al-Rubaie, Karradah District Council chairman. "We are here to clean up and do whatever we can for our residents."



Spc. Kelly K. McDowell

Sgt. 1st Class Brandon Cozad, B Troop, 1/75th Cav., examines the weapons cache his platoon uncovered in south Baghdad Nov. 16.

CACHE, continued from page 1

weapons, so we just continued to search and continued to search and continued to discover more and more weapons buried in the field."

When the troops find a cache, they dig manually with shovels for hours before uncovering the full load of munitions and weapons.

As of Nov. 16, the weapons cache consisted of 150,000 7.62 rounds of ammunition, 600 propellant charges, 500 blasting caps, 400 artillery fuses, 150 hand grenades, 150 120-millimeter rounds, 125 rockets, 100 primer charges, 85 82-millimeter mortar rounds, 68 60-millimeter rounds, 50 plastic grenades, 35 anti-tank mines, 13 20-millimeter rockets and 12 RPG launchers.

There were also multiple barrels and bags of small-arms ammunition, seven unknown types of missiles, seven rolls of copper wire, three 60-millimeter mortar systems, three 55-gallon drums of fertilizer, three rolls of detonation cord, two 82-millimeter mortar tubes with bases, and one 82-millimeter mortar system.

"This is a great step in removing capability, the means with which terrorists execute their indiscriminate and cowardly violence," said Col. Todd Ebel, 2/101st Abn. Div. commander. "I am very proud of all the Soldiers involved with this cache find. These Soldiers and others like them across this brigade combat team are making a difference in the safety of south Baghdad."

DEUCE, continued from page 1

heels this way. They are used to seeing and hearing vehicles coming for miles, but not Soldiers on foot."

The unit is beginning to root out the terrorist satellites, Kleager said.

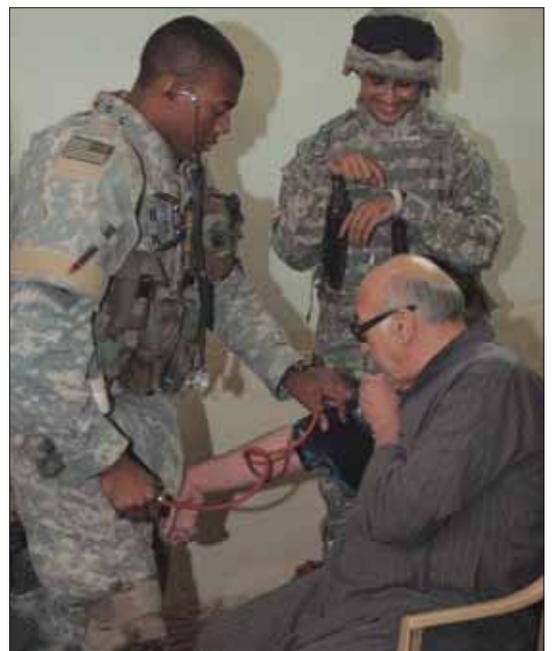
Although the Soldiers were resolved in their mission to capture key terrorists, they didn't ignore the needs of the citizens in the area.

Several medics accompanied the patrol and treated an older man who complained of chest pains.

"We make sure the citizens know we are here to help, even as we patrol their streets in search of terrorists," said A Co.'s 1st Sgt. Joseph Sanford. "Our medics listen to the needs of the people and then help out the best way we can under the circumstances."

By the end of the day's mission, the Soldiers had detained six suspected terrorists, all associated with the key cells which the U.S. Soldiers set out to find.

"We have seen success over the last three months on the streets of Iraq and tonight was just a continuation of that same success," Kleager said. "We accomplished what we set out to do."



Pfc. Jason Jordan

Sgt. Clydell White, a medic with 2/22nd Inf., checks an elderly Iraqi citizen's blood pressure while an interpreter looks on during a patrol the battalion conducted on Veterans' Day.



WARNING!

If you are using **ANABOLIC STEROIDS** or **EPHEDRA**, and/or drinking **ALCOHOL**:

STOP!

- As of **1 JAN 05**, the Anabolic Steroid Control Act of 2004 declared **ANABOLIC STEROIDS ILLEGAL**, including "ANDRO" Supplements (i.e. androstenediol, androstenedione, androstenediol, and androstenediol).
- Using **EPHEDRINE** products (i.e. *Metabolite 356, Ripped FastExtreme Ripped Force, Diet Fuel, FH Fuel, Herbs Fuel, Metabolite, ThermoCare, etc.*) is a direct **VIOLATION** of the Department of Army Substance Abuse Policy and is **BANNED** from all FORSCOM Installations.
- Remember: Drinking **ALCOHOL** is a **VIOLATION** of **GENERAL ORDER ONE**.

As of 1 Jan 05, testing for Anabolic Steroids & Ephedra in Urinalysis will begin Army wide.

*If you are using Anabolic Steroids or Ephedra, or drinking Alcohol, **QUIT NOW!***

MAXIMUM PUNISHMENT FOR WRONGFUL USE OF DRUGS IS CONFINEMENT UP TO 5 YEARS!

Sports center opens in Baghdad suburb

Spc. Adam Musil
2nd BCT PAO

BAGHDAD – Iraqi citizens joined with community and civic leaders in Baladiat, a suburb in east Baghdad, to celebrate the grand opening of a Sports Complex Nov. 11.

The new complex boasts a boxing gym, cafeteria, internet cafe, management office, weight room, showers, wrestling gym, basketball court, tennis court, volleyball, beach volleyball, and a soccer field with outdoor stands.

“Most people like sports. This place will make life better for all the people in the community,” said Mr. Ali, a resident of Baladiat and an amateur kickboxer and martial arts expert who enjoyed displaying some of his expertise for visitors to the center.

The project to build the Baladiat Sports Complex was initially set in motion nearly two years ago and cost approximately \$150,000.

It was initiated, designed,

and managed by the Baladiat Neighborhood Council. A permanent armed Iraqi security detail will help keep the facility safe for all to use.

Talib, another resident of Baladiat, dreams about being in the Olympics someday.

At the center’s opening, he talked about how the new soccer field will help his team and the community.

“This project gives me more confidence in the Baladiat government,” he said. “It is a very nice place. The soccer team we have will play very well here.”

Mr. Esmael Khaleel Salman, an Iraqi boxing champion in 1978, was also on hand for the festivities.

“Under Saddam, we (athletes) had to stay in the shadow, now everyone can come forward and do their best,” he said.

“This project will help the youth see good examples of sportsmanship and what there is to gain from athletic achievement.”

Mr. Jasim, who said he’d been boxing for 20 years, said

the facility is very good and he is glad the community has such a nice place to exercise.

Jasim and Mr. Odd, a less-experienced fighter, put on a one-round exhibition at the grand opening.

Jasim beat his chest with his gloves as he prepared for his fight with Odd, who was very confident of his chances of winning the bout.

“I will show (Jasim) that I can fight,” Odd said, adding, “This is a great ring for us to use.”

Mr. Aman, of the Baladiat District Council told those in attendance, “The center will be a big help to our youth and will help to build a more democratic Iraq.”

Lt. Col Kevin Farrell, commander of Coalition Forces in Tissa Nissan, was an honored guest at the event.

“This project shows what happens when Iraqi leadership and Iraqi craftsmanship work together,” Farrell said. “This is a success story for the spirit of cooperation at the local and district levels.”



Spc. Ben Brody
Mr. Jasim (left) takes on Mr. Odd during an exhibition bout at the grand opening of a sports complex in Baladiat Nov. 11. Both boxers said the new facility is a great addition to their community.

Maintenance crews upgrade humvee gunner protection

Capt. Douglas Herrmann
Spc. Carlos Caro
1/10th Mtn. Div. PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Chief Warrant Officer Mark Swanson of 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment is certain of his goals for this Iraq deployment.

“I want to put the medics out of business in 1/87,” Swanson said.

He’s certainly taken steps in the right direction.

Swanson and his crew in the maintenance section have been upgrading turret protection to the battalion’s fleet of M114 armored humvees. By making simple modifications to the humvees using readily-available parts, Swanson and his crew have already saved the lives of at least three Soldiers. This additional turret protection applies to every threat a gunner might face.

Spc. John Tri, a welder with 1/87, is a

key player in Swanson’s goal. By putting in long and hard hours in the motor pool, his skills have become invaluable in keeping the men of 1/87 safe. His work is often overlooked by those who rely on his creations, at least until they save a life.

This additional armor has already attracted considerable attention from 1/87’s Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Hibbs; the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division’s Command Sgt. Maj. Brian Carlson; and Multi-National Forces Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Mellinger.

The three senior noncommissioned officers all recently met to see the improvements made by the maintenance team. Several 1/87 Inf. gunners were also present.

“I’ve seen add-on armor breakthrough,” Mellinger said. “But this here, this is the right idea.”

Carlson said the extra protection ideas originated from the lower ranking troops and worked upward through their chain of command.

“That’s where all great ideas come from,” he said. Their (the upgrades) rapid implementation comes top-down, after some squared-away private first class or specialist comes up with a great idea and somebody listens to him.”

Mellinger said he considered it a very practical design, one that could be manufactured both cheaply and quickly. However, cost is not the issue.

“I do this math for people all the time,” he said. “Someone always says, ‘How much will it cost?’ I say, ‘This isn’t about cost.’”

Hibbs said acquiring superior equipment to outfit troops is a high priority for him.

“1/87 has really gone all out for the Soldier,” he said. “It’s night and day

compared to my last time in Iraq. I see every day how proud my men are of their unit and how confident they are in their equipment.”

“I really thank you for your hard work and initiative,” Hibbs added, turning to the maintenance team.

All three of the senior leaders challenged the Soldiers present to continue to improve their efforts. Mellinger asked Pfc. Matt Johnson to climb into the turret of the modified vehicle, then asked him, “What would you change if your life depended on it?”

The two were soon discussing many ideas to improve the gunner’s ability to see threats.

Swanson was first approached with the idea of additional armor by 1st Lt. Craig Broyles, the executive officer for B Company, 1/87. Broyles said he’s happy the concept has proved to be successful.

“The survivability has gone up,” he said. “This has already proven itself at least three times.”

“One time, we were hit by an improvised explosive device and it barely did anything to the vehicle,” said Spc. Jeffery Neubauer, of B Co. “Our gunner was hit with some shrapnel and was barely scratched.”

Pfc. Matt Johnson, a C Co. gunner, believes Swanson’s modified armor saved his life and “at least one other guy’s life.”

“It’s the best thing they could have put up there,” he said. “It gives you greater visibility in every direction and helps you feel safer. I say every vehicle should have it.”

Good gear alone is not good Soldiering, Mellinger reminded the Soldiers.

“First-line supervisors are the ones who must make corrections on seatbelts, speed, helmets and gunners riding at name tape defilade,” he said. “Every leader needs to make life-saving spot corrections.”

Swanson is grateful for the Soldiers’ feedback and for their anecdotal evidence that his work has paid off.

“(With) the late hours we put in on this ... one guy smiling at me when he should have (been wounded), that makes it worth it,” he said.



Spc. Nathan Carr

Multi-National Forces Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Mellinger (left) talks with 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment Soldiers Nov. 4 about their experiences while on patrol in Iraq. During this visit, 1/87 Soldiers showed Mellinger how a battalion maintenance crew made modifications designed to increase protection on their humvee turrets.

TF Baghdad tankers keep armor rolling

Spc. Ben Brody
2nd BT PAO

BAGHDAD – While an M1 Abrams main battle tank may look indestructible rolling down the highways of Baghdad, a trip to the motor pool reveals how much maintenance the 70-ton machines actually require.

Tankers from 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, are conducting daily operations in eastern Baghdad while constantly making sure their tanks are roadworthy and combat-ready.

“For every hour you spend driving a tank, that’s two hours you spend in the motor pool maintaining it,” said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Derington, B Troop, 3/7 Cav. platoon sergeant. “That’s not to say that they’re delicate – it’s just the reality of operating any machine with that much power.”

Baghdad highways generally do far more damage to tanks than terrorist attacks because tanks are well-designed to withstand attacks, but not to endure constant driving on asphalt.

In addition to setting up observation points and creating improvised roadblocks, tankers primarily conduct security patrols on highways.

During a night mission Nov. 13, tankers patrolled a major Baghdad highway for hours looking for terrorists planting improvised explosive devices.

During the mission, a wheel sheared off one tank and Soldiers rushed to fix it well enough to drive back to Camp Rustamiyah.

“The tanks will almost always roll back in under their own power, but a lot of times there’s work to be done,” said Pfc. Zeb Saul, B Troop, 3/7 Cav. loader. “It’s an unforgiving machine, but tanks are as fun as they are hard.”

Upon their arrival at Rustamiyah, the 4th Platoon tankers set to work repairing

the damaged tank, an all-day job.

“We’re like a pit crew with this tank, we fix it so fast,” Saul said. “Go on a mission, fix the tank, and get back out there again.”

B Troop’s 4th Plt. tanks have logged more than 7,000 miles during the deployment, said Spc. Eziqel Guifierrez, a driver with B Troop.

Tankers are a superstitious group, probably due to the amount of work that goes into repairing tanks. Apricots are seen as bad luck by most tankers, and some refuse to carry any kind of fruit on a

tank. “Never bring an apricot on a tank, you’ll regret it,” Derington said. “Talking trash about your buddy’s tank is another good way to get your own tank to break down. Just try it and see.”

As the day wore on, the 4th Plt. tankers repaired the tank’s broken arm, and replaced many of the track’s worn-down track pads.

“We’re going to finish up here, grab some chow, take a quick nap, and head right back out,” said Sgt. Jay Schade, a gunner with B Troop. “That’s the tanker’s life for you.”



Photos by Spc. Ben Brody

Top: 1st Lt. Sean Gavin, a platoon leader with B Troop, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, pulls security atop his M1 Abrams tank Nov. 13. Above: Tankers from 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry prepare their tanks for an early-morning patrol in Baghdad Nov. 13.

1/87 Inf. Soldiers bring food, water, supplies to Iraqis in need

Capt. Douglas Herrmann
Spc. Carlos Caro

1/10th Mountain Division

BAGHDAD – Taking the fight aggressively to terrorists comes naturally for 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry

Soldiers, but they’ve also been doing other things that are equally important.

Supported by F Company, 10th Brigade Support Battalion, 10th Mountain Division Soldiers have been busy conducting humanitarian assistance missions in a neigh-

borhood a few miles west of Baghdad where the capital city’s crowded tenements give way to clusters of old homes.

The people there face austere conditions, such as a lack of basic sewage service and running water. Capt. Dennis Faulkner, A Company com-

mander, met with a local sheik Nov. 6 to discuss ways to improve conditions.

“We want to get to know the key leaders out here,” Faulkner said.

Soon after the meeting, Soldiers began unloading pallets of food, water, children’s shoes, basic first aid supplies, school supplies, blankets and clothing.

Local residents soon joined the Soldiers to help with the unloading, forming a human chain to carry the supplies to the sheik so he could distribute the supplies to the people.

The sheik’s dedication to his people was impressive, Faulkner said. “It’s always good to see a leader trying to help his people during hard times. We like helping with that.”

“We were well received,” said 2nd Lt. Maxwell Funk. “The sheik made it abundantly clear he appreciated our help and wanted our presence up there.”

“The looks on the kids’ faces when they saw the school supplies and toys made the entire trip worthwhile,” said Pfc. Shane Scicluna, assigned to F Co. “This mission made me realize how lucky I was growing up and how much I shouldn’t take for granted.”

“This mission helped me understand the big mission here in Iraq,” said Spc. Eric Norberg, also with F Co. “Working with A Company is awesome. This mission went perfectly as planned, just as we’d rehearsed it.”

Soldiers from B Company, 1st Bn., 87th Inf., completed a similar humanitarian mission Nov. 9 when they delivered school supplies to a primary school in a joint effort with the Iraqi Police and the Ghazaliyah Neighborhood Advisory Council.

“We are helping facilitate good relations between the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government and local police,” said 1st Lt. Ty Adelman of B Co.



Spc. Nathan Carr

Soldiers from A Co., 1/87th Inf., set up security in preparation for a humanitarian assistance mission to distribute food, clothes, toys and medical supplies to Iraqi citizens Nov. 6.

It keeps growing and growing and growing ...

Iraqi Army adds new armored brigade to ranks



Maj. Gen. Bashar Mahmoud Ayoub, 9th Iraqi Army Division commander, speaks during the activation ceremony for the Iraqi Army's 2nd Armored Brigade Nov. 17. The new brigade will bolster 9th Division's security operations northwest of Baghdad.

Iraqi Soldiers at Camp Taji stand in formation during a ceremony marking the creation of a new armored brigade in the Iraqi Army on Nov. 17. The 9th Division now has a 2nd Armored Brigade equipped with main battle tanks and other armored vehicles.

Right: Iraqi Soldiers march past a grandstand during the activation ceremony. Far right: Iraqi tankers drive T-72 tanks during a ceremony marking the creation of a new armored brigade in the Iraqi Army at Camp Taji.



Photos by Sgt. Matthew Wester

Behind-the-scenes troops keep war-fighting Soldiers on the go, ready for anything

Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp
MNC - I PAO

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait – When a unit deploys, it takes with it literally tons of equipment. These items include radios, medical bags, weapons, vehicles and more.

Not all of that equipment goes straight to the battlefield. Some equipment stays behind for later use as supplies on the field dwindle. If that happens, or when items or help is needed logistically, it's up to behind-the-scenes troops to make sure their unit's Soldiers are outfitted with anything they need to stay in the fight.

For 3rd Infantry Division Soldiers, from Fort Stewart, Ga., their helping hand comes from troops with the 3rd Inf. Div. liaison's office in Kuwait, a 15-person team on three camps designed to keep the "Rock of the Marne" troops in Iraq rolling.

"Our mission is to supply and assist anyone that deals with the 3rd Inf. Div. in Iraq, including units that fall under them for the deployment," said Maj. Jim Nelson, 3rd Inf. Div. LNO officer-in-charge, Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. "We handle administration, medical, maintenance, supply and logistics for the Soldiers as well as deal with deployment and redeployment concerns."

Logisticians by trade, the LNO team runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and is capable of getting people out with the supplies they need to get them in, and keep them in the fight, according to Master Sgt. David L. Rosser, non-commissioned officer in charge of the 3rd Inf. Div. LNO in Camp Arifjan.

"We have troops spread out through the different camps in Kuwait to assist getting troops to the battlefield," Nelson said. "Whether it's training concerns or getting them items they need before they ship out, we are here."

Troops who deploy through Kuwait spend 15 days there, going through a three-step process before moving to the battlefield: reception, staging and movement.

The LNO team assists in all facets, especially getting their Soldiers hard to

acquire items before heading to Iraq. Some of those items include body armor, ballistic eyewear and radio equipment. If the Soldiers who are already in Iraq don't have these items, the LNO team will ship it to them on the first convoy out.

"We get requests for sizes that Soldiers didn't get on initial issue back in the states," Rosser said. "That's either because the sizes weren't available at the time or a troop got issued the wrong size. This happens a lot with the (Interceptor Ballistic Armor). We'll just get the right size, put it on a convoy and send it up north."

Transporting the goods is a job in itself. The LNOs work with both the U.S. Navy and Air Force to get their troops and equipment into and out of Kuwait.

"We do a lot of work with the Navy because they handle the customs going into and out of the country," Nelson said.

Difficulties do arise for the Soldiers working in Kuwait. Communication can be a challenge with the parent and sister units in Iraq. "If a (Forward Operating Base) has been hit, they might shut down the phone lines, making coordination for us difficult, but the best line of communication for us is through e-mail," Nelson said. "Difficult or not, the LNOs have never failed a mission."

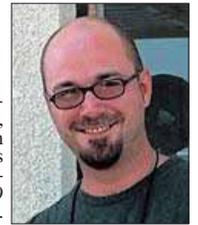
"There is a certain amount of pride we take in knowing we are here for our fellow Soldiers, and we have never failed them in our mission," Nelson said. "We have always gotten what they needed. I've asked 100 percent of our team, and everybody has come through."

The team – along with the rest of the 3rd Inf. Div. – is on the last leg of their tour here, but motivation, drive and morale are still going strong, Nelson said. The unit recently had two promotions and a re-enlistment, and the LNOs are stepping up operations as the rest of their fellow Soldiers begin returning from Iraq.

"Whether it's training concerns or getting them items they need before they ship out, we are here."

Maj. Jim Nelson
3rd Inf. Div. LNO OIC

A tale of two calendars



Jake Lester
Cultural and Political Advisor

As the end of the 3rd Infantry Division's tour approaches, two very important events are about to take place in Iraq: one secular, one religious.

The first, of course, is the December 15 elections, in which the Iraqi population will choose its first non-temporary government in the post-Saddam era.

The second is the Hajj; the annual

pilgrimage to Mecca in which devout Sunnis and Shiites of all ethnicities from all over Iraq (and the rest of the world) converge on Mecca for this most important of all spiritual experiences for a Muslim.

One difference between these two events is that we only know for certain which day the elections will take place.

This is because Iraqi secular events are scheduled according to the familiar Gregorian calendar, whereas Islamic religious events follow the

unpredictable Islamic Lunar Hijri calendar.

About the Islamic calendar:

The Islamic calendar is used by Muslims everywhere to determine the days on which religious holidays take place.

The numbering of the years begins with the early Muslim emigration (Hijrah) from Mecca to Medina (also in Saudi Arabia) to escape persecution in 622 AD. We are currently in the year 1426 AH (from the Latin anno hegrae - in the year of the Hijrah).

The lunar calendar is approximately 11 days shorter than the Gregorian solar year. This causes the Islamic date to move backward through the Gregorian calendar by an average of eleven days each year.

In addition to this, the beginning of each Islamic month is determined by the direct visual sighting of the new crescent, which is attempted on the 29th day of each month.

This determines whether the current month will be 29 or 30 days long. This makes it impossible to know in advance the exact Gregorian date of the beginning or end of any Islamic month.

This uncertainty increases the farther the date is away from the present date.

For example, a date occurring within the next lunar month will fall on

one of two possible days, depending on whether this month is determined to be 29 or 30 days long.

A date two months away will fall on one of three possible Gregorian dates, and a date three months away will fall on one of four possible dates, and so forth.

Islamic rules do not allow for determination of events based on astronomical calculations, but they do help to reduce the uncertainty to within two days.

To further complicate the matter, not only do scholars from different countries disagree with each other, so do scholars from different sects within the country.

This year, different scholars within the same sect in Iraq were at odds regarding the beginning and end of Ramadan: those who follow Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr celebrated the end of Ramadan one day before the followers of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

So when is the Hajj?

We know for sure that it will begin on the 7th night of the Islamic Month of Dhu al-Hijjah, which will fall on either January 6, 7, or 8 of 2006.



Courtesy of Ali Mansuri, Wikipedia

A supplicating pilgrim prays in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

Marne Medical Mentor ... a prescription for good health from your Docs in the Rock

Reunion with loved ones calls for different kind of training

Senior Medical Staff
Special Troops Battalion

Whether you are going home because your tour of duty in Iraq is completed or you're going home to see family during your mid-tour leave, you need to prepare yourself mentally for some normal changes which may have occurred both in yourself and in others while you've been away.

Knowing to expect these changes will help you and your family to become reacquainted with each other more easily.

Your reunion with loved ones can go more smoothly if

you keep the following things in mind:

Expectations for Soldiers

- Even though you may want to talk about your experiences, your family may not.
- Face-to-face communications may be difficult.
- Closeness may be awkward at first.
- Children grow up during separations; they may seem different.
- Spouses become more independent, have assumed many different responsibilities in your absence and may need more space.

Expectations for Spouses

- Soldiers may have changed.
- Soldiers may feel "closed-in"

or claustrophobic and may need space to feel comfortable.

- Soldiers often feel overwhelmed by the everyday noise and confusion of home life.
- Soldiers may need time to resume sleeping patterns.
- Soldiers may feel left out and need time to adjust.
- Soldiers may feel hurt when small children are slow to hug them and show emotions.

What Children May Feel

- Babies less than 1 year old may cry when you hold them.
- Toddlers may not know you at first.
- Preschoolers 3-5 years old may be afraid of you.

- School-age children 6-12 years old may demand more of your time than other children.
- Teenagers may seem moody, and act as if they don't care.
- Some children may be anxious, fearing your expectations of them.
- Children may respond with a display of symptoms of minor illnesses.

Remember:

- Go slowly - don't try to make up for lost time all at once.
- Accept that your partner may be different.
- Take time to get reacquainted.
- Seek help for family members, if needed.

When to Seek Help

- When conflicts continue.
 - When interaction is mostly hostile.
 - When you can't relate.
- If you feel like you are having trouble coping with adjustment, it is healthy to ask for help.

Many normal, healthy people occasionally need help to handle tough challenges in their lives.

One telephone number available for you or your family to call any day, everyday, and any time, night or day, regardless of where you may be located in the U.S. is the "MILITARY ONE SOURCE" at 1-800-464-8107.

Information Requested

THE FOLLOWING PROPERTY WAS STOLEN IN RECENT WEEKS IN AROUND THE CAMP LIBERTY AREA. CID IS CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR THE PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE AND ANYONE HAVING KNOWLEDGE IS ASKED TO COME FORWARD. YOUR NAME CAN REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.

CASE # 02M-05-CID899-37839- WHITE GOLD, PRINCESS CUT DIAMOND RING, STOLEN FROM LIVING TRAILER ON PAD 11 BETWEEN 19-21 AUG 2005

CASE # 02M-05-CID899-37868- \$1,255.00 STOLEN FROM A QIT EMPLOYEE WALLET, QIT AREA, 16 SEP 2005

CASE # 02M-05-CID899-37960- MISCELLANEOUS ELECTRONIC ITEMS (PSP GAME STATIONS, MP3 PLAYERS, VIDEO CAMERAS, EXTERNAL HARD DRIVES) FROM THE LOCAL NATIONAL STORE IN RIVA RIDGE (00* MEN DIV), 22-24 SEP 2005

CASE # 02M-05-CID899-37863- AN/VRC 91A RADIO MOUNT AND AMPLIFIER, STOLEN FROM HADJOW IN THE DEPLESERY DINING FACILITY PARKING LOT 29 SEP 2005

CASE # 02M-05-CID899-37865- TWO SINGCARS, SN# 009604A & 008478A, STOLEN FROM RADIO HILL, 27-28 SEP 2005

CASE # 0302-05-CID899-37877- \$1,300.00 WAS STOLEN FROM AN INTERPRETER'S WALLET WHICH WAS LOCATED IN HIS PERSONAL DRAWER INSIDE THE TEST PAD 5, RIVA RIDGE

ANY PERSON HAVING INFORMATION REGARDING THE ABOVE PROPERTY SHOULD CONTACT THE CAMP LIBERTY CID OFFICE AT DSN: 847-2151, VOIP: 242-4223 OR THE LOCAL MILITARY POLICE AT DSN 822-4790.

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LEGAL PROBLEMS?

CONTACT YOUR UNIT'S SJA FOR GUIDANCE

? ? ? ? ?

To our Soldiers

The following notes are printed in their original form. Go to <http://www4.army.mil/ocpa/tooursoldiers> for more letters to the troops.

To: All Soldiers
From: The Olson Family in Crown Point Indiana
 Thank You. (short and sweet but never said enough)

To: U. S. Soldiers
From: E. Sharp in Pennsylvania
 Thank you so much for working to build up freedom out there in the middle east. It makes me hopeful for the future- and especially for my children's future. Without your efforts I know it would be a lot scarier. We'll always be grateful. We think about you and pray for your protection.

To: to all the americans
From: in N,C
 thank you for fighting for are country and making it a better place but it doesnt fell like a better place because you guys are not here to see whats going on in the world and thank you and come home safe.

To: All Men & Women of this WAR
From: Gailya T. in Brunswick,North Carolina
 THANK YOU ALL FOR THE LOVE EACH OF YOU HAVE IN YOUR HEARTS TO SERVE THIS UNITED STATES. FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART I THANK EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU. AND IF YOU ARE NOT FROM THE UNITED STATES THANK YOU BECAUSE IT COULD HAVE BEEN YOUR COUNTRY. THANK YOU AGAIN AND I LOVE YOU ALL. COME HOME SOON.....

To: All of our Servicemen and Servicewomen
From: Czar Andrew Ver in Texas
 Thank you all for everything you are doing for us over there and over here. I want to let you all know that I support you and what you are doing. Keep up the good work. Never stop. I know that you all represent our country greatly. Thank you all once again.

To: soldiers in foriegn countries
From: Ed Wood in South Carolina
 Thanks again for fighting for this nation and keeping people like me safe. I know it's a job I couldn't take. Stay safe and hopefully you'll get out of that rathole soon.

To: men and women of the army overseas in Iraq
From: DeHaven Kennedy and Sebastian Shealy in South Carolina
 hello This is DeHaven Kennedy and Sebastian Shealy. We are in Mr. Biscotte's 9th grade class. We would like thank you for fighting over there and protecting our country . We appreciate every thing you are doing to protect our freedom. for those from South Carolina the rivalry game is this week between clemson and carolina. (Go clemson Tigers/ Go Carolina Gamecocks) who do think will win?

To: The Brave Soldiers
From: Someone Who Cares in South Carolina
 We appreciate the effort that you guys are putting towards making Iraq a better place and for supporting our country. You will always be in someone's heart and will never be forgotten. Know that you are fighting for a good cause and family members can't wait until you get home. Keep your head up and only think about getting the job done and coming home. Thanks for all of your help!

To: Our Soldiers
From: Torrence Daniel and Barry Reed in Columbia, South Carolina
 Soldiers I think it is amazing to put your lives on the line for the sake of your country. Not many people have the heart and bravery to do what you are doing now. We just want you to know that we care and are backing you 100%.

To: our soldiers and soljets
From: nate scott in South Carolina

i look up 2 u guys like super heroes ,u know,keepin the country safe and risking your lives everyday.

To: Our heroes away from home
From: Jeremy in Georgia
 I would like to say "Thank You" for everything everyone of you are doing for our country. May God Bless all of you and bring everyone home safe to your waiting families. Thank you and Happy Holidays

To: All the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan
From: Glenn in Ogden Utah
 As you are serving our country where you are at, I am doing my part in serving in law enforcement here. I am a police reserve officer. I am trying to go full time. I am proud to serve here while you are serving there.

To: soldiers in iraq
From: amanda howard in georgia
 happy thanksgiving! :)

To: Soldiers In Iraq
From: Wendy Rosser in Georgia
 Happy Thanksgiving!!!!!! Sorry you can't be over here with your families this Thanksgiving, but I know your going to have a very wonderful Thanksgiving because you all are the heroes of this country and we appreciate all that you have done and are doing. With Specail Thanks, Wendy Rosser

To: Our Soldiers
From: Melanie Mora in Missouri
 As you may know that we are at a time of disbelief. Well rite now I feel that its my responsibility to tell you that you must not think of it as a bad time. Think of it as an opportunity to actually realize who you are. You are men and women of great honor and power instead of thinking of it as a(n) Bad thing. My Love and prayers to all of you.

To: All of our Soldiers
From: The Hannan family in New York
 We thank you for your service and sacrifice, we want you to know we are 100% behind you and your efforts. Our prayers are for God's Blessing and safe keeping of all of you, till you return! Also, for your families and loved ones untiltll your safe return. We "KNOW" you are making a difference there! Thank You All

To: All the soliders in war
From: Terri Bays in Missouri
 Happy Thanksgiving to all of you that cant be at home for the holidays. Thank you for your time your family's time and i will be praying for you through out the holidays. Thank You.

To: All Military personell
From: A PROUD ARMY MOM in New York

Thanks you for all that you are doing whether it be in States or overseas - We are Proud of you & Support you and the USA! We are thinking of you and you are in our prayers. {{{Soldiers}}}

To: Our Brave Soldiers in Iraq
From: James V. in Texas
 I am so proud of the work that you are doing in Iraq. More important you are helping to establish freedom and democracy in Iraq. God Bless you and God Bless America.

To: All Troops and all Units
From: Anonymous in Fargo in North Dakota
 They fight for all and protect our freedom. They got our backs, whenever we need 'em. They fight for liberty and justice for all. And what do ya know, they haven't missed a call. A small poem for those fighting for me to have freedom, because I am one of the all. I send my love, prayers, and best wishes to all your heroes.

To: all of our soldiers
From: Lori in Arizona

Thank you for risking your lives for our freedom.....this does not go unnoticed.....there are many many many people who support you and pray for you daily!!

To: Soldiers in Iraq
From: Laurence Davies in Alabama
 Heartfelt thanks for the awesome job you guys are doing. Despite what the press and the media are saying, we know the truth is that you guys are the only hope for freedom and decency in the world. Wish I could do more. Keep up the good work. You are the good guys and the enemy is truly evil in every sense of that words meaning. God bless you all

To: Anyone
From: Charles Holleran in Arizona
 I served with the 4th ID and was injured on the day Saddam's sons were killed. I was in Bagubah airfield and as I watch the news that area is a hot area now. If the soldiers that read this are in that area please be careful and stay focused.

To: U.S. Soldiers
From: Gerri in Minnesota
 Thank each and everyone of you for your service for our country. God Bless and keep you. Have a nice Thanksgiving Day and just know that you are totally supported.

To: All Our American Heroes
From: Tammy Cady in Tennessee
 On this Thanksgiving Holiday I am most thankful for all of you. For the honor and courage you bring to our country. For the hope you bring to the innocent people of Iraq. For the pride that fills my heart when I say I am proud to be an American. Thank You!

To: All Soldiers
From: Lillian in Florida
 TO ALL THE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN. THANK U FOR WHAT U GUYS ARE DOING. U GUYS ARE MY INSPIRATION TO LIFE AND HOW VALUABLE IT IS. HAPPY HOLIDAYS. HOPE U CAN COME HOME SOON.

To: All Soldiers
From: Tony Letizia in Nevada
 I want to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all of you who are far from home and fighting for a cause that is just and right. No matter how bad things get or how negative they may seem, please remember that the masses of good, God fearing people here in the State's are praying for you, your mission, your families, your well being and safety, and we look forward to giving you a heroes welcome once your noble task is completed. May God Bless you and keep you, and shine his face upon you! Please keep the good thoughts.

To: All Soldiers
From: For Campbell in KY
 To Our Troops, Thank you for your sacrifice, hard work, and dedication to your country and to freedom. We love you, are praying for you and hope you come home soon!

To: All Servicemen & Servicewomen
From: Elizabeth Heape in North Carolina
 God Bless You, God Bless You for ever and ever AMEN. You ALL are so brave and we are so grateful. Be safe, and know you are in our prayers. Thank you, we are proud...

To: All of the ones that keep us safe.
From: Angela hardy and family in South Carolina
 Thank you for keeping us safe. You are all so brave. You all are in our hearts in prayers everyday. I hope that you all come home soon. Wishing you all a Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas. (at least the best you can have there) Sgt. Hardy your wife and kids miss and love you very much. God bless all.

Chaplain's Corner

There are no outsiders in God's town

Chaplain (Capt.) Glenn Palmer
 2/70th Armor, 3/1AD

For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or whether we die, we belong to the Lord. - Romans 14:7-8

Dear friends,
 Before coming on active duty, my family and I bought a home and lived in a small town in Maine. My wife and kids and I are all "Mainers," but we were not from "that" town. The town we lived in was like many small towns - a beautiful place, but a little suspicious of outsiders.

As we were getting ready to leave that town and make our way to Fort Riley, one of the local ladies made the following comment, "It's so sad you folks are moving. You were almost one of us."

I remember the heaviness of that statement to this day: "You were almost one of us." The implication was: "You will never be one of us."

In contrast, God's radical grace draws us in. There are no outsiders in God's town, the Kingdom of God; instead, we are all "one of us."

When we come to God as sinners forgiven by His grace, we affirm that we are all God's people. We see the image of God in the face of our human neighbor, who might not be like us. We extend love and hospitality to him or her, even when we don't feel like it; at times, even when we might not like them!

It is my observation that people who practice warmth, openness, and kindness towards others, usually receive the same. Those who are closed, mean-spirited, and self absorbed, also tend to receive the same.

That's human nature. But folks, in God there is always more that joins us than separates us. Just as God has bridged the gap between Himself and all people, it is my hope in a time such as this, that we model God's love in our workplaces, our units, our family readiness groups, our homes and the neighborhoods around us.

It is my prayer that no one ever feels like they were almost loved by God or by God's people. Instead, I pray that all people feel a sense of worth, welcome and belonging from God and God's people, you and me, now and always.

God be with you all.

Camp Liberty religious services

Division Chapel

Mon. - Fri. 12 p.m. Catholic Mass	Sunday 9 a.m. Contemporary Protestant
Mon., Wed., Fri. 6 p.m. Reunion & Suicide Brief	10:30 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
Saturday 10 a.m. Seventh Day Adventist	3 p.m. Gospel Protestant 5 p.m. Church of Christ 8 p.m. Collective Protestant

Engineer Chapel

Sunday 8:45 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass 10 a.m. Traditional Protestant 12:30 p.m. Latter Day Saints 7 p.m. Traditional Protestant

Warrior Chapel

Wednesday 7:30 p.m. Gospel Protestant	Friday 12 p.m. Muslim	Sunday 12:30 p.m. Gospel Protestant
Wed. & Sat. 10:30 a.m. Reunion & Suicide Brief	Sunday 9 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass	Thursday 10:30 a.m. Contemporary Protestant
Thursday 10:30 a.m. Reunion & Suicide Brief	Sunday 9 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass	Friday 12:30 p.m. Gospel Protestant

In Memory of ...

- Staff Sgt. James E. Estep, A Co., 1/320th FA**
- Pfc. Travis J. Grigg, A Co., 1/320th FA**
- Spc. Matthew J. Holley, A Co., 1/320th FA**
- Pvt. Dylan R. Paytas, HHC, 3/3 BTB**
- Spc. Alexis Roman-Cruz, A Co., 1/320th FA**
- Sgt. Ivan Alarcon, 473rd Cm. Co.**
- Sgt. Dominic J. Sacco, 1/13th Armor**
- Spc. Allen James Knop, C Co., 2/502nd Inf.**
- Staff Sgt. Steven Reynolds, 170th MP Co., 504th MP Bn.**
- Pfc. Marc Delgado, 170th MP Co., 504th MP Bn.**



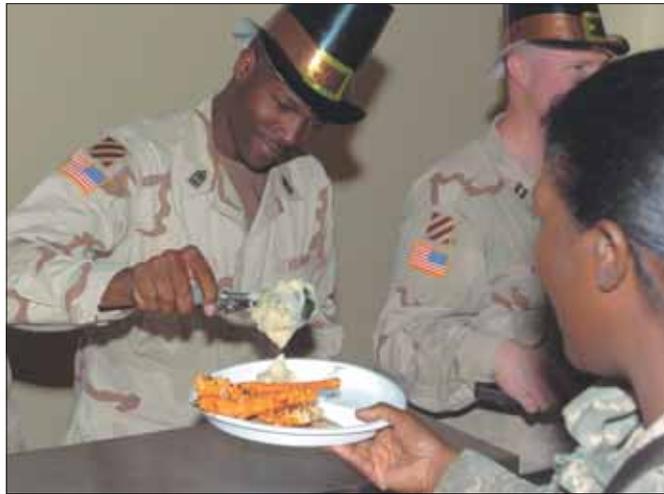
*You may be gone,
 but you're not forgotten.
 We will continue the fight.*





Sgt. Matthew Wester

Staff Sgt. Karen Vanterpool, a cook for 223rd Maintenance Company, shows off her pilgrim costume at Camp Taji. Vanterpool wore the outfit to get into the Thanksgiving spirit during the special holiday meal.



Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Mills

Above: 1st Sgt. William Lee, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, serves mashed potatoes to one of his Soldiers during the Thanksgiving meal at Forward Operating Base Speicher. Right: Spc. Josiah Kaehele spoons gravy onto his meal at FOB Speicher.



Sgt. Andrew Miller



Sgt. Matthew Wester

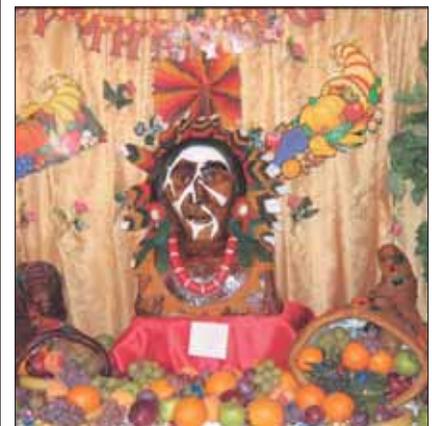
Above: Spc. Martin Ellis, a 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne Division cannoneer, enjoys a special Thanksgiving meal at Camp Taji. The dining facilities at Taji prepared turkey, stuffing and pumpkin pie for thousands of Soldiers and offered extended dining hours.

Left: Gen. George Casey, commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq, talks with Task Force Baghdad Soldiers during the evening Thanksgiving meal at the Rock of the Marne Sports Oasis Dining Facility Nov. 24. Casey, the Army's top general in Iraq, joined the Soldiers in Baghdad as they feasted on turkey, ham, prime rib and all the trimmings.



Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker

Above: Chapra Ganapathy Rao, a pastry server with Gulf Catering, sets out an inviting dessert spread for a Thanksgiving meal at Camp Liberty. Right: A turkey formed out of baked bread, made by Sgt. 1st Class Preston Lee Slayton, Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company, Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Inf. Div., sits on display in the Rock of the Marne Sports Oasis dining facility at Camp Liberty. Far right: A bread creation depicting a Native American, created by Sgt. Onica Branch, HHSC, STB, and Spc. Antoinette Ellis, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Soldier Support Battalion, is part of the Thanksgiving decor at the Rock of the Marne Sports Oasis DFAC.



Runners go for 'Turkey Trot'

Spc. Derek Del Rosario
100th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Runners endured a brisk, chilly morning and began their Thanksgiving Day by participating in the 3rd Infantry Division's Morale, Welfare and Recreation five-kilometer Turkey Trot race.

The runners' labored breaths were visible in the cool air as some runners wore jackets and gloves while oth-



2nd Lt. Peter Euler, first platoon leader with 546th Trans. Co., races to the finish of MWR's 5K Turkey Trot race Nov. 24.

ers bravely ran in shorts and T-shirts. All 75 participants finished the race which started shortly before sunrise.

The top finisher was Spc. Derrick Jackson, a mechanic in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 612th Engineer Battalion, with a time of 17 minutes, 45 seconds.

The second-place finisher completed the Turkey Trot shortly after Jackson, but was such an enthusiastic runner that he kept on going after the run and did not attend the awards presentation afterwards. The speedy civilian contract worker was only identified as "Kurt from Washington."

The third place finisher was 2nd Lt. Peter Euler, a platoon leader with 546th Transportation Company, who finished in 18 minutes, 27 seconds.

The top female finisher was Master Sgt. Silvia Marchan, 3rd Infantry Division's non-commissioned officer in charge of equal opportunity, with a time of 22 minutes, 8 seconds. Marchan outran the second-place finisher, Capt. Sarah Knudson, 504th Military Police Battalion, by one second.

The third-fastest female

was 1st Lt. Marietta Squire, B Company, 92nd Engineer Battalion, with a time of 23 minutes, 18 seconds.

The three fastest males and females were awarded T-shirts; first-place finishers in both categories additionally received gift cards, while the second-place male and female finishers received food certificates.

The Turkey Trot was Jackson's sixth race since arriving in Iraq in January.

Jackson, a runner in college, he said he was happy with the win, but that he still has room for improvement. He said the MWR races here in Iraq have helped improve his running as well as boost his morale.

"I wanted to run in a low 17 (minute) time for this race, but ultimately I would like to get back to running in the 16s," Jackson said. "I think races like (the Turkey Trot) are a big morale booster for the troops. They definitely are a stress reliever for me – participating also reminds me of home."

Marchan is an avid runner who also achieved first-place finishes in Camp Liberty's 4th of July and Labor Day races. Marchan said she was trailing



Photos by Spc. Derek Del Rosario

Master Sgt. Silvia Marchan, 3rd Inf. Div. equal opportunity NCOIC; Capt. Sarah Knudson, 504th MP Bn.; and 1st Lt. Marietta Squire, B Co., 92nd Eng. Bn., braved the cold and finished the Turkey Trot in first, second and third place, respectively.

Knudson most of the way, but was able to overcome her lead about half a mile from the finish.

"(Knudson) was really hauling butt the entire race, but I just stayed on pace and was able to pass her near the end," Marchan said. "I am happy with the race overall. We had a good turnout despite the (cold) weather, and it was good to run for what might be my last race (during

Operation Iraqi Freedom 3)."

While there were many competitive runners participating in the Turkey Trot, some runners ran for unit morale, including 12 Soldiers from 30th Medical Brigade, according to Maj. Jeffrey Jarvis, the brigade's civil military officer.

"Thanksgiving is a time for family, and that's why we are all out here running together," he said.

Cooks serve thousands of Thanksgiving meals in Iraq

Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper
4th BCT PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – It was an early-morning mission for the food specialists at Forward Operating Base

Prosperity: prepare a Thanksgiving feast for Soldiers deployed more than 3,000 miles from home.

Starting at 1 a.m., the Soldiers and civilians who work in the dining facility began to give it a new look.

The inside of the dining facility

was changed to give Task Force Baghdad Soldiers a very different dining experience than they find day-to-day. Displays made of food – such as the gingerbread model of the palace in which the Soldiers were eating, ice sculptures and other decorations –

adorned the facility. A Soldier dressed as a pilgrim and an interpreter dressed as a Native American greeted the Soldiers as they came in.

"The meal was excellent," said Sgt. Timothy Hartung, an engineer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team. "It definitely took you away from Baghdad. The meal really showed that the staff cares about making us feel like we're at home."

The dining facility staff expected at least 4,000 people and prepared a virtual cornucopia of Thanksgiving favorites.

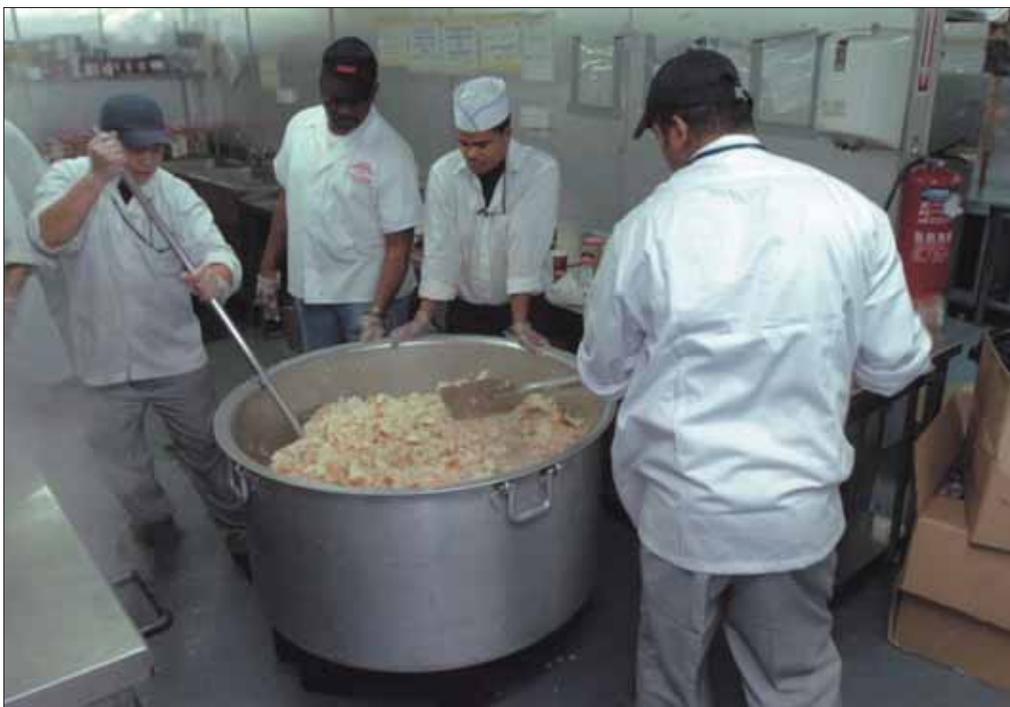
"We put a lot of emphasis on Thanksgiving because it's one of the biggest meals of the year and it's a way for us to say thanks to the Soldiers for what they do every day," said Clyde Randolph, dining facility supervisor.

Cooks prepared 2,500 pounds of turkey, 1,200 pounds of prime rib, as well as ham hocks, a whole pig, 500 pounds of Cornish hens, 600 pounds of roasted ham, 700 pounds of collard greens, 800 pounds of mashed potatoes, 600 pounds of corn on the cob, 750 pounds of dressing and 2,500 pies.

"We asked quite a few Soldiers what they wanted for Thanksgiving. A lot (of them) wanted ham hocks, collard greens, pumpkin pie and pecan pie, so we made a big effort to make sure we had all those things today," Randolph said.

Thanksgiving is a day for many to spend time with their loved ones when they are at home and the staff wanted to create the same feeling here.

"They're away from their families and this is a home away from home so we wanted them to feel like they're at home and give them what their mama would fix," Randolph said.



Spc. Dan Balda

Civilian food specialists prepare the 750 pounds of dressing that were served during the Thanksgiving meal at FOB Prosperity.

'Night of Praise' provides holiday entertainment

Spc. Brian P. Henretta
100th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Soldiers gathering at the 3rd Infantry Division chapel were treated to a “Night of Praise,” – in the form of dance, drama, comedy, and song – while celebrating their blessings at Thanksgiving.

Some of the evening’s events included a dance medley, a gospel choir and a play. The program also served as an end of deployment showcase to highlight some of the many tal-

ented performers in the division.

The show began with a selection of songs from the Brothers in Christ, including a rendition of “Thank You Jesus.”

The standing-room-only crowd then watched a dance medley performed by members of the Virtuous Angels and the United Men of God.

“The dances were a way for us to give praise through the- atrics,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Leonard Mardis, chief of Soldier Support Center, B Company, 3rd

Soldier Support Battalion.

The dance groups have put on many performances during the past 11 months and this was a way to tie all of their work into one big package, said Mardis, who choreographed most of the dances.

The finale was a play titled “On the Rough Side of the Mountain,” written by Sgt. Ronald Edwards, a special duty chaplain’s assistant with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 92nd Engineer Battalion.

“On the Rough Side of the Mountain” focuses on a mother

who struggles to keep her family together. The play starred Staff Sgt. Monika Lamb, a disbursing agent with 3rd Finance Company, 3rd Soldier Support Battalion, as Tina, trying to raise a teenage girl after her husband walks out on them. She still has feelings for her husband, but at the same time wants to show her rich parents she doesn’t need to depend on anyone.

The directors of the event said they were happy with how the event turned out because of the emotional boost it provided Soldiers on the holiday.

“It took everyone’s minds off of not being home on Thanksgiving,” Edwards said.

“The night was a tremendous asset to morale because it gave people something extra to their day ... something to look forward to,” Mardis added.

The audience members were not alone in enjoying the show.

The cast was proud that their hard efforts and practices over the past three months, sometimes as early as 4 a.m., paid off.

“Everything felt right, felt good and brought joy to all the cast members and dancers,” Mardis said. “That made it all worth the sacrifices for them.”

Although everyone involved had a great time on the holiday,



Photos by Spc. Brian P. Henretta

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Leonard Mardis, B Co., 3rd SSB, twirls Capt. Ivy Miller, HHC, 36th Eng. Bn., during one of the many dance numbers performed in the Camp Liberty Gospel Dance Medley at the 3rd Inf. Div. Chapel Nov. 24.

Edwards said he was happy that he could use his writing and dramatic talents to serve God and hopes he touched someone’s heart with the story.



The characters of “On the Rough Side of the Mountain” argue through their Thanksgiving dinner during one scene of the play, which was part of the festivities of the Liberty Chapel’s “Night of Praise.”

Marne Soldiers celebrate Native American Indian Heritage, history, beliefs, customs

Spc. Derek Del Rosario
100th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Before embarking on a mission, Pfc. Michaela M. Howe burns a piece of braided sweetgrass, a sacred plant in her culture which is often used in ceremonies and prayers.

Howe said the three strands of the braid representing mind, body and spirit are burned at the tip so the smoke of the smoldering sweetgrass rises, taking prayers to the Creator.

She does this to invoke good spirits



Left: Pfc. Michaela M. Howe, C Company 365th Engineer Battalion, shows Chaplain (Maj.) Robert Whitlock a few American Indian items during the Native American Indian Heritage Month observance at the MWR center Nov. 18.

Right: Pfc. Michaela M. Howe, C Co., 365th Eng. Bn., displays a piece of sweetgrass.

and positive energy for her convoy. Most people are not familiar with Howe’s ritual, but for her, it’s a characteristic part of her American Indian culture.

U.S. Soldiers throughout Task Force Baghdad celebrated the culture, customs and history of Native Americans during a Native American Heritage Month observance ceremony at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation center Nov. 18.

Attendees listened to poems and learned of the history and stories of personal experience by Task Force Baghdad Soldiers who are Native Americans.

Howe, an engineer in C Company, 365th Engineer Battalion is half Crow and half Hidatsa Indian. She brought the sweetgrass and other Native American items such as jewelry, dream-catchers and pictures to share with those attending the ceremony.

“These are all items I brought with me (to Iraq) to remind me of home,” she said. “It is good to recognize other cultures, and I am happy to



Photos by Derek Del Rosario

bring these things so I can share my beliefs and customs with others.”

The ceremony opened with a video message from the Honorable Clarence A. Johnson, the principle director of equal opportunity in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense. After Johnson’s opening remarks, Native American Soldiers shared their thoughts on their culture.

Staff Sgt. Mary Lynch, 860th Military Police Company, took the opportunity to talk about life growing up on a Navajo reservation.

“(This observance) is just one way to make the public aware of Native Americans,” Lynch said. “It gives them a better understanding of who we are and why we do some things differently. For example, on our reservation, we would say a prayer outside to greet the morning.”

American Indians have played vital roles throughout military history, from the Navajo code talkers in World War II to the hundreds of Native American Soldiers who have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Staff Sgt. Louis Gaddy, 126th Military Police Company, talked about Native American contributions to the U.S. military.

“I am thankful for being part of this day and having a chance to teach others about Native American contributions,” Gaddy said. “Native Americans were involved in saving a lot of American lives in World War I and World War II. The Navajo code talkers played an integral part in winning the war.”

The Navajos developed a dictionary of military terms in their native language. These code talkers communicated messages that were too complex for the Japanese to decipher. They successfully transmitted impor-

tant information such as troop movements, tactics and orders over radios and telephones.

Informing people about Native American culture not only teaches people about American history, but it’s also helped Howe respond to stereotypes that some people have approached her with.

“Some people have the wrong mindset,” Howe said. “People have come up to me and asked me if I still live in a teepee and other stereotypical questions like that. So it’s nice to get to teach people and help people who really don’t understand. There is a lot to learn.”

For Lynch, seeing others interested in a different culture gives her gratification for sharing her customs and beliefs with others.

“God made us all different, and it’s good to know we can share our differences, values and beliefs with others,” Lynch said. “Being able to open up and share my culture, and having people out there care about what I have to say and who want to know who we are (is most gratifying).”

The evening’s final speech was from guest speaker Brig. Gen. Karl R. Horst, assistant division commander (maneuver) for 3rd Infantry Division. Horst said celebrations like the Native American observance help recognize a different culture while also honoring Native Americans who serve in the military.

There are currently 229 Soldiers of American Indian ancestry serving in Task Force Baghdad, he noted.

“Native Americans have always helped shape our nation’s history, and their customs and traditions strengthen the American spirit,” Horst said. “(Native Americans’) courage, conviction and selfless service continue to promote democracy and forge a path for the future.”