

# RAKKASAN REPORT

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## WAR RAKKASANS START THANKSGIVING WITH AIR ASSAULT

By Spc. Kenia Kraus  
3rd BCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SUMMERALL, Iraq (November 25, 2005) – Most Soldiers begin their Thanksgiving morning anticipating good food, family and football.

Then again, Rakkasans are not most Soldiers.

On Thursday, the War Rakkasans of 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 33<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Regiment teamed with the Iraqi 20<sup>th</sup> Strategic Infrastruc-

ture Security Battalion (SIB) in Operation Hue, an air assault cordon and search mission to capture a suspected enemy arms dealer in Talladhahad.

In the pre-dawn darkness, troops from Company D, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 187<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the SIB isolated the village with blocking positions north and south of the village.

The dawn raid began with UH-60L Blackhawk helicopters



Photo by Cpt. William P. Wilford  
Rakkasans from 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry take off for the village of Talladhahad, Iraq, just after dawn on Thanksgiving morning.

## Air assault mission takes down terrorist stronghold

By Maj. Tom Bryant  
3rd BCT Public Affairs

Forward Operating Base Summerall, Iraq (November 22, 2005)– A joint Iraqi and U.S. mission against an



Photo contributed by 1/187

A joint operation between 1st Battalion 187th Inf. Regiment and Iraqi Security Forces captured more than twenty suspected terrorists and a large cache of weapons and money.

insurgent hideout near Bayji has dealt a blow to terrorists in the area.

The operation, dubbed Operation Old Baldy, was launched Monday, 21 November by Soldiers from 3<sup>rd</sup> Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Division and Rakkasans from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat Team's 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 187<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. More than 20 suspected terrorists and a large cache of money and weapons were captured during the operation.

The air assault mission was centered on Al Bayji Island, a 10 square kilometer land mass splitting the Tigris River north of Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown. The island has served as an isolated hideout for terrorists and criminals in the past.

According to Lt. Col. Randy George, commander of Task Force Leader, Bayji Island was a "previously untouched area, and we wanted to send a clear message to the insurgents: there is no safe haven in AO Rakkasan."

-See Cache Page 11

## Editors Notes



The Rakkasan Report can be viewed at [www.dvidshub.net](http://www.dvidshub.net). Holiday greeting are coming soon to the website.

The following journalists will be embedded with and reporting on the Rakkasans in December:

Ann Tyson

Mike Marshall

Ryan Lenz

Dennis Steele

WABC-TV (New York)

## Next Issue

Units to be featured:

**1-187 IN, 3-187 IN  
3 STB,**

Publication Date 17 Dec.

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## Air Assault



Photo by Maj. Tom Bryant

An Apache attack helicopter provides aerial overwatch as Rakkasans from 1/33 Cav. occupy security positions in Talladhahad.

sweeping over the Hamrin Mountains and Tigris River east of Bayji. Apache gunships patrolling overhead provided close air support as the Rakkasans landed and quickly moved to the target house and began their search.

After questioning several villagers, it was determined that the arms dealer was not in the area. However, two of his close associates were detained for

further questioning by coalition forces.

Once the search was completed, the Rakkasans were extracted and returned to FOB Summerall – in plenty of time to enjoy a hearty Thanksgiving lunch.

According to Capt. Jamey C. Turner, commander of B Troop, 1-33 Cavalry, the mission was a success in more than one respect, particularly the integration of Iraqi security forces.

“This is their country, and we plan on leaving at some point. The more we get the opportunity to work with them and show them what right looks like, the better off they are going to be in the future,” said Turner.

Sgt. First Class Anthony B. Crisostomo, the squadron intelligence NCOIC, agreed with Turner’s assessment.

“It’s very important to let the people of Iraq know they have an Army and that they are working with us to make [Iraq] better,” said Crisostomo.

## RAK 6 NOTES

As I paused on Thanksgiving Day, I reflected on what I’m personally thankful for. I’m most thankful for the courage of the seven Rakkasans we recently lost in combat. These men were husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers. They touched the lives of many in the Rakkasan family, and their sacrifice will not be forgotten. The families and friends of these men need – and will get – the continual support from every member of the Rakkasan family. We have a tradition of caring for our own, and that will not change.

I’m thankful for the commitment I see every day on the faces of our young troopers as they prepare to go outside the wire and hunt the enemy. The pace of combat operations here is on the rise – we are steadily increasing pressure, and the insurgents are running out of places to hide. Over the coming weeks, the fight will get tougher, and I need every trooper to completely focus on the task at hand. Make no mistake, we will continue to give the enemy the maximum opportunity to die for his country.

I’m thankful for the Rakkasan family – the wives and husbands, the Golden Rakkasans, every person who shares the hardships of our troopers. Your active support will continue to be a vital combat multiplier for us. I know without a doubt that all of you stand ready at a moments notice to help the team in any way you can – not every Brigade commander in our Army can say that. Thank you for your untiring support.

Finally, I’m thankful for having the opportunity to lead the best young men and women our nation has to offer in a war to defend our freedom and way of life.

I would ask that each of you – every Soldier, present and past, every family member, every friend – take a few minutes during the busy holiday season to thank God for the Rakkasan who’s standing guard right now in a foreign land, and to remember the sacrifice of those heroes who have gone before us.

RAKKASAN!

# RAKKASANS PAVE THE WAY TO FREEDOM IN BAYJI

**By Staff Sgt Jesse C. Riggin**  
3rd BCT Public Affairs

*Forward Operating Base Summerall Iraq (17 November, 2005)* – The Rakkasans of 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat Team are focused on their mission in Bayji, Iraq. Saddam Hussein had a strong influence in the area before he was captured, and the city still harbors many Anti-Iraqi Forces. The Rakkasans of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 187 Infantry Regiment and 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron 33<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Regiment are carrying out combat operations in Bayji. 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Troops Battalion provides training and logistical support to the Iraqi Security Forces.

The road to freedom and security in Bayji is going to be a long one with many trials along the way and it is not going to be won by the Coalition Forces. Success lies in the hands of the Iraqi Security Forces. “Some day the Coalition Forces will leave,” Col. Michael Steele, 3<sup>rd</sup> BCT Commander, said while addressing sev-



Photo by Staff Sgt Jesse C. Riggin  
Staff Sgt Bryan Beville, Company C 1/187, and two team members sweep a field North West of Bayji Iraq for weapons caches used to support attacks on a near by oil refinery.



Photo by Staff Sgt Jesse C. Riggin  
2nd Platoon, A Troop 1st Squadron 33<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Regiment, fords the Tigris River during a mission to clear an island of weapons caches.

eral Iraqi Battalion Commanders, “and you will live in Bayji with the security of the Army you create.” There are three main elements that make up the Iraqi Security Forces around Bayji. The largest element is the strategic Infrastructure Battalions (SIBs). The SIBs are responsible for securing important economic and logis-

tical sights in the area. The Iraqi Battalion Police (IP) patrol the streets of Bayji and the Iraq Army (IA) is responsible for the out lying areas. “We are putting the responsibility on them,” said Lt Col. Randy George, 1/187 Commander, “and helping them come up with solutions.” The systems are in place but there is a lot of work left for the Rakkasans and the ISF. “We need to get the IA, IP and SIB’s working together as a cohesive unit,” said Cpt Michael Starz, 1/187 Assis-

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## 3rd BCT Public Affairs Staff

The Rakkasan Report is an official publication of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team. It is published monthly by the 3rd BCT Public Affairs Office. Contents of the Rakkasan Report are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the US Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, or Fort Campbell, Ky. We welcome the submission of news items, articles, and photographs. Items and comments may be emailed to [jesse.charles.riggin@us.army.mil](mailto:jesse.charles.riggin@us.army.mil).

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# Weapons Cache Found in Cemetery



Photos by Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggins

*Forward Operating Base Summerall (28 November 2005)* – Rakkasans from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 187th Infantry Regiment and the Iraqi Army uncovered a weapons cache in West Bayji Monday afternoon.

Spc. Zachary McCracken, Sgt. Joshua Weiss (HHC 1/187) and two Soldiers from the Iraqi Army found two Soviet made rockets in a graveyard being guarded by Iraqi Security Forces.

Saddam Hussein had a strong influence in the area prior to his capture. The area still harbors many Anti-Iraqi Forces. The graveyard itself holds the tombs of two of Saddam’s Cousins.

The Rakkasans decided to search the sight based on intelligence gathered from previous missions in the area. They arrived at the sight after a patrol in the Eastern Islands of the Tigris River around Bayji.

## Bayji

tant Operations Officer.

1-187 is currently conducting training programs for the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police on FOB Summerall. The 3<sup>rd</sup> STB also trains the ISF along with providing logistical support for their day-to-day operations.

The fate of Bayji is up to the people, but the Rakkasans are a dominant factor in the process. They are training the Iraqi Security Forces and running 24hr operations in and around Bayji.

“Our Soldiers are disciplined,” said George. “They balance between respecting the Iraqis and striking fear into the insurgents.”

The Coalition’s innovation, attention to detail and willingness to adapt is paying off. Joint operations between the Rakkasans

and ISF have turned up hundreds of artillery rounds, explosives and detonation devices in the last few months.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggins

“The churn of democracy has started here,” said Starz. “We have a ways to go, but things are working here.”



# Al-Fatah Key To Rebuilding Iraq's Economy



Photos By: Spc. Matt Wrzesinski



Soldiers from 3rd Special Troops Battalion pull security on the Al-Fatah bridge as Brig. Gen. Michael Oates, Assistant Division Commander for Operations, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), along with Col. Michael Steele, commander, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, meet with contractors in charge of rebuilding the bridge. The meeting was an assessment of the progress they have made. The rebuilding of the bridge will make it easier for Iraqis to distribute oil, which is their leading source of income.



# Rakkasans and the Citizens of Bayji



Photo By Spc. Matt Wrzesinski



Photo By Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggins



Photo By Spc. Matt Wrzesinski



Photo By Spc. Matt Wrzesinski



Photo By Spc. Matt Wrzesinski



Photo By Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggins



Photo By Spc. Matt Wrzesinski

# Future Of Iraq is Ultimately in Their Hands

By Spc. Matt Wrzesinski  
3rd BCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SUMMERALL, Iraq (November 12, 2005) – We’ve come a long way since the first days of entering Iraq. The goal of putting control of Iraq back in the hands of the Iraqis gets closer everyday. The Rakkasans are here to help continue the efforts of the Soldiers before them.

Brig. Gen. Michael Oates, Assistant Division Commander for Operations visited the Rakkasans at Forward Operating Base Summerall Nov. 12 to assess the status of the surrounding area’s strides towards self governance.

Oates accompanied Col. Michael Steele, 3rd Brigade Combat Team Commander, and battalion commanders to three pivotal places in the rebuilding of the Bayji area.

The first place they visited was the construction site at the Al-Fatah bridge. This area is significant because of Iraq’s dependency of the oil industry. Bayji is where one of the main oil refineries is located

“This is a very important point to Iraq’s economy,” said Col. Joey

Wyte, commander, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd BCT. “Oil is their main source of revenue.”

From the Al-Fatah bridge Oates and Wyte went to the headquarters of the 8th SIB. The visit was to assess the progress they’ve made towards creating a plan to end attacks on the pipeline.

“They’ve been doing something right,” said Wyte. “They have had no attacks to their section of the pipeline since February.”

The Rakkasans brought supplies for the SIB including new weapons and communication devices. The visit was also to identify what other supplies the Rakkasans can get to help the SIB better complete their tasks.

According to Wyte, the Rakkasans were the ones who initiated the relationship with the SIB.

“They don’t have all the proper facilities,” said Wyte. “We want to give them more permanent fixtures.”

The last stop for Oates and Wyte was the ammunition supply point. The ASP is in the control of American contractors with perimeter security duties being shared with the Iraqis.

According to Wyte, security of the ASP is a high priority.

“We wanted to make sure nothing was leaking out,” said Wyte. “And it isn’t.”

The assessment gave Oates and the Rakkasans

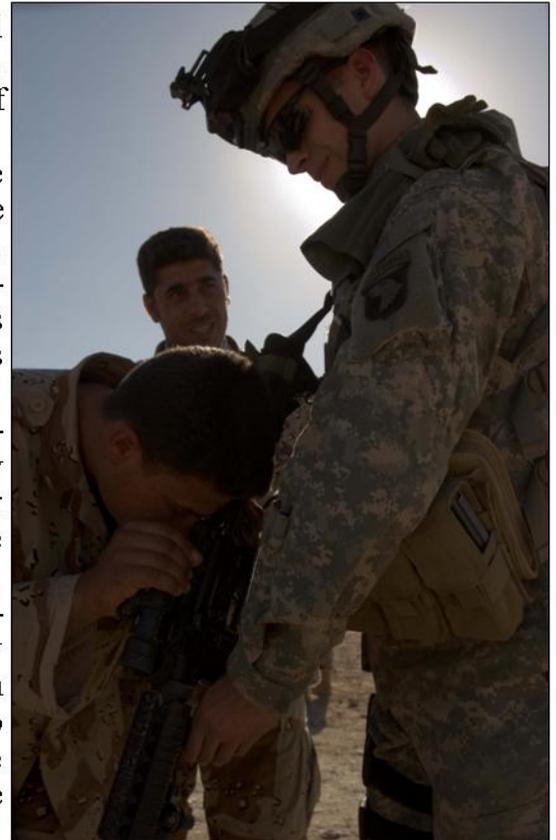


Photo by Spc. Matt Wrzesinski  
2nd Lt. Daniel Toshner, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd STB, 3rd BCT, shows members of the Iraqi Army the sites on his

a positive outlook on the Iraqis and their strides towards taking full control of their country.

“The Iraqis seemed pleased with us,” said Maj. Bruce Beyers, S-3 Operations, 3rd STB. “They are wearing uniforms and running checkpoints up and down (Main Supply Route) Tampa.”

The goal of the Rakkasans’ stay here is to bring Iraq closer to taking full control of their country. From this visit the people of Iraq look like they are willing to work towards that goal.

“The willingness of the Iraqis to deal with their problems is great,” said Wyte. “They are beginning to produce results.”



Photo by Spc. Matt Wrzesinski  
Maj. Bruce Beyers, Operations Officer, 3rd STB, 3rd BCT, watches as Soldiers from the 8th SIB get a feel for his weapon.

# Iraqis Eager to Learn From Rakkasans



Photos By: Spc. Matt Wrzesinski

Lt. Col. Joey Wyte, commander, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, meets with officials from the 13th Strategic Infrastructure Battalion, to discuss the progress they have made in fighting insurgents in their area. The Soldiers of 3 STB also talked with the SIB soldiers to get a feel for their living conditions and give them tips on how to better control their area and fight the insurgents.



# 626th Defeating the Fog Of War

**By Staff Sgt. Jesse Riggin**  
3rd BCT Public Affairs

*Forward Operating Base Summer-*  
*all (25 November 2005)*-Hours and  
sometimes days of planning and  
preparation go into each mission in  
Iraq. Information must be passed  
from the commanders down to the  
Soldiers. Noncommissioned Offi-  
cers must set and enforce standards.  
Soldiers must understand their  
commander's intent and uphold the  
standard set by their NCO's.

This can be an enormous task  
when coordinating for Combat Lo-  
gistics Patrols with upwards of  
twenty vehicles going to multiple  
destinations, but it is the norm for  
Company A, 626<sup>th</sup> Brigade Support  
Battalion 187<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

"Whether we are traveling twenty  
miles or five hundred miles, the  
preparation is the same," said Cpt.  
John Rotante, Company A 626<sup>th</sup>  
BSB.

Every piece of equipment is in-  
spected in detail for safety and ser-  
viceability. Vehicles are prepared  
for worst-case-scenarios such as

Improvised  
Explosive De-  
vice attacks or  
roll-overs. The  
626<sup>th</sup> BSB  
Soldiers are  
the work-  
horses, spend-  
ing countless  
hours to en-  
sure they and  
their equip-  
ment are up to  
par with the  
company stan-  
dard.

The final step  
before a con-  
voy rolls out the FOB gate onto the  
unforgiving supply routes of Iraq is  
a series of Pre-combat In-  
spections, rehearsals and a  
convoy brief.

The 626<sup>th</sup> BSB command  
devised a system to ensure  
all this is done and leaders  
have ample time to perform  
their PCIs and rehearsals. The foun-  
dation of this system is the "Locker  
Room."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggin  
Staff Sgt. Tony Ringle, A Company 626th Brigade Support Battalion, gives the security element few words of wisdom before their combat logistical transport mission



lined up in the order of movement  
outside. Inside the Locker Room,  
Soldiers line the hand-  
made bleachers in front of  
a projector screen and large  
sand table for their convoy  
brief.

Soldiers hear the mission  
statement, enemy situation,  
intelligence reports from the last  
several days and other bits of infor-  
mation vital to their situational  
awareness.

The Locker Room is a  
"This is the time for mental prepa-  
hangar dedicated entirely  
to mission preparation for the mission itself," said  
Rotante.

While they are getting briefed,  
their vehicles are getting inspected  
and debriefs. Once the planning  
and preparation is complete the  
mission starts and preparation is complete the  
Rakkasans of Company A 626<sup>th</sup>  
and ends in BSB bow their heads in prayer. The  
the Locker Room. the chaplain offers them his blessing as  
they head out on another patrol.

Several hours "It is dangerous out on the roads,"  
prior to a said Rotante. "The most we can do  
mission, ve- is ensure our Soldiers are pre-  
hicles are pared."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggin  
Rakkasans from A Company 626th Brigade Support Battalion receive their convoy brief in the "Locker Room."

# AIR ASSAULT

THE RAKKASANS ARE TAKING THE FIGHT TO THE ENEMY



Photo By Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggin



Photo By Spc. Matt Wrzesinski

**GIVING THE ENEMY THE MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE HIS LIFE FOR HIS COUNTRY**



Photo By Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggin



## Cache

The Soldiers swept onto the island before dawn Monday in UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters from the 101<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade. Over the next 36 hours, the Iraqi and American Soldiers conducted searches of the entire land mass, uncovering stores of enemy weapons including surface to air rockets, RPGs, and IED making material.

“This operation instilled confidence in our Iraqi counterparts, and served to further strengthen our partnership with the Iraqi Army,” said George.

Old Baldy is the nickname of Hill 346 on the Korean Peninsula, the scene of numerous intense “outpost” battles between U.S. and Chinese Soldiers during the Korean War in 1952-53. Today a ROK Army observa- 

## CHAPLAINS CORNER

### FEAR NOT?

Fear is a most basic human emotion that can be experienced at any age or situation. Fear is an equal opportunity agent. It can affect us here in Iraq or at home.

In reflecting on fear I consider the negative impact of fear on a person. Fear prevents a person from appropriately responding to a real danger. When the danger is imagined, then fear keeps us from enjoying what was otherwise a positive experience for us.

It is often seen that fear is something which controls us, but there is an alternative. Once we have become aware of our fear, we could ask God to reduce the fear or help us to harness the energy into action. Then we are more aware of and not controlled by the situation we are in.

The Bible is full of admonitions about fear. The angels said to the shepherds, “FEAR NOT!” Remembering God is in control can put our fears in perspective. Instead of basically being controlled by fear, we can tell ourselves the truth: “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of love, power and sound mind.” (II Timothy 1:7) Then we can have a different experience that is affected but not controlled by fear.

*By Chaplain (Cpt) Ralph Bieganek 1-33 CAV*

## R&R Leave

Beginning in December, Rakkasans will be taking their 15-day R&R leave. A few reminders for Soldiers and families during this well-deserved break:

**Emergency contact phone numbers are on the Soldier's DA 31 (Leave Form).**

**If you experience a travel delay, contact the Army Travel Assistance Center.**

**Remember to maintain the professional standards of all Rakkasans while on leave.**

**Don't forget OPSEC.**

**Be safe – we cannot afford to lose a Rakkasan to a preventable accident.**



Photo by Maj Tom Bryant  
SGT Timothy Sherphard, 20, from Ft. Myers, FL, and Col. Steele observe the civilian activity outside a security position at a power plant in Baghdad. The Iron Rakkasans of 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry are safeguarding several strategic sites in the Iraqi capital.

# TASK FORCE RAKKASAN IN MEMORY

Greater Love hath no one than this,  
That a man lay down his life for his friends.  
John 15:13



**CPL JONATHAN BLAIR**  
B-1-137  
4 JAN 1984-19 NOV 2005

**PFC ANTHONY GAUNKY**  
A/ 3RD STB  
13 AUG 1986-18 NOV 2005



**CPL VERNON WIDNER**  
A/ 3RD STB  
10 AUG 1971-17 NOV 2005



**2LT DENNIS ZILINSKI**  
B-1-137  
23 DEC 1981-19 NOV 2005

**SSG EDWARD KAROLASZ**  
B-1-137  
25 OCT 1980-19 NOV 2005



**SPC DOMINIC HINTON**  
B-1-137  
16 NOV 1981-19 NOV 2005

**CPL MICHAEL IDANAN**  
A-1-33  
12 JUN 1984-19 NOV 2005



## TIL WE FORM AGAIN...