



SCIMITAR

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U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. B.K. Jones

Building for democracy: Iraqi Army Soldiers with 1st Iraqi Infantry Division, 2nd Brigade, 1st Battalion tear down and rebuild a security post on Firmbase Castle, Fallujah. The Soldiers are part of the ongoing effort to create of a secure environment that enables Iraqi self-reliance and self-governance.

VOTE!

Iraqis flock to polls, take part in democracy

Story by Spc. Rick Rzepka
Scimitar Assistant Editor

On Dec. 15, 1791, America's founding fathers ratified the first 10 amendments to the Constitution. The Bill of Rights became a beacon of freedom and liberty.

Exactly 214 years later on Dec. 15, 2005, another nation will accept the torch of democracy and elect its first full-term government.

For the first time, Iraqis will be represented by a permanent, democratically-elected legislative body.

Thousands of Iraqi citizens are expected to flock to the polls Thursday to vote under the new Iraqi Constitution. It's the birth of a Middle East democracy.

"They're setting up for their own independence, sort of like our 4th of July and that makes me feel good to see this. It's a right they've never had before and I'm proud to be part of giving them that."

Senior Airman Jose Peterson

Gen. George W. Casey, Multi National Force - Iraq, commanding general, said if the recent past is any indication, Iraqis want the ability to participate in the political process by voting. Iraq's transition into democracy "has not come about by accident or coincidence, but by sheer will

power and the determination of the Iraqi people," he said.

According to a recent report by Reuters, even Saddam loyalists, who turned their backs on January's election have done an about face and encouraged fellow Sunnis to vote in the Parliamentary elections, going so far as to say they were prepared to defend polling stations from al Qaida terrorists.

See **ELECTION**, Page 2

PERSPECTIVES

Having the power to shape our future

By Staff Sgt. Thomas Brick
332nd Expeditionary Contracting Flight

Freedom is a hard concept to define at times. Many would say freedom is yours at birth, that you are born free with the same rights everyone else has. The creator may have wanted it that way, but reality is much different.

Freedom is something that you have to want for yourself. It is something you have to define for yourself.

When we are born we are not free because we are so helpless and unable to do anything for ourselves that we are dependent on our parents for everything. This really isn't freedom because we depend on others for support and are unable to make decisions for ourselves.

As we begin progressing from adolescence into adults we start to learn what freedom is. It is when we start making decisions for ourselves; but, this freedom is not without price. This freedom comes with the cost of having to live with the consequences of each action we take and each word we utter.

To me freedom is a very precious and worthwhile state of being. Freedom is not just a label or a right that politicians tout on a stage in front of supporters. It is that state

of control over your own destiny. That is why freedom is worth fighting for, worth dying for. Because it is so precious and fragile it must be defended and held tight from those who would take it away.

Many people take this for granted. They walk through the streets, forests and mountains blissfully unaware of the fortune that our founding fathers have left for us.

Through the founding father's actions and steadfast persistence a nation was created that was unlike any other nation on Earth at the time or even now. The Republic they created stood for freedom and the right to find your own destiny.

The result of all this blood, sweat and tears is a nation that allows you to live your life according to your own desires. You can become a doctor, a lawyer, a writer, a scholar or whatever you wish to become.

I love my freedom, which is why I joined the Air Force. I am happy to defend my freedoms and those of the American citizens. I am also happy to fight so people from other nations can enjoy the same freedoms we do.

I invite everyone to think about what freedom is, what this powerful

word means to them. Think long and hard on it, without bias or prejudice. Freedom is an extraordinary state of being, cherish it.

"To me freedom is a very precious and worthwhile state of being. Freedom is not just a label or a right that politicians tout on a stage in front of supporters. It is that state of control over your own destiny."

Scimitar Pulse

What do you think about the Iraqi elections?

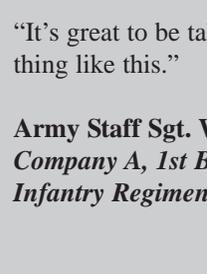
"It is my duty to be here."

Army Spc. Joel H. Shafer
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 561st Corps Support Battalion



"I think the elections will be great. I will actually help and improve the way of life for the local nationals."

Army Spc. La Derra Roberson
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 561st Corps Support Battalion



"It's great to be taking part in something like this."

Army Staff Sgt. Willie Signil
Company A, 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment



"We're just trying to stay focused on the mission. I hope everything goes good for this country."

Army Spc. Jason Laguatan
Battery C, 4th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment

"It gives you a feeling you can't get in the civilian world, knowing you're actually making a difference."

Army Sgt. Jeffrey O'Dell
Battery C, 4th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment



Thanks to Sgt. Rachel Brune of the 101st Sustainment Brigade for this week's Scimitar Pulse photos.

Have you heard?

Classic Rock 0600 - 1000	Sgt. 1st Class Gail Anderson
Flashback Iraq 1000 - 1400	Sgt. 1st Class Marty Collins
Today's Hits 1400 1800	Spc. Kristen King
Urban Hits 1800 - 2200	Senior Airmen Chris Brewer

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U.S. Marine brings joy to Iraqi children

Story by Lance Cpl. Christopher J. Zahn
2nd Marine Division

FALLUJAH — One year after the city was secured by Coalition Forces as part of a major counter-insurgency offensive, parts of Fallujah are still in disrepair.

Bullet holes in buildings, piles of rubble and the smell of burning trash permeates the air throughout the city.

Despite the unpleasant living conditions, children roam the streets here playing with their new friends, the U.S. Marines.

A group of laughing kids surrounds one Marine in the street. The Marine, Lance Cpl. Felipe SantosMesquita, a squad automatic weapon gunner with 2nd Squad, 3rd Platoon, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, is in the middle of the mob handing out candy.

The 22-year-old, Edison, N.J., native has the biggest smile of everyone present as he teases the children before giving them chocolate.

The children respond with a rapid-fire torrent of Arabic and SantosMesquita, without understanding a word being said, just smiles and shakes his head.

SantosMesquita enjoys helping the people of Iraq.

"I think that what we are doing out here is the best thing possible for them. We are working to free their country from insurgents. We are not here to fight the people of Iraq; we are here to fight the insurgents. SantosMesquita said.

"The whole thing with these kids is that you can change their mindset about us," said SantosMesquita. "The older generations are pretty much set in their ways; we can change the next generation."

The Perth Amboy High School graduate thinks that the older generation is capable of some things, however.

"They're able to take over right now," he said. "The Iraqi Army troops are pretty good right now. We just have to get them trained up that last little bit."

SantosMesquita, who was born in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, and immigrated to America nine years ago, says he plans to become a U.S. citizen after his deployment with the battalion. However, he didn't join the Marine Corps solely to become a citizen.

"I have always wanted to be a Marine, ever since I was a little boy," said SantosMesquita.

The Marines working with SantosMesquita said his work ethic and strong loyalty to his fellow Marines is noticed by all.

"He is a good Marine, a good leader," said Cpl. Jose A. Pego, the squad leader for 2nd Squad. "He is a very loyal guy, and has the potential to be a good noncommissioned officer."

"I think that what we are doing out here is the best thing possible for them. We are working to free their country from insurgents. We are not here to fight the people of Iraq; we are here to fight the insurgents."

Lance Cpl. Felipe SantosMesquita

Task Force Baghdad Soldiers keep Yusufiyah streets safe

Story and photo by
Spc. George Welcome
2nd Brigade Combat Team,
101st Airborne Division

YUSUFIYAH — When Task Force Baghdad Soldiers get ready for a mission, a lot of things take place before the sun comes up.

Soldiers are mobilized, ammunition is loaded, vehicles are prepped, briefings are conducted, and maps are studied.

These are a few of the many things the Soldiers of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, did to get ready for their patrol of the Mulla Fayyad area of Yusufiyah. This was a critical patrol for the Soldiers, it allowed them to establish in an area that was rarely patrolled prior to their arrival.

Dogs barked incessantly as Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment and elements of 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division began patrolling their sector of Mulla Fayyad. The Soldiers and the dogs were the only ones awake in the early morning.

Humvees tactically dispersed and cordoned the area to provide the Soldiers with security from anyone who might try to access the sector during the cordon-and-knock mission.

"Today's mission was to see if we could apprehend some insurgents who may have been in the area," said Sgt. Kenneth Casica, a team leader in 1st Platoon. "We want these folks to realize that we are here to help them."

In order to stabilize the area, the Soldiers and the citizens have established a basic trust, which is why the U.S. troops took care in searching people's homes.

The Soldiers searched for weapons, bomb-making materials and anti-Coalition or Anti-Iraqi Forces propaganda. The searches were thorough, yet the Soldiers still respected people's rights and their property.



Pfc. Steven Green, Company B, 1st Battalion, 502 Infantry Regiment, prepares to blast a lock off the gate of an abandoned home.

"This was nothing like a big raid," Casica said. "We just asked people to open cabinets and looked around in their things."

Even though the Soldiers of Company B did not find any weapons or terrorists, they know their presence helps reduce the chance of the insurgency gaining a stronghold in the city.

"I feel that our patrols make a difference," Casica said. "I guess the patrols make the insurgents nervous because they know ... we'll push them out of this area to make the people feel safe."

After nearly 13 hours on the streets of Mulla Fayyad, the Company B Soldiers cleared the last house in their sector.

Baquba rebuilds its future with water

Story by Polli Barnes Keller
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

MOSUL — More than 300 residents receive fresh water from another water network completion in Baquba.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the director of water for Diyala worked together to refurbish existing pipelines in the town of Baquba. As a result, workers connected 315 homes to the water network.

The citizens of Baquba now receive a continuous flow of water directly from the nearby water treatment plant instead of waiting for delivery trucks to transport water to their homes.

In addition to providing water, one of the key objectives of this \$222,000 rehabilitation was to make the maximum

use of local contractors, suppliers, artisans, and laborers in the specific neighborhoods where the work took place.

"Watching the director of water engage in this project from the beginning to the end was exciting," said Bill Hood, the senior construction manager for USACE, Gulf Region North.

The results of this work is something the engineers and Iraqis can take pride in, said Hood.

The repairs and renovations included refurbishing existing pipelines and providing additional ones where needed.

At the transfer of sovereignty in June 2004, there were a little more than 200 projects started. Today there are 2,927 projects started, with 1,909 projects complete. Construction will continue across the country as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers puts more than \$11.2 billion of reconstruction money to work.

PERSPECTIVE

Shots ring out after soccer shootout

Spc. Rick Rzepka
Scimitar Assistant Editor



Spc. Rick Rzepka

I awoke to the sound of a thousand AK-47s cracking all at once from all sides. 'My god,' I thought as hundreds of red tracers streaked through the night. 'They've rallied and we're under attack. This must have been what the Tet offensive was like in 1968 as the Viet Cong converged on the U.S. Embassy in Saigon,' I mused while struggling to slap on my body armor.

Dressed in my 'battle rattle' and fully prepared to defend the palace from the barbarians at the gate, I came across a group of scantily clad people milling around outside watching the fireworks. I overheard someone with a wry smile say, "They've won. The Iraqis won the soccer match against the Syrians."

On the night of Dec. 10, the Iraqi National soccer team squeaked out a 4-3 victory over rival Syria in Doha, Qatar, triggering a bullet-fest in the streets of Baghdad.

After the game was decided in an overtime shootout, Iraqi fans poured into the streets with their AK-47s and plenty of ammunition to celebrate. "I was in the streets of my neighborhood celebrating with my neighbors," said Firas whose last name will be withheld for safety reasons.

"Even the Iraqi Police and the Iraqi Army were participating (in the shooting)," he said.

Soccer is Iraq's most popular sport and a source of much needed pride for the country. "It is a very historic event in this very critical period," said Firas who became wild-eyed and frenzied in his description of the game.

"We want to show other countries that we are still here and surviving," he said.

For athletes in Saddam's Iraq, the only way to survive was to win. When Saddam's son Uday was the Iraqi Olympic chairman, he would provide special incentives for those who won. Win the game and you won't be tortured, beaten and starved.

Can you imagine if George Steinbrenner had a torture chamber in Yankee stadium? Alright, bad example, but the point is that unlike America, politics and sports are one in the same here.

A win for the Iraqi soccer team is a win for the Iraqi people.

I couldn't imagine a better time

for the Iraqi team to win a tournament than on the eve of the Parliamentary election. At a time when the Iraqis so desperately need a hero, the Iraqi soccer team has stepped up as a unifying force. It's something that all Iraqis can agree on while putting partisan politics aside.

In the U.S., we love the underdog and right now Iraq is an underdog on the worldstage and in the World Cup.

They are the comeback kids and have earned at least one new fan, though I'm not too fond of bullets flying over a soccer game. Go Iraq!

"A win for the Iraqi soccer team is a win for the Iraqi people."



Courtesy photo

A ball of fire fills the air as more than 4,200 mortar rounds are detonated at Forwrd Operating Base Warrior.

Cache-ing in EOD destroys munitions

Story by Maj. Gregory Bishop

1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division

KIRKUK - A massive weapons cache was destroyed by the Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit of the 506th Air Expeditionary Group outside Forward Operating Base Warrior Dec. 5.

"It was a good find, I'm glad the Iraqi Army found it over someone else," said Tech. Sgt. Jennifer Wayne, an EOD team chief at the discovery site. "All those rounds are potential improvised explosive devices; we just stopped that many more IEDs."

The cache, consisting of more than 4,200 mortar rounds and 950 fuses totaling more than 15 tons, was initially discovered buried in the ground just outside Kirkuk by Iraqi Army Soldiers on November 27. Once the Iraqi Soldiers began digging they quickly realized the cache was much larger than expected and they called U.S. Forces from the 101st Airborne Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team for reinforcements. The cache took two days to unearth.

The EOD unit rolled outside the perimeter of FOB Warrior hauling the weapons cache and 1,800 pounds of C-4 explosives. The three hour preparation for the 30-second explosion consisted of downloading the cache into two separate masses approximately 25 meters apart. The wooden boxes holding all the confiscated ammunition were set side-by-side and then covered with the slender bars of C-4. Immediately thereafter, the words "fire in the hole" carried across the vast dirt range. As the words faded, an orange ball of fire erupted from the ground spitting up a mushroom cloud of smoke and dust. Ten seconds barely passed before the command was given once more, and a second blast roared skyward, following the same pattern of the first.

Though the cache took many long hours to gather, in less than a minute the threat of this ammunition being used against the Iraqi Security Forces, innocent Iraqi citizens, or U.S. Forces was terminated.



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Andy Dunaway

A U.S. Soldier with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry, 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne, Fort Campbell Ky., provides security as an Iraqi contractor helps move a concrete barrier at a polling location before Thursday's elections in the village of Al-Mazra'a.



Maj. Christopher S. Sutton, executive officer for Combat Logistics Battalion 8, right, assists an Iraqi Police recruit off a truck.

Hitch a ride

Marines give Iraqi recruits a lift

Story and photo by
Lance Cpl. Wayne C. Edmiston
2nd Marine Logistics Group

BAGHDAD — Marines assigned to Combat Logistics Battalion 8, 2nd Marine Logistics Group transported more than 100 Iraqi Police recruits here so they could continue their basic training.

Whether the cargo is Iraqi Police recruits or a pallet of wood, the Marines will move anything anywhere, said 2nd Lt. Rikki L. Felts, a convoy commander with the battalion.

The training of Iraqi Police and security forces is crucial to this coalition efforts as it attempt to transfer greater roles of responsibility to the new

Iraqi government, said Maj. Christopher S. Sutton, the battalion's executive officer.

"It's good [to] get them trained up so they can eventually take over some of the security roles we are providing for them in Iraq," Sutton explained.

Helping Iraqis provide their own security is a steppingstone toward a self-sufficient

nation, and the Marines of CLB-8 are more than willing to help, he said.

Training is just one step toward a self-sufficient nation for Iraq and the more the Iraqi's are able to do for themselves the better off it's going to be for the Iraqi government and for Multi-National Forces - Iraq, said Sutton.

2nd Lt. Rikki L. Felts

"The more they can do for themselves, the more we can become less of a visible presence here in Iraq."

"This is huge for Iraq," said Felts. "It's all about turning it over to them."

3rd ACR troopers earn Bronze Stars

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Donald Sparks
3rd U.S. Cavalry

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SYKES

— Commander of Multinational Corps Iraq, Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, visited Forward Operating Base Sykes to personally commend three troopers for their acts of heroism and to thank them for their sacrifices in the war against terrorism.

He presented Bronze Star Medals for Valor to Staff Sgt. Rigoberto Torres, Spc. Christopher Davis and Pfc. Marcus Waggoner, all of 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment.

Torres and Davis, both assigned to Troop G, earned their medals for their bravery and courage under heavy enemy fire on July 9 in the restive Sarai neighborhood of Tal Afar.

After a medic track vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device, Torres, a Bradley commander from Bell, Calif., moved his vehicle to the IED site and rendered assistance to three wounded troopers.

Torres came under small-arms fire immediately after dismounting his vehicle to provide aid to the wounded Soldiers. He was told by one of his Soldiers that the disabled vehicle's fuel cells were leaking and the batteries were sparking.

Despite the hazard, Torres entered the vehicle to extract the wounded Soldiers. As he loaded the first casualty into his first sergeant's Bradley, enemy rounds landed a few inches from him.

He went back to retrieve the second Soldier who was stuck under debris. Again as he took the second casualty to safety, Torres came under heavy enemy fire.

The final trooper was caught under the front deck of the exploded vehicle.

Torres and one of his Soldiers to pushed the disabled vehicle with the nose of their Bradley. His driver lifted the disabled vehicle enough for Torres, to go underneath and extract the last casualty.

Davis was leading a dismount team during

a raid on a suspected enemy weapons cache inside a building when the team came under heavy direct fire.

While waiting for a Bradley to breach a wall, the exposed team was engaged with fire from multiple directions. After the Bradley cleared the wall, the Soldiers entered the building.

Davis, from Tempe, Ariz., helped his team clear the first room. Moving to secure the room, a hand grenade exploded in the door of the room the team just cleared.

One of the dismounted Soldiers was mortally wounded. Davis and his team to provided security for the casualty. Then Davis ran out of the building, exposing himself to fire, to retrieve a litter from a vehicle outside.

He exposed himself to fire again while returning to the building. Once inside, Davis provided suppressive fire for a medical evacuation team rendering aid.

As a second grenade exploded near Davis, he continued to secure his position and allowed his comrades to evacuate the wounded Soldier

Waggoner, assigned to Troop E, distinguished himself on June 14 as part of a dismount patrol in the Hai Al Quadisiyah neighborhood of Tal Afar.

The 19-year-old Sedro-Wooley, Wash. native was on foot patrol with his squad leader, Staff Sgt. Jason Bednarek, to gather intelligence on insurgent activity when the patrol came under heavy small arms fire.

The squad immediately scattered to seek cover and engage the enemy, but Bednarek was struck below the knees in both legs by at least two rounds.

Waggoner was the only Soldier in the squad that saw Bednarek fall and acted without regard for his own safety, left his safe cover to retrieve his wounded squad leader.

He exposed himself to a burst of fire in an alley and grabbed the handle on the back of Bednarek's interceptor vest and dragged him out of the danger area. Waggoner then began initial care of Bednarek's wounds.

Story, photo, art and comic submissions are welcome!
Classified advertisements are also welcome.

Please send to the *Scimitar* for consideration at:
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U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore

Airman 1st Class Roy Dimson, of 732nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron Add-On Armor Shop, routes the power lines for a truck's air conditioner.

Saving lives at Big Bob's

Story by Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing

BALAD AIR BASE — Not many people can say their work saves lives everyday, but Airmen who work at Big Bob's Add on Armor Shop can. The shop is named after a former Army colonel assigned to the air base.

The Airman assigned to the 732nd Expeditionary Logistic Readiness Squadron Add-On Armor Shop spend their time in Balad stripping down heavy equipment and tactical vehicles and rebuilding them stronger.

"We provide add-on armor support for most of Central and Northern Iraq," said Chief Master Sgt. Tim Stern, 732nd Expeditionary Logistic Readiness Squadron add on armor manager.

Airmen working at Big Bob's install level-two armor to convoy vehicles being used by Airmen, Soldiers and Marines. So far this rotation, the Airmen have re-armored more than 155 vehicles.

"The armor we're pulling off the trucks that come in here is far thinner than the pre-made kits



Master Sgt. Jon Vance, 732nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron first sergeant, inspects a recently armored M915-A2 freightliner truck tractor in the yard at Big Bob's Truck Stop.

we're installing," said Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Arnett, a 732nd technician. The fit of the new armor is much better and the vehicle glass with the new kit is four inches thicker than the original glass.

The upgrades Airmen are making to vehicle armor can be time consuming.

Depending on the type of vehicle being worked on, it can take between 65 to 120 hours to armor it, said Tech. Sgt. John Conner, assistant noncommissioned officer in charge.

The Airmen take pride in knowing their work keeps others safe.

"Knowing that we saved three more lives every time a truck goes out the door is very rewarding," Arnett said.

Conner agrees.

"What we are doing here allows one more son or daughter, father or mother, the protection they need to make it home," Conner said.

The accomplishments of the add-on armor Airmen has not gone unnoticed.

"I couldn't be prouder of the troops I have on this rotation," Stern said. "The work accomplished here has saved, and will continue to save lives of Soldiers, Marines and Airmen operating outside the wire in Iraq."

U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Chad Watkins

Sustainment Brigade

American, Iraqi medics provide checkups

Story and photos by
Sgt. Rachel Brune
101st Sustainment Brigade

MAKHMUR — Coalition medical personnel conducted a medical civilian assistance program, or MEDCAP, with medics from the Iraqi Army 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division here recently.

Capt. A. Michelle Moore, brigade surgeon, 101st Sustainment Brigade, and Capt. Charles Roberts, physicians assistant, 172nd Brigade Support Battalion, led the team examining, diagnosing, medically treating and advising family members of the Iraqi soldiers.

At the initial screening station, combat medics from the Brigade Support Medical Company, 172nd BSB, from Fort Wainwright, Alaska, obtained patients' vital signs such as pulse, temperature and blood pressure.

"If it's something simple, we can take care of it," said Spc. Michael Crittenden, BSMC combat medic from Tiverton, R.I.

The combat medics tested for diabetes with an over-the-counter blood sugar test.

The medics interviewed each patient, with the help of an interpreter, for medical history and previous treatments and noted his or her complaint on a small slip of paper.

"We write a basic note for the docs so they can begin right away," said Sgt. Courtney Berry, BSMC combat medic from Highland, Mich.

At another station, Moore and Roberts examined the patients, reviewing the medical history if available, reviewing X-rays and prescribing and distributing medications.

"We're not just an offensive force," said Sgt. Brian Hawthorne, a civil affairs sergeant with Company A, 401st Civil Affairs Battalion. "We're also a sustaining force."

One of Moore's first patients was a young boy, paralyzed, with ulcers on his lower back. Moore, who is from Seffner, Fla., treated the boy, advising the family on various aspects of care.

With the help of an interpreter, Moore also explained the situation to local tribal leaders who attended

the MEDCAP. The tribal leaders have the ability to mobilize the community and get additional help for the family, said Hawthorne.

Master Sgt. James Townsend, 101st Sustainment Brigade medical operations NCOIC from Lake City, Fla., assisted Moore distributing medication and gathering equipment.

Nestled in the foothills east of the Tigris River, the Iraqi outpost is known as FOB Crazy Horse to the small American liaison team permanently stationed there.

The Iraqi medics, also known as "Blue Shirts" because of their distinctive uniforms, attended the MEDCAP to gain more experience, according to Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Kearney, Special Forces medic, from Rockaway Point, N.Y.

With fellow Special Forces medic, Sgt. Justin Kirschner, from Bark River, Mich., Kearney trained the Blue Shirts in medical tasks such as trauma assessment and beginning an intravenous drip.

"We gave them a week of anatomy and physiology," said Kearney. "[The training was] pretty similar to what a combat lifesaver in the Army would get."

The two medics are from 5th Special Forces Group at Fort Campbell, Ky.

The Blue Shirts assigned to 3rd Battalion conduct the battalion sick call, said Kearney. Some of the Iraqi medics who successfully completed the course became trainers themselves and teach the material to new classes.

The liaison team hopes to create



Capt. A. Michelle Moore, 101st Sustainment Brigade surgeon, examines a young Iraqi boy's eyesight during a medical civilian assistance program.

a medical platoon for the battalion, said Kearney.

Coalition forces conducted a MEDCAP for each battalion in the brigade, according to Hawthorne, who as a civilian is an emergency medical technician. The 401st is a Reserve unit from Webster, N.Y.

As the day continued, the medical personnel saw patients with everything from spinal stenosis, which is a narrowing of the spinal canal, to

back fractures, eye problems and clubfoot, according to Roberts, who is from North Pole, Alaska.

In America, many of the conditions would have been corrected at birth, said Roberts. Still, he and Moore did what they could for the patients they saw.

"Our purpose here is to hopefully forge good relations and to work with the Iraqi [medical] providers here," said Roberts.



Capt. A. Michelle Moore, 101st Sustainment Brigade surgeon, examines a young Iraqi boy's eyesight during a medical civilian assistance program.



A Special Forces medic examines a patient's back during a medical civilian assistance program.

gade helps out

ks ups for Makhmur populace



...sustainment Brigade surgeon, smiles as she examines a young Iraqi boy during a medical civilian
...t Sustainment Brigade surgeon, smiles as she examines a young Iraqi boy during a medical civil-



An Iraqi Army medic, or "blue shirt," gestures as he speaks with Spc. Jesse Valerio and Spc. Rachael Rodriguez, 172nd Brigade Support Battalion combat medics.



...a set of X-rays during a medical civilian assis-



Spc. Rachael Rodriguez, 172nd Brigade Support Battalion combat medic, prepares to take a patient's blood pressure during a medical civilian assistance program.



Capt. A. Michelle Moore, brigade surgeon, 101st Sustainment Brigade, examines a patient's X-rays.



Iraqi Soldiers practice dismounting an armored personnel carrier during a class on improvised explosive devices in Tall Afar.

Soldiers teach Iraqis IED hunting

Story and photo by
Pfc. James Wilt
82nd Airborne Division

TALLAFAR – Paratroopers from Company D, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, have begun teaching Iraqi Soldiers the basics of route clearing.

The classes are being taught by the U.S. Army to protect the people of Iraq and members of the Iraqi Army from improvised explosive devices.

IEDs are the greatest threat to the Iraqi Army, said Capt. Joe Blanton, commander of Company D and a native of Spartanburg, S.C.

The classes give the Iraqi Security Forces the U.S. Army's knowledge and experience in dealing with IEDs, Blanton said.

Sitting in a makeshift classroom, 14 Iraqi soldiers viewed a presentation while listening to the officers.

Instruction was given on several topics to include mounted and dismounted operations.

As the teachers rotated through the class, they discussed intelligence, communications and training.

Slides containing pictures of IEDs the unit has found were shown to the students to teach them the various techniques used by insurgents to hide them.

They were also told how the paratroopers had found the explosives.

After concluding classroom training, the Iraqi Soldiers moved into the courtyard of their compound to practice mounting and dismounting vehicles under the watchful eyes of their instructors.

Throughout several iterations, the Soldiers were given tips on how to properly conduct combat movements during a route clearance.

Hands-on training will be the next step for the Iraqi Soldiers.

Blanton said the class will conduct joint patrols with his company to continue their education.

Iraqis clean monument area

Story by Capt. Chris Watt
Joint Area Support Group

BAGHDAD — More than 20 local Iraqis began work on the clean up and repair of the Unknown Soldier Monument here Nov. 23.

The project is expected to be finished in time for the traditional wreath-laying ceremony conducted by the Iraqi military on Jan. 6. The occasion will mark the traditional anniversary of the formation of the Iraqi military in 1921.

The project at the Unknown Soldier Monument is a joint venture between the Joint Area Support Group and the Coalition Police Assistance Training Team, both based in the International Zone. Working together, the two groups hired local contractors who will not only clean up the monument, but also fix the electrical and plumbing lines and install barracks and a dining facility for the guards.

Iraqi Soldiers specifically assigned to guard the monument are expected to move into the barracks near the end

of December.

"It is a very nice gesture to clean the site out of respect for the new Iraq Army," said Feisal Hazem, a contract worker for the project. "The monument is actually in pretty good shape. It just needs cleaning up and landscaping."

"This area is one of the nicest and greenest areas of Baghdad," he said.

As part of the contract, most of Hazem's hired workers are Iraqi residents of the International Zone. They've spent the past two weeks clearing and burning the wild brush and grass around the monument grounds.

"Work is good here," said a worker with both thumbs up. "You have more work after this?"

The man said he plans to save what he makes on the monument project to move into a house outside the IZ.

The Unknown Soldier Monument cleanup is one of many initiatives being promoted by the Iraqi government and the International Zone-based JASG-C, to clean up and restore the monuments and buildings within the International Zone.



Courtesy photo

Iraqi workers spray down and wash off the layers of sand and debris from the marble grounds of the Unknown Soldier monument.

Firefighters turn in ordnance

Story by Maj. Russ Goemaere
2nd Brigade Combat Team

BAGHDAD — Iraqi firefighters from the Rusafa Fire Station in east Baghdad turned over more than 200 rounds of unexploded ordnance to elements of Task Force Baghdad for destruction.

The firefighters gave 65 artillery rounds and 143 mortar rounds to elements of 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery.

This is a continuing effort and partnership between the leadership of the Rusafa Fire Station and 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery to rid the area of unexploded ordnance and deny terrorists bomb-making material.

"I am glad to be working with the firefighters here to make the community safer for everyone," said Maj. Jay Sawyer, battalion operations officer.

"The most exciting aspect to me is that the Iraqi citizens provide the Iraqi security forces and fire departments with the location of unexploded ordnance they find in their neighborhoods," Sawyer added. "The people want their communities safer and they look to the Iraqi government to provide that safety."

All of the ordnance was later destroyed by a U.S. explosive ordnance disposal team.

911 system will be in place by Feb.

Story by Cmdr. Walter Blaney
Joint Contracting Command

BAGHDAD — Beginning February, Iraqi citizens in 15 cities will have an emergency response system much like America's E-911 call system.

This emergency response system is Iraq's new Advanced First Responder Network. Citizens in Baghdad can already use the system to call emergency medical technicians, police, firefighters, or security forces.

Baghdad's AFRN system was completed in time for the Oct. 15 constitutional referendum vote and contributed significantly to the security of those who voted, Baghdad police officials said. The Baghdad dispatch center recorded more than 70,000 emergency calls during voting day.

Iraq's AFRN system allows Iraqi first responders to quickly mobilize to the area where a call originates. The system works over public telephones, other landline phones, and cellular phones. This encrypted communication system denies insurgents the ability to listen as emergency personnel communicate.

Iraq's AFRN system has capabilities that go beyond American E-911 systems. For example, a local Iraqi police officer can communicate instantly with Iraq's national security force.

64th EMHU keeps search copters flying

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Pamela Anderson
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing

BALAD AIR BASE — Whether it's a matter of life and death or a routine mission, members of the 64th Expeditionary Helicopter Maintenance Unit do everything in their power to ensure that their Combat Search and Rescue helicopters are ready to go at a moment's notice.

The unit, with more than 30 personnel, works 12-hour shifts, seven days a week, maintaining and repairing the CSAR HH-60Gs deployed to Balad Air Base.

"The big thing is to stay on top of it and make sure (the aircraft) flies,"

said Tech. Sgt. Shaun Roberts, 64th Expeditionary Helicopter Maintenance Unit electro-environmental craftsman.

Roberts' main responsibility is to fix the electrical systems in the aircraft and troubleshoot when necessary.

"I'm responsible for anything that has a wire in it," he said. "It can be time consuming and sometimes difficult but the priority is to fix it and launch on time."

"We have met all alert takeoff commitments with ease, and every bird has made its mission."

Tech. Sgt. Kevin Pizzino

ity is to fix it and launch on time."

Launching on time hasn't been an issue for the 64th Expeditionary Helicopter Maintenance Unit.

"We have met all alert takeoff commitments with ease," said Tech. Sgt. Kevin Pizzino, 64th Expeditionary Helicopter Maintenance Unit expediter. "And every bird has made its mission."

Pizzino credits that feat to teamwork and the professionalism of his unit.

"We have great camaraderie between operations and maintenance," he said. "It's a very good group and overall we mix very well together."

The fact that this deployment has less experience than most hasn't hindered the mission either, Pizzino said.

"We have a lot of first timers who have done very well for us," he said.

Senior Airman Jesse Rivas, 64th Expeditionary Helicopter Maintenance Unit helicopter crew chief, said the end result is well worth it.

"It's a good feeling to see what you put together fly," he said, "but the greatest accomplishment is knowing that my aircraft has saved somebody's life."



Airman 1st Class Casey Guilmette, 64th Expeditionary Helicopter Maintenance Unit, cleans a GAU-2 mini gun. Airman Guilmette is an armament specialist.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Kuzma

A group listens to a speaker at a women's conference at the Al Rashid District Dec. 10. The conference was designed to give local women an insight into the new political system.

Election conference educates more than 100 Baghdad women

Story by Master Sgt. David Abrams
Task Force Baghdad

BAGHDAD — More than 100 Iraqi women showed up at the Al Rashid District Council building Dec. 10 to learn all they could about the upcoming national elections.

Topics covered by Khazal Chassib Augla, a Master Trainer of an Iraqi non-governmental organization, included the progress of the Iraqi government, the right to vote, the voting process and what to look for in a particular candidate.

Iraqi Air Force flies first solo mission

Story by Tech. Sgt. Paul Dean
407th Air Expeditionary Group

ALI BASE — Iraq's Air Force grew more self-reliant last week when a six-man crew flew a C-130 Hercules mission to Baghdad without Coalition advisors.

"This is a very good day for the Iraqi Air Force," said the 23rd Squadron's (Transport) navigator and deputy commander. "These are very important days and the Americans have done well training us to do our best." The Iraqi lieutenant colonel and other squadron members are not identified by name for security reasons.

The Iraqi Air Force transport squadron's three C-130s, gifted by the United States in January, have been flying missions since.

But until Nov. 29, there has always been at least one instructor from the U.S. Air Force's 777th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron AST on board.

"I am so very happy," said the squadron's quality assurance officer. "This is the first time since the war that we [prepared] the plane and fly in the skies of Iraq. This is a great day for Iraq and America."

There was a different feeling in the cockpit as the pilot, copilot, flight engineer, navigator and two loadmasters took to the skies of Iraq on their historic mission.

"This is what makes us happy. We are flying for the new Iraqi Air Force and for freedom," said another pilot, who flew in the copilot seat. "Now (the Iraqi Air Force) has to get bigger and bigger

Task Force Baghdad Soldiers from A Company, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion helped organize the conference and were on hand to observe the proceedings.

The last part of the seminar was a question-and-answer period where Augla fielded various inquiries from the women in the audience.

This was the second elections-based conference hosted by the Al Rashid Women's and Children's Committee in the past three months. The first was held Oct. 3 prior to the vote on the Constitutional Referendum.

with more men; Iraqis all over the world should be happy about today."

The Iraqi air crew began their training in the United States, completed simulator training there and returned to Iraq for flight training. They all had prior experience flying other aircraft in Saddam Hussein's air force.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Michael Bauer, 777th EAS commander, and U.S. Air Force Maj. Roger Redwood, 777th EAS, 23 AST operations flight commander, have shared the task of training the Iraqi air crew.

"The Iraqis worked hard," said Bauer. "This is a critical step in post-war Iraq as they stand up a military, a government and a country. It is a proud moment for all of us to see Iraqis flying their own planes in their own country."

The flight was the first for many in the Iraqi Air Force.

"This is the right thing, the right way for Iraq," Redwood said.

"This is a really big step, and although we still have a ways to go until the Iraqi Air Force is fully functional and self-sufficient, this is a great confidence builder."

Advisory support team members who trained the Iraqi ground crew also shared the glory of the moment.

"Seeing your students go out, taking the steps on their own for the first time - it's like seeing your kids or somebody in your family doing great things," said U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Furber, a squadron maintenance instructor and adviser.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Three al-Qaida terrorists sentenced by the Central Criminal Court of Iraq

BAGHDAD — Iraqi Ministry of Justice officials announced that three members of an al-Qaida terrorist cell, in the Adhamiya area of Baghdad were convicted by the Central Criminal Court of Iraq for threatening the public safety, crimes against the security of Iraq and belonging to armed groups who threaten the Iraqi people.

The CCCI found Musab Kasar Abdul Rahman al-Hafith, also known as "Yunis," guilty of threatening the public safety on Nov. 16 and sentenced him to 15 years imprisonment.

Uthman Awad Hamid Ahmed al-Jubouri, also known as Ossman Awad Hamid Ahmed, was found guilty of crimes against the security of Iraq on Nov. 22 and was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment.

Daud Salman Mohammed Ali al-Barmani was found guilty of belonging to armed groups who threaten the Iraqi people on Dec. 5 and was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment.

The members of the Adhamiya terrorist cell have planned and participated in armed attacks against Iraqi Police, Iraqi National Guard, Iraqi civilians, and Coalition Forces. The cell is also responsible for getting foreign anti-Iraqi Forces fighters into Iraq from locations such as Morocco, Tunisia, and North Africa.

Saddam's nephew receives 21 years in prison

BAGHDAD — On Dec. 5, a Baghdad court found Aymen Sabawi, Saddam Hussein's nephew and a former regime insider and once-active terrorist supporter, guilty of illegally crossing the Syrian border without authorization from Iraqi customs.

Yesterday's court handed down a 15-year sentence, Sabawi had already received a 6-year sentence during a September trial when he was found guilty of possession of illegal weapons and manufacture of explosive devices.

Sabawi will not be released from the Iraqi prison for more than 20 years.

Sabawi was apprehended last May by Iraqi and Coalition Forces near Tikrit. Sabawi's father, Sabawi Ibrahim al-Hasan al-Tikrit, is the half-brother of Saddam Hussein. He was apprehended in late February and remains in custody awaiting trial.

Sabawi and members of his family played an active role in sustaining terrorism by providing financial support, weapons and explosives. He frequently used neighboring Arab countries as safe havens to plan and launch terrorist attacks.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483 indicted the Sabawi family for stealing millions of dollars from the Iraqi people during Saddam Hussein's regime. Officials believe the Sabawi family used these stolen financial assets to fund terrorism and anti-Coalition activities.

Sabawi was among the highest ranking members from the former regime to be brought to trial and successfully convicted.

Iraq jails four al-Qaida terrorists for life

BAGHDAD — Four foreign Arab nationals accused of committing attacks for al-Qaida in Iraq have been sentenced to life in prison, the government said last week.

"The Central Criminal Court of Iraq issued a verdict of life imprisonment against four criminals, known to be members of al-Qaida in Iraq," according to a government statement.

The defendants were foreign fighters from Algeria, Jordan and Syria who entered Iraq illegally and committed crimes "ranging from murder and terrorism to possession of illegal weapons," it said.

The four, named Mahmud Abdul Hadi, Mohammed Atala Mohammed, Mohammed bin Rabit Saadam and Ismail Mohammed Abdullah, belonged to a bombing cell in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul led by Abu Talha, the statement added.



Sabawi Ibrahim al-Hasan al-Tikrit awaits trial on terrorism charges.



Abu Talha, top aide to Abu Musab al Zarqawi, was captured in June.

CHAPLAIN'S TALK

Finding the Best in People

By Chaplain (LTC) Scott Ofsdahl MNF-I Command Chaplain Office Camp Victory, Iraq



Chaplain Ofsdahl

Emily Dickinson is a famous American poet who lived a rather unusual life.

As an adult she rarely left her home and during the time she lived "hidden away," she preferred wearing white dresses. She wrote nearly 2,000 poems, but she hid most of her poems away.

Only five of her poems were published during her lifetime. After she died, her sister found her poems and they were published into books of poetry. How fortunate for thousands of readers that take pleasure in the beauty of her writing.

Sometimes it takes a long time to learn to love ourselves. Loving and forgiving ourselves is fundamentally a spiritual journey. Perhaps we've done things that seem too hard to forgive. Or we tried to dig out from a bad relationship back home and then things got ugly. Maybe an engagement while out on patrol is hard to get out of your mind. When we get buried under negative garbage and negative images, we shut down. Our gifts and talents become "hidden away," as in the story of Emily Dickinson. Fortunately, we're not alone in this journey. Each of us is a part of a team. As team members, we

need to find the best in each other. Why is this so hard? Because when we're beaten down and we have nothing left to give, we tend to be at our worst. A nice way to describe it, is we get "crispy." We end up hurting the very buddies that we'd take a bullet for. Why? Your buddies are the people physically closest to you and they're the ones who will be hit by the emotional collateral shrapnel.

When someone on the team is facing difficult times, we each have a choice. We can focus on the negative or we can uplift the positive. The servicemember who focuses on the positive will raise the "watermark" on their team's efficiency and effectiveness. These teams sustain us when we're lost. Our comrades hold us up as we try to get the picture of ourselves back into focus. Each of us brings different gifts along for the journey in Iraq. We all have a variety of talents. By finding the best in

each other, we bring out the good that might be "hidden away."

The truth of Christmas is that God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son. This Christmas, God offers everyone a gift that overshadows all others: unconditional love. It is the engine of life. It is the fuel that drives acts of heroism and is a gift from above, no strings attached. It is God's love that colors all other relationships. So how do we focus on finding the positive in others? First, we must love ourselves as God loves us.

Then, as the good book says, we must love one another. Mother Teresa describes it well, "Love is the fruit in season at all times, and within reach of every hand." Without love, life is empty and void of meaning. Love includes God's love for you, your love for God, and your love and support for those on your team. Some things never change. God's unconditional love is one of them.

On one of your crispy days, remember to receive God's unconditional love. Look to your buddies for the strength to overcome. And vice versa. When you're frustrated with someone who's a bit "crispy," I challenge you to find the best in them. Trust me, it's a powerful investment in people. The profit from your investment may one day save a life.

May God bless you and those you love during this holiday season.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The U.S. military charges that Abu Talha, also known as Mohammed Khalaf Shakar, was a top aide to the al-Qaida in Iraq frontman Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Abu Talha was captured in Mosul last June.

Iraqis help U.S. forces clean streets

BAGHDAD — Task Force Baghdad Soldiers captured four terror suspects and discovered a large weapons cache during a series of operations in the Al Rashid district on Dec. 4.

U.S. Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment conducted a raid in western Rashid based on information provided by local Iraqis. The raid resulted in the capture of two individuals.

In another mission, Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment conducted a cordon and search in eastern Rashid, resulting in the capture of two individuals and a sizable weapons cache. The weapons cache consisted of five AK-47 assault rifles, seven AK-47 magazines, six SKS automatic weapons, one Russian machine gun and 20 100-pound bags of aluminum sulfate.

Weapons cache uncovered near Tuz

TIKRIT — Just a week after a huge cache of mortars was uncovered near the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk, another large terrorist cache was discovered Tuesday morning near the neighboring city of Tuz.

Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, found two storage bunkers crammed with weapons near Forward Operating Base Bernstein, west of the city.

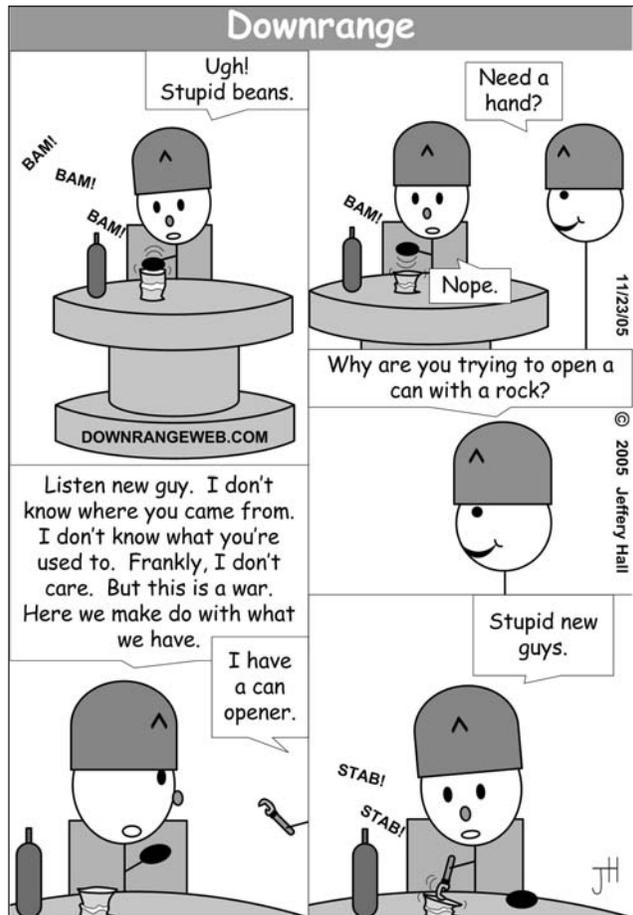
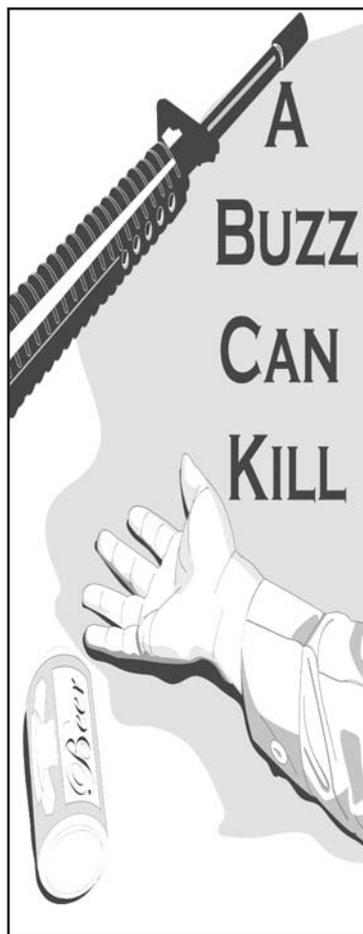
More than 400 rockets of various types and 80 mortar rounds were discovered in the bunkers. Mortars, rockets, and IEDs, are the preferred weapons of terrorists against civilian populations and military forces.

Seventy cases of small arms ammunition, 100 artillery fuses, and a dozen rocket-propelled grenade warheads were also stashed in the bunkers.

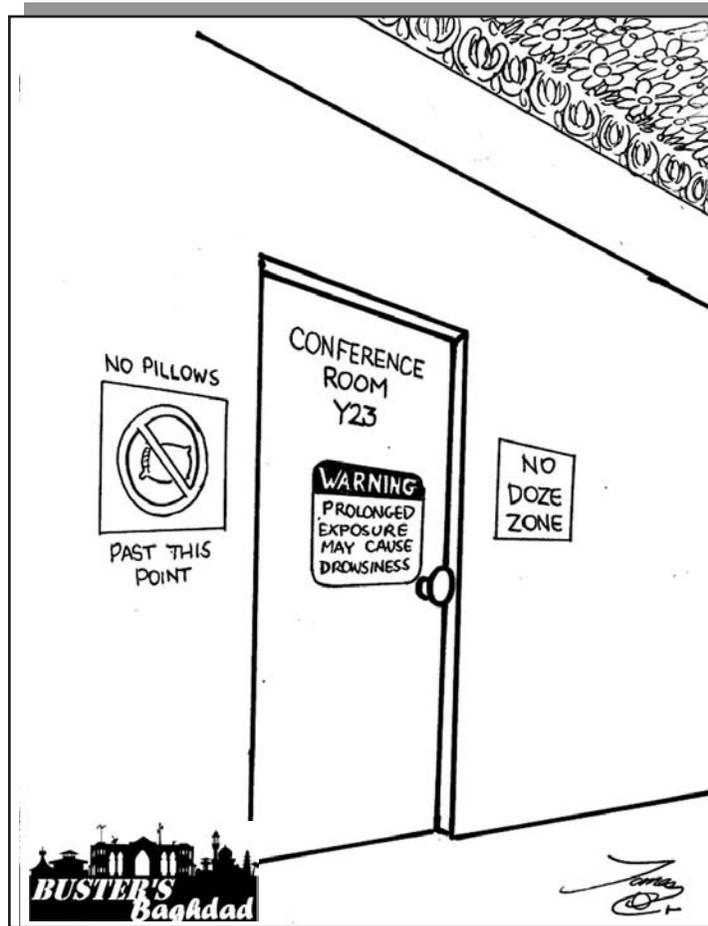
An explosive ordnance disposal team was called to inspect the weapons and conducted a controlled detonation to destroy the cache.

Another weapons cache was seized in Kirkuk Dec. 6, after police received a tip from a local resident.

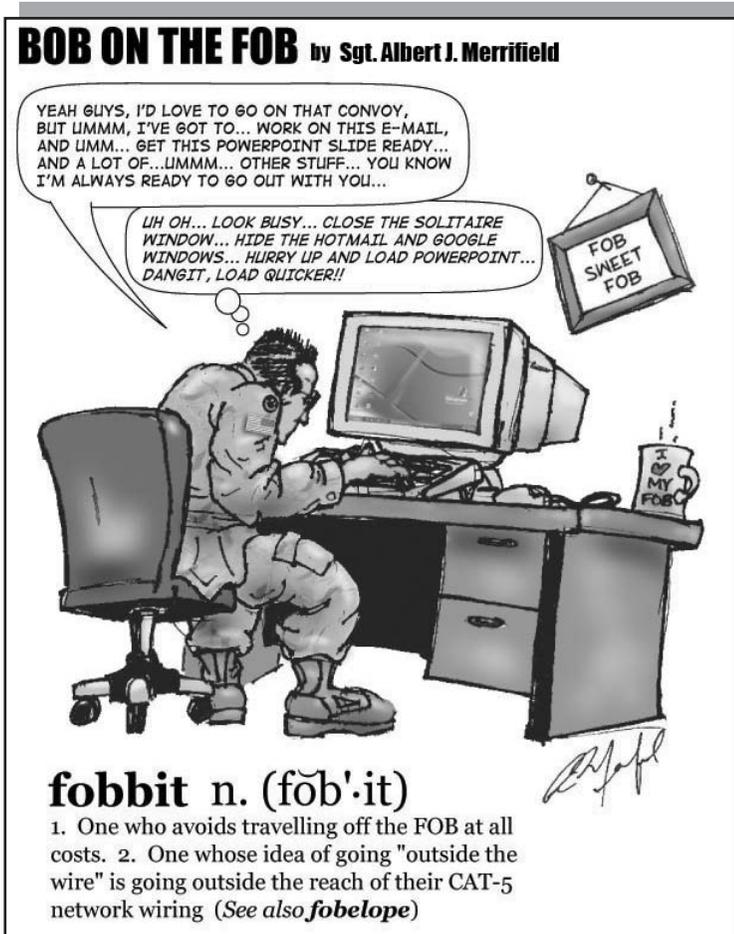
Scimitar Slapstick



Art by Jeffery Hall



Art by Maj. James D. Crabtree



Words of the Infidels

1	13	14		9	17	18
2			15	16		
3						
		4				
5					10	
		6		11		
7	19			12		
8						

ACROSS

- Fighting man's badge
- Jane Fonda exercise
- Muslims can't eat _____.
- 80's generation
- Main ingredient in beer
- pinch hitter
- delicious cookie
- ___ in your face!
- Childish term for feces
- where you go after getting beat up
- Mafia title
- A lyric poem

DOWN

- MNF-I Commander
- Show 'em your ___ face!
- Magnum ___.
- If it starts ticking, call these guys.
- When you got your stripes
- S-2 type of warfare
- The Devil's _____.
- First part of Sniper motto
- Don't get ___ out of shape Sir.
- Lame TV show
- Whacky MTV family
- Egyptian sun god

Words of the Infidels solution from Dec. 9, 2005

P	O	E		B	U	N	S
A	C	D	C		F	O	O
B	T	U		E	O	N	S
S	O	C	O	M			A
T	B	A		P	S	D	
	E	T	H	I	C		A
P	R	O		R	U	C	K
O		R	E	E	D		O

HEALTH & FITNESS

The Scoop on Creatine

Capt. Reva Rogers, RD
101st Airborne Division dietician

What is it?

Creatine is a naturally occurring compound found in foods such as beef and fish. In your body, it is primarily stored in your muscles as phosphocreatine, which can be broken down to release energy.

Does it work?

Creatine appears to help improve performance of repeated short-duration, high-intensity activities such as weight-lifting, football, basketball and sprinting. The average gain in strength and performance ranges from 10 to 15 percent, although some people may not respond at all to creatine supplementation.

Athletes who consume a diet low in creatine, such as vegetarians, typically see a greater increase in performance after supplementation as compared to athletes whose diet is naturally higher in creatine. Creatine has not been shown to benefit endurance exercise such as long-distance running or road-marching. Almost all studies have found creatine supplementation increases body mass. During the loading phase most people gain between 2 and 4.5 pounds. Soldiers who are close to their screening table weight and want to avoid getting taped should avoid creatine.

Will it help me build muscle?

When taking creatine the rule of thumb is: it won't work if you don't work. Creatine is thought to improve performance by providing additional energy for high-intensity exercise. Creatine supplementation may also help speed recovery between bouts of strenuous activity enabling you to work harder longer. Creatine will not help you build muscle or lift more weight if you do not put the hours in at the gym.

Are there any side effects?

The only side effect of creatine supplementation consistently found in scientific research is weight gain. Although some people have reported experiencing stomach upset, muscle cramps or feeling dehydrated while taking creatine, studies have failed to show any link between creatine and adverse side effects such as heat injuries or muscle strains.

However, that does not mean if you are taking creatine you will not get muscle cramps or become dehydrated. When exercising for longer periods at higher intensity levels, you require additional fluid. Additionally, as your physical fitness improves, you will become more efficient at regulating your body temperature and

will sweat more.

This makes it essential for you to monitor your hydration status while taking creatine. A good gauge of hydration status is urine color. Your urine should be light yellow. Dark urine can be an indication that you are not well hydrated. Your urine might also be dark if you are taking a lot of vitamin/mineral supplements. In this case monitor quantity and darkness of color.

Can I take creatine with other supplements or medications?

People taking medications that strain their kidneys, such as cyclosporine or gentamicin, should not use creatine. The side effects of taking creatine in combination with other dietary supplements have not been studied, but the combination of creatine, caffeine and ephedra is of concern. In general, people who consume multiple dietary supplements are at higher risk for experiencing adverse side effects than those who do not. As always, you should check with your doctor or physician's assistant before starting any new supplement.

How much should I take?

The most effective way to take creatine is to start with a loading dose of five grams taken four times per day for three to five days. This amount and duration will saturate your muscles. Once your muscles are saturated you only need to consume three to five grams per day to maintain elevated creatine stores. Consuming creatine with a carbohydrate source, like a sports drink or juice, helps increase your creatine stores more rapidly than taking it alone.

Powder, liquid, or chews?

Creatine is very easy for your body to absorb, so there is no advantage to taking it in liquid, capsule or chewable form as compared to a powder. The only benefit of taking creatine in a form other than powder may be convenience, variety or taste preference. No matter which form of creatine you purchase, the label should state the product contains pure "creatine monohydrate" and should list the amount of creatine per dose or in the container.

Always purchase dietary supplements from a reputable dealer. An independent research company, *ConsumerLab.com*, analyzed several creatine products and discovered several were contaminated with creatinine, a waste-product formed by the breakdown of creatine.

Creatinine has no physical performance benefit and makes your kidneys work harder. Although their listing of acceptable creatine supplements is by no means all inclusive, *ConsumerLab.com*'s Web site lists some products that were found to be pure.

Check yo head!

ACH guidelines for proper wear

Recent surveys conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan show that as many as half the Soldiers serving there are not properly wearing the Advanced Combat Helmet. Soldiers whose helmets are fitted poorly or worn improperly face an increased risk of injury or death from ballistic threats and other head injuries. In response to this finding, the U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Command issued Safety of Use Message 05-006 outlining the proper wear and fit of the helmet.



- Top of head must touch the crown pad
- 1/2 inch space between head and helmet head
- Helmet is level, front to back
- Crown pad must always be worn
- All seven pads are worn for high risk operations
- Portion of ear at or above ear canal is covered
- Minimum of five pads used (including canted crown pad)
- Soldier is at increased injury risk with less than seven pads
- Hardware covered by pads for high-risk operations
- Check pads for tears and compressibility
- In cold, allow pads to warm to conform to the head
- Retention system nuts and bolts are tight
- No cut, frayed, or loose stitching or webbing
- Helmet inner hook disks are attached to helmet
- No cracked, worn or damaged hardware
- Helmet is level (side to side), not twisted or canted
- Front rim is not more than 1/2 inch above eyebrows
- Retention straps are evenly adjusted and snug
- Small chin strap is in front of chin and level
- Neck pad resting on nape of neck

If the ACH is too tight:

- Rearrange side pads in a vertical, diagonal, or horizontal configuration
- Remove front or back pads and rearrange side pads
- Create space in the area that feels tight
- Try next smaller pad size
- Try next larger shell size

If the ACH is too loose:

- Rearrange side pads in a vertical, diagonal, or horizontal configuration
- Tighten chin strap retention system
- Increase number of pads
- Try next larger pad size
- Try next smaller shell size

If the ACH is too high:

- Judge at brow and ear - Soldier should see rim of helmet when looking up
- Portion of ear above canal should be covered
- Try next smaller pad set
- Try next larger shell size

If the ACH is too low:

- Try next larger size pad set
- Try next smaller shell size

Information compiled by Sgt. Dallas Walker, 101st Airborne Division. ACH modded by Staff Sgt. Joey Mickles, a medic with Headquarters Company, 501st Sustainment Brigade, 101st Airborne Division



Capt. Raad Faesal, commander, 2nd Company, 3rd Iraqi Army Division, hands a stuffed animal to an Iraqi child at a school house in the Al Fadoose village in Yethrib. Faesal and his Soldiers delivered school supplies, toys and clothes to the school.

More than red apples ...

Iraqi Soldiers deliver school supplies, smiles

Story and photos by
Sgt. Dallas Walker
101st Airborne Division

YETHRIB – A pencil, paper, a toy: was these little things that made one December afternoon brighter for a group of Iraqi children in the Al Fadoose village.

Soldiers from 2nd Company, 3rd Iraqi Army Division, delivered a truckload of supplies, clothes and toys to the village school recently.

“I am very happy to see these supplies being brought to our school,” said Yusra Abid Ahmjeed, school headmaster. “We can’t buy these things in our own [village] and we never have enough to last the school year.”

Ahmjeed has been an educator in the village for 25 years and has seen the lack of supplies as a consistent problem in schools. She said the city gives supplies to each school once a year, but it is never enough

to last.

“We divide it up as best we can, but it’s still not enough,” Ahmjeed said.

The IA Soldiers have been delivering supplies to all the schools in the Yethrib area with the help of U.S. Coalition Forces. There are 40 schools in Yethrib and the surrounding villages, according to Capt. Raad Faesal, commander, 2nd Company, 3rd Iraqi Army Division.

“We try to visit the schools monthly,” Faesal said. “We saw a big change since the old government fell. We used to have a hard time coming to schools because they had a bad view of the military. Now, they come to us and ask us for help. They ask us to bring them supplies.”

Faesal said one of the biggest problems in the schools is the lack of technology available.

“Other schools in bigger cities have computers, but these schools don’t,” Faesal said.

It will be many years before these small

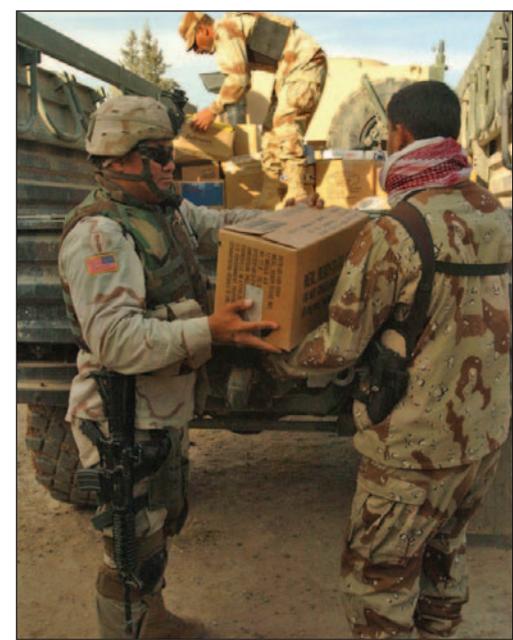
villages see the technology that schools in larger cities have, he said. For now, they will concentrate on the necessities.

Faesal has been working with the civil affairs section of 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry Division, to bring supplies to the schools.

Sgt. Billy Carrillo, civil military operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge for the unit, said that helping the IA organize these visits with local schools will help them to establish better relationships with the villagers.

“It also allows [the IA] to build their own confidence,” Carrillo said. The more confidence these Soldiers have with their own communities, the faster they will be able to stand on their own.

“Before, the Iraqi Army [in this area] was very disorganized. Structure was lacking at best,” Carrillo said. “Now they are a functional unit, to the point of completing their own missions. They’ve made leaps and bounds over the last year.”



Iraqi Soldiers from 2nd Company, 3rd Iraqi Army Division, work with Coalition Forces to unload a truck full of school supplies.

Scapel, retractor stat!

Soldiers bring improved health care to Iraqi citizens

Story by
Sgt. Matthew Wester
3rd Brigade,
1st Armor Division

CAMP TAJI — As he watched Army doctors treat Iraqi children and Soldiers distribute humanitarian aid to residents of an area northwest of Baghdad, 1st Sgt. Gorakh Persaud said, “This is the heart of civil affairs.”

Persaud and other Soldiers from Company A, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion were on a day-long mission to improve health care for Iraqi citizens on Nov. 27.

“The mission had two parts,” said Capt. Chris Warner, division psychiatrist for 3rd Infantry Division. “We took medical supplies to a local hospital. The first mission was to get them supplies. The second (part) was to go out into the community and provide medical care for some of the Iraqi civilians.”

Warner is also trained as a family practitioner and used those skills during the mission.

For the mission’s initial phase, Soldiers contacted officials from Al-Imam Al-Hussain Charity Hospital in Rashdiya. The hospital provides free medical care for residents of the town.

“They treat anyone with a need, so we decided to donate some of our medical supplies,” said Sgt. Richard J. Cochea, a civil affairs specialist for Company A, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion “Although the hospital is privately funded, resources are still limited.”

The Soldiers and medical professionals from 3rd Infantry Division’s 550th Medical Company helped supplement those resources. They worked together with employees of the hospital to move a truckload of supplies into the building.

Capt. Wendy Weinell, a team leader for Company A, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion, said the Army donated, “a little bit of everything from dressings to needles, needle boxes, and gowns.”

“By us being able to supplement a completely free hospital, it is going to increase the number of people they can actually service,” Weinell said. “There is a high demand in this area.”

“There is a high rate of tuberculosis, a high rate of children being bitten by dogs, and there are also a lot of farming accidents,” she said. “These supplies will help. It will



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin Bromley
Staff Sgt. Chris Edwards moves medical supplies into the Al-Imam Al Hussain Charity Hospital in Rashdiya.

help them treat a lot of the injuries they get.”

After the Soldiers unloaded the medical gear, they mounted up and navigated along sandy farm roads until they reached the relatively remote village of Su Bak Suur.

Smiling children greeted the Soldiers as they set up a makeshift clinic in the corner of a neighborhood soccer field. There the Army medical professionals set up four treatment stations and put their equipment and expertise to use.

“We saw Iraqi civilians of all ages, men and women, a definite broad range,” Warner said. “In terms of ailments, we saw some general complaints you would see in any pri-

mary-care clinic such as arthritis and upper respiratory viruses. We also saw a lot of high blood pressure and diabetes, which is to be expected.”

Warner said it was important the villagers realized U.S. troops were willing to treat people even in a remote area like Su Bak Suur.

The Soldiers reached out to the village in another way as well. After treatment, they gave each person humanitarian aid items like pillows, sleeping mats and school supplies.

The children were especially excited when they received new backpacks full of pencils, pens and notebooks.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin Bromley
Maj. Donna Mattson, a medical officer for Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, checks an Iraqi man's pulse during a medical mission northwest of Baghdad.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin Bromley
Sgt. Richard Cochea, a civil affairs specialist with Company A, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion, unloads medical supplies during a medical mission northwest of Baghdad.

“This stuff is for the Iraqi people,” Persaud said. “It serves no purpose sitting in a warehouse. We’re giving it to the folks so they can use it.”

Persaud said his teams deal with a lot of construction projects daily, but they like to do humanitarian aid missions that require direct contact with the Iraqi people.

“It’s interaction for the people in a positive way,” Weinell said. “It’s also a chance for our Soldiers to see positives in the people. Every kid you see out here is ultimately why we’re here. (There’s hope) that their future will be better in Iraq.”