

The Heart Beat

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division

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Adjusting Fire: 1-320th F.A.R Operates as Light Infantry

Free Mail

To:

From:

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STRIKE 6



Dear STRIKE Soldiers,

*We start the New Year—
and we start it knowing
we are making a difference.*

It is human nature to see difficulty and danger as altogether bad. But it is often the case the finest and noblest things we know come from situations which are so hard and perilous that no one could deliberately want them. They do indeed, destroy some people; but some people are cleansed and strengthened and made so heroic by them that the world is lifted a little nearer to God because of them.

- Daily Devotional Messages for Those in the Service of Others

Everyday while I visit the battlefield, I witness real courage, real sacrifice and I am encouraged. I know first hand the challenges we all face in this battle. I am proud of each and all of you— it is simply amazing how you give, personally and professionally, all that you have to give. Your reward is not here and now, but it is in the safety and future of all others for sure.

We are in a good fight, but we fight for a good cause. Keep the faith, for there are those who will be inspired by you and your actions.

I am honored to serve with each of you and am grateful for you. You are indeed America's best. You inspire freedom.

STRIKE!

Sincerely,
Col. Todd Ebel

Cover Art:

Sgt. Edan Puente, HHB, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment searches a vehicle during a combat patrol in Taji, Iraq on December 18. (Photo by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell, 2BCT Public Affairs)





Story by Sgt. Joy Kroemer

Photos by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell

CAMP TAJI, Iraq-- Fighting the war in Iraq has brought more than just the light infantryman into the common theme of extended-hour maneuvers, cordon and searches, motorized convoys and dismounted patrols. Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment have dominated a large area throughout the city and rich farmland of Taji, helping to perfect the role of the light infantryman and secure peace for the people of the region.

“Overall, we’ve captured 109 insurgents, 41 have gone to Abu Ghraib,” said Lt. Col. Rafael Torres, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment commander. “We’ve discovered 15 caches, three of which were the biggest ever found in this area. We’ve taken in excess of 14-15 hundred artillery rounds here recently and destroyed them.”

Since their arrival to the Taji area in October of this year, 1st Battalion, or “Top Guns”, has undergone more than just artillery-turned infantry changes. Coming from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and normally attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, “Top Guns” landed in Iraq attaching to 3rd Brigade of the 1st Armored Division out of Fort Hood, Texas, and wasted no time in tackling the light infantry role and taking charge of a larger area of operations than most battalions find themselves having to engage.

“Our units are spread out, so we have the challenge of constantly maneuvering our forces on the battlefield to ensure that we have the right combat power at the decisive point of an engagement,” Torres explained. “I think the operational cell and the batteries have done a really good job in being flexible and doing that.”

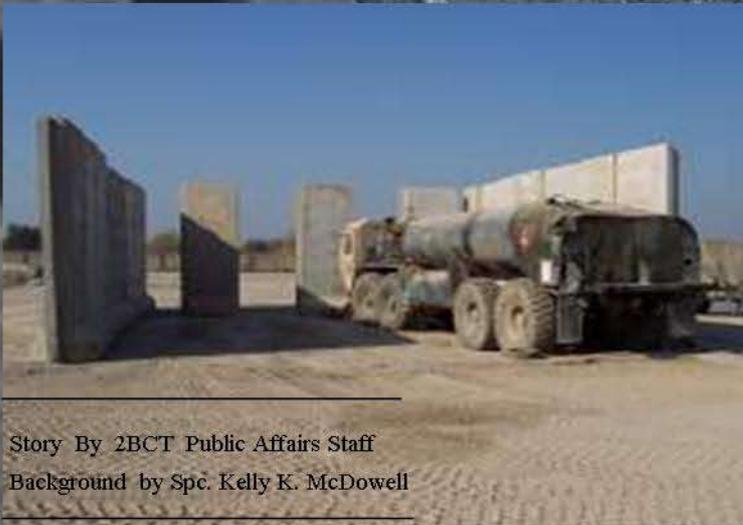
Soldiers from 1st Battalion often find themselves on maneuver rotations anywhere from 72 to 96 hours at a time. They patrol the seemingly never-ending dusty roads of the Taji region and man checkpoints throughout their combat shifts. They rotate back through Camp Taji for 48 hours of rest before tackling new missions all over again. Missions that have been overwhelmingly successful despite the loss of six “Top Gun” Soldiers since the beginning of operations.

Below: Private 1st Class Aaron Sanchez, HHB, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery regiment and 1st Lt. Christopher Burton, HHB executive officer, visually secure a side road while a recovery vehicle tows a damaged truck back to Camp Taji on December 18. (Photo by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell)



Story continued on Pg. 11 See FIRE

Force Protection: Keeping Soldiers Safe



Story By 2BCT Public Affairs Staff
Background by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell



CAMP STRIKER, Iraq— Fortifying bases is an issue that is of great importance. Not only does building up camps help to protect valuable equipment and vehicles, it most importantly helps to protect the lives of Soldiers and civilians. As Soldiers daily face danger every time they leave the wire, the places where they live and work should be as safe as possible from enemy attacks.

At FOB Lutifiyah, work is being done to seal the camp off from potential threats from outside. Hesco Barriers have been placed in such a way that they will allow traffic to move through, but block visibility of its motor pool from outside the FOB.

The JDAM building, which many Soldiers call home is also currently undergoing improvement. Where it was once very open, and its interior exposed, engineers have worked steadily and added metal doors, installed new wood paneling and employed the use of sandbags to fill in gaps.

The improvements made in Mahmudiyah not only have been made to FOB Mahmudiyah North, but to the road just outside its walls. Alternate Supply Route Jackson has undergone major repairs that widened the road's shoulders and created crossover lanes in the road. The FOB itself has come a long way since the Soldiers arrived there, what was once a collage of scrap metal and dust, is now shaping up to be an environment that is more than livable.

Meanwhile, Yusafiyah is also undergoing similar fortification efforts. The FOB was refitted with all new HESCO Barriers, as the old ones were

becoming worn and unserviceable. New rolls of concertina wire were emplaced; the old wire was becoming rusted and hazardous to Soldiers who work there. The generator that powers the dining facility was repaired, and concrete barriers were placed around it for protection from a possible enemy attack. Engineers have also repaired roads throughout the FOB, smoothing out the roads and filling in potholes.

At the aid station in Yusafiyah, Engineers created a casualty tunnel, a place where local nationals can wait safely while their loved ones are being treated. Hesco Barriers and sandbags were also placed around the station and its generator to provide them with greater protection.



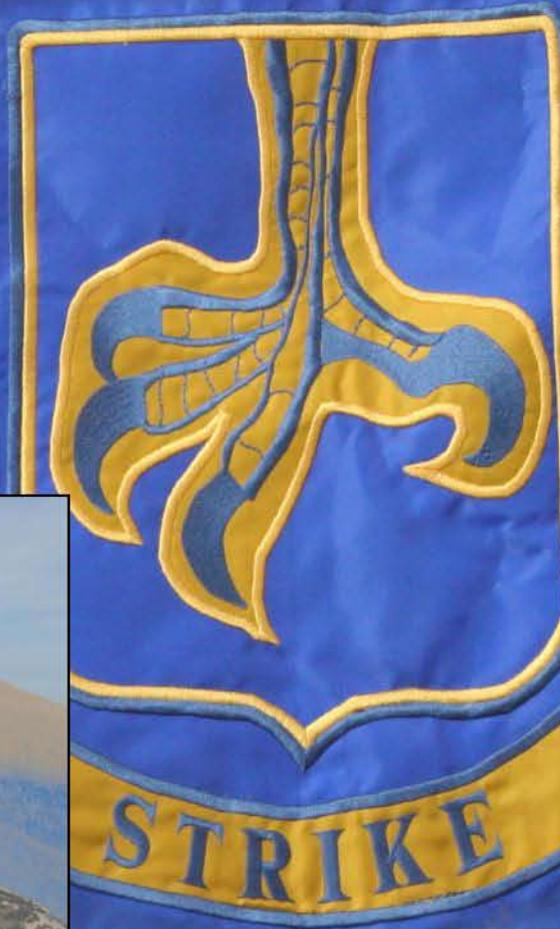
The JS Bridge Compound is also going to be the recipient of some major construction, as the area is being built up to protect Soldiers. Currently,

American forces are responsible for guarding the JS Bridge, but after mid-January, the bridge will be under the control of the Iraqi Police. Leaving the compound adequately protected will allow the Iraqi soldiers to establish a permanent base of operations and keep the area secure.

With the fortification of the bases, Soldiers can worry less about the safety of their living and working environment and focus on the mission; defeating the enemy and bring peace to Iraq.

Congratulations on a Job Well Done !

**NCO of the
QUARTER**



**Soldier of the
QUARTER**



**SGT. ALBERTO MORGAN
ALPHA TROOP
1-75TH CAVALRY**



**CPL. AQUINAS KENROG
BRAVO TROOP
1-75TH CAVALRY**



Visions of Freedom

Iraqi National Elections

December 15, 2005



Heavy Hitters

'The Assassins' of 1-121

Story by 1st Lt. Sebastian Montagne

Photos by Sgt. Joseph Neely

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq— As you roll down Iraqi roadways west of the Baghdad International Airport and see Soldiers manning checkpoints and Bradley Fighting Vehicles patrolling, you may wonder, who mans those positions? The answer is the proud members of A Co. “Assassins”, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment.



The “Assassins” are part of the 48th Brigade Combat Team of the Georgia Army National Guard. The core of the company is primarily made up of “Assassins” mem-

bers, however there is a platoon from Bravo Company, 1-121 Inf. Besides the infantry men of Alpha Company, there are over 15 maintenance and shop personnel from the Brigade Support Battalion who keep the Bradleys rolling everyday. Although many are from the Peach State, there are representatives from more than just Georgia. There are Soldiers from South Carolina, Florida and from as far away as Connecticut. Many in the unit volunteered to be transferred knowing full well it meant a deployment to Iraq, and being away from their family for over a year and half.

The unit mobilized on Dec. 9, 2004 at Fort Gordon, and a month later, moved to Fort Stewart for four months of intensive pre-deployment training. While at Fort Stewart the “Assassins” flew to the National Training Center in Ft. Irwin for a Mission Rehearsal exercise.

The unit deployed to Iraq with the 48th BCT to serve as part of Task Force Baghdad after nearly six months of training. The unit served with the

“Red Devils” for the first two months, then were reassigned to the “Blackhawks” of 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry. In the sixth month of deployment the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division Air Assault took responsibility for the area previously held by the 48th Brigade Combat Team, part of the transition caused the “Assassins” to be assigned to the “Widowmakers” of 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.

Great things have happened to the Assassins while on deployment. Eight Soldiers re-enlisted in December, in addition 1st Lieutenant Parker is expecting his first child. Accolades are abundant from leaders who witness the vigilance and dedication to providing a safe roadway along the Corps MSR.

After almost a year of mobilization and with six months left in

country, the men of Assassin Company are poised for a new challenge as the 4th Infantry Division re-aligns sectors.

Undoubtedly, the men of Assassin company have had their fair share of change. Through all of the movement however, they continued to vigilantly patrol their sector and discovered many more IEDs than or an ambush, their safekeeping and vigilance is greatly appreciated.



1st Lt. Sebastian Montagne is the S-1 of 1-75th Cavalry and the Unit Public Affairs Representative.



FACES OF

CAPT. KURT HAMMOND, C/2-101 BTB COMMANDER RECEIVES THE COMPANY'S GUIDON FOR THE LAST TIME AS CAPT. JASON BURNS LOOKS ON, IN A CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY ON DECEMBER 21.



STAFF SGT. BRENT WOOD, ALPHA TROOP, 1-75TH CAVALRY, REACHES INSIDE A BOX TO HAND OUT CANDY TO SCHOOL CHILDREN DURING A HUMANITARIAN AID DROP ON DECEMBER 25.

SPC. ANDREW DUBOIS, HHC 2BCT GETS UP CLOSE WITH ACTRESS KELLY HU, WHO ALONG WITH MUSICIAN MITCH ALLAN, VISITED CAMP STRIKER AS PART OF THE AMBASSADORS OF HOLLYWOOD HOLIDAY TOUR ON DECEMBER 22.



THE HEART



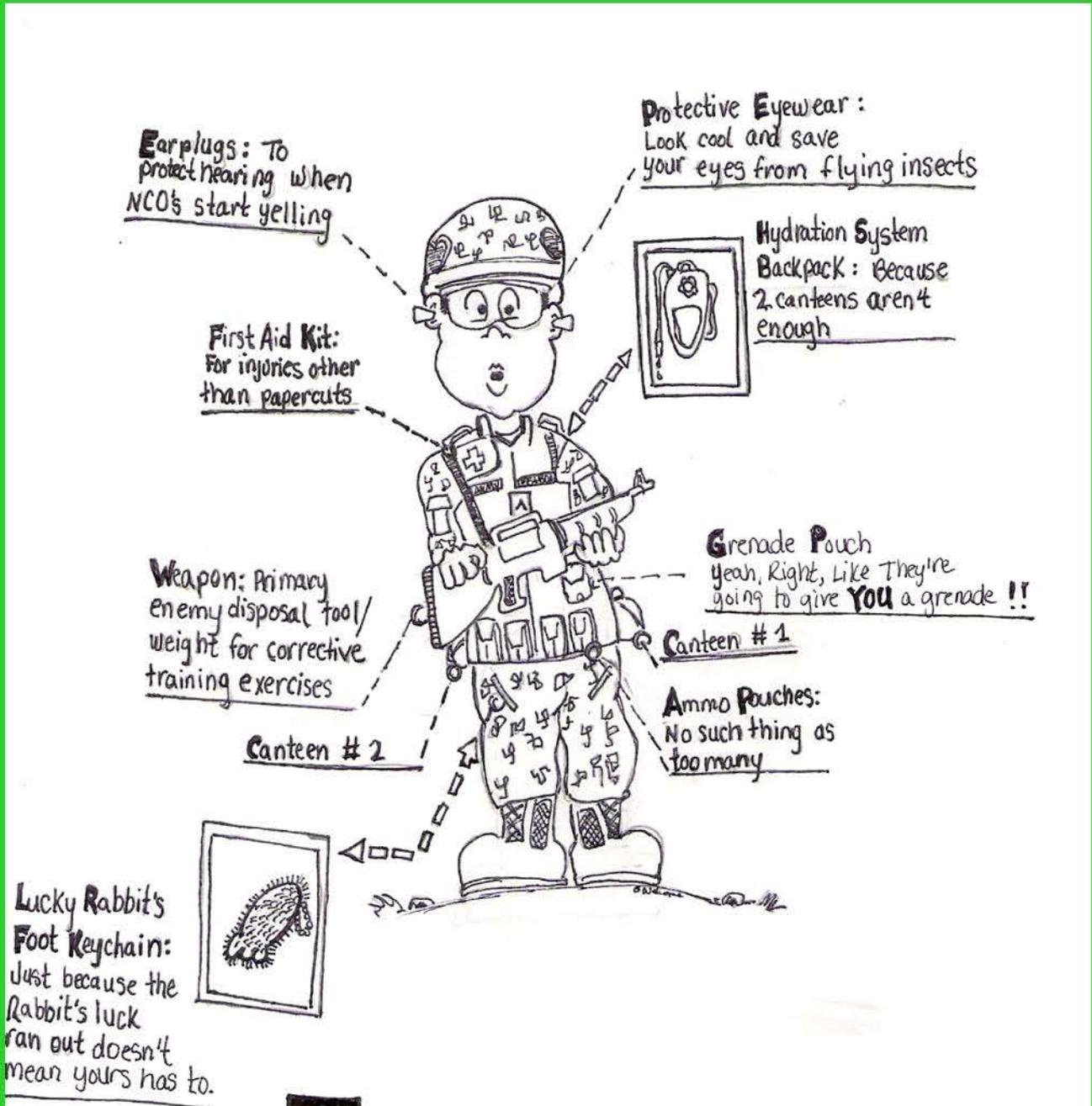
1ST LT. LAUREN KOBAN, B/526TH BSB RECEIVES A CERTIFICATE AFTER PLACING FIRST IN THE WOMEN'S DIVISION OF THE HONOLULU MARATHON HELD AT CAMP VICTORY ON DECEMBER 18.

THE CAMP STRIKER MARATHON TEAM (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): 1ST LT. LAUREN KOBAN, CAPT. SHANNON ROWE, CAPT. AARON LIEBIG, 1ST LT. CHAD HENDERSON, CAPT. JULIE FULLEM. THESE SOLDIERS TOOK PART IN THE HONOLULU MARATHON AT CAMP VICTORY ON DECEMBER 18.



SPC. ROBERT RUSSELL, 2-502 DRESSES UP AS SANTA CLAUS TO SPREAD SOME HOLIDAY CHEER, WHILE HIS HELPER ELF MANS A MACHINE GUN.

Roger That



The basic load of a Soldier,
as worn by Pvt. Peabody

FIRE (Continued from Pg. 3)

"I think the fact that we are a team is key," said Capt. Robert Jenkins, whose Alpha Battery has sustained all six "Top Gun" losses. "Just maintaining that sense of team and keeping that as the nucleus of everything we do, we'll be alright."

"We've taken some hard hits here," Torres confessed. "Those Soldiers, every one of them, they were here doing their mission and they knew what their mission was."

Through the tough losses, "Top Guns" have stepped up as a team to take the war in their area to a different level, and it has paid off. By actively taking the fight to anti-Iraqi forces in the Taji region, 1st Battalion has broken up four Improvised Explosive Device-making cells and destroyed the nucleus of two different insurgent "gangs" putting most of their members behind bars.

"With us proactively going after these caches, insurgents can't defend them, so they just have to watch us dig them out," explained Torres. "For 48 days, we've captured over 40 percent of what the brigade has done (since their arrival in January). And that's in 48 days."

With six different military occupational specialties, or MOS's, making up 1st Battalion's headquarters battery, training with the right Soldiers has made all the difference in effectively taking on the light infantry role.

"5th Special Forces group trained with us for four months solid at Fort Campbell," Torres explained, "we fired more ammunition between the July timeframe until September when we deployed than the average artillery Soldier has fired in his lifetime, 20 years in the Army."

"When we first found out we were going to be doing light infantry, we didn't know what to expect," said Sgt. Eden Puente, HHB, 1-320th FAR. "Then we got here and got Lieutenant Burton. He's very knowledgeable in infantry tactics, so him being

here plus the training back at Fort Campbell has been good. I think everybody's pretty happy about what we've been doing here so far."

Proud of their accomplishments throughout the Taji region, 1st Battalion is getting focused for yet another major change in their mission... a move to Camp Victory. No matter what the upcoming mission holds for Torres and his "Top Guns", one thing is certain...they are ready. Ready for the future but never forgetting their accomplished past and the Soldiers that represented them in Taji.

Torres also credits support from back home for helping the Soldiers be a success.

"I would like to thank everyone in rear detachment and our Family Readiness Group for all their hard work and support of us while we are trying to accomplish our mission," Torres said. "I would also like to thank the towns of Villa Hills, Lakeside Park and Taylor Mill, Ky. for their kindness and support of our Soldiers."

"I am extremely proud of them," exclaimed Torres. "They have gone above and beyond any of the expectations I would have had on them at this phase of the battle. In my mind, they upheld the name of the 101st. Period. So I'm proud of them."



Getting Answers: Sgt. Justin Wiggins (left), Capt. Kendrick Fanniel (middle) and Spc. James West (right), all with HHB 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, question two local nationals after searching and clearing two buildings outside of Taji on Dec. 18. (Photo by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell)



Life has a certain flavor for those who have fought and risked all that the sheltered and protected can never experience.

- John Stuart Mill