

The Heart Beat

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division

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FACING THE ENEMY
ALPHA 2-502 CRACKS DOWN
ON INSURGENTS IN RADWANIYAH

Free Mail

To:

From:

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Facing The Enemy: Alpha 2-502 Cracks Down on Insurgents in Radwaniyah | 3 |
| Motor Pool keeps STRIKE Brigade Rolling | 4 |
| First Strike: Taming the Wild West in Southern Baghdad | 5 |
| Alpha Battery, 1-320th Change of Command | 6 |
| Brigade Logo Design Contest Winners | 7 |
| Faces of the Heart | 8-9 |
| Roger That | 10 |
| Facing the Enemy, 2-101 Motor Pool continued | 11 |
| | |

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STRIKE 6



To all **BLACK HEART**
Soldiers,

What we do is make peace, what we bring to
this fight is justice.

The insurgents [in Iraq] are not freedom fighters or anti-globalization guerillas– they are fascists. They represent something evil unleashed in this world. If we allow them to regain power in Iraq, they will drag this nation and whatever countries they control into the darkness of killing fields, mass graves, public executions, and other forms of spirit -breaking tyranny the likes of which Americans have little conception... we fight a form of modern slavery.

In The Red Zone

Therefore blessed are the peacemakers, the Black Heart Soldiers,
for each is bringing peace.

We continue our fight against injustice, oppression and cruel exploitation. And if we only open our eyes and look around us, we will realize that even in the midst of this war, there are people who have largely been strangers to each and are now drawn together as allies in a common struggle against terrorism. Our efforts and our sacrifices are aimed at creating a more just order in this world.

Daily Devotional Messages for Those in Service of Others

We are indeed bringing peace to South Baghdad and it is largely noticed by the good citizens. Through our efforts, many people now have water, schools are being repaired, and an enemy is disrupted. We must continue to bring justice to the evildoers and reach out to those strangers, who are not like us, but who are drawn together to work for peace and freedom because of us.

I remain in awe of each of you– your courage, discipline and strength are inspiring.

God Bless each of you.

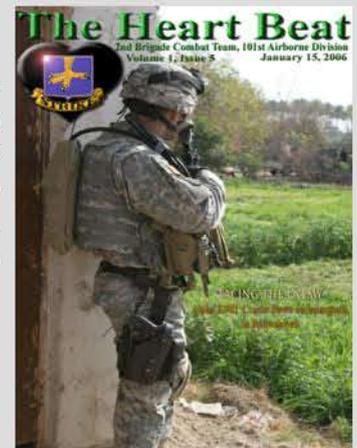
STRIKE!

Col. Todd J. Ebel

Commanding

Cover Art:

A Soldier from Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment looks out signs of insurgent activity in the town of Radwaniyah. (Photo by Spc. George Welcome, 2BCT Public Affairs)



FACING THE ENEMY:

ALPHA 2-502 CRACKS DOWN ON INSURGENTS IN RADWANIYAH

Story and Photos by
Spc. George Welcome

RADWANIYAH, Iraq— To someone just passing by, the Radwaniyah area wouldn't appear to be more than a sleepy farming community.

The thick grass and palm tree groves indicate fertile land. The canals and irrigation systems have no doubt helped in keeping the land so green. Water fowl swoop down from the sky to go for a swim in the canal, only to take off again shortly after. The houses in the village all seem peaceful with the children playing rather quietly on their lawns.

Peaceful façade aside, there is trouble afoot in Radwaniyah. Insurgents in the area have disrupted the town's tranquility, and until the arrival of Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, they had gone unchecked.

There's a lot going on down in the swamp. At any moment you can find Soldiers gearing up for an upcoming mission, while others who have just come off the trail are preparing for some well earned rest. Outside fighting positions are being dug, and sandbags filled in an effort to fortify the position. On the rooftop, an Alpha sniper peers into the distance, waiting to eliminate any long range threat.

There is always something going on down in the swamp. Of course, it isn't a real swamp, but there are alligators there.

"Our mascot is the gator so it seemed appropriate to call our patrol base "The Swamp" because that's where gators hang out," said Capt. Howard Donaldson, commander of Alpha Company, 2-502.

The Soldiers of Alpha Company are embarking on a difficult mission. They are tasked with ridding the Radwaniyah area of insurgent forces. This is no small feat, as the area had not been actively patrolled before their arrival.

"It's very active down here," Donaldson said. "Almost everyday we have some form of contact with the enemy, whether it is direct fire, observation, IEDs and sometimes even sniper fire."

Despite being inherently dangerous, Donaldson believes that the best way to defeat the insurgents is by conducting foot patrols.



Spc. Curtis Nelson, Alpha Company, 2-502, pulls security as fellow Soldiers search an abandoned school.

"I think the most successful thing we do against this enemy is being dismantled," explained Donaldson. "By getting out there and getting into the mix, we get into the enemy's decision making process, as opposed to just staying in vehicles and patrolling like that."

Contact with enemy forces is inevitable, considering the number of patrols that Alpha Company runs. However, the patrols are having great effect as their presence has caused enemy activity to taper.

"We patrol on a 24 hour basis," Donaldson said. "Since we've been here in the last three or four months, we've seen a decrease in enemy activity. We've disrupted the enemy and caused them to re-align their forces."

The Soldiers can tell that their presence has already had an impact on the area.

"Our platoons come out here for seven or eight days," said Spc. Curtis Nelson, Alpha Company, 2-502. "Enemy activity started out really heavy, we were always getting attacked, but it's calmed down since we've been out here more often."

Though the "Strike Force" Soldiers are seeing a decrease in physical attacks, the enemy is still out there, and is employing new tactics that are not aimed at Soldiers, but the townspeople themselves.

Arabic graffiti on a wall outside of the abandoned Rahzi Middle School threatened the people of Radwaniyah with beheading if they cooperated with coalition forces. Inside the school more anti-coalition graffiti proclaimed, "Long live the Mujahadeen."

As the Soldiers cleared each of the school's rooms, a trip to the roof would reveal a mortar round which impacted the school's roof, but did not detonate. An iron pole stuck into an old car rim stood in the corner of the roof about ten feet away from the impact site. As it was perfectly aligned with a telephone pole across the street, it was agreed that the insurgents had been using it as an aiming stake, a way to measure the direction and distance they should fire their mortars.

According to Donaldson, the Soldiers have been getting mixed reactions from the local population. Even though the town is being threatened by insurgent forces, not everyone

Story continued on Pg. 11 See ENEMY



Story and Photos by
Spc. George Welcome

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq—Mobility, as defined by Webster's Dictionary is, "the capability of moving or being moved." The "STRIKE" Brigade's ability to be mobile is imperative not only to accomplishing the mission of destroying the enemy and establishing peace, but in saving the lives of innocent civilians and Soldiers. In a war where every place is a danger zone, having reliable transportation is critical.

Soldiers of the 2nd of the 101st Brigade Troops Battalion motor pool have been working around the clock to ensure that the brigade's vehicles are fully capable of safely carrying troops all across the sector. This being no small task, the BTB and HHC Brigade motor pools were combined in order to service the vehicles.

"We have a total of 36 Soldiers," said Staff Sgt. Derick Roberts, of Amory, Mississippi, 2-101 BTB motor sergeant. "Some are out with MITT. The engineer equipment mechanics support the engineer teams, because every time the dozers, the Bobcats or any IED finding equipment goes down, they have to be there to fix it."

Upon arrival to Camp Striker, the Soldiers realized that they would have their hands full getting the vehicles in top condition.

"When we got here the service team had to get the vehicles up to standard so that the Soldiers could go out on their missions," explained Roberts.



Private 1st Class Jeremy Anderson tightens a speedometer cable on an M1114. Anderson, who is a fueler by trade, also helps with vehicle repair.

The Soldiers who work in the motor pool know first hand the amount of work that has gone into getting the vehicles ready.

The combining of the motor pools helped with the workload because these vehicles were in bad shape, said Private 1st Class Freddie Galloway, of Lansing, Michigan.

"There is an abundance of vehicles here and they're being taken care of," said Galloway. "When the operators bring in their vehicles, we check them out and then we fix whatever needs to be fixed."

The work involved in repairing the vehicles is not only challenging, but time consuming.

"Our workload has picked up tremendously," said Private 1st Class Jeremy Anderson, who by military occupational specialty is a 92F, or petroleum supply specialist, but pulls double-duty by working as a mechanic. "The first thing we do in the morning is check out the dump trucks and make sure they are ready and mission capable, and then later in the morning there is a rush because people are coming in and trying to get their trucks dispatched. It's a lot of hard work, but it's getting done."

A common issue that was raised by more than one mechanic was the care or lack thereof, the vehicles were being given by their operators. They stressed how important it is to conduct thorough preventive checks, maintenance and services or PMCS to the vehicles.

Operators PMCS your vehicles, because you will be the first ones to notice any problems with them, Roberts said.

This thought was echoed by Galloway who also had some words of wisdom for vehicle operators.

"People aren't conducting PMCS as well as they should," Galloway lamented. "If you care for your vehicle, your vehicle will care for you."

Story continued on Pg. 11 See ROLLING

FIRST STRIKE: TAMING THE WILD WEST IN SOUTHERN BAGHDAD

"MORE THAN ANY OTHER UNIT BEFORE THEM, FIRST STRIKE SOLDIERS EFFECTIVELY BALANCE LETHAL AND NON-LETHAL OPERATIONS IN THE CITIES OF SOUTHERN BAGHDAD.

THEIR EFFORTS HAVE HAD AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON DISRUPTING THE TERRORISTS' EFFORT IN OUR ZONE.

THEY ARE INSPIRING PEACE."

COL. TODD J. EBEL



ROCK HARD BATTERY UNDERGOES CHANGE OF COMMAND

On Friday, January, 13, a Change of Command ceremony took place at the Al-Faw Palace on Camp Victory.

The ceremony marked the official transfer of command from Capt. Robert Jenkins, Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, to Capt. Jeffery Munn.



Jenkins, who not



only served as the Alpha Battery commander, was the commander of Charlie Battery as well. He will be returning to Fort Campbell to become the 1-320 Rear Detachment commander.



Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Rafael Torres praised Jenkins' leadership saying, "Capt. Jenkins has provided his leadership and has patiently and diligently lead the unit through one success after another."

In his outgoing address, Jenkins thanked all the members of the Rock Hard battery for their dedi-

cation and perseverance." "No one could have asked for more than the amazing effort and perseverance you demonstrated everyday," said Jenkins.

During his incoming address, Munn told the Soldiers how he is



looking forward to being their new commander. "I am honored to be in this unit, I am truly honored and deeply humbled to have the privilege to serve among you, the Rock Hard."

After all the speeches had been

made, Jenkins gave his first command, by turning the battery over to the 1st Sgt. as is custom in change of command ceremonies.



STRIKE Brigade Logo Design Contest Winners!!!



By Pvt. Edwin Barrueto



By 1Lt. Nicholas Countouriotis

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq-- The winners of the STRIKE logo drawing contest were awarded in a ceremony held in the Strike Brigade Conference Room on the evening of January 13.

In early December, flyers were posted around Camp Striker announcing that the Brigade was looking for a design that represented the Brigade's lethality in combat. The design was to include an eagle's head and talons super-imposed onto a helicopter. The cutoff date for the competition was December 24.

The entries that were submitted were so well drawn that four prizes were awarded instead of just one.

Before the prizes were awarded, the Brigade commander had a few words of thanks to the contestants.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support and your time," said Col. Todd Ebel to the contest participants. "Each of you has a unique talent and I would ask that you continue to work on that talent, and thanks for a job well done."

Staff Sgt. Edwin Solano of HHT, 1-75th Cavalry and Private 1st Class Jeremy Halstead, of Bravo Troop, 1-75th Cavalry were awarded \$50 AAFES Gift Cards for their entries. The top prizes went to Pvt. Edwin Barrueto of 2-101 BTB and 1st Lt. Nicholas Countouriotis of HHT, 1-75th Cavalry. They were each presented with a \$200 AAFES Gift Card, and both will get a chance to paint their designs so that all future units will know that Strike was here, and helped make Iraq a better place.



FACES OF

**STAFF SGT. DERICK ROBERTS, 2-101
BTB MOTOR SERGEANT, PUTS THE
FINISHING TOUCHES ON THE ENGINE
REPAIR OF AN M1114 AT THE BTB
MOTORPOOL.**



**2BCT COMMANDER COL. TODD EBEL
SHAKES THE HAND OF 3ID COMMANDER
MAJ. GEN. WILLIAM WEBSTER AFTER
PRESENTING HIM WITH A BRIGADE
PLAQUE AT A CEREMONY HELD AT THE
STRIKER DFAC ON JANUARY 5.**



**1-75TH CAVALRY COMMAND SGT.
MAJ. SCOTT SCHRODER ADDRESSES
TROOPS DURING AN EVENING
AWARDS CEREMONY HELD ON
JANUARY 4.**



THE HEART



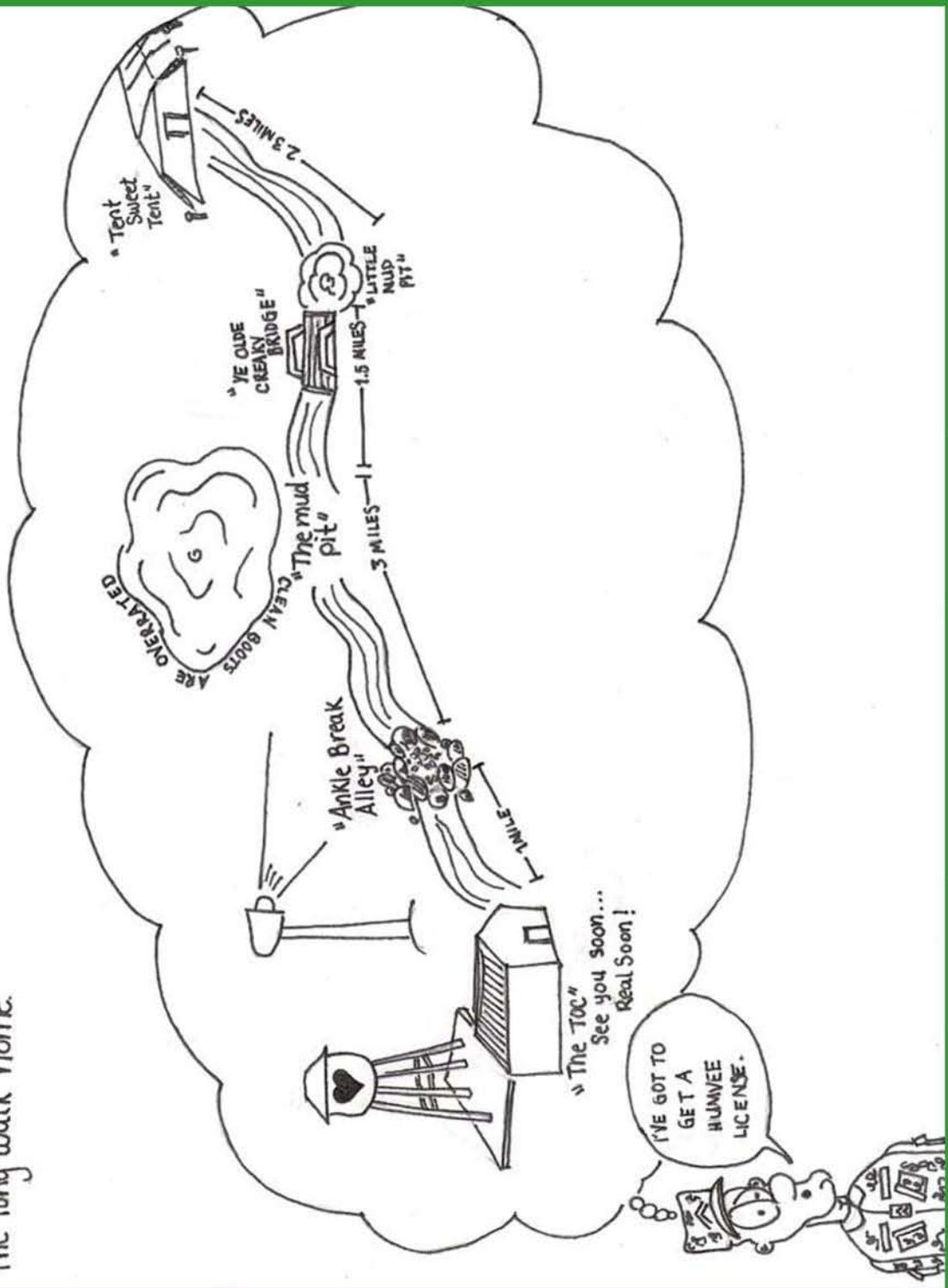
SGT. FRANCISCO SILVA PREPARES FOR HIS SPEECH DURING HIS RE-ENLISTMENT CEREMONY ON JANUARY 10.

1ST LT. NATHAN SMITH, BRAVO 2-502 STANDS FIRM UNDER THE BLAST OF AIR CREATED BY THE ROTORS OF TWO UH-60 BLACKHAWKS AS THEY TAKE OFF ON A RECENT MISSION. (PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. KEVIN MOSES)



ALPHA COMPANY, 526TH BSB FUEL AND WATER PLATOON TAKE A MOMENT FROM THEIR HARD WORK TO POSE IN FRONT OF THE COLORS

CPL. Hecksworth contemplates
the long walk home.



ROAD HOME

ENEMY (Continued from Pg. 3)

there is willing to help the people who are trying to eliminate them.



Capt. Howard Donaldson, Alpha, 2-502 commander, disposes of a make-shift aiming stake used by insurgents. (Photo by Spc. George Welcome)

"Sometimes we have locals who sympathize with the enemy forces," Donaldson explained. "But there are others who want change, and a new Iraq, one that's liberated and has freedoms and privileges."

When their time here is up, the Soldiers of Alpha Company hope that their efforts in bringing peace and freedom to the region last.

"We've learned the hard way," Donaldson said. "We learned through some tough losses, but we are better for it now," he said. "We would just like to give people more opportunities and hope for the

future. I think that they are starting to see that through the elections and will continue to see that as long as we are in the area, because that's our goal and that's what we are going to do."



Gator Swamp patrol base, the home of the Alpha Company Gators. Alpha Company runs 24 hour operations out of the swamp. Having a base in Radwanayah allows them the flexibility they need to fight the insurgents.

ROLLING (Continued from Pg. 3)

Also important to making sure that vehicles are fit to roll are the logisticians, who order the parts so that vehicles can be repaired.

"Our day begins by pulling the computers online every morning and it pulls the status back from the main stars transmission point over at 526th," said Sgt. Melissa Browning, of Bienna, Illinois. Then we start our daily routine and dispatching hours start, if we have parts in we make sure they get to where they need to go and have the mechanics install the parts and dispatch the trucks."

Getting needed parts is critical, as mission accomplishment relies heavily on having vehicles that are able to withstand the rigors of combat.

"The difficulty in getting parts is that everyone has the



Private 1st Class Freddie Galloway checks a belt to make sure it is properly installed. Galloway and the other mechanics have adjusted to the increased workload they now have.

same equipment," said Browning. "Everyone has the heavy armor vehicles, so we're depleting the supply system.

When supplies are limited, the logisticians have a way of determining what vehicles get the needed parts first. "We try to determine if a vehicle is needed for combat operations, or if it is just a FOB vehicle," Browning said. "If it is needed for combat missions, we'll get it up and running right away."

The role of the motor pool is vital to the brigade being able to accomplish its task in Iraq. While a driver may not think about it when they flip the ignition switch in their M-1114s or their Let's, a lot of care and pride is taken by the men and women of the motor pool who make sure parts are readily available, and make sure those parts are properly installed and the vehicles are ready for battle.

"I have Soldiers who are doing amazing things," Roberts proudly stated. "If a vehicle can be fixed, they'll find a way to fix it. I take my hat off to them. I wouldn't trade any of them for the world."



Sgt. Melissa Browning stacks parts in the motor pool's supply room.



You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you must really stop to look fear in the face...

You must do the thing you think you cannot do.



- Eleanor Roosevelt

... We can do and therefore we must do. What we do is bring peace.

- Strike 6