



Rakkasan Report

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Bulldogs Uncover Massive Cache

Spc. Matt Wrzesinski
3rd BCT Public Affairs

TIKRIT, Iraq (23 December 2005) -- Rakkasans from Company B, 1st Battalion 187th Infantry Regiment, began uncovering a weapons and munitions cache on 20 Dec. near Bayji, Iraq.

Additional searches led them to 11 more cache sites over a two kilometer area. Three days and three controlled detonations later they were finished excavating and disposing of the second largest cache found in the 101st Airborne Division's area of operation thus far in the deployment.

The cache held an array of explosives, weapons and ammunition. two hundred and eighty three 155mm artillery

rounds, 27 anti-tank mines, and 1975 lbs. of bulk high explosive material were uncovered between 20 and 23 Dec. All of these things are commonly used by insurgents to build improvised explosive devices.

Along with the explosives, 1600 rockets ranging in size from 57mm to 125mm and 80 Soviet rifles were found.

It was unclear if the cache was in use by AIF prior to its excavation. Fresh tire tracks and the lack of wear on some of the weapons indicated that the deposits were new. In other sites the weapons were corroded and had log books with entries ending in 1984, dating them back to before the first Gulf War.

One thing was - *See CACHE Page 5*

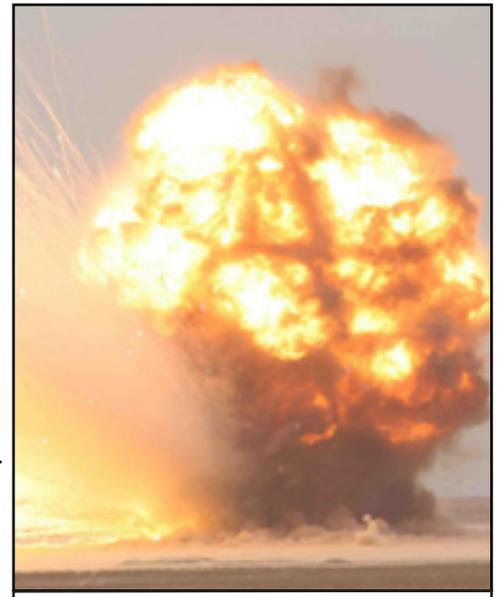


Photo By Spc Matt Wrzesinski

Munitions found by Company B, 1-187, are detonated. The blast consisted of nearly 10,000 lbs. of explosives.

Keeping the Insurgents Out of Saniyah, Saliah



Photo By Spc Matt Wrzesinski

Soldiers from the 505th Engineer Battalion construct a 8 ft. berm around the cities of Saliyah and Saniyah.

By Spc. Matt Wrzesinski
3 BCT Public Affairs

BAYJI, Iraq (11 January 2006) -- Following the recent spike in IED attacks, the Iraqi leaders and the Rakkasans took action.

Within a week, a series of IED and vehicle borne IED attacks killed and injured more than twenty and damaged Iraqi infrastructure.

The effects of attacks transcend the victims. The day to day life of the local populace is impacted by heightened security and living with the constant possibility of attacks.

"People come from outside the town, shoot mortars and leave," said Maj. Shawn Daniel, Operations Officer, 1st Squadron 33 Cavalry Regiment. "We want to let the citizens of Bayji live peaceful lives with as
- *See BERM Page 3*

Editors Notes

The 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment is currently attached to the 3rd BCT Public Affairs Office to help us cover all units in the Rakkasan area of operations.

The journalists from the organizations listed below will be covering the Rakkasans in January and February. Look for their stories on television and your local news stands.



Steve Harrigan



Tom Ricks



Tom Lasseter



Joe Giordono

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Rakkasans Assume Command in Tikrit

PFC Cassandra Groce

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

TIKRIT, Iraq (January 5, 2005) -- The Rakkasans of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, assumed control of operations in the Salah Ad Din Province from the 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, in a ceremony at Forwarding Operating Base Speicher on Thursday.

Various Iraqi officials attended the ceremony including Lt. Gen Abdel Aziz, Iraqi Army 4th division commander, and Humad Mumood Shugti, governor of Salah Ad Din.

The Raiders provided security and guidance through the constitution, referendums and the elections in the province. They have also trained and equipped four Iraqi Security Forces battalions.

"Since their arrival in January [2005], the accomplishments of this brigade [Raiders] have been remarkable," said Maj. Gen Thomas Turner, commander of 101st Airborne Division.

Col. Michael Steele, the Rakkasan commander, spoke of freedom to the Iraqi officials.

"Rakkasans are professional combat soldiers, and we're ready to work with Iraqi counterparts for a free Iraq," said Steele. "But we can't give you your freedom. You have to earn it."

"It's time to go to work," said Steele in conclusion.



Rak 6 Sends

RAKKASANS! We've marked the beginning of the New Year with the assumption of the entire AO Rakkasan battlespace – from Bayji to Samarra. Our team has grown with the Iron Rakkasans and Red Knight Rakkasans returning to the Task Force, and the Hunters from 2-9 Cavalry are already making a tremendous impact.

I want every member of the Rakkasan family to know how much I appreciate the unbelievable show of support you gave to the troops over the holidays. It's tough being away from friends and family during that season, but your generosity made it a little easier for every Rakkasan. Thank you all.

As I travel to the battalions and go out on patrols with the troopers, I am continually impressed by the dedication, professionalism, and fighting spirit of our Soldiers. Leaders are ensuring every detail is cared for, buddy teams are looking out for one another – it's a team in every sense of the word.

This fight will not get easier right away; our enemy is determined to undermine a free Iraq and undo all the progress that's been made. I need every trooper, regardless of rank or position, to stay plugged in. Be ready every time you round a corner – expect it.

Finally, I'd ask that every Rakkasan – past and present, spouses and families – continue to keep these great troopers in your prayers. This Regiment is unlike any other, and that legacy starts with taking care of one another. **RAKKASANS!**

Iraqi Officials Denounce Insurgency



Photo By Spc Matt Wrzesinski

Key members of the Bayji community meet with Lt. Col. Randy George, commander of 1-187, to talk about a future security plan.

By Spc. Matt Wrzesinski
3 BCT Public Affairs

Leader Rakkasans from 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment met with key members of the Bayji community

Saturday to discuss the current state of the city and what steps need to be made to rid the area of insurgents.

Lt. Col. Randy George, commander of the Leader Rakkasans, made it clear to the gathering of Sheiks, Iraqi Army officials, and Iraqi Police that this problem would not go away without a combined effort.

“I must have your help to make Bayji safer,” said George.

The local leaders voiced their opinions on the current state of their city and George’s suggestions for creating a solution to this problem.

Through a translator Col. Sufyan Mustfa Assad, Bayji Chief of Police, said, “The insurgent safe houses need to be found. If those are taken away, then the insurgents won’t have a place to hide in the city.”

George ended the meeting by telling the citizens they will meet again soon to further discuss plans to make Bayji safer. Although coalition forces are willing to help, the fate of Bayji is ultimately in their hands.

“This is your country, your city,” said George. “We’re going to bring peace to Bayji, you deserve it.”

BERM (Page 1)

little coalition presence as possible.”

The local government devised a plan to restrict the terrorist’s freedom of movement and separate them from civilians.

At the request of Iraqi government officials, Rakkasans of 1st Battalion 187th Infantry Regiment and 1st Squadron 33rd Cavalry Regiment have constructed a wall around two small cities just outside Bayji, Saliyah and Saniyah, and the Iraqi Army has in placed more control points around Bayji.

“We want to restrict access routes to Bayji,” said Capt. Michael Starz, Assistant Plans Officer, 1st Battalion 187th Infantry Regiment, “and keep the insurgents outside of the town.”

The walls around the cities are 8 to 10 tall mounds of dirt. It is a simple plan with potential for huge results.

Similar projects have been successful

in the past. Samarra and Mosul were once insurgent strongholds, but experienced a significant drop in violence after berms were built.

The Rakkasans and the people of the northern Salah Ad Din Province hope to have similar results.

1-33 Cav. was responsible for overseeing construction of the wall around Saniyah and Saliyah. Company C, 1-187 (attached to 1-33) pulled security on the building sites while Soldiers from the 505th Engineer Battalion constructed the wall.

Access to the cities will be controlled by check points strategically placed throughout the walls. Watch towers will be constructed to limit the dead space between checkpoints. Coalition forces are working with Iraqi Police to man the checkpoints. The goal is for Iraqi forces to be in total control of the checkpoints and

ultimately their cities.

“The Iraqi Police have a lot of room to grow,” said Daniel, “as they progress our presence will become less prominent.”



INSURGENTS BROUGHT TO JUSTICE

By Staff Sgt. Jesse C Riggins
3 BCT Public Affairs

BAYJI, Iraq (23 December 2005) - Six suspected terrorists were detained and a cache of one hundred mortar rounds were found during an air assault mission conducted by 1st Battalion 187th Infantry Regiment Friday in Muslakhah, Iraq.

Muslakhah is located near an oil pipeline that is

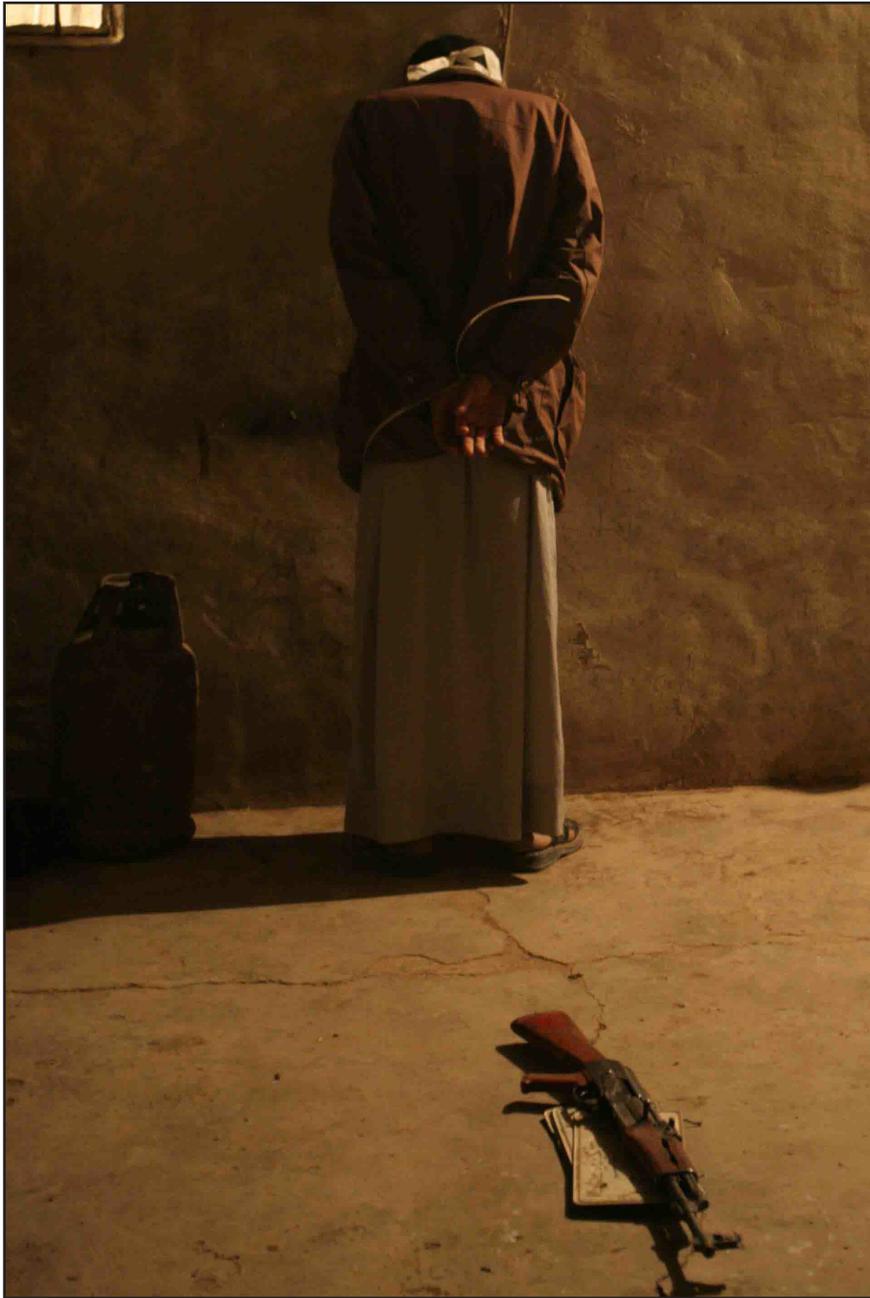


Photo By Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggins

One of six suspected terrorists detained by Company C 1-187 on 23 Dec. stands behind the weapon and license plates found during a search of his home.

under construction which will bring much needed revenue to the area when complete. Attacks on the workers have disrupted its construction, but coalition and Iraqi forces are working to reduce attacks and safeguard the pipeline.

Elements from Company C, 1-187 landed in Muslakhah aboard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters 23 December and began searching the village for individuals listed as being involved with insurgent attacks in the area. Within one hour of touching down they identified and detained two individuals on the list of suspects.

“Every day we win small victories,” said Cpt. Christopher Judge, 35, C Co. Commander, from Wilford NH, “but when we can get someone on our list, it is a huge boost.”

On this particular day they apprehended six individuals.

C Co. continued the search as Company D 1-187 began an amphibious assault on an island in the Tigris River adjacent to Muslakhah. While patrolling the banks of the island they discovered a cache of approximately 100 mortar rounds.

AH-64 Apache helicopters provided close air support for the ground forces and fired ten pound high explosive rockets into the mountain passes leaving the area, cutting off escape routes.

“We are trying to make it difficult for them (Anti-Iraqi Forces) to operate,” said Judge.

The Rakkasans and the Iraqi Security forces are doing just that. Since 20 December two major caches have been discovered and multiple joint operations have led to the apprehension of known terrorists in the Salah Ad Din Province.



Photo By Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggins

An AH-64 Apache helicopter fires a ten pound high explosive rocket at a mountain passage to cut off escape routes in Muslakhah, Iraq 23 Dec.

Iraqi Army and Rakkasans Uncover Cache

By Spc. William Jones
133rd Mobile Affairs Detachment

SAMARRA, Iraq (January 6 2006) – Soldiers in the Iraqi Army continue to play a greater role in seizing power once held by Anti Iraqi Forces in an area northeast of Baghdad.

On January 4th the 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division and the Rakkasans' Military Transition Team (MiTT) from 3rd Special Troops Battalion, unearthed a weapons and munitions cache during a joint search of a farm in the city of Hawish, Iraq.

The Soldiers were dispatched to the location based on intelligence gathered from the area. Once on the scene, two individuals were detained and made to unearth the cache.

The search uncovered several artillery rounds, land mines and rocket-propelled grenades. U.S. Army explosive experts were called to the scene to supervise the destruction of the cache.

The IA Soldiers began their training early last year and have been working with Rakkasans since their arrival last fall. The Iraqi Soldiers' duties are primarily manning security checkpoints near major cities and providing quick reaction forces as needed. The goal of the MiTT team is

to aid the Iraqis as they begin to assume more security responsibilities.

First Lt. Matthew Upperman, a member of the MiTT team, said, "the Iraqi Soldiers continue to show their professionalism and have come a long way in a relatively short period of time."



Photo contributed by MiTT Team
Members of the Rakkasans' Military Transition Team and the Iraqi Army stand beside a weapons cache unearthed in a farmer's field near Samarra on 3 Jan.

CACHE (Page 1)



Photo By Spc. Matt Wrzesinski
Company B, 1-187 counts out over two hundred artillery rounds and numerous Soviet made assault rifles found in a cache near Bayji.

site; they had a multitude of weapons and explosives at their disposal to use against the Iraqi people and coalition forces.

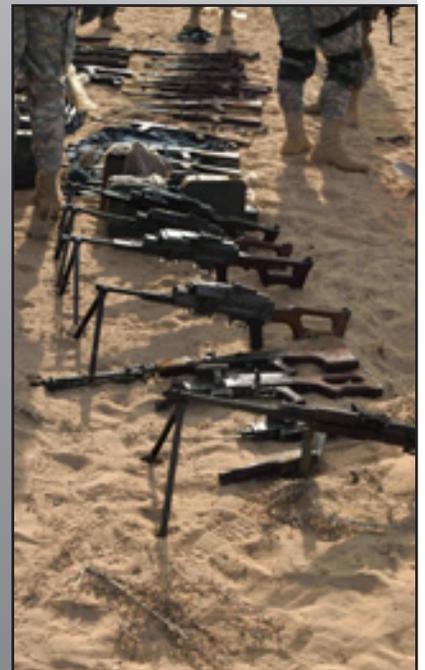
"This place was basically an ammo supply point for the enemy," said Cpt. Matt Bartlett, B Co. Commander. "Any

attack they wanted to do, whether an IED or small-arms, they could get what they needed here."

Whether the cache was active or not, its contents will never be used to do harm to anyone thanks to the three labor-intensive days the Rakkasans spent excavating the site. In most cases the sites were dug up with shovels then loaded and consolidated by hand.

"You can't take work ethic into account in your (operation) order," said Bartlett, "The Soldiers are the reason we found more than we expected."

The cache was a huge find but the mission in Bayji goes on. The Rakkasans will continue operations in the area to disrupt terrorist networks and help the local governance establish a



K-9 SOLDIERS JOIN THE FIGHT



Photo By Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggins

Houdy wards off unwelcome strangers on a dismounted patrol with Company A, 1-187, down Market Street in Baiji, Iraq 24 Dec.

By Spc Matt Wrzesinski

3 BCT Public Affairs

BAYJI, Iraq (1 January 2006) - Very few things that threaten Soldiers in Iraq are detectable with the naked eye. The threats that go undetected can lead to casualties on the battlefield. A different type of Soldier is used to eliminate these threats.

There are approximately twenty military working dogs in Iraq being used by the Army and Marine Corps to find explosive materials.

Rakkasans from 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment have begun using these military working dogs on their patrols in Baiji, Iraq.

The battalion has two dog teams attached to it. Each is comprised of a dog handler and a military working dog. This is both teams' first tour in Iraq. However, they have plenty of experience with this type of work in

the United States. Houdy and Mike, military working dogs, have eleven years experience in detecting explosive materials between them.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Jacob Kelecava, Wright Patterson Air Force Base, OH, and Houdy, an eight year old German Shepard, have been a team for two years. Houdy has been a military working dog for seven years and is on her eighth overseas deployment.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Benjamin Bomar, Scott Air Force Base, IL, and Mike, a five year old German Shepard who weighs in at eighty five pounds, have been working together for six months. Mike was one year old when he started his training as a military working dog and has been working for four years.

Houdy and Mike have a distinct advantage over any human when it comes to detecting explosives and personnel. On average a dog's sense of smell is seventy times greater than a human's.

"When you smell a bowl of chili, you can only smell the chili," said Kelecava, military working dog handler. "She (Houdy) can smell salt, cayenne pepper and beans."

The process of turning a regular dog into a military working dog starts with obedience and detection training.

The obedience training teaches them to listen to only their handler. This keeps the dog under control and focused on the mission.

According to Kelecava, the dog's respect for its handler is the nucleus to all the training that a military working dog receives.

"Obedience is the key," said Kelecava.

Detection training teaches the dogs what smells deserve a reaction. This is accomplished

using positive re-enforcement.

"When the dog smells what you want her to find, you give her praise," said Kelecava. "She learns that smell is a good thing and gives a response."

Explosives can be hidden in anything making it extremely difficult for Soldiers to find them. Since the dogs use their sense of smell to search, they don't need to see explosives to locate them.

"You can look at a block of high explosive and just think it is a rock, said Kelecava. "She smells it and knows that she is supposed to give a response."

The dogs can also be used to track down and capture personnel.

"Sometimes a suspect can run faster the Soldiers," said Kelcava. "I don't know too many people who can outrun a dog."

They give the Soldiers a sense of security and add to the mission by letting the Soldiers conduct their task knowing the area is clear of explosives.

"You could be searching a house and never know that the flower pot is full of explosives," said Kelecava. "Immediately my dog will know there is something in it."



Photo By Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggins

Air Force Sgt. Jacob Kelacava, 24, of Salem OH, and Houdy, a Military Working Dog, inspect a suspicious area pointed out by Sgt. 1st Class Tim Shuler, 3rd Platoon Sgt, 1-187, while searching a man's house in Baiji, Iraq 23 Dec.

Iron 6's Son Plays in Army All American Bowl

PFC Cassandra Groce
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

SAMARRA, Iraq (January 7, 2006) – For the men and women of the armed services it is always difficult to handle missing special events while they are deployed, especially when it comes to the accomplishments of their children.

Lt. Col. Nathaniel “Skip” Johnson II, the commander of the Iron Rakkasans of the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team in Iraq knows this too well. He has proudly watched, as often as possible throughout his military career, his two older sons grow into men, pursue college degrees and play football.

Now his youngest son, Micah, a 17-year-old senior at Ft. Campbell High School, was selected to play as a middle linebacker on the Army All-American Football East Team. Micah was one of only 78 high school football players chosen from across the country.

“I was jumping all around here [office in Iraq] when I found out he was selected,” said Johnson proudly.

The seniors are picked for their performance and accomplishments as team players. Micah was named Kentucky Mr. Football and was the only Department of Defense athlete picked for the Army All-American Football Team.

“It’s an opportunity to join two great entities and their values - the Army and the future leaders,” said Johnson. “Football is the mechanism that brings it together.”

Lt. Col. Johnson strongly believes that football enforces values like discipline, work ethics, sacrifice, dedication and leadership.

“I see these in my sons,” said Johnson. “The same values represented by our men and women in the Army, these students have to have.”

Lt. Col. Johnson was not sure if he would get to watch Micah’s football game due to his duties and technological restraints. However, he was on the front row in a conference room in Iraq watching his son’s game on television 30 Dec.

“It’s special watching them play,” said Johnson who has also watched his son’s Christian play for

the University of Kentucky on television. “They’ve stayed focused even though we moved a lot as a military family.”

Micah’s team, the East, won beating West 27 - 16 in the game.

Micah has been playing football for approximately ten years and grew up in a family who supported the Dallas Cowboys.

“Before he was old enough to play, he’d watch his brothers,” said Johnson. “I love it. I like the fact that all three play and are competitive.”

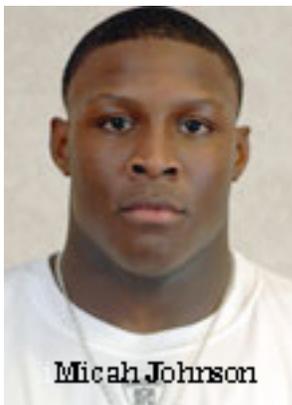
Micah plans to team up with his brother Christian to play for the University of Kentucky on a football scholarship next fall.

Lt. Col. Johnson’s oldest son, Nathaniel Johnson III, is transferring from Laney College in California to the University of Kentucky to be with his two younger brothers and finish his degree in Education. According to Johnson, he has not yet decided whether he will try out for the football program or not. Either way, he will definitely be pursuing his educational goals of completing his undergraduate program and going on to graduate school which makes his father very

proud.

Lt. Col. Johnson wishes he could cheer his sons’ games on in person, but insists that being in Iraq is part of life as a Soldier.

“Every Soldier that’s deployed is sacrificing something important right now,” said Johnson. “I’m proud of all of them [his sons] and all they’ve accomplished. Being away from family is tough, but I have an extended family - the Rakkasan family.”



Micah Johnson



Photo By Pfc. Cassandra Groce

Lt. Col. Nathaniel Johnson, commander of the Iron Rakkasans watches the Army All-American Bowl with his Soldiers 30 Dec. in Iraq.

Chaplain's Corner

“In the beginning God;

Here in the first chapter of Genesis we find some of the greatest words known to man. God creates, He takes time and makes each creature with care and love. And after all of creation is complete, the King of the universe makes man in His image. And then God finishes by saying “it is very good.” Remember as we are here in Iraq, we are the hand made creation of God Almighty, and by His own words, we are “very good” in His site.”

CH Jason McCash
 soli Deo gloria
 3-320th FABN

SENDING A STRONG MESSAGE TO TERRORISTS



Photo By Spc Matt Wrzesinski

Bayji, Iraq (5 January 2006) - In their continuing effort to deny insurgents any safe haven in the area, Rakkasans of Company A, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, conducted an air assault on Bayji Island Jan. 5.

Although no insurgents were found, there were signs on the island of recent insurgent activity. AK-47 amunition and explosive detonating material was found on the outskirts of the town

“We can go anywhere at anytime,” said Capt. Scott Goehring, 1st Battalion Civil Affairs (Civil Assault) Team Leader. “We will not let them get comfortable.”

RAKKASAN PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

The Rakkasan Report is an official publication of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). It is an electronic publication posted bimonthly and can be viewed at www.dvidshub.net under Military Publications. The contents are not necessarily the official views or endorsed by the US Government, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army or the 101st Airborne Division.

We welcome submissions and story ideas of any kind. Submissions should be made through Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggin at jesse.charles.riggin@us.army.mil

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TASK FORCE RAKKASAN

IN MEMORY OF

**GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS,
THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS
JOHN 15:13**



**SSG CHRISTOPHER VANDERHORN
C 1-187 INF
14 JUNE 1968 - 1 JAN 2006**



**SFC JASON BISHOP
HHC 1-33 CAV
12 SEP 1974 - 1 JAN 2006**



**SPC CLINTON UPCHURCH
HHC 3 STB
21 SEP 1974 - 7 JAN 2006**

TIL WE FORM AGAIN...