



IBC

Iron Brigade Chronicles

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Correction: In the Dec. 20 article titled, "A chaplain's faithful guardian," The Mill was improperly referred to as a dive bar, it is actually a Christian youth group.



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Cover photo

Soldiers from the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, stand in formation with their Iraqi counterparts during the Transition of Authority ceremony Jan. 11 at Forward Operating Base Warhorse.

Photo by Spc. Danielle Howard, 55th Combat Camera

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Striker 6 sends



Col. Brian D. Jones

Strikers,

I want to take a bit of your time to offer you some thoughts on the deployment thus far. With almost two months in theater and one month in the fight, we are doing extremely well. Everyone from the individual Soldier through the companies, battalions, MiTT teams and attached or supporting units are performing in a truly outstanding manner. I could not be more proud of your collective accomplishments at this point. However, this performance has not come without cost.

Recently we lost a fine young Soldier due to a tragic vehicle accident while on patrol, and had a Soldier seriously injured as the result of an IED. I know that each Soldier in the HBCT joins me in mourning Cpl. Dustin Kendall, and that all understand that every Purple Heart earned in action against the enemy comes at great cost. The reality of these events serves to keep us both resolved and focused on our mission.

Resolved and focused translates to disciplined actions by Soldiers and leaders on a daily basis. With a month of patrolling under our belts, we seem to be getting a bit too relaxed and somewhat complacent in the area of operations. We are seeing a few more negligent discharges, some minor vehicle accidents and increased reports of losses of sensitive items. These indicate a lack of attention to detail and could be indicative of a lowering of initial standards. I would ask all to remember that NCOs are the keepers of the standard, and only through their constant efforts will we remain focused on the task at hand. Loss of focus means loss of life, as this enemy is both clever and lethal. Conduct every mission as if it is your first. Do not cut corners on Pre-Combat Checks and Pre-Combat Inspections, and do not let your guard down. In short: Stay alert, stay alive!

A second area that requires constant attention is maintenance. The operations tempo here is high, and the wear and tear on our equipment is great. Before you know it, we'll have 100 m.p.h. tape on our weapons and be going off the FOB without key equipment such as night-vision goggles, radios or Warlocks working properly. And don't forget your armored vehicles. A broken track at 45 m.p.h. will flip an armored vehicle and kill a crew member just as effective as an IED. Let's not help the enemy cause casualties. Focus on the maintenance of your equipment. Perform preventive maintenance checks and services as though your life depends on it – because it does.

Finally, let's really work hard on our escalation of force procedures. I'm told that 20 Iraqis a month are killed accidentally in escalation of force incidents. We need kits that physically block a road well in front of our lead and trail vehicles. Sawhorses, cones, signs, spike mats and similar tools help prevent these unfortunate circumstances from arising. Let's make sure each of our patrols are properly equipped to help both our forces and the Iraqis avoid such unfortunate accidents.

You service thus far has been inspirational. You have been disciplined, aggressive, courageous and compassionate. We are taking the fight to the enemy though intel driven, precision operations. Everywhere I visit I witness the best characteristics of the American Soldier and the values of our Army. Your actions, and those of your coalition and Iraqi partners, will make a difference in the lives of millions of Iraqis.

Steadfast and Loyal,

STRIKER 6

P.S. You'll notice we have temporarily adopted the 4th Infantry Division motto of "Steadfast and Loyal," as "Expect No Mercy" really doesn't promote our effects objectives in this COIN fight. But don't throw away your coins, we'll revert to the original motto upon redeployment.

List's List



Command Sgt. Maj.
David H. List

1. Operational

Security: In case you haven't already figured it out, there are bad guys here that want to kill us. Don't give them the opportunity. Don't volunteer what they are trying hard to get. If you believe there aren't people going through our trash looking for information right under our noses, you are fooling yourself. Don't talk about operations in the dining facility. Guard what you say on the telephone and what you write in letters and e-mails. Shred or burn everything with writing on it, especially letters and packages with home addresses.

2. Sustainment: We are finally doing what we have trained long and hard for, but getting here is not the culmination point. It is only the beginning. Now is not the time to ease back and ride it out. Dust, water and mud take their toll on our equipment, and we rely on that equipment for our lives. Conduct preventive maintenance checks and services on everything by the book. Clean your weapons daily and empty the cartridges out of your magazines every few days for a cleaning and to release the tension on the spring. The last thing you want is a weapons jam when you are bearing down on a bad guy pointing a rocket propelled grenade at your patrol.

3. Safety: We owe it to our families and friends and our buddies on our left and right to take care of ourselves and each other. Don't expose vulnerabilities for the enemy to exploit. Wear the protective gear the Army gave you, and wear it right, including groin and neck protectors, eye protection, gloves, earplugs and knee and elbow pads. In a vehicle, check load plans, wear your seatbelt and engage the combat door locks, windows up, gunners down and drivers – two hands on the wheel. Drive down the middle of the road and move to the right for coalition forces convoys, after they pass move back to the center of the road.

4. Be Proud: We have already come a long way in a short time. It is unfortunate that we lost a brother along the way; he served freedoms cause with courage and distinction. He was unrelenting in combat, unwavering in loyalty and unmatched in decency. He has taken his rightful place among our country's great heroes and he will not have died in vain. His death will serve to remind us that we do dangerous business every day, but it is necessary business, important business that the whole world will remember us for.

God Bless the Soldiers and Families of the 3rd Brigade!

STRIKER 7



Photo by Staff Sgt. Sheryl Lawry



Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott



Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott

Remembering a hero ...

Cpl. Dustin Lee Kendall, Command Security Detachment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, was the first death in the Iron Brigade during the units' second deployment in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Kendall died in a vehicle accident Jan. 15. During the memorial, Soldiers, leaders and friends of Kendall spoke of the qualities he possessed as a Soldier. Though he was only a part of the Iron Brigade for a short time, he was remembered as a hard-working and loyal Soldier.

ABOVE: Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Riling, 4th ID command sergeant major, holds Kendall's identification tags during the memorial at Forward Operating Base Warhorse.

ABOVE RIGHT: Cpl. Dustin Lee Kendall's id tags hang from an M-16 tribute during the memorial at FOB Warhorse.

BELOW RIGHT: Cpl. Dustin Kendall's memorial included his photo and unit guidon.

Commentary by Chaplain (Capt.) Michael Reeves

1-68 Combined Arms Battalion Chaplain
 "You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the Lord will be with you." (II Chronicles 20:17 ESV)

In II Chronicles, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, prepares for battle against the Moabites and Ammonites. He calls an assembly in Jerusalem and reminds the people of all God has done. At the same assembly, God moves one of the men to challenge the people to persevere; to "stand firm" in their trust of God.

Unfortunately, the one thing it is easiest for us to forget when times get tough is the one thing we most need to remember. God will never fail us. The battles we face, we never need face alone. We don't need to be worried or overwhelmed. The battle is the Lord's! He is all powerful and cares for us more than we comprehend. He can be trusted! Certainty in Him enables us to "stand firm" in any and all situations.

Thomas Kinkade has a painting titled "Perseverance" in His "Life Values Collection." He says about the painting, "We see that the clouds are about to break. The seas will calm; the sailor's per-

severance will soon be rewarded by a return to God's safe haven." He goes on to say, "Perhaps this painting can assure each of us that if we can simply persevere, God's hand of love will soon disperse each storm we face."

Persevere in your walk with God. He will see you through any challenge. Stand firm in your faith in God, he will give you strength to deal with any obstacle. "Tomorrow go out against them." Firmly face the challenges and situations in your life. "And the Lord will be with you." Trust in God's ability and take comfort in His presence wherever you find yourself.

Random Thoughts



Warhorse construction team builds a home



Photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski

Members of the Vertical Construction Platoon, Bravo Company, 505th Engineers put the frame of a building up at Forward Operating Base Warhorse. The group is tasked with much of the woodwork construction on the FOB.

by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAQUBAH, Iraq – As the Iraqi army grows and more Iraqi units develop, so does the infrastructure requirements within the forward operating bases throughout Iraq.

The Vertical Construction Platoon, Bravo Company, 505th Engineers, of the North Carolina Army National Guard, is at Forward Operating Base Warhorse making it happen.

This group of “Tar Heel Guardsmen” based out of Gantoinn, N.C., has been in Iraq since October. They have been tasked to aid in the transition of forward operating bases from U.S. control to eventual Iraqi army control.

2nd Lt. Kevin Sigmon, the VCP commander, said “our primary mission when we got on the ground was to establish a FOB footprint here at Warhorse that would allow the nearby FOBs to collapse down to ‘enduring FOBs.’”

The platoon is composed of

carpenters, masons, plumbers and electricians.

“With those skill sets we can take it from the ground up,” said Sigmon, who is a Lincolnton, N.C., native.

As coalition forces handover FOBs, the platoon is building more accommodations on enduring FOBs to support the consolidation of forces. The unit recently finished constructing six buildings to be used for housing or office space.

To hone their skills stateside, the vertical platoon builds structures on drill weekends for non-profit organizations, including a community access center in Union Mills, N.C.

Staff Sgt. Robert Mote, a Grover, N.C., native and a Guardsman of 17 years, said, “It’s just like we are building back in the states but we miss our families here.”

From the ground up – literally – the Tar Heel Guardsmen are playing a crucial role in the handover mission here to the Iraqi Security Forces. Every nail driven brings the Iraqi people one step close to a free and stable Iraq.



Vertical Construction Platoon members lift a wall into place before it can form the outer buffer of the building.



Turner



Jones



Salazar

Diyala welcomes

by Sgt. Zach Mott
IBC editor

Diyala Province has a new military command overseeing the provincial reconstruction and building of the Iraqi security force.

The 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division from Fort Carson, Colo., officially assumed responsibility of the area of operations from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Benning, Ga., in a ceremony on Forward Operating Base Warhorse Jan. 11. The Iron Brigade's area of operations includes the former stomping grounds of the 3rd BCT, 3rd ID as well as areas that were controlled by the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division and an armored cavalry regiment.

"We fell in on some excellent programs and processes that are already in place throughout this province," said Lt. Col. James Rice, deputy brigade commander of the 3rd HBCT, 4th ID. "We've got the staff and the battalions prepared to take the great programs ... to the next level so we can set up the Iraqis for future success."

"We have just completed one of the toughest military operations that can be executed – and that is a relief-in-place in contact with the enemy."

Lt. Col. James Rice
Deputy Brigade Commander
3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division



6 Col. Steven Salazar, commander, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Maj. Gen. Thomas Turner, commander, 101st Airborne Division and Sgt. Zach Mott, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, render proper honors to the flag prior to the 3rd HBCT, 4th ID officially assuming control of Diyala Province.

Iron Brigade; Sledgehammer Brigade departs

The Iron Brigade is participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom as part of the larger Task Force Band of Brothers which is commanded by 101st Airborne Division commanding general, Maj. Gen. Thomas Turner. The unit's mission includes training the ISF, assisting in the rebuilding of the Diyala Province infrastructure as well as continuing to root out the anti-Iraqi forces that inhabit this region.

Provincial leaders, members of the Iraqi military as well as other coalition forces filled the FOB Warhorse hangar for the mid-day ceremony. Many were here to pay respect to the Soldiers who have helped Iraqi citizens conduct free elections as well as a constitutional referendum that is helping form the building blocks of a democracy.

"It is fitting to pause and recognize the tremendous accomplishments of the Sledgehammer Brigade," Turner said. "Col. Jesse Salazar and Command Sgt. Maj. (Jesse) Andrews and their Soldiers have added to the proud history of the Marne Division over the past 12 months once again in Iraq."

A transition of authority ceremony marks a bittersweet change. It is the end of one unit's participation in this endeavor while it sparks the beginning of another's.

"We have just completed one of the toughest military operations that can be executed – and that is a relief-in-place in contact with the enemy," Rice said. "The TOA ceremony means that we're prepared to take over the mission and they're prepared to go home."

Soldiers moved more than 18,000 tons of equipment from the sands of Kuwait through the dangerous roads of Iraq to their current positions at forward operating bases around Iraq.

"The colonel (Col. Brian D. Jones, commander, 3rd HBCT, 4th ID) and I are very proud of the Soldiers and what they have accomplished," Rice said. "We've done all of this without any significant or serious injury to one of our Soldiers."

Although the Sledgehammer Brigade has been the official head of operations in this region, Iron Brigade Soldiers have been at the tip of the spear in protecting Iraqi citizens

since the brigade arrived in December.

"We've already had Soldiers in contact with the enemy," Rice said. "So far, everything has been done with great safety for our Soldiers and that's a tremendous record to try to uphold. We're going to continue working hard to do that."

Assuming control of this region is another step in the long list of recent Iron Brigade accomplishments. Beginning in December 2004, when the brigade was transformed under Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker's plan of creating modular brigade combat teams, and continuing through field exercises at Fort Carson and the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif. The brigade also participated in a brigade-level command post exercise to integrate its systems with the 101st Airborne Division as well as the 4th Infantry Division.

"We've got a very adaptive force," Rice said. "That training agility that we've built into the program will make the Soldiers agile and able to respond to whatever the threat may be."



Photo by Spc. Danielle Howard, 55th Combat Camera

and Task Force Band of Brothers, and Col. Brian D. Jones, commander, 3rd Diyala Province from 3rd BCT, 3rd ID.



Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott

Col. Brian D. Jones, commander, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, receives the unit colors from Maj. Gen. Thomas Turner, commander, 101st Airborne Division and Task Force Band of Brothers, during the transition of authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq. The 3rd HBCT, 4th ID takes over for the outgoing 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

Medical officers, DCO visit Iraqi hospitals

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

IBC staff writer

Iraq finds itself in the unique position of having to prioritize its rebuilding efforts. It must decide which projects have top priority - is it national defense, oil resources, infrastructure or healthcare?

Lt. Col. James Rice, deputy brigade commander, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, went with a team of brigade healthcare professionals to assess the medical goals in Diyala Province.

“(The goal is) teaching the Iraqi’s how to prioritize their projects, keep in mind they have security issues, health issues and civic issues. Where and how all of these projects fit into the puzzle is going to be tough,” Rice said. “The biggest challenge for them is to learn how to apply their budget to the most important places to service the better of

the community.”

The first stops on the tour were to the Diyala Medical Supply Warehouse and Baqubah General Hospital to see how Iraqi’s were handling supply issues. Getting medicine into Iraq has been a top priority at the highest levels of Iraqi government. Medicine primarily comes from places like India, Jordan and Egypt. The medicine has to go to Baghdad before it can be distributed to outlying provinces like Diyala. Public hospitals, like Baqubah General Hospital, often wait a long period of time for crucial medicines like anesthesia to arrive.

“Anesthetics are a problem and a country-wide issue. Especially at the child and women’s health hospital where smaller doses are needed along with special applicators to administer them,” said Capt. Julie Benson, 3rd HBCT, medical operations officer. “They would be able to do more sur-

geries if they had more anesthesia and maybe as a result they would not have to send patients to (Forward Operating Base) Warhorse.”

Diyala Medical Supply Warehouse has to supply the public hospitals as well as the local Iraqi army as well. Sometimes when a wounded Iraqi policeman or soldier goes to Baqubah General Hospital they are turned away and sent to FOB Warhorse for medical treatment. One of 3rd HBCT’s goals is to set up the local hospitals so they are prepared to treat military and civilians on their own, Benson said.

The final leg of the tour was to a private hospital to compare it against the previous public hospital. While the public facilities have improved, with private hospitals you have more money and a better patient-to-staff ratio, said Capt. John Hughes, surgeon for the 3rd HBCT who was part of the touring group. They are able to

spend more on patient comforts, just like in the United States.

At Al-Hayat Private Hospital, the hospital directors explained that an appendectomy would cost \$75 U.S. dollars and a caesarian would cost \$125 U.S. dollars. Inexpensive to most Americans, but only a small portion of Diyala’s population would be able to afford such procedures, Hughes said.

With the troubles surrounding the reconstruction effort, which can seem insurmountable at times, Rice remains upbeat about the immediate future.

“At the public hospitals there is a lot of construction work going on inside and outside to clean up their healthcare facilities,” he said. “A whole new operating wing is expected to be completed within next month at Baqubah General. They (the Iraqi’s) are making good progress and that is a great first step.”



Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

Outside the Baqubah General Hospital in Diyala Province, Capt. John Hughes, surgeon, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, listens to an Iraqi explaining his medical needs.



Soldiers change CHUs for home-like feeling

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

IBC staff writer

As the Chinooks landed late into the night, Soldiers from the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team got their first impression of their new home: Forwarding Operating Base Warhorse. The FOB was pitch-black. The only light guiding the Soldiers' footsteps came from the moon. Escorted, Soldiers stumbled into a hangar for the first of many briefings on the policy and rules of the camp. There they also received keys to their new homes called CHUs or Containerized Housing Units and found out who their roommates were.

The CHUs or "hooch's," as Joe's affectionately refer to them, are shipping containers that have been fitted with a linoleum floors and air-conditioning units and can house up to three people. Outside each CHU, sandbags are placed against the sides and stretch all around the container to protect the unit from incoming mortars attacks. Some enterprising Soldiers have even taken Air Force metal palates and placed them on the roof to provide even more security.

Inside a typical CHU the furniture is a bed, a chair, a refrigerator and a wall locker. Unfortunately, all CHU's did not come furnished the same way. Many Soldiers were forced to scrounge the area to find furnishings for their CHU.

"When I arrived at the CHU there were only the two bunks available," said Staff Sgt. Brian Obara, who works in the 3rd HBCT brigade automations section.

Obara and his roommate had to scavenge for wood, a refrigerator and extension cords since none of their 110 volt outlets worked. The two plan to use the wood to create two separate sleeping spaces and a common area, to include a place for their IBAS and boots, which will aid in keeping the CHU clean.

Unlike Soldiers with the same circumstances as Obara, others were very lucky in the CHU that they were given. Upon opening her CHU, Pfc. Karna Rosequist, a 3rd HBCT medic, found a fully furnished home with three beds, refrigerator and a deck complete with patio furniture. When the previous brigade vacated the CHUs they were only allowed to take with them what they could carry. Leaving some CHUs, like Rosequist's, fully tricked out with all sorts of amenities, even Satellite TV.



Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

Making the most out of the scraps of wood they can find, Sergeants 1st Class Robin D. Watson and Tanya M. Valdez, secure communications, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, start building shelves to spruce up their newly acquired Containerized Housing Unit on Forward Operating Base Warhorse.

Regardless of whether or not Soldiers scored fully furnished CHUs, there was always room for improvements to their new home. Wood palates quickly became a prize possession. Soldiers have found ways to take the wood from these palates and construct furniture or partitions to provide a little bit of privacy from their respective roommates. "We are just trying to make it comfortable, maybe some shelves or a desk, so we can be comfortable," said Sgt. 1st Class Tanya M. Valdez, a member of the 3rd Special Troops Battalion secure communications team within the 3rd HBCT.

Fortunately for Valdez, she and her roommate get along so well their plan is to keep their CHU very airy and open

with no partitions.

Even the most hardened Soldiers can become their own Martha Stewart in designing their CHU. Whether it's a front patio deck, satellite TV or the simple arrangement of the sand bags surrounding the CHU, the possibilities are endless.

"I'm going to line the half Hesco's (a Hesco is an over sized bastion filled with sand bags) up into a L shape and line them with dirt and get seed from the (local merchants)," said Sgt. Keith Reiss Jr., the supply sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd HBCT. "I am going to do a little flower garden along the side of my CHU. I want a flowery smell so it gets rid of the whole Iraq, dust, desert smell."

Bombs away ...

Destroyer patrols clear IED-laced roads

by Sgt. Zach Mott
IBC editor

With eyes darting from one partitioned window to the next, Sgt. 1st Class Jason Andrews is on a mission. He and his crew are out in the first peaks of daylight to clear roads of suspected improvised explosive devices and other patrol-hampering road blocks.

The Destroyers of Company D, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, conduct two patrols a day to clear main transportation routes around the Baqubah, Iraq, area to ensure later patrols passing over these roads will be safe.

“If I have to get hit in this vehicle I kind of feel reassured that nothing’s going to happen versus a Humvee,” said Sgt. Michael Smallwood, a gunner with Company D, who rides in an M1-A2 SEP tank. “I’d rather have a 155 hit (our) armored vehicle versus a Humvee and kill someone. They have a lot of armament to get through before they get to me.”

Smallwood watches a number of things through his gunner sight deep in the belly of the 73-ton beast, relaying any pertinent information to Andrews, his tank commander.

“I pay special attention to the roads, to the area and what the people are doing at certain times, their reactions to vehicles,



Photos by Sgt. Zach Mott

Sgt. 1st Class Jason Andrews, tank commander from Company D, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, consults a digital map while on a route clearing patrol in Baqubah, Iraq.

houses, whether or not people are running and ducking behind walls,” Smallwood said. “I watch the flanks of the vehicles, I warn the tank commander if anything suspicious happens and then he’ll take further action from there.”

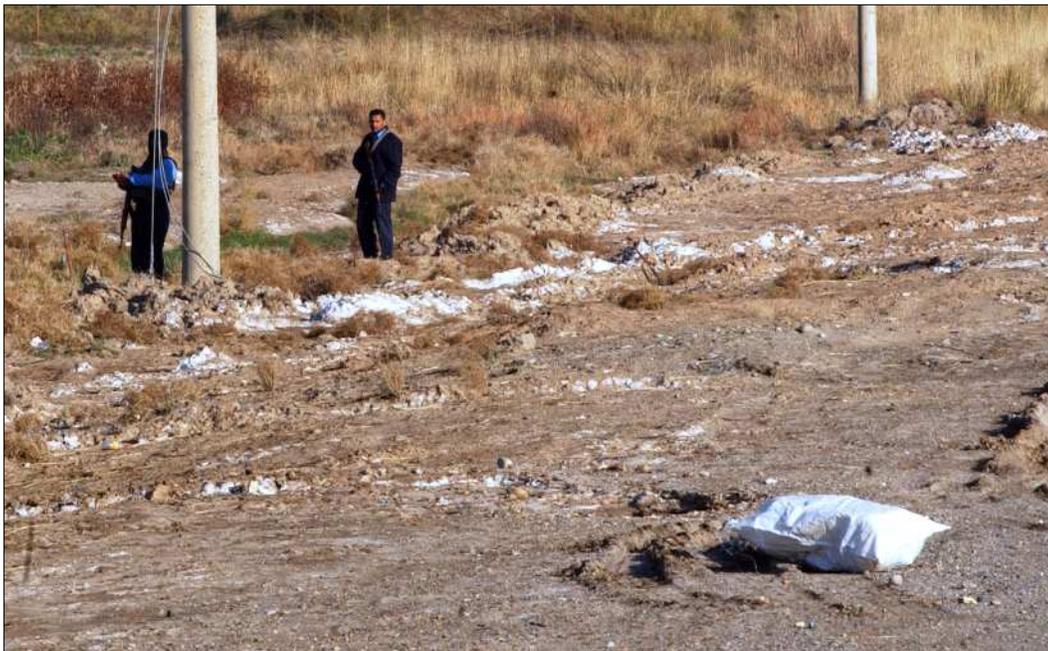
During this mission, the patrol found two suspected IEDs – one a box in the middle of the road, the other a large, white bag on the side of the road – that required further investigation. After securing the area, the patrol called for further guidance. With assistance from the Iraqi security forces, the suspected IEDs were determined harmless.

On other days, Pfc. Jason Jahnke, a loader for Company D, is tasked with providing security outside of the tank or searching suspicious people or vehicles.

“I’m usually the first one to get out and check it out,” he said.

Today, Jahnke stayed in the tank. There were no people to search, there were no suspicious vehicles blocking the road, and as Smallwood said, it was a quiet day.

The crew continues to search the roads twice daily, scouring for suspected IEDs, suspicious vehicles and activity – keeping the roads safe for the Iron Brigade to travel.



A suspicious bag is positioned near a major thoroughfare for the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, patrols around Baqubah, Iraq. Members of the Iraqi police 10 secure the area before investigating the white bag.



After five days, Argonauts make it home

by Sgt. Zach Mott

IBC editor

Tension was high as the 30-plus vehicle patrol pushed out the gates of Camp Buehring, Kuwait toward the Iraqi border. For many, this would be their first time entering a combat zone.

What was scheduled for a three-day, four-stop trip began by moving from Camp Buehring to Navistar – a support facility near the Kuwait-Iraq border.

Once there, Soldiers bedded down for several hours for what would be their last bit of sleep before entering Iraq.

“It was nervous preparation at first,” said Pfc. Dave Blamire, a gunner from Company A, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. “But, it got a lot more serious as the ride continued.”

As the border neared, the relative prosperity of Kuwait became a blur, and the desert landscape became less and less populated with homes.

“It’s a surprisingly poor country,” he said. “There were a lot of people on the edge of the road that were waving.”

This leg of the trip was scheduled to be a two-stop trip; first stopping in Convoy Support Center Cedar for fuel, then continuing on to CSC Scania where the group would again sleep for several hours.

Because of circumstances outside of their control, the patrol halted at Cedar II.

The following night’s journey was again cut short, the patrol stopped at CSC Scania for the night because of hostile activity along the route.

With news of insurgent attacks along the route spreading, Soldiers worked diligently to clean their weapons, ensure their vehicles were in proper working order and go over crew drills in the event these valuable tools would be needed.

Because of escalated insurgent activity, the patrol did not leave Scania until late in the night bound this time for Baghdad International Airport. As the sunlight began to shatter the overnight darkness, the BIAP gates became visible through the ballistic glass of the windshield. On the outskirts of Baghdad, this military fortress was to be home once again to the now tiring mass.

News of multiple attacks along the planned route continued to spike tension levels throughout the patrol. Again, Soldiers cleaned weapons, checked vehicles and went over tactics, techniques and procedures in the event they encountered insurgents. The next leg of the patrol was potentially the most dangerous they would encounter.

Under the guise of darkness, the patrol left BIAP bound for Camp Taji – which was scheduled to be the one refueling and rest stop for the night. Soldiers were at the peak of readiness as they sped along the main supply route.

“Every chance I get, I try to pass on knowledge from my past experiences to the younger Soldiers,” said Spc. Shaun Brostrom, a gunner from Co. A, 3rd STB. This is Brostrom’s second trip to Iraq. He previously served in the first Operation Iraqi Freedom rotation as an infantryman with 1st Armored Division.

After a short break at Taji, the patrol entered the thick of danger in an area that was rampant with insurgent activity such as small arms fire and improvised explo-



Photos by Sgt. Zach Mott

The first view of Iraq for Company A, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division was through the window of a Humvee.

sive devices.

The patrol made it through this area without incident. Despite being ready, these Soldiers would have to wait for another time before experiencing their first insurgent contact of this deployment.

The only other known obstacle that remained was crossing the mighty Tigris River on a pontoon bridge. This could be a dubious task for a HEMTT carrying various tonnages of equipment, containers and vehicles to cross over the floating conduit.

The area surrounding the Tigris is vastly different from what you’d expect to see in a largely desert climate. There is lush, green vegetation, palm trees and large residential areas in the basin.

From here, the patrol navigated the twists and turns of the roads to the gates of Forward Operating Base Warhorse – which is to be their home for the foreseeable future.

“Fortunately we didn’t have to shoot at anyone,” Blamire said. “But we’re properly trained on our weapons and our (tactics, techniques and procedures.)”



Soldiers prepare their vehicles at Navistar, Kuwait – the final stop for Soldiers before crossing the border into Iraq.

FAR #1

Make security and safety your first priorities (accidental/tactical risk; drive safe not scared: seat-belts required; treat every weapon like its loaded; 360 degree security 24/7 and 5/25).

The 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team Commander made safety part of his Striker FARs for a good reason. Last year (FY05) the Army lost 306 Soldiers due to accidents. As of Jan. 25, 2006 another 84 Soldiers have died because of accidents. Since FY04 the Army has lost a Soldier every 32 hours because of accidents.

Our first fatality during this OIF 05-07 deployment happened on Jan. 15 and the

reason was a vehicle accident not by enemy fire. As the brigade continues with the mission here in Iraq we must continue to manage our risk by conducting daily composite risk assessments and enforcing all standards not just safety. Here are some daily safety reminders:

- ♦ Always face traffic while walking or running on the roadways.
- ♦ Never smoke inside tactical vehicles, buildings, CHUs, or tents. Smoke outside your CHU and have a butt can with sand. Get the can from the dining facility.
- ♦ Smokers must be 50 feet from buildings, tents, generators, fuel points, fuel tankers, fuel storage, petroleum oil and lubricant storage and ammunition/explosives. Maintain situational awareness before you light-up!
- ♦ Never drive vehicles while eating, drinking or smoking.
- ♦ Follow all FOB speed limits.
- ♦ Drivers clean your windshield and windows daily.

♦ Drivers must adjust the vehicle speed outside the FOB to meet road and weather conditions.

♦ Vehicle TCs must help the drivers ID road hazards and make on-the-spot corrections if the driver is driving reckless.

♦ Wear your seat belt!

♦ Vehicle TCs must monitor drivers for signs of fatigue.

♦ Guards maintain situational awareness while on the guard tower; if your guard tower has a door on the floor do not step on top of the door.

♦ Use both hands while climbing or descending the guard towers. Maintain your "Three Points of Contact."

♦ Never point your weapon at anyone, only the target you intend to shoot.

♦ Maintain your weapon on safe and your finger out of the trigger housing.

♦ 5/25 means checking within five and 25 meters of a vehicle when you stop.

Our Army at war – be safe – make it home!

Photo Share

RIGHT: Spc. Keith Beeson, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, shares a glimpse of an early morning at a guard tower.

BELOW: Terry Moore, a paramedic with KBR, catches another moment in the sun, this time a medevac helicopter as it sits on the flightline waiting its call to duty.



To see your photos here, e-mail them to: zachary.mott@us.army.mil
Photos can be anything from a promotion to everyday life on the FOB. Please include as much information about the pictures as possible.

