'I'll sleep when I'm dead!' Experts say no, page 5

SCIMITAR
MNF-I's Cutting Edge

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U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Lance Cheung

We got ourselves a convoy: **Civilian trucks and Army vehicles with containerized cargo are staged and ready in a muddy lot, waiting to begin a morning combat convoy run from Balad Air Base to Forward Operating Base Caldwell.** ***See also Marine convoy through Hit, page 8***

Certifying Iraq's future

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Patrick McDonald
Multi-National Forces - Iraq, CMO Elections

"The people of Iraq have spoken and we can now move on to the formation of the new, permanent government for Iraq."

With those words, Dr. Adil Al-Alami, the chief electoral officer for the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq announced the final certification of the results Friday from the Dec. 15 Council of Representatives election.

Background - By the Numbers

For December's Council of Representatives election, more than 307 political parties and 19 coalitions with a total of 7,655 candidates ran to fill 275 seats representing the 18 governorates of Iraq, a far cry from the days of Saddam Hussein when only he was on the ballot and a vote against him meant torture.

The main election itself commenced on Dec. 15 for the 15.6 million registered voters in Iraq. They went to over 6,200 polling stations and voted.

To assist with voter education, IECI produced more than 5 million posters and 2 million pamphlets in five languages distributing them nationwide. Each political party plastered the country with their campaign signs urging people to remember their candidates' number on the crowded ballot.

Council of Representatives - behind the numbers

The Shi'ia based Unified Iraqi Coalition garnered 128 seats, but a deeper look at that organization and the other party factions that will make up the new Iraqi Council of Representatives, gives a different view of what type of voting blocks could be expected to form over the four-year life of the council.

See ***ELECTION***, Page 4

332nd ECES firefighters save lives

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

Members of the 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron Fire Prevention Flight do more than fight fires when necessary.

"In addition to fire and medical calls we respond to HAZMAT, confined space and high angle rescue calls," said Chief Master Sgt. Daniel Raymond, 332nd ECES fire chief.

Hazmat, short for hazardous materials, can be anything from batteries to oil.

The flight also responds to in-flight emergencies and on-and-off base accidents, like car wrecks.

"The Rescue Air Mobility Squad is a very unique mission," Raymond said. "We have one of only two RAMS teams in the Iraqi area of responsibility."

The RAMS team members are certified members of the fire protection flight who receive additional combat skills training from the Army.

"The RAMS team has this unique mission because firefighters have the tools, training and experience to pull vehicles apart while protecting the occupants, extricate victims and provide emergency medical care prior to their being transported to a medical facility," said Raymond

The RAMS team is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

When needed, the team is either transported by medical evacuation helicopter to the incident scene or convoys out to it carrying 350 pounds of extrication tools in a Stokes basket.

Regardless of the mode of transportation, the fire protection flight is able to respond to calls faster than ever thanks to the newly installed 911 system. The system became fully functional in mid-December.

Though working in the dispatch center can be slow at times, its impact is not overlooked by those who sit there.

"It's not as exciting or as hands-on as firefighting, but I understand the importance of it," said Airman 1st Class Matthew Clayton, 332nd ECES firefighter. "This is the nerve center of emergency response at Balad."

Raymond also credits Army firefighters under his command with making the mission here such a success.

"We have seven Army firefighters detailed to the wing from the 452nd Ordnance Company," he said. "We are three groups but we're purple all the way."

Airman 1st Class Nathan Shaw, left, and Senior Airman John Armstrong inventory extracation tools on a Stokes Basket.

Eyes on the patrol

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron D. Allmon II

Army Sgt. 1st Class John Guy from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Armored Combat Regiment commands an M-1 Abrams battle tank while on patrol in Tall Afar.

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THIS WEEK IN IRAQ

To learn more about Iraqi and Coalition successes, log on to: ***www.mnf-iraq.com*** and click on the logo to download this week's issue.

PERSPECTIVES

No one is more professional than NCOs

By Roger W. Putnam

History has taught us many lessons on what to do after a war is won. Germany and Japan are just two examples of defeated countries that rose from the ashes of defeat to become leaders in the international community with the direct assistance of the United States.

In no small respect, the U.S. military's noncommissioned officers and their troops became the ambassadors of goodwill in these countries, and played a major role in winning the hearts and minds of the people. Earning the trust of the people is essential if any reconstructive effort or peacekeeping mission is going to be successful.

Today's problems in Afghanistan and Iraq are similar. The NCOs and their troops are the ones seen everyday on the streets of the cities and towns. It is their behavior that shapes the views of the local population and reflects what America is all about.

One of the hardest tasks for the NCO is to not blame all the people for the acts of a few. We have trained our Soldiers to be war fighters, and justifiably so, but America's Soldiers are still filled with compassion for children and the downtrodden.

It is difficult for the NCOs to see their Soldiers attacked by terrorists and not become cynical toward the populace. Our NCOs have proved they have the values and ability to put those feelings aside and perform the acts of kindness we see them doing the world over, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. Cynicism only undermines our ability to build a rapport with the population.

The NCO is instrumental in ensuring the populace understands America's values and that it is a truly compassionate country. In Vietnam, our Soldiers built orphanages and schools, treated the sick, and spent untold hours assisting the Vietnamese, even while being attacked daily by Vietcong. U.S. Soldiers have performed similar deeds in every conflict in which our country has been involved, and the NCO has always been at the forefront. Without the noncommissioned officer, many of these endeavors would not have succeeded, or even existed. The NCO has to be the positive influence in both peace and war. NCOs make things happen.

"We have trained our Soldiers to be war fighters, but America's Soldiers are still filled with compassion for children and the downtrodden."

The NCO must always remember planning is done at a higher level, but implementation of orders is an NCO responsibility.

The NCOs are responsible for teaching and training their subordinates, not only in war fighting techniques, but also how to approach the populace, how to understand and appreciate their culture, and how to treat them as they would want to be treated. Trying to understand the rules they live by is as foreign to our culture as ours is to theirs. A smile to civilians from one of our troops is a language that anyone can understand, and lays a foundation on which reconstruction can build.

NCOs and their troops are crucial to showing the population America liberates, not conquers; that we truly want to help their people gain a better life. It is imperative NCOs realize they are the key to winning not only wars, but also the peace.

Putnam is a retired Army command sergeant major and former president of the noncommissioned officers association.

The Army NCO Creed

No one is more professional than I. I am a Noncommissioned Officer, a leader of Soldiers. As a Noncommissioned Officer, I realize that I am a member of a time honored corps, which is known as "The Backbone of the Army." I am proud of the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon the Corps, the Military Service and my country regardless of the situation in which I find myself. I will not use my grade or position to attain pleasure, profit, or personal safety.

Competence is my watchword. My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind -- accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers. I will strive to remain tactically and technically proficient. I am aware of my role as a Noncommissioned Officer. I will fulfill my responsibilities inherent in that role. All Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership; I will provide that leadership. I know my soldiers and I will always place their needs above my own. I will communicate consistently with my soldiers and never leave them uninformed. I will be fair and impartial when recommending both rewards and punishment.

Officers of my unit will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and confidence as well as that of my soldiers. I will be loyal to those with whom I serve; seniors, peers, and subordinates alike. I will exercise initiative by taking appropriate action in the absence of orders. I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage. I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget that we are professionals, Noncommissioned Officers, leaders!

Scimitar Pulse

What is you favorite comic strip?

"Boondocks. I like the art work. It's usually one of the funniest ones."

Pfc. Jason Guthrie
Multi-National Corps - Iraq, Artillery
Placerville, Calif.

"Pardon My Planet. It's sarcastic."

Sgt. Scott Tucker
Multi-National Corps - Iraq, Artillery
Dallas, Texas

"Hagar the Horrible. I like it because they're Vikings."

Spc. Jerry Jordan
Multi-National Corps - Iraq, Artillery
Schererville, Ind.

"Garfield. I think it's the sarcasm I like."

Sgt. David Paquet
Multi-National Corps - Iraq, Artillery
Ashley, Pa.

"Garfield. It's just something I always read. My grandparents had a big, yellow cat."

Staff Sgt. Wesley Richardson
Multi National Security Transition Command Iraq, Operations
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Iraqi NCOs train their own

Story and photo Pfc. Michael Molinaro
2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division

AL HILLAH — In the previous Iraqi regime, only army officers received military training while non-commissioned officers and their Soldiers received no formal training.

Under the tutelage of Coalition forces, Iraqi Army Soldiers are learning advanced warrior skills equivalent to the U. S. Army's primary leadership development course.

More than 20 Iraqi Soldiers graduated from the program recently in Al Hillah.

The program equips noncommissioned officers with tools to further train their Soldiers, said Sgt 1st Class Charles Carrasco, head trainer, Troop C, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. "It's basically a train-the-trainer program."

The four-week program educated Iraqi Soldiers on individual and small-unit tactics. Training was on improvised explosive devices, tactical control points, building clearing and land navigation.

After three weeks of intense "Sabers and Scimitars" training, the soldiers were challenged with practical exercises to test their new-found knowledge. The week culminated with a live-fire exercise involving room clearing and close-quarters combat.

The graduation symbolizes what hard work will accomplish and shines as an example to other Soldiers, said Iraqi Col. Hatem, commander, 2nd Brigade, 8th Division.

> ***"It is our ambition to be the ones who defended our country and got rid of terrorism in Iraq."***
>
> Iraqi 2nd Lt. Mowafak Hussain

"These guys are highly proficient, and I would go anywhere in Iraq with them," said Capt. Mark Kovalcik, commander, Troop C, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment. "I would conduct any operation with the full confidence that they would excel."

Iraqi Soldiers, in partnership with Coalition Forces, have conducted numerous cordon and searches and raids together. The more capable they are at training their own, the quicker they achieve self-reliance and become a more cohesive and potent force against the enemy, Kovalcik said.

Iraqi Soldiers perform a close-quarters live-fire exercise.

"A leader must have the ability to lead from the front," said Maj. Earnest Boyd, team chief, military transition team. "Iraqis training Iraqis will make them much better at fighting terrorism."

The graduates will immediately put their new-found skills to the test when they begin training Soldiers.

"It is our ambition to be the ones who defended our country and got rid of terrorism in Iraq," said Iraqi 2nd Lt. Mowafak Hussain, infantryman. "We are eager to apply this training to the rest of our battalion so that we all can fight the enemy as one great unit."

courtesy photo

Staff Sgt. Anna Hall, supply sergeant for 126th Military Police Company, with her older sister, Maj. Teresa Hall, intelligence officer-in-charge for 48th BCT, pose together at Camp Liberty.

Hall sisters reunite in Iraq

Story by Sgt. Kristin Kemplin
363rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY — Band of Brothers? For the Hall siblings try Band of Sisters. Alas there is still the issue of rank.

"She can run but she can't hide.I can find her and still boss her around," said Maj. Teresa Hall. Her younger sister, Staff Sgt. Anna Hall, nodded.

"She says that a lot, and believe me - it's true," said Staff Sgt. Hall. "She forgets who used to make her sandwiches."

The two sisters, deployed to different base camps in Iraq, met a few weeks prior to Staff Sgt. Hall's redeployment to the states. Sitting in the Camp Liberty division dining facility for dinner, the two reminisced about the seven-month overlap of their deployment to Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Hall, supply sergeant for the 126th Military Police Company, New Mexico National Guard, arrived at Camp Liberty at the beginning of last year. Maj. Hall, an intelligence officer with 48th Brigade Combat Team, deployed to Camp Stryker in June 2005. The two have not had many opportunities to see each other "because of the high op tempo," Major Hall said.

But when Maj. Hall, now working at Camp Talil, was scheduled to attend a meeting in the area in January, she contacted her sister to arrange a visit.

"It doesn't hurt to have a supply sergeant sister because she can help get me travel arrangements and billeting for the visit," Maj. Hall said."I might be a little biased, but she might be the best supply sergeant in the whole freakin' Army."

"Having my sister here made my first deployment easier to cope with," said Staff Sgt. Hall.

Although they will part ways in the coming weeks, the sisters will continue to communicate as they have for the last seven months, by e-mail and occasional phone calls.

ELECTION

from ***Page 1***

The Unified Iraqi Coalition is a confederation of 18 separate parties. Although Shi'ia in nature and greatly influenced by Iran, it is not the unified group that it may appear at first blush. Reform and moderate Shi'ia along with elements of the Turcoman and centrist groups are joined by fundamentalist organizations such as the Iranian-backed Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Iraqi Hezbollah movement.

The UIC will probably find many of its members straying to coalitions that form over different political issues that crop up in the legislative arena.

The Kurds, represented by the conservative Islamic Union of Kurdistan with five seats and the Kurdistani Gathering with 53 seats make up the largest non-Arab group with 58 seats. The "Gathering" party is also a divergent coalition of eight parties from the Communist Party of Kurdistan and its counterpart, the Kurdish Socialist Party to the Turcoman Group and conservative Islamic Group of Kurdistan.

The other large group with 59 seats belongs to a set of Sunni coalitions who are sometimes at odds with one another over how to approach the Coalition and how best to respond to their loss of status with the fall of the Saddam regime. The largest of the four Sunni-based coalitions, the Tawafog National Front, which garnered 44 seats, is made up of three parties, the Iraqi Islamic Party, General Council for the Iraqi People and the National Iraqi Council. The Iraqi Council group fractured over the Islamic Party's support for the constitution, but the group held together for the December election and is now a major factor in the discussion going on with the formation of a new government.

The other Sunni group, the Hewar National Iraqi Front, headed by Saleh al-Mutleq, the chief of the Sunni coalition in the outgoing Transitional National Assembly, picked up 11 seats. Al-Mutleq rejected the final version of the proposed constitution and differs from the other parties that are in the new council in that his is a single party with the goal of ridding the country of Coalition Forces and rebuild Iraqi into a strong centralized government different from the loose confederation sought by the Kurds and Shi'ia. Other Sunni groups, the Liberation and Reconciliation party and the Mithal Al Aloosi List picked up four more seats bringing the total Sunni-based representation to 59 out of 275.

Rounding out the list of major coalitions is the secular based National Iraqi List headed by Prime Minister Ayad Allawi. With only 25 seats, the coalition is a varied group of 15 parties - socialists, communist, moderate, ethnic and business-based parties. Although it could be a moderating influence on both religious and ethnic disputes, the party will hold less than 10 percent of the seats and could act more as a broker in close political disputes and factional in-fighting in the council.

The last three seats go each to the Al Rafadeen (Christian), Iraqi Turcoman and Yezedi religious-based Al Ezediah Movement.

Way Ahead

With the certification of results Friday, the Iraqi President Talal Jalabani has until Feb. 25 to call the new Council of Representatives together. The new council will then choose a president who will then recommend a prime minister to the body. Once the prime minister is confirmed and a cabinet formed the council will continue its deliberations for the next four years as a permanent elected parliament for the Iraqi people.

Clearly, Iraq has gone from being a one-man, one-party state built on oppression and fear to a fledgling democracy based on the rule of law and the competitive free elections.

It is a continuous struggle with a great deal of work to be done, but judging from the dramatic increase in voter participation over the past year, it is clear that there should be no turning back to the dark days of dictatorship and fear.

The final results are available from the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq on their Web site at: *www.ieciraq.org.*

HEALTH & FITNESS

To sleep! perchance to dream — ay, there's the rub

By Eric Cipriano and Maj. A.L. Ochsner

Although Hamlet spoke about the sleep of death and military members are fond of the saying "I'll sleep when I'm dead," doctors say regular sleep is important to healthy life.

Why do I need to sleep?

Sleep remains a mystery. Studies show that sleep is essential for survival. Too little sleep leaves us drowsy and unable to concentrate, and it leads to impaired memory and poor physical performance. If sleep deprivation continues, hallucinations and mood swings may develop. Some experts believe sleep gives the nerves we use while we are awake a chance to shut down and repair themselves.

How much sleep should I get?

The amount of sleep each person needs depends on many factors, including age. Infants may require about 16 hours a day, while teenagers and young adults need about nine hours on average. For most adults over 25 years, seven to eight hours a night appears to be the best amount of sleep, although some people may need as few as five hours or as many as 10 hours of sleep each day. Women in the first three months of pregnancy often need several more hours of sleep than usual.

The sleep a person needs increases if he or she has been deprived of sleep in previous days. Getting too little sleep creates a "sleep debt," which is much like being overdrawn at a bank. Eventually, your body will demand that the debt be repaid. While we may get used to a sleep-depriving schedule, our judgment, reaction time, and other functions are diminished. Many driving accidents, work errors, friendly fire incidents, and disruptive behaviors can be caused by the lack of sleep. Even if you think you're getting enough sleep, you may not be. Here are some of the signs that you may need more sleep:

— difficulty waking up in the morning
— inability to concentrate
— falling asleep during meetings, classes
— feelings of moodiness and even depression

How do I improve my sleep while deployed to Iraq?

Set a regular bedtime. Going to bed at the same time each night signals to your body that it's time to sleep. Waking up at the same time every day can also help establish sleep patterns. Stick to your sleep schedule even on weekends. While it's OK to occasionally "sleep in" on weekends, it also makes it harder to wake up early Monday. Do not go to sleep more than an hour later or wake up more than two to three hours later than you do during the week.

Exercise regularly. Try not to exercise right before bed as it can wake you up, but sleep experts believe that exercising five or six hours before bed may actually help a person sleep.

Avoid stimulants a couple of hours before going to bed. Avoid caffeinated drinks. Sources of caffeine include coffee, chocolate, soft drinks, nonherbal teas, diet drugs, many supplements and some pain relievers. Smokers tend to sleep lightly and often wake up in the early morning becuase of nicotine withdrawal. Stay away from alcohol as a sleep aid. Alcohol robs people of deep sleep and REM sleep and keeps them in the lighter stages of sleep.

Relax your mind. A warm shower, light reading, meditating, or listening to soothing music can help your body relax. You can train yourself to associate certain restful activities with sleep and make them part of your bedtime routine. Avoid action movies or television shows right before bed. Reading books with complicated or active plots may also keep you from falling or staying asleep.

Unwind by keeping the lights low. Light signals the brain that it's time to wake up. Stay away from bright lights, including the TV or computer screen.

Create the right sleeping environment. Studies show people sleep best in a dark room that is slightly on the cool side. Close your blinds or curtains or use blankets or towels heavy enough to block out light. Turn down the thermostat in your tent or room. Use blankets or wear pajamas if you're cold. Some people use music or have a fan producing "white noise" to help limit the outside sounds. Noise can be a sleep turnoff, too. If you are sharing a room or tent, be considerate of your roommates.

Don't nap too much. Naps of more than 30 minutes during the day may keep you from falling asleep later.

Avoid all-nighters. While some jobs require shift work, short suspense, or continuous operations - cutting back on sleep the night before a significant operation may mean you perform worse than you would if got more sleep.

Good leaders ensure their subordinates get good sleep. Good leaders and supervisors set the example of good sleep habits. They expect their subordinates to get good sleep, use rest/work cycles, construct sleep tents or areas for shift workers, and enforce noise restrictions.

When should I see a health professional about sleep problems?

Many people have insomnia - trouble falling or staying asleep. The most common cause of insomnia is stress. But all sorts of things can lead to insomnia, including physical discomfort (the stuffy nose of a cold or the pain of a headache, for example), emotional troubles (like family problems or relationship difficulties), and even sleeping environment (a room that's too hot, cold, or noisy or a roommate who snores).

For some people, insomnia can be made worse by worrying about the insomnia itself. A brief period of insomnia can build into something longer lasting when a person becomes anxious about not sleeping or worried about feeling tired the next day.

It's common for everyone to have insomnia from time to time. If insomnia lasts for a month or longer with no relief, then doctors consider it chronic. When insomnia interferes with your work, your relationships or other areas of your life, it might be a signal of something more serious. Chronic insomnia can be caused by problems like depression. People with chronic insomnia can often get help for their condition from a doctor, health professional, medical corpsman, or mental health counselor. Their treatments may include simple nonmedical methods, medications, or both. One simple treatment is relaxation training, an effective technique which can be learned quickly and practiced almost anywhere.

Avian flu gives new meaning to being scared of the birds

Story by Spc. Jeremy Pitcher
124th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

With Iraqi and Coalition forces battling insurgency everyday, government officials hope there won't be an even deadlier enemy on the rise in Iraq.

Avian influenza, also known as the bird flu, is making quite a stir for governments around the world. With reported cases in 20 countries, health organizations worldwide are preparing to not let what is now an agricultural emergency turn into a viral pandemic.

There are 16 known strains of the avian influenza virus. The exact strain determines how easily it is transferred from host to recipient.

The avian flu virus was first reported to have jumped from bird to human in 1997 in Hong Kong, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The avian influenza can be contracted from bird saliva, nasal secretion, and feces.

Humans are likely to come in contact with these viral hosts if they work in a poultry slaughter house or raise poultry.

The virus is highly pathogenic, live poultry markets and poultry farms are very susceptible to the spread of the virus.

The deadliest strain is named H5N1, the only strain that passes from person to person. Though these cases are rare, health officials fear that the strain could mutate and become easily contagious among humans.

The World Health Organization said the epidemic for birds from the H5N1 started in Korea in Dec. 2003 and spread from there.

To date, human cases of the H5N1 strain have been reported in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iraq, Thailand, Vietnam, Turkey, and, recently, Nigeria.

To prevent further human infection, governments in the countries that have found the avian flu have ordered massive bird slaughters.

Since 2004 the World Health Organization has reported more than 160 human H5N1 cases of the strain. Only a few of the virus cases have spread from person to person, but the virus has not spread beyond two people at a time.

Because humans have never been exposed to the virus they do not have an immune system equipped to fight it off.

> ***"The protection of this right now is simple hygiene."***
>
> Dr. Samuel Yingst

Officials worry that if the avian flu is contracted by a person who also is infected by another more typical flu, the avian flu could pick up genes it needs to spread easily.

Health officials are researching trends in the virus's movements along with the changes the virus undergoes.

Iraq's first confirmed case of the H5N1 strain came in mid-January when a 15-year-old girl died of the virus. The girl's uncle also died of an illness, but the results from avian flu detection are not yet in.

Health officials are preparing for the avian flu becoming a major health crisis. Dr. Samuel Yingst, virology and zoonotic researcher at Naval Medical Research Unit 3, has simple advice for people to stay safe.

"The protection of this right now is simple hygiene," he said.

Washing hands and clothes after contact with poultry, and using personal protection equipment, such as latex gloves when handling poultry, can help protect people.

Yingst is part of a medical team which stopped in Iraq after the Iraqi ministry of health asked for assistance.

FAQs FAQs FAQs

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza, or "bird flu", is a contagious disease of animals caused by viruses that normally infect only birds and, less commonly, pigs.

What is special about the current outbreaks in poultry?

The current outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza, which began in South-east Asia in mid-2003, are the largest and most severe on record.

What are the implications for human health?

The widespread persistence of H5N1 in poultry populations poses two main risks for human health.

The first is the risk of direct infection when the virus passes from poultry to humans, resulting in very severe disease.

A second risk, of even greater concern, is that the virus – if given enough opportunities – will change into a form that is highly infectious for humans and spreads easily from person to person.

Is it safe to eat poultry and poultry products?

Yes, though certain precautions should be followed in countries currently experiencing outbreaks.

Does the virus spread easily from birds to humans?

No. Though more than 100 human cases have occurred in the current outbreak, this is a small number compared with the huge number of birds affected.

courtesy of http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/avian_faqs/en/index.html

Arbor Drinkwine, resident engineer with Gulf Region Central District in Baghdad, said that after years of neglect, the beautiful French-designed Baghdad International Airport was dilapidated. During his nearly three years in Iraq, renovating the airport and bringing it up to international standards has been one of his signature projects.

Engineer leaves mark in Baghdad

Story and photo by Norris Jones

BAGHDAD — Arbor Drinkwine, a resident engineer with Gulf Region Central District, has two signature projects that overshadow all others he's been involved with during nearly three years in Iraq.

The complete renovation of the Baghdad International Airport, bringing it up to international standards, and the restoration of a system of pumps and canals that keep water flowing into an oasis of lakes at nearby Camp Victory.

About $12 million so far has been invested at the Airport to bring it up to FAA standards.

"A functioning international airport is a critical part of Iraq's plan for economic growth," he said.

The French designed airport, was built in the 1980s, but after years of neglect it was dilapidated, said Drinkwine. He expects the airport to reach international standards within three months, which will mark a definite milestone in Iraqi's march toward freedom.

A quarter-century ago, Saddam Hussein decided to add lakes and canals to a dry-barren area near the airport. His engineers dug out the lakes and despite 130-degree sizzling summer temperatures, filled them and kept the water level unchanged by pumping water from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. When Coalition Forces took over Baghdad in 2003, the 25-year-old system of pumps, levies and canals was in disrepair.

Drinkwine said that the lakes are essential for Camp Victory. About 1.5 million gallons a day are used by the Soldiers there.

"Had we not fixed the canals and pumping stations, those lakes would have dried out within two months," he said. He estimates about $5 million has been invested on new pumps and cleaning out the sediment in the canals.

"In the summer, water supply is a critical problem as the temperature of the lakes rise, oxygen levels decline, and evaporation increases. He said that in Saddam's time, people who diverted any of the water were arrested.

"We can't do that. We work with people in the community and come to a mutual agreement on how much water can flow to Camp Victory."

Drinkwine is finishing his final tour in Iraq next month.

Drinkwine was working as a project manager in the Environmental Branch at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District in Wiesbaden, Germany, when Coalition Forces moved into Iraq in 2003. He says he agreed to join the team of engineers heading to the war zone because he felt it was his responsibility. He started off as an environmental engineer in Iraq, but broadened his experience to other areas.

"In 14 years with the Corps, I had never been so completely involved in construction. Iraq not only offered me that opportunity, but the great thing about a war zone is everything is done on an accelerated basis so you see your designs and plans implemented almost immediately. It comes down to figuring out what needs to be done, finding a solution, offering it to the customer, and getting it fixed."

"This Week in Iraq"
a weekly review of how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is rebuilding Iraq, and improving the quality of life for the next generation.
Saturday & Sunday
@ 8:45 a.m., 1:45 p.m., 5:45 p.m. and 9:45 p.m.
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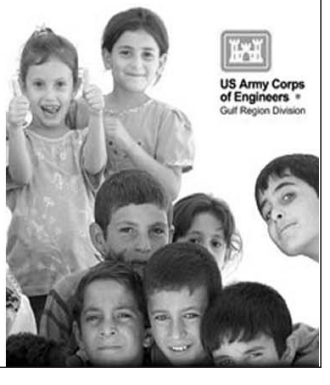


Engineer finds Iraq deployment rewarding

Story by Suzanne M. Fournier

BASE CAMP ADDER — A current passport, government travel orders and a challenging mission are key ingredients for Barry Stuard's success over the past 20-plus years of global deployments.

Stuard, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civilian employee from the Little Rock District, is deployed to Iraq as a construction representative in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in Diwaniyah Province.

He is involved in building 14 schools and oversaw renovation of six railroad stations.

"I got wrapped up in the great needs of people here in Iraq. These people have been living this way because they've been beaten down for years. I have a 35-year-old Iraqi civil engineer who faced insurgent intimidation to work for us. He has never known anything but war in his life," said Stuard.

Stuard is a stickler for safety and is known for the blue marks he leaves at construction sites to identify saftey programs. When his year-long assignment is up, Stuard will return to his job with the Corps of Engineers in Arkansas.

Guard Major helps lead reconstruction mission

Story by Norris Jones

BAGHDAD — Missouri National Guard Maj. Jay Gann is serving as the chief of operations for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Central District.

The district encompasses a 55,000-square-mile area including the cities of Baghdad, Fallujah and Ramadi.

He helps oversee more than 1,200 reconstruction projects valued at $2.3 billion. One of his main responsibilities is assessing insurgent threats.

He knows first-hand about improvised explosive devices. He was in a convoy in June when one exploded, blasting a piece of shrapnel through the front windshield, snapping off a piece of the dash and steering wheel and injuring the driver. Gann was awarded the Combat Action Badge for his response, the first such award ever presented at GRCD.

Gann also serves as GRCD's intelligence officer, force protection officer, planning officer and heads up the Regional Reconstruction Operations Center. The center keeps track of logistics and personnel movements. He supervises about 175 people.

He says his top priority is ensuring GRCD personnel are able to accomplish their jobs in as safe a manner as possible.

His biggest reward is seeing how reconstruction efforts have a positive impact on Iraqi families.

"I see the progress we're making. Sadr City's 2 million residents are seeing their sewers working, clean water coming out of their taps, and the trash being picked up," Gann said.

"We're building four new schools in Fallujah and residents in Ramadi are getting a sewer system for the first time ever. Those people's needs were neglected for decades and they're happy to finally get the same basic essential services as others."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Police academy gets new shooting range

MOSUL —The Military Police Service Academy here has a new set of firing ranges, after completion of a project monitored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The new pistol and rifle ranges were built by local labor as part of the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Program, along with an eight-meter-high protection berm.

The MPSA graduates 250 new policemen each month.

There are 356 police facilities projects nationwide, with 290 completed and 62 ongoing.

— Claude Mckinney

Fortifying the border

BASE CAMP ADDER — Protecting the border between rivaling countries of Iraq and Iran in rural Maysan Province is a daunting mission.

The Maysan Province is now more fortified than ever before, thanks to 22 new border forts constructed over 168 miles of mountainous terrain between Iran and Iraq.

The final fort, Al Bjela Border Fort, in a remote area of the border, was turned over to the newly-trained Iraqi border police this week.

The border forts cost approximately $275,000 each and were constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers using Iraq Relief and Reconstruction funds.

—Suzanne M. Fournier

Worst case scenario

Mass casualty exercises held to demonstrate unit's readiness

Story by Pvt. Paul Harris
4th Infantry Division

BAQUBAH — Recently, the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade and the 4th Infantry Division held seperate exercises to demonstrate their preparedness to manage a mass casualty event.

To ensure the readiness of the brigade medical staff, a simulated insurgent attack, followed by a mass casualty exercise, was conducted Jan. 18 at Forward Operating Base Warhorse.

"Guidons, Guidons, Guidons, this is Destiny Main. We have a MASCAL event. All units execute the Forward Operations Base MASCAL Plan."

This is the beginning of a radio call for which every medical team member prepares and trains. They hope it will never occur as more than an exercise. It is the radio call that raises the anxiety level and heart beat of every physician, physician assistant and medic. A mass casualty is an event in which a large number of casualties arrive at a medical facility at a rapid pace.

It was the job of the highly trained medical staff of Company C, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, to keep a sense of order in what can be a chaotic event.

When the ambulance rolls into the medical compound with casualties, a litter team greets the ambulance to offload the wounded. The triage officers determine what level of care is needed based on the severity of the patient's wounds.

"If there is excessive bleeding or danger of losing life, limb or eyesight, then they go into immediate care first," said Capt. Derek George, physical therapist, 64th BSB.

Less severe cases go into the delayed care category and walking wounded or stable cases go into the minimal care category.

In some cases, the 64th BSB medical staff might have to treat an Iraqi citizen or one of the many foreign nationals who work on Forward Operating Base Warhorse.

"Language barriers propose a problem for our medical workers," George said. "To combat this, we have interpreters on staff to help out. If we get a prisoner of war in (the troop medical clinic), they have to be screened first at the (front) gate and then they are screened again at the aid station for potential security risks, making sure that their weapons are gone or they are not booby-trapped before receiving aid."

From the triage area, patients moves inside the medical clinic for treatment, where they can expect to encounter someone like Pfc. Megan Berry, medic, 64th BSB. It is her job to prep the patient before a doctor arrives.

"When the patient comes in, I make sure their vital signs are recorded and hook up an (intravenous therapy bag) if needed," Berry said. "I also make sure the patient's airway is open, cut their clothes off to check for any other wounds that they might not be complaining of, and get them ready for the doctors to see them."

After being treated, a patient can recuperate at the medical clinic. If further medical attention is needed, they can be airlifted to Logistical Support Area Anaconda.

It is very important for the 64th BSB medical staff to work like a well-oiled machine. Having everyone know their responsibilities provides the best care for patients.

To get real-world feedback, the battalion decided to have one of its own be a casualty during the exercise.

After a simulated indirect fire attack, Pfc. Heidi Freeman, medic, 64th BSB, simulated a casualty with a lower leg fracture. She was then picked up by the Perimeter Reaction Force, who took her to the troop medical clinic.

Freeman went through triage quickly, where it was determined she was in urgent critical condition and she needed to be medically evacuated by a helicopter. She was then taken to the helipad, where the staff simulated loading Freeman onto a Blackhawk Helicopter.

Though it was only a simulation, being a casualty can be an intimidating experience--even for the most seasoned medics.

"I was scared because you are lying on your back (on the litter) thinking that this could be me in real life and how traumatic that would be," Freeman said. "But the medical staff was very professional and talked to me through every procedure, making sure to explain what task they performed on me."

With the deployment of 3rd HBCT in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom just getting under way, Berry remains upbeat about the road ahead.

"With the doctors and equipment we have, we are very prepared to handle emergencies like a mass casualty with very little difficulty," she said.

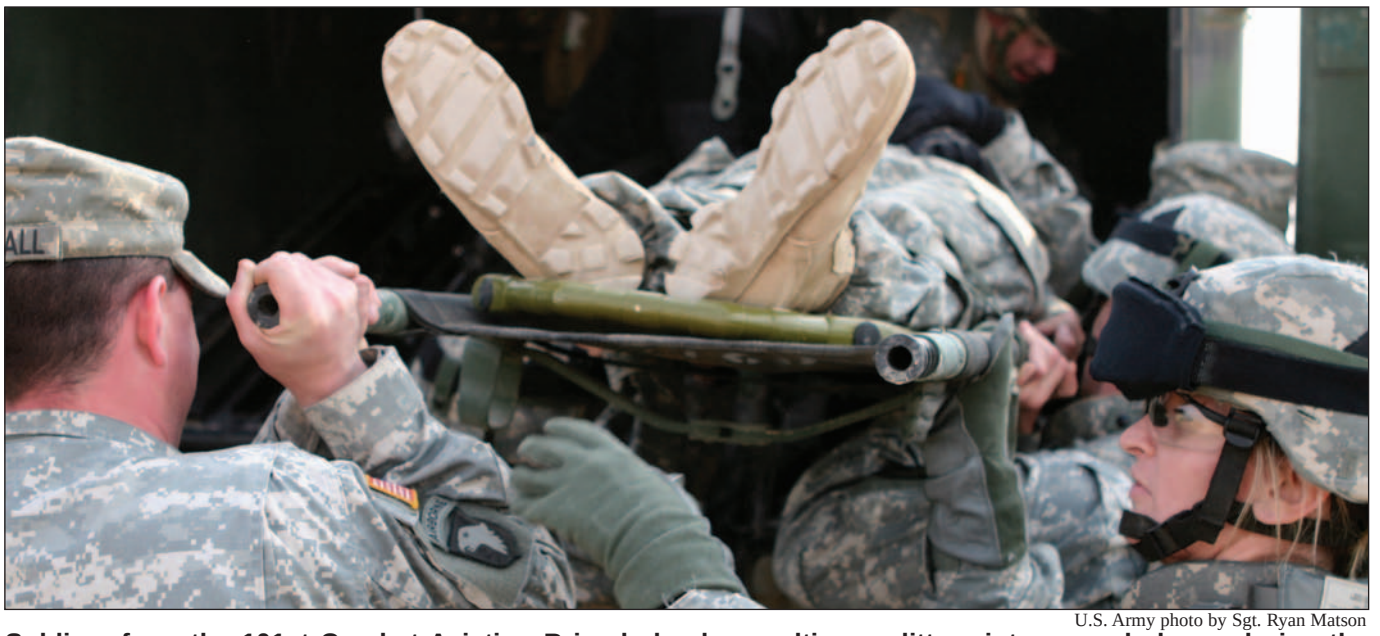
— Maj. Bart M. Diaz,101st Combat Aviation Brigade Surgeon, contributed to this story.

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ryan Matson

Sgt. Nicole Lopez, left, a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, and Capt. Colin Burroughs, a physician assistant with 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, secure a casualty to a litter in preparation for ambulance transport as part of the mass casualty exercise Jan. 31 on Forward Operating Base Spiecher.

U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Paul Harris

Medics from 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, hang intravenous therapy bags in preparation for treating a casualty during a mass casualty exercise Jan. 18.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ryan Matson

Soldiers from the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade load casualties on litters into an ambulance during the mass casualty exercise Jan. 31 at Forward Operating Base Speicher.

ON PATROL IN I

Marines and Sailors play vital roles duri

Cpl. Omar Montanez, a food-service technician from Passaic, N.J., mans an M-240 machine gun atop a seven-ton truck as his convoy travels through Hit.

Cpl. Darry A. Cross, of Monticello, Ky. and radio operator with Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion., 2nd Marines, looks into a building.

Before the convoy departs, 2nd Lt. Lindsey Bellomy briefs the convoy route to Marines and Sailors.

Story and photos by
Cpl. Cullen J. Tiernan
22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit

FORWARD OPERATING BASE
Convoys or combat logistics patrols
Marine Expeditionary Unit Service S
Group 22 are constantly on the move
ering supplies and transporting Iraqi
Soldiers and U.S. Marines throughou
Anbar province.

Every Marine and Sailor know the
aboard the convoys rolling through t
ous terrain.

They are prepared to counter smal
fire from insurgents and all are vigil
the improvised explosive device thre

"On convoys, everyone has a job t
said Capt. Troy M. Pugh, the Baltim
native and operations officer with M
22. His unit is the combat service su
element of the 22nd Marine Expedit
Unit. "Nearly everyday, we have mu
missions going to different locations
Although we have experienced seve
IEDs, the Marines have performed e
tionally well."

Pugh said the convoys are a lifelin
combat for outposts. The convoys pr
fuel, food, bottled water; all the supp
that allow them to continue their cou
surgency operations.

Pugh said Marines on convoys kn
importance of their jobs and there is
shortage of volunteers. He said the s
elements are "chomping at the bit" a
always eager to get back out again.

"I ensure we maintain a 360 degre
perimeter at all times," said Cpl. Ed
McClure, a convoy security team co
er with MSSG-22, and a Winchester
native. "We are always ready to eng
enemy upon contact. We have to ma
all the goods on the convoy make it
destinations safely. The Marines out
wire can't push without us bringing
the supplies."

McClure said his mission in Iraq k
him and other MSSG Marines busy
nothing slows them down; not IEDs,
darkness. He stressed that for a conv
roll securely, each individual must k
their responsibilities.

"We had an IED explode directly
my security vehicle," said McClure.

It was because of the unit's well-r
procedures that they were able to co
their mission.

"We reacted to the IED as we hav
trained to, and no one was injured,"
McClure.

During the cold nights, according
McClure, the turret gunners have the
spot.

"We all bundle up and wear as much
can so we can focus on the mission," h

While keeping guard atop security

IRAQ

ing convoy missions in war-torn country

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A Marine convoy travels through Hit.

Cpl. Omar Montanez, a food-service technician with Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, keeps his finger straight and off the trigger, as he mans an M-240 machine gun atop a seven-ton truck.

cles, turret gunners are ever vigilant regardless of the bitter, cold wind.

"We need everyone in the convoy to be alert constantly," said 2nd Lt. Lindsey Bellomy, originally from Dallas and the mobile combat service support detachment commander with MSSG-22. "Whether they are part of the security posture, watching the roads, or collecting intelligence aboard a seven-ton truck, everyone's eyes and ears contribute to the overall safety of the convoy."

As a convoy commander, Bellomy maintains command and control, accountability, and security, so that upon enemy contact actions are carried out and the overall mission is accomplished.

"Our Marines have done a good job of making the point we only harm insurgents," said Bellomy.

"We roll with Iraqi Army trucks, and we always have Iraqi children wave and smile as the convoys roll by. We have given out some humanitarian meals and will be giving some soccer balls in the near future. During a convoy, I had a little Iraqi child girl come up to me smiling and wave. Even though we couldn't speak to each other, there was a kind of a communication there."

A Marine with Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, watches a convoy depart from a base near Hit.

Blood of a Nation ...

Iraqi Army holds first ever blood drive to save comrades

U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jason Thompson

An Iraqi Soldier waits patiently as blood is drawn. More than 200 Iraqi Soldiers and a handful of U.S. Soldiers volunteered to donate a pint of blood to the local blood bank during the first ever blood drive by the Iraqi Army.

U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jason Thompson

An Iraqi Soldier watches as a doctor draws blood from his arm during a blood drive in downtown Baghdad on Feb. 5.

U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jason Thompson

Command Sgt. Maj. James Clinton, NCOIC, Military Transition Team, 4th Brigade, 101st Airborne Division donates, blood.

U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jason Thompson

Iraqi Soldiers wait in line to donate blood during a blood drive in downtown Baghdad.

De-mining effort receives wheels

Story and photos by
Spc. Rick Rzepka
Scimitar Assistant Editor

BAGHDAD — The Iraqi Mine Clearing Organization received two five-ton trucks Friday from the U.S. government to aid in the de-mining effort in Iraq, which was initiated in Sept. 2003.

The surplus vehicles were made available via the Humanitarian Assistance Program - Excess Property. This program provides excess property to authorized recipients, arranges DoD-funded and space-available transportation for non-governmental organizations for delivery of humanitarian goods to countries in need and coordinates foreign disaster relief missions.

The IMCO is a nongovernmental organization which works to keep Iraqis safe from the dangers of landmines and other unexploded ordnance in cooperation with a U.S. contractor and the Iraqi Ministry of Planning. The IMCO plans to use these trucks to transport de-mining dogs and equipment all over the country, said Zahim Jihad Mutter, IMCO director.

The trucks, which were headed to the scrap yard, were saved by U.S. Central Command's Humanitarian Operations Center in Kuwait and transferred to the 322nd Civil Affairs Brigade here. After making some repairs and arrangements to have the trucks painted, they were handed over to the IMCO, who payed for the cost of repairs.

> ***"We're really proud to present these vehicles to you."***
>
> Col. Randy Hart

"On behalf of our unit and all those involved here, we're really proud to present these vehicles to you," said Col. Randy Hart, 322nd Civil Affairs Brigade functions team chief.

Mutter said the trucks will speed up the de-mining effort, which will make the country safer for Iraqis.

Zahim Jihad Mutter, director of the Iraq Mine Clearing Organization in Baghdad, is presented with the titles to two five-ton trucks that will be used to further the organization's mission here.

The Iraq Mine Clearing Organization trains Iraqi forces to identify and disarm unexploded ordnance, which are a threat to Iraqi civilians.

Sgt. Chad T. Johnson, combat engineer with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, digs to find a weapons cache buried in the side of a canal bank on Operation Trifecta.

Marines prevent explosions

Story and photos by
Pfc. Christopher J. Ohmen
2nd Marine Division

ZAIDON — The sun was rising on the second day of Operation Trifecta and it was time for Sgt. Chad T. Johnson, a combat engineer attached to 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, and his engineers to impair insurgent operations in the Zaidon area.

The Rockford, Ill., native helps a platoon from Company F search vast areas of farmland looking for weapons and explosives.

"Finding the caches is the pay off for us. We could be walking around for hours and be tired, but if we find a good cache it is all worth it," said Johnson, a 1994 graduate of Auburn High School.

> ***"Finding caches is the pay off for us. We could be walking around for hours and be tired, but if we find a good cache, it is all worth it."***
>
> Sgt. Chad T. Johnson

Starting at daybreak, Johnson, whose teammate Lance Cpl. Bryan Fishel, headed out with another sweep team and an infantry squad from Company F. A sweep through numerous fields and along the sides of canals was the order of the day for Johnson and this group of Marines. There were suspected barrels of TNT in the area they were searching that day.

At around 11:00 a.m. Johnson's sweep team noticed part of a fiberglass pipe protruding from the ground with a piece of corrugated steel bent over one end. Running the metal detector over the area Johnson's team received a positive hit and they decided to investigate.

Clearing away enough dirt to peel back the metal on the end of the pipe they placed two chemical lights in the end of the pipe and used a flashlight. Getting enough light to see inside they saw right away they would have to keep digging.

"The insurgents tried to waterproof the section of pipe by using plastic and metal on one end and sandbags on the other,"said Johnson.

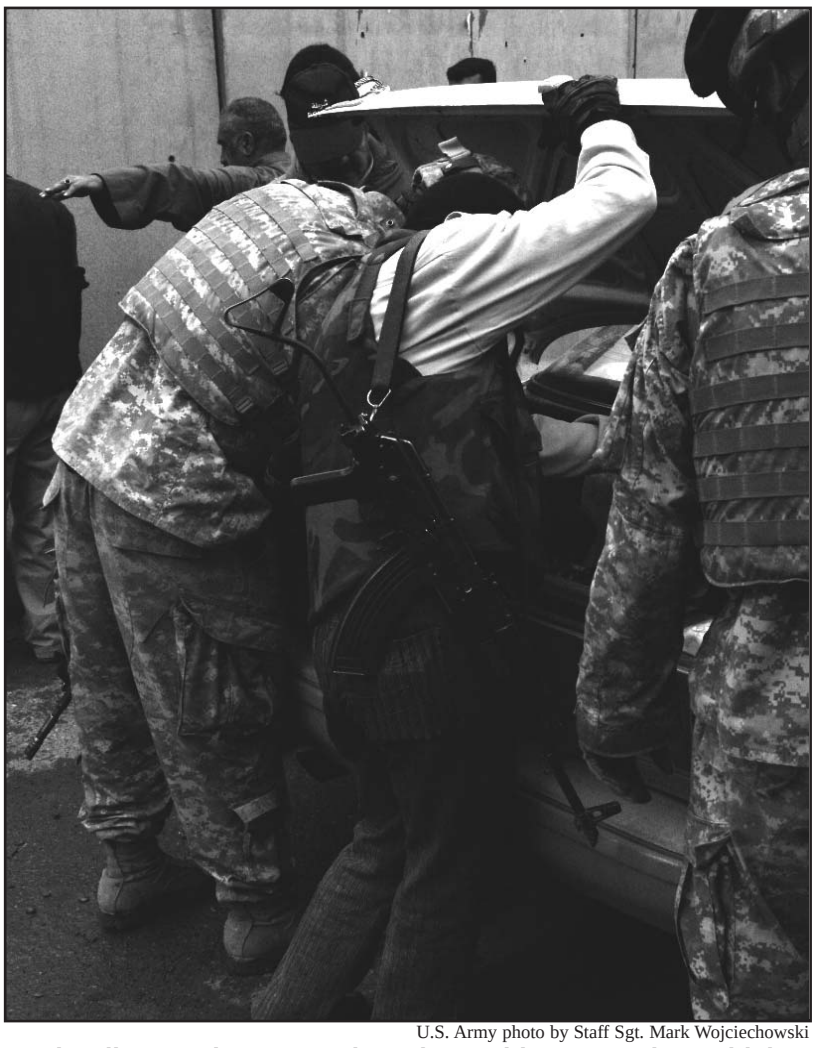
After seeing what was being stored in the pipe, Johnson's team had to methodically weed through the mortar rounds and various improvised explosive device components. Some of the mortar rounds were missing safety devices and were unstable.

Johnson's team took around five hours to remove the ordnance from the cache. About 200 meters from the pipe was a storage container that also gave a positive hit with the metal detector. After searching around the edges of the container, a second cache was discovered and excavated.

After a long day of digging and sweeping, Johnson's team and the engineers were successful in getting a large quantity of ordnance out of the insurgent's hands.

"All the engineers did an excellent job of scouring the area to uncover these pockets of weapons," Johnson said. "We hurt the insurgent's ability to fight the Coalition Forces in this [area]."

The operation uncovered more than 1,000 mortar rounds, artillery rounds and rockets; 20,000 rounds of ammunition for small arms and over a dozen weapons.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski

Iraqi Policemen known as the 'Ghost Riders' search a vehicle for contraband in Muqdadiyah.

Iraqi Ghost Riders clean up streets

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

MUQDADIYAH — The people of Iraq have less to worry about now that the Iraqi Police are becoming more organized and proficient in their jobs, with a little assistance from coalition forces.

With some coaching and mentoring from 3rd Platoon, Alpha Troop, 1-32nd Cavalry, 101st Airborne Division, the IP are evolving into a highly capable protective force for the people in this area of Iraq.

Though the IP are making significant improvements, there are still areas that need more work. As 3rd Platoon, known as the "Ghost Riders," see a problem in the way the IPs are handling a challenge, they correct it.

"It is not that they don't know how to handle a situation, it is just that they have not seen the proper way of handling it," said Sgt. 1st Class Anthony L. Longoria platoon sergeant and Rockport, Texas native.

On this day, as the platoon rolled through the streets of Muqdadiyah, there appeared to be a traffic accident that had just occurred. As they approached, they noticed that a man had been fatally shot in one of the vehicles. The Ghost Riders secured the area until the Iraqi Police showed up. Minutes later the Iraqi Police arrived to handle the incident and the Ghost Riders were on their way.

Next the Ghost Riders visited a traffic control check point. Here, the IP were running random searches of vehicles and personnel as they passed. They were searching for any unauthorized weapons, munitions or IED-making materials. A few pointers were given on search techniques and again the Ghost Riders were off leaving the IP in control of their area.

One last pass through the city revealed a heavily congested traffic jam that the IP were negotiating; Longoria, with the help of his interpreter, prompted the IP to work it out a bit more aggressively.

At this point in their development, the IP can be related to a civilian security organization that is a little less structured than the way we [coalition military forces] are used to seeing, said Longoria.

The Ghost Riders are working with the IPs to build their leadership abilities and help them in any way they can. They will continue to work with the IP in this area to ensure they are ready to protect and serve the people of Iraq.

CHAPLAIN'S TALK

"Moving Out"

By Chaplain (Maj.) Charles M. Herring
Multi-National Corps – Iraq, Operations

Chaplain Herring

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

My wife and I have a powerful military art print hanging over our bed. Every evening as we go to bed and every morning we wake up to stare at this commanding print. We recognize it is the symbolic existence of every soldier moving out, leaving a family to wait his return.

The print is titled "Moving Out" by Don Stivers. There was nothing routine about the mission of the U.S. Cavalrymen. The real, sudden danger of the unforgiving frontier was always on their minds. In the print, cavalry troopers are moving out on yet another mission. The formation moves pass the red bricked post housing with long shaded porches and ruff hewn flooring. The column of twos continues slowly pass uncertain yet courageous family members into the foreboding frontier. A mother holds her infant while two obedient children stand by her side as she watches her trooper ride slowly past silhouetted in the early morning sun.

"Moving Out" speaks powerfully to each modern soldier and their families. Like the troopers in the print, I'm on a journey to board the bus for the airport. I look around me and see the same stoic faces of the old cavalry troopers on the young faces of America's finest sons and daughters, now focused straight ahead as we board the bus for our journey. The faces among the many families gathered at the assembly point reflect those of the cavalry families – the slow uncertain waves, the tentative smiles, the courageous anxiety and haunting eyes focused upon their loved one.

In my mind I can hear the sounds from the print that each trooper hears – "Bye, Daddy." "Hurry up and come back." "Will you be back for my birthday, Pa?" My ear can hear the soft sound of a rifle sliding into a worn leather case. My mind's ear picks up the squeaking of saddle leather as the trooper mounts his horse. There is the clink of metal scabbards upon the side of the horse as the trooper settles into his saddle. Finally there is the metal scuffing of horseshoes upon the hard western clay as the trooper moves pass the security and comfort of post into the unsecured frontier and harsh realities of being a trooper on patrol.

All these sights and sounds are still true of today's "trooper". Boarding the bus I hear a small boy say, "Bye, Papa. Bye Papa" and a young girl says, "My birthday is next month. Will you be here, Mom?" There is the rustle of heavy rucks being loaded, sliding against duffle bags packed with more gear. There is the sound of weapons being shouldered then stored overhead on the bus. Sitting in this seat I can imagine what saddle leather would sound like as I try to find a comfortable spot for the silent journey to the airport. The scuffing of horseshoes is replaced by the whine of a jet engine preparing to taxi down the early morning runway. Lastly there are the stoic faces with eyes that pierce straight through to the heart and soul of each soldier.

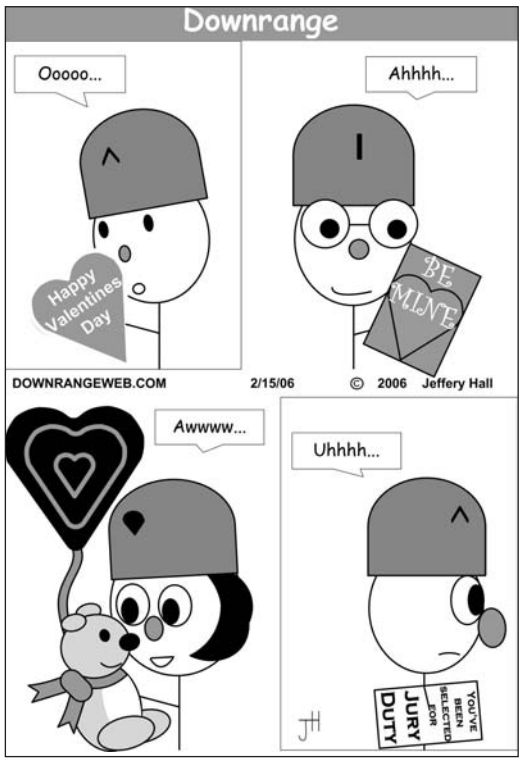
No matter what mission we are on (soldier on patrol or family back home) we can courageously fear no evil because our Heavenly Father protects us with his rod and staff.

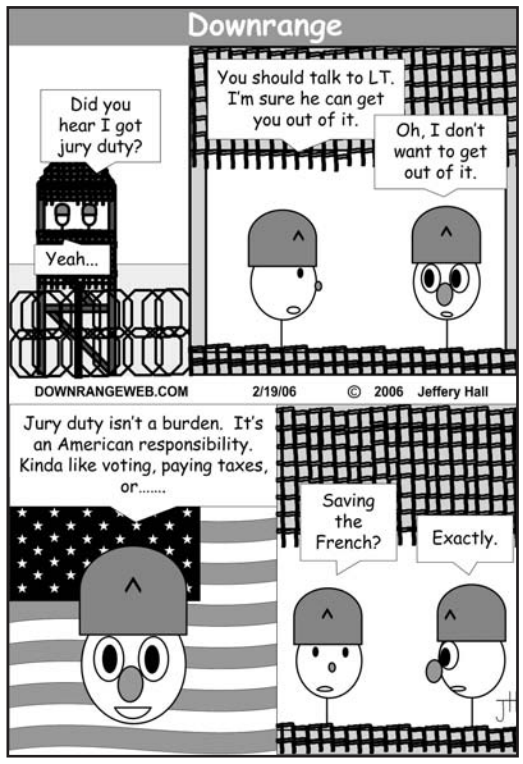
Trust God to guide you through your valley. He still hears and sees us just as he saw those frontier troopers "Moving Out."

U.S. Army photo by SPC James P. Hunter

An Iraqi Soldier with the Iraqi Special Operations Force prepares his M-240 machine gun for use during the ISOF Convoy Security Course gradutation ceremony Feb. 9. The course provides Iraqi Soldiers with the skills to properly pull security during convoy operations.

Scimitar Slapstick





Art by Maj. James D. Crabtree

WELCOMING
our new *"Landing Zone"* on-air traffic controller...

Sgt. Lucrecia Gutierrez

Hear Sgt. Gutierrez play your favorite Rock hits
Monday - Saturdays, 2 - 6 p.m.
on *Freedom Radio* 107.7 FM

Occasionally, Freedom Radio must leave the air for service maintenance. We appreciate your patience during these times and hope you enjoy our satellite feed from our headquarters at the American Forces Network in Mannheim, Germany.

Fightin' Words

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8			■	9			
10				■	■	11	
12		■	■	13	■	■	
	■	■	14		15	16	
■	17	■	18				■
19							

ACROSS

1. 1960's English Band
5. A Jeff Lynne band, abbreviation
6. Abbreviation for kilobyte
8. Alternative rock band ____ 6
9. Soul singer India ____
10. 1930's & 40s crooner ____ Crosby
11. ___ Hook & the Medicine Show, 70s rock group
12. Linux and Windows are _____, abbreviation
14. Motown founder _____ Gordy
18. Greek for hill
19. Remaining Joy Division members formed this alternative rock group

DOWN

1. A predecessor to rock & roll
2. Presley or Costello
3. Futuristic cartoon babe _____ Flux
4. Hair metal band ____ Row
7. 1950s rock star Chuck _____
13. Jim, Sharon, Andrea, and Caroline _____ make up this Irish folk rock band
14. ____ _____ Dolls
15. Actor, comedian ___ Skelton
16. "_____ a deer, a female deer."
17. Chuck D, Flavor Flav band, abbreviation

Fightin' Words solution from Feb. 10, 2006

A	Q	U	A	R	I	U	S
M	T	N	■	■	■	N	E
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[Counter Radio-controlled IED Electronic Warfare]

CREW

Treat Us Right
We'll Help Save Your Life

Darling of the ward ...

Young girl receives medical attention form 47th CSH

Story and photo by
Sgt. 1st Class David P. Benamati
138th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

LSA DIAMONDBACK — The smile on the face of the little Iraqi girl in the Intensive Care Ward of the U.S. Army's 47th Combat Surgical Hospital has an uplifting effect on the otherwise somber mood of the hospital.

Samah Arajy is a precocious 12-year-old Iraqi girl recovering from wounds she sustained when she was caught in the crossfire between Coalition Forces and insurgents last September in her home town of Tall Afar. Initially, she was treated at a local Iraqi hospital and released shortly thereafter. Because her family was unable to get follow up medical care, her wounded leg became infected.

It was obvious to her father, Mohammed Arajy that his daughter needed medical treatment soon. Help came in the form of 2nd Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment. While in Mosul, where Samah's family was staying temporarily, her father sent her brother running outside their residence to flag down the U.S. Army Stryker vehicle on patrol to ask for some anti-bacterial ointment. Capt. Brent Irish, platoon leader for 2nd Plt. stopped the Stryker and asked to see the girl.

"I asked our medic, Spc Jacob O. Olthoff to have a look at her and see what he could do for her," said Irish. "As Olthoff was removing the bandages, we could tell that she was not healing right. The look and smell of the infection was obvious. So we decided to bring her to the CSH for treatment and her father agreed to let us take her there.

The doctors at the CSH examined Samah, realized the infection was serious, and needed immediate medical attention; care she would not be able to get locally. Lt. Col. Gregory Semanick, is a doctor of pediatrics and was her doctor at the ward. knew her condition was serious. "I knew that if we didn't treat her, she would lose her leg to the infection," said Semanick.

The Soldiers of 2nd Platoon visit her almost daily to check on her condition. For them it is therapeutic as well, an escape from the tensions of daily patrols in dangerous neighborhoods. She has become their surrogate daughter and they lavish her with the loving attention they would give their own children.

Samah Arajy, laughs with Soldiers at the 47th Combat Support Hospital in Mosul, where she was treated.

Since she was admitted to the CSH, Samah has under gone several operations and six weeks of intensive antibiotic treatments. Her condition has improved dramatically and her leg is healing. The staff and doctors treat her like one of their own children; pushing her up and down the corridors of the hospital in her wheelchair, joking, and playing games. They call her "the darling of the ward".

Soldiers support soccer

Troops help donate jerseys to youth players

Story and photo by Spc. Lee Elder
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

HAMRIN — Soon, Iraqi soccer players will be wearing new jerseys donated by an English football club.

Soldiers from Company C, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, presented the jerseys to the town mayor, Khaled Ibrahem Khalaf el-Jarbary.

The mayor said he hopes to schedule a match between two of the teams wearing the jerseys.

"This makes me very happy," el-Jarbary said. "It is a good feeling knowing you military guys take care of the civilians."

The jerseys were procured by Company C's predecessors, Battery B, 1-10 Field Artillery, 3rd Infantry Division. However, they were not delivered until after the units had changed out late last year.

Capt. Angel Brito, Company C's commander, said he was glad to finish the job.

"I really didn't do much," said Brito, a Levittown, Puerto Rico native. "I was just on the receiving end of what they had done."

There were enough jerseys donated for five teams, each sporting different color schemes. It took two Soldiers to carry the gigantic box into the mayor's home.

Despite much community interest in soccer, the teams have had little in the way of support until now. The mayor said the uniforms would be put to good use.

"There will be a lot of happy young people," he said. "The teams will be very happy."

The Ipswich Town Football Club donated the uniforms. Brito's predecessor, Capt. Mark Stoneman, who set up the donation, had contacted the English team.

Soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division, hand out new soccer jerseys to Iraqi youth along with Khaled Ibrahem Khalaf, Hamrin's mayor.

For his part, el-Jarbary said the presentation should be a good start to a good working relationship between the town and U.S. forces. He pledged to continue working with U.S. and Coalition forces to help sustain peace here.

"I am going to do my best to continue this," el-Jarbary said. "I want our relationship not to be like military to civilian, but be more like brothers."

In addition to the uniforms, new soccer balls also were delivered. It was a different sort of mission for the Soldiers of the Fort Carson, Colo., unit who were greeted by about 50 local children.

"It's really nice to get out and meet the public," said Spc. Nathan Yancer, a driver from Athens, Mich. "It's good to see smiling faces."

"When you see their smiling faces, it makes what you're doing here seem more worthwhile."

Beanies for Baghdad

Story and photo by Spc. Karl Johnson
363rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD — In a country where having a toy is a rarity, Soldiers passing out beanie babies to Iraqi children can become very popular.

"The children's faces just light up when they see you," said Sgt. 1st Class Alan Certain, Company C, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion. "It's amazing to see what an effect a simple toy can have on a kid."

The civil affairs Soldiers pass out the small toys during their missions in central Iraq.

Sara, a child living in Baghdad, with Beanie Baby "Courage."

To date, more than 150,000 of the miniature stuffed animals have been distributed throughout the war-torn nation with the help of Beanies for Baghdad, a nonprofit organization.

What started as an attempt to get one child to smile has turned into a project that is helping Soldiers build positive bonds with the Iraqi people.

"This is forming the beginning of friendships between the children and the Soldiers," said Donna Ward, Beanies for Baghdad project manager. "The hope for a better tomorrow is found in the children of Iraq."

"We are hoping to see an entire new generation of Iraqis who trust that we are their friends and that we're here to help them," said Capt. Darrell Retheford, Co. C, 490th CA Bn.

The success of Beanies for Baghdad has just begun, said Ward.

"We have so much more we hope to accomplished," she said. "These little ones didn't ask to be born in the conditions they are growing up in and this is a way we can make a difference."

"I personally feel this is a small gesture we as Americans and other countries can do to help our Soldiers sow seeds of friendship and to give these children something to smile about in a war-torn land," said Ward.

'Banshees' prepare to prowl home

Story and photo by
Cpl. Micah Snead
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing

AL ASAD — The Banshees of Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 1 are preparing to return home after six months of duty in support of Operation Iraq Freedom at Al Asad.

The EA-6B Prowler squadron, based at Marine Corp Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., recently completed its mission of electronic warfare in support of II Marine Expeditionary Force. The Banshees logged more than 800 flight missions, or sorties, which added up to more than 3,000 flight hours.

"This was a very successful deployment for us," said Maj. John D. Thurman, an electronic countermeasures officer and Grand Prairie, Texas, native. "We got a lot of flight hours and it was gratifying because we know we made a contribution to the overall effort."

The Banshees deployed to the Al Anbar province with high-tech weapons to battle insurgents. The EA-6B employs nonkinetic firepower to protect Marines and Soldiers on the ground. While much of the unit's mission is classified, the Prowler attacks by disrupting communications or disables the enemy's capabilities using specialized equipment instead of engaging enemy targets with bombs or rockets.

"It was an awe-inspiring experience," said Cpl. Anthony Potts, an electronic countermeasures systems technician and Santa Maria, Calif., native. "This is everything we wanted to do when we became Marines. We are putting our technical skills and physical abilities to use against an enemy and in support of our ground forces."

The Banshees, who supported OIF from Prince Sultan Air Base during 2003, were only the second Prowler squadron to operate from Al Asad. They also expanded their support to include detachments of carrier-based squadrons Navy Electronic Warfare Squadrons 135 and 141. Marines not only arranged billeting, transportation and working spaces for the Sailors, they provided training, tools and maintenance assistance for the detachments.

"Due to our support, Navy and Marine Corps Prowlers were able to conduct more sorties, which is beneficial to our guys on the ground," Thurman said. "Our logistical and maintenance support for them enhanced the overall operational success and that is why it was important."

An EA-6B Prowler aircrew from the Banshees of Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 1 prepares for the squadron's final flight mission, Jan. 21, at Al Asad. The Banshees, based at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., are preparing to return home after six months of duty.

The squadron supported 15 major operations in Iraq and watched from the skies as Iraqis made history on the ground with a referendum vote during October and parliamentary elections during December. The deployment was a first for many of the Banshees and most took advantage of the opportunities to excel, Thurman said.

"One of the real big positives from this deployment is the experience gained by young aircrew members," Thurman said. "Not only their flight hours, but working in a joint environment and being a part of the decision-making process. That kind of experience is not easily gained."

The deployment presented obstacles and opportunities to the aircraft maintainers as well. The Banshee maintainers racked up more 41,000 maintenance hours and performed 20 engine installations during the deployment.

"I learned a lot and I think many other Marines did the same," said Cpl. Norberto A. Vela, a seat mechanic and Mission, Texas, native. "The pace was a lot faster. There were more flights and we had to replace engines more than we were used to in Cherry Point. I think the junior Marines responded to the environment and workload very well." Overcoming obstacles big and small was a theme for the Banshees throughout the deployment, Potts said.

101st medics train Iraqi counterparts to save lives on battlefield

An Iraqi Soldier drags a casualty to safety during a training exercise. U.S. medics trained their Iraqi counterparts in combat medical procedures.

Story and photo by Spc. Lee Elder
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

MUQDADIYAH — U.S. medics here are gearing up for a second round of training with Iraqi Army medics in first response procedures.

Based on the Eagle First Responder Course, taught for years at Fort Campbell, Ky., the five-day course gave Iraqi Army medics updated training in key battlefield medical tasks. It's just one of the tasks for U.S. forces who are preparing their Iraqi counterparts to become more self-sufficient in their battle against insurgents.

"This will result in many saved lives," said Sgt. Thomas Miller, a medic attached to 1st Battalion, 32nd Cavalry, 101st Airborne Division, stationed at Forward Operating Base Normandy. "That is the most satisfying part for us as trainers, knowing they will take this training and use it to save lives."

> ***"That is the most satisfying part for us as trainers, knowing they will take this training and use it to save lives."***
>
> Sgt. Thomas Miller

The last course trained 30 medics. The upcoming course hopes to train between 20 to 25 medics, Miller said.

Medics were taught airway management, controlling bleeding, treating casualties for shock and tactical combat casualty care. The classroom training lasted four days and, on the fifth day, the student medics were sent through scenario-based training where they would perform tasks they had been taught in class.

"We put all these tasks together at the end," Miller said.

Army medics were assisted by Iraqi doctors, most of whom could speak English. This helped lessen the language gap between instructors and students.

"We would work with the Iraqi doctors and that way things wouldn't get lost in translation," Miller said. "When your translator understands what's being taught, it makes teaching much easier."

Miller said U.S. instructors enjoyed teaching the class and are looking forward to the next one. They found they had many things in common.

"It's always fun to teach and share techniques," Miller said. "It's always fun to teach students who are enthusiastic and want to learn."

The Iraqi Army medics' expertise and experience levels varied. It was up to the instructors to keep things interesting for every one.

"The biggest challenge was trying to get on the same level with the Iraqis," Miller said. "There was quite a bit of distance between their medical technology and ours. We had to find a place in between and discover a happy medium."

The training and testing was made as realistic as possible. U.S. forces even fired AK-47 rifles during the testing to give Iraqi medics the feeling they were operating under combat conditions.

"It added to the stress level," said 1st Lt. Chad Gagnon, the medical platoon leader at FOB Normandy. "Plus, it gave our Soldiers training using AK-47s."

The date for the upcoming course will be based on the local Iraqi Army battalion's training schedule. Because of so many demands on its time, it is difficult to find a time for the training.

Miller said Iraqi Army medics were urged to share their training with their fellow Soldiers. It would give them additional medical assets similar to the U.S. Army's combat lifesavers program.

"By training the medics first, it gives them the wisdom and the knowledge to be better medics," said Miller. "They will now be able to take the First Responder training to their own Soldiers."

Superbowl Sunday spent with Stars

Ex-football stars, actress get chummy with troops here

Story and photos by
Pfc. Cassandra Groce
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

TIKRIT — The Super Bowl has long been an event that excites football fans everywhere. Soldiers in Iraq looked forward to that 2 a.m. game as well. Not much could improve on that game, except maybe some retired NFL pros sitting with you.

Numerous Soldiers in Iraq were visited by an entourage of traveling football players, culminating with them watching the game with troops in Tikrit, at Forward Operating Base Speicher.

Running back Keith Byars, who played in Super Bowl XXXI, linebacker Bryan Cox, who helped the Patriots win the Super Bowl in 2001 for the first time in franchise history, kicker Nick Lowery, who broke virtually every Chiefs record including longest field goal, and running back Christian Okoye "the Nigerian Nightmare" who was nominated for the 2000 Hall of Fame, attended.

In addition to this elite group of players, Bonnie-Jill Laflin, a former Cowboys and 49ers cheerleader, CEO of an NBA clothing line and actress in shows including Baywatch, Ally McBeal and numerous music videos, came to cheer the troops.

"I hear it's pretty much like Groundhog Day with the same thing over and over," said Laflin. "So if I can change it up and put a smile on their face, it's really worth it to me."

The group visited troops at Camp Adder, Haditav, Alasad, Ramagan near Samarra, Speicher in Tikrit, Tajji, Prosperity and Liberty in Baghdad.

While at Ramagan, the players' "toughness" was challenged from a convoy of returning Soldiers. The jests led to the players being given a chance to fire a .50 caliber machine gun and an M-4 rifle.

"We got to shoot guns, which was really fun," said Laflin.

The group's trip to Iraq had some sobering ramifications as well. When they first arrived in Kuwait, they watched fallen Soldiers being shipped back.

"It was very sobering and really put things into perspective," said Brian P. Lee, the director of Marketing Ventures and Promotions, which put the NFL players tour together. "Regardless of if you think the war is right, wrong, or otherwise, we have people over here battling for our freedoms," said Cox. "So it's important that I come over here and let the guys and girls know how thankful I am that [they] sometimes have to give up [their] lives for others to be free."

Seeing the country first hand and talking with Iraqis has showed the athletes a whole new side to a high-profile war.

"You read all kinds of junk about the country and once you come to Iraq your thoughts and views are changed," said Okoye. "This is real and a lot of things are a lot better than I thought and what I have seen on television. [These] guys have really done a good job bringing freedom to the country. From what we hear on TV and see in newspapers, it didn't sound like this, so I am very impressed."

"It's funny talking to the Iraqis and seeing how nice they are," said Laflin. "Everyone here seems happy and that the war is making a difference. I think if you come over here it changes your opinion."

The players and Laflin spent hours visiting troops throughout the camps, signing autographs and taking pictures with them. They also took the time to eat dinner with troops.

"We want to say to them to hang on - keep doing what they are doing," said Okoye. "They have our support. Just looking at them and seeing the smile on their face makes me feel good."

"We've been all over Iraq to support the troops, and it is very dear to my heart," said Laflin. "It was very important to come out here and give the troops a smile."

Bonnie Jill Laflin eats chow with Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Speicher. Many, many Soldiers stopped by to say hello.

Keith Byars, Bryan Cox, and Bonnie-Jill Laflin took numerous photographs with Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Speicher in Tikrit.

2006 Torino Winter Olympics on AFN

Friday February 17, 2006
1100 Xtra Figure Skating, Snowboarding, Speed Skating, Skeleton
1200 Sports Women's Snowboarding, Men's Curling, Women's Curling, Women's Hockey, Bobsled
1800 Xtra Figure Skating, Snowboarding, Speed Skating, Skeleton
2300 Xtra Women's Hockey: Semifinals
Saturday February 18, 2006
0130 Xtra Men's Curling: USA vs. Switzerland
0400 Atlantic Figure Skating, Snowboarding, Alpine Skiing, Skeleton, Ski Jumping
0500 Xtra Cross-country
1300 Xtra Men's Hockey
1600 Sports Men's Curling: Usa Vs Germany
2000 Atlantic Cross-country, Biathlon, Men's Hockey: Usa Vs Slovakia, Short Track Speed Skating
2300 Xtra Men's Hockey: Czech Republic Vs Finland
Sunday February 19, 2006
0130 Xtra Women's Curling: Usa Vs Italy
0400 Atlantic Alpine Skiing, Short Track Speed Skating, Speed Skating, Ski Jumping, Bobsled
0400 Xtra Figure Skating, Snowboarding, Alpine Skiing, Skeleton, Ski Jumping
1100 Xtra Short Track Speed Skating
1400 Xtra Men's Hockey
1600 Sports Women's Curling: USA vs. Switzerland
1830 Atlantic Men's Hockey: USA vs. Sweden
2100 Xtra Biathlon
2200 Xtra Men's Hockey: Czech Republic vs. Italy, Finland vs. Canada
Monday February 20, 2006
0200 Xtra Men's Hockey: USA vs. Sweden
0600 Xtra Men's Curling: USA vs. Great Britain
1100 Xtra Figure Skating, Alpine Skiing, Speed Skating, Cross-country, Bobsled, Freestyle Skiing
1530 Xtra Men's Curling: USA vs. Great Britain
1600 Sports Men's Curling: USA vs. Canada
1830 Xtra Women's Hockey: Bronze Medal Game
2200 Xtra Men's Curling: USA vs. Canada
Tuesday February 21, 2006
0100 Xtra Women's Curling: USA vs. Great Britain
0400 Atlantic Figure Skating, Alpine Skiing, Freestyle Skiing, Ski Jumping
0600 Xtra Women's Hockey: Gold Final Game, Bobsled
1100 Xtra Figure Skating, Alpine Skiing, Freestlye Skiing, Ski Jumping
1400 Sports Biathlon
1430 Xtra Men's Hockey
2200 Sports Men's Hockey: USA vs Russia
Wednesday February 22, 2005
0100 Xtra Curling: Tiebreaker
0400 Atlantic Figure Skating: Ladies Short Program, Bobsled, Speed skating
0530 Xtra Biathlon
0730 Xtra Nordic Combined
0830 Xtra USA vs. Russia
1230 Xtra Figure Skating: Ladies Short Program, Bobsled, Speed Skating
1600 Sports Women's Curling: Semifinals, Men's Hockey: Quarterfinals
1800 Xtra Men's Hockey: Quarterfinals
2230 Xtra Men's Hockey: Quarterfinals
2300 Sports Men's Hockey: Quarterfinals
Thursday February 23, 2006
0100 Xtra Men's Curling: Semifinals
0500 Xtra Snowboarding
0600 Xtra Men's Hockey: Quarterfinals
1100 Xtra Alpine Skiing, Freestyle Skiing, Speed Skating, Snowboarding, Short Track, Figure Skating
1400 Sports Women's Biathlon Final
1500 Xtra Women's Curling: Bronze Medal
1900 Sports Women's Curling: Finals
2000 Xtra Men's Hockey: Quarterfinals

For further details check *http://myafn.dodmedia.osd.mil/*