



SCIMITAR

MNF-1's Cutting Edge



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U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles W. Gill

Got your six: Pfc. Janelle Zalkovsky, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne provides security while other Soldiers survey a newly constructed road in Ibriam Jaffes Dec. 4. The road project was initiated by U.S. Soldiers in cooperation with local officials to provide better access to the village from other main travel routes.

Training Iraq's Future Leaders

Story by Sgt. Dennis Gravelle
and Spc. L.C. Campbell
138th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

MOSUL — The future of a successful Iraq begins with the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police. Having them trained properly is an important step in accomplishing that goal.

The Hammam Al Alil Regional Training Center provides that first major step by helping the IA and IP gain the confidence they need to professionally handle any emergency situation.

“What has been accomplished over the past several months has been unbelievable, it would not have been possible without the help of the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army, and also the citizens of Mosul,” said Lt. Col. John Norris, battalion commander, 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment.

During an Iraqi Soldier's career, he will attend different stages of learning at the training center. One of those stages is the Junior Officer Development Course which lasts 24 days. It combines basic Soldier skills, leadership training, and intense physical training; raising the overall

effectiveness of platoon leaders. Upon completion of the course, platoon leaders will return to their assigned units better trained and more proficient.

In January, 21 Soldiers graduated from the first squad leaders course held at RTC. The course is designed to teach Iraqi Soldiers basic military skills such as drill and ceremony, basic Soldier common tasks skills, rifle marksmanship, military operations in urban terrain and training on improvised explosive devices. The Soldiers endured an

See *FUTURE*, Page 4

Iraqi Army assumes more battlespace responsibility

Story and photo by Pfc. Jason Dangel
4th Infantry Division

BAGHDAD — The 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, assumed responsibility for areas in central and southern Baghdad during a battlespace transfer of authority ceremony from 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, at Forward Operating Base Honor on Feb. 20.

The ceremony took place after many months of training and combined missions between the two units, in which the Soldiers of the 4th Brigade Combat Team assisted the Soldiers of 5th Brigade in preparation to assume the battlespace inside and around the International Zone.

Col. Mohammed Wasif, the 5th Brigade commander, accepted responsibility from Col. Michael Beech, the 4th Brigade Combat Team commander, as his unit became the latest Iraqi unit to gain control of its own area of responsibility.

"This brigade has trained hard, and we are ready for the mission," Mohammed said to the crowd of spectators. "We promised God and the government that we will remain loyal Soldiers, defending the borders of this country."

The assumption marks the unrelenting progress in the Iraqi Security Forces' capabilities.

"This event sends a clear message to those who wish to disrupt or doubt the successful future of Iraq," Beech said. "As our combined forces continue to grow, we will follow the Iraqi lead as they continue to keep the pressure on the enemies of a free Iraq."



Soldiers from the 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division march during a pass in review at the battlespace transition of authority ceremony between the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, and the 5th Bde., 6th IAD, at Forward Operating Base Honor on Feb. 20.

Beech said he remains optimistic about the new transition. The Iraqi Army is now responsible for the security of nearly 60 percent of Baghdad.

The Soldiers of the 5th Iraqi Brigade.

have been operating independently for months with little or no assistance from 4th BCT, Beech said, and as they take the lead in operations in central and southern Baghdad, both units will continue to work

together.

"Our mission remains the same," Beech said. "We are proud to continue combined operations as allies and to support the success of the 5th brigade."

Ready...steady...FIRE!



Member's of the Iraqi Army acquire their targets during a dry fire drill. 3rd Battalion, 16th Field Artillery Unit, Military Transition Team # 0812, are on their second day of training the Iraqi Army in a two week training course.

U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Katrina Beeler

OPSEC



What you don't say could save lives

Quote of the Week

"The enemy is anybody who's going to get you killed, no matter which side he's on."

- Joseph Heller

PERSPECTIVES

Civility over civil war

Gen. George W. Casey
Multi-National Force - Iraq, Commanding General



Gen. Casey

Last Wednesday terrorists blasted the golden dome of the Askariya Shrine in Samarra north of Baghdad, heavily damaging one of Islam's most significant religious sites. America and other countries have vowed to assist in the restoration of this important shrine to its former glory as a main symbol in Iraqi culture. It is clear the effort of the terrorists was to provoke the anger of Shiites and drag Iraq into a sectarian war. It is also clear that the terrorists again grossly misjudged the character and spirit of the Iraqi people - and their will to become a free and democratic people.

Just as important as the loss of an important shrine is what did not happen as a result of the bombing. The Iraqi government did not buckle; it stood strong and took strong measures. The Iraqi Security Forces did not fragment or choose sides; they protected the Iraqi people.

The Iraqi people as a whole saw this for what it is; a blatant effort to foment sectarian violence and promote the perception of civil war in Iraq. In all three counts the terrorists failed miserably and the people of Iraq won. Iraqi leaders such as Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari and President Jalal Talabani immediately denounced the crime and demanded the Iraqi people not take the bait of sectarian violence, but instead use this moment to join against terrorism and for Islamic unity. Provincial councils in

Basrah, Baghdad and elsewhere called for calm. The people of Iraq listened.

To be sure there was and continues to be sporadic violence, as some rogue elements use this opportunity to get revenge for past wrongs or commit crimes. But, there is no indication of an all-out civil war to the extent initially reported in the Western media. As of Saturday, careful analysis revealed less than two dozen mosques across Iraq were attacked and only six of

those had any significant damage. Instead of the wildly predicted outbreak of civil unrest, across Iraq there were dozens of mainly peaceful protests ranging in size from hundreds to thousands of people in the days following the bombing calling for unity. Only three demonstrations were marred by violence - and those situations were quickly controlled by the ISF.

Speaking of the ISF, the government of Iraq employed their military and police forces in an expert fashion and much anticipated "splits" in composition of these units again failed to materialize. That is a testament to their superior training, commitment and, more importantly, their allegiance to protect their country and constitution. The loss of any holy site is a tragedy, but the loss of a country's unity is a catastrophe. There will be more tests of strength and will in the coming months and years for the Iraqi people. However, if last week is any indication, the future of the new democratic Iraq is off to an impressive start.

1st Armor Div.: We are watching

Story by Spc. Anna-Marie Risner
133rd Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

TIKRIT — They are watching, listening, waiting for the enemy to make his move. High in the air, their eyes are always open, waiting to help find those who would do us harm.

The Soldiers of Battery D, 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Armor Division, have

an important mission at Forward Operating Base Speicher. They operate and maintain radar systems which monitor everything in the surrounding skies.

"Our bread and butter is the radar," said 1st Sgt. Eric Laub, Battery D, 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery. "It gives the commanders a picture of what's going on."

The main purpose of this system is to pinpoint the origin of incoming

fire, said Sgt. Ernesto Ritacca, with Battery D. This allows counterfire efforts to be more accurate. In addition, teams attempting to locate caches often have more success.

"It helps us try to shut them down," Laub said. "Without the radars, it would be a lot more difficult."

Ritacca said while the system won't prevent attacks from occurring, information gathered can help keep the FOB safer down the road.



Airmen stand ready as others prepare for a convoy.

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

Scimitar Pulse

What's your favorite OutKast song?

"Hey Ya!"

Sgt. Jesse Moore
Company B,
4th Special Troops Battalion
Cumby, Texas



"Hey Ya!"

Pvt. Mark Ryan
Security Detachment, 1st Battalion,
Royal Australian Regiment
Townsville, Queensland

"Hey Ya!"

Pfc. Julie Banks
Company B,
4th Special Troops Battalion
Havlock, N.C.



"Ms. Jackson. His high voice and the name of the song reminds me of the song Me and Mrs. Jones."

Staff Sgt. Harvey Jones
448th Civil Affairs Battalion
Tacoma, Wash.

"I like them all. I can't decide."

Sgt. Tameiko Snell
Headquarters and Headquarters
Battery, V Corps Artillery
Cottonwood, Ala.



"B.O.B. (Bombs Over Baghdad)"

Spc. Adam Spates
113th Cavalry
Sioux City, Iowa

"Ms. Jackson. It's a catchy tune."

Sgt. Gabby Abboud
448th Civil Affairs Battalion
Fort Lewis, Wash.



Blackhawk pilot makes suggestion, wins big

Story and photo by
Sgt. Ryan Matson

101st Combat Aviation Brigade,
101st Airborne Division

A small knob which costs about \$5 to purchase, had once cost the Army several thousands of dollars when it broke, until an observant warrant officer saw a solution and made a suggestion, earning him \$5,000.

Chief Warrant Officer Merle Goodall, a Blackhawk pilot with Company C, 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, made a common-sense solution to a problem he noticed on a piece of avionics equipment he uses every day.

The suggestion was named the Military Suggestion of the Year on Jan. 19.

"It's a very simple idea really," Goodall said. "And I was very surprised when I found out I won."

Goodall said he actually came up with this year's Military Suggestion of the Year about five years ago while at Fort Campbell.

Goodall said he was doing preflight checks on equipment inside his UH-60 Blackhawk when one of the knobs on his horizontal situation indicator, or HSI, a navigation device, fell off. The knob is held on the indicator by a special screw that tightens it down against a piece which sticks out of the front face of the indicator. The screw requires a special



Chief Warrant Officer Merle Goodall, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, holds a horizontal situation indicator, the piece of avionics equipment in which he suggested an improvement, winning him the 2005 Military Suggestion of the Year.

Allen-wrench-like tool to be tightened. When the screw strips out, the knob becomes loose on the piece sticking off the indicator face, and eventually will fall off, rendering the indicator useless.

Without the knob and no replacement knobs, the standard procedure in the maintenance manual was to remove the entire indicator and send it back to the manufacturer, Goodall said.

The indicator runs about \$34,000 for the complete instrument. When an indicator is turned in to be repaired or replaced, the Army receives a turn-in credit of about \$22,000, meaning around \$12,000 is lost each time an indicator must be replaced.

"To take this thing out and put in a new one costs the Army about \$12,000," which did not include the cost of labor, Goodall said.

Goodall asked around and found the problem was more common than he had suspected.

"It happened to me twice in one year," Goodall said. "Then I started asking around DynaCorps at the time and found out that it had happened a few other times in our battalion alone."

So Goodall took action. He went to the Fort Campbell office of the Army Suggestion Program and filled out a DA Form 1045, which allows a Soldier to make a suggestion about something they notice as a problem with equipment in the Army.

"I suggested on the form that the Army start carrying replacement knobs in the Army inventory," Goodall said. "They should issue them a National Stock Number that the crew chiefs could look up and actual get to order. I also asked them to issue a change to the Dash 23 manual, which is the Blackhawk maintenance manual, authorizing the crew chiefs to actually replace the knobs. It seemed simple enough."

The suggestion bounced around various departments of the Army while they looked into the equipment and determined if Goodall's suggestion, was feasible. He checked in with Fort Campbell Army Suggestion Program manager Gail Linkous and she informed him where the suggestion was in the process.

Meanwhile, Goodall kept his suggestions coming. He would come across something he

saw that could be fixed or improved, usually something simple.

For example, before his unit left for a training rotation in the field, Goodall suggested a canvas cover be made for an expensive new laser copier the company had just acquired.

The canvas cover was made by the canvas shop at Fort Campbell and Goodall's unit's copier was the only one that still functioned following the NTC rotation. He said that his suggestion for the canvas was adopted as a Fort Campbell policy, for which he received \$100.

Goodall said he sees good ideas every day, and feels that more Soldiers need to know about the Army Suggestion Program.

"The point is, I see Soldiers who have great ideas everyday, but they just aren't officially adopted," Goodall said. "I see crew chiefs who have something rigged up because it makes something easier, and it's a great idea. That's why I think it's important that people know about this program."

Suggestions can be submitted online or in person at a post Army Suggestion Program office. For more information on the program, check out the Army Suggestion Program web site at <https://armysuggestions.army.mil>.

As for Goodall, he said he doesn't remember how he found out about the suggestion program, but he did.

"I only found out about (the) office just on a whim; I heard somebody talking about it," Goodall said.

It turns out that whim will save the Army money, and was worth \$5,000 to Goodall as well.

FUTURE

from Page 1

intense six-week course of military training before returning to their assigned units.

Also at the RTC, Iraqi Police will receive a Police Basic Skills Course that will train recruits on basic law, human rights, detainee and basic police operations.

Iraqi Army medics will attend a 30-day training course teaching them the basics in treating injuries on the battlefield. Throughout the course each Soldier is trained how to control bleeding and shock, CPR, airway management, how to treat a chest injury, and how to administer an IV.

All of the courses taught at the RTC are designed to give the IA and the IP the professional skills needed to take the next step in securing Iraq's future as a new nation free from terrorism.

Waterborne Soldiers take fight to rivers

By Cpl. Michael Molinaro
4th Infantry Division

ISKANDARIYAH — Some of them are tankers, some of them are infantryman, and some of them are ... sailors?

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, are keeping the pressure on terrorists in the Babil province by taking counter-insurgency operations to an unexpected place for an armor unit - the water.

Terrorists will do whatever it takes to go undetected and using the river is one of the ways they transport and hide bomb-making materials, said Staff Sgt. Paul Jones, combat engineer with Company E.

The battalion discovered numerous weapons caches since taking over. During the past two-weeks alone, four caches were found over a 24-hour period. Last month, a substantial cache was discovered on one of many islands along the river.

Islands are a clever place for

terrorists to hide improvised explosive devices and other weapons used against

Coalition and Iraqi security forces, said Jones. Having a presence on the rivers to prevent terrorists from getting to those islands only makes sense. Soldiers probe the islands and search for weapons and other material terrorists use to do harm.

"It's a nice change-of-pace to be on the river after patrolling the roads all of the time," said Spc. Michael Komaromy, a Company E combat engineer.

"There are bad guys on the water, so we need to get them too."

Soldiers from Company E never trained for water operations before deploying late last year, Jones said. Since arriving in Iraq, it has been on-the-job training for these medics, scouts and other Soldiers tasked with keeping the water routes free from terrorists.

"If cruising this river all day and all night is what it takes to take the bad stuff out of the (terrorists') hands, then that's what I'll do," said Jones.

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Iraqi Police show off their skills in a demonstration at the IP graduation here on Feb. 16, where more than 1,000 recruits earned their place amongst the ranks of the force.

Police force bolsters strength

IP showcase new talents in ceremony demonstration

Story and photo by Maj. Anna Friederich
4th Infantry Division

AL HILA — Following a formal ceremony to graduate more than 1,000 Iraqi Police, demonstration took place on the parade field in which an IP bus, sirens blaring, entered the area followed by several law enforcement vehicles loaded with seasoned policemen. As the vehicles slowed to a stop, the officers jumped from the vehicles and raced to the bus.

They swiftly secured the area, using distinct tactical formations learned at the academy and cleared the bus of role-playing suspects.

Once they had the “terrorists” face-down on the ground and their hands secured behind their backs, they were escorted to the waiting security trucks and whisked away to face justice.

The demonstration showcased the skills taught at the academy and portrayed a potential real-life situation.

“It was very impressive and smoothly executed, a

good combination of their tactical proficiency and road experience,” said Col. John Tully, commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division

During the Feb. 16 ceremony academy graduates, decked out in their finest, displayed their best drill and ceremony techniques for the audience as they took the parade field for the formal portion of the graduation ceremony.

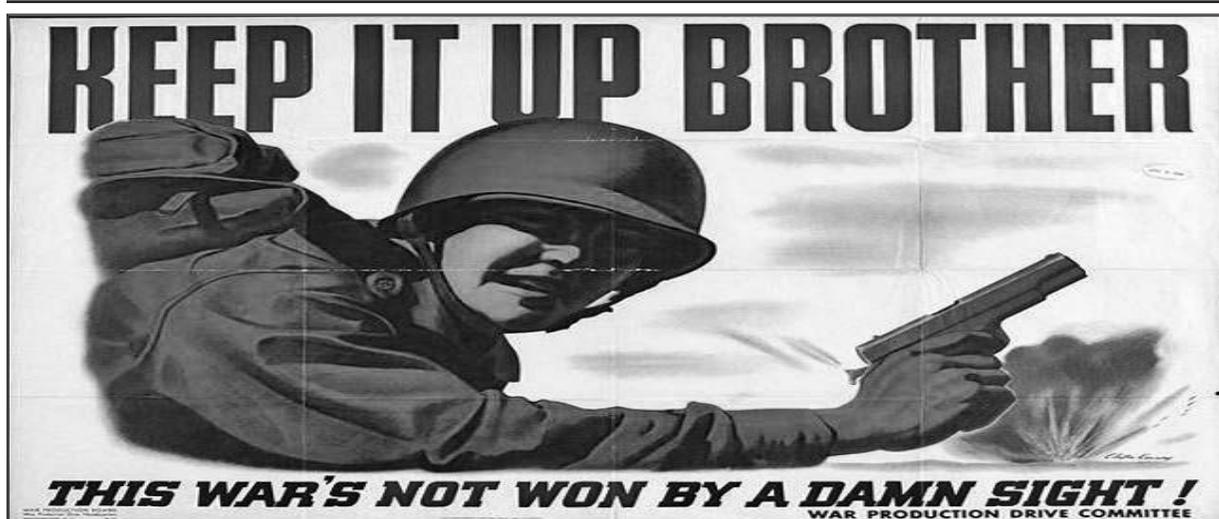
More than 1,000 IPs were in formation, standing tall, as several dignitaries praised their achievements and lauded their determination and courage in joining the ranks of such an elite force.

Speaking on behalf of the Babil Provincial Police was Brig. Gen. Qais Hamza, provincial police chief. He expounded on the accomplishments of those serving and the future success of those joining their team.

Maj. Gen. Joseph Peterson, Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq, commended the courage of the newest IPs and their dedication in keeping the province safe from terrorism and moving the region toward stability.

About 50 IPs were awarded distinguished honor graduate certificates for their exceptional performance during the training. Quais, Peterson and Tully personally awarded the certificates and congratulated the security officers.

The day ended with a tour for the guests through the Hall of History, which opened last month.



Quickies

Tension rises

SAMMARRA — In southern Salah ad Din province, an explosion destroyed the al Askariya “Golden Mosque” early Wednesday morning.

The mosque is being secured by Ministry of Interior forces.

The cause of the explosion is unknown, but is under investigation.

Mosques are protected sites under the Geneva Convention. Individuals or groups who attack and destroy religious sites demonstrate their disregard for religious and culturally significant structures and the people who value them.

Good work boys

CAMP FALLUJAH — More than 3,000 pieces of various types of munitions were discovered Feb. 20 by U.S. Army soldiers conducting a reconnaissance patrol near Al Quratiyah.

The cache is among the largest discovered to date in western Al Anbar province.

The Soldiers, from 14th U.S. Cavalry Regiment, were actively seeking out weapons caches because of tips provided by locals. The Soldiers discovered two displaced piles of dirt and rocks near a vehicle trail. Upon further investigation, the displaced areas were identified as weapons caches and they were excavated.

The cache of munitions ranged from 60 to 125 mm mortar rounds and included various other projectile-type munitions.

This latest cache is the 118th found by soldiers from 4th Squadron, 14th U.S. Cavalry Regiment.

Meeting of the minds

FOB CHARLIE — Officers from the Babil Provincial Police Department and sheiks from the surrounding areas met with Coalition Forces representatives Feb. 23, to discuss security issues in the province.

Meeting with the Iraqi representatives were Lt. Col. James Love, commander, 1st Battalion, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, and Capt. Brian McCarthy, commander, Company B, 1-10 Cav.

They discussed ways of preventing conflicts that have hindered the process of improving the overall security and stability.

The sheiks said the meeting was a positive step toward better security. They also suggested including tribal leaders from the northern Babil province and representatives from the Iraqi Army in these meetings. A committee is being formed to increase the representation and widen the scope of these gatherings.

Thou shalt not steal

TIKRIT — A Task Force Band of Brothers air weapons team engaged and destroyed four trucks being used to transport fuel stolen from a pipeline near Samarra Feb. 20.

AH-64 Apaches from the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, were patrolling, when a group of men pumping fuel into drums were spotted. As the helicopters approached, the group scattered and eight men attempted to flee in the trucks.

The thieves were detained by a ground patrol from the 101st Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team that the helicopter crews guided to the site.

The Soldiers also seized a small cache of weapons that consisted of six AK-47 assault rifles with ammunition and a sniper rifle.

Air Assault!

BAGHDAD — Soldiers from 3rd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division and 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, disrupted a terrorist staging area Feb. 19.

The Soldiers air assaulted into the village and surprised the terrorists before they could escape.

More than 39 detainees were captured along with several caches in and around the village.

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Shelter from the storm

Story by Sgt. David Bill
48th Brigade Combat Team

BASE CAMP ADDER — Soldiers from the 48th Brigade Combat Team and the 406th Corps Support Battalion delivered large tents to five local Iraqi Bedouin families who lost their homes during a recent winter storm that brought high winds and heavy rains.

Sheik Mohammed Minshed Tayseer contacted the 48th BCT Civil Affairs Office and requested five tents for families in dire need of shelter

after the storm. The civil affairs team requested support of the 16th Combat Support Group, who provided Army tents.

"It feels good to provide for the locals," said Spc. Jason Douthitt, of Evansville, Ind., a member of the 406th who helped roll the tents from the truck.

"You saved me from death to life," said Kadhem Utob, a retired farmer who watched as his shelter was loaded into the bed of a small pickup truck.

"You are providing good support for the people of Iraq, I give thanks to you."

Joint effort helps kids

Story by
LuAnne Fantasia
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

BAGHDAD — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, working with the 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, donated \$3,000 worth of goods to Iraqi children of the Red Crescent Al Huddah Orphanage last week.

Tim Rogers, project supervisor with USACE, received the funds from his church in Vicksburg, Miss.

The church began collecting donations last Christmas, which helped to purchase blankets, shoes

and toiletries for the children.

"I get a lot of personal fulfillment and satisfaction," Rogers said. "I feel, as a Christian, it is a calling to help people."

Sgt. Maj. Tammara Wipf, acting first sergeant, Company A, 425th CA Bn., said the project serves as a steppingstone toward the long-term goal of ensuring health care for Iraq's orphaned children.

"A lot of times, we don't see the results of our work," Wipf said. "Events like this are tangible; (they) give us a chance to see first hand what we've done."

"This was small, but it was also positive because we helped people," said Wipf.

32nd Police station opens

Story by
Suzanne M. Fournier
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

BASE CAMP ADDER — The police chief of Diwaniyah Province, Iraq Reconstruction Management Office, Representative Hakim Kawy and Col. Larry McCallister, commander of Gulf Region South District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opened the 32nd police facility within Diwaniyah Province.

Hay Ramadan Police Station is a new station in a congested market area of city of Diwaniyah. Around 100 police officers and guests were in attendance.

The police chief thanked all Americans and especially the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their help.

Construction started on the \$141,000, multi-room police station in early November and was finished this past week. The station has offices and sleeping rooms for the officers, visitation rooms, jails, bathrooms, a parking area, a perimeter wall, a guard tower and emergency generators.

This station ends the police program of the Security and Justice reconstruction sector built by the U.S. Corps of Engineers using Iraqi Relief and Reconstruction funds.

COMING AND GOING



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

Servicemembers who just arrived in theater move to their rally point, while a Soldier says goodbye to Iraq at Sather Air Base.

BROTHERHOOD



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class David P. Benamati

Soldiers from the 562nd Engineer Company, 172nd Stryker Brigade and the 14th Combat Engineer Battalion salute their fallen friends and comrades, Sgt. Christopher Morningstar, Sgt. Jeremiah Boehmer and Spc. Roberto Martinez.

"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.



Freedom Radio 107.7 FM



Enemy craters filled over night



Army engineers from Company C, 505th Engineer Battalion, clear debris from an IED crater before preparing it for repair.

Story and photo by
Spc. L.C. Campbell
138th Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

MOSUL — The silence of the night is broken by the screaming sound of a concrete saw and a jackhammer vibrating the tranquil atmosphere of the quiet city streets.

Preparing the crater turns the jagged edges of the exploded ground into unmistakable clean cut edges as engineers from Company C, 505th Engineer Battalion, worked through the night to repair craters caused by improvised explosive devices, Feb. 16.

The engineers leave Forward Operating Base Marez weekly to do extensive repair to the roadsides. They do this to protect Coalition Forces and to deter anti-Iraqi Forces from reusing the craters to place another IED.

The IED repair sites are

surveyed by an advance team to make sure that the repair operations run smoothly during the entire process.

The Soldiers clean out the crater, removing trash and excess concrete. Rebar is then cut and placed into the crater, so that when the concrete is poured it maintains stability.

After the preparation is complete, concrete is poured into the crater. The concrete must be poured precisely, and smoothed before it starts to cure.

It takes the engineers about two hours to complete one crater. The repair time includes setting up and breaking down their equipment and departing to fill another crater. The engineers usually fill about two craters every night. Engineers found that crater repair was one way to help Coalition Forces avoid the threat of IEDs on future missions.

Iraqi operators train with best

Story and photo by Spc. James P. Hunter.
Multi-National Corps - Iraq

BAGHDAD — The Soldiers of the Iraqi Special Operations Forces Brigade believe they have the capability to defeat the terrorists who are attempting to destabilize Iraq, said an Iraqi ISOF instructor.

The ISOF Brigade Soldiers continue to hone the combat skills that make the brigade a driving force in Iraq's fight for freedom.

Nine ISOF Soldiers graduated from the Convoy Security Course Feb. 9.

Initially, U.S. Army Special Forces trained the ISOF. The SF trainers selected the best-qualified Iraqi Soldiers to become instructors and teach the Special Operations coursework to their fellow Iraqis.

Now, American SF Soldiers serve as advisers to the ISOF Brigade on training and operations, helping the Iraqi Soldiers on skills they can sustain and improve upon, said one of the ISOF's U.S. advisers, a captain from the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force - Arabian Peninsula, who asked not to be named.

"The course gives the Soldiers the ability to protect themselves on the roadway and protect convoys," the U.S. captain said. "As we know, convoys are the most dangerous part of being in Iraq."

Throughout the course, the Iraqi Soldiers learn a variety of skills, starting with marksmanship and weapons familiarization.

They then learn infantry movement tactics, such as advancing toward an objective and breaking contact with the enemy. The Soldiers then learn to operate Humvees.

Finally, they put all the training together, mount weapons on the vehicles and conduct a mounted tactical movement.

An Iraqi ISOF instructor said that his goal as an instructor is to proficiently train his students, making them skilled



Iraqi Special Operations Force Soldiers show their marksmanship during their Convoy Security Course graduation.

Soldiers who are ready to defeat the enemy.

"God willing, we will do it. We will fight terrorism, fight the Saddamists, and gain the freedom of Iraq," he said. "We are Iraqi Special Forces. We shall go on many missions and all the students will be trained and ready to fight in the streets."

Iraqi Soldiers are ready to conduct their own convoy operations without the supervision of American forces, said the U.S. captain serving as an ISOF adviser. The Soldiers are trained, and equipped with modern weapons and armored vehicles.

Once they are given a mission, they coordinate everything, he said. The Soldiers write their own operation

order, conduct the mission and survive on their own.

"This training is vital," the U.S. captain said. "Not only to survival on the road but to the overall mission."

"Their passion for what they do, their love for their country and their desire to have it back is unparalleled," he said. "In Iraq, their people take nothing for granted. Their Soldiers know what is at risk everyday in their lives and for their families."

The Iraqi ISOF instructor said his overall goal for the Iraqi special operations is to protect their freedom and the people of Iraq.

"For God, for country, and for freedom. Long live Iraq!" he said.

SEARCHING FOR THE



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kelly McDowell

Spc. Andrew Vanleuvan, 3rd Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, searches the fields in the Sadr-Yusufiyah area with a metal detector for a weapons cache.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kelly McDowell

Spc. Jeff Graham, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, assists the Explosive Ordnance Disposal team in lining up the mortars found in the weapons cache. The 3rd Platoon uncovered in the Sadr-Yusufiyah area south of Baghdad Feb. 21.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kelly McDowell

Munitions and explosives were discovered by the Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, south of Baghdad.

INGS THAT GO BOOM



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kelly McDowell

Lt. Col. Rob Haycock, commander, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, looks over Spc. Jeff Graham's shoulder while he examines a part from a weapon discovered in the weapons cache.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kelly McDowell

Master Sgt. Wayne Kettelhut (left), from IED Joint Taskforce, shows a member of the Explosives Ordnance Disposal team, a part of a mortar round while standing behind a small portion of the weapons cache.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kelly McDowell

Lt. Col. Rob Haycock, commander, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, examines a sighting device.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kelly McDowell

A black cloud of smoke rises over the houses south of Baghdad. The explosion was a controlled detonation of a large weapons cache discovered by the Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, Feb. 21.

Rebuilding Iraq

Projects shaping a nation

Tall Kief

Repairs to the Tall Kief courthouse have been completed. The \$194,000 project also upgraded parts of the facility.

Shekhan

A hospital renovation project in Shekhan should boost health service to more than 3,000 people.



Sulaimaniyah Province

A border fort in Sulaimaniyah Province has been built, providing security along the mountainous border with Iran.



Diyala Province

Two border forts have been built in the Diyala Province along the Iraq and Iran border. Each structure costs about \$608,000.

Fallujah

New storm drains in Fallujah will help prevent flooding and property damage for about 200,000 residents.

Baghdad

A school renovation in Adhamiyah is complete, giving K-6 grade students a better place to learn.

Baghdad

More than a mile of pipe will give 11,000 people in Mahmoudiya clean water.

CRESCENT SNAPSHOTS

Scimitar readers send in your photos for consideration for *Crescent Snapshots*. Please e-mail photos to scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil.



A convoy of Polish Army Soldiers involved with civilian-military cooperation return to Camp Echo after inspecting electrical lines at three locations in Diwaniyah.



Pfc. Gregory Mazzone, from the 978th Military Police Company, wears a combat protective suit on FOB Brassfield-Mora. The suit includes ballistic plates in the front and back as well as armor inserts for the arms.



A U.S. Soldier from the 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, guards suspected insurgents during a raid in Taji.



Members of the 101st Airborne Division Band play for Soldiers at LSA Diamondback dining facility as part of a morale-building tour.

Cool Movies, AFN Movie Channel

Saturday March 4, 2006

1100 Xmen
1300 Laws of Attraction
1445 A Simple Plan
1700 Stripes
1900 Predator

2100 Laws of Attraction

2245 A Simple Plan

Sunday March 5, 2006

0100 The Bad News Bears

0256 A Few Good Men

0533 Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's

Stone

0815 Independence Day

1300 Lord of the Rings: The

Fellowship of the Ring

1620 The Fast and the Furious

1807 The Breakfast Club

1953 Lord of the Rings: The

Fellowship of the Ring

2313 The Fast and the Furious

Monday March 6, 2006

0300 Revenge of the Middle Aged
Woman

1300 78th Annual Academy Awards

1700 Galaxy Quest

2100 78th Annual Academy Awards

Tuesday March 7, 2006

0300 Adrift

0700 Something's Gotta Give

0915 The Juror

1100 The Entertainers

1300 Undercover Brother

1442 The Rookie

1700 The Score

1918 American Pie 2

2100 Undercover Brother

2242 The Rookie

Wednesday March 8, 2006

0100 The Entertainers

0300 Odd Girl Out

0444 Ordinary People

0700 What Women Want

1300 The Tuxedo

1453 Deep Impact

1700 Pure Country

1907 Arthur

2100 The Tuxedo

2253 Deep Impact

Thursday March 9, 2006

0446 Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home

0700 Bad Girls

0847 What Lies Beneath

1300 Bringing Down the House

1459 The Thomas Crown Affair

1700 The Pelican Brief

1914 Quicksilver

2100 Bringing Down the House

2259 The Thomas Crown Affair

Friday March 10, 2006

0100 Abandoned and Deceived

0449 Good Will Hunting

0700 Someone to Watch Over Me

0856 Point Break

For further details check

<http://myafn.dodmedia.osd.mil/>

NATO Soldiers learn life-saving techniques

Story by Capt. James Lowe
506th Regimental Combat Team

BAGHDAD — North Atlantic Treaty Organization Soldiers assigned to the Iraqi Military Academy of Rustamiyah trained with Soldiers from 801st Brigade Support Battalion, 506th Regimental Combat Team, on Eagle First Responder life-saving techniques last week.

Soldiers and officers from the countries of Great Britain, Romania, Hungary and Poland participated in the life-saving courses. Completing the course will provide them the ability to certify their Soldiers in Eagle First Responder.

Soldiers participating learned advanced life-saving techniques ranging from applying a tourniquet, intravenous therapy, treatment for shock and other first-aid techniques. During the eight-hour training event, the Soldier medics from 801st BSB provided instruction on techniques used in Iraq.

"These techniques are combat-tested and proven to save lives. By conducting combined

operations, we provide a training platform for others to learn the 101st Airborne Division's standard of being an Eagle First Responder," said Capt. Ryan Schwankhart, 801st BSB operations officer.

"This is the training that directly impacts lives on the dangerous roads of Iraq," said Maj. Anpal Kiss, the IMAR surgeon, a general practitioner from Hungary. "We are excited to participate in this training alongside our Coalition partners."

"Great training. This is far more comprehensive than what our ground forces usually receive. The procedures and equipment used by U.S. forces help to improve our ability to care for wounded on the battle-

field," said British Command Sgt. Maj. Alan Bissett.

Training culminated with personnel administering IV fluids in buddy teams and participating in scenario-based medical evaluation exercises. The NATO students completed the required tasks to standard and successfully met the training objectives.

"This is the training that directly impacts lives on the dangerous roads of Iraq."

Maj. Anpal Kiss



Lt. Col. Robert Neese works on his patient in the newly remodeled dental facility in the International Zone. The re-opening ceremony is scheduled for today and returning patients will find a more comfortable environment.

Brand new chairs, same familiar tools

Story and photo by
Pfc. Sean C Finch
Multi-National Corps - Iraq

BAGHDAD — For servicemembers afraid of going to a dentist that is on a dirt floor inside of a tent, there is no need to worry.

The 10th Combat Support Hospital dental facility underwent a complete remodeling in the middle of last year and has changed to fit a more professional environment, said Lt. Col. Robert Neese, commander, 10th Combat Support Hospital dental clinic.

"Our goal during the re-make of the dental clinic was to create an office environment that would help our Soldiers to relax and feel more at home and less intimidated by their surroundings," said Neese.

"Due to renovations and remodeling, as well as a full and well-trained staff, Coalition Soldiers can find dental care that supersedes the expectation of a field clinic," said Neese.

The dental facility is open to all Coalition troops as well as contractors and civilian military employees.

While U.S. troops are the primary reason for the renovations, they represent the smallest number of patients at the dental clinic, said Neese.

"Perhaps the greatest testament to U.S. military dental facilities is that when deployed, American troops represent a miniscule percentage of who we actually see here in the office," said Neese.

American troops are required to go through an extensive dental checkup

before deploying to any foreign country. This ensures the servicemembers arrive in Iraq without a pre-existing dental problem.

"We see more Coalition troops than anything else, most of them with habitually induced dental problems," said Neese.

The dental facility is not used for regular checkups or for hygiene updating, but rather for issue based problems, said Neese.

Most of the patients that are seen in this clinic have injuries that are either sustained in accidents or people who are having pain and not just routinely visiting, said Neese.

Broken jaws, which have been difficult to get treatment for in the past, are now handled by a maxio-facial surgeon on the staff, said Neese.

The dental facility is comprised of dentists from all over the United States. Dental Command created the facility entirely out of augmented personnel, said Neese.

"Dentists that are assigned to the 10th usually serve six months or less, whereas board certified dentists serve a one-year tour," said Neese.

Dentists are rotated frequently to keep clinic morale high and the staff in good spirits for their patients, said Neese.

"While board certified dentists may lead the way by staying a little longer, it takes the entire staff working together to give anyone who comes in here a world class dental experience," said Neese.

Dental Command is working hard to get more facilities updated, so that care can be comfortably given to all those deployed who need it, Neese said.

Out of Sight



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Timothy J. Vllareal

Boatswain's Mate John Christofferson with the Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Detachment 11, out of Woodby Island, Wash., shoots the .50-caliber sniper rifle at a range in Ad Diwaniyah.

Don't fall victim to an IED.

Create a safe standoff when halted.



0080



IEDs KILL



Pfc. James Horris prepares for another patrolling mission around Mosul as he gets into the drivers hatch of a Stryker combat vehicle.

Grace under pressure

Former busboy remains calm as a Soldier

Story and photo by
Sgt. Dennis Gravelle
138th Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

MOSUL — Every once in a while people abandon their old jobs to jump-start a new career.

For Pfc. James Horris from Baltimore, Md., the decision to join the U.S. Army was easy.

“A year ago I was a busboy in a restaurant in Little Italy, going nowhere, so I decided to join the Army and chose to be an infantryman,” Horris said.

Today, Horris is a Soldier with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team from Fort Wainwright, Alaska, supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom at Forward Operating Base Courage in Mosul.

Back in Baltimore, Horris knew exactly what his schedule would be. Here at FOB Courage, he gets up before dawn, and is out patrolling the streets of Mosul, at times for many hours, unaware of what may come next.

“No day is ever the same, every day we do something different, usually two to three missions a day,” said Horris. “We do more before 9 a.m. than what I did for an entire day back at home.”

The 172nd arrived in Iraq in August 2005 while Horris was still attending advanced individual training. He caught up with the 172nd in November 2005 and was assigned as a Stryker vehicle driver.

“Horris is doing a great job as one of our drivers, he’s very reliable and is quick to learn new tasks,” said 1st Lt. Devin Hammond, platoon leader, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment. Horris is responsible for getting Soldiers to and from FOB Courage safely, not an easy task considering the risks of improvised explosive devices and insurgent activity.

“Our Stryker has had one direct hit from an IED, but Horris remained calm and was able to remain calm and follow directions,” said Spc. Nicholas Ericson, team member, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment.

CHAPLAIN'S TALK

Uncle Bearge's salted Herring

By Maj. Charles Herring
Chaplain,
Multi National Corps - Iraq
Religious Support Operations



Chaplain Herring

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. - Matthew 5:13

I've heard all the jokes about my family name, Herring. There is smoked, dried and even “red herring” but today I'm talking about salted herring.

My uncle, Bearge Hagopian, was an avid fisherman. He fished for just about anything. I remember one summer visit to “the camp” on Emden Lake in Maine where we fished from a canoe, cooked on a campfire, and had a glorious time.

One day we didn't catch any fish. Uncle Bearge was not disappointed because he had brought some salted herring for just such an occasion. I can't really remember how it tasted except that it was really salty! That was my first experience of eating a preserved salted fish.

Remembering that wonderful day camping on the lakefront with tall evergreens all around a beautiful New England lake, I got to thinking about Matthew 5:13 and how Jesus tells me how I am the “salt of the earth.”

Salt preserves. (That herring I ate was preserved, but I thought it was possibly fossilized!) Lots of things are still preserved by salt today. Spiritually I am a preserving element to a world that will decay because of sin. My life (and that of most people of faith) is designed and commissioned by God to enhance a community and to preserve what is good and right today, here and now.

There is a powerful significance for a faithful life that is involved in its community. The presence of God in you makes all that He is available to others - to preserve what is faithful and true.

If I am not in a right relationship with God, however, Jesus said I am like salt that has lost its saltiness and is good for nothing. None of God's grace and power can be shared through me to others if I have lost my “saltiness.” How do I test the “saltiness” of my life? Am I preserving my family from destructive influences? Do I preserve the faithful and true spirit of the soldiers I meet every day? Am I preserving the super teamwork and esprit de corps in my work section? Is Iraq a better place because I am involved in it?

The evidence that we are being used by God as a preservative is that things are becoming spiritually better around us. If people around us are deteriorating spiritually, we need to allow God to use us as His great preserving agent - “the salt of the earth.”

A needle in the rubble



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. William Servinski II

Army 1st Lt. Eric Robinson, with Company B, 4th Brigade, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, searches a field of rubble during a sweep for weapons and items used for making improvised explosive devices in Baghdad, Jan. 23.

Scimitar Slapstick



Art by Maj. James D. Crabtree

WELCOMING
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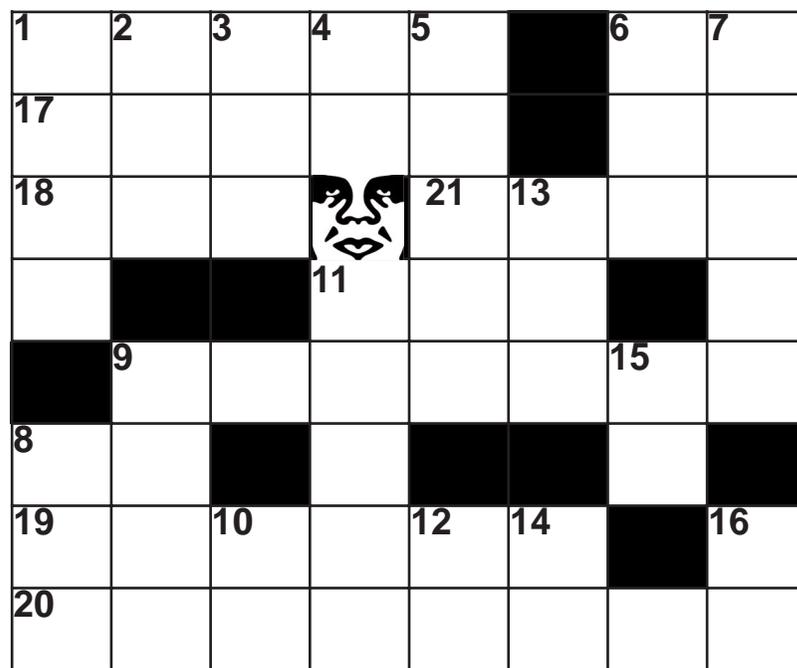
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Fightin' Words



DOWN

ACROSS

- 1. Synonym for bum
- 2. Santa's helper
- 3. Russian jet
- 4. Audio, Video
- 5. Type of aftershave
- 6. Predicates AIDS
- 7. Where Davy Crockett died
- 8. Combat ribbon
- 9. Religious teacher
- 10. New Mexico abbreviation
- 11. Good cookies
- 12. Barry Bond's position
- 13. Labor union
- 14. Delaware abbreviation
- 15. Cliff Huxtable's job
- 16. Can't drink without it
- 17. Martini accoutrement
- 18. Ronald Dahl's giant
- 19. Terminator's first name
- 20. SecDef
- 21. Spanish for long live

Fightin' Words solution from Feb. 24, 2006



[Counter Radio-controlled IED Electronic Warfare]

CREW

Treat Us Right
We'll Help Save Your Life

National Guard unit leaves mark here

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

CAMP LIBERTY — A yearlong deployment to Iraq offers Soldiers both opportunities and challenges.

For one Arizona National Guard Military Police unit, going home after a tough deployment provided them the opportunity to look back on what they accomplished as well as on what price they paid.

"I've seen the most violent parts of life and, at the same time, the greatest humanity ever," said 1st Lt. Jon Cope, 860th Military Police Company.

The MPs spent the majority of their year working side-by-side with Iraqi Police, training them to take over responsibility for securing the streets of the Abu Graib district of western Baghdad.

Success was by no means guaranteed. Several of the MPs said they had their doubts as to whether the IPs could be brought up from meager beginnings to operate independent of U.S. forces.

"When we first arrived in Iraq, the Iraqi

policeman were wearing slippers and walking around with AK-47s," recalled Cope, a Phoenix, native.

With hard work, the MPs were able to help transform an inexperienced group of men into a professional force ready for the challenges of autonomy.

"We definitely made a difference here," said Sgt. Chris Palmer, 860th MP Company. "From day one until (the day) we left, we could see with our own eyes their improvement."

"The Iraqi Police that we worked with now do their jobs the right way without any help or supervision," Palmer said. "I wish everyone back home could see the difference we've made."

When asked what major factor contributed to the unit's success, the MPs said the willingness of their Iraqi counterparts to learn new things.

"The Iraqi police in our area were very willing to learn, and they really want to make a difference in their country," said Palmer.

The Soldiers from the 860th MP Co. left Iraq Feb. 14 to begin the journey back

home to the U.S.

The friendships formed between the MPs and their Iraqi counterparts will last a lifetime, but the strides made in Iraqi police development will last even longer, Cope said.

"After a while working with them, we made friends with the Iraqi policemen – and we really care about them," said Cope. "If one of our IPs was harmed, we took it like they were one of us."

"There is a very good lieutenant, an Iraqi policeman that I consider a very good friend," he said. "It would break my heart if anything ever happened to him."

"I lost three close friends while I was here," said Cope. "I've lost some hearing in both ears, and I deal with several other aches and pains every day, but I haven't lost time in life. I think all the time I've been here and everything I've done has been for a purpose."



1st Lt. Jon Cope, 860th Military Police Company, holds a little girl he called "Gypsy" in the village of Al Risallah, near the Abu Ghraib district of western Baghdad.

Soldiers fire paper bullets

Story and photo by
Sgt 1st Class
Walter E. van Ochten
133rd Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

AD DAWR — With the sun burning down on the market of Ad Dawr, Iraqi Soldiers walk down the streets hanging posters on the walls of the shops. Local citizens gather to see what they say and talk to the Soldiers as they go about their duty.

Soldiers of the 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, gave the Iraqi Soldiers the posters and leaflets to hang up and pass out.

"This mission is what I like to call a walk and talk. The [Iraqi Army] gets to walk around town. It gets them involved and gets our message out at the same time," said Staff Sgt. Mark Williams, Psychological Operations non-commissioned officer for 2nd Squadron, 9th U.S. Cavalry.

According to Williams, this mission is twofold. One mission is distributing information on what he calls the "product," which are his leaflets and posters. On one set of leaflets is information detailing the impact of improvised explosive devices on civilians. Another set of leaflets outlines the mission and how to contact the Joint Communications Center, the

Iraqi version of the American 911 emergency system. The posters also highlight the area's most wanted.

The second message comes from interaction with the locals. "Most of the product we put out is just a way for the people to talk to us," said Williams. "So we can show them that we're human, and we, in fact, are here to help."

It is up to the Iraqi Army to get out and distribute them in Ad Dawr areas with high pedestrian traffic.

"What we realize is that the people want to see their guys doing the work. It's their country; it's their army now," said Williams. "Putting their face on the mission ...handing out product, [really is] just an avenue for them to come and talk. So we have the IA do it and the people come and talk to them."

This kind of mission is not something Iraqi Soldiers are used to doing. In the past, the Iraqi Army did not understand that meeting and talking with the civilian population was vital to their success.

"Face to face interaction engagements are something that we have been training them to do," said Williams. "They say 'that's not what a Soldier does but it is now, so they need to get used to doing it.'"



This Iraqi Soldier hangs a poster of the area's "most-wanted", in Ad Dwar. The poster details the crimes by local anti-Iraq forces leaders against Iraqi citizens.



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

Capt. Erik Aadland, front and center, looks up from his reading during his flight over Iraq. Most of the passengers in this aircraft are returning to Iraq after a 2-week R & R break. The aircraft and crew are from the 315 Airlift Squadron, Charleston Air Force Base, SC. They are serving for one-year in Southwest Asia in support of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.

Combat Camera



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Jason Dangle

An Iraqi martial arts expert exhibits his skill during the transfer of battlespace ceremony between the 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division and the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, at Forward Operating Base Honor Feb. 20.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Desiree Palacios

U.S. Army Sgt. Eric Leslie, with 722nd Explosive Ordnance Company, 3rd Ordnance Battalion, headquartered out of Fort Anniston Army Depot, Ala., puts together a charge with three boxes of C4 in the back of a joint explosive ordnance disposal rapid response vehicle during a mission in Baghdad, Feb. 15.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt Valerie Smith

The engineering and installation team, with players from five different National Guard units, takes a morale break to play basketball at Ali Base.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin L. Moses Sr.

U.S. Army Soldiers from Company A, 3rd Battalion, 6th Field Artillery train on firing points with an M119 Howitzer outside Camp Liberty, Dec. 23.

Soldiers sing away the blues

Story by Pfc. Luke Allen
10th Mountain Division

CAMP LIBERTY — "Open Mic Night" gives Soldiers a chance to unwind each Thursday at the Scorpion Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center here.

"There's other things that we do to relax, like playing pool and video games, but this is definitely the most fun," said Pvt. William Babineau, Fires Support Element, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division.

"We're just enjoying the music and festivities, having a good laugh and getting the stress off our shoulders," said

Babineau, who performed Feb. 16.

Although not everyone who performs is a good singer, Soldiers seem to enjoy live entertainment. "Everybody's watching you, so if you mess up, people are going to know, but you've got to go up there and have a good time (and) keep a smile on your face while doing it," said Babineau.

Damien Bland, events coordinator for the Scorpion MWR, said that karaoke night always has a good turnout. "Open Mic Night is the craziest event because of the Soldiers. They like to come up here and do all kinds of dances and get big groups singing and dancing on stage. We just leave it open for

whatever they want. They seem to enjoy it, and I enjoy watching them," said Bland.

Events like karaoke night provide Soldiers an opportunity to "live out their dreams while in a combat zone," said Bland.

"This is just a small part of the freedom we're actually here to protect. You have to give up a lot to be here and serve our country back home, but the MWR facilities really present a way that Soldiers can get a small piece of that freedom back," said Pfc. Michael Parris, of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. "You can kind of get away from the military a little, and be yourself."



Capt. Tom Kennedy, a Camp Slayer facilities manager and tour guide, explains the history of the Baath Palace on Camp Slayer.

Knowing is half the battle

Story and photo by
Pfc. Jason Jordan
10th Mountain Division

BAGHDAD — Iraq is full of history dating back thousands of years. For most of its historic past, the area now known as Iraq was called Mesopotamia.

Many dynasties and empires ruled the Mesopotamia region including the Sumer, Akkad, Assyria and Babylonia. The rich culture and colorful past still inspires the minds of Iraq's modern leaders and the palaces they called home.

Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, recently were provided an opportunity to learn more of Iraq's recent history.

Ten Soldiers went on what the brigade hopes is the first of several tours to explore the palaces and underground bunkers of Camps Victory and Slayer.

"We wanted to give the Soldiers a chance to learn about the history of the country they are fighting to free," said Capt. Young Kim, chaplain, 1st BCT. "Iraq is a very historical land, and the chance to experience it is exciting to the Soldiers."

The chaplains for each battalion, and their assistants, organize the tours two weeks in advance. The units are contacted with dates and

available slots and the sections send back names of interested Soldiers.

The Headquarters and Headquarters Company first sergeant and the brigade command group are also involved in organizing the tours.

The tour lasted for three hours and visited the Victory Over America palace, the palace of Saddam's son Uday, the Baath palace and presidential underground bunkers.

The buildings are mostly destroyed, so safety is key throughout the day.

"I love sightseeing and learning about history," said Spc. Joalice McKenna, HHC. The role of the brigade chaplain is broader than most might think, said Kim.

Among their numerous duties is to provide ways for Soldiers to release tension in positive ways.

"We just felt these tours were a great way for Soldiers to get away from their normal routines and learn about some exciting history with their fellow Soldiers," Kim said.

"These tours have been a great learning experience since we began them," said Capt. Jason Snelgrove, facility manager and tour guide, 17th Field Artillery Brigade. "We get a lot of questions about the architecture and how many people were inside when the strikes by Coalition Forces began."

There's a tear in my beer



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Sean Finch

Spc. Michael L. Desmarais and Sgt. David A. Avilla, 539th Military Police Company, pour out 8 bottles of whiskey, which represents a small portion of the contraband seized at Camp Victory. "Those who choose to get this stuff, find it in duty-free shops and places outside the wire, but eventually it ends up right here in the dirt," said Desmarais.

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