The Heart Beat

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division
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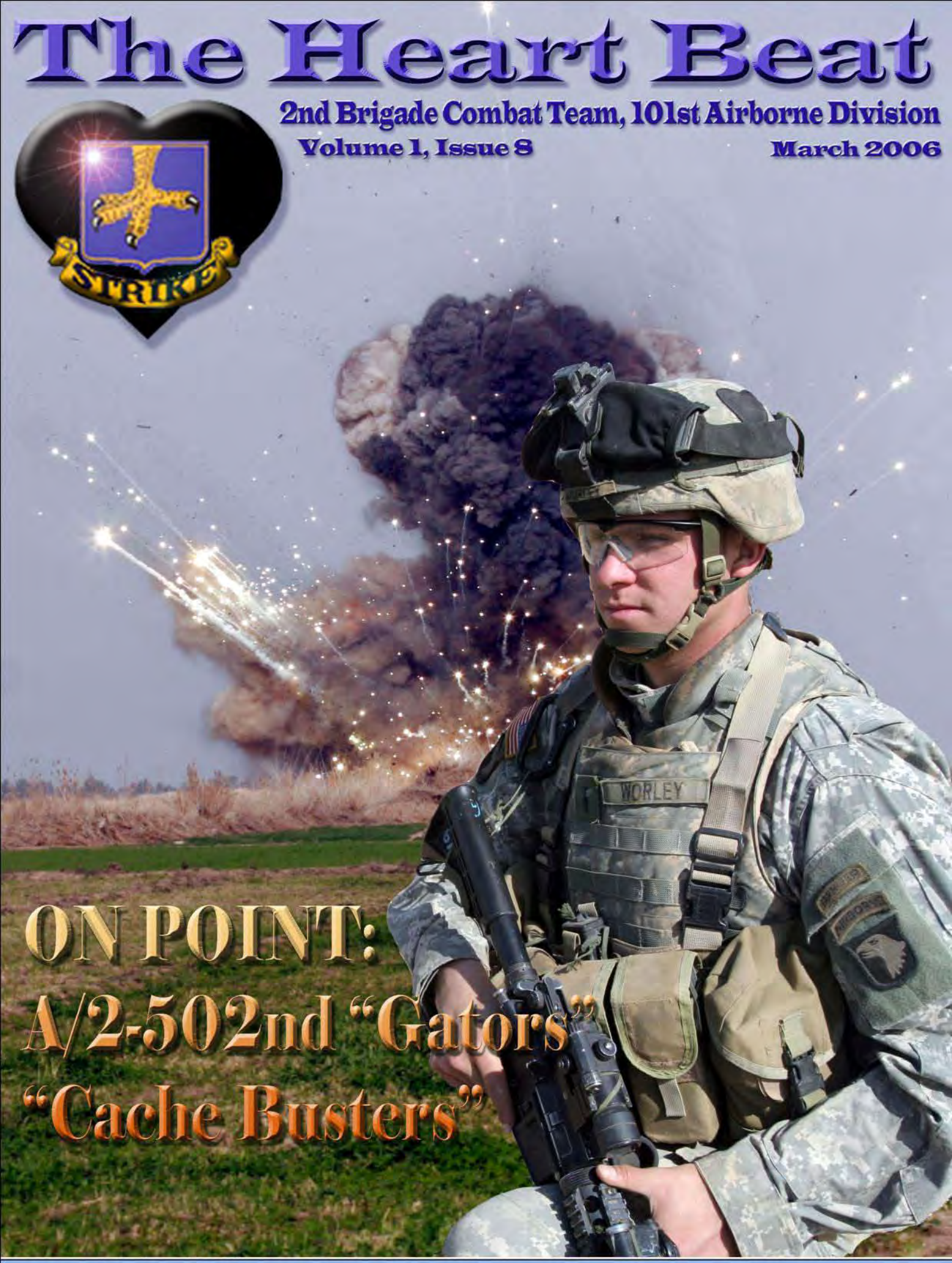

ON POINT: A/2-502nd "Gators" "Cache Busters"

Free Mail

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OPSEC:

It is everyone's responsibility

WHY OPSEC.

* Operational Security is essential and especially true today due to modern technology.
* Classified information must be safeguarded to prevent it from getting into the wrong hands and used to harm Soldiers or family members.

HERE ARE A FEW THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PRACTICE OPSEC:

* DO NOT DISCUSS RULES OF ENGAGEMENT (ROE) WITH MEDIA OR LOCAL NATIONALS.
* DO NOT DISCUSS OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES, EXACT NUMBERS; TROOP STRENGTH, SIZE, LOCATION AND DISPOSITION OF UNITS OR FUTURE OPERATIONS.
* DO NOT DISCUSS OPERATIONAL INFORMATION OVER UNSECURED LINES WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS (TELEPHONE, INTERNET EMAIL)
* TREAT ADDRESS LABELS FROM PARCELS RECEIVED IN IRAQ AS CLASSIFIED INFORMATION AND REMOVE AND BURN THE ADDRESSES.
* DO NOT POST INFORMATION ON INTERNET BULLETIN BOARDS, BLOGS ETC. THAT VIOLATES OPSEC.
* LOG OFF YOUR COMPUTER WHEN YOU LEAVE IT UNATTENDED TO PREVENT UNAUTHORIZED USE.
* SAFEGUARD CLASSIFIED INFORMATION AND DISPOSE OF DOCUMENTS AND OTHER ITEMS APPROPRIATELY, REMOVE AND BURN. (DO NOT THROW OUT IN REGULAR TRASH)

DO NOT HATE

It is our faith, abundantly proven in history that hate, as a unifying force, lasts only a short time. In the end [hate] destroys, not those whom it is directed, but those in whom it is generated.

- Daily Devotional Messages for Those in Service of Others

There is no doubt, the many terrorists that hate anyone not like them, will falter, if not by our sword on this battlefield, then by their own sword.

Each day there is clear evidence the insurgency in South Baghdad is losing momentum. Sympathizers of terrorists groups are rapidly losing ground and influence as the Black Hearts make their presence felt.

In our most recent operations we have seized over 30 caches, killed several insurgents, captured others and destroyed 90% of all IEDs found near the Euphrates River. More importantly, the combined teamwork of all STRIKE units enabled this great Brigade Combat Team to seize key terrain that significantly blocks the easy flow of foreign fighters, weapons and bomb making material into South Baghdad -- no unit in the three years prior to our arrival ever achieved something like this.

The impact of our operations is unprecedented and without comparison. Before we arrived, locals lived in real fear. Councils of concerned tribal leaders would not meet, the Iraqi Army, poorly resourced, would not leave their bases, contractors would not enter any of our communities. There was no hope – only hate. That place –previous called the 'Triangle of Death " has changed.

Furthermore, because of our focus on Baghdad proper and troops to tasks issues, we have neglected it [South Baghdad] for three years. You, STRIKE BCT, have an opportunity to change all that and believe that you have already done more than all that went before have done

-Commanding General MNC-Iraq, 15 Feb

Today, while still we serve amongst life's and war's daily struggles, it is without question, the great Black Heart Soldiers have changed the face of South Baghdad in just six short months. Our collective and individual heroic actions are manifest as we now see contractors on the streets, water in Lutifiya, newspapers and the truth being shared out west in Sadr-Yusifiya, schools and medical clinics opening, the establishment of the first micro-loan facility in all of Iraq, streets being cleaned of debris, electricity repaired (Yusifiya enjoys more daily hours of power than any other city in Baghdad province – it used to be amongst the worst), and children smiling. The roots of terrorism are dying on the vine –hate is loosening its grip on the locals.

Thus, it is my faith, that all of us in STRIKE will continue to help destroy those that generate hate through our hard work and persistence. To date, it is our demonstrated professionalism, competence and courage, that is indeed helping to forever shape the minds of the good citizens of South Baghdad towards America, towards democracy, towards freedom and towards peace. Thus do not hate, but likewise, do not tolerate those that do.

God Bless each of you and your families.

STRIKE!

Todd J. Ebel

Colonel, Infantry

Commanding

ON POINT: A "CACHE

Story and photos by
Spc. Kelly K. McDowell

BAGHDAD-Responding to a tip from a local national and further investigation of that tip from military observers, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, Soldiers uncovered multiple large weapons caches south of Baghdad, Iraq, beginning February 20.

After military observers confirmed the possibility of a mortar cache, 3rd Platoon, Company A "Gators", 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, followed tracks from a farm truck to a large area of dried dirt in the middle of a field just north of the Sadr-Yusufiyah area. At the location Soldiers uncovered a weapons cache near a small canal consisting of multiple various size mortar rounds, rockets, and roadside bomb making materials.

As the days passed from February 20 through 23, the Soldiers continue to search and exploit the cache site uncovering such weapons as over 20 rockets with two homemade rocket launchers, thousands of rounds of ammunition, 660 mortars with five mortar tubes and one complete mortar system and two mortar plates, one tank sabot round, three heavy caliber machine guns, anti aircraft weapons, nine SAGGER missiles, 60 rocket propelled grenades, multiple artillery rounds, various Improvised Explosive Device materials including bags of blasting caps, missiles, grenades and 33,000 feet of detonation cord.

"This was a great find and great day for the coalition forces and the people of Iraq."

"After receiving intelligence that there were mortar tubes in the area a couple days ago, my guys just came off a 24 hour shift, we searched a house and didn't find anything," said 1st Lt. Paul Worley, Company A, 2-502nd IN, who was one of the Soldiers who discovered the initial cache. "So, we searched the fields and found a small weapons cache."

An Explosives Ordinance Disposal team was called to the site to assess the explosives and conduct a controlled detonation of the cache. After the controlled detonation, EOD returned to the site to confirm the destruction of the munitions. In the crater left behind from the blast, there were even more weapons exposed and additional bunkers hidden in the ground.

"As soon as EOD blew [the weapons cache], we returned to secure the field and found this bunker," Worley said.

"I wasn't sure we would get this much stuff in one small farm or field. This is my first real mission out here…If we find [weapons caches] once we will

2-502ND "GATORS" BUSTERS"

find [weapons caches] again," said Pvt. Joshua Powers, 3rd Platoon, Company A, 2-502nd IN, who is new to the unit only just arriving to Iraq seven days prior to discovering the large weapons cache.

The exploitation of the area has continued from Monday, February 20, through Thursday, February 23.

As of Thursday, February 23, the total number of weapons caches discovered by the Soldiers of 3rd Platoon is 16 in a 500 meter circle of a remote farming area.

"I think by coming to isolated places, it shows the people we don't just drive the roads in our up-armored humvees," Worley said. "We are willing to get out and make a difference in their lives. They see us trying to help them. It gives them the hope that when we leave and they are faced with the terrorists they can pick up from where we left off and defeat these insurgents."

After continuously excavating the area for four days, the Soldiers of Company A, 2-502nd IN, had little rest as each day a new weapons cache was uncovered.

"We have been out here working hard trying to uncover everything. It is great to know we are taking away these items that could be used against us or local civilians." said Cpt. Vaughn Strong commander of Company A, 2-502nd IN.

"There were things we haven't seen before in this cache," Worley said. "This was a great find and great day for the coalition forces and the people of Iraq."

This site is still being searched and with the Soldier's hard work and determination more weapons caches are still being found.

"This is exactly the type of find that improves the security situation for the local people and coalition forces," said Col. Todd Ebel, commander of 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. "This is exactly why we're out here, to make a difference. These Strike Soldiers do it every day. God bless them."

Alpha "Gators"

(Left) A large mortar lays in a row of weapons, munitions, and explosives discovered by the Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment (Right) Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, carry and place weapons from a weapons cache discovered in the Sadr-Yusufiyah area (Middle) Spc. Jeff Graham, 3rd Platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, helps a Soldier place an artillery round on a mountain of weapons, munitions and explosives discovered south of Baghdad

FACES OF

(Above) Pvt. Avery M. Jackson, from 1st Platoon, D Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, pulls security at a traffic control point (TCP), during a patrol of Al Rasheed, Iraq on February 11th, 2006. (Photo by SPC Timothy W. Story)

SSG Anthony Durso (Fort Campbell, KY) Squad Leader for Charlie Company, 2d Battalion, 502d Infantry Regiment checks his squad's sector near the Euphrates River in Southwest Baghdad. (Photo courtesy of CH (CPT) Scot McCosh)

(Above) 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, "Bear" Soldiers relax outside the barracks at FOB Falcon (Photo courtesy of 1-22nd IN)

(Above) A patrol from 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, watches the roads south of Baghdad, Iraq. (Photo by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

(Left) On February 22nd, 2006, Specialist Joshua D. Ring from 4th platoon, A Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, travels to the scene of an altercation in Baghdad Iraq. (Photo by SPC Timothy W. Story)

THE HEART

((Above) Pfc. Wright (Left) and Spc. Pharr, HHC 2nd BCT, enjoy a night of music provided by the Fuzz band March 1. (Photo by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell)

(Above) The three singers of the Fuzz Band called the Soldiers from Mahmudiyah to the front of the stage to "show what they got" during a concert held March 1. (Photo by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell)

(Above) 1-320th Field Artillery Soldiers pose for a photo before heading out on a mission. (Photo courtesy of 1-320th FA)

(Above) Soldiers from 1-320th Field Artillery visit with the local children south of Baghdad, Iraq. (Photo Courtesy of 1-320th FA)

(Left) Several soldiers from A Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, take a rest after marching through Rushdi Mullah, Iraq during a mission on February 14th, 2006. (Photo by SPC Timothy W. Story)

AIRBORNE

"Strike" Soldier receives Bronze Star with valor

Photo by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell

CAMP LIBERTY, IRAQ – GEN. RICHARD A. CODY, THE U.S. ARMY'S 31ST VICE CHIEF OF STAFF, PRESENTED THE BRONZE STAR FOR VALOR TO SGT. JEREMY MCDONALD, WHO IS ASSIGNED TO COMPANY C, 2ND BATTALION, 502ND INFANTRY REGIMENT, 2ND BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION, DURING AN AWARDS CEREMONY AT THE IRONHORSE CONFERENCE CENTER.

MCDONALD WAS PRESENTED THE MEDAL FOR HIS ACTIONS JAN. 15 WHEN HE WAS WOUNDED BY TERRORISTS AFTER IDENTIFYING A SUSPICIOUS VEHICLE WHILE ON DISMOUNTED PATROL.

SERVING AS THE SQUAD LEADER, AND PLACING HIMSELF AS THE LEAD ELEMENT, HE ATTEMPTED TO STOP THE VEHICLE FOR INSPECTION. THE VEHICLE'S OCCUPANTS COMMENCED AN UNPROVOKED ATTACK. MCDONALD WAS WOUNDED BUT CONTINUED TO RETURN FIRE. THE SOLDIER WAS STRUCK BY POINT-BLANK RANGE AK-47 FIRE FIVE TIMES. HIS SOLDIERS, INSPIRED BY HIS FEARLESSNESS, ENTERED THE FRAY AND DEFENDED THEIR LEADER, WHO CONTINUED TO FIRE AT THE TERRORISTS EVEN AS HIS SOLDIERS PULLED HIM AWAY FROM THE VEHICLE. MCDONALD CONTINUED TO SECURE THE AREA WITH HIS SOLDIERS UNTIL HE WAS FORCED TO EVACUATE 45 MINUTES LATER.

"There is no better performance" "STRIKE" supporting others to save lives

By Sgt. Ashley Voss
Company C, 526th BSB

While we are participating in the overall mission here in Iraq, be that at work, on a mission, a convoy, or any number of activities, we are participating in history. In the future, the history books of the United States will chronicle significant events such as the massive troop deployment, the capture of Saddam Hussein, and the first democratic election in Iraq. Unlike the remarks left to the books, our history as soldiers will be individual pieces of the larger picture. The history that we will remember is the history that we have directly impacted.

The impact of Sgt. Ivan Ansbaugh was felt in the gratitude of the 120 Iraqi Army soldiers who were successfully trained as medics. Sgt. Ansbaugh, from Charlie Company, 526th BSB, was attached to the Iraqi Army Service Support Institute (IASSI), Coalition Military Assistance Training Team, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), for six weeks at Camp Taji, Iraq. Sgt. Ansbaugh served with a Joint Coalition Force as a primary instructor for the Basic Medic Course.

During the course Sgt. Ansbaugh, through the help of interpreters, instructed his students in a number of skills including Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), IV and injection administration, ambulance operations, trauma assessments, medical care under fire, and medical evacuation. The Iraqi Army students were evaluated on a number of tasks including their ability to provide care during a Mass Casualty Exercise with simulated patients. "Over the period of six weeks the Iraqi Army students developed a considerable amount of knowledge in the medical tasks that were taught," Sgt Ansbaugh recalled. "The students were eager to learn during the course, they actively engaged in questions and participated during the hands on experience."

One student's efforts in particular were noted. Sgt. Zenasami was the first ever Iraqi Army female soldier to participate and graduate from the medic course. "Sgt. Zenasami always sat in the front of the classroom and was an excellent student, often mentoring the other students in the class. Her success in the course has paved the way for future female soldiers, not only the medical field but other branches of the Iraqi Army," Sgt. Ansbaugh said. "It was an honor to have participated in this piece of Iraqi military history."

Those are the moments that we, as soldiers, will remember. The impact of our history will remain with the individuals whose lives we have positively affected. Our contributions remain evident in the potential we have inspired, and the steps toward progress we have made.

Do you have questions, comments, photos or story ideas for your 2nd Brigade Combat Team newsletter?

If so, please call the "Heart Beat" staff at the public affairs office, our VOIP number is 242-4372 or email us at strikepaoiraq@yahoo.com

Mount up: The Cavalry Rides again in South Baghdad

Story by
Cpt. Matthew Arrol
1-75th Cavalry Regiment

Imagine the year is 1876, a wagon train loaded with supplies and settlers is slowly winding its way across the prairie of the American west. Suddenly, amid a flurry of arrows and war cries, the party is ambushed by a band of hostile Indians. Panic sets in, as the settlers try to circle the wagons in a vain attempt to defend themselves. Just as the situation turns desperate, the plainsmen hear the familiar peel of a bugle on the horizon... it's the Cavalry... riding in to save the day... just in the nick of time.

Now fast forward to February 2006, and replace the wagon train of settlers with the civilian and military logistical convoys that provide the constant flow of supplies to the American forces in Iraq. The environment and the enemy might have changed, but the mission remains the same. "Conduct route security to ensure friendly forces freedom of movement." It's a mission that the Cavalry has historically done for over 150 years, and a mission that allows the 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment to get back to its roots.

On January 23rd, after three months of successful offensive operations, the destruction of over 20 tons of enemy equipment, and the capture of over 100 insurgents ultimately leading to the disruption of multiple terror cell networks, 1-75 CAV (RSTA) conducted a relief in place with elements of the 10th Mountain Division and the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment and assumed its new mission providing security along a main supply route within the 2nd BCT Area of Operations. The 25 mile corridor of the MSR assigned to 1-75 CAV cuts through some of the most dangerous "Indian Country" in all of Iraq. Supply convoys and civilians trafficking through the area have often been attacked by insurgents in the past and the mission assigned to the Squadron while necessary, is both difficult and treacherous. LTC Mark Lee Walters, the "Widowmaker" Squadron Commander, summarized the importance of the mission this way, "The Corps MSR is the lifeline for the flow of supplies north(to Tikrit, Mosul, Balad, etc.); whether it's personnel, machine guns, bullets, or frozen salmon, if it gets where its supposed to... it's because our Soldiers keep the road open".

Besides the obvious change in scenery, the new mission has also brought with it a change in the way the Squadron plans and executes its operations. This mission is more defensive in nature than the unit's previous experiences in rural Southwest Baghdad. By preventing the enemy from cutting the lines of supply, protecting friendly forces and civilians, and allowing other coalition units freedom of movement, the squadron is able to set the conditions for the ultimate defeat of the insurgents. In the month since 1-75 CAV took over the sector, the Squadron has spoiled several attacks on KBR Convoys and inflicted heavy casualties on the insurgent IED teams, in-

cluding 6 confirmed enemy KIAs and 1 WIA. Through aggressive and almost constant patrolling, continuous surveillance, and rapid movement on the battlefield, hallmarks of the cavalry since the days of General Phillip Sheridan, "Widowmaker" Soldiers have had a significant effect on the enemy's ability to conduct attacks along the MSR.

In all respects, the Squadron has had great success thus far in the new AO, but it has not done it alone. Upon being assigned the new mission the unit gained two valuable assets and force multipliers. The first is E Company, 1st Battalion 22nd Infantry Regiment, commanded by CPT Patsky Gomez. The unique capabilities of these combat engineers have assisted the Squadron immeasurably in improving the infrastructure of the roadway, and reinforcing security throughout the sector. The second asset is the 4/5/6 Iraqi Army (IA) Battalion, commanded by General Faisel Kasim Alawi. This unit represents the future of the Iraqi Security Forces which will one day assume total responsibility for security of the highway. Until that time, the battalion will be trained and mentored by the "Widowmaker" Squadron. The mission of preparing the IA is something which all members of the Squadron take very seriously, as was pointed out by SFC James Durst, the Operations Battle NCO and a former member of the Military Transition Team (MiTT) which was assigned to the help develop the IA, "The average Iraqi soldier is just looking for someone to lead them, our job is to give their NCOs and Officers the confidence and knowledge to do that, while being patient enough to realize that they won't be equal to our standards immediately". As the Iraqi Army forces assigned to the battalion continue to improve by leaps and bounds, they are far from idle. The current IA presence is instrumental to the security of the MSR, they man traffic control checkpoints, conduct joint patrols with coalition forces, and assist the Squadron in providing surveillance further inhibiting the terrorist's ability to conduct attacks.

For the soldiers of the line Cavalry Troops, the mission is an opportunity to have a real impact not only within the Brigade area of operations but across Baghdad and all over Iraq. It is rewarding work, but often difficult. Maintaining vigilance during patrols can be tedious and IEDs are a constant threat. It's a constant struggle to try to catch the increasingly wily terrorists in the act, but there's a satisfaction in knowing that every IED identified will be one less that hits an unsuspecting coalition convoy or random civilian just trying to get to work. The importance of the mission is not lost on the soldiers either. "It has its good days and its bad...we help keep the roads safe", explains PFC David Cargill "There are a lot of civilians out there that really appreciate what we do, like the time we got this guy's bus back after some insurgent's hijacked it... he was really glad we were there."

The mission may not always be glamorous, but it's something cavalrymen are trained for and uniquely adept at. CPT Jeff Lewis, commander of "Apache" Troop, describes the flexibility of his soldiers and how his unit is well suited to their new job, "The RSTA Troop is one of the most versatile organizations in the Army. We are capable of conducting a wide range of operations; however, reconnaissance and security are our core missions. MSR security is an ideal task for us. Our long-range reconnaissance ability allows us to observe several kilometers of the MSR at any given time. Our mobility and organic weapons systems allow us to quickly destroy insurgents attempting to conduct attacks against Coalition Forces all along the MSR".

The capabilities of the "Cav" Squadron have already begun to have a dramatic effect on the insurgency within the MSR Corridor. In the past month, the enemy has expended twice-as-much energy, without achieving nearly the same effects as they had prior to the arrival of the Squadron. They are taking casualties daily, and have been unable to slow the flow of supplies, or significantly impede

the movement of friendly forces in any way. Though hardly a month into the operations, it is already clear, that in the fight for the control of Iraq's Highways, the enemy is losing... and the Soldiers of the 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, are not only leading the charge, but are putting the spurs to the insurgents.

Photo credits:

(Bottom right) A Soldier from 1-75th Cavalry Regiment pulls security while patrolling the roads of south Baghdad. (Photo by Maj. Jose Garcia). (Middle) Soldiers from 1-75th Cavalry Regiment stand proudly behind a large weapons cache discovered early in the units deployment to Baghdad. (Photo by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell). (Bottom Left) 1-75th Cavalry Regiment Soldiers return fire after being engaged by insurgents in the south Baghdad Area. (Photo by Spc. Timothy Story)

Now is the

How does reenlistment

It comes a time when everyone has to make a choice about the Army. Should I stay in or should I get out. Getting out is an option, but may not be the best one.

Reenlisting in Iraq comes with a host of benefits, including tax free bonuses, 18 months of stabilization, time to go to college as part of an education incentive and many other things that Soldiers are provided as part of deciding to stay in the Army while deployed.

What benefits does reenlistment offer you?

- Job security
- Steady pay
- Tax breaks
- Quarters/housing
- Medical and dental care
- Legal assistance
- Army Emergency Relief
- Selective reenlistment bonuses
- Financial assistance
- Passes and free time
- Veterans benefits
- Uniform allowances
- Paid hollidays

The "Strike" brigade is doing well. "Across the board we have achieved more than the other infantry brigades (in the 101st Abn. Div.)", said Master Sgt. Patricia Raikes, Senior Retention Advisor for 2 BCT. Raikes attributes the success to leader involvement all the way down to squad leader level and the exceptionally generous reenlistment incentives.

In Iraq and other combat zones bonuses are not taxed, which means more $ for you. "Bonuses in the rear are taxed at 28%, also at home bonuses are based off of a soldier's MOS. Out here it is based on being deployed. Bonuses as of 30 April are $22,500, tax free, lump sum, up front", said Raikes. It is the highest she has seen for bonuses, with the exception of certain specialty MOSs.

The reenlistment option is open to more Soldiers also. "A soldier who reenlists after ten years is not normally offered bonuses. Out here soldiers under 14 years of service are eligible for bonuses." Said Raikes.

Sgt. Justin Schafer, HHC, 1-75 Cav., an infantrymen from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma has been in the Army for over 4 years. He recently returned from Environmental Leave and spoke with his wife at length about the reenlistment decision. "It was a joint decision. I like the Army," said Schafer. "The benefits that the Army provides are very hard

time to reenlist: benefit you and your family?

to match. I take part in E Army U. The benefits for families are also outstanding."

How does reenlistment benefit your family?

- TriCare
- Medical and dental care
- Dependent education program
- Family members are first for on post jobs
- Housing
- Military discounts
- Day care
- On post, tax free, shopping
- On post schools
- Recreational facilities
- Youth center
- Religious center
- Survivor benefits

Schafer joined the Army when he was 27. He worked with people who had been in the Army. He said he never spoke to anyone who said they were glad they got out. It was quite the opposite.

"I worked with people who had been in the Army," Schafer said. "Many said that they wished they would have stayed in for the benefits and retirement. Many soldiers do not know all the benefits they have. There is a lot more involved in the package than just the bottom line on their LES. The Army has a great retirement system as well as the TSP program that soldiers can contribute to."

The best decision is an informed decision. Even if you decide not to reenlist, it is worth the time to see your chain of command and retention NCO to review your options and provide information that you may not be aware of prior to making your decision.

What do you gain from reenlistment?

- Advancement/promotion
- Esprit de Corps
- Job satisfaction
- PRIDE

For questions about reenlistment visit your 2nd BCT reenlistment office.

PSD patrol assists wounded local national child's wounds

Story by Louis Ojeil
PSD Team Interpreter

On November 11, 2005, the "First Strike" PSD team of FOB Mahmudiyah patrolled the different polling sites prior to the Iraqi elections held on December 15, 2005. During a stop at the Kaaka Housing Projects, a group of citizens from the neighborhood rushed to the patrol holding a little girl, with wounds on both feet and wrapped by some dirty bandages.

At the scene was "First Strike" Commander, Lt. Col. Thomas Kunk. He immediately instructed the PSD medic to care for the wounded girl. Spc. Devin Allred rushed to her aid, cleaned her wounds and applied new bandages.

Sabrina, an 11 year old girl who lost her father during the Iran/Iraq War, took some shrapnel from a mortar round that landed near where she and her friends were playing. A few days later, the PSD Team Interpreter contacted her mother and advised her to bring little Sabrina for a follow-up. She reluctantly accepted and the interpreter welcomed them at the gate. He carried the little girl all the way up to the aid station, where Dr. Stephens, the FOB physician, was waiting for her. He and his staff rushed to her care and treated her wounds.

Sabrina's mother holds her as the medics treat her wounds.

Though Sabrina was in much pain, and her open wounds were bleeding, she amazingly did not shed one single tear. To take her mind off of her pain, she was given some toys and candy, which brought an angelic smile to her face.

Sabrina is doing well and is making a fast recovery. Her mother asked for a message to be given to Lt. Col. Kunk, and to everyone at FOB Mahmudiyah, a message of appreciation and much gratitude for a job well done.

"We will always remember Sabrina," said Kunk. "We will keep her in our hearts and prayers."

TWO COMPANIES WELCOME NEW COMMANDERS

(Above) The colors are passed during the change of command ceremony for Company A, 2-502nd IN February 16.

In just two days, two companies with in the ranks of 2nd Brigade Combat Team bid farewell to their commanders who trained and prepared them for the deployment to Iraq, and welcomed two new commanders.

February 16, the Soldiers of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, gathered in formation for the change of command ceremony. Outgoing commander for the "Gators" was Cpt. Howard Donaldson, the incoming commander was Cpt. Vaughn Strong.

The next day, February 17, the Soldiers of B/2nd Battalion, 101st Brigade Troops Battalion, gathered while their families in the states gathered around a computer for live internet feed of the change of command ceremony. Outgoing commander was Cpt. Jerry Moon, and the incoming com-

(Above) 2-101 BTB commander passes the colors to the incoming commander during the change of command ceremony February 17. (below) B/2-101 BTB in formation during the ceremony.

1-22, Iraqi soldiers Secure road to Baghdad

BAGHDAD –In the early morning hours, American Soldiers from Task Force 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment and Iraqi soldiers of Company C, 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Division Iraqi army began efforts to improve the Iraqi army traffic control point north of the town of Al-Rashid. This site helps facilitate traffic in and out of southern Baghdad.

Historically, this highway has served as one of the main highways that connect Baghdad to its surrounding southern municipalities. Day after day, thousands of Iraqi people travel this six lane highway to go to work, shop, and visit family members. The Iraqi army traffic control points here serve as the first of many checkpoints along the roadway that is manned by Iraqi Security Forces. Before the improvements to this traffic control point, the six lane divided highway merged into two lanes, which caused significant heartache and stress for those who use this highway everyday.

In an effort to improve traffic and security into southern Baghdad, Company C, 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Infantry Division partnered with the Support Company from Task Force 1-22 IN to accomplish this important task. In doing so, Task Force 1-22 IN and the Iraqi army company have committed themselves to a construction effort that will improve traffic congestion in southern Baghdad.

"They (C/3/1/6) feel great about helping civilians; they are just happy to help and be at the TCP," said Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Davis, who is the senior enlisted member of Task Force 1-22 IN's Military Transitional Team 3. "All of the Iraqi soldiers were once Iraqi civilians, who joined the all volunteer Army to make their country a better place. Some Iraqi soldiers unfortunately have lost family members to the terrorists, and this is what makes them committed to being an Iraqi soldier, and securing routes of safe passage for their fellow citizens."

Soldiers help "Light up" an Iraqi village

Baghdad, Iraq – A soldier from Task Force 1-22 marks a broken telephone pole near the Tigris River on Wednesday, 15 February 2006, aiding Ministry of Electricity workers in fixing electricity in the local area. (Photo by Captain Robert Stoffel, 1-22 Infantry Regiment IO, 4ID)

Baghdad - On February 15th, 2006, soldiers from 3/1/6 Infantry Battalion in conjunction with Task Force 1-22 Infantry Regiment, escorted local Ministry of Electricity workers to repair electrical lines along the Tigris River.

Power in this area had been out for over a month following collateral damage from previous combat operations. Electricity is vital to the local economy due to the geography of the area. The region is approximately five to ten meters above the water level of the Tigris River, which runs adjacent to the region.

Local farmers must pump water up into the system of canals which run through the surrounding farmland in order to adequately irrigate their fields. As the winter rainy season comes to an end, the local farmers faced the prospect of a growing season without electricity to pump water up into the canals. By securing the electrical technicians while they were restoring power to the area, Iraqi Security Forces helped stabilize the economy of the region.

This improvement to the region's economy strengthens the popular support for Iraqi government forces in the area. Once electricity was restored in the area, the soldiers took the initiative to patrol the neighborhood around their patrol base to check the functionality of the power, pumps, and equipment of the local farmers. In doing so, this operation not only strengthened the community's trust and support in the Iraqi national government and military, but instilled a feeling of accomplishment in the Iraqi Soldiers.

Baghdad, Iraq – Soldiers from Task Force 1-22 in conjunction with soldiers from the 3/1/6 IA BN conduct a patrol south of Baghdad proper, just west of the Tigris River, on Wednesday, 15 February 2006, to ensure the neighborhood's power, pumps, and equipment are functional. (Photo by Captain Robert Stoffel, 1-22 Infantry Regiment IO, 4ID)

2nd BCT "Strikes"

Story and Photo by

Spc. Kelly K. McDowell

From the north to south, east to west, coalition forces have fought to ensure peace and a stable government for the people of Iraq. In an area south of Baghdad the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, has made a significant impact in this fight.

The mission for 2BCT commander, Col. Todd Ebel, was plain to see. Disrupt the safe haven for the insurgents and terrorists in the "STRIKE" Brigades area of operation and continue to keep the pressure on those who threaten the future of Iraq.

"I couldn't be more proud, we all need to be very proud. No other brigade is having the effect on the population of Baghdad like our brigade and it has taken the whole team,"

-Col.. Todd J. Ebel

"Since our arrival in October, I was more and more convinced that this area had been neglected in terms of persistent coalition efforts to disrupt the insurgency," said Col. Ebel. "For the past few months we have literally fought a war more so than an insurgency in south Baghdad."

Day in and out, the "Black Heart" Soldiers, named so for the black hearts stitched to their helmets, perform route clearing missions to rid the streets of road side bombs, snap traffic control points to ensure the vehicles pose no threat on roadways traveled by coalition forces and local nationals, and conduct multiple cordon and searches of homes in the south Baghdad area in order to continue to put pressure on insurgents and those who harbor terrorists.

In the five months 2nd BCT has operated in the area, over 600 local nationals have been detained, 50 percent of which were transferred to Abu Gurahb Prison, more than 60 insurgents killed, 400 road side bombs discovered and 120 weapons caches uncovered. The "Black heart" Soldiers tackle more than these numerous tasks, they are also responsible for training 6th Iraqi army Division "Desert Lion", soldiers to better prepare them to assume security responsibilities in the south Baghdad area.

"The Iraqi brigades that operate in our area, 4th and 6th Brigades of the 6th Iraqi army Division, were the least resourced of all the Iraqi Brigades," Ebel said. "There was no priority for funding and in my view this was a mistake."

Ebel said both Iraqi brigades never left the cities until the "Strike" Brigade helped them move beyond the city borders to cover all of south Baghdad.

"Each day the [Iraqi soldiers] gain more and more confidence," he said. "That is a direct reflection of the leadership provided by the [Military Transition Team (MiTT)] and the Soldiers persistence to do it right under tough conditions."

The Iraqi forces trained by MiTT Soldiers have participated in every major operation conducted by the "Strike" Brigade.

The most recent and largest operation to make a significant impact in the areas surrounding Mahmudiyah, Lutufiyah, Latifiyah, Yusufiyah and Sadr-Ysufiyah areas was Operation Glorylight.

During the week long execution of Operation Glory light, the "Black heart" Soldiers along side their Iraqi brothers in arms, air assaulted into the Sadr-Yusufiyah area, a suspected safe haven for insurgents and terrorist activity. The Soldiers determination to provide safety and freedom to the local nationals of the southern Baghdad region resulted in the discovery of 21 roadside bombs, two Vehicle Bourne Improvised Explosive Devices and 15 weapons caches consisting of multiple mortar rounds, explosives, ammunition, rockets and various roadside bomb making materials.

Continued on pg. 19 see STRIKE

down on terrorism

Operation Glory Light: Iraqi army soldiers, "Strike" Soldiers secure Sadr-Yusufiya

Story by

Spc. Kelly K. McDowell

BAGHDAD —Iraqi army units, along side the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, conducted one of the largest operations to gain control of a terrorist stronghold south of Baghdad, Iraq.

The operation began in the early morning hours of March 2 with the soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi army Divison, and 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, followed by 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, air assaulting into the Sadr-Yusufiyah area where they were attacked by indirect fire and small arms fire, and discovered one roadside bomb.

With numerous Iraqi soldiers clearing, searching and securing the roads and houses in the town, the Iraqi soldiers from the Iraqi 6th and 9th Divisions, moved into position uncovering a small weapons cache consisting of one 82mm mortar round, three 120mm mortar rounds, one roll of detonation cord, five AK47s and various Improvised Explosive Device making materials including multiple blasting caps.

The operation lasted for a week straight. From sunrise to sunset and all the hours in between, the Iraqi soldiers along side 2nd BCT Soldiers cleared the town of any threat, questioned locals and uncovered multiple weapons caches.

In total, the combined efforts from 1st Battalion, 9th Iraqi mechanized Infantry Division, 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 9th Iraqi army Division, elements from 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi army Division, and 2nd BCT, 101st ABN DIV, resulted in the discovery of 21 roadside bombs, two Vehicle Bourne Improvised Explosive Devices, 15 weapons caches, two detonated roadside bombs and seven small arms fire attacks.

Through the hard work and determination of each Soldier involved in the operation, the town of Sadr-Yusufiyah is now secured by Iraqi forces and Soldiers from the 2nd BCT, 101st ABN DIV.

(Left) Two UH60 Blackhawks fly into the Sadr-Yusufiyah area south of Baghdad, Iraq, while the Iraqi soldiers of 1/9 Mech. prepare to move out into their designated area in cooperation with coalition forces as part of Operation Glory Light. (Photo by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell) . (Right) Spc. Adam Berken pulls watch over an avenue of approach south of Baghdad during operation Glory Light. Berken is a Soldier in Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Karl Johnson, 363 MPAD). (Top photo) Spc. Brandon Griffis, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment uses his M-14 rifle to scan for enemy insurgents during operration Glory Light. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Karl Johnson, 363 MPAD)

The Heart Beat staff would like to apologize for a misprint in our last issues memorial page. In the February 15 issue the date for our fallen comrade, Spc. Sergio Mercedes, was incorrect. The correct date was February 5, 2006. We apologize for this misprint.

Cover photo Illustration:

Photos by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell, 2nd BCT PAO

(Background) EOD conducts a controlled detonation of a weapons cache discovered by Company A, 2-502nd IN.

(Foreground) 1st Lt. Paul Worley pulls security while the Soldiers of Company A, 2-502nd IN dig up mortars at a weapons cache site Feb. 20.

STRIKE *(Continued from pg. 16)*

Each cache discovered helps the coalition forces keep the weapons out of the insurgent's hands and in effect saves lives of not just the Soldiers but the local nationals and their children.

"Any time we can take weapons or ammunition away from the insurgents it's a great day. Now this can't be used against innocent Iraqis, Iraqi security forces or coalition forces. It makes our area of operation that much safer," said Lt. Col. Thomas Kunk, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment commander. "Glory Light allowed us to take the fight to the insurgents and kick them out of our areas they have been operating out of freely. Now they know we will hunt them down no matter where they are day or night. Our Soldiers performed superbly. They are well trained, disciplined and well led. They are warriors and proud to be First Strike and Strike Soldiers."

Not only does the success of the mission rest on such operations, but the success is also apparent in the reconstruction of Iraq as well. Non lethal projects like rebuilding water treatment plants, refurbishing schools and providing proper medical treatment for the people of south Baghdad helps gain the local nationals trust and confidence in the progress their country is making.

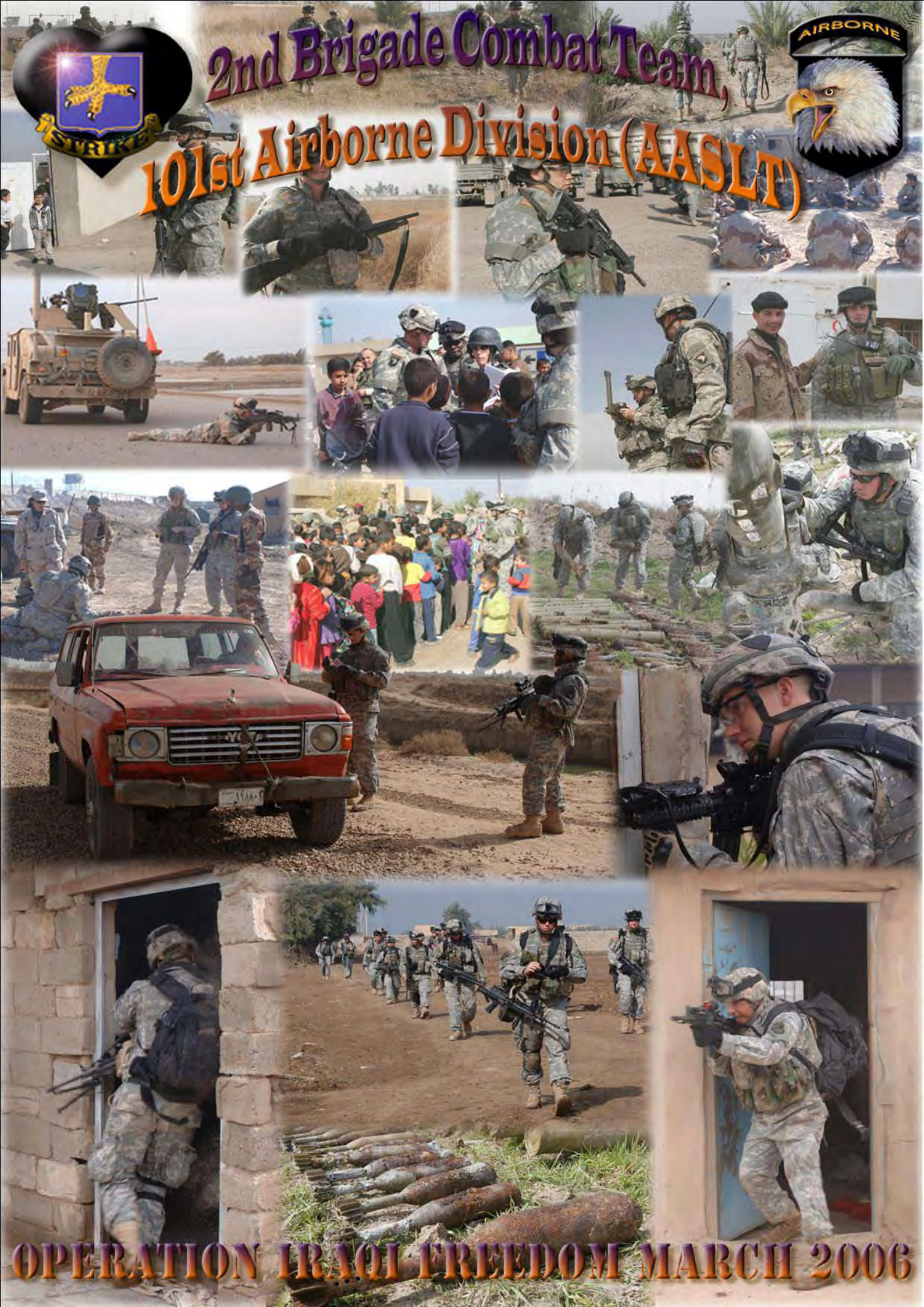
"These projects are visible signs of change in the people's environment and pay dividends to the legitimization of the fledgling government," said Maj. Eric McFadden, 2nd BCT's project manager. "Critical projects have second and third order effects. Not only do they employ locals to rehabilitate their towns, they collectively create a tipping point, a point where the locals delegitimize the insurgents and begin to take the initiative in restoring their own environment and well being."

With each project, smaller mission, operation and every convoy, a larger picture is being drawn. The dreams of peace and freedom for the local nationals in the south Baghdad area rest in the mission.

The mission, in every form, could not be successful if not for the Soldiers of the 2nd BCT. Often freedom comes with sacrifice, and in the past five months 28 "Black heart" Soldiers' lives have been taken in combat operations. With these warriors' sacrifices, the Soldiers of 2nd BCT continue to fight, secure and succeed in the brigade's mission honoring the memory of their fallen comrades.

"I couldn't be more proud, we all need to be very proud. No other brigade is having the effect on the population of Baghdad like our brigade and it has taken the whole team," Ebel said. "Through our efforts and coordination with Iraqi units we have severely disrupted the insurgent networks in south Baghdad. As a result, the population of Baghdad proper is safer."

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (AASLT)



OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM MARCH 2006