

IBC

Iron Brigade Chronicles

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Keeping tabs

Pages 6-7

Published for the Soldiers, families and friends of the 3rd HBCT, 4th ID

Inside this issue

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The *Iron Brigade Chronicles* is published in the interest of the Soldiers, families and friends of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers.

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Cover Photo

Pfc. Nathan Rivera, the hall monitor at the Brigade Internment Facility for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Special Troops Battalion gives a meal to a detainee at the facility.

Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott

Page 3:

Messages from the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team command team.

Page 4:

Iron Brigade Soldiers earn citizenship at naturalization ceremony at LSA Anaconda.

Page 5:

Warhorse ceremony commemorates fallen comrades.

Pages 6 & 7:

Warhorse facility houses detainees, treats them with dignity and respect.

Table of Contents

Page 8:

1-68 CAB works to establish an Iraqi police station.

Page 9:

Bandit QRF ready for any and all missions that come its way.

Page 10:

FARP keeps choppers in the sky in 24-hour a day, seven day a week mission.

Page 11:

IA patrol discovers Iran-Iraq War-era munitions near border with help from U.S. EOD unit.

Page 12:

Highlighting FAR #6, comments from the chaplain and sharp shots from 3rd HBCT area of operations.



Pg. 4



Pg. 6 & 7



Pg. 9



Pg. 11



Pg. 12

Complacency Kills!

Strikers,

Unfortunately, I have to begin this note by offering our collective prayers and condolences for the loss of both Staff Sgt. Marion Flint and Pfc. Grant Dampier from Company B, 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion; may these Fighting Eagles rest in peace. As we all realize, this enemy is both clever and lethal. In this instance, he threw a pitch at us that we had not seen before, and managed to exact a very high price. We will learn from this unfortunate event and respond accordingly.

As the enemy adjusts his TTPs, so must we. I would ask everyone to re-examine our current procedures to ensure we are not developing patterns. We have become very comfortable in this lethal battlespace. It's a comfort born of experience, of confidence in ourselves and in our wingman, and of confidence in our ability to withstand the enemy's best shot and come out swinging. *It's the kind of confidence that will set us up for a fall if we are not constantly looking at our routines the way the enemy does.* He searches for our weaknesses. He looks for opportu-

nity. He studies our every move. In this very dangerous game of cat and mouse, we must stay ahead of him. Do not let your guard down!

The evil twin of too much confidence is complacency. One breeds the other. After nearly six months deployed and five months in the area of operations, we are starting to see some scattered signs of complacency in some isolated incidents. It's natural; it's the halfway point. In some cases, PCCs and PCIs are not being done to standard. A few weapons are no longer being cleaned as often. Some crews are not test firing as frequently. Some drivers are speeding. We are sometimes skipping the use of a second set of eyes in clearing our weapons. Corners are being cut. I think it's time we all reach back into the bottom of our duffel bags and pull out the Striker FARs and remind ourselves how it was that we approached this battlespace in January. We need to get back into that mindset. Some of the bad habits we are witnessing will get people hurt or killed. We can't have that.

Having said all of that, it's clearly evi-

dent that the vast majority of our team is doing the right things the majority of the time. Our officers plan well and lead by example. Our NCOs do likewise, provide their hard earned expertise, and serve as the keepers of the standard. Our Soldiers have been disciplined, aggressive and tireless. All three of these groups have performed superbly in the first half of this mission. I expect they will perform superbly in the latter half. You have demonstrated time and again over here that you will do your duty even when tired, under fire or wounded. I could not be prouder of your efforts to date. The 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team is truly functioning as a team. The second half is starting: let's finish strong.

Steadfast and Loyal!

Striker 6



Col. Brian D. Jones

List's List

As said many times, if leadership is the lifeblood of our great Army, then discipline is its heart.

You must remember discipline is not just responding to orders or imposing punishment for screwing up, but it is something leaders and Soldiers build together. The desire to do what is right even if it is difficult or dangerous. The ability to do the right thing when nobody is watching.

Discipline is the self-desire to accomplish any task well, not because of fear of punishment but because of pride in your unit and yourself as a Soldier.

NCOs, I need you to take a look at the basic discipline of



**Command Sgt. Maj.
David H. List**

your sections: i.e. seat belts, speeding, gunners riding too high, uniforms: sleeves rolled up, blood types on sleeves, subdued flags, boots not bloused, hair cuts/sideburns/mustaches too long, eye pro on top of heads (proper wear tethered around neck). All these are standards, on-the-spot corrections are the responsibility of every NCO in this brigade.

Do your job — you are working one small piece of the big picture. If you drop your piece everything falls through your hole.

Always remember to fire at a target until it changes form!

God bless the Soldiers and families of the 3rd HBCT.

Striker 7

Soldiers become U.S. citizens in Iraq



Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

Spc. Sola Ogundele, a Nigeria native, Company A, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, gives the oath of allegiance to the U.S. during a naturalization ceremony.

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris
IBC staff writer

120 Soldiers became U.S. citizens in a naturalization ceremony May 10 at Logistical Support Area Anaconda.

"Today marks a very important and very special day in the lives of some of our Soldiers," said Col. Mark Hampton, commander, 35th Area Support Group, in his opening statement at the ceremony. "Each of whom have made a commitment to service in the Armed Forces of the United States."

Five Soldiers from 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers received their citizenship during the ceremony. The newly naturalized citizens are Spc. Sola Ogundele, automated logistics specialist, Company A, 64th Brigade Support Battalion; Staff Sgt. Ricardo Silva, heavy wheeled vehicle operator, Company G, 64th BSB attached to Task Force Pacesetter; Cpl. Rey Pena, human resource specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery; Spc. Xiang Tran, logistical supply specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Special Troops Battalion; and Spc. Suhee Onder, cook, Forward Support Company, 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion.

For a civilian there is normally a five year residency requirement to be eligible to obtain citizenship. With military service members the requirement is waived along with the processing fee, said Walter Haith, immigration officer from the Frankfurt,

time giving the oath of induction in a naturalization ceremony in Iraq.

"It is an honor to come here and do the oath ceremony," Haith said. "These individuals who are not citizens of the United States have put themselves in harms way to defend our country."

Ogundele came to the U.S. 13 months ago from Nigeria on a diversity visa. He joined the Army after arriving in America. Ogundele has a bachelor's degree from Nigeria and joined the Army for the tuition money to earn his master's degree. He was not worried about going to Iraq so quickly after joining the Army. In fact he wanted to experience the combat he read about in books and saw on the news.

"I am the happiest man on Earth today to be a U.S. citizen," Ogundele said. "I know the sky is the limit for me in the United States. I (now) have absolute freedom to pursue my dreams."

For some Soldiers citizenship meant the chance to secure their future with the Army and for their families. Silva wanted to make a career of the Army and wanted to move up in rank. He was approaching eight years of service in his military career and the Army has a requirement to become a citizen after eight years to continue serving. Silva was born in Portugal but had lived most of his 25 years in the U.S. He felt after he had given the oath of allegiance to the U.S. a big weight had been lifted off his shoulders.

It feels a little different now when you wear the American flag, Silva said.

Having the ceremony in Iraq instead of America was bittersweet for some of the

Iron Brigade Soldiers. Pena and his family from the U.S. and Mexico wished they could have been together at the theater to witness him becoming a citizen.

My wife wished she could have been there but it was good that I had my Army buddies there cheering me on, Pena said. It is a big accomplishment, it feels great.

For Tran and Onder receiving their citizenship papers meant the end of long journey from immigrants to the beginning of a new one as citizens. The emotion of the ceremony got to Onder as the oaths had been rendered as she fought the tears of joy knowing she could now go forth as an American citizen.

Before the ceremony concluded President George W. Bush gave a taped message to the newly inducted citizens.

"Today the United States is not only your home it is your country," he said. "With a single oath all at once, you became as truly American as the most direct descendant of the founding fathers."

52 countries were represented by the 120 Soldiers who endured a six-month application process that included an interview to demonstrate the ability to write and speak a sentence in English and a 100-question exam for the right to become U.S. citizens.



Staff Sgt. Ricardo Silva, heavy wheeled vehicle operator, Company G, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, receives his citizen certificate and U.S. flag from Col. Mark Hampton, commander, 35th Area Support Group in a naturalization ceremony at Logistical Support Area Anaconda.

Warhorse pauses to remember fallen



Photos by Sgt. Zach Mott

ABOVE: Soldiers salute the American flag while *Amazing Grace* plays following Staff Sgt. Sarah Jones, left, personnel administration NCOIC, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, reading of the eight names of Soldiers who have died from the Iron Brigade during this latest deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

RIGHT: Soldiers of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers and civilians from around Forward Operating Base Warhorse sing *America, the Beautiful* during the Memorial Day ceremony May 29.



In memory of ...

**Staff Sgt. Marion Flint Jr.
Company B, 1-8 Combined
Arms Battalion,
4th Infantry Division**

**Pfc. Grant A. Dampier
Company B, 1-8 Combined
Arms Battalion,
4th Infantry Division**

Gone, but not forgotten

MPs stay professional



Photos by Sgt. Zach Mott
LEFT: Up to four detainees are housed in each cell at the Brigade Internment Facility on Forward Operating Base Warhorse.
INSET ABOVE: When each detainee arrives at the BIF, they are given a blanket, two bottles of water, a prayer mat and a Qur'an.
INSET BELOW: Detainees are fed three "Meal Alternative Regionally Customized" entrees per day. The meals are specifically designed to meet the religious needs of the detainees.

by Sgt. Zach Mott

IBC editor

Detainees are captured almost daily in Iraq. Whether they are planning attacks, or actually carry those attacks out, against coalition and Iraqi security forces, they are typically sent to a Brigade Detainee Internment Facility like the one at Forward Operating Base Warhorse.

When the detainees arrive at the BDIF, they are processed, questioned and a determination is made

whether to send them to a more permanent U.S. military facility, an Iraqi police facility or to release them altogether.

Detainees can spend up to 14 days in the brigade facility before they are transferred to a theater facility or released, said Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Edler, BDIF NCOIC, Military Police Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers.

IN-PROCESSING

Detainees are brought to the BDIF by units throughout the 3rd HBCT area of operations. Once they arrive at the Warhorse facility, paperwork is screened and then each detainee is searched, entered into a world-wide database and given a thorough medical examination.

"When they first come in, we have one hour from that time in order to have a medic check them out," Edler said.

The medical personnel search for any untreated injuries or illness and prescribe medicine. This screening is followed with twice daily visits during their stay.

After the medical processing they are allowed to shower before changing into

an orange jumpsuit all detainees wear while they are at the facility.

After the detainees are in-processed, they are placed in a cell where they are given a blanket, mattress, two bottles of water, a Qur'an and prayer mat.

Special cells are allotted for juvenile and female detainees. Both groups are segregated from the general population in the facility for their protection and adherence to cultural sensitivities, Edler said.

RESPECT

Detainees are accused of everything from conspiring against coalition and Iraqi security forces to conducting attacks against those same forces or Iraqi civilians. Exercising restraint when these individuals are brought into the facility is attributed to the professionalism of the Soldiers working there.

"We've got to treat them better than we treat ourselves," Edler said. "It's hard to do sometimes, but it's just the way we are. It's why we're doing what we're doing."

DAILY LIFE

Detainees are given three "Meal Alternative Regionally Customized" meals per day. These are bag meals that contain foods specific to religious considerations.

In the mornings a staff physician makes the first of his two visits. During this time, the detainees receive medicine and are thoroughly checked for any conditions which may require further care.

"They get really good medical treatment here," Edler said, "stuff that they would never get back in the real world."

During the day, detainees may be questioned to help determine where they will be sent after their stay at the Warhorse BDIF. Most of the day, however, is spent in their cell sleeping, praying or eating. They are provided one hour for daily exercise. No matter where they go, detainees are escorted whenever they are out of their cells.

"It's a really controlled environment. The only time they're out of their cells is when they're using the bathroom, getting showered or getting processed," Edler said. "Other than that, they're inside their cells at all times unless they're getting screened by a doc."

Occasionally, detainees may be let out of their cells to clean the facility or to make improvements.

"All the cleaning that goes on inside the detention facility, from the hallways to the individual cells, is done by the detainees themselves," Edler said. "Anything that's done to improve the facility is done by them."

OVERSIGHT

During each 12-hour shift, a guard force commander is the link between what happens at the facility and the brigade headquarters. The commander ensures that detainees are properly cared for and that all relevant information is sent to higher headquarters regarding who is at the facility. "(I) keep track of the detainees; I make sure everything is straight as far as the paperwork," said Sgt. John Santos, guard force commander from HHC, 3rd STB.

The sergeant of the guard ensures the Soldiers working in the facility are doing their job and are where they're supposed to be.

"It's (my) job to stay on (my) toes and make sure all the Soldiers keep working," Dammann said. "I take pride in making sure everybody's in the spot where they're supposed to be doing the right thing."

Soldiers working at the BDIF received Arabic language training prior to deploying to Iraq to help ease the language barrier that can cause problems between them and the detainees. Coupled with the knowledge the Soldiers gain from the interpreters they work alongside, the Soldiers are able to communicate basic commands such as stop, kneel down, hands on the wall, turn, walk, hurry up, get up and quit talking.

"ZERO TOLERANCE"

After three years, the events that transpired at Abu Ghraib prison remain fresh in the mind of most when they think of the treatment of detainees. Soldiers at the Warhorse BDIF are very cognizant of the need to treat detainees with dignity and respect to ensure they are properly brought to justice.

"We haven't had one (incident of abuse), nor will we have one," Edler said. "It's very important because it's a zero tolerance job. Any mistake we make in here has repercussions way beyond just me going away. It entails the whole chain of command."

Soldiers here strictly follow the established procedures no matter what is thrown at them and regular inspections and command oversight ensure everyone understands and maintains the standards.

"They're scared," Dammann says of the detainees. "(But,) this is like the Holiday Inn. We feed them, we give them water, we pick up their trash, we take them to the bathroom, we give them running water, we let them shower, we do all their badges, we do all the paperwork, they just stay here. They sleep all the time (and) they pray when they're supposed to pray."



Silver Lions help IA, IP establish base

by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Locating an area for a new Iraqi police station is one more step toward the security and safety of the people of Iraq.

The initial phase of Operation Barak was to establish an area where an Iraqi police station could be developed and show the people of Diyala Province that violence will not be tolerated.

Elements of the 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion "Silver Lions" rolled into an area that had not been patrolled by coalition forces in more than one year.

Maj. John Digiambattista, the executive officer for the 1-68 CAB, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, said, "They have had some rival violence with some of the other neighboring towns and by putting an (Iraqi army) presence here they will be able to provide them with security and also verify the reports we have had of the various types of terrorist activities and sectarian violence in this area."

Command Sgt. Maj. Jerry Rimpley, the unit's top noncommissioned officer, said, "The initial phase of the operation was to scout an area out where we could fortify it for an Iraqi police station.

"This is more of a sphere of influence engagement with Iraqi Army moving in, and then the Iraqi police," said Rimpley.

"The objective is to identify a piece of ground that can be secured and transition that base of operations to the Iraqi army and eventually to the Iraqi police," said Digiambattista. "What

that does is establish a source of legitimate governance and security for the people here."

With a new Iraqi police presence in this area of Diyala Province, the citizens of this area can feel safer going about their daily lives.



Pfc. Andrea Moore, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, pulls security from the turret of a Humvee during an operation outside of Mukhisa, Iraq in Diyala Province.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski

Soldiers from the 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers pull security outside of a school in Mukhisa, Iraq.

QRF is ready to go at moments notice

by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

In a combat zone, a quick reaction force has to be prepared for anything at a moments notice providing extra security for important visitors.

Elements of the 101st Airborne Divisions 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry are serving as Forward Operating Base Caldwell's Quick Reaction Force.

The unit's platoon leader 1st Lt. James Wilson said, "We have a variety of missions ... from providing security for (explosive ordnance disposal) on (improvised explosive device) calls, cache response and vehicle recovery."

On this mission, the QRF was to establishing primary, secondary and tertiary landing zones in and around the city of Balad Ruz in anticipation of a visit to the local mayor's office by Gen. George Casey, the Commanding General of Multinational Forces in Iraq.

"Just in case something happened and we need to get him out of the area fast," said Wilson who is from Mt. Vernon, Ill.

They also visited the meeting place at



Spc. Keith Steward, Quick Reaction Force, 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry, attached to the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, watches over the town of Balad Ruz during a VIP visit to the government center here.

the mayor's office downtown prior to the visit to give a thorough search for anything that might cause harm.

"Pay attention to the backside of the building," Wilson told his rooftop security element during the mission brief.

The mayor's office is backed up to a populated residential area that could pro-

vide cover for an insurgent attack on the building, explained Wilson

As Casey entered the government compound, the QRF assumed the role of outside security, complete with a rooftop sniper to provide surveillance.

Staff Sgt. Hugh McGonagle of Mohegan Lake, N.Y., explained, "There

were basically four parts to this mission today. Initially we conducted a route clearance into the town, establish the primary, secondary and tertiary landing zones, clear the mayor's building where the VIP would be visiting, and lastly provide outside security while the meeting was taking place."

The nine-man team stands ready to react throughout the day and night for any impromptu combat tasks that come its way.

Whether it is clearing the way for a VIP or assisting with security during the recovery of an unexploded roadside bomb, the 1-32 QRF is always there when you need them.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski

The 101st Airborne Division's 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry Quick Reaction Force, attached to the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, provides security during a VIP visit to the government center in downtown Balad Ruz.



Fueling winged beasts



ABOVE: Pvt. Daniel Kiser, fueler, Company A, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, communicates with the UH-60 Black Hawk crew chief as he refuels the aircraft at the Forward Area Refueling Point on Forward Operating Base Warhorse. **INSET:** Pfc. Jeremiah Griffin, fueler, Co. A, 64th BSB, hooks a grounding cable to a UH-60 Black Hawk as he prepares to inject fuel into the aircraft at the FARP on FOB Warhorse.

Photos by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris
IBC staff writer

As the helicopters buzz overhead, Soldiers race from surrounding buildings like ants up a hill to the Forward Area Refueling Point. They have few, precious minutes to spare. Every second that goes by with a helicopter on the ground waiting for fuel means less time for a doctor to work on a patient or an attack helicopter to provide aerial support to Soldiers on the ground.

The refueling team expeditiously gets the job of refueling the birds finished in a matter of minutes, resembling a Dale Earnhardt Jr. pit crew. The fast and furious pace is considered normal for the fuelers of Company A, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Band of Brothers.

The FARP on Forward Operating Base Warhorse is the main stopover point between Logistical Support Area Anaconda and satellite FOBs in The Iron Brigade's area of responsibility. The FARP is able to refuel any helicopter in the Army's arsenal. Open 24 hours a day Soldiers from Co. A, also known as Regulators, must be ready at a moments notice to refuel an incoming helicopter.

Keeping up with the demands of staffing a 24-hour operation, while farming out Soldiers to the needs of the brigade, is a constant challenge for Capt. Paul Simonsen, operations officer, Co. A, 64th BSB. Regulators are often assigned to drive fuel trucks on logistical patrols and pull guard duty for the security of the FOB in addition to their fueling duties.

"People work 12-hour days. There are no days off in Alpha Company," said Simonsen.

Though the challenge exists of supporting a FARP and the re-supply needs of the Iron Brigade, not having a FARP on the FOB would be a strategic nightmare. The extra time and distance added to aerial missions in Diyala Province would be too costly.

"The consequence would be that you would have to go back to LSA Anaconda to refuel," said Simonsen. "It takes 10 minutes to get there and 10 minutes to get back (to FOB Warhorse), so a lot can happen in a 10 minute time frame. People could lose 10 their lives. (With the FARP here) it saves lives and time in

the mission."

Since time is a critical factor in a refueling mission, an approaching helicopter is considered the highest priority. Soldiers on fueling duty must drop everything and hurry as fast as they can to the FARP to service the bird. When a rotary wing aircraft arrives at the FARP there are five personnel, resembling a NASCAR pit team, on the ground ready to spring into action to refuel the helicopter.

The crew chief will step out of the helicopter to pull fire watch before allowing the fueler to approach the aircraft, said Staff Sgt. Sheldon Pajimola, 3rd Platoon sergeant, Co. A, 64th BSB. Once the OK is given, the fueler attaches the nozzle and 75 gallons of fuel per minute shoot through the hoses to the awaiting helicopter. Within minutes the aircraft is on its way.

A helicopter's blades rotating at high speed generate a large amount of static electricity. Even though the fuelers make sure to attach grounding rods before fueling, combining static electricity with jet fuel could lead to a hazardous situation.

"Almost 2 million gallons of fuel has been issued and 1,200 birds have been serviced since the company has been deployed. There have been no accidents," said Staff Sgt. Michael Francisco, section sergeant, Co. A, 64th BSB.

The fuel the FARP uses comes from Kuwait and LSA Anaconda. It is funneled into large

mesh-like bags in a nearby area nicknamed the bag farm because the partially buried bags resemble watermelons in a patch. The bag farm supplies fuel to the FARP and to the tanker trucks that transport fuel to surrounding FOBs.

With the hotter months rapidly approaching, the heat will play a factor with the fuel. When the temperature reaches 100 degrees or more the fuel bags will begin to expand. One, little hole could lead to a lot of fuel in the ground.

"We monitor the bags very closely looking for holes or leaks. I don't know about you, but cleaning up five gallons is bad enough but if you have 50,000, you are talking environmental disaster," Francisco said. "Everybody here is trained very well on fuel and safety. We treat this place like we would treat our own and we don't want to do any damage to the environment. That is a big issue."

Iraq-Iran War-era munitions discovered near border



by Spc. Lee Elder

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Remnants from a past war could have spelled danger for coalition forces currently serving in northern Iraq. These items were disposed of during a joint Iraqi-U.S. operation.

Members of the Iraqi Army's Bomb Disposal Company and U.S. Air Force explosives ordnance disposal personnel rushed to a construction site to take possession of munitions discovered by workers near the Iranian border. Nearly 30 rounds were uncovered at four different locations on the site.

"The danger is that any AIF fighter could walk around and police it up," said Lt. Col. James Rice, who serves as the Tactical Command Post commander and the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division's deputy commanding officer. "Then, they could put it to use as (improvised explosive devices)."

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Eric Osborne led the U.S. detail to identify and remove the rounds. A Lawton, Okla., native who is based with the 332nd EOD Flight out of Incirlik, Turkey, he said unexploded ordnance is used "quite a bit" by insurgents to produce deadly IEDs.

"If we can take away that source from them, it should decrease the number of IEDs they can make," Osborne said. "Most of it is found lying around from the different wars.

"There is a huge amount of ordnance in this country."

A Mercersburg, Pa., native, Rice speculated that the munitions were probably left over from the Iran-Iraq War fought from 1980 to 1988. Locals have told

authorities that the current dam construction site was once a key battleground near the two nations' border.

"I believe that was probably an old fighting position of some kind," Rice said. "At the time, they were probably just stored there for use in the war with Iran."

After Iraqi Army forces pointed out the locations of the munitions, each round was individually inspected. Several rounds were destroyed on site using daisy chain explosives.

"There were about six items we felt were too dangerous to move out of the area," Osborne said. "They had been damaged somewhat and there was potential that several of the fuses were armed.

"Instead of taking any chances moving them, we just blew them where they were at."

Both Osborne and Rice praised the Iraqi army forces for their efforts. The Iraqis showed a great deal of poise despite their relative lack of experience in this unforgiving task.

"They did a very good job," Rice said. "They've got several platoons trained up.

"Although we identified most of the (unexploded ordnance) it was the Iraqi army that provided security and policed them up."

"They are a brand-new unit," Osborne added. "They are all very recent graduates from their bomb disposal school."

Osborne said his Iraqi counterparts have learned a great deal during the three weeks they trained together with his team.

Photos by Spc. Lee Elder

BELOW: U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Eric Osborne, right, and an Iraqi Soldier check out unexploded ordnance found during a joint operation near Maladi in northern Iraq. Osborne is based in Incirlik, Turkey with the 332nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight and hails from Lawton, Okla.

LEFT: An Iraqi officer confers with Lt. Col. James Rice, deputy commander of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division during a joint operation near Maladi in northern Iraq. The operation was staged because munitions were found at a construction site near the Iran-Iraq border.



However, there is still much to learn.

"We are trying to get them moving from a schoolhouse, individual skills building, to working as a unit conducting their own operations," Osborne said. "Trying to steer them in that direction is by far the biggest challenge."

The Iraqi Army Soldiers worked well with their U.S. counterparts. They moved quickly across the vast construction site pointing out piles of munitions with ease.

"I was kind of looking over their shoulder, but they identified everything correctly," Osborne said. "They knew what was safe and what wasn't safe to move.

Another aspect of the Iraqi Army's performance was their Soldiers' bravery. They were not intimidated by the potential dangers the unexploded ordnance posed to them.

"To be in the position that they are in right now is courageous," Osborne said. "When I graduated from EOD school 10 years ago, they put me in a unit and they kept me on the side and trained me.

"These guys are learning on the fly while there is a war going on."

FAR # 6

FAR #6 Never "chase an Apache into the rocks ..." think before you act!

Iraq is an area we are not intimately familiar with. Although Soldiers have been conducting patrols since arriving in December, and for some this is their second tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq remains an area we are still only getting to know.

The insurgents who call these areas home know every knook and cranny out there. You do not. No matter how familiar you think you are with an area, always pursue cautiously, you never know what lurks around the corner.

If you are attacked, and the insurgent flees into a covered area or encourages you to follow him, do not. This could be an attempt to lure you into an ambush.

By remaining cognizent of your surroundings and the situation, you are enabling yourself and your Soldiers to remain in the fight and to successfully engage the enemy that watches our every move. They want us to chase them into an area where they have the advantage. Do not allow the enemy to put you into that position.

Think about where you are and what you are doing. By remaining aware of your surroundings and aware of your actions you can continue to have the upper hand against the insurgents.

If you must follow the enemy, remain aware of your surroundings and stay vigilant in your defenses. Rely on your training, remember your experiences and follow your leaders -- they know what they're doing.

Random Thoughts

Simple Steps to Shrink Soldier Stress
Commentary by Chaplain (Capt.) William Johnson
1-8 Combined Arms Battalion

It's going to happen. You know it. There will come a time during this deployment that you will experience stress. It's impossible to avoid. So, what are these simple steps to shrink Soldier stress?

First, try saying the title five times as fast as possible. Once you realize that isn't helping, then follow this simple acrostic to gain a better perspective on what is causing stress in your life:

S – Stop: The American culture is very fast paced. In a stressed filled world, life tends to go much faster. Find time to just stop.

T – Talk: Once you've stopped, you need to find someone to talk to about what is stressing you out so much. I might be biased, but chaplains are great for this.

R – Reflect: A stressed person has given very little time to what matters most in his or her life. Take time to reflect on the things that matter most to you.

E – Evaluate: Once the reflection is over, it is not only necessary to evaluate goals, priorities, and daily decisions, but also the daily stressors of life. An evaluation will allow you to see the steps necessary for personal progress.

S – Strategize: Once your evaluation has identified the stressor in your life, it is imperative that you have a strategy to beat it.

S – Start Over: You have a new perspective on where and who you are, as well as, a better understanding as to what you are going to do when stress comes at you. Now it's time to start over. Implement your plan.

Stress – It doesn't have to rule your life. You can beat it. You can be successful. Just follow these Simple Steps to Shrink Soldier Stress and you will be on your way to a less stressed you.

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Photo by Sgt. Glenn Brink

The sun sets as a patrol from Bulldog Troop, 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division occupies an observation post in southern Salah al Din Province.



Photo courtesy of the Georgian army

Members of the Georgian army conduct a patrol near the Asindiya Bridge in Diyala Province.

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