



The Heart Beat

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division
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**ON CALL:
ONE PLATOON
TAKES ON THREE JOBS**

FREE MAIL

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Army Values --

are more important now, in the midst of war, than ever.

While it may seem difficult and perhaps even strange, we cannot succumb to the emotion of hatred, even hatred of our known enemies. Hatred is not what makes us fight; it is what we fight against.

Hatred is the very foundation of the root of evil for why we are here in Iraq. Others may hate, but we, Black Heart Soldiers, must not. This does not mean we can't fight; on the contrary, we must. 'We are not fighting people, we are fighting ideas, ideas which are evil and full of hatred and that cannot exist in the same world in where American ideals are found.

One idea we must fight for is the rule of law, a law based on good values and principles such as those embodied in our Army Values.

It is simple -- we cannot be above the law. To do so, especially in this environment, would absolutely discredit all that we have done to move Iraq forward to not just peace, but peace with freedom.

I share this now because the recent news related to allegations of unlawful actions taken by Marines in Haditha, Iraq should cause concern. There is no doubt the emotions of the Marines in this event were sparked; the loss of life clearly has incited feelings in each of us during difficult periods of our battle in South Baghdad. Yet, when emotions emitted result in unlawful actions, all that our recently fallen have fought for is lost.

We must keep faith in Army Values and must hold those fallen in high regard by our positive and law abiding example, especially under fire in this time of war.

Follow the rules and remain committed to excellence.

Pay attention to detail, be safe, be strong and cool headed.

Keep away from rashness, avoid hatred.

Trust in the Army Values.

STRIKE!

Todd J Ebel
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

ON CALL:

ONE PLATOON TAKES ON THREE JOBS

Story and photos by
Spc. Kelly K. McDowell

For many Soldiers deployed in Iraq there is a “battle rhythm” that predicts what activities they are going to be faced with throughout the day, but for many Soldiers there is no typical day or regular battle rhythm.

When a platoon is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, there is no definite plan, no way of knowing what lies ahead and what to expect on their next mission. The Soldiers of the Mortar Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters

Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, manage to tackle this challenge and thrive on the adventure.

Not only do these Soldiers handle the task of being ready for any counter fire called, but they also provide escort for the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Team and are responsible for detainee guard at the battalion internment facility.

“The reason we are different from other platoons is that we have to do the regular infantry job as well as the 11 Charlie job, which is knowing how to fire mortars and use mortars tactically and effectively,” said Sgt. Jacob

Brooks, lead truck and EOD coordinator, 1-502nd IN Mortar Platoon. “We also have EOD escort and detainee guard at the battalion internment facility where we have to process and handle the detainees and we have to transport them to the brigade internment facility. We have to know all the proper procedures including the paperwork.”

When first deployed to Baghdad, the Soldiers of the mortar platoon did not know what challenges laid ahead of them, but when they arrived it was clear they were going to have to take on a whole new series of missions and tasks.

“We have adapted very well,” Brooks said. “We don’t have a typical day, there are days when we have only one mission and there are days when we are gone from 0600 to 2300 hours.”

Every day the Soldiers work to perfect their skills and maintain their equipment in order to be ready for anything.

“We wake up and [perform preventative maintenance] on our trucks, clean equipment and make sure we have the load plan set, having spike strips, cones, MREs and water,” said Pfc. George Maxwell, 1-502nd IN Mortar Platoon. “Our goal is to do five rehearsals a day, preparing us for anything.”

Continued on pg. 11 see **MORTAR**



Saving Lives Through Innovation

Story by

Sgt. 1st Class Gary Taylor
526th BSB

Two innovative welders with company F, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division have created vehicle modifications that are responsible for the prevention of injuries and deaths to Strike Soldiers.

The work of Sgt. Kimberly Osteen and Spc. Jackie Delaney has made them heroes to the Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.

The loss of friends and comrades created a desire deep within these two welders to help their infantry brothers by reducing the number of casualties caused by improvised explosive devices. Osteen, believing that she and Delaney could do so much more for their brothers-in-arms, spearheaded an effort which no doubt led to many injuries being avoided and numerous lives saved.

On one occasion a HMMWV was hit with an IED and destroyed, not by the IED but by the ensuing fire. Delaney, feeling that the main contributing factor to the spectacular blaze which destroyed

the HMMWV was a ruptured fuel cell, found plans for armor plating to be formed around the fuel cells. He then made the necessary coordination, received the armor plating and began cutting, bending, bolting and welding until he had ensured all of 2nd battalions M1114's fuel cells had been covered with the armor plating.

Another life saving modification made to 2nd Battalion vehicles was the addition of ballistic glass to the gunner's turrets. These "Fighter Support" warriors installed 64 sets of "transparent armor". After one particular patrol, a Soldier from company C, 2nd battalion approached Osteen and Delaney and thanked them for the hard work and innovative design. He informed them that the "transparent armor," as many of the gunners call the system, had saved

his life. An IED had exploded near his vehicle earlier that day and the glass which surrounded him absorbed all of the shrapnel and stopped any penetration. He told them they had saved his life.

Osteen and Delaney are currently working on a system to install ballistic glass to the lower inside portion of the vehicle doors, affording the personnel inside the vehicle more protection. They hope to present their design to their supervisors in the very near future for approval.

"These infantry Soldiers are my friends, I will do whatever I can to ensure they are all safe," said Osteen. It is this kind of dedication and devotion that these two Soldier's supervisors have come to expect.

"I have been lucky to have them; they show initiative and don't wait to be told what to do," said Chief Warrant Officer Randy Whetsell, battalion maintenance technician.

No doubt, that company F, 526th Brigade Support Battalion and the entire Brigade Combat Team is a little more combat effective and safe due to the dedication and commitment of Osteen and Delaney.



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Strike Force Delivers Steel Rain Over Baghdad

Story by

Sgt. 1st Class Doug Pfeffer

2-502nd IN

While deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the mortar tubes of the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment have fired over four hundred rounds of 60, 81 and 120 millimeter ammunition. Through the never-ending mud of the rainy season and the intense heat of the summer, these soldiers have hammered the enemy with an almost daily dose of “Steel Rain”.

The fire supporters of the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment are made up of approximately eighty mortar men and fire support specialists. They can be found at the battalion, company, and platoon levels. These Soldiers are highly trained in very specialized fields. They must undergo a battery of qualification tests, and if there is one mistake during Live Fire Operations, the consequences could be devastating.

Not only could there be extensive damage to the area, but there is always the threat of serious injury to anybody nearby. In essence, their jobs have a “Zero Tolerance” margin for error.

In the sector of Southwest Baghdad, owned by the “Strike Force”, temperatures reach over one hundred degrees almost daily. The threat of dehydration is constant and the troops who man these company level patrol bases face an uphill battle almost every day.

The tasks are never-ending. There are the patrols, the traffic control points, the scheduled missions, and the not-so-scheduled ones. Combine all of this with the fact that you could be called upon at any time of the day to man the guns, and execute a fire mission in under six minutes, and what



you get are some of the most highly trained, highly disciplined Soldiers that the battalion has to offer. These Soldiers have no more than six minutes to execute their task, but they consistently manage to complete it in less than two to three minutes. That intensity and speed has proven to be the turning point in their effectiveness, solidifying them as some of the fastest, most efficient teams in theater right now. They stand by their guns 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They never miss a day, and the Soldiers of the “Strike Force” Battalion have grown to depend on their accuracy and speed in keeping them safe from the threat of the insurgent mortars. They are the keepers of the big guns.

Sgt 1st Class Michael Marsh is the platoon sergeant for the mortar platoon. Before leaving for Iraq, he spent weeks preparing his teams for the task that lay before them. There were crew drills to master, Live Fire Exercises to complete, and a grueling certification program that qualified them for the mission ahead.

“This is the best platoon that I have ever had,” said Marsh. “I wouldn’t have wanted to go to war with any other crew. I knew that it would be difficult, but these guys worked night and day in the rear to make sure that they had it down pat. In this line of work, perfect is not good enough. I’m really proud of them and of what they’ve achieved for the fire supporters of this battalion.”

In addition to being well trained on both the 60 millimeter and the 81 millimeter mortar systems, the mortar platoon also had received the 120 millimeter system before departing Fort Campbell for Iraq. The system was new to most of them, but being true professionals, they threw themselves at it, quickly mastering the system.

In theater now, the 120 millimeter accounts for over 90 percent of the rounds that they have sent down range so far. Without the training that Marsh put together prior to departing, the battalion would not have been as successful as it has been so far.

The Fire Supporters have a different story to tell. Originally assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, the majority would be attached to the companies that they supported, in order to increase the level of cohesion with their supported companies.

Continued on pg. 11 see **STEEL RAIN**



Iraqi Army takes on Terrorism



Story by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell
Photos by Staff Sgt. Kevin Moses Sr.

The soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, conducted their first company level air-assault operation May 15 resulting in four detainees, one small-arms fire fight and no casualties.

The Iraqi soldiers arrived at Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah for training on entering and exiting a helicopter before embarking on their six kilometer search and attack mission in an area suspected of terrorist activity.

“The importance of this mission was that it showed that the 2nd Iraqi Battalion could conduct



a company level operation while maneuvering three different platoons simultaneously,” said Capt. Ryan Hartwig, commander, Military Transition Team 2. “That was the basis of what we were looking at as far as evaluating and seeing if these Iraqi soldiers were competent at the company level.”

Throwing in the variables of an air-assault mission and a nighttime operation tested the 2nd Bn.’s soldiers, said Hartwig.

“Ninety-five percent of their missions are daytime missions,” he said. “Also, pushing the limit of lack of sleep, no food and just enough water to sustain, testing them under those conditions was the most important thing.”

Some Iraqi army soldiers will have to work to be stronger said Col. Fowzi, commander, 2nd Bn., 4th Bde., 6th IAD.

“I want strong soldiers,” he said. “This mission was long and difficult; it tested our soldier’s strength and will to strive. Many soldiers were sick from the heat, and tired from the long distance so I will improve on their strength so that they may move long distances for a long period of time.”

Even with the intense Iraqi sun beating down on the troops’ shoulders, the soldiers worked hard to reach their goals for the operation, and in doing so, detained four terrorist suspects, one of whom is suspected to be an assassin.

“Conducting a mission of this magnitude has held the IA to a greater standard. Now they know that the two or three hour patrols the U.S. Soldiers take is nothing compared to a 16k movement patrol at night, where it is hard to know where you are,” Hartwig said.

“Basically, I think this operation is just raising the bar, so now the little three or four hour patrols become nothing to them.”

This was the largest air-assault mission the IA has undertaken to date in conjunction with 2nd BCT. The operation proved to the MiTT elements that their hard work and dedication is paying off.

“The U. S. forces have worked very hard to help make the IA stronger and more proficient,” Fowzi said. “All this work is seen through operations like this one.”

"Top Guns" Conduct DOD Contractor Searches to Help Keep VBC Safe

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Kevin Lovel
363rd MPAD

Soldiers from Multi-National Division – Baghdad's 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, along with an Airman, Sailor and Ugandan base security workers, conducted an inspection and search of two civilian contracting companies' premises here April 27 as part of their on-going mission of providing base security for the Victory Base Complex.

Lt. Col. Rafael Torres, battalion commander, 1st Bn., 320th FA, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., set the tone for the mission while giving the operations order. He urged the Soldiers to "maintain (their) composure, and treat them (employees) how they should be treated."

The operation involved searching warehouses, offices and personnel for forbidden items such as unauthorized weapons, cell phones, camera cell phones, drugs and alcohol, as well as for environmental and contract compliance violations, said Maj. Steven Phillips, operations officer, Garrison Law and Order Detachment, 539th Military Police Detachment, 49th Military Police Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Local national employees are allowed to have regular cell phones in their living quarters, but not at their place of work. They are not authorized to use camera cell phones in either setting due to security concerns, said Phillips.

"We hope to ensure that the Department of Defense contractor is in full compliance with the Victory Base Complex rules and regulations as put out by the garrison commander as well as check up on their site," said Phillips. "It's (the inspection) a force protection, environmental and contract compliance mission."

Depending on the level of non-compliance, penalties for possessing illegal materials involve anywhere from simple confiscation all the way up to detention and interviewing by counter-intelligence personnel, said Phillips.

"If it's an activity that's criminal in nature, then the individual will be charged, and, based upon the nature of the offense, the garrison commander can ban the individual from VBC,

which kicks in Multi-National Coalition – Iraq policy that states if an individual is banned from one forward operating base, they are banned from all FOBs in Iraq," said Phillips.

If an environmental or hazardous material violation is found, then an action against the company is brought. The contracting office decides how to handle the issue with the company, and can issue warnings or in the case of severe violations, terminate the company's contract with DOD, said Phillips.

During the mission April 27, the contracting companies were found to be mostly in compliance. However, some items such as unauthorized cell phones, two cases of "hard liquor" and bags of DVD batteries, were found and confiscated.

The Soldiers, sailors and airmen involved in the mission said they enjoy their job and see the necessity of this type of mission.

"I like that we get to go from place to place, see different people and learn new tactics," said Spc. Demetrius Bryant, petroleum supply specialist, 1st Bn., 320th FA, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., whose hometown is Albany, Ga.

Bryant said that an important part of the job is "knowing the personnel we're searching, and knowing the techniques for searching a building."

Proper disposal of hazardous





Story by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Pfeffer
2-502nd IN, 2nd BCT

In a combat zone, stress is part of every Soldier's daily battle rhythm. Sometimes, the stress can be unbearable, and Soldiers need an outlet where they can blow off a little steam, and regain a sense of normalcy in their daily lives.

Sometimes, it can also involve a little goofing off. On May 8, the men of company D, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment held one of the most bizarre sporting events held in Iraq since the 2nd Brigade Combat Teams arrival in South West Baghdad last October.

The inaugural "Delta Dog Eating" contest was held amongst cheers and jeers as the company's competitors lined up to take part in this off the wall event. First and second platoons faced off with two contenders each.

The Soldiers were competing for the right to advance to the finals. Capt. Jared Crain, commander of the "Delta Dawgs", opened the ceremonies stating, "Let the games begin!"

When asked how he felt about his Soldiers potentially downing

enough hot dogs to make them violently ill, Crain added, "These guys have so much on their minds. I'm just glad that they can take the opportunity to blow off a little steam. There may be some sore stomachs, but it's all in the name of good clean fun."

The Hot Dog eating competition was held at the Delta's command post, on Camp Striker. The Soldiers of company D received Hawaiian Tropic sun visors (to shade the glare from the M1114's headlights) and black tee shirts, supplied by Jockey (to save their uniforms from unnecessary wear and tear). Both companies became willing sponsors of the inaugural event, showing their support for the Soldiers.

Andy has been first platoon's interpreter since Delta Company was reattached to 2nd Battalion back in March 2006. He has been with them through thick and thin and his loyalty has never been in question. For this competition, he would represent the Soldiers of first platoon, due in part because of his popularity with the Soldiers, but mostly because of his ability to eat... and eat and eat!

Sporting a mohawk, Andy was ready for battle. Turning back was not option; he had already spent many hours deep in meditation, preparing himself for the moments ahead. Those five minutes would test his dedication, as well as his stomach. Andy had not eaten all day, choosing instead to starve himself, thereby maximizing his ability to put down dogs. He was hungry for victory.

As he began, the crowd roared with anticipation. He knew that he only had five minutes to secure victory and he



wasted no time at all, stuffing and chewing his way through an unbelievable amount of hot dogs.

The five minutes came and went as he managed to put down several pounds of processed meat. The actual number of hot dogs would be kept secret for health reasons, but it was an unhealthy amount. Despite weighing less than 150 pounds, Andy defeated his competition, and first platoon advanced to the finals, ready to meet the other finalist.

On May 9, third and fourth platoons each had their representatives meet in what was sure to be a showdown for the ages. Each platoon sent three individuals to compete, and the excitement did not disappoint.

The following night, the platoons competed with three contestants each. On that night, the contest was extended to twelve minutes, in order to allow for maximum consumption of meat.

Pvt. Shaun Moorhead walked away with an easy victory, often hoisting two dogs at a time, securing his chance to challenge Andy in the finals.

Victory was easy for Shaun, who earlier had mentioned that he had, "put a lot of practice into the competition, focusing on his breathing, and mental concentration."

The Finals of the "Delta Dawgs" Hot Dog eating contest were held on May 26.

The two finalists, "Iron Gut" Moorhead and Andy "The Motivated Muslim" were poised to down to do battle in what was sure to be a finale for the ages. As with all athletes, each of the finalists credited a couple of little known superstitions that they claim to have gotten them to this moment. In Moorhead's case, he chose to speak directly to the dogs themselves, claiming that if he explained his motives to them in quiet reflection that they would allow themselves to be eaten more readily.

In Andy's corner, he had chosen to don a Mohawk haircut, claiming that it had brought him luck so far, and that he would continue to don it until he walked away with a victory. The moment was tense as

the two competitors approached the platters full of all-beef dogs. One of these two athletes would define the moment while the other would wind up defined by the moment. As the bell rang, the dogs went down.

Halfway through the allotted fifteen minutes of fame, it appeared that Andy might walk away with a clean victory, but Moorhead began pulling away, as Andy's stomach seemed to lock up, refusing another bite. At the conclusion of the marquis event, Moorhead walked away with a tense victory, defeating Andy 14-9 in what was sure to be a memorable final.

After the event, Moorhead called his mom to tell her of his victory. After explaining to her that he is the reigning champion, she simply responded with how proud she was of her son and his ability to "keep them dogs down."

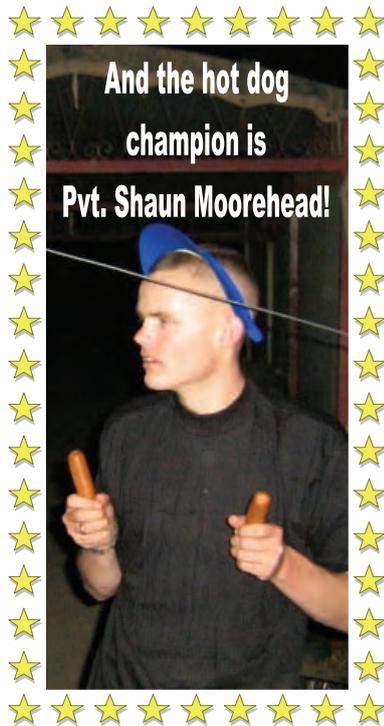
Moorhead was also quoted as saying that he, "had never downed so many dogs" and that he, "never wants to see another hot dog again".

The event was attended by Lt. Col. Robert Haycock, the 2nd Battalion, and 502nd Infantry Regiment Commander, who stood by in awe as his Soldier did battle against one of the finest interpreters that this division has to offer. It's never a dull moment at the "Strike Force" as the Soldiers once again proved that they highly motivated Soldiers.

Every unit in the military knows the dangers that they face in a combat environment.

They're reminded of them daily, as they prepare to depart on patrols, or as they man some of the many patrol bases that dot the Iraqi landscape. Amidst all of the chaos, it's good to know that there are units out there that have a little fun.

For the Soldiers of company D, the hot dog eating fun continues to be a source of pride and enjoyment in a time of stress and uncertainty.





*Staff Sgt. Santiago Halsel
May 16, 2006*

Operation Winged Victory Takes Flight

Story by 1st Lt. Dahbry Streets
Task Force 1-22nd IN

Operation Winged Victory was a three day combined operation along the Tigris River conducted by 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Division Iraqi Army and Task Force 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment. The Air Assault left Soldiers with a deep sense of satisfaction as they conducted reconnaissance of an area not frequently visited by Coalition Soldiers.

Sayafiyah is composed of mostly Shia farmers, which is similar to the composition of most areas in southern Baghdad. What makes this area different from other areas is the fact that most of the residents have already embraced the ideals that Coalition Forces have fought so hard to bring about. The people there take ownership of their own communities.

“It is great to see the people of Sayafiyah coming together as one within their communities to fight the insurgency, and put a stop to the violence,” said Sgt. 1st Class Paul Nice, who is the Fire Support Non-Commissioned Officer for TF 1-22.

This Combined Air Assault that included both Iraqi and American Soldiers began in the early morning hours on Friday, May 19, and ended just before midnight on Sunday, May 21. While in Sayafiyah, the combined units conducted numerous foot patrols, talking to many of the local residents of Sayafiyah.

“The members of the village were happy to see Americans, some were extremely happy,” said Capt. Matthew Weber, Company B commander. “This predominantly Shia area displayed a positive attitude toward the new Iraqi government. In Sayafiyah, living conditions in the villages were extremely poor, and some houses had livestock yards next to their homes, within the perimeter of the village.”

Overall, the people of Sayafiyah were happy to see Iraqi and US Soldiers patrolling their area because they understood that coalition forces deny sanctuary to insurgents. The Soldiers were also able to gain information on the quality of services in the Sayafiyah area. This Shia enclave could one day pose as the model village for the future of Iraq.

MORTAR *(Continued from Pg. 3)*

It is not all maintenance and rehearsals for these Soldiers, once the nine line EOD call comes in the platoon is on the move, within 15 minutes of the call the convoys are ready to roll, said Maxwell.

This assignment has worked well for the Soldiers, with three different missions their jobs are constantly changing and breaking the monotony of deployment, said Brooks.

“Our job is constantly changing,” he said. “A crew will



have a week of EOD escort, then a week of detainee guard and a week of hot gun which is basically monitoring the radio and being ready to do a fire mission at any time of the day. So, we basically have three different jobs while we are here and it doesn't get old because we do them each a week at a time.”

With such diversity in the mission, the Soldiers have found they are making a difference no matter where they are assigned for that week, but most pride is taken in their role as EOD escort.

“In your job, in order to feel you are fulfilled, you want to feel like you have made a difference and this job does make a difference,” Brooks said. “We are going out there and taking care of the Improvised Explosive Device that could've hit a truck or hit the dismounts.”

But each Soldier agrees that this is a job that could not be done without the help of other Soldiers out there looking for the threat.

“We have to give a lot of credit to the line companies that do find [the IEDs]. They are doing a great job,” said Sgt. Adam Clark. “I have become really good friends with the line company soldiers, you get to meet them, go to an IED site and we gain respect for each other and what we all do. It wasn't like that back at Fort Campbell, but now people know who we are and that we are making a difference and they appreciate our job and we appreciate theirs.”

STEEL RAIN *(Continued from pg. 5)*

They would also be able to provide valuable support as extra riflemen when things got hot. With this in mind, they trained hard and long at various infantry skills, so as to better support the companies ultimate goal of success on the battlefield. In addition to these infantry skills, they also had to endure a rigorous certification program, as well several Live Fire Exercises, thus needing to understand two fields, taking on double duty for the battalion.

Recent additions to the team are the “Fisters” of company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Armor Regiment. Being members of the 4th Infantry Division, they offer a unique perspective on the battlefield.

“It's been great being attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. My Soldiers have been exposed to a completely different approach to combat. Soldiers of the “Strike Force” have really taken us in. It's great to be part of the team,” said 1st Lt. Andrew Armstrong, company C fire support officer.

The Soldiers of the “Strike Force” rest easy as the fire supporters, both artillerymen and mortar men stand ready to provide accurate and timely fires. They support their infantry brethren as they conduct patrols, and manage the battle space. These young Soldiers are always ready to let loose a little “Steel Rain” on the insurgents holed up in the sands of Iraq.

"FIRST STRIKE" SOLDIERS UNCOVER WEAPONS CACHE

“First Strike” Soldiers of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, conducted a cordon and search of a target house suspected of harboring terrorists and concealing weapons caches May 26, south of Baghdad, Iraq.

While on the patrol the Soldiers of Company B, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, discovered a small weapons cache by the house, after securing the area the patrol uncovered a sizeable cache in a field.

The weapons cache consisted of 2,300 50 caliber machine gun ammunition, 300 30mm mortar rounds, 30 disassembled 50 caliber weapons, one rocket, two disassembled 30mm weapons, one 60mm mortar rounds, eight 120mm mortar rounds, nine large bags of home made explosives and multiple road side bomb making materials including emptied out propane tanks, hollowed out cinder blocks, fuses and spools of copper wire.

An Explosives Ordinance Disposal team was called to the scene to assess the weapons cache and conduct a controlled detonation.

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"No Bridge To Far"



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