

IBC

Iron Brigade Chronicles

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An Army in transition

Pages 6-7

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

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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

Honor Guard Soldiers stand in position as the 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division conduct their Iraqis in the Lead Ceremony, July 1.

Photo by SGT Zach Mott

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Strikers,

It's hard to believe it's almost the end of July! It did not seem that long ago when we were slogging through the mud and rain of March, and here we are talking about heading home. Such talk is absolutely motivating, somewhat alluring, and unfortunately: very dangerous.

At first glance, it wouldn't seem that those three definitions of our mutual longings for home would go together, but they do. It's motivational in that reuniting with our loved ones is starting to grow tantalizingly closer. It makes it much easier to get up in the mornings, to conduct the numerous missions, and to put on our IBAS even though each day feels hotter than the last. As the days roll by, we get closer and closer to the magical BOG date that seemed so far away a few months back.

We're getting so close, you can almost taste it. That's the alluring part. The closer we get the more our minds drift back to that special someone, to the sights and sounds of home, to the opportunities awaiting us just over the horizon.

The World Series draws closer, college football rankings are starting in earnest, and the NFL analysis on ESPN is cranking up. It's enough to make your mind wander. And that's the dangerous part.

There may be just over 100 days left over here, but all of those dreams can come crashing down in a split second. That's all the longer it takes to go from carefree daydreamer to casualty.

This remains a very dangerous environment, and the AIF do not care if you are 100 days from departure or three days from departure. They're trying to kill

you, and they will do so up until the day you step off the plane in Colorado Springs. The only way to combat this enemy is to focus on enforcing standards, acting in a disciplined manner, and remaining vigilant.

Our standards are slipping. I wish it weren't so, but I'd be lying if I said otherwise. We are becoming complacent towards and contemptuous of this enemy. I've discussed the dangers of complacency before, but the contemptuous attitude we now see creeping into our mission performance is just as dangerous. I think some of us have done so many missions successfully; we think this enemy can't possibly hurt us.

We're doing things on missions now that we would never have considered when we first arrived. Uniform indiscipline, lapses in vigilance, cutting corners on TTPs while patrolling. We think because we've dominated this enemy on so many occasions that it's pre-destined. That's not how it works. At this time in our deployment, we are becoming our own worst enemy. Trust me: this enemy does not need any help.

The way to continue to dominate this fight and this enemy is to constantly instill and reinforce our discipline. I've often heard discipline defined as doing the right thing when nobody is looking. I'd suggest we need to do the right thing because the enemy is looking. Self discipline is the basis of unit discipline: it starts with the individual Soldier.

If you're a leader, do not think that by cutting your guys slack in basic standards that you're doing them a favor. The favor they need most from their leaders

is to bring them home.

Finally, even if we are enforcing basic standards and are acting in a disciplined fashion; if we fail to maintain our vigilance inside and outside the wire,

we're just asking for trouble. This heat and this complex environment drain your energy. They combine to cause you to think about personal comfort and easier solutions rather than the necessary tough ones: its human nature. Fight it. Fight it every day until we depart. As I mentioned before, it only takes a split second of inattention, of day dreaming, of casual attitude to result in casualties. We've had enough of those.

As I write this, we remain saddened by the loss of SGT James Muldoon, SSG Alberto Sanchez, and SGT Thomas Turner. Soldiers who, by all accounts, did their missions extremely well yet were chosen by God at this time to serve elsewhere. Each was special in his unique way. Each will be missed greatly by his unit, his family, and his friends. Each of whom I'm sure would relay to their comrades, if possible, to do everything they could to enforce standards, to be disciplined, and to remain vigilant. Each of whose loss reminds us of the precious nature of life and the great fortune involved in getting to go home.

Steadfast and Loyal
Striker 6



Col. Brian D. Jones

In memory of ...

Staff Sgt. Virrueta A. Sanchez
Company B, 1-68 Combined Arms
Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat
Team, 4th Infantry Division

Sgt. James P. Muldoon
Company E, 1-68 Combined Arms
Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat
Team, 4th Infantry Division

Sgt. Thomas Boyd Turner Jr.
Company C,
1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry,
101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)

Gone, but not forgotten



Medics tested

Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott

Spc. Joshua Randles, a medic with Company D, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, wraps a wound on an Iraqi child who was injured in a market place attack in Kharnabat, Iraq, June 26. Randles was one of several medics who treated the 37 casualties who were brought to the Forward Operating Base Warhorse troop medical clinic.

by Sgt. Zach Mott
IBC editor

Medic! is a call synonymous with battle; it can rival small arms fire and explosions as often as it is heard. Monday evening, medics, whether Soldier or civilian, heeded that call at Forward Operating Base Warhorse as 37 casualties were brought to the troop medical clinic at this outpost near Baqubah, Iraq.

Medics, including civilians and members of the U.S. and Georgian armies, treated the Iraqi citizens who were brought to the base after insurgents attacked a crowded marketplace in the village of Kharnabat. The attack was carried out by suicide bombers and small arms fire causing 37 casualties, 21 of which were children, and killing 18 to 20.

The injuries medics and doctors treated on both adults and children and both men and women ranged from minor shrapnel wounds to gun shot wounds to severe

burns to the face that can cause breathing problems.

The main concern with the patients was to stabilize them and get them the proper care their wounds needed. Dr. (Maj.) Jeremy Beauchamp, battalion surgeon, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, worked in the immediate care section responding to the most serious cases.

"What we do is go through the initial checklist that they teach in a basic (emergency medical technician)," said Beauchamp of his initial preparation to treat the casualties. "We're all fairly confident at this point in doing the drill."

"My medics are fantastic," said Staff Sgt. Karen Mutz, a medic with Company C, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers. "They're the best I've seen in ... 12 and-a-half years as a medic in the Army."

Some medics who don't normally work out of the TMC were in the midst of other activities when the call came out to respond to an inbound mass casualty.

"I was getting ready to go to the gym," said Spc. Joshua Randles, Company D, 1-68 CAB. "(When I got here) I started treating the wounds as calm as possible."

Randles said he found just helping out to be a justification of his skills as a medic.

"It's good to be able to get my hands on a patient," he said. "I feel like I'm helping either by starting an IV or just smiling at a kid."

Once treated, 32 of the more severe patients were medically evacuated by air to level three U.S. hospital care. Also, five were taken to Baqubah General Hospital with minor wounds.

"There are countless people that we're helping out that otherwise might not make it," Beauchamp said.

Pacesetter patrol finds baby

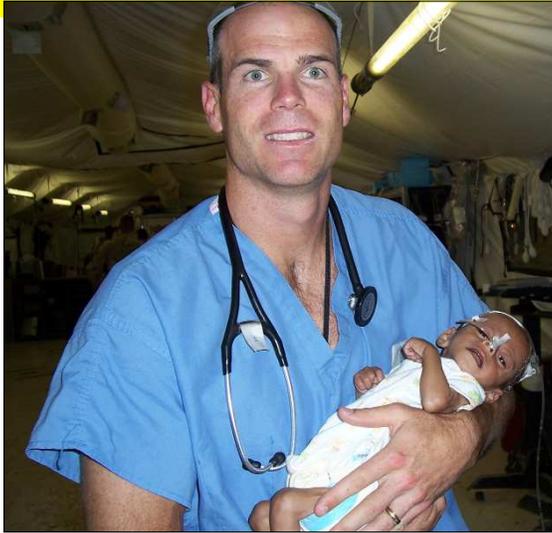


Photo courtesy of Senior Airman Christine Noldee

Maj. Jase Dean, physician, 332nd Expeditionary Medical Operations Group from Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, holds a baby he treated for dehydration at Balad Air Base.



Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

Spc. John Sullivan, healthcare specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery, prepares to cut open the shirt of Pfc. Gary Morgan, Battery B, 3rd Bn., 29th FA, during a training exercise on Logistical Support Area Anaconda. Sullivan was the medic who treated the abandoned child on the side of the road near LSA Anaconda.

by **Pfc. Paul J. Harris**

IBC staff writer

An Iraqi male infant was found on the side of the road close to Logistical Support Area Anaconda by a patrol from Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers.

Staff Sgt. Donald White, patrol leader, Btry. B, 3rd Bn., 29th FA, and his team came across a box on the side of the road. Initially, he thought it to be an improvised explosive device until he heard crying coming from the box. White made sure there were no wires protruding from the box and made sure it was not booby trapped.

“I ran as fast as I could, snatched the box off the ground and kept on running, thankfully nothing blew up,” White said.

White then asked Spc. John Sullivan, healthcare specialist, Headquarters and

Headquarters Battery, 3rd Bn., 29th FA, to evaluate the child and assess its medical needs.

The skin was literally hanging off the child and we could see it was massively dehydrated and malnourished, Smith said. Sullivan told me we needed to get the child to a hospital right away and we jumped into the trucks and drove to the hospital as fast as we could.

In transit to Balad Air Base hospital, Sullivan turned the air conditioning vents in the baby’s direction so the air would cool the infant.

I was nervous because I have never had to professionally treat a sick child before, Sullivan said. “(He) did not cry at all in the vehicle but his eyes rolled in the back of his head and I thought ‘oh my goodness he is starting to die on me.’”

By the time the Pacesetter patrol made its way to the Balad Air Base hospital the staff was already waiting for them when the vehicles pulled up. The Air Force medical staff treated the child by putting a feeding tube into him to replenish lost fluids. After a while the infant regained its strength and was in stable enough condition to be released. A civilian liaison with the Iraqi hospital in Balad was called and the child was released to hospital care.

The baby was reunited with its mother on June 19. The mother of the child told the Iraqi police she had left the child in the care of her daughter. The daughter was carrying the infant on the road near the LSA when she was chased by wild dogs and left the baby so she could run faster according to reports given to Capt. Lance Awbrey, commander, Btry. B, 3rd Bn., 29th FA.

White credits the success of the rescue to the members of his Blue Delta patrol, not just himself and Sullivan.

In all this God-awful mess of arresting people, God forbid killing people and getting blown up, finally something good has come out of it, Smith said. Hopefully as a result, God will bless us for the next few months that we are here.



Photo courtesy of Senior Airman Christine Noldee

Senior Airman Christine Noldee, aerospace medical technician, 332nd Expeditionary Medical Operations Group, feeds a baby who was found abandoned on the side of the road near Logistical support Area Anaconda by a patrol from Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery.

IRAQI ARMY USHERED

Compiled by Sgt. Zach Mott
IBC editor

Iraqis continue to take a more defined role for the security of their nation with each passing day. Iraqi Army Soldiers have taken charge of areas in Diyala and Salah al-Din provinces in recent weeks as a true testament to the IA's ability to secure its country's future.

The 2nd Brigade, 5th Division of the Iraqi Army took control of areas in and around Baqubah July 1 in a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Gabe. The area was under the previous control of the 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers.

Lt. Col. Thomas Fisher, commander, 1-68 CAB, called the event, "an illustrious ceremony that marks another great step forward for the great nation of Iraq and the people of Diyala."

In another ceremony, this one conducted July 3, the 5th Division of the Iraqi Army assumed control of much of Diyala Province from the 3rd HBCT in a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Caldwell, near Balad Ruz.

"I'd like to say that this division will be successful because it is composed of the full spectrum of Iraqi people," said Maj. Gen. Ahmed Klepos Awad Majhool al-Kozae, the commander of the 5th Division during the ceremony. "It repre-

sents the hand of the government that carries the weapon and the olive branch at the same time."

The most recent ceremony saw the Iraqi Army's 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division take control of a portion of southern Salah al-Din Province from the 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd HBCT, July 13.

Part of the area now under control of the 4th Bn., 1st Bde., 4th Division is the town of Al Dujayl, which has gained notoriety in recent months because of the Saddam Hussein trial. Many witnesses who have testified during the first part of the trial are from this region.

"The this area be proud of the Soldiers of this battalion," said Col. Shaker Ferris Kadub, commander of the 4th Bn., 1st Bde., 4th Division. "People will be able to sleep at night because of these brave Soldiers."

Iron Brigade Soldiers may have a less hands-on role in Iraq, but the mission remains vital. Soldiers remain ready to assist their Iraqi brothers-in-arms should the need arise. Iraqi Soldiers are in the lead in many of these areas — they are the ones with boots on the ground, tracking insurgents and defending their fellow citizens. But, if the need should arise, Iron Brigade Soldiers are only a radio call away, standing by, ready to help.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jason Maynard, in Army Combat Uniform Insurgency Platoon sergeant, Bulldog Battery, 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division, watches members of Iraqi Army's 2nd 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division conduct a patrol at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan.

Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris
RIGHT: Sgt. William Hannah, intelligence analyst, Headquarters and Headquarters Company attached to Company D, 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion, and an Iraqi sergeant from the 1st Brigade, 4th Division during a joint mission in the town of Ayabachi.

D INTO LEADING ROLE



Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

Staff Sgt. Daniel Barnes, left, section leader, Bulldog Troop, 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, speaks with an Iraqi counterpart during a joint mission near Balad.



Sgt. Zach Mott
n, Counter
alion, 29th
Company,
ol briefing



Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

Pfc. Brent Brooks, Bulldog Troop, 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, and an Iraqi Army Soldier search a cow pasture during a joint patrol.



Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott

Members of the local government as well as Iraqi and American Soldiers enjoy a traditional Iraqi meal following an Iraqi in the lead ceremony.

Fighting Eagles on patrol

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

Reacting at a moments notice in response to insurgent activity is key to preventing further attacks against coalition and Iraqi security forces.

Alpha Company, 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, rushed to the scene of an improvised explosive device detonated near Forward Operating Base Paliwoda to eliminate any terrorist threats.

“Our mission is to help provide security to the city and help the local government, establish structure,” said Capt. David Sandoval, Alpha Company commander and native of Downey, Calif.

After a hasty brief by Sandoval, Alpha Company rolled out the gate and arrived at the site in a matter of minutes. One of Sandoval’s responsibilities as commander was to determine why there was a breakdown in security so close to an Iraqi Police checkpoint. He questioned locals and Iraqi Police to determine how this happened, why this happened, and what can be done to prevent this from happening again.

After question the locals and the Iraqi Police, Sandoval’s group combed the area for clues and a trigger man. Analysis of the blast site revealed the type of detonation device involved in the explosion, but

no trigger man was found.

The blast was intended for a U.S.

Humvee. The vehicle received minor damage from shrapnel, but no one was injured in the incident. Part of incurred was a flat tire.

Sgt. Kenderick Schunke, a Vesper, Wisc., native, who was on a routine security patrol when the IED detonated, utilized a tractor that was on-site to lift the Humvee and change the tire. He credited his ingenuity with being raised on a farm.

In addition to the IED blast, Sandoval noticed a partially collapsed building not far from the check point may have been a hiding place for anti-Iraqi forces.

“The building was destroyed to deny sanctuary for any future insurgent activities,” said Sandoval.

Searching and destroying areas which could harbor insurgents is all part of the 1-8 CAB’s mission and aim to make Iraq safe for its people and its growing government.



Capt. David Sandoval, commander, Company A, 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion, briefs his troops before a quick reaction force mission.



Company A, 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion Soldiers conduct a patrol in reaction to an improvised explosive device detonation.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski

Company A, 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers Soldiers search a condemned building for anti-Iraqi forces responsible for detonating an improvised explosive device close to an Iraqi Police check point.



Photo by Spc. Michael Pfaff

Combat engineers from the 14th Engineer Battalion clear the debris and level the area where air-strikes killed Al-Zarqawi and destroyed the house he was hiding in.

by Spc. Michael Pfaff

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Days after the death of coalition forces' prime target, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the ruins of his house remained a monolithic symbol of victory in the Global War on Terrorism.

Despite the symbolism the wreckage yields, Soldiers from Company C, 14th Engineer Battalion, 101st Airborne Division are leveling the plot of land the house once stood on as a testament to the reconstruction efforts in Iraq amidst the destruction war may bring to a country.

"We dropped the bomb and made the mess," said Capt. Ryan T. Smith, commander, Co. C, 14th Eng. Bn. "We want to get it cleaned back up, so whoever owned this land can still use it."

The air-strike left the area littered with rubble and debris from the house, as well as knocking over many of the date palms the region is known for. The engineers' mission was to clean the area of the rubble and level the land.

Before the engineers leveled the area with their bulldozers, Iraqi Army troops arrived on scene to witness the aftermath of the attack. Many of the Iraqi Army didn't wish to see the area cleared of debris, wanting the site to remain as a monument to Zarqawi's defeat.

"This is a positive step for the people of Iraq and a milestone for the Iraqi Army," said 1st Lt. James P. Hester, platoon leader for the scout platoon, Bravo Troop, 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry, who provided security while the engineers cleared the area. "The Iraqi Army wants to keep the hole to remind them of our victory here, but it's important for us to clean the area up so that it can be used in the future."

Clearing the area and leveling the land took engineers seven hours, but that wasn't their only involvement. They've been working at this site since the night of the attack on Zarqawi.

"This is our third day out here," Smith said. "The first night we were out here moving debris to help recover casualties and intelligence, the second day we moved all the rubble into piles and today we're clearing all the debris and leveling it all."

There were possibilities of danger during the three days, with IEDs at the site being the most notable, but the 14th Engineer Battalion are combat engineers trained as trailblazers, or IED hunters. Once they made sure the area was safe from IED attacks, they were free to work.

"The only challenges we faced here was making sure that we removed any unidentified explosive objects from the initial debris, and making sure the rubble wasn't booby trapped when we returned," Smith said.

After Company C leveled the area, it was hard to tell a house once stood there. But, despite the location of Zarqawi's demise being cleaned up, a victory in the war on terrorism and the struggle to free Iraq from an insurgency's grip has been felt by all.



Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott

Felled palm trees and rubble fill the crater of the former safe house to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Hibhib, Iraq.

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

IBC staff writer

Imagine for four years you did a job you did not want to do. The only solace you received is that on the weekends, you were in a beautiful place next to the mountains that offered some of the best hunting ground around.

That is how Spc. Christopher George, food preparation specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery, saw it. He chose to come into the Army at 17 with the condition of placing him in Alaska or Colorado. He was offered Colorado and his next question to the recruiter was 'which job offer has the best bonus?'

At that time, cooks were being offered \$13,000 enlistment bonuses and to someone fresh out of high school from Red Bluff, Calif., that was a lot of money.

George became a cook, but he also knew he could shoot, scoring expert on nearly every qualification range he attended.

George deployed in 2003 with 3rd Bn., 29th FA. That is when he met Staff Sgt. Justin Widhalm, Task Force Pacesetter sniper NCOIC, who saw George as more than just a cook.

Each morning at breakfast, George would always ask how he could help and if he was needed on a raid or patrol.

"I like that type of person, whatever you throw at them they take the ball and run," Widhalm said.

Widhalm believed George had the right tools to be a sniper from many years spent hunting in northern California.

"I know every free second he has (at Fort Carson) he spends in the bush out hunting," Widhalm said. "He could sneak up on anybody and being a sniper is basically being a hunter."

When a sniper position opened, Widhalm nominated George to join the team. Even though George had good hunting skills, he had to learn the finer points of becoming a sniper. George was sent to Contingency Operating Base Speicher for a sniper course taught by instructors from the U.S.

Not long after George joined the sniper team his new skills were put to the test. On the morning

of April 1, two sniper teams, one including George, were inserted in a field to observe a route that had seen a large amount of insurgent activity. The two teams put themselves into position and waited.

Shortly after daybreak, a few of trucks pulled in front of their position to start excavating dirt. Shortly after the group, arrived they were brandishing AK-47 rifles.

The rifles tipped the teams that these were not just simple farmers. However, the group did not show any hostile acts toward any patrols or helicopters passing by.

At 3:30 p.m., sniper team two decided to rotate men off the observation post. The group was spotted by insurgents who immediately opened fire on their position. The insurgents were 500 meters away from where George and the rest of his sniper team were positioned.

As other insurgents moved to fire upon sniper team two, George engaged the enemy with his weapon. George positioned himself at the base of a tree in an irrigation ditch.

"Rounds were hitting the tree, limbs were falling," he said. "The sound of rounds passing overhead is like a huge beehive."

Two insurgents tried to speed away; George shot at the car and disabled it. At the same time, another car tried to move on their position. Widhalm turned and shot one of the insurgents with his sniper rifle while the other occupants fled.

After the shooting stopped, George wounded two insurgents with Widhalm killed one. The remaining attackers were detained.

"I replay the incident all the time," George said. "I think there is always something I could do better."

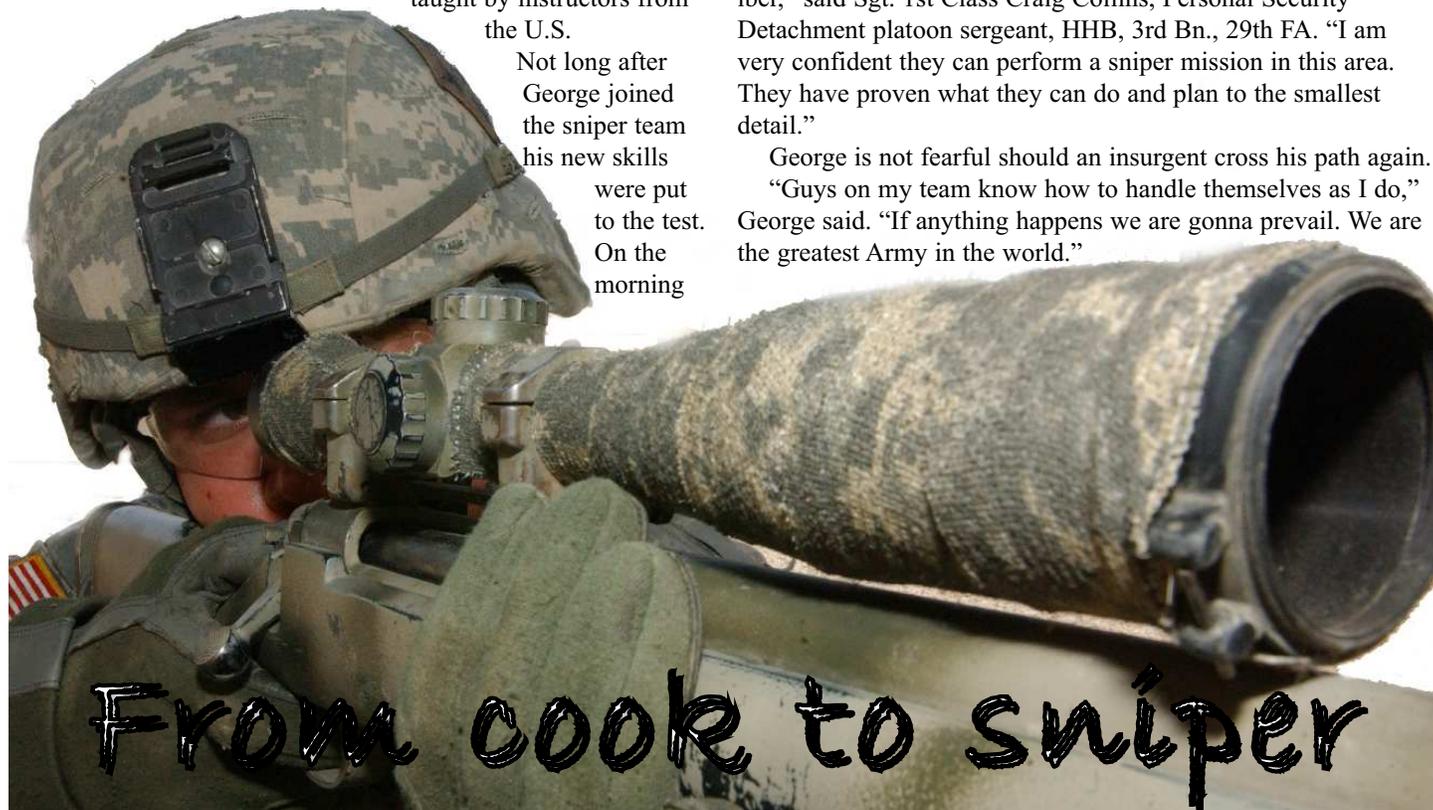
For their actions, George and his sniper teammates received the Army Commendation Medal with Valor.

"It's great. It's an honor. You don't see 'V' devices everywhere, that means something," George said.

"It is a tremendous honor to serve with Soldiers of this caliber," said Sgt. 1st Class Craig Collins, Personal Security Detachment platoon sergeant, HHB, 3rd Bn., 29th FA. "I am very confident they can perform a sniper mission in this area. They have proven what they can do and plan to the smallest detail."

George is not fearful should an insurgent cross his path again.

"Guys on my team know how to handle themselves as I do," George said. "If anything happens we are gonna prevail. We are the greatest Army in the world."



From cook to sniper

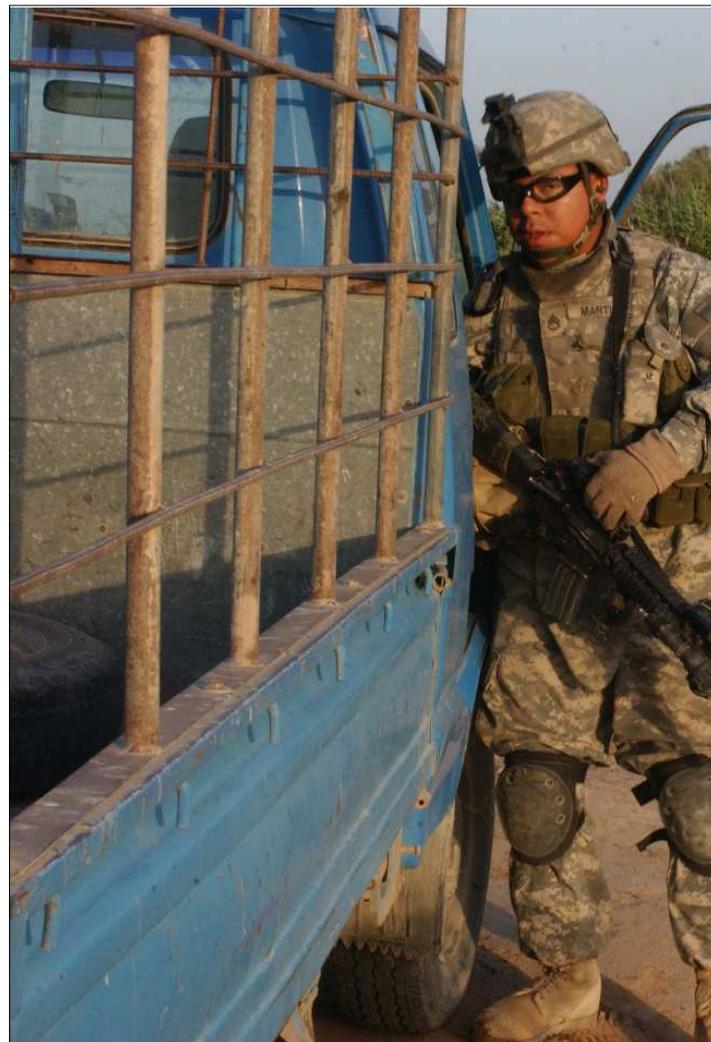
Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

Spc. Christopher George, food preparation specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery, eyes the target through the scope of his M-24 sniper rifle.



Photos by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

2nd Lt. Reese Morris, intelligence officer, Company A, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, pulls a rocket propelled grenade round out of a buried cache site in a field near the town of Nahrwan, Iraq.



Staff Sgt. Roberto Martinez, gunner, Company A, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, searches a bongo truck during Operation Shaku Maku, a joint operation between 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division and Soldiers from 1-68 CAB.

One more time Joint raid nets caches, insurgents

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris
IBC staff writer

A raid turned up weapons caches in Diyala Province June 29 by Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division and 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers.

Operation Shaku Maku, which is Iraqi slang for what's up, took place in the early morning with elements air assaulting into a village near the town of Nahrwan along with troops following close behind on the ground.

A source tipped off coalition forces that six individuals were in the village involved in laying improvised explosive devices and responsible for killing a U.S. Soldier three weeks ago.

"Every time we have come to this area we have been shot at," said 2nd Lt. Reese Morris, intelligence officer, Company A, 1-68 CAB.

A checkpoint was recently bombed near this area and we believe those responsible lived in this village. The operation seized a cell phone, American computer, small arms and 20 individuals were detained, Morris said.

The village used to contain a house that was used for executions by the insurgents, said Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Rimpley, command sergeant major, 1-68 CAB. The house was discovered by coalition forces recently and destroyed so it could never be used again. Once the house was discovered, the area was under constant surveillance and preparations for the raid were put in place.

While returning from the raid to Forward Operation Base Warhorse, AH-64 Apache attack helicopters noticed a suspicious black vehicle near an area of recent insurgent activity. Soldiers went to the home containing the vehicle to question the residents, while that was happening the helicopters performed dust off

maneuvers in an adjacent field. In doing so the helicopters uncovered four cache sites.

The sites revealed one 82mm mortar tube, twelve 82mm mortars, two rocket propelled grenade launchers, four RPG rounds, 35 hand grenades, 1,000 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition and various armament accessories. The Apache helicopters used Hell-Fire missiles to destroy the cache sites after the weapons had been collected. Five individuals from the site were also detained.

This was a joint mission with the Iraqi Army to strengthen its abilities and give the Soldiers confidence, said Capt. Scott Lynch, commander, Company A, 1-68 CAB. Their Soldiers were involved in the air assault and on ground clearing operations.

"They are getting better every day and it also shows the community that the Iraqi Army is on the ground helping to enforce the peace," Lynch said.

FAR # 8

*Commander's FAR number eight:
IO isn't everything, but everything is IO.*

"IO isn't everything, but everything's IO" simply put, means there's an information component to everything we do. The way we wear our uniform and the way we drive our vehicles sends a message.

With the world watching, it's important we send the right message. Sometimes, it is even more important when we think no one is watching. Since we represent what democracy is to the Iraqis, we need to conduct ourselves like professionals.

Everyday we show them what right looks like; we get one step closer to Iraqis in the lead. That gets at the heart of what we're trying to do over here:

1. build a legitimate government that is responsive to the needs of all the Iraqi people;
2. build capable Iraqi security forces that can take the lead in counter-insurgency operations;
3. neutralize Anti-Iraqi Forces that are trying to deny the Iraqis the chance for Democracy.

This is a tough business; the enemy, the heat, the repetition and the length of the tour conspire against us all. The best thing we can do in these situations is to continue to stay focused, stay professional and show the Iraqis how we do it (live with democracy) in America.

Random Thoughts

Commentary by Chaplain (Capt.) Leonard Siems
3rd Special Troops Battalion

Now that we have passed the six month mark of our tour here in Iraq, thoughts more and more will be turning to redeployment and reunion with our families! Even though we still have much work to do yet, it is exciting to think what reunion with family and friends will mean to every one of us. You may be asking, is it to early to be thinking about this already. Well, we all know the Army plans out events like this many months prior to the event. So should we plan out and communicate with those at home about the reunion and the changes that will take place when we all return home.

The first thing we must realize about reunion is that it will both be joyful and stressful. Change always causes stress and reunion is a big change. We also know that everyone is affected, the Soldier, the spouses, the children and friends. It is important to note that emotions are especially intense, the joy of reunion is powerful and exciting and along with that, disappointments can be extra strong also.

The second aspect concerning reunions is that we must prepare for a happy reunion, they just don't happen! To help prepare for your reunion, communicate with you spouse, children and loved ones during separation, reach out to others (they are going through the same feelings as you are), and be realistic.

The last aspect concerning reunions is to realize that things will not be the exact same at home as when you left. People grow, it is only natural for people to change with time, you have, so will they. Communication can be difficult at first, work on getting to know each other again and realize with proper planning and communication your reunion can be a happy and successful event.

Photo share -- show off your view of Iraq here



Photo by Maj. Michael Humphreys

Taken near FOB Caldwell, it's of the outside wall of one of the many "Castle" checkpoints on the Iraq/Iran boarder. It's currently used as a training ground from the Dept. of Boarder Enforcement.

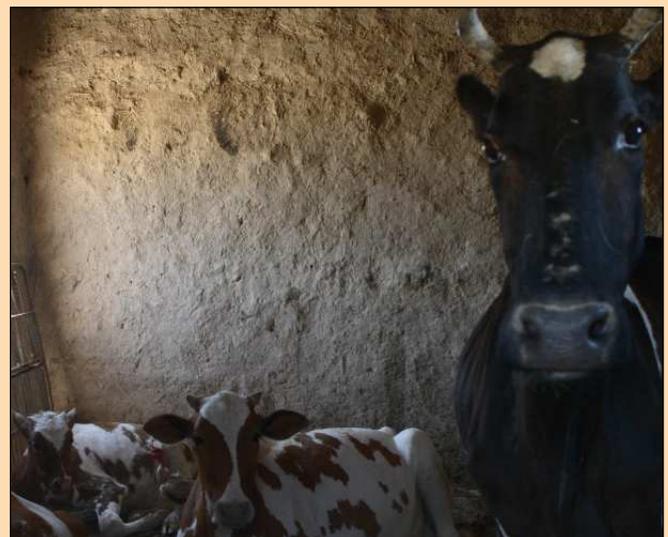


Photo by Michael Humphreys

Patrolling Soldiers checked out-buildings to ensure no anti-Iraqi forces were hiding out. This out-building housed a friendly and photogenic cow who moved in for her debut -- close-up.

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.