Iraqi contractors contribute to local security, development

Together Forward
IA, MND-B Soldiers provide medical relief in Ghazaliyah

Chaplain shares reunion, reintegration tips for redeployment

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FORGING AHEAD
INPs, Stryker Brigade Soldiers continue security operations in Adhamiyah

BAGHDAD – Staff Sgt. Patty Arnold-Carney, a truck driver with 172nd Stryker Brigade Support Battalion, searches a greenhouse in the northern sector of Baghdad’s Adhamiyah neighborhood Aug. 29 with 1st Platoon, Troop A, 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. Carney worked with the platoon in case a female terrorist suspect needed to be searched during the operation to rid the area of terrorists and weapons caches.

Story and photo by Sgt. Kristin Kemplin
363rd MPAD

BAGHDAD – In the early morning hours Aug. 29, Soldiers of Multi-National Division – Baghdad’s 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team piled into heavily-armored vehicles and rolled into a cordoned section of Baghdad to continue clearing operations as part of Multi-National Division – Baghdad’s Operation Together Forward.

It marked the third day in a row the Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Troop A, 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 172nd SBCT, and members of the Iraqi National Police patrolled the neighborhood, which is located on the outskirts of an Iraqi National Police station.

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INP, MND-B Forces conduct combined security operations in support of Operation Together Forward

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces, supported by Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers, conducted security operations in support of Operation Together Forward into a new area as part of current efforts to increase security and reinforce peace throughout the Baghdad area Sept. 10.

The 9th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division, working with Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, is conducting 24-hour operations to enhance security and disrupt terrorist activity in Baghdad’s southern neighborhoods of Bay’aa and Risala of the al-Bay’aa beladiya during the first day of the operations.

The National Police and MND-B Soldiers will search homes for illegal weapons and registers private weapons for families who are using them for home protection in accordance with the Iraqi law.

As part of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki’s immediate mandate to restore peace to the city, Operation Together Forward involves more than 40,000 Iraqi Security Forces and approximately 8,000 Coalition Forces, making it one of the largest security operations in Baghdad since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

(Courtesy of 4th BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.)

MND-B Soldiers provide free medical checkups for Iraqi citizens

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers seized of a cache containing a school, seize cache

Four male suspects were detained from the cache site.

The security operations of this event are another shining example of the increasing capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces as they take on more responsibility for the safety and security of their countrymen,” said Elledge.

(Courtesy of MND-B PAO)

The Ivy Leaf

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4th BCT, 4th Inf. Div.
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Do you have a story to share? The Ivy Leaf welcomes columns, commentaries, articles, letters and photos from readers. Submissions should be sent to the Editor at mary.mott@mnbd.b.byarmy.mil, and include author's name, rank, unit and contact information. The Ivy Leaf reserves the right to edit submissions selected for the paper. For further information on deadlines, questions, comments or a request to be on our distribution list, email the Editor or call VoIP 242-4464 or DSN (319) 847-1913.
The District Advisory Council of Adhamiyah and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from the 414th Civil Affairs Battalion provided humanitarian assistance to Iraqi families in support of Operation Together Forward in Adhamiyah Sept. 2.

Only days after Iraqi army and MND-B Soldiers cleared the area, the 414th CA Bn. set up a civil military operations center in Adhamiyah to bring local leaders and military officials together to discuss the needs of the people while members of the DAC handed out generators and food.

“We’re showing the Iraqi people that we’re here to help them,” said Capt. Andrew Corbin, a native of Austin, Texas, and civil affairs team leader with 414th CA Bn.

The DAC and Soldiers from the battalion contracted with area vendors to provide more than 15 generators to local leaders, school headmasters and business owners as well as more than 3,000 bags of food to families in the Adhamiyah district.

“We’re giving out food to those who are in need,” said Mohammed, a local resident and member of the DAC through an interpreter.

“It’s good to be able to cooperate with the people of the city,” he added.

Soldiers from the 414th CA Bn. said they recognized the need to show support for the citizens of Adhamiyah.

“This area has been neglected, and the residents have had problems with electricity, sewage and water,” said Corbin.

“So, we set up the CMOC to bring local leaders together to support their people,” added Corbin.

“The generators will provide power so that local residents may have lights and hopefully make their futures brighter,” added Sgt. Michael Free, military policeman and personal security detachment, 4th Infantry Division.

Following the humanitarian mission, Soldiers from the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, along with their commander, Col. Michael Shields, went out into the streets of Adhamiyah to meet with residents of the neighborhood to discuss safety, street cleaning and any other needs identified by the community.

“All the people I’ve talked to in Adhamiyah say they like the security that’s been established,” said Shields.

“We’d like to build on that.”

Residents of Adhamiyah came out in large numbers, filling the streets for an opportunity to talk to Shields, 172nd SBCT Soldiers, and Command Sgt. Maj. Riling, MND-B, as they walked through the neighborhoods.

The Soldiers made it a point to talk to local residents who have been employed as street cleaners for Adhamiyah to ensure the workers are getting paid. A key question posed was whether residents felt safer walking around their neighborhood.

The general populace of Adhamiyah appeared eager to discuss their concerns about safety and ongoing operations in their neighborhood, observed the 172nd SBCT Soldiers.

“Since Coalition Forces came into Adhamiyah, we’ve seen less violence,” said Nomar, a resident of Adhamiyah through an interpreter. “I feel safe. The longer Coalition Forces stay, the better it will get.”

“There’s a lot of good things planned for Adhamiyah,” remarked Shields.

“We’re working to fix electricity, sewer and water issues and working to get the hospital back up and running,” concluded Shields.
MiTT Soldiers train IA to defend Lutifiyah
Spc. George Welcome
2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.

LUTIFIYAH, Iraq — In the early morning of Aug. 16, soldiers of 1st Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, operating with the Soldiers of Military Transition Team 1, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, conducted “Operation Babylon” just outside Lutifiyah.

The combined operation successfully netted six suspected terrorists in the area and was one of the first in which the Iraqi soldiers took a leading role since being handed responsibility of the Lutifiyah area June 15.

The success of the mission is not only further proof that the Iraqi army is maturing in its role as defender of Iraq, but also that the hard work and training of MiTT 1 has not been in vain.

“The purpose of the mission was to seize brigade and battalion targets and deny (terrorists) safe haven in the area,” said 1st Lt. David Cochrane of MiTT 1 and commander of American ground forces during Operation Babylon. “What prompted the raid was intel we’d gotten over the past few months indicating a large group of individuals belonging to a terrorist cell was in the area.”

Another reason for the mission was to allow the Iraqi troops to become more confident through being out front in a combined effort.

“When we first got here, we did more of these types of missions,” said Cochrane of the Iraqi and American missions. “Since we handed over the sector, they have kind of tapered off. We let them build the intel, build the mission and go do it own their own,” he said.

MiTT 1 Soldiers said the IA soldiers are doing well in their new roles.

“With the IA taking the lead, they really have been doing a good job,” said Staff Sgt. Eric Jones, MiTT 1, who normally serves as a squad leader in Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Inf. Regt. “Their initiative is there. Their officers have been doing a good job explaining task and purpose to their Soldiers. We are here more in an advisory role to help them out in situations that they get stuck in.”

“The teamwork between the MiTT Soldiers and the IA has been key in the strengthening of the IA,” said Cochrane of the relationship between the U.S. troops and Iraqis. “Especially when Col. Ali was here. We built a good rapport with them; they’d invite us over for dinner. Unfortunately, a lot of those officers left when Col. Ali transferred up to brigade. We’ve had to start over from scratch since most of the original officers are gone.”

There has been more continuity in the relationship between the noncommissioned officers and soldiers of the Iraqi and American forces as their respective groups have largely remained the same.

“The NCOs here have spent countless hours training the Iraqi army from basic soldier skills to what we’re doing now — leading soldiers on missions. The IA soldiers and NCOs have come a long way since we started, and that has a lot to do with the rapport we have built from the beginning,” said Jones.

One of the challenges facing the IA soldiers and the Lutifiyah area is the lack of an Iraqi police force. Without the agency generally charged with maintaining law and order, the problems of fighting crime and the insurgents falls squarely on the IA.

Another, more internal, problem facing the IA is a lack of a solid NCO Corps.

“The structure of the Iraqi army does not emulate the American structure,” said Sgt. 1st Class John Greis, MiTT 1, who also serves as a platoon sergeant with Co. A, 1-502 Inf. Regt. “What we know as an NCO Corps, they do not have in their army. Their NCOs don’t get paid any extra money for added responsibility, and they might not even have the same soldiers from day to day.”

While it hasn’t been easy for the Soldiers of MiTT 1 to train their Iraqi counterparts, each day they are able to see the fruits of their labor.

“They’re coming slowly but surely,” said Greis. “From June until now, they have been in charge of about half of the missions. You train on a task today, and tomorrow you are out in combat doing it. It’s not like you are just training, you are out there with them the very next day facing IEDs and everything else that comes with war.”

The Soldiers of MiTT 1 have done nothing short of preparing the IA soldiers to defend their area, which will be the determining factor in how long Americans have a presence in Iraq.

“The guys I have had the pleasure of working with for the last year on the MiTT are the best this battalion has to offer,” said Greis. “They’ve done a hell of a job under extreme circumstances. It’s not easy to go out on patrol, it’s even harder to go out with people you don’t know and you can’t speak their language. It’s a testament to their ability.”

Apaches defend IED site, allow MEDEVAC team to save lives

Story by CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Crews assigned to a pair of Longbow Apache helicopters from Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, assisted Iraqi army ground units and guarded two MEDEVAC helicopters during Iraqi army-led raids Aug. 18.

An attack helicopter team assigned to the 1st Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, provided aerial security for the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, and its military transition team south of Baghdad during the MEDEVAC mission.

“I’m glad we have the MiTT teams there so the exchange of information is quick and concise,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Lowell Jones, a pilot with Company B, 1st Bn., 4th Avn. Regt. “That way we can get there, get it done and get out — especially when somebody’s life is on the line.”

At approximately 9 p.m., the Iraqi patrol was hit by an improvised-explosive device.

Two CAB air ambulances assigned to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, were called in from Forward Operating Base Falcon to pick up four non-U.S. military personnel.

Capt. Andy Caine, an Apache pilot and the commander of Co. B, explained that he and the other three pilots first went to FOB Falcon to establish radio communications with the air ambulance helicopters.

The Apache helicopters went to the roadside scene first, since the MEDEVAC helicopters already had their own escort.

“You basically treat it like air-assault security,” Caine explained. “We saw the friendly forces and we conducted security around the landing site.”

The Apache helicopter crews provided landing zone reconnaissance information for the MEDEVAC before it left FOB Falcon and escorted the medical helicopters back to the 10th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad, said Jones.

Additionally, both of the CAB’s attack battalions’ Apache helicopter teams conducted combat air patrols Aug. 18.

The Blackhawk utility helicopters of the CAB’s 3rd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, conducted Ironhorse Express air transportation missions and moved another 30 personnel around the Baghdad battlefield while the CH-47 Chinook helicopters of Company B, 2nd Bn., 4th Avn. Regt., transported 18 pallets of gear in support of Sustainment Brigade, 4th Inf. Div., which is located at Camp Taji, and moved 84 personnel around the battlefield.
CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Staff Sgt. John Gilbert, an infantryman with Company A, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, attempts to entertain a young child with one of his funny faces during a medical operation Sept. 2 at the Sheikh Hamid Village north of Baghdad.

IPs, MND-B Soldiers search, soothe local community

Story by Spc. C. Terrell Turner
4th Inf. Div. PAO


Operation Resolute Anvil was designed to pursue terrorist activity in the area while maintaining strong, supportive ties with the community.

Phase two of the mission involved getting out and meeting with the local populace.

“It was about keeping the local citizens informed and promoting Coalition and Iraqi security in the area,” said Maj. Peter Dargle, plans and operations officer, 1st Bn., 66th AR. “We let them know about phase three, the medical operation, and improvements we are making in their area to improve the quality of life for the local populace.”

Upcoming civil military projects in the area include a new pipeline and a water treatment facility.

The 303rd Psychological Operations Company, which is attached to 1st BCT, broadcasted audio messages throughout the area and spoke to the locals while passing out handbills with tip line numbers on them.

“Basically, we were broadcasting messages letting everyone know that there will be a medical operation, an upcoming water project and rewards offered for information on caches and bad guys,” said Cpl. Richard Behana, team chief, Team 1123, 303rd Psyop Co. “Our other mission was to talk to people and collect information on how the locals feel about the Iraqi army, Iraqi police and Coalition Forces, or atmospherics as we call them.”

Atmospherics collected over time allow the psychological operations unit to monitor ongoing changes of opinion in multiple areas of operation.

“We’ve been collecting atmospherics in this area for the last six months,” said Cpl. Bill Whitehill, assistant team leader, Team 1123, 303rd Psyop Co. “We’ve noticed that it’s definitely getting better since we started getting projects in here.”

The Psyop mission directly followed the cordon and search mission so closely that the two convoys passed one another going to and from the objective area.

“Part of the mission objective is to provide humanitarian assistance to the local nationals in case they are agitated,” said Dargle. “We come in right behind them and try to make peace in case of a bad situation. We engage them in discussion and provide humanitarian items in order to allow the other unit to leave with their detainees and any possible evidence without having to settle down the people.”

The mission has been a successful one for the Soldiers of 1st Bn., 66th AR.

“We found a possible (improvised explosive device) cache and detained five individuals,” said Dargle. “It was an interesting mission. When we talked to the people, a lot of their needs coincided with our upcoming projects so it was good for us to be able to give them immediate feedback.”

A medical operation was conducted Saturday for residents of the community. Hundreds showed up as two MND-B doctors, an Iraqi doctor and MND-B medics provided residents of the community with a checkup and free pharmaceuticals while civil affairs Soldiers handed out supplies.

“We coordinated with a local medical supplier to get some medicine for the people,” said Staff Sgt. Dail Harris, civil affairs non-commissioned officer, 414th Civil Affairs Bn., which is attached to Special Troops Bn., 1st BCT.

“This is my second (medical operation) that I’ve been on. I think we are starting to make a difference in these communities.”

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Sgt. Josh Cuddy, team chief, Detachment 1120, 303rd Psychological Operations Company, which is attached to 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, kicks a soccer ball back to an Iraqi child Sept. 1 during an assessment mission with Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 66th Regiment, 1st BCT, in the Sheikh Hamid Village. Cuddy also distributed anti-terrorism pamphlets to the locals.

Photo by Spc. C. Terrell Turner, 4th Inf. Div. PAO
‘Iraqis helping Iraqis’

Local contractors repair roads, contribute to make area safe

Story by Cpl. Michael Molinaro
2nd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FOB KALSU, Iraq – “Iraqis helping Iraqis” was the theme in the Rasheed district Aug. 25-28 as locals helped patch together a road that had been blown apart by terrorists.

Local contractors disregarded terrorist threats and ventured out to repair the roads and allow Iraqis to travel unharmed.

“The workers did a great job and worked very hard for two days to complete this monumental task,” said Staff Sgt. Micah Greene, noncommissioned officer-in-charge, Company B, 412th Civil Affairs Battalion, attached to Multi-National Division – Baghdad. “This road repair demonstrates the local contractor’s patriotism and courage by standing up to the cowardly terrorists and working hard to fix this road.”

Numerous roadside bombs have detonated between Adwaniyah and Hawr Rajab, which left huge craters and made the road impassable. Soldiers from Troop A, 1st Squadron, 10th Calvary Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, provided security while the contractors worked on the roads.

Many projects have been started in the Rasheed area because of the willingness of the local populace to end terrorism in their backyard, said Greene. The trash cleanup project not only beautifies the area but also gives terrorists less places to hide bombs on the side of roads.

Projects like road repairs make it easier for local civilians to get to work and makes it more difficult for the terrorists to find another hiding spot for their bombs. Road repairs hamper the terrorists’ efforts to repeat emplacing the bombs in areas they have established safe escape routes.

The repairs to the road also eased travel in the area, which has allowed the local economy to slowly recover, said Capt. Jon Bodenhamer, commander, Troop A, 1st Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt. Prior to the repairs, shops on the damaged roads shut down for extended periods of time.

“The workers did a great job and worked very hard for two days to complete this monumental task,” said Staff Sgt. Micah Greene, noncommissioned officer-in-charge, Company B, 412th Civil Affairs Battalion, attached to Multi-National Division – Baghdad. “This road repair demonstrates the local contractor’s patriotism and courage by standing up to the cowardly terrorists and working hard to fix this road.”

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“Business has greatly improved because of this road repair,” said one Iraqi citizen. “It is easier to get Benzene from the local Benzene station because more fuel trucks can get there faster.”

Iraqis in the region continue to gather their own information on the actions of suspected terrorists in the area and turn that information over to Iraqi army soldiers and Coalition Forces, Bodenhamer said. This allows the IA and CF to stop any terrorists before innocent people are harmed or killed. Rewards are often given to those who help assist getting terrorists off of the street.

“They are beginning to realize that if they stand together, the terrorists cannot win.”

More and more Iraqis are stepping up to the challenge every day and standing up to the terrorists. They are beginning to realize that if they stand together, the terrorists cannot win.

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Capt. Jon Bodenhamer
commander
Troop A, 1-10 Cavalry Regiment,
2nd Brigade Combat Team,
4th Infantry Division

IA, 172nd SBCT Soldiers conduct joint cordon, search operation in Ghazaliya neighborhood

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


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Capt. Jon Bodenhamer
commander
Troop A, 1-10 Cavalry Regiment,
2nd Brigade Combat Team,
4th Infantry Division


Along neighborhood blocks, taking care to respect Iraqi customs and property along the way.

“Unfortunately, we have to enter each home whether it’s empty or not,” said Capt. Matthew Mousseau, platoon leader, 1st Platoon, Co. C, 4th Bn., Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Many of the residents were at home and were present as each room of their residence was searched. However, some homes appeared to be recently abandoned because all furniture and household items were absent.

In previous searches Company C has conducted, Soldiers found notes threatening homeowners to leave, and sometimes the notes had a bullet attached, said Mousseau.

It is threats and violence such as these that the IA and MND-B Soldiers hope to end with the operation.

“People are very interested (and respond) well to what we are doing, giving us information and displaying a positive attitude towards us,” said Sgt. Shane Weaver, infantryman, 1st Plt., Co. C. “They seem happy to see us on the ground,” he said.

“It’s great to have the IA along,” said 2nd Lt. Michael Williams, platoon leader, 2nd Plt., Co. C. “They do a good job and the residents like to see them out here as well.”

“We’re making the area safe from terrorists,” said Habib, an Iraqi army soldier, through the aid of an interpreter.

He said he has a vested interest in eliminating the criminal element in the area, which is “taking some convicted terrorists to prison that had hurt my family.”
5th Bde., 6th IAD begin search operations in Monsour

Story by Pfc. Paul David Ondik

FOB LOYALTY – 61st Cavalry Regiment, Iraq – Two kidnap victims were freed Aug. 23 by Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. "It's kind of weird how it was just sitting there," said Spc. Kenneth Correa, a member of the Troop B commander's personal security detail. "We got him, and he said that his friend was still in the house."

MND-B Soldiers surrounded the home. Inside they found the second victim, whose hands and feet were bound. The criminals fled the scene before MND-B Soldiers were able to cordon off the building. The victims, a Shiite and a Sunni, told the Soldiers that they had been riding motorcycles and had just crossed the A' Iamma bridge going into Adhamiyah when they were surrounded by the four armed kidnappers, who also were on motorcycles. The criminals took them to a transfer point south of the Abu Hanifa Mosque. At that point, the victims were forced into the back of a vehicle and taken to the home where Soldiers found them.

In June, the battery moved to Camp Freedom, said DeStefano. "It's kind of weird how it was just sitting there," said Spc. Kenneth Correa, a member of the Troop B commander’s personal security detail. “We got him, and he said that his friend was still in the house.”

MND-B Soldiers surrounded the home. Inside they found the second victim, whose hands and feet were bound. The criminals fled the scene before MND-B Soldiers were able to cordon off the building. The victims, a Shiite and a Sunni, told the Soldiers that they had been riding motorcycles and had just crossed the A’Iamma bridge going into Adhamiyah when they were surrounded by the four armed kidnappers, who also were on motorcycles. The criminals took them to a transfer point south of the Abu Hanifa Mosque. At that point, the victims were forced into the back of a vehicle and taken to the home where Soldiers found them.

Soldiers from 1st Sqdn., 61st Cav. Regt., have located and freed 10 kidnap victims in the past two weeks. "Over the last couple of months, (kidnapping) has been one of the focuses," said Lt. Col. Brian Wisniki, commander, 1st Sqdn., 61st Cav. Regt. He said both Col. Thomas Vail, the 4th BCT commander, and Maj. Gen. James D. Thurman, commanding general, MND-B, have increased measures to stop the sectarian violence in east Baghdad.

Although many kidnappings are motivated by sectarian tensions in the area, it is unlikely this particular incident falls into that category, Wisniki said. Soldiers questioned civilians living nearby about the incident.

The victims were released to Iraqi police in their home neighborhood of Khadamiyah.

The cylinder was lying at the edge of a building. It was not a threat, he told a company first sergeant. "It's kind of weird how it was just sitting there," said Spc. Kenneth Correa, a member of the Troop B commander’s personal security detail. "We got him, and he said that his friend was still in the house.”

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4th BCT Soldiers capture high-value terrorist, three associates in Al Oubaidy neighborhood

Story by 1st Lt. Georgia Bradshaw

FOB RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers of Companies B and D, 3rd Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, captured a high-ranking terrorist cell leader, along with three of his associates, Sept. 1 in east Baghdad’s Al Oubaidy neighborhood.

The captures were part of Operation Together Forward, a Multi-National Division – Baghdad operation designed to reduce assassinations, kidnappings and prevent escalation of sectarian violence in order to restore Baghdad security to Iraqi control.

“We’ve been looking for the leader of this cell for about four weeks now. We decided to target him about a week and a half ago,” said 1st Lt. Randall Weaver, a native of Susanville, Calif., platoon leader, Co. D. “The unit received information there was a terrorist cell operating in Al Oubaidy. Meanwhile, Soldiers from Co. B and Co. D set up a cordon and search around two houses in the Al Oubaidy area.

The combined patrol detained four local nationals. One of the detainees fit the description of their target.

“Not a single shot was fired, and we accomplished our mission,” said Lt. Col. Mark Bertolini, a native of Bellerose, N.Y., battalion commander, 3rd Bn., 67th AR. “In a related event, the unit received a tip that militia military took over the gas station across from Forward Operating Base Rustamiyah. Sources indicated the deputy of the terrorist leader captured the day prior was operating at the gas station.

Elements from 3rd Bn., 67th AR, were sent to conduct an area reconnaissance to gather information for future operations. Upon arriving at the gas station, the Soldiers identified the targets and started moving to detain the local nationals. A vehicle containing the targets attempted to flee the scene, but the Soldiers captured the four suspects. It was later confirmed that the unit had apprehended the deputy of the terrorist leader.

“This is a result of many weeks of hard work by our battalion and brigade staffs and culminated by a precision operation that was executed flawlessly by our Soldiers,” said Bertolini.

Neither the suspected terrorists nor MND-B personnel were injured during the operation.

50th Eng. Co. fixes bridges over troubled waters

Story by Spc. Joshua Ramey
2nd BCT, 1st Arrn. Div. PAO

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, along with the Iraqi National Police and Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, cleared all buildings within the Ghazaliyah neighborhood Aug. 21.

The Iraqi army and Iraqi National Police led four-man teams through houses and businesses, registering weapons and working to build local contacts to help establish peace in the area.

“The Iraqi Soldiers are doing a good job,” said 1st Lt. Gary Worst, executive officer, Company B, 1st Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt. “We are no longer working to train the Iraqis; this is the execution phase of the operation, and our job is to support them in clearing and securing the neighborhood.”

“From the time we were here during the last deployment to now, the Iraqi army has really improved,” added Sgt. Jason Adkins, Co. B, speaking of the progress of ISF. “They’re really starting to grasp the idea of what they’re doing as we continue to clear some of the worst areas of Baghdad.”

1st Lt. Otman of the Iraqi National Police said he has been doing his job with the ISF for two years and feels it is important he does his part to keep his fellow citizens safe.

He remarked, “I do this job because I hate the bad people of Baghdad. My family lives here, so I am making the city (more secure) for them.”
Pouring troubles away

Water filter provides factions reason to unite, combat water problems in region

Story and photo by Spc. Edgar Reyes
2nd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

As the scorching Iraqi sun blazed down on a little boy in a village, he cupped his hands together to drink water from a canal running through the middle of his town, unaware that 11,000 children like him die from water-borne diseases every day around the world who drink from similar canals.

As a way to resolve the local water problem and prevent tragedies such as this, leaders from 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, requested the help of a college professor to teach local Iraqi potters how to make clay/sawdust ceramic filter pots capable of decimating 99.88% of water-borne disease agents.

Perhaps equally important in the endeavor is the ability to provide jobs for the local populace and present a reason for factions to unite for a common cause.

To accomplish this, Richard Wukich, a college ceramics professor who teaches at Slippery Rock University in Pittsburgh, volunteered to instruct two Iraqi potters how to make the ceramic filters during his free time between semesters. He traveled to Iraq and spent two weeks training his new charges.

Wukich began his class by teaching the apprentices how to make clay pots with a mixture of saw dust, which is uncommon in Iraqi culture. The saw dust disappears during the clay baking process, creating several small holes that act as a filtering system inside the pot.

After crafting several pots, Wukich taught the trainees how to coat the pots with colloidal silver, an incredibly fine particle that kills bacteria and organisms and does not allow bacteria to grow into a culture inside the pot. The pots are either painted with a brush or dipped into a container containing a colloidal silver and water mixture.

After the colloidal silver is completely absorbed into the pot, it is placed on the mouth of a 5-gallon receptacle container. The filter is then covered with a lid or a piece of fine cloth.

Users pour water into the fine cloth to filter out extremely turbid water. As the water enters the clay pot, the filters inside the clay leave small dirt particles behind and the colloidal silver destroys any bacteria in the water. The clear and clean water then drips into the 5-gallon receptacle at a rate of 1-1.5 quarts-an-hour.

“This project was originally initiated by Capt. Richard Nardo,” said Wukich. “He is an environmental engineer who was activated by his Reserve unit to deploy to Iraq. He saw the need for a water filtration system and began researching on the internet until he found the clay filter technology “Potters for Peace” had learned to use from a doctor in Guatemala.”

Nardo contacted “Potters for Peace” and requested Wukich to help teach Iraqis how to build the filters as well as devise a business plan so the Iraqi people could begin mass manufacturing of the product and create jobs in the area.

Initial attempts to begin the project stalled in January 2004 before Wukich provided an article published in a renowned newspaper in the U.S., which contained statements from a commander in Iraq who had the same concerns regarding the conditions of the water supply.

In the article, Lt. Col. Patrick Donahoe, commander, 1-67 AR, stated the problems he was facing in Iraq were similar to the problems he faced when he deployed to Bosnia as a young officer, said Wukich. People of different ethnicities and religions attempted to gain power in the country and, in doing so, they ripped the country apart and divided the people—eerie resembling the current situation in Iraq with Sunni and Shiite factions clashing.

In the article, he also mentioned the need to provide business opportunities benefiting both factions and reintegrating local politics with leadership.

Knowing the business possibilities of the ceramic filters, Wukich said he sent an email to Donahoe describing the water filter and the possible economic impact it could have in Donahoe’s area of operations. After several conversations with Donahoe, Wukich was invited to Forward Operating Base Iskandariyah to begin the project.

“If it wasn’t for Lt. Col. Donahoe, this project would not be happening right now,” said Wukich. “I had several roadblocks with my previous attempts, but with his assistance, I’ve finally been able to start the project.”

“This project is going to do two things,” said Maj. James Ortoli, civil affairs team leader, 412th Civil Affairs Battalion. “It’s going to put Iraqis to work and give them clean water. It is the most economically efficient way for Iraq to start making its people responsible for their own water.

The big plan for the ceramic filters is to teach the apprentices how to make the filters so they can start selling them at affordable prices to the general public. Once the idea of having a filter catches on with the Iraqi people, the apprentices could then hire workers to increase production in their area thereby creating jobs and improving their economy. Having both sides work together to provide the country with clean water and boost the economy could be exactly what this country needs at this moment in time, said Ortoli.

“This filter has come late into my life,” said Wukich. “If I could teach people how to clean their water and have 10,999 children die a day instead of 11,000, I would feel like I accomplished something. It does not sound like a big statistic, but when it’s your child, it becomes significant.”

FOB KALNSU, Iraq – Richard Wukich, ceramic professor from Slippery Rock University in Pittsburgh, coats a clay pot water filter with colloidal silver, which kills disease-causing, water-borne microorganisms as they pass through the filters inside of the pot, during a class aimed at teaching local Iraqi apprentices how to produce water filters at Forward Operating Base Iskandariyah Aug. 24.
New center brings economic growth opportunity to Baghdad

RADWANIYAH, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers and facility staff celebrated the grand opening of the Al Bashair Center for Micro Finance at the Radwaniyeh Civil Military Operations Sept. 2.

The center’s opening was the culmination of an 11-month project under the combined efforts of the center’s staff and the Soldiers from 413th Civil Affairs Battalion and 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division.

The center will provide small loans to local residents to help them start their own businesses.

“If we determine that there is a need in the community, we look for Iraqi people that know this country to help us develop the programs,” said Maj. Paul Schmidt, civil affairs officer, 2nd BCT, who also serves as an advisor for the Al Bashair micro finance center.

The finance center is the first of its kind in Iraq.

“This project began with a vision almost a year ago,” said Col. Todd Ebel, commander, 2nd BCT. “It was my observation upon arrival in October that many of the resources that were being committed by the Coalition Forces and the government of Iraq were focused on the large cities. There are many citizens, who make up the majority of southern Baghdad, who are farmers and small business owners. We saw an opportunity to enable those farmers and small business owners to invest in their future.”

Workers at the center said they are optimistic about the possibilities it will bring to citizens.

“It’s a new opportunity and another project in this area,” said Ali Fahid Modec, a loan officer at the micro finance center. “Micro finance is a new kind of program. Our best goal is to help the people become productive so they can have more progress in their lives.”

The intent of the program is designed to teach Iraqis how to start small businesses and how to run a successful business so the Radwaniyeh community can enjoy economic prosperity.

“We try to help people understand how to use the money we give them and what they need to open their shops or markets because it is a small loan and they have to use every penny,” said Modec.

“It’s not only taking the money and that’s it,” he added. “They will have to pay for it, so they need to know how to run a business.”

Loans ranging from $200 to $3,000 are provided. The money is enough for the entrepreneurs to get started but not so much that they will be crushed under the weight of the debt.

The center is funded by the United States Agency for International Development. The center was provided an initial endowment of $250,000 by the non-governmental organization, which invests in developing countries throughout the world.

“We explain to them what they need to do to get a loan,” said Modec. “We gather the information and documents that we need. We fill out an application form for them; and after that, we wait two or three days for approval.”

Just in opening, the center has overcome enormous odds – but there are still challenges that the staff and potential borrowers face. Security is a major issue that will affect the success of the center as well as the staff’s ability to sell the center’s merits.

Some people say that they cannot take the loans because they think it is against Islam,” said Tamather Al Janabi, the executive director of the center.

“We do not take profits,” he added. “The money we take is for the service; it goes back to the people. Some of the money goes to pay the loan officer’s salaries and our business expenses.”

The ability for the center to thrive in its infancy depends greatly on whether the local leaders and citizens will support it.

“It’s important to have the support of the local people and the local leaders,” said Schmidt.

It is hoped that the center will help to bring peaceful change to the Radwaniyeh area.

“I really do believe that if this works, it will help provide opportunities for the average Iraqi citizen and will help contribute to reducing violence in the rural communities of south Baghdad,” said Ebel.
Mimicking other recent success stories in the Babil province, farmers from Jiff Jaffa held Agricultural Union board elections Sunday at a primary school in town.

Seven members were elected to lead the union into the future and help farmers earn profits they haven’t seen for years.

“This is the beginning of something better for us and our region,” a local resident remarked.

“The Americans have showed us the way to help ourselves – and for that, we are forever thankful.”

A staggering 483 people voted from the small community, choosing between 11 candidates representing different tribes in the area. The candidate with the highest vote total was named the director of the union, and the next three highest vote-getters were named assistant director, treasurer and secretary.

“The chance to vote is still new to us,” said Awwan, a local resident. “It is exciting to pick the people we feel will lead us in the right direction.”

The agricultural unions are designed to help farmers to buy seed, tools, insecticides and other items at subsidized prices and earn profits previously not seen before. They also have the ability to resource each other for machinery and equipment.

The union was run by the Iraqi government during the Saddam regime. Operations were handled by the Ministry of Agriculture, sometimes leaving the smaller individual farmer’s needs out in the cold as they tended to cater to those that would help stock markets in Baghdad, Awwan said. After the fall of the regime, the unions closed.

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, said they saw the union as a way of getting the farmers back on their feet and being able to conduct business for themselves. Agriculture is the primary means of business in the region and a majority of people depend on it to keep their families fed and clothed.

Having already established profit-making unions in Muelha and Diyara, the Soldiers from 2nd Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., coordinated the efforts in Jiff Jaffa, provided security for the elections and ensured the election process was handled efficiently and professionally. A representative from the MOA was on hand to verify the results and issue the union its license to operate.

“Even though there were winners and losers in the election, there were no losers in Jiff Jaffa today,” said Capt. Colin Brooks, commander, Company B, 2nd Bn., 8th Inf. Regt. “Everybody won today. Democracy was in action, which is always a good thing.”

Soldiers from 2nd Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., donated bags of fertilizer and other consumables to the union so the farmers had something to work with – “start-up cash” – as Brooks described it. It is now up to those elected to set the prices for the farmers to buy their items and get things rolling at the union. Brooks said he will help the union get on its feet; but in the very near future, the union will be run by those elected, and the success or failure of the union would be up to them.

“I am excited to get to work,” said Hamdi, one of the elected board members. “A friend of mine has seen how much good the union has done for his people in Muelha, and now Jiff Jaffa will begin to reap the same benefits.”
Soldiers from the 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, along with Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, provided medical treatment to residents of Ghazaliya during Operation Ghazaliya Aid Aug. 26.

The medical operation in the Baghdad neighborhood attracted nearly 200 residents, who were treated for a variety of medical conditions.

“The medical operation was a great event that helped a lot of people in Ghazaliya,” said Capt. Robert Callaghan, of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt. “It showed what could be accomplished by the neighborhood council, Iraqi police and the National police, when they work together in the best interest of the people.”

Iraqi army medical personnel, supported by MND-B Soldiers, treated each person who waited in line and referred future medical concerns to the Ghazaliya Primary Care Clinic, which recently reopened in the neighborhood.

Along with medical aid, the Iraqi Security Forces and MND-B Soldiers worked to build support and cooperation with the local population. Sgt. 1st Class Cesar Valdez, HHC, was among the MND-B Soldiers who worked with the ISF as Ghazaliya residents waited to receive medical care.

“The Iraqi Security Forces were instrumental in managing the long line of residents who showed up to take advantage of this opportunity,” said Valdez.
CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: BAGHDAD – Soldiers of the 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, hand out gifts Aug. 26 to children of Ghazaliya during Operation Ghazaliya Aid, which provided medical aid for local residents. Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, provided assistance during the operation.


BOTTOM FAR LEFT: BAGHDAD – Soldiers of the 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, hand out gifts Aug. 26 to children of Ghazaliya during Operation Ghazaliya Aid.

Carrying on to victory
MEDEVAC event seals winner of Humvee crew competition

Story and photo by Spc. Allison Churchill
Fires Bde. PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

A

A competition Aug. 22 designed to find the best M1114 up- armored vehicle crew in Fires Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, also proved to be a valuable training tool.

Claiming top honors among the six three-man crews competing was Sgt. Christopher Fernandez, Sgt. Jason Trahan and Spc. Todd Fatziinger, who represented Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Fires Bde.

The competition consisted of six events, each worth 100 points, over three days: a firing range, an Army Physical Fitness Test, a general knowledge written test, a pre-combat checks/pre-combat inspection, a convoy operations oral exam and a medical evacuation evaluation.

Soldiers kicked off the competition with a weapons qualification competition at Caughman Range here. Each Soldier shot 20 rounds from their assigned M16 or M4 rifle at a paper target 25 meters away.

The task proved more difficult than expected, as many Soldiers proved to be more dependent on their scopes and other accessories than knowing the correct breathing, rhythm and body postition techniques, said Sgt. Maj. Kevin Jones, operations sergeant major, Fires Bde., who served as the competition noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

"You can have all the high-tech stuff you want, but it’s not going to help you if you can’t shoot to begin with,” said Jones.


“All of my guys used their iron sights,” said Rassman about his team’s shooting skills.

The second day of competition started bright and early with the Army Physical Fitness Test near the Division Morale, Welfare and Recreation center.

The “Phoenix” team from the 324th Network Support Company: Sgt. Alvin Brown, joint network node section sergeant, of Richmond, Va., Spc. Abraham Elizondo, Kl band operator, of Brownsville, Texas, and Pfc. Andrew Giddins, radio operator and maintainer, from Steger, Ill., proved their physical might and earned the highest team average score.

“Everything was pretty realistic,” said Sgt. Christopher Fernandez, a native of Tucson, Ariz.

Convoy operations saw competitors take part in a written test and PCC/PCCI, followed by each team being given an hour to prepare its vehicle for a convoy.

A team of judges evaluated the teams on maintenance, safety, communications equipment, electronic warfare devices and the readiness of uniforms, weapons and load plans.

Truck commanders from each vehicle then took part in a convoy operations scenario on a sand table to demonstrate their knowledge in escalation of force incidents when reacting to indirect fire and other situations that can arise during emergencies.

The HHB team shone in the final event, a MEDEVAC scenario, although Fernandez and Trahan both described it as the most physically challenging.

In the scenario, the gunner from each team was knocked unconscious from an improvised-explosive device attack. His teammates had to carry him 50 meters to a safe zone to evaluate him and immediately treat his wounds as well as call in a nine-line MEDEVAC request and prepare a landing zone. The driver and TC then carried their gunner to the landing zone.

After teams “saved” their gunners, they worked together to answer a short oral exam, which judged how well the Soldiers understood the nine-line MEDEVAC request.

“I would trust those guys with my life,” said Fatziinger, a native of Allentown, Pa., who acted as the wounded gunner.

“Having a litter strapped to your vehicle isn’t going to do you any good if you can’t use it,” said Jones. He recommended crews take a good look at load plans to figure out what they will or won’t actually be able to use in an actual emergency.

The HHB team won and the Soldiers said they learned a lot during the event.

Sgt. Montrell Russell, mechanic, Company B, 589th Brigade Support Battalion, competed for his team and claimed top honors. His performance throughout the competition impressed the brigade’s leadership so much he was recognized as the top NCO of the competition.

“I didn’t know what to expect,” said Russell, a native of Charleston, S.C., of the competition.

He said he had relied on drills and procedures from the combat logistics patrols he participates in to get ready for the competition.

Although the brigade is nearing the end of its deployment, it’s not too late to improve convoy techniques, said Command Sgt. Maj. Gilbert Canuela, Fires Bde. “It’s better to find shortcomings in this situation” than out there when something bad happens,” said Canuela.

The winners were announced Aug. 25 during an awards ceremony at brigade headquarters. Brig. Gen. David Halverson, assistant division commander for support, 4th Inf. Div., and the division’s senior artilleryman, presented Trahan, Fernandez, Russell and Fatziinger with Army Commendation Medals for their success.

“Me and Kubik were talking about re-enlisting,” McLean said of an earlier conversation he had with his friend. “I’m about to have a kid,” said McLean, a native of Charlotte, N.C., “and he was telling me how he hates when people have kids but don’t take care of them. I told him I was thinking about re-enlisting, and he told me that was the right thing to do, so I can take care of my kid.”

When McLean received word that Kubik had been shot on a patrol and was critically injured, he immediately went to his battalion’s re-enlistment office and made arrangements to be re-enlisted.

“The day that I heard he got shot, I went straight to the re-enlistment office and told them that I wanted to re-enlist,” said McLean.

“Just in case he didn’t make it, at least I could do that for him and he’d know that I would still take care of my kid and do what I need to do,” he said.

The bond between McLean and Kubik is not uncommon among Soldiers. While living and working together in an adverse combat environment tends to have a cohesive effect on members of a unit, these Soldiers got off to a fast friendship back at Fort Campbell.

“We met back in the rear about three or four months before we came to Iraq. We used to hang out together and go everywhere. He was like my brother,” said McLean.

“I can’t forget him – I am getting a tattoo of him once we get back to the rear,” added McLean. “I didn’t go anywhere without him. On missions, he was always right there with me.”

McLean later asked if he could exchange his M-203 rifle for Kubik’s M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon. Initially, his superiors were hesitant about making the change as McLean had expertise with his weapon and they understood what it meant to him and approved the switch.

The Soldiers of Co. A have come together to help McLean deal with the loss of his friend, and they’re certain he will recover.

“I think McLean realized what the Army can do for him in the long run and the betterment of what he has going on,” said Sgt. 1st Class James Kelley, first sergeant, Co. A. “Kubik’s death was unfortunately timed, but I think McLean realizes that the Army is a great place to be, and he’ll be successful because he’s a great young Soldier. I think his battle buddy’s death was added motivation for him to re-enlist.”

Kubik’s temperament and personality made him quite popular with the Soldiers in his platoon.

“Kubik was the guy that everybody could turn to when they had a problem, and he always had a smile,” explained McLean.

“He was never sad, rarely mad, and if you had a problem, he would try to cheer you up. He was a cheerful guy,” McLean added.

As the realities of war set in, Soldiers sometimes begin to contemplate their mortality. McLean and Kubik had conversations about what they would expect if either of them were to perish.

“We talked about it a lot, what would happen if one of us was to die,” McLean stated. “He told me that he wouldn’t want anyone to be sad if he died because he was going to a better place.”

STRYKER,
CONTINUED FROM PG. 1

Police station, looking for weapons caches and other signs of possible terrorist activity.

The platoon set out to clear a sector in northern Adhamiyah as part of the brigade’s mission: “to quell sectarian violence in certain city hot spots,” said Capt. Duane Waits, 1st platoon leader, Troop A, 4th Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt.

The platoon, working with a dog team from 67th Specialized Search Dogs Detachment, 5th Engineer Battalion, 16th Engineer Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, was able to clear approximately 130 residences and businesses during three days of operations in the area.

“Our mission today was to root out any weapons caches, find any foreign fighters and (eventually) bring some peace and normalcy to the area,” said Waits, a native of Littlerock, Ark.

The platoon’s two-fold mission also involved collecting information from residents about trouble in the neighborhood as well as general information about the local populace.

“We have been going more or less house to house, getting a census of the community to see who lives where, what’s going on and what problems they have been having in the neighborhoods,” said Spc. Phillip Page, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt.

“For example, we are trying to gain information about terrorists groups in the area and how they are affecting the populace and, as a result, how the populace feels about Coalition Forces coming into this neighborhood,” explained Page, who is aided in these efforts by an interpreter.

“We want the local residents to feel comfortable enough to tell us what’s going on and to lead us in the right direction to track down these terrorists,” said Waits.

Many agricultural businesses operate within Adhamiyah, growing everything from date palm trees to garden vegetables.

“Most of the residents we have spoken with are farmers,” said Page, a native of Alliance, Ohio. “They are good people who have been living in the area for quite a while and just trying to make a living for themselves.”

The Soldiers also came across a kindergarten school that had recently come under fire from mortars launched by terrorists.

“The terrorists were aiming at the Iraqi National Police station nearby, explained the head security guard for an Adhamiyah kindergarten school through an interpreter.

“If (these patrols) happen more times, maybe the terrorists would leave,” he said.

He said he has lived in the neighborhood for seven years, has observed the area change for the worse and feels the current security operations in Adhamiyah will be good for the neighborhood.

“Even my babies – they see Americans and Iraqi (Security Forces) and they feel safe because they think this will give security to them,” said the father of three.

“A lot of the residents I have spoken with said as soon as we rolled in (three days ago), the terrorists, or whoever was taking over this area, rolled out. Violence has gone down and it seems pretty peaceful,” said Page.

“Our kids have only experienced wartime,” said Hussein. “We hope we never see another war. We hope our kids live in peace.”

No weapons caches or terrorists were discovered in the third day of operations within the neighborhood.
Contracts awarded for Iraqi primary healthcare clinics

Story by Kimberly Mielcarek
Gulf Region Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

BAGHDAD – Building an Iraqi health-care system based on outpatient clinics and the provision of primary care is a high priority of the new government of Iraq. To further that goal, all contracts for the 142 planned primary healthcare clinics in Iraq have been awarded.

The contracts – the last of which was awarded Aug. 31 – total more than $185 million.

Currently, three clinics are operational and three more are scheduled to open shortly. The positive relationship between the Corps of Engineers, the Ministry of Health and the Iraqi construction companies, is hoped to result in the majority of the clinics being completed between December and February. The GRD facilities and transportation sector estimates that each clinic will serve between 40,000 and 100,000 patients a year.

The clinics all adhere to the same basic design, consisting of six examination rooms, a pharmacy, two dental examination rooms and X-ray facilities. They also include all necessary medical and office equipment, furniture and three months worth of medical consumables. The clinics will ensure that the Iraqi people receive modern medical care close to home. Currently, the medical equipment – which cost a total of $117 million to outfit all 142 clinics – is being stored in a warehouse until each clinic is completed.

“We are fulfilling our commitment to deliver modern health care to the Iraqi people using Iraqi contractors,” said Col. Andrew Knapp, USACE facilities and transportation sector lead. “Once completed, the clinics will relieve the overburdened outpatient care currently provided by older hospitals and reduce infant mortality by at least 20 percent nationwide.”

Currently, the facilities and transportation sector has completed 834 of 947 planned schools; 20 of 32 planned hospitals; 11 of 17 planned airports; 86 of 99 planned railroad stations; and 31 of 34 planned postal facilities.

As of Aug. 26, GRD has started construction on more than 3,800 projects at a cost of $6.51 billion. More than 3,000 projects have been completed at a cost of $4.11 billion.

Dogs have their day

Story by Tom Clarkson
Gulf Region Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

BAGHDAD – When the temperature regularly exceeds 120 degrees, asphalt and concrete streets tend to be a tad toasty on the toes – even through tough combat boots. The norm for all who work outside in Iraq this time of year, is to be hot, hot and very hot. But imagine if the job also entailed treading on the baking pavement ... barefoot.

Until recently, such has been the daily grind of Sweep, Scratch, Bob, Will, Jess and Muttley, the six English Springer Spaniels whose security detail work is that of checking vehicles for explosives.

Their duty stations are the entry points for the high-walled, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region Division and the Project and Contracting Office compounds in the International Zone in Baghdad.

The Corps is the organization taking the lead in the massive Iraq Reconstruction effort of more than 3,000 projects, upgrading and improving the Iraqi infrastructure.

These faithful canines serve and protect every bit as diligently as do their human partners.

Renay Wilson, an activated Navy Reserve commander who has been in Iraq nearly six months now, serving as deputy of the Program Analysis and Integration Office, said she thought the hard-working pooches deserved a break.

Wilson contacted close friend Brenna Hargraves, a veterinarian technician at the Banfield Animal Hospital, and described “in-country” working conditions – harsh for both man and beast.

Hargraves took it from there, and as a result the Wild Side Pet Store and the Petz Edge catalogue ordering company for the Banfield Hospital in the PetsMart organization – all of Puyallup, Wash. – recognized the need and “doggedly” proceeded to resolve it.

The result was several boxes of products for this group of four-legged troopers, along with their more serious-minded comrades, Max, Frodo, Kai and Jake, German Police dogs who serve as perimeter attack dogs.

Included were booties to protect theSPANiels’ feet, grooming brushes, anti-rich shampoos, ophthalmic eye drops and ointment, pet wipes, cooling blankets, “pig ear” chews, toys and other treats. Accompanying these welcome gifts were notes written by the hospital staffs and their children.

“During the opening of the boxes, “Sweep,” representing his fellow “dog-faced troopers,” eyed a particularly attractive rubber bone and claimed it with a quick clamp of his canines. One not to speak with his mouth full, Sweep’s expressive brown eyes appeared to express gratitude as he rolled them at Wilson, the initiator of these treasures!”

A Department of Defense employee as a civilian, Wilson works as an equal employment opportunity officer at MeChord Air Force Base in Washington.

63,000 to get electrical boost in Diyala

Story by Polli Barnes Keller
Gulf Region North District
US Army Corps of Engineers

DIYALA, Iraq – Nine electrical substations, built at a cost of $51.6 million, will provide power to 63,000 people in Diyala province.

Built by local construction companies and over-watched for quality assurance by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, these nine substations will provide power to newly constructed areas as well as existing neighborhoods, businesses and industry.

Two of the nine are 400,000-volt substations and are considered to be important components of the national electrical system, having a significant impact on the stability of the national grid.

The two substations tie into the supervisory control and data acquisition system. SCADA controls and monitors the overall national power management and national electrical system. It also synchronizes the power facilities throughout Iraq so they can work together as a system, which also protects the national network from shutting down when there is an unsynchronized situation.

Shutdowns are common in Iraq as the electrical systems are not yet stable and consumption is more than the source can handle.

SCADA is designed to reduce and eventually eliminate blackouts. Adding nine new substations to the grid in Diyala not only improves the electrical distribution network in the province by reducing the load of the existing overloaded substations, it also increases the reliability of the power supplies for domestic, industrial and commercial uses, with less down time.

As of the end of August, eight of the nine electrical substations were complete. The last substation is scheduled for completion in September.
MND-B strives to beat ‘late deployment accident spike’

By Sean Morrill, Safety specialist, 4th BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

When units enter a new area of operations, there is usually a steady increase in mishaps. The first few months can be hectic as new missions are conducted and units get used to their new battle-space and living conditions. Over time as the mission progresses, experience is gained, controls are put in place to prevent accidents and they taper off to lower levels. Unfortunately, after units have hit their stride in operations, there is a tendency for accidents and fatalities to increase again – especially a few months before redeployment. This can lead to overcosting lives, results in injuries and damaged equipment and detracts from the mission.

During the later stages of long deployments, units may experience a rash of accidents during the few months before returning home. What categories of accidents are most seen during a deployment? During Operation Iraqi Freedom I, the 4th Infantry Division had a high number of Army motor and combat vehicle mishaps and personal injuries. The primary cause for vehicle accidents during deployment is the same as in the United States – excessive speed, including driving too fast for conditions. This is historically the number one reason these mishaps occur. Collisions, rollovers, and hitting dismounted troops are some of the sub-category types of motor and combat vehicle accidents. Motor vehicle accidents are also typically the largest fatality-producing category.

Personal injury accidents while deployed include falls from an elevation – off vehicles and buildings – sports activities, physical training, unsafe maintenance or material handling and the improper use of electricity. Though this category may sound less dangerous, many of these accidents are fatal or cause permanent damage to those who survive them. The root causes of these accidents are Soldiers being overconfident, rushing or becoming complacent about everyday hazards – like climbing on their vehicles, moving heavy equipment or plugging in too many items into one electric outlet.

What can Soldiers do to prevent the late deployment accident spike? First, all Soldiers need to be aware of the root causes. The primary reason for late term accidents is complacency – being too comfortable in performing dangerous jobs. This usually occurs when a Soldier has successfully performed a task or operated a potentially dangerous piece of equipment for months on end without any problem. Soldiers gain experience and expertise and no longer have to think much about what they are doing to accomplish the task correctly. Unfortunately, this can lead to subconsciously downplaying the hazards inherent in the job or mission and failing to continue to give these dangers the healthy respect they deserve. This attitude can lull Soldiers into a false sense of security and cause them to take short cuts, become overconfident and do things too quickly. Of course, this complacency can easily result in the very accident that the Soldier believed would “never happen to me.”

To counter complacency and the tendency to downplay the very real and on-going hazards of the job, the mission, and simply being in Iraq, Soldiers need to keep in mind that there are things the individual, the section and unit can do to fight this dangerous mindset. Soldiers need to turn the tables away from complacency and use the knowledge gained through experience to make the job safer, or “Murphy-proof,” if possible. Soldiers being overconfident, rushing or becoming complacent about everyday hazards – like climbing on their vehicles, moving heavy equipment or plugging in too many items into one electric outlet.

As individuals and as Soldiers, consider incorporating the following practices into your safety routine:

• Create a continuity book with emphasis on how to safely do your job.
• Write down complex tasks step-by-step and create a checklist, if the task should follow one.
• Label or post signs about the hazards in the area that you have learned and enforcing the standards so that history does not repeat itself.
• Review technical manuals and refresh yourself on ‘warnings, cautions and notes’ for the vehicles and equipment you work with – fight the tendency to fall into the “know-it-all” frame of mind.

These are only a few ideas on how to counter complacency and the late deployment accident cycle. Every Soldier can probably think of more tips or can get ideas from those who have seen these late deployment mishaps.

The knowledge, expertise and confidence gained over the deployment can be used to fight the very complacency it breeds.

Every Soldier should keep in mind that the tendency toward overconfidence and getting too comfortable on the job are real threats to individual safety. These dangerous attitudes can be countered by using what has been learned and enforcing the standards so that history does not repeat itself.

Flattening out the late deployment accident spike is a battle we can all win.
Are you at risk?

Soldiers should watch for signs, symptoms of deployment-related stress problems

A ll military and civilian personnel in Iraq supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom have experienced deployment-related stress. This is not necessarily a bad thing, since some stress is good for us. As Friedrich Nietzsche once said, “What doesn’t kill us makes us stronger.” Small doses of physical or psychological stress spread out over time can help build confidence, toughness, and effectively immunize us against hardships we may face in the future. This is one of the reasons we emphasize tough and realistic training prior to deployment.

However, if we are subjected to too much stress, either physical, psychological or both, our ability to cope may be overwhelmed and lead to mental distress. As we get closer to redeployment, we need to identify personnel who may be suffering from deployment-related stress problems and ensure they receive counseling or treatment before returning home, where they may have to suddenly cope with new stressors, such as marital or financial problems. Here are four kinds of deployment-related stress problems many of our personnel may be experiencing.

Combat and Operational Stress Reactions are the mildest form of deployment-related stress problems and tend to occur immediately after exposure to stressful situations. Sufferers will usually show only a couple of signs listed in the table below, and most cases will resolve quickly when the Soldier is given an opportunity to “unwind, vent and rest.” Participating in a critical event debriefing or an after action report in a safe and secure area soon after the event provides a good opportunity for this to happen.

Adjustment disorders occur when people are exposed to too much stress and become emotionally distressed or impaired. Adjustment disorders can manifest as excessive anxiety, depression, and disturbed emotions or conduct. Unlike COSRs, the symptoms of adjustment disorders may take up to three months to start showing. Most of these emotional symptoms will resolve within six months.

Acute Stress Disorder occurs after an exposure to a traumatic event that elicits intense emotions. It is quite similar to posttraumatic stress disorder, but the symptoms usually last less than a month.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is the least common, but most severe of the deployment-related stress problems and those suffering from it should seek medical attention as soon as possible. Approximately 50 percent of cases will get better on their own within three months, but, left untreated, many cases can become chronic and debilitating. Like ASD, soldiers suffering from PTSD can pose a safety risk to themselves and those around them – particularly in a stressful combat environment.

PTSD sufferers may experience many of the stress reactions listed in the table below as well as three other symptoms:

1) They re-experience the traumatic event in their minds through unwanted memories, dreams or “flashbacks” that they find very distressing;
2) They may feel emotionally numb or disconnected, and avoid situations that remind them of the traumatic experience;
3) They feel “keyed up” or jumpy, have difficulty sleeping or concentrating, and feel irritable most of the time.

Field treatment and prevention efforts against acute deployment-related stress problems focus on providing rest, replenishment and other actions to help restore confidence. The prognosis for Soldiers experiencing stress problems is very good, especially when signs and symptoms are identified and addressed early on.

In order to help identify personnel at risk for COSRs, each of our brigades will have designated personnel answer questionsnaires for a mental health survey during the coming month. Division medical personnel will be screening soldiers for signs and symptoms of stress-related problems when they fill out Post-Deployment Health Risk Assessment Forms in the 30-day window prior to leaving Iraq. Soldiers at risk will be referred for consultation and medical evaluations as indicated from their history and interview results.

If you or a battle-buddy is experiencing a stress problem, seek counseling now from your unit chaplain, medical officer or combat stress control team. If you would like to learn more about combat and operational stress, military references include: TG 241, Combat Operational Stress Reaction; TG 242, Combat Operational Stress Reactions Prevention: Leaders Guide; FM 6-22.5, Combat Stress; FM 22-51, Leaders’ Manual for Combat Stress Control; and FM 8-51, Combat Stress Control in a Theater of Operations, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures. These and other related documents can be downloaded from the USACHPPM website at: http://chppmwww.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/Population/combat.aspx.


Signs and symptoms of Combat and Operational Stress Reactions (also known as Battle Fatigue):

Muscle tension, jumpiness, cold sweats, rapid heart rate, rapid breathing, upset stomach, diarrhea, constipation, frequent urination, fatigue, and vacant expression or “2,000 yard stare.”

Common Mental and Emotional Signs of COSRs:

1) Anxiety, irritability, poor attention span, unclear thinking, difficulty communicating, troubled sleep, crying, guilt, anger, and loss of confidence.

2) They may feel emotionally numb or disconnected, and avoid situations that remind them of the traumatic experience;

3) They “keyed up” or jumpy, have difficulty sleeping or concentrating, and feel irritable most of the time.

Tom Lea’s poster “Two-Thousand Yard Stare” illustrates a classic sign of combat and operational stress reactions. Identifying and treating stress problems early on can help prevent them from becoming more chronic and severe.
Ramadan Karim! – Part II

To recap the last article in this space, Ramadan is the holiest of all Islamic months. It begins with the sighting of the new crescent moon by scholars, and it ends when the new moon of the following month is sighted. The month of Ramadan is the month in which Muslims believe that God revealed the first revelations of the Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. The month is the holiest of all months to Muslims. In observance of the month, Muslims, both Sunnis and Shiites, observe the month by fasting from sunrise to sunset every day. This means that every Muslim is required to abstain from drinking, eating, smoking, sex, and any other type of indulgence and sin, including obscene words.

As you expect, Ramadan will have a major impact on operations in the MND-B AO. For starters, most of the Iraqi troops and policemen working with our troops will be fasting. As the weather will still be very hot, they will be tired from staying up so late to eat the final meal before dawn, thirsty and hungry from having nothing to eat or drink for the whole day, and short-tempered from being exhausted, thirsty and, most especially, because many of them will be experiencing the effects of nicot ine withdrawal.

Although Muslims are allowed to break their fast during combat, most Muslim scholars would agree that the conditions of patrolling and manning checkpoints do not count as active combat.

Another way in which Ramadan is guaranteed to affect operations in our AO is that working hours change dramatically during Ramadan. Because of the changed sleep and eating schedule, it is common practice for employers, including the government, to change the work schedule for their employees. A typical schedule during Ramadan might be from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The effects of Ramadan on work are not restricted to working hours, however; because of the low energy levels of Muslim employees/workers, expect progress to be much slower than usual.

Important days in Ramadan (please note that all Gregorian dates listed are approximate, and are accurate to within one day):

Oct. 16 and 20: Muslims believe that the month of Ramadan is the month in which God revealed the first revelations of the Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad. The night on which Muhammad received the first revelations is called Laylat al-Qadr, or the Night of Destiny. The exact date of the night of destiny is uncertain. All Muslims believe that it is one of the last nights of Ramadan. Shiites celebrate it on the 23rd day of Ramadan, and Sunnis celebrate it on the 27th. The 23rd day will fall on or around Oct. 16, and the 27th will fall on or around Oct. 20. Celebrations of the event will include all night prayers at all mosques and special recitations at the major Sunni and Shiite mosques, respectively.

Oct. 3: On the 10th of Ramadan, the Prophet Muhammad’s first wife, Khadijah, died. Khadijah was Muhammad’s most important supporter and the earliest believer in his message. Few people commemorate this event. On the same day in 1973, Egypt and other Arab allies launched a surprise attack against Israel. Most Arabs believe that the battle was a victory for Arabs and Muslims. However, this is more likely to raise the levels of rhetoric at mosques than to cause any real action.

Oct. 8: On the 15th of Ramadan, the Second Imam, Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba, was born to the First Imam and the Prophet Muhammad’s daughter. This event is commemorated with a typical Shiite celebration at the major Shiite shrines in Iraq with lights, recitations from the Qur’an, chanting and religious songs.

Oct. 10: The 17th of Ramadan marks the anniversary of the Battle of Badr in which a small army of the early Muslims defeated a much larger army of the pagans of Mecca. This day is significant because it represents the first victory of Muslims against their enemies. This is a day to be careful because attacks against Coalition Forces are likely to be higher than usual, especially in Sunni areas.

Oct. 12-14: On the 19th of Ramadan, the First Shiite Imam, Imam ‘Ali Ibn-Abi-Talib, was mortally wounded with a poisoned sword in battle. He died on the 21st. The days from the 19th to the 21st of Ramadan carry special significance to the Shiites. The death of the Imam ‘Ali marks one of the most significant dates in the Shiite calendar. Because a Sunni killed the Imam, sectarian tensions will be very high. The commemoration of the agonizing death of the Imam will center on the Imam’s shrine in Najaf. The commemoration will follow the now-familiar practice of marches to the shrine from all parts of Iraq, mostly on foot. Our troops should prepare themselves for the usual self-flagellation and the bloody scenes that accompany the practice.

Oct. 22: On a curious note, the 29th of Ramadan is the date on which Muslims believe that Jesus Christ was born. This does not mean that Muslims believe that Jesus was born in October because the Islamic calendar is not pegged to the Gregorian. Although the date has no great importance to Muslims, it does answer the question some of you have asked me: “When is Muslim Christmas?”
Chaplain’s Corner: Love: the greatest gift

1 Corinthians Chapter 13: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not Love, it profiteth me nothing.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abide faith, hope, Love; three: but the greatest of these is Love. 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13, is considered one of the greatest chapters of the Bible. It is also one of my personal favorites, and as I read this chapter with zeal and affection, these beautiful verses remind me of how important and how valuable love is in our lives.

Without love, in my opinion, people cannot survive. Love is an essential part of our existence. I remember the song, “Love, love, love makes the world go round” – and it does!

Ask this question of yourself honestly, “Can we survive without love in our lives?” No, I do not believe that we can survive without love.

There are three different kinds of love; Eros, Philos and Agape. Eros is the type of love that exists between a man and a woman. Philos is brotherly love for one another. Agape is the unconditional love that our God has for each and every one of us. Each and every one of us has experienced at least one of these categories of love.

For me, love is the most important factor of life. As Soldiers here in Iraq, the most important things that we can do are to take care of each other, look out for each other, pray for one another and love one another.

Philos is the type of love that is concerned about humanity: how we treat each other, how we deal with each other and how we love each other. Philos love is what we use every day – it is one of the foundations of the golden rule, “Treat others as you would want to be treated.”

There may have been times when all of us have lost our temper, lied or were unfair to another person. This is not Philos.

Part of our responsibility as human beings is to forgive each other. Many times we and our fellow Soldiers are working under stressful conditions and environments that are pushing us to the limits of our endurance.

During these tumultuous times, we may have said or done things we regret or treated others unfairly. However, it is Philos for us to say, “I am sorry for what I have said or done to hurt you, and I will try not to do that again.”

By saying these words, mountains can be moved, souls can be healed and people can move on in their lives without resentment and hate.

Love is the greatest gift God has given us and the gift we can give freely to one another – it is a gift we should give daily.

Love is the Greatest Gift of God.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES, AA MEETINGS, AND MANDATORY R&R BRIEFINGS

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<td>9 a.m. Contemp. 6 p.m. EML Chaplain's Brief</td>
<td>7 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. 4 p.m. Roman Catholic Mass</td>
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<td>1 p.m. Episcopalian 7 a.m. Alcoholics Anonymous 4 p.m. Mormon Worship</td>
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<td>For more information on religious services contact Sgt. 1st Class Billy Arnold, Chaplain’s plans and operations non-commissioned officer, by email at <a href="mailto:billy.arnold@mnd-b.army.mil">billy.arnold@mnd-b.army.mil</a></td>
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Successful reunion begins now! – part 1

This series of articles is designed to help deployed personnel prepare for redeployment. The Army core values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage are matched in these articles with some important family values, such as Listening, Demonstrating Care, Rekindling Relationships, Sensitivity, Honesty, Intimacy and Patience.

Successful reunion begins now! Waiting until you are on the bus, the plane or walking down the ramp is neither the time nor the place to begin thinking about reuniting with family and friends!

Remember these key points: Because you stepped out of the stream does not mean the stream stopped flowing; there is no “cookie cutter” solution to reunion problems and issues; and, every family situation is different and every family has different skills and tools for managing changes.

This series will hopefully assist you in identifying and managing the changes that have occurred since your deployment. You may be tempted to just focus on the military mission, equipment and readiness pieces upon redeployment and ignore the human issues which are more difficult to manage. However, successful reunion and reintegrations with family and friends requires all the effort and energy you can muster.

This first article will discuss:
1. What you can do NOW.
2. Compare Army and family values.
3. Listening is a skill.
4. Hearing our children.

What you can do NOW

As you prepare to return to family and friends, there is much that can be done. Phone calls and emails have been a great tool for reconnecting families. Digital cameras and webcams have given families the opportunity to see and hear in “real time” the events of the day. This is important. No longer do we wait for weeks for a card or letter, trusting in “snail mail” to reconnect. Some hints:

• Make a list of things to talk about so you don’t forget stuff.
• Make sure every family member is included.
• Use lots of PRAISE for good things that have happened and minimize the negatives.
• Always end on a high and positive, encouraging note.
• Remember all special occasions and celebration.
• For children especially, try to ask questions that require some explanation rather than “yes” or “no” or “fine.” For example, instead of “Are you doing your homework?” ask “What have you been studying about in school?” For example, instead of “Are you doing your homework?” ask “What have you been studying about in school?”
• Focus on speaker’s key points.
• Avoid distractions.
• Focus on content, not delivery.
• Maintain eye contact with speaker.

Here are some Family values:

• PERSONAL COURAGE: Willingness to face an enemy, adversity or challenge for the sake of others.
• LISTENING: Value what your partner or family member has to say.
• Avoid the temptation to solve everything, sometimes people just need to be heard and cared for.
• Remove distractions.

Here are a few hints to skillful listening:

• Maintain eye contact with speaker.
• Focus on content, not delivery.
• Avoid distractions.
• Focus on speaker’s key points.

Hearing our children

Here are some suggestions for improving communica-
tions with children:

• Be interested. Ask about children’s ideas and opinions regularly. If you show your children that you are really interested in them, they will respond.

• Avoid “dead-end” questions. Ask children the kinds of questions that will extend interaction rather than cut it off. Avoid “yes” and “no” questions. Rather, ask children to describe, share and explain.

• Extend conversation. Try to pick up a piece of your child’s conversation. Respond to his or her statements by asking a question that restates or uses some of the same words your child used. When you use children’s own phrasing or terms, you reinforce their confidence in their conversational and verbal skills plus you reassure them that their ideas are being heard and valued.

• Share your thoughts. Share what you are thinking with your child. For instance, if you are puzzling over how to rearrange your furniture, get your child involved with questions such as, “I am not sure where to put this shelf. Where do you think would be the best place for it?”

• Observe signs. Watch the child for signs that it is time to end the conversation. When a child begins to stare into space, give silly responses or asks you to repeat several of your comments, it is probably time to stop the exchange.

• Reflect feelings. One of the most important skills of a good listener is the ability to understand his or her feelings and feelings. As a parent, try to mirror your children’s feelings by commenting, “It sounds as if you’re angry with your math teacher.” Restating or paraphrasing what children have said is useful when they are experiencing powerful emotions that they may not be aware of or understand.

Some fun quotes:

“When I am getting ready to reason with a man, I spend one-third of my time thinking about myself and what I am going to say and two-thirds about him and what he is going to say.” — Abraham Lincoln

“Listening well is as powerful a means of communica-
tion and influence as to talk well.” — John Marshall

“T he Ivy Leaf begins now! Waiting until you are on the bus, the plane or walking down the ramp is neither the time nor the place to begin thinking about reuniting with family and friends!”

“t Pennsylvania, the Army, your unit and to other Soldiers.

DUTY: Fulfill your obligations and commitments.

RESPECT: Treat people as they should be treated.
SELFLESS SERVICE: Put the welfare of the nation, the Army and your subordinates before your own.
HONOR: Live up to all the Army values.
INTEGRITY: Do what is right legally, ethically and morally even when nobody is around.
PERSONAL COURAGE: Willingness to face an enemy, adversity or challenge for the sake of others.
LISTENING: Value what your partner or family member has to say.
Avoid the temptation to solve everything, sometimes people just need to be heard and cared for.
Remove distractions.

DEMONSTRATING CARE: Demonstrate the worth of each family member in thought, word and action.
REKINDLING RELATIONSHIPS: Family relations-
ships require regular maintenance and upkeep.
Plan acts of kindness and tenderness.
SENSITIVITY: Understand that each member in a family is unique and has different needs.
HONESTY: Communicate honestly and openly about anxieties, misgivings, frustrations.
INTIMACY: Plan times for each family member individu-
ally as well as group times.
Remember, it is not just the words that you say but how you say them that is heard and felt by the listener!

The wedding march always reminds me of the music played when Soldiers go into battle.” — Heinrich Heine, German poet.

Although we may find some humor in Heinrich Heine’s statement there is an element of truth there. If you’re married, or have been married, I think you’ll find yourself in agreement.

“Marriage is a decision to serve the other whether in bed or out.” — I Corinthians 7:4 (“The Message” Bible)

LISTENING is a skill

Here are some Family values:

• PERSONAL COURAGE: Willingness to face an enemy, adversity or challenge for the sake of others.
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LISTENING is a skill

Read what Harvey Mackey says in an article, “LISTENING is the Hardest of the Easy Tasks …”

More than a century ago, a young woman who had dined with both William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli explained why she preferred Disraeli: “When I dined with Mr. Gladstone I felt as though he was the smartest man in England. But when I dined with Mr. Disraeli, I felt as though I was the smartest woman in England.” Being a good listener also means paying attention to context as well as content. A listener who can paraphrase what you’ve said without changing your meaning is a great listener. A listener who merely can repeat your words is a parrot.

It takes skill and determination to be a good listener, but the effort yields terrific results. Perhaps the biggest reward to being a good listener is that you also become a better talker. You learn the best way to get people to hear what you’re saying, and you find that you don’t need to force-feed your ideas and opinions to others. You’ll know you’ve attained your goal when you can utter two sen-
tences in an hour-long conversation and the other speaker thanks you for your input and adds, quite earnestly, “You always have so much to say!”

Here are a few hints to skillful listening:

• Maintain eye contact with speaker.
• Focus on content, not delivery.
• Avoid overreacting emotionally.
• Avoid distractions.
• Focus on speaker’s key points.
• Remember … there are words, thoughts and feelings on every issue.

Ask yourself honestly from time to time, “Am I a good listener?”

Hearing our children

Here are some suggestions for improving communica-
tions with children:

• Be interested. Ask about children’s ideas and opinions regularly. If you show your children that you are really interested in them, they will respond.

• Avoid “dead-end” questions. Ask children the kinds of questions that will extend interaction rather than cut it off. Avoid “yes” and “no” questions. Rather, ask children to describe, share and explain.

• Extend conversation. Try to pick up a piece of your child’s conversation. Respond to his or her statements by asking a question that restates or uses some of the same words your child used. When you use children’s own phrasing or terms, you reinforce their confidence in their conversational and verbal skills plus you reassure them that their ideas are being heard and valued.

• Share your thoughts. Share what you are thinking with your child. For instance, if you are puzzling over how to rearrange your furniture, get your child involved with questions such as, “I am not sure where to put this shelf. Where do you think would be the best place for it?”

• Observe signs. Watch the child for signs that it is time to end the conversation. When a child begins to stare into space, give silly responses or asks you to repeat several of your comments, it is probably time to stop the exchange.

• Reflect feelings. One of the most important skills of a good listener is the ability to understand his or her feelings and feelings. As a parent, try to mirror your children’s feelings by commenting, “It sounds as if you’re angry with your math teacher.” Restating or paraphrasing what children have said is useful when they are experiencing powerful emotions that they may not be aware of or understand.

Some fun quotes:

“When I am getting ready to reason with a man, I spend one-third of my time thinking about myself and what I am going to say and two-thirds about him and what he is going to say.” — Abraham Lincoln

“Listening well is as powerful a means of communica-
tion and influence as to talk well.” — John Marshall

“The greatest gift you can give another is the purity of your attention.” — Richard Moss

To be listened to is, generally speaking, a nearly unique experience for most people. It is enormously stimulating. It is small wonder that people who have been demanding all their lives to be heard so often fall speech-
less when confronted with one who gravelly agrees to lend an ear. Man clamors for the freedom to express him-
self and for knowing that he counts. But once offered these conditions, he becomes frightened.” — Robert Murphy.

“I married the first man I ever kissed – when I tell this to my children, they just about throw up.” — Barbara Bush, former first lady.
Hispanic Heritage Month Observance Sept. 15 - Oct. 15
Celebrate at Camp Liberty’s Division MWR
Oct. 7
8 p.m-10 p.m.
Live music, dance contest,
free food and giveaways
Sign up for the dance contest at
Camp Liberty’s Division MWR.

CARTOON CORNER

★ OPERATION ELUSIVE CONCEPT ★

WHAT REALLY HAPPENS BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE DFAS TRAVEL VOUCHER SECTION.

★ OPERATION ELUSIVE CONCEPT ★

THE MILITARY SOON REALIZED THAT THEIR ELECTRIC VEHICLE CONCEPT DID NOT DO SO WELL UNDER REAL-LIFE CONDITIONS.
Chase for Nextel Cup

The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing Nextel Cup Series began its season 26 races ago with the running of the Daytona 500 at the Daytona International Speedway in Daytona, Fla., February 19. At that time, 43 drivers had their minds set on accomplishing one goal—qualifying for the Chase for the Nextel Cup and winning the championship.

After eight hard months of fighting with 42 other drivers week in and week out, it all comes down to the final 10 races of the season in a 10-race shootout to determine who will be the 2006 Nextel Cup Series Champion.

Following the final race of the regular season, the top 10 drivers’ points are reset to separate each driver by only five points, with only a 45-point difference between first and tenth place entering the first race of “The Chase.”

Matt Kenseth enters the chase with a five-point lead over Jimmie Johnson, with Kevin Harvick, Kyle Busch and Denny Hamlin rounding out the top five. In sixth place is Dale Earnhardt Jr., followed by Mark Martin, Jeff Burton, Kasey Kahne and Jeff Gordon. The defending Nextel Cup champion, Tony Stewart, was eliminated by 16 points in the final race at Richmond International Speedway in Richmond, Va.

Here is a breakdown by driver of what fans can expect during the grueling 10-week final series, which began Sep. 17 in Loudon, N.H.

Matt Kenseth, the 2003 champion, entered the 2005 Chase in 8th place in the standings and climbed one spot through the final 10 races to finish the season 7th. Last year, Kenseth used a late summer surge to qualify for the Chase after his team had some bad luck at the start of the season.

Kenseth had a car capable of finishing in the top 10 nearly everywhere during the Chase, but due to numerous incidents on the tracks, he finished the season 181 points behind Tony Stewart. This season the #17 Roush Racing team has been spot on at every type of track. As long as Kenseth can avoid trouble on the track, he will be strong contender for the championship.

Much like the 2005 season, Jimmie Johnson is entering the chase second in points after dominating for a good majority of the regular season. The #48 Hendrick Motorsports team has a history of providing Johnson with strong cars at the tracks that are scheduled during the chase.

Lack of consistency inside the Chase has prevented Johnson from earning the championship in years past, and although I expect Johnson to win a couple races during the chase, I do not foresee him holding the trophy at year’s end.

Kevin Harvick has been one of the most consistent drivers, especially late in the season. His team has produced 10 consecutive top-15 finishes, including wins at Watkins Glen and in the regular season finale at Richmond. This year is the first that Harvick has earned an opportunity to race for the championship and with momentum on his side, Harvick should be a legitimate contender for the title.

Kyle Busch won rookie-of-the-year honors in 2005, winning two races in his rookie season, including the Checker Auto Parts 500 at Phoenix International Speedway during the 2005 Chase. Yet, over the course of the year Busch failed to produce consistent runs, resulting in his missing the Chase and finishing 20th in points. The #5 Hendrick Motorsports team has overcome many obstacles from 2005 in helping Busch to qualify for the Chase, but I believe the inconsistency will come back to haunt this team, and they will struggle during the Chase.

The first rookie to be eligible for the chase, Denny Hamlin began his career in the Nextel Cup Series in 2005 during the Chase running the final seven races of the season in the #11 Joe Gibbs Racing Chevy before taking over as full-time driver of the car for 2006. During that span, he finished in the top 10 three times and earned his first career pole award at Phoenix International Speedway.

Over the course of his rookie season, Hamlin has won two races and earned 19 top 15 finishes, including finishing 15th or better in 16 out of his last 17 races. If anyone is looking for an underdog on their fantasy teams, Hamlin is one rookie who is not finished with going above and beyond expectations.

After suffering a heart-breaking year in 2005, missing the chase and finishing 19th in the final standigs, Dale Earnhardt, Jr.’s team has overcome a lot of the issues the team suffered last year as they enter the chase in sixth position.

However, the #8 Dale Earnhardt Incorporated team is not quite on the same level of competition as some of the other competitors, and I believe it will struggle to make the top five at year’s end.

Mark Martin is entering what is believed to be his last run at the championship since he will retire from driving full-time in 2007.

Martin is arguably one of the greatest drivers in NASCAR history to never win a championship, and I don’t believe he has enough left in him to make a strong run at the championship this year. Martin has been consistent with producing strong runs over the years; however, with the chase for the championship formatting, he’s going to need more than consistent runs to win—he’ll need to make consistent strong runs with multiple wins to take home first place in the championship this year.

Like his teammate Harvick, Jeff Burton is entering the Chase for the first time in his career. Burton last finished in the top 10 in the standings in 2000, when he finished third while driving for Roush Racing under the old championship formatting. Burton has had consistently strong cars throughout this season with Richard Childress Racing, but he has failed to finish strong on numerous occasions. I believe this same tendency will eventually lead to Burton falling short in his pursuit of the championship.

Jeff Gordon has won four cup series championships, with his most recent coming in 2001, under the old points system. Gordon failed to make the Chase in 2005 and finished the season in 11th in the standings. Gordon’s 2006 season has seen its fair share of ups and downs, including 10 top five finishes and two victories; however, Gordon also has five finishes of 30th or worse, including the regular season finale at Richmond.

The final addition to the Chase field was Kasey Kahne as he finished third in the Chevy Rock & Roll 400 in Richmond as Tony Stewart failed to produce a strong run in the regular season finale, falling 16 points short. Kahne is the current series leader in victories, with five.

Up through the first half of the season, Kahne looked to be a shoe-in for making the field. Later on, a string of bad finishes knocked him out of Chase contention and had to race his way back in over the last four races. If Kahne keeps his momentum strong through the next 10 races, he’ll be a force to be reckoned with.

Here are some predictions for the top 10 by our group of semi-experts:

**My championship predictions:**
- Matt Kenseth
- Kevin Harvick
- Jimmie Johnson
- Denny Hamlin
- Kasey Kahne
- Jeff Gordon
- Mark Martin
- Kyle Busch
- Dale Earnhardt Jr.
- Jeff Burton

**Sgt 1st Class Robert Schultz:**
- Fires effects cell noncommissioned officer, 4th Inf. Div.
- Dale Earnhardt Jr.
- Matt Kenseth
- Kevin Harvick
- Kasey Kahne
- Denny Hamlin
- Kyle Busch
- Jimmie Johnson
- Jeff Burton
- Jeff Gordon

**Master Sgt. Douglas Nardecchia:**
- G6 operations non-commissioned officer, 4th Inf. Div.
- Dale Earnhardt Jr.
- Jimmie Johnson
- Jeff Burton
- Kevin Harvick
- Denny Hamlin
- Kasey Kahne
- Matt Kenseth
- Jeff Gordon
- Mark Martin
- Kyle Busch
CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Pfc. Jason Hostetler, infantryman, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, stands with his rifle ready while leaning over the front of his vehicle Sept. 1 during a force-protection exercise at Camp Taji.

LEFT: FALLUJAH, Iraq – Sgt. Frank Hernandez, Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, Fires Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, grasps the ball during the championship game with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Fallujah Aug. 27. The Army Soldiers beat the Marines at 38-12.

ABOVE: BAGHDAD – Maj. Gen. James D. Thurman, the commanding general of Multi-National Division – Baghdad, met with local residents Sept. 6 in the bustling market place of Ghazaliya neighborhood of western Baghdad. Thurman talked with the citizens about security in the region and listened to their concerns and observations on quality of life.