

IBC

Iron Brigade Chronicles

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Hunters return to Iron Brigade AO

Pages 6-7

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Cover Photo

1st Lt. Patrick Conner, platoon leader, Apache Troop, 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, opens a gate during a cordon and search operation in an Iraqi town as other members of the platoon prepare to enter the compound.

Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott

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Strikers,

The baseball season is drawing to a close. The pennant races are about finished and the playoffs will soon begin. The World Series is just around the corner. It's fitting that at this time of the baseball year we should remember the words of the great New York Yankees' Hall of Fame catcher, Yogi Berra. After an improbable ninth inning comeback, Yogi once said, "It ain't over, till it's over." I have to think that's sound advice that applies more to what we are doing here *right now* than to any baseball game.

Our final days in Iraq will be during a potentially violent time period. Ramadan is a special religious holiday for millions of Islamic worshippers, but the enemy we fight knows no God. This is no time to lose sight of the challenges that remain: the day-to-day operations, the transition and the equipment movement.

With the coming of Ramadan, it is important to remember that you are ambassadors of the United States and that we are on Iraqi soil. Respect the religion and custom of our host nation. From sun up until sun down in the presence of Iraqis, refrain from drinking water or eating, do not smoke and be extra careful of your language. Treat the Iraqi people the same way you would wish to be treated

during a religious holiday. However, you must always keep in mind **STRIKER FAR #2: *Be professional, be polite, be vigilant, be disciplined and always be ready to kill.*** There are some who would like to celebrate this holiday by harming you and your comrades. Do not give them the opportunity. Sadly, we added the name of Pfc. Nick Madaras to the remembrance wall this past week. I do not want to add another name to the list of 3rd HBCT heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Stay alert and do not take force protection considerations lightly.

In transitions: Transitions are typically the most difficult of military operations. We must stay focused simultaneously on the mission at hand, on the equipment movement requirements and on safety considerations. I expect the transition to be done professionally in all areas to ensure we set the follow-on unit up for immediate success. That should go without saying. We owe it to those fine Americans that follow us to teach them everything we know about this very complex, challenging and lethal environment.

Equipment movement means many things. Do not lose focus on the tactical mission. Do not lose accountability of pieces and parts through a "smell the barn" syndrome. We must return with our

equipment in a state that allows us to train or redeploy immediately upon our return. That's what professionals do, regardless of what the future may hold.

Finally, do not take safety for granted. A tank falling off of a HETT can be just as dangerous and just as deadly as an IED. Do all things to standard. Like everything else in the Army, nothing happens until a Sergeant tells a private what to do. And nothing happens safely unless our Sergeants are talking about safety. Talk about safety.

We'll need our junior leaders to stay very aggressive in making sure we transfer duties professionally and get everyone moved safely. Going home is not the only goal. Going home safely, professionally and with our honor is. And remember what Yogi said (and no, I'm not talking about picnic baskets), It ain't over till it's over!

Strikers!
Steadfast and Loyal!
Striker 6



Col. Brian D. Jones

In dealing with the Iraqi Army on a consistent basis, I have noticed the Iraqi NCOs were more of a go-between the officers and junior enlisted, instead of demonstrating a proactive authoritative position of their own.

As a result, I developed a nine-page manual for Iraqi NCOs to reference during their training at the NCO Academy.

Iraqi Army NCOs need to show that their officers can trust them with responsibility and leadership instead of taking charge of everything and going right around them.

There are three core fundamentals of NCO leadership that we practice in the United States Army. Duty, responsibility and authority.

The Iraqi Army has its challenges. But through the Iron Brigade Soldiers, improvements have made.

Just last week, the Iraqi NCOs are starting to maneuver and organize their Soldiers on their own. They had come into contact with a roadside bomb and the Iraqi Army spotted suspected insurgents fleeing from the site.

We will continue to do set the example for Iraqi Soldiers by following the standards.

God bless the Soldiers and families of the Iron Brigade.

Strikers!
Steadfast and Loyal!
Striker 7



Command Sgt. Maj. David H. List

In memory of ...

**Pfc. Nicholas A. Madaras
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
1-68 Combined Arms Battalion,
3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team**

Gone, but not forgotten

KMTB turnover brings in new command

by Spc. Lee Elder

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Helping the Iraqi security forces and local governments work together to defeat the insurgent threat and improve the lives of ordinary Iraqis has been the greatest accomplishment of the outgoing unit here according to its commander.

After just two months manning the coalition site at Kirkush Military Training Base, a 40-man cell from 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, is preparing to return to its home base at Forward Operating Base Warhorse. The cell gave way to 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, based out of Fort Bragg, N.C.

As he prepares to leave Kirkush, Lt. Col. Leonard Wells, who commands 3rd STB, said he is proud of his unit's efforts here. He said he believed that despite its relatively short stay the 3rd STB was able to make a difference.

"We were able to do a lot for providing coalition affects for the Iraqi Army," Wells said. "We were able to assist them with EOD assets, help them in their targeting of the AIF and in the use of MEDEVAC.

"They don't have any of that in the Iraqi Army."

Using their own efforts combined with Military and Border Training teams, Wells said 3rd STB has helped give the local Iraqi Army more specialized training in key areas. There are now separate military police, military intelligence, signal and bomb disposal companies which are becoming more proficient and aiding the IA in its quest to rid eastern Diyala Province of the insurgent threat.

"We were able to partner with them and conduct outside-the-FOB missions," Wells said. "We had actual combat missions.

"We were able to train them inside the wire and were able to conduct combat operations."

During these operations, 3rd STB was able to provide infantry and transportation support. They also provided assessments and evaluations when the missions were completed.

During the rotation, Wells said he had hoped to have had a platoon of military police to help train local Iraqi Police, but they were diverted to Baghdad. However,

4 he has able to secure the services of

four International Police Liaison Officers. These officers observed and evaluated their local Iraqi counterparts and made recommendations for improvement.

The last link in the chain was the local Iraqi governments. Wells said he developed a plan modeled after the one used by the 3rd HBCT to work with area municipalities.

Agriculture was a major component in this plan. It drives the local economies.

"We are trying to improve the economy in the local area by allowing farmers to produce more, which means they can sell more and produce more income," Wells said. "Potentially, they can hire more workers as their productivity increases."

To that end, there are 32 water well projects nearing completion in eastern Diyala Province. Work has also been done to clean out water canals that have been congested with various debris and trash.

"A lot of those canals are choked with weeds," Wells said. "They haven't been cleaned out which drastically cuts the amount of irrigation water that goes down to the fields."

Work has also been done to give farmers a market for their crops once harvest time comes. Wells pointed to the re-opening of the Balad Ruz Corn Plant as a major step forward.

"Farmers bring their produce and their livestock in and they are given an opportunity to sell them to those who want to buy," Wells said. "It's like a big country market."

Despite progress in each of these areas, Wells said his unit's greatest accomplishment here was working with all of the Iraqi Security Forces and coordinating their efforts with those of the local governments. This was done by constant interaction, ongoing leader training and information exchange between Coalition and Iraqi elements at all levels.

"The Iraqi Army, police and government working together is a lot more of a formidable force against the (anti-Iraqi forces) than they are separately waging battles that are not synchronized in any way," Wells said.

Wells is a Shreveport, La., native who serves in the Engineer Branch. He is a 1988 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, and is the son of Louis Wells Sr. and Bettie Wells of Shreveport.

The transition represents a return of a

cavalry to KMTB. The base was once known as "Camp Caldwell" when it was home to a pair of squadrons from the Tennessee Army National Guard's 278th Brigade Combat Team during Operation Iraqi Freedom III, from 2004 to 2005.

The incoming unit is one of the Army's newer, hybrid forces. Its numbers are almost equally divided between Infantry and Armor capabilities said 2nd Lt. John Chen, one of the 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry's assistant operations officers.

Chen said the light cavalry unit relies mostly on armored Hummers and Bradley Fighting Vehicles. It will also continue to support the various support teams based on this outpost that lies just 10 miles from the Iraq-Iran border.

"This unit brings a lot more combat power so that they can help partner with the Department of Border Enforcement," Wells said. "Now, we will actually have maneuver units that can partner with the border police that will help bring their training, operations, sustainment and logistics to the same level as the Iraqi Army.

"It gives them another partner to bring them up to a level where they are more self sufficient and can patrol the borders and add to the defense of Iraq overall."



Photo by Spc. Lee Elder

Soldiers with with 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry set up equipment as their unit prepares to take over Coalition operations at KMTB.

THE PATH TO FREEDOM, A FUTURE

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris
IBC Staff Writer

As the trucks roll through the gate at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, the drivers are greeted by one of their own - an Iraqi. Since most Soldiers know only a few words in Arabic, it is up to Iraqi interpreters to question drivers about the contents of their vehicle. It's a dangerous job for both the Soldiers and the Iraqi interpreters.

Iraqis who work as interpreters also face danger for simply working for coalition forces. If insurgents learned their identity their life would be in danger, as well as their family's lives.

One such interpreter accepting the risks is Ritchie. Not his real name, Ritchie is an alias given to him by Soldiers because of his likeness to the late singer Ritchie Valens. To help people understand what Iraq was like before 2003 and why interpreters risk everything to work with CF, Ritchie came forward to tell his story.

Ritchie's story begins at an early age and is marred by abuse and hard living under Saddam Hussein's regime. He grew up in Khalis, a suburb of Baqubah, the youngest of four children. When he was eight years-old his father died after falling from a date palm tree. Ritchie said he was suddenly the only male and felt the pressure of having to look after his mother and sisters.

As a result, he left school to pursue odd jobs as a butcher or farmer, anything that could provide for his family, but most of the time he said they lived hand to mouth.

One job he tried hard to avoid was being conscripted into the Iraqi army. The IA in the late 90's paid its Soldiers the equivalent of three dollars a month. Ritchie said he had his family to support and could make more money doing odd jobs so he became what the Iraqis call a *frar*, or a deserter in English.

In the summer of 1999 the police came to Ritchie's house and asked why he had not reported to the army. For refusing to join the army Ritchie said he was thrown in jail for six months.

He was jailed near the town of Muqdadiya, and said the living conditions of the facility horrible. There were 80 inmates per cell and they were usually

given only five minutes a day to use the restroom and provided very little to eat. He said his sentence was during the summer months and during his time there he saw eight inmates die from the heat and poor living conditions.

While in jail Ritchie said he received one of the most severe beatings he had ever endured. Every night the lights went out at 9 p.m. However, one evening Ritchie did not go to sleep right away. During a cell check he said he was caught awake.

"We were not talking or anything, but my eyes were open," Ritchie said. "The jailer said, 'Why are you not sleeping?' 'We can't sleep,' I told him. 'You come with me,' the jailer said."

The jailer led Ritchie down the hall to another room: "(He) blindfolded me and beat me with a cable without any mercy," he said. Ritchie said he is convinced it was Hussein's influence that taught the prison staff how to be so brutal in their treatment of prisoners.

Upon his release from jail, Ritchie said he was immediately put into the army in a unit near Ramadi. He escaped from Ramadi twice, but each time it cost him a lot of money to obtain transportation back to Khalis. When Ritchie made it to Khalis he worked and saved as much as he could, but said he always knew that he would eventually have to serve in the army.

During this time, Hussein gave a reprieve to deserters saying if they came back to join the army they would not have to face jail time.

At this point Ritchie and other *frars* were placed in Ramadi to guard weapons caches. They heard news reports of the impending invasion by CF. Americans were bombing every hour and he thought it would be suicide to stay. He and his fellow Shia decided to try and escape during a break in the bombings.

Ritchie said he was happy, but scared. He was more afraid of the Iraqi army catching him trying to escape than of the American's bombs. He knew if he was caught he would have been tortured.

When Ritchie made it back to Khalis he said he could not imagine what his mother had been going through while he was away.

"I went to my house and saw my mom

sitting by the gate," Ritchie said. "Some people had told my mom I was dead, because my name was on the missing Soldiers list. When she saw me she passed out."

Three months after returning to Khalis, Ritchie could not find a job and went back to living hand to mouth. One of his friends was working at Logistical Support Area Anaconda and told him there was work available there. Ritchie said he was hired as a laborer performing such duties as filling sandbags or other odd jobs around the LSAA.

He said he only knew a few words of English when he started working at the base, but in the two years he worked there, talking to the Soldiers everyday, he was able to speak enough English to qualify as a translator. Shortly after qualifying, Ritchie was transferred to FOB Warhorse where he has been working the gates ever since.

"He is very dependable," said Sgt. 1st Class Denny Nelson, East Gate NCOIC, Company A, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers.

"I do not have to worry about security at the locations he is at, he thoroughly searches individuals. He is insuring safety of everyone on the FOB."

Though he enjoys his job Ritchie said he has received pressure to quit from his family because of the potential danger that comes with the position. Ritchie will hear nothing of it.

"I hate the terrorists; (therefore) I work for the CF," Ritchie said. "I am ready to put myself and my family in danger to work with CF."

Though he does not want to see the Americans leave, he knows the day will eventually come. Ritchie said he has had thoughts about joining the new Iraqi Army after the CF leave, saying it's a different Army now, more professional, with better pay.

Since the fall of Hussein Ritchie said he has noticed changes for the better.

"Even though the terrorists have increased in Iraq," he said. "We see it as better than Saddam's era."

(Ritchie, an interpreter at FOB Warhorse, speaks with a local national about his cargo. Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris)

Hunters return



Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott

2nd Lt. Patrick Conner, platoon leader, Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, asks questions of residents in an Iraqi village during a cordon and knock operation.



Soldiers of the 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry and Iraqi Army Soldiers from the 3rd dismount on a "cordon and knock" patrol.



to Iron Brigade

by Sgt. Zach Mott
IBC editor

After nearly eight months as part of the Rakasans of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry returned to the Iron Brigade area of operations in August. The Hunters replace the now departed 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry who returned to its home station of Fort Campbell, Ky.

The Hunters will finish up the final months of this rotation operating out of Forward Operating Base Normandy near Muqadadiya, Iraq, after conducting missions from Forward Operating Base Wilson in

northern Salah al-Din Province previously.

“We have a number of initiatives across all operations albeit it will be for the next two months we can now move to set the conditions for the next relief-in-place,” said Lt. Col. Louis Lartigue, commander, 2nd Sqdrn., 9th Cavalry.

The Hunters will continue to conduct cordon and knock missions with the Iraqi Army as well as continue establishing a solid Iraqi Police force. FOB Normandy is home to the Scorpion Police Training Academy which is responsible for training most of the Iraqi Police forces who patrol the streets of Diyala Province.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski
Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski

ABOVE: Sgt. Vellore Cabellero, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, secures an area in town of Hamrin, Iraq, while local leaders meet with the Lt. Col. Louis Lartigue, commander, 2nd Sqdrn., 9th Cavalry. **LEFT:** Soldiers from the 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry question a local resident through an interpreter during a joint cordon and knock operation.



9/11 firefighter volunteers to do his part in Iraq

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris
IBC Staff Writer

In the early morning of Nov. 12, 2001, residents of the sleepy neighborhood of Rockaway, N.Y., awoke to a thunderous sound. American Airlines Flight 587 crashed in the area and filled the beachside community with thick black smoke. For a firefighter this scene was all too familiar.

Sgt. Sean Cummins, civil affairs team sergeant, 404th Civil Affairs Battalion from Fort Dix, N.J., attached to 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, and an 11-year veteran of the New York Fire

Department, lived near the crash site in Queens, N.Y. He was home on his first day off since the attacks on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11. Cummins raced to the scene and began pulling hoses

off the fire trucks already there to help tame the raging fire. Though many were saved, 250 people died that Veterans Day.

"If September 11 was an earthquake here in this neighborhood, this is an aftershock," said the area's congressman, Rep. Anthony Weiner to a CNN reporter following the plane crash.

Two months before, on Sept. 10, Cummins switched days off with two firefighters from Rescue Company 1 so he could drive his mother to the airport and finish his scuba certification class to become a rescue diver on Sept. 11.

Both firefighters, including 10 others from Rescue 1, were killed when the World Trade Center towers collapsed.

"It was actually easier to go dig for guys than to go back to the firehouse and face the wives," Cummins said. It was emotionally tough for Cummins to face the two wives of the firefighters he switched shifts with.

"One of them came up to me at a memorial service," Cummins said. "She went and gave me a big hug and she said 'listen, he would have been there anyway.'"

Between the two deceased firefighters they had nine children as opposed to Cummins' three. He often struggles with the fact that it could have been three children without a father instead of nine.

"9/11 was one of those things that happened; it wasn't one of those things you just did, it wasn't like you prepared for it," Cummins said. "There were 87 guys who I knew who died that day. What do you do? Do you roll over and die? Or do you get up and keep moving on?"

Cummins and his family did move on and from all of the support he received from the community and his country he felt like it was time to give something back.

"In all honesty I look at this as penance, that is why I volunteered for a year tour (in Iraq)," Cummins said.

His mission has changed somewhat in Iraq. Instead of putting out fires, he and his two civil affairs teammates are trying to help the Iraqis rebuild their country.

Cummins deployed with Capt. Anthony Coppola, team leader, and Sgt. Jeffrey Scotti, civil affairs sergeant, both from the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion, two men he had never met before he received orders to deploy. It turns out; they did not live far from each other in New York and became close friends after driving 12 hours each way to Fort Bragg, N.C., for deployment training.

"You know he's always got your back," Scotti said. "You know he is motivated to be here. He does his job and does not ask for much."

Helping people is helping people, Cummins said, while taking a break from assessing a water treatment facility in the Tigris riverside village of Ayabachi. The easiest part of working in Iraq, he said, is dealing with the people; the hardest part is dealing with politics and paperwork.

Cummins' job is to assess villages in 1-8 CAB's area of operation on four key areas: water, sewage, electricity and transportation.

Water is a main concern in most towns because the water comes directly from the river untreated. Cummins will order chlorine to be delivered to the town so Iraqis can learn how to treat the water themselves.

Cummins equates this job to fighting an uphill battle. He explained that with civil affairs you will not see the end result for 10 to 20 years, compared to the instant gratification he receives as a firefighter.

"Sgt. Cummins is a walking volume of novels, good novels," Coppola said. "The constant stories, the lighthearted humor to break the tension sometimes, you come to expect it (from him). If someone were to come up to me and say he saved a thousand people in his life it wouldn't surprise me. The life that he has lived and the work he has done at 43, I admire it."

Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

Sgt. Sean Cummins, civil affairs team sergeant, 404th Civil Affairs Battalion from Fort Dix, N.J., attached to 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion, offers his hand to an Iraqi child in the town of Ayabachi, Iraq.



Unit earns moniker 'ForeRunner' for its dedication to Soldiers at outlying FOBs

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris
IBC Staff Writer

As the sun crept up over Forward Operating Base Warhorse Soldiers scurried about, making sure straps are properly tied down to the trucks and pre-mission checks on their vehicles were conducted; all had to be done before they could depart the FOB to deliver much needed supplies to Soldiers at the outlying areas.

This is a daily routine for the Soldiers of Company F, 64th Brigade Support Battalion attached to 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers. Their frequent trips off the FOB and to the forefront have earned them the nickname, ForeRunner Company.

They are always at the forefront supporting the troops similar to the tip of a spear, explained 1st Sgt. Michael Young, the company's first sergeant.

However, before being deployed to Iraq in November 2005, and earning its moniker, the company went through a period of adjustments.

First, Company F is attached to a support battalion, which means female Soldiers are allowed in the unit. The addition of female Soldiers has made it easier to fill the company's ranks and has improved camaraderie - a surprising revelation to Young, who had never worked with female Soldiers so closely before.

"It has changed my attitude and I have sisters in the Army," Young said. "There is no difference; they are just as hard-core as the guys. It's a good thing."

The second adjustment was training all

the new Soldiers he received. Sixty percent of the company was fresh out of advanced individual training. The solution was to have the company constantly train on tactics and procedures at Fort Carson, Colo. and continue that training everyday while they were here in Iraq.

"Every time we roll out we give a safety brief and go over what to do if we make contact with the enemy," said Sgt. James Rose, fuel handler, Co. F., 1-68 CAB.

The intense preparation has worked in ForeRunner's favor.

While the company has had its fair share of scrapes with roadside bombs, the training and constant reinforcement of policy standards has kept Soldiers defended. So far the company has not had a Soldier killed.

Some of the policy standards non commissioned officers have been enforcing are wearing the required body armor when going on missions. With the temperatures in the Diyala Province averaging 120 degrees, Soldiers are tempted to not

wear the additional side plates and shoulder protectors.

Sgt. 1st Class Lionel Allamby,



ForeRunners platoon sergeant, said he does not buy the argument that it's too hot out as an excuse for not wearing the proper gear.

"It is real important to wear all of your gear because it is additional armor to protect yourself," Allamby explained. "If shrapnel was to penetrate a vehicle, the (body) armor is the last line of defense."

With all the challenges ForeRunner has faced, Young said he would not change a thing about his company.

"Because my Soldiers are combat service support instead of combat arms they have always felt like they have to take that extra step to prove themselves," Young said. "I have seen the Soldiers mature into highly motivated Soldiers and I would challenge them against any company in Soldier skills any day."

Photos by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

ABOVE: Spc. Danielle Biggers, petroleum supply specialist, Company F, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, hands the fuel nozzle after transferring fuel to a tanker at Forward Operating Base Gabe.

LEFT: Spc. Christian Frank, Company F, 1-68 CAB, follows the logistical patrol from Forward Operating Base Warhorse to Forward Operating Base Gabe.





Photo by Pfc. Paul Harris

Spc. Mark Hall, a gunner, raises his right hand and takes the oath of U.S. citizenship during a naturalization ceremony at Logistical Support Area Anaconda near Balad.

A Soldier's road to citizenship

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris
IBC Staff Writer

From John Wayne to Tom Hanks Hollywood has projected the depiction of the American Soldier as larger than life on the big screen. Audiences from all over the world have seen movies and TV shows about the lives of Soldiers.

It was no different for Spc. Mark Hall, gunner, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, growing up in the islands of the Philippines. He always wanted to be an American Soldier, just like he had seen in the movies.

Hall got his wish after receiving a visa to come to the United States. It was an emotional decision that required him to leave his job as an operating room technician and leave his family behind, but it was one he said he was determined to make.

"When I got my visa in the Philippines my plan was to come over and join the Army," Hall said referring to his trip to the U.S. "I asked permission from my wife, but she didn't like the idea because she knew there was a war on. She tried to support me in my decision."

Hall arrived in San Bernardino, Calif., in November, 2004 and within weeks was at the recruiter's office ready to join. After 13 weeks of combined basic training and advanced individual training at Fort Benning, Ga., Hall was sent to his first duty station, Fort Carson, Colo. Soon after settling in he started the process of becoming a naturalized citizen.

Hall initially received an appointment from the Denver Immigration and Naturalization Service but the appointment collided with his deployment with 3rd HBCT in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

As a gunner for the 3rd HBCT command security detachment, it did not take long for Hall to experience the dangers of his job as a deployed Soldier. In mid January while on patrol and manning the .50 caliber machine gun for his Humvee his vehicle collided unexpectedly with an M-1 Abrams tank. Hall luckily only suffered bruises and cuts to the face.

After the accident Hall was given some time off to recuper-

ate, explained his squad leader Sgt. Michael Carlson, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd HBCT. Carlson said he noticed the physical wounds healing but emotionally Hall was still hurting because his friend Cpl. Dustin Lee Kendal, the vehicles driver, died in the accident. It took Hall a long time before he was able to open up and talk about the accident.

Hall's appointment with INS had been postponed until he arrived in Iraq, but due to the accident was pushed back even further. Fortunately an appointment opened up in April and he was flown to Forward Operating Base Spiecher for his interview with officials from the Rome INS office. Hall was required to answer test questions on basic American knowledge such as 'who was the first president of the United States, and during the interview was asked about this background and growing up in the Philippines.

It only took the Rome officials 20 minutes to approve of Hall's citizenship request; upon finding out about the decision Hall was ecstatic. "My dream became true," he said.

His dream materialized July 1 at a naturalization ceremony held at Logistical Support Area Anaconda. He stomach was filled with butterflies before the ceremony but soon turned to excitement as the ceremony began. Hall said he kept telling himself 'I am finally an American Citizen' as he walked across the stage and accepted the American flag.

"It was an honor and privilege to be there when he received his certificate," said Command Sgt. Maj. David List, command sergeant major, 3rd HBCT. "These folks come from other countries and give up everything they had to come and be part of our nation. Now they are true Americans, now that flag actually means something."

Never one to pass up an opportunity to have some fun with his Soldiers, List playfully shouted at Hall from the audience as he accepted his certificate of citizenship 'Hurry up Hall; we have to go on patrol!'

Editor's Note: For servicemembers the five year waiting period is reduced to one year and there is no fee involved for applying to become a citizen.

Mountaineers remember where they were on 9/11

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

IBC Staff Writer

On the fateful day of Nov. 22, 1963, when shots rang out of the book depository in Dallas and killed President John F. Kennedy, most Americans can remember where they were or what they were doing. It would be a long time before such an event would be engrained into the nations psyche, that event would be Sept. 11, 2001.

For the Soldiers of 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers the day the Twin Towers fell will be a memory not soon forgotten.

Command Sgt. Maj. Rigoberto Lopez, command sergeant major, 64th BSB, remembers the day like it was yesterday.

He was in his office in Wiesbaden, Germany, in the 19th Support Center, 3rd COSCOM and received an e-mail from a friend in the U.S. with a picture of an airplane ramming into one of the towers.

"I said 'oh my God,' I did not know how to take it. I was very

alarmed because we had never been attacked before in the United States," Lopez said. "Oh my goodness, is this a movie or something?"

It certainly was not a movie for Aaron Wade, brother of Spc. Jason Wade, battalion radio and telephone operator and raven flight controller, HHC, 64th BSB. His brother who was an Air Force senior

airman working in communications for the Pentagon at the time

of the attacks on Sept. 11.

Jason was managing an auto parts store in Waco, Texas, when a customer came into the store and informed him of the attacks. He raced across town to be with parents once he heard the news.

"We had a moment where we did not know if he was alive or dead," Jason said.

The plane hit the pentagon on the opposite side of the Potomac River. Jason's brother worked on the riverside and was on the opposite end of where the plane hit.

"I visited him afterwards in D.C. and he took me to the Pentagon and to where the damage was, you could still see smoke on the walls," Jason said.

As a result of the attacks on the Pentagon, Jason decided to join the Army out of patriotism. His brother still works at the Pentagon but now as a civilian doing the same job he did while in the Air Force.

For some of the newer Soldiers to 64th BSB, Sept. 11 was the first introduction to the crisis and turmoil in the Middle East.

Spc. Renee Laforce, health care specialist, Company C, 64th BSB, was in Geometry class in her sophomore year of high school in South Lake Tahoe, Calif.

"Is this really happening," Laforce thought to herself. "It was hard to relate because it was so far away, it was on TV and everything on TV is fake. I

learned about Osama Bin Laden in my next period class which was Spanish."

When Laforce returned home she talked to her father and discussed what was happening and what was going on in the Middle East. She described her family as hard core Republicans and very patriotic and

the events of Sept. 11 started to plant the seeds of service to ones country in her mind.

Laforce, with her fathers consent, joined the Army when she was 17.

"The war being a consequence of 9/11 was what hit home for me," she said. "These were people that I could know, people going to another country to die and that for me was heart wrenching. I actually prayed for them and I am not a religious person."

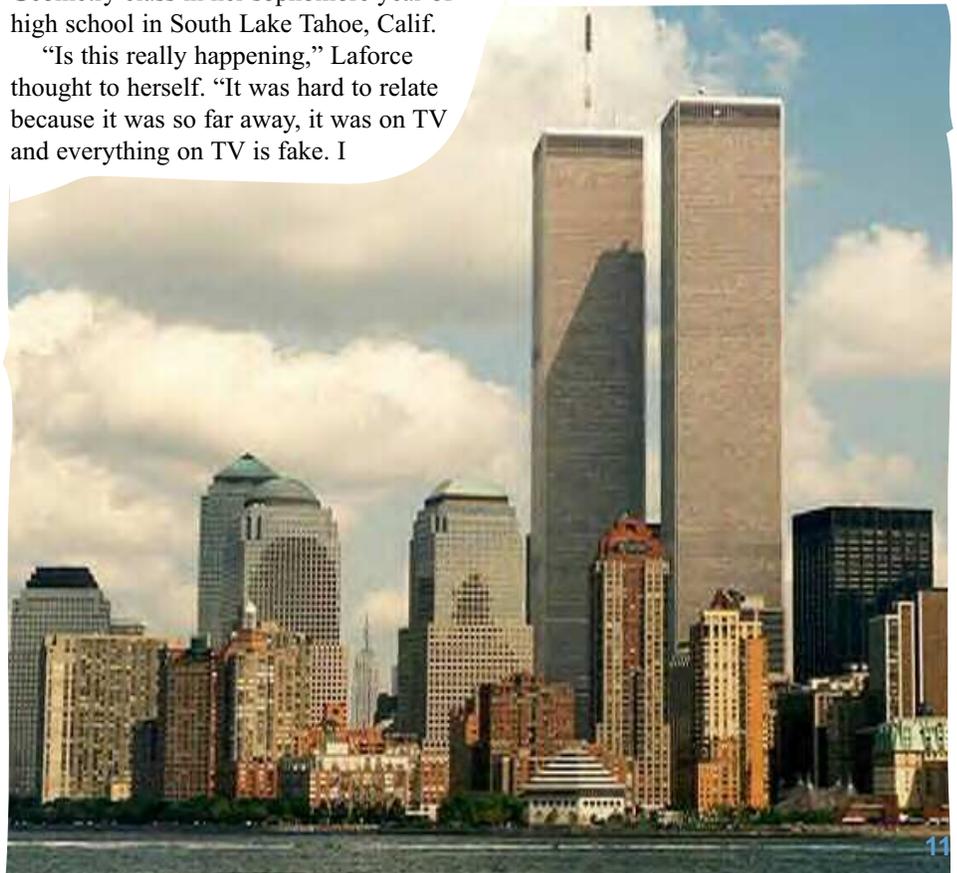
In his 30 years of service Lopez cannot remember, with the exception of the Berlin Wall coming down, an event that has changed the world and the face of the military like Sept. 11 has. Though war was not on his mind after the attacks, Lopez was wise enough to understand the ramifications of the day's events and knew we would be in conflict soon.

"I knew President Bush would retaliate," Lopez said.



Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

Spc. Renee Laforce, health care specialist, Company C, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, monitors the fluids in an IV bag at the troop medical clinic at Forward Operating Base Warhorse. Laforce was in high school during the Sept. 11 attacks.



FAR # 10

“Perfect is good enough” when it comes to having your equipment ready for combat. Perform PMCS like your life depends on it ... because it does.

As Soldiers, we’re required to make sure our battle systems are ready for combat. Whether it’s our individual weapon, vehicle or radio, it needs to function properly.

By conducting routine preventive maintenance checks and services you ensure that in a moment of crisis, your equipment is able to perform a possibly life-saving task: either firing, maneuvering or communicating.

Allowing small faults and deficiencies to pass without correcting them can cost Soldiers’ lives. If your vehicle has a small leak that goes untreated it can spiral into an uncontrollable leak that could cause the vehicle to break down at it’s most needed time during a mission.

Imagine lining up an insurgent in your cross hairs, you squeeze the trigger of your weapon and nothing happens. It’s not because the weapon is on safe, it’s because you failed to properly service the weapon before going on a mission. That insurgent could potentially kill your fellow Soldiers because you failed to properly maintain your assigned weapon.

Don’t put other Soldier’s lives at risk because you want to cut corners. Do not allow deficiencies, whether large or small, to go uncorrected. Even a small problem can seem out of control in a moment of need.

Proper PMCS of your equipment can save not only your buddies life, but yours as well.

Random Thoughts

Compiled by Chaplain (Maj.)

James C. Hartz

3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team

As a young Soldier, I discovered a very important truth. When serving in a foreign country it is important to understand the people and culture of that land. I also discovered that honoring local customs, especially religious traditions, pays both personal and military dividends. That is as true today as it was then.



As Ramadan approaches, I wanted to review some facts and customs that may help us be sensitive to the people of Iraq. Ramadan, the ninth lunar month of the Islamic Calendar, begins Sept. 23 or 24, depending upon the official sighting of the new moon.

Ramadan is the holiest month of the Islamic year. It commemorates the giving of the Quran (Revelations) to the Prophet Mohammed. For Muslims it is a time of “fasting, taming human passions and developing compassion for those less fortunate” (cf Quran 2:183). The fasting occurs daily from just before sunrise to just after sunset. Devout Muslims will refrain from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual activity during daylight hours. Exceptions may be granted to pregnant/nursing mothers, children and the sick. One of the five pillars of Islam, fasting is recognized as a means to purify oneself, attain consciousness of Allah and defend against Satan’s attacks. A special effort to pray five times a day is made and many attend evening prayers and a special reading of the Quran every evening (Tarweeh).

Other Key Dates in Ramadan 2006:

Nights of Glory – Oct. 13, 15 and 17: Prayers on these nights are more powerful than others and increased numbers of worshippers may gather for evening prayers. Oct. 13 also marks the death of the first Imam Ali, significant for Shiites.

Night of Power – Oct. 19: The night on which the Quran was revealed. Most significant night of Ramadan. Prayers and deeds of religious significance are 1000 times more valuable

Ramadan ends with Eid al Fitr (Breaking the Fast) Oct. 23 or 23. The Eid celebrates enhanced piety, forgiveness, peace, fellowship and unity among the true believers of Islamic faith. This time of joy includes family gatherings, special prayers of thankfulness to Allah and special acts of charity. It lasts three days.

As visitors to an Islamic nation, we can (and should) remember to respect the practices of our hosts especially during such a holy commemoration. Here are some tips:

Avoid being seen eating, drinking or smoking off the bases when in the presence/line of sight of Islamic worshippers

Avoid loud displays and interference with peaceful worship in and around Mosques

If possible, consider a charitable donation during Ramadan or during Eid al Fitr.

Photo share

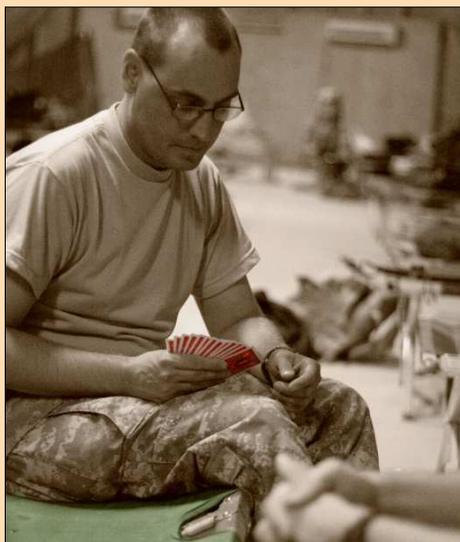


Photo by 1st Lt. Duane Sanders

We were in the transient tents and four of our guys were playing spades. I decided to take a series of shots in sepia tone. I later added some color to make it a little more interesting.