



The Long Knife

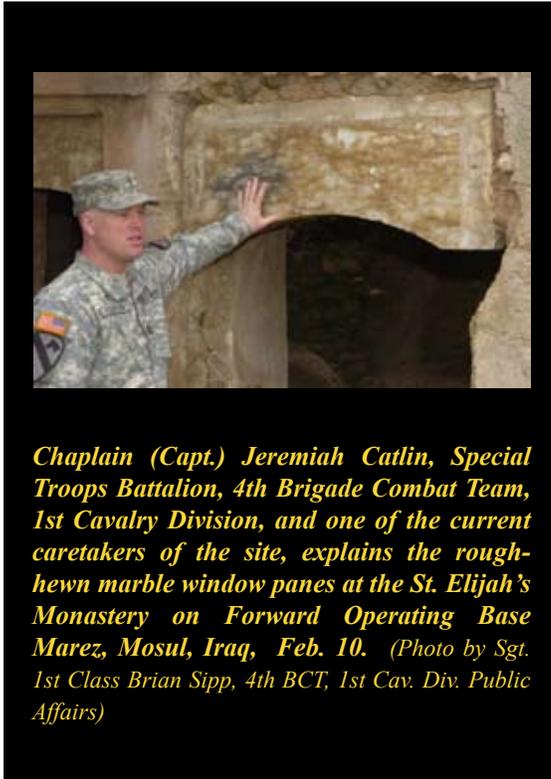
A MAGAZINE BY AND FOR THE 4TH BCT, 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION



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Inside this issue



Chaplain (Capt.) Jeremiah Catlin, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and one of the current caretakers of the site, explains the rough-hewn marble window panes at the St. Elijah's Monastery on Forward Operating Base Marez, Mosul, Iraq, Feb. 10. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brian Sipp, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

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COVER PHOTO: *Sergeant First Class Gary Parks, Bradley fighting vehicle mechanic, cuts a notch into a metal bracket at the E Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion motor pool Jan. 19. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Samantha Stryker, 5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)*

BACK COVER PHOTO: *Private Garnett Wooten, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, Fort Bliss, Texas, guards a suspect during an inspection at a propane distributing station for possible improvised explosive device makers in Kirkush, Iraq. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. JoAnn S. Makinano)*

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A message from Long Knife 6



Greetings Long Knife Family,

OUR MISSION:

Today marks the beginning of our fourth month here in Mosul, Iraq. Since assuming responsibility for our area of operation in Ninewa Province, we have partnered with the Iraqi security forces as one team, with one mission: Security for Iraq's people.

We continue to work on our primary focus of developing the Iraqi security forces so they can maintain security for their country. The Iraqi Army and the Iraqi police continue to develop their capabilities and readily assume more responsibility, allowing us to transition into more of a supporting role.

THE WAY AHEAD:

Our job here is far from over as we continue to help the Iraqi security forces develop into a viable, respectable and capable combat team. They are prepared and want to secure their cities and citizens. The military senior leadership is ready, having demonstrated their mettle during several combat missions and training exercises.

The biggest challenge for the Iraqi people's government is employment. The government is working hard to establish real jobs for the people. As in the states, meaningful employment means a lot. This in itself can potentially alleviate some problems in our area of operation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: How will Long Knife Soldiers contribute to the fight for improved security in Baghdad?

A: Our contribution to the overall mission is to focus on our Iraqi counterparts and get them to the trained and ready state where they are conducting operations

by themselves, with the CF in a supporting and overwatching role. We will do our part by supporting the fight here in Mosul and Tal Afar.

Q: Will we be in Iraq longer than 12 months?

A: We are currently on a year-long deployment, but as with any deployment, the enemy gets a vote in which our tour could be extended.

As of now, we continue to operate in the 12-month timeline. If for some reason we are extended, our families will be among the first to know.

THE SOLDIERS:

The Soldiers of the Long Knife Brigade are a great group of Soldiers! They are simply the best the US Army has to offer. I am proud to serve with them. Their work ethic and morale is high and has been that way since day one. I am sure you are as proud of them



as much as I am.

The facilities here are top notch. Your Soldiers are afforded many of the accouterments of any military installation in the states. This gives them the opportunity to relax in this environment. We support the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation facilities that give the Soldiers a taste of normalcy. These outlets allow the Soldiers to unwind and enjoy their time while here. Again, I would like to thank those that facilitate our support system at Fort Bliss. Your hard work is appreciated.



A message from Long Knife 9



First of all, I would like to send our deepest condolences to the family members and friends of Sgt. Robert B. Thrasher, assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, who was killed in Baghdad Feb. 11, 2007, when his unit came under small arms fire.

We will continue to face adversity and challenges in this very tough mission before us. I would tell you to be strong and refer to the core. Principles of being a Soldier that brought you here.

I would also like to thank all the Soldiers in the brigade who have diligently been striving to achieve great success throughout Iraq and who have been working side-by-side training the Iraqi security forces. Our quick pace and commitment to achieve the goals set before us, once again proves our tenacity to stop terrorists in their tracks.

I encourage everyone to remain vigilant in your missions and stay true to the Army Values:

Loyalty—Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other Soldiers. Bearing true faith and allegiance is a matter of believing in and devoting yourself to something or someone. A loyal Soldier is one who supports the leadership and stands up for fellow Soldiers. By wearing the uniform of the U.S. Army you are expressing your loyalty. And by doing your share, you show your loyalty to your unit.

Duty—Fulfill your obligations. Doing your duty means more than carrying out your assigned tasks. Duty means being able to accomplish tasks as part of a team. The work of the U.S. Army is a complex combination of missions, tasks and responsibilities—all in constant motion. Our work entails building one assignment onto another. You fulfill your obligations as a part of your unit every time you resist the temptation to take “shortcuts” that might undermine the integrity of the final product.

Respect—Treat people as they should be treated. In the Soldier’s Code, we pledge to “treat others with dignity and

respect while expecting others to do the same.” Respect is what allows us to appreciate the best in other people. Respect is trusting that all people have done their jobs and fulfilled their duty. And self-respect is a vital ingredient with the Army value of respect, which results from knowing you have put forth your best effort. The Army is one team and each of us has something to contribute.

Selfless Service—Put the welfare of the Nation, the Army and your subordinates before your own. Selfless service is larger than just one person. In serving your country, you are doing your duty loyally without thought of recognition or gain. The basic building block of selfless service is the commitment of each team member to go a little further, endure a little longer, and look a little closer to see how he or she can add to the effort.

Honor—Live up to Army values. The Nation’s highest military award is The Medal of Honor. This award goes to Soldiers who make honor a matter of daily living—Soldiers who develop the habit of being honorable, and solidify that habit with every value choice they make. Honor is a matter of carrying out, acting, and living the values of respect, duty, loyalty, selfless service, integrity and personal courage in everything you do.

Integrity—Do what’s right, legally and morally. Integrity is a quality you develop by adhering to moral principles. It requires that you do and say nothing that deceives others. As your integrity grows, so does the trust others place in you. The more choices you make based on integrity, the more this highly prized value will affect your relationships with family and friends, and, finally, the fundamental acceptance of yourself.

Personal Courage—Face fear, danger or adversity (physical or moral). Personal courage has long been associated with our Army. With physical courage, it is a matter of enduring physical duress and at times risking personal safety. Facing moral fear or adversity may be a long, slow process of continuing forward on the right path, especially if taking those actions is not popular with others. You can build your personal courage by daily standing up for and acting upon the things that you know are honorable.





A military police officer, Spc. Brice Bell, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, mans the .50 caliber machine gun atop his uparmored humvee, which is being driven off the forward operating base for an escort mission Feb. 8.

MPs PLAY VITAL ROLE IN WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

STORY BY AND PHOTOS BY PFC. BRADLEY J. CLARK
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq— The military police officers, belonging to the Special Troops Battalion of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, play an important role in the war on terror. Their current mission, since the middle of November, is that of an escort and security team.

We do everything from going to the Joint Coordination Center to drop off mail and supplies, to escorting the Provincial Reconstruction Teams to wherever they need to go, said Staff Sgt. Michael Wood, military police squad leader, Headquarters and Headquarters Company. "Also, we're the ones that get called when the [Quick Reaction Force] needs back-up."

The MPs may try to downplay their job, but in actuality, they realize it is one of high importance

because of the types of people they escort; people who not only count on them to get them from point A to point B, but who are also glad to have MPs there for their safety.

The people, said Pfc. Aaron Rankie, like the members of the Provincial Reconstruction Team, are helping the Iraqi government to rebuild Iraq and are responsible for assisting with the management of millions of Iraqi dollars for project funding.

"Our main mission is to keep the escorts safe until they are back on the [Forward Operating Base]," said Pfc. Timothy Baker. "The people that we escort are always grateful that we're there."

Conducting escort operations became a vital part of the military police's job not long after Operation Iraqi Freedom began. "The MPs used to patrol the streets, but since there is no frontline, now the infantry is learning our techniques and patrolling the streets," said Wood. This, in effect, he explained, has freed

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Cavalry Soldiers transform to military advisors

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. ANTONIETA RICO
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

MOSUL, Iraq — Iraqi Army soldiers have assumed control of northern Iraq, freeing up U.S. cavalry Soldiers from patrolling the largest city in that area, Mosul, and enabling them to instead concentrate solely on providing direct training support to the Iraqi Army in Ninewa Province.

Heading this large-scale shift in mission, the first of its kind in Iraq, is the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, out of Fort Bliss, Texas. It follows a proposal by the Iraq Study Group, which recommended in its report released in early December 2006, that the number of embedded American Soldiers with Iraqi units be increased five-fold.

The squadron's troops, headquartered in Mosul, are now close to completing the process of reorganizing from a combat operations unit into a teaching role with military transition teams. The cavalry Soldiers will be working closely with Iraqi security forces, making a final boost in training to strengthen the Iraqi Army's two northern divisions.

"We are now going to work with the [Ninewa Province] military transition teams to help train, teach, coach, mentor and assist in the ISF development," said Lt. Col. Keitron Todd, a Camden, Ark. native and commander of the 1-9 Cav.

Soldiers assigned to MiTTs live with Iraqi security forces and act as advisors for the Iraqi units in a wide range of military operations.



Soldiers of 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment refuel their vehicles after a convoy from Mosul to Tal Afar. In Tal Afar, the Soldiers will begin their new mission training Iraqi Army and border patrol units. The squadron is in the process of realigning to a 'Super-MiTT'. The Soldiers will work under the command of Military Transition Teams in Ninewa Province to teach, coach and mentor the Iraqi security forces.

Leaders of Task Force Lightning, of the 25th Infantry Division, which heads Coalition Forces in northern Iraq, say that the concept will not reduce combat power in the province, but instead, will increase the capabilities of the Iraqi security forces.

The 3rd Iraqi Army Division and the 2nd Iraqi Army Division own the battle space in Ninewa Province.

"They really, really have it," said Todd, who has worked with the 2nd Brigade of the 2nd Iraqi Army Division based in Mosul. "There are two very capable Iraqi brigades here that can

really handle this," he said referring to combat operations in the Mosul area. "Kinetically, they can do it, the Iraqis can do it, absolutely," he affirmed.

By sending his squadron to work with Iraqi units throughout Ninewa, Todd said his Soldiers will enhance

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Soldiers of 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment stand in formation during a change-of-command ceremony Jan. 18 at Forward Operating Base Marez, Mosul, Jan. 18.

Supply convoys keep Soldiers happy, combat ready

STORY AND PHOTO BY SGT. ANTONIETA RICO
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

MOSUL, Iraq — Curfew is in effect in Mosul as the Troop D, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, Soldiers roll through the city's empty streets Jan. 26. Undeterred by reports of a possible roadside bomb, the support Soldiers are intent on delivering supplies to fellow cavalry Soldiers.

“Our goal is to keep the convoy moving,” said Capt. George Childs, Troop D commander, “If we stop, we are failing that mission.”

The supply convoy moves cautiously through the road where the suspected bomb is emplaced, and the Soldiers arrive safely with their cargo at Al Kindi, an Iraqi Army base near Mosul. There, Troop D delivers supplies, which include mattresses, fresh water, wood, building material and some generators to Soldiers of Troop A, 1-9 Cav. Regt. The Soldiers of the headquarters section of Troop A are embedded with a Military Transition Team at the Iraqi base.

With the recent realignment of 1-9 Cav. Regt. into a “super MiTT,” and Soldiers of the squadron spread throughout Ninewa Province, the Soldiers of Troop D, the 1-9 Cav. support troop, are relishing their chance to show what they are capable of.

Soldiers of Troop D also deliver supplies to MiTT units and coalition forces within Mosul, as well as 1-9 Cav. Regt. Soldiers in the Tal Afar and Al Kisik areas in western Ninewa Province.

“Especially now, with the squadron split, our mission is extremely important,” said Childs, a Daytona Beach, Fla., native.

The supplies Troop D Soldiers deliver ensure the squadron's Soldiers are able to carry out their own mission.

“If I don't deliver, trucks don't move,” said Staff Sgt. Guillermo Rivera, distribution platoon sergeant. “They don't have spare parts for their vehicles, they don't have ammunition, they don't have fuel, they don't eat.”

And although the Soldiers deliver the necessities, they also deliver the comfort items that take the edge off a hard days work. Rivera's Soldiers also deliver mail, hot chow, and the occasional special request for cream cheese.

“If nothing else, we improve the morale of Soldiers that are deployed forward,” Childs said.

“When you go out there you always get a happy face waiting on you and a warm handshake,” said Rivera, a native of Puerto Rico, “We are like their best friend.”

That friendly sentiment was evident when the Troop D Soldiers arrived at Al Kindi.

Soldiers of Troop A were waiting for them and as the supplies were unloaded, the Troop A Soldiers and an Iraqi Army officer started making Chai tea for the Troop D Soldiers. Soon there was a gathering outside by a bonfire, with Soldiers from both troops swapping stories over sweet, hot Chai.

And although sometimes people forget to thank the supply Soldiers for their vital support of the line troops, words are not always necessary.

“The Soldiers and the happy faces when you get to different places; that's enough for me,” Rivera said.



Private Cory Rand, Troop D, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, adjusts a lamp to check his vehicle before heading out on a supply convoy to Al Kindi, an Iraqi Army base near Mosul, Jan 27. Rand's mission was to deliver supplies to Troop A, 1-9 Cav. Regt., who are supporting military transition teams, or MiTTs, at the base.



Specialist James Storey, a member of the 454th Transportation Company, watches TV as his son, Spc. Patrick Storey, a member of the 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, checks his e-mail on his father's computer. The Storeys are currently stationed together at Forward Operating Base Q-West, Iraq.

IRAQ PROVES TO HAVE TWO STOREYS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PFC. BRADLEY CLARK
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq—The Storey family is not one that you see everyday in the military. They have four members in the Army: three of them are assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division; three of them are currently deployed to Iraq; and two of them are on the same Forward Operating Base.

It all started when Cpl. Angela Sadowski, a member of the 27th Brigade Support Battalion, and her husband, Spc. Brian Sadowski, a member of the Special Troops Battalion, reenlisted for Fort Bliss, Texas, from Germany.

A week after the Sadowskis reenlisted, Spc. Patrick

Storey, Angela Sadowski's brother, came down on orders for Fort Bliss as well.

"I was excited," said Cpl. Sadowski. "I hadn't seen Patrick in over two years, so I was really happy. We all spent quite some time together. I went to lunch with Patrick and to the German Cantina all the time. Plus, we lived a block apart, so we could just walk to each others house."

After being stationed at Bliss for several months together and being able to reunite for the first time in two years, Patrick packed his bags once again, along with the rest of the 4th BCT, and headed off to Iraq, while his sister stayed behind because she was having a child.

Spc. Sadowski, Angela's husband, was stationed at FOB Marez, while Patrick, Angela's brother, was sent a short distance away to FOB Q-West with the 5th

Battalion 82nd Field Artillery Regiment.

Around the same time Storey and Sadowski were leaving for Iraq, Spc. James Storey, Angela and Patrick's father, a mechanic assigned to the 454th Transportation Company, was settling in at FOB Endurance.

What the father and son team of specialists did not know, was that FOB Endurance and FOB Q-West were in fact, the same installation.

"I knew he was coming to Mosul, but I had no idea he was coming to this post," said James. "They had changed his location three times before he actually got in country."

When Patrick arrived in Iraq, he knew the name of the FOB where his father was stationed but didn't know where it was located. "I knew he was on FOB Endurance," said Patrick. "The first week or so, I heard people saying this was FOB Endurance, but I didn't really believe it," added Patrick.

Patrick had to find some hard evidence, so he decided to go to the Post Exchange. "I went to the PX to see if they had any of the shirts that had the name of the FOB on them. Most of them said Q-West, but I found a few that said FOB Endurance on them."

Now that Patrick knew he was on the same FOB as his father, he had to figure out how to find him. "I thought the best thing for me to do was to go to the mayor's cell, because they have a record of everyone on the FOB," said Patrick.

The mayor's cell did some calling around and found the unit that James was with after a few tries.

After he confirmed the location of his father, Patrick set out to see him. "I went to his motor pool and a non commissioned officer was walking toward me so I asked if a Spc. Storey was here and the NCO said 'Yes, who are you?' I'm his son. 'Wow, he's right around the corner.'"

"I was building shelves in a connex, for parts, and I hear, 'Hey old man, what are you doing,'" explained James. "I couldn't believe it when I heard his voice. I turned around and I jumped on the kid like there was no tomorrow. I hugged him like a bear; it was wonderful."

The Storey's try to spend as much time together as possible, but sometimes duty makes it hard on them to do that. "I go out on patrols a lot and we don't know when we are coming back in," said Patrick. "Sometimes it's pretty late."

"They keep him busy enough; sometimes I only see him once every two weeks or so," said James.

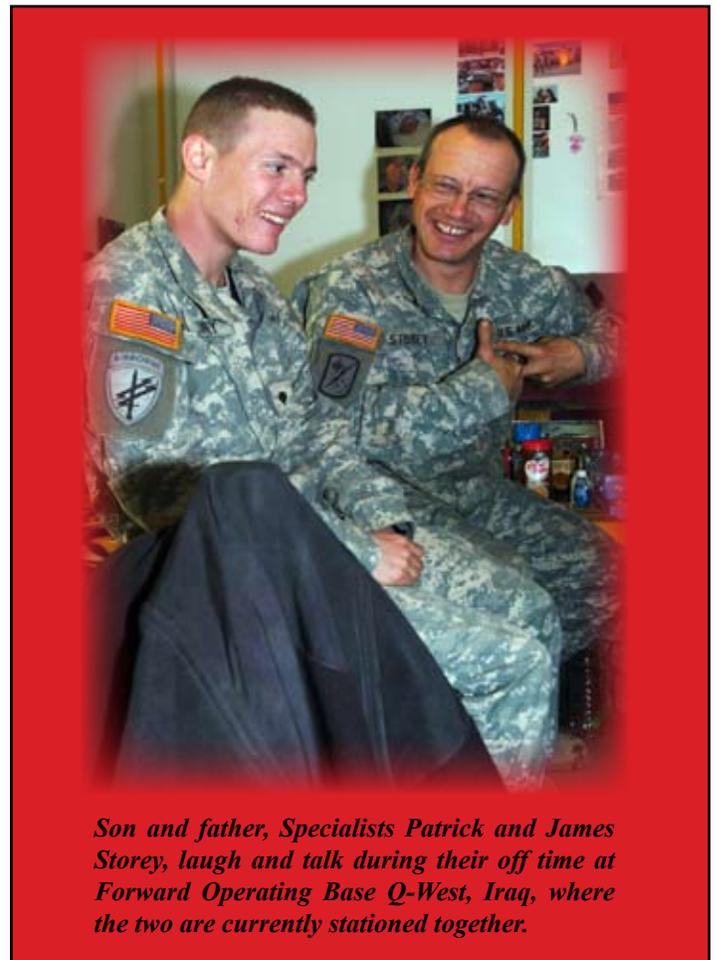
When they do get together, they talk with family back home.

"He comes over and visits my computer," laughed James. "We talk and joke around with all our friends and family back home on the internet. I think they like it when we pick on them together. The family back home thinks its great that we're on the same [FOB] and that we get to see each other."

Cpl. Sadowski thinks, "It is good that they are on the same FOB. It will help build a better relationship between them. It's just something that you don't hear about too often; they can help each other out and keep the morale going for themselves and others too."

Her father agreed and added, "I think it's easier being on the same FOB because I get to see him and I know that when I see him, even if it's just in passing, if he's walking upright, I'm happy. That's how I feel. I get a hug and 'I love you' and away we go," said James.

"I'm just proud to have this young man as a son," He exclaimed! "He is really my hero; three tours, he's a family man like no other, he's got all the qualities that I wish a lot more people had, and he's proud of his country."



Son and father, Specialists Patrick and James Storey, laugh and talk during their off time at Forward Operating Base Q-West, Iraq, where the two are currently stationed together.

Engineers, mechanics fabricate safety

STORY AND PHOTOS BY STAFF SGT. SAMANTHA M. STRYKER
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

MOSUL, Iraq — After numerous improvised explosive device hits, mortar attacks and gunfire, nearly every engineer vehicle of E Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, shows signs of some sort of battle damage.

Concerned the strikes would eventually compromise the structural integrity of the armor, an engineer officer challenged his motley crew of talented mechanics to redesign the rocket-propelled grenade deflection cage on the M113A3 armored personnel carrier to fit onto the RG-31 engineer vehicle.

Captain Tim Hudson, commander, E Company, 2-7 Cav., said the idea occurred to him when he examined a wire cage mounted to the trucks.

“When we got here, the last unit had made a wire cage and wrapped it around the truck,” he said. Hudson was referring to the 111th Engineer Battalion, Texas



Washington native, Spc. Kyle Thomas, E Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, cuts a notch in a mounting bracket in the motor pool at Forward Operating Base Marez, Jan. 19.

Army National Guard, who used Hesco basket wire in an attempt to add another layer of protection against RPG attacks.

“We get our share of RPGs and knew we had to come up with something better,” he added.

TRANSFORM, *cont'd from page 6*

the capabilities of the rest of the ISF in the province.

Although MiTTs have been working with the Iraqi Army in a ‘coach, teach, mentor’ capability in Iraq for several years now, this new shift in mission moves hundreds of combat Soldiers into that same close-mentoring role among the Iraqi soldiers.

The 1-9 Cav. Soldiers will be assigned to transition teams already in place within Iraqi Army soldiers in Ninewa. The MiTTs will assume operational control of the 1-9 Cavalry troops and guide them in their new role with the Iraqi Army. This will leave Todd with a headquarters force in Mosul that will continue to provide logistical support for the squadron’s Soldiers.

Soldiers of 2nd Squadron, 7th U.S. Cavalry Regiment, also with the 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., will continue their normal operations in Mosul with other units of the Long Knife Brigade.

Although Todd said he was hesitant when first hearing of the mission, which called for him to give operational control of his troops to the transition teams, he said he realized that the means justified the end.

“When you believe in what’s actually going on, that this enhances the training and capacity for the ISF, then you look at it and go; ‘This is the right thing,’” Todd said.

The success of this new mission depends on the hard work of the 1-9 Cav. Soldiers, said 4th BCT Command Sgt. Maj. Stephan Frennier, during a change-of

command-ceremony for C Troop Jan. 18.

Frennier and other leaders of the Long Knife Brigade said they are counting on the noncommissioned officers in the cavalry troops to make the new mission a success. They believe that the NCOs’ background in leading their own Soldiers, as well as the squadron Soldiers’ discipline and knowledge of combat operations, will reinforce what is already a good foundation of basic combat skills the Ninewa Army divisions possess. They hope this new mission will bring the Iraqi Army closer to being completely self reliant, not only in Ninewa Province, but eventually in all of Iraq.

“Starting with you, it is going to trickle its way south to the rest of the country,” Frennier told squadron Soldiers.

The need for an additional layer of force protection stems from the regularity of injuries and vehicular damage incurred on missions in the city and the surrounding areas. The RPG cage could help increase the survivability of the truck and its safety of its occupants.

The RPG cages will not completely shield the trucks from the full force of a direct blast. The initial concussion is taken by the cage while the secondary blast, which is not as powerful, will strike the armor and the ballistic glass.

Hudson knew there was a better solution than wire baskets; he just needed to find it and find it soon. Missions continued despite the lack of a durable cage.

Hudson found the answer within steps of his office; parked across the motor pool were five APCs with RPG cages. He figured out what to use; now he had to figure out how to mount it on the vehicle.

Enter “Dave and Gary’s Fabrication Shop,” where dreams and ideas come true.

Sergeant 1st Class Gary Parks, the motor pool noncommissioned officer-in-charge gathered his five other mechanics from E Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, and began to tackle the problem.

Before any actual work started on the vehicle, Hudson had to get permission for his mechanics to improve the vehicle.

“Because it is a fairly new vehicle, we can not work on it. So the commander had to ask the civilian company who owns it to approve what we did and how we did it,” said Parks.

Hudson was told his mechanics could not cut or weld on the hull because it could weaken the integrity. He was also told the company was developing a RPG deflection cage and it should be ready for testing this summer.

Neither Hudson or Parks and crew were willing to wait if they could improve Soldiers’ safety now.

“We needed this RPG cage now, and we could take it on a true test,” said Parks. “What is important is keeping Soldiers safe.”

Parks, a Louisville, Ky. Native, along with fellow Bradley fighting vehicle mechanic, Staff Sgt. Dave W.

Finney, gathered their team of mechanics and began working. The “Fab” team included Spc. Kyle Thomas, track vehicle mechanic, Pfc. Paxton White, heavy construction mechanic, and two heavy wheel mechanics. They scrounged for metal materials on and around the base and at the neighboring airfield, working on their project during slow times at the motor pool.

Relishing in the opportunity to exercise his welding skills and imagination, Thomas, a Republic, Wash., native discovered the RPG cages could be turned upside-down and mounted onto C-channel brackets. Then the brackets could be secured onto the truck using the pre-existing holes along the hull.

“The hull keeps all of its integrity, we are just adding something extra,” said Thomas.



(Front to back) Specialist Kyle Thomas, Sgt. 1st Class Gary Parks, Pfc. Paxton White and Staff Sgt. David W. Finney scrutinize over a metal mounting bracket in the E Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion motor pool Jan. 19. The Fort Bliss, Texas, fabricators took the metal bracket and redesigned it to mount on an engineer vehicle for added troop safety in Mosul, Iraq.

They did not stop there. Parks and Thomas looked at where a low-angle blast would strike the vehicle and cut a piece of armor and fit it to an already-existing ledge. This extended the armored coverage upward over the windows, without blocking the occupant’s view.

Within three weeks, the first of two engineer trucks rolled out of the motor pool with the RPG cage. Each mount and bracket was painted so no one would ever suspect the cage was added later.

“We are perfectionists and want our work to look good,” Parks said. “We know that anything not painted to match the rest of the vehicle will attract attention.”

The added weight caused by the cage does not really cause the drivers any concern. “It is a lot better knowing we have the cage,” said Spc. Thomas Daniel Trimble, a combat engineer with E Co., 2-7 Cav. “A direct hit by an RPG would leave you pretty rung. But if it hits the cage first, then the secondary blast does not feel too bad.”

“It makes the vehicle heavier,” said Spc. Jeremy Gibson, also of E Co. “But it sends out a message, ‘the more force they use, we will use what we need to protect ourselves.’” Parks said they like the challenges of improving the equipment they have. It appeals to their creative side, but more importantly, it allows them to help save lives.



(U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Bennett Freeman, 5-82 FA)

Iraqi Army soldiers, with the help of the 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment and the 45th Sustainment Brigade, distribute supplies throughout the town of Shafa'at Feb. 1.

Black Dragons team with IA for humanitarian mission

STORY BY SGT. PAULA TAYLOR
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

SHAFAT, Iraq—Soldiers of the Black Dragon Battalion partnered with members of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division and the 45th Sustainment Brigade to hand out supplies and conduct a medical assessment Feb. 1.

“The 3/2 IA unloaded several trucks filled with water and toys for the populace and were greeted by the children with hugs and smiles of thanks,” said 1st Lt. Bennett Freeman, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment. “The Iraqi Army, 5-82 FA, and the 45th all had medical personnel on hand to administer aid to the children of the town,” he explained.

One of the medics, Sgt. Garrick Morgenweck, of the 5-82 FA from Huntsville, Ala., who joined the effort, said he thought the mission went very well. “We had an Iraqi Army doctor there, two IA medics and three Soldiers from the 45th,” said Morgenweck. “These types of missions are always successful. People come in droves

from all around and are glad there are people available to help.”

The group also spent time mingling with the townspeople and interacting with the children. “I played with the little kids,” said Spc. Heather Jay, transport operator from Iowa City, Iowa, 5-82 FA. “We sat down with them, asked how old they were and just tried to make them feel comfortable. The kids were running around, giving ‘high-fives’ and having a good time. They brought out the kid in all of us that were in that room.”

Jay and Morgenweck said the distributed items consisted of medicine, lotion, toys, clothes, blankets, water and candy. The two agreed it was a great experience and look forward to the opportunity to assist the locals in getting back on their feet.

“The media always puts out there that we’re always under gunfire, it’s horrible over here, things are blowing up left and right, because they’re going after the ‘story,’” said Morgenweck. “But where we are, the people are glad we’re here; they’re happy to have us here. The Iraqi people, in general, are like anybody else. They just want to better their lives and they’re glad we’re here to help them get there.”

STB Soldiers work ‘The Big House’

STORY BY STAFF SGT. SAMANTHA M. STRYKER
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

MOSUL, Iraq — If you work for or abet anti-coalition forces, you do not want to meet these guys. But if you are arrested for planting improvised explosive devices, participating in insurgent activity or in any way assisting anti-coalition forces, you are going to their house. That house is the Mosul Detention Facility.

The detention facility is operated by members of the Provincial Detention Operations Company, C Company, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

These Soldiers are fired-up about being pulled out of their teams and formed into a new unit, where few of them share the same military occupational specialty, in order to guard detainees while their battle buddies participate in or support ongoing operations in northern Iraq.

At first, some asked ‘why them?’, but now they are seeing first hand their vital role in countering the insurgency and helping to rebuild the nation.

“One of the biggest challenges for Soldiers, especially combat-oriented MOSs, was being placed in a situation of not being able to work with the units they trained and expected to deploy with,” said Sgt. Robert Greene, a light-wheeled vehicle mechanic who is now a shift operations control facility noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

Greene, a Newport, R.I., native, said that as leaders, they reinforce the importance of this mission to the overall success of the brigade’s mission.

For Iraq veterans like Spc. Adolfo Aguirre, being a member of the detention company allows him to see what happens after an operation that resulted in capturing suspected insurgents.

“There are a lot of MOSs that contribute to the mission,” said Aguirre, a food service specialist. “After the bad guys are brought in, we take over and then the process continues from here. We need to acknowledge we are making a difference in the country from inside these walls,” said the Vado, N.M. native.

Sergeant 1st Class Eric Dementer, the detention facility noncommissioned officer-in-charge, emphasized their role as directly contributing to keeping the streets safer for Soldiers.

“This mission is important. We are keeping bad guys off the streets. Detaining them keeps them from planting IEDs, financing snipers or convoy attackers.

We are protecting Soldiers,” Dementer said.

While at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin., Calif., the unit ran a small holding area. Back at Fort Bliss, they continued their training with a Military Transition Team out of Fort Hood, Texas, for a week.

Once in Mosul, Soldiers had to undergo a certification process with the previous unit that included a day of classroom training that addressed language and cultural awareness, intern operations and reviewing the Geneva Convention guidelines.

However, the strength of the unit is not in its numbers or the hours of training. It is in the guards working inside the facility, and their ability to do the right thing everyday despite their circumstances.

“It is very difficult seeing the persons responsible for the mishaps to our troops,” said Pfc. David Fanny, a combat engineer. The Pensacola, Fl., native says he shares the concern for the families whose loved ones may not make it home. But he tries not to let those emotions show or cloud his judgment. “You have to think your actions through and do not let them get to you,” he added.

The fallout of other detention facility operations and personnel are never too far from the minds of leaders

“We are keeping bad guys off the streets. Detaining them keeps them from planting IEDs, financing snipers or convoy attackers. We are protecting Soldiers.”

—Sgt. 1st Class Eric Dementer—

See **BIG HOUSE**, page 18

LONG KNIFE SOLDIERS TAKE A JOURNEY BACK IN TIME

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. 1ST CLASS BRIAN SIPP
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq — Soldiers from the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division were able to take a walk into the past without leaving the present when they were allowed to tour the St. Elijah's Monastery Feb. 10.



The alcoves, used as personal quarters for the St. Elijah's Monastery's inhabitants and evident from the inner courtyard, stand in contrast to the Russian tank graveyard visible outside the site's walls on Forward Operating Base Marez, Mosul, Iraq, Feb. 10.

Sitting nestled in a field across from a Russian tank graveyard, the Christian sanctuary is now protected by a chain-link fence and away from the maneuver of heavy vehicles and patrolling feet. Resembling a medieval castle, its walls and courtyard show the signs of age, as well as more recent damage from combat sustained in the fall of 2003 when an Iraqi armor unit used it as a command post against the Coalition Forces. The inside is a collection of alcoves with four distinct staircases leading to the walls. Parapets ring the outside, presumably for defense against attack, and several second-floor rooms remain in remarkably good shape.

Properly called the Dair Mar Elia Monastery, after Mar Elia, a monk who studied at the great monastery at Ezla Mountain in Turkey, its origins can be dated back to its establishment in 595 A.D., according to Chaplain (Capt.) Jeremiah Catlin, Special Troops Battalion, one of the current caretakers of the site and administrators

of the tour.

Soldiers begin the tour like any other military operation, with a rules and safety briefing, before they are allowed to traverse the grounds and enter the buildings. Hazards are explained and safety is stressed due to the structural problems in several areas. The troops are then asked to stay in a group and follow the guided tour before being allowed to break-off from the main group and explore on their own. "All of the Soldiers, whether religiously oriented or not, have always displayed the highest level of respect for this site, and demonstrate a very keen interest in the historical relevance and significance of this monastery," said Catlin.

Catlin explained why the area has sparked such interest in him, and what he envisions for the future. "I have now visited St. Elijah's Monastery on more than 25 different occasions. I began as a fellow Soldier attending the tour. I have spent time working on the site to remove unexploded ordnance with our explosive ordnance disposal teams. I spent time researching the site's history online and visiting with individuals who have extensive knowledge of this building. Now, I am attempting to assist in the preservation of the building as well as furthering the knowledge of the monastery for all Soldiers that will have the opportunity to come through it."

Walking through the ruins, Catlin explained to the assembled following how history played out directly under their feet. "After many years of service by Mar Elia, the responsibility of caring for the monastery was given to Mar Elia's nephew, Khnanisho. Many years passed, and a church was built sometime between the 14th and 15th century. During the 17th century, an Alqush native by the name of Hurmizd Alqushnaya renovated the monastery. It remained to be a successful center of Christianity until 1743, when Tahmaz Nadir Shah destroyed it, as well as Dair Mar Oraha, and killed all of its inhabitants."

Remnants of 1,500-year-old pottery lie scattered in several rooms on the ground level, a testimony to the endurance of the structure and people who lived there.

"It has really made me think about our value systems and whether our value structure will still be visible in 1,000 years, like it is here," reflected Sgt. Jessica Muller, a Special Troops Battalion combat medic, and native of El Paso, Texas.

Several Soldiers had similar thoughts after absorbing the sense of timelessness and perseverance that seemingly emanates from the grounds.

“It gave me an incredible insight into Iraq’s past,” said Staff Sgt. George Wrin, a communications noncommissioned officer also with STB, and a native of Philadelphia, Penn. “This is the last place I would expect to find a Christian monastery,” he added, referring to the predominant religion of Islam that currently encompasses the region.

Catlin again expressed his joy at being able to share this area with Soldiers, and explained why he felt it was significant for them to visit. “I have taken both Soldiers whose jobs keep them in offices on the FOB, as well as Soldiers whose duties take them outside the wire every day. For the FOB Soldiers, it allows them to connect and helps them feel they are getting to know some of the culture and rich history of this country. Our off-the-FOB Soldiers seem to find that it allows them an opportunity to relax and forget the stressors of their daily jobs. While Soldiers will not be as likely to exit a vehicle and get pictures of every site in this historically-rich city, they can at least get one comparable picture in a safe environment by visiting this monastery tucked away on FOB Marez.”

The beginning of the 20th century brought much interest in St. Elijahs. The complex saw many renovations and halls and rooms were rebuilt for use during WW I as a refuge, explained Catlin. The last Wednesday in November is dedicated to remembering Mar Elia. Most recently, during the 20th century, thousands of Chaldean Christians would gather at this site to commemorate Mar Elia. Later a military compound, the Muaskar el-Ghazlani, was built around the monastery, which reduced the number of visitors to the location.

As the tour concluded, the Soldiers were forced back into the 21st century reality of a nation and Army at war and their daily duties supporting their country’s effort to bring peace to a tumultuous region. Still, some were thinking of another time and another vision of what could be. “This whole land would look absolutely gorgeous if there was no barbed wire,” said Pfc. Roy Smith, an STB intelligence analyst from Knoxville, Tenn.

“I enjoy the looks of interest and intrigue on our Soldiers’ faces,” Catlin explained. “I enjoy the time spent focusing on something that naturally leads to discussions of faith.”



Soldiers from nearby Forward Operating Base Marez in Mosul, Iraq, including Sgt. Jessica Muller, a Special Troops Battalion combat medic, and native of El Paso, Texas (foreground), can be seen touring St. Elijah’s Monastery from a second-floor window Feb. 10.



The inner courtyard shows the stairwells and upper level of St. Elijah’s Monastery, spotlighting its location as Forward Operating Base Marez can be seen in the background Feb.10. FOB Marez is located in Mosul, Iraq and is the operating base for the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

Iraqi Army conducts weapons training

Local sergeant major takes the lead

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. PAULA TAYLOR
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq—The 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, assisted in training the 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division in enhancing their basic rifle marksmanship and war-fighting skills beginning Feb. 1.



Command Sgt. Maj. Mohammed Jasim Hussen, 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division, shows one of his soldiers how to react to hostile fire on the range at Forward Operating Base Q-West Feb. 1. Hussen, working in conjunction with Coalition Forces of the 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, conducted basic rifle marksmanship training to enhance his soldiers' combat skills.

The two elements came together for a three-day BRM course and close-quarter battle drills training, said 1st Sgt. Jon Rettmann, top enlisted member of A Battery, 5-82 FA. “The only thing my [noncommissioned officers] had to do was provide the IA leadership with the latest [tactics, techniques and procedures] that the Coalition Forces have seen work.”

“By us sharing our techniques that we’ve been developing, we can instill confidence in them so that when they go out, they will know how to react,” said Pvt. Kagan Richard, gunner, A Battery, 5-82 FA.

Rettmann explained it was his NCOs who built the training schedule to teach the IA battalion. “Two of my NCOs developed a training plan for the range and presented it to the 1st Iraqi Army Battalion’s sergeant major,” said Rettmann. “Once he said it looked good, we began the training. The first day of the range, we were very surprised at the level of knowledge the IA NCOs had. So after about the first hour, their sergeant major, his first sergeant, and platoon sergeant, took the lead and ran the range.”

Rettmann said the Iraqi Army soldiers learned close-quarter battle room clearing, including single and multiple-room clearance procedures, along with basic rifle marksmanship. “Once we got to BRM, we concentrated on firing from the kneeling, standing and prone positions; then they fired live, reflexive-fire rounds.”

The senior NCO of the 1st Battalion, Command Sgt. Maj. Mohammed Jasim Hussen, said the training was a necessary step in the process of getting his troops ready for any situation. “We are trying to increase our soldiers’ abilities through training so that they will be able to conduct any type of mission. We want them to break down all the terrorists in



Command Sgt. Maj. Mohammed Jasim Hussen, 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division, shows one of his soldiers how to react to hostile fire on the range at Forward Operating Base Q-West Feb. 1. Hussen, working in conjunction with Coalition Forces of the 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, conducted basic rifle marksmanship training to enhance his soldiers' combat skills.

Training with field artillery battalion



Command Sgt. Maj. Mohammed Jasim Hussien, 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division coaches his troops in close-quarters battle drills, Feb. 1.



Command Sgt. Maj. Mohammed Jasim Hussien, 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division, teaches one of his soldiers from 1st Platoon, 2nd Company basic rifle marksmanship, while Sgt. Luis Arevalo, A Battery, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment looks on.



An Iraqi Army soldier from 1st Platoon, 2nd Company, 1st Battalion gets ready to practice a four-man stack under the direction of Command Sgt. Maj. Mohammed Jasim Hussien, 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division at the range on Forward Operating Base Q-West Feb. 1.

our country, anywhere they are. The Iraqi soldiers have a very strong desire to defeat terrorist activities in Iraq. This training will help build their confidence.”

During the three-day course, Sgt. Basheer Abdula, platoon sergeant, 1st Platoon, 2nd Iraqi Army Company, said his troops went through the course several times each, concentrating not only on targeting, but on weapons familiarization. “They each fired a series of nine times,” he said. “They learned good skills in targeting and weapon discipline.”

Abdula and Hussien were both grateful to the 5-82 FA Soldiers. “I am thankful to all the Coalition Forces for supporting our troops and helping the great Iraqi Army through the training they are giving us,” Hussien proudly announced. “With the high level of training we are getting from the Coalition Forces to keep our army in very good condition, under my name, under the name of all the Iraqi Army, and under the name of our 1st Battalion, God willing, we are going to finish all the terrorist activities.”



Command Sgt. Maj. Mohammed Jasim Hussien (far left), top enlisted member, 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division, and Sergeant Basheer Abdula, platoon sergeant, 2nd Company, 1/3/2 IA Div., coach their soldiers on close-quarters battle drills at the range on Forward Operating Base Q-West Feb. 1. The IA troops are working with Coalition Forces from A Battery, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment to train the Iraqi troops in basic rifle marksmanship and CQB.

BIG HOUSE, cont'd from page 13

and guards. But those mistakes are not what drive the guards' conduct. They are guided by a personal compass and experience.

"My up-bringing taught me to treat people with respect and you had to give it before you could get it," said Pvt. Jacob Owen, cavalry scout. "We have to take care of them, they are human and they deserve it. They may have been responsible for someone's death or injury, but if we do not treat them right we will not get any helpful information to keep someone else from getting hurt," he explained.

The Provincial Detention Operations Company operates the brigade internment facility that holds persons who have committed a crime against Coalition Forces. The facility can accept men, women and children. Detainees are held up to 14 days before they are turned over to the Iraqi police or are released.



New commander, new mission, new home

STORY AND PHOTO BY SGT. ANTONIETA RICO
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

MOSUL, Iraq — Soldiers of C Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment began a new phase in the history of their troop, simultaneously getting a new commander, a new home and starting a new mission in Iraq Jan. 18.

The C Troop Soldiers will begin training the Iraqi Army and border patrol in west Ninewa Province as part of a realignment of the entire squadron.

The Fort Bliss, Texas, unit, part of 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, will assist Military and Border Transition Teams in Ninewa Province to help teach, coach and mentor Iraqi security forces.

Captain Todd Hook, the very first commander of C Troop since the 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Division's activation in 2005, relinquished command of his Soldiers to Capt. David Escobar, just hours before the troop moved from Mosul to the Tal Afar area. The Soldiers will operate out of Forward Operating Base Sykes, where they will face their new challenge.

A challenge, however, is something Soldiers of C Troop specialize in. During the change of command ceremony, Hook recalled how far Crazy Horse Troop had come in little more than a year. During the 16 months since C Troop first stood up, Hook said, the troop went from having 20 people, a trailer for a troop headquarters, and a couple of desks and chairs, to arriving in Mosul and performing over 150 combat patrols. Three months after arriving in Mosul, the troop is riding off from the city to their new mission.

"Flexibility is one of our best attributes," said Crazy Horse 1st Sgt. Scott Shepard. "We can have a new commander and a new mission on the same day and not miss a stride."



Soldiers of C Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment fuel up Jan. 18 in preparation for their move to Forward Operating Base Sykes, in the Tal Afar area. The move came just hours after Capt. David Escobar took charge of C Troop at a change-of-command-ceremony at FOB Marez, Mosul. In Tal Afar, the Soldiers of C Troop will begin their new mission as Military Transition Teams, training Iraqi Army and border patrol units in Ninewa Province.

VITAL, cont'd from page 5

them up to escort groups who don't have the uparmored equipment or training to go out on their own, or who need a little extra security.

The MPs go out on missions nearly every day in the Special Troops Battalion, but they still have time to stay in shape and keep in touch with family back home.

"Our average mission runs six to eight hours, and our average day runs 10-12 hours," Wood said. "We normally go to the gym after dinner for physical training and then get our down time and try to do the things normal people do."

The MPs enjoy what they do and take a lot of pride in their missions.

"I like what we do," Spc. Chase Thouvenell said with enthusiasm. "I think it's a good thing."

Wood agreed and added, "I know we do a good job when we all come back in one piece. It's like our command says, we are all warriors first, then whatever our [Military Occupational Specialty] is, comes second."



Sgt. Raymund Begaye, military police team leader, puts on his outer tactical vest before heading out on a security escort mission Feb. 8 from Forward Operating Base Marez.



(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. John Keenan, Special Troops Battalion)

Military police officers, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, stationed on Forward Operating Base Marez, prepare their vehicles at sunrise for a security escort mission.



A Soldier with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, of Fort Bliss, Texas, practices reflexive fire drills at the Spears Academy range in Mosul, Jan. 26. The Soldier and others in his unit are brushing up on their weapons skills in preparation for the inaugural class of Iraqi Army soldiers at the troop-run noncommissioned officers academy.

Cav troops to start Iraqi Army NCO Academy

STORY AND PHOTO BY SGT. ANTONIETA RICO
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

MOSUL, Iraq — Soldiers with 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment are in the process of establishing a noncommissioned officers academy for Iraqi Army soldiers at Forward Operating Base Marez. The first class will begin Feb. 3.

The Spear Academy grounds include a firing range, obstacle course, barracks, and even a mosque for the Iraqi soldiers to pray, said Staff Sgt. Gregory Stephens, one of the NCOs in charge at the academy.

Soldiers of Troop A, 1-9 Cav. Regt., embedded with the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division Military Transition Team, will provide the five-day course for the 2/2 IA Soldiers.

Course objectives include training on vehicle maintenance and driving procedures, first aid, map reading and reflexive fire.

The NCOs at the academy are particularly proud of the range where they will teach range procedures and reflexive fire techniques.

“That’s where the best hands-on training will be,” said Staff Sgt. Jared Heisler, another NCOIC with Troop A at the academy. He said the reflexive fire drills at the range will provide the Iraqi soldiers training relevant to their environment.

“It’s a lot more practical in the type of terrain we find ourselves in,” said Heisler, referring to urban fighting.

The NCOs of Troop A will instruct, while the troop’s junior enlisted Soldiers will act as demonstrators and assistant instructors.

The MiTT team and the Troop A Soldiers are attempting to strengthen the Iraqi Army’s NCO Corps with the academy.

“The main focus is to develop future leaders of the Iraqi Army,” said Heisler, “We are training them so they can handle the fight without us.”

Establishing the academy is in line with the transformation of 1-9 Cav. Regt. into a ‘super-MiTT.’ The super-MiTT concept augments the transition teams across Ninewa Province with 1-9 Cav. Regt. platoons, embedding the Soldiers with the transition teams to help ‘teach, coach and mentor’ Iraqi security forces.

“For the big picture, for us to finally leave Iraq, this is a big stepping stone,” Heisler said, referring to training the Iraqi soldiers.

Heisler said he hopes that once Coalition Forces are gone, the Iraqi Army will continue running the academy. He said he wants the course to become as integral a part of the Iraqi Army as the Warrior Leaders Course is to the U.S. Army.

The first class on Feb. 3 is expected to have 20 Iraqi Army soldiers.

Wrestlers bring opponents to their knees

STORY AND PHOTO BY PFC. BRADLEY CLARK
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—Several Soldiers, representing a variety of units stationed throughout the FOB, competed in a wrestling tournament that was held at the Morale Welfare and Recreation gym Feb. 9-10.

The tournament, an idea sparked by the 25th Infantry Division's Deputy Commanding General of Support, Brig. Gen. Frank Wiercinski, sponsored 32 wrestlers, who competed in 64 matches, throughout the two-day event, said Kirk Hoxie, MWR coordinator.

"It only took about a month to put together," Hoxie said. "We just had to get the equipment. Now that we have the equipment, we should be having another tournament within six months and continue to have them that often."

For the tournament, the units were placed into eight teams for the overall team scoring, explained Dave Culley, MWR lead technician, and the individual participants were placed into one of nine weight classes, ranging from 120 pounds to 265 plus.

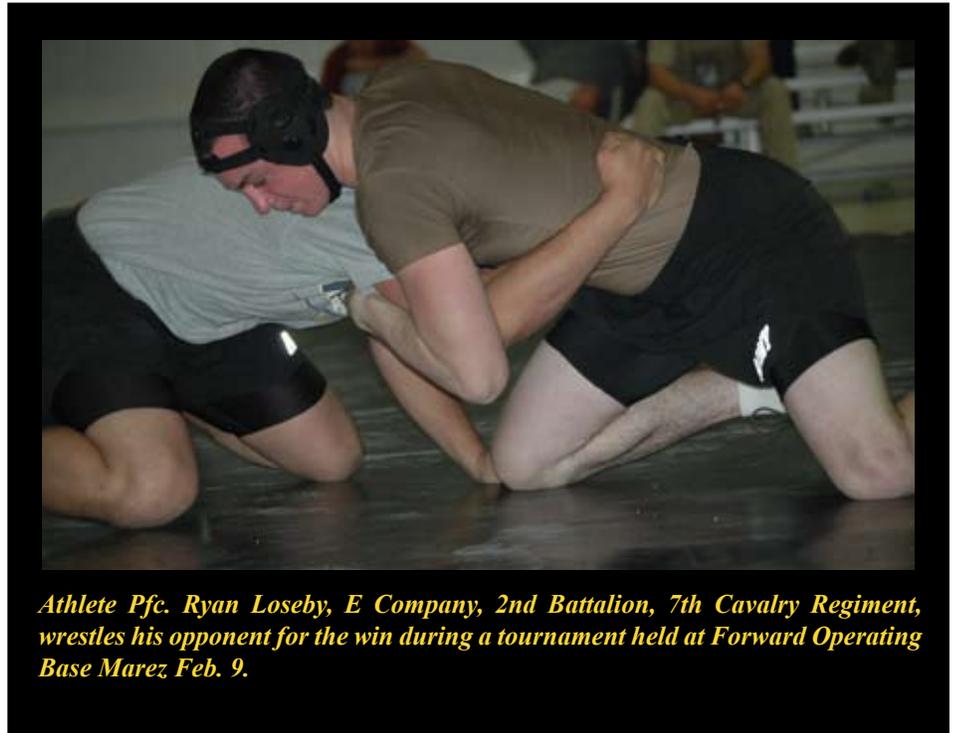
The winning team was the 111th Engineers, who scored a total 111 points. The second place finishers, the 25th ID and B Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment tied with 77 points each. The third place team was E Co., 2-7 Cavalry.

Special accomplishments in the event were awarded to Spc. Stephanie Canavan of the 111th Engineers as the tournament's Most Valuable Player.

Also receiving special awards, was Pfc. Ryan Loseby, E Co., 2-7 Cav., who had the most pins in the tournament with four, and the quickest pin in the tournament, which took him only 12 seconds.

and has been winning ever since. "I went to state three years in a row," he said. "I went to junior nationals, nationals, and the Olympic trials."

Unlike his teammate, Freeman wasn't surprised that E Co., 2-7



Athlete Pfc. Ryan Loseby, E Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, wrestles his opponent for the win during a tournament held at Forward Operating Base Marez Feb. 9.

Loseby also came in 1st place in the 165 pound weight class. "I was surprised at how well I did, since I haven't wrestled in about 4 years," said Loseby. "I was good in high school. I won Junior varsity states my freshman year and varsity states my sophomore year, but then I blew out my knee over the summer and hadn't wrestled since. I was also surprised at how well our team did. There were only three of us and we came in third place out of all the other teams."

One of Loseby's teammates, who also took first place in his weight class, was Spc. Nathan Freeman. Freeman said he started wrestling over 12 years ago at a summer camp

Cav. did as well as they did. "Echo company has die-hard guys; we just keep going until we can't go anymore," said Freeman. "My company commander recommends more of us go out next time, since we did so well."

Some of the participants expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to compete at this type of event and said they look forward to future tournaments.

"This was a great tournament," said Freeman. "It was better than the last one. There were a lot more people and more support."

Loseby agreed and added, "I'm very happy. I can't wait until the next one."

Notes from home

The staff of the public affairs office, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., has been posting a Web log (blog) in the El Paso Times newspaper's online Web site since our arrival in Kuwait. So far, we have been averaging more than 3,000 'hits' on the counter per week. As with all blogs, anyone can post a response. We have received comments from family members and friends of the brigade and will use this page to post their messages to our troops. To visit the blog site: <http://elpasotimes.typepad.com/longknife>

Comments from the Blog site.....

Paula,

I read the Blog site and can only tell you I am privileged to call myself an American. Thanks for sharing.....your words, your thoughts, and your life.

Blessings, Judy-----

Only in the Army can you say that you're a print journalist and shoot a .50 cal for a profession in the same sentence!

I'm not there but, welcome aboard! Way, to go and good for you. Good luck out there and stay safe. God Bless!

Posted by: Cara Rhea | -----

Paula--

Your blogs are terrific and evocative. Keep them coming. And thanks for the pictures from NTC (we meet there in August.) Please send my best to Maj Cunningham and Sgt Sipp. Stay safe, stay strong.

Best regards--Tony gerber

Posted by: Tony Gerber | -----

Thank you, Thank you for the update.. We are so proud of you all. God Bless you all and please stay safe.

Posted by: Terry (Burluson) Walls | -----

My prayers to all the families whom have lost a child.

Posted by: Terry (Burluson) Walls | -----

To to PAO Team. Enjoy your stories/news. Years ago, I was a young Specialist 6 and taught PJ at DINFOS located at Uncle Ben's Rest Home, i.e. Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. I left the Army after 9 years, got my degree in industrial scientific photography and work on NASA contracts as a Information Specialist/still digital photographer. Keep up the good work. If you take request, do a story on the Welders, my step-son ,Pvt. David Durham is one. Thanks Douglas

Posted by: Douglas Stoffer | -----

Dad used to tell me, "you'd make a good 2nd lieutenant". After reading the post, I think that would not be a bad thing to aspire to. Thank You for sharing this with us.

Posted by: jim warren | -----

Thank you for the update..My sympathy to the families of the fallen and to their comrades, God Bless you all.

Posted by: Terry (Burluson) Walls | -----

Sure appreciate your faithful correspondence and unique perspective. Blessings to you in your work and to the families of the fallen. Kath

Posted by: Katherine M Wicker | -----

Thank you again for the update. My prayers go out to all the troops over there.

Just want to say HI to my husband 1LT Greening 5-82FA.

Love you baby.

Posted by: Christine Greening | -----

So sorry to hear of our loss and a heart felt prayer for those family members. This war has to get better for those of you involved and closer to the action. Please remember "we" in the states are backing you as much as possible. Sgt D.J. Rogers please take care we miss you.

Posted by: Kathleen Rogers | -----

The fallen and their families are in our thoughts and prayers. Our daughter-in-law keyed us to the story in the El Paso paper. She received an "official call" to notify her that her husband [our oldest son] was alive and she in turn called us to let us know about this incident. Our thoughts and prayers also go out to the Soldier and his family who was killed in action the other day.

Posted by: Steven Lodahl | -----

I can't express in words the way my heart feels for are solders. I so much appreciate your sacrafices as well as those of your families. You deserve and have earned every dollar taxpayers have paid and our congress allocated. May you all complete the mission and return safely to your love ones and fellow Americans. God Bless!

Posted by: Mannyman/elPaso,Tx. | -----

HeadHunter News



STORY AND PHOTO BY 1ST LT. SCOTT BEAL
1-9 Cav. Regt. Public Affairs Representative

**1-9 CAV(ARS)
"Head Hunters"**



Pfc. Oscar Trejo, stationed at Forward Operating Base Marez, Iraq, chats with his wife who is 7,000 miles away at Fort Bliss, Texas, during the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment's Valentine's Day video teleconference event Feb. 13.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq— Valentine's Day cheer was brought to eight lucky Soldiers of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment Feb. 13 when Fort Bliss, Texas, and the Headhunter signal shop came together to bring video teleconference capability to the Soldiers in Iraq.

Captain Matthew Miller, squadron signal officer, coordinated all the efforts in conjunction with Fort Bliss and the Headhunter Family Readiness Group to give Soldiers in his squadron and their loved ones some personal one-on-one time.

"It is a great experience for the Soldiers to connect with their loved ones at home," Miller said.

Each Soldier was given just over ten minutes to talk to their families. Several wives brought their children so they could see their dad on Valentine's Day.

Sgt. 1st Class Rahim Gaymon, a participant from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, said, "Ten minutes is better than nothing, especially when you don't see your [loved ones] face after four months."

After the event, Miller commented that, "It is great to see the smiles in Soldier's faces as they leave the VTC."

In the future, the 1-9 Cav. plans to sustain this event and bring families together once a month.

Horsemen News



STORY AND PHOTO BY SPC. DANIEL BEARL
25th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

1-17 CAV
“Horsemen”

TAL AFAR, Iraq — A thick bundle of blue wires pours out of an air conditioning vent in the back of a housing trailer at Forward Operating Base Sykes, near Tal Afar in northern Iraq.

Inside, the wires spill from the back of a small box; orange and green lights blink intermittently.

These cables, ultimately connected to a modem and satellite dish, provide a link to home for over 40 troopers living at FOB Sykes by allowing them Internet access in their own rooms.

“We all split the costs for it,” said Spc. David S. Smyth, from Port Orchard, Wash., the Soldier responsible for setting up and maintaining the equipment. “It’s a reliable system. A lot of people can use Web cam. That technology has come along, so it’s real easy to just keep communications back home, which is the most important thing with this system.”

While computers with Internet access are available to all Soldiers at the base’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation center, the satellite connection piping through Smyth’s room offers more privacy and convenience for the troops he keeps connected.

“It’s also nice being in the [containerized housing units] (small trailers that many Soldiers in Iraq call home) where you don’t have to go to the [Multi-Use Facility] if you’re up late at night,” Smyth said.

“That’s when our families back home are up. It helps to be sitting in your CHU chatting online with your parents or wife or husband or whoever. You don’t have to worry about other people or time limits, like at the [Morale Welfare and Recreation facility].”

Actually getting the system and setting it up wasn’t easy, though, Smyth said. He had to spend time researching different Internet providers before settling on one at their location. Then there were the initial costs – about \$3,500 for the dish, modem, switch, router and wireless devices, by Smyth’s estimate. Then there was the task of actually connecting everyone to the network.

“The biggest challenge with this system is just getting everyone connected,” Smyth said. “Someone may be far away from my system, so we have to run a wire. We’ve had to dig a trench probably about 300 feet to connect up about 10 people on the other side. That’s just something that’s gotten in the way, but we’ve gotten over it.”

Once set up, the cost to maintain the system is reasonable, though, at between \$40 and \$55 per month per user, depending on how many users are connected, Smyth said.

Despite the costs and some of the headaches, Smyth says running the system is worth it.

“The most important thing is communication with people back



Spc. David S. Smyth, with Troop E, 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, stands in front of the satellite dish on top of his trailer at Forward Operating Base Sykes, near Tal Afar, Iraq. Smyth maintains the dish and modem, which provides Internet connections for as many as 40 Soldiers living near him.

home,” Smyth said. “It’s nice to hear people say, ‘Hey, I was able to talk to my wife on Web cam’ and to see their kids or their pets or whatever. That’s what it’s about and makes it worth it going to all that trouble.”

This is his second deployment so he says he knows what a lot of these troops are going through. “As time goes on, they miss their family; they get bored out here. I just try to offer what I can to people, really.”

Ghost Battalion News



2-7 CAV
"Ghost"

STORY BY 1ST LT. JOHN AMES
2-7 Cav. Regmt. Public Affairs Representative

MOSUL, Iraq—When Pfc. Aaron Gibson and his platoon left Forward Operating Base Marez on an early February morning, they hoped that the intelligence report that spurred the mission would be worthwhile.



(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Aaron Gibson, 2-7 Cav.)

A Soldier from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment works to unearth a weapons cache found in a residential backyard Feb. 9 in Mosul, Iraq.

The 2nd Platoon of Comanche Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, like any other combat unit in Iraq, is used to *dry holes*, the term used by Soldiers for a target that really is not a target after all. "A lot of times we go out, but there is not anything there," Gibson explained.

On Feb. 9, Gibson and his platoon were not disappointed. In a joint operation with the Iraqi Army, Comanche Co. raided a residence attached to a cell phone store that was believed to be sheltering insurgents. Buried in the backyard, they discovered a large cache of mortar rounds, mortar tubes, and other explosives.

As the Coalition Forces and the IAs worked to excavate the cache, a single insurgent attacked the group from another building. "He emptied about thirty rounds at us and ran off," explained Gibson. "It was no big deal, but somebody obviously didn't want us there."

The lone insurgent escaped after his attack.

The success of the mission was based largely not only on the cache, but the fact that they were able to detain one of the men who was considered a high-value target, wanted by American and Iraqi forces. Most mortar attacks no longer target Coalition Forces, but are still used heavily against Iraqi Army and police stations. Gibson said that the platoon's morale was significantly buoyed by the successful mission. "Just knowing we got the guy messing with them is something. He was wanted and we got him," said Gibson.

Gibson is not like most Soldiers of his grade. The vast majority of Coalition Forces are young and on their first real career paths. Gibson, 32, of Highland, Kansas, previously served six years in the National Guard. When asked why he came back to the Army, his answer was quick and direct: "To go to Iraq." Gibson did pause and note with a laugh that he took a pretty big pay cut to do it though. But serving his country is more important than a little extra money Gibson said. With no spouse or children, Gibson said he had no real reason not to come back to the Army and serve.



(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Aaron Gibson, 2-7 Cav.)

Staff Sgt. Bobby Lightner and two Soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment excavate a buried weapons cache in Mosul, Iraq.

Thunder Horse News



2-12 CAV “Thunder Horse”

STORY AND PHOTO BY 2ND LT. MIKE DASCHEL
2-12 Cav. Public Affairs Representative

BAGHDAD, Iraq — For two weeks now, Company C of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment has been based at their combat outpost in central Ghazaliya. The outpost, staffed by as many as a hundred Soldiers, is shared with the Iraqi Army and is used as part of a new strategy in fighting the insurgency in Baghdad.

The outpost’s construction, which was planned well before a new strategy of living in the neighborhoods was announced, is the first of its kind in Baghdad.

Combat Outpost Casino, as it is officially known, is surrounded by concrete barriers and includes six houses. Half of the houses belong to the Iraqi Army and the other half to U.S. forces. A large field is also enclosed within the perimeter of barriers to eventually park vehicles in.

Soldiers sleep in crowded rooms with no heating, and have no running sewage system, but outhouses they built and service themselves. In addition to combat patrols, Soldiers travel to Camp Liberty daily to conduct their own logistical missions such as refueling and supplying food.

“It’s all right,” commented Spc. Gabriel Thornberry, a Soldier stationed at the outpost. “It would be better if we had electricity that didn’t fry you every time you plug something in.” The electricity is produced by generators at the outpost and the electrical components inside were rewired during the construction.

Being based in Ghazaliya has seen its share of success stories. Just days after moving in, Cpl. Peter Callahan, combat medic, saved the life of a four-year-old girl who was brought in by her family with a pulse below forty beats per minute.

During a patrol in Ghazaliya, Spc. John Laweryson, who was driving a humvee, spotted a suspicious-looking vehicle. One of the men inside was acting strangely. “I thought either he was wounded, or trying

to hide something,” Laweryson said.

He explained that after the vehicle turned around, trying to slip away from the American patrol, they were blocked off by the Soldiers with nowhere to go. The men in the car scattered away by foot. “They dispersed into a building.”

When the vehicle was searched, a kidnapping victim, who was in the trunk

of the car with his hands bound together, was rescued. He was taken to the outpost, and after two days there, his father arrived to take him home in a very emotional reunion.

The combat outpost is a work in progress—waiting for more materials to finish the construction completely—but it is fully operational. Security is provided by Soldiers from the rooftop throughout the day, and the majority of the soldiers of Company C spend their time there, conducting logistical operations and combat patrols.



Specialist Robert Thompson provides security from the rooftop of the Ghazaliya combat outpost compound, Iraq.

Night Raider News



3-4 CAV
"Night Raider"

COMPILED BY SGT. PAULA TAYLOR
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SYKES, Iraq—For one D Company, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment troop, being able to live the life of an Army Soldier is an honor.

Specialist Thomas Lawhorn Jr., petroleum supply specialist, Distribution Platoon, began his career in the Army in 2006 after serving in the Air Force as a special police officer.

Lawhorn said he chose to join the Army because he wanted a job that would be both “demanding and rewarding.”

Whether the mission he’s going on takes him to Sinjar mountain or Contingency Operating Base Heider, his friends say he can be seen with a smile on his face exclaiming, “Get pumped for the mission!”

His platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Thip Siyajuck said, “He is one the most motivated and dependable Soldiers in the platoon. He constantly brings a breath of fresh air when called upon.”

Lawhorn also said he is proud to serve and hopes his family understands the time spent apart is for a greater cause.

“I want to make my dad proud,” he said, knowing serving his country and trying to make Iraq a better place for all Iraqis to live is the right thing to do.

As he passes kids waving on the side of the road during combat logistic patrols he says, “I think of my wife and two sons and I know why I am here.”

That sentiment, added Lawhorn, makes him look forward to being able to go home, but always weighs heavily on his mind.

“It is an honor being in the military and Army,” he said. “I know the Soldiers from the past, present and future are watching so we have to follow the Army Values and do what’s right.”



(U.S. Army courtesy photo provided by 3-4 Cav.)

During a combat logistic patrol, Spc. Thomas Lawhorn exits his vehicle in a snowstorm on top of Sinjar Mountain. Lawhorn, a petroleum supply specialist, D Company, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, is tasked to be a M1151, enhanced armament carrier, (uparmored humvee) driver.

Task Force Ready News



STB

“Always Ready”

STORY AND PHOTO BY 1ST LT. BRIGETTE BELL
STB Public Affairs Representative

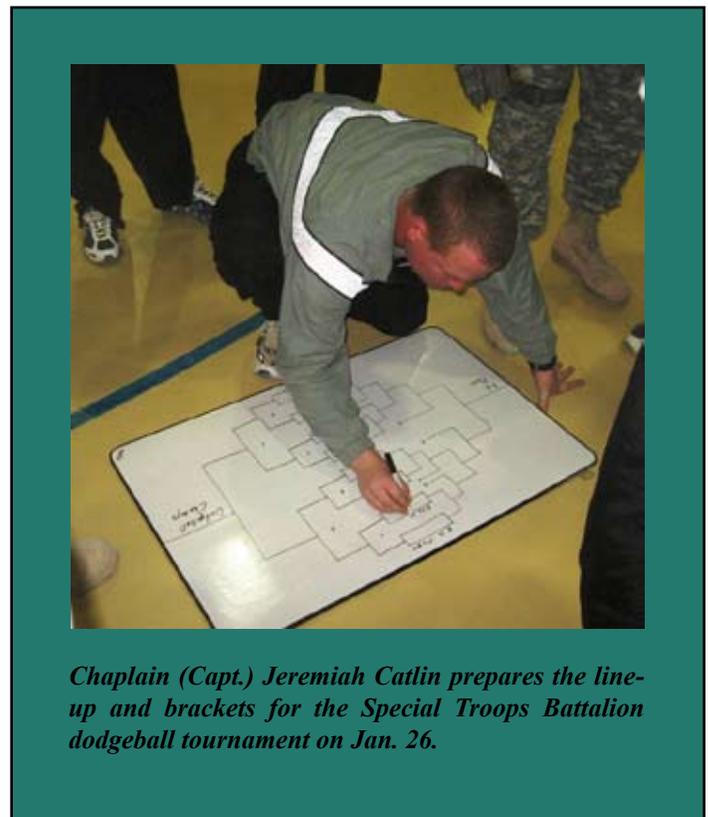
FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—Task Force Ready Soldiers work hard and play even harder. The battalion chaplain, Capt. Jeremiah Catlin of Missouri, understands that his counseling sessions and extracurricular activities that he plans for the Soldiers are much-needed breaks. Catlin explains, “It has long since been a part of the chaplain’s role to inspire the men and women in uniform in their faith, courage, and personal strength. Many times our Soldiers are in great need of this and simply involving them in some social event achieves the initial step towards such encouragement.” Catlin, who has spent time around the Special Troops Battalion Soldiers from Kuwait to now, has learned what activities they enjoy.

Since the deployment began, the chaplain has hosted such events as the pocket tanks tournament, the dodgeball tournament, and two spades tournaments. The chaplain’s events inspire team building within the companies and a high level of competition that can become rather fierce. Such simple events as this one, “Can break the daily ‘grind’ and assist our Soldiers in removing themselves from the stressors of their daily jobs,” says Catlin. “On a weekly basis, I now hold a Saturday night fun time at the Chapel. We offer movies, X-box, Playstation, board games, and a live band.” There is regular participation by Soldiers interested in getting away for one night.

The most acclaimed event in the Task Force was the first dodgeball tournament held on January 26, 2007.

Eleven teams competed with an average of 10 players per team. The tournament lasted about two hours and boasted at least some 50 spectators from throughout the various companies of Task Force Ready, for a total participation of nearly 150 personnel. Several said that they had not played dodgeball for more than 10 years and others even longer. The competition was quite intense, with E Company coming out on top. Catlin reflects that “As I watched it all taking place, I realized that there was not a single person thinking about all the concerns and stressors involved in being deployed. All

thoughts and concerns were gone out the window as we either participated or watched Soldiers ‘bean’ one another with little colorful dodgeballs for two hours.” Soldiers have talked about how they plan to beat the other companies and are beginning to look anxiously forward to the next event that the chaplain will be offering. “As a chaplain, it makes my job worthwhile. I have not seen so many smiles on so many Soldiers in one night since we deployed.” Catlin goes on to mention that he has seen greater participation in the tours to St. Elijah’s Monastery, the events at the chapel, and has many more opportunities to speak one-on-one with Soldiers about their deployment issues and struggles. Task Force Ready will now host monthly dodgeball tournaments. The Task Force dodgeball tournament trophy will be housed by the current champions, with plates to show each monthly winner.



Chaplain (Capt.) Jeremiah Catlin prepares the lineup and brackets for the Special Troops Battalion dodgeball tournament on Jan. 26.

Rough Rider News



27TH BSB
“Rough Rider”

STORY BY 1ST LT. KENDRA EVERS
27th BSB Public Affairs Representative



(Courtesy photo by 27th Brigade Support Battalion Troops Battalion)

Pfc. Stephanie Correll, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, demonstrates to the board the proper disassembly procedures for a .50 caliber machine gun.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—Several Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, competed in a battle of the wits and hands-on skills during the Trailblazers’ Soldier of the Month board Jan. 28.

“This board was held to help Soldiers prepare for the upcoming promotion boards,” said 1st Sgt. Freddie Mathews, board president. “A lot of the Soldiers tend to get nervous and have difficulty answering basic questions in front of a board, but if you see them at how they don’t even have to think about the answers.”

The board consisted of five noncommissioned officers. Each of them asked questions on various topics related to basic Soldier skills. The five Soldiers who participated were also asked to demonstrate

proper disassembling and assembling procedures on a .50 caliber machine gun.

Pfc. Ramiro Idrobo, one of the Soldiers competing, learned in less than 24 hours how to break the machine gun down, thanks to his peers, he said.

“I learned that with proper guidance and direction, Soldiers can do anything” commented Staff Sgt. Tenise Sanchez, a member on the board.

Sanchez also mentioned how good the teamwork was between the competing Soldiers.

“I would see them all the time, studying and quizzing each other on the different topics.”

After some debate, the board announced Pfc. Stephanie Correll, a medic who is also on the battalion commander’s personal security detachment, as the winner, with a close runner-up being Idrobo, who is a chemical specialist. The winner was given a certificate of achievement and also the battalion coin.

“Pfc. Correll is a very outstanding Soldier and had been preparing for this longer than any of the other Soldiers,” said Sanchez. “It just depends on how bad you really want something, and she really wanted this. She did a great job.”



(US Army photo by Sgt. Paula Taylor)

An Iraqi Army soldier prepares to fire his weapon at the range on Forward Operating Q-West after being provided basic rifle marksmanship training by members of A Battery, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment and Command Sgt. Maj. Mohammed Jasim Hussien, 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division.



(US Army photo by Pfc. Bradley Clark)

Soldiers, representing several units stationed on Forward Operating Base Marez, compete in the Task Force Lightning wrestling tournament Feb. 9-10. The top three finishers of the double-elimination tournament, from each of the nine weight categories, were presented medals for their performance.



(US Army photo by Sgt. John Keenan)

A military police officer, assigned to the Special Troops Battalion, conducts roof-top security during an escort mission into the city of Mosul, Iraq.



(US Army photo by 1st Lt. Scott Beal)

Physician's assistant, Capt. Barry Seip, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, enjoys the surprise of his whole family being present for a Valentine's Day video teleconference call. Seip's unit sponsored the VTC, with the help of Fort Bliss, Texas, to connect deployed Soldiers with their loved ones back in El Paso.



(US Army photo by Staff Sgt. Katherine Tripp)

Sergeant Juan Diaz of D Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Bliss, Texas, pulls security on a driver whose vehicle was being searched in Mosul, Iraq.



(U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Vanessa Valentine)

A Soldier, assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, from Fort Bliss, Texas, scales a wall during a raid on several homes of suspected terrorists in Mosul, Iraq.



(U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Vanessa Valentine)

Staff Sgt. Jason Elemen, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, provides security outside a factory suspected of housing bomb-making materials used in recent improvised explosive device attacks on U.S. forces, Mosul, Iraq.



(U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. JoAnn S. Makinano)

Sgt. Rosario Leotta, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, tests an Iraqi for residue during an inspection at a propane distributing station for possible improvised explosive device makers in Kirkush, Iraq.



(U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Vanessa Valentine)

A Soldier with the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, from Fort Bliss, Texas, kicks down a door during a raid on several homes of suspected Al Qaeda terrorists.

A soldier in full combat gear, including a helmet and goggles, holding a rifle, standing in a doorway with a bright light source behind them. The soldier is wearing a digital camouflage uniform and a tactical vest. The scene is backlit, creating a silhouette effect and highlighting the texture of the gear. The soldier's expression is neutral and focused.

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