



Paratroopers stand up new joint security station in Hurriyah

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Soldiers celebrate Black History Month

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Teens cowboy-up in Belton

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# Crossed Sabers

Volume I, Issue 7

"Telling the MND-Baghdad Story"

Monday, March 5, 2007



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

## Need a lift?

A CH-47 Chinook helicopter airlifts a 16,000 pound up-armored humvee Feb. 16 during sling load training on Camp Taji, Iraq. Soldiers from Company A, 115th Brigade Support Battalion, received a lesson in the proper way to hook a sling to an aircraft during sling loading training Feb. 16 on Camp Taji, Iraq. (See page 6 for full story.)

## Troops Employ Concrete Solution to Market Security

By Staff Sgt. W. Wayne Marlow  
2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div. PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Concrete barriers are going up in eastern Baghdad's Rusafa security district, aimed at providing enhanced security to the Al Shurja market place.

As part of Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon, elements of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division started placing concrete barriers this week.

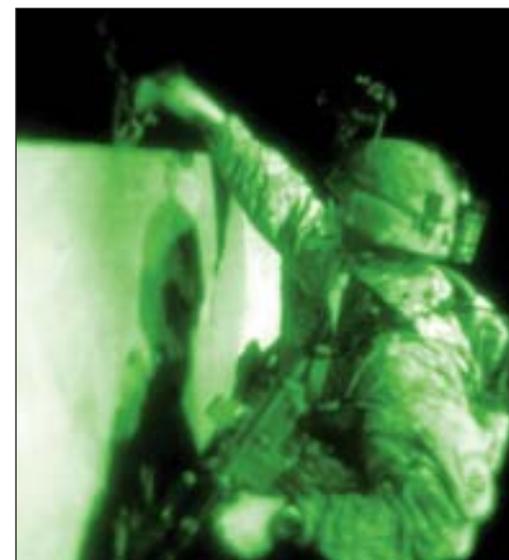
Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment emplaced more than 130 concrete barriers at the market place Feb. 16. The area has been the site of three vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks in the last month, including one that killed more than 100 Iraqis. The added security is aimed to disrupt car bomb attacks and is part of an overall plan to reduce sectarian violence and stabilize the capital.

The barrier emplacement operation went as planned.

"It went surprisingly smooth," said Maj. Matthew R. Sampson, an engineer with the brigade from Avoca, Iowa. He called the emplacement a success.

With the barriers in place, Iraqi Army troops and Iraqi national police officers will man market checkpoints. Shoppers will leave vehicles in a parking lot and use a secured pedestrian walkway to enter the market, Sampson explained.

"The ultimate success of this depends on



(Photo by Spc. Davis Pridgen, 1-504th PIR)

**A Soldier from the 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment fastens a hook to a barrier during emplacement operations Feb. 16 in the Al Shurja market in the Rusafa security district.**

the Iraqi security forces, on how they operate and implement the market checkpoints," Sampson said. "This is helping them get on their feet and...protect the markets."

This operation can also serve as a springboard to increased security in places other than markets, Sampson noted.

"Anything we can do to help establish the legitimacy of the government of Iraq will show its citizens that it is protecting them," he said.

## MND-B CG Explains Security Plan

By Spc. L.B. Edgar,  
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The goal of coalition forces new security strategy is to clear, control and retain Baghdad's neighborhoods, said the Multi-National Division – Baghdad commanding general during a press conference here Feb. 16.

Maj. Gen. Joseph Fil, Jr., the MND-B commanding general, outlined the security strategy for his division in a live satellite press conference between Baghdad and reporters in the Pentagon press briefing room.

The security plan includes an increase in Iraqi and coalition forces in Iraq's capital, a push to rid the city of violent extremists and the creation of joint security stations through-

out Baghdad, Fil said.

Once the streets are cleared of extremist elements, the coalition and Iraqi security forces will assert control of each neighborhood and move further toward transition, he said.

"After an area is cleared, we move into what we call 'control operations.' Together, with our Iraqi counterparts, we will maintain a full-time presence on the streets. We'll do this by building and manning joint security stations," said Fil, who assumed responsibility for MND-B three months ago. "The effort to establish these joint security stations is well underway."

As Iraqi security forces assume control of

See Security Page 5

# Iraqis, Coalition Commitment - Key to Success

Recently, I spoke with the Pentagon press corps via satellite, giving them an operational update of the security situation in Baghdad and answered their questions. I explained the three phases of the new security plan for Baghdad are clear, control and retain.

The first objective within each of the nine security districts in the Iraqi capital is to clear out extremist elements – neighborhood by neighborhood – in an effort to protect the population.

After an area is cleared, we move into the “control phase.” Together with our Iraqi counterparts, we will maintain a full-time presence on the streets. We’ll do this by building and manning joint security stations.

The effort to establish these joint security stations is well underway.

An area moves to the “retain phase” when the Iraqi security forces are fully responsible for the day-to-day security mission. At this point, coalition forces begin to move out of the neighborhoods and into locations where they can respond to requests for assistance, as needed.

During these three phases, efforts will be on-going to stimulate local economies by creating employment opportunities, initiating reconstruction projects and improving the infrastructure. These efforts will be spearheaded by neighborhood advisory councils, district advisory councils and the government of Iraq.

That’s the plan, in a nutshell. We will know we are succeeding when the levels of violence are reduced. Some areas of the city will see rapid improvement, while others will take some time to make the same strides ahead.

We are here for the duration. The Iraqi people have not given up their hope for a pros-

## Pegasus 6 Sends

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr.



perous and peaceful future, and we should not give up on them.

We work, literally day and night, with the Baghdad Security Command to help bring down the levels of violence. The government of Iraq continues to move forces into Baghdad as we bring in more U.S. forces.

It’s an extremely complex and difficult mission, but together we are up to the task.

All of this will take time. We all know that it will take time for additional forces to flow in. It will take time for these forces to gain an understanding of their areas and to establish relationships with local leaders and the citizens. It will also take time to conduct the clearing operations, and then build on our achievements.

I remain confident as we walk the road ahead with our partners in the Iraqi security forces. The Iraqi people are moving forward. We see it, firsthand everyday, and I, especially, see the commitment of our Soldiers to finish the mission we started here.

Over the coming months, we will redouble our efforts and do everything we can to make this security plan succeed. Ultimately, the Iraqis have to want to make this work as much, if not more, than we do.

We experienced some initial successes – with thousands of munitions taken off the

streets and hundreds of suspects detained – yet we have taken some casualties implementing the new security plan, as our members continue to sacrifice on freedom’s frontier.

Our mission is clear – to maintain momentum over the coming months and work closely with our Iraqi counterparts to reduce the levels of violence. To accomplish this, we must remain committed to this mission – to help Iraqis realize their full potential.

Our nation has made a huge commitment – in terms of money, equipment and resources, but the most important resource is you, the Soldiers of MND-B.

I am extremely proud of all of you – for your dedication, service and sacrifice. Some have made the ultimate sacrifice. We will be forever be indebted to them and will never forget them.

Finally, I’d like to thank your families – who also sacrifice for our nation back on the home front. They remain our strength and our solace.

It is my privilege to be here, leading this formation. It is important that we stay the course to defeat those here with a radical ideology that would take away our freedoms; freedoms that have been earned at a high cost by those who have gone so nobly before us.

There may be more tough days ahead and sacrifices yet to be made, but we will make the days even tougher on the radical groups we face, who, left to their own devices would spread their barbaric methods far beyond the borders of Iraq.

The challenges are many, but this plan can work. It will work if each of us, our country and the Iraqi people remain dedicated to this mission before us.

FIRST TEAM!

## A Note from Chuck

Greetings to all military personnel serving in the Baghdad area.

I hope I was able to meet at least some of you during my recent trip to Iraq.



(Courtesy Photo)

The opportunity to meet, eat and sleep with true warriors such as you was a great honor.

In my film and television career, I have had the opportunity to play many heroic characters.

The inspiration for the parts I play has always been found in you – our nation's men and women in uniform, serving on the front line, and the selfless contribution you make on a daily basis to keep our country safe and free and to provide the great gift of freedom to others.

I will never forget you and the time spent with you. You will always be close to my heart.

I salute you. I thank you. And I wish you God's speed and a safe return home.

Your friend,  
Chuck Norris

(This message was sent to the *Crossed Sabers* editor after sending an e-mail to Chuck Norris through [www.chucknorris.com](http://www.chucknorris.com) about his fans in Baghdad.)

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## U.S. and Iraqi Baghdad Commanders Meet



(Photo by Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl, Multi-National Division - Baghdad PAO)

Iraqi Lt. Gen. Abud Qanbar, commanding general of the Baghdad Operational Command, exchanges a handshake with Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr., commanding general of Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 1st Cavalry Division at Forward Operating Base Shield in Baghdad Feb. 15. The two generals met to discuss the overall security situation in Baghdad and Operation Law and Order, which began Feb. 14 in the Iraqi capital.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs)

Cpl. Clayton Carroll, a driver with 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) and native of Pleasanton, Calif., patrols the streets of Martyrs Market as local nationals buy and sell items in Mahmudiyah, Iraq Feb. 14.

## Mahmudiyah Market Reopens

By Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie  
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs

MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq — Last July, innocent women and children were killed here when terrorists attacked one of the only places that thrived with livelihood — the Mahmudiyah Marketplace.

Since the attack, which killed more than 40 Iraqis and wounded more than 100, Iraqis and coalition forces worked together to rebuild the market.

Local Iraqis gathered at the Mahmudiyah Marketplace, now named the Martyrs Market in remembrance of the local nationals killed during the July attack, for the grand opening Feb. 14.

“Today we are sending a message to the terrorists that whatever they have destroyed we (the Iraqis) will, and are continuing, to rebuild it,” said Moyad Alamery, the mayor of Mahmudiyah. “Today is a happy day.”

Since the attack of the market — a place where it was safe to shop — small businesses had suffered. However, the opening of the market signified hope to the once terror-stricken area.

“Our store has been open for just a short while,” said Muthana, an Iraqi vendor, as he stocked the shelves of his store. “We had spent months repairing our store from the terrorist attack, but we are up and running.”

Muthana, like many store owners had to repair the damage caused from the July attack. The repairs in his shop ranged anywhere from holes in the ceiling to cracks in the walls — totaling 3 million dinar just to fix.

Although Muthana and other Iraqi vendors had the funds to fix their store, many other Iraqis did not since their small store was their only mean of survival.

“We helped the people with repairs to their stores by facilitating the projects the contractors worked on,” said Taliv Abbas Jasim, the city council president. “We are helping to improve the quality of life and provide basic services such as water and electricity to the people.”

With the city council and other Iraqis helping their neighbors the local residents are starting to have confidence in their government. As the market was being built up again, terrorists still tried to stop the progress. Mortars were fired towards the area and bombs were set; however, the Iraqis pushed on — fighting for a better Iraq.

“The Iraqi people have more confidence and trust with the Iraqi government,” Alamery said.

Wanting to provide for their own, Iraqi government

officials worked with coalition forces to help get the market open again.

“We coordinated the contractor work and helped to provide security when necessary during the renovation (period),” said Lt. Col. Bob Morschauer, a native of Fairless Hills, Pa., who serves as the commander for the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery, Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry).

“Iraqi contractors repaired damages and the Iraqi City Council provided assistance,” said Col. Ali, the 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division commander. “The opening will help the Iraqis and bring them closer to the Iraqi government’s efforts to help them.”

Even though the market was opened there were still memories of the Iraqis lost in July.

“The new market is something considered of great importance to me,” Ali noted. “It is a remembrance of people who lost their lives.”

Noting the market signifies a mending of hearts for loved ones lost, it also signifies the new relationship between two tribes that have been at odds for some time.

“We have both Sunni and Shiite vendors here,” Ali commented of the market. “We hope to solidify the relationship — the market is open to everyone.”

Since tension in the Mahmudiyah area is common knowledge security was tight during the opening. Soldiers from 4-6 and 2-15 FAR provided security for the opening, however; the event was peaceful as Iraqi men, women and children roamed the streets.

“I am happy that I have the chance to shop and not be scared,” said Nawal, an Iraqi woman as she walked with her children through the market. “I was scared before, but I no longer am.”

Nawal, just like many others, combed the streets of the market looking at anything from shoes and blankets to fresh meat and fruits. There was a wide variety of items to choose from.

“I think the market is good for the community itself — the people,” Morschauer said.

The market, which currently consists of 92 stores, was built with extra security precautions to ensure the safety of local nationals.

The mayor commented about what the opening will do for the Iraqi economy.

“This will help the economy of Iraq,” Alamery said. “This market will be very busy.”

## Baghdad News Briefs



(Photo by 1st Lt. Chris Defiori, Co. D, 1st Bn., 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment)

An Iraqi boy gives the peace sign as Pvt. Robert Connet, a medic from Fort Wayne, Ind., and Sgt. Marcus Wagner, from Anaheim, Calif., both of Company D, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, treat his burned arm Feb. 16 in Kadamiyah.

### Security patrol helps young burn victim

BAGHDAD — While patrolling the streets in the Kadamiyah district of western Baghdad Feb. 16, Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment were approached by a local man and his seven year old son.

The child had been badly burned in an accident about a week prior. The man had immediately taken his son to a local hospital for treatment. Since that time, though, the wound had become infected and the man was concerned for his son’s well being.

Pvt. Robert Connet, a medic from Fort Wayne, Ind., and Spc. Marcus Wagner, from Anaheim, Calif., both from Company D, 1-325th AIR, immediately started treatment for the child.

After removing the old bandages and inspecting the wound they applied new bandages.

The patrol then continued on their way, now followed by a small boy with a new bandage, a piece of candy and a big smile.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

General Richard A. Cody, left, Army vice chief of staff, reenlists five Soldiers from 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Feb. 13 during a visit to Taji, Iraq.

### Army Vice Chief of Staff Visits Troops

TAJI, Iraq — The Army’s vice chief of staff visited Soldiers from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade here Feb. 13.

During the visit, Gen. Richard A. Cody presented the Purple Heart, Air Medal for Valor and Air Medal awards and reenlisted five noncommissioned officers from the 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division.

“The reason why they’re reenlisting in a combat zone is because they’re great American patriots just like you are,” Cody said to Soldiers from the 1st ACB who attended the presentation. “They know how important the score is to keep America free and help the Iraqis.”

# Tough Question Brings Laughter At Town Hall Meeting

By Maj. Kevin Inglin  
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Families at Fort Hood were treated to a visit from a familiar face, make that faces, during a live Town Hall meeting conducted via satellite from Baghdad Feb. 22.

Brig. Gen. John Campbell, the Multi-National Division – Baghdad deputy commanding general for maneuver, with assistance from other members of the division's command group, addressed a crowd of more than 320 family members in Texas from the Media Operations Center here.

After brief opening remarks that included thanks to the families and central Texas community for their continued support of the troops, Campbell took questions from the audience.

When asked a “hardball” question from Phelps, however, Campbell turned to his counterparts from the MND-B command group for assistance.

A member of the Fort Hood audience asked if the tour length for the 1st Cavalry Division headquarters would be impacted based on the recent announcement that Fort Stewart's 3rd Infantry Division headquarters will be flowing into theater in the coming months, the deputy commander looked to support from a “higher authority.”

“I'm going to have to defer that to somebody else,” said the general as he held up a photo cutout of Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr., the commanding general, MND-B, in front of his face.

“General Fil told me he doesn't want to answer that question, so I'm going to defer that to another person,” continued Campbell, as he held up another photo, this one of Brig. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, the MND-B deputy commanding general for support.

Campbell went on to display two additional photo cutouts – the MND-B senior noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Johndrow made an appearance, as did his ever-present sidekick, the Cav Kid.

The cutouts were met with rousing applause and laughter from the family members in attendance at Fort Hood, highlighting the interactive component of the satellite connection.

The meeting was made possible through use of the division's Digital Video and Imagery Distribution System, or DVIDS, and allowed the deputy commander to interact with



(Photo by Sgt. Colby Hauser, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

**More than 300 Soldiers, family members and community leaders look on as Brig. Gen. John F. Campbell, the 1st Cavalry Division's deputy commanding general for maneuver, addresses them live from Baghdad via satellite during the division's monthly Town Hall meeting Feb. 21 at Fort Hood, Texas.**

the family members in real time.

The meeting was conducted at 6:30 p.m., at the Fort Hood Catering and Community Center Feb. 21, which meant an early morning for Campbell -- 3:30 a.m. Baghdad time.

Col. Larry Phelps, rear detachment commander, 1st Cavalry Division, relayed questions ranging from what kind of living conditions Soldiers could expect at the new Joint Security Stations going up throughout Baghdad, and how the security situation is changing for Soldiers stationed outside of Baghdad, to what types of items Soldiers most need to be sent from home.

“It's important to stay connected to our family members and to provide them with information. We owe that to them,” said Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl, MND-B spokesperson and public affairs officer.

The live satellite connectivity allows the unit leadership to interact with their home station in a way that truly makes the family members feel joined with their troops while they are deployed, Bleichwehl added.

The live Town Hall was the second such meeting conducted by 1st Cavalry Division senior leaders since the unit deployed to Baghdad in October. It has become the standard,



(Photo by Spc. Jennifer Roux, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

**Brig. Gen. John Campbell, deputy commanding general for maneuver, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, “defers” to Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr., commanding general, MND-B, by holding up a paper mask of his commander when asked a “hardball” question from a family member.**

Bleichwehl said, for how the meetings will be conducted for the duration of the unit's deployment.

# Iraqis, Minnesota Guardsmen aid western Baghdad School

By 1st Lt. Stewart Whitson  
1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment

BAGHDAD—Long before the sun has risen, infantry Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment of the Minnesota Army National Guard, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, pull into the gates of an Iraqi Army compound.

As the morning prayers sounds from a nearby mosque, Soldiers are briefed by U.S. and Iraqi leaders through the help of an interpreter. The mission this morning will be different from their usual combat security patrols conducted by the 3rd Platoon “Outlaws.”

Today they will not seek to destroy the enemy, but rather to help the less fortunate.

The patrol moves along with their Iraqi counterparts, deep into the heart of an area often fraught with terror. Winding through a maze of old run-down two story buildings they see tangled clumps of wire strung from one structure to the next and trash strewn about the ground. Stray dogs dart back and fourth across the street as Iraqi men and women make their way through a crowded market place.

Amidst all this filth and sewage lies a school. It is this school where the patrol's mission is to take place. While the area is dirty and filthy outside of the school, inside there is something else: hope. Upon arrival, the U.S. and Iraqi troops



(Photo by Spc. Vang Yang, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment)

**Iraqi Army troops hang one of five chalk boards delivered to a western Baghdad school during a joint operation with Soldiers from the 136th Infantry Regiment, Minnesota Army National Guard, attached to 1st Bn., 7th Field Artillery Regiment.**

begin their work. The patrol is greeted with the smiles and laughter of hundreds of students as they anxiously watch from their classroom windows. The looks on the faces of the school children are inspiring, as the Iraqi soldiers unload the new items for their school – five new chalk boards, 200 packs of school supplies and more than 200 pairs of shoes.

The Iraqi soldiers distribute the gifts, while the children

take turns singing songs for the U.S. troops.

They smile and they laugh, and they beg the Soldiers to take pictures of them and show them the images on their digital cameras.

Local Iraqi men from the neighborhood discuss security concerns with 1st Lt. Muhammad, the Iraqi patrol leader for the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army.

“Conducting this mission with [the Americans] gives us a great opportunity to improve the image of the Iraqi Army, while at the same time discovering the concerns of the people,” 1st Lt. Muhammad said while handing a small Iraqi girl a new pair of shoes.

“Having the opportunity to work with the Iraqi Army has been very rewarding. There seems to be a keen awareness by both U.S. and the IA leadership that the only way to win this war is to win it together,” said Staff Sgt. Matthew Larson.

As the mission wraps up, there is a feeling of hesitation among the troops about leaving the kids. The question lingers about who has benefited most from the mission: the children or the Soldiers.

With this hesitation lies an important certainty for the troops – they made an impact with this small act of kindness.

As he prepares to leave, one of the U.S. Soldiers, Spc. Vang Yang said, “It is days like these that make this deployment worth it. You look at these children and you see something positive - you see hope.”



(Photo by Pfc. Jon Cano, 2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Public Affairs)

## Eagles Sweeping the Shadows

Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division "Baghdad Eagles," move through rays of sun through a muddy palm grove on a patrol near Mahmudiyah, Iraq, 17 miles south of the Iraqi capital. U.S. and Iraqi Army troops patrolled the area together to deny insurgents safe haven and staging grounds to launch attacks against the Baghdad.

# MND-B Commanding General Explains Baghdad Security Plan

## Security

From Page 1

the day-to-day operations of Baghdad's joint security stations, coalition forces will move out of its neighborhoods, but still respond to requests for assistance from Iraqi security forces, if needed, he said.

In addition to the joint security stations, Fil said the new strategy will also have an economic component to spark the Iraqi economy.

"During these three phases, efforts will be on-going to stimulate local economies by creating employment opportunities, initiating reconstruction projects and improving the infrastructure," he explained. "These efforts will be spearheaded by Neighborhood Advisory Councils, District Advisory Councils and the government of Iraq."

Though optimistic the plan will succeed in pacifying Baghdad, he did acknowledge it will take time for the new strategy to bear fruit.

"It's important to remember that all of this will take time, and the mission is going to be tough. It will take time for additional forces to flow in. It will take time for these forces to gain an understanding of their areas and to establish relationships with local leaders and the citizens," said Fil, a native of Portola Valley, Calif. "We are here for the duration. The Iraqi people have not given up their hope for a prosperous and peaceful Iraq, and we should not give up on them."

The most critical factor of the plan hinges on the Iraqis taking responsibility for their own security, Fil said.

"Iraqis are moving forward. I see it, firsthand, everyday, and I see the commitment of our Soldiers to finish the mission we started here," he said. "Ultimately, the Iraqis have to



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Rick Lewis, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

**Maj. Gen. Joseph Fil, Jr., Multi-National Division – Baghdad commanding general, address the Pentagon press corps from Camp Liberty, Iraq during a live satellite press conference Feb. 16.**

want to make this work as much, if not more, than we do."

Fil pointed to some of the Iraqi success stories.

"The province of Al Najaf was turned over to Iraqi control, and the plan to bring security to Baghdad was revised significantly, most notably with the standing up of the Baghdad Operational Command and the influx of thousands more Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers to the effort here," he said.

Fil also called on Americans to continue supporting the troops already in Iraq and those on the way.

"Our Soldiers remain committed to this mission – to help Iraqis realize their full potential. Our nation has made a huge commitment – in terms of resources, but more importantly by sending its sons and daughters, husbands and wives here to assist, and fight as necessary," he said. "I'm extremely proud,

as you all should be, of the dedication, service and sacrifice of our nation's finest. Some have made the ultimate sacrifice. We will be forever indebted to them and never forget their devotion to duty."

Fil reminded Americans of the tough road ahead toward success in Iraq, but said the price was worth the cost.

"It's important that we stay the course, to defeat those here with a radical ideology, who would take away our freedoms; freedoms that have been earned at a high cost by those who have gone so nobly before us," he said. "I have no doubt the radical groups we are facing here, left to their own devices, would spread their barbaric methods far beyond the borders of Iraq. We all see their brutality, firsthand, everyday."

Following his opening remarks, the general took questions from the Pentagon press corps. He told reporters progress in reducing casualties of car bombs was being made.

He also said there has been a significant reduction in the number and effectiveness of attacks on coalition forces since the troop escalation and current operations began. However, Fil said the road ahead was going to be a great challenge.

"We do expect there are going to be some very rough, difficult days ahead and this enemy understands lethality and they have a thirst for blood like I have never seen before," he said.

In closing, Fil said the security of Baghdad and success of Iraq depends on the continued effort of coalition forces to secure the Iraqi capital and an increased role for Iraqi security forces.

"I'd like to say that while there certainly are challenges, this plan can work, Iraq can have peace," he said. "It will work if our country remains dedicated to this mission and Iraqis place their nation before the personal interests that have divided them."

# Troopers Learn to Airlift Equipment, Supplies

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp  
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – When people think of air assaults they may have an image in their mind of Soldiers repelling from helicopters down long ropes and then once on the ground, the Soldiers go to attack an objective.

But much of what the Army teaches about air assaults concerns the ability to airlift supplies, equipment and other re-supply items, getting them quickly to Soldiers in the combat zone.

This is the type of training that 1st “Ironhorse” Brigade Combat Team Soldiers with Company A, 115th Brigade Support

Battalion received here Feb. 16 as they sling loaded M-1114 up-armored humvees with the assistance of CH-47 Chinook helicopters from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade.

“We did this in preparation for further training events in which our Soldiers can train others in the brigade about high speed insertion (air assault) capabilities, adding just another facet to our capabilities,” said Capt. John Jacques, the company commander and a native of West Islip, N.Y. “This will help our Soldiers as they learn how to get supplies quickly to an objective to include vehicles and equipment or whatever is necessary to complete the mission.

“They’re also learning teamwork and gaining the confidence that they can accom-

plish anything tasked to them in support of combat operations,” added Jacques whose troops often work escorting convoys and transporting supplies. In preparation for the training airlift, Soldiers attached four large chains which are part of a large sling and attached them to shackles on the vehicles.

Once the vehicles were in place on a helipad, the helicopter flew in and the Soldiers hooked the slings to the under belly of the aircraft. When the sling was secured to the hook on the helicopter, the Soldiers quickly moved away from the aircraft and the vehicle.

In the training, the helicopter crews airlifted the vehicles a short distance and then lowered the vehicles back to the ground,

unhooking the sling and allowing time for other Soldiers to have the opportunity to take turns sling loading the vehicles.

According to 2nd Lt. Justin Bergen, a platoon leader with the company and a native of Centralia, Ill., oftentimes the purpose of rapid air insertion involves getting equipment to Soldiers in areas that have difficult terrain—terrain that makes it impossible to get equipment to troops via standard routes such as roads.

“This training gives us more skills, making us more flexible when we have to tackle some of the difficult logistical problems that often face troops in the combat zone,” said Bergen.

Nearly two weeks ago, the Soldiers of Co. A took several hours of instruction, and trained using a 40-foot crane to simulate a helicopter lifting humvees and other supplies.

“For many of the Soldiers, this will be their first time working with a helicopter,” said Jacques.

“This is very exciting and a great opportunity for the Soldiers to realistically practice what they’ve been trained,” said Bergen. “Hopefully, this will inspire them to want to go to other professional military schools such as the air assault school or Pathfinders.”

The Soldiers said the training was a worthwhile experience.

“It’s an honor and a pleasure to learn something new and to be able to know how to do this,” said Pfc. David Barkdoll of Co. A and a native of Atlanta, Ga. “If one of my fellow Soldiers is in desperate need of equipment in the combat zone, I know I’m trained and prepared to help him get that equipment quickly.”

Barkdoll, whose military occupational specialty is that of a petroleum supply specialist, has spent his time in Iraq going on patrols and escorting convoys.

“It’s exciting and pretty amazing when you see how close that helicopter gets to you,” said Barkdoll of the day’s training experience.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Soldiers from Company A, 115th Brigade Support Battalion work to hook a sling onto a CH-47 Chinook helicopter which will airlift their humvee Feb. 16 during sling load training on Camp Taji, Iraq.

## Iraqi Security Forces Work With U.S. Troops at Traffic Control Point

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp  
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

HUSAYNIYAH, Iraq - Iraqi security forces along with coalition forces set up a traffic control point here Feb. 14 to improve the security of the city by hindering insurgents from being able to transport weapons and improvised explosive device-making materials into the area via a major highway.

The control point was set up by Iraqis with the 5th Special Troops Company, 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) with the help of Soldiers from Battery B, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery.

During the joint operation, Iraqi security forces and the U.S. troops directed traffic and searched vehicles.

According to 2nd Lt. Rico Vargas, a platoon leader for Battery B, 1st Bn., 37th FA Regt., the traffic control point will improve the quality of life for the citizens of Husayniyah by helping to protect them.

“Most Iraqis just want to live their daily lives, going to work and doing the normal things that everyone does,” said 2nd Lt. Rico Vargas, a platoon leader for Battery B. “When they see the Iraqi Security Forces working with Americans, it makes them feel safe. It helps us to put a face on what we’re



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Ontario, Calif., native Spc. Andrew Ramos (right), a field artilleryman for Battery B, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, and an Iraqi police officer carry concertina wire that will be set up at a traffic control point being set up near Husayniyah, Iraq.

doing here, showing the Iraqis that we’re here to help them.”

Despite obvious language barriers, Soldiers said there was a sense of esprit de corps as they worked with the Iraqi

troops.

“To a certain extent, there was a great amount of camaraderie,” Vargas said. “We’re Army and they’re Army, so we do, in a sense, speak a common language. They’re making great sacrifices to keep their people free, and we’re making sacrifices too.”

Smackover, Ark., native Spc. Willard Mays, a field artilleryman for Battery B, echoed Vargas’ sentiments.

“We’re doing a good thing here, and I actually like working with the Iraqi Army soldiers,” said Mays. “Most of the (Iraqi Army troops) we work with are really great at doing their jobs.”

Vargas said working with the Iraqis through operations such as the control point in Husayniyah places them a few steps closer towards transitioning to having full sovereignty over their own security forces and government.

“You can see how well they work toward solving their own problems, and in many ways we’re just observing and mentoring them,” said Vargas. “You can really see how well trained they are.”

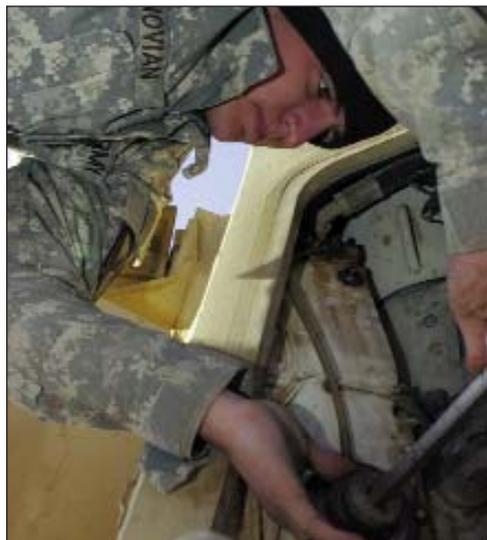
“They’re trained to think through certain scenarios and come up with their own solutions—and that’s exactly what they’re doing on the job here,” he added.

# Red Dragons Keep Guns Hot, Ready for Action

By Spc. Alexis Harrison  
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Artillery has always been considered the ‘King of Battle,’ but when troops from the 3rd “Red Dragon” Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division arrived in Iraq a few months ago, they found out their job was less about artillery then they might have thought.

The Soldiers have been stationed at FOB Union III performing escort duties for the U.S. embassy and missions handed down from the brigade. While most of the Soldiers



**Spc. Josh Novian a Thousand Oaks, Calif., native with 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, checks the oil on the Paladin he and his team keep “hot” and ready for action at Forward Operating Base Falcon Feb. 8.**

stay busy with the “Red Dragon Express,” as it’s called, some Soldiers get a chance to practice and perform the duties that truly make them the ‘King of Battle.’

Several miles south of their home base in the International Zone is where a platoon of artillery men rotate in for a month-long stay to keep their mobile howitzers hot and ready for any mission they might get called for. They call it “keeping the guns hot.”

Around the clock, Soldiers man a few Paladins and stay ready to send rounds downrange, when needed.

Sgt. Steven Lucero and his team have the overnight shift on the guns. As soon as the shift change is over, he readies his team by performing all the necessary checks in his machine and monitoring the radio.

“The call for fire could come at any time, so we have to be ready to go,” said the Edgewood, N.M., native.

Lucero and his team went through a few dry-fire exercises to make sure they were on point with their targeting system. Although they didn’t fire anything, the team worked furiously to get the imaginary rounds fired.

What may seem as simple as firing an oversized rifle actually involves quite a bit of science. Not only do the gunners know how to aim the cannon, they know the properties of the propellant, the exact timing of the fuses and every step it takes to send a massive 155mm round out into the battlefield.

While the night lingers, the temperature drops. The crew does everything it can to stay warm and awake during its 12-hour shift through the night.

Just as it seemed nothing was going to happen, a call came over the radio for a possible mission. In seconds, the crew was on its feet and in position.

Sometimes the Soldiers are tasked with



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

**Sgt. Curtis King from Texarkana, Texas, and Spc. Josh Novian from Thousand Oaks, Calif., perform maintenance on their mobile howitzer after a long shift through the night Feb. 8. The two Soldiers are part of a team from 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, who stay at Forward Operating Base Falcon to keep their Paladin ready for fire missions 24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

firing illumination rounds out into the dark sky to help fellow Soldiers out on the streets see better and possibly spot any insurgent activity. Other times the Soldiers get to fire more lethal, high-explosive,, rounds. According to everyone in the paladin, these rounds are capable of obliterating just about anything they come into contact with.

As they stand ready, another call comes across the radio telling them to stand down. Disappointment flashes across the faces of the troops from platoon.

“We were hoping to get to fire tonight, but it doesn’t look like that’s going to happen,” Lucero said. “We hope to get to fire at

something every night we’re out here. It makes the long nights worthwhile.”

Hours later, the sun breaks over the horizon signaling not only daylight, but the end to another long shift for the four Soldiers manning the gun.

After an uneventful night, the Soldiers open the hatch, climb out and begin preventative maintenance. After the checks and services the team waits until its relief shows up. After a long night of standing at the ready, the Soldiers get chow and go back to their rooms to get some rest before the next night’s shift when they have another chance to prove themselves as the ‘King of Battle.’

# Soldiers Reaching Out to Local Al Doura Residents

By Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim  
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Face time. It’s seems to be a term used more by celebrities than Soldiers, but as Iraqi Army and national policemen go on patrols with coalition forces, face time is something one unit is saying is very important to their mission of capturing the bad guys.

On what’s become a normal patrol mission in Baghdad’s northwest Al Doura, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division Soldiers are using the results of their “face time” to help catch the enemy.

“Our presence is very important,” said Staff Sgt. Juan A. Lopez, a Bronx, N.Y. native. “The [locals] will talk to us and tell us where the caches and insurgence are, they will tell us about new people who have moved into their neighborhood and maybe are threatening them ... It’s a positive we are here everyday. That way, little-by-little, we can make a difference.”

On a patrol of one neighborhood in the humvees, children were peeking out of their gates and waiving to the Soldiers through their bulletproof glass. “Wave at them man,” Lopez told one of his Soldiers in the vehicle. “They might remember you later and say, ‘hey, I waived at that Soldier when I was a little kid.’”

Lopez, who, back in the Bronx, has a Yemenese friend



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

**Bronx, N.Y., native Staff Sgt. Juan A. Lopez, speaks a little Arabic with some Iraqi children during his unit’s patrol of a market in Al Doura.**

who taught him some Arabic phrases, uses it to reach out to the community. When he and his Soldiers walk around the market, they are swarmed by young children. Lopez uses his limited Arabic to joke with the children. In one of the neighborhoods, there is a thriving marketplace within what used to be a traffic circle.

The locals go there to buy fresh fish, produce, clothes, shoes and other items. As recent as a month ago, insurgent

activity forced a lot of them to stay away from the market. Lopez and his unit had seen some fierce fighting there. During the battle, the coalition forces fought the insurgents out of the neighborhood.

In a way, the locals have, in casual meetings with the coalition forces, learned to embrace them. During their cordon and search missions the Soldiers commonly refer to as “block parties,” it’s not uncommon for the locals to ask Soldiers and Iraqi National Police officers to come in and have some tea. According to Lopez, a lot of the people their unit has caught have been a direct result of their presence patrols and the bonds they make during them.

“One day, a lady told us to take someone because he was a cell leader,” he recalled. “It wouldn’t be like that if we weren’t out here. We found a lot of guys and caches because of all the tips [from the locals].”

During a recent block party, Lopez and his team searched a house of a couple with a small child. When asked how they felt about being searched, the husband said he didn’t mind it – that it made their community safer to have Soldiers around.

Another important relationship they have fostered is the one they have with the Iraqi National Police.

“We can’t do everything, so that’s why we work with the NPs (national police),” he said. “And now that the Iraqi Army is here, the [insurgents] are pulling out. It makes a difference, and that’s what they want.”

# 'Dagger' is Top Retention Brigade in Baghdad

By Sgt. 1st Class Keith Laird  
2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – More Soldiers in 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, have reenlisted since last October than any other brigade in Multi-National Division—Baghdad.

Since 9/11 and the start of the War on Terror, military service has changed from a place to serve your country and earn an education, to a place to serve your country in a time of war, deploy to foreign countries to bring the fight to the enemy and earn the right to call yourself a veteran.

The Soldiers of the 2nd "Dagger" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, continuously show their dedication to their unit and the Army, their commander said. The brigade has the achievement of surpassing all other brigades in the Baghdad area when it comes to Soldiers choosing to 'Stay Army.'

"2nd Brigade Combat Team has deliv-



(By Sgt. Lance Wail, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

**Sgt. 1st Class Arnold and Staff Sgt. Barkdull are awarded the Dagger Coin in recognition for outstanding performance in brigade retention services.**

ered more re-enlistments and more bonuses than any other brigade in MND-Baghdad," said Col. J.B. Burton, commander of the Dagger Brigade. "We have many challenges with Soldiers spread across the battle space, on nine separate forward operating bases, but this outstanding retention team has met each

one head on."

"Since the beginning of Oct. 2006, the Dagger Brigade Combat Team reenlisted more Soldiers than any other Brigade in the MND-Baghdad area," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Staley, the brigade's Senior Career Counselor. "There are many factors involved in our success. First of all, we have the best retention team in the whole Army. The career counselors and retention noncommissioned officers in this brigade keep our Soldiers well informed about their options and incentives that are available through reenlistment."

Staley said of the 471 Soldiers who reenlisted, 155 of them opted to stay with the Dagger Brigade, with most choosing to take advantage of the college incentive option.

College incentives are available to those who reenlist to stay within the brigade, Staley explained. Under this program, Soldiers who reenlist for 12 months current station stabilization will be allowed to attend

civilian college classes upon redeployment.

"For those who re-enlist to stay with their same unit, 30 percent is considered to be an indicator of high morale within a unit," said Staley, "We are currently at 43 percent who choose to stay with the Dagger Brigade.. We are doing something right."

"The most gratifying aspect about my job is when a Soldier has no plan, dead set on separating from the Army, but ends up reenlisting after many hours of counseling knowing he/she made the right decision," said Sgt 1st Class Cole Arnold, a brigade career counselor.

"I think we are so successful because every Soldier is asked to reenlist to stay with the Dagger Team," said Staff Sgt. Gabriel Barkdull. "They are constantly kept informed of all options and incentives. I don't stop negotiating with the Retention Management Branch at (Department of the Army) until I fulfill their assignment requests."

## Riva Ridge Medical Clinic Troops Treat 17; Get Treated to Special Iraqi Meal as Thanks

By Spc. L.B. Edgar,  
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE CONSTITUTION, Iraq – When the victims started to arrive at the Riva Ridge Medical Clinic on Camp Liberty, all 17 needed medical attention. All 17 were saved. All 17 were Iraqi Army troops.

With a multitude of crushing injuries and shrapnel wounds to treat, the staff of the clinic frantically treated the patients. When the pace slowed and the patients were all stable, the medical team could relax.

The mass casualty incident occurred Dec. 14, 2006. On that day, Soldiers of Company C, 299th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, treated human beings based on their medical needs, not their uniform, said Sgt. Victor Banks, a radiology sergeant with Co. C.

Two of the 17 Iraqis required further attention and had to be medically evacuated. Fifteen others were stabilized and released from the clinic, said the native of Moorehead City, N.C.

The Iraqi Army troops were victims of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and a suicide vest, which simultaneously detonated. The troops were repairing a school when the attack occurred. The structure collapsed and the soldiers needed treatment fast, Banks said.

Enter the Soldiers of Riva Ridge Medical Clinic.

While the drama unfolded, another Iraqi Army troop was in the clinic for a dental appointment. While the clinic's staff triaged its patients, the Iraqi troop in need of dental assistance had to be rescheduled. Interested in the clinic's pressing challenge, the soldier observed the amazing treatment of his fellow Iraqi Army soldiers, said his commander, Brig. Gen. Nassir, the brigade commander for 3rd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division.

Nassir caught wind of how the American Soldiers at Riva Ridge Medical Clinic diligently treated his troops. Consequently he felt compelled to express his gratitude, he said.

Nassir was able to thank eight members of the staff who treated his wounded soldiers, when he hosted a dinner replete with tea, Iraqi cuisine and cigars

Feb. 12.

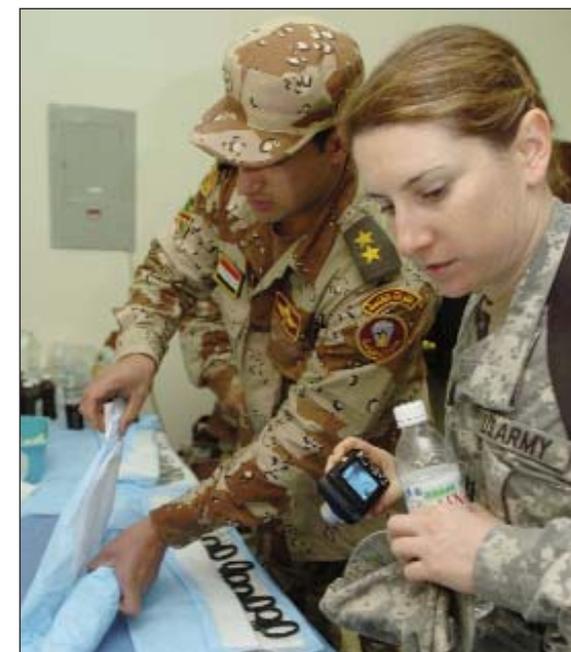
Banks, who worked on the wounded troops, said he was just doing his job.

"We're here to show our support for these guys. We're going to work on Iraqis and Americans the same," he said.

The equal treatment of Soldiers, regardless of affiliation, is what impressed Nassir, said Col. Kenneth Stone, team chief for 3rd Bde, 6th IA Military Transition Team.

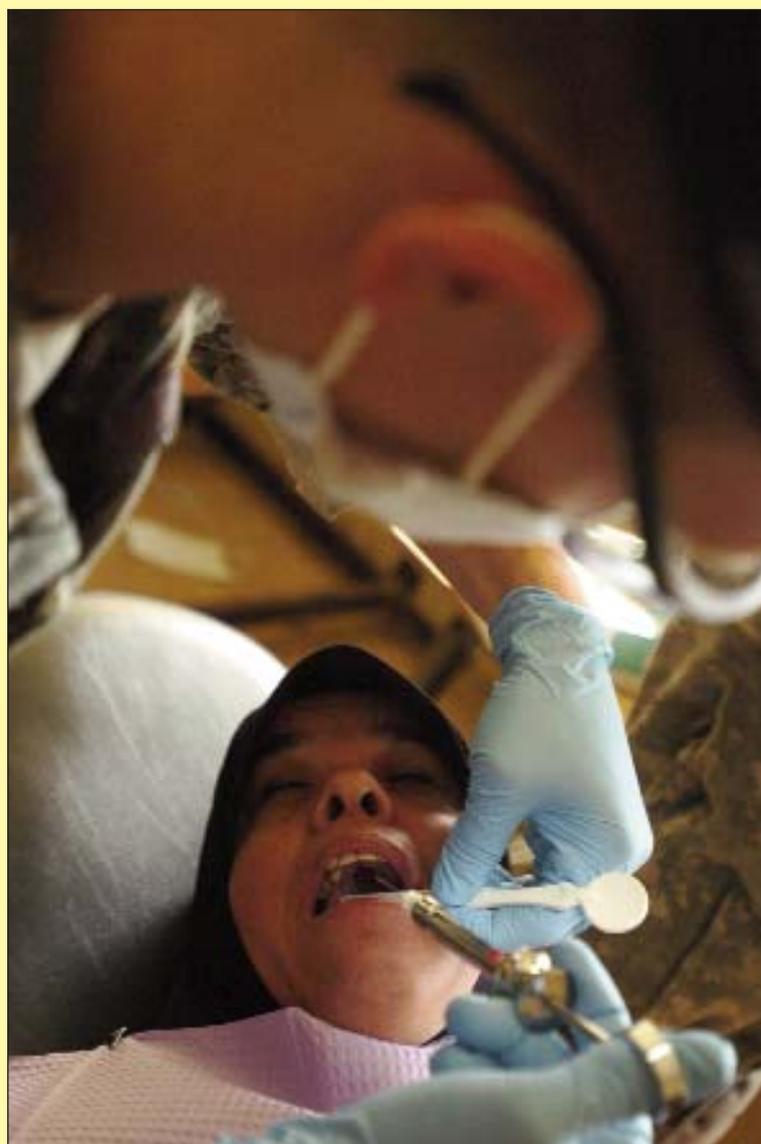
"Gen. Nassir just wanted to thank the American Soldiers for their excellent treatment of Iraqi Soldiers," said the native of Warr Acres, Okla.

There are also 17 thankful Iraqi troops, who made it through two explosions thanks to the medical staff of Riva Ridge Medical Clinic.



(Photo by Spc. L.B. Edgar, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

**Brockledge, Fla., native Capt. Theresa Hanes, a physician's assistant at the Riva Ridge Medical Clinic, assigned to Company C, 299th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, gets a tour of an Iraqi medical clinic on FOB Constitution Feb. 12.**



(Photo by Spc. L.B. Edgar, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

## Ouch!

Wooster, Ohio, native Capt. Jared Dean, the brigade dentist, who is assigned to Company C, 299th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, removes a tooth from an Iraqi woman during a medical assistance mission in the village of Abidone inside the Bay Al Sabir High School of Baghdad's Abu Ghraib district. Dean passed out dental supplies, instructed participants on oral hygiene and removed teeth when necessary.

# Diyala MiTT Helps Iraqi Army Succeed

By Pfc. Ben Fox  
3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

BAQUBAH, Iraq – Coalition forces in Diyala province in Iraq bring important strategic military force to the area, but their efforts can only go so far.

It is the Iraqi military that needs to take the lead, which is what military transition teams, or MiTTs, bring to the fight.

A MiTT is comprised of coalition force Soldiers from various job fields who work with Iraqi Army Soldiers at division, brigade and battalion levels.

“The number one job for (our) MiTT is to help the Iraqi Army brigade that we work with to transition to the point that they can step up to complete operations on their own,” said

Lt. Col. Jay George, the commander for the 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army MiTT.

The 2-5 MiTT works with their Iraqi counterparts to help them transition to become a self-sufficient fighting force, said the Spartanburg, S.C. native. The team falls under the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, which in charge of operations in Diyala.

“All of the guys we deal with down there seem very eager to learn,” said Staff Sgt. Robert Lindstrom, a Corry, Penn. native and 2-5 MiTT Soldier.

Lindstrom said he always tries to let the Iraqis come up with their own plans on how to operate by observing from outside and giving them advice when necessary.

If the MiTT tells them how everything needs to be done,

they aren’t learning anything, he said.

“It’s their military; they need to do things their way,” said Lindstrom.

Spc. Garfield Pellhum, native to St. Roberts, Miss., said before he goes out on missions with the Iraqis, he does certain routines to show them a system of checks before leaving.

Pellhum is a gunner with the 2-5 MiTT who mainly focuses on security for the patrols he goes out on, and ensures the well being of other gunners and drivers.

“I think that the MiTT teams are actually accomplishing what needs to be accomplished for Iraq to have a working Army,” said Lindstrom.

“The Iraqi Army needs to be Iraq’s force for the future,” said George. The Iraqi Army needs to be the military arm of the government that can respond the way the government needs it to, he said.

Each Soldier on the MiTT partners with staff sections and members in the Iraqi Army brigade, said George. They also help them tactically by bringing assets such as air strikes and indirect fire to the fight, he said.

The IA watches how coalition forces operate, said Pellhum.

“This time I know we are making a difference,” said Lindstrom, who previously deployed in 2004. “I can see that first hand.”

“From the last deployment to this deployment... the IA has come leaps and bounds from the last time I was here,” said Lindstrom.

“The sooner that their army stands up and completely stands by itself... the United States Army can finish the mission,” he said.

“When they do that on their own, then we have succeeded, and the United States Army can start stepping back out of the picture,” said George.

Many different elements of 3rd BCT had to give up some of their best Soldiers, but George said it was worth it.

“If it hurts, if it’s painful to give the person up, then it is probably the right thing to do,” he said.

George said he has seen the IA making progress.

“I do see that the Iraqi Army is moving forward,” he said.

It will take time for the Iraqi Army to be a completely self-sufficient force, he admitted, adding that it took Americans a long time to become the stable government they are today.

“They are on the right track,” said George. “It is just going to take time.”



(Photo by Pfc. Ben Fox, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Preparing his gear for a mission, Capt. John Leitner, a native of Houston, makes sure he has all of his equipment before leaving FOB Gabe with his unit, the 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Military Transition Team, assigned to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div. in the Diyala province of Iraq, Feb. 17.



(Photos by Sgt. Armando Monroig, 5th MPAD)

Soldiers from 6-9 Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, search a residence in Balour, Iraq, during a joint operation with the 3rd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army, Feb. 20.

## Operation Leads to Detention of Terrorists

MUQDADIYA, Iraq – During a combined operation, Iraqi army soldiers and their Coalition Force counterparts, targeted individuals in a cell responsible for creating and planting improvised explosive devices, and other terrorist activity in Balour, Iraq, Feb. 20.

The cordon and search operation led the forces from 3rd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army, and 6-9 Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, to detain seven suspected terrorists, one of whom is suspected of placing an IED at a cell phone shop in November 2006 which killed 12 people.

The lack of enemy contact was a clear indicator that the Iraqi and Coalition security forces have successfully disrupted the terrorists’ ability to operate throughout the area.

“The terrorists that work in this area are seeing the improvements taking place in the Iraqi Security Forces and are unwilling to attack them head on. Additionally, the people of the area are beginning to understand that by supporting the terrorists they are preventing growth,” said Col. David W. Sutherland, commander of 3-1 Cav. and senior U.S. Army officer in the Diyala province.

“The violence perpetrated by the terrorists is recognized by the population as disrupting their lifestyle by preventing services, con-



A Soldier from 6-9 Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, searches a residence in Balour, Iraq, during a joint operation with the 3rd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army, Feb. 20.

struction, and economic growth. The local population is sick of it and is providing more support to the Government of Diyala and the Iraqi Security Forces,” Sutherland said

# Mountain Soldiers Cruise Route Tampa

By Spc. Chris McCann  
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — American Graffiti. Easy Rider. Grease.

Since the dawn of the automobile age, American teenagers have “cruised” up and down the streets and roads, talking with friends, and sometimes stopping to fight. It’s no different in Iraq, really.

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) regularly “cruise” the roads and byways south of Baghdad, on watch for terrorist acts and improvised explosive devices.

The main highway through Iraq, known to coalition forces as Route Tampa, is a prime target for IEDs and other acts of terror because it is so heavily traveled by military and civilian convoys, as well as local civilian traffic.

It is patrolled almost constantly, day and night, to deny terrorists the ability to harm the thousands of vehicles that travel it.

“We’re allowing freedom of movement,” said Sgt. Gilbert Sanchez, an infantryman with Troop C, 1-89th and a native of Bakersfield, Calif., during a patrol Feb. 16. “We’re allowing people to travel with more confidence, both civilians and military. And it makes me feel good knowing we’re helping the Iraqis.”

On a nighttime mission Feb. 14, Spc. Andrew Snyder of Temple, Pa., a driver in the company, admitted that the job is often dull, but it’s critical.

“It allows the units in the brigade to do their missions,” he said. “We’re doing this, so they can do that. And the fact that we do it allows everyone else — other units, or contractor convoys — to go back and forth. By keeping the routes safe, we’re helping everything else go smoother.”

The Soldiers patrol in shifts, traveling up and down Route Tampa, sometimes stopping to watch the traffic from an observation point.

Their vigilance pays off in IEDs found and defused



(Photo by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs)

**Spc. Andrew Hung, a native of Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and a gunner with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), watches Route Tampa south of Camp Striker, Iraq, during a route security mission Feb. 16**

before they have a chance to explode and terrorists found before they can execute their missions.

A patrol from the squadron found a man near Tampa Feb. 14 with a 50-pound sack of ammonium nitrate — a common ingredient in the homemade explosive mixtures that pack many of Iraq’s IEDs. He was detained.

The unit also patrols through the village of Mustafar, just

off Route Tampa, where they are known by name, especially by the Iraqi children.

The Soldiers check the village routinely, providing a sense of security not only on the road but to the villagers at home.

“Everything we do is for the kids,” said Sanchez. “They’re the future of Iraq.”

## MiTT Happens...

# But Logistics Could Use a Little Work

By Capt. Amanda Nalls  
210th Brigade Support Battalion

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — During the sometimes difficult process of blending American and Iraqi military culture on military transition teams, or MiTTs, the catch phrase among Soldiers here involved in the process has become “MiTT happens.”

While training and operations continues to improve the Iraqi Army, logistical challenges also need to be addressed.

To address those challenges, leaders in 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) hosted their first logistics conference aimed at improving logistical capabilities within the MiTTs that work daily to train, equip, and improve Iraqi army forces.

The conference, held here Jan. 30, provided an opportunity for logistics experts and MiTT trainers to develop solutions to the increasing number of challenges inherent in supporting the fledgling Iraqi Army units.

“I challenge you to come up with creative ideas on how to solve unique problems,” said Col. Michael Kershaw the Commando Brigade commander and a native of Huffman, Texas, in his opening remarks to the group. “The solutions you develop must be ‘Iraqi solutions,’ and must work with their view of logistics.”

“Training and operations in a vacuum will not sustain the Iraqi army,” Kershaw added.

This thought was echoed by leaders who deal with the Iraqi Army on a day-to-day basis.

“We all know, ‘MiTT happens,’ but the Iraqi Army has an unconventional approach to logistics,” said Maj. Lee Brinker, a trainer with the 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division.

During the conference participants discussed topics such as procurement of cold weather gear, issues with understanding the complex world of contracting, and the long wait to receive vehicles and replacement parts for non-mission-capable equipment.

Although the solutions proposed by members of the group were far from revolutionary, leaders were able to speak with their counterparts at the tactical and operational level.

The open forum allowed for an exchange of ideas and laid the groundwork for future discussions in the realm of MiTT logistics.

“We aren’t expecting to win the war in one day,” said Maj. Garth Johnston, 210th BSB future operations officer and native of St. Cloud, Minn. “Sometimes even a ‘good enough’ solution is better than what we had before. The aim of this conference is to open dialogue and to be a ‘think-tank’ for the experts in the area of logistics.”

While their maneuver-battalion brothers work to train the Iraqi Army on tactics and Soldier skills, the 210th BSB intends to leave its mark on Iraq by ensuring that their army is better-equipped and has the capabilities to support and sustain itself in a free Iraq.



(Photo by Capt. Amanda Nalls, 210th BSB, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI))

**Capt. Anita Trepanier, commander of Company A, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) and native of Dayton, Ohio, leads a small-group discussion on major item and vehicle procurement.**



(Photo by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs)

A resident of Sadr Al-Yusufiyah, Iraq, brings his elderly father to receive medical treatment during a medical operation held in the village Feb. 10. Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) provided treatment to many of the town's residents.

## More than Warriors: Soldiers Care for Iraqis

By Spc. Chris McCann  
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs

SADR AL-YUSUFIYAH, Iraq — In a country where poverty is endemic and many people are afraid to leave their homes because of terror threats, basic medical care can fall by the wayside.

The village of Sadr Al-Yusufiyah, Iraq, a mostly Sunni area near the Euphrates River, is no different, but the Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment "Golden Dragons", 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) who live next to the village at Patrol Base Warrior Keep have strived to help the local residents.

A medical operation held Feb. 10 at the clinic next to the patrol base was just one part of their mission to help.

"Today, we're helping the community by treating their sick and injured," said Pfc. Stephen Harris, a native of the Cayman Islands and a rifleman with Company B, 2-14th. "It makes me feel outstanding, knowing I'm helping and bettering this community."

Medics and doctors from both the Army and the local Iraqi community came to provide care as Soldiers of Co. B secured the clinic and searched each person who came in to ensure everyone's safety.

Almost 150 residents of the village were seen or treated for a variety of complaints, ranging from chronic problems to the usual sniffles and coughs that come with the cold, damp Iraqi winters.

While some of the local people may disagree with the Soldiers' presence in the area, there were many smiles and thanks as they departed the clinic.

"I really think this (operation) will help change the opinion that the Americans are here for personal gain," Harris said.

Sgt. Asa Shaw, a native of Riverside, Calif., and a fire team leader with the company, agreed.

"We're providing basic medical care for them," he said. "Everything we can do to win hearts and minds helps, and it makes me feel good, knowing we're helping less fortunate people."

Staff Sgt. Chris Lopez, a native of Diamondhead, Miss., and a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-14th, treated several local residents during the operation.

"It's good to treat the women and children, especially," Lopez said. "Helping someone's kid might stop them from setting that next improvised explosive device. What better way to help someone than by saving their lives?"

The Golden Dragons plan to hold more medical operations in the future.



(Photo by Pvt. Dameon Mobley, 210th BSB, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI))

Chaplain (Capt.) Daniel Kang, a native of Seoul, South Korea, escorts a group of Soldiers to the Al-Faw Palace on Camp Liberty recently. Kang is the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) chaplain.

## Soldiers See Different Side of Iraq

By Capt. Amanda Nalls  
210th Brigade Support Battalion

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — While many Soldiers walk away from a year-long deployment to Iraq with photos of dust, dirt and more dust, some have the opportunity to see a little more.

Once a month, Soldiers from the 210th Brigade Support Battalion "Providers," 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) are given the opportunity to see a different side of Iraq — they are able to take home photos of presidential palaces and a better understanding of Iraq's rich history.

Each month, the 210th BSB chaplain, Capt. Daniel Kang, a native of Seoul, South Korea, escorts a group of Soldiers on a tour of the palaces located on the Baghdad International Airport Complex. The highlight of the trip is the stop at the Al-Faw Palace, one of the eight presidential palaces used for hunting and recreation by Saddam Hussein and his family as well as other Baath Party members.

While there, Soldiers learn about the building's construction and are able to take photos of the large fish — called "Saddam bass" — that fill the lake surrounding the palace. Other stops on the tour include "Bedrock," a large play area now located on Camp Slayer that was built for Saddam's grandchildren, who reportedly enjoyed watching "The Flintstones" in their spare time.

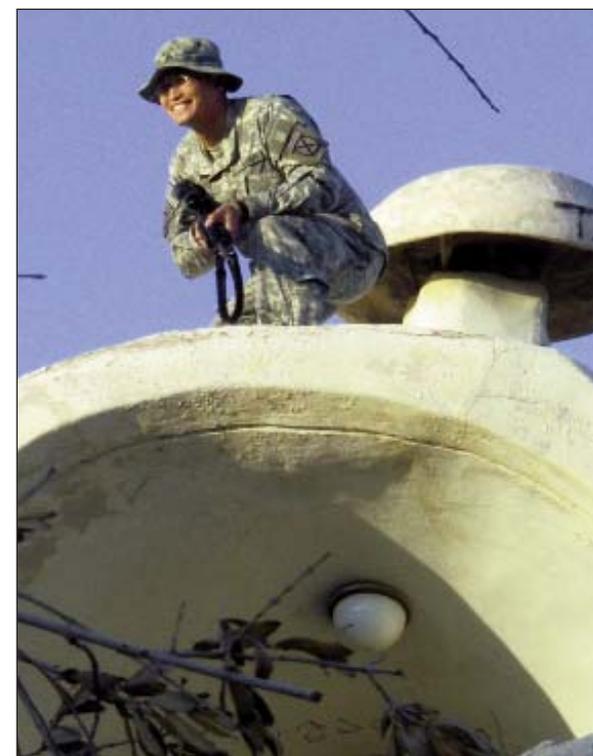
The Perfume Palace, a former Baathist government amusement complex located on the present day Camp Slayer, is no longer open to the public. However, Soldiers are able to take photos of the blue-domed building and receive a short history lesson on the military murals, hot tubs, and domed ballroom that grace the interior.

"It's an amazing opportunity to be able to see these buildings," said Sgt. 1st Class Mayrineth Campbell, a food-service noncommissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 210th BSB and a native of Allentown, Pa. "It gives you a different perspective on the lives of some of the former Iraqi leaders. It's interesting to think of Saddam

Hussein as someone who took the time to build a play area for his grandchildren."

"The tours are an opportunity to teach our Soldiers about Iraq's history and its culture," Kang said. "A better understanding of the country's culture will allow our Soldiers to better identify with the Iraqi people that they are here to help."

"I definitely enjoyed the trip," said Spc. Deon Williams, also a member of HHC, 210th BSB and a native of Lynchburg, Va. "It was something I'll always remember and appreciate."



(By Chaplain (Capt.) Daniel Kang, 210th BSB, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI))

Sgt. Lux Beltran, a nuclear, biological and chemical specialist assigned to Company B, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), crouches atop a building in order to get better photos of the surrounding area during a tour. Sgt. Beltran is a native of Yigo, Guam.



Muskogee, Okla., native Sgt. John Pruitt, 29, a squad leader with Company A, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, which is attached to 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div., patrols the Hurriyah neighborhood of Baghdad's Kadamiyah district Feb. 8. Pruitt's unit patrols from a Joint Security Station in the neighborhood, which encourages transition by allowing Iraqi security forces to train and operate with the paratroopers on a one-on-one basis.



Muskogee, Okla., native Sgt. John Pruitt, 29, a squad leader with Company A, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, patrols the Hurriyah neighborhood in Baghdad. (Photos by Sgt. John Pruitt)

# Paratroopers Stand Up Security Station in Hurriyah

By Spc. L.B. Edgar,  
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KADAMIYAH, Baghdad – The sudden clap of a firearm's discharge prompts the split second reaction of the paratroopers patrolling the volatile streets of Iraq's capital on foot.

The paratroopers are poised for contact with the unseen threat.

From behind urban cover – a car, a corner or even a light post - they meticulously scan their interlocking sectors of fire to ensure 360-degree security for the platoon conducting a presence patrol.

Fortunately for the enemy, the noise, which prompted instantaneous action from the platoon of battle-tested paratroopers, was a false alarm. The sound of road construction was the likely culprit.

Thanks to a revamped strategy to quell sectarian violence throughout Baghdad, the paratroopers of Company A, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, attached to 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div., are spending more and more time on the streets of the Hurriyah neighborhood, within the Baghdad's Kadamiyah district.

The paratroopers, who stood up the Hurriyah Joint Security Station (JSS) in just three days with the help of some combat engineers, have moved into the neighborhood and are making their presence felt, said Maj. Michael Shaw, the company commander.

With the Iraqi police already living in the JSS, Iraqi national police residing nearby and an Iraqi Army battalion of Kurdish troops en route, the JSS is becoming somewhat of a joint operations headquarter-

ters, said the native of Wichita, Kan.

"We're here to help establish a JSS in order to give the IA, IPs, NPs and the coalition forces a common operating picture of the battlefield and the ability to be more proactive with the security of Iraq," Shaw said. "We're here to help the Iraqi security forces establish security and maintain the security (to) eventually allow (them) to take complete control of all the security within Baghdad."

In order to provide Baghdad residents security, the paratroopers are working with the Iraqi security forces to quell sectarian violence, said 1st Lt. David Eckenrode, company fire support officer.

"Our unit's role is to target the extremists on both ends. We're not taking any sides here," said the native of Clark, N.J. "There are things wrong right now. You got stuff going on, on both sides. The majority of the people want security and to end what's going on, We're just here to help them."

Since the security of Baghdad is the focus of the mission, the paratroopers of the Hurriyah JSS are hopeful working in the community will pay dividends in intelligence. The paratroopers recently moved into the neighborhood and the residents of Hurriyah have not been forthcoming, thus far, with useful information, Shaw said.

"The local population is under the influence of a local militia and is unwilling to speak with, or cooperate with coalition forces," he said.

However that does not mean the paratroopers are not giving the residents every opportunity to come forward.

To increase interaction with the local populace and let them know they are there to stay, the para-

troopers

the Hurriyah

Eckenrode

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Milwaukee native Sgt. 1st Class Scott Brown, 32, a platoon sergeant with Company A, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, attached to 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div., patrols through the Hurriyah neighborhood of Baghdad's Kadamiyah district Feb. 8. Brown and his unit reside in the Joint Security Station of the neighborhood, which encourages transition by allowing Iraqi security forces to train and operate with U.S. paratroopers on a one-on-one basis.



(Photo by Spc. L.B. Edgar, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Company A, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, attached to 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div., provides security while patrolling the Hurriyah neighborhood of Baghdad's Kadamiyah district Feb. 8.

## Up New Hurriyah

Paratroopers conduct frequent joint, presence patrols of the Hurriyah neighborhood with their Iraqi partners, Shaw said.

"When we feel they're ready, then we can turn it over to them. But right now, we're here to help them shape their environment," Eckenrode said. "Eventually down the road, we want to train them and show them the right way and turn it over to them."

Paratroopers are also engaging leaders of the community in an effort to foster a positive relationship between the Iraqi security forces and the residents of Hurriyah, Eckenrode said.

Command leaders of Co. A met with the neighborhood's Neighborhood Advisory Council for the first time. The NAC includes many of the community's civic, military and religious leaders, who the paratroopers would like to work with on more proactive security measures in the neighborhood, Shaw said.

"By engaging the community's leaders and their presence felt, the paratroopers are confident they will obtain useful intelligence, which can be used for operations to drive out insurgent and terrorist organizations, Shaw said.

"We're living with Iraqi security forces. We're doing joint patrols with them and we're basically providing an example, the know-how and also, in some cases, the resources for the Iraqis to provide their own security so we can come home," Shaw said.

"Maybe the next time there is a false alarm, they'll be able to react to the situation and provide their own security to Hurriyah. Until then the paratroopers of Co. A are ready to show them how it's done."



Spc. Jason Bates, 21, a saw gunner with Co. A, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, provides security while patrolling the Hurriyah neighborhood of Baghdad's Kadamiyah district Feb. 8.

# Unit Fires First Mortar Since Getting in Country

By Spc. Courtney Marulli  
2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq — The mortar platoon of 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, started its deployment with a bang, firing its mortar for the first time.

Most members of the mortar platoon have been together for years, but even the new members have quickly become part of the team. Even the 1-504th's senior enlisted member, Command Sgt. Maj. Klaus J. Meckenstock, used to be a member of the platoon and wanted to be there when it registered the weapon using the assistance of the unmanned aerial vehicle for the first time.

"This was actually a first time for me based on the modern technology," he said.

Meckenstock, of Bad Kreuznach, Germany, said he has always used a forward observer and using the UAV was new. "It went well," he said.

In 1983, Meckenstock was a private in the mortar platoon and eventually became platoon sergeant from 1992 to 1994. It was special for him to be there with the platoon and to hang a mortar round with them.

"I'm proud to be there with my Soldiers," he said.

Sgt. 1st Class Paul D. McNeill, platoon sergeant for mortar platoon, has been deployed two times and has been with the platoon for almost three years. It was a first for McNeill, of Lillington, N.C., and the rest of the platoon.

Before coming to Iraq, McNeill said everyone trained extensively while at Fort Bragg, N.C., to ensure all Soldiers, especially the newer ones, were comfortable and in sync with one another.

"Repetition and training is how to get in sync," he said.

Staff Sgt. Louis M. Bost, section sergeant, has been with the platoon since 2003

and is on his third deployment.

"It went well," he said of the registration. "Any kinks we had we solved before we even started."

Spc. David A. Elliott, an FSE Soldier, is on his second deployment and said everything inside the Fire Direction Center ran smoothly once the registration started. He agreed that everything went smoothly, and he credited the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Fire Support Element with helping out.

"Their standards are different than anything we've done," he said.

Cpl. Mark P. Keenan, the squad leader,

also said the registration went well.

Keenan, of Fair Lawn, N.J., is on his second deployment and has been with the platoon for two years. Keenan's role in the process is to receive the information such as deflection, elevation and fuse setting and the type of round to use. Then he conveys this to the gunner and makes sure the gun is ready to fire. He checks the ammunition to see if it is prepped properly and then supervises everyone else. Getting everyone on the same page is a challenge, but very important.

"With mortars you're dealing with a dangerous weapon," he said. "You have to be con-

fidant in your guys and know what they're doing and that they'll do the right thing."

Spc. Robert P. DiMatteo, a gunner, has been with the platoon for almost two years.

DiMatteo, of Staten Island, N.Y., said his role as the gunner is to receive the information from the squad leader and then realign the tube to the aiming stakes. Then he levels the bubbles, which help make sure the weapon is balanced. Once that's done he lets the squad leader know the mortar is ready to fire.

DiMatteo and his assistant gunner, Pvt. Kerry D. Marino, they have been working closely with one another to get in sync. Marino, of Bar Harbor, Maine, is on his first deployment and it's also his first time working with the 120mm system.

"It's the second time I touched it since I came into the platoon," he said.

On the job training has helped Marino during his four months with the platoon. Marino's role is to make sure the elevation bubbles are level and help the gunner shift the bipod. He also gets to hang the rounds.

Pvt. Emmanuel V. Adame, the ammunition bearer for the mortar platoon, is responsible for keeping an accurate round count and for prepping the rounds to be fired.

On-the-job training has helped Adame, of Los Angeles, transition into the rhythm of the platoon he has been a part of for almost three months.

This is his first deployment and everything has been smooth so far. Keenan said Adame has an important job because in a way he has his own section to take care of. The ammunition bearer has to hear the data, process it quickly and prepare the round. The ammo bearer also has to be confident in his role because he functions on his own.

"Most of the focus is on the gunner and assistant gunner," Keenan said. "Sometimes it's an overlooked member, but important as well."



(Photo by Spc. Courtney Marulli, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

**Command Sgt. Maj. Klaus J. Meckenstock, of Bad Kreuznach, Germany, the senior noncommissioned officer with 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, hangs a mortar round during the platoon's registration at Forward Operating Base Loyalty.**

# Singing Trucker: Songs Soothe Soldiers in Combat Zone

By Spc. Courtney Marulli  
2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

FOB RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq — In the Army, vocal chords sometimes seem to be something junior enlisted are discouraged from using, but that's not always the case.

One Soldier in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, uses her vocal talent to entertain friends and to express herself through song.

Pfc. Valerie A. Strand, of Selma, Ore., a truck driver, has been singing since childhood and continues to share her vocal talent with the world. Her mother, who sang her whole life but never had the chance to make it big, allowed Strand's talents to shine. Those talents shone when Strand first began to talk. Instead of saying the usual

"Dada" or "Mama", Strand was singing.

"My first song was Rubber Ducky," she said of her childhood performance captured on tape. Strand and her mother are close, and have always bonded through music.

"She sang Stevie Nicks to me," Strand recalled. Her mother had a little studio from which she would record backup vocals for karaoke. Strand said she would ask her mother to go sing in the studio.

"Mom kept it because she knew how important it is to

me," Strand said.

Both mother and daughter recorded backup vocals and cherished the moments together, making music in the little studio.

"I love singing to my Mom because she cries when I sing to her," she said.

Aside from her mother, Strand's musical inspirations growing up were Amy Grant and Wilson Phillips. Her current inspiration is Jo Dee Messina. Strand has continued her love of music and also uses it as a form of self-expression.

"What I feel about singing is like a way to express my emotions," she said. "I don't have to say anything, just sing."

That expression has helped Strand during hard times, such as being deployed to Iraq and when she's missing her loved ones.

"All of that energy comes out and you just sound so good," she said.

One of her personal inspirations growing up was her high school choir teacher, Terry Lund. Strand said Lund put her up for solos because he knew she had a good voice.

"He brought it out in me," she said.

With her singing in full force, Strand performed at sporting events and festivals.

"I love to be onstage performing," she said. "I think it's all the energy around me. People are there for you."

Being onstage isn't a selfish fulfillment for Strand, as

she enjoys pleasing the crowd.

"I've never done it for money or fame but to make people happy," she said. Her friends are a large support group who are constantly encouraging her to try out for American Idol. Strand, who has not had any formal vocal training, said she promised all of her friends she would try out for the popular American television show.

"Before the Army, I could never go to American Idol because I was in job corps and school."

After her year tour in Iraq is over, Strand plans on trying out and seeing where that may lead.

Strand joined the Army on Jan. 17, 2005 because she wanted to do something with her life. Through job corps, she became a dental assistant. But not being satisfied with her education, she planned on becoming a hygienist.

Joining the Army was a way to get money to fulfill her educational dream and to travel the world, she said. She wants to change her military job to the dental field, but if that doesn't work out, she will pursue a hygienist career after the Army. The fame from a singing career isn't what drives Strand.

"Fame isn't anything for me," she said. "If I got famous at this very moment, I would still drive my truck in the war because I feel I have an obligation to fulfill, a team to serve. I can't let my team down. We've come so far, I just can't split out now."

**'I hereby declare, on oath ...'**

# 1st ACB Soldiers Become U.S. Citizens in Iraq

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins  
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Iraq – One minute, seven 1st Air Cavalry Brigade Soldiers are guests of the United States, and the next minute, they are citizens of the U.S. What happened in those two minutes? Well, an oath happened in those short minutes.

After extensive paperwork and interviews, these seven Soldiers from the 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division, took the Oath of Allegiance and received a long sought after dream – to become a naturalized citizen of the United States.

Pago Pago, American Samoa, native Staff Sgt. Eteru Ane, the supply noncommissioned officer in charge for Company E, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment was one of those lucky seven to become a citizen that day.

"I joined the Army because I believe in the values of the United States – I believe in the military values. I'm proud to be an American," said Ane.

His hometown, very much like Hawaii, but smaller, is near and dear to his heart, but he is glad to be called an American, he said.

"It's like you [have mixed feelings] because it feels like your giving up your culture and taking in the American culture, but it's not like that at all. I'm proud to be an American," said Ane.

Ane started his paperwork while stationed in Fort Hood, Texas but didn't get confirmation of that paperwork until he was



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

**Once sworn in as a U.S. citizen, Staff Sgt. Eteru Ane, the supply noncommissioned officer in charge for E Co., 2-227th, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., and 88 other newly sworn-in citizens say the Pledge of Allegiance nearing the end of a ceremony at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq Feb. 11.**

already overseas. Luckily for him, the U.S. Army has the Naturalization Program in Iraq.

The program allows Soldiers like him to finish his paperwork and interviews and swear in as a U.S. citizen while fighting for the country overseas, said San Antonio native Staff Sgt. Christa Sanchez, the senior paralegal for 1st ACB. Ane knew it would take persistence, but after almost six years of ups and downs with the entire application

process, he finally finished it.

"It's a really big deal for them. For us to process that stuff, you have to keep on it and make sure that we keep up with [it], because how would I feel if I were in their shoes?" said Sanchez.

Becoming a citizen raises another question: Whose rights and whose country were these Soldiers fighting for before they became U.S. citizens?

Ane believed in the values of the U.S. and the Army enough to fight for them even though he did not share the same rights as his brothers-in-arms who fought next to him.

"That all falls under [the category of] what people take for granted. We have a lot of people here who aren't citizens who are willing to die for the rights of ... others," said Ane.

"When you're born with something, you get tired of it. It's like a toy you had. You play with it every day; then you just leave it in the corner. When someone comes along and they see it and you finally give it to them, they'll be happy with it because they've never had it before," explained Ane about becoming a citizen.

Having Soldiers come into the legal office to take part in this program to become citizens, Sanchez sees more clearly what Ane is talking about.

"We had a guy that came in and said he wanted to be able to be a citizen, because he had a lot of opportunities being in the states and in the Army that he never would have had if he had been working where he's from," she said.

With all the paperwork aside, Ane was able to enjoy the ceremony where he would swear in as a U.S. citizen.

After the Oath of Allegiance was spoken, where once stood Samoans, Mexicans, and even an Iraqi – 49 different nationalities in all – now stood 89 new citizens of the United States of America.

"I like being called an American," said Ane.

## 200th ACB Soldier Reenlists; Bonuses Exceed \$2 million

By Spc. Nathan J. Hoskins  
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – All she was doing was securing a better future for her son and continuing her career in the U.S. Army. Staff Sgt. Charlotte Harris didn't know that she was part of a larger, growing number.

The Opelika, Ala., native, a light wheel mechanic and platoon sergeant for Company E, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, just reenlisted and became the 200th Soldier to do so since the deployment began for 1st ACB. She and the 199 other 1st ACB Soldiers have racked up more than \$2.1 million in bonuses.

Harris, a career Soldier who joined the Army right out of high school, is already looking to progress further in her field by becoming a warrant officer.

"I would like to go warrant. That is the goal I am shooting for right now. Hopefully towards the summer time I will put in my packet," said Harris.

She is also looking to make sergeant first class sometime this month.

"I enjoy the Army. I like dealing with different people. There's always a different challenge you have to rise up to," said Harris.

This is Harris's third reenlistment, and it brings her to an indefinite status. This reenlistment will carry her through her retirement date, said Charleston, S.C., native Sgt. 1st Class Melissa McNorton, the brigade senior career counselor.

Seeing the 1st ACB hit its 200th reenlistment is great, but having it be a Soldier that is making a career out of the



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

**Opelika, Ala., native Staff Sgt. Charlotte Harris, a light wheel mechanic and platoon sergeant for Company E, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, inspects an engine at 1-227th's motor pool.**

Army makes it even more special to McNorton.

"It speaks well of the command, it speaks well of the Soldiers in the 1st Cav because a lot of people don't make that final commitment," said McNorton.

Already ahead of schedule for this fiscal year, McNorton and her team of career counselors are winning awards and getting recognized.

"We haven't had the award presented yet, but yes, we won top brigade in the division for the first quarter," she said.

Although 1st ACB is leading the division in reenlistments and have doled out a total of \$2,186,287 in reenlistment bonuses; they have no intentions of slowing down, said McNorton.

"We aren't going to relax until mission is made and then some," she said.

The 1st Air Cavalry Brigade is looking to take top honors for the second quarter as well, but because of the seemingly obvious future deployments, it will be more difficult to keep Soldiers serving, said McNorton.

"It is affecting us because a lot of Soldiers want the stability, they want the down time with the family members, but I think if a lot of them 'Stay Cav,' at least they'll know exactly how long they will be stabilized for; they'll know when the next rotation is coming up," said the brigade career counselor.

Moving to another unit upon returning to the states could mean deploying back to Iraq in less than three months. Knowing the rotation schedule is a benefit to staying Cav, she said.

Also, a shake up in some aviation military occupational specialties is affecting 1st ACB's reenlistment, if ever so slightly, said McNorton.

"Some of the aviation MOS's are over-strength, so that is stopping a lot of people from being offered the option of [permanent change of station]. Once that's fixed, we'll be a lot better off in the Air Cav Brigade," she said.

Adversity aside, McNorton is optimistic about the future for 1st ACB reenlistment.

"The future is bright [for 1st ACB reenlistment]," she said.



(Photo by Pfc. William Hatton, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

**Spc. Jason Minter, an infantryman with Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, provides security in front of a Iraqi shop while his team searches the ally behind him in a northern Baghdad neighborhood Feb. 17.**

## From a Soldier's Eyes: Baghdad Improving

By Pfc. William Hatton  
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – If only mom and dad could see what goes on in Iraq on a daily basis. The things Soldiers see become life changing. Every day major news networks show the endless bombing and fatalities that arise, but are the Soldiers' perspective of the war different?

True, there are undesirable experiences throughout Iraq, but for Spc. Jason Minter, an infantryman with Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, not every day is horrible.

"Life here has definitely been a different experience," Minter said, a native of Lake Bay, Wash. "Life is actually all right, for the most part. Yeah, bad things have happened around me, but for the most part, life is OK here."

Upon arriving in Baghdad, Minter's unit hit the ground running, but had help with their first essential steps, Minter said.

"When we first got here, we were able to go out with units that had been here for the last year and learn the basics of how things were in Iraq," Minter said. "This was really helpful."

Mission after mission, eight months passed with good and bad experiences, everything becoming more and more of a learning opportunity, Minter said.

"Over time, our mission changed from being less of going in and taking out a bad guy with force, to doing courtesy searches in neighborhoods where we try to be less forceful to the residents," Minter said. "We still occasionally patrol streets and make a more forceful impression, but we are trying to leave a better impression with the people here in Iraq."

Another big change is the aid of Iraqi security forces, Minter said.

"Almost all missions we go on seem to have Iraqi Army troops leading the way," he said. Interacting with local Iraqi residents has helped Minter see the world through their eyes, he said.

"We deal with people here on a daily basis," Minter said. "Most people here are just trying to live their lives. We have a job to do, and most people know that. Most people are just trying to live their life, and I try to encourage people to go about their daily business. We try to be less of a picture in their life."

In time, Minter said, things will become better in Iraq.

"It's just going to take a lot of hard work and perseverance."



(Photo by Pfc. William Hatton, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

## Stryker, Iraqi Army operating as one

**Soldiers from the 3rd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division out of Fort Lewis, Washington, work with soldiers from the Iraqi Army in a northern neighborhood in Baghdad, Feb. 17. The combined effort of both forces is further progression in making Iraq an independent country.**

## Soldier Fights off Cancer to Fight in Iraq

By Pfc. William Hatton  
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – What makes a person desire to join the military during a time of war? Service members have different reasons for joining the military. Whether it's a love of country or wanting to secure their future, there is always a reason to serve. But is there a 'greater cause' for joining the service?

For Pfc. Matthew Moody, an infantryman with Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, joining the Army was more than just providing security for his future. Joining the military was a way to honor his fallen friends.

While serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, Moody said he



(Photo by Pfc. William Hatton, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

**Pfc. Matthew Moody, an infantryman with Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, scans his designated area for intruders. Moody, a native of Springfield, Ore., was diagnosed with cancer prior to his unit being deployed to Iraq.**

had friends killed in action there.

"One of the biggest reasons I joined the Army was not necessarily to avenge my friends' deaths, but to honor their deaths by continuing where they left off," said Moody, a native of Springfield, Ore. "It just felt like the right thing to do."

When asked by a recruiter what he wanted to do for the Army, Moody replied that all he really wanted to do was kick in doors with a shotgun in his hands. The recruiter said that a he couldn't guarantee a shotgun, but that he could guarantee an M-16, which led to him to the infantry.

Since joining the military, Moody said he has come to love serving his country. That love helped him fight his way into the fight in Iraq.

Following completion of his training, he was assigned to his unit with an Iraqi deployment looming. As the rest of his new unit prepared for their deployment Moody found out that he would not be going to Iraq, and that service to his country might come to an abrupt halt.

He had been diagnosed with cancer, he said, forcing him to remain behind as his new-found friends left for Iraq.

Moody said his only option was to fight his illness. Finally, he was declared fit to fight.

"I was happy because I really wanted to be with my buddies in Iraq," he said.

Once arriving in Baghdad, the climate surprised him, Moody said. He was expecting a desert, like he saw at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

Moody's unit spends much of their time kicking in doors searching for bad guys, he said, conducting clearing operations and cordon and search missions.

He said he has come to enjoy his time in Iraq, taking in the scenery and doing what he has come to love.

With the fight for his life over, and gaining a love for his job, Moody said he now looks forward to continuing his services in Iraq and returning home.



(Photos by Pfc. William Hatton, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Spc. Michael Campbell, a chaplain's assistant with 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, provides security for Chaplain (Capt.) George Wallace as he talks with local school children as other Soldiers from the battalion search a school in a northern Baghdad neighborhood Feb. 15. Campbell, a native of Nixon, Mo., and Wallace, a native of Albany, Mo., went with the Soldiers to better understand what they go through during their missions.



A Soldier with 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, pulls security along a street in a northern Baghdad neighborhood searching for insurgent activity, Feb. 15.

## Strykers Soldiers Work, Baghdad Streets Safer

By Pfc. William Hatton  
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Soldiers walked the streets of a northern Baghdad neighborhood in an effort to provide enhanced safety and security and strengthen the relationship with local residents Feb. 15.

“We’re basically out here doing a courtesy search,” said Staff Sgt. Trevor Warrior, a squad leader with Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. “We’re searching to see if each resident has the appropriate amounts of weapons in the house, but at the same time just let them know we are here in the neighborhood trying to protect them.”

Warrior’s Squad went from house to house down numerous blocks, searching and meeting with Iraqi citizens to make the neighborhood safer.

The basic objective, Warrior said, is looking for bad guys.

“We make sure that everyone has no more than one AK47 (assault rifle) in the house,” said Warrior, a native of Alberta, Canada. “The law in Baghdad states that people are allowed to have only one AK-47 in their house. We just make sure people are

abiding by the rules.

“If we at least scare away the bad guys, then we’ve been successful,” Warrior added. “That’s all that really matters.”

“We’re doing more to establish a better U.S.-Iraqi relationship by going house to house and talking to people,” said Sgt. Chris Sherrill, a team leader with Warrior’s squad.

“Most people are happy that we’re here,” said Sherrill, a native of Charlotte, N.C. “They know that we’re impartial to whether they are Sunni, Shiite, or Kurdish.”

Despite the early acceptance shown by local residents, Sherrill knows the mission will take time to accomplish.

“In order for things to get better here, it’s going to take a little bit of time, and willingness for Iraqis to step up and take charge of their country,” Sherrill said. “I feel that it is possible, and that great improvements have been made towards Iraq becoming more independent, it’s just going to take time. It’s a long road, and there’s no other way to say it, really.”

Though no weapons were found and no insurgent suspects were detained on the mission, Warrior still considered it a success, he said, by simply having a presence on the streets and strengthening relationships with the Iraqi people.



Sgt. Chris Sherrill, a Charlotte, N.C., native and team leader with Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, plays with children outside a house while his squad searches inside during a security operation in a northern Baghdad neighborhood Feb. 15.



(Photos by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Steven Michaelis, a squad leader with Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, takes the point as his platoon moves down a street in Adhamiyah known as an IED "hot spot" Feb. 16.

## Taking back the streets:

# Black Falcons Put Boots on the Ground in Adhamiyah

By Sgt. Mike Pryor  
2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Like any advancing society, the roads in Baghdad are like the arteries of a heart, pumping vital supplies and equipment throughout the city. Similarly if troops can't travel on the roads, the heart stops beating.

Insurgents have preyed on that fact by placing deadly roadside bombs along routes used by all, making driving on the roads increasingly dangerous.

But in east Baghdad's Adhamiyah security district, paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team is partnered with the and the 2nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division and the 8th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division are taking back the streets.

The "Black Falcons" of the 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment are conducting foot patrols along the major avenues in Adhamiyah in order to deny insurgents the opportunity to set roadside bombs and disrupt their ability to move weapons and materials in and out of the area.

"It's going to put pressure on the bad guys, because we're out there all the time, and they know we're going to be looking for them," said Sgt. Eric Meinhardt, a squad leader with Battery B, from Summerville, S.C.

The Black Falcons, based at a joint U.S. – Iraqi combat outpost in the Rabi area, have been conducting constant patrols since their



Staff Sgt. Jeramie Schader, of Placerville, Calif., a squad leader with Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, directs vehicle movement at a traffic control point in Adhamiyah Feb. 16.

arrival in early February. This is the first time their area of operations has had a dedicated, constant coalition presence.

"(The insurgents) basically had a free pass on this road before, so the idea now is to really saturate it with 82nd guys," said 1st Lt. Josh Rowan of College Station, Texas, a platoon leader with B Battery.

On a recent patrol, Rowan's platoon of paratroopers moved easily along the streets, interacting with the local people. Whenever they shut down a section of the road, boys immediately poured out onto the street to

play soccer.

As they moved, the Paratroopers' eyes were constantly scanning, looking for anything out of the ordinary.

In addition to patrols, the Black Falcons are manning vehicle check points (VCPs), randomly selecting vehicles to be searched. The idea is to turn the tables on insurgents coming into the area and make it dangerous for them to travel on the roads, rather than coalition forces. Iraqis depend on the road networks as much as U.S. Forces.

"The hope is that, with VCPs, we'll be

able to catch (criminals) off guard," said Rowan.

On Feb. 14, the Black Falcons apprehended several men at a VCP who were traveling with four dead, mutilated bodies in their truck, apparently the victims of sectarian killings that have gripped this city and led to the troop "surge" that brought this brigade to Iraq.

Even when the paratroopers aren't physically out on the streets, they are still a threat to insurgents. The close proximity of their combat outpost to the main roads means they can respond to suspicious activity almost immediately.

"There's no point in our area of operations that is more than three kilometers away from the COP. If something happens, we can be there in minutes," said Lt. Col. Al Shoffner, the Black Falcons' commander.

When U.S. helicopters flying overhead saw men suspiciously digging holes by the side of a road in Rabi one night last week, they alerted the Black Falcons operations center.

A quick reaction force was scrambled and arrived on the scene quickly enough to capture the four men.

Rowan said he hopes such shows of force and the constant sight of paratroopers walking the streets sends a message to insurgents that they can't do their dirty work in Adhamiyah anymore.

"Hopefully they'll realize that we're going to do this 24-7," said Rowan. "They can't wait us out."

## Paratroopers Search Marketplace

By Sgt. Marcus Butler  
4th BCT (ABN), 25th Inf. Div. Public Affairs

KARMA, Iraq – Moving under the cover of darkness and the watchful eye of helicopters overhead, paratroopers loaded up in their vehicles on a mission to seek out sites containing improvised explosive device-making material in a market here.

Two platoons from Company B, 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division and two Marine canine teams conducted simultaneous cordon and searches Feb. 9 of a market area in order to deny anti-Iraqi forces a construction, distribution and storage area for the explosives.

The two platoons moved towards different areas of the market and put “Operation Chicken” into motion.

“Each platoon received one canine team and moved to their respective search areas by different routes,” said Capt. Eric Nylander, the Co. B commander.

After establishing blocking positions at each end of the market, the paratroopers dismounted and moved in to begin searching the area.

With bolt cutters in hand, the paratroopers moved shop to shop breaking locks, clearing the area and moving on to the next shop.

With the exception of occasional echoes from shotgun blasts to breach some of the shops’ doors and chatter from surprised Iraqis in their homes, the paratroopers moved stealthily through the mission.

Once a room had been cleared, it was searched thoroughly by other paratroopers with a canine team.

Running from shadow to shadow, the paratroopers moved through the mission swiftly with smooth efficiency.

“The mission was very effective and successful,” said 1st Lt. Caleb Curlin, a platoon leader for Co. B. “The paratroopers executed well during the mission

and completed it three hours faster than anticipated.”

Once the last shop was searched, the paratroopers collected all of the evidence from the raid and moved back to their base.



(Photo by Sgt. Marcus Butler, 4th BCT (ABN), 25th Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

**Spc. Eric Martinez, an infantryman assigned to Company B, 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment and a Hollywood, Calif., native, prepares to breach a door of a shop with a shotgun during a raid of a market in Karma, Iraq Feb. 9.**



(U.S. Army photo)

## One, two, three, four...

**Spc. Charles Kindstrand, from Company B, 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division sits with an Iraqi child and helps him count using candy. Kindstrand, a Lillington, N.C., native was on patrol gathering information from the residents in Karma, Iraq.**



(Photo by Maj. Eric Verzola, 4th BCT (ABN), 25th Inf. Div. PAO)

**Iraqi police officers from the Babil and Karbala provinces practice firing their weapons under the watchful eye of the Iraqi police liaison officers, law enforcement officers from the United States, during the Iraq police sustainment training program at FOB Kalsu from Feb. 1-10.**

## Iraqi Police Train To Lead, Protect

By Maj. Eric Verzola  
4th BCT (ABN), 25th Inf. Div. PAO

KALSU, Iraq – Iraqi policemen from the Babil and Karbala provinces took a big step on the journey towards Provincial Iraqi Control here Feb. 10.

The Iraqi police stations across the Babil and Karbala provinces sent 20 dedicated, experienced officers to the forward operating base here to attend the Iraqi police sustainment training program. After 10 days, the officers graduated the course having gained valuable knowledge to provide advanced instruction to fellow officers at their home stations.

“The training was very, very good. I learned so much in this program,” said Raheed Shahid, from the Iskandariyah police station. “God willing, we will assist in a better future here in Iraq.”

The training program’s goal is to help Iraqi police officers maintain law enforcement proficiency at the fundamental and supervisory levels. Its long term goal is to provide advanced instruction in order to increase their proficiency in their law enforcement skills, explained Capt. John Shaw, the officer in charge of the IPST program and provost marshal for the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division.

The instructors in the program, or Iraqi police liaison officers, were from various locations in the United States. The IPLOs were excited about contributing to the war on terror as instructors in the program.

“It is very exciting and a great honor to be part of this program,” said Robert Spencer, a native of Sumter, S.C. and a sheriff in the Sumter County Sheriffs Department. “These IPs are making history by being here and completing this inaugural course.”

“When I found out that there was an opportunity to make a difference with the IP force and help them to reach another level in law enforcement, I took advantage of it,” said Troy Cox, an IPLO and investigator from the Atlanta Police Department. “We (IPLOs) gain a lot from this experience as instructors. It has been an absolutely great experience. By teaching here, we learn. We come away seeing law enforcement in a different aspect.”

Achieving Provincial Iraqi Control requires an effective Iraqi security force.

The program can make the difference in the country’s journey to PIC with the Iraqi police providing effective law enforcement capabilities and an endearing loyalty to the government and people of Iraq, said Col. Michael Garrett, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division.

“These brave men have shown that they will do what is necessary to provide rule of law to the Iraqi citizens in their respective provinces,” Garrett said at the graduation ceremony. “Their commitment to Iraq and dedication to duty as peace officers is evident in the efforts they made to reach this graduation day. It is an honor to be in their presence.”

# Humor, History Mix in Black History Month Observance

By Spc. Chris McCann  
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — Many performers show support for the troops by playing concerts in various theaters of operation. But in celebration of Black History Month, Camp Striker, Iraq was treated to a show by a band that has been around since 1964.

“The Temptations” — actually a group of Soldiers of Troop D, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) — sang and danced in honor of the day, and Soldiers of that troop also re-enacted Rosa Parks’ refusal to give up her bus seat and the assassination of Malcolm X.

The theme for the annual celebration this year was “From Slavery to Freedom: Africans in the Americas.” Command Sgt.

Maj. Spencer Gray, a native of Thomaston, Geo., and the command sergeant major for the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd BCT, was the keynote speaker at the celebration, and called to mind all those who have struggled for the rights of African Americans in the United States, including former presidents John F. Kennedy and Harry Truman.

“This celebration gives Soldiers the opportunity to celebrate African-American heritage month,” he said. “This means a lot — even with the struggles of African-Americans, there are people without whom we couldn’t have done it,” he said, speaking of the strides made in equality. “Lincoln, Kennedy — everybody had a part of this just cause.”

“The military has evolved greatly,” Gray said, speaking of the desegregation after the American Civil War and the fact that black Soldiers were often steered into support occupations, even until recently. “The mindset has changed now.

In every branch, you have African Americans. ... We’ve been serving side-by-side with our majority counterparts in the U.S. military.”

He cautioned that African-American Soldiers cannot rest on what has been done before.

“Whatever took place in the past, it was a bad deal,” he said. “But don’t make that negativity a focus. We’ve got to push on, and it’s okay to struggle.”

The re-enactment of Rosa Parks’ watershed refusal to surrender her bus seat to a white passenger was played out by Trp. D, 1-89 Soldiers using chairs as bus seats. As Pfc. Jackie Jones, a Spartanburg, S.C. native and a communications specialist with Trp. D, was hustled off the stage by Soldiers playing police officers, a narrator spoke about the year-long Montgomery Bus Boycott that came about because of her courage and the civil rights movement of the 60’s that found its precipitating factor in her refusal.

Soldiers also re-enacted the assassination of Malcolm X by members of the Nation of Islam, and spoke about his legacy of promoting equality between the races.

Spc. Jenna Maravillas, a native of Lake in the Hills, Ill., and an information systems specialist for 2nd BCT, sang Mariah Carey’s “A Hero Lives In You” as a tribute.

“I was asked to perform by Sgt 1st Class (Anthony) Drayton, the brigade’s equal opportunity representative,” said Maravillas. “I had wanted to sing it for the Fourth of July, so I brought it up to him and he said it would be nice as a dedication.”

Staff Sgt. Nikkii Courtland, a native of Columbia, S.C. and a brigade aviation element noncommissioned officer in charge, commented on the importance of the observance.

“Black History Month is important, because it recognizes the accomplishments of African-Americans that are not duly noted in the history books. But it shouldn’t just be a month — it should be every day.”

Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, a native of Lockhart, Texas, and the equal opportunity representative for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BCT, said she enjoyed the performances.

“I particularly liked it because it showed that the Soldiers are knowledgeable about history because they came up with the skits themselves. I think it really illustrated to the other Soldiers that Rosa Parks isn’t just a name in a history book, she was a real person. And their struggles, while they might have been before most Soldiers’ times, were real and continue to have real repercussions for us today.”



(Photo by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs)

**“The Temptations” - a group of Soldiers of Troop D, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) - perform a song and dance number at a Black History Month observance Feb. 17 at Camp Striker, Iraq. The number was led by Pfc. Rodger Jones, a native of Chicago, at front.**

## Observance Recognizes African-Americans Throughout History

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins  
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — Soldiers of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade gathered for a time of remembrance and, for some, a time of learning during a Black History Month program Feb. 15 in Taji, Iraq.

Among those in attendance were Traverse City, Mich., native Col. Daniel Shanahan, 1st ACB’s commander and Stamps, Ark., native Col. Aundre F. Piggee, commander of the 15th Sustainment Brigade.

Baton Rouge, La., native Lt. Col. Charles Dalcourt Jr., the deputy brigade commander of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade was the keynote speaker. He discussed the significance of African Americans’ roles in the military and creating a free nation.

“It is my belief that no story told of or pertinent to the introduction, integration, exploitation and liberation of Africans in America could be considered complete without addressing the role African Americans have played in establishing America, defending Old Glory or



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

**Cake and finger foods were served to Soldiers of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division after the Black History Month program at Camp Taji, Iraq, Feb. 15. The keynote speaker, Baton Rouge, La., native Lt. Col. Charles Dalcourt Jr., the deputy brigade commander, cut the first piece.**

raising our nation through the profession of arms,” Dalcourt said during his remarks.

Along with Dalcourt’s speech, there was

a reading of this year’s observance proclamation, a display of famous African Americans’ pictures and biographies and a short excerpt

of the film “Glory.”

The film excerpt showed the efforts of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, a Black unit who fought for the Union in the assault on Fort Wagner during the Civil War.

“I saw that movie, but that was several years ago and seeing it again really makes you think about the sacrifices of the black Soldiers [who] came before us,” said DuPont, Wash., native Spc. Misha Argall, an S-1 clerk for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st CD.

Soldiers in attendance felt the program covered a wide range of topics concerning African Americans.

“They talked about every instance. It wasn’t just military. They talked about both sides as far as just being yourself — being a people,” said Los Angeles native Staff Sgt. Kelly Coleman, the battle noncommissioned officer in charge for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB.

# Soldier Sees Need for Shoes, Students Respond

By Spc. L.B. Edgar,  
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD – Sick of seeing Iraqis walking through the war-torn neighborhoods of Iraq's capital without shoes, he wondered what one Soldier could do to help cover the naked feet of so many.

Then it came to Lt. Col. Robert Colfer, who teaches history to 9th, 10th and 11th graders at Marblehead High School, of Marblehead, Mass., when not activated from the Army Reserve – get his students involved.

“Shoes for Iraqis” was born.

“Last spring I got in touch with some of my students after driving out in sector and seeing a lot of kids without shoes. I thought that a shoe drive would be a good thing,” said the native of Newbury, Mass. “I already knew a lot of kids who were interested in this type of thing. I contacted them and found some volunteer students who agreed to honcho a shoe-drive effort.”

Colfer, who is an intelligence advisor for the military transition team assigned to 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, said the shoe drive has more than exceeded his expectations.

At the start of the school year in August, organizers of the drive had collected 200 pairs of shoes. By October the number was 450. A couple of months later, 2,200 pairs of shoes were ready to be shipped to Iraq for its shoeless citizens, Colfer said.

The shoe drive was so successful its organizers faced the challenge of shipping a mountain of shoes. The community of Marblehead banded together and started contributing. Fund raisers worked with the Veteran's of Foreign Wars of Marblehead,



(Photo by Spc. L.B. Edgar, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

**Iraqi Army troops from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division unload boxes of shoes at the Hamid Shaban Girl's School in Baghdad's Abu Ghraib district Feb. 15. The shoes were sent from Marblehead High School, of Marblehead, Mass., as part of the “Shoes for Iraqis” fundraiser to a teacher of the school who serves on 2nd Battalion's military transition team. Lt. Col. Robert Colfer of Newbury, Mass., who teaches history to 9th, 10th and 11th graders when not activated from the Army Reserve, came up with the idea last year and the program has sent several thousand pairs of shoes to needy Iraqis.**

Colfer said.

However, the cost was so great the drive's organizers spread word of the need for monetary support.

“This was publicized. The story was out there that the school was struggling to raise shipping costs and an anonymous donor

walked into the high school and wrote a check for \$1,433 and walked out,” Colfer explained.

Thanks to the anonymous contributor, the organizers had the funds to ship the shoes and immediately employed teams of students to fill boxes. The teams packed 70 boxes of

shoes and filled out a customs card for each, before sending the shoes down range to Colfer's unit, he said.

Colfer and his fellow Soldiers placed the shoes in family-sized bags and then supervised their distribution by Iraqi Army soldiers in their Baghdad sector, he said.

According to Colfer, humanitarian assistance missions such as the distribution of shoes are new to the Iraqi Army. The point is to convince the people the Iraqi Army exists to serve the people of Iraq, Colfer said.

“The important thing is that they see the Iraqi Army doing this. Before we go out all of the H-Aid (humanitarian assistance) and shoes are loaded onto Iraqi Army trucks, so it's the Iraqi Army distributing it,” Colfer said. “They see their own soldiers handing things out, and really all the IA is asking for is a little cooperation and a little trust. I think with things like this, a little goes a long way.”

Distributing the shoes is also a benefit in the mission to gather intelligence. Colfer and his unit put tip cards in many of the shoes for Iraqis, so they can share pertinent information with the Iraqi security forces, he said.

“I think you're planting a seed. I think the great thing here is all the Iraqi Army is asking for is a little cooperation and a little trust,” Colfer said.

The immediate practical benefit of distributing shoes may be outweighed by the gesture's effect in gradually changing the minds of the Iraqi people about the Iraqi Army, Colfer said.

“I've got the easy part. I just had the idea. I successfully drafted from some students and they went to town with it,” said the teacher and Soldier, who will return to his teaching duties after demobilizing. “It's been a good thing for everybody.”

## Nursing Graduates Mark Health Care Progress

By Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie  
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs

VICTORY BASE COMPLEX, Iraq — Before Saddam Hussein was in power, Iraq thrived with an excellent health care system. The nurses were well educated and highly respected until Hussein proclaimed the field of nursing unnecessary.

Recently, 18 Iraqi women have defied Saddam's words by successfully graduating from the first Preparatory Iraqi Nursing Course at the Civil Military Operations Center located in the Victory Base Complex in Baghdad Feb. 19.

“This is happy day for me,” said Amel Hadi, a PINC graduate. “I always wanted to be able to help people and now I can.”

The six-week course provided lessons in basic health care. PINC Students learned cardiopulmonary resuscitation, wound dressing and care and how to check vital signs. And being that most of the women who attended the class have children, family planning and the male and female reproductive system lessons were taught.

“This class is designed to teach basic medical skills, but also empower the women,” said Air Force Capt. Samantha Elmore, a PINC director and native of Sacramento, Calif. “I hope this class will help them find a job and take care of their family.”

Currently, Iraq is critically short of nurses. Typically, there are four nurses for each doctor; however, Iraq has only one nurse for every 100 doctors.

“We developed the PINC because we wanted to repair the physician structures in Iraq,” said Maj. Darrin Frye, a PINC director and native of West Palm Beach, Fla. “When Saddam was in power, he thought technology could solve medical problems, but when the electricity went out, the patients could not be taken care of. We want to staff the medical facilities with nurses, so they can treat the patients.”

One of the goals of the class was to reach Iraqi women who live in rural communities and teach them basic nursing skills so they can take care of others.

Although the Iraqi women were afforded an opportunity to learn basic health skills, they struggled with terrorist threats during the course.

“One of our students received death threats,” said Dr. Ahlam Turki, a cultural advisor for the class. “Terrorists told her she would be beaten until she bled and then taken back to her family to see.”

The student who was threatened did not let the threats of terrorists stop her from pursuing her dream of becoming a nurse.

The class offered many of the students an opportunity of a lifetime.

“This is my first class since middle school,” said Madha Alawi Hussein, a 38-year-old PINC student. “I have never been (afforded) the chance to go to class since I was a girl. I am very happy.”

Graduates of the PINC will have the opportunity to attend advanced nursing classes in the future. More PINC classes will be held at the CMOC, periodically.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI))

**Eftaker Ali, a nursing student, studies before taking the Preparatory Iraqi Nursing Course final exam at the Civil Military Operations Center at the Victory Base Complex in Baghdad.**

# Cav Teens 'Cowboy Up' in Belton

By Amanda Kim Stairrett  
Killeen Daily Herald

BELTON, Texas — Rodnetria Cooper had one thought when she found out the 1st Cavalry Division's Teen Family Readiness Group was going to the PRCA rodeo in Belton on Feb. 10.

"Lame."

After sitting in the Bell County Expo Center for a few hours with more than 70 1st Cavalry Division teenagers, Cooper changed her mind.

"I like it," she said. "It's fun."

It was their first rodeo, but there was, after all, food. And music. And shopping — don't forget the shopping. Among the vendors who set up at the rodeo, one thing caught the eyes of Cooper and her friends.

Cooper, Ronisha Allen, Rodnesha Cooper, Nakita Wilson, Shaniqua Morton, Sequoia Morton and Courtney Flemming went out to take a look at the vendors and each came back wearing a white cowboy hat with a pink bandanna wrapped around the band.

All agreed that they were going to start wearing their hats and all agreed that the rodeo was a lot better than they expected. Wilson even said she loved it.

The outing was the first for the 1st Cavalry's Teen Family Readiness Group, which was created to reach out to teenagers of deployed First Team soldiers, said Col. Larry Phelps, the rear commander.

The rear command hosts meetings for spouses and events like November's Fall Fest, but there was really nothing for the teenage demographic. Events like the rodeo gave them a chance to get together, have fun and share their experiences, Phelps said.

Wilson said she liked getting to meet new people at Saturday's rodeo.

Division officials have been talking about forming a teen group for a few months, Phelps said, and attending the rodeo would be a good first event. It was most of the teens' and the



(Photo by David Morris, Killeen Daily Herald)

**Members of the 1st Cavalry Division's Teen Family Readiness Group acknowledge applause when introduced prior to a rodeo at the Bell County Expo Center in Belton, Texas Feb. 10. More than 70 teenagers, sons and daughters of deployed First Team troops, attended the event**

11 chaperones' — senior noncommissioned officers, brigade rear commanders, chaplains and family readiness group leaders — first time at a rodeo.

"They're as new to rodeos as I am," Phelps, who has attended once before, said. "If nothing else, it's great exposure to something so central Texas."

Phelps is looking for 1st Cavalry teenagers to tell him

what they want to do for future events, he said.

It was good for the teens to get out of a military environment, too. Members of the crowd recognize the sacrifices these kids and their families make, Phelps said, so it was a "great shot in the arm" for them.

The group even got an appreciative applause from the crowd before the events started.

# Home Front Celebrates Black History Program

By Amanda Kim Stairrett  
Killeen Daily Herald

FORT HOOD, Texas - Sgt. 1st Class Natasha D. Hartley is not much taller than 5 feet, yet her soulful voice commanded the attention of a room full of Soldiers Feb. 15 at the Ironhorse II Dining Facility, and even moved some of them to tears.

Workers at the dining facility gathered around to hear Hartley sing "For Every Mountain," during the 1st Cavalry Division's Black History Month celebration. When the sergeant was done, crowd members jumped to their feet and applauded, and some gave her performance an appreciative, "amen" or "hallelujah."

The celebration included a meal of "soul food," said Staff Sgt. Tracey Wallace, with the division's Equal Opportunity office, with things like fried chicken, barbecue chicken and ribs, ham hocks, pigs feet, collard greens, corn on the cob, red rice and rice, sweet potatoes, cornbread and sweet potato pie.

The office coordinated the event at the dining facility so participants could eat some Southern cooking and celebrate Black History Month, Wallace added.

From the singer to the guest speaker, the



(Photo by Spc. William Grove, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

**Brenda Coley speaks at a Black History Month celebration Feb. 15, while members of the 1st Cavalry Division rear command, Col. DeWayne Brewer, division chaplain; Command Sgt. Maj. Brad Wallace, senior noncommissioned officer; Col. Larry Phelps, commander; Lt. Col. Archie Davis, deputy commander; and Maj. Carl Womack, 15th Brigade Support Brigade commander, listen.**

celebration was full of inspiration messages. Brenda Coley is the executive director of human resources for Metroplex Health System and was the first black president of

the Killeen Independent School District Board of Trustees, but said she didn't come to the ceremony to tell a typical story about a disadvantaged person who overcame adver-

sity because that's not something she relates to.

Instead, she wanted to speak about how those in attendance could make a difference in the community and world around them.

Coley doesn't usually accept speaking engagements during Black History Month, she said, because she is simply a leader who happens to be black. She talked about success and said it was not measured by what a person has, but the obstacles that person overcame.

"People are always blaming circumstances for what they are," she said, adding that she doesn't believe in that. People are the directors, screen writers and stars of their own lives, Coley added, and they decide whether it is a smash or a flop.

Too often, people say, "someday," she said, and unfortunately that someday never comes. No matter what, they can enjoy life right now, she added.

She quoted a Christian writer, saying that what a people are survives them and can never be buried. Coley would like to be remembered as an honest, good person with a caring heart who did the right thing for the right reasons.

"What would you like your legacy to be," she asked the Soldiers.

# Comedy Tour Comes to Baghdad "In Living Color"

By Maj. Sean Ryan  
2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div. PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq — The USO-sponsored comedy tour headlining David Alan Grier with fellow comedians Kevin Avery and Kristopher Tinkle was the talk of the FOB here all week, and tickets were in high demand for the Feb. 10 show.

The performers didn't disappoint, as those in the packed house were rolling with laughter after every 30-minute set, with Grier commanding the stage for the last set.

It was definitely an adults only show, as Grier's topics ranged from divorce to running his first and only marathon, and concluding with his soulful 1960s version of "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

Spc. Latoya Roberts, a resident of Anniston, Ala., and personnel clerk, said she was really excited about the show.

"I was shocked to find out the comedians were coming to FOB Loyalty since it has a reputation of being dangerous due to constant mortar fire. The show was very entertaining and I thought David Alan Grier was a real people person," she said. "He even gave me the same t-shirt he was wearing on stage."

Grier, despite being nominated in 1981 for a Tony Award for his portrayal of Jackie Robinson, found his greatest success in the 1990s television series, "In Living Color," which produced other Hollywood stars such as Jim Carrey, Jennifer Lopez and Jamie Foxx.

The former Detroit native and graduate of the University of Michigan was approached by the USO to come to Iraq to visit the troops and convinced both Avery and Tinkle to join him. Grier said he tricked Avery to come here but said the comedians are close friends, despite Avery's reluctance to fly.

The flight was extra long for Grier, as he had recently flown coast-to-coast in the states before leaving on his current trip. Grier said he currently has a few individual projects going on, to include working on his own production company and has worked with both Avery and Tinkle in the past.

Tinkle, an unlikely substitute teacher based out of San Francisco, started the show and discussed his students, lack of knowledge on most subjects teachers should know and a lack of a monogamous relationship.

Staff Sgt. Kevin Lee, an engineer with the 2nd BCT and resident of Clanton, Ala., thought it was a great show and a tremendous boost for morale. Lee said the show really gave



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Bronco Suzuki, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

**David Alan Grier performs for Soldiers in a packed house at Forward Operating Base Loyalty in eastern Baghdad Feb. 10 as part of a USO comedy tour.**

the Soldiers something to do besides the typical missions and never thought a big-time entertainer like Grier, would come to Iraq. He was really impressed with Tinkle as well, though he had not heard of him before.

"Everyone I talked to had a great time and really enjoyed the show," he said.

Avery, who grew up in the San Francisco area and later moved to Alabama, attended Tuskegee University. He studied drama, but came back to comedy after he couldn't remember his lines in serious roles and found himself improvising. His act contained bits about trying to be more of a

thug in Oakland and having a voice that didn't coincide with his race.

After the show, the three relaxed with the Soldiers on stage and conducted a meet-and-greet to sign autographs and take photos. After the meet-and-greet, Grier and company went to the dining facility and enjoyed ice cream before their flight, and said they were extremely pleased to be a part of the tour and perform for the Soldiers.

Some Soldiers, just in from missions, had to do double-takes and couldn't believe they were hanging out with the three entertainers while eating a late dinner.

## America Discovers British Comic as He Discovers Us

Inappropriate.

If someone asked me to describe the movie *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* in one word that is what I would say. Inappropriate.

However, we live in a world where seeing someone jump off a rooftop into a vat of pudding or get hit in the family jewels with a football is funny.

For years, there has been "dead baby" and "ditz blonde" jokes. These all can be construed as offensive. It just depends on your state of mind when you hear them. For the most part, we laugh.

That is the category that this Golden Globe-winning movie is in. You know it is going to be full of stupid, off-color humor and yet you are strangely drawn in.

The main character is Borat, a Kazakhstan journalist played by British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen. He is trying to enlighten his country by going to the "great U.S. and A" and bringing back an edu-

**Random Reviews**

**Sgt. Nicole Kojetin**



cational documentary.

Leaving behind his mother, prostitute sister, angry wife and the town rapist, Borat makes his way to the land of opportunity. First stop... New York City.

The sidewalks were bustling and Borat was a little overwhelmed trying to greet all the people with what we all call "the man-kiss."

Most Americans like me, have personal space issues.

Do not come within 18 inches or you will get a mouthful of fist. Aggressive, but my personal space bubble should be free of

debris.

This is what the friendly Borat walks into.

Much of this film is done without the other "actors" knowing that they are in a film.

So, we have real, unsuspecting citizens threatening to punch Borat in the nose. It was pretty humorous.

The anti-Semitic journalist then has his first experience with American TV and falls in love with the voluptuous, Baywatch babe Pamela Anderson. A few days later, he gets informed his wife had died and with his obese producer Azamat Bagatov, played by Ken Davitian, by his side, Borat makes it his quest to make Anderson his new "virgin bride."

This unlikely match makes for quite a few laughs except one disturbing part. When I say disturbing... I mean that when you close your eyes you see the horror on the insides of your eyelids! It is worse than accidentally walking in on your parents being

intimate.

Much, much worse!

Let me warn you, so you know when to hit the fast forward button. Borat comes out of the shower and catches his fat partner naked and enjoying a magazine featuring Borat's dream girl, Pamela, a little too much.

Borat becomes enraged, loses his towel and tackles the man.

Oh the horror! The poses! I shudder as I type this.

These two guys rolling around in the nude — attempting to fight (for air, at times) — was by far more sickening than any Jackass segment. The only thing that saved me from having nightmares is the fact that I was watching a bad bootleg version of the movie. Mercifully, it wasn't very vivid. Ick.

I'm not going to recommend or not recommend this video. If the synopsis, tickles your fancy, watch it.

I'll tell you one thing: I won't watch it again.

(Two out of five stars)

# Technology Helps Soldiers Stay Close to Loved Ones

By Pfc. Benjamin Gable  
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – “Snail mail” is quickly becoming a thing of the past for deployed Soldiers thanks to the 1st Cavalry Division’s commitment to keeping families close through video teleconferences (VTCs).

“The guys love using the VTC capabilities here and we stay busy all the time,” said Staff Sgt. David Beach, a cable system installer with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, and non-commissioned officer-in-charge of the division’s VTC program.

VTC isn’t new to Iraq. The 1st Cavalry Division furnished the capability in Operation Iraqi Freedom II, almost four years ago. It is used for operational purposes, FRG meetings by the command and is a tool to keep Soldiers in contact with loved ones back home. Before this option was available, Soldiers were forced to wait the one to two weeks for a letter in the mail or wait in long lines to use phones.

Though not new, improvements in technology have made VTC operations better.

“Everything is better this time around,” said Sgt. Michael Cooper, a common ground station



(Photo by Pfc. Benjamin Gable, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

**Staff Sgt. Lorenzo Antley, a military intelligence analyst from Orangeburg, S.C., with the Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, speaks with his family at Fort Hood Feb. 4 via video teleconference in the division headquarters’ “Stetson Room.”**

operator with the division’s headquarters.

“Now we have a reliable internet, cell phones and we can sign up to use the VTC to see our friends and family back home,” added the Killeen, Texas native. “This is a great benefit for all deployed Soldiers.”

Using the VTC is simple. It’s available

to any Soldier assigned or attached to a 1st Cavalry Division unit.

After a Soldier informs his chain of command, arrangements are made with the family in the rear and a time and date are set.

There is typically a short waiting period to allow coordination with the rear detach-

ment.

Then, when the time comes, a Soldier simply shows up at the division main headquarters between the hours of 10 p.m. and 9 a.m.

Each Soldier gets 15 minutes to speak with loved ones in the “Stetson Room.”

“This is an important tool for Soldiers because it builds more moral when they can actually see their loved ones, instead of just speaking with them over phone or internet,” said Beach, a native of Chickamauga, Ga..

The program has been a popular one, Beach said. The division main is averaging 40 VTC’s a month. Holidays are the busiest times, Beach added.

Soldiers and family members benefit from the program.

“Last time I was deployed I didn’t talk to my family for eight months,” said Staff Sgt. Lorenzo Antley, a military intelligence analyst from Orangeburg, S.C., assigned to the division headquarters.

“Being able to see my wife and children now keeps me motivated and ready to get back in the fight. They also get a chance to see me and know I am doing fine,” he added.

Antley said he will continue to use the program throughout the year, making this deployment to Iraq better than his last.

## Hoping Barry Gets the Boot from Baseball

On July 20, 1976 Henry Aaron connected off California Angel right-hander Dick Drago for his 755th, and final, home run of his career. Aaron, a Milwaukee Brewer for his final two seasons, played sparingly the rest of the season and didn’t reach the fences again.

Barry Bonds reported for spring training with a new \$15-million one-year contract and growing clouds of suspicion of illegal steroid use and potential grand jury indictment. The man who has hit more home runs in his 40s (Bonds) returns to center stage in San Francisco just 21 home runs shy of “Hammerin’ Hank’s” career record.

My first hope for this upcoming Major League Baseball season is that Bonds doesn’t make it.

The steroid generation of superstar baseball players, headed by Bonds but including other notables like Rafael Palmeiro, Jose Canseco, Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire – who collectively could do a commercial endorsing better living through chemistry – has the average baseball fan scratching their heads wondering how good these guys would have been *without* the juice.

Without a doubt, they all had talent – but 70-plus homerun talent in a season (66 for Sosa)? I don’t think so. Not without the needle.

The voters for the baseball Hall of Fame took one look at Mark McGwire’s first look at induction into the shrine and shouted a collective, “Next!” Palmeiro comes up for consideration next year. Even with 3,000 hits and 500 home runs, “Raffy” is toast.

Jose Canseco has done his utmost to stay in the public eye

### Trigger Pull

Master Sgt.  
Dave Larsen



since the wayward ‘Bash Brother’s’ tell-all book put some of baseball’s best under the microscope.

Let’s see: there was a comeback attempt, as a pitcher (!) in some California semi-pro league and a starring role in a reality TV show. Next up, I think Jose will a) make an appearance on *Fear Factor* (eating live worms is sort of like sports, isn’t it?); b) lose all his money on

day one of the *World Series of Poker*; c) jump in the back of the line with a cast of thousands and claim paternity of Anna Nicole Smith’s baby girl; or d) all of the above.

Sammy Sosa, believe it or not, is attempting to make a comeback with the Texas Rangers.

He signed a minor league deal and is hoping his slowing bat can catch back up to major league heat again.

Based on his 2005 performance with the Baltimore Orioles (.221 batting average and only 14 dingers), I doubt that Sammy found the Fountain of Youth or improved the ever-widening hole in his swing facing a pitching machine.

Sammy started with the Rangers, signed by them as a speedy, gangly teen from the Dominican Republic.

It really costs the Rangers nothing to bring Sosa to spring training, maybe generating the interest of more snow birds in the process.

Speaking of spring training arrivals, most everyone got there on time this year, except the habitually tardy Manny Ramirez from the Boston Red Sox. I think it’s an allergy thing for him that doesn’t clear up until March.

With the suitors of spring lining up in Florida and Arizona for the grand prize, a World Series title, I can only hope that my Milwaukee Brewers can break the .500-mark for the first time in 14 years.

That brings us back to Bonds, the man who’s chasing the record that Ruth built, but Aaron owns. My biggest hope for the coming baseball season remains that Barry Bonds gets the boot from baseball before he can reach the record books.

**Henry Aaron batting during spring training April 1, 1955. This photo is posted in the Milwaukee Braves exhibit on the Wisconsin Historical Society website, <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org>.**