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

Helping Heal in Sadr City

Maj. Joe Johnson, of Miami, Fla., brigade surgeon for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, treats a patient during a joint U.S. - Iraqi medical operation in Sadr City, Baghdad March 17. (For story see Page 22)



(U.S. Army Photo)

Iraqi National Police gather around a weapons cache found in Sadr City in Baghdad March 24.

Cache Found in Sadr City

2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — Iraqi security forces operating in the Sadr City area of the Iraqi capital discovered a large weapons cache March 24.

Iraqi security forces of the 2nd Battalion, 8th Brigade, 2nd Division of the Iraqi National Police and 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment (AIR), 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division conducted operations in Sadr City in their efforts to secure the area from militia extremists.

The Iraqi National Police received a tip from an Iraqi citizen about the location of a weapons cache. The National Police and coalition forces investigated the tip and found a weapons cache containing 470 anti-tank mines.

Families, Soldiers Gather for Town Hall on Fort Hood

By Sgt. Joy Pariente
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – More than 300 1st Cavalry Division families and Soldiers gathered at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center, March 21, to ask the downrange leadership some questions about their deployed troops during the First Team's monthly Town Hall forum.

This month's speaker was Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Johndrow, Multi-National Division and the First Team's command sergeant major, 1st Cav. Div. He answered questions from the audience about medical care, Iraqi security forces and when families might expect their Soldiers home.

Many questions revolved around the possibility of an early homecoming for the First Team. Johndrow replied that he hadn't



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

Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Johndrow, the senior non-commissioned officer for MND-B, alongside his ever-present sidekick, the 'Cav Kid,' conducts a live Town Hall meeting via satellite with family members at Fort Hood March 21.

heard anything about the possibility of that.

Audience members were also curious about the Iraqi security forces.

"They've grown in leaps and bounds,"

Johndrow said. "They continue to progress and improve every day." In addition to training, First Team Soldiers have been working at the Joint Security Stations with Iraqis and coalition forces in order to get out on the street and build a partnership with the locals to get tips on suspected terrorist operations.

Johndrow also touched on the combat hospitals and the Soldiers he's spent time with there. He said these Soldiers are most concerned with how their fellow Soldiers are doing and making sure they get to recover and stay downrange in the fight. Few injured Soldiers want to be evacuated, Johndrow said. In the Soldiers' eyes "they came over as a team and made a commitment to go home as a team," Johndrow explained.

As per popular audience request, Johndrow described to the crowd what a day in the life of their Soldier was like. He

explained how busy the entire division has been. He ensured families that this was the reason they weren't hearing from loved ones as often as they did at the beginning of the deployment. And he thanked the families for their support while "playing mom and dad and keeping the home fires burning."

March's Town Hall was finished with videos and photo slideshows from Iraq, and an informative segment from the director of Army Knowledge Online, Col. James Barrineau. Barrineau came to encourage more family members to join the AKO network. AKO offers more secure email as well as instant and video messaging that's easily accessible to family members and Soldiers downrange, Barrineau said.

Town Hall forums are open to all members of the 1st Cav family monthly at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center.

An Easter Tale: How the World, Easter Came to Be

By **Chaplain (Lt. Col) Steve Walsh**
Multi-National Division - Baghdad Chaplain

"Every time you eat this bread and drink from this cup you proclaim the lord's death until he comes." I Cor 11:26

I.

Before the mists of time in a place known only to God there lived a mighty angel. An angel so awesome, so attractive, so beautiful, so wise and so filled with power that he was reverently called the "shining one" which means Lucifer.

One day, the shining one sat alone brooding when a cherub called Shira asked him, "Why do you not join the other angels in worship?"

"I worship in my own way," the shining one answered. "But we miss your sweet voice," Shira responded tenderly causing Lucifer to shrug off Shira's touch.

"Not now, I am trying to understand." "What is there to understand my prince? We are all in all and God is good."

"Everything is not good," Lucifer murmured. "God has lied, He is not all powerful as he says. If God is all powerful he should be able to do all things, he should be able to die."

"What is it to die?"

"It is something I have realized must exist. It is the ability to cease."

Shira laughed, "God cannot cease."

"If God cannot cease, if even for a moment, then he does not have all powers. If God is all powerful he would know about death and could do this thing. So it follows that if our God does not possess all powers then it's possible there might be another God who does," Lucifer explained. "Another spirit being with powers that God does not have."

II.

Word of Lucifer's theory spread among the seraphim and cherubim who each debated the proposition. When the time came for the great angel council to convene they gathered in an assembly in the throne-room of God who said, "Approach Lucifer and speak that which we already know."

"You know of death?"

"Of its possibility. Death is only a possibility not an actuality," God responded.

"Can you die?" There was silence.

"I submit to this assembly that by his silence, God admits that he cannot die" Lucifer boldly asserted and continued to present the logic of death and his challenge in a dramatic testimony. "If you are the most powerful and almighty God of Gods and Lord of Lords it should be easy enough to make yourself die, if even for just a flicker."

A third of the angelic host nodded in

agreement. Instantly Michael, the council's ruling angel, raised his voice, "Lucifer you have deliberately created this false syllogism for the purpose of casting doubt upon the voracity of God."

Lucifer retorted, "I have no agenda other than to present a possibility which I have asked be answered. If death can exist, then God should be able to die. If he cannot die then he is not all powerful."

The shining one turned to the assembly with his hands upraised. "I seek only to discover the truth, nothing more."

"You are a revulsion to all that is holy," Michael replied moving forward. "You have created the idea of death and now challenge the triune God to answer your preposterous claim. God has nothing to prove to you."

"How do you know this?" Lucifer said.

"I will tell you how," Michael said. "Because in him is nothing but truth and life, not this revolting proposition you call death. Have you no shame?"

"Then why does he keep secrets from us? If death be possible, why has he not told us?"

Michael responded, "How you have fallen from heaven! You have said in your heart, I will raise my throne above the stars of God and I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." Michael pointed outward, "Depart Lucifer. You have removed yourself from this assembly by your scheme to trap God with a sly riddle. You have separated yourself by creating death in a world that knows only life. You must now suffer the disconnection that is the consequences of your scheme."

"I am not responsible for death," Lucifer hissed. "I only posed its possibility."

"Liar, death is your invention and now you create a lie to deceive us of your innocence."

There was an instant hush among the assembly as Lucifer turned to the billions of angel spirits surrounding him and shouted, "Hear me. I now pronounce that death exists and that God has known about death but has kept it hidden from us so that we would not learn that he does not have the power to die. If he is not all powerful then he is not God. You have been deceived." And instantly Lucifer disappeared, taking with him a third of the heavenly angels.

III.

Alone, and in the stillness of sacred contemplation God spoke to his heart.

"Let us use Lucifer's logic to magnify our love and ultimately answer his challenge. We must first create a world that has the capacity to die."

And so God thought of all the billions and billions of details necessary to create the world

he envisioned. "When Lucifer sees what we have created, he will rush to inject his death into it and he will unknowingly set about a series of events that will result in his undoing. Through our greatest creation - man."

"Lucifer will deceive man as he deceived the angels and death will be introduced into the world. Yet it will be through a man that death will be ultimately be conquered. I will become a man and capable of death."

"Let there be light!"

IV.

Shira settled next to Lucifer. "Master you seem troubled."

"I must admit that God's new world is magnificent. In some ways superior to the place we once occupied. However, it is the man who troubles me. He is the only creature that combines a material body and an eternal spirit. I am troubled that God intends to do something special with this man-being. I will turn them from God as justice for God turning from me. I will cause them to die and God will not be able to save them because he has no power over death. Eventually they will cease from the earth and we will reign over the planet."

V.

The earth passed years and generations of human beings that died just as the shining one predicted. Over time, nothing changed except that humans delighted more and more in the pleasure of their bodies, their lies, their lusts and their fascination with death. From time to time men predicted that God would come and change things. But few people believed.

One day, while watching a group of murderous men hack a merchant to pieces Lucifer was approached by Shira. "Master, he has become one of them. God has become one of them, a man. He was born today in a place called Bethlehem, they call him Jesus."

"So God really intends to prove that he can die," Lucifer smiled. "Then we must help him." This turn of events was better than Lucifer could have hoped for. As he saw it, no matter what happened he would be rid of God forever. If God couldn't die, he would be powerless as Lucifer predicted.

Instantly, he flew to the drunken ear of the perverted king who ruled Bethlehem and whispered a word of fear.

"You will lose your throne if you do not murder all Hebrew boys from birth to the age of two." Death came to hundreds of innocent boy ripped from their mothers arms.

"Master, you have caused much death," Shira reported. "But the god-child was not among them."

"Do not be troubled, my loyal angel," mused Lucifer. "We have God right where we want him."

VI.

The years passed and Jesus grew from a baby to a boy to a man. Time after time Lucifer used his powers in an attempt to influence the murder the God-man. But each time he failed. Finally, he called Shira to his side.

"I believe that the conditions are right to finally bring an end to this game. I have detected a weakness in one of Jesus friends, the one called Judas. Seduce him with your powers, possess his soul with your charm, prepare his mind to betray Jesus."

Doing exactly as she was told, Shira

possessed Judas and within hours they convinced the religious and Roman leaders to mercilessly arrest, accuse, judge, condemn, scourge and crucify Jesus.

"If you are really the almighty God, use your powers to take yourself off the cross," Lucifer yelled at the helpless figure nailed to the wood.

"Pierce his side with your lance to be sure he is dead." The soldier did as the voice told him and he thrust his lance deep into the body of Jesus.

"He is dead," the soldier reported.

"Well, I guess that I was wrong," Lucifer sheepishly grinned to Shira. "Apparently God did have the power to die." Then he began laughing, "I guess that leaves only me now."

VII.

The next day, Lucifer went to the tomb of Jesus just to make sure that he was still dead. He checked on the guards and the status of the rock that had been securely placed at the door. His paranoia caused him to continue to check the tomb and on the third day he was startled to see that the guards were not there and the stone had been rolled away. Inside the tomb he was astonished to be confronted by Jesus who was folding his burial cloths.

"You're alive!" Lucifer stammered. "But I watched you die."

"Yes," Jesus said. "And I am glad that the suffering is over."

"How can God cease?" Lucifer challenged him. "It defies logic."

"Much less the power to restore my life out of nothing?" Jesus asked.

Lucifer could not accept and comprehend that God had the power to die and the power to resurrect himself back to life from nothing. "You have somehow tricked me. You did not die on the cross. You have made a fool of me!" Lucifer grew angrier by the moment. "It is impossible."

"Oh it is not only possible, but any person who comes to me I will share my power with them. And when they die they will live again, just as I live again."

"Not if I can convince them otherwise," Lucifer snarled. "I will spend every hour confusing, distracting and destroying every person that you create before they can come into this knowledge. I will bring wars, famines, sickness and so much suffering and misery that your precious humans will never believe that a loving God would allow it. They will never believe that you have the power to live-die-and live again. I will hate them with the same burning hate that I now have for you."

"And I will love them with the same burning love as I have always had for you," Jesus replied. "But realize my angel that I know mine and they will know me. You will never turn them from my voice or from the truth of what I have done. I will choose who I share my power, not you. And I will choose who lives with me forever."

At that, Lucifer began cursing his humiliating defeat and vowing his revenge. "This is not over yet Jesus."

"Not until the day and the hour of my choosing," Jesus replied. And then Jesus began to walk away to show the world what he had done.

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Baghdad News Briefs



(U.S. Army Photo)

An Iraqi policeman with 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police carries a desk into a school in West Rashid during an operation with 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division troops March 15.

Police, Soldiers Drop Off School Supplies

BAGHDAD – The Iraqi National Police and Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldiers dropped off supplies to a school in West Rashid March 15 in an effort to improve relations with the Shurta community.

Among the supplies dropped by the 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade of the Iraqi National Police and members of 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division troops, was 30 desks, 20 backpacks and toys for the children.

Brigade Troops Receive the Combat Patch



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

Spc. Dustin Hoptry, a forward observer with the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) and native of Lucas, Ohio, provides security for the re-opening of a mosque in Yusufiyah, Iraq Feb. 23.

Mutanabi Teachers' Institute Opens



(Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Sabeeh Al Ka'abi, the head of the Al Rasheed District Action Council, cuts the ribbon to officially open the Mutanabi Teachers' Institute in the Rasheed District March 13. The institute was opened at the Netaaken School, a school for girls ages 12 to 19,



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

Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and from the 887th Engineer Support Company, 20th Engineer Battalion, 36th Engineer Brigade, set up Combat Outpost Thrasher, located in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Ghazaliya, March 17. COP Thrasher was placed in Ghazaliya in efforts to lower insurgent presence in the neighborhood.

New Joint Security Station in Ghazaliya

By Pfc. William Hatton
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Soldiers from the 887th Engineer Support Company, 20th Engineer Battalion, 36th Engineer Brigade, and troops from the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, constructed a new combat outpost in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Ghazaliya, March 17.

By putting a combat outpost here in the neighborhood of Ghazaliya, a decrease in insurgent presence, and making a more stable area is what is hoped for, said Sgt. Maj. Russell Hurley, with 2-12 Cav, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

The combat outpost was built in an area that has seen many attacks over the past few months and is known to be a hot and disputed area, said Hurley, a native of Fort Worth, Texas.

There are many things that went into building COP Thrasher, Hurley said.

Some of the things that need to go into building a combat outpost are building protective concrete walls and guard towers throughout the outpost, said 1st Lt. Seth Nieman, with 887th Eng. Support Co., 20th Eng. Batt., 36th Eng. Brigade.

“887th Engineer Support Company’s mission out here is to set up the concrete barriers used to protect the outpost,” said Nieman, a native of Calvin, N.D.

“Although the goal is to knock out the mission as soon as possible, it can be long and tedious,” Nieman said.

By putting up tall concrete barriers around the outpost the threat of sniper fire is reduced, Nieman said.

One of the biggest things that needs to be looked in whether a combat outpost will be successful is knowing if the units will be able to defend the area, and to determine what the outcome of the mission in building the outpost, Hurley said.

A combat outpost is basically a smaller version of a



A Soldier from the 887th Engineer Support Company, 20th Engineer Battalion, 36th Engineer Brigade, unhooks a concrete barrier after it was lowered into place around the exterior of combat outpost Thrasher, located in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Ghazaliya, March 17.

forward operating base, Nieman said.

JSS Thrasher will house both Iraqi and coalition forces, 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 10th Iraqi Army Division and Company D, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, which is attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. This Iraqi Army Battalion recently arrived with their military transition team from southern Iraq.

Thrasher will provide a constant coalition presence in southern Ghazaliya, the most violent neighborhood in the battalion’s area of operations.

The Joint Security Station is called JSS Thrasher in honor of Sgt. Robert Thrasher, a 2-12 Cav Soldier killed in action on Feb. 11, 2007. Sgt. Thrasher died from combat wounds suffered during a joint cordon and search in southern Ghazaliya.

'Charlie Med' Saves 4-Year-Old Boy's Life

By Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – On the evening of March 15, the medics of Company C, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, saved a four year-old Iraqi boy's life after the child had fallen on a steak knife.

The knife was successfully removed from the boy's neck with only minimal damage to his thyroid gland, a relatively minor injury compared to what could have happened.

Capt. Ross Witters, the battalion surgeon for 610th BSB, said luck was on the boy's side.

"He's about as lucky as you can get," Witters said. "He should have went out and bought a lottery ticket."

Lost in the recounting of the story is that in lesser hands the boy may not have been so lucky. This patient's success is a sign of abilities of the "Charlie Med" medics, Witters said.

"It reflects very highly on their skill and their level of training," the Omaha, Neb., native said. "They have some of the most outstanding (noncommissioned officers) and officers that I've ever had the honor of working with."

Witters said the reason the medics are so good at what they do is their continual drive to make themselves better. The Soldiers work to improve themselves and hone their skills every day, he said. Whenever they are needed quickly to respond to an emergency situation, they respond hastily and effectively. In addition to trauma treatment, Charlie Med is responsible for running sick-call at Camp Falcon, supporting all medical care on the base through their clinic, supporting the 4th BCT at combat outposts, on flight operations, and aiding the explosive ordnance disposal teams.

Charlie Med also provides level 2 facilities to other units at the camp, such as laboratories, emergency rooms, x-rays, and physical therapy equipment.

Providing these services to Camp Falcon has not come



(U.S. Army photo)

An X-ray taken by Company C, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, known as "Charlie Med," shows a steak knife buried in the throat of an Iraqi boy.

without challenges. The main problems the medics have faced are a lack of space and communication difficulties.

1st Sgt. James Fales, the first sergeant for C Co., 610th BSB, said that the medics can never have enough space, but the communication problems actually benefit the medics

through practice.

"We spin up a lot for things that don't happen, but that's just the nature of our work," the Tonganoxie, Kan. native said. "It keeps the edge sharp."

Rehearsals, as Company C has come to call such spin-ups, are one way to keep the unit trained and ready. Another method, the method the Centaurs use to make training seem more realistic, is stress.

"This is an unpleasant task," Fales said. "The only way to benefit the Soldier is to realize that you staying calm and methodically doing your job is the only way you're going to benefit that person."

"Getting over-stressed or getting tunnel-vision is not going to be beneficial to that patient, ever."

The first sergeant said that the medics train with an unrealistic amount of stress in order to over-stress the Soldiers so they learn how to overcome that pressure.

The unit experienced 24 hours of mass casualties during 4th Brigade's rotation at the National Training Center, which is unrealistic, but assisted in making the Soldiers understand the stress factor.

Trainers from Fort Sam Houston also put Company C through a training evolution prior to deployment with the same thought in mind.

"The only way you get medics to understand the real deal is to overstress them," Fales said.

In training, Company C trained to deal with tense situations. Already, the medical team has shown that training has paid off.

"This is one of the most outstanding groups of people I've had the pleasure of working with," Witters said. "This group here has come together in a way that I have never seen, even in a medical setting."

"Now we do the best we can with what ever gets thrown at us."



(Photo by SPC Davis Pridgen, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)

Top General Visits East Baghdad

Gen. David Petraeus, commanding general of Multi-National Force – Iraq, talks to local vendors while visiting the Al-Jedidah market in New Baghdad March 11. Petraeus visited the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division area of operation stopping to see the market and the joint security station in Karadah.

Soldiers Celebrate Women Accomplishments

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Adversity is a part of life and women know this all too well.

For many years women were treated as lesser individuals – unequal in the eyes of men. It was not until 1916 that the first woman was allowed to serve side by side with men in congress, said Deer Park, N.Y., native Lt. Col. Holly Cook, the 1st Cavalry Division staff judge advocate.

Four years later, women finally received the right to vote when the Nineteenth Amendment was passed, she said.

Despite a long history of adversity, women have made a name for themselves. Forged from these fires are the resilient and strong women who live and work today.

The 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cav. Div., welcomed Cook along with Iraqi native Suzan [full name withheld for security purposes], a lawyer who works with coalition forces, as guest speakers during a Women's History Month celebration hosted by 615th "Cold Steel" Aviation Support Battalion at Camp Taji, Iraq, March 19. The theme for Women's History Month this year is "Generations of women moving history forward."

"So often, we as both Soldiers and Americans do not have an appreciation for the struggles and sacrifices of those that preceded us. With little or no reward or recognition, women have led progress in our country and military forces since the birth of our nation," remarked Baraboo, Wis., native Lt. Col. Mark Hirschinger, commander of 615th ASB. He continued on to remind the audience about the many prominent heroines, such as Dr. Mary Walker.

"Dr. Mary Walker was a prisoner of war during the Civil War and the first and only woman to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for her military service," said Hirschinger to the packed theater.

Following Hirschinger, Cook spoke



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

Lt. Col. Holly Cook, the staff judge advocate for the 1st Cavalry Division speaks to Soldiers and civilians about the importance of women during a Women's History Month celebration hosted by 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cav. Div. at Camp Taji, Iraq, March 19.

about the importance of diversity in the Army. The reason we celebrate and honor the many different groups in the Army is not to single out any particular race or gender, said Cook, but to recognize their achievements and contributions, take pride in them and learn from them.

Still, she did not want to lessen the fact that everyone in the Army, no matter race or gender, is important.

"No one in the military accomplishes anything because we are women or men, black or white or Hispanic. We make things happen because we are Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines," she said.

The highlight of the celebration ceremony was Suzan's speech. She talked about the hardships the Iraqi women face each day.

"Traditions and customs have the essential role of controlling the Iraqi woman's personality ... and have caused the loss of her identity. She was torn between accepting those traditions and customs [or] rejecting them. She had the knowledge and vision to

build a productive society but she couldn't escape the burdens imposed by traditions," she told the audience.

These customs and traditions put Suzan's life in danger every time she walks out the front door of her house to go to work. Not the traditional stereotype, Suzan stands out among her peers in a dress suit – her face uncovered – working a job normally held by a male in her society.

While this way of life has kept Iraqi women out of sight, a new hope is slowly rising – the hope of equality.

"Modern Iraqi society has paved the way for Iraqi women to change their status. The independence of the political society – focusing on free speech, economic development, and social change – has set the stage for their liberation," said Suzan.

Although circumstances may be getting better, there is still a battle raging – pushing through hundreds of years of tradition.

"This change is just beginning and there is still a big difference between women's ambi-

tions and reality, in which customs and values act as a thick wall separating women from opportunities available to men," she said.

Suzan explains that the top reason that Iraqi women are losing what small freedoms they have gained is because of terrorism.

"Terrorism surrounds their lives and threatens their families. Try to imagine women suffering in a new society that is calling for democracy, freedom, and equality between men and woman while it is being threatened by an unstable security situation," she said.

This unstable situation in Iraq is being dealt with by people, and more specifically Soldiers, who want a better future for all people regardless of race, nationality or gender.

"As we continue to move forward in the 21st century, the role and contributions of all women will become even more important as we navigate the changes in our military and our society. And, it is the job done by those of you here serving today which will continue to open those doors of opportunity," Hirschinger stated in his remarks.

Women have come a long way in the military and have never sought special treatment, only the right to be treated fairly and equally, he said.

Today, many women are serving next to men who are all fighting for democracy in Iraq – the freedom for men and women alike. There are over 350,000 women serving in the military – about 15 percent of active duty personnel. One in every seven troops serving in Iraq is a woman, said Hirschinger.

While there is progress being made to bring freedom to Iraq, the mission is not over and there should not be any rest till it is completed, said Suzan.

"Empower women, and let them enrich society with their love, warmth, and knowledge to build a new Iraq. To the Iraqi women, working side-by-side with men developing this country, I say: we have accomplished much, but we cannot, we must not, we shall not stop now," she declared.

First Team Troopers Celebrate Women's History Month

By Sgt. Robert J. Strain
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – Troopers from the 1st Cavalry Division gathered at the division's Memorial Chapel here to celebrate Women's History Month March 22.

The celebration was an opportunity for Soldiers to reflect on not only the women in history who have helped advance women's rights, but those women whom have influenced each of their personal lives. Col. Larry Phelps, the First Team's rear commander, said Soldiers don't need to look very far to find a good female role model.

"I doubt very seriously any of you are going to name Sojourner Truth ... as the most influential person in your life," Phelps said to the Soldiers at the celebration.

Phelps said most people would name someone closer to them, and for him, that woman is his mom.

"She put me on the course to join the Army, and 28 years later, I'm still where mama sent me," Phelps said.

Col. Victoria Bruzese, the Fort Hood garrison commander and the celebration's guest speaker, spoke about how things have changed throughout her career as an engineer, a field normally dominated by men.

"I have never looked upon myself as a female in the



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Strain, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

Col. Larry Phelps, the 1st Cavalry Division's rear detachment commander, speaks to Soldiers about the most influential woman in his life at the division's Memorial Chapel at Fort Hood, Texas.

Army, it's always been 'I'm a Soldier who just happens to be a female that joined the Army,'" Bruzese said.

Bruzese told the Soldiers at the ceremony about some of

the challenges she faced and changes she's seen while she worked her way up the ranks.

She also told the Soldiers about the many lessons she's learned throughout her 26-year career.

"Don't let somebody write success for you – define success for yourself," Bruzese said was one of the most important points she wanted to get across.

Phelps explained that many things have changed for women since he joined the Army in 1978. Female Soldiers attended a different basic training and even wore a different uniform.

"The Army has changed," Phelps said. "It's gotten smarter, it's realized that talent does not belong to a gender – talent belongs to an individual."

Bruzese closed with a story about two women she met who served in the Coast Guard's Women's Auxiliary during World War II, one of them scrubbed pots and pans and the other raked rocks.

She thanked them for what they did in order to set the course of history and pave the way for women in the military since their time.

"The opportunities now that exist for women in the Army are absolutely phenomenal, and you all are doing such phenomenal jobs," Bruzese said.



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

Soldiers from Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment fired the howitzers on their M109A6 Paladins during the first-ever firing of the Modular Artillery Charge System in the combat zone by an entire Paladin battery March 13 on Camp Taji, Iraq. The MACS is a newly refined propellant that pushes projectiles out of the barrel of the howitzers. The MACS will be used in conjunction with the soon to be fielded Excalibur precision munition.

Field Artillery Fires New Modular Artillery Charge System

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – While many artillerymen only get the opportunity to fire artillery pieces during training, Soldiers from Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment have already fired more than 1,100 rounds in real world missions to engage enemy targets in support of combat operations in theater.

Since the first calibration of the M109A6 Paladin howitzers in early December, Alpha Battery has supported combat operations every day by firing their Paladins. The unit has supported operations with everything from counterfire to suppressive fire missions as well as striking pre-planned targets. They have also cleared routes for combat missions along with providing base camp security. Yet even with doing all this, one of the most memorable moments for these Field Artillery soldiers came March 13 as they fired a new propellant.

“The new Modular Artillery Charge System (MACS) for their Paladins were utilized during their howitzer calibration,” said Alpha Battery commander Capt. Derek Baird.

“We’re on the brink of history,” said Baird, who hails from Virginia Beach, Va., explaining that the event marked the first time ever that the MACS has been fired in the combat zone by an entire battery of Paladins.

The MACS system, used in conjunction



Spc. Eduardo Briseno, a cannoneer who loads and fires howitzers for Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, prepares to load a charge into the barrel of a howitzer on an M109A6 Paladin, March 13 on Camp Taji, Iraq.

with a projectile, according to Baird is a refined propellant that facilitates higher rates of fire and extends range capabilities for the howitzers.

The pre-measured charges which are packaged in cylindrical, toilet paper roll-shaped canisters push or propel projectiles from the barrels of the howitzer.

The charges also help to lessen the work of the old way of measuring charges, whereby bag charges were cut and then unused portions had to be disposed of—wasting powder, added Baird. Alpha Battery will use

the MACS in conjunction with a new munition they will receive training on and implement within the next few months—the Excalibur.

“This is all very exciting. Our firing of the MACS is in preparation to get Excalibur,” said Baird. “This is the final step before it’s fielded to us, and all of our crews have qualified on it.”

Baird said his troopers have been quite fortunate to work with the howitzers as most soldiers in the field artillery branch have faced a cultural change over the past few

years. Artillerymen are now serving in less traditional field artillery roles—with fewer opportunities to employ howitzers in anger.

“Now they’re working more in roles that concentrate on doing foot patrols, pulling tower guard and doing cordon and searches,” said Baird.

“One of the most important things for my Soldiers is the fact that they’re actually getting to do artillery tasks, and for them this is great and I could not be more proud of their performance today,” Baird added. “We’re the only true ‘hot gun’ battery in theater—others may have only one gun firing at any given time in support of real world missions—we’re using our entire battery all the time.”

Thomson, Ga. native, 1st Lt. Sidney Wilson, a Platoon Leader for Alpha Battery said he was quite impressed with the MACS and hopes his Soldiers will remember the experience.

“They should take pride in being the first battery to fire these in theater,” said Wilson. “When they go home, this is something they can tell their families about.”

San Diego native Spc. Eduardo Briseno, a cannoneer for A Btry. who loads and fires howitzers, had his own take on what the day’s firing meant to him.

“I love it, I can’t really explain it. There’s nothing else that compares with this and nothing else I’d rather be doing,” said Briseno. “Knowing that we’ve made history today in firing the MACS, this really feels awesome.”

Iraqi, U.S. Troops Build Relations with Villagers, Each Other

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

KEM, Iraq – Troops from the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) and Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment are continuing to do their part in building relationships with each other as well as with villagers living here.

As part of a combined effort, they did just that as they worked together on a foot patrol, passing out fliers and going door to door meeting the villagers in the area March 17.

The fliers explained how the people could protect themselves against the threats of improvised explosive device attacks, what to do if they should stumble across an IED, how to recognize threats so they do not become victims of insurgent motivated violence and who to call for help.

“I prefer to be doing missions like this one where we actually can see first hand the long term benefits,” said Pfc. Jeremy Stone, an infantryman with Co. A, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt. and a native of Somis, Calif. “A lot of times when we go on routine patrols, it’s hard to see exactly how we’re making a difference, but meeting the people here and working with the IAs and seeing them do their parts to help end the violence here and protect the people is a great feeling.”

Carrollton, Ohio native Sgt. Jerrod Border, a team leader with Co. A whose Soldiers often do foot patrols in the area, said his troops are slowly but surely building relations with the IAs and the people in their area of operations and positive things are beginning to happen through their partnership with



(Photo by Spc. Sean Hanson, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

An Iraqi Army soldier talks with an Iraqi boy March 17 during a patrol near the village of Kem, Iraq. The boy rushed over to show the soldier a fish he had caught.

the IAs.

In addition, through building trust with the people, he said, they are collecting information that helps lead them to insurgents.

“Sometimes there are people who, when you talk to them, they’re a little afraid to talk to us because they may feel the insurgents are watching and may harm them,” said Sgt. Jerrod Border, a team leader for Co. A. “But for the most part, the people want us here and everyday things are getting better. They’re starting to feel more secure with the IAs and

with us. We’re trying to get out here more often, so the people can feel safe in their neighborhoods.”

During the patrol, each Co. A Soldier teamed up with an Iraqi Army “battle buddy.”

Over the course of talking to villagers and handing out the fliers, the Co. A Soldiers observed as the Iraqi Army soldiers led the efforts of getting to know the people.

Along with that, as the patrol moved on foot, the Soldiers said they were impressed

with how observant the IA soldiers were when they pulled security and their vigilance in keeping their eyes open for anything suspicious.

“This is a really sharp group, they really know their stuff and they’re really squared away,” said Border, whose battle buddy was an IA squad leader.

When time and the situation allowed, there was also some good natured kidding amongst the IA troops and Co. A Soldiers, which reflected that they have become brothers in arms, said Border.

As Baghdad Security Plan operations continue flushing insurgents from the city, IA troops and Soldiers like those in Co. A will keep working to keep the enemy from finding safe havens in the outer-lying communities like Kem, said Capt. Scott Hequembourg, commander, Co. A, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt.

“The way we see it is, as they clear Baghdad of bad guys, they’re going to try to go somewhere, so we have to be prepared to clear the area, and help the people here,” said Hequembourg. “Some of our biggest goals are to keep routes clear for supplies and helping the Iraqi security forces train up to where they can protect the people and eventually U.S. forces can leave.”

“The IAs are getting better at what they do every day,” he added “The people in the villages are getting friendlier and most of them are good and just want to have a good life. I believe our Soldiers see that all of the hard work is leading to something positive and that it’s not a waste of time—they are going to have a sense of accomplishment of helping not only Iraq, but their own country as well.”



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

Protecting Progress

Still Water, Okla. native Pfc. Jason Grant (right), a medic who also serves as a gunner, and Sgt. William Davis, an infantryman who hails from Greenville, Texas, both from Company C, 52nd Infantry Regiment attached to the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, man gun mounts atop their Stryker light armored vehicle as they pulled security during a tribal sheikh and city council member meeting in the village of Sheikh Hamad, Iraq March 15. The meeting was facilitated by the 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt.

A Walk on the Wild Side:

15th BSB Begins Work with Baghdad Zoo

By Sgt. Robert Yde
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – “It was kind of a shock because I didn’t know they had a zoo,” Sgt. 1st Class Herbert Mowery said of his initial reaction upon learning that one of his new responsibilities would be working with the staff of the Baghdad Zoo.

Mowery, the special projects noncommissioned officer for the 15th BSB, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, recently moved with his battalion from Forward Operating Base Falcon located in southern Baghdad to FOB Prosperity located in the International Zone.

With this move came new missions, among those overseeing an area of Baghdad known as Al-Zawra Park, which is home to the once renowned Baghdad Zoo.

The three-square block park, nestled in the heart of the city, was a surprising sight to the Parkersburg, W. Va. native the first time he visited the area.

“It was a big shock because of how well they had maintained it throughout this whole time, and then to see the people out there and the animals that they have,” said Mowery. “It was a welcome surprise.”

Within the confines of the park are several walking paths, a small amusement park, horse stables and the Baghdad Zoo.

“It’s a nice place where the local nationals can go to have some relaxation time and some family time,” he said.

The zoo, which was once one of the largest in the Middle East, was home to more than 600 animals at its prime. Although there are not nearly as many animals today, it is a testament to the dedication of the staff that it is still in operation.

According to the zoo’s assistant director, who helped open the zoo in 1978, the zoo only closed for about five months after the war began. During that time, staff members who lived on the grounds continued to care for the animals.

“As far as I know, they only lost one animal during that whole time,” Mowery said.

The assistant director said that while attendance is still much lower than he would like to see, things are going well.

Mowery is hoping that with the 15th BSB’s assistance, the area will continue to improve and that more and more residents will take advantage of park.

The first step toward this goal is assessing the entire area, which is what Mowery set out to do March 19.

“Right now we’re just trying to get a basic layout,” he explained. “Then once we find out more about the park and how many people actually come from the neighborhood around it, then we can decide exactly what we need to do.”

Mowery and other 15th BSB Soldiers spent the morning driving around the park, visiting the different areas and talk-



(Photos by Sgt. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Sgt. 1st Class Herbert Mowery and 1st Lt. Gabrielle Caldara of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division pet a cheetah during an assessment of the Baghdad Zoo March 19.

ing with the staff.

“We’re out here to get some key landmarks and plot them on the map, and talk to some of the key leaders,” Mowery explained. “We need to get their information to help us help them to make sure the infrastructure is good and to see what we can do to help them to get more people to come out.”

While Mowery spent much of the morning speaking with those in charge of the different areas of the park, 1st Lt. Gabrielle Caldara, the brigade’s environmental officer, collected water samples from the park.

“I’m looking at three general parameters,” Caldara, who is originally from upstate New York explained. “It’s PH level, chlorine and bacteria. It’s just a general assessment and visual inspection otherwise.”

Caldara said she was impressed by the overall appearance of the park and the zoo.

“It’s actually pretty good. There’s not a lot of trash. Compared to a lot of conditions we see, it’s in very good condition,” she said. “There are standing water issues but that is just from their sprinkler system, which will probably evaporate, but there is some chlorine in their water, a small amount, but generally speaking it’s very well maintained considering the surroundings.”

Walking through the zoo, Caldara also said that she was struck by how close she was able to get to some of the animals.

“It was much closer than our zoos,” she said. “I’ve

never had an experience like that.”

Unlike most modern American zoos, in which animals are kept in large areas created to replicate their natural environment, the animals are kept in relatively small, caged-in enclosure. During the walkthrough, staff members took the Soldiers right up to the cages so they could get a close-up look at the animals to include lions, a bear, a camel and several species of monkeys.

Perhaps the biggest surprise for the Soldiers was when the assistant director took them into the cheetah’s habitat, where they were actually able to pet the two tame cats.

“The cheetahs were pretty cool,” Caldara said.

Mowery said that he will continue to visit the park frequently and his next focus will be on maintaining the security inside the park.

“There are IPs (Iraqi Police) at each checkpoint and there are IPs walking throughout the park and that’s one of our main things,” he said. “The next time we go out we’re going to meet with the head of security for the park and see what their actual mission is out there and see if we can help them out in any way.”

Mowery said one of his key goals is to maintain a secure environment where people can come enjoy themselves and feel safe.

“That’s one of our big projects that were going to try to do here,” Mowery said. “It’s good for the people to have a place where they can relax and get away from everything else outside.”



1st Lt. Gabrielle Caldara, the environmental science officer for the 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div., checks a water sample during an assessment of the Al-Zawra Park in Baghdad March 19.

Spartans Take Advantage of Upgraded Security

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – For almost five months now, the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, has been busy discovering problems and implementing reconstruction efforts in the heart of the capital.

While the new security plan, Fard Al Quanoon, continues to show success in the “Black Jack” Brigade’s area of operations, the Spartan Battalion and local leaders are taking advantage of the momentum to continue improving neighborhoods still reeling from the effects of sectarian violence.

After several days of intense dominance and fighting last month, coalition forces reclaimed the area allowing the Infrastructure Coordination Element to go to work in a safer environment.

“Things are happening extremely fast right now,” said Lt. Col. Ken Crawford, commander 2nd BSTB. “And we’re seizing that opportunity to get these [projects] rolling.”

Black Jack leaders said the security in the area has drastically improved. According to the brigade commander, Col. Bryan Roberts, murders have gone down more than 80 percent in his brigade’s area.

What this means for the reconstruction team is peace of mind, said Crawford.

“It’s never easy to go out into sector,” Crawford said. “However, it’s a lot more pleasant to go out and talk to people who are more receptive and eager to see you.”

“We’re here right now,” said Command



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

Command Sgt. Maj. Chris Nadeau, 2nd BSTB, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division takes a look at some of the destruction left behind after heavy fighting in the Karkh area of Baghdad March 13. Nadeau, the battalion’s top noncommissioned officer, was out with troops from the Spartan battalion to look into refurbishing essential services to the neighborhood.

Sgt. Maj. Chris Nadeau. “We have to co-exist with these people. As things get better we also have to be a part of that change. It’s about interacting with the people and getting their lives back to normal.”

Now, every time the team goes out, they are greeted by men, women and children from the neighborhood. Crawford said that this is the best way to assess the pulse of the community.

Not only has Crawford’s team been able

to do their job, public works and district leaders are at the front, looking into possible avenues of improvement.

Crawford likened the relationship between his troops and local leaders to a total team effort. Everyone plays a small but important role in bringing the community back to life.

To date, more than \$66 million has been spent on more than 35 projects by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers led by the 2nd

BSTB Spartans.

Also, more than \$5 million has been put into the Commander’s Emergency Response Program that’s netted more than 60 complete projects.

At least 40 more projects are on the way thanks to a joint effort between the Spartans, district and municipality leaders. As much has been completed, it hasn’t been an easy road to travel for some of the communities’ civic necessities.

Just one example of success is a clinic in the Karkh area. More than two months ago the clinic was operational, but suddenly it closed. In fear of their lives and security, the staff closed the doors and didn’t look back until new security measures began to be installed. Now, a total joint effort has been renewed, and the clinic is up and running again.

The 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division provides necessary security while district leaders and public officials perform assessments on possible projects.

The Spartan team parallels this by essentially doubling the manpower able to assess projects while providing security for themselves and the people.

“[Local leaders] are able to go out into the neighborhoods with us and also perform their own assessments,” Crawford said. “[They] are very eager to move progress ahead for a more functional, cleaner environment for people to live in.”

“As long as the people see us, meaning the coalition, Iraqi Security Forces and local leaders, working together, anti-Iraqi forces won’t be able to maintain a foothold in the neighborhoods.”

Black Jack Women Soldiers Change Roles, Find Success

By Spc. Kate Huff
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – Six months ago, Spc. Shana Shelby thought she would deploy to Iraq and spend her time in the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion’s communications shop.

But when she arrived to Kuwait, where the brigade staged before heading to Baghdad, she was told that wouldn’t be the case.

“At the time I was very disappointed because I really wanted to do my job,” said Shelby, originally from New Orleans. “It was very frustrating.”

She and many other females from the Brigade’s organic units were pulled, last minute, to be part of 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment’s Search and Support platoon. The squadron was going to head up security for the International Zone in Baghdad and needed females to search the women entering the heavily fortified area.

“I needed to have a certain amount of females to perform my mission,” Command Sgt. Maj. James Daniels, 4-9 Cav’s senior non-commissioned officer explained. “My organic organization didn’t have enough, so I needed other units from the BSB (15th Brigade Support Battalion) and the BSTB (2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion) to each provide 12 females a piece so I could be able to accomplish my mission.”

So the 32 women all picked up and headed to 4-9 Cav where they trained to work at checkpoints.

“We had some ECP (entry control point) training in Kuwait. You know, what to look for,” said Pfc. Amanda Tyler who used to be a military policeman with Headquarters and



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

Pfc. Amanda Tyler, of Tampa, Fla. who is part of with 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment’s Search and Support platoon searches a female March 17.

Headquarters Company, 2BCT. “We learned how to search and what to feel for on the body. Basically signs to look for.”

Initially, some Soldiers said they were skeptical about the move.

“Well, everyone at first was really, well, not on edge, but a little hesitant because no one really knew each other,” said Tyler, a native of Tampa, Fla. “We all came from different jobs and all of that.”

Not only was it matter of getting to know new people, but also a matter of abandoning countless hours of deploy-

ment training in their old military occupational specialties. Shelby explained that she had spent over two years training to do her job for a deployment, but now that she’s been at the ECP for almost five months she knows that the experience she gains here will help her when she returns to her original job.

“I’ve gained a lot of tactical knowledge and think that I can apply that to my old job,” said Shelby. “I’ve gained a lot of experience out here. So I would say this is an invaluable experience. And I’m glad to have the opportunity to do it.”

That sentiment seemed to extend to the personal relationships the Soldiers formed.

“We all like being a part of this. I mean, we do all miss our companies and our original positions, but we’ve come together as a team; we support one another. We’re proud of what we’re doing, and we enjoy it. We’ve all made a lot of good friends; we all stick together,” said Tyler.

They’ve also had a chance to get out and meet the locals and find out how their mission affects them.

“We’ve all learned a lot of Arabic and a lot about the culture. Which I think will help us in the long run,” Tyler said. “I think it helps [the local nationals] – that we do respect their culture – that we do respect their rules – their religion.”

Though they were displaced from their original positions, the female searchers of 4-9 have found their niche in this deployment.

“We all came from different places, all at the last minute- kind of in a whirlwind thing -- didn’t even know what we were doing or if we’d like it. I think it’s a good thing,” said Tyler. “A lot of people are taking pride in what they’re doing because they feel like they’re doing something helpful.”



(U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearsall)

Stryker Battalion rolls into Baqubah

Soldiers from the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, conduct their first mission in Diyala province, engaging anti-Iraqi forces in Baqubah, Iraq, March 14.



(Photo by Sgt. Serena Hayden, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Mohammed Maroof Hussein, the Balad Ruz mayor, and Col. Farris, the Balad Ruz director of police discuss essential services and security with Col. David W. Sutherland, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division commander and senior U.S. Army officer in the Diyala province, during a meeting at Kirkush Military Training Base.

Leadership Discusses Security, Services

Multi-National Division – North PAO

BALAD RUZ, Iraq – The Balad Ruz mayor and director of police met with the commander of the 5th Iraqi Army Division and the senior coalition forces commander, March 10, to discuss services and security for the people throughout the region.

Mohammed Maroof Hussein, the Balad Ruz mayor, and Col. Farris, the Balad Ruz director of police, spoke with Maj. Gen. Shakur Hulail Husayn, the 5th Iraqi Army Division commander, and Col. David W. Sutherland, the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division commander, to determine solutions for the fuel, food, and essential services in Balad Ruz.

The mayor, when speaking of his three concerns, said he realizes the issues are inter-related and affect the entire city.

“The mayor asked for this meeting with the Iraqi security leadership to address the concerns of the people,” said Sutherland. “He is fighting for them to express the reality of the

situation. This is democracy at work and shows the trust the people have in the Iraqi security forces,” he added.

“The coalition forces will surely support the ISF in their efforts.”

While the mayor was concerned about food, fuel and essential services, he did say security has greatly improved in the area since the Iraqi Army and coalition forces defeated the terrorists south of Balad Ruz.

“My goal is to help with security first, then services,” said Mohammed, who said he continues to work with the government and CF to solve the problems his people face.

Although there have been a number of attacks recently, to include the suicide bomber who killed 28 citizens and wounded an additional 31, the mayor said, “There is little you could do to stop a suicide bomber,” and is still pleased with the security in the area.

The meeting is significant because it shows the local government and security forces working for their people to bring a more stable and secure environment.



(Photo by Spc. Karly Cooper, 15th SB, PAO)

Spc. Michelle McCormick and Sgt. Erick McCormick , both with HHC, 15th BTB, 15th SB, met on their first tour during Operation Iraqi Freedom 04-05 and are serving their second tour together.

Love Strong in Iraq

**By Spc. Karly Cooper
15th SB, Public Affairs**

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – More and more Soldiers spend their deployments in Iraq serving along side their spouses.

Sgt. Erick McCormick, the warehouse noncommissioned officer in charge for Headquarters Headquarters Company, 15th Brigade Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade from Ketchikan, Alaska and Specialist Michelle McCormick, a supply specialist also with HHC, 15th BTB, 15th SB, from Houston, Texas, on their second deployment together, but first deployment as a married couple.

Spc. McCormick joined the Army in 2004. Right graduation from high school, she packed her bags and headed to Fort Jackson, S. C.

“My dad is a military police and my sister is a supply specialist in the Army Reserves, so I decided to join,” she said.

Her first duty station was Fort Hood, Texas and within a few short months of arriving, she deployed to Camp Taji, Iraq for three months during Operation Iraqi Freedom 04-05.

“I was excited because my dad was in Baghdad and my older sister was in Karbala,” she said.

Sgt. McCormick joined the Army in 2002 after taking the first few years out of high school to work as a fisherman on charter boats. He also worked as a bio-medical tech at the Ketchikan Indian clinic, a local reservation clinic.

“After the twin towers were hit in 2001, I decided to join,” he said.

With friends in Special Forces and the Rangers, he felt the patriotic pull to serve his country. He completed basic combat training at Fort Jackson, S.C. His first duty station was at Fort Hood, Texas.

“I liked my first deployment, we went out on a lot of convoys so we were gone a lot and that made the days go by faster,” he said.

Arriving on Camp Taji, Iraq in 2004, he met his wife while working in the internet café. She would go in and check her email, giving her a reason to go in everyday to sit and look at him.

“I guess you could say it was love at first sight. I would go into supply for minor things like pens just to see her,” he smiled.

It took two weeks to get back to the states after the first deployment. After what seemed like an eternity for the two, they saw each other again and began dating. They married two months later, in May 2005.

“I love having him here. It makes the deployment less difficult since I have him here with me,” Spc. McCormick said.

When asked how he likes having his spouse over here with him, he replied with a chuckle.

“It saves me a bunch of money on phone cards.”

Contractors Making Supply Runs

**By Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner
15th SB, Public Affairs**

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers of the 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Corps (Expeditionary) travel the roads of Iraq nightly; part of the vital logistics train that supports all coalition forces within the Multi-National Division-Baghdad area.

Running the gauntlet right along side them are civilian drivers as well. Contracted employees, crewing specially designed trucks, make convoy runs to support the 15th SB’s mission of supplying and sustaining the 25,000-plus combat troops currently on ground in MND-B.

Steve Mathis, from San Antonio, Texas, is no stranger when it comes to working with the military. After spending ten years in the Army infantry, he’s now the civilian convoy commander, in charge of making sure the massive freight haulers get where they need to be.

“[Being prior service] makes it easier for us to come out here and do what we do,” he said. “We understand what is going on and it helps us.”

Moving everything from heavy equipment to food and water, Mathis and his partner, Mike Winters, count on the armored International 5000-MV heavy equipment transporter to pull loads in excess of 180,000 pounds.

“I’ve put a lot of stuff behind it and it hasn’t bogged down yet,” said Mathis. “I’ve taken an IED (improvised explosive device) that ripped out the engine and I’m OK. I feel safe in it.”

Once outside the wire, within a 15th SB convoy, the difference between military and civilian doesn’t matter any more, said Mathis. The men are adamant about the fact that on the road, every one works together as a team; looking out for one another during the combat logistics patrol.

When a military vehicle rolled over during one mission, Mathis and Winters didn’t even think about what needed to be done. With fuel leaking from the overturned truck, Mathis grabbed a combat lifesaver’s bag and ran to help extract the Soldiers.

“Out on an MSR (main supply route), things change so quickly; you’ve got to be prepared to help,” said Winters. An Oklahoma City, Ok. native, both he

and Mathis completed the Army’s combat lifesaver course; adding to the medical capabilities of a CLP.

For 15th SB troops out on mission, having contractors along affords extra benefits. More trucks mean more supplies hauled, which in turn equates to fewer runs per night. With basic math out of the way, Mathis and Winters bring additional communication and global positioning systems to the convoys.

While they can’t talk on military channels, their high frequency radios can reach in areas where troops have difficulties communicating. By placing hand held radios with each of the military security vehicles, Mathis can act as a relay station to contact the contractors’ dispatch hubs at either Logistics Supply Area Anaconda in Balad, or Victory Base Complex in Baghdad.

“You adapt to the situations as you need to,” he said.

By working with gun truck elements from 1060th Transportation Company or 1/115th Field Artillery, 867th Corps Support Battalion, he can assist calling in help from quick reaction forces, explosive ordnance disposal teams or for medical evacuation.

“Without [the gun trucks] we couldn’t get the job done,” said Mathis. They’re some of the most squared away units I’ve run with. Those guys got it together.”

Contractors play a crucial role on the battlefield said Col. Gregg Gross, Chief of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) Distribution Management Center. “Contractors are part of our formation. They live, eat, work, pray, sweat, and sacrifice side-by-side with our Soldiers everyday, said Gross. A day without contractors is like a day without food, fuel, water, ammo, clean latrines...well, suffices it to say, it’s a lousy day.”

Mathis and Winters have logged more than 12,000 miles since getting their new truck in August, 2006. The routes they take can be some of the most dangerous areas in Iraq, but they would much rather be driving outside the wire; doing what comes as second nature they said. Both smile energetically when it comes to getting the next call that will take them back out on Iraqi roads.

“We love livin’ in this truck, we love workin’ in the truck,” said Winters. “I’m happy with what I’m doing.”



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner, 15th SB Public Affairs)

The massive International 5000-MV heavy equipment transport truck tips her bonnet during a March 12 display on Camp Taji, Iraq. The truck is built as one piece of armor to protect the civilian drivers who join 15th SB convoys. It’s 500 horsepower engine is capable of pulling loads in excess of 180,000 pounds.

Child to Receive Life-Changing Surgery

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOY-ALTY, Iraq—After being critically injured by stray gunfire a year ago, a 3-year-old Iraqi boy will travel to the United States with his mother for surgery that may allow him to walk again.

Maj. Phil L. McIntire, commander for Company A, 414th Civil Affairs Battalion, said the child, named Abdullah, sustained a life-threatening injury when he was 2 years old. The shot shattered Abdullah's left femur and left him unable to walk.

"I know we can't save all the kids in Iraq, but we can help some," McIntire said. McIntire, of Saline, Mich., said Abdullah got around by pulling himself along and using his right leg to hop on.

Abdullah and his mother will be flown to the U.S. for surgery at the University of Michigan. A bar will be put in his leg to act as a new femur, McIntire said. The bar will fuse to the bone, and as long as the child's growth plates were not damaged, the leg should grow normally.

"The procedure is done a lot," he said.

The surgery will be performed by one of the world's leading pediatric orthopedic surgeons according to McIntire.

Administrators at the University of Michigan hospital are donating their facilities for the surgery and recuperation. The anesthesiologist is also donating services and the hospital will provide 10 hours of rehabil-



(Courtesy photo from 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.)

Maj. Phil L. McIntire, commander for Company A, 414th Civil Affairs Battalion, has been helping kids who need special medical care throughout Baghdad.

itation.

A friend of McIntire's is a professor at the university's medical school and is also a physician who will act as Abdullah's primary care provider during his recovery.

The child came to McIntire's attention while his civil affairs teams were on a routine patrol.

His mother brought him out to the Soldiers to ask if they could do anything for her son's leg. The child's leg had been operated on initially by Iraqi doctors, but they said he would never walk again.

"I contacted friends back in the states to see if anything could be done," McIntire said.

Getting finances together to send

patients to the United States has proved to be one of the biggest challenges, McIntire said.

However, the generosity and caring heart of a wounded officer is the reason Abdullah and children like him will be able to get the proper treatment they need.

A captain under the leadership of McIntire was shot in the spine by a sniper and is currently undergoing rehabilitation procedures to learn to walk again at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington D.C. The captain, a reservist from New York, is a successful businessman who put his money into a children's fund he created while recovering from his injury.

"That's how we're able to fly the mom

and son to the states," McIntire said.

Other issues include securing passports and visas from Iraq for the people seeking treatment. The National Iraqi Assistance Center helped get the passports, but the visas are still in the works.

Letters from contacts in the United States are also needed and then the tickets can be purchased. McIntire said Abdullah's father was really excited that his son has a chance to lead a normal life. "They had lost all hope that the boy would walk again," McIntire said.

McIntire credited Trinity Health, a Catholic health care organization from Farmington Hills, Mich., with helping make the surgery possible. He said Trinity Health has charity funds to help children get treatment they otherwise wouldn't be able to. "People want to really show Iraqis that the U.S. wants them to become a functional nation," he said.

Non-government organizations also want to help but tend to stay out of many areas due to the danger. However, Soldiers can bridge the gap to those organizations, McIntire said.

"If there's no one controlling the process of visas, passports and information, it just kind of all falls apart," McIntire said. "I fell under the role of manager to handle the cases."

The most important aspect of helping children like Abdullah, is the opportunity and possibility of making a difference. "We can't change everyone's life, McIntire said. "But we try to do what we can."

Military Transition Team Upclose and Personal

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

COMBAT OUTPOST, EAST BAGHDAD, Iraq — Soldiers with Military Transition Teams work and fight alongside Iraqi security forces everyday, working to bring security to the capital.

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's MiTTs are comprised of Soldiers from all over the brigade, and they work with the 2nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division in eastern Baghdad.

When something occurs in their area of operation, Soldiers in the MiTT don't have to watch television to get the news, but simply go to the rooftop and watch the events unfold, reminding troops just how close they are to the fighting.

Lt. Col. Edward Taylor, the MiTT Chief for the 2-6 IA, said a MiTT is important, as the key to the transition toward Iraqi stability and security is for the country to have competent Iraqi security forces.

"The reason the MiTT, (National Police Transition Teams) and (Police Transition Teams) teams were created, was to enable this transition from U.S. in the lead to ISF in the lead," he said. "They were created to fill this critical need, because the brigade combat teams and battalions are still focused on security operations. The transition teams' focus is on the Iraqi units."

Taylor, of Colorado Springs, Colo., said that would mean having effective Iraqi Army, National Police, and Iraqi Police forces that can take over the security requirements from U.S. forces and run operations on their own.

"The transition teams help the Iraqi units increase their capability by coaching the Iraqi commanders and NCOs on successful leadership, training, planning and management



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

Recruits in the 2nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division fall into formation Feb. 3 in Baghdad. The U.S. 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division Military Transition Team lives on the Iraqi compound in order to work directly with the Iraqi Army to show them tactics and procedures.

techniques," he said. "Our goal is not necessarily to make them a mirror image of the U.S. military but simply help them be a force that fits their society and is capable of beating the anti Iraqi focus militias and terrorists and securing the Iraqi people."

Taylor said it's an honor and challenge to serve on a transition team. "You have a direct working relationship with the Iraqis who are fighting for their country and their future," he said. "It fires me up everyday to work with the Iraqi officers and NCOs who have so much at stake. It is also motivating to be part of the U.S. Army's effort that is so critical to the

Iraqi future."

The MiTT Soldiers come from a variety of military occupational specialties, and they draw upon their job training to work as advisors and mentors to the Iraqi Army.

Sgt. Levi Calhoun, an infantryman, said when he first joined the MiTT, it was different for him because he now had to rely on other military occupational specialties to help keep him alive when he went outside the wire.

Being in the infantry, Calhoun said they train with one another steadily and have each other's back without uttering a word. When he was chosen to join the MiTT, however, he met everyone for the first time in Kuwait.

Calhoun, of Electra, Texas, is on his third deployment, but this time he has the opportunity of really working with the Iraqis.

"In 2003, we worked with the Iraqis, but back then it was the Iraqi National Guard," he said. "But this is different as we live with them and make that relationship."

Calhoun said it's nice to see them everyday, as many of them fight right alongside a Soldier during a firefight.

The Iraqi Army receives plans and executes missions. They lead the missions instead of having the U.S. lead them, Calhoun said.

The importance of the MiTT, Calhoun said, is that it's laying the foundation for the U.S. to pull out. "We're getting the Iraqis to where they can take over," he said.

Pfc. Daniel Roodzant, a truck driver, is one MiTT team member who appreciates the experience he has by working directly with the Iraqis.

"I feel like I'm getting a lot more out of a year over here than over there," he said of living with Iraqi forces versus living on a forward operating base such as Rustamiyah or Loyalty.



(Photo by Cpl. John Androski, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment)

At the Monsour Joint Security Station, Coalition Forces under the command of 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, have started a series of battlefield medical workshops. These workshops are used to bring Iraqi security force medics up to a higher level of training on common battlefield medical tactics

Iraqi Medics Open Shop For "Coughs and Sniffles"

By Cpl. John Androski
1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment

BAGHDAD—For close to six weeks now, a team of medics in Baghdad have been training soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th, Iraqi Army, on both basic and intermediate combat life-saver skills.

This intensive course of study has been lead by 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

These ten soldiers, having completed their

introductory combat medicine phase two weeks ago, are well into phase two of their training. This new phase aims to build on the basic concepts originally learned in their previous class by introducing more immediate trauma assessment procedures and medical techniques. The culmination of this phase was the creation of an Iraqi Army 'sick call.'

This milestone was established March 15, when Iraqi Army soldiers began assessing and treating all Iraqi security force soldiers independently without the supervision of any coalition forces medics.

'Patriots' Go For a 'Right Seat Ride'

By 1st Lt. Charles Bloomfield
2nd Bn, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment

BAGHDAD – The "Patriots" of 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery are started completing their "Right Seat Ride" with 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, on, March 11.

This opportunity allows Soldiers from 2-32 FA, to go on patrols through the streets of Baghdad with the experienced Soldiers of 1-5 Cav.

It is a quick week for the Patriot Soldiers and there has been a lot to learn.

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, began the week by riding in vehicles with 1-5 Cav., and by the end of the week, they were taking their own vehicles out on the patrol.

"It helped me learn about our part of Baghdad and the tactics that the units are using to combat the enemy," said 1st Lt. Matt Offiler, from Battery B, 2nd Bn, 32nd Field Artillery. "It has been interesting, because we have had contact with the enemy every time we go out."

They took control of their area after a



(Photo by 1st Lt Matthew Offiler)

Sgt. 1st Class Rousch, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry shakes hands with an Iraqi Army Lieutenant while working with incoming 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment Soldiers before the Transfer of Authority ceremony March 15.

Transfer of Authority ceremony held on Camp Liberty, March 15.



(Photo by 1st Lt. Kasey Kinney)

True Patriot Sponsors a Day of Fun

Mr. Gil Sanborn, a Weston, Conn. native, donated \$25,000 to Task Force Guardian to help sponsor numerous events including Christmas parties, and more recently, the Schweinfurt Community Winterfest. TF Guardian is the rear detachment unit of the deployed 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Winterfest was a great success as it brought families together and gave the children of deployed Soldiers the opportunity to enjoy various activities such as face painting, a taekwon-do exhibition, juggling and much more.

Paratroopers Help Distribute Fuel

By 1st Lt. James Phillips
Co. D, 1st Bn., 325th Abn. Inf. Regt.

BAGHDAD – Each month the people of Kadamiyah, a northwest security district of the Iraqi capital, receive a monthly ration of fuel, sometimes however they aren't able to get enough. Allegedly, some locals will bribe the distribution point to get extra fuel, leaving others without an adequate amount.

Capt. Douglas Rogers, Commander, Company D, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, wanted to get to the root of the problem and assisted with the security and distribution of fuel at a local fuel point in Kadamiyah on March 5.

As Delta Company began to tackle the distribution problem, Rogers and one of his platoons followed a propane truck to its



(Photo by 1st Lt. Pete Evans, 1-325 Abn. Inf. Regt.)

Capt. Douglas Rogers, Commander of Co. D, 1st Bn., 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, talks to officials managing a fuel distribution point.

distribution point.

To get a better understanding of their procedures, Rogers talked with the man responsible for distributing the fuel and the paratroopers of the company assisted in securing the fuel point while fuel was being distributed.



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

Sgt. Michael Kasper and Staff Sgt. Roy Starbeck, Soldiers with 2nd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, pull bags filled with bottled water from a Blackhawk helicopter in a field in southern Baghdad, March 9. The water was a re-supply for Stryker Soldiers walking along numerous farmland roads during a mission to secure areas suspected of being insurgent training camps.

Tomahawk Stryker

By Pfc. William Hatton
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

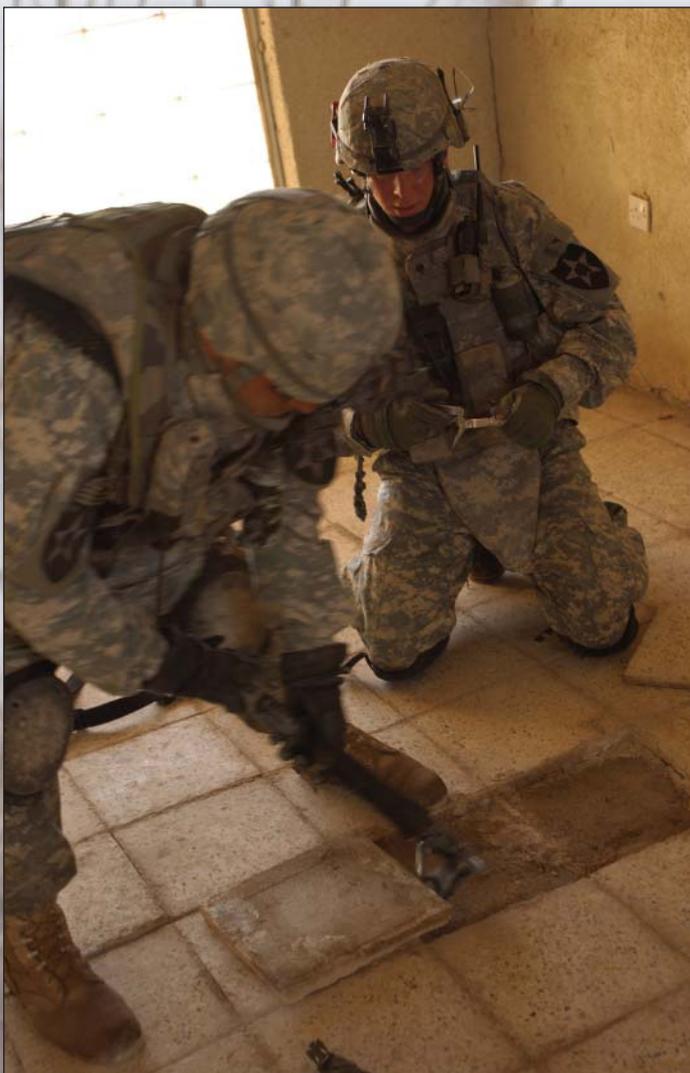
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Staff Sgt. Valentine Vildosola and Spc. Trevor Munn, infantrymen with 2nd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, removes tiles from the floor as they search for possible illegal weapons. Vildosola, a native of Celinas, Calif., and Munn, a native of Lakeland, Fla., investigated what sounded like a hollow area of the floor.



Tomahawk Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, walk along rural southern Baghdad farmland searching for possible insurgents and securing an ongoing mission. The troops were sent to investigate a fish hatchery for a possible insurgent training camp.

Tomahawk Troops Trade Strykers for Combat Boots

Sam Hatton
Public Affairs Detachment

BERTY, Iraq – In the marsh farmlands south of Baghdad, coalition forces aren't a typical presence from most Iraqis in this area work hard farming the land to make a decent living, others have more traditional occupations.

Information came in that insurgents are possibly setting up camps in this rural area, Tomahawk Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, working with Iraqi soldiers didn't hesitate making their way known as they searched the farmland for weapons caches recently.

Tomahawk Soldiers, a Stryker means a lot of things, often a second home, a cafeteria, and living quarters. Sometimes live, eat and sleep in their Stryker.

In rural farmland however, troops took left their Stryker.

Off hiking throughout the marshland with only assault boots and assault packs, as the roads were too narrow for most Strykers to drive down.

On the routes and the weight of the Strykers, we

couldn't really drive in anywhere, either because of all the water or all the vehicles would either roll over and get stuck," said Sgt. 1st Class Eric Beck, a platoon leader for 2nd Platoon, A Co., 1-23rd Inf. Reg., 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.

"We basically had to park the vehicles and walk in through the different channels and canals working our way down the street to our objective," said Beck, a native of Fontana, Calif.

After numerous mortar attacks, intelligence reports said that the point of origin was coming from a fish hatchery in the farmland that was also suspected of being a training camp for insurgents, said 1st Sgt. Cero Pinheiro, with A Co., 1-23rd Inf. Reg., 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.

Although searching the area for specific threats turned up empty, Tomahawk troops were still successful as they continued progressive work with the Iraqi Army, and making a presence known in the area.

As far as the Iraqi soldiers work today and in recent missions, they have come a long way, Beck said.

"They still have a long way to go, but over the last few months I have definitely seen great improvement," he said.

"By having the Iraqi soldiers working with us during the mission shows the locals that even though we're in the area, these are the guys that are going to be coming through later," said Pinheiro, a Tacoma, Wash., native.



A Soldier with Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, pulls security as fellow Soldiers search within the building during a mission in southern Baghdad. Stryker Soldiers searched numerous areas in a rural farmland for weapons caches and a suspected insurgent training camp.

Words of Safety Echo on Camp Taji

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Safety, a word echoed throughout the ranks of the 1st Air Cavalry “Warrior” Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division – but why?

Safety has to be practiced at all times no matter what you are doing, said Boulder, Col., native Chief Warrant Officer 5 Alan Koch, 1st ACB’s Safety Officer.

This point was emphasized with a recent visit from the Brig. Gen. William Forrester Jr., the director of Army Safety and commanding general of the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center

Forrester stressed the ability of every Soldier to be a safety officer.

“The way I look at it is you all have one safety officer in this formation. That isn’t enough to make sure that all of us [are] reminded about what’s important,” he said.

Putting the responsibility of safety on every Soldier reinforces the battle buddy system – a system that the Army has stressed for years.

“Take ownership of not just your own actions, but of the actions of your teammate. ... The power is in you guys to protect [your] own, because if you don’t, then you’re going to be operating with less than which you came with,” said Forrester.

Along with keeping the buddy system at the forefront of the Soldiers minds, Forrester also redefined “fallen comrade.”

“A fallen comrade might not be someone that’s just in a hot [landing zone], but someone who’s had too much to drink, someone who’s tired, someone who’s sick, someone who’s been sexually assaulted ...,” he said to a group of Soldiers.

“We’ve got to look at each other and



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

Brig. Gen. William Forrester Jr., the commanding general of the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center and director of Army safety, talks with Soldiers of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division during a visit to Camp Taji, Iraq. Forrester stressed taking accountability for not only the individual, but battle buddies as well.

[ask,] ‘Are you okay? Are you alright?’ To think we can’t wrap our arms around them and protect them from doing something stupid when they’re down is [foolish,]” said Forrester.

“If an accident happens, usually somebody in the unit knew that Soldier’s behavior could lead to an accident.... and so many times we don’t intervene just because he’s a good guy,” he said.

While talking to the troops about safety practices that have been around for some time, Forrester also brought a new concept to the Soldiers – their families.

Forrester suggested that units should call

the family of the Soldier heading home and tell them to watch out for them because they are an integral part of the mission.

Koch agrees, “Let’s say my mom called me the day I got home from leave and said, ‘Alan, you be careful now. Don’t go crazy just because you’re home on leave.’ That’s interesting, that would be a great idea.”

Koch has found that using the Composite Risk Management process, a continual process that helps mitigate or eliminate dangers, is something every Warrior should be using as a tool to stay safe.

“The CRM process should be the way you think about things – whether you’re

going on a date or going flying. You should think about it,” said Koch.

Soldiers can find information about the CRM process and a 40 minute course online at <https://crc.army.mil/home/>, said Koch.

Whether flying the skies over Baghdad, or working on a helicopter in the hanger, safety is a high priority for the Warriors, he said.

But even the best can slip sometimes. That is why consistently looking out for one another and taking that responsibility to be a safety officer is necessary in keeping Soldiers alive and well on the battlefield.

Maintenance Rids Aircraft of “Battle Damage”

By Capt. Peter Hathaway
1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Upon completing a combat mission, an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, returns home. The pilots complete a thorough, post-flight inspection when they discover a small hole and some peeled back metal with jagged edges in the stabilator, the tail wing of the aircraft – evidence of a bullet hole. It is apparent that the aircraft has sustained battle damage.

Upon hearing the words “battle damage,” the aircraft maintainers of Company D “Bone Crushers,” 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment “First Attack,” 1st ACB, get right to work. Their mission is to minimize the time the aircraft is out of the fight.

This event occurred Christmas Day 2006. The Bone Crushers rapidly repaired the bullet hole in the aircraft’s stabilator, and the Apache was back in the fight the next day.

“We’re the ones that put band-aids on bullet holes and repair the stress on the air frame,” said Reaford, N.C., native Daniel Capers, an aircraft structural repairer from Co. D.

“Doing a repair on the aircraft like that can take a long time – it takes a pretty good team to get in there and knock all that out quickly,” Capers said.

The Bone Crushers know their hard work is vital to



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

As a structural repairer, Reaford, N.C., native Daniel Capers of Company D “Bone Crushers,” 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, works on the skin of the aircraft to make sure it is ready to go into battle.

keeping the Apaches in the air and, in turn, know how important airborne Apaches are to the ground forces, said Buffalo, N.Y., native Spc. Brett Bolt, an aircraft power plant mechanic for the Bone Crushers.

“The Apache is basically the infantry soldier of the air. If

our birds are down, that means [the troops on the ground] are not getting the help they need out there,” said Bolt.

So the maintenance crews work hard to keep the aircraft mission capable. Maintenance and inspections are constantly completed in order to keep Apaches in the air.

But when an aircraft is damaged and cannot fly back to the forward operating base, someone has to go to the helicopter. That is when the Downed Aircraft Recovery Team springs into action.

“They are like a quick reactionary force, but for the maintenance aspect. They are the ones that go out there and do battle damage repair – just enough to get [the helicopter] up in the air and right back home,” Capers said.

The DART has flown to several FOBs in order to repair damaged aircraft. Each time the team removed and reinstalled a main rotor blade in under an hour, quickly getting the aircraft back into the fight.

First Attack’s Armament repairers are another group of maintainers. It is their responsibility to keep the weapons systems operational—a never-ending task, but without operational weapons an Apache is ineffective, Spc. Bret Gibson an armament, avionics and electronics repairer with the Bone Crushers.

In addition to repairing the systems, they ensure that upon return from a mission, expended ordnance and flares are rapidly replaced and the aircraft is ready for another mission, he said.

(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)
Tucson, Ariz., native Pfc. Nicholes Cota (left), a transportation management coordinator for Company E, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, pumps fuel into an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter at the Baghdad International Airport Forward Arming and Refueling Point.



Forward Arming and Refueling Point Keeps Birds Airborne

By 1st Lt. Morgan Wolff
 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – When you pull up to the gas pump, there are friendly faces waiting to service your vehicle. No need to get out, they’ll take care of everything. Tip? No need, they love what they do and wouldn’t hear of it. Their goal is to not waste any of your precious time and get you back on the “road” as soon as possible.

This is a rare occurrence in the U.S., but at Baghdad International Airport this happens 24 hours a day, seven days a week due to the hard work of a few Soldiers from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

Company E, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, assumed responsibility for operations at the BIAP forward arming and refueling point “Crazy Horse” on Oct. 27, 2006. Since then, they have pumped a colossal two million gallons of fuel into coalition aircraft.

Along with hitting the two million gallon mark so quickly, Co. E has serviced over 7,500 coalition aircraft since taking over the mission at BIAP, said Killeen, Texas, native Capt. Michael Martin, commander of Co. E, 1-227th Avn.

To put that into perspective, Company E has serviced more than the equivalent of all the U.S. Army aircraft in very little time, he said. Twenty eight Soldiers are split between two 12-hour shifts seven days a week to provide

around the clock fuel distribution to coalition aircraft operating within the Baghdad area of operations.

The Crazy Horse FARP is the nucleus of air operations within Baghdad which is the epicenter of Operation Iraqi Freedom. For this reason, quality control and surveillance of petroleum management operations there are second to none, said Martin.

The serviceability of fuel trucks and associated FARP equipment are of the utmost importance, he said.

Each day, prior to any fuel being issued, samples are taken and tests are conducted to ensure quality levels meet or exceed Army aviation standards. This is especially important as the very lives of coalition pilots and those of their supported ground units depend on it.

Even a minor oversight could mean disaster for an aircraft and the mission to which it was assigned. Because of these concerns, Soldiers receive daily safety briefings and are frequently quizzed on their knowledge of emergency battle drills and safety procedures in the event of a catastrophe.

“A lot of people don’t realize what high standards we have to hold for our fuel. We really push ourselves to make sure [the pilots] get the best quality of fuel,” said Birmingham, Ala., native Pfc. Kristina Hunter, a fueler for Co. E.

Additionally, highly trained and motivated NCOs provide first line supervision of all operations at the FARP,

said Martin.

The types of aircraft serviced at the Crazy Horse FARP are far more diverse than anything the Soldiers saw during training conducted prior to deployment.

Within only a few days of operating the Crazy Horse FARP, Soldiers were exposed to a variable menagerie of helicopters.

“We fill up anybody that comes in here – British [Royal Air Force], Navy, Marines and birds from all the different units over here. You come into BIAP to get fuel – we’ll take care of you,” said Hunter.

On average, 14,000 gallons of fuel are issued to 50 aircraft each day, with busy days surpassing 100 aircraft and over 26,000 gallons.

At the current rate, it is estimated that nearly six million gallons of fuel will be issued to over 21,000 coalition aircraft by the end of the 1st Cavalry Division’s current deployment, said Martin.

The importance of combat aviation missions to the overall success of coalition operations throughout the Iraqi theater is clear.

“This is vital to everybody in theater because mobility is the important thing over here – the ability to transport troops, medical supplies, medical personnel [and] fire support – fast,” said Hunter. “We provide these helicopters with the fuel to get them where they need to go and it makes a big impact all across the board.”



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

Hayward, Wisc., native Pvt. Robert Boss, 20, a grenadier and Malden, Mo., native Cpl. Melvin Tibbs, 26, a team leader with 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division direct a concrete barrier into place on Combat Outpost Battle in the Baghdad neighborhood of Al Furat March 17.



Soldiers of Company B, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division unload sand bags on Combat Outpost Battle in the Baghdad neighborhood of Al Furat March 18. The troops were deployed as part of Operation Farqh Al Qanoon and are building a COP to operate out of during their deployment.

COP Stands Up as Part of 'Surge'

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

AL FURAT, Baghdad – Building something out of nothing is part of the mission for the more than 20,000 additional Soldiers participating in Operation Fardh Al Qanoon.

The latest troops to put boots on the streets of Iraq's capital are the infantrymen of the 1st Infantry Division's Company B, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, who are setting up shop in the district of Al Furat.

Since getting Soldiers out into the community is a priority of the latest plan to secure Baghdad, the Soldiers of Company B are building their new home from scratch – Combat Out Post Battle, said Capt. Brian Ducote, the company commander.

"It's primarily where we're going to have our base of operations," said the native of Dunwoody, Ga. "These Combat Outposts are important because it gets us out with the people where we can get to know them more. It's easier to patrol. You can respond quicker to incidences."

COP Battle will serve as a planning center for coalition forces working to improve security in the local community. Unlike many forward operating bases that tend to remove Soldiers from the reality of Iraq, the COP will allow troops to better understand the area's culture and people, Ducote

explained.

Though COP Battle is currently a work in progress and the amenities are near non-existent, the conditions will improve as the structure comes together, Ducote said.

The first priority of the COP is always force protection. Approximately 350 Alaska barriers, which are protective concrete walls, will protect troops from incoming threats, said 1st Sgt. Gerald Cornell, the company first sergeant.

"When we're done we'll have 12-foot walls around the entire (COP) with a couple of entrances," said the native of Moscow, Idaho.

As the COP stands up one concrete barrier at a time, the Soldiers are living in tents, a makeshift motor pool houses their vehicles and an stark tactical operations center is in the works, Cornell said.

"It will be austere at first but every day we're taking steps to improve it. It will really be just like a mini FOB out here," said 1st Lt. Scott Hutchison, the company executive officer who is from Dear Park, Texas. "We're here until the job gets done."

Despite the living conditions, the Soldiers are prepared for the challenges of living in Baghdad outside of the heavily fortified FOBs most Soldiers are accustomed to occupying, Cornell said.

"It's the infantry. That's the nature of the beast. That's what we do," Cornell explained. "They're ready to do what they need to for their country."

Teachers' Institute Opens

By Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – The Iraqi National Police and Multi-National Division-Baghdad Forces opened the Mutanabi Teachers' Institute in the Rasheed district of the Iraqi capital March 13.

The institute was opened at the Netaaken School, a school for girls age 12 through 19, in the southern district.

Sabeeh Al Ka'abi, the head of the Al Rasheed District Action Council, said this project, which took about three weeks to complete, would help teachers do their job of educating young Iraqis.

Staff Sgt. Bryan Stone, a squad leader with Troop C, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, whose unit was instrumental in opening the school, said the mission went smoothly while providing a facility for the all-important business of education.

"Education's something no one can take away from you," he said. "It helps them provide for their own."

This project took place through the cooperation between MND-B forces and the Iraqi National Police, Ka'abi said, because of the two groups' common aim.

"The Iraqi government and the coalition forces work hard because they have one goal," he said, "to build a new Iraq."

Stone said that the goal of building a new Iraq is one that the Iraqi people stand behind.

"It makes me feel good to know that they appre-



(Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Sabeeh Al Ka'abi, the head of the Al Rasheed District Action Council, cuts the ribbon to open the Mutanabi Teachers' Institute in Southeast Rasheed March 13

ciate what we do," he said. "It looks like everybody out there is a little bit happier knowing they're getting a little more education and a little more security."



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Strung Out

Pfc. Brian Schwentner, an aviation operations specialist with Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, places wire outside the brigade's headquarters building at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Iraq.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Standing Guard

Spc. Marquis Dawkins, a member of the personal security detachment with Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from New York pulls security outside Company A, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment's combat outpost March 17 in Baghdad. Dawkins was escorting Col. Ricky Gibbs, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, to the outpost.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Keith Laird, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Lt. Col. Gregory D. Gadson, Commander, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery, and Command Sgt. Maj. William Huffin uncase the battalion colors March 15.

Fresh Faces Arrive in Iraq

**1st Lt Charles Bloomfield
2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment**

BAGHDAD—Fresh troops have arrived in western Baghdad and have assumed control in their area of operations.

2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, the 'Proud Americans,' officially assumed responsibility for operations March 15, during a transfer of authority ceremony held on Camp Liberty, Iraq.

This is the first time the Proud Americans uncased their colors in a combat zone since the unit departed Vietnam in 1971.

Lt. Col. Gregory Gadson, Commander of 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, gave a motivational speech during the ceremony. He touched upon the progress the unit has made since receiving a change of mission from its traditional field artillery role, to mounted and dismounted infantry operations in western Baghdad.

"I am truly amazed at the transformation the Proud Americans have made over the past four months," he said. "As recently as October, 2006, we were manning our howitzers and providing fires for the Dragon Brigade; now we are poised for a new mission in west Baghdad and we are honored to serve with the Dagger Brigade, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division."

Hopes for Economic Growth Start in An Najaf Province

4th BCT (ABN), 25th Inf. Div. Public Affairs

KALSU, Iraq – An-Najaf provincial government leaders, coalition force leadership, and American business liaison personnel toured the “Ready To Wear” clothing production factory in An-Najaf province March 19.

The achievement of provincial Iraqi control has allowed investment from abroad to take interest in possible business ventures in the province.

Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, deputy commander, Multi-National Davison-Baghdad; Paul Brinkley, deputy undersecretary, Defense for Business Transformation; Fawzi Hariri, Minister of Industry and Minerals; Ali Al Dabbagh, spokesman for Iraqi Prime Minister, Mahdi Sajjad, vice president of International Business Development for Gulf Sands Petroleum, and As’ad Abu Khalil, governor of An Najaf toured the company and were given an overview of the factory by

Salah Hamoody, facility director general, and expressed a desire to expand into exports markets including the United States.

The company is a clothing production facility and several hundred employees on the production floor were working at near capacity.

Brinkley expressed his confidence that the factory could compete with any textile plant in the world and that he intended to bring them as much demand as they could handle.

Following the tour, the group sat down for a traditional Iraqi dinner.

After the meal, a news conference was held with Iraqi media to explain the purpose of the visit and the prospects for economic development throughout Najaf and the surrounding provinces.

This visit and hope for economic growth in the province can be directly related to the provincial Iraqi control achieved late last year



(U.S. Photo)

U.S. economic business leaders, Multi-National Davison-Baghdad leaders, Najaf provincial officials, and Iraqi government economic ministers prepare to enter the “Ready To Wear” clothing factory in Najaf for a tour in hopes of promoting investing in the area March 19.

‘Geronimo’ Gentle Giant Protects Battalion’s Spiritual Leader

By Sgt. Marcus Butler

4th BCT (Abn.), 25th Inf. Div. Public Affairs

ISKANDARIYAH, Iraq – Standing 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighing in at around 235 pounds, at first glance Spc. Jemell Garris, would strike anyone as being a hardcore, metal chewing, fighting machine.

In reality, however, he is totally the opposite.

While most people picture an infantryman as those Soldiers running through gunfire, explosions and clouds of dust, for Garris, an infantryman assigned to the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, his role in the fight has taken a somewhat different direction.

Garris, a Boston native, started out with the battalion’s scout platoon.

After leaving the scouts, he became a training room non-commissioned officer. After nearly three years with the Geronimo Battalion, Garris was asked to take on his biggest role yet, protecting the battalion chaplain.

Totally unaware of his upcoming assignment, Garris was a little confused when he was approached with the job.

“I was just standing in the training room finishing up some paper work, and the chaplain came out of a meeting with the first sergeant and asked me what my physical fitness test score was and what my weapon qualification score was,” said Garris. “At first, I was a little confused why he would be asking me these questions, but I answered them. Then he asked me to pick him up and fireman’s carry him. So I did.”

After this initial test, Garris was offered with the position as the battalion’s new chaplain assistant.

“I was looking for someone who was a warrior; who was strong; who could shoot expert. It was suggested that Garris would be a perfect match,” said Chaplain (Capt.) Dan Hardin, the battalion’s spiritual leader. “I know it sort of caught him off guard when I approached him, but he passed the test and I said, ‘You are hired.’”

Moving into the chaplain assistant position, Garris had a few changes to make in order to accomplish the mission ahead of him.

“Garris is a great guy that takes initiative,” said Hardin. “He quickly learned what it took to be a chaplain assistant, which is a military occupational specialty within itself and completed the online course for the MOS on his own.”

Understanding the importance of his role in the unit,



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

Spc. Jemell Garris (right) a Boston native, is a chaplain assistant for Chaplain (Capt.) Dan Hardin, the battalion chaplain for the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Garris has found a new love, one he does not want to lose.

“I love being a chaplain assistant,” said Garris. “If I was able to start over in the Army that would be the job I would have chosen.”

Garris is not the only one in love with his new position. His family also agrees with his new career path.

“My wife likes me working with the chaplain rather than me going out on missions as an infantryman,” he said.

The main role of the chaplain assistant is to make sure that the chaplain is safe and that the paratroopers’ interests and concerns are always placed first.

“A chaplain’s assistant is, first and foremost, a warrior and a personal security detachment,” said Hardin. “He is the

expert tactician and the guy that directs movement under fire, returns fire and gets us to a place of safety. What better person to fulfill that position than a person with experience as an infantryman.”

Achieving tactical expertise in a certain area requires a level of commitment, both physically and mentally, to reach and exceed 100 percent.

“(On) one side he is a warrior, a level two-trained combatives expert. He boxes, does Tae Kwon Do and can shoot. On the other hand, Garris is very soft spoken, compassionate, and tender. He knows when to turn it off and on with both sides,” Hardin said.

Working with the chaplain to help paratroopers is no small task. In all actuality, it is a process that has to be carefully put into action without offending or causing more damage to the one it was meant to help.

“Helping the Soldiers is not a simple process,” said Garris “We generally start by moving the Soldier to a neutral location away from the stress and that coincides with that Soldier’s particular religion. Then we ask what the problem is and listen to how we can help.”

Being responsible for another person’s welfare is stressful enough without having to worry about someone trying to harm you in the process. For the chaplain’s assistant, this is daily occurrence while at war.

“I want to make sure that the chaplain is being taken care of, that is my primary concern,” said Garris. “As long as I am being vigilant, some of the nervousness dissipates. I am always aware of the chaplain’s presence and position, so it is not as stressful as it could be.”

A chaplain, being a non-combatant, is totally reliant on his assistant to ensure his safety when the unit missionary team ventures outside the base camp. No matter what the situation, it is up to that chaplain’s assistant to bring his chaplain back unharmed.

“I am very confident in Garris’ capabilities outside of the walls of the FOB while we are on missions,” said Hardin. “He has great awareness of the entire area we are operating in. I know he has my back.”

Working in the Geronimo Spiritual Operations Center, Garris has found a new home away from home.

“Working with the chaplain and taking care of the Soldiers is what I do best,” said Garris. “I would rather spend the rest of my time here as a chaplain’s assistant. This job fulfills me.”

Military Working Dogs Keeping Troops Safe

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

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — The terrorist is quiet during the search, letting Sgt. Harold Corey pat him down all along one side. But when Corey gets to his right hip, the terrorist shoves at him. It's less than a second before Wandor's huge mouthful of teeth is clamped around the terrorist's arm and Corey is out of danger, telling him "away!" to make him release the man's arm.

It's just a simulation and a chance for Wandor to play; "the terrorist" - actually 1st Lt. Timothy Owens, the executive officer for Company A of the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) - is just trying out the "bite suit" used by dog trainers.

But even playing, Wandor, a Belgian Malinois shepherd, can take down a grown man in seconds, running at 30 miles per hour and exerting 1,400 pounds per square inch of bite pressure.

"It was really cool," said Owens, a native of Corpus Christi, Texas. "It was surprising how the dog looks so lean, but one twist, and he took me down. They're a great asset for enforcement and detection."

Corey, a native of Newport News, Va., has been working with dogs for three years now with the 529th Military Police Company based out of Heidelberg, Germany.

"I enjoy it," Corey said of the March 19 practice session, which was attended by several 210th BSB Soldiers. "It's never not exciting to watch a dog take someone down."

The 2nd BCT, based at Camp Striker, Iraq, has several attached handlers with dogs that accompany brigade missions every day.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hart, a native of Syracuse, N.Y., and the BCT's provost mar-



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

Chief Warrant Officer Julio Hall, a native of Grafton, N.H. and a supply systems technician with the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) is tackled by military working dog "Wandor" while wearing a padded bite suit during a demonstration at Camp Striker, Iraq, March 19.

shal, explained that most of the dogs that work with the brigade are trained to seek explosives. But they are also adept at combat tracking. While a human usually requires hearing two shots to pinpoint the direction of origin, dogs can point to the origin after only one shot. Once the dog finds the shooter's hiding place, he can track the person and even pick him out of a lineup. There are also patrol narcotics dogs, said Hart, used during health-and-welfare inspections of troops, and dogs trained to seek bodies. The dogs are well-trained and well kept, Hart explained.

"They have veterinary coverage twenty-four seven," he said. "And there's medical evacuation coverage as well, just like there is for humans. They're out there risking their lives too - it's only fair."

The handlers know basic first aid and

life support skills for the dogs, and a veterinarian is at the helipad waiting if a dog comes in injured.

So far, said Hart, they haven't needed to medically evacuate a dog. One was killed in the line of duty while searching a house; an air-conditioning unit he jumped onto had an exposed high-powered wire on it. Other than that, he explained, they have had only minor injuries like cut paws.

The animals have provided very tangible benefits for the brigade, sniffing out explosives and weaponry.

"They're a force multiplier," said Corey. "They can do the searching of five or six Soldiers and do with their nose what a Soldier has to do by prodding and digging. They make the job easier. Also, they're a visual deterrent - the local nationals are scared of them, so

they're more cooperative."

Corey said that Wandor has found several weapons while helping on cordon-and-search missions.

"He finds weapons in houses even before the homeowners turn them over to us. Instead of having to move everything in a house, he just sniffs around, and when he finds something, he sits. Then we just have to move one thing to get to the weapons."

All of the hard training works, Corey explained, because the dogs think of the job as a game.

"A dog is like a five-year-old child," he said. "To get a kid to do something, you make it fun."

The object of the game for Wandor - as it is for almost every other military working dog - is a beehive-shaped rubber toy called a Kong. If he finds explosives, he gets to play. Corey explained that the dogs are trained to understand that finding the object of their search might take awhile, but if a mission is fruitless for too long, he's prepared with a piece of detonation cord.

"I'll hand it to someone else and ask them to hide it for me," Corey said. Wandor can then find the cord and win some quality time playing with his Kong before moving on and continuing the quest.

Although it may be like a game for the dog, the perspective is different on the other side of those sharp teeth.

After being bitten through the padded bite suit, Chief Warrant Officer Julio Hall, a native of Grafton, N.H., and a supply systems technician with the 210th BSB, said he had more respect for the dogs' power and for the capabilities they provide against terrorists.

"The dog took me down right away," he said. "The dog itself is pretty intimidating. If I was an insurgent, I'd be petrified."

Brigade's Nerve Center Gets Facelift

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

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — When people think of a deployment to Iraq, they may imagine sand-filled tents and crude buildings on posts. Sometimes, that mental image is right, but sometimes it isn't.

The Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), assisted by local Iraqi builders and civilian contractors, have revamped their brigade's tactical operations center at Camp Striker, Iraq.

When the brigade arrived in September of 2006, the operation center was housed in two separate buildings, simple structures of two-by-fours and plywood, unpainted and with a rough concrete floor. By December, the floor was tiled, the walls boasted a carpet wainscoting and subtle wallpaper, and framed photographs and captured weapons decorated the hallways.

Over the last few weeks, the Soldiers of the brigade have put in overtime, pouring concrete, building walls and roofs, and painting to join the buildings. While civilians have put in time doing the lion's share of outdoor painting, much of the work is done by Soldiers.

Sgt. Tony Fusco, the assistant brigade engineer and a native of Avon, N.Y., has been working on the center for several weeks.

"The way it looked before was plain. Now it looks a lot more like a brigade headquarters should," he said.

Fusco, who says he has been doing carpentry and con-

struction since he was nine years old, helped build walls and the front porch for the TOC as well as other carpentry.

"It makes me feel good. I like to get out of the office, get some fresh air and sun - and I enjoy building. I'm glad I get to use my skills to make the building better," Fusco said.

"The Soldiers are motivated, and they're working together well," said Sgt. Jason Carvel, a native of DeKalb Junction, N.Y., a dismount with the brigade's personal security detachment, as he assisted his Soldiers moving sandbags and rocks. "And it's fun for both of our patrols to work together."

"It's a one-hundred-percent improvement in terms of image," said translator Frank Oraha, who was born and raised in southern Iraq but immigrated to the United States in 1966. He has served in the TOC for almost three years, as three units have moved in and out. "The previous units didn't project an image like this. It gives the image of a professional headquarters."

Projecting tidiness and professionalism is important in Iraqi culture, Oraha noted, explaining that especially in a sheikh's home, the madhif, or parlor, is always kept clean and properly set for receiving guests and entertaining.

"It's always kept presentable for guests, to present a good image," said Oraha.

The Soldiers appreciate the building's new look as well.

"I like that they're integrating all the things they're doing in sector with what we do here," said 1st Lt. Amber Ryder, deputy brigade personnel officer, and a native of Kalamazoo, Mich., of the photographs that line the walls. "We're showing the success of the guys who are out there doing the hard work."



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

Sgt. Carl Hildebrandt, a native of West Topsham, Vt., paints wooden trim on an improvised rack outside the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) tactical operations center on Camp Striker, Iraq, March 15.

Helping to Heal:

Paratroopers, Iraqi Police Provide Medical Assistance

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

SADR CITY, Baghdad – It was a hectic day for personnel inside the clinic in this desperately poor neighborhood. In classrooms converted into treatment rooms, Iraqi and U.S. medics attended to a constant stream of patients, from white-bearded old men to babies only a few months old. They spent much of the day dispensing Tylenol and antibiotics for colds, fevers, viruses, infections, and other simple ailments. Other cases were more severe. In a few heart-breaking instances, parents entered the rooms cradling

crippled or blind children, their eyes pleading for a magic cure.

Despite Sadr City's reputation as a bastion of anti-American sentiment, once people entered the treatment rooms there were no politics - just mothers and fathers seeking help for their sick children.

This was the scene as Iraqi and U.S. forces turned a Sadr City schoolhouse into a makeshift medical clinic March 17 providing much-needed medical assistance to residents of one of Baghdad's most impoverished districts.

The day-long medical operation was the first large-scale humanitarian aid project

conducted in Sadr City since coalition and Iraqi security forces entered the area weeks ago as part of the overall effort to improve security in Iraq's capital.

The medical operation came at a time when coalition and Iraqi forces in Sadr City are beginning to transition from purely security-focused operations to projects providing the people with essential services, said Lt. Col. Richard Kim, commander of a battalion from the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team based in the area.

"This shows that the government can not only protect the people, but also provide the services they need," Kim said.

The unit treated 453 people, including 153 women and 122 children, during the operation.

Residents turned out in droves for the event, forming a line stretching around the block outside the schoolhouse-turned-clinic.

There is a huge need for medical services in Sadr City, which has virtually no public health infrastructure. The goal of the operation was to provide basic, short-term medical attention to residents who currently have few health care options.

"We were just trying to take care of the immediate issues," said Capt. Rose Smyth, of San Pedro, Calif., commander of Co. C, 407th Brigade Support Battalion - known as "Charlie Med" - the 2nd BCT's medical company.

Besides offering something for the pain, there was little the medics could do for patients with chronic, severe illnesses. As trained healers, it was something they all found frustrating.

"You want to offer more but you just can't," Smyth said.

Even so, the patients seemed to appreciate the medics' efforts, said Sgt. Sunde Douglas, from Victoria, Va., an X-ray techni-

cian with Co. C, 407th BSB.

"They all seemed really happy we were here, and most of them would say 'thank you' and shake your hand," Douglas said.

Iraqi police from the 8th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division provided the bulk of the security for the operation. The policemen moved through the crowd outside, causing mini-riots as they distributed bags full of toys and soccer balls to the neighborhood children. They also provided medical personnel to help with treatment inside.

"Of all the medical operations I've been on, this one has had the most Iraqi involvement," said Maj. John Bride of Westwood, Mass., battalion surgeon for the 407th BSB.

In one room, medical officer Maj. Charles Neal, of San Antonio, Texas, and Khuder Abbas, the 8-2 INP's brigade surgeon, spent the day treating patients together. They managed to find a rhythm, despite not being able to speak the same language.

As Abbas examined one boy, he communicated symptoms to Neal by hand signals. When he was finished, Abbas turned to Neal. They had both reached the same conclusion about the treatment the boy would need.

"Doxycycline," Abbas and Neal said simultaneously.

Neal and Abbas, like the other medics, continued to treat patients until late in the afternoon, when the supplies had run out and the schoolhouse was piled high with empty packages of medicine and drugs. Then they began packing up to leave.

As the schoolhouse started to clear out, an officer from the Iraqi police stared out the window at the crowd that was still gathered three and four-deep outside. The operation had gone well, he said, but there was still much more work to do in Sadr City.

"The people have been with us since we started the new security plan," he said, "now the government has to show results."



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

Staff Sgt. Steven McDonald, a civil affairs medic with Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, and Pvt. April Stamper, of Battle Creek, Mich., a medic with Company C, 407th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, treat an Iraqi woman's sick baby during a joint U.S. - Iraqi medical operation in Sadr City, Baghdad March 17.



Staff Sgt. Buddy Tucker, of Denver, Colo., a paratrooper with Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, guards the entrance to a schoolhouse converted into a medical clinic for joint U.S. - Iraqi medical operation in Sadr City, Baghdad March 17.



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

Making Friends

Sgt. Josh Cutty, of Pittsburgh, Penn., with Tactical Psychological Operations Detachment 1120, 303rd Psychological Operations Company, attached to the 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division, gets to know some neighborhood kids while on a mission with Iraqi National Police in the Sha'ab area of the Adhamiyah district in Baghdad March 6.

Paratroopers Train Iraqi Noncommissioned Officers

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

COMBAT OUTPOST WAR EAGLE, Baghdad – Standing on a make-shift rifle range on a shared U.S. – Iraqi base in Baghdad, Staff Sgt. Darin Morgan was doing what he had done a hundred times back at Fort Bragg, N.C.: teaching soldiers how to shoot. Only now he was doing it in Arabic.

“Yameen!” he barked.

The squad of Iraqi soldiers in front of him pivoted to their right and aimed their AK-47s at a row of targets.

“Aman!” yelled Morgan. They lowered their weapons and switched them to safe.

“I think I’m getting the hang of this,” Morgan said.

From new vocabulary words to new combat techniques, there was something for everyone to learn during a three-day training course for Iraqi soldiers sponsored by the 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment “Black Falcons” March 16 to 18.

Eighteen Iraqi Soldiers from “Jaguar Platoon” of the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 6th Army Division were the first to attend the course. Hundreds more are expected to be trained in the coming months.

The model for the training was the U.S. Army’s Warrior Leader Course for new noncommissioned officers, said Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmy Tomlinson, the Black Falcons’ senior NCO.

“What we did was set up some basic classes like we teach at our WLC . . . to teach, coach, and mentor the Iraqis on their techniques,” he said.

The training was about one quarter classroom instruction and three quarters practical exercises, said Staff Sgt. Shane Glowcheski, a squad leader with the Black Falcons’ Bravo Battery, who was one of three American instructors for the course. Topics covered in the classroom included basic NCO responsibilities and the role of officers and NCOs. For the hands-on exercises, the group trained on basic rifle marksmanship, reflexive fire techniques, close quarters combat,



(U.S. Army photo)

Staff Sgt. Shane Glowcheski of Rapid City, S.D., a squad leader with B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, coaches an Iraqi soldier from 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division on shooting techniques during the first Iraqi Army non-commissioned officer training course at Combat Outpost War Eagle in Adhamiyah, Baghdad March 16 to 18.

entering and clearing rooms, vehicle search procedures, and movement techniques, said Glowcheski.

With some minor changes, that curriculum is expected to remain in place as the course becomes a permanent fixture at Combat Outpost War Eagle over the coming months, said Tomlinson. New Iraqi units will be cycling through the course every two or three weeks, he said.

To accommodate all those personnel, Tomlinson is overseeing the construction of an approximately \$400,000 training facility. It will include barracks facilities for about 60 soldiers, a new classroom, four rifle ranges, and a “shoot house” – a lifelike urban battle simulation complex with raised platforms giving instructors a bird’s eye-view of the soldiers as they enter

and clear rooms.

Things were a little more bare-bones for the inaugural version of the course. The silhouettes for the ranges hadn’t arrived, and the “shoot house” consisted of strips of electrical tape laid on the ground to indicate walls and doors. But these were minor snags, and the Iraqis certainly weren’t complaining. They were just happy for the chance to train.

“Just the little we were able to bring to the table, it made their day,” said Glowcheski. “Their motivation was through the wall.”

The three days of instruction was a rare and invaluable experience for the Iraqi soldiers, most of whom, though combat tested, have only basic training. Some of them hadn’t been to a firing range in a year and a half, said Tomlinson.

As a result, the instructors made marksmanship a top priority. Out on the range, they broke down bad habits and focused on the fundamentals. Some of the improvements were simple. Glowcheski hugely improved the accuracy of the squad he was training just by convincing them to shoot on semi-automatic instead of fully-automatic, he said. All the instructors agreed that after only a few hours on the range, the Iraqi soldiers had improved drastically.

“It took one day, and they were SMOKING!!,” Glowcheski said.

The Iraqis were so pleased with the three-day course that they asked to have it extended.

“They want to train. They don’t want just three days, they want nine days. They want two weeks. They want a month,” said Morgan.

Future classes are scheduled to last a day longer, to give the soldiers more time on the range, Tomlinson said.

“Once you train a soldier and you teach them a task, and they get it, you get that feeling of accomplishment,” said Glowcheski.

But the most important thing, he said, was that the Iraqis make the most of the knowledge they learned at the course and use it to help their fellow soldiers.

“For them, knowledge is power,” Glowcheski said.



Pvt. Randy Rainey, of Vicksburg, Miss., a medic with Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, keeps the fire on the burn pit going at Combat Outpost Callahan in Sha'ab, Baghdad March 2. The Soldiers moved in early February.



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

Paratroopers from 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, carry sandbags to reinforce security at newly-established Combat Outpost Callahan in Baghdad's Adhamiyah security district

"You Should've Seen This Place When We First Got Here":

White Falcons' Make a Home Out of a Hovel

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

COMBAT OUTPOST CALLAHAN, Baghdad – Talk to Soldiers at almost any military base in Iraq, and you tend to hear the same refrain:

"You should have seen this place when we first got here."

This is typically followed by a nightmarish description of how bad living conditions were before the base was built up. Exaggerations are common.

But for paratroopers at combat outpost Callahan in Baghdad's Sha'ab district, no exaggerations are necessary.

When the "White Falcons" of 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division moved into the COP in early February, they found a hollowed-out building with no power, light, sewage, heat, or running water – not to mention packs of wild dogs and rats "the size of small kangaroos."

But in only three short weeks, the paratroopers have worked hard to overcome those challenges and turn the wreckage into a home.

"We're leaps and bounds from where we were, and we are going to continue to improve every day," said 1st Sgt. Bobby Wooldridge, of Talala, Okla., first sergeant of Company F, the battalion's forward support company.

Since the announcement of the new Baghdad security plan last month, combat outposts have been springing up in neighborhoods all over Baghdad. The aim is to improve the security

situation in the capital by pushing troops off the larger bases outside the city and into smaller outposts closer to the areas they patrol. COP Callahan was one of the first of these new outposts to be established.

The COP is situated on the gutted remains of what was once a large, five-story shopping center. Inside, broken-down, skeletal escalators ascend into darkness. When the White Falcons arrived, the whole place resembled one of the abandoned tenements in the movie *Blade Runner*, complete with the same general, post-apocalyptic ambience.

But the Army mentality of "leave it better than you found it" has taken hold at Callahan, said Wooldridge, and in almost no time at all the White Falcons have turned COP Callahan around.

The first priority was force protection, said Capt. Michael Henry of Grand Junction, Colo., the executive officer for Headquarters Company. That meant long days setting up gun positions, moving concrete barriers into place, stringing concertina wire, and stacking sandbags. Lots and lots of sandbags.

As soon as an acceptable level of security was reached, the next step was to ensure supplies from the rear could flow in and get distributed. That ongoing job belongs to the paratroopers of Co. F. They make sure food, water, bullets and fuel reach the paratroopers who need them. It's a tough job, but one that shows immediate results, said Wooldridge.

"Whenever someone eats an MRE, we did our job. When they fire a round, we did our job. When a truck leaves here with a full tank of gas, we did our job. It's instant grati-

fication," he said.

With those concerns out of the way, the White Falcons have been able to focus on quality of life issues.

The COP now has power, lights, and a contracted sanitation system. Within the next week there will be hot showers. A Morale, Welfare, and Recreation center was recently constructed that provides phone and internet access. And equipment is on the way that will enable the paratroopers to cook a hot meal every day.

Making so many improvements in such a short time took teamwork, said 1st Sgt. Mickey Ross, from Fayetteville, N.C., First Sergeant of Headquarters Company.

Despite all the positive changes, Wooldridge cautioned that COP Callahan will never have some of the luxuries that the larger Forward Operating Bases are equipped with.

"We're not going to become a FOB. We're here for a certain mission, and we're not going to build this place up as if we were going to be here forever," he said.

Nevertheless, the White Falcons are going to do everything possible to make sure Soldiers get taken care of, he said.

Getting to that point has meant hard work and long hours for paratroopers like Pvt. Rebecca Howard of Fox Co., from Williamsburg, Ky. Howard said she has been so busy since arriving at COP Callahan, she has lost track of time.

But the results of all the work she and her fellow paratroopers have been doing are evident every time she looks around, Howard added.

"It's getting better every day. It really is," she said.



(Photos by David Morris, courtesy of 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)



Cavalry Shows its 'Blue Collar'

(Above) Col. Larry Phelps, commander of the 1st Cavalry Division Rear, presents a box of cigars and a First Team lapel pin to "Blue Collar Comedy Tour" Veteran Ron White before his performance March 16, at Abrams' Field House.

(Right) "Blue Collar Comedy Tour" Veteran Ron White visited Fort Hood for a free show March 16, at Abram's Field House. More than 200 First Team Soldiers and their family members were in attendance, many of whom are home recovering from injuries while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08.

Chaplain Finishes Career with the First Team

By Sgt. Joy Pariante
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas - Some people call it coincidence, to some it's fate but, to others it's more of a divine intervention. Sometimes things happen at just the right time, like getting hired for your dream job when you can't take your current job anymore. Other times, things happen that you don't want to happen, but you realize later that no matter how good or bad the occurrence, it happened at that moment for a specific reason.

According to Chaplain (Col.) DeWayne L. Brewer these are all examples of God's impeccable timing and ability to give us what we need exactly when or far before we really need it.

In his 30 years of service, Brewer, a reserve chaplain mobilized to serve the 1st Cavalry Division's rear detachment, the Lord's timing has played a vital role in his career. Even after being passed over for multiple promotions and being forced out of the Army five times during his career, Brewer keeps ending up back serving and doing what he loves. "What I love has deeply hurt me," Brewer explained. "That is the essence of life and of love."

It's part of God's timing and plan, he explained. "The Army said 'we don't need you anymore', but the Lord had a purpose and brought me back to the Army."

Brewer has been mobilized three times



(Photo by Sgt. Joy Pariante, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Chaplain (Col.) DeWayne L. Brewer, the 1st Cavalry Division Rear chaplain, addresses Soldiers of all faiths at the Ironhorse dining facility, March 7, during his final prayer breakfast as a military chaplain.

since joining the Reserves in 1995; first to be the rear detachment chaplain for 4th Infantry Division in 2003.

Next, the Army sent him to Afghanistan to be the camp chaplain in Kabul for Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. Finally, the chaplain made his way to First Team, where he'll finish out his Army career on April 28.

"I don't know of any other way to finish

up than with America's First Team," Brewer said. "With this last assignment God gave me a wonderful gift. It's the second time God's helped me close out something with an amazing assignment."

The first closure was when Brewer finished his active duty career as a transportation officer with the 106th Transportation Battalion; the same unit his career began in. Brewer's active duty career was cut short

after 15 years when the Army was drawing down forces in 1992.

Brewer took the separation package option and decided to go to seminary school back home in Kentucky.

Upon finishing school, Brewer was accepted into the Army Reserves as a major in the chaplain corps.

Since then, Brewer has divided his time between his civilian and military ministries. "I love being a Soldier and a minister for the Lord," Brewer said. "They go together." And Brewer's love for being a Soldier makes leaving even harder. "I don't want to get out, but the Lord reminds me that He gave me all these years to serve even when I thought it was over," Brewer said. "In removing me from the Army, He reminded me that my identity is not in the Army. My security is not in the Army. It is in Christ, it's in Him."

Brewer will be heading back to Kentucky where he'll be with his wife of 31 years, Sheri. He is looking forward to either working as a hospice chaplain or a minister at a church.

After three decades of serving, Brewer doesn't want to leave the Army with just stories of his experiences. He said wants to leave the Army with exactly what he's taking away from it; love.

"If we pass on not just our experiences, but the story of love because that's what carries on. Love for what we do, for the nation, for the Lord and for one another," Brewer said.



(Photos by Sgt. Joy Pariente, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

The Patriot Guard Riders roll up to the Cove Theater in Copperas Cove to share breakfast and a movie with the Family Readiness Groups for 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment and 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division.

Patriot Guard Rolls With Fort Hood Families

By Sgt. Joy Pariente
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – Motorcycles and minivans converged upon the Cove Theater in Copperas Cove March 17 when the Patriot Guard Riders joined Fort Hood Family Readiness Groups for a morning viewing of the new movie “Wild Hogs.”

The FRGs of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment and the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, invited the Riders to come out and spend time with the families of the Soldiers they show so much support for. “We wanted to say thank you to the Patriot Guard for all they do,” said Katrina Clemons, FRG leader for the 1-5 Cav. “We don’t get many opportunities to thank them.”

There are Patriot Guard Riders all over the country and their mission is to travel to the funerals of service members to show their respect and to keep protesters from harassing families or ruining services. Their motto is “Standing for those who stood for us.” The Riders travel to the funerals on their own dime; on motorcycles or in cars, all for different reasons.

“There are 84,000 different members with probably 80,000 different reasons why they do it,” said Sonny Albert, a ride captain with the Patriot Guard.

“Some people do it because it’s the only thing we can do for them,” said rider Ann Wenger. “We can’t go and fight.”

Some members are Soldiers, some are parents or spouses and some are veterans. Don Hardman, a Korean War vet-



The Patriot Guard Riders roll up to the Cove Theater in Copperas Cove to share breakfast and a movie with the Family Readiness Groups for 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment and 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. The Riders are best known for attending Soldier funerals to protect the families and the dignity of the service from protesters.

eran, echoed the sentiment of many of the veteran riders. He said he rides to the funerals because he wants to do for these Soldiers what wasn’t done for his generation when they came home.

He wants to show them the respect they deserve.

But showing respect for a Soldier isn’t all about that

Soldier; it’s about that Soldier’s family as well.

“Every time I think of a Soldier who has passed away, I think of my own family,” said Debby Norton, a rider whose husband is in Iraq and her son is on his way there again this year. “I want to let them [the families] know that we care and we love them.”

And the families are what brought the Guard out to the movies Saturday morning. Riders and spouses bonded over coffee, doughnuts and chicken biscuits. Children questioned bikers about the meaning of all the embroidered patches on their leather vests.

“This is one of the good things we get to do,” said rider Steve Cole. “We’re going on a family outing, they consider us their family.”

And, according to Clemons, what these men and women do to support the Soldiers does make them family. And the FRGs are devoted to making sure that the Riders get the appreciation and integration into the families that they deserve. “We don’t want the first time we know of them to be at a funeral.”

The Patriot Guard Riders invite everyone to join them in paying respects to fallen Soldiers and protecting their families. Everyone who says they support the troops should be out with the Riders showing that support, Cole said.

“There should be 300 million Americans at every funeral,” he added.

For more information about how to support the Patriot Guard Riders or for more information about their mission, visit their Web site at www.patriotguard.org.

'Max Impact' Air Force Band Hits Taji

By Spc. Karly Cooper
15th SB Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Music filled the Camp Taji base cinema as 'Max Impact,' rocked for Soldiers here March 8.

Billed as the premier rock ensemble of the United States Air Force, from Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, D.C., they're currently on a six week tour of the Middle East.

"... We can't say it enough, thank you for what you do, thank you so much," said Air Force Master Sgt. Ryan Carson, the vocalist of the band.

Pulling from a wide variety of music, Max Impact played everything; from the Black Eyed Peas to Metallica to Janis Joplin. Soldiers from the crowd got into the act when picked from the crowd as back up vocalists.

"I didn't expect to get pulled up onto the stage. It was a lot of fun though," said 2nd Lt. Willard 'Chip' Wells from South Haven, Miss., platoon leader with the 1687th Combat Heavy Equipment Transfer Company, 867th Corps Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade.

Sgt. 1st Class Bonnie Frazier, 867th CSB, 15th SB, won the band's "Defending Freedom" disc at the performance.

"It was a lot of fun and it's cool that I won a CD," said Frazier.

The band carries two messages with them when they travel. They want Soldiers to know that they are supported 110 percent and, when the band goes home, they take back stories to share in the States.

They do many small shows for Soldiers that are unable to attend main performances. One of the most touching shows came when



(Photo by Spc. Karly Cooper, 15th SB Public Affairs)

Air Force Master Sgt. Regina Coonrod, one of Max Impact's vocalists, gets the night started with her version of the Black Eyed Peas. The band performed at the Camp Taji movie theater March 8.

they visited a young Soldier they nicknamed "Johnny Rocket". Hospitalized after surviving a mortar hit, the band said the impact of

being able to perform for him was phenomenal. Air Force Master Sgt. Dave Graves summed up what being a part of Max Impact

means to him and his band mates.

"I can't imagine a better job than to be a messenger. This is why I joined the Air Force."

'300' Gives a Darkly Courageous Spin to History

I'm a director buff. I'll watch a David Fincher movie just because it's a David Fincher movie.

And I'll admit that I wasn't the world's biggest fan of "Sin City," but Frank Miller's style was captivating.

So when I heard about "300" – based on Miller's graphic novel, which drew from 1962's film "The 300 Spartans" – I was predisposed to sacrifice some of my precious free time to watch it.

A second draw was that the battle of Thermopylae seems to get short shrift in history class, although it was a defining moment in the birth of Greek democracy, and lastly, it seems relevant enough to the situation we face in Iraq that even the Iranians have complained.

The movie isn't a docudrama, and wasn't intended to be. Miller's graphic-arts style shines through, and almost any frame could be printed as an outstanding photo. The entire film has a dreamlike quality – everything is sharper, clearer and more vivid than real life.

When Xerxes, the Persian god-king, sends elephants and rhinoceroses charging toward Leonidas' painfully thin Spartan



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ranks, the beasts seem to charge off the screen.

The movie was filmed with real actors against a blue screen – almost everything else was added later, adding to the hyperreal quality that defines Miller's work. The action changes subtly from fluid full-speed to slow-motion to stop-motion; it's a graphic novel come to life.

And as far as history – a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down, as they say.

As I recall, Thermopylae was discussed very briefly in high school, but never to an extent that made me realize the importance of the battle.

The resistance of the Spartans offered Athens critical time to prepare for a naval

attack on Xerxes' ships at Salamis later that year.

The Persian navy was left in tatters, and Xerxes retreated to Asia, leaving his army in Greece under Mardonius. The Spartans reassembled and led an army of Greeks drawn from all the city-states to a decisive win at Plataea, ending the Greco-Persian War and Persian expansion into Europe.

It's all nice for the history books, but the one battle at Thermopylae rallied the loosely confederated Greek city-states behind the Hellenic cause.

Most of the surrounding areas and even many Greeks had "Medeized" – thrown in their lot with the Persians, at least in name. Without the immediately famed battle, the Greeks might not have put up a fight at all, becoming subject to a king and never giving rise to the philosophies, political structures, and other contributions they made to Western thought.

To touch on the last subject, as a Soldier in Iraq, I enjoy a good war movie now and again – especially one that doesn't sermonize or spend a lot of time mooning about the folks back home.

But in a much larger scope, it struck me

as familiar.

Three hundred Spartans against 500,000 Persians isn't the best odds.

But here we are, a relatively small number of coalition forces facing down home-grown Iraqi terrorists, foreign fighters, and petty criminals, while trying to maintain freedom as a force in the world. And based on their superior devotion to freedom and their own culture, the outmanned Spartans inflicted disproportionately huge casualties on the Persian army.

They didn't win the battle, but they turned the tide of the war, and sometimes that is all that can be asked.

As a final note, '300' is a great date movie.

The action, gore and style will satisfy the most enthusiastic of men, and suffice it to say, 300 ripped men, scantily clad in loin-cloths and cloaks, will win the hearts and minds of women.

In my book, Frank Miller's latest offering definitely deserves five stars.

(Editors Note: This issue's Random Review is brought to you by the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division Public Affairs Office.)



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

Allentown, Penn., native Sgt. Hector Sanjurjo, a technical inspector for Company B, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, keeps the rhythm for the band Last Ditch Effort during Bunker 182, an alternative, contemporary Christian program aimed at younger Soldiers at Camp Taji, Iraq.

Head for the Bunker!

Christian Service Rocks Taji Theater

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The 1st Air Cavalry Brigade’s alternative, contemporary Christian service, Bunker 182, rocked Taji Theater, March 4, with over 70 Soldiers in attendance.

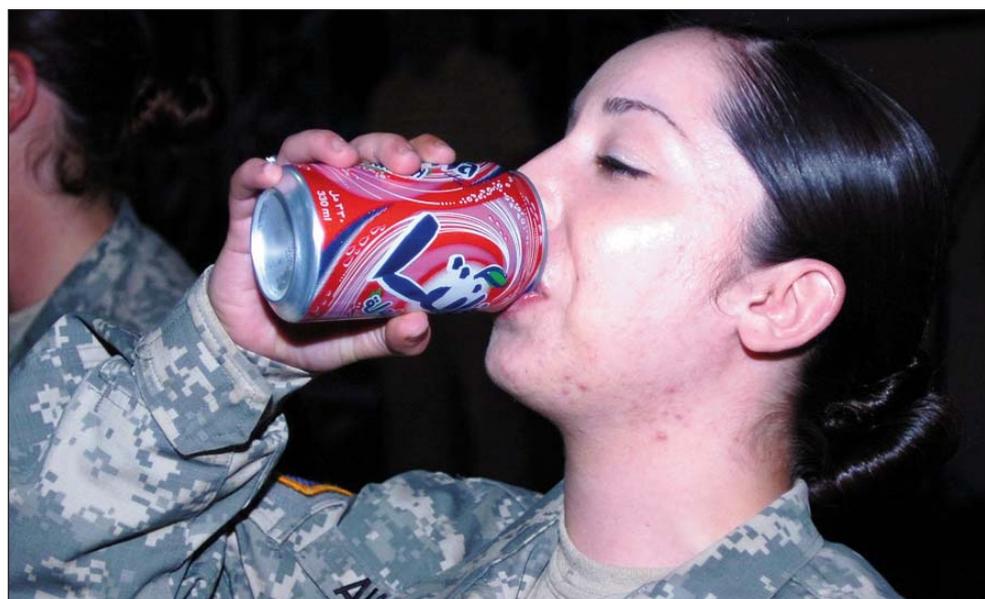
Expecting only about 40 Soldiers, the Chaplains’ were pleased to see almost every seat was filled, said Austin, Texas, native Chaplain (Capt.) Ben Clark of 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division. The Soldier/civilian band, Last Ditch Effort, opened up the night with Christian rock songs that kept heads nodding and feet tapping to the beat.

“Last Ditch Effort was a wonderful mixture of vocal and musical talents. ... It was definitely better than sitting in my room playing X Box,” said Palm Bay, Fla., native Spc. Damien Steinrich, a paralegal for 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div.

“The band sets the tone for the night. It sets the energy level – It’s loud and rocking. That’s what these Soldiers want,” said Brandon, Fla., native Chaplain (Capt.) Michael Fox, of 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment.

Along with the rock music, there were audience participation games. This night brought about eight Soldiers up to the front for a belching contest.

The winner for the women’s side, standing at only 4 feet 11 inches tall, was Fuquay-



Fuquay-Varina, N.C., native Pfc. Erica Avent, a paralegal for the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, quickly downs a soda to help her belch louder than her opponents during the opening night of Bunker 182, an alternative, contemporary Christian program brought to the Soldiers by 1st ACB chaplains at Camp Taji, Iraq. Incidentally, Avent won the contest.

Varina, N.C., native Pfc. Erica Avent, a paralegal for 1st ACB.

“Getting the crowd involved was a good idea. Instead of just sitting there listening to the band play, they got the audience actively involved with the program,” she said. After reflecting on the contest Avent said, “I was a little disappointed in myself, I usually do better at belching – it’s one of my obnoxious skills.”

After the game, there was a positive

message put out by Chaplain Clark on this month’s theme – fuel.

“We are all fueled by something, just like any vehicle. If you put the wrong fuel in, you’ll get disastrous results. We’re suggesting running your life on integrity and faith,” said Clark.

The following months will continue with themes such as “living life to the extreme,” “myth busters” and more, said

Clark.

The overall concept of Bunker 182 is to give Soldiers an alternative to the normal church service and take their minds off of the daily toils of being at war.

“You don’t have to give up enjoying things just because you decide you’re going to live the Christian lifestyle. It’s not your grandfather’s church – it’s a viable alternative,” said Clark.

“The bottom line of course is that people’s lives will be improved. As they go out in the workplace or in their relationships, there will be a morale compass there ...,” said Hugo, Minn., native Chaplain (Maj.) Charles Causey, 1st ACB’s chaplain.

Bunker 182 also exists partly because Chaplains see the hardships and adversities Soldiers face everyday – realizing they needed a release.

“We hear the horror stories of these Soldiers everyday – broken relationships, stress, (and other) problems. We need to give them an outlet to where they can get some relief ... We’re going to give them some coping mechanisms to deal with these tough life issues they’re going to encounter,” Fox said.

The first night far exceeded the chaplain’s expectations.

Everything fell into place and there was a real positive response from those who attended, said Fox.

“When Soldiers walk away and say, ‘I got to tell somebody about that,’ that determines a success for me,” he said.