



Volunteers Join Fight Against Al Qaeda

Page 6



Air Cav: A Force Not to be Reckoned With

Page 16



Honoring Military Fathers

Page 28-29

Crossed Sabers

Volume I, Issue 15

"Telling the MND-Baghdad Story"

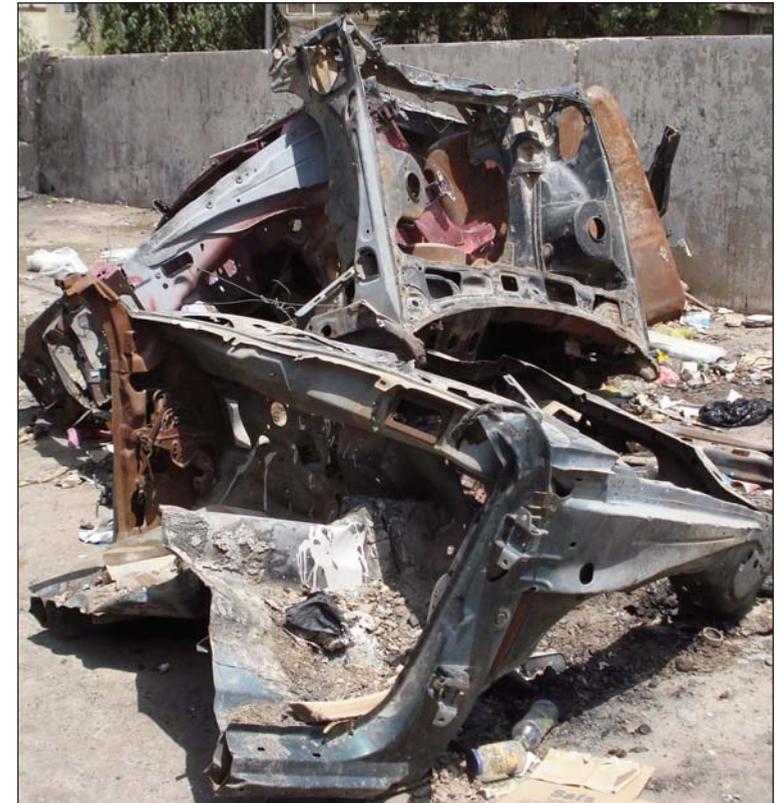
Monday, June 25, 2007



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

Watching Your Back

Spc. Dustin Graves (right), a York, Pa., native with Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, and an Iraqi soldier from the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division pull security during Operation Tiger Hammer, a combined cordon and search mission in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District June 7. Just after sunrise, the U.S. troops established blocking positions around the neighborhood while the Iraqi units fanned out through the narrow streets, searching houses and apartment complexes for weapons and contraband. The four-hour operation netted nine detainees and 38 illegal weapons. "This just shows the commitment of the Iraqi Army to protecting the people of Adhamiyah by going after criminals and terrorists who want to create instability and hinder progress," said Capt. Leon McGill, of Waynesville, Missouri, a U.S. military transition team advisor.



(Photo by Capt. Jared Purcell, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment)

The rusted shell of a dilapidated vehicle rests on the streets of Baghdad's Adhamiyah District. It and 30 other vehicles were removed during a two-week project funded by the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, to clean up streets in east Baghdad district.

Soldiers Work With Local Leaders to Clean up Streets

2nd BCT, 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, recently completed a two-week, \$10,000 project to remove dozens of burned-out, broken down vehicles from the streets of the Adhamiyah District, on the east side of the Iraqi capital.

The project was the result of coordination between the 1-26th "Blue Spaders," the Adhamiyah District Advisory Council and the local neighborhood advisory councils.

A local contractor was employed to oversee the removal of the vehicles.

The project provided jobs for 20 local workers.

The removal of the vehicles opened up several lanes of traffic that had been blocked, easing some of the gridlock on Adhamiyah's streets. It also reduced health risks caused by the unsanitary condition of the cars, many of which were leaking gas and oil.

In some cases, the broken down vehicles had had been used as improvised road barriers by local people to keep sectarian violence out of their neighborhoods.

With the implementation of the 2nd BCT's "Safe Neighborhoods" project, which has placed temporary protective cement barriers in the area, such measures have become unnecessary, said Capt. Jared Purcell, the Blue Spaders' public affairs officer.

Abu Nuwas Revitalization Center Opens

By Maj. Sean Ryan
2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq — The rebuilding of the famous market in eastern Baghdad is making progress with the opening of the Abu Nuwas Revitalization Center June 9.

The market is well known for serving up mazgouf fish, meaning river fish, a Baghdad delicacy cooked over wood fires while you wait and served with fresh vegetables. The wait won't be too much longer as the information center is one of the first steps in the historic street's revival.

The information center was opened in conjunction with local leaders from the Rusafa District along with

the District Advisory Council chairman from Abu Nuwas.

This part of the city, which once provided a variety of shops, restaurants, and hotels, was world-renowned and will soon open again. Approximately 45 business owners attended the opening to discuss economic and security issues.

According to Maj. Dave Carlson, a native of Allensburg, Wash., and the leader of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's civil support team and the Rusafa district, the meeting allowed business owners from the area to discuss issues

See Abu Nuwas Page 3

Freedom isn't Free...and It Should be Cherished

*"In the truest sense, freedom cannot be bestowed; it must be achieved."
- Franklin D. Roosevelt*

In 1776, our forefathers boldly signed the declaration of independence, standing up for individual liberty, freedom from tyranny and the basic human rights of mankind. When they penned their names on that document in Philadelphia on July 4, each man knew he could be signing his own death warrant. Yet, they stood firm in their convictions, fought for many years and finally gained their independence.

Today, America finds its sons and daughters in a different kind of fight, against an elusive, cowardly enemy who won't stand toe-to-toe with our warriors, and who hides in the shadows and preys on the innocent and the unsuspecting.

We fight a Global War on Terror, and here in Baghdad we are seeing signs that the Iraqi people have had enough of al-Qaeda and extremist, terrorist elements operating in their midst.

In western Baghdad, Sunni residents in Abu Ghraib and Amiriyah have taken up arms against these terrorists. They are tired of the senseless slaughter of innocence in their neighborhoods and they are making a stand.

In time, we hope that more Iraqis will throw off the yoke of terrorist influence, work together with the Iraqi government and Iraqi Security Forces and fully realize a new nation – free to pursue its own destiny in the world.

Many Americans have given their lives

Pegasus 6 Sends

**Maj. Gen.
Joseph F. Fil,
Jr.**



in the fight for freedom. From the Revolutionary War to this moment in history, America's sons and daughters continue to selflessly serve their nation, sacrificing the comforts of home to take the fight to the enemies of our nation.

All of you should be extremely proud of your service to the nation, and the achieve-

ments we continue to build upon here in Baghdad. I am very proud to call myself your commander.

We can all be proud to call ourselves American warriors; freedom fighters.

Growing up, I think we can all remember simpler, more peaceful times.

Many of us even marched in town parades down main streets waving the flag and meeting in some central place in the evening to view the splendor as fireworks lit up the night sky.

Those simple, peaceful times can never be forgotten. We must cherish those memories even as today, with our nation at war, we look forward to peace again.

Today, here in Baghdad we are in a fight for freedom – but it is freedom from fear,

from terror, and from those with extremist ideologies who murder their fellow man in the name of their misbegotten causes. We are America's warriors. We fight our nation's wars. Yet, we yearn for the quiet comfort of lounging with loved ones on an endless summer day.

In American towns across the country, large and small, kids will still march in parades waving small American flags. Ice cream, barbecue and the gathering of friends and family remain the highlight of the day for many Americans this 4th of July holiday.

It's commonplace sight back home. It's simple. It's peaceful. And it's something we all cherish. We will cherish it even more when we return home to our loved ones to again to experience it ourselves.



Commanding General:

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr.

Public Affairs Officer:

Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl

Command Information Supervisor:

Master Sgt. Dave Larsen

Print NCOIC:

Sgt. Michael Garrett

Editor:

Sgt. Nicole Kojetin

Contributing Writers:

Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim, Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner, Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert, Sgt. Jon Cupp, Sgt. Mike Pryor, Sgt. Robert Yde, Sgt. Robert Strain, Spc. Alexis Harrison, Spc. Nathan Hoskins, Spc. Shea Butler, Spc. L.B. Edgar, Spc. Ryan Stroud, Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, Spc. Alexis Harrison, Spc. Courtney Marulli, Pfc. William Hatton, Pfc. Benjamin Gable, Pfc. Ben Fox, Pfc. Nathaniel Smith

Contact *Crossed Sabers* at VOIP 242-4093, or DSN 318-847-1855 or e-mail david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil or nikki.lemke@mnd-b.army.mil.

Crossed Sabers is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of *Crossed Sabers* are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the First Cavalry Division. All editorial content of *Crossed Sabers* is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs Office and posted on the First Team website at www.hood.army.mil/1stcavdiv/.

CENTCOM Commander Tours Mutannabi Book Market



Adm. William J. Fallon (left), commander of the U.S. Central Command, speaks with a local printer on Mutanabbi Street in the Rusafa District of eastern Baghdad June 11. Fallon toured the Mutanabbi Book Market, the most famous book market in Baghdad. The market, also named Al Saray, meaning paper market, is open again though still recovering from a car bombing March 5. Fallon spoke with locals and asked how things were progressing.

(Photo by Maj. Sean J. Ryan, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)



(Courtesy Photo)

Citizens of the Zafaraniya community hosted a neighborhood advisory council member election at the Wadi Al-Ain School in eastern Baghdad June 1.

Elections Show Iraqis Practicing Democracy

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – The Zafaraniya community saw democracy in action as they hosted a neighborhood advisory council member election June 1 at the Wadi Al-Ain School, which drew approximately 1,000 voters.

The vote was completely run by local officials. Fawzi Dawood, a council member and election center manager, said this marked the third election for Zafaraniya. The first was on May 29, 2003 after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime and again in January 2005.

The election highlighted a turning point as two muhallas, or neighborhoods, now have neighborhood council representation, Dawood said.

"This election is special for Zafaraniya as it increases the activities of the members and consequently increases the services to the citizens of Zafaraniya in general and the Hay Al-Zafaraniya, in particular," he said. "It will increase the momentum for the members and intensify the cooperation, the enthusiasm and the continued work of the members and the community."

Six candidates ran for two open positions, and after all ballots were cast and videotaped for authenticity, the winners were Jasim Sakran Muohmed and Muohmed Abass.

1st Lt. John Lee of the 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, who arrived to give added protection while the voting was underway, said Muohmed won by a landslide with 451 votes.

"Mr. Fawzi wished to thank the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police for providing security and mentioned Col. Khalid, the Zafaranyah IP commander by name, indicating that he was there for the entire process," Lee said of the 1st Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division. "It was a great success for everyone."

In order for voting information to get out to the people, Dawood said advertisements were placed in schools, mosques, markets and along main roads and intersections.

Iraqi Security Forces, along with help from sheiks, civil organizations and other community leaders, allowed voters to place their ballots in a safe environment, Dawood said. All the citizens were searched when they came in to ensure everyone's safety.

"I felt that the voters felt secure with the presence of the IA," Dawood said, stressing the help of Maj. Qasim of the 1-4-1st IA.

Support for the election was also given by the Karadah District Council chair, Dr. Muhammad and Ahmad Ulga, the Zafaraniya Neighborhood Advisory Council chairman and Lt. Col. Wayne Grieme, the commander of 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery, Dawood said.

Soldiers Seize Bomb 'Factory'

**By Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons
4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs**

BAGHDAD – Multinational Division – Baghdad Soldiers seized a bomb-making "factory," along with another large weapons cache while on patrol in the eastern portion of the Rashid District of the Iraqi capital June 11.

"This is tremendous work by our Soldiers to take more than 300 (improvised explosive devices) off the streets," said Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, commander of 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

Troops from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, and Company A, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 4th IBCT, discovered the factory, a complex of small buildings deep in the thick palm groves of East Rashid, after receiving word of the objective's location from other Coalition Forces.

The find consisted of one vehicle wired and loaded with explosives as a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device; 54 82mm mortars; 27 155mm artillery shells; one 500-pound bomb; 64 anti-tank mines; two 200-pound bombs; three 100-pound bombs; 30 130mm projectiles; 30 hand grenades; 200 artillery boosters; 10 40mm rounds; one bag of blasting caps; one rocket of unknown caliber and origin; one bag of booster charges; six bags of propellant; 300 five-gallon cans of nitric acid used to make homemade explosives; one bag of breaching charges and 15 bags of anti-personnel mines with 100 mines per bag. Also found in the cache was enough wiring and bomb-making material to create more than 300 improvised explosive devices.

In a separate cache near the complex, an additional 125 five-gallon containers of nitric acid were found.

Three other vehicles were also found at the site wired as car bombs, but did not contain explosives. A



(Photo by Spc. Ben Washburn, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Spc. Marquis Dawkins of Brooklyn, N.Y., an infantryman assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, surveys the more than 120 five-gallon cans of nitric acid, a component used to make bombs, discovered at a bomb-making "factory" in Baghdad's East Rashid District June 11.

Coalition explosive ordnance disposal team catalogued the weapons and explosives found and will dispose of them properly, preventing them from being used against innocent Iraqi people or Iraqi Security and Coalition Force personnel.

"This find further emphasizes our ability to get after the extremists and take away their tools of destruction, as none of these weapons and explosives will ever be used to harm others," Gibbs said.

Street's Revitalization Center Opens

Abu Nuwas

From Page 1

and "become unified in their economic goals."

"It's in everyone's best interest to make the street a more central location," said Qays Foraj, the Abu Nuwas chairman. Foraj explained to the business owners his vision of the future for the market and the possibilities of offering financial assistance.

The center will be open to answer questions or discuss upcoming projects to citizens and business owners, alike.

Questions to be answered include when the market will be open for customers.

"I would be very happy once the area brings back even a portion of the customers that used to come," said a store owner who owns a retail store. "A lot of money is being put into fixing the street and the people appreciate the time and effort from everyone."

Under Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon, also known as the Baghdad Security Plan, the Abu Nuwas Market is one of the areas targeted to stimulate economic growth.

Brig. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, Multi-National Division-Baghdad's deputy commanding general for support, paid a recent visit to the market and discussed issues with local owners.

"The Iraqi people need to remain resilient and things will get better," he said. Brooks recognized that security needs to improve and reassured the store owners that they will not be left without protection.

"Coalition Forces are working side-by-side with the Iraqi Security Forces and we are here to help, not leave," he said. Iraqi Police and Army under the Iraqi Rusafa Area Command provide security for the area,



(Photo by Maj. Sean Ryan 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)

A worker continues construction on Abu Nuwas Street. Approximately 45 business owners attended the opening of the Abu Nuwas Revitalization Center June 9 in the Rusafa District of eastern Baghdad to discuss economic and security issues of the area.

with help from the Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, currently operating as part of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

The area has been shut down due a series of car bombs that left the area paralyzed several months ago. With no customers coming in, a lot of shop owners and restaurateurs had to close their doors and the ones that stayed in the area, slowly watched their livelihoods disappear.

"We still need essential services like electricity and water," an owner of one of the fish markets told Brooks during the general's visit, "but we are ready to start telling all customers we will be open soon,"

4th of July: Reminding Soldiers What it Means to Serve

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

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – This Independence Day, as the Iraqi people struggle for freedom, Soldiers deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism should take pride in the difference they are making and remember their country's own struggle for independence more than 200 years ago, said the Multi-National Division - Baghdad command sergeant major.

Even after four years of combat operations in Iraq, Soldiers in harm's way are serving their country as America's forefathers did during the Revolutionary War, said

Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Johndrow, the MND-B and 1st Cavalry Division command sergeant major.

"We're still fighting for freedom against an enemy who attacked us on our own shores September 11th. We're continuing to fight for our freedom," said the native of Townsend, Mont. "At the same time we're helping the Iraqi people obtain their freedom, which is something they had never had before or enjoy it as we enjoy it."

Just as the fight for Iraq is not solely an Iraqi conflict, the American Revolution was not exclusively fought by Americans. The monetary contributions, military manpower and naval support provided by France were critical to the success of America in the Revolutionary War, Johndrow said.

"We're doing a lot of the same things with the Iraqi people," he said of the Coalition's contribution to Iraq.

Far from a quick split, the struggle to end British colonization took years.

Although the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, the struggle for independence continued until 1781 when Gen. Cornwallis surrendered following the battle of Yorktown. Even then the United States was not formally recognized until the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783, Johndrow said.

"You have to be persistent. It's not easy. Freedom is not free and it's always a struggle," he said.

Of all the heroes of the Revolutionary War, Johndrow admires America's first pres-

"...once you get a little taste of freedom and you know what it's about and you can feel it...You'll do anything for it."

*Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Johndrow
Multi-National Division - Baghdad
1st Cav. Div. command sergeant major*



ident most. Also America's first General of the Army, George Washington, overcame early losses and shortages of necessary supplies to achieve victory. Even with shoeless Soldiers at Valley Forge, Washington did not falter.

"If he gave up back then, where would we be today? He didn't and that's like us: we will never give up. The American Soldier is very tenacious," he said. "We have to stand up and continue to keep our freedom."

"It's a struggle and it's not easy, but once you get a little taste of freedom and you know what it's about and you can feel it like you can see it and you can touch it there is no going back. You'll do anything for it," Johndrow said.

Though freedom is new to the Iraqi people, they are beginning to understand what it's all about, he said.

"We know what freedom is all about. We know how precious it is. So we'll never give it up. We'll fight to the bitter end. They're just starting to get the taste and the smell of it," Johndrow said.

The bottom line for Soldiers in Iraq is that freedom has a price, Johndrow said, and "it's a very expensive price, but it's worth every penny."

For all of the Coalition's struggles, progress has come in the form of improved Iraqi Security Forces, Johndrow said. "They've made leaps and bounds."

Part of pacifying Iraq involves some form of reconciliation.

"We have to come together as a team and fight for their independence. We have to

come together, each one of us. Not as Sunnis, not as Kurds, not as Shia; as Iraqis. One nation," Johndrow said.

Disagreements are natural in a country with diverse groups. However, disagreements need to be debated in the political realm rather than resolved with violence, he said

Another sign of progress is the rejection of extremism by some Iraqis who previously supported the insurgency, he said.

"Some of the Sunnis are joining together to fight al Qaeda because they've realized al Qaeda is no good. They're bad. That's not to say they're in love with us but they know we're fair and we are honest and we're not here to harm them. We're here to make things better. They definitely know al Qaeda is not," Johndrow explained.

The Iraqi people "want peace and stability, not only for them, but for their children. They want their children to go to school. They want to be able to go out and earn an honest living for their children," he explained. "You always want to make things a little better for your kids that they were for you."

Johndrow is proud of these Soldiers fighting for the Iraqi cause, and hope they are proud of themselves, too.

"There were hardships back then. There still is today. These are challenging times. But (Soldiers) ought to wake up and be proud of themselves when they put that uniform on and go out into sector because they are making a difference every day," Johndrow said.

Those who have not donned the uni-

form can never fully comprehend what it means to serve. Deploying together, Soldiers live in "close confinement, take care of each other, where it really counts and matters," he said.

Contrary to portrayals in popular culture, Soldiers are not robots, whose function is to execute and dictate orders, Johndrow said.

"There is such a deep, loving admiration Soldiers have for one another. When they're in harm's way they're worried about each other, not themselves. They don't want to let each other down. That's something you can't get any place else," he said. "Once you've been in and understand it, it gets a hold of you. It's not something you ever want to give up, even if you do two or three years in the Army and then get out. If you ask a Soldier, he will never forget his experience in the military – never."

One necessary sacrifice of military service is separation from loved ones. Johndrow said Soldiers always keep loved ones close to their heart.

"We're thinking about you as you're thinking about us, and even though we're miles and miles apart, we're still in each others' hearts. Distance can never take that away from any of us," he said. "Try not to be upset and bitter about it."

Typically, Johndrow enjoys the 4th of July like most Americans. He spends time with his family, enjoys fireworks and the outdoors. However, this 4th of July will be different.

He will be where he always is while down range – with Soldiers. He plans on visiting combat support hospitals, meet with Soldiers out on mission and then pass out calling cards to Soldiers to call home, he said.

One of Johndrow's friends will be with him the whole day. "The Kid," a lucky charm he takes with him everywhere will be by his side the whole time, he said.

"I don't think I'll let him play with any fireworks. He would probably blow something up. He will be with me with a big old smile on his face just enjoying it all," Johndrow joked. "He's just proud to be here. He'll have his Stetson on."

Honoring Our Fallen Heroes

Sgt. James Akin, 1-37 FA, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Alexandre Alexeev, 6-9 Cav, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Zachary Baker, 6-9 Cav, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pfc. Matthew Baylis, 2-12 IN, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Spc. David Bahrle, 1-5 Cav, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Clinton Blodgett, 1-18 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pfc. Joshua Brown, 1-18 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Sgt. 1st Class Scott Brown, 1-325 IN, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div.
Spc. Mark R. C. Caguioa, 1-5 Cav, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Staff Sgt. Juan Campos, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Spc. Romel Catalan, 1-23 IN, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Sgt. Caleb Christopher, 1-8 Cav, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Jeremiah Costello, 27 CS, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. Bacilio Cuellar, 1-18 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Sgt. Dariek Dehn, 6-9 Cav, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pfc. Robert Dembowski Jr., 1-504 IN, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div.
Spc. Chadrick Domino, 1-23 IN, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Spc. Shawn Dressler, 1-18 Cav, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Sgt. 1st Class Robert Dunham, 6131 MiTT, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

Sgt. Anthony Ewing, 6-9 Cav, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Llythaniele Fender, 5-5ADA, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div.
Staff Sgt. Greg Gagarin, 1-37 FA, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Shawn Gajdos, 2-16 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pfc. Joseph Gilmore, 1-5 Cav, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pfc. Nicholas Hartge, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pfc. Travis Haslip, 1-5 Cav, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pvt. (2) Charles Hester, 2-3 IN, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Sgt. Andrews Higgins, 5-20 IN, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pvt. (2) William Johnson, 1-4 Cav, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Cpl. Tyler Kritz, 1-37 FA, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Robert Liggett, 2-69 AR, 3rd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.
Staff Sgt. Brian Long, 2-3 IN, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Spc. James Lundin, 1-18 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Cpl. Jonathan Markham, 6-9 Cav, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. Anselmo Martinez III, 1-12 Cav, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Marquis McCants, 1-325 IN, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div.
Sgt. Jean Medlin, 1-5 Cav, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pvt. Scott Miller, 5-20 IN, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.

Staff Sgt. Christopher Moore, 1-5 Cav, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pfc. Joshua Moore, 1-18 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Spc. Casey Nash, 1-12 Cav, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Keith Nepsa, 27 CS, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Meresebang Ngiraked, 5-5 ADA, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div.
Pfc. Cameron Payne, 2-16 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Spc. Joshua Romero, 1-12 Cav, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pvt. (2) Oscar Saucedo Jr., 1-28 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Staff Sgt. Russell Shoemaker, 6131 MiTT, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Spc. James Summers III, 6-9 Cav, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Cpl. Robert Surber, 1-37 FA, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Sgt. 1st Class Greg Sutton, 212 MiTT, (Unit Transitioning)
Spc. Francis Trussel Jr., 1-12 Cav, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. Iosiwo Uruo, 1-14 Cav, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Alexander Varela, 1-5 Cav, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pfc. Justin Verdeja, 2-12 IN, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Sgt. Kimel Watt, 1-7 FA, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
2nd Lt. Kile West, 6-9 Cav, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Doonewey White, 2-5 Cav, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

Estonian Minister of Defense Visits “Stone Platoon”

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – For more than six months, an Estonian platoon known as the “Stone Platoon,” has been working with troops from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division conducting combat operations together in the village of Sab Al Bor, Iraq.

These partners shared a rare opportunity to meet the Estonian Minister of Defense Jaak Aaviksoo here June 8.

During the visit, Aaviksoo talked with Estonian troops and Soldiers from Troop B, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment – who work alongside the Estonian soldiers every day. Aaviksoo also exchanged gifts with senior leadership in the 1st BCT.

In a presentation at the Camp Taji Theater, Aaviksoo took part as Estonian troops and Soldiers of “Garryowen” presented each other with awards—with the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment presenting traditional Cavalry spurs to their Estonian partners while several Garryowen troops received the Estonian Distinguished Service Medal.

“The traditional earning of the spurs comes with service in the Cav. as the organization goes to war,” said Lt. Col. Kevin MacWatters, upon presenting the spurs to the Estonians. “Wear these spurs with honor.”

“You can definitely see a good interaction between our two countries, and this is very important to our nation” said Estonian Army Col. Neeme Vali, the Chief of the General Staff for the Estonian Army, who presented Estonian Distinguished Service Medals to Soldiers in Garryowen. “Now it’s time for the Estonians to say thank you to the



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

Killeen, Texas native Sgt. Nicholas Anderson (left), a scout with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, discusses U.S. Army combat equipment with Estonian Minister of Defense Jaak Aaviksoo at Camp Taji, Iraq June 8.

U.S.”

Following the ceremony and a briefing on the Estonian and Garryowen mission in Sab Al Bor, the minister took the opportunity to speak to those in attendance.

“We’re not very numerous and our country is not very big, but we suffered under totalitarianism for 50 years and we don’t want that to ever be repeated,” said Aaviksoo during his opening comments. “The modern world is getting smaller all the time and the ideals of democracy are just as important to us as they are to the local Iraqi people here.

“This is not an easy mission here, and you know that better than I do,” added Aaviksoo addressing his troops and the

Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. “But the goal of the joint multinational forces is to help bring peace and democracy to Iraq. I have seen your focus and commitment to that goal.”

In cordon and searches, mounted and dismounted patrols and other joint operations with U.S. troops and Iraqi security forces, the Estonian troops have assisted in the detaining of more than 37 insurgents. They also assisted in the conducting of convoy operations and traffic control checkpoints along with the finding of many weapons caches and improvised explosive device-making materials. In all, they have been on 148 patrols, some of which were up to 48 hours long. Aaviksoo

concluded his speech with praise for the achievements of the partnership.

“I thank you for your commitment and we all look forward to your continued success in Iraq,” said Aaviksoo. “I wish you every success and I wish you luck, without it, it will be hard to achieve your goals.”

From the Taji Theater, Aaviksoo traveled to the Estonian platoon’s area on the base camp where he viewed a static display of both Estonian and American weapons. Afterwards, he ate lunch with the Stone Platoon.

Estonian Sgt. Juri Lapko said the experience was worthwhile and meant a lot to him and his fellow troops.

“It’s good that our leaders remember what Estonian soldiers are doing here, and that they recognize we are in Iraq doing a very important job for Estonia,” said Lapko, a humvee gunner. “And that what we are doing here will be good for the future of the Iraqis.”

MacWatters and his troops said they have been quite impressed with the soldiers in Aaviksoo’s Stone platoon.

“They are full partners with no restrictions on how their soldiers participate in operations and they’re just like a part of our platoon,” said MacWatters. “They bring their own counterinsurgency skills and always add to the capabilities of the unit. We have a great partnership here.”

“They’re unbelievable,” said Killeen, Texas native Sgt. Nicholas Anderson, a scout with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. “We’ve gone on a lot of missions with them and they’re good with tactics, they’re very proficient and definitely know their stuff, and I’m extremely excited to be over here with them.”



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

Pit Stop

(Above) An Iraqi Army soldier from the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) visually inspects a truck at a traffic control point near Taji, Iraq June 1. (Left) An Iraqi Army soldier checks the load paper work of a truck driver, who is hauling goods to market, at a traffic control point. The troops often check truck loads as a security precaution to keep the roadways safe for local Iraqi citizens. The IA troops working the TCPs is just one step toward the Iraqi military’s transition to taking full responsibility for their nation’s security.

Volunteers Join Fight Against Al Qaeda

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

BAGHDAD – Initially, it was hard to distinguish friend from foe when they met. The rag-tag Iraqis were armed with well-worn AK-47s, RPKs, PKCs and even a few Dragonoffs – all weapons commonly used against Coalition Forces. They traveled with weapons hanging out the windows of unarmored vehicles, while a “gunner” lay on the vehicle’s roof as security.

This was not the scene the Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, anticipated when they met the volunteers, a group of western Baghdad residents fed up with the status quo in their Abu Ghraib neighborhoods.

They had resolved to no longer endure the endless torture, beheadings and extortion, which had become all too common. These men joined forces to rid their communities, once and for all, of a plague of foreign fighters. They are willing to go to any length to defeat their sworn enemy, Al Qaeda in Iraq, said Spc. Angelo Moreno, 24, Bradley gunner with Company E.

“They wanted Al Qaeda out of their neighborhoods. Al Qaeda had been disrupting their neighborhoods and their way of living. They got tired of it and decided to take some action and help us out to take care of their families and their neighborhoods,” explained the Denver native.

Forcing Al Qaeda out of Khandari, Al Haswa and Al Hamadania neighborhoods within Abu Ghraib, is what the volunteers want to accomplish, said Alawi Chiad Manaweer, a volunteer from the Al Janabi tribe.

“Before we felt scared from them (Al Qaeda members) because we don’t have weapons like them. But now something different happened,” said Manaweer through a translator. “There are two or three guys in a neighborhood who are bad. They set up IEDs (improvised explosive devices) for you (Coalition Forces). Then you’re going to imagine that



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

Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, unload water outside Joint Security Station Luzon in the Abu Ghraib District of Baghdad May 26. The JSS, located inside a former railroad station, provides security to the Iraqis of the area as well as shelter for Soldiers and volunteer policemen assisting Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces in the area.

everyone in this neighborhood is bad and (the residents) are terrorists. These Al Qaeda members are very bad. They are like poison for (the) Iraqi society.”

Manaweer and his Al Janabi tribe are not alone in tiring of the violence. Tribesmen of the Al Abidi, Al Chwiran, Al Hamdani and Al Zawbaai tribes all have members serving as volunteers in Abu Ghraib neighborhoods to battle Al Qaeda operatives.

Once an enemy, always an enemy?

For many of the volunteers, Al Qaeda in Iraq was not always the enemy. In fact, some tribe members were at one time supporting the terrorist organization either by turning a blind eye, supplying food and resources or possibly carrying out attacks, said Capt. Lawrence Obst, 28, the commander of Co. E. from Summit, N.J.

However, now having had a change of heart, volunteers are lining up to join with the Coalition against the extremists.

Part of the reason for the about face are the empty promises Al Qaeda in Iraq made to local supporters, said 1st Lt. Steve Klocko, 23, the platoon leader of Co. E’s 1st Platoon.

“They were promised numerous things by Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda never came through, so they want to fight back and make the area safe for their families,” explained the Pittsburgh native.

This is not the first time residents have turned on Al Qaeda in Iraq. In fact, it is becoming the trend, Obst said.

“The more moderate Sunnis have basically cut ties with Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda is a ‘with us or you’re against us, organization,’ so, as soon as you cut ties with them that pretty much seals the deal. If you’re not with them, you’re at war with them,” Obst said.

Consequently, the Soldiers forgive past transgressions and focus on Iraq’s future.

“We don’t ever ask them if they were insurgents. We stay away from that question. That way we can develop a friendship with them and show them that we are actually going to work with them and can trust them,” Obst said. “That way, in the long run, it should help us and make this place more secure.”

According to Manaweer, the group of volunteers, who

are not officially approved or sanctioned by the Ministry of Interior as a volunteer police force, come to fight Al Qaeda from a wide array of occupations or were unemployed before volunteering.

Yet, the Soldiers who work with the unofficial volunteer policemen, who were deputized by members of the Iraqi government, know better. The sudden decrease in violence is most telling, said Staff Sgt. Steven Creel, 34, a squad leader with 1st Platoon.

“We have not had any sniper fire since we started working with these guys. The IEDs on Route (Michigan, which is nearby) mysteriously disappeared,” the Orlando, Fla., native said.

Foreign fighters all too familiar

More threatening to peace in Abu Ghraib than tribal disputes or sectarian violence, the steady stream of foreign fighters into Baghdad threatens Iraq’s fledgling government and Coalition Forces, as well as the people of Iraq, said Manaweer.

“They keep the Iraqi people to not be a good people, to not be a free people by making VBIEDs (vehicle-borne explosive devices) and placing IEDs,” he said.

Abu Ghraib is an access point for foreign fighters heading into Baghdad. Co. E is trying to block access and deny safe haven to such undesirable individuals, said Klocko.

The presence of Soldiers in neighborhoods is to have a “Stabilizing effect on the population (since it) is one of the gateways into Baghdad. So, by blocking and disrupting Al Qaeda here, we have an impact across the division,” Obst said.

Though most of the leadership is foreign, many of the foot soldiers are local. Desperate Iraqis, who feel caught into between a rock and a hard place, end up working for Al Qaeda to make ends meet, he said.

According to Manaweer, the Iraqi people are a good people who are suffering in the midst of a battlefield.

“Most of the violence comes from outside Iraq,” he said. Though Sunnis outnumber the Shia in this northwestern



Pittsburgh, native 1st Lt. Steve Klocko, 23, the platoon leader of 1st Platoon, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, positions a 12-foot barrier into place with an Iraqi contractor outside of Joint Security Station Luzon in the Abu Ghraib District of Baghdad May 26.

Striving for a Good Clean Shave

The face of Denver native Spc. Angelo Moreno, a gunner with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, is reflected in a mirror while he shaves outside Joint Security Station Luzon in the Abu Ghraib District of Baghdad May 27. The JSS, which is located inside a former railroad station, provides security to the Iraqi residents of the area as well as shelter for Soldiers and Iraqi policemen.



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

Volunteers Join Coalition in the Fight Against Al Qaeda

Volunteers

From Page 6

portion of the Iraqi capital, violence between the sects is not the problem residents face. In some cases Sunnis marry Shia in Abu Ghraib. The volunteers are almost perfectly representative of the area with 70 percent Sunni and 30 percent Shia, Obst estimated.

“The war is against Al Qaeda, at least in this area,” he said.

Manaweer concurred and said the violence is not home-grown, it is imported.

“The problem is not between Sunni and Shia,” he said. “The problem is coming from outside Iraq. If you control the border between Iraq and Iran and all the other countries around Iraq; by this way you’re going to find there is not a problem between Sunni and Shia anymore.”

Baghdad Security Plan

With Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon, commonly referred to as the Baghdad Security Plan, well under way, Coalition Forces and their Iraqi partners are occupying many sections of Baghdad having cleared them in the preceding months. Now the objective is to hold the cleared areas by occupying them with Soldiers and Iraqi Security Forces. Joint Security Station Luzon is one of many efforts underway in Iraq’s embattled capital, Klocko said.

JSS Luzon, which was until recently the abandoned Sheik Gari Railway Station in the Khandari neighborhood of Abu Ghraib, is under construction and houses Co. E and a fluctuating number of volunteer policemen, he said.

Once complete, JSS Luzon is slated to accommodate approximately 40 to 50 Soldiers and 100 to 200 official Iraqi Police at any given time. The IPs will be tasked with security while the Soldiers’ mission will guide them and act as a quick reaction force. Once the IPs are sufficiently capable of securing the area, 200 to 300 IPs will call the JSS home and Soldiers will step back, Obst said.

The goal is for JSS Luzon to mirror some of the success enjoyed at the nearby

Nasser Wa Salem IP station where volunteer policemen

provided intelligence to Iraqi Army soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division, which led to the killing and injury of two Al Qaeda members.

Since the volunteer policemen began working with the Iraqi Army, there has been a significant decrease in attacks, Obst said.

Although the volunteer policemen working out of JSS Luzon are not officially sanctioned, the Ministry of Interior is looking to hire 1,300 full-time Iraqi Police in the area.

So far, there is no shortage of applicants with more than 5,000 Iraqis looking to become IPs, Obst said. He said the surge of Soldiers into Baghdad has sent a wake-up call to Iraqis that Coalition Forces will not be here forever.

“If you’re going to help us out,” he said, “you need to help us now.”

Hand-in-hand transition to the future

Although it’s still early, the success stories of JSS Luzon are encouraging signs of progress to the Soldiers who are fortifying the structure one sandbag at a time.

“What’s going on here is locals are rising up to say, ‘We don’t want Al Qaeda here and we want peace,’” Obst said. “It definitely has the potential to help us create a secure Iraq.”

The area surrounding the JSS has seen the most dramatic changes.

“Just a few months ago, you couldn’t drive down that road without definitely getting hit by an IED,” Klocko said. “The reason we are moving out here is so that we can develop a better rapport with the volunteers, IPs and also the people within the area.”

Klocko said he and his Soldiers like what they’re seeing from the volunteer policemen, as well.

“The volunteers are extremely motivated and willing to work. They refer to themselves now as soldiers and they won’t do anything without permission from their chain of command,” he said. “When you’re at home you don’t really hear about the JSSs or these outposts like this, where you work hand-in-hand with the IPs or the local nationals.”

Working hand-in-hand is one of the benefits of JSS Luzon.

“It helps us to know one another. In order for them to really trust us we got to be able to work with them. They stay

here so we get to interact with them a lot. They get to know we’re not just foreign Soldiers; we’re actually people just like them trying to do our job and go home,” Moreno said.

In fact, Soldiers like Moreno find quite a bit of common ground with the volunteers who are stepping up to do their part in securing Baghdad.

“They want the same thing as we do. They just want to be able to go home with their wife and kids. They want to live a normal life without someone threatening them and their way of life,” he said. “It’s the same thing back home. You just want a normal neighborhood where you watch your kids grow up and have some peace.”



**OPERATION IRAQI
FREEDOM**

DON'T GET BURNED

**USE A LITTLE MATH TO DETERMINE IF
YOUR POWER STRIP IS OVERLOADED**

Power strips are rated in amps. Most power strips are rated between 10 and 15 amps. To determine if your power strip is overloaded, you first must know how much current (amps) your equipment requires. Equipment power requirements can usually be found on the data plate.

EXAMPLE

Power Strip (10 amps) plugged into: refrigerator (3 amps) + coffee maker (3 amps) + microwave (3 amps) + printer (1 amp) + shredder (5 amps) = OVERLOAD = FIRE

How to determine power, voltage or current

Power (watts) = Current (amps) x Voltage (volts)

Voltage (volts) = $\frac{\text{Power (watts)}}{\text{Current (amps)}}$

Current (amps) = $\frac{\text{Power (watts)}}{\text{Voltage (volts)}}$

LEARN NOT TO BURN



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

An Iraqi Army troop (left) with the 3rd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) hands an AK-47 magazine and two illegally-owned assault rifles to Humble, Texas native, Sgt. Marcus Canseco, a squad leader for Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, during a combined cordon and search operation in Hor Al Bosh, Iraq June 6. In the operation, Iraqi Army troops, working with Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, detained 17 suspects and confiscated several illegal weapons.



An Iraqi Army troop from the 3rd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) kisses a baby while taking a break at a house after walking hours in the hot afternoon sun during a cordon and search operation in Hor Al Bosh, Iraq June 6.

Iraqi Army Partners with Stallions To Clean the Streets in Hor Al Bosh

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

HOR AL BOSH, Iraq -- In a big push to clear the streets here of extremists, Iraqi Army troops of the 3rd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) teamed with Soldiers from the 2nd "Stallion" Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment to perform a large Iraqi-led combined cordon and search operation, going door-to-door in every neighborhood here.

In this particular operation, the Stallions simply observed as the Iraqi Army troops performed the June 6 searches.

The Iraqi soldiers walked from house to house checking for weapons caches and meeting the people, as well as handing out tips cards for information on any extremists who may be lurking in the neighborhoods.

When they were needed, Soldiers from the 2-8th Cavalry assisted the Iraqi troops.

"They're (the Iraqi troops) pretty comfortable with everything and taking it slowly and deliberately as they go about their searches," said Bedford, Va., native 1st Lt. Ben Melton, a platoon leader for Company D, 2-8th Cavalry.

"They're really doing an excellent job flushing out the bad guys.

"This is a mainly IA-driven operation," he added. "These are the types of things they need to be doing to eventually be able to take over the security of their own country. That's exactly what they're doing."

Over the past few months, Soldiers from Stallion Battalion have been helping to train the 3-9th troops advanced infantry tactics and other aspects of military training. Just recently, the 2-8th troops have begun going on real missions with their Iraqi counterparts.

"When we go on missions with them, we haven't had to give them any pointers, they're pretty much already on it," said Sgt. Marcus Canseco, a squad leader for Co. D who hails from Humble, Texas.

Canseco has seen the Iraqi troops work under fire. "They're just like any other infantry squad. They're highly motivated and dedicated to the task," he said. "The other day when they took fire, they handled everything very well and ended up capturing three detainees."

Within the course of this day's mission, the Iraqi troops arrested 17 suspects and confiscated several illegal

weapons.

The day's success, according to Canseco, is a testament to the Iraqi Army soldiers and U.S. troops working together to gain the trust of the villagers in Hor Al Bosh.

"We've been securing our patrol base here and making our presence known, and a lot of the time we've spent here has involved meeting the people and most of them want us and the Iraqi Security Forces here," said Canseco. "We feel really good about what we're doing here today."

Canseco said he hopes his troops gain an appreciation for the Iraqi people and the Iraqi Security Forces with whom they are working.

"I hope they see how the people live here and earn a better understanding of the culture," said Canseco. "I think it will give them a better appreciation for the freedoms they have back home."

"It's a small town and it needs to be cleared so the people here can have a future," said Willows, Calif., native Spc. James Boggan, an infantryman with Co. D Boggan. "I'm just glad that we're able to help the Iraqi Army as they transition so they can give their people a better life by getting rid of any insurgent elements in their town."

Resident 'Bug Lady' Plays Vital Role

By 1st Lt. Gabrielle Caldara
15th Brigade Support Battalion

BAGHDAD – She knows about German cockroaches and the proper temperature to store your leftovers after Thanksgiving dinner. She also knows the chlorine level in your drinking water and the symptoms associated with any number of venereal diseases. She knows the best way to catch a rat and the foot candles of light needed for Soldiers to have adequate lighting.

Who is she, and why does she have such a wealth of knowledge of seemingly useless facts?

She is Sgt. Danielle Stephens of Company C, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, and by being the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of preventive medicine for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, her duties include filling her head with bugs, mice and food-borne diseases.

On a weekly basis, Stephens, who hails from Litchfield Park, Ariz., travels throughout the International Zone merging medical aspects with vector control and water quality analysis.

She also convoys to joint security stations, transition team sites and establishments within Baghdad to help them improve their methodologies and approaches to sanitation.

She inspects dining facilities, barber shops, gyms, living areas, water containers, shower units, and local national vendors to ensure that the standards are being met to provide the utmost safety for Soldiers.

Stephens sometimes likens her job to that of a public health inspector, providing information and preventive medicine services to the Soldiers throughout the "Black Jack" Brigade.

"I like my job because it is behind the scenes and many people aren't aware of all the things I do, but it has huge benefits,"



(U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Gabrielle Caldara, 15th Brigade Support Battalion)
Litchfield Park, Ariz., native Sgt. Danielle Stephens (right), shows Spcs. Shaquette Buntain of San Antonio (left) and Lauren Snowden of Phoenix the wet bulb thermometer readings near Forward Operating Base Prosperity's aid station in central Baghdad.

Stephens said.

One of her greatest contributions has been to enforce the standards of personal hygiene and food sanitation at dining facilities that are frequented by Soldiers, as well as Iraqi military dining facilities.

According to Lt. Col. Jeffrey Vieira, the 15th BSB's commander, Stephens not only does her job well but performs it with a pride and professionalism that shows through her willingness to help anyone. And she does it with a smile on her face.

"Sgt. Stephens lives the "Black Jack Charge;" nobody is more positive, polite, and professional," Vieira said.

Stephens came upon this diverse field almost 10 years ago when she spoke to her

recruiter about combining nursing and pest management. Her interest stemmed from her childhood spent with her parents; her mother is a nurse and her father owns a pest-management company.

The recruiter had a viable option for her: preventive medicine. Stephens thought this would be a good match with her interests and experiences, so in the summer of 1997, Stephens began her military journey.

Stephens has gained a wealth of knowledge over the past 10 years and her life has been further enriched by being a mother to three wonderful girls. Her development has been enhanced with time and experiences at Fort Campbell, Ky., Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., Fort Gordon, Ga., Fort Hood, Texas and

now in Iraq.

Over the course of her career, Stephens has investigated various cases involving bed bugs, food poisoning outbreaks, and Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus infections.

"The most fun I've had was during the Hanta virus survey at Fort Campbell, Ky.," she said.

Her endeavor to correct violations of health and safety errors serves to keep Soldiers safe from the awful effects of illness and dysentery.

Stephens is also responsible for the mosquito surveillance program throughout the International Zone at FOBs Prosperity, Union III, Freedom, and at Freedom Rest. She logs and monitors the mosquitoes and sand flies that are collected in light traps on a weekly basis to provide an accurate count of the harmful bugs that are in the area.

"The quality of work and craftsmanship that Sgt. Stephens provides FOB Prosperity and the surrounding FOBs in the Baghdad area has cut down on the number of mosquitoes, flies and rodent population, which helps with the brigade's overall mission because we don't have to worry about our Soldiers getting ill from the diseases these insects and rodents may carry," said Command Sgt. Maj. Nathaniel Richardson, 15th BSB's top non-commissioned officer.

Stephens said she believes that by protecting the health of the Soldiers, she is conserving the fighting strength and fulfilling the goals of preventive medicine.

Stephens said she is eager to offer her knowledge and expertise for the betterment of the Soldiers, thus insuring the force's health protection.

Although she misses her young girls, Stephens said she is proud to serve her country here in Iraq where the need for quality preventive medicine is essential for the health of Soldiers and Iraqis.



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

'Dealers' Award Troops

Headquarters and Headquarters Company "Dealers" commander, Capt. Lexie Gibbs, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, takes a few moments to talk about the importance of the Combat Infantryman's Badge during a ceremony honoring four Soldiers from the Black Jack Brigade atop the palace on Forward Operating Base Prosperity in central Baghdad June 9.





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

A young girl cries as 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team's surgeon, Lt. Col. Margret Merino, looks inside her ear during a medical operation in Baghdad's Karkh District May 26. After recently standing up a coalition outpost in the district, Soldiers from 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment decided they needed to do something to reach out to the surrounding community and let the residents know they are there to help.

Soldiers Provide Medical Assistance to Karkh Residents

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

BAGHDAD – After recently standing up a coalition outpost in Baghdad's Karkh District, Soldiers from 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment decided they needed to do something to reach out to the surrounding community and let the residents know they are there to help.

The first step in this effort was a medical mission the task force, which is attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, conducted in an abandoned building adjacent to their combat outpost May 26.

"We want to establish a good relationship with the people of this community, so that they know we're close by, and that's why we're providing a little bit of medical help to them," Maj. Elvis Coronado, the unit's operations plans officer explained.

The logistical efforts for the medical mission were headed up by the civil affairs team, from Co. B, 97th Civil Affairs Battalion out of Fort Bragg, N.C., which is working with Task Force 1-14.

"Basically what we do is civil reconnaissance for the commander in the area, and we come in and assess the infrastructure and security of an area," said Sgt. 1st Class

Charles Burns, the team sergeant. "This area doesn't have a clinic. So we thought with the COP being right beside it, the best thing to win over the people would be coming here and conducting a [medical mission] so that the people understand we're here to help them."

Burns, who is originally from Lakeland, Fla., said that he meets with the local leaders in the area often and medical assistance was one thing that they specifically asked for.

Having conducted similar operations with his team numerous times over the past two years in Africa, Afghanistan and Iraq, Burns was quickly able to procure the medicine, enlist the help of the required personnel and organize the event.

Once they arrived at the selected sight for the operation, a make shift doctors office with two treatment rooms – one for males and another for women and children – was quickly set up and stocked with medicine that had been purchased from the local economy.

"Most of the time we try to purchase local that way the money is going back into the community, and it's not a foreign medicine to them," explained Burns.

On hand to assist the patients were the brigade's surgeon, Lt. Col. Margret Merino

and the task force surgeon, Maj. Isaac Johnson, both of whom were assisted by additional medics.

According to Johnson, a native of India, many of the patients who he treated came in with similar ailments and symptoms.

"We definitely saw a lot of the same things over and over," he explained. "Mainly things like vitamin deficiencies, malnutrition, a lot of suspected worm infestations of the abdomen, a lot of rashes and a lot of children with ear infections."

The majority of the medicine that was distributed was described by Johnson as basic medication that would be given out during sick call, but many people also brought prescriptions in with them that they hoped could be filled.

"We got a good feel that they're in need of some type of pharmacy because a lot of what they came for was refills on their medications," Buffalo, N.Y. native, Merino explained.

While Johnson and Merino were the only two doctors on hand for this mission they are both hoping to do this again in the near future, but next time with help from some of the local doctors.

"We foresee working with Iraqi doctors," Merino said. "There are some very

good physicians who are from this area who have expressed a desire to help us out and actually be the main people who are providing the care, and that's what we hope to see for the future operations."

Merino also said that there are plans to set up a self-sufficient clinic in the area that will be able to provide the residents with health care needs on a steadier basis.

"There's an empty building, and these doctors have a desire to work in that building," she explained. "It would be a very nice practice with five different types of sub-specialty doctors, and we're going to try really hard to get that open for them."

During the three hours that the station was set up, nearly 200 people were treated, and while Merino said that she finds it rewarding to be able to come out into the community and help the people, she is excited about the prospect of Iraqi doctors taking over health care in the area.

"I certainly enjoy doing this, but I think it is really important that we start taking ourselves back and letting the Iraqi doctors be on the front lines," she said. "I think that will be the main goal, at least for me, while I'm here, to try to make that happen. It's still very gratifying for me to be able to come out here though and try to do something."

Strykers, Iraqi Police Search Southeast Baghdad

By Pfc. Benjamin Gable
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers and Iraqi Police troops worked together on a two-day mission to provide security in the Doura area on the south side of the Iraqi capital.

Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash., searched for improvised explosive devices, homemade explosives, weapons caches and extremist activity with help from the Iraqi Police.

The mission began June 1, before sunrise.

Coalition Forces moved into the neighborhood and cordoned off the area.

Some Soldiers performed “high-sight” duties, moving to rooftops to provide additional security for those moving on the ground.

“We find the best vantage point we can so we can cover a squad’s movements on the ground,” said Staff Sgt. Scott Murphy, an Ashburn, Va. native, with Company B. “We scan rooftops and windows for any hostile activities to provide more security.”

With the high side security and cordon in place, Coalition Forces moved from home to home, searching thoroughly for illegal activity.

Every room and every courtyard was searched.

Coalition Forces have worked this area before.

There was intelligence indicating terror-



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

South Hadley, Mass., native 2nd Lt. Garrett Silvera, a platoon leader with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, photographs a journal found by Iraqi Police in a mosque in the Doura neighborhood of southeastern Baghdad June 2.

ists had been in the neighborhood planting IEDs and conducting other illegal operations.

An Iraqi woman, who did not wish to give her name for security reasons, said through an interpreter that terrorists frequent the neighborhood recruiting young males and planting roadside bombs, as well as threatening anyone who gives information to

Coalition Forces.

She also said the area is mostly quiet when Coalition Forces are present, but as soon as they leave, the terrorists return.

Coalition Forces did take sporadic small arms fire throughout the first day.

The mission did not slow, however, and they continued moving from house to house

and street to street.

Soldiers did whatever it took to ensure the area was safe for the locals.

“The Iraqi people sometimes praise you when you walk in their homes,” said Spc. Michael Royster, an infantryman with Co. B. “It makes you feel good about being here and helping them.”

After a full day of meticulous searching, the Soldiers regrouped to move back to their base camp and get some rest before starting the second day’s mission.

The following morning Soldiers from Co. B. linked up with Iraqi Police and headed back into southeastern Baghdad.

Coalition Forces scoured every house throughout the neighborhood and a surrounding field searching for any evidence they could find.

With an interpreter close by, they spoke with many residents to gather further information regarding insurgent activities.

After making their way through the neighborhoods, Coalition Forces moved to a mosque. Iraqi Police went inside.

One Iraqi policeman found a journal that documented previous attacks on Coalition Forces, as well as future attacks. Also uncovered in the mosque was a pair of pants and a shirt covered in blood.

Coalition Forces then moved to finish up clearing the neighborhood.

After completing the mission, the Soldiers of Co. B loaded back into their Strykers and headed back to base. With the mission complete, the Soldiers returned to get some well deserved rest.



Staff Sgt. Scott Murphy, an Ashburn, Va., native, a member of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, scans rooftops and windows for any hostile activities, providing rooftop cover to Soldiers on the ground conducting a combined cordon and search operation June 2 in the Doura neighborhood of southeastern Baghdad.



(Photo by 1st Lt. Brittney Kessler)

Ambassador John Bennett (center), a native of Springfield, Va., and leader of the 2nd “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division’s embedded provincial readiness team, sits in on a District Advisory Council with Baghdad’s Mansour District. The EPRT helps provide a link between maneuver commanders and the Baghdad Provincial Readiness Team.

Initiative Brings Expertise To Maneuver Commanders

By Capt. Travis Ammons
2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD—Combat brigades throughout Iraq receive embedded provincial readiness teams to bring a different perspective to the fight.

Early this year, the U.S. State Department came up with the idea to embed 10 Provincial Readiness Teams (PRT) with combat brigades to supplement the 10 non-embedded PRT’s established in March 2006.

Embedded PRTs consist of a senior State Department officer as the team leader, a civil affairs officer as the deputy team leader, and up to nine other members with a variety of skill sets.

The diversity allows each EPRT to work closely with not only the commanders and Soldiers on the ground, but also with the local community leaders in Baghdad.

The 2nd “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, welcomed one of these EPRTs April 15, and has been working closely with them to integrate all of the different skill sets into the combat formation.

The Dagger EPRT consists of Ambassador John Bennett from Springfield, Va., who volunteered to come out of retirement as a U.S. Ambassador to be the team leader; Lt. Col. Felix Boston from Walnut Creek, Calif., who agreed to come out of a command assignment in civil affairs to be the deputy of the Dagger team; Ali Ameen from Richmond, Va., who is the bicultural, bilingual advisor; Dr. John Crifield from Falls Church, Va., who works with USAID; Col. Louis Fazekas from Mechanicsburg, Pa., a city planner; and Bob Perry from California City, Calif., an industrial specialist.

The EPRT’s goal is to work with the Iraqi government and private sector to help rebuild the country, filling a valuable void at the level between civil affairs, which works at the tactical level, and the Baghdad PRT, which works at the operational level.

“Iraq has come through a very disastrous 50 years,” Ambassador Bennett said. “We must have an appreciation for the Iraqis as they constructed one of the world’s most impressive cities, Baghdad.”

Bennett praised the Iraqi culture for its advances in education and industry, despite the obstacles derived from Iraq’s political state over the past 50 years.

During their train up with the State Department in Washington D.C., some of the EPRT members met with President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

“It was an honor to meet and talk informally with the decision makers of our great country,” Boston said of his meeting.

The EPRT continues to work with the Dagger Brigade, with each day on the ground giving the team a better understanding of the complexities inherent in western Baghdad, Bennett said. Though there are no easy solutions, Bennett believes that if the Iraqis take the lead, then the answers will meet everyone’s expectations.



(Photo by Capt. Brian McCall, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment)

Col. Ali Al-Obaydi, commander of 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, talks with a local woman in the Hateen Market. The Iraqi battalion commander toured the market in late May in order to find out what was keeping customers away and determined how the change in security measures for the area could increase commerce.

Market Thrives During Troop Surge

By 1st Lt. Brian Cooke
2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment

BAGHDAD—Adjusted security measures have resulted in a resurgence of economic growth in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Hateen. A local market has seen a resurgence of activity as Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers and Iraqi Security Forces give way to shopkeepers, and fear gives way to progress.

Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, have teamed up with members of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army to find a way to stimulate business in the Hateen Market while still maintaining security. As a result, economic activity in the market has increased, fostering better relations between local merchants and the Iraqi Army.

The market, located in the southeastern Mansour neighborhood of Hateen, is the economic center of the area and its activity is directly tied to the economic prosperity of the residents.

Markets in Baghdad have long been a favorite target of suicide bombers, and the previous Iraqi Army unit in Hateen worried that the market there might be next in the long line of attacks committed by insurgents.

With its three blocks of grocery stores, butcher shops, cafes, and vegetable stands, the Hateen Market presented a security problem for 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Infantry Division.

In response to this problem, the Iraqi battalion blocked the roads leading into the market with concertina wire and concrete and sand-filled barriers. The concertina wire and concrete kept suicide bombers at bay, but it also limited pedestrian access to the market.

As a result, sales plummeted and a large number of proprietors closed their shops.

The local merchants were distraught by the

decline in customers, and requested that the Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces find a way to secure their market without limiting pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

The new Iraqi Army battalion commander, Col. Ali Al-Obaydi, made fixing the situation in the Hateen Market his top priority. On May 21, Col. Ali toured the market, along with Maj. Jim MacGregor, 2-32 FA’s executive officer, and Capt. Brian McCall, commander of Battery A, 2-32 FA.

Together, the three leaders engaged local merchants about the status of commerce in the market and asked the shop owners what could be done to stimulate business. Most of the owners agreed that the Iraqi Army needed to remove the concertina wire and abandon its blocking position to allow local residents easier access to the market.

They also asked that Coalition Forces conduct regular combined patrols of the market with Iraqi Army units. Within one week, the blocking position was unmanned and the concertina wire was removed. Business in the market immediately picked up. Soldiers from 2-32 FA regularly patrol through the market with Iraqi Army troops, and local merchants greet both forces with smiles and, many times, an offer of a cold drink or snacks.

“It was unbelievable,” remarked McCall, following a patrol of the market a week after his tour with Col. Ali. “Just a week ago, half of these stores were closed, and the ones that were open had owners who only wanted to complain to Col. Ali and I. Today, a week later, I felt like I was walking through a completely different market. The shops were all open. The merchants seemed happy, and best of all, there were customers everywhere.”

McCall added that his unit, in conjunction with 2-5-6th IA, will continue to evaluate economic activity in the market. He said they are currently planning an advertising campaign that will use billboards to highlight the security of the market.

Troops Improving Educational Opportunities

By Capt. Matthew Angliss
1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment

BAGHDAD – A school in western Baghdad is re-opened after Coalition Forces, along with local community leaders, sponsored its renovation.

Only three months ago the teachers at the Al Swaib School in western Baghdad were working under increasingly trying conditions. Their classrooms were overcrowded, the roof leaked in several places and school supplies for their students were scarce, at best. When the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, took over responsibility for the security in the area nine months ago, they sat down with the local leaders and discussed the community's concerns.

"They immediately identified their education program as the most important issue in their area," said Capt. Timothy Lynch, a former platoon leader in the battalion. When the battalion walked through all of the schools in the area to meet with the teachers and students, they instantly recognized issues and problems in the structures which they could help to improve over the coming months.

"Not long after that, a contractor came to us who listened to our proposed plans for renovation," remembers Capt. Warrick Craig of 1-7th FA. Craig was one of several officers who helped to first put the project into motion. "The contractor, Sheik Saad, was a local sheik who told us he would employ 40 other men from the area as workers to complete the job."

Employing the local populace with these types of projects is something the battalion always emphasizes.

"This way we're not only helping to rebuild their school, but we're also giving back to the community by creating these temporary jobs," Lynch said, "which is a very welcome source of income to the people in this area. It's like a double blessing."

The battalion is not unfamiliar with these types of work projects to improve the local infrastructure and employ the nearby communities to carry out the work. This is the second school renovation the field artillerymen have financially assisted in the past two months.

The original project contractor, Sheik Saad, was killed only a month after work began on the school. Not one to go back on their word and realizing how important this work was for his community, Saad's brother, Raad, agreed to see the undertaking to the end.

By May 30 the work was finished and the 1-7th FA's battalion commander, Lt. Col. Michael Griffith, was on hand to review the craftsmanship and observe the ribbon cutting ceremony.



(Photo by Capt. Matthew Angliss, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment)

A teacher shows his students a picture of themselves taken moments earlier in one of the two new classrooms at the Al Swaib School in western Baghdad. The school was renovated through a partnership between local Iraqi leaders and Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment.

emony.

Raad was already at the school, making final preparations when the battalion commander arrived. Following a brief greeting, he guided Griffith through the two completely new classrooms and showed off the other improvements, including a new generator, which now gives the school the capability to be completely independent of city power, when necessary. Renovations also included extensive repairs on the roof of the school, completely restored bathrooms and two new computers.

"You really can't understand how good we have it as Americans until you come to a place like this," said Capt. Christopher Piskai, the battalion's intelligence officer. "These computers may be the only ones the students at this school will have the opportunity to use during their education."

Other improvements, like the new classrooms, provide secondary benefits to the school. Not only do they afford a

new space for students to go to class every day, but they also lighten what was once the cramped area of the old classrooms. Teachers can focus more of their time on each individual student.

"Instead of having a classroom with 40 to 50 kids inside having to struggle to maintain everyone's focus, students now benefit from a little more personal attention," Piskai said.

All of these things help to improve the educational setting at the school which, Lynch said in the long run will improve the quality of education for nearly 450 students at the school.

He said the partnership with local leaders made the school renovation projects a reality.

"These are just great examples of people coming together to improve their communities and giving us the privilege to be a part of it," he said.

Iraqi Army Donates Computer Lab For Disabled Local School Children

By Sgt. Jack Androski
1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment

BAGHDAD—Iraqi Army soldiers provided computers and other supplies for a disabled children's elementary school in the Baghdad neighborhood of Mansour. Local government officials in Mansour have traditionally labeled electricity and water treatment as the area's primary essential service needs.

Educational initiatives, such as new computers and school technology upgrades, have been pushed aside and have lost priority to other community projects.

The 1st Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division have undertaken the task of confronting the educational problems in Mansour by partnering with local leaders and Coalition Forces to not only

improve school buildings, but also provide the necessary equipment to teach the future generations of Baghdad.

The soldiers from 1-5-6th IA recently established a computer lab at the Mansour Educational Institute for Children. The Iraqi Army battalion was able to provide four computers, a printer and numerous tables and chairs for the institute's first computer lab.

This school provides individual instruction for children who suffer from physical disabilities. The lab will provide a better learning environment for these children and give them the same educational opportunities as other children. The 1-5-6th IA plan to build on this educational initiative, by improving school construction, upgrading the technology of school equipment and, possibly, providing school uniforms.



(Photo by Sgt. Jack Androski, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment)

Children from the Mansour Institute of Education, a school for children with disabilities, enjoy their new computer lab which was donated to them by troops from the 1st Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division.

Advisory Team Works with Iraqis in Rashid

By Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons
4th IBC, 1st Inf. Div., Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – When President George W. Bush ordered troops to “surge” into Baghdad he was not just sending Soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, he was also sending little-known teams of reconstruction experts as well.

One of those teams operates out of Forward Operating Base Falcon with the 4th “Dragon” Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, in the southwestern Rashid District of the Iraqi capital.

These small teams, known as Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams, are made up of workers from the U.S. military, State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Timothy Zuniga-Brown, who heads the EPRT in the Dragon Brigade, said his team serves as advisors to the Iraqis.

“We are a small team that works at the brigade and regimental levels,” said the Carson City, Nev., native. “This gives us better visibility and better understanding of what the Iraqi government can do to bring peace and stability to their own country.”

The team, comprised of seven people with technical expertise in various areas such as governance, security and economics, has been on the ground for almost two months.

“It is premature to see noticeable changes,” Zuniga-Brown said. “But we have seen changes for the better.” He said the district council holding its own meetings and the Doura Market revival are two examples of Iraqi



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

Lt. Col. Joseph Birchmeier (standing), commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team’s Brigade Special Troops Battalion, briefs Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr., Multi-National Division - Baghdad and 1st Cavalry Division commanding general on essential services projects in the Rashid District of Baghdad June 4 at Forward Operating Base Falcon.

growth in the area.

In December 2006 there were three shops open in the Doura Market, while today there are more than 250. More than \$100 million has spent so far on rebuilding projects throughout the Rashid District, which the team is responsible for.

While the work was started by the military, Zuniga-Brown said the civilian teams will eventually help the Iraqi government stand on its own.

“Brigades have lots of knowledge and understanding at

this level, but their main task is to fight and help the Iraqis win this war on the military side,” he said. “But, it’s clear in this conflict, especially when dealing with counterinsurgency, a lot of components are civilian – the Iraqis sending supplies to their own people, listening to their own people and putting together the requirements for a civil society to be stitched back together.”

Currently, the team has been working with the Iraqi city manager’s office to help them deliver needed supplies.

“It’s a challenge for them,” he said. “Expertise was lost. We have been able to help them through training by USAID and by bringing in experts from the states.”

Memphis, Tenn., native, Lt. Col. Tom Kurlick, deputy commander of the team, said the team is trying to rebuild the Iraqi infrastructure.

“We are trying to rebuild that area at the lowest levels,” said the civil affairs officer with a medical background. He said the biggest help, so far, was the brigade accepting them into the family and helping them get to Rashid District Council meetings whenever they needed.

“(They) started to lay the groundwork,” he said of the brigade leadership. This groundwork allowed the team to integrate well with their Iraqi counterparts.

“They were looking for partners and welcomed us,” he said.

The military was there to help address the security problems, but they needed help addressing their other problems, as well, Zuniga-Brown added.

“We are in an advisory role, a helping role,” he said. “Bottom line – the Iraqis need to do it themselves and they understand it.”

Couple Renews Army Vows

By Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons
4th IBC, 1st Inf. Div., Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Being in a combat zone can bring Soldiers feelings of loneliness, isolation and fear. Whether married or single, these feelings create a cocoon of feelings that the Soldier may never break out of.

Some married Soldiers have the luxury of deploying with their spouses; reducing the stress levels. For Spc. Vanessa and Pfc. Norris Johnson, who renewed their Army vows during a reenlistment ceremony June 8 at Forward Operating Base Falcon on Baghdad’s south side, the Army is a good way to stay together.

“It can be stressful we rarely see each other,” Vanessa, 20, a logistical specialist with Company B, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div. “We both work different hours and live in different buildings.”

The San Antonio native admitted though it is easier for her.

“When I am stressed out I can talk to him,” she said. “I can trust him because I know he won’t say anything – he knows me, he knows my family. It’s not the same when you go to your fellow Soldiers because they don’t understand you. There are definitely times when he takes all the stress off me.”

For the couple being nearer to each other and to home was a large part of their decision to reenlist for six more years.

“We wanted to stay in for a long time,” said Norris, 21, a truck driver with Co. D., 610th BSB. “We are looking forward to being closer to home.”

The Johnsons, who met while at Fort Riley, Kan., and wed Dec. 1, 2006, reenlisted to be stationed together at Fort Polk, La.

“I like my (military occupational specialty) and my unit,” said the native of Baton Rouge, La.

Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, the 4th IBC, 1st Inf. Div.



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

Spc. Vanessa Johnson, 20, Company B, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, and her husband Pfc. Norris Johnson, 21, a truck driver with Co. D, 610th BSB, reenlist for six years each during a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Falcon in Baghdad June 8. The couple, who met at Fort Riley, Kan., and wed Dec. 1, 2006, reenlisted to be stationed at Fort Polk, La.

commander, administered the oath during the ceremony because of a conversation Norris had with him.

“I was at the dining facility when I had dinner with him,” he said, “when he said, ‘If you reenlist for more than five years, I will reenlist you.’ We gave him six.”

The reenlistment ceremony took place immediately following an awards ceremony.



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

Lord of the Flies

Barberton, Ohio native Sgt. Bobby Crouse, 29, a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, “guards” the entrance to the Coalition Outpost Carter with a fly swatter in the Rashid District of Baghdad June 5. The Schweinfurt, Germany-based unit is operating in Baghdad under the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, based out of Fort Riley, Kan.



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

Guiding Light

Sgt. Blake Newell, a squad leader with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, from New Albany, Ind., briefs his Soldiers before going on a night mission in southern Baghdad's Rashid District June 7. The "Warriors," based out of Fort Carson, Colo., and currently attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division out of Fort Riley, Kan., were performing a census in the area.

Warriors Do Not Let the Enemy HIIDE

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

BAGHDAD – “Know your enemy.”

The adage seems as old as time, but Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers in the Iraqi capital are applying the same principle today to battle the insurgency in Iraq.

The “Warriors” of 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, who are currently deployed to southern Baghdad out of Fort Carson, Colo., are performing a census in their area of operations to get a feel for who is there.

Sgt. Eric Callahan, a team leader with Company C, 2-12 Inf., from Cheyenne, Wyo., said while performing the census, Soldiers are able to perform background checks on civilians moving into the region to prevent terrorists from taking up residence the area.

“One activity we have seen has been insurgents moving from one neighborhood into other neighborhoods, trying to spread the insurgency,” he said. “This helps prevent the spread of the insurgency.”

Three weeks into the census, which the battalion started from scratch, more than 600 houses had been catalogued.

Staff Sgt. Steven Quast, a fire support noncommissioned officer with Co. C from Belleville, Ill., said Iraqis in their portion of the Rashid District have welcomed the census with open arms.

“In the past week, I’ve drank a gallon of chai,” Quast



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

Staff Sgt. Michael Nash, a team leader with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, based out of Fort Carson, Colo., scans an Iraqi man’s retina in southern Baghdad’s Rashid District June 8.

joked, referring to the strong black tea often offered by residents to Soldiers.

“Anything we do to push insurgents out, they’re happy with,” Callahan said.

Even with the people’s cooperation, cataloguing all the citizens in the area is no small task, Callahan said.

To facilitate the completion of the mission, “Chosen” Company has employed the Handheld Interagency Identity

Detection Equipment, or HIIDE.

The HIIDE, first used by the Marine Corps to keep track of civilians moving into Fallujah, feeds information into a national database that is accessible by other units and services across Iraq.

This aids the units with tracking down criminals trying to spread violence into different regions of the country.

The HIIDE is complete with a retinal scanner, fingerprint scanner and a touch screen that allows the Soldier operating it to input different information about the residence, such as location and number of residents. While such technology may seem complex, Quast said the learning curve is actually quite small.

“You can pick it up and know how to use it in five minutes,” he said.

Quast said the census has had other benefits to his company.

“We spend more time in the houses, and people get more receptive,” he said. “People open up and start giving (information) without even knowing it.”

Quast said the census fits one of basics of counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq - know who is in your area of operations.

“This is going to help our fight,” Quast said. “How do you fight an insurgency if you don’t know who the insurgents are? We have to separate fish from the sea so we can spear them.”

Trained with

... trained in all infantry tactics; we train them in the ... that are unique to air assault operations (are) what

... doing static load training so we've got it down pret- ... speed and efficiency up," Manwaring said. "The ... ker (the pilots) can get off the objective and we can

... with each aircraft and then becoming proficient in ... Hawk, the Soldiers had one last training exercise in ... new training to use – the Mission Readiness Exercise,

... mission readiness exercise where they actually air ... id King.

... actually been on a combat air assault mission," said ... ng raids and things like that for a year. Now, instead ... ve're jumping out of a helicopter."

... RE the DRRF responded to a simulated downed air-

... s of 1-37th kept in constant communication with the ... aid.

... s were working their mission, they had Apaches cir- ... them out.

... l support to the DRRF mission," said King.

... pilots on the radio is the easiest part. They just want ... ve of what's going on ... that's been refreshing,"

... the general area of the downed aircraft, the DRRF ... l focused on extracting the pilots to provide medical

... plete, the Soldiers critiqued themselves to figure out ... at on. This enabled them to perform better in the next ... l event, said King.

... had to do a training exercise in the black of night to ... assault wearing their night vision equipment, he said. ... s up their brief rotation through the DRRF, another ... go through similar training, said King.

... trymen, we also get artillerymen and mortarmen ... ographic, across the Army, to be air assault capable,"

... Brigade has been deployed this rotation, they have ... ns, he said.



Sebastian, Fla., native Spc. Thomas Quinn, a Division Rapid Response Force Soldier for Battery C, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, stands guard as an AH-64D Apache helicopter takes off after a downed aircraft training mission at Camp Taji, Iraq.

MEDEVAC: If You Need Them, They Will Come

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The saying goes that only two things in life are guaranteed: death and taxes.

In battle, there's only one: MEDEVAC.

A medical evacuation crew from Company C, 2nd "Lobo" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, proved that to be true on Memorial Day as they picked up two wounded Soldiers who needed urgent care.

Despite flying in adverse weather and coming under enemy fire, the MEDEVAC crew managed to evacuate the wounded Soldiers to a combat support hospital within about 30 minutes of being called.

"The weather was below marginal conditions," said Lt. Col. Timothy DeVito, acting commander of 1st ACB, who hails from Orlando, Fla. "No Multinational Division-Baghdad or Multinational Division-Center aircraft were flying, but in true MEDEVAC fashion, the condition of the injured Soldiers on the ground is what drove them to conduct that mission."

"The visibility was less than two miles," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Christopher Walls, the pilot in command on the MEDEVAC mission, who hails from Tampa, Fla.

Additionally, the crew had to fly without an AH-64D Apache escort.

"There was no Apache available (to provide security), but the mission was approved," said Sgt. Dale Hlavacek, a medic from Co. C, from Des Moines, Iowa. "We had a (UH-60 Black Hawk) chase helicopter and the ground guys to provide security."

The nine-line MEDEVAC request had warned that there were enemy forces to the north, but the landing zone itself was secure.

The weather turned out to be the least of their problems.

Moments after the two Black Hawks



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

A row of UH-60 Black Hawk Medical Evacuation helicopters sit parked on the airfield at Camp Taji, Iraq. The MEDEVAC crews fly in adverse weather conditions and sometimes come under fire from the enemy as they work to evacuate wounded Soldiers, Iraqi military forces, civilians and enemy prisoners.

landed, they came under mortar and small arms fire.

"We landed to the south," Hlavacek said. "I saw the ground element at our three o'clock. I got off and started assessing the patients. One of them was a litter patient, so I called for the crew chief (Pvt. Bryan Makepeace, from Avon Park, Fla.) to bring a litter. I heard an explosion and small arms fire. I signaled the crew chief for the aircraft to take off."

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Corey Mallard, another pilot on the MEDEVAC crew, immediately knew something was wrong.

"I heard two explosions at our six o'clock," said Mallard, from College Station, Texas. "There was small arms fire hitting the ground to our left. I told Makepeace to get on the aircraft. Once he got in and I saw that we were all clear, we took off. There were tracer rounds to our left, and they followed us all

the way out."

Walls said it appeared the enemy initially was firing at the chase helicopter from 3rd "Spearhead" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment. The chase helicopter was between the enemy forces and the MEDEVAC helicopter, he said.

"I could see tracer rounds in front of the helicopter. It looked like they were shooting at the chase helicopter while we were on the ground, because they were closer (to the enemy)," Walls said. "As we took off, they were shooting at both of us."

Hlavacek remained with the two injured Soldiers. One of the injured Soldiers had sustained a gunshot wound to the leg and the other had a gunshot wound to the head. The Soldier with the head wound was able to walk.

Hlavacek and a few of the Soldiers from the ground unit got the injured Soldiers to cover. The enemy forces "were in a ditch. I

could see the rounds skipping off the dirt and hear them going by," Hlavacek said. "I think they were targeting both of the aircraft. Once we got the patients to cover, I began to return fire with the ground unit. I always take my M-4 with me when I depart the aircraft, but this is the first time I have had to return fire. Usually when we land, the enemy forces will bug out and leave. These guys stayed and fired at us. They were close."

The firefight lasted for about a minute, Hlavacek said, and then the aircraft were cleared to land again. Hlavacek got smoke from the ground unit and moved the landing zone closer to where the injured Soldiers were located.

They loaded the Soldiers on the MEDEVAC helicopter and took them to the Combat Support Hospital without further incident, Hlavacek said.

"Everything is briefed (before the missions), and we have been doing this for a few months," Walls said. "I didn't have any concerns about (Hlavacek); I knew that he would be safe with the ground guys. He knew that we would be back to get him. We talk about this every day, about what we will do in this situation, and we did it just how we had planned. We brief this and talk it beforehand, and everyone just reverted to their training."

Although he goes on MEDEVAC missions just about every day, Hlavacek said that he doesn't get into a routine on the missions.

"It may seem like the same thing every day – we do this whenever guys out there need us. You never know what's going to happen when you go out to pick up patients," Hlavacek said. "You have to be ready. I would tell my peers to stay open to things; it's never going to be the same thing out there. Anticipate the worst."

But one thing remains the same for ground forces in Baghdad, as this crew from Co. C, 2-227th, has proven: If you call for MEDEVAC, they will come.

Cavalry Aviators Receive Combat Action Badges in Taji

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Aviators from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, received combat action badges in a June 8 ceremony for their actions when their helicopter went down April 5.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jaime Gordon, a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot for Company A "Werewolves," 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., was the pilot in command that day.

It all started when the helicopter's number one engine went out and caught on fire, said Gordon a Priest River, Idaho, native.

When the fire began to rage, Wichita, Kan., native, Spc. Benjamin Full, a Black Hawk crew chief for the Werewolves, helped the pilot fight the fire, he said.

"I can't see the engine from where I'm seated. (Full) was my eyes to see the engine. Together we fought that fire," said Gordon.

While Full and Gordon were fighting the engine fire, another fire started inside the cabin where the passengers were seated, said Gordon.

That's when the other crew chief, Nolanville, Texas,



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

Spc. Benjamin Full, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief for Company A, 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, stands before his peers as his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Michael Shenk of Carlisle, Pa. pins on his Combat Action Badge during a ceremony June 8, at Camp Taji, Iraq.

native Sgt. Bruce Adams, from Company B, 3-227th, threw the fire extinguishers to the passengers to help fight the flames bearing down on them, said Gordon.

While most of the crew and passengers were fighting the fires, the co-pilot, Portland, Ore., native 1st Lt. Kenny Doleac of Co. A., was trying to land without the usual com-

munication with Gordon or his crew chiefs, Gordon said.

"(Doleac and Gordon) ensured the safety of their occupants and they minimized the destruction of Army property. Those are two things we are trying to do every time we go out there and fly and do our mission," said Carlisle, Pa., native Lt. Col. Michael Shenk, commander of 3-227th in remarks at the ceremony. "I'm glad (Gordon and Doleac) are setting the example for the rest of us pilots and as members of the crews."

Once Doleac safely landed the helicopter, the crew chiefs, without any concern for their own safety, quickly began evacuating the passengers and pilots, he said.

After the crew and passengers were safely away from the downed aircraft, Full provided first aid to the wounded passengers, said Gordon.

"You hope and expect that the (crew chiefs) will act and react to the situation with the best of their abilities ... there wasn't one thing they did wrong that day," he said.

"We thank Pfc. Full for understanding the bigger picture and being a much bigger part of the crew that day," said Shenk.

Once the badges were pinned on the Aviators in attendance – Adams was not able to attend – the crew did what most heroes do; they went back to work.

Cavalry Aviators Thwart Attacks for Two Divisions

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – In order to exert effective battle command during the surge, two divisions control the fight near Baghdad: Multi-National Division – Baghdad, led by the 1st Cavalry Division and Multi-National Division – Center, led by the 3rd Infantry Division.

But, this doesn't mean there are two aviation brigades covering these two expansive areas of operations.

Since the establishment of MND-C, the 1st Air Cavalry "Warrior" Brigade, 1st Cav. Div., has been supporting both MNDs to protect forces in and around the Iraqi capital and enable both divisions' operations, said Lt. Col. Timothy DeVito, commander of 4th "Guns" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, and acting brigade commander for the 1st ACB.

"We're currently integrating the 3rd ID's combat aviation brigade into MND-C's area of operations, and when that is complete, we will focus our support to (mainly) MND-B," said DeVito an Orlando, Fla., native.

Punctuating their efforts, both attack battalions of the Warrior Brigade conducted near simultaneous engagements, stopping potential indirect fire and improvised explosive device attacks. But while one engagement was in MND-B, the other was in MND-C, the Guns commander said.

On the night of June 2, the 4th "Guns" Battalion thwarted a group of enemy forces who were emplacing improvised explosive devices in MND-C's area of operations, said 1st Lt. Jennifer Owen, the assistant intelligence officer for 4-227th.

While conducting route reconnaissance, a team of two Apaches noticed suspicious activity in a road, said the Whitefish, Mont., native.

Suspects were later observed digging a short distance up the road from a fire started in the middle of the road. An Apache team from 4-227th was called in to engage them, said Owen.

Upon returning to the area, the Big Gun team got clearance from the ground troops to fire on the burning road and any insurgents nearby, she said.

"They shot into the fire on the road and observed secondary explosions – indicating that there were either IEDs emplaced within range of that or they had it set aside so that once they (dug the hole) they could set it in," Owen said.

Both aircraft in the team then engaged the insurgents fleeing from the site. The enemy operation was defeated.

Because of the 4-227th Guns, there were no losses to Coalition Forces, because the IEDs were not successfully emplaced.

Around the same time that 4-227th was engaging enemy forces emplacing IEDs, a team of Apaches from the 1st "Attack" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, were called off an ongoing mission to respond to terrorists setting up rockets in a soccer field

near Sadr City – MND-B's area of operation, said Las Vegas native Lt. Col. Christopher Walach, commander of "First Attack" and one of the Apache pilots flying the engagement.

The ground force, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, found the terrorists setting up the rockets and called in attack aviation for support. Within minutes, Apaches were there assessing the situation, Walach said.

"This is probably the largest number of rockets I've seen set up, set to go off, since I've been here," he said.

Ten rockets were aimed at the International Zone with an unknown number of explosives still inside the terrorists' van parked nearby, Walach said.

The First Attack commander and his wingmen engaged the enemy forces, rockets and the vehicle, he said.

When the engagement began, some insurgents ran for shelter underneath the concrete bleachers of the stadium, said Tallahassee, Fla., native Chief Warrant Officer 4 Kevin Smith, the senior maintenance test pilot for 1-227th, and one of the crewmen during the engagement.

The crews engaged the enemy personnel. The ultimate outcome of their engagement was four insurgents killed and 10 rockets and one van destroyed, Walach said.

"We've spent hours and hours and hours looking for these guys," Smith said. "This time, we finally got them, so it's a good feeling."

"This mission was probably the most integrated, ... combined armed operation I've seen in the past nine months to take out anti-Iraqi forces trying to do harm to the Iraqi government or the Iraqi people," said Walach. "We couldn't do what we do without being fully integrated with the ground combat teams."

Both of these planned terrorist attacks, the potential rocket attack on the International Zone and the potential IED attack on Coalition Forces, were defeated by the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade in two completely different areas of operation, DeVito said.

"(That night) is a fitting example of how the brigade is sustaining its operations with lethal simultaneity in both MND areas of operations," he said.

The willingness and determination of the Warriors is what keeps them running at such a hectic operation tempo, DeVito added.

"We are searching relentlessly to find our missing comrades and supporting this (troop) surge to defeat terrorists and anti-Iraqi forces while we, simultaneously, provide direct support to both MND (areas of operation) and integrate the 3rd CAB into our operations," said DeVito. "It's just part of our cavalry tradition and mindset. Out troopers know that our brothers on the ground are out there performing heroically across the area of operations and (1st ACB) is committed to doing anything and everything we can to protect these brave troopers and to enable their success as they operate."



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

An AH-64D Apache attack helicopter from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, flies through the skies over Camp Taji, Iraq, during a training exercise. Both 1st and 4th battalions of the 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, are simultaneously supporting ground troops operating in Multi-National Division-Baghdad and Multi-National Division-Center until the 3rd Infantry Division's Combat Aviation Brigade becomes fully integrated into MND-C.

Infantry Regiment Trains Police in Ar Ramadi

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

AR RAMADI, Iraq—Ar Ramadi has always been dubbed the Wild West when comparing it to other areas of Iraq, but recently the tide has changed and things are calming down. With less firefights breaking out, members of 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment have been concentrating on training the Iraqi Police.

Company D, which spent many months clearing areas of Ar Ramadi, is now the designated training company. They are in charge of training the local Iraqi Police at Camp Corregidor, to ensure they know what to do and can eventually take over security responsibilities themselves.

“When we first got here, if you walked downtown you were going to get in a firefight,” said Capt. James R. Enos, the commanding officer of Company D. “Through all the operations we’ve done in Ramadi, we have eliminated some of that threat.”

Enos, a native of Lakewood, Wash., said several of his Soldiers had worked on a military transition team during their previous deployments, where they saw the value of the Iraqi police force and proceeded to train the policemen along with members of the Iraqi Army.

Camp Ramadi, on the west side of town, has a training center where Enos sent some of the Iraqi Police for training. But, by opening up another training center at Camp Corregidor and running it themselves, Enos said it will be easier on the Iraqis because it provides easier access to those



(Courtesy Photo)

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment conduct a physical training test for the Iraqi Police. The PT test is one of the many training aspects Company D, 1-9th Infantry is concentrating on as the unit began focusing its mission on training Iraqis June 1 at Camp Corregidor in Ar Ramadi.

on this side of town.

“We hope to integrate IP liaison officers to accomplish some of that training,” he said, of having former police officers who come to Iraq as contractors to train the police force in police tactics.

The Iraqi Police are going to learn basic marksmanship, close-quarters combat, ethics, how to put together a detainee packet, investigation techniques and detainee operations, he said.

Basic training skills are already something the Iraqi’s

know, but Enos said the goal is to have them build upon that to where they can carry out squad-level live-fire exercises.

“(Our goal is to) get them working together as squads to build an effective team,” he said. The company started training the Iraqis June 1.

When 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment first took over in Ar Ramadi, Enos said there was one Iraqi police recruit on the east side of the city. Now, they have five Iraqi Police stations with about 300 to 400 policemen at each station.

“They’ve actually been pretty good to work with,” he said. “They seem demanding at times, but it’s all understandable requests like uniforms and weapons.”

Enos said the Iraqi Police have proven they are effective because they are from the local area and know it well.

“I think some of it will be new to them,” he said of the training. “You’re dealing with people who have never undergone training before and this is the first time they’re dealing with a formalized training process.”

This change is to help the Iraqi Police, but it’s also a huge change for the Soldiers in Company D who were doing combat operations only a few months ago.

As of late, the company has been in a lull and mostly pulling guard.

Once the training gets going, Enos said the goal is to eventually create a “train the trainer” course where they can teach a few select Iraqis, who in turn, can teach their peers.

“The best case scenario is all we’re doing is over watch while Iraqis are training fellow Iraqis,” he said.

Looking for Explosives: A Day in the Life of Cav Soldiers

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUS-TAMIYAH, Iraq – Military convoys do their best to avoid explosive formed penetrators and improvised explosive devices at all costs, since they are the leading cause of lives lost in Iraq. Checking the safety of the routes, ensuring convoys have plenty of fire support, medical care and working communications are second nature to Soldiers going on missions.

For the cavalry troops and combat engineers of Company E, 1st Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment, attached to 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, their daily job entails route clearance to find explosive devices before any convoys come across them in the future.

It may sound crazy to the average person, but along with their partners, the explosive ordnance disposal teams, they go searching for bombs every day and night.

This type of job is unenviable for most, but like Sgt. 1st Class Augusta Creech, the platoon sergeant for Company E’s 1st Platoon based out of Fort Hood, Texas said, “It has to be done.”

He said, if not, it gives more opportunities for the enemy to place additional IED’s and EFP’s out, causing more American and Iraqi casualties.

“Despite the fact the process slows traffic down, the deadly routes have to be cleared and most residents are used to the daily process by now,” said Creech, a Brooklyn, N.Y., native.

In order to get ready for the mission, teams prepare their vehicles and go over last-minute details with Creech before departing.



(Photo by Maj. Sean Ryan, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)

Sgt. Edward Cruz, 1st Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment, attached to 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, scans the area for possible explosive devices during a route clearing operation in eastern Baghdad June 2. Cruz, part of 1st Platoon, Company E, and a native of Sacramento, Calif., helped spot one of two explosive devices during the day’s mission.

The confident 18-year veteran remains focused on the mission at hand, as he has already been struck by IED’s twice in his career, one during each rotation he has served in Iraq.

During this deployment, the vehicle he was riding in struck an IED that caused multiple burns to his driver, who is recovering in San Antonio, he said. Creech received minor injuries in both incidents, but was able to return to duty both times. He fully realizes his good fortune.

Clearing the most dangerous routes in Baghdad starts off no different than the rest with Spc Rober Perkins from Greenville,

N.C., as the driver, and Sgt. Edward Cruz, the team chief, seated next to him.

Cruz is steadfast and his job today is scanning the area for possible explosive devices with binoculars and other technical devices. Creech is in the back orchestrating the mission and acting as the liaison with the rest of the convoy.

The mission goes as planned in the first hour until suddenly, Cruz notices something out of place. The Sacramento, Calif. native instructs the convoy to halt.

Many Iraqi drivers are clearly annoyed they have to stop when the convoy stops. Without an understanding of the possible

consequences, they quickly pop the curb and start driving against traffic on the opposite side of the street. In Iraq, this is commonplace. Soon, two lanes are replaced by three, going both directions.

An EOD vehicle swerves into action, getting closer, but not in harms way to the suspected object. The vehicle downloads a robot to check the area more closely.

Heavily armed Bradley Fighting Vehicles get into position to start blocking traffic on both sides of the road, much to the chagrin of the daily commuters. The EOD team begins to track a wire seen by Cruz, as the robot is sent in to get a closer look.

Unfazed, some of the locals continue to walk past the area despite the halted convoy and stalled traffic. Sharp-eyed kids catch a glimpse of the robot and wave and motion for it to come closer. Parents push them back and keep them further away from the scene, realizing the severity of the situation.

Time passes, but this is not a process to be worked in haste. Finally, the EOD gives a signal of thumbs up meaning an explosive device is found.

The area is cordoned off from the many onlookers and soon a call of “fire in the hole” is bellowed by Creech. The ordnance is blown in place with a boom that resonates throughout the area.

The convoy leaves the area, and within five minutes, another EFP has been found on the same street. After the same process, the EOD blows that device in place, as well.

After clearing the rest of the road on both sides of the street hours later, the mission is over and all are safe. Though dangerous, the mission is a productive one for the members of 1-8th Cavalry. They are two for two finding explosives.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric D. Radecki, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Infantry Division)

The Iraqi Air Force Military Transition Team transported the Iraqi Minister of Defense to Coalition Outpost "Old Mod" in eastern Baghdad so the Minister could inspect how members of 1st Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army were training. The flight marked the first time the Iraqis have flown to a high-ranking Iraqi official to the outpost, which got its name from being the former headquarters of the Ministry of Defense.

Air Force Takes Flight

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq —The Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police receive a lot of attention in the news, but little is known about the Iraqi Air Force.

Lately, the Air Force has made great strides and recently flew an UH-1 Huey helicopter carrying the Iraqi Minister of Defense and landed at a Coalition Outpost.

The Huey was flown by members of the Iraqi Air Force Military Transition Team, which consisted of one Iraqi pilot, one American pilot and an Iraqi and American gunner, said Sgt. 1st Class Eric D. Radecki, the operations noncommissioned officer in charge for the 1st Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division's MiTT, which is comprised of members of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

"Prior to this, you'd see a lot of the higher ranking Iraqi's flying on American birds," Radecki, of Colorado Springs, Colo., said. "Now, that they're flying on Iraqi aircraft. It's one more step to doing things on their own, without our support."

The Iraqi Minister of Defense was making a scheduled stop to inspect members of the 11th Iraqi Army Division and

see how things were running, Radecki said.

When the Huey landed, it marked the first time the Iraqi Minister of Defense had come to Combat Outpost "Old Mod," which got its moniker since it was once the former Iraqi Ministry of Defense building.

It was also the first time an Iraqi aircraft had landed there, Radecki said.

"The Air Force MiTT team briefed the (2nd IBCT) MiTT team on the Iraqi Air Force's step in learning anti-terrorism tactics," Radecki said. "They will soon gain that air-mobile activity."

Gaining air mobility will be a huge step for the Iraqis as it will allow them to put troops out in sector at a moment's notice, Radecki said.

It will also enable them to conduct targeting raids and reduces the danger for their soldiers because they'll be using less convoys.

"It makes their abilities a lot greater," he said.

The kinks are still being worked out and Radecki said the Hueys have some maintenance issues.

Radecki said maintenance issues are being addressed.

"Hopefully," he said, "we'll see more Iraqi aircraft flying over the capital doing patrols."

Market Revitalized After Getting Temporarily Shelved

By Maj. Sean Ryan
2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq — For many people who do not know Iraq's illustrious history with books, the March 5 suicide bomb that rocked the Mutanabbi Book Market, the most famous book market in Baghdad, was not only an act of terrorism, but a blow to their literary sense as well.

The place known as the "Books Street," or Al Saray, meaning paper market, was a gathering place for people from all social groups, to include Sunni and Shia, writers and students.

The market is also known for the availability of some of the toughest books in the world to find, whether outlawed or not.

This historical sanctuary allowed customers to drink chai tea, discuss current topics and to peruse the millions of books in the open-air, covered market.

The old adage of the Arab publishing industries goes, "Cairo writes, Beirut prints and Baghdad reads."

The book market on Mutanabbi Street epitomizes this sentiment, but unfortunately, the last image a lot of people remember of the market is charred books in the street, torn pages raining from the sky, burning vehicles and memories of loved ones lost after the car bomb exploded.

But the market is making a comeback.

Slowly, recent cleanups and reconstruction efforts have begun to fix the damage done and the market has reopened and is ready to thrive again.

Adm. William J. Fallon, commander of the U.S. Central Command, visited the area recently to speak with local store owners to inquire out how things were progressing.

"The Coalition Forces are here for your security," Fallon told the shopkeepers. "Everything takes time, so you need patience."

He discussed electricity and security issues and took



(Photo by Maj. Sean Ryan, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)

A store owner from Mutanabbi Street in the Rusafa District of eastern Baghdad signs paperwork requesting a grant for his store June 11. The market, also called Al Saray, meaning the paper market, is famous in Baghdad for its millions of books, including an abundance of rare books. The market is open but still recovering from a car bombing.

some time to drink chai tea with some elders in a coffee shop. "Together, we can build a strong Iraq," he told them.

Some storeowners have recently been given grants to

help them rebuild their businesses.

One owner, whose family has owned their business since 1914.

"I could have left after my sister died in the blast, my business lost and I received injuries as well," he said, "but Iraq is my home, and I want to stay."

A grant will help his nearly century-old business get back on its feet.

"The grant will help me re-supply the inventory I lost," he said. "I will use the money to buy stationary and other office supplies sold in my store."

He believes progress is being made in Baghdad, but said it will take time to see his business flourish again.

He noted a lull right now in business, with school being out, but he hopes his store is ready after the summer.

"The grant will help me import books to be sold to my clientele of university students, doctors, lawyers and teachers," said another business owner, who mainly sells dictionaries and other periodicals. "The business has been in my family since the early 1970s, although I didn't start until 1984."

The market is located in the Rusafa District of Baghdad, between Al Maidan Square and Rasheed Street, and Mutanabbi Street. Mutanabbi Street is named after the 10th century classical Arab poet. The first Iraqi King renamed the market to honor the poet.

Visiting Maidan Square, you can find a statue of the famous poet Abu Taib Al Mutanabbi, much like finding the statue of the poet Abu Nuwas, on the water front of the famous fish market.

These statues stand as testaments to the Iraqis' love of poetry and the literary world.

Overall, the famous book market is a little closer to flourishing again and soon people will be able to get together to discuss classic novels, or find that rare first edition they have been searching for — only on Baghdad's Mutanabbi Street.



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

A New Way to Earn Jump Pay

Staff Sgt. Branden Velazquez, of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, vaults over a wall on a rooftop during a clearing operation in the Al Doura area of Baghdad. Soldiers from Bravo Company were conducting an operation to engage the local populace in discussions about security, as well as search for weapons caches and improvised explosive devices in the area.

Iraqis Build Soccer Fields for Youth

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUS-TAMIYAH, Iraq—Iraqi and Coalition Forces have been working together to build a better Iraq, but in the Al Razul area of eastern Baghdad, the Iraqis carried out a community project themselves with only financial help from 1st Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment.

The 1-8th Cavalry, operating in eastern Baghdad attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, helped Iraq's in the Al Razul community to undertake a project to build three soccer fields near a school that students and the general public can utilize during their free time.

Capt. David C. Freeman, the effects coordinator for 1-8th Cav, said the idea to improve the area stemmed from seeing how unsuitable it was for use to the community and from the squadron's desire to help develop that neighborhood.

"It's a project done by the Iraqis to better an Iraqi community with the money going directly to the community," Freeman, a Detroit native, said.

Wanting to help make the area better for the residents, the project was started but given to the Iraqis to

control and implement.

"When you use local workers the economic impact goes straight to the community versus up to higher," he said.

Utilizing a local contractor and 37 local workers, the Iraqis took a flooded and overgrown area and turned it into three soccer fields.

The location near a school enables the school to use the fields, but is available to the entire community, much like facilities run in the United States by city parks and recreation departments.

Economically, Freeman said the project allows the local Iraqis to have a stake in building up their community because they are in charge of the project.

It also gives the youth a positive outlet for their free time such as playing soccer or just interacting with one another.

"The youth can develop a sense of unity through sports," Freeman said. "You see it in the U.S., too."

The community's reaction has been positive, Freeman said. When the Soldiers drive by on patrols they see more people out playing.

"It's not a huge project," he said. "But it doesn't have to be huge or expensive. It can still make an impact."



(Courtesy Photos)

Three soccer fields replaced what was once a flooded and overgrown field in the Al Razul area in eastern Baghdad. The project was carried out by Iraqi community leaders in the area with help from 1st Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment, currently attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

Soldiers Create a Brotherhood in Iraq

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

KHAN BANI SA'AD, Iraq - Gathered around a makeshift table made from a sheet of plywood resting on Meals Ready-To-Eat boxes, Soldiers at Khan Bani Sa'ad played a game of cards in the middle of their compound.

These Soldiers talked, joked and fought the entire game as if they all had known each other their whole lives.

The truth is, many of these men have known each other for just over a year, some even less.

"I just came to this platoon four or five months ago," said Spc. Miguel Luzunaris, or "LZ" as his friends call him.

Yet, at this compound run by the 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, the men have bonded in the same way a family would after years of living together.

"I would put my life on the line for everybody out here," said Luzunaris.

"It's more of a brotherhood than anything out here," said Spc. Jeffrey Marder.

"We are with each other 24 hours a day, seven days a week," he said.

In this "brotherhood," the Soldiers have built their bonds from the experiences they share.

"When you're out there and you have to trust your life to your friends, it brings you a little bit closer," said Pfc. Matthew Taylor, the platoon's combat medic.

"If you're pulling 360 security or doing (small kill teams) at night, you are watching out for each other," he said.

"Infantry, we are in the fight a little deeper than anybody else," said Luzunaris. "You have to trust the man behind you, and you have to trust the man in front of you.

"I think we are a lot closer because we go through a lot of stuff together," he said.

"We go on numerous missions, and the missions are always more than one person," said Marder. "Everybody is helping each other out."

Not only do the Soldiers come closer together through combat experiences, but personal experiences also increase the bond they share.

"We are all dealing with close to the same things," said Luzunaris.

"We all have family... back at home," he said. "We are all trying to get back to them.

"It's the support, 'I know you have your family and I have mine so let's help each other make it back to them,'" said Luzunaris. "We all just gather up... and take care of each other."

"We are always going through certain instances... or certain personal problems that may happen within the platoon," said Marder. "People just need to come to you to talk or you need to go to somebody else just to talk to."

Many of the Soldiers feel like they are just as close to each other as they are to their families back home.

"I treat them like I do my brothers," said Taylor. "I have two younger brothers and a



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

Spc. Miguel Luzunaris and Pfc. Matthew Taylor, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, patrol together through palm groves in Judidah, Iraq May 10. Taylor and Luzunaris' platoon share a bond of brotherhood as close as their own families back home.

younger sister.

"They are as much family as my own family," he said. "If they need something, I'm there for them and they are there for me."

"You get to know everybody around you," said Marder. "You get to know their lifestyle and their home life, even their personal life.

"I know the same amount about my brother as I do these guys," he said.

"I just wasn't born from the same family," said Marder. "Brothers from another mother basically."

The men also get into brotherly fights. "We rag on each other like you wouldn't believe," said Taylor.

"Griff and I as roommates...every day we are messing with each other," said Luzunaris. "If he isn't messing with me, I'm going to pick a fight with him.

"Just because, I guess we feel comfortable like that," he said.

"It doesn't feel right if we don't bicker with each other at least once a day," said Luzunaris. "If I can fight with you and five minutes later we are back laughing, that's when you really know that is a real friend right there."

These Soldiers are also willing to put their lives on the line for each other.

"Friends are friends but... family, you



As a group of school children follows him down the street, Pvt. Brad Griffith, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, talks to his convoy commander over the radio in Judidah, Iraq, May 10.

always have them," said Luzunaris.

"Even if I don't get along with one of them, if we are in a firefight out there... they are going to protect you," he said.

"I have friends back at home... now that I think about it, they are more acquaintanc-

es," said Marder.

"I'm not too sure that my friends back at home would jump in front of a bullet like these guys would for me," he said.

"And I would do the same for them," he added.



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

Tight Squeeze!

Protruding legs are all that is visible of San Antonio native Spc. Ruben Chavez, as he squeezes his way into a tiny cubby hole in the wall during a cordon and search operation in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District June 11. He was able to maneuver his way out after inspecting the storage area. Chavez is with Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment based out of Schweinfurt, Germany and operating in the Iraqi capital with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division



(Photo by Maj. Sean Ransford, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div.)

A contractor helps emplace 12-foot-high concrete barriers along a road in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District as part of the safe neighborhood project. The temporary barriers were installed by paratroopers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, in order to protect the local people by limiting terrorists' ability to enter the neighborhood and commit violence.

Construction Complete on "Safe Neighborhood" Project

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

BAGHDAD – The thick chains attaching the "T-Wall" barrier to the crane shuddered as the slab of heavy concrete was lifted into the air. The crane operator worked his control stick, first swinging the barrier through the air, and then slowly lowering it into place.

As the 14,000 pounds of concrete settled onto the ground with a grinding crunch, the project to secure a neighborhood in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District behind miles of protective barriers came to an end in darkness of the early morning May 28.

The project, overseen by the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, involved emplacing temporary barriers and checkpoints around a three-mile area of Adhamiyah in order to protect the local populace from attacks by terrorists.

"This was our biggest project to date," said Lt. Eric Brumfield, of Visalia, Calif., a platoon leader with the 2nd BCT's 407th Support Battalion, which oversaw the project's construction. "It was a massive undertaking."

Almost every night for two months straight, paratroopers from the 407th BSB left their base and convoyed to Adhamiyah, emplacing as many as 70 of the huge barriers each night alongside the main road ringing the neighborhood.

"It was probably more labor intensive than anything we've done," said Capt. Priscilla Smoot, of Miami, the commander of Company A, which did the majority of the work for the project.

Brumfield said he was shocked to read early media reports criticizing the project as a Berlin Wall-like partition dividing neighbor from neighbor. In reality, the wall was a simple security measure, he said.

"It's just like driving at home where you have barriers beside the highway. It's no different than that," he

said.

In some sections, the project simply improved on roadblocks that residents had already emplaced themselves, said 1st Lt. Jacob Allen, of New Kent, Va., a platoon leader with Co. A. Allen also pointed out that the wall hasn't restricted foot movement at all in the area.

"There are plenty of places to walk. What this has blocked off is movement of (vehicle-borne) explosives," he said.

Brumfield said that despite the criticism of the project, his paratroopers are proud of what they accomplished.

"We're exhausted. We're tired of seeing the wall every night. But in the end, we did it. We were able to fight through the IEDs and the publicity and everything else and get it done," Brumfield said.

"Now it's time to step back and start looking at the statistics. We have to let time tell if it's going to work," he said.

So far, the results have been positive. Murders are down 61 percent in Adhamiyah between the beginning of April, when construction began, and May 28, when it ended, according to reports compiled by the 2nd BCT.

"Since we started building the wall, we've already seen a noticeable decrease in violence," said Capt. Jared Purcell, of Lake Orion, Mich., the public affairs officer for 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, whose unit operates in the area. Purcell said his unit will continue to closely track the effects of the safe neighborhood project.

"We will be in the community with an ear open as to how people feel about the wall, as well as how it is improving security," Purcell said. "We're constantly going to be re-evaluating the wall to make sure it is providing maximum security with minimum disruptions to people's lives."

Taking Charge:**Iraqi Security Forces Out in Front on Joint Patrols**

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

BAGHDAD – In the little conference room of the Suleikh Joint Security Station, 1st Sgt. Phong Tran was staring at a blank dry-erase board.

Tran and Iraqi police commander, Lt. Col. Ahmed Abdullah, were trying to plan an upcoming joint patrol, but Tran could tell Ahmed was getting lost.

Tran realized his military lingo was probably the cause of the problem.

“You’ve got to know your audience. You can’t use military standard verbiage,” said Tran, a Richmond, Va. native. “When you talk about task, purpose, and all that, it just gets lost in the translation.”

Tran decided to simplify. He asked Ahmed – a veteran cop with nine years experience policing the area – what is the first thing you would do if you wanted to make this patrol work?

All the sudden it clicked. Ahmed took Tran’s marker and began drawing formations and routes.

“It was like a seed planted in the ground: it just blossomed,” Tran said.

Assessments of the progress of Iraqi Security Forces often focus on statistics like numbers of troops, tanks, or equipment. But the numbers don’t answer the question: at the small unit level, are Iraqi commanders ready to take the lead?

At the Suleikh Joint Security Station in Baghdad’s Adhamiya District, paratroopers from 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment are finding that the answer is yes.

The paratroopers share the base with Iraqi police and troops from the Iraqi Army. The different units are in constant coordination, and several times a week, key leaders get together to plan joint patrols.

Recently, the Iraqis have been taking a much larger role in the planning and development stages of the missions, said 2nd Lt. Jesse Bowman, of Reynoldsburg, Ohio, a platoon leader with Battery A, 2-319th AFAR.

“We’re trying to put them at the forefront as far as planning our joint patrols,” Bowman said. “They’re the ones thinking through all the details and contingencies.”

“We just kind of say, ‘Hey, this is what we want to do,’ and then let them run with it, planning-wise,” said Capt. James Peay, of Nashville, Tenn., Alpha Battery’s commander.

That leeway doesn’t stop at the planning stages; it also extends to tactical control during missions. That is a crucial step to the transition process, even if it means surrendering some control on the battlefield, said Capt. Joe Miller, a military transition team liaison.

“(Some U.S.) commanders don’t want to give up control on the ground. But every day we control the ground is a day



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

Lt. Col. Ahmed Abdullah (center, with finger raised), the police commander in the Suleikh neighborhood of eastern Baghdad, gives a convoy briefing to a group of U.S. paratroopers, Iraqi Army soldiers, and Iraqi policemen prior to moving out on a joint patrol May 24.

that accomplishes nothing,” Miller said.

During a joint patrol that left the JSS May 24, it was clear the Iraqis were in charge.

Before the patrol moved out, the soldiers, paratroopers, and policemen gathered under a shady tree to receive a convoy briefing from Ahmed, the police colonel. Ahmed, a tall man with wavy hair and rugged features, removed his ever-present mirrored shades to address the group.

“Take all commands from me,” he said, before launching into a description of the route and the mission.

Alpha Battery squad leader Sgt. Eduardo Rosa, of Springfield, Mass., had never received a briefing in Arabic before – or been on a patrol led by an Iraqi.

“It’s good that he was taking charge like that,” Rosa said.

After some final checks, the convoy moved out. The purpose of the patrol was to assess Iraqi Army and police checkpoints along one of the major routes running past the JSS. Periodically, Ahmed, Bowman and Tran would dismount to check positions first hand and talk to the soldiers and police-

men manning the checkpoints.

Afterward, back at the JSS, Rosa said it was good for people in the neighborhood to see U.S. and Iraqi forces out on joint patrols, especially with the Iraqis in the lead.

“It shows that we trust them, so they should, too,” he said.

“The people feel safe when they see us working together and supporting each other,” agreed Capt. Ali Kamal, a commander with the 3-2-6th Iraqi Army.

“We support each other,” Ali said. “We are just like brothers.”

Hours after the patrol was finished, Tran was in a thoughtful mood. He said he had heard a lot of hype about Iraqi forces taking the lead, but what he had seen on the ground was always disappointing. His time at the JSS, though, was starting to turn him into a believer.

“I think these guys can pull it off,” he said. “If it works at the lowest level, that gives me hope that it can work on a larger scale.”



Safeguard sensitive information.

See



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

Spc. Jason Donaldson (left) administration assistant with HHC 15th Support Battalion is currently on his second deployment to Camp Taji. His father 1st Sgt. Leonard Donaldson (right) a combat medic with Charlie Medical Company, 215th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, resides at forward operating base Camp Warhorse.

Father, Son Soldiering Together in Combat

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Some boys dream about someday growing up and following in their father's footsteps. Some let the dream die, while others make it a reality. Few get a chance to say they went to combat and served together.

Spc. Jason Donaldson, administrative assistant with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 15th Brigade Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), is currently on his second deployment on Camp Taji, since joining the Army in 2004.

"I haven't seen my father since 2004 so it's great getting a chance to get to see him," said Jason.

1st Sgt. Leonard Donaldson, with Charlie Medical Company, 215th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, resides at forward operating base Camp Warhorse. He works as a combat medic, assisting in frontline trauma care in the battlefield.

"It's different having my son here with me, when he first got here I was concerned about him going outside the gate," said Leonard.

Deployment is nothing new to him either. He has been deployed a total of three times.

The first deployment landed him in Kuwait during Operation Iraqi Freedom 03-04. He worked with

the Headquarters and Headquarters Company 421st Medical Brigade.

"My first deployment was something new to me so I gained a lot of experience on each deployment," he said.

His second deployment took him to Camp Speicher with Alpha Company 557th Medical Company Ground Ambulance, 30th Medical Brigade for a year.

Working as a combat medic his entire military career, he has had the opportunity of traveling and seeing many parts of the United States as well.

He has been stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C., Fort Ord, Calif., Fort Gordon, Ga., Landstuhl, Germany, Sinai, Egypt, and is currently on his tour at Fort Hood, Texas.

"I was able to stay at my son's house and help take care of the baby while he was deployed and then I was deployed 30 days later," he said.

Spc. Donaldson has a wife and two small children at home. He was able to go home around the time his second baby was due.

"It is different being over here with my father because I haven't seen him in so long," said Spc. Donaldson.

The long duration of deployment certainly tends to be a lonely haul but not so much when you have a family member close by.



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

Sgt. Jose Mendoza from Fullerton, Cali, a supply sergeant with the HHC, 15th BTB, 15th SB, 13th SC (E) has completed the process to becoming a United States Citizen.

New American in Town

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers can get their citizenship in theater after applying and waiting six months. For a citizen there is normally a five-year residency requirement to be eligible to obtain citizenship.

Sgt. Jose Mendoza, a supply sergeant with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 15th Brigade Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) has been approved for citizenship and is about to go thru a naturalization ceremony.

"I am excited to be able to do this, becoming a citizen in Iraq makes me very happy and it does seem a little strange considering the circumstances," said Mendoza.

The Fullerton, Calif., native has been in the Army for eight years now. "There were better opportunities in the Army," he said.

Since he has been serving in the Army and living in America all his life, "There's not much of a difference, I've been treated like a United States citizen all along," he said.

Though serving in the Army, not being a United States citizen did have its downfalls.

"I went to Airborne school, graduated, and then I decided I wanted to go to Ranger School but couldn't go because I wasn't a U.S. Citizen," he said.

To start the process off, he submitted a photo and fingerprints for a background check. He went to his brigade legal office to complete the paperwork and an application. His company commander signed a memo stating that he was not flagged or in trouble.

Once the documents were submitted to the Immigration Naturalization Services (INS) the six month wait began.

"I got my letter about six months later and then I got an e-mail from the legal office in Balad," said Mendoza.

The process includes an interview where the applicant must demonstrate the ability to write and speak a sentence in English and pass a 100-question exam.

Now well into his second deployment, he is happy he took the steps that he needed to get naturalized. "My father wanted me to do this a long time ago, but I procrastinated and really should have done it on my first deployment," he said.

Now that his time of being an immigrant is at an end, the beginning of a new life as a citizen it is opening up many possibilities. Mendoza plans to one day to join the Special Forces as a weapons sergeant.

"I really don't reel any different and I considered myself a citizen before but I am very proud," said Mendoza.

Food Service Soldiers Prepare for Army's Birthday

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – An Army celebration would not be complete without the cut-

ting of a cake, so as the Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division prepared to celebrate the Army's 232nd birthday June 14, the Soldiers and staff of the dining facility were busy the day prior putting the final touches on several cakes that would be on display in the Black Jack

Bistro, the dining facility here.

Holidays are a time when food service Soldiers get to show off some of their creativity, however the art of cake decorating is not a basic skill taught to these Soldiers. Many of these Soldiers have very little or no experience decorating cakes, but luckily the DFAC's lead baker, Prince Prashanttan, does and they were able to rely on and learn from his wealth of knowledge.

"A lot of people pay good money to go to school to learn things like this," said Spc. Shelly Martinez, a food service specialist with the 15th Brigade Support Battalion.

The San Antonio native said that this was her first attempt at cake decorating and she learned a lot from the experience.

"It's been a wonderful experience," she said. "We have Prince back here, and he is an excellent teacher."

Panshanttan, a native of Sri Lanka, is employed with a contracting company and has worked at the Black Jack Bistro since April.

According to the 2nd BCT Food Service Supervisor, Sgt. 1st Class Denise Worsley, Panshanttan takes great pride in the presentation of every cake he prepares.

"Every item he puts out is to perfection," Sgt. 1st Class Denise Worsley said of Prince's work. "Doing Betty Crocker or Duncan Hines at home is not the same."

As they worked on the cakes throughout the day, Worsley, who is originally from Philadelphia, said that her Soldiers were able to rotate through in order to learn some of the finer points of cake decorating - a skill they will be able to employ throughout their careers.

"It's just a great opportunity, especially to be able to take it back to the States and working the DFACs back home," Martinez said. "Being able to present something like this back home is just wonderful."



(Photo by Dergham Turki, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Spc. Shelly Martinez, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, decorates a cake for the Army's birthday celebration at Forward Operating Base Prosperity June 13.



(Photo by Spc. Shea Butler, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

And Many More...

Lt. Col. Bruce Allen (left) and Pfc. Rolando Trinidad (right), the oldest and youngest troops of the Multi-National Division - Baghdad along with the MND-B and 1st Cavalry Division commanding general, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr. (center), cut the Army's 232nd birthday cake during a celebration at the division's headquarters on Camp Liberty in western Baghdad June 14.

Leader Reflects on Being an Army Dad

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – In the movie "We Were Soldiers" a young lieutenant who'd recently become a father asks Mel Gibson's character, Lt. Col. Hal Moore, what he thought about being a Soldier and a father.

"I hope that being good at one makes me better at the other," Moore replied.

Moore's words spoke volumes about the relationship a father has with his children and the relationship a leader has with his Soldiers. For one senior noncommissioned officer, the word leadership is completely synonymous with fatherhood.

Command Sgt. Maj. James Daniels, the top noncommissioned officer for the 4th "Dark Horse" Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, has been in the Army for more than two and a half decades. Although his military career is long and, according to him, nowhere near close to an end, it's only about a year longer than he has been a father.

Twenty-five years ago, he enlisted into the military with full support from his entire family. Two of his brothers were already in, so it made the decision a little easier on his family. More importantly, his father, a pastor at the time, gave him his blessing.

"He was a great mentor," he said. "I followed him everywhere he went."

"He told me to cherish your family," Daniels recalled. "They will always be there for you through thick and thin. You will always have your family to fall back on. The closer you are to your family, the stronger the bonds are, and no one can break those ties."

Daniels said that his father had a huge role in his own fathering skills after he had



(Courtesy photo)

Command Sgt. Maj. James Daniels, the senior noncommissioned officer for 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, stands with his wife, Marilyn, and two daughters, Demeka and Janel, during a family gathering.

his first child, Latrice.

Shortly after having his first child, Daniels was assigned to a station in Germany where his dependants weren't allowed to go with him.

"[The deployment] taught me that being away and still having that bond, you really don't lose anything," he said.

Early in Daniels' career, things like mid-tour leave didn't exist. He and his family had to rely on the bonds created from triumph and tragedy.

His first child was killed in a motor vehicle accident when he was only 18 years old. Although the pain was great, Daniels said it made his family even stronger.

"It strengthens you," he said. "It makes

you closer as a family to lose a loved one, much like during a deployment."

Daniels' advice to fathers not only in his squadron, but to all service members is simple: build strong relationships and bonds with your family while you can.

The troops from the Dark Horse Squadron, who Daniels watches over, have a multi-faceted job in Iraq. Not only do they guard the base with heavy machine guns atop towers along its perimeter; they maintain peace in what used to be a violent, volatile area just north of the International Zone in the heart of the city.

For many fathers in 4-9, this isn't the first time away from their families. Although the many veterans are well-honed warriors,

they admit that leaving their wives, daughters, sons and friends doesn't get any easier no matter how many times they do it.

To help his Soldiers, Daniels assumes the role of a father figure every time he sees them. He said that many of the little things like a pat on the back or a few words of encouragement can make all the difference.

The origin of Father's Day can be traced back as far as 1909 when Sonora Smart-Dodd first came up with the idea to honor her father for what he'd done.

William Smart was a Civil War veteran who was widowed and left to raise his six children on a farm near Spokane, Wash.

Dodd was at a Mother's Day sermon when the idea came to her. About a year later, the mayor of Spokane chose the month of June to celebrate the American father because June was the month of William Smart's birthday.

It wasn't until 1966 when former President Lyndon Johnson declared the third Sunday in June to be considered Father's Day for a national observance.

In 1972, former President Richard Nixon signed the bill making it law declaring Father's Day a national holiday.

For people like Daniels, it's more than just a holiday, especially while he's deployed. It's a time for him to reflect on not only his accomplishments, but those of his children and his Soldiers.

Daniels said one of the most rewarding things about being a father and a leader is watching those you look after flourish and grow into something to be proud of.

Whether it be his children attending college with aspirations of becoming doctors, or his Soldiers making it to the next rank of responsibility, Daniels said seeing them succeed is about as rewarding as it gets to him.

Father's Day Deployed: Milestones Missed, but Memories Made

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

BAGHDAD – The high school senior was sitting with her classmates during her graduation ceremony looking into the bleachers at her family.

Everyone was there, except one important face: her father's.

As a Soldier currently deployed to Iraq, her father had tried to make it home, knowing the importance of the event. The young lady, while disappointed, understood why he was gone but didn't necessarily like it.

With the ceremony over and the diplomas handed out, she went to greet her family, and then she received perhaps the greatest graduation gift of all.

Standing with her mother and siblings was Sgt. 1st Class Lonnie Powell, 'Dad' to the student, Loneia Powell.

He had made it to the milestone event after all, and the father and daughter wept tears of joy that he was there to share in her special moment.

The story sounds like something out of a movie. It's the part where the women cry as the guys fall asleep, but for the Powells, it's a true story that took place in May, and meant the world to one young woman taking a first real step away from the nest.

Powell, the equal opportunity advisor for the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Tampa, Fla., and father of three, spent his third Father's Day



Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

Cpl. Kyle Patterson, a vehicle commander on the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team personal security detachment from Kirksville, Mo., shows off a picture of his son, 17-month-old Lane, at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad June 12.

away from his children; the first in 1991 and again in 2003.

"It never gets easier," Powell said. "The only reason why it was a little easier the first deployment, my daughter was only three at the time, but the second wasn't any easier. This time they understand, but I think this one is the hardest one for them."

While this one may be the most difficult, Powell said he

and his kids know how to better stay in touch.

"We all learned from the last two deployments," he said. "We stay in touch more, we write more, e-mail helps out a lot and the (video teleconference) helps out a lot. The phone helps out. The only thing that existed back then (during Operation Desert Storm) was regular mail."

While Powell had the benefit of knowing what to expect as a father while deployed, other younger Soldiers weren't as lucky. Cpl. Kyle Patterson, a vehicle commander on the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Personal Security Detachment from Kirksville, Mo., is one such Soldier.

Patterson, the father of 17-month-old Lane, celebrated his first Father's Day away from his son. While he doesn't like being away from his child, the infantryman said it's for a worthwhile cause.

"I'll tell him I was fighting to keep him, his mother and the rest of the family safe," he said.

Even though Patterson has not had the benefit of learning from experience the way Powell has, he still finds ways to keep in touch with his son.

"I try to talk to him every night on the phone," he said. "He recognizes my voice, and I send videos of me talking to him."

While Patterson had less of an idea about what to expect from this deployment as a father, he had a simple strategy for preparing himself and his son for what was coming.

"I tried to spend every minute I could with him," Patterson said.

Father's Day in Iraq:

How Soldiers Stay in Touch with Those Back Home

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq — For fathers deployed to Baghdad, it's hard not to be there to experience every new step their young children take or cheer on their eldest during a sporting event. Despite this sadness, they stay positive about what they are doing for their families and take advantage of the readily available Internet in order to stay in somewhat constant contact with those they love back home.

Many members of 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division missed out on a lot of their children's lives by being stationed in Korea, then making the historical deployment from Korea to Iraq, resettling at Fort Carson in Colorado and then returning to Iraq once again.

Sgt. 1st Class Larry M. Burden, the battalion motor sergeant with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, was one of those Soldiers.

"This deployment is better than my last deployment," he said of being able to have Internet in his room and talk to his family via webcam. His first deployment took him to Ar Ramadi.

Burden, 33, of Colorado Springs, Colo., has been in the Army for 15 years and is currently on his second deployment to Iraq. He has three children, two of which are dealing with his absence for a second time.

For Emily Burden, 10, and Bryan Burden, 9, it's hard when their father leaves. He said since he and his first wife divorced, when he is gone, his children don't have that parental connection.

They are cared for by Burden's wife, who has a 15-year-old daughter named Amanda Brooks.

"I talk all the time on the webcam," he said. "They see I am doing well."

The Internet is a blessing, Burden said, because at Christmas he was able to watch his children open their presents via webcam, and they could see him and show him what they got.

When the brigade was deployed to Ar Ramadi, Burden said he would get to call home about once a month. But with Internet in his room and phone centers nearby, he is able to

keep in touch regularly. But, keeping in touch still doesn't make it easy for his children when it comes time for him to deploy.

"My daughter has always been really attached to me," he said. "So it's a little bit harder on her than my son."

Being a parent in the military isn't easy, but living the military life is something Burden always wanted to do.

"There's a lot of stuff you have to sacrifice being a father and doing what you got to do over here," he said. Despite the distance, Burden said he and his wife talk to their children and his daughter, Emily, also talks to her friends at school whose parents are also deployed.

"It's a better life style they have with me in the Army than with me there," he said. "This is what I do. They understand."

Having to leave your children is never easy, especially when they are very young.

Sgt. William R. L. Port, a member of the personal security detachment of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd IBCT, left his wife and two small children behind when he came to Baghdad for his second tour to the Middle East.

Port, 27, of Pleasant Hill, S.C., and his wife, Nichole, 25, work together to keep the children informed on where their father is and why he has to be gone.

"My wife does a great job taking pictures," he said. "She recently bought a video camera and sends me videos, but you miss a lot."

The Port's have two children, Leea, 3, and Carson, who will turn one later this month.

"When I left to come over here the first time, my daughter was four months old," Port said. "This time my son was three months."

Even though he misses out on helping with diaper duty, Port said it's hard to know that he's missing the small moments in his children's lives. However, Nichole sends him photos and made him the best gift he ever received.

Port pulled out a small photo album that has pictures of him and his children, Nichole with the children and the whole family together. He keeps it in his right pocket at all times, wrapped in a protective plastic bag. He also created a collage of family photos that he has on his wall.

Port, who was in the National Guard the first time he



Sgt. William R. L. Port, a member of the personal security detachment of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, keeps in touch with his family via the Internet, but also calls home. He stays positive about being apart from them by surrounding himself with family photos and tokens from their achievements.

deployed to Iraq, said this deployment feels a lot different than his first did.

When he deployed with the National Guard, he said he felt like he was coming over here for his family, and with his family, since he had cousins that deployed with him. It felt like he was going to right a wrong, he said.

"It felt like a patriotic duty," he said of deploying while still holding down a civilian career. "Not that I don't feel that now. But now, (as an active Army member), it's my job. I'm just going to work."

Either way, he said it's very hard to be away from his family. However, he and his wife decided together that having him go active duty was the best decision for their family. He said being in the military always felt like something he was supposed to do.

But it's always hard to part from those you love. Port said even though he's on his second deployment, leaving his family never gets easier.

"There are things you learn in the first deployment that makes the second easier," he said. "It is the same for my family."

Port said he thinks his daughter understands where he goes in her own way. Before he deployed this time, he said he sat down with Leea and told her that he had to leave.

"She said, 'I know,'" he said. "I told her I have to go to work and be gone a long time. She said, 'I go, too.' It broke me up."

But, even though she is sad herself, Port said Leea is always talking to Carson about their dad and telling her brother that dad is at work. She also shows Carson her photo album with pictures of their father in it.

"She's a great big sister, a great help," he said.

As for Carson, he's still too little to grasp the concept of a deployment, but Port said he understands in his own way.

"They know, even if they don't understand exactly, they know something's going on," he said.

Port said children want to be talked to and it's important for parents who are deploying to explain that there is a reason for their absence and that they aren't just leaving.

With Internet readily available, Port says he talks to his family nearly every day a communication blackout. But, even if he only has time to call for two minutes, he does so his family can know he's okay and so he can know they are doing fine.

Even though he takes pride in being a great father, Port said it's his wife who deserves all the ribbons during a deployment.

"She's my rock," he said. "She keeps it all together. She's the one who gives me my pep talks on the bad days."



(Photos by Spc. Courtney Marulli, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Sgt. 1st Class Larry M. Burden, the battalion motor sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, gets online so he can talk to his wife and children via instant messenger and webcam.



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Strain, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Killeen Rodeo – Cav Style

Spc. Adam Byrd (left) and Sgt. 1st Class Troy Gorman, troopers with the 1st Cavalry Division's Horse Cavalry Detachment, attack balloons with their 1880s-era pistols during a mounted cavalry demonstration at the 60th annual Rodeo Killeen June 1 at the Rodeo Arena in Killeen, Texas. Cavalry troopers demonstrated all the skills needed by the horse cavalry during the 1880s, including rifle and pistol marksmanship, riding ability and saber skills.

Troops Get a Taste of Patriotism at Local Senior Center

By Sgt. Cheryl Cox
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BELTON, Texas – With decorations of red, white and blue throughout the room, Soldiers from 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division enjoyed a day of food and conversation at the Belton Senior Center June 14.

Beginning in February, the senior center has been a part of the Adopt-A-Unit program with the battalion.

“There was a story on the TV that showed Soldiers concerned about the lack of support they seemed to have from the people back here at home,” said Elaine Murray, the Belton Senior Center director. “We decided that there was something we could do to help change this perception of the people in the Fort Hood area and we started a card campaign.”

With the campaign, cards are distributed throughout the surrounding areas and filled out with scriptures, words of support or just a simple thank you and then mailed to the Soldiers in Iraq, Murray explained.

Since the campaign started and the senior center got



(Photo by Sgt. Cheryl Cox, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Pvt. Oteka Roberts (center), of Headquarters Company, and Pfc. Alejandra Cardoza (right), of Company B, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, speak with Zed Lancaster, 81, of Belton, Texas, during their visit to the Belton Senior Center June 14.

involved with the “Centurions,” there have been several visits by members of 1st BSTB to the senior center for lunch and conversation with the seniors, some of whom served in the

military.

“The Adopt-A-Unit program is really for the Soldiers and the community,” said Sgt. 1st Class Mark Bolden. “It gets the community involved and shows the Soldiers that people other than spouses and Soldiers care about them.”

The cards that are being prepared to be sent to the Soldiers currently in Iraq offer words of support and thanks.

“In 1991, during one of my deployments, I received a box filled with letters and stuff from people back in the states,” said Bolden. “Once I read through the letters, I started writing to the people who had contacted me. It wasn’t until 2005 that I lost contact due to changing duty my station and misplacing the addresses in the move. It really meant a lot to me that so many people were out there supporting what I do.”

One of the things that made Murray want to be a part of the card campaign was reflecting back to her husband’s return from Vietnam.

“I remember him coming home and no one supported the Soldiers,” she said. “Patriotism needs to be visual and not just something in your heart. Regardless of political views, we have to support our Soldiers. Without them, the United States wouldn’t be the United States as we know it today.”

'Haifa Street Project' Set to Debut July 4

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – When most Soldiers with the 2nd “Black Jack” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division hear the name, “Haifa Street Project,” the first thing that probably comes to mind is the brigade’s ongoing work to restore the former battleground in Baghdad’s city center. However, within the brigade there is another Haifa Street Project that has recently begun and is hoping to make a name for itself.

“We were just sitting around and somebody said, ‘Haifa Street Project,’ and it was just like, that’s perfect,” Capt. Jason Lewis, the brigade’s civil affairs officer said.

Lewis and four other Soldiers have recently formed a band and adopted the civic project’s name as their own.

“We have an ongoing Haifa Street Project in the Karkh District right now that’s a really big deal,” the Santa Barbara, Calif. native explained. “We just felt like that’s a project, and

we’re a project; they’re growing, we’re growing, and so we named the band that.

“Plus we get dual publicity,” he added. “Our own and every time somebody mentions Haifa Street, you don’t know if they’re talking about the band or the street project in Karkh.”

The original idea to form a band while in Baghdad started back at Fort Hood, Texas with guitarist, 2nd Lt. J.P. Hare who is with Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment and lead singer, Capt. Patrick Miller who is with the 5-6th Military Transition Team. At the time, both Soldiers were with the 15th Brigade Support Battalion and assumed they would be living at the same base.

“At the last second I got thrown onto the MiTT at Prosperity while [Hare] was at Falcon,” explained Miller, a Buffalo, N.Y., native. “So, it never really came to fruition.”

While at FOB Falcon, Hare started playing with two other Soldiers: bassist, Spc. Stephanie Gould who was also with the 15th BSB, and drummer, Spc. Zak Deckard, who was with one of the Black Jack Brigade’s attached units, 1st Battalion, 14th Cavalry Regiment. In March, both the 15th BSB and 1-14th Cavalry relocated to the International Zone, and Hare and Miller were able to pick up with their original plan of forming a band.

“We ended up coming here to Prosperity, and we were all able to come back together with Capt. Miller and Capt. Lewis, and now we’re ready to rock the IZ,” Naples, Fla., native Gould said.

All of the Soldiers said they have been involved with music for quite sometime, and most of them have played in other bands before.

“J.P.’s been in numerous bands in California, and I’ve been in a few bands,” Miller said. “The last time I was deployed to Iraq I was in a band, and we toured around the

Green Zone. It’s just something we love doing.”

For Lewis, however, this is his first stint in a band, and he said that so far he’s enjoyed the experience.

“It’s awesome. I love music,” he said. “I did play in one of the church services, but it’s a little different flavor now – a little different music. It’s very loud, and I’m kind of an older guy, so if I lose my hearing, then, oh well, it’s for a good purpose.”

Since forming about a month ago, the Haifa Street Project tries to find time to practice about 10 hours a week, usually in the evening at the Prosperity Chapel.

“We’re very passionate toward what we’re doing because it’s very time consuming,” Miller said. “We work on top of this, too. So it’s hard to find the time to come here to the chapel at a reasonable hour and not wake people up. You’ve really got to want to do it to be able to do it.”

Although it can be difficult for all five Soldiers to find the time to get together, Lewis said that the time he is able to spend playing music is worth it.

“You just blow off steam,” Lewis said. “All we do is work and focus on military activities and operations and missions. That’s our primary job over here, but if I can get an hour to blow off some steam and play with the guys then I love doing that.”

The band hopes to help other Soldiers blow off some steam on the 4th of July when the Haifa Street Project makes their debut with an outdoor concert at Prosperity.

“It’s going to rock,” Gould said of their upcoming concert. “We’re really looking forward to it. We’ve been practicing hard. We’re playing songs that everyone knows and everyone’s familiar with. We’re just going to play and have a good time and just enjoy it.”

The music is primarily mainstream alternative, which all the band members, with the exception of Lewis, said is what they listen to.

“That’s all them,” Lewis said. “If I had my choice we’d be playing all Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd, but I couldn’t even get the Bee Gees in there. I’ve got to go with the band, though.”

Along with practicing several times a week for their upcoming concert, the band has been busy advertising their concert by printing and posting up flyers all over Prosperity and throughout the International Zone.

“There’s a lot of time, money and effort going into it, and we’ve got a lot of people supporting it,” Miller said. “I have no idea what to expect, but whether it’s 700 people or it’s 30 people, we’re going to play the same. It’s going to be a good show.”

Based on how their first show goes, Miller said he hopes that band will be able to play other venues around the IZ and possibly Baghdad.



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

Members of the ‘Haifa Street Project,’ lead singer, Capt. Patrick Miller from Buffalo, N.Y., guitarist, 2nd Lt. J.P. Hare from Oakland, Calif., and drummer, Spc. Zak Deckard from Bloomington, Ind., practice at the FOB Prosperity Chapel June 8.



Members of the ‘Haifa Street Project,’ practice at the FOB Prosperity Chapel June 8.

Where’s the Romance: Love in ‘Chick Flick’ Not Convincing

I am a girl. I like to be girly and I think calling someone a female is like labeling a cow (like the one milk comes from, not like a fat person).

I keep my toenails painted and my nails filed and make sure my room smells good. I even have fake daisies next to my bed here. So, it is a pretty good guess, (even if this is the first time you have read one of my reviews), to assume that I am a “chick flick” fan.

I love watching people fall in love. I love watching people have their first kiss. I cry when they cry.

That’s just the way I roll.

With that being said, when I pick up a movie that screams “love story,” I automatically assume that I am going to like it.

Sadly, however, I was overtly disap-

Random Reviews

Sgt. Nicole Kojetin



pointed after watching the Warner Brothers’ flick “The Lake House.”

The concept of the movie was great. Two people were brought together by a magic mail box and a house that stands on stilts. (It sounds cool, but really it is just on the lake). But it twisted reality. They are really two years apart. I don’t mean in age, either. Sandra Bullock plays, Kate, who is a

lonely doctor moving to a larger hospital in Chicago in 2006. Keanu Reeves, or Alex, is a frustrated architect trying to reconnect with his family in 2004.

OK, the magic of the scenario automatically dictates that these two must fall in love. Seriously, sending letters back and forth through an enchanted mail box... that is some sort of cosmic intervention and it must be respected.

They *have* to fall in love. It’s some sort of Hollywood rule. Honest.

So they do, but you just don’t get that. It just isn’t believable.

The conversation that passes between them through their letters doesn’t seem like enough to make someone all soft and mushy inside.

They talk about little things, but it never

really shows their personalities. Bullock does a great job staring off into the distance with the watery doe-eyed look, but the emotion just isn’t conveyed.

I don’t particularly like Keanu Reeves, either. Yeah, yeah... he’s good looking, but he always comes across very emotionless, like he is reading off a cue card. He does do twitchy very well, but for the love of all that is holy, don’t ask him to cry. It was a mess. I felt like I was watching one of my nephews throw a fit and was waiting for him to peek out from the crook in his arm with a grin on his face.

Just cast Keanu as a manly-man in an action film. Spare us the agony.

To spare yourself the agony, don’t watch this film.

(1 out of 5 stars!)

Mid-Season Milestones, Meanderings & Musings

With the National Basketball Association championship decided (yawn!), it's time to turn our attention to Major League Baseball. You remember, that sport that used to be America's pastime before television made the National Football League America's passion?

Even though it's only mid-June as I write this, this year's baseball season has provided some very interesting story lines heading into mid-season.

Hometown Heroes

If the season were to end today, my beloved Milwaukee Brewers would be headed into the post season, since they have a 5.5-game lead on the second place Chicago Cubs. The Brewers, in fact, are the only team in the National League Central Division with a winning record. The defending champion St. Louis Cardinals are 6-and-a-half games behind, with a 28-35 record to this point.

Milwaukee has been led by youngsters finding their stroke at the major league level, most notably first baseman Prince Fielder who leads the senior circuit with 23 home runs, and shortstop J.J. Hardy who has hit 16 already. Their closer, Francisco Cordero, leads the majors with 24 saves thus far, and had ripped off 21 straight before blowing a save chance earlier in the month.

The San Diego Padres have the best record in the NL, at 38-27, but the Los Angeles Dodgers are only a half-game behind the NL West front runners and would be the wild card team if the regular season could, miraculously, end today.

In the east, the New York Mets are holding off the Philadelphia Phillies by two games, but don't count out Bobby Cox's Atlanta Braves who are only two-and-a-half games back.

Bosox Back on Top

The Boston Red Sox have the best record in the American League, at 41-24, and still hold a 7.5-game lead over the surging New York Yankees. The Red Sox have had the best starting pitching in the AL, with Josh Beckett leading the staff with nine wins through June 15.

The Yanks decided to start hitting again, and coupled with the arrival of Roger Clemens, they may eat into the Red Sox division lead over the second half of the season. Two hitters have helped keep the Yankees competitive in an up and down first half: Third baseman Alex Rodriguez has hit 25 homers to go with 68 runs batted in, both major league highs at this point. Catcher Jorge Posada is earning his all-star berth with a un-catcher-like .351 batting average.

Regardless of who wins the AL East, expect both the Red Sox and the Yankees to see the post-season this year.

The Los Angeles Angels have a five-game lead over the Seattle Mariners and Oakland A's in the AL West, while the Cleveland Indians have a two game lead over the defending AL champion Detroit Tigers in the central division. If the season ended today, Detroit would make it into the playoffs as the wild card.

Individual Honorable Mentions

Based on his power numbers, RBIs and quick start, the AL Most Valuable Player for the season's first half would easily be Alex Rodriguez. A case could be made for Tiger outfielder Magglio Ordonez, who leads the majors in hitting (.367) and is third in the AL RBI race with 60, six more than the NL leader.

The Angels' John Lackey is the majors' first 10-game winner, but Boston's Josh Beckett has been the ace of the league's best team, so Beckett would get my vote for a mid-season Cy Young Award in the American League.

The best pitcher in the National League is San Diego's Jake Peavy, who is tied for second in the league with eight victories and leads the league with a stellar 1.82 earned run average. L.A.'s Brad Penny is a close second, with eight wins and a 2.18 ERA.

St. Louis first baseman Albert Pujols will get the starting nod for the all-star game next month, but my pick for the first half MVP is Milwaukee's Prince Fielder. Besides leading the league in dingers, Cecil's son is third in RBI with 51 and is a leader on a very young, talented Brewer team.

Still Too Early

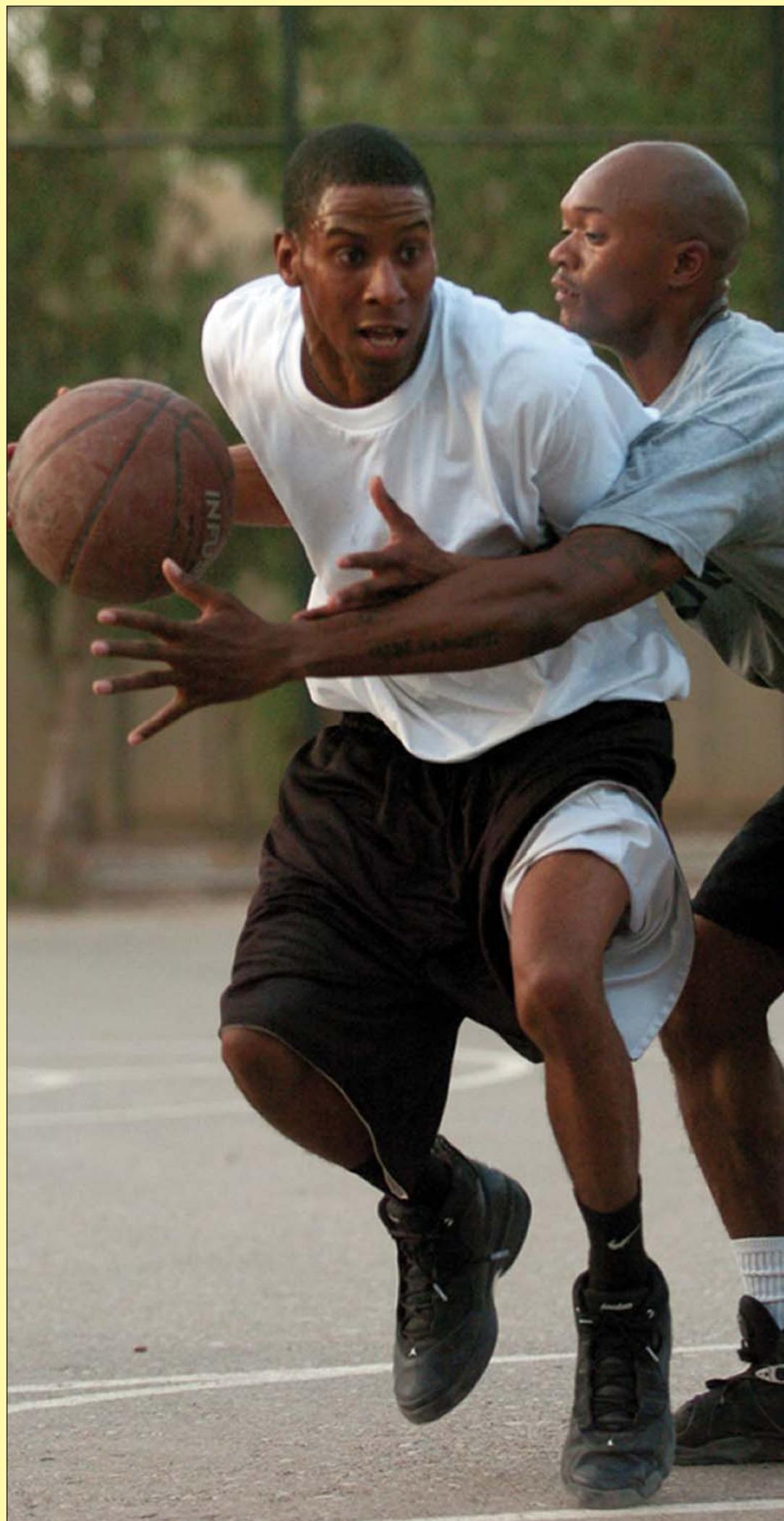
Barry Bonds (at the time of this writing) is eight home runs away from passing Henry Aaron for the all-time home run lead. But he's still one torn hamstring away from the disabled list, too, so I continue to root against the Giants' druggie, I mean slugger.

Nobody pays attention to baseball standings until after the all-star break. Probably because of the length of the season and that we're all watching the NBA playoffs, NASCAR, the Indy 500 and Triple Crown horse races. The French Open probably drew better TV ratings than a June regular season baseball game.

Still, as the weather heats up at home (though never as hot as here), so too will the interest in America's pastime. I'm glued already! Go, Brewers, go!

Trigger Pull

**Master Sgt.
Dave Larsen**



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

Think Fast, Move Faster

Spc. Marvin Delaney of Company B, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, tries to get past Co. E, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment Staff Sgt. Lameric James' defense during the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division's Black Jack Basketball Tournament on Forward Operating Base Prosperity in central Baghdad June 11 to 15.