



# The Long Knife

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

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# Inside this issue



*(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Bradley J. Clark)*

*An Iraqi citizen receives blankets for his family from Sgt. Steve Stephens, C Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, during a humanitarian mission in Al Qosh, Iraq.*

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**COVER PHOTO:** U.S. Army Sgt. Terrell Gonzalez, B Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Bliss, Texas, checks the identification of an Iraqi man found inside a building the Soldiers were searching during an operation in Mosul, Iraq. *(U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Katherine Tripp)*

**BACK COVER PHOTO:** Tori and Bethany, New Orleans SaintSations National Football League cheerleaders, call a timeout to read the 4th Brigade Combat Team magazine, the Long Knife, during a visit to Forward Operating Base Marez. *(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Bradley J. Clark)*

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# A message from Long Knife 6



July marks the ninth month of our deployment to Ninevah province, Iraq. Your dedication to the mission and personal actions have been exemplary. We have taken the fight to the enemy in Mosul with the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, in Tal Afar with the 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, and in Qayyarah with the 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment. I cannot forget our protection from above by our air weapons team, the 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment. I applaud the diligence in your daily quest to remove those elements that want to see Iraq fail.

Many are of the opinion that Ninevah province is on its way to being self-sufficient and that we may be one of the last brigade combat teams to have an active role in directly securing these major cities. The Iraqi security forces continue to get better every day by conducting operations unilaterally, providing their own engineering assets, and working hard to enhance their intelligence gathering, providing their own medical support, and improving their logistics infrastructure to facilitate their supply needs.

With the help of our military transition teams, ISF cell and the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, they will be on their way to being self-sufficient very soon. None of us could survive without the logistical efforts from our own 27th Brigade Support Battalion and the engineering, military intelligence, and military police efforts provided by the Special Troops Battalion. I would also like to commend

those Soldiers and civilians who provide for our daily needs here on the forward operating base, such as the 237th Forward Support Battalion, the 28th Combat Support Hospital, the 352nd Combat Support Battalion, other military units, and Kellogg, Brown and Root. I also applaud the efforts and success of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment in Baghdad.

Finally, I will tell you to not get complacent, stay focused on the mission, remember your training, push leadership to the lowest level, and ensure that you get your rest for mental and physical recovery. I ask that you talk to your Soldiers about their personal lives and pay attention to them. If you need assistance the chaplain, combat stress, and mental health are available. Our operational tempo will continue to move at a fast pace until our Transfer of Authority ceremony late December or early January, so stay vigilant in your approach.

# A message from Long Knife 9



As Col. Twitty stated, we are now beginning our ninth month here in Iraq and we have cleared that “halfway” mark in this deployment. There are a few very important issues I want to place special emphasis on to enable us to complete our tour with the same strength and fire that we began it with.

First of all, Complacency Kills! Do not assume that you have “been there or done that.” Treat every mission and every operation with the same attention to detail as the one prior. Do not cut corners and do not let up. Stay as aggressive as the situation requires and always remain ready to kill, if necessary, to protect your fellow Soldiers and anyone who cannot protect themselves.

This deployment may be half over, but there is still half to go. The environment we operate in can turn deadly in an instant; and insurgent fire and IEDs don’t discriminate based on how much time we may or may not have left, or when we think we are going home. Stay vigilant and stay on the offensive.

Finally, take care of each other. NCOs, do not be forced to live with the knowledge that one of your Soldiers got injured or killed due to you not doing your job. Soldiers, listen to what your NCOs tell you; you may not always understand the guidance, but it is given for your own safety and good. There is a lot of combat experience in this unit; utilize it and make good decisions.

The commander and I are very proud of the job that each and every one of you has done so far, keep up the great work. There will be plenty of time for

visiting friends and families and telling stories once we return home. Stay focused and let’s complete the job that we started here.

The Long Knife Brigade’s place in the history of this great division will be marked by exceptional achievement and personal sacrifice by you, its Soldiers, in accomplishing the mission and maintaining your standards as professionals.

# Criminals beware: CSI Mosul hits streets

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PFC. BRADLEY J. CLARK

4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—A group of Iraqi crime scene investigators graduated from the first class of the evidence spectrum training program recently in Mosul, Iraq.

For the elite few chosen to participate in the initial class, the experience was like nothing they had been a part of before.

“The program was great,” said Capt. Oaad, major crimes unit. “It had everything we needed to know about evidence collection.”

The purpose of the course is to bring the Iraqis

together and set a standard for collecting, documenting and preserving the forensic evidence collected at a crime scene.

“We did this so they could learn the skills to go out and properly collect and preserve evidence,” said Eric Jiminez, major terrorism unit team leader and head instructor of the course. “This way, they can present a successful case in court.”

Although the first class of the program was deemed a success, the participants were still faced with difficulties along the way.

“The hardest part for me was the language barrier,” said 1st Lt. Amar, MTU investigator. “Even with the language barrier, our instructors took the extra time to make sure we learned what we needed.”

*(SEE CRIME LAB, Page 10)*



Eric Jiminez (left), major terrorism unit team leader and head instructor of the evidence spectrum training program, checks the fingerprints on a weapon found by 1st Lt. Amar (middle) and Sgt. Muhammed (right) during a mock crime scene training exercise in Mosul, Iraq. Finding fingerprints was one of the many things the class learned over the course of the program.



*Virgin Islands native, Sgt. 1st Class Jerome Crosse, Bradley fighting vehicle maintainer noncommissioned officer-in-charge, A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, loosens a few screws on an engine in Mosul, Iraq.*

*Sacramento, Calif., native, Pfc. Javier Negrete, cavalry scout, A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, takes off some bolts holding the hood to the body of a Bradley fighting vehicle.*

*Bradley fighting vehicle maintainer and Muncie, Ind., native, Spc. Kurt Scheidenberger, A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, guides the hood of a Bradley fighting vehicle to the ground in Mosul, Iraq. The hood to the vehicle had to be removed in order to pull the engine out of the Bradley to replace the exhaust clamp the engine needed. Scheidenberger and his fellow maintainers had to replace the clamp so the exhaust would not get inside the vehicle and harm the Soldiers.*

## *Bradley maintainers keep vehicles on track*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PFC. BRADLEY J. CLARK

*4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs*

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—Soldiers from A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division rely heavily on the use of the Bradley fighting vehicle to conduct their mission in Mosul, Iraq.

Because the vehicles are mission essential for the troops, maintenance must be provided to keep them moving.

“The maintenance is daily because the vehicles are used for [the quick reaction force] and route clearance,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jerome Crosse, Bradley fighting vehicle maintainer noncommissioned officer-in-charge, A Troop, 1-9 Cavalry. “Maintenance can take anywhere from two to six hours a day,” added Crosse. “We do it because some things might get neglected and also to prevent mishaps.”

Muncie, Ind., native, Spc. Kurt Scheidenberger, Bradley fighting vehicle maintainer, agreed with Crosse and added, “Almost every week we have to fix something on the Brads, and when we’re fixing it, we can find something else that could use some work.”

Being deployed can also draw out the mission for the maintainers due to a lack of parts and being understaffed, but having to do all the work makes their tour go by a lot

faster, said Crosse.

Another benefit to deployment is the fact that they are able to help train their Iraqi counterparts.

“We teach the Iraqi mechanics how to do stuff and loan them parts,” said Scheidenberger. “They learn pretty quickly. We showed them how to fix some tires and we only did one then they did the other six.”

The work that the mechanics do does not go unnoticed by the troops that it affects.

“They do an awesome job,” said Wimauma, Fla., native, Staff Sgt. Enrique Torres, cavalry scout. “They are the best I have seen in a long time. They are very patient and I am definitely confident in the work that they do.”

Sacramento, Calif., native, Pfc. Javier Negrete, cavalry scout, agreed with Torres about the great job the mechanics do and added, “Every time something breaks, they are out there until it is fixed. They take good care of the Bradleys which means they take care of us.”

The job of the maintainers can be gratifying, especially in a combat zone.

“The best part about my job is knowing I’m doing my part to keep the scouts out there,” said Crosse. “I’m happy when I see them roll out the gate.”

The job of the Bradley fighting vehicle maintainers is never done, but the work is something that is vital to the cavalry’s mission here in the war on terror.



*Staff Sgt. Chuck Shuck and his K9 partner, Sgt. 1st Class Gabe, both with the 178th Military Police Detachment, 20th Military Police Battalion, congratulate each other for a job well done after a training session at Forward Operating Base Q-West.*

## ***K9 Team Brings Special Skills to Fight***

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SPC. AMANDA MORRISSEY

*5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

SHUKRAN, Iraq—For just about every cordon and search operation in Iraq, there is a special two-Soldier team that provides an extra sense to the efforts to find anti-Iraqi forces and hidden weapons. One of those teams at Forward Operating Base Q-West is Staff Sgt. Chuck Shuck and his K9 dog, Sgt. 1st Class Gabe, both with the 178th Military Police Detachment, 720th Military Police Battalion, 89th Military Police Brigade.

On this particular morning, Shuck and Gabe are helping A Battery, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment Soldiers search the nearby village of Shukran for any weapons that may be hidden in the area.

“The dog has a nose like no human has, that’s just

a given,” Shuck said. “A dog is able to smell stuff that humans can’t smell because they can pick up on residue and stuff like that. Even if Soldiers miss something, 95 percent of the time the dog is going to pick up on it.”

In the eight and a half months Shuck and Gabe have been in Iraq, they have worked primarily with 5-82 FA Soldiers. They have conducted approximately 140 searches, both on and off the base, and have been on more than 90 combat missions off the FOB. To date, one of their biggest finds was 36 122 mm rounds back in Oct. 2006.

Gabe and Shuck have also seen their fair share of action in theater.

“Last month, we were on a raid with A Battery, 5-82 FA, and a guy started shooting through the door. Gabe and I were right there in the thick of things with them, and it was pretty amazing,” Shuck said. “Gabe actually

*(SEE K9 TEAM, Page 19)*

# *NCO makes third tour in Iraq a success*

STORY AND PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. TONY WHITE

*5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

SHARQAT, Iraq—His rank says he is a staff sergeant, his actions tell his Soldiers to trust their leader, and the tone in his voice says, ‘follow my example.’ He is their chief—the man they head out of the wire with every day in Iraq.

When a person speaks with Staff Sgt. Jonathan Wilson, a squad leader from A Battery, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, they hear a distinctive voice not because it is brash or soft-spoken. They hear confidence that says, “I’ve been there, done that.”

Completing a sixth deployment in eight years will do that to a person.

The Irwin, Tenn., native is in the midst of his third deployment in Iraq. This time he is in Q-West. In his first deployment he served in Baghdad during the initial push after Saddam Hussein, the since-executed leader of Iraq. In 2005, he would redeploy again to Iraq, this time soldiering in Baquaba before it was a widely-known “hotspot.”

His time in theatre has allowed him to see the changes in the country and the enemy.

“In 2003 when we came here, the main task was to overthrow Saddam Hussein,” Wilson said. “I don’t think anybody thought we could take him that quickly.



*Staff Sgt. Johnathan Wilson, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment squad leader, center, talks with his squad during an operation in Sharqat. Wilson is currently serving his third tour in Iraq.*

But that was an army versus an army.

“During the second deployment, you began to see a bit of the rebellion and their use of improvised explosive devices,” he continued. “Now, this has turned into just an opportunity for anybody that doesn’t like the United States to come here and fight. It’s an opportunity for them to come and kill a Soldier. It’s unfortunate that it has come to this.”

As many of his field artillery brethren, Wilson has spent half of his career working as an infantryman. It was these four years as an infantryman and his Iraq experiences that helped him train his Soldiers for the deployment as part of a brigade that had existed for less than a year.

“Having the experience allows you to be able to give them the training they need,” Wilson said. “Even though each deployment is a little bit different from the one before, you still can take a little bit of everything.

“It’s like leadership; you try to take a little bit from the best of them and apply it,” he continued. “There are a lot of NCOs here who have experience, which was tremendous in getting this brigade moving forward. That’s why we were able to leave as fast as we did.”

For all of the combat operations Wilson and his squad conduct, the hardest part of the deployment is being apart from loved ones. It is something that has become easier for him as his deployments continue, but everyone has their own way of

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“Before when I was gone,  
it was for six months and  
then I was home. Now I  
am gone for 15 months and  
we have never been apart  
for that long.”

—Staff Sgt. Jonathan Wilson—

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dealing with it, he said.

“You don’t really have a chance to get used to home because when you are home, you are training,” he said. “You are always in the field. Regardless of whether you are home or here, you are gone. That is an issue that families have to deal with. The kids take the hardest impact, and the smaller ones the hardest. The older ones are kind of used to it.

“My wife said this is the hardest one so far,” he continued. “Before when I was gone, it was for six months and then I was home. Now I am gone for 15 months and we have never been apart for that long. In the eight years, going on nine years we have been married, we

have never had that big of a break. It is different.”

As different as a 15-month deployment may be for Wilson, patrolling out of Forward Operating Base Q-West has been welcomed change for Wilson after fighting in Baghdad and Baquaba. Still, the change of scenery has not softened his stance.

“Being here, Soldiers can fall into a false sense of security about this country. It’s good that young Soldiers can come to an area like this, where the risk isn’t that high, because you know that the opportunity of getting those guys home is a lot better.

“You beat [the training] into them,” he continued. “We did a lot of dismounted operations, practicing clearing houses, and setting up checkpoints. Now they are using everything we taught them at Fort Bliss,

Texas. A lot of them have really stepped up and are really good Soldiers.”

In the end, it is his experience that is Wilson’s greatest weapon in the fight to get his men safely back to the base and, ultimately, back to their families.





*Iraqi crime scene investigator, Sgt. Muhammed, prepares to dust a weapon for fingerprints during a mock crime scene training exercise in Mosul, Iraq. Finding fingerprints was one of the many things Muhammed and his fellow classmates learned in the evidence spectrum training program.*

Jiminez agreed with Amar and added, "Another thing that was difficult was gathering all the resources that will allow them to learn properly."

The group learned many things that are common practice at crime scene investigations in the United States, but remain new concepts for investigators in Iraq.

"The part I enjoyed the most was learning how to properly photograph a crime scene," said Sgt. Muhammed, MTU investigator.

Although all the members had their individual favorite courses in the curriculum, they all agreed on

what was the hardest to learn.

"The hardest part for me was learning how to pull fingerprints using the powder," said 1st Lt. Aosamah, MTU investigator.

The course covered a wide range of topics, teaching new things to some, and furthering concepts to others.

"They learned a lot," said Jiminez. "Some of them enhanced what they knew already and others were learning things for the first time that they didn't know."

Overall, the class perceived the training well and are collectively eager to help their fellow comrades learn the skills they now have.

"We are very glad to have the opportunity to practice these skills," said Muhammed.

"What we learned is valuable and is needed not only in the city and province, but throughout the whole country," added Amar.

"We plan on taking the things that we learned and teaching them to fellow officers whenever we get a chance," said Oaad.

Each participant's eagerness to teach their coworkers these new skills will help the evidence spectrum training program reach its ultimate goal, said Jiminez.

"This course was a small step, but it is in the right direction. The goal is to get all of Ninevah province, and ultimately the whole country of Iraq, on the same page and doing this together," he added.

Like many other families in the world, who have loved ones in harms way, the Iraqi investigators' families are apprehensive, but know the service their husbands and fathers provide is needed for this country to succeed.

"Our families are worried and scared for our safety," said Aosamah. "But at the same time they are happy for us and proud of the job we are doing because they know it will benefit all of us."

It wasn't only the students that enjoyed the class and learned something; the instructors also learned valuable teaching skills and loved being involved in the program, according to Jiminez.

"It was a great learning experience for me. The class showed me a lot and we built relationships that will last a life time," added Jiminez.

The graduates of the evidence spectrum training program are ready to take their newly-found skills to the streets and help make Iraq a safer place for the people that live in it.

# Rough Riders mount up, hit dusty trail to deliver supplies

STORY BY SGT. PAULA TAYLOR

4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

AL QOSH, Iraq—The convoy cautiously made its way through the thick Mosul traffic and headed out of the bustling city to the quiet little village of Al Qosh to deliver cheer to the townspeople.

When the Soldiers arrived, several local folks gathered around them with smiling faces and waves of joy. Children laughed and kicked soccer balls with a few of the 27th “Rough Rider” Brigade Support Battalion Soldiers.

The purpose of their mission was to talk to local leaders about future Commander’s Emergency Response Projects (CERP) in the Tel Kef District and to pick up bids for scheduled projects, explained 1st Lt. Kendra Evers, battalion civil affairs officer. While they were there, they also handed out blankets, toys and candy to the displaced people and children of the village, which is something the unit has been planning to do for quite some time, she said.

“We rolled out with 1,000 blankets, 300 Beanie Babies and 7 pounds of candy,” said Sgt. Steve Stephens, combat medic. “The blanket project is in its seventh month and we were finally able to see part of the end result.”

Stephens began the project, which he calls “Soldiers Helping Those in Need—Iraq,” during the winter months, soon after his unit arrived in country, and said it has since become a huge success.

“Major [Eric] Carnahan [battalion



(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Bradley J. Clark)

**Combat medic, Sgt. Steve Stephens, and food service operations specialist, Pfc. Sandra Brown, both assigned to the 27th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, unload blankets and supplies from their truck to hand out to the local people in the village of Al Qosh, Iraq.**

executive officer] and Lieutenant Evers both opened their arms to the project and are a huge reason why we were able to make the mission happen,” Stephens said. “It was nice

to see the battalion get behind me on this project. It made me feel like I was on the right track.”

The project started off slow, but soon picked up speed after people in

(SEE MEDIC, Page 12)

*(MEDIC, continued from page 11)*

the U.S. began to hear about it and offered their help in spreading the word.

“Monica, with Blankets.com, and Debbie, with doonenicething.com, are both reasons why we have reached above our starting goal of 2,000 blankets,” Stephens said. “We still have another 927 in storage, and when I get back from rest and relaxation, I can’t wait to go back out there.”

Helping Stephens with the project are several members of his unit.

“Sergeant [Christopher] Cunningham, Specialist [Stephanie] Correll, and Private 1st Class [Sandra] Brown were committee members that were able to attend,” Stephens explained. “Hundreds of hours were put into ‘Soldiers Helping Those in Need—Iraq.’ People in 40 states have placed orders and three churches have donated over 100 a piece.”

Stephens said he plans on continuing to collect the blankets over the next two months.

“The last order will be on August 1,” he said. “There was nothing easy about putting this idea into motion. It has taken a lot of time and effort, both by myself and the committee. Looking back, I can’t even begin to think that we would have reached so many people back in the states that wanted to help.”

Although two of the committee members, Spc. Amy McCafferty, and Spc. Amanda Thorstenson, both combat medics, were unable to attend due to other mission requirements, Stephens felt the blanket drive was well worth the trip.

“As I was handing out the blankets, I couldn’t help but think of all the people that made the mission possible. One man asked me if the blankets came from the Army. I looked into his eyes and said, ‘No sir, the blankets are from people back in the U.S.A. that believe in your well-being and that wanted to help.’ He smiled, shook my hand and said as he walked away, ‘Please tell them, thank you.’ Putting a convoy like this into words is very hard to do; it’s more of a feeling that you get when you know you have reached part of a goal.”

What started out as an idea in Stephens head, he said, is helping thousands of people; not just here, but back home as well, because people feel good knowing they are helping others.



*(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Bradley J. Clark)*

**Blankets are handed to an Iraqi man by Sgt. Steve Stephens, combat medic, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, during a mission in the village of Al Qosh.**



*(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Paula Taylor)*

**A local Al Qosh, Iraq, citizen thanks combat medic, Sgt. Steve Stephens, for delivering blankets to his village. Stephens and his unit, the 27th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, collected nearly 2,000 blankets, which were donated by Americans, to distribute among displaced Iraqis.**

# U.S. Soldiers, Iraqis celebrate well openings in Ninevah province

STORY AND PHOTO BY SPC. AMANDA MORRISSEY

*5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

KREIDI, Iraq—U.S. Forces joined local Iraqis to celebrate the opening of new water wells in Kreidi and Mualih Hasso, two villages near Forward Operating Base Q-West in the Ninevah province.

Soldiers with 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment and B Company, 431st Civil Affairs Battalion participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony in Kreidi put on by leaders from both villages to commemorate the occasion.

“Today is a good day,” said Dr. Mohammed Ismael Ahmed, a local physician and a tribal liaison for multiple small villages in the area. “The water from these wells will be used for washing, cleaning, agriculture and livestock,” Mohammed added.

These projects are a joint effort between the local Iraqi government and U.S. Forces. Iraqi contractors



*A local villager checks out the water from the new well at the grand opening ceremony in Kreidi, a village near Forward Operating Base Q-West.*

and workers actually built the wells, with civil affairs Soldiers providing oversight and advice.

Ground was broken on the wells in March with A Company, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion. However, the wells were not completed by the time the unit was redeployed in April, so the incoming CA team took up the projects about halfway through their construction, explained Staff Sgt. Larry Slough, civil affairs team leader.

For their part, the 431st Soldiers went to the villages to inspect the wells as they were being constructed to make sure they were being built to standard, as well as performing a final quality assurance inspection at their completion.

“Water projects are a really big deal for these villages,” Slough explained. “The only water they had before had been trucked in from the Tigris River, and deliveries could be unreliable, especially in the summer months.”

The well systems consist of two 10,000 liter storage tanks, a filter system, a chlorine system and a sedimentary system to produce non-potable water, which can be used for cleaning and agriculture, but not for drinking.

Each location is set up for a reverse osmosis system to be installed in the future which will make the water produced drinkable and will solve a majority of the water problems faced by those who live in the smaller villages in the countryside, Mohammed said.

With the completion of the wells, Slough and his team are stepping back and will not play an active role in obtaining the reverse osmosis systems for the wells in Kreidi and Mualih Hasso. It is up to the village leaders to pursue any improvements they want through their government, said Slough.

“Our goal is to get these villages to be independent from Coalition Forces,” Slough said. “The objective is to have the villagers maintain and improve the wells so that they will continue to function after we’re gone.”

On this day, however, villagers and Soldiers are not thinking about the hurdles still to be overcome. Instead, there are smiles all around as the generator is turned on and water begins to flow from the pumps for the first time.

“Clean water affects their agriculture, their livestock and their health,” Slough said. “There are a lot of benefits to these wells, and they’ve got a huge impact on these villages.”



*Maj. Todd Villines (left), a cardiologist, and Maj. Ted Koutlas, a cardiac surgeon, both with 399th Combat Surgical Hospital, examine Mahmood Amer Hamad, 8, as a part of the 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment medical team's effort to treat his heart defect. Mahmood has a ventricle septal defect, which is a hole in his heart, and requires corrective surgery.*

## *U.S. Soldiers give Iraqi boy chance of his lifetime*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SPC. AMANDA MORRISSEY

*5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

AL TINA, Iraq—There are certain expectations U.S. Soldiers have when they go “outside the wire” to conduct missions in Iraqi villages around their military bases. Stumbling across the opportunity to save a child’s life is generally not one of those expectations.

The 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment medical team, led by Capt. Abel Alfonso, the battalion surgeon, has been given that opportunity to help in Mahmood Amer Hamad, an 8-year-old boy with a heart defect.

“When I came here, the prior battalion surgeon had found out about this boy,” Alfonso explained. “He had

tried to get Mahmood examined in Mosul, but they didn’t have the proper equipment there. That’s when I came in and made the arrangements to have cardiologists come here to see the boy.”

First discovered about ten months ago by 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment Soldiers, the 5-82 FA has taken up the cause to get Mahmood the medical attention he needs in order to live.

“The American Soldiers came to our village, and I told them about my son,” said Amer Hamad Randan, Mahmood’s father. “I asked them to help Mahmood, and they told me they would help.”

Alfonso contacted Maj. Todd Villines, cardiologist, and Maj. Ted Koutlas, cardiac surgeon, both with 399th Combat Surgical Hospital at Contingency Operating

Base Speicher, Iraq. They flew to FOB Q-West with a portable echocardiogram machine in order to examine Mahmood and conduct the necessary tests to determine the severity of Mahmood's heart defect.

"Mahmood has a ventricle septal defect, which is an abnormal connection between the right and left ventricles of the heart," said Villines. "It's like a leak from one side of the heart to the other that puts a strain on the right ventricle. If left uncorrected, it would likely over time lead to permanent heart damage, then heart failure and early

death.

"However, if it's caught early enough, he can lead a normal life," Villines added. "That's what is so gratifying about coming here and treating this little guy. We can really make an impact on his future."

Mahmood and his father arrived early one morning at FOB Q-West for the tests. Small for his age, Mahmood held on to his father's hand tightly, shying away from the men in uniforms who towered over him.

Unaware of the importance of the occasion, Mahmood cried his way through the procedure,

living in anticipation of a child's worst fear—a shot. Fortunately for him, immunizations were not on the schedule for the day's events. Instead, the doctors did an echocardiogram, which is an ultrasound used to determine the exact size and location of the hole in Mahmood's heart.

"It's important to know how big the hole is, where it's located, what direction the fluid is moving through the hole, and if he has any early signs of heart enlargement," Villines said. "We really need the ultrasound to guide what kind of surgery we would have to do, and ensure

that he didn't already have such severe damage to his heart that surgery would be unsafe."

The doctors were optimistic about the results of the tests they conducted. While it was confirmed that Mahmood did indeed have a hole in his heart, they concluded that he is a perfect candidate for corrective surgery.

"He doesn't have severe enlargement of his heart or severe heart damage, he's fairly young, and he's at a stage where we can correct this and it'll improve how his heart works now," Villines said.

*(SEE HEART, Page 18)*



*Cardiologist, Maj. Todd Villines, 399th Combat Surgical Hospital, performs an echocardiogram on Mahmood Amer Hamad, 8, while his father Amer Hamad Randan comforts him. The test is a part of the 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment medical team's effort to treat his heart defect.*

# 618th “Nasty” Engineer Co

STORY BY PFC. BRADLEY J. CLARK

4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—Soldiers from the 618th Engineer Company, 19th Engineer Battalion, 20th Engineer Brigade, XVIII Airborne Corps won the Lt. Gen. Emerson C. Itschner award May 23, recognizing them as the best engineer company in the U.S. Army.

This is the third time that the 618th’s “Nasty” Engineers have won the coveted Itschner award, which is only handed out to the best of the best.

The Itschner award, named in honor of Lt. Gen. Emerson C. Itschner, the 39th Chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is presented each year to the most outstanding active duty, Reserve and National Guard Engineer units throughout the Army.

In order to be eligible for the Itschner Award, a unit must be selected at every level, from their battalion, to their brigade and finally their major command. Once they are approved,

they advance to the Army level where the branch evaluates the nomination packets and selects a winner.

For some Soldiers, like Spc. Robert Schaefer, a general construction equipment operator for the past three years, winning the award came as a surprise.

“I didn’t think we were going to win until my dad got an e-mail saying that we did,” said the New Orleans native.

The unit was awarded the Itschner for its accomplishments in 2006, many of which happened since they deployed to Mosul in August.

The 618th is completely committed to the counter-improvised explosive device fight in Mosul, with three platoons operating nightly in the city providing Col. Stephen Twitty, commander, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, assured mobility, said 1st Lt. Lyndi Koch, support platoon leader, originally from Fort Lauderdale, Fla..

One way that they assure mobility is by repairing IED craters, which denies the enemy the terrain used to emplace IEDs, added Koch.

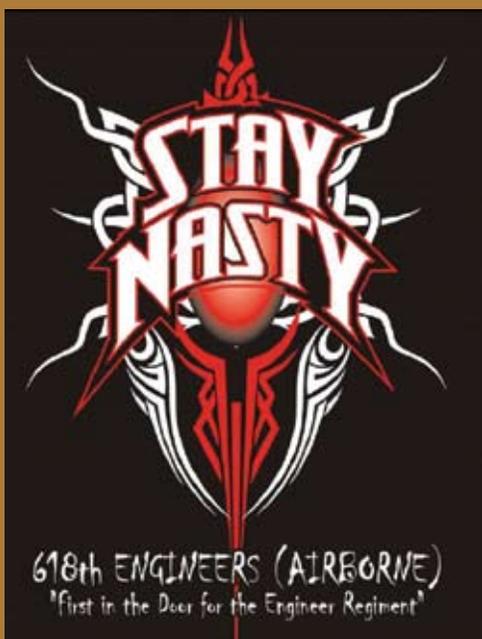
The company, she said, became the premier unit for airfield crater repair and the techniques they developed there are now being used to enhance their ability to fix roadways and structural surfaces throughout the 4th BCT’s battle space.

“The crater repair that we do has the biggest influence on Soldiers in Iraq and the routes that they take,” said Pfc. Torres Ferguson, general construction equipment operator and Moultrie, Ga. native. “What we do keeps us safe. We do a lot of projects [for Soldiers and the people of Iraq] to feel safer each time we complete a job.”

Regardless of rank or job title, the 618th Soldiers are enthusiastic about winning the award.

“We feel a great sense of pride in the company and being a part of something this big,” said Koch. “Winning the award three times says a lot about the values, dedication and hard work of the 618th.”

The 618th is the only company to receive the Lt. Gen. Emerson C. Itschner award three times, previously winning it in 1964 and 1995.



# Company named Army's best

*Photos clockwise from left:*

*"Nasty" Engineer Company Soldiers, Spc. Jeremiah LaFrance, a Lynchburg, Va., native, and Spc. Kyle Knutson, a Lowell, Mass., native, help fortify a position at an Iraqi Army training base in Mosul, Iraq.*

*A "Nasty" Soldier excavates a site during the late evening hours. The 618th Engineer Company works around the clock repairing roadways, fortifying combat outposts and repairing blast sites throughout the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division's battle space in the Ninevah province.*

*Company commander, Capt. Mara Boggs, walks across the newly repaired surface, which had been previously a large crater left after a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated in Mosul, Iraq. Within 15 hours of the detonation, the 618th repaired the crater and removed over 30 burnt-out vehicles.*

*(U.S. Army photos courtesy of 618th Engineer Company)*



*(HEART, continued from page 15)*

The next step is to arrange for the surgery itself, which presents Alfonso with a new set of challenges. The biggest hurdle to overcome is finding the means to funding the procedure, as well as the costs associated with travel and accommodations.

One of the options is to send Mahmood to Amman, Jordan, to get the procedure done. However, that would cost approximately \$10,000, which is prohibitive, said Alfonso. Another idea is to send Mahmood to the United States.

“I do probably about 12 to 15 charity cases a year back home, and I’d certainly be glad to operate on him,” Koutlas said. “We work with a program called Samaritan’s Purse, and it sponsors kids from different countries. I’ve operated on kids from Mongolia, Bosnia, and Honduras. I’m sure they’d be willing to help us operate on Mahmood.”

While ideal, this option presents its own challenges. While the costs of the treatment itself would be taken care of, there is still the matter of funding the plane tickets for Mahmood and a guardian. There is also the matter of determining who would make the trip with the boy, while caring for his nine brothers and sisters still in Iraq.

Despite the logistical obstacles faced by the 5-82 FA medical team, they are optimistic and determined to bring about a positive outcome for this child.

By the end of the exam, Mahmood realized that the dreaded shot is not going to happen and was busy exchanging high-fives with his new friends. Charmed by his smile, Alfonso gave the boy a few pieces of candy as a reward for being such a trooper, and handed over two bottles of children’s vitamins to his father as the pair prepared to leave.

“There are lots of kids out there who need help,” Alfonso said. “We can’t save the world, but we can make a difference in the life of one kid, and that makes it all worthwhile.”



*Amer Hamad Randan helps his son Mahmood Amer Hamad, 8, put his candy in his pocket. The 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment doctors awarded Mahmood with the treats for being a good patient during the tests necessary to treat his heart defect. The 5-82nd FA medical team is working to get him the treatment necessary to save his life.*



*Mahmood Amer Hamad, 8, peeks out shyly from behind his father’s back at the 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment aid station on Forward Operating Base Q-West.*

*(K9 TEAM, continued from page 7)*

got put in for a Combat Action Badge.”

Such skills take a lot of training, both for the dog and its handler. They go through a five month training course at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, where the dogs receive obedience and detection training. Soldiers learn how to work with the dogs and how to care for the health of their canine partners. At the end of the course, the dog and the handler certify as a team and graduate together.

“These dogs are trained to clear open areas, buildings, routes and vehicles, and they’re able to work off a leash,” Shuck said. “We also train with the dogs in school to react to gunfire, so that pretty much doesn’t faze them.”

Gabe is unique because he is a specialized search dog, meaning he will respond to the commands of his handler without the guidance of a leash. He is one of approximately 300 dogs with such training in all branches of the military.

Graduation from the schoolhouse doesn’t mark the end of training for these teams. Each month, they conduct 16 hours of mandatory detection training to keep the dogs proficient in their skills, as well as daily exercises, said Shuck.

However, Gabe is more than just an extra-sensitive nose to the Soldiers he works with.

“I can see from working with the units here just having the presence of the dog there is a morale booster for Soldiers,” Shuck said. “Gabe is like the mascot of the battalion, and everybody knows him.”

Gabe is also a morale booster for his partner. While in Iraq, Shuck and Gabe are roommates and constant companions, going just about everywhere together.

“The dogs really do become you’re best friend, your partner,” Shuck said. “Gabe is loyal, and he’s trustworthy. You always have a companion in the dog. If I’m having a bad day, he turns it into a good day. There’s nothing that beats having a dog as a partner.”



*Staff Sgt. Chuck Shuck and his K9 partner, Sgt. 1st Class Gabe, both with the 178th Military Police Detachment, 20th Military Police Battalion, practice their skills during a training session at Forward Operating Base Q-West.*



*Staff Sgt. Chuck Shuck (right) and his partner, Sgt. 1st Class Gabe, both assigned to the 178th Military Police Detachment, 20th Military Police Battalion, search a home during a cordon and search operation in the village of Shukran, near Forward Operating Base Q-West.*

# NOTES FROM HOME

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

this is for ctt-1 evans  
honey if you are fortunate enough to see this please know that we all love you and are so proud of you and the guys there with you. thank you for being someone with honor and integrity. stepping up to do the hard thing and defend our nation all our love  
Rose and kids

*You guys are awesome. Thanks  
Posted by: Jack*

I recently found this website, Im very proud of my husband Sgt, salazar and was pleased to see the pictures of him, your all doing such a great job, I was recently back home in california and when I would tell people my husband was in Iraq the response was awesome, people really do love and support you guys all over, its great. Keep up the good work your always in our thoughts and prayers

Posted by: Dawn Salazar

*Again, KUDOS, for keeping us here at home as informed as possible. I was wondering if you could do a story about soldiers on outposts and what they do, how are the living conditions, etc. It seems that the 1/9 is on one and I haven't found much info that is current. It would be greatly appreciated, keep up the good work. We support you all by flying Old Glory and a 1stCD flag daily! Many people ask about the 1stCD flag, and it is with PRIDE we tell them. Thanks again for all you do, Lori Stach a first cav soldiers mom*

Posted by: Lori Stach

*Chris - Your father and I are proud of you and miss you very much. The whole family is with you! Love, your mother!*

Posted by: Mary M. Gardiner

Thank you the updates, pictures and video's, means so much for us, here at home. Ya'll stay safe and hurry home. To my son, SPC Matthew Burluson, counting the days until you get home, we love you and miss you!!!

Posted by: Terry (Burluson) Walls

Awesome information about the good things which are being done. Too bad the media in the United States is too busy trying to destroy the morale of this nation's warriors to tell it how it really is. But then again, telling the whole story about our warriors are doing would run counter to their anti-Bush, anti-war, and anti-military agenda.

Posted by: Steven Lodahl

*Thank you for continuing to give to the families who are waiting at home. Your stories and updates and the frequency of them now make me very grateful for what you three do. Hearing how our soldiers are doing on almost a daily basis is not only helpful, it is downright soothing. Thank you so much for doing all of this for us.*

Posted by: Valerie Mansapit

*Maj. Cunningham,  
When are you going to do another video? Sometimes I watch it daily, and originally I thot there were 2, but now I only can view one. I so enjoy them, and my son said (when he was home on R&R) that you are an awesome dude!! Please make another video soon, it keeps my heart closer to all of you. We are so proud of ALL of the 4th BCT, and especially the 1/9Cav. If you happen to run across Pfc. Stach please give him a kiss for me!! Most graciously(sp),  
Lori Stach*

Posted by: Lori Stach

Great post and awesome photos, thank you so much for all you do. I am so proud of each one of you.

Posted by: Wild Thing



*(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Bradley J. Clark)*

**Grillmasters, Capt. Salvador Zuniga and Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Hall, both assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, prepare food during the unit's 4th of July celebration on Forward Operating Base Marez, Iraq.**

# *Long Knife celebrates 4th of July*

STORY BY SGT. PAULA TAYLOR

*4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs*



*(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Bradley J. Clark)*

**Grill Sergeant Hall takes a break at the grill and sips his non-alcoholic "near" beer on the 4th of July on Forward Operating Base Marez, Iraq. Hall, along with several members of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, took time out of their hectic work schedules to celebrate the holiday with a cookout.**

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—While deployed Army Soldiers are helping the Iraqi people fight for freedom and democracy every day, staff members of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division took time out their busy work schedules to celebrate their own country's freedom over the 4th of July holiday.

"We had a barbecue with hot dogs, hamburgers, potato salad, chips, soda, corn-on-the-cob and cake," said Maj. Kevin Spielman, brigade information and operations officer-in-charge. "It was nice. It gave us a break and helps improve camaraderie between our fellow coworkers and Soldiers."

Throughout the day's festivities, the troops also spent time together playing horseshoes and volleyball.

"It helps bring everyone together," said Sgt. 1st Class Thomas McKean, brigade master gunner. "You get to see people you normally wouldn't work with in a more relaxed environment."

# *A new chapter of involvement: United Through Reading*

STORY BY PVT. KRYSTAL ROBINSON

*Special Troops Battalion*

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—As Soldiers get deeper into their deployment, it becomes harder and harder to remain a constant part of their families' lives. Consequently, it may be hard for children to understand deployments completely. However, we can facilitate an ongoing connection with our families back home with the help of support organizations.

The United Service Organizations (USO), in partnership with the Family Literacy Foundation, is proud to welcome the United Through Reading Program to Mosul, Iraq. This program has been around since 1990 and has benefited over 143,000 military parents, spouses and children.

The Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Community Activities Center kicked off the program which allows deployed Soldiers to go into a private room and record themselves reading to their child(ren).

The CAC, with assistance from a local contracting company, has designated two rooms for the program, equipping them with stand-alone video cameras, couches, posters, and a large reading selection.

Each Soldier is allotted thirty minutes to read as many books as time allows and leave a personal "I love you" message. After the recording session, the Soldier takes the video or DVD recording to the front desk representative and receives a free mailing package for their recording. This program is



*(U.S. Army photo courtesy of the Special Troops Battalion)*

***Special Troops Battalion Soldier, Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Siemers, reads a book to his children back home in El Paso, Texas, after the United Through Reading Program opening ceremony at the Community Activities Center on Forward Operating Base Marez.***

free of charge to all Soldiers.

The FOB Marez Base Defense Operations Center commander, Lt. Col. Maria Kelly, and Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Cook, were present for the opening ceremony, which was led by the Special Troops Battalion chaplain, Capt. Jeremiah Catlin.

"The program's grand opening was a success," said Pvt. Angelica Gallegos, a human resources specialist who was present for the ceremony. "Every Soldier walked out smiling," she added.

The STB S-3 liaison officer, Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Siemers was the first of many to kick off the United Through Reading program. For Siemers with six children, ranging in age from 2 to 14, it is challenging to keep in touch and connect with all of them.

"There is just something about reading to your child/children that makes you glow from the inside out."

Siemers said that he loved the program and does plan to do it again. "You get to read to your kids in private and act yourself."

With programs like United Through Reading, the deployed Soldier has a way to stay actively involved in the lives of their family at home.

"There are several success stories about how a child will kiss the television because their mommy or daddy is inside the screen," said Catlin.

The program is expected to benefit participating families throughout the deployment. For more information, visit [www.read2kids.org](http://www.read2kids.org).



*(Photo by Ted Tae, Platoon Magazine)*

*Cavalry scout, Pfc. Daniel Weber, 2nd Platoon, B Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, reenlists at the helicopter landing pad on Forward Operating Base Marez, Iraq. Just hours prior to Weber reenlisting, he was wounded in an improvised explosive device attack.*

## Wounded Soldier reaffirms commitment to fight

STORY BY PFC. BRADLEY J. CLARK

*4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs*

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—Soldiers reenlist in the Army everyday, but for one Soldier with the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, reenlisting was an experience far from ordinary.

Frankenmuth, Mich., native, Pfc. Daniel Weber, cavalry scout, 2nd Platoon, B Troop, 1-9 Cav., reenlisted only hours after being involved in an improvised explosive device attack in Mosul, Iraq.

“I was planning on reenlisting that day for a while now,” said Weber. “Why should I let something like this change my mind?”

Weber’s company commander, Capt. Bradley Nelson, was in a convoy heading to Forward Operating Base Marez for a meeting and Weber just hitched a ride so he could reenlist.

“We were riding along just fine when we heard over the radio that Delta Troop was in some trouble, so we decided to turn around and help them out because we had a medic with us,” said Weber.

When the convoy had decided to turn around, Weber, along with his fellow Soldiers, was surprised at what happened next: an improvised explosive device detonated right beside their vehicle.

The concussion of the blast rattled through the vehicle, blowing Weber out of the humvee.

*(SEE REENLIST, Page 24)*

*(REENLIST, continued from page 23)*

“I knew we got hit,” said Weber. “I thought I was dead. I slid on the concrete for at least 20 meters.”

As Weber lay on the ground, his adrenaline began to take control of him.

“I couldn’t feel my legs, but I realized I had to stand up and get back to my truck for cover,” Weber recalled.

Weber ran over to his commander and helped him back into the vehicle and then recovered his driver’s weapon.

“The blast forced my door open all the way, trapping the driver in the vehicle,” said Weber. “As I helped him fix the door, I could feel my sleeve stick to my arm and that’s when I knew I was hurt.”

The convoy regrouped and rushed to an Iraqi military base nearby where Weber was seen by U.S. Navy doctors.

“The docs thought my arm was broken but they weren’t sure, so they cleaned me up and rushed me over to the Iraqi troop medical center for an X-ray,” said Weber.

Weber’s X-ray came back negative.

Right after Weber received the results of his X-ray, Nelson told him that he could be on a flight to FOB Marez, if he still wanted to reenlist.

“My sergeant asked me if it was something I still wanted to do,” said Weber. “I want to re-up to get the guys that did this.”

After a short helicopter ride, Weber landed and reenlisted on the landing pad.

“After it was all done, everyone came up to me and thanked me for my service and reenlisting,” said Weber. “Colonel (Stephen) Twitty thanked me and then Command Sergeant Major (Stephan) Frennier gave me a coin and thanked me. After that, Lieutenant Colonel (Keitron) Todd and Command Sergeant Major (William) Beever thanked me.”

Weber’s family might have mixed emotions about what happened, but they all share pride for him and what he is doing.

“My two brothers are in the military and both of them are extremely proud that I decided to reenlist,” said Weber. “My wife and mother were shocked and worried, but in the end, they are also very proud.”

Weber reenlisted for six years and received a \$10,000 bonus and duty stabilization at Fort Bliss, Texas.



*(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Bradley J. Clark)*

**SaintSations cheerleaders, Tori and Bethany, show off the Long Knife magazine during a visit to Forward Operating Base Marez. The New Orleans Saints cheerleaders spent time signing autographs and posing with Soldiers as part of a Morale, Welfare and Recreation-sponsored tour.**

# *SaintSations visit Marez*



*(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Bradley J. Clark)*

# HEADHUNTER NEWS



STORY AND PHOTO BY 1ST LT. SCOTT BEAL

*1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment*

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—Top enlisted Soldier in Iraq, Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, visited the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment to see firsthand the success they have had since the beginning of their deployment.

Hill said he came to the 1-9 Cav. to give the Soldiers energy. He did that and more with his rousing pep talks to Soldiers from the battalion staff, the Spear Academy, and other troops who were present during his visit.

He started off the visit with lunch at the dining facility on Forward Operating Base Marez where one Soldier, Spc. Robert Greife, cavalry scout, was selected to eat with him. During the meal, Greife said they talked about everything from how they felt about the deployment to how Hill got the MNF-I position.

“I felt real comfortable talking to him and just being around him. He was an easygoing person and not someone to stress out around. He asked me if I was going back to the states, what would I say to my peers about being on deployments, and I said I wouldn’t give up too much information but would tell them about the good times here and what the weather was like, not the actual war part of it. I was real honored to be able to eat and talk to him,” Greife added.

After lunch, Hill moved down to the Spear Academy, which is where the 1-9 Cav. Soldiers help train the Iraqi Army troops in basic-level soldier skills. To date, the school has made several additions to the program, with little to no budget, under the guidance and leadership of Staff Sgt. Gregory Stephens, academy commandant, A Troop.

Stephens, who has helped train more than 250 Iraqi Army soldiers, has overseen the construction of an obstacle course, incorporated a live shoot house and rifle range, and assisted with the tour Hill was given of the academy that included barracks, classrooms and training facilities.

After the tour, Hill was the guest of honor at the graduation ceremony of the latest group of Iraqi soldiers



*Senior enlisted Soldier in Iraq, Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, cheers with the Iraqi Army soldiers at the Spear Academy in Mosul, Iraq, after the IA graduation ceremony. The purpose of the academy is for Coalition Forces, assigned to the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, to train the IA troops in basic soldiering skills.*

to attend the academy and was among the presenters of the certificates.

Hill also traveled to the 1-9 Cav. headquarters building during his visit, where he spoke to the staff about what the Army is doing in country.

“You don’t measure success by the number of enemy dead or [improvised explosive devices] located, you measure success by the amount of people opening new shops, building new homes, and children going to and from school everyday. You measure success by the attitudes and inclination of the people towards helping the Coalition Forces and Iraqi security forces fight the insurgents. When I was here the first time, we needed an entire U.S. Army division. Over time, we moved to a brigade, and now we are at a single battalion; that is success in the purest form.”

He encouraged and complimented the work of the Headhunter Squadron in supporting the military transition teams, and enabling the Iraqi Army to take the fight to the enemy and protect the Iraqi people.

Toward the end of his visit, he went on a combat patrol in the city of Mosul and visited A Troop, 1-9 Cav. at Al Kindi Army base, headquarters of the 2nd Iraqi Army Division.

# GARRYOWEN NEWS



STORY AND PHOTOS BY 1ST LT. ALLEN TRUJILLO

*2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment*

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq— The road to success is traveled often by many, but few have encountered the same journey as the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment’s Mortar Platoon.

From the early days at Fort Bliss, to the live-fire training at Dona Ana, to the Central Corridor at the National Training Center, the mortarmen have faced multiple training scenarios that covered various types of combat situations.

“The training we received at the National Training Center was loosely related to our current mission,” said Sgt. Hugo Orozco, squad leader.

But like all good units in the Army, the mortarmen have simply taken what has been asked of them and carried on with their mission.

Since their inception in Sept. 2005, the platoon has conducted mortar operations in El Paso, base defense security at NTC, and mounted infantry platoon missions in Mosul. All of this diverse training has allowed them to be extremely successful at conducting targeted raids throughout the GarryOwen area of operations. In fact, they are capturing more confirmed enemy insurgents than any other unit in the 2-7 Cavalry.

Sergeant Joseph Hussey, squad leader, attributed their successes to the fact that they have great leadership and cohesion, from their squad leaders to their platoon leader, 1st Lt. Garret Smith.

“The success of our targeted raids clearly displays our overall versatility,” Smith bragged. It is this versatility, he said, that clearly separates the Mortar Platoon from the other platoons in the battalion.

Life has not always been that great in the Mortar Platoon. The constant shuffle from one battalion mission to another wore on the morale of the Soldiers. However, since arriving in Mosul, things have really started to make sense. Their extensive training covering various platoon missions has allowed them to excel at their current tasking.

“Due to our recent success the overall morale within



*Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment’s Mortar Platoon rehearse search procedures prior to a targeted raid.*



*Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment’s Mortar Platoon conduct final preparations for a targeted raid by reviewing tactics, techniques, and procedures.*

the platoon has increased,” said Pfc. Robert Caldwell, driver. It is this increase in morale that has helped them achieve great success in Mosul.

“We really feel like we are making a difference,” said Spc. Chris Leavitt, a dismount.

Although they are not participating in a conventional mortar mission, the platoon is a perfect example of how a unit can adapt and overcome any obstacle.

# NIGHT RAIDER NEWS



STORY AND PHOTOS BY 2ND LT. SEAN BOWEN

*3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment*

AL MUMI, Iraq—Soldiers of 1st Platoon, A Troop, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, met with Iraqi Police from the town to execute combined patrols in the area. The Iraqi Police immediately took the lead in order to show local residents that they were willing and able to protect them.

Members of 1st Platoon conducted the combined patrol with several trucks from the Iraqi Police station in Al Mumi. Periodic patrols through towns like Al Mumi bolster confidence in the local security forces and allow unit commanders to assess the needs of the Iraqi people and the abilities of the Iraqi security forces.

A Mount Vernon, Ill., native, Sgt. 1st Class Russel Williams, platoon sergeant, said combined patrols with the IP are important because the patrols improve cohesion between Coalition Forces and the ISF.

“These patrols build trust between us, the Iraqi Police and the local civilian population,” said Williams, who believes that trust between the IP and local populace is the key to maintaining the local security. “When the people trust the Iraqi Police, they are more likely to provide helpful information,” he said.

Additionally, combined patrols with the IP help to combat the perception that the ISF are not doing enough to pull their own weight in the fight against the insurgency.

According to Chicago Heights, Ill., native, Spc. Steven Griffith, a gunner on the platoon sergeant’s vehicle, doing combined patrols with the IP is constructive for both Iraqi and Coalition Soldiers. Combined patrols expose the IP to new methods of conducting operations and build trust between Soldiers and the ISF. Griffith also believes that when IP and Coalition Forces patrol together, it sends a signal of strength to the insurgents.

“I believe it shows a turning point to the civilians,” said Griffith. “It also shows that the Iraqi Police and Coalition Soldiers are both here to help them.”

He also believes that combined patrols are a good



*Soldiers of 1st Platoon, A Troop, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment and the Iraqi Police stage before beginning their patrol through the streets of Al Mumi.*



*The 1st Platoon’s Arabic interpreter radios the Iraqi Police to get ready to begin a patrol through the streets of Al Mumi.*

chance for Soldiers to interact with the Iraqi populace in a positive manner. The patrol lasted several hours and many of the residents of Al Mumi came out of their homes to wave at the IP and 1st Platoon troopers.

“It’s good to show the civilians that we are here to help them,” said Griffith, “I think the patrols are good for everyone.”

# BLACK DRAGON NEWS



STORY AND PHOTO BY  
STAFF SGT. TONY WHITE

*5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

MAKMUR, Iraq—A vehicle-borne improvised explosive device destroyed a large portion of the mayor's building and several other surrounding buildings in Makmur, near Irbil.

As of the latest reports, 29 people were killed, including four Iraqi police officers, and more than 100 others were injured.

The wounded were evacuated by Makmur officials to the local clinics and the Irbil hospital.

Reports indicate an insurgent, dressed as an Iraqi Army officer, was seen driving a dump truck during the attack. Officials estimate the dump truck was filled with 2,500 pounds of explosives.

"The insurgents are trying to create fear and turmoil," said Lt. Col. Robert McLaughlin, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment battalion commander. "But we are all working for the common goal here. We want to maintain a sense of normalcy, progress and hope for these people and unity of effort—Coalition, Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and Iraqi governance. So far, it has been solid."

The Makmur mayor was among those wounded from the blast. Quickly released after treatment for minor injuries, the mayor conducted a television interview with the Irbil media.

"He is part of a system that is in place that has hope and wants good things for its people — that is how it should be," McLaughlin said.

The blast incapacitated several government buildings, including the mayor's office and the police



*Sergeant 1st Class Christopher Fulbright, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, pulls security in a parking lot across the street from the Makmur mayor's building after a vehicle borne improvised explosive device detonated.*

station. The police also lost all of their vehicles in the explosion.

"One of the biggest concerns I had was all of the IP's vehicles being destroyed," McLaughlin said. "Within 24 hours we got them five capable trucks. They asked for three, but we came up with five. It is always important to me to show the Iraqis that we care and we want to help."

The response of the local population gave McLaughlin a brief moment of relief despite earlier events.

"The beautiful thing about that town is that their initial reaction to the people was incredible," he said. "They were taking the people to Irbil to get them treated quickly. They did a great job with that. Everybody has a choice to make," McLaughlin concluded. "The people can choose to be the victim or they can choose to make progress. It's their choice at every level."

# TASK FORCE READY NEWS



STORY AND PHOTO BY  
1ST LT. BRIDGETTE BELL

*Special Troops Battalion*

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—In accomplishing a myriad of missions, B Company, Special Troops Battalion, set a new standard for the way signal operations are organized and accomplished in Iraq. Leading the way to the transformation was Detroit native, 1st Sgt. Gerald Morgan, the company's senior enlisted Soldier.

When the company began their Relief In Place/Transfer of Authority with the outgoing Stryker brigade last fall, it became evident that the unit's structure was not going to be able to support all the requirements it was tasked with.

Morgan personally revamped the company task organization to better support operations both on Forward Operating Base Marez and throughout the Ninevah area of operations.

To do this, he created two completely different platoons: the Combat Net Radio (CNR) Platoon and the Joint Network Node (JNN) Platoon.

The CNR Platoon provides dedicated signal support to facilitate tactical communications to the 4th Brigade Combat Team. The platoon, under the leadership of 1st Lt. Ariel Perez and Sgt. 1st Class Roderick Jack, is responsible for running two simultaneous split section retransmission sites and managing over 15 retransmission nets.

The JNN Platoon provides secure tactical communications to the entire BCT. The platoon installed the brigade's first-ever Joint Network Transport Capability (JNTC) network, which is the second largest in the Iraq theater of operations. Under the leadership of 1st Lt. Craig Starn and Staff Sgt. Chris Meiss, the platoon has installed over 290 secure, secret Internet connections, 150 secure, secret phones, and a multitude of non-secure Internet phones and computers. They have also provided dedicated Internet and phone lines to all battalion-level military transition teams.

Establishing a new task organization required utilizing untested methods of communication, coupled with commercial off-the-shelf communication equipment.

"Initially, the transition from what the Stryker brigade was working with to what we had was challenging," said Sgt. Lucas Rangel of Clifton, Texas, a JNN Team Chief. "We had to reorganize from what [the previous unit] was doing to fit our JNN network," Rangel explained. "Our generators were not meant to run continually so we spent a lot of time switching them out."

Along with reorganizing B Company, Morgan led more than 70



*The B Company commander, Capt. John Green (left), presents a plaque to outgoing 1st Sgt. Gerald Morgan during the unit's change of responsibility ceremony on Forward Operating Base Marez.*

combat logistics patrols throughout the battlespace that provided the Soldiers at each combat outpost the dedicated life support they needed in order to continue to conduct combat operations.

In addition to personally leading multiple patrols, he created a training plan that allowed the noncommissioned officers to continue to train and maintain their warrior skills. Morgan's training plan started with train-the-trainer training on small-arms marksmanship, close-quarter marksmanship, medical first responder, and convoy live fire. This training enabled the company to execute combat patrols without casualties or damage to vehicles or equipment.

After serving for nearly two years as the company first sergeant, Morgan was selected for a brigade-level position and will be responsible for overseeing the S-6 communications shop.

# ROUGH RIDER NEWS



STORY AND PHOTO BY 1ST LT. KENDRA EVERS

*27th Brigade Support Battalion*

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—Despite less than desirable living and working conditions, Soldiers from the 27th Brigade Support Battalion managed to assist Iraqi Army mechanics in fixing 14 vehicles in just four days at Contingency Operating Base Salameah, Iraq.

Soldiers from the 27th BSB, led by Capt. Jacqueline Escobar, commander, B Company, went to nearby COB Salameah in order to assist the Iraqi Army in preparing their vehicles for their upcoming convoy move to Baghdad.

“We took trucks, a wrecker, and a trailer full of parts,” said Escobar. “They didn’t have much to work with.”

Despite limited supplies, they were still able to repair 14 vehicles, and in the meantime, showed the Iraqis how to conduct preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) on their vehicles and how to use tow bars.

The Soldiers enjoyed the opportunity to do something different for a change.

“Even though it was dirty out there, and the working conditions weren’t the greatest, I had a lot of fun and learned a lot,” said Pfc. Amanda Prager, a mechanic in B Company. “It gave me a chance to practice my skills and learn how better to work with limited supplies and tools.”

The living and working conditions were difficult to say the least, with no port-a-potties, no showers, no place to sleep, and only Meals Ready-to-Eat (MREs) for food.

“Honestly, it was better than I expected,” said Staff Sgt. William Evans, senior maintenance technician. “I thought we would be out working in the middle of the desert on rocks and dirt, but at least we had a paved surface to work on, and there were a few buildings



*Specialist Joseph Kindred, B Company mechanic, works with an Iraqi soldier to prepare an engine for a transfer.*

around.”

The Iraqi mechanics were friendly and helpful to the U.S. Soldiers.

“They helped us work on the vehicles, and had a pretty average level of knowledge,” Evans said. “They even brought us food—flatbread, rice and chicken to eat; it wasn’t bad being there.”

“One of the Iraqi Army majors even came out and worked with us,” exclaimed Escobar. “He seemed very interested and was more involved than I had seen any other higher Iraqi Army officials be.”

It was difficult for the Soldiers to explain to the Iraqis how to conduct PMCS, and to convey the importance of doing them regularly.

After fixing the vehicles, the Soldiers gave the Iraqis some tow bars and showed them how to use them. The IA have almost nothing to work with, and the only way they will be able to fix vehicles on their own is to get a good logistics backbone, expressed Escobar.

“They really do need their own supply system so they can get parts and tools,” agreed Evans. “They have a supply system, but it needs a lot of fixing.”



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