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Crossed Sabers

Volume I, Issue 20

Telling the MND-Baghdad Story

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Lighting up the Sky

Firing teams Gunny and Storm from the 2nd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division fire a M109A6 Paladin, a Self-Propelled Howitzer, into the Diyala River Valley in support of Operation Lightning Hammer, which was just underway when the rounds were launched late into the night, Aug. 13. (Photo by Spc. Ryan Stroud, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

Cavalry Troop Receives Valor Award, Combat Medical Badge

(See Page 2 for story)



Iraqi Army, US Engineers Help Reconnect Taji to Major Highway

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

TAJI, Iraq - Spc. Matthew Harrison, a combat engineer with the 502nd Multi-Roll Bridge Company, glanced at the place where the bridge used to be and shook his head. Just a couple of days prior, Al Qaeda operatives using a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device had blown up the structure leaving a nearly 50-meter gap over the water and disconnecting local residents here from a major highway Aug. 14.

"The terrorists must be getting pretty desperate to be doing things like this and it's ironic because they're not really hurting us (Coalition Forces) so much as the Iraqi people," said Harrison. "They're hurting innocent civilians who are just trying to live their everyday lives. The people they affect most are those who are just trying to go to work, to their local

mosque, to the market or are traveling to take their children to school."

Then smiling, Harrison looked over at his Iraqi Army comrades, combat engineers from the 3rd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) and his fellow Soldiers from the 502nd who worked together to emplace a new bridge section here Aug. 15-19.

"I feel really good about that," the Seattle native said pointing to the joint effort, in which the Iraqi engineers took the lead in rebuilding the structure. "This is a really big deal because it's going to help increase logistics as well as helping the Iraqis, who rely on the bridge, back to their lives after a brief intermission."

As the work continued, the Iraqi and U.S. Army engineers lifted the bridge sections with chains that hooked to a

see **Bridge** Page 4

Cavalry Troop Receives Valor Award, Combat Medical Badge

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq—Being a line medic is more than just being the "doc" in the group. It takes a person who knowingly goes into a hail storm of bullets to come to the aid of a fallen comrade.

One Soldier with 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, made his mark on Operation Iraqi Freedom through courage and a caring hand.

Pfc. Josh R. Schrader, a native of Charleston, West Va., is a line medic with Troop B, and was awarded with the Army Commendation Medal for Valor and the Combat Medical Badge for his actions during an engagement in Salman Pak on Dec. 14, 2006. His troop was carrying out a 24 hour operation. They were one day and 12 hours into it when they heard gunshots coming from an Iraqi Army checkpoint down in Dureda.

They were being engaged and firing back so they moved to where they thought the gunfire was coming from. The gunfire was coming from two locations. So, they made their way down the canal and had two trucks go down one part of the canal and two down another. The third truck stayed to report.

Schrader said gunfire was coming from all sides. One of the noncommissioned officers, who had just pulled his truck up, dismounted not realizing they were taking fire from all sides.

"He went back to get in his vehicle and was hit in the back of the neck," Schrader said. "I saw him go down and thought it was his leg."

Schrader said his platoon sergeant dragged the wounded NCO over to the vehicle he was in.

"I jumped out in the mist of everything," he said. "He was saying he was hit and saying he felt it in his chest. I didn't see anything so I ripped off his vest and saw his back

was all bloody."

Schrader had his patient secured only by a humvee tire. A bullet came toward them and missed the wounded Soldier. Schrader said the Soldier's plates stopped the bullet from going into his knee, but it grazed the rubber of another Soldier's boot.

The wounded Soldier was talking and then couldn't feel his legs and eventually couldn't talk and was having a hard time breathing. He was larger than Schrader, so he said they had a hard time getting him into the vehicle. Once he was secure, they drove in reverse out of the enemy's fire.

"We went fast until the engine blew," he said.

Someone called up that there was a casualty being brought in and Schrader said 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment already had a landing zone set up for them. They sat with the patient at the flight line for 20 to 30 minutes until the birds came.

"The guy helping me was an EMT," Schrader said. "1-8 had a medic on the ground to help."

Schrader said he made sure the fallen Soldier didn't go into shock while the EMT trained Soldier kept the casualty's airway open. The Soldier from 1-8 ensured the bandage stayed secure. Another guy was lifting the casualty's legs to enable blood to go back into the chest.

Checking his vitals, Schrader said the casualty was slowly crashing.

"I put in five needle decompressions in his chest," he said. He also gave the Soldier an IV that would help with the blood loss.

Schrader said he doesn't remember all the details, but they got the casualty on the bird and he is alive today. His wound caused a lot of internal damage, but he is recovering in New Mexico. The doctor's have said he is temporarily paralyzed due to swelling around the spinal cord.

"He's part of a 12 step rehabilitation program that takes two years to complete," Schrader said. "Last time I



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

Pfc. Josh R. Schrader, a Soldier with 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, received his Army Commendation Medal with "V" device for valor and his Combat Medical Badge for his actions during a firefight in which he saved a fellow Soldier's life.

heard he was six steps into it."

Schrader said he isn't looking for awards because he was just doing his job.

"I feel pretty decorated," he said. These are the first awards he has gotten in the Army and he said it feels good and he's glad he received them. "But, I can't be selfish. My guys helped me get it."

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

Soldiers Recognized for Sacrifices

Spc. Terry White, an infantryman with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, stands in formation after receiving the Purple Heart from Roundup, Mt., native, Col. Paul E. Funk II, commander of 1st BCT, at Patrol Base Courage in western Baghdad Aug. 11. White also received the Army Commendation Medal earlier in the ceremony.

Baghdad News Briefs

Dragons Find Car Bomb, Three Caches in Southwestern Baghdad

4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD- Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldiers found a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and three caches in southwestern Baghdad Aug. 20.

Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 4th "Dragons" Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, responded to a tip and found a car bomb in the Doura area. While cordoning off the area, the vehicle exploded. There were no casualties.

Earlier in the day, Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment "Black Lions," 4th IBCT, discovered a cache consisting of 94 mortar rounds of various sizes, two 107mm rockets, two rocket-propelled grenade launchers, four Iranian-made RPGs, an SKS rifle, a Dragonov sniper rifle, four hand-held radios and chargers and an anti-aircraft sight.

An explosive ordnance disposal team was called in to destroy the cache.

At another location, the Black Lions found several thousand rounds of 7.62mm linked ammunition inside of a car.

Later on in the morning, Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, attached to the 4th IBCT, discovered an AK-47 with two 30 round magazines and one set of Russian-made body armor.

Tip Leads to Insurgent Cache Site

By 1st Lt. Andrew Coody
1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment.

BAGHDAD - Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers uncovered an improvised explosive device cache site in Khadra on the western outskirts of the Iraqi capital Aug. 19.

Acting on tips, members of 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, attached to 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, raided a home in the neighborhood with assistance from officers from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Regiment, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division.

The abandoned home contained seven artillery rounds, two mortar rounds, two recoilless rifles, two hand grenades and 15 pounds of homemade explosive material.

Scorch marks within the building indicated that an insurgent cell used the site to produce homemade explosives and build improvised explosive devices.

An explosive ordnance disposal team detonated the cache at a separate location.



(Photo by 1st Lt. James Gallagher, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment)

Buried munitions are inventoried laid out for inventory following a targeted raid of an abandoned house in the Khadra neighborhood of western Baghdad Aug. 19.



(Photo by Sgt. Serena Hayden, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division)

After blocking key routes into the city of Khalis, Iraq, protesters unblock the road to allow a Coalition Force convoy to pass through, Aug. 21. The demonstration began after several mortar attacks from an unknown enemy, causing more than 500 concerned citizens to protest until they received security and services from the security forces and the local and central governments.

Khalis Protest a Sign of Democracy in Diyala

Multi-National Division - North PAO

KHALIS, Iraq - Local Iraqi and Coalition leaders heard and addressed grievances from approximately 500 concerned citizens, who had been demonstrating in and around a major roadway outside Khalis Tuesday.

The civic demonstration started outside the mayor's residence on Aug. 19, as an effort draw attention to their complaints about inadequate basic services such as food, water, electricity and fuel; and additional support from the Iraqi army and police. Another point of concern stemmed from an Aug. 18 mortar attack on their community that left three dead and 22 injured.

"This protest demonstrates the citizens of Diyala believe in democracy and have faith that their local leaders will hear them and take action," said Col. David W. Sutherland, commander, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. "This is a purposeful step toward achieving true democracy."

After protesting outside the mayor's office, the protesters moved into the streets, blocking the main routes into the city and setting up two large tents in the center of the road.

Iraqi army and police immediately responded to the demonstration, setting up road blocks to the north and south of the demonstration to protect the protesters and divert traffic.

Representatives of Diyala's security forces and the province's central government met with the leaders of the protest on Aug. 20 to address their concerns and gain an understanding of their demands.

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division and their respective Military Transition Team met with the demonstrators the morning of Aug. 21, it was understood the protesters would not leave until they felt their concerns were addressed.

The afternoon of Aug. 21, a Coalition Forces' convoy moved through the area and received small-arms

fire from unknown gunmen hiding within a group of protesters along a main road into Khalis, early Tuesday.

Because there was a crowd, the patrol fired non-lethal warning shots to disperse the crowd and deployed smoke to obscure themselves from the gunmen as they moved along the congested roadway.

The Diyala Provincial Joint Coordination Center reported individuals were injured from the smoke and one person had a gunshot wound, however, the report cannot be substantiated and is under investigation.

Iraqi Army soldiers converged on the area to ensure the route was passable and that protesters would not endanger themselves or traffic.

Following the small-arms fire incident, Staff Maj. Gen. Abdul Kareem, commander of Iraqi Security Forces in Diyala; Staff Maj. Gen. Salihm Kareem Saleh Ali, the 5th Iraqi Army Division commander; Col. Steve Townsend, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division commander; Sutherland, and the Khalis mayor and local security officials met with the leaders of the demonstration to further address their issues.

The group addressed their main concerns of irrigation, water, medical supplies, security and specific checkpoints, coordinating with the present leadership to begin resolving issues within the next few days. During the meeting, protest leaders agreed to allow the Stryker vehicles to pass through the route.

"With local Iraqi leadership willing to listen to the people, hopefully, future events will not include violence or arms in any form," said Sutherland. "But the underlying point here is confidence in the democratic process and the fact these citizens believe in the system."

By the end of the discussion, the protest leaders agreed to tear down their tents and leave, allowing vehicle traffic and security convoys to access the route.

Broken Bridge Builds Relations, Hope

Bridge From Page 1

crane and once in place the engineers put each section together using their various tools of the trade. Within a matter of days, the bridge would be complete once again and the city reconnected.

"It makes me proud to see that we're helping the Iraqis to help themselves," said Spc. Jeffrey Losung, a combat engineer for the 502nd En. Co., who hails from Coquille, Ore., of the opportunity to work with his Iraqi

counterparts in such a major operation. "I'm also satisfied knowing I've helped the Iraqi people."

Keeping Iraqis connected to the world as well as supply routes open for military convoys is an extremely meaningful task, according to 2nd Lt. Nicholas Soroka, a platoon leader with the 502nd.

"This is one of the most crucial missions in Iraq," said Soroka, a native of West Chester, Pa., whose troops recently spent time training the Iraqi Army engineers from the 3rd Bde., 9th IA Div. (Mech.) on how to build

bridges.

"We've trained the Iraqis on this type of bridge specifically and now they're doing the actual mission," Soroka said. "It's been a really good opportunity in practice to give them experience."

"They're doing really well and they've had no problems keeping up with us," added Soroka. "Building bridges is our main job, but they've (the Iraqi troops) just learned this and it's really impressive seeing them work and how much they've progressed in just a few short weeks. This has

been particularly beneficial toward their transition."

As their work shift ended at the bridge site, Harrison and his engineer comrades reflected on the job that they had done and in a way saw their efforts as not just about rebuilding a bridge, but more about rebuilding a nation.

"When you see how well the Iraqi Soldiers are doing you know that the Iraqi people are making great progress towards the building of their own country," said Harrison.



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

During a joint effort to rebuild a bridge, an Iraqi Army engineer from the 3rd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) standing atop a bridge section helps to steady the not yet assembled bridge piece with his U.S. Army counterparts from the 502nd Multi-Role Bridge Company, in Taji, Iraq Aug. 16.

Intelligence Field Looking for NCOs

Multi-National Division - Baghdad Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - The Military Intelligence Corps is looking for noncommissioned officers, staff sergeants and sergeant first classes, to fill a shortage in the 97E career field by being human intelligence collectors in the active duty Army.

Human intelligence Soldiers are responsible for collecting information from human sources, analyzing information, and conducting debriefings and interrogations.

"This is a great program for NCOs in an over strength (military occupation specialty) to reclassify into in order to open new avenues for career advancement," said Sgt. Maj. Kevin Gainey, the senior NCO of Multi-National Division - Baghdad intelligence. "It also is beneficial for the Military Intelligence Corps as we are looking for NCOs who have combat experience and proven leadership time to reclassify into MOS 97E and who will then be assigned to

take charge of an HUMINT support team after finishing training in most cases."

Soldiers interested in re-classing need to turn in their application packets no later than Sept. 15 and need to be U.S. citizens with at least a secret security clearance.

Since the last class starts in February, which is just a few months after redeployment for most of MND-B, Gainey says Soldiers need to get their packets in as soon as possible so they have a better opportunity to get into the late class and to do the paperwork to waive their 90 days of stabilization, if applicable.

The training program is 24 weeks and four days or 27 weeks and four days, at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., depending on the follow on assignment.

"The program also offers advanced human intelligence training that is usually not offered to an NCO until they have served several years in the MOS,"

Gainey said.

"The promotion potential within MOS 97E is wide open at this point. Under modularity in both divisions and the battlefield surveillance brigades, the (modification table of organization and equipment or) MTOEs are weighted very heavily with HUMINT MOSs in the military intelligence companies and battalions," he said.

Graduates will be assigned to units preparing for deployment or currently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom.

More information about this career opportunity is located at <http://www.dami.army.pentagon.mil/sgm/index.asp> and Sgt. Maj. Ronald Wheelock at Fort Huachuca is fielding calls from eligible NCOs at (520) 533-1174.

Gainey is also willing to assist applicants at gainey.kevin@mnd-b.army.mil or DSN 318-848-8065 or VOIP 242-4021.

Iraqi Citizens Take Part in Their Own Security

By Spc. Shea Butler
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

ABU GHRAIB, Iraq - They have no formal training. They don't wear uniforms. They have no title, rank, or position. They don't even receive a paycheck. They are strictly volunteers, volunteering their time, sometimes even their lives, for the security of their nahia, or district.

These volunteers of Nasr Wa Salam stood guard at checkpoints in sweat soaked



Col. Paul Funk II, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division commander, greets Abu Azzam, a leader of the Nasr Wa Salam volunteer center Aug. 14.

apparel and second hand protective gear with their own personal weapons in hand, ready for anything under the unforgiving Iraqi sun. These volunteers are living the old saying "Anything worth having is worth fighting for."

The Nasr Wa Salam volunteers got the chance to show their dedication to Maj. Gen. Paul Newton, Multi-National Forces - Iraq, Forces Security Engagement Cell, deputy commanding general, during his first visit to Abu Ghraib Aug. 14 with Col. Paul Funk II, commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. Nasr Wa Salam is the largest neighborhood in Abu Ghraib.

Their hard work and dedication was apparent in the crowded local markets and the traffic on the street, said Lt. Col. Kurt Pinkerton, commander of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment. That was not the case a few months ago. The markets were bare and people were not out on the streets in early May.

The Coalition leaders met with Abu Azzam, the man in charge of the volunteers, to discuss progress in Nasr Wa Salam and goals for the future.

"Abu Azzam brings people who are sitting on the fence about the government to the table so they can achieve the goal of one Iraq," Pinkerton said. "He finds people who want to participate in a legitimate government."

Not all of Abu Azzam's volunteers have a clean wrap sheet. Some of them are ex-insurgents, but have since signed statements swearing their allegiance to the Iraqi government and condemning Al Qaeda, Pinkerton explained.

The walls of checkpoints in the Abu Ghraib neighborhood are decorated with pieces of paper stating people's loyalties to their country and their sins against it.

It's more than just signed documents; these men are out there sweating and work-



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

A Soldier with 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, hands a local volunteering at a checkpoint a bottle of cold water in Nasr Wa Salam, Iraq Aug. 14.

ing hard for security.

The volunteers are useful because they know the area better than anyone and they know the people well. They know who the bad guys are, especially since some of them used to be insurgents, Pinkerton said.

Though Pinkerton, a San Jose, Calif., native, said the volunteer effort has been effective, he is moving Iraqi Police into the area for better security and better equipment. This way the volunteers won't be stretched so thin.

"What the volunteers are doing is great, but a government needs to be run by govern-

ment organizations. The volunteer effort is just a starting point and extra reinforcement," Pinkerton said.

Adding Iraqi Security Forces is only the beginning in making Nasr Wa Salam a safer place. Pinkerton and Azzam are looking to build a hospital, and work on sanitation and construction projects.

"My end goal is to leave Nasr Wa Salam with a local functioning government and a tribal council that meets regularly," Pinkerton said. "I don't want it to be Shia and Sunni -- just one Iraq."

Volunteers Reveal Multiple Weapons Caches North of Baghdad

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Volunteers fed tips to Soldiers from the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division which led to the finding of four weapons caches and the detaining of two suspects in multiple operations north of Baghdad Aug. 8-9.

Troops from Battery B, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, attached to the 1st BCT, acting on a tip from a neighborhood watch volunteer, uncovered an IED cache near the town of Sab Al Bor Aug. 8.

The cache included five complete IEDs and 12 incomplete IEDs. The cache also included 20 munitions of varying sizes, 100 pounds of homemade explosive, one can of nitric acid, some command wire as well as the tools necessary to manufacture IEDs.

The same day acting on a tip from a volunteer, Soldiers of Company D, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, also of 1st BCT, found a 100 millimeter projectile, ten 80 mm mortars, six IED timers, two rocket-propelled grenades and an accompanying booster.

In two separate incidents also involving information garnered from volunteer sources, Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment working with their Iraqi counterparts



(U.S. Army photo)

Working off tips from local volunteers, troops from Company D, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment uncovered a large weapons cache (pictured) near Abu Ghraib, Iraq Aug. 8.

from the 3rd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) unearthed two caches and detained two suspects. In the first, while draining a canal, engineers from 2-8 Cav's Sapper company found three 60 millimeter mortar rounds, two 82 millimeter

ter mortar rounds, one 120 millimeter mortar round and one 122 millimeter projectile Aug. 9 near Kem, Iraq.

In the second find, during a cordon and search, 2-8 Cav. troops and Iraqi troops found 1 sniper rifle with two scopes, one AK-47 assault rifle with five magazines, a 9 millimeter Glock pistol, a hand grenade and detained two suspects in connection with the cache near Al Dhabiya also on Aug. 9.

All of the finds were further evidence of Ironhorse Soldiers' success in working with Iraqi communities and volunteers to root out insurgents and extremists alike, said Lt. Col. Peter Andrysiak, 1st BCT's deputy commanding officer.

"Cooperation by citizens and their volunteer security roles is what will turn the tide in securing Iraq," said the Austin native. "We have the largest reconciliation and volunteer movement in Multi-National Division-Baghdad. We fully support Iraqis taking an active role in securing their neighborhoods, towns and villages to stop the violence which hinders the government's delivery of essential services and an environment that enables small business opportunities and growth."

Local Iraqis have grown tired of the Al Qaeda stranglehold and they are taking back their communities and their lives, according to Andrysiak.

"Their efforts, along with that of the Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, may prove to be the turning point," he added.

Separating Friend from Foe Through a Child's Eyes

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

BAGHDAD - The young Iraqi girl looked up to her mother in search of the right answer to the question: "Is this a bad man?" Apprehension shaded her innocent, cherubic face. Hesitantly, she responded with a meek, "Laa." No.

Immediately, a seasoned female interpreter recognized the child's reluctance as fear. The truth: the man in question was certainly suspect, if not criminal. The eyes of a young child seldom lie.

In the girl's neighborhood within Saba Al Bor, mixed signals are common. Residents of the predominantly Shiite area of the town in the northern Baghdad Province, live in constant fear of militia extremists.

However, things are better than before. Sectarian violence is down, there is an increased presence on the streets, and most importantly, citizens of Saba Al Bor, located on the outskirts of Iraq's capital, are taking responsibility for their own security, said Swansea, S.C., native, Capt. Brooks Yarborough.

"The biggest help from the citizens of Saba Al Bor is their hospitality and willingness to cooperate with Coalition Forces. Every door we knock on, every child we see, there is always a smiling face greeting us," said the 25-year-old fire support officer for 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

The only child not smiling, as the Soldiers passed on patrol, was living in fear of her neighbor. The Soldiers of Troop B, along with their counterparts from Estonian Platoon 15 and Iraqi Army troops did not frighten the girl. It was the thought of what the man next-door would do, if he learned of her complicity, which frightened the youngster.

Already suspected of ties to Jaish Al Mahdi (JAM), a Shiite extremist group operating in Saba Al Bor as well as greater Baghdad, the man was questioned. When his story did not quite add up, neighbors weighed in about why they feared the round Iraqi.

"The suspect claimed to merely be a butcher, rather than a member in Mahdi's Army," said Killeen, Texas,

native Sgt. Nicholas Anderson.

The bulk of the information leading to questioning the man came from a seemingly unlikely source, a concerned citizen of Saba Al Bor, who actively works with Coalition Forces to secure his town.

Though the concerned citizen's true name is uncertain, he prefers to be called "Colonel Muhammad," saying he was once an officer in Saddam's Army. Although a Sunni, he also works with Shia in Saba Al Bor.

"His primary concern is bringing criminals, across sectarian lines, to justice and in the process restoring the once populous town's prosperity," said Anderson, 24, who works with him regularly in Saba Al Bor.

Colonel Muhammad's other alias, "volunteer six," denotes his assumed position as the commander of the volunteers, concerned citizens who actively assist Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces root out insurgents and extremists alike by providing useful information.

The information du jour is the butcher suspected of ties to the Jaish Al Mahdi. Col Muhammad spoke with residents who relayed their concerns; sometimes directly and in other cases non-verbally, such as the young girl.

"The people are scared of him," the clean-cut, middle-aged Col. Muhammad told Anderson, a liaison with the Estonian platoon. In turn, Anderson shared the tip with the Estonian soldiers. Other residents were consulted and their responses coupled with the child's reluctance to answer compelled a line of questioning.

When the suspect was uncooperative during questioning he became a visitor of the nearby joint security station, another improvement to security in Saba Al Bor.

"The JSS allows for a greater presence of Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces in the town," said Anderson.

"The people of Saba Al Bor are really pleased with the Coalition presence here, to include the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police," explained Yarborough.

That presence in Saba Al Bor is the investment that Coalition Forces are starting to see real returns. Though the Soldiers did confiscate multiple weapons, information from residents was the crowned jewel of the day, Yarborough said.

"The only way you're going to catch these people is to



An Iraqi boy holds a stuffed animal in Saba Al Bor, a town on the northern outskirts of Baghdad Province, during a search of a predominantly Shia neighborhood Aug. 7.

make relationships with the people," Anderson said.

One little girl may not have verbally given Coalition forces an honest answer, but her eyes told no lies. She feared her next-door neighbor, who was taken away by the Soldiers who searched and secured her neighborhood.



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

Sgt. Nicholas Anderson, the Estonian liaison for Troop B, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, takes a breather along with an Estonian soldier as a boy looks on in Saba Al Bor, a town on the northern outskirts of Baghdad Province, during a search of a predominantly Shia neighborhood Aug. 7.

Governor of Baghdad Meets Abu Ghraib Leaders

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

ABU GHRAIB, Iraq - The war against the almighty clock challenged the guest's entourage all day. Though nothing about the man at the center of attention signaled anything remarkable, he had many places to go and even more people to see.

This was not just another visitor to the formerly embattled county of Abu Ghraib, located to the west of Iraq's capital. Rather, the VIP was the first politician from Iraq's capital to step foot in the now relatively secure region.

More than just a media day for the governor of Baghdad, Hussein al-Tahan, the event was loaded with signs of significant reconciliation between once fiercely opposed sect members.

Meeting in the morning inside the Nasr Wa Salam Iraqi Police Station with local leaders, sheiks, Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces, al-Tahan was receptive to information from those in attendance.

Citing security as the most dramatic improvement in the county, Lt. Col. Kurt Pinkerton, the officer in charge of the areas al-Tahan visited, said Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces were partnering with volunteers from local communities, who were tired of living in fear.

"We have volunteers here and we're starting to employ them," said Pinkerton, the commander of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment.

Many leaders attended the meetings, including Abu Azzam, the leader of Abu Ghraib's volunteers. His attendance demonstrated the volunteers' sincere desire to partake in the political process, said Maj. Geoffrey Norman, executive officer for the battalion.

Most of the volunteers are unemployed laborers and struggling farmers, who survived an occupation by al-Qaeda in Iraq and a limited presence by Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, Norman said.

Now the formerly oppressed citizens are looking for any chance to defend their vil-



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

Governor of Baghdad, Hussein Al Tahan, meets with leaders of Nasr Wa Salam, a town within the Abu Ghraib district, which lies on Baghdad's western edge Aug. 13. Tahan visited an Iraqi Police Station, a primary health clinic and the Abu Ghraib Qada Council in order to see the progress of the area as well as challenges still facing the community.

lages. They provide tips and valuable information to Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, Norman said.

Numerous volunteers even enrolled in the Biometric Automated Tool Set system, or BATS. The system ensures Iraqis enlisting as volunteers are not known criminals, extremists or insurgents by comparing their fingerprints and iris scans to databases of known enemies of Coalition Forces and the government of Iraq, he said.

Of the approximately 2,000 Abu Ghraib residents who enrolled, so far only 50 turned up as having hardcore-criminal records, said Norman, a native of Killeen, Texas.

"They know who doesn't belong there," Norman said of the volunteers who patrol the communities. "They're taking a stand and providing a future to their families."

As a result of volunteers policing their communities - an effective counterinsur-

gency measure - Abu Ghraib improved by leaps and bounds over the last few months. Up until May no one could walk the streets for fear of attack. The rule of law had been superseded by that of the Kalashnikov rifle, Pinkerton, a native of San Jose, Calif., explained.

"Anything they couldn't get away with they destroyed," Pinkerton said, referring to members of al-Qaeda in Iraq, a terrorist group sworn to the principles set forth by Osama Bin Laden.

Yet there are still challenges facing Abu Ghraib, which is transitioning from improving security to providing essential services to its residents. Employment is one critical area, Pinkerton said.

"Reconciliation for us out here is not only about security," Pinkerton said. It also encompasses projects, as well as stimulating the local economy.

After the briefing, the governor of Baghdad walked through the streets of the Nasr Wa Salam market, without wearing body armor, but accompanied by a formidable security detail. He then visited the Nasr Wa Salam Primary Health Clinic, located in Khandari, a district within Abu Ghraib.

During the visit eager residents ready to voice their concerns swarmed al-Tahan. He spoke with numerous sheiks in attendance representing their tribes. The governor called for peace, greater nationalism and cooperation in rebuilding Iraq.

"We need the pencil more than the AK," al-Tahan said, adding the Iraqi government is the peace-making force necessary to subdue sectarian divisions throughout Iraq.

Al-Tahan's final stop was probably his most important; a meeting with the Abu Ghraib Qada (Council), the county's governing body.

Jam packed into a modest room, the town-hall style gathering took place over a

variety of soft drinks.

The all-male council members read from prepared remarks and asked rehearsed questions, but many spoke from the heart, frequently raising the pitch of their voices for emphasis and gesturing with their hands to communicate non-verbally.

Council members and sheiks expressed the everyday concerns of their constituents, such as agricultural challenges, fuel shortages and educational deficiencies. On the latter issue, al-Tahan was most adamant. He said improving the education system was vital to bettering Iraq as a whole.

One attendee raised the issue of missing residents, who had not been heard from since detainment; estimating over 10,000 citizens still unaccounted for. Another spoke of the need for communal sacrifice, having lost a son to a Vehicle-Borne IED during an Iraqi Police recruitment drive. Facing a myriad of issues, al-Tahan pledged to rise to the diverse and numerous challenges facing the community.

Yet he told those in attendance they had to meet him half way by making an honest effort to document inefficiencies. The governor of Baghdad said the bureaucracy of government required supporting documents and pictures, before improvements could be made on the local level.

Over the chatter of masked interpreters, al-Tahan addressed the residents of Abu Ghraib in search of answers, and promised to return later in the week with officials from the government's ministries.

"Our heart is open to anyone regardless of sect," al-Tahan said in an animated closing speech, as Col. Paul E. Funk II, the commander of 1st Brigade Combat Team, tapped his watch, signaling the end of the day's battle with father time.



Governor of Baghdad, Hussein Al Tahan, meets with leaders of Nasr Wa Salam, a town within the Abu Ghraib district, which lies on Baghdad's western edge Aug. 13.

Medics Train Iraqi Government Employees on First Aid

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

BAGHDAD - Medics from Company C, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, are used to training Soldiers on life-saving techniques. They've even trained Iraqi Security Forces on first aid. Recently, they received the call to train a branch of the Iraqi government responsible for the democratic process.

Medics from the "Trauma" Company spent the day training several employees of the Independent High Electoral Council (IHEC) on the basics of first aid Aug. 16.

This was the first time training of this type was offered to governmental employees, according to members of the training team.

Staff Sgt. Sean Gallagher, Sgt. Kimberly Hunter, Sgt. Crystal Ritz and Sgt. Chan Has gave specialized blocks of instruction on several practical topics throughout the day.

Gallagher, a North Bay, N.Y., native in charge of coordinating the training, said that training the 15 employees on first aid was only part of the reason why he and his team came to the ballot tallying office in the Green Zone.

"This was a chance to go out and do something directly for the people to help themselves," Gallagher said. "This training gave them leadership tools as well as first aid knowledge."

Gallagher said the class' design was to give them basic knowledge to help people in just about any situation. Some of the more important topics covered were how to control bleeding, rescue breathing and CPR training, and treatment for heat-related injuries. All the classes were first described in detail then given with hands-on training.

Sgt. Crystal Ritz, who is the primary Combat Life Saver Course instructor of the battalion, said that all the people in the class performed very well for never having training in first aid like this.

She said that after giving the formalized lecture on hemorrhage control, she helped hand out bandages and observed the employees practice the proper steps in applying the dressings.

"The very first person I watched took charge immediately," she said. "They went step by step through the whole

process and looked up to me with a big smile like 'How'd I do?' You could tell that they were paying attention when they did the hands-on stuff so well."

One of the employees remarked on how important the training was to them. They said that just basic information like this can help them train others on how to help.

"We are very happy to get this kind of training," the man said. "The Coalition is giving us information to help all people."

Many of the employees have to travel to places far outside the capital during elections. According to Squadron Leader Lewis Frederickson, the Australian liaison between Multi-National Force - Iraq headquarters and the electoral council, the hope is that when the people travel they'll help disseminate the information as they go by training others in the basic life-saving tools they were taught in the class.

Gallagher and Ritz agreed that the skills acquired in the class can be used in many situations. Some of the other classes like treating heat-related injuries, and minor sprains and strains can reduce the strain on many of the hospitals the people may have had to go to for help.

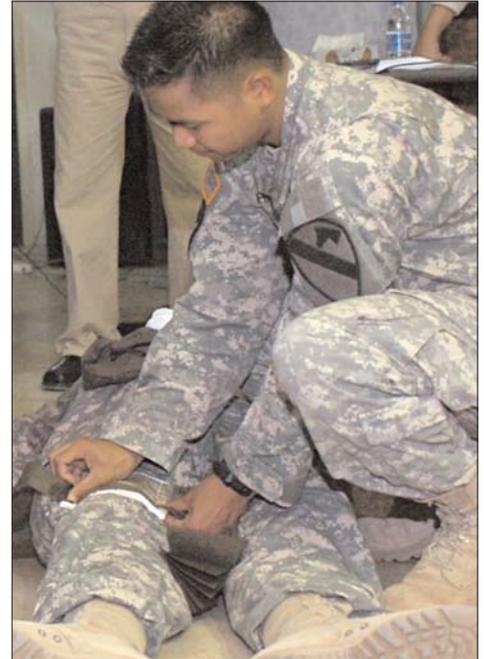
"In a many cases, these people might have to wait for an hour or two before an ambulance shows up," Gallagher said. "They now have a better understanding of the meaning behind the term 'first aid.' It gives them a sense of empowerment that might save someone's life."

The council was directly appointed by Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki to be a non-partisan group that would be in charge of the planning, logistical and implementing procedures behind the democratic elections in Iraq.

In 2005, the group conducted the first-ever open elections in Iraq. The group is currently in the rebuilding stages according to its employees. The need for first aid training was brought up by the head of their security who believed that not only his guards should be ready for anything but also many of the people in the building they work out of.

The security chief said that having training like this allows everyone to be more agile and adaptive while the government is allowed to be set up fairly.

"This is where the government and democracy begins:



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

Sacramento, Calif., native, Sgt. Chan Has from Company C, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, demonstrates how to apply a dressing to a wound during first aid training for the Independent High Electoral Counsel employees Aug. 16.

right here," he said. "This training is very important to the commissioners. It allows everyone to protect themselves while they begin the election process. They will be able to train their friends, family and other people when they travel during the elections."

Troops Deliver Food, Water to Poorest Residents of Al Kindi

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

BAGHDAD - Residents of the Al Kindi neighborhood lined up to receive food, water and shoes during a humanitarian assistance mission conducted by the Soldiers of Company E, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, Aug. 16.

Co. E, which is attached to 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, focused on getting supplies to some of the poorest families in the central Baghdad area, according to their top non-commissioned officer, 1st Sgt. Kenneth Patrick.

Patrick said that there are 140 families living in the targeted area and that his Soldiers were able to provide supplies to almost half of those families.

"We dropped off water, beans, noodles, sugar - minor necessities, but ones we thought could feed families up to five," he said. "We were able to drop off about 60 packages of those today."

"We estimated that a normal family would probably use about five-point-five pounds of sugar in about two weeks time, so we felt that if we broke everything down into five-point-five pounds then we would be able to feed up to 60



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

Spc. Emmanuel Danso, Co. E, 1st Bn., 5th Cav. Regt., gives a case of water to a girl during a humanitarian assistance mission in Baghdad's Al Kindi neighborhood Aug. 16.

families of four to five people for at least two weeks," Patrick explained.

Having the items pre-packaged and ready to be handed out also provided for a quick an orderly distribution, he added.

After receiving their food and water, fami-

lies with small children were also able to pick through a box of shoes to find one pair of shoes for each of their children.

Patrick said that this was the first humanitarian assistance mission that his Soldiers have conducted, and he credited much of the mis-

sion's success to the assistance that the village's chief provided them.

The mission was unannounced to the residents of the village, so one platoon was sent out early to begin setting up security and locate the chief to let him know their intentions. The chief quickly got the word out to his village, and as families came through and received their supplies, he recorded each family's name to ensure that during future humanitarian assistance missions the families who hadn't received supplies this time would be the first ones to receive them next time.

Patrick said that his company plans on conducting a similar type of humanitarian mission sometime during the next month to ensure that the other families in the area receive the same types of supplies. He said that missions such as this one help build a partnership between the Soldiers and the villagers.

"It brings us together. By us coming in and showing good nature and good faith to the community today, it gives them a little trust in us and shows that we're out there to try to help them," Patrick said. "We also gain trust in them because nothing happened on the mission and it was a successful mission."

Pool Therapy Helps Black Jack Soldiers Stay in the Fight

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq - With the opening of Montpetit Pool last month, Soldiers from the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division have had a daily escape from the summer heat.

While most Soldiers are making use of the cool waters for leisure, another group of Soldiers meet at the pool every Saturday morning to work through injuries sustained during the Black Jack Brigade's current deployment.

"Normally in the states, where you have the gym with the pool, you always incorporate pool therapy," explained Sgt. John Hart, a physical therapist tech attached to Company C, 15th Brigade Support Battalion. "It allows you to become more functional faster without compromising the rehab for certain injuries, whereas if you're doing weights in the gym or standard exercises in the gym, there's always that fine line where you can be doing the exercises and the next thing you know the patient has a setback because maybe the resistance is too much.

Hart, a native of Chicago who worked at Reynolds Army Community Hospital at Fort Sill, Okla., before being attached to the Black Jack Brigade prior to its deployment to Iraq last fall, said that he and physical therapist, Capt. Matthew Larson, began using the pool for therapy sessions soon after it was opened



(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, stretch out before beginning a session of pool therapy Aug. 11.

in July. "The thing about the pool is that it adds a different element to the exercise," explained Larson, who is originally from Lincoln, Neb. "It's something that's a little bit different so it challenges people in both a strengthening workout and an aerobic workout. The water provides good resistance for limb movement and it's a good lower impact, but still vigorous workout for people with certain injuries."

Pool therapy is just one aspect of Hart's and Larson's rehabilitation program, with patients also meeting twice a week at the FOB's gym and three times a week at the troop medical clinic, but according to Hart the pool therapy sessions seem to be a favorite among the patients.

According to Spc. Tyler Burdette, a Soldier with Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, who is currently undergoing physical therapy after tearing a ligament in his knee, pool therapy is the most demanding workout that they go through.

"It's the hardest, most strenuous thing we do," the Louisville, Ky. native said. "But it helps a lot because a lot of times with injuries you can't support your own body weight, and that's the hardest part about working out - you can't support it and the pool helps with that so it's really good."

Like Burdette, most of the Soldiers undergoing pool therapy have injuries to their lower bodies, and most of the exercise are designed to work out the patients' ankles and knees.

"It's mainly a lower extremity workout so we start with just some basic leg stretches and then some non-impact exercises like flutter kicks," Larson, who was attached to the brigade from Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, explained. "If you have a knee injury or an ankle injury you can get a good workout because you're still moving everything, but you're not impacting that injury as hard as you would by running in formation or

that sort of thing. At the same time, you're working on muscle endurance and muscle strength because you're moving it against the resistance of the water."

For Soldiers with upper body injuries such as Sgt. Amanda Sweesy, who has been undergoing physical therapy for her rotator cuff since March, individual exercises are integrated into the program to accommodate her specific needs.

"It doesn't cause me as much pain as the gym so I don't mind it at all," Sweesy, a Haskins, Ohio native who is assigned to Co. B, 15th BSB said.

According to Hart, the benefits of pool therapy can be experienced by any Soldier, not just those undergoing physical therapy, when integrated into a regular physical training program.

"You can even do it for preventive stuff," he explained. "I have a lot of people now who have found out about the pool therapy and they just come ask me, 'hey is there any exercise I can do in the pool for my PT.' A lot of them will incorporate this stuff into their PT programs. It's a really good strengthening exercise."

He said that in the past physical therapy was performed only at the combat support hospitals and units would either have to transport the Soldiers to the CSH daily or risk losing the Soldier for several months while they lived and underwent rehab at the CSH.

"It was really demanding on the units because a lot of these maneuver units and these units that go out and do these patrols need these guys - they need the manpower," Hart said. "It was really hard and demanding on the units to continue on and do the mission properly without the proper personnel."

"Overall, I think that physical therapy this far forward is a really good idea.

I think it's helping the brigade combat teams stay in the fight better."

Hart said that he is only expecting to be able to take advantage of the pool for therapy

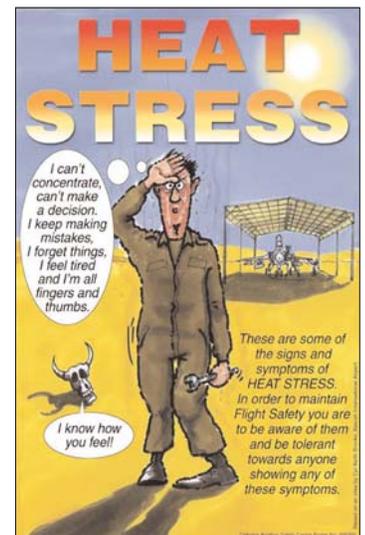
sessions for another two months before the weather gets too cool, but that he is hoping that the next unit assigned to FOB Prosperity will pick up with it where he and Larsen leave off.

"We'll come up with a program and when the next unit comes in we'll have them take over," he said. "That's our goal, to have a program that can grow and that's already set up and established so that other units and other physical therapy techs and therapists can fall into it, and just go from there."

"This can be a really good thing. Just like any athlete, you need proactive, injury preventive stuff, and then when you get injured you need the right type of stuff to rehab so you don't lose your career out here. There's a lot of really good things going on with physical therapy. We're trying to incorporate into these brigade combat teams and keep these guys in the fight."



Sgt. Amanda Sweesy, a Soldier with Company B, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, who is undergoing physical therapy for her rotator cuff, works on her exercises with the brigade's physical therapy tech, Sgt. John Hart Forward Operating Base Prosperity's Montpetit Pool Aug. 11.



Paratroopers Push Through the Pain

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

HAD MAKSAR, Iraq - A CH-47 Chinook helicopter touched down in a small clearing outside Had Maksar, a village in the Diyala River Valley, Iraq.

Immediately, the ramp lowered and a group of Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers streamed out of the chopper to prepare for their mission.

The Soldiers were about to endure two days of Operation Hoplite, where they would clear houses and palm groves in and around Had Maksar - all while fighting temperatures in the 120s.

"There is a lot that goes through your mind," said Staff Sgt. Adam Jeter, Company A, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08. "You're not sure what you're getting into.

"As soon as the wheels hit the ground, your immediate thought is if you are going to make contact or not when you hit the (landing zone)," said Jeter.

"You don't really know what to expect," said Spc. Mario Mendoza, also with Co. A, 5-73 Cav.

"When you hit the LZ you could take con-

tact immediately, but that's why you pull security," said Mendoza.

After the Chinook took off, the Soldiers left the field and began clearing houses. Each of the men knew the harsh conditions of fatigue - referred to by many Soldiers as "the suck," - they were going to face in the near future.

"The suck starts to hit after about two or three hours of clearing, even though we started at roughly two o'clock in the morning," said Jeter. "It doesn't take long because you're wearing (individual body armor), in other words, 40 to 50 pounds.

"Since we did an air assault mission, all the gear that you're taking with you is on your back," he said. "So you're looking at carrying 110 or 120 pounds on your back.

"It doesn't take long for that to set in," said Jeter. "It gets rough.

"I mean it's only a couple of hours until your body is wanting to give out on you," he said.

"For this particular mission it just started to suck when it started getting hotter," said Mendoza. "Your gear starts to weigh down and your water is all hot.

"You just want to get done with it," he said.

With the harsh conditions, the Soldiers have to find ways to continue on and keep focus.

"It's up in the head," said Mendoza.

"You just have to keep going.

"Sometimes I think of worse situations we've been in," he said. "Some of the time you just don't think about it and just continue on with what you are doing."

"The way that I have always gotten through and... maintain my focus is, first of all, my immediate situation - me and my men," said Jeter. "My goal from day one was to make sure myself and my men made it home alive," he said. "I can pretty much deal with anything as long as I make sure that my guys get home alive.

"Secondly, my family," continued Jeter. "I have a wife and three kids, and I want to make it home to them.

"Dealing with that short bit of pain is worth it to make sure I have my focus and stamina to make it through," he said.

After all of their assigned houses had been cleared, the Soldiers found a house to stay in that night. The next morning, they had to complete the last stage of the mission, which was to clear the palm groves.

"We call the palm groves Vietnam," said Mendoza. "The humidity is just (ridiculous) there."

Getting up in the morning and knowing that they are going to go through possibly worse conditions than the day before did not faze Jeter.

"It almost becomes kind of comedic," said

Jeter. "You get up and you know it's going to suck," he said. "You know you are getting ready to go through hell, and you know your backs going to hurt... you're going to get dehydrated and feel light headed.

"The palm groves are going to be humid, and you're going to be bent over trying to walk down under the (vineyards)," said Jeter.

"You get to the point where you know it's going to happen one way or the other, so you may as well laugh about it," he said.

Mendoza said it could have been worse.

"We did it when it was still relatively cool out, so it wasn't that bad," he said.

"When it gets hotter in the day, it's not dry anymore -- it's humid," said Mendoza, "which makes it that much worse.

"The vineyards are the worst because they are so low," he said. "It sucks to be bent over walking around in the IBA.

"The only thing that was going through my head was 'Last day of this (stuff),' " said Mendoza.

Jeter said that each mission gives him something to reflect on for future operations.

"It does get easier each time, because each time you can fine tune what you didn't do perfect the last time," he said. "With each mission comes that additional refinement that makes you that much better for the next one."



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

Staff Sgt. Adam Jeter, Company A, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, rests after eight hours of clearing houses in Had Maksar, Iraq, during Operation Hoplite, Aug. 4. The Soldiers spent two days searching for terrorists in 120 degree weather.



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

High Five!

Staff Sgt. David Simmons, a team leader with 725th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, gives local children a pack of gum while clearing Sheik Mazen Village, Iraq, a village in the Diyala River Valley, in support of Operation Lightning Hammer Aug. 17.

Judge Takes Journey Through the Ranks to Find His Niche

By Spc. Ryan Stroud
3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAQOUBA, Iraq -- He was a successful attorney in his home state of New Jersey, holding a partnership that had him working 16-hour days during his busy work week. But at the age of 30, the attorney felt he was missing something.

A supporter of the war in Iraq, the flourishing attorney



Capt. Paul Curry, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 25th Infantry Division, attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, is stationed in Baqouba, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08.

decided to do the unthinkable - quit his practice to join the U.S. Army as a cavalry scout.

Today, and now at the age of 33, this former cavalry scout has once again jumped back into the whirling world of law, this time as the Legal Systems Judge Advocate and Operations Judge Advocate in support of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, who is stationed in Baqouba, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08.

But the change hasn't been easy for Capt. Paul Curry, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 25th Infantry Division. Just over nine months ago, he was a specialist, preparing for deployment to Iraq. He now is a part of the proud group of officers who run the "Grey Wolf" Brigade.

"I enlisted as a 19D, cavalry scout, and was reassigned into the training room, a job I didn't really enjoy," said Curry while discussing his reasons for becoming an officer.

"My colonel and sergeant major presented me with the opportunity, since I was already an attorney, to put in an application for [Judge Advocate General]," he continued. "Three months later, I was picked up for JAG and in October, I left for commissioning."

From an outsider's perspective, Curry progressed through his new rank quickly.

"I was given first lieutenant rank, but I progressed no faster than anyone else in my class," Curry stated. "[We all] got our rank within three or four days in July."

"People told me it would be better to be an officer... but I have found that you have just as many bosses, senior as an officer, just as you do enlisted," he said. "But it feels like you're changing teams, [though] your basic military

bearing stays the same. The biggest difficulty I've had is convincing myself up here," as he points to his head.

"For the first couple of weeks after I had pinned on my rank, I would see a first sergeant, sergeant first class, walk by and snap a salute," Curry joked, "and I would quickly go into panic mode to find out who they were saluting and ready my explanation for why I hadn't.

"[Others saluting me] caught me off-guard for a while," he continued. "It was a good feeling but also an embarrassing feeling. I wasn't used to it; it took some time to get comfortable with."

While he's since overcome his shyness towards salutes being directed to him, Curry says he enjoyed his time as an enlisted Soldier but now looks forward to his future as a leader.

"When I left being a 19D, I feel that I was a very good shot and a good scout," continued Curry. "I don't feel as accomplished yet at this job. I still have more to accomplish and I won't be finished until I feel I have done that."

Curry does have advice to those who are thinking about "switching sides" from enlisted to officer.

"Find out internally what you want to do with the Army," he said. "The Army gives you so many opportunities... whether it is to stay enlisted or become an officer, check into the different [Military Occupation Specialties] or different posts.

"But if someone is unhappy being enlisted, becoming an officer is not always the answer," Curry warns. "You shouldn't make your decision [to become an officer] on money or on perceived respect. Find out what you really want to do, and do it."

Warrior Brigade Reaches Retention Goal

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - The fiscal year hasn't even ended yet, but the retention rate of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade "Warriors," 1st Cavalry Division, has already smashed its goal for reenlistments - and there is no sign they're slowing.

The Army sets yearly retention goals for every unit. The 1st ACB's goal this year was 460 and they are at 526 as of Aug. 2, said Charleston, S.C., native Master Sgt. Melissa McNorton, the senior brigade career counselor.

Although the retention noncommissioned officers do all the leg work and paper work, they'll say it's the Soldiers who really make things happen, said McNorton.

"(Reenlisting) says that our Soldiers value the commitment that they've made to the Army, to the Army's mission and also to the brigade," she said.

A lot of people think that the large bonuses are the only reason that many Soldiers are reenlisting, but Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Spiva, the top noncommissioned officer of 1st ACB, believes it takes more than just money to keep Soldiers "Army Strong."

"Everybody has different reasons. Some do it for family, some do it for job security, some do it for the money, but I think it's probably more than that," said Spiva, who hails from Sutter Creek, Calif.

"There's not any amount of money to make people do this. They do it because they like to do it ... they do it because they believe in what they're doing," he said.

Staff Sgt. David Villanueva, a UH-60 Black Hawk maintenance technical inspector

for Company D, 3rd "Spearhead" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, felt reenlisting during a time of war showed an extraordinary level of commitment to the Soldiers' country.

"It shows a level of patriotism; under the conditions over here, in a war zone, it just shows that much more patriotism in my book," said Villanueva who hails from El Paso, Texas.

Villanueva knows about that patriotism first hand - he was the mid-career Soldier who put his brigade at 100 percent of their annual retention goal. The term "mid-career" means that the Soldier who has already reenlisted once will still have less than 10 years of military service upon the completion of his second commitment.

Although the Warrior Brigade is piling on the reenlistments, they know it isn't a frivolous decision to be made on the fly, said Spiva. He points out some ideas to consider before taking the plunge.

"If they're married, they need to talk with their spouses and their kids if they have kids. It's a family affair," said the husband and father of three.

"They've got that saying that says, 'We enlist Soldiers, but we reenlist families,' and that's pretty true," said Spiva.

Aside from discussing this important matter with their family, there is one other point to consider, said the Warriors' senior noncommissioned officer.

"They've got to believe in what they're doing, regardless of whether they're single or married," said Spiva.

"They've got to think that they are contributing to this fight ... that they're doing some good," he said.

Villanueva, who has spent time in Central



(U.S. Army photo)

Torrance, Calif., native Capt. Cecil Nix (left), the commander of Company D, 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, gives the oath of enlistment to El Paso, Texas, native Staff Sgt. David Villanueva, a technical inspector for Co. D at Camp Taji, Iraq. Villanueva re-enlistment put the 1st ACB at 100 percent of their retention goal before the fiscal year had come to an end.

America, Korea, Bosnia and twice in Iraq, agreed with Spiva's sentiment.

As a medical evacuation crew chief on his last deployment to Iraq, Villanueva felt he was definitely contributing to the fight.

He did his job well because lives depended on it, he said.

Soldiers who don't want to make the Army a career can still benefit from it because of its many programs for educational advancement and professional develop-

ment, said McNorton. During his new commitment, Villanueva plans to take advantage of the educational benefits and obtain a business degree, he said.

Even though the Warriors' retention goal has been met and then some, there is no end in sight for reenlistments, said Spiva.

"We're not going to stop," he said. "We're not going to slow down. We want to just keep right on going and work through this (deployment)."

10th Mountain Brigade Recognizes 1st Air Cavalry's Support

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Leaders from the 2nd "Commando" Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, visited the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, here Aug. 13 to show their thanks for the aviation brigade's coverage of their area of operations.

Huffman, Texas, native Col. Mike Kershaw, Commando commander, presented a captured anti-aircraft weapon system to Traverse City, Mich., native Col. Dan Shanahan, commander of the 1st ACB "Warriors."

Kershaw also presented commemorative plaques to Lt. Col. Michael Shenk, commander of 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, who hails from Carlisle, Pa., and Lt. Col. Timothy DeVito, commander of the 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, from Orlando, Fla.

Shenk commands a battalion of UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters which supported the Commandos on numerous air assaults and other air missions. The 3-227th Assault Helicopter Battalion assisted with the search for three missing Soldiers from Task Force Marne by conducting multiple air assaults and moving Soldiers across the battlefield in an effort to find their missing Commandos.

The 3-227th AHB also conducted its first air assault on this deployment with the Commandos on the anniversary of the first ever air assault conducted in the Ia Drang Valley in Vietnam, 1965 - depicted in the movie "We Were Soldiers," said



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

Col. Mike Kershaw (right), commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, presents Lt. Col. Michael Shenk (left), commander of 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, with a plaque Aug. 13 to show his gratitude for a job well done while their two units worked together in Iraq, during a ceremony at Camp Taji, Iraq.

Kershaw.

Kershaw expressed his thanks to the Spearhead Battalion for its help in such a difficult, yet critical time for his brigade.

"When we got hit on (May 12), we got hit hard, and it was

a rough day for our brigade. We went after the bad guys, but the fact is 3,300 little infantrymen ... can only get around so far in 330 square miles ... and we couldn't go after those people without (your) component," he said to those from 1st ACB in attendance for the presentation ceremony.

Shenk was proud of his battalion and was honored to support the Commando Brigade, he said.

"We surely appreciate being able to do not only the first (air assault) with you on the anniversary of LZ X-Ray, but every one after that which was superb," said Shenk.

"Without a doubt the 'Big Guns' call sign, the attack aviation assets of this squadron, have played a great part in what we've done," the Commando commander said.

DeVito said he felt humbled to be recognized from a ground unit which showed nothing less than true professionalism while Big Guns were flying overhead.

"It's humbling because those guys have the more difficult mission, obviously. They're out there every day and night, on the ground, shoulder to shoulder with the Iraqis, doing the hard work out there to positively affect this mission," said DeVito.

The Commandos haven't left Iraq yet, but they didn't want to miss out on recognizing the importance of the Warrior Brigade's mission to the troopers on the ground, said Kershaw.

After the plaques were handed out, it was time for Kershaw to head back to his area of operation, but not without saying the Soldiers Creed with Shanahan and the rest of the room, recognizing the bond that whether they're in the air or on land, they are all Soldiers - brothers-in-arms fighting for a common cause.



(Photo by Master Sgt. Winston Churchill, 615th Aviation Support Battalion)

Unmanned Only in Air

Baton Rouge, La., native Sgt. Michael Jack, an unmanned aerial vehicle maintainer for Company E, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, recovers a Shadow UAV after it landed at Camp Taji, Iraq. Soldiers from Co. E run 24-hour operations keeping the UAVs in the air in support of ground troops.

Father Reenlists Air Cav Son in Combat Zone

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - It wasn't the large cash bonus; it wasn't the Air Assault School or civilian education incentives, none of these made this Soldier's second reenlistment special.

This 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division Soldier's reenlistment was special because his father showed up to be his reenlisting officer.

Fayetteville, N.C., native Staff Sgt. Jeremy Walker, a maintenance technical inspector for Company B, 615th "Cold Steel" Aviation Support Battalion, took his second oath of enlistment Aug. 6, from, Savannah, Ga., native Chief Warrant Officer 4 Rhimington Walker, the brigade target officer for the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div.

At first glance, and maybe second glance, most people would not think that Walker senior, an African American, and Walker junior, a Caucasian, were father and son. That's because Walker senior was Jeremy's step dad when he adopted him at the age of six.

Because his father so greatly influenced his life and his military career, Jeremy didn't give it a second thought when he had to decide who would reenlist him, he said.

"There's no one that's inspired me more other than my mother and father. The opportunity to have my dad come do it - I mean, who can say that they had their dad come and reenlist them and be their reenlistment officer (in Iraq)?" he said.

His dad, who is stationed in Mosul, Iraq, was honored by the request, but was worried at first if he was going to be able to make it, he said.

"When I initially got the call, the first thing



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

Fayetteville, N.C., native Staff Sgt. Jeremy Walker (right), a maintenance technical inspector for Company B, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, pauses for a photo after taking the oath of reenlistment from his father, Savannah, Ga., native Chief Warrant Officer 4 Rhimington Walker, the brigade target officer for 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div., during a ceremony Aug. 6 at Camp Taji, Iraq

I thought about was, "Will I be able to get a flight?" said the senior Walker.

Since the Army tries to fulfill requests like this for Soldiers who are reenlisting, they came through, and Rhimington was on his way to see his son.

"I'm pleased that the Army ... gives you the opportunity to actually fly across the country, from one FOB to another, to be able to do that

for your son," he said.

The junior Walker is well on his way to making a career out of the Army. He knew from the moment he first enlisted that he was staying in for the long haul just like his parents.

His father already has 28 years in service and his mother is a command sergeant major currently working at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas. He even

has a younger brother who is an air traffic controller based out of Fort Rucker, Ala., he said.

Jeremy also has a younger sister - who is the black sheep of the family - attending college to be a surgeon, instead of joining the military, he said.

"Right now my younger sister (is) currently at college over at the University of Texas, El Paso. She - as far as I know - doesn't plan on joining the military, but you never know with us," he said with a laugh.

As far as his military career is concerned, Jeremy had it all planned out before he took his first oath of enlistment, he said.

During his remarks after reenlisting for the second time, he told those in attendance that he'll be reenlisting again when the time came - no matter the bonus or incentives.

On the topic of bonuses, when his reenlistment noncommissioned officer offered him a hefty bonus and Air Assault School, something he's always wanted to do, those two things had no bearing on whether he would reenlist or not, said the junior Walker.

"Not that they were a great influence on my reenlistment - I was going to reenlist if they gave me two dollars - but they ended up giving me \$17,000, and I'm going to Air Assault School, as well.," he said.

Jeremy feels that the Army provides a rewarding and fulfilling life, but it is up to the Soldier to make it work out in a positive way.

"The Army is what you make of it. It can do great things for you or you can just hate it the whole time you're here and just go ahead and leave," he said. "Take advantage of what the Army has to offer and you'll improve your life as well as help defend your country."



An Estonian Soldier receives a glass of water from an Iraqi boy as other members of Estonian Platoon 15 take a break in Saba Al Bor, a town on the northern outskirts of Baghdad Province, during a search of a predominantly Shia neighborhood August 7.



Two Estonian Soldiers from Estonian Platoon 15 attached to the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry

Garryowen Teams to Clean the Streets

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

SAB AL BOR, Iraq - Nearly 150 combined troops from the 1st Squadron, 7th "Garryowen" Cavalry Regiment, the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized), the Sab Al Bor Iraqi Police and Estonian troops from Estonian Platoon 15 teamed with a few neighborhood watch volunteers to clear the streets here of insurgents and extremists as they moved in teams through each neighborhood in the city Aug. 11.

Covering every block during the operation, the Garryowen troops and their joint partners searched door to door in each house for possible weapons caches and at the same time continued to build relationships and trust with the locals who they have been getting to know for the last nine months. They also took the opportunity to garner any possible information that the people could give them on insurgents or extremists operating in their neighborhoods.

"This is a large multi-troop operation that shows the people we're out here to support them by making their streets safer," said Capt. Timothy Dugan, commander, Troop B, 1st Sqdrn., 7th Cav. Regt. whose unit patrols the village every day and during the operation worked with other Garryowen units to include their Headquarters Troop, Darkhorse Forward Support Troop and the attached Troop D, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment. "This is the largest dismounted operation that the people have seen in this city for a long time."

"It's a significant mission because it's the first time we've had the Iraqi Police on a search with us," added Dugan, who hails from Audubon, Pa.

Within a few minutes of his troops hitting the streets, Dugan received a call on his radio. Information received by volunteers led the Estonian troops working with Dugan's Soldiers to finding some blasting caps often used in the making of improvised explosive devices and they were able to

detain one suspect.

Shortly after getting the call of other tips from volunteers, 1st Div. (Mech.) discovered a Sten suspect.

"Anytime we get information, we pay the people money," said Dugan. "The people are giving us information. We don't know what the locals do-they have been a great help in our neighborhoods."

At each stop during the search, the people they have built relationships with are giving them information about each street. In the alleys and courtyards, the soldiers are giving candy and toys to children who are giving them information.

Along with searches, the soldiers are giving the people things which included food and other items.

"The people here see that we are here to help them. It's an operation like this one when we are here for a good day," Dugan said. "A day's worth of rice, usually enough to feed 20 people for 7,000."

On one of the city streets, Dugan was greeted by a woman who said she was a woman who had been a Sten suspect.

Dugan spoke with her through a translator and gave her 10 Iraqi dinars from his pocket to help her.

"So how are things going here?" Dugan asked.

With smiling eyes, she answered him.

"It's good." Things have been improving since the attacks and the people are feeling safer. The Iraqi security forces and coalition





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

Regiment search a hole for hidden weapons, during a joint operation in Sab Al Bor, Iraq Aug. 11.



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

Pvt. Juri Tikk, a scout with Estonian Platoon 15, which works with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, keeps a watchful eye on the streets in Saba Al Bor, a town on the northern outskirts of Baghdad Province, during a search of a predominantly Shia neighborhood August 7.

with ISF, Estonians ets of Sab Al Bor

I, Dugan also received word that based off Iraqi Army troops from the 2nd Bde., 9th IA machine gun and had detained one more

tion from the people here, we're making le are becoming more confident about givnow what the insurgents look like and the it help in identifying the bad guys in their

rch, the troops would see familiar faces of tips with in the houses and store fronts lind near each house, Soldiers handed out ran up to talk with the troopers.

ldiers gave out humanitarian aid packages items.

we're here to help and anytime during an e can get them food and other rations it's food package contains seeds, beans and 0,000 people and this is a town of about

Dugan stopped by a small local store where tile.

ugh an interpreter while also pulling a few buy a soda from her small corner shop. here?" Dugan asked the shop keeper.

vered "zahn" which is the Arabic word for /ing over the past several months with fewer ig more confident and safe with seeing the on troops patrolling their streets, she told

Dugan.

According to Dugan, this is typical of how most of the people in Sab Al Bor are feeling these days. Dugan said he attests the decrease in violence and improved stability in the area to the daily presence of Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition troops working out of a nearby joint security station along with the recent success of neighborhood watch volunteers who have aided in the catching of insurgents and extremists.

When Spc. Roy Loucks, a mortarman attached to Troop B, first came to the Sab Al Bor area, attacks were constant and he said he's seen first hand the changes of which Dugan speaks.

"Before we rolled into the village, things were in total chaos," said Loucks, a Honolulu, Hawaii native. "Things have gotten much better. We used to have to do a lot more counter fires to intimidate the insurgents but things have gotten more quiet now."

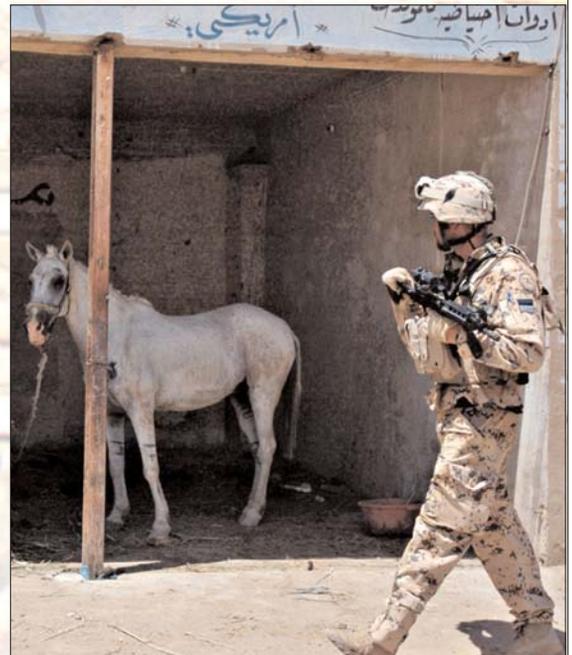
Loucks, who has been learning Arabic to better communicate with the locals, said he enjoys his work on the streets of Sab Al Bor.

"This is what I joined the Army to do," said Loucks. "If there's no security then the people can't enjoy their lives, it makes me feel good to know that I'm doing my part to help them. Most of them are telling us that they can now come outside with more piece of mind."

After the joint operation ended with two suspects in custody and some confiscated contraband weapons in tow, Spc. Daniel Emblen, who is attached to Troop B and works with the Estonian platoon, reflected on the success of the day's operation.

"It really has been a great mission," said Emblen, an Elizabethtown, Ky native. "We feel like we're accomplishing great things here-continuing to support the Iraqis as they take care of things and move towards their transition."

"I also love working with the Estonians, who are a great group of guys," he added.



Staff Sgt. Kristo Noorhani, a scout with Estonian Platoon 15 passes a horse in Saba Al Bor, a town on the northern outskirts of Baghdad Province, during a search of a predominantly Shia neighborhood August 7.

More Than 300 Iraqis Get Free Medical Treatment

By Spc. Benjamin Gable
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD - An empty school building was transformed into a makeshift clinic Aug. 15, as coalition forces treated residents of the Al Jami Ah neighborhood for illnesses.

Medics with Headquarters and



1st. Lt. Abbas Albasri, an Iraqi Army physician, evaluates a young boy's eye for damage during a combined medical operation with Coalition Forces in Baghdad's Al Jami Ah neighborhood Aug. 15.

Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, and physicians and pharmacists with the Iraqi Army treated more than 300 area residents for numerous ailments and illnesses.

"The goal of this mission was to put the IA in front and give them the lead in working with their people," said Maj. Kevin Horde, a family physician with the unit. "It's the IAs treating their own, but with our help."

Iraqis crowded the gates waiting for their chance to see a physician. Men, women and children of all ages were lined up to seek medical attention. Many walked from different neighborhoods because healthcare in their communities is lacking.

Upon entering the facility, the Iraqis were signed in and asked to list their medical issues. Residents were seen for illnesses ranging from the common cold, to broken bones and birth defects.

Coalition medics brought the Iraqis in one by one to give them a complete check up.

After having their symptoms evaluated, the patients were seen by a physician for further evaluation. Their conditions were then diagnosed, and if possible, they were given a prescription to be filled by the Iraqi pharmacists on hand.

"Overall were here to help Iraqis gain confidence in their own healthcare system," said Maj. Kevin Horde.

Coalition Forces also handed out more than 200 humanitarian aid boxes for those



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

Pfc. Carlos Cruz, a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, checks an Iraqi's blood pressure at a high school during a medical operation in Baghdad's Al Jami Ah neighborhood Aug. 15.

in attendance. The boxes contained toiletries including toothbrushes, toothpaste, soaps and shampoo. Iraqis were also given clothing such as shoes and shirts for every age group. Soccer balls, children's toys and Iraqi flags were handed out, as well.

"It's good to be hands-on with the Iraqis to show how much we do care for their well

being," said Capt. Darrin Briseno, a physician's assistant with the unit. "We try to make sure everyone walks out of here with something."

The extra pharmaceuticals were given to the IA physicians to be taken to their outposts for future use. The unit hopes to set up another free clinic in the coming weeks.

US, Iraqi Forces Provide Water to Western Baghdad Neighborhood

By 1st Lt. Mike Gilotti
2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment

BAGHDAD - It took a water crisis to give U.S. and Iraqi forces an opportunity to earn the trust of the residents in the western neighborhood of Shula in the Iraqi capital. A portion of western Baghdad located in the Kadamiyah District stopped receiving water due to broken pipes from a failing water line. The crisis, and the quick reaction by U.S. and Iraqi forces, helped them to gain trust among the residents.

For more than nine months the Shula area patrolled by Company A, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment from Fort Bliss, Texas, was an area where the Jaish Al-Mahdi militia members had significant control.

"Patrols tried to give people the understanding that if no one in the area helped to give up JAM terrorists, and if attacks continued, there was nothing [Coalition Forces] could do until the attacks stopped," said Capt. Keith McCarty, the executive officer with Alpha Company.

"For a period of 48 hours there was no water and for weeks the situation regarding electricity continued to worsen" said Sgt. 1st Class Roberto Leon, a platoon sergeant for Alpha Company.

Coalition patrols were approached by local citizens about the water shortage. When the troops delivered the needed water to the community, U.S. and Iraqi forces gained the support of the people.

Alpha Company coordinated for a humanitarian aid drop of bottled water for the people of Shula. The mission was conducted jointly with the Iraqi Army and became an immediate attraction throughout the neighborhood. Children cheered for the Soldiers and Iraqi men thanked the officers and noncommissioned officers of both armies. Smiles were shared by everyone. Over a two day period, the company continued this humanitarian aid effort.

"Locals approached the patrols and said that they saw it as a

sign of offering and peace," said Capt. Jim Walker, commander of Alpha Company.

Residents said they blamed JAM for not fixing the problem and that the Americans were trying to help Iraqi citizens. Patrols have been conducted daily with the Soldiers of 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division to show the people of Shula that both American and Iraqi troops were

working to improve the situation.

"Alpha Company is now in the process of making more proposals for additional humanitarian missions and projects to continue this relationship with the local population," said 1st Lt. Moonerah Lao, 2-12 public affairs representative. "The company's efforts are truly making the difference in this war by clearly displaying the message that Coalition Forces are here to help and protect the people."



(Photo by 1st Lt. Mike Gilotti, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment)

An Iraqi woman carries away a case of bottled water from a humanitarian mission by Company A, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment. The troops passed out water to residents of Shula, a northwest Baghdad neighborhood which has had a water crisis due to broken water mains.

Bomb Production Facility Destroyed

By 1st Lt. Andrew Coody
1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment

BAGHDAD - Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers discovered an improvised explosive device production facility in an abandoned building in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Khadra Aug. 16.

Iraqi Police officers from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Regiment, 2nd National Police Division and Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, were led to the production site by an anonymous tip from a Khadra resident.

The search uncovered a kitchen area being used to produce homemade explosive material. Nine PVC pipes, three of which were ready-made pipe bombs, were discovered. Twenty pounds of half-inch ball bearings, 15 gallons of nitric acid, three high-powered rifles and various spools of cellophane and wire were also found.

An explosive ordnance disposal team detonated the cache on site, destroying the facility.



(Photo by 2nd Lt. James Gallagher, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment)

A cloud rises from an abandoned building, once used as a bomb-making facility, following a controlled detonation by an explosive ordnance team in western Baghdad's Khadra neighborhood Aug. 16.

Ministry of Oil Replaces Fuel Pumps Destroyed by Fire

By 1st Lt. Ray Ashworth
1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment

BAGHDAD - The Iraqi Ministry of Oil rebuilt an essential benzene pump station in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Khadra.

On July 10, an engine spark ignited a puddle of spilled benzene next to one of the pumps at the station. An explosion ensued, resulting in seven civilian deaths and all 10 benzene pumps being destroyed.

"It was very bad," said Famir Abus, one of three managers at the benzene sta-

tion. "But the Ministry of Oil gave us the money we needed to replace the pumps five days after the accident."

The Ministry of Oil provided the money for new pumps and paid contractors to fix the wiring for those pumps to help prevent any future accidents from occurring.

"Government workers worked every day to make sure the benzene station was open as soon as possible," remarked Muhammad Sigheed, another station manager.

Muhammad was quick to show that all 10 pumps were not only replaced, but the

Iraqi government provided money to purchase four new pumps, as well.

With government help, the Khadra benzene station opened 16 days after the accident. Now it has a larger fuel capacity and is better able to serve the citizens of Khadra. There is a constant stream of vehicles flowing through its gates with 15 employees on hand providing the customers with full service.

An added feature to the station since its reopening is the presence of Iraqi National Police officers from 2nd Battalion, 5th Regiment, 2nd National Police Division. Two police trucks guard

both the entrance and exit points, and police officers patrol the line and inspect the would-be customers.

"A few months ago, terrorists would come in and steal benzene, and there was no one to stop them," said Muhammad Sigheed. "But the National Police protect the station while we're open."

"The Khadra benzene station is very important to the city," said the local National Police commanding officer, Lt. Colonel Hassan. "With benzene, our citizens can drive to work and provide generators with fuel for electricity. So, it is part of our service to Khadra to help keep this station open."



(Photo by 1st Lt. Ray Ashworth, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment)

An accidental fire destroyed the benzene station in Khadra July 10. The Iraqi Ministry of Oil provided funds to repair the gas station, as well as supplied Iraqi National Police officers to guard the station during its hours of business.

Five Months Later, Troops Made Outpost 'Home'

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

BAGHDAD - Doing a lot with a little. It's the story of the U.S. Soldier: being faced with unfavorable odds, being given the necessities to work with, and being expected to accomplish something great.

The Soldiers of Company A, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division have upheld that tradition in southern Baghdad.

Attack Company was given an abandoned recreation center in the Aamel neighborhood of the Rashid District.

Out of a gym that was covered in bird droppings with a flooded basement and cluttered weight room, the Soldiers created a fully-functional outpost where they live and work.

In addition to the Co. A Soldiers, the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade Iraqi Mechanized National Police Training Team operates out of the COP.

On March 16, the troops moved in under cover of darkness and began work. Operating continually for 72 hours, the unit set up guard positions to establish a foothold in the middle of the Rashid District.

Now, the Black Lions have the "Jewel of southern Baghdad," as their battalion commander, Lt. Col. Patrick Frank, calls it.

Spc. Alan Noe, a Miami native with Co. A, 1-28 Inf., said it's easier to unwind there than at Forward Operating Base Falcon

while off mission.

"A little more relaxed than the FOB," Noe said. "There's no saluting. It's more of a relaxed environment at the operating base."

To help the Soldiers loosen up when they're on a mission, the COP has been outfitted with new air conditioners, refrigerators and generators to provide electricity.

"The quality of living has improved a lot since we first established an operating base," Noe said. "We like it here a lot. We all like it here."

Pvt. Coleman Hykes, an Okolona, Miss., native with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-28 Inf., said in addition to preferring the COP to the FOB, the outpost helps the company accomplish its mission.

"We're right here in our (area of operations). If something happens, we can go right out there," said Hykes, who is attached to Attack Company. "We don't have to do anything to get out here to get to our objective."

In addition to assisting with accomplishment of the mission, the outpost has multiple services available to the Soldiers, such as a phone service, unclassified internet access and a television hooked up to the American Forces Network.

Hykes added that while he feels safe and well-connected to his family back home, even his buddies have noticed the amenities COP Attack has to offer.

"I have friends that live back at (Joint Security Station Black Lion), and they say



Cpl. Jon Dorsey, a team leader with Co. A, 1st Bn., 28th Inf. Regt., 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div., takes advantage of the internet service at Coalition Outpost Attack, Aug. 2. In addition to the internet, a phone service is available for Soldiers to call home.

this is better."

Of all the services provided to the Soldiers, one of the most popular is the weight room.

Noe said he appreciates the benefits of some quality physical training.

"Getting a good work out is good for the body," he said. "It makes you feel better and improves your health."

"It's pretty sweet," said Pfc. Matthew

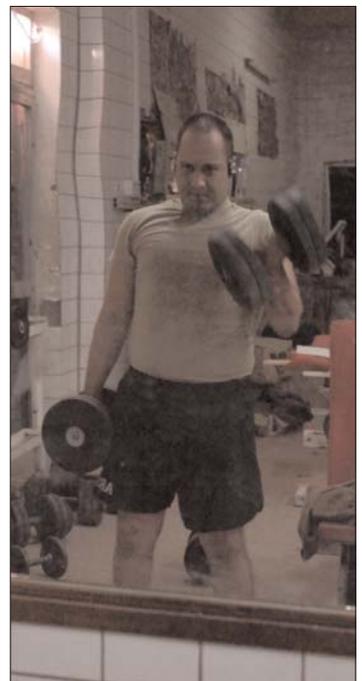
De Leon, a gunner for Company A, 1-28 Inf. from Yucaipa, Calif. "We can work out after every mission or when we're just chilling."

'Chilling' is not something these Soldiers get to do a lot, running approximately 200 missions a month. At any moment, they can go from relaxing to responding to enemy activity in their area of operations.



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

Spc. Joseph Mueller, with Co. A, 1st Bn., 28th Inf. Regt., rocks out during his down time at Coalition Outpost Attack, Aug. 3.



Pfc. Matthew De Leon, a gunner with Company A, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Yucaipa, Calif., pumps some iron in the weight room at Coalition Outpost Attack, Aug. 2.

Dragon Doctors Aid Iraqis in Southern Baghdad

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

BAGHDAD -When Gen. David Petraeus, the commander of Multi-National Forces-Iraq, goes before

Congress in September, one of the benchmarks for the success in Iraq will be the ability to provide essential services to Iraqis.

Multi-National Division-Baghdad forces took a step in the right direction by

providing medical services to the citizens of southern Baghdad, Aug. 11.

Task Force Dragon elements from the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, and the 610th Brigade Support Battalion teamed up with an Iraqi healthcare provider and two Iraqi nurses to treat civilians in the Ghartan region.

The Soldiers also provided the area with chlorine tablets to purify drinking water.

Citizens of the area turned out in force from mid-morning to the middle of the afternoon, braving the Iraqi heat all day long, showing how desperately the people needed the medical services.

Separate areas were set up to provide healthcare to men and women, respecting cultural sensitivities.

Sgt. Rashawnda Clugston, a human resources sergeant with HHC, 4th IBCT from Norman, Okla., said being able to help with the mission despite not being from a medical field was a rewarding experience.

"It was good to be a part of something," she said. "Working in an office all the time, I can't always see the good we're doing."

"It was good to see they were being seen and they were getting help."

Clugston, who contributed by search-

ing female patients, did not have to participate in the mission, but she chose to get involved in order to make a difference.

"I volunteered to be a part of something that made me feel good," she said.

Master Sgt. James Fales, a member of the 4th IBCT's Iraqi Security Forces cell from Raymore, Mo., said the mission helped American and Iraqi forces build a rapport with the civilians.

"The access to the local population will help build better relationship with the U.S. forces," he said.

"It also helps to legitimize the local authorities there," he said.

Whether or not the Soldiers return to provide further treatment depended on the perceived impact they made.

Fales said being able to help the people just this one time, especially the kids, was satisfying.

"I'm always reminds that no matter where you go on the planet, kids have the same sicknesses they have everywhere," the Purple Heart recipient said.

"If you can help take care of some of the minor illnesses, make them healthier, happier, it makes you feel good to do it," he said.



(Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith, 4th IBCT Public Affairs)

Sgt. 1st Class Brian Starns, the brigade surgeon noncommissioned officer in charge with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, checks a young boy's heartbeat during the unit's medical visit to southern Baghdad, Aug. 11.

Iraqis Attend Small Business Seminar in Hateen

By Pfc. Benjamin Gable
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

HATEEN, Iraq - Troops from 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, provided security for a small business seminar in the Hateen neighborhood of western Baghdad Aug. 6.

Soldiers cleared and cleaned a local school the day before to provide a safe environment for the event. This was the second seminar in two weeks to introduce business opportunities to area residents.

About a dozen Iraqis attended the seminar, where they discussed starting or improving a small business of their own.

The United States Agency for International Development micro-grant program offers up to \$2,500 dollars in cash or goods to legitimate businesses. USAID offers the money to businesses in Iraq to repair or expand, making them more viable.

Iraqis fill out an application indicating what they intend to do with the funds. The forms are reviewed, and if deemed legitimate, the business owners can then use the money to buy whatever may be needed to get their business running.

Capt. Brian McCall, a field artillery officer with the unit, spoke with the locals and advised them how to better their business opportunities.

He informed them after filling out their applications they can receive their money, typically within a week, and get on track.

"If we are creating jobs and opportunities, then that takes people off the streets that may otherwise look to the insurgency for money," he said.

Some of the residents are interested in open-



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

Hateen residents look over an application for a small business grant through the United States Agency for International Development micro-grant program seminar Aug. 6. These men hope to open a food stand and a clothing store in their neighborhood. Coalition Forces hosted a small business seminar to publicize the grant program which offers up to \$2,500 to Iraqi businessmen to help start or improve a business.

ing small retail businesses ranging from taxi cab services to barber shops. The shops they would open would be comparable to strip malls in the

states. The unit hopes to hold similar meetings monthly to expose Iraqis to business opportunities helping both themselves and their neighborhoods.

Commanding General Visits State-Run Leather Factory

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq - A senior military leader toured a state-run industry in eastern Baghdad Aug. 14, to see what the factory needed to increase production and employment.

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., commanding general of

Multi-National Division-Baghdad and the 1st Cavalry Division, visited the State Company for Leather Industries in the Zafaraniya section of eastern Baghdad. The factory produces leather jackets, while its partner company in Kufu produces athletic shoes and military boots. Together, the facilities produce leather coats, boots, belts, leather accessories, book bags and military and police items.

The factory tour started where skins are processed into

leather. The next phase took Fil to the shop where the leather pieces are sewn into jackets. Fil stopped by each area to greet the workers.

He looked at how the skins are prepared and then spoke with those who sew the pieces together. The workers greeted him with smiles and proudly displayed their work.

Mohamed Al-Dhalmi, the director general of the facility, met with Fil and Lt. Col. Wayne C. Grieme, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, to discuss problems the factory had with the sewing machines.

Rick Hintz of San Diego, an industry specialist with the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, attended the meeting to see how the project was coming and to gather information on how to help the factory.

Al-Dhalmi told Hintz the company's 75 sewing machines were unsuitable for industrial work. The machines were scuffing the leather and are more suited for light work such as household sewing.

"It wasn't fitting their needs," Hintz said. New machines are going to be purchased for the facility, with Al-Dhalmi choosing which ones to are the right type. However, the 75 machines they already have are going to be reallocated to ensure they help someone else.

The new sewing machines should be in within a month. Hintz said one motivation behind getting the factory up and running is that it can employ up to 3,000 people. Right now, Al-Dhalmi said only 700 people work at the facility.

"The good thing about increasing employment there is that it increases the supply chain," Hintz said.

Having the factory running at full capacity would open up jobs for those who supply the hides, move the shipments and the retailers who sell it. It would also boost employment for mechanics and machinery manufacturers.

"We're hoping for that," he said. Hintz added the working relationship with Al-Dhalmi has been good.

"He is very happy to work with Americans," he said. "He's very full of information and that helps."



(Photo by Spc. Courtney Marulli, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr. (left), commanding general of Multi-National Division-Baghdad and the 1st Cavalry Division, visits the State Company for Leather Industries in the Zafaraniya section of eastern Baghdad to see how the factory is operating and to ascertain what is needed to increase employment and production.

1-8 Cavalry Conducts Humanitarian Aid Mission in New Baghdad

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HOPE, Iraq - Fighting a war can leave a wake of destruction, but some Iraqis are given hope through humanitarian aid missions conducted by troops from the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, operating in eastern Baghdad as part of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

Humanitarian aid missions enable Soldiers to go door-to-door and see what the Iraqis need and to deliver needed food. Information is also passed out on how residents can get other supplies and medicine.

Sgt. Gary Wilkerson, fire support section sergeant for Company B, 1-8 Cavalry, said the reception by residents was good, as his platoon conducted its first humanitarian assistance delivery to a new neighborhood, the Shawra wa um Jidir neighborhood of the New Baghdad District, Aug. 12.

"They accepted us over there," Wilkerson said. "There's actually more support for Coalition Forces in that area."

A majority of those neighborhoods are poor. Women and children shyly answer the knock of Soldiers at their gate, their bare feet trodding over broken rock and brick. Their clothes are dirty, but they smile and grateful-



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

Sgt. Gary M. Wilkerson, fire support section sergeant talks with a woman concerning items her family needs during a humanitarian assistance delivery to residents of the Shawra wa um Jidir neighborhood in eastern Baghdad Aug. 12.

ly accept the packages the Soldiers give them.

While they handed out food, Wilkerson, a native of Monroe, La., and his Soldiers also

collected information, such what residents think of plans being carried out in Baghdad.

Wilkerson said a lot of thought was put into what food would be handed out, and it

was geared toward a Muslim diet. Boxes included corn oil and beans and other items that they can use to cook for their families.

Inside the boxes, Wilkerson placed an information packet telling residents about curfews in effect and information regarding no-interest small business grants. In this way, Wilkerson said, the people know what is available and it allows them to know where to get grants to helping to get their businesses up and running.

"It's geared toward businesses that have been affected by the war or militia activity particularly," Wilkerson said.

Wilkerson said his unit will assess the impact of the humanitarian aid missions when he speaks with community leaders. Conducting the humanitarian drops and ensuring the platoon is secure is a job for the Soldiers who accompany Wilkerson.

Spc. Jesus A. Santana, an infantryman in Company B, 1-8 Cavalry, said he saw some mixed reactions from the people when his platoon conducted the humanitarian aid mission.

"From what it seems yesterday, the first couple houses were excited and the rest were not," he said. "Then people filled the streets wanting something." Santana, a native of Los Angeles, said they try to help the people out as much as they can.

Residents of Hababiyah Welcome 1-8 Cavalry Troops

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUS-TAMIYAH, Iraq - Knowing the lay of the land is important for a successful operation, but so is knowing the local people and showing them that Coalition Forces are here to help, and not harm them.

Soldiers from 2nd Platoon, Company D, 1st Squadron, 8th Cavalry, attached to the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, have been given the task of providing security and helping the people of Hababiyah, an eastern Baghdad neighborhood. On Aug. 6, the platoon went into the neighborhood for the first time to give humanitarian aid and other supplies to the residents.

Sgt. William A. Pulkinen, tank commander, said his hasn't had any problem in that area yet.

"If we continue to do this, we can prevent mass chaos," he said. Pulkinen, of Raynham, Mass., said one goal is to get water and electricity problems in the area fixed.

Spc. Ronnie H. Page, a tank crewman, said it's important to gain the trust of the peo-

ple in that area, so they can help provide critical information and not attack Coalition Forces.

Page, of Camdenton, Mo., said they conducted a census to help get an overall make-up of the neighborhood.

"We want to establish a relationship with the people," he said. "As far as we know, no one has been in that sector for a long time. We're trying to establish relationships so they know we're good."

Pulkinen said everything is still new to the platoon since they recently moved into this area. He said another goal of the census and house-to-house calls is to establish which tribal leaders are in charge of the neighborhood. The houses they went to were chosen at random.

Some of the houses they came across were abandoned. These homes were continuously checked to ensure no one had stolen the home by moving in, Pulkinen said.

So far, Pulkinen said the platoon has not had any problems.

"From the times we've been up there, we've been well-received in that area," he said. "At the same time, we try to ensure that we can mitigate any attacks."

Page said most Iraqis act nice, but only

time will tell if the neighborhood is truly friendly to Coalition Forces.

"It's good to start getting on the ground and meeting these people and see

how they are," he said. "Just from the first impression, you get a good idea of how the (neighborhood) is going to work out."



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

Members of Company D, 1st Squadron, 8th Cavalry, attached to 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, went door-to-door in the neighborhoods of Hababiyah, in eastern Baghdad, to greet the people and collect information.

Battalion Shifts Focus on Essential Services to Residents

By 2nd Lt. Ryan Wood
2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq - In an effort to adapt to the ever-changing battlefield in the heart of Iraq, the Rangers of the 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, are on the move.

With a recent drop in sectarian violence in the Ranger area and the increased need for services, the battalion has been able to shift its focus on helping to provide essential

services to eastern Baghdad residents.

"Our initial task when we arrived in Baghdad was three-fold," said the Ranger commander, Lt. Col. Ralph Kauzlarich. "We were to reduce sectarian violence, assist in the development of Iraqi Security Forces and assist in providing essential services to the people. Our efforts up until now have decreased the violence level significantly, and now we are reorganizing to better achieve our remaining objectives."

Before August, the Rangers were responsible for five sections in eastern Baghdad that comprised 32 neighborhoods. With the new distribution of forces, Task Force

Ranger will now only be responsible for four areas with a population of approximately 350,000 people.

According to Kauzlarich, this change will allow a greater concentration of forces and better align the 2-16th's boundaries with the Iraqis they work with.

This change from clearance to control operations won't cause major changes in the daily actions of the companies operating in the area, said Maj. Brent Cummings, the battalion executive officer. It will allow an evolution to operations which are less intrusive on the general population.

"The companies will continue to conduct combat patrols and dominate the terrain," Cummings said. "What will change is a shift to more intelligence-driven, pinpoint raids instead of clearance operations, allowing us to control the zone better."

The boundary shift has also aligned 2-16 with a single National Police Battalion instead of the two that the Rangers were working with in the past. Kauzlarich said this will allow much better communication, coordination and training opportunities.

The increased security and drop in violence has also allowed a more concentrated effort to provide essential services to the people. With many Iraqis in the area living with no power, water or sewage removal, the efforts of the Rangers and the local Iraqi Security Forces are their only links to these needs.

"Our guys are involved in building essential services every day," Cumming said. "They will help ISF provide security for essential services projects and work with the ISF to bring new projects into the neighborhoods so that the people can see and benefit from the results of the security that Task Force Ranger is providing."

Dozens of projects are being worked throughout the Ranger area, with many nearing completion. Sewage projects, water treatment, power generation and transmission, and school rehabilitation projects are all in progress.

In one much-needed project, the battalion is providing 40,000 gallons of water per week to local neighborhoods and increasing that amount to 94,500 gallons per week by the end of the month.



(Photo by 2nd Lt. Ryan Wood, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment)

During a patrol in eastern Baghdad, Spc. Barry McDonald provides security in front of his vehicle.

Troops Go the Distance to Care for Wounded Iraqi Girl

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

BAGHDAD - Baghdad is a city full of sad stories. Soldiers on patrol hear so many of them, a kind of numbness tends to set in. But when a platoon of Soldiers heard the sad tale of a little Iraqi girl named Rusil recently, they knew they had to act.

Rusil, a 5-year-old living in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District, was hit in the leg by a stray bullet in July.

Local doctors treated the wound, but without proper follow-up care, the leg wasn't healing, and Rusil had been shut up in her house, unable to walk, for almost a month.

Since learning of the situation, Soldiers from Troop A, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment have taken it upon themselves to make sure Rusil gets the medical attention she needs.

Soldiers from Troop A's 2nd Platoon first heard about Rusil during an Aug. 8 patrol in Adhamiyah's Suleikh area.

The platoon had stopped to talk with some of the locals when one of them mentioned a sick little girl in the neighborhood. Information often gets passed to the Soldiers that way, said Paso Robles, Calif., native Pfc. Anthony Graves, the platoon's medic.

"We'll be standing there talking to a group of people and someone will come up and tell us about someone who is hurt or needs help," Graves said. "Usually, even if there's nothing we can do, we still go take a look, just to show our good faith."

When the man told the Soldiers about Rusil's situation, they immediately decided to investigate.

The platoon paid a visit to the tiny apartment where Rusil lives with her aunt and grandmother.

The women were, at first, very nervous to have the Americans in their home, but they took the Soldiers to the next room to see Rusil.

She was on the bed, wearing a white dress, her curly brown hair pulled back from her face, and she had a gruesome steel brace screwed into her tiny leg. The Soldiers' appearance in body armor, helmets, and sunglasses seemed to frighten her. Graves went over and knelt down next to the girl and smiled.

"I took off some of my gear to look a little bit more normal and talked to her real softly and she started to calm down," Graves said.

The grandmother told the Soldiers that Rusil had been playing in the yard July 17 when a bullet from a firefight between U.S. forces and insurgents struck her in the leg. The 3-7th Cav has not been able to corroborate that there was an incident that day, but to the Soldiers who were there in the room with Rusil, it didn't matter who was responsible.

"Whether or not she was hurt by American forces isn't really important," Graves said. "She's just a little girl who



(U.S. Army Photo)

Five-year-old Rusil, an Iraqi girl living in the Suleikh neighborhood of Baghdad's Adhamiyah District, smiles for the camera while recuperating from injuries in her home Aug. 7. Soldiers from the Fort Stewart, Ga.-based Troop A, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, found the girl and have made it their mission to make sure she got proper medical attention.

needs help."

Rusil's right femur had been shattered by the bullet.

Her aunt and grandmother took her for treatment at a local hospital, but the treatment there wasn't adequate for the severity of the injury.

To hold the bone in place, the doctors had given Rusil an External Fixator, a brace that screws through the skin and into the leg. According to Oklahoma City native Lt. Col. Marvin Williams, the 3-7 Cav's squadron surgeon, the device is only meant to stay on for a few days. By the time the Soldiers found her, Rusil had it on

for almost a month.

It appeared to Graves that the wound was infected. The Soldiers urged the family to take Rusil back to the hospital for antibiotics. When they left, Rusil was over her initial fright. She waved happily.

The next day, they came back to the little apartment to check up on her. This time they brought coloring books and toys for Rusil, as well as food and water for the family, who were destitute and living off the kindness of neighbors.

Rusil was glad to see the Soldiers this time, smiling and waving when they came in, and eventually trying to talk with

them.

"Even though we didn't understand each other, we talked a little bit," Graves said. "She showed me how to write her name in Arabic and I showed her how to write my name in English."

But when the aunt showed them the x-rays taken at the hospital, the news was worse than they had feared.

"As it is now, if she doesn't get proper surgery, the best that will happen is that the leg won't heal right and she'll be crippled for life," Graves said. "The worst that will happen is, she could lose the leg or even die."

When the Soldiers left the house this time, they were committed to getting Rusil the best possible care.

Their best hope was to get her to the Army's Combat Support Hospital in the International Zone. When the story reached Anchorage, Alaska native Capt. Jesse Reynolds, the squadron's physician's assistant, he got to work making the arrangements to have Rusil admitted to the CSH.

On Aug. 11, Rusil and her grandmother were taken to the 3-7's base in Adhamiyah.

Because of the nature of her injury and the limited space on helicopter flights, they couldn't fly her to the hospital. So, instead, the squadron arranged a special convoy just to take her to the Green Zone.

"What this has been all about is teamwork," said Williams. "Everyone from the Soldiers out on patrol who found her, to the orthopedic surgeons at the CSH, to the people transporting her there, they all pitched in to make this happen."

At the CSH, Rusil will have to have surgery to clean out her wound and put in pins and a plate to hold her bones together. After that, she'll need physical therapy to learn how to walk again, Williams said.

"She still has a good, long road ahead of her," Reynolds said. But Reynolds and the other Soldiers are now guardedly optimistic about her prospects.

"I want her to be outside playing soccer in a few months," Reynolds said.

Many of the Soldiers who pitched in to help Rusil said they felt obligated to do so, because it may have been an American bullet that hurt her in the first place.

"We want to put right any harm that we caused," Gassman said.

But for others, there was something like a sense of redemption in their efforts to help the little girl.

For Soldiers accustomed to operating in gray areas, it was a rare chance to do something purely selfless and positive.

"This little kid had nothing to do with our fight," Graves said. "She's just a 5-year-old girl who needed help. You need to do something good like that over here just to make everything else worthwhile."

Baghdad may still be a city of sad stories, but now it has one less.



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

Graduation Day

Lt. Col. Jeff Broadwater (left), commander of the 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, shakes hands with one of the first 30 graduates of the Adhamiyah Critical Infrastructure Guard Force training program at a graduation ceremony at Coalition Outpost Apache in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District Aug. 19.

Residents Turn out for Opening of Adhamiyah's Only Gas Station

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

BAGHDAD - As Mohammed Fadhil finishes filling the tank on his old Volkswagon, a bit of the clear, pungent gasoline comes swirling up with a rush and splashes out onto the ground. Fadhil pulls the nozzle out, a smile beaming on his face. For the first time in two weeks, he has a full tank of gas.

"This is good!" Fadhil exclaims. "I am very happy today!"

Fadhil and other residents of Baghdad's Adhamiyah District turned out in droves to fill up on 20 liters-per-person of affordable gasoline during opening day at the neighborhood's only legitimate gas station Aug. 16.

Americans who complain when the price of gas goes up a few cents probably wouldn't get much sympathy from Adhamiyah's citizens, whose fuel woes can be a matter of life and death. For at least a year, the neighborhood hasn't had a single working gas station.

Residents must make inconvenient - and sometimes dangerous - trips outside of the area to buy fuel or else purchase it off the black market at inflated prices in order to drive their cars and power their generators.

Fadhil, for example, said he had to skirt three potentially deadly militia checkpoints in order to buy gas on his last trip out of



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs)

Residents fill their gas tanks and fuel canisters at the Adhamiyah Fuel Station in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District. The station, currently the only legitimate gas station in the area, opened for business Aug. 16, allowing residents to purchase fuel without leaving the neighborhood or using the illegal black market.

Adhamiyah.

So it was a jubilant day in the community when the Adhamiyah Fuel Station finally opened.

Though the station was built eight months ago, a combination of poor security and difficulties with the Ministry of Oil prevented any fuel from being delivered, said

Ahmed Ali, one of the employees at the station. But in recent months the neighborhood has become more stable, and the problems with the ministry were partially resolved. On Aug. 15, a tanker finally arrived at the station holding 36,000 liters of fuel, Ali said.

Word spread quickly throughout the community, and by early morning there was

a line of cars stretching for a block outside the station. Inside, a queue of mostly women and children waited patiently for a turn at the pumps with bright, plastic containers in their hands.

A few hours after the station opened, U.S. Soldiers from the Fort Stewart, Ga.-based Troop B, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment stopped by to help keep order and talk with the people.

"We just came out to get the reaction from the people, and from what I've seen, it's been ecstatic, said Staff Sgt. Christopher Grimm, of Cabot, Ark.

One thing that many of the Soldiers appreciated was the fact that they had nothing to do with the station's opening. It had been purely an entrepreneurial effort by local businessmen.

"I think it's a great thing, it shows that these people are stepping up to take charge of their area," Grimm said.

"All (the people) need is a little spark," said Capt. Al Marckwardt, of Columbia, Md., the troop's commander. "If everybody starts taking initiative, then that's when this place will turn around."

It was something of a validation for the Soldiers, who have worked hard to establish the conditions in which business ventures like the Adhamiyah Fuel Station can thrive.

"It's a little victory, and little victories are what you need to keep your motivation up," Marckwardt said.

Improved Guard Towers Enhance Security

By Sgt. Dave Lankford
316th ESC Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - The perfect fox-hole is never built in a day. It begins as a hole in the ground, with no room to move and very little over-head cover. As days pass, continued work goes into improving

that hole until it becomes fully operational and, if at all possible, comfortable. The same is true for guard towers.

Virtually no perimeter security existed when coalition forces took over here in 2003. "The first guard towers were pre-fabricated steel, assembled along the base perimeter," said Army Capt. Stephen

Young, force protection officer with the 15th Brigade Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade.

Though they carry the scars of shrapnel and small arms fire, the square steel towers have done well to protect the guard force and the perimeter. However, just like foxholes, there is always room for improvement.

Earlier this year, the 15th SB began construction and installation of improved concrete towers. Young believes the new towers are a vast improvement over the steel design.

The round concrete towers are designed to defend against rocket-propelled grenades as well as vehicle borne improvised explosive devices and small arms fire. This design causes projectiles and shrapnel to glance off, said Young.

Recently, an airburst over a steel tower injured two 15th SB Soldiers on guard duty. Though the steel tower saved their lives, Capt. Young believes concrete may have averted these injuries all together.

Soldiers performing base security said it was common for insurgents to take pot shots at steel towers just because they felt they could get away with it. Roadside bomb attacks and indirect fire near the steel guard towers were commonplace as well.

Spc. Jordan Skaggs and Pfc. Sara Merryman, both members of the 410th QM, 15th BTB, 15th SB, Kentucky National Guard, believe the new towers have better placement as well.

"Insurgents had an angle of approach toward the old steel towers as well as the ability to escape undetected," said

Skaggs. The improved concrete towers cut off that angle, so anyone trying to plant any form of explosive device or conduct a close attack has no chance of success or escape.

"There have been situations where people definitely wish they would have had a concrete tower. The new concrete towers have not been shot at yet," said Merryman.

The closer proximity to the wall also allows for extended views of approaches, improved interlocking fire, and a better over watch outside of the perimeter.

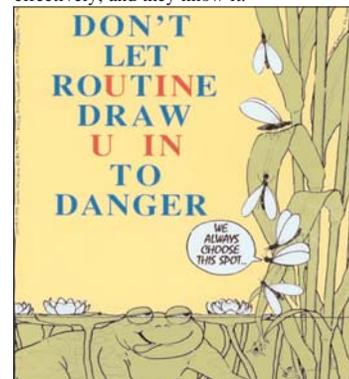
Both Soldiers and base defense officials feel more secure by their new concrete surroundings, but agree the most important improvement has been to perimeter security.

"The new towers give us much better cover and visibility," Young said. "If the insurgents shoot at us, we are not only better protected, but can shoot back more effectively; and they know it."



(U.S. Army photo)

Spc. Jordan Skaggs, a Kentucky National Guardsman with the 410th QM, 15th BTB, 15th SB, pulls guard from a tower on the perimeter of Camp Taji, Iraq. Though the older steel towers provide the necessary protection from small arms and improvised explosive device attacks, Skaggs prefers the added security and greater visibility of the newer concrete towers.



Congratulations, Postal Clerk!

Spc. Roland Ray, a postal clerk with the 834th Adjutant General (Postal), 15th Personnel Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, gets awarded his War on Terrorism Service Medal by Lt. Col. Angela Odom, 15th PSB commander, during an Aug. 7 ceremony at Camp Taji. Other awards presented were: Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Overseas Service Ribbon and Iraq Campaign Medal. "The awards I received are symbolic of the time I spent here, the job I have done and when I get home, though I can tell everyone I was in Iraq, [these awards] will say it so much better," said Ray. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Karly Cooper, 15th Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs)

'Cold Steel' Has Day in the Park

By Sgt. Robert Strain
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

KILLEEN, Texas - Soldiers and family members from the 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division gathered together Aug. 12 at Killeen's Long Branch park for a back-to-school bash.

The gathering was meant to be a way for the battalion's families to get together and get out of the house before school started back up and units started returning from Iraq, said Oklahoma City native Kathy Vela, who coordinated the event.

She explained that there had been a long time since the last battalion family event, and she wanted to do something to bring everyone back together before they got busy.

"Once school starts, people get busy - between sports, band and other after school activities," Vela said.

Besides the playground equipment at the park, the battalion provided a inflatable house for the kids to bounce around in and hot dogs cooked by the Hewitt,



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

Capt. Brent Bosson, the rear detachment commander for the 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, and other members of the battalion hand out backpacks to kids at the unit's back to school bash Aug. 12 in Killeen's Long Branch park.

Texas, local Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The VFW also provided school supplies, including notebooks, pencils, glue, and mark-

ers, to put in 100 backpacks, which were then given to the kids at the party, Vela said.

Also donated by the VFW were six

bicycles, which were given away to kids at the bash.

Brandon Garcia, 8, enjoyed the day, especially the hot dogs, but the highlight of the day for Garcia was winning a 15-speed mountain bike, he said. He said it was something he didn't expect when he came out to the bash, and that he also liked the backpack full of supplies.

Harry Munn, the commander of VFW Post 6008 and native of Hewitt, Texas, said he enjoys doing things like this with not only the Soldiers, but their families too.

"It's what the VFW does," Munn said. "When the Soldier goes to war, the family goes with them."

Munn said that the VFW plans on doing more events for the Soldiers when they return from Iraq later this year and early next year.

"Being here when the Soldiers come home - it's very gratifying to be able to serve our country in this way, to serve our Soldiers and their families," Munn said.

First Team Family Keeps Busy with Household Projects

By Sgt. Robert Strain
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

COPPERAS COVE, Texas - Normally, home improvement projects are taking care of by Dad. For one 1st Cavalry Division Family, these projects are being taking care of for Dad - who is currently deployed to Iraq with the First Team.

Oklahoma City native Kathy Vela and her two kids have tackled home improvement projects for two deployments, and plan to continue if there are more deployments in store for

Command Sgt. Maj. Glen Vela, the senior noncommissioned officer for the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade's 615th Aviation Support Battalion.

The first deployment, and project, came in 2003, when he was deployed with the 4th Infantry Division.

According to Kathy, their home in Copperas Cove, Texas, had essentially no backyard, just a steep slope to the back of the lot, which became very slippery and muddy when it rained.

"It was such a slant and there was no grass or anything, you couldn't do anything with it," she said. "I knew Glen didn't like it

from the beginning, that's the reason he didn't want to buy this house."

Over the course of the deployment, the backyard was built up with dirt and held in by railroad ties, until it was more like large steps. Kathy said the hardest part of the project was keeping it all a secret from her husband.

"We tried really hard," she said. "It was a little hard, because [the kids] wanted to tell him."

The kids, Mindy, 15, and Andy, 11, wanted to tell their Dad about the work because they were so excited about the project.

"We were excited to tell him, and what he would think," Andy said.

Kathy explained that although keeping a secret worked out the first time, they weren't even going to try the second time around, which came in Oct. of 2006, when Vela deployed with the 1st Cavalry Division.

This time, they decided before he left that they needed to do something around the house to occupy their time and keep them busy until he returned, Kathy said.

After completing many smaller projects, including renovating an upstairs bathroom and several closets, the Velas moved onto a bigger project - the floor.

Their plan is to remove the linoleum floor in the kitchen and carpeting in the dining room, replacing it with vinyl tiles, she explained.

"We were tired of it," Mindy said. "We were like, 'Man, this looks really ugly!'"

They have been ripping up the current floor since the beginning of July, but have been pacing themselves in order to make the project last longer.

"I want to finish before Halloween, for sure," Kathy said, but she hopes to have it finished by the end of September.

What started as a backyard project several years ago has evolved into almost a tradition for this First Team family. Kathy said they are unsure what the next project might be if there is another deployment in store, but they plan to continue doing something to fill their time until Dad comes home.

"We'll have to wait and see," Kathy said. "We have to finish this one first."



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

Mindy Vela, 15, and Andy Vela, 11, tear up the linoleum flooring in the kitchen of their Copperas Cove home Aug. 8. The Velas take on a different home improvement project every time dad, Command Sgt. Maj. Glen Vela, the senior noncommissioned officer for the 615th ASB, 1st ABC, 1st Cav. Div., deploys.

Troops Relieve Baghdad Stress One Stage at a Time

By Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - They have strummed out a string of 1,366 gigs since they've set foot in Baghdad's combat zone last October with their rifles in one hand and their instruments in the other, and with each morning's sunrise that number grows.

These well-traveled musicians assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division Band continue to help release the stresses and frustrations that come naturally-intertwined with war, of Soldiers all over Iraq.

"Being able to perform and to get out there and play for people who really need music as a form of release from all the tensions that they are experiencing in and around Baghdad, to see them to be able to relax in an environment that we help create through music is satisfying," said Spc. Mitchell Vandenburg. "It feels good to know that they've earned that release and I can help."

However, before the First Team musicians arrive on stages across the country, they have to clear several hurdles: extra rehearsals, rethinking musical pieces and loading and unloading gear.

Staff Sgt. LaLance Richardson of Cincinnati said that after so many performances the same music can grow stale so, he makes an effort to find innovative ways of presenting the music making it new again by rotating musical pieces, changing beats and many of the band members play in different genres of music.

Although music can be considered a refuge from the troublesome atmosphere of deployments, music can also be a form of cel-

ebrations and, at times, some people don't feel like celebrating, said Vandenburg, a native of Loveland, Colo.

Richardson, who plays the clarinet, said that one of the hardest parts of playing in a combat zone is walking the line between enjoyable and intruding and he uses song selection and volume to help in that balancing act.

"You try to read people as you go along," Vandenburg added.

Despite the task of having to gauge each audience, both Richardson and Vandenburg agreed that they love what they do.

"A good definition of success is being able to do what you love and with people who love what you do," Vandenburg said. "Music is a language. It's a way you can speak through your instrument."

"I feel like I am speaking through music."

Just the other day, someone asked the 21-year-old bassist, if being in the Army and playing music everyday has made him like music any less.

After thinking about it his response was a clear, "No."

Although getting to a gig grows more and more unfavorable because of all the packing and loading, the second he breaks out his bass and falls into the mode of making music it makes all the preparation worthwhile, Vandenburg said.

Sgt. Allison Bates said that at the smaller forward operating bases the people are more surprised that the band would come out there and, at times, more receptive.

Unfortunately, many of the do not have access to as much entertainment and aren't afforded the luxuries often taken for granted



(Courtesy photo)

Loveland, Colo., native Spc. Mitchell Vandenburg, a bassist with the 1st Cavalry Division band performs with the Amber Tight Variety Band during a celebration to remember members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, ANZAC Day April 25 on Camp Victory in western Baghdad.

like internet and cell phones, she said.

The band members have had the opportunity to see a lot of Iraq. They have performed at FOB Falcon, Mahmudiya, Kalsu, Iskandariyah, Loyalty, Rustimiya, Union III, Prosperity, Freedom Rest, Camp Taji, Coalition Outpost Callahan and the U.S. Embassy in the International Zone.

Bates, a flute player who hails from

Chattanooga, Tenn., said that one of the advantages of traveling all over Iraq is that she gets to meet new people and experience new things.

"Anytime anyone gets to be well-traveled it widens your perspective on life. You get to see what life is like here, what life is like there and from that you can piece together more of what Iraq is like as a whole," Vandenburg said.



Let Me See Your Grill!

Paul Wall and Sgt. Philip Rhett, from Columbia, S.C., show off their "grills" during the rapper's visit to the Multi-National Division - Baghdad headquarters at Camp Liberty in western Baghdad Aug. 8. Rhett, with the 642nd Regional Support Group currently supporting the division's rear operations center, surprised the crowd by pulling out a grill - fake gold teeth - of his own. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

Pavilion Brings Tropics to Troops at Taji

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Soldiers who are sick of dust and gravel around the forward operating base here can now relax and enjoy a meal at the beach.

Well, sort of.

With the Aug. 7 grand opening of the Command Sergeant Major Cooke Dining Facility's Pavilion, Soldiers have an outdoor eating area with a tropical theme - right down to the Hawaiian shirts the Pavilion's staff will wear, according to Cincinnati native Chief Warrant Officer 4 Tim Parson, brigade food advisor for 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

The Pavilion was designed as a way to break up the monotony of day-to-day life for Soldiers deployed to Iraq, according to Lt. Col. Charles Dalcourt, 1st ACB deputy brigade commander, who hails from Baton Rouge, La.

"The purpose was to provide the Soldiers with a place that they can go and literally escape or get away from the thoughts and environment," Dalcourt said. "The area that we have around Camp Taji is rather mundane. Giving them a place - a tropical island setting - to just sit, talk and enjoy each other with the smoothies, iced coffees and those kinds of things will take them away for a few moments."

The outdoor eating area is surrounded by cement bunkers and barriers as a force protection measure. The required bunkers and T-walls were not exactly what the dining facility staff had in mind for décor, but a Soldier-artist was able to turn the unseemly barriers into an amazing design element.

Sgt. John Phillips, driver for the 1st ACB brigade command sergeant major and a native of Cloudfcroft, N.M., said he spent 50 hours

painting the 180 degree beach mural that nearly surrounds the eating area.

"(Phillips) is one of the guys who helped bring this up to the next level," said Traverse City, Mich., native Col. Dan Shanahan, 1st ACB commander, in remarks at the grand opening. "If you look around, you're thinking about Jimmy Buffet. Sergeant Phillips spent long hours out here making it a special place - covered head to toe in paint. He poured his heart and soul into it to make it nice, and this will be something for Soldiers to enjoy for a long time. Whether you're in the Air Cavalry Brigade, the 15th Sustainment, part of any of the brigades that are here ... or that are going to occupy Camp Taji, this is going to be a special spot."

While Phillips had a tangible contribution to the Pavilion, many people worked behind the scenes to bring it to fruition, including the dining facility staff, KBR and the 1st ACB brigade leadership.

"It was just a vision and then a lot of extraordinary effort on the part of many people - (Parson has) put a lot of effort into building that place from the construction - getting the wood, the materials, working with KBR, who was absolutely outstanding in supporting the project, to garnering the support that helped us along," Dalcourt said. "The dining facility manager, Larry Justice, came along side of him, and they really teamed well. We've had great support ... and (Parsons) spearheaded the effort."

Parson said he got support from the command and his own staff in completing the project.

"We knew exactly what we wanted to do," Parson said. "From there, we went to our civilian agencies and got their support. (We) constructed the facility. Our Soldiers who work in the dining facility have been a big part of this project as well. It's been an eight-month



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

Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's "Funk Toward Enemy" band performing at the grand opening of the Command Sergeant Major Cooke Dining Facility Pavilion Aug. 7 at Camp Taji, Iraq.

process." While the Pavilion was in the planning stages, the dining facility staff was busy improving the meal choices inside, where the various serving stations throughout the facility offer a wide range of food choices including the popular sandwich bar, pasta bar and burger and brat grills.

"When we returned (to Iraq) back in October, we knew some of the things we wanted to improve upon," Parson said. "One of the things was the ... rotisserie chicken ovens. It's a great product - appealing to the eye and palate - it's delicious. Another thing that we bought was the gyro machines. Reception for both of these items has been fantastic."

"Those are the types of things that we want our Soldiers to have. We want them to be com-

fortable. We want them to be able to come in the dining facility and really, really enjoy a lot of things that they really miss from back home."

While Soldiers have been enthusiastic about the changes inside, they were curious about what was going on behind the cement barriers in front of the base's largest dining facility, Parson said.

"They've been wondering what has been going on behind these bunkers here, and they are quite surprised (now that it is complete)," Parson said. "They've already said this is a nice place to hang out. This is a nice place to have lunch, dinner."

"That's our intent, to have the Soldiers come and enjoy it. We're all here under tough circumstances, and this just takes their minds off of it a little bit."

"Pan's Labyrinth" too Much of a Puzzle to Enjoy?

Have you ever seen a movie that seemed like it was going to be a great film and by the time it was over you felt disappointed?

You weren't really sure why you felt the film was going to be awesome. Maybe it was something your friend said, or something you saw in a preview.

Sometimes I feel friends ruin movies simply by saying they love it or they hate it. I always take that opinion of my friend going into the film and I feel it affects the mood of the movie.

I watched a movie recently that a good friend of mine recommended and said she loved.

The movie was "Pan's Labyrinth." I saw previews of the film and said to myself that it looked like something I'd enjoy.

After watching the movie I felt like it didn't live up to the expectations I had built for it. I didn't build it up too much in my mind, but I felt like it was missing something. Like the film was missing a small ingredient.

The movie is basically about a little



girl whose mother remarries a cruel and sadistic officer in the fascist Spanish Army during World War II.

As the girl and her mother move to a remote house with the new father, she starts receiving visits from mythological creatures who give her a sense of adventure in the ruthless stepfather's household.

The girl meets a creature, who tells her that she is a princess from a far away world, but can not return home and claim her royalty until she fulfills three grisly tasks.

Right off the bat I have to say that this movie is a foreign film, which typically doesn't bother me. I think that this movie might have been better if it was in

English, and I'm not saying that because I don't appreciate other cultures and diversity in film. I just thought that it was one thing that would have made the movie more enjoyable.

I don't want to ruin a movie for anyone by saying how or what happened in the end, but I will say that I didn't like how the movie ended.

Every movie follows your basic principle of a beginning, middle and an end. If a movie is lacking in one of those areas, you notice right away.

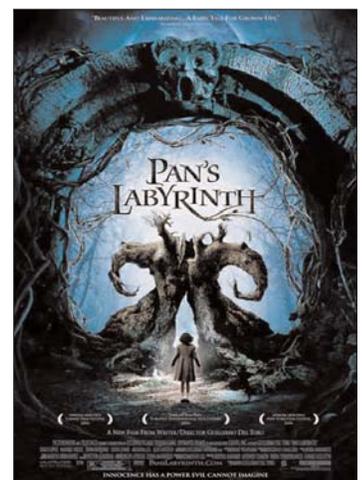
I personally feel that the movie was lacking something in the end.

I did feel that the visual effects in this film were phenomenal. There were other things the movie had that entertained.

I wouldn't say it was a complete waste. I just feel that it was missing something.

All and all the movie wasn't the worst movie I'd ever seen, it had its moments.

I personally don't recommend it, but then again this goes back to what I said



(Courtesy Photo)

"Pan's Labyrinth" movie poster. about friends and forming opinions. I give the film three out of five golden spurs.



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

Out with the Old ...

Dayton, Ohio, native Rodney Farmer, the personnel noncommissioned officer in charge for 1st "Attack" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, sprints down the court with Tecumseh, Neb., native Justin Robinson, a welder for Company E, 1-227th, hot on his heels. Farmer and Robinson, along with other Soldiers from the battalion, played in a basketball tournament Aug. 17 at Camp Taji, Iraq, where older troopers tested their wisdom against the physical prowess of the younger troopers. In this instance, the "New School" team won.

Falcons, Brett Favre, and What Could Have Been

Growing up near Atlanta, I quickly adapted to a losing tradition with my Braves, Hawks and Falcons.

For the record, the Thrashers don't count. Hockey? No thanks, Canada.

After the dreadful Bob Horner-Doyle Alexander days, the Braves did come through for me and win a World Series.

As for the Hawks, they have unleashed their fury on opponents with such greats as John Koncak, John Battle and Hanno Mottola. Never heard of any of these guys? Don't worry, neither have they.

That brings me to the Falcons.

Where do I even start? The 1992 off-season sounds good.

The Falcons and Jerry Glanville traded quarterback Brett Favre to the Green Bay Packers for a first-round draft pick, which turned out to be running back Tony Smith.

When was the last time you saw him

Trigger Pull

Spc. Benjamin Gable



on a Wheaties box? Glanville once said it would take a plane crash for him to put Favre in a game.

So, Jerry, would you like a window or aisle seat?

The Falcons go on to be, well, the Falcons. Favre goes on to be a first-ballot lock for the Hall of Fame. Think about it for a second.

The Falcons could be a storied franchise by now, led by Favre. Instead, we have toiled through the years watching errant passes and interceptions thrown by the likes of Steve Bartkowski, Chris

Miller, Bobby Herbert and, coming soon to a loss column near you, Joey Harrington. Give me a break.

These guys are easier to read than a stop sign.

What criteria are the Falcons using to decide which quarterbacks they play?

From what I have seen, they have started the worst QBs they can get their hands on.

Favre's first pass as a Falcon was intercepted and returned for a touchdown.

He then finished the season with zero completions in four attempts.

So, you'd think they would have signed him to a max contract.

It was Glanville who once told a referee after a missed call, "This is the N-F-L, which stands for "not for long" when you make calls like that."

"Not for long" turned out to be Glanville's career on the sidelines after

making all those bone-head decisions. Favre is entering his eighteenth season in the league. He's had three consecutive Most Valuable Player awards, and a Super Bowl ring to go with the numerous other records he holds.

He is on pace to break even more this year, by becoming the most prolific passer and throwing the most touchdowns in a career.

Instead of Lambeau Field being hallowed grounds, it should be the Georgia Dome.

Then, I wouldn't have to worry about Falcons home games being blacked out, in Atlanta!

So, here's to my favorite quarterback. Instead of watching the Falcons make history for all the wrong reasons this year, I could be watching the storybook ending to one of the greatest athletes of all time.

Thanks, Jerry.