



The Long Knife

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



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Inside this issue



An Iraqi woman comes out to talk to U.S. Soldiers from Fort Bliss, Texas, as they patrol down a street in the Palestine neighborhood of Mosul, Iraq. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Vanessa Valentine)

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COVER PHOTO: U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Bliss, Texas, patrol down a street in the Palestine neighborhood of Mosul, Iraq. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Senior Airman Vanessa Valentine)

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A message from Long Knife 6



Greetings Long Knife family,

I want to commend you once more on a job well done, and I ask that you continue to maintain your professionalism and can-do attitude. Since we have been in Ninevah province, we have taken the fight to the enemy, trained the Iraqi security forces, and provided for the citizens of the province while supporting the provincial government. Through both our efforts and those of the Iraqi security forces, we have captured more than 1,500 terrorists and criminals. Our efforts here have allowed attacks in the province to decrease from 15 to 19 in December, down to 10 to 13 attacks in March, and now we average 7 to 9 attacks a day. It is obvious that we still have work to do, but things are steadily improving, and I am very optimistic of the future of Ninevah province and Iraq.

“*Focus*” is our touch word for the next three to four months. Everyone is a leader and is expected to provide direction and guidance when they see an unsafe act, witness a failure in common sense, or notice something that is simply wrong. I expect

the senior leadership to lead by example and provide the mentorship that is necessary to ensure everyone continues to follow our safety policies with the objective of returning from each mission safely and unharmed. Every Soldier is a safety officer and is expected to look out for their fellow Soldier’s welfare. Communicate with each other on a daily basis and ask those hard questions to ensure your battle buddy is in the right frame of mind and is ready for his mission.

I am proud to inform you that this brigade has received another accolade from the department of the Army. Your leadership and efforts has allowed us to have the lowest injury rate of all brigade combat teams in the Army for the 2006 calendar year. This is something you should be proud of, and I ask that you continue to work hard to maintain this standard. This simply means that again you have proved that the best Soldiers in the Army work and operate within this unit and I am proud to serve with you.

Finally, as we draw closer to our departure date, I ask that you keep your head in the game and stay focused on the mission at hand. Prepare to provide our replacements with all the information you can to set them up for success. Continue to learn and exploit your portion of the battle space and make your piece of this mission better. When it is all said and done you not only assisted the Iraqi people to live in a free and democratic society, you also supported the global war on terrorism and assisted in keeping the threat away from our homeland. Ensure you continue to look out for each other and communicate with your loved ones at home.

Until next month, Long Knife.

A message from Long Knife 9



Hello, Long Knife,

Just recently, I received a safety report from our brigade safety officer. It was a report that was generated by Col. George M. Bilafer, the deputy commander of the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center in Fort Rucker, Alabama.

The report read, "In calendar year 2006, [the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division] had the lowest injury rates of all the BCTs: 1.88 per person/year (69 cases). The highest is about 19.33 (678 cases) with a estimated median of about 4-5 (200 cases)."

I cannot remind all of you enough times, the importance of safety. Every decision you make, both on and off the battlefield, has the potential to save lives.

I am so proud of this brigade and all of the Soldiers who have worked so hard to maintain the high safety standards expected of a Long Knife trooper.

As our time here shortens, I ask you all to continue to remain vigilant in your quests to do the right thing. As I walk around the forward operating base and visit the different battalions and squadrons of the

4th BCT area of operations in Ninevah province, I cannot help but notice the level of professionalism shown by each of you. I am honored to serve beside such outstanding Soldiers.

Soon, we will begin the arduous task of preparing our equipment and Soldiers to redeploy to Fort Bliss. During the process of packing and maintaining accountability of our property, I ask that each of you stay alert and keep your focus. This deployment is not over until everyone gets on the plane bound for El Paso. We still have a few months left and our replacement unit will need our full, undivided attention so that we can point them in the right direction and set them up for success. I need all of you to continue listening to your leaders and remain respectful of one another.

To the noncommissioned officers, I need you to maintain good discipline within your squads, sections and platoons; keep your Soldiers safe and on the right path; listen to their needs and concerns; and ensure you are providing a mentorship that fulfills your obligation as a leader. It is up to us to keep our troops' morale at the highest level possible. Don't let your guard down and open yourself up for failure.

So far, we have enjoyed much success throughout Ninevah province. We have captured major terrorist cell leaders, detained and questioned hundreds of suspected killers, and have found countless numbers of improvised explosive device-making materials and weapons caches. Our mission here has been extremely productive. Your tenacity and endurance has enabled this brigade to prove to the American people that Iraq is worth fighting for, and that we are, in fact, making a difference here.

I hope you will continue to stay vigilant and safe!

From the senior editor's desk



*Sgt. 1st Class Brian Sipp
Senior Editor, Long Knife Magazine*

I would like to take a bit of time (and column space) to recognize the Soldiers who work to make each issue of the Long Knife magazine possible, and whose skill and dedication to duty makes being the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division Long Knife Brigade Public Affairs Office (the hands-down BEST in the U.S. Army) an easy task.

To Staff Sgt. Paula Taylor, my senior print journalist responsible for the layout of the Long Knife magazine each month, I say "Thank you." Your patience in working through the inevitable last minute changes does not go unnoticed. You create a truly high-quality magazine each month, and usually receive little recognition for all the things that are done on time and on target in each and every issue. You create a division-sized monthly product, with a brigade-sized staff and budget. Our success as an office is not possible without your hard work.

To Pfc. Bradley Clark, my newest print journalist and late arriver to the 4th BCT PAO team, I say "Get back to work." Seriously, why aren't you out covering a story? To be honest, however, your arrival has definitely allowed us to cover the brigade more efficiently, and your willingness to embed with units and tell the Soldiers' story also does not go unnoticed. You are honing your craft as a journalist and photographer in arguably the best writing atmosphere the world has to offer (Iraq); and you are meeting the challenge.

To Maj. Roderick Cunningham, our public affairs officer, I say "Keep fighting for us." Your proactive approach to public affairs has shown me, and the rest of the brigade, how much reach we can have in "shaping the battlefield." Our office is a direct reflection of your motivation and 'never-quit' attitude. 🇺🇸

Long Knife Brigade enjoys award-winning S6

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PFC. BRADLEY J. CLARK

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq— It's not everyday that Soldiers get recognized for the outstanding work that they do and, even less often, do they get acknowledgment from the head of their branch.

That was just the case when Soldiers from the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division's communications and automation section, or S6 shop, were awarded the Signal Regiment Certificate of Achievement and the Chief of Signal Plaque.

The Signal Regiment CoA is used to recognize outstanding achievements relative to the Signal Regiment's mission. The plaque is for those Soldiers whose performance and contributions set them apart from their peers.

"Both awards are designed to foster 'esprit de corps' and to contribute to the Signal Regiment's cohesiveness," said Sgt. Maj. Beverly Lewis, senior enlisted member of the 4th BCT S6 shop. "The Soldiers won these because of what they have done since we have deployed." *(SEE AWARD, Page 18)*



Telecommunications operator and maintainer, Pfc. Ashley Bumpas, (left) and signal systems support specialist, Pvt. Sandy Ackerman, both in the communications and automation section, or S6 shop, of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, check the fiber optic cables that connect all of the signal tactical vehicles together at Forward Operating Base Marez, Iraq. Ackerman and Bumpas are just two of the members of the S6 shop to receive awards from the chief of the signal regiment for their work in Iraq.

Duty to country is family affair for Edmondsons

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PFC. BRADLEY J. CLARK

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq— Many children follow in their parents footsteps, but very rarely do the parents follow their in their kid's footsteps.



Postal operations specialist, Spc. Michael Edmondson, 747th Adjutant General Postal Company, prepares to load a container of mail onto a military transport vehicle at Forward Operating Base Marez in Mosul, Iraq. Edmondson has been in Iraq since November, providing postal support to units in northern Iraq.

That was just the case when two members of the Edmondson family found themselves stationed on the same forward operating base in Mosul, Iraq.

Spc. Michael Edmondson, postal operations specialist, 747th Adjutant General Postal Company, who has been stationed at FOB Marez since November, heard in January that the Army was sending him a very unique present.

"I was pretty excited when I heard my dad was going to be here," said Michael.

Michael's father, Lt. Col. Guy Edmondson, military transition team commander, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division, had spent four months trying to find a way to get sent back to Iraq.

"I started working different ways to volunteer for Iraq in August, when I found out he was deploying," said Guy. "When I found out in January that we were going to be at the same base, I was surprised."

The father and son reunited the good, old-fashioned American way, over a meal at the dining facility. Surprisingly enough, this is not the first time the Edmondsons have been on the same installation together.

"The first time I was on a MiTT, back in '05, Michael's reserve unit was the one that handled our pre-deployment," said Guy.

"I processed him the day he checked in," said Michael. "And the day he deployed, I was working security at the theater where they staged."

While being in a war zone can be more stressful than being stateside, Guy was able to find a way to loosen the tension by playing a joke on his son.

"The first time he came over to visit me and my team was for a barbecue," said Guy. "He was here for 30 minutes when my (executive officer) came out and told us there was a fire fight and we had to roll. My gunner wasn't around, so I asked him if he wanted to be my gunner.

"My [executive officer] came back out and said, '16 dead, 40 injured, you got to go now,' and then threw a vest at him and we mounted up," said Guy.

"I wasn't scared at all," said Michael. "I had fire in my veins."

"At that point we couldn't let it go any further," said Guy. "We had to tell him we were (SEE DUTY, Page 11)

STB Soldiers set new re-enlistment standard

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
CAPT. BRIDGETTE BELL

Special Troops Battalion

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—The Special Troops Battalion became the first battalion in the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division to make their re-enlistment mission for Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08.

The battalion's success started early-on in the deployment while the unit was still in Kuwait preparing for their movement into Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Erick Jones, STB re-enlistment noncommissioned officer, said he did not expect to do any re-enlistment contracts in Kuwait.

"We ended up doing a total of nine, including three from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, brigade; one from HHC, STB; two from Alpha Company, and three from Charlie Company," Jones bragged.

The unique variety of military occupational specialties within the battalion has paid dividends for the Soldiers.

"What is good about our battalion is that I work with Soldiers from so many different MOSs."

Although this gave Jones a lot of flexibility, some of his challenges were Soldiers whose military job skills could get them high-paying jobs in the civilian sector.

"I would tell all Soldiers, who are considering transitioning out of the military, that they should really consider the benefits they would no longer be entitled to."

He cautions Soldiers to remember that they may lose dedicated



Staff Sgt. Erick Jones, retention noncommissioned officer for the Special Troops Battalion, helps Spc. Michael Warren, B Company, fill out his re-enlistment contract and certificate. Since his unit's deployment in October 2006, Jones has helped over 100 Soldiers get assignment of choice, new military jobs, and thousands of dollars in re-enlistment bonus money.

medical and dental services and the additional living allowances when they transition from the Army.

"Regardless of what they can offer in the civilian sector, I try to focus on how to help Soldiers get the highest bonus and best assignment that fits their background and ultimately, can further their career in the military."

All movement options opened up for Soldiers, May 1, 2007. This meant that highly coveted duty stations, such as those in Europe, were now available to a number of Soldiers.

Staff Sgt. Claudia Limon of the 4th BCT Property Book Office, who re-enlisted on the day of her promotion to staff sergeant, was able to get an assignment to Italy.

Limon, who said she is extremely happy with the whole program, explained, "I initially wanted to

go to Hawaii but reconsidered when Italy came up as an option. I did it because I like the Army, not necessarily for the money."

Limon also said she feels that all Soldiers should consider taking advantage of the tax-free bonuses.

"The nice thing about re-enlisting while Soldiers are deployed is that all the bonus money they get for their re-enlistment is tax-free, which puts hundreds, sometimes thousands, of extra dollars in their pockets," Jones said, "whereas if the Soldier waits until he or she redeploys back to the U.S., they lose that tax-free incentive."

Jones also noted that approximately 30-40 percent of the Soldiers he re-enlisted chose the option of up to 12 months of stabilization (*SEE RE-ENLIST, Page 12*)

Deployed cavalry Soldier harvests fruit of his labors

STORY BY 1ST LT. KENDRA EVERS
27th Brigade Support Battalion

and

STAFF SGT. PAULA TAYLOR
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Forward operating Base Marez—some folks back in the U.S. are spending time this summer tending to their flower gardens, mowing their grass, installing irrigation or adding a water feature to their yard, one Soldier assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, is in Iraq planting a little bit of home.

As you look around the forward operating base, there is a barren desert floor that stretches on for what seems like forever. But when you walk past B Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion's Communications and Electronics (C&E) shop, you can't help but notice a patch of greenery that is completely out of place. Growing despite the 120 degree heat, the rocky soil, and arid conditions, is a garden that most would agree is doing quite well.

Stationed on the outskirts of Mosul, Iraq, is Chief Warrant Officer Michael Wangler, the technical expert for the C&E shop and avid gardener.

"I just wanted to see if I could grow a garden in Iraq," he said. "Everyone just thought I was nuts for trying to grow one in the desert. I grew up with a big garden every year and I love to have fresh vegetables."



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of the 27th BSB)

Chief Warrant Officer Michael Wangler, B Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, points out a five-inch long cucumber hiding amongst the leaves in his garden on Forward Operating Base Marez, just outside Mosul, Iraq. Wangler, a Rochester, N.Y., native, is stationed in Iraq with the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. The Fort Bliss, Texas, unit is scheduled to return to the U.S., January 2008.

Wangler, a Rochester, N.Y., native, came up with the idea of having his own garden here in the desert and asked his wife, Kristin, to send him some seeds from home.

"She thought it was a great idea—something to help me relax and keep my mind on other fun things," he explained. "She was more than happy to send me the seeds. She sent me cherry, beefsteak, and rainbow tomatoes; cucumbers; a melon mixture of honeydew and cantaloupe; and wild flowers. She kept asking me if I wanted more. Later she sent me some pumpkins and watermelons."

"It was a great idea. This way, he has something to fill his spare time with," Kristin admitted. "He likes fresh vegetables. He tries to grow a

lot of stuff at home; sometimes he is successful."

As soon as the seeds arrived the first week in May, he started planting. Now, just a few months later, his tomato plants are more than a foot high, and his other plants seem to be doing well, too.

"The cucumbers and melon plants have grown a lot. They are really big and have good-sized leaves. I have about eight melons growing so far and one should be ready to pick any day. So far, we've picked about 20 cucumbers. I have eaten five of them. I share the rest with other Soldiers in the company."

Wangler is proud of his garden and hopes to continue planting and harvesting until his unit redeploys back to Fort Bliss, Texas, January



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of the 27th BSB)

Chief Warrant Officer Michael Wangler, B Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, uses a hose that he has rigged to a container atop the building where he works, to water his garden. Wangler began planting seeds his wife, Kristin, sent him in May.

2008.

“My 3 year-old daughter, Emelia, told my wife, ‘Daddy won’t be home for Halloween, so we need to send him pumpkin seeds so he can grow pumpkins to carve,’ so I’ll be planting pumpkins soon too,” explained Wangler.

In the recent triple-digit temperatures Mosul has been having, he has to water the garden three times a day.

“I water it first thing in the morning, right after lunch, and at the end of the day,” said Wangler. “I have a water container on top of my building and I ran a hose to the pipe

so I have running water to water the garden. The water container gets filled every couple of days.”

Wangler said he doesn’t have to worry about insects destroying his efforts, mainly due to the heat here, but that birds are a concern he’ll soon be managing.

“The birds keep eating the small buds on the melon plants, so I am not getting as many melons as I had hoped. They have been eating the fruit as soon as they are large enough to notice.”

Even with his efforts to scare the birds with a plastic sack that blows in the wind and with jugs of water,

they keep returning, so, Wangler said, he will soon erect a scarecrow, which he hopes will dispel the birds.

When Wangler is not available to tend to his flourishing garden, Staff Sgt. Alan Rains, senior quartermaster chemical equipment repairer, B Company, 27th BSB, is happy to step in and help out.

“I water the garden three times daily and spread our used coffee grounds throughout to act as fertilizer. Everyone has their own way of relaxing; this is just one of ours.”



(U.S. Army photo by Maj. Roderick Cunningham)

The 25th Infantry Division deputy commanding general for support, Brig. Gen. Frank Wiercinski, (left) stands with Maj. Gen. Wathiq, Ninevah provincial director of police, (center) and Col. Stephen Twitty, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, (right) after the presentation of an Army Commendation Medal to Wathiq during a ceremony at Provincial Hall in Mosul, Iraq. Wathiq was honored, along with Brig. Gen. Jassim Moutaa Habeeb, commander of the 2nd Iraqi Army Division, for meritorious leadership of Iraqi Police in the fight against terrorism.

Iraqi heroes recognized for outstanding leadership

STORY BY SGT. 1ST CLASS BRIAN SIPP

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

MOSUL, Iraq—One man commands Iraqi Army soldiers who relentlessly pursue terrorists down every street and around every corner; the other oversees the entire Iraqi police force in northern Iraq, hunting down the terrorists who manage to slip through the cracks and protecting every day Iraqi citizens from harm.

Both are loved by their men, both are hated by the terrorists, and both continue to lead the Iraqis through a sometimes cloudy present, toward a future filled with security, stability and prosperity.

Both Maj. Gen. Wathiq Muhammad ‘Abd Al-Qudir Muhammad Al-Hamdani, Ninevah provincial director of police, and Brig. Gen. Jassim Moutaa

Habeeb, commander of the 2nd Iraqi Army Division were presented U.S. Army Commendation Medals, in recognition of those leadership values, by Brig. Gen. Frank Wiercinski, 25th Infantry Division deputy commanding general for support, during a ceremony at Provincial Hall in Mosul.

“In the United States Army we reserve this award for only the best Soldiers. We give this award to those who have distinguished themselves not only in combat, but in peacetime,” explained Col. Stephen Twitty, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

“[Brigadier] General Moutaa and [major] General Wathiq have distinguished themselves here in Mosul in fighting the terrorists. They have led the army and police force with distinction, and are truly two heroes of Mosul,” added Twitty.

(SEE HEROES, Page 11)

(HEROES, cont'd from Page 10)

As the room was called to attention and the citations were read, Wiercinski greeted each man with a handshake and pinned on the awards, creating an official record of recognition for both; a record that was already unofficially understood by the citizens of the Ninevah province.

“This is not a medal just for them,” Wiercinski said. “This is a medal for the IP and soldiers of the 2nd Iraqi Army Division who have given everything they have to fight terrorism here in Mosul and the Nineva Province; and it represents the martyrs who gave their lives in defense of this country. It’s because of leaders like them that we are able to continue this fight; and they are winning. This is not a city owned by terrorists; this is a city owned by the people of Mosul.”

As the ceremony concluded, Wiercinski asked for quiet, as he had one (perhaps the most important) final point to make about the honoring of two of Mosul’s finest.

“I forgot to mention one thing...these two are also my friends,” he added smiling. 🇺🇸



(U.S. Army photo by Maj. Roderick Cunningham)

Commander of the 2nd Iraqi Army Division, Brig. Gen. Jassim Moutaa Habeeb, stands with Col. Stephen Twitty, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, after the presentation of an Army Commendation Medal to Moutaa during a ceremony held at Provincial Hall in Mosul, Iraq. Moutaa was honored, along with Maj. Gen. Wathiq Muhammad ‘Abd Al-Qudir Muhammad Al-Hamdani, Ninevah provincial director of police, for meritorious leadership of Iraqi Army soldiers in the fight against terrorism.

(DUTY, cont'd from Page 6)

just kidding.”

“Of course I was mad,” said Michael. “But you have to admit, it was pretty funny.”

Even though they are able to have fun together, both Soldiers have a vital mission in Iraq that they take seriously.

“I break down pallets, sort mail and distribute mail to units in Northern Iraq,” said Michael. “We cover everyone above FOB Q-West.”

“My job is advising the 2nd Brigade commander,” said Guy. “I work with my team to push the (Iraqi Army) from Coalition Forces to Iraqi control for the western part of Mosul. Our goal is to turn over control to the Iraqi security forces and government as soon as possible. When you look at Mosul, both CF and ISF are having a great deal of success.”

When it comes to his father’s job, Michael sees nothing but success and knows that his father will handle his duties professionally.

“My dad will never change,” said Michael. “If he can do it, it will be done right at whatever the cost is. If you look, they are shifting control to the Iraqi forces who are learning and taking the challenge well.”

As far as Guy’s feelings towards his son and being stationed together go, he is happy that their deployment was able to turn out the way it did.

“It’s an experience most families don’t get to share,” said Guy. “I am so proud of him. He enlisted after 9-11 because he felt he had a job to do and he is over here doing it.” 🇺🇸



During a humanitarian mission, Lt. Col. Guy Edmondson, military transition team commander, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division, hands out clothing to village children in Mosul.



Staff Sgt. Claudia Limon recites the oath of enlistment, given by Capt. Steve von Deneen at the brigade logistics and supply office. Limon re-enlisted to be stationed in Italy, in addition to receiving a tax-free cash bonus.

(RE-ENLIST, cont'd from Page 7)

at Fort Bliss.

One of those was Spc. Kenneth Conklin, Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle operator in A Company, who re-enlisted for the stabilization option July 6, 2007, marking the point where the battalion met its re-enlistment mission and surpassed \$1,000,000 in bonus money paid to STB Soldiers.

Common misconceptions about the re-enlistment process can only be cleared up if Soldiers seek guidance from their re-enlistment NCOs.

“A lot of people did not know they could re-enlist outside their window (more than two years until the end of their service time) and take advantage of bonus opportunities,” explained Jones.

Deployed Soldiers also get to take advantage of additional bonus messages that are out that they would not be able to if they were in back in the States.

Currently, there are three different bonus messages. First, the Enhanced Bonus will give Soldiers a flat rate based on their rank, if their MOS is a critical skill. Second, the Inventory Bonus is calculated based strictly on occupational specialties that are short-staffed. Finally, Soldiers are entitled to the Deployed Bonus simply because they are deployed, regardless of whether their MOS is critical. For some Soldiers, these messages, which change regularly, have made the difference of up to \$15,000.

Supply specialist (92Y), Spc. Kashema Brooker, C Company, wanted to do something different from what her friends back home were doing.

“I got my first choice for an assignment at Fort Jackson and a re-enlistment bonus. I ultimately want to become a warrant officer, but for now, I enjoy what I do as a 92Y.”

The STB re-enlistment mission was 80 Soldiers—21 initials, 42 mid-career Soldiers, and 17 career troops. An initial is a Soldier who has never re-enlisted. A mid is Soldier who has re-enlisted at least once and has less than ten years at date of discharge (the day before the re-enlistment). Careerists have more than ten years at the date of discharge and only have the option of re-enlisting for assignment based on the needs of the Army.

The battalion’s initial goal was to earn \$750,000 in re-enlistment bonuses. Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Marvin Hedstrom, said he is pleased that his battalion has managed to get over \$1,000,000 for STB Soldiers.

“That is a million dollars back into the pockets of highly-deserving Soldiers and their Families,” he said.

One B Company trooper, Spc. Michael Warren, chose to



Master Sgt. Terry Titus, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, senior career counselor, helps Sgt. Alonzo Scarborough, a supply sergeant assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, fill out his contract and certificate prior to his re-enlistment.

re-enlist to become an information systems operator—analyst in order to “further my career in the Army and better my military education.”

Warren’s main influence to stay in the Army was his grandfather who served at Fort Bliss in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but gave credit to all of the support he currently gets from his unit, as well.

In May, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Mixon, 25th Infantry Division commander, and commander

of Multinational Division-North, told the Vice President of the United States that in six months, the division had achieved a re-enlistment level, that in the past had taken a full year to accomplish.”

Since their deployment, over 100 STB Soldiers have re-enlisted — 18 from HHC 4th BCT; 41 from HHC STB; 18 from A Company; 18 from B Company; and 11 from C Company, for a total of almost \$1.1 million in bonus money. 🇺🇸



Military police platoon leader, 1st Lt. R.J. Henderson, congratulates Sgt. John Keenan, team leader, Military Police Platoon, Special Troops Battalion, after his re-enlistment ceremony at the Iraqi-Syrian border port of entry, Rabbayah, Iraq.

Cobras conduct Combat Lifesaver recertification

STORY BY 1ST LT. SOPHIA FILS

27th Brigade Support Battalion

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—Members of C Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion conducted their first Combat Lifesaver Recertification courses beginning in June.

A Combat Lifesaver must recertify annually to maintain skills and to prevent having to go through the 40-hour original course.

The recertification consisted of two portions: the examination and the hands-on. The training



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of the 27th BSB)

Staff Sgt. Michelle Bergantino, combat medic, C Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, prepares an IV bag for the Combat Lifesaver recertification course that was taught on Forward Operating Base Marez, Iraq.

received involved enhanced first aid procedures and selected medical procedures. The hands-on portion also involved putting an IV into a fellow Soldier.

The Combat Lifesaver instructors, who are all medics of C Company, were Staff Sgt. Faith Castro, Staff Sgt. Gregory Aguilar, and Sgt. Michelle Bergantino, while Staff Sgt. Michael Montgomery, a combat medic from a local civil affairs battalion, also assisted in teaching the class.

“The CLS recertification has been going steadily; the Soldiers coming to class have been motivated and have been putting a lot of effort into the hands-on portion of the recertification,” explained Aguilar.

Despite their enthusiasm, the instructors said some students were leery of performing certain procedures.

“The IV portion was the part of the class most Soldiers were either really anxious or scared to complete,” said Castro.

Most students and instructors agreed on the importance of the course, especially since the unit is deployed and its Soldiers are operating in a combat environment.

“Training like the CLS recertification class is important in ensuring that all Soldiers remain current and ready for real-life injuries by regaining the confidence needed to treat their fellow Soldiers in combat,” said Bergantino.

Being able to react quickly on the battlefield greatly reduces the likelihood that a Soldier will

die from life-threatening wounds. Soldiers who are well-trained in combat lifesaver techniques are usually able to handle themselves better in these situations, which helps to free up the medics to handle the more serious casualties on the battlefield. ♣



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of the 27th BSB)

Pfc. Jason Hooper, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, inserts an IV into Spc. Star Kimple, C Company.



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of the 27th BSB)

Staff Sgt. Michelle Bergantino, combat medic, C Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion demonstrates the proper way to insert a nasopharyngeal tube.



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of the 27th BSB)

Capt. Courtney Sugai of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, puts an IV into Spc. Joseph Kindred of B Company during CLS recertification class.

Spear Academy brings CF one step closer to ultimate goal

STORY BY PFC. BRADLEY J. CLARK

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



(Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Quinton Russ)

An Iraqi Army soldier practices room clearing procedures during training, sponsored by members of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, at the Spear Academy in Mosul, Iraq. The academy is designed to teach rifle marksmanship, search techniques, combat medical skills and driver's training for the Iraqi Army troops.



(Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Quinton Russ)

Iraqi Army soldiers take turns practicing room clearing procedures, taught by Coalition Forces assigned to the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, at the Spear Academy in Mosul, Iraq, June 13.

MOSUL, Iraq—Every Soldier's mission in Iraq is important, but for a group of Soldiers in Mosul, their mission directly affects Coalition Forces reaching their ultimate goal of leaving this country in the hands of its citizens.

Soldiers from A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, run the Spear Academy, an instructional institute for Iraqi security forces, located on the Forward Operating Base Marez.

"We train them on what they need to know to be successful," said Spc. Joshua Golden, Spear Academy instructor. "We provide them knowledge of basic skills that helps save lives in combat."

The Iraqi Army students that attend the Spear Academy learn a wide range of tactics, techniques and procedures from the U.S. Army instructors.

"We teach them everything from room clearing, to drivers training, to medical training," said Staff Sgt. Gregory Stephens, Spear Academy commandant.

One area the instructors focus on is marksmanship, due to its importance on the battlefield.

"Shooting is the easiest thing for them," said Stephens. "What they have a problem with is aiming and accuracy."

"We teach them a lot about marksmanship," said Spc. Kristopher Herrin, Spear Academy instructor. "They learn everything from reflexive fire to proper aiming techniques. We teach them how to properly handle their weapons when clearing a building. Also, we take them through a glass house where they do a dry run and a live fire run."

Herrin attributes the academy's success to the skills of the instructors he works with.

"The reason why this is successful is because you have combat Soldiers teaching combat skills that will help them stay alive," said Herrin. "This is making them more combat effective and taking them to the point where they won't need us anymore."

(SEE SPEAR, Page 19)

Iraqi officials lead Nine

STORY BY SGT. 1ST CLASS BRIAN SIPP

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

KHAHTANIYA, Iraq—Local, provincial and central government leaders converged in western Ninevah province as 3rd Iraqi Army Division soldiers and emergency workers in the villages of Khahtaniya and al Jazeera continued their determined rescue efforts in the wake of five vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks, which killed an estimated 275 and wounded 400.

Iraq's Minister of Health, Abd al Samad Raham Sultan; Governor Duraid Kashmoula, Ninevah's provincial governor; and mayors from surrounding cities and towns such as Mayor Najim Abdullah of Tal 'Afar, were greeted with cheers by citizens and relief workers. The group walked the streets assessing damages in both villages and interacting with citizens.

"So far, the accounting of casualties has been very speculative," said Col. Stephen Twitty, commander, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. "The villagers and rescue workers are still trying to find those missing; and their efforts, and those of the local, provincial and central government leadership, along with the ISF here, have been tremendous. These people

are clearly unified in this effort."

Abd al Samad Raham Sultan delivered funds to city officials in order to provide immediate relief for damaged-home claims.

Soldiers from 3rd Iraqi Army Division, in conjunction with CF from 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, and 4th Squadron, 6th Air Cavalry Regiment, are assisting the recovery efforts. The 3rd IA has provided earth-moving equipment, and food and medical supplies to the villages and Iraqi police are securing the areas.

"This is an act of desperation by a group of maniacs who continue to offer only death, destruction and violence to the innocent citizens of Iraq," said Maj. Gen. Benjamin Mixon, commanding general, 25th Infantry Division and Multinational Division-North. "The efforts of the 3rd IA soldiers are heroic as they continue to work tirelessly to save as many citizens as they can, proving their commitment to all of Iraq's people regardless of ethnicity or sect."

Coalition Forces have provided 2,880 humanitarian meals, 4,608 bottled waters and vast amounts of medical supplies to include medicines and bandages. Coalition Forces also have airlifted 5,760 additional meals with 3,500 more being coordinated for distribution, and enough medical supplies to support approximately 2,000 casualties. 



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

Staff Sgt. Robert Horais, cavalry scout, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, stands amongst the rubble in the town of Khahtaniya during his commander's visit to the area.



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

Soldiers of 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment pull security while front-end loaders clear debris and search for survivors in Khahtaniya after a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device blew up in a busy market area.



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

An Iraqi man from the town of Al Jazeera thanks Sgt. Joel Kort, combat medic, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, for treating his head wound which was caused by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device that detonated in his village, killing and wounding hundreds. The squadron, who had just taken over the area days before the blast, was responsible for bringing humanitarian supplies and for providing medical aid to the wounded locals.

evah recovery efforts



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

Combat medic, Pfc. Andrew Kelley, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, treats an Iraqi boy who was injured during a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonation. The explosion killed nearly 300 and injured 400 local civilians.



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

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

An Iraqi man surveys the damage caused by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device that detonated in the town of Khahtaniya. The town of Al Jazeera was also bombed. Nearly 300 civilians were killed and 400 injured in the blasts.

A market in Khahtaniya, Iraq, was damaged by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device that detonated near the heart of the village. Several hundred civilians were killed or injured.



Signal systems noncommissioned officer, Sgt. Delvin Hawkins, communications and automation section, or S6 shop, of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, conducts maintenance on an antenna on Forward Operating Base, Iraq. Hawkins, along with the rest of the S6 shop, has been deployed since October in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

(AWARD, cont'd from Page 5)

Since their deployment, the signal Soldiers have been responsible for managing hundreds of networks, radio systems and communications systems, from Baghdad to the Syrian border. These systems provide communications to over 5,000 Soldiers, stationed across 58,000 square kilometers.

“When we got here, we hit the ground running,” said Spc. Elvis Cabrera, information systems operator. “We were able to setup all of the systems in a real short time. Now we are constantly adapting to new standards, while preparing for new units, so they can be as successful as us.”

The S6 Soldiers are responsible for planning and managing critical

communication systems to ensure mission success without communication interference. They provide this support to many units consisting of four combat battalions; two support battalions; an aviation battalion; two Iraqi Army divisions; U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy elements; along with Department of Defense contractors and civilian agencies within Multi-National Division-North.

One troop believes the mission success is due to the team effort and constant training.

“We are all a piece to the puzzle,” said Pvt. Sandy Ackerman, signal systems support specialist. “When we’re all doing our part and you put us together, that’s how we’re successful. On top of that, we train weekly to keep up-to-date on Army standards.”

Lewis can see the results of the training and cohesiveness of the team play out during the deployment.

“These Soldiers demonstrate outstanding professional skill, knowledge, and leadership in developing, planning and executing all aspects of information security and tactical communications in support of combat operations in Ninevah province and Multi-National Division-North,” said Lewis.

The Soldiers worked with the 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division; the 1st Cavalry Division; the 25th Infantry Division; and several Soldiers attached border and military transition teams to ensure mission success.

“My Soldiers always go the extra mile to ensure the communications network is maintained at a high standard and the commander is poised to command and control the battlefield at all times, utilizing numerous communications assets,” said Lewis.

Lewis explained that the Soldiers contributions to the warfighter, combined with tactical and technical expertise, directly lead to the efficient and successful execution of combat operations.

Lewis went on to say that she has never worked with more dedicated and technically proficient Soldiers in her career.

“The Signal Corps should be very proud of the tremendous talents of its Soldiers engaging in combat operations,” said Lewis. “My Soldiers work very hard, around the clock. I know their Families miss them, but their Families can be proud of how dedicated they are to mission accomplishment and sustained readiness.”

Iraqi teen warns CF of bomb, kidnapped sister returned

STORY BY 1ST LT. NICHOLAS PAOLINI

2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq—Just as the Scout Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment was returning to Camp Liberty, they drove past a 16-year-old boy who was trying to get their attention. They were no more than a half mile outside the gates when they stopped to see what the big deal was. It isn't unusual for kids to run toward American convoys, holding their hands up asking for soccer balls or the infamous, "chocolate mista."

The scout platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Alexander explained, "We drive past these kids almost everyday. Everyday they run outside waving and cheering. A lot of them give us the thumbs up sign. The 16-year-old boy had his hands together about chest high and then threw them apart as we were passing." Alexander knew right away what the boy was trying to tell them—there was an improvised explosive device close by.

"I stopped the platoon right then and there," said Alexander. "The scouts have become accustomed to numerous false reports of IEDs but will never ignore a warning. I treat them all as if they were true."

The scouts then began talking to the boy through their interpreter to determine where the IED was located. The boy explained how three men came to his house

and were trying to emplace an IED in the road. The boy stopped the three men from placing the IED and somehow got them to go away, but not before the men abducted his 6-year-old sister.

It was at this time that Alexander noticed the boy had some bruising on his face.

"The boy must have given those guys a tough time because he looked pretty roughed up," said Alexander.

Armed with a description of the three men, the scouts set out to find the kidnappers and attempted IED emplacer. The scout platoon drove in the direction the boy said the kidnappers fled.

Their first stop was to check with the nearby Iraqi Army checkpoints to see if they had seen the three men and little girl. The Iraqi Army said they saw no men fitting the description.

"We were just about to give up hope when we saw a young girl wandering around," said Alexander.

The scouts went up to her with the interpreter to see if by some chance it was the missing girl. It was that family's lucky day because it was the missing girl. The girl explained that she ran away from her captors. The scouts brought the girl back to her joy-filled brother.

"The brother was so excited when we came back and the girl hopped out of the Hummer," said Alexander.

The scouts were also glad they were at the right place at the right time to help out the girl.

"Kidnappings happen all too often here in Iraq," Alexander explained. "I just hate seeing these kids getting caught up in the violence; it's just a shame." 🇮🇶

(SPEAR, cont'd from Page 15)

"We are very hands on when it comes to teaching," said Herrin. "First we tell them what the lesson is, then we demonstrate it to them. After that, they do a walk through and then they do it at combat speed. We do it like that because it is critical information they are learning," explained Herrin. "They need this training to be a proficient fighting force."

Stephens said another reason why the Spear Academy is so successful is because not only do both the students and the instructors benefit from what is being taught, but everyone involved in making Iraq a peaceful nation does as well.

"The Iraqi Army benefits from the academy because this is advanced training they have never had before," he said. "Now they can conduct operations without a Coalition presence. [And we] benefit from the training because now when

we go out with the IA, we are on the same page when it comes to tactics, techniques and procedures," added Stephens.

As more and more Iraqis come through the institute, the Soldiers of 1-9 Cav. can see their counterparts make a smooth journey down the road to freedom paved by the Spear Academy — each step taking them closer and closer to defending Iraq on their own. 🇮🇶

NOTES FROM HOME

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

THANK YOU 1/9 Cav, for looking after Spc Matthew Burluson, as he gets over his surgery. He tells me, that ya'll won't let him even go to the chow hall and they ya'll bring his food to him. Stay Safe!! and God Bless you ALL!

Posted by: Terry (Burluson) Walls

I am so glad you all got to relax a little on the 4th. I would also like to say thank you to all of you great soldiers over there working hard every day. Also I would like to say HI!! to all the soldiers in HHC 2/7 CAV. And to my hubby Ssg Lowe I love you baby. The girls and I are very proud of you.

Posted by: Beth Lowe

Dear My Wonderful Husband Private Joseph Bons,

I am so proud of you baby i love you w/all my heart & soul & i miss you so much sweetie w/ everything i have in me! I cant wait until you can come home to me & our beautiful 2yr. old daughter we both are so proud of you & love & miss you so much hunny! Stay Safe & Come Home Soon To Us Baby!! Only 6 more months! Savannah says i love you daddy!!xoxoxoxoxoxoxoxo

*Love, Your Very Loving Wife, & Very Loving Daughter, Mrs. Jo Bons & Savannah Love
*biggest kisses ever baby!**

Posted by: Mrs. Joanna Bons Proud Army Wife Of Private Joseph Bons

I just wanted to thank you for your story today. My husband is in Mosul with the CAV and its a good feeling knowing he is "okay" over there with his brothers and sisters. Also thank you for thanking us, wives and family members as well. Im going through a little rough patch right now and its just nice to hear someone say that. So thank you for lifting me up just a bit...

Be Careful and Stay Strong and We can't wait until all of you are finally home.

Posted by: Sarah Mashino

Would just like to say Happy Birthday to my son Spc Richard Przybylinski Jr who is a member of G Battery 5th of 82nd Fa at Q-West. It also would be nice to see some stories of them.

Posted by: Richard Przybylinski Sr Ret Msgt

Hey everyone in 1/9 A troop.. i just wanted to say thanks for those pics they were great even though my husband wasn't in any on them... :(He never is. Please get some for me and post them in the next issue i would appreciate it.. anyway i can't wait for everyone to make a safe and speedy return. I also wanted to say that i love you hunny and am so proud of you for your reenlistment and for everything you do for us. WE ARE PROUD OF YOU, YOU ARE OUR HERO! WE LOVE YOU.

Posted by: Monalisa Johnson

Young Cav Soldier learning, maturing in combat

STORY AND PHOTO BY SPC. JEFFREY LEDESMA

1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq—A Denver native, Spc. Carlos Bustos, assigned to Dirty Deuce Platoon, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Bliss, Texas, reflected on his experiences thus far in the Iraqi capital as his new rank was playfully punched onto his chest.

Bustos signed up to be a Soldier at age 17 and set foot on Iraqi soil at 18. He said this early experience has benefited him.

“It makes you grow into a better Soldier, a better person,” he said. “You become a man because you’re dealing with things young people like myself wouldn’t be dealing with outside of the military.”

The young tanker explained that if he was in the civilian world he would be worrying about college and what his next homework assignment was. This world is a little different.

“I’m worrying about the safety of my guys while we’re out on patrol; IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and firefights,” Bustos said. “The things we see here really mature you as a person in many different ways.”

Back in March, the 18-year-old trooper was pulling guard duty atop a high concrete tower facing Alpha Road on the easternmost side of southern Ghazaliya’s Joint Security Station Thrasher when one of those moments happened.

“I heard a real big bang down the road, saw a big cloud of smoke,” he recalled.

Bustos didn’t find out until later that evening that Soldiers with his unit were responding to troops in contact when their sand-colored humvee hit a deep-buried IED. Four “Thunderhorse” heroes had fallen.

“It’s one of the first incidences that really tested my emotions as a person, dealing with that loss,” he said.

Loss isn’t unfamiliar to the youngest Soldier in this platoon. He lost friends before he joined the Army, Bustos said, but losing a friend in combat is something completely different.

“It takes a while to set in. It makes you think about how serious this place really is because sometimes it doesn’t feel like you’re in a conflict or a war and then things like that happen and it really takes you back



Guntersville, Ala., native, Capt. James Walker, commander of A Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, currently attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, makes sure the newly-placed rank doesn’t fall off Denver native Spc. Carlos Bustos’ chest with a punch during a promotion ceremony at Camp Liberty in western Baghdad. Bustos, a tanker, and his platoon conducted a morning patrol through the streets of northwestern Baghdad earlier that day.

down,” Bustos said. “It reminds you where you’re at.”

About a month later, as his patrol was rolling through northern Ghazaliya, an explosively-formed penetrator detonated near his vehicle, injuring Bustos and his tank commander.

“It was like slow motion for a second. I felt the blast, but I couldn’t see anything and I didn’t hear anything,” said Bustos, the gunner at the time. “All I felt was the pressure on my body.

“I was out,” he said. “The cab was suffocated with a thick smoke.”

Once he started coming to, all he could hear were the muffled sounds of the engine (SEE YOUNG, Page 24)



(Photo courtesy of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment)

Tank commander, 1st Lt. Joseph Perry, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, prepares his Abrahms tank for a mission into Mosul, Iraq.



(Photo courtesy of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment)

Bradley fighting vehicles from 1st Platoon, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment on line in the motorpool, Forward Operating Base Marez, Iraq.



(Photo illustration by Staff Sgt. Paula Taylor)

Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment return from a mission in Mosul, Iraq.



(Photo courtesy of 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment)

Fire support specialist, Spc. Cameron Hurd, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, mans the gunner's turret in his humvee.



(Photo courtesy of 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment)

Sergeant Rogiero Ortiz and Pvt. Cassandra Sas, both assigned to D Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, pull guard duty at Long Knife Gate on Forward Operating Base Marez, Iraq.



(Photo courtesy of 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment)

Soldiers of 1st Platoon, B Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment train Iraqi Army soldiers on squad wedge procedures near Tal 'Afar, Iraq.



(U.S. Army courtesy photo)

Staff Sgt. Calvin Babers and Staff Sgt. Tyson Cole, both infantryman assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, conduct security as members of the BCT commander's personal security detachment.



(U.S. Army courtesy photo)

Members of the BCT commander's personal security detachment keep a watchful eye while off Forward Operating Base Marez in northern Iraq.

(YOUNG, cont'd from Page 21)

knocking and the flat tires struggling to run on the ground, he said.

Although the 5-foot-11-inch Soldier couldn't really see anyone because he was still feeling the effects of the blast, thoughts were racing through his mind like bolts of lightning, he said.

"Ah, man, this is pretty bad," he recalled thinking. "What just happened?"

The machine gun mounted on his vehicle blew off and hit him in the head, knocking him unconscious. After receiving medical care he was returned to duty. Although preparation prior to the deployment was extensive, nothing really trains you for that, Bustos said.

"There is no real way to prepare yourself for what you're going to see out here, things you're going to do, things you're going to experience. It's definitely going to test your emotions. It's going to test you physically," he said. "All you can do is prepare yourself mentally, be prepared for anything and just make sure you have a strong mind."

The young Soldier said his advice to other troopers coming into the service is that, no matter how hard something might affect you, always try to do your best to keep your head in the game.

"Try not to lose the spark that you have inside that keeps you moving," Bustos said.

Many of the noncommissioned officers above him have been here before, he said, and are a real inspiration to the younger Soldiers.

"They keep us moving during times when we feel real down. They always have a real positive attitude," said Bustos.

For example, the newly-promoted specialist said, his exhausted platoon might be rolling through the gates, back from a six-hour firefight, and someone might crack a funny joke to release some of the stress. He said a positive attitude is a key element in making it through each long day in this stressful environment. Learning from the day's events also helps him.

"As a Soldier, you make a lot of mistakes, but what develops you as a person is the way you utilize those mistakes and Bustos is really good

about trying not to do the wrong thing twice," said Sgt. 1st Class Miguel Sanchez. "He is smart. He is street smart and he has common sense."

Sanchez, Bustos' platoon sergeant, said he has been lucky enough to have quality leaders for the "Joes" to learn from, the 14-year veteran said.

"I'll take a few of the lessons that they've taught me and when the day comes when I get a Soldier underneath me, I'll definitely be there for him and try to guide him like my NCOs have guided me out here," Bustos said.

"He went from being a Soldier that we all made fun of, because he was so young, to being one of the most mature Soldiers in the platoon," said Sanchez, a native of Odessa, Texas. "He looks like he is going to be an excellent NCO."

"Now that I am a specialist, they are going to be noticing me more," Bustos said after his promotion. "Once again, I am going to have to step up my game and try to get ready for that next level." 🍀

HEADHUNTER NEWS



STORY BY STAFF SGT. PAULA TAYLOR

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

TAL 'AFAR, Iraq—In March, a major thoroughfare leading into Tal 'Afar, received extensive damage when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated along the route. But with help from Coalition Forces and the local Iraqi government, the road has been reopened and completely repaved.

After the construction was complete, which was conducted by local Iraqi contractors, the city mayor, local leaders and government officials opened the road during an official ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Named after the recently deceased director of municipalities, Mohammed Mostafa Salah, 1st Lt. Brendan Fry, special projects officer, 1st Squadron, 9th

Cavalry Regiment said the road is significant because it links both Sunni and Shia neighborhoods in Tal 'Afar and is a main source for travel and commerce within the city.

In order to quell the threat of violent attacks like the one in March that killed more than 100 locals, several Iraqi checkpoints were established in the area.

“The Iraqi police protect the area’s inner perimeter, while the Iraq Army guards the outer streets,” said Maj. Mufutau Taiwo, squadron executive officer. “There are numerous checkpoints, and they have been effective in stopping violence along the route. Earlier this month, they stopped a suicide bomber from reaching the route, which has a large marketplace used by both Sunnis and Shias. This city is an example for all of Iraq. We are very proud of the efforts by the government here to continue to improve and secure Tal 'Afar.” 🇮🇶



(U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Brendan Fry)

Mayor Najim, city of Tal 'Afar, Iraq, cuts the ribbon during a ceremony commemorating the grand re-opening of a major thoroughfare that links Sunni and Shia neighborhoods together. Named after the recently deceased director of municipalities, Mohammed Mostafa Salah, the repaving was completed by Iraqi contractors after a bombing in March destroyed the road.

GARRYOWEN NEWS



(U.S. Air Force photo by: Staff Sgt Quinton Russ)

U.S. Army members of A Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, and Iraqi Army personnel talk about the illegal weapons and ammunition found during a house raid in Mosul, Iraq. Some of the weapons and ammunition found were rocket-propelled grenade rounds, a sniper rifle with ammunition, improvised explosive device-making material, and a grenade.



(U.S. Air Force photo by: Staff Sgt Quinton Russ)

Sgt. Siamu Utu, A Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment goes through a drawer trying to find anything suspicious during a raid in Mosul.



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment)

Soldiers of A Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment train members of the Iraqi Army in conducting insurgent ambush operations.



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment)

An aerial bomb is dropped onto an abandoned farm on the outskirts of Mosul after Soldiers of A Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment received information from the Iraqi Army that the farm was being used as an insurgent hideout. A search conducted at the farm revealed evidence, including booby traps, weapons caches, and bomb-making material, that showed the area was in fact a terrorist stronghold. After clearing the area of local civilians, the farm was destroyed to deny the insurgents a safe haven.

THUNDER HORSE NEWS



STORY AND PHOTO BY SPC. JEFFREY LEDESMA

1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq—As the early morning heat tiptoed past 100 degrees, “Thunderhorse” Soldiers alternated rolling over the Iraqi capital’s paved streets and its less-congested dirt backroads.

A voice over the radio broke the casual conversation. “I just heard from a buddy of mine that someone from our (advanced individual training) was killed in Afghanistan,” Pfc. Geoff Bakker said.

In his fledgling Army career, just 17 months, Bakker already knows two medics who have been killed in action and three more who have been wounded on the frontlines of Iraq.

He has a black, metal reminder that never leaves his wrist. The 28-year-old combat medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, said that the bracelet keeps the memory of his fellow medics alive.

One of the medics who stays in his thoughts is Sgt. John Allen. Allen signed up to save lives and, in the process, sacrificed his own.

When Bakker, a Portland, Ore., native, arrived in country, his first place of duty was at a medical treatment center. Shortly thereafter, Allen joined him after coming off a rotation serving with a line unit.

Bakker said he looked up to Allen. The 25-year-old sergeant told him about his experiences outside the wire, taught him the tricks of the trade, showed him what to do in different situations and provided hints on how to help make him a more efficient medic, he said.

“If he wanted to tell you something, he would tell you straight up,” Bakker said about his honest friend.

On Saint Patrick’s Day, Bakker’s one-year anniversary in the Army, he was supposed to go out of the wire, but he was in the motor pool because two of his trucks had broken down and weren’t in working condition. Bakker said while they were working on their downed vehicles,

Capt. Eric Mendoza walked into the motor pool and announced that some people had died ... eventually Allen’s name came up.

“When you know someone who dies, it brings back the harsh reality,” Bakker said. “Being a medic, you know that people die over here, but when the name that’s called is someone you know, someone you hung out with, someone you talked to, you’re more rattled.”

The sergeant, known for his goofball humor and blunt honesty, had died after a roadside bomb detonated near his patrol.

“He always created these special, funny moments. John had a way of making good things happen even though it was done in the strangest possible way,” his twin sister, Amanda Braxton of Redding, Calif., said in a Los Angeles Times article.

“I didn’t want to believe it was true. I turned around from the rest of my team and walked off by myself,” Bakker said. “It was the first time someone got killed that I knew personally. It hit me really, really hard.”

He lost a friend and was confronted with the reality that it could have been any one of them who had been killed that day.

“Death is something that, as a medic, you were trained to deal with, and the possibility of it happening to me is kind of something I accept,” Bakker said. “I figure if I could save someone’s life, it’s worth it.”

But Bakker said the road a medic travels is never easy and the trinket around his right wrist pays tribute to that road and the medics who have traveled it before him.

“I wanted to do something so I’d never forget – always have that reality check in my head ... not to scare me, but to keep the reality that things do happen out here,” he said. “I worry sometimes that I’ll forget things about him or I’ll forget that I knew him and that’s something I never want to do.”

Allen, a Soldier who was once in the Navy and extremely proud of serving his country, was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery. 



Pfc. Geoff Bakker, combat medic, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, Baghdad, Iraq.

REDCATCHER NEWS



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of 4th Squadron, 6th Air Cavalry Regiment)

Maj. Demetrios Nicholson, executive officer, 4th Squadron, 6th Air Cavalry Regiment, re-enlists Spc. Nicholas Green, Spc. Teddy Ray, and Sgt. Jason Reichart in front of an OH-58 Kiowa helicopter on the flightline at Forward Operating Base Marez, Mosul, Iraq.



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of 4th Squadron, 6th Air Cavalry Regiment)

Sgt. Jeffery Lewis, 4th Squadron, 6th Air Cavalry Regiment, getting a block of instruction on the proper use of a fire hose from the fire department at Forward Operating Base Sykes in Tal'Afar, Iraq.



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of 4th Squadron, 6th Air Cavalry Regiment)

A crew chief assigned to the 4th Squadron, 6th Air Cavalry Regiment prepares an OH-58 Kiowa helicopter for a nighttime assault in Iraq. The helicopter crews provide aerial surveillance and 24-hour coverage throughout Ninevah province for the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, who are headquartered on Forward Operating Base Marez, Mosul, Iraq.



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of 4th Squadron, 6th Air Cavalry Regiment)

Chief Warrant Officers Rian Demery and Mark Leach, Kiowa pilots, 4th Squadron, 6th Air Cavalry Regiment prepare for takeoff at Forward Operating Base Sykes, Tal 'Afar, Iraq.

BLACK DRAGON NEWS



PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:

Brig. Gen. Baez, commander, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division, engages the village muhktar of Thouray Uwest about security in his area as Lt. Col. Robert McLaughlin, commander, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, looks on.

Pfc. Justin Spaleny, Pfc. Daniel Salazar, and Pfc. Justin Crabtree load ice into a refrigeration unit during Operation Pale Rider.

A Blackhawk crew from B Troop, 1st Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry Regiment drops several hundred bags of ice at a resupply point during Operation Pale Rider. The supplies provided by B Troop were necessary for maintaining 24-hour operations during the mission.

An Iraqi Army soldier searches for buried weapons caches in Thouray Uwest Village as Lt. Col. Ra'ad, commander, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division, looks on. Ra'ad brought his battalion from Al Hadr to conduct missions alongside Soldiers of 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment during operations in the Tal Abtha District.



(Photos courtesy of 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment)



TASK FORCE READY NEWS



STORY AND PHOTO BY CAPT. BRIDGETTE BELL

Special Troops Battalion

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq— Since early May 2007, the Special Troops Battalion's Military Police Platoon has been escorting and providing security for the Ninevah Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) throughout the province.

A PRT is an administrative unit responsible for overseeing the formation of local governments and economic development. The PRT consists of civilians and military specialists working to perform small reconstruction projects or provide security for others involved in aid and reconstruction work.

When the STB took on the PRT mission, the MP Platoon was augmented by Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Reconnaissance Platoon and signal Soldiers from B Company. Those Soldiers have been well integrated into the platoon and perform duties and fill leadership positions alongside their MP counterparts.

Spc. Clearchus McCreight, a multi-channel transmission systems operator by trade, admits that initially it took time to learn his new job but said he has caught on pretty quickly.

"Of course I miss working with my fellow Soldiers in B Company, but I volunteered for this mission because I knew I could handle it. Now we see what the MPs do regularly and we have a better understanding of Mosul and the Iraqi people."

Platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Gilbert Limas, understands the challenges his Soldiers face.

"In addition to our other missions, formerly at Rabbayah and now at Badoush Prison, they are constantly on the go. But they know that is their job

and they enjoy doing it."

To date, the platoon has conducted over 140 PRT escort missions. Despite the frequency of the escort missions, the threat of imminent danger, and the mix of different skill sets within the MP Platoon, the attitude amongst the Soldiers is nothing short of enthusiastic. The Soldiers are impressed by what they see on missions to locations like Ayn Sifni where they were invited by a local religious leader to partake in a feast and tour a local shrine.



Pfc. Fernando Lopez, Special Troops Battalion, pulls security in Mosul during an escort mission while attached to the Military Police Platoon.

"This helps to pass the time and keeps me busy," said Pfc. Wade Harrell, chemical operations specialist. "I really like seeing the different parts of Iraq that I did not even know existed."

Currently, there are 25 Provincial Reconstruction Teams of varying sizes located throughout Iraq who receive guidance from the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan C. Crocker, and Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander, Multi-national Forces Iraq.

Without the efforts of the Military Police Platoon and its attachments, the PRT would not be able to accomplish missions that are vital to ensuring the political and economic development of the province.

"These Soldiers are not only ensuring the PRT's safety," Limas said, "but they are learning the importance of us building a partnership with the Iraqi people and being educated daily on Mosul Ninevah province and the Kurdish autonomous region."

The Special Troops Battalion's ability to sustain the versatility of its Soldiers is a testament that Soldiers should never stop training and improving, regardless of the conditions they are deployed in and the skills sets they possess. Continued collaboration between Soldiers like those in the MP Platoon will be a fundamental contributor to the PRT's success and the improvement of quality of life for the people of Ninevah province. 🇮🇶

ROUGH RIDER NEWS



STORY BY STAFF SGT. PAULA TAYLOR

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, Iraq—“This is not a job,” said freelance historian, Jim Spiri, during his visit to Mosul. “This is one of those life experiences that I was not going to miss.”

The N.M. native and his wife are both contractors who, for the past three years, have worked closely with the troops arriving in Iraq and Kuwait. Now that his job as a contractor is nearing completion, he decided to take time off to travel the country and spend time with Soldiers and Marines.

“My wife of 34 years is in one accord with me on this adventure. She and I have both worked flight lines in Iraq as well as Kuwait. It was always our plan that if our children went to war, we would somehow be there and do our part. This [vacation time] is the only way I can give back something that will benefit the Soldiers as well as the Families. It is not a paid job. It is strictly for the sake of history. I have always had the thought that if the Soldiers have to be here, then I want to document how they overcome and adapt in this war environment. I was not going to miss this opportunity to give back to those that have given much more than I have.”

Coming to Mosul seemed like an easy decision for Spiri because, he said, aside from being able to meet Soldiers from his neighboring state, it would allow him to see his friend, Maj. Eric Carnahan, the executive officer of the 27th BSB—someone he had worked with before in Balad, 2004.

“I have gotten to meet several of the 27th BSB Soldiers and had the opportunity to audio interview many,” Spiri said. “I was along with them on a trip to Al Qosh, and had an extremely enjoyable and informative time. My impression of 27th BSB is similar to my entire experience of the Soldiers here at FOB Marez—that they are all professional and make me feel at home. It is quite fulfilling to tell their stories.”

To help document the Fort Bliss cavalry Soldiers’ deployment, Spiri began a Web log through the Philadelphia Inquirer, where he posts stories and

experiences daily.

“I was unaware of what a blog was six months ago. The newspaper in Philadelphia suggested it, and I agreed as long as they did not edit anything. I did not want this to be a political venue, but rather a historical archive of individual Soldiers that I have come to know and travel among. The purpose was also to show to the American public that the everyday life of an individual Soldier deployed in Iraq is noteworthy.”

In his blogs, Spiri said he concentrates on writing about what Soldiers do on a daily basis in support of the overall mission.

“I have found that everyone, no matter what their job is, has a Family Member back home that is proud of their service. I like to bring out that aspect in everyone I speak with. Each Soldier here is doing something important, whatever their job is. I like to tell it from an individual angle that otherwise might not get told.”

Spiri has connected with the troops on FOB Marez, and said he is proud to claim them as his own.

“All those I meet become members of my family, for I have always considered that all the sons and daughters of America that are deployed here, are mine as well.”

Spiri said he is hoping to stay in the Mosul area until the second week

in September. His blog can be found at: <http://blogs.phillynews.com/philly/spiri/> 



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of 27th BSB)

Jim Spiri, freelance historian, interviews Spc. Eddy Carpenter, wheeled vehicle mechanic of B Company, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, during his visit to Mosul to meet troops. Spiri plans on staying in Mosul to interview Soldiers until mid-September.



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