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# Crossed Sabers

Volume I, Issue 23

Telling the MND-Baghdad Story

Monday, Oct. 15, 2007



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

## Iraqi's to the Rescue

Iraqi firefighters work to extinguish a blaze at Coalition Outpost Callahan in eastern Baghdad's Sha'ab neighborhood after a generator caught fire Sept. 27

## Stryker Soldiers Send Message to Insurgents

By Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma  
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - The essence of an insurgent-dominated neighborhood of the Iraqi capital's East Rashid District is evident as Soldiers weave through the desolate, maze-like streets peppered with improvised explosive devices. Several doors and gates are painted with evidence of a fanatic Muslim stronghold.

"In the name of God, I take back this house from the non-Muslim," a Sunni interpreter reads from a gate. "Signed, al-Qaeda in Iraq."

Despite the dangers that linger behind street corners and on rooftops, the Vilseck, Germany-based 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, currently with Multi-National Division - Baghdad, wanted to send a clear message to the insurgency Sept. 20.

The Stryker Soldiers, who have been in the country for less than two months, are tackling their clearing mission one weapons cache, suspected insurgent and roadside bomb at a time in a fight that Staff Sgt. Jared Utter briefly described as possibly being "one of the biggest fights in Iraq right now."

Only a month into the unit's projected 15-month tour, Utter, a native of Columbus, S.C., and the squad leader with Company G's 2nd Platoon, said his troops have seen more than a month's worth of experience now on their fifth back-to-back day out in this sector.

This particular day started off like all the others with the sun peeking above the hori-

zon creating an orange backdrop behind the company's formation of eight-wheeled Stryker vehicles.

It took about an hour to get to the neighborhood and begin searching; a place where only six out of 36 houses were occupied.

The Soldiers with 2nd Platoon, led by 1st Lt. Eric Owens, discovered hand-made, highly-explosive materials in a house they had cleared out the day prior.

"This is not the first time we've seen (insurgents) come in behind us," said Owens, who hails from Richmond, Va. After an explosive ordnance disposal team detonated the explosive material, the company continued with the mission.

It was a little after 1 p.m. and the company has been clearing homes all morning. Behind a shield of white smoke, 3rd Squad maneuvered across 60th Street, a road with a direct view of an open field, when something exploded and rounds started to fly.

"I saw tracers hit the ground. They opened up on us with PKCs (machine guns). We don't know if it was a mortar or (rocket-propelled grenade that exploded), but it couldn't have hit more than 20 feet away from us," said Spc. Eric Horvath of Mentor, Ohio, who later found pieces of shrapnel melted onto his gear. "It all happened so fast. It was like I teleported to cover."

While they continued to receive heavy machine gun fire from the second story of a building across the open field, Spc. J. Jacobs of Bloomington, Ind., fell face down onto the

See **Game On** Page 4

## 828 Iraqi Police Recruits Graduate Training

By Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Beach  
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP INDIA, Iraq - Gerian Mohamed is proud of many things in his life; his marriage and the birth of his children. But today, he said, is one of the proudest moments of his life.

Today he became a police officer.

A few short months ago he was a farmer, growing vegetables sold in Baghdad markets. The 30-year-old proudly declared he is ready to serve his country.

"The training was very difficult, harder than I imagined," Mohamed said through a translator. But he said he

feels ready for what lies ahead.

Mohamed was one of 828 volunteers to graduate the Iraqi Police training program here today. A separate class graduated from the Baghdad Police College Sept. 20. The goal is to expand the Iraqi Police force by 12,000 officers over the next six months throughout Iraq.

What lies ahead for Mohamed and the nearly 1,500 other volunteers from the Abu Ghraib area of western Baghdad, who will soon undergo the same training, is the opportunity to do their part in building a better and safe Iraq for them-



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Beach, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Iraqi Police graduates carry Lt. Omar Thamer, an Iraqi Police officer instructor, on their shoulders after the graduation ceremony at Camp India Sept. 25.

See **Graduate** Page 3

**Everyone Agrees:**

# Progress Made in the Iraqi Capital

Read any newspaper or watch any broadcast network news program and it is unanimous: the surge is working here in the Iraqi capital.

We've seen a decline in terrorist acts and sectarian violence over the months since Operation Fardh Al Qanoon began in mid-February, and the prognosis for Baghdad looks brighter than it has in several years.

Having additional Coalition forces working alongside their Iraqi counterparts at joint security stations and Coalition outposts brings us closer to the population we help protect and it has allowed our Soldiers and their leaders to build trust among the people.

We've reached out to the local populace and they, in turn, are reaching out to us and providing tips that are helping us to rid Baghdad streets of extremists and criminals.

But the level of cooperation has gone even further than that.

The Iraqi people have responded to our presence and are lining up to join in the fight against terrorism and sectarian violence by criminal militia members.

Instead of harboring the hatred of extremists, Baghdad residents are banding together to join with the government of Iraq and its security forces to

**Pegasus 6  
Sends****Maj. Gen.  
Joseph F. Fil,  
Jr.**

put an end to senseless violence.

Last month, more than 1,500 volunteers from Abu Ghraib completed their training and have returned to their neighborhoods and homes as full-fledged members of the Iraq Police.

We have helped set the conditions for reconciliation between the people in Iraq and their government – promoting change from within, by joining forces with Iraqi Security Forces, than by attacking it. The members of the Multi-National Division – Baghdad have been instrumental in this movement, and we must continue to foster the reconciliation process here in the Iraqi capital.

We are making a difference, but there is still so much to do.

With that in mind, I know that many of us are looking forward to reuniting with our families in the coming months.

I charge all of you, leaders and troopers alike, to maintain your edge; maintain



your focus; and avoid becoming complacent as we near the end of a very successful 15-month-long deployment.

Our extension here in Baghdad allowed our brothers and sisters from the 4th Infantry Division to refit, retrain and have a year of dwell time in our Central Texas home.

They are preparing to return again, and we will welcome them with open

arms when the time comes.

But that time is not today. Stay focused, stay sharp and stay the course of freedom here in the Iraqi capital.

I'm proud of the professionalism you all bring to bear here every day. It's that professionalism that brings progress to the people of Baghdad.

We've built a great team; it our team; it's the First Team!

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

## Commanding General Keeps Army Strong

Gen. David H. Petraeus, commanding general of Multi-National Force – Iraq, reenlists Sgt. Adam Prince, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., a member of the 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team based out of Fort Carson, Colo., at a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Rustamayah Sept. 22 in eastern Baghdad.

## Baghdad News Briefs

### Apache Crews Engage Enemy Positions

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Multi-National Division-Baghdad attack helicopter crews fired upon two buildings from which insurgents were attacking Coalition Forces, at approximately 5 p.m. Oct. 2 in south Baghdad.

Apache helicopter crews from 4th “Guns” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, were called in for support after Soldiers from the 2nd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment came under fire by insurgents from a building.

Two hours earlier, another air weapons team from 4-227th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion had destroyed a possible car bomb near the same building. The ground unit used the remnants of that destroyed vehicle as a landmark to identify the target building for the aircrews.

The Apache crews were cleared to fire on the building and engaged it. Immediately following that engagement, the ground forces requested that the aircrews fire on another building from which more insurgents were targeting Coalition Forces with small arms fire. After receiving clearance, the crews engaged that building, as well.

The small arms fire stopped from both buildings after the Apaches engaged them. In both instances, the Apache crews hit the intended targets, causing damage to the targeted buildings but no collateral damage.

### Volunteers Will Attend Iraqi Police Academy

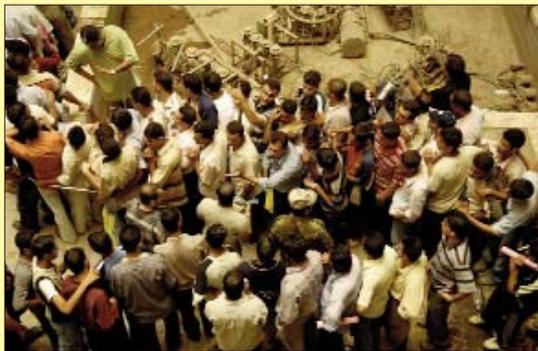
By Maj. Chris Budihas  
1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment

BAGHDAD — Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers, in conjunction with Iraqi Security Forces, held three recruiting drives in the western Baghdad neighborhoods of Adl, Jamia and Khadra over the past week. The purpose of the drives are to hire local citizens to bolster security in the Mansour District of western Baghdad.

Ultimately, these volunteer security guard forces will attend the Iraqi Ministry of Interior Police Academy and become Iraqi Police officers in their neighborhoods.

As part of Operation Rogue Volunteer, the “Desert Rogues” from 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, worked with local neighborhood councils, sheiks, religious leaders, political parties and former Iraqi military officers to select capable local men to work directly with Iraqi Army units in their neighborhoods to guard the population from insurgent attacks and intimidation.

The first 286 volunteers from the neighborhood of Adl will attend the Baghdad Police Academy later this month. Thus far, Task Force Rogue has already screened more than 1,200 applicants in the western Baghdad neighborhoods of Adl, Jamia and Khadra. The goal is to recruit 800 to 1000 volunteers-turned-Iraqi Policemen by the spring of 2008.



(Photo Specialist Gill, MNC-I Combat Camera)

**Hundreds of local residents attend a recruiting drive for volunteers to become Iraqi Police officers in a western Baghdad neighborhood. Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces screened more than 1,200 residents during the past week.**



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Beach, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

**Iraqi Police graduates celebrate at the conclusion of their graduation ceremony at Iraqi Army Camp India in Baghdad Sept. 25. More than 800 volunteers from the Abu Ghraib area of Baghdad graduated the 30-day training and are now Iraqi Police officers. They will return to their own neighborhoods to help provide security.**

## Iraqi's Protect and Serve

Graduate  
From Page 1

selves by starting in their own neighborhoods.

Mohamed said a few months ago he didn't have a lot of hope for the future or his children's future.

Extremist and terrorists had infiltrated the area where he lived and made life very dangerous. In what has been widely publicized, sheiks of Abu Ghraib formed an alliance with Coalition Forces and the government of Iraq, turning their backs on these extremist groups like al-Qaeda.

Sheik Talib Motlak Al Halous is one of them. For him, this graduation was a very important day.

“This morning is a good morning, because today, we were able to put aside our sectarian differences and come together to start ridding our country of terrorists. Today is a start. Today is a very proud day,” Sheik Al Halous said.

“Mohamed, his pale green eyes looking up at his instructor, nods his head in agreement.

Before the ceremony, one of the recruits came to the podium and read from the Quran, his voice rhythmically singing the words of the holy book, filling the air and floating on the breeze. He recited a Surah, or verse, which commands all true believers to not fight one another; that all Muslims should work together and always look for peace.

“You have undergone very good training,” Iraqi Lt. Gen. Abud Qanbar, commanding general of the Baghdad Operations Command told to the graduates. “You know how to do your jobs now, and your first priority is to defeat the terrorist and help the Iraqi people.”

Abud went on to tell the graduates this was a very important first step for all of Iraq.

“You must enforce the law. You must work together to keep away sectarian violence. We must get all Iraqis to come together, as one people and one nation. We must stop the bloodshed,” Abud said.

“In order to do that, you have to treat all Iraqi people with respect. You have to follow the laws

you uphold and represent. Remember your training, and always strive to improve yourself. Remember, it is Iraq first and last,” he said.

For Lt Col. Kurt Pinkerton, the difference between a few months ago and now is night and day. Pinkerton, from San Jose, Calif., is the commander of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. He said what made the difference was the young men filling the parade field.

“Since we got here, we have been working with the tribes,” Pinkerton said. “Frankly, we have been reaching out to the people ...trying to find out what they were resisting; what their goals and objective were.

“What we found was it was almost cultural. They didn't have a purpose to resist. They did it, at first, because it was the thing to do as a culture. And then after a while it just sort of sustained the fight. They didn't like the government, they didn't like the security forces and they were jobless,” Pinkerton explained.

“So they voiced their anger through resisting. Once we started finding them jobs, working with them, letting them secure their own areas, integrating them with the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police; they turned completely and have helped us for several months to fight al Qaeda,” Pinkerton said.

“These guys all started out as volunteers, none of which got paid,” he said.

Now that they have completed the 30 days of training, they are police officers and will return to their own neighborhoods where they are expected to serve and protect.

“There are two big advantages to doing it this way,” said Pinkerton.

“One, they know the people and the people know them, so there is already mutual respect and cooperation. The second key thing is its going to build a stronger local economy, with 1,500 jobs for the local population. That's a significant boost to the local economy,” he said.

“My confidence is high,” said Mohamed surrounded by smiling classmates. “I see a good future for Iraq. I see a bright future for my children.

“Perhaps in a few years,” he said, “I can put away my uniform and my gun, and go back to farming.”

# Strykers Tell Insurgents 'Game On'

## Game On

From Page 1

cement.

Jacobs said he felt the blast, grabbed his neck, saw the blood and instinctively applied pressure to the wound, a piece of shrapnel in his neck.

"I felt loopy, was hot and dizzy, and fell," the 32-year-old said. "At some point, I must have lost consciousness."

"I heard the machine gun fire and turned around and got blasted in the face with something. I went to the corner and didn't know he was down," said Spc. Jason "Doc" Kucharski, the squad's medic.

"I thought he was shot," Utter said. "I thought he took one."

Sgt. Michael Huffman said he saw his Soldier moving on the ground and then he stopped.

Three more smoke grenades were tossed out from different directions as rounds continued to fly over Jacobs. Pfc. Victor Flores who was the second Soldier in the file moving down the street rushed behind the cover of a building's corner and quickly laid down suppressive fire with his squad automatic weapon.

"The first thing that came to mind was to take cover and shoot back," said Flores of San Jose, Calif. "I saw someone in a white shirt, blue collar, black jeans about 16 to 18 years

old run into the building right before the contact."

"We turn around and all we could see is Jacobs lying face first on the corner," said Horvath. "We weren't sure if he was dead or if he was shot. I thought he was shot and so did Hawkins (Spc. Michael Hawkins, an infantryman from Palm Springs, Calif.)"

"We have a man down," Owens echoed over the radio.

Huffman, a team leader, said he shot an M-203 grenade, as the rest of the company started to lay out suppressive fire.

"It took me about half a second to realize what was happening. You see bullets flying at you and that's all it takes," said Spc. Richard Main of Reno, Nev., "I was in the (vehicle commander's) hole in the truck manning my 50-caliber machine gun."

Main said knowing his buddy was down definitely made him fight that much harder. The infantryman fired more than 450 rounds at the enemy from the truck.

"Our main goal was to get him the (heck out of there)," Huffman said.

Still under enemy fire, Huffman and Kucharski grabbed the downed Soldier and pulled him into the closest courtyard.

"When we moved him, I saw a blood spot right where his face was," said Kucharski. "He was struggling to breathe, but he was trying to."

"When I came to, I was disoriented. I saw the blood. I



**A javelin, an American sounding rocket, fired by a Soldier with Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, strikes a building where the unit was receiving heavy machinegun fire from during an insurgent complex attack in Baghdad's East Rashid district Sept. 20.**

couldn't see or hear very well," Jacobs said. "My chest felt like it was hit by a sledge hammer. I had a hard time breathing and I started to panic because I didn't know what was going on."

With a combat life saver, a combat medic, a physician's assistant and his fellow Soldiers surrounding him, they assessed his wounds. He was quickly loaded onto a truck and medically evacuated out of the area.

"It was pretty much 'game on' after that. Everybody ran to the rooftop, started opening up on them (the insurgents). I dropped almost two mags at the building that was shooting at us," Horvath said. "It's like an ultimate feeling of safety to fire back. Every round they shoot at us, we shoot a hundred back."

The company fired back with an AT4 (anti-tank rocket), two javelins and one wire-guided missile. They also support from attack aviation assets, both rotary and fixed-wing. Two hellfire missiles and a 500-pound bomb hit the structure.

"(The building) is nothing but the burnt skeleton of what once was a house," said Hawkins as he pulled over watch on the rooftop.

Once the firefight came to an end, Utter told his Soldiers that they did a good job maneuvering. They went to their guy under fire and pulled him out.

As they loaded up and headed back to their base, they knew they will be back at it again tomorrow. This is just the beginning their 15-month deployment. Tomorrow they'd see more desolate, maze-like streets peppered with improvised explosive devices, discovering weapons caches, roadside bombs and more sporadic gunfire.

Jacobs, who suffered a concussion, a hairline fracture of the left cheek and sinus cavity, as well as the shrapnel wound in his neck, is recovering and is scheduled to be back out with his comrades in a week.



(Photos by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

**Soldiers with Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, lift a wounded Spc. J. Jacobs of Bloomington, Ind., into a Stryker vehicle to be evacuated out of an insurgent attack Sept. 20. The 32-year-old was later deemed return to duty and is scheduled to be back out with his unit in a week.**

## Honoring Our Fallen Heroes

Sgt. Robert Ayers III, 3-2 CAV, 2nd SCR  
 Staff Sgt. Kevin Brown, 6-9 CAV, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.  
 Staff Sgt. Donnie Dixon, HHC, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.  
 Sgt. First Class James Doster, 2-16 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.  
 Spc. Jason Hernandez, 1-9 CAV, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.  
 Spc. Thomas Hilbert, 1-9 CAV, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.  
 Staff Sgt. Courtney Hollinsworth, 1-4 CAV, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.  
 Sgt. First Class Randy Johnson, AAT, 2nd SCR  
 Pvt. (2) Christopher McCloud, 6-9 CAV, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.  
 Spc. Todd Motley, 6-9 CAV, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

Gunnery Sgt. Hermon Murkerson, 2-4-1 MiTT, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.  
 Pfc. Christian Neff, 1-64 AR, 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.  
 Sgt. Randell Olguin, 1-2 CAV, 2nd SCR  
 Spc. Joshua Reeves, 2-16 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.  
 Spc. Jonathan Rivadeneira, 6-9 CAV, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.  
 Staff Sgt. Zachary Tomczak, 2-325 IN, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div.  
 Sgt. Terry Wagoner, 6-9 CAV, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.  
 Spc. Aaron Walker, 3-2 CAV, 2nd SCR  
 Sgt. Lee Wilson, 1-9 CAV, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

# Ironhorse Brigade Assists in Delivery of Soil Testing Kits to University of Baghdad

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

ABU GHRAIB, Iraq – The 1st “Ironhorse” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division recently took a step towards advancing the future of farming in Iraq through helping the country’s agricultural scientists at a major university here.

Soldiers from the brigade along with members from the brigade’s Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team and civil affairs office linked up with two scientists from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the Green Zone in Baghdad to deliver soil testing kits to faculty members of the University of Baghdad’s College of Agriculture here Sept. 22.

The delivery included 17 soil testing kits and a water analysis machine to professors and other faculty members at the college. The kits and a water analysis machine will allow the scientists to use up to date equipment to improve their efforts in advancing agriculture in Iraq.

According to Lt. Col. Harvey Fitzgerald, senior agri-business advisor for the Ironhorse Brigade EPRT, much of the work with agriculture in the area is being accelerated due to the success of local reconciliation efforts.

“We’re providing pieces of the puzzle for reconciliation and there’s lots of momentum right now, specifically through trying to find opportunities to strengthen agricultural economy and we’re trying to make sure that the Iraqi system is success-

ful,” said Fitzgerald, who hails from Hermosa, S.D. “Today, we’re providing them with soil testing kits that will allow them to have the latest in soil testing technology and help them with the planning of their resources for the fall planting season.”

The test kits will allow the Iraqi agriculturalists to test the overall composition of the soil to examine nitrate and phosphate levels and evaluate whether the soil is good for farming.

The day’s visit to the college marked the first time USDA representatives have traveled to meet with the faculty on the university campus which boasts 14 laboratories and a dairy research facility within its College of Agriculture.

“We have met with them (the college faculty) at the Ministry of Agriculture building before but we wanted to do a face to face with our friends at their university,” said Dr. Rebecca Burt, a USDA soil science advisor. “We consider them important partners and we’re optimistic about this first big step through this visit to their home turf.”

During their meeting, the college faculty, USDA representatives and Ironhorse Brigade personnel discussed various issues concerning the running of agriculture programs at the university. Some topics discussed included the replacement of lab equipment which was stolen three years ago and training on new pieces of equipment that the college’s labs will be receiving.

“We will work with them to identify



A faculty member (left) from the University of Baghdad’s College of Agriculture speaks with Dr. Rebecca Burt (center), a soil science advisor for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Hermosa, S.D. native Lt. Col. Harvey Fitzgerald, senior agri-business advisor with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, during a tour of the university’s dairy research facility lab in Abu Ghraib, Iraq Sept. 22.

their needs and address their issues, working hard to help them resolve their problems,” added Burt. “We want to see them succeed at (taking over their own agricultural efforts) and we have a wealth of experts who can help them do just that.”

Reconciliation efforts helped to facilitate the meeting on the campus, according to Capt. Mark Finnegan, Ironhorse Brigade’s deputy civil affairs officer.

“Security has greatly improved in Abu

Ghraib thanks to reconciliation efforts and the (college faculty) who were once worried about meeting with us on the campus, have not seen any significant acts of violence in nearly five months,” said Finnegan, who hails from Pittsburgh, explaining some of the significance of the meeting.

Following the meeting with the agriculture faculty, the USDA members and Ironhorse troops were taken on a tour of the college’s dairy research facility and lab.

Working with the USDA, the Ironhorse EPRT and civil affairs personnel have been coordinating with local government officials within the Ironhorse area of operations, to include Abu Ghraib, to improve the agricultural economy for farmers.

“We’re currently working a number of things to help them create farmer’s associations which are organizations made up of farmers that report to the government of Iraq,” said Fitzgerald.

“These organizations help farmers by serving as a conduit between the Iraqi Director General of Agriculture and the producers and will assist them in seed, fertilizer and chemical purchases,” he said.

“Along with that we will help them with input on how to sell a large part of their output,” added Fitzgerald.

Recent improvements in security will help not just agriculture in the area but continue to move other local governance and reconstruction projects along as well, according to Finnegan.

“Reconciliation is helping accelerate our persistent efforts to help the Iraqis become self-reliant and improve governance, economics and essential services in the Abu Ghraib area,” said Finnegan.



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

Sgt. Thomas Fogarty (left), a native of Alameda, Calif. and Sgt. Paul Gomez, who hails from San Antonio, both Soldiers serving on a 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division personal security detachment, deliver soil testing kits to a faculty member from the University of Baghdad’s College of Agriculture in Abu Ghraib, Iraq Sept. 22 during a visit to the facility’s campus.

# 'Red Dragons,' Civil Affairs Soldiers Make Humanitarian Aid Drop in Baghdad

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

BAGHDAD – About 10 years ago, Inam Jawad and her husband were blessed with a little girl. Soon after her birth, they realized that their daughter had a severe mental disorder that would mean she would need extra help throughout her entire life.

Then after the death of her husband shortly after the birth of their daughter, Jawad made a choice that would echo throughout the community and touch the lives of hundreds of children and adults.

She opened up her home in central Baghdad to children and adults who were mentally disabled.

Years went by without much help from the government. Only private donations were taken to keep the home running despite high rent payments and food and medical supply bills.

Recently, without explanation, the food drop off's stopped. The neighborhood advisory council caught wind of the problem and immediately contacted Capt. Donald Cherry and his troops from Battery A, 3rd "Red Dragons" Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, to see what could be done for Jawad and her home.

"Without cooperation, you can do nothing," said Udai Jalal, the council's deputy chairman. "Any help is welcome, especially when it is for children like this."

Working closely with a team from the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion out of North Carolina, the troops from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, made a food drop that would keep Jawad's home well-stocked for about a month.

Several hundred pounds of rice, beans, canned vegetables and powdered milk were dropped off Sept. 18 to sustain the center until more regular lines of logistics could be opened up.

Along with the food, medical supplies like cough syrup, valium and cold medicines were dropped off to help Jawad restock her cabinet.

"The medicine, food and help are appreciated," said Jawad. "I hope to keep the relationship with the council and the



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

Staff Sgt. Moorehead, from the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, and Spc. Justin Reed of Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, unload a trailer full of food being dropped off at a home for children affected by mental illness during a humanitarian aid drop in central Baghdad's Qadisiyah neighborhood Sept. 18.

Americans in the future."

Jawad expressed her thanks to the troops, but hinted at future intentions while talking with the council chairman.

She said she would like to become more independent

in the future by not having to pay such a steep price for rent and have more regular shipments of gasoline for her generator, food and supplies she exhausts on a daily basis.

Her center houses more than 20 children and also several elderly adults in need of extra care.



Several hundred pounds of rice, beans, crackers and canned vegetables were dropped off to a home for mentally disabled children during a humanitarian aid food drop coordinated by troops from Battery A, 3rd "Red Dragon" Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment and the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion team attached to the Red Dragons in central Baghdad's Qadisiyah neighborhood Sept. 18.



Pfc. Felix Rolan, Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, unloads a 50-kilogram (about 110 pound) bag of rice during a humanitarian aid food drop to a home for mentally disabled children in central Baghdad's Qadisiyah neighborhood Sept. 18.



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

An Iraqi doctor listens to a man's heartbeat inside the mobile aid station built by Soldiers from Company D, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment in central Baghdad's Karkh District during a cooperative medical engagement Sept. 20.

## Defenders Conduct First-Ever Cooperative Medical Engagement

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

BAGHDAD – Normally in a support role, you support ongoing operations with maintenance and logistics. You hardly ever get out in the streets to perform first-hand operations.

Troops from the Forward Support Company D, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, spearheaded a cooperative medical engagement involving several Coalition elements coming together September 20.

Soldiers from the "Defender" Company were joined with medics from Company C, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, troops from Company E, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment and Iraqi Security Forces from the 4th Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, who were all on hand to play their part for the larger mission.

This was the first mission of its kind for the support company. Normally, they are busy with duties like vehicle maintenance and logistical support for the Dark Horse Squadron on Forward Operating Base Prosperity in central Baghdad.

The Defender Company's commander, Capt. Nicole Vild, said that although the mission is a little different from the normal routines of her troops, it hasn't slowed them down any.

"My company is very flexible," said the Cleveland native. "The guys really love to come out and help whenever they can. This area has no representation from the government. It's a lot of refugees just living in shacks, so we thought we could come out and show a little love."

The goal was simple: set up and treat as many patients as

possible while maintaining safety in Baghdad's Karkh District.

There was no clinic or even walls to the structure where the event was held. Iraqi and American Soldiers helped one another corral the people anxiously waiting to have one of their children or themselves seen by one of several medical practitioners.

This was also the first time the company got a chance to use its new mobile aid station – built from scratch by the Defender troops a few weeks ago. Once it was unloaded from the truck, it took just a few Soldiers about 20 minutes to set up and use it to give patients a little privacy while being examined by one of the several doctors.

Cooperative medical engagement is a literal term used for these types of events.

American medics and physicians work closely with Iraqi doctors and medics from the security forces on hand. "One team, one fight," as one man put it.

Throughout the morning, more than 150 people were seen and treated for ailments like minor colds to old wounds from violence that once shook the area.

For one Iraqi woman who brought her daughter to get seen for a cold, it wasn't just about getting medicine. She said that the Americans and Iraqis who work to keep her neighborhood safe are very close to her heart. She also wanted to check to see if there was going to be any assistance with propane or food that day.

"This is about as hands on as you can get when bringing humanitarian aid to the local populace," said 1st Lt. Jean Hare, an Oakland, Calif., native with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4-9 Cav. "It feels good."

Hare said that many of the ailments are similar to regular symptoms some Soldiers seek care for when going to a



Sgt. 1st Class Mark Dengate, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, examines an Iraqi baby brought to a cooperative medical engagement in Baghdad's Karkh District Sept. 20.

troop medical clinic.

Along with the treatment came medicines and personal hygiene items like toothpaste, soap and baby wipes.

# Medics Provide First Aid Training to AAFES Employees

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – It was a strange bit of irony that occurred just days before a scheduled first-aid training class when one of Cynthia Smith's employees suffered deep cuts to two of his fingers requiring a visit to the aid station here.

Smith said that accidents like this one, which resulted when the employee was operating a forklift in the post-exchange's receiving area, have been a rarity, but if something similar were to happen again, she believes her employees will be better prepared to handle it thanks to the training they received from the medics of Company C, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Sept. 17.

First aid training is an annual requirement for all Army and Air Force Exchange Service employees, Smith, who is a native of Statesboro, Ga., explained, and while she and the other managers were up to date on the training, several of her newer employees had yet to receive the training.

By offering to conduct the training for them, Pfc. Amanda Ouillette, said that it not only allows them to meet their training requirements, but it also benefits every one on the FOB.

"It helps us a little bit," Ouillette, who is originally from Detroit, explained.

"That way they can start a little bit of

treatment before we get there so there's something – the patient gets treatment as fast as possible," she said.

Ouillette, along with Spc. Jennifer Havenar, served as the two primary instructors for the class, which covered basic life-saving techniques to include, airway obstruction, controlled bleeding and treatment for shock and burns.

The two hour training session was primarily hands-on with the AAFES employees learning how to apply various types of bandages and tourniquets, as well as use other first aid supplies, all of which can be found in the numerous red and white medical boxes that are strategically placed around the FOB.

The casualty collection point boxes are packed with medical supplies, and the boxes are latched shut and secured with plastic zip ties, which can be cut away if somebody needs to access the supplies.

"Everything we brought can be found in the CCP boxes," Baytown, Texas native, Havenar, said. "They're basically put in locations around the FOB in order to be best located for the whole FOB so people can get easy access to medical supplies."

Whether they are military or civilian, Havenar said that it is important that everyone on the FOB is familiar with basic life saving skills and tools.

"It is good for everybody – it's not just for military personnel," she said. "If we get mortared or if anything happens on this FOB,



Employees at Forward Operating Base Prosperity's post exchange practice applying bandages during a first aid training class for AAFES employees at the central Baghdad base camp Sept. 17.

everyone should be prepared."

Havenar also added that her company is willing to offer first aid training to any person or group at FOB Prosperity that requests it.

"The more people that know about basic life support, the better," she said. "It's simple steps to save someone else's life."

Although her employee's injury wasn't

life-threatening, Smith said it's best to be prepared for the worst, and she feels more comfortable now knowing that all of her employees have a basic knowledge of first aid.

"It makes a difference when you have the training and when you don't," she said. "You never know when something may happen again."



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

Spc. Jennifer Havenar, a medic with Company C, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, turns Pfc. Amanda Ouillette, also a medic with Co. C, onto her side to demonstrate the recovery position during a first aid training class given to AAFES employees at Forward Operating Base Prosperity's post exchange in central Baghdad Sept. 17.



(Photo by Pfc. Kirby Rider, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

## Clean Sweep

Soldiers from 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, prepare to enter a vineyard after spotting al-Qaida in Iraq members running from the vineyard during Operation Clean Sweep in al-Abarra, Iraq, just south of Baqouba Sept. 26. Operation Clean Sweep brought local leaders of Al-Abarra and Baqouba together to discuss ways of keeping the village safe.

# Soldiers Celebrate Birthday of Their Regiment in Iraq

By Sgt. Serena Hayden  
3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BALAD, Iraq – History has and always will be an important part of our lives. Whether it is world history, the history of the state you're from, or your family's history, history impacts most people in one way or another.

For the Soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, the history of their regiment is held deep in their hearts.

And although the Soldiers of the "Warhorse" battalion were deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08, they did not allow that to stop them from celebrating the 141st birthday of their regiment at Forward Operating Base Paliwoda in Balad, Iraq, Sept. 21.

In honor of their regiment's birthday, the Soldiers took a break from their rigorous deployment routine for a rest and re-fit period to enjoy challenging activities and good food.

Soldiers were treated to a barbeque and music during the occasion.

They also participated in a strong-man competition to prove their mettle and enjoy the brotherhood they share with the buddies they serve alongside on a daily basis.

With the temperature still soaring around 100 degrees, the Soldiers were physically taxed after competing in the events,

which included a Light Medium Tactical Vehicle tire flip, track pull and truck pull.

First Lt. Benjamin Harrow of Wilmington, N.C., placed first in the event; Pfc. Kyle Bushey of Mooers Forks, N.Y., placed second, and Sgt. Darius Heard of Detroit, placed third overall.

The battalion is in its twelfth month of combat and stability operations in Salah Ah Din province, charged to work with local Iraqi Security Forces to protect the people of Balad, Dujayl and the surrounding community.

Lt. Col. Kevin Dunlop, battalion commander, said, "It has been a tough ride, but one where our troopers have served honorably and done very well."

"We have fought hard here to bring stability to this area. We are using this day to remember where we came from and celebrate who we are," he said.

The day's activities concluded with an awards presentation and cake-cutting ceremony.

Pvt. Jonathan Aguirre from Las Vegas, the youngest trooper in the battalion, assisted Dunlop in cutting the ceremonial cake.

"This is an opportunity to allow Soldiers to celebrate the history of their unit by enjoying some well-deserved break away from their daily mission set," Dunlop continued.

"After 12 months in country, we saw it necessary to celebrate our achievements and mentally prepare ourselves to complete our



(U.S. Army photo)

A Soldier from 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division participates in the truck pull event of the strong man competition as the unit celebrates the 141st birthday of the 8th Cavalry Regiment in Balad, Iraq, Sept. 21.

mission," he said.

"[The Soldiers] continue to show me their 'no quit' attitude every day. There is

still a long way to go on this deployment and we will continue to stay focused," he said.

# Soldier Proves Cousin Wrong 17 Years After Bet

By 1st Lt. Jenny Wright  
1-227th Avn. Regt.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – For one 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division AH-64D Apache crew chief, a career in the Army began with a challenge.

Sgt. Mark Ramon Tudela Martinez was inspired to enlist by his cousin, now Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Castro, but not because of words of encouragement – Castro told Martinez he couldn't hack it.

Martinez decided to prove Castro wrong and joined the National Guard in Guam on Aug. 14, 1990, as a water purification specialist.

He continued his civilian career as a salesman for 10 years before giving it up to go on active duty.

On June 22, 2000, at 31, he switched to active duty and switched military occupational specialties to become an attack helicopter repairer.

He later deployed to Afghanistan in 2003 for Operation Enduring Freedom and to Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004 with 1st Battalion "Expect No Mercy," 101st

Aviation Brigade.

After a year in Korea, he arrived at Company A, 1st "Attack" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment in June 2005 and deployed to Iraq for a second time in October 2006.

Seventeen years after the challenge from his cousin, Martinez continues to serve. As a member of a large family from Guam, the Army is a good fit for him, he said.

"I like to be around other people and learn about other cultures and ethnic groups," he said.

With wife Liza, Martinez has a fair-sized family of his own: two daughters, Julianna Marie, 14, and Michelle Lynn, 6, and a son Andrew Alvin, 11, all of Killeen, Texas.

Martinez said he credits his wife as the influence for his staying in the Army for so long.

"Even though it is hard on her while I'm deployed, she always tells me to 'Keep on going,'" he said.

Martinez is the supervisor of his maintenance section and responsible for main-

taining records and the maintenance of the Apache helicopter.

His dedication to his mission has caught the eye of his company leadership.

"He doesn't care what anybody thinks, because he's going to do the right thing," said Co. A's top enlisted Soldier, 1st Sgt. Duane Dohrmann of Grainger, Texas. "He gets along great with everybody, and he messes with the pilots every now and then."

"Sergeant Martinez does all of the little things that help to make the company run," added Capt. Guyton Robinson, commander of Co. A and a native of Thomasville, Ga. "He keeps all of our vehicles running, keeps our tools calibrated and is one of our top aircraft mechanics."

Recognition for his contributions didn't stop with his company leadership. He recently received a commander's coin from Col. Dan Shanahan, 1st ACB commander.

"He had stepped up to the plate," said Mt. Gilead, N.C., native Sgt. 1st Class Eto Haywood, Martinez' platoon sergeant. "The Soldiers really look up to him as a noncommissioned officer and in their daily duties."

Seventeen years after that fateful bet,



(Photo by 1st Lt. Jenny Wright, 1-227th Avn. Regt.)

**Sgt. Mark Ramon Tudela Martinez, an AH-64D Apache crew chief from 1st Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Martinez was recently recognized by 1st ACB Commander Col. Dan Shanahan for his contributions to the brigade's mission in Iraq.**

Martinez has proven that his cousin could not have been more wrong.



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

## Time to fly!

Topeka, Kan., native Spc. Anthony Crawford, an Apache crew chief for Company C, 1st "Attack" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, salutes Belton, S.C., native Chief Warrant Officer 3 Russell Motes (back seat) and Deming, N.M., native CW2 Joshua Robertson (front seat), both pilots from Co. C, before they take off from Camp Taji, Iraq, Sept. 27 to conduct missions over Baghdad and the surrounding area.

# “Dagger” Brigade Tops 1,000 Reenlistments

By Sgt. 1st Class Keith Laird  
2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq — One year into its 15-month deployment, Soldiers continue to reenlist with the 2nd “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, in Iraq. The brigade reenlisted its 1000th Soldier on Sept. 8, as Spc. Matthew Adams, an infantryman with Company A, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment.

Gen. David McKiernan, the commanding general of U.S. Army-Europe and 7th Army, was the reenlisting officer during a visit to Baghdad.

“Our mission as leaders, at every echelon, is to retain quality Soldiers to ensure that our Army is well-prepared for its enduring mission to fight and win our nation’s wars,” said Col. J.B. Burton, the Dagger Brigade commander.

“This achievement is a prideful one for this BCT and our Army. It is reflective of the tremendous commitment of our Soldiers to ‘stay with the team,’ and it is also a great testament to leaders at every echelon who have created an environment within which Soldiers and their Family Members are proud to serve,” he said.

While supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom since August of 2006, the Soldiers of the Dagger Brigade continue to reenlist in record numbers. The Brigade kicked off the fiscal year with a

huge reenlistment ceremony October 4, 2006, in Kuwait. Maj. Gen. Fred D. Robinson Jr., then the commanding general of the 1st Armored Division, was the reenlisting officer for 82 Soldiers who chose to stay “Army Strong.”

Since then, the Dagger Brigade has averaged 20 Soldiers reenlisting every week for the past year. More than \$9 million have been given to Soldiers as bonuses for their commitment to further their military career.

Forty-three percent of reenlisting Dagger Soldiers chose to remain at their present duty station, within the brigade for their next enlistment.

“That percentage shows that Soldiers are proud to be part of the Dagger Brigade,” said Master Sgt. Robert Staley, the brigade’s senior career counselor. “It is also an indicator of high morale within the units of this great brigade combat team.”

“Of the many reasons, the vast majority of Soldiers reenlisted for stabilization because of the stability that comes after the deployment,” said Sgt. 1st Class Cole Arnold, a brigade career counselor.

The Dagger Brigade also earned the “Commanding General’s First Strike Retention Award,” an award given by Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., the commanding general of the Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 1st Cavalry Division, to the first brigade to meet their retention goal for



(Photo by Capt. Rodney Martin, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment)

Spc. Matthew Adams, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, has his photo taken with Gen. David McKiernan, the commanding general of U.S. Army-Europe and 7th Army, and Command Sgt. Maj. Juniasolua Savusa, the senior non-commissioned officer in USAREUR. Adams was the 1000th Soldier to reenlist from the 2nd “Dagger” Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, during fiscal year 2007.

the fiscal year.

The award this year is even more significant because there are 12 brigades working for the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad, instead of the standard six brigade-sized units assigned.

“Army-wide, our brigade was one

of four brigade combat teams to reach 1000 reenlistments this year,” said Staley.

“That is a remarkable achievement and I take pride in saying that the Dagger Brigade has the finest retention team in the entire Army,” he said.



(Photo by Sgt. Lance Wail, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., commanding general of Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 1st Cavalry Division, awarded Col. J.B. Burton, commander of 2nd “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and his reenlistment team the “Commanding General’s First Strike Retention Award” at Camp Liberty in western Baghdad Aug. 30. The Dagger Brigade earned the award by being the first of 12 brigades to reach 100 percent retention goals for the year.



(Photo by 1st Lt. Reimund Manneck, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment)

Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, along with Iraqi soldiers survey the Al Khullud School for Girls before renovations begin.

## Al Khullud School for Girls Receives a Face Lift

By 1st Lt. Reimund Manneck  
1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment

BAGHDAD — An all-girls school in a neighborhood in the Iraqi capital will soon be re-opened for class after a month of reconstruction that started in September.

The Al Khullud School for Girls in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Adl has only 20 classrooms, 20 teachers, and educates more than 650 Iraqi girls every year.

In July 2007, Company A, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, surveyed the school and found it to be unkempt and hazardous. The school also sustained structural damage during a mortar attack in February. Through the Commander's Emergency Relief Program, funds were provided to repair and rebuild the school.

The renovation project began Sept. 3, and employed 20 local citizens. The contractors repainted all interior and exterior walls, replaced fixtures and windows, and did electrical, plumbing and landscaping work.



(Photo by 1st Lt. Reimund Manneck, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment)

Contractors make the finish renovations to Al Khullud School for Girls. The renovation project began Sept. 3, and employed 20 local citizens. The contractors repainted interior and exterior walls, replaced fixtures and windows, and did electrical, plumbing and landscaping work.



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

A recruiting drive resulted in more than 300 applicants for the new Ameriya Iraqi Police.

# Ameriya Conducts Iraqi Police Recruiting Drive

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

BAGHDAD — Residents in the western Ameriya neighborhood took another step this week to secure their community, as a local recruiting drive resulted in more than 300 applicants for the new Ameriya Iraqi Police Force.

The recruits underwent a series of physical tests, mental evaluations and a literacy assessment.

Successful completion certified them as qualified Iraqi Police candidates to represent more than 30,000 citizens of Ameriya.

To date, Ameriya does not have a police force to protect and serve residents like other communities in western Baghdad.

Ameriya currently has both an Iraqi Army contingent as well as a battalion of U.S. Soldiers, the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, who manage security interests; however, no Ameriya resident is incorporated into either of these two security forces.

"Allowing residents to take a stake in providing their own security for their neighborhood will go a long way toward denying Al-Qaeda the

ability to move back into Ameriya," said Maj. Chip Daniels, the operations officer for 1-5 Cavalry. "This is a good move on the part of the Iraqi government. The Iraqi Army did a fantastic job running this recruiting drive," he said.

Recently, a group of concerned men from Ameriya bonded together to stand guard over their schools and homes and have since molded into an organized community watch force.

This group of men, called the Farsan Al Rafidayn (Arabic for "knights between the rivers") or FAR Volunteers, have significantly improved the security situation for the local residents by helping to push Al-Qaeda operatives out of their neighborhood and deterring criminal militia death squads from intimidating or harming Ameriya residents.

Daniels said even with this success, the FAR Volunteers have not enjoyed all the financial or long-term benefits of being full-fledged members of the Iraqi Security Forces.

This week's recruiting drive went a long way, Daniels added, toward integrating the volunteers into the Iraqi government's plan for security by establishing a legitimate Iraqi Police force made up of Ameriya residents.

# Black Lions Restoring Rashid one Billboard at a Time

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

BAGHDAD – Citizens of Baghdad have been surrounded by images of the past since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq over four years ago, such as bombed out buildings and images of the regime under Saddam Hussein.

The Black Lions of the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, currently deployed to southern Baghdad out of Fort Riley, Kan., have set out to help instill a new sense of pride in the Iraqi people working toward a common goal.

The unit kicked off the “West Rashid War Relics Initiatives” this month, starting with a mural on a billboard that used to bear the image of Saddam. Likewise, they demolished the structurally unsound “Saddam Department Store,” where members of the Baathist party once shopped, and are planning to replace it with a park that all the citizens of the Rashid District can enjoy.

Capt. Ralls Finch, the deputy operations officer of 1-28 Inf. from Charlotte, N.C., said the War Relics Initiative is accomplishing several objectives at once.

“One was employing the people of the local area in the community; two, bringing together and uniting the people of the community; three, making them feel safer and raising the morale in the community,” he said.

“Showing the people that northwest Rashid is going to be cleaned up and it’s going to be a success story without insurgents striking fear in their minds and having people afraid and staying in their homes,” he said.

In addition to these goals, the project also helped the economy, providing more than 170 jobs to residents of the Black Lions’ area of operations.

“We’re employing people in the community to clean up their own community, which not only raises (spirits) but helps employ community members that would otherwise maybe be influenced by insurgents or terrorism,” Finch said.

The success of the West Rashid War Relics Initiative is an indicator of the success U.S. Soldiers are having in the area, Finch added.

“Before the 1-28 Infantry Black Lions arrived in



(U.S. Army photos)

**This mural replaced Saddam Hussein’s image along Airport Road in the northwest portion of Baghdad’s Rashid District. The project would not have been possible without security provided by the Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division’s Soldiers.**

northwest Rashid, I don’t know if it’s possible that you could have had 20 guys out there painting a mural or 100 guys cleaning up along (Airport Road) because it was too dangerous,” Finch said.

“The Soldiers doing kinetic operations down in the line platoons and companies have changed that aspect of the battlefield,” he said.

“Obvious evidence of that is people can go out and clean up the roads, tear down damaged department stores, rebuild new ones, and cleanup the streets,” he added.

Finch said the success of the project is gratifying for him personally, and it allows people, Iraqis and U.S. forces, to look toward the future with an optimistic eye.

“It gives me great satisfaction to know that I can give back to a community that didn’t have the

funds or means to reach some of their goals,” he said.

“It’s evident when you talk to the Iraqi national people they are looking for unity, they are looking to come together and help clean up their country, and when you can turn around and help them get one step closer to that goal, you’ve got to go to bed at night feeling pretty good,” he said.

“The 1-28 Black Lion family has been able to help motivate and invigorate the community which also leads to people coming together as a community and rooting the insurgents out. Once they see success stories like the War Relics Initiative, they see it is possible and we can continue to push the bar higher and higher,” he said.



**BEFORE - The Saddam Department Store in southern Baghdad is where members of the then-ruling Baathist party once shopped, prior to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.**



**NOW - The Saddam Department Store is leveled after Coalition Forces conducted an offensive against anti-Iraqi Forces who were using the structure as a rally point. From the rubble, plans are in the works to construct a park for all citizens of Baghdad to enjoy.**

# Hispanic Tradition Continuing in Iraq

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

BAGHDAD – On Sept. 26, there was a patrol through southern Baghdad. It was like every other. The Soldiers encountered the things that are unfortunately commonplace in a city like Baghdad: a car on fire, suspected cache sites, and citizens concerned about their families' safety.

To someone with a keen sense of cultural history, this patrol would not be like any other, however. These Soldiers were led by 1st Lt. Alex Torres, a platoon leader with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Columbia, S.C.

Torres is a normal guy. He keeps his Soldiers' spirits high in the early dawn by talking and laughing with them. He gets frustrated when plans on a mission fall through, like anyone else would. He's just as happy as the next man in his platoon to roll back through the gates of Forward Operating Base Falcon without incident.

So this begs the question, why is a patrol being led by the University of South Carolina graduate special?

Torres, who comes from a military family himself, is upholding the tradition of Latin Americans answering the call to serve in America's time of need.

Torres said his father's service had a direct impact on his decision to carry on this tradition.

"(My father is) a good role model.



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

**1st Lt. Alex Torres, a platoon leader with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Columbia, S.C., talks to an Iraqi man while on patrol in southern Baghdad, Sept. 26.**

"I've always looked up to him," he said. "By joining up, I'd at least have a good start at being half the man he was."

October is Hispanic Heritage Month, honoring the contributions Hispanics have made to our society, past and present, including the military.

Torres, who grew up in a Puerto

Rican family, put the month in perspective.

"There's more sense of pride this month, but we're pretty prideful all the time," he said. "You always see flags across the vehicles, shirts and hats. It's not just this month."

In terms of distinguished military service, Latin Americans have plenty

to be proud of with more than 40 service members of Hispanic descent having been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in conflicts ranging from the Civil War to the Vietnam War.

Latinos have also fought in every American war since the Revolution and every major battle of World War II, where as many as half a million Latin Americans have been estimated to serve, making up almost five percent of the entire American fighting force.

The same way the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment has been a mark of pride for African-Americans, the 65th Infantry Regiment is for Hispanics. The unit fought in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War.

In Korea alone, the "Borinqueneers" of the 65th were awarded 10 Distinguished Service Crosses, over 250 Silver Stars, and more than 600 Bronze Stars.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur may have summed up Hispanics' service best when referring to the Soldiers of the 65th Inf. Regiment.

"The Puerto Ricans forming the ranks of the gallant 65th Infantry on the battlefields of Korea are writing a brilliant record of achievement in battle, and I am proud indeed to have them in this command. I wish that we might have many more like them."

Today in Baghdad, 1st Lt. Torres carries that torch that traveled the fields of Europe to the jungles of East Asia to the urban sprawl of Baghdad.



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

## The Good Shepherd

Waco, Texas, native, Spc. Kevin Hail, a dismount with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division deployed from Fort Riley, Kan., watches a herd of goats surround him while on patrol in southern Baghdad's Rashid District, Sept. 26.

# Hunters Bring Hobby to FOB Falcon

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

BAGHDAD – It's not uncommon for Soldiers to bring as much of home as possible with them when they deploy. Some bring pictures of loved ones. Others bring tokens such as stuffed animals.

Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Falcon took it a step further, clearing out a dump full of 66 tons of trash and constructing a fully functional archery range where Soldiers can shoot, whether they've been hunting all their lives or they're simply looking to pick up a new hobby.

Staff Sgt. Nathan Tabor, a Joint Network Node assistant platoon sergeant with Company C, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, played a large role in the construction of the range.

For the Dickinson, N.D., native, it was the carrying on of a part of his heritage.

"My entire family hunts. Since I was a little kid, my dad's always taken me with him. I've just always done it," he



Some of the key contributors to the construction of the Forward Operating Base Falcon Archery Club's range; from left, Staff Sgt. Fessenden, Sgt. 1st Class Switzer, Maj. Zimmerman, Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne, Capt. Derrick, Staff Sgt. Nathan Tabor.

said.

The carrying on of a tradition was not easy; a lot had to be done to prepare a range for something other than rifles on an Army installation. With help from several individuals and units, an idea that manifested while Tabor was on his way home for leave became a reality. He said

his family, wife Marisol and son Luisito of Topeka, Kan., kept him motivated when he felt like quitting.

"It wouldn't be possible without my family. They motivated me quite a bit. There's been times when I'm like 'I don't have time for it,' he said. "They're like 'just get it done, it pays off in the

long run,' and that's what's happened. We've got it done, and it's definitely going to pay off."

Tabor saw the payoff as an opportunity to not only get to practice a hobby from home, but also to generate interest in a sport that has been losing its draw.

"It's great because every year the number of hunters and fishermen are steadily declining. That's for the simple fact people not knowing about it, people not having a place to go," he said. "As long as you have something there for the Soldiers to use, people will get interested. Next thing you know, it's something you like, and you're teaching your kids."

Tabor said in addition to the proliferation of an activity, it also provides Soldiers a distraction from the every day stresses of a war zone.

"It's a place for the Soldiers to get away when guys are coming back from missions," he said. "It's a good way to forget some of the stuff you're doing every day and start doing the stuff you remember from back in the States."

Classes to certify Soldiers on FOB Falcon interested in taking up archery for the first time are scheduled to begin in early October.



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

Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne, the senior noncommissioned officer of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, fires the first arrow at the Forward Operating Base Falcon Archery Range, Sep. 23. The range was made possible through the efforts of Soldiers from the 610th Brigade Support Battalion, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th IBCT.

# Fires Squadron Joins Medics to Bring Healthcare

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

BASSAM, Iraq – Medical experts from the Fires “Hell” Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment teamed with Iraqi Army healthcare professionals from the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) in a joint effort to bring healthcare to the residents here Sept. 27.

The Fires Squadron, attached to the 1st “Ironhorse” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, coordinated the combined medical effort which also involved the participation of a doctor from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division and medics from Charlie Medical Company, 115th Brigade Support Battalion.

During the CME, Iraqi Army troops from the 3rd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division assisted with security and escorting patients and Soldiers from the 2-9 Military Transition Team were on hand to observe the event.

Within the course of the day, the medical staffs saw more than 200 patients who were treated for aches and pains, headaches, colds and other minor complaints at a school which was set up as a clinic for the day.

“We hope the community sees that we really are concerned with the problems of the people in the villages here,” said Capt. John Hendricks, Fires Squadron surgeon and a native of Austin, Ind. “The added benefit to the event is our getting to work with the Iraqi Army medics. It’s good to get their involvement and they’re doing a really great job.”

Although the CME was designed to be similar to a military sick call in which patients are treated for minor maladies, when patients came in with major ailments such as heart disease or major burns they were referred to the Iraqi Assistance Program (IAP).

The IAP is an Iraqi government program which refers patients to higher levels of care such as are found in major hospitals.

“In one case, we saw a guy who needed cataract surgery, so what he needs to do is call a number on the paperwork we gave him for the Iraqi Assistance Program in order to be able to receive the proper care he needs,” said Hendricks.

Having arrived in theater a little more than a month ago, the CME marked the first time that Fires Squadron personnel have participated in a community outreach healthcare project during this current rotation to Iraq.

During its time in country, the squadron has plans to continue these types of joint efforts throughout its AO to include Fira Shia among other villages, according to Hendricks.

“We plan on doing one once every two weeks until we hit every major area within our AO,” said Hendricks. “We’re making sure that we treat both Sunnis and Shia equally so they see that we want to pay proper respect to them and their culture.”

In one incident during the CME, a father brought his five-year old son, who



Prior to treating patients, Iraqi Army Pvt. Ahmed Abdulsuda, a medic with the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) checks his medical bag in the back of an Iraqi Army field ambulance to ensure he has all of his medical gear for assisting with a combined medical effort near Bassam, Iraq Sept. 27.



Through an Iraqi interpreter (center), Austin, Ind. native Capt. John Hendricks (left), squadron surgeon, and Spc. Kari Cordis, a medic, who hails from Terre Bonne, Ore. assist an Iraqi woman (right) by explaining to her the proper dosage of medication to take for a cold during a combined medical effort near Bassam, Iraq Sept. 27. (Center Photo) Iraqi Army Pvt. Ahmed Abdulsuda, a medic with the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) examines a little girl's mouth which is causing her pain at a school set up as a make-shift clinic during a combined medical effort near Bassam, Iraq Sept. 27.



# ns with Iraqi Army althcare to Bassam

had a broken arm and a staph infection, into the make-shift clinic.

Hendricks and his medics, although having been in country for a very short period of time, had seen the boy before, having treated him a few weeks earlier at a traffic control point, shortly after he broke his arm.

“They came down here from Sab Al Bor to see us, they knew we were having a CME here. The boy’s doing much better, we gave him some antibiotics and the infection seems to be clearing up,” said Hendricks, smiling. “He’s doing well and it was good to see him today and how much he’s improving.”

Spc. Kari Cordis, a Fires Squadron medic and a native of Terre Bonne, Ore., said she was impressed with how Iraqi Army medics are progressing towards transition.

“I’ve received a lot of great encouragement from seeing how they’re beginning to take over responsibility for things (like healthcare),” said Cordis. “It makes things even more satisfying for us as we do things like this.”

Cordis said she saw the event as a great opportunity to help the average, everyday Iraqi citizen.

“It’s been fantastic, and we need to be here and we want to be here to help with these efforts in general,” said Cordis. “It’s been a real learning curve because it helps us to get a better feel for what the common complaints are here. It’s just a small sampling of the population, but we’re getting a good idea of what kinds of ailments the people here suffer from. Knowing their ailments, helps us as medics to be able to best serve them.”

Spc. Kenneth Maple, a field artilleryman for the Fires Squadron and a native of Cascade, Idaho, who helped pull security during the event, echoed many of Cordis’s sentiments.

“While we’re here, we need to be able to help them out to the best of our abilities,” said Spc. Kenneth Maple, a field artilleryman for the Fires Squadron and a native of Cascade, Idaho. “Being over here makes you realize what you left behind and serves as an opportunity to help those who are less fortunate than we are.”

Iraqi Army healthcare professionals said the event was quite meaningful to them and that they hope to continue their efforts in villages throughout this part of Iraq.

“I’m happy to be doing humanitarian missions and doing things to help people,” said Iraqi Army Pvt. Ahmed Abdulsuda, a medic for the 2nd Bde., 9th IA Div. (Mech.) “It’s my duty to offer my efforts to my people to protect them and serve them.”

“This is a beautiful thing and we hope other big events like this one can take place here,” said Iraqi Army 2nd Lt. Mohammad Hailan, a nurse who is also with the 2nd Bde., 9th IA Div. (Mech.). “We also hope that we can continue supplying more medical help and more medics, especially to help the children here.”



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

An Iraqi Army troop with the 3rd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division helps two little girls cross the street to a building where their mother is being treated for flu symptoms during a combined medical effort near Bassam, Iraq Sept. 27.



Spc. Kari Cordis, a medic for the Fires Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, who hails from Terre Bonne, Ore. walks past her fellow Fires Squadron Soldiers into a school that will be set up as a make-shift healthcare clinic during a combined medical effort in Bassam, Iraq Sept. 27.



# Infantry Company Training Iraqis to Standard

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

AR RAMADI, Iraq — The goal of the United States presence in Iraq is to get the country up and running and to ensure the Iraqi Security Forces can effectively defend the country. In Ar Ramadi, things have quieted down and the Iraqi Army has undergone training and is now leading classes with aid from American Soldiers.

Noncommissioned officers in Company D, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, took Iraqi Army NCOs and trained them in areas such as traffic control point operations and squad live fire operations so effectively that Iraqi Army NCOs now conduct the classes themselves, with 1-9 NCOs there to give aid if needed.

Capt. James R. Enos, the commander of Company D, said the effort has been put to good use because the goal is to get the Iraqis to the point where they can sustain themselves and teach classes without help.

Enos, a native of Lakewood, Wash., said the progress has been great, but also frustrating because the Iraqi soldiers don't operate at the same tempo American Soldiers do. "We want it to be their program, but the difference in culture makes it difficult," he said.

The training started off with a select group of NCOs from Company D who observed the Iraqi Army NCOs for a week. The second week the 1-9 NCOs instructed the classes with the aid of an interpreter. The third week the Iraqi NCOs taught the classes to their peers with the 1-9 NCOs helping them. They also learned how to set up and conduct ranges. By the fourth week, the Iraqi Army NCOs began teaching the classes to IA soldiers with the 1-9 NCOs providing overwatch.

"They're still growing as a cadre," Enos said.

Enos added that the Iraqi Army cadre have a different mentality when it comes to training than American NCOs. He said the concept of conducting additional training for training's sake is not something they are used to.

"It's unheard of for them to get resources for their guys to train at a range," Enos said.

Enos said his NCOs aren't the only ones supporting the effort. Brig. Gen. Abdullah, the commander of 1st Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division, has been very supportive, and the 1st Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division Military Transition Team has also helped out by ensuring the Iraqi Army soldiers arrive to training in the correct uniform at the correct time. The training is conducted by the NCOs from Company D, 1-9, Enos said.

Enos said they are getting closer to being able to take over the job of providing and implementing security on their own.

The 1st Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division has been fighting the insurgency in Ar Ramadi for two years now, Enos said, and this joint training is a way to make them more effective.

"We're training these guys how we trained to come over here," he said. "It's no



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

**An Iraqi Army cadre member instructs IA soldiers during a squad live fire exercise rehearsal while the IA sergeant major looks on. The training is conducted by the cadre but American cadre NCOs from Company D, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, are present and help ensure everyone is safe and performing to standard.**

different than training back at Fort Carson. We're just training a different group of Soldiers."

The Iraqi Army cadre have gone from needing additional help from the Company D NCOs to conducting training with very little corrections, Enos said.

The next step, Enos said, is getting the Iraqi Army to resource the training themselves and handle the logistical aspects themselves.

The NCOs from 1-9 volunteered for the job, Enos said, and each one wanted to help out and train the Iraqi Army soldiers to standard.

Staff Sgt. Jacob E. Lester, the senior American cadre for IA training, is a squad leader in 1st Platoon, Company D, and is in charge of overseeing the training on personnel and vehicle searches and traffic control points.

Lester, a native of Modesto, Calif., said each week the IA cadre receive 10 new Soldiers from each battalion in their brigade and they are growing as leaders.

"We're training them and they're stepping up and learning faster," he said. "We're not having to intervene as much."

By training the IA cadre and then having them instruct their own soldiers, nothing is lost in translation as they hear it in their native tongue, Lester said. Lester, on his third deployment, said they started working with the IA cadre in June and have seen the success of the training.

"These guys love to teach," he said. "They like to be up there in front of others. From what I understand from previous talks with them, their lieutenants do most of the work so when they get an opportunity to teach they enjoy it."

It was a challenge and a half, Lester

said, of taking the IA NCOs and transforming them into a competent cadre.

"Anything's a challenge when you don't speak the same language," he said.

By attending each class, with an interpreter, Lester said he and his fellow American cadre can step in and correct anything that is not being explained and taught according to standard.

"It's made this deployment more interesting," he said of the training. "Actually, it's nice because we know they're getting trained and are out there doing the missions and we're not. That's how it should be. It's their country."

Staff Sgt. Frank P. Marulli IV, an American cadre member for IA training, is a squad leader for 2nd Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2IBCT, 2ID, and is in charge of team and squad live fire and the assistant cadre for tactical movement.

Marulli, a native of Crescent City, Calif., said the IA cadre are doing a good job, but need to understand they are now leaders.

"One thing about the training is that the IA cadres need to realize that they're now instructors and not friends with IA soldiers," he said.

This distinction is necessary, and something that helps keep the IA soldiers focused during team and squad live fire ranges.

Marulli said the live fire ranges haven't been too challenging.

"I have good IA cadre who take pride in their job and want to ensure it's done right," he said.

These ranges, which allow one squad to do a simulated dismounted mission while another fires from vehicles, also include a shooting house where the soldiers can learn

how to properly enter a building and clear a room, Marulli said.

The IA cadre conduct the range, but Marulli and other American cadre walk behind them to interject information if need be. Marulli is currently on his second deployment to Ar Ramadi.

"This deployment started off really fast, but the tempo slowed down," he said. "My last tour it was back-to-back missions."

The tempo has slowed because 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment has made a vast achievement toward the goal of having the Iraqi Army being able to train and sustain itself, Marulli said.

Staff Sgt. Richard L. Sanchez Jr., an American cadre member for IA training, is a squad leader for 2nd Platoon, Company D, and is in charge of tactical movements during day and night in woodland and urban environments and also team and squad live fire.

Sanchez said getting the IA cadre to understand urban movement is especially important since they don't see things the way Americans do.

"They do it our way and they want to do it another way," he said. "When they go out they don't do what we taught. We tell them we're trying to teach one basic way; the basics of how to do it. They can change it up when they get to their units."

Sanchez, a native of Los Lunas, N.M., is serving on his first combat tour due to previously fulfilling the role of drill sergeant.

One challenge is getting the basic standard across, Sanchez said, but others are on the logistical side of trying to get resources and materials to build quality ranges.

"There are not a lot of materials to do what we want to do," he said. "We built nice ranges out of what we had."

Another challenge is that the older cadre are stuck in their ways of doing things and aren't as receptive to new ideas, but things are improving.

The improvements have been seen in how the violence has gone down in Ar Ramadi and how the training level of the IA cadre and soldiers has increased.

"It feels good because we already worked on training cadre and already stopped a lot of violence in Ar Ramadi," he said. "We're doing our part so we can all go home."

Sanchez said the Army's goal is to have the Iraqis take over the responsibility of their own security and they are getting closer to it each day.

"If we can get these guys to take over, not only patrols but training their own guys, we can all go home faster," Sanchez said.

With each class the IA cadre conducts, Sanchez said he has seen them go from teaching the basics to getting more in-depth with each subject and adding things to each rotation of Soldiers they instruct.

He said, "It's more rewarding to know that you taught them well enough that they are able to teach someone else with little to no guidance from you."

# Continuous Training Keeps Manchus in Top Form

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

CAMP CORREGIDOR, AR RAMADI, Iraq — Despite carrying out numerous combat missions, guarding the camp and maintaining physical readiness, Soldiers in Company D, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, also conduct routine training to ensure they stay on top of their game.

Cpl. Josh N. Brown, a team leader from Centerville, Iowa, said ensuring Soldiers train continuously is a way to keep their minds off having their tour extended to 15 months.

Brown also works closely with his fellow team leader, Spc. Kristopher M. Timms. Timms is in charge of Bravo Team and is a native of Lubbock, Texas.

Timms said their Soldiers have been reading through training manuals and handbooks the entire time they have been in combat and easily do so during their down time.

Brown said each Soldier is fully aware of the standards and is capable of performing, but the extra training is to keep them physically sharp on proper procedures for such things as entering and clearing a room. Regular attendance at ranges also helps ensure weapons stay zeroed and shots accurate.

“No matter where you’re at, combat or garrison environment, wherever, you have to train,” Brown said. “You always have to train. Yeah, I’ll admit in a combat environment you have a lot going on. You have to train because you’ll never get it perfect, never get it exactly how it’s done.”

Brown said the Soldiers who have been with the unit since Fort Carson, received a lot of training prior to deploying. But, during combat, teams change and Soldiers change, so continuous training ensures each Soldier knows what to do.

“We have been here long enough that each guy knows what the other will do,” Brown said. “You have to anticipate each other. There is no such thing as enough training.”

Timms said he recently received a new Soldier who underwent training prior to deploying, but continual training will allow that Soldier to understand the unit’s standards.

Brown said the three hour training session could easily have



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

**Soldiers from 2nd Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, fire at posters featuring hostile targets while avoiding the non-hostile individuals. The posters test the reaction time of positively identifying a hostile target while keeping non-combatants safe. The Soldiers train continuously to ensure they keep sharp on their house-clearing skills and other valuable training knowledge.**

turned into an all day event.

“You can never be too good at clearing a house,” he said. “It’s impossible.”

Brown added that when Soldiers enter a house, it is always a situation of controlled chaos and mistakes can be deadly.

“It’s the small, tiny, little mess-ups that cause the biggest problems,” he said.

Going into a house slowly is important because the movement is then smooth, according to Brown.

“Slow is smooth and smooth is fast,” he said. “We make it look like we control it but there are so many moving parts, chaos, a lot to it, we have to make sure because rounds are fly-

ing.”

Timms said the little mistakes are the ones that cause training to be conducted over and over again that day until the standard is met.

“You have to know you can go in and do live fires and trust the guy next to you not to shoot you,” he said.

Training is important not only for individual Soldiers and teams, but for the Army overall, Brown said.

“The Army is one of the greatest forces in the world,” he said. “Training to me is to try and achieve perfection. It’s impossible. We train to keep people alive, but sometimes things just happen. No training sets you up for failure.”

## East Baghdad Base Camp Learns About ‘Livin’ Like a Lonestar’

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq — The Soldiers at this eastern Baghdad base camp definitely believe Granger Smith saved the best for last.

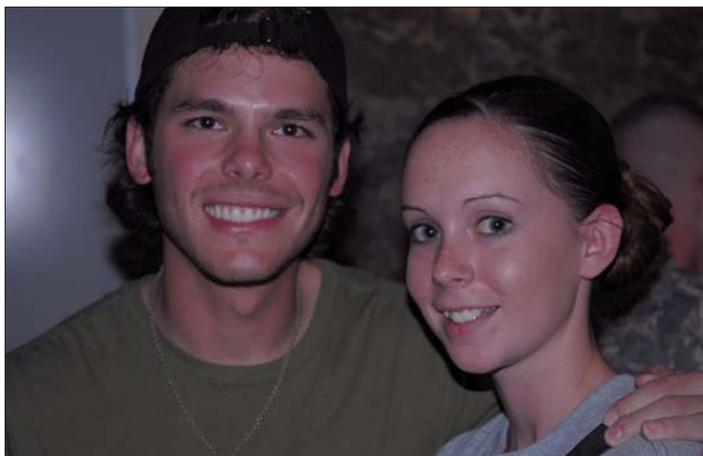
Performing their ninth and final concert on their 2007 Iraq tour, the band had Soldiers here stomping their feet to a country mix with a little blues and rock thrown in.

Smith, the youthful 28-year old lead singer, has spent half his life in the music world and has recorded three albums to date, including his latest, Livin’ Like A Lonestar, for which he wrote, produced and engineered all the songs.

“I had total creative control which does not happen a lot and will probably not happen again in my future,” said Smith.

The inspiration for playing music came early for the Texas A&M graduate and the “Aggie” looked up to George Strait and rock band legends such as the Eagles for inspiration. Smith often stood in long lines for Strait concerts.

“I was trying to get to wherever



(Photo by Maj. Sean Ryan 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. PAO)

**Granger Smith meets Spc. Justine-Tea Phelan, a medic from Plymouth, Mass., and Soldier with the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Smith and his band from College Station, Tex., performed for the Soldiers of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team at Forward Operating Base Loyalty in eastern Baghdad Sept. 27.**

he was and would stand over eight hours in line to see his concerts.”

Now, with his own band and CDs out, he’s trying to land a big contract,

Smith and his band wanted to come to Iraq and give something back.

“We always wanted to come to Iraq as I personally had buddies over

here, but we wanted to wait for the right time,” he said.

“The goal was to play for the Soldiers at the more remote FOBs where they receive little entertainment. Overall, it has been awesome,” he said.

The troops enjoyed it, too.

“I thought they were really good and now I’m looking to get their CD. I hadn’t really heard of them before but thought there sound was within today’s music, not too country, more like rock-country,” said Spc. Justine-Tea Phelan, a medic from Plymouth, Mass., and a member of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

“I really appreciate them taking their time out to come here and play for us and it was nice to get away from work for an hour and forget about everything else,” she said.

“The band is soaking up this trip to Iraq and it has given us a different perspective,” Smith said.

“The shows here are so rewarding and it will be hard to gear up for when we go back and play,” he said.

# Former Skinny Kid Aimed to Win Bodybuilding Competition

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUS-TAMAYAH, Iraq — Often in life, it's the journey that matters to most people, not necessarily the final results. For 1st Lt. Fecker Charlot, he hopes for both a gratifying journey and victory in the upcoming Baghdad Classic Bodybuilding competition Sept. 29 at Camp Liberty, Iraq.

Charlot, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., was the proverbial 135-pound skinny kid getting sand kicked in his face at the beach like the Charles Atlas ads in comic books. The platoon leader for Company C., Special Troops Battalion, part of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team based out of Fort Carson, Colo., couldn't even get selected during pick-up basketball games because he was too small.

Charlot turned to weight lifting in 1995 at the urging from a fellow Soldier and ensured staying fit became part of his lifestyle. "I learned it's important to make realistic goals and train towards them to help keep you focused. It's easy to quit if you don't give yourself a chance to succeed."

He didn't get serious about training for anything until he and a friend started training for the Bataan Death March in 2003, while as a Combat Camera photographer with the Golden Knights at Fort Bragg, N.C. After training for the 100-mile march, he decided to train for an all-natural bodybuilding competition later that year.

"The all-natural competition was important for me because it meant no cheating, they ensured no illegal substances were taken by competitors and everyone took a polygraph test," he said. Charlot took first in the competition.

Originally from Haiti, Charlot took the time to learn about nutrition and exercise and received his certificate as a personal trainer. "I thought it was important to show others how to stay in shape and I applied the same principles to them as I did to my own train-

ing," he said.

Charlot competed in one more competition in 2004 but started to focus on other facets in his life such as selection to Officer Candidate School, getting married and taking a break from competition.

Once deployed in 2006 as a new lieutenant, Charlot found himself in Kuwait and decided to enter the Morale Welfare and Recreation's STREND competition, a seven-event challenge that featured bench pressing, dead lift, pull-ups and 2-mile run, among other events. Despite no specific training for the event, a first place medal found its way around Charlot's neck, and the competitive drive within him resurfaced.

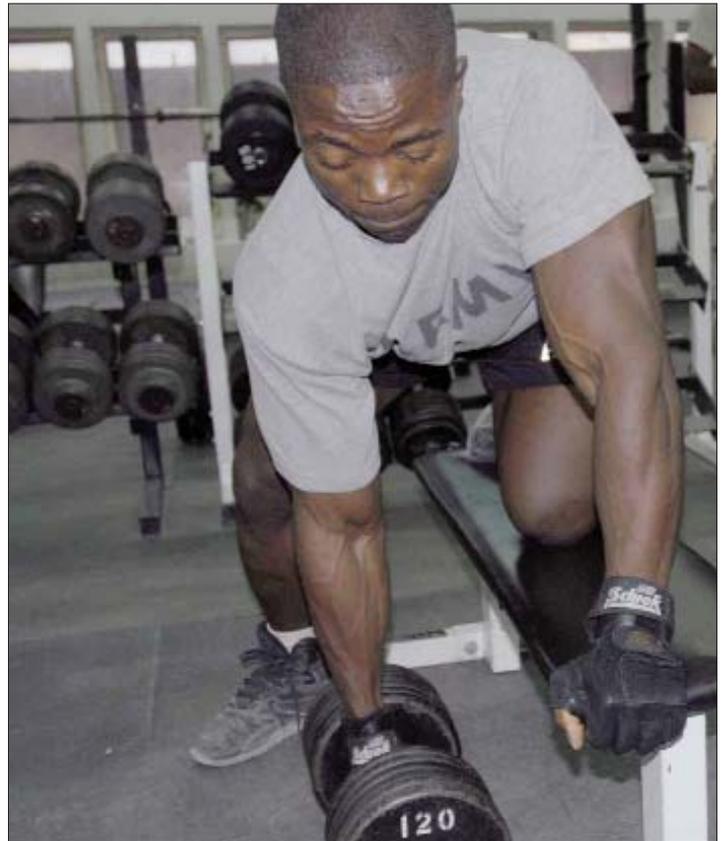
"My training programs, even though not geared for competition at the time, kept me in shape and that's very important because bodybuilding is something that cannot be attained overnight. You need incentives for goals and goals to keep you focused. Once you reach your goal, set one higher."

Nutrition is 70 percent of getting ready for competition, according to Charlot. The dining facility isn't always the greatest place for training, Charlot said, but if a person is selective, it can work.

Charlot said he sees a lot of mistakes in the gym and sometimes steps in and tries to help the Soldiers. "A lot of Soldiers may not see improvements and I think it is due to not setting realistic goals, improper use of lifting, and nutrition," he said.

"Not everyone can lift the same weight, but you will see a group of guys all trying to lift the same and eventually, someone is going to get hurt. I tactically tell them what they are doing is not working and do my best to help whenever possible," he said.

Staying injury free has been important to Charlot and working towards competition weight is no easy task for anyone. Charlot predicts he will have to lose around 15 pounds to get down to competition weight to show the proper definition needed to win a



1st Lt. Fecker Charlot, platoon leader for Company C., Special Troops Battalion, part of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team based out of Fort Carson, Colo., prepares for the upcoming Baghdad Classic Bodybuilding competition September 18.

competition.

"I normally would give myself more time to train but I didn't make the decision to enter until last month, giving myself essentially five weeks to prepare," he said. No excuses though, my Soldiers expect me to come home with a trophy and hopefully, my workouts will

pay off in the long run. Without a doubt, it is hard trying to get into competition shape in Iraq, but I want to win. There isn't much else to do in Iraq except work and go the gym. Training for an all-natural competition is a great way to stay focused and showcase some of America's best Soldiers."



(Photos by Maj. Sean Ryan 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. PAO)

1st Lt. Fecker Charlot, platoon leader for Company C., Special Troops Battalion, part of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team based out of Fort Carson, Colo., prepares for the upcoming Baghdad Classic Bodybuilding competition September 18.



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

## Rush Hour at the River

Residents help push a crowded water taxi away from a dock in the Graya'at section of Baghdad's Adhamiyah District Sept. 12. The water taxi runs from daybreak until late at night carrying people across the Tigris River.

# Paratrooper's Persistence Helps Release Adhamiyah Man

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

BAGHDAD – 1st Lt. Larry Pitts squinted into the noon sun as the helicopter began

its descent. Moments later, the UH-60 Blackhawk touched down on the landing zone in a cloud of dust and deposited its passenger, a slight, 30-year-old Iraqi school teacher named Mustafa Hassan Ali. Only a

few hours before, Mustafa had been a prisoner at a U.S. detention facility. Now, he was a free man. A crewman helped him from the helicopter and led him over to where Pitts was waiting.

The last time Pitts had seen Mustafa, he had been placing him under arrest. Now, five months later, Pitts was going to take him home.

"Welcome back," Pitts said, putting gentle hand on the man's shoulder.

After being detained by U.S. forces and held for five months on charges he was later found innocent of, Mustafa was released and returned to his home in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District Sept. 14. In a strange twist of fate, it was Pitts – the platoon leader who initially captured Mustafa – who became the driving force in securing his freedom.

Mustafa's detainment began in April, when paratroopers from Pitts' unit – Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division - received information from a credible source that Mustafa was involved in terrorist activity. Pitts and his platoon swept into the area and detained several suspects, including Mustafa.

Unfortunately, during security operations it is possible where arrests are made and individuals are later found to be innocent, said Baltimore native Capt. Andrew Woodward, a staff officer with the 2nd BCT.

"I thought that was the end of the story. Just another bad guy off the street," said Pitts, a Fayetteville, N.C., native.

But in the following weeks and months,

as Pitts continued to patrol through the area, he kept in contact with Mustafa's family members. Each time he saw them, they pleaded with him, telling him that Mustafa was innocent.

The family's unwavering insistence that Mustafa had been wrongly accused made Pitts begin to second guess the evidence that led to his arrest. He started to think that Mustafa might have been the victim of someone with a grudge who had planted bad information.

"Maybe people wanted to settle some scores," Pitts said.

With that in mind, Pitts began his own investigation into Mustafa's background. He found that the mild-mannered schoolteacher had a good reputation in the community.

"We asked the sheiks, the neighborhood councils, the local leaders, and no one had a single bad thing to say about him," Pitts said. In time, the lieutenant took the issue to his chain of command.

"I told my commander that we might have detained the wrong person," he said.

With his command's support, Pitts began working with MNF-I's detainee operations unit and the Iraqi legal system to see what he had to do to secure Mustafa's release. The process has several checks and balances incorporated into it to minimize the potential for wrongly releasing a detainee, Woodward said.

But Pitts plowed ahead, producing all the necessary affidavits and documents, and



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

A tearful female relative greets Mustafa Hassan Ali (center) while he is escorted back to his house in the Graya'at area of Baghdad's Adhamiyah District by Fayetteville, N.C., native 1st Lt. Larry Pitts (2nd from right), and Los Angeles native Staff Sgt. Julian Romo, both from Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division Sept. 14. The paratroopers helped secure Mustafa's release from a holding facility after he was wrongly detained in April.

# Home Sweet Home for Adhamiyah Resident

## Home

From Page 21

keeping the pressure on to make sure Mustafa's release remained a priority.

Meanwhile, Pitts told Mustafa's family he was working on securing his release. Despite starts and stops, the family clung to the hope that Mustafa would be returned to them soon.

"We always had hope, the whole time," said Mustafa's mother, Lamiyah. "We knew (Pitts) was doing his best."

The day came when Mustafa's release was approved. When it was just days away, Pitts told the family the next time they saw him, he would have Mustafa with him.

In his cell, Mustafa waited. Even though he knew people were working behind the scenes to secure his release, he had doubts.

"Up until the last minute, I didn't believe," he said.

On the day of his release, Mustafa was taken out of his cell for the last time.

He was flown by helicopter to Coalition Outpost War Eagle, the 2-319th's base in Adhamiyah, where Pitts was waiting for him. They rode together by humvee through the streets of his neighborhood until they came to his block.

As they got out and made the walk to Mustafa's house, neighbors stopped and stared with mouths open.

Then a few came running up to shake his hand or kiss his cheek. Soon there was a huge crowd surrounding him. The paratroopers had to make a human shield around Mustafa just to push through the throng of bodies.

Then, from up ahead, someone started shrieking. It was Mustafa's mother. She had seen her son com-



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

**Mustafa Hassan Ali (center) is escorted back to his house in the Grayat area in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District by (from left) Los Angeles native Staff Sgt. Julian Romo, Fayetteville, N.C., native 1st Lt. Larry Pitts, and Palmdale, Calif., native Staff Sgt. Jose Calito, all from Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division Sept. 14.**

ing and ran out to meet him. They embraced, he kissed her cheek, and she fainted to the ground.

In the pandemonium, Mustafa was crying, a medic was treating the mother and Pitts was trying to

keep the group moving forward.

Finally they made it inside Mustafa's house. His wife and daughters came up and he smothered them with kisses.

Mustafa sat down on the couch and wiped tears from his eyes, overcome with emotion.

"Thanks be to God," he said softly.

"I told you we'd bring him back, and we brought him back," Pitts told the family, triggering a fresh outbreak of crying and exclamations.

Eventually, things calmed down somewhat, and Pitts explained the circumstances that had led to Mustafa's arrest and all that had happened since.

Mustafa showed no bitterness. He said he still thought U.S. and Iraqi soldiers were doing a good job protecting people against insurgents.

"I want to thank this man for listening to my family and for pushing to help me in my case," he said.

After a little more small talk, it was time to go.

Pitts wanted to leave Mustafa alone to get reacquainted with his family.

The paratroopers left the house to a chorus of "thank you's" and handshakes from the family members.

For Pitts, the happy outcome was worth the months of work.

"We made a mistake, and we had to make it right. I'm just glad it all worked out in the end, and he could get back home to his family" he said.

Even the tough paratroopers in Pitts' platoon were affected by the emotions of the day.

"It feels good. Seeing how happy the family was, all crying and everything," he said.

It feels really good" said Staff Sgt. Julian Romo, a squad leader.

"We do good things every day, but this was one we'll remember for a long time," he said.



**Mustafa Hassan Ali displays his release papers during a joyful reunion with his family at his home in Baghdad's Grayat neighborhood following his release from a detention facility Sept. 14. Fayetteville, N.C., native 1st Lt. Larry Pitts (left) and other paratroopers from Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division helped secure Mustafa's release after he was wrongly detained in April.**

# Comrades Tackle First Month of Combat

By Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma  
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

BAGHDAD —Two comrades with Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, stationed out of Vilseck, Germany, experiences the first of 15 months in their unit's deployment as the Iraqi capital's quick-reaction force.

Pfc. Reuben Gonzales and Spc. Daniel Liles' first month on the ground was not exactly what they expected. For Gonzales, training back at home station was helpful, but a little different.

"We might get into direct contact every other day which is a lot different than what we trained for. We trained everyday, it was a constant 'Go, go, go,'" Gonzales said of Modesto, Calif.

The 21-year-old infantryman described his first month as "Tiring and hard." He explained that everyone expected everyday to be big and crazy – firefight after firefight.

"I don't think (combat here is) as ruthless as it was before because now it's more focused on the people," Gonzales said. "During the training it was kicking in doors

and running in. There were no people."

However, clearing homes in the East Rashid district the young troopers have already had plenty of interaction with the Iraqi people in their own neighborhoods.

"We've mingled with some of the Iraqis and most of them are great people that are willing to work with us," said Liles of Tehachapi, Calif.

Prior to deploying they received words of wisdom for the Soldiers that led them into combat.

"Our squad leaders, who were over here the first time, told us their personal views on the situation here. They said to gain your own perspective of what Iraq is about and what the culture is like," Liles said. "(But,) the only way to know what it's really like is to actually be over here first hand."

Liles said he has seen so many things in this first month that he won't see anywhere else.

"(So far,) we've had our fair share of firefights. I've seen (improvised explosive devices) go off. I know what to expect now," said the 22-year-old who celebrated his birthday Sept 19.

Something Soldiers prepare for is the

separation from their families during deployments and it's one of the toughest things to go through, Gonzales said.

"You don't get to talk to them as much so you talk to everyone else here. That's all you got. You just talk to each other," Gonzales said. "All of us bring our own little unique blend to the squad."

Although the camaraderie between the Soldiers in his platoon has grown throughout his time in the service, Gonzales said the upcoming months without his wife, Erin, and his 10-month-old son Gabriel are going to be rough.

Both Soldiers try to maintain as much contact with their families back home as possible.

Liles said he tries to communicate just enough information that people back home can take it and gather from news channels to piece it all together so they have a concept of what is happening here and what he is facing on today's battlefield.

The infantryman added that everyone should know that their sons and daughters are in a dangerous place because they are, but also that they are bravely doing their jobs and playing their part on a grand scheme to keep

Iraq a safer place.

With one month down, the two Soldiers have 14 months until they redeploy to Germany. Liles said he thinks the best way to tackle the rest of the deployment is to concentrate on doing his job and doing it well.

"Going out and coming back alive, making sure all these homes are cleared (and) all the weapons caches are found," Liles said.

Gonzales or "Gonzo" as known by his platoon, said that he will try to keep his mind off things by playing video games and hanging out with his brothers in arms.

"You can't really have a set plan because 15 months is 15 months no matter how you look at it," Gonzales said. "But, plenty of packages from my wife and pictures of my family will hopefully help me through the days."

Liles, who originally wanted to enlist as a tanker, said he really can't say what the year is going to bring. For now, Gonzales will play his Metallica and Static X to get mentally ready to roll out on missions.

"It's definitely a start of an experience I'll never forget," Liles said.



(Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

Pfc. Reuben Gonzales of Modesto, Calif., an infantryman with Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, stationed out of Vilseck, Germany, keeps his sight on an area his unit received heavy machine-gun fire from the day prior during a clearing mission in Baghdad's East Rashid district Sept. 21. The 21-year-old and his wife, Erin, have a son, Gabriel, who is going to be celebrating his first birthday in November.



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

## Hot on the Trail

1st Lt. Travis Pride, a platoon leader with Company A, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division searches for clues left by insurgents hiding in the woods while investigating an improvised explosive device blast along a road in the Basateen section of Baghdad's Adhamiyah District Sept. 12.

# Combat Veteran Jumped at Another Chance to Deploy

Multi-National Division – Baghdad

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – After several overseas tours of duty in the United States Army and raising two children, most people would be ready to finally enjoy life on their own schedule and maybe do a little traveling.

For Staff Sgt. Elizabeth Smith, 42, of Brooklyn, N.Y., the travel itinerary suddenly included a government paid trip to Iraq.

In 2001, 12 years after leaving the Army and moving to Conway, S.C., Smith re-enlisted in the South Carolina Army National Guard.

When she learned that forty Soldiers from her unit, the 151st Field Artillery Brigade were to be activated as part of Operation Iraq Freedom in 2006, she immediately volunteered to deploy.

When she was not initially chosen and the unit left for pre-mobilization training in Fort Sill, Okla., without her she was disappointed. That September, however, she received a surprise call.

"One of the initial soldiers could not deploy," she said. "They gave me four days to get my affairs together and go join the unit."

Despite the suddenness of the change, Smith was elated.

"I know that it is hard to believe," she smiles, "but this was so important to me. Deploying with my unit was what I desper-



(U.S. Army photo)

**Staff Sgt. Elizabeth Smith, a guardsman with the 151st Field Artillery Brigade from Conway, S.C., stays in the military to honor her step-father, retired U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. William Sears, who died Sept. 11, 2001.**

ately wanted."

During this deployment, Smith worked in the Iraqi Security Forces Cell for the Multi-National Division-Baghdad, to overhaul the Iraqi Army and Iraqi National Police pay and promotion systems.

But she isn't a stranger to being deployed.

Smith, at the age of 17, first enlisted in

the Army for the "educational benefits" in 1982. She served in Panama in 1986, Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield in 1990, and Kuwait for Operation Desert Storm in 1991.

Like many other Soldiers, Smith's decision to reenlist was triggered by the events of Sept. 11, 2001. For Smith, however, the horror of that day was more per-

sonal than the attack on her home state.

"On Sept. 11, I lost the only man that I knew as a father," she said.

In a somber voice, Smith described her step-father, retired U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. William G. Sears, as a, "good man, strong and fair," who raised Smith, her three younger sisters and her older brother.

"My father was already very ill with cancer," she recalled, "but when he heard the news about planes striking the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, he had a heart attack and literally died of a broken heart from love of his country."

After the tragedy, Smith's sense of duty required her to re-enlist.

"My step-father proudly served our country," Smith said. "He was the man that I drew to for strength and advice. Now all that I can do is honor his memory and continue to make him proud."

That isn't the only reason why she serves.

"I serve in the hope that no-one else will lose a loved one to a terrorist attack," she said.

Smith ensured that the military pride which Sears instilled in her was passed down to her children. She proudly said that both her daughters, Shatiqua Jones, 22, and her son, Jason Jones, Jr., 21, both serve in the South Carolina Army National Guard.

# Apache Pilots Treasure Emails Over Awards

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Although they will leave Iraq with their first awards for valor, the real reward for four pilots from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade was doing their part to save the lives of many Soldiers on the ground in an engagement in December.

The pilots earned Air Medals with Valor for providing support to ground troops in contact with the enemy in an engagement that was like “something you would see in a World War II movie,” according to Waxhaw, N.C., native Chief Warrant Officer 2 Rich Reid, the gunner and copilot for the trail aircraft during the engagement.

Reid, Capt. Matthew Carlsen and chief warrant officers 3 Les McNellie and Christopher Ezell comprised an air weapons team of two Apaches from 4th “Guns” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division, that responded to a call from troops in contact with the enemy.

About a month after their battalion’s transfer of authority with the previous unit, they came upon a scene where all hell had broken loose. Two other air weapons teams had been on station to assist. One of the Apaches that had taken small arms fire made it back safely to Camp Taji and landed, despite having only one working engine.

“I think chaotic would be the best word to describe that, because one of our brothers was in the air, got (hit by enemy fire), had to come back here, make a single engine landing at Taji,” said Carlsen, who hails from Twin Falls, Idaho.

At the time, the four pilots had been part of a small task force at Kalsu.

“We didn’t know what was happening,” Carlsen said. We were stationed down at Kalsu, so I think that added distance, separation – that detachment from the battalion main body – added to a little bit of that confusion.”

The confusion didn’t last long. Reid, from Waxhaw, N.C., got the team caught up on the situation on the ground by talking over the radio to Sgt. 1st Class Samuel R. Jackson, a Soldier from the ground unit. The pilots did not know the ground unit’s designation.

“He (Jackson) was trying to paint the target picture: multiple grenade attacks from rooftops, small arms fire,” said McNellie, a native of Jacksonville, Fla. “At that time, (Reid) had (positive identification) of two enemy personnel jumping from one rooftop to another.”

The insurgents ducked into a building and Reid lost site of them. The ground forces continued to receive small arms fire and grenade attacks.

The four pilots waited in frustration for about 30 minutes, providing over watch as they waited for the ground forces to be able to move a safe distance away from the target area.

“About that time is when we learned about the single engine failure (of the



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

**Col. Dan Shanahan, commander of 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, (far left) and Gen. Richard A. Cody, (second from left) present the Air Medal with Valor to, from left to right, Capt. Matthew Carlsen, chief warrant officers 3 Christopher Ezell and Les McNellie and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Rich Reid. Carlsen, Ezell, McNellie and Reid received their valor awards for assisting a ground unit that had come under small arms fire and grenade attacks in December.**

Apache from a previous team supporting the ground fight) and that one of our sister aircraft had been engaged – taken small arms fire,” McNellie said. “I relayed that to (Ezell and Reid, who were in the trail aircraft) and said: ‘Whoa, this is getting pretty serious pretty quick.’

“(Reid) was doing a great job of talking to the ground guys, trying to get in there to get in the fight. We knew that once we started shooting, and we could put rounds on target, that these guys would either break contact or we would kill the enemy.”

As they waited, they got word that Jackson had been hit by enemy fire.

“As soon as that happened, throughout our whole team, there was that sinking feeling of ‘we’re here now, we want to help. We can’t help until you guys tell us we’re clear to engage,’” McNellie said. “There was this eerie moment of silence amongst our team. Then, here comes (Jackson) – I remember to this day – comes back up on the net and goes: ‘Hey guys, I’m currently going to be out of the fight. I got hit. I’m down, but I’m OK.’”

Jackson passed the Apache team off to his commander to continue the fight. The ground commander was able to clear his Soldiers away from the target area to allow the Apache crews to engage the enemy.

“We rolled in and did some precision diving fire,” McNellie said. “We hit the front face of the building, which was where the majority of the small arms fire was coming from.”

The crews made three passes engaging the same building, but the insurgents continued their attack, McNellie said.

The ground commander got clearance from his battalion commander to engage the building with a hellfire missile.

“They rolled in and (Reid and Ezell) did a ... hellfire engagement right through

the roof of the building,” McNellie said. “It was a perfect shot; the round went right where it needed to be.”

Although fire ceased from that building, the ground unit soon came under fire from a different enemy position.

“They said they had multiple shooters and multiple personnel back on rooftops and on balconies,” McNellie said. “I remember coming down the street and we were low ... at the time. I looked out the left door, and I remember just saying: ‘Whoa!’ T-72s and T-55s were just rocking with their guns. The humvees were shooting. The whole place was just getting lit up.”

With the help of the ground commander, the pilots spotted the target – a building with a blue garage. As they came back to fire on the target, they spotted a humvee parked directly in front of the garage.

“I couldn’t engage, because there was a humvee parked right in front of that blue garage,” McNellie said. “That would have been a bad situation. I called (Ezell) immediately and said: ‘Do not engage; do not engage.’”

Once the ground forces were clear of the building, the Apache team made another pass and engaged the building, suppressing enemy fire long enough for the ground forces to reach their rally points.

Ezell, who hails from Geneva, Ala., said he could remember the full range of emotions coming over the radio from the guys on the ground.

“From the beginning to the end, you can tell by changes in their tone of voice of how things are going,” Ezell said. “You hear them kind of excited: ‘We’re taking fire!’ It goes from that to ‘This is working; this working.’ They go from being in a black hole they can’t get out of to: ‘I can see a little light; I’m slowly getting there.’ It’s a

good feeling to know (that we contributed to that).”

The engagement was – to this day, 10 months later – the most intense the team has been on.

“At that time, we had had maybe one or two engagements prior to this one, but this was the first close combat attack that our unit had had,” McNellie said. “Since then, we’ve only had about two or three others.”

“Up until this point (Dec. 1), we’d been flying in country for a little over about 30 days,” Carlsen added. “We would get troops in contact where it was just a target of opportunity (for the enemy) on ground forces, and then they would break contact and melt away. We were there for about two hours, and throughout the engagement, the enemy was standing fast. They had no intention of removing themselves from that area.”

Although the pilots received Air Medals with Valor for their actions – presented by Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Richard Cody – the messages from the ground unit held more meaning for them.

“Everyone knows why we do what we do – to preserve freedom,” McNellie said.

“When we’re out there as aviators, and we are helping these guys on the ground, there is no award, no medal you can pin on your chest. The things I like? I’ve got three emails from ground commanders from over here this time, of when we’ve saved guys’ ... lives – coming from either the guy on the ground himself or their brigade, battalion or company commander. Those emails mean more to me. Having them come in here, and they see us, and they look you square in the eye and tell you: ‘Thank you, you saved our lives.’ You could see it in their eyes. That right there says enough; that says it all,” he said.

# Ironhorse Brigade, Local Iraqi Leaders Celebrate Reconciliation Successes

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

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – When the sun went down, the evening was a time for celebration and the breaking of the Ramadan fast as tribal sheiks and local government leaders from the Abu Ghraib district of Baghdad dined together with senior leadership from the 1st “Ironhorse” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division and the brigade’s 2nd “Lancer” Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment at the Joint Visitor Bureau building here Oct. 1.

The tribal leaders and government officials from areas throughout the Lancer area of operations to include the villages of Nassir Wa Salam, Khandari, Agar Quf and Zeljdot among others that lie within Abu Ghraib coordinated the celebration with the Lancers and used the occasion as an opportunity to recognize recent successes in reconciliation efforts.

“This event has been a great chance to celebrate Ramadan with local leaders in the area and our progress together over the past year,” said Maj. Geoffrey Norman, executive officer, 2nd Bn., 5th Cav. Regt. and a native of Boulder, Colo. “We’ve got a pretty wide range of folks with a combination of Sunni and Shia partners and Iraqi Police here tonight.”

Norman pointed out many of the positive things happening in the village of Nassir Wa Salam as just one example for the type of reconciliation successes occurring throughout the Lancer AO and that were celebrated during the event.

“We have a fantastic relationship in Nassir Wa Salam with the 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division,” said Norman.

“Our Iraqi Army partners in reconciliation have bravely stepped forward to work with Iraqi Security Volunteers and Coalition Forces to allow local people to regain control of their villages and neighborhoods from Al Qaeda in Iraq,” he said.

“The result has been a complete change in Nassir Wa Salam from being a town in the grip of Al Qaeda to a city flourishing for its children and its local businesses,” added Norman. “The streets used to be deserted but now they’re packed with people, and this is happening in Khandari and Shiha as well.”

During the dinner, the gathered attendees ate American cuisine provided by the Lancers and five members of the 1st Cavalry Division Band were on hand to provide music for the occasion.

After they had dined, Sunni and Shia sheiks spoke with each other and the Ironhorse Brigade personnel about recent reconciliation efforts, shared a few laughs and posed for photos with one



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

**Lt. Col. Kurt Pinkerton, commander, 2nd “Lancer” Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment shares a laugh with tribal leaders from throughout the Abu Ghraib district during a dinner held at Camp Liberty, Iraq Oct. 1 to celebrate the success of recent Abu Ghraib reconciliation efforts.**

another.

Col. Paul E. Funk II, the Ironhorse Brigade commander and Lt. Col. Kurt Pinkerton, the Lancer Battalion commander, addressed the gathered crowd.

“This is an important night to share in the breaking of the (Ramadan) fast with our friends and it’s a very historic time for Iraq,” said Funk, during his opening statement. “Now is the time for reconciliation, for four years there were way too many opposing views and it is a time now for words and not bullets. The power of reconciliation leads this country forward.”

“As you know 1,500 Iraqi Police were just hired and it’s a chance to establish true security throughout this zone but it takes people working together,” added Funk. “We see that you are all willing to reconcile. There’s not one Kurd, one Sunni or one Shia—there’s only one Iraq.”

Funk also explained that the Iraqi people are quite capable of eventually being able to take responsibility for their own destiny—calling the nation a country of “scholars, mathematicians and brilliant engineers.”

“There’s a need to move forward, and soon the Ministry of Displaced Persons will start sending people back to their homes,” Funk continued in his speech, referring to the thousands of Iraqis who thanks to reconciliation efforts to

improve security are now moving back to their villages—places which were once marred by acts of violence almost daily. “It’s time to start reconstruction and this takes patience, perseverance and people who have the courage of lions.”

“Those people are sitting in this structure tonight,” he added pointing to the assembled leaders.

“We can’t do this alone, we all have to work together to make this successful,” said Pinkerton, who added that his Soldiers have made strong bonds working with the local residents in Abu Ghraib as well as with their Iraqi Security Volunteer and Iraqi Security Force partners.

Since arriving in country nearly a year ago, the Lancer Soldiers have experienced a change in the security situation that has been like night and day thanks to reconciliation, according to Norman.

“It’s really amazing, because they came into a very dangerous area and sustained some very painful personal losses, yet day in and day out they showed amazing discipline and respect for the people in whose hometowns and villages they were operating,” said Norman. “Everyday and every night they were asked to make split decisions to discern friends and innocent villagers from armed insurgents who hide amongst the population we’re here to protect.

“Now, we feel that we’re in a very

important juncture in our tour over here and it’s as though we’ve turned a corner with the security situation which will give us the opportunity to finish strong and focus on essential services and rebuilding projects to leave an enduring mark on the Abu Ghraib area,” said Norman while explaining that the battalion only has about four more months left in-country.

One of the ways forward that Norman said he sees for reconciliation involves reestablishing Iraqi Police into local communities which will also include more Iraqi Security Volunteers becoming police officers.

“We’ll bring Iraqi Police officers into the neighborhoods and villages that they’re actually from,” said Norman. “So, much of the way forward will include replacing the civilian (volunteers) with IPs and then continuing to improve local government agencies that can provide essential services to the people.

Reactions to reconciliation efforts have been very positive and have yielded many surprising results, added Norman.

“It’s been an amazing experience, and everyone feels very positive about where things are going,” he said. “The integration of both former Sunni and Shia insurgents who have reconciled and are cooperating with the Iraqi government and with us has really allowed us to shift our focus and work with Iraqis to complete many projects designed to rebuild functional local governments in a lot of areas where there was previously no government.”

The improved security situation in Iraq has allowed the Lancers to assist the local government with providing power to people in some of the smaller villages in Abu Ghraib until the national power grid can be fully up and running in the future.

“We’ve worked with a lot of small villages to get small generators which are large enough to power houses in the village even though there may be no power grid to connect them,” said Norman. “The ability to give each village power, has significantly improved the quality of life for many small villages.”

Although the Lancers will be leaving Iraq within a few months, on-going combined efforts to bring “normalcy” back to the lives of Abu Ghraib residents will include such things as working to rebuild schools, water departments and support for the Iraqi government’s efforts to reintegrate displaced people back into their villages, according to Norman.

“We’re going out on high note with a lot of momentum with projects we’ve started—many of which we’ve seen through to completion,” Norman said.

# Soldiers at Taji Find Relief Hitting the Wall

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – When they get the call to go their heart rate quickens and adrenaline starts rushing through their veins.

There is no time to waste. Get the info, get the facts, get the coordinates and get on the move. Soldiers' lives depend on it.

With mountains of responsibility resting on the shoulders of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division's medical evacuation unit, it's ironic that a mountain is what helps relieve the stressors of their job.

Well, maybe not quite a mountain.

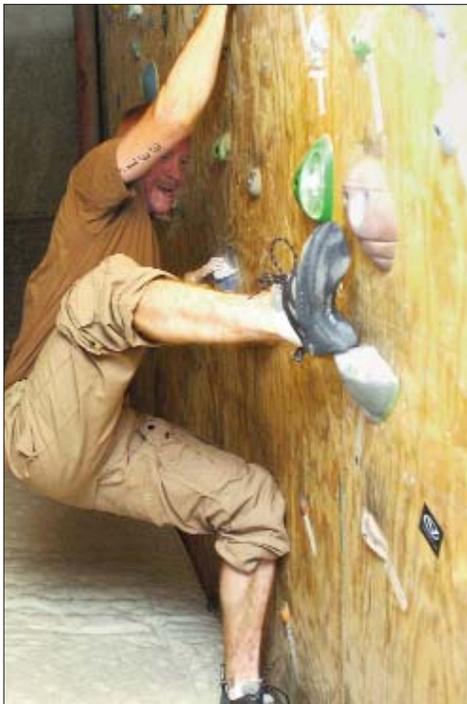
Colorado Springs, Colo., native Spc. Ryan Utz, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief for Company C, 2nd "Lobo" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., has been an avid rock climber for over 10 years and a deployment to Iraq isn't going to stop him – especially when it helps melt away the tension, he said.

That's why Utz, along with the help of fellow climbing enthusiast, Capt. Micah Helser, a MEDEVAC pilot for Co. C., built their own rock climbing wall – a sort of mountain getaway in the middle of Iraq.

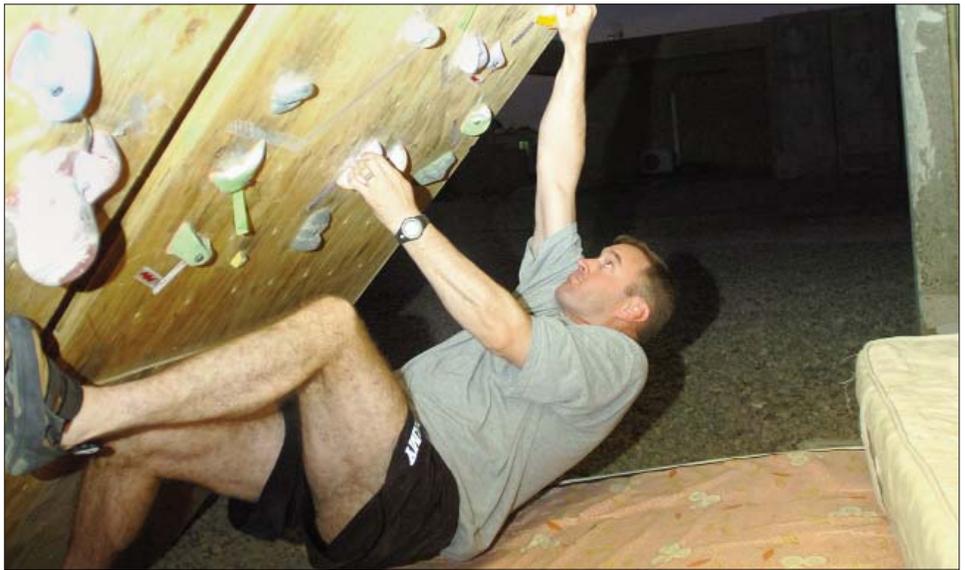
"I guess (building the wall) was my idea. Before I came down to MEDEVAC, I was planning on trying to build a rock wall, but didn't know if I'd get the go ahead," said Utz.

"Utz is the one that came up with the harebrained idea. I didn't think it would actually happen, but it did," said Helser who hails from Salem, Ore.

After getting approval from their chain of command, they headed out on the journey to find building materials



Staff Sgt. Eddie Barrier, a flight medic for Company C, 2nd Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., concentrates as he moves up the climbing wall in Camp Taji, Iraq, built by Colorado Springs, Colo., native Spc. Ryan Utz, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief for Co. C.



(Photos by Cpl. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Colorado Springs, Colo., native Spc. Ryan Utz, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief for Company C, 2nd "Lobo" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, climbs up a climbing wall he built in Camp Taji, Iraq, to give him and other Soldiers a stress release while deployed. Utz, who has been climbing avidly for over 10 years, has already planned some climbing trips with his fellow Soldiers when they return from their deployment, he said.

for their new project, which ended up taking a while to complete, said Utz.

"It took at least a couple of months (to complete the wall). We are still getting new holds in. It's an evolving process," Utz said. "We really had to scrounge for the materials to build it."

The wood they found around camp, sometimes dumpster diving for discarded wood, but the foot and hand holds they ordered online.

These modular fittings are made to replicate holds they would find on a rock in nature with one minor exception, said Utz.

"The holds are made to be easily gripped and obviously Mother Nature doesn't think much about that," he said with a smile.

The wall consists of an eight-foot high section about 12 feet in width connected to an inverted climbing surface which in turn leads to another wall that is set at about a 45 degree angle.

Each hold is mounted with a system that allows Utz and his crew to reposition and replace them whichever way they please, said Utz.

What this small wall lacks in height, it makes up with difficulty, said Helser.

"The first thing most people say is that it's not very high. What we do is make it very technical and difficult so that height doesn't matter," he said.

"When we first started doing it, we were totally weak and we could hardly do what we think are now easy problems," he said.

They can constantly change the difficulty by moving the various holds to different locations – many of these holds only allowing two fingers worth of room on them. This creates new and more difficult routes, said Utz.

The more difficult they make it, the more that it challenges them.

The more it challenges them, the more it takes them out of Iraq and places them on a rock surrounded by a piney forest, said Helser.

"You can ask anyone. One of the only times I have a

smile on my face is after we've been climbing or when I know that I'll be climbing," said Helser.

"The wall is a great release – something to put your mind on instead of what you saw that day," said Utz. "We, on occasion, see some pretty gruesome things – some pretty heart-wrenching things."

In the beginning, there were only two of them climbing, but now Utz and Helser have somewhat of a following of four other novice climbers, Utz said.

One of those Soldiers, Advance, N.C., native Staff Sgt. Eddie Barrier, a flight medic for Co. C, has only been climbing on the rock wall for a month and a half and is already showing tremendous improvement, said Utz.

Along with the benefits of relieving stress, the climbing wall is beneficial to muscular strengthening as well, said Utz.

"When you're on a harder route you really have to focus on what you're doing, what every little muscle is doing, where your feet are, where your hands are, and how you have to turn your body," he said.

"It's an all encompassing activity. It's not like running ... on this you have to pay attention to everything," he said.

It isn't only the physical side that gets tested on this small mountain in Iraq; it's also the mental side, said Helser.

"That's one of the most satisfying things out here is when you're working a problem and you physically think you can't do it, but something in your psyche clicks and you tell yourself that you're going to make this move or you're going to do this route," Helser said.

Once the MEDEVAC Soldiers have completed their mission in Iraq, they plan on moving on to slightly larger rocks when they return home, said Utz.

"We're planning on climbing on some real rock together when we get home," he said.

But until then, the Soldiers of Co. C will have to challenge themselves with their private little mountain in the arid land of Iraq.



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

Staff Sgt. James Ray, a career counselor for the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division who hails from Section, Ala., assists Anchorage, Alaska native Spc. Loren Sutton, a supply specialist from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st BCT, with Army career options, showing Sutton the many possible career paths available to him during an office visit on Camp Taji, Iraq Oct. 3. Ray was recently named the Multi-National Division-Baghdad's Career Counselor of the Year and will be competing in the Multi-National Corps – Iraq Career Counselor of the Year board at Camp Liberty, Iraq Oct. 6.

## Soldier Named MND-B Career Counselor of the Year

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Staff Sgt. James Ray, a career counselor for the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division was recently selected as the Multi-National Division-Baghdad Career Counselor of the Year.

Ray beat out three other MND-B career counselors in a board held at Camp Liberty, Iraq Sept. 29 which was designed to test their knowledge on such things as the Army Retention Program, the re-classification of Soldiers and writing contracts for active and reserve component troopers.

"This unquestionably is the highlight of my Army career, and I couldn't be more proud," said Ray, who hails from Section, Ala., also explaining that he faced some tough competition. "We were all selected based on our successful completion of the commander's retention program and for doing well in assisting with and surpassing our retention mission."

For Fiscal Year 2007 which ended Oct. 1, the Ironhorse Brigade reenlisted more than 1,000 Soldiers in theater and handed out more than \$10 million in cash bonuses to the reenlisting troopers.

Throughout the fiscal year, Ray worked in a combined effort with retention noncommissioned officers in the 1st Brigade Support Battalion; the 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment and Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. as they wrote contracts for 268 of those reenlisting troopers.

Ray stressed, however, that being a good career counselor has nothing to do with numbers but is all about helping Soldiers reach their career goals whether that means helping

them attain all the reenlistment options they are entitled to or with deciding to move from an Army career to the civilian sector.

"Our success in the brigade is because we have a good combination of great leadership and high quality Soldiers," said Ray. "When Soldiers receive proper counseling to assist them in making wise career decisions, they're going to continue serving in the Army. When a Soldier comes in, I'll try to match their personal desires with the needs of the Army, and try to accommodate them the best I can."

"We don't like to pressure Soldiers as it tends to make them feel like they're not important to you," added Ray. "We have a commitment to the Soldiers and regardless of their decision, we're not only here to retain them, but to help them transition into civilian lives as well."

Ray said he understands all too well the way Soldiers who are thinking about getting out of the Army feel. He was considering it too while serving as a nuclear, biological, and chemical noncommissioned officer until a twist of fate put him on a new career path.

"At a time when I was seriously thinking about getting out of the Army, my battalion was over-strengthened and I was suddenly appointed as the full-time battalion reenlistment NCO," said Ray, who did not particularly care for his job as an NBC specialist. "There I found a renewed enjoyment of the Army and decided to put in my packet to become a career counselor."

Ray graduated from the Army's Basic Career Counselor Course at Fort Jackson, S.C. in August of 2006 and arrived to the Ironhorse Brigade in September 2006.

"It's better than any other job in the Army and it's the most satisfying job I've ever held either in the civilian world or the military," said Ray. "I look forward to coming into

work every day and taking care of Soldiers and I honestly believe in what I'm doing."

After nearly 12 and half years of service in the Army, Ray said although it can be difficult being away from home his family accepts his decision to continue his career in the Army.

"My wife's not happy that I'm gone from home, but she definitely understands my career and what it entails to include deployments," said Ray.

For his future goals, Ray plans on spending a 30-year career in the Army, eventually achieving the rank of sergeant major.

"I'd really like to become the Army's G1 command career counselor—that's as high as you can go in the career counselor field," said Ray. "I just want to be able to influence the Army retention field in a positive way by coming up with inventive ways to help Soldiers and what better way for me to do that than from the top."

Those Soldiers who work with Ray said that he was deserving of receiving the career counselor of the year award.

"His dedication to the career counselor field and to the Soldiers is what made him career counselor of the year," said Staff Sgt. Nick Byse, a retention noncommissioned officer for the 1st BCT who hails from Long Beach, Calif.

"He put in a lot of time and effort, putting in long hours to study for the board," said Sgt. 1st Class Humberto Flores, the Ironhorse Brigade's senior retention noncommissioned officer and a native of Laredo, Texas. "It's an honor to have him on our team."

Ray will be representing MND-B against other career counselors in the next level of career counselor of the year competitions, attending the Multi-National Corps-Iraq Career Counselor of the Year board.

# First Team Honors Wounded, Volunteers

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

FORT HOOD, Texas – Friends and family of the 1st Cavalry Division gathered Sept. 25 to honor 28 troopers and recognize the efforts of nearly 30 volunteers at the Catering and Conference Center here.

The Soldiers, who were wounded in combat operations in Iraq, were presented Purple Heart Medals by Brig. Gen. Frederick Rudesheim, the Fort Hood installation commander.

“No matter what I say, it’ll be inadequate,” he said to the wounded troopers after presenting each of them their medals.

Rudesheim said that although the ceremony is an



Purple Heart Medals wait to be presented to Soldiers Sept. 25 during the 1st Cavalry Division's Purple Heart and Volunteer of the Month Ceremony at Fort Hood's Catering and Conference Center. The First Team recognized 28 Soldiers wounded during combat operations in Iraq and about 30 outstanding volunteers during the ceremony.

important event for the wounded Soldiers, it is even more important for the other Soldiers and family members to recognize their efforts and sacrifices.

“We need to recognize you, we need to hold you up as heroes,” Rudesheim said.

He explained that although there have been many changes in our lives since the formation of our nation, one thing has always remained the same.

There will always be young men and women willing to put their lives on the line to defend that way of life.

“As a nation, we will always be counting on those selfless volunteers, and of course, their families, who willingly sacrifice so much of their own lives to defend people many of them have never met before,” Rudesheim said.

One such Soldier, Staff Sgt. Fred Turner, a cavalry scout and Bradley Fighting Vehicle commander with Troop A, 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, was helping to protect the lives of his fellow troopers when his convoy was hit by a roadside bomb.

Turner, an 8-year Army veteran from Austin, Texas, explained that he was in the lead vehicle of his convoy as they headed out on their late-night mission and was in the hatch of the Bradley, checking holes in the road for improvised explosive devices.

He said that checking the holes for IEDs was important to him because it minimized the risk to the rest of his Soldiers in the convoy behind him.

“I’d rather take the risk,” Turner said, “rather than just drive by and possibly let someone else get hit.”

Turner said that it was something he expected any noncommissioned officer would have done for their Soldiers. The 26-year-old father of two said that



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

Brig. Gen. Frederick Rudesheim, the Fort Hood installation commander, pins the Purple Heart Medal on Sgt. Victor Salazar, a member of the 1st Cav. Div.'s 2nd BCT, during the division's Purple Heart and Volunteer of the Month Ceremony Sept. 25 at the Catering and Conference Center at Fort Hood.

although he is glad to be home, the hardest part of coming home was seeing all the Soldiers with injuries worse than his own.

# Cav Soldiers Remembers Fallen Comrades

By Sgt. Robert Strain  
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – “Sabers never quit!”

With the sounding of their unit motto, Capt. Chris Wooldridge, the rear detachment commander of the 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, gave the order to fall out.

With that order, about 20 troopers slowly moved across the grass of the 1st Cavalry Division's Memorial Chapel to meet Robert Baloga, the father of Pvt. Michael Baloga, who was killed in Muqdadiyah, Iraq, July 26.

One by one, the Soldiers tell him about their experiences working with his son, and how he will be greatly missed.

Wooldridge explained that the families of the unit's fallen troopers always requested to speak with some of the Soldiers that served alongside their trooper.

“It provides them a sense of closure,” Wooldridge said.

He explained that although he can't always get a formation together following the division's memorial ceremony, Soldiers will exchange phone numbers or email addresses in order to keep in touch with their fallen comrade's family.

According to Wooldridge, meeting



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

Spc. Patrick Colwell, with the 4th Infantry Division Band, plays taps following the firing of volleys at the 1st Cavalry Division Memorial Ceremony Sept. 20. First Team troopers, friend and family members honored seven fallen troopers during the ceremony at the division's Memorial Chapel on Fort Hood.

the Gold Star families also helps out the Soldiers, who get the opportunity to get to know the fallen at a another level.

“It takes it beyond the Army,” Wooldridge said.

Baloga, a cavalry scout who joined the Army in November 2006, exhibited a motivated and can-do attitude and always enjoyed learning something new, said Spc. Joe Jenkins Sept. 20 during the

division's memorial ceremony.

“He wanted to learn, and saw everything as a learning opportunity,” Jenkins said.

According to Jenkins, Baloga was also a very dedicated father.

He joined the Army in order to provide for his daughter Isis.

“He loved her unconditionally and more than anything in this world,” Jenkins

said. “Everything he did was devoted to providing her with the best life possible.”

The First Team honored seven fallen troopers during the ceremony, including Spc. Donald Young, an infantryman with the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment of the division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Blaine Dowell, Young loved fishing – but he wasn't very good at it, he seldom caught any fish.

“I guess it would be better to state he loved spending time with family and friends while sitting in a boat with a string dangling in the water,” Dowell said.

Dowell said not being very good at fishing was frustrating for Young, who spent part of his life growing up in Montana, but he never quit trying.

“He never gave up and always strived to get better at whatever he set out to accomplish,” Dowell said.

Dowell explained that everyone who met or worked with Young will never forget the positive times they shared together.

“He was a Soldier's Soldier and will be dearly missed by his fellow comrades,” Dowell said.

# Soulful Rendition Wins First 'Black Jack Idol'

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – Although he was the second of three finalists to perform, once Pfc. Daniel Jens finished his performance of Edwin McCain's, "I'll Be," the winner of the first Black Jack Idol had all but been officially named.

Jens' soulful rendition of the '90s rock ballad stole the show and capped off the nearly two-month long competition during which, performers, either assigned or attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, sang weekly at the Black Jack Bistro Dining Facility in a competition fashioned after "American Idol."

"The best man won -- he really did," second runner-up, Staff Sgt. Marcia Scott, a Demopolis, Ala. native with 15th Brigade Support Battalion, said.

"He did a good job. He's been great the whole competition," she said.

One of the judges and the driving force behind the event, Maj. Michael Duck, the brigade's chief of operations, said that despite the weekly change in genres, Jens, who is with 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, remained the most consistent through the weeks.

"He selected the proper songs for his voice, and I think some of the other contestants had problems with that," Duck, a native of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., said.

During the six weeks of competition, the 11 contestants who auditioned and were selected to participate, delivered karaoke-type performances on a stage set up in the middle of the DFAC during din-



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

After accepting his trophy for winning the first-ever Black Jack Idol competition from the commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Col. Bryan Roberts (right), Pfc. Daniel Jens waves to the crowd.

ner hours.

For the finals, however, which were held Sept. 20, the 1st Cav. Div. Jazz Band provided the music for the competition.

"It was awesome being able to play with the band," Jens, who is originally from Milwaukee, said.

"I think the worst part about the karaoke part is I'm used to having a band - playing with them. So you're up on stage, and you got the band guys to help rile you up and get you excited and everything. And you're up there by yourself, so it was

awesome to have the band this time," he said.

Fan favorite Scott, admitted that she had a little trouble adjusting to singing with live music.

"Well it's a lot different," she said. "The background vocals -- you're finding yourself having to sing the chorus and the song, and you're trying to catch up and then do the ad libbing in between and that was kind of rough."

With Scott and runner-up, Sgt. Orlandus White's very vocal fan bases on

hand every week Jens said that although he thought he was performing well each time, he wasn't expecting to win.

"Actually, the first time I did it, they called my name, and you could hear crickets," he said.

"So I was a little intimidated every time they called their names, and they had half the room cheering for them. But every week, when they'd call my name, it started getting louder and louder; so that made me feel good," he said.

For winning the first Black Jack Idol competition, Jens received an MP3 alarm clock radio, a pair of sunglasses with a built-in MP3 player and a \$50 AAFES gift certificate.

White received a wireless headphone set and a \$25 AAFES gift certificate, and Scott received a watch along with a \$25 gift certificate.

Duck said that in retrospect, he wasn't sure what exactly to expect going into the competition, but that he was impressed with both the level of talent and the fan participation throughout the event.

"I think everybody got a good taste of what the talent is around here so it was good," he said.

"I was looking for fan participation and people to come out, and I think that's what we accomplished," he said.

He also may have unwittingly set a trend as a Black Jack Runway competition is being planned for November.

"I don't know if that's the direction we want to go," he said laughing.

"But yeah, I think it's started. It's bringing out other people's creativity and talents and I think it's a morale booster," he said.

## From A to Z: Two Real-Crime Movies Highlighted

What is it about movies based on real events? It seems more movies come out every year taken straight from old police reports and newspaper clippings from years ago. Now I'm not going to say that these movies aren't any good, because some of them are pretty interesting, but that it seems that Hollywood will pursue just about any story -- fact or fiction.

This will be my last review, due to me getting out of Iraq (back to the 'Hood,' Fort, that is), I will treat everyone to a double review.

I felt it was only appropriate as I watched two movies recently that were somewhat in common and were both based on actual events that it only seemed right to line them up next to each other.

The first movie was "Zodiac," starring Jake Gyllenhaal, Mark Ruffalo, and Robert Downey Jr.

"Zodiac" is basically about a series of murders across California involving a man who calls himself the Zodiac. After each murder he would write a letter detailing his crime to the newspaper.

As murder after gruesome murder occurs, a detective (Ruffalo), tries to solve the mystery of who the killer is. As years pass and the killer goes uncaught, a cartoonist (Gyllenhaal) who followed the story intensely turns the case



into his own person quest. As the quest becomes more of an obsession, time will only tell whether he'll find the killer or not.

The second film was "Alpha Dog" starring Bruce Willis, Emile Hirsch, Justin Timberlake, and Sharon Stone.

"Alpha Dog" is about a small time drug dealer that gets caught up in a kidnapping turned murder.

After being attacked by man that owes him money, Johnny Truelove (Hirsch) decided to kidnap his young teenage brother in hopes that it would make him pay up.

As the kidnap becomes more and more lax, the brother becomes less of a hostage and more of a guest at the various parties they attend.

As the situation grows more and more surreal, Truelove decides the only way out of the kidnapping will be to kill the hostage.

First off, there is a need to establish which film was a decent watch and which one was a waste of time. Surprisingly, I found "Alpha Dog" to be considerably entertaining and enjoyable, while I found "Zodiac" to be somewhat boring and not very suspenseful.

"Zodiac" was directed by one of my all time favorite directors, David Fincher. You might know his work in "Fight

Club," which is probably one of the best movies of all time...and if anyone wants to argue that point, I'm all ears. However, Fincher's work on this film left me feeling bored at times.

The movie runs at two-and-a-half hours, which generally is 30 minutes too long.

I can understand if a movie needs to be longer to tell the story, but this one dragged on too long.

Now I'm not saying "Zodiac" was a bad movie. It was interesting at times, but I wouldn't recommend it over most movies.

"Alpha Dog" just seemed to flow a lot better, and had my heart pumping throughout the entire film, especially at the end. "Zodiac" just sputtered out at the end leaving me wishing I could have my time back.

Now I know most people are displeased with Timberlake's acting abilities. His role and performance in this film was pretty good. It was even enjoyable, but hey, that's just my opinion.

As similar as these movies were, involving vicious crimes based on real events, I can easily say I would chose one over the other.

If you are in the mood to touch up your California '70s murder history, "Zodiac" is probably a good choice. If you're in the mood for an entertaining, heart-pumping thrill ride, check out "Alpha Dog"

I give "Zodiac" three Golden Spurs and "Alpha" Dog gets four.

# Hundreds of Runners Take Part in Black Jack Eight-Miler

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – Runners from throughout the International Zone gathered in the early morning hours of Sept. 29 here for the first-ever Black Jack Eight Miler.

The eight-mile run through the International Zone was hosted by the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division and drew 388 participants.

According to the brigade's information officer, Maj. J.P. Smith, who served as the officer-in-charge of the event, the run was a precursor to the upcoming annual Army 10-Miler, which will be held in Baghdad at Camp Victory this month.

Smith said that a distance of eight miles was chosen to represent one of the 1st Cav. Div.'s training philosophies, which is known as the "Cav. Big 8," and the event served as a morale booster for everyone involved.

"It took the Soldiers' minds off their daily work-

load and gave them something other than another meeting to look forward to," he said.

"I didn't expect it to be that large...it was petty exciting," he added.

First and second place medals were given out to the top male and female finishers in several different age groups, and the morning's best time was posted by Steve McGrory, a member of the British Army, who completed the course in 44 minutes.

"That's one of the best courses that I've ran in my whole running career," he said.

"When we set off this morning running over the bridge, it was just getting light. There were three of us running together and we could see the panorama of the city. It was really good."

McGrory said he is looking forward to telling the members of his running club back home about his latest race.

"They'll be pretty impressed when they hear that I took part in an eight mile road race around Baghdad," he said. "That will impress anyone."



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

**Soldiers hand out cups of water to runners during the Black Jack Eight-Miler, held in Baghdad's International Zone Sept. 29.**

## October's Eye-Opening First Week a Sports Fan's Dream

The first week of October was one of the most exciting weeks for sports fans in recent memory!

Five top ten college football teams were toppled, the major league baseball season concluded with a surprise finish and the highly-favored U.S. women's soccer dumped a semifinal match in the World Championships and one of their goalies for mousing off.

To overuse the cliché – that's why they play the games.

### Topsy-Turvy Top Ten

The college football world was turned upside down heading into October, as Louisiana State University wound up number one in the Associated Press poll after Southern Cal had an unimpressive win.

While both of the front-runners remained undefeated, five Top Ten teams tumbled out of the ranks of the unbeaten, sliding down in the national rankings, too.

Who's upset? Well, Florida lost to Auburn in the swamp; Texas got thumped by Kansas State; Oklahoma dumped their unbeaten record on the road in Colorado; Maryland took out Rutgers; and the University of South Florida started the upset avalanche by toppling West Virginia from the Top Ten.

The wave of upsets helped my Badgers of Wisconsin, who survived a scare at home against Michigan State and moved up to Number Five (!) in the nation and into Bowl Championship Series contention. Other teams benefiting from the wild weekend were California jumping up to number three in the nation; Ohio State moving up to number four, and South Florida (!) rising to number six in the AP poll. (OK, enough about the NFL's minor leagues.)

### The Mets – Simply Amazin'!

A quick note about baseball – the American League was a ho-hum pennant



race with the Yankees rising from the ashes to win the wild card, but the senior circuit was a different story! The New York Mets made a gift of the NL East title, despite having a seven game lead on the Philadelphia Phillies with only 18 games to play.

The Mets tanked it and Phillies short-stop Jimmy Rollins ended up looking like Nostradamus by predicting that they'd take the title.

Speaking of the Phillies, Rollins set the single-season record for at bats, breaking a 26-year-old record formerly held by the Kansas City Royals' Willie Wilson. Rollins' 716 at bats passed Wilson's 705 in 1980.

A more infamous record falling to a Phil's hitter is Ryan Howard taking the strikeout crown.

The slugging first baseman whiffed 199 times, besting the 2004 total by Cincinnati's Adam Dunn (who had 195). But fear not, Dunn still whiffs at a prodigious rate and every year has the opportunity to break the 200-K barrier.

The Cubs held off the Brewers by two games in the NL Central, clinching the Thursday prior to the last weekend of ball, and the Brewers helped the Colorado Rockies by taking two out of three from the Padres and forcing a playoff at Coors Field for the NL wild card post season slot.

It took extra innings, but the Rockies

made it to the playoffs for only the second time in their franchise history by a chin whisker, literally. Exciting stuff, you bet.

The first round of the playoffs is already in the books as this article hits the streets, but they're just getting started as I write this column.

The Cleveland Indians had the best record in the AL, but that honor drew them the wild card Yankees in the first round.

I expect a Yankees/Red Sox AL Championship, with the Bean Town Bombers making it to the World Series.

I wouldn't bet on either one, though, since it really is a coin flip.

In the NL, I like the Phillies.

Whoever comes out of the NL will be the sacrificial lambs for the AL winners this year, unlike Detroit's surprise visit to the big show and being "just glad to be there" before getting swept by the Cardinals.

So, expect another title for Boston.

### No Soccer Sisterhood

I'm not a big soccer fan, but the U.S. women's team has always been a powerhouse in the sport. They went to the World Championships as the number one seed and ended up choking in the semifinals to Brazil, 4-0.

Like I said, I don't know much about soccer, but I do know that a 4-0 score in that game is like losing 56-0 in football.

It wasn't close, yet their goalie, Hope Solo, who was benched for the game in favor of 36-year-old Brianna Scury (who led the team to gold in 1999) called out her coach for the decision and dogged out Scury, saying she would have made those saves.

Nice, huh? What a teammate. What support. What was she thinking?

The coach, rightfully, dumped her from the roster for the bronze medal game, putting Scury back in the net for what will

probably be the last game of her illustrious career.

Scurry, by the way, has kept quiet during all the fuss. That's class. Maybe Solo will learn something from the veteran's example.

### Four Rolling, Others Rocked

Finally, on to the NFL, where (at the time of this writing) there are only four unbeaten teams in the league: the reigning champion Indianapolis Colts, the New England Patriots, the Dallas Cowboys and (drum roll, please!) the Green Bay Packers!

Through the first four weeks of the season, I've gone 33-29 trying to pick winners, but most of those misses are due to the poor play of some of last year's playoff teams – notably the San Diego Chargers and the Chicago Bears.

Some other notable losses thus far include Daunte Culpepper running for three scores against his former Miami mates in a 35-17 romp on the road; the Cleveland Browns taking down the favored Baltimore Ravens, 27-13; the Arizona Cardinals scoring two fourth quarter touchdowns to slip by the Steelers 21-14; and the Kansas City Chiefs chastising the Chargers (in San Diego!), 30-16.

Finally, I did pick the Pack to win on the road in Minnesota and Brett Favre made me look smart with the pick and even broke Dan Marino's record for most touchdown passes in an NFL career, hitting two to run his total up to 422 (and counting).

My dream ending to the NFL season, and Favre's, would be to see the Green Bay great play his final game in the Super Bowl.

But Dallas and New England look to be the cream of the crop with a quarter of the season gone.

There's still a lot of football left, so ...Go Packers!

# Field House Fills for Body Building in Baghdad

**Spc. Angel D. Martinez**  
113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The Morale, Welfare and Recreation Field House filled with more than 200 spectators for the 2nd Baghdad Classic Body Building and Figure Competition here Sept. 29.

Three judges rated 26 men and nine women competitors who presented their physical attributes, hoping to be recognized as the best-built body of the evening. Sgt. 1st Class Deighton Little, one of the judges for the evening from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, said the event was open to all Coalition Forces, military and civilian.

Throughout the event, judges made their decisions based on overall tone, tight muscle groups and muscle density for the two women's figure categories - short and tall, said Little, who has more than 10 years of bodybuilding experience. He said judges looked for size, definition and symmetry for body building categories, in both the men and the women.

Staff Sgt. Joseph Fiorani, a member of the 58th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, won the overall honor as the best body builder in

the event and was awarded a pro card, which will allow him to compete in professional events once he gets back stateside.

Fiorani, a native of Eldersburg, Md., put on a show with his "Big Guns" routine.

The top honors among the nine woman contestants went to Spc. Allison Schlegel, also from 58th IBCT and a resident of College Park, Md.

Besides the benefits of being fit, this kind of event gives troops something to get out of the daily routine.

"Obviously, being in a deployed environment you have a lot of repetitions, so it gave me something to prepare for, to look forward to and to be proud of," said Sgt. Marissa Rico, the winner in the Women's Figure - Short category. In the same way, she said preparing for the competition not only provides a daily routine, but it builds morale, as well.

"I think it's a great morale booster, especially for the Soldiers competing," said Rico, a member of HHC, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div. "There is so much going on over here, and it gives them another focus."

In other words, she added, if you're interest in doing it, and go for it on center stage, "the worst thing that can happen is that you'll wind up leaving with a better body."



(Photos by Spc. Angel D. Martinez, 113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



Eldersburg, Md., native Staff Sgt. Joseph Fiorani, shows off his "Big Guns" routine during the 2nd Baghdad Classic Body Building and Figure Competition at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Field House at Camp Liberty in western Baghdad Sept. 29. By winning the top honors in the competition, Fiorani, a member of the 58th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, was awarded a body building pro card from one of the event sponsors, allowing him to compete in professional events when he returns to the states.

The overall winners of the 2nd Baghdad Classic Bodybuilding and Figure Competition, College Park, Md., native Spc. Allison Schlegel and Staff Sgt. Joseph Fiorani from Eldersburg, Md., both from the 58th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, pose for pictures taken at the conclusion of the 2nd Baghdad Classic Body Building and Figure Competition at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Field House at Camp Liberty in western Baghdad Sept. 29.