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# Crossed Sabers

Volume I, Issue 24

"Telling the MND-Baghdad Story"

Monday, Oct. 29, 2007



(Photo by Spc. Angel D. Martinez, 113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

An Iraqi mother escorts her son after his release from detention during Ramadan, Oct. 10. The Multi-National Force - Iraq and the Iraqi government have worked together re-educate detainees to allow for mass releases during the Ramadan holiday as a means to foster goodwill and reconciliation.

## Detainees Released as Ramadan Ends

By Spc. Angel D. Martinez  
113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD – As a gesture of goodwill and reconciliation Multi-National Force - Iraq and the government of Iraq released more than 50 detainees as part of the Pledge and Guarantor Release Program Oct. 10.

The mass release occurred during the month-long Muslim holiday, Ramadan, which started with the new moon Sept. 13.

According to Air Force 1st Lt. Angela Webb, an Ocean Township, N.J., native and

the deputy public affairs officer for Task Force 134, the detainees were held because at some point, they were a security risk to Iraqi and Coalition Forces.

Once they no longer are a threat, they are released.

In the Pledge and Guarantor Release Program, the detainee promises he will not hurt innocent Iraqis, Iraqi Security Forces or Coalition Forces, Webb said. Then a family

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

## Home At Last

Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's Band and the 15th Sustainment Brigade's Detachment B, 15th Personnel Services Battalion are greeted by Greenville, Ala., native Col. Larry Phelps, the commander of the 1st Cavalry Division's rear detachment, and Troy, Ala., native Sgt. Maj. Brad Wallace, the First Team's rear detachment senior noncommissioned officer. Approximately 70 troops returned to Fort Hood Oct. 15 from their deployment to Iraq. For full article see page 23.

## Adhamiyah Women Join Volunteer Guard Force

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

BAGHDAD – In a well-lit meeting room in a government building in the Iraqi capital, 20 Iraqi women were sitting in a circle, intently watching the demonstration in the center of the room. They were dressed modestly but with some flair: bright pink and blue headscarves mixed in among the black

chadors, chunky, designer purses resting on the floor beneath their seats.

The friendly, casual atmosphere in the room looked similar to a suburban book-club meeting, or maybe a Mary-Kay cosmetics party. Except that these women were not learning how to apply foundation, they were learning how to lock and load an AK-47.

"Who can show me how to do it?" asked the instructor,

an Iraqi Army sergeant, holding up the weapon.

One of the women jumped up and took the automatic rifle, expertly disassembled it and put it back together. When she cocked it by loudly slamming the charging handle back, the rest of the women applauded.

They might well have been applauding themselves. As

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# Iraqi Women Stand up to Fight in Security Force

## Leading Ladies

From Page 1

members of the first class of female security volunteers in Adhamiyah, all 51 women in the class were groundbreakers. The women will join hundreds of male residents that are already helping secure Adhamiyah by guarding important public sites like schools, hospitals, and government buildings.

The four-day course running from Oct. 8 to Oct. 11 was organized by the 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, and taught by U.S. and Iraqi soldiers. The training focused on security procedures, proper search techniques, and weapons familiarization.

"I think it shows these women that, 'I, too, can make a difference in my community,'" said Los Angeles native, 2nd Lt. Lauren Cabral, the officer in charge of the training.

The necessity to have female security guards became clear earlier this month when a female suicide bomber was able to enter a public building without being searched in nearby Fadhil and blew her explosive vest up, killing several people, said Maj. Ike Sallee, the 3-7 Cav's operations officer.

"Insurgents can come in any size, shape, or gender," Sallee said.

In Iraq, cultural sensitivities preclude men from searching women. But there is nothing stopping a woman from searching another woman. For that reason, it was important to give women in Adhamiyah the chance to assist with the security effort.

"It's their lives that are in danger, too," said Kalamazoo, Mich., native, Pfc. Paula Cook, a military policewoman with the 108th MP Company and one of the instructors in the class.

In a culturally conservative society like Iraq's, there are some who might criticize the female security volunteers for stepping outside their traditional roles. But Mervat Hussein, a single mother enrolled in the class, said no one has the right to criticize the women for trying to protect their community.

"What is the substitute they have? Nothing," Hussein said. "Should we just stay in our houses, suffering?"

However, while women like Hussein had the motivation to take part in security efforts, they lacked the know-how. The class was designed to remedy that by giving them a basic,



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

**Los Angeles native, 2nd Lt. Lauren Cabral, a maintenance officer with the 3rd Infantry Division's 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, helps an Iraqi woman get comfortable with the AK-47 during a weapons familiarization class Oct. 10**

working knowledge of several skill areas they will need in order to be effective as security volunteers.

Proper search procedures are one such skill area. On the second day of training, Cook demonstrated search techniques for the group.

The class began with nervous titters among the Adhamiyah women, who blushed and looked away when Cook showed how to search sensitive areas.

The women were definitely operating outside of their comfort zone, Cook said.

"At first they seemed a little nervous, a little wary," she said.

But when Cook showed them how easy it is to hide a weapon if a thorough search isn't conducted, the women stopped being timid and started really shaking each other down during role-playing exercises.

"Once we got it across to them that it's for their security as well as everyone else's, I think they got it," she said.

"Towards the end they were really catching on."

Cabral, who was supervising the entire program, said she felt a responsibility to the women in the class to make sure they received the best training.

"As a female, I definitely feel responsible. I want to teach them everything I know that could help them out on the street," she said.

After only a few days of training, many of the women were already feeling more confident and better able to protect themselves.

Hussein said she had gained a lot of knowledge from the training, especially about the AK-47.

"I really learned many things. I knew nothing about weapons before this," she said.

She said she was looking forward to putting her new knowledge into action after she starts working.

"I am happy because now I am taking a part in protecting the community," she said. "I am nervous, but happy."

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## Reformed Detainees Released Back to Baghdad

### Release

From Page 1

member has to ensure that the promise is kept.

If the detainee slips up again, not only the detainee but the family member who claimed responsibility for them will be held liable.

"Not all (detainees) have to have a guarantor, but as part of the program we're trying to find one for each of them," said Webb. "We're not just going to keep them if they don't have a guarantor. If they're not a security risk anymore, we'll let them go."

For many of the detainees this is not the first visit they have had with their family since being held. While they are detained, family visitations are allowed.

"We are not trying to keep them away from their families, but they obviously did something bad enough to be considered a security



(Photo by Spc. Angel D. Martinez, 113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

**A group of more than 50 Iraqis were freed by Multi-National Force - Iraq and the government of Iraq Oct. 10.**

threat," said Webb.

Since most of the detainees are their families' sole providers, there is a material incentive program for detainees and their families, Webb said.

During their captivity the

detainees have the opportunity to change their ways by working and pursuing educational opportunities. One of the programs allows them to work voluntarily. With this option, they will be able to send money to their families while they are

detained.

There is also anti-extremist re-education program, Webb said, which includes Islamic clerics, psychologists and behavioral scientists working one-on-one with the detainees.

"A lot of (detainees) that come in are illiterate, so we make them go through a basic education class," said Webb. "This way they can read the Quran for themselves, and they can see that the killing of innocents is not acceptable."

Overall the program seems to be working, because none of the detainees released under the program have been detained again, she said.

"We are trying to learn about them and figure out how we can help them and their country," said Webb.

"So when they get out here, they pick up a book instead of a gun because they have that knowledge now."

## Baghdad News Briefs



(U.S. Army photo)

Rusafa residents rally in support of the Iraqi Army and local sheiks in the Zubaida Square in Baghdad Oct. 14.

### Rusafa Residents Rally as Iraqi Army, Tribal Leaders Discuss Reconciliation

2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Reconciliation between Iraqis and unity against insurgents were the main themes of a meeting between the commander of the 4th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division and tribal leaders in the Rusafa District of eastern Baghdad Oct. 14.

More than 500 Rusafa residents attended a pre-meeting rally, held in Zubaida Square, where music played, leaders passed out candy and residents chanted anti-insurgent slogans. Following a luncheon with tribal leaders, 4/1 IA commander, Brig. Gen. Abdullah, took the leaders on a tour in Al-Fadel, passing cheering residents along the way.

Rusafa leaders thanked Abdullah for the work he and his Soldiers have done in revitalizing the area and making it safer. The meeting and rally were planned and executed by the Iraqi Army.

### Reconciliation Stressed at Iftar Dinners

2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Leaders of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division joined their Iraqi Army counterparts and local leaders in eastern Baghdad for Iftar, the evening meal that breaks the fast during Ramadan, Oct. 14.

The dinners, held in Rusafa and Karada, were part of an overall effort to reconcile Iraqis while also giving U.S. forces a better understanding of Iraqi and Islamic culture.

In Rusafa, the dinner was held at the Hajj Mohaned Kassim al-Madrisi Mosque, with Rusafa District Council chairman Sheikh Jamal and mosque Imam Sheikh Nowaf speaking to the guests. Themes they stressed during their speeches were the need for unity and how that would lead to increased security in Rusafa.

Meanwhile in Karada, U.S. and Iraqi forces joined district leaders for a dinner that also served as a memorial for those lost in a car bomb a year earlier. Leaders noted that insurgents were unable to stop the meeting and that by continued solidarity, Iraqis who hope to make the country a better place will prevail.

Since Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces implemented the Baghdad Security Plan, there has been a reduction in violence in eastern Baghdad, and events like the Iftar dinner are meant to build on that momentum and set the conditions for eventual Iraqi takeover of security.

# Iraqi General Visits Ironhorse

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp  
1-1 Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The general in charge of leading the Iraqi efforts in Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon (Baghdad Security Plan), Iraqi Army Lt. Gen. Abud Qanbar, commanding general of the Baghdad Operations Command, met with senior leadership from the 1st “Ironhorse” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division here Oct. 15 to discuss the brigade’s recent progress in and way ahead for the reconciliation process.

Brig. Gen. John F. Campbell, deputy commanding general for maneuver with the Multi-National Division-Baghdad and the 1st Cav. Div., accompanied Qanbar during the visit.

Col. Paul E. Funk II, the Ironhorse Brigade commander, hosted the generals and explained to them the roles the brigade is playing with the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army units in the reconciliation process.

Having an area of operations that encompasses nearly one million people, Funk highlighted the large decrease in significant enemy activity within the villages and outlying areas where the brigade operates, attributed to the impact of reconciliation.

Much of the improved security, said Funk, is due to the efforts of the Iraqi people coming together to push out Al Qaeda operatives and other extremists, and there are approximately 5,000 Iraqi Security Volunteers working within the Ironhorse area of operations.

The security improvements have been a concerted effort with local residents, Iraqi Security Forces, Iraqi security volunteers, local tribal leaders, Iraqi government leaders and Coalition Forces, Funk added.

“We collectively are winning

the security fight in Iraq,” said Funk. “The local sheiks are the real driving force not only behind reconciliation efforts but also with Iraqi Police expansion efforts.”

Funk also said that the economic impact of reconciliation efforts, as well as the security of the local populace, is “indicative of a national momentum for a greater Iraq.”

Funk briefed Qanbar on recent success during an Iraqi Police recruiting drive in the Taji area in which the brigade’s Iraqi Army partners in the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) assisted in the effort, resulting in 1,265 locally vetted Iraqi Police applicants volunteering for police duty.

“The support for the recruiting drive, a joint operation between the IA and IPs, was a great process and certain success, due primarily to the support of the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division commander and the Taji Iraqi Police station chief,” he said.

Funk shared his confidence in the Iraqi Army’s abilities with Qanbar and praised their efforts.

“I am immensely proud of my

Iraqi partners – especially the commanders of the 3rd Brigade and 2nd Brigade of the 9th Iraqi Army Division—and their cooperative dealings with the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Security volunteers in our area of responsibility,” said Funk at the conclusion of the meeting.

Qanbar said he was pleased with reconciliation progress being made in the Ironhorse AO and is “adamant” about the success of the Iraqi security volunteers.

“The Awakening has resulted in many groups standing up against the enemy,” said Qanbar.

“Our forces are all volunteers who are choosing the path of righteousness and our successes are convincing the public and inspiring hope in the population,” Qanbar added.

“Despite the enemy’s actions and the number of things they destroy, they have not won and will not win,” added Qanbar. “Cooperation between the population, Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces is the key (to success).”



(Photo by Spc. Shejal Pulivarti, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Col. Paul E. Funk II (right), commander of the 1st “Ironhorse” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, hosts Iraqi Army Lt. Gen. Abud Qanbar (left), commanding general of the Baghdad Operations Command, during a meeting at Camp Taji, Iraq Oct. 15 to discuss Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police roles in reconciliation efforts within the Ironhorse Brigade area of operations.

## Iraqi Police Undergo Selection Process

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

BAGHDAD – Three pull-ups. That would be the difference between success and failure for Salmak Said Mohammad. If he did them, he could go forward in the selection process to become an Iraqi police officer, putting himself on the path to a well-paying job that would provide for his family and help protect his people. If he couldn’t do them, he was going home with nothing.

A policeman stood in front of the pull-up bar with a scorecard in his hand. It was Salmak’s turn. If the skinny 31-year-old with the slicked-back, Elvis-style hair felt any hesitation, he didn’t show it. He stepped forward, leaped onto the bar, and pulled himself up three times quickly.

“No problem, no problem,” he said as he

hopped down and popped a cigarette into his mouth.

With that, Salmak completed the last requirement to be accepted as a new recruit in the Iraqi Police Force, and became one of more than 120 men from northern Baghdad’s Adhamiyah neighborhood who were invited to join the Iraqi Police Force ranks following a day-long selection process Oct. 8 at Coalition Outpost Apache.

The event was driven by a recent decision by the government of Iraq to hire 3,000 new police officers to work in Adhamiyah. About a third of the slots were earmarked for men who live in the neighborhood.

“This is huge for security here. The government understands that for Adhamiyah to be safe, we

See Police Process Page 13



(Photos by Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy, 58th IBCT Public Affairs)

Lt. Col. Kurt Pinkerton, commander of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, stands among the almost 1,500 locally recruited Iraqi Police officers in Nasser Wa Salam, who were celebrating their graduation from the Baghdad Police Academy Sept. 29.

## Celebration Marks Graduation of IPs

By Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy  
58th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

NASSER WA SALAM, Iraq- The village of Nasser Wa Salam celebrated the graduation of almost 1,500 Iraqi Police candidates, who were recruited from the local area, Sept. 29.

The gathering, which all of the new officers attended, included several hundred local residents, roughly 50 of the local sheiks and tribal leaders, and Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

The celebration marked the end of a three month effort to get volunteers from the local tribes in the Abu Ghraib area -which stepped forward to fight Al Qaeda- through the Iraqi Police recruiting, training, and stationing process. The local leaders invited the 1st Cavalry Division troops to the event to show their appreciation for their efforts in accomplishing these tasks.

"This is an historic date for the people of Abu Ghraib (and) Nassir Wa Salam," said Col Paul E. Funk II, commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div. "These almost 1,500 new graduates of the IP course is historic in that it is the Iraqi people standing up to protect themselves."

The event included songs and speeches by many prominent leaders. One of the more well known speakers was Dr. Abd Alghafoor Alsamare, head of the Sunni Endowment for all of Iraq.

For many, the event was a way to look toward the future of the area.

"This town represents what Islam stands for, which is a community working together for peace and prosperity," said Lt. Col. Kurt Pinkerton, commander of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment. "I look forward to working with the community and the new Iraqi police to further stabilize and secure Iraq, and eliminate all extremists who want to take away (the local resident's) riches and futures."

The event concluded with the posting of duty assignments for those who recently graduated, which is something that will help Coalition Forces achieve their security goals for the area.

"Our goal here is to bring stability and security to the



Lt. Col. Kurt Pinkerton addresses the audience in Nasser Wa Salam during a celebration marking the graduation of almost 1,500 locally-recruited Iraqi Police officers from the Police Academy Sept. 29.

region so there will be opportunities, in my area, for all people to stand up and help secure their own neighborhoods and their own communities," said Funk.

## Brigade Begins Countdown

By Spc. Shejal Pulivarti  
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division celebrated what they hope signifies their final 100 days of their 15-month deployment during a party here Oct. 6.

The fall party marking their first year here and approximately 100 days left to the end of the deployment also recognized their continued hard work. The evening had a sense of the tropics as they closed out the summer season. The hall of the HHT troop area was widely decorated with palm trees, colorful balloons and streamers to fully accomplish the tropical atmosphere.

The Ironhorse Brigade set boots on ground in theater October 2006 and was originally scheduled for a 12-month deployment. A three-month extension was announced in late April.

The still-motivated soldiers socialized and played games while enjoying the plethora of food at the party.

"Positive events, such as this party, are a good morale builder," said Fort Walton Beach, Fla., native Spc. Andrew Dubai, an infantryman for a personal security detachment attached to HHT, who spends most of his time in Iraq providing security outside the wire.

Many of the Soldiers said they find solace by keeping in touch with their loved ones and relaxing on their limited time off with fellow troops. Participating in events the morale, welfare and recreation center provides, going to the pool and playing spades are a few things that help them stay upbeat.

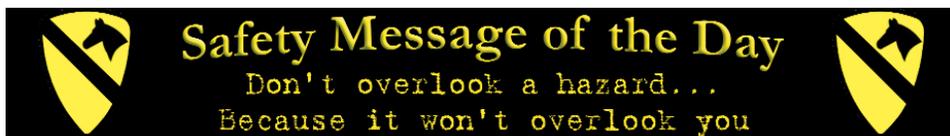
"The additional time away from family is hard to cope with, but I understand that the extension enabled the surge and it helped bring more stability," said Master Sgt. Jason Swain, noncommissioned officer in charge of intelligence for the Ironhorse Brigade, who hails from Del Rio, Texas.

The Soldiers said they look forward to returning home and reuniting with loved ones.

"It doesn't matter what I do, just being with my wife and daughter is enough," said Swain.

Dubai, who recently reenlisted for another six years, plans on getting married and going to Ranger school once he returns home.

Ironhorse troops anticipate being back in the states by mid-February next year.



# 'Garryowen' Troopers Continue Building Strong Relationships

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

TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers from Troop C, 1st Squadron, 7th "Garryowen" Cavalry Regiment, who work out of a nearby Coalition outpost, are continuing to reach out in operations to build relationships and trust with the people in the areas they patrol here.

In one such effort, Soldiers from Comanche Troop conducted a census to gather an accurate assessment of population size and statistics while at the same time interacting with the local populace Oct. 6 in the Baghdad Gardens area near Taji.

"We just took over the area about a month ago (from Troop A) and there a few houses we've never visited before because the home owners were not there. So we're going to get information from those particular homes which we did not get the last time we were there," said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Fernandez, a platoon sergeant in Troop C, who explained that doing a census serves as an opportunity for the people in the area to become familiarized with Soldiers in his platoon. "Gathering a census also lets us know exactly who's living in the area and who the local tribal leaders are so we can connect with them on reconciliation issues and other matters."

The information garnered from the census will be passed on to the Iraqi government, providing government officials with insights into the demographics of the area, Fernandez said.

As the Soldiers went door to door in the neighborhoods of Baghdad Gardens, they were met with smiles, handshakes and offers of traditional Iraqi chai (tea).

Children followed the troops on nearly every street.

At one house the sounds of "hello, hello" as well as traditional Arabic greetings from male members of the household emanated from the streets as the Comanches were welcomed into the courtyard of the residence.

In an adjacent house, a local artisan showed the troops his clay wares.

"These look like something you might find in an up-scale store in the states," said Staff Sgt. Halisaam Thompson, a squad leader with Comanche troop who hails from Philadelphia.

The man smiled proudly as an interpreter translated Thompson's words into Arabic.

Upon entering the courtyard in another home in this farming community, a flock of sheep filed past the troopers. Date fruits, which are harvested in the area during Ramadan, were picked, placed in large plastic bags and stacked on the grass.

"You are welcome in my home, and thank you," said the home owner who greeted the troopers. The man, who had been picking dates, could not shake with his hand due to it being sore from picking the fruits which are eaten during the break from the Ramadan fast. He offered an apology through an interpreter for his inability to give the traditional greeting, but he did give the Soldiers the "thumbs up" sign.

As the troops explained their census gathering mission to the villagers at each house at which they stopped, the male head of each household answered the questions.

Fernandez attests the willingness of the local residents to help with the census and other Coalition efforts in the area has a lot to do with improved security throughout the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment's area of operations.

"They can see a big change and understand what we're doing," said Fernandez. "But it's not just about us helping them, it's all about Iraqis helping Iraqis, especially with recent reconciliation efforts in our area."

"Before there were (Iraqi security volunteers) initially things were a little rough because the locals wanted to help but wouldn't give us any information because they were afraid that they would be killed by insurgents," said Fernandez. "Now they're happy we're here and are way too willing to give up the bad guys because there are Iraqi secu-

city volunteers working near their neighborhoods."

Fernandez's Soldiers said they too have definitely noticed a change since the Iraqi security volunteers began working with Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces to weed out extremists.

"If the whole country were to do what our volunteers have done, pushing out Al Qaeda and members of the Jaish Al Mahdi army, then our forces will be out of here sooner than any analyst could ever hope to predict," said Pvt. Brandon Reed of Unadilla, N.Y., a Comanche Troop scout. "Our security environment has definitely been improving and at every checkpoint there are volunteers manning them—men who are protecting their own houses and families and that's as much as they could ever put on the line."

People who live in the local villages are also signing up to become Iraqi Police. Comanche Troop's role in those efforts have involved helping with the administering of physical fitness tests for the recruits as Soldiers from Troop A did the recruits' administrative processing.

"These police are local area people who will be protecting their own towns and their own neighborhoods – they'll protect their own people and keep outsiders and extremists out of their hometowns which will be good for those communities," said Fernandez. "Our guys are excited to see the Iraqis actually standing up and providing security, eventually becoming part of the Iraqi government."

Reed said the chance to participate in operations such as the day's census have been a worthwhile experience and he always invites opportunities to work with the Iraqi people.

"It's been great for me as I'm getting to learn about a different culture and building an awareness and respect for that culture, seeing how other people live," said Reed. "It's definitely been an eye-opening experience."



Sgt. Jonathan Toth of Clinton, Miss., and a scout with Troop C, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, gets to know an Iraqi boy during a foot patrol in a Baghdad neighborhood near Taji, Iraq, Oct. 6.



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

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Fernandez, a platoon leader with Troop C, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment who calls Killeen, Texas home, speaks into a tape recorder to document census information garnered from local residents in the Baghdad Gardens area near Taji, Iraq, Oct. 6.

## Gamblers Have Huge Turn Out for Cooperative Medical Engagement

By Spc. Alexis Harrison  
2-1 Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – The first time Soldiers from the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, "Gamblers," held a cooperative medical engagement inside the Baghdad Zoo, they treated almost 100 people who came looking for help.

During another of these engagements Sept. 24, the Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division treated more than double what they did during their first operation in late May.

According to Staff Sgt. Jerry Normoyle, this was by far the most organized, well-planned and executed medical engagement he's seen since arriving in Iraq just a few months ago with the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion out of North Carolina.

Normoyle has certainly seen his share of medical operation and the Grove City, Ohio, native said that the Gamblers did an outstanding job that day.

Several stations were set up to treat patients with varying symptoms. There was even a dental station that was kept busy throughout the day.

Capt. Christine Ford and Spc.

Lisa Beasley noted how they saw many recurring problems with all the patients they saw. Tooth decay, plaque build up, and poor brushing and flossing techniques topped the list.

"We try to teach them the right way to take care of their teeth, give them some of the essentials and hopefully reverse much of the damage done by years of neglect," said Beasley.

Ford remarked that you only have to brush and floss the teeth you want to keep.

While many people came in to ask questions and get non-specific treatment, a few came in with more serious issues to be addressed.

One man came in on the verge of fainting from the effects broken foot coupled with heat exhaustion. Spc. Erin Braun, a Rockford, Ill., native with the "Trauma" Company, noticed the symptoms and began an intravenous solution to get the man hydrated.

For many of the Iraqis seen that day, dehydration was a big concern to many of the providers. During the holy month of Ramadan, Iraqis are bound to fast during the day in honor of their religion. Mix heat and empty stomachs and problems are bound to arise according to the providers

seeing patients.

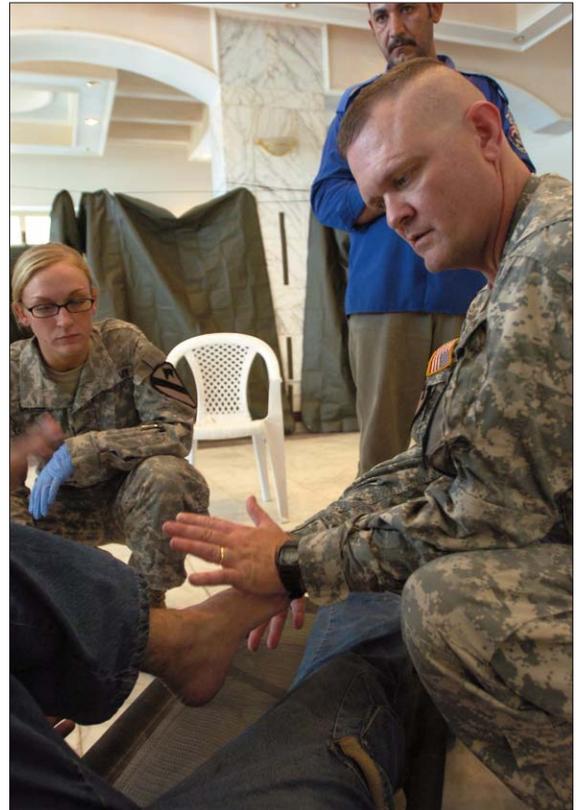
Other than treating patients, reintroducing Iraqi doctors is another main focus of the cooperative medical engagement. Dr. Asim Izzat, a doctor of internal medicine with almost 40 years experience in the medical field, was on hand to treat and help build confidence once lost by the people in their medical system.

"Working here with Americans helps bring confidence back to the people in their doctors," he said. "Much was lost when Saddam was here. I tried to help everyone, but in the end I was threatened like everyone else."

Izzat had begun practicing medicine as a family doctor in 1962. He toured the world giving lectures and refining his own practice until 1995 when he was forced to leave the country due to increasing concern for the well being of his family.

He said he feels indebted to not only the people of Iraq, but the Americans he works with to bring engagements like this to the people.

"This is certainly not an occupation; this is a liberation," he said. "I remember who threatened the lives of my family, and for what? I was trying to help the common people."



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

After receiving oxygen and intravenous fluids, an Iraqi man's broken foot is examined by Maj. Thomas Hair from the Ireland Community Hospital at Fort Knox, Ky., and Rockford, Ill., native Spc. Erin Braun during a cooperative medical engagement in the Baghdad Zoo Sept. 24.

## Soldiers, Salhiyah NAC Re-open Omar Muktar Boys' School

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

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from Troop A, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division and members of the Salhiyah Neighborhood Advisory Council were on hand at the Omar Muktar Boys' School Oct. 4, to take part in the grand opening of their most recent project.

Over the past several months, the citizens of Salhiyah have seen three schools in their community completely renovated and reopened for the upcoming school year thanks to the partnership between 4-9 Cav. and their NAC.

"We work very closely with the NAC council," explained Troop A commander, Capt. Joseph Guzowski. "It's been a great relationship."

Work on the boys' school, which serves 1,000 secondary and high school-aged students, began in August and involved a complete overhaul of the building and school grounds.

"The school was thrashed before – windows broken, garbage everywhere, classrooms in disarray, not painted, ceilings



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

Salhiyah Neighborhood Advisory Council members and staff members of the Omar Muktar Boys' School cut a ribbon at the opening of the school Oct. 4.

corroded," Guzowski, who is originally from Buffalo, N.Y., said.

The piles of garbage were removed and broken windows were replaced. The interior and exterior of the school was repainted, new desks and blackboards were provided,

and a computer lab was added. Repairs were also made to the plumbing, and lights and air conditioning units were installed throughout the school.

"It looks 100 percent better than what it did before, and it gives the kids a good

environment to learn in," Guzowski said.

According to Ali Najim Abdullah, the contractor who oversaw the renovation of the school, the project not only provides the students an ideal learning environment, but it also provided much needed work to members of the Salhiyah community.

Abdullah said that everyone he hired for the renovation of the school was from the local community, and that he would typically have up to 30 people a day working on the school.

"It is a good feeling to be able to help out this community," he said.

The students are scheduled to return for classes Oct. 7 and the school's director, Sami Gamel, is expecting a positive response from them when they see their new school for the first time. He said the renovations have already generated a lot of excitement from the teachers, who are already back and making preparations for the return of their students, and they are looking forward to the upcoming school year.

"If you've got a better place to learn, you're going to want to go to that school rather than do whatever out in the streets," Guzowski said. "It fosters a better learning environment for all the kids."



(Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Cpts. Jefferson Rodieck (center), a physician's assistant with Company C., 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and Leon Richardson, also a physician's assistant with 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, ask a woman standard medical examination questions during a combined medical engagement in Janeen's "Green Camp" in central Baghdad, Iraq Oct. 10.

## Displaced Iraqis Receive Medical Care

By Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim  
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – For some 150 "squatters" who call Janeen's "Green Camp" home, there is very little the local government does

for them because they are not formally recognized as residents.

Soldiers from Battery A, 3rd "Red Dragons" Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division and their attached 422nd

Civil Affairs team out of Greensboro, N.C., got together to help more than half of the displaced Iraqis living in the Green Camp with medical aid and medicine for their ailments Oct. 10.

For Ghanin Hasan, who lives with his wife, mother and 2-year-old son, Mohamed, the visit meant a lot.

"I'm grateful for the Americans and the Coalition Forces for getting medical help," he said through a translator. "I hope we can keep the Americans helping us, with not only medically, but also for security reasons. It's useful here because most of us here are very poor."

The team of physician's assistants and medics saw cases from knee injuries to inner organ problems, treating patients of all ages, according to Sgt. Robert Simmons, a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3-82 FA who hails from Fayetteville, N.C.

"I saw a 15-day-old infant whose eyes are still yellow," said Capt. Leon Richardson of San Antonio, a physician's assistant with HHB As the team of PA's and medics took care of the people inside a makeshift clinic

in a resident's home, the rest of the Soldiers played with children outside.

"Even though I'm supposed to be the (civil affairs) guy, this unit does a great job of what we call CMO, or Civil Military Operations," said Maj. Wes Stewart, a member of the 422nd from Virginia Beach, Va. "They are always out and always talking with people."

Capt. Jesse Wood, HHB, 3-82 FA, said helping those in need is the big reason why the battalion's Soldiers enjoy doing what they do.

"It's just good to see the effort you put into it," said Wood, of Blackwell, Okla. "I think they appreciate us getting everyone together and helping out as much as we can."

Richardson said that's what the "Red Dragons" are about: helping those who can't take care of themselves.

"This is an awesome feeling that we are here for as a medical provider," Richardson said. "We are fortunate to help those who are less fortunate ... fortunate to wield the American spirit in taking care of people who can't take care of themselves."



Capt. Jefferson Rodieck, a physician's assistant, examines two-year-old Mohamed Ghanin during a combined medical engagement Oct. 10.

## FA Battery Raises Bar Round for Round

By Spc. Ryan Stroud  
3-1 Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAQOUBA, Iraq – It is not every day a unit in the U.S. Army achieves one of the highest standards set in relation to their specific mission, and even raises the bar on those standards while deployed to Iraq. But when a unit does, whether formally recognized or not, there is a sense of accomplishment among the team.

Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, 3rd “Grey Wolf” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, is Multi-National Division-North’s best and most respected field artillery batteries operating in northern Iraq today, said Lt. Col. Tony Bryant, MND-N’s fires and effects officer in charge.

“We have fired almost 4,300 rounds of artillery throughout this deployment,” Capt. Sean O’Keefe, the battery’s executive officer humbly admitted when discussing an accomplishment normally achieved by a battalion-sized field artillery unit.

Proudly discussing the capabilities of his battery, O’Keefe said, “We’ve conducted more missions and fired more rounds than [any other battery] in [Multi-National Division-North],” he added after confirmation of this information by Bryant.

Firing the most rounds as a battery-sized element is not the only accomplishment for these Soldiers said Bryant. They are also the first battery in MND-N to fire an Excalibur round, a GPS guided ammunition, in theatre combat responding to troops in contact, while running 24 hour-a-day operations in Diyala province.

“We provide 24-hour artillery fire coverage in the Diyala province,” said O’Keefe, a native of Yonkers, N.Y.

“We’ve got men on the gun line, men in the Fire Direction Center, so we have fires available whenever anyone needs a mission – we are never closed,” he added.

“Anyone who calls for fires through Grey Wolf, as long as they have the clearance... we send [ammunition] downrange,” Staff Sgt. Donald Whann, a member of A Battery, and a native of Modesto, Calif.

“Every challenge we’ve been faced

with, we’ve always done what we could to help out those around us and never turn anyone away. We’ve risen to the occasion each time,” O’Keefe said.

“The Excalibur round is a way to bring back artillery and accuracy into the fight. We, as a battery, have been given a thumbs up to firing into a city without the Excalibur round because of how accurate we are,” O’Keefe said.

“The Excalibur round is a great piece of ammunition used to help keep us in the fight, but it’s been our exceptional firing that has kept us in,” he continued. “We were the first to fire the round in Iraq during an operation and we’ve fired the most Excalibur rounds out of the MND-North.”

A Battery’s success hasn’t come from luck-of-the-draw Soldiers coming to the unit; it’s come from countless hours of training and preparing for the unthinkable.

“Some people get off days; we never really do,” said Whann. “As soon as the day begins, we’re training. We are constantly on our toes.”

“Everyday we have to make sure that our weapons have been [maintained],” he continued. “Maintenance is so very important. That weapon cannot fire if you don’t take care of it.”

“Training is important because it keeps our Soldiers on such high level of standards,” Whann added. “They have to know how to conduct each person’s job just in case something ever happens. If something ever happened to me, I know [my guys] could pick up where I was and continue to send rounds downrange.”

Whann’s unique training methods molds his Soldiers into being battle-ready fighters.

“There will be times when we’re training and I’ll just fall [to the ground],” joked Whann. “My guys will be like, ‘What are you doing, Chief?’ I’ll just lie there, playing dead, and then they know they need to rotate positions and keep running the mission. That forces the guys to react, adapt and finish the mission at hand.

“With us staying [up-to-date] with the standards, we’re ready for any call to come down to us,” he said. “We’re ready for anything that could be thrown at us.”

These artillerymen are not only

ready for anything; they thoroughly enjoy their jobs. A Battery pride themselves on exceptional performance they strive to attain while in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08.

“This job really is motivating at times,” said Spc. Jesus Perez, a native of Bovina, Texas. “When a fire mission comes down, you run to the guns ready to shoot. You’ve been waiting for your chance and now you’re all pumped up.”

“It is motivating,” Spc. Emmanuelle Reyes, a native of Bronx, N.Y., agreed. “You get your energy going and you know that you’re helping troops in contact, trying to make a difference. Knowing that we might be blowing up a building that the enemy is hiding in to help our guys get the job done is really a great feeling.”

Reyes’ noted one of the most important accomplishments his unit has achieved is the great numbers his unit holds.

“We pride ourselves on speed and safety,” he said. “You have to be fast at your job because peoples’ lives could be on the line, but safe at all times.”

Though the battery’s deployment is coming to an end, these artillerymen said they will stay focused until they are on the plane home. They said it’s been a hard deployment at times but a successful one.

“This is an unbelievable experience that I’ve gotten to work with the Soldiers in this platoon and in our battery,” said O’Keefe. “We’ve had all different kinds of missions thrown at us and been given the opportunity to prove what we can do and how good we are at our jobs.”

“We have proven that artillery still has a significant position in modern military battlefield,” he continued. “My Soldiers have risen to the occasion every time and it’s completely humbling to be in charge of guys like this.”

O’Keefe smiled and spoke confidently about his Soldiers and how proud he is of them.

“I am absolutely proud of my guys,” said O’Keefe. “The unit before us shot 1,000 rounds in the same location we quadrupled that [amount of rounds fired].”

I’m very proud of that and the fact that my guys have been able to handle everything thrown at them.”



(Photo by Sgt. Patrick Lair, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

### Food for Thought

Residents of Bob ab-Durib, a village outside Baqouba, Iraq, unload cases of bottled water in preparation for a humanitarian aid distribution Sept. 27. U.S. Army Soldiers from C. Company, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, hauled more than 10,000 kilograms of rice, flour, bottled water and cooking oil to the village to be handed out by Iraqi Army soldiers.



...It's everyone's responsibility

# "The Longest Year"

## Cav Soldiers' Deployment Finally Comes to a Close

By Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner  
15th SB Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – In cavalry terms, they are almost close enough to let the horses smell the barns. For Fort Hood Soldiers from the 15th Sustainment Brigade, the 15 months of riding the trails, literally, of Iraq is at an end.

Having left Central Texas in August 2006, 'Wagonmaster' troops will be the first forces of the 1st Cavalry Division to return from what some have dubbed "the longest year".

As the largest brigade element in the Multi-National Division-Baghdad area, 15th SB provided support operations to 13 brigade combat teams and multiple corps level units totaling over 100,000 coalition forces.

"We're very proud of the fact that the biggest move of supplies in history was during WWII; known as the Red Ball Express," said Col. Aundre Piggee, commander, 15th SB. "We executed a Red Ball Express on a weekly basis; the number of supplies we pushed around Iraq."

The deployment marked numerous his-

torical firsts for the 15th SB.

Transformed under the Army's modularization plan just prior to deployment, the brigade assumed command of over 4,200 active duty, reserve and National Guard troops from the United States, Puerto Rico and Germany; spread over the southern two-thirds of Iraq.

Piggee is quick to point out, that of the additional 30,000+ Soldiers brought to Iraq since January 2007 as part of the surge, the majority of which the 15th SB supports, his brigade received no additional logistical troops.

"We've been able to provide that support without any degradation to combat forces," he said.

As the center of logistical gravity, 15th SB Soldiers measured mission success in numbers followed by lots of zeros. 'Wagonmaster' troops logged over 4.3 million miles over the most dangerous roads in the world.

Heavy equipment transporters provided almost 17,000 concrete barriers to the 30 joint security stations and combat outposts in and around the Baghdad area. 15th SB tankers delivered enough fuel to turn the Houston Astrodome into a high octane aquarium; more than 190 million gallons.

"I don't think there is any other situation that can compare (to the 15th SB's) support situation," said Maj. Jeff Foster, support operations officer for the 15th SB.

With MND-B being called the largest division size element ever assembled, he said, essentially, the brigade supports a traditional corps or larger element.

The key, Foster explained, was the 15th SB's distribution capabilities. By constantly pushing supplies to combat forces, brigade logistical planners could ensure units always had five to ten days on hand.

"We were able distribute supplies throughout the (area of operations) in a way that anticipated requirements versus reacting to them," he said.

That mindset transferred itself to other 15th SB operations.

The brigade maintenance staff oversaw and coordinated the installation of over 10,000 vehicle up-armor enhancement kits to high mobility, multi-wheeled vehicles; saving countless lives from improvised explosive devices and insurgent attacks.

Soldiers worked around the clock shifts adding re-enforced steel, ballistic glass and improved, motorized gun turrets for coalition combat troops.

"This was the first time that (15th SB) maintenance Soldiers got to step forward in a life saving way for the maneuver units," said Maj. Tom Cunningham, support operations maintenance officer for the 15th SB. "Vehicle armor enhancements, especially the latest improvements, became the modifications that allowed the brigade maintenance troops to step into their own."

Col. Piggee and the Soldiers of the

15th SB now hand the reigns over to the 1st Sustainment Brigade, out of Fort Riley, Kan. As they brush off Iraqi dust and dirt from the last 15 months, the mission now is to reunite with loved ones on Fort Hood's

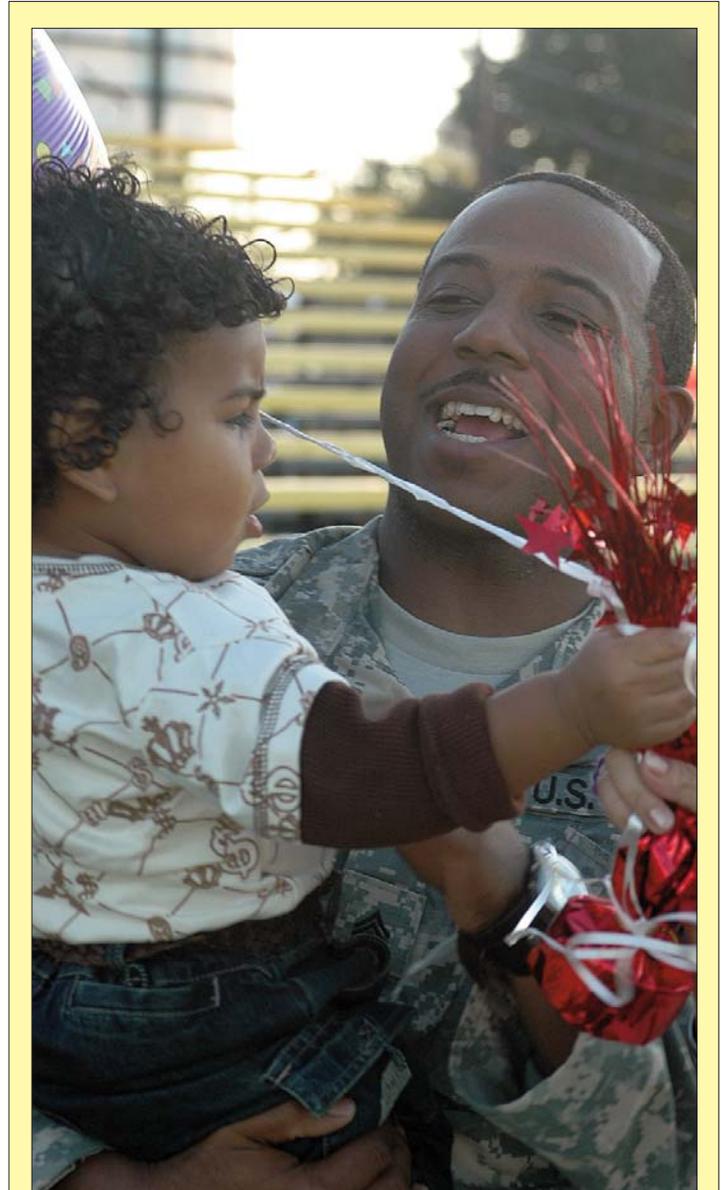
Coopers Field.

He added that when history looks back to this place and time, 'Wagonmaster' troops can confidently attest that they did 'Support the Action.'



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner, 15th SB PA)

Sgt. Justin Garza, 15th Brigade Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, waits for his final flight out of Camp Taji, Iraq, Oct. 13. The Harker Heights, Texas native spent 15 months deployed with the 'Wagonmasters'; three months longer than the brigade anticipated. Garza and fellow 15th SB Soldiers are some of the first 1st Cavalry Division troops to return to Fort Hood from Iraq.



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Strain, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

### Worth the Wait

Sgt. Jeremiah Shakir, a New York native and an electrical technician with Company A, Brigade Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, holds his nearly 2-year-old son Jeremiah Shakir Jr., after returning to Fort Hood from his deployment to Iraq Oct. 18.

# Quick Reaction Helps Pilots Thwart Attack

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – For the past year, Apache pilots from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade have conducted countless reconnaissance missions in search of roadside bombs and mortar systems aimed toward forward operating bases or Iraqi neighborhoods.

Four pilots from 1st “Attack” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division, were flying just such a mission when they happened upon up to 20 insurgents armed with rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers and manning four anti-aircraft gun trucks Sept. 29.

Three short seconds after the pilots spotted the gun trucks, they were under fire.

“From the time that I first saw them first and could get (a visual) on them was probably three seconds until we were passing by. It was a pretty quick amount of time until we got into the actual getting engaged,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Terry Eldridge, pilot in command for the lead aircraft, who calls Killeen, Texas, home. “As soon as we passed, I kind of veered off to one side, and they started tracking us with the guns from the back of the trucks. As soon as they got where we were inside their range, effectively for their shots, they started shooting – so, about the time it takes to swing a turret, in this case a gun on a tripod mount.”

“It was pretty much instantaneous,” added Capt. Thomas Loux, air mission commander for the mission. “We saw them as they opened fire.”

Eldridge said that, in that short amount of time, he thought less about himself and his aircraft than of his wingman aircraft, which was about to fly into the same situation. He radioed Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kyle Kittleson, pilot in command of the trail aircraft.

“I came on the radio talking to (Kittleson) ... to try to get him focused on where he was at, because he was coming along behind me. As quickly as possible, I tried to get the helicopter oriented back on the area where we were taking fire from and try to get some suppressive fire out to decrease the amount of effective fires they had on us.”

Meanwhile, Loux was talking on another radio to the ground unit from 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div. to alert them of the situation and see if any back-up aircraft were in the area.

“We had ... a sister team from another company working pretty much the same area south of us,” said Loux, a native of Fort Myers, Fla. “I heard them checking out on the ground net. When I heard them, I called them to get them in the area. We weren’t too sure on how this was going to go. We saw multiple machine guns, and they pretty much had a bead on us.”

Eldridge and Loux had already taken fire and were turning back in to engage the insurgents before Kittleson and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cole Moughon flew into the area.

“As soon as he starts taking fire ... and basically (returned) back to target, we were coming inbound,” said Kittleson, a Copperas Cove, Texas, native. “We suppressed one of the gun trucks with 30 millimeter (rounds) and rockets. On the second pass, Cole took a round in the canopy above his head.

We coordinated our turns inbound-outbound between the two aircraft.”

Seemingly surprised by the Apache pilots’ quick reaction, the insurgents scattered.

“They were initially gathered there in the road,” Kittleson said. “As soon as Terry put his suppressive fire rockets down, they started dispersing. (They) had a guy in one of the gun trucks still firing, but, as we came around and suppressed with 30 (millimeter) and more rockets, they all pretty much scattered into the building like little

cockroaches.”

Although they fled the open area at the four-way intersection, the insurgents continued to fire on the two Apaches once they found cover in nearby buildings.

“Pretty much every person out there had a weapon of varying degrees,” Eldridge said. “For the first seven to ten minutes, somebody was shooting at us the whole time. We established a pretty on-the-fly dynamic plan. We put together the best attack angles that we could at the time to keep each other covered. That was ... the primary intent – to keep their heads down, get effective fires on the enemy and keep each other protected.”

The four continued to engage the insurgents while the sister Apache team that had arrived a few minutes into the fight remained at a higher altitude to prevent having too many aircraft in the area.

“We were trying to get them into the fight, but, from what they said, we were kind of all over the place looking like angry bees,” Loux said. “They didn’t want to get into the area and cause a mid-air (collision) while we were trying to engage the enemy.”

By the time the Apache team was out of ammo, up to 15 of the insurgents were dead and the gun trucks were disabled. They handed off the targets to their sister Apache team to further engage the vehicles and destroy them, Loux said.

The entire engagement lasted less than 15 minutes, although it seemed longer, Loux said.

“Perceived, it seemed like forever,” Loux said. “I thought it was at least a half hour, but when we looked at the tape, it was only half that.”

Even several days after the engagement, when the pilots participated in a battalion after-action review, Moughon said he could remember the flashes of the insurgents’ weapons.

“You see that flash, and it scares you, especially when you start taking rounds off the cockpit,” said Moughon, a native of Gray, Ga. “Then, you think about your buddies – the guy flying with you and the two guys that are flying with them in the other aircraft. You think: ‘We’ve got to take

*“You see that flash, and it scares you, especially when you start taking rounds off the cockpit. Then, you think about your buddies.”*

- Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cole Moughon

care of this.”

The crews credit their success in the engagement to communication with each other and the ground unit and their experience as a team.

“This particular team has been operating together for a couple of months now,” Loux said. “It definitely helps that we’re real familiar with how each other works. Everything kind of kicked in at once. We all started doing what we needed to do, because we knew what the other person was going to do. It wasn’t something that we had to always consciously talk about.”

But the intensity of the fight and the numbers of armed insurgents gathered in one place added up to more than these crews had seen during their 12 months in Iraq on this deployment.

“This is my third rotation over here,” Eldridge said. “I had seen other firefights when we were down in Sadr City ... during OIF II. I will say this is probably one of the more intense firefights that we’ve seen this rotation. We personally have not seen a whole lot of consolidated fire of that magnitude.”

Although the crews’ quick reactions were integral in their survival, they said they can’t take all of the credit.

“(We) would not have been at the right place at the right time – or wrong time, whichever way you look at it – had it not been for our crew chiefs being on the ball. From the guys that we talked to that morning to the crew chiefs, it was a team effort and turned out in our favor.”



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

(Left to right) Chief Warrant Officer 3 Terry Eldridge, Capt. Thomas Loux, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cole Moughon and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kyle Kittleson pose in front of an AH-64D Apache. The four pilots from 1st “Attack” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, reacted quickly when they came upon four anti-aircraft gun trucks and 20 heavily armed insurgents on Sept. 29.



(Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Daniel McClinton, 1st ACB)

## Watchful Eyes Stare Down on Baghdad

An AH-64D Apache from Company B, 1st "Attack" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, flies over a residential area in the Multi-National Division-Baghdad area Oct. 12. The Apache crew was conducting a reconnaissance mission.

## Buddy System: Pilots Serve in Same Units Since Basic Training

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – When Zachary Johnson and Eric Dillman first met seven years ago at a selection board for Army pilot candidates, they had no idea they would spend the first decade of their Army careers in tandem.

"I took a look at him there and thought: 'He'll never get picked up,'" said Johnson, a native of Palouse, Wash. "He was looking at me going: 'Man, he'll never get picked up.'"

Two months later, Johnson and Dillman – now chief warrant officers three and AH-64D Apache pilots with the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade – were headed to Basic Training at Fort Jackson, S.C., in the Army's High School to Flight School Program.

Coincidentally, they were in the same platoon at Basic. From there, it seemed less like coincidence and more like fate. The two were roommates at flight school and then stationed together in the 1st Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, in Germany and in Company B, 4th "Guns" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division.

They also have deployed together to Iraq twice and will both go to Fort Rucker, Ala., after they redeploy, to be instructor pilots.

While it would seem that being stationed together for so many years could cause some friction, they said they can sense when it's best to give each other some space.

"We usually leave each other alone; we can tell when the other is agitated," said Dillman, a native of Olympia, Wash.

They have reached a level of communication where they often finish each other's sentences. That's an asset for pilots on the same team who sometimes have to make split-second decisions that affect their sister aircraft.

"We can go out there, and we'll probably talk a lot less than a lot of other teams do," Dillman said. "That's a good thing and a bad thing in itself."

"The bad thing being that if you do get new people – we know what we're going to do without even talking about it, and the (other pilots) can be left out of the loop," Johnson added.

Their closeness has also led them to progress more quickly in their careers than they may have had they been fly-



(U.S. Army photo)

**Chief warrant officers 3 Eric Dillman (left) and Zachary Johnson are assigned to Company B, 4th "Guns" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. The two have been assigned to the same units since Basic Training.**

ing solo.

"There was always competition between friends to make you sharper," Johnson said. "We always challenge each other – rip on each other when we do something stupid. When it's coming from a friend, you can take it a little more lightheartedly."

The two said they cherish the friendships they have made on their current deployment, and talked about the low point of the deployment.

"We suffered a loss in the company early on in the deployment," said Dillman. "That was definitely the low point for the company. You could just tell how everybody changed."

That incident happened in Najaf in January, when 4-227th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion lost two pilots – Capt. Mark Resh and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Cornell Chao. Johnson's actions during the firefight were highlighted during a press briefing by Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, the Multi-National Corps-Iraq commanding general.

"I want to pause and recognize one of our heroes, Chief

Warrant Officer 2 Zachary Johnson," Odierno said during the Pentagon press briefing in April. "You might remember earlier in the year that extremists attempted to seize the city of Najaf and kill several of the major clerics within Iraq. The Iraqi army fought valiantly and called for air support from Coalition Forces.

"Among them was Chief Johnson, who led his crew to attack and destroy enemy air defense systems despite the risks of daytime operations. Disregarding his own safety during this action where a fellow Apache crew had already been shot down, he expended all of his ammunition on enemy positions. He then flew back, rearmed and immediately rejoined the fight. His undaunted courage in the hostile skies north of Najaf contributed to the success of the Iraqi security forces and Multi-National Division-Baghdad that day. The complexity of this mission demanded the highest level of leadership as well as technical and tactical skill, which he delivered for all his fellow Soldiers and teammates."

The two have watched each other's backs since day one, but Johnson joked that he has more incentive to watch over his buddy now, since Dillman got married about two years ago.

"It's a professional thing; you do it because that's your job," Johnson said. "We're friends with everybody in the company; I don't want to see anybody ever get hurt. It makes it a little more personal. I know his wife would kill me if something happened to him."

But it was Dillman watching out for Johnson in July, disregarding his own safety to swoop in and retrieve Johnson and his fellow pilot when their Apache was forced to land during a mission in Baghdad.

The two recovered pilots rode back to Camp Taji on the wings of Dillman's Apache.

Dillman said he would do the same thing for any of the pilots in his company – whom he considers his brothers – but the fact that it was his daughter's godfather and his own best friend made it even more personal.

"I guess that's one of those things where, you would do it for any pilot, but, because it was him, I was a little more eager to get down there and get him."

Besides, what fun would Fort Rucker be for Dillman without his wingman?

# Babysitting Ben

## “Saber” Medic Fills in as Father-figure for Lost Iraqi Boy

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

BAGHDAD – Spc. Tyler Ratliff watches the boy dart around the room in a perpetual blur of motion, and wonders where he gets the energy. Ratliff has bags under his eyes. He hasn't slept more than a few hours in days. But the boy is still bouncing off the walls like most eight-year-old children on a sugar fix.

“Ben, don't touch that!” Ratliff shouts as the boy begins tinkering with an expensive digital camera. The boy puts the camera down and moves on, looking for some other mischief to get into. Ratliff just shakes his head.

It's a scene that wouldn't be out of place at any playground or day care center in the U.S. What's remarkable is that it was happening at a small security base in the heart of Baghdad.

For the past week, Ratliff, a medic with Headquarters Troop, 3rd “Saber” Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, based at the Adhamiyah Joint Security Station in eastern Baghdad, has been acting as the primary guardian for an eight-year-old autistic Iraqi boy named Ben, and learning the hard way something parents all over the world know – caring for a child can be exhausting.

For Ratliff, it all began on the night of Oct. 1, when an Iraqi Police patrol came across the boy wandering alone through the streets in a deserted, industrial section of Adhamiyah. He had no identification, and didn't respond to questions about who he was, where he was from, or even what his name was. The police, worried for the boy's safety and at a loss as to what to do with him, decided to bring him to the district police station, which is located in the same building as the JSS.

When Capt. William Chastain, a Kennesaw, Ga. native who commands the U.S. forces at the JSS, saw the boy, he was concerned. The boy was dirty and thin, and there was no way to know how long he had been out on the streets by himself. Chastain told Ratliff to give the boy – who by then had acquired the nickname ‘Ben’ – a thorough medical screening.

Up to that point, Ben had been so silent and unresponsive that the police officers thought he was mute or even brain damaged, but for some reason, he seemed to form an instant connection with Ratliff. Later that night, Ratliff fed him, gave



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

Baytown, Texas native Spc. Tyler Ratliff, a medic with Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Stewart, Ga., holds an autistic Iraqi boy nicknamed Ben in his arms at the Adhamiyah Joint Security Station Oct. 7.



(U.S. Army photo)

Morse, La., native Spc. Howard Leleux (left) and Baytown, Texas native Spc. Tyler Ratliff (right), both from Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Stewart, Ga., play with eight-year-old “Ben,” an autistic Iraqi boy the Soldiers have temporarily adopted, at the Adhamiyah Joint Security Station Oct. 7. The Soldiers have been looking after Ben, who was found wandering the streets alone by Iraqi police Oct. 2, while authorities attempt to locate his parents.

him a bath, and dressed him in clean clothes.

Since then, the boy has rarely left Ratliff's sight.

“I've basically just been babysitting him,” said Ratliff, who hails from Baytown, Texas.

Ratliff helps Ben get dressed in the mornings and makes sure he eats. He has shown him how to brush his hair and wash his hands.

During the day, he keeps him entertained with soccer games and balloon animals made from surgical gloves. Mostly, Ratliff keeps an eye on Ben and tries to stop him from causing too much eight-year-old mischief.

Under Ratliff's care, Ben has started to come out of the shell he was in from being alone on the streets. Though the boy mainly communicates in a strange language of high-pitched yips and yaps, Ratliff has gotten him to the point where he can ask for food and water.

“The first night he was here, he didn't speak a word, but he is a lot more vocal now,” Ratliff said.

It's been a challenge for Ratliff to keep up with Ben, who, despite his handicaps, is a pint-sized bundle of energy. Looking after him has turned into a full-time job.

“He'll sleep for two or three hours at a time. Then he wakes up and tries to make a break for it,” he said.

While Ratliff has been watching after Ben, the Iraqi Police have been attempting to locate his real family. The police commander, Maj. Nadham, distributed the boy's picture to police officers in the area where he was found. The Iraqi Police (IPs) have been showing the photo to people every day, hoping someone might recognize him or give them a clue to his identity.

There is also the unfortunate possibility that Ben may have been abandoned, and his family doesn't want him back. With that in mind, the JSS leadership is working with Iraqi government officials to locate an orphanage that can support the boy's special needs. Chastain said he will probably hear an answer in a matter of days.

In the meantime, Ben has become a fixture at the JSS. On

**“It's a big morale boost, honestly. I have a six-year-old of my own and some of the things (Ben) does reminds me of him.”**

**- Spc. Howard Leleux**

a recent afternoon, the boy was spinning stones on a folding table outside, giving a friendly yelp to each Soldier who came through the door and fending off Ratliff's attempts to feed him an orange.

He was dressed in a surgical smock that hung down to his knees and hugely oversized tennis shoes. Ratliff genially chased after him as he ducked through the legs of Soldiers waiting in line for chow, and bounced into the arms of other Soldiers coming in from guard duty.

For Soldiers like Morse, La., native Spc. Howard Leleux, having Ben around has been a welcome change of pace.

“It's a big morale boost, honestly,” Leleux said. “I have a six-year-old of my own and some of the things (Ben) does reminds me of him.”

Chastain joked that Ben's presence has turned the JSS into a day care center, but said he was impressed with how Ratliff has assumed responsibility for Ben's welfare.

“Ratliff's done a great job,” he said. “He's shown a lot of maturity.”

Ratliff, who has no children of his own, said the experience has given him a whole new perspective on how difficult the job of caring for a child can be.

“I really appreciate my Mom a lot more now,” he said with a weary chuckle.



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

## Always Ready to React

Spartanburg, S.C., native Spc. Raymond Prince of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, uses a parked car as cover while pulling security while out on patrol with his platoon in eastern Baghdad's Sha'ab neighborhood Sept. 30.

# Iraqis Clear Hurdles Toward Becoming Policemen

## Police Process

From Page 3

have to improve the security forces, and these men are stepping up to do that," said 1st Lt. William Bass, a fire support officer with Troop C, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. Bass and other Soldiers from the 3-7 Cav were supporting the Iraqi Police during the selection process at COP Apache.

Men who wanted to take advantage of the opportunity began arriving at the COP early in the morning on Oct. 8. They had a long day ahead of them consisting of in-processing, a background check, a formal interview, a medical exam, and a PT test including push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups, a 150-meter dash, and a 1,500-meter run. Any applicant who failed at any station would not be selected.

"Only the strong will survive this process," Bass said. "Our goal is to get the best caliber men to protect Adhamiyah."

Detroit native, Sgt. 1st Class Derrick Talley, a platoon sergeant with Troop C, said the responsibilities of the police force are too important to leave to unqualified men.

"You can't just throw anybody out on the streets," Talley said. "We want to put the right people with the right stuff in the right



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

**Eastman, Ga., native, Staff Sgt. Edrese Johnson, of Troop C, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, races a barefoot Salmak Said Mohammed, an aspiring police recruit, at Coalition Outpost Apache Oct. 8. Johnson won the race.**

places."

Applicants who made the cut will eventually get slots at the Rusafa police academy.

After graduating from the academy, they will return to Adhamiyah to police the

streets, said Richmond Hill, Ga., native, 2nd Lt. Russell Smith, a platoon leader with the 108th Military Police Company who works as an advisor to the police force in Adhamiyah.

Smith said he believes the influx of

new police officers in the neighborhood will have a positive effect on security.

"It's going to put police in places they haven't been before, and hopefully put some more pressure on the insurgents," Smith said.

The fact that many of the new police officers will be people from the neighborhood should also make a difference, said Bass.

"There's a feeling in the community that outsiders don't care about Adhamiyah, so with these people being recruited from their home and coming back to protect their home, they have more of an interest," he said.

That was the case for Salmak, who said his knowledge of the area would come in handy when he became a police officer.

"I know all the people in my neighborhood, so I know who belongs there and who doesn't," he said.

At the end of the day, Salmak knew he had made it to the next level. He knew he had a long process ahead of him to become a full-fledged police officer, but he was feeling confident.

"This is the best way for me to protect my area and my family," he said. "I have to succeed."



(Left) Three policemen with the 5th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division, practice searching techniques during a training exercise conducted by the 5-2 National Police Transition Team while at the National Police Academy in Numaniyah Oct. 10.



(Above) Iraqi policemen from the National Police Academy practice searching procedures under the supervision of a 1st Class J Team, shows Iraqi soldiers p

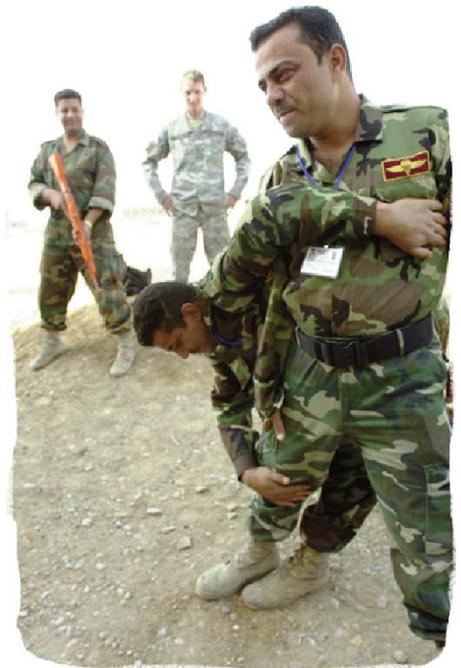


(Background) Policemen from the 5th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division practice cordon techniques and maintain security during a training exercise at the National Police Academy in Numaniyah, Iraq, Oct. 9.





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



the 5th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division, practice weapon-handling drills during a month-long stay at in Numaniyah, Iraq, Oct. 9. (Right) Three policemen with the 5th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division, practice under the watchful eye of their instructor, Staff Sgt. Josh Hammerstone, a Secaucus, N.J., native with the 2nd National Police Transition Team, during a training exercise at the National Police Academy in Numaniyah, Iraq, Oct. 10. (Bottom Left) Staff Sgt. John Bennett Sr., a Claymont, Del., native with the 1st Battalion, 5th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Transition Team, practices proper room-clearing techniques at the National Police Academy Oct. 10.

## Iraqi Police Officers Train Up in Numaniyah

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

NUMANIYAH, Iraq – Imagine you have just graduated high school. You decide to become a policeman and serve your community. Within days, you are given a uniform and tasked to patrol some of the deadliest streets in the world – without any training whatsoever.

In order to give policemen on the streets of Baghdad an edge against terrorists determined to tear neighborhoods apart, the 5th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, has begun training on several topics that their leadership hopes will make them better both professionally and tactically.

At the National Police Academy in Numaniyah, the policemen have begun their regiment of training that involves dozens of different classes designed specifically for their needs while keeping Baghdad safe.

Roughly a third of the 1,800 policemen who came to the academy started the course outside on the streets of a makeshift city.

Broken down into smaller groups again, the policemen were given hands-on instruction by members of the 5-2 National Police Transition Team proper room-clearing procedures, basic medical training and traffic control standards.

Secaucus, N.J., native, Staff Sgt. Josh Hammerstone, said that many of the policemen attending his sub-course of the traffic control class have already been manning control points and searching vehicles and people while on duty in Baghdad.

“It’s a different point of view on how to do something these guys have been doing right all along,” said Hammerstone.

Although much of the traffic course was con-

*“At first, we were scared to leave our families in Baghdad, but now that we are here in Numaniyah, we feel proud to be doing this for our families and our country.”*

- An Iraqi Policeman

sidered a refresher for policemen without the hustle and bustle of packed streets of the Iraqi capital, they still showed their motivation and appreciation for the training.

“The Soldiers teach us in ways we can understand,” said one policeman. “At first, we were scared to leave our families in Baghdad, but now that we are here in Numaniyah, we feel proud to be doing this for our families and our country.”

“This training can only make us better policemen,” he added.

Becoming better has been the goal of the brigade’s commander, Brig. Gen. Baha. He spearheaded the idea to bring his police force to the training compound to get them away from the threats they worry about on the streets so they could better focus on their professional development.

“It is much easier to focus here,” said one policeman during the traffic course. “We get a full-night’s rest and don’t have to worry about bombs or snipers.”

Just down the dusty road from the traffic control point constructed from cones and tape, the transition teams’ medics were giving classes on the basics of first aid to the attentive class of policemen.

How to carry a casualty, bandaging tech-

niques and splinting were being taught in an interesting fashion. First, the Soldiers teaching the class would walk the policemen through the proper procedures, then after smaller groups were allowed to practice on each other, the Shurtah (Arabic for policemen) were put to the test with a platoon-on-platoon race to see who could come out on top while maintaining the standards.

Two policemen would carry one of their “wounded” comrades to a station where placing a bandage on the wound properly was the primary task.

Three tasks in all were timed and graded to see who came out on top.

“These guys get really excited when you make a competition out of something,” said Madison, Wis., native, Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Ethington.

After the group of policemen gets done with the six-day rotation through the training lanes outdoors, they will continue to train indoors with classes on ethics, evidence collection and many others taught in a more conventional classroom-style of training.

This is when several hundred more will rotate out of the classroom and into the ghost town to begin their tactical training with their transition team counterparts.





(Photos by Sgt. Mark B. Matthews, 27th Public Affairs Detachment)

Soldiers in Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, begin clearing a street in the East Rashid district of Baghdad, October 11.



Palmer, Alaska native Staff Sgt. Brandon Kramer, a squad leader with Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, uses all means necessary to enter an abandoned house to clear it of any possible weapons or explosives during clearing operations in the East Rashid District of Baghdad, Oct 11.

## Stryker Troops Clear East Rashid, Rid Neighborhoods of Dangers

By Sgt. Mark B. Matthews  
27th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The sun begins to peak over the Baghdad horizon as the Soldiers slowly creep into the neighborhood. All of their weapons are loaded and all of their minds are focused on the day's objective. Everything is eerily quiet and not a soul is seen on the trash-ridden streets, but they still keep a close watch on every corner, window and rooftop.

Soldiers with the Ghost Rider Company, 3rd Squadron "Wolf Pack," 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, conducted clearing operations in neighborhoods of the East Rashid District in Baghdad, Oct 11.

The purpose of the operations were to clear the area of al-Qaida forces in the area, search for bombs and bomb-making materials, uncover weapons caches and counteract any improvised explosive devices.

"We have been taking out one of the last al-Qaida enclaves and basically clearing the area, which is going home-to-home and street-to-street and trying to get rid of all the weapon caches and al-Qaida members in the area," said 1st Lt. Jonathan Peterson, from Tacoma, Wash., a platoon leader with the Ghost Riders.

"The biggest initial challenge is getting a foothold in the area so we can begin talking with the people to get intelligence on where IEDs and al-Qaida members are,"

Peterson added.

Upon arriving to an area the Soldiers begin searching houses. This is done one street at a time while one unit provides over watch security and another searches houses. Many times houses needing to be searched are abandoned. More precautions must be taken in order to safely enter the homes.

Ghost Rider Company is not alone during these clearing missions. They have the support of other companies in the regiment, explosive detection dogs and explosive ordnance disposal teams who assist in detecting IEDs and house-borne explosive devices before they become deadly.

Soldiers said operations are proving to be going very well in East Rashid. When operations first began in the area, Soldiers in the unit were receiving gun fire everyday. Now, they go days without seeing any, Peterson said.

Aside from securing the area, this mission has been a learning experience for many of the Soldiers, and they are able to pass what they have learned to help other units with similar missions be successful.

"When we first got into sector, the procedure of clearing a house was to get in quickly, clear the home of any explosives and disable any weapons. Now, due to the threat of (house-borne explosive devices), we use many more precautions," said Spe. Dustin Cason, a Longview, Texas native and squad

designated marksmen for Ghost Rider's 1st Platoon. "We were one of the first to counteract house born explosive devices."

As the Soldiers continue to clear and make more and more areas of East Rashid safe for residents, they hope more and more people will begin giving information to Coalition Forces. This information can then be used not only to provide better security in the area, saving U.S. and Iraqi lives.

Operations in the East Rashid District have proved to be successful, but not without loss. However, Soldiers of Ghost Rider Company continue to face the streets of Baghdad every day with a 'mission first' mind set.

"We are all trained professionals who know how to react to certain things," Cason said. "It's difficult to lose a Soldier, but when you're out there you can't play the revenge game. The man to your left and right are who you look out for, and not personal vendettas."

The Ghost Riders, whose home base is in Vilseck, Germany, have only been in country since September, but they have already made great strides in providing stability and security to East Rashid, Peterson said.

"We have a lot of great Soldiers here who love the tough missions. They live for them," Peterson said. "All of the Soldiers want to be the tip of the spear and serve their country in the best way they know how."



(Photo by Spc. Shejal Pulivarti, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

## “Hell” Fighters Combat Tested

Capt. Timothy Gatlin, commander of Battery C, Fires “Hell” Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, places the combat patch on one of his Soldiers during a ceremony at Camp Taji, Iraq Oct. 14. The Houston native, along with Apai, Samoa native 1st Sgt. Peni Sua, the battery’s top noncommissioned officer, congratulated each Soldier in their battery. The ceremony was held to award the deployed Soldiers their combat patches after completing 30 days in the combat zone.

# Stryker Soldiers Provide East Rashid with Safety

By Maj. Steven Lamb  
MND-B Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Troops from the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment discovered several improvised explosive devices during clearing operations in the East Rashid District of the Iraqi capital Oct 8.

The eastern Baghdad operations are aimed at clearing out the al-Qaeda in Iraq presence in the area.

Troops from Company H “Hawks” of 3rd Squadron, 2nd SCR found a command-wired 82mm mortar IED and a deep-buried IED in their sector, while the Company G “Ghost Riders” reported one IED exploding in their sector. There was no damage or casualties reported from that blast.

The Ghost Riders also discovered a building rigged to explode. The IED detonated without causing any casualties and damaging only the building where it was found.

The 3-2nd SCR’s “Iron” Company received a tip that there was an IED alongside a road in their sector; an explosive ordnance disposal team robot approached the

IED and it detonated. There were no casualties or damage from the blast.

Several small weapons caches were also discovered during clearing operations in eastern Baghdad, including a shotgun, and 9mm pistol, two rocket-propelled grenade launchers and more than 250 rounds of small arms ammunition. Also found were five Iraqi Army uniforms, brass knuckles, two knives and various bomb-making materials.

“The bottom line, al-Qaeda isn’t welcome in East Rashid,” said Maj. Scott Pendell, a spokesperson for the 2nd SCR. “They won’t find a place to hide here.”

In early afternoon, Iron Company came under small arms fire while conducting combat operations in the area. An Apache air weapons team from Multi-National Division – Baghdad’s 1st Air Cavalry Brigade came on station to assist the unit.

The Apaches fired one Hellfire missile into a building where the small arms fire was originating. The small arms fire attack stopped.

There was no collateral damage reported in from this event.

**First Team  
POWER THOUGHT**

**“I CAN SAVE MY OWN LIFE”**

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**  
I am responsible for my own safety both on and off post.

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?**  
Because I AM important, my friends and family love me,  
My unit needs me, and my nation is depending on me.

**YOUR EAGLE CASH CARD**

**DON'T LEAVE YOUR TRAILER WITHOUT IT!**

# Human Terrain Team Filling Key Role

By Staff Sgt. W. Wayne Marlow  
2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Omar Altalib was a year old when he moved from Mosul, Iraq, to the Midwest. Now, he is back in his native country, armed with a social sciences Ph.D., and part of human terrain team for the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

The team advises brigade Soldiers, usually leaders, on how Iraqis think and operate, to give U.S. forces a better understanding of how to act with residents. Besides Altalib, the other team members are 1st Lt. Steve Albeita of Isleta Pueblo, N.M. and Master Sgt. Richard Howard of Orange, Texas. Albeita has a master's in public health, while Howard has a criminal justice background.

Altalib said his family expressed concerns about his return to Iraq, but still encouraged him.

"They're excited about me using my background in social sciences to create a better situation in Iraq," he said. "They're very supportive of me."

Terrain team members advise 2nd IBCT Soldiers on a wide array of topics, from economics to religion. The latter has proven especially important.

"Many Americans are used to ignoring religion," Howard said. "Here, that doesn't work."

The team breaks down the complexities of Islam and explains it to brigade leaders so that knowledge can be useful in forging U.S.-Iraqi cooperation.

"The biggest thing for us is breaking down Western cultural bias," Howard said. "We're trying to come up with innovative ways of reconciliation."

"Everything comes with a bias," Albeita added. "And

not everybody can know everything, but we get the answers the brigade needs."

Albeita points out that dental care is mentioned in the Koran, and that this is one of the many elements of Islam and Arabic culture most people don't know about.

It is the human terrain team's role to present this information like this to brigade Soldiers if it is relevant to a mission.

"My role is the social structure, data collection, and analysis," Altalib said. "I learn what is on the mind of locals and present my findings to the brigade."

The far-reaching knowledge is especially important in eastern Baghdad, according to Howard, because in that area, he said, "You have a broad spectrum. It is a microcosm of Iraq."

Altalib noted that Iraqi suffering goes back decades, and that has to be taken into account.

"There's been a lot of trauma, so there's a lot of need," he said. "We try to get a better feel for what is influencing local communities...and how the government is servicing their needs."

While Altalib received encouragement from his family, some in his academic circles were less enthusiastic. But he said their concerns were unfounded.

"I recognize and respect the ethical boundaries of the social scientist," he said. "I have to remain within those boundaries. I'm not involved in intelligence or psychological operations. I'd like to make the world a better place...through better understanding."

"We fill the gap between civil affairs and public affairs," Albeita added. "A lot of people criticize this and say it's a bad program, that academics shouldn't be



(Photo by Staff Sgt. W. Wayne Marlow, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Omar Altalib (left), and 1st Lt. Steve Albeita, both members of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's human terrain team, analyze data that will be put into a report for brigade leaders. The human terrain team helps Soldiers to understand the Iraqis they work with better.

involved in this. But we want people here to get along. We're here to make a better understanding, to quell violence."

As such, the team, according to Altalib, "gathers information on the Iraqi population to help develop a stable Iraq. We recognize what mistakes have been made and make improvements."



(U.S. Army photo)

An Iraqi boy from the eastern Baghdad Rusafa District steps up to get his shoe size measured during a giveaway organized and executed by members of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Iraqi National Police Division Oct. 13. National Police officers handed out more than 150 pairs of shoes to area children in Rusafa.

## National Police Give Shoes to Youth

2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Youth in the Rusafa District of eastern Baghdad received more than 150 pairs of shoes from officers with the 3rd Battalion, 8th National Police Brigade Oct. 11.

The giveaway was part of the police brigade's ongoing effort to reach out to the community as a way of reducing sectarian tension and increasing security.

When the officers pulled up, anxious children quickly surrounded them and got in line to have their shoe sizes measured. While the children were being fitted, officers passed out leaflets to the parents. The leaflets explained the role of Iraqi Security Forces and laid out why it is important to defeat the insurgency.

1st Lt. Naem, the brigade's public affairs officer, said the giveaway a success, as it helped put a human face on the Iraqi Security Forces who patrol Rusafa daily.



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

## Above the Competition

Command Sgt. Maj. William Johnson (center), the senior noncommissioned officer for the 2nd "Strike Force" Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, based out of Fort Carson, Colo. stands with Spc. Joseph Hazel (left) and Sgt. John Valenzuela (right), the brigade's Soldier and NCO of the year, respectively. The Strike Force Brigade held the competition at Forward Operating Base Loyalty in eastern Baghdad Oct. 12. Hazel (left), a Soldier with Company A, 2nd Base Support Battalion and a native of Durham Conn., had previously won Soldier of the Month and Quarter boards. Valenzuela, from Manila, Philippines, won the NCO competition by beating out four other competitors. He is with the Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

# Troops Respond, Tackle Firefighting Training

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq — Soldiers face a myriad of threats and extreme circumstances in everyday operations in Iraq, but one thing they don't usually expect is the threat of a fire in their work or living space. On the forward operating base in eastern Baghdad, however, one group of Soldiers has begun learning to fight against the heat, destructive power and danger of fires on the FOB.

More than 20 Soldiers have volunteered to undergo a 10-week firefighting certification course to serve FOB Loyalty as the fire rescue team.

The Basic Firefighter and Hazardous Material Level One Course is taught to Soldiers from every unit on the FOB serving in the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

Capt. Justin P. Hurt, the chemical and force modernization officer for the brigade, is coordinating the course. Before joining the military, he was a professional firefighter for four-and-a-half years in Wisconsin. He also served as a paramedic and a police officer. He taught Firefighter Level I and II courses and hazardous material operations at a technical college to more than 300 fire candidates.

"It's about helping people out," Hurt said. "There is nothing quite like the expression on somebody's face when you get in, put out the fire and save someone's child or loved one."

Hurt, a native of Menomonee Falls, Wis., said the response for the course was overwhelming. He initially sought out 16 volunteers, but ended up with 23.

"It is somewhat of a rush, it's exhilarating," Hurt said. "You are going up against one of the most destructive forces in nature. I think that draws a lot of people."

The idea to create a fire department and certify a group of Soldiers stems from several fires that have occurred on the FOB.

"We really started looking at having

some kind of fire protection, or group, after the large U.S. Army Corps of Engineers electrical yard fire back in December," he said. "Since then we've had four other fires on the FOB that Soldiers have had to put out without any formal training."

The training the Soldiers are receiving through the course, comes from the doctrine of the International Fire Service Training Association, which is affiliated with Oklahoma State University and helps develop the standards for firefighting training in the United States, Hurt said.

Soldiers in the course will learn how to conduct search and rescue missions, use proper ventilation for a smoke-filled building, and put out fires with hoses and extinguishers. They will also cover pump operations, ladders, hydrants, sprinkler systems, HAZMAT and decontamination, dealing with fire related injuries, overhaul and salvage, and arson and fire investigation.

"I think they have really enjoyed what they have learned so far," Hurt said.

Hurt said the students listen to lectures and also carry out exercises, but also must pass tests and receive a passing performance evaluation to graduate.

Hurt's assistant instructors include Chief Petty Officer Jonathan D. Dupree, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and a former Navy firefighter; Capt. David DeBlasio, a surgeon from 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment; and Chief Warrant Officer 3 John L. Blanton, 2nd IBCT's aviation tactical operations officer, who will cover the aspects of extinguishing aviation fires.

Hurt is in the process of trying to acquire firefighting equipment such as the Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), a fire truck, and other equipment. Hurt is also working with Wackenhut Services, the group that runs the professional fire department on Victory Base Complex, to help with training.

"I am really looking forward to implementing this and hopefully we can get the firefighting equipment we need to protect the Soldiers and civilians on the FOB," he said.

Capt. William C. Holley Jr., a Fire



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

**Pfc. Justine-Tea Phelan, a native of Plymouth, Mass., and Pvt. Heaven L. Gallop, a native of Winston-Salem, N.C., both medics with 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, practice giving first aid to Capt. Daniel B. Dunn, the executive officer for HHC, 2nd IBCT and a native of Aurora, Colo., during a firefighter training exercise as part of the 10-week Basic Firefighter and Hazardous Material Level One Course at Forward Operating Base Loyalty.**

Inspection Officer with Wackenhut Services, has come to FOB Loyalty to help get the fire department running, and thinks the firefighting program enables Soldiers to be the first line of defense until a professional fire department is established.

Holley, of Fort Worth, Texas, has been a firefighter for 21 years and is a retired Air Force firefighter. For Holley, the thrill of firefighting is helping people.

"I love every aspect of it, but I really love the fact that when people are in trouble and need help, they call us to come and help out," he said. "My goal is, through fire prevention programs, to increase the public education on fire safety and eliminate the fire risk in the buildings."

The prevention programs will be offered to all base agencies, including military, Army and Air Force Exchange, Kellogg, Brown & Root employees and local nationals.

Holley said the Soldier firefighters are getting great training but once a fire department of professional firefighters is fielded they won't have to be the primary individuals to combat fires. However, their training will enable them to be prepared for and assist in fighting fires, and is knowledge they can take with them elsewhere.

"It is a critical resource that we didn't expect to need," said Lt. Col. Dean C. Dunham, the deputy commanding officer for 2nd IBCT. Dunham, a Cottonwood, Ariz. native, said the firefighting course adds to the capabilities the unit already has on hand.

Staff Sgt. Timothy C. Ullman, the Nuclear, Biological and Chemical noncommissioned officer and a native of Kearney, Neb., is skilled in using the SCBA and will be helping Hurt instruct the class on the proper usage of breathing equipment. The training the class offers, Ullman said is good and as realistic as can be without setting fire to a building.

The training will help Soldiers prepare for the real deal. During one fire, Capt.

Daniel B. Dunn, the executive officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd IBCT said, was at the interpreters' living quarters, and when he went in he found an interpreter lying on the floor unconscious. Dunn said the man had soot around his nose and mouth, which meant he had inhaled it.

He also knows first hand what it's like to be the victim of a fire since he lost everything when his room was engulfed by a fire several months ago.

"It's very important to get this program together so others wouldn't be affected," he said of the creation of the fire department. One appeal is the aspect of helping and protecting others, which Dunn said is something he takes to heart.

"It says a lot about people when they run into a building when everyone else is running out," he said.

Pfc. Justine-Tea Phelan, a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion and a native of Plymouth, Mass., said she volunteered for the course because it's an excellent training experience. She wanted to learn about firefighting and to help out on the FOB if any more fires occur.

During a recent search and rescue exercise, she and fellow medic, Pvt. Heaven L. Gallop, brought the victim out, played by Dunn, and went into their medical role and evaluated the casualty.

Gallop, a medic, is a native of Winston-Salem, N.C., said that the hands-on-training is the best part of the course because it enabled the students to apply what they learned in the classroom setting.

"I was the first volunteer," she said. Hurt spoke with Gallop at the aid station after a fire. "He mentioned (the program) and I wanted to join. It's another notch on my belt, like First Aid. You can go anywhere and do anything with it."

"Ultimately, it's about Soldiers helping and protecting other Soldiers," Hurt stated.



**A four-man search and rescue team goes in to save a simulated casualty during a training exercise for students in the 10-week Basic Firefighter and Hazardous Material Level One Course at Forward Operating Base Loyalty.**

# 'Bushmasters' Settle into East Baghdad Outpost

## Soldiers Embark Upon Life at Combat Outpost in Kamiliyah

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

KAMILIYAH, Iraq – “Welcome to EFP Airways,” Staff Sgt. Howard Weitzmann, the weapons squad leader with 1st Platoon, Company B “Bushmasters,” 2nd “Ranger” Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, said as the patrol left Forward Operating Base Rustamiyah in southeastern Baghdad.

The patrol would be heading into one of the roughest parts of the city, known for numerous explosively-formed penetrators targeting Coalition and Iraqi forces, to replace a platoon at Coalition Outpost Bushmaster.

Zigzagging through the bustling city avoiding traffic jams, the platoon was forced to come to a halt only once that trip – traffic outside the local Iraqi Police station was in gridlock as thousands of military-aged men awaited the chance to enter and apply for a job.

“Only about 50 or so will be chosen to go inside,” Weitzmann, the 32-year-old Patillion, Neb., native said as the throng of jobless men began rushing together like high school American boys eager to watch a fistfight.

About the same time, an American unit entered the IP compound and Weitzmann’s patrol began moving again.

Entering the small town of Kamiliyah, the patrol was welcomed by many children waving and giving “thumbs-up” signs as the lumbering humvees ambled their way through the narrow litter strewn streets slowly avoiding suspicious piles of debris and the omnipresent overflowing open-air sewage trenches.

Though the troops have been up and down these streets tens, if not hundreds, of times since May when they began manning the COP, the Iraqi children seemed to pay a keen interest in the Americans. At one point, a little girl and her sister passed the convoy multiple times as it halted briefly before beginning its journey.

### COP Bushmaster

Ultimately, the “EFP Airways” flight had been quiet and the sights of the smiling and cheerful children refreshing. The patrol entered COP Bushmaster with little fanfare except for the smiling faces of fellow Soldiers eager that 1st Platoon had come to relieve them.

Nestled near the town’s industrial complex, camouflage netting and concertina wire signals the quiet presence of the COP. Home to at least two platoons for almost a week at a time, the two-story building is the base of operations for the Bushmasters, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division operating in eastern Baghdad out of at Forward Operating Base Loyalty.

The unit’s parent brigade, the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley, Kan., is operating out of Forward Operating Base Falcon, in the Rashid District on the south side of the Iraqi capital.

A quiet complex, that has grown quieter yet since Moqtada Al-Sadr called for a six-month cease-fire in August, has the basic needs a Soldier could ask for with few exceptions.

There are hot meals twice a day, Internet access, telephones, satellite television, a full-sized gym with free weights and wrestling mats for the Soldiers to unwind after a mission outside the relative safety of the COP’s wire.

But, with all the modern amenities the COP has, the lone shower consists of a refillable bag attached to a low ceiling allowing a single Soldier a cramped chance to wash off a mission’s grime. Then there are the six wooden latrines, where the contents were pulled out in barrels and with a touch of diesel fuel put to the torch.

Despite conditions that make “Fobbits” cry foul, the Bushmasters to a man stoically agreed they would take COP-



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

**Staff Sgt. Lucas Horn, 23, an infantryman from Portland, Ore., assigned to Company B, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division based at Fort Riley, Kan., and attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Inf. Div., stands guard at the entrance to the Baghdad’s Kamiliyah Neighborhood Council Hall Oct. 11.**

life over FOB-life any day. In an era where there is no rear echelon, “Fobbits” are what Soldiers who routinely pound the Iraqi landscape call those who stay on the FOBs.

“It’s not that bad,” said Spc. Jonathan Turek, a gunner from Houston, slowly smoking a cigarette. “It could be a whole lot worse.”

The truck commander of his vehicle agreed.

“It’s much better than staying on the FOB and making that trip twice a day,” said Cpl. Jacob Price, an red-haired, boyish-looking 21-year-old from Eureka, Calif. The smoke from the duo’s cigarettes wafted into the air as they spoke a quiet resolve in their faces.

During the first months at the COP, the Bushmasters had to withstand triple-digit temperatures while their air conditioning and electric generators sputtered and died.

They said they lost at least ten AC units in the first month alone.

On Sept. 29, their platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class James Doster was killed by an improvised explosive device traveling the stretch of road the patrol had just traversed.

“We are rolling with the ball,” said Staff Sgt. Jose Vera, a 26-year-old infantryman from Philadelphia. “That is what Doster would want us to do. We are doing the same things as before.”

Though solemn in their resolve, the air is ripped apart with laughter around the same time each day. One of things that makes the Soldiers laugh heartily are the re-runs of America’s Funniest Home Videos shown on Saudi Arabian television.

With the laughter is the clanking of weights as the Bushmasters strengthen their sinews before their next mission.

### A meeting and a night’s rest

Soon the Bushmasters would be back on the streets making their presence known to those whom they are there to protect—the Iraqi people.

A few hours after its arrival, 1st Platoon was once again cautiously driving through town, this time to the Kamiliyah Neighborhood Council Hall where Capt. Jermaine Hampton was scheduled to meet with the council chairman about cur-

rent issues affecting the village.

“Looks like it will be a long meeting,” said 1st Lt. Edward Boland, 1st Platoon’s platoon leader as he stood guarding the front door of the bustling hall. Four sheiks in traditional dress had entered the complex, where locals arrive for everything from medical care to resolving business issues.

The troops had fanned out in their humvees outside the complex walls, while others went inside for added protection.

“There is a convoy approaching,” crackled a voice on Boland’s radio.

Boland said “Ranger 6,” or Lt. Col. Ralph Kauzlarich, the 2-16th’s commander was arriving for face-to-face talks with the sheiks.

Inside the large, well air-conditioned room on the second floor, Kauzlarich and Hampton sat across from the sheiks with the chairman sitting behind his desk under an Iraqi flag between the two as if a moderating a political debate.

After initial pleasantries, Kauzlarich told the sheiks bluntly, “We have captured these three individuals. They are bad men ... We have had numerous people tell us they were bad.”

The tribal elders listened intently and asked small questions, but to a man they nodded in agreement when Kauzlarich said a contractor scheduled to do work in the town was fired because he failed to work in a manner timely enough to help their people.

Downstairs, children, amused by the heavily-armed Americans, began to congregate at the gate straining to get a glimpse or even maybe a treat from the strangers.

Soon the meeting would end, and the sweat-drenched Soldiers were on their way back to their base for much needed rest and some hot chow.

As the sun began to sink into the dust on the horizon, the Soldiers found out why the meeting took as long as it did – there would be no night mission that evening, allowing the sheiks to maintain order over their people.

**(Note: This is part one of a two-part series on life at Coalition Outpost Bushmaster in Kamiliyah, Iraq.)**

## Dragons Bomb Terrorist Sites

4-1 Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division Baghdad forces launched an air strike into dense palm groves being used by terrorist forces as staging areas and safe havens in southern Baghdad Oct. 8.

The palm groves, located in a rural area along the western edge of the Tigris River in the East Rashid District, were believed to be actively used by anti-Coalition forces since 2005 to emplace roadside bombs, fire mortars and rockets against Iraqi and Coalition targets, and infiltrate weapons, materiel and personnel into Baghdad.

In recent weeks, the palm groves are believed to have been used to stage combined roadside bomb and small arms fire ambushes, using the dense foliage as concealment to move in and out of position in order to stage the attacks.

MND-B forces delivered multiple precision bombs from the air into the historic ambush sites and mortar/rocket launching points.

No casualties were reported as a result of these attacks.

“The successful strike reminds the terrorists once again that we know where they operate,” said Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, whose forces conducted the operation. “Should they continue to use the palm groves to launch attacks on our forces and innocent Iraqis, they do so at their own peril.”



(Photo by Maj. Kirk Luedeke, 4-1 Inf. Div. Public Affairs)



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



(Left) Spc. Gustavo Pena, a Bradley gunner was born and raised in Colombia until the age of 18, when he moved to the United States and now calls Miami home. (Middle) Spc. Daniel Montanez, a Bradley driver from New York, prepares for a mission at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad, Sept. 8. (Right) Spc. Oscar Tovar, a medic from Palm Springs, Calif., scans his sector on a mission in southern Baghdad's Rashid District, Sept. 8. All of them are with 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

# Security Detachment Drives on with Strong Latin Brotherhood

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

BAGHDAD - The sense of brotherhood Soldiers have with each other, whether they served together, with separate units, or even in separate wars, comes from shared experiences that only fellow Soldiers would understand.

For the Hispanic troops on the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division's personal security detachment, there is a special bond due to their cultural background.

“I bonded with these guys right away,”

said Spc. Oscar Tovar, a medic with the 1-18 Inf. Personnel Security Detachment from Palm Springs, Calif., of his Latin American battle buddies.

“I try to get along with everybody,” said Spc. Gustavo Pena, a gunner with the 1-18 Inf. PSD from Miami, “but we grew up with the same things.”

While there are similarities between the Hispanic Soldiers on the ‘Vanguard’ PSD, they say their heritage had less to do with their decision to serve as much as a calling to do the right thing.

“Our culture has a lot to do with the Bible and about doing good things. Part of

that is serving our country,” said Spc. Daniel Montanez, a driver on the 1-18 Inf. PSD from New York.

For Tovar, it had less to do with being a Latin American as much as simply being American.

“I’m American so it just seemed right. The last Tovar to fight in a war was my great-grandfather’s brother at the turn of the 19th century in the Mexican Revolution,” said Tovar, whose father was denied enlistment during Vietnam for medical reasons.

“I just thought it’s my turn,” he said.

For Pena, who moved to the United States from Colombia at the age of 18, it was about giving something back to his adopted country.

“The country took us in as refugees. They give us jobs, and you can actually get a life for yourself,” said Pena, who is currently going through the process of obtaining his U.S. citizenship.

“You should give back to the country, so I stepped up,” he added.

Being Hispanic has had little bearing on how they have been treated in the Army, said Montanez. Instead, they get treated like every other Soldier and are rated on one thing – performance.

“I don’t think (race) really matters as long as you just do your job,” he said.

Pena and his battle buddies have been doing their jobs and giving back to their nation, whether it’s their adopted or native land, for the past 14 months, and they don’t seem to be ready to quit anytime soon.

Tovar, Montanez and Pena have all reenlisted to continue their service to the United States in a time of war.

The ‘Vanguards’ of 1-18 Inf. are deployed out of Schweinfurt, Germany, and currently attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division of Fort Riley, Kan.

## Got Potassium?

Andover, Conn., native 1st Sgt. Todd Hood, the top noncommissioned officer for the Fort Carson, Colo.,-based Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, currently operating in southern Baghdad as part of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, purchases a banana from a market in Baghdad's Doura neighborhood. More than 300 shops and stores have opened in Doura since the year began.



(Photo by Maj. Kirk Luedeke, 4th IBCT 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)

# Brigade Commander Notes Progress in Northwestern Baghdad Neighborhoods

By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen  
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq – A reduction in violence in neighborhoods on Baghdad's northwest side and an improved security situation is allowing reconstruction efforts and economic gains to flourish, the commander of the brigade who have patrolled the area for nearly a year said

## Ameriya Shows Sign of Progress with No Murders in September

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

BAGHDAD — After more than 20 months of violent insurgent activity, September marked the first month that there were no murders within the western Ameriya neighborhood of the Iraqi capital.

"Murder has been an effective insurgent tactic in Ameriya and groups like al-Qaeda have capitalized on it as a method to terrorize the local populace," said 2nd Lt. Evan Howell, a staff officer with 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, who, together with Iraqi Security Forces, provides security for the area. "Earlier this year we were recording almost two a day, and since late 2005 murder events were as commonplace as buying groceries in Ameriya."

Ameriya has already recorded similar decreasing trends with indirect fires, and a rise in the detection of weapons caches and improvised explosive device discoveries, Howell said.

"Stopping murders was a top priority for this battalion," Howell said. "A zero monthly murder count combined with a record number of weapons caches and IED finds leads to the overwhelming conclusion that Ameriya has become a safe and secure neighborhood. This is probably one of the greatest successes of this battalion's endeavor to protect the neighborhood of Ameriya."

during a press conference here Oct. 12.

Col. J.B. Burton, commander of the 2nd "Dagger" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, met with members of the Pentagon press corps for a briefing via satellite. He highlighted the progress made in his area of operation, which spans most of northwestern Baghdad.

"In order to stop the cycle of violence we set about to defeat sectarian expansion by Shia Extremists, while simultaneously defeating Al-Qaeda and denying their access to the population," said Burton, a native of Tullahoma, Tenn. "In short, we had to get out into the city, live among the citizens, fight alongside the ISF, and deny insurgents, criminals and extremists access to the population."

The implementation of the Baghdad Security Plan, Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon allowed the Dagger Brigade to move into neighborhoods with a permanent presence, Burton added, with the end result being an 85 percent reduction in violence in the area since May.

"Of our 95 'Mulhallas,' or neighborhoods—58 of them are now considered under control, 33 remain in a clearing status with violence continuing to go down, and four remain in a disrupt status," Burton noted. He said murders in the area, which a year ago occurred more than 150 times each week, are down to an average of five a week.

He said a major contributor to the improving security situation in northwestern Baghdad is the commitment of concerned citizens, who have stepped forward to aid Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces provide safe neighborhoods and put a stop to sectarian violence and terrorist acts in their midst.

"These volunteers are actively providing security in partnership with our combined forces and concurrently increas-

ing the citizen's confidence in the Iraqi Security Forces as a whole," Burton said. "To date, we have a total of 1,772 volunteers and recruits who are fully screened and ready to attend academy for integration into the ISF, with 500 scheduled to attend (the police) academy this month."

With an increased confidence in the security efforts in their neighborhoods, Burton said each of his 14 joint security stations have seen an increase in tips from residents, helping to thwart terrorist activity. Likewise, he said residents are becoming more involved in the local governmental process, addressing community issues together.

"Further, we are focused on extending the reach of the government by providing businesses access to financial capital and through the development of public works substations that employ locals in local areas to deliver essential services within their capacity," Burton told the media members. "Our Embedded Reconstruction Team and Joint Project Management Office are helping us achieve these effects."

Burton's brigade headquarters is slated to return to its home base in Schweinfurt, Germany beginning next month. The Dagger Brigade commander said he is pleased with the progress he's seen during his year in the Iraqi capital.

"We leave an area of operations that has shown significant improvement in terms of reduced violence, improved essential services, improvement in the task of daily governing, Iraqi Security Forces that get better each and every day," Burton concluded. "And most importantly we are seeing citizens who are rejecting extremist organizations and standing up and volunteering to help improve the security and well-being of their families and their neighbor's families."



(Photo by Capt. David Levasseur, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)

Tullahoma, Tenn., native Col. J.B. Burton, commander of the 2nd "Dagger" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, conducts a press briefing via satellite with the Pentagon press corps from Camp Victory in western Baghdad Oct. 12.



(Photo by Spc. Victor Hagler, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment)

## National Police Hinder Enemy

Officers from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division National Police and Company C, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, raided a western Baghdad home and found more than 100 pounds of homemade explosives, 14 AK-47 assault rifles, seven RPK Russian machine guns, 18 rocket launchers, detonation cord, and miscellaneous body armor pieces in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Khadra Oct. 2.

## First of the First Team Troops Hit Fort Hood Ground

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

FORT HOOD, Texas – Under a cool, cloudy Central Texas night, a plane landed at Fort Hood's Robert Gray Army Airfield, but this was no ordinary plane.

This plane didn't carry your usual airline passengers, and it wasn't coming from Houston or Dallas, but from Bangor, Maine, carrying nearly 70 Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's Band and the 15th Sustainment Brigade's Detachment B, 15th Personnel Services Battalion.

These troopers, who were welcomed home by rear detachment Soldiers and eager family members during a late night ceremony Oct. 15, were the first large group of the division's Soldiers to return from their deployment to Iraq.

"Tonight, at long last, we welcome the returning heroes of the Bravo Detachment of the 15th PSB, and the busiest band in the Army, the First Team Band," said Col. Larry Phelps, the rear detachment commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, during his short speech.

The band, which had been deployed since October 2006, played more than 1600 missions all across Iraq, four times more than any previous band during Operations Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom, said Phelps, a native of Greenville, Ala.

He said that the 15th PSB Soldiers provided critical personnel services support to hundreds of units and thousands of Soldiers.

"They have done everything imaginable to support their customers," Phelps said. "They are our heroes." Before releasing the troops to their anxiously awaiting loved ones, Phelps asked everyone to remember the First Team troops still serving in Iraq.

"Before we rush this field and let these troopers know just how much we've missed them, and just how glad that we are that they're home – I would ask each of you here with us tonight to keep the troopers still down range in your prayers," Phelps said.

Once Phelps' remarks were complete, the Soldiers were released to their families for three days off to relax before starting their reintegration processing. Even though the Soldiers had

been traveling for nearly 36 hours, all of them were excited to be home.

"I'm really happy and really tired," said Spc. Jeffrey Van Curan, a French horn player

with the band.

Several members of Van Curan's family came out to the late night ceremony to welcome him home, including his grandfather, mother,

sister and his fiancé, Kim Butler.

Van Curan said that he is looking forward to just sitting around the house, enjoying life and playing with his Siberian Husky.

### Tiny Hands Help Heroes Home

Kids from the 15th Brigade Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, decorate signs during a battalion Family Readiness Group meeting Oct. 6. The signs will be placed inside the barracks rooms of single Soldiers when they return from Iraq. The battalion has already welcomed home a handful of advance party troops and expects to receive the first large group of Soldiers later this month, according to Capt. Stephanie Harris of Somerset, Ky, the battalion's rear detachment commander.



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

## Newspaper Kicks Off New Sports Website

Killeen Daily Herald

KILLEEN, Texas -The Killeen Daily Herald now has a way to bring local high school football games to service members unable to go to the games.

KDHPressBox.com hosts live text-based webcasts of area football games as well as live audio broadcasts. This means Soldiers across the world can listen as the Killeen and Copperas Cove teams battle it out on the football field.

"A lot of the kids in this area have parents who are deployed and this is a way for them to follow their children's sports careers," said Natalie Hull, online editor for the Killeen Daily Herald.

KDHPressBox.com launched on Aug. 26 and shares the Killeen Daily Herald's popular high school

sports coverage with readers outside of the area and around the world.

"I would like to thank you and your staff for making it possible that myself and the hundreds of soldiers from the Fort Hood area are able to listen to the local games," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Sonny Hinchman.

"(It is) awesome, what you guys have done."

Besides the live features, KDHPressBox.com includes schedules for area teams, rosters with player information and box scores. As KDHPressBox.com grows, it will include various high school sports and team information.

Features on KDHPressbox.com include: audio broadcasts; live play-by-play web casts; player statistics; player photographs; game photographs; viewer polls; area schedules; game scores; and articles about area teams.



# Twin Captains Share Brotherly Love in Iraq

By Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim  
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – Deployments usually separate family members from one another. Yet, for twin, 1st Cavalry Division brothers, being in Iraq is as close to being home as anything they've come to know since they started their military careers.

"This is the closest thing to home for us," said Capt. Richard Gomez, a 1st Cav. Div. construction operations officer at Camp Liberty west of Baghdad. "We talk every day."

The fraternal twins, Richard and Daniel, both Army captains, grew up in Woodside, Queens, N.Y., where they attended Francis Louis High School's Junior Reserve Officer's Training Corps together.

"Well, I started there first, and then Danny copied me," Richard teased.

During high school, the two decided to strive for ROTC scholarships to Hofstra University, Long Island, N.Y. During their time in college, they witnessed the World Trade Center collapse and knew exactly how they would spend their time in the Army.

"We were wearing our uniforms that day," Richard recalled. "I pulled [Daniel] out of class and went to the top of the building."

Daniel, who is serves as a brigade military transition team operations officer on the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div., said after knowing what happened, they both



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

**Capt. Richard (left) and Daniel Gomez pose for a picture in front of the Forward Operating Base Prosperity's palace. Richard serves as 1st Cavalry Division's division construction operations officer and is serving in Iraq with his twin brother Daniel who serves as a brigade military transition team operations officer with the First Team's 2nd Brigade Combat Team.**

just wanted to go where ever the country asked them to go.

After they were both commissioned and completed their respective officer basic courses, the country asked Richard to go to Korea, and Daniel to go to 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery where he served as a tar-

geting officer for 2nd Squadron, 12th Cavalry Regiment, then with 2nd Brigade, 1st Cav. Div.

Upon Richard's completion of tour in Korea, he came to 1st Cav. Div. and they knew they would deploy together.

"Our parents were both scared," Daniel

said of his parents Jose Gomez and Rafaela Martinez, who still reside in Queens, N.Y. "They understand what we do. They support us. They know we love it, and are really proud of us."

Richard's duties allow him to travel throughout the 1st Cav. Div.'s entire footprint of operations. As Daniel's unit's area of operations is within them, they have been able to spend some brief time together.

While Richard comes around FOB Prosperity for environmental studies, Daniel travels with his Military Transition Team for Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces meetings.

For Richard, the deployment means that he has his "best friend" here.

Though they are fraternal twins, the two cannot be mistaken for anything else but brothers. Although Richard is four inches taller, he joked that Daniel is four inches wider.

"We locked him in a closet when he was a kid," said Richard when asked why Daniel was shorter.

As if the response had been rehearsed for years, Daniel said, "Yeah, all they fed me was pizza and pancakes because that's all they could fit under the door."

Although the two started their careers together, Richard admits that he has plans to transition into the private sector while Daniel is going to his captain's career course as a Civil Affairs officer and stay in the Army a little bit longer.

# "Grey Wolf" Doctor Designs Mural 'Laughing' at Death

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

BAQOUBA, Iraq - While deployed to Iraq many Soldiers look for ways to stay creatively occupied during their spare time between missions and work. Many Soldiers write and record music while others write poems or stories.

One doctor with the 215th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, has taken the opportunity to leave his and his unit's mark on Iraq during their deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08 by constructing a mural on their medical center's wall, letting those who visit the station know the heroes who have been here to help.

Maj. Paul Alban, 215th BSB's surgeon and Teal Medical Clinic officer in charge, is finishing up a medical mural inspired by a caduceus as his way of leaving his mark on Iraq. The doctor/artist says though this is not his first mural, it is one of his most prized pieces of art.

"This wall means a lot to me," he said. "It will be something I remember and look back upon for a long time."

Alban got his start in art at an early age. Taking after his father, Alban began with simple drawings and discovered a love for drawing.

"Since I was in middle school, I've been drawing," Alban said. "I never had [an art class] but I was always being asked to draw on book covers and things like that."

"My dad was always a doodler," he continued. "Everything he ever had to write on always had little doodles on the sides of the paper. I think that's how I got started. Also, one of my sisters was also very good at drawing, so I probably was trying to compete and become better."

Years later, Alban completed his first walls, a gift for a friend which prepared him for his mural at the TMC.

"I've done a couple of other walls," he explained. "I did

a six and a half foot wolverine, which was pretty cool looking, and a mural for my niece, which was teddy bears and blocks. That was cool because it was my first time painting. I had never painted before but liked the challenge."

Alban has also designed a few tattoos for his close friends. Although Alban currently has no tattoos, he has considered getting one and feels it's an honor to have his work on other people's body.

"It was pretty cool to see that somebody has my work on their body," he said. "That's a nice feeling to know they liked it that much."

"I did one for a Soldier I had met before she had deployed," he continued. "She ended up [dying] with a month left before her deployment was to end, but its neat knowing that I was able to leave her with something that she really liked, so much that she had it tattooed before she deployed."

After others were intrigued by work Alban created on the back of medical scrubs, he was provided the opportunity to leave his team's mark as they come close to the end of deployment. Alban said he jumped at the chance and began to craft his masterpiece.

"First I had done drawings on the backs of the scrub tops we used to wear," he said. "After seeing a couple of different shirts I had finished, they told me to have at it and do what I want with the wall."

Alban got to work on his caduceus, using charcoal and hairspray to sculpt the gothic tribute to his TMC.

"The wall can mean anything to anybody; but to me, if you take a step back from the wall you will see the medical caduceus in there," he said. "It is a little bit different. We don't have the angelic wings and the snakes going around a staff, we have snakes going around a sword that's piercing a skull that has bat-like wings."

"Snakes have always been in medicine as a healing fig-



(Photo by Spc. Ryan Stroud, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

**Maj. Paul Alban, battalion surgeon and Teal Medical Clinic officer in charge for 215th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, finalizes his work-in-progress, his medical mural inspired by a caduceus.**

ure, they are not meant to be evil," he continued. "The snakes are making their way through the skull, kind of laughing at death. The wings are to give it the more gothic theme with the skull, but they do represent the wings on the caduceus."

"It's not quite done yet," Alban said. "There's an EKG [electrocardiogram] strip that will be easy to understand for medical people. You will see a deadly EKG that will flat line a little bit and then it will return to normal. It's like us here – we treat the sick and help them get better."

As Alban continues to work on his wall, he hopes others will enjoy looking at it. Though he is proud of what he has created, he hopes it will be covered soon; a sign of the US forces exiting Iraq.

## Ironhorse Trooper Named Top Battalion Retention NCO

By Spc. Shejal Pulivarti  
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Staff Sgt. Daniel Countiss, battalion retention noncommissioned officer, 1st “Dragon” Battalion 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, is being recognized as the top battalion retention NCO within the 1st Cav. Div. during fiscal year 2007.

Countiss was volunteered for the position as a retention NCO approximately 28 months ago and has no regrets since assuming the job. “I love taking care of Soldiers,” stated the Mechanicsville, Md. native. In the past year, he has managed to reenlist 144 Soldiers from the Dragon battalion.

As a retention NCO, he interacts with Soldiers and coordinates with a 1st BCT career counselor to assure they receive the incentives of their choice.

“He does a great job talking to the Soldiers and finding out what they want,” said Staff Sgt. James Ray, a career counselor for 1st BCT, 1st CD. This Section, Ala. native was recently selected as the Multi-National Division-Baghdad Career Counselor of the Year.

Countiss, described as the epitome of a NCO by 1st Sgt. Robert Spinks, the top non-commissioned officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Bn., 82nd FA Regt., believes that influencing a Soldier to make a

decision, regardless of if they reenlist or not, is the progress in the program.

“It’s all about taking care of the Soldier, not the unit,” he boldly stated. “He’s well deserving of the award,” said Spinks, a Jackson, Miss. native.

“He works to get the Soldiers exactly what they want,” commented Capt. Jason Bullock, commander of HHB, 1st Bn., 82nd FA Regt. He credits Countiss’ increased success to being proactive.

“He is constantly walking around talking to all the Soldiers. He’s a great listener and he really cares,” the San Antonio, Texas native added.

Although getting Soldiers to reenlist during a time of war has its challenges, Countiss honed his skills to not only take care of the Soldiers’ desires but also the needs of the army.

“Countiss met the retention challenge head on and displayed professionalism daily in a decisive and positive manner while taking care of Soldiers. His steadfast determination brings great credit upon the “Dragon” Battalion,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Mike Giles, the top NCO of 1st Bn., 82nd FA Regt. who is an Omaha, Neb. native.

For the 2007 fiscal year, 1-82 Field Artillery was also the top battalion for retention within 1st Cav. Div as well as having the top battery (Battery B).

“This shows the Soldiers understand the spirit of service,” said Lt. Col. Martin Clausen,



(Photo by Spc. Shejal Pulivarti, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

**Staff Sgt. Daniel Countiss (left), the battalion retention noncommissioned officer for the 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division assists Staff Sgt. Juan Carter, a meteorologist from the battalion’s Headquarters and Headquarters Battery with Army career options.**

commander of 1st Bn., 82nd FA Regt., a San Diego native. “They serve and honorably live their lives.

“Countiss was the most important person for communicating the genuine concern of the command and he retained the best Soldiers,” Clausen added.

“He achieved this by selflessly and rou-

tinely serving,” he added.

Countiss measures his success not by numbers but by the effect he has had on Soldiers.

“I feel I could have done more,” he said. “Working with Soldiers is wonderful and for every Soldier who reenlisted I feel I have helped them and their families make a great decision in life.”

## First Team Husband Reenlists Wife for Long Haul in Army

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – A 1st Air Cavalry Brigade medical Soldier’s husband not only supported her indefinite reenlistment, he reenlisted her himself.

Staff Sgt. Misty Spencer, Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support “Cold Steel” Battalion, 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division, was reenlisted by her husband, 2nd Lt. Jeffery Spencer from the 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div.

Misty, who hails from Reno, Nev., said she jumped at the chance to have her husband of year and a half issue the oath of reenlistment Oct. 6.

“How often do you get to have your spouse at your reenlistment – let alone being the one to reenlist you,” she said. “I thought it would be great to have him reenlist me.”

She was supposed to be the first Soldier that her husband reenlisted. Instead, Jeffery, who was in the Navy as an enlisted man for eight years before becoming an Army officer, issued the oath of enlistment just a few days earlier to one of his Soldiers in the explosive ordnance disposal security platoon that he leads.

“I thought it would be a great thing to do, and I was happy that (Misty) chose me to do it,” he said.

Although Misty knows now that she will make the Army a career, 10 years ago she had no interest in even joining.

“My best friend called me from the recruiting station to pick her up, because she didn’t have a ride home,” she said. “The recruiters started talking to me about enlisting, but I wasn’t interested. I ended up taking her there a second time, and they talked me into taking the (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery).”

The two enlisted in the Army under the buddy program, which guaranteed they would attend the same Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training courses.

It didn’t quite work out that way.

“They couldn’t get us out on the same flight,” Misty said.



(Photo by 1st Lt. Jesse Tafoya, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

**Staff Sgt. Misty Spencer, (right) and 2nd Lt. Jeffery Spencer, husband and wife, pose after Misty completes an indefinite reenlistment. Misty, from Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, was reenlisted by her husband Oct. 6 at Camp Taji, Iraq.**

“My flight left first, and I got on it and went to Basic Training. She never got on her flight.

I was so mad at her; I didn’t talk to her again until Basic Training was over. But, we are still friends to this day. She is a stay-at-home-mom; which is what she wants to do, and I’m happy for her.

“I would call her when I was stationed in Europe, and she would ask what I was up to. I would say: ‘I’m going to Paris,’ or whatever my plans were.”

Later in her career, she worked at the Military Entrance Processing Station in Phoenix, where she was part of the medical staff that conducted screenings of potential military enlist-

tees.

At the MEPS station, she met her future husband, who worked there as a civilian employee. She also met countless Soldiers who were trying to reenter the military after having voluntarily separated.

“When I was stationed at the MEPS, people would come through trying to get back in the Army, saying they never should have got out,” Misty said.

This helped her decide on sticking with the Army as a career, even though it will mean future deployments.

“I know that I want to make the Army a career,” she said. “I know that this could mean coming back to Iraq (multiple) times. Right now, we have no children, so that makes it easier.”

As does having a job that fulfills her childhood aspirations. “I was always interested in medicine; I never had a problem with blood, and I like to help people,” she said. “I’ve thought about medical school, but it is not the right path for me. I have two options that I am looking at for myself: put in a flight packet or become a registered nurse.”

Even though she’s doing her dream job and is pleased with her career choice, taking the 10-year plunge wasn’t easy.

The indefinite reenlistment is required for enlisted Soldiers who choose to reenlist, and it covers the second half of an enlisted career – 10 or more years.

“My first thought was that I couldn’t believe I was already at this point in my career,” she said. “My second thought was: ‘Am I actually going to do this?’ It scares you for a second, knowing that you are going through with it.”

Her husband said he supported her decision without thinking twice.

“I am pleased that she reenlisted; she is doing what she planned to do, which is make a career out of the Army,” he said.

“The goal is to retire together at the same time, since we have about the same amount of years in service,” Jeffery added.

With any luck, the buddy system will work a little better for Misty this time around.



(Photos by Spc. Elvyn Nieves, 113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Las Piedras, Puerto Rico native Staff Sgt. Nelson Velázquez, from Company A, Division Special Troop Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, and Jersey City, N.J., native Spc. Zoraida Sánchez, from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div., give a fast-paced demonstration of Latin dances in the 1st Cavalry Division Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center at Camp Liberty Oct. 11.

## “Who Am I?”

### Soldiers Celebrate Proud Hispanic Heritage

By Spc. Elvyn Nieves  
113th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – In an evening full of pride, joy, song and dance Hispanic American troops offered a celebration for their fellow Soldiers during the Hispanic Heritage Month program at the 1st Cavalry Division’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center here Oct. 11.

The audience was presented with the history of Hispanic Americans, entertained with songs in the Spanish language and witnessed a demonstration of Latin dances like Salsa, Merengue, Bachata and Punta performed by Soldiers.

There was a “Who am I?” presentation where a Soldier recited the career highlights of a famous Hispanic American and the audience had identify the person.

“The importance of this celebration is to recognize the fact that we, as Hispanic American Soldiers, may be representing different Latin countries, but we have one goal in common and that is to defend the freedom and democracy of our nation,” said Staff Sgt. Nelson Velázquez, a Las Piedras, Puerto Rico native from Company A, Division Special Troop Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division.

“We have to be proud of who we are, be patriots and keep our roots standing,” he added.

The guest speaker of the night was Los Angeles native Command Sgt. Maj. Victor Martinez, the senior noncommissioned officer for the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment. Noting



Los Angeles native Command Sgt. Maj. Victor Martinez, the senior noncommissioned officer for the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, gives a speech as the guest speaker for the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration in the 1st Cavalry Division Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center at Camp Liberty in western Baghdad Oct. 11.

the Army’s diversity, Martinez said ethnic observances are important, and not only for Hispanic Americans.

“It’s important for the Hispanic community to retain our customs and traditions wherever we go because if we don’t, they get lost,” said Martinez. “If you don’t pass on those traditions and customs, like the language and music, they won’t get passed on to future generations.”

Martinez said that, while the Hispanic community has suffered racism and discrimination in the civilian world, such practices are not happening in the Army thanks to the equal opportunity program.

“No matter what ethnic back-

ground, what culture you might be, whether Black, Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, you should be proud of it,” said Martinez. “Don’t forget it. I can proudly announce that my name is Victor Martinez, I’m a Soldier, and I’m a Hispanic American striving to make a positive impact.”

Hispanic Heritage Month started as a week-long observance in 1968, and was expanded to last 30 days starting Sept. 15 to Oct. 15.

It was decreed law on Aug. 17, 1988. The date for the observance, Sept. 15, was chosen because it coincides with the independence day anniversary of many Latin American countries.

## Air Cavalry Soldiers Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, gathered Oct. 6 to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

Those in attendance enjoyed music by the 1st Cavalry Division Band, a history of Hispanics in the Army and a live exhibition of Latin dancing.

Kona, Hawaii, native Staff Sgt. Nuala Taylor, an information systems specialist for Headquarters Support Company, 615th “Cold Steel” Aviation Support Battalion, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., said that it is good to celebrate ones heritage in the Army; a place where conformity is often the rule.

“In the Army we all work together as one ... we act as one machine, one animal, but we start to understand our individuality (with these celebrations),” said Taylor, who was also one of the dancers for the ceremony.

Also, the busy days that are part of a deployment to Iraq leave little time to celebrate anything except for sleep. With events like this, Soldiers still get to celebrate their heritage despite the operational tempo, said Taylor.

“It’s wonderful that we can, in a war zone, still have time to celebrate our different ethnicities and cultures during the year so that we can encourage peoples’ pride in who they are,” she



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

Buffalo, N.Y., native Sgt. Elizabeth Vega (left) and New Jersey native Sgt. Harvey Olarte, both chemical operations specialists assigned to Company A, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, dance to salsa music at Camp Taji, Iraq, Oct. 6.

said.

Guest speaker for the ceremony was Chap. (Capt.) Leonardo Rivera, the chaplain for 615th ASB. He talked about

*“Every Hispanic will never forget their hometown – their family. My heart is in my town, but my body is here,”*

- Chap. (Capt.) Leonardo Rivera

how most Hispanics will always have a love for their home.

“Every Hispanic will never forget their hometown – their family. My heart is in my town, but my body is here,” said Rivera, a native of Camuy, Puerto Rico.

Although he loves America and everything it has afforded him, Rivera still has a passion for his heritage, he said.

“I love the American flag and I have a passion for my original flag, too. I have one body, one heart and one feeling for (both of them),” he said.

With all the celebrating and the jovial atmosphere, Rivera quickly added that it is not only important to celebrate Hispanic culture, but to remember those Hispanic Soldiers who have given their lives in the name of freedom.

Once the dancing and music faded, the Soldiers went back to their daily grind, but not without a better understanding of the importance of Hispanics and the diverse nature of the Army.

# Fish Pond a Tranquil Refuge for Taji Troops

By Spc. Shejal Pulivarti  
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The sound of fish jumping and splashing around captured the attention of those present at the pond, taking them away from the gun fire in the distance. The pond, surrounded by various trees, provides Soldiers here with an oasis needed from the reality they face daily. “Being able to continue it in such a stressful time allows

me to relax and not think about anything else,” shared Sgt. Jonathan Dillenberg, a standardization instructor from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. Dillenberg is a Fort Worth, Texas native and was accustomed to going fishing roughly six times a week. He tries to make it to the pond at least three times a week after a shift.

Some visit the pond for the atmosphere. Some fish, others watch and even more feed the fish.

“The fish are definitely fed well,” said Dillenberg.

The troops catch the fish for sport and return them to the pond.

Chaplain (Capt.) Bruce Wagner, the 115th Brigade Support Battalion chaplain, brought his fishing rod in hopes of such an opportunity. Wagner, a Copeland, Ala., native, used to go fishing with his family regularly.

“I’m looking forward to getting back home and fishing with my little 10-year-old son,” he said. “I’m trying to keep my skills sharp until then.”

The numerous bottom feeder fish that occupy this pond and the few obstacles that the pond presents definitely keep the skills of the fishing Soldiers sharp.

“They bite kind of soft,” Wagner said, “so you have to pay closer attention.”

Dillenberg said success is all in “setting the hook.”

Everyone uses something different for bait. Among the variety are mixed veggies, tightly packed bread and Slim Jim sausage.

The fishermen are also wary of the underbrush that bites harder than the many fish in the pond. The tall grass surrounding the pond was recently cut down significantly. Dillenberg credits the fish not biting much to the sudden disturbance to their habitat.

“I don’t see anyone catching anything right now, but I don’t see anyone complaining either,” Wagner said. The troops still remained with cast lines, taking advantage of the calm and using the time to reflect.

“It doesn’t even matter if you really catch anything,” Wagner said, “just coming out and relaxing is what counts.”



(Photo by Spc. Shejal Pulivarti, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Chaplain (Capt.) Bruce Wagner, the 115th Brigade Support Battalion chaplain from Copeland, Ala., reels in his first catch of the day at the pond where he regularly fishes at Camp Taji, Iraq.



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

## Bat Girl Visits Baghdad

After trying on her “Bat Girl” costume, 1st Cavalry Division’s Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers representative, Spc. Jonte Scott of Sacramento, Calif., sits outside her trailer making goodie bags for a party later this month at Camp Liberty, Iraq, Oct. 17.

## Flick Not About Fraud, but Friendship

Most of the time movies are full of action, gore or sex. It was refreshing to find one about friendship.

In *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry*, Chuck, Adam Sandler, and Larry, *King of Queens*’ Kevin James, are macho Brooklyn firefighters who are best pals.

Larry, a widower, is stuck between a rock and a hard place. Being one of New York’s finest means he puts his life on the line nearly every day, but if he dies all of his assets would go to the state instead of his two young children (stupid paperwork glitch.) After a close call he decided that something had to be done before it was too late. What to do? What to do?

He decides that he needs to get married to someone that he can trust to make them the new benefactor so his kids will be taken care of.

He definitely couldn’t find a trustworthy woman that fast so he chose Chuck. After he pulled out the “Remember that time I saved your

Random Reviews

Sgt. Nicole Kojetin



life” card, Chuck, who is ordinarily a bit of a womanizer, had to agree. After all... it was just about paperwork... no one would ever know.

Well, not so much. Once a fraud agent comes sniffing through their trash, they realize that their “domestic partnership” has to look a little more legit.

The best part about their arrangement is the fact that they are manly-men. It was just uncomfortable but amusing to watch them try to con-

vince their co-workers that they are homosexuals. One of the best parts was when someone (oops) dropped the soap or the debate over whether or not to purchase maxi pads.

I am an Adam Sandler fan but this wasn’t his best role.

The concept was amusing and there were a few good jokes, but the movie kept going and going and going and going (you get the idea.) Are they going to get away with it, or not? They love each other like brothers... I got it... get on with it, already.

So since we are in Iraq and our time is precious, I say skip this one. (Two out of five stars.)





(Photo by Maj. Kirk Luedeke, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

## From Battlefield to Playing Field

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment "Black Lions," part of 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, based at Fort Riley, Kan., cheer during the ESPN Gameday broadcast live from Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad Oct. 6. The Soldiers were on the program because the unit has a special relationship with the Kansas State Wildcats football team. The regiment's Company D and the football team held a physical fitness challenge last winter before the unit deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

# Top College Teams Tumbled; Dallas Humbled

Who's number one? It seems like no one in the college ranks wants top billing. For two weeks in a row, the number one-ranked team in the nation fell from the unbeaten ranks. First USC dropped a home game, and then LSU followed suit with a triple overtime road loss to the Kentucky Wildcats, 43-37.

Ohio State, which wasn't even a pre-season top ten favorite, found itself with a number one ranking, while unlikely South Florida moved into the number two slot after California lost to Oregon State at home, too. Boston College moved up to number three and a lot of football powerhouses with one-loss are hoping the undefeated teams continue to topple, making their Bowl Championship Series bids more viable.

Who's going to end up in the mythical national title game this year? Stay tuned, because all the early favorite college teams keep tumbling in the polls.

### Brady beats 'Boys

In the National Football League, though, a battle of unbeaten proved the disparity between the contenders in the AFC and those in the NFC. The New England Patriots demolished the Dallas Cowboys 48-27 in the 'Big D,' as Tom Brady passed for 388 yards and a career-high five touchdowns.

The Cowboys were actually in the game, and had a 24-21 lead early in the third quarter. But the wheels came off and the Patriots pulled away from the badly over-matched 'Boys. The receiving trio of Randy Moss, Donte

Stallworth and Wes Welker made a mediocre Dallas secondary look sick, as Stallworth and Welker both went for more than 100 yards each. All three caught TD passes from Brady, with Welker scoring twice.

Dallas did some trash talking leading up to the Week Six showdown (remember, they do have Terrell Owens on the roster), while the Patriots quietly prepared for the contest and proved on the road that they are the team to beat this year in the NFL. With the Indianapolis Colts taking the week off, probably watching New England demolish Dallas, too, only two undefeated teams remain – the Patriots, at 6-0, and the Colts at 5-0. I picked the Pats to beat the 'Boys, so that doesn't qualify as an upset, but there were some surprises (at least to me) in this week's NFL action.

### Who's hot, who's not

The Green Bay Packers are hot! That's who! Brett Favre set the career touchdown passing record in the season's fourth week and then set the interception record two weeks later. Even when Hall of Fame-bound Favre has a bad game, the Packers young and improving defense has found a way to get turnovers and score points, too, when the offense gets in a funk.

The Pack hasn't run the ball at all this year, and Favre may throw the ball up 700 times this season. Still, Green Bay is finding a way to win and at 5-1, they have a head start on a playoff run on their nearest competition in the NFC North. It's truly been a team effort in the Frozen Tundra thus far, as one of the youngest teams in the NFL is learning how to win. It's a good thing the competition in their division isn't very tough, though the Detroit Lions have shown an offensive resurgence under coordinator Mike Martz.

The Minnesota Vikings' Adrian Peterson ran over the once-vaunted Chicago Bear defense, rushing for a team-record 224 yards

and three touchdowns in an exciting 34-31 road win in the Windy City in week six. Peterson looks more like the explosive running back who nearly won the Heisman Trophy as a freshman in college, than the banged-up back his final two years in Norman, Okla. With the season less than halfway complete (at the time of this writing), Peterson is my preliminary pick for Rookie of the Year. If he can stay healthy, he's a lock for the award.

Chicago, last year's NFC Super Bowl sacrificial lamb for the AFC champion Colts, looks nothing like the Monsters of the Midway defense that took them to the title game last year. Brian Griese looked pretty good, and their offense scored 31 points, but now their defense can't stop the run against a team with a quality backfield. Don't expect the Bears to return to post season play this year.

One other surprise was the New Orleans Saints, who waited until the sixth week of the season to finally winning their first game, 28-17, on the road in Seattle. After picking the 'Aints to turn around their season nearly every week, I gave up on them and picked the Seahawks to win at home. Not! Has New Orleans turned the corner? I don't think it really matters. You can't start out 0-4 and expect to contend for the conference title, let alone make the playoffs.

### And the winner is ...

I've been making weekly predictions each week in our electronic newsletter, The Daily Charge, and surprisingly, I've managed a 53-36 success rate through the first six weeks of the season. That's better than a coin flip, at least.

The early favorites to see the post season so far this season in the NFC, besides my beloved Packers, are Cowboys and the New York Giants in the east; the Detroit Lions north; the Carolina Panthers down south; and, believe it or not, the Arizona Cardinals will win

### Trigger Pull

Master Sgt.  
Dave Larsen



an extremely weak western division with either street free agent Tim Rattay or former league MVP Kurt Warner (if his arm heals) under center now that Matt Leinart is on the shelf for the rest of the season.

Tampa Bay and Seattle have decent records early on in their respective divisions, but I'm not on either one's bandwagon this season. The Giants and the Lions are my early picks for wild card berths.

In the AFC, where the big boys play, the reigning champion Indianapolis Colts will again rule the south; New England will have the east sewn up by Thanksgiving; the Pittsburgh Steelers will take the northern crown; and out west it will be the San Diego Chargers, who started out horribly but play in a horrid division.

My wild card picks have to be the Jacksonville Jaguars in the south and the Baltimore Ravens in the north. The Ravens, with their defense, appear to me to be the best bet to knock off New England and spoil a perfect season for Tom Brady when the two teams meet on Monday Night Football Dec. 3 in Baltimore. Unless the Pats tank a game between now and then to an inferior opponent, they could be going into the game 12-0.

After the whooping they put on the Cowboys in Dallas, the New England Patriots have to be everyone's favorite to win all the marbles this year. Still, there's plenty of football to be played. So ... Go Packers!

