

# The Daily Roar

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MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION -- BAGHDAD

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## Flag of my Father

**By Staff Sgt. Mike Pryor**  
2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. PAO

BAGHDAD – Like any Soldier, Pfc. Alexander Cesario always makes sure he has all his essential equipment before he leaves the wire. For Cesario, that means his weapon, his radio, and his night vision goggles, as well as one special, personal item: an American flag his father brought home from Vietnam.

Cesario, a Somerville, N.J. native serving as a forward observer with Company A., Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, has carried his father's flag with him on every mission since being deployed to Iraq a year ago.

The flag was first acquired by Cesario's father, Adam, 61, when he was a young paratrooper serving in Vietnam. The elder Cesario never let a day go by without unfurling the flag, no matter where he was or what he was doing.

"(My dad) flew that flag every day, even if he had to put it up on a radio antenna," Cesario said.

At one point, a mission went wrong and Cesario's father was cut off from the rest of his platoon. For three days, he had to hack it out of the jungle alone, with the Vietcong in hot pursuit. But even on the run, he still managed to raise the flag each day.

"He didn't stop moving at all for those three days, except to fly that flag," Cesario said.

When Cesario's father returned from war, he put the flag into safekeeping. He was so protective of it that even family members were rarely allowed to handle it.

"It was like his prized possession," Cesario said.

Nothing could make the elder Cesario part with the flag until Alexander, 19, was deployed to Iraq this year. After he began patrolling the streets of Baghdad, Cesario decided he wanted to carry on his father's tradition. After some arm-twisting, he convinced his dad to mail him the flag.

The flag arrived with step-by-step instructions on how to take care of it, Cesario said. He recalled the final step with a laugh: "If you lose it, don't bother coming home."

Despite the threat of exile, Cesario takes the flag with

him everywhere. It is his way of paying tribute to his father, he said.

"I wanted to honor him," Cesario said, "It meant a lot to him, and because of that, it means a lot to me."

Cesario keeps the flag tucked into the front flap of his body armor, close to his heart. Cesario said he is looking forward to redeploying and returning the flag – now a veteran of two wars – to its rightful owner. Eventually Cesario, who is single, said he would like to pass the flag on to his own son, when he has one. There's only one problem.

"I'll have to pry it away from my dad first," he joked.



by Staff Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd ABN Div. PAO  
Pfc. Alexander Cesario displays his father Adam's American flag on a rooftop in Baghdad's Suleikh neighborhood Dec. 27.



## On watch

by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, 4IBCT, 1ID

BAGHDAD-Inverness, Fla. native Staff Sgt. Michael Moore, a military policeman with the 4th Infantry Division Military Training Team, stands guard with Iraqi Army soldiers and national policemen, as a group of military officials converse during clearing operations in Saydiah, Dec. 27.

## Baghdad Three Day Weather Forecast

**Monday**  
Partly cloudy  
HI: 60F/16C  
LO: 39F/4C



**Tuesday**  
Partly Cloudy  
HI: 60F/16C  
LO: 42F/6C



**Wednesday**  
Sunny  
HI: 64F/18C  
LO: 44F/7C




## The Daily Roar

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# Police attention helps burned boy

**By Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons**

4 IBCT, 1ID PAO

BAGHDAD – For Yousef Kasim, living in the Five Farms area of Baghdad is a challenge.

His family lives in a mud brick home, with no running water or electricity; in a place, where until recently, Al Qaeda terrorists roamed the area generating a swath of destruction.

Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces helped Yousef and his family by first clearing the area of terrorists and again Dec. 13 when they treated the boy's severe burns.

That day, Yousef was chasing the family kitten around the family's outdoor oven when his pants snagged on a grate covering the fire pit; he tripped and landed in the stew his mother was cooking causing severe burns from his right hip down to his right knee.

The terrorists had been forced out by a combination of 30,000 U.S. troops surged into Baghdad, and the Iraqi National Police allowing Yousef to be seen by competent medical personnel.

It was one of those policemen who noticed the badly burned boy while passing out candy and informed American medics who treated Yousef.

Upon arriving at the family's home Dec. 13, Charlotte native, Staff Sgt. Antonio Ellison, the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division Training Team medic squeezed into the small house along with the boy's family, NPs and fellow Soldiers; quickly assessed the boy's burns were major and began immediate treatment. He gave the Yousef some pain medicine and lotion for the burns he characterized as "real bad second degree burns over nine percent of the boys body."

"When we first saw him, he wouldn't eat or sleep, he would just lay there crying," said Ellison, who trained with his training team at Fort Riley, Kan., Dec. 20 when his unit and the national police visited the family a third time.

During the second visit, the boy was much better.

"Four days (after being treated) he got up and was walking around, and yesterday he started to wear clothes over the burn site," he added.

On Dec. 20, the medics and the policemen returned to the family's home for the third time to check the youngster's condition and to give him a much needed haircut.

"It is painful for me to see the people who have suffered so long from Al Qaeda," said Lt. Col. Rassan Gassid, the 1-2-1 National Police commander after seeing the boy, who is much better than the first time they met. "It makes me proud that one of my policemen found him."

On third visit, the burns were largely scabbed over, but he still needed more lotion to help the area heal properly.

"Put this on him before he goes to bed every night," El-



by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, 4IBCT, 1ID

Charlotte native Staff Sgt. Antonio Ellison, chats with Yousef Kasim, an Iraqi boy who had suffered from severe burns, in front of the boy's home in the Five Farms area of southern Baghdad, Dec. 20

lison said to his mother.

Yousef's mother was visibly happy for the attention her son and family were getting and said she couldn't think of words to describe how she felt.

"Honestly, there are no words I can tell you," said Saadya Ibrahim with a huge grin. "They are always coming around to take care of us."

She added that she is always asking God to keep the policemen and their American counterparts safe as they go about their duties.

For one of the American Soldiers witnessing the attention Yousef and his family was getting the scene reminded him of his own family in Germany.

Elgin, Ill. Native, Staff Sgt. Joseph Geier, a platoon sergeant with Company D, 2nd Squadron, and 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment who is one his second tour in Iraq said he was proud the boy was getting help, but that it makes him proud his children are safe at home.

"I have done many humanitarian missions," the father of a daughter Katelynn, 4, and son Christopher, 2, said. "These types of missions are good. But I just hope my kids never have to go through this."

Gassid added that Yousef is "like one of my sons" and is a good boy and would have helped him even if he wasn't a fellow countryman.

"Even if he was not from Iraq we would have helped him," said the commander, who had moments before given the boy a haircut before playing a little soccer with him.

"We all work on the same team."