

The Daily Roar

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Attorney enlists for money, sticks around for adventure

By Sgt. Brandon Little

Task Force XII PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – More than four and a half years ago, Sgt. David Williams joined the Army because he owed a lot of money.

Williams, a native of San Diego, was more than \$100,000 in debt; not from over charged credit cards or gambling, but from student loans.

“After I graduated from the University of Notre Dame, with a degree in political science, I went to the University of Southern California School of Law and earned a Juris Doctorate,” said Williams, a production control manager for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) in Company G, Task Force XII. “My friends from college went on to become lawyers, and I have cousins, who followed in my footsteps to law school, who are lawyers.”

Although he passed the California bar exam, and his family felt he should practice law, the Army was willing to provide him with something that law firms in his area could not.

“I lived near a naval base, and I saw all of these signs that said the military would pay up to \$65,000 of your college loans,” he said. “So I talked to a recruiter and he told me that the Army could pay that amount of money and could also send me to Europe.”

Being able to be stationed in Europe played a vital role of his decision, he said.

“I spent my junior year of college in Toledo, Spain, and I just fell in love with Europe,” said Williams. “It gave me a taste for foreign cultures and made me appreciate how much there is outside of the U.S.”

The guaranteed money to help pay his student loans and the opportunity to return to Europe would not have been available if he had decided to join the Army as a commis-

sioned officer.

“I probably get asked once a week why I’m enlisted if I have a law degree,” he said.

“I’ve known (Williams) for about a month and a half, and I was kind of shocked when I found out about his college background,” said Sgt. Aaron Mertens, the lead

UAV maintainer in Company B, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. “I was shocked because I don’t think I would have chosen to enlist in the military with that kind of a degree.”

Being in the Army has provided him with many wonderful experiences and the opportunity to meet really amazing people, said Williams.

“Growing up, I thought (being a lawyer) would be the greatest thing, and I didn’t think that much about the Army,” he said. “Now I think the opposite, I think that (practicing) law isn’t that great, and the Army turned out to be a lot more than ever I expected it to be.”

“It’s great that he’s going after what he loves to do instead of what everybody expects him to do,” said Mertens, a native of Jefferson City, Mo.

“(Williams) is a hard worker who learns quickly, and he’s a model Soldier because of his excellent physical fitness,” said Capt. Shirwen Separa, the commander of Company G and a native of Rockledge, Fla. “I could definitely see him becoming a company commander, or a first sergeant, one day; it just depends on what route he chooses to take.”

Even if Williams decides to use his degree to practice law later in life, the Army gave him what law firms in his area would not ... not just help paying his student loans and a chance to explore Europe, but the unexpected benefit of a new perspective on life. Williams said he wouldn’t trade that benefit for the world.



By Sgt. Brandon Little Task Force XII PAO
Sgt. David Williams briefs Soldiers on the status of unmanned aerial vehicle maintenance.



by Staff Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd ABN Div. PAO

Entourage

Hawaii native Pfc. Edward Gonsalves of Troop B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd BCT, 82nd Airborne Division, attracts a following of local kids while out on a security patrol in Baghdad's Sha'ab neighborhood Jan. 16.

Baghdad Three Day Weather Forecast

Monday
Clear

HI: 60F/16C
LO: 39F/4C



Tuesday
Clear

HI: 59F/15C
LO: 35F/2C



Wednesday
Chance of rain

HI: 51F/11C
LO: 39F/4C




The Daily Roar

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Paratroopers look back on deployment

By Staff Sgt. Mike Pryor

2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. PAO

Part 1 of a two-part series

BAGHDAD – Most of Sha'ab was still sleeping as a humvee weaved its way through the neighborhood's maze-like streets early one frigid, January morning.

Commanding the patrol was 1st Lt. Austin Dziengelewski's platoon of paratroopers from B Co, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment. The patrol was on their way to a squatter village in the area, where displaced families were living in makeshift tents. With the temperatures dropping below freezing at night, the paratroopers were worried people in the camps might freeze to death. The platoon's mission was to find them and see what help they needed.

As the humvee rounded a corner, the squatter village appeared. The vehicles pulled up and the platoon dismounted. With breath steaming out of their mouths in the chill air, the paratroopers picked their way through the ramshackle camp. It was a nest of tents, tarps, and scrap metal that looked as if it had been picked up and dropped there by a tornado.

The head of the family emerged from one of the tents and spoke with Dziengelewski. He told the lieutenant that sectarian violence had forced him and his family to flee their home in another part of Baghdad and settle in Sha'ab.

"Why here?" Dziengelewski asked him.

"It is safe here," the man replied.

After Dziengelewski promised to return later with blankets, tarps, and food, the platoon headed back to base. On the ride back, the man's seemingly insignificant words hung in the air.

It is safe here.

A year's worth of work, translated into four words. When the White Falcons first arrived in Sha'ab with the mission of improving security, the neighborhood was gripped by constant violence. Twelve months later, it is safe enough that families flee to it as a sanctuary.

For paratroopers like Spc. David Higuera, a medic with Company B from Phoenix, Ariz., the area's revival against all odds is a point of pride.

"After a year, when you look back on how it was, compared to now – things are definitely a lot better," Higuera said

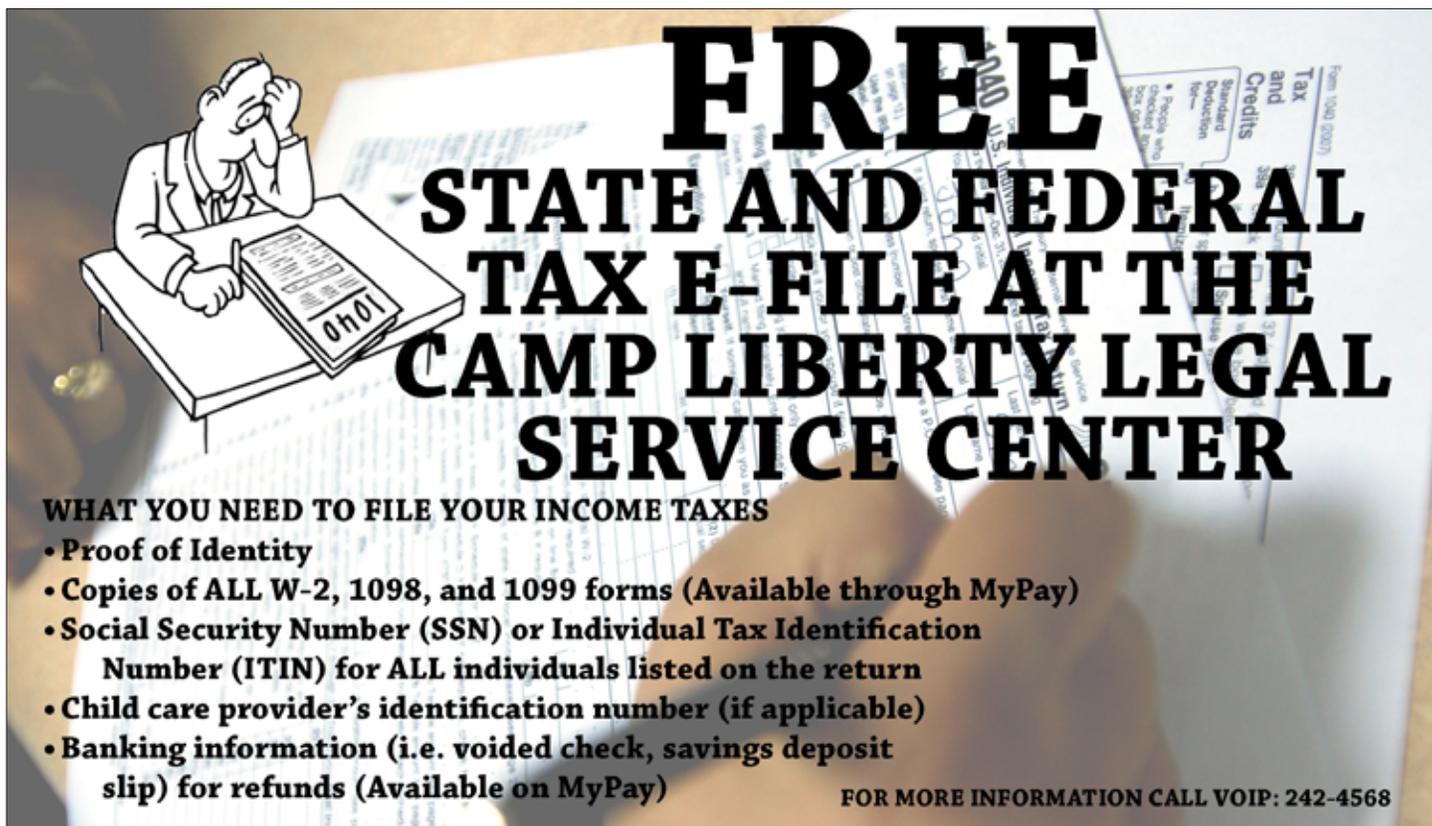
"I know for a fact that when I look back on all this, I'll be proud of what we did," he said.

Welcome to the Neighborhood

In February, the 325th Abn. Inf. Regt. became one of the first units to move into a battle space as part of Operation Farth al Qanoon - the name for the strategy to stabilize violence in Baghdad by pushing thousands of additional U.S. and Iraqi soldiers into the city's neighborhoods.

The 2nd Battalion "White Falcons" were given the mis-

see **Paratroopers** pg.4



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White Falcons take on mission of securing Sha'ab

from **Paratroopers** pg.3

sion of securing Sha'ab, a mainly Shia district in Eastern Baghdad dominated by violent militia gangs.

The paratroopers set up their base, Combat Outpost Callahan, inside an abandoned, fortress-like shopping center. Inside the cavernous building, a layer of grime covered every surface and rats scurried along the exposed ceiling shafts. It had the feel of an underground bunker, even though it was five stories tall. Troops began calling it "the death star."

From Callahan, the paratroopers began conducting patrols and operations at a relentless tempo that never slackened. Their priority in the first months was to aggressively target the militia groups and insurgent cells that were causing havoc in the neighborhood. Before long, they started to see results.

According to battalion commander Lt. Col. Richard Kim, by the end of summer 2007, the paratroopers had captured the equivalent of an enemy battalion.

The success came as no surprise to Westcliffe, Colo. native Capt. Will Canda, Company B's commander. Canda said no one is better than the White Falcons when it comes to "kinetic operations."

"It's not an accident that Bravo Company has 135 guys in Camp Cropper and over 400 detained. It's because we do this stuff all the time, and we're very good at it," said Canda.

Rising to the Challenge

By spring, bodies had stopped turning up on the streets of Sha'ab, and Canda marveled at the number of arrests his troops had made.

"We're literally running out of bad guys to catch," he said.

With the security situation vastly improved, the White Falcons began focusing on complex counter-insurgency tasks such as improving the essential services in the area, training the Iraqi Security Forces, and strengthening the local

government agencies.

Staff Sgt. Robert Brogdon, of Erie, Penn., a squad leader with Company B, said the new emphasis on non-combat operations forced the paratroopers, most of whom are proud to be "door-kickers," out of their comfort zone. But Brogdon said they rose to the challenge.

"We didn't do just the things we're good at or the things we liked to do, we did it all," he said. "We're professionals. Whatever they tell us to do, we're going to do it, and we're going to do it well."

By networking with local leaders, renovating schools, and getting the trash picked up, the White Falcons were pursuing a strategy that had been meticulously mapped out at the highest levels of command. But for the Soldiers out pounding the pavement in Sha'ab, it all boiled down to something simpler, said Spc. Herrick Lidstone, of Littleton, Colo., a radio operator with Company B.

"For us, we don't look at it in terms of the big picture," Lidstone said. "For us, it's just going out everyday and making the streets as safe as we can make them."

**continued in the January 22 edition of
The Daily Roar**



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

Pfc. Jacob Jonza (left), and Sgt. Daniel Grime of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd BCT, 82nd Airborne Division, provide security for their platoon during a patrol through a business district in Baghdad's Sha'ab neighborhood Jan 15.