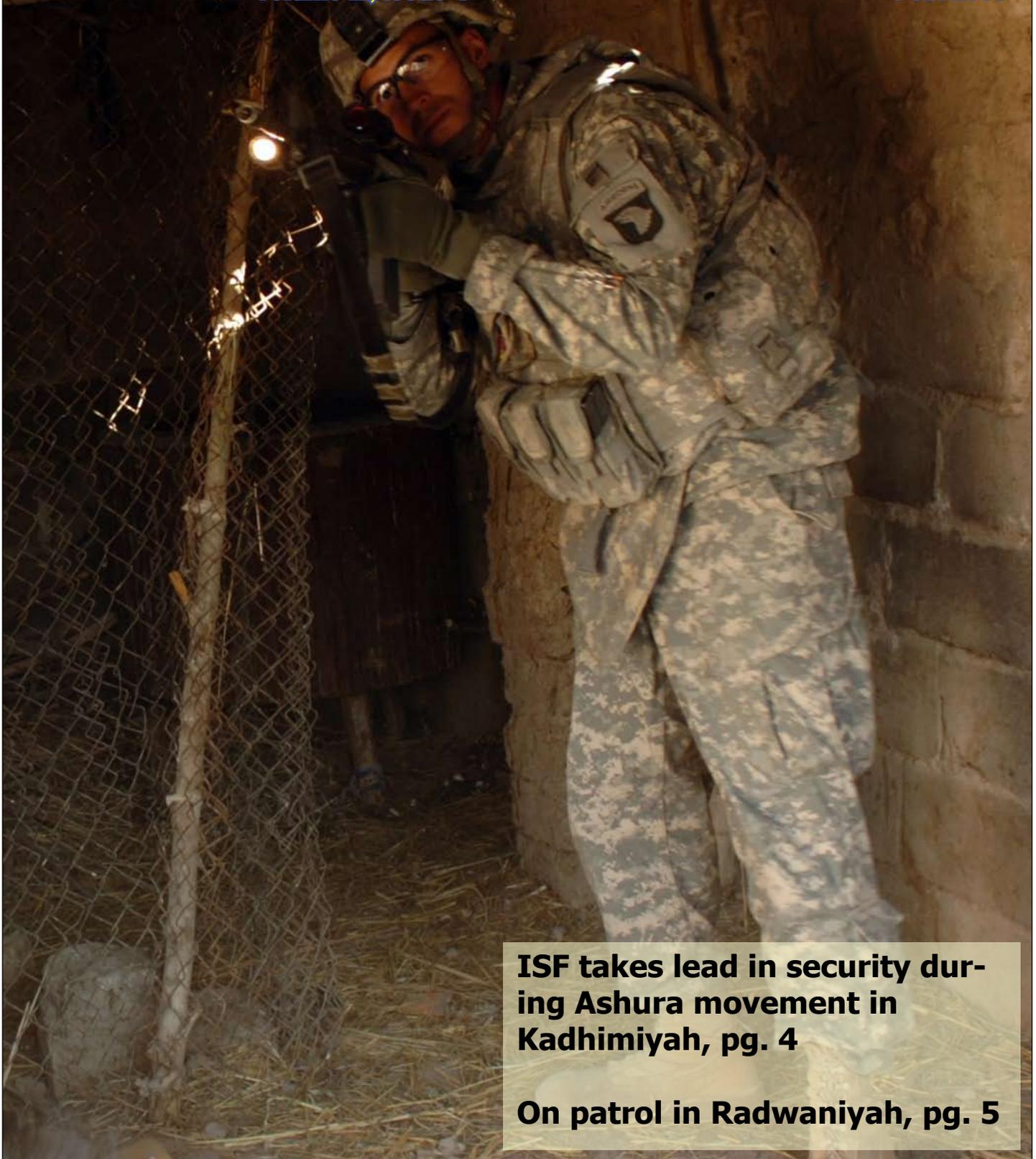




The Heart Beat

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)
Volume III, Issue 4
Feb. 2008



ISF takes lead in security during Ashura movement in Kadhimiyah, pg. 4

On patrol in Radwaniyah, pg. 5

Strike 6



Col. William B. Hickman

Strike Soldiers, families and friends, we are making significant progress in west Baghdad. I have seen determination in the eyes of many Strike Soldiers. I know we are focused on the mission of helping the

people in our areas. I know we are working hard and establishing important relationships. The relationships that we have and will continue to establish with local leaders, officials and the people in our areas will be critical in achieving success here. In partnership, we will overcome the problems that present themselves.

The Iraqis people that I have spoken with appreciate our efforts. They know that this has been a long hard fight, and are determined to someday live a peaceful and prosperous existence. In time I believe the area will become safer for the people.

The security situation is not perfect, but has remained relatively calm compared to previous times. The efforts by Soldiers who conducted operations here before us and our continued actions have made a difference here. The security that we and the Iraqi Security Forces provide, create the conditions for the government of Iraq to take action and provide for the needs of the people. What you do matters to mission accomplishment here.

Together we have accomplished a lot this month. The Iraqi Security Forces led the way with security for Ashura pilgrims. Millions of people were able to practice their faith without persecution here. We worked closely with our Iraqi security partners in security planning and were prepared to support as required. Our first group of concerned local citizens started training to become Iraqi police officers. This is significant and in time will assist in providing additional law and order and security in the neighborhoods that we patrol.

I realize many of you are interested in finding out if our deployment will be less than 15 months. There has not been any official change. We should have a better idea in the summer, but I will tell you that conditions can change even if an announcement is made to shorten our stay. We must be mentally prepared.

I want to personally thank all Soldiers and their families for their sacrifice. The sacrifice that you are making will directly affect the future of this region.

This month I would like to make sure all of our Soldiers and leaders are aware of some of the professional development opportunities we will have in the near future and throughout the deployment. Starting in March we will have the Strike Soldier and NCO of the quarter board as well as the Sergeant Audie Murphy Award competition.

I challenge all units to provide Soldiers capable of winning the Soldier and NCO of the quarter competitions. The competition will consist of a modified physical fitness test, challenging marksmanship event, hands on common tasks, a written test, and a board.

The Sergeant Audie Murphy Award Competition, formerly known as the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club will be held at the BCT. This is part of the FORSCOM Commanders Awards program. Selection as a recipient of this award is a reward for noncommissioned officers whose leadership achievements and performance merit special recognition. Recipients of this award exemplify leadership characterized by personal concern for the needs, training, development, and welfare of the Soldiers and concern for their families. Leaders should encourage their very best enlisted leaders to compete

for this award. It truly is looked upon favorably and is a mark of excellence. Sergeant Audie Murphy Award boards will be held quarterly.

Another of the FORSCOM Commanders

Strike 7



Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder

award is the Dr. Mary E. Walker Award. This selection will be held in conjunction with the SAMA board. The Dr. Mary E. Walker award was named after the only woman in United States history to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. It is an Award to recognize our very special spouses whose achievements and performance merit special recognition. If you have not received information on these programs check with

your 1SGs. The BCT S3 sergeant major (Sgt. Maj. Richard Vangenewitt) is the proponent for all MOIs for these events, and the BCT S1 will collect all administrative information / packets. These competitions are open to all 2nd BCT units assigned and attached including MiTT, and NPTTs. Transition teams will forward their recommendations through the battalion they support.

The last topic I would like to address is the 101st Association membership drive. We are conducting this drive to help support an organization that supports our Soldiers, their families and the Ft. Campbell community. This too is open to all assigned and attached units as well as MiTT, and NPTTs. This organization provided over \$111,000 to the Ft. Campbell community in 2007. The association routinely assists Soldiers and family members with financial grants with nothing more than a request from the company chain of command. I do not know of any time this organization has turned a Soldier or a family member away. The POC for the 101st association is Sgt. 1st Class Stacy Merriwether the 2nd BCT EOA. His office is in the BCT S1 shop.

Everything is going well. Continue to watch out for your buddies, and leaders keep enforcing the standards.



Col. William B. Hickman
Commander

Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder
CSM

Maj. Jose F. Garcia
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Eagle STRIKE!!!

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2nd Brigade Combat Team - "Strike"

On The Cover:

Sgt. Matthew Hubbard, a native of Lancaster, Calif., with 3rd "Spartans" Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, inspects a chicken coop during a patrol in Radwaniyah, Jan. 3. Spartan platoon troops patrol daily, ensuring the needs of the Iraqis are addressed, ensuring their daily well-being. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

Around Strike AO



(Top Left) Rapid City, S.D. native, Sgt. 1st Class Terry Geraldson, noncommissioned officer-in-charge with the Military Transition Team, 5th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, pulls security at a tactical checkpoint during Ashura, Jan. 17, in Kadhimiyah. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. Public Affairs)



(Right) Kempton, Pa. native, 1st Lt. Michael Henriques, platoon leader with 3rd Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, provides security as Belle Union, Pa. native, Sgt. Jay Gilliam, searches an Iraqi man Jan. 18 in Kadhimiyah. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

ISF takes lead in securing Kadhimiyah during Ashura

Story, photo by
Sgt. James P. Hunter
2nd BCT PAO

KADHIMIYAH, Iraq— Millions of Shia Muslim's moved through the streets of Kadhimiyah over the course of the past couple weeks to celebrate Ashura.

Ensuring these men, women and children were safe, Iraqi Security Forces came together in planning and executing the security in and around Kadhimiyah. It was a joint effort among the ISF and took weeks of planning to ensure the festivities went off without a hitch.

In control of security and planning in Kadhimiyah is the 2nd Division of the Iraqi National Police.

Iraqi army soldiers from the 5th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, set up the outer cordon of Kadhimiyah, and manned tactical checkpoints to search each Iraqi citizen and vehicle entering the

area for explosives and weapons.

The 5-1-6 IA also has 40 female troops within the battalion, and used them—to include 12 other females augmented to the battalion—to search female Iraqi citizens at each checkpoint.

National policemen from the Justice Battalion maintained the inner security of Kadhimiyah, as forces from the 6th Ministry of Interior manned shrine security.

“They went through numerous synchronization meetings at all levels of command for this operation,” said Clarksville, Tenn. native, Capt. Dan Koban, operations advisor, Military Transition Team, 5-1-6 Iraqi army. “They joined together to publish a plan, went through weeks of preparation and it has all come together.”

The security plan was a joint and combined effort using different ISF elements, incorporating coalition air and aviation, to accomplish one single plan; security for the Iraqis, Koban stated. There were three levels of security, with each level of

security getting tighter as it got closer to the Shrine.

The Iraqis also worked with local neighborhood and district council members, local councils and governments, and local clinics engaging every angle they needed to, to ensure overall safety and fidelity.

As Coalition Forces look to move toward tactical over watch, they wanted little involvement in the operation to secure Kadhimiyah. They wanted to step back, and watch the ISF take control of their homeland. All the ISF asked from Coalition Forces was for air assets to patrol the skies above.

Soldiers from Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, traveled between TCPs, giving the ISF added troop strength on the ground.

“We provided just an American presence their to respond to any situation that would develop,” said Andover Township, see **ASHURA**, pg. 10



An Iraqi army soldier with the 5th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, directs traffic at a traffic control point Jan. 19 in Kadhimiyah. Iraqi Security Forces took the lead in controlling security in and around Kadamiyah during Ashura.

Top Guns patrol Radwaniyah

Story, photo by
Sgt. James P. Hunter
2nd BCT PAO

RAWANDIYAH, Iraq—Baghdad is like any normal big city. Throughout the day the streets are lit up, vendors sell their products to passing Iraqis and traffic can be a nightmare. It seems homes are one on top of the other, with what seems to be little privacy to the neighboring person.

Things are a bit different on the outskirts of Baghdad in Radwaniyah—a very rural area. There is no overhead light—with exception to the gazing moon—traffic doesn't seem to be a problem, and the nearest neighbor could be quite some distance away cross many fields and canals.

In areas of Radwaniyah, Iraqi citizens live in mud hut like homes, with minimal electricity. Out back some women prepare meals for their families in a darkened kettle. Clothing hangs from a line behind their homes, where cows and chickens can also be seen. Surrounding these Iraqis home, sit fields of produce—their harvest.

Though relatively safe, the Iraqis are still plagued with a few problems.

The biggest problems they face are lack of electricity, lack of and quality of drinking water, and medical care, said Middleville, Mich. native, 1st Lt. Benjamin Sevald, Spartans platoon leader.

Through home assessments and constant patrols, the troops of 3rd “Spartans” Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, are able to establish positive relationships with the local Iraqis and focus on improving their quality of life.

“My first goal is to keep my (Soldiers) as safe as possible, and to keep the Iraqis in the area as safe as possible, and then to do whatever we can to improve their qual-

ity of life, which I think we are making big steps in that regard right now,” Sevald said.

Perris, Calif. native, Sgt. Ziggy Buenrostro, chief truck commander, with the Spartans platoon, said they are providing good welfare to the local nationals by always keeping them informed, tracking their well-being, ensuring they have the necessary water, and providing school



Pfc. Benjamin Ulery, medic and native of Jay, Maine, with 3rd “Spartans” Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, places a bandage on a Iraqi girl in Radwaniyah, Jan. 3. Spartan platoon troops patrol daily, ensuring the needs of the Iraqis are addressed, ensuring their daily well-being.



Perris, Calif. native, Sgt. Ziggy Buenrostro, chief truck commander with 3rd “Spartans” Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, inspects an Iraqi home during a patrol in Radwaniyah, Jan. 3. Spartan platoon troops patrol daily, ensuring the needs of the Iraqis are addressed, ensuring their daily well-being.

supplies when needed.

“We are doing a great job,” he said.

Currently, the Spartans platoon are working on putting a water pump and filtration system into the area, said Sevald.

Some Iraqis are taking their water from the canals, which can be very hazardous to their health.

During a patrol, Jan. 3, Sevald sat down with a local man who was new to the area.

Arabic writing covered the walls. The man sat on his knees, with an ashtray to his forefront. Rugs and pillows were scattered across the floor, suggesting this was where his family lays their heads at night.

The man was very open to discussion. Troops in the room sipped on Chai Tea while listening to the gentlemen's concerns.

They talked to him about his crop situation, given the fact he was new to the area, said Sevald. He wasn't really sure about some of the irrigation aspects. He expressed his concerns about the electricity and the basic necessities he lacks in his area.

After exchanging their goodbyes, the Iraqi man said, “My house is your house.” It seems the troops were very welcomed.

Further on in the patrol, they came upon two children with warts upon their faces. The medic, Pfc. Benjamin Ulery a native of Jay, Maine, treated the two children and continued on with their mission.

“...you feel the difference when you are wanted,” said Buenrostro who feels when they first started patrolling they got what he called a “stink eye,” but the people warmed up to them, and showed they respected them and their presence.

In most areas he believes the Iraqis, especially the children, are waiting to greet them. “People treat us with respect.”

Earning these Iraqis respect is pertinent, especially to the security aspect, said Sevald. These men and women are the ones who live here, spending their entire

see **PATROL**, pg. 10



Capt. George Morris, commander of Co. B, 2-502 Infantry, and his Soldiers hit the ground running in the opening salvo of Operation Patriot Strike in Ubaydi, Dec. 29, 2007. The operation netted ten suspected al-Qaeda conspirators, who were detained.

Operation Patriot Strike nets AQI suspects

Story, photo by

Sgt. Ben Brody

4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

UBAYDI, Iraq-- Going after al-Qaeda cell leaders in the Ubaydi farmland 20 miles south of Baghdad, U.S. and Iraqi troops launched a three-pronged assault on the area which netted dozens of detainees, Dec. 29.

Soldiers from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, and Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor, along with about 200 Iraqi troops, raided houses and searched fields near the Tigris River.

The operation was planned by Task Force 1-76 Field Artillery, part of 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

As the sun rose through Ubaydi's date palm groves, four Black Hawks landed in a fury of dust and whipping wind. Soldiers from Co. B poured out, their breath steaming in the cold air as they charged straight for a small compound purported to be an al-Qaeda safehouse.

"This is an area where our sources say people are either aligned with al-Qaeda in Iraq or they've been killed or chased away," said Sgt. 1st Class Lyle Whitted, a platoon sergeant with Co. B. "This is the definition of an AQI-controlled area."

The four helicopters soon returned to deliver more troops to the objective.

After determining that 10 men were either associates or close relatives of known AQI leaders, the Soldiers flew back to drop the detainees off at a holding facility before resuming their mission.

Three of the men detained were found in a spider hole by Iraqi troops.

About half of the force on the ground was Iraqi, showing the local populace that Iraqi troops are a legitimate and viable force, committed to reigning in terrorists.

The operation on the southernmost of the three main objectives was planned, led and executed entirely by Iraqi soldiers. The Iraqi troops took 32 detainees that were on their blacklist.

Iraqi police supported the operation by reinforcing the western cordon, preventing AQI fighters from escaping the targeted area.

Throughout the operation, OH-58D Kiowa helicopters fired rockets at suspected weapons caches. Iraqi soldiers also discovered four 120mm mortar rounds and 80 rounds of 20mm anti-aircraft ammunition.

"This was a combined operation including Coalition Forces, Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police units," said Lt. Col. Dane Barksdale, commander of Task Force 1-76.

"The purpose was to clear all reported or suspected enemy safe-houses, meeting locations, and cache sites in the northern portion of [Area of Operations] Anzio. We detained more than 40 enemy and confiscated or destroyed enemy mortar and anti-aircraft ammunition."

Barksdale added that the initial response of the people in the area has been positive and that they appreciated the operation which helped to secure the people in the area.

Barksdale added, "The longer term effect is that the majority of the people in the area are against these enemies of Iraq and there is no place for them to hide because of the partnership that exists between the security forces and the people."

TF Rogue helping boost economy in Baghdad

Story by

1st Lt. Shawn Pardee

1st Bn., 64th AR

The "Desert Rogues" of Task Force Rogue 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, from Fort Stewart, Ga. arrived in the volatile Mansour District of northwest Baghdad in June and were charged with improving the security situation in this former al-Qaeda stronghold. Due to the blood and sweat of the Soldier's and their Iraqi army partners, there has been a drastic decrease of attacks and sectarian violence which once paralyzed the region.

This significant downturn in violence has set the conditions for Task Force Rogue to commence in an operation coined "Rogue Currency." This operation is a simple employment of business theories used to boost the local economies by energizing locally identified economic support zones with micro-grants. Termed "micro-grant," it is a Coalition funded monetary grant of \$2,500 awarded to legitimate local national entrepreneurs to jump-start their new or struggling business. The Desert Rogue's focused these grants in areas of Mansour that were historically avid business districts prior to the fall of the former Saddam Hussein regime.

"There's many ways to defeat this complex insurgency and one is through simple economics and employment. Our micro-grant strategy is bringing goods and jobs to an area that has long suffered from extremist insurgent activity," said Jacksonville, Fla. native, Maj. Chris Budihas, 1st Bn. 64th Armor Regt. operations officer. "These grants are giving the local Iraqis employment and through it hope that the future will be better."

Another significant goal of this operation was to empower and legitimize the local Neighborhood Area Councils as legitimate governing committees. This was achieved by incorporating the NAC into the micro-grant vetting process. The application process is fairly simple. Local entrepreneurs submit an application with specific details surrounding their business-type and business plan to use the grant to improve their store to the NAC.

The NAC then scrutinizes the application to ensure the business venture is legitimate. Once the application is approved it will be submitted to the Coalition to be financed and returned with the awarded money. Once the micro-grants are approved and the identification of the applicants is confirmed, they receive their grant at their local NAC office.

To date, the battalion has awarded

182 micro-grants totaling over \$430,250. The word of the program spread quickly throughout the district. The battalion now has over 700 applications in the approval process. Each award gives a business capital to fix their war damaged stores, and purchase goods or supplies for services. This in turn generates jobs and supports various business markets and customer product demand in the neighborhoods. This cyclic movement of money and goods ultimately contributes to rebuilding portions of the local economy.

The progress of the micro-grant award program is evident as new commerce and customer base are sprouting up throughout the area.

According to Budihas, "The implementation of our micro-grant strategy in our sector has brought to life an area that was al-Qaeda battlefield back in the summer. Daily, these streets were buzzing with bullets and filled with [improvised explosive devices]. Now, they are buzzing with customers buying goods and filled with newly opened business thanks to these small monetary grants."

The Desert Rogues will continue to aggressively employ this strategy to functionally assist the Iraqi people by returning pockets of the city of Baghdad to a sense of normalcy.

526th BSB troops conduct barrier mission

Courtesy Story

Co. A, 526th BSB

Since arriving in theater, Company A of the 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), has been providing barrier movement and emplacement support throughout the greater Baghdad area.

Recently, Alpha Company has been tasked with another mission of a great importance; this one serves many purposes in the support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. It involves the use of concrete barriers; however, these barriers are not your ordinary highway dividers one may find on the road in the United States.

The barriers that are used actually are a lot bigger. In fact, there are several types of barriers all with different heights, lengths, widths, and even shapes. The barriers have the capability of interlocking with each other by placing them side-by-side. Interlocking the barriers provides the ability to block off roads leading into a neighborhood, diverting vehicles through a checkpoint controlled by Iraqi Police. The most commonly used barrier is

called the "Virginia."

For the barrier mission, they have been tasked to support 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment in their area of operations. To support 2-32 FA and help them improve their relations with the local nationals, they provide a forklift, operator, and ground guide for safety while operating under Night Vision Device visibility. The crew emplaces the barriers either as a wall for protection or as a trash collection point. The wall is emplaced to block off roads denying enemy access to neighborhoods or Muhallahs, and the trash collection points are for the people of the neighborhoods to have somewhere to store their trash before it is burnt or disposed of.

According to Sgt. Jesse Veaser, with Co. A, 526th BSB, "The challenges that these neighborhoods face in protecting themselves is totally different than what we go through in the U.S. We have to respect that." The gesture of creating trash points and walls for the neighborhood watch groups to defend themselves helps create a strong bond between the Iraqi people and the Coalition Forces.

see **BARRIER**, pg. 13



Faces of the Heart



photo by Sgt. Ben Brody, 4th BCT, 3rd ID

Soldiers from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), descend down a hill during Operation Patriot Strike in Ubaydi, Dec. 29, 2007



photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT

A Soldier with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), pulls security at a bakery in southern Ghazaliyah, Jan. 14.



photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT

A Soldier with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), talks with a child known to the troops as the "Great Ghaz" during a patrol in southern Ghazaliyah, Jan. 14.



photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT

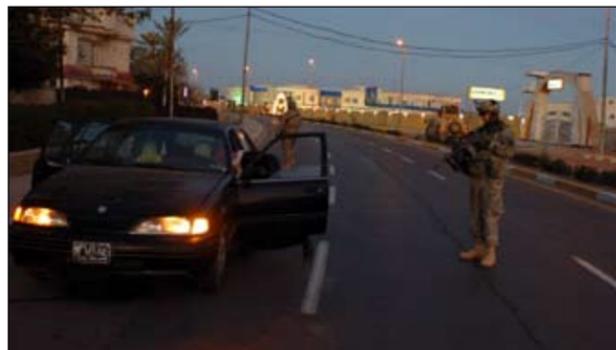
Staff Sgt. Chris Murray, a native of Gresham, Ore., with 3rd "Spartans" Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, pulls security during a patrol in Radwaniyah, Dec. 3. Spartan platoon troops patrol daily, ensuring the needs of the Iraqis are addressed, ensuring their daily well-being.



photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT

Belle Union, Ind. native, Sgt. Jay Gilliam, a squad leader with 3rd Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, talks with Iraqi men in the early morning hours of Jan. 18 in Kadhimiyah.

Troops in Kadhimiyah



photos by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT

Belle Union, Ind. native, Sgt. Jay Gilliam, a squad leader with 3rd Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, pulls security as an Iraqi man opens his vehicle to be searched Jan. 18 in Kadhimiyah.



Rapid City, S.D. native, Sgt. 1st Class Terry Geraldson, noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the Military Transition Team, 5th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, pulls security Jan. 19 while patrolling through Kadhimiyah, inspecting tactical checkpoints.

PATROL

days upon this land. They know who does and does not belong within, and can point out strangers to the platoon.

"It's a pretty rural area, so there isn't a whole lot of people coming in and out," said Sevald. It's mostly the people who live there and their relatives coming through to visit them.

"They're a huge help to us just in that respect," he added.

"We have good communications with the people there," said Buenroostro. "We try our best to help them out."

With that and constant presence from the troops, the security in the area is very good, said Sevald.

"They always talk about how a few years ago it was dangerous in the area," he added. "They couldn't go the market because it was too dangerous there. People didn't feel safe in their homes—there were bombs going off."

Now they feel safe, and "we are trying to keep it that way," he said.

ASHURA

N.J. native, Capt. Brad Henry, commander, Co. D, 1-502nd Inf. Reg. "The real reason we [were] there is really to be a liaison between the air assets that are allocated to the battalion for Ashura. We are the link if something were to happen to the ISF units on the ground."

Coalition troops acted as a back stop to the ISF, who were responsible for the overall security in Kadhimiyah, he said.

Since 2004, Iraqis have been afforded the opportunity to celebrate Ashura, something Saddam would not allow the Shia's to do. The last few years there were no serious incidents besides small arms fire from insurgent forces. This year was no different, except there were no negative incidents reported. No small arms fire; no mortars.

However, the threat was there. The Kadhimiyah Shrine is one of the few Shia monuments unharmed by insurgent activity, said Henry.

"The threat is their but there's been no attacks, and a lot of that credit goes to ISF forces in Kadhimiyah," he further explained. "They do a pretty good job of keeping Kadamiyah locked down from outside extremist organizations."

Kadhimiyah is predominately Shia, explained Henry, and most of the security forces operating in the area are Shia themselves, so they take a lot pride in protecting the Kadhimiyah Shrine.

Kadhimiyah is the central hub of the Shia religion and they have put the right amount of resources and focus there, and according to Koban, "they've got their A-game in Kadhimiyah."

Iraqi Security Forces have had the lead on the security for the processions since day one, said explained.

"It bodes very well for the future. They still require support and attention from Coalition forces to get them where they need to go, but where they are at now, the ISF, compared to where they were two years ago is light years ahead..." Henry said. "The fact that they can secure Kadhimiyah with very, very little coalition support is very promising. The amount of Coalition Force input into the planning process was very low."

Henry believes Coalition Forces are well on their way of handing Kadhimiyah over to the Iraqi Security Forces with minimal coalition input and presence, allowing them to move into more of an over-watch role.

"I think the success they've had during Ashura says we can get to that point in the future," he continued.

Now with Ashura over, and the success fresh in their minds, it's time to look toward the future.

Their focus now, especially with the continued peace throughout northwest Baghdad, is on soldierly training—especially among the noncommissioned officers and junior troops, or jundi, said Woodbridge, Va. native, Capt. Jeffrey Mackinnon, team chief, MiTT, 5-1-6 IA.

"We want to develop their NCO corps so they are capable of executing things without a US force," he said. "That's our goal in the end, so we're pushing them to take charge in their operations. We're pushing them to take more charge with their personnel and logistics mission."

"These guys are willing, able and confident and want to move forward... once the higher level Iraqi army comes on line then these guys will take the next step forward," Koban said.

Anthropologist helping troops understand needs of Iraqis

Story, photo by
Sgt. James P. Hunter
2nd BCT PAO

To measure economic growth, one must venture out into the community and interact with the local populace. In the streets of Baghdad, a simple minded person from a foreign land can look at the streets cluttered with trash, roads bent out of shape and think poverty, "third-world country." But it goes deeper than that to some of the simpler things of life: the produce.

Before being "thin" or "chiseled" were the so called thing in Western societies, wealth was measured by how healthy one ate, which meant people were predominately thicker; in turn, wealthier.

In Iraq food is no different, said Dr. Marcus Griffin. Wealthier Iraqis eat rice, lamb and fish. Poorer individuals eat bread, eggs and beans. However, all Iraqis have one thing in common: their daily intake of cucumbers and tomatoes. The difference here is the quality of these products.

"These are quick indicators of market infrastructure," Griffin said.

Economic growth can easily be measured by the quality of produce in these inner-city markets, he said.

Griffin, an anthropologist, is helping Soldiers and leaders from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), better understand the needs and living conditions of the Iraqi citizens in northwest Baghdad. Griffin is a 40-year-old professor who put his teaching on hold for a year to bring his knowledge and experience to the fight.

Using anthropology and sociology methods, he tries to determine whether the micro-grants are having any

affect on the communities. Griffin often looks at the quality of produce, the quality of fish, and where they are getting their tomatoes. This helps him assess the growing economy. The better the quality, the more the economy is growing.

"His expertise in analyzing the type of food being sold in the markets has been useful," said Shreveport, La. native, Capt. Thomas H. Melton, commander of Troop A, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment. "He was able to explain that the markets in my [area of operations] are receiving poor quality fruits and vegetables, indicating



Capt. Thomas H. Melton, a native of Shreveport, La., and commander of Troop A, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, and Dr. Marcus Griffin, anthropologist for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) talk with an Iraqi woman inside her home in Ghazaliyah, Iraq, Jan. 13. Griffin is helping Soldiers better understand the needs and living conditions of the Iraqi people.

that the area is fairly poor and malnourished."

Recently, Griffin toured the markets in southern Ghazaliyah with Strike Soldiers from Troop A, 1-75th Cav.

There are four markets in southern Ghazaliyah: 8th Street, Nafla, Afran, and Zawia.

"All four have shown substantial growth since my [transfer of authority] in early December. With the exception of Zawia, the markets are all traditional, open air markets with bakeries, butcher shops, and fruit and vegetable stands," he said. "These markets cater to the residents of Ghazaliyah from within the Muhallahs.

Zawia Market is more like a western style strip mall that caters to traffic on a main highway."

Over the past year, there was heavy fighting in the area, damaging much of the market, but with security set, the economy is seeing much growth.

"Store owners are returning everyday, but this market is very much in a rebuilding phase. The other markets are each seeing expansion, specifically Nafla and Afran," Melton said. "The presence of new stores, including restaurants, indicates that the economy is improving and the

people feel secure."

Griffin wanted to see the economic boost and help identify the needs of these Iraqis to help the economy grow even more, because, according to Griffin, "A bakery can change a neighborhood with just the basic necessity of bread. It can cause change, especially to the economy."

And that is where Griffin started his day, at the local bakery talking with some of its workers.

According to Melton, the doctor has taken special interest in this bakery

and "will help us facilitate a micro grant approval for this business in order to study the effects that the micro grant process has on the community."

The smell of freshly baked bread straight out of the kiln filled the afternoon air as they approached the bakery. Three men worked inside under no lighting except for the glow of the fire baking the bread. The bakery sells nearly 10 pieces at a time at 1,250 dinars. But keeping the business running is a problem. Having the money to purchase flour and fuel can be quite difficult.

A micro-grant is just what they need to see **GRIFFIN**, pg. 17

Top Guns hold MEDOP for school children, families

Story, photos by
Sgt. James P. Hunter
2nd BCT PAO

Al SWAIB, Iraq—When four Sheiks from al Swaib got together during a council meeting in November they came to the conclusion the people, especially the children, in their area needed vaccinations and medical care.

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), responded when they held a medical operation (MEDOP) at the al Swaib School, Jan. 16.

However, this wasn't just a U.S. ran operation. Iraqi army soldiers from the 3rd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division pulled outer security and controlled the crowd; while Iraqi doctors, physicians, nurses, pharmacists and a dentist, worked side-by-side with their American counterparts to meet the needs of the Iraqi citizens.

Nearly 300 children and 150 Iraqi adults were seen by the doctors that day, said McComb, Miss. native, Capt. Melvin Jackson, civil affairs officer, 1st Bn., 320th FA.

There is only one physician in the area available to react to the peoples needs; Dr. Abass, said Jackson. He currently does not have a working staff, the money nor resources to fully aid his fellow citizens.

Though Dr. Abass is regarded as "...the town hero," because of his professionalism and demeanor to aid his Iraqi friends and neighbors, he can only do so much and help is needed, according to Miami native, Sgt. Jason Torres, a medic with the personnel security detachment platoon, 1st Bn., 320th FA.

Jackson remembered a specific incident where a young child, who must have been no more than six years old, had an ear infection.

"Back in the states if we had an ear infection we go see the local doctor and get the necessary antibiotics or medication to take care of it," Jackson said. "This kid had what I consider a mild ear infection, but because it was untreated or he just didn't have the access to a local doctor or medicine to treat it he became very dizzy and disoriented and it messed up his inner equilibrium."

The boy was eventually seen by a local doctor, taken to the Abu Ghraib hospital outside the area and treated.

"Something mild became worse than it originally was, and

for that reason they need local health care to deal with minor issues, cuts, abrasions, flu before it turns into something major like pneumonia, severe ear infection or bronchitis," Jackson continued.

Jackson hopes the Ministry of Health recognizes Dr. Abass' clinic as a health care center and provide the clinic with health care personnel to assist the Iraqi doctor in treating the local nationals in the area, both medically and pharmaceutically.

These are all hopes for a better future, today was simply a chance for the Iraqi and US physicians to reach out to the locals in al Swaib.

"...it highlights Iraqis helping Iraqis. You have the Iraqi Army securing the event. You've got local national nurses and doctors giving back to the community. So, ultimately, the long term effect of this is to get Iraq to sustain themselves, and this is a small step towards that," Jackson said.

On this day, the physicians saw everything from upper respiratory infections to tooth aches.

Torres, who worked with Dr. Abass during the MEDOP, said "I personally feel this builds a better relationship between us and the Iraqis; especially when we talk about the medical field, we get to find out what our strength and weaknesses are. Most importantly it benefits the Iraqi people; they get the medical attention they need."



Little Rock, Ark. native, Capt. John Batson, dentist, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, numbs the mouth of an Iraqi child prior to removing her tooth during a medical operation, Jan. 16, at al Swaib School. Iraqi and U.S. doctors, physicians, pharmacists and dentists aided the men, women and children of al Swaib.



photo by Spc. Charles W. Gill, 55th Combat Camera

Spc. Terrill Welge, Civil Military Operations Team, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery, 1st Infantry Division, arm wrestles with a young local boy in Hateen, Iraq, Jan. 3.

BARRIER

"It is one of the most important reasons we are here," Vesser stated of helping create bonds.

Only 18 barriers are emplaced when establishing trash collection points. However when emplacing a wall, the barriers can range in number between 36 and 40 at a time. During a quick mission the forklift crew lead by Vesser emplaced 81 barriers in 6 hours. That is a tremendous accomplishment.

"Working with 2-32 to improve these neighborhoods is easy for us," says Sgt. James Aycock, Co. A, 526th BSB. "They [2-32 FA] protect us and our forklift and talk to these guys [Iraqi citizens from each Muhallah] before we come out to get exactly how they want the barriers emplaced in their [Iraqi] neighborhood."

There is no mission that these troops has not taken on and completed, and continues to learn in order to provide faster and safer ways to support the Strike Brigade Combat Team.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eduardo Carranza, Co. A, 526th BSB

Sgt. Jesse Vesser of Company A, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), finishes the emplacement of the last barrier at a trash collection point.



photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO

Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) shakes hands with Command Sgt. Maj. Wayne St. Louis, of the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, Jan. 15.

Helping one child at a time

Story by
Maj. Tim Hayden
1st Bn., 64th AR

BAGHDAD-- Early this past summer, Task Force Rogue began an enduring series of medical support operations called Operation Rogue Aims. Rogue Aims was designed to cover all aspects of the battalion's cooperative medical engagements, regardless of scope.

At the beginning of December, TF Rogue took control of the Military Transition Team working with one of three of their counterpart Iraqi army/Police Battalions. An unofficial part of the relief in place between the task force team and the outgoing team was to take over care for a young boy wounded in an IED attack last spring. The previous team found this child as they cleared houses along with the IA in the summer-long fight to secure the neighborhood of Jamia. No Soldier worth his boots can bypass a wounded child—it violates everything troops fight and stand for. The team made a commitment that day to doing everything they could to make a difference.

They evacuated the boy to the 28th Combat Support Hospital in the International Zone—Baghdad. This is where the most serious of wounded go. The doctors there were able to save his leg and patch up the wounds to the rest of his body. He had a partial amputation of a finger, a shattered femur, severe burns, and severe shrapnel injuries across most of his lower body. After his initial surgery, the team checked on the young boy from time to time at his home in Jamia. Unfortunately, the care he received from his family was not the greatest.

see CHILD, pg. 16

Troops resume IED clearance

Story by
Capt. Brian J. Tritten
Co. A, 2nd BSTB

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – On November 17, 2007, Sappers from Company A, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, began their second year of route clearance operations in Iraq with the official transfer of authority from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division to 2nd BCT, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), making Baghdad an even safer place to live. It was approximately two years ago when the Sappers first attended the Task Force Iron Claw Academy located on Camp Liberty and prepared to clear the roads in and around southwest Baghdad. It was from those experiences and a tough year of training at Fort Campbell that have created such a successful team.

In late 2005, during the Soldier's first training session in Baghdad, not a single Soldier from the company had ever participated in this type of mission nor had they ever even really seen it in action other than in a few news reports. Although the concept of route clearance was not new to the Army, the use of the new technology, specialty vehicles, and tactics, techniques and procedures was impressive to see in action. There was a steep learning curve ahead and the Soldiers hit it head on.

The Soldiers executed a tough mission that year and are now back

see CLEARANCE, pg. 21

CF, IA work together to clear out al-Qaeda

Story by
Pfc. Amanda McBride
4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE KALSU, Iraq - Coalition Forces teamed up with Iraqi army soldiers to conduct an operation focused on securing an area south of Baghdad known as Chaka Four Region, Jan. 10.

Troops from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, and the 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division seized weapon caches and detained suspected al-Qaeda in Iraq members during Operation Nanos II, the first joint operation between the units.

More than 50 suspects were detained, including one individual believed to be behind the assassination of prominent sheik Imad Ghurtani last November. Soldiers also discovered a bomb-making facility and destroyed two large-caliber mortar systems, according to Lt. Col. Mike Getchell, commander of the 2-502nd Inf. Regt., currently attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

"This operation removed the yoke of intimidation on the population of Chaka four," said Getchell, adding the next step will be recruitment and installation of Concerned Local Citizens in the former AQI stronghold.

1st Lt. Brian Roberts, 1st platoon leader, Company C, 2-502nd Inf. Regt., described the IA's abilities on the mission.

"(The IA) were really excited to get out there and do it," said Roberts, from Redding, Pa. "They have a much better feel for who's good and who's bad."

After improving security, the unit's goal is to begin reconstruction in the area, Roberts said.

"We are now trying to transition into the building stage," Roberts said. "Where we can start reconstructing roads and getting the schools back up.

"Overall, I would say this mission was a success. It should set us up for future operations in our Company," Roberts said.

Partnership brings hope to new year

Story by
1st Lt. Raymond Ashworth
1st Bn., 64th AR

A promising new year comes to the Khadra neighborhood in northwest Baghdad, as the partnership between Khadra's Concerned Local Citizens and the 1st Battalion, 6th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division continues to grow.

"We are very pleased with the progress the CLC have made this past month," said Colonel Ra'ad Isma'il, the battalion commander of 1-6-2 INP. "I look forward to seeing even more progress from them and the security of Khadra over the next few months."

The Khadra CLCs were hired in December of 2007 as a way to further involve the local citizenry with the security of the city. The CLC groups resemble a cross between a neighborhood watch and a militia in their organization. They first arose in Iraq's Al-Anbar Province in rejection of Al-Qaeda ideology, and have since spread to nearly every Sunni area in the country. The idea was to train local men and then give them births into the Iraqi Police Academies or other government employment. Once they graduated from the academies they would return to their own city as an Iraqi Police Officer and as part of the Iraqi Government.

Since their formation in December, the Khadra CLC has been trained by the 1-6-2 INP, the Iraqi Security Forces responsible for security in Khadra. They have learned how to patrol as a team, clear buildings, and search vehicles. For the past month, the Khadra CLC have worked with the National Police on the seven different traffic control points along Khadra's main roads.

"They [the CLC] have proven to be a valuable asset," remarked Ocala, Fla. native, Capt. Daniel Cannon, the commander of Company C, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). "Since we and the national police started working with them, we've arrested six Al-Qaeda members from intelligence

see **PARTNERSHIP**, pg. 20

Soldier delivers toys to Iraqi school

Northern Colorado radio station sets up toy drive on behalf of Soldier's request to aid Iraqi children

Story, photo by
Sgt. James P. Hunter
2nd BCT PAO

When Sgt. Lee Cooper of Fort Collins, Colo., visited Banasig Primary School in the Da Woodi muhallah of northwest Baghdad in mid-November with his tactical physiological operations team, the Headmaster of the school pointed out to him the children did not have any toys or educational supplies to keep them occupied during the school day.

The school, teaching kindergarten students, has four classrooms with seven teachers.

"The classrooms were virtually empty," said Cooper, with the 324th PSYOP Company, currently attached to the 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, "and there was very little with which the teachers could occupy the children."

Soon enough he would be able to answer the prayers of these Iraqi children.

For quite some time, Cooper had been in contact with a radio station back in his hometown in northern Colorado. Fox News affiliate, AM 600 KCOL, at one point asked him "if there was anything they could do to support us and our efforts in Iraq."

Cooper mentioned his visit to the school, and their lack of toys and school supplies to stimulate their learning process, and asked if they could spearhead a toy drive to support the school.

"As a result of the coverage by the radio station, several northern Colorado businesses got involved in providing support," Cooper said. "The toy drive ran for one full week, book ending the Thanksgiving holiday. The toys arrived in Baghdad just days before Christmas."

With that, Cooper set forth to deliver these toys to the much eager and anxious children, Jan. 7. With 12 large, quite heavy boxes,

Cooper brought in the toys, and in the end smiles to the faces of these Iraqi children.

Within the boxes were everything from art supplies and construction paper, to soccer balls, pumps, blocks, stuffed animals and toy cars, said Cooper. "Everything you could imagine."

"We've established a relationship with the school," said 1st Lt. Adam Buchanan, Fire Support Officer, Company D, 1st Bn., 64th

tion, however, dates back to when he was 18 and took a trip to Europe.

"I remember vividly being approached by an elderly Frenchman who recognized me as an American," he said. "My grandfather had fought in Europe during the Second World War, and [the Frenchman] still wanted to express his appreciation and his gratitude for what America had done for his country when he was a child."

The elderly Frenchman had very vivid memories of the kindness that Americans had shown to the children when they were in Europe, Cooper continued.

"I had always thought that whenever I interact with Iraqis, especially Iraqi children... I want to do everything I can so one day when my kids or my grandkids come to this part of the world they may be approached by an elderly Iraqi or somebody who again has warm memories of what American Soldiers did for them when we were on their soil," Cooper said.

With that very kindness American Soldiers bring, it's the future they are affecting.

"The kids are the future of Iraq; there's no question about it," said Cooper. "The change that's going to happen in this country isn't going to happen within the next year or five years. Fundamental change is going to occur over the next generations, and the foundations for that change are going to be how these kids growing up today how they're going to view us as Americans, how they're going to view their neighbors.

"What we're doing right now, and the interactions the American soldiers have with kids makes it much more difficult for the enemy to demonize the American forces..." he continued.

With his tour in Iraq ending shortly, he feels this was a great ending note, or summarization of his tour.

"Personally it's been an incredibly rewarding experience," he said. "Anytime I get to deal with kids I just get a kick out of it."



Fort Collins, Colo. native, Sgt. Lee Cooper, with the 324th Psychological Operations Company, poses for a photo with an Iraqi child and his new stuffed animal at the Banasig Primary School in the Da Woodi muhallah of northwest Baghdad, Jan. 7. Thanks to the efforts of Sgt. Lee Cooper and a northern Colorado radio station, they were able to bring toys and educational supplies to the children of the school.

AR. "We just want to continue to show we care."

Cooper, who himself has a son the very age of these children, felt inspired to give to the children of this small school. The inspira-

On Patrol



Capt. Iain Mackay, native of Scotland, with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), pulls security in Ghazaliyah, Jan. 5. Mackay is originally with the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, of the British Army, currently attached to the brigade under the Exchange Officer Program. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. Public Affairs)



A Soldier from 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, provides security at the hospital in Yarmouk, Iraq.

On Patrol

photo by Spc. Charles W. Gill, 55th Combat Camera

Troops deliver school supplies

Story by
1st Lt. Raymond Ashworth
1st Bn., 64th AR

KHADRA, Iraq- The students at Ibn Kaldun Primary School, in the Khadra District of Baghdad, Iraq, never thought there would be a day they'd want to stay at school any longer than they had to. Up until 11:30 a.m. it was just like any other day for them. That was before Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor, along with Iraqi army troops from 1st Battalion, 6th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division arrived at the primary school with much needed school supplies.

They brought over 600 backpacks filled with school supplies. Each bag contained a notebook, folders, paper, a ruler, scissors, pens, pencils, colored pencils, pencil sharpeners, and erasers. When the Soldiers finished passing out the bags, they had given out 470 backpacks.

"The size of this school can be deceiving," said Camden, S.C. native, Staff Sgt. Donta Brown, with Co. C, 1st Bn., 64th Armor Regiment. "The kids seem to come out of the woodwork for such a small school."

Ibn Kaldun Primary School is different from most Iraqi schools. Most primary

schools in Iraq start their day at 8 a.m. and end at 12:30 p.m. However, Ibn Kaldun is two schools in one. The morning school has traditional hours while an afternoon school is from 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. The Ibn Kaldun also gives remedial classes for older students trying to return to school.

The small size of the school compared to its large roster has not gone unnoticed by the Soldiers of Charlie Company. Enough supplies were brought for both school periods. Due to the school's large amount of students and funding shortages, the students would normally have to share school supplies.

"Anything we can do to bring some normality to these kids' lives is a good thing," said Auburn, Ark. native, 1st Lt. James Gallagher, platoon leader for Co. C. "We normally do that by making sure they're safe from Al-Qaeda. But today we're making sure they don't have to share school supplies by giving them their own."

Gallagher went on to say that they plan on doing more for the school than just hand out school supplies. His company is currently working with the school's headmistress, Amara Abdullah Muhammad, and the Khadra Neighborhood Area Council to get funding to help expand the school by building four to six more classrooms.

Senator's visit Strike troops, tour AO



photos by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO

U.S. Senator Norm Coleman from Minnesota walks with a Soldier from the 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), in a Ghazaliyah market, Jan. 5. Three U.S. senators visited Strike Brigade troops and toured markets in Ghazaliyah to see the continued security and economic progress.



U.S. Senator John Cornyn from Texas (left) and Senator Johnny Isakson from Georgia talk with a Soldier from the 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, and an Iraqi citizen in a Ghazaliyah market, Jan. 5. Three U.S. senators visited Strike Brigade troops and toured markets.

CHILD

He essentially remained motionless on the floor of his home for months on end. His shattered femur did not heal properly, despite the external fixator emplaced during the initial surgery, and he suffered from infections. Rogue MiTTs team medic, Sgt. Pertuit, took a personal interest in the young boy. As the team transitioned, so too did the care of the boy. During mission planning, they planned routes that allowed them to visit and check on the boy. At first he remained nameless; during pre-mission briefs he was just 'the little crippled kid.' But, with Christmas fast approaching, and in the holiday spirit motivated by classic Christmas episodes of the TV show Southpark and Charles Dickens "A Christmas Carol," he soon became known as 'Little Timmy, or Tiny Tim.' The team set a goal to get him cleaned up and home for Christmas.

The previous team had already coordinated for an additional surgery and Pertuit immediately took over. Pertuit is no ordinary combat medic—he also holds an additional skill identifier as an orthopedic technician. He knew exactly what had to be done

to save the boy's leg and allow him any chance of ever walking normally again. The team transported Little Timmy to the CSH for a four day surgical stay. While there, he was treated by a world class surgical team who removed the external fixator and replaced it with a plate to stabilize the leg. They also re-cast his ankle to set it at the right angle to heal properly, cleaned his lower leg of severe skin infections, and began the first round of physical therapy to regain mobility in the frozen joints.

Four day's later, kids ran excitedly in the streets when they saw the patrol pull up in front of his Spartan home to return Tiny Tim to his parents. Pertuit carefully explained all the instructions to the boy's family and made a promise to continue to check on the boy and monitor his progress. Hopefully this time he will get the care he needs from his family and continues physical therapy to regain normal use of his leg.

TF Rogue will continue to check on him as they patrol through the sector. With their first goal of having him home by Christmas accomplished, they've set the next one: to see him play soccer with the rest of his siblings and friends in Jamia now that the streets are safe to do so.

Westlake, Ohio, helps bring holidays to BSTB troops

Courtesy Story
Co. B, 2nd BSTB

Despite the arid climate and the balmy weather, members of Company B, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), enjoyed the 2007 Holiday Season with all the traditional trimmings thanks to the citizens of Westlake, Ohio.

Bravo Company, a military intelligence unit, and the City of Westlake have a unique bond which formed in mid-2007. Both parties independently applied to a program called America Supporting Americans. ASA is a non-profit organization that links individual units in all branches of the military with communities across the country. The hope of ASA is that the relationships facilitated by their organization will continue for decades to come. In fact, since ASA inception in 1967, the organization's Adopt-A-Unit program has united over 100 cities in 15 states with deserving military units around the world.

In April 2007, Capt. Nicole Ussery, the current company commander of Company B, nicknamed the Nighthawks, contacted ASA. As a new commander, Ussery sought to find ways to improve morale and support for her troops in preparation for the unit's deployment to Iraq. Simultaneously, she petitioned the city of Westlake, her hometown, to join the program and agree to adopt her company. Enthusiastically, the city of Westlake agreed and appointed Ms. Vera Goss and the city's liaison officer. Soon after, Ms. Goss made contact with Ussery and so the partnership began.

The Nighthawks deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, in October 2007, for their scheduled 15 month deployment. After the initial excite-

ment associated with getting to know the environment, Soldiers' began to realize that they would spend the holidays without family and friends. The company first sergeant, 1st Sgt. Ira Turner, from North Little Rock, Ark., commented, "The holidays in a combat zone often come and go with little fanfare. It is just another day and it can sometimes get you down."

The city of Westlake recognized the Soldiers needed support during this time and organized a holiday drive to collect decorations, lights, letters, and baked goods to send to the troops in time for the holiday season. The support was overwhelming. The city of Westlake sent approximately 40 boxes of decorations; all donated by the caring citizens of Westlake and surrounding communities which arrived to the company over the course of four days in mid November 2007.

1st Lt. Caroline Kennedy, from Scarborough, Maine, and a first time deployed Soldier, was astonished by Westlake's thoughtfulness, "I never expected so many decorations, cards and letters. The decorations brighten everyone's holiday and remind us that America truly cares about the mission we are here [in Iraq], to do. I know that I appreciate their tremendous efforts."

The Nighthawks have recently taken the holiday decorations down now that the 2007 holiday season is over, however, the company stored them for next year and hope to pass them on to the unit that will replace them in 2009.

Ussery stated, "Our deployments are long and at times, tedious. Being away from home is never easy. This Christmas has by far been the most enjoyable that I've experienced in Iraq. We owe that largely in part to the people of Westlake and especially to Ms. Goss for organizing the entire drive. I am humbled by Westlake's dedication, and the Nighthawks look forward to our continued partnership with Westlake for many years to come."

GRIFFIN

boost their business and the community as a whole.

Griffin toured much of the area that day, spending quality time with an Iraqi family. They sipped on Chai Tea, ate lamb patties and discussed much of their needs in the area. Their needs, however, mostly dealt with the electricity. Lately, they are only getting a half-hour of electricity a day. Meanwhile, Griffin noted all the difficulties they are facing, hoping to fully understand their needs and what it would take to satisfy their desires.

"The biggest needs of the Iraqi people are the improvement of essential services. The residents average between one and two hours of electricity per day. The lack of electricity forces them to spend much of their income on black market fuel to run generators," said Melton. "Additionally, it prevents the sewage pump stations from working, which contributes to the bad standing water problems in the streets."

Griffin also stopped at a fruit stand during his visit, oddly noticing it selling coconut—a rarity, to his knowledge, in Iraq. This here shows signs of growth, having the ability to bring in an exotic, luxurious food.

"As we move toward tactical over watch, we need to see visual indicators quickly of how the community and economy is doing; see the growth within," said Griffin. "It keeps a pulse on the population."

Combat Patch



photo courtesy of 4-10 Cav.

A Soldier with the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), receives his combat patch during a ceremony at Camp Liberty, Iraq, Jan. 12.



101st Airborne Division Association Membership Drive



Why Join the 101st Airborne Division Association?

Joining the 101st Airborne Division Association will:

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- maintain camaraderie amongst past and present Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division

- preserve the memory of those who served

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Field Artillery Troops on Patrol in Baghdad



(Above) Cpl. James Baker, with the Civil Military Operations Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, takes a knee and scans his sectors for enemy activity while on patrol in Yarmouk, Iraq. (Below) 1st Lt. Michael Hayhurst and Sgt. 1st Class Rickie Jackson of 1st Platoon, Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, engage a local man to stay in touch with the community in Baghdad. (U.S. Army photos courtesy of 2-32 FA)



CLEARANCE

defeating the improvised explosive devices and their emplacers once again. A lot has changed since the company's last deployment. The Soldiers now operate in the northwest portion of Baghdad in an area much more built up than last time with homes, businesses, and major highways. The terrain has forced the Soldiers to adjust their tactics to meet new trends and requirements, all of which were trained on during their second time through the Task Force Iron Claw Academy and at home prior to deployment.

The success of the route clearance teams has seemed to have had a large impact on the population and enemy's ability to emplace his weapon. "Route clearance operations within our area of operation have been very quiet since the transfer of authority. Overall, it appears that the coalition efforts to clean up the AO are working," says 1st Lt. Blake, Sapper Platoon Leader from Hope

Taking the Lead



photo courtesy of 4-10 Cav.

Col. Hassan, commander, 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, discusses vehicle passes with an Iraqi woman, Jan. 31. This began the implementation of the new vehicle pass system adopted by the leadership of Ameriyah, giving the Iraqi Security Forces a greater role in controlling security in Ameriyah.

PARTNERSHIP

the CLC provided."

Cannon further explains that because of their success on the TCP, he and his counterpart, Ra'ad, have decided to expand the CLC use into the neighborhoods of Khadra. In fact, earlier this week, January 8, the national police and the Khadra CLC jointly established a new TCP inside of Khadra proper.

The Khadra CLC program has not only proved successful in security, but as a program. 61 of the 155 Khadra CLC members have already reported to the Iraqi Police Academy in Yarmuk and should graduate in the middle of March.

Mills, N.C. This has also given the Soldiers more of an opportunity to work with the population on many positive interactions.

Concerned Local Citizen groups are now assisting in keeping the streets clear and the IEDs out. These personnel paired with a stronger more capable Iraqi Army and Police forces are bringing about many positive changes to this once badly beaten up area of Baghdad. As a team working together, the Sappers and Iraqis are keeping the streets clear of IEDs and safe for the local population to do their daily activities.

There is still a long year ahead for the company and many missions to be conducted. It will undoubtedly seem tedious at times driving ever so slowly down the road looking for IEDs, but as Sgt. 1st Class Foreman, from Allegany, N.Y., puts it, "Each device removed from the street or deterred from being emplaced by our presence is a life saved from pain and suffering or even worse death and that's well worth our efforts."

Reconstruction efforts continue in northwest Baghdad

Story by
Sgt. Mark Matthews
27th PAD

As security in Baghdad continues to improve, Soldiers remain vigilant in their mission to not only protect the Iraqi people, but to provide them financial assistance as well.

Local Iraqi business owners and future business owners lined up in front of Joint Security Station Khadra to receive micro grants from the U.S. military in order to repair their shops, start a business, or buy goods to restock the shelves, Jan. 13.

"We paid out 13 micro grants worth about \$31,500", said Battle Creek, Mich., native Cpt. Jason Alday, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, currently attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). "This basically helps stimulate the economy throughout the Khadra area."

Each local business owner or hopeful business owner in Khadra must meet basic requirements and go through an application process in order to be eligible for a micro grant.

"Business owners looking to receive a micro grant must first fill out an application and state what their business is and where they live, and as long as long as they own a business, rent a store or plan on renting or owning a store in Khadra, the grants are available to them," said Redlinds, Calif., native 1st Lt. Raymond

Ashworth, C Company, 1st Bn., 64th Armor Regt.

These micro grants not only help local business get back on their feet, but also provides business owners with peace of mind in knowing these grants do not have to be paid back and they are contributing to positive way of life, absent of terrorism, for the Iraqi people.

"These are something they do not have to pay back," Ashworth said. "We're handing them out in order to start up the economy, which helps us fight terrorism because as long as people are enjoying their lives and starting businesses they are not going to want to support (terrorism)."

Each individual micro grant was worth up to \$2,500 and was given to a Khadra citizen to help improve their existing business or start a new business.

"(Business owners) can use these funds to buy supplies and merchandise for their shops or fix broken windows and broken doors," Alday said. "This basically revitalizes the economy in this area."

These 13 micro grants were the most recent of 182 micro grants totaling more than \$400,000. These were the first given to the people of Khadra, but Alday says he's seen these work in other areas before.

"We've seen from other areas that after we paid out these micro grants, to local business owners, other stores in the area who didn't receive micro grants would open as well, just based on the perception of security and economic activity in the area," Alday said.

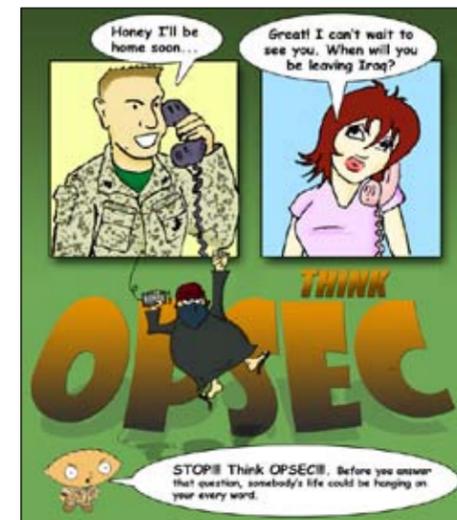
The micro grants seem to really be paying off for other business owners who have received grants. Other financial districts in Baghdad have begun to flourish as a result. The hope is Khadra will be no different.

"(Micro grants) have really been taking hold and everyone seems to always ask about them," Alday said. "Phone Card Road for example has about 1,000 stores in a two mile stretch and maybe 50 of these stores were open. Now, due to our micro grants we are seeing upwards of 300 of these stores open."

"In about two weeks we will return and have a look at each store to see if the money is being used for what (the business owners) said it would be used for," Alday said. "For the most part, we are pretty pleased with what they are doing and if they aren't spending the money on their stores, they are still putting the money into the economy, which still helps out in the long run."

Although Alday was the man behind the desk handing out the money to local business owners in Khadra, he also said the operation is a team effort and takes the hard work of many Soldiers to successfully accomplish the mission.

Micro grants, like these, continue the reconstruction efforts in Baghdad by allowing financial district to grow and expand. As time progresses, more stores and markets are expected to flourish as a result of the steadfast and loyal Soldiers of the Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



Strike

Lt. Col. Curtis Carson, deputy commanding officer, and Col. William B. Hickman, commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), take notes while speaking with Iraqi political officials. (Photo by Amb. John Bennett, PRT Team Leader)

Troops fabricate weapons platforms for Soldiers at security stations

Story, photo by
Sgt. Aaron Nester
Co. B, 526th BSB

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq- The Soldiers from Company B, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) are making weapons platforms for use in Joint Security Stations throughout northwest Baghdad.

The weapons platforms are made by the Soldiers of the service section in the company. These platforms allow tower guards the flexibility to mount different crew served weapons depending on their mission; they also provide stability ensuring positive control and the accuracy needed for defeating insurgent actions.

These mounts are a base plate with a multiple use pintle adapter welded on the base plate along with a butt stock rest and four supports to emplace the mount on the tower wall. The pattern was derived from a prototype. Strike Brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder, who also ensured these mounts were delivered and emplaced at the JSSs, expressed through conversation that the tower

guards were delighted to be able to use these mounts. The shop set up an assembly system in order to increase production time. Each of the welders prepared the metal parts ensuring they were cut to the proper size and ready to assemble. Once the parts were ready for five to seven mounts, the welders would assist each other in finishing the mounts. The welders ensured that all fabricated parts were securely mounted and welded in place to ensure that the platforms provided a solid base for the weapon crew. The manufacture of these weapons mounts is provided by the service section, lead by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Byrin Wheatley.

“These weapons mounts will assist our Soldiers at the JSS towers allowing them to provide the over-watch protection at the right location at the right time,” said Wheatley.

Each of these mounts takes about four hours to produce. The service section has produced over 20 mounts and is preparing to manufacture more with improvements suggested by the weapons crews. Most of the materials are kept on hand at the shop where they can be used for different projects, although some specialty items are more difficult to acquire. The Soldiers have learned how to network and use Army resources to accomplish their mission.

The welding is accomplished under a clamshell shaded area which provides minimal protection from the wind and blowing sand.

“It is good to know that our work contributes to the mission Soldiers are doing out in Baghdad; it gives me a feeling of accomplishing something worth-while” said Pfc. Patrick Todd, a native of Madisonville, Ky.

When compared to other projects this shop has accomplished, this is one of the less complex jobs. These welders have put armor on forklifts, created security doors and walk-through gates, designed and manufactured armor plates and windows for guard towers, and made counter improvised explosive device rollers. No job is too great or too small for the Soldiers of the company’s service section. They will do whatever they are tasked to keep the Soldiers of the Strike Brigade in the fight.

The Service section consists of Wheatley, Todd, Sgt. Aaron Nestor from Pittsburgh, Pa., and Spc. Philip Price, a native of Marbury, Ala. The service section has produced over 20 mounts and is preparing to manufacture more with improvements suggested by the weapons crews.



Pfc. Patrick Todd, a Madisonville, Ky. native, of Company B, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2 Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), completely welds a pintle adapter to the mount base-plate.



On Patrol with 1-75 Cav.
(Right) Soldiers with the 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, patrol through a Ghazaliyah market, while (left) a troop pulls security during a visit to the area by three U.S. Senators, Jan. 5. Northwest Baghdad continues to improve its security and economy. (U.S. Army photos by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO)



Signal troops conduct CMOC security mission

Story by
Capt. Stephen M. Marshall
Co. C, 2nd BSTB

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HAWK, Iraq – Troops of Company C, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion does more than just communications support. A fire team comprised of Cable Systems Installer/Maintainer’s and Radio RETRANS Operator’s has provided security for Company B, 492nd Civil Affairs Battalion’s Civil Military Operation mission.

Though these Signal Soldiers are specialists in their communications field, intensive training at home station has given them the ability to perform the security task. The daily security mission gives the CMOC the ability to help local nationals find detained loved ones, provide a venue for claims, meet with contractors, gather passive information and continue to be a conduit for open communications in the local community.

Sgt. Brandy McPherson has worked the CMOC mission for the past month. She personally enjoys the interaction with the local nationals and the ability to see the outcome of her work. Sgt. Kevin Keene has noticed that the customers of the CMOC look quite satisfied when they leave the facility. Even though the escort mission is non-kinetic in nature, the end effect continues to create a positive influence in the community.

In the past two months, the security element has given the CMOC the ability to:

1. Ensure that over 200 Iraqi children received humanitarian assistance.
2. Accept 354 claims equaling \$1,188,000 that are still under consideration.
3. Assist 1750 local nationals in finding their detained loved ones.,
4. Provide over 500 soccer balls, uniforms and school supplies for distribution to local schools.

In the upcoming months, the CMOC will continue to positively affect the local populace with the assistance of the companies security element.



Communications Soldiers with the 4th Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, emplace an OE-254 in order to improve retrans capability at a joint security station. (Photo courtesy of 4-2 SCR)

Keeping the Bugs at Bay

Preventive medicine making a difference on the battlefield

Story by
Sgt. Gabriel G. McMillan & Staff Sgt. Jason P. Wendell
Co. C, 526th BSB

Historically, casualties incurred from diseases and non-battlefield injuries have accounted for far more losses in combat than hostile action. In the most recent conflicts of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, DNBI has accounted for only a few percent of those. This advancement in conservation of fighting strength, the reduction of time lost to needless and preventable causes, is due in large part to the Army’s Preventive Medicine Program.

The Brigade Preventive Medicine section, assigned to Company C, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) is comprised of the Environmental Science Officer 1st Lt. Devon Riley and Sgt. Gabriel McMillan, the Preventive Medicine Specialist. They are responsible for monitoring water quality, food sanitation, air, soil and water environmental sampling, noise surveillance, human, liquid, and solid waste disposal systems, and disease carrying rodent, animal, and insect control. They also assist with the ordering and distribution of personal and equipment insect repellent, and the various traps and insecticides they employ.

Between the two of them, the preventive medicine team is responsible for over 15 different sites, including Joint Security Stations, Coalition Outposts, and Forward Operating Bases, housing over 5,000 United States and Coalition Soldiers and civilians. During this deployment, their focus has been on maintaining the current DNBI levels, which are already the lowest in the U.S. Army’s history. Most of their work consists of overseeing and advising the unit Field Sanitation teams at the JSSs and COPs, and bringing their field expedient infrastructure as close to the U.S. standards of hygiene and sanitation as possible within the current operational environment.

This deployment, they have more areas to cover, but they are more easily accessed. “It could take me a good part of the day to reach just one site last deployment, whereas this time we can now survey multiple sites in just one afternoon,” said McMillan. “We are busier this time, but it seems like less work because of the proximity of our customers.”

The forces they help protect are now more spread out over the city area, versus last deployment where their sector was outside the city, with only a few patrol bases. Either way, they are still very busy with the overall health of all the Soldiers and civilians at stake.

Their responsibilities will always change with the environment, from heat to cold, and the composition of the outlying sites, but their devotion and drive to perform their best will always prevail to reach their ultimate goal: to conserve the fighting strength.

Commemorating

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Top Left: Soldiers of the Warrior Chapel Gospel Choir sing a musical selection during the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday observance, Jan. 21 at the Engineer Chapel on Camp Liberty, Iraq. (U.S. Army photos by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

Top Right: Miami native, Sgt. Sherwin Jose', with the 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, strums the bass guitar during the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday observance.

Far Right: (Foreground) Chicago, Ill. native, Staff Sgt. Raymond Powell, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, plays the keyboard while Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. native, Staff Sgt. Tyrone G. Marshall, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 168 Brigade Support Battalion, plays the drums during the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday observance, Jan. 21, at the Engineer Chapel.

Middle: Chaplain (Maj.) Norman Jones, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), talks to those who gathered during the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday observance., Jan. 21 at the Engineer Chapel.

Bottom Chicago, Ill. native, Staff Sgt. Raymond Powell, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, plays the keyboard while the Warrior Chapel Gospel Choir sing a musical selection during the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday observance, Jan. 21., at the Engineer Chapel.

