



The Heart Beat

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)
Volume III, Issue 5

March 2008



**Top Guns search homes in
Rathwaniyah, pg. 5**

**Task Force Rogue troops patrol
Mansour daily, pg. 4**

Strike 6



Col. William B. Hickman

To all Strike Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, families and friends:

Strike Brigade, the Iraqi Security Forces and the people of west Baghdad have come a long way since the combined Iraqi and Coalition Forces Op-

eration, Fardh al Qanoon (Enforcing the Law), began a year ago. Improvements in the security situation in west Baghdad can be measured by an 80 percent reduction in violence since January of 2007.

The Iraqi Security Forces in our area of operations, under the capable leadership of Iraqi Army Brig. General Sameer, 1/6 IA, Maj. Brig. General Ghasan, 5/6 IA, and 2nd National Police Commander, Maj. General Karim are protecting the Iraqi people side-by-side with their U.S. counterparts. The Iraqi Security Forces have increased both in quantity and capability. Nearly 8,000 Iraqi Army soldiers and National Police are partnered with the 4,300 Strike Soldiers in our formation.

As a result of your personal dedication, the Strike Brigade Combat team has given the west Baghdad people and the Government officials the time necessary to move forward.

We have seen over 800 Sons of Iraq, attend training and graduate from Iraqi Police training. This is encouraging and

will surely, play an important role in helping with local neighborhood security. We have initiated 532 projects since we took over responsibility on 17 November. Over 346 micro-grants have been provided to small business owners who are most immediately affected by the assistance.

There are over 25 major market areas in our AO that seem to be doing very well. This resurgence of small business and markets would not have occurred without the improvements in security and cooperation with our Iraqi partners. You all play an important role here in this operation. I appreciate your efforts and dedication to mission and the Iraqi people.

In closing, please take care of each other. We have come a long way, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

I pray that God may bless you, the United States of America and the Iraqi people.

Strike 6
"Air Assault"

As the Spring comes, the temperatures will rise. Leaders need to ensure Soldiers drink plenty of water before, during and after physical activity. Many of the things we do; drinking soda, smoking, and taking dietary supplements, do not complement operating in Iraq's HOT summer environment. Leaders need to know your Soldier's habits and ensure they are monitored. Heat casualties are preventable. Drinking water, eating properly, and getting the appropriate amount of rest between missions will go a long way to protect our Soldiers from becoming heat casualties.

Ok reenlistment is another topic that will become hot. Leaders need to take every opportunity to speak to their Soldiers about reenlistment. Many Soldiers struggle with this decision regardless of their time in service, 2 to 26 years. We all have a decision to make. It is critical that Soldiers receive honest counsel that provides Soldiers with all the options available, personal and professional. Leaders should also make sure Soldiers who are planning on ETS have a solid plan.

Some leaders may find it difficult

to provide this counsel because they are struggling with the same decision. It is never hypocritical to counsel Soldiers on their future. It is our duty as leaders to make sure our Soldiers understand

Strike 7



Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder

what is available, whether taking a bonus, looking to reenlist for their present duty position, or guiding them in taking a professional development assignment. We must provide this counsel to balance both professional and personal considerations. Family is always a large part of this equation.

One thing I tell all Soldiers new to the organization and those who are consider-

ing getting out of the Army is that one of the greatest things about the Army is; nobody wants to see you fail. The Army is an organization that encourages personal growth and promotes teamwork.

If you find yourself in a unit that you do not care for it is only temporary. The leadership will change or you will PCS. You can change your career field without taking a pay cut. I have been in the Army for 26 years. I have experienced all of this and have never regretted staying with the team, but every time I was faced with the decision to reenlist I struggled to make sure I was making the "best right" decision. Don't try to do it alone. Ask your leaders for help.

I would also like to thank every single Soldier who supported the 101ST association. We have had a very successful drive. It isn't over we still have a couple battalions that are wrapping up their operations. We have over 550 new members across the BCT raising over \$10,000 in membership dues to help support an organization that supports our Soldiers and their family's everyday. Again thank you. It still isn't too late for Soldiers who didn't have the opportunity to join this association.



Col. William B. Hickman
Commander

Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder
CSM

Maj. Jose F. Garcia
Public Affairs Officer

Sgt. Paul Monroe
Public Affairs NCOIC

Sgt. James P. Hunter
Editor

Submissions:

To submit stories, photographs, editorials, comments and suggestions, contact Sgt. James P. Hunter at james.p.hunter@us.army.mil. Please include rank, first and last name, job title, unit and phone number.

The Heart Beat is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of The Heart Beat are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government or the Department of Defense.

STRIKE!!!

In this issue of the Heart Beat

Commander's Voice	Pg. 2
Sergeant Major's Call	Pg. 3
TF Rogue Scouts Patrol Daily	Pg. 4
Top Guns in Rathwaniyah	Pg. 5
Day in the Life-- Sgt. Hall	Pg. 6
Yarmouk Hospital Open House	Pg. 7
Faces of the Heart	Pg. 8-9
Top Guns VET OP	Pg. 12
IP's graduate Academy	Pg. 13
Safe Neighborhood Project	Pg. 16
In Memoriam	Pg. 24

2nd Brigade Combat Team -- "Strike"

On The Cover:

Staff Sgt. Nicholas Albert, section leader, with 2nd "Ghost" Platoon, Troop B, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, receives a kiss from an Iraqi girl while on patrol in Ghazaliyah, Feb. 25. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment)

Around Strike AO



(Top Left) A young Iraqi boy holds up a peace sign to a passing American convoy near the Karama Hospital in the Karkh District of Baghdad. Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces continue to patrol and secure areas throughout western Baghdad, ensuring the safety of it's citizens, and paving the way for a brighter future for all in Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. Public Affairs)



(Right) An Iraqi girl smiles at Coalition Forces while her mother carries her inside the Karama Hospital in the Karkh District of western Baghdad Feb. 25. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

Task Force Rogue Scouts patrol daily, stand ready to react to any situation

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

There is no “normalcy” to the daily lives of Soldiers operating throughout Iraq. Granted, Coalition Forces have been patrolling Iraq for nearly five years now, but each step and each breath taken is a journey; a journey unknown to some and one familiar to many. It’s a journey down a path of uncertainty.

The daily lives of the Soldiers of Scout Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, are no different. Everyday seems to be different; a journey down a path less taken.

“We have a very diverse mission set,” said 1st Lt. Tyler Rund, the Scout platoon leader. “We execute all of the battalions targeting, arresting all high level terrorists throughout the battalions [area of operations].”

They also execute a standard patrol daily, Rund continued, interacting with the local population and gaining a good grasp on the neighborhood they are working within. “In doing so, we have a working knowledge of the entire battalions AO, and are familiar with the atmospheres of every aspect,” he said.

The Scouts also constitute the battalion’s reserve force, on stand-by 24-hours a day to respond to any significant event within their battle space, Rund said. Particularly, if there is a known terrorist moving through their area.

“The best part of the job is taking criminals off of the street,” he said. “Everyone we go after, and subsequently arrest, has attacked Coalition Forces and are truly terrorists; taking them off of the street makes the area safer for both the people that live

see SCOUTS, pg. 11



Madison, Wisc. native, Sgt. Sen Colon, with the Scouts platoon of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, pulls security in Adil, a muhallah in western Baghdad, Feb. 7. The scouts patrol through western Baghdad daily, interacting with local citizens, and stand ready to detain a known insurgent at any given time.



Valparaiso, Ind. native, Spc. John Koritko, and Joshua, Texas native, Spc. Chance Nelson, with the Scouts platoon of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, climb a flight of stairs while searching a home in Adil, a muhallah in western Baghdad, Feb. 7. The scouts patrol through western Baghdad daily, interacting with local citizens, and stand ready to detain a known insurgent at any given time.

Top Guns search houses in Rathwaniyah

Story, photo by
Spc. Elvyn Nieves
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – After receiving complaints from local citizens about people taking weapons into Baghdad’s neighborhood of Rathwaniyah, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers conducted a cordon and search operation Feb 19.

The Soldiers of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), searched every house in their section – every room, every box and every vehicle – everything was checked to make sure nobody was hiding explosive material or weapons.

“We wanted to show we support the locals, and we would actually do something to help them,” said Capt. Geoffrey Gorsuch, a Peoria, Ill., native, who serves as the commander of Battery B. “We didn’t want people to hear stuff and that we were not doing anything about it. We wanted to show that we support them.

“I think they saw our true commitment with them today. Even though we were intruding into their lives, most of the people were very happy to see us because they understood why we were doing it.”

Gorsuch said they have had incidents where businesses or local leaders were targeted with a bomb. When that happens, the Soldier of the 320th FA respond to issues of concern, which demonstrates their care for the local nationals and lack of fear of the extremists.

“It’s really hard for us because there is no police station in the area. We have to get in there and help them until the Iraqi Security Forces spread out and accompany

us in our area,” said Gorsuch.

What started as a five-hour mission ended in 11 hours. On this day however, the Soldiers of Battery B didn’t find anything out of place during their operation. Despite not finding anything, they were not disappointed.

“We did not find what we were looking for, which is a good thing because that means all the people living in the area know we’re doing our job,” said Gorsuch. “The fact we didn’t find anything makes it a good day.”

One of the things the Soldiers of Battery B did during the operation was to station the platoon leader outside to talk to the Iraqi families while the Soldiers were searching the houses. By doing so, the platoon leader presented a professional face and explained to them exactly what they were doing. This in turn helped to calm them down while the search was underway.

Pfc. Benjamin Ulery, a Jay, Maine, native, who serves as a combat medic with Battery B, said the mission was

a long process; but in the end, it was rewarding to see the mission accomplished without finding contraband.

“During this type of mission, I use my skills and knowledge to help the local nationals with their medical needs,” said Ulery. “Kids from the area come to me, and I try to help them out. If it is something complicated, I let them know they need to go to the hospital in the area.”

The Rathwaniyah neighborhood has come along much better, and the improvements can be seen in the security of the area. The locals are very receptive to them and very cooperative because they understand it’s for their own protection, Ulery said.

“I’m always extremely proud of my Soldiers. We’ve come so far since last year, and just watching how this battery has grown in their professionalism amazes me. They were always very professional with the families in the neighborhood. I think they did an excellent job.”



Sgt. Bryan Ganoe (left), a Rindge, N.H., native, who serves as a truck commander, and Sgt. Matthew Hubbard, a Lancaster, Calif., native, who serves as a section chief, both assigned to Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad, search a house during a cordon and search operation Feb. 19 in the Rathwaniyah neighborhood of Baghdad. Soldiers were conducting the search in response to concerns expressed by local residents about weapons and terrorist activity.

Throughout life, one Strike Soldier has always lead from the front

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

Noncommissioned officer's lead from the front by mentoring, coaching and training troops during peace time and war.

For the 39-year-old Sgt. William H. Hall, he has always led from the front, and continues to lead by example. Throughout his life, he has lived by the motto, "You lead by example."

"Sergeant Hall is the NCO that all E-5's and junior enlisted should strive to be," said Lufkin, Texas native, Staff Sgt. Charlie Collier. "Always leading from the front and always setting the proper example; not the right example, the proper example."

Hall wants to ensure his Soldiers know if they come into a sticky situation while operating in northwest Baghdad, they can look at him and know he's going to make the right decision.

"Soldiers watch what you do," Hall said. "Anybody can demand respect but few people earn respect. If [Soldiers] truly respect you by you earning their respect, they'll follow you anywhere you've got to go."

Hall, a native of Foley, Ala., serves as a team leader on the personal security detail for Col. William Hickman, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). He describes his job as, "Exciting, demanding, and rewarding."

Daily, the PSD element travels throughout the Strike battle space, escorting the commander as he meets with Soldiers, influential Iraqi leaders and Iraqi Security Forces.

Everyday, in the lead, is Hall. "We go out everyday. It's pretty demanding because we concentrate on the entire [area of operation], going everywhere in northwest Baghdad."

Hall said the key is learning the routes, through continued planning; however, at times he has to make key decisions on the spot.

"You've got to make sure you know where you are going because everybody is following you," he said. "Your main job is to get everybody where they need to be."

Though Hall has a responsibility to lead the convoy, he serves an even greater responsibility to his Soldiers. He hopes he can

make an impact on their lives.

"You make sure they are good Soldiers; make sure they do what they are supposed to do, ensuring they stay alert," he said. "You have to make sure they are there everyday maintaining their arms and their equipment. The main objective is to complete the mission."

However, leading by example is nothing new to Hall who grew up in a small town along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. His town had a well-known football tradition. He was apart of that tradition since the age of eight.

In 1989, upon graduating from high school, he joined the Marine Corps and served as an infantryman with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines. He was a team leader and a squad leader.

Many members of his family had served their nation, but none of them had served as a Marine, so he decided to go against the grain.

"I always heard it was kind of hard," Hall said. "At that point in my life I needed something challenging."

As a Marine, Hall earned his Ranger tab and airborne wings. "I got to experience a little bit of the Army through the marine corps."

He worked himself all the way to the rank of sergeant, until in 1995 when he decided to leave the Corps. He had come down on orders for drill instructor, but his father was ailing from heart disease and he wanted to spend what time he had left with him.

In the meantime, Hall worked as a sod farmer and in the lumber business, but the passion for the military never left him.

"I was an operations manager in a lumber company for several years, made good money, but I had a desire to serve my country again and come to Iraq and be apart of history," he said. "I felt like I would have cheated my

life if I wouldn't have come over here and at least gave my effort in the battle against terrorism."

Since Sept. 11, 2001, Hall had wanted to re-join the ranks, but had a lot of commitments with family and jobs until one day when he said, "Hey, I don't want to miss out."

Hall rejoined the National Guard where he served with the 20th Special Forces Group. He went through the selection course, but even after completing the 21-day course, was not selected.

However, he didn't see this as a weakness, but more as a sign. see HALL, pg. 12



Foley, Ala. native, Sgt. William H. Hall, a team leader with the personal security detail, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), prepares for a mission, Feb. 20. Hall, a father of six and a former Marine, leads by example daily continually mentoring, coaching and training his Soldiers.

Yarmouk Hospital hosts open house, showcases recent improvements

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

Surrounded by concrete barriers in west Baghdad sits Yarmouk Hospital, which is the largest hospital west of the Tigris River and serves to nearly 3 million Iraqis. It houses the only burn center in Baghdad, and is the main trauma center in the Iraqi capital.

Staffed by nearly 1500 people, with 250 doctors, 150 specialists, and 300 nurses and post-graduate trainees, Yarmouk Hospital is a busy hospital with outdated and overtaxed equipment.

At one point, the hospital was amid criticism from others because sectarian issues divided the Shia-heavy hospital staff from the Sunni-heavy population just on the other side of the hospital confines, said Maj. Amit Bhavsar, brigade surgeon, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

There were reports of Sunnis being harassed, denied care, assaulted, kidnapped and even killed within the hospital, which resulted in a "clean-up" operation of corrupt personnel working within. Since then,

the security situation has improved, he said.

Over the last six months, the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, in conjunction with the 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, were able to combat that issue, said Lt. Col. Michael Lawson, commander of the 2nd Bn., 32nd FA.

Richmond, Va. native, 1st Lt. Quinn Robertson, platoon leader for the Civil Military Operations Platoon, said Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces are denying the enemy sanctuary. "This is not a safe-haven for them. It just lets the enemy know that life goes on and care will be given to the Iraqis no matter what his background is."

After seeing the benefits of the combined security operation to clear out sectarian issues, they wanted to showcase to the community the improvements the hospital is continuing to make, said Lawson. The security situation has allowed for major improvements to the hospitals infrastructure to meet the needs of providing medical care to millions of Iraqi citizens.

Community leaders from across southeast Mansour District of Baghdad

gathered at the Yarmouk Hospital Feb. 16 to tour the hospital and view some of the most recent improvements to the facility.

"The whole purpose of the open house is to provide an opportunity for the hospital director, Dr. Haqqi, to showcase his hospital and to talk about issues related to the communities at large," said Capemay, N.J. native, Lawson.

They wanted to showcase what the hospital has been doing lately, but also wanted to talk about what the hospital needs, he said.

"My attitude is whether you're Sunni, Shia, or Arab or Kurd, if you're injured or need medical attention the hospital should provide it to you," Lawson said. "So that's the part we are really trying to showcase to the community."

Ideally, the community leaders will go back to their communities and talk about the hospital to get it some visibility and generate discussion about issues related to medical care to the population at large, he continued.

"There is a significant medical need in this community... but it's limited because they don't have the right medicines, the right medical equipment or medical supplies," Lawson said. "They're lacking in some doctors and medical specialties because the doctors are either not available or afraid to come here."

Dr. Haqqi, the hospitals administrator, hosted the open house tour to highlight some of the recent improvements that will allow the hospital to better serve the community. There have been improvements in the blood bank, trauma center, and with the training of doctors and nurses. A new trauma center is currently under construction and there are plans for a new burn center within the facility in the future.

The burn center provides a much needed service in Baghdad and its surrounding communities, but, until recently, was ill-equipped to provide modern burn care due to outdated facilities.

see YARMOUK, pg. 13



Right, Dr. Haqqi, Yarmouk Hospital Administrator, speaks with Dr. Tahseen Al-Shaikhli, the Baghdad Security Plan Civilian Official Spokesman, during the Yarmouk Hospital Open House, Feb. 16. Community leaders from across southeast Mansour District of Baghdad gathered at the hospital to tour and view some of the most recent improvements to the facility.



Faces of the Heart



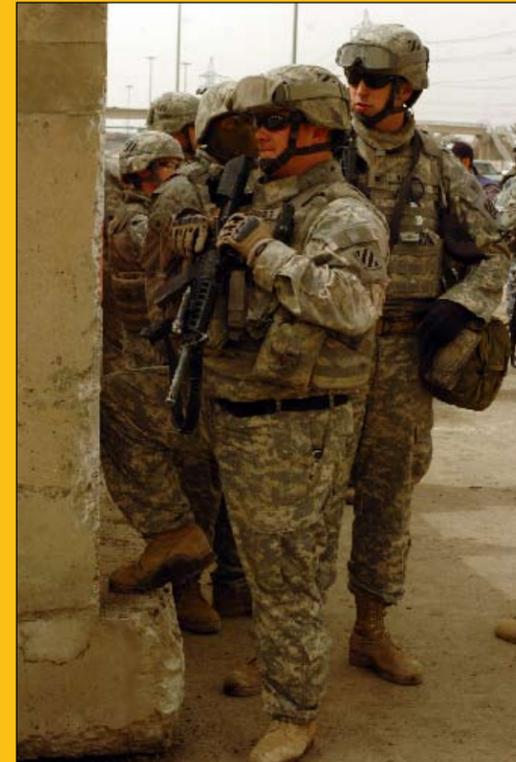
photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO

Richmond, Va. native, 1st Lt. Quinn Robertson, platoon leader, civil military operations platoon, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, talks over the radio to his platoon while at the Yarmouk Hospital Feb. 16. The CMO platoon visits the hospital daily to prevent enemy forces a safe haven, allowing the hospital to make the needed improvements to aid ailing Iraqi citizens.



photo by Spc. Elyvn Nieves, MND-B PAO

Pfc. Robert Rushton, a Patterson, Calif., native pulls security and calls by radio Feb. 19 during a cordon and search operations in Baghdad's neighborhood of Rathwaniyah.



St. Francisville, La. native, Pfc. Brandon Overholt, with Company C, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), pulls security in Khadra, Feb. 27. The Soldiers of Task Force Rogue patrol daily through Khadra alongside Iraqi Security Forces, ensuring the safety and security of the Iraqi local citizens. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div., MND-B)



photo courtesy of Co. C, 526th BSB

Spv. Jamie Irvine attempts to start an I.V. on the Treatment Platoon Sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Russell Kruse, at the Riva Ridge Troop Medical Center.



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

Gen. Richard Cody, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, speaks with Lt. Col. David Burwell, commander of the 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, at the battalions' headquarters on Camp Liberty, Feb. 13.



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

Axtell, Neb. native, Sgt. 1st Class Samuel Popple, platoon sergeant, civil military operations platoon, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, pulls security outside the surgical department at the Yarmouk Hospital Feb. 16. The CMO platoon visits the hospital daily to prevent enemy forces a safe haven, allowing the hospital to make the needed improvements to aid ailing Iraqi citizens.

Platoon leader remarks on positive impact his platoon had on Iraqi children

Story by
1st Lt. Benjamin Sevald
1st Bn., 320th FA

Recently, the Spartans of 3rd Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, were given another opportunity to have a positive impact on the lives of the children of Iraq. We all have positive memories from the successful Medical Operation that brought quality medical treatment to hundreds of children with limited options for seeking medical care. When an Iraqi Battalion asked our platoon to help secure two area schools during the national mid-term exams, we were more than happy to oblige. There are few missions that Soldiers can embrace with more enthusiasm than that of protecting innocent children. Many soldiers also sympathize with children being forced to slog through an odious exam. No Soldier in the Spartan platoon could allow additional miseries to be heaped upon the suffering children by bibliophobe insurgents.

This mission also provided an excellent opportunity to observe the herculean efforts of the Iraqi educators. After speaking with the principle of the local boy's school, I can only look with awe at what the teachers of Iraq are accomplishing

with the meager resources they are given. Their class sizes are huge, two or three times the size of the average American class. Many of the college educated teachers make less than \$300 per month. The facilities in which they teach are falling apart and it is extremely difficult for them to obtain funds from the Ministry of Education.

At one of the schools we secured there were no functioning toilets and the principle had repaired the classroom heaters with money collected from the teaching staff.

Despite these seemingly insurmountable odds, the staffs of the schools have striven, in some cases for thankless years on end, to educate the future of Iraq. They labor in crowded, unheated classrooms because they realize the absolute necessity of their efforts in building a successful future for Iraq. The Principle told me his fondest hope is that the government of Iraq recognizes the importance of educating their countries youth. He and the other teachers then promised that if the government did not change its ways they would vote for different leadership in 2010. This simple promise proves the error in the claim that Iraqis do not understand democratic government. I know firsthand that some of them have a perfect grasp of the workings of democracy and they are working hard to create a strong democratic future for their country.

Troops helping improve Top Gun operations

Story courtesy of
1st Bn., 320th FA

The Service Battery of 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, is always looking for ways to improve operations at Camp Liberty since its arrival in November. Since taking over the northwest towers in December, several adjustments have come to be an aid in the overall operational success the battalion has experienced.

Such enhancements like the addition of plexiglas helps to keep Soldiers warm while allowing the Soldiers to be more vigilant about their sector as opposed to trying to keep warm. The updating of panoramic photos are used to highlight known areas of interests and their locations relative to the towers to ensure the tower guards could report accurately to assist the maneuver platoons as they go in sector.

New machine gun platforms have been installed, along with camouflage netting to better conceal the High observation tower

positions. The improvements are not just weekly but daily, as Soldiers are given daily tasks to improve their operations so complacency does not set in.

The biggest challenge for the tower improvement project was when it came to deciding a course of action to install and weld metal doors, antennas and brackets to a 100 foot tower. The Battery leadership relied on Sgt. Norkett, Sgt. Berk, Spc. Drake, Pfc. Green and Pfc. Combs to complete this daunting task.

Norkett coordinated with KBR to have a crane hoist his welding trailer approximately 80 feet in the air so he could accomplish this large-scale mission; there's no mission to complex that these Soldiers could not do with relative ease. With over six years of welding experience, Norkett has never experienced a task like this, commenting, "It was a first, very different from any welding job I've done before. I never thought I'd be lifting up my trailer to weld." Then, with a smile on his face, he added, "It's extremely difficult to do all that wearing an IOTV!"

Thanks to Norkett and other Side-winder Soldiers, the steady improvements in the Top Gun area of operations continue to be the driving force which enables each Soldier to perform their mission that much better.

Puppy Love



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

Clarksville, Tenn. native, Sgt. Steven Olesen, and Spc. Bryce Wiltermood, a native of Sacramento, Calif., both with the personal security detachment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), pose for a picture with a puppy at Joint Security Station Ghazaliyah 1, Feb. 24.

SCOUTS

there and my friends and fellow Soldiers that patrol the streets on a daily basis."

During a raid Jan. 29, the Scout troops apprehended an al-Qaeda in Iraq leader in east Mansour who was suspected of targeting and attacking Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces south of Baghdad in the Iskandariyah and Haswah area. This suspected insurgent was Multi-National Division-Center's number one sought after terrorist.

"We know as a platoon we have made it safer for every Soldier that leaves the wire," said Valparaiso, Ind. native, Spc. John Koritko, the Scout platoon medic. "The guys we grab are wanted for a lot of different crimes that resulted in attacks on Coalition Forces."

Arresting criminals is what the Scout platoon loves to do, said Koritko. "You feel like you've accomplished something tangible."

For Rund, conducting this sort of task is specifically why he joined the Army.

"For me I couldn't ask for a better job during this deployment," he said. "I feel a great sense of accomplishment leading this platoon. I know Iraq from a standpoint of knowing the people that live here and their day-to-day life, and I know the enemy, arresting more than 40 so far."

Rund's Scout platoon has accomplished

everything put in front of them, he said. "I will go home knowing that I truly made a difference."

In the meantime, it's about keeping each other safe, away from the dangers that lurk around on the streets of Baghdad.

"As a medic, driver and dismount, I always prepare for the worst: actions on contact, how to treat a Soldier if he's hit, and make them feel like they're in good hands," said Koritko. "I've put all my Soldier and medic skills to test here. My guys should feel safe with me as a medic and a shooter... I never feel like someone doesn't have my back."

For the platoon leader, it's no different. These men are his responsibility.

Given the fact these criminals they are chasing have attacked Coalition Forces, "my focus is to not only catch him, but keep my dudes safe in the process," Rund said. "There have been several occasions where we have taken shots or rolled up on armed personnel in the area we are targeting the terrorist."

A lot of things come into play when targeting these individuals, "[with] coordinating the vehicle support with the dismounts and identifying the individual in question," Rund said. "It is a tricky process sometimes taking what limited info we have on some and using it to move in on a target."

On one particular occasion while conducting a routine patrol, they stumbled onto the steps of the home of a known terrorist; however, he was not home.

"We spent some time talking to his family and neighbors getting our [intelligence] straight for a later raid," he said.

They were planning for a later raid in the week; however, they decided to raid the home later that night.

"We snuck into his yard and approached his home without being spotted by either the neighbors or the occupant of the home itself," Rund said. "Upon search, we found that the target had not returned..."

The dismounted element secured the home, patiently waiting for the man to return. At daybreak, his neighbors came to check in on him. They made them sit and wait as well. Then, just a couple hours later, they made the neighbor call the criminal to inform him his child was sick.

"Around an hour later the [terrorist] came home and walked straight into the arms of eight scouts," Rund said. Just another successful mission for the Scouts.

They will continue to patrol Mansour daily, and react to any given situation when called upon as they continue to take that journey down the path less taken.



Silhouetted, Houston native, Staff Sgt. Jody Riley, with the Scouts platoon of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, pulls security in a home in Adil, a muhallah in western Baghdad, Feb. 7. The scouts patrol through western Baghdad daily, interacting with local citizens, and stand ready to detain a known insurgent at any given time.



Valparaiso, Ind. native, Spc. John Koritko, a medic with the Scouts platoon of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, climbs a flight of stairs while searching an home in Adil, a muhallah in western Baghdad, Feb. 7.

And Stretch...



photo by Sgt. Jerry Hamilton, 526th BSB

Staff Sgt. Eric Curtis of Mobile, Ala., stretches his Transportation Platoon, of the 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), before they conduct training at the Camp Liberty obstacle course.

HALL

He figured if he still had the mental and physical capabilities to make it through, then why not go active duty?

"Sometimes in life you have to do something that makes you feel better inside," Hall said. "I was on my way to Desert Storm and it ended so I was like 'man I missed out.' I said, 'enough's enough.'"

Six weeks after leaving the National Guard, Hall was in Iraq. "This is what it's all about. Everyone's got to do their time and do the right thing," he said with conviction. "Not too many people can say they came to Iraq and defended their country."

It was a sudden, but he always had his families support. Hall and his wife have six children with one currently on the way.

His wife had just graduated from nursing school, and basically just beginning her career, but he knew whatever he chose to do, his wife and children would back him up 100%.

They are continuously there for him, especially knowing when he calls home there is someone waiting to talk to him— somebody who cares about him and is concerned about his well-being, he said.

At the end of the day, when Hall finally gets the opportunity to kick his feet up and relax, he thinks about his wife and his unborn son, and how God has truly blessed him.

"He's let me do what I've always wanted to do," he said. "I've always had the desire to be in the military."

Top Guns hold vet clinic for Iraqi livestock

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

The sounds of sheep echoed through the air, as they arrived in herds of nearly 30 at a time in a very rural area of Baghdad. Surrounded by orange fencing, sheep awaited to receive vaccination shots to help with their growth and reproduction issues.

With the help from civil affairs veterinarians, Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), held a Veterinarian Operation Feb. 22 in the southern portion of Abu Ghraib in the Iraqi capital.

The purpose of the vet operation, where they saw approximately 300 sheep, was to help the local populace with their livestock, in time, making them healthier and able to reproduce to the better the local economy, said Huntsville, Ala. native, Staff Sgt. Richard Gilliland, Civil Affairs Noncommissioned officer-in-charge, 1st Bn., 320th FA.

The local citizens and leaders within the community brought to the Soldiers attention that their livestock were not doing so well when it came to their growth and reproduction, he said. Platoon leaders and battery commander's pushed out into the community to inform the local sheiks and populace to bring their sheep to the event.

"What I hope to happen is the animals first off all get better and are able to reproduce for these farmers," he said. "Then that way they can have a better herd for future meals and make them more economically healthy."

It's not a huge concern thus far within the area, but given the fact the sheep are the Iraqis main source of food in this area, this needed to be done, Gilliland said.

see VET, pg. 17



Milford, Neb., native, Spc. Joshua Pohlman, and Houston, Alaska native, Pfc. Jimmy Young, both with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), inject a sheep with a vaccination during a veterinarian operation in southern Abu Ghraib, Feb. 22.

YARMOUK

Over the last couple of months, Coalition Forces held a series of lectures at the hospital dealing with facial trauma and advanced airway management.

"One of the main problems in the Iraqi health care system is the lack of access to updated medical information due to the limitations to internet and updated texts," Bhavsar said. "This lecture series is one way we as U.S. physicians can share our training and knowledge with our Iraqi counterparts."

The Ministry of Health, with help from Coalition Forces, have been able to combat some of the major issues within; however, according to Robertson, "We have a long way to go."



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

Sgt. Jose Bermudez, a native of Mount Vernon, N.Y., with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), pulls security in the Karkh District of Baghdad during an Iraqi Human Rights Declaration event Feb. 23.



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

Staff Sgt. Robert Elliott, with the 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), recites the Oath of Enlistment during his re-enlistment ceremony Feb. 9. Elliott was re-enlisted by Brig. Gen. Joseph Anderson, Chief of Staff, Multi-National Corps- Iraq.

IP's graduate from Police Academy

Story by
Sgt. James P. Hunter & Capt. Mark Battjes
2nd BCT PAO & 1st Bn., 64th AR

When Iraqi leaders and Coalition Forces began recruiting men to join the Concerned Local Citizens, their end state goal was for the men to go through the Iraqi Police Academy to join in the mission of securing Baghdad as a legitimate security force.

Men throughout Baghdad stepped up to answer their fellow neighbors call for freedom and security and joined the effort to help protect their fellow men, women and children.

With the Iraq's Maj. Gen. Kadhem Hamid Sharhan, the provincial police commander of Baghdad in attendance, more than 490 Iraqis showed him and his counterparts their readiness and willingness to protect their fellow Iraqis as they graduated from the Camp Fiji Iraqi Police Training Facility in Baghdad Feb. 2.

More than 260 of the men were recruited from the Mansour District of Baghdad.

"These men were former CLCs and are now police officers working for the Ministry of Interior and the Government of Iraq," said Capt. Marcus Vartan, a Bristol, Tenn. native, who serves with Multi-National Division – Baghdad's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). "They are the first class of CLCs to become IPs. They will be followed by many of their other CLC brothers in the near future."

The recent graduates went through the two-week course at Camp Fiji that was taught by 20 Iraqi police instructors from the Iraqi Provincial Directorate of Police and five instructors from the Civilian Police Assistance Transition Team, said Vartan. The course taught the students basic knowledge in enforcing the law, weaponry, combative techniques and first aid, while also concentrating on the appropriate values, ethics and appropriate guidance on human rights.

see GRADUATION, pg. 15



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

Iraqi Policemen stand in formation during their graduation ceremony Feb. 2 from the Iraqi Police Academy at Camp Fiji in Baghdad. More than 490 new policemen graduated from the academy and will soon begin patrolling the streets of Baghdad. Of the graduates, more than 260 are slated to patrol through the Mansour District of Baghdad, in Ameriyah, Adil, Khadra and Jamia.

Pulling Security



Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, pulled security during the Iraq Human Rights Declaration in the Karkh District of Baghdad, Feb. 23. (U.S. Army photos by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO)



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

Livermore, Calif. native, Sgt. Carlos Santos, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), pulls security in Khadra, Feb. 27.

R
O
G
U
E

Support battalion keeps brigade seeing at night

Story by
2nd Lt. Nathaniel Beckett
Co. B, 526th BSB

It's Thursday morning, and just like every morning inside the small maintenance shelter, Soldiers with Company B, 526 Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, work tirelessly servicing and repairing Night Vision Goggles for Soldiers of the Strike brigade.

"The United States Army rules the night, and we help them do it, at least that's how I see it," said Sgt. Quincy Welch, a special electronics device repair technician with the 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

Welch and Pfc. April Rowser work seven days a week servicing this equipment in the Electronic Maintenance Shop. Inside, an air purifier on the wall hums, keeping the air free of dust. The Soldiers are wedged between a work bench and dozens of drawers full of the tools and spare parts they will need to accomplish their task. The work bench is covered with night vision goggles in various states of repair. Some are here for service; some are burnt out or in need of a good cleaning.

Each pair of goggles will receive careful examination from the critical eyes of this technical duo. Standing close by is the unit armorer from the 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment. His battalion alone has 525 sets to be serviced; these are just the first 100.

The first step for service is accountability. The work begins in earnest as Welch pulls out a job order and begins to call off serial numbers. The armorer responds by holding up the corresponding NVG. In just a few minutes, 100% accountability has been achieved.

Now the goggles are ready to be inspected. If they pass that inspection, they are passed to Rowser who attaches a purging kit that removes any moisture with a burst of nitrogen.

"The reason we have to get the moisture out is to keep the electronics from corroding," says Rowser as she nimbly attaches the purging kit to another set of NVGs. Purging only takes a second but adds years to the life of any night vision device.

NVGs that fail inspection are deemed unserviceable and start the long road to repair. The individual components of a pair of goggles are expensive, so each broken pair requires a separate job order then repair parts can be ordered to a specific serial number.

In just a matter of hours these 100 NVGs are finished. The armorer is ready to go. Unserviceable goggles will come back for repair at a later time. The serviceable ones will be swapped out for one of the 425 that need to come in for service and the process will start all over again.

Welch sums it up well, "We can fix anything, short of running it over with a tank and having to superglue it back together."

Road opens in Khadra, paves way for economic growth

Story by
1st Lt. Michael Dytrych
1st Bn., 64th AR

The Iraqi National Police opened the northern checkpoint to vehicle and pedestrian traffic in Khadra, Feb. 27, marking a momentous milestone in the neighborhood's remarkable security and economic improvement.

This checkpoint had been previously closed for more than a year in an effort to increase local security, said Ocala, Fla. native, Capt. Daniel Cannon, commander, Company C, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment. There was only one exit and one entrance into the muhallah previously.

Khadra, located in western Baghdad, was a hot bed for insurgent

activity, he said. This area saw roughly four to five attacks a day on Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, and local nationals.

The joint partnership between 1st Bn., 64th Armor Regt., and the 1st Battalion, 6th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division, headquartered in Khadra, had virtually eliminated the insurgent threat in

Khadra and made it a safe neighborhood again.

Additionally, local leaders and Coalition Forces worked together to devise a plan to keep insurgents out. They set up barriers around Khadra to block out al-Qaeda in Iraq from conducting attacks there, Cannon said. Once the barrier

system was in place, all traffic had to come through the one checkpoint, making it nearly impossible for insurgents to penetrate the neighborhood.

"That's the main reason we have been able to open up this checkpoint today," Cannon said. "Over the last three months, the security situation has drastically improved, especially with the Sons of Iraq and the work that they've done. The security situation has allowed for this to happen, bottom line."

The heightened security allowed for the economic development of several see ROAD, pg. 21



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

An Iraqi National Policeman with the 1st Battalion, 6th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division pulls security at the newly opened road in Khadra, Feb. 27. The opening of the road will allow for economic growth and stability in the area.

GRADUATION

Capt. Mohammed, an Iraqi training commander, said he sees only good things for the future with this increased amount of policemen patrolling throughout Baghdad to bring peace to the citizens of Iraq.

Vartan made a few stops at Camp Fiji to witness the training first-hand.

"I observed them in first aid classes and in making a felony traffic stop," he said. "I was most impressed with their superb discipline and high degree of motivation."

Particularly for the Iraqi Security Forces of Jamia, the event proved to be a historic day. In September, the men were recruited to serve as a local security force to protect the neighborhood from once again falling into the hands of al-Qaeda.

The 50 men, and 11 others who graduated from the Karkh Police Academy on the other side of town, will form the core of a new police force that will begin work in Jamia next Friday.

"There hasn't been any Iraqi Police in the neighborhood since we arrived, so we expect today's graduation to have a big effect on security," said, 1st Sgt. Samuel Aarons, a native of Ft. Worth, Texas, who serves with Co. B, 1st Battalion, 64th

Armor Regiment. "Our goal has always been to have our Concerned Local Citizens become Iraqi Police and a part of the legitimate government security forces, so this is an extremely positive step in the right direction."

Prior to their attendance at the academy, Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, and the 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, trained them on basic security tasks, such as weapons handling, vehicle and personnel searches and night operations.

After undergoing the training, the men were able to work at traffic control points inside the Jamia neighborhood along side Iraqi Army Soldiers. With their graduation from the IP Academy, the men will now be able to receive in-depth training on conducting investigations, community policing and resolving disputes first hand.

They will also be able to assume a greater role in the security of the Jamia neighborhood by conducting patrols to investigate reports of criminal activity, which is often linked to terrorist activity.

It was an extremely proud day for the Mansour District of Baghdad. After countless months of rampant violence, followed by an uneasy calm, the district now has an enhanced ability now that it has a police force capable of further enhancing neighborhood safety.

'Safe Neighborhood' project more than 'Concrete'

Story, photo by
Capt. Dan Cannon
Co. C, 1st Bn., 64th AR

KHADRA, Iraq – The day began at 4:30 a.m. Jan. 27 when Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, wiped the sleep out of their eyes, donned their nearly dry uniforms and looked out of their sand-bagged windows – hoping to find that it stopped raining sometime during the night.

They were not necessarily looking forward to spending the next 48 hours standing in the rain; and, as luck would have it, not a drop could be seen falling through the dim light provided by the joint security station lights as they flickered on and off. All they could hope for was that the rain stayed away – at least for the next couple of days.

At 6 a.m., they began combined traffic control point operations with the Concerned Local Citizens and their Iraqi National Police counterparts of the 1st Battalion, 6th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division.

The operation was simple in its tasking, but the purpose had a more complicated goal. As several tons of concrete continue

to be placed around Khadra as a security measure for the local nationals, access points had to be manned and vehicles entering the area searched or the concrete barriers became nothing more than an almost \$1 million eyesore.

The purpose of the operation is to bolster security at these access points in an attempt to deter enemy logistical movement and identify possible weaknesses in the wall. In order to do so, the Soldiers spent the next 48 hours searching vehicles with their ISF counterparts.

"It got a little backed up this morning, and we were surprised to see the local Iraqi Police working the checkpoint with us without even being asked. Without their help this morning, we would have had a line of cars backed up a mile," said Staff Sgt. Thomas Taylor, platoon sergeant for 2nd Platoon, Co. C, 1-64 AR.

The locals from Khadra, although hesitant at first, have made it a point to voice their appreciation for the wall that now surrounds their city, said Taylor. As they weigh the inconvenience versus the increased security the wall has provided, the majority of Khadra citizens have come to appreciate the barriers.

At 11:30 a.m. Jan. 28, almost 30 hours into the mission, a local national walked up

to the check point with a camera man. 1st Lt. James Gallagher, platoon leader for 2nd platoon, found out the two of them were a news team with "Out There News" working for Channel 4, a British network.

The reporter introduced himself as simply "Osama" and spent the next hour talking with Coalition Forces, Iraqi Security Forces and local nationals about security in Khadra. The response Osama received from the locals he interviewed mirrored that of the comments the Soldiers have said throughout the operation.

"The checkpoints make this crowded, but they are worth it," said Omhar, a local man waiting in line to have his vehicle searched. "Before three months, I wouldn't let my children walk to school, but the security has gotten much better and my children are able to walk to and from school without my supervision."

The local Iraqis are aware that Coalition Forces are profiling taxis moving into and out of the city, but it has not slowed down the influx of taxi traffic they continue to see at the check points.

"Two months ago I wouldn't even come into Khadra; lately though, business has been good and the checkpoints are only a slight inconvenience. They are actually the reason it is now safe for me to come into Khadra," said Ali, a taxi driver from Dora.

During a neighborhood advisory council meeting a month ago, NAC representatives presented a plan to the chairman to produce memos for local bus drivers to come in and out of the city to carry children to and from schools in Khadra. There are 14 schools inside Khadra that are attended by students throughout the Al Mansour District.

Although the barriers have certainly hindered what locals would consider daily activities in the neighborhood, they continue to develop plans to help streamline and support the project. Marian is one of these bus drivers found waiting in line at the checkpoint with a van full of children who were apparently late getting to the Khadra Girls Secondary School to take their semester exams.

"The process is getting easier," said Marian. "Two months ago, we couldn't even find drivers willing to do this job."

"You can't be late if you're all late together," explained Gallagher, to a van full of students who were worried about being late.



Concerned Local Citizens man a checkpoint in Khadra Jan. 27. Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers with Company C, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, operationally attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), conduct combined traffic control point operations with CLCs and Iraqi National Police while concrete barriers were being emplaced throughout the muhallah to enhance security throughout.

VET

Murray, Ky. native, Air Force Staff Sgt. Billy Nored, with the 492nd Civil Affairs Battalion, injected the sheep with ivermectin, which was used as a de-wormer to get rid of the screw flies manifesting themselves on the sheep.

"Screw flies manifest themselves in and host themselves on sheep and start to produce infection," Nored said. "We are doing all we can to improve the quality of livestock for the local populace."

Golden, Colo. native, Capt. Zach Mills, with the 432nd Civil Affairs Battalion, who also injected the livestock with Clostridium Chauvoei & Clostridium Septicum, said, "We can make the quality of the animal better. For the economy, it will allow for better meat and better quality. It will allow for the economy to grow from the ground up."

While injecting the sheep with vaccine, they were also trying to get a general consensus of what the animals conditions were in the past, what the current condition of them is as opposed to the goal they are trying to reach for the farmers in the community, said Nored.

"The quality is not bad; it's actually pretty good," he said. "It's good that the word got around so these animals could get vaccinated. It's going to help."

Another problem they are facing in the area is the lack of an Iraqi veterinarian clinic to treat these animals, said Gilliland. The Top Gun troops want to identify a qualified vet, provide him with a traveling veterinarian kit and allow him to move through the community to give the animals regular immunizations and examinations.

"The ultimate goal is to get a veterinarian in this area to try and help these people with their animals," Gilliland said. As Coalition Forces continue to move more toward an over watch position, allowing Iraqis to take care of Iraqis is essential. So getting a veterinarian into the area allows for Coalition Forces to continue that move toward over watch.

"We are trying to stimulate their economy as we continue this push forward," Mills said. "We want them to be able to do this themselves."

In about a month, the veterinarians will push back into the community to assess the improvements of the sheep.



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

An Iraqi farmer leads his herd of sheep prior to them receiving vaccinations during a veterinarian operation in southern Abu Ghraib Feb. 22.

IP Stations open for business in Mansour

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

Since Coalition Forces toppled the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003, many areas of Baghdad have lacked a police force to serve and meet the immediate needs of the Iraqi citizens.

Recently, more than 490 recruits graduated from the Camp Fiji Iraqi Police Training Facility in Baghdad. More than 260 of those men were solely dedicated to the Mansour District of Baghdad.

With the needed Iraqi policemen in place, the next step was to put these men in position in their respective neighborhoods to "protect and serve" the Iraqi citizens against criminal activity.

Iraqi Police stations officially opened for business in Adil, Khadra and Jamia, Feb. 10, setting the conditions for a more secure and stable area.

"The implementation of a home grown police force in suburbs of Jamia, Adil and Khadra will allow local Arab men to secure their neighborhoods and homes," said Jacksonville, Fla. native, Maj. Chris Budahas, executive officer, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment. "This will ultimately facilitate our effort to destroy al-Qaeda for once and for all in the Mansour District of Baghdad."

Capt. Azad, commander of the Adil Police Station, said it is time for Iraqi policemen to take control of their neighborhoods.

"In the next six months, everything will be safer and quieter," he said with conviction and guarantee. "Everyone who goes to school and everyone who goes to work will be safe because the Iraqi Police will do their job."

There are some immediate problems the Iraqi policemen will face see **OPENING**, pg. 20



An Iraqi Policeman takes roll at the Adil Iraqi Police Station in western Baghdad, Feb. 9, prior to police training. Iraqi Police Stations opened for business in three muhallahs in the Mansour District of Baghdad Feb. 10.

New IP force integrates with Coalition Forces

Story by
1st Lt. Robert Langford
Co. B, 1st Bn., 64th AR

The Iraqi Police academies at Camp Fiji and Camp Furat, both located in Baghdad, recently graduated two classes of police officers, with nearly 300 of those new Iraqi Policemen dedicated for the city of Jamia.

Those officers are beginning their integration into the local neighborhoods with the mentoring of Coalition Forces.

Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), conducted joint patrols with the newly integrated Iraqi Policemen, Feb. 26.

The patrol was conducted in Jamia, a neighborhood in western Baghdad, and was considered an overwhelming success.

This marked the first time the new Iraqi Police force had patrolled the area.

They conducted random searches of homes, cars, and pedestrians in an effort to better secure the population of Jamia. Their presence was widely received by the local citizens of the area as it marked a milestone in the effort to establish joint security in the Baghdad area.

Both children and adults were out in the streets eager to embrace the Iraqi Police with praise.

Sgt. 1st Class Martin Hilton, a Brunswick, Ga. native, and platoon sergeant in Company B, described the situation as a “testament to the strength and determination of the Iraqi people.”

Currently, the police force in Jamia stands at 69 trained policemen. Another 119 recently graduated from the Iraqi Police Academy and will be joining the force shortly.

Cavalry troops deliver supplies to Iraqi hospital



photo by Capt. Kyle Satelee, 4th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt.

Capt. Tom Fournier, commander, Troop C, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), and an Iraqi man distribute medical supplies at the Islamic Hospital in Ameriyah during a medical supply drop Feb. 12.



photo by Capt. Kyle Satelee, 4th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt.

Soldiers with Troop C, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), place a box of medical supplies on the ground prior to handing them out at Islamic Hospital in Ameriyah during a medical supply drop Feb. 12.



Deputy Minister of Education visits Ameriyah Schools

Story by
Sp. C. Joshua Barnash
4th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt.

Iraq’s Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. Nehad Al Joubory, assessed the ongoing school projects in Ameriyah Feb. 13.

Joubory, alongside Lt. Col. Monty L. Willoughby, commander of the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), visited the Al Fardious and Al Rawadan school projects in Ameriyah to gain an assessment on its progress, which are projected to open sometime during the first or second week of March.

“The school openings will provide a viable and capable facility where the children of Iraq can continue their education,” said Capt. Kelly Lanphere, civil military operations officer, 4th Squadron, 10th Cav. Regt.

The Deputy Minister discussed issues with the contractor in charge of rebuilding the schools while Afrah, the head engineer in charge of school projects for the Ministry of Education, inspected the jobsite on both schools.

One of Joubory’s main goals is to ensure that all schools in the Baghdad area, as well as within Iraq, are equipped with enough computers’ to combat the growing computer illiteracy problem. He feels that it is a growing problem and wants to focus more time and money on its resolution, even if it means cutting costs in other areas.

The Deputy Minister was very pleased with the progress of the ongoing projects and with Coalition Forces for their help in the schools renovation.

Soldiers support Soldiers, become one team

Story by
Staff Sgt. Jeryn Jackson
Co. A, 526th BSB

Day-in and day-out, the Soldiers of the 526th Brigade Support Battalion perform several very important missions, many of which support the Soldiers at District Joint Security Station Kadhimiya in west Baghdad.

If you ask the Soldiers of the 526th BSB if their support to the Soldiers in Kadhimiya is important, they would respond that they are just ordinary Soldiers performing a job that must be done. If you asked the Soldiers at DJSS Kadhimiya if what 526th BSB does is important,

they would answer that they are somewhat of a lifeline. The Soldiers Company A, B, and C come together to provide logistical, maintenance, and medical support in order make the execution of these essential resupply missions possible.

Everything that the battalion delivers to the security station is vital to the Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion; Company E, 526th BSB; and the 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.

Food, water, ice and utensils are delivered in order to provide essential nourishment; maintenance supplies and parts enable them to perform their missions; fuel is delivered so they can keep their vehicles running; mail is delivered to help with unit morale and quality of life;

medical supplies help them to provide the necessary treatment to injured personnel, and barriers are hauled and emplaced in order to provide essential security to the Soldiers at DJSS Kadhimiya.

By supporting these Soldiers, the 526th BSB is in turn helping them to support other Soldiers. It’s a cycle of subsisting which makes all units an important part of the operation. One unit cannot perform its mission without the help of the other units. Just to get to DJSS Kadhimiya, a mission has to pass through four separate unit’s battle space. The concept of several moving parts that come together to make one team is what makes this Army so remarkable... a machine that cannot be stopped, cannot be beaten, and will never quit!

Ameriyah IP Station opens for business

Story by
Sgt. 1st Class Logan Reiser
4th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt.

Local citizens of Ameriyah can sleep a little easier tonight under the watchful eye of their newly opened Iraqi Police station.

It has been years since the Ameriyah faithful have seen a fully operational IP station in their city, but all that has changed.

Under the watchful eyes of the Mansour district police commander, Brig. Gen. Raheem, and the Baghdad police commander, Maj. Gen. Khadim, the Ameriyah Iraqi Police station opened its doors to the city in grand fashion Feb. 24.

Upon arrival, Khadim cut the ceremonial ribbon that leads into the IP station. Subsequently, Rasheem gave Khadim a tour of the facilities, then asked everyone to join him in the conference room where Khadim gave a spoke to all the visitors.

They discussed reconciliation and the importance of the new IP station. He noted that Ameriyah citizens do not have to live in fear, and they can now live in peace under the watchful eyes of their Iraqi policemen.

After the ceremony, Lt. Col. Monty L. Willoughby, commander, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), noted that, “These types of events are instrumental toward our ongoing reconciliation efforts.”

Outlaw Wrench

Story by
1st Lt. Mike Jones
1st Bn., 64th AR

An integral part of every combat operation is maintenance. In order for a mission to be completely successful, all vehicles, weapons, and associated equipment must be fully mission capable and ready for any fight.

Since deploying to Iraq, the Outlaw maintenance team, of the 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, has performed services on over 40 wheeled vehicles and 30 tracked vehicles. Despite managing the headquarters company vehicle fleet that is double the size of their stateside fleet, due to additional specialty

vehicles, the Outlaw maintenance team also services and repairs vehicles for two Military Transition Teams and one Iraqi National Police Training Team.

It is also not uncommon to see complete strangers drive into the motor pool for quick fixes before they head back outside the wire. Outlaw mechanics don’t look at patches or bumper numbers—if they bring it in for work, it’ll roll out in better shape than before. The Outlaw mechanics don’t make band-aid fixes though. If it comes in for work everything gets fixed before it rolls back out. They take extreme pride in their work and have received compliments from every leader who has visited the motor pool for their work and disciplined approach to maintenance. Their technical repair skills have lead to a 98% operational readiness rate, keeping Outlaw in

the fight.

In addition to their aggressive service schedule, they have also installed countless upgrades to Outlaw vehicles to include spot lights, sniper blinds, mine rollers, and spare tire kits. As the tactical environment changes, the mechanics have continually developed upgrades and improved the survivability of the Outlaw fleet through added armor fabrications to increased protection against improvised explosive devices and small arms fire.

While their work often goes unnoticed, it is simply because their hard work ensures that everything works. No matter the conditions—blazing sun, pouring rain, deep mud, or the coldest weather of the century—these great Soldiers take tremendous pride in all they do. Their work is the cornerstone of the battalion’s success.



(Left) An Iraqi National Policeman with the 1st Battalion, 6th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division pulls security in Khadra, Feb. 27. (Right) An Iraqi Army Soldier pulls security near a vegetable stand in the western Baghdad Karkh District March 1. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO)

OPENING

within their muhallahs, said Columbia, S.C. native, 1st Lt. Benjamin Kim, executive officer, Co. A, 1st Bn., 64th Armor Regt. One of the biggest problems in Adil is the number of abandoned homes.

When sectarian violence went into full throttle, many people let their homes for the safety of their families. With the security situation stabilized, many Iraqis are returning to find others occupying their homes, he said.

"You have the home owners coming back with their proofs of deeds," Kim said. "The Iraqi Police will be the legitimate force that helps maintain security in the area while helping to resolve issues of land ownership."

However, Adil is a relatively safe neighborhood, and with the addition of 53 Iraqi Policemen operating out of the Adil Police Station, Kim hopes they "will be able to maintain the stability that already exists in the area and provide more security."

"The opening of the Adil IP Station will most importantly provide more security forces throughout the Hay'y. Nothing can happen if the area is unsecured," said Sweetwater, Tenn. native, Capt. John Dixon, commander for Company A. "More security will enable the residence of Adil to feel safer, thus allowing for more stores to open and essential services returned, stimulating economic growth.

"Furthermore, this will show the people that the [Government of Iraq] is continuing to make progress to return the area to a sense of normalcy and encourage reconciliation as the GoI is seen as caring about the Sunni population," Dixon continued.

In Jamia, their police force will operate out of Joint Security Station Jamia. They currently have 65 Iraqi Police to patrol throughout Jamia.

"It will give the residents of the neighborhood hope for continued improvement in the security situation," said Parker, Colo. native, Capt. Mark Battjes, commander, Company B, 1st Bn., 64th Armor Regt. "This will allow Coalition Forces to deepen our partnership with the Iraqi Security Forces as we work together to secure the population."

Also, in Khadra, there are 168 total policemen operating out of the Khadra Police Station. Of those men, 58 are recent graduates of the police academy.

Even though these men are graduates of the IP Academy, their training will not stop as Coalition Forces want to build the strongest police force possible.

On Feb. 9, the day prior to the opening, IP's in Adil began filtering into their station for continued training.

Their day began at 9 a.m. Some came in late, some were out of uniform and a few were unshaven. This did not go over to well with Azad, their station commander. He expects disciplined policemen on his force.

"Discipline is something you have to enforce," Kim said. "You can't have people showing up late to formation. It also shows that these people didn't show up because they were drafted; they showed up because they want to be here. They just need guidance in the right direction, and that is what this is really all about— giving them the guidance and showing them the way."

Over the next couple weeks, Soldiers will train these men on various police tactics to continue to develop their skills, said Kim.

According to Phoenix native, Staff Sgt. Terry Blogg, Bradley Section Leader with 3rd Platoon, Co. A, 1st Bn., 64th Armor Regt., they will teach on various topics such as duties and responsibilities, medical training, reacting to improvised explosive devices, ethics training, operating tactical checkpoints, and rules of engagement.

That day Blogg taught a class on escalation of force. "Self defense; A police officer has the right to defend himself," he said to the class. "You may use force to defend yourself against hostile act or hostile intent."

As they continue to train, they will continue to learn and grow as a more organized and legitimate police force, he said. One day these will solely be their streets to control and secure.

"In the future, Coalition Forces will be able to take a backseat as the people of Iraq begin to solve problems on their own," Budihas said. "The need for Coalition Forces will still be present, but as a facilitator instead of the initiator."

Personal security detachment platoon: "It's a Family"

Story, photo by
Spc. Preston S. Millner
 HHC, 2nd BSTB

From the first day that Staff Sgt. Adam Hughes took over the personal security detachment platoon of the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), he made sure they would become more like a family. Even though the PSD team is made up of many different specialties, such as infantrymen, military policemen, engineers, and so forth, it was a must they came together as a family.

It can be stressful seeing each person everyday and being around each other all the time, but by becoming a close family they are able to operate as well as any team and even exceed the standard.

About once a month the platoon comes together and conducts a sensing session, to discuss freely what they need to improve on or sustain, which helps with the communication

within the team.

The Soldiers know they can always turn to the noncommissioned officers when they need advice or when they need to just sit down and talk. Sgt. David Acevedo of Vancouver, Wash., said, "I am really glad that I can be apart of this family and serve here in Iraq with them."

The platoon consists of 14 personnel trained to provide protective services for Lt. Col. Miguel B. Hobbs, commander, 2nd BSTB. They also provide services for the Strike Team Engineer-

ing and Management Team, which supervises and assesses the reconstruction developments in the Karkh District of west Baghdad.

The projects the STEAM Team supports consist of cleaning up the roads, working on the barriers on the highways, reconstruction of the sidewalks, repairing water lines and many more essential services.

Staff Sgt. Paul Sanford of Clarksville, Tenn., said, "I am impressed with the dedication the contractors in the Karkh District have shown to projects throughout the Baghdad area. It shows they really care about the future of Iraq."

see FAMILY, pg. 23



Sgt. David Acevedo of Vancouver, Wash., provides protective security for the Strike Team Engineering and Management Team in the Karkh District.

ROAD

market areas in Khadra because the local citizens were no longer scared to venture outside of their homes to shop for goods, he said. The economic and security advancement of Khadra allowed Coalition Forces and their Iraqi Security Forces partners to evaluate the possibility of opening this crucial northern checkpoint.

Though they found the security enhancement helped boost the economy in Khadra, it inevitably slowed the economy due to the closed northern checkpoint.

During a recent patrol, Jacksonville, Fla. native, Maj. Chris Budihas, operations officer, 1st Bn., 64th Armor Regt., and COL Mustafa, commander of 1-6-2 Iraqi National Police, asked the local leaders what supplementary actions could further boost their economy. Their answer was to open the northern checkpoint to allow the flow of residents from surrounding neighborhoods to shop in their markets.

"The opening of this checkpoint will undoubtedly increase the local economy and further return Khadra to a state of normalcy," Budihas said.

Battalion awards grants to center

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

FOB KALSU, Iraq – Students from the Babylon Center for Economical Development received micro grants in a ceremony, Jan. 26, in Iskandariyah.

The micro grants ranged from \$1000 and \$2500; the total awarded was \$27,250. The grants were made to nine existing businesses and six new businesses.

More than 100 local business owners in Iskandariyah participated in the class. There was no fee for the class and enrollment was open to everyone, male and female, prospective and current business owners.

The course taught basic business theory, accounting procedures and business planning. At the end of the course, all of the students created a

business plan to help model possible growth of their business.

The instructors mentored the students with their business plans and then selected the top 15 plans to receive micro grants.

The Commander of 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, Lt. Col. Michael Getchell, met with the top graduates from the business training and personally thanked the recipients for their efforts to improve their business.

"I am opening up a café. This is my first business. It's the first kind of business for this area; a small shop that sells snacks and sandwiches," said one of the recipients, Eltiat Ali Globe, one of three women who received a grant, "I was very surprised when they told us that we would receive the grant. We did not expect that news."

Platoon's training leads to successful missions

Story by
Sgt. Joshua Cannon
Co. A, 526th BSB

The Soldiers of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), need supplies to sustain the mission of securing the neighborhoods of Baghdad. The mission of the 526th Brigade Support Battalion is to provide those supplies. The mission of the Security and Escort Platoon of Company A, 526th BSB, simply known as Gun Truck Platoon, is to make sure that those needed supplies safely get to the Strike Soldiers.

The Soldiers of Gun Truck Platoon train daily to remain vigilant against any threat posed toward the supply convoys they escort. "Complacency will be our number one threat the entire time we are here," explains Staff Sgt. Leroy Brown from New Orleans, La., the Gun Truck platoon sergeant. "The supply convoys that we run have a significant impact on how well the brigade can operate. That's why we train everyday, why Gun Truck Platoon maintains the way it does, so that we can be successful."

The training is completed at the lowest rank level and in small groups so that

Soldiers receive the message. It is a much focused training approach.

Some days training for the Gun Truck Platoon covers basic Soldiering tasks. Tasks such as weapons clearing procedures, daily maintenance of vehicles, radio maintenance and proper radio operating procedures are great refreshers for all Soldiers of every level in the platoon.

Other days the platoon reviews very specific training, reinforcing their ability to execute convoy tactics used in different situations. They review classes, for example, on the proper procedures to evacuate a casualty or repel a Level I threat in an urban environment. For the Gun Truck Platoon Soldiers, battle focused training is very important, but battlefield situations need to be balanced with basic soldiering to enhance discipline. The goal is realistic training that is scenario based that teaches Soldiers to think through problems and find solutions.

"This is my time," explains Antioch, Calif., native Pfc. Jeffery Thomas, "Back in the rear this would be like 'Sergeant's Time' and really impersonal. But now, I've got to be the one training my buddy's. So, making sure this training gets done right everyday is really important to me."

The small groups are supervised by

senior specialists who then are supervised by the noncommissioned officers of the platoon. The section sergeant, Staff Sgt. Damon White a resident of Richmond, Ky., commented, "When everybody knows what to do and when to do it, the training really pays off. It makes the missions run really smooth."

The platoon consists of a mixture of Soldiers from different military backgrounds. There are fuel specialists, automated supply specialists, water purification specialists, transporters, and even a petroleum lab specialist.

According to the platoon leader, 2nd Lt. Eric Shumpert from Sumter, S.C., "Every Soldier of the platoon is trained to perform all jobs involving gun truck duties from driving, communications, and casualty evacuation to manning a crew served weapon."

It is this professional diversity that makes this specific platoon unique. With so many strengths being brought together, the Security and Escort Platoon truly understands how necessary their existence is.

The motto of the 101st Abn. Div. is "A Rendezvous With Destiny." This unit is not afraid to meet its destiny, because of how they adapt is evident by the successful creation of elements like this platoon.

Daughter's of Iraq fill essential role in Ghazaliyah security

Story by
Sgt. Matthew Vanderboegh
1st Sqdn., 75th Cav. Regt.

With little assistance from Soldiers from Troop A, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, the women of Ghazaliyah have stepped up and answered the call to assist in securing a future for Iraq.

At Joint Security Station Ghazaliyah nearly 20 female volunteers attended a three-day course to train for basic security procedures. The training included such tasks as radio operations, reporting procedures and weapons training. Additionally the women were trained in searching of female suspects; an essential aspect that will act as a force multiplier in the future.

According to Capt. Thomas Melton, commander of Troop A, no problems were encountered in training, and the women were very excited about the prospect of protecting their community.

In the past the Sons of Iraq, or Abna'a al-Iraq, have not

been permitted to search female suspects. With the current threat of female suicide bombers, having these women on the streets will enable a dynamic stabilization in security, which has not been pursued in the past. Additionally, the Daughters of Iraq will also augment recent shortages in locally SOI security forces.

Though the training was comprehensive enough to handle most day-to-day situations, the call for expanded duties may not be far off.

Sgt. Abercrombie, one of the training noncommissioned officers, said, "Just like the SOI, these women will grow into their role. Once we start seeing good things from them we will see about getting them some more responsibility. It is not hard to transition them to full Iraqi Policewomen and give them a bigger playing field."

The situation of dealing with women in security roles has always caused a measure of resentment between the local populace and the Coalition Forces. However, for the Southern Ghazaliyah Guardian Commander Shuja Naji Shaker, the
see **ROLE**, pg. 23

Iraqi refugees return home to Jamia

Story by
Capt. Mark Battjes
Co. B, 1st Bn., 64th AR

Fifteen men, each representing a refugee family that has recently returned to their home, stood tall at the Neighborhood Advisory Council in Jamia, a neighborhood in western Baghdad, Feb. 25.

These families fled Iraq as the violence began to increase in the western Baghdad neighborhood.

The men came to the NAC hall to meet with Emad, a representative of the Mansour District Advisory Council's Displaced Person's Committee, in order to begin the process to receive assistance from the Government of Iraq and have their refugee cases closed with the United Nations.

Emad explained that each refugee family would receive monetary assistance from the Government of Iraq, between 1 million and 4 million Iraqi Dinars, once their status had been verified.



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

Stanton Island, N.Y. native, Sgt. Christopher Hoyt, with the personal security detachment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), removes the bolts from a tire after the tire went flat at District Joint Security Station Kadhimiya Feb. 28.

ROLE

female security force is a welcome sight at the female schools where the previous SOI elements have not had the ability to enforce security measures other than deter external threats. The success of the suicide bomber mainly relies on surprise. Women are not normally viewed with as having much scrutiny for their actions and are much freer to strike where they please. Due to efforts by coalition forces to put up barricades to prevent vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, suicide vests are being seen as an alternative.

Recently, Feb. 2, two female suicide bombers killed over 70 in a Baghdad Market.

In order to verify the family's status, Emad required that the men provide proof that they owned the home in the Jamia neighborhood, were currently living in that home, and had in fact been refugees outside of Iraq in the last year.

All of the men stated that they returned to Iraq because of the dramatic increase in security in Jamia, and they praised the efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces and their Coalition Force counterparts.

"This is an extremely positive sign for the long-term security of the neighborhood", remarked Fredricksburg, Va. native, 1st Lt. John Rerucha, executive officer for Company B, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment. "If people feel safe enough to return to the homes they left behind, that demonstrates that the neighborhood has rejected terrorism and sectarian violence."

Emad will continue to come to the NAC hall in Jamia as this marked only his first visit to the area.

The Khadra NAC chairman, Muhammed, noted that the 15 men represented only a portion of the refugee families who have returned to Jamia.

FAMILY

Without help from the battalion's PSD, the STEAM Team would not be able to conduct their missions effectively.

Many members of the PSD volunteered for the mission because they wanted to go outside wire. However, now that they are in Iraq they are able to see all the things the Army is doing to improve the country from a structural, economic, and governmental standpoint.

Remembering one of the first times the platoon went outside the wire, they went down a back road and one of the first thoughts was that it was a frightening area, with trash thrown about and beat up sidewalks.

Merely two months later, after many STEAM Team projects were completed, the roads look brand new. Knowing what they are doing will make a difference in this country is very pleasing.

Since joining the PSD, they have learned a lot about themselves, the Army, and Iraq. The platoon has become a tight knit group of Soldiers, knowing they will walk away from this deployment with many memorable friends.

The first day of work for the Daughters of Iraq was coincidentally on the same day that an insurgent leader who directly recruited women was captured by Coalition Forces in the Diyala province. From video footage taken at the schools, the Daughters of Iraq displayed great confidence and pride in their work. The student's bags were inspected and others were skillfully searched. These women have become a great testament to the efforts the Iraqi people have accomplished to secure their own freedom despite the best efforts by al-Qaida to prevent it.



In Memoriam

We Shall Never Forget...



**SGT CONRAD ALVAREZ
ALPHA COMPANY
1-502 INFANTRY REGIMENT**



**CPL ALBERT BITTON
HEADQUARTERS AND
HEADQUARTERS COMPANY
1-502 INFANTRY REGIMENT**

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name sake. Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies; thou annointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord, forever,”

Psalm 23



**STAFF SGT ROBERT J. WILSON
ALPHA COMPANY
1-502 INFANTRY BATTALION**



**SPC MICHEAL B. MATLOCK
ALPHA COMPANY
1-502 INFANTRY REGIMENT**



**SPC MICHEAL E. PHILLIPS
BRAVO COMPANY
1-502 INFANTRY REGIMENT**

