

Marne Focus



Volume 1, Issue 26 March 27, 2008

Serving Task Force Marne and MND-Center



- MP canine care.....P. 4
- HVT captured.....P. 5
- Overcoming injury..... P. 8
- Knighthawk challenge.....P. 12



Caring for residents, getting bad guys. Page 4



Internet, computers for local girls. Page 9



So you want to be an IP. Page 7



Photo by Sgt. Ben Brody

Sgt. Joseph Lagas (left) and Spc. Brian Weaver, along with Iraqi troops, search farmhouses near Patrol Base Summers during Operation Marne Rugged, March 15. Lagas, Weaver and other Soldiers from Co. A, 2-69th Armor Regt., attached to 4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., are building PB Summers near Suwayrah, 20 miles south of Baghdad.

PB Summers takes shape, establishes security presence near Suwayrah

SGT. BEN BRODY
4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

FOB KALSU – In a bid to establish a formidable U.S. security presence near Suwayrah, Iraq, Soldiers began construction of Patrol Base Summers amid the ruins of a former Iraqi Air Force Base March 15.

In a huge convoy of fighting vehicles and tractor trailers, Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, pushed toward the Tigris River from Forward Operating Base Kalsu, Iraq.

In stark contrast to the push to set up Patrol Base Kelsey, Iraq, in December, Soldiers encountered almost no resis-

tance and found the destroyed base uninhabited.

“I think there was a ‘shock and awe’ effect on the local people, to see so much combat power arrive so suddenly,” explained Capt. James Browning, Company A commander.

As part of the company secured the patrol base area, Company A’s Red Platoon and Iraqi Army Soldiers swept through a neighboring village, shaking hands and greeting their new neighbors over chai.

Their Bradleys and Humvees idling on the main road, Soldiers spent nearly eight hours walking from house to house by the shortest route possible – often through barnyards full of huge cows.

“It’s sometimes tough to tell when you first meet people, but

the Iraqis seem pretty receptive to us being here,” said 1st Lt. Stephen Eldridge, Company A fire support officer. “Some people offered us chai and they were all waving to us when we left. We certainly did our best to make a good first impression.”

Soldiers from Red Platoon and Iraqi troops cataloged residents’ personal weapons and met with the village sheikh.

During the patrol, a group of children followed the Soldiers around, cracking jokes and trying out their English on the troops.

One boy of about four had a filthy, bloodstained bandage wrapped around his head – his father said he was hit by a rock while playing with other children.

Pfc. Vince Richardson, a medic with Company A, set down his 50-pound aid bag and went to work, cleaning the wound and replacing the dressing. The boy winced, but didn’t cry, as Richardson dabbed the wound with antiseptic.

As Red Platoon returned to PB Summers, a small dust storm rolled in, turning the sky a deep red. The Soldiers ate a quick meal and slept in their trucks, waiting for their next mission that night.

Around midnight, the platoon set out into the desert surrounding the patrol base and climbed one of the many small ordnance bunkers that

See SECURITY, page 6

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THE MARNE FORWARD

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Marne 6 sends

3rd Inf. Div. women make history every day

When I am out visiting you every day, I am amazed by the work of our fine female Soldiers. Throughout March we focused on celebrating the history of women in our Army, but over here, women are making history every day.

I start my day by reading intelligence, and the sergeant in charge of human intelligence comes into my office every morning to brief me. She lays out the reports from the day prior, and focuses my attention to areas in which our Soldiers are at risk. She focuses me so that I can focus the staff and brigade commanders. With the same sight picture she provides, the entire Division can take the fight to the enemy.

My favorite thing to do each day is to sign awards for our magnificent Soldiers, and the women in our awards section process them within 24 hours of arriving at the Division Headquarters.

Every day I get in the back of my helicopter to visit you. Often, when I get off my helicopter I am greeted by a female Soldier running landing zone control, and when I reach my destination, there is usually a female journalist taking pictures or recording the session. As I walk the Iraqi markets and talk to the locals, the leaders tell me of the female doctors, medics, and specialists who work with their towns to get the schools rebuilt, the clinics staffed, and agriculture revitalized.

In the 3rd Infantry Division women are making history every day. Women are earning Bronze Stars, Meritorious Service Medals, Air Medals, and Army Commendation Medals. More notably, in the past year, 125 women



Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch
Task Force Marne Commander

have earned Combat Action Badges, 54 female medics have earned Combat Medics Badges, and five female Soldiers have earned a Purple Heart.

In today's war, the lines are blurred between the front and those who support them. I know that I see a female Soldier everywhere I turn. They are driving convoys, flying helicopters, running supply yards, purifying water, cooking, translating, analyzing intelligence, running communication

sites, and many other things. It gets to the point where race or gender doesn't matter – it's the Soldier's work that does.

Over here, we are all at risk – men and women alike. SGT Trista Moretti from the Fourth Brigade, 25th Infantry Division paid the ultimate sacrifice when a rocket hit her trailer while she was eating lunch. 2LT Tracy Alger from the Third Brigade, 101st Airborne Division paid the ultimate sacrifice when her logistics supply convoy hit an IED. Both were a part of Task Force Marne, and both are remembered for being brave heroes.

As I look across our formations, they would be empty without the females that serve. The Division Headquarters is 15 percent female – without these 167 women, the Division Headquarters would not be able to operate.

As we reflect on the fifth anniversary of the war in Iraq, and women are serving in even greater capacities than they have in the past. Our formations would be empty without this magnificent group of Soldiers, and our successes as well.

ROCK OF THE MARNE!



Marne Focus

TASK FORCE MARNE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
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Command Sergeant Major – Command Sgt. Maj. Jesse L. Andrews Jr.

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TF Marne PAO – Lt. Col. Randy Martin
TF Marne PA NCOIC – Master Sgt. Marcia Triggs

Editorial Staff
Managing Editor – Master Sgt. Marcia Triggs
Editor – Sgt. Michael Connors
Layout – Sgt. Jasmine Chopra
Contributing Writers – Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback, Staff Sgt. Carlos Lazo, Sgt. Benjamin Brody, Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft
Graphics – Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback, Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft

Contributing Units
2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division
3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division
4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division
3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division
3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)
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With National Geospatial Intelligence Agency's assistance, clarity emerges from 'fog of war'

By RAY McNULTY
MND-C PAO

CAMP VICTORY — Multi-National Division - Center formed in spring 2007 as part of the U.S. troop surge. The progress made since then has been well-documented as Soldiers have built a network of patrol bases covering the “belts” of suburbs and agricultural communities surrounding southern and eastern Baghdad. What is less well-known is the surge in support required from other U.S. government agencies in bringing about those gains. In MND-C, one of the most significant of those surge partners is the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency.

The NGA – a Department of Defense support agency and member of the U.S. intelligence community - is a silent partner in the Iraq fight.

“When the fog of war thickens, as it always does, geospatial intelligence creates a vivid visual picture of the battle space,” said NGA director Vice Admiral Robert B. Murrett.

Murrett explained that the mapping and imagery his staff produces gives commanders on the ground a forward look into enemy territory.

“When the mission enters unfamiliar territory, geospatial intelligence shows the way with maps, charts and imagery.”

— Vice Adm. Robert B. Murrett
NGA

Over the past year, MND-C forces in central Iraq have launched a series of combat offensives, each targeting a small geographic region around towns and villages deemed strategic for their location relative to Baghdad or their status as enemy sanctuaries. These were areas where Coalition forces had not sustained a presence for years; MND-C itself was a new creation under the U.S. troop surge and information on the area was slim.

Enter the NGA.

“When the mission enters unfamiliar territory, geospatial intelligence shows the way with maps, charts and imagery,” Murrett said.



Courtesy Photo

Specialist Monica Mitchell, ACE GEOINT, G2 section, 3rd Inf. Div. (right), and Chief Warrant Officer 1 Scott Potter, ACE GEOINT branch chief, G2 section, 3rd Inf. Div., evaluate intelligence data sourced by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency Support Team 29 embedded with Multi-National Division –Central.

Partnered for the last 12 months with the division G2's Analytical and Control Element, NGA's GEOINT Support Team 29 provides 24/7 support to the ACE. Analysts work shifts, while the team leader supervises operations and works with the G2 and ACE leadership to focus geospatial analysis where it is most effective in supporting the mission. The team also acts as a conduit for customized reach-back support from NGA's U.S. headquarters. According to an unnamed NGA official, the group's mission is highly collaborative, complementing MND-C's other intelligence feeds to give a more complete picture of the ground situation.

“GEOINT is collaborative. It fuses with information from other intelligence analytical tradecrafts answering the questions, ‘When, where, and how often?’” the official said.

Taking advantage of the visual medium, he explained, GEOINT uses geospatial data to display volumes of information, forming a bridge from raw data points to a refined intelligence picture.

“In Iraq, we have used GEOINT to effectively pinpoint insurgent locations, identify trends and assist in reducing their effectiveness to conduct operations against Coalition forces,” the official said.

As surge operations gained momentum through summer and fall 2007, al-Qaeda in Iraq and other insurgents saw attack numbers and effectiveness diminish,

leading Coalition officials to suspect AQI was either shifting locations or slowly declining as an effective adversary. MND-C has kept up offensive operations into winter and spring 2008, but with an increasingly sharper focus, to wipe out remaining pockets of insurgent resistance. In these later operations, the NGA's support comes into play more than ever.

“When the enemy tries to hide, geospatial intelligence makes pinpoint precision targeting possible,” Murrett said.

According to their counterparts, the NGA staff is critical to mission success because they allow Soldiers to operate more efficiently in a massive battlespace.

“They have been a critical force multiplier, and their presence has exponentially increased our GEOINT capacity,” said Warrant Officer Scott Potter, ACE GEOINT branch chief, G2 section, 3rd Infantry Division.

“The depiction and associated analysis of the spatial relationship of events is key to the accomplishment of our mission in Iraq,” Potter said.

On a day-to-day basis, the NGA team assists MND-C units with analytical intelligence assessments, exploitation of imagery, production of graphical analytical products depicting weapons cache finds and IED

See FOG OF WAR, page 9

Fort Stewart 'Frontline' wants to hear from you

The Fort Stewart, Ga., newspaper, “The ‘Frontline,’” would like to feature Soldier Diaries in its July 4th special edition. Soldiers who would like to share excerpts of their journals or write about a memorable event can send their submissions to the Public Affairs Office at mnd-c_pao@iraq.centcom.mil.

Families in the Hinesville and Savannah areas would like to hear from their Soldiers. The Public Affairs Office will determine what submissions will be forwarded to “The Frontline.” The deadline to send your article to the PAO is June 2.



Soldiers meet with sheikhs, chase insurgents

By Sgt. BEN BRODY
4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

FOB KALSU, Iraq – “It seems quiet out there, but there’s always a calm before the storm,” said the burly platoon sergeant as he tightened the straps on his helmet. “We have to take care of the people and get the bad guys.”

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Williams, the platoon sergeant, and Soldiers of Company C, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, jumped in their Humvees at Forward Operating Base Iskan, Iraq, with that mindset the afternoon of March 9.

As the heavy vehicles lumbered through the date palm groves in Abu Jassim, near Musayyib, a group of sheikhs waved to them from the brick archway in a large farmhouse’s courtyard.

Williams and 1st Lt. Josh Ray, the platoon leader, jumped out and greeted the sheikhs, as the rest of the platoon pulled security around the isolated compound. The group discussed an upcoming infrastructure project, a road paving project that they are working together to bring to fruition. The plan to pave the road would cost \$24,000 and employ about 100 local laborers, according to Williams, who is from Bloomington, Ill.

“A lot of little kids use this road to get to school and farmers drive heavy trucks on it, so the pavement would mean less wear and tear on their vehicles,” Williams said. “We like it because it’s harder to dig an (improvised explosive device) into a



Photo by Sgt. Ben Brody
Sgt. Christopher Humes, with Co. C, 3rd Bn., pulls rooftop security during a meeting with tribal leaders to discuss humanitarian and infrastructure aid projects in Musayyib, Iraq, March 9.

paved road.”

Sheikh Abbas, leader of the local Sons of Iraq program, also mentioned to the group that several of his checkpoints had recently come under small-arms fire in the evenings.

Sheikh Abbas, Ray and Williams agreed that more checkpoints, strategically located to counter the attacks, would be manned.

After the meeting with the sheikhs, Company C’s Staff Sgt. Tad McGill got a phone call stating a suspected insurgent wanted by the company had been sighted

in Musayyib.

The Soldiers headed for the man’s house, searched it and the surrounding neighborhood, but according to his parents he had already fled.

Jumping over walls and dashing through dark alleys, part of the platoon tried to track down the fleeing man.

Observing brand-new sneaker prints in the mud behind the wall in the suspect’s backyard, Sgt. Brent Massey followed the tracks in hot pursuit. The Soldiers ultimately did not find the man and returned to his parents’ house.

“We left on good terms – any mother’s fear is that her child will be hurt, and we assured her that’s not the case if he turns himself in,” Williams said. “She wants him to clear his name so he can get married and her husband agreed to talk with his son about it.”

After leaving the suspect’s house, the platoon stopped in at a local market to speak to some local residents.

Before the patrol left, Ray stepped inside and bought orange soda for a group of children socializing under the store’s outside lights.

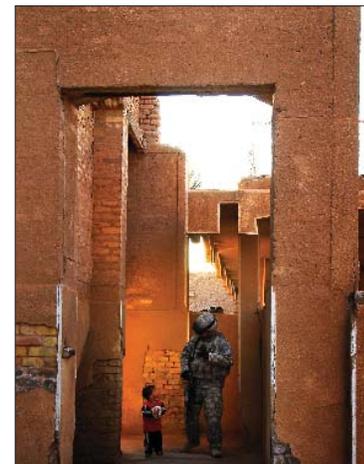


Photo by Sgt. Ben Brody
Sgt. Christopher Humes, with Co. C, 3rd Bn., chats with an Iraqi child in Musayyib, Iraq, March 9.

MP Canine receives first-class medical care

By Spc. LADONNA JENKINS
26th BSB
214th Fires Brigade

FOB DELTA, Iraq – Accustomed to meeting the challenge of saving human life, one patient put the 26th Brigade Support Battalion’s motto of “No Challenge too Great” to the test.

Jago, a 5-year-old German shepherd with the 3rd Infantry Division’s K-9 unit, was brought into FOB Delta’s Level II Hospital for evaluation by Company C, 26th BSB, medics.

Jago became ill while on a mission to a Coalition checkpoint. He stopped eating or drinking and became very lethargic, said his handler Spc. Matthew Carroll.

Jago was returned to FOB Delta but his symptoms did not improve.

He was taken to the hospital prior to

evacuation to a facility with veterinary services.

“It was extremely important that he received medical care quickly,” Carroll said. “It’s probably more important for them because they can’t tell us what’s wrong. What might seem minute to us may be extremely serious for them.”

“What might seem minute to us may be extremely serious for them.”

— Spc. Matthew Carroll
3rd Inf. Div.

Medics 1st Lt. Joyce Mullins, Spc. Brandy Elliot and Staff Sgt. Christine Roberts gave the distressed dog a thorough triage based on information provided by his handlers. Roberts, who worked as a pet store assistant before enlisting, administered intravenous fluids to rehydrate Jago.

Jago was evacuated to Camp Slayer, where he was diagnosed with an upper respiratory infection. Jago received treatment and has since returned to duty.



Photo by Spc. LaDonna Jenkins
Spc. Matthew Carroll, a 3rd Infantry Division military dog handler, and Staff Sgt. Christine Roberts, a medic with Company C, 26th Brigade Support Battalion, comfort 5-year-old Jago, who was suffering from a respiratory infection. Jago, a search dog, was evacuated to a Coalition veterinary facility for medical treatment.

Night raid leads to capture of HVT

By Spc. BEN HUTTO
3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

FOB HAMMER – A high-value target was captured during a night raid in Narhwan by Soldiers of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team March 16.

Scouts from Troop B, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, currently attached to 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery, cleared three houses during the mission and detained three men for questioning, in addition to the target.

The HVT was wanted by Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition forces for his role in several improvised explosive device attacks. He was suspected of smuggling weapons and explosives to several criminal groups throughout Iraq.

Soldiers uncovered a small cache in the HVT's home containing an AK-47 assault rifle, two shotguns, a bayonet and a small quantity of small arms ammunition.

"Everything went perfectly," said Capt. Jared Albright, from Lancaster, Pa., commander of Troop B. "Our guys did everything according to plan and it went exactly as we rehearsed it."

First Lt. James Self, from Mobile, Ala., platoon leader in Troop B, said the capture of the target was important.

"The target was a really bad guy," he said. "It's a very good thing that he is off the streets. His capture not only makes Narhwan a safer place, it makes Iraq, as a whole, safer."

The earlier this month, Troop B detained another HVT in a raid outside of Narhwan.

"This isn't the first time we've done this," said Staff Sgt. Denis Pettitt, from DeRidder, La., the troop's operations noncommissioned officer. "On average,



Photo by Spc. Ben Hutto

First Lt. James Self, from Mobile, Ala., a platoon leader in Troop B, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, and 1st Sgt. Miguel Rivera, the first sergeant of Troop B, discuss operations during a night raid March 16.

we've been capturing about one high-value target a month, so our guys know what do."

Troop B is mainly comprised of scouts serving their first deployment, but the troop's performance hasn't suffered due to lack of experience.

"Our new guys have performed well," Pettitt said. "Part of that has to do with our NCOs. They keep

our guys calm and have done a good job getting them ready for those situations. They stay calm and haven't gotten a big head about our successes."

The 3-1st Cav. Regt. and 1-10th FA are assigned to the 3rd HBCT, 3rd Infantry Division, from Fort Benning, Ga., and have been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since March 2007.

SMA Preston visits 3rd CAB, Rakkasans



Photo by Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft, 3rd CAB, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston (right) watches as Soldiers from Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division repair an aircraft engine during Preston's visit to the 3rd CAB flight line at Camp Striker March 15.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT) PAO

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston watches as Sgt. Francis Lagat, with Company A, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), remotely controls an IED-probing robot March 15 at Camp Striker.

SECURITY: From front page

dot the area. After some slipping and sliding on the smooth, steeply-angled concrete roof, the troops pulled each other to the top.

After a few hours silently scanning the windswept desert, the platoon slid two by two down the bunker and hiked back to Summers.

The next morning, another convoy of flatbed trucks bearing concrete barriers and other fortifications arrived and an Air Force C-17 cargo jet air-dropped 40 pallets of construction materials near the patrol base.

As the huge green parachutes floated to the desert floor, a passing Bedouin goat herder jumped up and down, shouting at the sky.

Soldiers from 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th BCT, gathered up the pallets with a forklift and trucked them to Summers.

“We did the air-drop because we could, not because we had to,” said 2nd Lt. Scott Dyer, the convoy security platoon leader for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 703rd BSB. “The air assets were available, and there’s plenty of space – it’s a good experience for the logistics personnel.”

Soldiers from 703rd BSB will continue to bring supplies and Company A will continue to build up the base dur-



Sgt. Ben Brody

Soldiers from 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, load HESCO barriers onto a flatbed truck after the materials were air-dropped into the desert near Patrol Base Summers, Iraq, March 16.

ing the last two months of their deployment, Browning said.

“By the time we leave, I’d like to see the patrol base fully operational, to the point where a company can come in and set up their operations in 24 hours,” said Browning, who is from Waynesville, N.C.

The base will serve as a launching point for essential services projects to

the neighboring communities and Suwayrah, as well as combat operations.

“Tactically, this spot is key to controlling the larger brigade’s area of operations – you can stage lots of equipment here and there’s a good standoff distance from civilian roads and houses,” Browning said. “Partnering with the Iraqi Security Forces, we can make inroads into Suwayrah.”



Sgt. Ben Brody

Pallets of building materials float to the desert floor near Patrol Base Summers, Iraq, March 16.

Lt. Col. Majid, commander of Suwayrah’s 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 8th IA Division, sends his troops to work with Company A on joint patrols.

“The big thing here is providing essential services to the people – they’re proud of their communities and fought hard to kick al-Qaeda out,” Browning said. “The farmers here depend on their crops, which means they need water and electricity. With us here, we can help the Government of Iraq provide those services.”

Microgrants help tailors tackle tall order

CAPT. ALLISON FLANNIGAN
3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT)

CAMP STRIKER – Three residents of Yusifiyah, Iraq, are about to receive an order for 400 Iraqi flags.

The three men, who all own separate tailor shops in the Yusifiyah market, formed a consortium to pool their tailoring talents to complete an order none of them could finish alone.

“Our small microgrants of \$2,500 won’t put a hundred people to work in a factory but it is giving the little guy a chance to get into the game and build an independent business that he can grow.”

— Sgt. 1st Class Dale Kramer
3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT)

Kramer, from the ePRT at Patrol Base Yusifiyah, recommended approval of the tailors’ microgrants.

“Our small microgrants of \$2,500 won’t



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Dale Kramer

Selah Abas Hussein shows off a sample of stitching he made with a machine purchased through a microgrant. Hussein sells his wares in his new shop in the Yusifiyah market.

put a hundred people to work in a factory but it is giving the little guy a chance to get into the game and build an independent business that he can grow,” Kramer said.

Kramer, a native of Grand Rapids, Mich., is responsible for 70 microgrants in Yusifiyah and has nearly 200 grant applications pending. He specialized in small business development in

his civilian job and has a knack for selecting promising grant applicants.

“We never, never fail to follow what Kramer advises; he’s right all the time,” said Lantner, who works for the State Department and is the

First-ever IP recruitment drive in Arab Jabour

By Sgt. Luis Delgadillo
2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

FOB KALSU – Iraqi Police from the Rashid District and Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, hosted an IP recruitment drive March 10-13 at Patrol Base Hawks, Iraq.

The recruitment drive is the first chance for citizens of the region to establish their own long-term security.

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, jumpstarted efforts to recruit 300 Arab Jabour men for IP Academy training.

The event ushered in an era of transition for some Sons of Iraq, who with the assistance from IPs of the Rashid District, will one day patrol their neighborhoods and maintain their hard-earned safety.

Lt. Col. Ken Adgie, commander of the 1-30th Inf. Regt., said the event marks a significant step toward linking the Government of Iraq, which has not had a presence in the region for more than five years, to the people of Arab Jabour and its neighboring communities.

While more than 800 men attended the event and successfully applied for the IP Academy over the four-day event, just a week prior to the recruitment drive it was in serious jeopardy of not taking place.

The IP leader in Rashid District, Lt. Col. Muhammed, had misgivings about the location of the drive due to his misperceptions about Arab Jabour.

He told Adgie he would not be taking his IPs into the region because it was not secure. Adgie said he wanted to show the IP commander the area was safe, so he took him on a walking tour through the streets to see the transformation firsthand.

Instead of being greeted by angry mobs or al-Qaeda insurgents, Adgie said the IP commander and his security detachment were greeted by smiling businessmen and curious children who had never before seen an IP car.

Later, the two leaders met with Arab Jabour community leaders and Muhammed decided the area was safe enough to allow his policemen to follow through with the event.

While the partnership between Coalition forces and the SoI has proven effective at rooting out insurgent fighters, the program was never considered a sustainable security solution.

Instead of being splintered militias opposed to the GoI, the SoI program has grown to symbolize positive change.

"It's safe now. Our challenge is to keep the security going and allow the Iraqi Security Forces to build that capacity in the area," said Adgie, a native of National Park, N.J. "Nobody wants peace more than the people here."

As proof of their willingness to see lasting security in their community, SoI and men from the region showed up at the gates of Patrol Base Hawks each day of the drive, up to three hours before the day's recruitment activities began.

Each morning of the recruitment drive, Soldiers standing guard at the gates were surprised at the crowds of more than 300 men who gathered, eagerly awaiting the opportunity to apply.

"I believe as soon as they go to the IP Academy and they release them saying that they're qualified IPs, they'll be able to come back here and protect the streets of Arab Jabour, hopefully make it a safer place and continue what they've been doing as SoI," said 1st Lt. Derrick M. Anderson, platoon leader with 1st platoon, Company B, 1-30th Inf. Regt.

While pleased with the outcome, Anderson, of Fredericksburg, Va., said it was



Photo by Sgt. Luis Delgadillo

Spc. Steven Goodwin, a combat medic with HHC, 1st Bn., 30th Inf. Regt., 2nd BCT, checks the blood pressure of a man applying to the Iraqi Police Academy during the area's first-ever IP recruitment drive March 11 in Arab Jabour. Goodwin, a native of Bellevue, Ohio, assisted Iraqi doctors with the health screenings of more than 800 applicants.

even more rewarding to see many of the SoI, whom he had come to know while on patrol, come through the recruitment drive and make a concerted effort to become Iraqi lawmen.

Taking recruits through the process of applying for the academy were Soldiers of the 153rd Military Police Company, out of Wilmington, Del.

"We've had an opportunity to observe several recruiting events before putting this one on and they (applicants) are definitely organized; they come with the proper documents and they want to be here," said Staff Sgt. John French, a military policeman and squad leader with 153rd MP Co.

Soldiers and IPs worked together at each of the five stations, taking recruits through the application process.

The first station involved organizing paperwork and checking identification. Once applicants cleared station one they moved on to a quick background check where they were vetted through a database of known insurgents.

Applicants were then taken through a health screening process where combat medics of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-30th Inf. Regt., assisted Iraqi doctors with health screenings.

After completing their literacy test at station four, the candidates went on to the final phase of their screening process, a test of their physical abilities. Applicants labored through pull-ups, push-ups, a 200-meter sprint and finally, a sit-up event.

Once completing the five stations the men's contact information was taken and they were told that notification of their 'pass or fail' would arrive in the coming weeks.

"Most won't make it because there aren't slots for everyone but they all want the opportunity and that's what they're getting today," said Adgie. Even knowing this, he said their efforts are not in vain.

Coalition forces are working at establishing long-term work programs for citizens of the area as well as education and vocational programs, which will curb unemployment when the SoI programs have run their course.

Nonetheless, the high turnout for the event signals a new day for the men of Arab Jabour.

"The Sons of Iraq are motivated, they want to be police, they want to be part of the government, they want to be part of the security system that takes care of their neighborhoods," Adgie said. "They are patriotic men and they should be given that opportunity ... that's what's wonderful to see."



Photo by Sgt. Luis Delgadillo

Spc. Allen Ray Harris, Pfc. David Morales and Spc. Brian Anaya, all military policemen with the 153rd Military Police Company, of Wilmington, Del., review Sons of Iraq member's paperwork during the area's first ever Iraqi Police recruitment drive March 11 in Arab Jabour.

Knighthawk overcomes injury, succeeds as pilot

By Spc. Emily Wilsoncroft
3rd CAB, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

CAMP STRIKER – When Chief Warrant Officer Fred White sits down at the controls of a Black Hawk helicopter, he looks just like any other pilot in his battalion. He wears the same flight suit, the same helmet and the same air of confidence – the only difference is that at the end of the day, his wrist might be a bit sorer.

The victim of a roadside bomb attack during Operation Iraqi Freedom I, White sustained injuries that led to the loss of the first two fingers on his right hand.

White, an aviator and communications officer with 2nd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, was not always a pilot. He enlisted in the Army in 2001 as a cavalry scout.

“I always wanted to be in the Army,” he said. “Cav. scout seemed like a cool job. I knew I didn’t want to be infantry, but I did want to be in combat arms.”

During the second year of his enlistment, White’s unit became attached to 3rd Infantry Division for the initial push up to Baghdad from Kuwait in the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“There was a lot of fear and uncertainty when we originally crossed the berm,” he said, “but after that it became more of a daily routine.”

The routine included route clearance, convoy security, vehicle security, observation post setup and maintenance – “pretty much anything that needed to be done in Sadr City,” as White put it.

On Sep. 5, 2003, the routine was disrupted.

“We were pulling security for the engineers that day,” White recalled. “We were on our way to the site, going down Highway 5.”

As the convoy passed under an overpass, it was hit by a remote-detonated 120 mm mortar round.

“It blew up my truck,” he said. “I was the gunner, and the blast threw me against the back of the turret ... my driver took

shrapnel in the side of his neck; the (vehicle commander) lost his left thumb and his right eye.”

White, who was hit by shrapnel in both his hands and legs, as well as his face and buttocks, lost his fingers as a result of the attack.

For many Soldiers, that would have been the end of the road, as far as a military career was concerned. But White, who fully recovered from his injuries after less than a year, decided he wanted to be a pilot.

White said even though the doctor had cleared him medically, the Reserve Officer Training Corps medic said he wasn’t fit for the Army. “So I (turned in) my warrant officer packet and was picked up for flight school.”

Although there were some who tried to tell White he wouldn’t make it through flight training, he said his injury didn’t hold him back at all.

“I cannot describe in words what it takes for a young Soldier, ... wounded in combat, to not only continue to serve his country, but to take the initiative, become a warrant officer.”

— Lt. Col. Alex Covert
2nd Bn. 3rd Avn. Regt.

White said, demonstrating how he wraps his wrist around the control. “I was set on proving the people who doubted me wrong and I adapted so I could succeed.”

White’s battalion commander, Lt. Col. Alex Covert, was quick to note the young warrant officer’s success.

“Fred is an above average UH-60L Black Hawk pilot,” Covert said. “He has flown over 150 hours in combat under the harshest conditions flawlessly.”

Aside from White’s skill as a pilot, Covert also lauded his perseverance and devotion to his military career.

“I cannot describe in words what it takes for a young Soldier, ... wounded in combat, to not only continue to serve his

“Flying is more of a mental thing,” he said.

“You have to be physically coordinated, but a lot of it’s in your mind. You have to think three-dimensionally to maintain control.”

One of the controls in the helicopter resembles a joystick, he explained, on the front of which is a radio control that functions via a trigger-type mechanism.

“I just sewed up the first two fingers on my glove and changed my hand position,”



Photo by Spc. Emily Wilsoncroft

Chief Warrant Officer Fred White, a Black Hawk pilot with 2nd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, demonstrates the preparations he makes before a flight March 18 at the 3rd CAB flight line in Baghdad.

country, but to take the initiative, become a warrant officer, an outstanding Army aviator and serve as a Battalion (communications officer) in combat,” he said.

“His selfless service is clearly an example for others to follow.”

White plans to stay in 2-3rd Avn. Regt.,

based at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., for at least the near future.

“All the experiences I’ve had in the Army have led me to where I am right now,” he said. “I have no regrets, no resentments. I know I’m lucky to still be here and I appreciate that.”

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FOG OF WAR: From page 3

attack trends, force protection planning and, more recently, general infrastructure repair support.

After months of intense fighting in areas that once represented the heart of the Sunni insurgency, Coalition forces are beginning the transition to stability operations. While the potential for physical harm is reduced in the shift from kinetics to capacity-building, the need for real-time intelligence and ground visibility is unchanged and situational awareness remains a critical factor in success.

As a result of the shift, support to infrastructure and reconstruction projects is becoming a higher priority for the NGA team. One example of that shift involves exploring the potential use of geospatial analysis and advanced technology to assist in monitoring and depicting the health of agriculture in MND-C and the status of the irrigation canal network – crucial capabilities in supporting a region of Iraq that is heavily dependent on agriculture for its livelihood.

That cooperation and adaptability has earned the agency praise from Coalition officials.

Girls' school gets computers



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Stacy Niles, 214th FB PAO

Sgt. Amanda Timmer, the Wasit Provincial Reconstruction Team head of women's initiative and program manager, talks with students at the al Kut Girls Secondary School after the ribbon cutting for a new Internet center March 10. The center features 10 new computers and furniture.

By SGT. 1ST CLASS STACY NILES
214th FB PAO

FOB DELTA – While the school's infrastructure may be behind the times, students' education has been thrust into the modern era.

The Al Kut Girls Secondary School received an Internet center complete with 10 computers and furniture. The school, established in 1932, educates 1,000 females, grades 10 to 12.

The center will be used by female students throughout the province, said the school manager, Zahrah Aljdrey. Students will now be able to do research and work on projects. The center will also allow the girls to complete exams they would otherwise have to travel to Baghdad to take.

Aljdrey said the computers will help students get a

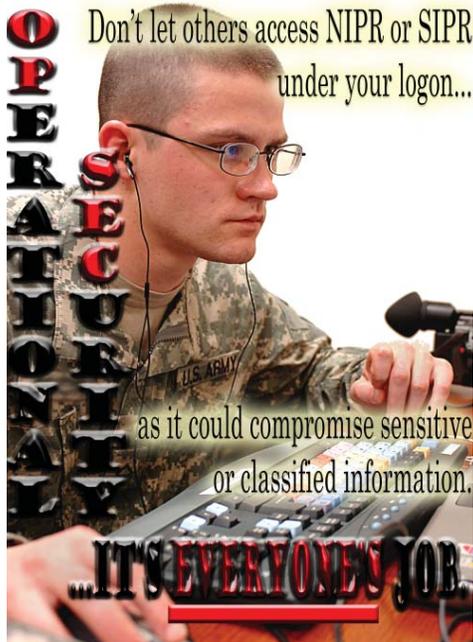
better education and will give them the opportunity to learn about different cultures.

For Sgt. Amanda Timmer, the Wasit Provincial Reconstruction Team head of women's initiative and program manager, the project provided her with a feeling of satisfaction.

"It was great especially after talking with the girls and seeing how optimistic and energetic they were," Timmer said. "It was as if they could sense that the world was at their fingertips. Like they knew they were the future of Iraq."

"They already had the initiative, but this gives them the tools to help accomplish their initiatives and ambitions," she said.

The project was a cooperative effort between the Wasit PRT, the Wasit provincial council and the Iraqi Director General of Education.



Aiming is equal: daughter follows dad in skill

SGT. KEVIN STABINSKY
2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

FOB Kalsu – At a petite 5 feet 2 inches, 114 pounds, with green eyes and a youthful, slender face framed by shoulder-length black hair, Spc. Barbara Benedict doesn't look like a typical gunner. But as her fellow company mates will tell you, she is one hard-core trooper and a fine gunner.

"I was really impressed with her," said Spc. Daniel Sanders, a civil affairs specialist with Company A, 415th Civil Affairs Battalion, from Kalamazoo, Mich., adding she defies

all expectations.

In addition to her civil affairs duties, Benedict serves as a gunner for her team, expertly handling crew-served weapons with ease.

Despite not fitting the stereotypical mold of a crew-served weapons operator, it is a role she was prepared for growing up.

"I'm daddy's little girl. I did everything he did."

That 'everything' encompassed a lot of weapons training.

Her father, Sgt. 1st Class Louis Benedict, U.S. Army Recruiting Battalion, operations noncommissioned officer, is a 31-year veteran in the Army who often

took his daughter shooting.

"My dad taught me to shoot when I was young; first a BB gun, then a .22 rifle," Benedict said of her marksmanship training.

While teaching his youngest girl - Benedict has two older sisters - how to aim at a target, Louis is also inadvertently aimed her to follow in his footsteps.

Benedict said her father was her inspiration to join the Army.

After enlisting, Benedict said she was amazed at the lessons taught in a weapons training class by a master gunner.

She began talking with the master gunner, learning all she could about various weapons

used by the Army, picking his brain for knowledge. The work paid off. She soon knew more about weapon systems than anyone else on her team. She passed her knowledge about crew-served weapons such as the M-240-B and .50-caliber machine guns on to her fellow Soldiers.

Sanders, a native of Grand Rapids, Mich., saw some of that skill first hand while qualifying on the M-240-B machine gun range at Fort Bragg, N.C., in preparation for deployment.

The pair would qualify expert on the weapon, a distinction Benedict also holds for the M-4 rifle.

Although some people find it odd to see her in a traditionally male role, Benedict sees no problem. To those who dismiss her because of her gender, she says they are wrong. "You do what you're good at. I did what I wanted to do. I wanted to be here (serving as a gunner)."

It was a desire born, in part, from the knowledge that women play an integral role in the military, especially in Iraq.

"There are certain things you can't do without females, especially over here," she said, noting that cultural norms in the Arab world prevent a lot of male-female interaction.

MARNE HISTORY

PROVIDED BY LT. COL. MIKE HURST, HISTORIAN, 3RD INF. DIV.

3rd. Inf. Div. Crosses the Rhine

Sixty-three years ago this week, on 26 March 1945, the Third Infantry Division crossed the Rhine River. This was of more than military importance. "Father Rhine" was the heart of Germany. When the Allies crossed it, a huge psychological as well physical barrier to an Allied victory also fell. Major battles, especially at Nuremberg, would remain after the 3ID crossed the river, but the Division's speed in moving through Germany would be more reminiscent of the "champagne campaign" of Southern France the previous fall than the slog through the Vosges. In less than two months the War would be over.

The 3ID had spent January and February 1945 eliminating the Colmar Pocket, the last territory in France still held by the Germans, for which it well deserved the PUC it was awarded. Then it had gone into SHAEF reserve status for a deserved rest. On 12 March it had become part of XV Corps and returned to business. On 15 March it had crossed the Franco-German border north of Strasbourg [captured by the 3ID in December 1944] and continued north to the city of Zweibrücken, which sat behind the anti-tank ditches, dragon's teeth and fire trenches of the Siegfried Line. It only took the 3ID three days,

18-21 March, to breach the Siegfried Line and devastate the city. Then on the 22nd the 3ID turned northeast toward the area between the cities of Mannheim and Worms on the Rhine, sixty miles away.

The main impetus for the push to the Rhine came from the 30th Infantry, which had been completely motorized on the 21st. It covered the sixty miles to the river in three days on Hitler's pride, the Autobahn, to assembly near the town of Ludwigshafen. The 15th Infantry had headed northeast to Kaiserslautern, which it took on the 22nd; leaving a battalion there, the rest of the regiment arriving at the Rhine the next day. The 7th Infantry, after resting on the 22nd, moved near Carlsberg on the 23rd and arrived at the banks of the Rhine on the 25th. The stage was now set for the crossing.

Shortly after dusk on 25 March the 10th Engineers began bringing boats and river-crossing material to the jumping off place opposite the town of Sandhofen. High dikes south of the unfinished Autobahn bridge forced troops to carry their boats to the water's edge, while German troops fired mortars from the town—a precursor of what was to come—until Division Artillery took them out.

0230 on the 26th was H-Hour, with the 7th and 30th Infantry Regiments making the assault and the 45th

Infantry Division crossing at the same time on their left flank above Worms. The first boats ran into an inferno from mortars and self-propelled guns targeting both banks. By noon elements of the 7th Infantry were in Sandhofen and finding every house had been converted into a pillbox that had to be destroyed. It took until the morning of the 27th for the town to be completely controlled. The 30th Infantry had an easier task. Starting off just south of Worms, it quickly took several small villages and gone through a belt of woods to high land beyond.

While doing that it had captured about 1,250 prisoners and a huge amount of equipment. By the end of the 27th the west bank of the Rhine was completely in the hands of the 3ID in its sector and the division forces had pushed more than five miles east.

The 3ID was ready to continue on its way northeast. By one of the ironies of history, the area 3ID soldiers would barrel through in the next two weeks—Aschaffenburg, Bad Kissingen and Kitzingen—would be the home of the 3ID for almost forty years during the Cold War; and 3ID soldiers would change from being Germany's conqueror to its defender.

Soldiers, Sol partner with locals to give mobility

SGT. 1ST CLASS SCOTT MAYNARD
3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

FOB HAMMER—The Soldiers knew how to get wheelchairs and local council members knew who needed them. The Sons of Iraq provided security and all three groups worked together to bring mobility to disabled residents of Tesah Nissan March 14.

Capt. Chas Cannon, commander of Battery A, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery, along with Sheikh Qassim, leader of the Tesah Nissan Sol, and Sheikh Enad, council chairman, coordinated as a team to accomplish the mission.

"Back in December, during a patrol, I saw a man walking on his hands and asked the council, 'Are there others who need a wheelchair?' The council said yes, and at the following meeting they had names and locations," said Cannon, a native of Moultrie, Ga.

Getting the wheelchairs was as simple as going on the internet.

"The wheelchairs were donated by freewheelchairs.com and our civil affairs detachment, the 489th Civil Affairs Bat-

talion out of Knoxville, Tenn., got them to my battery," Cannon said. "They came in boxes and my Soldiers put them together."

Humanitarian missions such as the wheelchair distribution go a long way toward building trust and good relationships with local residents.

"We have made considerable progress through these humanitarian missions," Cannon said, "having just as much effect, or more, than a kinetic operation against the extremists."

Staff Sgt. Roderick Coleman, from Norfolk, Va., agreed with Cannon.

"I've got a new understanding of the humanitarian and political side of the war," said Coleman, a section chief with 2nd platoon, Battery A. "In order to defeat extremism you have to beat it from the inside out.

"A wheelchair distribution, a medical assistance mission, digging wells, building schools or a new Sons of Iraq headquarters building are all things that build confidence and trust between the Soldiers, the Sons of Iraq and the townspeople," Coleman said.

Coleman, an artilleryman, turned infantry squad leader for this part of his

"I've seen schools built, supported medical operations, helped the Sons of Iraq develop in Tesah Nissan and all those things are signs of progress."

— Staff Sgt. Roderick Coleman
1st Bn., 10th FA



Photo by Spc. Ben Hutto

Two members of the Tesah Nissan Sons of Iraq deliver a wheelchair to a disabled resident of the region March 14 as Staff Sgt. Roderick Coleman, from Norfolk, Va., 2nd platoon, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery, looks on.

deployment.

"I don't mind working the streets," Coleman said. "I get personal gratification from seeing the progress on the ground. I've seen schools built, supported medical operations, helped the Sons of Iraq develop in Tesah Nissan and all those things are signs of progress."

The council meets weekly to discuss development and needs ranging from crops, to water and even wheelchairs.

"The council, led by Sheikh Enad, sets the pace for my work schedule," Cannon said. "I tell the council how I can support them and they point me to the needs in the area. The wheelchairs were a need, that need has been filled."

The 1-10 FA is part of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, from Fort Benning, Ga., and has been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since March 2007.

MICROGRANT: From page 6

approving authority for Kramer's grant requests.
 Kramer talks to each one of the microgrant recipients at least a twice a month. One of the tailors in the consortium, Jawdet Hussein Abdul, is an older man who reminds Kramer of his father.
 "When we started talking about this project I saw a spark come to the man's eyes," Kramer said of Abdul. "After five years of conflict and watching his business crumble, he was going to get back into the game."
 Kramer has met with all three tailors on several occasions to discuss formation of the consortium and the flag contract. The men agreed that Abdul should be the manager of the group.
 "I invited all three of them to come in and gave them a low-down about the possibility of a project," Kramer said of the 400 flag order. "The three of them decided to pool their talents and work together."
 The contract for the flags is worth about \$4,000. The flags are being purchased with quick-reaction funds for the 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT) and will be distributed during Rakkasan operations and events.
 "There is that spark of entrepreneurship, the desire to earn their living by working hard (to) provide a better life for their families," Kramer said. "Most don't want a handout but rather a hand up."

Photo Contest Winner: James F.X. O'Gara



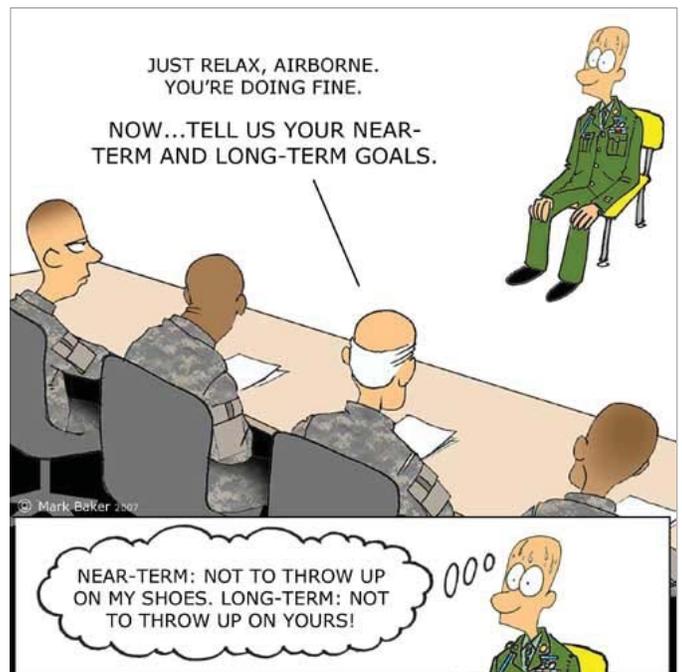
DOIN' MORE BEFORE 9 a.m. ... Soldiers from 511th Military Police Company, Fort Drum, N.Y., attached to 214th Fires Brigade, eat cereal atop their Humvee during a break in the action recently at Forward Operating Base Delta. Mr. O'Gara is a State Department governance specialist with the Wasit provincial reconstruction team.

Photo Contest Get Published!



Want to be famous?
 Email your best photo to the editor: michael.connors@iraq.centcom.mil. A photo will be chosen for the next edition of the *Marne Focus*. Include your rank, full name, job title, unit, photo date and a brief caption with rank, full name, job title and unit of each Soldier in the photo.

PVT MURPHY'S LAW



Power lunch Iraqi style



Photo by Sgt. Natalie Rostek, 3rd HBCT Public Affairs

Leaders from the 3rd Infantry Division including Brig. Gen. James Huggins, deputy commanding general for maneuver and Col. Wayne W. Grigsby, Jr., commander, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, eat a meal of lamb and rice with Gen. Aboud, commander of the Baghdad Operations Center and members of the 1st National Police Division and the 9th Iraqi Army Division, March 22 near Kanasa, Iraq.

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OPERATIONAL SECURITY

...some have disguised themselves as one of us. Report suspicious activities immediately.



Sole female team conquers Knighthawk Challenge

By Spc. EMILY WILSONCROFT
3rd CAB, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

CAMP STRIKER – Specialists Andrea Hernandez and Kimberly Burton did not set out to win the Knighthawk Challenge – at least, not in any traditional sense.

The two best friends, both from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, said they signed up for the battalion-wide competition, held March 16 at 2-3 Avn. Regt.'s headquarters, as a way of testing their own limitations.

"We thought it would be something fun to do," said Hernandez, a native of San Diego, Calif., wiping the sweat from her forehead after completing 54 sit-ups in her first event. "We trained for a month."

As the only all-female team in the competition, Burton and Hernandez knew they wanted to make their mark amid their male counterparts.

"Just because we're smaller, it doesn't mean we can't do the same stuff they can," Hernandez said. "We wanted to show people what we can do."

"I knew we weren't going to win," Burton said, "but once you finish it all, accomplish everything and do your best, you feel good. We wanted to show everyone that we have strength, we have guts and we can take care of ourselves."

What they could do boiled down to 10 events: push-ups and sit-ups; weapons assembly; communications; preventive maintenance checks and services on a Humvee; dips; bench-presses; combat life-saving tasks; recitation of the

"We wanted to show everyone that we have strength, we have guts and we can take care of ourselves."

— Spc. Kimberly Burton
3rd CAB, 3rd Inf. Div.

Soldier's Creed and Dog Face Soldier Song; a quiz on their knowledge of their chain of command and NCO support channel; and the most unconventional, a "tire-flip," in which the team had to flip a tire from a Light Medium Tactical Vehicle for a total of 40 yards.

Most of the tasks were not foreign for the two, but still were far from the jobs they do on a regular basis as aviation operations specialists.

This lack of familiarity proved to be an obstacle – especially during the CLS

and tire-flip events – although not an insurmountable one.

"Yeah, we flip tires every day for, like, an hour," Burton joked.

Moments before that event, she had good-naturedly lain still as Hernandez worked determinedly to insert and remove an IV from her teammate's arm under simulated combat conditions. Burton and Hernandez combined their efforts to succeed not only while maneuvering the larger-than-life tire, but throughout the entire competition. They even exceeded their own expectations in some events.

"When we first started training, neither of us could do even one dip," Burton said. Combined, the two had completed five dips in two minutes, each one rooting the other on from the sidelines.

"She (bench-pressed) a ton more weight than she usually does," Hernandez said of her teammate, who had just finished pressing 125 pounds in the event.

The Soldiers' platoon sergeant, Staff Sgt. Glen Porter, supervised the competition and said he was pleased with their performance.

"I thought they did an outstanding job," he said. "They're great Soldiers, and they showed a lot of leadership potential by volunteering for this. They're a good example of what all young aviation specialists should be."

Although they didn't win – they placed 15th out of 20 teams – both Burton and Hernandez said they were glad they'd completed the Challenge and put all they could into it.

The women said they'd be more than willing to participate again in the competition, which was the second of its kind for the battalion during its current deployment.



Photo by Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft

Specialists Kimberly Burton and Andrea Hernandez, HHC, 2nd Bn., 3rd Avn. Regt. flip a tire from a Light Medium Tactical Vehicle approximately 40 yards as part of the Knighthawk Challenge March 16 at Camp Striker.

"We definitely would (compete)," Burton said. "Now that we did it, we can do it again." The overall winners of the Knighthawk Challenge were Chief Warrant Officers Robert Rayner and Matthew Groover, Company C, 2-3rd Avn. Regt.



Photo by Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft

Spcs. Kimberly Burton and Andrea Hernandez with HHC, 2nd Bn., 3rd Avn. Regt., do a radio check as part of the Knighthawk Challenge March 16 at Camp Striker.



Photo by Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft

Spc. Kimberly Burton, HHC, 2nd Bn., 3rd Avn. Regt., CAB, 3rd Inf. Div. assembles an M16A2 rifle as part of the Knighthawk Challenge March 16 at Camp Striker.