

The Ivy Leaf

Established in 1917 to honor those who serve

VOL. 2, NO. 09

MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION - BAGHDAD

“STEADFAST AND LOYAL”

APRIL 14, 2008

Raider Brigade Soldiers arrive in Kuwait

Pg. 9



Soldier's remains found after missing nearly 4 years

Pg. 12

NYC firefighter leaves NY to serve in Iraq

Pg. 17

MND-B Soldiers test new protective tactical vest

Pg. 23



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Zach Mott, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Iraqi Army soldiers in a convoy approach a checkpoint manned by the 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st National Police Division, in northeastern Baghdad March 31.

ISF stand tall in wake of increased attacks

By Sgt. Zach Mott

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces manned their positions at checkpoints across northeastern Baghdad March 31 to show terrorist forces in the area that they will not back down.

Violence across the capital and southern city of Basra has spiked in recent days, but ISF members continue to provide security to the people they are sworn to protect in this part of Baghdad.

“We are National Police first. We must protect and defend the people in the area,” said Capt. Jallal Farris, a commander at an Iraqi National Police checkpoint in Baghdad, who serves with the 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st National Police Division.

The checkpoint is in a busy part of the city; several cars, trucks

and emergency vehicles pass through the area in the course of the day. Because of this, Farris and his men remain vigilant in their checks and duties. There is no time to squabble with secular divisions.

“We don’t believe in separate people. We are all one,” he said.

Coalition Forces and Iraqi Army troops also pass through this checkpoint, which serves to bolster the security in this region and displays the partnership between various groups.

“Criminals of special groups are trying to destabilize the progress made by the Government of Iraq and Iraqi Security Forces, but the Iraqi Army and Police forces, supported by Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers, are successfully containing the violence until a peaceful resolution can be achieved,” said Maj. Michael Humphreys, the public affairs officer for the 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

This week in the Ivy Leaf

Commentary	2
Mission	4
Photo Feature	14-15
Soldier	16
Family	19
Team	22
Sports	27

MND-B Soldiers deliver gifts to VBC area school

By Pfc. April Campbell

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – While Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers remain hard at work alongside the Iraqi people to increase the essential services and security in Baghdad, they also continue to take opportunities to bring needed goods to local citizens.

Some of their most appreciative benefactors are children; the gift of a new pair of shoes, soccer uniform or even a notebook goes a long way in the eyes of a child. Such was the case March 19 when MND-B Soldiers brought donated items to children at the Iraqi Family Village School, on the outskirts of Victory Base Complex.

Soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company,

432nd Civil Affairs Battalion, 360th Civil Affairs Brigade, MND-B, along with two Iraqi Army civil affairs soldiers, brought the gifts to the primary school, which had already been released for the day, with help from troops with Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company, Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, currently serving with Task Force Vigilant (Area Defense Operations Cell), Task Force Lexington (Base Defense Operations Cell), MND-B.

They returned the next morning to distribute the items to the students.

“We brought clothing, school supplies and other miscellaneous items the children can use,” said Capt. Leslie Parker, who serves as a civil affairs officer with HHSC, STB, 3rd Inf. Div.

Amongst the donated items were shoes and clothing for approximately 300 children and 500 soccer uniforms, added Parker, a Nashville, Tenn., native.

The gifts, which filled up the back of a Light Medium Tactical Vehicle, were an accumulation of donations from several different groups.

“There are a total of 11 different agencies that contributed goods to this, from the (Multi-National Corps – Iraq) chaplain’s office on down to church groups back in the U.S. that send items,” added Parker.

Area and school leaders present when the Soldiers brought the supplies to the school expressed their gratitude for the gifts.

See **School gifts** Pg. 13

Battle buddies vital in helping friends in need

By Spc. Elvyn Nieves

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers are often faced with situations that compel them to take quick action. The outcome of those decisions, good or bad, has a dramatic effect on the future.

But what happens when a Soldier makes a decision that affects not only himself but the lives of those around him as well? Battle buddies and Family members back home suffer a sometimes crippling pain because of the desperate decision of a Soldier to commit suicide.

Maj. William Nicholas, an Orlando, Fla., native, who serves as the brigade chaplain for 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, is often an outlet Soldiers seek in times of crisis.

Nicholas said the reason a person thinks about ending his life is usually an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness and can be compounded by low self-esteem. Hopelessness is fed in by a series of losses, such as the death of a spouse, Family member or even being relieved from a job.

“If someone has a Family history of suicide, then he or she is more apt to consider that method,” said Nicholas. “That stands true not only in the military but in the civilian sector. Hopelessness is the reason pushing a person to commit suicide. They want the pain to end, whether that has to do with physical or emotional pain.”

There are usually verbal or nonverbal

Battle buddies and Family members back home suffer a sometimes crippling pain because of the desperate decision of a Soldier to commit suicide. “Most people who are suicidal don’t want to die,” said Maj. William Nicholas, an Orlando, Fla., native, who serves as the brigade chaplain for 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. “They just need somebody to listen to them. A battle buddy is the key. Talking about it helps ease the pain, it gives the sense that somebody cares.”



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Elvyn Nieves, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

indications a person is contemplating suicide. The person might say to a friend, “this world would be better off without me,” or “I’m not worth anything.” They suddenly complete a will to make sure their belongings go to the right people, or they will tell somebody they’re contemplating taking their own life, said Nicholas.

“If they don’t have a will, then they’ll just give their belongings away, like a car or money,” said Nicholas. “That’s when a friend and battle buddies’ red flag has to go up.”

Among the warning signs important for Soldiers to recognize are sudden changes in personality, such as somebody who was once outgoing suddenly becomes quiet and isolated. They may stop doing things they enjoyed and have problems sleeping, said Capt. Christi Borrell-Moreno, an Oklahoma City native, who serves as the mental health officer with Company C, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

It can be prevented by being aware of the people around us,” said Moreno. “We have to be tuned in to what is going on with the people we work with. We have to be there when people are going through rough situations in their lives.”

Most people who are suicidal don’t want to die; they just need somebody to listen to them. A battle buddy is the key. Talking about it helps ease the pain; it gives the sense that somebody cares, said Nicholas.

“One way to prevent it is to educate people about it,” said Nicholas. “It’s important to care about oneself mentally and physically.”

There’re places a person can go for help. The Soldier’s chain of command, the chaplain’s office, military police and safety officer are among them, said Nicholas.

“The right thing to do is to refer anyone showing those signs to a mental health specialist,” said Nicholas. “That’s what we all are supposed to do.”

The Ivy Leaf

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Do you have a story to share?

The *Ivy Leaf* welcomes columns, commentaries, articles, letters and photos from readers.

Submissions should be sent to the Editor at jason.thompson21@us.army.mil or the operations NCOIC at guadalupe.stratman@us.army.mil and include author’s name, rank, unit and contact information.

The *Ivy Leaf* reserves the right to edit submissions selected for the paper.

For further information on deadlines, questions, comments or a request to be on our distribution list, email the Editor or call VolP 242-4093 or DSN (318) 847-1855.

New Army field manual discussed on Hill

By Elizabeth Lorge
Army News Service

WASHINGTON – The commander of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., testified this week to the Airland Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee about the Army's new operations manual, FM 3-0.

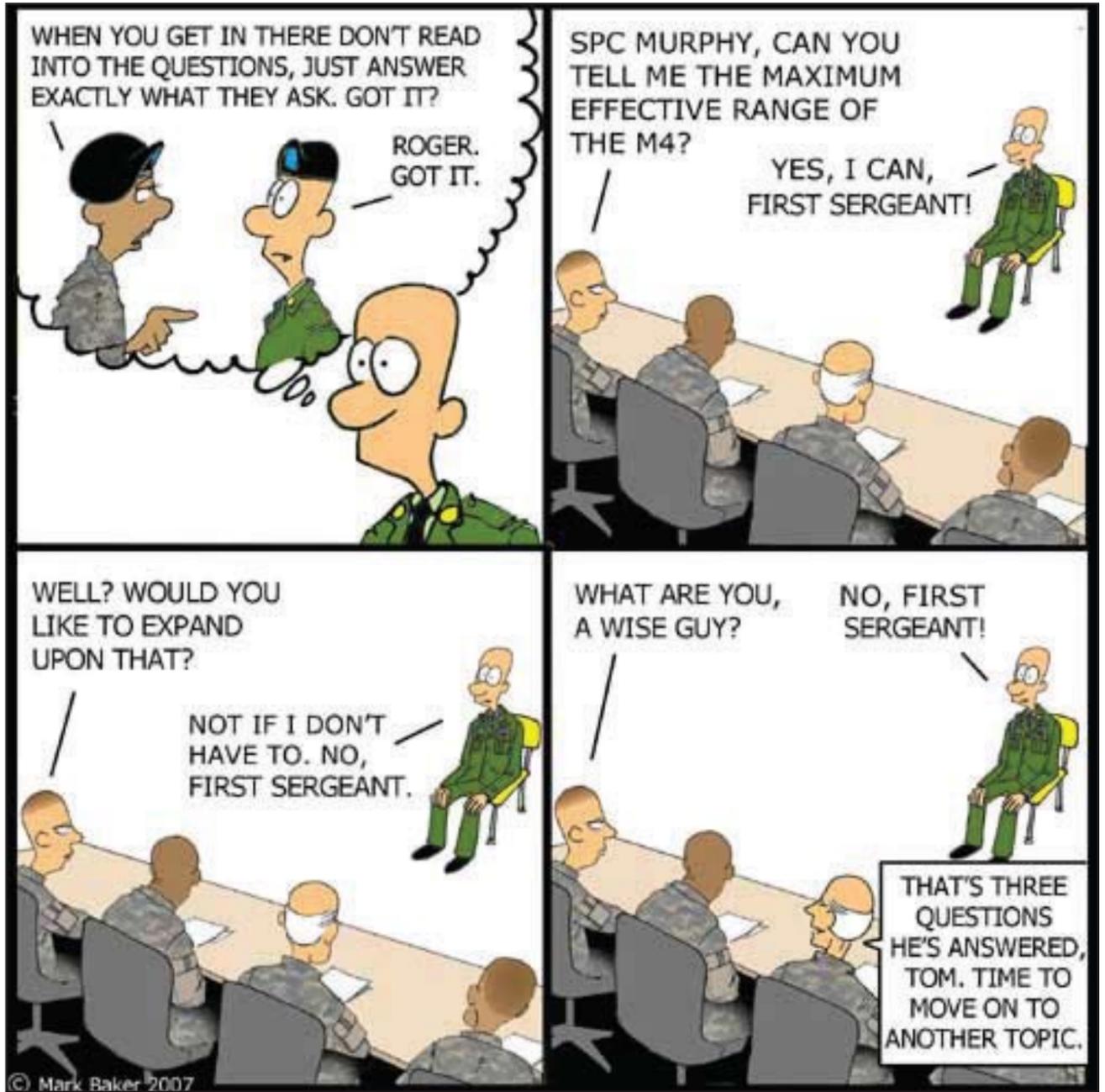
Lt. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV told Senate Subcommittee Chairman Joe Lieberman and Ranking Member John Cornyn that while Soldiers are performing magnificently in the war on terrorism, FM 3-0 is their blueprint for operating in an uncertain future. He also said creating a total-government approach for future conflicts is crucial for success, adding that this depends on Congressional resourcing of other government agencies.

FM 3-0 marks the first major changes to Army doctrine since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and institutionalizes simultaneous offensive, defensive and stability operations. In fact, stability and combat operations are given equal importance.

"A tremendous amount of change in FM 3-0 has come from lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan," Caldwell said after the manual's launch in February. "It was important for us to go back and take those lessons that we have learned over time and incorporate them into our doctrine, training and leader development."

Both Lieberman and Cornyn were concerned about how the Army could support and budget for such a wide spectrum of operations, but Cornyn congratulated the military for its ability to successfully perform so many missions.

While Caldwell was in the capital, he also stopped by the Army's Worldwide Public Affairs Symposium and talked to public affairs officers about the changing face of media and the importance of engagement.



Six honored for journalistic excellence

By C. Todd Lopez
Army News Service

McCLAIN, Va. – Four Soldiers and two Department of the Army Civilians were recognized March 31 for excellence in Army journalism.

During the 2008 Worldwide Public Affairs Symposium, Secretary of the Army Pete Geren presented plaques to six of the winners of the 2007 Keith L. Ware awards.

The winners honored during the symposium include:

- The Paul D. Savanuck Military Print Journalist of the Year award: Staff Sgt. Mike Pryor, Fort Bragg, N.C.
- The John T. Anderson Military Broadcast Journalist of the Year award: Staff Sgt. Jose Colon, American Forces Network-Bavaria.
- The Moss-Holland Civilian Print Journalist of the Year award: Mike Glasch, Fort Jackson, N.C.
- The Civilian Broadcast Journalist of the Year award: Tony McKinney, AFN-Bavaria.
- The "Rising Star" for Outstanding New Writer award: Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, Fort Hood, Texas.
- The "Rising Star" for Outstanding New Broadcaster award: Spc. Nathan Jones, AFN-Bavaria.

These six represent but a few of the many winners of the Army's 2007 Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware Journalism Awards Competition. The competition recognizes military and civilian employee print and broadcast practitioners for journalistic excellence in furthering the objectives of the Department of the Army internal-information program.

Award winners of the 2007 journalism awards will now move forward to compete against journalists from other services in the Department of Defense's Thomas Jefferson awards competition.

Pryor served as the public affairs noncommissioned officer-in-charge for 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, who recently redeployed after serving in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Word on the Street:

What does your child think of your deployment?



Master Sgt. Tony Rodrigues
Wahinwa, Hawaii
provost NCO
HHC, 2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

“They know I'm proud to be a Soldier and that is the job I signed up to do. I think they're proud of me, at least they haven't said otherwise.”



Sgt. Michael Bicek
Jacksonville, Fla.
paralegal NCO
HHC, 2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

“They're extremely supportive, they've been planning for a long time and they'll be glad when it's finished.”

“She's three years old. She thinks I'm at work and that I just haven't come back yet.”



Lt. Col. Harvey Fitzgerald
Hermosa, S.D.
senior agri-business advisor
EPRT-Baghdad 5, 2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

News briefs

Iraqi Army, MND-B Soldiers kill 7, detain 4 criminals

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Army and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers engaged and killed 7 criminals in separate engagements March 30.

At approximately 12:10 p.m., Soldiers from 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, were conducting a route clearing operation when the vehicle they were traveling in was struck by an improvised explosive device in eastern Baghdad.

After the IED strike, Soldiers were attacked by small-arms fire as they secured the damaged vehicles and prepared to move. Soldiers returned fire and killed five criminals.

No Soldiers were injured.

Two other vehicles were also struck by IEDs within ten minutes of the first strike.

At approximately 6:45 p.m., Iraqi Army soldiers from 7th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division were attacked by small-arms fire in southeastern Baghdad. The Soldiers returned fire and killed two criminals and detained four others.



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. April Campbell, MND-B PAO

Welcome to NCO Corps

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Newly promoted sergeants recite the Noncommissioned Officers Charge toward the end of an NCO induction ceremony at Camp Liberty March 31. During the ceremony, the Soldiers, who serve with the Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, were welcomed into the NCO Corps by their senior NCOs.

MND-B Soldiers kill 25 criminals

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers killed 25 criminals in eastern Baghdad March 30.

Soldiers from 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, were traveling in a combat patrol to investigate a possible point of origin for an indirect fire attack when their Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device.

Immediately after the IED attack, Soldiers discovered a second IED in the area and attempted to secure it.

While attempting to secure the IED, they were attacked with indirect fire, rocket propelled grenades and small-arms fire from a house in the vicinity of the IED strike.

An aerial weapons team was called in to support the Soldiers on the ground. A mortar team was spotted on the roof of the house where the attack was coming from, and the AWT defended the Soldiers on the ground and killed 25 criminals.

One Soldier was injured in the IED attack.

“We will defend ourselves when attacked by armed criminals,” said Lt. Col. Steven Stover, MND-B spokesman. “We are not the aggressors, but we will defend ourselves and the Iraqi people with all resources available to us.”

Air weapons team engages, kills 12 terrorists

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers killed 12 criminals after a small arms and rocket-propelled grenade attack in northern Baghdad March 30.

At approximately 1 a.m., a 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division patrol was attacked, and Soldiers pursued the criminals as they fled.

An air weapons team arrived on scene to provide support.

After positively identifying the attackers, the air weapons team engaged and killed the 12 individuals.

“We are exercising great effort to protect the people of Baghdad,” said Lt. Col. Steve Stover, MND-B spokesman.

MND-B Soldiers target criminals; 22 killed

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers engaged and killed 23 criminals in separate engagements in Baghdad March 28.

Soldiers from 2nd BCT, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), killed one criminal in northeastern Baghdad after seeing the individual with a rocket propelled grenade launcher in an alleyway during a patrol.

At approximately 4 p.m., a 3rd BCT, 4th Infantry Division vehicle struck an improvised explosive device in northeastern Baghdad. A number of criminals then fired on the soldiers while they attempted to recover the vehicle. Soldiers spotted and

INP arrest 3 after uncovering weapons cache

4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Iraqi National Police arrested three suspected terrorists March 31 after a search of their vehicle uncovered a rolling weapons cache in the New Baghdad district in northeast Baghdad.

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment reported INP confiscated five rockets, two mortar rounds, two hand grenades, three blasting caps and a 9 mm pistol.

The detainees were taken to a detention holding area for further questioning.

engaged two of the attackers, killing them both.

Iraqi security forces and Coalition soldiers were attacked during the early evening at a checkpoint in northwestern Baghdad. An air weapons team was called in to assist the ground force. The air weapons team fired one hellfire missile from the helicopter, targeting 10 criminals who were armed with RPG launchers and automatic weapons. All 10 were killed in the engagement.

Soldiers from 4th BCT, 1st Infantry Div., were attacked with small arms fire in southern Baghdad while on a combat patrol later in the evening. Soldiers returned fire in self defense, killing nine terrorists.

MND-B Soldiers kill 11 in Baghdad

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers engaged and killed 11 criminals in separate engagements in Baghdad March 29.

An MND-B aerial weapons team killed a criminal after a ground patrol was attacked by SAF in eastern Baghdad at approximately noon.

In another incident, Soldiers from 2nd BCT, 101st Airborne Division, killed a criminal fighter after the patrol observed the combatant emplacing a mortar tube in northwestern Baghdad at approximately noon.

At approximately 1:30 p.m., Soldiers from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, killed a criminal after the patrol was struck by an improvised explosive device and small-arms fire in eastern Baghdad.

MND-B Soldiers from 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, killed six criminals after their patrol was attacked by small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades in eastern Baghdad at approximately 4 p.m.

In an earlier event Soldiers from 4th BCT, 10th Mtn., Div., killed two criminals in eastern Baghdad after their patrol was attacked by small-arms fire at approximately 3:30 pm.

“Along with our Iraqi Security Force partners, we are targeting individual criminal networks and anyone involved in violent crimes against the Iraqi people,” said Col. Allen Batschelet, chief of staff, MND-B.

Brigade CSMs from across MND-B gather at Freedom Rest for conference

By Sgt. Maj. Eric Lobsinger
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Brigade command sergeants major from across Multi-National Division – Baghdad gathered together at Freedom Rest, located in Baghdad's International Zone, for the MND-B Command Sergeants Major conference March 19.

The event was hosted by Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia, the senior enlisted leader for the 4th Infantry Division and MND-B, and provided the enlisted leaders a first-hand look at the facilities available for their Soldiers.

"The primary purpose was to get you down here so you could see what Freedom Rest is," said Gioia, who explained that the three-day program available for the division's Soldiers offers the troops an opportunity to decompress and provides a brief respite from the hardships of ongoing, continuous operations.

His message to his fellow leaders was direct and simple.

"I'm empowering you – to help me – to help you," he said.

The all-encompassing theme for the assembled command sergeants major, and what was of paramount value to them all, was the importance of taking care of Soldiers. Each were quick to share their observations and knowledge with their peers.

"The thing that concerns me most, and I'm sure it is what concerns you most as well, is protecting the force. My guidance is to be deliberate in everything you do.

"We have to make every painstaking effort to make sure your Soldiers are protected. All of your sectors are different, and you each face unique challenges."

With that, Gioia opened up the floor for discussion, listening intently to the feedback provided by his fellow leaders.

Among the hot topics for the gathering was one of quality of life for Soldiers.

"For our Soldiers at the combat outposts and joint security stations, the main thing they really want is more recreation," said Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Greca, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, adding that improving the quality of life for his Soldiers is a key goal for him.

Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Dailey, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, piped in that he also considers quality of life an important issue, and he is also working on improving what is available for the Soldiers who are serving in the more remote areas of the battle space.

There should be some relief on the way, said Sgt. Maj. Duane Harb, MND-B G-4 Maintenance, because the process of ordering equipment for the more austere posts is becoming modernized in that it is becoming automated. The process is getting simpler because it can now be performed largely via emails.

"The fully automated system is much more user-friendly for you," added Harb, which will help expedite the ordering process to get the quality of life equipment out to where it is needed.

Another hot topic, and perhaps a contentious one for the gathering, was that of awards for Soldiers – particularly



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Maj. Eric Lobsinger, MND-B PAO

Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia welcomes brigade command sergeants major from across Multi-National Division – Baghdad to Freedom Rest, which is located in Baghdad's International Zone, for the opening of the MND-B Command Sergeants Major conference March 19. Gioia, the senior enlisted leader for the 4th Infantry Division and MND-B, hosted the event, which provided the enlisted leaders a first-hand look at the facilities available for their Soldiers. The conference provided the attendees an opportunity to voice their concerns. "They were able to 'put them on the table' so we could address them," said Gioia.

"It was a great opportunity to just cross talk and find out what everyone is doing. It builds teamwork with your battle buddies. You find out what is going on and how you can work together effectively."

Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Cardoza
1st Sustainment Brigade

award submissions for the combat action badge and the combat medic badge.

"We are looking for clarity for the policy on awarding combat action badges," said Command Sgt. Maj. Ray Harding, 35th Engineer Brigade. "And for medics who were not awarded the combat medical badge, do they qualify for the CAB?"

The consensus from around the table was that it may be time to rewrite the regulation governing the awarding of the CAB and CMB so it is more easily understood and removes some of the "gray" areas of interpretation on who is, or is not, authorized the award.

Gioia said the issue is one that Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston has direct visibility on as well, and it is one that is being looked at by the Department of the Army.

Among the other topics brought up for discussion were those pertaining to uniforms, weapons safety and clearing procedures, ammunition for training, tracking NCOERs, the sharing of techniques, tactics and procedures, battlefield promotions and working closely with Iraqi counterparts.

Afterward, the group broke up into smaller groups, con-

tinued their discussions and shared their experiences on what works well in their sectors and what areas they are working on improving – each garnering recommendations on how things are going on their "battle buddies" area of operations.

"It was a great opportunity to just cross talk and find out what everyone is doing," said Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Cardoza, 1st Sustainment Brigade.

"It builds teamwork with your battle buddies. You find out what is going on and how you can work together effectively.

"You can talk directly to your battle buddy."

At the end of the day, the group felt the conference was a success and one that they looked forward to doing again in the future.

"This was an opportunity for all the command sergeants major to voice their concerns," said Gioia. "They were able to 'put them on the table' so we could address them."

After a luncheon, which was provided by the Freedom Rest staff, the attendees gathered around a ceremonial 4th Infantry Division cake. Command Sgt. Maj. James Champagne, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, whose unit will soon be departing the MND-B team and redeploying back to its home station of Fort Riley, Kansas, had the honor of cutting the cake.

At the conclusion of the conference, the attendees were provided a tour of the Freedom Rest facilities and took advantage of experiencing some of the outstanding services available.



1st Sustainment Bde.

Train moves rail cars to Baghdad, clears way for new

By Staff Sgt. Bryant Maude

1st Sust. Bde. PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The day started off with a stuck switch that needed to be repaired before Mustapha, the conductor for the Iraqi National Railways, could move his Chinese-built diesel-electric train down the tracks to collect the 54 flat cars destined for Baghdad's central rail yard March 20.

"We're removing 54 old, defunct train cars out of the Taji rail yard in an effort to clear up space for future rail moves," stated Maj. Ira Baldwin, a Laurinburg, N.C., native, and mobility chief for the 1st Sustainment Brigade.

The Taji rail spur project started weeks ago with the arrival of the first train since 2004 and continued with a crew of Iraqi National Railway workers cleaning tracks and repairing switches. Eventually, this spur will be used by both Coalition Forces and the Iraqi Army as a place to move heavy cargo in and out of the Central Receiving and Shipping Point and the Taji National Depot respectively.

"This proof of purpose does several things," stated Baldwin. "It serves as a test bed for the U.S. Army to conduct rail operations in Iraq and builds confidence in the Iraqi National Railway. Eventually, having a viable rail system, the Iraqi Army will have a means by which they can transport equipment, provide good jobs for Iraqi workers and aid in the overall growth of the Iraqi economy."

This optimistic approach was not just evident in the Soldiers but the conductor and his crew as well.

"Very pleased with the way the railroad has returned," said Mustapha.

A twenty-seven year veteran of the rail business, Mustapha got his start as a result of watching friends, who encouraged him to become a driver. Now he operates a number of aging trains that were purchased years ago from places like Spain, Turkey, China and Germany.

"I hope to get newer equipment and that the tracks will be improved and the depreciation to the equipment will slow down," said Mustapha. "God willing, it will be in the service of the Iraqi forces, and everyone knows how efficient they are at running things."



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Stewart Brown, HHB, 1st Bn. 143rd FA

The Iraqi train conductor maneuvers a large number of flat cars up and down four sets of train tracks March 20 in an effort to line up 54 train cars that later pulled out of the Taji rail spur bound for Baghdad.

U.S. Army transfers humvees to ISF

By Spc. Andrea Merritt

1st Sust. Bde. PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Ninety Iraqi soldiers from the 5th Iraqi Army Division stood proudly on the parade field during their graduation from the Iraqi Army Service Support Institute's Drivers Training Course March 13.

Not only did they have the honor of being the first Iraqi soldiers to go through the three-day course, but after graduation, they drove off the field in the first 45 M1114 humvees transferred from the U.S. Army to the Iraqi Army.

"These humvees have served as work horses for the United States military and will now serve the Iraqi Security Forces just as well," said Lt. Gen. James Dubik, the commanding general of Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq.

"The Iraqi Security Forces will have the improved capability fighting against those who seek to do harm against this nation and its people," Dubik said.

The drivers training program at IASSI is part of the U.S. Army's humvee fielding initiative, where the U.S. plans to transfer 8,500 humvees to Iraqi Security Forces in the next two years.

When U.S. Army units began trading in their humvees for the new Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected vehicles, the humvees were given to Foreign Military Sales and sold to the Iraqi Army.

"As the MRAPs were fielded to the U.S. Army, it created a situation where we had an excess capacity of up-armored humvees. So, what happened was discussions were made at high levels within the Army to rather than move these up armored humvees back to the U.S. sell them through the Foreign Military Sales to the Iraqi government to go to the

Iraqi Army," said Col. Kevin O'Connell, the commander of the 1st Sustainment Brigade.

"The 1st Sustainment Brigade's involvement is the transportation of the MRAPs between VBC and Taji for fielding to units within (Multi-National Division – Baghdad)," said O'Connell.

As the 1st SB helps field MRAPs to U.S. units, the humvees that are transferred to the IA undergo a refurbishment process to ensure the Iraqis receive quality vehicles.

When U.S. military units first turn in the humvees, the Redistribution Property Assistance Team collects vehicles and makes sure they meet the requirements to be refurbished.

The humvee has to have a gunner's protection kit, all basic items of issue need to be present, and the vehicle can only be in need of minor repairs.

After the vehicles are deemed fit to refurbish, all sensitive items are taken out of them. The chairs and floor mats are also taken out of the vehicles so that they can be washed inside and out.

Sometimes during the process of stripping the humvees, damage to the frame is found. If this happens, the vehicle is not refurbished, but used for parts for other humvees.

"Nothing goes to waste in this program,"

"These humvees have served as work horses for the United States military and will now serve the Iraqi Security Forces just as well."

Lt. Gen. James Dubik
commanding general
MNSTC-I

said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Paul Hasley, the officer in charge of logistical support operations for Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq.

Once the humvees are washed, they undergo a technical inspection to find any mechanical problems the vehicles may have. Depending on the issues the vehicles have, they are either sent to the speed line or heavy line when they go in for maintenance.

At the maintenance bay, Iraqi local nationals have been trained to work on the humvees. More than 1,500 people applied for the job, but only 300 were hired and another 200 workers are scheduled to be employed.

"The whole mindset is by the time the civilians get done with the 8,500 humvees they will be specialized on how to fix or repair the M1114s," said Hasley. "We're quite impressed with their work standards ... It's quite enjoyable because instead of asking them to fix something, they fix things without being told."

On the speed line, all humvees have 20 parts that are mandatory for the mechanics to replace, such as the swing arms, ball joints, springs oil and air filters, and serpentine belts. The fluids and electrical system are also checked on the speed line.

The heavy line is reserved for vehicles in need of major repairs, such as engine or transmission problems.

After the repairs are complete and the mandatory replacement parts are put on, the humvees are put through a five-mile road test to check the brakes and gears.

"We make sure we have a sound vehicle after we've replaced all the parts," said Hasley.

When the road test is complete and no extra repairs are needed, the humvees are taken to the paint shop.

At the paint shop, the humvees are transformed from a plain tan color to a desert camouflage.

The Iraqi flag is plastered on the front doors of the vehicles, officially making it an ISF humvee.

By the time Iraqi soldiers attend the Drivers Training Course, the refurbished vehicles are ready to be signed for.

During the three-day course, the Iraqis learn to operate and maintain their new vehicles, which is a huge step for many of them considering many of the IA soldiers who go through the course have never had a driver's license.

"IASSI actually has a hard chore because they have to teach them to drive responsibly and to take care of their vehicle," said Hasley.

"We also trained the Iraqi Security Forces to drive and perform preventative maintenance checks in an effort to keep the vehicles at a high quality state of readiness. The quality of these vehicles is very good," said O'Connell.

In the weeks since the first class graduated from the course at IASSI, two more classes have graduated and about 50 more humvees have been fielded to the ISF.

In approximately two years, the IA will own more than 8,500 humvees, which is an upgrade from the pick-up trucks with guns mounted on the back of the ones they use to use on convoys.

Extreme Makeover: New medical facility enhances service in Striker Village

Story and photos by Spc. Elvyn Nieves
3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Charlie Med Soldiers are operating out of a newly refurbished warehouse at Camp Taji's Striker Village that will help them to better serve their patients.

Building 1245 went through a 90-day transformation, where it morphed from an abandoned warehouse to a medical facility capable of providing professional care for Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers as well as others needing treatment.

The building was thoroughly sanitized to implement the renovation process. The crew refurbishing the building then rewired the electricity and repaired the concrete floors. In less than two months, rooms and walls were built and gave shape to the new building.

Moving from tents – where the aid station was – to an actual building has many advantages.

“The most important advantage is sanitary conditions,” said Capt. Johnpaul Kelly, a New York City native, who serves as commander in Company C, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

Kelly said when the medical facility gets patients with open wounds they have to immediately focus on infection control. When you're in a tent, there's no way to control that.

“In a tent, you have so many different openings for dust and bacteria to get in,” said Kelly. “In the building, the doors have a rubber piece at the bottom to help us fight the dust. The other thing is that you can't sanitize a tent's floor. Now we have a floor to sanitize.”

Patients sometimes don't have the ability to regulate their own body temperature. In case of a fever, they have to be cooled down. If they are hypothermic, they need to warm up. The constant temperature inside the building allows the medical staff to control the temperature better than in a tent, said Kelly.

“During the summer, it's going to be 135 degrees outside and, even with all the air conditioning inside the tent, it's going to be 135 degrees too,” said Kelly.

“This is one way of raising the standards to show we care for them.”

Another advantage the new facility provides is protection from changing weather conditions.

“The fixed facility gives us the ability not to be exposed to the elements,” said Staff Sgt. Timothy Matz, a Crestview, Fla., native, who serves as treatment platoon sergeant in Co. C. “In a tent, eventually it starts leaking when it rains. In the new building, we don't have to worry about that or the wind. It's a clean environment.”

Charlie Med has dental, lab, X-ray, preventive medicine, preventive health and medical maintenance. Its mission is to provide Level-2 medical support to the Striker Brigade and its subordinate units.

“We've been operating in tents for almost two months,” said Matz. “Before this, we were operating in Chemical Biological Protective Shelters. This new building is something Soldiers can be proud of. It shows Division cares enough to spend the money and give us a fixed facility.”



Before



After

Streets get back to life, market gears up in Adhamiyah

By Spc. Elvyn Nieves
3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

ADHAMIYAH, Iraq – During a joint dismounted patrol with the Iraqi Army on Chem Street, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers witnessed the changes and progress in the area and its bustling market.

The Soldiers of 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, along with the Iraqi Army soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, and the Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq), have been working hand-in-hand to provide Adhamiyah residents with enough security for them to feel safe walking the streets.

“What we've been doing in the last four months is working with our IA counterparts and putting them in the front so people can see their IA is out there to help security as much as we are,” said Capt. Erik Kjonnerod, a Fairfax, Va., native, who serves as commander of Troop A, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. “We wanted to show them their Iraqi Security Forces are out there as much as we are. They're not sitting on check points doing nothing. They go out on patrols just like the Americans do.”

The awakening of the market on Chem Street is attributed to the progress in security in the area.

“When we first got here, we could see an average of 15 to 20 shops open,” said Staff Sgt. Germaine Seabrook, a Charleston, S.C., native, who serves as a cavalry scout in Troop A, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. “With the help of Iraqi forces, we helped keep the security tight. Most of the Iraqi people started coming back, opening up shops, and the economy started rolling better. The people from Adhamiyah can see how safe it is now.”

The advantage of joint, dismounted patrols is getting Soldiers to talk to people and letting the people know they are there for security, and they do care about their concerns.

“In the beginning of our work here, the streets were pretty much desolated,” said 1st Lt. Matthew Jensen, a Camarillo, Calif., native, who serves as platoon leader in Troop A. “We didn't see many people walking around. People were scared to get out of their homes. Through civil affairs, micro grants, the Sons of Iraq and our presence, people started coming out. Most of the stores on Chem Street are opened now.”

The populated market in Chem Street proves the success of joint dismounted patrols. The Iraqi people feel more confident to get out of their houses, walk the streets and approach the ISF with their problems and concerns. The Sol keeps the security and peace in the area when the Coalition Forces are not around. Thus far, it's a method the Iraqi people can see and feel.

Former detainees returned to community

By Spc. Elvyn Nieves
3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – As part of national reconciliation efforts, 13 detainees from Adhamiyah district were re-incorporated to society and their Families in a repatriation ceremony March 21.

The released citizens swore on the Quran that they will maintain their allegiance to the Government of Iraq, give support to the troops and work for the stability of their country before they were released. The former detainees signed the oath of allegiance

in front of the community leaders.

“Today is a great day for me,” said Montasar Abadal Mahdi, one of the released Iraqis detained for almost one year. “I'm so happy to finally reunite with my wife and sister.”

The detainees were brought to the squadron detention area on Combat Outpost Apache to verify basic information and to make sure they were medically fit to return to society.

The freed citizens will go to the Iraqi Police patrol house to certify their per-

sonal information is still accurate on the 30th day after being released. Once completed the last check in day 45, they will not require further checks.

“This is my third tour to Iraq and it's the first time I've seen detainees being released from detention holding facilities,” said Sgt. 1st Class Ricardo Lugo, a San Juan, Puerto Rico native, who serves as the squadron master gunner in Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, which is attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry

Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. “It's a good thing to see the system is moving forward and releasing people.”

More repatriation ceremonies are expected in the future.

“After they have gone through a detailed screening process, they'll move forward and be released,” said Lt. Col. Jeffery Broadwater, a Radcliff, Ky., native, who serves as the squadron commander for 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. “This ceremony makes me feel there's hope for our cause and allows me to see how well we have done so far. It makes us proud of what we have accomplished in Adhamiyah.”



4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

Daily mission doesn't end with setting sun

By Spc. Grant Okubo

4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq — A setting sun signals the end of the workday for many, but Soldiers of 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light), Multi-National Division – Baghdad, work toward ensuring a safe and secure environment for Iraqis day and night.

Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Battery B, 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery, patrolled the streets of Karadah March 20, just as they have for many evenings before. Capt. Stephen Swan, Ben Lomond, Calif., native, who serves as the platoon leader for 2nd Plt., along his Soldiers, went out that night to engage possible extremists reported to be operating in the area.

Some of the patrol's goals that night were to engage the cell's leader, uncover any additional evidence against him and identify other extremists of the cell, explained Swan.

The 2nd Platoon Soldiers identified suspects of the cell and subsequently went to several locations, searching their homes, gathering more information and inputting the data into their system, said Swan. Additionally, the patrol informed the suspected cell leader they are watching him closely to deter future illegal actions and would return if he continued his activities.

The mission was successful, and 2nd Platoon Soldiers were able to "throw a monkey wrench into his organization," claimed Swan. They convinced the cell leader to identify members in his extremist organization and, in essence, undermine the organization and trust within the cell, he explained.

Operating at night, versus in daytime, brings different challenges and opportunities. It also changes battlefield conditions. One difference, noted Swan, is night opera-

tions offer a greater sense of control because fewer civilians are moving about. It is easier to identify groups who have gathered at night and to investigate their activities.

As an artillery unit, Soldiers of 5th Bn., 25th FA have had to adjust to missions and tasks handed to them. Swan said he is pleased with performances and adjustments his Soldiers made and attributes much of the platoon's success to his noncommissioned officers who have multiple deployments under their belts.

Being deployed and conducting the missions is not too different from the training Soldiers received at home station. Sgt. Sean Conner, a former drill sergeant who recently joined the unit from Fort Knox, Ky., attested that a lot of the techniques used in Iraq are the same as those used to teach basic training recruits – especially building-clearing techniques, he explained.

The training helps build the foundation of their performance, but it is the relationships Soldiers establish with Iraqis that are the keys to their operations.

"I receive ... intelligence from the people on the street," said Swan.

In addition to gathering information about good and bad people in area neighborhoods, 2nd Plt. Soldiers assess the general needs and situations of the Iraqi people they protect, explained Swan.

As he patrols, Spc. Navoild Bradford, a

Chicago native, and senior line medic for 2nd Plt., said he realizes the importance of establishing a good relationship with the Iraqi people, adding that he believes this platoon has shown Iraqi people they are here to help.

One of the platoon's goals is to inform the Iraqi populace there is someone on the streets helping Iraqi Security Forces look out for their interests so they don't have to look to, or fear, extremist organizations, said Sgt. Rocky Kulick, a Lakeland, Fla., native.

Whether their missions occur at day or

night, the Soldiers of 2nd Plt. are happy with how things have turned out and with the contributions they've made so far. Bradford said he is pleased with the performance of the platoon and how they've "come together as a team." Discipline has been a platoon focus, he said.

"I feel like the biggest challenge for us, and every other unit, is staying disciplined," said Bradford. "We seem to be doing a real good job at it. Without discipline, bad things happen."



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Grant Okubo, 4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

Sgt. John Ray, a Milwaukee native, searches the back of a large van for prohibited items as he and his platoon patrol through the streets in Karadah March 20. Ray serves with Battery B, 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



18th MP Bde.

Eight MND-B Soldiers earn recognition for gallantry, heroism

By Spc. Anthony Henderson

18th MP Bde. PAO

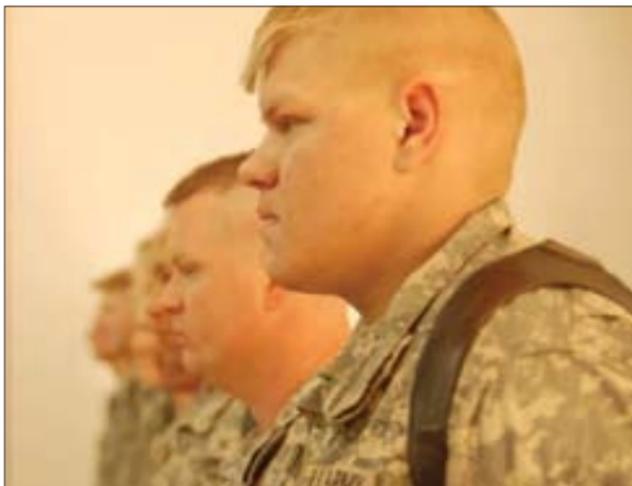
BAGHDAD – A Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier was awarded the Purple Heart, and seven of his comrades were awarded the Combat Action Badge, in a ceremony March 16 at Forward Operating Base Rustamiyah; the eight Soldier are assigned to 54th Military Police Company, 95th MP Battalion, 18th MP Brigade.

Sgt. Colin McColley, a military police noncommissioned officer, who is a native of Flint, Mich., was awarded the Purple Heart after suffering wounds during a terrorist's improvised-explosive device attack on his convoy while conducting a Police Transition Team mission in support of training Iraqi Police.

Also during the ceremony, seven Soldiers from his team were presented Combat Action Badges for their actions following the IED attack. McColley was the only Soldier injured.

Soldiers awarded the CAB were: Sgt. Aaron Fullerton, a native of New York; Sgt. Steven Yarbrough, a native of Bradenton, Fla.; Sgt. Daniel Smith, a native of Granhaven, Mich.; Spc. Anthony Miller, native of Louisville, Ky.; Spc. Justin Harvey, a native of Des Moines, Iowa; Pfc. Kyle Kloeckl, a native of Spearfish, S.D.; and Pfc. Matthew Valentine, a native of New Port News, Va.

"I know that when you're back in garrison, and you read



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Anthony Henderson, 18th MP Bde. PAO
Seven Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers stand tall as they wait to be awarded the Combat Action Badge March 16 at Forward Operating Base Rustamiyah, Iraq.

stories of Soldiers receiving Purple Hearts and CABs, it doesn't have the same impact," said Maj. Geoff Stewart, executive officer, 95th MP Bn., and native of Granville, N.C. "You don't realize the sacrifice, selfless service and honor these Soldiers display while in combat. I've had the opportunity to fully understand what it means to be in the

company of heroes because that's exactly what these Soldiers are – Heroes."

The Purple Heart is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to any member of an Armed Force who, while serving with the U.S. Armed Services after April 5, 1917, has been wounded or killed, or who has died or may hereafter die after being wounded; in any action against an enemy of the United States; in any action with an opposing armed force of a foreign country in which the Armed Forces of the United States are or have been engaged; while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party; as a result of an act of any such enemy of opposing armed forces and as the result of an act of any hostile foreign force.

On May 2, 2005, the Chief of Staff, Army, approved the creation of the CAB to provide special recognition to soldiers who personally engage, or are engaged by the enemy. The requirements for award of the CAB are Branch and military occupation specialty immaterial. Assignment to a Combat Arms unit or a unit organized to conduct close or offensive combat operations, or performing offensive combat operations, is not required to qualify for the CAB. However, it is not intended to award all soldiers who serve in a combat zone or imminent danger area.

1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. 

Raiders arrive in Kuwait

Soldiers undergo new training for changing battlefield

By Spc. David Hodge

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP BUEHRING, Kuwait – The Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, pitched their tents at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, during the month of March, in preparation for their 15-month rotation with Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Raider Brigade Soldiers will use this short time in Kuwait's Udairi Desert to hone their combat skills in preparation for the missions that will be executed daily for the units that are deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, said Lt. Col. Paul Hossenlopp, deputy commander, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

"The training here in Kuwait gives the Soldiers a chance to get acclimated to the theater and climate change," Hossenlopp said. "Also, it allows Soldiers to be successful at the personal and crew-levels before they enter combat operations."

Hossenlopp said he believes the valuable training is a critical piece in ensuring the overall combat readiness for the Raider Brigade and will better prepare the Soldiers to fight as a unit in Baghdad.

The latest round of training for the Soldiers incorporated the most recent techniques, tactics and procedures used on today's battlefield and served as a refresher for some of the veteran Soldiers.

"We have had some new training this time," said Spc. Jarjo Calidonio, a scout assigned to the Scout Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st BCT. "The (Improvised Explosive Device) training was good; it was a refresher for my mind."

Calidonio, who hails from Los Angeles, said that the Soldiers of his Scout Platoon arrived in Kuwait combat-ready and look forward to the challenges of the future operations.

The training in Kuwait varied from hip-pocket training on the rules of engagement and laws of land warfare and instruction on the Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer to three-day training events for the Army's newest combat vehicle, the Mine Resistant and Ambush Protected vehicle.

Among the new training the Soldiers attended during their first two weeks in camp was a medical treatment-based class devoted to teaching Soldiers how to stabilize wounds until a higher echelon of medical treatment is available, said Mike Haight, a training facilitator and instructor at Camp Buehring's Medical Support Training Center.

"The training has evolved into more of a combat-casualty care and combat life saver course for Soldiers," Haight said.

This four-hour class has already paid dividends on the battlefield since its start in May 2006, explained the retired Special Forces medic with more than 15 years of service.

"Soldiers have said that the material taught in the class is what's working on the ground," said Haight, a native of Seattle.

Since its inception, the class has doubled in size and is on the verge of doubling its numbers again, said Haight. The number of Soldiers trained at the class since its last expansion has multiplied four-fold.

Raider Brigade Soldiers attending the class said it was educational, but lacked the usual classroom characteristic: boredom.

"The advanced combat life saver course was very informative," said Pfc. Jensen Buller, a medic from Oshkosh, Wis., assigned to the personnel security detachment, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

The 1st BCT has added all the training of Kuwait to its repertoire, and with the rigors of combat operations inside Baghdad on the horizon, Raider Brigade Soldiers will be given the opportunity to adapt to a similarly harsh environment, said Sgt. Maj. Ronald Smiley, operations sergeant major, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

"In Kuwait, the training builds the Soldiers' confidence on their weapons and hones other necessary combat skills," Smiley said.

Upon arriving in Baghdad, the 1st BCT Soldiers can expect to be busy learning their new area of operation from the outgoing unit, so it is important that the Raider Soldiers make the best of the training environment in Kuwait, said Smiley.

"We want to make Iraq a safer place for its citizens and security forces," Smiley said. "Also to make sure the unit replacing us is better situated in regards to training and the environment on the ground."

With their boots on the ground, the Soldiers continue their reception into the Central Command Theater with orientation briefs and several periods of classroom training while allowing their bodies to acclimatize before conducting rifle and gunnery ranges.

"The Soldiers have met the standards," said Smiley, who hails from Lake Village, Ark.

"Overall, Soldiers are achieving all the training goals, and in fact, are ahead of schedule."

Soldiers of the Raider Brigade continue to conduct pre-combat checks and inspections to ensure that they are ready to assume their upcoming mission in Baghdad's Rashid district.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Soldiers from the 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, fire their individual weapon systems during a familiarization range at the Udairi Range Complex, Camp Buehring, Kuwait, March 11, before the unit moves north to Iraq to support Multi-National Division – Baghdad as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom 07-09.

4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. 

Dragons welcome Raider brigade torch

By Spc. Nathaniel Smith

4th BCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – It's a beginning of an end in southern Baghdad, and for some as far away as Kansas, there couldn't be better news.

With the end of their deployment nearing, the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division welcomed the advanced party of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division of Fort Hood, Texas, to Forward Operating Base Falcon in South Baghdad's Rashid District March 20-21.

The "Dragon" Brigade, the second of the "surge" brigades, is scheduled to return to Fort

Riley, Kan., later in the spring after spending 14 months in the Iraqi capital.

Col. Ricky Gibbs, commander of the 4th BCT and native of Austin, Texas, said while his Soldiers may be on the stretch run, they still have a lot of work to do.

"The ADVON's arrival is an important milestone for transition between the Dragon and Raider brigades," Gibbs said. "We're glad to see the Raider Soldiers here at Falcon, and everyone's working hard to make sure we conduct a proper battle handover."

With her replacement showing up with the advanced party, Spc. Chenique Walker, an

intelligence analyst with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th BCT, said she is trying to maintain her focus even though her replacement is now on the post.

"It's hard to concentrate," the Birmingham, Ala, native said. "It's not 'They're in Kuwait.' They're actually showing up at FOB Falcon."

Walker added that to keep her mind on the task at hand, she is teaching her replacement everything that she knows.

"I'm letting them ask me questions and that's keeping me focused. Whatever they want to know, I show them," she said.

For Sgt. Barbara Tobin, the training non-

commissioned officer attached to HHC, 4th BCT, who plans to stay with the 1st BCT, the arrival of the "Raider" ADVON means meeting her new co-workers.

"I find it easy to get along with most people; there shouldn't be any problem with the transition," said the Anaheim, Calif., native. "I've been looking forward to helping the new training NCO. Regardless of where they have me, I'll do the best I can."

The "Raiders," who are on their third deployment after deploying to Tikrit and Taji will assume responsibility of the Rashid District.



2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Soldiers remain committed to 'forgotten' village

Troops offload supplies for IP station, connect to villagers

By Sgt. Jerome Bishop
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment “Golden Dragons,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, took several more steps March 30 to show the people of Abayachi, a village north of Camp Taji, they haven't been forgotten.

As part of an effort to assist the locals in the village, the Soldiers of 1st Bn., 14th Inf. Regt., offloaded force protection supplies at the Abayachi Iraqi Police Station to get them on their way to providing law and order for the area.

“The Tarmiyah district police have decided to occupy and start to rebuild the Abayachi Police station. There's no furniture, and we delivered the initial package of wire and wood and a tip line phone to get them on their feet,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Boccardi, a native of Colorado Springs, Colo., who serves as the battalion commander of the 1st Bn., 14th Inf. Regt.

Boccardi traveled to the village to meet with local leaders as Soldiers from his battalion, as well as the 411th Military Police Company, assisted the Iraqi Police at the fledgling station in getting the supplies, such as barrier wood, sand bags, Hesco barriers and concertina wire, offloaded at the station.

“Our top goal right now is to improve the force protection of the current police station,” said Capt. Norma James, a Lawrenceburg, Ky., native, who serves as the commander of the 411th MP Co.

Along with improving the station's force protection, the MPs also plan on getting the station operable, with the assistance of the

Golden Dragons, and getting essential services like law and order back in Abayachi, she said.

While in the village, Boccardi also took the opportunity to visit a Nahia council member, who recently suffered the tragic loss of his infant son.

“In this culture, you can never compensate the loss of a loved one – a child in this case. You have to do something instead of nothing,” said Boccardi.

“I went through the claims program and tried to compensate him as best we could for the loss of his son.”

While traveling to Ramadi, a ricochet from an escalation of force incident struck his son, said Boccardi.

“The people up here, they're not forgotten. It's all too often you can't reach out and touch certain people just by the number of troops you have available or how far the bases are away.

If you can get out to the little remote areas, you can make a big impact by just doing small things.”

The difference between the visit to the IP Station and the resolution of the claims appear to be separate; however, the completion



U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Jerome Bishop, 2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

Iraqi Police officers and Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, offload wood from a pallet of force protection supplies dropped off at the Abayachi IP station March 30 by the Soldiers from 1st Bn., 14th Inf. Regt.

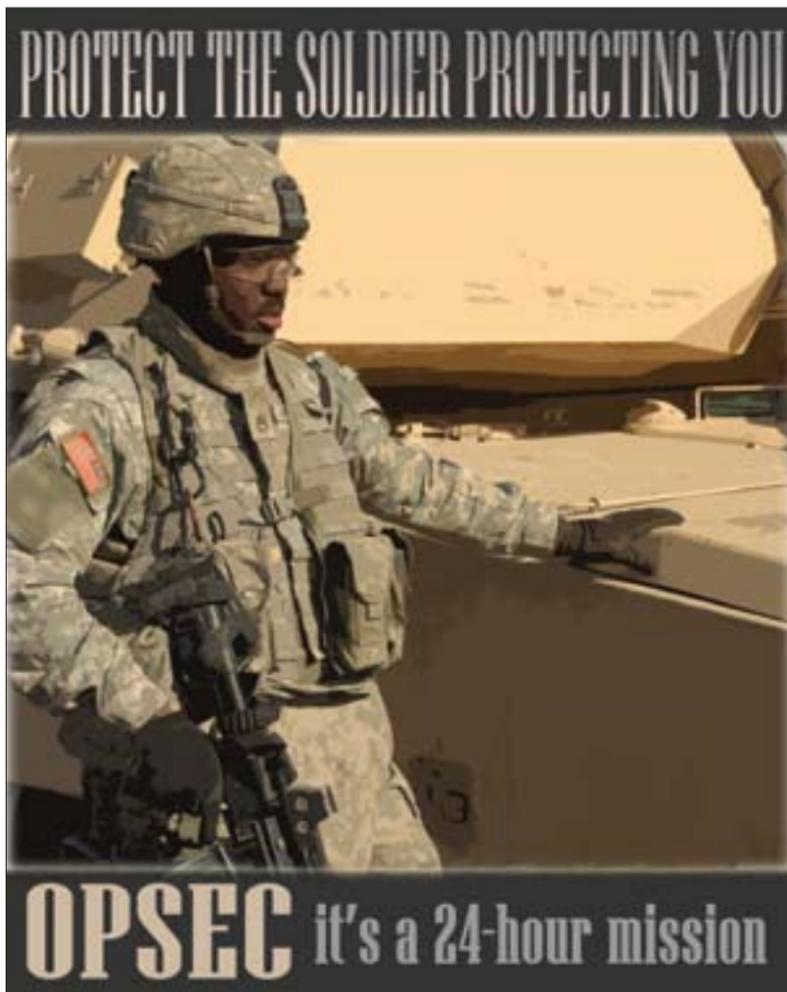
of both objectives came together to better integrate the meaning of the mission.

“They intertwine because you reach out and show that you care about someone. Just that little bit of hope and little bit of reach sparks a little fire that they aren't out here and forgotten,” said Boccardi.

While the visit to the Abayachi IP Station by Golden Dragon Soldiers and the 411th MP Co. didn't end with a ceremony or a grand

opening, the end result of the mission was still a success.

“We didn't cut a ribbon today; we didn't give life back to his son; we didn't bring the people who were responsible to bear,” said Boccardi, “but we made a step forward in making a police station functional, and we made a step forward in making the people believe that the American aren't egregious people who don't care about anything.”



Detainee release provides healing in small community

By Maj. Allen Hing
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Twenty-two detainees were released March 19 as part of Operation Forgiving Dragon.

Seven of the detainees were released back to the city of Tarmiya and the remaining 15 to Taji, both cities are located northwest of Baghdad

The Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and local leaders joined forces with Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, to assist in taking the men back home.

Sheik Sa'ad Jassim warmly welcomed the seven former detainees back to Tarmiya. His words were firm to them.

“Some of you have done wrong, but it is time to put that in the past,” he said. “We thank the Americans for allowing you to return to Tarmiya – to your Family. Your time in prison is done. It is time to move forward.”

With unanimous nods, the seven looked knowingly to their leader with acknowledgement that it was time to move forward.

Col. Tawfiq al Janabi, the chief of police, also welcomed the men back to Tarmiya.

“You have paid the price (for your transgressions),” he said, “and you have been given a second chance. It is time for you to be part of the ‘Tarmiya Family.’ Do as your pledges say – with honor and loyalty.”

Each man was required to sign an agreement that they would honor and follow the rule of law and commit no crimes against the Government of Iraq or Coalition Forces.

“I offer my hand in friendship,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Boccardi, a native of Colorado Springs, Colo., who serves as the commander of 1st Bn., 14th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT. “You will see me. I live here. Together, we can move forward.”

The seven stood and readily took his handshake. Among the applause and hugs, the men then joined their Families.

“The release of these men today reflects the improving security conditions in this community,” said Col. Todd McCaffrey, a native of Hudson, Ohio, and commander of 2nd SBCT. “Iraqi leaders and security forces are now capable of ensuring these returned men abide by the rule of law and can effectively reintegrate into this society.”



2 Schools open doors in Ameriyah

By Sgt. James Hunter

2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.

BAGHDAD – Following months of renovations, two schools in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Ameriyah officially opened their doors March 16.

With Dr. Nehad, the Deputy Minister of Education, present, the Firdous and Al Rawadan Schools held ceremonies to commemorate their openings.

Laughter and excitement filled the air as children danced and sang to the beat of musical instruments. The boys – some dressed in soccer jerseys and dress shirt and tie – chanted in celebration and waved the Iraqi flag. The girls wore their best spring dresses, read poetry and danced throughout the day.

Though the schools were open during the renovation process, it was an opportunity to celebrate the successes within the community and to give back to those in the area who sacrificed so much, especially during periods of serious enemy engagements.

Ameriyah was entrenched in constant fighting a year ago, said Maj. Joel Stephenson, a native of Duluth, Minn., executive officer, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment. The schools in the area suffered some of the impact caused by the enemy activity.

However, the Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq), in coordination with the Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces, assisted in securing Ameriyah, bringing justice to the once war-torn area of western Baghdad, said Stephenson.

Attacks against the populace, Iraqi Security Forces and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers, have dropped tremendously since securing the area, he said.

“We maybe have two or three attacks in a weeklong period,” Stephenson said. “Then, it may have been 10 to 15 attacks weekly.”

Community celebrates education, success following renovation



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div. Iraqi girls dance during a performance in celebration of the official opening of the newly renovated Firdous School in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Ameriyah March 16.

With security set, it was time to begin rebuilding the area. According to Stephenson, there are 17 schools in Ameriyah, and these two schools were the first of a few they plan to renovate.

Windows were blown out, the electricity was bad, and there was no emphasis on technology, he said. This was as MND-B project; however, the contractor who worked on the school and the workers he hired came from within Ameriyah. Coalition Forces simply ensured the project went through and

said Stephenson.

Even when things were bad last summer with enemy activity, the Headmaster at the Al Rawadan School made it a point to ensure the kids came to school to experience some sort of normalcy and better themselves as Iraqi citizens through education.

The schools Headmaster’s told Stephenson through recent discussions they are really proud of their students and how intelligent they are.

was done correctly.

“I think it’s mostly transparent to the Iraqis,” Stephenson said. “They are obviously appreciative to what we do, but they also recognize the Ministry of Education and the Government of Iraq was involved in this – and that’s a good thing. It builds legitimacy when they see the Iraqi government, and they see some of their local governments, doing things for their community.”

The schools both have generators running power and electricity into the buildings, as well as new desks, bathrooms and new lights and fixtures. The foundation and the walls in one school were beginning to crack, so the contractor was able to fix that as well.

Also, new computers with internet access were put into the school.

“There were no computers: no emphasis on any type of technology,” Stephenson said.

“They are trying to get the most advanced equipment in these schools so their kids can have the best available education.”

The schools in Ameriyah, which are historically known for having successful education systems, are not only for the children to have a place to learn but also a source of pride for the Iraqi citizens within the community,

ISF, Coalition team to combat threat

By Sgt. James Hunter

2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.

BAGHDAD – As violence heightened in northwest Baghdad, Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces teamed to combat the threat of any criminal activity.

The recent detention of four criminals in Ramaniyah, Jouadine, and Katieb, may have contributed to the violence, said Sgt. Joseph Lorenzana, a New York City native, with Company C, 1st Squadron, 75th Squadron, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), however, their arrest may have curbed the attacks against coalition forces in the area.

“There was an increase in attacks,” said Capt. Terrence Higgins, a native of Point Pleasant, N.J., and commander of Company C. “The checkpoints came under fire, so we were sent to reinforce the checkpoints. Ultimately, we returned fire when the enemy fired upon us.”

The enemy fired rocket-propelled grenades, indirect fire, small arms fire, and placed improvised explosive devices on main avenues in and out of the area, said Higgins.

It was as if the war had begun anew. Hellfire missiles soared through the air, engaging and killing three enemy combatants March 27.

That same night, there were reports that 15-20 armed enemy combatants were moving through the Jouadine Market in northern Ghazaliyah carrying AK-47’s and rocket propelled grenades.

Soldiers with 3rd Platoon, Company C, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, were sent in to either capture or kill

these men bringing havoc to the once quiet area.

While moving through the market, a terrorist with an AK-47 stood atop a roof top and engaged the passing Coalition Force convoy. After seeing the muzzle flashes coming from his rifle, they fired .50 caliber rounds into his position.

It was late in the night, and everyone’s night vision goggles lit up like the Fourth of July.

The night grew long, well into the following morning. Criminals were wheeling lit tires into the street in hopes to white-out the Soldiers night vision goggles, possibly for a rocket-propelled grenade attack on the Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces operating the checkpoint.

It was a different environment, especially since Ghazaliyah had been quiet – free of much enemy contact. With the increased violence in certain areas of Baghdad, the Government of Iraq imposed a three-day curfew, restricting unauthorized vehicles, motorcycles or pedestrian traffic movement.

While sitting at Joint Security Station Ghazaliyah III, a Son of Iraq [Abna’al Iraq] member, said the people of Baghdad are scared of the criminals – they absolutely fear them. They have good weapons, because, to his belief, they have the money to purchase these weapons, which come from selling drugs, ransom from kidnappings or money from outside supporters.

To ensure no further criminal activity or supplies pushed through the area, Iraqi Security Forces and Soldiers from Co. C, 1-75 Cav., continue to man a critical checkpoint in the area.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div. Staff Sgt. Clay Craig, Company C, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), looks down the site of his weapon for any criminal activity while operating at an observation post in northern Ghazaliyah March 28.



2nd SCR

Missing Soldier found after nearly 4 years

By Sgt. 1st Class William Quiett
2nd SCR PAO

BAGHDAD – The remains of Staff Sgt. Keith Matthew Maupin were recovered March 20 northwest of Baghdad by elements the Multi-National Division – Baghdad's 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, which is based out of Vilseck, Germany.

The recovery was the result of four years of intensive effort by MND-B Soldiers and multiple joint and interagency organizations; The Soldiers of 2nd SCR were able to recover Maupin's remains by approaching the recovery as a criminal investigation and employing appropriate investigative techniques.

"Since beginning operations in Abu Ghraib, we made finding Staff Sgt. Maupin a top priority to clearly demonstrate to every service member, and every Family, that we will never leave a fallen comrade," said Col. John RisCassi, the commander of the 2nd SCR.

The Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment "Gimlets," who are based out of Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, are currently under the tactical control of 2SCR and performed the actual recovery mission.

The recovery was made possible by the Gimlets relentlessly pursuing intelligence leads and simultaneously leveraging the new relationships made possible by reconciliation.

"We were able to produce great synergy by pursuing this investigation in conjunction with our ongoing targeting efforts," said Lt. Col. Omar Jones, executive officer, 2nd SCR.

Many of the terrorists involved in this incident have continued to attack coalition forces and Iraqi people for the past four years, he added, and the 2nd SCR identified and detained the vast majority of these insurgents in recent weeks. In addition to recovering Maupin's remains, they have been removing a significant threat to the security of the Iraqi people.

Though honored to return a fallen comrade to his Family, the Dragoons of 2nd SCR and Gimlets of 1-21 Inf. Regt. will



U.S. Army Courtesy Photo

Sgt. Keith "Matt" Maupin of the U.S. Army Reserve's 724th Transportation Company is shown in his vehicle sometime before April 9, 2004, when his convoy was ambushed en route to Baghdad International Airport.

continue to pursue those responsible for Maupin's death and all who threaten the security of Abu Ghraib.

Maupin, 24, was a motor transport operator assigned to the 724th Transportation Company, U.S. Army Reserve based out of Bartonville, Ill.

Maupin was captured on April 9, 2004, after his fuel convoy came under attack near the Baghdad International Airport. Terrorists ambushed the convoy with gunfire, mortar rounds and RPGs, disabling many of the civilian fuel tankers and Army vehicles.

After the remnants of the convoy reached safe ground it was learned that about ten soldiers and civilian KBR contractors were wounded, one soldier and a civilian driver had been killed in the battle, and Maupin was among nine people

unaccounted for – seven civilians and two soldiers. One of the missing civilian drivers, who had been taken hostage during the ambush, escaped his captors on May 2, 2004. The bodies of five other civilians and the second soldier were subsequently recovered.

The Batavia, Ohio, native was promoted three times while missing in action as his Family awaited news on his status. Army casualty assistance officers flew to Ohio March 30 to personally notify his parents, Carolyn and Keith Maupin.

"One of the elements of the Army's Soldiers Creed is that I will never leave a fallen comrade," said Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey. "We take those words very seriously, for our Soldiers, their Families and this nation. We will never leave a fallen comrade. I want to thank the many Soldiers who've searched and continue to search for these men. Your tireless efforts are one of most important and unrelenting responsibilities we share."

"The Maupins are people of modest means with great big hearts, and they've touched the lives of thousands," said Pete Geren, Secretary of the Army.

"His parents are helping others with Soldiers in harm's way, just like their son, from the Yellow Ribbon Support Center in Cincinnati. This center was set up to build Internet cafes in Iraq, and they secured the donation of laptops so Soldiers could use them. They also sponsor college scholarships and facilitate a support network for Soldiers' Families. They collect and they distribute truckloads of gifts and supplies for Soldiers and Families.

"The Maupins selflessly serve as a funnel for the generosity of people across America," Geren said. "Americans who want to help Soldiers, Americans who want to help our Families. Carolyn and Keith, our prayers are with you. Thank you for all you do for Soldiers."

(Army News Services reports contributed to this story)



35th Eng. Bde.

35th Eng. Bde. Soldiers combat roadside bombs in Baghdad

By Lt. Col. David Lowe
35th Eng. Bde.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Since 2003, roadside bombs and improvised explosive devices have been among the biggest dangers U.S. forces face in Iraq. Today, the 35th Engineer Brigade is leading the way in combatting them.

Capt. Brian Sayer, of Laquey, Mo., who teaches middle school math in Laquey, is continuing his educational career in Iraq. Sayer runs Task Force Iron Claw Academy, a training institute that transforms troops into improvised-explosive device hunters. His team, which includes Master Sgt. Richard Chappell, of Farmington, Mo., has had a major impact.

"Since assuming the duties as senior instructor on Sept. 1, 2007, more than 1,300 Coalition Forces and civilians have been trained at the academy," Chappell said.

Chappell, the noncommissioned officer in

charge of the academy, draws on experience earned in two previous Iraq deployments to teach his students about route-clearance, a sometimes tedious, often dangerous mission.

At the academy, Soldiers learn the tactics, techniques, and procedures of how to spot roadside bombs. Academy classes begin with five days of classroom instruction. There, troops learn about route-clearance vehicles, formations, movements and casualty evacuation, Sayer said. The course relies heavily on expert guest lecturers from a variety of fields.

"We have many guest instructors who come to teach the IED hunters including those specializing in collecting evidence, a Naval officer who teaches us about electronic warfare and countermeasures, and even our own JAG officer, who teaches the Soldiers rules of engagement and law of armed conflict," Sayer said.

The curriculum is fluid, constantly adapt-

ing to new developments in Iraq, stated the primary instructor.

"The enemy's tactics are constantly changing, which requires us to develop new countermeasures for Coalition Forces," said Sgt. Melvin Locklear, of Lumberton, N.C., the academy's primary instructor. "As we educate and train the Soldiers who graduate from the academy, their survivability rate greatly increases as they go on route-clearance missions."

After classroom instruction, the Soldiers are taught to identify IEDs. To graduate the academy, troops must pass a final exercise, in which they have to identify hidden explosives. Although some are easily identified, many are almost impossible to spot, Sayer said.

After training, some of the Soldiers will go on live route-clearance missions.

"If a Soldier completes Task Force Iron Claw Academy and goes on five route-clear-

ance missions, he is considered an IED hunter by his peers," Sayer said.

In addition to running the academy, the task force is responsible for oversight and planning of the 35th Engineer Brigade's route-clearance missions in the Baghdad area of operations. The route-clearance mission is designed to locate and destroy roadside bombs.

Some of those missions are carried out by troops from the 107th Engineer Battalion, a National Guard unit based in Ishpeming, Mich. The Michigan Soldiers scour the streets of Iraq in specially designed vehicles called RG-31s, Huskies and Buffalos. Travelling at slow speeds, the troops inspect any suspicious objects that might hide explosives.

The troops perform a critical mission that saves lives throughout Iraq. They are a key-stone in the overall efforts by the U.S. Army to provide protection and security for Coalition Forces and civilians in Iraq.



Task Force XII



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brandon Little, Task Force XII PAO

Maintain the force

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – AH-64 Apache helicopter maintainers in 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, perform post-flight checks and services on a helicopter returning from a mission. Task Force XII Soldiers work around the clock to keep mission essential aircraft repaired and refueled for missions.

MND-B attack aviation crews destroy enemy positions

Task Force XII PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad attack helicopter crews destroyed two enemy positions in separate attacks March 25.

They responded after enemy forces fired on Coalition forces in Baghdad at approximately 8:20 p.m.

The aircrews from 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, answered the call from ground forces, who reported that they had received enemy fire from a nearby position as they traveled along an established route.

The crews investigated the suspected point of origin and observed several individuals with weapons. The suspected individuals eventually engaged ground forces along the route from the same location.

After obtaining clearance from the ground unit to engage the enemy position, the Apache crews fired upon it, ceasing all enemy activity from the location.

Apache crews continued to provide security for the ground forces until the area was secure.

In an earlier attack, aircrews were called to investigate possible suspected terrorist establishing an attack position at approximately 1:15 p.m.

Upon arrival, the aircrews noticed the individuals preparing for the attack and fired upon the position forcing the terrorists to flee the scene.

There were no Coalition forces or Iraqi citizens injured as a result of the two attacks.

MND-B Soldiers deliver gifts to local area school

From School gifts Pg. 1

“The supplies will help the children to stay occupied with healthy activities, like sports and learning. Keeping busy with these activities will also help keep them out of trouble and on the right path,” said Abo Jasan, a member of the Iraqi Family Village Council.

The school’s principal, Sami Abbas, expressed his appreciation for the school supplies and the benefit they will have on the students’ learning.

“We appreciate the help provided by these Soldiers,” he said. “These supplies will help us with our mission to educate our children.”

The Iraqi Army civil affairs soldiers added a new dimension to the supply drop through their participation. The Iraqi civil affairs program is relatively new, and the soldiers are working with the MND-B Soldiers to better understand their jobs.

The program has only existed for about a 1.5 years, and there are approximately 16 Iraqi civil

affairs personnel in the MND-B area of operations, said Sgt. Brendan Piper, a team sergeant with the HHC, 432nd CA Bn.

“We will work with them for the next eight months,” he said. “Our goal is for them to run their own operations, even though we will still help them organize the operations.”

The Iraqi Army soldiers show a great deal of interest in learning the different aspects of civil affairs.

“They really seem to care about helping the community when we go on missions,” said Piper.

It is his concern for the community that makes gift-giving missions like this rewarding for Piper.

“I signed up for the Army to make a positive difference,” he said.

For the children at the Iraqi Family Village School, receiving small material gifts boosts their morale, thus enabling Piper to make that positive difference.



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. April Campbell, MND-B PAO

Spc. Ryan Palmer, a Bad Axe, Mich., native, tosses a basketball to an Iraqi boy while unloading school supplies, clothing and other miscellaneous gifts from the back of a Light Medium Tactical Vehicle at the Iraqi Family Village School in Baghdad March 19. Palmer serves as a civil affairs specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 432nd Civil Affairs Battalion, 360th Civil Affairs Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Do you have a story to share?

We want to hear about it.

The Ivy Leaf

See Pg. 2 and contact your unit’s Public Affairs Office for more details



'Hard Rock' ensures safety, security of local Iraqi citizens

Story and photos by Sgt. James Hunter
2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.
BAGHDAD –

Hurriyah is a very busy town in western Baghdad, littered with trash, shopping markets filled with “designer clothing,” and men, women and children alike who move through the streets and try to carry on their life with what little normalcy it may contain.

A man in a wheel chair maneuvers down an alley with his young child clinging to the armrest of his father's chair. The man struggles to move himself down the bumpy surfaced road; however, though paralyzed to a wheel-chair, he still manages to nudge a smile as an American convoy passes.

He waves, as does his child, as the Soldiers, mounted in their humvees, wave back in acknowledgement. A child on a bike approaches the convoy on the evening of March 18 with a BMW hubcap wrapped around the frame.

“Mista, Mista, give me money,” he said to the truck commander in the vehicle. “No,” he fires back jokingly, “You give me money.”

Maybe the boy wanted money, maybe not. Perhaps what he really wanted was a conversation with the men he sees daily patrolling through his streets, who continue to bring peace and prosperity to his worn-torn community.

The Soldiers of Company A “Hard Rock,” 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad, patrol the streets of Hurriyah daily in an attempt to quell terrorist and criminal activity, and aid in improving the economy, government, infrastructure and civil services.

The Soldiers often visit local leaders in the community and maintain a presence in what some would consider a very dangerous area. Often, they speak with local nationals to gain an assessment on their current living conditions, the enemy activity in the area, and any tips that would help the MND-B Soldiers take the bad guys off the streets.

(Continued on next page)



Sgt. Brandon Griffis, a native of Pendleton, Ind., kicks through a door while clearing a building in Kadhamiyah March 21. Griffis serves with 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



SpC. Jake Grosschmidt, a native of Canton, Ohio, talks with an Iraqi man during a patrol in Hurriyah March 20. Grosschmidt is currently attached to Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



SpC. Jake Grosschmidt, a native of Canton, Ohio, talks with a group of Iraqi males while they play a game on dominoes during a patrol in Hurriyah March 19. Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces patrol the area often in an attempt to quell terrorist activity to help improve the economy, governance, infrastructure and civil services of Hurriyah. Grosschmidt is currently attached to Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

(Continued from previous page)

Partnered with the Iraqi Security Forces in the area, they move through the streets of Hurriyah in an attempt to improve the area and aid the development of the ISF, said Sgt. Brandon Griffis, a native of Pendleton, Ind., and weapons squad leader for 1st “Black Sheep” Platoon, Co. A, 1-502nd Inf. Regt. Part of their overall mission is help ensure the Iraqi Army continues to increase its capabilities to “get the job done.”

Often, according to Griffis, the Soldiers train their IA counterparts at their compound in Hurriyah. They teach them basic first aid procedures that deal with such things as applying a tourniquet, stopping bleeding and resuscitation. They also teach them about land navigation and how to maneuver in an urban environment.

Though they patrol with them often, they continue to train them on patrolling techniques because just as Coalition Forces do, it's a technique they must always practice, said Griffis.

However, Griffis said he feels the biggest problem when it comes to the growth of the IA is the Iraqi citizens reliance on Coalition Forces – especially with the many assets available to them in the Iraqi Security Forces.

“We've got to instill as much confidence in the people for the Iraqi Army because that is who they are going to have when we leave,” he said.

When they see the Iraqi Army on patrol, they can begin to earn their trust, especially when they see them doing good things, said Griffis.

“They are their military, and they are here to help them,” he said. “When they see them patrolling, I think it let's the community know that the Iraqi Government is trying to help them. It lets them know that Iraq is starting to stand on its own two feet because that's the bottom line; basically, one day, we won't be here. It's up to the Iraqi Army to do the job we are doing.”

The IA is coming along real well, he said, adding that he is very impressed with their abilities and their potential. In the meantime however, there are still issues that sit at their forefront.

One of the biggest problems is getting the people of Hurriyah to talk, said SpC. Jake Grosschmidt, a native of Canton, Ohio, who is currently attached to the company.

While on a joint patrol with the Iraqi Army, he went into a small building where four Iraqi men were playing Dominoes. He began asking questions, knowing they had some information, but got nothing in response.

“I just wanted to tell them that if they wanted a better Hurriyah, they need to start talking if they want to make it better for themselves. We do a lot for them, but sometimes

it's up to the citizens to push the insurgents out themselves. We need their help; it's not just us. They're just afraid.”

And that is exactly what it is – the people of Hurriyah are scared of the militia's operating in their area.

“The groups we are fighting are in it for the money. Since the people are so innocent and scared, they will do anything for their own safety,” Grosschmidt said. “If it's paying those guys money, then they'll do it. The money they pay them goes toward weapons.”

The militia's have a fear instilled in the people of Hurriyah, Griffis said. “so sometimes it's difficult for people to tell us information we need to know. They are scared.”

With that, it just makes Griffis and his men want to push out into Hurriyah even more to let the people know they will not stand for militia's trying to disrupt their way of life.

“When we go out there, the message we try to spread is you don't have to pay for security. You have the right to live in a secure, free environment,” Griffis said. “It just means we have to get out there and get after it more.”

The Soldiers talk to the people, the local nationals of Hurriyah, to listen and try to understand their problems and come up with solutions to those problems. Most importantly, they are trying to catch those who the citizens are afraid of, said Grosschmidt.

“The more information we find on them then the better we can help out the people,” he explained.

“Every time you catch someone, that is a step in the right direction,” added Griffis. “If you take one of those guys off the streets, that does something in the community or neighborhood you did it in because they are all scared. These guys do horrible things to them, and they are frightened.”

The Soldiers work at a high level knowing, “When we're out at night, they'll go to sleep because they know the Americans are there,” said Griffis.

And that is where the credit lies – with the Soldiers of Hard Rock who patrol the streets daily.

“From the very beginning it's been a tight-knit group of guys. You can't separate these guys for nothing,” said Griffis. “They give a lot. There is not one person out there in our platoon that won't give 110 percent when asked.” “They know that their leadership is going to take care of them.”

One of the reasons Griffis joined the Army in the first place, he said, is to watch his Soldiers grow.

“It's amazing to watch them from the time they first come in until now,” he said. “They are seasoned Soldiers. They are combat proven. It's amazing to sit back and watch something like that. I wouldn't rather be anywhere else then where I am right now.”



Pfc. William Simcoe, a native of Port Townsend, Wash., pulls security while on patrol in Hurriyah March 19.

Night in the life ...

NCO leads Soldiers throughout night

By Pfc. April Campbell
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Providing quality leadership for Soldiers is not simply a daytime mission for noncommissioned officers serving with Multi-National Division – Baghdad, it is a mission carried out 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Soldiers, such as Staff Sgt. Kerry Harrison, a Columbus, Miss., native, who serves as the MND-B's automation operations night shift section leader with Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division and MND-B, help to carry out this mission in the wee hours of the night at the Division Main building on Camp Liberty.

Harrison and his crew work a 12-hour shift overnight at the D-Main, keeping the different sections connected via internet and phone networks. Throughout the shift, he approaches his duty of taking care of his six-man crew with a high degree of integrity.

Even before the shift begins at 8 p.m., Harrison and his Soldiers meet at 5:30 p.m. every day, except for Sundays, to conduct physical fitness training.

“Because we cannot do organized PT (in Iraq), on days we don’t run, (Harrison) decided that we are going to go to the gym. He watches us to monitor which exercises we are doing,” said Staff Sgt. Michael Helmen, who serves in as the information operations nightshift imaging technician officer with Co. C, STB.

During this pseudo-organized PT, Harrison starts out his day showing leadership to his Soldiers. He takes his time to make sure each Soldier uses his time wisely and sees the maximum results.

“When we first arrived in Baghdad, we had a Soldier here who was overweight. (Harrison) took it upon himself to do cardiovascular exercises with the Soldier,” said Helmen. “The Soldier lost a lot of weight, and he was able to pass a tape test. He also passed his P.T. test with the best score he has ever earned.”

When he arrives at work, Harrison and his team leaders receive a shift-change brief from the dayshift noncommissioned-officer-in-charge.

In the midst of the work Harrison’s crew receives during the evening brief, they also help other nightshift sections when they encounter network problems with their computers or phones.

“We address the issues people bring to us as they come to the help desk,” said Harrison. “We adjust our schedule to those needs as well as those carrying over from the day shift.”

Sometimes nightshift workers encour-

“I want the Soldiers to know that somebody is taking care of them. If they ask me a question, whether I like that question or not, I owe them an answer.”

Staff Sgt. Kerry Harrison
Columbus, Miss.
night shift section leader
automation operations, MND-B

tered issues which would normally require somebody to go through their section’s information management officer before Harrison and his Soldiers can fix their problem. If possible, Harrison still tries to assist these customers with the problems.

“There has to be somebody that we can talk to (during the night) to make us understand why we need to go ahead and fix their problem,” he said, “so I can add that explanation to the work order.”

Including documentation with every work order completed is one way Harrison helps his Soldiers to better perform their mission.

“I try to mentor the Soldiers in my section. I want to make sure they don’t take shortcuts,” Harrison added. “Even though it may seem easier to go ahead and put somebody on the network on the spot, they need to go through the proper procedure so that everything is documented and tracked.”

In the midst of performing the nightly mission of maintaining the internet and telephone connections at the D-Main, Harrison also finds time to get to know his troops and encourages them to grow – both technically and as Soldiers.

“I want the Soldiers to know that somebody is taking care of them,” he said. “If they ask me a question, whether I like that question or not, I owe them an answer.”

In addition to weekly courses focusing on the technical aspects of their job in information management, Harrison encourages his crew to take college and military correspondence courses.

“The education they receive will help them whether they stay in the military or if they decide to move on to the civilian world,” he said.

Harrison also ensures his Soldiers maintain their military career administratively. He keeps up with their enlisted record briefs and helps them create “I-love-me books” in which to keep each official document they have received since enlisting in the Army.

“The books help (our Soldiers) to keep track of everything they need to be promoted and encourage the Soldiers to take personal responsibility for their Army careers,” he said.

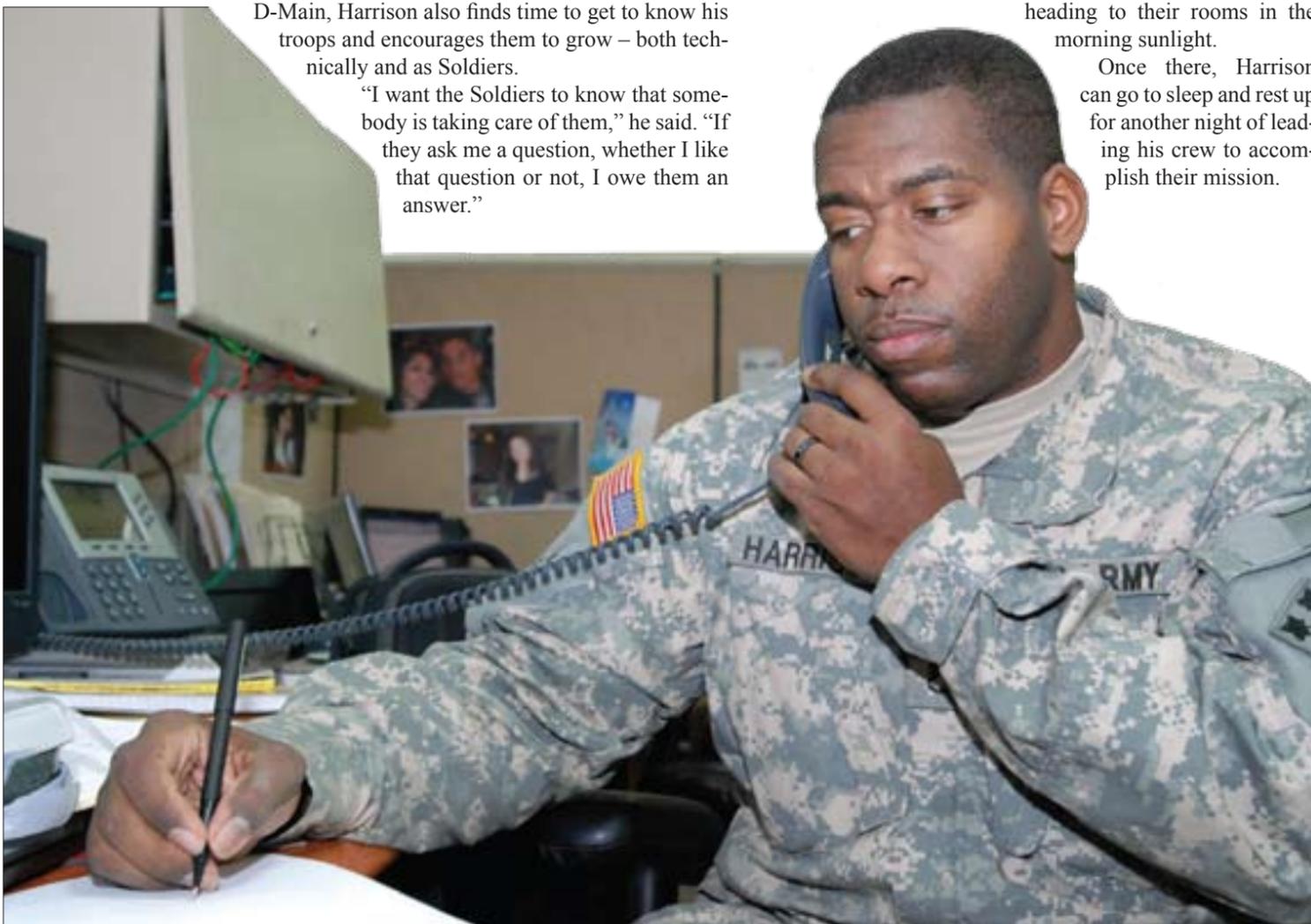
Harrison’s leadership has also helped other NCOs in his section become better leaders.

“I was good at focusing on my Soldiers as people,” said Helmen. “Staff Sgt. Harrison has helped me to be a better NCO and to focus more on encouraging and guiding them to be better Soldiers.”

After a night spent taking care of his Soldiers, Harrison prepares the IO shop for a smooth transition for the day shift before they arrive.

At around 7 a.m., Harrison and his Soldiers take account of all the equipment in their shop. When the morning shift comes in, they conduct a morning shift-change brief before heading to their rooms in the morning sunlight.

Once there, Harrison can go to sleep and rest up for another night of leading his crew to accomplish their mission.



Staff Sgt. Kerry Harrison, a Columbus, Miss., native, who serves as the division information operations night shift section leader with Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, assists a customer needing network access in the IO shop at the Division-Main building at Camp Liberty. Harrison works throughout the night to provide quality leadership to his Soldiers and makes every effort to assist those who need help with their computer network access or phone lines.

NYC firefighter leaves NY to fight fire in Iraq

By Staff Sgt. J.B. Jaso III

1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – On September 11, 2001, Pfc. Nicholas Pata, then a volunteer firefighter in Rockland County, N.Y., assisted rescue efforts after terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in Manhattan.

Twenty-five year-old Pata, a New York City native, no longer fights fires, he now fights terrorism as a radio-telephone operator assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment “Wolfhounds,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

“After 9-11, seeing and losing (many) friends that were firefighters, I felt I owed it to them to jump into the fight,” Pata said. “The time I spent at Ground Zero made up my mind (to join).”

Pata joined the Army in January 2007, where he completed Basic Combat Training at Fort Benning, Ga., and then was assigned to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, and joined the “Wolfhounds” in June.

Less than two months later, Pata departed Hawaii with his unit to conduct training at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif. There, he used his medical skills gained as a fireman & emergency medical technician to save the life of a fellow Soldier who was suffering from a severe heat injury. As a result of his actions and performance during the training rotation, he was awarded the Army Achievement Medal.

After completing training in California, Pata took pre-deployment leave to relax before a 15-month deployment to Iraq. His leave was not all relaxation. He suited up and went back to work as a firefighter. Pata answered the last alarm minutes before he had to return from leave.

“Nick told (his fellow firefighters) before he left for Iraq to keep his ‘bunk warm,’ and (not to) ‘mess with my gear; leave it right where it is,’” said Greg Tobin, a fellow Rockland County volunteer firefighter. “Ever since, he has been gone his gear is exactly like he left it. No one (has) dared to touch it – not out of fear, rather out of respect for the man who wore it.”

When Pata left in October, he not only had to say goodbye to his biological family, but he had to say goodbye to his other family, his fellow firefighters, said Tobin.

“His passion as a firefighter to help his community is what Nick lives for. He is a unique person that has risen to the position of captain in the fire department. He feared no fire; he was always the first into a fire and the last one out, and always making sure he watched over the men he led. He is a brave man, very respected, and very missed by us at home. The community will be safer again when he comes home,” he added.

While in Iraq, Pata assists his unit and the Iraqi Security Forces keep the Taji Qada, northwest of Baghdad, safe.

It is his experience under fire that has helped him be a calm presence here.

“Pata always maintains his composure under pressure re-



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brad Willeford, 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. Pfc. Nicholas Pata, a New York City native, is a radio-telephone operator for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

ardless of the situation,” said Maj. Patrick Aspland, a native of Fort Ann, N.Y. Aspland is the executive officer for the 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt. “His maturity and experience gives him this mannerism that he has things under control.”

Pata was recognized by Gen. David Petraeus, the commander of Multi-National Forces – Iraq, March 12 for his exemplary performance in Iraq.

“Your great work is bringing new hope for the Iraqi people,” stated Petraeus, during the award ceremony. “Keep up the terrific work!”

Pfc. Pata has been doing terrific work as he “is one of the best RTOs I’ve seen in my career; he is able to handle multiple tasks simultaneously,” said Master Sgt. Timothy Jackson, a native of Dryden, N.Y., who serves as the operations sergeant major for the 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt. “Pata is a great asset to the (battalion).”

Pata has approximately one year left in Iraq before going back to fight a different kind of fire.

Pata said he looks forward to going back to Hawaii and eventually returning to New York to continue to serve the people there.



Courtesy photo from Pata Family Pfc. Nicholas Pata was a volunteer firefighter in the Rockland County Fire Department prior to joining the Army. Pata assisted in the rescuing efforts after the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

Engineer Soldiers head to ‘Ends of the Earth’ for EML

By 1st Sgt. Michael Touchinski

HSC, 107th Eng. Bn., 35th Eng. Bde.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Most people would agree that given the time and mode of transportation, exotic locations are desirable; Add to that the need for a change of pace and mindset, and you are conceivably on your way to some of the greatest getaways known to man.

Perhaps it is with this in mind that the Soldiers of the 107th Engineer Battalion are going to the “ends of the earth” for their Environmental Moral Leave.

Some of the notable getaways are to tropical regions for the Soldiers of Headquarters Support Company, 107th Eng. Bn. For Master Sgt. Stephen Waring and his wife, Hawaii will serve as their “getaway”

from it all. Staff Sgt. Greg Kendall, a chaplain's assistant, and his wife are headed to New Zealand. Sgt. 1st Class Richard Lopez and his wife are going on a honeymoon to the Dominican Republic, and Spc. Kallie Derouin, a legal assistant, a trip to Jamaica is in her future. All of these are splendid tropical locations that most people only dream of.

Some people have more traditional getaways to Europe planned. First Lt. Charles Dekeyser, who serves as a battle captain, and his wife are headed for Rome. Staff Sgt. Doug Thibault is perhaps more daring than most to go it alone with a package deal that brings him through seven different European countries. He said he will go to France, Germany, Austria, Netherlands,

England, Switzerland and Italy. For Lt. Col. Dean Degrote, who serves as the battalion's commander, a trip to Ireland to tour the Guinness Beer Factory is in the calling. Capt. Jennifer Ferrell, battalion physicians assistant, said she is also going to Ireland and will meet her husband there. These too are very nice locales, which are likely to help them take their minds off their tours of duty long enough to renew their spirits.

“This is the first time in 30 years with the Military that I’m flying to vacation on the Military’s dime,” said Master Sgt. Stephen Waring, who serves as the noncommissioned officer for the 107th Eng. Bn. S2 section. “I am looking forward to spending time with my wife in Hawaii.”

Sgt. 1st Class Richard Lopez, who

serves as the NCOIC for the battalion's aid station, said he is “looking at going somewhere warm, without blowing sand and dust, overlooking the ocean.” He is heading to the Dominican Republic.

Many of the company's Soldiers head home for their leaves, which provides them the opportunity to regroup and prepare for the rest of their tours.

Sgt. Stephanie Schroeder, a logistics specialist, said she went home to get her husband and the two of them took off for Las Vegas.

Environmental Moral Leave is designed to provide Soldiers an opportunity to relax and relieve some of the stress so Soldiers are prepared to return to their units and complete their missions.

'Hard Rock' Soldier's tremendous work ethic helps accomplish mission

By Sgt. James Hunter

2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.

BAGHDAD –

The life of Pfc. Christopher Stephenson began a little more than two decades ago and developed over time while growing up in Fort Wayne, Ind.

Stephenson, 20, serves as a gunner with 1st Platoon, Company A "Hard Rock," 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), grew up playing baseball, football and skateboarding.

His true love, however, was baseball, where he played for his church as a catcher. If he wasn't playing baseball, he said he was going to school and working to earn his certification as a computer technician.

"I was always good with computers," he said.

He worked at a computer store until he received his certification and became a senior technician mentoring future techs.

Life wasn't always fun or easy for Stephenson while growing up. Just like many people in life, he had obstacles he had to maneuver around prior to getting to where he is today.

Like some kids, he got in trouble. However, there to pick him back up whenever he was down was his father, who he said is an inspiration in his life.

"I really think, without my dad, I would have got in a lot of trouble," Stephenson said. "I had a lot of friends who got in a lot of trouble – who are in jail right now. Without my dad's influence on me, I would have probably been a lot worse off."

His father, who was once an alcoholic, he said, taught him that you can't find happiness at the bottom of a bottle. He also taught him perhaps the most important lesson in life: If he worked hard, his hard work would pay off and he would succeed.

His father, who had worked as a mechanic at the same job since he was 18, never gave up at the chance of moving up the ranks within the company.

Stephenson, who will turn 21 in June, said he didn't have a lot growing up in his life until his dad finally landed the managers job. It showed him that giving up was never an option.

Even when he gained nearly 80 pounds when he hurt his knee training for his baseball team, he never quit.

"I hurt myself during winter training, and after that, I stopped playing baseball and football. I just didn't do anything, and that is when I first started getting fat," Stephenson said. "I got myself up to 250 pounds."

There were bumps along this path; however, he was going to change himself and his appearance.

Upon graduating from North Side High School in 2006, he had to make a decision on what to do next.

He knew he didn't want to go to school for another four years.

"I just decided that I wanted to do something in my life," he said. "I was like 'well, I have always been active my whole life.'"

Stephenson saw how his brother, who

served as a Marine and was another big influence in his life, had accomplished well for himself during his time in the service.

He said he thought to himself: "The Army is going to give me a lot of benefits, and I can still serve my country," said Stephenson. "I will be able to get myself back active, and that's one of the reasons I joined the infantry instead of doing computers or anything with what I was already trained for. That gave me the motivation to lose all the weight."

And that is exactly what he did. From the time he joined the Army through the end of basic combat training, Stephenson went from 250 pounds, down to 170 pounds, which he maintains as his current weight today.

He arrived at Fort Campbell, Ky., in October. The first person he met was Sgt. Brandon Griffis, his current squad leader.

"When I first met him, he was like any other new guy: scared and timid," said Griffis, a native of Pendleton, Ind.

The first thing Griffis mentioned to Stephenson was that the guys in his platoon were going to become brothers as they prepared and conducted their next mission in Iraq.

"We did a lot of training, a lot of dismounted stuff," Stephenson said, about his training at Fort Campbell as the unit prepared for its deployment.

"We trained so much back at Fort Campbell. Honestly, a lot of the training we did back there was harder than what we do here."

Now, Stephenson serves with Hard Rock's 1st Platoon, where he works as a gunner, running day and night missions in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Hurriyah. His team patrols the streets in an attempt to defeat criminal and terrorist activity while simultaneously meeting the challenge of helping to improve the economy, government and infrastructure within the community.

"(Iraq is) way different than anything I ever expected," said Stephenson. "I expected it to be a lot worse. Everybody speaks a different language. Surprisingly though, when you talk to people, they really do understand you with what broken Arabic you know, and the broken English they know, and with the hand gestures.

"I thought it was going to be a lot different. I didn't expect people to be waving at us and coming up to us. Right now, it just seems a lot more peaceful than I could have ever imagined. It's a different world."

Though a different world, many miles away from his homeland in Fort Wayne, Stephenson said he is adapting to the situation and helping accomplish the mission of the securing and improving the area.

"He's got a tremendous work ethic," Griffis said. "If you give him something to do, he will get it done. If he can't figure it out, he'll go ask somebody else. He's a go-getter. I think with some more professional development down the road, he'll be a good leader."

With the potential Stephenson has, Griffis

said it will be hard for the Army to lose someone like him.

"I am sure whatever he does after the Army, he'll be good at it," he added.

After his enlistment is up, Stephenson said he plans to work as a police officer, maybe doing computer forensics. In the meantime, he will continue to plan for his wedding in the summer of 2009 as well as continue to bond with his brothers – just as Griffis told him he would.

"Sometimes, we have disputes; but when it comes to going out on missions, we are all really in synch because we have been doing the same training and mission together," Stephenson said. "One of the reasons I like Alpha Company so much is because they are all my boys."



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.

Pfc. Christopher Stephenson, a native of Fort Wayne, Ind., patrols through the streets of Hurriyah March 19. Stephenson serves as a gunner with 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Dual-military Family watches child grow up through pictures, videos

Family members take care of deployed couple's daughter

By Sgt. Brandon Little

Task Force XII PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Sgt. Lindsey Souza and Staff Sgt. Stephen Kelley, a married couple in Troop R, 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, spent the morning of their deployment, with Family and friends, trying to keep their moods upbeat and not think about what awaited them in the next few hours.

As time for them to leave grew near, they said their goodbyes and prepared to leave, but they knew they would be leaving a part of themselves behind: that part was a three-year-old little girl named Taylor.

Souza and Kelley are just one of several deployed couples who have to rely on Family members back home to take care of little ones they had to leave behind.

“Leaving her was the hardest thing I’ve ever done,” said Souza, the training and operations noncommissioned officer for Troop R and a native of Kailua, Hawaii. “We decided it would be best if we said our goodbyes to Taylor at our house instead of on post right before we left.”

As they made their way to the airport, they had to mentally prepare themselves for not only their first deployment, but for all the time and memories they would miss with their little girl, said Kelley, a maintenance section sergeant in Troop R and a native of Clark Summit, Pa.

“My father was visiting from Hawaii, and we had to take him to the airport before we went to post,” said Souza. “I got pretty emotional along the way, and I cried a lot; but once we got to the airport, the mood got lighter and we were able to say our goodbyes.”

Kelley’s father, David, took them to their unit staging area and then he told them goodbye and stay safe. David and his wife, Rene, live in Fort Worth, Texas, and have custody of Taylor while the couple is deployed.

Souza and Kelley had a lot of things to take care of during the pre-deployment process. In addition to deciding who should take care of Taylor, they also had to close out bills, sell a car and figure out who would watch over their newly purchased house.

“I think it would have been a little easier if one of us stayed behind, but that was never an option we wanted to take,” said Souza. “We really appreciate all the help our Families have given us, and we realize how much pressure it would have been for the spouse left behind.”

“When I’ve had a bad day at work, and I really miss Taylor, my husband can tell by the look on my face when I’m looking at pictures. He helps me get through the rough times and I try to do the same for him.”

Sgt. Lindsey Souza

Kailua, Hawaii

operations NCO

Trp. R, 4th Sqdn., 3rd ACR, TF XII



U.S. Army courtesy photo

Staff Sgt. Stephen Kelley (right) and Sgt. Lindsey Souza pose for a picture with their daughter, Taylor, the day of their deployment to Iraq

“It’s difficult for any parent to be separated from their children, but I know it’s extremely difficult for troops, like (Souza and Kelley), who have to leave their children with other Family members,” said Capt. Jeffrey Hernandez, the Troop R commander and a proud father. “A deployment can be especially difficult for the parents of young children because they miss so much of the child’s life.”

Hernandez, who is on his second deployment, said his three children are handling his deployment very well so far.

Since Souza and Kelley began their deployment, they have missed Taylor’s third birthday and the entire holiday season, but their Family tries to keep them involved.

“Being away for the holidays was really hard because this is the first Christmas she really understood Christmas gifts,” said Kelley. “Our Families took plenty of pictures and sent us videos, but it’s not as good as being there.”

“I know sometimes are more difficult for them than others,” said Hernandez, who hails from McAllen, Texas. “Sometimes when they call their daughter, she might not want to talk or might want to talk with one of them more than the other.”

This deployment isn’t the first time

they have had to leave their daughter behind, but it will definitely be the longest.

“We’d spent about a month away from her (for deployment training) last year, but that was nothing compared to right now,” said Kelley. “Last year, when we got back from training, it took a while for her to get use to being around us again.”

Being deployed together has allowed them to help each cope with missing their daughter, said Souza.

“When I’ve had a bad day at work, and I really miss Taylor, my husband can tell by the look on my face when I’m looking at pictures,” said Souza. “He helps me get through the rough times, and I try to do the same for him.”

Souza and Kelley go on leave in April, but they both say leaving little Taylor will probably be harder this time than it was at the beginning of the deployment.

When both parents are deployed, they must rely on help from close Family and friends to take care of their children, but they must rely on each other to get through the difficult days.

“So far I’m enjoying my deployment, especially since I have my husband here with me,” said Souza. “I miss my daughter a lot, but I know what we’re doing here is really important.”

“I’m really excited about the idea of getting back home after the deployment and having our Family back together again.”

MND-B Soldier's mission: *find Family, become team*

By Pfc. Samantha Schutz

MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Having the foundation and support of a Family makes completing any mission easier for Soldiers deployed as part of the Multi-National Division – Baghdad team.

One MND-B noncommissioned officer is currently building on a Family foundation that was established just recently; he is getting to know his biological mother and half-sister, who had been searching for him since he was a child.

When Staff Sgt. Edwin Scott, a native of Corpus Christi, Texas, was born in Okinawa, Japan, nearly 36 years ago, his young mother felt giving her son up for adoption was the best thing she could do for him.

She took a few years to get her life together, relocated to Sacramento, Calif., and then began searching for Edwin in 1977.

However, it took nearly 30 years for Valerie Alexander-Bailey to be reunited with her son. It also took the help of Valerie's now 28-year-old daughter, La'Keisha, who used modern Internet search engines to track down the half-brother she always wanted to grow up with. She even wrote letters to television talk shows like Oprah and Montel Williams.

Edwin, who serves as the division's non-commissioned officer in charge of video teleconference operations with Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, said when his sister first contacted him through a letter in May 2007, he was admittedly apprehensive.

Growing up, his adoptive parents were honest about his circumstances, but Scott never got his hopes up about meeting his birth parents.

"I just put (the situation) in a little box, closed it, locked it and put it away inside myself," Edwin said, about dealing with being adopted. "I never thought about what it could have, would have been."

The letter Edwin got from La'Keisha opened a new door, though. Her detailed explanation of the circumstances surrounding his adoption intrigued him; so finally, he called the phone number she included. Hearing her voice on her phone's voicemail, Edwin said he sensed there was a connection.

"I heard her voice and I knew. I thought, 'That's her. That's my sister,'" said Edwin.

Edwin used an Internet search to look up La'Keisha after he left a message on her voicemail. Although there were a few different profiles bearing her name, from Sacramento, he said one in particular stuck out. Feeling certain, he jotted down the e-mail address she provided in her profile.

As soon as she received the message, La'Keisha returned Edwin's call. Once the two got past the initial awe of confirming their relationship to each other, they exchanged e-mail addresses. When La'Keisha started to tell him hers, Edwin said he didn't have to write it down. He had picked the right profile.

That initial spark ignited a fiery hunger within the siblings. Catching up on lost time became their biggest priority.

"For the next few weeks, we didn't speak for less than two hours on the phone, and we passed hundreds of pictures via e-mail," Edwin said.

Through the conversations they had during their free time that first month, the siblings learned about each other's personalities, their likes and dislikes, their pasts and their hopes for the future.

"Both of us are definitely stubborn," Edwin said with a



U.S. Army courtesy photo

SAN ANTONIO – Staff Sgt. Edwin Scott, a native of Corpus Christi, Texas, has a big smile for the new connections developing with his biological mother, Valerie (left), and half-sister, La'Keisha, during their first meeting in San Antonio in June 2007. Scott, who serves as the division's noncommissioned officer in charge of video teleconference operations with Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, was adopted at birth but is developing new Family ties more than 35 years later.

laugh. "She's way more spoiled than I am though. She'll tell you that, too."

La'Keisha seems to believe the two would have been more similar if they had been raised together.

"There are some differences too, but I think that has to do with us growing up apart," she said.

When they shared photos over the Internet, the siblings were amazed to see how much they resembled one another. Each of them has prominent Filipino features, and La'Keisha said she thinks Edwin bears a close resemblance to their other Family members, also.

"I have my mother's nose and high cheekbones," Edwin said in agreement.

Valerie was able to capture lost years, in a way, by looking at Edwin's pictures.

"He sent me pictures of himself from when he was a baby to where he is today," said his mother. "I treasure each and every one of them."

Even though Valerie was excited by seeing the pictures and knowing her son was out there, she was cautious about talking to him for the first time.

"I was afraid to scare him away," she said. "When he told his new sister how nervous he was about talking to me, I made sure he knew I did not want to pressure him in any way. We communicated first by e-mail only."

After a little more than a month of continuous commu-

nication by telephone and Internet, the blossoming Family decided it was time to arrange a meeting. Since Valerie was already scheduled to arrive in San Antonio in mid-June for a business meeting, she arranged for La'Keisha to fly from Sacramento with her.

Their first meeting was like a sigh of relief for Edwin, Valerie and La'Keisha.

"To finally meet him in person was a blessed day," Valerie said.

"We were at the airport; he and his Family were picking us up. When he turned to hug me, all the pent-up anxiety from the past 35 years was finally released," she continued.

"I could have stayed in that very spot for hours, but I knew we had to keep moving on."

Because Edwin and La'Keisha had spent so much time talking on the phone, they were anxious, but not nervous, to finally come face-to-face.

"I think because we had talked so much on the phone before we met in person, for me it felt like some of that uncertainty and nervousness was gone. I was very excited to see Edwin, but in some ways, I felt as if I had already been given an opportunity to know him more before we met," La'Keisha said.

Since their first meeting, the three have maintained constant contact. Valerie and La'Keisha have visited Edwin in Texas several times, and Edwin had the opportunity to visit Sacramento to walk his mother down the aisle at his sister's wedding.

His presence, La'Keisha noted, was what made her wedding day complete.

Edwin said he plans to move to Sacramento after he retires to make up for lost time with his Family.

"California is the place I ought to be," he said with a smile.

Such a long journey as Valerie and La'Keisha's search for Edwin seems exhausting, but La'Keisha said it was perse-

verance and faith that brought them all together in the end.

"Anything worth fighting for takes time, and with due diligence people will find who they are looking for. If things are meant to be, they will be," said La'Keisha.

As for Edwin, he is overjoyed about the new relationships he's now able to forge.

He said he encourages anyone looking for an estranged Family member never to give up.

"If you ever had a doubt...if you ever had a percentage of wonder about your biological Family, seek it out," Edwin advised.

"I know my adoptive parents did the best they could for me. I don't feel like I'm at any disadvantage from my upbringing, but there's a certain connection (adopted children are) missing. I don't care how they try to hide it; I don't care how adamantly they try to sweep it under the rug. There's always that yearning to know."

No matter what form it takes, whether adoptive or biological, whether it's a mother, a grandmother, an uncle or simply a well-trained dog, Family is a necessity.

The unconditional love of a Family sees past flaws and imperfections. It offers support, both emotional and physical, when no one else seems to be around. And, in the case of Edwin, Valerie and La'Keisha, it knows no bounds – it can reach across states, countries and even a time gap of more than 30 years.

Brothers reunite in Iraq

By Sgt. Brandon Little
Task Force XII PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Throughout their military careers, Staff Sgt. Shane Hansen and his brother, Sgt. 1st Class Zane Hansen, have always been on opposite sides of the world.

Over the years, the combination of both brothers getting married, having children and being stationed in different places has reduced the number of chances they saw one another. But an unexpected mission change, combined with a little good fortune, brought them together in Iraq.

Shane, who is stationed in Katterbach, Germany, deployed to Logistical Support Area Anaconda in July; Zane, who is stationed in Fort Hood, Texas, learned his unit would also deploy to Iraq in November.

When Task Force XII received the mission of becoming the aviation task force for Multi-National Division – Baghdad, the Hansen brothers found their first opportunity to be stationed together in November.

“I was excited when I found out we would be here together because the last time I saw (Zane), before this deployment, was at our parents’ house in August of 2004,” said Shane, a

sec-

tion sergeant in Company D, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment. “We usually get to see each other about once every five years.”

Even though the brothers, natives of Wichita, Kan., live and work less than a half a mile away from each other, they still remain worlds apart.

“Right now I’m working night shift and (Shane) works day shift; it seems like every time my shift changes, so does his,” said Zane, a platoon sergeant in Troop T, 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. “Since we’ve been stationed here together, we’ve only seen each other about three or four times.”

“Our different shifts, and different reset days, makes it difficult to see each other unless we really put forth an effort to going over to where the other one works,” said Shane, who has been in the Army for 12 years.

Their Families have mixed feelings about them being stationed together in Iraq.

“Our wives are happy that we are stationed here together because they feel we have someone to talk to,” said Shane, a UH-60 Black Hawk maintainer. “Our parents don’t like the idea of us being here together because if something happens, it might happen to both of us; but our older sister isn’t too worried about us being here.”

Both brothers are on their second deployment; Zane previously deployed to Bosnia and Shane to Afghanistan. Zane, being the oldest, joined the Army a little more than a year before Shane.

“When I joined the Army in 1994, I got stationed in Korea,” said Zane, an AH-64D Apache Longbow maintainer. “When he joined the Army and got stationed in Hawaii, I was stationed in the states.”

Communicating with each other was difficult for the first couple of years because there was no internet; but now, it’s definitely gotten a lot better, said Shane.

Zane has always been in aviation, but Shane started his military career as a signal Soldier.

“I really didn’t like that job, and Zane would always tell me about

his job and all of the cool things he did,” said Shane. “He wasn’t the only reason I chose this job, but he definitely helped me make my decision.”

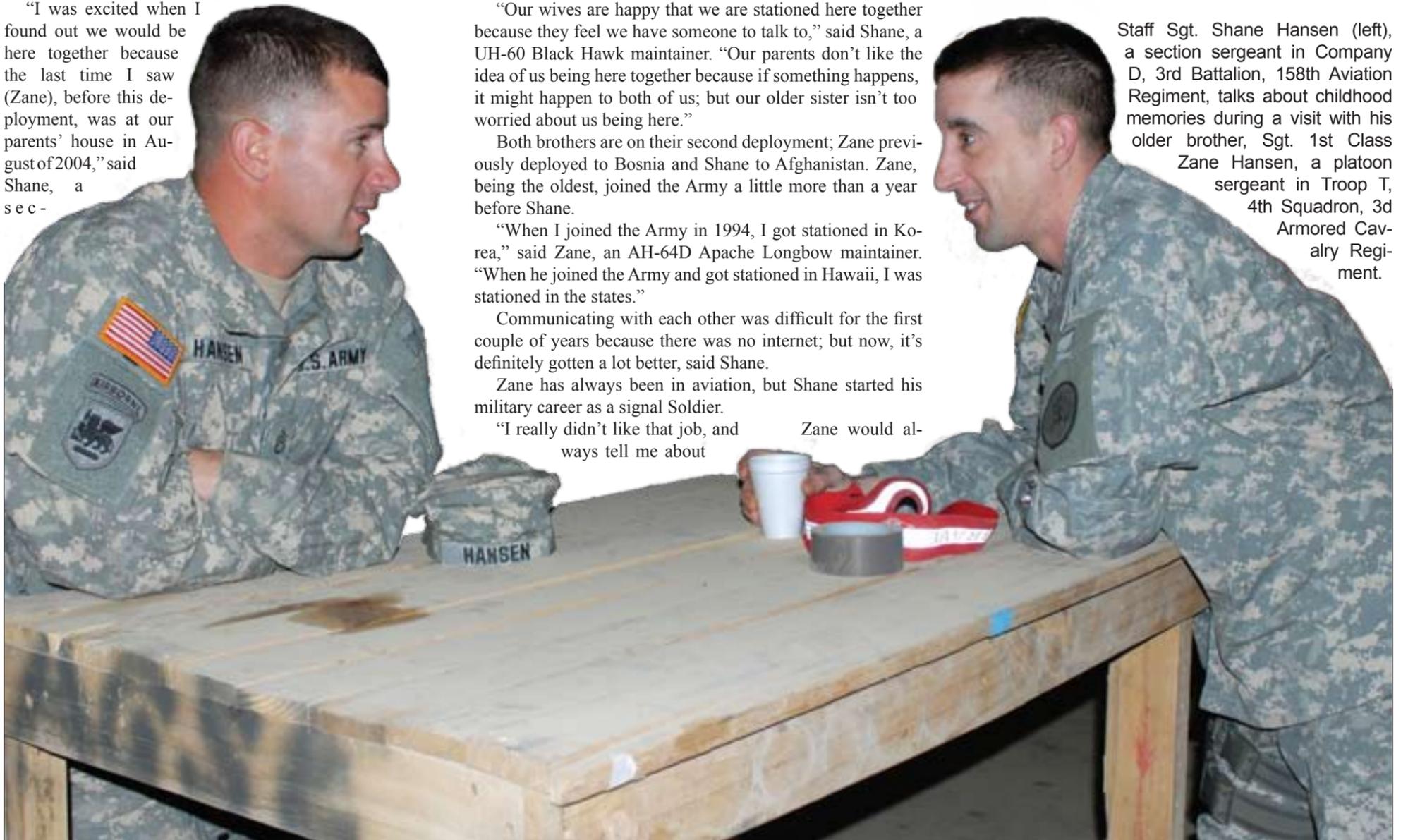
Their grandfathers were also in the military and both served during World War II. Their father also served in the Army; he joined shortly after the Vietnam War.

Growing up, they had plenty of good times mixed with a little bit of mischief. Although they try to stay professional, and call each other “Sergeant Hansen” when around other Soldiers, childhood memories sometimes resurface.

“All of (Zane’s) Soldiers want to know about him,” said Shane. “Every once in a while, one of them will come up to me and ask me questions about him, and I’ll give them a tidbit of information about some of the things he did growing up.”

Shane has been selected for promotion to sergeant first class and said, in the future, he would like to be stationed back in the United States. Of course, Zane said he and his wife are discussing the idea of asking to go to Europe.

Staff Sgt. Shane Hansen (left), a section sergeant in Company D, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, talks about childhood memories during a visit with his older brother, Sgt. 1st Class Zane Hansen, a platoon sergeant in Troop T, 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brandon Little, TF XII PAO

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'Heating Up'

MND-B Soldiers battle rising temperatures, prevent heat-related illness, injury

By Sgt. Jerome Bishop
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – It won't take long for anyone in Iraq to notice the weather is starting to get a lot warmer, and as the Soldiers from Multi-National Division – Baghdad continue to push on with the mission regardless of the weather, they must remain vigilant by taking care of their bodies.

While Soldiers head out into the Baghdad area, increasing temperatures can begin to inhibit the war-fighting capabilities of troops on the ground.

"Heat is obviously the biggest issue," said Lt. Col. Troy Ross, a Georgetown, Texas, native who serves as the division preventative medicine physician with the 4th Infantry Division, MND-B. "As we start moving into the warmer weather, people need to get used to working in the heat. Bodies take time to adjust and (Soldiers) need to change how (they) drink fluids and how (they) take breaks, so that's the number-one concern – making sure people understand how to deal with what's going to be some pretty hot weather."

Ross also explained how important it is for Soldiers to begin preparing for the hot summers in Iraq as early as possible.

"You don't want to wait for the first hot day and then all of a sudden do a record physical fitness test or go out on a really long mission and not have eased into to that change in the heat load on the body, so slowly doing more as the weather warms up is one way to protect you from injuries," he added.

All Soldiers are taught about the dangers of dehydration early in the military careers – as far back as basic combat training. Staying hydrated can make all the difference in battling the heat.

One way to help determine a proper level of hydration is observing the color of one's urine. A Soldier who is properly hydrated will have "lemonade" colored urine, said Ross.

"You don't want it to be completely clear because you can actually over-hydrate – drink too much water, and that washes out all the salts in your body, which can be just as dangerous.

The best sign however, is to keep track of how often urination occurs.

"You shouldn't be going all day without urinating. If you go for more than about four hours, then you probably aren't drinking enough," said Ross.

Lastly, Ross warns against using nutritional supplements, which can increase the work on the body and dehydrate the body.

In 2006, there were a total of 236 heat-related injury cases, according to the Medical Surveillance Monthly Report, published in May 2007 by the Department of Defense.

While rising temperatures can directly harm the body, it can also lead to other conditions for Soldiers living outside



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jerome Bishop, MND-B PAO

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers are issued ammunition and protective gear to help against the dangers of combat, but carrying additional sanitation wipes, hand sanitizer and water can prevent the deadly consequences of dehydration, skin irritation and food-borne illnesses, which result from the harsh Iraqi heat.

the reach of regular wash facilities, like showers and restrooms.

"The other thing along with the hotter weather, our Soldiers working out in the smaller (joint security stations), where hygiene is more of an issue, is skin infections and skin problems from all the sweating and not being able to take showers or wash their clothes," said Ross.

Being in a JSS or a combat outpost can trap Soldiers in a

unique environment where proper personal hygiene is limited to use of cleaning wipes and hand sanitizers since showers and plumbing systems in general may not be available.

"Probably the hardest battle to fight out there is just hygiene," said Ross. "If they can't take showers, just use baby wipes or just water to clean their skin off.

"If they get a rash, get in and see the doc early and don't let that be something that progresses into an infection. Once you have irritated skin, and you don't take care of it and keep it clean and dry, then bacteria can get into those broken layers of skin and it will become an infection," he added.

The DoD documented 273,518 diagnoses of skin-related problems, according to the MSMR.

Soldiers living on a JSS or COP don't only have to battle skin problems as a result of their living conditions, but also the food they eat might also be dangerous, whether it came from another base or off the local economy.

"We have a lot of those locations where we don't have regular kitchens, so food gets pushed out and sometimes Soldiers eat out on the local economy even though it's not the smartest thing to do, and sometimes they're sort of obligated to when dealing with the locals and building relations," said Ross. "Just base-line sanitation and hygiene out there in the local population sets people up for food illnesses."

Hand washing also plays a pivotal role in defense against food-borne illness.

While hand sanitizers kill bacteria on someone's hand, it's only effective until the lotion is dry, at which point bacteria can begin to grow again, Ross said.

"Hand Washing is the most important thing, especially for the people who are preparing food; they should try to get their hands physically clean," he added.

When fighting food-borne illnesses, the responsibility falls on unit leadership to ensure the proper storage, care and disposal of the food coming to the Soldiers, he added.

Soldiers in theater aren't defenseless against the dangers of the desert heat. Troops exposed to living or working conditions where heat-related illness or injury can take a toll can actively prevent any real problems. Unit medics and physician assistants have additional information which can help Soldiers stay clear of the dangers of the Iraqi summer.

Soldiers gain first impressions of new tactical vest

By Spc. Aaron Rosencrans

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD — After stomping around for a few days with the new Improved Outer Tactical Vest, 4th Infantry Division Soldiers came back with mixed reviews for the new tactical gear.

The new vest has several design differences and some added features, which keep the Soldiers in mind when they're in times of trouble.

The first noticeable difference in the vest design is the way Soldiers don the IOTV. Rather than slipping into it like a jacket, as with the Interceptor Body Armor, they lift it over their head and pull down, which sometimes requires another person to help get the vest on properly.

Soldiers can also detach the fasteners on the wearer's left shoulder, and slip into the vest from the side.

Another key design change is the addition of a quick release lanyard that reduces the vest to its component pieces, which allows the wearer to get out of the vest easily in case of an emergency situation.

Though the troops had mixed feelings about the new vest, they ultimately said the IOTV is a new piece of equipment they will work with the best they can.

"I noticed right away how the weight is more evenly distributed with the new vest," said Pfc. Joe Piotrowski, a native of Chicago, who serves as an infantryman with the 4th Inf. Div., Military Transition Team, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. "However, there's more Kevlar on the inside of the vest, so it got twisted easily and made it uncomfortable."

Piotrowski said he managed to fix the twisted Kevlar inside the vest and hasn't had the problem since.

Soldiers also commented on the increased risk of heat rashes that develop from wearing a large, hot piece of equipment.

"The new vests are more ergonomically correct, but they don't breathe very well," said Sgt. Jayme Turner, a native of Salt Lake City, Utah, who serves as a combat medic with the 4th Inf. Div. MiTT. "With the old system, when it's hot out, you get a little rash in the summer; however, with this system

you get a much bigger rash all over."

One of the perks of the new design was a flush front, where Soldiers have more room to attach accessories to carry weapon magazines and other necessary equipment.

"Tactically, it's better because I have more places to put my magazine pouches to make them more accessible," said Piotrowski. "Also, you don't have two sides to worry about; you get to work with the whole front flap, which is nice. I like the built-in side plates as well. They're a lot better than the other ones."

Turner and Piotrowski both said the quick release system was a good feature to have in case of an emergency; however, it needed to be reworked to prevent it from pulling the vest apart when it wasn't intended.

"The quick-release feature was a good idea to help Soldiers get out of their vest in an emergency situation, but I hear it's a pain to put back together," said Piotrowski. "If something does happen where you're submerged under water or something like that, it'll be a lot better to take this vest off rather than the other one where you have to take it off like a jacket. The new system will just fall off of you."

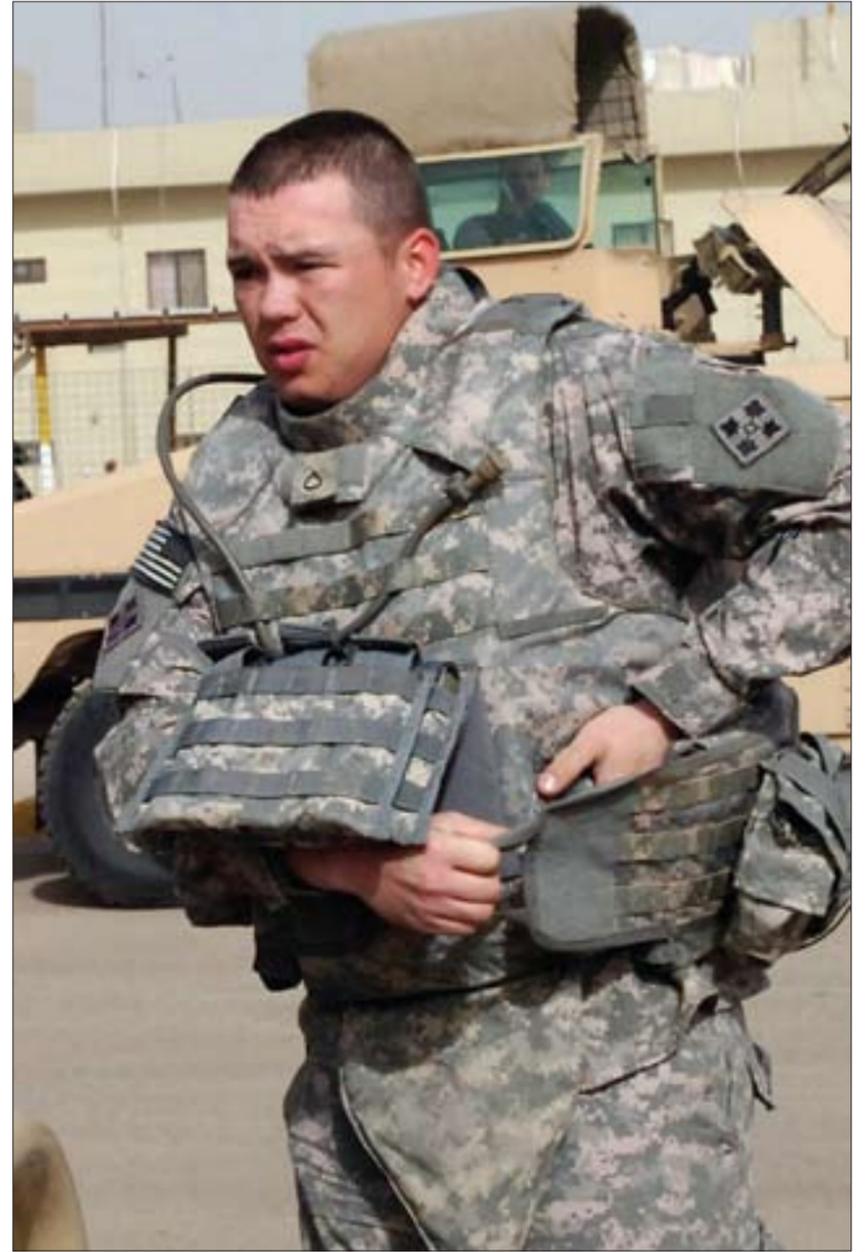
He added that something needs to be done to make the quick-release system not as easy to pull, just to ensure the vest doesn't fall apart during combat operations.

Soldiers have added tape to the cord on the quick release system to prevent it from loosening when it wasn't intended to.

Due to the added components of the IOTV, Soldiers now understand it's not just their weapon and vehicle they need to properly maintain, but their armor as well.

Turner said it's more important to perform preventative maintenance checks and services than with the old system. He explained how he had seen a vest malfunction on a Soldier while climbing into a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

The IOTV was issued to Soldiers who initially received the IBA for their deployment and have 120 days or more remaining on their tour. For the most part, Soldiers are adapting to the new system, and they are working with the IOTV to make it better as the days go on.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Aaron Rosencrans, MND-B PAO

Pfc. Joe Piotrowski, a native of Chicago, who serves as an infantryman with the 6th Iraqi Army Division Military Transition Team Personal Security Detachment, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, dons his Improved Outer Tactical Vest March 14 before a mission in Baghdad. He said the new vest is more comfortable than the Interceptor Body Armor and has a better carrying system for his equipment.

Chaplains corner: Soldiers assist chaplains across the battlefield

By Sgt. 1st Class Michael Miles

4th Inf. Div. Chaplain's Office

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – When you see a chaplain moving across the battlefield, if you look closely, you will find his battle buddy – the chaplain assistant.

The chaplain assistant is a multifunctional individual who has many responsibilities. From religious support in garrison, to religious support on the battlefield, the chaplain assistant has many tasks and roles that complete the team and form a true combat and ministry multiplier for our Command.

On December 28, 1909, the War Department, released General Order number 253, and paragraph 1 reads: "One enlisted man will be detailed on special duty, by the Commanding Officer of any organization to which a chaplain is assigned for duty, for the purpose of assisting the chaplain in the performance of his official duties."

This meant that the assistant generally cared for the chaplain's official property, acted as his clerk and helped with the educational, religious and entertainment programs. In 1866, the Army decided that a Soldier found competent to teach common school subjects should be detailed to do so under the auspices of a local chaplain who often served as the schoolmaster.

In 1909, the military authorized one enlisted

person to be assigned to the chaplain to assist him in the performance of his official duties. Although moral character was required, there were no other criteria for performance.

In 1927 and 1933, the chaplain made overtures to the Secretary of War to provide a small group of enlisted assistants. This was unsuccessful. The job continued to have no vocational integrity until World War II.

The Korean War saw the development of the chaplain assistant military occupation specialty. After almost 100 years there, there was now officially a job for the chaplain assistant. All trainees were volunteers who had successfully completed nine weeks of basic combat training and nine weeks of clerk typist advanced individual training.

In 1965, the chaplain assistant job description developed. In 1972, the role was implemented into the noncommissioned officer education system with the same degree of professionalism as other enlisted specialties. In October 2001, the MOS changed from 71M to 56M and now serves in a "stand alone" career management field.

Today, the chaplain assistant within the

MND-B operational environment maintains physical security of the chapel equipment that soldiers meet in for spiritual renewal as well as provide security for the chaplain as he conducts battlefield ministry to soldiers on the battlefield.

I call the chaplain assistant "the Jack of all trades and a master of none" – or we could be considered the "master of many." We are kind of like the different sections that make up our organization. We are the Chaplain's S-1: the clerk responsible for all administrative actions. We are responsible for providing battlefield intelligence, so we are his

S-2: collection data to be able to travel safely through the battlefield. We are the Chaplain's S-3: responsible for writing FRAGOs at the brigade and division level. We provide battlefield coverage, zoning areas of operations as well as setting up base operations to provide area coverage for units without chaplains.

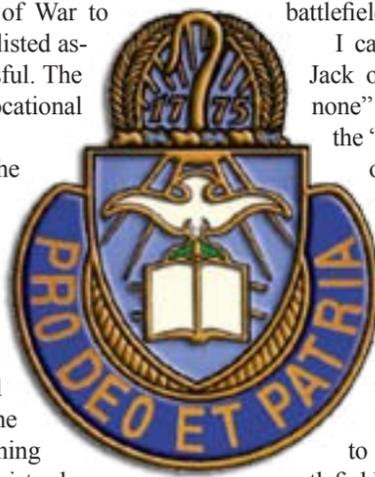
We are the Chaplain's S-4: providing the Unit Ministry Team with religious and office supplies as well as pushing supplies out to the lowest level within the organization. We are the S-6 for the chaplain. I have run network-

ing CAT 5 cable, with the assistance of S-6, and sent up the necessary paperwork for communication upgrades and computer upgrades. We are also sometimes called upon to work closely with the civil military affairs in assisting the local communities in which we serve by distributing comfort items to those in need. I had the privilege of doing this when I served in Somalia by providing clothing and school supplies to an orphanage.

We sometimes get called upon to counsel, not proving direct religious support guidance necessarily, but to just listen to the Soldier, who might feel a little uncomfortable speaking to an officer, but will talk to the enlisted advisor to the chaplain. The chaplain assistant must also know the differences of all faiths and be able to assist whenever called upon.

So as you can see, the chaplain assistants are not just a smiling faces that you see along with the chaplains. We are warriors, servant Soldiers, here to ensure that all religious freedoms are safeguarded – ensuring the spiritual wellbeing of Soldiers is being met and protecting the spiritual leader of the organization on the battlefield.

It is an honor to serve my nation and my God as a chaplain assistant. It is also an honor to serve you and all the members of the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad. God bless!



Stage Right Review: *Your mind will not accept a game this big*

By Pfc. Samantha Schutz

MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – As humans, it's in our nature to make things more complicated than they really are. We are approval-seekers, always in competition with the next guy to prove our worth.



Pfc. Samantha Schutz

"Revolver," the latest film by British writer and director Guy Ritchie (Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels; Snatch), gives insight into just how deeply and completely self-involved most humans are.

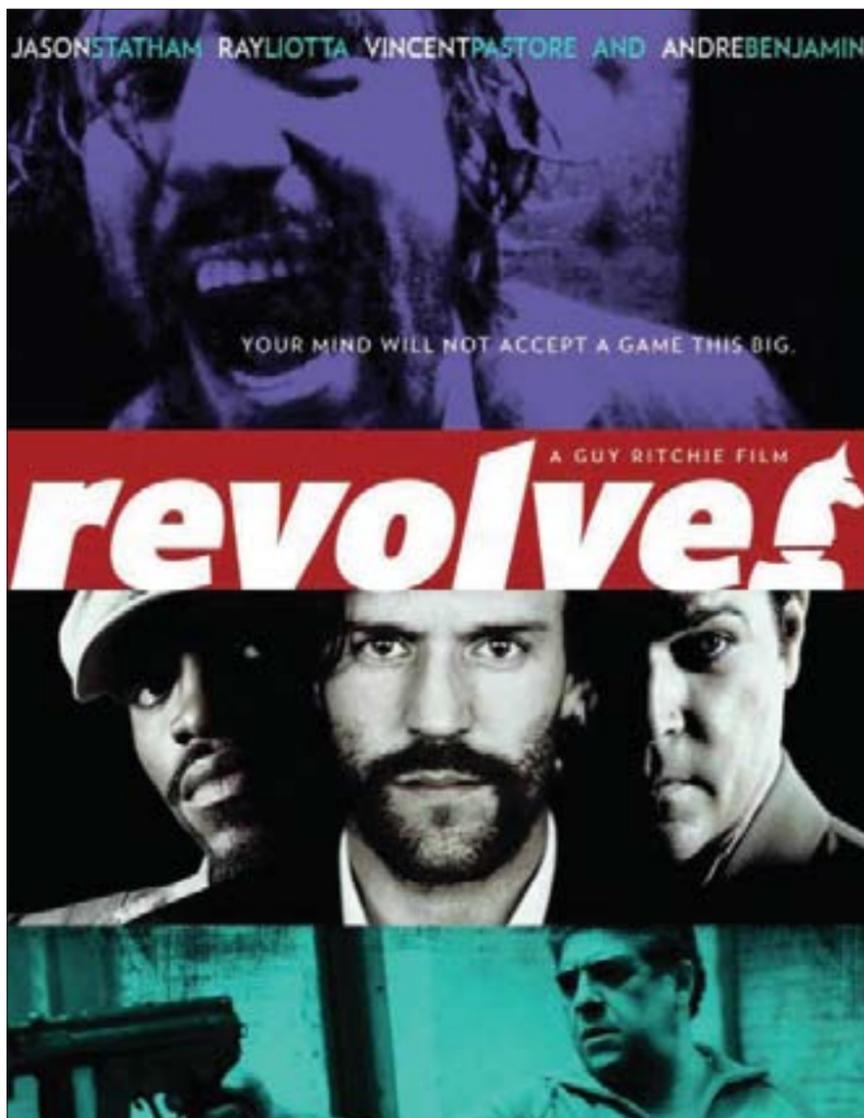
The story follows Jake Green, played by Jason Statham (Snatch, War), two years after his release from solitary confinement. During his seven-year stint in prison, Jake befriended two convicts whose cells were on either side of him. The men – one a master chess player and the other a master con man – passed notes back and forth by writing them in the margins of library books. When Jake realized they were not only developing a formula for the perfect chess game but also a plan for the perfect con, the pair decided to let him in on it.

The convicts' plan involved breaking out of prison, and they assured Jake they'd break him out as well. Because he trusted the plan, Jake confided all his secrets to the men, including how much money he had and where he kept it. But when it came time to execute the plan, the pair disappeared from their cells and left Jake to serve the final two years of his sentence.

Of course, the con men cleaned Jake out. They left him completely broke. Since he was a professional gambler before going to prison, Jake simply applied the chess formula to other games; it worked wonders, and Jake quickly regained his wealth.

After two years of earning his money back (and then some), Jake decides to pay a visit to his mortal enemy, Dorothy Macha, played by Ray Liotta (Goodfellas, Smokin' Aces). Macha is a powerful casino mogul whom Jake claims had him sent to prison, and Jake wants to take him down. However, before the overly-cocky Jake gets a chance to do his worst, Macha orders a hit put on him.

Fortunately (or not), Jake meets a pair of mysterious strangers – Avi, played by Andre Benjamin (Four Brothers), and Zach, played by Vincent Pastore (The Sopranos) – who claim they can keep him safe and bring Macha down. Through a strange chain of events, Jake gets involved in their



scheme, completely unaware that what he's really involved in is a complicated mind game aimed to free him from the "prison" of his own mind.

"The only way to get smarter is to play a smarter opponent."

"Revolver" retains elements of a typical Guy Ritchie film, such as rich character development, edge-of-your-seat gunfight sequences and smart, snappy dialogue, but it is vastly different from his earlier work.

It's more cerebral, more philosophical, more intelligent. The action you see on screen is not just meant to entertain you – it's meant to make you think. Everything the characters go through and every conversation they have is a metaphor for a deeper message.

Any intelligent viewer will immediately realize there is more to "Revolver" than meets the eye. Ritchie employs various techniques to emphasize his points. For instance, at cer-

tain high-tension points in the movie, the screen fades to black to present quotes for the audience to ponder, such as "The only enemy to have ever existed is an eternal one," from a book titled "The Road to Suicide."

Another technique Ritchie uses is repetition. Dialogue is often repeated, as are key scenes. Some scenes are played out in alternate ways, and some are played backwards. This allows viewers to rethink their perspective on the given situation, like the way a chess player might mentally rehearse his options before making his move.

While Ritchie is known for using stylistic effects in his films, he pushes the envelope in "Revolver." In one scene, the action bounces psychedelically between real-life and animation without any reason or excuse. It works somehow, maybe because it takes the drama of the situation and distorts it until it is almost comical.

In another scene, a stuttering hitman has a change of heart and dominates a five-minute-long scene during which he calmly and dexterously shoots 13 bad guys hiding in a house. Okay, I admit it – I only mentioned that scene because it's really cool. But his decision to go against his boss's orders and "do the right thing" ties back to the overlying theme of the film.

"There is something about yourself that you don't know."

Despite every horrible review of "Revolver," I find it to be one of the smartest movies as of late. It's saturated with metaphors and references relating to psychology, philosophy, spirituality and society. I don't understand how so many critics could overlook this film's brilliance.

That's not to say the movie doesn't have its flaws. It is far from perfect. It's a bit long (nearly two hours) and hard to follow. There are unexplained events and scenes that are out of order or just don't seem to fit. Some of the symbolism is vague. It's not the usual Guy Ritchie brand of light-hearted, shoot-'em-up, caper comedy.

But those very flaws are the reasons I appreciate "Revolver" so much. My friend and fellow movie buff loaned it to me, and I immediately knew I had to write this review. We can't stop talking about this movie. Its loose ends can be knotted, tied together or intertwined in a number of different ways, making for some great debates.

So if you're only into watching movies with heart-stopping suspense and easily digestible, linear plots, "Revolver" might be a bit hard to swallow.

For anyone who enjoys a little bit of meat to their storylines, though, this film could be just the tasty morsel you've been waiting to chew on.

I give "Revolver" five stars out of five. Plus three extra.



Gaming Review: Console Wars

Nintendo Wii, Playstation 3, Xbox 360 battle it out

By Sgt. Mark Matthews
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – When it comes to buying a console, you have three choices. Do you buy the playful, kid-friendly Nintendo Wii, the powerfully cinematic dream-machine, the Sony PlayStation 3 or the gamer's best friend, the Microsoft Xbox 360? They all have their markets pretty much cornered, but which is worth its weight in fun?

If you are under the age of 12 or drawing a social security check, the Nintendo Wii will probably suit your style. The Wii has a huge selection of games, which are both entertaining and easy. The problem with the Wii comes about when you talk about the depth of the system – it has none.



The Wii has yet to break any new ground as far as games go. Sure, Mario Galaxy and Smash Bros. Brawl were both amazing titles, but they were amazing in comparison to other Wii games. Look, everything about video games is relative to the competition. If the Wii has the under 12 and over 65 markets locked, then the only competition the system has is amongst itself. I doubt you'll see "Pro Shuffle Board Fury" come out on the 360 or PS3 anytime soon.

I like the Wii, I honestly do. I liked it enough to fork over the \$250 on launch day and faked a friendship with a packing boy at Wal-Mart to get one. It's not something I'm proud of, but I did it. The Wii has potential, but from what I've seen over the past year is that Nintendo is comfortable and with that I don't expect the Wii to go to far in this race. Mario can only do so much.

On the plus side, it's cheap, moderately entertaining and innovative. However, innovation without follow-through is just a waste of time and money.

As far as the two heavy weights go – it's all a matter of preference.

The 360 is an obvious choice for gamers, but at what cost? The 360 has had a laundry list of problems since its launch. If you bought an early version of the 360, then you had a one in six chance in buying a dud and receiving the red rings of death within months of purchase.

I, for one, am on my third 360, and I am fully prepared, if need be, to move on to my fourth one. It's sad that Microsoft built such an impressive machine without completely thinking it through. On the bright side, come September, these problems will hopefully be a thing of the past as they will be introducing a new version of the 360, which will end this cruel, love-hate relationship.



Microsoft has undoubtedly won the war on titles. Halo, Gears of War and Lost Odyssey are all 360 exclusive, but they also managed to steal almost all of Sony's fire. Guitar Hero, Devil May Cry and Grand Theft Auto are no longer the PlayStation's lifeline but are available on both consoles and, in some cases, all three.

However, the biggest shot to Microsoft happened over the past few months – the end of high-definition DVD. Toshiba, the creators of the technology, recently pulled the plug and said it would no longer support the medium after huge corporations like Wal-Mart and Disney sided with Sony's Blu Ray technology.

Therefore, all of us who bought into the HD DVD hype and bought a \$200 Xbox 360 HD DVD add-on drive might as well have just used the money to purchase cosmic real estate or a mail-order doctorates degree – at least these come with a good story.

The Sony PS3 is the obvious choice when it comes to entertainment beyond games. Blu Ray is the winner by knockout and the picture on a true HD TV couldn't be better.

The sound and picture, due to the built in HDMI port on the PS3, truly captures each rain drop and every single hair fiber with stunning realism.

I'm not saying the PS3 doesn't have games, I'm just saying they don't have enough good exclusive games – yet. Currently, they have Resistance: Fall of Man, with a sequel on the way. They have Metal Gear: Sons of Liberty, due out this year, and a lot of the same great games

the 360 has, like Guitar Hero, Rock Band and Grand Theft Auto. Sony just needs to appeal to gamers a little more and I have no doubt they would win. The problem is that Microsoft is about 10 steps in front of them and with millions more consoles in the hands of gamers.

When the original Xbox was released, it was a hit – but it was Sony's PS2 that had the head start. When Microsoft began work on its second-generation console, it wanted the early lead and rushed the system out as a result.

This is why there have been so many problems, and why it only came with a standard DVD drive built in and not a built-in HD DVD drive.

For me, the 360 is my system of choice, but I wish Microsoft would have put the time and effort in to making it that Sony did when creating the PS3 or even Nintendo with the Wii.

There has never been a generation of consoles quite like this one. Its funny when I hear people talk about what the next generation will be like, and I tell them this generation has barely even began. None of these systems have yet to be pushed to their limits.

There is a console for everyone. Hardcore gamers have the 360, movie lovers have the PS3, and everyone else can spend their time flailing their arms about like a "Wacky Waving Inflatable Tube Man" with the Wii and love every minute of it.

The truth of the matter is buying a console is like buying a vehicle. You have to know what you want in a system and have expectations it must meet.

You have to take them for test drives, do your homework and know how much you want to spend. Then pick one and make

the best of it. All three of these companies are the best at what they do.

All I can say is that I'm glad consoles aren't vehicles or I'd own a Porsche, a Ferrari and the best little Vespa you've ever seen.



Sgt. Mark Matthews



Soldier's quick action saves man's life

By Spc. David Hodge

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div

CAMP BUEHRING, Kuwait – A Soldier from the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, provided emergency medical treatment for a U.S. Army Contractor involved in a head-on collision, March 25, on a main supply route in Kuwait's Udairi Desert.

Staff Sgt. Michael Blake, a scout section sergeant assigned to Troop A, 7-10 Cav. Regt., was the first to render life-saving medical care to the critically injured man who crashed a sports utility vehicle into a light pole.

Blake was part of a convoy bound for port operations in Kuwait City to download the unit's cargo and equipment destined for combat operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, when the accident occurred.

"The second the pole hit the ground Blake veered the vehicle onto the side of the road and jumped out," said Maj. Lesley Ortiz, the 1st BCT Supply and Logistics Officer, who was traveling with the Soldiers when the accident occurred.

"He told me to contact emergency officials while he grabbed his Individual First Aid Kit and rushed over to the injured man," she said.

When Blake reached the vehicle, the injured man lay sprawled on the ground beside the SUV. Blake immediately provided first aid, the same emergency medical trauma care that he has learned throughout his 11-year service.

"I conducted all medical assistance in accordance with what I learned in (Combat Trauma Casualty Care)," said Blake, who hails from Martha's Vineyard Island, Mass.

"He took control of the situation," stated Ortiz, a native of Atlanta. "It was just amazing to watch him direct everybody around the scene."

Blake ordered one of his scouts to redirect the blocked traffic on the road as a medic platoon leader helped him with the casualty.

"As a scout section leader I get paid to make

decisions on the spot," stated the former life-guard. "I knew what I had to do. In this situation, I had to make sure he was stable until emergency services arrived."

Blake placed a makeshift splint on the casualty's wrist.

"I used two magazines to splint, what I believed, was a possible fracture to his wrist," Blake explained. "I also dressed and cleaned some lacerations on his forearm."

After Blake's initial assessment, the man said he tasted blood. Blake's instinct told him that the man had internal injuries. All the noncommissioned officer could do was comfort the stranger until a higher echelon of care arrived.

Blake poured a small amount of water into the individual's mouth for thirst and positioned himself so that his shadow would cover the injured man.

When the emergency medical services arrived, Blake assisted the emergency medical service workers with the spine board and neck brace.

In the days that followed, Blake consistently visited the provost marshal office to check the status of the gentleman, said Ortiz.

"The next day, I talked to the officer at the provost marshal and the guy had a damaged aorta valve," Blake said.

Every Soldier should take the Army's Combat Lifesaver training, said Blake.

"That stuff really works," added the squad leader who credits his training for his performance that day.

Staff Sgt. Blake is one of those Soldiers that is always willing to help, said 1st Sgt. Shannon Boldman with Trp. A, 7-10 Cav., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

"His actions on that day exemplify what an 'Assassin' Troop NCO should do in that situation," Boldman said. "He is a great leader and I look forward to serving with him during this deployment."



U.S. Army photo by Spc. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Staff Sgt. Michael Blake, a scout section sergeant from Martha's Vineyard Island, Mass., assigned to Troop A, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, provided life-saving emergency medical treatment, March 25, after a head-on collision left a Department of the Army Civilian critically injured outside of Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

Finance Soldiers build morale, support troops away from camp

By Spc. Andrea Merritt

1st Sust. Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – Soldiers who reside on combat outposts often miss out on services that Soldiers on larger forward operating bases have, such as a Post Exchange, a dining facility with a wide selection of food, or a facility that provides them access to their money.

Like at many other COPs, servicemembers based at the Old Ministry of Defense in central Baghdad or Combat Outpost Old MoD, do not have a finance office to go to when they need cash or have questions about their pay.

In an effort to help these servicemembers, a financial support team from Detachment E, 230th Finance Battalion, which is attached to the 24th Financial Management Company, Special Troops Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, traveled to Old MoD March 20 to provide financial services to Soldiers on the camp.

"We give Soldiers an opportunity to get casual pay up to

\$350 a month. They can write checks, and they can enroll in the Savings Deposit Program. They can also fill out pay inquiries and start or stop allotments," said Sgt. Jennifer Davis, a Soperton, Ga., native and a financial support team noncommissioned officer from Det. E, 230th Finance Bn.

The financial support teams from the unit, which is based out of Fort Hood, Texas, visits approximately 12 different locations twice a month to provide services to Soldiers.

"I love missions. I'd rather be on missions than sitting in the office all day. I like coming out meeting new people and seeing the different camps," said Spc. Benjamin Johnston, a Troy, Ohio, native and a pay clerk with Det. E, 230th Finance Bn., who was the cashier for the one-day mission.

The Soldiers on the FST weren't the only ones looking forward to their visit to Old MoD. When they arrived, a hint of excitement stirred in the Soldiers of 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, who stay on the camp.

"Their visit is beneficial for us because we can't even get

hair cuts without these guys coming to visit," said 1st Lt. Blakely Anderson, the mortar platoon leader for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Sqdn., 2nd Stryker Cav. Regt.

"It boosts the guys' morale because there are no financial services out here and everywhere on camp is cash only. This is it," said Blakely.

"It feels good to know they're waiting for us, to know that we're doing something good and that we're doing our part out here," said Davis.

By the end of the finance mission, the Soldiers on the FST assisted about 150 Soldiers on Old MoD with casual pays, enrollment in the Savings Deposit Program, and check cashing.

"When people think of finance, they think all we do is sit behind a desk all day. For the most part we do, but at the same time we still come out and provide financial support for Soldiers in these areas," said Davis.

Mol's Wide World of Sports

Playoff season is just beginning

By Sgt. Michael Molinaro
4th Inf. Div. PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – April brings us the beginning of baseball and the conclusion of college basketball. But it also means that the “second seasons” for the National Basketball Association and the National Hockey League get underway and, if you are like me, now is the time when the games are worth watching.



The NBA regular season is so boring to watch. With 82 games to play, teams know that they can pack it in one night and get away with a loss.

But the playoffs are another animal and are really entertaining. I really like the first series when it is just a best-of-five format. If the favorite loses a home game in one of the first two games it puts a tremendous amount of pressure on them to win a game on the road, immediately testing their mettle.

testing their mettle.

In the Eastern Conference, it should be a two-team chase to get into the finals between Boston and Detroit.

Since the start of the season, both teams came out of the gate and established themselves as the beats in the east. Cleveland has to be mentioned simply because of LeBron James, but a possible second-round matchup against the Celtics

should do the defending conference champs in.

A Boston-Detroit series would be a slugging match at its best. Boston fans are primed to see a return to glory and add to the franchises 16 NBA championships

The complete opposite exists in the west.

All eight seeds have what it takes to bring home the NBA trophy.

Going into the final week, it was still undecided who would be the first seed or eighth seed. In fact, San Antonio and New Orleans could end up one-two in the conference AND division, meaning the other division winners would end up three and four seeds.

It should be an exciting conference playoffs.

I think this will be one of the better NBA playoffs that we have seen in a long time, going back to the mid 90s.

The east may have the best team in Boston – the west with the best depth. So before the playoffs begin, I am going to pick a Boston-Phoenix finals.

Also starting are the NHL playoffs. This is good stuff. Playoff beards. Octopus. Coach fights.

Blood, sweat and tears.

The Stanley Cup playoffs are sports at its best. You can throw out the records once they begin, because in no other sport does the lower seeded team defeat the higher seed more times.

If you have never watched a hockey game but you are a sports fan, you don't know what you are missing.

As having gone to many hockey games in my life, I will admit that television doesn't do it justice.

But unlike in basketball, when teams go



Sgt. Michael 'Mol' Molinaro

on runs to put away teams or come back into a game, every second, every hit matters in hockey.

The Eastern Conference was a tight race all season, much like the NBA's west. The top teams are Pittsburgh and Montreal.

Pittsburgh has the league's best one-two punch in Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin. The Penguins, as one of the youngest teams in the league, got schooled on how the playoffs work last season by Ottawa and have been getting ready for this year's playoffs since.

Montreal is also primed to make a run with the highest-scoring team in the NHL.

Don't discount the New York Rangers or Ottawa either.

In the west, Detroit and San Jose established themselves early as the teams to beat.

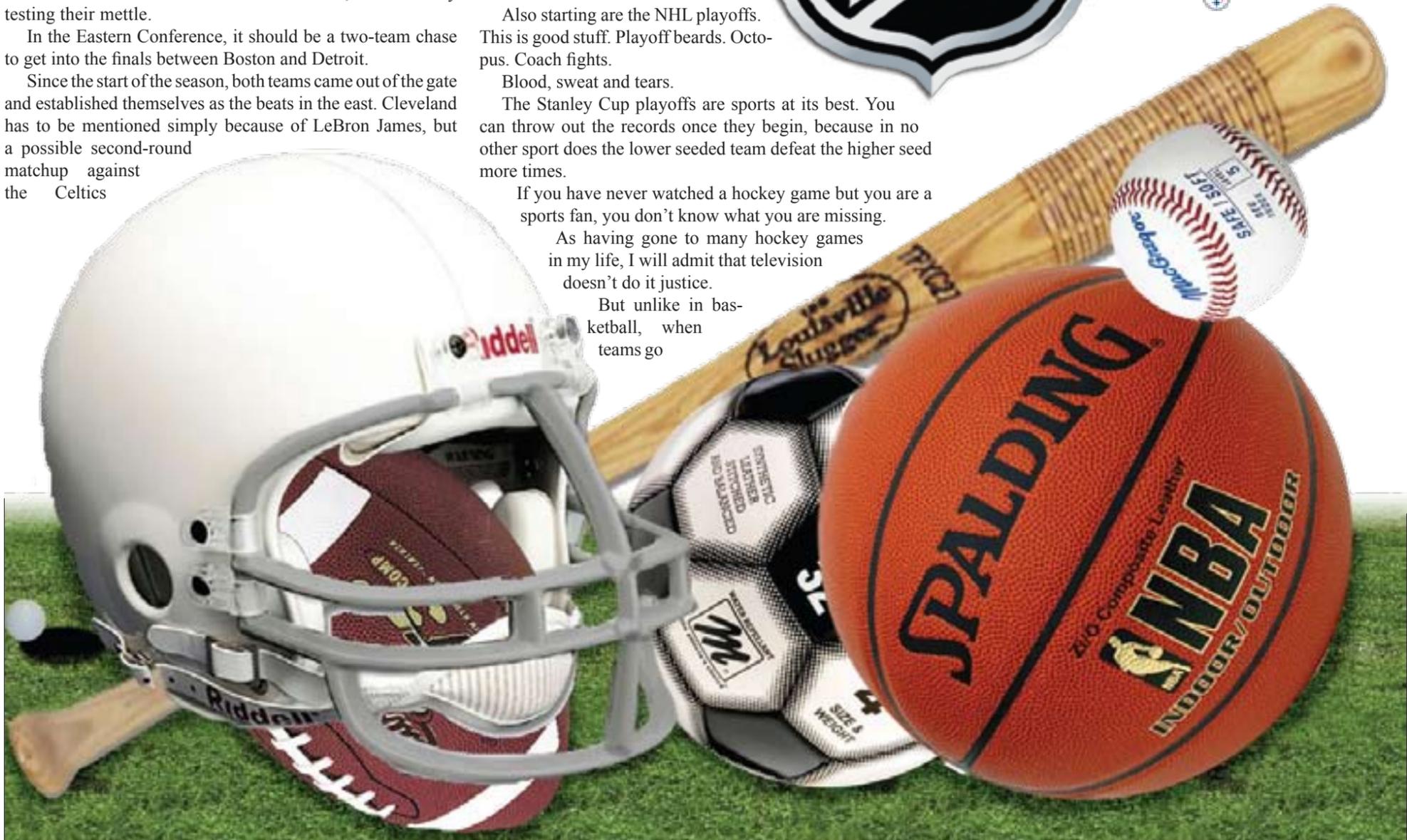
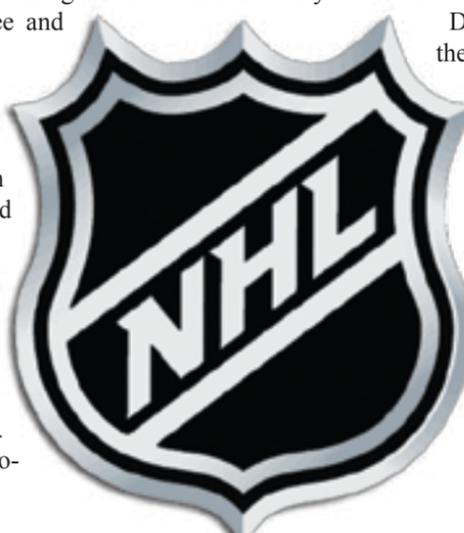
Detroit had the best record this season for the second straight season.

Last year they were ousted by eventual Stanley Cup champion Anaheim and would like nothing more than a revenge series against the Ducks.

Anaheim has the goods to repeat and will be a tough out this year.

With that being said, I am going to pick a Pittsburgh-San Jose finals.

That's all for this edition folks. Enjoy the playoffs, stay safe and keep your head down.



Soldiers patrol book market

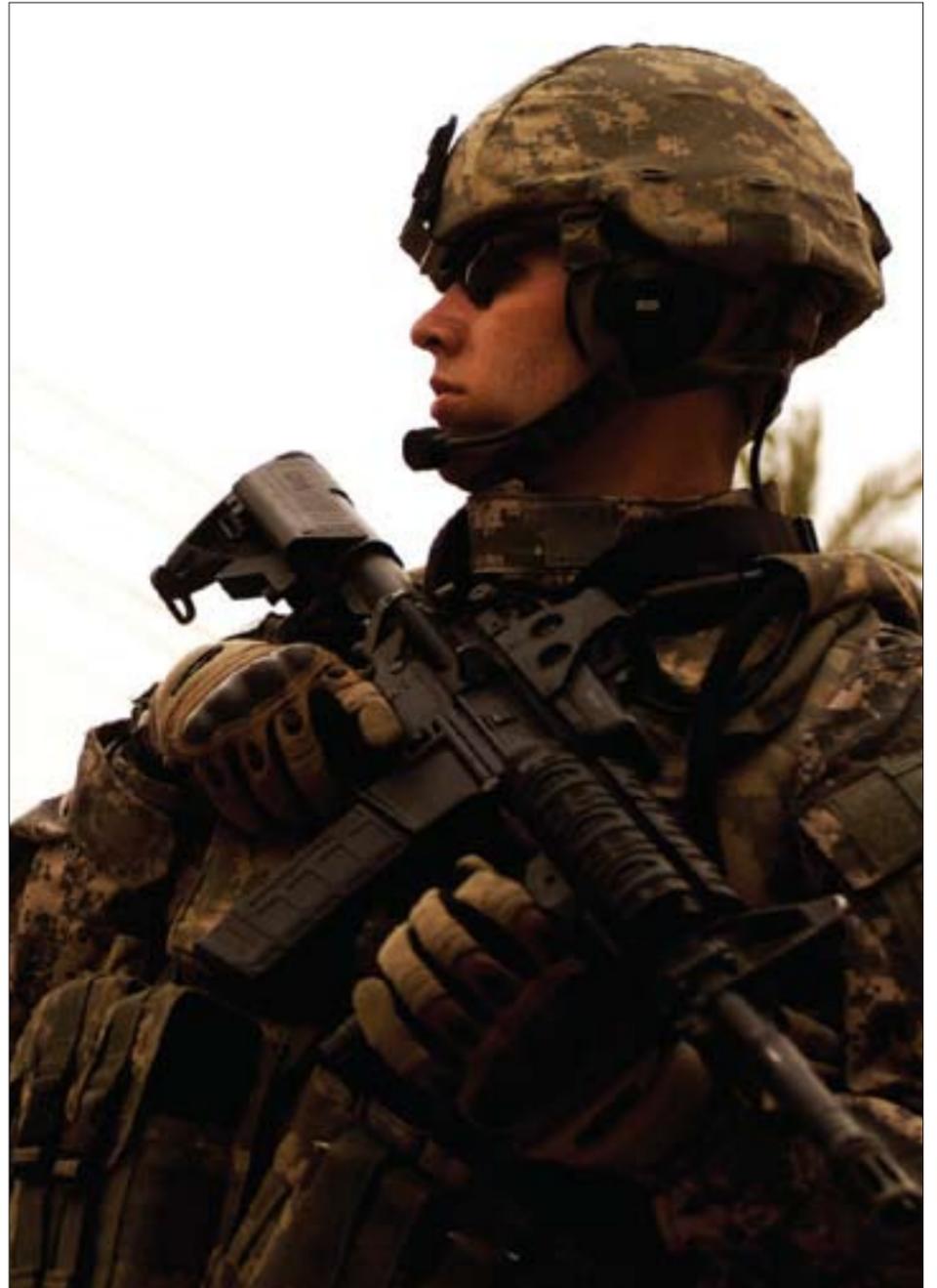
Photos by Air Force Staff Sgt. Jason Bailey, 1st Combat Camera Sqdn., 4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.



FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Spc. Andrew Kline, from Kirksville, Miss., patrols the Mutanabi book market in Baghdad, March 27. Kline is assigned to Company B, 418th Civil Affairs Battalion, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Sgt. Erik Packard, from Rosemont, Minn., speaks to Baghdad citizens while patrolling Mutanabi book market, March 27. Packard is an Army Reserve Soldier is assigned to Company A, 13th Psychological Operations Battalion based in Minneapolis, supporting 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Staff Sgt. Nathan Craft from Lenexa, Kan., patrols the Mutanabi book market in Baghdad, March 27. Craft is assigned to Company B, 418th Civil Affairs Battalion, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.