



The Heart Beat

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)
Volume III, Issue 7
May 2008



Cobra troops look for tips leading to criminals, pg. 4

Top Guns set up temporary COP in Rathwaniyah, pg. 6

Strike 6



Col. William B. Hickman

Strike Soldiers, families and friends: We are about half way through our deployment. We have come along way. Since arriving in October 2007 we have

accomplished a great deal. The patience and time put into learning and developing our relationships with local Iraqis has paid off. Many developments in security, essential services, economics and governance have taken hold. The seeds have been planted, and now it is time to help, guide and nurture these developments so they can reach full potential.

It is a good time for everyone to examine the way they are doing business. We have been here for nearly eight months. Take the time to look at your section and determine if there is a better way of doing business. You will likely find that there are certain adjustments that would create a safer, smarter way to conduct operations in this COIN environment.

I need all Strike Soldiers to dig deep and not take short cuts. Units over time have the tendency to get into routines. Let's make sure we are not setting ourselves up for failure by establishing routines that are not the best way of doing business. Complacency

kills, do the right thing even if it is harder and when no one is looking. Finding ways to improve will lessen the risk that may save your or your buddy's life.

Several battalions have departed our combat team, most recently the 4th Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry and just before them 2nd Battalion, 32d Field Artillery Regiment. Each unit spent a lot of time in this operating area and truly made an impact here. I want to thank the Soldiers of these organizations for all they have accomplished in improving the condition for the Iraqi people in their areas.

I welcome 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment to the Strike Brigade Combat Team. They are a fine outfit and have already assumed responsibility for their assigned areas. I look forward to working with you and am certain you will continue the strong traditions of your Regiment.

Col. William Hickman
Strike 6

Another month gone by and the Brigade Combat Team is continuing to get after it.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Straight Arrow Battalion, 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment from 4th Infantry Division.

They have quickly integrated with the Strike team. I would also like to thank the Saber Battalion for all they did for the Strike team. They are headed up north to reunite with their Regiment.

Change is continuous. Not only are units changing but our look is changing. We have recently been issued the Army Combat Shirt. I have worn it for the first time and it seems to be comfortable. Most of the Soldiers I have spoken to appreciate the shirt and the added comfort it affords. The ACS is not a stand alone garment it is designed to be worn under the IOTV.

This is the first quarter the Battle Field Promotion pilot program is in effect. The

Strike 7



Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder

BCT was initially allotted three promotions. In the end we have eight Soldiers who will receive a Battle Field promotion. I would

like to thank all the leaders who made it possible for our Soldiers to benefit from this program.

The last topic I would like to address is reenlistment. We are including in this month's edition of "The Heart Beat" the current reenlistment options. Please review this and if you have any questions speak with a retention counselor.

As leaders we have two primary missions: complete our operational mission, and retain quality Soldiers in the force. There is a plan for a mass reenlistment by the MNF-I Commander. Soldiers who reenlist will receive a flag flown over the Al-Faw Palace, their choice of coin from the MNF-I Commander (former Eagle 6) or CSM (former Strike and Eagle 7), and a picture. This is an opportunity for Soldiers to make this event very special.

Thank you for what you do everyday. Strike7



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STRIKE!!!

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2nd Brigade Combat Team -- "Strike"

On The Cover:

Sgt. Charlie Person, a native of Birmingham, Ala., climbs a flight of stairs while searching an Iraqi home during a cordon and talk in north-west Baghdad April 19. Person serves as a team leader for 1st Platoon, Company C "Cobra," 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div., MND-B)



Around Strike AO

(Top Left) A Iraqi woman watches U.S. Army Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Troop C, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, currently attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), walk down the street of a her neighborhood in Ameriyah, May 1. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Manuel J. Martinez)

(Bottom Left) With Iraqi children waving, a Soldier with the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment patrols through western Baghdad May 1. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Manuel J. Martinez)

(Top Right) A member of the Sons of Iraq (Abna'a Al Iraq) checks Identification Cards and searches pedestrians entering a checkpoint in Ameriyah April 21. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles W. Gill, 55th Combat Camera)



Cobra Soldiers look for tips leading to criminal suspects

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

Weeks have passed since northwest Baghdad rang from the sounds of small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenade attacks. The combined efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers quelled the violent outburst, and although many criminals were killed in fending off the attacks, some still roam the streets – living among innocent Iraqi civilians.

The outburst of violence is not something that has been forgotten in the minds of the Soldiers nor in the minds of the Iraqi citizens.

“These men are fools,” explained an Iraqi man in referring to the attackers. The man lives in Salam, a neighborhood just south of the Kadhamiyah district in northwest Baghdad. “They are criminals – killers.”

The man answered the door wearing just his pajamas April 18. You see, it was a day of rest for this Iraqi family. Although he has only lived in the neighborhood since May 2007, he said that, for the most part, he feels the area is very quiet and safe.

“We’re not fighting al-Qaeda,” said Staff Sgt. Ramon Baca, the platoon sergeant for 1st Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment. “We are fighting these criminals and gangsters who go against the Government of Iraq and attack Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces.”

He asked the man to be on the lookout for the criminals who, for all he knows, could be living in the calm area amongst the population and possibly using the area as a safe-haven – a place to re-fit or even to meet and plan future attacks.

“They are hiding among the innocent people,” Baca said. “With your help and your tips, we can crush them forever.”
MND-B Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd

Infantry Regiment, patrol through northwest Baghdad daily to interact with the local populace in an attempt to gather needed information regarding the criminals operating in the area.

“The people are fed up with the criminals and with the insurgents,” said Baca. “They want to stand up against them by either tipping them off or fighting against them.”

It can be very difficult gaining information from the local residents because they fear the potential reprisals from the criminals; however, Baca said, they are fed up with them.

The MND-B Soldiers often receive tips from the local residents, either via phone or one-on-one conversations, about the criminals’ whereabouts or potential future plans of attacks against the ISF and CF, said Baca.

“We get general tips – masked men gathering with weapons, (criminals) gathering for a meeting or tips on individuals transporting weapons through the (operational environment),” Baca said.

It’s a determined effort on the part of the ISF and MND-B troops because in order to continue the rebuilding of the local economy, infrastructure and

ISF, the criminal element must be dealt with.

Perhaps the odd thing however, is that the Cobra Soldiers don’t necessarily mention the criminals to the citizens they speak with. They have a round-about way of doing it – a simple, yet effective way.

“We don’t talk to them about those targets but what is going on within the community,” Baca said. “We talk to them about

what we are trying to do and what we are trying to help them with.”

It’s all about building rapport and trust with these residents, which, in the past, they may not have seen from their own government. The residents seem to have a circle of trust within their communities – people they can go to when they

need help or those they can count on when they face daunting challenges.

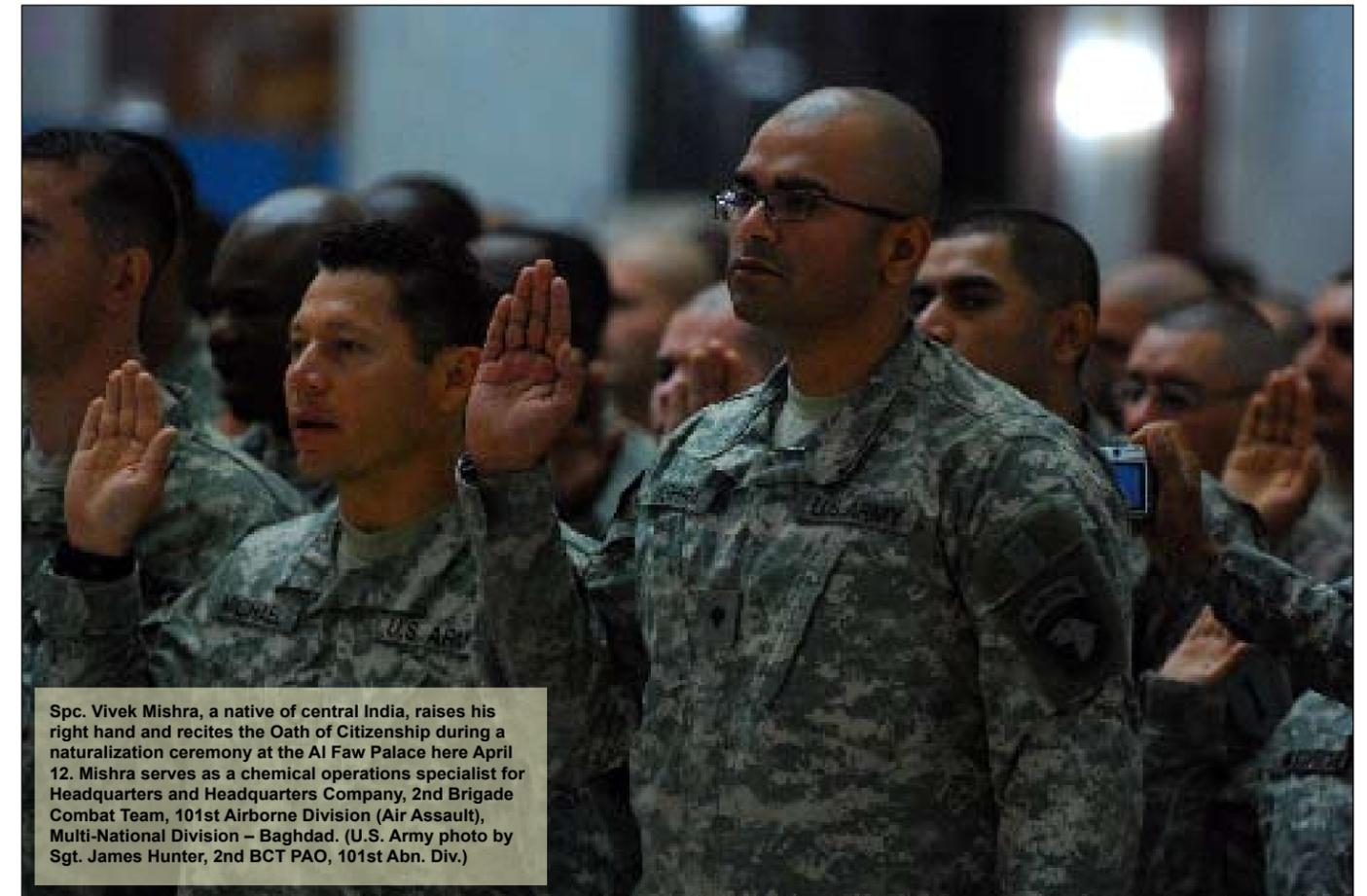
The MND-B Soldiers are earning that trust but make sure
see **COBRA**, pg. 10



Staff Sgt. Ramon Baca, the platoon sergeant for 1st Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), shakes hand with an Iraqi man at his home in northwest Baghdad following their conversation April 18.

“The people are fed up with the criminals and with the insurgents,”

said Staff Sgt. Ramon Baca
1st Platoon, Company C, 1-502nd Inf. Regt.



From life in India to the U.S. military...

One Strike Soldier is ‘Seeing the World’

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

Nearly 259 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines serving in Iraq received their U.S. citizenship during a naturalization ceremony at the Al Faw Palace April 12.

One particular citizen, Spc. Vivek Mishra, a chemical operations specialist, born and raised in central India, grew up in a rather different lifestyle than most would think. His father was a doctor, serving at the head of India’s Department of Pharmacy. He grew up rather wealthy, with no stories of famine or war that brought him to the United States of America. Rather, it was his studies.

Mishra serves with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault),

Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Mishra, who carries a heavy Indian accent, grew up in a large household, which would house anywhere from 25 – 40 Family members at one time. There was a lot of respect among the household, he said, which strived on Family and religious values. One could not even do as much as smoke in front of his parents, for it was a sign of disrespect.

Often, Mishra spent time with his friends at clubs or dining out at restaurants, which sat on the side of the highway near bodies of water.

When it was time for Mishra to go to college, he knew exactly the field he wanted to join. He felt he was not good at math nor did he like art.

“At that time when I was in India, they considered it a very big thing to be a doctor,” Mishra said, “but my dad never forced me to do anything. He said whatever I wanted to

choose to do, do it.”

He wanted to be a chemist.

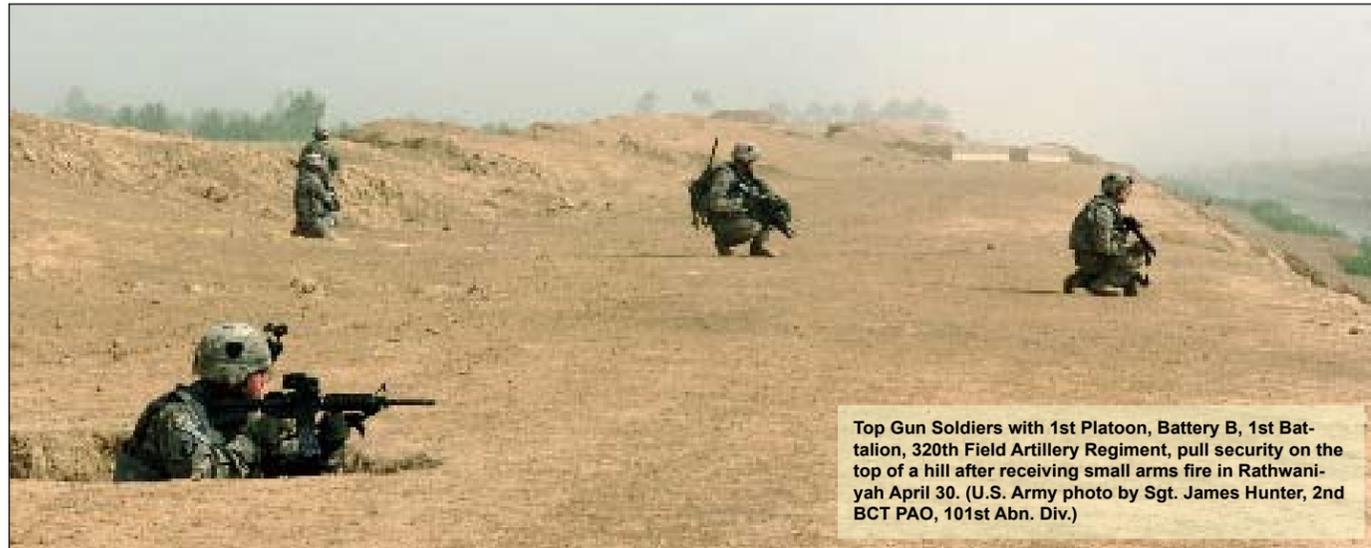
After three years at the Government Science College, Mishra earned his bachelor’s degree. Then, less than three years later, he earned his master’s degree in Chemistry at the Rani Durgavati University in Jabalpur, India.

What was it about chemistry that Mishra enjoyed?

“Reactions!” he said. “In chemistry, I love reactions. You cannot see it how it changes into another substance. When you mix two substances, it will have a reaction. I love being able to understand those things.”

After earning his master’s degree, Mishra joined the PhD program. During his studies, he said his professor asked if he was interested in getting another master’s degree at a school in the United States.

He thought it would be a good choice but
see **MISHRA**, pg. 22



Top Gun Soldiers with 1st Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, pull security on the top of a hill after receiving small arms fire in Rathwaniyah April 30. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.)

Top Guns troops set up temporary COP in Rathwaniyah to halt enemy movement

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

Well before the sun came up, Soldiers from Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, were out of their beds and patrolling Rathwaniyah.

This may sound like an everyday patrol for these Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers; however, things were much different this time around as they pushed into sector and set up a combat outpost in an abandoned Iraqi home April 29.

The house, which sat only one-story high with stairs leading to the roof, was filled with Soldiers and surrounded by concertina wire.

“Our main purpose out here is to disrupt enemy movement coming through the (area of operations),” said Capt. Geoffrey Gorsuch, commander, Battery B, 1-320th FA. “Also, it shows our support for the locals in our area.”

One of their main goals is to be in sector to push

small patrols out to react, to any situation and engage with the local nationals, said Gorsuch.

Normally, the Soldiers patrol the very rural area of Baghdad in an attempt to meet the needs of the local Iraqis through home assessments as well as to halt any enemy activity in the area through constant mounted and dismounted patrols.

However, after finding two improvised-explosive devices and hearing reports that criminals were using foot bridges along the canal in the area to transport weapons, the Soldiers believed the best option was to place a outpost within Rathwaniyah, said Gorsuch, a native Peoria, Ill.



1st Lt. Christopher Robertson, a native of Clarksville, Tenn., talks with a local Iraqi man during a dismounted foot patrol April 29 while operating out of a temporary combat outpost. The Soldiers continue to interact with the local population in an attempt to solve the many problems they face. Robertson serves as the platoon leader for 3rd Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

The Soldiers, who operate out of the COP, patrol and monitor the foot bridges daily in an attempt to halt any criminal movement or activity, said 1st Lt. Christopher Robertson, a native of Clarksville, Tenn., who is the platoon leader for 3rd Platoon “Spartans,” 1-320th FA, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division.

“Putting this here for a significant amount of time would stop that flow of enemy activity across the canals,” said Gorsuch.

see COP, pg. 17

Strike Soldiers visit clinics in western Baghdad

Troops seek to help in life-saving equipment, abilities

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

Women sat quietly in the waiting rooms as their young children curiously gazed around the room. With their white gowns neatly upon them, doctors and nurses moved quickly through the corridors carrying clipboards and charts. Even, an elderly Iraqi woman walked around with a squeegee and a bucket of steaming, hot water. She went room-to-room, cleaning the hospital floors.

It was an interesting place for the Soldiers of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad who were visiting the local medical facilities in their area that day. The facility was oddly quiet, which was strange for a place that had what seemed to be rather new or austere equipment. There was even a new X-ray machine.

The hospital seemed to have a certain flow to it. There was no uncertainty of what needed to be done. Even the patients seemed to have an understanding of how things ran, which could be an indicator the hospital was well run. There seemed to be no worries of outside problems, just ensuring the healthcare of their patients.

The biggest problem for the health clinic in the western Baghdad community

of Washash seemed to be a lack of electricity, which officials said they couldn’t afford fuel to keep it up and running.

Things were much different at a health clinic in Iskan. It too was quiet, but not because of the mundane hospital lifestyle but rather due to the lack of people within – there were perhaps 10 people in the building.

coming through the front entrance.

The pharmacy was also spread thin, with only 25 percent of the shelves stocked.

There were only two workers present that day: a doctor and the front door receptionist. It served as an indicator for the visiting MND-B Soldiers that help is needed to help boost these hospitals abilities to care for their local populace.

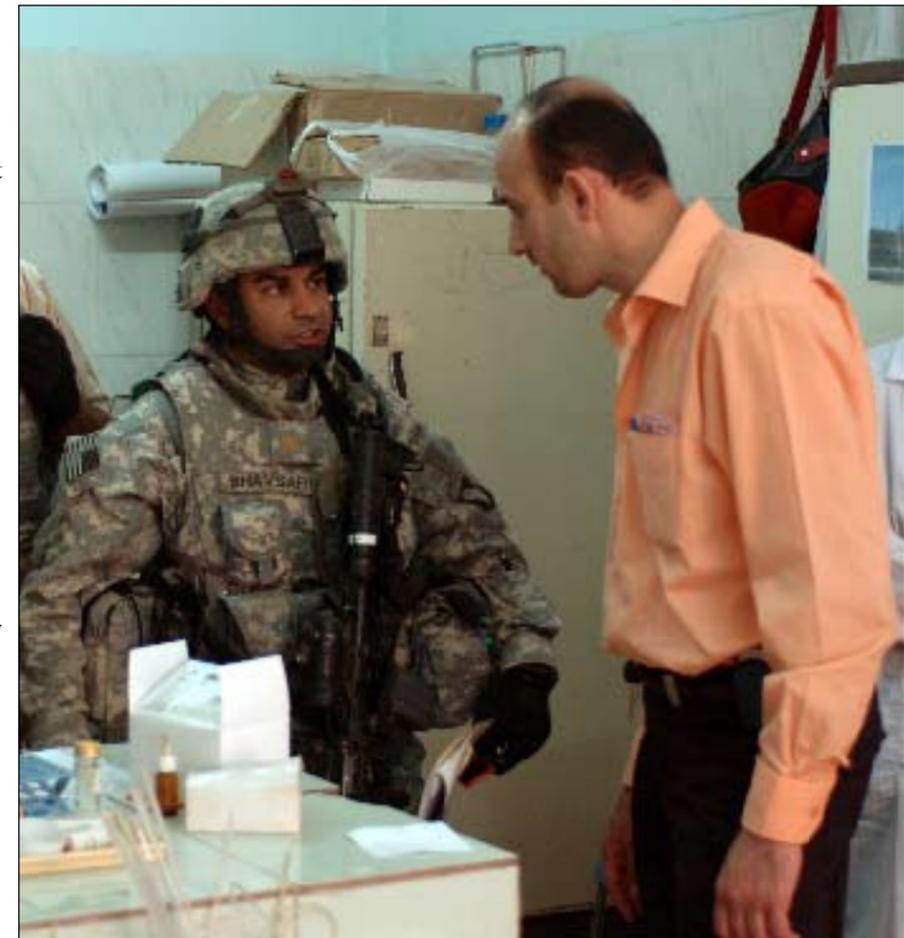
Upon receiving reports that many clinics within western Baghdad were lacking medical equipment and power to adequately provide to their local populace, Maj. Amit Bhavsar, a native of Fort Wayne, Texas, decided to see first hand the problems that lay at hand April 27 with visits to clinics in Washash, Iskan and Adil. Bhavsar serves as the brigade surgeon for 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

What Bhavsar learned was that “yes the reports were accurate;” however, he also said he needed to personally see the effect the issues were having on the clinics and the local populace as a whole.

“I wanted to see what that meant,” said Bhavsar. “The main things were:

yes, all three clinics did lack power – enough power where they couldn’t adequately perform their mission throughout the day. That lack of power was limiting their ability to carry out certain functions.”

The three hospitals he visited reported see CLINICS, pg. 16



Maj. Amit Bhavsar, a native of Fort Wayne, Texas, talks with a doctor at a health clinic in the western Baghdad community of Adil April 27. Bhavsar serves as the brigade surgeon for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad. He visited three hospitals in western Baghdad to see their equipment shortfalls.

This was not one of the larger clinics. However, as was the case with the previous hospital, it was also experiencing a lack of fuel to power the generator which, in turn, supplies electricity to the building. As a result, the patients and workers gathered in near darkness besides the light



Faces of the Heart



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

Spc. Scott Woods, a native of Warrior, Ala., hammers a post into the ground while setting up concertina wire around their temporary combat outpost in Rathwaniyah April 29. Woods serves with 3rd Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



(Left) Sgt. Patrick Delacruz, a native of Saipan, move across a main road while operating at a tactical checkpoint in northwest Baghdad April 20. Delacruz serves with 3rd Platoon, Company C "Cobra," 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div., MND-B)



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

Command Sgt. Maj. Frank A. Grippe talks with Sgt. Daniel Gonzalez, Sgt. Steven Olesen and other members of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), during a visit April 16. Grippe, the former 101st Abn. Div. command sergeant major, serves as the command sergeant major for 1st Corps. Gonzalez, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., and Olesen, a native of Jaffrey, N.H., serve on the personal security detachment for the Strike Brigade.



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

Pfc. Curtis Shovan, a native of Port Huron, Mich., pulls security during a patrol in northwest Baghdad April 18. Shovan serves with 1st Platoon, Company C "Cobra," 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



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

Spc. Phillips Casey, a native of Cartersville, Ga., talks with a group of Iraqi children during a joint patrol with Iraqi Army Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, in the Abu Ghraib market in Baghdad April 9. Casey serves with 1st Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



Sgt. Daniel Lopez, a native of Seattle, Wash., searches a vehicle while operating at a tactical checkpoint in northwest Baghdad April 20. Lopez serves as a radio transmission operator with Company C "Cobra," 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div., MND-B)



A Strike Soldier with 3rd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, shakes hands with an Iraqi child while on patrol in northwest Baghdad April 20. Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), continue to patrol the streets of northwest Baghdad.

COBRA

not to promise anything they can't deliver. With the ISF, what they can deliver is security. It is a vital mission they have been performing for some time.

"Because of the constant patrolling and keeping these bad guys quiet, every day, we get thanks for that. We are keeping criminals on their toes so they don't

have that opportunity to attack," Baca said. "The Iraqis do appreciate us – and they do trust us."

With the trust, and the ability to provide constant security, the tips will flood in because the local residents are tired of the criminal activity in the area. As Iraq continue to grow, so does the ISF. However, it is the help of the citizens of the proud land that is vitally needed, said Baca.



photo by Spc. Charles Gill, 55th Combat Camera

Staff Sgt. Robert Gaytan takes notes while speaking with local business owners at a market in Khadra May 4. Gaytan serves with 1st Platoon, Troop A, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, currently attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

Widowmaker troops capture suspected VBIED manufacturer

Story by **Sgt. Matthew Vanderboegh**
1-75th Cav.

The streets of Baghdad are a little safer now due to the combined efforts of Soldiers from Troop A, 1st Battalion, 75th Cavalry Regiment and Iraqi Army Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division.

The result of literally thousands of hours of building a rapport with the people of Ghazaliyah and human intelligence gathering have netted a clue that could put a possible vehicle-borne improvised explosive device manufacturer in jail for a very long time.

The night time raid, led by Troop A's 4th Platoon, netted two detainees.

Pfc. Gary Tate explained the raid, "[After entering the house] I saw movement to the left and moved down the hall to that room and found a man matching the target's description standing in the room with his wife. I told them to get down and they instantly complied."

Being modest about his involvement, he said, "It wasn't a big deal."

The IA assisted in the isolation of the objective and also helped secure the house. According to the platoon leader, "It is a team effort. It does not matter who gets the guys as long as somebody does."

The capture of the insurgent disrupted his terrorist cell and prevented the imminent VBIED threat to the residents of Ghazaliyah.

Following the operation, the platoon contacted the local city councilman to explain the arrest and to ask his support in telling the people the truth about the operation.

The residents polled all stated that the security in Ghazaliyah has drastically improved in the past year due to the efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces and the Coalition.

"We're glad we captured this guy," Tate reflected. "He may just live in Ameriyah but his attacks in Ameriyah aren't that far from us."

ISF, CF work together, live under same roof

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

As early as 2 a.m., the sound of a rooster can be heard in the distance as cats and dogs rummage through trash on the streets of Baghdad looking for their morning meal. The sounds seem loud coming through the walls as it echoes around the room.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo," the annoying, yet recognizable rooster screams. Maybe it's time to wake up.

Soldiers awaken from their dreams – perhaps thinking of their Families or driving along the coast – to begin their early morning guard shift.

It's just another day in the lives of the Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from Company C "Cobra," 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, as they work side-by-side with the Iraqi Army at Coalition Outpost 412 in north-

west Baghdad.

It's a home away from home for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division Soldiers, with nothing all that interesting in their two-story building. There are only three couches, overhead lights and fans, and the surrounding Iraqi neighborhood that really catches anyone's attention.

The couches are somewhat comfortable; the fans keep it cool, and it's anyone's guess what may happen in the neighborhood. That can keep anyone on their toes.

However, it's the working relationship between Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces that keeps it interesting. These are infantrymen from both the American and Iraqi Armies brought together to live as one entity under the same roof. They don't share the same language, but they still manage to laugh and joke with each other and trade stories of the past.

It's a working relationship these grunts share: a bond built over time as MND-B troops continue to mentor these men, said Sgt. Christopher Warnes, a native of Guilford, Conn.

"We have a good relationship with the IA. They work generally pretty hard, so we are generally happy," Warnes said. "They are our Iraqi counterparts. They are Iraqi

infantry and we are American infantry.

"We are the same people – except for they are from Iraq. We joke around and eat together. We do everything together, short of personal hygiene," he said with laughter.

Initially it was an outpost – one of three different outposts – for the Iraqi Army to push out into their area of operations. However, now it is used to man the tactical checkpoint, which secures the main supply route in the area and as a more direct way of mentoring and developing the Iraqi Army.

Their position is critical to the security of the area, said Warnes.

"We monitor all the traffic going to Kadhamiyah, coming out of Hurriyah, Washash," he said. "Generally, if anybody wants to go anywhere on this end of Baghdad, they have to come down the route."

The outpost has matured more into higher-level leadership mentoring, said Warnes. It's graduated from TCP training to planning patrols and setting defensive postures.

"We coordinate with them where they want their barriers, what supplies they need to make their building more secure," Warnes said. "We started off with just the Soldiers; now, we are helping establish the (noncommissioned officer) corps."

see **JOINT**, pg. 23



An Iraqi Army Soldier searches an Iraqi man while operating at a tactical checkpoint in northwest Baghdad April 20. Coalition Forces continue to work side-by-side with Iraqi Security Forces as they mentor and develop them.



Sgt. Patrick Delacruz, a native of Saipan, signals for a vehicle to stop while operating at a tactical checkpoint in northwest Baghdad April 20. Delacruz serves as a team leader with 3rd Platoon, Company C "Cobra," 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



Sgt. Matthew Hubbard, a native of Lancaster, Calif., jumps over a small creek while on patrol in Rathwaniyah April 29. Hubbard serves with 3rd Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.)

Strike Soldiers, IA patrol Abu Ghraib market

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

As Coalition Forces move toward more of an over watch position and Iraqi Security Forces take control of the streets of Iraq, it is essential to ensure the ISF is well trained and ready to man the streets without a Coalition presence.

To do this, they must train – and the best way to ensure they truly are ready and capable is to put them out into the environment to patrol and interact with the local Iraqi citizens.

Such was the case April 9 as Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers conducted a joint, dismounted patrol in the Abu Ghraib Market with Iraqi Army soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division.

Prior to pushing out into the market, 2nd Lt. Vincent Barber, a native of Toledo, Ohio, met with his Iraqi Army counterpart to discuss the upcoming mission.

Together, they planned the route, where the vehicles would be placed and the task and purpose of the mission, said Barber, a platoon leader with 1st Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

“I don’t go in with a planned mission and say this is what we are doing,” he said.

Barber said he wanted feedback from the Iraqi lieutenant to ensure they were on the same page and that both took something away from their meeting.

Afterwards, the two platoons rehearsed dismounted maneuvers and room-clearing procedures.

“We are really trying to incorporate rehearsals a lot more. We’re schooled in maneuver, and it’s a lot different than how they do it,” Barber said. “It’s a part of the things we can bring to them; we bring a little bit more order. They are really starting to adapt to our (tactics, techniques and procedures).”

Following the rehearsals, they pushed out into the market to conduct atmospherics of the area, and interacted with the

local citizens to find out if they have the basic services needed for everyday survival, said Spc. Phillips Casey, a native of Cartersville, Ga., with 1st Platoon, 1-320th FA.

“The main thing is they have (basic) services; they have water and some electricity,” Barber said.

However, and perhaps more importantly, they are happy about the security in the area brought to them by Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces, said Casey.



2nd Lt. Vincent Barber, a native of Toledo, Ohio, patrols alongside an Iraqi Army soldier with the 3rd Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, in the Abu Ghraib market in Baghdad April 9. Barber serves as the platoon leader for 1st Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

“We are stepping up the amount of patrols we do so they feel a lot more secure than they have in the past,” Barber said. “There are a lot more people coming into the market, which is good because it brings in more commerce; it keeps the money in the area rather than everyone going outwards, especially in our area because it’s really a rural farm type economy so that gives them a place to bring their crops.”

More now than ever, the local citizens within the community see the faces of the Iraqi Army soldiers. Two to three times a week, Barber and his platoon conduct combined operations with the IA troops.

Their continued venture into the community is bringing the best out of them, Casey said. Often, the local children would mostly flock to the American forces patrolling the area; however, the more they make their presence known, then the more the children flock to them as well.

“They have stepped up with their professionalism. They have come a long way when it comes to deal-

ing with the Iraqi people,” Barber said. “(U.S. Forces) are a little more respectful when dealing with the local nationals, and I think they have picked up on our TTPs when it comes to dealing with the people – winning the (counterinsurgency battle).”

Casey said he believes the Iraqi Army is gradually improving.

“They are getting better. You can tell they are definitely a young Army,” Casey said. “We’ve been around a long time, so we’ve got a lot of military history.”

“They are getting better. You can tell they are definitely a young Army,”

**said Spc. Phillips Casey
1st Platoon, Battery B, 1-320th FA**

Public Works substation opens in northwest Baghdad

Story, photo by
Sgt. Paul Monroe
2nd BCT PAO

In the United States, it is easy to overlook all it takes to keep a city’s trash and sewage system up and running.

Take the trashcan out to the end of the driveway, return from work and it’s empty. Turn on the faucet and clean water flows.

In Baghdad, basic services like sewage, water and trash service are tied to security. While Soldiers work to make the streets safer, their leaders work to put systems in place that will give residents a sense of normalcy.

To help residents restore basic services, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, opened the first of four proposed Public Works Substations in Adil, a neighborhood in the Al Mansour District of Baghdad April 16.

Soldiers, local officials and members of the community marked the occasion with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the substation.

The substations will serve as hubs

where workers will be able to store and maintain the equipment used to keep basic services going. They are located next to joint security stations.

Workers will meet with Iraqi Security Forces at the JSS to coordinate services with ongoing security efforts in the area. The close proximity to the JSS will help ensure the safety of the equipment and the workers.



A prominent local sheik cuts the ribbon at the opening of the Adil Public Works Substation in Adil, a neighborhood in the Al Mansour District of Baghdad, April 16. Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, are scheduled to open three more substations over the next two weeks.

Capt. Adam Harris, the civil military operations officer with 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, worked for the past month to get the substation ready for the opening.

“We refurbished (the building). After it was completed, we hired out city workers,” Harris said.

The opening is the culmination of nearly a year’s work.

Col. Louis Fazekas, who serves on the embedded Provincial Reconciliation Team with 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., started working on the project in May 2007.

When he arrived, the 2nd BCT, 1st Infantry Division, averaged more than 19 attacks a day in the Al Mansour District.

“We knew as things started to calm down, we needed to start to restore services,” said Fazekas.

While the Soldiers of the Dagger Brigade worked to make northwest Baghdad safer, Fazekas and his team focused on services. They met with local leaders and put together a plan to improve the already existing system to provide services that both sides could agree on.

“You have to look at the existing institutions, not create new ones,” said Fazekas, “See what’s wrong with them

and see what we can do to try and fix them.”

Over the next two weeks, the Strike Brigade will open three more Public Works Substations in northwest Baghdad.



Patrolling Yarmouk

(Right) Sgt. Josh Phillips provides security as 1st Lt. Scott Della Salla talks to a local business owner while on patrol in Yarmouk April 26. (Left) Spc. Francisco Alers provides security while on patrol in Yarmouk April 25. Both Soldiers serve with 3rd Platoon, Battery B, 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery. (U.S. Army photos by Spc. Charles W. Gill, 55th Combat Camera)



Widowmaker troops earn US citizenship

Story by
Sgt. Matthew Vanderboegh
1-75th Cav.

In recent years the percentage of non-citizens military recruits stands roughly at four to five percent.

The long drawn out process for an immigrant is usually quite lengthy and expensive. For naturalization it would normally require three years of living within the United States and cost well over a thousand dollars. Military members have the advantage of a streamlined process without cost to the applicant.

For many of the Soldiers interviewed in Iraq, the long road ended April 12 during a

naturalization ceremony. Their stories are all different but all resound with the same cord of enterprise and freedom.

As is the case with many immigrants, traveling to the U.S. is perilous at best. For Pfc. Jadranko Beslic, a war refugee from Novitravnik, Bosnia, his journey began when he was six years old.

“When we left Bosnia, we had to go on foot. Sometimes other Bosnians would help us along the way. Sometimes it was the local military. I had to hide out in basements and saw people getting killed. We eventually made it to Hannover, Germany.”

After about six years, the family was picked up by a refugee placement organization, the International Reserve Commit-

tee. It was a family vote that brought them to Georgia when Jadranko was fourteen.

For the rest of the Beslic’s some stayed in Bosnia, some are still in Germany and others are still unaccounted for. When speaking of his first impressions of America, “Originally I hated it. I wished that I were back in Germany. But it took me about two months to become fluent in English. Now all of my friends are here, I am married to an American. This is my home now.”

Though they were born on opposite sides of the world, the stories of the immigration Pfc. Tien Tran and Spc. Yovanny Calcano were very much the same. For Tran, who’s Vietnamese, and Calcano, see **NATURALIZE**, pg. 18

CLINICS

they were only getting around two hours of power per day, which drastically cuts down on the ability to treat patients.

“None of the clinics had the ability to hold immunizations because immunizations require 24-hour refrigeration,” Bhavsar said.

Though the clinics lacked power, it isn’t because of an electrical shortfall but rather due to the lack of fuel they all able to obtain or even afford.

“All the clinics had generators, but most of them didn’t have enough fuel to run the generators all the time,” Bhavsar said. “They couldn’t refrigerate or operate all their equipment, especially electronic equipment. So, they were very limited on what services they could offer throughout the day because of the lack of power.”

With the lack of power and certain needed equipment it creates a serious problem.

According to a report, “Special report: health services in Iraq,” the Iraqi government estimates that 70 percent of critically injured patients die in emergency care units due to the current lack of medical staff and supplies.

This is a serious issue, given the fact health clinics play a vital role in providing immediate and quality health care to their local population. Without the proper services, the population could potentially decrease and open the community to a number of other possible problems and even diseases.

Despite these challenges, life goes on inside the hospitals, which have one primary focus and concern: the health of their local citizens.

“The hospitals are running in a way you would expect them to run in a third-world country,” said Bhavsar. “The physicians and the staff will make due with what they have and they will do their best. When you don’t have an EKG or lab capabilities to diagnose a heart attack, you go back to simple things and you do a lot of guess work.”

Bhavsar said he believes that without the capabilities to perform their jobs, they just have to go back to their training and get hands-on

with the patients.

“In a lot of the places, the lack of equipment is certainly affecting medical care, but they will still try with the best of their ability,” said Bhavsar. “Certainly, not having that equipment makes the practice of medicine much less of an exact science and more of an art; and surely, mortality and morbidity increase significantly when you’re working that way.

“You still have to go on in that fashion,” he added.

The clinic in Adil is a prime example. It is a primary care clinic that essentially does obstetric care and muscular and skeletal care, said Bhavsar. For the rheumatologist, who specializes in bone and joint disorders, it is extremely difficult for him to have a meaningful practice without being able to do lab tests required to diagnose certain conditions.

Getting the medical clinics to their full potential would go a long way in helping the local communities as a whole, he said.

“By functioning appropriately they would have to assume a primary care and preventive medicine and public health role in the community,” Bhavsar said. “That involves things like normal newborn child screenings, prenatal examinations, immunizations and appropriate referrals to hospitals for conditions picked up early.”

It’s a community clinic, and it supports the community by keeping people healthy by increasing the access to medical care, added Bhavsar. It’s not necessarily working that way because of the limitations.

“You don’t have immunizations, the clinics are limited to the number of hours they can stay open, and the lab capabilities are limited,” Bhavsar said. “So they’re severely limited in performing that role.”

So what happens from here?

“We are going to get together and discuss potential assistance for these clinics,” Bhavsar said, “not just the fuel issue, but some of the shortfalls within the clinic.”

“We’ll look to provide some of this equipment and look to provide equipment to assess pregnant patients and basic diagnostic equipment, such as stethoscope,” he continued.

COP

Although they are trying to halt the enemy’s use of this region for transporting weapons and terrorizing the law-abiding citizens in the area, the Soldiers are also using this home to build an even stronger relationship with the local Iraqis within the community, said Gorsuch.

Granted, they already interact with the Iraqis in the area on a daily basis; however, Gorsuch said he believes living among the people will bring them closer in trust and with respect for one another.

“I hope they see that we are out here living with them and that it builds their confidence and trust that we are really out here to help with their security,” Gorsuch said.

During a dismounted foot patrol on a very humid, dusty afternoon April 29, the Soldiers left the combat outpost and moved house-to-house, talking with some of the local citizens regarding their living conditions and any difficulties they face with their water.

Electricity and water remain the two major problems in the area, said Robertson.

“It’s a common theme,” he said. “Everyone I talk to either has electricity or water problems.”

The problem mostly stems from a persistent drought in the area, he added; however, part of it deals with them being uneducated on using the canals as a resource for harvesting their crops.

“The people out here really like us. In our area, we have started up drinking water for the first time in two years so they are extremely happy about that,” Gorsuch said. “We are working really hard on the irrigation water because we found that through all the problems, their number-one worry is safety – and they

feel we have accomplished that.

“However, their number-two worry is water. If they don’t have water, they can’t grow their crops; it’s a very rural area. It might take some time because it’s very complex.”

The only way to help them solve these problems is to get to the bottom of it by talking with the Iraqis.

“Talking to people is completely essential,” Robertson said. “The thing is, when you go and talk to someone randomly and have no real agenda in mind, as long as you treat them with respect, they are so willing to talk with you.”

On April 30, they met up with Abu Mohammed, a local Sheik in Rathwaniyah, about the ongoing projects, current problems and everyday life in the area. They even shared a delicate breakfast – made up of salted eggs, cucumbers, tomatoes and hard-boiled eggs – prior to getting down to business.

“You’re responsible for this area, and any time we have a problem, we can come to you,” said the elderly, yet energetic Sheik.

“We have their trust and confidence. We have been working with them for six or seven months now,” said Gorsuch. “They like us coming over. We

have fun with them and joke around with them, but then we get down to business. They trust we are going to work until we can complete the mission.”

Sheiks play an important role in the community, almost acting as the voice within the community, said Gorsuch. The Sheiks know all the problems within the community and can voice it to Gorsuch and his platoon leaders during their weekly meetings.

They seem to have a real working relationship with Sheiks. It is a bond built over time. Even Robertson said he considers a Sheik he deals with on a daily basis a very close friend.

“You never want to be too close to someone necessarily because anyone could betray you, but the truth is... my relationship with him is very good,” Robertson said.

The Sheiks may also play a role in whether they Soldiers decide to keep the COP in Rathwaniyah.

“We are possibly looking to do it consistently. This is our validation – us just being out here is going to disrupt the enemy,” Gorsuch said. “If we get a lot of good reactions from the sheiks, we will see where to go from here.”



Pfc. Kyle Stout, a native of Texarkana, Texas, places concertina wire around their combat outpost in Rathwaniyah April 29. Stout serves with 3rd Platoon, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



Sgt. Christopher Warnes, a native of Guilford, Conn., speaks into a radio, communicating with other elements from his platoon, while on patrol in northwest Baghdad April 20. Warnes serves with 3rd Platoon, Company C "Cobra," 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.)

NATURALIZE

who's Dominican, the move to America was mainly economic.

Tran grew up in Saigon, Vietnam. His father was a former ARVN soldier who ended up in a successful textile business. When explaining how he came to the States, "I was the last of my family to leave Vietnam. My Grandfather sponsored me to come over but my Aunts gave the money to process the paperwork. It took about ten years to get me over. We had to go through a big medical screening so they could make sure we had all of the shots up to date."

When Tran was sixteen he was finally able to come to the States and settle with the rest of his family in California.

How does he compare the two countries?

"Vietnam is much more industrial than America," Tran said. "When I came to California I thought it was very cold... It was also clean and very big. Everything is operated by machines."

Since he had already had English in Vietnam it did not take him too long to become fluent.

"We had to learn English in school and you had to do well in learning it," he explained. "If you did not pass at an average level then you were beaten with bamboo." Tran later expressed how easy the American schools were by comparison and how relieved he was to come to the U.S.

For Calcano and his family, it was a way to escape the squalor and have a real opportunity to his economic condition.

Just as with many immigrants, his family had to be separated in

order to establish a foundation in their new land.

"My Father first came to New York and then eventually the rest of us were able to come over... When I first came I thought it was too cold and I just wanted to get on a plane and go back to where it was warm."

He went on to explain about the language difficulties, "I had four years of English in the Dominican schools but I was still very shy about speaking it. It wasn't until I got into the Army that I had to really learn how to speak English fluently."

The military has very specific guidance on the treatment of non-citizens in relation to duty positions and time in service. For the Army, you cannot become an officer, hold a security clearance, nor stay within the ranks for more than eight years. During the 2004 presidential election year, President George W. Bush signed into law a bill that would streamline the process that it took service members to become citizens. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration service website, the process is currently taking about 14 to 16 months to process. Additionally there have been about 2.5 million applications during the past fiscal year alone. The number for this fiscal year is currently around 1.4 million, which is twice the number for the same time last year.

According to Tran, "I am very excited about being a citizen. I definitely plan on voting in the next election."

However large or small, citizenship means something to everyone. For these Soldiers this is the final step in a long road from their old homes. The idea of enterprise and opportunity, of freedom from oppression and an uncertain future, the best ideals of the founding fathers has certainly come back to America. All should be honored to call these Soldiers countrymen and fellow citizens.

Retention Updates

As of May 11, 2008

(Changes are highlighted)

Operation Freedom Strong:

Gen. Petraeus will conduct a mass reenlistment at Al Faw Palace on July 4. Names need to be submitted by June 27. SM gets a photo, flag and MNC-I coin.

Assignments:

Let your Retention NCOs know where you would like to be stationed. They will submit the request to the Retention Management Branch who will contact your assignment manager.

Assignment manager / Branch manager contact info is posted on the HRC webpage.

Go to <https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/protect/Active/enlist/cb-let.htm>, and then click on your branch!

Have Soldier also update their Assignment Satisfaction Key (ASK) via AKO; this is what assignment managers are using to place Soldiers on AI when their number comes up.

Training:

Airborne, Drill Sergeant, Recruiter

HOTT MOS's:

11B – Infantryman

13F - Fire Support Specialist

14T-Patriot launching station

19D - Calvary Scout

25B – Information Tech Spc

25S – Satcom System Oper Maint

31E – Corrections NCO

35H – Common Ground Station Op

68W - Health Care Specialist

92G - Food Service Specialist

13B – Cannon Crewmember

13R – FA Radar Operator

15J-OH-58 Repair

21B – Combat Engineer

25N – Nodal Network Operator

25U - Signal Support Systems

35F - Intelligence Analyst

35M - Human Intelligence

88M - Motor Transport Operator

92R – Parachute Rigger

13D - FA TACT Data SYS SPC,

14E - Patriot Fire Control

15T-UH-60 Repair

21U – Topo Analyst

25Q – Multi-channel Trans System

31B – MP

35G - Imagery Analyst

63B - Light Wheel Vehicle Mech

92F – Petroleum Supply Specialist

92Y – Supply Spec

***May be others, see your Career Counselor if interested in a new career field.

Packet MOS: (formal application required, follow web links)

21D - Diver (PKT MOS) <http://www.wood.army.mil/577th/diver/>

21P - Prime Power Spec (PKT MOS) <http://pps.belvoir.army.mil/>

31D – CID Agent (PKT MOS) email for info: rhonda.l.brown@ua.army.mil

35L – Counter Intelligence Agent (PKT MOS) email for info: ann.kosendar@us.army.mil

37F - PSY OPS SPEC https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/protect/Active/epsf/sf_ltr.htm

38B - Cival Affairs Spec https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/protect/Active/epsf/sf_ltr.htm

89D - EOD Specialist (PKT MOS) <http://www.bragg.army.mil/EOD>

GI Bill Benefits to dependents

See your Retention NCO for details.

Stabilization @ Ft Campbell for 12 months

Sources:

MOS Smartbook; lists descriptions and qualifications: <https://perscomnd04.army.mil/MOSMARTBK.nsf>

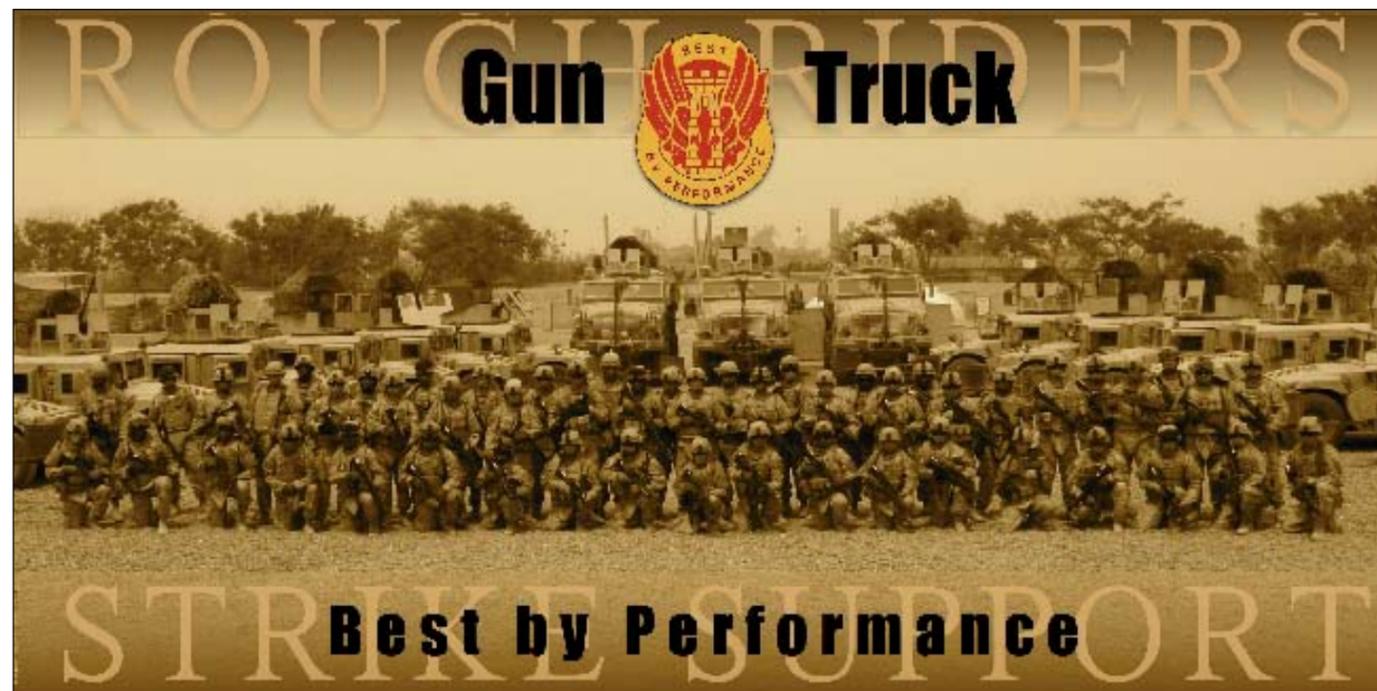
Army Posts, with links to the local communities: <http://thearmylink.iwarp.com/post.html>

Civilian Occupational Outlook Website; see where your civilian job is going: <http://stats.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>



“Strike” Brigade Combat Team
101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)





Gun Truck Soldiers truly are "Best By Performance"

Story, photo
courtesy of 526th BSB

In a massive display of power and execution, an ensemble of mounted weapons on mission ready Gun Trucks were ready for inspection when the 526th Brigade Support Battalion conducted a spectacular gun truck layout April 18.

In order to create the display, amazing coordinating skills were demonstrated by the truck commanders who directed their trucks to maneuver into diverse formations.

The battalion commander, Lt. Col. William Krahling of Litchfield, Minn., and battalion command sergeant major Ardandy Brown of Fayetteville, N.C., meticulously inspected each piece of equipment, entered each vehicle and spoke to each Soldier with words of encouragement while checking for the safety and welfare of the Soldiers.

Gun Truck Platoon Soldiers from Company A (Road Warriors) and B (Mad Bulls) truly are Multi-Functional Logisticians, said 1st Lt. Jonathon Sohl of Rapid Springs, S.D. They are all Soldiers who specialize as motor transport operators, automated logistic supply specialists, petroleum supply specialists, water purification specialists, computer detection system repair, land combat electronic missile repair, welders, light wheeled vehicle mechanics, and small arms repair. All are experts in their respective field as well as their immediate mission of providing convoy security.

"The security sections within each of the company's are the culmination of what is best in battalion. Our Gun Truck Soldiers come from all Military Occupational Specialties within the ranks, but they have one thing in common, their specific job is the protection of the soldiers, civilians, and equipment that sustains this brigade. What they showed today is that they remain highly trained, motivated, and ready for any mission. I am very proud of them. They do an incredible job every day," said Krahling.

To prepare for their war-time mission not only did they receive training in their respective MOS, but underwent additional training from a collaboration of other military fields. The training programs were developed through Soldier Training Plans from multiple MOSs, to include: infantry, cavalry scout, and military police. This built a diverse knowledge of skills that would give

the Soldiers the capability to conduct their war time mission. To maintain their high standards of excellence they constantly train and develop their skills through rehearsals and battle drills.

Just as diverse as their

MOSs, is their wartime mission. Whether it is providing security for Barrier Movement Operations in Ghazaliyah, conducting sustainment replenishment operations to Forward Operating Base Justice, escorting internal recovery elements to a piece of downed equipment or escorting the BSB Iraqi Security Force cell to conduct their training missions inside and outside the Strike area of operations, every tactical movement the BSB conducts, focuses on bringing the Soldiers home safely.

"... they remain highly trained, motivated, and ready for any mission,"

said Lt. Col. William Krahling
commander, 526th Brigade Support Battalion

Sons of Iraq screened for security forces



A Sons of Iraq member waits as his application is scanned during an Iraqi Security Forces screening in Muellha, Iraq, April 7.

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

FOB KALSU — Sons of Iraq eager to join the Iraqi Security Forces participated in an initial screening in Muellha, Iraq.

Iraqi Security Forces, Coalition forces and local leadership held the screening, designed to gauge which SoI members are eligible to continue forward with the transition process into the ISF.

"We were doing a Sons of Iraq screening so we can transition the SoI into the Iraqi Security Forces," said Capt. Kaiwan Walker, commander of Company D, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.

Leadership from 2-502nd Inf. Regt., attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police leadership and the Mayor of Iskandariyah evaluated the applicants.

"Prior to the screening, each SoI had to fill out an application that had his fingerprints and picture on it," Walker said.

More than 300 SoI lined up outside the Muellha Agriculture Building where the event was held. Once inside, they waited to be called in one by one to be reviewed by the leadership.

After turning in their application to the mayor, Walker said, they took a literacy test. Following the test of basic reading and writing skills, the applicants' identification cards were verified.

"The ID manager checked to make sure that they are of age and to check that they live in the region or city that they were filling in the application for," Walker said.

After completing the process, Walker said all the commanders reviewed the packets to determine whether the SoI met the criteria to get into the ISF program.

More than 60 percent of the SoI applicants were approved to move forward for further screening.

The 4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. area of operation has approximately 10,500 SoI members, all of whom will be screened, said Lt. Col. Michael Getchell, commander of 2-502nd Inf. Regt. Up to 5,000 of those packets will go to the Government of Iraq, which will screen and evaluate them during a 90-day period.

"There is a phenomenal interest in the ISF," said Getchell, a native of Bridgewater, Mass. "Those who have been in the Sons of Iraq program are our priority over those who are not part of the Sons of Iraq program. They stepped forward to defend and protect their areas, so they've already shown the propensity to be part of the security process."

Those who didn't qualify during the screening will continue to work in the SoI program, Walker said.

Future SoI screenings are planned throughout the Babil province to continue their transition into the ISF.

4-42 Field Artillery uncases colors in western Baghdad



(Left) Lt. Col. Robert Kirby and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Williams with the 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, uncase their units colors during a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Liberty April 12. The unit relieved the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, and will now operate in the northwest Baghdad neighborhoods of Hateen

(Right) Lt. Col. Michael Lawson and Command Sgt. Maj. William Huffin with the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, case their units colors during a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Liberty April 12.



MISHRA

wanted his parent's opinion on the matter first. His father told him if he stayed in India, he would just know his surroundings; however, he would not know the real world.

Mishra arrived in the United States in 2002 and enrolled at Illinois State University to work toward another master's degree in chemistry. He was nearly complete with his degree, he said, with one semester left and 80 percent of his thesis done, when he decided he needed to take a break from school for a while. He was recently married, and said he didn't make much money working as a graduate assistant at the university. He had to put college aside to provide for him and his wife.

He worked a numerous jobs, but never really found his true calling. He said he wanted to work in a lab as a chemist, mixing different substances.

"At that time I said, 'Well, I do not have this much patience to continue to look for a job,'" he recalled.

After seeing an article on recruitment, he decided the next best thing for him would be the military.

But what did his parents think? Well, chuckled Mishra, he didn't tell his parents until he graduated from Advanced Individual Training – where he became a chemical operations specialist.

"They were in shock," he said.

His mother didn't want him to join the military; however, they understood he wanted to make a difference. His mother thought that no matter where he was as a Soldier, he explained, she worried that a bullet would find him. Thankfully, that has not been the case.

Mishra said being in the military is his true calling.

"I will be in the Army for about 20 to 25 years, as long as my body permits it," he said. "Its like a big Family. It's a big mental support. I have made a lot of changes within myself."

When growing up, he said he wasn't given orders but simply given the choice if he wanted to do something or not.

"I have learned responsibility and order," he explained.

With already knowing he wants to be a career Soldier, his next goal in his career is to become an officer in the chemical field.

"War is completely changing, but chemicals are still an issue," Mishra said. "The chemical corps is growing, and they need really good Soldiers to understand all these things."

He said he wants to maximize his abilities with chemicals in relation to the military. In the meantime, however, he will first soak in his new status as an American citizen.

"It's completely different now to be an American citizen – it's a good feeling," Mishra said. "Now I am on the same track as everyone. I don't think anyone treated me differently because I wasn't a citizen, but it's a mental thing."

Becoming an American citizen is an honor he is well deserving of, said Capt. Robert Woodruff, his commander.

"Specialist Mishra exemplifies all that is good in an American Soldier, even before he officially became a U.S. citizen," said Woodruff. "He's been through a roller coaster ride for the two years to get to this culminating point in his life. He is technically and tactically proficient in his skills as the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear expert in the company, routinely filling the shoes of a noncommissioned officer on a daily basis.

"He definitely deserves this"

FACES OF FREEDOM



Children, no matter what land they live upon, seem to always have the ability to bring a smile to the faces of those around them. Even though this is a nation continuing to re-build, these are children of a free Iraq. Soldiers are tough, but children are unique. They are the future of this free country. Most importantly, they are the faces of freedom. (Left) A young child plays, oblivious to what is going on around her, as Iraqi Army and U.S. Army Soldiers search for possible weapons caches in Amariyah April 22. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Gill) (Above) As one child tries to hide, another is caught in the moment at a hospital in western Baghdad. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Manuel J. Martinez)

JOINT

Soon, two-thirds of Cobra's area of operations will be handed over to the Iraqi Security Forces. From the ongoing efforts in the area, due to the constant combined patrols, the area has stabilized, which will allow the ISF to take over in the near future, said Warnes, a team leader with 3rd Platoon, Co. C, 1-502nd Inf. Regt.

The Iraqi soldiers have shown obvious signs of improvement, especially with their relationship with the Iraqi people, said Warnes. They are generally pleased to see the MND-B and Iraqi troops patrol together.

"We do constant patrols

with the Iraqi Army," said Staff Sgt. Ramon Baca, the platoon sergeant for 1st Platoon, Co. C. "We go out with them and do knock and talks. A lot of the time they take point. They are getting a lot of face

time with the Iraqi people."

However, it has taken time to get the Iraqi Army to this point because they basically came from nothing to the point they are at now, said Warnes.

"I've only been in Iraq twice, but I can relate to my last tour. I was in a different part of Iraq, in the Sunni triangle," he said. "However, in the last year I have seen basic Soldiering get much better, a start of a noncommissioned officer corps and good weapons discipline."

When Special Groups criminals put up arms against the MND-B and Iraqi troops mere weeks ago, "the Iraqi Army stood tall and manned their positions," said Warnes. "They wanted to fight. They are really are developing into a unit that one day will be able to handle the country themselves."



An Iraqi Army Soldier searches an Iraqi man while operating at a tactical checkpoint in northwest Baghdad April 20. Coalition Forces continue to work side-by-side with Iraqi Security Forces as they mentor and develop them.

BSB distributes fuel to keep Strike Brigade moving

Story, photo by
CPT Linda C. Wade
526th BSB

For many Soldiers operating out of Forward Operating Base Prosperity, their first stop upon completing a combat patrol or convoy is the Prosperity Retail Fuel Point to top off their vehicles.

The constant flow of fuel that allows the perpetuation of combat readiness day-after-day is easily taken for granted by many Soldiers; however, the Soldiers from the fuel section of the Fuel/Water Platoon, Company A, 526th Brigade Support Battalion spend each and every day ensuring maximum efficiency and operability of the Prosperity Fuel Point, traveling throughout Strike Brigade's area of operation with thousands of gallons of this highly flammable and explosive liquid. They are all too aware of the time and effort it takes to maintain fuel operations.

The fuel section's main mission is the operation and sustainment of the fuel point, which they drastically modified over the last four months. The original fuel point was inherited from 15th Brigade Support Battalion and required numerous changes in order to fulfill tenant units of FOB Prosperity's fuel requirements. Their initial challenge was to develop procedures that would allow smooth traffic flow and included building two additional retail points to handle more customers in a timely and efficient manner. Not only was this achieved, but the Soldiers also found time to improve other aspects of the fuel point, as they were eventually able to increase the fuel capacity by 50,000 gallons.

Upon the previous unit redeploying, nine members from the Fuel Section were required to relocate from Camp Liberty to FOB Prosperity in order to operate the fuel point. Previously, the fuel point was manned by a platoon size element of about 30 Soldiers. In a matter of only two days, the Soldiers of the company's fuel section had set up and begun operating out of the new fuel point.

"The Soldiers worked diligently and effectively to ensure they could provide adequate services to customers," stated Sgt. Gerald Foust, an expert fuel operator.

The current fuel point is manned 24 hours for the convenience of customers returning from convoys and other missions. Over 190,000 gallons of fuel can be stored; making this is a very significant distribution point in the greater Baghdad area. The Class III Point also supports the International Zone to include FOB Washington, Union III, FOB Fernandez, and FOB Prosperity. Staff Sgt. Miriam Johnson, who supervises the setup and operations of the fuel point, stated, "We have issued over two million gallons of fuel between 15 December 2007 and 15 April 2008. It's our job, and someone has to do it."

Not only does the fuel section provide fuel to tenants of Prosperity, the company fuel operators located at Camp Liberty and FOB Prosperity both travel throughout the Brigades area of operations to deliver fuel to multiple units operating outside the wire as well as local nationals and Iraqi Army Soldiers. To date, the fuel section has issued more than 3.2 million gallons of fuel to customers. Spc. Terry McNear-Jenkins, a fuel operated stated, "We always give our 110% during all fuel missions that we are given."



In Memoriam

We Shall Never Forget...



CPL DAVID P. MCCORMICK
HHT
1-75TH CAVALRY REGIMENT



SSG SHAUN J. WHITEHEAD
COMPANY A
2-502 INFANTRY REGIMENT



SPC JACOB J. FAIRBANKS
BATTERY B
1-320TH FIELD ARTILLERY



SGT WILLIAM E. ALLMON
COMPANY E
1-64TH ARMOR REGIMENT



SSG BRYAN BOLANDER
HHC
1-502ND INFANTRY REGIMENT



SSG CLAY CRAIG
COMPANY C
1-75TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

"The Lord is my Shepperd..."