

Warrior News



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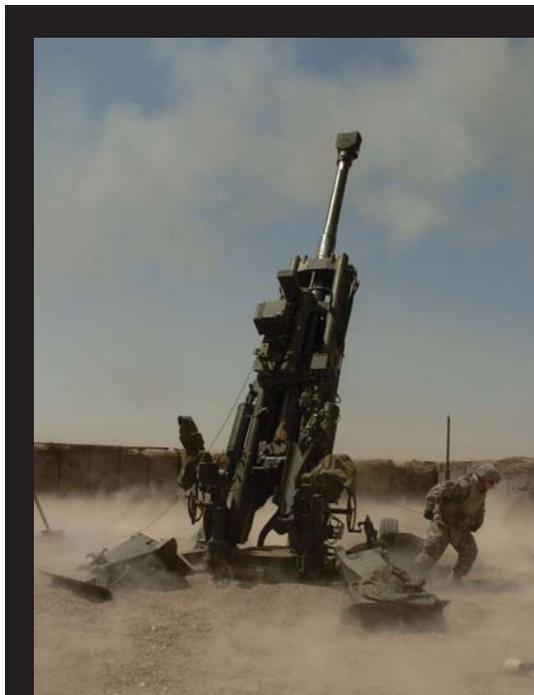
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On the Cover.

An Excalibur explodes out of an M777 howitzer on Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad, April 26. The Excalibur fired was the first round of this type fired by Soldiers from Battery A, 2nd Battalion 11th Field Artillery Regiment "On-Time," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. For more photos, go to page 5.

U.S. Army photo by Spc. Derek Miller, 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B



Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti

Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Goodman, a native of Toledo, Ohio, hands a shirt to a child in Sab al Bour, northwest of Baghdad, May 9. Goodman is the platoon sergeant for 3rd platoon, 66th Engineer Company, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. The platoon completed its route-clearing mission with a stop in Sab al Bour to hand out toys to the children there.

Warrior Sappers lead way for engineers

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

The engineers from the 66th Engineer Company, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, are the 2007 winners of the Lt. Gen. Emerson C. Itschner award, recognizing them as the best engineer company in the Army.

"It feels good," said Spc. Jose Diaz, about the recognition. "The last two years of training were hard, and now we are being recognized by the Army as being the best engineer company."

Diaz, a native of Arlington, Texas, who is a combat engineer with the 66th Eng. Co., joined the Army two years ago as a combat engineer. He said the job wasn't

really what he wanted to do, but it was a good option and he doesn't regret the decision.

"I was told I was going to build and blow stuff up, and that sounded interesting so I took it," he said.

To prepare for the competition, Diaz said the unit did a lot of demolition training, improvised-explosive device

classes, unexploded-ordnance classes and tactical movements. In truth, there is no preparation for the competition, said 1st Sgt. Jonathan White, the company's senior enlisted leader, who added that his unit was being recognized for the professionalism of his team.

"You just do your mission," said White, a native of San Francisco.

"This is just a reflection of what we've accomplished as an organization throughout the course of the year."

The prestige of the award is something which will travel throughout the engineer regiment.

"Every year, you hear about the unit who won the Itschner Award, and they

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Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti

Staff Sgt. Steven Garrido, a native of Yigo, Guam, arm wrestles a child in Sab al Bour, northwest of Baghdad, May 9. Garrido is assigned to 3rd platoon, 66th Engineer Company, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. The platoon completed its route-clearing mission with a stop in Sab al Bour to hand out toys to the children there.



“It’s a reflection of our Soldiers’ accomplishments. They **TAKE PRIDE IN WHAT THEY DO EVERY DAY.** They have a tremendous amount of spirit,”

1st Sgt. Jonathon White
66th Engineer Company

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are a unique company or a company who has done awesome things,” said Maj. Anthony Barbina, a native of Belmont, Ohio, the unit’s commander.

To be considered for the competition, each engineer company was required to submit a book highlighting the unit’s accomplishments.

For the 66th En. Co., the book was 180 pages.

The companies are judged on various criteria, to include retention, education programs, Family Readiness Groups and the unit’s contributions to the Army Corps of Engineers and the Global War on Terrorism.

“It’s a reflection of our Soldiers’ accomplishments. They take pride in what they do every day,” White said. “They have a tremendous amount of spirit.”

Being recognized is akin to the “cherry on the ice cream cone,” White said, adding that it is a great way to acknowledge what his Soldiers are all about.

Their achievement marks the first time an engineer company from the 25th Inf. Div. has been recognized with this award.

“This is a once in a career achievement for most engineers,” said Maj. Anthony Barbina, a native of Belmont, Ohio, who is the unit’s commander.

While deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 66th Eng. Co.’s mission is route clearance.

The Soldiers tirelessly travel the roads used by Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces and Iraqi civilians – clearing them of IEDs.

“We are here to defeat the most catastrophic weapon the enemy has, which is the IED,” said Barbina

“We are here to make sure everyone get to where they need to be safely.”



Sgt. Jerome Bishop

Sgt. John Yost (center), a Greeley, Colo., native, shows Iraqi Army engineers where they went wrong on a lane exercise used to teach the IA soldiers about how to spot improvised-explosive devices and indicators April 5. Yost serves as a team leader with the 66th En. Co.

Soldiers fire 'On Time'



U.S. Army photos by Spc. Derek Miller, 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

(Above) Staff Sgt. Edison Vargas, a native of White Plains, N.Y., and Sgt. Ontario Smith, of Washington D.C., inspect artillery round components prior to firing an Excalibur round on Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad, April 26. The Excalibur fired was the first round of this type fired by 2nd SBCT while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Both Soldiers are assigned to Battery A, 2nd Battalion 11th Field Artillery Regiment "On-Time," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

(Left) Pfc. Nolan Laughlin, a native of Chicago, removes the rotating band protector from an Excalibur round. The Soldiers are assigned to Battery A, 2nd Bn., 11th FAR.

(Below) Staff Sgt. Edison Vargas, a native of White Plains, N.Y., prepares his soldiers to fire an Excalibur round for the first time on Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad, April 26. The Excalibur is a specialized round guided by GPS. Vargas is assigned to Battery A, 2nd Bn., 11th FAR.



Fallen Wolfhound honored

Story by Maj. Al Hing
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from 3rd Platoon Company C, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, MND-B, stood on the front stage of the Taji pavilion,

pulled the lanyards that dropped the covering over the commemorative memorial to Sgt. Jon M. Schoolcraft, III, April 15.

Schoolcraft died of injuries when the vehicle he was riding was destroyed by an improvised explosive device Jan. 18. He was the first Soldier lost for this deployment of the 2nd SBCT.

“This was absolutely the right thing to do,” said Col.

Brian Harris of Loganville, Ga., and Camp Taji garrison commander. Harris’ comments honoring Schoolcraft who meant so much to his comrades and the command.

First Lt. Richard Pace from Brawley, Calif., and Schoolcraft’s platoon leader was amazed at how quickly the memorial came together.

“It shows how much this means to the brigade and it shows how much the Army cares about the impact of one Soldier,” he said.

“This means a lot, to the platoon, and to me.”

Staff Sgt. Adam Lane from Sparta, N.C. agreed.

“It’s amazing, I don’t know what to say,” Sparta, a platoon sergeant for 1st Bn. 27th Inf. Regt. said. After a pause he continued, “I’m honored and the platoon is honored to have one of our Soldiers memorialized in this way.”

The memorialization of Schoolcraft also meant remembering a friend.

“This is about remembering a good friend, so all future Soldiers when they come here, they will see who came before them to pave the way to where they are now,” said Spc. Michael Jacobs a native of Fort Washington, Ky., and infantryman assigned to 1st Bn. 27th Inf. Regt. “(Mike) was more than a platoon member, he was a friend. We spent lots of time together after our (duty) day was over. I’ll miss Mike forever.”

Lt. Col. David Davidson, from Lewisberg, Tenn., and deputy commanding officer for 2nd SBCT said he wants to ensure there is a memorial in a more permanent place.

“This is a dichotomy, as we want to

memorialize a Soldier, but we realize this is a temporary place, Camp Taji is not an enduring post, and someday, we won’t be here. There has to be a plan, that someday that memorial will find its way back to Schofield Barracks, back home with the Wolfhounds.”

For now, the most permanent memorial is in the hearts of the Soldiers who knew and served beside him.



U.S. Army photo by Maj. Al Hing, 2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B
Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers bring the colors forward for the dedication of the Camp Taji pavilion April 15.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. J.B. Jaso III, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B
Sgt. Steven Walters a native of Wichita, Kan. and Sgt. Antwan Scales, a native of Bellwood, Ill., unveil a plaque April 15 that dedicates the Camp Taji stage and pavilion to commemorate the memory of Sgt. Jon Michael Schoolcraft III. Walters and Scales are both infantrymen assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment “Wolfhounds,” 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. J.B. Jaso III, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

1st Lt. Rick Pace (left), a Brawley, Calif., native, speaks with Col. Todd McCaffrey, commander, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, before the Sgt. Jon Michael Schoolcraft III Stage and Pavilion dedication ceremony April 15. Pace was Schoolcraft’s platoon leader with Company C, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment “Wolfhounds.”



A sheik from Hor al Bash speaks with Lt. Col. Richard "Flip" Wilson, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y. and commander 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad and Ramsey Jiddou, cultural advisor at the opening of the Al Tatwar Primary School, April 14.

IA, Wolfhounds Soldiers open new school

Story and photos by Sgt. Waldemar Rivera
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers and Iraqi Army soldiers from 2nd Mechanized Battalion 3rd Brigade 9th Division, met at the town of Hor Al Bash northwest of Baghdad, for the grand opening of the al Tatawar Primary School April 14.

The purpose of the mission was to give support at the grand opening of the al Tatawar Primary School and bring needed supplies to the school children, said Capt Timothy Cho, a native of Honolulu, Hawaii, and part of the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, 1st Battalion 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, MND-B.

After several reconciliation speeches from guest speakers, the school children performed for the audience and chanted words of appreciation for opening the school and the donated school supplies.

"These school supplies were provided to these children by American organizations back home through the ePRT," said Cho.

The donations from the U.S. are welcome and appreciated not only by the children, but by the teachers of the school as well. The school supplies were distributed to the children before the grand opening ceremony of the al Tatawar primary school by the Iraqi army, local Sheiks and representatives and the head masters

"Some of the teachers here are volunteers and work for free for the good of the community," said Lt. Col. Richard "Flip"

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Iraqi Army Col. Mustafa cuts the ceremonial ribbon to mark the opening of the al Tatawar Primary school in the town of Hor Al Bash, northwest of Baghdad, April 14.

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Wilson, a native of Brooklyn N.Y. and the Wolfhound commander.

Besides opening the school for the children of the town, Wilson said there are further-reaching objectives.

“The goal is to get all these small communities to do something good about their own future and then let them spread the word to other communities to encourage them to do the same,” he said. “The idea is to let the people know that the community is becoming self-sufficient and try to put all collective efforts together for the good of the community.”

“The goal is to get all these small communities to do something good about their own future and then **LET THEM SPREAD THE WORD** to other communities to encourage them to do the same.”

Lt. Col. Richard “Flip” Wilson,
1st Bn. 27th Inf. Regt.



An Iraqi child waves the Iraqi flag during the grand opening ceremony of the al Tatawar Primary School in the town of Hor Al Bash, northwest of Baghdad April 14.



Iraqi Col. Mustafa meets with local Sheiks during the grand opening of the al Tatawar Primary School in the town of Hor Al Bash, northwest of Baghdad, April 14.



An Iraqi Army Soldier stands among children at the grand opening ceremony of the al Tatawar Primary School in the town of Hor Al Bash, northwest of Baghdad April 14.



U.S. Army photos by Spc. Dustin Weidman, 1st Bn., 21st Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. MND-B

An Iraqi Army officer watches on during a ceremony commemorating the release of 11 former detainees as they prepare to begin a new life in their communities. The release was hosted by 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment “Gimlets,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, at Joint Security Station Nassir Wa Salam, located west of Baghdad, May 8.

Former detainees return home

Story by Capt. Benjamin Roark

1st Bn. 21st Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

Eleven former detainees gained their freedom May 8 – beginning a new life and returning home to their families.

To mark the occasion of their release, Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment “Gimlets,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, hosted a ceremony at Joint Security Station Nassir Wa Salam, west of Baghdad, to mark the latest release of detainees in a national initiative to reincorporate the men back into society.

The former detainees signed an oath in front of friends, family, local leaders, in addition to military leaders from both the Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces, to maintain their allegiance to the Government of Iraq, give support to the troops and work for the stability of their country.

One of the released men expressed his joy at beginning a new life.

“I am so thankful to be given this opportunity,” he said, “I will make this time count and not go back these bad

decisions again.”

Before the ceremony, the men verified their basic information and local leaders signed as guarantors for their release, which serves as a testament of their readiness to return to society and keeps them accountable for their actions.

“This is your first step down a new road in your life,” said Capt. Rafal Stachowski, a native of Warsaw, Poland, and intelligence officer for 1st Bn., 21st Inf. Regt. “What you do with this opportunity will make all the difference.”

The Gimlets have hosted several release ceremonies as part of the national reconciliation process and will continue to support the GoI and Iraqi Security Forces in the future.

“I cannot tell you how many of these men said that they can’t wait to turn their lives around,” said Sgt.

Richard Ash, a native of Ann Arbor, Mich., who serves as the detainee operations noncommissioned officer in charge, 1st Bn., 21st Inf. Regt. “I feel proud to be involved in helping these Iraqi citizens return to the community and become a productive member of society,”



A soldier from the 2nd Battalion, 44th Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, speaks to soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment “Gimlets,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, as they pull security at the entrance to Joint Security Station Nassir Wa Salam, west of Baghdad, May 8. They may not speak the same language, but the Soldiers have been able to work together, without an interpreter, by using their own form of sign language.

Soldier turns life around by signing up

Story and photos by Sgt. Jerome Bishop
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

Every Soldier has a different reason for enlisting to be in the Army.

Some do it for patriotic reasons, others for help paying for college, but one Multi-National Division – Baghdad Noncommissioned Officer signed up in 2005 for an entirely different purpose.

Before enlisting, Sgt. Wyatt Karney, an Albuquerque native who serves as a mortarman and Personal Security Detachment NCO with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, MND-B, led a life of hard work, shared custody of a child and an unwanted drug problem.

“I decided to join the Army because I had a drug addiction and I had to get out of my home town,” said Karney who now calls Colorado Springs, Colo., home.

Karney’s addiction cost him his Family. It ended his marriage and resulted in shared custody of his son.

“At the time we were divorced and I had joint custody of my son, I tried to get off drugs several times for years and couldn’t do it,” he said.

For Karney, the worst was telling his son.

“He didn’t ever see it, but I would explain to him that I had a drug problem and he didn’t notice it, but I just got sick of myself,” he added.

Karney said he decided he

had to leave the town where he was born and raised so he could rid himself of his addiction.

“I have close Family members and a lot of friends who are involved with drugs and I had to get away from it.”

The call to serve came, as it did with many Soldiers, when the attacks on New York and Washington happened Sept. 11, 2001. Even though he felt the call to duty, it was several years before he enlisted.

“I wanted to join when the towers fell on 9/11, but because I had joint custody of my son, I didn’t want to leave him,” he said.

Karney said he would join if there was a chance he would defend his country.

“I’ve always liked the military, but I never wanted to join unless there was a conflict going on. I didn’t want to just join and do garrison stuff,” he said. “My grandfather served in WWII and my father served in Vietnam, and I wanted to serve only if there some kind of war going on.”

In the end, his close relationship to his son eventually led him to leave.

Two weeks after he pledged his commitment to the Army, Karney said goodbye to his son and headed toward a new life.

Since enlisting, Karney was able to clean up his life. He credits being away from his hometown and the people associated with his drug



Before enlisting, Sgt. Wyatt Karney, an Albuquerque native, led a life of hard work, shared custody of his son and an unwanted drug addiction. Today he leads Soldiers and serves on his squadron commander’s personal security detachment and mortarman with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

problems, as well as the Army’s no tolerance stand on drug use as reasons for his success in getting sober.

Today, Karney is contributing to the mission of providing security on a routine basis for the commander of the squadron in which he serves.

“Many Soldiers in my command have long histories. What makes the Army great is it is not about what you have done in the past, it is how you carry yourself into the future that truly matters,” said Capt. Ken Bernier, a Garland, Maine, native who serves as the commander of HHT, 2nd Squadron, 14th Cav. Regt. “Sgt. Karney is a reliable member of my team, who can be depended on to be a riflemen, vehicle commander and a proficient mortarman.”

Back home, his son is waiting for his return, but he

is not waiting alone. There is another member of Karney’s Family who waits for him. He said she was instrumental in him turning his life around.

The woman Karney speaks so highly of is his ex-wife, who he remarried in 2007.

“I didn’t have a squared away mind to be able to deal with things that she was going through, but she dealt with her stuff and I dealt with mine while we were separated and we’ve both grown a lot so we decided to get back together,” he said.

After his four years of service are up and his duty fulfilled, Karney hopes to one day take a job as a government employee in Colorado Springs. Until then, he’s sure to continue to fight the good fight, both against the enemy in Iraq and against the ghosts of a former addiction.

Wolfhounds spread Aloha Spirit

U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. J.B. Jaso III,
1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

Capt. Shaun Wheelwright, a native of Pinetop, Ariz., distributes school supplies, donated by Hawaii-based company, "Oils of Aloha," to students at a school April 26 in a village in the Taji Qada, northwest of Baghdad. The students were very thankful and eager to receive the educational supplies. Wheelwright is the assistant operations officer for the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warriors," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad.



A student in enjoys school supplies that were donated by Hawaii-based "Oils of Aloha." The supplies were delivered April 26 to a school in the Taji Qada, northwest of Baghdad., by Soldiers from the 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt.



Capt. Shaun Wheelwright, a native of Pinetop, Ariz., waves hello in a sea of children at a school in the Taji Qada, northwest of Baghdad, April 26. The children just received school supplies donated by Hawaii-based company, "Oils of Aloha."



edics treat people of Jaffer Village

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class
Christina Bhatti
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf.
Div., MND-B

(Right) First Lt. Amy Hawkins, a native of Fort Wayne, Ind., checks a boy's breathing during a medical operation April 29 at the Al Arwa Abn Al Ward School in Jaffer village. Hawkins is a physician assistant assigned to Company C, 225th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

(Right center) Pfc. Melanie Shelton, a native of Henniker, N.H., looks down the ear of a girl who attended a medical operation April 29 at the at the Al Arwa Abn Al Ward School in Jaffer village. Henniker is a medic assigned to Company C, 225th BSB. The MEDOP was hosted by Company B, 52nd Infantry Regiment, attached to 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd SBCT.



Capt. Ken Smith, a native of Phoenix, looks at a rash on a baby during medical operation April 29 at the Al Arwa Abn Al Ward School in Jaffer village, which is in the Taji Qada, northwest of Baghdad. Smith is a physician assistant with 225 BSB. (Right) Spc. Melodye Dzamba, a native of Tahl-equah, Okla., checks a child's heart murmurs who came to a medical operation April 29. Dzamba is a medic assigned to Company C, 225th BSB.





Sgt. Robert Shelton, a native of Glendale, Calif., teaches close-quarters marksmanship to Iraqi Police recruits at the Shat Al Taji Police Station, northwest of Baghdad, May 7. Shelton is assigned to 2nd Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment, "Strykehorse," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Strykehorse Soldiers train Iraqi Police

Photos by Capt. Ron Geronimo

2nd Sqdn. 14th Cav. Regt. 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B



(Above) Soldiers from the 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, "Strykehorse," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, conduct a quick overview of the day's training with local Iraqi Police recruits at Shat Al Taji Iraqi Police Station, northwest of Baghdad, May 7. The Strykehorse Soldiers have been training the Iraqi Police recruits on traffic control point operations, search of personnel, search of vehicles and control of personnel at check points in order to enhance their effectiveness in the surrounding community.

(Left) Staff Sgt. Joseph Ryker, a native of Lafayette, Ind., watches on as Iraqi Police recruits conduct vehicle searches in the Taji Qada, northwest of Baghdad, May 7. Ryker is assigned to 2nd Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt. The oversight and guidance provided by the Soldiers of 2-14 Cav. Regt. provides the new recruits confidence in the training that they received from the Iraqi Police Academy.