

The Ivy Leaf

Established in 1917 to honor those who serve

VOL. 2, NO. 12

MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION - BAGHDAD

“STEADFAST AND LOYAL”

MAY 26, 2008

‘Ironhorse Big 8’ equals mission success for MND-B Soldiers

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IA, Gol, local government take lead in providing aid to Sadr City residents

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Soldier encourages fellow voters to make their voices heard, vote

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U.S. Army photo by Lt. Col. Steve Stover, MND-B PAO

Raising walls

A Soldier from 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, based out of Germany and attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, pulls security during a barrier emplacement operation in the Sadr City district of Baghdad May 12. The mission is part of the safe neighborhood plan to safeguard southern Sadr City residents from terrorists and criminals, restore essential services and support economic growth. MND-B Soldiers and their Iraqi counterparts from the 11th Iraqi Army Division initially went into south Sadr City in late March to disrupt the enemy’s use of the area as a firing point for rockets and mortars throughout Baghdad. Since the establishment of the wall, IA Soldiers distributed 3,400 food packs that can feed a family of five, conducted five medical operations treating over 2,500 Iraqi civilians, and established an Iraqi Assistance Center at a joint security station.

See related story on Pg. 9

6th IA Div. conducts inaugural command sergeants major conference

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – In what is perhaps a sign of the growing importance of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps in the Iraqi Army, the 6th Iraqi Army Division conducted its inaugural Division Command Sergeants Major conference – the first of its kind – at the Muthana Airfield May 7.

The conference served as an opportunity for the brigade and the battalion command sergeants major to bring the issues their units are facing to the table; it also provided the senior enlisted leaders the opportunity to share their experiences and challenges with their brothers in arms.

“It was a huge step,” said Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia, the senior enlisted leader for Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 4th Infantry Division, who had the opportunity to witness to the meeting.

“It marks a leap forward toward building a strong Non-

commissioned Officer Corps in the Iraqi Army.”

The United States military has learned through its storied history that it is important to have a strong NCO Corps to support its Officer Corps because military commanders cannot be everywhere at the same time. As such, it is the duty of the NCOs to be the commander’s eyes and ears across the battlefield.

“In the U.S. Army, it’s very important, as a sergeant major, to gather feedback from your senior enlisted advisors because your commander can only see so much of the battlefield,” said Gioia, a native of Buffalo, N.Y. “He relies on senior NCOs to be his eyes and ears to bring back the information he is missing.”

The Iraqi Army is beginning to understand the importance of the NCO Corps through its experiences with the Soldiers of Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

To help make this transition a reality, one of the main efforts the Military Transition Teams are working toward with their Iraqi counterparts is supporting their efforts to form and train a strong NCO Corps.

“Right now, the Iraqi Army is building its noncommissioned officer corps,” Gioia said. “It’s a long and difficult process that will require a different thought process for both the officers and the NCOs.

“Ultimately, it will be up to the commissioned officers to empower their NCOs to be able to provide them the support they need to grow their army.

“As it stands now, the IA enlisted leaders do not have the leadership responsibility we have in the U.S. Army – yet. However, we are working with the Iraqi Army leaders to

see **Conference** Pg. 5

'Ironhorse Big 8' equals mission success for MND-B Soldiers

By 1st Lt. Adam Moore

4th Supt. Bn., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – The Convoy Escort Platoon of Company A, 4th Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, is a unique element that executes all of the 1st "Raider" BCT's combat support missions outside of Forward Operating Base Falcon.

Deployed for a 15-month tour in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the platoon of Soldiers cannot be found on any Modified Table of Organization and Equipment because it was formed by Soldiers from each company within the battalion – Soldiers who contribute their special skills to ensure mission success.

A key element for the leaders of the platoon was ensuring their Soldiers follow the appropriate steps to maximize the safety of their troops while out on mission.

"First, last and always, security is what protects you from the enemy, and there is more to it than having 360 degrees established," said Staff Sgt. Johnnie Martinez, a motor transport operator from Okeechobee, Fla., assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Supt. Bn. "It is imperative that you understand your enemy and all the threats and where they occur in your operating environment."

Fundamental to every operation the platoon conducts is the Ironhorse Big 8, which consists of operations orders, graphics, pre-combat checks and inspections, rehearsals, security, reconnaissance, time management and risk management.

Every mission begins with an operations order. The platoon leader or platoon sergeant work in coordination with the battalion intelligence and operations personnel to prepare an executable mission that integrates the enemy situation into all planning considerations.

Once the battalion commander approves the plan, the order is then issued to the Soldiers; thorough back-briefs are conducted to ensure each Soldier understands all aspects of the operation.

"Our rehearsals are intense," said Spc. John Brewer, a native of Tallulah, La., and a petroleum supply specialist assigned to Company A, 4th Supt. Bn. "They are situational training exercises that allow us to perform our actions on the objective prior to execution."

Pre-combat checks and inspections are the focus of the platoon's preparation. Every Soldier and vehicle is checked, rechecked and checked again.

"If a piece of equipment fails, or is over-looked, then it is a failure at the squad, platoon, company and battalion level because they are all involved in the pre-combat inspection process," said Capt. John Friel, commander of Co. A, 4th Supt. Bn., who hails from Warrensburg, Mo.

Graphics play an important role in the platoon's operations. Graphics are issued prior to every mission to provide a visual aid on the enemy and civilian situations, to include



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Adam Moore, 4th Supt. Bn., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Sgt. 1st Class Jesus Mora supervises preventive maintenance, checks and services daily before combat logistics patrols depart the base camp in support of the Soldiers of the 1st "Raider" BCT operating at combat outposts and joint security stations throughout the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

historical and predictive threat locations. Also included are primary, alternate, evacuation routes and overlays of all battle space owners.

"The graphics are a great tool that helps bring the mission to life prior to execution," said Sgt. Paul Royar, a native of Alba, Texas, and a light-wheeled vehicle mechanic assigned to Co. B, 4th Supt. Bn.

"It makes it easier to conceptualize the mission if you have materials to reference after the briefing."

Integrated into every operation is a security plan. The patrol leader, with the assistance of the battalion's military intelligence team, conducts engagement area development and thorough enemy analysis to determine what considerations must be taken. Different movement formations and techniques are used to counteract potential enemy threats.

"Our primary mission is not to seek and destroy the enemy; however, if we can provide actionable intelligence to the maneuver guys in their battle space, then it's a big bonus," said Spc. Dexter Clingan, a petroleum supply specialist from Halleyville, Ala., assigned to Co. A, 4th Supt. Bn.

"We get updates from (intelligence) on what activity to look for in specific areas, and we serve as an extra set of eyes and ears on the ground."

The final step to the Ironhorse Big 8 is composite risk management.

No operation takes place without a completed risk assessment and risk brief. Control measures are developed, disseminated and continuously refined. Updates are based on the tactical situation as it develops, and accidental risk is continuously evaluated and mitigated.

"I never want to be the leader whose Soldier gets injured due to my negligence or lack of prevention," said Sgt. 1st Class Jesus Mora, senior wheeled vehicle mechanic and platoon sergeant of the convoy escort platoon, who hails from Corpus Christi, Texas, and is assigned to Co. B. "Our Soldiers are too valuable and too important not to take the proper steps to ensure their safety."

The platoon's leaders ensure these standards are adhered to at all times, and the Soldiers are always prepared to execute the mission, said Mora.

The Ivy Leaf

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All editorial content of The *Ivy Leaf* is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the Multi-National Division – Baghdad Public Affairs Office.

Do you have a story to share?

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

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

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

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

Ask Dr. Feel Good

MND-B surgeon's office



What's up Doc? I see that there are bats flying around at night, especially by the DFAC. I was running for cover across the bridge when one was coming towards me because my battle buddy told me that they like perfume. He said that they can't see, but they can smell.

Since then, I noticed they are everywhere, even when I come out of the shower.

Is there some bat potion that we can put down to keep them away, are they attracted to sweet perfumes, and what happens if one bites me?

Signed, Batty in Baghdad

Dear Batty in Baghdad:

Bats are an important part of the ecosystem. You should especially appreciate them since they eat night flying insects (mainly mosquitoes).

They have no reason to be attracted to people, and they don't have any particular interest in perfume.

So since they eat insects and aren't interested in you, you shouldn't be concerned about them.

Just like with any other animal if you do get a bite for some reason, you need to go to your medical provider to be treated.

What's up Doc?

I think the TRICARE prescriptions online is a good idea. The problem is when I logged on, it asked me for my credit card number.

I thought this program was free.

How do I get through to the TRICARE on-line pharmacy?

Signed, Try-Caring to get my meds

Dear Try-Caring to get my meds,

For active-duty personnel (to include activated Reserve and National Guard Soldiers), the Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy (TMOP) service is FREE. However, for retirees or DoD eligible contractors, there are co-payments required depending upon the medication ordered.

Active-duty personnel are not required to enter credit card information and can by-pass the credit card information step.

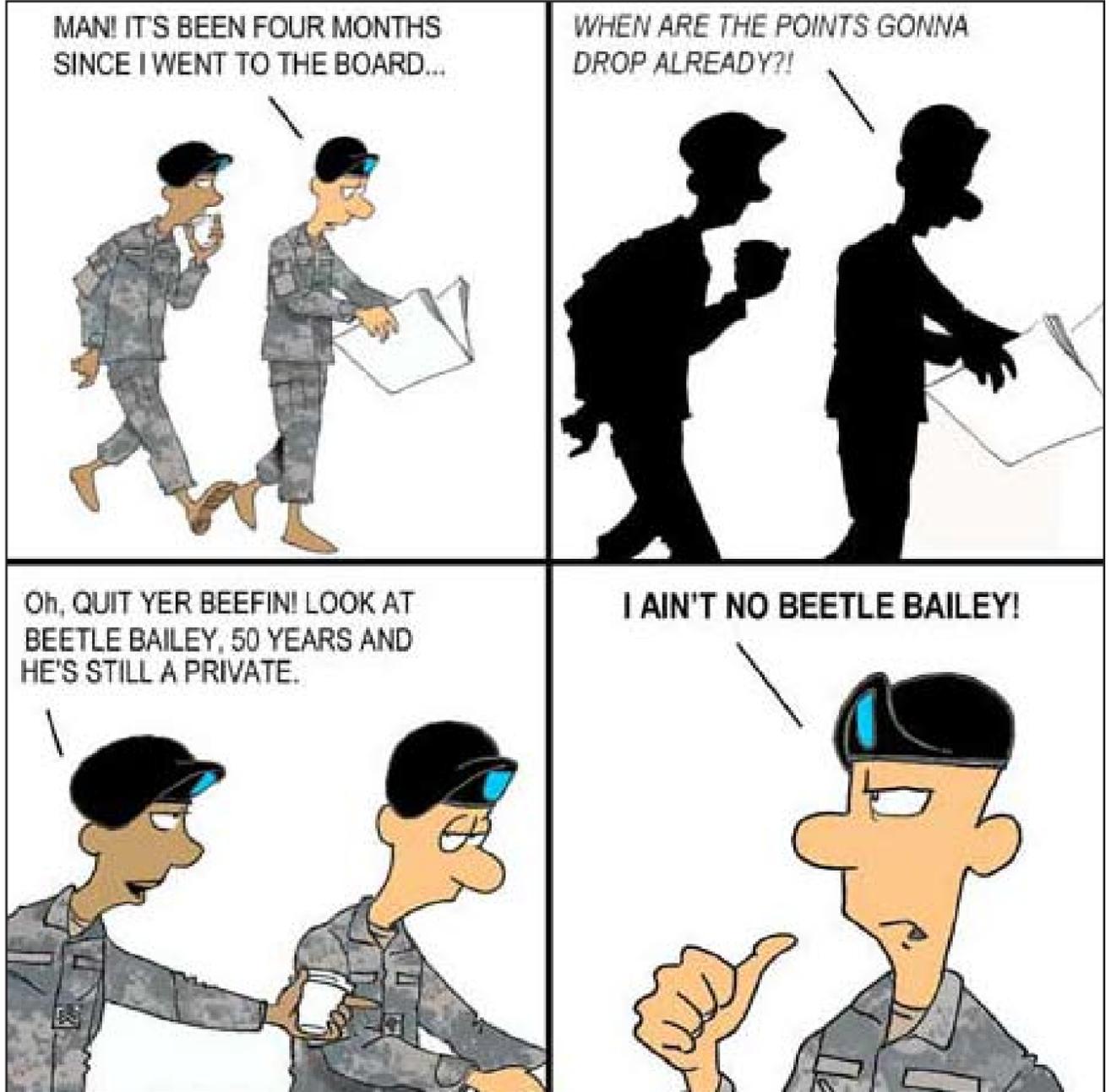
We have requested Express Scripts (the civilian contractor) to remove the credit card screen during the registration process for our active-duty personnel.

In the meantime, they have agreed to place the disclaimer, "For Active Duty Personnel, credit card information is not required!"

Service members with problems during registration can contact customer service via e-mail at tmop.customer.relations@express-scripts.com.

For additional information on TMOP, please visit the Frequently Asked Questions link: <http://www.express-scripts.com/custom/dod/tmopfaq/>, or contact your nearest pharmacy representative.

Letters for Dr. Feel Good should be placed in the "Doc Box" located in the D-Main entrance, or email to mndb_pad@mnd-b.army.mil.

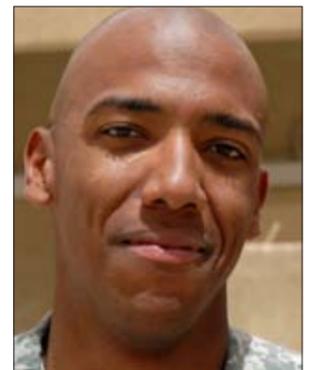


Word on the Street: What are your personal goals during the deployment?



Spc. Daniel Powers
Cullman, Ala.
Apache crew chief
4th Sqdn., 3rd ACR, TF XII

"I want to get in shape and get promoted while I'm here, and get home safe to see my little girl."



Sgt. Harrison Slaton
Mission, Texas
welder
3rd Bn., 158th Avn. Regt., TF XII

"Since I've been here, I finally finished an associate's degree, and I'm already working on my bachelor's degree."

"I'm working on a bachelor's degree in paralegal studies. It's going slowly but surely ... I've taken four classes so far."



Staff Sgt. Dorothy Washington
Opelousas, La.
personnel specialist
HHC, TF XII

News briefs

ISF, MND-B find, seize substantial weapons caches

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers found several large weapons caches across Baghdad May 12.

At approximately 10 a.m. Iraqi Army soldiers informed their Multi-National Division – Baghdad partners that they had discovered a weapons cache in east Rashid that contained several mortar rounds. The IA soldiers cordoned off the area to protect the local populace and awaited an explosive ordinance team to exploit the site. EOD investigated the site and uncovered 54 82mm mortar rounds and 27 60mm mortar rounds.

At approximately 10:40 a.m., MND – B Soldiers discovered a weapons cache in the Mansour district of Baghdad that contained five grenades, five grenade fuses, three pounds of TNT, 60 blasting caps, 200 feet of detonation cord, various bomb-making materials, three rocket motors, an AK-47 and a 9mm sub machinegun.

At approximately 3:20 p.m. a Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) leader informed MND-B Soldiers of the location of a weapons cache in east Rashid. The cache contained seven rocket-propelled grenade rounds, a propane cylinder filled with an unknown explosive, a PKC light machinegun and assorted ammunition.

At approximately 4 p.m., a Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) leader informed MND-B Soldiers about the location of a weapons cache in Adhamiyah.

The cache contained two 57mm rockets and two 60mm mortars. Further investigation of the site revealed a 122mm illumination round and 20 to 25 pounds of an unknown explosive.

“Along with our Iraqi Security Forces partners, we are continuing to conduct deliberate operations to take these weapons out of the criminals’ hands,” said Lt. Col. Steve Stover, spokesman, Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 4th Infantry Division.”

Tusker element finds mortar cache

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers unearthed a significant cache of mortar rounds at approximately 8:30 p.m. May 16 while on patrol in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, assigned to the 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, which is attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad found 21 82mm mortar rounds and 17 60mm rounds while on patrol in the Furat community of Rashid.

“Significant finds like these hamper enemy activity by pressuring the enemy and keeping the munitions off the streets,” said Maj. Dave Olson, spokesman, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. “The Raider Brigade and its attached units conduct daily patrols in the neighborhoods, or muhallas, to ensure that the citizens of the Rashid district are free to live in a safe and secure environment.”



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Soldiers kill 2 criminals, seize munitions caches

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers killed two Special Groups criminals, who conducted attacks on Coalition force Soldiers, and discovered two weapons caches, one with the help of a Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) member, in Baghdad May 16.

The SoI member led Soldiers from 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division to a munitions cache consisting of 155 mm mortar rounds west of Baghdad at approximately 12:20 p.m.

At approximately 5 p.m., Special Groups criminals attacked Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), with an improvised-explosive device and small-arms fire, as the Soldiers were conducting a mounted patrol in the Shuala neighborhood of Baghdad’s Kadhamiyah district. The MND-B Soldiers defended themselves and killed two criminals. At approximately 6:15 p.m., Soldiers from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, discovered 82 mm mortars and 60 mm mortars in the Furat neighborhood of the West Rashid district.

“The Soldiers of Multi-National Division – Baghdad work alongside the Iraqi Security Forces to keep these dangerous weapons out of the hands of criminals,” said Col. Allen Batschelet, MND-B chief of staff. “We will remain diligent, and steadfast and loyal, in the professional execution of our duties to maintain peace and security for the people of Iraq.”

Don't mind me, just stoping by for a visit

BAGHDAD – Spc. Daniel Tweit, a native of Ely, Minn., who serves as an infantryman with 3rd Platoon, Company A, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armored Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, chats with a boy during a visit to the Al Murooa School for Girls May 12. The Soldiers are helping the school headmaster in finding ways to receive additional help from the Iraqi government and neighborhood councils for the more than 800 students who attend the school. The school serves the residents of Ur as well as the surrounding neighborhoods.

MND-B Soldiers rescue kidnap victim

2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers rescued a kidnapped Iraqi citizen May 8 near Ibrahim Bin Ali, northwest of Baghdad.

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment “Gimlets,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, acted on tips from Iraqi Army soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division, in addition to tips provided by Iraqi Police and

Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) members.

The suspected kidnappers were detained and are being held for further questioning.

“U.S. Soldiers, in full partnership with Iraqi Security Forces, are aggressively pursuing criminals and terrorists, especially those who directly threaten the lives of Iraqi citizens,” said Col. Bill Buckner, MNC-I spokesman. “With the restoration of security, we see the Government of Iraq more able to provide essential services for the people – and that’s the goal.”

MND-B Soldiers kill 1 criminal, detain 5, seize munitions caches

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers detained five criminals, killed one and seized weapons in separate events in Baghdad May 14-15.

Soldiers from the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, MND-B, were struck by an explosively-formed projectile improvised-explosive device that damaged one vehicle during a patrol in eastern Baghdad at approximately 11 a.m. May 15.

After the EFP strike, criminals continued the attack on the patrol with small-arms fire. The Soldiers returned fire and killed one criminal and wounded another. No Soldiers were injured in the attack.

“We have every right to defend ourselves and innocent civilians from violent extremists,” said Lt. Col. Steve Stover, spokesman, MND-B and 4th Infantry Division. “Those committing these atrocities

are simple thugs and criminals and deserve no other title.”

At approximately 5:30 a.m. May 14, Soldiers from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B, entered an apartment building in southern Baghdad and found 9mm pistols, 9mm magazines, a couple detonating devices, and a spool of command wire as well as cell phones, false identification cards, and a couple undeveloped rolls of film. The Soldiers also detained five suspected criminals during the event.

“(These Soldiers) conduct clearance operations at all hours of the day to bring criminals to justice,” said Maj. Dave Olson, a spokesman with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. “Coalition forces, along with Iraqi Security Forces, maintain a constant presence to deter criminals and prevent harm from coming to the Rashid district.”

IA conducts 1st senior enlisted conference

from Conference Pg. 1

assist them in developing the NCO Corps – as the leaders envision that Corps.”

Some of the issues the sergeants major addressed at the meeting included the need for more training ammunition for their soldiers to practice firing, the addition of more vehicles for the troops to conduct more missions and pay issues.

“There is a lot of frustration tied up in the Iraqi Army, but it is evident of a new army that is starting to form,” said Gioia.

He added it was interesting to watch a new military organization in the making.

Sgt. Maj. Christopher DuBose, a native of Cleveland, said he saw progress just by the fact they were having the meeting in the first place.

“Just having the meeting was a big step forward because it showed how IA leaders are realizing they are having some problems and are willing to work toward fixing those issues,” he said.

“This new idea of having an NCO Corps, with senior enlisted leaders who are active in the leadership process, is a new concept in this Army. In the old system, the officers did everything; so, it’s taking the officers a little while to empower their NCOs to help them take care of some of the issues the IA is having on the battlefield and on base.”

DuBose serves as the force protection sergeant major with MND-B and the 4th Inf. Div.

“A lot of ground has been broken over the course of the past five months, explained Sgt. Maj. Terry Grezlik, who



U.S. Army courtesy photo

Senior enlisted leaders in the 6th Iraqi Army Division gather together for the first time to discuss issues within the division with Command Sgt. Maj. Ayad, who serves as the division’s senior enlisted leader. Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia, a native of Buffalo, N.Y., who serves as the senior enlisted leader with Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 4th Infantry Division, attended the meeting and encouraged the IA senior enlisted leaders to continue having the meetings and to work together as a team.

serves with the 6th Iraqi Army MiTT and is assigned to the 4th Inf. Div.

First, we were able to get the division command sergeant major out on battlefield circulation with the division commander.

This positive move showed the Soldiers that the senior NCO of the division was counted on by their commander.

“Having explained our own process of division/brigade/

battalion command sergeant major meetings and the value to the Soldiers and the command team, the 6th IA command sergeant major approached the commander with the idea. Maj. Gen. Abdul Ameer (the commanding general for the 6th IA Div.) agreed that it would be a benefit – we had two firsts in two months.”

Grezlik said the conference served as just the latest example of the growing importance of senior noncommissioned officers in the Iraqi Army.

“Brigade and battalion commanders wholeheartedly supported the conference,” he said. “Already, two of the brigades have their command sergeants major out on battlefield circulation, checking on Soldiers, check point readiness and conditions. These are signs of empowerment and trust in their senior NCOs.”

Before leaving the meeting, Gioia made it a point to encourage the IA senior enlisted leaders to continue having the meetings.

He told them not to be discouraged because one meeting cannot resolve all of the issues they face. It is something they need to continue to work on together.

“As frustrated as everyone is in this room, you all still came together to address your concerns for your units,” he said.

“You can see your brothers, the other brigade sergeants major, are having the same problems.

“This allows for Command Sgt. Maj. Ayad to be better informed when he briefs Gen Amir about the needs of the division.”

The Ivy Leaf Readership Survey

The staff of the Ivy Leaf would appreciate your opinions on the quality and satisfaction of the newspaper for it's readers. Please take a few moments to answer a few questions in regards to this newspaper as your opinions are important so we may continue to deliver a quality newspaper for all to enjoy.

What base camp are you stationed?

How often do you read the Ivy Leaf?

On a scale of 1-5, please rate the following based on your overall assessment of the Ivy Leaf, with 5 being the highest level of satisfaction and 1 the lowest.

Is the Ivy Leaf is readily available in common areas.

1 2 3 4 5

Is the content of the Ivy Leaf entertaining.

1 2 3 4 5

Is the content of the Ivy Leaf informative.

1 2 3 4 5

How do you rate its overall quality.

1 2 3 4 5

What features of the newspaper do you enjoy reading? What features to you not care for?

What recommendations do you have to improve the Ivy Leaf?

Responses to this survey can be mailed to: Ivy Leaf Editor
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Unit # 43219
APO AE 09344-3219

Or you can email the editor at ivy_leaf_editor@yahoo.com



1st Sustainment Bde.

Competitors vie for top honors during truck rodeo

By Sgt. Jennifer Schweizer

1st Sust. Bde. PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The competitors stared each other down as they prepared to mount their mighty steeds and engage in battle for top bragging rights at the rodeo – the truck rodeo that is.

Such was the case as the Soldiers of the 515th Transportation Company, 165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, which provides support throughout the Multi-National Division – Baghdad area, took advantage of an opportunity to show off their skills during the unit's inaugural truck rodeo here May 7.

“The main purpose for this event is to build cohesion, morale and esprit de corps within the unit and platoons,” said 2nd Lt. Travis Michelena, an Ooltewah, Tenn., native, who serves as a platoon leader with the 515th Trans. Co. and the event's organizer.

“I figured it would be fun and a way for Soldiers to get their minds off the deployment,” he continued.

The rodeo was a timed event in which the competitors were required to conduct proper preventive maintenance checks and services before heading out to the course. Awaiting them were eight obstacles, and their chosen paths to victory were

outlined by cones to mark the trail.

The object of the rodeo sounds simple enough – to make it through each event in the shortest time possible. The rules seemed simple enough as well. Drivers faced a time penalty for hitting cones. The time penalty was added to their total time, and the drivers could earn a time deduction for their ability shorten their distances from the cones during their turns.

“I feel good about this event. It gives the Soldiers an opportunity to come out and show their skills” said 1st Sgt. Norvell Tillman, a native of Bruce, Miss., who is the senior enlisted leader with 515th Trans. Co.

Altogether, 10 Soldiers stepped up to the challenge to compete in the truck rodeo, with two Soldiers from each platoon vying for top honors.

Spc. Malcolm Barker, a native of Tupelo, Miss., said despite the fact he had not had a chance to practice on the course before the competition, he felt confident as he watched his fellow competitors.

“After watching the first two (competitors), I feel pretty confident – they are kind of messing up,” said Barker.

His tone changed a bit after following his turn – he spoke of the difficulty of the course. The bottom line, he said, was that he was glad to have had the opportunity to compete.

Claiming top bragging rights for the day was Sgt. Rudy Ancheta, a native of Honolulu, Hawaii. Ancheta blazed through the course in the now-record time of 8 minutes, 48 seconds. Although he has been working at a battalion staff job for the past four months, he said it's vital to keep up his driving skills.

“It's my job to learn how to drive this truck and be able to do it whenever called upon,” said Ancheta, who also claimed top honors during a truck rodeo hosted by the 28th Transportation Battalion in Germany.

“I guess it's in my blood,” laughed Ancheta.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Michele Meadows, 1st Sust. Bde. PAO

Spc. Malcolm Barker, a Tupelo, Miss., native, attempts to parallel park a M1088 series truck with a M879 series flat bed trailer in the shortest time possible during a truck rodeo here May 7. Barker serves with 3rd Platoon, 515th Transportation Company, 165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



Do you have a story to share?

We want to hear about it.

The Ivy Leaf

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

24 Iraqi National Police leaders graduate Warrior Leader Course in S. Baghdad

By Maj. Dave Olson

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATION BASE FALCON, Iraq – Behind every good military leader is a host of noncommissioned officers, who worked hard to teach, coach and mentor the young leader. In the U.S. Army, the Warrior Leader Course serves as the initial military leadership course in a series of challenging courses in the NCO Education System to prepare young leaders to become professional NCOs and consummate leaders.

It is a system that has proven its value over time for the U.S. Army – and now, it is one that is beginning to pay dividends for Iraqi Security Forces, who are striving to develop their growing forces – in particular, their fledgling NCO Corps.

And so it was on May 8 when military leaders from the 7th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division, and 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, gathered to recognize the accomplishments of 24 Iraqi National Police students during the Warrior Leader Course graduation ceremony at Joint Security Station Doura.

Master Sgt. Donald Sherman, the senior enlisted advisor for the 7th Bde., 2nd INP Div. transition team, served as the master of ceremonies during the graduation ceremony.

During the course, the policemen learned many skills, which will make them a better policeman, said Sherman. Some of the skills include leadership techniques, troop-leading procedures, first-aid medical tasks, establishing and maintaining a checkpoint, map reading, close-quarter combat techniques and lessons in applying human rights.

Sherman challenged the graduates to “apply the skills and lessons learned” during the WLC and to share them with their



U.S. Army photo by Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Bobb, the senior enlisted leader of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, presents a Raider Brigade coin for excellence May 8 to Sgt. Moshtaq Thiab, an Iraqi National Policeman with 7th Brigade, 2nd INP Division, who served as an instructor at the Warrior Leader Course.

fellow policemen.

Brig. Gen. Sa’ad, the deputy commander of the 7th Bde., 2nd INP Div., was the guest speaker for the event.

He congratulated the policemen for their hard work during the training and thanked the Coalition Forces for their support in facilitating the WLC. He challenged the graduates to follow the Rule of Law and help build a new Iraq without terrorism.

“Work hard in the Al Rashid district to protect the civilians,” Sa’ad charged the police graduates.

Sa’ad closed his speech by thanking the American instructors for their time and expertise in training the policemen, which, he said, will assist them greatly in providing a safe and secure environment in Rashid.

After the speeches, the graduates filed individually across the stage. Each stopped about one meter in front of the general, stomped their right foot and came to the position of attention before rendering a smart salute to the general with their right palm facing outward. They then shook his hand as Sa’ad presented them their diplomas.

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Bobb, the senior enlisted advisor of the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., presented Raider Brigade coins to two INP sergeants, Mahmud Jawad and Moshtaq Thiab, who were assistant instructors during the course.

“On behalf of the Raider Brigade, I present this coin to you for excellence,” Bobb said, referring to the excellent training they provided to the other shurta (Iraqi policemen).

Six of the graduates were local Iraqi Policemen from Doura, while the others were from the division’s other battalions: the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions.

The graduation ceremony marked the culmination of the fifth WLC conducted at JSS Doura by the 7th Bde., 2nd INP Div.

Following the ceremony, Sherman led Bobb on a tour of the facility and the medical clinic at JSS Doura.

MiTT Soldiers assist, mentor Iraqi Army leaders

By Spc. David Hodge

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Military Transition Team Soldiers play an integral part in helping form the future of Iraqi Security Forces in the Multi-National Division – Baghdad operational environment by assisting and providing guidance daily to the staff sections at the brigade and battalion levels.

These select officers and enlisted Soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, operate from Joint Security Station Jihad and interacts daily with the staff sections of the 43rd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division.

“The whole purpose of us being here is not to make the brigade MiTT successful, it’s to make the Iraqi brigade successful,” said Lt. Col. Rick Caya, the MiTT chief and executive officer with 43rd Bde., 11th IA Div., who is assigned to 1st BCT.

In the past, MiTT teams dealt more with hands-on training but now focus on the staff sections because the Iraqi Security Forces have become a more self-sustainable entity, added Caya.

“It’s important for the staff to work together properly because that is how it works in a military organization,” said Caya, who hails from Waterloo, Iowa. “There are some things that the IA does not do our way – and that’s fine. We try to figure out how they operate and help them make it better.”

When the MiTT assumed the area of north-west Rashid April 13, the IA staff had coordination issues with each other, said Caya.

It is vital that the staff and commander have to work together to make sure the unit functions properly over periods of months and years, he said, adding that each staff section leader’s goal is to provide information to the IA commander to reach the best decision possible given a time constraint.

That is why Caya and his team of 15 1st BCT “Raider” Soldiers spend hours each day with individual engagements among the staff members and their sections and offer suggestions when the IA soldiers, or jundis, have any issues.

“We coach, teach and mentor our counterparts in our respective areas to enable them to operate smoothly in this difficult environment,” said Warrant Officer Paul Franks, effects trainer, 43rd Bde., 11th IA Div., MiTT. “It is the interpersonal relations between the American team member and his counterpart that will make them successful.”

During his interactions with the IA, Franks said he believes that it is imperative to conduct himself in a professional manner at all times.

“The Iraqis look to us as the most professional army in the world,” said Franks, a Phoenix native. “The IA wants to duplicate the qualities they see will work to make them a better organization.”

Franks has been deployed to Iraq three times and said he has seen great strides toward improvements in the IA and Iraq over the last five years.

“I am quite impressed with the IA unit’s nationalism and pride,” Franks explained. “The soldiers and officers are dedicated to their country and brigade regardless of their religious sect or where they come from.”

Also at JSS Jihad, a battalion-level MiTT team works to assist all operations for their Iraqi counterpart, the 2nd Battalion, 43rd Bde., 11th IA Div.

Similar to Caya’s team, the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st BCT MiTT assesses and evaluates its battalion counterparts in every aspect of their tactical and administrative performance, said Capt. Nate Rawlings, maneuver trainer, 2nd Bn., 43rd Bde., 11th IA Div., MiTT.

“We coordinate combined operations and accompany the units on patrols and raids to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the battalion,” said Rawlings, a native of Chattanooga, Tenn.

Rawlings and his six fellow “Regulars” Battalion Soldiers enjoy developing strong working relationships with the Iraqi soldiers and often eat some local foods with the jundis at lunch time.

“I enjoy working with the IA and seeing how they actually function,” said Sgt. Christopher Hardt, a tanker from Dallas, as-

signed to the 2nd Bn., 43rd Bde., 11th IA Div. MiTT. “We are making a difference for them by making them step-up to the plate and take responsibility for their actions.”

When training is not scheduled by the 43rd Bde, it is scheduled by the 11th IA Div. or the Ministry of Defense and on occasion, the MiTT Soldiers provide training for the IA, said Caya.

The training events are first taught to the IA lead instructor by the MiTT Soldiers. Then, the MiTT takes a step back and provides over-watch as the lead instructor teaches the battalion and company instructors, who in turn teach the material down to the lowest level, the jundis.

In the near future, Caya said, the IA will be conducting Warrior Leaders Course training, combat life saver training and weapons training on the M16, which are now being issued to the IA.

With the ISF gaining more control of Iraq, the U.S. Army will slowly be able to withdraw its forces, leading to the ultimate goal of Iraq defending itself with no assistance, added Caya.

“I love having a job that is tactically and strategically important, where the team can have a large influence on the unit’s future success,” Rawlings explained. “The Iraqis are a fascinating and wonderful group of people and work extremely hard to make their unit better.”



35th Eng. Bde.

Engineers complete partnership with IA counterparts

Soldiers look back on deployment, prepare to return home



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Henry Bauer, 769th Eng. Bn., 35th Eng. Bde.

Spc. Darrell Arwood (right), a Gulfport, Miss., native, who serves as a technical engineer with the 230th Concrete Team, 769th Engineer Battalion, 35th Engineer Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, demonstrates how to pack concrete as a 6th Iraqi Army engineer watches on. The engineers from the 6th IA Div. underwent training on how to pour concrete through classroom and hands-on training.

By Capt. Jeff Crane

35th Eng. Bde. PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The 35th Engineer Brigade, which is part of the Missouri National Guard, arrived in Baghdad September 2007 and assumed responsibility for providing engineering support throughout the Multi-National Division – Baghdad operational environment. The brigade's mission was specialized – encompassing route-clearance patrols as well as horizontal and vertical construction.

With assumption of this responsibility, the brigade's Soldiers began forging a relationship that would blossom into a full partnership with the 6th Iraqi Army Division engineers.

Brig. Gen. Michael Pace, a West Plains, Mo., native, and commander of the 35th Eng. Bde., said he understood the importance of establishing and developing this relationship without delay.

"I immediately realized the tremendous benefit, which could be derived by working together and sharing experience and information," said Pace.

The teamwork was developed and fostered over the course of time which, ultimately, assisted the brigade's understanding of the 6th IA Div. engineers operational and training capabilities to perform similar types of missions for the Iraqi populace.

The partnership led to collaborative training between both organizations, resulting in both units learning from each other.

The units regularly perform joint missions, thus illustrating the desire to work together to protect the Baghdad citizens from threats while building a safe, secure environment for all to live.

Among the many missions the brigade was responsible for included joint route-clearance patrols in which the MND-B Soldiers and ISF hunted, identified and destroyed improvised-explosive devices. The 107th Engineer Battalion, which is part of the Michigan National Guard, was responsible for the route-clearance mission under the 35th Eng. Bde.

"These initial joint route-clearance missions between the 6th IA Div. and (35th Eng. Bde.) were important for giving them the tools and knowledge needed to do the mission. It gave them confidence to be able to do the mission," said Lt. Col. Bud Degrote, a Grand Rapids, Mich., native, and commander of the 107th Eng. Bn. "It gave us the confidence they could do the mission – a mission that is welcomed and integral to the future IED fight once they are fully resourced. The 6th IA Div. Soldiers showed great eagerness to learn and showed great pride in doing their mission".

The 769th Engineer Battalion, from the Louisiana National Guard, worked alongside the 6th IA Div. engineers during joint vertical and horizontal missions, which included concrete work, electrical engineering, surveying and carpentry.

As the 35th Eng. Bde. prepares to depart Baghdad, the relationships fostered between comrades of different nations, united under a common goal, will continue strong.

"I have been an Engineer for 30 years, but the last five years have been the happiest of my life because being an Engineer is now about rebuilding instead of destruction," said Col. Ahmed, the 6th IA Div. chief engineer. "You will be a part of our history. We appreciate your sacrifice of leaving your Families to come here to help us."

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http://www.hood.army.mil/4id

3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.



Soldiers help improve security in Sadr City

By Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Multi-National-Division – Baghdad Soldiers, along with their Iraqi Security Forces partners, helped improve security in the southern portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad during a barrier emplacement mission May 3.

During the shift, the Soldiers from Company A, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, transported more than 90 concrete barriers so that engineers from other units could clean the areas and emplace the barriers that will separate one Sadr City neighborhood from another, said Sgt. 1st Class Shaun Prior, a native of Pittsfield, Mass., who serves as the transportation platoon sergeant with the 64th BSB.

The emplacement of these barriers will help improve the living conditions of the residents there and is aimed to keep criminals operating the special groups in Sadr City from crossing to this area as well as minimizing the planting of improvised-explosive devices, mortar attacks and rockets used by special groups, said Prior.

“Hopefully it makes the Iraqi people safer,” said Prior.

On the other hand, as a sign of improvement and collaboration, the Iraqi Army is assisting in this operation by transporting barriers and by bringing them to the barrier yard, said Prior.

“This was a kind of the new things for us. I have watched them get out there; they hook up the chains; they work with the civilian crane operators and put the barriers in place and all that good stuff. I think is really helping them in many different ways,” said Prior.

The barrier mission in the area has shown an improvement in the security for the citizens living in the surrounding areas.

“I see people are more active now; they are getting out



Photo by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Soldiers detach the concrete barriers, also known as “T-Walls,” from the crane during an effort to improve security in the southern portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad May 3. The Soldiers from Company A, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National-Division – Baghdad, are helping improve the security here by transporting the barriers while Soldiers from other units emplace them.

of their houses. This is the first time I’ve seen kids outside playing soccer,” said Sgt. Damon Chatterton, a native of Quincy, Ill., and who serves as a driver with Company A, 64th BSB.

Prior said he feels the Soldiers are merely demonstrating

their true professionalism.

“Soldiers did a great job,” he said. “Their motivation is there, and they want to continue doing the mission. They are doing an outstanding job. The Soldiers drive is awesome – they do a great job.”

18th MP Bde.



Iraqi police continue to train, prepare for future missions

By Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger

18th MP Bde. PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMI-YAH, Iraq – Only four miles west of the criminal spurred violence in Sadr City, more than forty Iraqi policemen arrive early in the morning to begin training at the al Rashad Police Station in the New Baghdad District May 15.

Despite being in the shadow of violence in neighboring Sadr City, a stronghold for criminal militias in Baghdad, the al Rashad Iraqi policemen show up to work with smiles on their faces and eager to conduct the days training.

The IP recently completed a Basic Recruit Training and are now conducting a two week on-the-job training program before hitting the streets of al Rashad to police their community.

“This area (New Baghdad District) was bad about a month ago. This was a real big hot spot for crime during the Baghdad uprising,” said 2nd Lt. James Shaffer, native of Cumberland, Md., who is a platoon leader with 3rd platoon, 54th Military Police Company, and oversees Police Transition Team operations in the New Baghdad District.

Violence has begun to decrease in the past month in the New Baghdad District.

“Crime is down lately in the New Baghdad area and around the IP station that we work at,” said Sgt. Paul Tram, a native of Anaheim, Calif., who is a military police team leader with 3rd platoon and conducts PTT operations at various New Baghdad IP stations.

The military police team at the station cred-



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger, 18th MP Bde. PAO

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers with the 54th Military Police Company Police Transition Team prepare to kneel to the ground after advancing forward during foot patrol training at the al Rashad Police Station May 15 in the New Baghdad District.

its the drop in violence to diligent leadership at the station and the New Baghdad IP taking a more proactive approach to deterring crime.

“This training teaches the IP how to be more proactive in policing their communities,” said Shaffer. “The station commander is also very proactive by seeking out guidance from Coalition Forces and constantly trying to improve his station.”

The training Shaffer refers to is a two-week long, on-the-job training program that the IP

work through in order to become certified policemen. The classes are taught daily for approximately six hours at the station by Iraqi Police advisors. The IPAs are contracted law enforcement personnel, who came to Iraq to help build the IP force from their knowledge and experiences in law enforcement positions.

“Today, we are teaching the IP how to maintain basic police training, foot patrols, dynamic takedown and suspect control, apprehension techniques and responding to an am-

bush,” said Mike Ridgell, an IPA, and a native of Baltimore.

“The training provides the IP a better background and understanding of their daily duties,” said Shaffer.

Although the violence has gone down in the area in the past month, the IPA and PTT Soldiers are equally surprised that the IP still chose to join the force in such great numbers when Sadr City is right in their backyard.

“Knowing the violence is going on, and still wanting to come out here and try to make a difference, really shows how much these IP want to improve their community,” said Shannon Edison, an IPA and a native of Dayton, Nev.

In the past week, two improvised-explosives devices, one carjacking and one kidnapping were reported to the IP at the station, said Tram.

“Every day, the Rashad police work while knowing they are in harms way,” said Tram. “It is our job to train, advise and guide the IP to help them defend their communities.”

The team leader (Tram) said he is surprised by the amount of courage the IP have in fighting crime when the shadow of violence in Sadr City is only a few miles away.

“It takes a lot of courage to join a police force during this time of violence,” said Tram.

The 54th MP Co. is deployed from Fort Lewis, Wash., and is currently assigned to the 95th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Warrior Sappers lead way for engineers

By Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – 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



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jerome Bishop, 2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div. Sgt. John Yost (center), a Greeley, Colo., native, provides feedback to Iraqi Army engineers during a lane exercise designed to teach the IA soldiers about how to spot improvised-explosive devices and indicators April 5.

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 Itscher Award, and they are a unique company or a company who has done awesome things,” said Maj. Anthony Barbina, a native of Belmont, Ohio, the unit’s com-

mander.

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.”



4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

Citizen’s tip leads MND-B Soldiers to EFP-making factory in bakery

4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. PAO

BAGHDAD – An Iraqi citizen’s tip led Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers to a weapons cache in the New Baghdad district of eastern Baghdad May 16.

After receiving a tip about an explosively formed penetrator-making operation in a Kamaliyah bakery at approximately 2 p.m., Soldiers from Company D, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, cordoned off the suspect building.

Criminals attacked the Co. D Soldiers with small-arms fire and were driven off by MND-B Soldiers employing accurate small-arms fire. Soldiers from another platoon rushed to the scene to provide additional security.

The search operation continued and the MND-B Soldiers found a cache including two explosively formed penetrators, four mortar tube, six mortar rounds, three rocket-propelled grenade launchers, 14 RPG rounds and numerous armor piercing rounds, 20 blasting caps, three electric detonation devices, four sniper rifles with more than 400 rounds of ammunition, an RPK machine gun, 400 meters of command wire, 100 meters of detonation cord, various improvised-explosive-device making materials, three grenades and a vehicle modified for a sniper to fire from unobserved. The vehicle also contained one of the EFPs.

“We are thankful to the citizen who provided the information to make this find possible. Iraqis are taking an active role in their own protection to secure a brighter and safer future for Iraq,” said Maj. Joey Sullinger, spokesperson for 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. “We will find these criminals and their weapons of terror no matter where they hide. Along with our Iraqi Security Force counterparts, we will protect the populace.”



U.S. Army courtesy photo Soldiers from Company D, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad found a large weapons cache after an Iraqi citizen’s tip led the Soldiers to the cache in the New Baghdad district of eastern Baghdad May 16.



1 million gallons – and counting

TF XII fuel handlers recognized for monumental milestone



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

A Task Force XII petroleum supply specialist, assigned to Company E, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, stands ready to refuel an AH-64 Apache helicopter during a night shift. Soldiers assigned to the distribution platoon have safely pumped more than a million gallons of JP-8 since arriving at Camp Taji in mid-December.

By Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

Task Force XII PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – To the untrained eye, pumping fuel into an aircraft seems like a reasonably harmless activity. To those who've been around for a while, pumping a million gallons in just under four months, without incident, is a pretty big deal.

The Soldiers of the distribution platoon, Company E, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, took over the mission Dec. 19 and hit the million gallon mark in early April. Their commanders say they've done it without spilling a drop.

"It's just a tremendous effort out here, and I'd say the most impressive part of all is that they've done it safely," said Lt. Col. Jay Macklin, battalion commander, who hails from Macon, Ga. "These guys are out here, usually before the blades stop spinning, ready to fuel ... This is a very mission-focused group, and I'm real proud of them."

The platoon is responsible for "cold-refueling." While aircraft often fuel at forward arming and refuel points with the rotors spinning – known as "hot-refueling," much of the fuel is distributed with the engines turned off.

"A lot of times, it's more efficient to come and shut down and get 'cold gas' as opposed to burning more blade hours sitting on a hot FARP if you're finished with your mission," said Macklin.

"It's a constant hustle out here," said Sgt. 1st Class Dorian Green, distribution platoon sergeant, who is a Columbia S.C. native. "We work 12-hour shifts, 24-hours per day. In a typical day, we'll fill anywhere from 80 to 110 aircraft."

In a ceremony to recognize the one million gallon mark, Col. Timothy Edens, the commander of Task Force XII, honored the Soldiers and passed out Task Force XII commemorative coins to four of the best. He thanked them for their efforts, reminding them of just how important their work is to the brigade.

Without these guys, said Edens, all the aircraft on Taji would be nothing but a huge static display.

"It's fast paced job with a lot of moving pieces," said Spc. Andrew Myers, a Cleveland native. "There's a lot of stuff to deal with on the flight line. Everything has to be perfect to make sure things run smooth, and we keep the aircraft fueled."

Flying UAVs not a game for Soldiers of Task Force XII

By Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

Task Force XII PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Flying an unmanned aerial vehicle sounds like a video gamer's dream. In reality though, it is serious business for the Soldiers of Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Games like the popular "Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon - Advanced Warfighter" even let players fly a simulated UAV through a digital battlefield – discovering the pending threats before they discover you.

And, according to the actual UAV operators, the virtual video versions are pretty realistic. Those who've played them say they get the eerie feeling that they're back at work.

"Operating the UAV, you're not in the aircraft so you're looking at the computer and you're opening menus and putting in numbers; it is kind of like a video game," said Spc. Samuel McKamey, a Cloverdale, Ind., native. "It's more serious than that though."

McKamey is a UAV operator for 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. For now, he's attached to Company G, Task Force XII, which is comprised of operators from six brigade combat teams. His company launches and recovers the Army's Shadow UAV for units throughout MND-B.

"With video games, you always push it 'till you crash and have to restart the game," he laughed. "Out here we try to make it a point not to crash the airplanes."

The 23-year-old McKamey says he's never really considered himself a gamer, although he played some video games in high school, such as "Madden" football and "Grand Theft Auto," but he concentrated mostly on sports and cars.

"I hit up the arcade at the mall a few times when I was a



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton, Task Force XII PAO

Soldiers assigned to Company G, Task Force XII, launch a Shadow unmanned aerial vehicle in support of brigade combat teams serving in Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

kid," he said. "Once I got my car though, video games were pretty much out the window."

Still, with only 1.5 years in the career field, leaders from his chain of command said he has done well for himself. In fact, after seven months in Iraq, he was given the added responsibility of being in charge of company standardization.

"He picks up on stuff so fast and has been able to adapt to what we're doing quickly," said 1st Sgt. Todd Venema, Company G, who hails from Grand Rapids, Mich. "Honestly, he's the expert out here – that's why we made him the standards officer."

So while the propensity for gaming may be relative, McKamey said his attention to detail far outweighs his technological aptitude.

"I don't think this job is technically outside the limits of most people who currently serve," he said. "This job is the future, but you don't have to be a 'techie' to do it."

"A lot of guys will sit in the shelter for 12 hours straight looking at that camera. They take it very seriously; and if they don't find something at the end of the day, they're disappointed. Those are the guys who find a lot of stuff and help out the most."

The most attentive UAV operators have proven especially useful in the current fight in Sadr City, said Lt. Col. Scott Williams, the deputy commander of Task Force XII. Williams, also an AH-64 Apache pilot, said the extra eyes are crucial on a very cluttered battlefield.

"The Soldiers on the ground can't see what's around the next corner," he said. "With a UAV, they don't have to be able to see it because these guys see it for them, and they can react accordingly."

And while the interest in UAV operations has grown considerably – both from ground commanders as they recognize the potential and from would-be operators seeking work in a growing field – McKamey's eyes are elsewhere.

Controlling the aircraft from the ground isn't enough for him. He says the next logical step for him is putting in a packet to become a helicopter pilot – he wants to fly the old-fashioned way.

Operators at the site say potential replacements show up at the gates all the time wanting more information about the career field ... but gamers beware, says McKamey.

"This is a great job," he said, "but they wouldn't sell a lot of games if all you could do was (fly around) and take pictures."

'Iron Knights' adapt to new 'castle'

Unit begins new mission in New Baghdad supporting 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Brent Williams
1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE Falcon, Iraq –

The Soldiers of the "Iron Knights" Battalion arrived in Baghdad al-Jidida (New Baghdad) in early March, eager to start a new mission – fit to fight, and fight they did.

The 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad, began its mission – to transition control to Iraqi Security Forces by providing security and stability for Baghdad al-Jidida – while under fire from enemy forces, said Lt. Col. Scott McKean, commander, 1st Bn., 66th Armor Regt.

"Iron Knights Soldiers responded with aggressive and disciplined actions that answered the so-called testing of new units," McKean said. "Most important, the Soldiers have adapted to the environment, some seeing more engagements in their first 30 days than some Soldiers see during their entire tour."

Taking the lead of Command Sgt. Maj. Edward Mitchell, 1st Bn., 66th Armor Regt., the noncommissioned officers are using their leadership and experience to accomplish the mission while company commanders and their platoon leaders learn their surroundings, all the while working alongside Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and Iraqi National Police in a very busy and hostile environment, he said.

"The Soldiers have demonstrated character and courage under fire and in taking the fight to the enemy," said McKean, a graduate of West Point, Class of 1990.

Even though the battalion joined the 10th Mtn. Div.'s newest brigade combat team, the 4th BCT, out of Fort Polk, La., during a volatile and violent uprising in eastern Baghdad, the Iron Knights Soldiers immediately established a successful relationship with the ISF, who are leading many operations in the predominately Shia and Christian-mixed community that is home to an estimated 1.3 million Iraqis, explained McKean.

"During the Shia uprising in March 2008, there were large numbers of desertion and collusion with the militia; but within days, the ISF policed up their ranks, arrested those who were complicit with militia or that did not perform their duties, and re-established security within their respective areas of operations," said McKean, who describes the ISF as a resilient force.

The ISF are conducting routine missions, such as clearing operations, with the Iron Knights providing physical support with outer cordons and tactical support coaching Iraqi company and battalion commanders in the decision-making process, said Capt. Roman Izzo, commander, Company C, 1st Bn., 66th Armor Regt., MND-B.

"The IA soldiers working in Baghdad al-Jidida are miles beyond any Iraqi unit we have seen out here in all my time deployed," said Izzo, who is currently on his third deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"But there has been plenty of turmoil – not the level of hand-off we would have like; and especially when the enemy gets his vote, and we get the uprising in March," said Izzo, a Houston-native.

The 1st Bn., 66th Armor Regt., is a combined-arms battalion comprised of seven companies, including armor, infantry and combat-support Soldiers, headquartered at Forward Operating Base Rustamiyah and operating out of combat outposts and joint security stations in eastern Baghdad, said Izzo, a graduate of West Point, Class of 2000.

Most of the battalion's Soldiers stay at the COPs instead of on the FOB, said Izzo, and conducting daily operations from within the district allows the "Crazy Horse" Soldiers of Co. C to build relationships and safeguard the Iraqi people.

The IPs, INPs and MND-B Soldiers are centralized at the JSS, working from a common operating picture, updating checkpoints

and patrolling to secure 18 of the 36 mahallas, or neighborhoods, in Baghdad al-Jidida, said Izzo.

In addition to conducting daily dismounted patrols with ISF in the neighborhoods and making face-time with the Iraqi people, the Soldiers also provide COP security, where they live and work for at least six days straight before returning to the FOB for a day to refit, said Izzo.

"If I can send a platoon in overnight to the rear where they can take 16 consecutive hours off – 16 consecutive hours with me not bugging them for anything – and they can get two hot KBR meals and a hot shower and just chill in their room and then come back out; that gets a Soldier's mind back in the game," said Izzo.

Despite the long hours, the Soldiers, who walk the streets day and night, love their work, especially the patrols, but not so much the COP security, said Izzo.

"If their feet feel like mine, then I need to back off a little bit but right now we're managing; and honestly, the wear and tear on the vehicles is worse than the wear and tear on the guys," he explained.

Pfc. Sean Keeler, a native of Saint Paul, Minn., and an armor crewmember assigned to Co. C, said that sometimes time at the COPs goes by so slow it seems to move backwards.

"Usually though, time just seems to fly by. Working the radios during the day, 12-hour shifts, and then 12 hours doing whatever: sleeping, guard duty, maintenance and whatever details we have to do," Keeler said.

Keeler, a member of the company's tank platoon, added that his job is very important to the company's day-to-day accomplishment of its mission as he monitors all radio traffic from his station in the command post, tracks significant activities in the area and relays mission critical information to his commander.

Security in Crazy Horse's area of responsibility that is home to an estimated 200,000 Iraqis is good, according to Staff Sgt. Christopher Jordan, an infantry squad leader assigned to Co. C, 1st Bn., 66th Armor Regt., who said that most of the attacks in the area are between special interests groups competing for power on the other side of the district.

"So far they're not fighting with us, but they're not fighting against us either," said Jordan, who hails from Columbus, Ohio, and is responsible for the health and welfare of eight Soldiers as he leads his teams on daily operations in Baghdad al-Jidida.

Jordan, who is beginning his third deployment with the 4th Inf. Div. since 2003, said that his platoon routinely visits Iraqi Army checkpoints to better assist the Iraqi soldiers, bringing them amenities, such as water, cots and discussing issues and working to facilitate ISF operations.

"My initial impression of the Iraqi Army: they're hard workers," he said. "They are just like anybody else, but I can't really judge them because I have to look at what if the shoe was on the other foot."

When he is not pulling duties as sergeant of the guard, monitoring the video cameras posted around the perimeter of the COP or overseeing maintenance issues for the vehicles and equipment, Jordan said that he is patrolling the streets, learning the maze-like terrain of the neighborhoods and interacting with the Iraqi people.

"If they're happy, I mean, that makes for a great day," he said. "Security is good, and the ISF seem to have a handle on it – so far so good, but it could be the calm before the storm."

Jordan said that he looks forward to the time when the ISF and the Government of Iraq are self-sufficient and controlling security by their own means; but until then, his Soldiers have a job to do.

The 1st Bn., 66th Armor Regt. is stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, and currently deployed for a 15-month rotation in support of MND-B and Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Soldiers of Company C "Crazy Horse," 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad, return to their Combat Outpost in Baghdad al-Jidida (New Baghdad) May 2 after completing dismounted security patrol in the central Baghdad community. The 1st Bn., 66th Armor Regt., is part of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, and deployed in support of MND-B and Operation Iraqi Freedom.



▲ Lt. Col. Scott McKean, commander of the 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, discusses future operations with Brig. Gen. Amir, commander of the 1st Brigade, 1st National Police Division responsible for the security of New Baghdad. McKean commands the seven companies of infantry, armor and combat support Soldiers that comprise the combined arms battalion responsible for transitioning control of New Baghdad to Iraqi Security Forces.



◀ Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, download pieces of a destroyed Iraqi Security Forces checkpoint outside Forward Operating Base Rustamiyah May 1.

▶ Capt. Roman Izzo completes a claims card May 2 for an Iraqi citizen whose car was damaged in a firefight between Coalition Forces and criminals in New Baghdad the night before.





2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

Strike Soldiers provide medical care to sick, wounded patients

By Sgt. James Hunter

2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – There is no telling what may happen on the streets of Baghdad as Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces maintain a constant presence in an attempt to de-tour any enemy activities. The enemy will go to great lengths to inflict damage upon those who wish to see a prosperous Iraq. However, more often than not, they are unsuccessful; though occasionally, their cowardly attacks do cause harm.

Depending on where wounded troops or civilians are located in Baghdad and how immediate their wounds are determines where they will be medically evacuated to. One particular place is the Riva Ridge Troop Medical Center.

Twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon, the Riva Ridge TMC receives patients with illnesses ranging from fevers to back problems.

The clinic is a Level II medical facility comprised of the Soldiers of Company C, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. It has wide-ranging capabilities, said Sgt. 1st Class Russell Kruse, a native of St. Clair, Mo. It has X-ray, dental, laboratory and patient hold capabilities within their facility, which one could not find at a regular battalion aide station.

There is an immunizations room, trauma room, pharmacy, treatment room, physical therapy section, and mental health section available to Soldiers, said Kruse.

Staffed by 37 Soldiers from the Treatment Platoon, and anywhere from two to three Soldiers a day from the Evacuation Platoon from within the medical company, the Soldiers operate in shifts to treat those injured while operating in western Baghdad. Since November, the staff has seen nearly 15,000 patients.

The days are long, sometimes grueling. Don't let the numbers fool you. Having a staff of 37 might sound wonderful; the Soldiers, however, have to fulfill many obligations and maintain 24-hour operations.

They often deal with trauma patients, who have been hit with improvised-explosive devices, suicide vests, indirect fire, snipers and small-arms fire, said Kruse.

"We've seen just about everything," he added.

From local nationals and Iraqi Security Forces to Sons of Iraq and American Soldiers, anyone may make their way through the TMC in a trauma situation.

When they know trauma patients are en route, the atmosphere in the medical clinic is "organized chaos," said Kruse.

"Everyone's got their spot; everyone's pretty proficient when it comes to running their portions of the TMC. They already know their tasks," said Kruse. "They come in, inspect their materials and do a systems check on everything. We are ready to receive patients well before they get here. That literally takes a few minutes and everyone's in place."

Thus far, the Soldiers have treated nearly 120 trauma patients, said Kruse.

"Every trauma that goes out of here alive is a success story," said Spc. Tessa Kowatch, a native of Belle Union, Ind., who serves with the Evacuation Platoon, Co. C, 526th BSB. "There are a few patients that if they



U.S. Army photo courtesy of Co. C, 526th BSB, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. Spc. Christina Holt performs a purified protein derivative skin test to a patient to check for exposure to tuberculosis at the Riva Ridge Troop Medical Center. Soldiers from Company C, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), run the TMC 24-hours a day.

wouldn't have made it here within another half-hour or so, they would be dead," added Kruse.

Being a part of a brigade combat team, the Soldiers often get around enough to build close, personal relationships with Soldiers throughout the brigade. Those they know could be the next person they see come through that door, wounded and on the brink of death.

"It affects a lot of the medics greatly," said Kruse. "We've had medics work on people they know personally; it's pretty tough."

Through it all however, they must continue their mission as medics: saving peoples lives.

"It affects our emotions, but it doesn't affect our job," Kowatch said.

And accomplishing their mission is vital for the Soldiers they serve.

"In the moment, we don't think about that; we focus on our patient," said Pvt. Mandy Yeatrakas, a native of Abilene, Texas. "When they are gone, that's when it's tough. It's like

"Wow, I just saved that guys life and he's my friend."

Kruse said his Soldiers are performing tremendously.

"When it comes to medical proficiency – I've been in the Army for 16 years and 2 months now – and this is the most proficient, technical group of medics I've ever seen. They are very proficient ... all the way down to privates."

2nd Lt. Michelle Lawrence, a native of Memphis, Tenn., who is serving her first duty assignment, said she was very impressed with the medics at the TMC when she first arrived.

"They definitely have a handle on things. They know what they are doing with traumas and emergency services," said Lawrence, who serves as the platoon leader for the Treatment Platoon. "With so few medics we have, it's truly impressive. They work really well as a team. It's a pretty easy transition with just coming in. It's a close knit group; it really is."

The immunizations section has administered more than 8,000 shots since the beginning of November when the Soldiers took over the TMC, said Kruse. "That's a tremendous task."

The Mental Health section has seen more than 300 patients, said Kruse, and provides care and comfort to the many issues Soldiers face.

The section also provides anger management classes, sleep hygiene and smoking cessation classes to name a few.

The physical therapy section of the medical clinic is also working at peak capacity. Its two-person staff provides a valuable service in treating patients. It is estimated that approximately 60 percent of the injured Soldiers would need to return to the states if the capability of providing for them was not available in theater, said Lawrence.

"With their abilities to do therapy here in country, they are conserving the force," she said.

The dental clinic has seen nearly 1,400 patients. Its number-one focus is on the Soldiers who push out onto the streets of Baghdad daily.

The staff conducts regular cleaning, exams and root canals from the chair of the dental office.

The clinic's laboratory has seen approximately 800 patients and has completed 2,400 different lab tests.

The Riva Ridge TMC is a unique medical clinic with a wide array of capabilities to offer the Soldiers who patrol the streets of western Baghdad.

The Soldiers' abilities remain vital to every mission, to every Soldier and to the Army as whole. They hold the pulse of each American and Iraqi who come through their doors.



U.S. Army photo courtesy of Co. C, 526th BSB, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers transport a patient to an awaiting aircraft under the supervision of the flight medic at the Riva Ridge Troop Medical Clinic.

IA, GoI, local government take lead in providing aid to Sadr City residents



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Cohen Young, 1st Combat Camera Sqdn., 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div. A Soldier with the Iraqi Army's 42nd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, hands out water to young boys before they wait in line for medical care at an abandoned school in the southern portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad May 8. The Iraqi Army handed out relief supplies and provided medical care in an effort to help the people in the district. More than 250 people showed up to receive free food and medical supplies.

By Spc. April Campbell
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Residents in Sadr City continue to receive humanitarian aid from their local government, the Government of Iraq, Iraqi Army soldiers and Multi-National Division – Baghdad with the help of the recently opened Civil Military Operations Center and Iraqi Assistance Center at Joint Security Station Thawra 1.

At the CMOC, local government officials, GoI officials and the Iraqi Army receive guidance from MND-B Soldiers to plan and carry out operations to better the infrastructure and essential services as well as supply food, water and other necessities to the people of Sadr City.

“The CMOC has done an exceptional job bringing together all of the Iraqi officials, allowing them to take leadership in repairing some of the damages caused by the recent fighting,” said Lt. Col. Frank Curtis, who serves as the commanding officer of the 432nd Civil Affairs Battalion, 360th Civil Affairs Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

“The Iraqi Army plans and executes mission in coordination with Coalition Forces,” continued the Braintree, Mass., native. “But the Iraqis determine the locations and plans the missions.”

Area citizens are beginning to use the center more to help deal with the issues they might have. They can show up in person and receive help dealing with their problems.

To date, 114,000 liters of water have been handed out and approximately 46,000 meals have been given to the area's residents. Iraqi Army soldiers bring the items to the community and deliver them to the people on the streets.

Large appliances, such as 64 generators and 15 stoves, have also been provided for the local residents.

Although the aid provided is needed by those in the area, there is currently not a humanitarian crisis in Sadr City. The problem has more to do with costs than with supply, said Lt. Col. Gerry Messmer, who serves as the division chief of staff for civil military operations with Company A, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B.

“Because of restrictions in vehicle movement, there is a reduction of food in some of the markets, but not to critical levels,” said the Interlaken, N.Y., native. “What this has done, in the free market society that they have, is raised prices. The Iraqi Army

is taking food and water in to help the poorer people and defray the expensive costs in the markets.”

The CMOC is also working to improve essential services by providing such services as trash cleanup and the water and sewer systems. Officials are working to identify leaks in the sewer and water pipes.

IA soldiers have not forgotten about providing medical care to those in Sadr City. They have been bringing such services to the streets of Sadr City on a regular basis.

“The 11th IA Division doctors have done at least one medical engagement a week, treating the local people,” said Messmer.

They have seen more than 2,500 people over the last three weeks out on the streets in Sadr City. They go to different locations with their vehicles and set up a mobile medial office to treat people right there on the streets, he added.

Residents seeking reparations for damages caused during the recent fighting can go to the Iraqi Assistance Center on a walk-in basis to receive assistance from MND-B Soldiers with the 432nd CA Bn. There are interpreters and an Iraqi lawyer on site to help. The center also provides the ability track their loved ones, who have been detained, said Curtis.

“If it's damage caused by U.S. forces, we pay to have it repaired, and if it's damage caused by the Iraqi Army or the Iraqi Police, they pay for the damages,” said Messmer. “We've paid out over \$25,000 in damage claims to people.”

Those seeking reparations from the Iraqi Security Forces are helped by the Iraqi lawyer, who also gives them legal advice and helps to educate them about the Iraqi legal system, Curtis said.

“Over the past three weeks, we've seen over 600 people,” he added. “Currently, between 80 and 90 people are coming for help each day.”

While the IA, GoI and Multi-National Division – Baghdad plan to continue with the current aid they are providing, they are also planning for the future.

“We plan to renovate schools and clinics and then refurbish and revitalize the Jamilla Market, a wholesale market that supplies most of Baghdad,” said Messmer.

Ultimately, it is all about Iraqis helping themselves and other Iraqis.

“The people see this,” said Curtis, “and they recognize that they can support their government's efforts to give them a better, more stable community.”

Bulldog Soldiers secure piece of Iraqi history

By Spc. David Hodge
1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, safeguard a piece of Iraqi religious history while operating from a combat outpost adjacent to a Christian-based seminary in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

The Soldiers of Troop B, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st BCT, ensure the preservation of the seminary, college and chapel that encompass the St. Peter Seminary of Chaldean Patriarchate in the predominantly Muslim community of Abu T'shir.

“Due to the proximity of the seminary to the COP, it became necessary to conduct clearance operations within the seminary and chapel to ensure it was not being used by criminals for attacks against Coalition Forces,” said Capt. David Lombardo, commander, Troop B. “Also, ‘Bulldog’ Troop conducts scheduled patrols within the seminary grounds to lock access points and prevent vandalism.”

The seminary opened in Baghdad in 1960; in 1991, the Pontifical Babel College for Philosophy and Theology was added to

the compound.

“In 2006, Coalition Forces obtained permission from the Chaldean Bishop in charge of the property to use the college as a patrol base,” said Lombardo, a native of Waynesboro, Pa. That year, the seminary had relocated outside the country and the college became a combat outpost for Coalition Forces.

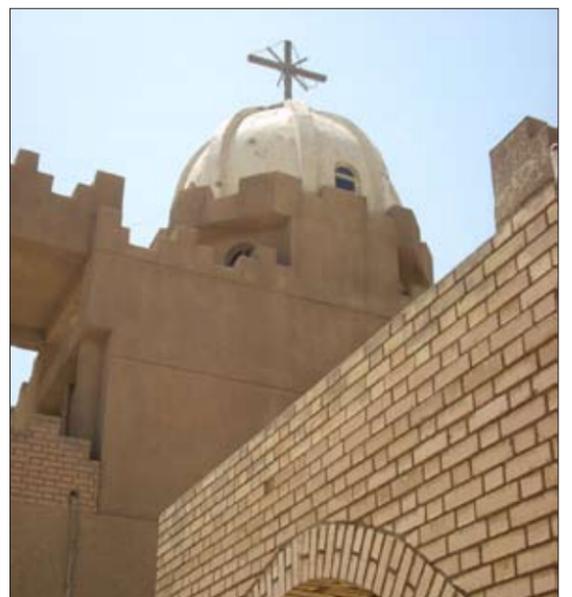
U.S. forces found, collected and salvaged numerous religious artifacts, such as books and documents dating back to the 17th century, which helps to preserve a piece of Iraq's history, said Lombardo.

“We make sure all the religious valuables inside the church are safe,” said Pfc. Shane Nerenberg, a forward observer from Riverside, Calif., assigned to Troop B.

The Soldiers said it is not a duty they take lightly.

“It's an honor to be charged with the duty of securing the church,” added Spc. Michael Lavelle, a mortarman from Pittsburgh, assigned to Troop B.

Just like the previous four units that operated out of the COP, the Bulldog Soldiers will continue to provide security in their operating environment and preserve a small piece of Iraq's renowned history.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div. The main chapel of the St. Peter Seminary of Chaldean Patriarchate displays a cross atop its steeple in the Abu T'shir community in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

Day in the life ...

Vehicle gunner sings, dances way through deployment

By Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo
3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD –

Historically, Soldiers have faced and experienced different emotions on the battlefield or while away from home at overseas locations. Changes in routines, adapting to a new environment or culture, to include making new friends and getting used to new policies and commands, are things most experience.

Whenever these changes arise, Soldiers try to look and find different ways to entertain themselves and comrades. These changes result in making lifelong friends and memories. During times like these, Soldiers learn to manage their spare time by either playing video games, watching movies or using their computers and the Internet.

However, things like that are usually done while “inside the wire” at a forward operating base or combat outpost in Iraq, but what they do while “outside the wire” to keep their morale up, and what makes it so memorable is the greatest question of all.

For Spc. Jackie Moore, a Fox, Ore. native, it’s as easy as just singing to his fellow Soldiers through the internal communications system of his vehicle.

As he sings, Moore dances in the turret as the vehicle rolls through the streets of northern Baghdad. Moore, who has been in the Army for more than two years and serves as a vehicle gunner with Company B, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National-Division – Baghdad, is well-known among his peers, non-commissioned officers and commander for his artistic abilities.

For Moore, singing and dancing is something that helps him keep the morale up through the 15-month deployment. It is also what helps keep his fellow Soldiers awake and alert while on long, overnight combat logistics patrols.

“Why not try to make the best out of it? It keeps everyone awake, alert; I try to keep everyone’s spirit up,” said Moore. “It keeps me awake for the most part too, keeps me moving, and I don’t really get a lot of time for PT so I get it by dancing a little bit.”

Part of Moore’s repertoire includes songs like “I Will Survive,” from Donna Summer to country music. However, he also has music of his own where he makes up the words to relate to current situations.

Music and dancing has been part of his life since his childhood. His children, Kyle and Heather, seem to have inherited their musical abilities from him as well. It is something that seems to run in his Family. His wife, Christina, has also joined in the dancing and singing routine.

“They love all kinds of music. I let them decide,” Moore said.

As for Moore, he has a message to his fellow Soldiers.

“Spend your time here bettering yourself. We are here for a purpose; have fun, take



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Spc. Jackie Moore, a Fox, Ore., native, prepares for a mission at Camp Taji prior hitting the road in northern Baghdad. Moore is a vehicle gunner serving with Company B, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National-Division – Baghdad. His singing and dancing when on patrol makes him popular among his fellow Soldiers. To him, singing and dancing helps keep fellow Soldiers awake during long overnight patrols and helps to boost morale as well.

care yourself; keep positive; you are not out here for four or five years, you are here for 15 months,” he said.

His outlook on his mission is a positive one as he deals with the challenges of the deployment in his own unique way.

“Spc. Moore is a character,” said Sgt. 1st Class Joe Bernal, a Fresno, Calif. native, who serves as Moore’s platoon sergeant with the 64th BSB. “Everybody has their own way of dealing with things, especially being out on the roads for sometimes from 12 to 18 hours.

“Some people seem to enjoy it – especially when we have passengers in the back. It keeps them awake and also keeps them entertained,” Bernal concluded.

Do your part – Vote!

Task Force XII Soldier encourages fellow voters to make their voices heard

By Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton
Task Force XII PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – You get the feeling he's done this before.

Perhaps, in his past endeavors, he was soliciting votes for student body president – or even selling lemonade. Whatever the case, he was determined to get his fellow Soldiers to the polls.

On a warm day in May, 18-year-old Pfc. Nicholas Howard sat, strategically placed, at a squadron entry control point. From his position, Soldiers had to make it through him to get anywhere on the compound.

He vigorously questioned any brave passersby with enough courage to look him in the eye – “Are you registered to vote?”

“I think they picked me because I talk to anybody I see,” said Howard, a Belleville, Mich., native, and member of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, which is based out of Fort Hood, Texas. “I’m trying to get people to sign up to vote so we can elect a great President.”

Although he said it wasn't necessarily his idea to meet with his fellow Soldiers about their voting opportunities, he was the right person at the right place, for providing the motivation.

The leaders of the squadron recognized the need to encourage their Soldiers to sign up for their absentee ballots early so they wouldn't miss the opportunity to play their part in this year's general election.

Howard just happened to be the right man for the job.

“I think it's a great idea,” said Staff Sgt. Richard Roff, a native of Morristown, N.J., who was one of several Soldiers to stop in and submit his absentee-voter packet. “He's definitely in the right spot. Everybody who walks through here sees him.”

It's a fairly simple process, said Howard. Any citizen stationed overseas can fill out the Standard Form 76, which is also available online at www.fvap.gov.

They merely mail in the form and will get their ballot in the mail in time to vote in the Nov. 4 election.

But, he added, there's a difference between knowing you can do it and actually getting it done.

“We can explain the process and have all the rules,” said Howard, referring to his copy of the absentee ballot guide – or what he affectionately termed his “big book of knowledge.”

“We even mail it in for them,” he added. “But if they don't register, they can't vote.”

“I always try to vote,” said Staff Sgt. Jose Ramon, a native of San Antonio. “This is actually the first time I've done it overseas though. I'm in the process of learning how to do it as I go.”

As for Howard, he said he intends for his first vote, in any election, to count. In the mean time, he'll help out the rest of the squadron voters as long as they'll listen to him.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton, Task Force XII PAO
18-year-old Pfc. Nicholas Howard, from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, which is based out of Fort Hood, Texas, stands at a squadron entry control point waiting for potential voters May 7. The Belleville, Mich., native, was responsible for helping Soldiers fill out absentee ballot requests so that they can participate in the Nov. 4 general election.

Texas National Guardsman trains, deploys with Ivy Division

By Spc. April Campbell
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Unlike most National Guardsmen who train and mobilize together as a whole unit before deploying to Iraq, some guardsmen deploy individually and are attached to active duty units.

Such is the case for Maj. Barry Hafer, a Marshall, Texas, native, and a member of the 5th Battalion, 112th Armor Regiment, 36th Infantry Division, Texas Army National Guard, who serves as the Red Team leader with the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

In early 2007, the 4th Infantry Division initiated plans for the first division-level Red Team, a team designed to work with different staff sections performing critical reviews and challenging cultural assumptions. The position on the Red Team caught Hafer's attention, and he volunteered for the job.

“I thought it was a great opportunity,” Hafer said. “It's a leading edge concept.”

With having a civilian job in industry and manufacturing, the ability to get to root causes and bring up the sensitive questions along with helping to find solutions interested him very much, Hafer added.

At the time, Lt. Col. Mike Runey, an Exeter, N.H., native, who now serves as the chief of plans with the 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B, was asked to lead the team and help choose two guardsmen who would best fit the role.

“There were several candidates put forward by the Texas National Guard at the time,” said Runey. “They thought Maj. Hafer would be a good fit, and we thought so too. It worked out well for us.”

With less than a week notice, Hafer began training for the new position. In April, he attended the University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. There, he met the other two Soldiers, including Runey, comprising the division's Red Team. This would be the first step in

Hafer's deployment.

While he had initially planned upon deploying with the 4th Inf. Div. shortly after completing the course, the division's initial deployment date was later pushed back until November. Hafer went to Fort Hood and trained with the Ivy Division until that time.

While Hafer has spent many long hours working to accomplish his mission during this deployment, the hard work with the division is not the only sacrifice he has made. Hafer, a Family man, businessman and leader in his community, had to put his civilian life on hold without much preparation time.

“I left a lot of good people with almost no notice, and everyone in Marshall stepped up and was incredibly supportive,” said Hafer.

Hafer was actively involved in the Marshall Rotary Club, the Marshall Chamber of Commerce and the Harrison County Manufacturing Council. He was also the director of operations for Mecar USA, a military ammunitions manufacturer, he added.

While he and his wife did not know when or where he would deploy, being a Soldier in the National Guard, Hafer said he knew he most likely would deploy. This helped to mentally prepare the Hafers for the deployment.

“We talked a lot. Career wise, I knew I would be deploying,” he said. “As a Family, we were ready. Not everything was taken care of, but we were ready.”

Hafer also received support from his employer.

“Mecar USA supported me with no notice and has kept in contact with me and my family since I've been gone,” said Hafer.

Hafer makes sure that he does his part as well to keep in contact with his loved ones and community back home. As is the case with many Soldiers deployed to Iraq, this correspon-



U.S. Army photo by Spc. April Campbell, MND-B PAO
Maj. Barry Hafer (left), a Marshall, Texas, native, helps review population perception while going over plans with Maj. Keith Chinn, an Elk Grove, Calif., native, in the Division-Main building May 10 at Camp Liberty, Iraq.

dence with those at home helps to lift Hafer's spirits.

“Staying in touch with his Family and community back home has been key to keeping his morale up,” said Runey. “Maj. Hafer is one of the hardest working guys I've seen.”

Hafer will soon be able to reconnect with his family and friends back home when he redeploys in July.

The homecoming, though long awaited, will be bitter-sweet, as Hafer will be leaving many new friends here in Iraq. He said he will not soon forget his deployment with the Ivy Division.

“I think it was a great opportunity to work with an extremely professional active duty unit with a great reputation,” Hafer said. “I've learned an immense amount just being here – being around this unit, the people and the professionalism.”

MND-B Soldier fights battles from above

By Spc. Aaron Rosencrans
MND-B PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — U.S. military forces dominate the battlefield with superior weaponry and disciplined talent not only on the land and in the water, but in the air as well.

Part of the success of Multi-National Division – Baghdad's efforts throughout the greater Baghdad area has been attributed to the precision attacks on our enemies from thousands of feet above ground in Task Force XII's AH-64 Apache helicopters.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Dennis Seymour, a native of Hattiesburg, Miss., who serves as

the brigade master gunner for all aircraft and the standardization pilot for AH-64 Apache helicopters with Task Force XII, brings a vast supply of knowledge and skill to the battlefield in support of ground operations in and around Baghdad.

Seymour first joined the military in 1980, where he spent nine years as an electrician in the Air Force. His passion for flight brought him to the Army as a rotary wing aviator, flying Apaches.

Even with so many years in the military, Seymour said he still plans on staying in until the Army decides it's time for him to leave.

"I always said I would get out when I stopped having fun," he said.

Now with 27 years behind his back, Seymour said he has no plans on going anywhere until after he reaches the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 5.

Seymour's superior skills have not gone unnoticed by his commander, who has flown with him in the majority of his missions this tour in Iraq.

"Seymour is an absolute expert when it comes to flying and fighting Apache helicopters," said Col. Tim Edens, a native of Fruitland, Idaho, who serves as the commander of Task Force XII. "He is a former instructor pilot at the Fort Rucker Apache Course so he knows the ins and outs of the aircraft."

Edens went on to say Seymour is not just a "TRADOCian," where he only knows the basic skills taught in the schoolhouse.

He has spent most of his career in tactical units, so he knows several tricks that are not yet in the training manual, which makes him a very dangerous weapon against the enemy, he said.

The Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) is in charge of recruiting, training and education of the U.S. Army's Soldiers.

Seymour has a daily ritual before every mission, which includes doing his preflight checks, putting on his yellow "Southern Miss" hat and preparing the aircraft before he even climbs into the cockpit.

Seymour said it is his job to set the example for the rest of the crews. That way, everyone knows what right looks like, so he does his checks by the numbers.

"I start at the front end of the helicopter and I work my way around, checking every hatch,

the fluid levels and the integrity of all the major parts even before receiving my mission briefing," he said.

After the mission briefing, Seymour usually straps into the bird with Edens and takes off for their mission.

"Some people think it's all excitement as an Apache pilot," Seymour said. "Really, what ends up happening is we fly around for five hours for only three minutes of excitement. In fact, flying six or seven days per week wears you out. There's a lot of mental strain involved with flying the helicopter and targeting bad guys on the ground."

When it comes time for Seymour to engage enemy forces, he said he thinks of the process as more of a video game than a real life situation.

"The reality of it is I'm taking somebody's life away every time I pull that trigger," he said.

"That's a hard thing to think about. What makes it easier is the fact that every enemy I take out is one less bad guy my son has to worry about."

Seymour's son followed in his father's footsteps and joined the Army as well. He serves in a psychological operations unit and is currently attending the Defense Language Institute at the Presidio of Monterey, Calif.

After the mission is complete, Seymour's job could be done for the night; however, ground crew members said he provides a helping hand with post-mission checks when he can.

"He is one of those pilots who goes above and beyond with the checks and maintenance, which makes our job much easier on the ground," said Cpl. Jimmy Duenas, a native of Guam, who serves as an Apache mechanic and crew chief with Outlaw Troop, 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Task Force XII, MND-B.

As long as pilots like Seymour are around to provide air coverage for Soldiers on the ground, the U.S. military will continue to dominate in all areas of combat.



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

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Dennis Seymour, a native of Hattiesburg, Miss., who serves as the brigade master gunner for all aircraft and the standardization pilot for AH-64 Apache helicopters with Task Force XII, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, checks the fluid levels and every major component of his AH-64 Apache helicopter before a mission in Baghdad May 14.

Soldiers create opportunities to expand their horizons

By Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton
Task Force XII PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — Those who know 21-year-old Spc. Michael McCann say he's always been a pretty smart guy. After graduating Bixby, Okla. High School with a 3.85 grade point average, he joined the Army as an AH-64 Apache crew chief. He's enrolled in online classes as a bio-chemistry major at the University of Oklahoma, and wants to reclassify as an X-Ray Technician ... he's even thinking about becoming a doctor.

There was only one problem – his GT score wasn't high enough.

The GT score (general technical) is the Army's measuring stick for technical aptitude. It's one of 10 line scores provided by the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery to assess a Soldier's potential.

Many technical career fields, like X-Ray Technician, require a 110. McCann scored a 106.

"I don't really know what I was doing wrong," he said. "I took the test in high school. Everybody takes it in high school ... I wasn't really paying attention. I just needed a little reminder."

McCann became one of several Soldiers in Task Force XII to get that reminder, courtesy of fellow Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers in 4th Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, who organized a functional academic skills test (FAST) class.

The classes have been around for years. They help Soldiers raise their test scores so that they can apply to become pilots, go to officer candidate schools or switch to different

career fields within the Army. But attending a FAST class, while deployed, isn't always feasible.

"We have people working shifts 24/7 at all ends of the flight line, so it can be a little tough for them to make it (to the education center)," said Sgt. Andrew Erford, squadron retention noncommissioned officer. "The education center allowed us to start the program. They offer one here, but it caps out at 20 (students) per class. Plus, it's a little far away."

The class focuses on two specific areas – math and English. Erford, who hails from Batavia, Ill., teaches the English portion.

"Test taking strategies are the biggest things we teach," he said. "A lot of Soldiers just have problems with multiple choice tests ... that's pretty common everywhere, from high school on up."

The Soldier-led versions of the classes haven't been around for long, but Erford says so far they've raised the score of every Soldier who has taken part. The word has spread, and more Soldiers seem interested in participating.

"The first one, we got off the ground as soon as we could," he added. "Two weeks later, we're now doing two: an evening class and a morning class."

So far, of the five Soldiers who have finished the class and braved the GT score improvement test, four have passed the requisite mark of 110.

As for McCann, it didn't take long to prove he has the aptitude to match his attitude. He raised his score to a 112 – six points higher and one important step closer to a very big dream.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton, Task Force XII PAO
Sgt. Andrew Erford, a Batavia, Ill., native, discusses vocabulary with a group of students taking a functional academic skills test class May 13.

Military Marriage: Spouses cope with deployments

By Heike Hasenauer

Army News Service

FORT MYER, Va. – A lot of marriages have been tested in Iraq, said an Army chaplain who returned from a year-long deployment there in November.

Maj. Derrick Riggs, now a religious-support resource manager at Fort Myer, Va., served with the 82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team in Iraq last year.

"Marriage will succeed or fail based on everything you do before a deployment," Riggs said. "If you have a strained marriage, the deployment will have a greater adverse impact. Absence will only make the heart grow fonder if you have a strong marriage to begin with."

"I don't think younger Soldiers have solid expectations of marriage, but, rather, are driven by emotion," added Maj. Chris Downey, operations officer for the 82nd Airborne Division's 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade.

"They're seeking immediate companionship before and after deployment."

Downey and his wife, Trish, have been married for 15 of his 17 years in the Army - from the time he was an enlisted Soldier, through advanced military training, to his commissioning, and two recent combat tours to Afghanistan and Iraq.

"I'm worried about my family when I'm deployed, but when I'm deployed, the mission has to be my main focus," he said.

That's why Soldiers depend so much on the support available to them through family readiness groups and others. It's that support, and the support of other spouses that helps military families cope, Downey said.

Deployment, while not easy on a family that includes a son and daughter, ages 10 and 13, respectively, didn't cause any marital problems, Trish said. "I had no feelings of resentment when he deployed. I was proud of him. And our marriage was very strong when he left."

"What makes it strong is his commitment to his family," she said. "And I know his family comes first when it can



come first."

Sgt. 1st Class Ernest Rabot of the Italy-based 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team has been married to Joy for 20 years. He echoes Downey's sentiments.

"When I'm deployed, I focus on the mission, but when there's time to relax a bit, I write my wife all about the things I've been doing or going through during the deployment.

Sp. Chase Windell, another member of the 173rd ABCT, deployed to Afghanistan soon after his wife, Samantha, joined him in Bamberg, Germany. The couple's son was 2 months old at the time.

"The first few months after my husband deployed were miserable," Samantha said. "I wanted to stay home the whole time."

Instead, she got involved, spending time with other women whose husbands had also deployed, participating in Yoga classes, shopping, supervising their respective children's playtime and taking trips together. Samantha also volunteers as her family readiness group's treasurer.

Her advice to spouses of deployed Soldiers is: "Get out there and get involved."

"The most important thing you can do to keep a marriage healthy is to communicate," Downey said. "If you're going to deploy, talk about some of the stressors before, during and after deployment."

Soldiers who are deployed should try to call as much as possible, he added, even if the calls are short.

"Just knowing Chris was thinking of me meant a lot to me and the kids," Trish said.

"I think marriage in the military is a significant challenge for the Army," Downey added.

"Officials are doing a very good job at understanding that the family is a combat multiplier - an important part of the puzzle - and are providing programs to support the family."

The current Reset pilot program, as an example, is one of the Army's newest attempts to ease a Soldier's transition back to his family and his community by minimizing or eliminating training requirements for 120 days after a Soldier returns from deployment, Downey said.

"Marriage isn't for kids, and being in the Army just makes it harder," added Chief Warrant Officer 3 Roy Melebeck, commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd ABCT Rear Detachment.

Besides communication, he suggests honesty, unselfishness and support, candlelight dinners and flowers - for no special occasion at all.



Spiritual graduation, a goal worth reaching for

By Lt. Col. James Carter

MND-B chaplain

BAGHDAD – Graduation is right around the corner.

Many of us have loved ones back home who are graduating and entering a new phase of life.

Many are completing high school and college.

Some graduates are simply moving from one grade to the next.

It is possible that you even may be completing classes yourself.

Any of these scenarios are positive, marking milestones towards achieving a goal.

These are exciting times for our children and loved ones.

Often these goals become stepping stones for achieving other goals; the completion of the original goal opens the

door to new visions and new opportunities.

Consider your own early education.

Just because you learned how to write the alphabet did not mean you automatically knew how to write poetry or sonnets. But learning to write was just a step toward achieving that goal.

Similar progression can be seen within our professional military education. We take those classes that will help us achieve our military goals. Some classes are necessary prerequisites for promotion. Other classes help us develop skills in career fields in which we have interest and aptitude.

Continuing education is not a goal all in itself – rather it is an excellent method by which we can shape our lives to fulfill our dreams. We learn how to learn and we re-examine our beliefs and continue

to grow.

The same holds true with our Spiritual education.

Do we set goals for our spiritual journey?

Where do we look?

For example, our gracious God strongly encourages us to study to show ourselves approved. He also commands us to hide His word in our hearts so that we might not sin against him.

Education is powerful and spiritual education empowers us as we study the things of God. We never will graduate from this course of study but the benefits are out of this world.

We thank our gracious God for our graduates this month and we continue to be good students of his word.

God bless you as you continue to be His student.

Stage Right Review: *Popularity is state of mind*

By Pfc. Samantha Schutz

MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Let's be honest with ourselves: we've all got issues. Nobody's perfect. But it's our flaws – and the ways we choose to deal with them – that define who we are as people.



Pfc. Samantha Schutz

This idea of self-acceptance is the basis for debut writer Gustin Nash's film *Charlie Bartlett*, a dark comedy with an enlightening message.

The title character, Charlie, played by Anton Yelchin (*Hearts in Atlantis*), is a quirky, 17-year-old "rich kid" who is bent on being accepted. His desire for popularity, in conjunction with his enterprising mind, causes him to cook up brilliant-but-mischievous schemes at a string of private schools, which leads to expulsion each time.

But Charlie isn't a bad kid. He's just a little bit misled, and we can see why. His father has been absent since Charlie's childhood, leaving him to take care of his young, medicated mother, Marilyn, played by Hope Davis (*Proof*). What should be a mother-and-child relationship has developed into more of a friendship, so there is little in the way of discipline or mentoring for Charlie.

He's likeable, though – intelligent, charming, empathetic and confident. These qualities are evident when Charlie becomes "the new kid" at a public school. Although he gets ridiculed for the way he dresses, avoided because he is outwardly friendly and violently assaulted "just because" by the resident high school bully, Charlie stays true to himself.

However, his therapist thinks Charlie's "true self" needs medication. He gets prescribed to Ritalin for attention deficit disorder and quickly finds out he doesn't need it; the pills do the opposite of what they are meant to, making Charlie erratic and over-energetic.

So, our street-wise and enterprising hero decides to sell them (with the help of his new friend and "business partner," the same bully who beat him up) at the school dance.

Well, one thing leads to another, and soon Charlie's fellow students learn that he has access to medication. The requests for help start flooding in, and Charlie finds himself visiting several psychiatrists, faking numerous psychological issues, to acquire a multitude of various pills. He doesn't just dish out uppers and downers, though – his classmates find him easy to talk to, and before he knows it, he has become the school's secret psychoanalyst.

Obviously though, if you're not a licensed physician, you cannot distribute professional advice, let alone prescriptions. As the line outside Charlie's "office" gets longer and longer, he realizes he's biting off more and more than he can chew. Besides, every teenager has issues – is he neglecting his own problems by trying to be strong for everyone else?

"Quite frankly, he is one of the brightest boys here at school."

There is a lot more to *Charlie Bartlett* – both the movie and the character – than a single-layer story about a young man



who finds himself in trouble after making an honest mistake. Nash's intentions, when writing this script, delved far deeper than your everyday "teen comedy."

In fact, I have a hard time even calling this one a comedy. Although they are delivered in a comedic way, the messages and morals delivered throughout the movie are realistic and

the first chance I get. I'm sure she'll cry as much as I did. (I'm a sucker for those tear-jerkers!) If you're reading this and you're a 20-something, or younger, maybe you should consider doing the same. It would definitely make for some good conversation.

If you're a parent of a 'tween, a teen or a 20-something, I'd recommend you check this one out. These are the types of movies your kids are going to be watching, barring the R rating restrictions. *Charlie Bartlett* is a movie your kids probably ought to watch, anyway, since it contains such strong, positive messages.

Sure, there's some dirty language. Trust me – it's no different from what you'd hear if you walked down a high school hallway.

Okay, so there's drug use. Well, news flash: these are prescription drugs that an ever-increasing part of the student body is already prescribed to, including Prozac, for depression, and Ritalin.

And as for brief nudity, well, I can't really defend that one. To be honest, that scene could've been left out. But if you're that uncomfortable with it, tell your kid to cover his eyes.

Either way, *Charlie Bartlett* has a clever way of inspiring and reminding us that there's more to life than being popular.

I give *Charlie Bartlett* 4.5 stars out of 5.

directly related to the times we're living in.

Self-image, drug & alcohol use, peer pressure, promiscuity, privacy, Family values, relationships, rebellion and a laundry list of mental illnesses are approached and dealt with within 90 minutes – and the list keeps going.

The actors all do a great job portraying real, human people. Some show us how our flaws can overwhelm us; others show us how they can strengthen us, and still others show how sometimes we don't even notice we're flawed.

Robert Downey, Jr., (*Iron Man*), who plays Principal Gardner, makes a bold statement about how depression and alcohol can tear apart a Family and break down a life. He also shows us that no matter what happens, all it takes is a little understanding and compassion to make a valuable change.

"Would you like to talk about it?"

Despite its R rating (for language, drug content and brief nudity), *Charlie Bartlett* is a film that begs to be shared between parents and their teenage children. It shows, in a brilliantly satirical way, how misconceptions and miscommunications can affect every part of a person's life, whether they're young or old.

I must say, I'm glad teen flicks are getting smarter again.

For a while there, the genre aimed at young people and 20-somethings passed through some kind of a dark age. Movies like *American Pie*, *Road Trip* and *Napoleon Dynamite*, while hilarious and quotable, lacked that certain je ne sais quoi that makes a story really great.

Now, comedies like *Knocked Up*, *Superbad*, *Juno* and *Charlie Bartlett* are starting to prevail in the young adult world. They feature loveable, realistic characters who endure realistic situations, relying on their wits rather than over-the-top antics.

Speaking as a 20-something, I personally plan to watch this movie with my mom

Gaming Review: Dangerous Titles

Warning! Top 5 games to avoid like plague

By Sgt. Mark Matthews
MND-B PAO

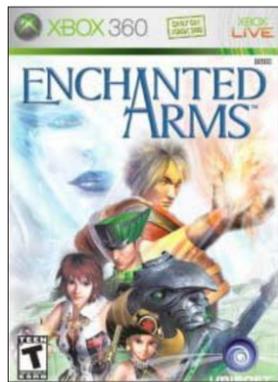
CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Call of Duty 4, Halo 3, Mario Galaxy and God of War are just a few of the games I have reviewed over the last few months. All of them in my opinion are the best of the best and the standard all other games should be measured by.

However, some titles completely miss the mark. So for everyone who says I think every game is a masterpiece, this week's review is for you.

Here are my picks for the five worst games I have ever played. I'm sure there are some worse ones out there, but these are all games I have a personal history with.



Sgt. Mark Matthews



5 Enchanted Arms (Xbox360)

Look, I'm a fan of role-playing games, I am. I loved Blue Dragon, the Final Fantasy's, Mass Effect, and I am currently in love with Lost Odyssey.

I paid \$59.99 for Enchanted Arms and as soon as the little "Pizza Men" tried to destroy me with their flaming pepperonis of death, or whatever they called it, I was done. The controls were bad, camera angles worse, and a story line only David Bowie could appreciate.

The only saving grace for Enchanted Arms was the graphics, but does it really matter how awesome an evil, pizza-faced guy is. It's still a dude made of dough and tomato sauce. Thanks, but no thanks. I'll just have a salad.



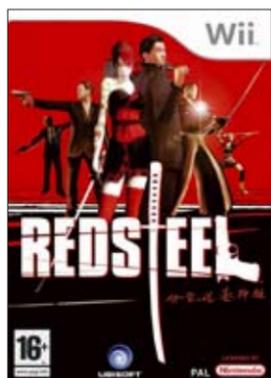
4 Tokobot (PSP)

I have to throw a hand-held game in here, and Tokobot for the PlayStation Portable takes the cake. Be honest, did you purchase this game simply because it was the only PSP game the Post Exchange carried.

It's okay if you did, because I fell into the trap as well. Tokobot is about a boy who has a special connection with a bunch of ancient machine-robot things and they all hold hands and do stuff.

The game is riddled with horrible camera angles, a non-existent storyline, impossible controls and mind-numbing dialogue. If you are ever tempted to buy Tokobot on the PSP, save yourself the trouble and the \$20.

Find some paint to watch dry or some grass to watch grow. Trust me, you'll thank me.



3 Red Steel (Nintendo Wii)

This title was going to be the next big thing for Nintendo. Red Steel is a first-person shooter for the Wii that attempted to immerse players into the game by allowing them to use the new Wiimote technology to wield swords and aim with deadly accuracy.

I paid \$49.99 for this game and I was shooting lamps, walls, doors and windows – everything – except what I was aiming at. I felt like I was in a bad Dick Tracy movie where the guy with the machine gun shoots all the way around the guy and leaves nothing but the outline of the target on the wall. I played the game for

three or four hours and I won't ever get that time back – ever.

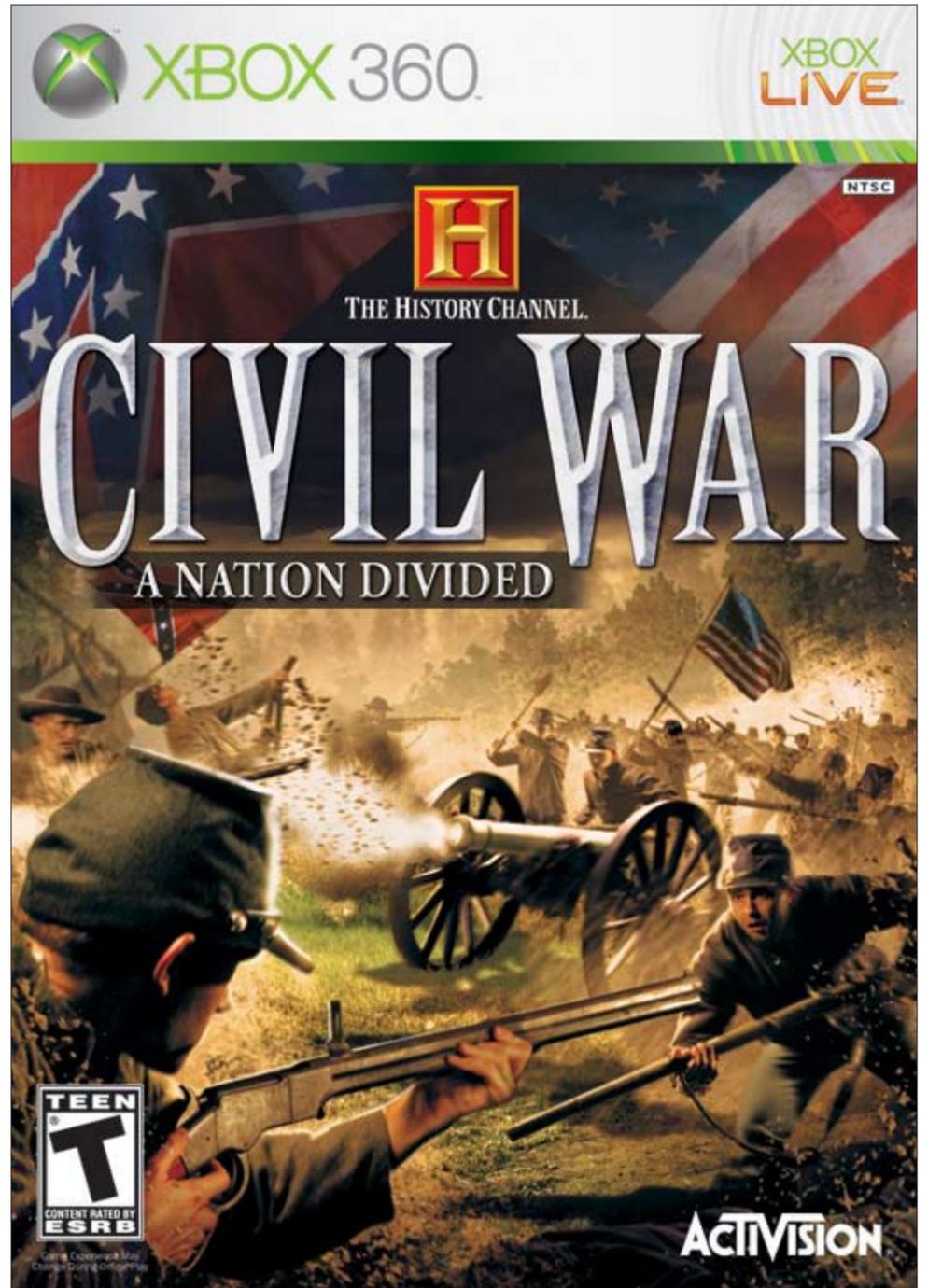


2 Fight Club (Playstation 2)

The first rule of Fight Club should have been "You do not make a video game about Fight Club." Obviously, the developers felt a little differently. It's a one-on-one fighting game similar to Street Fighter, Mortal Combat, Tekken and Def Jam.

The only difference is those games are actually good. Fight Club followed no storyline, the cut-scenes looked like a Power Point presentation and Tyler Durden, played by Brad Pitt, who looked more like a young Willem Defoe with a yellow wig on.

I am Jack's disappointed cerebrum.



1 The History Channel's Civil War (Xbox360)

Well this game was doomed from square one.

The Civil War? Give me a break. Whose bright idea was it to make a game about one of the darkest and bloodiest wars in our nation's history? It sounds like my 9th grade history teacher's doing, if you ask me.

Did they expect you to change the course of American History? How many people do you think actually sat down and got half way through the Battle of Gettysburg and thought "I wonder how this turns out in the end?"

Nice try, Mr. Ferguson, from my freshman year. I passed your history class. I got a C+. Leave me alone.

I've been playing video games for a while now, and these were my biggest mistakes. Back in the day, it wasn't a huge deal to not be sure about a game or to buy one not knowing exactly how good it will be. Well, games are about \$60 apiece now. I can't afford to buy bad games. So, I do my homework and make sure that every game I buy, I'm going to enjoy. People ask me why I don't review bad games. I just tell them "Because I don't buy bad games."

Next week, I'll have a list of my best games of all time. Do you have a suggestion of what should make that list or have a game worse than any of these? Let me know at mark.matthews@mnd-b.army.mil

Now you know the titles, but watch out for these Genres:

- ◆ Movie/TV Games: Harry Potter, Superman, Transformers, Fantastic Four, Lost, CSI
- ◆ Hunting Games: The Deer Hunting series or anything involving fishing
- ◆ Party Games: Wario Ware, Mario Party, Viva Piñata: Party Animals, Carnival Games
- ◆ Trading Card Games: Yu-Gi-Oh Championship, Pokemon, Marvel Trading Card Game
- ◆ Pokemon: Anything with the word POKEMON in the title

HIGHROLLERS ROCK OUT

1st Sust. Bde. Soldiers gather band to pass time during deployment

By Sgt. Jennifer Schweizer
1st Sust. Bde. PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Sounds of The Eagles, Bon Jovi, and original music by Spc. David Palmer, echoed through the night as the HighRollers' band performed May 10 at the Camp Taji Mudhouse on an open mic night; Palmer is a Chicago native and is assigned to the 515th Transportation Company, 165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Six months ago, the band was merely three people looking for something to pass the time.

"Barker and I started out with an acoustic guitar and a set of bongo drums," laughed Staff Sgt. Benjamin Reyes, a Boston, Mass., native, and the band's lead vocalist, percussionist and drummer. "Later that day, Palmer joined in to give us a total of three 'bored' members."

Songwriter, vocalist and guitarist are among the many talents Palmer has brought to the band since he joined. He is also the only member who is able to say he was once on American Idol.

"I love music, and that's all there is to it," said Palmer, who plays rhythm guitar and sings vocals for the band.

Since then, many other Soldiers in the unit have joined the band, looking for an escape from the long deployment months. Steadily growing, the band is presently seven deep with members from various ranks.

The band's members include: Reyes, Palmer, Sgt. Michael Kilroy, a native of Egg Harbor Township, N.J., and back-up drummer; Sgt. Antares White, a native of New Haven, Conn., and

a vocalist; Sgt. Brandon Jones, a native of Whiting, Maine, and the lead bassist; Spc. Malcolm Barker, a native Tupelo, Miss., and the lead guitarists who also plays the harmonica; and Pfc. Carl Ross, a native of Greensboro, N.C., and a vocalist.

One goal of the HighRollers is to produce a Mudhouse CD and leave behind a piece of their music history. How, one might ask, can a small unit band produce such a thing?

The band has a recording studio built right into their unit's Morale, Welfare and Recreation room.

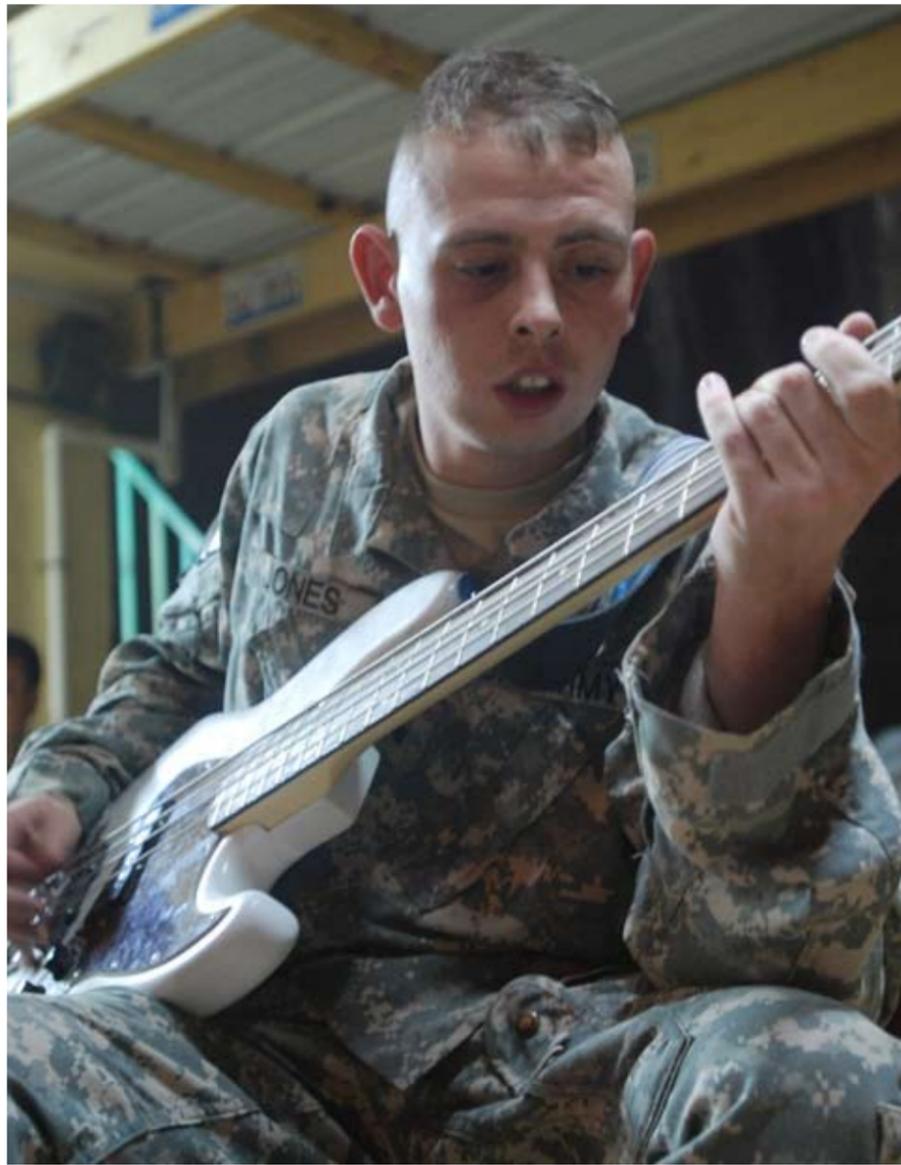
"The sound-proof room, now that was a crazy thing! We were going over some songs one night and Barker said how much he wished we had a booth to record in," Reyes commented.

Before the room was built, the band was using a padded wall locker located in a Soldier's living quarters.

"After about fifteen minutes of brainstorming, I got up from behind the drums, went out back and got some lumber. It took me three days to get the majority of it done before the guys realized it could work," he continued.

For the most part, the band performs its favorite songs, which range from rock to the blues. The HighRollers also pride themselves on giving their own unique twist to their all-time favorites. How often is Lynyrd Skynyrd's Sweet Home Alabama performed with a b-box, free-style rap twist to it?

"The band has come together so much over time. It has been real fun and given us all the chance to be part of something great," said Reyes.



Sgt. Brandon Jones, a native of Whiting, Maine, and a member of the 515th Transportation Company, 165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad, performs the Eagles classic "Hotel California" at the Camp Taji Mudhouse here May 10. Jones is the bands lead bassist.

Striker Soldiers sing, dance during talent performance



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Zach Mott, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div. Spc. Christopher Jackson (left), an Eloy, Ariz., native, and Sgt. Joshua Williams, an Alamogordo, N.M., native, dance the Macarena during a talent show on Camp Taji May 4. Both Jackson and Williams serve with Company A, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

By Sgt. Zach Mott

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – What do you get when you combine the "Macarena," Lynard Skynard and an originally written rap performance?

Give up yet? The answer: a Striker Village Talent Show.

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, gathered at a makeshift stage on Camp Taji May 4 to sing, dance, perform and, as one of the competitors said, to take a break.

"It's all about the Soldiers and having a good time in Iraq. There's enough stress out here. It's good to just relax and let your hair down," said Spc. Scedric Moss, a Baltimore native, who performed an original rap of "State on the Map" for the contest.

Moss, a human resources specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd BCT, finished third in the competition.

Staff Sgt. Freddie Hurt, who, along with Staff Sgt. Carl Buck, helped organize the event, said he wanted to give Soldiers an outlet not normally afforded to those on the outer edges of this sprawling military compound.

"Most of the time Soldiers, once they get done with work, they don't want to catch a bus ride to go way to main post to do something. We figured that we'd set up a talent show here for the Soldiers," said the Selma, Ala., native, who serves as the senior first cook with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd BCT.

Hurt also competed, singing "Anything" by Jaheim.

His performance earned top honors also.

"I didn't expect to win. There was some good competition up there," he said, after only entering the contest to ensure his friend would also participate.

The second place winners, Sergeants Anthony Smith and Daniel Kobler, both from the Missile Section of Company B, 64th BSB, performed two songs. With Smith on guitar and Kobler singing, they covered Lynard Skynyrd's "Simple Man" for the first tune and tried something different for the second.

Smith strummed the chord to Bob Seger's "Turn the Page" while Kobler sang lyrics he wrote himself and titled "Send Me Home."

"I've been trying to write it for a few months. I started writing it in January. It didn't take too much actual time once I started writing the words. But, it was just the way I've felt. I've loved the song my whole life," the Stockbridge, Ga., native, said.

Smith, a Campton, Ky., native, said the pairing came together rather easily.

"I can't sing and I just play guitar for him and he can sing and he can't play guitar so that made us the perfect duo," he said.

Other Soldiers performed songs and enjoyed the chance to entertain their friends for a short time. But, to kick things off properly, Sgt. Joshua Williams and Spc. Christopher Jackson chose to perform the traditional 90s dance.

This was the first planned event to help bring other morale-building events to this part of the Camp Taji. Hurt will begin hosting karaoke soon and plans to conduct another talent contest later this deployment.

Mol's Wide World of Sports NCAA football vs. NASCAR Who has more loyal fans?

Every sport has fans. Each team in any sport has their fans. The National Football League arguably has the most fans, and the New York Yankees have arguably more fans per individual team than any other. But, whose fans are truly, 100 percent behind their team and/or sport through the years, in thick or thin?

College football: It's more than just a game

By Staff Sgt. Michael Molinaro
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – When I was approached about coming up with a sport who has fans that are as loyal to their teams as that of NASCAR, it was hard to decide. NASCAR fans love their drivers and love their racin'. It's a hard argument to make.

I thought about NFL fans first but then decided that while the fans of the Pittsburgh Steelers are far and above the most loyal fans to one team in any sport; the fans as a whole may not win that argument. I even went outside the box and thought, for a second, maybe fans of Wrestling might be up there since those freaks think that stuff is real.

And then it hit me. What sport could stand up to this challenge? What sport has been around forever and has fans as loyal as any out there? Why, of course, it's college football.

Why college football? Where do I begin? Let's start with the fact that it has been around for more than 100 years and has had the time to build up such a fan base it's staggering. Once a person goes to a particular school, they are a fan for life. It doesn't matter if they attend a huge school such as Ohio State or a small school like Lafayette, the alumni of these school stay true to their alma mater for life.

Loyalty to me is the fans who stick with their team through thick and thin. You will never hear an Auburn fan say "I like Auburn, Michigan and Texas."

Fans pack their stadiums, year and in and year out, with some schools having a game day attendance of more than 100,000. And, by the way, they accomplish that six or seven times a year every Saturday. Now, I am not arguing about the numbers because it is a forgone conclusion that football is more popular than stock car racing. What I am arguing is that those are numbers for one team, and that is year in and year out, regardless of the team's record.

I would take an educated guess and say that at Michigan Stadium in the

fall, out of 108,000 fans in the stands, about 90 percent of them are rooting for the maize and blue. That's an automatic every home game. But you know what I like about that guess? Is that there is another 10 percent for the away team. That is loyalty: fans traveling to every game, no matter who it's against or where it's at.

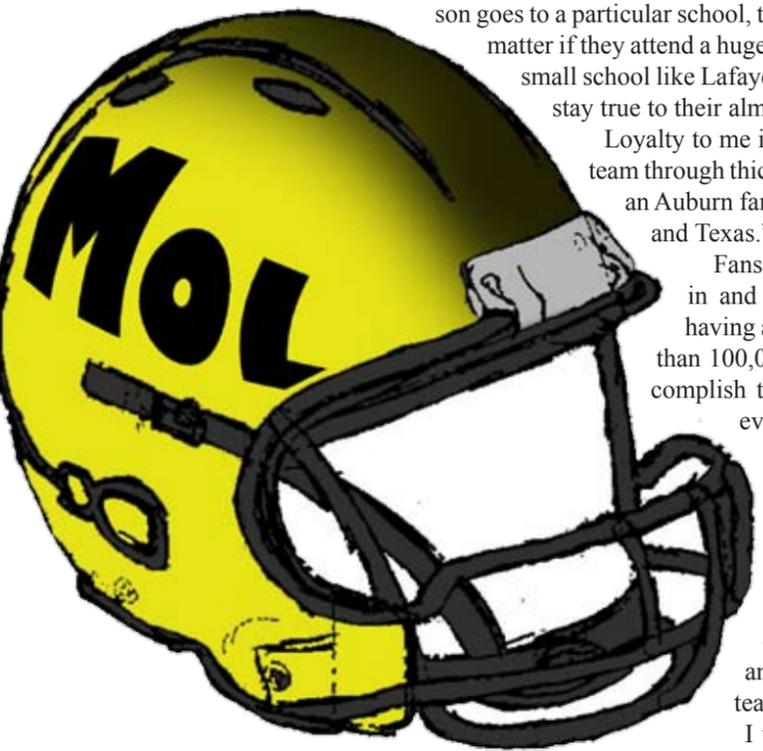
Many of the fans come from out of town, every single week. At Penn State, fans flock in their RVs starting on Tuesday for a Saturday game. At Notre Dame, Friday night pep rallies are the hottest ticket in town. Fans donate money to the program through booster clubs. Men and women, from the ages of eight through eighty, paint their faces and don their favorite jersey. Whether it's Texas, Oregon or Appalachian State, there is nothing like thousands of faithful singing the school alma mater or fight song in unison.

The college football fan base doesn't need brand names to get it motivated; it just needs amateur student-athletes playing for the love of the game. It allows the fans to get away from the daily grind every week or reminisce about their days of growing up. Fifty years from now, a freshman at the University of Notre Dame today will still be rooting for one and only one team.

For college football fans, their team is part of their life, in their blood, and that can never be debated.



Staff Sgt. Michael 'Mol' Molinaro



NASCAR: It's a complete way of life

By Sgt. Jason Thompson
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – The true and faithful fans that follow the National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing are the most loyal fans of any sport within the United States. True, you could make arguments about any of the major sports in America, but I have never witnessed fans in any other arena of competition as completely dedicated to their favorite sport as much as in NASCAR.

Fans in many other sports may travel an hour or two at most to watch their favorite team play in their hometown. They attend the game, and then that's it – go home, go to bed, wake-up for work the next morning. It's a great experience, don't get me wrong, but the novelty doesn't last long.

In NASCAR, fans travel from untold distances a full week before the race. Families plan entire vacations around race weekends. Dare try to tell a true fan to be back to work on a Monday after a race.

Nine times out of 10, every fan will plan one extra day into their vacation just in case of inclement weather. They aren't going to take that chance; they've looked forward to this weekend for months just to allow Mother Nature to spoil the show, I don't think so.

If you want to attend a Cup Series race at Bristol Motor Speedway, you are looking at sitting on a waiting list for upwards of three years. I have never heard of any sporting event in another sport that sales out three years prior to the event. It's just unheard of.

When it comes to choosing who to pull for on race day, a NASCAR fan will never venture away from his driver.

In the NFL, good teams will come and go and it always appears as though whoever's football jerseys are proudly worn throughout the sports bars across America is largely reminiscent of the records on the football field. In

NASCAR however, the same people will continue to support their favorite driver, year in, year out, through thick or thin.

Fans will go through extreme lengths to show their support for their drivers – everything from buying t-shirts and mini replica die-cast cars, to repainting their own vehicle to look like that of their driver's car on the track. If another driver has an altercation with his favorite driver, fans will go out of their way to hold a grudge against the other driver.

One thing that separates NASCAR fans well beyond any other sport is the brand name loyalty.

Tony Stewart fans will only shop at Home Depot for home improvement products.

Jeff Gordon fans will only drink Pepsi products because that is what he drinks.

Dale Earnhardt fans will never be seen driving anything but a Chevrolet because Earnhardt drove a Chevy.

These are just a few of numerous examples of fan loyalty.

NASCAR fans are absolutely nuts when it comes to supporting the sport and athletes they love, and this is why I am proud to say I am, and will always be, one of these NASCAR fans.

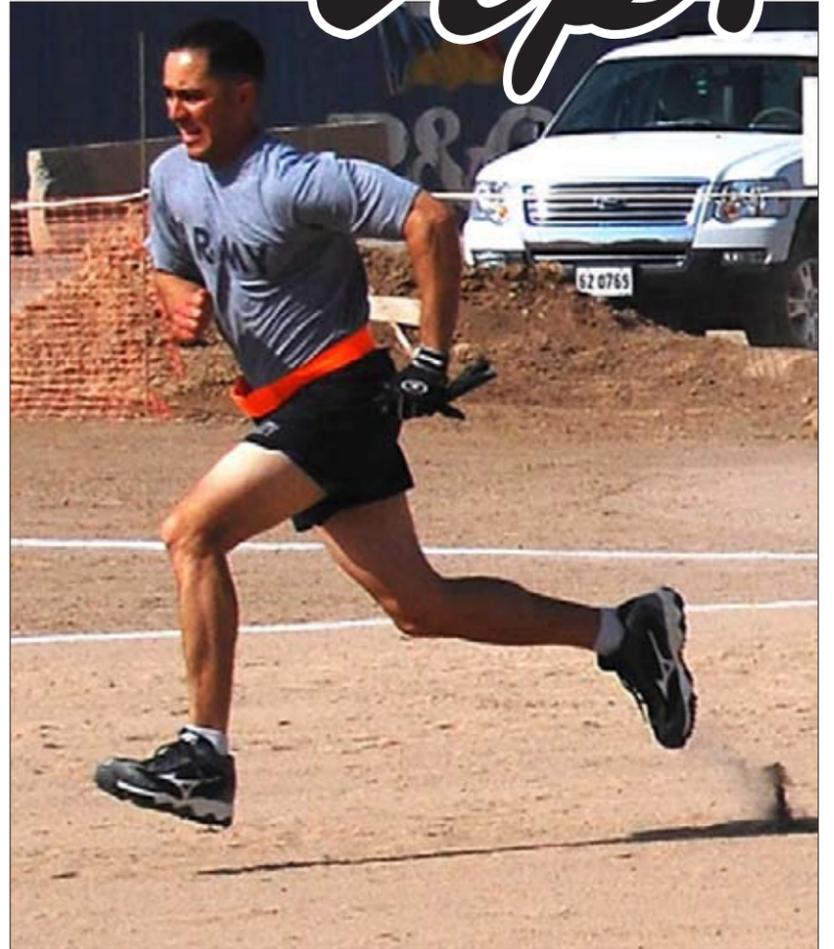


Sgt. Jason Thompson





Batter Up!



Spc. Albert Massie, an Arlington, Texas, native, serving as an automated logistical specialist with the 536th Maint. Co., 165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, swings for the fence during a slow-pitch softball game here May 14. The 536th Soldiers are a long way away from their home station at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. They are a few months into their 15 month deployment in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Chief Warrant Officer Freddy Sanabria, a Salinas, Puerto Rico, native, who is a maintenance officer with the 536th Maint. Co., 165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, sprints to second base during an inter-company softball game held here May 14. Camp Taji's well-maintained, though grassless, softball field is an unexpected site amidst blast walls and sandbags.

America's 'Pastime' helps Soldiers deal with present 'Wartime'

*Photos by Sgt. Aaron LeBlanc
165th Cbt. Sust. Spt. Bn. PAO, 1st Sust. Bde.*



Soldiers of the 536th Maint. Co., 165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, wish their competitors well following a slow-pitch softball game here May 14. Sports such as softball help to bolster the morale of troops stationed far from home and also encourage regular physical activity.