

Rakkasan Review

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Rakkasan Review

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Command Sgt. Maj.
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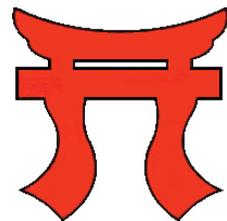
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We welcome the submission of news items, articles and photographs. Submissions should be made to the 3rd BCT Public Affairs Office via e-mail at: rakkasanspao@yahoo.com.



Pvt. Christopher McKenna

Soldiers with Troop A, 1-33rd Cav. Regt., carry school supplies into the Saad School for distribution May 21. Spc. Robert Kurtz's mother organized the items and had them shipped for distribution to Iraqi children from Fairfield, Pa. See story on page 9.

On the cover:

A team of Soldiers from Co. A, 3-187th Inf. Regt., patrols the Euphrates River during a demonstration at PB Kemple May 5. See story on page 5. (Photo by 1st Lt. Jodi Krippel)

Rakkasan 6 Notes

By Col. Dominic J. Caraccilo
3rd BCT commander

It has been a busy month for the Rakkasans. Operation Marne Piledriver was a huge success and the citizens of the Mahmudiyah Qada are reaping the benefits.

The articles in this edition of the *Rakkasan Review* detail the work our Soldiers and the Iraqis completed during the operation.

We are looking forward to the challenges ahead.

In July, the Iraqis begin their election process and we will expand our battlepace and welcome Leader Battalion back into the Rakkasan fold.

I do appreciate the hard work of our rear detachment personnel, our Family Readiness Support Assistants and all the families and volunteers.



Col. Dominic J. Caraccilo

 **Rakkasan 6**

Rakkasan 7 Notes

By Command Sgt. Maj. Gregory Patton
3rd BCT CSM

We are at the point in this deployment where change is good.

We have added nine new first sergeants and 15 new company commanders to the brigade combat team.

We continue to make gains in security, governance and economic stabil-

ity in our area of operations in southwest Baghdad.

It is more important than ever that we stay sharp and focused. The enemy is still out there and it comes in many different forms - everything from extremist activity to cutting corners, becoming too comfortable with our surroundings and failing to adhere to proper safety measures.

We have been successful up to this point by establishing standards and holding our Soldiers to these standards.

I want to thank the Rakkasan team at home for all their continued support. And, like all of the great 187th Infantry Regiment Soldiers who came before us, we are committed to our mission accomplishment.



Command Sgt. Maj. Gregory Patton

 **Rakkasan 7**

Piledriver ends, projects continue

By Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy
3rd BCT PAO NCOIC

Operation Marne Piledriver kicked off in earnest April 15 with an Iraqi Army-led air assault and clearing operations in the Mahmudiyah area, about 26 kilometers south of Baghdad.

Although the IA has led air assaults in the past, this particular mission showcased its abilities.

"This ... showed that Iraqis are securing the area, ridding it of the last bastion of [al-Qaeda in Iraq] and simultaneously injected projects, both US- and Iraqi-funded, such as clean

water, agricultural and other business opportunities and [aimed] to grow the trust in Iraqi Security Forces," said Col. Dominic Caraccilo, commander of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

Piledriver is the first major operation initiated by Task Force Marne that targeted capacity building throughout the Mahmudiyah Qada.

From refurbishing schools, clinics and water treatment facilities to rejuvenating the poultry and fish industries, the operation has yielded several projects to improve quality of life for Iraqis on many fronts.

"I think [the Iraqis have] benefited a lot, and I think they're only seeing the beginning of the benefits," said Vince Valle, team leader for the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team. "The idea is to help them get some self-sustaining projects that will generate economic activity and possibly ... generate jobs. We are seeing that already, and we'll see that a lot more as the activities develop."

While all the capacity-building projects provide essential services to the local populace, Caraccilo said the most critical improvement is providing

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Piledriver

From page 2

clean water to the people of the qada.

“If you have clean water you can have just about anything; it’s the base-line for all needs,” Caraccilo said. “We recognize that and, more importantly, the [Government of Iraq] in this qada recognizes that. That’s why they’re funding the Qaqa Water Treatment Plant which provides 40 percent of the water to the entire qada.”

Plans are still in progress to run a nine-kilometer pipe from the Mushada Water Treatment Plant, which will provide another 30 percent of the qada’s water supply to Mahmudiyah. Once the water projects are complete, Caraccilo said 85 percent of the qada will have clean water.

“Water is important even when it comes to produce or livestock, as well as human beings,” said Lt. Col. Linda Capobianco, deputy team leader of the Baghdad-4 ePRT attached to 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT). “It’s the interconnectivity between each of the projects.”

Almost as important as the projects themselves, Caraccilo said it is necessary to have GoI and local agencies involved in the process from start to finish. So delays, like the start of the water pipe, are okay because it means the government is working through how to make it happen.

“It does no good for us to just come to the rescue and give them clean water. We can do that, but it’s a temporal fix,” Caraccilo said. “A temporal fix is not what this country needs; it needs people engaged in the process.”

It’s easy to get frustrated when solutions are not immediately evident, but Caraccilo said these growing pains are necessary.

“Sometimes the means are more

important than the ends,” he said. “As long as [the government] is engaging and talking to [others in] its hierarchal structure, having meetings, debates ... I have no doubt they will eventually lay that pipe.

“The government processes ... have to be allowed to take their course,” he said, adding that he is convinced the process will improve every time. “They’ll get better and better at what they do and provide essential services to the people and then the timeline will shorten every time.”

In addition to the water-improvement initiatives, Operation Marne Piledriver resulted in the delivery of two ambulances to the Lutifiyah Medical Clinic, the reopening of the Yusifiyah Wholesale Market which had been closed since 2004, the establishment of two radio stations in Mahmudiyah and Yusifiyah to entertain and inform local citizens and the grand opening of the Yusifiyah Iraqi Police Station.

The purchase of 95,000 eggs of Dutch descent has re-energized the poultry industry, which had been dormant for several years.

“[We] imported eggs for a better-quality chicken ... and feed was imported to feed the chicks after they hatch,” Valle said. “But we’ve been working to eventually move over to a situation where the eggs and ... feed will be produced locally, the chickens will be slaughtered locally and will be fresh halal chickens, which we think can compete quite favorably with some of the imported frozen chickens.”

Valle said the poultry industry has deep roots and a long history in Iraq and hopes thousands of jobs will form by this re-energizing effort.

Other projects include 16 fish

farms that have been identified for refurbishment; 50 solar-powered pumps have been ordered to oxygenate the water for the fish ponds. Work on the Yusifiyah power substation is almost 80 percent complete. Training for nahia and qada council members is ongoing.

“A lot of things didn’t come to conclusion during the operation but they will continue to go on and a lot of them will lead to other projects,” Capobianco said.

Construction of a greenhouse is underway, with plans for three more in the future. Cell phone towers and improvements to produce chillers, slaughterhouses, feed mills and poultry houses are also on the horizon. Additionally, billboards are being placed along the main supply routes that provide information on Iraqi Security Forces and the GoI.

Caraccilo said all these efforts mesh to show the Mahmudiyah Qada can flourish on its own.

Although progress is evident, more will come before the government can stand on its own and meet the needs of its people without support from outside sources.

“The GoI, right now, functions at the grass-roots level, and until we have elections at the provincial level ... there will always be a challenge until you get that hierarchy in place, and it has to be an elected hierarchy,” Caraccilo said. “Right now there is a GoI that is sovereign and there is a local government. They’re just two different flavors – at some point they’ll be the same flavor.”

Such progress takes time.

“Democracies don’t grow overnight,” he said. “Democracies don’t grow in five years; they grow over dozens of years.”

BEAT THE HEAT. DRINK WATER.

Rakkasans prepare to patrol waterways

By Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy
3rd BCT PAO NCOIC

Most Soldiers who join the Army can honestly say they would have never imagined patrolling the Euphrates River in a boat.

Some Rakkasans will soon be able to say they've done just that.

Company A, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), is training to operate boats the unit received May 2.

"I'm pretty excited," said Cpl. Tomas Montoya, Co. A, 3-187th Inf. Regt. "I never thought I'd have the opportunity to work on boats over here in Iraq."

The boats will create new opportunities and capabilities in their operations along the Euphrates River, said Lt. Col. Andrew Rohling, commander of 3-187th Inf. Regt. "They bring a sense of security, strength and versatility the local populace has not always seen from the water."

The boats add invaluable dimensions to the unit's ability to conduct full-spectrum operations, said Maj. Curtis Crum, 3rd BCT operations officer. "The boats give the brigade a unique capability that is not typically resident in this type of unit's arsenal."

The unit's predecessors, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), ordered the boats in November 2007 to conduct riverine operations along the Euphrates to deter insurgent activity. The boats were delivered to 3-187th Inf. Regt., in January.

Since river operations are usually outside the scope of Soldiers' duties, the battalion sent eight Soldiers to Kuwait in January to train on operating the vessels.

"It was excellent, they did great training," said Pfc. Travis Baldrige of the Army divers and Coast Guardsmen who taught the course. Baldrige said the three-week course in Kuwait taught boat docking, engine repair, man-overboard drills, driving the boat under varying conditions, docking the boat and repairing major malfunctions. Now, almost four months later, Baldrige is in the instructor's seat passing on the knowledge he gained in Kuwait.

Baldrige is one of five in Co. A, 3-187th Inf. Regt., training other Soldiers in the unit on boat operations.

"It feels really good to be involved in this," he said. "I'm new to the Army, I've been in for two years and it's nice that they expect me to go



1st Lt. Jodi Krippel

A team of Soldiers from Co. A, 3-187th Inf. Regt., patrols the Euphrates River during a demonstration at PB Kemple May 5.

manders' guidance and input from the eight Soldiers who certified in Kuwait.

"The first thing in our mind is the safety of personnel in the boat," said Staff Sgt. Clifton Sanders, lead instructor for a five-day course designed to ensure all Soldiers who man the boats are physically and technically qualified for the task.

The first day, each Soldier has to complete a 50-meter confidence swim while wearing their Army Combat Uniform and boots. They also have to tread water for three minutes wearing ACUs, the improved outer tactical vest, advanced combat helmet and a personal flotation device.

"No weak swimmers or non-swimmers will be allowed on boat operations," Sanders said firmly. Those who don't meet the standards the first day have an opportunity to retest at the end of the course.

The remaining four days of training cover boat preparation, operation of the boat, battle drills and practical exercises that help prepare Soldiers for situations they may encounter during riverine operations.

"Our first mission will be ... river reconnaissance," Sanders said, an avid swimmer and certified lifeguard who voiced commitment to retraining all weak and non-swimmers.

Before executing any actual missions, Soldiers will identify potential hazards, determine loading and departure points and seek out areas frequented by criminal factions.

"The boats allow the Rakkasans to deter illegal activity and deter insurgents from potentially using the river to transit weapons and personnel," Crum said. "As a BCT, we have added to an already incredible capability, and this ensures, as we continue to assist the Government of Iraq and Iraqi Security Forces in stabilizing acceptable security levels, it will also foster systems that set conditions for long-term Iraqi self-reliance."

above and beyond the standards and to train up other people."

A training plan was established based on the battalion and company com-

Sayafiyah celebrates change

By Sgt. Kevin Stabinsky
2-3 ID Public Affairs

After nearly three months of reconstruction, Sayafiyah residents celebrated the simultaneous openings of the Sayafiyah Governance Center, Veterinary Clinic and Health Clinic May 20.

“This is their day,” said Capt. Joe Johnson, commander of Company C, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, currently attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

All three of the projects were a result of teamwork between Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), and the civilian population.

“They are great people down here who want to help themselves,” said Sgt. Jeremy Johnson, a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-187th Inf. Regt. “They put a lot of hard work into this,” he said, pointing to the restored health center. “Before, it was just rubble.”

Like the buildings, the community itself had been in dire straits. Once a safe haven for al-Qaeda in Iraq, the community

was held in bondage out of fear, said Lt. Col. R.J. Lillibridge, 1-187th Inf. Regt. commander.

The tide turned for the better with the arrival of the 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division in January.

With the support of this unit, the beginnings of a Sons of Iraq program took shape. However, due to the end of their deployment, the 5-7th Cav. Regt. could not pursue any long-term reconstruction efforts in the area before handing responsibility over to the 1-187th Inf. Regt.

When the 1-187th Inf. Regt. first arrived, Capt. Johnson said his unit began to strengthen the recently-risen SoI program and assess the area’s needs. Those needs, in addition to the health and vet clinic, included restoring two water

pump stations, two water treatment plants and two schools, he said.

But most importantly was the need to establish a government structure in the area.

“We want to see Iraqi people taking care of Iraqis, and the Iraqi government facilitating the needs of their representatives,” said Capt. Johnson, of Baton Rouge, La.

Achieving this required the creation of a city council and linking them with higher government organizations, he said.

Currently, Sayafiyah has an 11-member city council, with the council head reporting to the Rasheed Nahia council. From there, concerns are sent to the Mahmudiyah Qada and finally to the central government, Lillibridge said.

“It’s little government reaching up to big govern-

ment,” said Lillibridge, a native of Smithfield, R.I. “It is a positive sign. Before we solved all their problems, now we’re letting them solve their own.”

The work has begun to pay off, and the yield is shown by recent Government of Iraq involvement. The GoI rural service committee chairman, Mr. Mashadanni, has visited the area, as well as members of the Ministry of Education, Lillibridge said.

Besides instilling confidence in the people about their government, these commitments pave the way for considerable relief to American taxpayer involvement. Originally, projects such as the building of the health clinic, vet clinic and governance center were funded by Commander’s Emergency Relief Program funds, Lillibridge said.

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A Sayafiyah government official cuts the ribbon to celebrate the opening of the Sayafiyah Governance Center May 20. Besides the center, the Sayafiyah Health Clinic and Veterinary Clinic also opened.

Sgt. Kevin Stabinsky

Uthman Feed Mill renovations complete

By Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy
3rd BCT PAO NCOIC

After months of planning and hard work, the Uthman Feed Mill celebrated its completion of refurbishments in Mahmudiyah, about 26 kilometers south of Baghdad, May 21.

The finished feed mill now boasts a sound-proof generator and increased ability to provide pelletized feed for the re-energized poultry and fish industries.

“My feed mill shows the continued commitment of American forces to the area,” said Uthman Daheesh, the owner. “Without their assistance this would not be possible.”

The mill also now has the dyes it previously lacked to pelletize feed.

“Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia have dyes that are able to produce fish and chicken food, but these are (some of) the first to enter Iraq,” Daheesh said. “This is a very important day for Iraq.”

Feed in pelletized form allows growers to control the amount of proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals in their feed.

“Controlling the diet can ensure the birds reach optimal growth be-

fore slaughter,” said 2nd Lt. Bronson Hayes, Uthman Feed Mill project manager with 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

Traditional feeds do not allow farmers the ability to dictate the diets and often produce birds of various sizes.

The area poultry association plays an integral role by working with poultry houses, processing plants and feed mills in recent efforts to boost the poultry industry in the qada. The association worked with Department of State agricultural experts in the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team attached to the 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), to identify needs for the Uthman Feed Mill and ensure necessary improvements were made.

“The chicken industry was once very big in the area, with the Mahmudiyah Poultry Association and [Coalition] forces helping, it will hopefully become stronger than it was in the past,” said Sheikh Ibrahim Daheesh, brother of Uthman Feed Mill owner and influential leader in the Mahmudiyah area.

Sayafiyah

From previous page

More than \$3 million was invested into the area.

Now that Sayafiyah has a voice in the GoI, Iraqi money is starting to make its way into the rural agriculture-based society. The Sayafiyah Council has already requested funds to restore seven additional area schools.

The funds will come from \$8 million pledged to the Mahmudiyah Qada, Lillibridge said.

With the GoI finally making an investment into the area, it now works to protect that investment. Because none of the day’s events or other improvements could have happened without security established, GoI officials are sending troops into the area to help maintain security goals and keep al-Qaeda out.

In the next 30 days, a company of Iraqi Army Soldiers will take up residence with the 1-187th Inf. Regt. at Combat Outpost Meade, one of several bases manned by the Soldiers in Sayafiyah. A second IA company will follow sometime in the next three months, settling in at Patrol Base Vanderhorn, Lillibridge said.

“It makes our job easier,” said Sgt. Johnson, an Aiken, S.C. native, of the Iraqi involvement.

Such ease will help both the Coalition forces operating in the area and IA joining them, since much work still needs to be done in the community to improve standards of living, said Col. Terry Ferrell, commander of 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. But for now, he said it is important to celebrate the progress evident in the new buildings.

“There’s work to be done, but not today,” said Ferrell, of Huntington, W.Va. “Today we celebrate and tomorrow we get back to work improving the community.”

Got news?

**Send your story ideas to
rakkasanspao@yahoo.com**

1-33 MiTT teaches Soldier skills to Iraqi Army

By Pvt. Christopher McKenna
3rd BCT Public Affairs

A Military Transition Team stationed at FOB Falcon, about eight kilometers south of Baghdad, plays a rigorous and important role in rebuilding the capacity of Iraq.

The MiTT helps the Iraqi Army to operate in an optimal manner, said Sgt. Chad Highland, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

Soldiers from the MiTT, assigned to 1-33rd Cav. Regt., teach a five-day Iraqi basic training course using U.S. Army knowledge converted into something Iraqi Army Soldiers can execute.

“It’s basically a course to teach basic Soldiering skills and something to refresh what they ... already learned in their basic training,” said San Antonio native Sgt. Adam Troxel, MiTT gunner and trainer.

The five-day course, taught monthly, has a capacity for 25 Soldiers; five from each of the companies with 3rd Battalion, 25th Brigade, 6th IA Division.

Before assuming their duties, the team went through a MiTT course in Taji providing them with guidance on teaching Iraqis, said Highland, from San Clemente, Calif.

The instruction focuses on first aid, guard duty, unit movement techniques, vehicle search, reaction to improvised explosive devices, rules of engagement and other soldiering skills.

“The course itself attempts to focus more toward hands-on training so that the Soldiers can take what we teach them and utilize it out at their battle positions and checkpoints, which is where the majority of the Soldiers coming to us work,” Highland said.

When the MiTT is not conducting classes, the team travels to IA checkpoints and battle positions to ensure the proper procedures

learned are being implemented.

“When you actually go out and see them using what you taught them it is rewarding,” Troxel said. “Besides, we are all noncommissioned officers and it is our job to train Soldiers. It’s a reward in itself to be able to stand here and say ‘I help train Soldiers from a completely different country’s army than our own.’”



Pvt. Christopher McKenna
Sergeant Angel Otero, from Washington, D.C., MiTT communications noncommissioned officer in charge of HHT, 1-33rd Cav. Regt., gives a block of instruction to IA Soldiers on sector sketches at FOB Falcon, Iraq, May 5.



Pvt. Christopher McKenna
Sergeant Chad Highland, from San Clemente, Calif., MiTT operations sergeant for HHT, 1-33rd Cav. Regt., teaches a course on movement formations and techniques to IA Soldiers at FOB Falcon, Iraq, May 6.



Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy

Ready, set...

Rakkasans take off at the start of the Asian Pacific Islander Month run at Camp Striker May 25.

Rakkasans hand out school supplies

By Pvt. Christopher McKenna
3rd BCT Public Affairs

Rakkasan Soldiers distributed school supplies to the Saad and al-Zuwaiti Schools, about 11 kilometers southwest of Baghdad, May 21.

The Soldiers, with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), distributed a total of nine boxes filled with pens, pencils, erasers, paper, folders and other supplies.

“Basically, anything you would send your child to school with back home was included,” said Staff Sgt. Michael Wade, native of Auburn, Mass., section sergeant for Troop A.

Schoolchildren and generous people of Fairfield, Pa., donated everything distributed on that day.

“Tammy Kurtz, mother of one of our Soldiers, a teacher’s aide in Fairfield, contacted us and wanted to do something with the students as a civic’s lesson,” Wade said.

Various stores and shops in the Fairfield area took interest and also contributed to the donation of items.

“My mother asked me what she could do to help out here, so I gave her details on the schools,” said Spc.

Robert Kurtz, a native of Fairfield, Pa., scout for Troop A, 1-33rd Cav. Regt. “Naturally a caring person, she wanted to send maybe a box of school supplies. When people realized what she was doing, help started to come from all over, growing into a big fundraiser where I’m from.”

Kurtz’s mother asked for a list of items that the Iraqi children could use, which was relayed back to other people wanting to help.

“It shows a level of understanding by both the children and adults back home,” Wade said. “One of the five pillars of Islam is giving to the poor. Most of the people out here look at America as rich, and it’s nice to know that 8- and 9-year-olds back in the States are helping 8- and 9-year-olds in Iraq.”

“Maybe on the children the message is lost, but I think, for the adults –

especially the teachers – they realize that this is actually a big moment,” he said.

This is the first time the Rakkasans of 1-33rd Cav. Regt. have handed out school supplies in the area.

“Usually when items are distributed it tends to be things like

water, food and medical supplies,” Kurtz said. “It’s good to know that people who have are willing to give to those who need.”

Wade said he thinks the effects of this goodwill gesture will be felt for a long time.

When the Rakkasans arrived in Iraq, Kurtz said he didn’t see many children commuting to and from school during missions.

“Now every time we go out on a mission I see children walking the streets, moving around without fear,” he said.



Pvt. Christopher McKenna

A teacher in the Saad School hands supplies to one of her students during a school supply distribution May 21. Spc. Robert Kurtz’s mother organized the items and had them shipped for distribution to Iraqi children from Fairfield, Pa.

Armor companies change positions

By Pvt. Christopher McKenna
3rd BCT Public Affairs

Two companies from two different battalions traded places during a ceremony at Patrol Base Lion's Den, about 15 kilometers southwest of Baghdad, May 10.

The Soldiers of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment will soon head back to Fort Benning, Ga., after a 15-month deployment as Co. B, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment fills in their place.

Company B, 2-69th Armor Regt., part of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, was attached to 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), during their deployment.

"You've demonstrated the highest standard of professionalism and honor that Soldiers share, extending from within these walls ... into the local area," said Lt. Col. Brian Copper-smith, 1-33rd Cav. Regt. commander.

"We're proud now to pass the mantle from the 2-69th to the 1-35th."

The 1-35th Armor Regt. was originally established in 1941 as the 5th Armored Regiment and has served previous tours in 2003 and 2005 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I assure that we will do everything in our power, with the cooperation of our Iraqi friends, [to] maintain the security in this area and continue to improve the quality of life for the people of Radwaniyah," said Capt. Eric Morton, commander of Co B., 1-35th Armor Regt.

Soldiers of Co. B, 2-69th Armor Regt., received Combat Order of the Spur certificates, granted to all caval-



Pvt. Christopher McKenna
Captain Sean Morrow, commander of Co. B, 2-69th Armor Regt., furls the company colors during a transfer of authority ceremony May 10 at PB Lion's Den.

rymen who served in a combat environment.

"I am confident that the relationships we built [with the Iraqis] will only grow stronger with the new unit," said Capt. Sean Morrow, Co B., 2-69th Armor Regt. commander. "I know that they are prepared to take Radwaniyah to the next level."

Government comes to people of Qarghuli

By Pvt. Christopher McKenna
3rd BCT Public Affairs

Local government officials visited tribal leaders of Qarghuli to discuss a number of issues May 3.

"The government representatives approached us to speak of our concerns," said Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, who held the meeting in his home. "This is out of the ordinary. We are usually the ones going to them about our concerns and issues."

Rakkasan leadership of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Divi-

sion (Air Assault), attended the meeting but only to observe.

"It's rare for me to come to a meeting and not have to mediate, but I didn't have to do that today," said Col. Dominic Caraccilo, commander of 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT). "That just goes to show that the government cares about its people and is taking the steps to move forward in the right direction."

Many concerns were raised during the meeting, such as the farmers market, which recently reopened in Yusifiyah.

"As a leader for the Yusifiyah Nahia, it is my job to make sure that my people's concerns are known, and that steps are being taken to help those concerns," said Sheikh Somar Abd'al'amer Kother Hamdi al-Anbari, Yusifiyah Nahia director. The town of Qarghuli falls under the government jurisdiction of Yusifiyah.

Abdullah said government officials came during a time of stability in Yusifiyah, which can be attributed to the combined security presence of Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and

Coalition forces.

"Yusifiyah has become a symbol for Iraq as to how multiple tribes can coexist with one another without having to worry about violence," Somar said.

He added that months ago things were much different, with violence in the area at a peak. The nahia is coming together, Somar said, in ways many could have never expected.

"Now that good is being shown on a regular basis, it has become a convenience to work hand in hand with the government," Abdullah said.

4 Rakkasan Soldiers selected for induction into prestigious Sgt. Audie Murphy Club

By Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy
3rd BCT PAO NCOIC

Four Rakkasans from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), have been selected for induction into the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club since the brigade arrived in Iraq.

After a series of grueling boards at the battalion, brigade and division levels, these noncommissioned officers proved themselves to be the caliber of Soldier the board members sought.

Sergeant First Class Anthony Crisostomo, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment; Staff Sgt. Johnny White, HHC, 3rd Special Troops Battalion; Staff Sgt. Benjamin Richards, Company A, 626th Brigade Support Battalion; and Staff Sgt. Amos Sward, HHC, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), were recommended.

"I think the Audie Murphy Club is a prestigious club made up of NCOs

who wanted to be part of something great," White said. "The Army in itself is a great institution, but within any organization there are a few people who like to set themselves apart; the Audie Murphy Club presents that opportunity."

Sward likened the selection into the prestigious board to the Expert Infantryman Badge.

"It is an individual accomplishment that says a lot about your character," he said.

The general consensus of the inductees is that studying could not be limited to just a few areas, and personal experience counts for a lot.

"Unlike other boards, you can't just know the answer," Sward said. "You have to know the regulation and how to apply it."

In a deployed environment, the operational tempo is generally higher than usual, the duty hours are longer and can be unpredictable, making personal time limited. Under these conditions, time management and self

discipline are key in preparing for the board.

While it is indeed a challenge, the selectees encourage others to take part in the board.

"The process ... is very rewarding whether you make it the first time or not. You learn so much," White said. "It forces you to read deeply into different regulations and manuals, (and) it opens your eyes to a lot of things."

The Rakkasans' senior-enlisted member is especially proud of his Soldiers and said induction under Task Force Marne is especially poignant.

"I congratulate these outstanding NCOs for this huge accomplishment," said Command Sgt. Maj. Gregory Patton, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

(AASLT) command sergeant major. "Being selected for induction into the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club is truly an honor, especially while serving with Sgt. Audie Murphy's own historic 3rd Infantry Division."

An induction ceremony will be held at a later date.

What is the most valuable thing your father taught you?

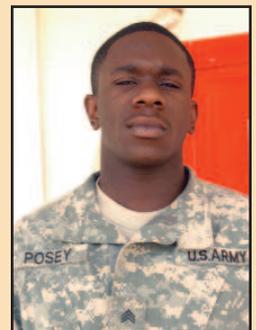


"... to be me, no matter what anybody else says."

Spc. Dorian Garza
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
3rd Special Troops Battalion

"... to do my best at everything in life."

Sgt. Charles Posey
Headquarters and Headquarters Troop,
1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment



"... to always be myself."

Spc. Jeremiah Miron
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
3rd Brigade Combat Team



"... to work hard and take pride in what I do."

1st Lt. Jennifer Van Wyck
Company C,
626th Brigade Support Battalion,

