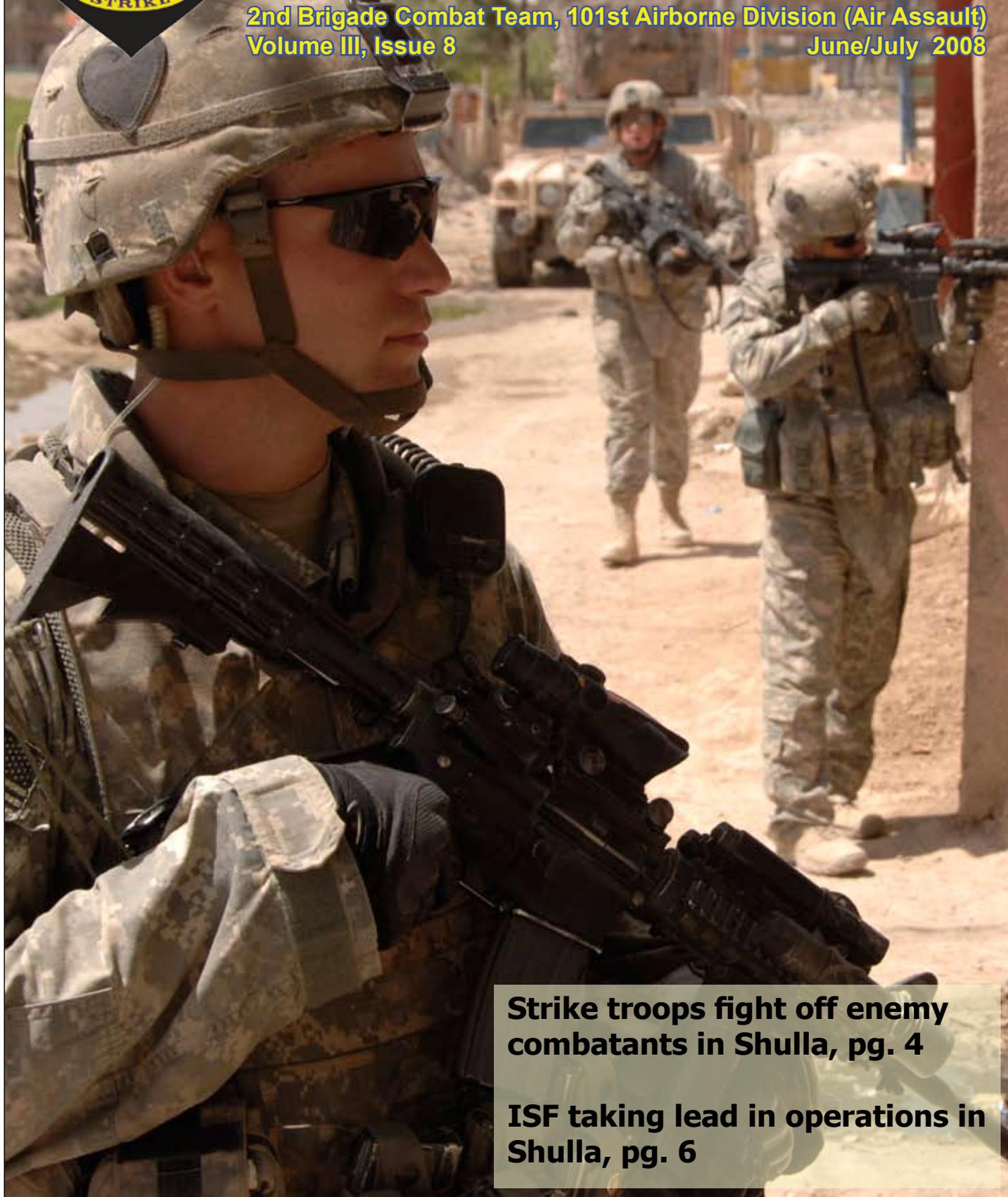




The Heart Beat

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)
Volume III, Issue 8
June/July 2008



Strike troops fight off enemy combatants in Shulla, pg. 4

ISF taking lead in operations in Shulla, pg. 6

Strike 6



Col. William B. Hickman

I hope everyone took a moment to reflect on our nation's birthday this

July 4. We conducted a patriotic prayer breakfast here and 55 Strike Soldiers took the opportunity to reenlist at the Multi-National Corps - Iraq Headquarters, in what is believed to be the largest reenlistment of troops overseas in history. I am honored to be surrounded by great Americans who have chosen a life of service to their nation.

All uniformed service members and their families are making sacrifices that are critical during this time of conflict.

Our deployment is over halfway complete. We are at the lowest rates of violence here in west Baghdad since we arrived. This is largely due to your efforts here in working with the Iraqi people and their leaders.

Despite the low rates of violence, we can not afford to become complacent. There are still people out there who will do what they can to disrupt

progress. Do the basics right, do not take shortcuts, and leaders enforce standards and we will do well. It is all about discipline. Discipline saves lives.

I want to thank all the families who keep us in your thoughts and support your loved ones here. We are fortunate to have such a wonderful Family Readiness Group who is focused on taking care of our Strike family. I appreciate everything you do and continue to do.

In closing, please take care of each other. We have come a long way, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

I pray that God may bless you, the United States of America and the Iraqi people.

Strike 6
"Air Assault"



Col. William B. Hickman
Commander

Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder
CSM

Maj. Jose F. Garcia
Public Affairs Officer

Sgt. Paul Monroe
Public Affairs NCOIC

Sgt. James P. Hunter
Editor

Submissions:

To submit stories, photographs, editorials, comments and suggestions, contact Sgt. James P. Hunter at james.p.hunter@us.army.mil. Please include rank, first and last name, job title, unit and phone number.

The Heart Beat is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of The Heart Beat are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government or the Department of Defense.

STRIKE!!!

In this issue of the Heart Beat

Commander's Voice	Pg. 2
Sergeant Major's Call	Pg. 3
Soldiers fight off enemy in Shulla	Pg. 4
ISF took lead in securing Shulla	Pg. 6
Troops aide patients at Riva Ridge	Pg. 7
Faces of the Heart	Pg. 8-9
Troops strengthen relationship in Mansour	Pg. 10
Troops assist at carpet weaving company	Pg. 13
Troops, IA patrol Hurriyah	Pg. 15
55 Strike troops re-up in Baghdad	Pg. 20
In Memoriam	Pg. 24

2nd Brigade Combat Team - "Strike"

On The Cover:

Staff Sgt. Michael Mason, a native of Orlando, Fla., keeps a watchful eye down an alley while providing security during a dismounted patrol in northern Ghazaliyah May 15. Mason serves with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division - Baghdad. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles W. Gill, 55th Combat Camera)

Strike 7



Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder

I hope everybody had a good 4th of July holiday. The brigade and the Army had a great day when more than 1,200 Soldiers reenlisted, of which 55 were from the Strike Brigade. This was an outstanding event. I want to thank all of the leaders and Soldiers who made this event possible.

I would like to recognize and congratulate Bravo Battery, 1-320th, for their outstanding showing at the Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Quarter competition. Staff Sgt. Angelo and Pfc. Stout were the respective winners. This competition is not just a board. It is a one day event that challenges Soldiers physically and mentally. The event consists of a modified Army Physical Fitness Test, stress shoot, hands on common task training, a written test, and a board.

There will only be one more competition prior to us redeploying I encourage all units to have representa-

tives compete. This month's winners received a Strike Knife, coins, and an Army Commendation Medal. Again, congratulations to Staff Sgt. Angelo, and Pfc. Stout.

While on leave, I had the opportunity to visit with several of our Soldiers who are at Walter Reed, and about 30 who are assigned or attached to the Warrior Transition Battalion. I was very proud

and humbled to have the chance to meet with them and their families.

I also attended the monthly remembrance (memorial) ceremony and it was a great tribute for our Fallen Soldiers and their Families.

The last topic I want to address is the need to continue training both individual and collective tasks. Fifteen months is a long time to go without training. We can not rely on our last combat operation as a training event. Individual skills need to be trained also. We continue to receive new Soldiers in theater.

We must certify their proficiency. We have Soldiers returning from leave. They too need refresher training. Some leaders will feel they do not have time to train. Outstanding leaders will make time. It doesn't take much to really make a difference. Make the time. Develop your self and your Soldiers.



A Soldier with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, searches through a garage for weapons or improvised-explosive device making material near the western Baghdad neighborhood of Shulla May 16 while receiving heavy enemy fire. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles W. Gill, 55th Combat Camera)



Sgt. Joey Brumfield and Capt. Robert Gillespie, both with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, maneuver down a path to their next objective while receiving heavy indirect, small arms and rocket propelled grenade fire during searching operations in Shulla May 16. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles W. Gill, 55th Combat Camera)

Strike Soldiers fight off enemy combatants in Shulla

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

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from Troop B, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), received a tip of a possible weapons cache just on the outskirts of Shulla in western Baghdad May 16.

The scene going into the area was almost unreal. Animal carcasses littered the fields surrounding Shulla. The creek running to Shulla's south filled the air with an awful odor. As they pushed into the area an improvise-explosive device immediately blew, thankfully not striking the troops, and was immediately followed by three rocket propelled grenades.

For nearly the next two hours, they continued to search the area for the possible cache while receiving indirect mortar and RPG fire. The Soldier's fought back against the cowardly criminals, pushing 5.56mm and .50 caliber rounds into the heart of these enemy combatants.

"We encountered perimeter defenses in Shulla. We were able to fight through those and take the objective of what we were looking for and conducted our mission safely until we were finished and

moved back," said Capt. Robert Gillespie, a native of Great River, N.Y. "Bravo Troop is definitely ready for anything that happens in Ghazaliyah and obviously as operations progress is ready to continue with whatever role we are asked to take on in support of the IA and the Iraqi Government to help in regaining control of their city."

The troops 4th Platoon, lead by 1st Lt. Andrew Bowling, were leading the convoy into Shulla to search for the possible cache.

"We were going to clear the field to the west and [1st Platoon] was going to clear the field to the east. We crossed the bridge and everything was going fine... we were about to go into the gate and an IED went off," said Bowling.

Initially, the Soldiers were all a bit shocked and surprised.

"I called up to my lead truck to make sure everyone was okay," said Bowling, a native of Medfield, Mass. "They were!"

With the smoke filling the air it was hard to tell what was going on, said Sgt. Daniel Unger, a native of Palestine, Texas. Shortly after it went off, the insurgents fired an RPG down the road traveling from east to west and buzzed past the whole convoy.

"One bounced off of our bumper, not exploding, and one went over Red Platoon's truck and stuck in a wall," said Pfc. Matthew Tonkovich, a native of Algonquin, Ill. "We started receiving small arms fire from the west, coming from a Taxi, and just directly from the east from a red car. We ended up getting two trucks on line to

watch east, and we had two trucks to the south to watch."

Fourth Platoon set up a support by fire position where they took contact and began engaging and suppressing the enemy. 1st Platoon pulled up to a gate. The lead truck couldn't enter, so waited for the second truck to ram through the gate and into the junk yard. While waiting, an individual stepped out with an RPG and shot at them, though missing.

"It went over head. My gunner starting suppressing," said Unger. "Once we fired he hopped back behind a fence."

Fourth Platoon had guys firing at them with PKC machine gun fire. These men then hopped into a car and proceeded to speed their way; however, it was the last move they made.

"We fired warning shots and they didn't stop, so we engaged them," said Tonkovich, a gunner with 4th Platoon, Troop B, 1-75 Cav.

They were also receiving small arms fire from a three-story building; however couldn't positively identify the shooter, but the Bradley drivers could.

They immediately engaged their targets on the three-story rooftop.

From what Tonkovich understands the blast from the rounds blew one of the men off the rooftop, falling three-stories to the garbage ridden ground. It must have been a bad day for that insurgent.

"Then mortars starting falling on top of us. They were pretty accurate," said Bowling.

With RPG and small arms fire flying through the air, now they had to deal with the possibility of a mortar falling in on them.

"My heart was beating pretty fast. I got kind of excited. I just did not want to get hit," said Tonkovich. "It was pretty loud. My ears were ringing."

With 4th Platoon ensuring the perimeter security, 1st Platoon, led by 1st Lt. Logan Dick, were through the gate and into the junk yard to dismount and begin their sweep for the possible cache.

They swept across fields, through old connex's and garages, clearing areas.

"We put as many dismounts on the ground as we could and started clearing the area," said Unger. "Half-way through we had to use bolt cutters to breach some buildings and a fence. We cleared that building and brought in a dog team to search for the cache."

About the time they entered the compound, was about the time 4th

Platoon started receiving indirect fire.

"The enemy was basically walking the mortars in on them. At first they were hitting hundreds of meters away. About the time we finished clearing with the dog, they were calling up on the radio that they were landing within 20 meters of the vehicle," said Unger. "They then started walking them in on our position. We cleared back to the east. As we began moving back to the trucks we received two more RPGs. The dog had a hard time clearing with all the indirect fire and small arms."

Once 1st Platoon got back to their trucks they pushed over to the gate they had previously busted through and began engaging enemy combatants posing a threat to their lives with 5.56mm rounds.

Through all the chaos, and rounds falling on the battlefield, Unger said he was very pleased with his Soldiers performance.

"That was the first time we worked with [4th Platoon] that directly as one unit with one setting up support by fire," said Unger. "I was very pleased and very confident. They took the majority of the contact. They took the IED and the initial fire. The indirect was landing in mere meters of their vehicles, but they continued to engage them and kept them off our back."

Unger said his troops have never let him down, and this time was no different even with the plan having to adjust multiple times to accomplish the mission and hold off the insurgents.

"Multiple times the plan was changed, but the strong point of our platoon is that we adapt really well," Unger said. "Security on the ground was maintained."

Lt. Col. John Hermeling, a native of Green Bay, Wisc., was also very pleased with his Soldiers performance.

"Bravo Troop fought well. It's good that when the enemy presents itself we are able to kill them so they can't present themselves again," said Hermeling,

commander, 1-75th Cav. "It discourages others from making a mistake from joining that criminal element who continues to fight against the Government of Iraq."

At the end of the battle, though no cache was ever found, they did positively confirm that they killed two Special Group criminals; however, the Soldiers believe they got anywhere from six to nine.



photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO

Sgt. Daniel Unger, a native of Palestine, Texas, directs his troops into position while searching for a possible weapons cache on the outskirts of Shulla in western Baghdad May 16. Unger serves with 1st Platoon, Troop B, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

ISF, with Coalition backing, took the lead in disrupting Special Groups in Shulla

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

It all started when the Iraqi Army took key positions in and around the western Baghdad neighborhood of Shulla. Through raids, they were able to successfully gain control of the Office of Muqtada al-Sadr, a power station, dental clinic and apartment complex key to securing Shulla.

With Coalition Forces set in blocking positions, totally isolating Shulla, and Iraqi Security Forces manning checkpoints on the outskirts of the area, they are preventing the repositioning and reinforcement of Special Group criminals in and out of Shulla.

Shulla, a town predominately made up of Shia, is currently controlled by Special Group criminals, said Lt. Col. John Hermeling, a native of Green Bay, Wisc., and commander of the 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). These criminals, who are ready to fight, are terrorizing the people of western Baghdad through intimidation and extortion.

“For this side of Baghdad, and to a degree for all of Baghdad, it’s pretty important that this former sanctuary and base of operations for Special Groups is taken away and under government control. It’s been an area where they can stage and have a safe-haven,” Hermeling said.

It’s essential the Iraqi Army takes Shulla because the permanent presence they can establish there will make it that much more difficult to make it a safe-haven for insurgents to store

caches and weapons that are used against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, said Maj. Jim Huber, a native of Jerome, Idaho.

“Right now the Iraqi Army is trying to regain control of Shulla by being in the lead themselves. This current operation going on in Shulla is an IA lead, IA resourced operation that the 22nd Brigade is in charge of,” said Huber, the executive officer for the 22nd

Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division Military Transition Team. “Essentially they’re initial goal was to take some key positions, buildings and terrain on the outskirts of Shulla to regain control of the entire area. This goal has been completed. They learned a few lessons along the way; however, they have achieved their objectives.”

The next step for them will be to establish a permanent presence in Shulla just like they have in the rest of their area of operation, Huber said. They will need to establish that permanent presence and gain the confidence of the community.

With the Iraqi Army in the lead, Coalition Troops are helping throughout the Strike area of operations. Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment continue to patrol in northern Ghazaliyah, just south of Shulla.

They are assisting with the isolation of Shulla, which is an area the Government of Iraq would like to assert more control over and have a permanent presence with Iraqi Army elements, said Hermeling. They are just assisting the Iraqi Army to keep the special groups from disrupting Coalition and Iraqi Army operations.

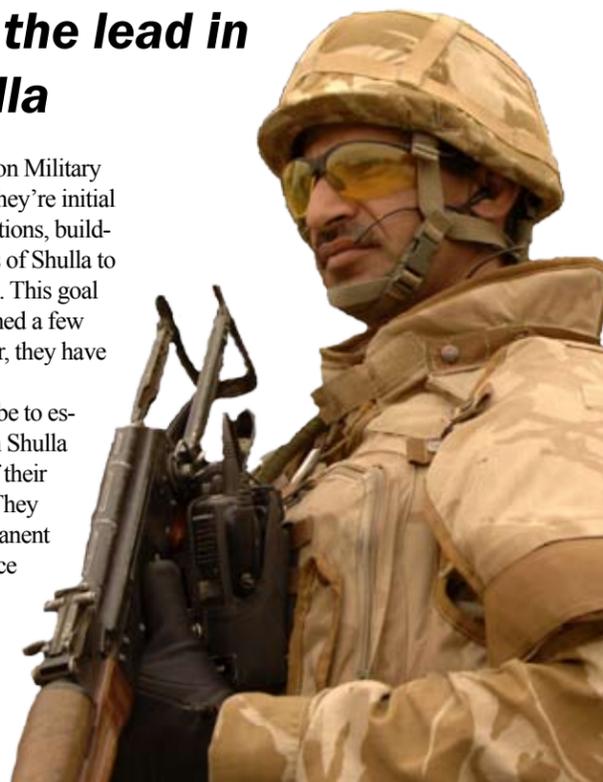
“We are continuing to control north Ghazaliyah to prevent any Special Groups

“... it’s pretty important that this former sanctuary and base of operations for Special Groups is taken away...”

said Lt. Col. John Hermeling commander, 1-75th Cav. Regt.

from entering here and recreating any problems in this neighborhood,” said Capt. Robert Gillespie, a native of Great River, N.Y., and commander of Troop B. “We are meeting with local leaders... to explain why there is such an IA presence and make sure they know it’s not a threat against their community.”

Also, they are engaging the population to



educate them on why this operation is essential in protecting Ghazaliyah and eliminate the threat they all experience in terms of criminals from Shulla who come down and take away their abilities to live their lives freely, Gillespie added.

“We are continuing to target the criminals who are live here and those who come down from Shulla,” Gillespie said, “and continue to partner with the IA and increase their abilities and self-sufficiency to accomplish the mission on their own.”

Currently, vehicle traffic is banned in and out of Shulla. However, persons on foot can crossover from Shulla but only at IA checkpoints, said Gillespie. This is helping prevent the carrying of weapons and movement of SG criminals in and out of Shulla.

Specifically, they do not want these criminals to cross over into northern Ghazaliyah, which as of late has been predominately peaceful, said Gillespie. The area is trying to move past the militia allegiances and sectarian violence’s of that last couple years.

“Our role is to help Ghazaliyah move forward, and help the Shia’s and Sunni’s live see SHULLA, pg. 11

Strike troops provide medical care to wounded, sick patients

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

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 detour 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 that not, they are unsuccessful; though occasionally, they get lucky.

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 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.

see CARE, pg. 12



photo courtesy of 526th BSB

Strike Soldiers transport a patient to an awaiting aircraft under the supervision of the flight medic at the Riva Ridge Troop Medical Clinic. Soldiers from Company C, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), run the TMC 24 hours a day.



Faces of the Heart



photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO

Sgt. Brandon Griffis, a native of Pendleton, Ind., talks with an Iraqi Army Soldier during a combined patrol in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Hurriyah June 29. Griffis serves as a squad leader with 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).



photo by Spc. Charles W. Gill, 55th Combat Camera

Capt. Robert Gillespie, a native of Grand River, N.Y., talks with an Iraqi family during a night patrol in northern Ghazaliyah May 15. Gillespie serves as the commander of Troop B, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



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

Soldiers with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment and Iraqi Soldiers brace for impact as a UH-60 Black Hawk lands in the Lutifiyah area during Operation Myrtle Beach IV June 18. After completing the mission, the aircraft returned the Soldiers to FOB Kalsu.



photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO

Soldiers with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), use a bolt cutter to cut through a lock on a door while looking for a possible cache May 16. While looking for this cache, the Soldiers received heavy enemy fire from mortars, small arms and rocket propelled grenade fire. They successfully fought off the enemy.



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

Pfc. Aaron Henningfeld, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, pulls security after searching a house in the Lutifiyah area during Operation Myrtle Beach IV June 18.



Staff Sgt. Anthony Orosz, a Nashville, Tenn., native, speaks with a young Iraqi girl being treated for cancer at the Iskan Children's Teaching Hospital in Mansour, a district in western Baghdad, May 15. Orosz and his platoon were visiting the hospital along with Iraqi Army soldiers to bring treats sent by Family members of Soldiers in his platoon. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. April Campbell, MND-B PAO)

IA, Rogue Soldiers strengthen relationship within Mansour community

Story by
Spc. April Campbell
MND-B PAO

As Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers continue to work with Iraqi soldiers, they stress the importance of developing relationships with members of the local communities.

Working with their Iraqi Army counterparts, Soldiers with the 1st Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, currently attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), MND-B, worked to build such relationships during a visit to the Iskan Children's Teaching Hospital in the Baghdad district of Mansour May 15.

During the mission, the American and Iraqi Soldiers visited the cancer ward at the children's hospital to hand out goodies sent by friends and Family in the United States. The Co. D Soldiers have been visiting the children at this hospital, which is near Joint Security Station Washash, where they have stayed since they arrived there more than a year ago.

The mission was about more than just dropping off gifts – it was about communicating with the children. For Staff Sgt. Anthony Orosz, who serves as squad leader with Co. D, 1-64 AR, taking time to talk to the young patients is a crucial element.

"It's difficult because it's impossible to do everything we

want to for the hospital," said the Nashville, Tenn., native, "but the kids, they just get smiles on their faces. That makes it worth it. That reminds us exactly why we do this."

The goal is to brighten the days of the children, and that brightness reflects back on the Soldiers, who take pleasure in visiting the children.

"This is like a treat. It's a good day when we get to go see the kids," said Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Deunger, a platoon sergeant with 1st Pltn., Co. D, 1-64 AR.

Both Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers interacted with the children as they handed out the snacks sent for the children.

"We're trying to get (the Iraqi Army) to take over so the Iraqi people know they are not just there to fight the bad guys," said Deunger, an Austin, Texas, native. "They are also there to help people and protect them."

Iraqi Army 1st Lt. Arkan Abraheem Ali, who serves as the executive officer with the 3rd Co., 1st Bn., made it a point to show interest in each child as they walked through the rooms in the cancer ward.

"I enjoy giving them the gifts because I can see the joy in the eyes of the children and their families," Ali said. "It helps to build bridges between us and the people here."

The hospital staff also expressed their appreciation for the attention the Soldiers have shown and continue to show to the children for which they care.

While the hospital workers and the Ministry of Health do
see **STRENGTH**, pg. 12

SHULLA

peacefully together and prevent criminals within Shulla from coming down and depolarizing things again," Gillespie added. "It's an area that due to the sectarian violence that started in 2006, which escalated in 2007, went from a secular neighborhood traditionally to being polarized along sectarian lines made worse by the movements of displaced people from both sects into Ghazaliyah that had a grudge and had a revenge motive."

However, since then as things have remained calmed and security has improved, the local leaders have started to back down from a purely sectarian identity and are trying to deal with the remaining problem of people having grievances and are prone to joining militias and taking part in the violence, Gillespie said. There is a large number of displaced people in Ghazaliyah who are unable to get into their homes, and they are upset and angry about it.

Their partnering with the Iraqi Army has helped in the success of this operation, and Gillespie has been very impressed with the IA's abilities.

"I've been very impressed in the last week with what they have been able to accomplish in terms of their ability to fight. They did very well," he said. "They have the essentials to accomplish the mission and that is what matters."

For Hermeling, it is a win-win situation for both the Iraqi Security Forces and U.S. troops on the ground.

"In areas we are helping the Iraqi Army and they are helping us. They are manning checkpoints and so are we. Everywhere they are we don't have to be. There are certain critical areas where we are doing it together," Hermeling said. "They have our combat power and our staying power, and we have their knowledge of the culture, a connection with the people, and their representation of the government of Iraq. It's an action sanctioned by the Government of Iraq and actioned by the Iraqi Security Forces. We are just trying to set the stage so they can be successful."

For the Iraqi Army this is a big push in the right direction as they are taking control of this key area in Baghdad. A lot will be said about what they are able to do with controlling this enemy safe-haven. Right now a lot can be said about those Iraqi Soldiers who are out in the streets today fighting for what they



photo by Spc. Charles W. Gill, 55th Combat Camera

Staff Brig. Gen. Sameer, commander of the 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, talks with Maj. Carter Price from the 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, outside the Office of Muqtada al-Sadr on the outskirts of the western Baghdad neighborhood of Shulla May 16. Iraqi Security Forces took control of the OMS building from Special Groups Criminals earlier this week.



photo by Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO

Spc. Michael Mullins, medic and native of Jacksonville, Fla., pulls security in northern Ghazaliyah May 18. Mullins serves with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

believe in.

When the war first started in Iraq and the Iraqi Army was dismantled, one Iraqi Army command sergeant major was an English teacher in Baghdad. "I joined the Army because I wanted to serve my country. I was an English teacher but when the war started and my country needed to be rebuilt I joined."

The Iraqi Soldier has five kids back home east of Baghdad, of whom he gets to see at

least once a week. When he is with them, they play soccer. "They are active," he said with sincerity. However, at this point, his children do not necessarily understand why he is a Soldier or what exactly he does.

"Whether I live or die, my wife or I will explain to my children why I chose to serve in the Iraqi Army," he said. "They will understand when they have total freedom and democracy."

CARE

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 guy's 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.

STRENGTH

all they can to continue improving the physical care these children receive, visits from the Soldiers, both Iraqi and American, help bring happiness to the suffering children, said Ab Al-Kareem Abass Muhssin, the assistant hospital manager.

Conducting missions focused on bettering the lives of children helps the Iraqi Army to have more well-rounded soldiers.

"The IA in our area have proven themselves to be competent soldiers. They are well trained," said Orosz. "Now, we are trying to get them to do the same thing that we did, which was switch from the more kinetic operations, such as raids, over to the humanitarian side as much as they can."



photo by Spc. April Campbell, MND-B PAO

1st Lt. Arkan Abraheem Ali, with the 3rd Company, 1st Battalion, 54th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, says hello to a young Iraqi child being treated for cancer at the Iskan Children's Teaching Hospital in Mansour.

Coalition Forces assist local Iraqi carpet weaving company

Story, photo by
1st Lt. Chris Thielenhaus
2nd BCT

Coalition Forces met with the director general of the State-owned Company for Hand Woven Carpets May 4 to discuss the progress being made to improve the factory, which is helping create a stable, flourishing Iraqi owned business.

The visit is part of an ongoing effort by the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), to improve the local economy throughout the Kadhamiyah District of western Baghdad through small grants, training, and opportunity for expansion from foreign markets to business owners.

Strike Soldiers are assisting the carpet shop through a number of separate projects, which include grants totaling \$1.4 million, advertising through the state media, and a potential expansion into the export market. The exquisite craftsmanship of the carpets has led Maj. Timothy Collier, the civil affairs officer for the 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., to look for an outside company to market the rugs to.

"The workmanship is really amazing," said Collier, "and I believe that there are many people in the United States that will pay top dollar for this kind of product, especially since it is all handmade."

Collier has been in contact recently with James Butler, a graduate student at Vanderbilt University, whose master's degree project is in developing a business relationship between the Woven Legends Inc. rug importing company and the hand woven carpet company in Baghdad. The hope is that encouragement in American markets will further build the confidence of the business and allow it to continue to expand.

This program has the potential to affect the Kadhamiyah economy as successful businesses will encourage other businesses to do the same, said Collier.

The carpet company has been the leader

in the Iraqi carpet-making industry for over 30 years. Ahmed Sadoon Yaseen, the director general of the business, originally worked for the regime under Saddam Hussein.

"Most of our carpets were made for Saddam's palaces," said Yaseen. "He really enjoyed the large carpets and elaborate designs."

The designs are the result of hundreds of hours of careful weaving done by an all female work force. The company employs over 700 women in 7 factories throughout Iraq.

Coalition Forces observed the remarkable skill of Yaseen's weavers in the main weaving room.

The women weaving the carpet make up



A weaver carefully cuts and weaves a carpet in progress at the Hand Woven Carpets in the Kadhamiyah District of western Baghdad May 4. Collier serves as the civil affairs officer for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

a highly skilled work force that is rare in a country that employs primarily men in an industrial and market based economy.

As Yaseen led the Soldiers through his weaving floor, he would stop at some of work stations to show the women carefully weaving and cutting balls of fabric that became beautiful carpets.

Yaseen explained that the ability of the women to do such fine work was a result of years of experience, as he displayed one of his workers carefully threading and cutting a carpet in progress.

Most of the women employed by the factory have been weaving for decades. Yaseen noted that his floor manager, Suaad, has been weaving and acting as the supervisor for over 30 years. As the company expands, the workers with the most experience assist the newcomers and ensure they are capable of weaving accurately. The most experienced weavers are capable of completing an entire carpet in the period of three hours.

Despite the violence and unrest throughout Kadhamiyah, the carpet company has continued to produce exquisitely detailed carpets.

Yaseen noted that not everyone can show up for work because of security as he spoke of difficulties stemming from the recent surge in

violence in Baghdad. While touring the grounds, Yaseen showed the empty looms that are normally filled with many weaving ladies. Many of the women are unable to come to work because they live in Shula, an area known for its instability.

However, this has not significantly affected his business, said Yaseen.

In a small room outside the main working floor, Yaseen keeps his finished carpets that are ready to be shipped or purchased. He allowed Coalition Forces to photograph his show room and potentially provide crucial advertising for his business. Yaseen stressed how pleased he was

with their support, which has provided his business with grants to help hire new workers and expand the business. He has successfully used this money to rehire new workers in factories in the al – Anbar province and improve the business headquarters in Baghdad.

The carpet company remains a glimmer of hope for economic improvement in Kadhamiyah. Coalition Forces and the Kadhamiyah District Advisory Council continue to support the carpet company and its work force, setting the stage for business success in the greater Kadhamiyah area.



FSC Soldiers Providing Personal Security Detachment Detail in the Al Kut Province

Story by
1st Lt. Randy Heath
Co. F, 526th BSB

Throughout Area of Operation Naples, the Soldiers of the Gun Truck Platoon from Company F, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, have been commended on their ability to provide flexibility and maneuver support to its combat arms counterparts.

The company currently provides logistics support for the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, in Iskandariyah at Forward Operation Base Kalsu.

To date, they have provided gun truck security for over 100 Combat Replenishment Operations, 35 Recovery Patrols, 21 Route Tampa Presence Patrols, and one Multi-National Division-Center tasking to escort an Iraqi Demining Team to FOB Scania. Their “can do” attitude, and talent of establishing priorities of work and adapting to new combat arms tactics, techniques, and procedures caught the eyes of their entire chain of command. It was because of this success story that they, once again, received a tasking from MND-C to provide a Personal Security Detachment to the Al Kut Province Provincial Reconstruction Team at FOB Delta.

Once this tasking came down in early April 2008, the company commander, Capt. Brandon Williams, as well as the distribution platoon leader, 1st Lt. Randy Heath, determined the “pros and cons” of shifting this added combat multiplier to FOB Delta.

The “cons” of this bittersweet situation, was the 2-502 Inf. Regt. would lose its dedicated CRO, and Recovery Patrol support. The “pros” of this imminent assignment was that it would give these CSS Soldiers an opportunity to be a part of something special that is directly affecting the lives of the local community. Once the Gun Truck Platoon was officially dedicated to supporting this tasking, Heath and his five Gun Truck crews mounted up and conducted a convoy to FOB Delta and reported to the 214th Fires Brigade, stationed out of Fort Sill, Okla.

Upon their arrival, the Gun Truck Platoon was linked up with 1st Lt. Anthony Dreyer, of the 511th Military Police Company, stationed out of Fort Drum, NY. Until the arrival of Heath’s Gun Truck Platoon, these MPs provided the PSD for the PRT. However, their MOS skills were required elsewhere in the training of the local IP force in Al Kut. The Relief in Place was an instant success, as Dreyer and Heath were both graduates of OCS class 08-06 at Fort Benning, Ga. After a week of area familiarization and left seat / right seat rides on PRT PSD missions, the Gun Truck Platoon was ready to embark upon its mission. The Soldiers and NCOs then coined the call sign, “Fighter PSD.”

The Fighter PSD Team is now in its second month of this MND-C tasking, and has provided escort and on the ground security for over 25 missions with various State Department Officials. These missions range from numerous trips to the Al Kut Provincial Counsel, Government Center, Court House, Blood Banks, as well as a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at the Sheik Saad District Library. In addition to these regular PSD missions, the Fighter PSD Team has conducted joint

security operations with the 511th MP Company, Lithuanian PSD, Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, and Georgian Army elements. Their ability to work with these various Coalition Force partners has enabled operations such as security for the Iraqi Minister of Agriculture and Marne 64 – Brig. Gen. Edward Cardon, deputy commander, 3rd Infantry Division – during their Agricultural Assessment in Dabooni, and Leader 6 – Col. Baker, Commander, 214 Fires Brigade, PRT, and Fox News attendance at the Al Kut Theatre where the “Mud House” play was performed for the community.

Fighter PSD Team’s ability to accomplish nothing less than laudatory results has resulted in their selection to perform upcoming operations with elements of the El Salvador Army’s Task Force in providing security for the U.S. Ambassador of El Salvador.

The Fighter PSD Team consists of 16 Soldiers, each bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table with their various MOS skills. The team consists nine 88Ms (Transportation Specialist), one 11B (Infantryman), one 63B (Light Wheel Mechanic), one 68W (Healthcare Specialist), one 25U (Communication Specialist), one 92F (Petroleum Specialist), one 19D (Cavalry Scout) and one 92A (Quartermaster Officer). The team was built like this in order to be as self-sufficient as possible. In addition, the wide array of skills has allowed Heath to build upon his Standard Operating Procedures, which has inevitably made the team a more efficient element in The Global War on Terror.

When asked about the recent change of mission, Pfc. Ryan Stevenson, of Hope, Mich., said, “I feel proud that I was selected to be part of this mission. I enjoy telling my family and friends back home of my team’s accomplishments and the changes I’ve seen in the local community.”

When asked if his views have changed with the local community’s leadership capabilities during this assignment, Sgt. Lucas Simmonds, of Summit, Miss., said, “The Iraqi Minister of Agriculture’s visit to Dabooni, as well as the ‘Mud House’ play in Al Kut opened my eyes to the progress that the local government has made. I truly believe that this province is taking steps in the right direction.”

These are just two representations of the positive outlook expressed of the Fighter PSD Team. The morale of this Gun Truck Platoon is a direct result of the exemplary leadership provided by its NCOIC, Staff Sgt. Derek Neeley, of Montgomery, Ala. When asked how he feels about his Soldiers’ accomplishments during the Fighter PSD Team’s tenure at FOB Delta, Neeley said, “I am thankful my Soldiers were given this opportunity to perform tasks outside of their normal realm of responsibility. Further, I am extremely proud of these Soldiers for adapting to this mission and performing each and every mission without fail.”

The Fighter PSD Team’s untiring dedication to duty has reinforced the 101st Airborne Division’s ability to accomplish any mission, anywhere. The Soldiers are looking forward to finishing up this tasking and returning to its brothers and sisters in arms at FOB Kalsu. Until then, they will proudly represent “Old Abe” throughout this new area of operations!

Hard Rock, IA patrols the streets of Hurriyah daily

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

Through the streets of Hurriyah, an area in western Baghdad, children gleefully play in the streets, amidst the quiet, stable environment. Shopkeepers continue to sell their goods from their small, yet inspiring, stores.

It seems almost anything can be purchased on the streets of Hurriyah – anything from swamp coolers, which try to vie off the scorching temperatures, to unheard of chocolates. The streets of Hurriyah seem to be flourishing; in large part due to the continued security within.

Although the latest incident was a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device that ripped through the streets of Hurriyah June 17, killing at least 27 and wounding more than 40 Iraqis, the security within Hurriyah seems to be where it is needed to succeed.

Daily, Iraqi Army troops can be seen amongst the Iraqi people – with weapon in hand and body armor donned – patrolling and interacting with the local populace helping shape a violence-free environment.

They are out looking for possible caches, clearing homes for illegal weapons, listening to the troubles of the local nationals, and maintaining security.

“Something like the VBIED happens and they are quick to respond,” said 1st Lt. Patrick Simpson, a native of Nashville, Tenn., and platoon leader for 1st Platoon, Co. A, 1 Bn., 502nd Inf. Regt. “I think the local nationals seeing the IA out doing patrols really motivates them to want to step up and do what the Americans have been doing for quite some time. It gives them a lot more confidence in the IA’s.”

Much credit can be given to those troops from Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. In an effort to continually build a stronger Iraqi Army, these Hard Rock troops meet up daily with the Iraqi troops from the 2nd Company, 2nd Battalion, 44th Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division to train and patrol with these men.

At least two different patrols meet up with these men daily to work on medical, weapons and common infantryman tasks,



An Iraqi Army Soldier with the 2nd Company, 2nd Battalion, 44th Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, pulls security while on a joint patrol with Coalition Forces in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Hurriyah June 29. Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, patrol and train daily with the Iraqi Soldiers.

said Simpson.

“Really, the training the Iraqi troops are receiving is the same training U.S. Army leaders teach to their Soldiers just not as advance,” said Sgt. Brandon Griffis, a native of Pendleton, Ind., who serves as a squad leader with 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, MND-B.

This training, however, is an opportunity of a lifetime for troops from both respective forces. Iraqi troops are receiving the training, and young leaders are getting the opportunity to spread their wings as leaders.

“We would like the Iraqi Army to be less dependent on Coalition Forces,” said Griffis. “The only way this is possible is if we are getting out there and reaching them the way an army should be. As far as our end is concerned just being able to teach, coach and mentor another nation’s army is a huge opportunity for younger leaders.”

Usually, training the forces of a foreign nation is not a conventional army task, for it is meant for those in Special Forces, said Griffis, but rebuilding an entire army takes a lot more support.

“So for us to be able to do that says something about our company and unit,” said Griffis. “They gave us the job because

they wanted the best and we are giving the Iraqi Army our best officers, NCOs and Soldiers this Army has to offer.”

Griffis believes the Iraqi Army’s will to learn is making the teaching experience a lot easier.

“Their best trait is their will to learn. Every time we go to their compound and give them classes they give us their undivided attention,” said Griffis.

Great Soldiers are bred not born, so it will take countless hours of training and patrolling to get them where they need to be, explained Griffis.

“Nothing about this job comes naturally. You have to beat it into your body over and over again,” said Griffis. “A great Soldier is extremely professional, displays courage under fire, has a sense of selfless service and a love for his country. A great Soldier would give you his coat if you were cold, give you his chow if you are hungry.

Currently Simpson believes the biggest change he has seen is their posture toward security. They are properly securing their Iraqi Army compound within Hurriyah and placing their men tactically to fend off any enemy advancement.

While on patrol, Simpson said, they are doing the little things like keeping their

see HURRIYAH, pg. 17

Barrier emplacement opens roads in Abu Ghuraib

Story, photo by
Sgt. Paul Monroe
2nd BCT

Packed cars, meandering pedestrians and the occasional donkey pulling a cart fill the busy streets of Baghdad daily.

Couple this with roads blocked off by Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces to lessen special groups militants and extremists ability to prey on citizens and you have the makings of a traffic jam in Baghdad.

In Abu Ghuraib leaders from the 24th "Muthana" Brigade decided to close Leaders Bridge more than three years ago to impede the movement of various militant and extremist elements.

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers with 1st "Top Guns" Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, along with Iraqi Army soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 24th "Muthana" Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, worked together to open the bridge over a three-day period ending June 6.

"This was a great team effort between our battalion, the 168th Brigade Support Battalion, the 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, and the associated military transition teams," said Maj. Thomas Bolen, a plans officer with 1st Bn., 320th FA Regt.

The 168th BSB linked the Soldiers of Top Guns with flat bed trucks, which were driven by local nationals who helped make light work of hauling the barriers.

The IA soldiers from the Muthana Brigade removed the barriers on Leaders Bridge that blocked traffic and positioned barriers to create two lanes for traffic to move freely; they also set up checkpoints.

Meanwhile, Soldiers from "Top Guns" escorted truck drivers to and from the bridge to ensure their safety. They also provided security for workers and Iraqi Army soldiers at the bridge.

"(The Bridge opening) is a pretty big deal now people who live further west can get to the market," said 1st Lt. Andrew

Bowling, a native of Medfield, Mass., who serves as a platoon leader for 1st Bn., 320th FA Regt, who added that

"(The bridge opening) is a pretty big deal now people who live further west can get to the market,"

**said 1st Lt. Andrew Bowling
1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment**

the bridge opening will dramatically reduce traffic on Abu Ghuraib's heavily congested roads.

Leaders Bridge is a simple structure that is just wide enough for two lanes of traffic. It stretches across Leaders Canal and had been blocked by barriers separating west Abu Ghuraib from east. Abu Ghuraib's eastern side houses a market that thrives on customer's needs and small shopkeeper's ingenuity.

"Since the bridge was blocked, the best way to get to the market was to go through the narrow farm roads" said Bolen.

Bolen added that the bridge opening reinforces the overall revitalization of the market area.

Improved security and micro-grants have already begun to bring about resurgence in the market. Easing the mobility of vendors farmers, and customers to the market, should add even more vitality to the improvement efforts.

"Conditions are returning to normal," Said Bolen, who added that residents are beginning to see the Iraqi Army does more than roll up bad guys.

At the bridge, residents will see Iraqi Army soldiers from Muthana Brigade's 2nd Battalion manning checkpoints on both sides of the bridge. The IA soldiers will



Iraqi army soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, move barriers in position on Leaders Bridge in Abu Ghuraib, a neighborhood in northwest Baghdad, June 5. Muthana Brigade soldiers positioned the barriers to allow for the free flow of traffic.

"Beast" troops step it up as deployment continues

Story by
Sgt. 1st Class Robert Foreman
Co. A, 2 BSTB

The deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom for Company A, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion Soldiers has been far different from its two previous tours for many of its Soldiers. The company's chain of command is asking more of its Soldiers than what had previously been asked of them.

All things outside the wire remain unchanged; watch each other's backs, keep alert to your surroundings, improve the environment in which you find yourself, strive for positive interaction with the Iraqi populace in every encounter, and continue to do your best to leave a positive impression of our great nation in your wake.

It is inside the wire that the senior leaders of the company are asking for the greatest change. Every Soldier of the company has been challenged to make the best of their time spent away from loved ones. Whether it is remembering a loved one's Birthday, an Anniversary, or another significant event in their lives, the Soldiers have been reminded to acknowledge those dates as they come to pass. Many other ideas have been emphasized as well. Each Soldier has been encouraged to address each of their financial situations. Making the most of each Soldier's additional pay has been one focal point in particular. The Thrift Savings Plan, Deployment Savings Deposit Program, purchase of Certificates of Deposits, or just simply paying off old debts are just some of the ideas that have been highly encouraged. Capt. Brian Tritten, the company's previous commander, approved numerous college tuition assistance requests that crossed his desk.

"Each Soldier has to make the best of the situation that they find themselves in. Whether it is improving their marriage or relationship with a significant other in some way, educating themselves, improving their financial position or other aspects of their personal lives is paramount," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Foreman, the company operations sergeant. "We cannot allow our Soldiers to simply pass the time deployed and go home a year and a half later, to the

exact life and circumstances that they left. Something has to be changed for the better, otherwise, they have essentially right clicked and deleted nearly two years of their lives. The situation we are in today is conducive to some sort of improvement, whether it is great or small, that is up to the individual Soldier."

1st Lt. Adam Blake, 1ST platoon's platoon leader and company voting assistance officer has been diligently engaging the Soldiers of the company, encouraging Soldiers to register to vote and apply for their absentee ballots. He has taken a very aggressive approach in fulfilling his responsibilities as he sees them.

"If a Soldier in this company doesn't know the process, has questions about the process or just a question in general...I am available any time of day to address your Soldiers' concerns," said Blake at a recent company operations meeting to the senior leaders of the company.

"First Lieutenant Blake has done an exceptional job ensuring the Soldiers of this company have been afforded every opportunity available to them to facilitate their active participation in the voting process.

HURRIYAH

distance while on foot, and taking a knee and taking cover when halted during dismounted patrols.

The Iraqi troops are even focusing on the needs of the Iraqi people. If there is a family in need they bring them food and water. Currently, the company is putting together a list of families who are in desperate need and plan to give humanitarian aide to help take care of their fellow Iraqis, Simpson said.

Even their relationship with the Iraqis is superb, he explained. Simpson, and his fellow platoon leaders in the company, meets with the commander of 2nd Co., 2nd Bn., 44th Bd., 11th Iraqi Army Division during each visit to discuss the welfare of the troops and issues he foresees with his men.

"We are almost like peers," said Simpson. "He is trying to take care of his guys while at the same time I am

He has devoted much of his limited personal time to address their issues or concerns in the voting process. First Lieutenant Blake has ensured that one of the very foundation principals of our country, the democratic voting process, that we wear the uniform to defend, is available to every Soldier of Alpha Company," said Foreman.

Blake has also made himself available for questions that Soldiers have in regards to personal finances and investment options. Blake, a self proclaimed financial consultant, has already pointed numerous Soldiers in the direction of utilizing the Thrift Savings plan and Deployment Savings Deposit Program through the 4th Infantry Division finance office. He has also recommended to nearly as many Soldiers that simply paying off their current debts is in their best interest.

Tritten had this to say, "Every Soldier of this company has stepped up to the challenges that they have faced, or will face. Every one of them grabs on to every opportunity given to them to improve themselves as a Soldier, a father, or a husband. I am proud to say that they will all return to Fort Campbell, a better Soldier and most certainly as better men and women."

trying to take care of my guys. Me and their commander, we are on the same page. We just want to make sure his guys are getting the right training and when his guys are on patrol he wants to make sure they are doing the right thing."

However, no matter how far these men have come there is still much to be worked on. The biggest problem, in Griffis' mind, is that Coalition Forces are seen more often than the Iraqi Security Forces though they are actively, and more now than ever, patrolling Hurriyah.

"They still need to work on making their presence known in their battle space," Griffis said. "The people need to see ISF in their neighborhoods instead of Coalition Forces. They need to see ISF ridding the streets of the thugs, thieves, and murderers..."

Griffis believes once this is achieved it will set the stage for the Iraqi forces to completely take over.

Time had little effect on the strands of razor-sharp concertina wire

Story, photo by
Maj. Craig Heathscott
39th IBCT PAO

Time had little effect on the strands of razor-sharp concertina wire that spanned hundreds of meters and split Ali's farmland except to dull its original purpose—security. Located on the outer wall of Camp Slayer on the Victory Base Complex in Baghdad, the fence was originally constructed sometime during the beginning of the war over five years ago. But until recently, it served no purpose but to divide.

In the small community of Radwaniyah, the poor Iraqi farmer simply wanted to be able to access his fields without the seemingly unnecessary long walk-a-rounds resulting from the wire. He had wanted to take the fence down himself; however, he was afraid the coalition forces overlooking his farm from the towers might shoot him.

"I happy to do work taking poles out of ground, but don't want someone to shoot me because I was stealing," said

Ali, who speaks relatively good English. "I talked to Captain (Cesaro) when he drove by and I asked him if I could move it. I thank him very much. Good man."

Although a handshake was enough to seal the deal for the young Army captain, he provided Ali with a business card explaining he had permission to take the fence down and coalition forces would assist in the effort. Ali now proudly keeps the card in his wallet and proudly boasts the friend he has made in Capt. Vincent Cesaro, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

Previously, the wire was designed to keep the Iraqi Army out. Yet, in an ironic twist, the division provided by the fence would now serve as an opportunity to bring three forces together again—Iraqi Army, Coalition Forces and local Iraqi nationals—which is the focus for the Coalition. Ultimately, the Coalition Forces strive to turn Iraq over to Iraq.

"I think it says a lot about the Iraqi

Army that they were willing to come out and join us for this mission," said Cesaro. "Every week we're looking for opportunity for IA and coalition forces to work together, and in this case, these guys had just gotten in from patrols at three in the morning, yet, they still came out here."

With temperatures in Baghdad reaching over 100 degrees, the Soldiers joined forces with these local farmers and began dismantling the fence. Constructed of over 300 rolls of concertina wire and six-foot tall metal post dug deep into the hardened earth, the two-day mission was very challenging at times. Weeds had grown around the wire which oftentimes required the strength of a vehicle to pull it free.

In between work periods, these Soldiers were able to learn more about one another—with the benefit of two interpreters—and, yet again, continuing to build on their relationship.

"Soldiers are Soldiers, and the IA guys are really interested in talking with our guys; building camaraderie, and most important, we're getting the job done and building a better Iraq," said Cesaro. "For me, it's just real neat to see the progress."

Referring to progress, Cesaro points to the professionalism within the ranks of the Iraqi Army as well as the relationships they are building with citizens like Ali. They are gaining trust in citizens that have not had a lot to trust in for some time.

"I hope they see us as professionals and know that we respect them as professional Soldiers, peers or contemporaries," he said. "These guys are competent despite the rumors and horror stories. I'm confident that they will be good enough to take the reigns here so that we don't have to keep coming back here when we are senior leaders."

With this being his third tour see **WIRE**, pg. 22



Capt. Vincent Cesaro, with the 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), speaks through an interpreter to an Iraqi Soldier in Radwaniyah.

Top Guns open water filtration system in small community of Baghdad

Story, photo by
Maj. Craig Heathscott
39th IBCT PAO

In an ironic contradiction, sweat beads form on the forehead of a Soldier as he walks the dirt road with several Iraqi children in tow. He looks over at a fellow 'Top Gun' Soldier and says, "I'm dying of thirst." The dust continues to billow from their boots hitting the ground as they continue on their path toward the site of the water filtration system that they will officially open for the citizens of the small community of Radwaniyah.

The contradiction results from the fact that this grand opening, designed to bring clean drinking water to over 150 homes, will prevent these citizens from possibly dying—'dying from quenching their thirst.'

Prior to this day, their drinking water has been very unhealthy in this small community of approximately 5,000 Iraqi citizens in Baghdad.

Drinking unpurified water, or irrigation water in this case, has led to an increased amount of sickness in the area. Living in a rural area without the benefits of essential services found in larger cities, the future looked somewhat bleak for this agricultural community. Oftentimes, these rural communities are very poor, and the idea of building a well—much less a water purification system—is unheard of for them.

However, community leaders, working in conjunction with the Government of Iraq and Coalition Forces,

worked hard to ensure disease doesn't destroy this community. And considering these people have survived the hardships of war, the war against disease was one fight they were not willing to lose either. They are very strong people.

Speaking in his native Arabic tongue to a gathering of about 100 people, Abu Mohammad, a local sheik, pauses and allows the interpreter to catch up with him, "This is going to feed 150 homes with clean drinking water. We get irrigation water and boil it and that is why everyone getting sick, because



Lt. Col. David Burwell, commander, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, helps cut the ribbon during the opening of the new water filtration system in Radwaniyah, a small community in Baghdad.

it not a good water to drink."

With the newly constructed water filtration system with the red ribbon blocking the entrance as a backdrop, the sheik's words are much to the delight of the citizens of the community and the Coalition Forces—1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, commonly referred to as 'Top Gun'—that surround him and eagerly await his message.

"We thank the commander for being very serious about this project," the translator says following the Arabic

version by the sheik. "Without your efforts and support we would never have this project."

The commander—Lt. Col. David Burwell—graciously bows to the sheik, recognizes several that were involved in the project and returns the compliment by saying, "This represents the good things that come with cooperation and security."

Burwell and his dedicated Soldiers continue to build positive relationships within their area of operation (AO) by focusing on bringing essential services—water, sewer, electricity—to

the Iraqi people. Each completed project brings the community and Government of Iraq one step closer to realizing their ability to take control of their community, their country.

"Success of this project is defined by the fact that the Iraqi people were instrumental in bringing it to fruition," said Col. Kendall Penn, commander of the 39th Infantry Brigade Combat

Team, Arkansas Army National Guard, who serves as the Base Defense commander for Victory Base Complex in Baghdad and has operational command over the 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment. "But take nothing away from Lt. Col. Burwell, and his team, as that is exactly how they should define their success. We're here to help the Iraqi people, not to do everything for them. Truly, this project has been a model for success in Iraq."

This project was a joint effort that see **WATER**, pg. 23

55 Strike Soldiers re-enlist during ceremony in Baghdad

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

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – “In serving our nation in war, you are following the footsteps of millions of brave Americans who have done so before you for some 232 years since our founding fathers declared America’s independence on this day in 1776,” said Gen. David Petraeus, a native of Cornwall-on-Hudson, N.Y., who serves as the commanding general of Multi-National Force – Iraq.

With 1,215 U.S. troops standing before him at the Al Faw Palace at Camp Victory July 4, Petraeus gave the oath of enlistment, marking the largest re-enlistment ceremony in history.

Of those 1,215 troops, 55 were Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

“Through your sacrifice and commitment, through your professionalism and skill, you are adding a proud new chapter to the already rich history of America’s military service,” said Petraeus, a former commander of the 101st Abn. Div. “It is clearly a case of serving something larger than self and it is impossible to calculate the value of what you are giving to our country.”

Though America’s military has been at war in Iraq for more than five years, Soldiers continuously answer their nations call to duty.

“There is no place that I would rather be to celebrate America’s birthday than right here with you in Iraq while we’re engaged in the enormously important task of helping the Iraqi people make the most of the precious gift the coalition gave them in 2003, their freedom,” said Petraeus.

Petraeus said these men and women have been engaged in a greatly important endeavor, enduring crushing sandstorms, brutal heat, a barbaric enemy, long separations from loved ones, and lost or injury to comrades in arms, but continue to fight the good fight.

For Staff Sgt. Danny Chappell, a native of Timmonsville,

S.C., who has two children and a wife back home at Fort Campbell, Ky., his re-enlistment really defines the value of today’s all-volunteer force.

Since 2003, Chappell, who serves with Company C, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, has been deployed three times to Iraq as an infantryman pushed forward in the fight against terrorism.

In 2003, he was apart of the initial invasion, critical in taking key battlegrounds, toppling the Saddam Hussein regime, and beginning the rebuilding of Iraq from ground up. He would again deploy in 2005 and 2007 with the Strike Brigade.

Now, with him battle tested and as knowledgeable as any infantryman, Chappell will become a drill sergeant, where he will take his knowledge and skills and train the next batch of Soldiers who desire to don the Army Combat Uniform and push forward in this fight against terrorism.



Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines raise their right hands and recite the Oath of Enlistment during a re-enlistment ceremony at the Al Faw Palace on Camp Victory July 4. The event marked the largest re-enlistment ceremony in history, with 1,215 U.S. troops recommitting themselves to protecting America. Of the 1,215 troops, 55 were from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

“I am going to instill in the Soldiers the discipline and the motivation it takes to become successful in a combat environment,” Chappell said. “I am going to teach what has kept me alive the last three times I have been over here,” which is his trust in his brother to his left and right.

So why did he choose re-enlist? Well, for obvious reasons.

“I love doing what I do, which is teaching Soldiers,” Chappell said.

For Master Sgt. Travis Trotter, a native of Batesburg-Leesville, S.C., his choice for re-enlisting was clear.

“I took the oath to continue to support and defend a nation at war on the very day that America declared independence and a new nation was born,” said Trotter, who serves with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

Trotter, who re-enlisted indefinite, served on active duty for ten years before making the choice to transfer to the reserve component. However, after seven years in the reserves and two deployments in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, he made the choice to come back on active status.

“I missed the day-to-day contact with Soldiers. You don’t realize at times that you have a profound impact on the lives of so many people,” he said.

see CEREMONY, pg. 23

Retention Updates 30 June 2008

(Changes are highlighted)

Assignments:

Old Guard, Special Operations Support / SOAR, 75th Ranger Regiment, Ranger Training Brigade, TDA Assignments

Let your Retention NCO’s know where you would like to be stationed!

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

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

****UPDATE your Assignment Satisfaction Key (ASK) via AKO, this is what assignment managers are using to place you on AI when your number comes up.**

Training:

Medical ASU’s, Airborne, Drill SGT, Recruiter

HOT MOS’s:

11B – Infantryman	13B – Cannon Crewmtr,	13D – FA TACT Data SYS SPC,
13F – Fire Support Specialist	14E – Patriot Fire Control	14T – Patriot launching station
15T – UH-60 Repair	19D – Calvary Scout	21B – Combat Eng
21U – Topo Analyst	25B – Information Tech Spc	25N – Nodal Network Oper
25Q – Multichannel Trans System	25S – Satcom System Oper Maint	25U – Signal Support Systems
31E – Corrections NCO	35F – Intelligence Analyst	35G – Imagery Analyst
35H – Common Ground Station Op	35M – Human Intelligence	46R – Broadcast Journalist
63B – Light Wheel Vehicle Mech	68W – Health Care Specialist	88M – Motor Transport Operator
92F – Petroleum Supply Specialist	92G – Food Service Specialist	92R – Parachute Rigger
92Y – Supply Spec		

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

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

21D – Diver (PKT MOS) <http://www.wood.army.mil/ST/tb/diver/>

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sources:

MOS Smartbook, lists descriptions and qualifications: <https://perscomm04.army.mil/MOSMARTBK.nsf>

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

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



Public Works substation opens in Yarmouk

Story by
Sgt. Paul Monroe
2nd BCT

Multi-National Division Baghdad Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), opened a Public Works substation in Yarmouk, a neighborhood in northwest Baghdad, June 14.

The Yarmouk substation will serve the southeast Mansour district and provides workers a place to store equipment used for basic services, such as trash removal and sewage maintenance.

“All of this was built from scratch” said 1st Lt. Nicholas Anderson, a civil military operations officer with the 4th “Straight Arrows” Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, operationally attached to the 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

Blackjack Soldiers picked up where the Soldiers they replaced from 2nd “Patriot” Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, left off, who worked during their 15-month deployment to improve security and get essential services going. The unit went as far as hiring 50 workers to pickup trash in the Yarmouk area while funding for the substation was on hold.

The Straight Arrows Soldiers are working just as hard to take advantage of improved security and are striving to work on finishing the essential service projects the Patriot Battalion started.

At the substation, they worked closely with local officials to build a permanent building with two offices. They also worked with contractors to install two trailers to provide workers with showers, a change room and a break room.

Iraqi Army and MND-B Soldiers, along with members of the Yarmouk community and the assistant zone director who oversees the operation of the substation, attended the grand opening together, where a red ribbon was cut and attendees enjoyed Iraqi hamburgers afterward.

The ceremony, however, did not mark the end of work for the

substations, said Anderson, adding that the substation currently employs 53 Yarmouk residents with proposals to eventually increase that number to 100.

“The equipment we have right now is under a rental agreement,” He added. “Coalition Forces have rented those vehicles; we are expecting that (local officials) will take that over.”

The proposal stems from an agreement reached between Coalition Forces and local officials in September, he added.

“We construct the site; we hire all the workers; we provide equipment for them” said Col. Louis Fazekas the Baghdad-6 governance team leader part of the embedded Provincial Reconciliation Team supporting the 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., who explained it was part of the agreement. He said there is an expectation that local officials will hire the workers and purchase the equipment after one year.

Fazekas, a reservist from Mechanicsburg, Pa., deployed to Iraq in April 2007, has been in Iraq for 14 months. During that time, he has met with government officials to hash out the details of agreements such as this one.

“I extended another year to try and see (the PWSS) through,” said Fazekas. “It’s taking a little longer than we expected because the funding got delayed, but the funding is back on and things are moving ahead.”

Originally, Strike brigade Soldiers planned to open four substations in Northwest Baghdad. The success of PWSS sites in the Adil and Ghazaliyah neighborhoods in northwest Baghdad has opened the possibility of opening additional substations.

No matter how long it takes to get the new substations built, Fazekas said he doesn’t plan to extend once he reaches the end of this tour.

“Certainly, you fill some ownership and you want to stay involved,” he added, but also noted that he has full confidence in the ability of Soldiers – whether they are from the Strike Brigade or a follow-on unit – to continue progress.

“The plan is there; it’s like a McDonalds Franchise,” he said. “Now, it’s just a matter of picking sites and implementing what we’ve done at the others.”

bags. He hands them to the young Iraqi captain while suggesting they go hand the contents to the children in Ali’s family. His extended family consisted of about a dozen children ranging from one-year-old to the teenage years.

And, the contents—everything from Beenie Babies to candy to pencils—were well received as the war-hardened Iraqi Soldiers knelt to hand them to the excited children.

“They took everything I said to heart, and they got down to the level of the kids,” said Cesaro. “As American Soldiers we love to interact with kids. We really get a kick out of them, yet, as a rule the Iraqis only interact with adults. I think it sends a good message

to the kids that they are the future of Iraq.

“These Soldiers can make an impression right now in the lives of these kids and that’s a great way to start the rebuilding process in Iraq. And just as important, I hope the local nationals saw that the Iraqi Army is here to help just like the U.S. Soldier is known to do.”

The measures of success in Iraq are often debated; however, one could argue that one of the best measures come in the form of a smile. And as smiles adorn the faces of both the Iraqi children and Soldiers, Cesaro is satisfied—at least for today—with the success he sees before him.

WATER

used many Iraqi services in creating the final successful outcome.

“It had an Iraqi improvement face to it,” said Lt. Col. Clark Easter, civil military officer for the 39th Brigade, who has the responsibility for finding ways to develop the needs of the Iraqi people into positive outcomes such as the water filtration project. “The Government of Iraq did the water testing for the project, and the communities leaders were engaged throughout. Basically, they did it to their standards, which is a very positive thing for the community and the country.

“The positive thing is that the Government of Iraq will take over the maintenance of the system,” he said. “We’re more like partners to the Iraqi people and not looking to stand out in front and do everything for them. These are good people, and everyone—Iraqis and Coalition Forces—wants them to prosper. This is a step in that direction.”

Prior to the first drop of water coming from the system, the community was experiencing a high level of sickness that was directly attributed to bad drinking water. This will dramatically decrease the potential for disease in the area. The system is designed to draw water from 30 meters below the surface to get good well water and then purify it by extracting the impurities, such as salt, from it.

After congratulatory speeches and handshakes, Burwell and the community leaders turn to cut the red ribbon that separates them from clean drinking water.

Moments later, the roar of a diesel engine fills the air and the water purification system is up and running. Abu Mohamad grabs the garden hose and pulls it close to his lips. He takes the first drink as the line behind him forms by those ‘dying of thirst’ and hoping to quench it with fresh water and good health. Before handing off to the next in line, he indicates that the water is very good as a big smile crosses his face.

“This is a big success and brings happiness to everybody,” he says to Burwell, who nods and shares a laugh with the Iraqi

CEREMONY

That decision, just as this one was to re-enlist indefinitely, would not be possible without the support and strength from his wife Suzanne.

“She has been right by my side with every decision that was made. Without her none of what I do would be possible. I have a great respect for a spouse that makes the choice to support their servicemember,” he said.

Since the beginning of the deployment, October 2007, nearly 450 Strike Soldiers have re-enlisted, though the allure of military life is not very glamorous in the eyes of many.

sheik.

He moves to the big water tank of the filtration system and turns a large red valve that allows clean water to flow from a four-inch PVC pipe—another sign of success. The view of rushing water flowing is a welcomed site to those in attendance and brings a sense of accomplishment to all. As a part of the project, many of the homes in the area will have the water piped directly into their homes—another sign of success.

Prior to the opening to the water filtration system, a feast was prepared in the home of one of the community leaders. The young adults brought in large metal plates measuring at least two foot in diameter piled high with rice and topped with lamb, which is a traditional Iraqi meal. It was served with numerous homegrown vegetables and amounted to a meal fit for a king, or at least four sheiks and several U.S. Army Soldiers, and then some, as much was left over.

Obviously not their first experience with a feast such as this, the Soldiers joined their hosts and one by one started reaching for the food with their fingers as opposed to using the utensils they are more familiar with on base. Nonetheless, the meal provided the opportunity to, once again, get to understand the Iraqi culture and continue to build on a relationship that continues to develop in a positive way.

Following the meal, the sheiks spent time having conversation with Burwell and his Soldiers about potential projects and concerns.

“If we want the Iraqi people to help themselves we need to simply listen to their needs,” he said. “If ever there was a measure of success in Iraq it has to be strong relationships. I don’t look at Abu Mohammad as just an Iraqi—he’s a friend, and I value the partnership, and the relationship we’ve developed. He is a strong leader, and today’s success story is tomorrow’s future here in Iraq.”

The future of Iraq—a young child—steps up to the American Soldier and accepts the invitation of a free flowing garden hose. He closes his eyes tightly as if nervous and takes a drink of the purified water and as it splashes all over his face he hands it back to the Soldier and bows his head with a grin—a true measure of success in Iraq.

“In many cases Soldiers accomplish great things for little recognition. Much of what is performed is never rewarded or even mentioned,” Trotter said. “An American Soldier just continues to strive for excellence with the knowledge that they are doing a great deed for a grateful nation.”

“Soldiers re-enlist for a variety of reasons. Some take the opportunity to complete educational goals while others do it for duty, honor, and country. Whatever the reason may be, the Soldiers in the Army are proud of what they accomplish on a daily basis,” Trotter continued. “They remain committed to excellence no matter where they are

or what the undertaking may be. That commitment came out today with the re-enlistment of over 1,200 service members.”

This is an obvious sign the Soldiers of the brigade, and troops around the world are ready and willing to continue their fight against America’s enemies.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill, the MNF-I senior enlisted leader, “We’re committed, we’re strong and we’re united. A message can be sent to your adversaries. ‘Hey, the same guys who have been kicking your butt for the last five years have signed up for some more.’”

WIRE

in Iraq, Cesaro believes in this mission. He understands the importance of building relationship. And, it is this skill that he wants most to be able to pass along to his Iraqi counterparts.

Relationships are started as easy as a handshake, a cup of chai tea and casual conversation, or the most popular one for Soldiers, which involves interaction with the children.

At the end of the second day, with the project complete, Cesaro thanks his Iraqi peer for leading his men during the mission. He then runs off to his vehicle and comes back with a couple of



In Memoriam

We Shall Never Forget...

*Sgt JOHN D. ARAGON
COMPANY C
1ST SQUADRON
75TH CAVALRY REGIMENT*



*CPL JESSICA ELLIS
COMPANY A
2ND BRIGADE SPECIAL
TROOPS BATTALION*

"The Lord is my Shepperd..."