

The Ivy Leaf

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MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION - BAGHDAD

“STEADFAST AND LOYAL”

September 15, 2008

Phoenix Soldiers take eyes to skies, keep Aerostat flying high above Rashid

By Spc. David Hodge

1st STB, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers operate an unmanned aerial platform in the shape of a blimp that hovers above Forward Operating Base Falcon, located



Photo by Spc. David Hodge

in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. “Phoenix” Soldiers of the 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, employ sophisticated camera technology inside the helium balloon, known as the Aerostat, to provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance for the Soldiers deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Early in the deployment, the Aerostat successfully assisted the 1st BCT in capturing some of the brigade’s most wanted criminals and terrorists, said Staff Sgt. Marvin Ward, a tactical unmanned aerial vehicle operator, assigned to Company A, 1st STB, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B.

“This was a tremendous coordinated effort and achievement by the Raider Brigade Soldiers,” said Ward, a native of Chicago.

The crew of Aerostat operators is comprised of Soldiers from the Phoenix Bn.’s three companies.

They are responsible for the Aerostat site, working various positions to ensure that the device remains afloat in the skies above southern Baghdad.

The noncommissioned officers, who operate the surveillance platform, serve as Aerostat flight directors.

see Aerostat Pg.6

‘Operation Sapper Torch’ denies terrorist concealment



Photo by Sgt. Whitney Houston, 2nd SBCT PAO, 25th ID

Sgt. Joshua Robbins, native of Dickson, Tenn., serving with the 66th Engineers Company, “Sappers,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, torches an area with a flame thrower in an effort to deny terrorists concealment and give Coalition Forces at Joint Security Station Mushada East a clear line of sight along a road, which lies between Mushada and Tarmiyah in the Tarmiyah Qada.



Photo by Sgt. Whitney Houston

Sgt. Dominic Johnson, 66th Engineers Company “Sappers,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, MND-B, torches the road-side where terrorists previously hid improvised explosive devices.

By Sgt. Whitney Houston

2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Engineers with the 66th Engineers Company “Sappers,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, conducted a controlled burn on a route used by Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces Aug. 26.

The flamethrower’s fire was to devour reeds, which provided concealment for terrorists that have planted many improvised-explosive devices along the route.

“What we’ve done essentially is a controlled burn to get rid of a bunch of reeds in a past enemy engagement area, voiding concealment,” said Capt. Joe

Byrnes, native of Boulder, Colo., serving as the executive officer for the 66th Eng. Co., as he stood next to a crater in the road made from a previous IED explosion.

A joint security station, called Mushada East, has been placed on the route to provide security along one particular route; however, Coalition Forces at the JSS couldn’t see through the tall reeds.

The operation called, “Operation Sapper Torch” will provide that line of sight.

“There is a joint security site here, full of Coalition Forces, and all of these reeds in the area don’t allow them to see any enemy movement.

see Sapper Pg.10

Army father, Air Force son reunite in Iraq

By Sgt. Zach Mott

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WAR EAGLE, Iraq – After several months of failed attempts due to either weather problems, schedule conflicts or various other road blocks, a father and son were reunited Aug. 17 in Iraq.

Army Chaplain (Capt.) Aaron Swartz and his eldest son, Air Force Senior Airman Brian Harding, were able to spend a few days together at Forward Operating Base War Eagle in northern Baghdad recently. Each said they cherished the time together and were glad to finally meet up in a country

more than 5,000 miles from home.

“We know it’s not easy being over here, but being able to be together for a couple days helps out morale wise,” said Swartz, who serves as the battalion chaplain for the 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, out of Fort Carson, Colo.

Harding is deployed to Joint Base Balad with the 732nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, which is based out of Patrick Air Force Base, Fla.

see Reunite in Iraq Pg.18

Air traffic controllers keep skies safe for Coalition Forces aircraft

By Sgt. Jason Dangel

CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The U.S. Army is sometimes described as a large jigsaw puzzle – all the pieces have a place in the accomplishment of the overall mission, and if a piece is missing, the picture or mission cannot be completed.

The air traffic control mission at Camp Taji, performed by the Soldiers of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, encompasses not just one but many pieces of the aviation mission for MND-B.

see Air Traffic Pg.11

The Ivy Leaf **Commentary / Editorials**

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4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

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Index

Mission	4
Photo Feature	12-13
Soldier	14
Family	18
Entertainment Reviews	20
Team	22



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

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4th Inf. Div. town hall focuses on Families, back to school



Photo by Sgt. Jason Thompson, MND-B PAO

Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, a native of Hattiesburg, Miss., commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, meets with Ironhorse Family members at Fort Hood, Texas, and Fort Carson, Colo., during the division's town hall meeting via live satellite feed Aug. 28. The 4th Inf. Div. Band was on hand to ceremoniously close the meeting with the playing of the 4th Inf. Div. March.

By Sgt. Jason Thompson

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – The dictionary defines the term Family as “A group of people united by certain convictions or a common affiliation.” The 4th Infantry Division, however, defines Family as the bedrock of the Ironhorse foundation.

Family was the primary focus for the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad senior leaders as Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, the commanding general of the 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B, met with Families during a town hall meeting Aug. 28 with the Ironhorse Division's Families back home at Fort Hood, Texas, and Fort Carson, Colo., via live satellite feed from Camp Liberty, Baghdad.

More specifically, the town hall highlighted those Family members who recently returned back to school and provided an opportunity to thank the spouses and Family members back home who are providing the loving care to the children as they return to their scholastic adventures.

The Town Hall also served as an opportunity for the division to pay special tribute to the high school seniors who are entering their final year before graduation as several of the division's guest speakers provided words of encouragement for those entering such a decisive period of their lives.

Hammond opened up the meeting by introducing Maj. Lance Hamilton, a lawyer with the division's Staff Judge Advocate office, to the gathered Families at Forts Hood and Carson.

He talked to the gathered audience about how Hamilton, before joining the Army, attended Penn State University, where he earned two academic all-American awards while playing football. After graduating, Hamilton then moved on to graduate from law school at Yale University.

“Lance and his older brother, Harry, both played football at Penn State under coach Joe Paterno,” said Hammond. “Upon graduation, Harry went on to play football for eight years in the National Football League. Lance, on the other hand, graduated from Penn State and moved on to graduate from Yale Law School, where he paid his way through.

“He then worked as a lawyer in the corporate world for two years before he decided to serve his country. Lance could have chosen to stay in the real world and earn a six-figure income, but instead he chose to serve his country. For your sacrifices, I am proud of you and I thank you for your service.”

Hamilton was left nearly speechless but thanked Hammond for his kind words and added that he is proud to be a Soldier.

“It is truly an honor and a privilege to serve my country,” said Hamilton. “I just wish more folks would step up and do the same thing.”

Hammond then introduced his guest co-hosts: Lt. Col. Scott McKean, a native of San Jose, Calif., who is the commander of 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 66th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div., which is based out of Fort Hood, and Lt. Col. Kevin Gregory, a native of Ireland, W.Va., who serves as the commander of 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., which is based out of Fort Carson.

“We hope you all had a great summer and wish you good luck on the first week of school,” said McKean.

“I remember some of the most common phrases heard during this time of the year were: ‘Just 5 more minutes;’ ‘I don't feel good;’ ‘and, I don't have anything to wear.’ – Oh, the joys of back to school.”

Gregory added that the beginning of another school year for his daughters back at Fort Carson marked another keystone moment for him as he is that much closer to returning home to his family after the deployment.

“The deployment is continuing to fly by as is evident by the starting of another school year. As a matter of fact, my girls have been in school since Aug. 7 – all the kids moving from Fort Hood to Fort Carson will have a little shorter summer next year,” said Gregory. “Good luck this school year.”

Spc. Alexander Bryant, a logistical support specialist with the 404th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Inf. Div., was the first guest speaker of the event as he discussed the importance of continuing his education – even during his deployment.

“A lot of people think that because they're deployed, they have to stop going to school, but I think it's very easy to continue your education online,” said Bryant.

“College classes are making time go by faster for me because it keeps me busy. I think everyone should take advantage of the many ways the Army provides for Soldiers to accomplish their educational goals.”

see **Town hall Pg.3**

4th Inf. Div. town hall

Continued from page 2

Bryant is originally from Dominican Republic but grew up in Massachusetts prior to joining the Army in 2006.

Following Bryant on the center stage was Sgt. Rachael Schafer, a Pittsburgh native, who serves as an intelligence analyst with the Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Inf. Div. Schafer shared her Army experiences with the Family members back home and exuded enthusiasm as she spoke of her plans for the next stage in her military career: attending Officer Candidate School.

"I have recently submitted my OCS packet, where I was selected as part of the (commanding general's) expansion program. Without the support of my NCOs and officers appointed over me, I would have never accomplished this achievement," said Schaffer.

"I urge you all, as you start your school year, to push forward to achieve levels much higher than expected.

"Remember, you always have Family and teachers to help fulfill any goal you set for yourself," she said, in encouragement for the students watching on in Texas and Colorado.



Photo by Sgt. Jason Thompson, MND-B PAO

Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, a native of Hattiesburg, Miss., commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, meets with Ironhorse Family members at Fort Hood, Texas, and Fort Carson, Colo., during the division's town hall meeting via live satellite feed Aug. 28.

Next up was the trifecta of Lt. Col. Paul Hossenlopp, the deputy commanding officer for 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.; followed by Sgt. 1st Class Tony Billings, the senior human resources NCO for 1st CAB, 68th Armor Regt., 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.; and Lt. Col. Troy Smith, the commander of 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., who each discussed the different trials that go along with being a deployed parent with children returning to school at home.

"I think back to my senior year in High School with great and unforgettable memories of sports, great friends, great times and, somewhere in all that, grades which were good enough to get me into college," said Hossenlopp, whose daughter, Cassidy, is entering her senior year at Harker Heights High School.

"I can't stress enough how important your education is and how time, effort and discipline spent now will shape your college and adult life."

The final guest speaker of the night was Omar Raad, a teacher of computer science at the Baghdad University.

Raad provided insight to Families in Texas and Colorado about the education system in and around Baghdad as the children attend school for 12 years, beginning from the time they are 6 years old.

He explained that all schools, to include college, are completely funded by the government to provide an accessible education for everyone.

Following the guest speakers, McKean and Gregory opened up the floor for questions from the Family members back home, which included a wide area of subjects, such as national elections, 4th Inf. Div.'s move from Fort Hood to Carson, and the condition of schools in Baghdad.

The town hall meeting was broadcast live via satellite feed to Families in attendance at both Fort Hood and Fort Carson and was also available for viewing via live web stream on the 4th Inf. Div. webpage.

Breathe in spiritual fitness



By Capt. Timothy Meier
Chaplain, MND-B

The Army expects Soldiers to be physically "fit to fight." To that end, we engage in all manner of physical training. Most of us would agree that we need this kind of training activity over the long term. For those of us who've engaged in organized sports since childhood, going for long periods without some sort of intentional physical training regimen causes us to feel out-of-sorts.

In addition to physical fitness we need to be spiritually fit as well, in order to thrive – and not just survive – in the midst of a war zone. A friend who attends Alcoholics Anonymous says that "spirituality can unite what religions divide," because she's seen folks from diverse religious backgrounds – people who otherwise would not even have coffee with one another unite by working the spiritual program of the Twelve Steps.

I suggest that engaging in spiritual exercises can do for our spirits what physical exercise can do for our bodies. Spiritual exercises do not need to be very time-consuming or complex; in fact, the best ones I've seen appear to be very simple indeed. I'd like to present a few for your consideration over the coming weeks. Here's one for starters.

Last summer, in the Chaplain Officer Basic Course, we had the first Buddhist Chaplain Candidate in the history of the Army going through Chaplain's Course. As part of his spiritual practice, he'd spend time each day meditating. A big part of his meditation practice was the intentional awareness of his breathing. What could be simpler? Anybody can do this spiritual exercise. Buddhist practice suggests breathing in through the nose, and out through the mouth. Peer-reviewed scientific journal articles have described the lowering of blood pressure and heart rate which can occur during such meditation events, of even a few minutes' duration. In a high-stress combat environment, such a low-cost, non-pharmacological stress reduction practice makes good physical as well as spiritual sense.

When aware of being stressed, if we remind ourselves to breathe deeply, even something so simple as taking a few deep breaths can make a huge difference. Years ago, a friend of mine, when I was upset in his presence, said to me with great kindness, "Tim, remember to breathe." His statement seemed stupid and condescending, but only until I realized that when I get upset, I hold my breath. The simple act of taking intentionally deep breaths can help to relax us, even in highly stressful situations.

The Hebrew Scriptures tell us in Psalms 46:10, "Be still and know I am God." When we're tense, our hearts are racing, and our guts are wrenched and contorted, it's hard to have a conscious awareness of God's presence and action around us. But when we're reminded to breathe, we can choose to inhale deeply, as if to breathe in the very breath of a God who "formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."

Word on the Street:

What are you thankful for as a U.S. citizen?

By Sgt. Grant Okubo
4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.



1st Lt. Yanía Bates
New York
Brigade Assistant S1
4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

"I'm thankful that my Family is able to live in safe country."



Spc. Doris Splunge
Montgomery, Ala.
Food Service Specialist
HHC, BSTB, 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

"I'm thankful for our freedom of speech, freedom of religion and I thank God we live in a country that isn't chaos."



1st Lt. Erick Montalla
Los Angeles
Executive Officer
Co. C, BSTB, 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

"The freedoms that we have each and every day. Unlike other countries, I think we have more of them."



Staff Sgt. Matthew Castillo
Las Vegas, N.M.
Bde. Aviation Element,
ADAM Cell NCOIC
HHC, 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

"The things I'm most thankful for are the opportunities the United States has to offer."

News briefs

MND-B Soldiers seize munitions caches in Baghdad

Multi-National Division – Baghdad

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers seized munitions while conducting operations to increase security Sept. 3-4.

At approximately 9:30 a.m. Sept. 3, Soldiers serving with Company C, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, found a cache northwest of Baghdad. The munitions seized included six pounds of unidentified bulk explosives, a DSHKA gun mount, two DSHKA heavy machine guns, a rifle stock, two rifle barrels and an anti-aircraft gun mount.

Soldiers serving with Company D, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, attached to the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, found a 155mm round, a 120mm round and two Italian manufactured anti-tank mines while on patrol in the East Rashid district of Baghdad at approximately 12:30 a.m. Sept. 4.

MND-B Soldiers detain suspected AQI in Rashid district

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers detained a suspected al-Qaeda in Iraq terrorist Aug. 30 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

At approximately 10:30 p.m. in the Jihad community, Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, detained the suspect believed to be connected to a vehicle-borne improvised-explosive device. The patrol returned to a combat outpost with the suspect for further processing.

“The 1st ‘Raider’ Brigade works around the clock capturing known criminals and keeping violence off the streets of the Rashid district,” said Maj. Dave Olson, spokesman, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. “The Raider Brigade continues to provide a safe and secure environment for the 1.5 million residents of southern Baghdad.”

MND-B Soldiers detain suspected AQI

MND-B PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq-Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers detained an alleged al-Qaeda in Iraq suspect in Baghdad’s Rashid district September 2.

At approximately 9:30 p.m. Sept. 2, Iraqi Army Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 53rd Brigade, 14th Iraqi Army Division, handed a suspect affiliated with AQI, allegedly responsible for attacks against Iraqi citizens and Coalition Forces, to Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B in the Jihad community. The Co. C Soldiers transported the detainee to a joint security station for further processing.

Cavalry troops, ISF patrol northwest Baghdad



By Air Force Staff Sgt. Manuel Martinez, Combat Camera, attached to 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

An Iraqi Army Soldier pulls security during a joint patrol with Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers in the northwest Baghdad neighborhood of Adil Aug. 27. Soldiers with Troop A, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, currently attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), patrol the area often with their Iraqi Security Forces counterparts.

Tip leads Strykehorse Soldiers to large cache

By Sgt. 1st Class Brian Addis

2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.,

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers from Ace High Troop, 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment “Strykehorse,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, with the help of a tip from of local resident, seized a large cache Aug. 18 along the banks of the Grand Canal in Dhabsiyah, a village northwest of Baghdad.

The cache was found buried in burlap bags under approximately 2 feet of loose dirt in the high reeds of the Grand Canal. The cache consisted of 227 37mm anti-aircraft rounds.

“The relationships with local leaders that “Ace High” has developed in the area since our (assuming responsibility for the area from) the previous unit have resulted in multiple caches being turned in. Working together, we are able to provide a safer more stable environment,” said Capt. Matthew Clark, commander of Ace High Troop, 2nd Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt. “Due to the hard work and dedication of the troops of Ace High, locals are willing to come to the JSS and provide information, which allows us to improve the security of the area.”



Photo by Capt. Matthew Clark, Troop A, 2nd Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Soldiers from Battery B, 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment “Strykehorse”, 2nd Stryker Brigade combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, seized a sizeable munitions cache Aug. 18.

Iraqi Army soldiers seize weapons cache during cordon and search operations

MND-B PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Iraqi Security Forces and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers seized a weapons cache during a combined cordon and search operation Aug. 30 in the Saydiyah community of the Rashid district located in southern Baghdad.

At approximately 1:45 p.m., soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 53rd Brigade, 14th Iraqi Army Division, discovered a weapons cache hidden under a floor in a house.

The IA soldiers are currently working with members of the 1st Bn., 24th Bde., 6th IA Div. Military Transition Team, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B.

Conducting clearing operations in southwestern Baghdad, the IA

soldiers captured four 60mm mortar rounds, a 60mm mortar tube with base plate, 2,000 rounds of PKC ammunition, four rocket-propelled grenades, four RPG launchers and three hand-held radios.

At approximately 2:15 p.m., IA soldiers from the same unit discovered a 60mm mortar round rigged as an improvised-explosive device.

A Coalition Forces explosive ordnance disposal team destroyed the munitions from both cache sites.

At approximately 9:15 p.m., responding to a tip from a concerned citizen the Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., detained three suspected criminals in the Aamel area. The patrol returned to a combat outpost with the suspects to conduct additional questioning.



4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

National Police gives humanitarian aid to needy citizens of Oubaidy

By Staff Sgt. Matt Meadows

4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – National Police officials gave out more than 600 bags containing humanitarian aid items to needy people in the 9 Nissan neighborhood in the New Baghdad district of eastern Baghdad Aug. 15.

Policemen assigned to 8th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division distributed donated food and personal hygiene items to residents in Muhalla 762 of the Oubaidy area. Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from 2nd Battalion of the NP brigade unit's National Police Transition Team provided security alongside their NP partners, and Company A, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. Soldiers donated the bags of aid.

Iraqi Brig. Gen. Ali Ibraheem Dabown, commander of 8th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, led the way in personally handling the humanitarian aid and disbursing it to deserving people in desperate need of a helping hand. He said he realizes how much the citizens of Oubaidy, and people all across Iraq, depend on the National Police and other Iraqi agencies and not just for food.

"The Iraqi forces give people peace and security. We also help support them as we help Iraqi people," said Dabown. "We gave food to more than 60 families in this area, and this is not the first time for our brigade. We are always giving people supplies."

Dabown explained that 8th Bde., 2nd NP Div. policemen distributed medical supplies, food and other items to Iraqi citizens in New Baghdad as recently as the previous week. He credited Coalition Force partners for working with them to bring this assistance to the people of New Baghdad, especially in a neighborhood such as Muhalla 762 in Oubaidy.

"We chose this area because most people here are very poor people, and they need our help," Dabown commented. "This is the main reason. And secondly, this is our location. This is the area where we do our operations every day, like search operations (and) checkpoints, and we need to secure the area."

Lt. Col. Christopher Dessaso, 2nd Bn., 8th Bde., 2nd NP

Div NPTT, from Springfield, Mass., explained that the combined humanitarian aid mission resulted from discussions with "General Ali" about non-lethal operations and the general's understanding of counter-insurgency operations.

The recipe for success in fighting insurgency requires mixing the ingredient of community support to an existing dish of established security. The 8th Bde., 2nd NP Div., not only has set the table for a successful main course, but also they have cleared it in preparation for enjoying their just desserts.

"They (Dabown and his staff) know that you establish security and then you get the support of the population. And then, you finish off the insurgents," said Dessaso. "There is a difference between something we're forcing them to do and something that they understand that they need to do and want to do. That is what we see today."

The most important thing about NP operations such as the humanitarian aid mission is for the people of Oubaidy to believe, know, understand and accept that the National Police are in their neighborhoods to help them, said Dessaso.

The citizens need to know the policemen care about them and will protect them, which is a relationship that works both ways, he said.

"We need to make sure that people know that Iraqi Security Forces are helping people with everything, not just fighting or for security," continued Dabown. "We work for everything to help people of this area. We just need the people of this area, and all Iraqi people, to help the Coalition Forces and Iraqi Forces."

"If we work together, we can secure the area, we can secure the community here in this place. And also, (we need citizens to) tell us about the people who are outlaws, insur-



Photo by Staff Sgt. Matt Meadows, 4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

Policemen assigned to 8th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division distributes bags of humanitarian aid to Oubaidy residents in eastern Baghdad, Aug. 15. The NPs gave more than 600 bags of donated food and hygiene items to approximately 60 families in Muhalla 762 of New Baghdad during the humanitarian mission.

gents – the people who are doing bad stuff to the Iraqi people. We can make this country secure."

At the end of the day, Dabown just wants the people of New Baghdad to know the National Police are here to help them in any way they can.

After all, they are public servants, and they serve with honor and pride.

"All of the Iraqi National Police, all the brigades, feel good and they feel proud when they help Iraqi people," expressed Dabown. "We feel that it is our job to serve and help the people."

Officials reopen refurbished Jadriya Lake Park in Karadah

By Sgt. Grant Okubo

4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq – An estimated 2,250 Iraqi citizens witnessed a step toward a return to normalcy as local officials reopened Jadriya Lake Park in the Karadah district of eastern Baghdad Aug. 22.

Government officials, security force leaders, contractors and Soldiers, who all worked together to restore the lake and surrounding grounds, joined the people in celebrating the successful lake reopening.

Dr. Mohammed Al Rubeiy, Karadah District Council chairman, and other council members and local leaders organized and conducted the reopening of Jadriya Lake Park. They planned the event to coordinate with a "Karadah Day" celebration, which infused a lot of food and activities, including art displays, emergency-responder demonstrations, a fun run, swimming and riding Jet Skis.

The Jadriya Lake Park grounds encompass approximately 400,000 square meters, and the lake itself is about 300,000 square meters – more than one-tenth of a mile around, explained Capt. Sean O'Brien. Originally, the lake opened in January 2003, said O'Brien, the effects coordinator for 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

"It is a very large water park," said Sgt.

1st Class Raymond Allen, a noncommissioned officer assigned to the 5th Bn., 25th FA effects cell. "It's a good place for families to go to and just relax and enjoy family time," emphasized the Daytona Beach, Fla., native.

Before the park closed, about 50,000 people visited the water park on weekdays and about 250,000 Iraqi enjoyed Jadriya Lake on weekends, estimated O'Brien.

Allen said a lot of people worked extremely hard to reopen the water park, which had several phases.

The first phase was cleaning the water park, clearing rubble, beautifying the park and getting water flowing. Phases

two and three mostly involved adding accents to the park area, which included installing basketball poles and benches, painting and making more beautification measures.

During this phase of the process, 5th Bn., 25th FA Regiment Soldiers approached local small-business men about opening shops and stands in the water park. There will be small shops opening and adding economic stimulus in the area, commented Allen, who said he was impressed with the effects of the project.

"The results of the project have been phenomenal," said Maj. Robert Machen, 5th Bn., 25th FA, Regiment battalion executive officer. The project isn't finished, with only two of three phases complete, so there are still plenty of great things to come from this project, said Machen, a College Station, Texas, native. The upcoming treats of phase three include restaurants, a boat ramp and paddle boats, he said.

Even though Coalition Forces attended the Jadriya Lake Park reopening, they represented only a small percentage of security personnel at the event. Iraqi Security Forces provided most of the security, said Machen.

The reopening of the lake park brings with it hope for and a hint of a return to normalcy, particularly for members of the Department of Tourism.

Eventually, Iraqi tourism officials hope to use a project such as this one to send the message to the rest of the world, explained Machen.



Iraqi citizens enjoy riding Jet Skis at the Jadriya Lake Park reopening in the Karadah district of southeast Baghdad, Aug. 22.



1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Phoenix Soldiers take eyes to skies, keep Aerostat flying high above Rashid

Continued from page 1

The nose line operator is responsible for keeping the hull, or front of the Aerostat, steady while two Soldiers balance the port and starboard sides of the Aerostat with confluence lines that attach to winches.

"Then there are two Soldiers who keep the rear of the Aerostat steady; they are called the snubber line operators," Ward explained.

The site has a senior flight director, who is responsible for ground and air safety, explained Ward.

The SFD ensures accurate reporting information for higher headquarters, supervises maintenance and is the senior instructor for training.

The Aerostat has both day and night capabilities and provides Soldiers with 360 degree visibility of the battlefield from several miles out, he said.

"When the Aerostat is safely airborne in accordance with all pre/post flight procedures, the Soldiers take up positions in the Ground Base System to operate the camera and watch the actions of the Aerostat," said Ward.

Since assuming the Aerostat detail April 9, 2008, the team has flown more than 675 flight hours without incident, said Sgt. Kathia Pierre, a human resources specialist and the Aerostat flight director, assigned to HHC, 1st STB, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Pierre said that her first and foremost priority is the safety of the Soldiers responsible for the Aerostat, and takes the re-



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

Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill, the top enlisted leader for Multi-National Forces – Iraq, presents a coin for excellence to Pfc. Matthew Rivera, a signal support systems specialist from Bronx, N.Y., assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, for his dedicated work service at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Baghdad.

sponsibility seriously.

She also said that she enjoys training and mentoring her crew on the system and provides quarterly proficiency exams to keep her Soldiers trained to standard.

"It is paramount that my crew know their tasks," state Pierre, who hails from Miami and is currently serving her

Bronx, N.Y. Rivera is the newest member of the Aerostat team, enjoys the work and also enjoys watching the camera videos at night.

The Soldiers of the 1st STB, 4th Inf. Div., are currently deployed to the Rashid district in southern Baghdad for a 15-month tour in support of MND-B and OIF.

third deployment in support of OIF.

Maintaining an unmanned aerial vehicle is not typically part of her military occupational skill, noted Pierre, who said she never thought she would have such an experience.

"It is definitely different and challenging – one that I will never forget!" she exclaimed.

The blimp requires a great amount of attention to detail and knowledge to run the aerial system and all the positions at the Aerostat site, said Pfc. Matthew Rivera, a signal support system specialist, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st STB, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

"The Aerostat is an excellent tool for my professional progression," added Rivera, who has worked in every position related to the Aerostat platform, adding that the duty provides him with a tremendous amount of responsibility but is a new and exciting experience.

"I was scared being a Flight Director because I was the lowest ranking Soldier making crucial decisions," said Rivera, who hails from



Photo by Staff Sgt. Brent Williams, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Sheik Talib Kwali, head chairman of the Jihad Reconciliation Council, welcomes 250 displaced families to resettle in their homes and communities of the Shishaan area of Hayy Jihad Aug. 23 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. Talib has been working to return displaced families to the Jihad neighborhood due to the success of Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces in providing security for the 1.6 million people of Rashid. Soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, attended the event to show their support for the citizens and the communities rebuilding their lives after years of violence and strife.

Iraqi leaders, MND-B Soldiers welcome 250 families back to Jihad community in Rashid

By Staff Sgt. Brent Williams

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers joined representatives from the Government of Iraq, the Hayy Jihad Neighborhood Advisory Council and Iraqi Security Forces leaders to welcome approximately 250 families back to their communities and neighborhoods in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

Soldiers and leaders of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, joined the Jihad Reconciliation Council and Iraqi Army soldiers Aug. 23 to mark the relocation of Iraqi citizens of the Shishaan neighborhood.

The event was a special opportunity to highlight the many accomplishments made by ISF in establishing security in the Jihad community, said Tom Lynch, Provincial Reconstruction Team leader embedded with the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

The resettlement of Iraqis into their homes in Baghdad's Rashid district is also a testament to the Iraqi people, who are working to rebuild their lives, said Lynch.

"This is your achievement – the achievement of the people of Jihad," said Lynch, who hails from Fairfax, Va.

Resettlements in Rashid happen every day, but a ceremony celebrating the return of more than 250 families is a unique event, said Capt. Michael Garling, commander of Company E, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st BCT.

"This is all Iraqi-led, Iraqi-driven; and Iraqis put this together under the reconciliation council," he said, adding that he thinks the ceremony is a good news story that illustrates the people working with their local leadership and the government of Iraq to take ownership of their communities and rebuild their neighborhoods.

Garling said his engineer company works with the sol-

diers of the 1st Battalion, 53rd Brigade, 14th Iraqi Army Division, to provide security and stability to the area, which enables the Iraqi citizens to return to a sense of normalcy after years of violence and strife.

"(These families) have been scattered far and wide across Iraq, and now they can finally move back in their houses because the security is strong enough ... in the Shishaan area, for them to feel safe," said Garling, a native of Albany, N.Y.

Speaking at the ceremony, Staff Col. Ali Abood, the commander of the 1st Bn., 53rd Bde., 14th IA Div., asked the Iraqi citizens returning to their homes and neighborhoods to call if there is a lack of security in their communities.

Ali said his soldiers are working under the Iraqi government's instructions and reminded those in attendance that "there will be no safety without the return of displaced families."

"We made the preparation for you to return safe and secure to your area and your homes," Ali said. "Our hearts are open for you as well as our eyes securing you."

Sheik Talib Kwali, head of the Jihad Reconciliation Council, welcomed the displaced families to return to the Hayy Jihad community and said he hopes that security will be maintained in Rashid.

Kwali also addressed the lack of essential services in some of the neighborhoods in the Jihad community and asked the Government of Iraq to assist the Iraqi people to fix the problems.

"People of Shishaan are still concerned that in the area there are no services, such as sewer, water and electricity, but Coalition, ISF and the people (in the muhalla) are working together to help bring back those services," Garling said. "There are a couple of projects in the works right now that should help them out."



18th MP Bde.

18th Military Police Brigade Soldiers declared Heroes by Inspector General

By Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – The Multi-National Corps – Iraq Inspector General declared seven 18th Military Police Brigade Soldiers as IG Heroes in a ceremony Aug. 28 held at the 18th MP Bde. headquarters at Camp Liberty.

The Soldiers were recognized by Col. Ramon Valle, MNC-I command inspector general, for outstanding performance during a recent IG inspection of the brigade by the IG team Aug. 26-28.

The team inspected the brigade's administration, motor pool and logistics sections.

"The MNC-I IG's office utilizes what we call Heroes program, which recognizes those individuals that stood out during their scheduled inspection," said Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Vinson, the noncommissioned officer who conducted the IG inspection for the brigade.

Although there is no written program to determine the qualifications to be awarded an IG Hero, said Vinson, it is up to the inspector to determine who he feels is worthy of the title.

"For example, the two I chose were Pfc. Hollie McDonald, 793rd Military Police Battalion, and Pfc. Jonathan Salinas, 716th Military Police Battalion," said Vinson.

"Both are very young junior Soldiers, who displayed great knowledge in their fields of logistics. Their knowledge exceeded those normally in their pay grade and military experience."

The IG Hero award is a way to recognize Soldiers like McDonald and Salinas for their efforts and hard work during their deployments.

The other 18th MP Bde. Soldiers awarded were: Staff Sgt. Sara Lay-Ibejibah, Headquarters and Headquarters Company; Spc. Gina Muncy, 716th MP Bn.; Sgt. Victor Cole, 716th MP Bn.; Sgt. Jose Calderon, 793rd MP Battalion and Spc. Ryan Wheeler, 793rd MP Bn.

"Just as any award recognizes an individual's efforts and hard work, so does the Hero Certificate of Achievement," said Vinson.

"The recognition serves as a morale booster for the individuals inspected."

The IG inspection, also known as the Operational Read-



Spc. Gina Muncy, 716th Military Police Battalion, is presented a Certificate of Achievement Aug. 28 from Col. Ramon Valle, Multi-National Corps – Iraq Command Inspector General, for outstanding performance during a recent IG inspection of the 18th MP Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, by the IG team Aug. 26-28.

ness Assessment, works in conjunction with the MNC-I commanding general's Organizational Inspection Program.

There is a requirement in the Army Inspection Program regulation that commanders utilize at the OIP program to ensure their commands are operating within compliance of Army regulatory and policy guidance, said Vinson.

"This is where the IG's office comes in and we inspect to ensure units are operating within compliance," said Vinson.

The 18th MP Bde. received 24 commendable areas out of 28 areas that were inspected, said Maj. Kimberly Grahek, 18th MP Bde. logistics officer and a native of LaFollette, Tenn.

The 18th MP Bde., Multi-National Division – Baghdad, is deployed from Mannheim, Germany, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 07-09.

Wolfhound Soldier of the Quarter, Soldier-skateboarder grinds in Iraq

By Sgt. Brad Willeford

1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – A native of Port Huron, Mich., he has come a long way from his days of skateboarding, playing football and working at a local home improvement store.

An avid skateboarder who loves to "grind," his days of "ollies" and "tail drags" are now days of patrols and finding ways to assist the people of Iraq.

It is a challenge that Spc. Bradley Cook, Cook an infantryman serving with Company C, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, meets heads on.

When he joined the U.S. Army in January 2006, his request was quite simple – he desired to be an infantryman.

"When I told the recruiter what I wanted to do, he told me there is no doubt that I would be coming to Iraq," said Cook.

Since arriving in Iraq, Cook has been on daily missions. On his first mission, Cook said he felt a little apprehensive going out and "not knowing exactly what to expect" (but) everything I had learned came back to me



Spc. Bradley Cook

– and I adjusted."

On a recent mission, Cook was on the road for more than nine hours, visiting Joint Security Stations in the brigade's area of operations, and focused on become more familiar with the area. He said he was exhausted but found it rewarding knowing he had an opportunity to help others.

"I just love it – not knowing what the next day will hold," Cook stated.

He has been busy in the first nine months in Iraq. He served as a member of the brigade's tactical reserve, responsible for rapid response to high impact events in the brigade's area located north of Baghdad.

The myriad of duties his team was responsible for included recovering downed aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles and aiding in efforts to rebuild Iraq and stabilize the local area.

During a two-month period in the spring, he assisted Iraqi Army soldiers in securing and stabilizing Sadr City during intense combat, where fire fights were daily occurrences.

He has also assisted in providing security and essential services to the residents in the Abu Gharib Qada.

"He is a stellar performer, who always puts his best foot forward on a consistent basis," said Staff Sgt. Jason Menard, Cook's squad leader. "He's one of the best Soldiers I have in my squad."

Cook recently earned the title of the Task Force's "Soldier of the Quarter."

MPs get first taste of MRAPs



Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 95th Military Police Battalion, check over their initial basic issue equipment for their newly received Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected vehicle at the Camp Liberty MRAP fielding site Aug. 22.

By Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad military police Soldiers with the 95th Military Police Battalion added another vehicle and combat multiplier to their fleet when they received their first Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected vehicles fresh off the assembly line Aug. 22 at the Camp Liberty MRAP fielding site.

The 18th Military Police Brigade, started receiving its initial fielding of MRAPs Jun. 30 and now has fielded more than 200 vehicles to its MP Soldiers patrolling the streets of Iraq, said Maj. Kimberly Grahek, 18th MP Bde. logistics officer and a native of LaFollette, Tenn.

The Soldiers of the 95th MP Bn. received more than 20 initial issue MRAPs at the Camp Liberty MRAP fielding site Aug. 22. The new MRAPs also are the first to be equipped with Explosively Formed Penetrator enhanced protective armor, a large armored shield that protects the side of the vehicle where EFPs are aimed.

MPs conduct Police Transition Team missions, training the Iraqi police on a daily basis on some of the most dangerous streets in Iraq and welcome the new vehicle as a form of further protection against criminal attacks.

"We are working in Sadr City, where everyone else is using MRAPs," said Sgt. Scott Werner, a military police Soldier with the 191st Military Police Company, North Dakota National Guard, 95th MP Bn., native of Bismarck, N.D.

As the vehicle's name states, the MRAP is designed to be far more effective than the humvee at deflecting the explosions of certain types of improvised-explosive devices, particularly those of the powerful, deeply buried variety.

The MRAP increases the survivability of Soldiers in combat," said Grahek, referring to the many new safety features that were put into place on the MRAP to protect Soldiers against IEDs.

"We have a better vantage point of the road sitting so much higher up," said Werner, referring to one of the many advantages of the MRAP for detecting threats while on mission.

The MP Soldiers have been riding in humvees, conducting their daily Police Transition Team operations. Now, they will have to get accustomed to the new features the MRAP brings.

"It is a much different perspective to get used to," said Sgt. James Greene, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 95th MP Bn., native of Ravenna, Mich., after completing a training course he attended to become certified to operate the vehicle.

The training course consisted of classroom instruction and hands on driving time around the Victory Base Complex while conducting both day and night drivers training.

The MP Soldiers look forward to the new protection the MRAP provides but say they will have to see how it works once they are out there using the vehicle in actual combat operations.

"We will have to see how it goes when we are out there," said Greene, referring to daily missions in Baghdad. "Hopefully, it offers better protection."



2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

Top Guns continue to work with SOI, ready them for Iraqi Police force

By Sgt. James Hunter

2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers continue their effort of transforming Sons of Iraq, or Abna'a al-Iraq, into Iraqi Policemen to help boost the number of policemen on the force patrolling the streets of Baghdad.

Since May 2008, Soldiers with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), have been working effortlessly with Sons of Iraq in Radwanayah, just on the outskirts of Baghdad, where they are maintaining security at tactical checkpoints.

"The primary purpose of the SOIs is to provide additional security to the area. Living on the FOB, we can only get out to patrol the area so much," said Capt. Geoffrey Gorsuch, commander, Battery B, 1st Bn., 320th FA Regt. "The SOIs occupy their checkpoints 24 hours a day, which increases security in the area. We lean on the SOIs as much as possible to complete tasks that would normally take up CF combat power."

For example, if an Iraqis are concerned for their own safety while completing a task that will better the whole community, such as cleaning a canal, Gorsuch will ask the SOIs to provide a couple of personnel to help secure the site while the locals work the canals.

It provides an Iraqi solution for an Iraqi concern of security for the populace and frees up American combat power for other tasks, said Gorsuch, a native of Peoria, Ill.

"They are doing good things out there. They are very important," said Staff Sgt. Michael Rivas, a native of Upper Marble, Md. "It cuts down our patrol times, and they know the area."

They are quick to notice suspicious situations or persons entering the area who really don't belong, he said.

"These SOIs know everyone in the area, so they know when someone is here who doesn't belong," said Gorsuch. "They also are better than us at spotting when something doesn't look right and needs a second look."

"The local SOIs are all from our AO, and most are from families that have lived here for a long time. Our area has always been fairly safe, but the SOIs are able to work 24 hours a day and deter the enemy from using our AO as a transit place when (Coalition Forces) are not patrolling," Gorsuch added. "Their impact on the security of the AO was immediate and pleasantly surprising."

Often, the Top Gun troops involve them in their daily patrols.

"Whenever possible, we will involve the SOIs with us during our operations to reduce the strain that our operations have the potential to cause on the local nationals," said Gorsuch. "Iraqi's are a lot happier to have other Iraqis searching through their belongings than a big American Soldier, who doesn't speak their language and may not be totally aware of cultural customs, rules and courtesies. Bottom line, involving the SOIs in our operations is a way to get the job done



Photo by Staff Sgt. James Hunter, 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.

With a Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier looking on, a Sons of Iraq, or Abna'a al-Iraq, member works to complete his set of pull ups during a physical fitness test in Radwanayah Aug. 21.

and lessen the cultural impact of our Soldiers on the daily lives of the people living and working in the AO."

Their acceptance into the community is definitely seen on the faces of the Iraqi people.

"Everyone is extremely happy with the SOIs. They have increased security in the area and also provided the young men in the area a way to make money for themselves and the family," Gorsuch said. "It is not a lot, but every job helps the community in some way. They are also happy that it is local men who are working the checkpoints."

The Iraqi people take great pride in their work, and they do not want to let down the people they protect. This is their community, and they want to keep it safe.

However, no matter how easily they are accepted by the people in the area, they still need acceptance from the Government of Iraq, which up to this point, they have not.

They are playing a vital role within the communities, with hopes they will continue their mission alongside the Government of Iraq as members of the Iraqi Police force. To ensure these men can get to that point, the Top Gun troops are doing all they can to ensure so.

The "Top Gun" troops gave 21 members of the all-volunteer force a medical screening and physical fitness exam Aug. 21.

The information gathered during the screening and fitness exams were filed into each man's packet, which will be sent higher for approval and hopefully acceptance into the Iraqi Police Academy.

"Our ultimate goal is to eventually transform the SOIs into a (Government of Iraq) ISF element," Gorsuch said. "These packets will be turned into the Iraqi Police department so they can be vetted through the Iraq channels and eventually, hopefully around the first of the year, the SOIs can report to training and be picked up as Iraqi Police officers and return in an official GOI-paid position to police the area."

The physical fitness test gave the SOIs an

opportunity to gauge their strengths physically. If accepted, the men will be expected to pass the physical fitness test in the academy, said Rivas. The physical fitness test was comprised of a 100-meter dash, 1,500-meter run, pull ups, sit ups and push ups. Each man passed the test.

"It was a basic PT test," said Estraca. "We had them do the minimum number to pass."

Two Top Gun medics examined each SOI, checking for any medical condition that would deter their entrance into the academy.

"We were making sure they had a full range of motion and were physically fit to accomplish their job," said Spc. Leonard Estraca, a native of Mathis, Texas, with Battery B, 1st Bn., 320th FA Regt. "We checked their blood pressure and their heart rate."

Estraca didn't find anything too serious, just minor problems as he sees daily with many Iraqi citizens in the area.

"What we see with most Iraqi civilians is dental problems and high blood pressure from smoking," said Estraca. "Overall, they were pretty healthy guys."

As the packets go forward and get vetted through the Iraqi channels, the Top Gun troops will continue to work with the SOIs and further enhance their abilities through training – just as they have done since May.

Prior to occupying their checkpoints, the battery conducted a week of training with them focused on basic skills, such as first aid, the safe handling and clearing of the AK-47, traffic control point operations and personnel and vehicle search techniques.

"We still conduct training with them but spend the majority of the time conducting joint TCPs and dismounted patrols with them," said Gorsuch. "We have found that they are very eager to learn and serve their community. They are always motivated and willing to work with the patrols in the AO."

Estraca, who has been working with the SOIs on a personal basis since May and said he finds them to be very hard working men who just want acceptance and the ability to provide for their families.

Former detainees return home to families

By Sgt. Matthew Vanderboegh

1-75th Cav. Regt., 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. BAGHDAD – "Do you promise to never be involved in any attacks against Iraqi Security Forces or Coalition Forces? Do you promise to never be involved with any criminal or insurgent groups or individuals?"

These questions were asked to four former detainees, now free men, as they were released to their families at Forward Operating Base Rock in Ramaniya Aug. 21.

The program, known as Operation Lions Return, has released more than 30 individuals from the Ghazaliyah area alone.

"I feel that the reconciliation with the local populace is what is moving Iraq forward," said Capt. Adam Nixon, a native of Ellensburg, Wash., who serves with 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

In order to help promote reconciliation throughout northwest Baghdad, the detainees are released back to their families and homes because it has been determined through the Government of Iraq and Coalition Forces that they no longer pose a threat to the local population and security forces.

"When we detain people, we are trying to make Iraq safe; there is no disrespect to you or your family. I know you have been away for a very long time," said Maj. Daniel Kirk, a native of Pensacola Beach, Fla., and acting commander of the 1-75 Cav. Regt.

During the ceremony, which was hosted by Col. Hassan of the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, each of the men placed their hand on the Quran and swore that they would never again take up arms or associate with any criminal elements.

Each of the detainees also received support from a member of their family, who vowed to help their loved one stay away from trouble and reintroduce them back into Iraqi society.

"I am your brother," said Col. Jalal, Iraqi Police commander in Shulla.

"I need you to put yourself away from the bad elements and let us work together to build our family."

The released men left with their families, all of whom seemed joyous, knowing they were taking their first steps of their new lives as Iraqi citizens.



Photo by Sgt. Matthew Vanderboegh

Col. Hassan, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, congratulates former detainees and their sponsors during a release ceremony held at Forward Operating Base Rock in Ramaniya Aug. 21.



Assistance center moves to facility in heart of northeastern Baghdad district

By Sgt. Jerry Saslav
3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – It was a grand opening without any grandeur; no ribbons were cut nor speeches given, but an Iraqi Assistance Center opened Sept. 1 in Baghdad's Sadr City district nonetheless.

The center, housed in a trailer near the Sadr City District Advisory Council building, is where Iraqi citizens go to file damage and condolence claims for losses suffered due to combat between Coalition Forces and Special Groups elements in this northeastern Baghdad district.

The second client for the IAC at its new location was a father seeking help for his son.

The father was going over documents with "Alan." Alan was showing the documents to "Sara," when Staff Sgt. Brendan Piper stopped in to check on the newly opened IAC.

For the past four months, Piper, a native of Milwaukee, has processed these claims at the IAC established at Joint Security Station Sadr City.

He and his team of Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers trained the Iraqi IAC team that took over operations in the new complex.

Upon seeing him, Sara quickly asked for Piper's advice. "It's your decision now. What do you want to do?" asked Piper, who serves as the Iraqi Assistance Center NCOIC with 432nd Civil Affairs Battalion, which is attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B.

"The people, when they went to the Americans, felt kind of afraid, intimidated. When they go to Iraqi's, Iraqi to Iraqi, they are not afraid because they are from his culture," said Muhanned Abdul Ridha, a lawyer who manages the IAC.

This new location, Muhanned said he believes, will help more residents of Sadr City to feel more willing to make a claim.



Photo by Tech Sgt. Cohen Young, combat camera, attached to 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Staff Sgt. Brendan Piper, a native of Milwaukee, hangs a sign on the new Iraqi Assistance Center in the Sadr City district of Baghdad Sept. 2.

When an Iraqi decides to make a claim, he is first interviewed by the IAC staff. T

he claimant must describe the details of the incident in question, the damage that occurred and bring any photo's he may have as evidence of the damage.

The team collects this and other related information, processes the paperwork and pass it on to Muhanned.

Coalition Forces are still involved in the process. Every two to three days, the IAC will send recent claims to JSS Sadr City to be checked against Coalition Forces reports.

"We're still reviewing the claims," said Piper.

"It's our American tax dollars, so we have the final say as to who gets approved."

The IAC at JSS Sadr City started taking claims April 24 and finished taking claims August 31.

In those 129 days, the IAC processed more than 1,500 claims worth approximately \$1.1 million for the residents of Sadr City.

For its first day, the new IAC filed no claims, but had 10 residents, including the father, walk in seeking information.

Eventually, the Iraqi Government will replace the U.S. Government as the source of the funding for paying claims.

Falafel King provides Soldiers taste of Iraq at COP Apache

By Sgt. Philip Klein
3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

COMBAT OUTPOST APACHE, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers operating out of Combat Outpost Apache now have another choice for meals in addition to the dining facility: the Falafel King.

Ronnie, an Iraqi citizen who operates the small stand outside of the gym at this base in northern Baghdad, got the idea after being approached by Soldiers interested in eating Iraqi food.

"They would always ask me, or other Iraqis working here, if they would go out to the city and buy food to prepare traditional Iraqi meals," said Ronnie. "My uncle is a translator, so we contacted a few people to see what kind of set up we would need, what equipment and things like that, and we got started."

Ronnie, who runs the stand with his cousin, Kirk, serves basic staples of Iraqi food, like falafels and kabobs, but has also expanded their menu to include American favorites, such as cheeseburgers and french fries.

"Business is good; we have been set up since Aug. 11, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. However, since we are always here, we also feed Soldiers when they come back from a mission and might have missed meal time. Instead of eating a Meal Ready to Eat, we will cook up something for them," said Ronnie.

Another positive result of the Falafel King is that it allows Soldiers to relax after a mission. It also provides the Soldiers the opportunity to spend time with local citizens and make new friends over a cup of chai.

"For an Iraqi, if you sit down to talk, it is always done over a cup of chai, so we do the same here with our American friends," said Ronnie.

For Staff Sgt. Jimmy Martinez, a section leader with Company A, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B, the Falafel King offers a break from the typical lunch time meals.

"Usually lunch here is just self-serve sandwiches, but coming here breaks up the monotony of meal times; and whether I eat a falafel or have a burger and fries, it's nice to have an option for something different," said Martinez.

"It is also nice around his stand. We have a little deck and some picnic tables, so it is a nice place to unwind," said the Orosi, Calif., native.

'Earthquake' continues support for Task Force 1-6 Infantry

By Spc. Matthew Lutz

1st Bn., 6th Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – It's been almost five months since the Company A, 40th Engineer "Earthquake" deployed to Iraq.

In that time, it has provided route clearance support to Task Force 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, which is currently attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. Earthquake has become a brigade route clearance asset.

In addition to routine route-clearance tasks, the company has been called to perform various other missions in support of TF Regular, such as demolitions, basic construction, rubble removal and security escort.

"With minimal notice, these combat engineers continue the proud tradition of performing an array of engineer and infantry tasks with great flexibility," said Capt. Justin Agostine, a Fredonia, N.Y., native, who serves as commander for Co. A, 40th Eng., Bn.

Earthquake has been providing the lion's share of route clearance in support of barrier missions and route sanitation along the northwestern edge of Sadr City. In doing this, the Soldiers have been helping keep the roads safe for not only Coalition Forces but for the citizens of Iraq as well.

Additionally, the route-clearance element assists the Iraqi Army by investigating possible improvised-explo-

sive devices when requested. Earthquake also assists in helping the Iraqi Army take control over the streets, which in turn allows the people of Iraq to know they have their own Army capable of doing the job at hand.

In the five months on the job, the unit has found multiple



photo by Spc. Christen Bodtker, Co. A, 40th Eng., 1st Bn., 6th Inf., 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Pfc. Charles Delaney, a Syracuse, N.Y., native, carries a .50 caliber machine gun to his truck prior to conducting a mission in the Sadr City district of Baghdad Aug. 28.

roadside bombs. Even with this high danger level, the Soldiers of Co. A, 40th Eng. Bn. will keep doing the job at hand until it's time to pack up and redeploy.

"Our route-clearance teams are out there every day, ensuring the mobility of not only U.S. Forces but that of IA forces. It's a tedious job that requires a lot of concentration and attention to detail, but our Sappers are always up for the task," said Staff Sgt. Ray Miller, a squad leader and Waynesville, Mo., native, with Co. A.

The Soldiers of Company A are helping the Iraqi people, and they are always up for the job no matter what time or how long the mission runs. To meet these requirements, Earthquake Soldiers are on a rotation-based schedule for to ensure the maximum time out in sector but also enough time for maintenance of the very heavy and unique pieces of equipment required to keep the roads safe for other Soldiers who maneuver the streets of Iraq's capital.

"Given the rapid development of equipment in support of OIF, the equipment we use relies on a solid maintenance program and junior leaders with an eye for detail; it is no easy task," Agostine said.

It is also between missions that Soldiers call home to ease their loved ones' fears and comfort themselves by enjoying well-earned personal time.

Spc. Jeremy Harris, a Cincinnati native and Sapper with 3rd Platoon, Co. A, said, "Route Clearance – it's important; it supports all other missions."



2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Iraqi Army soldiers learn lifesaving skills through Combat Life Saver course

Sgt. Whitney Houston

2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Army soldiers serving with the 39th Logistics Battalion, 9th IA Division, stationed on Camp Taji, endured two mass casualty combat scenarios Aug. 20 as they completed a rigorous 10-day Combat Life Saver course.

The CLS course has been going on now for eight months. More than 100 IA soldiers have been successfully completed the course, which consists of learning how to provide basic first-aid treatment, sustain fallen comrades and building self confidence through administering aid.

“We’ve been doing this for the last eight months, and on average, there have been 15 per month,” said Capt. Jody Brown, native of Kingston, N.H., who serves with Company C, Brigade Support Battalion “Mongoose,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

To date, he added, the MND-B Soldiers are closing in on helping train approximately 150 IA Soldiers.

“This course builds self confidence,” said Brown, “and when these soldiers see that their buddy is down while training on these lanes, it helps build their confidence that they can actually save lives using the proper techniques they’ve learned in the course.”

The IA soldiers, however, are not trained medics. They learn how to provide basic care and prepare wounded soldiers for transport to a higher level of care.

“They’re pretty much trained on point of injury of the soldier,” Brown said, “and they basically provide initial care that a wounded soldier would need until they arrive at a higher echelon.”

The basic knowledge the IA soldiers garner during the CLS course centers on and around the basic ABC’s: airways, breathing and circulation.

They learn how to maintain airways, provide breathing if needed, how to start an IV, perform a chest decompression,



Photo by Sgt. Whitney Houston, 2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div. Iraqi Army soldiers from the 39th Logistics Battalion, 9th Iraqi Army Division, simulate a casualty evacuation during a simulated convoy attack. The event was part of a final exercise of a Combat Life Saver course here Aug. 20.

splinting and how to treat hemorrhaging, among other things, Brown explained.

The IA soldiers executed their tasks with skill and proficiency. “This is the best class we’ve had yet,” said Staff Sgt. Sean Kelly, native of Springfield, Ill., serving with Co.

C. “They were very attentive and asked a lot of questions. They seemed to really want to do this, which I am very happy about.”

One soldier in particular stood out through his execution of CLS tasks and exams was named the honor graduate and selected to go to the IA’s medic course to further his medical knowledge.

“Yusef Kareem Hashem Al Askary was the top of his class and was presented as honor grad for best performance in the course.

He has been recommended for the medic course, which is good news for him because he will receive higher pay.”

It was an overall happy day for the logistics battalion, said 1st Lt. Latefa Muslim Ali, a health provider attached to the 39th Log. Bn.

“I’m so happy today because I know the soldiers know what they are doing in case of an emergency,” Said Ali.

The guidance provided throughout the CLS exercises has been successful for the IA.

The ultimate goal is for the IA will become more autonomous in training its troops.

“This training has definitely been beneficial,” said Brown. “It has increased their capability to provide the medical care they need to sustain their troops, and it is our desired end state that the IA will be able to independently run the show.”

Helping build the IA medic field appears to be a very rewarding project, and many seemed to share the same feelings, said Kelly.

“I feel very proud and honored to be a part of this. Working with the IA soldiers and working with their command has definitely been a different feel, but I’m glad to be a part of it.”

Happy with the results of their training, IA troops held their diplomas with pride, embracing their new skills.

The application of knowledge taught over the last eight months will hopefully continue as an integral part of the Iraqi Army.

‘Operation Sapper Torch’

Continued from page 1

So we’ve come out here with a flamethrower to burn it all down giving the Coalition Forces a clear view for at least 500 meters out,” said Byrnes.

Ordinarily, the 66th Engineers would use bulldozers and other landscaping equipment to get rid of the reeds, but there were a lot of obstacles, like canals, which nullify their equipment.

So as a last resort, they sought out the appropriate equipment to burn it.

“We had to borrow the flamethrower from the Marines in Camp Fallujah,” said Byrnes. “We usually use dozers and other types of equipment to knock down reeds, but the terrain won’t allow it because there are a lot of canals so we had to resort to burning (the reeds).”

The 2nd Engineer Company, 34th Engineer Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division, was also involved in the operation for safety and logistical purposes.

“The Iraqi Army helped provide some engineering equipment, like dozers, as well as show a friendly presence for any local nationals that come on site,” Byrnes said.

“They also helped provide security by cordoning off the area to make sure the area was clear of any type of explosives or personnel before we conducted the burn,” he added.

Operation Sapper Torch was a success in that

it evoked the initiative of the IA and local nationals and demonstrate evidence of a joint movement against terror.

“The IA and local leaders are really taking initiative,” said 2nd Lt. Ty Padilla, native of Topeka, Kansas, serving in the 66th Eng. Co. “Sappers,” 2nd SBCT “Warrior,” 25th Inf. Div., MND-B. “They really wanted to come and help.

The IA offered us anything that we really wanted, and it was the same thing with the sheiks. Hopefully, this is a step in the right direction or a building block for better things to come.”

The usual mission of the Sappers is to teach the IA route clearance as opposed to “route sanitation,” (which they were doing by burning the reeds). But this special mission proved to be good training for the IA soldiers.

“We’ve done a lot of clearance training and operations with the IA on Camp Taji,” said Byrnes. “We embed their sergeants and their lieutenants into our route-clearance patrols so they can learn how to properly clear the roads,” he added.

“Operation Sapper Torch” succeeded on many fronts with the IA and Coalition Forces.

It also stripped of foliage that terrorists could potentially use as cover in the future, making Route Coyote a more efficiently patrolled and safer road for all travelers, both Iraqi and Coalition Forces.

Wolfhound pup fights terrorist activity

By Pfc. John Ahn

1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Known as “Havoc,” he is the youngest Soldier in his company and is affectionately known as the company “pup.”



Photo by Pfc. John Ahn, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. Pfc. Robert Hatala provides security in the Taji Qada, northwest of Baghdad. Hatala is a reconnaissance scout with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment “Wolfhounds,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warriors,” 25th Infantry Division.

Havoc’s real name is Pfc. Robert Hatala, and he is a reconnaissance scout assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment “Wolfhounds,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warriors,” 25th Infantry

Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, Hatala joined the Army in July 2007, just three days after graduating high school in Ottawa, Ill. His goal, he said, is to do his part and better his life and joining the Army is a stepping stone for future aspirations.

Ultimately, he plans to pursue a career in special weapons and tactics law enforcement after using his college benefits from the Army.

In the meantime, he serves his country proudly.

see pup Pg. 15

4th Combat Avn. Bde.



Air traffic controllers keep skies safe for Coalition Forces aircraft

Continued from page 1

“This is one of the busiest airfields in Iraq,” said Sgt. 1st Class Derrick Brown, who hails from Kingstree, S.C., and serves as the senior enlisted supervisor for air traffic controller operations at Camp Taji. “We control all aircraft that fly within five nautical miles and up to 3,000 feet in the air. Our job is to put the aircraft on the ground safely.”

Unlike the other service branches of the military, which have servicemembers working a wide array of specialties, who complete the air traffic control mission, the Army has a sole military occupation specialty responsible for providing those services. These Soldiers must coordinate all movements in their airspace to include both fixed-wing and rotor-wing aircraft.

In a typical week the “Spartan” Soldiers can see more than 3,000 movements in or out of Camp Taji’s airspace. A movement is defined as any aircraft coming or going. Take-offs, landings, touch and goes as well as an aircraft simply transitioning through the airspace is considered a movement.

The company’s air traffic control mission is to ensure the safety of all Coalition Forces traffic coming in and out of their airspace.

With flights operating 24/7, the air traffic controllers coordinate their movements so accidents do not occur. These operations take place from both temporary landing zones as well as fixed sites, such as the company’s fixed position at the brigade’s airfield, respectively named Taji Tower.

Today in Iraq, the company successfully operates the fixed site as well as numerous other sites all over Iraq, directly supporting not only MND-B but the Multi-National Corps – Iraq mission. This success, however, wasn’t always a foreseeable



Photo by Sgt. Jason Dangel, CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.
Pfc. Myles Taylor, air traffic controller, Company F, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, directs air traffic as Spc. Forrest Harlow supervises at Camp Taji’s Air Traffic Control Tower Aug. 28. Taylor is a native of Frankfurt, Ky.

achievement when the company stood up at Fort Hood, Texas, a little more than a year ago.

More than 80 percent of the air traffic controllers assigned to the company were straight out of advanced individual training when they arrived at their first assignment in the CAB.

This situation posed many challenges for Capt. Amanda Violette, then the newly assigned company commander, as she worked to not only build the company but, at the same time, prepare them for their deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“There are a limited number of rated air traffic controllers across the board,” Violette said, a native of Nobleboro, Maine.

“The challenge we face as commanders for these companies is a Soldier will get a rating while they are deployed, and when they redeploy, they get out of the Army and go to work

for the (Federal Aviation Association),” she explained.

This is a typical route Soldiers will follow when pursuing a career as an air traffic controller, which results in a shortage of qualified air traffic controllers, she said.

In order for a Soldier to become certified as an air traffic controller, he or she must complete 154 days of on-the-job training – assuming that they have successfully completed the required 14 weeks of training during AIT.

This training is defined as a progressive approach to obtaining the necessary qualifications, the end state being certified by the FAA for the Soldiers specific working location.

During the initial stages of the company’s existence, Violette took a unique approach to ensure her company was qualified to direct Coalition Forces aircraft in Iraq.

Working with civilian crews from both the Hood Army Airfield and Robert Gray Army Airfield at Fort Hood, Violette was able to augment some of her Soldiers into daily aviation operations at the central Texas military facility.

“Hood Tower and Robert Gray Tower took on six of our controllers. This was their place of duty for about six months

while they obtained their (Control Tower Operator) certifications. This really saved us in terms of being ready for this deployment,” said Violette.

“These six Soldiers make it happen for us here in Iraq. If it wasn’t for them, we would barely be able to control operations at Taji,” she continued.

Currently, only six of the approximately 40 Soldiers assigned to the company are CTO certified, but this number will increase dramatically as the unit approaches the six-month mark of their deployment and the end of the required on-the-job training.

“We are on track,” said Violette. “We can’t expect to do everything overnight; it takes a while with all the development that’s involved, but we have done a great job so far.”



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt, CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Spc. Radha Bhramdat, air traffic controller, Company F, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B guides pilots into the Camp Taji Airfield Aug. 28.

Why I Serve – Iron Eagle air traffic controller keeps airfield safe

By Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – For one Iron Eagle Soldier, the decision to serve her country was never if it would happen, only when.

“Since I was 15, my mom started giving me the idea of serving in the military. She is real pro-military,” said Spc. Radha Bhramdat, air traffic controller, Company F, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Avn. Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, from New York City.

“Then, when I was a freshmen in high school, 9/11 happened and the event had a big impact on me,” she said. “I lived very close to where it happened, so joining the military was inevitable for me.”

Bhramdat began her Army career by serving in the New York and then North Carolina National Guard. After four years of serving in the Guard, Bhramdat made the move to active duty.

Currently, she is serving in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Bhramdat spends her days coordinating aircraft movement from the Camp Taji Air Traffic Control Tower just north of Baghdad.

“I’ve been doing this for about two months, and this job is more than I expected,” she said, as she constantly looks at the airfield and then to the sky.

“Once you get an aircraft (on the radar), you start communicating with them and then you tell them where you want them to land.

It is a lot to worry about with all the other aircraft in the area.”

Bhramdat works in a company of more than 40 air traffic controllers who are responsible for safely orchestrating the take-offs and landings of all types of fixed and rotary wing aircraft. Soldiers from the company are spread out in different locations throughout the country, supporting the Multi-National Corps – Iraq mission.

With flights departing or landing day and night, air traffic controllers coordinate their movements so accidents do not occur. They coordinate air movements at sites ranging from temporary landing zones to fixed tower airfields.

The Fort Hood, Texas, based company stood up only a year ago, and many of the Soldiers, and the company as a whole, are still growing. More than 80 percent of the controllers were straight out of advanced individual training when they joined the team.

For the young Soldiers who have just completed AIT and joined the company, they are required to perform 154 days of on-the-job training. During the OJT, Soldiers monitor progress of aircraft, conduct local ground control and then become certified by the Federal Aviation Administration for the particular airfield they are working at.

“This is her first experience at a very, very busy facility,” said Capt. Amanda Violette, commander of Co. F, from Nobleboro, Maine. “Growing our own has been the biggest challenge with this company. She (Bhramdat) has shown so much potential it is unbelievable.”

Signs of change set the stage for

Regular Soldiers teach Iraqi lifeguards how to save a life

By Sgt. Jerry Saslav

926th Eng. Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD, Iraq – “What you learn here today may save someone’s life,” Sgt. Michael Horst told the 11 Iraqi men standing before him.

The men were at Joint Security Station Sadr City in northeastern Baghdad to receive training which would enable Horst, a native of Green Bay, Wis., to complete a project that many residents of Sadr City had been waiting for – opening the district’s only public swimming pool.

Before the pool could open, the lifeguards, security guards and maintenance workers were required to be trained to handle any emergency situation that may arise at the pool.

The attendees were taught the proper procedures on how to perform cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and other lifesaving skills by Cpl. Luis Riosbaez and Spc. Amber Panter, both of whom are medics with Task Force 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, which is currently attached to 3rd BCT, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

“CPR’s one of the most important classes; it’s the basis of the medical field,” said Riosbaez, a Caguas, Puerto Rico, native.

To help conquer the medics’ inability to verbally communicate with the future lifesavers, Panter said they decided to go with a hands-on approach.

“It’s kind of hard with the language barrier, but it’s easier touching somebody. Knowing I have to push here so I can find a pulse,” said Panter, a Jacksonville, Fla.

Riosbaez and Panter first demonstrated the basic steps of CPR while asking questions of the students.

“When I first started, I asked some of them, ‘How do you check a pulse?’ Some of them went straight to the place,” said Riosbaez.

Riosbaez noted that there are two places to check for a pulse – the neck and inside the wrist. After running through the steps several times, the medics paired the students up for hands-on training. The training hit a few bumps at first, so Riosbaez and Panter took a step back and started again.

The medics emphasized the ABCs of first aid: airway, breathing and circulation. “I had to keep going back and showing them,” said Riosbaez. “At the end, they seemed to be doing it on their own. They were managing to open the airways.”

Next, the medics reintroduced chest compression techniques, paying special attention to the need to breathe for the victim.

The medics constantly quizzed their students to ensure they truly understood the tasks and weren’t simply repeating the processes they saw.

Riosbaez said “We asked them, ‘How many chest com-

pressions do you do (between breaths)?”

The response came quickly and correctly.

“They actually got to learn it and understand it. They seemed to understand everything we put out, they answered all of our questions,” said Riosbaez.

CPR, along with the other skills the medics presented during the daylong training, is a perishable skill that Panter said needs to be incessantly reinforced through training.

“They need to continually retrain and retrain; they need to do classes by themselves and teach other people how CPR is done. The more they do it, the more accustomed they are to it,” she said.

The people of the area have been watching the pool’s rehabilitation and have been eagerly awaiting its opening. The training was required before the pool would be allowed to open Aug. 30.

“If no one is around, and I see someone who doesn’t know how to swim, I will help him,” said one of the students attending the CPR training.

Once the final lesson was learned, Horst gathered the students to offer them words of inspiration. “This pool is a sign that things are changing in Sadr City – and you are all a part of it,” said Horst, a Civil Affairs NCO with the 432nd Civil Affairs Battalion, currently attached to 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

“You can tell your grandchildren and your grandchildren’s grandchildren someday that you made a difference in a lot of people’s lives.”



Photo by Sgt. Jerry Saslav, 926th Eng. Bde. PAO



Photo by Sgt. Jerry Saslav, 926th Eng. Bde. PAO

▲ Cpl. Luis Riosbaez, a Caguas, Puerto Rico, native, instructs a class of Iraqi men Aug. 27, who will serve as lifeguards, security guards and maintenance workers at Mithaq Pool in the Sadr City district of Baghdad. Mithaq Pool is opening Aug. 30 to serve the residents of Sadr City.

◀ An Iraqi man performs chest compressions during a class on the basics of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation taught by medics from Task Force 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, which is currently attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, at Joint Security Station Sadr City Aug. 27.

Iraq's prosperous future



Photo by Sgt. Jerry Saslov, 926th Eng. Bde. PAO

An Iraqi man checks for his pulse during a class on the basics of cardio pulmonary resuscitation taught by medics from Task Force 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, which is currently attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, at Joint Security Station Sadr City Aug. 27.



Photo by Sgt. Jerry Saslov, 926th Eng. Bde. PAO

Cpl. Luis Riosbaez, a Caguas, Puerto Rico, instructs a class of Iraqi men on how to properly perform Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation during a class at Joint Security Station Sadr City Aug. 27.



Photo by Sgt. Jerry Saslov, 926th Eng. Bde. PAO

Spc. Amber Panter, a Jacksonville, Fla., native, instructs a class of Iraqi men on how to properly perform Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation during a class at Joint Security Station Sadr City Aug. 27.



Photo by Sgt. Jerry Saslov, 926th Eng. Bde. PAO

Spc. Amber Panter, a Jacksonville, Fla., native, instructs a class of Iraqi men on how to properly perform Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation during a class at Joint Security Station Sadr City Aug. 27.

Day in the life ... an infantry squad

Sgt. David Hodge

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – An average day for Staff Sgt. Nathan Camp's squad starts at 1 a.m. with physical training.

Technically, it is the end of the work day, which means that Camp's squad, which is part of 3rd Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, have finished patrolling the streets of the Jaza'ir community and have already prepared their combat vehicles for the next day's mission.

"Everything starts the night after the patrol," said Camp, a squad leader with 3rd Plt., Co. C, which is attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. "It's important because we never know when we are going to roll out."

Camp, who hails from Paxton, Ill., and has more than five years of service in the U.S. Army, said he enjoys leading his squad "outside the wire" and into the handful of muhallas, or neighborhoods, in southern Baghdad's Rashid district.

"My role as a squad leader is to ensure all the preparations are accomplished so my guys can complete the mission," said Camp, who enjoys playing pick-up softball or basketball games with his comrades.

The squad maintains its level of mission readiness, whether training to achieve elite levels of fitness or preparing for a platoon weightlifting competition.

"It is easier to maneuver with all the protective gear on when Soldiers are physically fit," said Sgt. Michael Hardison, a team leader within the squad. "It's also a morale booster."

After their gym sessions, the infantrymen conduct person-

al hygiene and retire to their homemade wooden bunks that line their crowded rooms.

"The morning starts with mission preparation," Camp stated. "The team leaders conduct pre-combat checks and inspections on personnel and equipment."

After weapons are mounted and ready and the water coolers have been filled to the brim with ice and bottled water, the Soldiers watch a movie or television to relax before hitting the scorching pavement, said Hardison, a native of Battle Ground, Wash.

"We like to sit and laugh and joke to take our minds off of being away from home," explained Hardison. "It lightens the Soldiers' mood before they go on patrol."

After the Soldiers roll outside the boundaries of their combat outpost, they become mission-focused and ready to train the Iraqi Security Forces.

"Our main purpose is to make sure the ISF are ready for operations while we sit back in an over-watch role," Camp explained.

To accomplish this, the squad conducts many different missions, sometimes during the same patrol.

Generally, the Soldiers conduct at least one mission each day with the 2nd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division

"Our missions vary," said Pfc. Jason Wendel, an infantryman adept at many positions within the squad, such as a gunner, driver or dismounted infantryman. "We facilitate local businesses, pursue and detain high-value individuals and train NPs."

In a T-walled compound that houses an NP station, the Soldiers teach battle drills, such as react to contact techniques and the importance of wearing the proper personal protective equipment, to the ISF before conducting combined patrols throughout the muhallas with ISF by their side.

Hardison, a combat veteran with a prior deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, is impressed with the progress the NPs have made since arriving in Baghdad more than nine months ago.

"We show them how to conduct the training correctly the first time, and then their sergeant takes over teaching them," Hardison explained. "Until the handoff of operations, we are going to be working with the NPs every day."

"While we are out, we make sure they are doing things how we would do them," stated Wendel, a native of Clarksville, Tenn. "We are making sure that when we leave, they will have a set of standards to follow."

Besides securing the citizens of the Jaza'ir community, the 3rd Pltn. alternates with other platoons in the company to man security checkpoints around the COP and haul supplies back and forth to the forward operating base, said Wendel, who has been married for two years and is the father of two sons.

"When we come in from our daily patrol, we prepare the trucks for the next day's patrol," stated Wendel, whose father has served in the U.S. Army for 29 years. "The next morning, we wake up and check on the trucks again to make sure they are ready to roll."

The deployment provides the Soldiers of the squad the opportunity to gain knowledge that will benefit their Army careers, said Wendel.

"We cross-train all the Soldiers on the different weapons systems and communication equipment to give them the experience they need to become team and squad leaders," Wendel added. "That's a testament to our leaders."

The Soldiers of 2nd Squad, 3rd Pltn., are part of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, out of Fort Polk, La.



Photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Staff Sgt. Nathan Camp, a squad leader with the 3rd Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, physically directs an Iraqi National Policeman's rifle to cover his sector of fire during room clearance training Aug. 14 in the Jaza'ir community of southern Baghdad. Camp, who hails from Paxton, Ill., is attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Pacesetters offer microgrants, security while patrolling streets of Sha'ab

By Sgt. Zach Mott
3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – He sees a lot of potential in northern Baghdad. During a routine patrol around the area, he points to several areas that need improvements – a park here, a new store sign there – even Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) checkpoints are on his radar for upgrading.

“(We’re) showing the people that we care about them, and we care about the future and trying to put money into the environment – treating them with dignity and respect – trying to get them out of their homes into a safe, secure environment so they feel comfortable with us,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jason Maynard, a native of Mitchell, S.D. “Once we do that, they can start living normal lives.”

As the patrol drove around the Sha’ab neighborhood that surrounds Forward Operating Base Callahan, Maynard pointed to the areas that he sees room for improvement as well as those that have improved in his three weeks here.

In the eight months prior to arriving at FOB Callahan, Maynard and the other members of Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, were responsible for entry control points in Baghdad’s International Zone.

After an abbreviated relief-in-place of the counter improvised-rocket assisted mortar patrol mission from the Scout/Sniper Platoon of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., Maynard and his Soldiers hit the ground running – and with microgrant applications in hand.

In slightly more than three weeks, Maynard has processed nearly 30 applications, which he hopes will help to revitalize the small businesses off the heavily traveled roads here. Four previously submitted grants have been approved in that time, and shop owners were quick to put that money to use.

“They’ve already put up signs, got generators to help equip themselves; they’ve already hired local people to help them run their shops,” said Maynard, who serves as a platoon sergeant with Battery A, 3rd Bn., 29th FA Regt. “That’s been the biggest improvement so far.”

In addition to microgrant applications, the Soldiers usually come armed with school supplies, stuffed animals, soccer balls and anything else that might serve useful to the

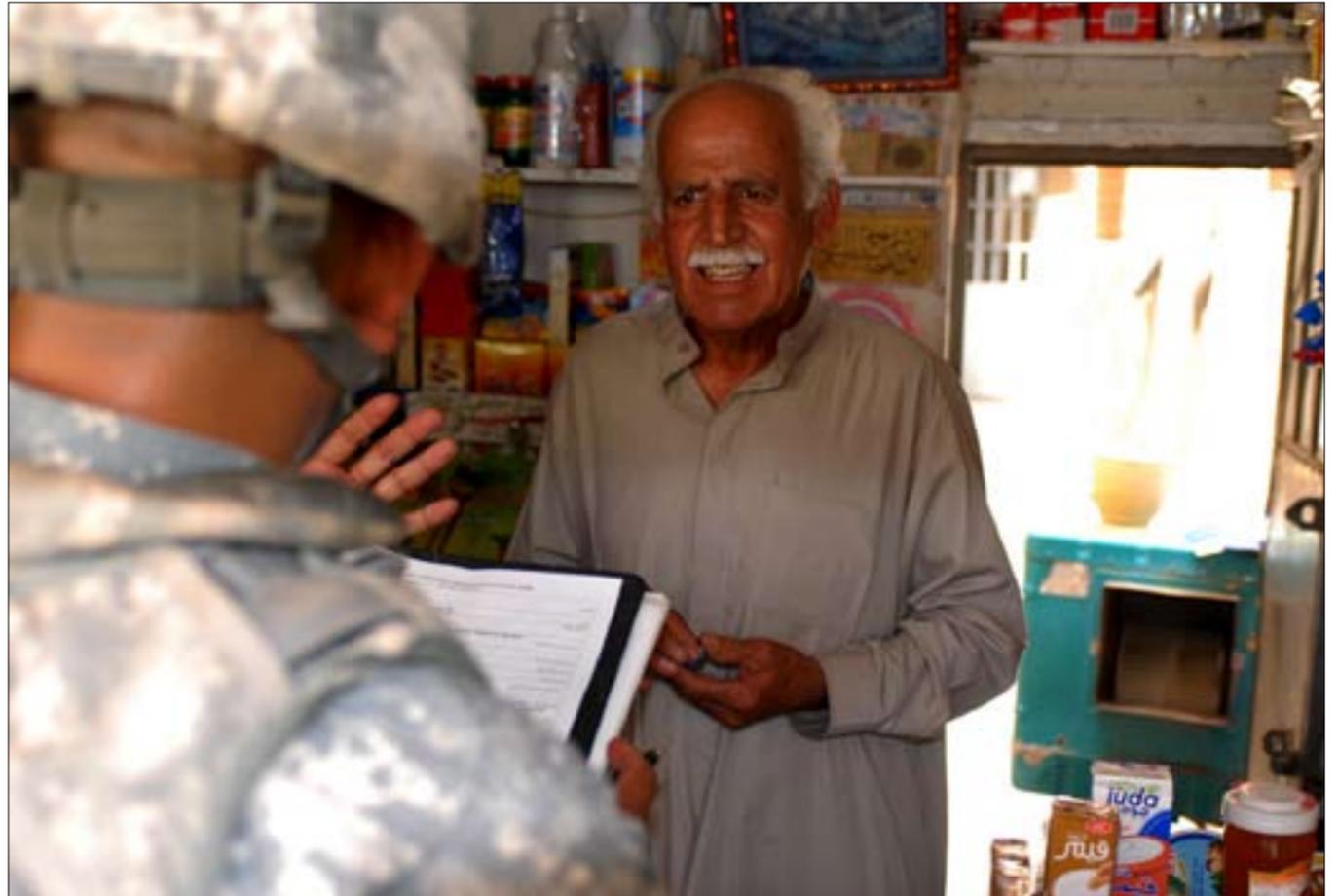


Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

A shop owner in the Sha’ab neighborhood of northern Baghdad speaks with Staff Sgt. Fernando Diaz, an El Paso, Texas, native, while completing a microgrant application during a patrol there Aug. 24. Diaz serves as a patrol leader with Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

residents.

“There’s lots of interaction (here). There’s not a day that goes by that we don’t have kids swarming us,” said Sgt. James Cook, a Wakefield, Kan., native, who serves in Battery A, 3rd Bn., 29th FA Regt.

Cook credits the warm reception to the efforts the Scout/Sniper Platoon made in building a rapport with the people here.

“The unit we replaced they did a good job. The interacted just as well. They’re used to having us around even before we got here. They’re extremely friendly,” he said.

Another factor in the quick assimilation was the Soldier’s

ability to speak Arabic – a skill adopted during 12-hour shifts alongside the Iraqi Army and interacting with government officials.

“We didn’t have an interpreter for about a week and a half, so that ability to speak a minimal amount of the language really helped us. We still conducted microgrants without being able to speak the language. It’s been an incredible help,” Maynard said.

Since that time, an interpreter now accompanies the patrol to speak with shop owners as well as SOI members operating checkpoints.

“We all love the mission here,” Cook said.

Wolfhound pup fights terrorist activity

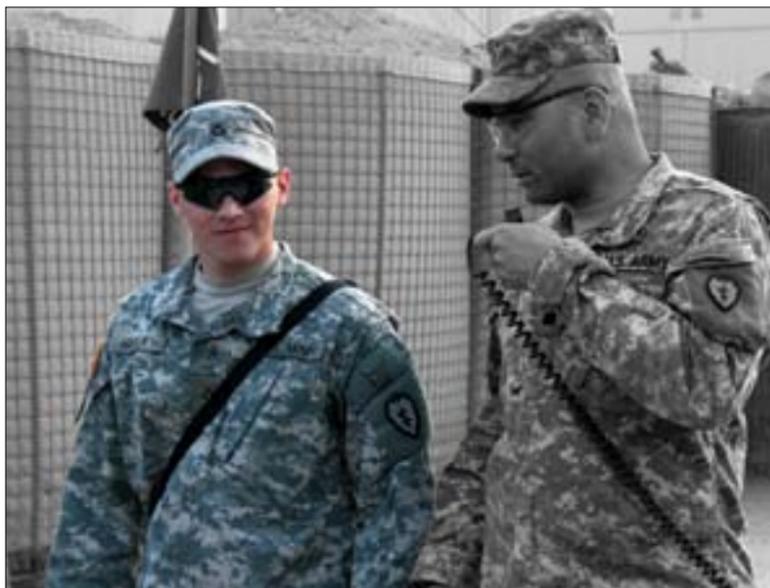


Photo by Pfc. John Ahn, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Reg., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Pfc. Robert Hatala (left) and Lt. Col. Richard “Flip” Wilson speak about the importance of adding to the more than 100 years of history their unit has served as he presents Hatala with a commander’s coin for excellence.

Continued from page 10

“I knew it would come sooner or later,” stated Hatala, in speaking about the inevitability of deploying to the warfront.

He rapidly deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in December 2007, where he is currently patrolling, securing and conducting reconnaissance missions in the Istiqlal Qada, to help ensure that the residents in this area, northeast of Baghdad, are free of criminal and terrorist activity.

Hatala has recently taken part in several successful missions that resulted in the capture of several of the brigade’s and battalion’s high-value individuals during a two-week surge to combat terrorist activity in the brigade area. Through the eight to 10 hour night missions, ‘Havoc’ continued to keep his fellow Soldiers motivated through his jokes and uplifting personality.

“(Havoc) is the most high energy person I have ever met. It doesn’t matter how tired everyone else is. He always has energy,” said Staff Sgt. Michael Mucha, a Fairfax, Va., native, a section leader in the reconnaissance platoon.

The pace of missions is hard, but the reconnaissance platoon continues to stay motivated and detain

terrorists who have hurt or killed innocent Iraqi people. Hatala rests a few hours and then continues to search for the enemy.

“It’s a cool job,” stated Hatala, “You go out on missions, look for the bad guys and provide accurate and timely information to other units to facilitate (future) operations.”

Hatala was recognized by Lt. Col. Richard “Flip” Wilson, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., the task force commander, for being the youngest “Outlaw” soldier and was presented his commander’s coin for his service.

He has a large family waiting and praying for his safe return home in 2009. His fiancé and sweetheart is raising their one-year-old son while he is deployed and is expecting twins in November.

The young couple had planned to wed during his rest and recreation leave from combat, but the dates did not match up to include their families. When he returns to Hawaii from combat operations, he said he plans to spend time with his children and get married as soon as possible.

In the meantime, ‘Havoc’ will keep the spirits up of his platoon. The ‘pup’ will continue the fight terrorism to keep Iraqis free of terror.

Soldier sings his way through deployment

By Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – At the age of four, he began his singing career by singing Gospel music at his local church in Indianapolis.

Now at the age of 21, he finds himself on center stage, showing off his vocal abilities on numerous occasions.

“It is just something I love to do,” said Sgt. Victor Cole, who enlisted in the Army as a human resources sergeant in 2005. “Singing and writing music calms me down and is just something I do that gets my mind off of the everyday stresses of being deployed.”

Since arriving in Iraq in December 2007 with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 716th Military Police Battalion, Cole has been tasked with not only taking care of the Soldiers in his battalion’s human resources needs but also with singing the national anthem at ceremonies his battalion conducts.

His talents became quickly noticed by his brigade command sergeant major recently during a noncommissioned officer induction ceremony.

“When I was told Cole was going to sing the national anthem at the induction ceremony, I was concerned,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Bernard

McPherson, command sergeant major 18th Military Police Brigade, and native of Orangeburg, S.C.

“I had never heard him sing a note, and the significance of the national anthem sung in a cappella was strategic.”

McPherson, however, was reassured by Cole’s battalion command sergeant major that he had nothing to worry about.

“I was still nervous,” said McPherson, “until I heard him sing a few notes in rehearsal. All it took for me to hear were a few notes. After hearing Cole’s melodic, clear and rich voice, my worries were belayed.”

McPherson said Cole was truly a gifted and talented NCO and that he expected an American Idol tryout sometime in his future.

With Cole’s lifelong goal of being a singer, he said he plans on attending the American Idol competition when he returns from his Iraq deployment.

“My lifelong goal is to become a professional singer,” said Cole. “I plan to attend the 2009 American Idol competition when I return from my Iraq tour.”

While deployed, Cole said he finds himself singing all day long at work, and when he gets time off, he sings competitively at the Morale Welfare and Recreation Cen-

ters on the camp.

Cole has won karaoke competitions at some of the Victory Base Complex MWR sponsored events, but that is very minor compared to some of the events he has performed at in the past.

When Cole was younger, he traveled around to different cities and states performing.

“When I was younger, singing was just something I did because I loved doing it,” said Cole. “Now it is completely different. I want to make a career out of it.”

Cole said he has made a few changes in his military career to help better his chances of becoming a professional singer.

“I love my job in the Army,” said Cole, “but I’ve always wanted to be a singer. I had the chance to go overseas on assignment, but I changed that to stay in the states so I could audition for American Idol.”

Even though Cole loves both singing and being a part of the military, he still feels they are two very separate worlds for him; however, they are both places he has been very successful in.

“My biggest accomplishment in the Army is getting promoted to the

rank of sergeant,” said Cole, of his recent promotion.

For his singing career Cole sang at events growing up such as: the Olympic Trials in 2004 in Indianapolis, Indiana Pacer games, Indianapolis Colts games, and he said one of his biggest accomplishments was winning a Show Time singing competition at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, N.Y.

Throughout his music career, Cole has been singing Gospel, Rhythm & Blues, and Blues and has been very successful thus far at doing so.

He said he decided to join the Army because of the stability that comes with being in the Army for military families.

“I joined the Army in my Junior year of high school in order to support my now 3-year-old daughter,” said Cole, who reenlisted recently to continue serving for another six years.

“Music is what drives me to continue, as well as the passion that I have to provide a good life for my daughter,” said Cole, adding that he writes music and sings constantly while he’s in Iraq to set himself up for success. When he returns from Iraq, his goal is to receive his own record deal one day.



Photo by Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger, 18th MP Bde. PAO

Sgt. Victor Cole, a human resources sergeant, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 716th Military Police Battalion, a native of Indianapolis, sings the national anthem during a noncommissioned officer induction ceremony June 21 at Camp Liberty.

Warrior Soldiers build camaraderie through stress relief

By Maj. Al Hing
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Barbeque, Karaoke, Baggo ... all seem out of place in Iraq and perhaps feel somewhat strange to the digitally camouflaged Soldiers.

“Where you’re going 100 miles an hour, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, you can appreciate when you can get some down time and relax,” said Maj. Silas Calhoun, of Washington D.C., who serves as a signal officer for 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. “There’s a stress breaker when you get to watch your battle buddies relax.”

Karaoke was the center point of the informal gathering, where a Playstation2 was brought out and hooked up to a Soldier’s TV, allowing Soldiers to belt out “Hammer Time” by M.C. Hammer and match notes on “I Wanna Dance with Someone” by Whitney Houston. Soldiers responded with either hearty laughter or encouragement for the microphone holder. Some just danced and enjoyed the moment.

For a couple Soldiers, the grill was the place to be. Turning steaks, hamburgers and hot dogs was a stress breaker.

“You feel as if you left Iraq for a little while; cooking just takes your mind away,” said Spec. Daberto Avila, of El Monte, Calif.

The mouth-watering scent of a grilled steak wafting through the air caught the attention of several noses and dragged Soldiers passing by into the group.

“If food brings you in, then that’s good; you can get to know the guys,” Avila continued. “We’re just taking some time to relax and get some good food.”

And then there was the event that involved tossing the Soldier-made bags filled with corn through the hole of a Soldier-made platform – from 25 feet away.

The game of Baggo, brings back memories for many of the participants.

The long high arcs get the bags to either land on the board for one point or three for getting the bags into the hole.

The murmurings of a close shot missed, or the shout of happiness for dropping the bag into the hole filled the evening.

“We just decided that we were going to make something that we could remember from home and just play,” said Spec Larry Hensley of Reading, Ohio.

“You play and you just forget the day for a little while,” added Staff Sgt. Joshua Bradley of Frederick, Md.

Stress release was the theme of the day – and one that the Soldiers seemed to greatly appreciate.

“(When you come here), you feel as if it takes you away and it gives you a chance to relieve stress – even if you don’t feel as if you’ve built up stress,” said Spc. Sarrienne Albizio, of Cassopolis, Mich., who works in the brigade’s topographical team.

“It’s all about getting rid of stress,” said Calhoun, finding a way to relax, and getting to know the team.

“We don’t always have the time to step back and see what is going on – and (stress) creeps up on you. This grilling and chilling gives a lot of our Soldiers a small break and they get to know their team and relieve some stress.”

Striker Launch and Recovery Site Soldiers enable seamless TUAV operations

By 1st Lt. Delaney Brown
Co. A, 3rd STB, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Within moments of any reported significant event occurring, a Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle is en route to provide commanders and staff member’s critical insight into the on ground situation.

However, far removed from the camera is a team of Soldiers dedicated to the maintenance, launch, recovery and mission management of the TUAV Fleet; the hardworking Soldiers maintain four Striker Brigade air vehicles as well as numerous air vehicles from five other brigades located at the consolidated TUAV Launch and Recovery Site on Camp Taji.

The Argonaut TUAV maintainers of Company A, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, have provided nine months of continuous, real-time imagery for the Striker

Brigade without a single operator-induced incident.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Antonio Mitchell, a New York City native, and TUAV technical warrant officer, is proud of his Soldiers.

“We’re the only brigade flying two vehicles at a time with zero accidents,” he said. “It’s a major accomplishment for these Soldiers.”

There are eight Striker Brigade Soldiers that provide support to the TUAV mission from the Camp Taji consolidated Launch and Recovery Site for Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Sgt. Mark Trombly, of Worcester, Mass., said he enjoys the luxuries of living on the large camp but has noticed differences in operating at a consolidated TUAS location instead of launching air vehicles from the Brigade location.

“The biggest difference is working directly side by side with other Brigade TUAS platoons at the same site location.

It also seems like the maintenance section is a little more distant (from the Brigade). During our last deployment, we were all at the same location. We usually had an idea of what happened during the flights; this time, we don’t really see that,” said Trombly, a TUAV mechanic.

Spc. David Lieba, of Stockton, Calif., who serves as a TUAV technician, has also noticed an unexpected advantage from the consolidated site – teamwork.

“The biggest thing I’ve learned is team work, especially while working with various TUAV platoons from different brigades,” said Lieba.

The maintainers, technicians and mission managers at Camp Taji enable the Striker Brigade to see the enemy: day or night.

Their hard work is amplified by cross-boundary teamwork and leaves no doubt that these Soldiers are doing great things for themselves and their country.

Father's inspiration becomes cornerstone of son's success



Courtesy photo

A young (now Maj.) Lance Hamilton defends a pass play during a Penn State University football game. One of many accomplishments, Hamilton is decorated with football trophies, a law degree and is currently deployed as the deputy staff judge advocate for the 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

By Sgt. Jody Metzger
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – “Well boys, should we fix the table or make skis out of it?” he asked, glancing from the broken wooden table to his two young sons.

It was the question his father asked one afternoon to make light of the situation. He chose to teach a lesson to his children instead of reprimanding them, instilling in them a sense of what is most important in life – a free moment of joy and laughter.

Maj. Lance Hamilton, who serves with the 4th Infantry Division, smiles with fondness when remembering moments like these which remind him of the happiness he shared with his father, Stan Hamilton, and the strong ethical values he later taught Lance and his brother.

Growing up in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., the Hamilton brothers batted, swam, ran and tackled their way through their younger years.

Thanks to their civil rights activist father, they remained steadfast and loyal to academics. Stan’s philosophy for his son’s was that if you didn’t get As, you didn’t participate in sports.

Hearing that ultimatum as a young boy motivated Hamilton to pursue scholastic endeavors for the reward of being able to play sports.

As gifted athletes, Hamilton and his brother, Harry, were excellent football players, playing all the way through high school. Harry earned an athletic scholarship to Penn State University; Hamilton wasn’t far behind.

Graduating from Penn State, Hamilton followed on to study law at Yale University.

Now, as he looks across his desk nestled within the main headquarters of the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, he said he is content to know that his hard work and his father’s deep-seated faith paid off.

Hamilton is currently filling the role of deputy staff judge advocate for the 4th Inf. Div., working with the staff judge advocate, Lt. Col. Tania Martin, on the mission of supporting the chain of command with thorough and complete guidance on all matters of legal assistance, to include claims, administrative law and operational law.



Maj. Lance Hamilton

He had not set out initially to join the Army. In fact, after graduating from Yale with a law degree, his dream, like many other young lawyers, was to work for a big law firm. In 1991, shortly after graduation, Hamilton began his clerkship with the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Petersburg, Fla. Following the clerkship, he went to work for a law firm, Holland & Knight.

Then, in 1996, a restless Hamilton got a phone call from his brother, Harry, who surprised him with the news that he had just enlisted into the Army’s elite SJA Corps. Idolizing his brother, Lance set out in his brother’s footsteps for a second time in his life and joined the Army.

When thinking about his decision to leave civilian law, he emphasized that he couldn’t have made a better choice.

“I had a renewed sense of vigor when I left that private sector and felt like I was serving the greater good again,” said Hamilton. “It tied it all into the many ways as when I grew up in my father’s household again, always helping and serving and doing for others – and finally being able to do it has felt for me like being put into an elite class.”

Joining the ranks of the Ivy Division family, Hamilton said he relates well with Maj. Gen. Hammond’s concepts, influenced by lessons learned on the football team, a relationship they both share and take great joy in remembering.

The Division’s motto – Mission, Family, Soldier, Team – could not ring more true to Hamilton’s athletic past. Just as his athletic background taught him how to manage a team on the field, those influences have also lent themselves to the organization of the Staff Judge Advocate office.

“Coming in, having played sports throughout most of my life and in my background, every time I’m in charge of anything or keeping an office of valuable people, I have always taken it back to my athletic roots as far as building a team because if you have a cohesive team working together, then it is much easier to accomplish your mission,” said Hamilton.

Capt. Liz Waits, an SJA attorney, who works contract and fiscal law for the 4th Inf. Div. and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, remarked that Hamilton encourages the office to maintain a balance of work and play.

“He has a great attention to detail. On one side, he really pushes us to meet a high standard and on the other, gets us out and playing flag football,” said Waits.

As an SJA officer and fellow member of the team, Hamilton is captivated by the strong leadership style he sees within the 4th Inf. Div. He noted that the influence Hammond, the commanding general of the 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B, has on the division mirrors his own ambition of success and teamwork.

“That is where we get motivation in the office – having good

leadership – which always helps. It’s easy for me because SJA is great. The chain of command, all the way up to the CG, is really oriented about the team concept and taking care of one another.”

As athletics shaped Hamilton into a success, it was his father’s beliefs of helping others that separate him from the rest. His father’s moral sense of justice and continued civil service, while also single-handedly raising his two sons and their young cousin, was remarkable to Hamilton.

Today, humble and impassioned, he said knows that none of his success would have been possible without the philosophies of his father reminding him that Family, and working as a team, is the only way to a successful mission.

“My dad always reminded us: ‘I don’t care how many yards you ran or how many tackles you’ve done, if you don’t think about your fellowman and do something for those less fortunate, than you are nothing in my eyes,’” said Hamilton. “He was always looking for what you are doing for the greater good for society, for your country.”

Stan Hamilton, father, military veteran and civil rights activist, gave more than he took. His teachings to his sons came from the back-breaking idealism of a street minister whose goal was to help others less fortunate.

“It is all I remember him doing,” said Hamilton. “He was running street programs for various churches throughout the community, looking to help those who have fallen through the cracks of society.”

The ministry his father spearheaded was dedicated to helping people whom the social services had forgotten or overlooked. Social services, for as much as they helped the community, could not help everyone, explained Hamilton.

As a result, the ministry was dedicated to helping those who were left behind.

“My father would do it in a fashion that went beyond what the social services could do for the people. There are a lot of people who didn’t qualify for the services. There were always those that wouldn’t fit somewhere in the middle, those that have children and are working but not making the cut, and they fall through the cracks.”

The all-American, football-playing, free-smiling Hamilton has won many trophies in his life, paid in accolades distinguishing him from the rest.

Yet, if you ask him what his most treasured reward is, he would reply, “being the son of an incredible man.”

“One day I hope to be half the man he was, and if I am half the man he is, than that would be an accomplishment. If my sons would feel half as much about me as I feel about my dad, I would leave this place a happy man.”

Army father, Air Force son reunite in Iraq

Continued from page 1

Harding is deployed to Joint Base Balad with the 732nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, which is based out of Patrick Air Force Base, Fla.

Swartz, who served as an infantryman in the late 80s to early 90s, said he's proud his three sons have chosen to follow in his footsteps in uniformed service.

Harding, who is the oldest, is due to return to his home station in September.

Swartz's second oldest son, Nathan, recently completed his tour of duty in Iraq with the Army.

His youngest son, Adam, is currently stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, and is preparing for a deployment in 2009.

"I'm of the opinion, I went first. They followed me. Personally, I think they're crazy for joining the Army. I think I set the example for joining the Air Force," said Harding, who calls Janesville, Wis., home.

After Brian and Nathan joined the service, Swartz, who was in Seminary at the time, said he was called by God to join up again and serve as a chaplain.

After being accepted, he too joined his sons in putting on the uniform. Adam soon followed into military service as well.

"Being enlisted before, I'd served my country before. Seeing my boys kind of go the same area, do the enlisted route, it was good to see that – serving their country and doing their duty and doing that with honor," said Swartz, a Lexington, Ill., native.

The father and son are able to stay in contact through various advances in 21st century technology – namely e-mail and phone calls, but they said they only talk about every three weeks and get most of their information about each other from one central source.

"We call back to my mom on a regular basis, so we get news about each other from that way too," Harding said.

Having two sons deployed to Iraq and a third pending, Swartz said he and his wife, Sally, are comforted by the little things.

"The good thing with both Nathan and (Brian), they stayed on the FOB. That gave me a solace. I don't know if it gave

Sally solace, but it gave me solace knowing that they're not riding outside the wire every day, worrying about (improvised-explosive devices). They were both up north, which is a little bit quieter," Swartz said.

Through this common military bond, Swartz and his eldest son both said they've been able to share more with each than those that don't wear the uniform.

"I would tell them ten times more than I would ever tell Sally. I talk more about my experiences here, and they talk more about their experiences here," Swartz said.

"I guess it kind of helps having someone over here knowing what you're going through too," Harding said.

"We don't really talk about it, but it helps. He understands the word 'Hooah!'"



Photo Sgt. Zach Mott, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Chaplain (Capt.) Aaron Swartz, a Lexington, Ill., native, shares a laugh with his son, Senior Airman Brian Harding, a native of Janesville, Wis., during Harding's visit to Forward Operating Base War Eagle in northern Baghdad Aug. 23. Swartz serves as the battalion chaplain with 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. Harding is a comptroller with the 732nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron at Joint Base Balad.

Deployed CAB pilot watches mother retire after 33 years of civil service



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt, CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 James Oliphant, battalion standardization pilot, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Avn. Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad takes a picture from Camp Taji, Iraq, of his mother, Pat Sprabary, executive assistant for Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch, III Corps and Fort Hood commander, at her retirement ceremony via teleconference from Fort Hood Aug. 28.

By Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt
CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – A pilot from the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, via teleconference from Camp Taji, Iraq, watched his mother retire after more than 33 years of civil service at a ceremony on Fort Hood Aug. 28.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 James Oliphant, battalion standardization pilot, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, CAB, from Copperas Cove, Texas, sat back and enjoyed from the other side of the planet as his mother, Pat Sprabary, retired among a room full of Family, co-workers and friends.

Sprabary, formally the executive assistant for Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch, III Corps and Fort Hood commander, has been the executive assistant for eight III Corps commanders.

"This is a great day, and it is great to have this warfighter here with us from Iraq," said Lynch, as he pointed to Oliphant on the VTC

screen.

"I am very grateful for her (Sprabary) service to the nation."

Sprabary began her civil service career in 1975 and has been the executive assistant in recent years for III Corps Commanders Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz and Lt. Gen. Ray Odine-ro.

At the ceremony, Sprabary received a Certificate of Retirement and a plaque depicting all eight III Corps commanders she has served.

After putting in her retirement paperwork, more than 120 people have applied for her former position.

Her son was just happy to be a part of the festivities.

"I think this is awesome although I can't be there in person," Oliphant said, smiling from ear to ear.

"This is the next best thing to being there, and this is definitely one of those morale improving situations."

Causes and 'effects' of Ironhorse countermeasures



Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Glenn Butler, 4th Inf. Div. FEC

Members of the Fire and Effects Cell, 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, pose for a photo in front of their jersey barrier mural, located at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. The picture was taken just prior to the section's movement up to Iraq in Dec. 2007.

By Spc. Douglas York
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Throughout the Army's history, there have been mottos, creeds, motivational stories, acts of bravery and selflessness as well as acts of remembrance. In terms of the latter, the members of the "Steadfast and Loyal" 4th Infantry Division's Fire and Effects Cell are no different.

The FEC, a collection of forward observers, targeting officers, cannon crew-members and intelligence personnel, overcame a tragedy of their own early in the division's current deployment, making them stronger as a team and even more dedicated to the vital role of pouring "steel rain" and hell down on the heads of the enemy who target Coalition Forces.

"A little before New Years, we lost one of our Soldiers (Pfc. Joseph Berlin), said Staff Sgt. Glenn Butler, a native of Mililani, Hawaii, who serves as one of the battle noncommissioned officers in the FEC, 4th Inf. Div. and Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

"We're actually down two guys as we lost one of our other guys (Pfc. Rene Medina) in Kuwait due to an illness," he added.

The remaining members of the FEC, led by Lt. Col. James Vizzard, of Alexandria, Va., who serves as the FEC's chief of targeting, continue the section's mission of handling and gathering intelligence, tracking indirect fire attacks and disseminating that information down to the division's subordinate units. However, the memories of their buddies linger on.

"It's a family atmosphere," Butler said. "We're deploying with these guys, we're training with them for a full year and to not have them around is really like losing a little brother," he added.

The tragedy, the expertise of their leaders and their collective training have brought the unit closer together, making them very successful in the overall effect they have had in making their peers and Iraqi civilians more safe.

"We oversee a group of Soldiers who operate and monitor the AFATDS (Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System), the RTOs (Radio Transmission Operator) and the CFO (Counter-Fire Officer)," said Sgt. 1st Class Geoffrey Epler, a native of Aurora, Colo., who serves as the FEC's platoon sergeant.

"We monitor all of the radar tracks that come in from any

MND-B area of operations," he added.

"Any time there's an IDF event we answer all of the five "Ws" (who, what, where, when and why) and keep the chain of command informed," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Schutz, a native of Copperas Cove, Texas, who serves as a FEC noncommissioned officer and is the Ironhorse Division's digital master gunner.

"We also assist the brigades with deconfliction of airspace for counter-fire, but our primary mission is to provide the division chain of command with an accurate picture of what's going on in the battlefield as it relates to IDF," he added.

Working in the Command Information Center amongst the division's various battle captains, looking at computer monitors and screens, the FEC works tirelessly to track Special Groups criminals, terrorists and extremists.

Working no less than eight hour shifts, the FEC crews endlessly and willingly stare at monitors and radars, tracking around 600-800 radar acquisitions a day, watching every move in the area, trying to differentiate between real attacks and false alarms.

Adding to the difficulties of deciding what is real and what is not, are the hard-to-predict activities of the criminals who are trying to undermine the country's overall success in its push toward security.

"You don't always know when (the enemy's) going to strike. You always have to keep on the top of your toes and wait for that next mission to happen," said Warrant Officer 1 Chris Meekins, a native of Preston, Md., who serves as one of the CFOs in the FEC.

"We're watching 24/7 for the enemy to strike, and the enemy knows that too. They've not been too successful at firing at us (lately) because we come right back at them," he added, making special note of the division's success since early spring.

During March, the division went through a period known to the FEC cell as "March Madness." The FEC crews were tracking and responding daily to multiple attacks coming from the Sadr City district of Baghdad. Through the diligence and efforts of all the FEC's assets, the division was able to snuff the bad guys out and put an end to the "madness."

"We started to see a pattern and put air assets in the area,"

said Epler, elaborating that their efforts allowed for quick counter-attacks, which eventually stopped the criminals dead in their tracks.

According to Schutz, Epler, Butler and the other leaders of the FEC, their efforts and hard work have not gone unnoticed by their peers.

"I think the division has done a really good job with certain things, like 'Player of the Day.' In fact, I believe that all of our Soldiers have got to partake in that," Butler said.

Regardless of whether or not outside praise ever came for his troops, they would remain a close knit Family, said Butler.

"If you go up to our battle NCO station, you'll see a picture of some of us (including the two soldiers they lost) together at the baggage drop a couple of days before the deployment," Butler said. "Everybody's smiling; we trained hard and guys were ready to go ahead and knock out the 15 months together. (The photo) is fading slightly from being on that work station for nine months already, but it will make it all the way to the last day of the deployment and we'll take it home with us," he added.

Though the picture may fade, the memory of their pals and their brothers will continue, as well as their confidence in each other.

"They're the best. I've got the best section in the Army," Schutz said. "There can't be a battledrill done, as far as IDF goes, if it wasn't for those guys sitting in front of those screens, letting us know something is going on," he added.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 James Quick, a native of Bennettsville, S.C., who serves as one of the FEC's targeting officers, was quick to agree.

"I think we have some of the most competent, most brilliant and hard-working leaders and Soldiers in the Army. They have stepped up to the challenges. They've performed without any reservations, constantly going in and out of the wire, protecting the force by trying to locate the enemy."

While their enemy may at times be elusive, the cause of this group remains true. Like the motto of their division, they remain "Steadfast and Loyal" to their mission, to their fellow Soldiers, to their Families and to their team. The resulting 'effect' is a group of Soldiers anybody in the Army would be proud to serve with.

Doug's Dig How are you on Hollywood: being portrayed?

By **Spc. Douglas York**
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – If given the chance to view them all, most of our troops would likely cringe at the growing number of films Hollywood has released in its endeavor to portray the War on Terrorism.

In the July 7th edition of Stars and Stripes, an article written by Los Angeles Times reporter Mr. Julian E. Barnes, titled "Calling the shots on war movies," was printed.



Spc. Douglas York

In the article, Barnes quotes Army Lt. Col. J. Todd Bresseale, who is actually stationed in Hollywood and acts as a liaison between the Army and filmmakers. All scripts for which movie companies are seeking Army assistance must first come through Bresseale, whose full-time job is to be the go-between for the Army and Hollywood.

The main thesis of the article is about how the Army has been portrayed by Hollywood in the past, and in particular, with reference to the Vietnam War based films.

"It is the self-licking ice cream cone of Hollywood: They make a war movie based on another war movie," Bresseale said. "It's important to tell the full story, not a story based on a weird Vietnam-era idea of what the military is like."

Bresseale's point was in reference to how negatively our modern troops are currently being portrayed by Hollywood with respect to the many unnoticed and honorable things our serving men and women have done thus far in this war.

Not coincidentally, Barnes' article draws attention to the fact that all of the films based on the current conflict have brought in less-than-stellar money at the box office.

"Iraq war movies as a group have not done well at the box office," writes Barnes. "Film critics have speculated that moviegoers see enough of war on the news or don't care to watch films about an ongoing conflict. The Army suggests another possibility: The public is rejecting films that feel didactic or inauthentic. The public does not deal too well with being preached at."

Given the point of Barnes' article, I felt that it would be interesting to take a look at the films Hollywood has produced about our troops, categorize them by the war they portray, the film's authenticity and overall appeal. In short, these are my picks for the best and worst films of every war era that have ever been made.

Without any further adieu, from the French and Indian War and ending with the War on Terrorism, here are the top three war films ever made and worst three war films ever made, as well as a brief synopsis of each of the best films and why they are placed where they are on my list.

The Three Best War Movies

Saving Private Ryan, distributed by DreamWorks and Paramount Pictures, is a 1998 war film set during the D-Day invasion of Normandy during World War II. It was directed by Steven Spielberg and written by Robert Rodat. This film is particularly notable for the intensity of its opening 24 minutes, which depict the Omaha Beachhead assault of June 6, 1944. Thereafter, it presents a fictional search by a group of Army Rangers for a paratrooper of the 101st Airborne Division. While this part of the film is fiction, the premise is very loosely based on the real-life case of the Niland brothers.

Saving Private Ryan was well received by audiences and garnered considerable critical acclaim, winning several awards for film, cast and crew, as well as earning significant returns at the box office. Additionally, the film won five Academy Awards, with Spielberg winning the Oscar for best director. But the most glaring Oscar the film missed out on was that of Best Picture, losing to the terrible "Shakespeare In Love,"

in one of the biggest mistakes the Academy has ever made.

The film stars Tom Hanks, Tom Sizemore, Edward Burns, Barry Pepper, Adam Goldberg, Giovanni Ribisi, Jeremy Davies and Vin Diesel as the Army Rangers as well as Matt Damon as Pvt. James Francis Ryan.

Never before and never since has a film captured the spirit of the American Soldier like this film. Honestly, it is arguable that no other war film made will be able to top this one. The first time, and every time since, that I have seen this film, my eyes have welled with tears. In fact, there are few movie moments that are more gut-wrenching than near the end of this film when, with his dying breath, Capt. John Miller (Hanks) asks Pvt. Ryan to "earn this," in reference to the sacrifice so many of his (Miller's) Rangers, as well as himself, had made to save James' life.

Private Ryan personifies all of the Army values and shows that even in the darkest of moments the spirit of the American Soldier will come shining through and the enemy, even if it is our inner fears and demons, will be defeated.

Glory, distributed by TriStar Pictures, is a 1989 film based on the history of Col. Robert Gould Shaw and the famous 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment during the American Civil War. The 54th was one of the first formal units of the U.S. Army to be made up entirely of African American men (apart from the officers).

The main cast includes Matthew Broderick (Col. Shaw), Denzel Washington, Cary Elwes and Morgan Freeman. Directed by Edward Zwick, the film was nominated for five Academy Awards, with the aforementioned Washington bringing home the Oscar for his portrayal of Pvt. Silas Trip, a runaway slave who fled the south and joined the Union Army.

Glory embodies the heart and soul of what the Civil War was about. Despite what some modern historians will argue, that war was fought to free our enslaved brothers and sisters as much, if not more than for the preservation of the Union.

The movie captures the feeling and the sentiments all involved must have felt, either as one fighting for his people's freedom, or one fighting for the freedom of others.

The Last of the Mohicans, distributed by 20th Century Fox, is a 1992 historical epic film set in 1757 during the French and Indian War. It was directed by Michael Mann, and is based on James Fennimore Cooper's classic novel, although it owes more to George B. Seitz's 1936 film adaptation than the source novel. The main cast includes Daniel Day-Lewis, Madeleine Stowe, Russell Means, Wes Studi, Eric Schweig and Jodhi May.

Of all the films based on its era, this is the most complete. The cinematography is astounding, the portrayals of each character and the costumes are spot on and the battle scenes are heart-pounding and eye-popping.

Additionally, this was the first war film to successfully interweave a love story (that of Hawkeye, played by Daniel Day Lewis, and Cora Munro, played by Madeleine Stowe) between its two main characters, while accurately showing the first involvement of the colonial militias (now our National Guard) in the protection of our nation.



Photo Courtesy from "Saving Private Ryan" official website

The Three Worst War Movies

The third-worst war movie, *Home of the Brave*, distributed by MGM, is a 2006 film directed by Irwin Winkler, starring Samuel L. Jackson, Jessica Biel and Curtis Jackson.

The film follows the lives of four American Soldiers in Iraq and their return to the United States.

The surviving troops suffered both physical and psychological injuries in Iraq and as they return to the U.S., the four Soldiers must face memories of the past as they look towards the future and return to civilian life.

The second-worst war movie, *Jarhead*, distributed by Universal Studios, is a 2005 film based on Anthony Swofford's 2003 Gulf War memoir, "Jarhead: A Marine's Chronicle of the Gulf War and Other Battles."

The film stars Jake Gyllenhaal as Swofford, as well as Peter Sarsgaard, Jamie Foxx, Lucas Black and Chris Cooper. The film was directed by Academy Award winner Sam Mendes, most famous for his 1999 film, *American Beauty*.

And the worst war movie of all time is *Revolution*, distributed by Warner Brothers, a 1985 film directed by Hugh Hudson, written by Robert Dillon and starring Al Pacino, Donald Sutherland, Nastassja Kinski, Joan Plowright, Dave King and Annie Lennox.

Aside from being one of the biggest box office failures of 1985, the film was a hard-to-tolerate two hours of doom and gloom as the audience dives into the life of an American fur trapper (depicted by Pacino) who unwillingly becomes involved in the war for independence after his son is drafted.

However, that shooting style is part of the movie's overall downfall and could likely be a result of being produced by a foreign subsidiary of Warner Bros.

The film depicts our colonial Soldiers in less-than-glowing terms, while giving the perception that none involved were faithful to the colonies and the only reason they were fighting for our nation's independence was simply because they were forced into service.

Nearly the entire movie is forgettable, as we watch Pacino's character shift from British loyalist to American patriot. Looking back, it is hard to believe that the legendary Pacino signed on to do this kind of film.

There you have it, my picks for the best and worst war flicks.

Time will only tell about how well future movies portray the War on Terrorism. Let's hope it is much better than what we have seen so far.

Gaming Review – Madden 09



20th anniversary of franchise continues to boost, improve on already successful title

By Sgt. Jason Thompson

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Here it is folks, the time of year that we have all been waiting for – the start of the NFL football season and coincidentally the awakening of “Madden Nation.”

Madden 09 marks the 20th anniversary of this already popular franchise dating back to 1989. With this latest edition, EA Sports placed a large emphasis on the accessibility of the core Madden gameplay, now offering different play styles and a user-defined difficulty setting known as My Skill to go along with revamped production values.



Sgt. Jason Thompson

When you first boot up Madden NFL 09, you'll be presented with the Madden Test, which is four drills that gauge your Madden IQ. The results are used to establish your My Skill difficulty level, which then continually changes based on your continued performance.

It's a clever mechanic in theory and one that actually does work for the most part. My only complaint is that My Skill can't separate the game's ineptness with the actual skill of your players shining through.

What that means is that it takes you gaining 150 yards per game with your halfback as a sign of weakness in the AI. No matter who your running back is, you'll face a tougher and tougher rushing defense if you continue to excel. It sort of puts a stop to any serious MVP candidates you might have on your team. But, if you do notice that things are getting a bit too difficult, there are several handy dandy sliders that let you manipulate rules and finite details with regard to each of the different areas of football.

So while My Skill might not work exactly how it's intend-

ed, users still have the ability to create their own customized set of difficulty settings if they so desire.

Play styles are another addition that, unlike My Skill, works to perfection. Players of varying football knowledge can choose styles that change the complexity of the game. The easiest level handles everything except for hiking, running and the act of throwing; everything else is handled by the AI. The hardest level puts everything in the hands of the player for a true football experience.

Play styles were designed to simplify the game for newbies, and in that regard they're a success. Their importance shines through to an even greater extent when a new player lines up against a pro. Madden now has handicapping which can skew the game in one direction in a hurry if you stack things enough.

But no true Madden fan really gives a darn about how EA Sports is making Madden easier for the less-than-important player, who has never picked up the game. Sadly, core changes to the tried and true Madden formula aren't a main focus for this year's release. There have been some additions – slide protection, formation subs on the fly, bluffing play art and rivalry games – that football junkies will surely appreciate.

Where Madden will impress followers of the sport is its attention to finite details. For instance, receiving animations have been tuned to add the ability of players' arms and hands reacting independently from the rest of the animation. This results in much fewer instances of the ball slamming into your receiver's head while his hands were only six inches away.

Running and juking have also been improved beyond the branching animations from Madden 08. Breaking out of a tackle is now more under user control. A tackle animation will begin, but if you hit a face button or flick the right stick, you could break free. If not, at least you'll get the satisfaction of seeing your player's body strain to escape.

With all of the small enhancements and little additions to the gameplay, there's no question that Madden 09 is the best pure football game I've ever gotten my hands on. Still, it isn't perfect. There are instances, mainly during kickoffs, when animations seem to glide along at an unnaturally quick rate.

As with every edition of Madden, the designers tried to

add in a “cool new feature” that otherwise completely missed the spot. In Madden 09 that is the Rewind feature.

While it can be turned off (or limited to 1, 3, 5 or unlimited number of uses), Rewind gives players a mulligan at the previous play. It isn't used at all during online multiplayer but can be used offline. Having a friend sitting next to you and having one of your touchdowns taken away is gut-wrenching to say the least.

I can see where the developers were trying to go with this, but I think it takes away from the competitiveness of the game where you can retract mistakes without penalty.

Game modes in Madden 09 are represented by the classic stable of Superstar, Exhibition and Franchise modes, all of which remain unchanged from what you've become accustomed.

The new trinkets and doodads on the presentation side wouldn't amount to much if the graphics engine looked like Ugly Betty. Luckily, that isn't the case. Aside from new, more dramatic lighting and player models that now actually look like NFL players, there's a new camera angle that does a much better job of keeping the action in front of you while delivering a greater sense of size with relation to the stadium and crowd.

The grass looks pristine, as do the smooth edges on players with aliasing only creeping in on the intricate facemasks and player models on the newly populated sidelines. For as good as everything looks on the outside, it's the inner workings that drive the animation that really sell the visual appeal.

Players move with extreme fluidity, almost too much so at times. There are still moments when oddities pop up, but most of the time you'll be wishing your favorite players could pull off some of these moves at your command in reality.

Madden 09 could easily be swept under the rug by the casual onlooker as being, “just another release.” And, for the most part, it is, but that doesn't make it any less worthy of your cash.

Madden NFL 09 is the most loyal translation of America's favorite sport I've ever seen. It looks great, plays great, and despite its few moments of inaccuracies, is still one of the best sports games in memory.



Infantry Soldiers compete in Ironman competition on FOB Loyalty



Photo by Sgt. Grant Okubo, 4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

Soldiers with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, compete in the Chaos Ironman Challenge at Forward Operating Base Loyalty Aug. 20. Soldiers take off at the start of a 4-K run in which four-man teams had to carry two boxes of Meals Ready-to-Eat.



Photo by Sgt. Grant Okubo, 4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

Pfc. John Askey, a Phillipsburg, Pa. native assigned to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, assembles an M-4 rifle blindfolded as part of the Chaos Ironman Competition at the Forward Operating Base Loyalty Aug. 20. Askey was on the winning team and represented his teammates during the M-4 rifle assembly – the event chosen to break a three-way tie after the main competition.

By Sgt. Grant Okubo

4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Even in a combat environment, the spirit of physical competition exists among Patriot Brigade infantry Soldiers, who also must maintain fitness as they conduct missions outside the wire.

In keeping with that spirit, Soldiers assigned to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light), competed in the Chaos Ironman Challenge at Forward Operating Base Loyalty Aug. 20; the competition consisted of five events and a tie breaker, if needed.

Capt. Adam Cecil, from Chesapeake, Ohio, the Co. C commander, said he supported the decision to conduct a companywide ironman competition in hopes of boosting morale, helping Soldiers keep their minds off missing home too much and conducting good physical training.

To perhaps make things a little more interesting, he also invited the unit's partnered National Policemen to participate in the good-natured competition, and they joined right in.

The contest began with a 300-meter shuffle sprint followed by a push-up event. From that point, sequential events included a 4-K run, in which teams carried two boxes of Meals Ready-to-Eat, a 75-meter humvee push and a sandbag military press.

Competition was fierce, and there was a three-way tie after the five main events. However, competition officials wisely planned a tiebreaker event in advance – one in which involved a different set of skills as a representative from each team had to assemble a weapon while blindfolded.

After all of the running, carrying, pushing, pressing and assembling, a team from 1st Platoon took top honors. The winning team consisted of Staff Sgt. Chad Workman, squad leader of 3rd Squad from Visalia, Calif.; Spc. Christopher Halki, a weapons squad team leader from Omaha, Neb.; Spc. Harry Sampang, a 1st Squad rifleman from Montgomery, Ala.; and Pfc. John Askey, a platoon radio telephone operation from Phillipsburg, Pa.

Sgt. Chris Burnley, one of the ironman participants, said he enjoyed the chance to unwind and compete with his fellow Soldiers and his Iraqi counterparts.

"It was great having the NPs participating beside us," said Burnley, a Hornbeck, La., native.

Cecil said he was pleased with the camaraderie of all the Soldiers and the National Policemen who took part in the events and was glad to see everyone cheering each other on. Camaraderie aside, Cecil stressed the importance of physical fitness to his Soldiers and a desire to help bring attention to areas needing improvement.

NASCAR Update – 2008 Chase preview

26 races in the books, 10 more to determine champion

By Sgt. Jason Thompson
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Well race fans, this is it. Ten races remaining and another season will be in the history books.

With the first 26 races of the season now in the past, the field is set for the final 10 races in NASCAR's version of the playoffs. The regular season did not disappoint as once again it came down to the final race in Richmond, Va., to determine who would fight for a championship, and who would try again next season.



Sgt. Jason Thompson

Each of the Chase qualifiers' points were reset to 5,000 with an additional 10 bonus points awarded to each driver for victories earned during the regular season.

First of all, I really hate to brag, but at the beginning of the season I predicted that of the 12 drivers to qualify for the Chase would be all three Joe Gibbs Toyotas, three Hendrick Chevys, three Roush-Fenway Fords, and two Richard Childress Chevys, with the final unearned spot going to either an additional Roush or Childress driver or Kasey Kahne's Dodge.

With that, the 12 qualifiers for this year's field are Kyle Busch, Carl Edwards, Jimmie Johnson, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Jeff Burton, Denny Hamlin, Clint Bowyer, Greg Biffle, Kevin Harvick, Tony Stewart, Matt Kenseth, and Jeff Gordon.

Kyle Busch stormed through the regular season with two missions on his mind – win, and win often. Busch seemed to enter each and every race with a chip on his shoulder after he was released last season from Hendrick Motorsports to make room for Dale Earnhardt, Jr. Through NASCAR's three top-tier series, he has won an amazing 18 races.

He enters the chase with a Sprint Cup Series-high eight vic-

tories and a 20-point lead over second place Carl Edwards.

Edwards has been the only competitor who has been able to keep up with Busch for the entirety of the regular season, bringing in seven victories (Edwards did not earn bonus points for his victory at Las Vegas due to illegal modifications found during post-race inspections).

The Chase will reflect a lot of the same from both of these drivers as neither one has shown any signs of slowing down. The only driver that I think could challenge Busch and Edwards for the championship would be Jimmie Johnson.

Johnson's team has always been able to step up at this point in the season and that is the reason he has won the last two championships. However, throughout the 2008 season, the number 48 team has not been consistent enough to compete each and every week, and I believe this last ten weeks will be no different and Johnson will fall short of his third straight championship.

That then leaves the championship to a battle between Busch and Edwards.

This will be the best-case scenario for the sport as a whole as the rivalry between the two drivers is beginning to escalate to levels that NASCAR has not seen since Dale Earnhardt, Sr. and Darrell Waltrip were dominating the sport in the '80s and '90s.

This rivalry has been stewing all year as Busch and Edwards have battled each other on the track nearly every weekend and always in front of or near the front of the field.

Right now, Edwards and Busch are on an unstoppable path to domination of the chase, and this will end up as one of the closest battles for the championship ever as both drivers will

swap the points lead back and forth before Busch will ultimately find his place as the youngest cup series champion in history.

As far as Chase non-contenders, Jeff Gordon is going to be the bust of

the group. I know many people will disagree with me – many of those are the same fans who think Gordon will win seven championships before he retires – but Gordon is no longer a threat in this sport consistently.

Another driver that doesn't have a chance to win the championship this year is Tony Stewart. As much as it pains me to say as a Stewart fan, since rumors began that he

would leave Joe Gibbs Racing at the

end of the season to become owner/driver of his own team, Stewart-Hass Racing, his performance has dropped to an abnormal low.

I think Stewart will perform stronger than Gordon, but still will not have a third championship when he leaves.

As for my dark horse of the chase, watch for Greg Biffle to have a solid performance. It seems odd calling the man who finished runner-up to Stewart in 2005 a dark horse, but he is looking more and more like that same Biffle of old – good, strong, consistent finishes every week.

Until next time, tighten your seatbelts and keep your hands inside 'cause this is going to be one wild ride.

My predictions for the final standings:

1. Kyle Busch
2. Carl Edwards
3. Greg Biffle
4. Jimmie Johnson
5. Denny Hamlin
6. Dale Earnhardt Jr.
7. Kevin Harvick
8. Tony Stewart
9. Jeff Gordon
10. Jeff Burton



Wolfhounds conduct joint operations with Iraqi National Police



Photo by Pfc. John Ahn, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, link up with officers from 2nd Brigade, 1st National Police Division, before sunrise Aug. 20 on a dark deserted highway south of the Husayniyah Nahia, located northeast of Baghdad, to conduct Operation Gunslinger Bonzai XI. The operation was aimed to clear Husayniyah Nahia neighborhoods of weapons and bomb-making materials.

By Pfc. John Ahn

1st Bn., 27th Inf. Reg., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – In the pre-dawn light, police officers of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division, and Soldiers of Company A, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, linked up along a stretch of highway that connects the Diyala Province to Baghdad in the Istaqlal Qada, located northeast of Baghdad, in order to search a city in the neighborhood of Hussaniya Nahia Aug. 19. The densely populated areas of the Hussaniya Nahia is known as a supporter of roadside bomb-

ings, suicide attacks and cache storage sites.

"The Iraqi National Police have done an outstanding job working hand in hand with Coalition Forces to help secure the Istaqlal Qada," said Capt. Lucas Yoho, Long Beach, a native of Calif., commander of Co. A.

The joint Wolfhound Stryker armored vehicles and the National Police armored trucks moved on to Hussaniya Nahia. After quickly establishing the perimeter, NP officers and MND-B Soldiers, with a tactical attachment of bomb-sniffing dogs and combat engineers, began to search the area.

While the search yielded no weapons or explosives, the operation was considered a success.

"The National Police integrated well with the mission objective. They were organized and tactically very sound," said Sgt. Andrew Lambright, a Eugene, Ore., native, who is an infantry team leader with Co. A said,

"They worked well with Coalition Forces and were a huge success."

"Though it was the first time I worked with (Iraqi Policeman) 1st Lt. Ehab, (2nd Bde., 1st Iraqi National Police Div.), he came extremely well prepared, proactive and had excellent knowledge of the area. He is the best Iraqi leader I've worked with," added 1st Lt. Tommy Ryan, a Seminole, Fla., native, platoon leader with Co. A.



Photo by Pfc. John Ahn, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

During joint operations, Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad and police officers from 2nd Brigade, 1st National Police Division, search through the neighborhoods of Husayniyah Nahia, located northeast of Baghdad, as the sun rises in the horizon Aug. 20.



Photo by Pfc. John Ahn, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and police officers of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division, take a security halt during joint operations Aug. 20 in the Husayniyah Nahia, located northeast of Baghdad. The operation was aimed to rid the neighborhood of weapons and explosive-making materials.