



The Striker Torch

The Official Newsletter of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division

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Iron Brigade



Boots on the Ground in Iraq

STRIKER 6

On Line

By Col. Pat White
2nd BCT Commander



Iron Brigade Boots on the Ground

I want all of our Family Members to know that we have had a safe and successful deployment into Iraq. We left Baumholder amidst a blizzard and some six hours later landed in the heat of Kuwait.

We stayed in Kuwait for about three weeks receiving, staging, and moving onwards to Iraq. The Soldiers of the Iron Brigade did a tremendous job of receiving their equipment, training with it and moving out to Iraq. We did this all without any accidents to Soldiers or equipment. I could not be prouder of the Iron Brigade Soldiers.

As we begin this deployment, all benefitting from your home front support, I would like to share with you the speech I gave to the assembled crowd at FOB Hammer at the Transfer of Authority Ceremony:

Distinguished guests, Iraqi friends and neighbors of the Hammer Brigade and Iron Brigade.

First and foremost, I want to thank Colonel Grigsby, Command Sgt. Maj. Pearson and the Soldiers of the Hammer Brigade. Six months ago you reached out to the Iron Brigade and began a process of preparing my leaders and Soldiers for this deployment.

In January, you introduced my senior leaders to key leaders in the Mada'in Qada, and helped us to better understand the changed operational environment.

And over the past three weeks, the Hammer Brigade ensured that we completed the best possible transition between two combat experienced units any commander could plan for.

This selfless dedication to 'gettin er done' in the Mada'in is truly heroic. The Hammer Brigade's efforts both in mission execution and during this transition has saved, and will save the lives of countless Iraqi citizens, and Iron Brigade Soldiers.



Wayne (Col. Grigsby), God speed to the Hammer Brigade and your families. I and my Soldiers are forever in the Hammer Brigades' debt.

There is nothing more important than what we are doing here. As the transition of coalition forces occurs, there remains one constant: the free citizens of the Mada'in.

Colonel Grigsby has already listed the many reasons why you have been successful, so I will not repeat them.

You are at a crucial point in your history. A point where future generations will look back, and praise Allah that he blessed you, the leaders of Mada'in, with the fortitude, courage, and vision to make Mada'in the example for all of Iraq.

You have all sacrificed to achieve the gains you see everyday as you travel throughout the Mada'in. Don't stop now.

Don't allow extremists and criminals back into the Mada'in. Capture or kill those extremists that persist, are hiding in your neighborhoods, or move back into the Mada'in from neighboring areas.

Continue to provide leadership, security and economic growth. Continue to improve the Mada'in one day at a time.

The Iron Brigade, just like the Hammer Brigade, will be at your side to continue to support and assist you.

We are honored to be a part of your history. Shukran Jazella! Mah el Salamah. Rock of the Marne! Strike Hard!

Strike Hard

Striker 6



STRIKER 7

On Point

By CSM Michael Eyer
2nd BCT CSM



Don't Forget Nothing!

Well, we are finally at Forward Operating Base Hammer. The 3-3 ID did an outstanding job preparing for our arrival.

There are many amenities on the FOB to include Green Beans Coffee House, Pizza Hut, and Subway. A great fitness center, shoppette, internet café, and much more.

By August all Soldiers will be in two person rooms. Laundry is a 24 hour turn around done for free. The Dining facility serves four meals a day with a great selection to choose from.

However as most of you know not all of our Soldiers are on FOB Hammer, we have 6 Combat out posts (COP) and one Patrol base (PB). The conditions on those locations stem from good to poor. Most Soldiers are in tents with limited shower use, they may have a small shop available to buy some drinks, movies, etc.

They do have internet and phone service. The food is prepared by our cooks as opposed to FOB Hammer where it is contracted by KBR.



The Soldiers living on the COPs and PB will be given the opportunity to visit FOB Hammer quite often; when they do so there will be a room there for them with all the amenities I mentioned earlier.

Mail has been running well with about a 6-9 day delivery from the States and 4-6 from Germany

We have three units, 1-6 Infantry, B 2-6 and B 1-35 that are working for different units in other parts of Iraq. The Commander and I will make a point to visit often and ensure they are well taken care of. All three units are living in similar conditions to our Soldiers on the COPs.

To the Families back home, your Soldiers came out of the box running. I see the passion in their eyes every day; we will all work to take care of each other. You at home must do the same. Be safe in all you do.

Strike Hard

Striker 7



REGULARS BY GOD!!!



1-6 IN

In the first 24 hours of taking over our sector, the Soldiers of Task Force 1-6 Infantry, conducted day and night combat operations against enemy forces and defeated them, safely cleared roads of multiple Improvised Explosive Device (IEDs), established rapport with market owners in one of the largest markets in Baghdad, coordinated operations with local Iraqi Army units, and conducted logistical re-supply operations across our area of operations. All of this while being spread across five separate locations and living under difficult conditions without complaint. I could not be more proud of this Task Force.



Soldiers of Task Force 1-6 pull security while emplacing a wall in Sadr City. The Regulators are under the operational control of the 4th ID (photo courtesy of TF 1-6).

We came to an area where we were needed and we wasted no time in making an immediate impact. Both Colonel Hort, the Brigade commander and Major General Hammond, commander of the 4th Infantry Division were impressed with how quickly we went to work. One of the major operations has been emplacing a barrier wall along the edge of Sadr City. You may have read about it. Know that our Soldiers performed exceptionally well under fire from the enemy and it did not stop our progress.

Placed in one of the most difficult areas in all of Iraq and given the most difficult missions within days of arrival, the Regulars have added yet another chapter to history in only our first week. Our Soldiers are amazing.

Living conditions and communications will slowly get better here. As I write this, we continue to improve the conditions for the Task Force. Food will get better, phones and internet will become more available, and more air conditioning to sleep in! Today, we were each issued the Army Combat Shirt that is designed to be worn under our body armor in place of our ACU top and keep us a few degrees cooler. Every little bit helps.

Please continue your prayers for us, you are in ours.

Regulars, By God!!!

Brian S. Eifler

LTC, IN

Battalion Commander
Task Force 1-6 Infantry



Soldiers of Task Force 1-6 conduct a combined breaching operation in Sadr City. (photo courtesy of TF 1-6).



Arafia Canal opens with Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Story by Spc Justin Snyder,
Photos courtesy of 3-1 Cavalry Regiment



1-35 AR



(Left) Leaders of the 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment and 3rd Squadron and the 1st Cavalry Regiment discuss the importance of the opening of the Arafia Canal with local residents.
(Below) Water pumps in Arafia, Iraq, pump water from the Diyala River into the Arafia Canal.



J isr Diyala Nahia Council Members, the Sons of Iraq, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment leaders, the 3rd Brigade, 1st National Police Division, 3rd Squadron, and 1st Cavalry Regiment leaders participated in a ribbon cutting ceremony in Arafia April, 28.

The ceremony was the final step in re-opening the Arafia Canal, which provides irrigation water to approximately 300 families in the area.

The upgrades include a new concrete lining and three functioning water pumps, all completed by contracted Iraqi workers.

"The Iraqi people contracted all the workers and did all the labor," said 1st Lt. Jeff Ritter, Waterloo, Iowa, the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment civil military operations officer. "We just supplied the funding and influence to make it happen."

Ritter said the opening of the Arafia Canal shows the continued cooperation between the Jisr Diyala Nahia Council, the local community council, and Coalition Forces.



(Above)The Arafia Canal moves water for more than 300 families in the area, April 28, in Arafia, Iraq.
(Left)– Local leaders pray just before a ribbon cutting ceremony, April 28, in Arafia, Iraq. The ceremony was held to signify the opening of the Arafia Canal.



As 3rd HBCT 3rd ID Bids Farewell, 4-27 Strengthens Growing Bond

By Pfc. Michael Schuch



4-27 FA

Captain Charles Cannon, Moultrie, Ga., commander of Battery A, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, met with Qussin Yassim, leader of the Sons of Iraq group in Tessah Nissan, to bid farewell and introduce Capt. Mathew Husted of the 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment during a ceremony in Tessah Nissan, May 1.

Cannon, along with Lt. Col. Mark Sullivan, from Huntsville, Ala., battalion commander of the 1-10 FA Regt., expressed his appreciation to Yassim for their strong relationship, and introduced Husted and Lt. Col. Michael Mammay, battalion commander of the 4-27 FA Regt. Cannon planned the ceremony to allow Husted and Yassim the opportunity to meet and hopefully continue the good relationship with the Sol group.

The Sol group has played a key role in establishing the security of key infrastructure, such as roads and water distribution facilities. According to Capt. Josh Beard, Opelika, Ala., the civil military operations officer for the 1-10 FA Regt., the Sol group has also helped secure all humanitarian aid missions, and identified numerous caches and improvised explosive devices.



Lt. Col. Michael Mammay, battalion commander of the 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment, discusses the goals that he hopes to be able to accomplish by continuing the relationship with the Sons of Iraq that Soldiers from the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division have established during a farewell meeting at Tessah Nissan, Iraq, May 1.



1st Lt. Christopher Aeillo, of the 1st Battalion 10th Field Artillery Regiment, demonstrates that members of the Sons of Iraq are trained in battle drills, and are prepared to fight side-by-side with Coalition Forces after a farewell luncheon at Tessah Nissan, Iraq May 1.

Yassim expressed his gratitude for the assistance provided by Cannon. "I hope to continue the same relationship with Lieutenant Colonel Mammay and Captain Husted so that Tessah Nissan will stay secure," said Yassim.

"I hope you continue to treat them (4-27 FA Regt.) as you've treated us," said Sullivan, expressing his appreciation to Yassim for the warm welcome of the new Soldiers.

"I am grateful that Captain Cannon helped us build our first store, and Captain Husted will help us build our second store," said Yassim, as he, Cannon, and Husted discussed their relationship.

The meeting came to a close when Yassim said, "we hope and pray we can continue to work together as well as we have."



The Ghost Troop Guide to Al Ja'ara



2-6 IN

By Staff Sgt. Alan Caldwell

Ghost Troop, 2nd platoon, arrived in Kuwait to prepare for operations in Iraq. We conducted counter IED defeat training and trained on a new combat system named the Full Spectrum Warrior. The Soldiers of Ghost Troop adapted quickly to new techniques and procedures to ensure mission success for Task Force Gator. Captain Jon-Paul Hart and his loyal troopers forged into Iraq aboard ground convoys and CH-47 Chinook Transport helicopters.

Ghost began the familiarization of the area of operations while partnered with Captain John Horning's Charlie Company, 1-15 Infantry, 3rd Infantry Division. Throughout the Relief in Place, with our brothers in arms, every day posed new challenges to be overcome.

The Tigris River valley is a complex network of canals and farms. Feeding from both the Diyala River and the Tigris, this lush flood plain is home to the former heart of Iraq's agricultural sector. With fish hatcheries and farms to the south, near the ancient city of Salman Pak; to dense steamy palm groves and orchards to the north, the Combat Outpost Cahill, is nestled in the middle.

Bordered by the arid desert to the east, and the rivers to the west, the area is reminiscent of a jungle, rather than a desert. The sunrise at 5:00 AM greets you in the morning with the ever present desert haze, and muggy humid conditions. The humidity makes the heat easier to handle, but water is still a Trooper's best friend. Sadly, the mosquitoes have taken a liking to the area as well, and they have a whole new buffet shipped in all the way from Germany.

On the operational side of the Troop, the mission to establish a stable region is rewarding and prospering. With the help of local citizens, the National Police, and Iraqi Army, the days of daily roadside bombings are slowly becoming a thing of the past. While the threat remains, the roads are continuously patrolled by our friends in the 40th Engineer Battalion's Route Clearance Teams.

With the support of the locals, removing dangerous unexploded ordnance, locating weapons caches, organizing the local villages to adopt their own security groups, and safeguarding the area is a tall order; an order being filled by Ghost Troop every day.



Pfc. Tristan Stewart and Pvt. Alberto Santiago pose after finding a weapons cache of mortars and fuzes during a dismounted patrol through the orchards of the Oogla region, G Troop, 2nd Platoon.



Staff Sgt. Aaron Ingmire, 1st Platoon, G Troop; provides security for 789th EOD Team Leader, Staff Sgt. Sean Caldwell, disposing of unexploded munitions.

The primary concern for the Task Force, with additional support from Charlie Company 2-6 Infantry, is to maintain the support of the local populace and bring stability and peace to the region.

Life on the outpost is no five star resort, but it is not the Dark Ages either. Soldiers on the outpost have more creature comforts than most can imagine. With a dining facility providing hot meals and snacks, to a gym with AFN programming, MWR and SPAWAR phones and internet; life is not too shabby. When not posted in the guard towers, or out on patrol, the COP is always busy with activity. A pick-up game of softball on the landing zone, platoons training on the small arms range; the always busy maintenance teams, and the crackle of radios from the Operations Centers, still remind the Troopers that its business.

It also helps that our fellow units in adjacent regions provide support in any way they can, forging new friendships across the Army. There are two large Forward Operating Bases within a short drive of the outpost, making the effort of meeting the needs of a forward deployed combat reconnaissance unit less complicated.

All in all, the Troop maintains its constant vigil in the Global War on Terrorism. Keeping the streets safe here, ultimately keeps the streets safe back home, wherever home may be.

While still an Army at war, the Troop has made new friends and allies here in the fight for mission success and safe operations. Until next time, the red and white guidon of the 1st United States Cavalry Regiment's G Troop flies in the desert winds once again, writing another Chapter in an already storied history. **RECON!**



47th FSB Medical Soldiers Show Their Readiness



47 FSB

By Pfc. Michael Schuch



Sgt. Samira Abdullah, of Sudbury, Ontario, Canada, from Company C, 47th Forward Support Battalion checks the vital signs of a wounded Soldier during a mass casualty simulation at Forward Operating Base Hammer, May 6.



Soldiers from the triage team, 47th Forward Support Battalion, reassure a victim of battlefield fatigue during a mass casualty simulation at Forward Operating Base Hammer, May 6.

Soldiers from Company C, 47th Forward Support Battalion, performed a simulated mass casualty drill at the troop medical clinic on FOB Hammer, May 6.

A mass casualty event is any situation where there are more casualties than the aid station can normally handle. Mass casualty simulations usually last from 30 minutes to several hours, based upon the level of severity and number of simulated casualties.

The leaders used the training event to rehearse the procedures used by the previous unit, the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

After evaluating the mass casualty event, leaders of the 47th FSB will then adjust those tactics to create their own standard operating procedures.

“When a mass casualty call comes in, all physicians, from dentists to surgeons are called in,” said Capt. Aaron Mallory, of Panama City, Fla., “those who cannot help on the treatment floor are sent to help with triage.”

“The thing about mass casualty simulations, is that you can never get them perfect, which is why it is called practicing medicine,” said Staff Sgt. Chad Wilson, of Hendersonville, N.C.,

This training is an important event for the Soldiers, because it maintains their readiness and offers a chance to make necessary adjustments to their procedures said Mallory, commander of Company C, 47th FSB.

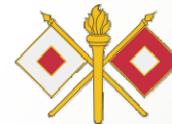


589th Signal Company Trains for Combat at Camp Buehring

By 1st Lt. Andrew Culclasure



40 EN



589th SC



Sgt. Turnbull prepares to administer an IV during his CLS recertification

Almost as soon as their boots touched the sand, the Soldiers of the 589th Signal Company began conducting high speed training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. They not only refined their basic marksmanship skills, but also conducted a variety of advanced combat training, all while adjusting to the intense heat of the new training environment.

Initially, training was primarily in a classroom environment, where we received classes on recognizing and counteracting improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and recognizing the multiple foreign friendly forces that are also deployed in Iraq. Then, we received training for our Improved Field Aid Kits (IFAKs), where we learned how to apply blood clotting pads and tourniquets on blood-squirting dummies.

A few days later, the 589th moved out to Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) training to practice combat skills in a village setting. Teams searched several houses, many of which were booby-trapped and which played deafening music to confuse Soldiers. While dealing with these chal-

lenging obstacles, our teams identified and engaged enemy targets with paint bullets, which forced team members to practice muzzle awareness. For many of the younger Soldiers in the 589th, this was their first time participating in urban training.

A couple days later, our Company conducted Entry Control Point (ECP) training which turned out to be a favorite among many Soldiers. At this range, the Signal Warriors learned how to establish and defend an entry control point for a FOB.

First, they set up a vehicle inspection point and learned how to search vehicles for Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosives (VBIEDS) and weapons. To add to the realism, local nationals role-played as rowdy mobs, pregnant females, and suicide bombers, forcing our Soldiers to make quick decisions about the use of force.

All in all, the training in Kuwait was hot, challenging, fast paced, and for many of the younger Soldiers in the company, new.

However, just as in the past, the Soldiers of the 589th Signal Company pulled together as a team on every challenge and came away well prepared for the 15 month deployment.



CPN 76 led by Sgt. Gray clear rooms during MOUT training in Camp Buehring



Iron Brigade

Transfer of Authority

By Spc.
Justin Snyder



Col. Pat White, commander of the 2nd BCT, 1st AD, and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Eyer, Command Sgt. Maj. Of the 2nd BCT, uncase their units colors during a transfer of authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Hammer today.

Like the Hammer Brigade, the Iron Brigade will be at your side to continue to support and assist you, said Col. Pat White, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division. "We are honored to be a part of your history."

History was made today in the Mada'in Qada area of Iraq, when authority at Forward Operating Base Hammer was transferred from the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, to the 2nd BCT.

The ceremony began with both the United States and Iraqi national anthems being played. Following the anthems, Major General Rick Lynch, Commanding General of the 3rd ID, addressed the crowd, which included 2nd BCT Soldiers, 3rd HBCT Soldiers, and many local Iraqi leaders and citizens.

Lynch, a native of Hamilton, Ohio, began by thanking everyone for coming out and supporting the Hammer and Striker Brigades. He told the crowd that his Soldiers could not have been successful alone and that the partnerships they developed with the Iraqi Army and National Police were a large part of their success.

"Everyone did this together, including the courageous people of the Mada'in Qada," said Lynch. "We are excited about what the future holds for you as Col. Pat White and the Striker Brigade Combat Team takes command. They will take things to the next level in the Mada'in Qada."

He followed by introducing Col. Wayne W. Grigsby Jr., commander of the 3rd HBCT, and congratulating him on a job well done.

"Wayne, you did an outstanding job and your Soldiers were lucky to have served with you," said Lynch. "Nothing was too great for you to accomplish and you accomplished it all. The people of the Mada'in Qada will miss you greatly."

Grigsby, a native of Prince George's County, Md., took the microphone and thanked the Iraqi's for accepting him and his Soldiers as their neighbors.





Col. Pat White, commander of the 2nd BCT, 1st AD, addresses the crowd during the transfer of authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Hammer today. "Like the Hammer Brigade, the Iron Brigade will be at your side to continue to support and assist you," said White. "We are honored to be a part of your history."

When the Hammer Soldiers arrived in the Mada'in Qada 15 months ago, it was strangled by Shiite, Sunni, and Persian extremist influences. The markets were vacant, women and children were not safe to walk in the streets, and irrigation canals were dry, leaving water for drinking sparse.

The Hammer Soldiers went to work, alongside the Iraqi Army, National Police, and Sons of Iraq, providing security, which led to the detaining of more than 500 suspected criminals, 47 of them being high-value targets. This effort facilitated the revitalization of markets, the building of schools, and improvements to water distribution facilities, all to increase the quality of life for the people of the Mada'in Qada.

Grigsby said he was proud to be a part of the rebuilding and that it was because of the brave citizens of Iraq that they were able to come so far.

"All things have changed in the Mada'in Qada and we have transformed," said Grigsby. "In our time here, the bold citizens have stepped forward. Because of you, the Mada'in Qada is a better place for future generations."

Grigsby promised more improvements would come as the Iron Brigade took over command in the Mada'in Qada.

"The Sledgehammer Brigade is leaving, but the mission will continue on," said Grigsby. "Col. White and the great Iron Brigade will take on this task and continue to make the Mada'in Qada even better than it stands today."

He left the podium and cased the colors of the 3rd HBCT, signifying the brigade's completion of their mission and turning over command to the 2nd BCT.

Col. White, a native of Apple Valley, Ca., followed by uncasing the Iron Brigade's colors, signifying the transfer of authority as official.

White thanked the 3rd HBCT on a great transition and said that there is nothing more important than what the Army is doing in Iraq. He said that the Iron Brigade stands strong and would continue to support and assist the people of Iraq, but it would involve their help.

"As the transition moves forward, there remains one constant, to free citizens in this Mada'in Qada," said White. "It is up to you to provide the leadership, security, and economic growth required to improve this Mada'in (Qada) one day at a time."

Lynch believes this transition has a much larger meaning than just a change of command, one that will stay with the Iraqi people forever.

"We are doing this for our children and your children," said Lynch. "We are truly building a new Iraq together."

Iron Brigade Soldiers

By Spc.
Justin Snyder
Photos by Pfc. Michael Schuch



Sgt. Jose Carlos Serna, Georgia, Bravo Company 2-6 Infantry Non-Commissioned Officer, instructs a Soldier during improvised explosive device training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

A Bravo Company 2-6 Infantry Soldier pulls security while training in a simulated improvised explosive device lane at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. The training is meant to prepare the Soldiers for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

When Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, arrived at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, at the beginning of April, they had a good idea of what they were getting into.

This is the Iron Brigade's third deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the highly motivated Soldiers had been preparing for months at their home station in Baumholder, Germany.

Since arriving in Kuwait, training has continued with test-firing weapons, tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles. They have also taken various classes to help identify and detect improvised explosive devices, along with lessons on other Iraqi specific tactics, techniques and procedures. All this done in preparation to conduct their mission to support Iraqi Security Forces in ensuring a safe and secure environment for the Iraqi people.

For Cpl. Paul Sanchez, Weslaco, Texas, Task Force 1-35 tank mechanic, this is his second trip to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He said that the training has been a big help and will help the Soldiers in completing their mission.

"I know how to fix tanks, that's my job," said Sanchez. "The training here has helped me in other ways, like brushing up on my Soldier skills."



For other Soldiers, such as Pfc. Nathan Ryder, a Boise, Idaho, Task Force 1-6 Soldier, this is their first deployment. Ryder spent three days patrolling simulated IED lanes, which forced the Soldier to identify possible IED's by sight.

"The IED training was very realistic," said Ryder. "When we get to Iraq, one of our main focuses as an infantry group will be IEDs. Being able to recognize them and knowing what they look like will save me and my battle buddies' lives."



Boots on the Ground



Bravo Company 2-6 Soldiers, scan a simulated improvised explosive device lane while training for Operation Iraqi Freedom at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Other training at Camp Buehring involved working with mine resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicles. The armored vehicles are new to the Army and will better protect Soldiers from IED blasts.

For Pvt. Andrew Flowers, Columbus, Ohio, Headquarters Company, Task Force 2-6 Soldier, this was his first introduction to the MRAP vehicles.

"We are going to be driving around in these things in Iraq," said Flowers. "Getting to know your vehicle now, before we get in country, is a big help."

Some of the Soldiers also received a new improved outer tactical vest (IOTV). The vest replaces the heavier interceptor body armor (IBA) and is designed to have less movement constriction..

"I like the new vest a lot," said Ryder. "I'm more comfortable in it and still feel protected."

Just as the training and gear has affected the Soldiers, so has the heat. When the Soldiers departed from Germany, snow covered the ground. Now, in Kuwait, they are experiencing near 100 degree weather

daily.

"It's best that we are in Kuwait and not somewhere else more comfortable," said Flowers. "The weather here is as close to Iraq as you can get."

Outside of training, the Soldiers have been taking part in different activities on post. Camp Buehring provides a movie theater, weekly karaoke, a large gym, AT&T call centers to call home, CZee internet cafe and, for a small fee, the Soldiers can have wireless internet in their tent. The dining facility provides four meals a day and various food establishments such as Taco Bell, Subway, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Starbucks offer Soldiers even more variety.

Sanchez said Camp Buehring has done well at facilitating the Soldiers' needs and believes it will have a positive impact on them as they head overseas.

"They have done a good job of adapting to changes with the war and meeting our needs," said Sanchez. "I think we are better prepared for deployment because of it."



Soldier Leaves Softball to go to Iraq

By Pfc. Evan Loyd

Cpl. Roxanne Finks, from San Diego, Calif., walks into the dusty office, sits down and begins working on her computer. Her quick fingers move like lightning on the black keyboard.

It's early in her deployment with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, and she has a lot of work to do, smoothing out the wrinkles on the units computer networks. She hasn't always been an information system operations analyst, though. Before being assigned to the communications section of the 2nd BCT, 1st AD, she played softball for the All-Army team.

"I was just in the right place at the right time," she says. "I don't even think I'm that great."

Finks started playing baseball when she was young and switched to softball during her high school years. After graduating high school, she turned down an athletic scholarship at a near-by college to join the Army.

"Everyone always asks me why I didn't go to the college team," said Finks. "At the time, I just didn't think I had the skill to play college softball. Also, the Army helped me gain independence and will help me later with school."

Still, Finks loved softball and didn't want to give it up. While she was stationed in Yansung, Korea, she decided to play ball in post-sized tournaments. She played so well at the Pacific Wide Tournament in Yansung, that a recruiter for the All-Army team invited her to attend tryouts at Fort Indian Town Gap, Pa.

"There was a lot of pressure once you were at the tryouts," said Finks "Over half of the people trying to make the team were players from



Cpl. Roxanne Finks, San Diego, Calif., a Soldier in the Communications Section of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, fields a ball while playing the infield for the All Army Team at Fort Indian Town Gap, Pa. 2008.



Cpl. Roxanne Finks, San Diego, Calif., a Soldier in the Communications Section of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, fixes a login problem on a brigade computer at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq.

previous years. Being previous players it was almost like they had spots reserved for them."

As a result of the tryout, Finks managed to get a spot on the second string. After a year, she earned her place as the middle infielder.

"That first year, my position was the bench cheerer," said Finks. "But, I paid my dues and got into my spot the second year."

After Finks' second season, she was offered the choice between staying with the team or deploying with a unit to Iraq. She decided that she would deploy to serve her country.

"I think everyone should put their time in," said Finks "This is what I feel I should do right now. You got to do what you got to do."

Finks' day goes a little different from when she once trained all day to play softball. With the Communication Section currently working on the transitions of tactical and automation computers, establishing network connections and providing a system to track friendly forces on the battle field and radio communication for the war fighters on the ground, Finks has almost no free time for softball.

"I usually finish my day and head straight to my bed," said Finks "I still keep my glove and a ball with me though. I'd sleep with it if I had to. It's my outlet for fun in life."

Finks is scheduled for redeployment from Iraq just in time to tryout for the All-Army team again. She has another three years with the Army, and plans to play for the team again for the 2009 season. After the Army, she hopes to use her GI Bill to attend UCLA and major in Information Systems.



First of Seven

By Pfc. Michael Schuch



Colonel Pat White, commander of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, Colonel Wayne W. Grigsby Jr., commander of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team and Sheik Nori Zabar Khamiss, Support Council Leader, discuss goals for further improvement of Mada' in Qada during the Support Council security meeting at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq April 30.

Colonel Pat White, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division met with the Mada' in Qada Support Council, Iraqi Army, National Police and Sons of Iraq from the Mada' in Qada April 30.

According to Iraqi custom, it is common to meet seven times before trust is earned. This was the first of many meetings to come.

Colonel Wayne W. Grigsby Jr., commander of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd ID reviewed several of the successes during 3/3ID's tour. "The one thing he will take away after 15 months of combat is that the Sons of Iraq are the solution," said Grigsby.

Many of the support council members introduced themselves and voiced their concerns to White while thanking Grigsby and his soldiers for their work over the past year.

Sheik Abu Hatem, from the Mada' in Qada said "the number one recruiter for terrorism is unemployment, and therefore unemployment must continue to be addressed."

The meeting came to a close with Sheik Nori Zabar Khamiss, Support Council leader, expressed a feeling of trust and safety.

"I feel I can say that today, thanks to the Sons of Iraq, Coalition Forces, and Iraqi Security Forces, our area is now safe." He continued "I look forward to continuing the success with the new leaders."



Colonel Wayne W. Grigsby Jr., commander of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team and Sheik Nori Zabar Khamiss, Support Council Leader cut the farewell cake during the meeting, setting off the beginning of the meal at the Support Council security meeting at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq April 30.



Germany

By Pfc. Michael Schuch

Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, deployed from Baumholder, Germany to FOB Hammer, Iraq over the past month in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This is the unit's third OIF deployment.

Soldiers endured two blizzards in Germany before departing on the 2,200 mile trip to Iraq. The trip took the Soldiers through several places on their way to FOB Hammer, including Ramstein, Germany, Camp Buehring, Kuwait and Baghdad, Iraq.

Soldiers spent three weeks in Camp Buehring conducting reception, staging and onward integration operations. During this time, they conducted training courses, readiness drills, vehicle and weapons ranges and ensured their equipment and vehicles were ready for combat.

"Because of the changes we had to go through, the trip from Germany was an unforgettable experience," said Spc. Rodrigo Garcia,

from San Diego, Calif. "It is something that you and your buddies will always be able to share."

"A trip from Germany to Iraq to do our part for Operation Iraqi Freedom is the trip of a lifetime," said Garcia, a soldier of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BCT, "you can only really understand the experience by actually doing it yourself."

Once Soldiers from the 2nd BCT arrived on FOB Hammer, they participated in a right-seat/left-seat ride with Soldiers from the previous unit, the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. This gave Soldiers from the 2nd BCT the chance to see what their responsibilities would be during their deployment before assuming their positions.

"There were no real issues with the transition, compared to previous deployments, it went very smooth and well," said Sgt. Maj. James Zadra, from Landisburg, Pa.



to Iraq



Fighting insurgency, brick by brick

By [John Vandiver](#), Originally published in Stars and Stripes
Mideast edition, Monday, May 5, 2008



John Vandiver / S&S

After a fuel deal was reached in January, there was an employment boom at the brick factory. The production cycle went from five days a month in January to every day. In February, 4 million bricks were made.

Before Lt. Col. Mark Sullivan arrived in this city of 120,000, he had his eye on the map. On the outskirts of Narhwan a big smoke-belching brick factory, once the economic engine of the region, was sitting idle. Before the start of the war, it employed more than 10,000. In the years that followed, though, it degenerated into a den of extortion. The extremists were shaking down the business owners.

“It was a sanctuary. Weapons and ammunition were stored out there,” Sullivan said. But Sullivan, commander of the 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, sensed an opportunity at the onetime employment hub turned weapons storage center.

“We saw it on the map and said we’re going to go after this sucker,” Sullivan said.

Seven months later, the mules are in motion. Conveyors are spitting out the bricks, which are being stacked up by the million. While the violence rages to the west in Sadr City, tensions have eased in Shiite-dominated Narhwan.

The reason is simple: People are too busy going to work every day, he said. “You have to provide an alternative to criminal behavior.”

The factory is once again the largest employer in Mada’in, an area southeast of Baghdad where the 3rd Heavy Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division has been operating since March of 2007.

In October, there were 2,500 workers at the factory. Now there are 15,000.

The facility — comprised of 167 mini-factories and numerous owners — has the potential to employ up to 25,000, Sullivan said.

Within two weeks a new unit will be coming in to take over Narhwan and work with the factory managers to keep the production going. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division will assume control of Mada’in Qada, which includes the city of Narhwan.



While Sullivan has spearheaded a variety of coalition-funded public works initiatives during his deployment in Narhwan, the brick factory hasn't been about investing money, he said.

"The good news with this particular project is that it has cost no money to the American taxpayer," Sullivan said. Instead, the focus has been on bringing together business and government leaders to get the plant the fuel it needs to operate.

Lt. Col. Michael Mammay, commander of the 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment, said he's looking to push public works projects forward in town.

"Our goal is to convince everyone in town it's not a new sheriff in town. It's the same old sheriff in town," Mammay said.

However, the help with the factory and other projects in the city comes with a condition: "One attack against my soldiers and all this stuff stops," Sullivan said.

With the extremists cleared out, the long-term success at the plant depends on the steady delivery of heavy fuel oil used to power the brick ovens.

Back in January, the factory owners and Iraq government officials reached an agreement for fuel delivery that triggered a production boost. The factories increased operations from five days a month to 30.

"Within three weeks 12,000 workers were brought back here," Sullivan said. "Word travels fast."

In March, however, the flow was disrupted when fighting erupted in Basra, the site of a key refinery facility. That started the search for an alternative.

"You just have to keep looking," said Sullivan.

Last week, a new supplier was tracked down. On Saturday, the deal was to be ratified by the owners. Though it was just a routine matter — the terms of the contract had been settled — the owners' group insisted that Sullivan attend.

"We want you there," said owner Abu Ziad, during a meeting Wednesday with Sullivan. "Will I get a cold Pepsi?" Sullivan countered.

After the quick chat, the battalion commander boiled his experience in Narhwan down to this: "You win a counter-insurgency with the tip of your tongue, not the tip of your rifle."



John Vandiver / S&S

Since production ramped up in January, employment at the Narhwan brick factory has soared. Some 2,000 donkeys also work at the plant, hauling cartloads of bricks. The donkeys are so accustomed to the back and forth grind they often carry the load without having to be shown what to do.

Unit finds peace by immersing itself daily in Iraqi village

By [John Vandiver](#), Originally published in Stars and Stripes Mideast edition, Tuesday, May 6, 2008

Capt. Chas Cannon has been the guest at village weddings. He's cut the throat of the ceremonial lamb, shoveled his right hand into mounds of rice and gorged on meats of uncertain origin. During his regular visits to the villages of Tesah Nissan, Cannon also makes a point to compliment the cooks in Arabic after eating. When he mingles in the crowd, he seems to know everyone by name. "You've got to get out of your vehicle. Face-to-face interaction is everything," said Cannon, who is wrapping up his third deployment to Iraq with the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division out of Fort Benning, Ga.

Since his battery of soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment took over the area in December, the unit has immersed itself in the daily lives of villagers, who live about 20 miles east of the Green Zone. The result: a cascade of tips leading to the seizure of weapons caches. In five months not a single roadside bomb has exploded in Tesah Nissan, which sits along a thoroughfare leading straight to Baghdad.

"Before, our security was real bad," said Quissin Yassim, the leader of the local and newly formed "Sons of Iraq" group. "Before, IEDs (improvised explosive devices) were in streets, and they (the extremists) were taking money by force. They were taking people's cars."

Similar scenes have played out in other parts of the Hammer Brigade's operational footprint southeast of Baghdad. During the early part of the unit's deployment, the environment was marked by firefights and bomb detonations. As part of the "surge" force, the unit took control of an area that had been mostly uncovered during all of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

But after the initial fighting in the Rhode Island-sized Mada'in Qada, much of battlefield has been transformed. Facilitating meetings, providing services and doling out money for infrastructure projects has been the business at hand.

"I'm sort of like a campaign adviser trying to help them get things running," said Cannon, who will complete his third tour in Iraq this month.

The Baumholder-based 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment will soon assume responsibility of the area. In Tesah Nissan, the payoff for cultivating relationships and building up local Iraqi security came after tensions boiled over in other Shiite-dominated areas back in March.

"Last month security was not good in Basra and Sadr City. Militias are fighting. Thank God we were able to keep peace in our territory," said Yassim, during a tribal council meeting with 1-10 leaders and members of the Baumholder unit.



Quissin Yassim, the leader of the "Sons of Iraq" group in Tesah Nissan, has worked with Capt. Chas Cannon of the 1st Battalion, 1 Field Artillery Regiment. Commanders credit the neighborhood watch group with securing the agricultural villages east of Baghdad.

Commanders credit the emergence of the local "Sons of Iraq," a local U.S.-paid civilian armed group, which has swelled to more than 200 members. When Cannon's unit arrived, there was no organized security force.

With the added security, the focus now has turned to improving services and infrastructure.

Hussein Abbas, a provincial leader in the region who functions as a liaison between Tesah Nissan and the government in Baghdad, says the reason the villagers turned from violence is simple. They're asking themselves which side can do more to put food on the table, he said. "People now feel good relations with them (coalition forces) are better than good relations with the extremists," Abbas said.

Now, the leading sheiks routinely hold meetings on how to improve the living conditions of its residents, Cannon said. A vote determines how to spend the project funds Cannon hands out, which puts responsibility on the villagers.

"If something doesn't work out, they can't come back at us. They made the decision," he said.

Perhaps the most important long-term development is the revitalization of the village's main canal, which is the lifeblood of the local farming economy. For five years, it ran dry. But in March it started to flow once again. As a result, sun-scorched fields are sprouting patches of green.

Last week, Cannon held his final meeting with the council leaders. There was a last bit of business. Walls must be built to protect the village windmills, which power the water well.

The sheiks wanted to make sure they would be getting the money before Cannon departed back home to Georgia. Cannon told them they would.

Then it was off for lunch at one of the tribal leader's farms, where the captain and the sheiks bid farewell. But before they departed for the farm, Cannon told them the assistance wasn't forever. One day, the apron strings would need to be cut, he said.

"Eventually, it's going to be all upon you guys to make things work for yourself," Cannon said.

Now the question is when.



John Vandiver / S&S

Cannon, a battery commander with 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, washes his hands after lunch with local tribal leaders in Tesah Nissan.

One is Sunni and one Shiite

Together they are the key to peace in Baghdad suburb

By [John Vandiver](#), Originally published in Stars and Stripes
Mideast edition, Friday, May 9, 2008

One man is known for his eloquence. When Abu Amosh speaks before a group, eyes and ears lock in. The other is a man of fewer words. Abu Mohammed, gruff and surly, was a former sergeant major in Saddam's army.

These two "Sons of Iraq" leaders — one Sunni and one Shiite — are the glue in the ethnically mixed Baghdad suburb of Qarguhliyah, according to the soldiers who work with them.

"That's my politician and my warrior," said Capt. Troy Thomas, commander of the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment's Troop A. "We've been able to make it safe again. We've got Sunni and Shia sheiks working together."

At Patrol Base Assassin, just about everyone knows that Amosh, the smooth talking Sunni, and Mohammed, the Shiite who somehow managed to rise in a Sunni dominated Army, are the linchpins to the peace that has emerged in Qarguhliyah.

It wasn't so long ago that kidnappings, carjackings and streetside shootings were the norm. But 14 months after the unit arrived in Mada'in Qada as part of the so-called "surge" force, life in Qarguhliyah has been transformed.

"This is the model. This is what you want the rest of the country to be like," said 1st Sgt. Myron Kennedy of Task Force 1-35 Armor.

"We've got a great opportunity here to build upon what they've done," said Kennedy, whose Baumholder, Germany-based unit is replacing the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division's cavalry troop.

While the soldiers of the 3rd ID redeploy to Fort Benning, Ga., the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division will step in to take control of Mada'in, an area southeast of Baghdad with a population of 1.2 million.

Across this region, the initial violence that distinguished the early part of 3rd ID's deployment has been transplanted. While commanders describe the relative peace as fragile and reversible, the focus now is on improving essential services, strengthening the local governments and getting more grass-roots involvement.

Soldiers say the spark has been the rise of the "Sons of Iraq," an armed civilian group funded by the U.S. military. Perhaps one of the best illustrations of the Hammer Brigade's success is the area controlled by 3-1's Troop A soldiers. When the soldiers first arrived, the streets were filled with garbage. Businesses were failing and villagers were under siege by the extremists who found sanctuary there.

But in a matter of months, progress became apparent, according to the soldiers.



John Vandiver / S&S

Capt. Jamal Williams, commander of the incoming unit, Task Force 1-35 Armor out of Baumholder, Germany, meets with some local villagers who say they need more electricity. With the local council of civic leaders gaining traction in the area, Williams tries to direct people to their local leaders as the starting point for getting assistance.



After building their patrol post — a Spartan base constructed on a slab of concrete roughly the size of two football fields — the unit went to work.

“The first thing we did was we shook the place down. We respected the culture, but we set the tone,” 1st Lt. Mike Resnick, Troop A’s executive officer, said. Aggressive patrols and raids were conducted around the clock. In a matter of weeks there was a distinct change.

Thomas said he knew he was having the desired effect when his name popped up on an al-Qaida operative list being circulated in town.

“That’s how desperate they had become,” he said.

After the roundups, Thomas started his search for local leaders. He found Amosh and Mohammed.

The two men quickly built up their ranks and established checkpoints and intelligence-gathering operations. Amosh also set up a headquarters building where weekly meetings could be held. That meeting developed into the Local Community Council, the first of its kind in the greater Jisr Diyala area.

The trust the unit has built up in many of the villages they patrol didn’t happen overnight, however.

“They definitely didn’t want us here when first got here,” Spc. Zachary Winburn.

The partnership with Amosh and Mohammed also took time, Thomas said.

But when fighting erupted in Sadr City in March, the local security force, along with the National Police, proved its willingness to stick together, Thomas said.

“These guys deserve a lot of credit. They stood their ground,” he said. “They even went across the river to reinforce another group that had fled.”

For all the success, though, there are still flickers of devastating violence. In early April, a bomb exploded along the main route through town, killing two 3rd ID soldiers from another unit that was passing through.

By the end of that night, though, Thomas had obtained pictures of all the suspects, which are now posted at various checkpoints.

“That would never have happened a year ago,” Thomas said. “Most of the people here don’t see us as the 10-foot bogeyman anymore.”



John Vandiver / S&S

Abu Mohammed, the leader of the "Sons of Iraq" group in the Four Corners part of town, leads soldiers to a weapons cache that was recently uncovered. Mohammed and Abu Amosh, a Sunni leader, are credited with helping to ease ethnic tension in the area.



Iraqi shop owners say 'no thanks' to grant

By [John Vandiver](#), Originally published in Stars and Stripes
Mideast edition, Sunday, May 11, 2008

The sales pitch should be easy. First Lt. Alex Lamolinara goes door-to-door along the strip of banged up storefronts, where there's a soda shop with no refrigerator, a paint shop without much paint and a bunch of secondhand junk dealers.

The lieutenant, who is looking for potential candidates for a new microbusiness grant program, is dumbstruck. A couple of shops over, he gets the same response.

"Ask him why," he tells the translator. The translator points across the street.

"He's scared," the translator says, referring to the green house of worship known to soldiers as the "JAM Mosque," after Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaish al-Mahdi, or Mahdi Army.



John Vandiver / S&S
First Lt. Alex Lamolinara, center, a platoon leader with the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment's Troops A, tries to get to the bottom of why a shop owner, right, is not interested in a \$500 grant.

In the village of Imam Ali, a small Shiite community roughly five miles from Baghdad's southeast city limits, the store owners weren't buying during a recent visit by members of the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment's Troop A.

In other areas where the unit is pushing the microgrant effort, business owners have been leaping at the chance for \$500 to spur commerce.



John Vandiver / S&S

In the village of Imam Ali, the children keep a distance from visiting soldiers. The Shia neighborhood has proved to be the one place that has been hard to win over for the soldiers of the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment's Troop A.

"I was a little skeptical about the program at first. But it works," said Lamolinara. "It puts the money back into the community."

But in Imam Ali's south side, a little slice of Troop A's territory, there doesn't seem to be much interest in the money.

"This is my one problem area," said Capt. Troy Thomas, whose Troop A commands the area that includes the small village.

There are quite a few Sadr loyalists in Imam Ali who don't seem very interested in coalition assistance, he said.

The grant program is part of a larger initiative throughout the Mada'in Qada, where much of the focus is on building up infrastructure and business. The idea is that if jobs and services improve,

hooking up with extremists becomes less enticing.

In the coming weeks, the unit that is replacing the 3-1 will be gathering applications and determining who qualifies for the money. Task Force 1-35 Armor will have roughly \$10,000 to disperse in the Qarguhliyah area.

On a recent visit to Imam Ali, soldiers from Troop A and the Baumholder-based 1-35 made the rounds.

Unlike other parts of Qarguhliyah — a suburb southeast of Baghdad — where soldiers often receive rock-star greetings from the children, the youngsters in Imam Ali keep a distance. Instead of waving, they do their gawking with arms crossed.

While it's not the friendliest of places, Troop A Sgt. George Sumrall noted that they weren't throwing rocks either.

"I'd be more concerned if they turned around and walked away," he said.

Nonetheless, in an impoverished area, turning down the chance at a \$500 business grant struck the soldiers as odd.

Back at the Imam Ali soda shop, the owner says he doesn't need the money.

"I don't have a lot of customers," he said.

"That's because you don't have a refrigerator," said Capt. Jamal Williams, commander of 1-35's Company A.

As Iraqis return home, challenges await

By [John Vandiver](#), Originally published in Stars and Stripes
Mideast edition, Monday, May 12, 2008

Before the war, Hamid Misshed used to tend to his front-yard garden and mind the crops. Water from the Diyala River fed the fields, and there was peace with his Sunni neighbors next door.

But three years ago, everything changed for Misshed and the 1,200 other people who have called the twin villages of al-Bata and al-Hemidat home for generations. "In the beginning we refused to leave," said the 67-year-old, who shouts out his words. "But eventually we had to go."

In 2005, terrorists descended on al-Bata, home of Sunnis, and al-Hemidat, home of Shiites. Sunni and Shiite extremists quickly went to work. Amid the gunfights, mortars and kidnappings, neighbor turned against neighbor. The villages soon became ghost towns. "When we first arrived there was no one here. All the residents had fled," said Capt. Troy Thomas, commander of Troop A, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment.

The refugees are now starting to trickle back home. Last summer, Troop A soldiers arrived on the scene as part of the "surge" force and started targeting the extremists.

The effort came with a cost. Following one of their first visits to the area, two soldiers were killed on the way out of town by a bomb. But in time the extremists, which included al-Qaida elements, were pushed out, Thomas said.

Once security was established, the local "Sons of Iraq" leader pulled the tribal leaders from both sides together for a reconciliation meeting in September. The sheiks agreed to put the past behind them. By March the first of the villagers started to return.

Getting these two traditionally hostile groups to the negotiating table has been the hallmark feature of Troop A's work in the ethnically mixed villages just outside of Baghdad's southeastern city limits.

But it's not quite a happy ending for the people of al-Bata and al-Hemidat.

When the first of the refugees arrived back home after more than two years away, they discovered a neighborhood reduced to rubble.

"My house is completely ruined. This used to be farmland. Now it's a desert," said Amar Jasm, whose family of four recently returned to al-Hemidat.

During his absence, the canals that delivered water from the Diyala River dried out. Now, there is no visible cropland.

Humod Kalil, whose brother was kidnapped and likely murdered during the fighting of 2005, was among the people who also decided to start over again in al-Bata, the larger of the two villages. He now shares his bullet-scarred home with two other families and cares for his orphaned nephew.



John Vandiver / S&S

Capt. Troy Thomas, commander of the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment's Troop A looks into a space that a family of four calls home. The villages of al-Bata and al-Hemidat were destroyed during sectarian fighting in 2005. Thomas is trying to rally support to get the villages rebuilt.

"We're hoping people will come and make things better," Kalil said.

In the meantime, the families of al-Bata and al-Hemidat live where they can find structures that still have roofs. In some instances that means families squeezing into spaces the size of walk-in closets.

Thomas said coalition forces have been able to help in some ways, such as getting more electricity to the area. A state department-funded vocational program, which is aimed at training Iraqis in construction, is another starting point. The program will teach about 150 people in Troop A's area how to build. But instead of having people learn how to construct something new, Thomas has steered the program to battered al-Bata and its smaller neighboring village. "This looks like a pretty good place to learn how to build something," said Thomas as he guided some Baghdad-based contractors through the decimated villages on a recent visit. But more money will be needed to get the communities back on track. Perhaps \$500,000, Thomas said.

As the soldiers of Troop A prepare to head back home with the rest of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division after a 15-month deployment, it will be up to the incoming 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division out of Baumholder, Germany, to help finish the job.

Capt. Jamal Williams, commander of the Baumholder-based Company A, Task Force 1-35 Armor, told villagers he would work to bring improvements to the area. But change will not happen overnight, he said.

"I hear your concerns. I need you to give me some time to work on this," Williams explained to the group huddled around him.

Thomas, who has forged close ties with the local "Sons of Iraq," says rebuilding the villages will help those local leaders capitalize upon the security gains achieved in the past year.

"This is our northern (area of operation) boundary. We can watch our northern flank from here. To the north is some of the most dangerous territory in Iraq," Thomas said.



John Vandiver / S&S

Hamid Misshed was forced from his home in 2005 because of sectarian fighting instigated by extremist groups who sought sanctuary in the villages of al-Bata and al-Hemidat. When Misshed returned two months ago, he found that his home was destroyed and all his furniture and belongings were stolen.

"If you rebuild, you have a ready force in the area," added Thomas, referring to "Sons of Iraq" security personnel who man checkpoints throughout the region.

In all, about 35 people were killed during the fighting in 2005, villagers said. Roughly 250 of the residents who fled the violence have returned.

Misshed, who leads a family of nine, said he's not interested in starting over in another town.

For 50 years he's called al-Hemidat home. Pushing 70, he said he wants to work the fields again and get rid of the sand in his front yard.

"This used to be a garden," said Misshed, pointing at the barren ground.

Security gains in Iraq give boost to new projects

By [John Vandiver](#), Originally published in Stars and Stripes
Mideast edition, Thursday, May 15, 2008

The Shiite sheik told the Shiite general that a new Shiite extremist just slipped into town.

A U.S. Army commander, listening to the conversation from a distance, arched an eyebrow and nodded in approval.

"That's pretty significant," observed Lt. Col. John Kolasheski, whose unit of soldiers with the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment spent the past year working toward such a breakthrough.

Just a few months ago, this sort of revelation would be hard to coax from one of Jisr Diyala's tribal leaders. Particularly in mixed company. But during weekly roundtable

Jisr Diyala Security Council meetings with the Iraqi National Police and Army leaders, Shiite and Sunni sheiks have begun to put tribal considerations aside for the sake of security.



Ben Bloker / S&S
Sgt. Jason Dragan, right, and Staff Sgt. Juan Vega provide security during a citizens' council meeting Tuesday in Jisr Diyala, Iraq.



Ben Bloker / S&S
Infantry soldiers assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment provide security outside a meeting Tuesday in Jisr Diyala, Iraq. As commanders spend much of their time empowering local government leaders to take ownership of rebuilding communities, the role of the infantry soldier has in some cases morphed into providing security for meetings and project visits.

In an effort to capitalize on the recent security gains and ethnic reconciliation — achieved in part by the security council meetings, which commenced in January and other similar efforts in the Mada'in Qada — U.S. forces here are poised to launch a major public works initiative. Dubbed "Marne Dauntless," it aims to fire a jolt of energy into the local economy in the coming weeks.

And at the center of the effort is the Baumholder, Germany-based Task Force 1-35 Armor, which is now in control of the greater Jisr Diyala area, southeast of Baghdad.

"Our sector is truly an area where Shia and Sunni have to co-exist," said Lt. Col. Rich Morales, the 1-35 commander whose unit recently replaced the redeploying 3-1 soldiers out of Fort Benning, Ga.

Some 18 projects will be introduced to the Jisr Diyala Nahia — the primary focus of Marne Dauntless — during the next couple months. Irrigation projects, expansion of electricity services, a health clinic, veterinary clinic, and school and village markets are among the efforts planned.



Ben Bloker / S&S
Dragan and Vega, both infantry soldiers assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment.

About \$4.5 million in coalition funds and another \$2 million in Iraqi funding will be poured into Morales' area of operation. The operation, designed to rebuild the dilapidated infrastructure and create jobs, is viewed as a way to establish long-term security in the region.

"It's a microcosm of what we're trying to do in Iraq," Morales said.

What distinguishes Marne Dauntless from other past public works efforts is that local Iraqis down to the village level have had a say in what's to be built. Local civic groups have been instrumental in shaping the initiative, Morales said.

"The projects are really developed from the bottom up," he said.

The projects target Jisr Diyala, a poor city with a population of 120,000 and surrounding villages with a collective population of roughly another 120,000.

But everything hinges on continued security.

Tips from local "Sons of Iraq" leaders and the Iraqi National Police force have been crucial to the improved conditions, Morales said. Intelligence gathered by local leaders routinely leads soldiers to caches of weapons and roadside bombs, he said.

"The Iraqi security forces are the ones out there pushing this," said Morales, who noted that four caches have been turned over in the past week.

Because of such cooperation, violence has plummeted about 80 percent since an Army presence arrived in the Jisr Diyala region last year as part of the "surge." Though there was a flare-up in violent activity in March, connected with the fighting in Basra and Sadr City, commanders say it was quickly put down.

At the recent security council meeting, the head of the local National Police brigade reminded the local village leaders that they must continue to be vigilant against extremists. Even if it means turning in a friend or family member, he said.

When a Shiite sheik expressed concerns about the latest talk on the street, involving an out of town Shiite extremist who just moved into town, the police commander gave words of encouragement.

"Just give me five minutes' notice (on his location) and we'll be there," National Police Brig. Gen. Emad Ali Abud Faris told the tribal leader.



Ben Bloker / S&S
A sheik listens in as local citizens discuss security and public works projects during a council meeting led by Task Force 1-35 Armor Tuesday in Jisr Diyala, Iraq. During the past several months, Sheiks have begun putting aside tribal differences for the sake of bringing greater security into their communities.



Smith Elementary
Baumholder, Germany
Parent/Student Newsletter
May 2008

[HTTP://WWW.BAUM-ESS.EU.DODEA.EDU/](http://www.baum-ess.eu.dodea.edu/)

The mission of Smith Elementary School, in collaboration with the community, is to provide a safe environment that encourages children to become critical thinkers, persistent problem solvers, and responsible and respectful citizens who have a desire for lifelong learning in a technological and information-based world.

PRINCIPAL NEWS

Dear Parents,
It's MAY!!! Let's hope that those short, grey days will soon be gone with LONG bright days in their place!!! If there is ONE thing to SHOUT OUT about, it is this, we REALLY need to express the **IMPORTANCE of REGISTERING YOUR CHILD FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2008-2009**. We are concerned that over 80 students, who we are expecting at school next year have not yet enrolled. It is EASY. All that you need are your child's up to date shot records, your signature, and a smile to complete the re-registration process!!! Our staffing is totally dependent upon student enrollment, so please visit us if you haven't already. Please look toward our GREAT programs yet to come this school year, including "Young Authors", an "Evening of the Stars", the Talent Showcase, a visit from Neubreucke, and the ALWAYS popular "Field Day"!!! Our Sixth graders will enjoy D.A.R.E. AND Sixth Grade Graduation on June 9th! Our PTO is bringing weekly excitement with "Popcorn Fridays", topping the year off with our **BOOK FAIR GRAND FINALE, May 12 - 16!!!** Look to the right and check out the complete calendar!!! **HAPPY TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK, MAY 5-9!!!**

Joseph J. Caruselle, Principal



*Inside this Issue
7 Pages of Great
Information!*

DATES TO REMEMBER

- 7 May—School Nurse's Day
- 7 May—Parent Workshop @ 12:30 pm (Parent Zone)
- 5 -9 May—Teachers' Appreciation Week
- 12—16 May Final Book Fair (1/2 Off Everything)
- 15 May—Earliest Acceleration Day for Students PCS
- 15 May—PTO General Meeting (Elections/Basket Raffle) @ 2:15 pm (Parent Zone)
- 16 May—Current 6th Graders Visit Baumholder Middle School
- 16 May—Students of Neubreucke ES Visit Smith ES
- 16 & 30 May—Popcorn Friday
- 21 May—Oral Reading/ Storytelling
- 23 May—No School for Baumholder Schools (DPW-Water Repairs)
- 26 May—No School (Memorial Day)
- 28 May—Field Day (Smith & Neubreucke ES) @ Smith ES
- 29 May—Evening of the Stars @ 2:30 pm
- 3 June—Run to Iraq Marathon Finale
- 4 June —Talent Showcase @ 5:30 pm (School Gym)
- 6 June—Early Dismissal @ 11:00 am (Collaboration Day)
- 9 June—6th Grade Commencement/D.A.R.E. Graduation @ Rheinlander
- 12 June—Last Day of School for Students
- 13 June—Teacher Workday (No School for Students)



Evening of the Stars



This event will showcase the many talents of Smith Elementary students to include music, art, storytellers, and authors.

Date: May 29, 2008
Time: 2:30 pm
Refreshments provided.



Come join us!

Hope to see you there!





Talent Showcase



****Rescheduled****

Student Council will be sponsoring a "Smith Talent Showcase" on June 4 at 5:30 pm. It is open to all students in Grades 3rd - 6th. Group or individual acts welcomed. If you have any questions, contact Mrs. Baker, Sponsor.



STAYING CONNECTED



"Battle Buddy Mentoring Program"

The Partnership Committee would like to announce that the 92nd MP Company is volunteering their time to "Mentor" our students during the deployment. They will provide additional support to help students face daily challenges, like deployment. The Battle Buddies are a great asset to our school.

Natarsha Baker, Partnership Chair



"Counseling Services"

Smith Elementary Counseling Center will provide support for you and your children during deployment. School Counselors are conducting Classroom Guidance Lessons, and providing Group and Individual Counseling for students. These activities will help students understand their feelings and emphasize the positive ways for children to cope through the stages of the deployment. If you have any questions or concerns, we can be reached at 06783-66545.

Erin Smith (Pre-K - 2nd)
and
Natarsha Baker (3rd - 6th)



Run to Iraq - Mileage Marathon Finale

June 3, 2008

Location - B Street to
Traffic Circle near PX

**Rain Date - June 5*





Wetzel Wizard

May 2008

Our Magic is Knowledge!

Muffins with Mom

The Wetzel PTO cordially invites all moms to a special Mother's Day treat. Come relax and bring your child(ren) and your favorite teacup on May 9th from 7:15-7:50 in the Cafeteria. You will be pampered with delicious muffins and beverages of your choice. Children must be accompanied by their parent.

POC- Mrs. McKenzie at mary.mckenzie@eu.dodea.edu

SAC Committee

This is a request for School Advisory Committee (SAC) nominations for next year. We need to replace two teachers and three parent representatives. The SAC is comprised of an equal number of parent and teacher representatives. It meets monthly from September through May, with the exception of December. Service on the SAC is for a two-year term. The SAC advises the principal on issues concerning:

- Policies affecting students and parents
- Administrative procedures affecting students
- Instructional programs
- Educational resources
- Allocation of resources to achieve educational goals
- Pupil Personnel Services

Student standards of conduct and discipline

This year, just as we did last year, we will use a self-nomination system. If you are interested in being on the ballot for the SAC election, send your name to ruth.jimenez@eu.dodea.edu. Mrs. Jimenez will send you a self-nomination form where you can tell the other parents a little about yourself and why you wish to be considered.

Just in: Child Size Wetzel T-Shirts ranging from XS – XL for \$8.00.

Also, we have Adult Size Wetzel T-Shirts for \$10.00 and new Wetzel Water Bottles for \$4.00 Store hours during lunch periods on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Science Fair

Calling all Science Wizards! The science fair is coming your way! If you are a student in 3rd, 4th, 5th, or 6th grade, your teacher will have a science fair packet for you. If you are a Kinder, 1st, or 2nd grader, you can be part of a whole class project. The individual or class projects can be submitted for the science fair on May 30th. There will be three categories of experiments, models, and audio/visual.

Mission & Goals Of WES

The mission of the Wetzel Elementary School Community is to promote an environment that enables all students to acquire the knowledge and skills to become successful life-long learners and responsible citizens in an ever-changing, global society.

Student Performance Goal #1: All students will increase their literacy skills across the curriculum. Essence: Literacy skills are defined at Wetzel Elementary School as the ability to comprehend write text and communicate ideas.

Student Performance Goal #2: All students will create their thinking skills across the curriculum. Essence: Thinking skills are defined at Wetzel Elementary School as analyzing and interpreting information, devising strategies for solving problems and justifying solutions to problems.

Focus on Learning: Another Successful "Lunch and Learn"

Building Background Knowledge... Conversation, books, games, and travel were the focus of the Lunch and Learn session on Tuesday, April 29 from 12:00-1:00 p.m. in the Information Center. We were glad that 17 parents were able to attend this session, including several parents from our session held in March. We will facilitate one more session this school year, to be held in May. We look forward to continuing our work with parents as we build the strong school-home partnership that is essential for high student achievement. If you have any questions or would like more information about our sessions, please see Mrs. Chamness, Mrs. Gustafarro, or Ms. O'Dell.



Registrar's Remarks

If you have not re-registered your child for next school year, please do so as soon as possible!

If your **child will be 5 years old by October 31, 2008** you need to register him/her for Kindergarten. You need to register as soon as possible.

If your **child will be 4 years old by October 31, 2006** you may apply for Sure Start now.

If you will be **PCSing or ERDing before 12 June** you must bring a copy of your orders to the registrar at least 10 school days before your child's last day of attendance.

If you are certain you will be **PCSing or ERDing after school is out during the summer** please bring a copy of your orders or other documentation to the registrar no later than 30 May so we may have your child(rens) school record(s) ready for you to pick up and deliver to the next school.

If your **sponsor is deployed and has his/her cell phone**, please let the registrar know to delete that number from school records so we don't use up your sponsor's minutes by calling long distance.

For your child(rens) information, please teach them your home and cell phone contact numbers. If they can't remember them, write the numbers and help your child place them in a secure place within their school bag(s).

If you have any questions about registration, re-registration, or withdrawal of your student please email the registrar at: susan.peterson@eu.dodea.edu

Wetzel Spirit Store

Host Nation Travel Corner

Since it looks like spring is really coming, here are two suggestions for day trips.

On April 18th, the garden show of our local state Rheinland-Phalz opened up. This time in Bingen along the Rhein River. Thousands of flower bulbs were put into the ground and many rose bushes were planted. Sculptures and special ornaments will lead you through town.

The Open Air Museum in Bad Sobernheim celebrated its 20- year anniversary on Sunday, April 27th. Almost every Sunday they are having special events like baking bread in the old bake house, grinding wheat for flour, etc. The old houses like the school-house, Gasthouse, the Doll Museum are all transplanted from other locations.

You will learn about trees and plants, there is a labeled Herb Garden and a Butterfly path is opened, as well.

Chris Niegisch, Host Nation Teacher

Spelling Bee Buzz

The Annual Wetzel PTO Spelling Bee was held on April 30th. Representatives from grades 1-6 received the opportunity of showing off their spelling talents. The winner from Grades 1-2 was Nickolaus Dethrow. Maciel Segura was the winner from Grades 3-4. Rolando Ferreras was the winner from Grades 5-6. These three students competed in the final round. Rolando Ferreras was crowned the Wetzel "Grand Champion".

Dinner with Author, David Greenberg

The Wetzel PTO sponsored David Greenberg, a children's author. He visited Wetzel Elementary School on April 25, 2008. There were three assemblies given to the students during the school day and that evening the PTO sponsored a dinner and poetry writing workshop. The event coordinators were Mary McKenzie and Cleo Strazdas. Over 80 pre-ordered five-dollar tickets were sold for Dinner with the Author night. Students and parents were served by the following teachers: Lavita Emmerson, Lori Escobar, Kaye Freeland, Jac Gustaferro, Jim Gustaferro, Mary McKenzie, Dorrie Meckes, Shannon O'Dell, Kathleen Thompson, and Ashley Yoder.

The cafegymatorium was transformed into an Italian bistro. The parents and students were served: pasta with their choice of alfredo or tomato sauce, bread, green beans, tea, lemonade and gummy bears for dessert. The walls were decorated with various forms of poetry written by Wetzel students.

After the dinner there was an open mike for the students to share their literary work. Then author, David Greenberg, shared an assortment of his published work. He then led the parents and students into a poetry writing workshop. Every family left with a piece of poetry written by their family. The evening ended with a book sale and book signing by David Greenberg with a teacher assistant, Cleo Strazdas.



Community News



"THE HOME-FRONT CLUB"

A SUPPORT GROUP FOR
SPOUSES OF DEPLOYED
SOLDIERS

1800-1930

Tuesday Nights, April 22- May 27
Chapel #1 Social Room



**"A strong bond will never be broken!" Come bond
with other spouses as together we survive the
Deployment on the Home Front.**

Call 0678361570/7043 to sign up, now!



"Mommy and Me Teddy Bear Tea"



Saturday, 10 May 08

1100-1300

Chapel Annex, Building 8217



Come join other women and children for a time of fun and fellowship in honor of Mother's Day. Includes a free "tea-time" lunch, a program, and a craft for children. Don't miss this enjoyable event.

Sponsor: Chaplain Glenn Scheib (Baumholder Family Life Chaplain),
Tel.: 0678367043/1570



Department of Defense Dependents Schools Baumholder Middle/High School Parent Newsletter



May 2008



Email:
BaumholderHS.principal@eu.dodea.edu
Website:
<http://www.baum-hs.eu.dodea.edu/>

Phone Numbers

Main Office: 485-7590/7591
Attendance Office: 485-8592
Nurse: Mrs. Yemma 485-6126
Guidance Dept:
Mrs. Hollenbeck 485-7121
Mr. Quevedo 485-6656
School Bus Office: 485-6874
Mr. Merz: 01622341770
Mr. Walker 01622341830

Principal: Mr. Danny Robinson danny.robinson@eu.dodea.edu
Assistant Principal: Mr. Kent Bassett kent.bassett@eu.dodea.edu
Secretary: Mrs. Terri Toone **Office Hours:** 0730-1600
Registrar: Mrs. Jeanne Bower 485-7590/91
Attendance: Mrs. Rachel Wright 485-8592

Baumholder Middle/High School Mission Statement

The mission of Baumholder Middle/High School is to create a partnership with parents and the community to provide a safe learning environment for students that promotes the acquisition of the skills, ethical behavior, and knowledge necessary to be productive citizens in a technological and global society.

Dear Parents and Students,

The final weeks of school are fast approaching and it is so important that our students continue to work. The fourth quarter of any school year has traditionally been the quarter where a student's GPA begins to drop because he/she tends to stop working. Please continue to monitor your child's performance and stay in constant contact with teachers. We plan on having a mid-quarter progress report in the mail by May 15th. However, do not wait until that time to know what kind of grades your child has this quarter. If you want to contact a teacher by email, all you need is their first name.last name@eu.dodea.edu.

Currently, we are working on the schedule for next year and there will be some changes to courses being offered next year. In order to have an accurate picture of our staffing needs, parents must come into our school to register their students for school year 2008-09. A final decision of what courses offered next year will not be final until mid-August. Please make it a point to register your child as soon as possible.

With the current deployment in full swing, I contacted the Stars and Stripes and requested maps of Iraq. They were extremely generous by providing me with 200 poster type maps. If you would like one for your home, please have your student see me and I will send one home with him/her. If the staff at Baumholder Middle/High School can be of any assistance at any time, especially during this deployment, please do not hesitate to ask us for help.

Encourage your student to finish this school year strongly. Doing his/her best will help your student at the start of next year. The 2nd semester GPA is used to determine if your child can participate in the fall sport's season and placement in advance courses.

Thank you,
Danny Robinson
Principal

BUC Nite

Please come to BUC Nite on Thursday 22 May 2008. It begins 1700 to 2200.

Funds from this event are used for Baumholder Senior Scholarships.

No School For Students

Due to maintenance at Baumholder Schools No school for students on May 23rd 2008.



CSP Goals

Goal 1: All students will improve their problem-solving skills across the curriculum.

Goal 2: All students will improve their written and oral fluency in communication across the curriculum.

Calendar of Events/Activities

May 1-2 M.S. Play 1900
May 3 Soccer@Home K-Town
Track@Alconbury
May 6 SAC 1600
AP Stats Exam
May 7 PTSA 1630
AP Calculus Exam
May 8 AP Eng Lit Exam
May 9 AP USHist & AP Euro Ex-
ams
May 9-16 Book Fair
May 10 Soccer@Home AFNorth
Softball@Home AFNorth
Track@Heidelberg
May 13 Spring Concert
AP Chem Exam
May 14 AP Lang & Com Exam
May 14-17 AP Berlin Trip
May 15-16 Video Fest
May 17 Soccer@Bamberg
Softball@Bitburg
Track@AFNORTH
May 19 JROTC Organizational Day
May 22 BUC Nite
Video Fest Awards
May 23 No School For Students
May 21-24 Soccer Championship
May 22-24 Softball Championship
May 23-24 Track Championship
May 26 Memorial Holiday
May 28 Spring Sports' Banquet
May 29 Power of One
May 30 PROM
Field Day
June 3 SAC 1600
June 4 PTSA 1630
June 6 Graduation
Exams 1 & 3
June 9 Exams 5 & 7
June 10 Exams 2 & 4
June 11 Exam 6
June 12 Last Day of School
½ Day release at 1100

Acceleration Information

If a family is PCS'ing or ERD'ing prior to the last day of school, please contact our registrar as soon as possible and provide a copy of the PCS orders. The first day that a student can accelerate this semester and receive credit for the 2nd semester is 15 May 2008. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Robinson at 485-7590/91.

SAC Board Members

Regina Bailey-Chairperson
IAC Representative
Regina.g.bailey@us.army.mil
Open-Vice-Chairperson
Open-Secretary

MEETING
May 6, 2008
1600-1630

**PTA mem-
bership is
\$5.00 for
family and/
or individu-
als. Please
support the
PTA by join-
ing and vol-
unteering!**

PTA Board

Lisa Money –President
Lisa_a_money@yahoo.com
Cyndi Raugh-Vice President
Tina O'Neil-Secretary
Quin Kelly-Treasurer
MEETING
May 7, 2008
1630-1730

After School Tutoring

The after school tutoring program is alive and kicking. Tutors are from the National Honor Society and National Junior Honor Society are volunteering to help tutor students on **Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 1500-1600**. Parents are welcomed to volunteer.

The “**BUC STOP**” spirit shop is open for business at Baumholder Middle/High School. A new line of spirit items have just arrived and are reasonably priced. Please stop by and stock up before the games begin. The store is open in the mornings on school days or stop by the main office.

Nurse's Corner

Stress management- Try these techniques

1. **Progressive muscle relaxation-** Sit in a favorite chair or lie down. Begin with facial muscles and work other muscle groups (shoulders, arms, chest, and legs) by tensing for 5-10 seconds then relaxing.
2. **Deep Breathing-** Slowly breathe in through your nose, feel your stomach muscle relax; slowly exhale through your mouth. Repeat until you're calm and relaxed.
3. **Visualize** a pleasant, peaceful scene, somewhere you feel comfortable. Picture yourself in this setting. Relax.
4. **Laughter** is a great stress reliever. Maintain a sense of humor.
5. **Take care of yourself-** Eat healthy; get plenty of exercise and adequate rest.

Get help when needed- Talk with someone you trust; contact your health care provider or seek out community resources which will help you deal with stressors.

Fit Families, what are you doing this month? Challenging you! For 50 years, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports has encouraged physical activity among Americans of all ages. This year, why not challenge your family to get fit. Log on to <http://www.presidentschallenge.org/>, to get started in one of several available programs, including the Presidential Champions program, which offers the opportunity to earn fitness awards. With over 100 recognized activities that count toward your fitness goal, what have you got to lose?
Mark your calendar: May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. Log on to <http://www.fitness.gov> for more information on the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and how you can challenge yourself to get active.

New Earphone, IPOD and Cell Phone Policy

Because of a **few** students who continue to use and wear their Ipods/Cellphones inside the building, the policy of picking up your iPod/Cellphone after school has changed beginning **24 April 2008**. If you do not have your iPod/Cellphone put away in the building it will be confiscated until your parent comes to the school to pick it up. Let's make this clear, your headphones, iPod, and cellphone **must be out of sight in the building during school**. You may still use your iPod/Cellphone outside the building and after the buses pull out after school. Any questions to this policy can be addressed to the principal or assistant principal.



Principal's Honor Roll

(GPA is 4.0 or better)

<p align="center"><u>12 Grade</u></p> <p>Bryan, Laura Ignacio, Isabelle Lamoureux, Jacob Newborn, Kevin Rongey, Matthew Whyte, Emily Wojcik, Casey</p>	<p align="center"><u>11th Grade</u></p> <p>Acosta, Edgar Alsup, Katrina Billington, Steven Kropilnicki, Pablo White, Megan Wojcik, Nathan</p>	<p align="center"><u>10th Grade</u></p> <p>Bowman, David Fantauzzi, Christine Hooks, Zandria</p>	<p align="center"><u>9th Grade</u></p> <p>Bower, Alexandra Hall, Sommer Kelly, Preston Lewallen, Jessika Sessums, Jennifer Stevens, Seth</p>
	<p align="center"><u>8th Grade</u></p> <p>Cabrera, Gustavo Darnall, Samantha Lee, Rebecca Oates, Casey Patton, Carolyn Whitcomb, Ryan</p>	<p align="center"><u>7th Grade</u></p> <p>Ebbs, David Ferreras, Rina Renae Rodarmer, Alexia</p>	

Gold Honor Roll

(GPA is 3.5-3.99)

<p align="center"><u>12 Grade</u></p> <p>Albert, Heather Clay, Samantha Hall, Jerry Hayes-Rough, Bradley Johnson, Deborah Rene, Shannon</p> <p align="center"><u>11th Grade</u></p> <p>Chisholm, Darrius Hall, Chelsea Money, Sarah Teniente, Samantha Wardell, Eric Williams, Stephenie</p>	<p align="center"><u>10th Grade</u></p> <p>Bassaw, Maame Cameron, Kendra Lamoureux, Aimee Maltman, Alyssa Maltman, Derrick Sherman, Maria Toone, Ciara Wilson, Melaina</p> <p align="center"><u>9th Grade</u></p> <p>Flis, Dylana Garcia, Marissa Johnson, Bria Jones, Gabriella Marshall, Samantha Owusu, Prince Torres, Dominik</p>	<p align="center"><u>8th Grade</u></p> <p>Baldonado, Adeza Bess, Brittney Daugherty, Chantal Ellis, Jami Garnes, Victoria Labrador, Luis Martinez, Lauren McGowan, Caitlin Money, Rachel OGuinn, Kandace Vieira, Stephanie Welch, Austin Wixon, Virginia</p>	<p align="center"><u>7th Grade</u></p> <p>Adriano, Katarina Anderson, Ashley Barnes, Brianna Bishop, Jacob Collins, Ashley Corpus, Mariah Donaldson, DiAndria Fleming, Raychel Hinkleman, Dominik Hounshell, Kayla Johnston, Emily King, Zachary Ladrillono, Jonathan McDaniels, Benjamin Miles, Tristin Powers, Diakira Ramirez, Emily Sparks, Dominic Villarin, Ku'uhiaonani Williams, Nathan Williams, Rebecca</p>
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Academic Improvement Award
(GPA is increased by .5 or more)

<p align="center"><u>12th Grade</u> Clay, Samantha</p> <p align="center"><u>8th Grade</u> Bess, Brittney Castillo, Richard Chisholm, Kendall Humphrey, Kyle Neal, Robert</p>	<p align="center"><u>11th Grade</u> Dooley, Jacob Kropilnicki, Pablo Russell, Michel</p> <p align="center"><u>7th Grade</u> Johnston, Emily Martin, Amber</p>	<p align="center"><u>10th Grade</u> Bassaw, Maame</p>	<p align="center"><u>9th Grade</u> Davis, Kayla Escalante, Miguel Eyer, Conner Gant, Dimitri Largent, Garold Lewallen, Jessika Miller, Javonna Moton, Sade' Powers, Dontaya Robinson, Romazjia Schweiger, Scott Silva, Jasmine Teniente, Samantha Touchine, Dylan Wagner, Brandon</p>
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Maroon Honor Roll
(GPA is 3.0-3.49)

<p><u>12 Grade</u> Corn, Kayla Davis, Kaneeshia Loyola, Kristina Melendez, Alexandra Murray, Montre' Rawls, Rico Winfree, Megan</p> <p><u>11th Grade</u> Baldeo, Melissa Boatner, Bryan Carey, Brian Dooley, Jacob Kujawski, Samantha Lampe, Marie McLemore, Jazmin Oppliger, Natalie Pacheco, Asia Sherman, Erik Stroupe, Evan Thompson, Jasmine Turpin, Courtney Welch, Megan Zawolo, Bindu</p>	<p><u>10th Grade</u> Andersen, Jewels Davis, Artrell Davis, Kimisha Doukoure, Alassane Jones, Dominic Jones, Tanielle Kemp, Jariza Lawson, Whitney Ledbetter, Sean OConnor, Christopher Rawls, Keyanna Skelton, Brian Smith, Mechelle Uriegas, Miranda Winterstein, Daniel</p> <p><u>9th Grade</u> Beatty, Nathan Bryan, Wende Bryant, Destiny Clark, Veronne Flanagan, Amanda Hall, Pamela Julien, Adrian Kujawski, Sara Ladrillono, Kendall Love, Danielle Moton, Sade' Nelson, Tanner Rivera, Amanda Rongey, Josephine Skuodas, Sydney Styles, Elizabeth</p>	<p><u>8th Grade</u> Adriano, Victoria Bailey, Ory Blankenship, Anastasia Boykins, Joyce Castillo, Richard Curran, Corey Dooley, Lauren Fontenot, Brighton Ford-Yancey, Kiah Gray, Tyger Green, Jeremy Hooks, Andrew Jackson, Terralynn Johnson, Christopher Jones, DeMarcus Jones, Jonathan Lebron, Christian Lewis, Jordan McClure, Ashley Montang, Elyse Pabon-Caceres, Angelica Parker, Michael Puni, Brandon Richards, Samuel Rodarmer, Nicholas Warner, Shawn Watkins, Kodi White, Ian Williams, Khadif</p>	<p><u>7th Grade</u> Acosta, Gabriel Beck, Christopher Bevington, Ariel Bower, Matthew DeArmas-Ventura, Johana Detherow, Cora Edwards, Danielle Gibo, Chainamei Haas, Arielle Jenkins, Natasha Johnson, Brooke Lewallen, Corey Mammay, James Martin, Amber Metcalf, Ellyseo Monroe, Terra Ocasio, Natasha Patterson, Essence Salazar, Elvia Stai, Stephanie Thomas, Jacqueline Wilburn, Alexis Wilson, Ashley Wright, Alec</p>
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S1 Personnel

By 1LT Ashley Salkowski



Staying in Touch While Deployed

As Soldiers begin developing their new battle rhythms the one thing that allows them to hold onto their home life is MWR. Anywhere from Postal Operations to R&R leave, the Brigade S1 shop is working toward the common goal of ensuring Soldiers moral is kept high.

No matter where Iron Soldiers are located, mail call is available. The Brigade S1 works along side the Battalion S1s to ensure all Soldiers receive mail sent from home in a timely manner. To assist in this mission, Soldiers are asked to use their appropriate mailing address based on location. Mail is delivered to FOB Hammer on an every other day basis and distributed to the Battalion S1's upon arrival. Mailing addresses are as follows:



Pfc. Angela Christian sorts through mail to distribute to the Task Forces

FOB HAMMER:

NAME

UNIT(COMPANY, BATTALION TASK FORCE)
APO AE 09308

FOB TAJI (TF 1-6):

NAME

UNIT(COMPANY, BATTALION TASK FORCE)
APO AE 09378

FOB STRIKER (B 1-35)

NAME

UNIT (COMPANY, BATTALION TASK FORCE)
APO AE 09322

FOB KALSU (B 2-6)

NAME

UNIT (COMPANY, BATTALION TASK FORCE)
APO AE 09312

Soldiers can send letters and packages home using the US Postal System (USPS) and Military Postal System (MPS). All packages less than 10kg sent to another APO address are free. Additionally, all letters sent through either USPS or MPS are free in theater. Packages will be searched prior to shipment. Soldiers should remember to keep packages open prior to heading to the Post Office and bring tape for proper sealing after the custom search. Soldiers are encouraged to talk with their Task Force S1 or their local Postal Operations with any questions.



Safety Bulletin

By Jerrold Scharninghausen



Don't get Zapped- Know Your Electrical Safety

Electrical fires are the leading cause of fire damage within the camps in Theater. These fires are easily preventable if you understand the danger and take basic precautions. No one wants to lose their equipment and possessions needlessly.

First, let's review how electricity works. Electrons flow through the wire to the outlet where the current is measured in amperes, or amps. When an appliance is plugged into an outlet, it demands electricity. The flow of electricity generates heat in the wire. As a result, it is critical that the wiring is large enough to handle the load.

A small copper wire allows few electrons to flow. A larger gauge wire allows more electrons to move to the appliance. The larger wire is able to withstand and dissipate the heat generated by current flow. Problems arise when we exceed the capability of the wiring to our appliances. When this happens, the excessive heat becomes an ignition source, melting plugs and outlets starting the fire. Sometimes, the fire rages out of control and can burn down a tent or building.

Overloaded electrical wiring is the leading cause of industrial fires in the United States.

A quick look at the back of an appliance usually shows how many amps are needed for normal operation. Add up the amps from each appliance plugged into the outlet and this will give you your total power demand. Most outlets are able to handle 12 amps, but this may vary with your location and the specifications in the contract when the wiring was installed.

Just like the wiring in the wall, power strips have limits, too. Know the limits of your power strip and don't overload it. There is a general rule of thumb for determining if an appliance draws a high number of amperes. If it has a heating coil, compressor, or a motor, it probably demands a high amount of electricity. These items must be plugged into a dedicated outlet. A coffee pot heating the liquid inside with a coil draws five to seven amps. Power strips must have a circuit breaker or fuse, regular extension cords are not authorized.

Another hazard is daisy chaining power strips together to increase the number of outlets. If we start using two or three power strips and max out the plugs, it won't be long before the amps exceed the capacity. A microwave will consume half of the capacity of the circuit. With additional items plugged into the circuit, it will quickly become overloaded. Know what else is pulling electricity through the wire. Note that most power strips will include instructions that say: Do not connect multiple power strips in series.

If you exceed the capacity for the wiring, you are creating an unsafe environment for yourself and fellow soldiers. If you put your hand on a cord and it's warm to the touch, check the amp demand. There may be a serious danger of a fire.

Don't overload the circuits. If the electrical service isn't enough to allow you to do your mission, submit a service order to have it upgraded. If the electrical demands of your creature comforts exceed your room's wiring capacity, unplug something



Chaplain's Corner

By Chap. (MAJ) NANA BASSAW
2nd BCT Chaplain



Live in the Present— make decisions for the future

Our lives can be divided into successive periods of days – yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Although we might worry about all three, and many do, in reality we only have control over only one – today.

Yesterday has come and gone. There is nothing we can do to change it or make it better. I cannot take back the hurtful things I said, or undo the damaging things I did.

Tomorrow drains off much of our energy. We worry about what might be. In a real sense, tomorrow never comes.

One might even say that, “Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.” The Bible teaches us that we should not worry about tomorrow, since tomorrow will take care of itself.”

Too often we worry so much about things that might or might not happen in the future that we fail miserably to live meaningful and productive lives in the present.

Although I cannot rewrite the personal history of my life, I can and must learn lessons from my mistakes of yesterday.

I do have the power to make responsible decisions in the present, which will result in a more meaningful life.

And if I am married and have children, those decisions will impact my family life, as well as my work and play.

Instead of worrying about yesterday and tomorrow, live today as if it will be your last. Treat others as you want to be treated. Speak to others in a manner that you want them to speak to you.

If you do, you will create a series of yesterdays that will, upon reflection, bring fond memories instead of painful ones. So live today.

The decisions you make determine how the final chapters of your life will be written and remembered.



Striker Justice

By MAJ Laura Calese
2nd BCT Judge Advocate



BOLT ACTION

The Brigade Operational Law Team landed very late in an already long day at FOB Hammer after three weeks at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Over the next few days we had the overwhelming task of orienting ourselves to the FOB, meeting many new faces from the unit we are replacing, 3BCT, 3ID, and learning what our jobs will be like over the next 15 months.

The Relief in Place (RIP) process with 3BCT, 3ID was eye-opening, as we discovered the extreme differences between practicing law in garrison and adapting to the new issues we would face in a deployed environment.

Detainee operations is one of the most challenging areas, which includes evaluating packets of suspected criminals we have captured for the possibility of prosecution by the Central Criminal Court of Iraq (CCCI).

We have also been reading up on fiscal law, such as the different types of money that exist for our units to use, not just to purchase the equipment

and supplies they need, but to also help rebuild Iraq in the form of construction projects, small business grants, and essential services for the local people.

Some of the members of the BOLT have even gotten a chance to leave the FOB already and see the country we are trying to rebuild.

Spc. Ciaran Cupples was lucky enough to assist on a court-martial that took place in Baghdad and SFC Emanuel Mines went on a ride-along claims pay agent mission to COP Cashe.

On the Rule of Law front, Cpt. Brad Crockett visited CCCI and Maj. Laura Calese met with the two new judges who have moved into our district to more effectively help us keep criminals off the streets.

With all this excitement, our Soldiers make every effort to reduce their stress levels and have a sense of mission and purpose.

As we wrap up our first month in theater, the BOLT is getting stronger everyday.



Doctor's Desk

By CPT (Dr.) Joseph May, MD
2nd BCT Surgeon



Striker Soldiers deserve nothing less

Making an appointment to see a specialist can be one of the most frustrating parts of health care. A patient can call a central appointment hotline and wait through 10 minutes of automation and canned music before they get the chance to talk to a real person. Then they may be told to go back to their primary care provider in order to get the correct consult placed into “the system”; but their primary care provider may not have any appointments available all week...so they hang up in frustration, only to try again later.

This frustration can be found in both military and civilian health care systems alike (though military facilities generally have fewer barriers than civilian ones do). Fortunately, the Striker Soldiers at FOB Hammer and its surrounding COPs have some of the military's best health care providers right at their fingertips—and usually on a walk-in basis.

The Striker medical team expanded significantly in preparation for this deployment. Our garrison staff of nine medical providers (1 physician, 1 dentist, and 7 PAs) has more than doubled since arriving into theater. 2BCT now proudly boasts seven physicians, eight PAs, one dentist, one nurse, one physical therapist, and two mental health providers.

Most Army providers deploy through the Professional Filler System (PROFIS). Providers who work in Army hospitals or clinics while in garrison are linked to operational units like 2BCT. When that operational unit deploys, the providers leave their medical facility to join the unit downrange for the duration of its tour.

The Iron Brigade has been joined by an exceptional slate of PROFIS providers: Lt. Col. Margaret Swanberg, the officer in charge of our aid station at FOB Hammer, is a neurologist from Walter Reed with impressive credentials—including 17 published articles in medical journals. Lt. Col. Neil Page runs the Family Practice Clinic at Fort Belvoir—one of the Army's busiest clinics.

In addition, Maj. Felix Oduwa, Maj. Romeo Lim, Cpt. Thomas Seery, and Cpt. Shawn Kapoor bring a wealth of expertise to help round out our primary care team of physicians.

Orthopedic injuries are among the most common medical problems troops face while deployed. 2BCT is one of the few units around with its own Physical Therapist, Lt. Col. Anne Resty, and Orthopedic PA, Cpt. Wayne Pilz. This team can provide care that both fixes and rehabilitates most orthopedic problems Soldiers face, right here at FOB Hammer.

We are all aware of the increased stress that combat presents. Fortunately, our BCT now has a team of two licensed mental health providers and three mental health technicians to assist our Soldiers in coping with whatever challenges come their way. Cpt. Michelle Kline, our Brigade Psychologist, is conducting individual and group counseling sessions for the Soldiers who face variety of mental health difficulties.

In addition, 2BCT has some of the finest enlisted medics and medical specialists in the Army. These Soldiers are trained in emergency medical care, trauma resuscitation, preventative medicine, and a host of other specialties. They are confident in their medical skills and are quick to help out when needed.

Last week a Soldier came to the aid station with back pain; within an hour of arriving he was evaluated by a neurologist, orthopedic specialist, and physical therapist—then counseled and educated by our Brigade Nurse, Lt. Sarah Culclasure.

Another Soldier came in for a routine dental evaluation by our Brigade Dentist, Cpt. Jose Cangas; he had a check-up, cleaning, and fillings done all within the same morning. I challenge you to find that kind of medical care anywhere else!

Our deployed Striker Soldiers deserve nothing less.



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Iron Brigade Soldiers



Boots on the Ground