



The Striker Torch

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

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Sgt. 1st Class
Volunteers to serve
With former commander



Soldiers
Earn Combat Patch



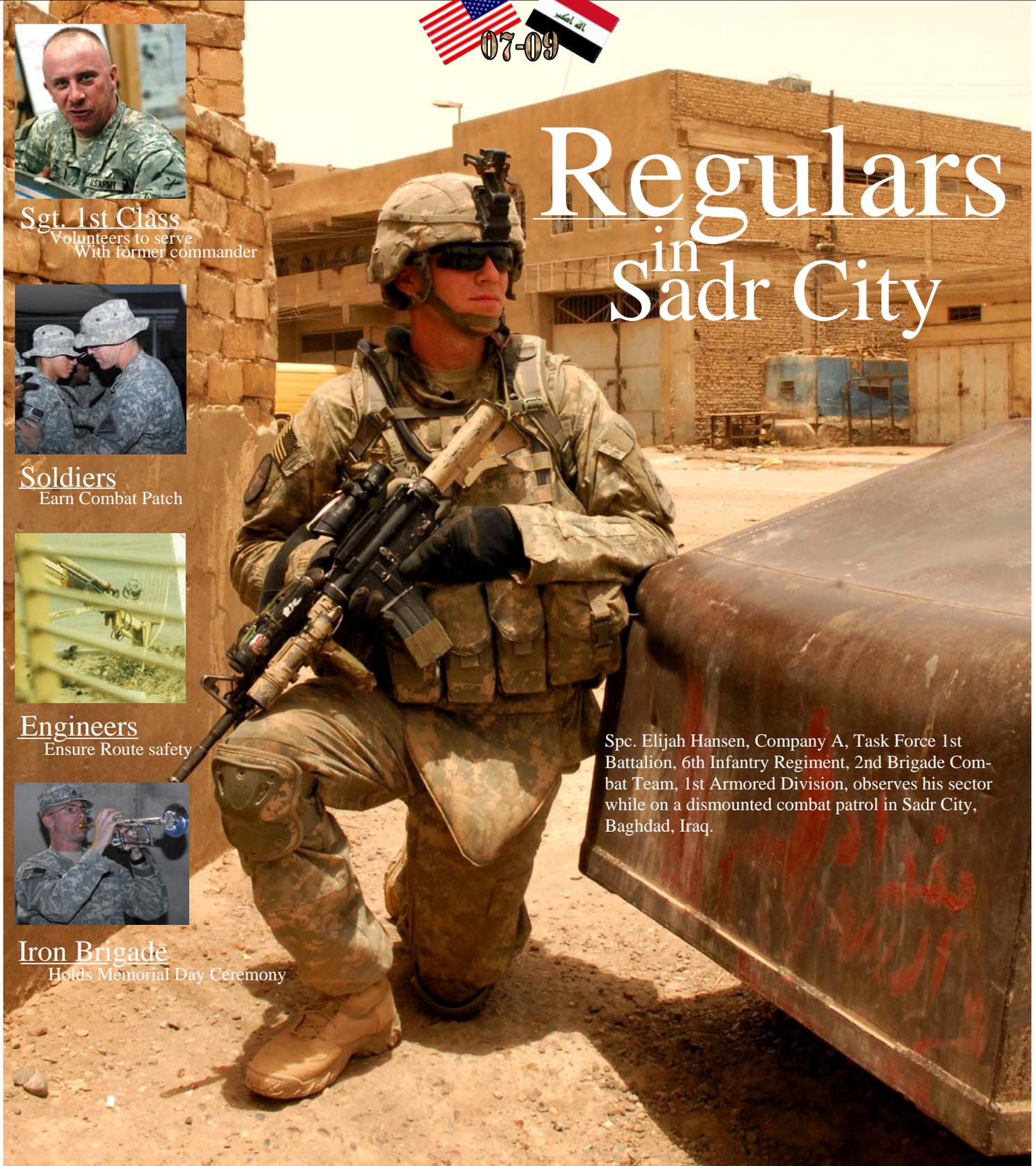
Engineers
Ensure Route safety



Iron Brigade
Holds Memorial Day Ceremony

Regulars in Sadr City

Spc. Elijah Hansen, Company A, Task Force 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, observes his sector while on a dismounted combat patrol in Sadr City, Baghdad, Iraq.



STRIKER 6

On Line

By Col. Pat White
2nd BCT Commander



Settling into FOB Hammer

Iron Brigade Family, it has been a busy month since we arrived at FOB Hammer.

We simultaneously transitioned with 3/3 ID and become the Division's main effort in Operation Marne Dauntless on the same day. The Iron Brigade continues to execute stability operations, and apply pressure on extremists.

We are now applying all our hard training in Germany in combat operations.

The Iron Brigade staff did a superb job planning and preparing for this operation. I gave them my guidance always keeping in consideration the Soldiers who would perform the mission. They realize that at the end of this plan is a Soldier.

The Task Forces took this plan and are executing with precision and discipline. Commanders at all levels, and Soldiers, have done a great job executing Operation Marne Dauntless. I am constantly impressed with their maturity, professionalism and proficiency, and I can emphatically state that this is the best Mechanized Brigade in the United States Army.

The purpose of Marne Dauntless is to improve the quality of life for Iraqi citizens of the Mada'in Qada, in southeast Baghdad province. Our operational environment is the only one which a 'surge' brigade combat team was replaced with another brigade combat team. We have been referred to as the front door to Baghdad. Our goal is to build capacity and security for the Iraqi people to allow economic and governance development.

The Iraqi Security Forces, whom we have partnered with, will take the lead in targeting criminals and their networks. Coalition Forces will support the ISF to ensure the bad guys are unable to conduct attacks or smuggle munitions into Baghdad.



The Iron Brigade has a large task but is up to the challenge. We must stay aggressive and disciplined.

Your Soldiers are living in accommodations which are improving every day. Some Soldiers at FOB Hammer are living in Containerized Housing Units (CHUs) and others who are living in tents will be in CHUs soon. The Soldiers in the outlying Combat Outposts (COPs) are living in CHUs or tents. All the Soldiers have air conditioners to keep them cool. I travel to the COPs daily along with the Command Sergeant Major and I address promptly any Soldier issues or concerns.

This month is High School Graduation time at Baumholder H.S. I would be remiss if I did not mention what the Iron Brigade is doing to ensure Soldiers who have children graduating can attend or view the ceremony.

I offered Soldiers early Environmental Leave (EML) to attend in person. We also have a Video Telephone Conference in the Striker Conference Room at FOB Hammer for those Soldiers who could not

attend the graduation ceremony at the Rhineland Convention Center. Congratulations to all High School Seniors, and good luck in your future endeavors!

Iron Brigade family, you remain in our thoughts and are missed greatly.

Strike Hard!

Striker 6



STRIKER 7

On Point

By Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Eyer
2nd BCT Command Sgt. Maj.



Don't Forget Nothing

Since our Transfer of Authority (TOA) Iron Soldiers have been hard at work. We continue to improve our fox hole with the finer things in life, from showers to “foamed in” tents. Personnel at the Combat Outposts (COPs) are busy building everything from smoking porches to barber shops.

On COP Cache South a local national built a barber shop complete with rotating chair and full size mirrors, while on COP Cleary the finishing touches have been made to a brand new gym. In most cases it is Iron Soldiers putting hammer to wood to make life better for their brothers-in-arms.

On FOB Hammer the Mayor Cell continues the hard job of building living and support areas for over 4000 Soldiers, while at the same time ensuring we have good food, clean uniforms and a place to call home.

I had the opportunity to visit B 2-6, B 1-35 and TF 1-6 recently. Just like the remainder of the brigade these great Soldiers are making it happen. As one young Soldier said,



“These are the cards you are dealt and you do what you can to make it better.”

Our Families continue to support us and I hear from the Soldiers how our spouses are finding creative ways to support them. I know you are spending countless hours putting together great care packages. Your letters and packages are a tremendous morale booster for all of our Soldiers.

As the School year comes to an end, I ask all families be safe and take care of yourselves over the summer holidays.

Congratulations to all of the Baumholder High School graduates and best of luck in all of your endeavors.

Team work is the hallmark of a great unit. I see this in action every day.

Strike Hard!

Striker 7



Regulars by God



TF 1-6 IN

Task Force *Regular* continues to make a huge difference at this time and location in Iraq. Despite the pressure for rapid results, the Task Force never fails to impress the influx of distinguished visitors it receives.

Last week, we had several high ranking visitors to our area. The Multi National Corps Iraq commander, Lieutenant General Lloyd J. Austin visited and was extremely impressed with how we were on track. General David Petraeus, Commanding General Multi-National Force- Iraq, applauded our efforts and stressed that the work we are doing is extremely vital. He was very proud of our efforts during the “Battle of Route Gold” establishing the wall and was amazed at the progress being made; he gave out 50 coins to deserving Soldiers. He



Deputy Prime Minister and General Petraeus thank the Troops



General Petraeus stresses the importance of our mission.

everyday and provide fresh fruits and vegetables now. They have “kicked it up a notch” everywhere they are. Rooms have been built, air conditioning added, more internet access provided, and the facilities are getting better.

Earthquake, Alpha 40th Engineers, continue to clear routes of IEDs everyday and prove to be the “Jacks-of-all-trades”. Charlie Company 1-35, Warlord (formerly Comanche), will return to our Task Force once again making us one big happy family again.

Comanche Company, 1-2 Stryker Cavalry Regiment, from Vilseck, Germany, will now return to their parent unit. We had a great “Germany connection” and it was awesome working with them.

was accompanied by the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, Abud Kamber, who personally thanked each Soldier. This does not happen very often and reflects the magnitude of our impact.

The Renegades of Alpha Company (formerly Raider) will soon have a home as they have been the “Nomads” of the Task Force traveling across the area of operations completing every mission given with distinction. Their conditions have been austere to say the least.

Conditions for the HHC and Commando Soldiers continue to get better at the Joint Security Station Sadr City. Thanks to our cooks who are able to grill





To date we have given out over \$200,000 in micro grants. These grants are critical to those that need to kick-start their businesses after battle damage or just to start a new business. The people in the area have responded extremely positively toward us and cannot seem to thank us enough from removing the yoke of oppression under the Jayish Al Madi (JAM) Special Groups. We have started over 45 contracts worth over \$8,000,000 for clean up and construction that produced over 600 new jobs.

Separate from those jobs, we have also made history starting the first Neighborhood Guard in the area in record time. Similar to the Sons of Iraq, these men are recruited from their

neighborhood and provide security for it keeping the enemy out. We have had hundreds of volunteers signed up and the first class just graduated.

Despite our best efforts and successes, Corporal Justin Mixon from Company C, 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, made the ultimate sacrifice for his comrades and country. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife Tia and son Tony back in Vilseck. He will not be forgotten as we remain vigilant and relentless in our pursuit of the enemy.

To our Families, I cannot emphasize the importance of what you do for this TaskForce back in Germany and state-side. I thank you for all the stress you suffer and all that you go through everyday to keep the home fires burning. A special thanks for those who volunteer to help out.

Despite rumors, this remains a 15 month deployment. As stated previously, I cannot be more proud of this Task Force in its performance and accomplishments. Our operational Tempo remains at top speed as we assist the local populace by day and apply constant pressure on the enemy at night. It is my sincere honor and privilege to serve with such honorable Soldiers.

The leaders across this Task Force are dedicated to making a difference every day in three areas: defeating the enemy, helping the Iraqi people, and improving our Soldiers quality of life/protection.

The Regulars are making history. Thank you for your prayers and support. It makes a difference.



Corporal Justin Mixon from Company C, 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment

“Regulars, By God!”

Brian S. Eifler
LTC, IN
Battalion Commander
Task Force 1-6 Infantry



The Road Dawgs supply

By 1st Lt.
Mark Grow



TF 1-35 AR

The Soldiers of Support Platoon, the Road Dawgs, have been running at a full sprint since arriving in Iraq almost one month ago.

Once the majority of the platoon arrived at FOB Hammer, we began an intensive, hands-on battle handover with the outgoing Support Platoon from 3rd ID, which included learning about the new equipment and vehicles.

A few days later, the Road Dawg leadership joined the outgoing platoon as they conducted a Combat Logistics Patrol (CLP) to resupply their fellow Task Force 1-35 AR Soldiers at Combat Outposts (COP) Cashe North and South and Patrol Base (PB) Assassin.

This would be the final CLP training we received from the outgoing Support Platoon as the majority of the outgoing platoon left for home two days later.

Fortunately, the Soldiers of Support Platoon rapidly identified what needed to be accomplished before, during, and after the CLP's.

They quickly learned where supplies get loaded on FOB Hammer,

routine vehicle maintenance, and familiarity with the route they would travel to reach the COP's and PB..

The tasks associated with preparing and conducting a CLP became second nature and Support Platoon has conducted seven CLP's as of 28 May.

The Road Dawgs are ready to face the challenges of conducting the largest CLP's and to the most combat outposts in the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division area of responsibility.

On a side note, life on FOB Hammer has been enjoyable.

After the initial frenzied pace that accompanies a relief in place slowed down, the Soldiers have been able to enjoy some of the services provided when they are not out on missions or preparing for the next CLP.

Most of the Soldiers find time to go to the gym, play sports, or even enjoy a latte at the Green Bean Café a couple times a week.

The recreation allows the Soldiers some much needed downtime, because the next CLP is always just around the corner.



Good Neighbors

By 1st Lt.

Justin Watson



TF 4-27 FA

The 4-27th Field Artillery has a long and storied history of ensuring mission success in campaigns around the world. Bravo “Bear” Battery is adding to this spirited history with their current deployment supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Reinforced with a Combat Engineer Platoon from C Company, 40th Engineers, the Bear battery has been tasked to assume two missions in support of 2BCT Operations.

At present, Bear Battery Soldiers are tasked to maintain firing positions at two locations east of Baghdad, and to conduct security and populace engagement missions along the heavily traveled Butler Range Road - which connects the Main Forward Operating Base, FOB Hammer, with the eastern outskirts of Baghdad.

Both of these missions are critical in denying control of the area to extremist groups. As a consequence, Bravo’s Soldiers are consistently in close contact with the Nahrwan citizens and local authorities.

So close, actually, that Bravo has already started to develop good rapport with the residents of Nahrwan, the local leaders, and Iraqi security forces along Butler Range Road. Specifically, by providing security, drinking water, and veterinary care for local livestock, the battery is working to increase support for local governance in the area.

Bear Soldiers are enthusiastic about these missions and are pleased to be participating in operations that focus on the long term success of Nahrwan and its local government. That is because the Soldiers realize that the work being done now will hasten the day when this area is truly self-sufficient.



Pfc. Matthew Levesque side by side with two Sons of Iraq. (photo by Pfc. Thomas McCord)

out drinking water and water filters, are helping the area get on the right track,” he said.

With a high degree of cooperation between Bear Battery and the people of Nahrwan, and a security situation that is increasingly more stable, this deployment will hopefully provide continued progress for Nahrwan and the surrounding area.

The battery leadership is managing this increased responsibility with great confidence in the newly augmented team. Capt. Matthew Husted, B Battery’s Commander, said, “Having to absorb two missions is a challenge, but in many ways it’s a very good thing. With all the challenges Bear Battery now faces, the time on this deployment is simply flying. Even more importantly, the Bravo Soldiers have handled all tasks given them with skill and dedication. I couldn’t be more proud of this Battery.”

As always, Bravo Battery Soldiers set a high standard in all that they do. Bears Lead the Way.



SpC. Christopher Stimson interacts with local children at a SOI checkpoint. (photo taken by Pfc. Matthew Levesque)

SpC. Emmanuelle Schingal, on his second deployment to Iraq, said, “I’m very, very pleased with our mission so far. I’d have to say the main difference between this tour and my last one is working with the Sons of Iraq (SoI). Working side-by-side with SoI’s has really shown me what the Iraqis could be capable of achieving on their own.”

The Son’s of Iraq are recruited locally to participate in a type of neighborhood-watch. They man vehicle checkpoints and patrol their own neighborhoods, always keeping an eye out for suspicious-looking vehicles or individuals.

They are a real asset to Iraqi and Coalition Forces, and many observers credit their assistance in keeping neighborhoods free from insurgent activity following the troop surge.

SpC. Christopher Stimson, another veteran of Bear Battery’s previous deployment, agrees. “It’s good to see the Iraqis taking positive control of their own security. I feel like the level of cooperation between us and the local populace is really high and the projects we’re doing, like handing



Gators Combined Operations Lead to Success

By Cpt.
Dusty Gray



TF 2-6 IN

Over the past two weeks Task Force 2-6 Infantry executed numerous missions focused on creating trust among the local population and the Iraqi Army.

To accomplish this mission, “Gator” Battalion Soldiers partnered with local Iraqi Army units to conduct combined training and patrols. The training and patrols have been a great success in Gators zone and a learning experience for everyone involved.

Team Charlie of Task Force 2-6 Infantry is partnered with the 3rd Battalion of the 44th Brigade of the Iraqi Army.

On 31 May, a platoon of Soldiers from Team Charlie traveled to the local Iraqi Army compound to meet up with a platoon of Iraqi soldiers and conduct combined training.

The training began with a tour of each unit’s tracked vehicles. The Iraqi soldiers showed a great deal of interest in the Bradley Fighting Vehicles and were enthusiastic about explaining the capabilities and operation of their vehicles to Team Charlie’s Soldiers.

After the vehicle tour, Team Charlie demonstrated how they mount and dismount from the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and took several minutes to discuss how to conduct mounting and dismounting drills from the IA vehicles. After the discussion, the Iraqi soldiers practiced mounting and dismounting drills in their vehicles.

At this point the day was beginning to wind down and the training ended with instruction on marksmanship and patrolling techniques in urban environments. 1st Lt. Mori, platoon leader for 2nd platoon of Team Charlie, and the Iraqi Army platoon leader discussed the day’s training and what each unit learned from the other. The training day



Spc. Mills and Pfc. Stephenson, TM C/TF 2-6 IN strengthen the partnership with 3-44 IA after conducting a patrol.

ended as a great success and 1st Lt. Mori said, “The IA seemed very motivated during the training and they are highly anticipating the next training event.”

Team Charlie isn’t the only Task Force 2-6 Infantry Company working with the Iraqi Army. Team Alpha has been busy as well conducting combined patrols and training with the Iraqi Army.

Conducting a census of the local area to better understand the needs of the populace is one of the combined missions Team Alpha and the Iraqi Army are working on.

The Iraqi soldiers have proven to be very capable and professional when conducting this mission and during one of the patrols an Iraqi Army Captain noted the locals seemed more relaxed when they saw soldiers from the Iraqi Army and Team Alpha working together.

The local people eagerly approach the Iraqi soldiers to discuss security and infrastructure needs for their communities. After one of the patrols 1st Lt. Pickford said, “Generally the populace in Stiyah is fond of the IA and feels they can be trusted as their brothers.”



Pfc. Ruether, TM C/2-6 IN, works with a jundi from 3-44 IA on ready up drills and movement techniques prior to conducting a combined patrol in Salman Pak.



Sharing the Load



47 FSB

By 1st Lt.
Kevin Lucciloa

Alpha Company of the 47th Forward Support Battalion is the primary distribution and transportation effort for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division.

The mission of the 47th FSB, with the Iraqi Medium Truck/ Engineer Platoon, is to provide transportation assets for the brigade that are capable of hauling bulk cargo and have internal lift capabilities.

To achieve this task, the IEP has a line of flatbed trucks and cranes. They also have an array of machinery, including forklifts, dump trucks, bucket loaders, bulldozers, excavators, a steel roller and a grader.

The IMTP/IEP has conducted missions throughout the Mada'in Qada, providing assistance for a variety of jobs such as site beautification and area rearranging. They were responsible for transporting all of the CL IV that was required to build the Iraqi Police checkpoint towers in Jisr Diyala.

There are Avenger Soldiers tasked to the IMTP/IEP, who are responsible for ensuring that the Iraqis are incorporated into the mission. The Soldiers also see that the civilians receive ample food and water supplies and are given transportation to and from their work site.

Staff Sgt. Jody Staggs, A/47 FSB, serves as the NCOIC for the group. He is responsible for coordinating all loads and missions that the IMTP/IEP is tasked to conduct.

The rapport between the Soldiers and the local nationals has helped create a positive work environment, resulting with in successful missions.

We are looking forward to the next 13 months, with the help of the IMTP/IEP, we will continue to augment the efforts of Alpha Company and the 47th FSB.



Route clearance team



makes Iraq safer

By Spc.
Justin Snyder

It's 4 a.m., and Soldiers of the 40th Engineers Battalion are just getting to bed after a route clearance mission in the Mada'in Qada.

"Wow, only a 12-hour day," said Pfc. Richard Goodman, a Company B, 40th Eng. Bn. combat engineer. "An early day and one more mission accomplished. We'll be back at it again tomorrow."

However, time is no issue for these members of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division route clearance team. Since April, they have gone out on missions daily, clearing improvised explosives devices and unexploded ordnance from streets.

"The earliest we got back from a mission was after nine hours and the longest was after 21 hours," said Goodman, a native of Rochester, N.Y. "It all comes with the job and we do what we can. Time is not an issue when you are dealing with IEDs."

Since 2003, IEDs have been the biggest killer of Coalition forces in Iraq. This makes the team's job very important, knowing the safety of others depends on the job they perform every day without fanfare.

Second Lieutenant Michael Hall, 40th Eng. Bn. platoon leader, said this job does more than clear roads of IEDs, it provides a safe and peaceful environment for Iraqi families. It also plays a large part in making the 2nd BCT's day-to-day operations possible.

"Our job is a very important piece to the puzzle here in Iraq," said Hall, from Akron, Colo. "It's our job to keep the roads safe. By doing that, we are keeping the lines of communication open for the 2nd BCT."

To accomplish their mission, the route clearance team uses a variety of vehicles and tools. A typical roll-out for a mission includes the Husky, a detector vehicle; the RG31 Mine Protected Armored Personnel Carrier; and the Buffalo, a mine clearance vehicle.

The Buffalo is equipped with a mechanical arm that is tipped with a claw called a "spork." The arm and spork are remotely-controlled from the cab of the Buffalo, which is equipped with a camera and light to allow the operator a close-up view of any suspected IEDs.

Also available for the Soldiers' use is the Talon, a small robot equipped with a camera that provides a close-up view of suspicious items and can assist in destroying IEDs.

Goodman believes the robot arm, spork and Talon all play an important role in completing their mission.

"These tools make our jobs much easier," Goodman said. "Without them, we would have to dismount more, which puts us in harm's way. They make things safer and get the job done."

The route clearance team roams the streets of the Mada'in Qada at slow speeds, enabling them to search the roads precisely. They search holes, objects and trash - anything that seems suspicious.

In their time here, they have found several IEDs and UXOs. Many missions will go without finding anything; Goodman believes they are successful either way.

"Sometimes you just don't find anything," Goodman said. "No matter what we come back with, the streets of Iraq are still safer. We are accomplishing our mission one day at a time."



A Soldier searches a possible IED hole with the Buffalo vehicle's manipulator arm while on a route clearance mission June 3.



The 40th Eng. Bn. route clearance team prepares to move out during a mission June 3.



Detainees get a second chance with Reconciliation



TF 1-35 AR

By Spc.
Justin Snyder

Not only has your family been waiting for you, but your country has been waiting for you. Go do good things and join in the rebuilding of Iraq," said Turkey Sawady, a representative of the Jisr Diyala Nahia.

This was the message being sent to 15 detainees as they were released back to their families during a reconciliation ceremony held outside of the joint security station building in Jisr Diyala, Iraq, May 29.

The ceremony began with Sawady, who spoke through an interpreter, thanking all of the distinguished guests, including the detainee's family members, for attending and showing their support for the detainees. He followed by reading a passage from the Quran and thanking Coalition Forces for their hard work in getting the detainees released back to their homeland.

Sawady, along with tribal leaders and family members, vouched for the detainee's credibility.

"We are very thankful to the Coalition Forces for allowing these people to have a second chance," said Sawady. "We are very happy to have these men released. I am confident that they will now participate in rebuilding the country of Iraq and make a positive impact in their community."

In the last year, the area of Jisr Diyala has seen many improvements. Markets have been revitalized, water distribution plants, schools, and health clinics have been established. Violence has also gone down, thanks to the security efforts of the Sons of Iraq volunteers, the Iraqi Police and Coalition Forces.

Brig. Gen. Emad, commander of the 1-3 National Police, said that the people of Iraq know that the Coalition Forces played a huge role in making those projects happen and will continue to make Jisr Diyala a better place. He would like the detainees to join in and do their part as free citizens of Iraq.

"After spending many months in jail, you will notice that Iraq has changed for the better," said Emad. "We are moving on in a positive direction and there is no time for terrorism. I ask you to help us move on and accomplish more goals."

Many Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, were in attendance. Lt. Col. Rich Morales, commander of the 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, said that things in Iraq have been changed for the better.

He said that the ceremony was not the release of 15 criminals, but the release of citizens who can contribute to society and that together, the citizens of Iraq and Coalition Forces can improve the Jisr Diyala one day at a time.

"I know that all 15 of you are understanding men who want to see your community succeed," said Morales, a native of El Paso, Texas. "You have been given a wonderful opportunity here and I know you will be welcomed back to your community with open arms."

Sawady would like to see the former detainees use their time spent in jail to influence future generations for years to come.

"Use your past experiences to become an idol and be an example for your children," said Sawady. "The future of Iraq depends on it."

Following the ceremony, the 15 detainees signed out in the Jisr Diyala JSS log book, stating they were free men. They were then led to the gate to return to their respected communities.



Lt. Col. Rich Morales, commander of Task Force 1-35 Armor, shakes hands with detainees following a reconciliation ceremony outside the joint security station in Jisr Diyala, Iraq, May 29.



Improvements being



40 EN

made at By Spc. Justin Snyder FOB Hammer

When Spc. William Hughes, found out he would be stationed at Forward Operating Base Hammer in April 2007, all he knew about the FOB was it had been recently built. "I knew that the FOB was practically brand new," said Hughes, a Soldier in 9th Psychological Operations Battalion. "I was expecting tents, water bottle showers and hoped that we would have phones or internet."

The fact was that FOB Hammer had been constructed only a month prior to his arrival by the 557th Expeditionary Red Horse Squadron. They had equipped the FOB with 223 tents for barracks, headquarters, latrines and other support functions called initial operating capacity.

"Everything I had expected was here," said Hughes, a native of Menteca, Calif. "I couldn't really complain."

Over the next year, Hughes watched the FOB grow larger and new amenities arrived. A new dining facility was built and Subway, Pizza Hut and Green Bean Coffee arrived. Eventually, Containerized Housing Units (CHUs) began to replace the tents for improved Soldier comfort.

"They did a real good job building this place. The incoming Soldiers will have it nice," said Hughes, who will complete his deployment in June.

With the help of the 40th Engineer Battalion and Kellogg, Brown and Root, incoming Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, have even more to expect as they begin their 15-month deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Picking up where the outgoing 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, left off, the 40th Eng. Bn. was greeted with the arrival of 1020 CHUs.

First Sergeant Robert Miles, FOB Hammer mayor, said the plan is for all Iron Brigade Soldiers to move into CHUs by the end of the year. Logistics Support Area Striker recently was turned over to KBR, and tents are coming down to make way for new CHUs. "We are trying to make things better ... for the Soldiers," said Miles, a native of Dubois, Pa.

A new chapel is currently under construction on the FOB and plans are in place for a softball field and a football-and-soccer field. Other planned improvements include wireless internet available for a monthly fee and asphaltting roads to cut down on dust.

"We are currently in our beginning stages and are looking at where we want to be in 15 months," Miles said. "These things take time, but we are going in a positive direction."

Specialist Matt Cupples, 2nd BCT headquarters paralegal specialist, arrived with the 2nd BCT at FOB Hammer in late April. He expected to be living in tents upon arrival, and with new CHUs he's looking forward to the next 15 months. "A lot of the things we have here, I never expected to have," said Cupples, a Cleveland native. "Any improvements they make here will be a plus."

Improvements are underway for workers traveling on and off FOB Hammer. A facility is being built for support truck drivers, so they can have a place to sleep when traveling to FOB Hammer.

"After long drives, the truck drivers could use a rest," Miles said. "This will give them that place to rest and wash up."

To complete these projects, the 40th Eng. Bn. works alongside KBR, the 557th ERHS and the Unity Corporation, which is comprised of 80 percent Iraqi contractors. Miles believes their mission could not be successful without these groups working together.

"This is one huge mission and no one corporation can accomplish it alone," Miles said. "Everyone reaches into their pockets to get things done."



Al-Zuber School opens in Salman Pak



TF 2-6 IN

By Spc.

Justin Snyder

Members of the Salman Pak city council and U.S. troops celebrated the reopening of al-Zuber School in Salman Pak, 15 kilometers southeast of Baghdad, during a ribbon-cutting ceremony May 21.

Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, are now supporting Salman Pak and its surrounding region in an effort to rebuild the community.

The 2-6th Inf. Regt. took over the area from the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, which arrived in Salman Pak in January 2007, a time when the area received enemy fire regularly and the school needed much repair.

The 1-15th Inf. Regt. began a \$180,000 project, designed to improve conditions at the school and help create a better environment for residents of Salman Pak.

Captain William Richardson, commander of Company C, 2-6th Inf. Regt., took over the project in early May, continuing where the 1-15th Inf. Regt. left off.

Richardson attended the ceremony and said he is glad his Soldiers could help make Salman Pak a safer place for children to learn and grow.

"When we arrived here, it wasn't a very safe place," Richardson said. "Working together with these people represents a positive step forward for Iraq and has created a safer Salman Pak."



A Salman Pak city council member cuts a ribbon with the help of Capt. William Richardson, commander of Co. C, 2-6th Inf. Regt., officially reopening the al-Zuber School in Salman Pak, May 21.



Iraqi children study inside a classroom at the al-Zuber School which reopened May 21 in Salman Pak.

Originally, the project was due to be complete in June, but was finished a month early. Improvements included new bathrooms with a septic system, newly painted walls and an entranceway garden.

A member of the Salman Pak city council cut the ribbon, making the re-opening of the school official. The school will provide nearly 700 children the opportunity to go to school while employing 43 teachers.

Mohamed Mahmud Jewad, manager of Marsa al-Shemah Construction Company, also attended. His company worked alongside Coalition forces and believes their work has paid off greatly.

"We are thankful for the Coalition forces, the city council, and anyone else who has helped complete this project. This school is something that the people of Salman Pak have always wanted," Jewad said. "We worked together to create something beautiful and I hope that one day, all of the schools in Iraq can look like this one."

Richardson said that everyone involved in this project has done an amazing job. He believes kids and their schools are key elements to rebuilding a community.

"Hopefully this progress will spread throughout Iraq for many generations to come," he said.



Coalition Forces



By Spc.

Justin Snyder

Help displaced families

TF 4-27 FA

Soldiers donated water and school supplies to two internally displaced Iraqi families at the al-Nabaha School complex in Narhwan, June 5.



Soldiers of the 4-27th FA deliver water to two displaced families at the al-Nabaha School complex, June 5.

“This area of Narhwan is one of the (poorer) sections,” said 2nd Lt. Guy Allsup, 3rd Platoon leader, Company C, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery. “To be able to get out there and help out these families, it shows that we really are listening to their needs.”

In the past, local families and Iraqi Police helped these families by arranging for jobs and living quarters for them. Allsup said it was important to build on that foundation.

“(IPs and local families) have been helping out these families before we got here and they are very proud of what they have done,” said Allsup, of Charlotte, N.C. “We had Iraqi Police and locals come up to us and thank us for helping out. That is huge for us. Building trust can be a slow process and these are the types of things that will help speed that process up.”

Allsup said the children were extremely excited to receive the school supplies and the families were appreciative of the water.

The school complex contains a water purification system that the Soldiers inspected. The pump system on the purification unit is broken, so a project has been scheduled to repair it.

Since arriving in the Mada’in Qada in April, the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division Soldiers have been supporting efforts to improve the health and welfare of the Iraqi people and enhance their quality of life.

“We realize the importance of clean water and are working hard to get the pump fixed as soon as possible,” Allsup said. “Not only will they have clean water, but it will cut down on water drops, helping them become more self-reliant.”



The father of one of the displaced families living at the al-Nabaha School complex receives water from a 4-27th FA Soldier, June 5.



Al-Wahida projects improve citizens' way of life

By Pfc.
Evan Loyd



13th GIB

A ribbon cutting celebrating the completion of one project, and a groundbreaking kicking off the start of another were held May 27 in al-Wahida. Both projects are aimed at improving the quality of life for area residents.

The first effort aimed to keep al-Wahida consistently and safely electrically powered. Iraqi workers and citizens, alongside Coalition forces, helped open a new multi-room, air-conditioned electric equipment repair station designed to ensure a safe work environment for electric workers. Previously, workers operated in poorly-lit, dangerously-hot metal buildings.

The second initiative reopened the first of eight pumps that supply water to the al-Wahida Nahia. Soldiers from the 13th Georgian Infantry Battalion and Task Force Petro, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, were present for a ground-breaking ceremony at the water pump station and a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the electric station.

"I thank the Coalition forces for their help in repairing this water pump station," said Jamad Kadhim al-Shaman, chairman of the al-Wahida Nahia Council. "This station will help to provide water for over 10 square kilometers of farmland."

Before the pump's opening, many residents had to choose between paying higher prices or going without water. When all three vertical pumps and five horizontal pumps at the new station are fully working, the surrounding farmland will be supplied with water for livestock, crops and personal hygiene use.

Major Davit Sul Khanishvili, commander of the 13th Georgian Bn., spoke to the crowd about Coalition forces' willingness to help the Iraqi people.

"We are happy to help the local Iraqi government rebuild its infrastructure," Sul Khanishvili said.

Future projects are planned to repair or replace other pumps throughout the area.

"The water pump restoration is a great step towards improving the local Iraqi's way of life" said Capt. Don Makay, commander of TF Petro, a native of Cassopolis, Conn.

The 13th Georgian Bn. and TF Petro fall under the command of 2nd BCT, 1st Armored Division.



The Gol is currently refurbishing the water treatment facility in Salman Pak. A Gol worker adds additional tanks and piping to the facility.



Soldier volunteers for deployment to serve with former commander

By Pfc.
Michael Schuch

Soldiers throughout the United States Army have answered the call to duty in their own ways. For Sgt. 1st Class Marcus Butler, a native of Baltimore, Md., that answer came as volunteering to deploy with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division.

Butler has been a Soldier in the Army for 18 years. For the last three years, he has been assigned to the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany.

"Being an observer-controller was the best job I have ever had," said Butler. "It gave me a chance to work with Soldiers without distractions, when they are focused and ready to train."

Butler's job was to train Soldiers in fire support operations. As an OC, he would observe the Soldiers conducting their training. Following their training events, he would facilitate discussions through after action reviews on different ways the Soldiers could improve or sustain their performances.

It was at the Iron Brigade's Mission Readiness Exercise at the JMRC in October and November of last year that Butler observed the 2nd BCT fire support Soldiers.

"During the Leadership Training Program and Mission Readiness Exercises, I recognized a lot of talent in the Fire Support and brigade staff," he said. "They just needed some time for cohesion."

This wasn't Butler's first experience with the 1st AD. "I was in the 1st AD for three and a half years," he said. He also has ties to Col. Pat White, a native of Apple Valley, Calif.

"He was my battalion commander when I was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 37th Armor Regt., 1st Brigade, 1st AD in Friedberg," said Butler.

While with the 2-37th Armor Regt., the Iron Dukes, he fought in one of the major battles of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004, known as the Battle of Najaf. "The battle of Najaf was a very different fight than the one we are experiencing now," he said.

TF Iron Dukes fought against Muqtada al Sadr's militia from April to June 2004. During this time, White conducted operations as the Task Force Iron Dukes commander, and Butler was the fire support non-commissioned officer in charge. "I provided fires in support of maneuver operations, as well as provided counter-fire missions," said Butler.

Following his time spent with TF Iron Dukes, Butler went on to his next duty assignment, Operations Group Mustang at Hohenfels, Germany. It would be another three years before Butler and White's paths would cross again as White commanded the 2nd BCT.

"I wanted to work with Col. White again because his leadership style makes people want to do better," said Butler. "I believe he has a genuine concern for his Soldiers."

Having previously deployed twice during his career, Butler knew that he would soon be called to deploy again. "I knew that if I volunteered to be assigned to the 2nd BCT, I would be able to deploy with people I knew," said Butler. "Between the familiar faces and the pool of talent on the brigade staff, I was in a win/win situation."

Upon realizing this, Butler contacted his branch manager and requested to be reassigned to the 2nd BCT. On February 10th, 2008, that request was answered, sending Butler to Baumholder, Germany.

Butler now provides operational fire support for the 2nd BCT, and is currently serving at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Sgt. 1st Class Marcus Butler briefs Soldiers of his Fire Support team at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, May 29.



Memorial Day Ceremony

Held at FOB Hammer

By Pfc.

Michael Schuch

Memorial Day is a day for Americans around the world to honor the memory of our fallen comrades who served our country through the years.

For Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, this day of remembrance was recognized during a ceremony held at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq.

With the United States, Iraqi and the BCT's colors all ruffling in the desert breeze, the ceremony opened with a speech from Col. Pat White, 2nd BCT commander.

White began his speech by explaining the deep bond that Soldiers share with one another.

"Soldiers endure hardships together, and help one another overcome fear, difficulty and loss," White said. "Soldiers understand that our freedoms do not endure without a firm and clear resolve. Sometimes at a terrible and final sacrifice."

White went into detail explaining that even on holidays such as Memorial Day, Soldiers continue fulfilling their duty to their country.

"Right now, as I speak to you, heroes are risking their lives somewhere out there," White said. "They do this for us; they do this for their country; they do this because, like millions before them, they accepted the defense of freedom as a very personal matter."

White also took time to recognize the Iron Brigade's fallen comrades from past deployments.

"The blood of 48 Iron Brigade Soldiers has soaked the soil of Iraq in our first two deployments," White said. "So let us pay tribute today to these heroes who gave their full and final measure."

Along with White's speech, the Star Spangled Banner was sung by Capt. Christina Fanitzi, a native of Buffalo, N.Y., and attendees held a moment of silence. The ceremony came to a conclusion with a silent roll call of the Iron Brigade's fallen Soldiers, a 21-gun salute and the playing of Taps.



Colonel Pat White, commander of 2nd BCT, 1st Armored Division, delivers a speech during a Memorial Day ceremony May 26 at FOB Hammer, honoring the memory of fallen Soldiers and recognizing the sacrifices all Soldiers make.



Memorial Day Ceremony

Thank you for joining me here today at FOB Hammer on this Memorial Day to pay tribute to those brave men and women who have given their lives in defense of our nation. I am honored to be with you on a day so rich with meaning.

Our national flag flies today at half-staff to express our profound gratitude for the acts of brave patriots who gave the full measure so that we might live free. We place flowers on their graves and speak in words of eulogy. Today all throughout our great country Americans at 3 p.m. will observe a national moment of remembrance to unite the nation in a moment of silence.

It is therefore fitting that on this Memorial Day at FOB Hammer, Iraq we turn our thoughts to the renewal of our own dedication to the cause of freedom. While we gather in groups and pay tribute as a nation, that dedication is entirely a personal matter. It is a personal matter for us to renew our commitment-to renew our involvement-in the preservation of a heritage that our honored purchased at such a dear price.

It is perhaps an indication of the success achieved by those who sacrificed everything that many Americans today do not fully understand the meaning of Memorial day. The theme of sacrifice is overcome by the super-abundance of life's blessings here, even in this time of war. If some in our communities think of Memorial Day as the day the swimming pools open, we all may thank the brave few for easing the prospect of menace and securing the bounties of liberty.

Soldiers understand that these freedoms do not endure without a firm and clear resolve - and sometimes a terrible and final sacrifice. Since our nation's inception, when our freedoms have been threatened, American men and women have responded with that resolve and more than a million have made that sacrifice.

Why did they do it? Why do they do it now? It is a call to duty, a sense of purpose strengthened by the bonds of shared service. Soldiers endure hardships together and help one another overcome fear, difficulty and loss. They develop confidence in each other, their units, their leaders and their cause. The belief grows that individually and collectively, they make a difference in the security of Americans at home and the liberty of those abroad seeking to walk free.

It has been said that for a nation to be successful, the nation must be willing to serve. For more than 230 years, our Soldiers have been

-serving; They have followed a timeless warrior ethos—a system of values which is central to all we do in our Army: I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade.

The blood of 48 Iron Brigade Soldiers has soaked the soil of Iraq in our first two deployments. Soldiers like staff sgt. Jeremy Horton of B company 2-6 Infantry. Sgt. Horton was 24 years old when he was killed in action by a roadside bomb in May 2004. I recently had the pleasure to correspond with his widow and with Pennsylvania State Representative John Hornaman.

Rep. Hornaman was instrumental in having the Powell Avenue bridge in Sgt. Horton's Hometown of Erie Pennsylvania renamed in honor of Staff Sgt. Horton last month. Sgt. Horton or his family will never be forgotten by the Iron Brigade. He died with honor and is a hero. I am certain he died doing what he loved, serving and fighting for his country. We know he is a hero, not because of the way he died, but because of the way he lived.

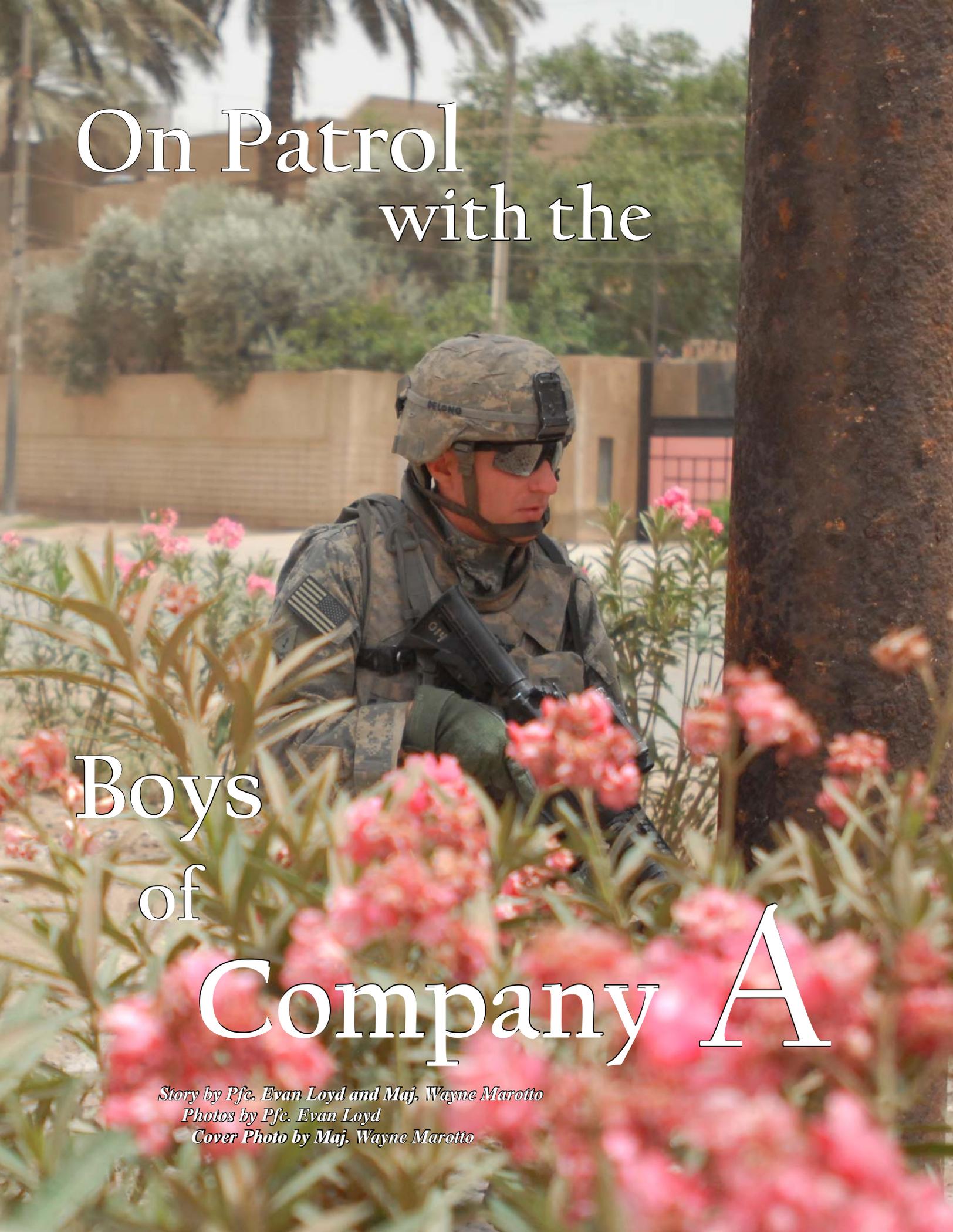
SGT Horton is survived by his wife Christy. We will never feel her pain but we will always honor her sacrifice.

Right now, as I speak to you, heroes like Staff Sergeant Horton are risking their lives somewhere out there. They do this for us; they do this for their country; they do this because, like millions before them, they accepted the defense of freedom as a very personal matter not to be left solely to others. They were stirred from within by a desire to make a difference, and in doing so, let us pay tribute today to these heroes who gave their full and final measure. Upon our return from deployment let us make a personal commitment to do two things before the arrival of summer and well deserved vacations. Let us visit the grave sites of fallen Soldiers and give thanks. Let us also reach out and shake the hand of a living hero—whether it's someone in uniform waiting in line at the commissary checkout, or a veteran standing along a parade route saluting old glory as she passes by.

Tell them you understand the depths of their commitment; tell them you honor their service. Tell them simply "Thanks."

God bless those who gave their lives in service and bought our liberties with their blood. God bless those who protect our freedoms, and their families, and; god bless America. Thank you.

*Speech given by Col. Pat White
on Memorial Day*



On Patrol with the

Boys of Company A

*Story by Pfc. Evan Loyd and Maj. Wayne Marotto
Photos by Pfc. Evan Loyd
Cover Photo by Maj. Wayne Marotto*



A young Iraqi girl walks up to Sgt. Charles Martinovic, of Stickney, Ill., a Medic in Alpha Company, Task Force 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, and asks softly “Mister, candy?” Martinovic is carrying his medic bag and M-4 and smiles as he reaches into his pocket and pulls out a piece of hard candy to give to the girl.

While to many this may seem a simple gesture of kindness; it also symbolizes the new relationship between the Soldiers of Alpha Company and the Iraqi people of the Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City, Baghdad.

When Alpha Company Soldiers first arrived in Sadr City they were sent into a combat operation to build a wall, but this wasn't any wall. This wall was built across Sadr City to provide a safe zone in the southern portion of Sadr City. Alpha Company was tasked to build over five kilometers of concrete walls all while under fire from militias to help divide Sadr City into sections in order to improve security.

The militia on the other side of the wall were believed to be supporters of Moktada al Sadr and fought ferociously against the building of the twelve-foot concrete barriers. On their 12 hour wall-building missions the Soldiers would come in contact and have fire fights for hours with multiple rocket-propelled grenades, automatic fire and sniper fire.

“It was pretty intense in the beginning when we were receiving fire,” said Spc. Kristopher Doktor, of Peoria, Ill., a Grenadier in the 3rd platoon of A Co as he sat on the roof of Combat Outpost Texas scanning the area with his automatic weapon. “But because of my training I was prepared and ready to act.”

The Soldiers used a crane to hook up the barriers and place them side by side. One Soldier would climb a ladder and unhook the crane lines from the barrier all the while dodging sniper fire. The other Soldiers would use the crane and wall as cover to return rifle fire and rocket-propelled grenade fire. A Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle was nearby returning fire from its guns. The Soldiers also called in Tank fire and hell fire missiles from helicopters. The enemy proved if anything to be tenacious.

1st Sgt. Michael Morton, of Bradenton, FL., 1st Sgt. of Alpha Company, had several close calls from sniper fire while unhooking the crane lines. “We spent over a month building that wall and almost every patrol that was sent out took contact”, said Morton. “Now that the wall is up, our missions are a lot less kinetic, and more about finding IED’s, and showing the populace that we are here to help.”



As the dismounted patrol continues, Morton takes the lead and stops to talk to local shop owners about their business and concerns.

One business owner asks Morton if he can provide more hours of electricity. Morton tells him he will discuss his concerns with his chain-of-command.

When Morton stops the Soldiers on patrol they all take a knee and seek cover. Although there are plenty of Iraqi boys following the Soldiers asking for candy and pens the Soldiers do not take any chances. “Don’t get too close to each other...and spread out. One grenade could call all of y’all,” Sgt. Julio Navarro tells the Soldiers.

The patrol continues down the street and Morton stops to talk to an Iraqi woman. She tells him through the interpreter that her son needs medical care. “Doc, grab your bag and come over here. There’s a boy who needs aid,” Morton says to Martinovic whom all the Soldiers call ‘Doc’.

Martinovic pulls his aid bag out and begins cleaning a wound on the boy’s head. “I am giving you some extra bandages. Use soap and water to clean the wound and put new bandages on it each night,” he tells the boy.

“Stop that vehicle and make it go the other way,” Navarro shouts to the Soldiers. No vehicles are allowed to drive down the same side of the street as the Soldiers. “You never know what that vehicle is,” Navarro tells the Soldiers.

One Iraqi man crosses the street and tells Morton that his wife needs medical care. Morton, Martinovic, and another Soldier cross the street and enter the house. One Soldier stands outside and pulls security.



“She says she has psoriasis on her feet and wants medication,” the interpreter tells Martinovic as an Iraqi man brings drinking glasses and cold water for the Soldiers. Morton sits down, sweat dripping down his face and drinks the cold water. The power goes out and the room is dim.

Martinovic gives the women some ointment and tells her to wash her feet with soap and water to relieve the itch. He tells her on another visit he will bring better medication.



The Iraqi family thanks the Soldiers, and they leave the house. “Based on the requests for medical care, I don’t think a patrol has gone down this street in a long while,” Morton says as he leaves the house.

More Iraqi boys come out on the street asking for candy, pens, and sun glasses. Occasionally an Iraqi girl comes out but they mainly stay behind the fences of their houses. The boys pose for photographs and several take their cell phones out and take photos of the Soldiers.

“Hey Doc, come over here. This lady has diabetes and wants aid,” Morton shouts

to Doc. “I don’t know if I am set up to help her First Sergeant”, Martinovic says as he walks over. “I can take a look at her, but I can’t treat diabetes.” Martinovic talks to the Iraqi women and tells her she needs to see a Doctor and that he is not able to treat diabetes.

One Iraqi man comes out and identifies himself as a former officer in the Iraqi Army. He tells Morton he wants more hours of electricity and wants the American Soldiers to slow down as they drive down the road. He tells Morton their big vehicles are damaging the road and asks when the Americans are going to clean and repair the road. Morton writes down his concerns and tells him he will report this to higher.

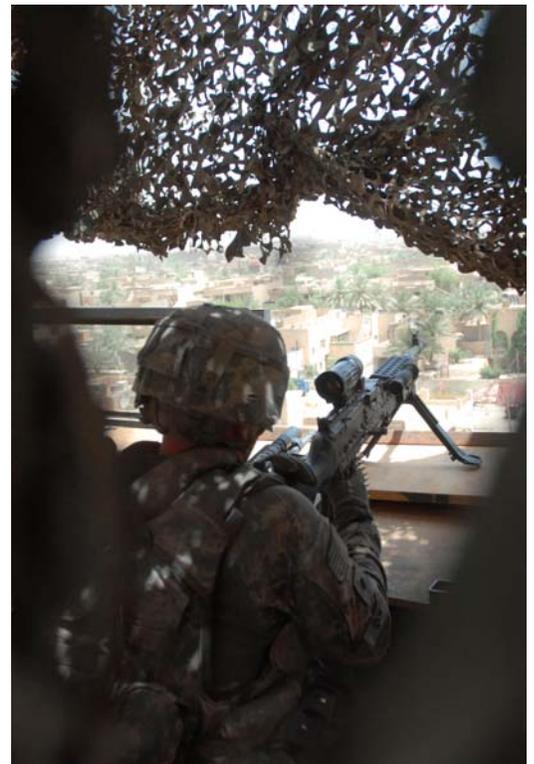
Gunfire rings out in the distance but it is a safe distance away from the Soldiers of Alpha Company. Their mission has changed from a lethal to a non-lethal mission. Morton says he hopes the situation remains calm.

Alpha Company is also tasked to help establish the local Iraqi Neighborhood Guard program. Local Iraqi men are hired, provided training and man checkpoints in their neighborhood to inspect personnel and vehicles.

The company’s mission is also to provide resources for reconstruction and revitalization of southwestern Sadr City. Many of the residents inquired on why it was taking so long to improve the neighborhood. “We take their concerns into account,” said Morton. “But, it just takes time.”

As they finish their patrol and walk over a pile of rubble in order not to step in raw sewage to the three-story building that is Combat Outpost Texas, Martinovic comments on the mission. “I love seeing the kids smile, but it’s also about letting the local Iraqis know that we’re not just here to fight.”

Task Force 1-6 Infantry, the ‘Regulars’, deployed with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division and now serve attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.



Iron Brigade Soldiers Earn Combat Patch

By Pfc.
Michael Schuch

Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, officially marked their combat deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom by receiving their shoulder sleeve insignia for wartime service during a ceremony here May 26.

This insignia is more commonly known as a combat patch, and is worn on the right shoulder of U.S. Army Soldiers to signify their unit's active participation or support of ground combat operations against hostile forces, in which they have been exposed to the threat of enemy action or fire, either directly or indirectly.

This patch signifies the Baumholder, Germany-based brigade's third deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. For many Soldiers in the brigade, however, this signifies their first deployment.

"This is a really meaningful experience," said Sgt. Tess Krause, a native of Crosby, Texas, currently serving on her first deployment. "I really feel that the patch helps build the esprit de corps of the unit."

For senior Soldiers, such as Sgt. 1st Class Steven Martz, a native of New Market, Va., this was the highlight of his career. Before deploying to Iraq with 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., Martz worked at the Kansas City Military Entrance Processing Station.

"I have been in the Army for 10 years, and love being a Soldier," said Martz, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the 2nd BCT personnel office. "But having never previously deployed, I felt like I never really served in the full capacity."

To fulfill this service, Martz contacted his branch manager and requested to be transferred to a unit preparing to deploy. For many Soldiers, the combat patch adds a sense of purpose to their way of life.

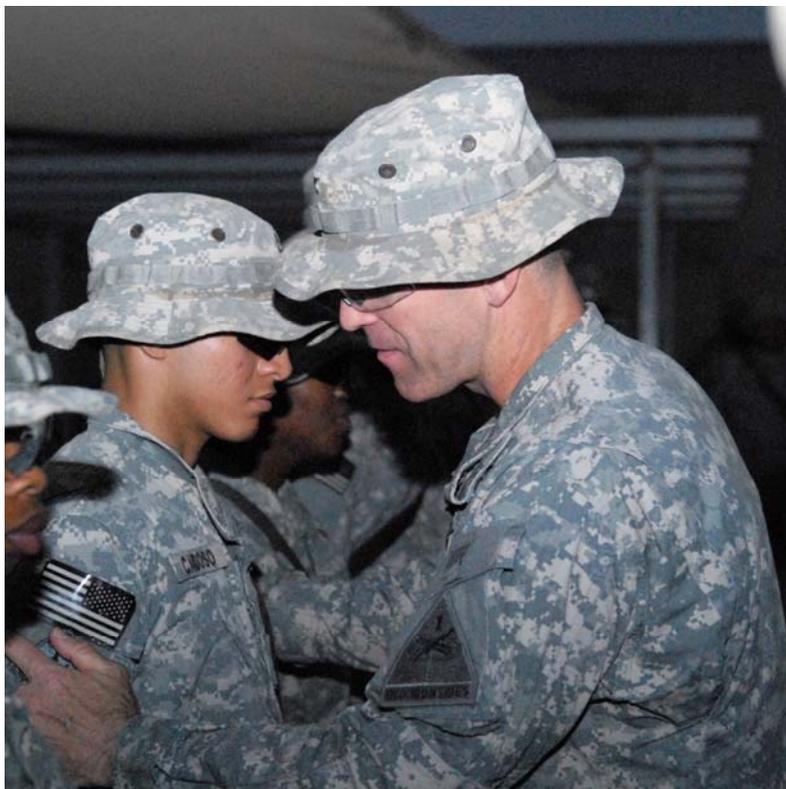
"I was removed from my field artillery unit in garrison and attached to headquarters," said Spc. Benjamin Hyder, a native of Blissfield, Mich. "It made me feel like I wasn't doing my part."

"Now that I have deployed to Iraq and I am serving my country, I feel like I actually did something while I was in the Army," Hyder said.

For officers of the 2nd BCT, the patch adds credibility to their various jobs.

"As an attorney that mainly specializes in briefing the rules of engagement, the patch lets the soldiers below me know that I have an understanding of what they have been through," said Capt. Bradley Crockett, a native of Spokane, Wash. "I believe that the experience that comes with the patch helps make me a better officer."

As long as a Soldier meets requirements listed by the Army regulation, they hold the right to determine whether or not to wear the insignia, or if they meet the requirements while in more than one unit, they can choose which insignia they want to wear.



Private First Class Jose Cardoso, from Fontana, Calif., receives his former wartime service insignia from Col. Pat White, from Apple Valley, Calif., after completing the first 30 days of his tour in Iraq with 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., at FOB Hammer, Iraq, May 26.



With improved security, GOI improves quality of life in Mada'in Qada

By Maj.
Wayne Marotto

Security gains made by Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition forces have allowed the Government of Iraq to significantly improve the quality of life in the Mada'in Qada, southeast of Baghdad.

In 2007, the GoI spent only \$1 million in the Mada'in Qada. When the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, 'surged' into the area in early 2007 they immediately set out to improve security, eliminating extremists and training ISF, while assisting them on their missions.

These efforts greatly improved security in the qada. To date, the GoI pumped more than \$86 million into a variety of essential services projects.

The money went to projects such as the al-Suomar School and Ishtar Water Station refurbishments, Hollandia Medical Clinic renovation and Narhwan sewage removal. These projects cost more than \$550,000, all aimed to improve quality of life for people in the province.

One highlight among these was the \$320,000 refurbishment of the al-Suomar School to educate Jisr Diyala children, giving them better opportunities for their future.

These projects also illustrated how the Mada'in Qada citizens took responsibility in their communities by formally requesting resources from the GoI.

The Narhwan Nahia Council recommended removing raw sewage from the village streets. The Baghdad Province funded \$30,000 to go towards the sewage removal project, creating an environment where businesses could thrive. This was a small investment compared to the larger return of a working economy.

Numerous water canal projects took place to help irrigate farmland and provide clean water, considered precious by the region's agricultural economy. To name one, the Ishtar Water Station refurbishment project improved drinking water for the al-Akclass School and surrounding village, giving villagers clean water for the first time in years.

This is the only region where a brigade is replacing a "surge" brigade, evidencing the region's importance to the overall Coalition mission in Iraq. More funding from the GoI is expected, especially as the region's security and stability continues to improve.



The GoI is currently refurbishing the water treatment facility in Salman Pak. A GoI worker adds additional tanks and piping to the facility.

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The Gol spent more than \$320,000 to refurbish the al-Suomar School in the Mada'in Qada. The project is to be complete by fall.

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The task of maintaining these positive trends is now in the hands of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, from Baumholder, Germany. The brigade is currently MND-C's main effort in Operation Marne Dauntless, building capacity for the Gol to provide for its people.

Chaplain assistant keeps

Soldiers connected to home

By Spc.
Justin Snyder

When Sgt. Sean McCormick packed his bags for his second deployment to Iraq, he decided to bring his video camera, laptop computer and 40 recordable DVDs to show his wife at home how he was doing.

"For my wife, it is very important to hear my voice and see my face," said McCormick, chaplain's assistant for 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division. "I thought it would make being away a little easier and wanted her to know I was OK."

After making his first video and learning his wife watched it three times in one day, he got the idea to make videos for other Soldiers deployed in Iraq.

He coordinated with 2-6th Inf. Regt. officers at Combat Outposts Carver and Cahill to reserve times at the chapel for Soldiers to send messages home.

McCormick, a native of Matawan, N.J., records Soldiers' messages on his camera, each lasting typically 30 seconds to 15 minutes. However, they can talk longer, saying whatever they want, or even read a book for their children at home.

"I encourage the Soldiers to bring pictures and do whatever they want. It's their project and I want them to feel comfortable," McCormick said. "It can be as big or small as they want."

McCormick compresses the video and puts it onto a disk for Soldiers to send home. All of this is done at McCormick's expense. While he hopes for help with DVD costs, he says the project is for Soldiers and worth every penny spent.

"It's not about the money, it's about keeping families connected," McCormick said. "These Soldiers are missing important days like holidays, anniversaries and birthdays. It's a way to let their families at home know that they are thinking of them."

McCormick does this process weekly at both COPs and hopes his idea will have an effect on Soldiers for years to come.

"It's something that can be done anywhere weekly and only takes a few minutes," McCormick said. "Hopefully this project will pick up and Soldiers all over Iraq will be able to send videos home."

McCormick also offers a movie night at the chapel on both COPs once a week. While the movies may be slightly outdated, he says Soldiers appreciate it just the same and it provides them something to do outside of their rooms and away from their jobs.

"The first movie night we held, some of the outgoing Soldiers came to watch," McCormick said. "They said that our movie night was the first movie night they had seen in 15 months. I know we are doing things right."

McCormick believes his duty is to help fellow Soldiers any way he can.

"If you provide services, the Soldiers will remember you and know that you care," McCormick said. "I don't do this just so people will come to church. I do it because they are United States Soldiers serving our country and I want them to know that we care."



Sheikh support council meeting

discusses issues, progress

By Spc.

Justin Snyder

A sheikh support council meeting brought sheiks and leaders of the Mada'in Qada together with their Coalition counterparts here May 28.

As the meeting commenced, Mada'in Qada Mayor Mushen Nasser asked for a moment of silence in honor of all the fallen Soldiers and civilians who have died in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Nasser next spoke on the importance of the Sons of Iraq, a group credited with reducing violence and improving security in the qada. The contract for the Sol is ending soon and Nasser expressed his hope it would be extended.

"They (the Sol) are here to support you and you need to work with them to accomplish your goals," Nasser said. "Together, you can make the Mada'in Qada the best mada'in in all of Iraq."

Colonel Pat White, commander 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, thanked those present for coming and said such meetings were a very important part of the Iron Brigade's mission.

"These meetings are a forum where you can air your grievances," said White, a native of Apple Valley, Calif. "It gives you the chance to tell us what your government is doing for you and tells us how we can help make your connections to the central government better."

One concern brought up involved the Iron Brigade's route clearance team. During their search for improvised explosive devices, the clearance team tends to bog down traffic – a situation White would like to improve, while adding the team serves a vital role.

Nasser agreed that because of these teams, the villages of Iraq are safer than they were a year ago and he asked for the tribal leaders' assistance in ensuring the team has room to work.

Nasser also discussed a newly established court in Salman Pak he believes needs to be used more.

"We need to enforce the Iraqi laws," Nasser said. "We put forth a lot of effort to make the court happen. Have your people go and solve their problems in court, not by violence, but with Iraqi law."



Colonel Pat White, commander 2nd BCT, 1st Armored Div., speaks with local tribal leaders before the Sheikh Support Council meeting at the FOB Hammer dining facility May 28.



Wetzel Wizard

May 2008

Our Magic is Knowledge!

PTO Carnival

The PTO will be hosting an end of the year carnival on Thursday, June 12th @ 8:30-11:00 on the baseball field. All students will have the chance to participate in various activities including sack races, face painting, ball tosses, etc. A snack will be provided by the PTO. Please contact Shannon O'Dell if you are interested in volunteering.

Spirit Week

Spirit Week June 9th – June 12th

Monday - "Magical Monday" - The students can dress up as any magical or fairy tale creature. Tie this into the characters you have read about in your literature this year.

Tuesday - "Turn-Around Tuesday" - The students can "turn-around" their clothes and wear them backwards.

Wednesday - "Wacky Wednesday" - The students can dress as wacky as they can! The wackier the better!

Thursday - "Carnival Day" - Students are encouraged to wear their Wetzel T-Shirts to show their school spirit for the carnival.

Yearbook Update

If you ordered a yearbook, they will be arriving at Wetzel on July 3rd. We will have an ice cream social to celebrate. Your yearbook can be signed and you can enjoy delicious ice cream. For those who will be PCSing, DON'T WORRY! Just provide us with your forwarding address or CMR Box and your book will be mailed by July 9, 2008. If you have any questions, please e-mail glynnis.harris@eu.dodea.edu.

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 written text and communicate ideas.

Student Performance Goal #2: All students will increase 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.

Dates to Remember:

- June 11- 4-6 Award Ceremony @ 1:15**
- June 12- Last Day of School- Early Dismissal @ 11:01**
- June 12- End of the Year Carnival 8:30-11:00**
- June 23- July 18- Summer School Daily 9:00-12:00**
- July 4th- No Class**
- Aug. 22- Open House/ Class List/Welcome Back BBQ**
- Aug .25- First Day of School for Grades 1 - 6 and Middle School/High School**
- Sept. 1- No School- Labor Day**
- Sept. 2 - 1st Day for Kindergarten**
- Sept.11- 1st Day for Sure Start**



Registrar's Remarks

Please clip and save this Wetzel Elementary School contact information. If during the summer you PCS, ERD, or otherwise move to a different school please give this information to your child's new school so they may contact us:

**Wetzel Elementary School
Unit 23815 Box 30
APO, AE 09034-3815**

**International Fax:
011-49-6783-3507**

**DSN: 485-7492 or 6416
Civ: 06783-67492 or 66416**

**Registrar E-Mail:
susan.peterson@eu.dodea.edu**

URGENT! 6th graders must register as soon as possible at the Middle School! Please contact the Baumholder MS/HS and registrar at your earliest convenience.

Please note that the calendars for school year 2008-2009 are now on our webpage. <http://www.kais-dso.eu.dodea.edu/calendars/calendars.htm>

*If your child will be 5 years old by 31 October 2008 you need to register your child for Kindergarten today!

*If your child will be 4 years old by 31 October 2008 you may apply for Sure Start.

Come by the school this week or contact the Wetzel ES Registrar for more information at susan.peterson@eu.dodea.edu

Please share this information with others at Wetzel or Champion Housing that may not have received this information.

Lunch and Learn: Focus on Learning

Understanding Assessment... Interpreting test scores and understanding the data sheets that teachers share with parents was the focus of the Lunch and Learn session on Thursday, May 29 from 12:00-1:00 p.m. in the Information Center. We were glad that 13 parents were able to attend this session, including several parents from our previous sessions held in March and April. We explained TerraNova, DRA, SRI, Star Early Literacy, and Star Math assessments. This was our final session for this school year. 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. Gustafarro or Ms. O'Dell.



Wetzel Summer Library

There's no reason to be bored this summer--come in and find a book to read!

The Wetzel Information Center (Library) will be open this summer for book check out and return:

June 23 - August 8

Monday - Friday

Hours: 9 - 12

(Students K - 2 need to be accompanied by an adult or older sibling.)

We hope to see you this summer! Remember . . .
"a book can take you anywhere!"

To be able to check out books this summer, please have your parents fill out and return a permission form. You can get a form from the librarian, or it is also an attachment on this newsletter.

Another opportunity you can take advantage of on your home computer is Tumblebook Library Online. It has e-books for kids with quizzes. Check it out:

<http://www.usafelibraries.org/kids/booklists.php>

Ms. McHenry's Salute

Ms. McHenry would like to bid a fond farewell to all the Wetzel Wizards. I have enjoyed my time at Wetzel so much and I will miss all the students I have had while I was here. I will be retiring to New Mexico, but I will always remember the WONDERFUL students at Wetzel. You ROCK!! Go Army!

2008-2009 PTO Board:

Jessica Ramos, President
Jeanette Beck, Vice President
Andrea Richardson, Secretary
Cleo Strazdas, Treasurer
Valerie Rene- School Spirit
Mary McKenzie- Event Coordinator

.Departing Wizards

The Wetzel Wizard Family would like to extend best wishes to the following departing staff members:

- Susan Terens-Gilbert- Retiring
 - Susan Kuh- Retiring
 - Julie McHenry- Retiring
 - Tracey Hunt- PCSing
- Maria Segura- PCSing

Summer Technology Math and Typing Websites

Fact Dash is a computer program that is used at Wetzel to increase speed in regards to **Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, and Division Facts**. It can now be downloaded to your computer for free! This program can help to reinforce skills taught at school. Please allow for downloading time depending on your computer speed.

Fact Dash Website: <http://www.mhschool.com/math/2003/student/index.html>

Looking for free resources to practice your **typing** skills in the luxury of your home? Try these:
Dance Mat Typing: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing>
Practice Your Typing: <http://www.nimblefingers.com>
Keyboarding Practice: <http://www.davis.k12.ut.us/cjh/appliedtech/Business/Keyboarding>

In this newsletter in the form of an attachment is a listing of various educational **Math Websites** for summer use. If you do not have a computer, a paper copy can be obtained from the registrar.

Please remember to always monitor your child's Internet viewing over the summer.



S1 Personnel

By 1LT Ashley Salkowski



Rest & Recuperation Leave

As the months begin to roll on, the Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team begin Environmental Morale Leave (EML). EML starts once a Soldier is 61 days in theater and will continue until 60 days prior to the unit redeployment date.

Soldiers that are deployed in Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom for 15 months are authorized 18 days of EML leave. Leave begins the day you arrive at your final destination and ends the day you begin your travel back to theater.

Soldiers are authorized to go almost anywhere in the world and the ticket to their destination of choice is free. Certain overseas destinations have passport and visa requirements. Soldiers should check online to make sure their planned leave destination is not prohibited. For all destination requirements, go to <https://www.fcg.pentagon.mil/fcg.cfm>.

Soldiers traveling outside of the United States will fly using commercial air. Soldiers traveling within the United States will travel on a commercial contracted flight to Dallas or Atlanta, with follow on commercial transportation from there.

Soldiers must coordinate with their company 1st Sgt. for leave date specifications.



Trying to determine where to go for R&R? U.S Army MWR has numerous programs at different locations around the world that will allow any Soldier the opportunity to explore. Army MWR has anything from discounts on an Australian adventure to the Armed Forces Recreation Center resorts: Hale Koa Hotel, Oahu, Hawaii, Shades of Green, Orlando, Florida, Edelweiss Lodge and Resort, Germany, and the Dragon Hill Lodge, Korea. Go to <http://www.armymwr.com/portal/travel/> for more information on a great adventure for less the cost.



Safety Bulletin

By Jerrold Scharninghausen



How to use a fire extinguisher

Portable fire extinguishers have two functions: to extinguish small fires and to allow personnel to clear routes for evacuation. To extinguish a fire with a portable extinguisher, you need immediate access to the extinguisher and knowledge on its operation. Attempting to extinguish even a small fire has some inherent risk. Fires can increase in size and intensity in seconds, blocking the paths and creating a hazardous atmosphere. In addition, portable fire extinguishers contain a limited amount of extinguishing agent and can be discharged in a matter of seconds. That is why they should be used only to fight very small fires. Prior to fighting any fire with a portable fire extinguisher you must perform a risk assessment that evaluates the fire size, the evacuation path, and the atmosphere in the vicinity of the fire.

Risk Assessment

Is the fire too big?	The fire is limited to the original material ignited, it is contained (such as in a waste basket) and has not spread to other materials. The flames are no higher than the firefighter's head.	The fire involves flammable solvents, has spread over more than 60 square feet, is partially hidden behind a wall or ceiling, or can not be reached from a standing position.
Is the air safe to breathe?	The fire has not depleted the oxygen in the room and is producing only small quantities of toxic gases. No respiratory protection equipment is required.	Due to smoke and products of combustion, the fire can not be fought without respiratory protection.
Is the environment too hot or smoky?	Heat is being generated, but the room temperature is only slightly increased. Smoke may be accumulating on the ceiling, but visibility is good. No special personal protective equipment is required.	The radiated heat is easily felt on exposed skin making it difficult to approach within 10-15 feet of the fire (or the effective range of the extinguisher). One must crawl on the floor due to heat or smoke. Smoke is quickly filling the room, decreasing visibility.
Is there a safe evacuation path?	There is a clear evacuation path that is behind you as you fight the fire.	The fire is not contained, and fire, heat, or smoke may block the evacuation path.

The following steps should be followed when responding to small fires:

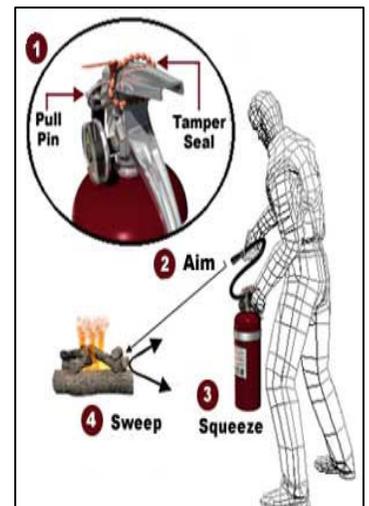
- ✦ Sound the fire alarm and call the fire department, if appropriate.
- ✦ Identify a safe evacuation path before approaching the fire. Do not allow the fire, heat, or smoke to come between you and your evacuation path.
- ✦ Discharge the extinguisher within its effective range using the P.A.S.S. technique (pull, aim, squeeze, and sweep).
- ✦ Back away from an extinguished fire in case it flares up again.
- ✦ Evacuate immediately if the extinguisher is empty and the fire is not out.
- ✦ Evacuate immediately if the fire progresses beyond the small stage.

1. **PULL...** Pull the pin. This will also break the tamper seal.
2. **AIM...** Aim low, pointing the extinguisher nozzle (or its horn or hose) at the base of the fire.

Note: Do not touch the plastic discharge horn on CO2 extinguishers, it gets very cold and may damage skin.

3. **SQUEEZE...** Squeeze the handle to release the extinguishing agent.
4. **SWEEP...** Sweep from side to side at the base of the fire until it appears to be out. Watch the area.

If the fire re-ignites, repeat steps 2 - 4.



If you have the slightest doubt about your ability to fight a fire....EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY!



Chaplain's Corner

By Chap. (Maj.) Nana Bassaw
2nd BCT Chaplain



Acceptance vs. Criticism

Margaret raced into the classroom after recess—she was late again! Ms. Garner, the teacher, was furious—shouting, “Margaret, we have been waiting for you! Get up here to the front of the class, right now!”

Margaret walked slowly to the front of the classroom and was told by the teacher to face everyone—the worst day of her life had begun.

Ms. Garner went off, “Boys and girls, Margaret has been a bad girl. I have tried to help her to be responsible, but, apparently, she doesn’t want to learn. So we must teach her a lesson. We must force her to face what a selfish person she has become. I want each of you to come to the front of the room, take a piece of chalk, and write something bad about Margaret on the blackboard. Maybe this experience will motivate her to become a better person!”

One by one the students came to the blackboard to write down their negative criticism of Margaret and one by one they sat down taking a little something of Margaret’s soul with them.

One student wrote, “Margaret is stupid!” another wrote, “Margaret is selfish!” another, “Margaret is fat!” Twenty-five students came to that blackboard that day! When they were done, collectively they filled the board with only one clear message, “Margaret, you are worthless—we hate you!” (*Messy Spirituality*, Michael Yaconelli, p. 45-47)

Twenty-five statements changed one young girl’s life for the next forty years.

In marriages and in our places of work

today it is too easy to be too “honest” and tell our loved ones and co-workers, “What we really think.”

Slowly but surely that chalkboard fills up, line-by-line, until that one message is spoken loud and clear—“You are worthless—I don’t like you.” Judgment and criticism are the most damning words that can ever be said—therefore, they should be used only when surrounded with the greatest of love and acceptance.

One’s love and their acceptance of the other should never be in doubt after a critical word is spoken.

We all know that this is not a perfect world and our partners and co-workers sometimes bring into the mix some awfully destructive behaviors. Filling the blackboard with words of hatred simply does not work—it never has and it never will.

Words of encouragement and criticisms stated in complete love go far in correcting those bad behaviors in our loved ones—both spouse and children alike. I believe that this is exactly what each and every one of use desires the most—to be loved unconditionally!



Striker Justice

By Maj. Laura Calese
2nd BCT Judge Advocate



Justice on the Move

The 2BCT 1AD BOLT (Brigade Operational Law Team) runs a consolidated legal office at FOB Hammer, Iraq.

Soldiers living at COPS and Patrol Bases throughout the AO can come to the FOB to receive legal assistance on a variety of issues.

However, it is not always easy or convenient for Soldiers to make it to FOB Hammer.

That is why the BOLT takes their services on the road. In the last month, the Officers and Soldiers of the 2BCT BOLT have made several trips to support Iron Brigade Soldiers and the Brigade's Mission.

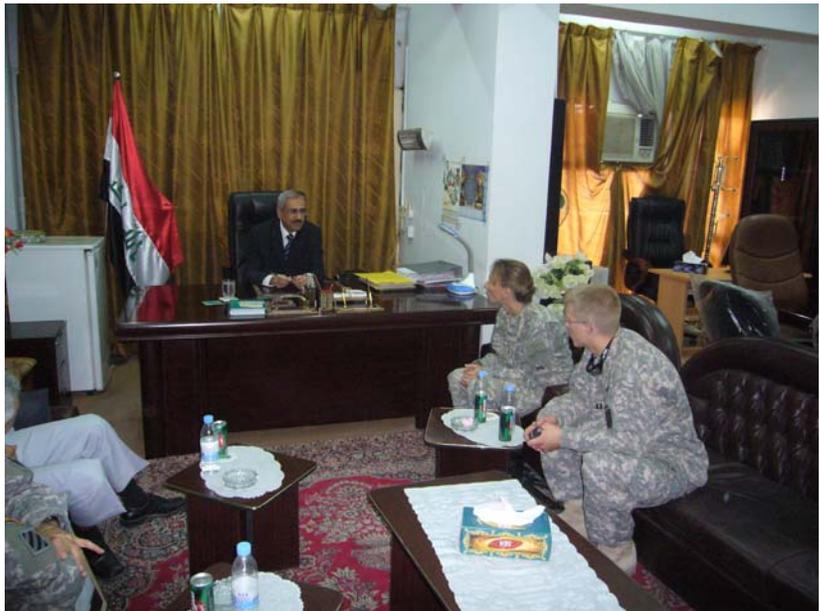
Capt. Jamie Rodriguez and Spc. Ciaran Cupples traveled down to Patrol Base Assassin and COP Cashe South to see legal assistance clients and complete powers of attorney. Several Soldiers from TF Knight took advantage of this opportunity, including one Soldier that applied for the expedited Citizenship processing that he is eligible for due to his deployment status.

Capt. Bradley Crockett and Staff Sgt. Melker Johansson traveled to COP Cahill to interview witnesses for a case set to be heard by the Central Criminal Court of Iraq. While they were there, Staff Sgt. Johansson was able to complete powers of attorneys for the Soldiers of G troop and C Company 2-6 Infantry. Capt. Crockett and Sgt. Natasha Stevens also interviewed witnesses in the TF Knight AO, to prepare them to testify at CCCI.

MAJ Laura Calese attended a Rule of Law Conference in Baghdad with other lawyers to discuss how to further develop the Iraqi Criminal Justice system into an effective, fair and self-sustaining system. She also attended several engagements with Iraqi Judges at various levels to discuss the progress in our region in establishing the rule of law.

Finally, Sgt 1st Class Mines went on a claims mission to pay an Iraqi citizen whose vehicle was damaged in a traffic accident with one of our convoys. In addition to ensuring the individual was properly compensated, Sgt 1st Class Mines was able to build good will with the local population by interacting with the kids in the area.

The Brigade Operational Law Team continues its mission to support Iron Brigade Soldiers and Command to build the rule of law throughout the Striker AO.



Doctor's Desk

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



Buffing up without falling out

Iron Brigade Soldiers have set a wide variety of personal goals to accomplish during this deployment—from learning to play the guitar to completing an online degree.

Some Soldiers are hitting the gym for two-a-day workouts to come back in better shape than when they left.

Gaining muscle and losing fat is to be commended, as long as it's done the healthy way. A number of Soldiers are turning to over-the-counter supplements to give them an added edge in their workout. Soldiers see the short-term results they can get from these supplements, but often fail to see the health risks that come along with them.

Several years have passed since the FDA banned ephedra, an adrenaline-like stimulant that has the potential to cause heart damage. That does not mean that other products left on the market are "safe" though.

The FDA does not regulate how supplements are manufactured or test their health effects in a lab like they do with prescription drugs. In fact, major health risks linked to supplements are often discovered after years of being marketed (as was the case with ephedra).

What are the risks?

The most common over-the-counter supplements contain some combination of caffeine, amino acids, minerals such as chromium, and plant extracts. Any of these can damage the body if used in the wrong dose or combination.

One of the biggest health risks linked to supplements is dehydration. Caffeine and several of the common plant extracts are diuretics, causing you to lose more fluid through increased urine production. Add to that the sweat loss from the work out—and the 110 degree Iraqi weather—and Soldiers can easily become heat casualties.

Kidney damage is another major risk. This is partly due to the dehydration effects, but it is also directly caused by the chemicals themselves. Athletes using supplements are much more likely to develop kidney stones and kidney damage that can result in secondary problems like high blood pressure.

Soldiers with other health problems or ones who take medications are at an even higher risk when using exercise supplements. Prescription medications can cross-react with the chemicals in the supplements and lead to a number of unintended consequences.

Is there a safe way to use supplements?

The safest way to buff up is the old-fashioned way: regular weight training, drinking lots of fluid, and eating natural protein—such as tuna, eggs, and cheese—to build muscle fibers.

However, if an athlete insists on using other over-the-counter supplements, they should never exceed the recommended amount on the label, and should always check with their physician or PA first—especially if they have other health problems or are taking prescription medications already. And plan on drinking 1-2 extra liters of water per day, beyond the 4-5 liters that we all should be drinking to beat the heat here in Iraq.



STRIKER TORCH NEWS TEAM

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The Striker Torch welcomes submissions of :
articles, comic strips or artwork, and photographs. Please email articles in Microsoft Word and send photos as JPEGs (Please do not send photos embedded in PowerPoint and Word)

If you would like a copy of this issue go online to the 2BCT homepage and download it.
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