

# The Ivy Leaf

Established in 1917 to honor those who serve

VOL. 2, NO. 22

MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION - BAGHDAD

“STEADFAST AND LOYAL”

October 13, 2008

## 4th Inf. Div., MND-B Soldiers safeguard Iraqi's Maj. Gen. Hammond: 'Protecting the Iraqi people is our number-one priority'



Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Kelvin Surgener, combat camera, attached to 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Sgt. Vicente Ayala, a combat medic from San Antonio, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, scans his sector as patrons wait in line Aug. 19, at a local gas station in the Abu T'shir community of southern Baghdad.

### By Sgt. Maj. Eric Lobsinger MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – The efforts of the Soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, along with their partners from the Iraqi Security Forces, have been bearing fruit and are clearly evident as the 4th Inf. Div. enters its tenth month at the helm of MND-B.

Their combined efforts have led to safer and more secure neighborhoods for the people of Iraq as the populace strives for a return to normalcy in the capital city.

“Protecting the population is our number-one mission – as directed by Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond,” said Col. Allen Batschelet, the chief of staff for the 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B, in speaking of the guidance provided by the division’s commanding general. “Protecting the population is our first and most essential task.”

To accomplish this, the division has the vital tasks of ensuring the brigade combat teams are provided the resources, the personnel, the equipment and the funding that they need in order to be successful, explained Batschelet.

See **Soldiers Protect** pg. 17.



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

Staff Sgt. Arto Brown, a cavalry scout assigned to 1st Platoon, Troop C, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, transports a landmine to another room of an abandoned house after finding a cache of 10 while conducting a security patrol Aug. 21 in the Abu T'shir neighborhood of southern Baghdad.

## Warrior Iftar dinner brings aloha spirit to Muslim culture

By Ken Griffin

2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The Warrior Brigade continued its tradition of eliminating cultural divides by hosting an Iftar dinner for Iraqi Security Force leaders at the Command Sgt. Maj. Cooke Dining Facility at Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad, Sept. 21.

Col. Todd McCaffrey, commander, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and other senior leaders hosted Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and National Police commanders during the traditional meal, which Muslims have at the end of daily fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. The meal is traditionally shared as a community, with Muslims breaking the fast together right after Maghrib, or sunset.

“The colonel ate dates and drank water to break the fast, just like one of us,”

said Iraqi National Police Col. Ahmed Mohammed Mohammed Saleh, commander, 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, referring to the Holy Quran verse: “When one of you breaks his fast, he should do so with dates for they provide blessing, but if he cannot get any, he should break his fast with water for it is purifying.”

After traditional prayers, the ISF commanders joined McCaffrey, his battalion commanders and other key leaders and advisors in the DFAC to begin the meal. McCaffrey kicked things off by welcoming his guests.

“Thank you, to our Iraqi partners. It’s our honor to be able to entertain you,” McCaffrey said. “Ramadan is a holy time for people in Iraq, and during this time, we’re learning more about your culture ... it’s an honor to serve with you and have you leaders here.”

An Iraqi cultural advisor worked with the DFAC’s head chef to prepare foods traditionally appropriate for such a meal. Those attending piled their plates with tomato-stuffed cabbage rolls, Kabuli rice, beef kabob, pita bread, tabouli, crab-stuffed trout and more.

“The dinner was very beautiful,” commented IA Staff Gen. Ya’arub Mahdi Hassan al Khafaji, commander, 34th Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, as he spoke with other commanders on the patio.

See **Iftar dinner** pg. 10

“Ramadan is a holy time for people in Iraq, and during this time, we’re learning more about your culture ... it’s an honor to serve with you and have you leaders here.”

Col. Todd McCaffrey  
commander  
2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

## MND-B Soldiers take cultural awareness onto streets of Baghdad

By Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger  
18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – “Kalo,” said the instructor in an Iraqi dialect to ten Soldiers who spontaneously began searching through their notes.

“Your mom’s brother,” answered one of the students.

“Correct,” said the instructor, as the class continued. “Next word, ‘Abn Amme.’”

A student instantly responded with “Your

cousin from your dad’s side of the family.”

This word familiarization exercise lasted for approximately another ten minutes or more Sept. 19 during the 716th Military Police Battalion’s cultural awareness class, which teaches anywhere from ten to twenty Police Transition Team Soldiers a week on various subjects pertaining to Iraqi culture.

The instructor, Fred Fachou, an interpreter with the battalion and a native of Troy, Mich.,

teaches the 10-week class.

“They use what I teach here while conducting their daily Police Transition Team missions at Iraqi Police stations,” said Fachou, who lived in Iraq his entire life before moving to the United States in 1977.

“I teach them a lot of the basics because that is what they use every day at the stations to communicate.”

The course, which consists of forty hours

of classroom instruction, educates students about the Iraqi language: how to use and recognize the Iraqi number system, how to recognize and pronounce Iraqi time, how to refer to someone’s relatives in Arabic and how to pronounce days of the week in Arabic. It also focuses on teaching the Soldiers Iraqi customs and traditions in order for the Soldiers to have better situational awareness while on mission.

See **Culture Awareness** pg. 7

The Ivy Leaf **Commentary / Editorials**

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Baghdad

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3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

CAB, 4th Inf. Div.

2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

18th MP Bde.

926th Eng. Bde.

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Submissions should be sent to the Editor at [jody.metzger@mnd-b.army.mil](mailto:jody.metzger@mnd-b.army.mil) or the Public Affairs Chief at [eric.d.lobsinger@mnd-b.army.mil](mailto:eric.d.lobsinger@mnd-b.army.mil) and include author's name, rank, unit and contact information.

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## 4th Inf. Div. leaders focus Town Hall meeting in memory of 9/11



Photo by Spc. Douglas York, MND-B PAO

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Bobb (left), a native of Killeen, Texas, who is senior enlisted leader of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad, and Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Dailey, a native of Palmerton, Pa., who is the senior enlisted leader of 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B, host the Ironhorse Division's Town Hall meeting Sept. 25. The meeting honored the victims of Sept. 11, 2001, and the service members who joined the Armed Forces after the events of that day.

### By Spc. Douglas York

MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Anyone old enough to remember the events of Sept. 11, 2001, will likely never be able to put to rest the thoughts, feelings and emotions invoked by the senseless tragedies of that day.

Most will always remember where they were that day and will be able to recount the horror that unfolded - live - before our eyes and the uncertainty that forever changed our nation in the aftermath.

During the Town Hall meeting Sept. 25, which was spearheaded by the efforts, thoughts and leadership of Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, a native of Hattiesburg, Miss., the commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division - Baghdad, the division's senior leaders took the opportunity to remember those who lost their lives on that painful day and honored a few Soldiers who took up their nation's fight against terrorism because of their overwhelming feelings to serve based on those events.

"Our theme today is reflecting on 9/11," Hammond said, opening the meeting. "We're going to look back a little bit, and we're going to talk a little bit about some experiences that members of this team had during 9/11 and why some of these young folks chose to serve their nation following that event," he added, recalling how he also narrowly avoided losing his life when the plane was flown into the Pentagon.

Hammond then turned the floor over to Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia, the 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B senior enlisted leader, a native of Buffalo, N.Y., who introduced the meeting's two guest hosts: Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Bobb, a native of Killeen, Texas, who serves as the senior enlisted leader of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div., based out of Fort Hood, Texas, and Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Dailey, a native of Palmerton, Pa., who is the senior enlisted leader of 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., based out of Fort Carson, Colo.

"I've been truly blessed by a supporting cast of some truly outstanding professional brigade sergeants major," Gioia said. "What makes my job extremely easy when I go into their battle space, is knowing that they are there," he added, giving the floor to the hosts as well as the 9/11 honorees.

The first Soldier to share his experiences was Staff Sgt. Juan Vega, a native of the Bronx, N.Y., currently serving with Company D, 404th Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne), in support

of 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., who is also a former firefighter and medical first responder from the New York City area.

"The morning of Sept. 11, I woke up and looked at the TV set: Tower 2 was on fire," Vega said, doing his best to maintain his emotions. "I quickly got on the phone and called the station, called my Family, called my friends and then donned my uniform and headed outside because I heard the convoys of fire trucks and ambulances heading down to Manhattan, and I hopped on one of the rigs," he added.

Vega went on to paint a picture of horror and terror as he described running for his life, trying to rescue people while the twin towers came crashing down on or around himself and his fellow rescue workers.

"Hell gave New York City a visit," Vega said.

Following Vega's remarks, 1st Lt. Patrick Dowdell, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., who serves as platoon leader with 3rd Platoon, Battery A, 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., attached to 101st Airborne Div.,

MND-B, shared his experiences and explained why he joined the Army following 9/11.

"I decided I wanted to deploy seven years ago, after 9/11, and am glad I finally made it over here," Dowdell said. "My father was a 21-year veteran of the New York City Fire Department, who was killed on 9/11. I worked with the men from his firehouse at Ground Zero as part of the recovery effort in

the months following Sep. 11," he added, noting that he loves his job in the Army and how proud he is of his Soldiers.

Next up were two brothers, originally from Las Vegas, who come from a military background and felt it their duty to their nation to serve in the wake of that dark day.

"We enlisted in the U.S. Army in May of 2004 after the attacks of Sept. 11," said Sgt. Marquis Walker, who serves in the Honor Guard, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Inf. Div., and with the division commandant section. "After the attacks, it became clear that we should serve our nation in some way because both of our parents served in the Army as well - establishing a tradition of service to country in my brother and I," Walker

added, speaking about himself and his brother standing next to him, Sgt. Tarius Walker, who is a medic with 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Shifting the focus of the meeting to a couple of current and ongoing events in Baghdad, Bobb and Dailey introduced Lt. Col. David Ristedt, a native of Logansport, Ind., who serves as the division surgeon with 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B, who in turn introduced Dr. Jalil al Shumari, who is the director general for health in the Karkh district of Baghdad.

"He is responsible for the healthcare management of the entire population on the southern and western side of Baghdad, covering about four million people," Ristedt said, turning the floor over to Dr. al Shumari, who candidly spoke about the status of healthcare and healthcare facilities in the area as well as the country as a whole.

"These hospitals and medical centers are only enough to provide 30 percent of the Iraqi health needs, and this is because of the neglect of Saddam's regime," al Shumari said. "For example, since 1985, there has not been a single hospital built all over Iraq."

However, al Shumari was quick to point out the successes that have been made since Saddam was removed from power.

Which have returned to Iraq, especially after the improvement of the security,"

See Town Hall pg. 3

## Town Hall meeting remembers 9/11

*Continued from page 2*

"Since the fall of Saddam, we have built 124 new medical centers, and the plan is to build 130 medical centers per year until we reach the goal of 3,000. There are more than 1,000 doctors and pharmacists, whe said.

Ristedt and al Shumari were both quick to cite the reasons for the improvements and gave the proper credit where it was due.

"There is support from the Government of Iraq to enhance the health situation in Iraq, and we would like to thank America for its continuous support to the Iraqi people, and my special thanks to (Maj.) Gen. Hammond and his medical team for their continuing support," al Shumari said.

Following al Shumari, the meeting's final special guest was introduced: Mr. Bruce Everson, a native of Townsville, which is located in Queensland, Australia. Everson is the manager of the Oasis Water Treatment Plant on Camp Victory and spoke about his company's efforts in supporting and providing fresh water for the troops.

"We produce an average 420,000 to 450,000 bottles of purified water per day, 365 days per year," Everson said. "Our water that we purify comes from the Tigris River through a number of canals and then finally into what we call Z Lake," he added, going into detail about the purification process.

Following Everson, Bobb and Dailey continued the 4th Inf. Div. Town Hall tradition of providing members of the audiences at Fort Hood and Fort Carson the opportunity to ask questions to the division's leadership. The questions, answered by the appropriate subject-matter experts best suited to provide the most accurate answers, were mostly regarding redeployment issues ranging from block leave timeframes to the pending move of the division to Fort Carson.

Despite the updates from al Shumari, Ristedt and Everson, and the question and answer period, the meeting definitely belonged to its 9-11 honorees, and Bobb, Dailey and Hammond took special care to recognize them and their peers in their closing remarks.

"The young men and women – our Soldiers – are doing a tremendous job. They've made significant progress just in the last six months, helping the Iraqi people rebuild their neighborhoods, their businesses and return to their homes," Bobb said.

"It is truly rewarding to witness the efforts of our Soldiers as they transition security and provide a safe and peaceful life to the Iraqi people," Dailey added. "You should be very proud of the job your Soldiers are doing over here every day. I can tell you that the Soldiers are doing great."

Hammond finished the meeting flanked by the four honorees.

"These are your nation's credentials. Somewhere in their lives, they were raised by parents, who turned out some pretty good kids – men of character and moral courage. I thank God for their service, and I thank God that he chose to bless our wonderful nation with the wonderful men and women like these guys here."

While the troops of the 4th Inf. Div. remain "steadfast and loyal" to their duties, the people of Iraq, and most importantly their Families – they, like most of us, will never forget the real reasons they are serving here.

## Nothing is magical about 'Spiritual fitness'

**By Capt. Timothy Meier**  
Chaplain, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.

In the last two issues of "The Ivy Leaf," I've suggested that the Army expects Soldiers to be physically "fit to fight" and to be spiritually fit as well in order to thrive – and not just survive – in the midst of a war zone. I've proposed that engaging in simple spiritual exercises can do for our spirits what physical exercise can do for our bodies. Something as ordinary as breathing can become a spiritual exercise as can something as seemingly mundane as reading – spiritual reading.

We measure our physical fitness using the metrics of the APFT, but there's no agreed-upon metric for gauging our spiritual fitness. However, we can get a good sense of how well we're doing spiritually by looking at how we react to resentments.

I know I'm not in a good spiritual place if I'm letting others "live rent-free in my brain." That's what I call it when I wake up in the middle of the night because I'm angry with what he or she said or did. When I can't let go of perceived wrongs, when I'm trapped by feelings of wanting vengeance or retribution – that's what resentment does to me.

Ironically, I can wind up becoming so much like the people I'm angry at. It means they've won. It is not healthy. I deserve better than that. The people who love me deserve better than me becoming someone I'm not.

That's where a simple spiritual exercise can come into play. It's a short prayer that works. I just have to do it daily for three to four weeks. There is nothing magical about the number of days; I just need to keep praying it daily until I come to realize that I'm willing to pay whatever price is necessary to be freed from the resentment. This usually takes some time. I've found it usually takes about three weeks.

Here's the prayer: "God, please grant this person every good gift I could wish for myself or those I love most."

After about the first week of doing it, I start using the person's name. At about the beginning of the third week, I actually mean what I'm saying. I've gotten to the point of being willing to accept that if something good should befall this person because of this prayer, I'm at peace with that because I'm so ready to be free of the resentment.

In the Christian scriptures, Jesus admonishes his followers to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44).

The only effective means for evicting someone from living rent-free in my brain I've found is through prayer. That's why this is a spiritual exercise.

Take the time to deal with your anger and learn this important spiritual exercise of dealing with your anger. Do not let resentment build and pray for those who anger you.



**Al Faw Palace**

Courtesy photo

## Word on the Street:

*What do miss most about home during the autumn season?*

**By Sgt. Whitney Houston**  
MND-B PAO



**Spc. Aubrey Rose**  
Hartford, Conn.  
1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

"It's leaf watching season, when all the leaves start changing colors on Connecticut's hilly countryside."



**Staff Sgt. Daniel Dever**  
Hopkins, Mich.  
3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

"Football. I'm a huge Michigan fan. Go blue! I hate not being able to go to the games."



**Pfc. Christopher Hays**  
Atlanta, Ga.  
1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

"I miss the weather. It's cool and it makes it more tolerable when I'm turning wrenches on vehicles."



**Spc. Tony Kirk**  
Canton, Ohio  
1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

"I surf the internet and call my Family during down time."

# News briefs

## Ghost Squadron Soldiers detain suspected criminal in Rashid

**1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.**

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers detained a suspected criminal Oct. 1 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

At approximately 1:30 a.m., Soldiers from Troop C, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, were conducting a mission in the area and detained a suspected criminal in the Abu T'shir community.

The suspect was taken to a combat outpost for further questioning.

"This is good work by the Soldiers of the Ghost Squadron," said Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT Spokesman, 4th Inf. Div.

"The Raider Brigade Soldiers continue to pressure the enemy with a 24-hour presence in the communities and neighborhoods maintaining security for the Iraqi people as the religious Muslim month of Ramadan comes to a close."

## IA sacrifice lives to save lives, prevent greater tragedy in suicide VBIED attack

**4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.**

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Army soldiers valiantly defended and saved the lives of hundreds worshipping at a local mosque by preventing an attack in the Karadah district of eastern Baghdad Oct. 2.

In an attempt to destroy the mosque, the extremist drove the vehicle-borne improvised-explosive device into an IA checkpoint and killed a civilian and two Iraqi Army soldiers.

The attack wounded 24 civilians and an IA Soldier. The explosion is believed to have originated from a vehicle carrying approximately 200 pounds of explosives.

"Reports indicate that the militant's original objective was the destruction of the Al Rasul Mosque, targeting the Shia Eid celebrations," said Maj. Joey Sullinger, spokesperson for 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division.

However the presence of the IA at the security checkpoint is believed to have prevented the criminal from detonating at the mosque, he added.

"The sacrifice made by the Iraqi Army soldiers potentially saved all the worshipers lives in the mosque, despite the casualties of today's attack," said Sullinger.

"We offer our condolences to the Iraqi citizens and to our IA partners, who have sacrificed and suffered from this horrific attack, and we encourage all Iraqi people to stand together in helping the Government of Iraq bring these criminals to justice."



## Officials open Al Naitakeen school for girls in Baghdad's Al Amin area



Photo by Sgt. Jeremy Todd, 4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

Students of Al Naitakeen all-girls school in Baghdad's Al Amin neighborhood line up to sing for and offer thanks to 9 Nissan district council members during the official opening of the school Sept. 29.

**By Sgt. Jeremy Todd**

*4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (L) PAO*

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq – Schoolgirls, their parents and New Baghdad government officials celebrated the opening of the Al Naitakeen primary school for girls Sept. 29 in the eastern Baghdad area of Al Amin.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held to commemorate the opening of the school, which caters to underprivileged girls, which will open its doors for students and teachers to begin a new school year in October.

Hato Abdul Hassan, 9 Nissan district council chairman, and Abd Al Zahra, district council education chairman, headed a list of dignitaries who performed the honor of officially opening the school.

When school starts, the day begins at 8 a.m. and children go home at 3 p.m. Sadah, the English teacher at Al Naitakeen, said the school is a nice building and although everything is not yet in place, the students are not going to express displeasure.

"They just aren't accustomed to such amenities," expressed Sadah. "And as long as they are learning, they won't ever complain."

Dhalia, an 11-year-old Al Naitakeen student, said she enjoys both mathematics and reading classes, and shared that she hopes to be a journalist someday.

Another student, 13-year-old Fatima, said she loves to learn, and her favorite class is reading.

"I am so happy to finally be allowed in school, especially one so close to my home," expressed Fatima.

Construction on the school began in March but was disrupted a few times due to extremist activity in the area.

However, work on the school promptly resumed when Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces cleaned up the neighborhood.

Zahra said schools such as this one offer an opportunity for children to stay busy shaping their futures.

He thanked Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces for their diligence in providing security.

## Raider Soldiers arrest suspected criminals

**1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.**

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers detained two suspected criminals Oct. 3 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

At approximately 2 a.m. in the Jaza'ir community, Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B, detained a suspected manufacturer of car bombs.

The patrol delivered the suspect to a Coalition Forces base for processing.

Later, at approximately 10 a.m., Soldiers from Troop C, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., detained a suspected rocketeer and mortarman during a patrol through the Abu T'shir area.

The patrol returned to a Coalition Forces combat outpost with the suspect to conduct additional questioning.

"The 1st 'Raider' Brigade continues to take the fight to the enemy alongside their counterparts, the Iraqi Security Forces, to keep the Iraqi people safe and allow the Government of Iraq the freedom to operate," said Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT spokesman.

"With the cooperation of Iraqi citizens, our Soldiers are helping to rid the streets of criminals and violence."

## IA, NP, MND-B Soldiers seize weapons cache

**MND-B PAO**

BAGHDAD – Iraqi soldiers, Iraqi policemen and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers seized weapons caches in the Baghdad Sept. 30.

Based on a tip from a local citizen, soldiers serving with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, and MND-B Soldiers serving with Company B, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), found a cache buried in a 55-gallon drum in the Kadhamiyah district of Baghdad at approximately 9 a.m. The munitions included five PKCs, three AK-47s, and 18 bags of small armament parts.

Soldiers serving with Commandos Company, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, found two half-buried 120mm Russian-manufactured artillery rounds west of Baghdad at approximately 8:30 p.m.

"Concerned Iraqi citizens and their security forces continue to step forward and do their part in removing these weapons that threaten the Iraqi populace," said Lt. Col. Steve Stover, spokesman, Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 4th Infantry Division. "Together, with our Iraqi Security force counterparts, the Soldiers of MND-B committed to the safety and security of the Iraqi people, especially during the Eid al-Fitr period."



## 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

## Sons of Iraq meet with Iraqi Security Force leaders to clarify changeover



Photo by Spc. Katrina Faulkner-Brown, 4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

Iraqi Maj. Gen. Abdulakreem Abdulrahman Al-Izi, commander of Rusafa Area Command and 1st National Police Division, addresses Sons of Iraq leaders at 1st NP Div. headquarters in eastern Baghdad, Sept. 21.

**By Spc. Katrina Faulkner-Brown**  
4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (L)

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Sons of Iraq and Iraqi Security Force leaders met at 1st National Police Division headquarters in eastern Baghdad Sept. 20 to discuss transitioning the SoI to Government of Iraq control.

Historically, SoI is an organization of volunteers, formerly known as Concerned Local Citizens, who provide security in their neighborhoods to protect people from criminals, militants and other anti-Iraqi forces. Subsequently, Coalition Forces paid SoI members for their hard work and dedication in securing their neighborhoods. And now, the GoI has incorporated SoI into the ISF and government service.

Iraqi Maj. Gen. Abdulkreem Abdulrahman Al-Izi, commander of Rusafa Area Command and 1st NP Div., said Oct. 1 will be the first time SoI will be paid through the Iraqi government. He explained that ISF officials wanted to meet with SoI leaders to discuss the details of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's order to integrate the SoI, which the GoI passed recently. Before the meeting, many questions and rumors remained concerning the placement of and payment to SoI members.

"We want to show that we are working with the SoI to coordinate our work with them," commented Abdulrahman.

Iraqi Maj. Gen. Qasim Jasim Nazzal, 9th Iraqi Army Division commander, and Dr. Tahswen Al-Shakhalyw,

Baghdad security plan leader, attended the meeting in a show of support for the GoI accepting SoI into their ranks.

According to an agenda read at the meeting, organizers' goals included addressing answered questions, squashing rumors and assuring SoI leaders the government does not want to deceive them.

"Gen. Kreem (Abdulrahman), as an Iraq commander, was laying out expectations to all the SoI leadership, as the Government of Iraq assumes control of the SOI programs," said Lt. Col. Richard Gledhill, a Gulf Breeze, Fla. native and ISF brigade coordinator assigned to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light). "It went very well because he's clearly articulating what the prime minister has put out in the order he was referencing today. And, he's trying to address the concerns that the individual (SoI) leaders may have."

One SoI leader asked for clarity concerning rumors about the GoI hiring and immediately firing SoI from the positions the Iraqi government are giving them as a reward for their service to Iraq. He said he heard only 20 percent would be hired to work with the ISF and everyone else in the SoI would be unemployed.

Abdulrahman explained that the prime minister's order outlines that 20 percent of the SoI will work with the ISF and 80 percent will be employed with the civilian Iraqi government as a reward for their efforts as long as they have not committed crimes against innocent Iraqis.

## Infantryman exemplifies 'Follow Me!' motto, accepts added responsibility

**By 4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.**

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – U.S. Soldiers in combat stepping up and assuming leadership roles beyond their rank is nothing new. Initiative and the willingness to accept greater responsibility are hallmarks of American foot Soldiers embodied in the infantry motto, "Follow Me!"

As an infantryman assigned to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, Sgt. Matthew Puttman has upheld this proud tradition through undergoing the transition from team leader to squad leader twice during the "Wild Boars" deployment sup-



Photo by 1st Lt. Brandon Trama, 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

Sgt. Matthew Puttman (left), an infantryman from Terre Haute, Ind., inspects Spc. Jeffrey Zabawa's weapon in their barracks Sept. 20.

porting Operation Iraqi Freedom 07-09. After his first squad leader redeployed early to deal with Family concerns, the Terre Haute, Ind., native, stepped up to the plate on a temporary basis.

"During Puttman's first stint as squad leader, there's no question that he demonstrated the maturity and proficiency required to not only lead a squad into combat but also to excel," commented 1st Lt. Brandon Trama, platoon leader of 3rd Platoon from Colchester, Conn., adding that among other company personnel moves, Puttman returned to his fire team.

When Puttman's second squad leader was sent home after suffering a non-combat injury, he stepped back into the role of squad leader, this time permanently.

Puttman has distinguished himself both inside and outside the wire since taking over as 1st Squad leader in July and was responsible for creating the Chaos Company Ironman Challenge, a grueling test of Soldiers' strength, speed and endurance that boosted esprit de corps, explained Trama.

Puttman has directly and unmistakably contributed to platoon and company tactical successes. During a company-level raid with multiple urban objectives, he was responsible for leading 1st Squad in breaching and clearing a house that an active member of a dangerous insurgent improvised-explosive device cell occupied. The squad rapidly entered the house and detained the criminal – a feat which Trama attributes, in large part, to Puttman's tactical proficiency.

"I'm extremely proud of the guys' performance," commented Puttman, quickly crediting his Soldiers for the squad's success, "They maintained absolute control over our objective."

However, his biggest contribution as a squad leader comes in the form of developing his subordinates, both as Soldiers and as citizens. From mentoring Soldiers in marksmanship to helping complete absentee ballot request forms for the upcoming election, Puttman demonstrates an unwavering commitment to the growth and well-being of his Soldiers.

## National Police CSM presented \$1,000 award from Team ISF partners

**By Sgt. Grant Okubo**  
4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (L)

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from Team Iraqi Security Forces presented a \$1,000 reward to a senior enlisted National Police leader at Joint Security Station Beladiyah Sept. 18.

Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, presented the award to Iraqi Command Sgt. Maj. Ali Mahdi Muhammad, 8th Bde. 2nd NP Div., for his exemplary work as a leader of his ISF unit.

"No one is more deserving of this reward than Command

Sgt. Maj. Ali (Madhi Muhammad)," said 1st Sgt. Brian Disque, a Philadelphia native, from Company C, 2nd Bn., 30th Inf. Regt. "I consider him my equal in every way. He definitely earned this."

Muhammad is a great leader and a tremendous example for other National Policemen, said Disque, who works closely with Muhammad and has developed a great working relationship with him and the NP. Disque also noted the amount of growth NP have made and attributed a lot of that to Muhammad's leadership.

The NPs do not really have an award structure to reward their Soldiers, so offering the monetary award is a good way to make up for that, explained Disque.

The NPs serving under their senior noncommissioned officer were pleased with the acknowledgement of their leader.

"We are proud of our sergeant major," said Iraqi Pvt. Hadier Hazem Muhammad, 8th Bde. 2nd NP Div. "He is a great leader."

Pvt. Muhammad praised his senior enlisted leader for all of his hard work preparing their unit for missions and for always making sure the Soldiers were briefed and well prepared.

"This is not just for our sergeant major, but it's also for us by recognizing all the hard work we are doing," said Pvt. Muhammad.



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

# New school partnership program strengthens ties between US, Iraq

By Staff Sgt. Michael Molinaro  
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad continue to make great strides on the ground with their Iraqi counterparts, partnering with the Iraqi Security Forces to sustain a sense of normalcy in Baghdad. As attacks are at an all-time low since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the division moves to support the securing of Iraq's future.

A new partnership is pairing schools and educators in the U.S. with their brethren here in Baghdad to expand that alliance beyond fighting an enemy and to investing in Baghdad's future.

"Our military leaders are reaching out to schools here and back in the U.S. so that educators can exchange information about the latest techniques and instructional methods," said Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commanding general of MND-B and 4th Inf. Div.

The program was initiated by leaders of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), MND-B. Hammond endorsed the initiative and called for an MND-B-wide program Sept. 24. Its focus is pairing Iraqi schools in Baghdad with schools in the U.S. to share information teaching techniques and to develop pen pals between students. Right now, 19 schools have partnered up.

"Children are no different in any country," said Lt. Col. Gerry Messmer, MND-B civil military operations officer and native of Interlaken, N.Y. "They want a good education and to grow up to be successful. At MND-B, we understand this and believe children of all ages can benefit from a partnership to enhance their educational experience. We have so many things to learn from each other about education, techniques and policies, as well as culturally."

The Ministry of Education supported the idea and assisted MND-B in determining schools to get the program up and running. Members of the Killeen Independent School District have been very receptive to the program, said Hammond, a Hattiesburg, Miss. native. A similar program exists between 4th Inf. Div. units and schools in and around Killeen. Now the program wants to expand on a much grander scale.

"The goals are to share information, help each other understand the others country culturally and to help U.S. schools get supplies to Baghdad schools that need supplies," said Messmer.



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

Capt. Kris Howell, the commander of Troop C, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, speaks with a local leader before the opening of the newly refurbished al Nahreen Primary School and Muath bin Jabal Secondary School in the Abu T'shir community of southern Baghdad's Rashid district.

Ministry of Education personnel let it be known that there is a lack of books available for students to learn English. As word began to spread about the program, an English training aide and supply donation drive was conducted in Nebraska, Wisconsin and Virginia.

English, math and science books were collected and shipped from Fort Campbell, Ky., to Camp Liberty for distribution to students in the partnered schools.

While citizens all across the country are beginning to believe in the program, Soldiers from MND-B and the 4th Inf. Div. have been hard at work ensuring the children of Baghdad have good schools they can attend.

MND-B has assisted the MoE in building or remodeling more than 350 school projects since December at a cost of more than \$47 million, Messmer said.

They share dialogue to ensure Iraqi standards are met and

the qualities of the schools are as good as any you will find in the United States.

Coalition Forces rebuild schools and enhance the education opportunities for Iraqi children since the start of the war. Through this partnership, MND-B is now taking it another step further to make certain that children and educators of the two countries are linked forever.

"I have two teenage children, so education is big with me," Hammond remarked.

"These new relationships will encourage children to share ideas and experiences which are common to all children everywhere. These new friendships will last through time and strengthen the bonds between our people and our nations."

For those interested in establishing a linkage with a school can email [school@mnd-b.army.mil](mailto:school@mnd-b.army.mil) for more information on how to be part of something special.

## NCO builds new internet café for Raider MWR



Pfc. John Beckett, from Buffalo, N.Y., surfs the net Sept. 24 inside a new internet café at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation facility on Forward Operating Base Falcon, Iraq. Beckett serves as a multichannel transmission systems operator with Company B, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. He said the new internet cafe is a convenience for him because he does not own a personal computer.

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

BAGHDAD — Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers have a new place to "surf the net" and call Family and friends at home thanks to the individual efforts of a 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division noncommissioned officer deployed to Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad's Rashid district.

The "Raider" Brigade's Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Gonzalez, the communications NCO in charge for the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., unveiled 20 desktop computers, eight phones and five webcams at the Falcon Morale, Welfare and Recreation facility Sept. 16.

With only two small internet cafes on the forward operating base, there were enough Soldiers, Airmen and Sailors to warrant another, said Gonzalez.

Before the 1st BCT began its current mission to support the security and stability of the Rashid district in southern Baghdad, the previous unit began construction of wooden cubicles for the internet and phones but was unable to complete the café before redeploying, stated Gonzalez.

Due to the number of units who operate from FOB Falcon, Gonzalez said he immediately recognized the need for an additional internet café upon his arrival and spearheaded the effort after initial operations began to slow down.

"I did not have the opportunity to begin work on the internet

café upon arriving in Baghdad," said Gonzalez, a San Antonio native. "Finally, in July, we started work on it."

Gonzalez coordinated a convoy across southern Baghdad to pick up the equipment at another FOB and then returned to the Falcon MWR to set it up.

Since the civilian workers at the MWR cannot be held accountable, Gonzalez said he decided to take full responsibility for the \$35,000 of equipment. Signing for the expensive equipment also provides him ample reason to regularly visit the café.

"Every day I see more and more Soldiers, Airmen and Sailors utilizing the free internet," Gonzalez explained. "It's good to finally see it up and running."

The internet café allows the Soldiers to keep in touch with their Families, said Phyllis Ward, Falcon MWR supervisor.

"We like to offer many things for the Soldiers," explained Ward, who hails from Waynesville, Mo. "When Soldiers are away from home, they like to be able to know what is going on in their Family's life."

Since the MWR has opened, the internet café has assisted more than 300 servicemembers, said Ward.

"This internet café is very convenient," said Pfc. John Beckett, a multichannel transmission systems operator from Buffalo, N.Y., assigned to Company B, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. "I don't have a computer, so I visit two or three times each week."



## First IP media advisors train at Furat IP Training Center



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

Iraqi Police media advisor recruits listen intently during a media class Sept. 23 at the Al Furat Iraqi Police Training Center. The IP recruits were in their first week of advanced individual training of a media course designed to teach them on how to work with the media in order to help communicate the capabilities and mission of the Iraqi Police force.

### By 18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – The inaugural class of 370 Iraqi Police completed their first week of training Sept. 29 in a course designed to teach the future media advisors the duties and responsibilities of how to become the connection between the Iraqi people and the IP organization at the Al Furat Iraqi Police Training Center in Baghdad.

The IP recruits are attending their version of advanced individual training during a media course that mentors them on how to work with the media to help communicate the police force's capabilities and missions.

The ultimate goal is to place at least two media advisors at each station in Baghdad to help station commanders communicate police activities within the city in order to tell the story of the Shurtas.

"There are many good things the Iraqi Police are doing at their stations, and the story is not being told by the IP," said Lt. Col. Michael Indovina, a native of Parma, Ohio, who serves as the public affairs officer with 18th Military Police Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. "The Shurtas and the IP systems have developed two-fold in the past year – now it is time for others to hear it from the IP perspective.

"Hearing these stories from the IP themselves will help increase their credibility and help build trust between the people of Iraq and the police forces."

This media training is the second phase of an eight-week basic IP recruit training at the center. In the first four weeks of the training course, the IP were trained on how to be an Iraqi policeman or "Shurta."

The IP training focused on reviewing basic law enforcement techniques, such as weapons training, combative techniques, structure-clearing techniques, first-aid and defensive maneuvers against small-arms attacks.

During the second phase, which the Shurtas are currently undergoing, the training focuses on a variety of techniques designed to train the students on how to establish a link between the IP station commanders and the communities they live and serve in.

The media and communication training focuses on subjects that include public affairs planning, interpersonal communications, electronic press usage, information strategies, dealing with the media, PA and crime, human rights principals, freedom of expression, crisis communications, news gathering and how to prepare for a press conference.

The training also focuses on informing the people of Baghdad about the IP's capabilities and keeping them informed of the truth of what the IP are doing for the people on a daily basis.

"We are here to help the people as well as help the IP get their messages out to the people," said Aidl Idan, a media advisor student attending the course.

The future IP media advisors will serve to provide an avenue for IP station commanders to keep the public informed.

"We are the bridge that delivers messages from the station commander, to the Ministry of Interior, and then out to the Iraqi people," said Aidl, who majored in media relations in college. In fact, a majority of his fellow classmates have already earned their college degrees as well prior to entering the training.

As the course continued throughout the week, perhaps the key message emphasized to the students pertained to the power of words – and the power of the press.

By keeping the populace informed and keeping them abreast of the facts, it provides them the avenue to address illegal activities and to "use media as a weapon to fight crime," in a manner of speaking, said the representative from Baghdad Media College. However, he added, it is instrumental to ensure that as the Iraqi Police representatives, that they "always seek the truth."

The instructor emphasized that the people of Iraq have a passion to fight crime, and it is the public affairs representative's mission at the station to help them fight that crime by communicating the facts through words and photos.

"We all have a passion against the enemy," said the college representative. "Don't be scared to tell the truth about criminals."

The representative went on to say that religion plays no part when it comes to reporting the truth.

"Our religions have nothing to do with our jobs in the media," said the representative.

In a seminar conducted Sept. 23, a representative from the Ministry of Health provided a block of instruction on the different diseases that are prevalent in Iraq and provided background information on health issues faced by the Iraqi people. For the IP media advisors, the background information could prove vital in helping them to formulate their plans in how to communicate the IP actions during a possible crisis.

Many of the students declared they feel it is their job to report the truth about the IP and, in doing so, they believe they will gain the trust of the Iraqi people.

"The Iraqi people have to trust us," said Aidl. "We are the first source of information, so they need to be able to trust us."

The students explained that before the Coalition Forces liberated Iraq, the people were unaware of the truth of the IP because no one was allowed to report it.

"We are excited to learn so we can better serve the people of Baghdad as media representatives for the IP."

The recruits will continue to press on during their upcoming weeks of media advisor training and are scheduled to graduate from the Al Furat IP Training Center Oct. 24.

## MND-B Soldiers take cultural awareness onto streets of Baghdad

### Continued from page 1

The course provides immediate effects on the unit's mission success by allowing the Soldiers to have better situational awareness through understanding the culture of their IP counterparts.

"The cultural awareness class has a direct impact on the capability of the PTTs mission," said Capt. Nathan Brookshire, commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 716th MP Bn. "Understanding the complex cultural environment the Soldiers work in with the added benefit of communicating in the native language enables the PTTs to build enduring relationships with their IP counterparts."

The course also is a direct impact on the overall IP development mission.

"The relationships created by investing in cultural awareness training increases the battalion's impact on police professionalism and effectiveness," said Brookshire.

The course is taught once a week on Friday, which is normally a day the Soldiers' use to recover from the countless missions during the week. The battalion uses Friday to recover; this works well as it coincides with the Iraqi weekend, which starts on Fridays.

The Soldiers that have attended the class said that applying what they have learned at class has been very beneficial to them when conducting their missions.

"It helps us be able to direct traffic and communicate in Arabic while we are on mission," said Pfc. Vanessa Enos, a military police Soldier, 978th Military Police Company, assigned to the 716th MP Bn.

"The class teaches us the things not to do when dealing with the Iraqi people to make sure we show them the proper courtesies according to their customs."

To help the Soldiers further understand Iraqi customs and courtesies, in one of the recent classes, Fachou taught topics related to Ramadan and customs Soldiers need to be aware of to ensure they display the proper respect to the Iraqi people during the religious observance.

Ramadan is the Muslim religious observance that takes place during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, which is believed to be the month in which the Qur'an was revealed to Angel Gabriel, to deliver it to Prophet Muhammad. It is the Islamic month of fasting (sawm), in which participating Muslims do not eat or drink anything from true dawn until sunset.

During this serious month of worship, it is important for the Soldiers to understand and respect the religious observance of their counterparts.

"We had a class just before Ramadan that told us what not to do when we are out on mission," said Enos. "We would not want to offend any Iraqis during their holy month."

During the cultural class, which meets for a one-hour class per week, it consists of: reviewing homework from the previous week, lessons of verbal communication and writing of different Iraqi words, and reviewing common phrases the Soldiers would most likely use when operating at local IP stations.

"The Soldiers ask what they need to know from the experiences they have had out on missions," said Fachou. "I try to answer all of their questions so they are more prepared the next time they go out."

Soldiers will ask questions like: "Why do Iraqis do this? When is Ramadan over? Would it be disrespectful to do this to an Iraqi?" "Anything they ask me, I tell them what it means in Arabic and how to write it," said Fachou.

"If they ask me something then that means they will use it a lot when they are out there," added Fachou.

The Soldiers then have an opportunity all week to practice their newly learned Arabic as they head out into the streets while conducting PTT operations.

The 716th MP Bn. is deployed from Fort Campbell, Ken., and is currently assigned to the 18th Military Police Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



## 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

# 71 released detainees find homecoming a welcomed reality

By Dan Martin Jr.

2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.

BAGHDAD – A day of reconciliation and celebration came for families in northwest Baghdad when 71 detainees were released during a ceremony at the Um Al-Qura Mosque Sept. 25.

Families from the Kadamiyah, Mansour and Karkh security districts crowded into a courtyard outside the Ghazaliyah neighborhood mosque to catch a glimpse of their loved ones. Escorted by Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces, the walk from the buses into the mosque turned into an impromptu welcome-home procession.

Being showered with candy, waves and shouts from their anxiously waiting families, they took their first steps toward renewed freedom. With one last stop to meet with their guarantor, freedom once again was a reality.

According to Lt. Col. John Hermeling, commander of the 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), these men, released under the care of a guarantor, being freed is a demonstration of the Government of Iraq showing forgiveness. These men were deemed to not be a threat to society and have not officially been charged with a crime by the Iraqi government. Their release will help with the continuing reconciliation process in northwest Baghdad.

Dr. Ahmed Abd Al-Chafoor, Chief of the Court of Sunni Endowment, stated that these men are not a threat to society. He called for the release of all the detainees who have not been charged with crimes and are not a threat to the safety and security of Iraq.

“We want to celebrate today for those released,” said Sheik Mahmud Al-Falahi, Imam of the Farooq Mosque in Hurriyah.

Rushing past guards, and in some cases, pushing their way through, family members could not wait until after the ceremony to welcome their loved ones. Receiving hugs, shedding tears, laughing with, and simple interaction with their families brought smiles to many.

Inside the mosque, many words of wisdom were given to the men by religious and military leaders as they listened to Sunni and Shiite leaders speak of peace among all Iraqis.

In the eyes of Chafoor, these newly-freed men are a large part of the future of Iraq. He called for the Government of Iraq to provide opportunities for these men, giving them a chance to make a positive impact in the community.

Col. Bill Hickman, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), said that it was an honor to see the families reunite and wished them well as they rejoin society.

As a part of the reconciliation of Iraq, reuniting families and taking care of those who were displaced are the main efforts of the Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces, as well as preventing future terrorism. According to the distinguished speakers, one of the most important tasks at hand is to secure the borders to prevent negative influence.

Sheik Salah Al-Haydiry, Chief of the Court of Shiite Endowment, thanked everyone for attending and gave his support to those who were released.

Just as his Sunni counterpart did, he spoke of brotherhood among all Iraqis to work together in bringing safety and security to the country and uniting Iraq as one.

At this historic mosque on this celebrated day, sons, fathers, brothers and husbands became free men once again.



Photo by Dan Martin Jr., 2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.

A recently released detainee holds a small Iraqi child while reuniting with his family following his release at the Um Al-Qura Mosque in the northwest Baghdad neighborhood of Baghdad Sept. 25.

## Ghazaliyah's Sons of Iraq to fall under government authority

By Sgt. Matthew Vanderboegh

1-75th Cav. Regt., 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

BAGHDAD – Soon, hundreds of Ghazaliyah's Sons of Iraq, or Abna' al-Iraq, will come under new management. In an effort to reorganize and integrate these concerned citizens, known locally as the Ghazaliyah Guardians, they will fall solely under the control of the Government of Iraq.

Though the change will be quite transparent to the citizens who cross these volunteers' checkpoints daily, it will have a profound effect on the direction and authority of the region's Iraqi Security Forces.

“Today we are transferring you from American authority to the Iraqi government,” said Capt. Thomas Melton, a native of Shreveport, La., who serves as the commander of Multi-National Division – Baghdad's Troop A, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Squadron, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), explaining to a group of Sons of Iraq Officers. “You will still remain in the GG (Ghazaliyah Guardians) but you will be under Iraqi control. The idea is to transfer you from GG to Iraqi Army in the future.”

The Ghazaliyah Guardians, or simply the “GG,” act as an armed neighborhood watch group. Just as the points on a compass, the GG are divided up into four regions.

In those regions they are largely responsible for internal security of the city by manning various checkpoints and safe houses. They have also served as an alternative for citizens that feel uncomfortable in approaching the Iraqi Army for security issues. As they are comprised of a Sunni majority and the Iraqi Army has a large amount of Shia, they have become a very valuable counterpoint in a city as sectarian mixed as Ghazaliyah.

When asked about how they felt about the trans-

fer to the Government of Iraq control, one of the Ghazaliyah Guardians said, “This is unbelievable. We are glad to go to either the Army or Police. We regret not having signed up for the Iraqi Army. This will be our opportunity to make a greater difference in Ghazaliyah.”

“We do not have any influence or authority as GGs. We can only man checkpoints and did not have any power to patrol the streets or detain criminals,” said another guardian. “The biggest question will be if the Iraqi Army and Iraqi government treat us the same.”

Currently, the transition is in its initial phase, said 1st Lt. Nicolas Caputo, a Boston native who serves with the squadron's

Troop A as the fire support officer.

“The packets will be sent to squadron and then over to the Iraqi Army. The Iraqi Army will select individuals that meet the requirements for enlistment in the Army. The GG will have a choice if they would like to join,” Caputo said. “So far, only a very small amount does not want to work with the Iraqi Army for whatever reason. There are some that are ineligible by Iraqi law because they already receive a paycheck from the Iraqi government. For instance, we have a retired Iraqi Army General that would have to give up his pension in order to serve in the GG. There are plans to try and retain those individuals in some sort of contract or liaison capacity.”

The Iraqi government will give these volunteers a trial period to assess their performance. In the end, most will become incorporated into the Iraqi Army or Iraqi Police force, Caputo added. They will assist in finding those not selected future employment.

However, there will be obstacles as this process continues.

“Initially, there will be rough areas. There is a lot of nervousness, fear and lack of clarity. The GG feel that since they are a Sunni majority and the Iraqi Army are mostly Shia, they doubt that things will be equal,” said Caputo. “The Iraqi Army feels that the GGs are undisciplined and it will take a lot to change that perception.”

The Sons of Iraq in Ghazaliyah have mostly relied on coalition support; however, they will have to operate directly with the Iraqi Army for those issues.

“Both the Iraqi Army and the GGs will have to learn to act in unison to make this work,” said Caputo.

Commander of the south Ghazaliyah Guardians, Col. Suja, noted, “We have been promised a transfer of authority before. It really will be a great thing for the Iraqi people. Now we will be more of a force in the community and bring more of a balance within the Iraqi Army.”



Photo by Sgt. Matthew Vanderboegh, 1-75th Cav., 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

A Multi-National Division Baghdad Soldier assigned to Troop A, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), directs members of a local Sons of Iraq group, known as the Ghazaliyah Guardians, to form a line during an in-processing drive Sept. 19 in Ghazaliyah.

# 'Phoenix' Military Police Platoon races against time

By Sgt. Jerry Saslav

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers have 21 hours to transport a detainee from the time of capture to the division holding area annex. If they are late, the detainee will be released – regardless of the evidence against him. Sometimes, this mission becomes a race against the clock.

“That number (the 21 hours) is the Multi-National Division – Baghdad standard for how long we can hold a detainee,” said Capt. Lillian Woodington, commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

This is the time determined a unit needs to properly process a detainee. The Soldiers follow strict guidelines in order to correctly process the individual. The timeline was put to the test Sept. 21.

“The unit does tactical questioning of the detainees. They have to inventory their evidence and their personal belongings, they have to do sworn statements, fill out detainee packets,” said Woodington.

This takes time, sometimes up to 10 hours, and is included in the 21 hour window. It can take the Military Police Platoon, HHC, 3rd STB, which is responsible for transporting the detainees to the holding area, anywhere from one to two hours to drive to the detainee’s location.

Another of the steps is a thorough medical exam.

“A detainee may have an unknown medical condition, and if a detainee is just sitting in a cell for 48 hours and nobody knows about his medical condition, then that’s just more time for him to get sick,” said Woodington.

During the examination, all injuries are noted and as much background information as is known is also written in the report.

The clock keeps on ticking.

“Sometimes we don’t find out (about a detainee) right away,” said Woodington.

That’s what happened this day.

The MPs had been to this northern Baghdad base earlier that morning when they picked up a detainee who was charged with illegal possession of a weapon and obstructing the performance of a military mission. They asked if there was anyone else. They were told no. The unit headed back with their one detainee.

When a second suspect was picked up at 3 a.m., it took longer than usual to process his paperwork and write the sworn statements.

“They were still working on gathering evidence on him, and they weren’t sure if they were going to have enough evidence to send him up to the (holding area),” said 2nd Lt. Elizabeth Nelson, a platoon leader with the MP Platoon, HHC, 3rd STB.

The MPs received a call notifying them later that day there would be three detainees needing transport.

The Soldiers planned their route, left their base and arrived at Forward Operating Base War Eagle to pick up personnel before heading to the first stop, a joint security station in northern Baghdad.

They arrived at the JSS shortly before 9 p.m. The team had a little more than three hours before the deadline. Soldiers quickly set about their tasks. One of the first was the medical exam.

“Does he have any blood diseases, high blood pressure?” Sgt. Alta Goodrich, a medic with HHC, 3rd STB, said to an interpreter as she began the exam.

“No,” was the reply.

“You take a glimpse of their body, identifying marks, bruising, swelling, scars and document any abuse

that they may have sustained. You do a health assessment for the (holding area) to be aware of what medical issues the detainee has,” said Goodrich, a native of Weatherford, Texas,

As Goodrich took the detainee’s blood pressure and examined him, Sgt. Devon Denson, a native of Philadelphia, searched the detainee’s clothes.

“I didn’t find anything; the capturing units usually do a pretty good job of making sure everything’s out of his pockets. We just double check,” said Denson, who serves as a military policeman with the MP Platoon, HHC, 3rd STB.

While this was going on, Nelson and Sgt. Christian Welmon, a native of Colorado Springs, Colo., who serves as a military policeman with the MP Platoon, HHC, 3rd STB, inspected the detainee’s paperwork, inventoried and catalogued evidence and personal property the detainee had with him.

“The MPs have to review the detainee packet, make sure it has all the correct paperwork in it, make sure all the evidence has been inventoried properly,” said Woodington.

As Goodrich listened to the detainee’s lungs, she didn’t like what she heard. She noted this on his record.

The detainee was then fitted with body armor and a Kevlar helmet, blindfolded, cuffed and led away to a military vehicle to be seat belted in for the next stop, where the 3 a.m. detainee waited.

It was now shortly after 9 p.m., two hours and fifty minutes remained in the 21 hour window.

The team spread out after it reached the next destination. It had been doing this routine for months now.

Goodrich and another Soldier headed to the holding area to examine the two detainees.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Dwain Johns, 64th BSB, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.  
Staff Sgt. Timothy Walker (center), a Franklin, Tenn., native, poses with his Iraqi Army mass casualty class students at Camp Taji in northwestern Baghdad August 2008.

Nelson and Welmon went to check the paperwork and perform their inventories.

The team worked as quickly as possible, making sure that everything was in order. They had less than two hours to reach the division holding area annex now.

On the way out of the base, they were stopped by a re-supply patrol. The team sat in their Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles examining their options.

They couldn’t wait for the patrol to pass, it would take too long. The MPs were forced to turn around and take an alternate, longer route.

The clock was still ticking.

The MPs headed to FOB War Eagle, radioing ahead so the personnel needing to be picked up would be waiting. When the patrol pulled into the base it had less than one hour remaining.

Less than five minutes after arriving, the team was on its way to the division area holding annex. This trip usually takes 45 minutes.

This is not a glamorous job, but that doesn’t bother the MPs.

“It’s helping to get more of the criminal elements off the street,” said Welmon.

“It hopefully brings some safety and security to Iraq and Coalition Forces,” said Staff Sgt. John Blossick, a native of Columbia, S.C., who serves as a military policeman with the MP Platoon, HHC, 3rd STB.

The MPs pulled into the division area holding annex with less than 30 minutes to spare.

Mission accomplished.

## 2nd Platoon issues soccer balls to ‘Shanty Town’



Photo 1st Lt. Martin Suarez, 2nd Pltn. Co. A, TF 1-6 Inf., 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.  
A “Shanty Town” child shows off the soccer ball he received from the Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Company A, Task Force 1st Bn., 6th Inf. Regt., 2nd BCT, 1st AR Div., attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

By 1st Lt. Martin Suarez

Co. A, TF 1-6 Inf., 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers helped contribute to the Iraqi soccer craze by issuing soccer balls Sept. 26 to the impoverished community, nicknamed “Shanty Town” by the troops.

Named “Shanty Town” by the Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Company A, Task Force 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, the community is located in the Sadr City district of Baghdad and is home to many residents that work in the industrial park and children that live to play soccer.

Since many residents are too poor to purchase soccer balls for their children, 2nd Platoon Soldiers took the initiative and acquired soccer balls from the psychological operations team to distribute them to the kids.

Upon arrival in the Shanty Town, children were chasing

the Mine Resistance Ambush Protected vehicles as they set their security.

“Every time we patrol through the Shanty Town, the children know there are items of interest in the vehicles,” said Sgt. John Norton, a Jourdanon, Texas, native, who serves as an MRAP section leader for 2nd Pltn., Co. A, TF 1-6 Inf., 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, which is currently attached 3rd BCT, 4th Infantry Division.

Once 1st Squad dismounted the vehicles, children swarmed the Soldiers as the soccer balls came in sight.

“It was like a mosh pit,” said Spc. Samuel Whitman, a Charlotte, N.C., native, describing the children pushing to grab a ball.

Even though the soccer balls brought a brief surge of happiness to the community, the residents claimed that the sewage problems are dangerous to their children’s health.



## 2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

# Brothers continue Family tradition of service

By Staff Sgt. J.B. Jaso III

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – A Wolfhound Soldier marked a memorable birthday celebration on a date now associated with great despair and reflection. The date was even more significant because he was joined by his brother.

On Sept. 11, Capt. Joshua May, a signal officer and native of Fall, Pa., assigned to 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment “Wolfhounds,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, met with his older brother, Capt. Joseph May, brigade surgeon for 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armor Division, Multi-National Division – Central.

The May brothers spent Sept. 11 catching up, and marked Patriots Day with a special Sept. 11 tribute concert at Forward Operating Base Hammer, southeast of Baghdad. Joseph plays keyboard in the band “12 Lead,” along with volunteer musicians from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armor Division.

Joshua helped support the band’s audio-visual efforts, which included a video tribute to the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks and to the Soldiers who have fought in support of the Global War on Terror.

Army service runs deep in the May Family. Their father, Col. James May III, is a senior Army chaplain in Heidelberg, Germany.

He retires in October following 34 years of military service. Col. May’s children all followed in their father’s footsteps into the Army.

Col. May’s eldest son, James May IV, served in the Army for six years, including a deployment to Iraq in 2005.

“When it came time for my unit to deploy, I was ready to continue a Family tradition,” said Joseph, the fourth in the Family to serve in Iraq.

“It’s an honor to be in the military, and I’m especially proud to follow in my brothers’ footsteps here in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom,” he said.

Following in his brother’s footsteps is what brought the brothers together for a birthday reunion.

“It was a great reunion,” Joshua noted. “It’s not often that military Family members get to cross paths with each other, especially within a combat environment.”



Courtesy photo

Capt. Joshua May celebrates his birthday on Sept. 11, by visiting his brother, Capt. Joseph May, both natives of Falls, Pa., at Forward Operating Base Hammer, southeast of Baghdad.

# Warrior Iftar dinner brings aloha spirit to Muslim culture

Continued from page 1

“Excellent,” agreed IA Staff Col. Ala’a Hussein Jiwad, commander, 36th Bde., 9th IA Div.

Warrior team members spent approximately four weeks coordinating the dinner and worked hard to get everything right, said Sgt. 1st Class Valentin Fletes, the information operations noncommissioned officer in charge, 2nd SBCT.

“Ramadan is only once a year, and seeing as our cultures can be so different, it’s important to find ways to bridge the gap,” said Fletes, after describing the work that went into selecting the menu and overseeing the preparation. “

And we especially wanted to bring pineapples. Although they’re known in Iraq, they’re considered to be a bit exotic, and we wanted to definitely share that.”

In addition to the fresh-cut watermelon and pineapple available for dessert, the brigade ensured there was a whole pineapple for each Iraqi attendee.

Although not a requirement, many

Muslims give or bring desserts or sweet gifts for Iftars. McCaffrey said he felt the pineapple fit that requirement and would exemplify the message he had for his ISF counterparts.

“When you leave we have a gift for each one of you. I’m not clear if the pineapple is common in Iraq ... but in Hawaii, this represents the spirit of hospitality, and here, it represents how much you mean to us. This present is a display of the unity we all share,” McCaffrey said.

“It’s a pineapple that represents Hawaii, but I think it was probably grown in the Phillipines,” he added, drawing a bit of laughter from the crowd.

“Please spend some time with us; we look forward to continue serving with each one of you – shukran.”

Recently, the Warrior Brigade was able to share traditional Polynesian dancing with some of their Iraqi partners, so the dinner wasn’t the first cultural exchange.

Most likely, added Fletes, it won’t be the last before the brigade redeploy.



Iraqi Security Force commanders pile their plates high during the Iftar dinner with leaders from 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, at the Command Sgt. Maj. Cooke Dining Facility on Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad, Sept. 21.

4th Combat Avn. Bde. 

## CAB avionics process 1,000 work orders



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

Spc. Benjamin Guerrero, an avionics system repair with Company B, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, who hails from Oxford, Fla., works on a radar component for a Blackhawk helicopter on Camp Taji Sept. 30. The avionics section of Co. B has completed more than 1,000 work orders in only 90 days.

**Story and photos by**  
**Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt**  
CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Avionic Soldiers from the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, have reached a milestone on Camp Taji just 90 days into the deployment – more than 1,000 work orders completed by Oct. 1.

Made up of electricians, communications experts and radar technicians, the maintainers from Company B, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, are keeping their portion of the fleet mission capable and saving the Army money.

“Keeping the aircraft fully mission capable is what we do,” said Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Buckland, component repair supervisor from Beckley, W.Va. “In the rear (Fort Hood, Texas), we only completed about 500 work orders in 18 months. Here, we are already over 1,000.

“We have already saved the Army millions of dollars by keeping the non-flying time down. Here we can fix and replace the parts on site. It saves the Army money because instead of shipping-out the entire mechanism to a third party, we rebuild it here,” he said.

The avionics section is just one part of phase maintenance process for the CAB’s fleet of aircraft. Once an aircraft is scheduled, it is brought into the service bay, stripped down, critical parts are inspected for wear and tear, worn or broken parts are replaced or repaired, the aircraft is inspected again, maintenance flights are conducted to see how the new parts are performing and then the aircraft is sent back into action.

Phase maintenance is conducted depending on the number of combat hours the helicopter has flown and the type of aircraft being serviced.

At 500 hours, the Apaches are brought into the shop; every 200 hours, the Chinooks are parked in the maintenance bay, and every 360 hours, the Blackhawk and air ambulance helicopters are inspected and repaired from front to rear.

“Every time an aircraft is due for phase maintenance, we have to completely overhaul it,” said Spc. Benjamin Guerrero, avionics system repair, from Oxford, Fla.

“We take all the parts off, test them and replace them with brand new parts. It is quite a job.”

Since the CAB has taken over responsibility of the MND-B area of operations for aviation support three months ago, the Iron Eagle brigade has flown more than 10,000 combat hours. In addition, fuelers from the brigade have pumped in more than 1 million gallons of fuel.

With a constant demand for aviation support and combat operations throughout Iraq, maintainers have the task of keeping the aircrafts running efficiently to support the mission and ensure the safety of its passengers. “We work on the radar system for the Apaches, Blackhawks and Chinooks,” said Sgt. John Lee, avionics system repair, from La Marada, Calif.

“With us doing this many work orders, it says a lot about the guys we have working here. To make this milestone so quickly says a lot about this shop and this company as a whole.”

## Former actor turns Blackhawk mechanic

**By Capt. Kathryn Briney**

3rd Bn., 4th Avn. Regt., CAB, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – As children, many dream of becoming something special when they grow up, such as a pilot, an astronaut or even an actor.

In most cases, dreams never materialize; but for one Multi-National Division –

Baghdad Soldier, a dream became reality.

Spc. Ganesh Maharaj, a Blackhawk helicopter mechanic with Company D, 3rd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, was born in the little village of Rousillac on the island of Trinidad.

He said he had always dreamed of becoming an actor, and he realized his dream after earning a degree in Dramatic Arts from the Conservatory of the South West in 1996.

After graduating from acting school, Maharaj left Texas and moved to Los Angeles to try his luck in Hollywood. He got a job rather quickly working at a studio, although not as an actor but as a security guard.

After getting his foot in the door, he soon ditched his security guard uniform and began acting.

Throughout his acting stint, he appeared in the movies “Space Cowboys” and “Terminator 3.” In addition, he also had bit parts in the television shows “The Monk,” “The Shield,” “24,” “The West Wing,” “Lost,” “ER” and “Ali MacBeal.”

However, he never got the steady work he had hoped for, so he gave a recruiter a call. In 2007, he found himself at Fort Hood, Texas, working on helicopters and today he is deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“He is a model Soldier for the section,” said Sgt. Kenneth Terrell, squad leader, Co. D from Washington. “He has an active interest in avionics and never backs down from a task. I know that I can count on him.”

Maharaj is now focused on learning his military occupational specialty so he can contribute more and more to the effectiveness of the company and the battalion.

“I left the glitz and glamour of Hollywood and found myself in the Army,” said Maharaj. “I have now learned how to be an aircraft electrician but my toughest job is still to come. When I get back to Fort Hood, I will play the toughest role of my life...dad.”



Photo by Capt. Kathryn Briney, 3rd Bn., 4th Avn. Regt., CAB, 4th Inf. Div.

Spc. Ganesh Maharaj, a Blackhawk helicopter mechanic with Company D, 3rd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, who is from Rousillac, Trinidad, inspects a generator on Camp Taji Sept. 30.

A screenshot of the 4th Infantry Division website. The page features a navigation menu with links for 'REAR DETACHMENT', 'WHAT'S HOT IN 4ID', 'FORT CARSON', 'FORT HOOD', and 'TRAO'. The main content area includes a map and various news sections. On the right side, there is a prominent text box that reads: "Visit the 4ID website for a full archive of past and present news and other important info. http://www.hood.army.mil/4id".

# Thirsty Birds

## Providers pump 1 million gallons of aviation fuel in less than 3 months

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Jason Dangel

CAMP PAO, 4th Inf. Div.  
CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers from the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, have already pumped a million gallons of fuel into aviation aircraft on Camp Taji as of Sept. 25 – achieving the milestone in a little more than two months into the brigade's deployment.

Soldiers from Company A, 404th Avia-

tion Support Battalion, who took over the fueling mission in mid-July, completed the feat in record time and are on pace to pump more than four million gallons of Jet Propellant – 8 aviation fuel upon the completion of their mission in Iraq next summer, said Cpt. Joshua Bundt, commander, Co. A, from Glidden, Iowa.

"This first million gallons is doubly significant because the initial 90 days for a unit in combat typically prove to be the most risky," Bundt explained.

"During the most risky time of the deployment, we have safely issued fuel to more than 3,700 aircraft without an incident.

"The efficiency of our rapid refueling mission directly contributes to the brigade's ability to keep aircraft up providing security for Coalition Forces and the local population," he continued.

Despite the fact that overall security in Iraq has drastically improved and troop levels have slightly declined, aviation support operations continue to increase as the brigade has become responsible for more and more missions supporting both MND-B and parts of the Multi-National Corps – Iraq area of operations.

In the first 20 days of the deployment alone, the company issued more than 300,000 gallons of JP – 8, followed by a second month of more than 400,000 gallons, said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Villarreal, the refueling point's top enlisted supervisor, who is from Rio Grande City, Texas, a longtime veteran of the petroleum profession.

These numbers would probably seem overwhelming if one were to consider that according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the average American citizen uses only 500 gallons of gas per year to fuel privately owned vehicles.

By the age of 80, considering the individual had been driving since the age of 18, the American driver will consume roughly 31,000 gallons of fuel in 62 years.

This number translates into about three percent of what Soldiers assigned to Co. A have pumped in less than three months.

"We didn't hit the one million gallon mark until about four months into the deployment the last time we were here," Villarreal said.

"This time around, we have experienced an increase of operational tempo and aviation missions due in part to the cooperation of the weather.

"The increase in fuel expenditure directly correlates with the amount of missions the pilots conduct. They are simply flying more missions this time around," he added.

Approximately 40 Soldiers operate the refueling point 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provide both fuel and ammunition for all Coalition Forces aircraft that need to top off the gas tank or restock weapon systems.

During their short time at Camp Taji, petroleum specialists and armament gurus have catered to a plethora of Coalition Forces aircraft.

The most notable of which include the Marine Corps V-22 Osprey, the Air Force MH-53 Pave Low combat search and rescue helicopter, the British royal army's Lynx and Puma helicopters and virtually all U.S. Army and Iraqi air force aircraft.

In between the influx of thirsty aircraft, the unit spends its time making improvements to the refueling point. Considerable additions to the area include a fully functional 24-hour troop medical clinic and extensive safety upgrades to virtually the entire operating area within the point.

The implementation of a small dining facility is also beginning to come to fruition as well, which will essentially make the refueling point a community of its own.

"I would be really interested and surprised to see another FARP (Forward Arming and Refueling Point) in Iraq as good as this one," said Lt. Col. David George, commander, 404th ASB, a native of Harker Heights, Texas.

"The FARP is definitely what we think as an important operation and because of that we put a lot of effort into mitigating the risks as much as we can.

"We can't have a perfect operation out here, but the harder we work, the closer we will get to perfect and that is where we are headed," he added.



Spc. Christopher McGee, petroleum specialist, Company A, 404th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, refuels a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter at Camp Taji's Forward Arming and Refueling Point Sept. 26.



Sgt. Silvester McLaurin, squad leader, Company A, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, operates the fuel holding area adjacent to Camp Taji's Forward Arming and Refueling Point Sept. 25.



Sgt. Silvester McLaurin, squad leader, Company A, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, operates the fuel holding area adjacent to Camp Taji's Forward Arming and Refueling Point Sept. 25.



Spc. Christopher McGee, petroleum specialist, Company A, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, distributes fuel to a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter at Camp Taji's Forward Arming and Refueling Point Sept. 25.

# Day in the life ...

## Ironhorse mechanic's hobby helps keep life in 'focus'

By Spc. Douglas York  
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – There are many stereotypes in our modern world, many automatic assumptions about a person's ability and intellect formed strictly off of that individual's outward appearance or worldly classifications.

Time and again these stereotypes are proven to be unfounded and ridiculous, showing us that we should never judge books, or in this case people, by their covers.

Along those lines and looking through a narrow-minded spectrum, one would not generally think of an Army mechanic as having a passion and a genuine talent for photographic creativity – yet such a Soldier exists in the Ironhorse Division.

"I started taking pictures as a child with my father's 35-millimeter camera," said Spc. Morgan Habecker, a native of Warner Robins, Ga., who serves as a power generation equipment repairer with Headquarters Support Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad. "He just kind of let me run around with it," he added.

Habecker's daily duties while deployed, however, are vastly different from his hobby.

He performs annual services on generators for the Ironhorse Division, and if anything breaks down, he goes out to the site, troubleshoots and repairs it.

In addition to being known as a being good at his military occupational specialty, Habecker is well known throughout his unit for his knack for taking thought-provoking, high-quality photographs.

"When you get seen carrying a very expensive camera, people tend to take notice," he said, noting that he spends his free time practicing photography.

His passion and talent is not lost on his peers or his leaders.

"When I need good photos of an event recorded, I want Spc. Habecker there because he takes a quality photo every time," said Capt. Charlesy Mahle, a native of Kingsport, Tenn., commander of HSC, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.. "I've been working with PAO (public affairs office) at division for two years now so I know when I see a good photo. So when I see his pictures, I'm like 'Yeah, he really does (have talent),' she added.

How did Habecker go from taking photos as a child to the background that he has grown accustomed to during his time in the military – an 8 year career in which he's also spent five years in the Navy – to becoming a stellar photographer and a go-to person for recording events and memories?

"I lost interest (in photography) until I was in the Navy and started taking pictures of friends, and being at sea taking pictures of the sunsets and the helicopters, and it just kind of went from there. I started learning everything I could about it, and here I am," Habecker said.

"Capt. Mahle's asked me to go along on a recent PT (physical training) challenge, and I did that for her and a lot of promotions and reenlistments and things like that for the company."

Mahle further described what an asset Habecker's talent is for her unit-Family.

"He has the ability to capture a concept with his photos. As opposed to just taking a photo of an object, you get a real vision of a thought," Mahle said.

"I just think the unique thing is that you have a guy whose got experience in a whole lot of things – he's been in the Navy and he's now a mechanic in the Army – and while doing all of that and being in Iraq, he still keep's something that's his passion, keeps it close to him, and he's able to use it out here," she added.

Mahle was also quick to stress that she never wants his passion for photography to become

burned out, and she does her best as his commander to help him foster his ability.

"I think it provides a little bit of sanity for him, something he can do in his off time," she said.

Habecker looks at his hobby through a much wider lens. Rarely seen in his off-time without his camera, it seems unlikely he would ever lose his desire to do what he enjoys.

"There is always something to take a picture of," he said. "Occasionally, I will roll through the motor pool with my camera and take pictures of people who won't hide their face, as I've wanted to get a picture of the guys welding for awhile."

Habecker recently captured the aforementioned picture, and it is indeed something to be enjoyed and something all involved in the shoot will cherish.

Despite the past accolades and the attention Habecker's talent might bring him in the future, it is obvious that photography is an extension of his being, nothing short of a part of him.

Yet he doesn't take this natural talent for granted and is always striving to be better.

"It's just like everything else, if you are going to do it, do it well," he said. "Go the extra distance to actually know what you are doing and practice often."

When it is all said and done, however, Mahle said she feels that not only is Habecker a talented photographer, he is another in a long list of examples of people who have much more substance to them, more than meets the eye.

"It's like when you look at an Army specialist, you don't normally think of them as having been in the Navy, so it just blows away your little images of how things are," she said.

In all, Habecker and his talent remind us that no matter how certain we are about people, we can all take a step back, reposition our tripods so-to-speak and refocus on the whole view. Maybe, just maybe, we captured something or somebody wrong to begin with.



Photo courtesy of Spc. Morgan Habecker, HSC, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.



Photo by Spc. Douglas York, MND-B PAO

Spc. Morgan Habecker, a native of Warner Robins, Ga., who serves as a power generation equipment repairer with Headquarters Support Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, focuses his camera Sept. 29 with the hopes of capturing a photo that will convey a thought and an emotion.

# CAB Soldiers celebrate Hispanic American month

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – As dancers swayed in brightly colored Hispanic costumes to the sounds of rhythmic music, Soldiers from the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-

National Division – Baghdad, celebrated Hispanic American Heritage Month on Camp Taji Sept. 27.

With a standing room only crowd observing the traditional south-of-the-border display, Soldiers on the camp north of Baghdad were treated to authentic celebratory dances to in-

clude the Jarabe Tapatio, the Reggaeton and the La Bamba.

In addition, Soldiers enjoyed fine, Hispanic cuisine together and talked about the contributions Hispanic Americans have made to the U.S. and its fighting forces.

“In every war since the Civil War, Hispanic Americans have sacrificed their lives for this country,” said Sgt. Maj. Augustine Flores, plans and operations sergeant major, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, CAB, from LaPryor, Texas.

“Currently, there are 1.1 million Hispanic American veterans. When our country has been in need, Hispanic Americans have answered the call and have risked their lives. This country was founded by the blood of many Hispanic Americans.”

To date, there are 42 Hispanic Americans who have received the Medal of Honor for their courage.

Hispanic Americans have received the nation’s highest honor for bravery in action during the Civil War, the Boxer Rebellion, World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

According to the annual proclamation by President George W. Bush, National Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to celebrate the spirit and accomplishments of Hispanic Americans everywhere.

The observance, which runs Sept. 15 through Oct. 15, recognizes the many Hispanics who have made significant contributions to America and the impact they have brought to our society and culture.

“In the USA, we have a rich heritage. It is a melting pot with a lot of different people from different places which makes our country so special,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Archie Davis, senior enlisted NCO for the Iron Eagle brigade from Houston.

“It is not just one race that makes our country so special, but all races put together that makes our country and Army so great.”

After the speeches, entertainment and presentations were complete, Soldiers from the brigade talked about the Hispanic influence on America and how they hadn’t known about all the contributions they have made.

“I found out today there is more of a Hispanic influence in the Army than I thought there was,” said Pfc. Armando Navarro, legal specialist, HHC, CAB from Bakersfield, Calif. “Now knowing the Hispanic heritage, it is great to know that others have the same sense of pride with our culture and serving our country as I do.”



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

Sgt. Madeogarcia Elisan, equal opportunity representative, and Sgt. 1st Class Luis Romero, force protection, perform the Bachata dance during the CAB’s Hispanic American Heritage Month Observance celebration on Camp Taji Sept. 27.

## Ironhorse sergeants inducted into NCO Corps

By Staff Sgt. Scott Wolfe  
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – As the official party exited the floor of the Camp Liberty Field House Sept. 29, the ceremony inducting the latest group of newly promoted Ironhorse sergeants into the Noncommissioned Officer Corps was complete.

Command Sgt. Maj. Edward Parker, a native of Warsaw, N.C., who serves as the senior enlisted leader with Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, welcomed the 26 Soldiers into the Corps.

“This is something one of my first sergeants or sergeants major came up to me about before we deployed,” said Parker. “They said they wanted a ceremony for new NCOs, so I told them to go find out about it and do some research.”

Command Sgt. Major Marvin Hill, the senior enlisted leader for U.S. Forces in Iraq, who serves with Multi-National Forces – Iraq, was the guest speaker.

Instead of prepared remarks from behind

a lectern, he walked up to the Soldiers being inducted and spoke to them of the powers that were attributed to them by their subordinates because they now wore the stripes of a noncommissioned officer – and of the responsibilities that went with those stripes.

He closed his speech and made eye contact with every new NCO in front of him and left them with something to think about.

“I can’t lead where I don’t go,” he said. “I can’t teach what I don’t know.”

Each of the new inductees signed a statement of understanding of the responsibilities of an NCO, with a sponsor from their unit and Parker as co-signers, symbolically showing the contract between leaders and those they lead.

The ceremony focused on the history of the NCO and the ties that connect the current Army to armies of the past.

“The tradition of commemorating the passing of a Soldier to a noncommissioned officer can be traced to the army of Frederick the Great,” said the narrator.

Gifts of bread and brandy, beer and tobacco, wine and a piece of tobacco were placed on a table with red, white and blue candles.

When lit, the candles represented the past and the blood that has been shed, the present and purity, and the future and loyalty for the country.

“This is the third (ceremony) – the last one,” said Parker.

The original plan had been to hold four induction ceremonies during the deployment, one a quarter, but that schedule had to be adjusted due to mission constraints on time.

“We will continue to do them when we return to home station,” he said.

“And believe it or not, a lot of sergeants major are doing this now. I wish they had them back when I got my stripes.”

The ceremonies have come to be a source of pride for the “steadfast and loyal” NCOs of the 4th Inf. Div. and will continue once again after the division redeploys early in 2009.



Command Sgt. Maj. Edward Parker (left), the senior enlisted leader with Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, presents a token of appreciation to Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill, the senior enlisted leader with Multi-National Forces – Iraq, for his role as the keynote speaker at the DSTB NCO Induction Ceremony held at the Field House Sept. 29.

# Army private put Navy dad 'through hell'



Photo by Staff Sgt. J.B. Jaso III, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Pfc. Joseph Biando, a Chesapeake, Va., native, is happy to see the reaction of children in the Taji Qada, northwest of Baghdad Apr. 14, as their school reopens after being reconstructed by the Government of Iraq's Ministry of Education.

**By Staff Sgt. J.B. Jaso III**  
1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Running away from home, stealing the Family's car and taking his father's checkbook are all things of the past.

Today, Pfc. Joseph Biando serves as an infantryman with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

It was a long and bumpy road for Biando to reach where he is today – a successful Soldier serving in his 10th month of a 15-month deployment. He lives and works in the Istaqlal Qada, just northeast of Baghdad.

"I was doing everything bad and nothing good," said the 19-year-old, Chesapeake, Va., native, about his childhood. "I put my dad's life through hell! I ran away several times – one time for 18 days."

Biando's father, a U.S. Naval officer with 24 years of service, had equally important issues to face when he wasn't dealing with his son's troublesome nature.

At one point, Lt. Cmdr. Keith Biando, Joseph's father, deployed in the Persian Gulf on the patrol coastal boat USS Firebolt.

"I was deployed when a lot of stuff was happening with him," said Keith, in regards to his son's free-spirited behavior. "I tried to be a father through a (satellite) phone."

If it wasn't for an argument with his father that resulted in Joseph leaving home for good with no shoes or shirt, he probably wouldn't be serving with distinction in Iraq today.

The day after he left his home, he went to the Army recruiting station and enlisted as an infantryman.

"It was the quickest way out of the situation I was in," said Joseph, about joining the Army in June 2007. "I always figured I would go into the military but never

thought the Army."

Still not speaking to his Family, Joseph stayed with a friend for two weeks before departing for basic combat training.

Even though Keith knew where his son was and what was going on, he decided to let Joseph tell him in his own time.

Finally, when Joseph was in need of clothes and other personal items, he talked to his father about his decision to join the Army.

The entire Biando Family met with Joseph on his last night at home before heading to basic training. They didn't talk about the past and the troubles that Joseph had caused; rather, they enjoyed their last night together as a Family.

That was the last night they were all together before Joseph would depart for Iraq. Once he completed basic combat training in November 2007, he was assigned to the Wolfhounds at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. He didn't have much time to enjoy the island as he deployed to Iraq three weeks after his



Photo by Staff Sgt. J.B. Jaso III, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Pfc. Joseph Biando, a Chesapeake, Va., talks with children outside a recreation center in Baghdad's Adhamiyah security district on Aug. 19.

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"I just want to make my dad proud," Joseph said. "I want to redeem myself – but it's going to take a while. I caused my dad a lot of stress."

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arrival.

"I called my dad, and he told me that it had to be done," Joseph said. "He helped me get situated and told me to be careful."

"I gave him the same guidance I give my young Sailors," Keith said. "Show up on time, and you'll be good!"

Not knowing anyone yet, Joseph boarded the plane in Hawaii to do what he had trained for – combat.

"I was scared, nervous, worried, but also excited," said Joseph, about his feelings while flying to Iraq.

Joseph is now 10 months into his deployment; the feelings of fear, nervousness and worrisome have all but diminished, and he said he has embraced his job as a member of the personal security detachment for the Wolfhound commander.

It's no easy task standing in 120-degree summer temperatures wearing the required protective gear, while others get to be inside air-conditioned buildings.

However, Joseph realizes the importance of his duties.

"It's an important task," he said, about his job. "We secure the battalion's leadership in order to allow them to rebuild and reconstruct Iraq."

Because of the security he provides, the Wolfhounds have been able to assist the Government of Iraq on the road to reconstruction. If it's a difficult journey down that road – Joseph can relate.

Joseph was selected as the Wolfhound Soldier of the Month in July and was presented the Army Achievement Medal for meritorious service in Iraq.

"He was so proud to be selected," said his father. "I'm proud of him."

"It felt good," said Joseph, after receiving the award. "I felt special for about 20 minutes until I went on mission – then it was back to work."

Joseph has another mission – to make his dad proud.

"I just want to make my dad proud," Joseph said. "I want to redeem myself, but it's going to take awhile. I caused my dad a lot of stress."

But Keith said he has no resentment over his son's troubled youth.

"I never had any resentment or ill feelings for what he did," the lieutenant commander said, of his son's childhood actions. "A dad can't have any. I just tried to steer him on the right path and away from the bad.

"He's always trying to make me proud, and I recognize that," Keith said. "I recognize his maturity – and I'm so proud of him."

Now that he knows his father is proud of him, Joseph said he wants to continue to be the best he can and try to live up to his father. "I apologize for my childhood, and I'm proud of my dad," Joseph said. "I wish I could accomplish what he has accomplished in his 24 years in the Navy."

Even though Joseph has several years until he could accomplish all that his dad has, he is defiantly on the road to success – looking at his childhood nightmares in the rearview mirror.

# 4th Inf. Div., MND-B Soldiers safeguard Iraqi people

## Continued from page 1

The results of these efforts bear witness to the successes of the brigades and the division.

The increases in security are clearly evident when comparing the historical number of overall extremists and militant attacks within MND-B's operational environment.

In July 2007, there were more than 1,100 attacks, or an average of 27 attacks per day in the area. This compares with less than 100 attacks for the month of July this year, an average of three attacks per day. In fact, the three month average for July, August and through the mid-point of September has been three attacks per day, which is an astonishing 87 percent decrease in that time period.

This trend has been mirrored in the reduction of attacks by the militants and extremists on the civilian population as well. In July 2007, there were 225 attacks directed against the Iraqi people, which resulted in 736 civilian casualties. In July of this year, that number dropped to 16 attacks resulting in 52 civilian casualties and 26 attacks in August with 40 casualties. This represents an 86 percent reduction in attacks targeting the population and a 92 percent decrease in civilian casualties. There was also a 98 percent decrease in murder events and a 99 percent decrease in murder victims during this period as well.

The reasons for this dramatic decrease in violence are many and varied, said Batschelet, who explained the division was presented an opportunity by the 1st Cavalry Division, which is the 4th Inf. Div.'s brethren unit from Fort Hood, Texas.

"We picked up where they left off," he said. "We made a couple of key adjustments that fit our circumstances."

One of these key adjustments, he explained, was to begin directing more of a centralized division level fight as opposed to a more decentralized approach to solving the problem – which was a major shift in concept. This was partially as a result of foreseeable diminishing resources since the surge was beginning to come to an end.

"We had to make some choices on where to prioritize and put our combat power. So, one of the ways the division commander did that was by centralizing the fight more than it had been in the past. That allowed us to reallocate combat power and apply that combat power into areas where needed."

In addition to that, he explained there was a combination of key factors that led to the increased security environment.

"We had the increasing capability of the Iraqi Army; the increasing capability of the Iraqi Police; the cooperation of some of the population who was previously resisting and not accepting of the government of Iraq. So when you take all of those things combined – and add the increasing capability of the government itself to exercise its sovereign authority and provide for the people in essential services – that resulted in the more stable environment that we're seeing today."

Perhaps one of the most key influences in achieving these dramatic reductions of violence was the emphasis by the commanding general to put Soldiers out on the streets of Baghdad, where they are currently operating out of 53 joint security stations and 20 combat outposts – and are now living amongst the people they were charged with protecting.

Moving Soldiers from the Camps and Forward Operating Bases to the JSSs and COPs just made sense, said Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia, the senior enlisted leader for the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

"If you know there is an area that the extremists and militants live and operate in, you can't really affect their activities if you are traveling great distances to go meet him on his grounds," said Gioia.

"So, if we know there is an area with predominantly insurgent activity, what better way to get after it than moving in, occupying an area and securing it?" he said.

Gioia said the tactic has not only been successful in the Baghdad area but all across Iraq as well.

The Soldiers adopted Hammond's philosophy of – attack, attack, attack – when it came to removing the extremists and militants as a threat for the local populace. This attack style can clearly be seen through the aggressive approach to safeguarding the security for the citizens of Baghdad.

Since the 4th Inf. Div. conducted its transfer of authority



Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Kelvin Surgener, combat camera, attached to 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Three Iraqi children enjoy lollipops given them by Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, during a patrol Aug. 19 in the Abu T'shir community of southern Baghdad's Rashid district.

with the 1st Cav. Div., MND-B has conducted more than 2,500 company level or higher operations since Dec. 19, 2007. These included more than 500 raids, more than 1,300 cordon and knock or cordon and search missions, in addition to more than 650 clearing operations.

Moving the Soldiers from the major Camps and FOBs out to the JSSs and COPs has been beneficial in providing MND-B Soldiers the opportunity to conduct this multitude of operations.

"We can't do it from sitting on a FOB," said Gioia. "We can't do it sitting in an office. Now, we literally are living amongst the people – and that's why security is so successful right now."

He explained that conducting joint and combined operations with Iraqi Security Forces has paid huge dividends as well.

"We are out on the streets – every day – with our Iraqi Security Force partners," said Gioia. "We've got to get out; we've got to walk with them; we've got to show them everything that we've learned over five years so they can pick that up and take it to the next step."

The more MND-B Soldiers conduct combined and joint operations with the ISF, he said, the greater the effects the ISF will have on the security in Baghdad as they continue to transition in taking the lead in security operations.

"We need to take the momentum forward but transition it to the Iraqi Security Forces so that we can take one step back and let them take one step forward."

The number of patrols conducted by the division to date is mind-staggering indeed – more than 394,000 patrols – which include more than 45,000 combined patrols, more than 208,000 Coalition Forces patrols, more than 34,000 Iraqi Army patrols and more than 106,000 Iraqi Police patrols.

"The bottom line is our Soldiers, along with our Iraqi Security Force partners, are out on the street, each and every day, at all hours of the day, conducting operations to safeguard the Iraqi people," said Gioia.

Accomplishing this task has fallen squarely upon the shoulders of the more than 28,000 service members and Coalition Forces assigned to MND-B's five brigade combat teams and three enabler brigades: 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division; 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.; 2nd BCT, 101st Airborne Div.; 4th BCT, 10th Mountain Div.; 2nd Stryker BCT, 25th Inf. Div.; Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Inf. Div.; 18th Military Police Brigade; the 926th Engineer Bde.; in addition to two

Macedonian platoons and an Estonian platoon.

The division's Soldiers brought a significant amount of experience with them to theater as more than 8,600 of the Soldiers are on their 2nd deployment. Additionally, more than 4,300 are on their 3rd deployment and approximately 2,000 on their 4th deployment or more. Less than one-half the Soldiers, approximately 11,000, are on their first deployments.

These Coalition Forces are partnered with approximately 49,000 Iraqi Army soldiers and National Policemen in addition to more than 24,000 Iraqi Policemen in Baghdad. In all, there are currently 107 Iraqi Security Force units in MND-B.

The combined efforts of the Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces have resulted in the detainment of more than 630 al-Qaeda in Iraq terrorists and more than 710 Special Groups operatives since 4th Inf. Div.'s TOA. Those captured include senior leaders, media experts to attack coordinators, facilitators and operators who actively and indiscriminately attack Iraqi civilians.

Additionally, they have seized approximately 500 improvised-explosive devices, more than 1,600 pounds of C4 explosives, more than 420 explosively formed penetrators, approximately 500 EFP bodies, more than 860 rockets, more than 8,500 mortar rounds, more than 2,300 artillery rounds, approximately 1,900 rocket-propelled grenades and more than 11,000 rifles.

"A lot of sacrifices have been made by both the Soldiers, their Families and the American people," said Batschelet. "We are at a point where there is a real opportunity to take advantage of those sacrifices. Our every effort is aimed at continuing the momentum so that the government of Iraq can take advantage of the opportunities at hand."

"We are, and I know everyone at home is, proud of our Soldiers and Family members for all that they have endured and achieved."

Each day the Iraqi Security Forces and the Government of Iraq take another step forward in providing for the citizens of their nation.

Together, they are making great strides. As such, it is important to help keep that momentum going forward as they take more and more control of their own security operations to safeguard the Iraqi people.

"I think they're eager to do it," said Gioia. "I think they are capable of doing it – but we can't turn our backs now. We can't wash our hands of it. We can't say, here it is, it's yours."

"It's similar to how we train in the U.S. Army, when we talk about the Crawl, Walk and Run phases. They are not running yet, but they are not crawling either. They are walking. So we will walk with them in order for them to eventually run."

**"We can't do it from sitting on a FOB. We can't do it sitting in an office. Now, we literally are living amongst the people – and that's why security is so successful right now."**

**Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia  
Senior Enlisted Leader  
4th Inf. Div., MND-B**

# Steadfast and Loyal to Army, each other



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Molinaro, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Eric Hough, forward observer, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – North, puts his "younger" brother Spc. Shawn Hough, chaplain assistant, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, in a headlock while they chat it up here Sept. 27. The identical twin brothers, with Eric being older by seven minutes, had a Family reunion in Iraq. The two Soldiers have deployed a combined six times to Iraq.

**By Staff Sgt. Michael Molinaro**  
MND-B PAO

FOB PROSPERITY, Iraq – The motto of the 4th Infantry Division, "Mission-Soldier-Family-Team," is the glue that holds the Multi-National Division – Baghdad team together. The third cog in that motto, "Family," means different things to different Soldiers.

Whether it's the bond between a squad that is with each other 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or the spouse back home that holds down the fort while deployed, it is a vital element to the superior performance displayed by 4th Inf. Div. and other MND-B Soldiers.

For Spc. Shawn Hough, chaplain assistant, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div., and his brother, Sgt. Eric Hough, forward observer, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – North, their commitment to the Army and each other is unbreakable.

The identical twin brothers gathered for an Iraqi-style reunion Sept. 27, one that took some well-coordinated efforts by many echelons of leadership between the two commands.

Shawn said it all began when Lt. Col. James Carter, 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B chaplain, was speaking to Hough and the topic of his brother being in country came about. Carter thought it was only right that the two should get to see each other while they were both serving their country in Iraq.

Hough didn't know if the reunion would be possible until his battery commander and his brother's battalion com-

mander began conversing with each other and seeing if they could make this happen.

The logistics was the main thing they had to overcome and, after some unscheduled dust storms delayed Eric's flight from the north, he landed in the International Zone to a long-awaited hug and high-five from Shawn.

"I have never seen Shawn so excited in the year-and-a-half that I've known him," said Capt. Charles Estanol, chaplain, 3rd Bn. 29th FA. Regt.

As boys, the Hough brothers, from Youngstown, Ohio, played Army and with toy guns growing up, sealing their fate for a military career, Shawn said.

They enlisted one year apart in 2001 and 2002, with Eric being the first to head off for basic training. Shawn wanted to go along with his brother but had an injury that delayed his entry.

They have never been assigned to the same unit, or the same post for that matter. They have each deployed to Iraq three times, making it extremely difficult to spend quality time with each other and Family, Eric said.

For example, after Shawn arrived home from his first deployment during Operation Iraqi Freedom I, Eric left for his first tour overseas a week later.

Before leaving for their current deployments, Shawn made the trek to Fort Campbell, Ky., from Colorado Springs, Colo., picked up his brother and drove to Ohio to see their parents, Martin and Jill. That was the last time they had seen each other until Eric arrived in the IZ.

There is an old-saying that twins have a sixth sense and

can think or sense what the other is thinking at the same time. Neither of them said if that is exactly true or not, but it may be more than a coincidence when it comes to the timing of placing an important phone call each week.

"It is weird because we call our parents almost at the same time a lot of the time,"

Eric said. "We don't plan it or anything, but I get off the phone with them and then he calls ten minutes later. It's funny."

Besides their loyalty to each other, no one can deny their loyalty to their country. Shawn reenlisted for six more years Sept. 11, and Eric enlisted because he felt it's an obligation we have to living in the greatest country in the world.

"We've always been patriotic and loved our country," Eric said.

"We wanted to serve our country and give back for everything we've been given. We aren't the type of people who take our country and everything it provides for us for granted."

Eric's unit is scheduled to redeploy back to the states later this fall. Soon thereafter, he will begin making arrangements for his next permanent change of station move to Hawaii. Neither of them believes they will get to see each other before Shawn and the rest of the 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., returns home, which makes this visit one they will both cherish for some time.

"I reenlisted this month. I found out I was getting promoted and am set to take leave in a few weeks," Shawn said.

"But this was the best of a good month. I don't know if my morale could be much higher than now."

# Warhorse Brigade arrives in Iraq

**By Sgt. Rodney Foliente**  
2nd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP ECHO, Iraq— Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, based out of Fort Carson, Colo., arrived to Multi-National Division – Central South and Camp Echo and assumed responsibility of Qadisiya Province.

“The Warhorse Brigade will provide overwatch with assistance by, with and through the Iraqi Security Forces as they continue to secure the Iraqi population in this province,” said Col. Butch Kievenaar, commander, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

The Warhorse Brigade’s 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 67th Armor Battalion will be operating in northern Iraq, and the 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, will operate in eastern Iraq.

The battalion and squadron will each fall under different units; however, the Warhorse Brigade will continue to provide all of their support and logistics.

“We’re ready to do our mission and help the Iraqi people take over and get their country back on its feet,” said Sgt. David Barnes, armorer and gunner, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd CAB, 8th Inf. Regt.

Barnes, who calls Colorado Springs, Colo., home, is on his second deployment with 2-8th Inf. Regt., and patrolled some of the areas that currently fall under the Warhorse AI in 2005-2006. He said it’s a completely different mission than the last deployment and is eager to personally see how

far security and stability have progressed.

The Soldiers of 2-8 Inf. Regt. hold the main responsibility for Coalition Forces’ presence in this province.

“We’re here to help the Iraqi people to better their local communities and country as a whole and help ensure they have a better way of life,” added Spc. Josh Dalland, scout, HHC, 2-8 Inf. Regt., and a native of Grand Island, Neb.

They have great confidence in their leadership, the Iraqi people, the ISF and collective Coalition capabilities, said Pfc. Brett Humbert, driver and gunner, Company E, 2-8 Inf. Regt.

“I’m ready. We’re all ready to do our mission and get things accomplished,” said Humbert, who is from Deer Trail, Colo.



By Sgt. Rodney Foliente, 2nd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, load onto vehicles after an evening helicopter insertion to Camp Echo Sep. 22.

## National Police, 2-30th Inf. Regt. Soldiers clear Baghdad streets of concertina wire

**By Sgt. Grant Okubo**

4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (L)

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – National Policeman and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers took to the streets to remove concertina wire in the 9 Nissan district of eastern Baghdad Sept. 18.

A combined effort of National Policeman from 8th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, and Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, MND-B, traveled through various areas in Beladiyat and took the prickly eyesores off the streets.

The combined forces sheared their way through the unwanted concertina wire with wire cutters, collected it and loaded it on to waiting trucks.

One of the primary reasons the combined patrol removed the concertina wire is because it led to a large trash buildup, explained Iraqi Command Sgt. Maj. Ali Mahdi Muhammad, assigned the 8th Bde., 2nd NP Div. In addition to collecting trash, the wire provided areas for militant criminals to plant im-

proved-explosive devices, he said.

A lot of the wire sections are remnants previous units left behind, commented Staff Sgt. Stuart Sword, platoon sergeant

for Co. C, 2nd Bn., 30th Inf. Regt. Taking away the wire improves the overall appearance of the Beladiyat area, added the Virginia Beach, Va., native.

Feedback from area residents on the removal of the wire has been positive. “The people are really happy about it,” said Muhammad. “It’s a sign of progress for the people.”

Seeing the wire come down has brought a level of reassurance to the people in the community that things are getting better, explained Muhammad. It helps make the people feel safer, he added.

Muhammad expressed his gratitude to the 2nd Bn., 30th Inf. Regt. Soldiers for their help in taking down the wire. Coalition Forces are always in Beladiyat and asking what needs to be done and helping the National Police, he said. Likewise, Sword had positive words for the work of their Iraqi partners.

“The National Police are doing an outstanding job,” said Sword.

Gaining the trust of the Iraqi people, he added, is one of the reasons for their success, and their efforts in removing the concertina wire shows they care about the people in the local communities.



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

A policeman from 8th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, gathers wire for removal Sept. 18 in the 9 Nissan district of eastern Baghdad. Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, joined National Policeman in their effort to clean up areas of Beladiyat neighborhoods.



## Bangkok 'dangerously' close to being boring

By Spc. Douglas York  
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Most of us look forward to the day we can get out of the Army or retire, exiting gracefully from the service, DD Form 214 in hand and hopefully with the words “Honorable Discharge” printed on it.

While most of our fates in lieu of the end of our military service are certain or at least partially foregone, what if each of us had chosen a different career path, one where getting out was far more difficult than getting in?

Enter hit man Joe, played by actor Nicolas Cage, a private mercenary who has a soft side and decides he wants to get out of the “business” and to live a normal life.

Joe is the main character of the recently released film, “Bangkok Dangerous,” directed by the

famous Pang brothers, Oxide and Danny. He goes to Bangkok for a month-long assignment for what he hopes to be his last big score: to kill four people for a Bangkok gang lord named Surat.



Spc. Douglas York

Joe hires a pickpocket named Kong, played by actor Shahkrit Yamnarm, as his middle man as Joe never meets his clients in person. Different parts of the contract must go through Kong via a nightclub dancer, who becomes romantically involved with Kong.

Normally, as a way of covering his tracks, Joe kills his middlemen before he leaves a job. In turn, he plans to kill Kong before he leaves Bangkok but after Kong gives him information about the gang's second target, he begins to train Kong as a hit man, who then helps Joe with the third kill.

When the movie reaches Joe's fourth target, for the first time ever, Joe has second thoughts. As a result, he is spotted, escapes through a panicking crowd and then himself becomes a target of four of the gang's members.

From there, the film quickly and interestingly draws to a shocking con-

clusion but, for the most part, the film slowly wanders from point A to point B and beyond. In fact, it borders on being very mundane despite being a remake of a very famous 1999 foreign film by the same name.

There are some interesting characters in the film. Kong and his dancer girlfriend are interesting as well as a deaf local pharmacist whom Joe falls for during a mishap on one of his kills. The problem is that none of them get enough screen time next to the sad-faced Cage.

Cage is hard to peg in this role. I couldn't decide if I liked his performance or if his character was as shallow as his “Snake Eyes” character from a few years back.

In the end, I decided that his goofy looking mullet aside, Cage did the best with what he was given, and the movie's boring moments and slow pace must first be blamed on the writing (Jason Richman and Oxide Pang Chun) and the directing Pang brothers. Heck, at least this film wasn't as horrible as “Ghost Rider,” a film I still cannot believe Cage signed on for.

I saw “Bangkok Dangerous” while I was home on leave at a good old-fashioned drive-in with my wife. The company was obviously great, and all things considered, I give this movie a straight rating of three chevrons (no rockers). There were enough moments to keep me interested, enough decent acting to show the characters were trying, but not enough to keep my attention glued to the screen.



# New off-road racer catches crazy air



## Gaming Review – Pure

By Sgt. Jason Thompson  
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Ripping around a tight corner covered with loose dirt and gravel, I dig in, nail the nitrous boost and preload my bike's suspension at the top of a 45-degree jump. With a lurch, my ATV leaves the ground and launches into the air, floating hundreds of feet above the mountains of New Zealand before beginning its sickeningly fast decent.



Sgt. Jason Thompson

Being the cool-headed racer I am, I decide this is the perfect time to pull off a series of aerial tricks, including the Saddle Flip, in which I stand on my quad bike's seat and do a back flip in midair. I land it like a pro, bank some boost juice as a reward and speed off toward the next jump.

It's a typical moment in Pure, a new off-road ATV racing title from Black Rock Studio and Disney Interactive, but the game is anything but pure.

Pure is a racer with the soul of an extreme sports game. Now, there are times when you'll be gunning for the finish line above all else, focused only on hitting your racing line and digging in to take corners perfectly. But most of your time will be spent doing things that shouldn't be physically possible, and this is when Pure is at its best.

The now-standard basic racing control scheme is here – right trigger accelerates, left trigger brakes and the left analog stick steers your ride.

Vehicle feel is extremely important in racing games, and Pure gets it right. Bikes have enough weight without feeling clunky when you get them airborne, and tires dig appropriately into the terrain when you're taking corners. Although there's no damage modeling, opponents can bump you off the track or land on your head, an often unpleasant effect during a race, so it pays to stay out of the AI drivers' way.

But the intuitive trick system is what sets Pure apart. When your quad is in the air, you can pull off tricks by hitting one of three face buttons and a direction on the left stick. You'll start each race with only Level 1 tricks available. Land enough of these and the Level 2 tricks will open up, followed by Level 3.

As you ramp up your trick availability during a race, you'll also bank nitrous boost. Depending on what type of race you're participating in, you'll constantly balance doing tricks, which fills your boost meter, and using that boost, which takes away your ability to pull off higher-level tricks.

To discourage you from getting in a rut, each trick is graded on the fly as being "Fresh," "Tame" or "Stale," depending on how many times you've recently landed it. The fresher the trick, the more boost and points you earn.

The controls are intuitive, the tricks are wild and fun, and the grading system pushes you to try new things. In short, Pure's controls make it easy to pick up but hard to put down, the Holy Grail of videogame controls.

The main focus of Pure is on World Tour, a single-player career mode in which you choose a racer, build your bike and set out to complete 10 stages of increasing difficulty. World Tour eases you in with a tutorial, throws a few simple challenges your way and slowly ramps up in difficulty and length.

There are three single-player event types: Sprint, Race and Freestyle.

Sprint is all about speed and handling, the tracks shorter and meaner, and very few jumps with which to pull tricks and gain boost. Race mode strikes a balance between technical driving and crazy air. The tracks are set up to give ample opportunity for boosting over jumps to pull tricks, solely for the purpose of banking boost juice to speed your way to the finish.

Whereas Sprint and Race are all about crossing the finish first, the third mode, Freestyle, is where Pure shines brightest.

In Freestyle, there's no finish line – you're battling against time to rack up the biggest and best trick score, and the tracks are copiously sprinkled with jumps to help you along the way. The most arcade-like of all Pure's single-player modes, Freestyle features power-ups that racers battle to grab during the event. Stars give you an instant Special Trick (good for mad points if you can pull it off), a 2X doubles your score for a limited time, and a nitrous icon fills your boost. Build your trick meter, pull sick tricks, chain them together before the combo meter runs out, and you'll stay alive. Once you know your tricks and become an expert at nailing them, Pure's Freestyle mode is extremely satisfying.

Aside from the World Tour mode, there aren't any other fully-formed single-player modes in Pure. There's a Trial mode that lets you attempt records on tracks you've unlocked without the intrusion of other racers, and Single Event is just that – the events you've already played in World Tour presented a la carte. There's no tournament mode, head-to-head or other sideline events that could have made Pure into a deeper experience. As a result, it's a relatively short game, depending on your skill level.

Hardcore racing game fans will likely finish the game in just a few hours while more casual gamers unfamiliar with the genre might have more of a challenge.

In a game where you spend large amounts of time high above the Earth, it pays to have stunning environments to

gaze upon, and Pure does not disappoint in that department. There are 12 areas in Pure, from the airplane graveyard of Ocotillo Wells, Calif., to the tropical island of Kosa Phi in Thailand. Each are lovingly rendered with terrain, foliage, buildings and impressive details like hovering helicopters and ramshackle outbuildings. Part of the fun of any racing game is getting to know the tracks in detail to get an edge on the competition, and Pure's awesome environments make that task a joy.

After 50 races in World Tour, those 12 areas (pretty as they are) can get a bit stale after a while. Despite the repetition, each track does have multiple branching paths and shortcuts that can boost you onto remote cliff-sides or drop you into muddy gulches. This helps keep each track somewhat fresh and gives you incentive to try new things.

When you complete events, you're rewarded with new outfits for the characters and new parts for your ATVs. Although it's fun to build your first couple of bikes, adding new parts as you upgrade them can be a bit cumbersome as you have to go back into the garage, find the part you unlocked and fit it to each bike.

Pure delivers an outrageous, arcadey, off-road racing experience with style and slickness. The controls are intuitive; the tracks are pure eye candy; and the tricks are so crazy and over-the-top that you'll find yourself gasping with glee when you land your first "Lazy Girl." Although it's a blast to play, it's not the deepest game out there, and I found myself wishing for just a few more modes, tracks and options to round out the experience.

I give the game 4 muddy helmets out of 5.



# Branch manager briefs 4th Inf. Div., MND-B senior NCOs on HRC initiatives

By Sgt. Maj. Eric Lobsinger  
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY – As the Soldiers were seated in the auditorium, they listened in rapt attention, some perhaps with a bit of apprehension, as the senior noncommissioned officer from the Army's Human Resources Command began her briefing.

Initially there wasn't a whisper as she began telling the Soldiers about the pending changes for the management of their career field – and for those who would follow their footsteps in the future.

This crowd was a little bit different than those normally found at briefings such as this. In fact, in this particular group, a majority of the participants wore the same stars in the middle of their ranks, some encircled by wreaths, upon the chests of their Army combat uniforms.

Such was the scene Sept. 25 as Sgt. Maj. Gabriella Russum, the sergeants major branch assignment manager, briefed her fellow senior enlisted leaders on changes to the sergeant major/command sergeant major management system.

Prior to kicking off her visit at Forward Operating Base Falcon and Camp Taji, she met with Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia, the senior enlisted leader for the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and provided him an in-brief. Gioia then escorted her as they shared their insights with their fellow Soldiers.

As he introduced her to her peers at FOB Falcon, his message was simple but clear: "Sergeants major represent three percent of the total Army strength, and command sergeants major represent one percent. With that said, you no longer serve for yourselves – You serve the Soldiers of your units."

"You can ask your questions – but at the end of the day, remember: 'I will always place the mission first!'"

With that, he handed over the reins to Russum, who told the gathered leaders that the sergeants major management branch in undergoing a metamorphosis to meet the changing and demanding needs of the Army.

Her visit, she added, provided her the opportunity to share some insight on the future management of the Army's senior enlisted leaders.

"Command Sgt. Maj. Hill invited us come here to Iraq and share our knowledge on the future initiatives of sergeant major branch with our sergeants major and command sergeants major," said Russum, referring to Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill, the senior enlisted leader for Multi-National Forces – Iraq.

Along with her team, which consisted of Sgt. Maj. Jesse Cofield, Master Sgt. Percina Laster and Master Sgt. Garvin Walcott, she was in the midst of a seven-day visit to Iraq that also featured stops at MND-North, MND-Central, Multi-National Corps – Iraq and MNF-I.

The reception during her briefings were somewhat varied, with some senior enlisted leaders hearing what they wanted and others, perhaps, not so much.

One of the biggest initiatives future sergeant major selectees will undergo is a fundamental change in philosophy pertaining to the promotion system itself. In the past, the promotion board specifically selected the senior NCOs for promotion in addition to identifying select master sergeants or first sergeants to attend the Sergeants Major Academy as alternates even though they had not necessarily been selected for promotion.

Under the approved initiative of Select – Train – Promote, she explained, the noncommissioned officers are now selected to undergo training at the academy.

Once they successfully complete the training and graduate, at that point, they become promotable, which is a fundamental shift from the previous promotion mindset.

Another fundamental change to the promotion process is that all master sergeants and first sergeants selected to attend the academy will now undergo a thorough background screening process prior to their admission to the course.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jody Metzger, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Maj. Gabriella Russum, sergeants major branch assignment manager from the Army's Human Resources Command, enjoys a laugh with senior enlisted leaders from the 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, as they prepare to fly from Forward Operating Base Falcon to Camp Taji Sept. 25.

Those who do not pass the screening process will not be able to attend the academy and subsequently not be promoted. Although this process has been in place historically for those selected for appointment to command sergeants major, it has been expanded to include all sergeant major selectees.

"My question is, why doesn't the Army promote all of those who previously graduated from the academy but have not been selected for promotion yet?" asked one of the assemble sergeants major, who cited the perceived inequities in the system that if these Soldiers were selected to attend the academy in the first place, then the Army should go ahead and promote them.

Russum said the new initiatives are intended to address challenges such as this "head on" since starting in Class 60 at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, only those selected for promotion will attend the course. The challenge for some of those who previously attended the course before being selected for promotion, she explained, was that while they were undergoing the training, their peers were out in those hard jobs and gaining operational experience.

Thus, when subsequent promotion boards were conducted, the selection process came down to "Who do you promote? The Soldier with the training experience? Or the Soldier with the operational experience?" The new system, she explained, helps to address that challenge.

"What do you think should be added to the promotion board?" she asked, looking for their feedback as she explained that the career branch managers provide guidance to the promotion board and she was interested in hearing their feedback.

Another important facet of her visit was the opportunity to sit down with the Soldiers and discuss their future potential assignments and career maps.

"We are working the assignment process," she explained. "But one thing everyone has to realize is that there is an expectation that the division will retain a certain percentage of its experience following the deployment."

This also is a subject that tends to illicit strong emotional responses as she explained the Army is committed to ensuring the division is set up for success as it resets and prepares for its pending move to Fort Carson and projected follow-on deployment.

This perhaps struck home for some of those in attendance in that they may not have the ability to move on to another assignment following the current 15-month deployment.

As the questions circulated throughout the room, Gioia took center stage and addressed the issue directly.

"I sat down with Sgt. Maj. Russum and shared my observations with her on the future assignments of our sergeants major and command sergeants major," said Gioia.

"Let me be clear on this. I am responsible for making sure the division is prepared for onward movement to Fort Carson and a future projected deployment. If HRC has not identified a replacement for a specific position, the current sergeant major will stay with the division."

Another initiative briefed by Russum focused on selections for appointment as a command sergeant major. Under the current selection system, NCOs serving as first sergeant can be selected for appointment to command sergeant major upon promotion.

The new initiative, she explained, is to establish a minimum goal of five years experience from the time a Soldier is promoted from master sergeant to the rank of sergeant major before being appointed to the rank of command sergeant major. This is achieved through the process of Select – Train – Promote, she said, as she walked them through the process.

The new initiatives can be somewhat touchy at times, she added.

The important factor of her trip, she said, is that it provides her and her team the opportunity to meet with the senior leaders face to face, which "alleviates us from doing it over the phone or through emails and trying to guess what the sergeant majors preferences are."

During her daylong visit, she met with more than 120 senior NCOs at Camp Taji and FOB Falcon.

"Overall, we touched more than 400 master sergeants, first sergeants, sergeants major and command sergeants major during our visit," she said. "I think it was very successful. When I leave, I'm confident that I leave them with the understanding that they have more options than they were aware of."

"The future management of sergeants major and command sergeants major is changing. It is our mission to educate the force on what the changes will look like and how it will affect them in the future."

# Mol's Wide World of Sports

## October = World Series time

By Staff Sgt. Michael Molinaro  
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – So it's the year 1945 and your team is up two games-to-one in a best-of-seven series with four games left on your home field. A nice old man named Billy takes his precious goat to Game Four with him to watch history unfold. But the owner kicks this little man out of the ballpark, and as he left he shouts "they ain't gonna win no more!" He was right, and the team was forever cursed.



Staff Sgt. Michael 'Mol' Molinaro

The team didn't win that year – or any year since. Heck, they haven't even been to the World Series since that season. This is what it is to be a fan of the Cubs, the loveable losers from the North Side of Chicago. And after 100 years of futility, their faithful believe this is the year they break the curse.

People always talked about the Curse of the Bambino and the Red Sox, but come on, this one has them beat for sure. In 1969 they were up eight games towards the end of August only to see the postseason slip through the crack of their fingers.

In '84, they were up two to zero in a best-of-five with San Diego and needed one win to get back to the World Series, but a 9th inning homer in Game Four and then Leon Durham's Bill Buckner-impersonation during Game Five (only it was two years prior to the one Buckner is infamous for) finished off the Cubs yet again.

And then there is Steve

Bartman in 2003. That's all I have to say. I don't want any Cubs fans reading this to get too angry – we do carry weapons and live ammo.

Isn't that crazy, on the 100th year of their last World Series victory, the Cubbies have what may be their best shot at getting back to the fall classic. 100 years!!!

They entered the playoffs with the best record in the entire National League. They have power; they play good defense; and what is most important in the playoffs, they have the pitching.

The year the Cubs have their best chance. You would think that the stars would be aligned and all of America who wasn't rooting for their own team in the playoffs would jump on the bandwagon and go for a ride with all of the faithful in Wrigleyville.

Who else could be as sad and pathetic and become America's darlings, the underdogs we all love to root for in sports, especially when it's on the grand stage of a Super Bowl, a Final Four or yes, a World Series.

Well, the Cubbies may have some company, and they can thank the Tampa Bay Rays for that. We're talking about a team that has won 70 games ONE TIME. A team that hasn't finished in last place ONE TIME.

Are you kidding me? And now, all of the sudden, this team is poised to be the real Cinderella story of the playoffs, the team ESPN's talking heads are sure to gush over for hours and hours on SportsCenter; the team so many fans of baseball and sports are going to root for.

How about this – the Cubs manager, Lou Pinella, was the Rays' manager before skipping town to take the same job with the Cubs. A little revenge motive there if they meet, huh?

Another sign that curse is still hanging around – they may not even get all of the fans in their own town. The White Sox, who reside on the South Side, are the red-headed step child in the city. But they have their following, and they have bragging rights since they won the championship a few years back.

So not only will the Cubs lose out to

many fans across America, they may not get all of the fans in the Windy City. Holy cow!

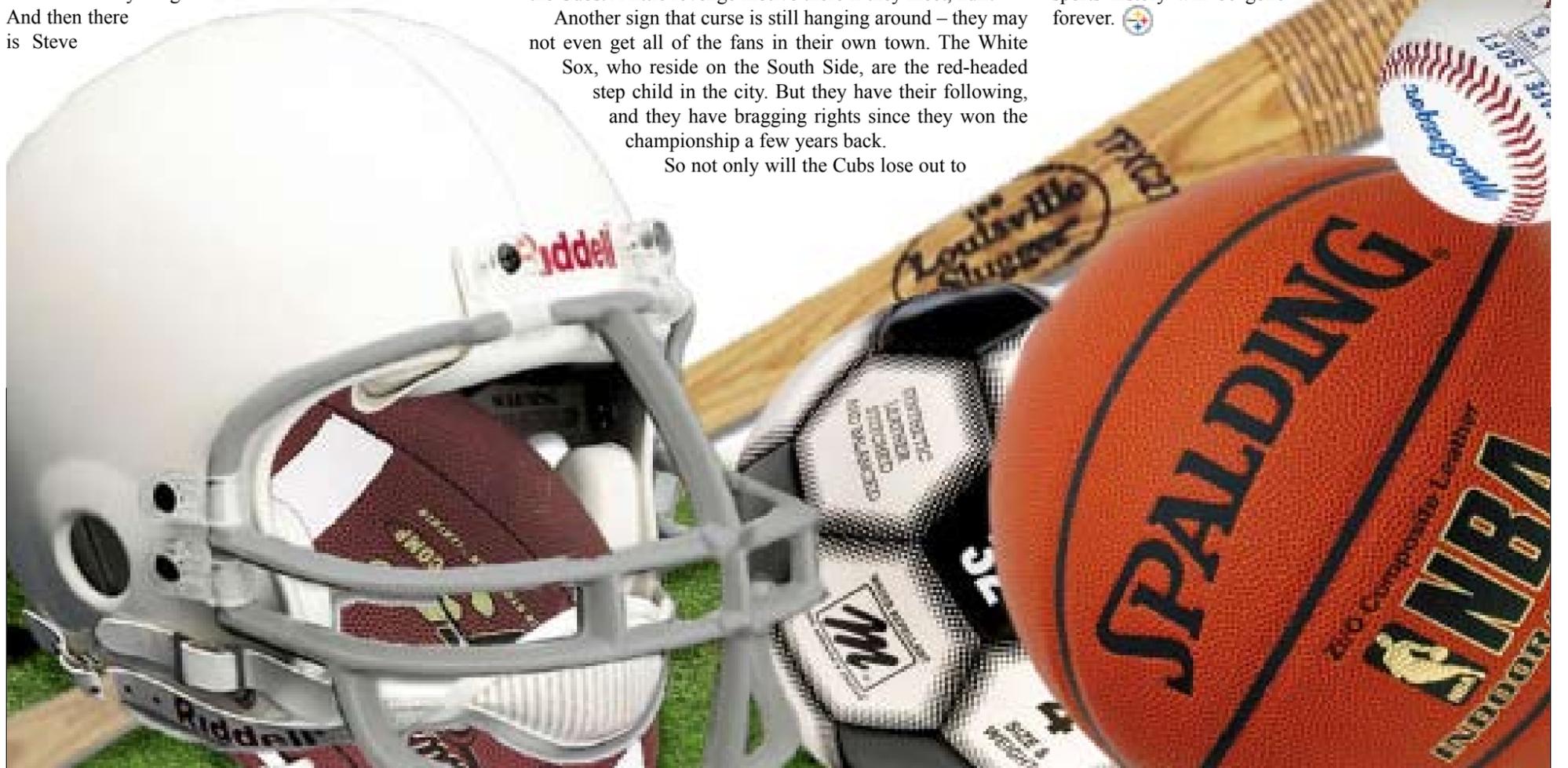
The Cubs will have to defeat the hottest team in the NL, the Los Angeles Dodgers, the tough Philadelphia Phillies or division rival Milwaukee to get to the World Series and end one drought. But the one drought the franchise, the fans and the city wants to end is the 100-year drought. And to accomplish that, besides beating what the NL has to offer, they will have to win four games against whoever comes out of the American League: those cross town White Sox, defending champion Boston, the team with the best overall record, the Los Angeles Angels or those pesky kids from the south, the Rays.

What I love about sports is its history. I like the fact that there is a team in New York that spends all of that money and still can't win. Don't change the rules and don't give baseball a salary cap. I like the idea that pitchers have to hit in baseball, dramatically influencing the strategy of late-inning baseball in the National League.

Please, don't ever add the DH in the NL. And I love it that there is a team that hasn't won the World Series in 100 years yet its fans still pack the house game after game and they still believe.

I hate to say it, I really do because I have been to Chicago many times and the people are super, the city is a great one to visit, and going to Wrigley Field is a sports fans dream. But I am rooting against the Cubs.

I fear that if they win, Wrigley won't be so special. The Cubs won't be fun to root for anymore and another piece of sports history will be gone forever. 🙄



# 32 Soldiers participate in Honolulu Century Ride in Iraq



Photo by Staff Sgt. Christian Foster, 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Participants in the Honolulu Century Ride in Iraq enjoy the scenery of Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad, during their ride Sept. 28. The event allowed riders to participate in a 25, 50, 75 or 100-mile ride. The event coincided with the Honolulu Century ride.

**By Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti**  
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The Honolulu Century Bike Ride rode into Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad, Sept. 28.

Thirty-two Soldiers lined their bikes up before dawn to participate in a 25, 50, 75 or 100-mile courses.

The course was over a 12.5-mile loop. Each 100-mile rider had to complete eight laps.

The ride at Camp Taji was the same day as the ride in Honolulu, only 13 hours earlier, and was a way to stay in touch with the state.

“I wanted to stay connected to the people in Hawaii,” said Maj. Chris Hanna, a native of Columbia, S.C., and effects coordination officer, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Hanna brought the 27-year old ride, the oldest bike ride in Hawaii, to Iraq for the first time. He participated in the ride in Honolulu in 2007 and said he wanted to bring a piece of home to Iraq.

He did it with some help.

“There was a lot of coordination with the units here and the Hawaii Bicycle League back in Honolulu,” he said.

The coordination paid off. Not only was there a “great turnout,” he said, there were many Soldiers who volunteered to help make the ride a success.

Approximately, 40 volunteers helped in many different capacities. They handed out water and snacks, helped riders repair their bikes when they had issues, and ensured accountability of the riders.

“This is exciting and unusual,” said Air Force Lt.

Col. Sterett Prevost, a native of Shreveport, La., an electronics warfare officer with 2nd SBCT. “We are basically doing the same thing as Honolulu, ... and this is an exciting and unique opportunity.”

Prevost was in charge of base operations and ensured all riders were accounted for and had “the safest possible ride and the most enjoyable possible ride,” he said.

The riders lined up at 5:30 a.m. There was a blend of riders of all levels and ages. Some serious, with all the best bike gear money can buy, and many recreational riders just there for a good time. As different as the riders who participated, the bikes showcased their differences and creative abilities. Some of the bikes were “homemade” on Camp Taji, piecing together different bikes to make one.

Spc. Alyxander Reynolds, a native of Hugoton, Kan., assigned to 1st Sustainment Brigade, built two bikes reminiscent of a chopper motorcycles.

“I just wanted to build a bike that was comfortable and reflects my style,” Reynolds said. Reynolds signed up to ride 100 miles, but only completed 37.5 miles on his two custom built bikes. In the future, he said he hopes for sponsorship by Orange County Choppers, Orange County, N.Y., and will ride annually in the Honolulu Century Ride.

Approximately 13 hours after the start, the last rider crossed the finish line completing the eighth lap and 100 miles.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Christian Foster, 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

First Lt. Richard Molinski, a native of Ocala, Fla., makes minor adjustments to his hydration pack before continuing his ride in the Honolulu Century Ride in Iraq at Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad, Sept. 28.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Christian Foster, 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Thirty two service members from Camp Taji, Iraq, northwest of Baghdad, take a group photo before the start of the Honolulu Century Ride in Iraq, Sept. 28.