

# IRON STRONG DAILY



PAGE 1

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## Bastogne artillerymen fall back on traditional role

### Story and Photos

By Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Doheny  
1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st  
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Over the course of seven years during the Vietnam War, the 2nd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment earned the nickname, "Balls of the Eagle," where they earned 15 campaign streamers, two Valorous Unit Awards and a Presidential Unit Citation. During those rain-filled, muggy days in the jungles of Vietnam, an artillery Soldier was primarily focused on providing timely, lethal fires in support of ground forces.

The role of the traditional artilleryman in Afghanistan and Iraq has evolved in recent years though, and so too has the artillery Soldier.

Today he finds himself conducting counter-insurgency operations. This change in mission has often taken him away from what he knows best...putting 'steel on target.'

Falling back on the traditional role as cannon crewmembers, Soldiers from Alpha Battery conducted an artillery raid Oct. 9, in support of an assault force during Operation Balls Jackson I, an air assault operation in the Jazeera Desert.

Two 105mm Howitzers were lifted via CH-47 Chinook helicopters to an isolated, predetermined landing zone. The combat-loaded, air assault Soldiers



A 'gun team' from Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, brace for the concussion as they fire a 105mm howitzer during Operation Balls Jackson I Oct. 9. The artillery Soldiers role in the operation was to set up and fire an artillery barrage in order to deny enemy extraction routes for an air assault operation

jumped off the back of the Chinook helicopters and began preparing their firing positions, just as their Vietnam-era brethren did more than 40 years ago.

"The Vietnam War saw the first major use of helicopters for transportation and aerial fire support, changing the artillery from a static role to giving it the mobility needed in any terrain or battlefield, said Capt. Adalberto Rodriguez, Alpha Battery commander.

Rodriguez said the artillery raid provides the element of surprise, while demoralizing and confusing the enemy troops, giving them no time for reaction.

"The artillery support during the operation gave us the ability to block the enemy extraction routes during the assault, keeping the enemy isolated on the objective," said Rodriguez. "It gave us battlefield supremacy."

According to the Maj. Timothy Frambes, 2-320th executive officer, the location in the Jazeera Desert has become an al Qaeda in Iraq support zone, where they have sought safe haven from Coalition force operations. He said due to his battalion's efforts with increasing the security in the population centers in the area, the enemy has

# U.S. Army South Chaplain rallies Salvadoran religious leaders

**Story and photos by  
Sgt. 1st Class Dave Thompson  
U.S. Army South PAO**

**E**l Salvador- Laughter erupted throughout a hotel conference room near Comalapa Air Base, El Salvador as U.S. and Salvadoran Army officials, meeting with local religious leaders for a conference, enjoyed a light moment.

The laughter was at the expense of the conference coordinator, U.S. Army South Command Chaplain (Col.) James Boelens, whose ambitious attempt at the Spanish language was flavored with an appreciable dose of self-deprecating humor. With a gentle demeanor and a smile big enough to match his six-foot-seven stature, Boelens' reverent approach lent a quiet calm to the edgy business of defending a nation.

He, along with some 7,000 participants from 20 nations, was taking part in PANAMAX 2008, an annual multinational exercise sponsored by U.S. Southern Command and hosted this year by El Salvador, Honduras and Panama.

The scenario centered around defending the Panama Canal and locations in Honduras from a terrorist group, as well as responding to a devastating hurricane in Honduras. Boelens' initiative focused on the responsibilities of faith-based

organizations during such crises. "Religious institutions are an often forgotten demographic with a quietly significant strategic strength," said Boelens.

"They are uniquely postured to assist in times of crises as they are not encumbered by many of the restrictions binding nation-states. They have a significant capacity that should be integrated into the planning process in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief."

Boelens underscored that any dialogue between the military and faith-based institutions must honor the separate and independent character of each religious organization. "When issues of mutual concern arise, however, we need to know how to interact with each other in order to provide humanitarian care."

Following a disaster Boelens indicated that access to basic health care, clean water, proper nutrition, and adequate shelter are subjects that



Col.) James Boelens gives a group of Salvadoran religious leaders a tour of the PANAMAX 2008 exercise site. Boelens discussed an initiative that outlined faith leader's responsibilities during natural disasters at a two-hour conference. Photo by Sgt 1st Class Dave Thompson, U.S. Army South Public Affairs Office

**Salvador** Continued on Page 3

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*Bastogne* from Page 1

sought refuge in the desert, and the air assault operation allowed Alpha Battery the element of surprise.

"The enemy loses his advantage when we arrive by air to root him out of his hiding places," said Frambes. "The demonstrated lethality, accuracy, and speed of an air assault, combined with artillery fires, completely evaporates the pool of support formerly given to them."

Not every artillery unit in the Army performs these types of operations; however, artillery units in the 101st Airborne Division pride themselves on them.

Numerous training hours are devoted on perfecting each and every individual task associated with such a highly-complex operation. Gun teams must be precise, fires must be coordinated and the air assault force must be swift and agile because lives are in jeopardy if one element is not on target.

"In combat there are no second chances or re-dos if a timeline is missed or a critical step is skipped," said Frambes. "Real bullets are shot by real bad guys who intend to do real harm. While we can maintain our task proficiencies by training in combat, we must be efficient and execute the call for fire and fire-mission processing precisely in order to remain safe and accurate when 'under the gun' in combat."

Rodriguez said that this operation was a success because of the precision of fires from his gun teams.

"The artillery support was the key of success of the operation," he said.



Soldiers from Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, run out of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter during Operation Balls Jackson I Oct. 9.

*Salvador* from Page 2

require collaboration.

"Religious institutions represent the people and it doesn't matter what faith you belong to; during times of crises we're all in the same boat," said Boelens. "We can all benefit from each other's help. As denominational leaders, we have a responsibility to discuss means and ways to improve conditions in our communities."

During the conference, Boelens and Col. Ricardo Palona, Salvadoran Army Chief of Civil and Military Affairs, gave an overview of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief programs and outlined the challenges and limitations of alerting citizens during crises. They recognized the vast influence that religious leaders have in impacting their communities and highlighted the value of faith-based organizations joining together to form a

multinational collaborative partnership to respond to natural disasters.

"During such times of disasters, we take help from anyone who is willing to give it," said Palona. "In hurricanes past, the first responder was Southern Command who provided helicopters and humanitarian aid. We always listen to what they have to say in these matters."

The initiative was received with great enthusiasm as one by one, the religious leaders expressed thanks, offered advice and pledged their willingness to do their part.

"Many times [in the aftermath of a disaster] it's not simply a physical catastrophe, it's also a spiritual condition," said Boelens.

"We are here to provide spiritual assistance. Years ago when your country was ravaged by war, we were there for you. Now, you are there for us. That's what a partnership is all about—all of us caring for each other during times of need."



## ELECTIONS

US presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama traded sharp words about their tax plans as they campaigned in key conservative states.

In a radio address, Mr McCain said his Democratic rival's proposals amounted to a "government giveaway".

Mr McCain, who is trailing in the opinion polls, is seeking to shore up support in Virginia and North Carolina.

In front of 100,000 people in St Louis, Missouri, Mr Obama said Mr McCain wanted to cut taxes for wealthy firms.

Missouri is a state often won by whomever becomes president; it voted for George W Bush in the last two elections.

Mr McCain's running mate Sarah Palin appeared on US comedy show Saturday Night Live, which has mocked her mercilessly.

She shared the stage with comedienne Tina Fey, who has caricatured Mrs Palin as an incoherent air-headed flirt.

The real Sarah Palin delivered the show's traditional opening line: "Live from New York, it's Saturday Night!" 'Bandits'

Mr McCain fired the first volley of the day, saying Mr Obama's economic plan would increase taxes and stifle job creation as

the US goes through its worst financial crisis in decades.

"Raising taxes on some in order to give cheques to others is not a tax cut, it's just another government giveaway," he said in a paid radio address.

"Barack Obama's tax plan would convert the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] into a giant welfare agency, redistributing massive amounts of wealth at the direction of politicians in Washington."

He was referring to Mr Obama's proposal to raise taxes on the five percent of Americans who earn more than \$250,000 (£145,000) and either lower them for the rest or give tax credits to those who do not earn enough to pay income tax.

"Senator Obama believes in redistributing the wealth, not in policies that grow our economy and create jobs and opportunities for all Americans," he said later at a rally in Concord, North Carolina, attended by about 5,000 people.

Mr Obama replied at a rally in St Louis where he drew his biggest US crowd of the campaign - an estimated 100,000 people.

He said Mr McCain

"wants to cut taxes for the same people who have already been making out like bandits, in some cases literally"

"John cCain is so out of touch with the struggles you are facing that he must be the first politician in history to call a tax cut for working people 'welfare'," he said.

"The only 'welfare' in this campaign is John McCain's plan to give another \$200bn in tax cuts to the wealthiest corporations in America."

With 17 days to the election, Mr McCain has failed to reverse his slide in the opinion polls.

A poll by Gallup on Saturday suggested the Democratic senator has a nationwide lead over Mr McCain of 50% to 42%.



## Entertainment

Travis Barker's ex wife Shanna Moakler claims she nearly was on board the plane that crashed in South Carolina.

Moakler tells Us Weekly that she nearly was on board the small plane that claimed four lives and seriously injured her ex and DJ AM. On September 19, Moakler learned Travis Barker, her ex-husband with whom she claimed she had recently reconciled, had been in a plane crash that left the rocker, 32, with second- and third-degree burns on his hands and lower body.

Barker and fellow passenger DJ AM were the only survivors of the Sept. 19 plane crash in South Carolina that killed four people. The deceased included pilot Sarah Lemmon and copilot James Bland, who reportedly died of burns and smoke inhalation suffered in the crash, according to Harry Harman, the coroner

for Lexington County.

Passengers Chris Baker and Charles Still, both friends and professional colleagues of Barker and DJ AM, were both said to have died as a result of impact-related injuries. Moakler, 33, shared the details with Us Weekly about her premonitions of the fated flight.

Moakler tells Us: "I was supposed to go with [Travis] to South Carolina, and at the



last minute, I had this gnarly feeling and said, 'I don't think we should fly together anymore.' God forbid something ever happened- our kids wouldn't have both parents. Instead of flying a commercial flight back home, they decided to take a private jet. He emailed me pictures of the plane and wrote, 'It's really small and scary.' I had a bad feeling, but didn't want to sound strange, so I said, 'Be safe.' "

Moakler revealed her feelings after getting word about the plane crash and Barker's injuries.

She tells US: "When the paramedic called me, I thought it was [Travis and his bandmates] joking. I almost hung up on him. He said, 'No, ma'am, I am very serious.' I was like, 'Oh, my God. What do I do?' and started crying."

The entire Travis Barker and Shanna Moakler plane story is in the latest issue of Us Weekly.

## Football

If USC were undefeated, I would not say much since no one impresses me other than Texas. (If Penn State beats Ohio State, I will happily acknowledge them. Having had the displeasure of being forced to see John Parker Wilson over and over again on CBS, Jefferson Pilot, and ESPN for the past four years, I will never acknowledge Alabama no matter what their record is. Good kid that John Parker Wilson is but not much of a player.)

But as USC will be only one of several very good one loss teams, why should they get the nod over everyone else?

If things play out as expected, Ohio State will be the only ranked team that USC plays all year. While it is true that USC opponents California, Arizona, Oregon or Notre Dame could put together a run, the truth is that there is little evidence that any of those teams have the talent to accomplish it, especially when you consider that the first three all play each other plus have the rest of the Pac-10 to worry about.

I admit that Oregon, by virtue of having already played USC, has a shot, but the truth is that if things hold to form Ohio State will be USC's only opponent with fewer than three losses.

USC fans will retort that everyone else, especially the SEC, is overrated. I don't have a problem with that.

SEC offenses are dyspeptic, Big 12 defenses are sieves, and the Big 10 has yet to show that it can compete with elite edge talent. But at the end of the day, denigrating other conferences doesn't add a thing to what USC has accomplished when USC's victories are compared with the one loss teams from other conferences.

Let us go back to the overrated SEC. Suppose Florida wins the rest of their games. You can call UGA, LSU, and Alabama frauds until the cows come home. And feel free to ignore that they played Hawai'i, Miami and FSU out of conference to focus instead on Citadel.

Even if it is all true, USC still won't be able to claim that they beat a better group of teams than did Florida. Case in point: the only SEC team to lose to a mid-major this year is 2-4 Mississippi State. The Pac-10 cannot come close to saying the same.

That is just the SEC. Truthfully, there



is no objective way of saying that USC would be more deserving of a national title bid than an 11-1 Penn State (especially after you consider what PSU did to Oregon State) or an 11-1 Oklahoma. Am I saying "anybody but USC"? A thousand times no. In the unlikely event that an ACC or Big East team finishes with a single loss, I will not advocate a national title game appearance for them.

Why? Well to be honest, for the same reason that I do not for USC. Should Virginia Tech, Georgia Tech, Pitt, or South Florida finish 12-1 or 11-1, they will have done so without beating very many superior teams. So why should they be advanced over teams that have?

I am aware that USC's excellence under Pete Carroll that causes us to presume USC's getting the benefit of the doubt for title games. Please understand how ridiculous this is.

Merely because USC is "the team of the decade" (a moniker that LSU, who lest we forget is 4-0 in BCS games including 2-0 in BCS title games, has some right to claim for themselves) does not mean that they are the best team in any given year.

Proof of this: FSU finished in the top five every single year from 1988 to 2003, but actually had a losing record A) to Miami and B) in national title games during that span.

Also, USC is clearly living off the accomplishments of Trojans of the recent past. Well please remember that those accomplishments weren't merely due to the Trojan uniform, but the players and coaches in

them.

Those USC teams had Carson Palmer and Matt Leinart at QB, Lendale White and Reggie Bush at RB, Dwayne Jarrett, Keary Colbert, Mike Williams, and Steve Smith at WR, and guys like Troy Polamalu, Shaun Cody, Mike Patterson, Darnell Bing, and Lofa Tatupu on defense. (More important, they had Norm Chow, Ed Orgeron and Lane Kiffin as assistants.)

Now maybe the players that USC has now have more natural ability, but they are not as productive, not as consistent, and not as good at stepping up when they really need to, and at least part of it is due to their coaches not using them nearly as well.

That 2005 USC team that nearly won the national title was the first in NCAA history to have a 3,000-yard passer, two 1,000-yard WRs, and two-1000 yard RBs.

By contrast, this year's USC team likely won't have a single RB or WR reach 800 yards. Where LenDale White broke the Southern Cal TD record in only three seasons PLAYING BACKUP, this USC team has combined for only six rushing TDs. And the numbers that Matt Sanchez are on pace for, 2500 yards with 28 TDs and 12 INTs, are nowhere near what Leinart and Palmer put up.

Yes, I am aware that USC is No. 1 in scoring defense. I am equally aware that the next great offensive team that USC plays this year will be the first. USC's great stats on defense haven't exactly come against Texas Tech, Oklahoma State, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas, ok?

## France

President Nicolas Sarkozy is considering aid to help the French economy through the financial crisis including speeding up rail projects and helping car manufacturers, a newspaper reported on Monday.

He is also expected to unveil later this week measures to fight rising unemployment.

The report in Le Monde newspaper is consistent with warnings from economists that France and other European countries will take advantage of a clause in EU rules allowing countries to run up their deficits in emergency circumstances.

Germany said on Monday it was working on stimulus measures.

"We needed to stop the financial crisis. Now we have to get the economic machine going," Prime Minister Francois Fillon told the newspaper.

Fillon will hold a press conference at 10 a.m. EDT on Monday to discuss the economy and financing of local authorities, which have been hit hard by the financial crisis.

Le Monde said the government "envisages helping several industrial sectors, in particular the car industry."

The newspaper said if France was

unable to convince Europe of the need for a concerted effort to help the car sector "it would take national measures to help the development of electric cars, to create a network of service stations capable of replacing batteries, or supporting research into fuel cells."

The government also plans to speed up big rail infrastructure projects. The idea of supporting environmental projects with the aim of boosting the economy is also "totally on the table," according to a source in Sarkozy's office, the paper said.

Sarkozy is facing pressure from politicians in his party to announce steps to help ordinary French people after he announced 360 billion euros in aid last week for the banking sector.

The government, which has been under pressure from the EU to keep its deficit under control, had insisted that the coffers were empty and there was no money for new tax breaks or spend.

But economists say the agreement struck between France, Germany, Italy and EU officials on October 4 to invoke the emergency clause will lead to more spending.

"We expect some countries, especially France and Italy, to adopt stimulative fiscal

policies to mitigate the impact of the credit crunch on the real economy," Bank of America economist Gilles Moec wrote.

"This will add to the mechanical deterioration in public finances triggered by the downturn."

He said it could bring France's deficit to 4 percent of gross domestic product in 2009, far higher than the EU's 3 percent limit and the government's official forecast of 2.7 percent for next year.



## Thailand



About 2,000 anti-government protesters marched past Bangkok's upmarket shopping malls on Monday accusing police of brutality, upping pressure on the increasingly-isolated prime minister.

In a repeat of a similar rally on Friday, supporters of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) handed out leaflets and CDs showing graphic images of protesters injured in a deadly clash with police earlier this month.

"The police try to distort the truth. I insist that what we bring is the whole truth," Somsak Kosaisuk, one of the PAD leaders, told crowds of people dressed in yellow shirts, which shows loyalty to the revered Thai king.

Two people were killed and nearly 500 injured on October 7 when police fired tear gas to prevent thousands of PAD supporters from blocking parliament, prompting some protesters to fight back.

A police officer at the scene early Monday estimated that about 1,300 protesters had turned out, and crowds later swelled, blocking traffic on normally-busy roads. About 300 police officers stood on the sidelines.

Protesters carried placards emblazoned with the word "Murderer" underneath photos of Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat and the national police chief.

The PAD are trying to bring down the democratically-elected People Power Party (PPP) government, accusing it of running the country on behalf of ousted and exiled premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who they accuse of corruption.

Their rally ended soon after midday, while a group of about 150 pro-government demonstrators also briefly gathered at the National Police Headquarters to submit a letter to the police chief.

"We will ask police to come and fight back if the army stages a coup ... and we want to give moral support to police," said Somyos Pueksakasemsuk, a pro-government activist.

"We just want to keep our democratic system."

There had been fears of clashes between PAD and the pro-government group, but both rallies ended without incident.

Thailand's powerful army chief on Thursday strongly hinted that Somchai should step down and dissolve parliament to take responsibility for this month's clashes.

Remarks by the army chief are taken very seriously in Thailand, which has seen 18 coups since the end of absolute monarchy in 1932, one of which removed Thaksin from his post in September 2006.